



Research Article

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Herbal drugs for abortion may prove as better option in terms of safety, cost & privacy

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Abstract

Background: Unwanted pregnancy is one of the major fertility as well as social issues of all times. Ever since mankind has prevailed, man has turned towards nature to solve a number of problems he came across, and nature has served him well. Unwanted and unexpected pregnancies are often gotten rid of by painful, costly and embarrassing surgical operations. What if, there was another way to do this without being going through all that pain and embarrassment? What if, nature has a cure for this problem as well? Yes, indeed it has! Certain natural herbs possess abortifacient properties that may help one to get rid of their undesired pregnancy without any sort of surgery. **Objective:** The aim of our study is to make people familiar with the natural abortifacients and their potent benefits over surgical abortion to give people an alternate way to end their undesired or unexpected pregnancy instead of going towards the infamous surgical abortion. **Methodology:** A survey was conducted that was based on 200 (n=200) people including common public, medical student, healthcare practitioners and different professionals just to know their general opinion about herbal abortion and to aware people regarding the beneficial aspects of natural herbs used in abortion in term of safety, cost and privacy issues. **Result:** The study showed that 97.5% of people know about abortion. Among those people, 46% were aware with the fact that the natural herbs can be used for abortion, while 54% of the people had absolutely no idea at all. Whereas, 41.5% think that these herbs can be harmful for our health, 45.5% considered these herbs as a better option, and 13% of the people had absolutely no idea about it. **Conclusion:** Natural herbs possess miraculous powers to compete with surgical abortion. Herbal abortion may prove to be a better option as compared to surgical abortion. The results we got from our study reveal people's lack of knowledge regarding herbal drugs for abortion, which makes people hesitant to use them. It's the job of our medicinal researchers and healthcare professionals to come forward and promote herbal method of abortion, which can prove to bring revolution in the life of people.

Keywords: Herbs, Abortion, Surgical Vs Herbal Abortion, Herbal Abortive Drugs, Herbal Abortifacients, Methods of Abortion.

Introduction

Fertility issues have become a major health problem throughout the world these days along with the extensively growing population.¹ Various health forums and organizations at national and international levels are quite eager in this matter but still no significant progress has been noted.¹ Unwanted pregnancies are one of the most common and major fertility as well as social issues since the beginning of time. These undesired pregnancies are usually gotten rid of via surgery.² Although surgical abortion of such pregnancies is very common and reliable method², nature has already sorted its alternative.³⁻¹⁵

Since there is very little published work, we are left with less understanding of different alternative methods to abortion other than the traditional surgery, such as herbal abortion. Although not widely practiced, but herbal method for abortion is rather an ancient concept!^{1,4,7} Herbs like pennyroyal, Italian catnip, soapwort, juniper, etc were commonly used in ancient times for abortion.^{4,5}

Researchers in Denmark investigated about 22 abortifacient plants in the lab on rat tissues, and several of the plants showed same effect as acetylcholine which was used as control drug.¹⁵ The results showed that half of the plants they used induced strong contractions. 11 out of the remaining extracts induced contractions for short intervals. However, the remaining 7 plants induced both types of contractions.¹⁵

Penny royal (Manthe *pulegium*) is said to be the most powerful miscarriage inducer.^{1,4,5,6,12}

But it can also prove to be a potent poison. That is why we should never use its essential oil, instead a few dried bits of pennyroyal to the tea infusion are added, and this infusion is used in a strictly limited dose of about 3 cups for 6 days. It is to be noted that the dose should not be increased.¹¹

