



Herbal Expectorants for the Pandemic Period and Beyond: A Review

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Abstract

As the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic has become a global health crisis and it mainly affects respiratory tract. An effort for presenting the traditional expectorants of the herbal medicine gains its attention, which is promising for the world population from the plant genetic resources to reduce the pressure on pharmacy for medicine. Herbal expectorants are proved to be environmentally safe and are available in around any habitats. Forty eight species of plants used traditionally as expectorants from six continents are included in the present study. Plant parts used its dosage forms, bioactive compounds having expectorant activities are evaluated in the study. *Abies webbiana* Lindl. belongs to gymnosperm, *Adiantum capillus-veneries* L. is a pteridophyte and 42 others are flowering plants. These plants were distributed and used as herbal expectorants in different continents of the world except Antarctica. Forty two species studied are distributed in Asia, thirteen species in Europe, six species from South America, five species in Africa and three species each in Australia and North America. Distribution pattern with respect to different continent is considered, which an added attraction is. During this dreadful situation people can rely on herbal expectorants to subside respiratory infections and increase immunity.

Keywords: Herbal Expectorants; COVID-19; Traditional Expectorants

Introduction

The initial symptoms of COVID-19 patients include were fever, myalgia, sore throat and dry cough which are common to any acute respiratory virus infection. Pneumonia was consistent with the manifestation of lower respiratory tract infections. By contrast, upper respiratory tract symptoms were less common in these patients. Non-specific symptoms included dizziness, diarrhoea, vomiting, headache, and generalised weakness [1].

Chloroquine, a widely-used anti-malarial and autoimmune disease drug, was reported as a potential broad-spectrum antiviral drug [2]. Remdesivir is an adenosine analogue, which incorporates into nascent viral RNA chains and results in pre-mature termination [3]. It was reported that remdesivir and chloroquine are highly effective in the

control of 2019-nCoV infection in vitro [4]. Azithromycin added to hydroxychloroquine was significantly more efficient for virus elimination [5]. Development of its preventive and treatment is still an ongoing process by scientists from all over the world. It is in this contest an effort for presenting the traditional expectorants of the herbal medicine gains its attention, which is promising for the world population when enough quantity of medicine is not available. When world is in the hands of terrifying infection, people with mild symptoms can exist with herbal solutions.

Herbal Expectorants

Forty eight species of plants used traditionally as expectorants in different parts of the world are critically evaluated and presented in Table.1. Among these species *Abies webbiana* Lindl. belongs to gymnosperm, *Adiantum*

capillus-veneries L. is a pteridophyte and rest other species are flowering plants that include six monocot species belong to four families and forty species are dicotyledons from twenty six families. These plants are distributed and used as herbal expectorants in different continents of the world except Antarctica. Forty two species studied are distributed in Asia, thirteen species in Europe, six species from South America, five species in Africa and three species each in Australia and North America. *Eucalyptus globulus* Labill. is widely distributed in all the six continents either by natural occurrence or by way of cultivation. *Marrubium vulgare* Linn. and *Origanum majorana* Linn. are scattered in three continents; Africa, Europe and Asia, while *Borago officinalis* Linn. is distributed in South America, Europe and Asia. Other species are limited to one or two continent in distribution and used as herbal expectorants.

Herbal drugs in crude form or in polyherbal formulations for the treatment of cough are better alternatives of modern cough drugs [6]. Decoctions or infusions of different parts of the plants studied are used individually or in combinations to cure cough, sore throat, bronchitis, asthma and other

respiratory tract problems. In *Dorema ammoniacum*, *Liquidambar orientalis* and *Styrax benzoin*, stem exudates are used as expectorant. Researches on herbal medicines have reported that bio active components like saponin, alkaloids, flavonoids, terpenoids and phenolic compounds are used in the treatment of cough [7]. Terpenoids and flavonoids are found to be major bio active compounds having expectorant action in the selected plant species. Phenols, alkaloids and saponins are also components of these plants involved in cough remedies. Limonene an expectorant is a monoterpene present in three plants *Carum carvi*, *Melaleuca leucadendron* and *Zingiber officinale*. Flavanoid luteolin is a cough suppresser isolated from *Anisochilus carnosus*, *Ficus carica* and *Mucuna monosperma*. *Cressa cretica*, *Eucalyptus globulus* and *Ficus carica* contain flavonoid quercetin which is an expectorant therapeutic. Flavonoid rutin has an expectorant activity obtained from *Brunella vulgaris*, *Tussilago farfara* and *Viola tricolor*. *Origanum majorana* and *Thymus serpyllum* yield natural terpenoid thymol with expectorant property. Bio active components of the plants included in the present study shows their relevance to be used as expectorant in folk medicines.

