TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE ON MEDICINAL PLANTS IN THE FAMILY CONTEXT: AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW

RESUMO


Descriptors: Medicinal Plants; Family; Knowledge; Woman.

RESULTADOS

Método: revisão integrativa orientada pela questão << Has the knowledge about medicinal plants been passed on in the family? >>. It was conducted a search for scientific articles, dissertations and theses in PubMed, LILACS, Nou-Rau System Unicamp, Portal Theses and Dissertations Public Health Brazil, Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations USP and CAPES thesis Bank, limited to the period from 1993 to 2013. Results: there were identified 16 studies that allowed understanding the transmission of knowledge of medicinal plants involving factors related to the family. Conclusion: the study allowed providing broad insight into the transmission of knowledge in the family, as the role of women, children and the media know about medicinal plants.

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ABSTRACT

Objective: analyzing publications to find out aspects related to the transmission of knowledge about medicinal plants in the family context. Method: an integrative review guided by the question << Has the knowledge about medicinal plants been passed on in the family? >>. It was conducted a search for scientific articles, dissertations and theses in PubMed, LILACS, Nou-Rau System Unicamp, Portal Theses and Dissertations Public Health Brazil, Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations USP and CAPES thesis Bank, limited to the period from 1993 to 2013. Results: there were identified 16 studies that allowed understanding the transmission of knowledge of medicinal plants involving factors related to the family. Conclusion: the study allowed providing broad insight into the transmission of knowledge in the family, as the role of women, children and the media know about medicinal plants.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of medicinal plants in human care is an ancient practice related to the origins of medicine and based on the accumulation of information by successive generations. However, knowledge on medicinal plants is particularly vulnerable to loss, related to the process of acculturation of populations strongly related to globalization. However, it is noticed that this care practice is present between the different systems of care that the population moves, expressing in this way the cultural value and the subjectivity present in communities.

The healthcare system can be composed of at least three interrelated subsystems: the informal (popular sector), represented by the family, community, friends, support groups and self-help; the popular (folk sector), which consider themselves secular or religious specialist officers but not legally recognized in society; and professional subsystem (professional sector), represented by health professionals.

The family is mentioned in these subsystems, and within its context, when typically occurs exchange of knowledge about this practice. Understanding how health care through the use of medicinal plants occurs, requires knowing the symbolic representations used in the transmission of this knowledge, which extends through the exchange of information among members of the family, a group or a community.

Health professionals, especially nurses, by close contact with the population, approaches this reality in order to understanding health care through the use of medicinal plants, and thus, sustaining the practice in view of completeness, occurs the care for each specific cultural group, however, there are publications on the subject concerned in conducting surveys of medicinal plants used by certain populations. It knows the importance of this work, however identifies the need to recognizing if there are investigations involving how is the transmission of this knowledge and the family would have an important role in the health care system to make this such forwarding to the present day, despite the changes taking place in society.

The present study has as guiding question “Has the knowledge about medicinal plants been passed on in the family?” In response, it was elaborated the objective:

- Analyzing publications to learn about aspects related to the transmission of knowledge about medicinal plants in the family context.

METHOD

It is an integrative review which has the potential to present the actual status of science in order to contributing to the development of theories that have direct applicability in practice.

For the conduction of this integrative review there were followed six steps: the identification and selection of the subject matter of the research for the development of an integrative review; establishing criteria for inclusion/exclusion of studies and literature search; defining the information to be extracted from selected studies; assessment of included studies; interpretation of results and synthesis of knowledge.

The integrative literature review was conducted in July 2013 in the databases, library and online portals: Public Medline (PubMed), Latin American Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS), Nou-Rau System Digital Library Unicamp, Portal Theses and Dissertations Public Health Brazil, Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations USP, Bank of Thesis CAPES.

