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**Ethno botanical survey on medicinal plants used in orthopaedic treatments in
Western and Sabaragamuwa provinces in Sri Lanka**

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Sri Lanka is an island close to the Indian peninsula with rich biodiversity and traditional systems of medicine. The native treatment method “Deshiyachikithsha” consists of such traditional medical knowledge inherited from generation to generation. Traditional orthopaedic treatment is one of the most important sectors in “Deshiyachikithsha”. Different types of plants and other materials have been used over a long period of time for a variety of medical preparations. However, this knowledge is not properly documented in an accessible form. Therefore, conducting a scientific survey on medicinal materials that are used in othopaedic treatment is crucial to safeguard this knowledge.

Western and Sabaragamuwa provinces were selected for the study since the provinces are well known for their traditional medical practices. The study was carried out using well-structured questionnaires. Sixty traditional healers from five districts were interviewed. Plant species were scientifically identified by comparing with herbarium specimens deposited at the Royal Botanical Garden and based on other classical texts. Collected data were tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Thirty one traditional healers were from the Western province and twenty nine were from the Sabaragamuwa province. Sixty seven percent of traditional practitioners are registered in the Ayurveda Department and 33% are not registered. Forty five percent of them are in the 41-60 age category and low recruitment of the young generation is a major reason for the collapse of this valuable medical system. A total of 245 plant species belonging to 79 plant families are being used. Of them 36 % of the plant species are from 7 plant families. They are Fabaceae, Poaceae, Moraceae, Rutaceae, Lamiaceae, Euphorbiaceae and Apocynaceae. In the Western province 19% of practitioners depend completely on the open market for their materials. This is quite different from the early days where most medicinal plants were collected from the forest. In the Sabaragamuwa province 21 % of the interviewed practitioners were dependent completely on the forest and no one depended on the market only for their material requirements. This can be clearly related to the impact of deforestation on the traditional medical practices in Sri Lanka and the need to promote medicinal plant cultivation.

Keywords: Ethnobotanical survey, orthopaedic treatment, medicinal materials, traditional medicine, traditional fracture treatment

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