Furthermore, Rue (*Ruta graveolens*) is also considered as a potent abortifacient.^{1, 5, 12} Rue causes decreased blood supply to the endometrium, which results in the insufficiency of uterine lining to provide enough nutrients to the fertilized egg.^{6, 12} Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) causes shrinkage of uterus thereby resulting in abortion/miscarriage.^{1, 5} Unripened papaya is also used to prevent and terminate pregnancy. It interferes with progesterone and causes miscarriage or abortion.^{3, 12} Seeds of papaya can also be used for this purpose.¹ Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) tea is a very common abortifacient.¹¹ Dried up cotton roots (*Gossypium*) are inducers of oxytocin, which is a hormone that induces uterine contractions. Induction of this hormone causes miscarriage.^{11, 12} Blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*) is another oxytocin inducer abortifacient herb.^{5, 11, 12} Black cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*) also induces miscarriage via uterine contractions.^{1, 5, 11, 12} Mugwort is also considered as an abortifacient.^{5, 12} But it should be used with caution as its overdose may cause renal failure.¹¹ Dong quai (*Angelica sinensis*) is yet another abortifacient herb^{5, 10, 12} which works by inducing uterine contractions. It is said to be most beneficial when used within 4 weeks of conception.^{11, 12} Wild carrot (Queen Anne's lace) and its seeds have been used as a contraceptive for a very long time.^{1, 8, 12} This theory is also described by Hippocrates.⁸ It works by blocking progesterone synthesis, which disrupts implantation.¹² Various studies have shown that Vitamin C is a potent abortifacient.¹¹ Vitamin C containing fruits such as pineapple are also said to induce abortion by uterine contractions.^{11, 12} Asafoetida is also reported as an abortifacient and an

emmenagogue.¹ Green tea is also a natural abortive drug. Too much consumption of green tea causes fertility problems.¹⁴

In addition to these herbs, leaves of *Ocimum sanctum* and aerial parts of *Guaiacum officinale* are also considered as abortifacient herbs.¹

Women across the globe prefer to use herbal abortifacients rather than other drugs or surgical procedure due to poverty, as well as the safety profile of herbs. Women in Nigeria⁹, India^{1, 13} Tanzania (Africa)¹⁵ and various other countries prefer herbal medication for this purpose instead of going for other drugs or procedures because abortion is considered as illegal in various parts of the world.¹⁵

Ever since mankind has prevailed, we have turned towards nature to solve a number of problems we come across in our daily life, and nature has served us well.⁶ Herbal abortifacients are said to be most effective when used in first trimester. Otherwise it is of no use and one would have to go for surgical procedures.^{7, 14} Although surgical procedures are practiced more, a natural abortion can prove to be cost effective as well as private.¹¹ If used in proper dose with proper precautions, herbal abortifacients can save people from the embarrassment¹¹ of having a surgical procedure to get rid of unwanted pregnancies as only one person is involved and no one else. But it is also to be noted that these herbs can be quite toxic for human health and should be used wisely.⁵

This study is designed to make women aware of the consequences they are likely to face by opting surgical or chemical abortion to get rid of their unwanted pregnancies and to show them another or say brighter, better and safer way to do so through natural herbs. There's no need to go for ridiculously expensive techniques when these herbs come right from your pantry! Various abortifacient herbs along with their relevant part & preparations are shown in table 1.^{3, 6, 8}

Table 1: Various abortifacient herbs along with their relevant part & preparations

| <i>Herbs (Scientific Names)</i> | <i>Parts used</i> | <i>Action</i> | <i>Preparation</i> |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---|
| <i>A. lappa Linn.</i> | Leaves, Roots | Abortion | Tea is made from leaves & roots. |
| <i>A. maritima Linn.</i> | Leaves | Abortion | Leaves are boiled then applied on abdomen. |
| <i>A. barbadensis Mill.</i> | Leaves | Abortion | 1g of pulp of leaves is used daily with black salt |
| <i>A. diffusa Linn.</i> | Roots | Abortion | 2g powder of dried roots is used |
| <i>Asiatica Lour.</i> | Leaves | Abortion | 1 tea cup is used daily. |
| <i>A. scoparius Linn.</i> | Leaves | Abortion | Leaves are boiled & the extract is used for abortion. |
| <i>Parthenium</i> | Leaves | Abortion | Decoction made from leaves is used daily in the morning. |
| <i>A. crota Linn.</i> | Seeds | Abortion | Powder of seeds (2g) is used twice daily. |
| <i>J. adhatoda Linn.</i> | Roots | Abortion | 1g Powder of dried roots is given once daily. |
| <i>M. charanita Linn.</i> | Roots | Abortion | Powder of the dried roots is given 2g daily for one week. |
| <i>N. officinalis</i> | Whole Plant | Abortion | Fresh plant is cooked & eaten. |
| <i>Nerium indicum Mill.</i> | Roots | Abortion | Roots are used to induce abortion. |
| <i>Papaver somniferum Linn.</i> | Fruit | Abortion | Milk from fresh capsule induces abortion. |
| <i>P. ovata Forsk.</i> | Seeds | Abortion | 5g of seeds & husk mucilage are taken daily in the morning. |
| <i>P. zeylanica</i> | Roots | Abortion | 3g of dried roots are used daily. |
| <i>Taxus wallichiana</i> | Leaves | Abortion | 5-10g of fresh leaves used daily. |
| <i>T. vulgare Linn.</i> | Flower | Abortion | Tea is prepared from flowers. |
| <i>Z. officinale Rosc.</i> | Roots | Abortion | 2g powder is given daily. |
| <i>Ziziphus nummularia</i> | Roots | Abortion | 3-5g of root bark powder is mixed with candy sugar & taken with milk twice daily. |

