



Usage of Apitherapy for Disease Prevention And Treatment Purposes

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Apitherapy (Apis is a Latin word that means bee) is the practice of using bee products such as honey, pollen, propolis, royal jelly, and bee venom for disease prevention or treatment proposes. It can be also described as “the science (and art) of the use of honey-bee products, to maintain health and assist the individual in regaining health when sickness or accident interferes.

In the past, the apitherapy products were frequently used as natural remedies for health maintenance. In many countries, bee products are part of traditional medicine. The roots of apitherapy can be traced back to more than 6000 years of medicine in ancient Egypt. The ancient Greeks and Romans also used bee products for medicinal purposes. There is also evidence that honey was part of traditional Chinese medicine: The famous ancient prescription book with fifty-two prescriptions dating back to the third century B.C. found in Changsha, Hunan Province, contains two prescriptions involving bees, one of which uses honey to treat diseases .

More recently, the bee products have been incorporated into modern medical practice, where the focus of attention is mainly the illness and its prevention . Among the complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) modalities, some dietary supplements show relatively strong positive evidence for being effective in the prevention of some common diseases . Some findings suggest that those who use alternative therapies, including herbal, mineral, and biological (including apitherapy) dietary supplements, appear less likely overall than nonusers to receive standard preventive care. In addition, users of dietary supplements are more likely to engage in healthy behaviours and appear to be a more health-conscious group .

Lithuania has very old beekeeping traditions and for

centuries bee products have been used in folk medicine for treatment of wounds, cough, ulcers, tuberculosis, and other diseases. Scientific research on apitherapy in Lithuania started more than 50 years ago when fresh royal jelly was applied at the Cardiology Department for patients suffering from cardiovascular diseases . From 1971, Lithuanian scientists have been focusing on investigation of propolis qualities and propolis preparations development. Nowadays, bee products, particularly honey and propolis and its preparations (tablets, suppositories, ointments, mouth sprays, and others), are quite popular among consumers and are available in most of the Lithuanian community pharmacies usually positioned as dietary supplements.

The changing role of pharmacists encourages them to discuss with pharmacy patients not only the correct usage of medication but also disease prevention and public health issues. The provision of information on disease prevention is part of the public health issues and may empower people to increase control over and to improve their health.

The community pharmacists are recognized as the most accessible to the public health care professionals. They are like gatekeepers when giving advice for patients who enter community pharmacy to obtain medication, dietary supplements, or medicine goods . In Lithuania, like in many other countries, the community pharmacy is the only legal place to obtain medication and the pharmacist consultation is an obligatory part of the purchase . The patients who make decisions about their health often use integrative practice and combine both conventional and complementary medicine practices . Complementary medicine practices which incorporate use of some traditional herbal, mineral, or animal kind

substances very often are discussed with pharmacy professionals because these products are often sold in pharmacies as dietary supplements. Pharmacy professionals often encourage people to use dietary supplements because there is no prescription need for them, this gives additional income for pharmacy and pharmacists value their knowledge on dietary supplements. Dietary supplements are often used for disease prevention purposes. The correct knowledge on common complementary medicines practices

is necessary to assist patient needs and answer the questions. This includes providing information that allows the patient to make the informed decisions about their health.

The aim of this study was to investigate the experience, knowledge, attitude, and practices of undergraduate pharmacy students towards bee products for disease prevention and treatment purposes.