REVIEW ARTICLE

Medicinal Botanicals in the Traditional Medicine of the Veps Used for Bronchial Infections

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Abstract: This article gives a short survey of the medicinal botanicals applied in the traditional medicine of the Veps, a small Finno-Ugric people, to treat severe respiratory infections—bronchitis, pneumonia, and tuberculosis of the lungs. Attention is focused on the methods of preparing the medicines, both simple and more complex medicinal forms. Veps’ traditional healing (znakharstva) applies medicinal botanicals with charms or spells. Nevertheless, we emphasize the scientific foundation and the efficacy of Veps popular medicine, that uses rare, rather than common plants.

Keywords: Veps, geography, culture, folk medicine, plant drugs, phytotherapy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization has proclaimed that assimilation by the scientific medicine of the methods, arsenal and experience of popular or traditional medicine, including plants that have anti-inflammatory, miatropic spasmodic, a narcotic analgesic, and local anesthetic properties, is one of the priorities of medicine in the 21st century [1]. The senior author of this article has published his research on the use of phytotherapy to treat tuberculosis of the lungs [2]. This article focuses on the relevance for scientific medicine of the experiences of the Veps people in treating bronchial infections with phytotherapy.

The Veps are direct descendants of the Ves, a Finno-Ugric people who came to Eastern Europe from beyond the Ural Mountains. They are mentioned in medieval chronicles [3]. In the first century of our era, the Ves spread from the lower Northern Dvina River; they gradually gravitated to the shores of the White Sea, in the current Vologda region, and, in the past, had settlements on the shores of the River Volkhov, in the St. Petersburg region. The Veps, descendants of the Ves, currently live between Lake Ladoga, Lake Onega, and the White Sea. The Veps numbered 36,000 before 1917; they number only 5-6 thousand at present and continue to shrink [4].

The Veps culture is interesting because they have always lived in terrain difficult to access. They had no government, cities, or writing. Colonization by the Slavs began only in the 19th century and Christianization lasted for less than a century [5].

The Veps traditional medicine is also interesting. In this article, we concentrate on the Veps use of medicinal botanicals to treat bronchial infections. Due to their Siberian origins, the Veps inter-
acted with other Siberian people and certain plants used by the Veps have connections with plants used in Tibetan and Kazakh traditional medicine. We discuss these connections in this article. First, however, we believe it incumbent to address allegations that detract from the Veps’ skillful use of phytotherapy. These criticisms relate to accusations that the Veps combine the rational use of plants to treat illnesses with practices that are occultist and unscientific.

Local healers use not only botanicals to treat illnesses but also charms or spells in their native language. The charms are secret. It is impossible to even speak generally about their contents. Indeed, if a person attempts to speak with a healer about charms, silence ensues. Additionally, the Veps’ healers use protective amulets including bird’s talons and the horns of domestic cattle. Both the Christian Church and the atheistic Soviet government regarded these practices as witchcraft. For example, in the Veps language, the name of their village of Noidola, located in the Boksitogorsk area of the St. Petersburg region, means “the land of sorcerers” and the title of one of the poems of Veps poet N. Abramov is “Noid”, i.e., sorcery [6]. As a result of these practices by Veps healers, both the Russian Orthodox Church and Soviet officials persecuted them [7].

This having been said, our many years of field research amongst the Veps underscore the validity and scientific basis of Veps healers’ use of medicinal botanicals to treat severe bronchial infections. Admittedly, we were eyewitnesses to Veps healers’ locating missing cattle and using items lost in the forest by a baby and by a geologist in their treatments. Additionally, in one home purchased by a St. Petersburg resident for a dacha, we saw amulets. Nevertheless, we did not notice any talismans in the homes of Veps that we investigated during our many years of field research. More importantly, we witnessed Veps’ healers effectively use simple botanicals such as *Viburnum opulus*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, and *Juniperus communis* to treat bronchial infections. Further, we adduce other qualities that emphasize the honesty as well as the competency of Veps’ healers. Thus, our article focuses on the skill of Veps’ healers in treating bronchial infections with phytotherapy.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

