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Evaluation of Medicinal Herbal Trade (Paraga) in Lagos State of Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional medicine can be described as the total combination of knowledge and practice, whether explicable or not, used in diagnosing, preventing or eliminating a physical, mental or social disease and which may rely exclusively on past experience and observation handed down from generation to generation, verbally or in writing (Sofowora, 1982). A medicinal plant is any plant which in one or more of its organs contains substances that can be used for therapeutic purposes or which are precursors for the synthesis of useful drugs. The use of medicinal plants as remedies is common and widespread in Nigeria. Currently, the society at large appreciates natural cure, which medicinal plants provide compared to synthetic cure. The plants parts used in remedies include the bark, leaves, roots, flowers, fruits and seeds. (Sofowora, 1982). The discoveries of the use of plant for food and as medicine began at a very early stage in human evolution. The history of the use of plants dates back to the time of the early man. The art of using plants to enhance his health must have come to the early man in the most unscientific way. Some of us may want to believe that he used his instinct to identify poisonous and non-poisonous plants while some of us accept that there were external forces or invisible help us who guided him to know what he could eat freely to keep fit. No matter which one is accepted the truth is that the early man used plans in the raw from and cooked from to keep fit. Since that time, the use of herbs has been known and accepted by all nations on the surface of the earth. (Kafaru, 1994). Herbal trade is on the increase in Nigeria in the recent times not only because it is cost effective but also because of easy accessibility and reported efficacy.

Lagos is a megacity that lies in south-western Nigeria, on the Atlantic coast in the Gulf of Guinea, west of the Niger River delta, located on longitude 3° 24' E and latitude 6° 27' N. Lagos is the most populous conurbation in Nigeria with more than 8 million people. It is the most populous in Africa, and currently estimated to be the second fastest growing city in Africa (7th fastest in the world). It was formerly the capital of Nigeria and it remains the economic and financial capital of Nigeria. Because of the unprecedented busy nature of the place and difficulties surrounding access to unorthodox treatment, a reasonable percentage of the inhabitants patronize traditional means of health care delivery system. Herbal medicines may be dispensed in refined ways by direct hawking, display in supermarkets and drug stores, and sometimes in hospitals and by crude means involving hawking directly to customers in various forms as ground powder, cooked decoction and concoction. The business is branded “paraga” in the parlance of the users. This complementary health care endeavour of the people encouraged the present study with the aims to evaluate the caliber of people that patronize it, the trend of incorporation of the approach into health

care delivery system of the city and dispensing methodology.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Oral questions and printed questionaire were administered to both users and sellers of herbal medicine in the Lagos metropolis. Their responses were scored and percentages of these responses were used for deducing inferences. Questions asked were: names of plants that are commonly used to cure a number of diseases, recipe formulation and method of administration. The respondents cut across the social strata of Lagos. Important information relating to vernacular names of plants and documented uses were obtained from literature (Burkill, 1985; 1994, 1995, 1997; Dalziel, 1937; Gbile, 1984; Isawumi, 1990; Iwu, 1993; Oliver, 1960).

RESULT

Names of plants used for some of the various disease treatments are presented in Tables 1 and 2 showing both scientific and vernacular names (Yoruba), part of plants used, taxonomic family names, reported chemical constituents and popular uses. It was found out that there are more males consumers than females, but more females sell than males. Adults generally patronize and their religious belief (Islamic and Christianity) is not a barrier. Automobile mechanics, vehicle drivers, bus conductors, traders, uniformed force and para-force men and women, corporate individuals and highly placed people in the society all use herbal medicine. About frequency of administration, 60% of the people interviewed consume it daily, about 20% of the respondents take it weekly, 10% of the people visit fortnightly and the remaining 10% take the medicine monthly. 90% of the respondent said it was efficacious regardless the method of preparation but 10% said that though they consumed but its effectiveness was doubtful and that method of dispensing was not quite hygienic. About its complimentary role to unorthodox medicine, 80% supported its assisting significance while 20% of the respondents did not agree. 60% said that they prefer it to modern medicine, 30% preferred unorthodox medicine to the practice whereas 10% of the respondents was indifferent. Responses as to solvents being used to soak plant parts, 60% preferred alcohol, 30% chose water while 10% might use alcohol or water depending on their mood as at the time of administration. The business of medicinal herb selling which operates throughout the day in Lagos is the only source of income to 60% of the sellers whereas the remaining 40% combined the business with other trade. The sellers also provided that they have been in the business for quite over 10 years and the art was acquired by training from friends, neighbours, mothers, fathers or mothers- and fathers-in-law. They also have a trade union that regulates their activities. The resource herb-men and women responded that the business facilitated increased sales of their herbal materials.

Table 1: Plants commonly used for medicinal preparations in Lagos.

