

When Aloe Vera Heals ...

By Officers of International Aloe Science Council

February 8, 1996

There is a quiet, but nonetheless impassioned battle being waged today between players in the Aloe vera arena, both in terms of science and the less precise field of marketing strategy. The question is: Does Aloe vera, in its natural form, have the therapeutic values imputed to it, or is there just one constituent in Aloe that provides all the benefits? It's a question of whether the entire orchestra does the healing, or just the solo performer.

This may seem an unusual analogy to apply to an herb reputed to be one of history's most revered and universally used healing plants. But it captures the current dichotomy between those scientists who believe that Aloe's therapeutic benefits derive from the "orchestration" of the more than 200 components found in Aloe vera gel – and the claim of a smaller band of researchers employed by a manufacturer of Aloe-based products – that only one element in the gel offers the curative powers for which the plant is known.

This "one-man-band" group has isolated a large, crude, polysaccharide from Aloe vera, which they have trademarked Manapolâ. While it appears that their theory is based on good science it is their conclusion that is open to question. And this arguably flawed conclusion is being hotly debated in those circles devoted to Aloe research.

Aloe Vera - A Healing Agent for Almost 4000 Years

After almost 4,000 years of use throughout much of the world in its original form (i.e. gel fresh from the leaf), and the documentary evidence provided by many cultures and civilizations – from the ancient Greeks, Romans, Chinese and Egyptians to the many hundreds of today's scientific papers – one would be led to believe that whole Aloe possesses the healing power, rather than only one of its polysaccharide.

The "Orchestra" philosophy, endorsed by the International Aloe Science Council, believes that the curative power of Aloe results from the aggregate effect of the polysaccharides, enzymes, amino acids, glycoproteins, vitamins and minerals intrinsic to the plant and its exudates gel. They believe that it is the natural synergy of these uniquely combined components that make the plant such a remarkable tool for combating many of mankind's illnesses. They flatly reject the notion that there is but one component or "instrument" in the Aloe orchestra that carries the melodic theme – with the other 200-odd constituent members simply playing an incidental accompaniment... and contributing nothing to the healthcare benefits.

Is It the Orchestra or the Piccolo Player That Makes the Music Work

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Is It Good Science – Or Ballyhoo?

To assert, as several writers have done – seemingly with information obtained from the developers of Manapolâ – that Aloe-based products not containing Manapolâ cannot offer the benefits associated with Aloe vera – seems little more than product ballyhoo, bearing but faint relation to the good science that produced both Acemannan and Manapolâ.

If, as it has been claimed, either Manapolâ or Acemannan provide favoring circumstances to the medical use of Aloe in the treatment of illnesses, then surely the whole gel content can be viewed as even more beneficial, given that it provides a spectrum of additional therapeutic constituents, each of which is known to perform specific tasks in the healing process.

We know, for example, that mannose-6-phosphate, a major sugar in Aloe vera, is an active growth substance. It has been shown to have anti-inflammatory activity and stimulates fibroblast activation. If we then call M-6-P an oboe player, is its sound not important to that produced by the orchestra? Does it have, or need, Manapolâ in order to produce its function of healing wounds?

There are countless other examples of specific constituents in Aloe vera that perform in special capacities relating to healing. Dozens of rigorously researched and carefully prepared scientific papers are published each year in support of the “orchestral” approach. These are written by men and women who have spent the better part of their professional careers in search of Aloe’s “truth.”

Should we now, on the basis of but one new “discovery” by a single group of researchers, throw out the baby with the bathwater? There are reputations on the line, here, and the majority seem to believe that, while Acemannan and Manapolâ may serve important purposes, the Aloe vera orchestra still makes the music the health conscious world needs to hear.

Some Active Biological Components Outside The Polysaccharide in Aloe Vera & Their Outside Activities

Since the proponents of the One-Man-Band theory claim that Manapolâ, and only Manapolâ does what Aloe is reputed to do, let’s examine a few of Aloe vera’s activities – apart from Manapolâ’s origin in the polysaccharide portion of the plant, and list these components.

Salicylic Acid:	It offers anti-inflammatory activities and relieves pain.
Sterols:	They have anti-inflammatory activity.
Gibberellin:	It is a growth factor and offers anti-inflammatory activities.
Beta Carotene:	An antioxidant – possibly a cancer fighter.
Anthraquinones:	A known cancer fighter.
Zinc:	Shown to improve wound healing in diabetics.

The list is, of course, longer than space permits in this treatment, but these few examples should tend to indicate that Aloe vera is, as naturally constituted, an important therapeutic tool.

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