The senior author has made 48 annual trips and the junior author 28 annual trips to the Veps and to the region where the Ves of the medieval chronicles lived. The method of studying the local medicinal Borealic flora was gradually linked with study of the local population in four population points: 1) the villages of Kozhinskaia, Rakula, Zelenii gorodok (green village) on the Northern Dvina River, and Mezen’ in Arkhangelsk Region; 2) the settlements of Ozrovichi, Kapshozero, Bereg, Kharagenichi, Ust-Kapsha, Pashezero, and others in Tikhvinsk area, St. Petersburg Region; 3) the villages of Liamen’ga, Koksharka, Sosnovka, Rosliatino, Belokrutets, and others in Vologda Region, and 4) fundamental places of continuous trips—the villages of Ladva, Zaozero, Kuznetsy, Kurba, Ozera, Vinnitsy, in North-east St. Petersburg Region. During these annual trips, the authors made contact with hundreds of Veps and with Russians who had Veps’ roots. The diminution of the Veps partly resulted from mass migration to urban areas and the fact that they began to consider themselves Russian. In their annual visits, the authors made contact with local “healers” (*znakhars*): P. Iniakova, M. Charandova, her son, L. Porygina, M. Zakharova, I. Mikshin, M. Abramova, and others. Information about the Veps’ use of medicinal plants was especially interesting to the authors because Dr. O.D. Barnaulov does phytopharmacological research and practices phytotherapy and Dr. A.O. Barnaulov uses elements of phytotherapy in his medical practice [8]. The plants gathered were identified with the help of professional botanists at the Botanical Institute in St. Petersburg. The ethnographic scientist A.E. Finchenko helped analyze the collection of other materials.

3. UNIQUE ASPECTS OF VEPs TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

3.1. Female Healers

Amongst the Veps, healers are usually female [9] although we encountered a male, the son of a healer. Unfortunately, much information about Veps healers’ methods has been lost. Indeed, during the time of our field research, an entire generation of healers has disappeared, without passing down their methods to descendants.
3.2. The “Scientific” Aspects of Veps Traditional Medicine

Those sick with epilepsy, neuroses, nephritis, headaches, myalgia, bronchial asthma, chronic bronchitis and most often tuberculosis, according to our observation, received effective treatment from Veps’ healers. Some of the sick claimed to have been treated long distance—without actual contact with the healers—on the basis of their written symptoms and prescriptions by the healer of botanicals necessary for treatment. Veps’ healers also treated domestic animals. The persecution of the Veps healers only strengthened their conspiratorial style—and not all those treated advocated returning. However, it was not sensationalism but rather the abilities of Veps’ healers and the effectiveness of their treatment that caused many people to return for treatment throughout the Soviet period—that is, until nearly the end of the 20th century. Indeed, in one instance, a physician praised the effective results of a Veps’ healer and recommended that a patient go to her.

V.F. Korsun, et al., Medicinal Botanicals in Diseases of the Blood [10] discuss the active ingredients in various plants, including antibiotic and anti-bacterial qualities, which would obviously counter bacterial pneumonia and tuberculosis of the lungs. We cite other specific active ingredients in plants used by the Veps to treat these and other respiratory infections.

3.3. Authenticity of Healers

We have collected examples of positive results of Veps’ healers in our unpublished work, “Ves and Veps.” A.V. Bol’shakova [11] has noted the difference between traditional healing and witchcraft. We cannot support such a distinction, in as much as the application of medicinal botanicals and spells are practiced by one and the same person. However, we have not noticed barbaric, wild methods of healing, such as using the dung of cattle, chickens and so on. Additionally, the disinterestedness of Veps healers must be noted. They never ask for money or advertise their abilities. This distinguishes them from popular pseudo-healers. Healers attempt and often achieve positive effects; masses of witnesses attest to this. They enjoy high status in village discourse. Tuberculosis was especially prevalent in the difficult years of the Second World War. Only women and children remained in the Veps villages. They had no medical help and were in dire need of food. During this time, the healers mobilized the villagers to collect mushrooms and berries, nettles, and the juniper plant to prevent infection.

