

ORIGINAL

Phytopharmaceuticals in the treatment of diseases in the adult population

Fitofármacos en el tratamiento de enfermedades en la población adulta

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: medicinal plants are a source of millenary wisdom, their use through the centuries and the different stages through which human history has gone through, has allowed them to currently become a method that nourishes and enriches the possibilities of natural and traditional medicine.

Objective: to characterize the use of phytopharmaceuticals in the population of Consultorio 72 of Entronque de Herradura in Consolación del Sur in the period from January 2021 to June 2023.

Methods: a descriptive, cross-sectional study was carried out. The universe was 675 patients and the sample was 135. The percent was used as the unit of measurement.

Results: the predominant age of these patients was over 65 years old (18,52 %), female sex (59,21 %), most of them knew about the existence of phytopharmaceuticals (65,8 %) and used them (74,81 %) and always used them frequently (49,63 %), chronic gastritis was the disease in which they used phytopharmaceuticals the most (25,19 %) and therefore the most frequently used was aloe vera (40,74 %) and the majority were of the opinion that if this Modality of treatment is effective (69,63 %).

Conclusions: to increase the use of alternative treatments in our environment and to promote the knowledge of the techniques and treatment of Natural and Traditional Medicine in Primary Health Care physicians in order to achieve a greater use of them.

Keywords: Medicinal Plants; Phyto Pharmaceuticals.

RESUMEN

Introducción: las plantas medicinales son una fuente de sabiduría milenaria, su utilización a través de los siglos y de las distintas etapas por las que ha atravesado la historia humana, ha permitido que en la actualidad se conviertan en un método que nutre y enriquece las posibilidades de la medicina natural y tradicional.

Objetivo: caracterizar el uso de fitofármacos en la población del Consultorio 72 de Entronque de Herradura en Consolación del Sur en el periodo entre enero 2021 a junio 2023.

Método: se realizó un estudio descriptivo, de corte transversal. El universo fue de 675 pacientes y la muestra 135. Se utilizó el por ciento como unidad de medida.

Resultados: la edad que predominó en estos pacientes fueron los mayores de 65 años (18,52 %), el sexo femenino (59,21 %), la mayoría conocían la existencia de los fitofármacos (65,8 %) y los utilizaban (74,81 %) y éste uso siempre con frecuencia (49,63 %), la gastritis crónica fue la enfermedad en que más utilizaron fitofármacos (25,19 %) y por ello la usada con mayor frecuencia fue la sábila (40,74 %) y la mayoría opinó que si es efectiva esta Modalidad de tratamiento (69,63 %).

Conclusiones: incrementar el uso de los tratamientos alternativos en nuestro medio y fomentar en los médicos de la Atención Primaria de Salud el conocimiento de las técnicas y tratamiento de Medicina Natural y Tradicional para lograr un mayor uso de los mismos.

Palabras clave: Plantas Medicinales; Fitofarmacos.

INTRODUCTION

Medicinal plants are a source of millenary wisdom, as their use throughout the centuries and the different stages through which human history has passed has allowed them to become a method that nourishes and enriches the possibilities of natural and traditional medicine in a time like the present, dominated by the value of ecology.⁽¹⁾

Traditional medicine of proven quality, safety, and efficacy contributes to ensuring access to health care for all people. It also offers a less harmful and more economically efficient alternative solution by saving industrial chemical drugs, and fewer adverse reactions are reported.⁽²⁾

WHO continues to follow up the development of natural and traditional medicines by developing a global working strategy.⁽³⁾ Many countries now recognize the need to develop a coherent and comprehensive approach to health care that facilitates safe, respectful, affordable, and effective access to natural and traditional medicine (NTM) for governments, health professionals, and, most especially, health care users. In Cuba, natural medicine modalities that have scientific and traditional validation are used. Although various techniques of traditional and natural medicine were used in selected clinics in the country, since 1996, a program was undertaken with a set of strategic objectives and actions of various kinds aimed at developing the knowledge and procedures related to NTM.^(4,5,6)

For the execution of all activities related to the National Program for the Development and Generalization of NTM, a commission was created, chaired by the Minister of Health; as coordinator, the National Director of Traditional and Natural Medicine; and integrated by the Ministers of Agriculture, Science, Technology, and Environment and the Medical-Pharmaceutical Industry, which includes representatives of the agencies and organizations that ensure and develop the actions outside the National Health System (SNS).⁽⁶⁾

Cuban professionals proceed under the principles of action on which natural and traditional practices in the SNS are based: safety, efficacy, efficiency, scientificity, integration, systematicity, ethics, and professionalism. In 1991, it was decided to initiate a program in the country that would include the scientific use of medicinal plants. Thus, the Medicinal Plants Program was created. Taking into account the extension of its use and the results obtained, Ministerial Resolution No. 9/1999 was issued, which put into effect the National Program for the Development and Generalization of MNT, with the priority participation of the Ministries of Public Health, Agriculture, Science, Technology and Environment and the FAR. This program allowed the organization and improvement of the use of NTM in the healthcare network and set the guidelines in the country for training, insurance, and research in the specialty.⁽⁷⁾

Many countries now recognize the need to develop a coherent and comprehensive approach to health care that facilitates access to traditional, complementary medicine in a safe, respectful, affordable, and effective manner for governments, health professionals, and, most especially, healthcare users.

