



Ethnobotanical Survey of Medicinal Plants Used for the Management of Inflammatory Bowel Disease by Ayurveda and Traditional Medicine Practitioners in Matara District

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Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is characterized as a chronic inflammatory condition in the gastrointestinal tract, which includes two major types, Crohn's disease (CD) and ulcerative colitis (UC). In Sri Lanka, traditional management of IBD relies on undocumented medicinal plant knowledge passed through generations. This study aimed to document the plant species, preparation methods, and treatment practices used by Ayurvedic and traditional medicine practitioners in Matara District. Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Ruhuna. Ethnobotanical data were collected by using an open-ended, semi-structured questionnaire from 139 registered Ayurveda and traditional medicine practitioners who were between 25 and 75 years old, had more than 1 year of clinical experience, and had more than 2 years of residency in the Matara district. Ethnobotanical data were analyzed using relative frequency of citation (RFC), use value (UV), fidelity level (FL), relative popularity level (RPL), rank order priority (ROP), and family importance value (FIV). A total of 95 medicinal plants belonging to 50 families were recorded. Leaves were the most frequently utilized plant part, and decoction was the most frequently utilized preparation method in IBD remedies. *Aegle marmelos* L. (common name: Bael fruit) (RFC = 0.59) was the most cited plant, followed by *Plectranthus zatarhendi* var. *tomentosa* (common name: Iriveriya) (RFC = 0.51). Rutaceae was the family with the highest FIV, followed by Apiaceae. *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss. (common name: Kohomba) had the highest UV (6.00) and the highest RPL (6.00) in IBD remedies. This is the first ethnobotanical survey conducted on medicinal plants used to treat IBD by Ayurveda and traditional medicine practitioners in the Matara district, Sri Lanka. The data obtained from this survey facilitate the preservation of the knowledge of Ayurveda and traditional medicine in managing IBD and also help in the development of novel drug entities for treating IBD.

Keywords: Ayurveda practitioners, Ethnobotany, Inflammatory bowel disease, Medicinal plants, Traditional healers