

# Use of herbal preparations during pregnancy

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# Use of herbals during pregnancy

- International research has found
  - Norway (Nordeng) n=400, postnatal ward, interview
    - 36%
  - USA (Glover) n=578, antenatal clinic, interview
    - 45%
  - Australia (Forster) n=588, antenatal clinic, survey
    - 36%
- Currently no research carried out in the UK

# Why is this important

- The general attitude: herbal = natural = safe
  - or at least safer than medicines ...
- There is a lack of
  - safety data of most herbs during pregnancy
  - efficacy data of many herbs
  - knowledge about herbs among doctors
- Interactions with conventional medicines can be significant

# The aims of the study

- Identify the herbal preparations used during pregnancy, the percentage of women using herbs and the amount of herbs used
- Identify the sources of information used by pregnant women
- Compare usage in the UK with reported international herbal product usage

# Survey among expectant mothers attending a hospital pre-natal clinic

- Collaboration between University of East Anglia, Norwich and University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway
- Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital
- Between 26th of November 2007 and 15th of February 2008
- 1035 questionnaires
- Ethical evaluation was performed by the Essex 1 REC

# Method

- Questionnaire based on a Norwegian interview guide (Nordeng)
- All women 20 weeks or more pregnant were asked to participate
- Sample size calculated from the Norwegian study
  - 36% used herbs
  - Acceptable standard error +/- 2%
  - Estimated 600 participants

## Method (cont.)

- Statistics
  - Chi square tests to analyse univariate associations
  - Significance level 0.05 was used

# Results

- 578 responses
- Response rate 55.8%
- 57.8% had used herbs during pregnancy
  - Norway (Nordeng) 36%
  - USA (Glover) 45%
  - Australia (Forster) 36%
- 78.4% of the users during pregnancy had used herbs before



## Products used (n=578)

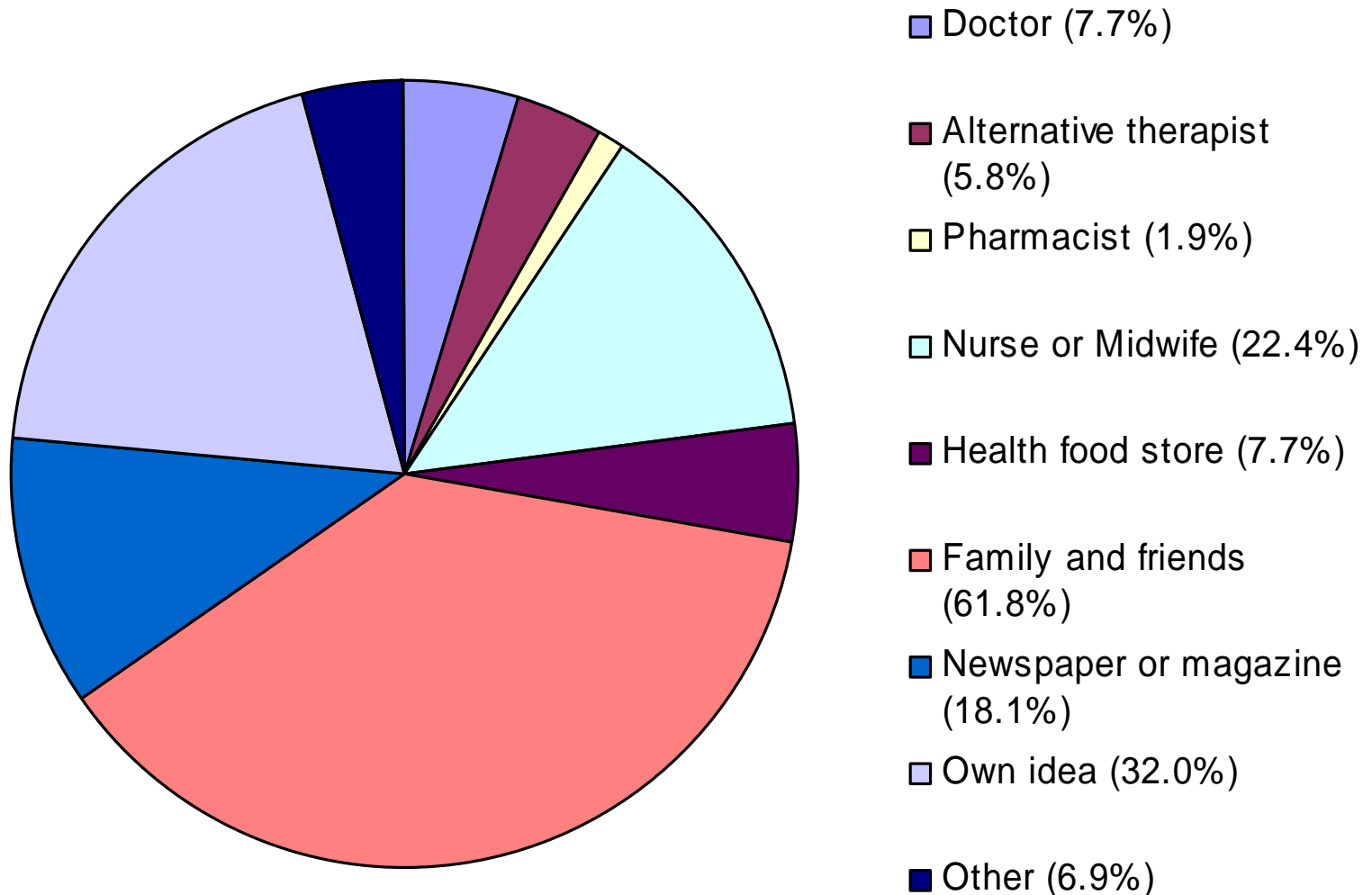
- Ginger 27.2%
- Cranberry 24.9%
- Raspberry leaf 23.7%
- Other products had less than 14% users
- 41 different herbs were used
- Most users used 1 product, some 2 or 3.
- A maximum of 10 products were used by one participant



