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Gentiana Mehmeti
genta89m@gmail.com

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Pharmacists recommendation for herbal preparations with secretolytic and antitussive action

*Gentiana Mehmeti¹, Gentrita Mehmeti², Urtina Raçi³

¹Pharmacy Pharma Company, Prishtina

²Dompé Pharmaceutical Company, Prishtina

³Blupharm Pharmaceutical Company, Prishtina

*Corresponding Author : genta89m@gmail.com

Abstract. Herbal medicines with expectorant and antitussive action have an important role in therapy and are prescribed by doctors and recommended by pharmacists. The study was based on a questionnaire on the use of expectorant and antitussive syrups. This study included 128 pharmacists and 116 pharmacy technicians from 157 pharmacies operating in the Prishtina region. 71.8% of pharmacists claim that naturally occurring syrups acting on the respiratory tract are prescribed by a doctor. Depending on the type of cough antitussive or expectorant prescribed by doctors, pharmacists claim that 82.8% expectorant syrups are prescribed, while 17.2% are antitussive. Syrups with antitussive or expectorant action for children are 100% recommended with plant extracts, and for adults 92.2% with plant extracts and with synthetic substances are recommended 7.8%. Reasons for recommending syrups with natural products by the pharmacist (71.4%) and pharmaceutical technician (81.9%) are due to few side effects.

Keywords: Pharmacists, Pharmaceutical technicians, Herbal expectorant, Herbal antitussive

1 Introduction

The mechanisms of actions of cough medicines are not always known. The problem is exacerbated for herbal medicines, where the effectiveness of the plant or its phytochemicals have rarely been carefully evaluated. Most popular herbs used as cough medicines appear to be demulcents whose action is confined to the oropharynx [1]. Coughing can be due to a respiratory tract infection such as the common cold, acute bronchitis, pneumonia, pertussis, flu and smoking or health problems such as asthma, tuberculosis and lung cancer. Substantial uses of folk remedies for different medical conditions have been documented [2]. Acute cough due to upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) is a common symptom. Non-prescription over-the-counter (OTC) medicines are frequently recommended as a first-line treatment, but there is little evidence as to whether these drugs are effective [3]. Ivy leaf is used for the

treatment of respiratory diseases with the intensive mucus formation, respiratory infections, and irritating cough coming from the common cold. Conferring to clinical trials, the efficacy, and tolerability of ivy leaf is good. The main compounds accountable for biological activity are triterpene and saponins. Ivy leaves show convulsive/antispasmodic, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, analgesic, anthelmintic and anti-thrombin activity. Not only ivy but also marshmallow and mustard seeds are used for these indications [4]. There is an increasing popularity of natural treatment options in patients and consumers worldwide. This is also true for root extracts from Marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*), which are successfully used for maintaining respiratory health resp. in mucosal irritations of the respiratory tract and irritative cough [5].

2 Aim

The aim of this study was to study herbal medicine for cough as a symptom of upper respiratory tract infections and common cold. This fact therefore aroused our interest to see how much the pharmacist and pharmaceutical technician recommends syrups with expectorant and antitussive action, with herbal or synthetic content, or recommends the use of herbal teas with the same action.

3 Material and methods

The study was based on a questionnaire on the use of expectorant and antitussive syrups. Data were collected from March 2021 to September 2021. This study included 128 pharmacists and 116 pharmacy technicians from 157 pharmacies operating in the Prishtina region. The questionnaire was developed in Albanian language . The answer format included multiple-choice questions, in which participants were asked to choose the most reasonable answer for them in the given list of options. The answers and results extracted from the research were calculated by Microsoft Excel version 2019.

4 Results

This study was carried out in 2021, and these results were issued which will be expressed as a percentage (%) and through the table.

71.8% of pharmacists claim that syrups with natural content acting on the respiratory tract are prescribed by a doctor.

Depending on the type of cough antitussive or expectorant prescribed by doctors, pharmacists claim that 82.8% expectorant syrups are prescribed, while 17.2% are antitussives.

Syrups with antitussive or expectorant action for children are 100% recommended with plant extracts, and for adults 92.2% with plant extracts and synthetic substances are recommended 7.8%.

The reasons for the recommendation of syrups with natural products by the pharmacist (71.4%) and the pharmaceutical technician (81.9%) are due to few side effects.

In addition to herbal syrups with antitussive and expectorant action, pharmacists recommend the use of herbal teas with the same action, 65.6% according to the patient's need and pharmaceutical technicians 100% according to the patient's need.

The teas that are most often recommended in pharmacies by the pharmacist, are:

Tea expectorant: Ivy leaf

Antitussive tea: Marshmallow

Table 1. Recommendation of expectorant and antitussive syrups from pharmacists and pharmaceutical technicians in pharmacies expressed in percentage (%).

Syrups	Pharmacist	Pharmaceutical technician
Natural Products	71.8%	93.1%
Synthetic products	28.2%	6.9%
Expectorant	82.8%	73.3%
Antitussive	17.2%	26.7%
With plant extracts (for children)	100%	100%
With synthetic materials (for children)	0 %	0 %
With plant extracts (for adult)	92.2%	100%
With synthetic materials (for adult)	7.8%	0 %

5 Conclusion

According to the data from this research, we concluded that most pharmacists and pharmaceutical technicians recommend herbal syrups (when not prescribed by a doctor) for the treatment of cough. Herbal teas are also recommended in high

percentage by pharmacists and pharmacological techniques for the treatment of cough.

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