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Plants used by the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee (Quebec, Canada) for the treatment of diabetes: A novel approach in quantitative ethnobotany

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Abstract

In the last decade, the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee has witnessed a 150% increase in the prevalence of Type II Diabetes (T2D) for people aged over 20 years. Clinical intervention using conventional therapeutic methods has yielded only a limited success within this population. An ethnobotanical survey was carried out to identify potentially antidiabetic plant species used within the traditional pharmacopoeia of the Cree. Interviews were held with 34 Cree Elders using a list of 15 symptoms ranked according to their association to T2D. A total of 18 species were cited during the survey, spanning 9 plant families. Species were prioritized for pharmacological analysis according to a

Syndromic Importance Value, based on their frequency of citation by informants and the number and specificity of symptoms for which they were used. Correspondence and clustering analyses were also performed to determine the specificity of association between species and symptoms and the symptom-based correlation between species. A data matrix and species ranking order generated from Cree-specific literature demonstrates significant similarity and correlation to our original matrix and ranking, respectively. This article demonstrates the applicability of various underutilized quantitative tools in ethnobotany, while taking a convincing preliminary step towards a therapy more in harmony with Cree culture and lifestyle.

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Abbreviations

CEI, Cree of Eeyou Istchee; SIV, Syndromic Importance Value; T2D, Type II Diabetes

Keywords

Diabetes; Antidiabetic; Cree; Ethnobotany; Quantitative analysis; Medicinal plants

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