

REVIEW

Traditional natural medicine, an alternative to the treatment of psychiatric disorders

La medicina natural tradicional, una alternativa al tratamiento de enfermedades psiquiátricas

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ABSTRACT

The origins of natural and traditional medicine are closely linked to the history of humankind and its struggle for survival. This speciality includes a set of methods and techniques that aim to restore balance within the individual and between the individual and the universe. The integration of therapeutic resources for the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases has been developed in a sustained and systematic manner in our country. Some of the pathologies that succumb to such resources are psychiatric illnesses, including anxiety, depression and insomnia. Natural and Traditional Medicine offers a set of modalities for their treatment, including: Acupressure, Auriculotherapy, Phytotherapy and Apitherapy. The objective of this work was to describe the therapeutic use of some modalities of Natural and Traditional Medicine in the treatment of psychiatric disorders. To achieve this, 21 bibliographies were consulted.

Keywords: Psychiatric Disorders; Acupressure; Auriculotherapy; Phytopharmaceuticals; Apipharmaceuticals.

RESUMEN

El origen de la Medicina Natural y Tradicional está íntimamente unido a la historia del hombre en su lucha por la supervivencia. Esta especialidad incluye un conjunto de métodos y técnicas que pretenden restablecer el equilibrio en el individuo y entre él y el universo. La integración de los recursos terapéuticos de esta para la prevención, tratamiento y rehabilitación de enfermedades, se ha desarrollado de forma sostenida y sistemática en nuestro país. Algunas de las patologías que sucumben ante tales recursos son las enfermedades psiquiátricas, e inmersas en ellas: la ansiedad, depresión e insomnio. La Medicina Natural y Tradicional ofrece un conjunto de modalidades para su tratamiento, entre ellas: la Digitopuntura, la Auriculoterapia, la Fitoterapia y la Apiterapia. Se propuso como objetivo del trabajo: describir el uso terapéutico de algunas modalidades de la Medicina Natural y Tradicional en el tratamiento de los trastornos psiquiátricos. Para dar cumplimiento al mismo fueron consultadas 21 bibliografías.

Palabras clave: Enfermedades Psiquiátricas; Digitopuntura; Auriculoterapia; Fitofármacos; Apifármacos.

INTRODUCTION

Medicine is the product of man's activity and social development, and it originates when his instinct to preserve life and alleviate pain drives him to influence nature.⁽¹⁾

Throughout history, man has posed the problem of the balance between health and disease. Initially, diseases were thought to be caused by the discontent of the gods or by demons. About 2500 years ago, in the ancient Chinese, Indian, and Greek civilizations, belief in the supernatural was replaced by the belief that health resulted from a balance of natural forces in the body and that illness was evidence of its loss.⁽¹⁾

The origin of Natural and Traditional Medicine (NTM) is intimately linked to the origin of humanity and the history of man's struggle for survival. It is considered a specialty that includes a set of therapeutic methods and techniques aimed at restoring balance in the individual and between the individual and the universe.⁽²⁾

MNT, known internationally as alternative, energetic nat, realistic, or complementary, is part of the universal cultural heritage, i.e., concepts and practices handed down from generation to generation.¹ It includes homeopathy, phytotherapy, acupuncture, acupressure, ozone therapy, apitherapy, and moxibustion, among others.⁽³⁾

Primitive man, in his first pain, instinctively took his hand to the painful area and tried to soothe it by massaging it, pressing it, constituting the first maneuver of acupressure. He used bamboo or fish thorns until the discovery of metals, using gold and silver needles, giving way to acupuncture. Other Asian countries where acupuncture developed were Korea and Vietnam. In the West, Jesuit missionaries at the court of Louis XIV of France visited China and coined acupuncture (acus: needle and puncture: puncture). In 1809, Berlioz placed the first needle; the practice spread throughout Europe and is now practiced worldwide.⁽⁴⁾

Auriculotherapy comes etymologically from the Greek *terapia*, which means to cure, and Latin *auricula*, which means ear. It is presented as a branch of acupuncture because it is practiced using Chinese needles. Its origin is uncertain, but it is undoubtedly known that it comes from the East. The Frenchman Dr. Paul Nogier was the first to create a detailed mapping of the auricle between 1954 and 1956. This method of treatment is a microsystem of acupuncture that diagnoses and treats various illnesses. It consists of the stimulation of nerve endings in the ear, which connect it to the rest of the body so that when one part of the ear is stimulated, it will affect the part of the organism related to that area. It is based on the idea that the ear represents the rest of the body.⁽⁵⁾

As far as phytotherapy is concerned, plants were initially used as food. It is unknown how the idea of using them as medicines came about. Probably, man began to try unknown plants to get to know new species that could also be used as food and thus experience different effects. In this way, man acquired more and more knowledge about using plants, which was passed on orally to other civilizations.⁽⁶⁾

In the Middle Ages, little progress was made in the knowledge of plants. Still, a great deal of valuable information was gathered, which would later help develop phytotherapy.⁽⁵⁾

Apitherapy is also one of the modalities of MNT widely used worldwide and has recently become very popular. Using honey and other bee products, such as apitoxins, pollen, propolis, and royal jelly, alone or in combination, has shown significant efficacy in treating various diseases. Hippocrates wrote about apitherapy, describing it as 'the pharmacy of heaven', which is mentioned in Chinese texts dating back 2000 years.⁽⁵⁾