4. BOTANICALS USED BY VEPS’ HEALERS TO TREAT RESPIRATORY DISEASES

4.1. Juniper

One of the plants used to heal and prevent infection, being a disinfectant of the home, bread, and mushrooms was the ordinary Juniper plant—Juniperus communis (in the family of Cupressaceae). Juniperus comes from the Celtic term jeneprus [12]. The Celtic druids as well as the Veps, considered the juniper a magical plant although there was no ethnographic contact between them and the organization of the Celtic druids was much higher and more complex than that of the Ves and Veps [13].

In distinction from Russian traditional medicine, which uses an infusion of juniper, the Veps’ cure of the sick was based on the smoke of juniper branches. During epidemics, dwellings were smoked up. Smoke, for a short time, was applied to the sick and to dwellings in cases of dry coughs with sputum, difficulty in breathing, pains in the chest, and spitting of blood. Smoke also was applied to animals during epizootics. Junipers were totemic at births. Dead children were buried under juniper bushes [14]. As the Veps were a forest people, juniper boughs provided protection and were augers of success for fishing, hunting, and finding berries and mushrooms. The Veps also prayed before stones and juniper branches. Mushrooms were gathered, cleaned, and preserved under the boughs of junipers. Contemporary research supports the usefulness of these practices—the high virus destroying, antimicrobial properties of the juniper, particularly the juniper’s bactericide

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1This situation is reminiscent of accounts that document the effectiveness of Grigory Rasputin’s treatment of hemophiliac Tsesarevich Alexsei Romanov in the early 20th century.
properties in tuberculosis. Decoctions of juniper boughs are given as a drink to the sick; the bitter taste is masked with berries and sugar. Juniper was used not only in respiratory diseases (bronchial, pneumonia, blood) but also for its diuretic properties in urinary infections.

In the last few years, Juniper has not been widely used amongst the Veps because it was considered especially helpful for their cattle—and their cattle have dwindled.

4.2. Raspberry. *Rubus ideaeus*. (Family of Rosacea)

The ordinary raspberry is a botanical with anti-inflammatory properties. Dry berries are boiled for a person sick with fever. Sometimes raspberry jam is used. Tea, however, made from dried berries is rarely used. In the past, many Veps’ families had dried raspberries, but today, only those with da-chas gather berries in summer and dry them. Some Veps buy berries. They apply the juice of berries to quench the thirst of those with fevers. Raspberries have a high antioxidant activity that counters tuberculosis, virus infections and pneumonia. Experiments have supported the detoxifying qualities that eliminate alcohol intoxication and “morning-after hangover”. As for the leaves of raspberries, according to information of I. Charandova and P. Iniakova in Ladva, they were prepared in their own right. Sometimes the raspberry leaves were fermented. The Veps also boiled the leaves of raspberries to make a tea used to treat grippe, coughs, and fevers. Raspberry tea was further used for those sick with tuberculosis of the lungs. And, in cases where there was no medical care in the Veps’ villages, the stalks were boiled and used as medicine, like aspirin.

Boiled leaves of raspberries are also recommended in the tract of traditional Tibetan medicine, “Chzhud-shi” [15]. There is no ethnographic connection between Ves and Veps with Tibet. However, it is possible that the similar methods of preparing tea from boiled raspberry leaves occurred during the Ves and Veps trek to Europe through the Ural Mountains from Asia, when parallel treatments were being formed in the comparatively young, traditional Indo-Tibetan medicine. Indeed, tea known as “Uighur tea” used in Kazakhstan [16] is prepared from the fermented leaves of the near relative of the raspberry plant—

the bluish grey blackberry *Rubus caesius*. The attractive taste of blackberry tea is recognized the world over [17]. However, the Veps do not cultivate blackberries.

