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**KNOWLEDGE AND PREVALENCE ON USAGE OF HERBAL AND
NUTRACEUTICALS AMONG THE PATIENTS ATTENDING OUT-PATIENT
DEPARTMENT IN PRIVATE TERTIARY HOSPITAL IN JAFFNA**

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Background: Herbal and Nutraceuticals are increasingly drawing the attention of manufacturers, researchers, regulators and health care professionals due to high levels of consumption. Knowledge and prevalence of usage of these products among patients is vital to obtain complete medical history data.

Aims: This study aimed to assess the knowledge and the prevalence of usage of Herbs and Nutraceuticals among the patients attending outpatient department in a private tertiary hospital.

Methods: A descriptive cross sectional study was carried in a systematically selected sampled patients using interviewer administered questionnaire. Data was entered in the computer and analyzed using SPSS. Two-hundred and ninety two patients were included in the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

Results: Prevalence of usage of herbs and nutraceuticals was 43.5% (n=127). Among the users, 32.2% (n=41) were using without prescription (self-usage). Regarding the knowledge majority of the participants stated that herbs and nutraceuticals are drugs (83.9%, n=245) and beneficial for human health (87.7%, n=256) and 76.4% (n=223) of them were did not know the side effects of the products. Only 19.5% (n=57) of participants stated that, herbs and nutraceuticals can be substituted for natural food. More than half of the participants (54.8%, n=160) stated, herbs and nutraceuticals cannot take without prescription. Only 39% (n=114) of respondents knew, herbs and nutraceuticals can interact with prescription or over the counter drugs. Among the self-usage, 41.5% (n=17) of participants stated that the self-usage is for saving their time.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Although, the prevalence of self-usage was low, patients have limited knowledge on usage of herbal and nutraceuticals. Patients need education to improve their knowledge which will also ensure the safe usage.

Keywords: herbals, nutraceuticals, knowledge, prevalence, usage