



The Uses of Medicinal Plants in the Treatment of Diseases -viewpoint-

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Background

In the treatment of various diseases of humans and animals, the medicinal plants were used from the ancient times and it is an efficient source to treat the diseases (Farnsworth 1985). Even in the modern era the use of medicinal plants is increased and the research is still continuing on it. These plants are the source of food, vitamins and trace element needed for the human health. The medicinal plants have been used in the treatment of different diseases by the ancient civilizations, Egyptian, Chinese and even Greek and Roman (Aftab and Sial 1999). The indigenous knowledge about the medicinal plants is gathered by many local people from various regions of Pakistan (Tareen *et al.* 2002; Durrani *et al.* 2003; Durrani and Manzoor 2006; Manzoor *et al.* 2013).

Pakistan has a rich source of medicinal plants. Almost 6000 flowering plants are found in Pakistan, which has a great medicinal importance. 200 different plant species are used in

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Pakistan for the treatment of different diseases which include a variety of skin disorders, kidney diseases, diarrhea and dysentery, urinary diseases and gastrointestinal diseases (Hayat *et al.* 2008a). The field of ethnobotany is virgin and has been introduced recently in Pakistan. A lot of work has been done in this field by many researchers in recent years in Pakistan (Shinwari and Khan 1998; Shah 2007). From various regions of Pakistan, the indigenous knowledge about medicinal plants is gathered by many local people (Tareen *et al.* 2002; Durrani *et al.* 2003; Durrani and Manzoor 2006; Manzoor *et al.* 2013).

Methods

The aim of this review article is to provide information on medicinal plant uses in the treatment of different diseases. For the preparation of this article various published literatures have been reviewed from international and national journals, local newspapers and books. Some data have been downloaded from the internet.

Uses of medicinal plants in different diseases

The early studies indicate that many plant extracts have different activities, such as antimicrobial, antioxidant, anticancer etc. The extracts of *Azadirachta indica* (neem plant), chewing sticks, have antimicrobial activity and are effective against *Streptococcus mutans* and *Streptococcus faecalis* and also have the insecticidal activities (Almas 1999; Mulla 1999). Hayat *et al.* (2004b) reported the antimicrobial activity of *Zizyphus vulgaris* root extract against gram positive bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* and gram negative bacteria *Escherichia coli*. The antioxidant activity of *Ocimum* and Cinnamon extracts has been reported (Middleton and Kandaswami 1993). The medicinal plants also have Anticarcinogenic activity. Samresh *et al.* (2003) reported that leaves of *Ocimum tenuiflorum* possess anticancerous properties. The young shoot of *Aerva javanica* (Local name: Bui booti (Saraiki); Sparai, Pashto) is used for wounds and abscesses. The leaves of *Alhagi maurorum* (English name: Camel Thorn; Local name: Jawan Janasa; Tibbi name: Jawansa) is used for abdominal troubles,

de-worming and cooling effects. The milk of *Calotropis procera* (English Name: Swallow wart; Local Name: Ak or akra (saraiki); Ak (urdu); Spulmaka (pashto); Tibbi Name: Ushar, Aak, Madar) is used for Snake bite and blood coagulation. The aerial parts of *Cichorium intybus* (English name: Cichory, Blue daisy; Local name: Kasni (saraiki); Kasni (urdu); Tibbi name: Kasni Bastani, Kasni, Thukham-e-kasni) are used for diseases of liver, particularly hepatitis, inflammations of stomach and spleen. The spines (leaflets) of *Phoenix dactylifera* (English name: Date palm; Local name: Khaji; pind (saraiki); Khajoor (pashto); Khajoor (urdu); Tibbi name: Khajoor) are used for general pain while the seeds of *Sisymbrium irio* (English Name: London Rocket; Local name: Khub Kalan (urdu); Tibbi name: Khub Kalan) are used for fever (Sarfraz *et al.*, 2008).

Conclusions

From the present study it has been concluded that the medicinal plants have great importance in the treatment of new and older diseases. Further research is needed to find out the activity of the medicinal plants against those diseases where the resistance is created. Especially in Pakistan more studies are needed to arrange on local available plants.

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