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Surviving the ravages of Time: 18th vs 20th and 21st century plant-based medicinal remedies in Valle Imagna (Bergamo, Italy)

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This investigation stemmed from the previous analysis of an 18th century manuscript found in Valle Imagna (Bergamo, Italy) and containing 200 plant-based medicinal remedies. We designed an ethnobotanical investigation to make a comparison between past and current phytotherapy knowledge in this territory. The field survey was conducted through semi-structured interviews (November 2021-November 2022). All data was then entered in a database and processed. Finally, a comparison between the field results and the ancient remedies of the manuscript was performed. 110 interviews were conducted and the use of 106 medicinal species, belonging to 46 families, was noted. The most used species were *Malva sylvestris* L., *Tilia cordata* Mill., and *Agrimonia eupatoria* L. The comparison with the remedies in the manuscript highlighted a similar use for 14 species. For example, agrimony was used in Valle Imagna until the 1960s-1970s for the treatment of deep wounds. Its fresh leaves were applied directly on the open wound and set in place with a gauze. Furthermore, wound healing compresses with the infusion or the decoction of the whole plant were applied. These kinds of medication call back to an ancient poly-herbaceous remedy in the manuscript against deep leg ulcers based on compresses of wine decoction of this species and on the direct application of the cooked poultice thus obtained. These preliminary results allow us to speculate on how slivers of ancient plant-based remedies used in Valle Imagna during the 18th century might have survived the passage of time, coming down the centuries to us today.

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