



## Exploring Remote Islands for Bioactive Molecules

*Paul Alan Cox, Ph.D.*

*Brain Chemistry Labs, Jackson Hole*

Plants, corals, and other sessile organisms in disparate environments use chemical means to mediate their interactions with competitors and predators. Many of these molecules demonstrate useful bioactivity for human beings. Over half of the drugs prescribed in the United States are derived from biodiversity, with 25% being from plants used by indigenous peoples for medicine, food, and personal care.

Ethnobotanical studies in remote islands of the Pacific have led to the discovery of exciting new drug candidates for immunomodulation, antiviral medications, and treatment of neurodegenerative diseases including ALS and Alzheimer's disease. Villagers who depend on tropical rainforests and coral reefs for medicine are particularly committed to conservation. Partnerships with island villages have now resulted in the protection of over 1.5 million acres of precious island habitats in 67 countries throughout the world.