



Short Note on COVID-19 and Medicinal Plants

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Abstracts

Medicinal plants have been used for a very long time that span the history of mankind. They are plants that possess special active compounds with the potential to alleviate or cure certain ailments and diseases. These compounds can possibly cure a disease or alleviate its symptoms through various mechanisms. This is chiefly due to their unique pharmacological properties. Indigenous plants with medicinal properties on the other hand are plants that are native to a particular geographic location. These plants, therefore, occur naturally in such a location without having been brought in from a different geographic location. COVID-19 is a highly infectious viral disease caused by the novel coronavirus. This disease is transmitted through contact with droplets from an infected person when they sneeze or cough. Although COVID-19 has claimed the lives of millions of people across the world, several vaccines have now been developed for this pandemic. These vaccines are however in limited supply and expensive. Therefore, indigenous medicinal plants offer a cheaper alternative to tackling COVID-19. However, so far, they have not been actively investigated.

Keywords: Medicinal plants; COVID-19; vaccine; Indigenous plants; indigenous medicinal plants

Introduction

The current COVID-19 pandemic has so far proven to be very deadly. While scientists around the world have and are working around the clock to develop vaccines against COVID-19, very little attention has so far been given to indigenous plants as potential sources of compounds against this pandemic. Previously, medicinal plants have shown efficacy against influenza A (H1N1) or SARS-CoV-1 (see Lu, Biosci. Trend 14(1), 69-17, 2020) and promising results against SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19 in China (see Xu et al. J. Zhejiang Univ. Med. Sci. 49 (1), 0, 2020). Medicinal plants derivatives have been used for a long time to formulate new drugs (see Mukhtar et al. Virus Res. 131(2), 111-120, 2008). About a quarter of all routinely used medicines contain plants derivatives. Due to their organic nature and unlimited supply, plant derived compounds offer a sustainable alternative to the fight against COVID-19. Although COVID-19 vaccines have now been developed, these vaccines are both expensive and in limited supply. Therefore, they are more likely to benefit only a fraction of people who have been infected with COVID-19. These are more likely to be people with money, power, and influence. The scramble and competition among big pharmaceutical companies and laboratories to come up with a COVID-19 vaccine has completely blindsided any consideration of indigenous plants as potential sources of compounds that can help fight this disease. This is something that the scientific community might regret in the future as a missed opportunity for devising a more convenient and pragmatic way of fighting COVID-19. Additionally, plant made vaccines and drugs are not only cost effective but they bypass many production processes such as fermentation..

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