Introduction

The most influential ancient physician, pharmacobotanist, and the first pharmacognosist was Dioscorides. Dioscorides’ recipes and use of medicinal plants can be found in Croatian medieval monastic medicine recorded in ljekaruše. Recipes with drugs of plant and animal origin from Dioscorides’ De materia medica and recipes in two Croatian books of folk recipes from the 17th and 18th centuries in Latin transliteration and transcription were compared. Special attention was also given to some particularities of the analysed books of folk recipes.

Karlobag books of folk recipes

The first Karlobag book of folk recipes (1603) was written on 16 pages in Latin handwriting. Chronologically, this is the third oldest preserved book of folk recipes in Croatia, and its value is in the fact that most recipes in it appear for the first time. One of the recipes describes the use of sage to treat dysentery: To treat dysentery, take sage juice and drink it with white wine – it is a medicine. A similar recipe for the use of sage is found in Dioscorides’ work: Taken as a drink with white wine it cures a painful spleen and dysentery. For the treatment of eye diseases, the ashes of young swallows are mixed with honey and placed on a clean scarf to cover sore eyes. We find similarities in Dioscorides’ recipe with swallows: ... the ashes of them and of their female parents burnt in a ceramic pot and rubbed on with honey cause sharpness of sight.

The second Karlobag book of folk recipes (1707) was written in Latin handwriting, on 18 pages following The first Karlobag book of folk recipes.

Rosemary has a very important place in recipes with medicinal plants: The healing power of rosemary... It is a remedy for every disease. Dioscorides writes for the rosemary the following: ... It is warming and cures jaundice ...It is also mixed with remedies for the removal of fatigue...

Croatian books of folk recipes

Croatian folk medicine has been preserved in special manuscripts called ljekaruše. Ljekaruše are recipe collections with instructions for the treatment of humans and animals. They were written mostly in the Glagolitic, Latin and Croatian Cyrilic script. They are usually named after the compiler, transcriber or place where they were written or found. The oldest Croatian books of folk recipes date from the 14th and 15th centuries.

Conclusion

Croatian ethnomedicine has been preserved in books of folk recipes called ljekaruše. They have simple instructions for the preparation of medicines and their use in the treatment of humans and animals. Many herbal and animal drugs from Dioscorides’ De materia medica found similar use in the recipes of two published and described Croatian books of folk recipes from the 17th and 18th centuries. They are historical source for the study of folk culture, language, medicine and pharmacy of different time periods in which they were created, copied or supplemented.