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Ethnobotanical study of the medicinal plants used for rheumatological disorders among patients attending rheumatology clinic in Teaching Hospital Jaffna

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Background: Rheumatological disorders, are common chronic conditions that significantly affect quality of life. Reliance on phytotherapy to relieve the symptoms highlights the importance of documenting ethnobotanical knowledge on medicinal plants used for rheumatological conditions. Therefore, systematic ethnobotanical surveys are needed to record plants used for managing rheumatological disorders among specific populations.

Objective: to describe the ethnobotany of medicinal plants used for rheumatological disorders among patients attending rheumatology clinic in Teaching Hospital Jaffna.

Methodology: A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among patients attending the rheumatology clinic of the Teaching Hospital Jaffna. Total population sampling was employed, and the data were collected using a validated structured interviewer-administered questionnaire. The collected data were entered and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Family Importance Value (FIV) and Relative Frequency of Citation (RFC) were calculated using COUNTIF function in Excel to identify significant medicinal plant families and species used by the informants.

Results: Among the 390 patients attending the clinic, 58 reported using medicinal plants for their ailment. A total of 22 species belonging to 18 families were documented, with a response rate of 100%. *Vitex negundo* L. (33 citations) was the most frequently reported species, followed by *Pavetta indica* Linn. (25 citations) and *Ricinus communis* L. (23 citations). The Relative Frequency of Citation (RFC) ranged from 0.02 to 0.65, with *Vitex negundo* L. showing the highest value of 0.65. Among the families, Lamiaceae had the highest Family Importance Value (FIV) of 76.47. Leaves were the most commonly used plant part (88.17%), and poultice was the most frequent preparation method (68.67%).

Conclusion: Medicinal plants were used by 14.87% of patients attending the clinic. Fourteen plant species used for rheumatological disorders were reported for the first time in Sri Lanka, contributing to the documentation of medicinal plants used for rheumatological disorders among patients at Teaching Hospital, Jaffna.