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Naturally Based Biomaterials and Therapeutics

The Case of India

 Springer

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Preface

Today, more than ever before, there is a pressing need for biomedical innovations to address the plethora of health problems afflicting the world. Particularly in developing countries like India—where communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, and injuries all contribute substantially to overall morbidity and mortality—there is no panacea that will easily pave the way to improved health outcomes. Different cultural, economic, infrastructural, and other factors also prevent many interventions currently popular in the developed world from being sufficiently effective in the developing world. For example, despite having far more people, nominal GDP in India and China in 2009 was less than one-fifth that of the United States and Western Europe,¹ a statistic that makes it clear that many high-tech, expensive procedures conducted in the US might not be as fitting for use in India.

The lack of suitable options currently available to improve health outcomes in developing countries like India presents a tremendous opportunity for less-traditional approaches, including those that utilize naturally based biomaterials and therapeutics, an area that has traditionally been overlooked but has also demonstrated impressive potential for health applications in recent years. This book seeks to explore precisely these kinds of applications, which can enable countries like India to access more effective, inexpensive treatments while also taking more ownership of their healthcare technologies and innovations.

The book is divided into four distinct chapters. [Chapter 1](#) provides some background and context for the rest of the book, giving a brief introduction to global health, biomaterials, and therapeutics. It starts by surveying the current state of health worldwide before focusing specifically on India and the challenges this populous, diverse country faces. Then it covers the significance of biomaterials and therapeutics and their promise in the quest to improve world health.

[Chapter 2](#) introduces nine natural resources with potential medical applications. These resources—bamboo, banana, coconut, jackfruit, jute, rice, silk, soy, and

¹ Hamilton, D. and J. Quinlan. “The Transatlantic Economy 2011: Annual Survey of Jobs, Trade and Investment between the United States and Europe.” *Center for Transatlantic Relations*, 2011.

tamarind—are commonly found in India as well as in certain other regions of the world. This chapter explores their various properties and current applications.

Chapter 3 delves into some of the most important potential biomaterial and therapeutic applications for each of these nine crops. Such applications vary from drug-eluting stents to treatments that eliminate intestinal parasites. Some of these applications are already in use today or have been used in times previously, such as coconut water as an alternative to popular contemporary intravenous fluid treatments. Other applications—such as the use of cross-linked carboxymethyl jackfruit starch as a tablet disintegrant—require additional exploration and research before they can be proven effective and safely used for humans. Each of these biomedical applications has demonstrated abilities to combat health concerns that are highly relevant to India, as well as other regions of the world.

Chapter 4, the final chapter of this book, summarizes the primary themes of the previous chapters and discusses the implications of these key points. It then raises and addresses several of the most compelling challenges and objections to using naturally sourced biomaterials and therapeutics for health applications, particularly in developing countries. Finally, it presents several recommendations and lays out a basic plan to move forward and harness the potential of naturally derived biomaterials and therapeutics to maximize their benefit in health applications.

Altogether, this book aims to help readers better understand some of the key health concerns facing countries like India and how naturally derived biomaterials and therapeutics could help substantially alleviate many of these problems. This is an exciting time for such biomaterial and therapeutic research, and hopefully further exploration of bio-derived materials will yield even greater benefits for world health outcomes in years to come.

Contents

Part I

1 Introduction to Global Health, Biomaterials, and Therapeutics . . .	3
The State of Health Worldwide	3
The State of Health in India	6
Biomaterials and Therapeutics: A Role in World Health	10
References	12
2 Natural Resources with Potential for Health Applications	15
Bamboo	15
Banana	16
Coconut	17
Jackfruit	18
Jute	19
Rice	20
Silk	21
Soy	21
Tamarind	22
References	23

Part II

3 Biomaterial and Therapeutic Applications.	27
Bamboo Applications	27
Blood Purification	27
Bone Repair or Replacement	28
Neuroprotector	30
Banana Applications	31
Burn Dressing	31
Inhibition of Viral Transmission	32
Diabetes Treatment	34

Bone Grafting	35
Anti-Ulcerogenic	36
Iron Absorption Promoter	37
Coconut Applications	37
Obesity and Diabetes Treatment	37
Helminth Treatment	39
Ulcer Treatment	40
Intravenous Treatment	40
Jackfruit Applications	41
Protease Inhibitor	41
Tablet Disintegrant	43
Leukemia Treatment	43
Jute Applications	45
Wound Dressing	45
Arsenic Protection	45
Digesta Viscosity Elevation	47
Rice Applications	48
Protein Production	48
Multifunctional Excipient	50
Porous Scaffolds	51
Sutures	52
Silk Applications	54
Corneal Grafts	54
Optical Devices	55
Conduits for Nerve Repair	57
Bone Regeneration	58
Drug Delivery	59
Cartilage and Ligament Repair	61
Multi-Functional Stents	62
Soy Applications	63
Bone Regeneration	63
Inflammation Treatment	65
Drug Delivery	66
Tamarind Applications	67
Drug Delivery	67
Ophthalmic Applications	69
Anti-Malarial	71
Anti-Obesity	72
Antihelminthic	72
References	73

Part III

4 Implications, Challenges, and Recommendations	83
Summary	83
Objections and Challenges	84
Moving Forward	87
References	89