Methodology

A Closed ended questioning survey was conducted on the topic of “Herbal Drugs for Abortion May Prove Better In Terms of Cost, Safety & Privacy”. In this survey, views of people from different localities as well as the students of different educational institutions and professionals at different healthcare centers were evaluated. The data was collected within 15-20 days in the month of January, 2015. This survey was conducted via a specially designed questionnaire, which comprised of 14 questions altogether. It was distributed among the population of 200 individuals. By this survey we intended to analyze public’s general idea about the methods of abortion that whether they know or do not know about herbal method of abortion? Or whether it proves to be effective or not? We also analyzed what medical professionals think or say about the effectiveness of herbal abortion. We intended to get a clear picture of what makes herbal abortion better than surgical abortion.

Data Analysis

The result was expressed in percentages by using a pie chart and two bar graphs. A pie chart was used to show that how many people know that herbal drugs are used for abortion (figure 1). Bar graphs were used to evaluate that how many people know about the abortive medicines prepared by the herbs (figure 2) and how many people think that herbal abortion is better than the surgical one (figure 3).

Result

All the questionnaires distributed among 200 individuals were shown keen interest and 100% participation. We mostly covered the female population i.e. 80%, besides 20% of the total individuals were males. Out of the 200 individuals, there were 50 (25%) doctors, 90 (45%) medical students, and the remaining 60 (30%) included non-medical students and professionals. The study showed that 97.5% (195/200) of population (out of the total of 200 individuals) knows about abortion. Among those people, 46% knew that the natural herbs can be used for abortion, while 54% of the people had absolutely no idea at all as shown in figure 1. 35% people knew about herbal medicines which used for abortion while 65% of people had no idea at all as shown in figure 2. In term of superiority, 20% of population knew the fact that herbal abortion is better than the surgical one while 51% of population said no and 29% of people had no idea at all as shown in figure 3.

