Introduction & Aim

- *Leonurus cardiaca* L., also known as motherwort, is a herb currently used by Western herbal practitioners in cardiovascular disorders, nervous tension and gynaecological complaints.
- The whole herb is used medicinally and is stated to have a "pungent odour and a very bitter taste."  
- It was traditionally used for its antispasmodic, diaphoretic, nerve, emmenagogue and tonic properties.  
- The EMA herbal monographs were created for the purpose of providing clear information to healthcare professionals, providing a basis in marketing authorisation and supervision of medicine safety.
- According to the EMA, *L. cardiaca* has traditional use in nervous disorders and cardiac complaints; however, gynaecological use isn’t mentioned.
- Historical texts allow for past uses to be preserved and revisited, in case once popular uses are slowly forgotten.

Aim: To investigate the documented historical uses of *Leonurus cardiaca* in order to assess the traditional uses as outlined in the EMA monograph.

Methodology

- Content analysis was used for coding and analysing data; this allows for conclusions to be drawn from texts with regard to the contexts of their use.
- Raw data was extracted from source texts into a framework.
- Data was then translated and coded for comparison and discussion.
- Data was extracted from:
  - The EMA monograph on *Leonurus cardiaca* L.
  - 30 source texts ranging from 500 to 1915.

![Timeline of Historical Sources](image)

Results & Discussion

- The majority of texts were published during the early modern period (1500-1800).
- 11 texts had no discernible entry for *L. cardiaca*.
- Several authors referenced previous herbals and authors.
- Two entries were near identical to previous herbals suggesting plagiarism.
- The EMA referenced very few historical sources (just 4 from before 1918).

![Frequency of Conditions Treated in Source Texts](image)

- Historical sources did not contain contraindications or safety information; therefore safety of the herb was difficult to establish. However, its emmenagogue properties may explain the EMA’s contraindication for use in pregnancy.
- Several factors had an impact on the results including translation and coding challenges, scarcity and plagiarism of texts, authentication of motherwort and difficulties associated with data mining.
- Much herbal knowledge may have been lost over time due to an inability or unwillingness to record it.
- Limited current research to back-up gynaecological use.

Conclusion & Recommendations

- The EMA indications appeared frequently throughout source texts; however, motherwort appeared to have more uses than the EMA monograph suggests.
- Lack of recent research into motherwort’s gynaecological uses may have contributed to the omission of these uses on the EMA monograph.
- Gynaecological use shows promise and may warrant further investigation with additional gynaecological studies recommended.
- Additional research required in order to decipher texts using a different system of medical belief.
- A greater number of sources and further analysis of posology advised.

References


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