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Black cumin as a traditional vulnerary – Little seeds with great effects?

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The history of medicinal plants is probably as old as humanity itself. The plants were chosen for the medical therapy according to empiric observations of their effects and handed down first by oral, later by written tradition from generation to generation. Often, indications and applications for medicinal plants can be observed over centuries. These traditional applications – explained by respecting and correctly understanding the contemporary concepts of illness and therapy – can be indications of a real effect. Our research project is dedicated to medicinal plants from the medieval Arabic medicine. First, the medicinal plants mentioned and described in selected medieval sources are identified under the aspects of modern botany. The next step is the analysis of the tradition of selected medicinal plants in the European pharmacy and medicine. Finally, medicinal plants with defined long-term use will be studied concerning the present knowledge about their constituents and efficacy and after the evaluation recommended as potential phytotherapeutics with the analysed indications or as resources for active substances.

Black cumin (*Nigella sativa* L.) is a medicinal plant with a long Arabic and European tradition in treating wounds and skin diseases. Recent research on animal models showed very promising enhancing effects of black cumin oil on wound healing. It seems to be essential to trace back its medical-pharmaceutical tradition and to investigate in how far it can explain and support present applications and suggest future potential of the plant.