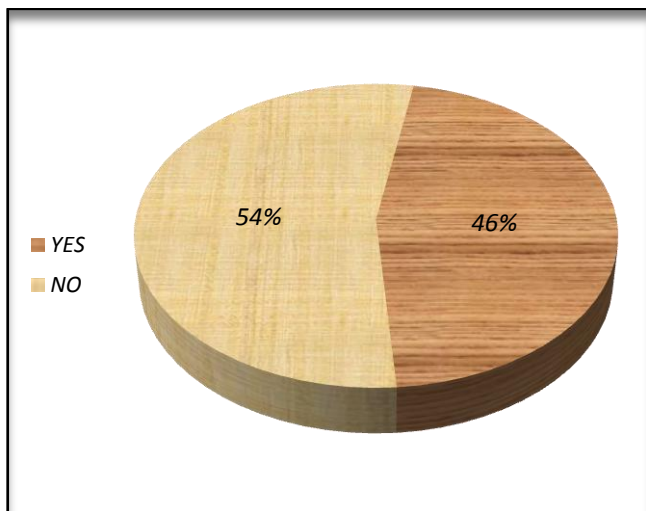


Figure 1: Awareness in public regarding herbs used for abortion

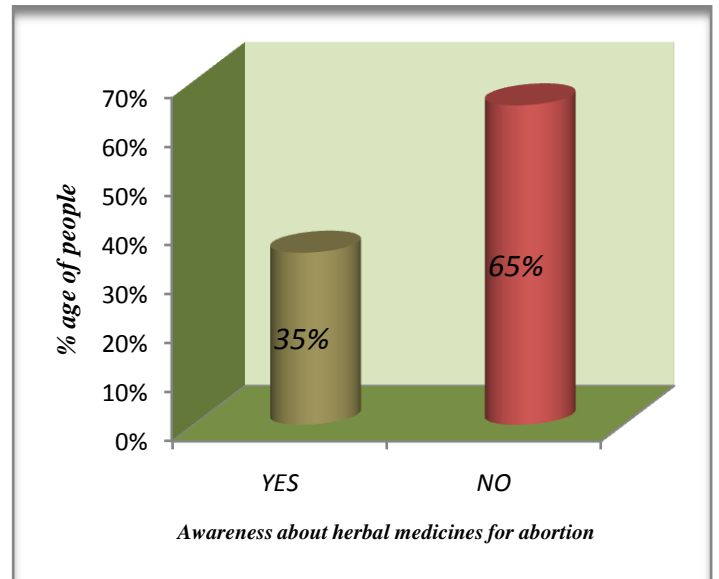


Figure 2: Knowledge about herbal medicines used for abortion

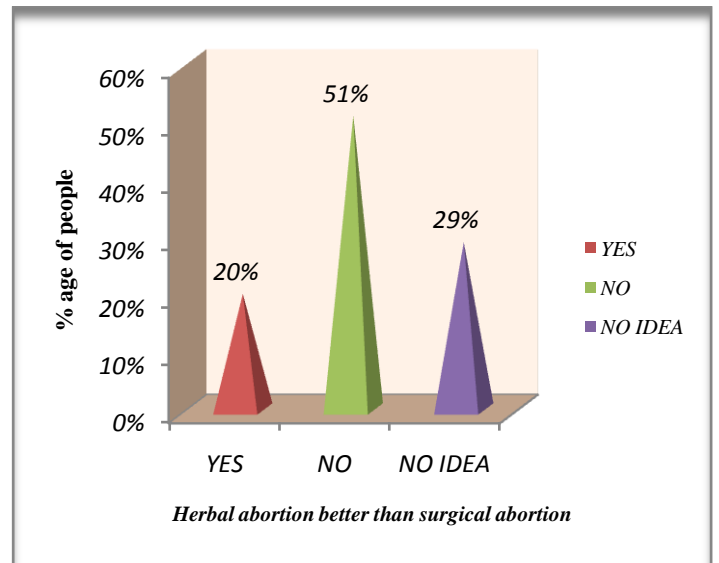


Figure 3: People's views about herbal abortion is better than surgical abortion

Discussion

An abortion is a most common issue among the population. It is the medical process of ending a unwanted pregnancy so it does not result in the birth of a baby. Our study based on this topic but in a different manner. We emphasized on the beneficial aspects of herbal drugs which used for abortion .Our study shows that 41.5% people think the herbs for abortion can be harmful for our health, 45.5% considered these herbs as a better option, and 13% of the people had absolutely no idea about it. 30.5% of the abortion cases that were done by herbs, were seen in urban areas whereas, 69.5% were seen in rural areas. 15% of the people regarded herbal medicines for abortion as expensive, 50% regarded them as cheap while the remaining 35% did not have any idea about the cost at all. As far as the side effects of these medicines are concerned, majority of people believe them to be free of side effects. People were asked for their views over whether or not they think that

using herbs as abortifacients may affect the future pregnancy of the user, to which 47.5% answered with a yes and 52.5% answered with a no. By the help of this study we can clearly evaluate that the use of herbs for abortion is the safest way to terminate pregnancy rather than going towards surgeries or other harmful chemicals or drugs. Although safety precautions and close supervision is also necessary as these herbs may produce toxic effects to the user if the doses are not dealt with proper care and monitored.

Conclusion

Natural herbs possess miraculous powers to compete with surgical abortion. Herbal abortion may prove to be a better option as compared to surgical abortion. However, the results we got from our study reveal people's lack of knowledge regarding herbal drugs for abortion, which makes people hesitant to use them. It's the job of our medicinal researchers, herbalists and other healthcare professionals to come forward and promote herbal method of abortion, which can prove to bring revolution in the life of many people. Many people may find it reasonable to have an abortion without going for ridiculously expensive and rather painful surgeries or without the fear of grabbing unnecessary attention.

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