The World Health Organisation (WHO), in the context of its 29th World Assembly, held in 1978 in Geneva, Switzerland, recognized for the first time the importance of traditional and natural medicine practitioners and the medicines and techniques they use; it also promotes the appropriate use of conventional systems of medicine as part of primary health care programs and thus stimulates the study of their potential usefulness as one of the fundamental pillars on which this care should be based.⁽²⁾

At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a decline in the use of natural medicine due to the boom in scientific advances, mainly in the field of chemistry, which led to an increase in the use of synthetic substances.⁽²⁾

It is important to note that MNT was conceived as a unique heritage of the Eastern hemisphere; however, over time, it has spread worldwide and can now be found in many countries.⁽¹⁾

This form of care is close to home, accessible, and affordable. It is culturally accepted and trusted by very many people. The affordability of most traditional medicines makes them more attractive in the context of spiraling healthcare costs and near-universal austerity. Conventional medicine also stands out as a means to address the relentless rise in chronic non-communicable diseases. Regardless of the reasons for turning to Natural and Traditional Medicine, there is no doubt that interest in them has increased and will continue to increase worldwide.⁽²⁾

In this respect, the Programme for the Development of Traditional and Natural Medicine in Cuba was approved in 1996. In 2002, Agreement No. 4282 of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers was adopted, establishing a series of measures, including creating a National Centre for the Development of TRM. This program is included in the National Health System. The modalities of natural and traditional medicine are defined in Ministerial Resolution No. 261 of 24 August 2009, which include phytotherapy, apitherapy, traditional Asian medicine, ozone therapy, homeopathy, floral therapy, medical hydrology, heliothalassotherapy, traditional therapeutic exercises, and naturopathic nutritional guidance.⁽²⁾

The MNT development plan was recently endorsed with number 158 of the Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution, approved during the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba.

2011, the current National Programme was updated based on the experiences acquired.⁽²⁾

In recent years, the Ministry of Public Health has developed a group of tasks to strengthen the National Programme for the Development of MNT. A priority element has been the production, marketing, and rational use of natural products. Since 2013, 34 products produced on an industrial scale have been included in the Basic List of Natural Products, including several lines of app pharmaceuticals, phytopharmaceuticals, and homeopathic products. These medicines are available to the public in all pharmacies throughout the country.⁽²⁾

Since traditional and natural medicine was incorporated into the national health system, the integration of therapeutic resources for the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of many pathologies has been sustained and systematic in the country. Among these pathologies are psychiatric illnesses, including anxiety, depression, and insomnia; their treatment with some of the MNT modalities is the motivation and primary focus of this work.

Given the development achieved in this field and the need to expand knowledge of MNT at present, it was decided to review several existing bibliographies to explain the use of acupuncture, auriculotherapy, phytopharmaceuticals, and apipharmaceuticals in the treatment of the psychiatric disorders mentioned above. The scientific problem is: What applications does MNT have in the treatment of psychiatric pathologies? The work aims to describe the therapeutic use of some Natural and Traditional Medicine modalities in treating psychiatric disorders. To fulfill this objective, 21 bibliographies were consulted.

Objective

To describe the therapeutic use of some Natural and Traditional Medicine modalities in treating psychiatric disorders.

DEVELOPMENT

Mental illnesses or disorders impact thinking, feelings, mood, and behavior. They can be occasional or long-lasting (chronic) and can affect one's ability to relate to others and function daily.⁽⁷⁾

There is no single cause of mental illness. Several factors can contribute to the risk of mental illness, for example, genes and family history, life experiences such as stress or abuse, especially during childhood, biological factors such as chemical imbalances in the brain, traumatic brain injury, a mother's exposure to viruses or chemicals, alcohol or drug use, serious illnesses such as cancer, etc.⁽⁷⁾

There are many different types of mental disorders. Some common ones include:⁽⁷⁾

- Anxiety disorders, including panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and phobias.
- Depression, bipolar disorder, and other mood disorders.
- Eating disorders.
- Personality disorders.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Sleep disorders.
- Psychotic disorders, including schizophrenia.⁽⁷⁾

Within these disorders, the following are of interest for the present work: anxiety disorders, depression, and sleep disorders, which are defined as follows:

Anxiety

Anxiety is an emotion in human beings that is aimed at increasing physiological activation to become alert to possible external threats and to mobilize towards action to overcome these threats, which has undoubtedly been fundamental for the survival of our species. From this point of view, anxiety is something healthy and positive that helps us in life, as long as it is a reaction to certain dangers or specific problems of everyday life.⁽⁷⁾

Generalized anxiety disorder increases in prevalence with age and is characterized by the almost constant presence of nervousness and worry, accompanied by neurovegetative, motor, and psychological signs and symptoms.⁽⁷⁾

Anxiety disorders can manifest with diverse and not always the same symptoms, such as hyperventilation, tachycardia, sweating of the body or hands, chest pressure, dizziness, and general malaise.⁽⁷⁾

