Cultural Preservation of Ethnomedicine in Perú

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Minority Health & Health Disparities International Research Training Program (MHIRT-Perú) was funded by NHI in 2002, since then the Perú Ethnomedicinal Project in Trujillo has been an ongoing research both in the ethno-botanical and biochemical field. The summer 2015 Ethnomedicinal Project was completed by MHIRT and supported by Linfield College focused on the usage of medicinal plants in northern Peru. Interviews were conducted in the coastal city of Trujillo, which has a population of around 500,000. The city has six districts: the urban core (Moche), La Delicias on the littoral, La Curva on the Panamerican Highway, an agricultural periphery (Capilla), and a peri-urban sector inhabited by migrants from the sierra (the older Alto Moche I and the more recent Alto Moche II, both also designated Miramar). The research was done on the urban core of Moche and the more rural sector of Miramar. The data collection of the commonly used plants was used to restore the garden in the Chan Chan archaeological site museum (Fajardo, Sours, 2012).

- Preserve the knowledge of these practices
- Analyze the plant properties
- Publish the information
- Provide the community with a garden
- Bring back and apply this in the Linfield community

High cost of pharmaceuticals draws people toward using traditional use of medicinal plants. Recent migrants to peripheral areas are maintaining sierra traditions (Busaamn,Sharon, 2007).

Hypothesis

Methods

Our descriptive and qualitative data analyzed through a Chi-Square test resulted in a no statistical significance between the preference in medicinal plants and location. In Moche, 49% of the participants preferred medicinal plants over pharmaceuticals, compared to 41% in Alto Moche. While 90% or higher of the participating population believed in culturally bound illnesses. Our questionnaire regarding the continuous intergenerational knowledge and use of medicinal plants demonstrated that 81% in Alto Moche and 66% in Moche confirmed that parents were more knowledgeable about traditional medicine.

Through our experience working with medicinal plants in Perú, we were motivated and inspired to implement that idea here in the Linfield Garden. The sustainability department granted support to begin the medicinal garden and begin connecting individuals to natural healing resources.

The other part of the research project was restoration of the medicinal plant garden in the Chan Chan archaeological site museum. In the summer of 2010, the implementation of a medicinal plant garden in the Chan Chan archaeological site was established by two Linfield students for educational purposes on a previous summer faculty-student collaborative research project. Through a series of surveys conducted in the summer of 2015, the most commonly used medicinal plants in Moche were identified. The demonstration garden reflects that diversity of plants, and is meant to serve as an educational model to teach people about the medicinal and cultural components of each species.

A brochure was created to guide tourists and locals through the garden. The brochure includes the following information for each plant species in the garden: common name, scientific name, origin, and medicinal use.

- No statistical significance between the preference in medicinal plants and location
- Deeply rooted practice of plant medicine in Perú
- In Moche, 49% of the participants preferred medicinal plants over pharmaceuticals, compared to 41.6% in Alto Moche
- 90% or higher for both communities’ belief in culturally bound illnesses
- 81% in Alto Moche and 66% in Moche – Parents more knowledgeable about traditional medicine

We would like to recognize the contribution from the community of Trujillo, Perú for allowing us to complete this project. We are thankful to those who participated in our interviews, it was through these that we were able to collect data and restore the garden. We are also thankful to our colleagues who collaborated in conducting the surveys, Marina Alvaro, Gloria Terraza, and Javier Blanch. We are especially thankful to Consuelo Tellez and Mario Bejarano for guidance and support throughout the research. Lastly, we would like to thank our director of MHIRT-Peru, Douglass Sours as well as Thomas Love and Linfield College for their support in the faculty-student collaborative research program.