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Ethnobotanical Study And Inventory Of Medicinal Plants Used To Treat Children In Algeria

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Abstract

Medicinal plants have a long history of use in therapy, and are an important part of traditional medicine. As Algeria's flora is very rich and diverse, phytotherapy is considered to be particularly attractive in Algeria. Although the use of traditional herbal medicine in adults is very widespread, it has not been well documented in the paediatric population. Hence the importance of this study, that aims to identify the medicinal plants used in paediatric pathologies, and to assess the way in which they are used and their relative importance in the Algerian population. Ethnobotanical surveys were carried out using 2000 questionnaires. The results showed that 66.25% of users were women and only 33.75% were men. For 50% of informants, the use of medicinal plants was ancestral knowledge. In 30.25% of cases, the pathologies treated were gastric troubles, and (24.4%) respiratory ones. The survey identified 136 species belonging to 62 botanical families, the most represented being *Lamiaceae*, *Asteraceae*, *Apiaceae* and *Fabaceae*. The leaf was the most commonly used part of the plant (34%). The most common method of preparation was decoction (37%), which was mainly administered orally (79%). The dosage used was random (95%) and for a short period (77%). Allergies seemed to be the most common undesirable effect of using certain plants by children. 87% of the informants used herbal medicine exclusively, without any combination with other medicinal treatments. The PCA showed strong correlations between the different regions of the country, with regard to the use of certain medicinal plants. This work could serve as a basis for further pharmacological studies, aiming to assess the therapeutic efficacy and safety of plants used by children in Algeria.

Key Words: *Ethnobotany, Paediatric Population, Medicinal Plants, Pharmacology, Algeria*

