CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates the importance of traditional Q’eqchi’ knowledge as well as the importance of ethnobotany as a route to drug discovery. Majority of the plants used by the Q’eqchi’ healers to treat epilepsy and susto are active at the BZD site of the GABA<sub>A</sub> receptor. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported. Biological activity is well correlated with healer plant selection in the case of susto, providing partial support for hypothesis 2. Ethyl and isopropyl caffeate are simple phenolics with low cytotoxicity<sup>3</sup>, and inexpensive synthesis methods, which are advantageous over the classical benzodiazepines as therapeutic drugs.

Future studies could involve the phytochemical characterization of some of the most active plants, in vivo studies using ethyl caffate, and the extraction of indole alkalds from G. rosea using acid-base fractionation<sup>5</sup>.

REFERENCES


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