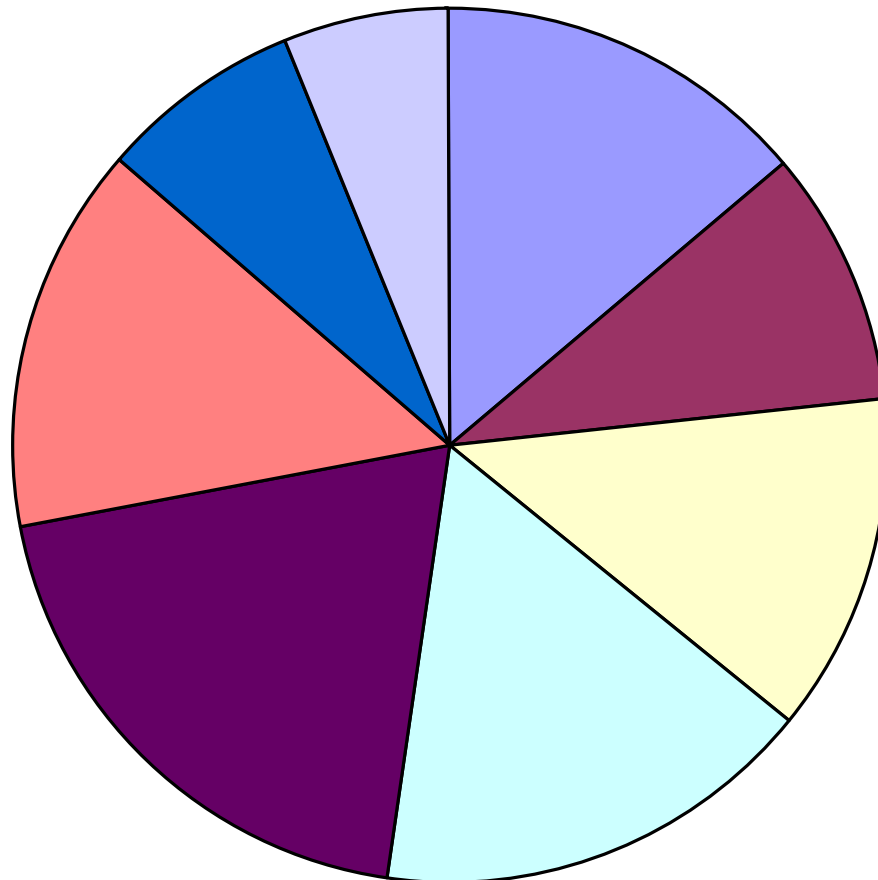
## Percent of herb users using each herb

