

# Chapter 6:

Persian Medicine & Covid 19





COVID-19 outbreak is started in the end of 2019 and is spread worldwide. It was identified as pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. Despite global efforts to find a solution to its management, which has led to a reduction in its incidence and mortality, there is still no definitive cure, and any solution is welcome. Traditional medicines are claimed to be effective for treatment of various diseases worldwide. There are some national official instructions issued as self-care guidelines according to the traditional systems of medicine in Iran (Persian medicine), India (Unani medicine and Ayurveda), and China (Traditional Chinese Medicine) for COVID 19. Based on the experiences of the Chinese, it is claimed that the integration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) with conventional therapies and cares could be beneficial for treatment and management of the patients affected with COVID-19 disease.

On the other hand, in some parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East, some charlatans who have no knowledge about the medicine try to abuse the people's beliefs to traditional medicine and even religion under the titles like traditional medicine, Islamic medicine, prophetic medicine, etc. by refusing conventional instructions and they possess a huge amount of financial turnover as a result of selling their illegal products to the people. This nonscientific approach has caused a big part of medical society to be against any traditional medicines and natural products.

Now, the following questions are put forth: Which view is correct? Can we use natural products or traditional medicine instructions to fight against COVID-19 or not? Is it an opportunity or threat? Regarding answering these questions, it should be noted that, any herbs and manipulation can influence on the body. Medicinal herbs are consisted of active ingredients. Also, many traditional systems of medicine are deeply rooted in the history and are supported by the

generation-by-generation human experiences as well as their own philosophical theories. Therefore, many hypotheses can be made about their application. But, they should be supported by the current investigations. They can play a significant role in the prevention; management or treatment; and post - treatment care of the COVID-19. There are also successful experiences regarding management of SARS and MERS. The evidence shows antiviral and immune boosting activities for some medicinal herbs making them potential candidates for treatment of the COVID-19. Clinical evidences approve the efficacy of many traditional systems of medicine and natural products helping to manage Covid 19. Following these scientific investigations, many traditional and herbal supplements are developed and industrialized helping to manage COVID 19 patients.

Integration of approved natural products and traditional methods with conventional therapies could serve the best services to the patients. Therefore, it seems that the best way to use both traditional medicines and natural products is considering them as a source of hypotheses and evaluating their efficacy without any prejudice, bias, and guard. Also, integration of accepted traditional medicine methods and natural products with conventional therapies and methods that is called as Integrated Medicine is the best way to use all the opportunities in order to help the patients to recover from the COVID-19.

In Iran, by involving the country to Covid 19 at February 2020, the attempts to fight against this disease with the help of Persian medicine is started immediately. By starting the spreading Covid 19 in Iran, a committee of Persian medicine for Covid 19 was organized in the Office of Persian and Complementary Medicine at Iranian ministry of health; including the best traditional medicine and pharmacy practitioners, specialists and physicians. The duty of this committee is making strategies for planning activities against Covid 19, follow up researches and other activities in the country to manage Covid 19 as an integrative approach helping to conventional medicine. Later, Dr. Namaki, the former minister of health and medical education of Iran ordered to Corona National Headquarter of Iran to use the contribution of Persian Medicine Specialists for prevention

and treatment of COVID 19 on March 22, 2020. It was due to the report of Chinese Medicine successful experiences to manage this outbreak by integrating Chinese medicine with conventional therapies. This report was prepared according to the videoconferences held with Chinese medicine specialists working in Wuhan and Beijing hospitals. Later, in the current government (president Raeisi), the general atmosphere for acting traditional medicine to manage COVID19 is spreading and improved. Dr. Einollahi, the minister of health and medical education pay more attention to use of the capacity of Persian medicine helping medical society against pandemic. Dr. Hosseini Yekta, Director General of the Persian Medicine Office lead the activities of this field to receive standard and scientific traditional medicine services for as many people as possible.

The brief report of the activities is as continue:

#### **Researches on managing Covid 19 by Persian medicine and phytotherapy solutions**

There are about 110 research clinical studies on managing Covid 19 with the topics of Persian medicine and phytotherapy, conducted by researchers in the medical Universities all around the country. These researches followed official protocols and have approval by Ethics committees in the universities. The office of Persian and complementary medicine at ministry of health followed them to find good solutions to support making remedies and include them to country protocols. 83 of these studies are finished and the papers are published.

