

HERBCLIP

FILE: · Sedative Herbs
· California Poppy (*Eschscholtzia californica*)
· Corydalis (*Corydalis* spp.)

DATE: September 2, 1997

HC 090272

RE: **Sedative Herbs: California Poppy and Corydalis**

Reichert, R. Sedative Effects of California Poppy and Corydalis.
Quarterly Review of Natural Medicine, Winter 1996, p. 256.

Two obscure sedative plants of the family Papaveraceae were highlighted in a German publication (*Arzneimittel Forschung; Drug Research*) by researchers at the Technical University in Munich, Germany

The California poppy (*Eschscholtzia californica*) and corydalis (*Corydalis cava*), like all members of Papaveraceae, both contain high amounts of isoquinoline alkaloids. The California poppy's main alkaloid is protopine; it also contains alkaloids from at least six other major categories. Protopine is similar in structure to morphine, but it is not addictive and has a different mechanism of action. Like benzodiazepines, protopine alkaloids increase the binding of GABA to GABA receptors. The total alkaloid content in the California poppy root is 2.7%; in the herb, it ranges from 0.06% to 0.29%.

Corydalis tuber contains a total of 6% alkaloids. The primary one is bulbocapnine, comprising from 20 to 35% of the total alkaloid content. Bulbocapnine is believed to work with the dopaminergic neuronal transmitter system. *In vitro* studies with rats have confirmed the sedative effect of corydalis. Tetrahydropalmatine, an alkaloid with analgesic, sedative, and tranquilizing effects found in the Chinese species *C. yanhuso*, does not appear on the extensive list of alkaloids present in *C. cava*.

Although human clinical trials are lacking, corydalis and California poppy show promise in treating insomnia in humans. —*Ginger Webb*

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