

Time to prioritize Ayurvedic medicine in fighting the Coronavirus disease pandemic

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Dear Editor,

The new coronavirus disease known as COVID-19 has been an albatross on the neck of respective governments' around the globe. The health and economic impact of COVID-19 is bringing most of the countries to their knees. As of August 06, 2020, 716,465 has succumbed to this disease (www.worldometer.com). Bloomberg report suggests that the world's gross domestic product will probably shrink by 5.2% in 2020 due to COVID-19 (www.bloomberg.com). What is COVID-19? The novel coronavirus disease is a zoonotic coronavirus and falls under β -coronavirus group (Zu et al., 2020). The major signs and symptoms of this disease are fever and dry cough with shortness of breath being the major complication associated with this disease. Largely old people are more susceptible to this disease than children. Besides, people with underlying health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension are at a greater risk of contracting this virus. What makes the virus dangerous is its ability to remain on the surfaces of items for far too long. In the absence of a vaccine to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, the respective governments around the globe recommend wearing of masks, washing of hands and the ban of social gatherings. Are the measures put in place by respective governments enough to curtail the spread of the virus? I have always argued that an individual boosting his/her immune system and leaning on Ayurvedic medicine and practices will go a long way to assist in the fight against this pandemic. Why Ayurvedic medicine? Researchers in this health tradition recommended the use of medicinal plants such as *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, *Moringa oleifera* and *Ocimum sanctum*, a diet rich in vegetables and exercises by people grouped under these four categories namely unexposed asymptomatic, exposed asymptomatic, exhibiting mild symptoms and those exhibiting moderate to severe symptoms to combat COVID-19 (Rastogi et al., 2020). Generally, COVID-19 has been described as iron overload and oxidative stress disease (Ntyonga-Pono, 2020; Cavezzi et al., 2020). It is not surprising that abnormal blood clots are registered in severe COVID-19 patients as a result of excess intracellular iron in their bodies. An individual taking a reasonable dose of turmeric (highly recommended in Ayurvedic medicine) could help against oxidative stress and excretion of excess iron if combined with vitamin C. It is significant to point out that steam therapy recommended in Ayurvedic medicine to fight against upper respiratory diseases should be taking into consideration and must be as a daily ritual for people to mitigate the effect of COVID-19. Previous studies have shown the usefulness of steam therapy in fighting against respiratory tract diseases (Saleem et al., 2019; Brewster et al., 2020). Interestingly, a Ghanaian nurse living in the United States of America who tested positive for COVID-19 and recovered from the disease explained her treatment regimen which included steam therapy that was published online by a news media. She explained the therapy that she leaned on to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 as follows:

"I soaked garlic, ginger and grains of Selim in water for 24 hrs and I started taking it. Apart from the taking of the concoction orally, I also used another traditional healing method where for 20 minutes each morning, I sat by a bucket full of hot water and covered myself with a blanket so as for the body to absorb all the heat from the hot water" (www.ghananguardian.com).

To conclude, Ayurveda medicine and practices could assist greatly in the fight against COVID-19 in the absence of a vaccine.

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