#### **Herbal and traditional medicine remedies approved by Iranian FDA**

According to the clinical studies, Iranian FDA approved 17 of the herbal and traditional remedies and regarding to this approvals, 10 natural products helping to Covid 19 patients are industrialized and accessible in the pharmacies and pharmaceutical market.

#### **Subgroup of Persian Medicine in the National Scientific Committee of COVID 19 & national protocol for Persian medicine recommendations for Covid 19**

By the beginning COVID 19 pandemic in Iran, Office of Persian and complementary medicine at the ministry of health established a committee to write national protocol for Persian medicine recommendations for Covid 19. This committee wrote and published 10 versions of this protocol until the end of 2020.

Later, the subcommittee of Persian Medicine was formed in the National Scientific Committee of COVID 19 and this subcommittee finalized the national protocol for Persian medicine recommendations for Covid 19 according to latest scientific evidences. Corona National Headquarter announced this protocol; to all medical universities in the country. This protocol includes standard recommendations for prevention and managing disease in all stages of Covid 19 according to the scientific evidences and investigations. It helps to the traditional practitioners and physicians to serve the best and standard services to the people and patients. Currently, one representative of Persian Medicine is the member of the National Scientific Committee of COVID 19.

In addition to “national protocol for Persian medicine recommendations for Covid 19”, Office of Persian and Complementary Medicine published 3 more educational collections and self-care and treatment guides:

- Program of preventive actions and adjuvant treatments of Persian medicine in the Covid-19 (in three languages: Persian, Arabic and English)
- A practical guide for improving physical and mental resilience from the perspective of Persian medicine
- Guide to self-care and improving immunity against the corona virus based on health principles, common medicine and teachings of Persian medicine

#### **Specialized clinics of Persian medicine for Covid 19**

Aiming to serve the best traditional medicine services to Covid 19 patients, the Specialized clinics of Persian medicine for Covid 19 is started to be found, supported by medical universities. The first ones are founded by the schools of Persian Medicine at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and Mashhad University of Medical Sciences in the year 2020. The number of these centers are increased to 158 Outpatient service and hospital consultation centers and 17 telephone centers until the end of 2022. Patients can get standard medical services of Persian medicine there. Also, in the telephone centers, Persian medicine specialists answer to the queries and questions by phone.

Furthermore, there are two systems using Noban and Behzai startups that are set up by the help of Office of Persian and Complementary medicine and provide





consulting services from 6 am to midnight with the presence and cooperation of 41 Persian medicine experts and traditional pharmacists.



### Training classes for treatment staff

There are measures have been taken to train the medical and health staff in order to be aware of the opportunities of Persian medicine for the management of Covid-19 with the aim of providing better health services to the society:

- Holding training classes for the treatment staff on the topic of increasing resilience against Corona using the teachings of Persian medicine.
- Participating in the National Martyr Soleimani Plan and training the active forces in the plan in two categories of doctors and health care workers and preparing and preparing brochures to present to the public.

### International collaborations

The international collaborations for exchange the knowledge and experience against Covid 19 is an important key point for Office of Persian and complementary medicine at the ministry of health. It helps to use these international experiences making the best strategies. There are 9 online videoconferences with Chinese parties about Covid 19. These online events are organized by school of Persian medicine at Tehran University of medical sciences (with the support of Office of Persian and complementary medicine at the ministry of health) and World federation of Chinese medicine. Also, there was an International Conference on Integrative medicine and clinical practice with the subject of Integrative medicine and Covid 19, that is held by school of

Persian medicine at Tehran University of medical sciences as organizer and 12 other national and international co-organizers in May 2020, 30. There were more than 1600 online participants from all around the world in this conference.



Furthermore, there is close contact with traditional, complementary and integrative medicine unit at world health organization (WHO) about Covid 19 management. For example, the representative of Office of Persian and complementary medicine at the ministry of health participated and had a speech about Iranian activities on using Persian medicine against Covid 19 in the first online WHO interregional training workshop on ensuring the quality of traditional, complementary and integrative medicine at October 2020, 14-16. Dr. Arman Zargaran, as the representative of Persian medicine office participates and reports about related activities on Persian medicine in Iran for COVID 19 in other various meetings and traditional medicine forums of WHO and exchange the experience. Also, he contributes to WHO expert meeting on evaluation of traditional Chinese medicine in the treatment of Covid-19 (Feb 28 – March 2, 2022).