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Sommario/riassunto

Natural products hold a prominent position in the current discovery and development of drugs and have diverse indications for both human and animal health. Plants, in particular, play a leading role as a source of specialized metabolites with medical effects. Other organisms, such as marine and terrestrial animals and microorganisms, produce very important drug candidate molecules. Specialized metabolites from these varied natural sources can be used directly as bioactive compounds or drug precursors. In addition, due to their broad chemical diversity, they can act as drug prototypes and/or be used as pharmacological tools for different targets. Some examples of natural metabolites that have been developed into useful medical drug are cardiotonic digoxin from Digitalis sp., antimalarial artemisinin from Artemisia annua, anti-cancer taxol from Taxus sp., or podophyllotoxin from Podophyllum peltatum, which served as a synthetic model for the anti-cancer etoposide. The study of natural products is still attracting great scientific attention and their current importance, as a valuable lead for drug discovery, is undebatable. I cordially invite authors to contribute original articles, as well as survey articles, that give the readers of Molecules **MOLECULES NEEDS TO BE ITALICIZED** updated and new perspectives on natural products in drug discovery, including but not limited to natural sources, identification and separation of bioactive phytochemicals, standardization, new biological targets, pre-clinical and clinical trials, pharmacological effects/side effects, and

bioassays.