

# HERBAL MEDICINE

An Extract from  
NATURAL DIAGNOSIS AND THERAPEUTICS  
By Dr. Gilbert Ezengige



## INTRODUCTION

The world is turning its attention to the utilization of herbs for healing, cosmetics and culinary. The ground work for the use of herbs in healing predated most ancient civilizations. Various scriptures of many religions point to the use and efficacy of various medicinal plants in effecting cures. Many centuries ago, Hippocrates taught his students; 'let food be thy medicine and thy medicine thy food'. Hippocrates advocated the use of herbs like garlic, ginger, onions etc for the treatment of diseases.

Here in Africa, our forefathers employed the use of herbs for therapeutic purposes as well as for nutrition. They administered single or combination of herbs after the herbal ingredients have been subjected to some processes like boiling, burning [carbonization], extraction in palm wine or local gin etc. Fresh leaves and vegetation were at their disposal and served as the much needed raw materials for their healing feats and trade. Following the advent of civilization and urbanization, the need to develop an improved system of producing and packaging herbal or traditional medicine to have longer shelf life as well as reduce the effect of product's degradation stemming from weather changes became imperative. The new generation of Africans more so find it more challenging to stem the tide of massive importation of foreign herbal medicinal products into our shores. They sense that if no pragmatic action is taken, the flooding of our markets with these products could lead to total eradication of an essential segment of our cultural heritage.

There is no gainsaying that the tropical regions have the greatest and most potent bio resources which are the basic raw materials for the production of herbal medicines. Potent drugs have in time past been extracted and later synthesized by pharmaceutical companies. Such drugs include; Morphin (from *Papaver somniferum*), Quinine (from *Cinchona* Spp.), Digoxin (from *Digitalis* leaves), Atropine (from *Atropa belladonna*), Ephedrine (from *Ephedra*), Emetine (from *Cephaelis* Spp.) and Artemisinin (from *Artemisia annua*) to mention a few.

A nation cannot progress if she solely relies on importing items whose equivalents remain untapped within her domain. The citizens of such country loose in two ways; they spend hard earned money on these very costly items as well as run the risk of giving their bodies what are not specifically designed for them. It goes without saying that Chinese herbs are best suited for the Chinese and African herbs for the Africans. The nativity of a person determines the most suitable foods, herbs, fruits, etc for that individual. There is uniformity in stellar radiation matrix that impact on plants, stones, animals and men quartered in a certain geographical location; a greater homogeneity exists between them and this fosters

greater assimilation and incorporation of nutrients present in herbs and foods into the human system. The observance of this food and herb specificity is largely flouted even by those countries known for their serious interest in herbal medicine production such as China and USA as can be testified from the research work of *Mukeshwar Pandey et al* indicating the volume of import of herbs into those countries; (See fig. 184).

#### **TRADITIONAL MEDICINE**

Traditional Medicine is the entirety of all knowledge, of all *explicable* and *inexplicable* methods of diagnosis, prevention and removal of physical, mental and social imbalances, based on the personal experience and on observation passed on from generation to generation.

#### **HERBAL MEDICINE**

Herbal Medicine is defined as the use of medicinal plants to prevent diseases, maintain health and cure disease conditions. The World Health Organization defines herbal medicines as “finished, labeled medicinal products that contain as active ingredients aerial (above ground) or underground parts of plants, or other plant material or combination thereof, whether in crude state or as plant preparations” (WHO, 1991).

#### **HERB**

This is any part of a plant that can be used to alleviate symptoms or treat illnesses or boost the overall health of an individual. The parts of plants commonly used include; flowers, fruits, seeds, nuts, leaves, stem barks, roots, bulbs and rhizomes.

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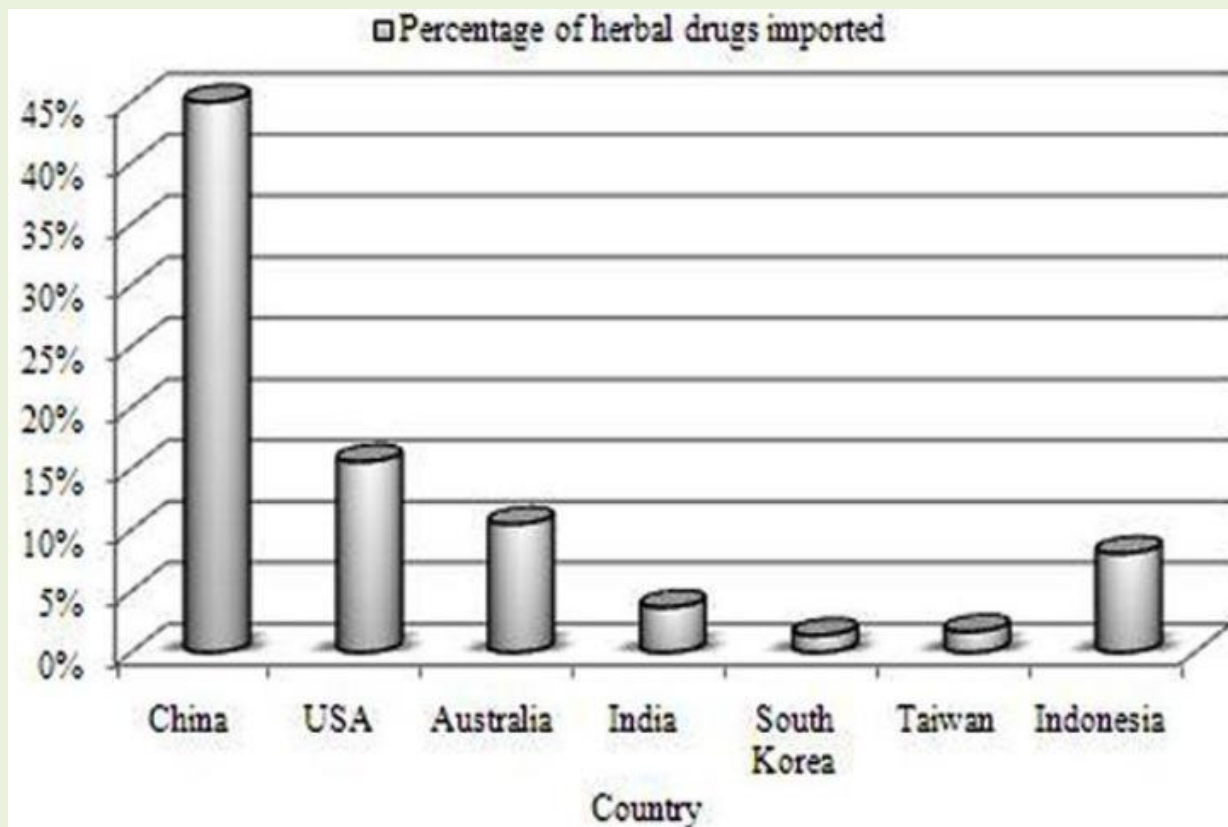


