

Herbal medicines Practice and Risk Factors for Herbal medicines among university students in Beni Mellal

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Introduction

Herbal medicines are substances one can eat or drink and may be vitamins, minerals, or herbs or parts of these substances. They can be defined as plants or plant parts used for their scent, flavor, or therapeutic properties. Moreover, understanding why University students resort to herbal medicine can help in planning interventions aimed at increasing awareness regarding herbal use. This study sought to investigate the prevalence and to determine factors for predicting the use of herbal medicine among Sultan Moulay Slimane University students.

Materials and methods

An institution-based cross-sectional study was employed from March 1st 2017 to April 13th 2017. 476 university students were interviewed using a questionnaire including sociodemographic scale and Herbal self-therapy knowledge and behavior. Data was analyzed using descriptive and analytic statistical methods.

Results

Frequency of Herbal self-therapy among the study sample has reached 65%. 26,07% of the participants reported that the first reason behind using Herbal self-therapy was lack of money. Meanwhile, the most prevalent conditions that make them use these plants by themselves were cough and common cold (36.48%) and pain in the abdomen due to heartburn/ peptic ulcer (24,41%). The most frequent self-administered plants were *Thymus vulgaris* (43.7%) followed by *Dysphania ambrosioides* (11,3 %) and *Eucalyptus* (16,63%). family, seniors or classmates were a source of information for Herbal self-therapy.

The practice of herbal self-therapy exposes the individual, especially the elderly, to the risk of adverse events, iatrogenesis, and the masking and aggravation of diseases, subjecting them to functional impairments that may compromise their autonomy and capacity for participation.

Table 1 : Socio-demographic characteristics of study population

Socio-demographic factors		Number of students (%)
Gender	Male	224 (47,06%)
	Female	252 (52,94%)
Age group (years)	17-22	413 (86,76%)
	23-27	57 (11,97%)
	28 et plus	06 (1,26%)
Formation	Biology	264 (55,46)
	Other than biology	212 (44,54)
Year of study	First year	141 (29,62%)
	Second year	219 (46,01%)
	Third year	110 (23,11%)
	More than third year	06 (1,26%)

Thymus vulgaris is an important medicinal and aromatic plant that has been used for centuries in phytopharmaceutical preparations, food preservatives and as an aromatic ingredient. Its essential oil contains bioactive monoterpenes such as thymol, carvacrol, and linalool, which have antioxidative, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial and antifungal effects. Thyme essential oil showed antibacterial and antifungal activity

Regarding the source of information for herbal self-therapy, family, seniors or classmates were the most common sources of information.

Conclusion

Our study shows that Herbal self-therapy is widely practiced among university students of Sultan Moulay Slimane University. In this situation, faculties should create awareness and educate their students regarding advantages and disadvantages of Herbal self-therapy.