

Herbal Medicine Usage and Changes during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A representative Study in Germany

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Background

The Covid-19 pandemic challenged healthcare systems worldwide. In order to control the pandemic restrictions in public life changed behavior and consumption pattern in many areas of life [1]. Studies in different countries found as well higher prevalence rates for herbal medicine (HM) usage [2] as well as decreased prevalence rates [3]. Little is known about HM usage and how it changed during the pandemic in Germany.

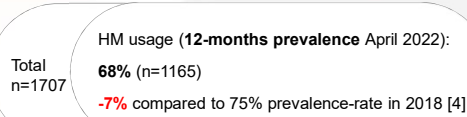
Aims

- Determining HM-usage prevalence rate during the Covid-19 pandemic in Germany
- Examining HM-usage behavior and aims during the pandemic
- Detecting changes in HM usage behavior and prevalence compared to a pre-pandemic period

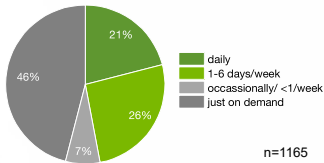
Methods

- National representative online survey in Germany (age 18 years+), conducted in April 2022
- Participants indication of HM usage, aims and HM consumption behaviour within the previous 12 months
- Comparison of the results with an equivalent study in Germany in 2018 [4]

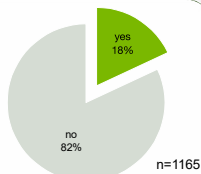
Results



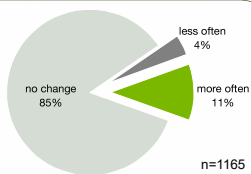
„How often have you used HM within the previous 12 months?“



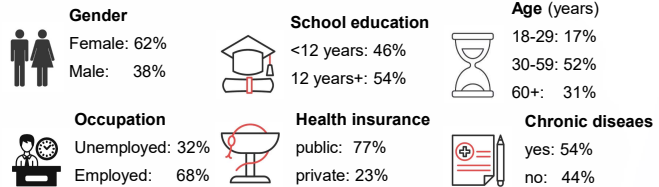
„Did you use new HM, which you had not used before the Covid-19 pandemic?“



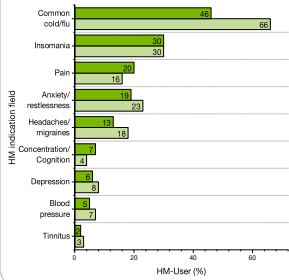
Frequency of HM usage during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to before Covid-19 pandemic



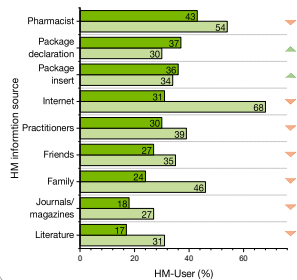
Sociodemographics HM user (n=1165)



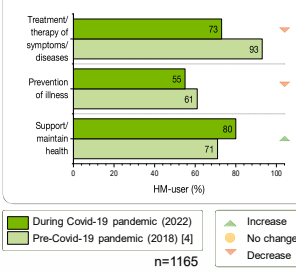
HM indication fields



HM information source



Aims of HM usage



Conclusion

- HM-usage prevalence rate during the Covid-19 pandemic was lower than pre-pandemic
- Fewer non-Covid-19 infections as a result of social pandemic regulations and restrictions, e.g. lockdowns [5], could have led to a decreased HM demand for infectious diseases
→ Aims of HM usage were rather **health support motivated** than disease related
- During the pandemic, pharmacists were the most popular information source for HM-users. On-product information got more attention compared to the pre-pandemic period

References

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- [2] Alotiby AA, Al-Harbi LN. Prevalence of using herbs and natural products as a protective measure during the COVID-19 pandemic among the Saudi population: an online cross-sectional survey. *Saudi Pharmaceutical Journal*. 2021;29(5):410-7.
- [3] Lam CS, Koon HK, Chung VC-H, Cheung Y-T. A public survey of traditional, complementary and integrative medicine use during the COVID-19 outbreak in Hong Kong. *PLOS ONE*. 2021;16(7):e0253890.
- [4] Wetz AN, Emberger-Klein A, Menrad K. The importance of herbal medicine use in the German health-care system: prevalence, usage pattern, and influencing factors. *BMC health services research*. 2019;19(1):1-11.
- [5] Tanišlav C, Kostev K. Fewer non-COVID-19 respiratory tract infections and gastrointestinal infections during the COVID-19 pandemic. *J Med Virol*. 2022;94(1):298-302.