SL No	Botanical Name	Common Name	Family name	Distribution-continent/country	Part and Form of use as expectorant	Bioactive chemicals detected	Reference
1	<i>Abies webbiana</i> Lindl.	Indian Silver	<i>Pinaceae</i>	Asia - India	Dried leaves - powdered leaves along with the juice of <i>Adathoda vasica</i> and honey	Flavonoids, biflavonoid glycosides and phytosterols.	[8]
2	<i>Acacia concinna</i> (Willd.) DC.	Indian Acalypha	<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	Asia - India	Leaves - Decoction	Saponin, lupeol, aspinasterol, acacic acid lactone, hexacosanol and aspinasterone	[9]
3	<i>Adiantum capillus-veneries</i> L.	American Maidenhair Fern, Venus Hair, Rock Fern.	<i>Adiantaceae</i>	Asia - India	Leaves - Decoction is filtered and honey or sugar is added; Infusion	Flavonoid, glucosides, terpenoids, adiantone, isoquercetin, astragaline, kaempferol	[10-12]

4	<i>Allium cepa</i> Linn.	Onion	<i>Liliaceae/Alliaceae</i>	Asia – India	Bulb - Decoction, infusion, fresh juice, raw, cooked, or roasted bulb	Thiosulphinates, cepaenes	[13]
5	<i>Amygdalus persica</i> Linn.	Peach tree	<i>Rosaceae</i>	Asia – China, Korea, Japan, India	Bark, seeds, leaves	Amygdalin	[14-19]
6	<i>Anisochilus carnosus</i> Wall.	Karpuravalli (Folk name-southern region)	<i>Labiatae/ Lamiaceae</i>	Asia – India	Leaves and stem - Fresh juices of leaves mixed with sugar and gingelly oil; Leaves and stems in infusion	Glucosides of luteolin and apigenin.	[13,20]
7	<i>Barleria prionitis</i> Linn.	Common Yellow Nail Dye Plant	<i>Acanthaceae</i>	Asia – India	Leaves and dried stem bark	Glycosides such as 6-O-trans-p-coumaroyl-8-O-acetylshanzhiside, barlerin and acetylbarlerin	[13,21]
8	<i>Blumea balsamifera</i> DC.	Ngai Camphor	<i>Compositae/ Asteraceae</i>	Asia – India	Leaves - Infusion	Borneol, caryophyllene, ledol phytol, caryophyllene oxide, guaiol.	[22]
9	<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i> Linn.	Horse-purslane, Hogweed	<i>Nyctaginaceae</i>	Asia – India	Whole plant -Infusion	Phenolics glycosides, terpenoids, rotenoids,	[23,24]
10	<i>Borago officinalis</i> Linn.	Borage, Cow's Tongue Plant	<i>Boraginaceae</i>	South America - Argentina; Europe - Spain - Canary Island; Asia	Leaf, dried pedicel, dried flowers - Leaf and dried flower infusion; decoction of the dried pedicels	Gamma linolenic acid, ascorbic acid, lycopsamine, supindine viridiflorate, pyrrolizidine alkaloid	[12,25-28],
11	<i>Brunella vulgaris</i> Linn.	Self-heal	<i>Labiatae/ Lamiaceae</i>	Europe - Germany; Asia – India, Turkey	Aerial aprts, inflorescence - infusions mixed with honey	Flavonoids,rutin.	[29-31]
12	<i>Carum carvi</i> Linn.	Caraway	<i>Umbelliferae/ Apiaceae</i>	Europe; Asia	Seeds	Volatile oil consisting of carvone (40-60%), and limonene	[32, 33]

