

Herbal and Traditional Medicine use in management/treatment of COVID-19

Brief statement:

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Reports have been raised in the use of Herbal/Traditional Medicine in management of Coronaviruses infection in some parts of the world. Much as we know the extent of use of such products in our Country, it is therefore of great importance to provide some guidance.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is caused by a new strain of virus that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans. The COVID-19 has presented in many parts of the world, including our Country Kenya.

Current medical reports indicate that there is no confirmed drug treatment for COVID-19 even though a lot of research is ongoing in different parts of the world to identify management therapies and a possible vaccine. Media reports have lately indicated that Herbal and Traditional medicines in combinations with conventional drugs are being used as remedial therapies for COVID-19 in certain parts of the world. However, concrete scientific evidence to support therapeutic benefit in such use is yet to be presented.

A number of Herbal/Traditional Health Practitioners (THPs) have been calling KEMRI claiming to have a cure/management therapy for COVID-19. Some have even requested laboratory space in KEMRI to demonstrate the efficacy of their concoctions. Much as this is a good gesture and an effort to avail a solution to the problem, KEMRI requests that in the meantime, such persons remain calm. They should follow instructions and directives as prescribed by the Ministry of Health on COVID-19 management as the medical research fraternity understands the new virus and develops models of therapeutic product evaluation, verification and/or validation.

Therefore, as it stands now, there is no Herbal/Traditional medicine ascertained to be of therapeutic benefit in COVID-19 management and any claims by THPs should be handled with caution and possibly reported to the relevant authorities for verification/authentication.

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