

The scientific basis for the use of *strychnos henningsii*(gilg) Plant material to stimulate appetite

Ogeto, J.O; Maitai, C.K

Abstract:

The medicinal value of *Strychnos henningsii* plant. Particularly as an appetite stimulant has long been recognised by the indigenous people of Kenya even before this is properly documented in scientific literature. The present work involves isolation and purification of the bitter alkaloidal principles present in powdered plant material. Quantitative estimation of the alkaloidal content, in each morphological part of the plant was done and the result compared with that of closely related species. *Strychnos nux vomica*, an official drug in several pharmacopoeia. Examination of the isolated alkaloidal was done using thin layer chromatography (TLC) and gas, liquid chromatography (GLC) to determine the number of alkaloids present in the plant. The median lethal dose (L.D) in rats and the bitterness threshold in humans for the isolated alkaloidal mixture were determined and compared with those reported for *S. nux vomica*. Results of this work indicate that *S. henningsii* can be substituted for *S. nux vomica* as an appetite stimulant.