It used the descriptors: Medicinal Plants and Family (or Plants, Medicinal and Family), which were consulted in the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) for PubMed, and the remaining descriptors were used in Portuguese above, consulted in Descriptors Health Sciences (DeCS). Using the Boolean operator “and”.

In LILACS database, the search was performed using the “Search via IAH Form” with the search for “words” and not subject descriptor, since this way reached a higher outcome studies.

Searches using the key words in English and Portuguese were performed in order to identifying which search would have greater results. Thus, only the results of PubMed search was considered with the descriptors in English, as in other searches found a greater result with descriptors in Portuguese.

The criteria for study selection were: scientific articles, thesis or dissertation, published in the last 20 years, have an abstract available, and deal with the theme and issue and published in Portuguese, English or Spanish.

For searching the PubMed limit the search as the publication period (11th July 1993 to 11th July 2013) .What not be used in other databases, libraries or portals consulted were
used, being applied during the verification of the criteria for selection of studies.

With the search proposed strategy there were identified 112 articles, 494 dissertations and 145 theses of which 22 showed inclusion criteria previously established, being selected for reading and analysis (Figure 1).

![Diagram](image)

Figure 1. Articles, dissertations and theses included in Integrative Review.

Regarding the availability of the dissertations, only eight were available online, and from the theses, only one. Contact was made by email with the authors via email registered in the same Lattes curriculum, and conducted search following information on the website of the Libraries of the Universities in that work were identified. Libraries who returned reported that the online submission is not possible, other did not return to contact. No author returned the email with the job.

One dissertation was excluded because the article with the results of the same was among the eight selected articles. Thus, 16 studies were part of the selected for analysis in full of this integrative review studies, eight items, seven dissertations and thesis.

To extract information from included studies it was designed an instrument to collect data that allowed the elaboration of a table with the following items: title, authors, year of publication, journal, or when referring to the dissertation or thesis, which was the area of training, objectives of the study, type of study (qualitative or quantitative) research site, we were done in urban and/or rural areas, and main results related to the topic of interest.

The reading and analysis of the studies were conducted by the principal investigator and five expert reviews were consulted, in the final analysis of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reading of 16 studies resulted in the identification of four themes: Transmission of knowledge found in the family, women as primarily responsible for the transmission of knowledge and holders of knowledge about medicinal plants, transmission of knowledge between younger and Media and other sources of information, which are presented below, preceded by the characterization of the studies analyzed.

Characterization of the study

Regarding language, all dissertations and thesis derived from the CAPES thesis database, being all Brazilian and written in Portuguese. Articles already, five12-6, 4, 6, 17 were in English and three (37.5%) in Portuguese.

As the year of publication, in 2008 focused most publications (six, 50%)12-22, followed by the year of 2012 (four, 25%)12-5, 2010 (two, 12.5%)23-4, and the years 200216, 200315, 20055 and 20116 (a publication, respectively). Although including researches from the past 20 years, studies were found in the period of 11 years.

Regarding the type of research, 4, 12-1, 17, 19, 25 eight (50%) are quantitative, six4, 16, 20-3 (37.5%) qualitative, and two18, 24 (12.5%) were defined...
as the quantitative-qualitative design. The largest number of public focused on the Journal of Ethnopharmacology (two articles) 14,16, in the other journals were identified one publication each: Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice 15, Journal of the School of Nursing 4, Complementary Therapies in Medicine 11, Brazilian Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences 17, Gaucha Nursing 4, Magazine and Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine 12.

As for the training areas of dissertations and thesis, three (37.5%) dissertations were requirements for obtaining a master’s degree in Nursing 2, 3, 4, 25, two (25%) to obtain title in Plant Science 21, being a dissertation thesis 18, and the following areas have had one paper: Plant Biology 19, Public Health 20, and Botany 24.

