SOME MEDICINAL PLANTS USED IN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN SWAZILAND

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ABSTRACT
An ethnomedical survey of the Manzini region of Swaziland was carried out. Traditional medical practitioners (TMPs) were interviewed in their homesteads where they practiced traditional medicine. Ethnomedical uses of plants used by each TMP were recorded. The plants recorded were collected from the wild with the assistance of the TMPs who gave information on them. Voucher samples of the plants were sent to Pretoria for scientific identification and the vouchers were deposited at the national herbarium in Malkerns. Twenty four of the plants are reported on, giving details of the preparations for their uses. The uses include treatments for diarrhea, dizziness, heartburn, infertility, sores in the genitals, diabetes, hypertension, sexually transmitted diseases, for version of fetus, to increase libido, and as emetic. Some of the plants are not used for curing or preventing diseases but their usage is difficult to explain scientifically as they tend to be magical, causing good luck, warding off bad spirits, preventing lightning and so on. The TMPs interviewed were highly knowledgeable in the area of diagnosis of diseases and taxonomy of plants. However, many of the plants were not being harvested in a sustainable manner. There is the need of bringing to the awareness of the TMPs the usefulness of conservation measures to their practice for the sustenance of our biodiversity. Phytochemical analysis of some of the plants used in herbal medicine by the TMPs showed the presence of the following secondary metabolites: alkaloids, antranoids, cardenolides, flavonoids, glycosides, polyphenols, saponins, steroids, tannins and terpenoids. These secondary metabolites are known to have varied biological activities and may be responsible for the therapeutic properties of the medicinal plants.

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