



COVID-19: Natural Products and Traditional Medicines; Opportunity or Threat?

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COVID-19 outbreak is increasing worldwide and it was identified as pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020 [1]. Despite global attempts to find any solutions for its management, there is no definite treatment, and any solution is welcomed. Traditional medicines are claimed to be effective for treatment of various diseases worldwide. The experience regarding the discovery of Artemisinin (Qinghaosu in Chinese Medicine) as an antimalarial remedy obtained from *Artemisia annua* L. that led to the achievement of 2015 noble prize by Prof. Tu Youyou [2,3] highlights the authenticity of this claim.

There are some national official instructions issued as self-care guidelines according to the traditional systems of medicine in Iran (Persian medicine), India (Unani medicine and Ayurveda), and China (Traditional Chinese Medicine). Based on the experiences of the Chinese, it is

claimed that, the integration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) with conventional therapies and cares could be beneficial for treatment and management of the patients affected by COVID-19 disease [4].

On the other hand, in some parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East, some charlatans who have no knowledge about the medicine try to abuse the people's beliefs to traditional medicine and even religion under the titles like traditional medicine, Islamic medicine, prophetic medicine, etc. by refusing conventional instructions and they gain a huge amount of financial turnover as a result of selling their illegal products to the people. This nonscientific approach has caused a big part of medical society to guard against any traditional medicines and natural products.

Now, the following questions are put forth: Which view is correct? Can we use natural prod-

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ucts or traditional medicine instructions to fight against COVID-19 or not? Is it an opportunity or threat? Regarding answering these questions, it should be noted that, any herb and manipulation can influence the body. Medicinal herbs contain active ingredients. Also, many traditional systems of medicine are deeply rooted in the history and are supported by the generation-by-generation human experiences as well as their own philosophical theories. Therefore, many hypotheses can be made about their application. But, they should be supported by the current investigations. They can play a significant role in the prevention; management or treatment; and post-treatment care of the COVID-19 patients. There are also successful experiences regarding the management of SARS and MERS with natural products [5]. The evidence shows antiviral and immune boosting activities for some medicinal herbs making them potential candidates for the treatment of COVID-19 [6]. Also, results of a docking study have shown the probable affinity of some plant-derived natural compounds to the proteins of the COVID-19 [7] and the investigations are now followed by clinical trials. Integration of approved natural products and traditional methods with conventional therapies could serve the best services to the patients. Therefore, it seems that the best way to use both traditional medicines and natural products is considering them as a source of hypotheses and evaluating their efficacy without any prejudice, bias, and guard. Also, integration of accepted traditional medicine methods and natural products with conventional therapies and methods that is called as Integrative Medicine is the best

way to use all the opportunities in order to help patients recover from the COVID-19.

Conflicting Interests

None.

Acknowledgment

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