4.3. *Cirsium heterophylla*

The Veps sometimes use the flowers and leaves of this plant, called Bodiaka in Russian, which also have connections to Tibetan medicine. Bodiaka has secretion and anti-inflammatory properties. M.I. Varlakov [18] analyzed the forms of Bodiaka in Tibet used to treat tuberculosis of the lungs, bronchial problems, abscesses and cancer of the lungs.

4.4. *Salix caprea*

Aspirin, acetylsalicylic acid and all groups of non-steroid anti-inflammatories must come from the plant *Salix alba* from which salicylic acid was derived. For many centuries, nothing knowing nothing about this acid, the Veps, successfully boiled the leaves, roots and sometimes the flowers of *Salix caprea*. This form of *Iva* or “Weeping Willow” was interesting because, as late as 20 years ago, the Veps prepared its roots in great quantities, but did not use them as a medicine but rather in their leather industry, which gave them supplementary earnings. Decoctions of roots are taken internally for diseases such as diarrhea, for various inflammatory diseases, in the form of foot baths for arthritis, and for other problems. The use of *Salix caprea* in the agriculture of the Veps is also interesting [19]. The plant grew quickly and so, to prepare the fields, they cut down the plants, then burned them and harrowed and sowed vegetables, roses and flax with the ashes. This is primitive agriculture. However, it can be done in a short time and without technical apparatus, using only working labor, and a decent harvest can be received—as was proven after the Second World War. Information about the flowers of the Weeping Willow is not well known. Veps’ healers apply them for impotence, sterility in women, and, naturally for many inflammatory diseases, especially bronchitis. Due to expectorant and anti-inflammatory activities, the tea from flowers is strengthening and a tonic but at the same time there is antineurotic activity supported by my own practice. Positive gonadotropic effect of the plants appears a marker of their adaptive activity causing a non-specific rise in resistance of the organism.
with relation to many infections. This theory of phyto-adaptiveness was first stated by the renowned Russian pharmacologist N.V. Lazarev [20]. The flowers of *Salix caprea* are gathered early in the spring before the leaves appear. Early white honey from the leaves of Weeping willow is especially prized by Veps-- and also by Russians. In the northern regions beekeeping, although noted locally, is not widespread because of long, cold winters. Nevertheless, ivy honey is highly effective as an anti-inflammatory substance and has been used for tuberculosis of the lungs for a long time. In distinction from scientific European medicine, which makes infusions and extracts from one plant, Veps’ healers use multiple combinations from the leaves of raspberries, nettles and so forth. Analogous to traditional medicine in China, India, and Tibet, the use of multiple components better achieve the intended healing effect.

**4.5. Hypericum perforatum Z and H. maculatum (Hieracium maculatum) (St. John’s Wort)**

The popularity of this plant is such that it is known to practically everyone. There is no difference between the forms. The basic reason for the application of this plant by Veps’ healers is its reputation for optimizing regeneration. St. John’s Wort is also used by the Kazakhs for wounds. The local application is done in the form of a decoction for cuts, ulcers, wounds and also the plant is applied as a laxative in cases of chronic constipation in old people. The correctness of such application has been supported by scientific investigation of various forms of St. John’s wort. Infusions of the plant combined with other plants have been applied to those sick with tuberculosis and chronic bronchitis for a long time period, to quell stomach pains and in ulcerous diseases, the sick are recommended to drink the juice of St. John’s Wort combined with the leaves of *Plantago major* (family: Plantaginaceae). The patients noted lessening of pains, the absence of spring-summer agitation and the need to turn to alcohol. The leaves are kept in enamel vessels until juice appears, added to warm boiled water, carefully transferred, strained and from the remaining substance, one more time is extracted some amount of water. Both extracts are combined. The juice of *Plantago major* and St. John’s wort is prescribed for serious forms of tuberculosis with hemorrhaging (fibrous-cavernous-tuberculosis), for emaciation, and even for cancer of the bronchial tubes. In the last case, it is obligatory also to use *Inonotus obliquus* (Chaga, a black Birch fungus). Among the Veps, *Inonotus obliquus* is generally known as a surrogate tea with moderate tonic, thirst- quenching and laxative qualities. In earlier times, this drink was a staple in every Veps dwelling.

