

ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is to map the approach and behaviour of the adult population in the Czech Republic as regards the use of plant products (PP), both medicinal plants and herbal dietary supplements. For the public, the high prevalence of PP is a good opportunity to use such plants for self-medication or to prevent illness.

The general part of this thesis describes the characteristics and importance of both groups of plant products, as well as the topical issue of the choice, use and role of these plants in the world and in the Czech Republic on the basis of research. The practical part then presents the results of a questionnaire survey of people who use plant products – customers of pharmacies in selected regions of the Czech Republic: the capital, Prague, the Region of North Bohemia, and the Region of South Bohemia. Based on classification attributes the work monitors the public's approach and behaviour as regards the choice and means of acquiring and using PP and activity in relation to self-medication, such as consulting the suitable selection of PP or people informing their doctor that they are using PP. The work ascertains to what extent users know about and are aware of medicinal plants, how they are collected and used, and their properties on which the respondents base their choice of PP.

In the experimental part of the thesis the results of the survey showed that the typical users of plant products are women with secondary-school education, aged between 31 and 60, physically active, non-smokers, living in the metropolis. The survey proved the prevalence of the use of domestic plants, such as *Matricaria recutita*, *Melissa officinalis*, *Mentha piperita*, *Plantago lanceolata* and *Tilia cordata*, in their natural and dried forms as well as in the form of finished products which are either purchased or collected. In relation to the choice of plant products it was seen that a high proportion of users consult their pharmacist or doctor, particularly in the regions (89%), while the number of people who later inform their doctor that they are using PP is inadequate (65%). Literary sources have become the most important source of information about the medicinal effects of plants (23%). Illnesses resulting from catching cold, digestive disorders, urological problems and insomnia are the most common reasons leading to the use of medicinal plant products. The survey confirmed the high level of influence that advertising has on women in selecting natural products (59%).

From the results of the survey we can conclude that the behaviour of Czech clients of pharmacies share the same features as regards their approach to the choice and use of PP and related activities as those identified in economically developed countries. However, this behaviour also involves features which differ from those in developed countries, either due to the specific way in which society has developed in recent decades or through the influence of traditional values which still apply in society.

Keywords: prevalence, plant product, dietary supplement, self-medication, phytotherapy