With regard to the place - urban and/or rural, where the research was conducted, eight 1, 14, 17, 20, 22, 25 (50%) were performed in the urban environment, five 6, 12, 16, 23, 4 (31.25%) in rural and three 13, 15, 21 (18.75%) in urban and rural. All dissertations and thesis conducted their research in Brazil. Regarding articles, four 4, 6, 14, 17 (50%) were performed in Brazil, and to a survey in each: Uganda 12, Czech Republic 13, Palestine 15 and Kenya 16. Regarding the methodological quality of studies, they are focus on evidence levels 3 and 4, in which eight 4, 12, 15, 17, 19, 25 (level 3) 3, 16, 18, 20-4 (level 4. All items were in category “Original”.

Transmission of knowledge checked in the family

The importance of family in the perpetuation of knowledge about medicinal plants was evident through all the studies included in this review. The research whether, scientific articles, dissertations or thesis held in different locations, in urban or rural areas, said at some point the importance of family as a source of information and encouraging the use of medicinal plants.

In a research 4 conducted with 300 users of a Basic Health Unit (BHU) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 60.4% of participants reported using medicinal plants, and the acquisition of knowledge comes in 63.4% of the family. Other research also users of UBS, in Minas Gerais, Brazil, presented similar data, this, of the 2,454 participants, 1,667 reported using medicinal plants by family tradition. 17

In southern Brazil two other studies have been developed 14, 18. These surveys were developed in the city of Pelotas 14 and in the Capital of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre 18, also with users UBS In both surveys, the family was identified as the major source of knowledge about medicinal plants.

Such data demonstrate that the use of plants is not limited to be a palliative method, but is fraught with subjectivity, being passed on from generation to generation. Still, the use of medicinal plants is closely related to social territory in which the subject’s, and this would not be limited only to rural areas, since the above four researches 14, 17, 18 were performed in the urban environment.

Family care is a daily practice, and occurs particularly in the interaction between its members. Usually there is a specific time to teach about medicinal plants, which reinforces the need for different generations in the family to be together, so that the knowledge to be shared. 23

A survey 22 conducted in urban area of a city in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil portrays that through the interviews, when asked about how they learned to use medicinal plants, it was found that most of the responses mentioned that the first contact was in childhood, in which seven of the ten respondents said they watched children since this practice to be held by their mothers and grandmothers. 22

Research in rural areas also show the family as the main source of knowledge, such as the study of ecology-based farmers in southern Brazil, which found that the largest source of information is the family, including through marriage in which wife and/or husband influence the practice of use of medicinal plants in health care. 6

These results show that the transmission of knowledge occurs within the family even nowadays, regardless of whether that family is inserted in the urban or rural areas, however, one realizes that this transmission of knowledge has diminished with the passing of generations.

Women as main responsible for the transmission of knowledge and holders of information about medicinal plants

It can be observed in several studies 12, 19, 22, 24, 27 that gender is presented as a relevant factor when it comes to knowledge of medicinal plants, since there is a tendency for a greater knowledge among women. 19 This influence is generally related to the activities performed by them, because they are usually responsible for the care of children and family, and to devote more care backyards or construction of house activities, thus experiencing major situations that promote this knowledge when compared to men. 19
In a study conducted in the urban area of the municipality of Santa Catarina, Brazil, the transmission of knowledge about medicinal plants was carried from mother to child in 74.5% of 90 interviewed. In the results of a study conducted with a group of indigenous Ugandans, the majority of respondents said the mother as a source of information about how to treat diseases using medicinal plants.

The woman also stands in representation in number among the participants of the research, which in several studies has been the biggest part. A qualitative research conducted in rural and urban area of a city in Minas Gerais (Brazil) is an example, where 75% of the 20 participants were female, and these participants were nominated by the snow ball method, therefore these informants were recognized and indicated as connoisseurs of plants by other research subjects. Furthermore, 80% of study participants said they learned about plants with mothers and grandmothers.

Two other studies conducted in southern Brazil, in the cities of Santa Maria and Rio Grande, both in the urban area, both qualitatively and quantitatively, respectively, approach also relied on more women among the group of participants.