Pharmacological treatment consists of the use of antidepressants (AD) due to the serotonergic increase in the brain that promotes anxiolytic effects, as well as anxiolytics to alleviate symptoms. Psychoanalysis with a psychiatrist or psychologist can also obtain good results. The synergy of both is the most effective, but people look for quick solutions in our environment and prefer medication. Therefore, psychoanalysis is slower and, although practical, consumes less. The main disadvantage of the use of anxiolytics and antidepressants in 35 % of the population is the dependence that is generated when these drugs are withdrawn. Usually, a large part of the population is not sensitive to this withdrawal, which is well tolerated. Still, the problem arises when, after two weeks of slow withdrawal, they are not well and require the use of these drugs again.⁽⁷⁾

Depression

Depression is a severe clinical illness. It is more than just feeling 'sad' for a few days. If you are one of the more than 19 million young people and adults in the U.S. who have depression, those feelings do not go away.⁽⁸⁾

They persist and interfere with your daily life. Symptoms may include:⁽⁸⁾

- Feeling sad or "empty."
- Loss of interest in favorite activities.
- Increased or loss of appetite.
- Not being able to sleep or sleeping too much.
- Feeling very tired.
- Feeling hopeless, irritable, anxious, or guilty.
- Headaches, cramps, or digestive problems.
- Thoughts of death or suicide.⁽⁸⁾

Depression is a disorder of the brain. There are many causes, including genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors. Depression can begin at any age but usually starts in youth.

Insomnia

Sleep is a physiological and psychological restorative process, a determining factor in the state of health, and an essential part of the human cycle. Chemical mediators involved in sleep are known to exist on the physiological side, and there is evidence that biogenic amines, serotonin, and catecholamine are involved in sleep regulation.¹⁻⁵ In the occurrence of sleep disorders, several authors find an incidence of 20 % of some forms of sleep disturbance in a presumably normal population.⁽⁹⁾

Insomnia is the most common sleep disorder and manifests itself in 3 ways:⁽⁹⁾

- Initial: difficulty in falling asleep.
- Intermediate: waking up once or several times during the night with difficulty falling back asleep.
- Terminal: i wake up very early and cannot sleep anymore.

Can be:⁽⁹⁾

- Transient or acute: short, from a few days to 3 weeks. The most frequent causes are tiredness, anxiety, depression, pain, excessive coffee, alcohol and tobacco. A good recovery can be achieved if habits are changed, although the effect is not immediate.
- Secondary or chronic: long lasting, from 3 weeks to several years. It is caused by other pathologies, such as anxiety disorders, endogenous depression, drug and/or alcohol abuse, high blood pressure, heart failure, or fibromyalgia, among others.

The causes of insomnia are:⁽⁹⁾

- Primary: anxiety, stress, or depression.
- Secondary: late and copious dinners, changes in sleep schedules, hot flashes, consumption of stimulating substances, side effects of drugs, etc.

This sleep disorder reduces the quality of life and health of the sufferer. Some of the effects of lack of sleep are:

- Mood swings.
- Anxiety, irritability, and depression.
- Exhaustion and general malaise.
- Difficulty concentrating and paying attention.
- Poor memory.
- Difficulty in decision-making.

Extraordinary advances have been made in the treatment of mental illness. As a result, it is now possible to treat many psychiatric disorders almost as successfully as it is possible to treat physical disorders. Most methods of treatment of psychiatric illnesses can be classified as somatic and psychotherapeutic.⁽¹⁰⁾

Somatic treatments include drugs, electroconvulsive therapy, and other treatments that stimulate the brain (such as transcranial magnetic stimulation and vagus nerve stimulation).

Psychotherapeutic treatments include psychotherapy (individual, group, or family and marital), behavioral therapy techniques (e.g., relaxation techniques or exposure therapy), and hypnotherapy.⁽¹⁰⁾

For significant mental health disorders, most studies suggest that a treatment approach involving the combined use of medication and psychotherapy will be more effective than either treatment method used alone.⁽¹⁰⁾

The following is a summary of the main drugs used for the treatment of psychiatric disorders:⁽¹⁰⁾

1. For anxiety:⁽¹⁰⁾
 - SSRIs: fluoxetine, paroxetine, sertraline, Buspirone, etc.
2. For depression:⁽¹⁰⁾
 - SSRIs: fluoxetine, paroxetine, sertraline, etc.
 - Atypical antidepressants: bupropion, mirtazapine.
3. For sleep disorders:⁽¹⁰⁾
 - Melatonin agonists: melatonin ramelteon (Rozerem).
 - Antihistamines: diphenhydramine (Benadryl), hydroxyzine (Atarax, Vistaril).
 - Alpha two agonists: clonidine (Catapres, Kapvay), guanfacine (Tenex, Intuniv).
 - Atypical antidepressants: mirtazapine (Remeron), trazodone (Desyrel).