To date [2023], only 25 of the 191 WHO member states have developed a national policy on traditional, complementary medicine (TCM), including Cuba, where there has been a marked governmental interest in promoting the use of NTM since the 1990s, which increasingly requires effective integration of NTM services into the health services network.⁽³⁾

In this sense, in recent years, various strategies have been developed that seek the stable and staggered integration of TRM resources into Health Services with broad coverage, both in primary health care (PHC) and in hospital care.

Data from previous years show that the European continent alone accounts for 46 % of the world market for phytopharmaceuticals, followed in second place by Asia and North America with 18 %, Japan with 15 %, and the rest of the world with barely more than 3 %. Although many active ingredients are derived, either directly or indirectly, from medicinal plants, only those that are prepared from the plant organism in question are considered to be phytotherapeutic preparations. In Europe, France and Germany are the leaders in this form of therapy, using their resources even for respiratory and gastrointestinal ailments. On the other hand, in the United States, a third of the population resorts to phytotherapy, while there are countries in which the lack of knowledge and the disinterest of the health system mean that this therapeutic alternative is in its primitive state, which has led to intrusion, as in the case of a country like Spain.⁽⁸⁾

This contributes to the fact that, at present, there is a high tendency on the part of Cuban society to incorporate natural products for primary health care.

Due to the importance of the subject, we were motivated to carry out this work with the objective of characterizing the use of phytopharmaceuticals in the population of Consultorio 72 of Entronque de Herradura in Consolación del Sur in the period from January 2021 to June 2023.

METHODS

In order to fulfill the proposed objectives, a descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out. The universe was constituted by 675 patients belonging to Consultorio 72, Entronque de Herradura in Consolación del Sur, in the period from January 2021 to June 2023. The sample consisted of 135 adults who met the following criteria:

Inclusion criteria:

- Voluntariness to participate in the study and informed consent (Annex 1).
- Psychologically fit to participate in the study.
- Residing in the area of Consultorio 72, Entronque de Herradura, in the municipality of Consolación del Sur

In order to carry out the study, a survey was applied to collect the information that responded to the research objectives (Annex 2), with prior informed consent of the participants.

The information obtained was processed on an Intel CORE™ computer using the SPSS/PC15.0 statistical system, using descriptive statistics and percent as the summary unit. The variables were reflected in tables and illustrative graphs for better interpretation and discussion of the final results.

RESULTS

Table 1. Adults according to sex and age group						
Age group (years)	Sex				Total	
	Female		Male		No	%
	No	%	No	%		
20 a 24	4	2,96	2	1,48	6	4,44
25 a 29	6	4,44	3	2,22	9	6,66
30 a 34	7	5,19	8	5,93	15	11,12
35 a 39	6	4,44	7	5,19	13	9,63
40 a 44	8	5,93	4	2,96	12	8,89
45 a 49	6	4,44	5	3,70	11	8,14
50 a 54	7	5,19	7	5,19	14	10,38
55 a 59	9	6,66	3	2,22	12	8,88
60 a 64	10	7,40	8	5,93	18	13,33
65 y más	17	12,6	8	5,93	25	18,53
Total	80	59,25	55	40,75	135	100

As shown in table 1, the predominant age of these patients was over 65 with 25 patients (18,53 %) and the female sex with 80 patients (59,25 %).

Table 2. Knowledge of the existence of phytopharmaceuticals and sex						
Are you aware of the existence of phytopharmaceuticals	Sex				Total	
	Female		Male		No	%
	No	%	No	%		
Yes	59	43,70	29	21,48	88	65,18
No	21	15,56	26	19,26	47	34,82

Table 2 shows the knowledge of the existence of phytopharmaceuticals in which 65,18 % said yes.

Table 3. Use of medicines made from medicinal plants or phytopharmaceuticals and sex						
Uses medicines elaborated from medicinal plants or phytopharmaceuticals	Sexo				Total	
	Female		Male		No	%
	No	%	No	%		
Yes	69	51,11	32	23,70	101	74,81
No	11	8,15	23	17,04	34	25,19

In table 3, 74,81 % of the population reported using medicines made from medicinal plants or phytopharmaceuticals.

Table 4. Frequency of use of medicines made from medicinal plants or phytopharmaceuticals		
Frequency of use of medicines made from medicinal plants or phytopharmaceuticals	No	%
Always	67	49,63
Almost always	38	28,15
Never	13	9,63
When indicated by the physician	17	12,59

The frequency of use of medicines made from medicinal plants or phytopharmaceuticals is shown in table 4, which shows that 49,63 % of the population studied always uses them in their daily lives.

