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Social awareness regarding Ayurveda and traditional medicine preventive measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic in Sri Lanka

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In Ayurveda, *Acharya Caraka* describes causes, prevention and therapeutics for pandemics under *Janapadodvamsa*. *Acharya Susruta* gives detailed accounts on the modes of transmission, aetiopathogenesis and management of *Aupsargika Roga* (contagious diseases). COVID-19 is a direct contacted, contagious disease, transmitted through droplet infection which was initially identified in Wuhan, China. This disease has no specific precise medication or treatment method to date. There was a trend in China to implement traditional preventive measures but the extent to which traditional methods are adopted in Sri Lanka to prevent/ cure COVID 19 infections is not documented. Therefore, this survey was conducted to study the public awareness of Ayurveda and Traditional perception and to identify the types of preventive measures used for the COVID-19 pandemic. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to obtain data from an educational institute in Kandy district and a higher educational institute in Colombo district from June to August 2020. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. It was designed and developed referring to Ayurveda and Sri Lankan Traditional Medical texts. It was validated with subject expertise and samples were selected randomly and the sizes were 50 and 35 respectively. The responses to the study were evaluated by percentages. Of the sample in Kandy, 46 responses were collected out of 50 questioners, 93.6% of them were females and 6.4% were males. 85.1% of the respondents were aware that there are Ayurveda/ Traditional medicines available for pandemics. Results showed that 57.4% have applied *Ferula asafoetida*, *Acorus calamus* during the pandemic and 91.5% of them knew that they are capable of enhancing immunity. Also, 78.7% of the sample have inhaled medicated steam during COVID-19, out of the 84.6% have used hot water, 30.8% included leaves of *Adhatoda vesica* and 12.8% added leaves of *Ocimum sanctum*. In the sample of Colombo, out of 35 questioners, 30 responses were given the filled forms. Out of all the responses 46.7% were females and 53.3% were males. Results showed that 38.5% have used steam from water boiled with leaves of *Ocimum sanctum*, *Vitex negundo* and *Adhatoda vesica* during the pandemic and 93.3% of them believe that they are capable of cleansing the respiratory tract. Also, 58.6% of the sample has consumed herbal porridge during COVID-19, 68.2% have used *Murraya koenigii*, 40.9% used *Aerva lanata* and 36.4% added *Centella asiatica*. Results showed that 57.4% have applied external preventive measures during the pandemic and *Ferula asafoetida* and *Acorus calamus* were the commonest among them. Therefore it can be concluded that awareness of the public on preventive measures related to the COVID-19 outbreak is relatively high. Eastern countries have been able to combat this deadly condition effectively using their traditional medicines by enhancing the immunity of the body. Therefore, a treatment protocol from Ayurveda or Traditional medicine can be proposed since there is no specific treatment to cure COVID-19 yet. This survey can be conducted island wide to aware the public of Ayurvedic and Traditional remedies for COVID-19.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Traditional Medicine, COVID-19 pandemic