

Ethnomedicinal Plants Used for Gastrointestinal Ailments by the People of Tribal District Kinnaur (Himachal Pradesh) India

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Abstract : Himachal Pradesh, a hilly State of India located in the Western Himalayas, with varied altitudinal gradients and climatic conditions, is a repository of plant diversity and the traditional knowledge associated with plants. The State is inhabited by various tribal communities who usually depend upon local plants for curing various ailments. Utilization of plant resources in their day-to-day life has been an age old practice of the people inhabiting this State. The present study pertains to the tribal district Kinnaur of Himachal Pradesh, located between 77°45' and 79°00'35" east longitudes and between 31°05'50" and 32°05'15" north altitudes. Being a remote area with only very basic medical facilities, local people mostly use traditional herbal medicines for primary healthcare needs. Traditional healers called "Amji" are usually very secretive in revealing their medicinal knowledge to novice and pass on their knowledge to next generation orally. As a result, no written records of healing herbs are available. The aim of present study was to collect and consolidate the ethno-medicinal knowledge of local people of the district about the use of plants for treating gastrointestinal ailments. The ethnobotanical information was collected from the local practitioners, herbal healers and elderly people having rich knowledge about the medicinal herbs through semi-structured questionnaire and key informant discussions. A total 46 plant species belonging to 40 genera and 24 families have been identified which are used as cure for gastrointestinal ailments. Among the parts used for gastrointestinal ailments, aerial parts (14%) were followed by the whole plant (13%), root (8%), leaves (6%), flower (5%), fruit and seed (3%) and tuber (1%). These plant species could be prioritized for conservation and subject to further studies related to phytochemical screening for their authenticity. Most of the medicinal plants of the region are collected from the wild and are often harvested for trade. Sustainable harvesting and domestication of the highly traded species from the study area is needed.

Keywords : Amji, gastrointestinal, Kinnaur, medicinal plants, traditional knowledge

Conference Title : ICMPPN 2016 : International Conference on Medicinal Plants and Natural Products

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : February 25-26, 2016