

Abstract

Introduction. As medicinal plant use becomes more popular in the United States, it is important to understand which plants are commonly being used and how patients feel about medicinal plants as a part of their overall health and well-being. A general lack of research into medicinal plants, and their use in both the United States and Costa Rica, prompts further investigation. Understanding patient perceptions could create a more holistic approach to treating patients.

Methods. A survey was created to determine a better understanding of perceptions about medicinal plant use amongst current United States and Costa Rica residents. The survey allowed for insight into which medicinal plants are most frequently being used and recommended, which diseases are being treated/prevented, where patients are learning about medicinal plants, where these plants are being obtained, and patient communication with healthcare providers about their medicinal plant use.

Results. Surveys were distributed in the United States and Costa Rica from March 2020 to March 2021. In the U.S., medicinal plant use was much less prevalent than Costa Rica, with information about medicinal plants coming primarily from family/friends, the internet, and healthcare professionals. Participants in the U.S. and Costa Rica both reported 31 different medicinal plants that they use or recommend, and the majority believed that it was important for their physician and pharmacist to know about their medicinal plant use.

Conclusion. Rates of medicinal plant use/recommendations in the U.S., as compared to Costa Rica, show that healthcare practitioners and the general public in the U.S. could benefit from a more robust knowledge of medicinal plants. Overall, patients believe they should consult their physician and pharmacist about their medicinal plant use, highlighting the fact that healthcare professionals need to be knowledgeable about medicinal plants.