

Documentation of medicinal plants in the Eastern Himalayan zone of Arunachal Pradesh, India

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Arunachal Pradesh with a total geographical area of 83,743 sq km. occupies a major portion of the Indian Eastern Himalaya-global biodiversity hotspot harbouring over 500 species of medicinal plants. In Arunachal Pradesh, the medicinal plants are an integral source of therapeutic drugs and play a significant role as easily available remedy among the rural ethnic communities. The 28 major ethnic groups inhabiting different areas of the state have high diversity of indigenous knowledge on the use of medicinal plants and have evolved various methods for utilizing the available nature's resources. Interestingly, the knowledge on utilizing these resources is unique and differs from tribe to tribe. Nonetheless, in the recent years, folk medicine is no more an attraction to the younger generation and is seriously threatened due to deforestation, environmental degradation and acculturation, currently taking place in the state. This study was conducted among three major ethnic groups namely the Nocte, the Nyishi and the Adi of the Eastern Himalayan region of Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India to evaluate their comparative knowledge on the use of medicinal plants in their primary health care system. Overall, we recorded a total of 74 traditional medicinal plants species belonging to 41 taxonomic plant families used for treating a total of 25 different diseases/ailments. Of the total 74 species recorded, the highest number of medicinal plants (36 species) was reported to be used by the Adi tribe inhabiting Lower Dibang Valley followed by the Nocte of the Tirap (25 species) and the Nyishi ethnic groups of Papum Pare districts (13 species). We also found that the men, elder people and illiterate ones had better knowledge on medicinal plants use as compared to women, younger and literate people. Findings of this documentation study can be used as an ethnopharmacological basis for selecting plants for future phytochemical and pharmaceutical studies.

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