

PREFACE

It is believed that Spices is the reason that brought Romans, Jews and Arabs to India. The search for spices was also the impetus for Christopher Columbus's discovery of America and for Vasco de Gama's voyage from Portugal to India, in the 15th century, along what is now called the "Spice Route". The Indonesian island where the nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and mace were grown is now called "Spice Island". Here, wealthy ladies kept spices in lockets around their necks so they could freshen their breaths, and gentlemen added nutmeg to food and drink. Spices were also used for medicinal purposes, especially in the relief of colic, gout, wounds, and rheumatism. Because of the great demand for spices, their prices soared, and so expeditions were launched to find their source and secure them for Europe. This struggle led to fights between Arabs, Portuguese, Spanish, French, British, and Dutch governments during the 17th and 18th centuries.

This monograph focuses on the medicinal aspects of these spices. Where is the evidence that these spices have medicinal value? Hippocrates remarked almost 25 centuries ago "*Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food*". This aphorism parallels the common American saying "you are what you eat" and the current recommendation from the United States National Institutes of Health to consume as many as "12 servings of fruits and vegetables a day" to prevent common diseases. How spices and their components affect disease and what are their molecular targets, is the collective focus of this book. We intend to demonstrate that, like modern medicine, ancient medicine, including its pharmacopeia, was evidence-based but based on technology different from that of today. We are fortunate that this is so, because products that are safe and yet efficacious

are needed today more than ever before. Overall, we hope that the information provided in this book is useful to scientists, clinicians, herbalogists, naturopaths, and above all the people who use such products. We would like to thank all the contributors who made this book possible and Divya Danda for the cover design. We hope that this book will justify “*Adding Spice to Your Life*”.

Bharat B. Aggarwal, Ph.D.
Ajaikumar B. Kunnumakkara, Ph. D.