

Medicinal Plants for Pain and Inflammatory Conditions: An Evaluation of Ethnobotanical Uses and Patterns in South Africa

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Inflammation is one of an organism's most basic and visible defence mechanisms. It is considered a biological activity that is initiated by mechanical tissue disturbance or by the presence of a physical, chemical, or biological substance in the body. Researchers have been fascinated by the varied and different patterns of inflammation formation and their significance in various illness states since antiquity. According to history (Rocha e Silva 1978), the four major symptoms of inflammation are redness, swelling, heat accompanied, and pain. Furthermore, the loss or disruption of function is seen as the sixth indication. These aforementioned symptoms are classified as clinical indicators of inflammation, which are known to entail a series of processes. Pain is a huge medical concern, with an estimated 20% of individual's worldwide suffering from it, and 10% being newly diagnosed with chronic pain each year. According to new statistics from the Global Burden of Disease Study, pain and pain-related disorders continue to be the top cause of disability and disease burden globally. From an epidemiological standpoint, the significance of pain and related diseases cannot be overstated because it is recognised as a widespread, complicated, and painful problem that has a significant influence on people and society at large. Despite the availability of traditional drugs/medicines for pain, inflammation, and associated diseases, the high risk of adverse effects and expensive cost continue to be important deterrents for many individuals, particularly in poor and impoverished nations. As a result, research into other methods, particularly pharmaceutical treatments, has remained relevant. In an ethnobotanical/ethno pharmacological setting, primary data from field research serve as the foundation for investigating plant resources for new bioactive substances and herbal medicine for various illnesses. The value of such knowledge is widely acknowledged, since it may help to improve human health and battle illness on both a local and global scale. South Africa is culturally varied, split into nine provinces, and has a population of more than 55 million people. The significance of traditional medicine and the relevance of medicinal plants are widely acknowledged among many ethnic groups. Despite the delicate nature and quick extinction of indigenous knowledge systems linked with the rich plant biodiversity, only a few research organisations in South Africa have concentrated on ethnobotanical surveys. The current study aims to examine the available literature on ethnobotanical studies/surveys, books, and grey literature in South Africa that focuses on plants used for pain, inflammation, and associated diseases. This review of literature is anticipated to highlight current knowledge gaps and serve as a key reference for future study in the subject, in addition to producing baseline data for future pharmacological and phytochemical investigations.

Based on the high number of plants documented (495), it is clear that their use for pain and inflammatory-related diseases is still a prevalent practise in South African traditional medicine. Given that they were referenced by three or more sources in South Africa, an estimated 18% (87 of the 495) of the documented plants are rather widely recognised. The documented herbs were used by many ethnic groups for a variety of ailments, including discomfort, headache, toothache, and backache. We discovered that several of the plants documented in this study are rigorously recommended based on gender and age (children versus adults). In several cases, we discovered that crucial information such as the plant component used, preparation techniques, and recipes were missing from the published literature for a large fraction of the identified species. This highlights the poor usefulness of South Africa's existing fragmented ethnobotanical surveys. Adherence to established criteria and rigorous ethnobotanical research methods are critical for the creation of a comprehensive inventory of remedies used for pain and inflammatory-related diseases in order to alleviate these problems.