

Herbal Therapy : Emerging Adjunct in Medical Practice

Sibasish Sahoo,¹ Sanjay Kumar Sahoo²

¹ MBBS, M.D, Department of Biochemistry, Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

² Department of Periodontics, Kalinga Institute of Dental Sciences, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

Corresponding author:

Dr. Sibasish Sahoo,
Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences,
Odisha, India.

E-Mail drsibasish18@gmail.com

Contact us: ijdmr.editor@gmail.com

www.ijdmr.com

Dear Editor in Chief,

Any plant which lacks characteristics of woody tissue (found in shrubs and trees) is called as herb. These are basically used medicinally or for scent and flavour. Herbs having medicinal properties play a vigilant role in ailments of various chronic diseases. Phytotherapy, also known as phytomedicine, has been an integral part of Eastern and Western Medicine since 2000 B.C. It were the Chinese who began the use of ginseng at least 3000 years ago.¹

Numerous allopathic medicines have been derived from medicinal plants. The use of Herbal Medicine as a means of alternative therapy is more common among patients with serious, chronic, or degenerative illness.² The Herbal preparations can be obtained from the flowers, leaves, seeds, and root. The Herbal preparations often contain a stipulated proportion of chemical substances and may contain minerals and vitamins. Herbal medications are prepared from natural

chemicals derived from a plant in a specific concentration and are prepared either in crude form, combined with other herbal extracts, or refined form.³

There are numerous explanations on the increased acceptance and use of herbal supplements as an alternative to allopathic or other forms of modern medicine. People consider natural products as pure, simple and safe to use. Herbal therapy has made people get rid of technological clutters in lives. Most people find drugs bit dangerous, so they opt for herbal alternatives. Many people consider herbal medicine mild, safe and chemical-free than other drugs.⁴

Use of Herbal Therapy in Medical Practice:

Most Popular and commonly used Herbal Supplements include Echinacea, Ginger, Licorice,

Ephedra, Ginseng, St. John's wort, Evening Primrose, Ginkgo, Saw Palmetto, Feverfew, The various Herbal Products used in medical sciences are

- Bromelain is used in sports and other minor injuries, works as anti-inflammatory agent.
- Cayenne works as an analgesic; eases related congestion
- Chamomile is used to reduce flatulence, stomach upset
- Dong quai is used as a muscle relaxant and blood purifier and moreover helps to treat menstrual problems
- Feverfew is used for relief of migraine related pain and moreover prevents and treats rheumatoid arthritis, asthma.
- Garlic is used to lower cholesterol and also prevents cold
- Ginger is used to reduce nausea, and prevent motion sickness.
- Ginkgo is used to enhance circulation.
- Ginseng is used to elevate energy levels and decrease stress.
- Green tea is used to prevent cancer and counter aging effects
- Kava Kava or Kava is used to reduce anxiety, nervousness.
- Valerian is used to Valerian is used to treat muscle spasms, insomnia,
- Yohimbe is used to treat and diagnose some types of impotence.

Goldenseal, Valerian etc.^{5,6,7}

- Aloe latex is used as Laxative and aids in wound healing and burns.
- Rhubarb is used in treatment of diarrhoea when prescribed in low doses and constipation at higher doses.

Use of other herbal supplements in dentistry:

- Cayenne is used in tooth ache. It is effective against clostridium, streptococcus.⁸
- Chickweed mouthwash acts as anti-inflammatory agent. It also helps to relieve pain from canker sores and other mouth sores.⁹
- Cloves oil can be used on sore gums and helps in alleviating pain.¹⁰
- Comfrey when compressed eases jaw tension and relieves jaw pain.¹¹
- Dandelion is useful for treating abscesses in the oral cavity.¹²
- Elderberry mouthwash is recommended after surgical procedures as it helps tissues to heal properly.¹³
- Eucalyptus oil gives temporary relief when applied on inflamed gums.¹⁴
- Garlic strengthens immune system.¹⁵
- Ginseng helps in repair of inflamed gum tissues.¹⁶
- Equisetum is used in maintaining gum health.¹⁷
- Licorice Root inhibits growth of plaque

- Myrrh aids in healing in case of pyorrhoea.¹²
- Peppermint is used in tooth ache and in mild gum infections.¹⁴

Herbal Medicine is also associated with some adverse effects. Some of which are burning sensation, stomach discomfort, diarrhoea, allergies, photo-sensitivity, dysgeusia, gingival hyperplasia, intraoral haemorrhage, necrosis, oral candidiasis, oral ulceration, stomatitis, tooth discoloration, and xerostomia.

Even though herbal therapy has adverse effects associated with it, these have proved to be an essential adjunct in medical practice. Herbal supplements can be used as an alternative to allopathic medicine. As because, herbal therapies are more safe, easily accessible, and provide more controlled treatment, more clinical trials should be conducted on herbal therapy to broaden its treatment dimensions in health sector.

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