

**USES AND PERCEPTIONS OF MEDICINAL PLANTS AND NATURAL MEDICINE  
BY THE ORGANIZATION PROAL-HOLOSALUD AND THE COMMUNITY OF  
LLANO BONITO, COSTA RICA IN MARCH AND APRIL OF 2013**

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This case study describes the uses of medicinal plants and natural medicine in Llano Bonito, Costa Rica. It focuses on the women's group called PROAL-HoloSalud, which works with medicinal plants, Bioenergetics, flower essences, and various other forms of natural medicine. A list of 57 different plants used in the region is included, with photographs, their medicinal uses, and other defining characteristics. A summary of the story of PROAL includes how the group started, what sorts of treatment they give, what their current direction is, and the perceptions of the community about the group and their role as medical providers. Semi-structured interviews yielded information about how the people in Llano Bonito learn about the uses of medicinal plants, how they feel about the current public medical system, and why people choose one type of medicine over the other. Also included are various home remedies, differences in perceptions of natural medicine between generations, and ideas of the community about what makes a good doctor. It was found that the vast majority of people commonly use medicinal plants, and that knowledge is still being passed down through families to the younger generation. Since most of the community has been treated with both plants and pharmaceuticals, there is a general desire to have medical providers that understand more than one type of medicine. Receiving a safe combination of different types of medical treatment can be achieved through honest communication between the patient and the provider, knowledge of the correct dosages of medicinal plants, and a mutual understanding of various medical philosophies.