Les plantes médicinales présentes en Polynésie française : quelles sont-elles, d'où viennent-elles, ... où allons nous ?

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Mots-clés : plantes médicinales, espèces indigènes, endémiques, introduites, gestion durable
Résumé. Une synthèse bibliographique basée sur près de 70 publications (ouvrages ou articles scientifiques) accessibles dans les principaux centres de publications à Tahiti révèle la présence en Polynésie française d'environ 540 espèces végétales utilisées localement comme plantes médicinales et/ou ailleurs dans le monde. Bien que la publication la plus ancienne remonte à 1773, la grande majorité des publications consultées (75%) a été éditée dans les vingt dernières années. Seuls 30% de ces espèces (156) sont des plantes indigènes, dont 7% (36) sont des endémiques de Polynésie française. Une faible proportion de fougères présentes en Polynésie française est utilisée comme plantes médicinales (27 espèces) par rapport aux plantes à fleurs, la quasi-totalité (93%) étant indigènes. Une majorité des plantes introduites l'ont été à l'époque européenne (311 espèces soit 80% du total) et seulement 72 espèces sont des introductions polynésiennes. Le nombre de plantes introduites volontairement ou accidentellement par les Polynésiens étant estimé à une centaine d'espèces, environ 70% des plantes introduites polynésiennes possèdent donc des vertus médicinales. On note également que parmi les plantes endémiques utilisées comme plantes médicinales, plus de la moitié (23) sont des espèces considérées rares ou menacées, ce qui souligne l'importance de leur conservation (protection in situ, multiplication ex situ) dans le cadre d'une gestion durable des ressources naturelles en Polynésie française.

Qualitative social survey report on Morinda Citrifolia L. from Fiji Islands

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Keywords : Morinda Citrifolia L, Kura, Medicinal Plants, Herbal Medicine, Biochemical Analysis, Ailments and Conditions
Abstract. The medicinally interesting plant Morinda Citrifolia L. belongs to the Rubiaceae family. Fiji Islands has a long history of uses of this traditional herbal medicine locally known as Kura otherwise Noni. The widespread use of Kura in the Fiji Islands interested researchers from both the University of the South Pacific (USP) and Fiji School of Medicine (FSM). Amongst other associated research undertakings to better understand the use and potential benefits of this herbal medicine, a national qualitative social survey was undertaken over a period of August 2002 to November 2003. Interviews, participant observation and participatory activities involved over 500 respondents. The fundamental aspiration of this research work involved survey of the diseases and conditions Kura was used for and to ascertain which part of the Kura plant was preferred for use with respect to the various conditions. Further the research work intended to provide prime knowledge on how the identified ‘part of the plant’ was prepared for use and to acquire view from the respondents on the outcome of using Kura for the specified condition. The research activities were analysed using the ‘thematic approach’ in qualitative research whereby each respondent’s questionnaire was coded with a numerical number, and his or her responses entered into an Excel and Word database. The database included crucial information on demographics of the respondents, the ailments for which Kura was used, its frequency of use, the part(s) of the plant that was used, the different Kura preparations, and other interesting comments pertaining to individual experiences with this herbal plant. Research findings strongly suggested that Kura was beneficial for a large number of ailments and condition. In total Kura was reported to be useful for 66 medical conditions and 1 spiritual application. These conditions ranged from skin condition to high blood pressure. Interestingly almost a third of these reports (415) were concerned with just 6 conditions: joint pains and swelling (100), muscle pains (59), headache (64), backache (68), blood pressure (70) and body strength (54). The Kura fruit was identified as the preferred part of the plant but the respondents accentuated that every part of the Kura plant was useful. Hence many different types of preparations were possibly notified for various conditions. It was concluded that Kura plant was well recognized as a trusted herbal medicine in Fiji society. However, its concentrations, dosages and regularity of use varied widely and Kura had possibly been used with both prescribed and other herbal medicine. Although Kura use delivered a few minor side effects yet if the beneficial effects of Kura on the major conditions identified were considered, consequently this qualitative research survey had indisputably provided with sufficient grounds to ensue with the next two phases of this research project that would accentuate biochemical analysis for identification of the active ingredients in the different parts of the Kura plant, and further clinical trials to determine opportunities for developing pharmaceutical drugs.

The inhibitory effects of Morinda citrifolia L. noni on phosphodiesterase enzymes : The possible mechanisms for increasing energy and improving diabetic conditions

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Keywords : Phosphodiesterase enzymes, Morinda citrifolia, cAMP, Lipolysis
Abstract. Morinda citrifolia L. Noni has been used in Polynesia for over 2000 years and is reputed to have a repertoire of health benefits. A list of health benefits includes but not limited to, lowering of high blood pressure, improving diabetic conditions, ameliorating gout effects, increase wound healing, treat cancer, increase overall health and strength.