	This study 2007/8	Nordeng Norway 2001	Glover USA 1999-2001	Forster Australia (2006)
Ginger	47.0	10.4	1.9	32.1
Cranberry	43.1	8.3	28.7	24.1
Raspberry leaf	41.0	nd	2.3	39.2

## Information sources used



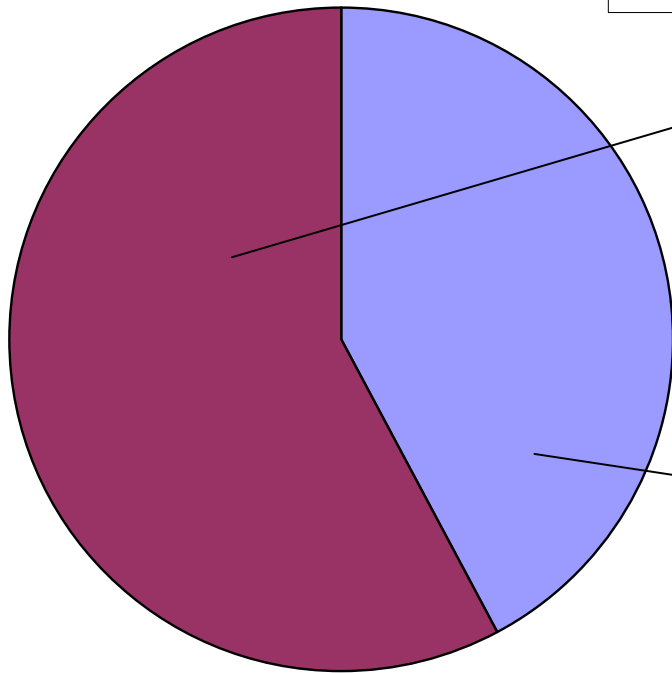
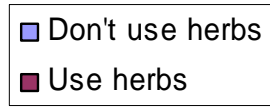
## Sources of information for future use



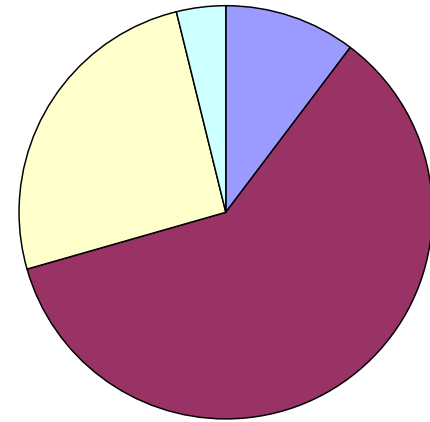
- Doctor (42.1%)
- Alternative therapist (29.1%)
- Pharmacist (38.3%)
- Nurse or Midwife (50.1%)
- Health food store (60.1%)
- Family and friends (44.3%)
- Newspaper or magazine (23.2%)
- Other (18.6%)

