

Medicinal Plants in Comitán, Chiapas, Mexico: Customs

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Abstract:- This paper sets out the results of research on uses and customs in relation to medicinal plants. It was held in Comitán de Domínguez, Chiapas, Mexico, a middle city located in an area bordering the Republic of Guatemala. In this country, the use of medicinal plants is an important part of culture from origin to the present day, despite the relevance of allopathic medicine and the pharmaceutical industry that supports it. The uses and customs related to the health care of the Mayan peoples are based on the great diversity of flora and fauna of the region. Specifically, medicinal plants are commonly used and are mostly cultivated by families for self-consumption.

Keywords:- Medicinal Plants, Chiapas, Traditional Practices.

I. INTRODUCTION

It has been quite analyzed on alternative medicines and their permanence or disuse (Barthelson et al, 2006). The truth is that traditional practices related to self-care in health have remained throughout history.

It is estimated that 80% of the world's population has herbal knowledge and practices and up to 35,000 plant species have been recorded for these uses (Annan and Houghton, 2007). In Mexico, biological diversity is so wide that it enriches the culture, uses and cultural customs of its population. Specifically, on medicinal plants it has been known since pre-Hispanic times, and they have been transferred and enriched from generation to generation as part of their daily practices (Martínez, 1996; Bye and Linares, 1987; Yeh et al, 2003).

The World Health Organization recognizes the importance of traditional therapies and has even created the Office of Traditional Medicines, reviewing the quality of products related to the use of self-care therapies in health and has published a series of guidelines for health authorities in different countries (WHO, 2005).

Herbs and drugs are considered two opposing worlds, however, in a study conducted at the National Cancer Institute in the United States, it is mentioned that 67% of

the drugs originate in the wild and approximately 25% are derived from plants. Currently several studies have been carried out on traditional medicine, specifically on herbalism have been several (Martínez y Gómez, 2011; McMurry, 2012; Corrales y Reyes, 2015).

Curing with herbs is a millennial knowledge that is called phytotherapy and is increasingly frequent in its study and use. This type of alternative medicine has its own rules, methods, dosages. Among the many benefits in its use are (UNESCO, 2001):

- Plants are easy to get, growing or collecting.
- Its effect is prolonged and constant and has no serious side effects like allopathic medications.
- They are free or very low-cost remedies.
- They have common names that facilitate their knowledge, transmission and location within the region concerned.
- There are several species of plants that produce and accumulate in their body some chemicals known as active substances, beneficial for curing diseases.
- One of the main benefits is the transmission of this knowledge and the way in which families or groups engage in self-care of health, both to prepare the remedies and to cultivate or collect them.

This document shows the results of a study conducted in Comitán de Domínguez, Chiapas, Mexico, an average city located in the Border Region of the state, adjoining the Republic of Guatemala. The main objective of the research was to identify the use of medicinal plants, generating the list of species mostly consumed by the inhabitants, as well as the uses they give them.

II. METHODS

The study was carried out during the period June 2018-June 2019, in the city of Comitán de Domínguez, Chiapas, Mexico. The research is qualitative, observational and cross-cutting, whose information-gathering tool was a semi-structured questionnaire applied to a simple random sample n=100, randomness was also applied for the sex of the Interviewed. The questionnaire was applied with informed consent, having as the only element of inclusion that the individual was originally from the city in mention

and that he would like to participate by answering the questionnaire.

III. DISSCUTION

The group interviewed has an average age of 41 years. Female participation was higher (89%) male (11%). Only 2% of respondents have indigenous language tojolabal or zoque, the rest, 98% speak Spanish. As for marital status, 71% married, 10% in free union and the rest in solitude or divorced.

As for the place of origin of the interviewees, 50% originating from Comitán de Domínguez, 12% Frontera Comalapa, 10% Amatenango de la Frontera, 6% of Trinitaria, 5% of Margaritas and the rest of different communities of the Region.

99% of the interviewed population consumes medicinal plants. In the form of tea most consumed are chamomile (*Chamomilla recutita*), lemon tea (*Cymbopogon citratus*), mint (*Mentha spicata*), random tea (*Citrus aurantiifolia*), linden tea (*Tilia platyphyllos*), black tea and green tea (*Camellia sinensis*), Boldo (*Peumus boldus*).

The species mentioned above are plants used for the treatment of digestive problems (green tea, black tea, boldo, chamomile and mint) and nervous system problems (random tea and linden tea), as well as problems in the respiratory (lemon tea).

