



THE USE OF UNCARIA GUIANENSIS IN THE TREATMENT OF DISEASES IN BRAGANÇA-PARÁ

Marília Araujo Pinto ; Alcides Rufino Oliveira Neto ; Iracely Rodrigues Silva ; Sérgio Moraes ;

Maria Gomes

INTRODUCTION

The low Cat's Claw is an indigenous plant of the Amazonian forest and tropical areas of South and Central Americas. The Incas were the first ones to use their active ingredients. This plant was described for the first time in 1830, but only became interesting in 1970, when a lot of researches in Europe were accomplished and was proved its real therapeutic value.

The *Uncaria guianensis* has been broadly used by the tribes Aguaruna, Asháninka, Cashibo, Conibo and Shipibo of Perú and Asháninka, Boras and Kaiapó of Brazil for at least 2000 years. Nowadays, who has the oldest registration – about the usage of Cat's Claw - is the tribe Asháninka, in the central area of Peru and in State of Acre, Brazil (Miranda, 2001).

In Jararaca community, as well as in Brazil, the use of natural medicines is a practical alternative, sometimes the only one, to combat the several diseases that attack the area (Diegues, 2000; Amorozo and Gély, 1988).

For that reason, the present work's target is to accentuate the uses and the application/indication that the community does of the *Uncaria guianensis* besides studying its healing properties. The importance of this research is the conservation and control of the social-cultural-traditional patrimony.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This research was accomplished in Jararaca Community, 21Km far from Municipal district of Bragança, Pará, that owns a hot humid equatorial climate. Its rainy station occur among January to June with precipitations of 2.500mm and temperature of 25,9°C (INMET, 1992). In the referred community, live about 218 inhabitants, distributed in 48 families that benefit themselves with the alternative medicine in the treatment of diseases.

In order to obtain the ethnobotanical information, a questionnaire was applied structured according to Amorozo (1996), emphasizing the following information: vulgar name, parts of the used plant, type of disease, preparation method, dosage, use and handling. The plant was collected and herborized according to the method described by Lin Chau Ming (1996), being identified for EMBRAPA.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Uncaria guianensis is a "liana", that blooms from February to June and it fructifies from April to August. It develops better in "capoeiras" or in the borders of rivers and highways, happening to form great concentrations and reaching from 5 to 10 meters of height. It is usually possible to extract up about 4kg of bark of each individual (Medina, 2005).

The part that is used to compose the natural medicines is the bark of the shaft, the root and the leaves. Its popular use in the community is to combat headache, constipation and it is good for the diseases that attack the prostate.

The low Cat's Claw owns several active ingredients as oxindole alkaloids, poliphenols, flavonoids, quinovic acid glycoside, triterpenes and anti-tumorous. With antioxidant properties, anti-inflammatory, anti-tumorous, anti-mutagenic, cholesterol inhibitors in synthesis and immunostimulants.

This species is also being used and commercialized in the USA with a value near of US\$ 500 and some chemist and pharmaco-therapeutics are trying, through researches, to insert Cat's Claw as the main immunostimulant component in the cocktail of SIDA.

Some active ingredients, if ingested in excess, can be contraceptive. The plant should not be used by pregnant or lactic women, even if in few amounts.

We can verify that the community makes use of the plant, according to what the women who cultivate and prepares the medicine, teach to them, without the due concern with the contraindications and toxicities. For this reason, this work aim at to preserve this traditional knowledge as well as the vegetable biodiversity, but also to add more correct information for the community about the plant and to drop some “myths” that might exist, endangering this way, the public health of that place.

It is important to increase our knowledge regarding to Cat’s Claw, because today it is already a industrial medicine and it is a species that is located also in the Amazonian, where it happens its largest concentration, besides having a lot of applicabilities and few contraindications.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the *Uncaria guianensis* being a plant that has so many active ingredients and combats a lot of diseases, in the Jararaca’s community it is just used to combat three. However, it is worth to emphasize that the research team will be returning to the community to guide the population on the use and handling of this plant and with that to optimize its applicability, without damages to the own health and the local ecosystem.

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