# Medicines do more harm than good

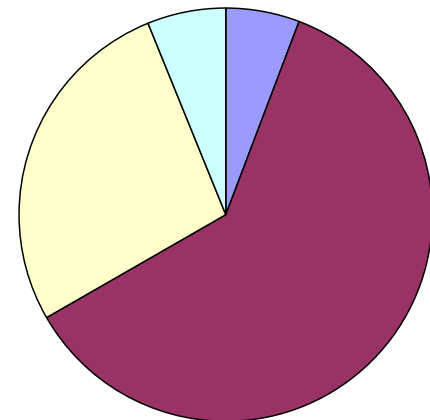
Population



Use herbs in pregnancy

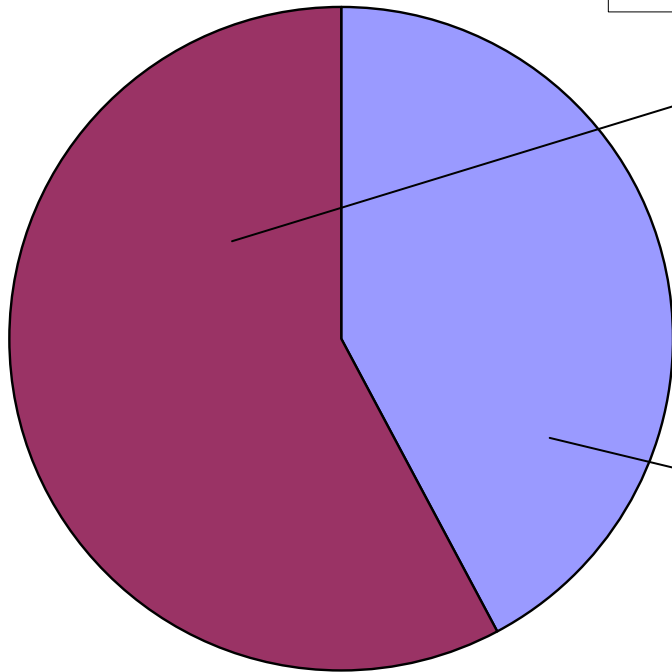
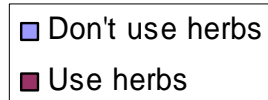