Table 5. Diseases in which medicines elaborated from medicinal plants or phytopharmaceuticals are used and sex						
Diseases in which medicines elaborated from medicinal plants or phytopharmaceuticals are used	Sex				Total	
	Female		Male		No	%
	No	%	No	%		
HTA	14	10,37	12	8,88	26	19,26
DM	9	6,66	11	8,15	20	14,82
AB	10	7,40	9	6,66	19	14,08
ARF	6	4,44	4	2,96	10	7,40
T. Gastric diseases	7	5,19	5	3,70	12	8,88
Renal Disease	6	4,44	8	5,93	14	10,37
Chronic gastritis	18	13,33	16	11,85	34	25,19

Table 5 shows the diseases in which medicines made from medicinal plants or phytopharmaceuticals are used, and in the case of chronic gastritis, 25,19 % of the population uses them the most, followed by AHT and DM.

Table 6. Phytotherapy used by the population and sex						
Phytotherapy used	Sex				Total	
	Female		Male		No	%
	No	%	No	%		
Garlic	10	7,40	7	5,18	17	12,59
Basil	6	4,44	10	7,40	16	11,85
Bija	9	6,66	11	8,14	20	14,81
Anamu	5	3,70	6	4,44	11	8,14
Indigo Cimarron	8	5,92	7	5,18	15	11,11
Aloe	24	17,77	31	22,96	55	40,74
Onion	5	3,70	4	2,96	9	6,66
Linden	21	15,55	19	14,07	40	29,62

Table 6 shows that the most frequently used phytotherapy is aloe vera with 40,74 %, which corresponds to the results of the previous table where gastritis is the pathology where this natural therapy is most used.

Table 7. Opinion on the effectiveness of this treatment modality		
Your opinion about the effectiveness of this Treatment Modality	No	%
Effective	94	69,63
Not very effective	29	21,48
Not effective	12	8,88

Regarding the effectiveness of this treatment modality, it can be seen in table 7 that 69,63 % said that it is effective.

DISCUSSION

In the literature, some studies report results similar to ours, where women constitute the most representative sample.^(9,10) The age group of 65 years and older was the most represented, which agrees with what was found by other researchers who reported a predominance in their populations of patients between 60 and 70 years of age.^(11,12) This is different from what was referred to by Chamba-Tandazo MJ et al., where the most representative sample was grouped between 71 and 80 years of age.⁽¹³⁾

Nearly all the patients surveyed reported knowing Natural and Traditional Medicine and phytopharmaceuticals, which is similar to what was obtained by Gómez-Agudelo LF and Polo-López LA, who found that more than 80 % of the population studied had previous knowledge about them.^(14,15)

Studies carried out in Peru and Guatemala showed that most of their respondents had positive attitudes towards NTM and the use of medicinal plants, considering their procedures as useful and effective, as well as knowing the plants in question, similar to the results obtained in the present study.^(16,17)

This differs from what was reported by Plasencia-Igarza TR et al., where 65 % of the participants considered the use of MNT as less effective.⁽¹⁸⁾

A high percentage of the patients studied reported applying MNT therapeutic procedures, a result similar to that reported by Chamba-Tandazo MJ et al. and Polo-López LA, where 75 % and 85,7 %, respectively, of the older adults stated that they used MNT as the first alternative for the treatment of health problems and practiced it continuously at home, making use of the traditions and knowledge acquired from previous generations.^(13, 15) This differs from what was reported by Aljawadi MH et al. and Albanés CM, where about 40 % of the patients studied practiced some MNT therapeutic procedure, which, despite being a favorable result, does not resemble the representativeness of that found in the present study.^(19,17)

Coinciding with our results, Gómez-Agudelo LF and Polo-López LA found that the most frequent diseases that are treated with medicinal plants are affections of the digestive system.^(14,15)

In other studies that differ from ours, infectious and parasitic diseases are found as the most treated with phytotherapy, followed by infections in general, diseases of the nervous system and sense organs, and respiratory diseases, among others; similar behaviors are observed in other populations.^(11,12)

The study of Díaz Rodríguez et al. detected that 94,7 % of the population used medicinal plants for the purpose of curing diseases, and only 5,2 % used them for prevention, as in the case of Acne, nerve alterations, hair loss, dandruff, cholesterol, skin care, inflammations, and colds mainly. This coincides with our results.⁽²⁰⁾

The population states that the treatment is effective. However, most of them say that if the two treatments are combined, better results are achieved, maintaining the custom that before going to the doctor, they first opt for the treatment option with traditional medicine practices. Similar criteria were found in other studies regarding the effectiveness of the use of this treatment modality.^(17,18,20)

CONCLUSIONS

Medicinal plants constitute an alternative to solve health problems; they represent an accessible means for the majority stratum of the older adult population in the face of the deficit of medicines, and the practices of traditional medicine and medical care are fundamental to preserving health since they use them in a combined way; the decision is related to the degree of satisfaction they find when using one or another practice and determined by the knowledge that the population has in a general way so that all together makes them consider the effectiveness of the treatment with this therapeutic alternative.

The research allowed us to confirm the traditional knowledge of medicinal plants for the treatment of diseases that our population has, with which we hope to contribute to the maintenance, preservation, and respect for traditional knowledge, which expresses the natural and cultural diversity of the country to our future generations, which means that for the communities, nature becomes the source of medicine and the means to find stable health conditions.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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