Traditional medicinal plants are widely used by both indigenous Fijians and Indians as an alternative to western-style medicine. Plants are traditionally used as herbal remedies or for treatment of various diseases and ailments.

The Pacific Medical Student Journal noted that people in the Pacific Islands have unique languages, physical characteristics and cultures. The Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Melanesia, Fiji and New Guinea are the major sub-regions. There is much more diverse flora found in the Melanesian countries than in any other Pacific countries, and these plants are still not fully documented regarding their medicinal use. For instance, in Fiji about 2500 vascular plant species are reported of which 20% of plants are used for medicinal purposes.

Traditionally, people used Cymbopogon citratus for tea [4]. Cymbopogon citratus has been used widely for antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, anti-fever and antidiyspeptic effects (preventing impaired digestion). The medicinal plants are either endemic (occurring only at one geographical location), indigenous or introduced. The introduced species were brought to Fiji for their medicinal properties by the Indians, Chinese and Europeans. About 70-80% from 2600 plant species in the Fiji Islands are widely used for medicinal purposes due to their availability, chemical constituents and acceptability from a cultural and spiritual perspective. More importantly, the use of natural products over synthetic chemicals is due to consumer concern regarding chemical preservatives.

Despite the usage of traditional medicines in Fiji Islands, the indigenous knowledge is not sufficiently documented, and the primary objective of the Pacific Medical Student Journal study was to report commonly used traditional medicinal plants from the selected villages of Nawairabe, Tomuka, Lauwaki, Nailanga, Tabataba, Innnaviyango, Naikabula and Navo. A verification survey was carried out at villages in the western division of Fiji Islands which revealed a total of 50 medicinal plant species from 33 different families that hold medicinal properties for a number of common diseases such as colds, diabetes, measles, menstrual cramps, gastritis, measles and dengue.

The majority of the plant species identified for traditional medicines were from the family Fabaceae that constituted 8% of the commonly used medicinal plants in selected villages. Parts of plants commonly used in traditional medicine were leaves, stem, flowers, barks, roots and fruits.

More Information -
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327514571_Traditional_use_of_Medicinal_plants_among_selected_Villages_in_Fiji_Islands_A_Review_Perspective_-_Pacific_Medical_Student_Journal

Some examples of the use of traditional and herbal medicines are:

- Herbals to stop bleeding, for example, gg plant leaves and ‘Drau ni Kaukamea’
- Pawpaw leaves for broad range of illnesses
- Layalaya
- Lemon leaves and Ginger for Cough.
Traditional medicinal values are now being harnessed by local businesses and enterprises in Fiji, and an example is Juice Fiji, whose products are noted as being ‘Sourced from Mother Nature & prepared with the intention of ancient wisdom, Juice Fiji invites you to Balance your Body, mind & energy.’

**Traditional Healers**

Both the Fijian and Indian communities have faith in traditional healing practices and traditional medicine, especially in the rural areas, with many people consulting traditional healers before certified medical practitioners. Traditional Healers are often identified within communities, with a belief that the knowledge and skills are hereditary within the family or clan.

The Women’s Association for Natural Medicinal Therapy, an NGO founded in 1993 which promotes the use of traditional medicine, conducted a survey and found that there were over 2,000 practising providers of traditional medicine in 13 of the 14 provinces in Fiji. These surveys and interviews with the locals show great faith in traditional medicine, believing it to be more effective and cost-efficient, although it should be noted there is no provision in the laws of Fiji to recognise or regulate traditional healers.

**Stigma – ‘Witchcraft & Sorcery’**

This survey by the Women’s Association for Natural Medicinal Therapy also revealed that many people use traditional medicine and seek treatment from traditional healers in Fiji but do not disclose it, as traditional healing can be seen to be associated with witchcraft, which is very challenging for many based on religious beliefs and values.

The perceived practice of ‘witchcraft’ was then addressed in the Fiji Crimes Act 2009, through which the act of witchcraft or sorcery was made illegal, with up to 5 years in prison if convicted.

**Fiji Crimes Act 2009**

**[CR 263] Witchcraft and sorcery**

263 A person commits a summary offence if he or she—
   (a) holds himself or herself out as being able to cause by supernatural means, fear, annoyance or injury to another person in mind, person or property; or
   (b) pretends to exercise or who practises, whether on an isolated occasion or otherwise, witchcraft or sorcery.

Penalty — Imprisonment for 5 years.