

Some Comments on the Role and Importance of Phytotherapy in Medicine

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Abstract: This article discusses the role and importance of phytotherapy in medicine. As we know, today, natural treatment is considered a guarantee of health in order to recover from the disease without complications and not to get the same disease again. In addition, information is given on the fact that phytotherapy is safe for human health, unlike drugs.

Keywords: inhalation, infusion, concept of treatment, polysaccharides dysbacteriosis, hemostatic, rehabilitation.

Phytotherapy is the oldest method of treating various diseases. It existed long before the advent of pharmacology. Now it has many supporters. They believe that plants are safer than medicines, which are products of the chemical industry. From this material you will learn what is the place of phytotherapy in modern medicine, whether it is really possible to treat with herbs.

Pharmacology is a fairly young science, it originated in the middle of the 19th century. However, this does not mean that people did not fight diseases before - they simply used plants for this. Information about their healing properties was mentioned in the works of Ebers in the second millennium BC.

The greatest contribution to the development of herbal treatment methods was made by:

Sushruta, the author of Ayurvedic treatises;

Hippocrates attempted to systematize knowledge about medicinal plants;

Li Shi-Zhen, the author of the first Chinese pharmacopoeia;

Galen, the compiler of the first ointments and tinctures;

Paracelsus was the first to use alcohol extracts from plants for medical purposes.

In our country, phytotherapeutic knowledge was collected in herbalists, and the achievements of other countries were studied in parallel. Today, the approach to therapy has changed, but from time to time people turn to natural medicines. The following methods are practiced within the framework of phytotherapy:

Oral administration (usually drinking). Over several thousand years, recipes have been created for almost all occasions, so it is difficult to define the scope of application of drinking herbal preparations.

External use (hot poultices, cold compresses, ointments). They are used for dermatological, fungal diseases, for the treatment of injuries.

Inhalations. They are used for diseases of the respiratory system, to facilitate the discharge of sputum, relieve bronchospasms.

Douching. Aimed at women suffering from gynecological diseases.

Microclysters. This does not mean cleansing, but medical procedures. They help with inflammation of the rectal mucosa, dysbacteriosis, hemorrhoids. Injections and intravenous infusions are not practiced as part of herbal treatment. On the one hand, it is unsafe, on the other hand, it does not correspond to the natural concept of treatment.

There are thousands of recipes. If you group them, you can deduce the main forms of natural medicines:

Decoction. Take hard raw materials (roots, bark, less often branches) and keep them in a water bath for at least half an hour. Cool it, strain it and use it within two days, provided it is stored in a sealed container. Infusion. Take soft raw materials (leaves, stems, buds, flowers) and pour boiled water over them (the temperature depends on the recipe). The product needs to stand at room temperature for an average of 4 hours. It can be stored for no more than a day.

Herbal collection. Dried raw materials are poured with boiling water (similar to tea), it should be consumed at one time.

Alcohol tincture. Plant materials are poured with alcohol or vodka, and the container is placed in a dark place for a month. The tincture is used in small doses, and the base allows you to store it for a long time.

Ointment. Plant materials are crushed, mixed with a fat base (petroleum jelly, butter) and boiled over low heat.

Extract (plant extract). Active substances are obtained by water-glycerin or oil maceration. Herbal preparations are selected according to different criteria. Some are guided by well-known recipes and indications for their use, others by the presence of suitable ingredients in the required state.

Those representatives of the flora that contain biologically active substances that have a beneficial effect on humans are considered medicinal. Of almost three hundred species, such properties are observed in only 20 thousand. 250 species of medicinal plants have undergone pharmacological tests and have been officially recognized by medicine as suitable for treating diseases.

They are called pharmacopoeial and are divided into three groups:

Effective: used in medicine;

Promising: their effectiveness has been proven, but there are obstacles to widespread use;

Potential: the pharmacological effect has been demonstrated, but additional research is required.

Representatives of the first group are actively used in pharmacology along with synthetic drugs. The use of herbal preparations based on them is approved by doctors.

