

BOTANICAL PEDICULICIDES: HISTORY, CONSUMER CRAZE OR POTENTIAL CURE?

Caroline Priestley

Department of Pharmacognosy, The School of Pharmacy, Brunswick Square, London, WC1, UK.

E-mail: caroline.priestley@ams1.ulsop.ac.uk

Before the advent of scientifically developed louse control methods, which are available from pharmacies today, the majority of lice infestations were treated using a combination of physical removal and the application of crude chemical or herbal treatments. In the 20th Century, the development of modern medicine led to botanical preparations being viewed as inferior, and of low efficacy. Many scientists also came to believe that synthetic pesticides, designed in the laboratory, would always be far superior than those happened upon in nature. In the 21st Century, it is quite apparent that the consumer demand for all things natural, which began in earnest in the 1990s, is continuing to grow. However, this is not the sole driving force behind the change in attitude towards medicinal plants. The scientific world is now shaking off its prejudices in favour of a more holistic approach to drug discovery, and has realised that to ignore naturally derived substances is to cut off valuable avenues in research and development. This talk will summarise the historical and folkloric use of plant based pediculicides, explain their role in present day louse control methods, and discuss how scientific research might provide new therapies in the future by using botanicals for inspiration.