13	<i>Cassia occidentalis</i> Linn.	Coffee Senna, Foetid Cassia, Negro Coffee	<i>Celastraceae</i>	South America - Peruvian Amazon	Seeds and flower - seeds brewed into a coffee-like beverage; flower infusion	Physcion and its glucosides, emodin, betasitosterol and sennosides	[34-36]
14	<i>Centipeda orbicularis</i> Lour.	Sneezewort	<i>Compositae / Asteraceae</i>	Australia; Asia - India	Leaves and wood ash - pituri	Flavonoids, sesquiterpenes and amide	[18,37]
15	<i>Cephaelis ipecacuanha</i> (Brot.) A. Rich.	Ipecac, Ipecacuanha	<i>Rubiaceae</i>	America; Asia-India	Roots and rhizome - Extract	Emetine, cephaeline, ipecacuanhic acid, and nauseating ethereal oil.	[38,39]
16	<i>Cheiranthus cheiri</i> Linn.	Wall-flower, Gilli Flower	<i>Cruciferae / Brassicaceae</i>	Europe; Asia	Leaves, flowers and seeds	Glycosides and chernine (a glucoside of the digitalis group)	[13,18,40,41]
17	<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> (Linn.) Nees & Eberm.	Camphor tree.	<i>Lauraceae</i>	Asia - China, Japan	Wood and leaves - Infusion	Camphor, safrol, linalool, eugenol	[42,43]
18	<i>Cordia myxa</i> Roxb. non Linn.	Sabestan Plum	<i>Boraginaceae</i>	Asia - India	Fruits	Alkaloids, flavanoids, coumarins	[44,45]
19	<i>Cressa cretica</i> Linn.	Rudanti, Rudantikaa, Rudravanti (Ayurvedic)	<i>Convolvulaceae</i>	Asia - Bahrain, India	Whole plant	Alkaloid, β sitosterol, scopoletin, quercetin glycosides, umbelliferone	[46]
20	<i>Curcuma amada</i> Roxb.	Mango-ginger, Wild Turmeric	<i>Zingiberaceae</i>	Asia - India	Rhizome	Curcuminoid	[41,47]
21	<i>Datisca cannabina</i> L.	False hemp	<i>Datisaceae</i>	Asia - Iraq, Nepal, India	Whole plant - Decoction	Flavonoids (datiscin and datiscanin)	[48,49]
22	<i>Dorema ammoniacum</i> D. Don.	Ammoniacum, Gum ammoniac	<i>Umbelliferae / Apiaceae</i>	Europe; Northern Asia - Siberia; Asia - India, Iran	Gum-resin	Amino-resinol, ferulene, coumarins and Ammoniacum	[18,50,51]
23	<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i> Lindl.	Loquat, Japanese Medlar	<i>Rosaceae</i>	Asia - China, India	Dried leaves - Ingredient in Shini-seihai-to and Biwayo-to	Flavanoid compounds	[52,53]

24	<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i> Labill.	Blue-Gum tree, Australian	<i>Myrtaceae</i>	Europe -Italy, France; Australia; S. America - Venezuela; N. America - Jamaica and Guaremala; Asia	Leaves, root bark - Infusion and decoction	Crystallized resin, cymenes, terpenes, flavonoids -quercetin, tannins, volatile oils	[29,54,55]
25	<i>Ficus carica</i> Linn.	Common Fig	<i>Moraceae</i>	Africa - Morocco; Asia - India	Leaf - Infusion and decoctions	Bergapten, quercetin, luteolin, and 4 '5'-dihydropsoralen	[56]
26	<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> Linn.	Licorice, Liquorice	<i>Papilionaceae / Fabaceae</i>	Africa; Asia - India	Underground stem and root	Glycyrrhizin, Glycosides -glycyrrhizol, glabrins A and B	[57,58]
27	<i>Hibiscus mutabilis</i> Linn.	Cotton-Rose, Chinese-Rose, Confederate Rose	<i>Malvaceae</i>	Asia - Bangladesh, China	Flower	Quercetin, kaempferol, betulinic acid, hexyl stearate, tetratriacontanol, nonacosane	[18,59,60]
28	<i>Iris germanica</i> Linn.	Orris, Iridis Rhizome, German Iris	<i>Iridaceae</i>	Africa - Morocco	Root - Infusion	Irigenin S, iriside A, stigmasterol (I), irone, irilone, irigenin, iridin	[61]
29	<i>Lilium candidum</i> Linn.	Madona Lily, Annunciation Lily, White Lily	<i>Liliaceae</i>	Europe - Romania; Asia - Anatolia, India	Bulb and flower - Infusion	Jatropham and etioline	[62,63]
30	<i>Liquidambar orientalis</i> Mill.	Fragrant Maple	<i>Altingiaceae / Hamamelidaceae</i>	Asia - Turkey, Anatolia	Resin from trunk	Cinnamic acid, cinnamin acid esters, cinnamyl cinnamate (styracin), phenylpropyl cinnamate; triterpene acids; vanillin; styrene	[13,64]
31	<i>Lobelia inflata</i> Linn.	Indian Tabacco, Pukeweed	<i>Campanulaceae / Lobeliaceae</i>	North America	Leaves - used in teas and tinctures	Lobeline, Lobelachrin, Lobelia acid.	[65]
32	<i>Marrubium vulgare</i> Linn.	Horehound	<i>Labiatae / Lamiaceae</i>	Africa - Algeria; Europe; Central Asia	Whole plant - combined with other herbs such as <i>Inula helenium</i> L. and <i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> L.	Marrubiin	[66,67]

