

THE UTILIZATION OF ALIEN INVASIVE MEDICINAL PLANTS IN THE
TREATMENT OF HIV/AIDS RELATED SYMPTOMS BY TRADITIONAL HEALERS
OF VHEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

By

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ABSTRACT

The utilization of invasive therapeutic plants assumes an essential part in the lives of provincial groups, concerning nourishment security, elaborate purposes and also essential human services.

The study presents the results of a survey of alien invasive plants used for the treatment of HIV/AIDS related symptoms. The study was conducted in Vhembe District municipality. Twenty one traditional healers were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. Parameters recorded during the interviews were local plant names, symptoms treated, plant parts used, life form and availability. Ethnobotanical information obtained from traditional healers, has revealed the use of 38 alien invasive plant species belonging to 24 different families, the most frequently used plant species were *Solanum mauritianum*, *Ricinus communis*, *Melia azedarach*, *Eucalyptus paniculata*, *Argemone ochroleuca* and *Agave sisalana*.

The six alien invasive medicinal plant species found to be commonly used for the treatment of HIV/AIDS related symptoms based on their frequency of use and little literature providing details regarding their antibacterial action were exposed to Minimum Inhibition Concentration (MIC) method.

Antibacterial testing using *Escherichia coli* (ATCC 35218), *Staphylococcus aureus* (ATCC 25923- Methicillin resistant), *Staphylococcus aureus* (ATCC 33591- Methicillin susceptible) and *Klebsiella pneumonia* (ATCC 700603) as testing organisms with the minimum MIC of ≥ 0.039 mg/ml and maximum value of ≥ 50.0 mg/ml.

From the study, medicinal alien invasive plant species play a vital role in the traditional primary healthcare services and in agriculture services. It is recommended that traditional healers and community members should be educated about economical gathering of the alien invasive medicinal plants. Traditional medicine practice in the Vhembe District Municipality is useful, and further pharmacological investigations is needed to check the cytotoxicity of the plant extracts.

Key words: Alien invasive medicinal plants, HIV/AIDS, Traditional healers, Vhembe District Municipality, Antimicrobial activity