Outreach activities undertaken by the Network FitoCerrado to join the Academy and the Community to a rational and sustainable use of medicinal plants.

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Introduction: The FitoCerrado Network is a local nongovernmental organization involved basically with extensions activities at the Federal University of Uberlandia to stimulate the implementation of public policies in the field of medicinal plants and phytotherapy.

Objectives and Experimental part: Our aim is to translate popular knowledge on herbal medicine into science through educational programs as well as to educate local communities in the appropriate use of medicinal plants. Several scientific publications, undergraduate dissertations in addition to technical training have been produced and conducted throughout the years.

Results and discussion: Among many extension activities developed we point out the following items. Quantitative analysis of several types of medicinal plants and herbal medicines used by the different groups; the collection, herborization and identification of the cultivated species; the classification of the medicaments used by them, according to the Anatomic Therapeutic Chemical Classification System and adopted by the World Health Organization; the investigation of potential herb-drug interactions; the elaboration of a hornbook and a database on the main interactions between medicinal plants, herbal drugs and conventional medicaments; the preparation of a booklet including medicinal plants and phytotherapics; workshops with our staff and academics to better prepare them for advise in the rational use of herbal medicine; the organization of small work meetings held in public and private schools as well as in basic health unit; the publication of a hornbook entitled “Health for All” on medicinal plants sent to every school in our district, and the organization of periodic meetings of the FitoCerrado Network involving the local community, students and health professionals.

Conclusion: Thus, through our action we contribute to disseminate the secure use of herbal medicine as complementary therapy in our community. We hope that all these activities can fill the gap between popular and scientific knowledge while contributing to relevant research, training and extension activities.

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