

Oral presentation

Medicinal plant knowledge among students (ages 12-17) in Las Yungas, Bolivia

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Introduction. A major influx of new residents and the continual removal of the native vegetation in Los Yungas has led to a probable decline in local plant use knowledge. Despite the many new, non-native herbs and crops introduced into this region the past several decades, Aymara and Quechua plant names and medicines are still in use.

Objectives. To compile a list of medicinal plants known to the students of Los Yungas (ages 12-17). From this list the number of native and exotic plants as well as the proportion of Spanish, Aymara, Quechua and plant names could be examined.

Methods. During a regular class session 198 students were asked the following question: list the names and uses for 3 medicinal plants that you consider to be the most effective. Include plants you may not have used, but that you believe are useful remedies because of information you have learned from friends and relatives.

Results. A total of 129 plant names were listed by these Bolivian students. Of this total 37% were Old World plants, 25% were native to Los Yungas, 18% were native to elsewhere in South America and 20% were of unknown origin (probably native). From this same list about one-third of the common names were in Spanish.

Conclusion. Despite relative isolation, the best known medicinal plant common names are primarily plants from other countries or continents. The most often listed medicinal plant by students was *Erythroxylum coca* L. (coca, kuka kuka) for digestive problems, but a close second was the Old World *Matricaria* spp. (manzanilla, chamomile).

Keywords: Aymara, Quechua, Interview

Selected References

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