Fig.184

Percentage of herbal drugs imported by different countries for drug preparation

The graph is taken from *Phytomedicine: An ancient approach turning into future potential source of therapeutics* a research conducted by Mukeshwar Pandey et al and published in 2011 by the journal of pharmacology and pharmacognosy vol. 3 (1)

**A. EXAMPLES OF MEDICINAL SEEDS [Seeds from these plants]**

S/N	Plant's Scientific Name	Common English Name
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- |    |                            |                  |
|----|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. | <i>Abrus precatorius</i>   | Crab's eye       |
| 2. | <i>Aframomum melegueta</i> | Alligator pepper |
| 3. | <i>Piper guineense</i>     | Black pepper     |
| 4. | <i>Cassia occidentalis</i> | African coffee   |

**B. EXAMPLES OF MEDICINAL FRUITS [Fruits from these plants]**

S/N	Plant's Scientific Name	Common English Name
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- |    |                               |               |
|----|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | <i>Abelmoschus esculentus</i> | Okra          |
| 2. | <i>Spondias monbin</i>        | Hog plum      |
| 3. | <i>Capsicum frutescens</i>    | Chilli pepper |
| 4. | <i>Mangifera indica</i>       | Mango         |

**C. EXAMPLES OF MEDICINAL LEAVES [Leaves from these plants]**

S/N	Plant's Scientific Name	Common English Name
1.	<i>Acalypha wilkesiana</i>	Copper leaf
2.	<i>Agerantum conyzoides</i>	Goat weed
3.	<i>Ficus exasperata</i>	Sand paper leaf
4.	<i>Vernonia amygdalina</i>	Bitter leaf

**D.** EXAMPLES OF MEDICINAL BARKS [Barks from these plants]

S/N	Plant's Scientific Name	Common English Name
1.	<i>Enantia chlorantha</i>	African yellow wood
2.	<i>Erythrophleum guineese</i>	Ordeal tree
3.	<i>Melicea excelsa</i>	Iroko
4.	<i>Newbouldia laevis</i>	Fertility tree

**E.** EXAMPLES OF MEDICINAL PLANT LATEX/JUICE  
[Latex/Juice from these plants]

S/N	Plant's Scientific Name	Common English Name
1.	<i>Calatropis procera</i>	Giant milk weed
2.	<i>Euphorbia hirta</i>	Asthma weed
3.	<i>Euphorbia kamerunica</i>	-----
4.	<i>Aloe vera</i>	Aloe

**F.** EXAMPLES OF MEDICINAL BULBS [Bulbs from these plants]

S/N	Plant's Scientific Name	Common English Name
1.	<i>Allium sativum</i>	Garlic
2.	<i>Allium cepa</i>	Onions
3.	<i>Gladiolus psitacinus</i>	Sword lily

**G.** EXAMPLES OF MEDICINAL RHIZOMES [Rhizomes from these plants]

S/N	Plant's Scientific Name	Common English Name
1.	<i>Curculigo pilosa</i>	African crocus
2.	<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Tumeric
3.	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	Ginger

**H.**      EXAMPLES OF MEDICINAL ROOTS [Roots from these plants]

S/N	Plant's Scientific Name	Common English Name
1.	<i>Anthocleista djalonensis</i>	Cabbage tree
2.	<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i>	Hogweed
3.	<i>Carica papaya</i>	Pawpaw
4.	<i>Morinda lucida</i>	Brimstone tree

**I.**      EXAMPLES OF MEDICINAL FLOWERS [Flowers from these plants]

S/N	Plant's Scientific Name	Common English Name
1.	<i>Cassia alata</i>	Ringworm herb
2.	<i>Hibiscus rosasinensis</i>	Garden hibiscus
3.	<i>Eugenia aromatica</i> [Flower buds]	Cloves
4.	<i>Hibiscus sabdariffa</i>	Sorrel

**J.**      EXAMPLES OF MEDICINAL NUTS [Nuts from these plants]

S/N	Plant's Scientific Name	Common English Name
1.	<i>Anarcadium occidentale</i>	Cashew nut
2.	<i>Arachis hypogea</i>	Groundnut
3.	<i>Cyperus esculentus</i>	Tiger nut
	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>	Coconut