

MEDICINAL PLANTS TRADITIONALLY USED IN THE TREATMENT OF DIABETES IN THE REGION OF SUVA PLANINA MOUNTAIN (SOUTHEASTERN SERBIA)

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Medicinal plants traditionally used on Suva planina Mt. are extremely important natural resource for a large majority of the people of this rural region for their primary health care. This is due to the specific geographical position, the high biodiversity, ethnic and cultural characteristics and folk tradition. This ethnobotanical survey was undertaken to investigate and document the anti-diabetic plant species used by the local people living on Suva Planina Mt. and its surroundings, as well as to preserve and utilize traditional knowledge for the potential development of new effective and safe medicines. The study was based on the field survey and details about the herb collection, mode of preparation of herbal remedies, treatment methods, and vernacular plant names were recorded. Information on traditional knowledge were collected from the locals through semi structured interviews, group discussions and observations, and 66 people of within 30–70 age groups of both sexes were interviewed. A total of 128 plant species and two fungi are traditionally used for medicinal purposes in the investigated region, of which 10 (12.8%) are used in the treatment of diabetes. The most frequently mentioned anti-diabetic medicinal plants were: *Alchemilla vulgaris* L. (the whole plant), *Allium ampeloprasum* L. (aerial part), *Centaurium umbellatum* Gilib., (aerial part), *Gentiana cruciata* L. (herb), *Helianthus tuberosus* L. (fresh rhizome), *Juglans regia* L. (internal hardened part of endocarp), *Mentha piperita* L. (aerial part), *Morus alba* L. (leaf), *Petroselinum crispum* (Mill.) A. W. Hill (leaf and root) and *Sorbus domestica* L. (fruit). For medicinal purposes, the fresh or dried aerial or underground plant parts including the rhizome are used, and general method for preparing herbal remedies includes infusion and decoction. Rich plant diversity, combined with local skills, experiences and knowledge of the healing properties of herbs in the region of Suva Planina Mt., represent an invaluable heritage to be preserved for future generations.

Key words: medicinal plants, diabetes, Suva Planina Mountain (Southeastern Serbia)