

Mitigating COVID19- Preventive Measures Jenn Leiferman

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Editorial

Since December 2019, a respiratory pandemic known as coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) caused by a new coronavirus named as SARS-CoV-2, has stalled activities worldwide. The symptoms are fever, malaise, and cough which resolve in a few days in most cases, but may progress to respiratory distress and organ failure. Transmission is through droplet infection or fomites, but other modes such as airborne transmission and orofecal transmission are also speculated with upcoming recent validated evidence.

Research is underway to develop effective vaccines and medicines for the disease.

The Unani system of medicine for health protection during epidemics is a traditional system of medicine developed during the middle ages, which employs natural drugs of herbal, animal and mineral origin for treatment. In Unani medicine, during an epidemic, apart from isolation and quarantine, three measures are of utmost importance, which include the purification of surroundings using certain herbal drugs as fumigants or sprays, health promotion and immune-modulation, and use of health-protecting drugs and symptom-specific drugs.

Drugs such as *loban* (*Styrax benzoides* W. G. Craib), *sandroos* (*Hymenaea verrucosa* Gaertn.) *za'fran* (*Crocus sativus* L.), vinegar etc. are prescribed in various forms.

With Covid-19 cases on the rise, Kerala is turning to ayurveda for the prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation of Covid-19. The steep rise in the number of cases has also prompted the state government to use all possible means, including Ayurveda, to enhance the preparedness of the state. According to reports, over 8 lakh people, including those in home, institutional and reverse quarantine have availed various ayurveda strategies.

This is despite the fact that the state government is focusing only on the preventive and promotive aspects of ayurveda. It is yet to grant permission for curative care despite the Ministry of Ayush coming out with protocols for Covid-19 treatment through Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha. The

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Indian System of Medicine, Kerala and National Ayush Mission, Kerala have rolled out a slew of programmes to fight Covid-19 through 1,206 Ayur Raksha Clinics across the state. According to the authorities, these clinics are struggling to meet the huge demand for preventive medicine. As part of the Amrutham programme, preventive medicines have been given to over 2.25 lakh population in the state till date. According to Ayurveda researchers, the conversion rate (persons who turned positive while taking preventive medicine) is only 0.342 per cent per lakh.

All India Institute of Ayurveda in collaboration with Nisarga Biotech Pvt Ltd will start human trials to check the preventative effect of neem capsules in people who have come in contact with Covid-19 patients.

The trials will be conducted in ESIC Medical College and Hospital, Faridabad led by Prof. (Dr.) Tanuja Nesari, MD, PhD, Director of AIIA and Dr. Asim Sen, Dean ESIC medical college will lead the team of six doctors from AIIA and ESIC.

The tests began on August 7 on 250 individuals. The tests are being conducted using the double-blind trial method where half of the individuals will receive proprietary Neem capsules while the other half will be administered for 28 days. In a double-blind trial, the doctors as well the participants in the trial do not know if they are taking the medicine for which the trial is being conducted or they are taking a blank capsule. This is done to eliminate bias towards the drug whose efficacy is being tested.