BOTANICAL NAMES	COMMON/LOCAL NAMES	PARTS USED	FAMILY
MALARIA (Iba)			
Enantia chlorantha	Awopa (Y), African yellow wood	Bark	Annonacease
Citrus aurantifolia	Osan wewe (Y), lime	Juice	Rutaceae
Cymbopoqon citratus	Ewe tea (Y), Lemon grass	Leaf	Poacease
Maqnifera indica	Ewe mangoro (Y),	Leaf	Anacardiaceae

	Mango		
Azadirachta indica	Dogonyaro (H), Neem tree, Aforo-oyingbo (Y), Ogwu (I)	Leaf	Meliaceae
PILE / BACK ACHE (Jedi / Opa eyin)			
Sabicea calycina	Ogan (Y)	Bark	Rubiaceae
Lannea welwitschii	Orira (Y)	Bark	Anacardiaceae
Aristolochia albida	Akoigun (Y)	Leaf	Aristolochiaceae
Lophira lanceolata	Panhan pupa/funfun (Y)	Bark	Ochnaceae
Syzygium aromaticum	Konofuru (Y), clove	Fruit	Myrtaceae
Tetrapleura tetraptera	Aidan (Y)	Fruit	Mimosaceae
PEPPER SOUP: Control of menstruation.			
Capsicum annum	Ata ijosi (Y)	Fruit	Solanaceae
Piper quineense	Iyere (Y)	Seed	Piperaceae
Allium sativum	Ayu (Y) garlic	Bulb	Amaryllidaceae
Zingiber officinale	Ata ile (Y), Ginger	Rhizome	Zingiberaceae
Syzygium aromaticum	Konofuru (Y), Clove	Flower bud	Myrtaceae
Ocimum gratissimum	Efirin (Y), Nchianwu (I)	Leaf	Lamiaceae
Monodora myristica	Ariwo (Y), Ehuru (I)	Fruit	Annonaceae
Xylopia aethiopica	Eru (Y)	Fruit	Annonaceae
TONIC (Ogun eje)			
Sorghum bicolor	Poroporo baba (Y), guinea com	Leaf	Poaceae
ERECTION (Ale)			
Symphonia globulifera	Ogolo (Y), Hog-gum tree	Roots	Apiaceae
Carpolobea lutei	Osun-sun (Y)	Roots	Polygalaceae
WATERY SPERM (Afato)			
Sympholia globulifera	Ogolo (Y)	Roots	Apiaceae
GONORRHOEA (Atosi)			
Citrullus colocynthis	Baara (Y)	Fruit	Cucurbitaceae
Allium sativum	Ayu (Y), Garlic	Bulb	Amaryllidaceae
Parinari sp.	Abere (Y), Neou oil tree	Fruit	Rosaceae

Table 2:- Some drug plants used in Nigerian orthodox medicine.

Botanical Names	Family	Part used	Constituents	Medicinal Uses
Allium Sativum	Amaryllidaceae	Bulb	Sulphur oils,	Vermifuge, intestinal disinfectant, Vasodilator (arteriosclerosis), antibiotic,
Aristolochia albida	Aristolochiaceae	Roots, Leaves	Aristolochine	Stomachic, tonic, fever (malaria), ingredients in guinea worm remedy, local analgesic
Azadirachta indica	Meliaceae	Leaves, stem, seeds, root bark	Margosa oils	Bitter, anti pyretic, parasitic, skin diseases
Citrullus colocynthis	Cucurbitaceae	Fruit pulp	Colocynthin, Citrullol, amorphous alkaloid	Purge (drastic, rarely prescribed alone)
Cymbopogon citratus	Poaceae	Plants, Leaves	Essential oils	Febrifuge, Malaria teas, insect repellant, carminative (obsolete), source of citral for vitamin A synthesis.
Enantia chlorantha	Annonaceae	Stem bark, roots	Berberine	Fevers, sleeping sickness, malaria, dysentery
Lannea welwitschii	Anacardiaceae	Roots, bark, Leaves	N/A	Wound dressing, dysentery
Lophira lanceolata	Ochnaceae	Roots, bark, leaves, seeds	N/A	Anti-viral, anti-inflamatory, fever, veneral infections, jaundice, coughs
Magnifera	Anacardiaceae	Bark,	Tannin, resins	Astringent, skin

indica		leaves		lesions, sore gums, diarrhea, piles
Ocimum gratissimum	Lamiaceae	Leaves, roots		Febrifuge, colds, stomachic, carminative
Parinari sp.	Rosaceae	Stem, fruits, kernels	Parinarium sterol A & B	Purge, Diarrhoea and dysentery, tonic wound dressing.
Piper guineense	Piperaceae	Fruits, leaves	Chavine, piperine	Carminative, restorative soup after child birth, embrocation for sprains, aromatic.
Sabiacea calycina	Rubiaceae	Roots	N/A	Wound dressing. rheumatism, panacea
Symphonia globulifera	Apiaceae	Fruits, leaves, exudates	N/A	Diuretic, wound dressing, venereal diseases, stomachic, tonic, surgical splint or dressing.
Syzygium aromaticum	Myrtaceae	Buds, volatile oils	Volatile oil, gallotonic acid, caryophyllin	Toothache, mouth sores, coughs, wound dressing.
Tetrapleura tetraptera	Mimosaceae	Barks, fruits, whole plant	Mimosine, saponin	Emetic, tonic, venereal diseases, fever, rheumatism, flatulence, jaundice, convulsions.
Zingiber officinale	Zingiberaceae	Rhizome, roots	Gingerol, essential oil	Indigestion, coughs, stimulant, anti microbial carminative, flavouring agent.

Some of the set back of herbal trading in Lagos include problems of standardization, negative attitude of enlightened people towards use of medicinal preparations probably because they can afford the alternative method, lack of scientific proof of its efficacy, problem of plant misidentification and unwillingness to share expertise with people (Kunle, 2000; Sanusi, 2002; Sofowora, 1982). However its advantages include the fact that it is complementary to unorthodox medicine, it is relatively cheap, there is ready availability of raw materials, it is a potential source of new drugs and of course, a source of cheap starting products for the synthesis of known drugs.

The sale and use of medicinal preparations should be encouraged and supported by government.

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