The Use of Herbal Medicines amongst Outpatients at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH), Ilorin, Kwara State - Nigeria

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Background: In Africa, particularly Nigeria, the standards of nutrition, health infrastructures and environmental sanitation are declining by the day. These drawbacks contribute significantly to the intensity of the damages caused by diseases. Therefore, there is an increasing interest in natural product remedies. This research studies the prevalence of use, pattern of use and awareness of outpatients at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital, Ilorin, Nigeria on the use of herbal medicines.

Methodology: Based on an informed consent, semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect data from a total of 112 outpatients about the use of herbal medicines. This sample size was derived from the Kish formula. Data obtained were analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics software and inferences made accordingly. The study was carried out for three weeks.

Results: Demographic information revealed that 58.93% of patient-respondents were of the female gender. Individuals within the age range of 20 to above 70 years were considered. All (100.00%) of the outpatients were familiar with herbal medicines, 67.86% had used herbal medicines in the past and 25.00% were currently taking herbal medicines as at the time of study. It was also found that 54.35% of the respondents use herbal medicines in no specific dose, 47.83% use the herbs with various additives, and 39.13% take their herbs concurrently with orthodox drugs. A total of 13.73% of the respondents prefer to use herbs when sick and another 35.29% prefer a combination of herbs and orthodox drugs. The herbs were commonly procured from open markets, collected from bushes, and usually stored in clay pots, kegs and boxes.

Conclusions: Most of the patient-respondents prefer to include herbal medicines in their therapies. To this end, more efforts should be geared towards creating awareness for the general improved use of herbal medicines.

Table 1: Pattern of Use of Herbal Medicines by Patients

Patients' distribution based on whether the herbal medicines are taken at specified doses (n=92)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Dosed	42	45.65
Not dosed	50	54.35

Patients' distribution based on whether additives are added to herbal medicines in preparation or not

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Add additives	44	47.83
No additives	48	52.17

Common additives mentioned by patients include: Carbonated drinks, water, lime alcohol, pap, and honey

Patients' distribution according to whether they take herbal medicines with orthodox medicines concurrently

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Take herbs with orthodox	36	39.13
Do not take herbs with orthodox	56	60.87

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I am Yusuf Ghazali, a Pharmacist from West Africa – Nigeria. I am interested in improving the presentation and delivery of natural medicines commonly used in Africa by employing modern techniques on these drug elements. Natural medicines are greatly used in Africa on accounts of their relative affordability, availability and efficacy in various ailments. However a lot of them are misused, used inappropriately and may become contaminated due to instability, poor presentation and sub-optimal delivery. My drive is to improve this. I have in the past formulated creams and suspensions of herbal products after validating claims of their use traditionally using standardized pharmacological models. I am very passionate about drug enhancement for better action and safety.

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