

## Ethnopharmacological prospecting of medicinal plants from the Province of Guercif (NE of Morocco)

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### Abstract

An ethnopharmacological survey was carried out between December 2012 and May 2013 in eleven different locations dependent on the Guercif Province (NE of Morocco). The names of plants, their mode of preparation and administration, and their parts used have been inventoried for various local uses in traditional medicine. Our survey allowed us to identify one hundred plant species used in that Province, belonging to 49 botanical families. *Rosmarinus officinalis*, *Origanum compactum*, *Artemisia herba-alba*, *Thymus* spp., *Mentha pulegium*, *Nigella sativa*, *Lavandula* spp., *Visnaga daucoides*, *Aristolochia longa* and *Cenchrus spicatus* are the most used taxa by the local population. This study showed that the plant leaves are the most commonly used parts, and the remedies prepared are mostly based on decoction. The endocrine system, especially the diabetes, and the digestive one are the most frequent among the body systems treated by the local traditional medicine.

**Keywords:** Guercif, Morocco, Medicinal plants, Ethnopharmacology, Decoction.

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### Introduction

Phytotherapy, including traditional phytomedicine, has long been used by different cultures and civilizations in Egypt, the Middle East, India and China (Ybert & de Laage de Meux, 2001). This ancient relationship between human being and nature, which promoted medicinal plants, played a very important role in the discovery of drugs (Akerele, 1990; Patwardhan, 2005). Most drugs are of plant origin; many others are synthesized analogues based on plant discovered compounds (Patwardhan, 2005; Verma & Singh, 2008).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), three-quarters of the world's population use medicinal plants as a source of remedy (Gilani & Atta-ur-Rahman, 2005). Moreover, in developing countries suffering from a delay in the modernization of the medical system, the

use of herbal remedies is widespread (Heywood, 1992).

Regarding to its biogeographical position, Morocco presents very wide ecological and floristic diversities. Among more than 4,500 taxa of vascular plants, native or naturalized, 800 to 951 taxa are endemic (Bellakhdar, 1997, Benrahmoune Idrissi & Dubruille, 2003, Fougrach *et al.*, 2007). Morocco is among the Mediterranean countries that have experienced remarkable use of medicinal plants. Indeed, Bellakhdar (1997) has reported that the Moroccan pharmacopoeia originated from know-how was transmitted by different ethnic groups who settled in the country, after their emigration from several regions, including the Arabs of the Middle East, Andalusians and the Jews of Europe.