

Traditional Medicine: The Need to Revive and Return to the Past amid the Outbreak of Coronavirus

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Dear Editor

Over the past two decades, coronaviruses have been associated with a significant prevalence. Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) emerged in 2002 and 2012, respectively. In late 2019, a new coronavirus, as the third most common human coronavirus outbreak in recent two decades, appeared in Wuhan, China, and quickly became a global health threat (1, 2). On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially named the current disease COVID-19, which is caused by SARS-CoV-2. (3) Health workers and organizations worldwide are working hard to control and prevent further outbreaks of the disease.

In the last century, the discovery of chemical drugs caused the world to turn away from traditional medicine. However, recently, the factors such as the discovery of new lethal pathogens like SARS-CoV-2, the lack of decisive and safe therapy for the prevention and treatment of the diseases, fewer side effects of herbal drugs, valuable methods of prevention and treatment in traditional medicine, than chemical healing practices have contributed to more attention of the international community and the WHO to use traditional medicine in research, education, and therapies (4, 5). This has continued so far and the WHO has emphasized developing strategies to expand traditional medicine' utilization and implement standard policies to integrate traditional medicine into the health care system (6).

Due to the important role of traditional medicine in the prevention and treatment of diseases, the practice of traditional medicine is increasing in developed as well as

developing countries (7). Today, in most developed countries, traditional medicine is supported by governments in various dimensions and has a great role in the health provision for society. Besides, the global trade in traditional medicine and its products has increased in different countries resulting in the general acceptance and the growth of knowledge in this field (8). The WHO reports also indicate that 65% of the world population is utilizing traditional medicine as a part of their treatments (9). Since there is currently no effective and certain treatment for COVID-19 disease and all human civilizations throughout history use herbs to treat viral diseases, herbs can be considered as a new source of antiviral drugs in the prevention, treatment, and symptom management of affected patients (10- 12).

However, the importance of this therapeutic method in Iran is more prominent than other countries in the world for two main reasons. First, since one of the valuable methods of prevention and treatment in traditional medicine is herbal medicine, Iran has an exclusive capacity in this regard due to plant richness, having 11 climates of 13 world-known climates, and diversity of 8000 plant species. Second, the possibility of inadequate access to chemical western drugs at the international level for various reasons, including the lack of financial resources needed to supply the drugs, possible sanctions, or time-consuming access, makes it even more necessary to pay attention to the importance of traditional medicine.

Thus, there is an urgent need for effective and non-invasive treatment. This article evaluates the possible mechanism of actions, originated from evidence-based

studies and the author's opinion. The association of Traditional Medicine should be organized by Iranian experts, which could make references for clinical practice and also, use of combined therapy so that two or more herbs with specific therapeutic actions are administered to combat the mediators of the disease and for further optimization and drug development process to combat COVID-19 (13-15).

According to what has been mentioned above, based on the author's opinion, two short-term and long-term approaches are proposed to benefit from the regional capacity and potential of traditional medicine and to compensate for the missed opportunities. In the short-term solution, the codification and immediate implementation of comprehensive and infrastructural programs to prevent and manage the outbreak of the covid19 disease by highlighting the role of prevention in families seem necessary. To reach this goal, we need to educate, and make the people aware of how to exploit and utilize traditional medicine effectively to strengthen their immune systems and also to treat this disease. The long-term approach is having the support of the government and policymakers in recognition of the ancient Iranian medicine, allocating funding for expanding researches in this field, supporting the existing centers of traditional medicine, preventing the easy sale of related raw products, and considering the traditional medicine in the medical structure of the country.

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None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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