Don't use herbs in pregnancy

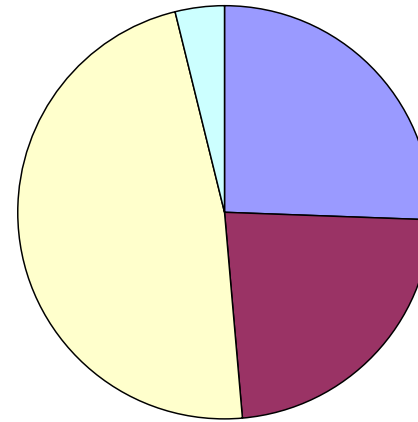


# Natural products are safer than medicines

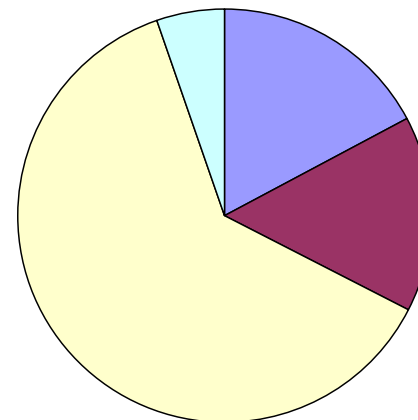
Population



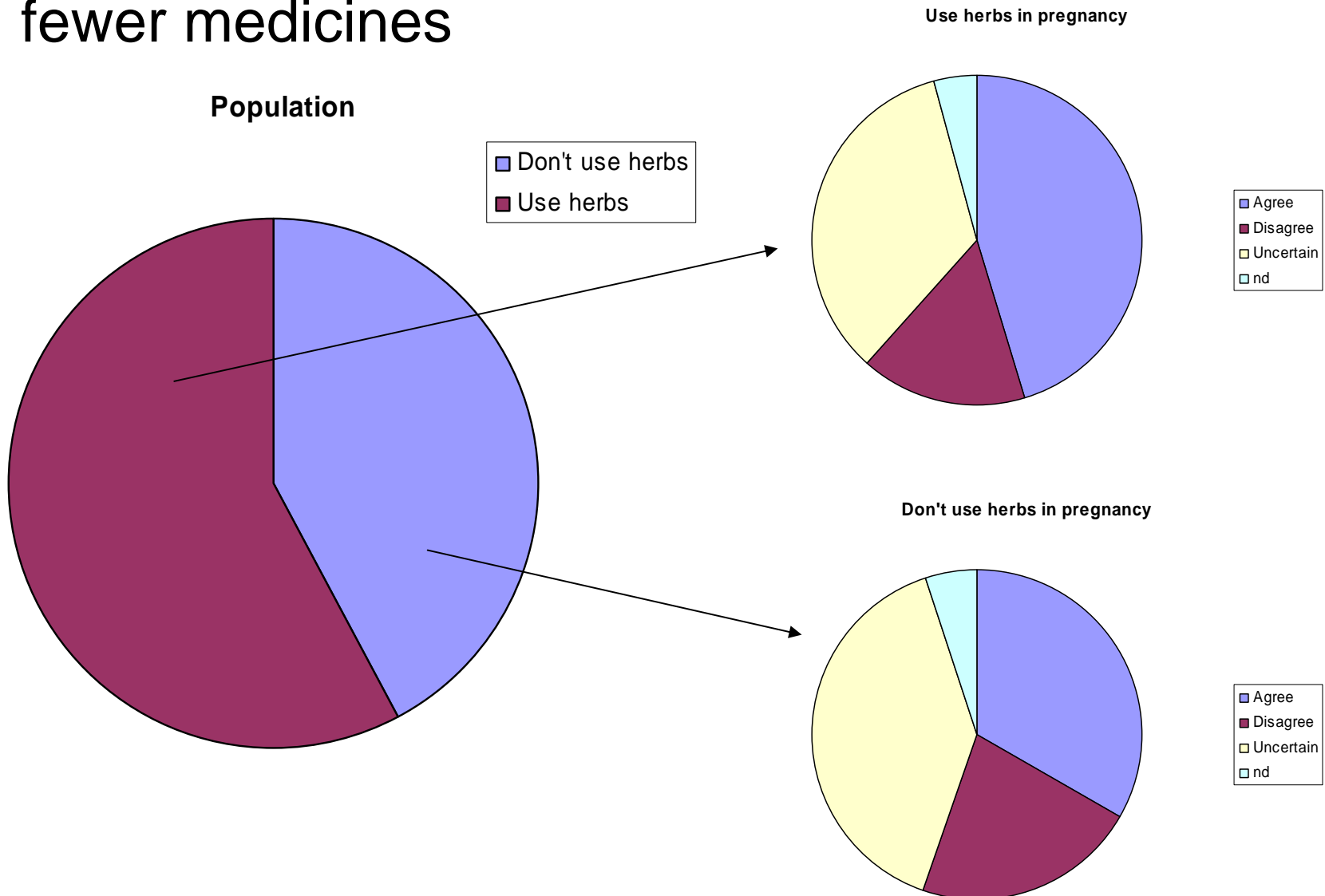
Use herbs in pregnancy



Don't use herbs in pregnancy



# If doctors had more time, they would prescribe fewer medicines



# Discussion

- Identify the herbal preparations used during pregnancy, the percentage of women using herbs and the amount of herbs used
- Most used herbs: 

	Percentage of women:
– Ginger	27.2%
– Cranberry	24.9%
– Raspberry leaf	23.7%
- Overall usage 57.8% of the participants
- Most women used 1 product

# Discussion

- Identify the sources of information used by pregnant women
- Family and friends most used (61.8%)
- Pharmacist hardly asked at all (1.9%)
- 76.3% did not inform their GP about their herb use



# Discussion

- Compare usage in the UK with reported international herbal product usage
- Compared to studies of similar size, many women in this study used herbal products.
- Points for discussion:
  - Did our method (unintended) select users?
  - Are ginger biscuits or ginger ale actually herbal products?

# Discussion

- **Attitudes:**
  - If doctors had more time with patients, they would prescribe fewer medicines
    - Significantly more users than non-users agree to this.

# Conclusion

- Doctors and midwives should always ask about herbs when they ask about medicines used during pregnancy.
- Pharmacists should be able to give evidence based advice on herb use during pregnancy.

# Acknowledgements

I want to thank everybody working in the antenatal clinic and antenatal ultrasound department at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital. A special thank to the receptionists without whom the study would not have been possible.

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Svein Haavik, UiB

**Thank you for your attention**