33	<i>Melaleuca leucadendron</i> Linn.	Cajeput tree, Swamp Tea tree, White Tea tree	<i>Myrtaceae</i>	Asia - Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, Malay, Indonesia; Australia	Essential oil	Terpenoids, nerolidol, limonene, benzaldehyde, valeraldehyde, and dipentene	[68-70]
34	<i>Morus alba</i> Linn.	Chinese White-Mulberry	<i>Moraceae</i>	Asia - Turkey, China, India	Root bark, fruit	Phenolic compounds, triterpenoids and a glyceride	[71,72]
35	<i>Mucuna monosperma</i> DC.	Kaakaandolaa (Ayurveda)	<i>Papilionaceae / Fabaceae</i>	Asia - Nepal, Andaman	Seeds	Luteolin, acacetin	[73]
36	<i>Myroxylon balsamum</i> Harms.	Tolu Balsam tree	<i>Leguminosae</i>	S. America - Colombia, Venezuela, Peru	Essential oil - used in cough syrups and pills	Benzoic acid and Cinnamic acid	[74-76]
37	<i>Origanum majorana</i> Linn.	Sweet Marjoram.	<i>Labiatae / Lamiaceae</i>	Asia - Iran; Africa - Morocco; Europe	Seeds, aerial parts, branches - Infusion	Thymol, rosmarinic acid, caffeic acid; and triterpenoids	[13,61,77]
38	<i>Pilocarpus microphyllus</i> Stapf.	Jaborandi	<i>Rutaceae</i>	South America - Brazil	Leaves	Pilocarpine	[78]
39	<i>Pimpinella anisum</i> Linn.	Anise, Aniseed	<i>Umbelliferae / Apiaceae</i>	Asia - India, Turkey	Seeds - powder and decoctions; used in traditional tea	Volatile oil, coumarin, β amyryn, stigmasterol, flavonoid glycosides	[27,79]
40	<i>Polygala chinensis</i> auct. non Linn.	Senega	<i>Polygalaceae</i>	Asia - India, Andaman	Root and leaves - Decoction of roots; infusion of leaves	Senegin	[13,80,81]
41	<i>Saponaria officinalis</i> Linn.	Bouncing Bet, Soapwort	<i>Caryophyllaceae</i>	Europe - Romania; Asia - Turkey	Leaves, root and rhizome - Decoction prepared from leaves; Infusion of root and rhizome	Saporubrinic acid and Saponin	[13,27,82,83]
42	<i>Scindapsus officinalis</i> Schott.	Ayurvedic-Gajakrishna, Hastippali, Gajapippali	<i>Araceae</i>	Asia - India, Andaman	Whole plant - used in medicated oils; Decoction of green leaves	Scindapsin A and B	[10,13,84,85]

43	<i>Styrax benzoin</i> Dry.	True Gum Benzoin, Sumatra Benzoin or Gum Benjamin	<i>Styraceae</i>	South-East Asia and East Indies	Stem exudates	Cinnamic, benzoic and sumaresinolic acid esters	[86,87]
44	<i>Thymus serpyllum</i> Linn.	Mother-of-thyme, Wild Thyme	<i>Labiatae / Lamiaceae</i>	N. America - Britain; Asia - India, Nepal	Aerial parts - combining it with other plants like <i>Tussilago farfara</i> L., or <i>Marrubium vulgare</i> L.	Thymol	[88-90]
45	<i>Tussilago farfara</i> Linn.	Coughwort, Coltsfoot, Asses' Foot	<i>Compositae / Asteraceae</i>	Europe - Italy, Balkans; Asia - India, Nepal	Aerial parts, leaves and flowers - Infusion	Chlorogenic acid, isochlorogenic acid A, B and C, 3,5-dicaffeoylquinic acid, and rutin	[91,92]
46	<i>Viola odorata</i> Linn.	Sweet violet	<i>Violaceae</i>	Europe; Asia - Iran, India	Roots	Volatile oil, salicylic acid methyl ester, saponins, alkaloids.	[18,92,93]
47	<i>Viola tricolor</i> Linn.	Heartsease, Wild Pansy	<i>Violaceae</i>	Europe; Asia, Turkey	Aerial parts - Infusion	Rutin, violin and salicylic acid	[18,27,92]
48	<i>Zingiber officinale</i> Rosc.	Ginger	<i>Zingiberaceae</i>	Asia - India	Rhizome - Juice mixed with honey; Boil ginger in milk	Zingiberene, camphene, β -pinene, myrcene, limonene, 1,8-cineole, β -phellandrene.	[94,95]

Table 1: List of Plant Species Used as Expectorants from Different Parts of the World and Key Source of Information.

Conclusion

Based on the present understanding of novel coronavirus pathogenesis and symptoms known so far, an attempt has been made to enunciate the various medicinal herbs from the plant genetic resources in different continents of earth. The plants and its parts, which are used as its decoctions and infusions and their combinations could be done as a treatment benefit for COVID-19 patients and those with seasonal flu and health issues. This may also increase immunity of the patients and provide resistance and safety of them against the viral infection.

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