**4.6. Urtica dioica (nettles) (Family: Krapivnye Urticaceae)**

During the hungry years of the Second World War, nettles were cooked to make cabbage soup, most often with sorrel blancmange and cabbage. At the present time, nettles have lost their significance as food. Nettles are used for their capacity to strengthen in general and for hemostatic qualities--most often in hemorrhaging of the womb but also in spitting up blood from pneumonia and tuberculosis. Veps’ healers consider nettles health restoring in bronchial diseases and that they give people strength. Some Veps also use nettles in animal husbandry; they are added to the food of suckling pigs and calves. The tops of the seed-vessels, as well as the leaves of nettles, are used.

**4.7. Allium-sera (Onion-garlic) Allium-sativum (Family: Liliaceae)**

The onion is not only a major component in the Veps’ medical arsenal. It is widely known as a prophylactic and treatment substance used for severe respiratory diseases. The Veps grow and use a lot of onions. Variations include onion inhalation, crushed onions, and garlic hung close to the beds of young children.

**4.8. Filipendula ulmaria (Family: Rosaceae)**

Information about the many-sided medicinal properties of this plant are more widespread in Russian traditional medicine and possibly the Veps borrowed from Russians. In Russia, the common name of this plant comes from the fact that it grows in moist places. In the past, the leaves of this plant were widely used as a surrogate tea. Russians used the tea for its anti-inflammatory, mildly analgesic and diuretic properties. It was considered health-restoring and regenerating [21]. People drank the tea to alleviate muscle pain. In the village of Ladva, only the now-deceased P.S. Iniakova applied the flowers of the plant in combination with the leaves of raspberries and St.
John’s Wort in cases of severe respiratory virus infections, for high fevers, especially when accompanied by agitation, and for ulcerous diseases and gastritis. Cattle do not go near this plant, notwithstanding the fact that it is not toxic and, in fact, detoxifying. Decoctions of the plant are added to the feed of calves with diarrhea. The plant grows all around the village of Ladva. Veps’ bee-keepers know that it is good for honey. Contemporary scientific experiments support the high anti-inflammatory, strengthening, pain-relieving and stress-limiting properties of the flowers of this plant [22].

4.9. *Ajuga reptana* (Family: Lamiaceae, Labiatae)

This plant was shown to us by a Veps’ healer in Kharagenichakh and identified by botanist Z. V. Akulova. The plant is known to only a few herbalists. The female Veps’ healer explained to us that *Ajuga reptana* is given to patients with tuberculosis of the lungs and to those with pneumonia. The plant has secretion, hemostatic, and anti-inflammatory properties. It helps patients to obtain better health. A warm decoction, near to 1:20, in combination with *tsetraria* (*Cetraria* or Islandic lichen), and raspberries must be taken by the sick person in small portions 1-1.5 liters per day.

4.10. *Menyanthes trifoliata*

The use of this plant, not told to all who visit Veps villages, was revealed to us in the village of Liamenga, Vologda Region, and supported by inhabitants of the village of Kozhinkaia on the shores of the Northern Dvina River and one of the Veps healers in the village of Ladva. The bitter decoction of the leaves was used long ago for malaria and in other fevers. As much as there is no malaria at the present time, use of this plant continues for severe respiratory virus infections, pneumonia, tuberculosis of the lungs, and lung cancer. Its antipyretic, anti-inflammatory effect also helps quell fevers and inflammation from other diseases: cholecystitis or inflammation of the gallbladder, angina, nephritis, cystitis, adnexitis or disease of the ovaries and fallopian tubes—that is supported in our clinical practice. Veps’ healers cannot explain the universality, the organic level of activity of anti-inflammatory plants such as raspberries, *Filipendula ulmaria* (Rosaceae), and Menyanthes trifoliata, but they know about them empirically and use them for many diseases. The bitter taste of Menyanthes trifoliata was corrected with honey or most often, with sugar. Following are the methods of making a decoction: The leaves were minced, mixed with water and put into a cast iron vessel in an outdoor, earthen, Mediterranean-style oven until boiling, and then kept in the *zagnetka*—a semicircular indentation on the left side of the oven, where foods are kept warm and without further cooking, the thermal transformation continues. Indeed, this method was used for the preparation of most water-based decoctions which healers recommended the sick take at a warm temperature. The correctness of Veps’ preparation is made clear by the fact that thermal transformation in a solution results in a semi-sugary blancmange that has immune-modulating activity.

