INVESTIGAÇÃO DO CONHECIMENTO TRADICIONAL E CIENTÍFICO DE PLANTAS ALIMENTÍCIAS EM JUAZEIRO DO NORTE-CE-BRA

RESEARCH ON TRADITIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE OF EDIBLE PLANTS IN JUAZEIRO DO NORTE-CE-BR

Raízza Barbosa Elói Mendes¹
Ana Vitória Matos dos Anjos¹
Maria Aparecida Nunes de Carvalho¹
Mayara Fernandes Pereira¹
Paloma Soares dos Santos¹
Alberto Malta Junior²

RESUMO
A relação das plantas medicinais e a humanidade é bastante conhecida. Suas propriedades medicinais, alimentícias, econômicas entre outras utilizações, vêm sendo exploradas através dos tempos. O avanço da ciência permitiu que fossem comprovadas atividades terapêuticas nas plantas alimentícias. O objetivo desse trabalho foi realizar um levantamento sobre o conhecimento popular do uso de plantas alimentícias como remédios caseiros entre a população idosa em Juazeiro do Norte-CE e comparar com dados da literatura científica. Esse estudo foi de natureza qualitativa, descritiva e exploratória com aplicação de instrumento de coleta de dados. O instrumento foi aplicado durante oficinas realizadas pela equipe da pesquisa. Foram incluídos no estudo idosos, com mais de 60 anos e que admitiam conhecer usos medicinais das plantas alimentícias. Os dois aspectos de exclusão foram: pouca sociabilidade e/ou estar em tratamento para algum transtorno mental. Os resultados foram consolidados em quadro com as informações pesquisadas. As pessoas entrevistadas foram do sexo feminino, com mais de 60 anos e estando em situação de aposentadoria. A coleta de dados revelou dezesseis plantas das quais a maioria possuía estudos pré-clínicos ou clínicos confirmando as indicações populares. Esse trabalho identificou e registrou conhecimentos medicinais de plantas alimentícias entre idosos em Juazeiro do Norte-CE. Os autores consideram que são necessários mais estudos para confirmar as ações medicinais das plantas alimentícias.


ABSTRACT
The relationship between medicinal plants and humanity is well known. Their medicinal, food, economic and other uses have been explored throughout years. The advancement of science has allowed to prove therapeutic activities in edible plants. The purpose of this work will be to carry out a survey on the popular knowledge of the use of edible plants as homemade medicines among the elderly in Juazeiro do Norte-CE, and compare with data from the scientific literature. This study was qualitative, descriptive and exploratory, with application of a data collection instrument. The instrument was applied during workshops held by the research team. The study included elderly people aged over 60 years who admitted knowing medicinal uses of edible plants. The two aspects of exclusion were: poor sociability and/or being under treatment for some mental disorder. The results were consolidated in table with the researched information. The people interviewed were female, aged over 60 years and retired. Data collection revealed sixteen plants, most of which had preclinical or clinical studies confirming popular indications. This study identified and recorded medicinal knowledge of edible plants among the elderly in Juazeiro do Norte-CE. The authors consider that further studies are necessary to confirm the medicinal actions of edible plants.


¹ Acadêmicas do Curso de Nutrição da Faculdade de Juazeiro do Norte,
² Professor do Curso de Farmácia da Faculdade de Juazeiro do Norte, maltaj@yahoo.com; Autor para troca de correspondência
INTRODUCTION

The humanity has used plants throughout the millennia due to their food, religious, aesthetic, cultural, economic, and even medicinal activities. \(^1,2\)

The medicinal properties of edible plants are usually implied in their food context, but reserve an opportunity to prevent diseases. Studies have also shown that edible plants can be used for the treatment of diseases.

The knowledge of the preparation of edible plants such as homemade medicines are kept with traditional people and communities. Work of Liporacci\(^3\) is categorical in stating that medicinal and edible plants are among the most investigated themes in Latin America by Ethnobotany. Within this context, the researches identify in domestic backyards, an area of conservation of popular wisdom about the use of plants. \(^1,2,4\) The elderly also represent a group that have quite traditional knowledge about plants for the most varied applications.\(^5\)

The bifunctionality of plants (edible-medicinal) has been reported in some studies. Pre-clinical studies have identified anxiolytic properties in lettuce (Lactuca sativa L.)\(^6\) and beets\(^7\) and hypoglycemic properties in mango\(^8\).

The literature also records several clinical studies with edible plants. The World Health Organization recommends the onion (Allium cepa L.) in the prevention of age-dependent vascular changes\(^9\) and pumpkin seed (Cucurbita pepo L.) against the overactive bladder syndrome.\(^10\) From the accomplishment of clinical studies, the stores have already begun to sell medicines made from edible plants that became medicinal, such as passion fruit (Passiflora incarnata L), today widely used against sleep disorders and control of anxiety.\(^11\)

The research and the subsequent dissemination of information about edible plants become important once they provide people with a source of ensuring one more path for prevention and treatment of diseases and utilization of parts that seemed useless.

