

Harmonizing Healing Traditions: a Comparative Analysis of Herbal and Western Medicines in Algeria during COVID-19

Mohammed MESSAOUDI ^{1,*}, Maroua MERAH ², Abdelkader ELOUISSI ^{3,4},
Mustapha TAIEB BRAHIM ¹, Mounir SAKMECHE ⁵,
Elfahem SAKHER ^{6,7}, & Zakarya Ayoub MESSAOUDI ⁸

¹ *Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Natural & Life Sciences, University of Adrar-Ahmed Draia, National High Way No.06, 01000, Adrar, Algeria.*

² *Algerian Center for Quality Control & Packaging, Algiers, Algeria.*

³ *Department of Agronomic Sciences, Faculty of Natural & Life Sciences, University Mustapha Stambouli of Mascara, Algeria*

⁴ *Biological Systems & Geomatics Research Laboratory (LRSBG).*

⁵ *Laboratory of Catalytic Materials and Industrial Processes (LMPCI), Department of Hydrocarbons and Renewable Energies, Faculty of Science and Technology, University of Adrar, National Highway No. 06, Adrar 01000, Algeria.*

⁶ *Laboratory of Energy Environment & Information System (LEEIS), Department of Material Science, Faculty of Science & Technology, University of Adrar, National Highway No. 06. Adrar 01000, Algeria.*

⁷ *Environmental Research Center (C.R.E) sis at Alzone 23000 Annaba, Algeria.*

⁸ *University of Saida - Dr. Moulay Tahar, Algeria.*

SUMMARY: In late 2019, an unprecedented outbreak of the novel coronavirus began in China. This global crisis has spurred extensive exploration into the potential of traditional medicine for tackling infectious diseases, seeking ways to alleviate their severity or even prevent their recurrence. Traditional medicinal approaches have garnered significant interest due to their capacity to identify compounds that optimize immune system functionality and bolster its responsiveness, offering potential avenues for addressing the challenges posed by such pandemics. This research endeavors to integrate healing traditions through a comprehensive comparative analysis of traditional and conventional medicines in Algeria during COVID-19. The study draws insights from a questionnaire survey that engaged 385 respondents. Its primary objective is to juxtapose the efficacy and practices of traditional healing methods against those of modern conventional medicine. The findings indicated a greater representation of women (62.07%) compared to men in the surveyed population. The most prevalent blood type observed among participants was A+ (72.46%). Notably, the questionnaire data highlighted a prevalent preference for phytotherapies among Algerians during the pandemic, accounting for 52.46% of responses, with a reported increase in usage during the COVID-19 period reaching 48.31%. Additionally, a significant proportion (51.94%) of respondents opted for alternative medicines due to their perceived effectiveness. The botanical species with the highest Relative Frequency of Citation (RFC) included *Syzygium aromaticum* (1.0000), *Citrus limon* (0.9157), *Verbena officinalis* (0.8052), and *Thymus algeriensis* (0.7587). These outcomes underscore the considerable reliance of the Algerian population on medicinal plants for preventive or therapeutic purposes amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

RESUMEN: A finales de 2019, se produjo en China un brote sin precedentes del nuevo coronavirus. Esta crisis mundial ha estimulado una amplia exploración del potencial de la medicina tradicional para abordar las enfermedades infecciosas, buscando formas de aliviar su gravedad o incluso prevenir su recurrencia. Los enfoques de la medicina tradicional han suscitado un interés significativo debido a su capacidad para identificar compuestos que optimizan la funcionalidad del sistema inmunológico y refuerzan su capacidad de respuesta, ofreciendo posibles vías para abordar los desafíos planteados por tales pandemias. Esta investigación intenta integrar las tradiciones curativas a través de un análisis comparativo exhaustivo de las medicinas tradicionales y convencionales en Argelia durante

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* Author to whom correspondence should be addressed. *E-mails:* microbiologistemed@yahoo.fr; microbiologistemed@univ-adrar.edu.dz

la COVID-19. El estudio extrae información de una encuesta en la que participaron 385 encuestados. Su objetivo principal es yuxtaponer la eficacia y las prácticas de los métodos de curación tradicionales con las de la medicina convencional moderna. Los hallazgos indicaron una mayor representación de mujeres (62,07%) en comparación con los hombres en la población encuestada. El tipo de sangre más prevalente observado entre los participantes fue A+ (72,46%). Cabe destacar que los datos del cuestionario destacaron una preferencia predominante por las fitoterapias entre los argelinos durante la pandemia, que representa el 52,46% de las respuestas, con un aumento informado en el uso durante el período de COVID-19 que alcanzó el 48,31%. Además, una proporción significativa (51,94%) de los encuestados optó por medicinas alternativas debido a su eficacia percibida. Las especies botánicas con la frecuencia relativa de citación (RFC) más alta incluyeron *Syzygium aromaticum* (1,0000), *Citrus limon* (0,9157), *Verbena officinalis* (0,8052) y *Thymus algeriensis* (0,7587). Estos resultados subrayan la considerable dependencia de la población argelina de las plantas medicinales con fines preventivos o terapéuticos en medio del brote de COVID-19.