4.11. *Cetraria islandica* (Family: Parmiliaceae)

This lichen is used by only a few Veps’ healers for all bronchial diseases with coughs, but predominantly in tuberculosis of the lungs and in bronchial asthma. In past decades, diagnoses of these diseases were made in hospitals, then the sick were treated on an out-patient basis. The sick turned to local healers and in some cases, it was observed that doctors recommended their patients to turn to local healers because their treatment got good results. Unfortunately, this cooperation between scientific and traditional medicine has not been maintained and the people turn first, on their own, to traditional healers.

Gathering of the lichen in coniferous forests is done only in dry weather. Mostly the lichen is taken as a decoction—rarely as a powder. Today, information about the secretion and laxative properties of *Cetraria* and its usefulness for tuberculosis is obtained from questionnaires about medicinal botanicals. However, 50 years ago, the Veps did not have such questionnaires. More than half the old healers could not read so that this information was not passed down to the present generation. Parallel with taking lichen those sick with tuberculosis were recommended to take a spoonful of protein food. Lichen was taken constantly, for a prolonged time and with other medicinal botanicals like raspberries, St. John’s wort, and with *Polygonum aviculare* (family of *P. bistorta*).
Today, research supports the use of the latter botanical in traditional medicine. Among the Veps, healers applied only the above-ground part of the plant in the form of a decoction. The plant has not only hemostatic properties but tannic activity and is an anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial substance, capable of restoring health. Analgesic properties have long been noted.

4.12. *Betula pendula, B. belaia, B. alba* (Family Berezovye Butulaceae)

The Veps have a special relationship to the birch tree in the village with the name Koivala, which translates as the land of the birch. Many household items are made from the birch tree. When the birch sap is moving, it is used to treat those with bronchial-lung diseases. From time to time, the leaves of the birch tree are mixed with the leaves of nettles, St. John’s Wort, and mint. It is suggested that this mixture is used when lung symptoms accompany diseases of the hepatic, gall-bladder system—pain, and heaviness in the right subcostal. In Russian traditional medicine, it is recommended to gather only young, small birch leaves and buds for attaining a diuretic effect. The Veps, however, gather large twig leaves. Birch twigs are also used in the sauna for dermatological purposes. Water, in which birch twigs have been soaked is considered useful for skin diseases. With scabies—which from our observation did not affect the Veps—birch tar was applied in the past, a method different from that described by the ethnographer A. V. Bol’shakova [23].

4.13. Common Mountain Ash Berry *Sorbus aucuparia* (Family: Rosaceae)

This plant, called “Common Riabina” in Russian, plays a key role in Veps’ culture and traditional medicine. The branches of the bush are integrated into the Veps’ huts when they are being built. The berries of the mountain ash attract birds. Steam from warm decoctions is used to soften dry coughs. The berries of mountain ash were formerly used with other components, such as nettles, St. John’s Wort, birch, and so forth, for bronchial illnesses, a treatment also used in Korean and other traditional medicines [24]. Veps’ healers further used berries of mountain ash to lower the appetite in cases of obesity and to lower blood pressure. We have supported the correctness of this recommendation with our clinical experiments. Today, the flowers of mountain ash are used for their anti-inflammatory properties.

