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Quantitative determination and comparative oil extracts and capsaicin content of three varieties of capsicum peppers (*Capsicum frutescens*-bird-eye pepper and two varieties of *Capsicum annum*: chilli pepper and sweet pepper)

Ekwere Mercy R
University of Calabar, Nigeria

Good nutrition prevents illness, herbal medicinal and aromatic plants are useful in treating existing health problems. Herbal medicines are not only effective but useful much cheaper alternative to synthetically produced drugs. Capsicum pepper has always been one of the most important spices with amazing healing powers since ancient time but seems to be under-rated as a natural medicine. Whatever value pepper has as medicinal plant is due to the essential oil and to the aromatic and pungent principle, capsaicin. This study sought to determine the oil and capsaicin content of three varieties of pepper from the genus capsicum namely, *Capsicum frutescens*-bird-eye pepper and two varieties of *Capsicum annum*-chilli pepper and sweet pepper; relate the level of pungency and equate the essential oil to reported observed effects on human-beings. The volatile oils were extracted using soxhlet apparatus while capsaicin was extracted by a modified method of Kosugue et al, 1958. Bird-eye pepper had the highest capsaicin content followed by chilli pepper while sweet pepper had the least. Sweet pepper also had the least oil content while chilli pepper had the highest oil content followed by bird-eye pepper. No significant relationship (<0.05) existed between capsaicin and oil contents of the capsicum peppers. Thus, bird-eye and chilli peppers would best be described and used as drug capsicum.

Biography

Ekwere Mercy R is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry, School of Sciences, Cross River State College of Education, Akampka, Nigeria and a PhD student in the Department of Biochemistry, School of Basic Sciences, University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. She has a teaching and research experience in Biochemistry for 20 years.

tomercyudoh@yahoo.co.uk

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