

SURVEILLANCE AND INFORMATION ON HERBAL MEDICINES USE OF IN PREGNANCY IN THE SICILY REGION

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Use of herbal medicines is increasing in the Sicily Region. These products are generally considered safe by people. They are used more frequently by women, and on the basis of their harmlessness, also during pregnancy and/or lactation. In the light of these considerations we elaborated a plan called “Surveillance and information on the use of herbal medicines in pregnancy in the Sicily Region”. Objective of the plan was to know the habits and the opinions on the consumption of herbal medicines of pregnant women in Sicily. Contextually the plan included the purchasing of informations to sicilian pregnant women on the possible risks deriving from their use.

A questionnaire was administered to 700 pregnant women recovered in the Obstetrical and Gynecological Clinical Services in Sicily into the period from 1 december 2005 to 1 december 2006. Results of the survey indicate that 16% of women took herbs during gestation. The majority (48%) considers herbs taken during gestation or breast-feeding lesser toxic than drugs, thinking the herbs equally efficacy (45%). Results indicate that it is important to know better the habits of pregnant women and to stimulate them to debate with physicians regarding use of all substances, not only drugs, during pregnancy and lattation.