Leaves, bark, buds, and other plant elements contain substances that are of particular value:

Alkaloids. They act on the central nervous system, cardiovascular system, regulate blood pressure. Tannins (tannins). They have anti-inflammatory and hemostatic properties.

Cardiotonic glycosides. They are useful for the heart: they improve blood flow, normalize pulse and rhythm.

Saponins. Reduce cholesterol levels, facilitate expectoration, have a laxative and diuretic effect.

Bitters. Normalize gastrointestinal functions, stimulate appetite.

Polysaccharides. Used to relieve irritation of the respiratory and digestive tracts.

Fatty oils. When taken orally, they thin the blood, normalize stool, and protect the liver. They are used as a base for healing ointments.

They contain essential oils, resins, vitamins, and minerals. The main thing is to know which substances are present in which plant. Supporters of herbal treatment highlight many reasons why they prefer alternative pharmacology. Firstly, it is safety.

People do not trust the chemical industry, so they focus on the benefits of herbal remedies:

non-toxicity;

no side effects;

additional immune support.

There is some common sense in this. For example, it is not advisable for small children and pregnant women to take medications. But they are not immune to diseases either. Then folk recipes are used as an alternative. The availability of herbal medicine is also often noted. Raw materials are inexpensive, and if you have special knowledge, you can extract them yourself. At the same time, it is possible to select herbs that have a positive effect on several organs at once.

Herbal preparations prepared independently can really help with many diseases. However, this advantage also determines the main disadvantage. Faith in the gifts of nature pushes people to completely abandon traditional methods of therapy. Not all diseases can be cured with herbs. They cannot replace antibiotics and antitumor drugs, they will not eliminate caries, and they will not drive out parasites.

Doctors note that taking homemade herbal medicines can even lead to negative consequences:

allergies to individual ingredients;

unpredictable reactions to a combination of plants;

overdose due to incorrect dosage calculation;

poisoning by poisonous specimens mistakenly taken for medicinal ones; aggravation of other diseases.

Often people who treat cystitis with cranberry juice end up in the hospital with a stomach ulcer, and supporters of treating gastritis with St. John's wort end up in the cardiology department with a hypertensive crisis. Herbal medicine requires extensive knowledge. It is not enough to remember which plant helps with which diseases. It is also necessary to take into account that its use can affect other organs and systems.

Herbal infusions, teas, ready-made syrups can be found in the pharmacy. However, true supporters of herbal treatment prefer to collect raw materials themselves. They know a large number of rules and strictly follow them. The bark is collected during the period of sap flow, the roots - either in early spring (before germination) or in late autumn (after the shoots die off), the buds - before they bloom, the leaves - before flowering, the flowers - during flowering.

Assess the condition. The leaves should not be damaged, and the flowers should not be withered. Roots up to 3 cm in diameter are suitable, thicker ones are not, since they are deprived of useful substances. Consider the weather. You need to go for herbs in dry weather - after the dew has melted, the bark, on the contrary, is collected in humid conditions. Use a basket. Cellophane bags are not suitable for this purpose: the plants in them will quickly begin to rot.

Experienced herbalists never collect raw materials for future use. At one time, they bring as much as they can process: wash, dry, place in a dry and ventilated place. Although we are talking about alternative medicine, it is also based on a scientific approach. If you approach the preparation of a therapeutic regimen systematically, you can get the desired results.

The main principles that herbalists adhere to:

Use small doses. This helps to control the body's reactions. Doses can be increased gradually.

Gradually complicating the composition. At first, it is better to use single-component drugs to track their effect. Multi-component collections are introduced over time - as you become familiar with individual ingredients.

Consider the time of day. Tonic herbs should be taken in the morning, invigorating ones - in the evening to avoid disruption of biorhythms. Infusions and decoctions with a diuretic effect are drunk in the first half of the day so as not to get up at night. Reasonable combination. Herbs should be combined with each other and not harm other organs.

The most important principle is that herbal treatment is secondary to traditional treatment. The main therapy should be carried out within the framework of official medicine and under the supervision of a doctor. Folk remedies are allowed as an addition to the main treatment and support during the rehabilitation period.

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