In parallel to this pharmacological treatment, Natural and Traditional Medicine offers a set of modalities, techniques, or preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitative procedures scientifically validated for treating these pathologies. These alternatives include acupressure, auriculotherapy, phytotherapy, and apitherapy. Their main applications are described below:

Digitopuncture

Digitopuncture is the digital massage that has become one more possibility of Alternative Medicine, consisting of influencing with the fingers, generally one of them, on a series of points distributed throughout the organism in hypothetical meridians for therapeutic and prophylactic purposes.⁽¹¹⁾

This technique originated in ancient China and is closely related to acupuncture, as it uses the same points along the meridians or channels in the body (considered access points to the energy pathways). However, they vary in the fact that, in the case of acupressure, finger pressure is used to stimulate (or unblock energies by restoring balance and eliminating disorders), whereas, in the case of acupuncture, it uses needle insertion.⁽¹¹⁾

It is believed that vital energy, or a life force called qi (ch'i), flows through these invisible channels. It is also thought that these 12 main meridians connect specific organs or networks of organs, organizing a system of communication through it. According to this theory, disease can occur when one of these meridians is blocked or imbalanced.⁽¹¹⁾

Acupressure practitioners use fingers, palms, elbows, feet, or special devices to apply pressure to acupuncture points on the body's meridians. Sometimes, acupressure also involves stretching massage.⁽¹¹⁾

Acupressure is especially used to treat generally mild pain (headache, backache, etc.), colds and flu, arthritis, allergies, asthma, nervous tension, menstrual cramps, sinusitis, sprains, and tennis elbow, among other conditions. Insomnia, nervousness, anxiety, and nausea also respond favorably to acupressure treatment.⁽¹¹⁾

It is effective in preventing and curing illnesses, prophylaxis of some psychosomatic disorders, and symptomatic treatment of pain once these are established. In short, it can prevent, alleviate, or even cure conditions, especially functional ones.⁽¹¹⁾

Basic principles:⁽¹¹⁾

- The patient must be motivated towards the use of this procedure.
- Always explain to the patient what this method consists of and its purpose, possibilities, and advantages.
- A preliminary diagnosis is necessary.
- Treat the patient in a pleasant room, neither cold nor excessively hot.
- The hands of the acupressure therapist should be clean, and the nails should be trimmed.
- The therapist should be confident in their actions, following a logical sequence and without hesitation.
- The duration and degree of intensity of application on a given point depends on the patient's ability to tolerate the influence.⁽¹¹⁾

Main techniques:⁽¹¹⁾

- Nailing with a finger.
- Digital rubbing.
- Fingernail Puncture.
- Digital pressure.
 - a. Simple pressure.
 - b. Pressure with vibration.

- Digital Clamp.
- Digital rubbing.
 - a. Horizontal rubbing with the entire surface of the thumb.
 - b. Lateral thumb rubbing.

Other variants:⁽¹¹⁾

- Gripping method.
- Punching method:
 - a. Thumb driving.
 - b. Half-finger driving.
 - c. Tridigital driving.

These techniques described above depend on the need to tone up, disperse, or harmonize the body's energy.⁽¹¹⁾

- Toning: used mainly to tone up the body, increase digestive secretions, combat fatigue, and keep alert.
- Disperse: it is mainly used to relieve pain, muscle reduction tension, and lower high blood pressure, among other effects.
- Harmonising: this method can be used in all situations.

Precautions and contraindications:⁽¹¹⁾

- Poorly nourished patient (fasting) or in the immediate postprandial period.
- Fatigued patient (just arrived, in a hurry).
- Patients with a very weak physical constitution.
- Localised points on the fontanelles should not be used for children.
- It is not recommended that pregnant women be treated except by highly qualified personnel.
- In pregnant women under three months old, acupressure on the lower abdomen, lumbar region, and sacrum is prohibited.
- Acupressure should not be applied to the upper abdomen in pregnant women older than three months.
- The main prohibited points for pregnant women are IG4, VB21, B6, V60, and V67.

Acupressure in the treatment of anxiety

Digitopuncture is an easy method to apply anywhere without medical instruments, so it is of utmost importance that all health personnel have the minimum knowledge to carry out this procedure.⁽¹¹⁾

Acupressure is an ancient healing technique based on acupuncture, a traditional Chinese medicinal practice. With acupressure, pressure is applied to specific places on the body. These places are called acupoints. Applying pressure to these points serves to soothe muscle tension and increase blood circulation.⁽¹²⁾

The pressure point Extra-1, also known as Yin Tang, is located at the midpoint between the eyebrows. Acupressure on this point can relieve stress and anxiety. You can acupressure on this point several times daily or as often as necessary to make the symptoms disappear.⁽¹²⁾

Acupressure in the treatment of depression

The points used for the treatment of depression are Baihui (DM 20), Yintang (EX-NH 3), Fengchi (VB 20), Fengfu (DM 16), Dazhui (DM 14), Neiguan (PC 6) and Sanyinjiao (B 6). Others can be stimulated, such as Hegu (IG 4), Taichong (H 3), Zusanli (E 36), Qihai (RM 6), Qimen (H 14), etc.⁽¹³⁾

Acupressure in the treatment of Insomnia

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the 24 hours of the day pass between Yin and Yang, with the night being the most Yin period associated with darkness, stillness, and cold. The day is the most Yang period associated with light, activity, and warmth.⁽¹⁴⁾

Sleep depends on the Fire element, one of TCM's five elements. The heart is the most essential organ of this element, and its functions go beyond the organ itself, influencing sleep and mental activity.⁽¹⁴⁾

During the day, brain activity depends on Yang as our brain is at full capacity, causing Yin to decrease throughout the day, which recovers at night through rest and sleep. If you have insomnia, this system is unbalanced, and Yang is predominant, which can cause you to be unable to fall asleep because you need a calmer, more Yin situation in your body and mind to sleep well.⁽¹⁴⁾