4.14. Mint (*Mentha arvensis* (Family: G. Lami-naceae or Labiatae))

This plant, discussed in the 11th century Odo iz mena na Lure [25] and in the 16th century, Amirdovlatom Am asiatsi [26] has a myriad of uses as a medicinal plant. Grown in kitchen gardens, it is used as a surrogate tea for its secretion effect. The Veps often preserve it in their huts through the winter. Mint is especially useful to treat children who will not drink bitter decoctions and infusions. Tea from mint, nettles, the leaves of currents, and raspberries, with sugar added, is a very good therapy for severe flu and bronchitis. Children with high fevers and coughs are usually not hospitalized at the present time and, in any case, there are no children’s hospitals near Veps’ villages.

The leaves of black currents—*Ribes nigrum* (family: Crossulariaceae) were not in use fifty years ago as much as they are today. Black current leaves are valued for their smell. The Veps boil the leaves of black currents and use them as surrogate tea and as medicine to quell fevers. Today, the mechanism of the ether oils of Black currents has been ascertained. The components draw out bronchial mucous, help secrete phlegm, and have an antimicrobial effect.

4.15. Cow parsley or Wild Chervil (*Anthriscus sylvestris* (Family: Ariaceae or Umbelliferae))

This plant is very invasive. Veps healers use cow parsley for the severe period of head colds. The leaves and flowers that improve the secretion of phlegm, are calming, have an analgesic, antipyretic effect, and possess antimicrobial activity. Besides this, the plant normalizes menstrual cycles.

4.16. *Aegopodium podagria* (Family: Umbelliferous Ariaceae)

This plant is called “Snyt’ obyknovennaia” in Russian and, in English, Ground elder, Bishops’ weed, goutweed or snow-in-the- mountain. For its anti-inflammatory properties, it is used to help arthritis sufferers. It is not a popular plant in the Veps’ traditional medicine but, during the Second World War, the plant was used for food. It is used
for respiratory diseases and tuberculosis of the lungs.

4.17. Other Botanicals Used by Veps’ Healers

The Veps also use “Thousand leaf” (*Achillea millefolium*, a family of Asteraceae) and, the roots of *Salvia* (*Rumex confertus*) for their hemo-static properties. In the basin of the Northern Dvina, *Sanguisorba officinalis* (family: Rosaceae) is also used. The three medicinal botanicals are used for diarrhea as well. A fourth hemo-static substance is the leaves of the Bird Cherry tree (*Padus avium*, family: Rosaceae). However, the key importance of these botanicals was a treatment for respiratory diseases. For the last 50 years, during our regular trips to the Veps, the authors did not see one case of lung hemorrhaging and rarely did we see blood spitting from heavy coughs, tuberculosis and cancer of the lungs. There were only a few people with tuberculosis of the lungs, who refused hospitalization. People reminisced about the days when there were no paramedic and obstetrical stations, and even lack of telephone connection with hospitals. In those days, native healers attended to their medical problems.

CONCLUSION: CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF TRADITIONAL VEPS’ MEDICINE

The authors of this article hope that this partial review of Veps’ traditional medicine will underscore the rationality, the usefulness of applying certain medicinal botanicals for respiratory diseases, particularly tuberculosis of the lungs. The effectiveness of long-time applications of the medicinal plants cited, based on empirical observation by the Veps, has now been substantiated by scientific analysis of the plants’ active ingredients. Much of the material in this article is based on first-hand observations recorded by the authors during their combined 76 field trips to the settlements of the Veps [27]. However, published sources corroborating many of their findings also have been provided.

Many of the botanicals mentioned in this article, including *Cetraria* or islandic lichen-- are sold in the packaged form on the internet. For example, readers can find Cetraria for themselves by clicking on the website [28]. This documents the fact that individuals are currently using phytotherapy in self-medication. The problem, however, related to us in interviews with phytotherapy practitioners, is that doses are not uniform.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

Not applicable.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

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