

Pharmacology

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DEFINITION ESSAY: PHARMACOLOGY SUBMITTED BY: SUBMITTED INSTITUTE:

Pharmacology is one of the multiple fields of study that fall under the broad umbrella of medicine. Other terms, closely related to pharmacology include pharmacy, pharmacist and pharmaceutical. The focus of this essay will be on the term ' pharmacology'. Pharmacology refers basically to the branch of science, which deals with the study of medicines, focusing on the origin, chemical composition and therapeutic impact (The American heritage, 2004). More specifically, Pharmacology is the study of interaction between drugs and living beings (Hollinger, 2003). The word pharmacology has a Greek origin. According to Bukert (1985), in Greek religion, ' Pharmakos' referred to a human scapegoat. Whenever there was disaster or crises, the Greeks offered sacrifice of a human, as means of purification or purging the society. This act was religious, conducted as part of the Greek religion, to serve the purpose of societal catharsis. The ancient Greeks actually maintained outcasts at public expense to serve as human scapegoats when needed. Their underlying belief was that sacrificing these scapegoats would purify the society of evil and the gods will be pleased. The term ' Pharmakos' then underwent a lot of evolution overtime. At first the word became ' Pharmakeus' meaning a spell giving potion or poisoner. Another development in the term was into the word ' Phamakon' meaning purging, purifying or remedial intervention. From this, the term Pharmacology evolved (Hollinger, 2003). The composition of the word ' Pharmacology' is quite simple, based on two words: Pharmakon, meaning drug and logy, meaning study or discourse; wherein drug refers to any chemical or toxin that can have a desirable or undesirable impact on a living organism (Muid, 2006). The simplest meaning to be derived from this definition is that Pharmacology

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is the study of drugs (Muid, 2006). The subject of pharmacology covers three broad terms: physiology, toxicology and biochemistry, all of these are related to study of impact of chemicals on living organisms. Pharmacology covers the aspects of drug usage in study of physiological behavior, biological effects of environmental chemicals and using drugs as medicines. Pharmacology has many divisions based on the type of study. Clinical pharmacology is the study of medicinal effects of drugs on living beings, neurological pharmacology deals with the effects of a drug specifically on the nervous system, psycho pharmacology studies the positive and negative effects of various medications on the brain and behavior of individuals, pharmacogenetics involves the study of genetic differences among individuals of a same species in their response to same drugs and toxicology is the division of pharmacology devoted to study of harmful effects of drugs specifically (Hollinger, 2003). Today, the term Pharmacology is mostly used to refer to the branch of study that deals with drugs, medicines, poisons and their effects on different living creatures including humans. The term however sometimes is also used as a more specific noun in the field of medicine, referring to the pharmacology of one specific drug. Thus, pharmacology is commonly used in two ways: to refer to a branch of science and to refer to the impact of a certain drug on living organisms. For example a person might say: I have chosen to study pharmacology; pharmacology is my field of interest or what is the pharmacology of this prescription? Either way, the term pharmacology implies the effects that any chemical can have on living organism. Whenever the word pharmacology is used, it refers to the effects of different chemicals or medications on living organisms.

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