In research conducted in the city of Santa Maria, the ten participants, eight were women, and besides, most of them (80%) mentioned having learned to use medicinal plants to women, citing the figure of the mother, grandmother and the oldest sister as the main transmitters of this knowledge. Similar to this result, in the Rio Grande survey, conducted with 360 people, 89.16% were women, and when asked about how they learned to use plants, 55.66% said that it was with mother and grandmother with 19.82%

The predominance of females shows the importance of women in the implementation of health care between families, making use of plants in the realization of such care, and, moreover, are often responsible for transmitting this knowledge.

With it, one realizes that the woman has a fundamental role in the transmission of knowledge of health care within the family, whereas usually owns the knowledge passed between generations. This may be related to the fact that women assume the role of caregiver, who is also a factor related to culture, and is passed among generations.

Transmission of knowledge among young people

Some studies pointed to age as a factor relevant in the knowledge about plants.

The study in Uganda showed that age is related to the level of knowledge, in which older people cited herbal remedies more than younger people. Studies conducted in Minas Gerais, Brazil, in the Czech Republic and in Palestine also, since observed the use of plants of more steeply among the older population, in contrast with lower use among young people below 30 years old, depicting less attention from the younger population regarding the knowledge transmitted through generations.

With that one realizes that the lack of interest of the younger people on this knowledge has taken place in different countries of the world, as well as is a feature that can be observed in urban and rural areas.

In a research conducted with artisanal fishers, in Santa Catarina, Brazil, authors found that the number of citations and of plant species is proportional to age, because as the age increases, increases the number of citations, i.e. increases the number of plants known by individuals. This study also brought a possible justification for this fact, in which the loss of knowledge of the youngest on this site may be related to the emergence of a public health service in the city, which has been much used by locals as a replacement to the homemade treatment. In addition, it was noted that in some cases, there is a preference for medical and allopathic medicines due to the rapidity of the effects desired. This situation can be the cause in other places too since health services are expanded, and approaching increasingly to outlying communities.

We can highlight this expansion as a breakthrough in the area of health, since it is not the entire population who has access to these services, but it is worth remembering that locations with UBS, bring the perspective of prevention and health promotion, logo for results found leads us to think that health professionals are still struggling to work with these goals.

We need to understand the different systems of care in which the population moves, among them, those that include the use of medicinal plants. From the knowledge, these require knowledge be valued, as well as the culture that permeates these systems and replace with all allogopathic medications.

Another factor associated with the lack of interest of more young people in learning about plants, this related to migration to urban areas or modern cities in which get jobs more easily. In addition, there is a growing interest in the amenities of modern life,
which generates disinterest by traditional knowledge. Treatment with allopathic medicine is easier and faster, for this modern life, when you have little time to take care of health.21

The survey conducted in riverside communities of Manaus, in Brazil, also depicts this reality.24 Mothers and parents participating in the study reported having no more the presence of children at home, due to the fact of them have migrated to the city of Manaus in search of employment, and allied to that met the disinterest of children who remain living with their parents in learning about the use of medicinal plants.

In contrast to these data, we have two studies that showed strong transmission of knowledge to the youngest.6,16 A study with ecological farmers from southern Brazil found that there is transfer of knowledge between generations, even for the youngest of the family.4 It can also be identified during field observation of this research, in which a child of nine years accompanying his father, verbalized orally the name of several plants and their indication, anticipating to information that were completed by the parent.6

Another study, conducted in Kenya, with mothers, compared their knowledge with the children investigated in a previous study25 and showed that knowledge is very similar, though a bit smaller, there's strong showing moderate transmission of knowledge about medicinal plants from mother to children.16

There were few studies that reported the school's role in the transmission of this knowledge to the children. In the study conducted with farmers in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, in Brazil,6 identified that the school did not appear among the main responsible for sharing of knowledge about the use of plants in health care. In a survey conducted in Uganda, although part of the sample were children, the little school featured as responsible for source of this knowledge.

