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## **PL12 Exploring natural products from Mexican biodiversity as a source of potential medicinal agents**

*Rachel Mata*

Departamento de Farmacia, Facultad de Química, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Coyoacán 04510, México DF, México.

Regardless of its richness and variety, only a small percentage of the Mexican medicinal flora has been investigated from the phytochemical or pharmacological point of view. Thus, the potential of Mexican medicinal plants as a source of bioactive compounds remains largely unexplored; mostly in view that many drugs or pesticide agents have come to us from the use of plants by indigenous cultures. In this scenario we have established a multidisciplinary research program to obtain phytochemicals of medicinal or agrochemical interest from Mexican plants used in folk medicine. In the medicinal area, our efforts have been mainly focused on the discovery of active principles useful for the treatment of gastrointestinal disorders which are a major health problem in Mexico. In this presentation the potential of Mexican medicinal flora as a source of useful biologically active products will be illustrated through selected examples stemming from our research program. Brief considerations of the botanical sources, and of the isolation, the structure elucidation, and the biological properties of the active phytochemicals are presented.

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### **Prof. Dr. Rachel Mata**

Prof. Rachel Mata was born in Caracas (Venezuela) and holds Mexican citizenship. She received her undergraduate degree in Pharmacy at the Universidad Central de Venezuela (1972), and her M.S. (1976) and PhD (1979) degrees in Pharmacognosy from Purdue University, U.S.A. In 1984 she joined the faculty of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), where she is Professor of Pharmacognosy. She received a Distinguished Alumna Award (1998) from the School of Pharmacy and Pharmacal Sciences, Purdue University, the National University Prize in Natural Sciences (2000) from UNAM and more recently the Martin de la Cruz Prize awarded by the Mexican government. Her *curriculum vitae* lists more than 120 peer reviewed scientific publications, several chapters, numerous abstracts and one book. She served as President of the Phytochemical Society of North America (1996-1997) and currently she is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Natural Products*.