Faced with this reality, the question that arises is: have the elderly in Juazeiro do Norte-CE used edible plants for medicinal purposes? The hypothesis is that the elderly have knowledge on the medicinal uses of edible plants. Documenting the popular knowledge of such use is important for health practices that can and should be disseminated among the community.

Thus, the objective of this work was to conduct a survey on the popular knowledge of the use of edible plants such as homemade medicines the elderly population in Juazeiro do Norte-CE and compare with data from the scientific literature.

METHOD

The present study was qualitative, descriptive and exploratory, with application of a data collection instrument to investigate the use of edible and medicinal plants among the elderly from São Miguel neighborhood. The study was conducted involving the elderly linked to a physical activity program carried out in the framework of the Unified Health System of the city of Juazeiro do Norte-CE.

The inclusion criteria for this study contemplated: elderly people aged over 60 years and who admitted knowing medicinal uses of edible plants. The elderly are normally a social group with an interest in the subject, and who lived in a period where access to medicines was less common and the plants were the only therapeutic alternative.\(^5,12\)

The exclusion criteria were the elderly that were little sociable and/or were under treatment for a mental disorder.

The data were collected during workshops conducted by the research team and categorized in tables listing the knowledge recorded among the interviewed population. According to Costantin\(^13\), the workshops are meetings that come with a small group of reporters and an animator to intervene and enliven the discussions. After the workshops, a data collection instrument was used to categorize the information. Before applying the instrument, the interviewee was invited to participate in the study, by signing the Informed Consent Form.

The data collection instrument was formed by socio-economic questions and variables related to the preparation of homemade medicine made from edible plants. The socio-economic variables used were: sex, schooling, residence neighborhood, occupation and income. The variables related to data collection were: popular name, part of the plant to be used, form of preparation, indication, mode of use and route of use.

The Ethics Committee of the College of Juazeiro do Norte approved this research, under opinion number 2.547.919.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

All interviewees were female, aged over 60 years and retired.

Frame 1 shows the mentioned plants with their respective recorded information.

Frame 1 – Edible foods with medicinal activity according to the interviewed elderly, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Popular name</th>
<th>Plant part</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Indication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avocado</td>
<td>Dried leaves</td>
<td>Decoction</td>
<td>Headache, anxiolytic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pineapple</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>Licker with honey</td>
<td>Flu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pineapple</td>
<td>Pulp with mint</td>
<td>Juice</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>Leaf and stem</td>
<td>Raw leaf in salad; stems used with infusion</td>
<td>Anxiolytic and insomnia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackberry</td>
<td>Dried leaves</td>
<td>Infusion</td>
<td>Spine ache 12, stroke prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beet</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>Licker</td>
<td>Flu and cough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beet with carrot</td>
<td>Tubercle</td>
<td>Juice in blender</td>
<td>Anemia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onion</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>Licker</td>
<td>Flu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kale</td>
<td>Green leaves</td>
<td>Juice in blender</td>
<td>Uterine inflammation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guava</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
<td>Infusion</td>
<td>Pain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Avocado is a fruit of the genus Persea, and the most common in the northeast is the Persea americana. Some studies report the use of substances of avocado against the pain, especially against osteoarthritis.

Pineapple belongs to the genus Ananas. The content in bromelain made the pulp of this fruit useful in combating respiratory problems. In addition, the contents in vitamin C is of interest for diseases of this nature.

Lettuce oil, a plant of the genus Lactuca, was tested against anxiety and resulted in an improved state of anxiety and quality of sleep of volunteers. The most common species of blackberry cited in the literature belongs to the genus Morus, which has analgesic activity found in the extract of leaves. In addition to the antioxidant activity, Moraceae family, of which Morus belongs, is known for its anti-inflammatory activity in different varieties of apple pulp or substances.

Hypoglycemic effect of red Brazilian berry, a plant of the genus Eugenia, are proven in laboratory animals. Other plants of the genus also present this activity. This study found no studies showing activity of tomato (Solanum genus plant).

The fruits, leaves, and flowers are used in traditional cooking, have medicinal properties recognized by traditional knowledge. Virtually all indications found scientific support. Indeed, there are not many clinical studies, but a set of evidence points to the additional benefit of edible plants that goes beyond nutrition. It is important to consider that the variables related to the plant such as soil, temperature, time of harvest can influence the greater or lesser pharmacological activity presented by chemical constituents. It is necessary to consider that the fruit may contain harmful substances such as pesticides, which reduce their benefits.

The authors declare that the limitation of this study was the non-identification of the species of the mentioned edible plants. On the other hand, as common plants, the genuses already reflect much on the chemical composition of each one of the plants mentioned.

The medicinal potential of edible plants is one reason for encouraging a healthy diet along with people. Health professionals can and should disseminate information on scientific studies of edible plants along with patients.

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