

An ethnobotanical survey of medicinal plants for the treatment of skin disease in southern Italy. (Oral Presentation)

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Introduction

Southern Italy has a rich cultural history that integrates wild and locally cultivated plants in many aspects of daily life. In rural communities, plants are commonly gathered for food and medicine. This tradition of preparing botanical remedies in the household has been studied at length in Arbereshe Albanian communities situated in southern Italy [1,2]. Here, we discuss the results of an ethnobotanical survey of traditional remedies for the treatment of skin disease in autochthonous Italian communities of the Vulture-Alto-Bradano region.

Objectives

To identify medicinal plants used by autochthonous south Italians in the traditional treatment of skin disease.

Methods

We selected one hundred informants at random using stratified random sampling techniques. We obtained prior informed consent before conducting semi-structured interviews regarding the use of medicinal plants on the skin. We collected voucher specimens of all reported species, and nomenclature follows Pignatti's *Flora d'Italia* [3].

Results

We identified more than 20 medicinal plants for the specific treatment of skin ailments such as inflammations, abscesses, burns, rashes, cuts, and bruises. Commonly cited plant species for these conditions included *Allium cepa* L., *A. sativum* L., *Brassica oleracea* L., *Parietaria judaica* L., *Matricaria recutita* L., *Sambucus nigra* L., and *Triticum aestivum* L.

Conclusion

South Italians use a variety of medicinal plants for the treatment of medical conditions related to the skin. Most of these plants are common, widespread temperate species, and include many of the old domesticated foods. Many of these ethnobotanical remedies are incorporated into the local folk-medical construct, which identifies illness as the result of magical or spiritual, rather than natural, imbalances. Ethnobotanical remedies for the skin represent an important aspect of medical care in these communities.

Keywords: Ethnomedicine, Ethnobotany, Folk-illness, Anti-inflammatory

Selected References

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