Herbal use by Latinos in Madison:

From Complexity to the Clinic

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WREN
Conference theme

- Assumption #1: we’ve met each other
- Assumption #2: we’d like to work together
- Assumption #3: common mission (helping people, improving health, “stamping out disease”, etc.)
- Challenge: using our unique perspectives
Ethnobotany

- The study of uses of plants by indigenous peoples
  - Relationships between plants, people, and culture
- Ethnomedicine = study of the dynamic relationship between people, the environment, culture, and their healing practices
  - Michael Balick, Ph.D.
Hypothesis

- Given: herbal medicine use is a significant, and often honored part, of traditional medicine systems in other countries
- Understand herbal medicine use practices in immigrant populations
- Apply to all demographics
- Improve safety and efficacy of herbal use
What “we” know

• Plant use outside allopathic clinics
  – Herb-drug interactions
  – Polyherbacy

• Basic knowledge
  – Which plants
  – Ethnic group differences
    • “Hispanic”, “Latino”
    • 4-100% use plants

• Plants
  – <1% screened
  – Ethno-screen
    • “Powerful plants”
  – Apprentices scarce

Gardiner, 2012; Juckett, 2013
What “we” don’t know (yet)

• What species?
• Where?
  – Info
  – Plants
• For what?

• Methods
  – Qualitative
  – Convenience sampling
    • Focus groups
    • Interviews
  – UW IRB exemption
Our questions

• Which plants?
• How often?
• For what?
• Where get them?
• Where learn?
• When plants vs MD?
• Diagnoses:
  – GI, cholesterol, arthritis
Results

• 8 interviews and focus groups
• 42 people
• 199 minutes audio
• 58 plants
  – See handout
• Plants > MD
• Info sources varied
Common names

• Jengibre (ginger)  
  – *Zingiber officinale*

• Hierba buena (peppermint)  
  – *Mentha x piperita*
  – *Mentha spicata*

• Estafiate  
  – Wormwood (epazote)  
  – *Artemesia maritima, A. absinthia, A. annua, A. pontica*
Retail sites

Figure 1: The number of herbal products sold for herbal medicine retail outlets in Madison

- Dried = 7
- Topical = 11
- Spices = 16
- Dietary Supplements = 0
- Fresh = 3
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Community Gardens

- Foods/Medicines
  - Nopal (Prickly pear)

- Community Action Coalition
  - Marlborough (Latino)
  - Quann (Hmong)

- UW
  - Eagle Heights
  - 60 languages (Mandarin)
Let’s meet one

• Hierba luisa
• Lemon grass
• Citral (aroma)
  – Anti-spasmodic
  – Anti-bacterial
• “Calmante” (GI)
• Fiebre
• Infusion
Clinical pearls

• Ask (“Hear”, H.E.R.B.A.L.)
• Food-medicines
• Polyherbacy
  – Cross check with meds
• Common name confusion
Future (what we don’t know yet)

• Sourcing, plant identification
  – Latin binomial

• Increase communication (clinics, PCPs)
  – Safety
  – Plant-pharma interactions
  – Scenario: on-line

• Latinos: country-by-country
  – Apply this analysis to other ethnic groups
Common Mission, Multiple Approaches
¡Gracias!