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### **Hirudotherapy in medicine and cosmetic treatment**

Hirudotherapy is a natural method of treatment of various ailments with the help of leeches. A leech by regulating the human circulatory system effectively treats and helps in the treatment of many diseases such as cardio-vascular, endocrine, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, respiratory, osteoarticular diseases, dermatological and neurological disorders.

Hirudotherapy in the United States, Britain, Germany and Russia is treated as an accepted method of treatment used by doctors. In 2004 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) introduced *H. medicinalis* for medical treatments and permitted their legal distribution by the registered companies. The therapy using medical leeches was registered into the International Classification of medical procedures under the number 99.991 - Leech Therapy. According to the Polish law this treatment is unconventional and still raises many controversies. Despite the fact that most doctors do not perceive hirudotherapy seriously, in many natural health clinics, this procedure is becoming more popular.

Scientific studies provide mounting evidence of the effectiveness of the leech therapy. In the leech treatment an individual approach to the patient is important as well as the issue of the illnesses or symptoms, so that the treatment is the most effective. Hirudotherapy treatments should be performed only in the hirudotherapy offices, and the staff performing the procedures should be trained in practical and theoretical issues concerning the leech therapy. Same leeches applied to hirudotherapy should come from controlled laboratory breeds, and after the treatment should be anaesthetized and disposed. Acquisition of leeches in the wild is banned and punishable.

It should be noted that hirudotherapy cannot replace the traditional medical treatment and consultation, however, it can be a very good way to supplement the traditional treatment.