Abstract

Studies on traditional use of medicinal plants can provide leads towards discovery of pharmaceutical drugs for treatment of both human and livestock diseases. This study sought to identify and document the use of medicinal plants by residents of Mwala Sub-county in Machakos County, Kenya. The research employed cross-sectional research design where simple random sampling was used to select the households to be sampled. A sample size of 61 households was used for the study and data collected by use of semi-structured questionnaires. Voucher specimens were collected, pressed, dried, mounted and identified at the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) Herbarium. Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) were used for data analysis and results presented in the form of tables and graphs. The study focused on identifying medicinal plants used, diseases treated, parts of the plant used, and methods of preparation and routes of administration. Research findings documented a total of 51 plants species from 31 families used to treat 38 different disease conditions in the study area. The commonly used plant species was Aloe secundiflora (11.1%) while Malaria (19.8%) was the most cited disease. The most used plant parts were the leaves (52.8%) and bark (19.4%). About 75.4% of the respondents acquired knowledge on medicinal plant use through apprenticeship from relatives. With the stocks of medicinal plants declining in the area, there is need for conservation, domestication and better management of key medicinal plants. Additionally, documentation of the indigenous knowledge is necessary to ensure intergenerational benefits from the herbal medicines.