

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS: USAGE,
INDICATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS ON
PHARMACIST'S ROLE IN SARAWAK**

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Abstract

Background: The interest of the world population has shifted towards the usage of herbal and dietary supplement (HDS) intended for health. HDS are readily available for sale in many stores and online shopping including in community pharmacies. Pharmacist plays an essential role on maintaining the safe use of these products. **Objectives:** The aim of this study is to evaluate the usage and indications of herbal and dietary supplements among the general public residing in Sarawak as well as their expectations on the professional role of pharmacist with respect to HDS. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted by a convenient sampling. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed in different cities across Sarawak. **Results:** A total of 209 of general public residing in Sarawak participated in this survey. Majority of the respondents were female (67.0%), ranging from 18-24 years (69.9%) with a low income status (75.2%) and without health problem (53.6%). The leading classification of HDS consumed was vitamins and minerals (57.8%), followed by health supplement (47.6%) and only one-fifth (20.9%) are taking herbal products. The common type of HDS consumed are vitamin C, multivitamins, collagen-containing products, fish oil and *Nigella sativa*. The two most popular indications were general health (42.4%) and weight-loss (22.9%). Most of the respondents thought it was important for pharmacists to be knowledgeable on HDS (88.5%), but only half of them (56.4%) felt that community pharmacist have enough knowledge on the matter. **Conclusion:** The usage of herbal and dietary supplements was common among the public in Sarawak. Pharmacists should improve their role as professionals in giving appropriate information and advice to the consumers based on their expectations.

Keywords: usage and indications, herbs, dietary supplement, general public, Sarawak, role of pharmacist.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

2.1 Introduction

The world population has shifted their interest to the complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) to treat or maintain health conditions. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) further classified CAM into five categories namely alternative whole medical systems, mind-body interventions, biologically based therapies, manipulative and body-based methods and energy therapies. In the United States (U.S.), biologically based therapies such as herbal and dietary supplements are most commonly used. (Ventola, 2010).

According to U.S. Food and Drug Administration, a dietary supplement is a product intended for ingestion that contains a dietary ingredients intended to add further nutritional value to the diet. Examples of dietary supplements are vitamins, minerals, amino acid, or a concentrate, metabolite, constituent or extract. Herb is a plant or part of the plant used for its scent, flavour, and/or therapeutic properties to supplement the diet (Mehta, Gardiner, Phillips, & McCarthy, 2008). Herbs can be combined with other dietary ingredients and becoming a dietary supplement product. HDS are often used to soothe or treat common ailments, reduce suffering, relieve pain as well as maintain health conditions (Mehta et al., 2008).