Although there are many types of insomnia, and each has its treatment, here are some general points to stimulate with a light circular massage with the fingertip for a couple of minutes on each point: clockwise and counterclockwise for another minute. These points are:⁽¹⁴⁾

- Pericardium 6 (PC 6) (figure 2): Nei Guan is the Chinese name for this point. This pressure point is located two cun below the wrist crease on the inner side and calms the heart and spirit. Stimulation of this point effectively reduces stress and relaxes the mind and body. Locate the point by measuring two cun below the wrist crease in the middle of the arm.
- Heart 7 (HT 7) (figure 3): the Chinese name for this point is Shen Men (Taling). This pressure point is located in the wrist crease aligned with the little finger and is known to calm the mind and heart, especially when troubled. Acupressure associates this point with insomnia caused by anxiety.
- Gall Bladder 20 (GB 20): Feng Chi is the Chinese name for this point. This pressure point is located on both sides, where the neck muscles attach to the base of the skull. It is one of the most useful acupressure points for combating insomnia.
- Other points used for this purpose are: a mien, G20, B6, R6, V2.

Auriculotherapy

Auriculotherapy is a micro acupuncture system of Traditional Chinese Medicine that consists of treating auricular pavilion reflex points with herbal seeds, drawing pins, or harpoons to promote the therapeutic effect at an endogenous level without using any chemical that requires an organic metabolism. Many studies demonstrate the efficacy of this technique in anxiety disorders.⁽¹⁵⁾

This stimulation, or auricular micro-massage, is carried out in three different ways: by applying pressure with the whole finger, fingertip, or fingernail tip. A special electronic device is even used in auriculotherapy. Seeds and small pellets can also be used to apply pressure. However, the pressure exerted on the treatment region must be progressively increased in each case.⁽¹⁵⁾

Through auriculotherapy, or ear microsystem (figure 1), organic peripheral conditions, imbalances, and diseases are diagnosed and treated by acting directly on the auricular pavilions.

The treatment of anxiety with psychotropic drugs with anxiolytic action is widely used in today's world. Still, it has side effects, such as dependence and depression, when the first doses are taken.

Different modalities of traditional medicine, such as acupuncture and its related techniques, were created and developed by Eastern peoples thousands of years ago but have only recently been recognized in the West; such is the case of auriculotherapy.⁽¹⁵⁾

In the treatment of anxiety

In the treatment of anxiety with auriculotherapy, the points can be stimulated: the auricular shamen, occipital point, heart, liver, spleen, and kidney (figure 1). Their choice is based on traditional Chinese theory and the experience of acupuncturists. In the case of fixed auriculotherapy, seeds may be fixed with adhesive tape to the points. The patient is kept on the treatment in weekly cycles with self-stimulation four times a day and renewed weekly until eight cycles are completed in order to achieve energetic regulation by pressure on the points.⁽¹⁶⁾

Auriculotherapy regulates the organism's nervous equilibrium by normalizing the excitation and inhibition of the cerebral cortex. The existence of a reflex-nerve communication between the ear, cerebral cortex, and the organs means that it acts by balancing and reaching the corresponding areas.⁽¹⁶⁾

In the treatment of depression

The effect of body acupuncture combined with auricular acupuncture in the treatment of depression has been investigated. The auricular acupuncture points used are the heart, liver, spleen, subcortex, inner secretion, and occipital (figure 1).⁽¹⁷⁾

In the treatment of insomnia

According to the criteria of Traditional Asian Medicine, insomnia may be due to a rise in liver fire caused by depression that is transformed into fire and a rise in vital qi energy. Sometimes, an excess of emotional excitement (usually excessive fear) can cause hyperactivity of the heart to fire and affect the kidney yin. This is insufficient, and there is a disharmony between heart and kidney and incoordination between water and fire; when the kidney water does not rise, the heart fire loses control, and the mind becomes restless, with irritability and insomnia.⁽¹⁸⁾

In cases with excess syndromes, the points selected were sangria, occipital, shamen, heart (C), and liver (H). In patients with deficiency syndromes, shamen, occipital, kidney (R), heart (C), and spleen (B) (figure 1) can be applied using Cardoso seeds, placed permanently, covered with sticking plasters for four weeks, and with a weekly medical check-up.⁽¹⁸⁾

Phytopharmaceuticals

Phytopharmaceuticals are medicines whose active ingredients are produced exclusively from plants or parts

of plants. Their use is based on the principles of medicine based on natural science research.⁽¹⁹⁾

The frequency of plant use in psychiatry started to become more evident in the mid-1990s when Grunwald et al. conducted a study in the European population, where the use of plants with sedative and anxiolytic effects accounted for 10 % of sales. Another study by the research group of De Smet and Nolen W. in 1996 found that St. John's Wort was more frequently prescribed than fluoxetine for depression.⁽¹⁹⁾

Herbal medicines have been used for psychosis, depression, anxiety, alcoholism, substance abuse, Alzheimer's, chronic pain syndrome, erectile dysfunction, sleep disorders, and anxiety.⁽¹⁹⁾

These products are not free from adverse effects and have been handled within the concepts of alternative and complementary medicine for years. Therefore, physicians need to know about them, mainly because of the interactions that may occur when using them with other medications.⁽¹⁹⁾

Worldwide, the most commonly used plants for mental disorders are St John's wort, Valerian, and Ginkgo biloba; however, trials have been carried out with others such as Kava and passionflower.⁽¹⁹⁾

In our country, the National Formulary of Phytopharmaceuticals and Apipharmaceuticals recognizes as preparations for the treatment of anxiety:

1. Caña Santa, Fluid Extract:⁽²⁰⁾
 - Pharmaceutical form: fluid extract.
 - Route of administration: oral.
 - Dosage: 20 drops in half a glass of water.
 - Proven biological activity: analgesic, antibacterial, antimutagenic, antioxidant, antipyretic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, antispasmodic, anxiolytic, ascaricide, astringent, carminative, depressant, diaphoretic, digestive, diuretic, emmenagogue, expectorant, fungicide, hypotensive, tonic, uterotonic, vermifuge.
 - Indications: acid indigestion, anxiety, ascaris, headache, mild vascular congestion, diabetes, diarrhea, dysmenorrhoea, dyspepsia, fever, hypertension, infection, insomnia, myalgia, pneumonia, rheumatism.
 - Adverse reactions or side effects: allergy and erythema. It may cause fatigue and general malaise.
 - Contraindications: do not administer to hypotensive patients - Warning: must be filtered - contains fibres that can damage the stomach and silica crystals that are carcinogenic.
2. Ginger, 50 % tincture:⁽²⁰⁾
 - Route of administration: oral.
 - Dosage: 10 to 20 drops in half a glass of water, 2 or 3 times a day
 - Biological activity demonstrated: analgesic, antiaggregant, antiallergic, antibacterial, anticarcinogenic, anticarcinogenic, anticathartic, anticholinergic, anticonvulsant, antidepressant, antiedemic, antiemetic, anti-emenagogue, antihistamine, anti-inflammatory, anti-leukotriene, antilipidemic, cardiogenic, carminative, antiseptic, antioxidant, appetite stimulant, antispasmodic, antitussive, and tonic.
 - Indications: adenopathy, alopecia, Alzheimer's, anorexia, anemia, anxiety, arthrosis, asthma, convulsion, depression, diabetes, spasms, in the treatment of migraine and in muscular and rheumatic disorders.
 - Adverse reactions or side effects: high doses may cause contact dermatitis and gastrointestinal and urinary irritation.
 - Contraindications: not recommended for children under 6 years of age. Not for use in patients with blood clotting disorders or gallstones.
 - Caution: use with caution in cases of peptic ulcer.
3. Chamomile, tincture 20 %:⁽²⁰⁾
 - Route of administration: oral and topical.
 - Dosage: 20 drops in a glass of water, 2 or 3 times daily. Topical (baths/foments 3 to 4 times a day).
 - Proven biological activity: antihistamine, antidepressant, antioxidant, antibacterial, antispasmodic, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, anxiolytic, anti-ulcer, healing, and cholagogue.
 - Indications: used in the treatment of anxiety, depression, cholecystitis, colitis, diarrhea, dyspepsia, hemorrhoids, peptic ulcer, dermatitis, erythema, insomnia.
 - Adverse reactions or side effects: allergic conjunctivitis during eye washing. Allergic contact dermatitis is characterized by erythematous lesions and papules in areas of contact with this plant species due to sesquiterpene lactones.
 - Contraindications: anaphylactic reactions are reported in patients with fever and bronchial

asthma. Refrain from prescribing essential oils internally during pregnancy or lactation to children under 10 years of age or to patients with gastritis, gastroduodenal ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, liver disease, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, or other neurological diseases. It is not recommended during pregnancy and lactation. It is not recommended during the teething process of babies.

- Warnings: do not administer or apply topically to children under 10 years of age or to persons with respiratory allergies or known hypersensitivity to the plant's essential oil.

4. Chamomile, Syrup 10 %:⁽²⁰⁾

- Route of administration: oral.
- Dosage: one tablespoon three times a day.
- Proven biological activity: antidepressant, antispasmodic, anxiolytic, and cholagogue.
- Indications: used in the treatment of digestive disorders and nervous disorders such as depression, anxiety, and insomnia.
- Adverse reactions or side effects: nausea, dizziness, and sesquiterpene lactones may cause allergic reactions.
- Contraindications: anaphylactic reactions are reported in patients with fever and bronchial asthma. Refrain from prescribing essential oils internally during pregnancy or lactation to children under 10 years of age or to patients with gastritis, gastroduodenal ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, liver diseases, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease or other neurological diseases. It is not recommended during pregnancy and lactation. It is not recommended to administer during the teething process of babies.
- Warnings: do not administer to children under 10 years of age or to persons with respiratory allergies or known hypersensitivity to the plant's essential oil.

5. Passionflower, Fluid Extract:⁽²⁰⁾

- Route of administration: oral.
- Dosage: 20 drops in half a glass of water before bed.
- Proven biological activity: antibacterial, sedative antiseptic antispasmodic, antispasmodic, anxiolytic, cardiotonic, digestive, emetic, fungicidal, hypnotic, hypotensive, and myorelaxant.
- Indications: addiction (complementary), anxiety, asthma, atony, diarrhea, dysentery, epilepsy, hypertension, and infection.
- Adverse reactions or side effects: high doses may cause CNS depression. One human case of severe sedative-hypnotic effects is reported, as well as indications of hepatotoxicity and pancreatotoxicity. Drowsiness.
- Contra-indications: refraining from prescribing during pregnancy, lactation, and infancy is recommended.
- Warnings: do not take with alcoholic beverages.

