

Abstract

The use of phytotherapy in the self-treatment of the adult population in the Czech Republic

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Introduction: The theoretical part of the thesis focuses on the issues of immunity support and respiratory infections and their symptoms, along with possible solutions through medicinal plants and their preparations. The practical part of the thesis includes the results of a survey that monitors the experiences, opinions, and perspectives on phytotherapy from both the general public and professionals. The thesis first introduces various respiratory infections along with their symptoms and causes, and subsequently discusses medicinal plants and the evidence supporting their use. The work includes plants with immunostimulatory effects, followed by plants with antiviral effects, and then plants that help treat the symptoms of respiratory infections. Another section addresses the issue of defining and classifying medicinal plants and their preparations, including legal aspects. The first part of the practical work presents the results of the survey focused on the general and professional public and their relationship to phytotherapy. The second part discusses the specific experiences of users of medicinal plants.

Objectives: The first objective of the thesis is to prepare materials for educating the professional public in the field of phytotherapy for immune support and respiratory infections and their symptoms. The second objective is to obtain information through a survey about the population's awareness of medicinal plants, their possible uses, benefits, and potential risks. The third objective is to gather information on the knowledge healthcare professionals have about phytotherapy and to collect data for the preparation of potential further follow-up research.

Methods: The data collection was conducted by the Faculty of Pharmacy, Charles University, Department of Pharmacognosy and Pharmaceutical Botany. The data were collected in April 2024 using Google Forms. The data were processed using Google Sheets. The questionnaire was distributed via social media, specifically Facebook and Instagram. It was shared through the author's personal account, as well as profiles, pages, and groups focused on medicinal plants. Participation in the project was voluntary and free of charge. The collected data were processed in an anonymous and aggregated form. Respondents consented to the data processing by submitting the questionnaire. The selection criteria were set as being of legal age, residing in the Czech Republic, being literate, and using either Instagram or Facebook. No target number of respondents was set. The Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Pharmacy at Charles University in Hradec Králové granted consent for the questionnaire collection.

Conclusion: The theoretical part of the thesis provides a detailed summary of medicinal plants applicable in therapy for immune support and respiratory infections. The practical part of the thesis presents the experiences, opinions, and perspectives on phytotherapy from both the general public and professionals.

Key words: phytotherapy, self-medication, tea mixtures, phytopharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals