ETHNOBOTANY

Ethnobotanical Medicines Exercise

Adapted from Teaching eHRAF Exercise 3.1: Topics in Medical Anthropology, Section 5: Ethnobotany and its Medical Uses by Christiane Cunnar
This exercise asks you to explore ethnobotanical practices across several societies.

**ETHNOBOTANICAL MEDICINE**
EXERCISE DETAILS

TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

➤ HRAF Access

➤ Worksheet and pen or other materials for recording answers

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of this assignment, you will be able to:

➤ compare and contrast the cultural views regarding medicinal properties of common plants, herbs, and fruits.

➤ construct effective and efficient search strategies in eHRAF in order to retrieve data relevant to a specific topic/assignment.

➤ appreciate the cultural diversity of medicinal knowledge across the globe
In many traditional medical practices, plants, herbs, and fruits are used for their healing properties.

Assembled herbs. Jonas Weckschmied on Flickr. Public Domain Image
For example, the antiseptic properties of garlic are known to a great number of societies. Garlic has been used to cure everything from bites, colds, boils, and furuncles, to wounds and fevers.

A basket of garlic cloves from the farmer’s market. By Jeremy Keith from Brighton & Hove, United Kingdom [CC BY 2.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons
Ginger is also widespread as a remedy. It is not only used for treating eye inflammations, stomach-aches, fevers and colds, but it is also used for childbirth.

Ginger and its Varieties. McCormick and company [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons
Rosemary is a good “general” herbal medication and will cure everything from headaches to toothaches.

Rosemary sketch. By Unknown artist from Italy [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons
In this exercise, you will explore the medicinal uses of a specific plant, herb, or fruit across a number of societies and world regions in order to better grasp variations in traditional medicinal practices.

ASSIGNMENT

Selection of Apothecary Jars. Wellcome Images. UK CC 4.0 via Wikimedia.
ASSIGNMENT PART 1

Choose a plant, herb, or fruit from the following list

➤ Garlic
➤ Basil
➤ Ginger
➤ Ginseng
➤ Juniper
➤ Mint
➤ Parsley
➤ Rosemary
➤ Sage
ASSIGNMENT PART 1

Now, create a table of your chosen plant & medicinal uses across the world.

- Perform an advanced search in eHRAF.
- Combine the name of your plant (as a keyword) with medicinally-related OCM identifiers across world regions.

*Tip: Use OCM subjects such as bodily injuries, mental and magical therapy, medical therapy, pharmaceuticals, child birth, post-natal care, and more.*

Example Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture Name</th>
<th>Bodily Injuries</th>
<th>Magical Therapy</th>
<th>Childbirth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural A</td>
<td>Basil leaves and stems crushed and applied as a poultice to open wounds and burns</td>
<td>Basil leaves crumbled and spread at doorways to ward off evil energies</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture B</td>
<td>Basil root applied to skin over sprains</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Basil stems chewed by mother, burned as incense in room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Across societies in your table, are there similar symptoms that this plant is used to treat—or similar effects that it is used to produce? *List the symptoms/syndromes and societies. (5 minutes)*

2. Do any of societies explain the effects of your chosen plant (or the illness the plant is used to treat) in identical (or nearly identical) ways? Explain. (5 minutes)
A selection of jars containing herbs and other ingredients used by Cunning folk in Britain. Museum of Witchcraft. Photo by Midnightblueowl. CC 1.0
The following rubric is suggested for evaluating responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Part 1: Data Collection</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory (0%)</th>
<th>Needs Improvement (25%)</th>
<th>Satisfactory (75%)</th>
<th>Outstanding (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table for plant use in eHRAF is absent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
<td>Tables for plant use is sparsely filled in with very few societies.</td>
<td>Table for plant use include multiple societies across several subjects</td>
<td>Table for plant use includes multiple societies across diverse subjects and include citations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Part 2: Questions 1-2</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major points are not clear.</td>
<td>Commentary on research findings is not comprehensive and /or persuasive.</td>
<td>Evaluation and analysis of research findings is accurate. Major points are stated.</td>
<td>Evaluation and analysis of research findings is accurate and persuasive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific examples are not used.</td>
<td>Major points are addressed, but not well supported.</td>
<td>Responses are adequate and address the question at hand.</td>
<td>Major points are stated clearly and are well supported.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
<td>Responses are inadequate or do not address topic or response to the questions</td>
<td>Content is accurate</td>
<td>Responses are excellent and address questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Specific examples do not support topic or response to the questions.</td>
<td>A specific example from the research is used.</td>
<td>Content is clear.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Several specific examples from the research are used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES

➤ Check out the *Advanced Search Tutorial* for detailed instructions on conducting searches in eHRAF World Cultures.

➤ For information on ethnobotanical practices in the archaeological record, check out *eHRAF Archaeology*.

➤ For more exercises and teaching resources related to human societies past and present, explore *Teaching eHRAF*.

➤ For a more detailed version of this particular exercise with additional questions and activities check out Teaching eHRAF *Exercise 3.1: Topics in Medical Anthropology, Section 5: Ethnobotany and its Medical Uses* by Christiane Cunnar.