6. Linden Extract Fluid:⁽²⁰⁾

- Route of administration: oral.
- Dosage: dissolve 20 drops in half a glass of water, 2 or 3 times a day
- Proven biological activity: sedative, digestive, and immunostimulant.
- Indications: insomnia, anxiety, depression, psoriasis (as adjuvant) and dyspepsia.
- Adverse reactions or side effects: drowsiness, headache, and dizziness.
- Contraindications: pregnancy, lactation, and children.
- Warnings: this plant, used alone, is very depressant of the central nervous system (CNS), so it is recommended not to use it in combination with others such as passionflower. Do not consume for more than 30 consecutive days.

7. Linden, 7 % syrup:⁽²⁰⁾

- Route of administration: oral.
- Dosage: one tablespoon 3 times a day.
- Proven biological activity: sedative, digestive, and immunostimulant.
- Indications: insomnia, anxiety, depression, psoriasis (as adjuvant) and dyspepsia.
- Adverse reactions or side effects: drowsiness, headache, and dizziness.
- Contraindications: pregnancy, lactation, and children.
- Warnings: this plant, used alone, is very depressant of the CNS, so it is recommended not to use it in combination with others, such as passionflower. Do not consume it for more than 30 consecutive days.

For the treatment of depression, the formulary cites:

1. Good Herb, Tincture 20 %.⁽²⁰⁾
 - Route of administration: oral.
 - Dosage: 20 drops in half a glass of water 3 times daily.
 - Proven biological activity: allergenic, analgesic, antipyretic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, carminative, digestive, diuretic, emetic, expectorant, insecticide, stomachic, vermifuge.
 - Indications: aphthous ulcers, bronchitis, colic, congestion, diarrhea, depression, dyspepsia, fever, hemorrhoids.
 - Adverse reactions or side effects: urticaria, allergic cheilitis, stomatosis, and rarely chills. Nasal preparations may cause spasms of the glottis in young people (adolescents).
 - Contraindications: gastrointestinal diseases caused by peppermint preparations include stomatosis, severe oesophagitis, diarrhea, and pancreatitis.
 - Caution: avoid ingestion in case of gallbladder disease or gallstones. Do not use during pregnancy, lactation, or in children under 5 years of age.
 - Interactions: unknown.
2. Ginger, 50 % tincture.⁽²⁰⁾
3. Chamomile, Tincture 20 %.⁽²⁰⁾
4. Chamomile, Syrup 10 %.⁽²⁰⁾
5. Linden, Fluid Extract.⁽²⁰⁾
6. Linden, Syrup 7 %.⁽²⁰⁾

For the treatment of insomnia, the following preparations are listed in the formulary:

1. Caña Santa, Fluid Extract.⁽²⁰⁾
2. Caña Santa, Syrup 10 %.⁽²⁰⁾
 - Route of administration: oral.
 - Dosage: 2 tablespoons 3 times a day.
 - Proven biological activity: analgesic, antibacterial, antimutagenic, antioxidant, antipyretic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, antispasmodic, anxiolytic, ascaricide, astringent, carminative, depressant, diaphoretic, digestive, diuretic, emmenagogue, expectorant, fungicide, hypotensive, tonic, uterotonic, vermifuge.
 - Indications: nasal congestion, catarrh, dyspepsia, fever, hypertension, infection, insomnia, myalgia, pneumonia.
 - Adverse reactions or side effects: allergy and erythema. It may cause fatigue and general malaise.
 - Contraindications: do not administer in hypotensive patients.
 - Warning: it must be filtered as it contains fibers that can damage the stomach and carcinogenic silica crystals.
3. Chamomile, Tincture 20 %.⁽²⁰⁾
4. Chamomile, Syrup 10 %.⁽²⁰⁾
5. Linden, Fluid Extract.⁽²⁰⁾
6. Linden, Syrup 7 %.⁽²⁰⁾

Many medicinal plants have been used in one form or another in psychiatry; however, only a few have any degree of scientific evidence. There is no denying the importance of adverse effects from using these products, which could have serious health consequences.⁽¹⁹⁾

Apipharmaceuticals

Apitherapy is also one of the modalities of MNT that is widely used throughout the world and has recently experienced a boom. The use of honey and other bee products such as apitoxins, pollen, propolis, and royal jelly, alone or in combination, has shown great efficacy in the treatment of various diseases.⁽²¹⁾

Among the app pharmaceuticals included in the National Formulary of Phytopharmaceuticals and Apipharmaceuticals in our country and which are used for the treatment of psychiatric disorders (especially anxiety), we find the following:

1. Medicinal Melito:⁽²⁰⁾
 - Ingredients: passionflower fluid extract 50 mL, chamomile fluid extract 60 mL, honey of bees q.s.c. 1000 mL
 - Pharmaceutical form: melito.

