**Herbal Medicine**

# **Abstract**

Use of herbal medicines is not a new phenomenon, but a practice that dates back in ancient times. Today, many types of herbal medicinal products are available for sale in pharmacies and supermarkets where one can purchase without a prescription. In this country for example, one can get products like Liv.52 for treatment of liver diseases like cirrhosis, alcoholic liver disease and viral hepatitis induced liver damage. Patients with haemorrhoids buy Pilex ointment to manage the pain, bleeding and itchiness associated with the condition. Mothers with new born babies buy and use Bonnisan to relieve colic, flatulence and indigestion that ia always a common problem in neonates. This class of drugs are commonly used because they are affordable, readily available, and believed to be safe. However, despite the widely accepted notion that natural products are safe, several concerns surround their use: potency, how do they interact with conventional medicines, and some toxic effects that may result from their administration. This calls for a close review of this pertinent issues and an examination of any scientific evidence available to support and guide health providers and patients on safe use of herbal remedies.

*Keywords*: Liv.52, Pilex, Bonnisan

# **Herbal Medicine**

 Herbal medicines refer to preparations derived from plants used for treatment of illness or promotion of healthy well-being. The medicinal products could be derived from leaves, tree barks, and roots. They come in different forms including; powder form, liquids, whole plants, tablets as well as ointments. The use of herbal remedies has its origin in ancient cultures and has been used for thousands of years. The belief that the compound nature of herbal medicine confer a holistic remedial effect unlike the use of single isolated chemicals, contributes to the massive use of plant based medicinal products.

 Some of the herbal drugs one can purchase in a supermarket or pharmacy without a prescription are;

* Pilex
* Liv.52
* Bonnisa syrup.

 Liv.52 is a popular herbal medication containing a combination of about seven different herbs used for treatment of liver problems.

*Achillean millefolium*, this herb has anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant and diuretic properties which confers hepatoprotective activity to patients with cirrhotic livers.

*Chicory*, the herb has strong antioxidants properties that protect the liver against alcohol toxicity.

*Caper bush*, known to have hepatoprotective properties since it suppress stressful oxidative markers like malondialdehyde as well as AST and ALT.

 Pilex is the second herbal preparation available without prescription for the treatment of haemorrhoids. It comes in tablet and ointment formulations. The preparation is well known for its fast action to stop bleeding and pain, the ointment also soothe the itchy and inflamed piles.

*Neem,* the herb has very strong antimicrobial effect.

*Chebulic myrobalan*, known to have anti-inflammatory properties useful in wound healing.

*Mesua ferrea*, the herb possesses haemostatic properties making it useful in controlling bleeding fast.

*Golden shower tree*, wound healing and antimicrobial properties.

 Bonnisan liquid is a must have preparation for new mothers. The tonic is widely used to relieve colic in neonates, it also takes care of flatulence and indigestion, as well as improving appetite in children. The following herbs contribute to the above effects.

*Dill oil,* potent antispasmodic herb with gas relieving properties. It also helps to protect the gut mucus membrane.

*Cardamom*, it helps to improve appetite and aid in digestion.

*Lay pepper*, relieves colic and has carmative properties.

*Gooseberry,* has anti secretory attributes on top of known antispasmodic action.

 Use of herbal medicine is as old as man's civilization, they have been used for centuries such that it evolved into a way of life in many societies. Although different cultures have varied perspectives on use of herbal preparation, there are some common underlying reasons that make a majority of people use herbal remedies.

 Many people use herbal preparations for what they consider to be mild to moderate illness, this may be conditions like flu, colds or when they suffer from stomach upsets.

 For others the high cost and availability of conventional drugs will determine the decision to go herbal or not. Herbal remedies are mostly affordable and easily accessible in a number of places like supermarkets, open markets, some even grow on farms. This easy-accessibility promotes more usage of herbal based products.

 There is a group of patients suffering from chronic diseases and used allopathic drugs without much success for some time. For this category of patients opting to herbal remedies as an alternative treatment regime remains the only viable option.

 In general, the motivation to use herbal medicine does not stem from one single factor but a combination of reasons. In one study done in Germany, (Welz A.N; Emberger K.A & Menrad K. 2018) while investigating why people use herbal medicine. Found out that different groups of people had varied reason to why they took herbal drugs. In addition to the above mentioned reasons, they observed that others opted to use herbs for the general well-being and fitness. This observation ties well with the unique characteristic of herbal remedies, that they possess both nutritive and curative attributes. Good example is seen in the consumption of some fruits, vegetables, beverages et cetera. (Jiang T.A 2019).

 Lately there has been an explosion of many herbal medicine on the market. Some familiar, because they are of local origin and some totally strange coming in from different parts of the world. It is important also to mention that as this influx happens, the mechanism of regulation in this subsector is underdeveloped or lacking as compared to systems applicable to conventional drugs. It therefore becomes challenging to ascertain the quality of these drugs in terms of efficacy and potency, their safety profile, drug interactions, side effects, impurities like heavy metals and other dangerous substance that constitute them. Despite the wide held misconception that herbal products are natural and therefore safe, herbs can have negative effects, poisonous and fatal. Care and high level of expertise is required during their preparation. Take an example of Rhubarb, the roots and bark are edible whereas the leaves are poisonous if ingested.

 To bring in perspective the three drugs that are a subject of this review. Let us examine the principles that guide their manufacture.

 Liv.52, Pilex and Bonnisan liquid are Ayurvedic preparations. Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word that loosely translates to the science of life. The practice has been in existence for over 3,000 years and the therapeutic and safety characteristics of individual herbs have been documented over the years. Lately, another body of evidence from scientific trials has added to this existing knowledge, these new evidence has confirmed the pre-existing anecdotal efficacy claims laid on this products and equally dismissed others altogether. For example, in their highly referenced book (Rotblat M. & Ziment I., 2001) have clearly outlined the efficacy, safety, pharmacology, clinical trial evidence and historical use of some individual herbs used today in Ayurvedic medicine.

 For our case, the three representative drugs have a chest full of evidence to support their efficacy and safety profile. Liv.52 claims of treating a number of liver diseases are based on clinical trials evidence. (Asim, Goatam & Rugueds, 2013) ;( Girish et al., 2009). Pilex effects on haemorrhoids is also supported with documented evidence as seen in (Gupta, Ghoshi & Bisnus, 1980) just to mention a few. In this regard my opinion is that this herbal medication do work, it is an obvious fact that has been proved by clinical practice experience and clinical trial body of evidence.

 Liv.52, Pilex, and Bonnisan are herbal medicines available in supermarkets and pharmacies without a prescription. They are indicated for liver diseases, haemorrhoids, indigestion and neonatal colic respectively. The drugs being of herbal origin and having been in use for many years with no known side effects, have found a wide use among many patients for various personal reasons. With accumulating scientific evidence supporting their efficacy and safety, it becomes imperative to consider them as an important complementary aspect in the successful management of different diseases.

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