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Ethnobotanical Study of Medicinal Plants Used for Making Herbal Teas in Coastal Syria

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Abstract

The area located between Mesopotamia and Mediterranean is an ancient and rich region in folk medicine knowledge which has been accumulated since thousands of years. However, there is a lack of studies to document this knowledge. Our study was carried out in the northwestern part of Syria bordering the Mediterranean Sea with 193 km including coastal plains and mountains. The study focused on ethnobotanical documentation of medicinal plants used in the form of a tea. We aimed as well to analyse a significant part of the local beverage culture by determining uses of herbal teas for both medicinal and recreational purposes. In the period from December 2017 to February 2018, 42 informants from 32 villages were interviewed. In total, 49 medicinal plant species were reported to be used in the form of an infusion tea, of which, three species were not mentioned before in any botanical publication throughout the Middle East. We received 303 use reports, which were categorised into 13 ailment categories. Although most of the plants investigated were used separately, 26 herbal tea mixtures were documented. The data were analysed through calculation of the species use value, informant agreement ratio, frequency of citation, and the cultural value index. Through this last index we could choose the most important local species which could indicate the species with promising economic value. The study contributed to documenting the diversity of medicinal plant species used as an infusion tea, in particular, we highlighted seven important plant species which are strongly recommended for future pharmacological and economical studies.

Keywords: Ethnobotany, herbal mixtures, infusion folk medicine