- Route of administration: oral.
 - Dosage: 2 to 3 teaspoons a day.
 - Indications: antispasmodic and sedative (traditional use).
 - Adverse reactions or side effects: unknown.
 - Contraindications: contraindicated in people with hyperglycemia. It may cause allergic reactions in pregnant women and in adults over 60 years of age may cause reactions contrary to sedation.
 - Warning: do not administer in the first 5 months of pregnancy. Do not administer to people with diabetes.
 - Adverse reactions: depending on its components.⁽²¹⁾
2. Passionflower Melito:⁽²⁰⁾
- Ingredients: Passionflower fluid extract 100 mL Honey of bees q.s. 1000 mL.
 - Pharmaceutical form: melito.
 - Route of administration: oral.
 - Dosage: one teaspoon 2 or 3 times a day.
 - Indications: antispasmodic and sedative (traditional use).
 - Contraindications: contraindicated in people with hyperglycemia
 - Warning: do not administer during the first 5 months of pregnancy. Do not administer to people with diabetes.
 - Adverse reactions: depending on its components.⁽²¹⁾

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of mental illness encompasses a large number of very diverse pathologies, including anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders. In parallel to pharmacological treatment, Natural and Traditional Medicine offers a set of modalities, techniques, or preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitative procedures scientifically validated for treating these pathologies. These alternatives include acupressure, auriculotherapy, phytotherapy, and apitherapy. Multiple applications and potentialities allow them to positively influence the population, encouraging the use of these therapeutic options to prevent or cure various illnesses, which is why all health personnel need to master them.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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ANNEXES

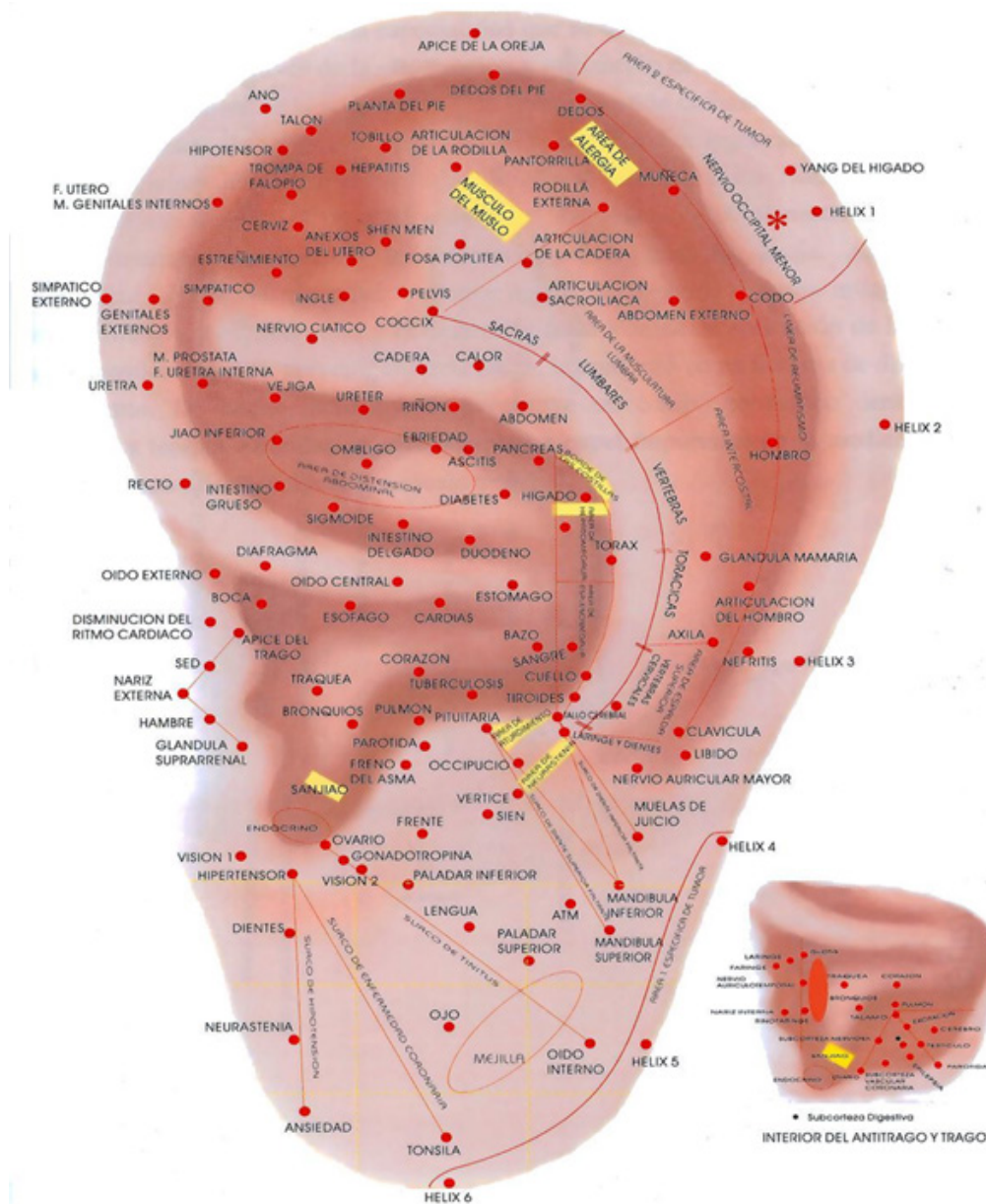


Figure 1. Atrial microsystem. Map



Figure 2. Pericardium Point 6



Figure 3. Point Heart 7