

## **Awareness and attitude of mothers about herbal medicine used to treat children aged under 5 years in Shendi City, Sudan**

Mariam Mohammed **Elnageeb**<sup>\*</sup>, Shireen Abdelfatah **Mohammed**, Lmya Eltyeab **Alhadi**,  
Adeela Said **Mohammed**

*Department of Pediatric Nursing, Faculty of Nursing Sciences, Shendi University, Shendi, Sudan, \*elnagmariam55@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

A cross-sectional study was conducted in Shendi City, Sudan, from August to December 2016 to assess the awareness and attitude of mothers regarding herbal medicine used in treating children aged under 5 years. A hundred participants were included and data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Participants were found aware of the concept of using herbs as alternative medicine, either as a replacement or adjuncts for treatment of mild illness such as a common cold, diarrhea and cough. The main reasons found for the use of herbs were their cheapness, availability and side effects free. The important source of information about the nature of plants was from grandmothers and media. Finally, physicians and nurses recommended regulating lectures on herbal medicine and its uses in proper ways.

**Keywords:** Mother, attitude, herb medicine.

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### **Introduction**

Herbal medicine is an important part of natural medicine; it is effective for treating many acute and chronic diseases <sup>[1]</sup>. Modern medicine recognizes herbalism as a form of alternative medicine, as the practice of herbalism is not strictly based on evidence collected using the scientific method. However, modern medicine uses many plant-derived compounds as the basis for evidence-tested pharmaceutical drugs, and phytotherapy works to apply modern standards of effectiveness testing to herbs and medicines that are derived from natural sources. The field of herbal medicine is sometimes extended to include animal products or parts <sup>[2]</sup>.

Most indigenous cultures in developing countries rely on herbal remedies for their medical care. The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that 80% of people in Africa rely on herbal medicine for their primary health care. In Swaziland, herbal medicine has been the main vehicle for delivering health to the majority of people from time immemorial. The practice has been flourishing in the country as far back as 1894 to the extent that it caught the attention of the colonial administration which made efforts to outlaw. It is currently estimated that about 85% of the population patronize herbal medicine and rely on it for their primary health care; the popularity of the traditional medical practice in the

country is because of socio-cultural reasons [3].

This study was carried out in Shendi City, Sudan, to assess the awareness and attitude of mothers regarding herbal medicine used in treating children aged under 5 years.

### Materials and methods

The study was done in Shendi City, Sudan, from August to December 2016. Shendi is about 172Km north of the capital Khartoum with a population of about 65000 individuals living in more than 38 Blocks, the majority of them are farmers. There are three main hospitals, Local Teaching Hospital, Military Hospital and Elmak Nimer University Hospital.

One hundred mothers from Block 20 in Shendi, who with children aged under 5 years were included in the study. Data were collected during morning visits using a questionnaire composed of 16 closed-ended questions. Each participant was asked to fill the questionnaire and some were interviewed by the researcher.

Permissions have been taken from the participants and explains that the data for scientific purposes only. Data were analyzed using the software, SPSS 22 for Windows.

### Results and discussion

In the present study, near half of the participants, 41% with ages of 26-35 years and 70% of them are housewives. More than half, 61%, of the participants have derived

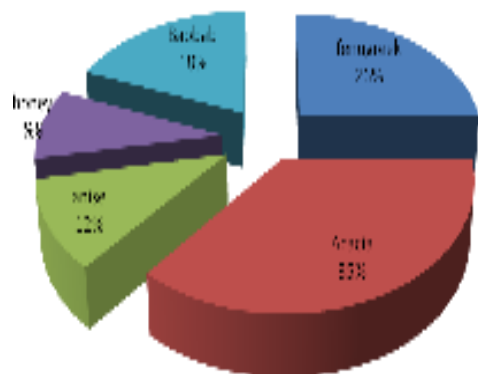
their knowledge on the medical herbs from grandmothers and 29% from media. This is in line with the finding that the important source of information about herbal therapy was the television [5].

The Majority, 92%, of the participants, were found using herbs to treat their children, this result reflects that mothers had a strong belief in herbs. The widespread use of herbal medicine is not restricted to developing countries, as it has been estimated that 70% of mothers use it, but 80% of the world population presently use herbal medicine for health care [5,6].

Regarding awareness of the participants about reasons for using herbs, it has found that more than half, 59%, used herbs because of their cheapness and availability. In addition, near two third, 64% of the participants have received the herbs from perfume shops. More than half of the participants, 64% found using herbs as alternative medicine, besides 25% as complementary medical treatment. Recently, WHO estimated that 80% of people globally rely on herbal medicine partially as an alternative medicine for primary health care [7].

The study revealed that about one third, 35% of the participants (Fig. 1) had aware of the uses and side effects of *Acacia* spp. plant to treat their children. Generally, the plant *Acacia nilotica* has used for gastrointestinal

disorders, syphilitic ulcers, toothache and respiratory tract infection for children [8]. In addition, *Acacia nilotica* has used as antimicrobial, antioxidant, antispasmodial, molluscicidal, antihypertensive, analgesic and anti-inflammatory activity [9]. Regarding awareness about the common diseases treated by herbs, more than one third, 35%, of the participants reply for the common cold, 29% for the cough and 20% for abdominal pain. this finding is similar to previous results that more than 71.9% of all herbal medicine has used for the treatment of cough, common cold and acute upper respiratory infection [10].

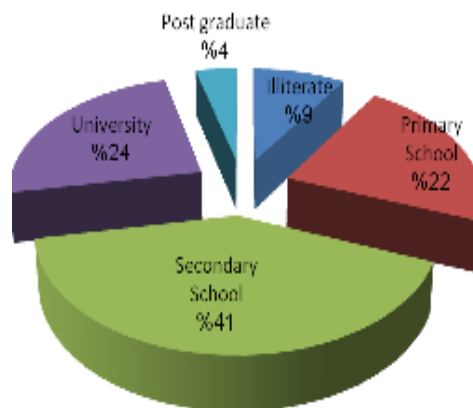


**Figure 1.** Distribution of the participants according to their awareness of herbs

In the present study, 71% of the participants replied with no side effects for herbs using, and 23% believed that the side effects of herbs represented in urine discoloration and no allergy. This disagrees with a previous result that the herbal medicine is safe for adults and may not be safe for children and women who are breast feeding should be avoiding most herbs for

the first four to six months of baby life [11]. Finally, the present study showed the majority, 90% of the participants took their children to the physicians if a child not responded to herbs. This true that more parents are considering the use of herbal remedies to maintain their children good health and treating their illnesses; they look for pediatricians and other primary care clinicians for advice concerning the safety and efficacy of herbal products for children [12]. There was a significant relationship between the educational level (Fig. 2) of the participants and the concept of using herbs as alternative medicine. This result agrees with a previous report that the level of education of parents is very important; as they are dealing with substances whatever it is natural it may produce harm to their children [4].

In conclusion, physicians, nurses and the community leaders recommended regulating lectures on herbal medicine and its uses in proper ways.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of the participants according to their educational level

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