Ethnobotany as a discipline is an ideal vehicle to promote cultural sensitivity and build a trusted relationship during the clinical encounter between a minority patient and health care provider. To accomplish this, one must generate educational materials and provide training to clinicians about the traditional knowledge, beliefs and practices of the patient group. We conducted cultural competency training sessions with several medical schools (Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center, Montefiore Medical Center and Columbia University Medical Center) and a community clinic (Mt. Hope Family Practice) in New York City, and with a medical university center (Centro Universitario de Medicina Tropical, Universidad Mayor de San Simon) in Bolivia.

In New York City, training tools included Powerpoint presentations, workshops, role play exercises, tours of the living plant collection at The New York Botanical Garden, guided visitations of botánicas (community-based shops providing traditional healthcare), classes on ethnomedical Spanish, patient-interviewing and topic-oriented language immersion sessions during internships in a community clinic. In Bolivia, we organized video-recorded workshops with local physicians specializing in tropical medicine, medical students, traditional healers and indigenous community members to promote dialogue about how health conditions prevalent in indigenous communities were recognized by and treated with biomedical and traditional healthcare. Evaluation of the training program consisted of both oral and written reflections by trainees and community members, as well as administration of a self-evaluation instrument containing statements related to trainees’ knowledge, attitudes and skills. Projects such as these demonstrate the usefulness of ethnobotany as an applied tool that extends beyond research and underscores its applicability to address pressing societal issues, including those related to the existence of health disparities in immigrant and indigenous communities.

**Keywords:** cultural competency training, medical education, botanical medicines, applied ethnobotany, community healthcare