It highlights that few studies that included the child in the research on the transmission of knowledge about plants, which highlights the need to investigate how the transmission has taken place between the family and the child specifically, in particular the ones on school age.

It should be remembered that the school is a space that aims to encourage the development of critical child, contributing that way in the construction of personal values and in a way, reflecting on the future of society. Soon, it is believed that the school end up worrying a lot about teaching predetermined subjects, which certainly is important, however, emphasized the need to encourage children to take care of your health, to have healthy habits, as well as talking with these, about the different therapeutic options that exist for the achievement of the careful, soon forming adults more aware and concerned about their welfare.

It was also little reference to health professionals in the studies, and that may be related to the fact that the transmission of knowledge have occurred predominantly in the informal system of health, and this is justified by the lack of preparation and/or disbelief of health professionals on this popular practice of care.6

Media and other information sources

In a survey conducted in the Czech Republic13, which had as its aim to investigating the use of herbal products from people who have been to the particular pharmacy, found that the greatest source of information to define the purchase was literature, followed by the media.13

It is important to highlight two specific facts of this research, first was performed only with people who have been to the pharmacy in the urban area, and, in addition, the traditional knowledge on medicinal plants is very well documented in Czech literature, in which, the books are very popular and are available in almost all families.13

In a study carried out in Palestine, with 1,883 people diagnosed with Diabetes Mellitus, 51,9% said make use of medicinal plants, and the media was referred to as a source of information of 12,3% participants.15 In a survey conducted in the State of Santa Catarina, in Brazil, with 90 people from different communities of the municipality of Itapoa, television was cited as a source of information to 5,6% of respondents.19

It is interesting to note the three referred researches13,15,19, there were held two in rural and in the urban areas13,15 and only one in the urban environment19. The fact of the researches include urban dwellers could have influenced the most connecting the use or knowledge of medicinal plants and the media.

The media nowadays, due to the easy access, for example, television and the internet have served as a “rival” of orality in the transmission of traditional knowledge.21 Parents commented that, with regard to health care, the son only used plants when the information was passed on TV, showing...
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that the media has a strong influence on the belief of the people, and consequently in popular practice, especially with the youngest. 21

Despite these sources contributing to decreased transmission of family knowledge, among other factors that also cause this, we cannot condemn her, because this can also be a useful source of information on medicinal plants, and that can reach many people. However, it is extremely important that the information provided are safe and do not generalize a local reality to the whole population within the family without getting lost with the passing of generations.

CONCLUSION

Knowledge about medicinal plants accompanies the historical evolution of health care, especially within the family environment. In this sense, the present work provides a broad view, with regard to the transmission of knowledge in the family, as the role of women, children and the media in the know of medicinal plants. Allowing also realize the gaps in the dissemination of this knowledge today, as the role of schools and health professionals.

The transmission of knowledge in the family still occurs regardless of whether it is located in an urban or rural environment, being primarily responsible for the perpetuation of this knowledge today. The woman is the primary owner of that knowledge and also responsible, in most cases, by transmitting knowledge in the family.

Identified that knowledge is being lost with the passing of generations, and there are many factors influencing, as the entry into the labor market earlier, migration to large urban centers, the lack of young people's interest in learning about the plants in front of the allopathic medication facilities, among others.

The media are important sources of information and sometimes act as “rivals” of orality in the transmission of knowledge. Another observation is that schools and health professionals would be little active in health care education including the use of medicinal plants.

As contributions to professionals, especially nurses, it suggests that include in their professional practice the recovery of popular knowledge with regard to health care, dialoguing about the transmission of knowledge about medicinal plants. Now you will be able to enhance the existing cultural wealth and enabling knowledge relating to medicinal plants continue being transmitted

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Submission: 2014/01/22
Accepted: 2014/10/01
Publishing: 2014/10/01

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