The way to achieve them is in the local market (58%), cultivation them (42%), at the same time mention that they can also collect them in the field (24%) or buy them in health food stores (16%). About the frequent cultivation of these plant species whose common use is related to self-care, FAO (2005) proposes to the family garden as an appropriate alternative for families to produce and consume at low cost these products are edible, aromatic or medicinal use.

By specifically questioning the option of quitting the allopathic medicine and replacing it with phytotherapy, 91% of respondents mention that they almost always replace hegemonic medicine with alternative medicine. In this regard, several studies have been conducted that show the contradiction between traditional medical practice and hegemonic medicine. However, it is also argued that herbalism has become more meaningful due to discoveries about the healing properties of some species such as white zapote (*Casimira edulis*) for the treatment of high blood pressure; nopal (*Opuntia streptacantha*) in the treatment of diabetes (Oliva-Peña, 2017).

As for diseases mostly treated with medicinal plants, in order of frequency are digestive conditions (80%), diseases in the airways (63%), disorders of the circulatory system (27%), the nervous system (26%), the system reproductive it (24%). Also mentioned were some chronic-degenerative diseases such as diabetes, also the use of

plants to treat problems in the urinary tract, infections and fever or pain.

The list of medicinal plants commonly used in Comitán de Domínguez is, in order of frequency:

- Chamomile (84%) *Chamomilla recutita*, used in the form of tea, boiled for body baths, ointments, eye drops.
- Lemon tea (74%) *Cymbopogon citratus*, tea-shaped consumption.
- Hierbabuena (60%) *Mentha spicata*, tea-shaped consumption.
- Chances (60%) *Citrus aurantiifolia*, in the form of tea.
- Fennel (49%) *Foeniculum vulgare*, consumed in the form of tea and body baths.
- Tila tea (48%) *Tilia platyphyllos*, in the form of tea.
- Ruda (23%) *Graveolens route*, consumed in the form of tea, boiled for body baths and magical-religious acts.
- Black tea and green tea (14%) *Camellia sinensis*, in the form of tea.
- Garlic (11%) *Allium sativum*, in the form of tea and ointment, as well as direct consumption by swallowing the garlic cloves as capsules.
- Basil (10%) *Ocimum basilicum*, consumed in the form of tea, boiled for body baths and magical-religious acts.
- Orange leaves (9%) *Citrus sp.*, in the form of tea.
- Romero (8%) *Rosmarinus officinalis*, used in the form of tea and boiled for body baths.
- Guava leaves (8%) *Psidium guajava*, consumption in infusion form.
- Five (6%) *Lantana camera*, consumption in the form of tea and infusion.
- Nance leaves (5%) *Byrsonima crassifolia*, consumption boiled for gargles or mouthwashes.
- Boldo (5%) *Peumus boldus*, in the form of tea.

The transfer of knowledge on traditional medicine, including phytotherapy, continues to take place, with the family reproducing this information (91%); the remaining percentage corresponds to the transmission of this knowledge between friendships and (9%).

Access to health servers in traditional medicine is frequent (59%), including traditional midwives, boilers, sco-or-catchers, pushbuttons, naturopathic doctors. In this regard, traditional medicine represents a strong habitus (Bourdieu, 1988) in Chiapas, Mexico, explained by the constant interaction of populations with its environment, that, in the case of this state, biological diversity is high and access to it is completely open.

Therefore, it is stated that through the generations a wealth of information has been concentrated regarding the use of medicinal plants for self-care of health. In the 21st century, they are still common practices that represent cultural fields, objectively constructed lifestyles in socially classified, accepted and replicated systems, both in indigenous-speaking ethnic groups and in mixed-name groups.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This document leads us to reflect on how the disease is treated in the hegemonic (curative) medical system and how it is treated in the traditional medical system, in this case phytotherapy. While in the former access is restricted by cultural barriers, high costs and geographical barriers; In the second the access is immediate, at no cost or at very low cost, they can even grow their own medicinal products.

While it is true that traditional medicine is not self-sufficient for addressing complex health problems and timely specific treatment, it is also true that it can be a reliable alternative for the treatment of minor health problems and even hegemonic medicine can help you achieve a better outcome in community health care. In this regard, WHO (2004) mentions that it supports the use of traditional medicines demonstrated its usefulness to the patient, as well as the minimum risk of adverse effects.

It was possible to identify 16 species of plants commonly used in the population, where the most commonly used ones are chamomile, fennel and rough. As for the consumption of teas as part of the treatment and prevention of health problems the most common are chamomile, lemon tea, lemon, hotair, tea of tila, boldo, black tea and green tea.

As a proposal, the result of this study and the reflection carried out, we emphasize that it is necessary to have a basic table of medicinal plants that aims primarily to meet the recognition needs of traditional medicine, as part of cultural wealth.

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