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Chapter · January 2020

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-1320-0.ch011

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Chapter 11

Ethnobotanical Uses of Medicinal Plants for the Treatment of Herniated Disc in Turkish Traditional Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Humans have known the therapeutic properties and plant origin poisons of many plant species since ancient times. Ancient people who had no real and scientific knowledge on diseases and treatments tried to find solutions to these problems by the opportunities they had and the theories they could produce. Plants are the most important source of traditional folk medicine. People around the world have benefited from plants grown in their environment for this purpose. In these drugs, whole plant or various plant organs or secondary substances were used. Over the years, several therapies have emerged to treat herniated disc, ranging from conservative treatment to minimally invasive and percutaneous techniques to open surgical methods. This chapter examines the recent studies to form a compilation on ethnobotanical uses of medicinal plants for the treatment of herniated disc and their local names, parts, and usage forms in Turkish traditional medicine.

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INTRODUCTION

Medicinal plant culture is an indispensable accumulation of knowledge depending on observations, and trial and errors for centuries. It started with garlic, castor oil and myrrh in the Egyptian Ebers papyrus in 1500 BC. It is a traditional culture that has reached today with the help of Indian, Chinese and Arabic medicine (Emre, 2012).

In general, the branch of science that investigates the folk culture of plants is called ethnobotany. Local studies on this subject are also studies that contribute to the recognition of world culture. In this respect, ethnobotanical studies aiming to provide a permanent accumulation of the folk culture that humanity has developed in the historical process and transfer to the next generations are carried on by caring about the world.

It is very clear that our country, which has a very rich environment in terms of plants, has also a very important position in terms of ethnobotany. Anatolia, where there is a very rich cultural accumulation, carries the traces of various civilizations. Therefore, Turkey is a very rich source for ethnobotanical research. It is very important to evaluate this source and to contribute to the recognition of our country in this respect with scientific studies. Ethnobotanical studies also allow our culture to be detected in time. Ethnobotanical research on the scientific validity has shown much increase over the past 40 years and especially the last 20 years in Turkey.

Wild plants used as herbal folk remedies and nutrients have a special importance for public health within ethnobotanical studies. With the increasing researches on these subjects, the situation in our country is tried to be recognized scientifically.

As it is known, the most important condition of being healthy is healthy nutrition. Plants are one of our most valuable nutrients because they contain vitamins, minerals and a variety of health-related substances, and they help to maintain body resistance against diseases.

Plants that are both cultivated and grown in nature make important contributions to our health. Among the wild plants, there are many plants where the people gather from nature and eat raw or cook in various ways. The use of wild plants as a source of food is especially common in rural areas of our country.

Plants used as folk medicine have traditionally played a role in the elimination of various health problems of the people for centuries. It is a fact that the people living in rural areas have widely used traditional methods in the treatment of various diseases. The role of herbal folk medicines in the treatment of simple and frequent health problems requiring rapid intervention (wound, cut, etc.) is important.

One of the interesting features of our folk culture is that the use of plants in traditional treatment is reflected in the local name of the plants (Stomach grass, Wound grass, etc.). Recognition and introduction of plants according to their use in treatment is an indication of the importance given to traditional treatment with plants in our country. The information traditionally transmitted from generation to generation is a very important source for scientific research in the field of medicine and new drugs can be developed by using these sources (Tuzlacı, 2016).

Due to their easy adaptation to our body, medicinal plants have remained on the agenda for centuries. Medicinal plants can have more than one beneficial effect at the same time, unlike drugs produced to treat a single disease. For example, a plant may be good for acne, headache, indigestion, constipation and fatigue. The main effect of this plant is to increase bile release. Fat excretion is regulated by bile and the skin heals. In addition, bile increase improves constipation. When constipation disappears and the intestines begin to work regularly, there is no accumulation of toxins in the body. This causes loss of complaints like headaches and fatigue (Emre, 2012).

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