

Assessment of Attitudes towards Herbal Medication in Response to Covid-19 Infection among Undergraduate Students in KIU Sri Lanka

IM Upeshadi¹, KRI Bandara¹, A Sahardeen¹, TSH Kalpana¹, NDDS Lakruwan¹,
JDK Dunukara^{1#} and TDCP Gunasekara²

¹ *Department of Biomedical Science, Faculty of Health Sciences, KIU, Sri Lanka*

² *Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Medical Sciences,
University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka*

#jayani@kiu.ac.lk

The utilization of herbal products as medicine can be traced back to ancient Assyrians, Egyptians, Chinese, and Indians. The demand for herbal medicine is increasing due to the need to boost immunity. This study assessed the prevalence of herbal medicine utilization, attitude towards herbal medicine, and associated factors regarding the total attitude score among undergraduates of KIU university against COVID-19. The descriptive cross-sectional study with a convenience sampling method comprised 350 students. The study was conducted from August 2021 to May 2022. An online pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data after obtaining ethical approval (KIU/ERC/21/86). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, and all hypotheses were tested at the 5% significance level. Values for the total score of attitudes were defined and modified as poor (below 33%), average (34%-66%), and good (above 67%), respectively. 88.7% of respondents believed herbal products could be utilized as a prophylaxis, and the majority (76.5%) supposed herbal products should be included in mainstream treatment against COVID-19. However, 52.7% had a poor attitude towards herbal products utilization as immune boosters. The academic year ($p=0.045$), degree programme ($p=0.000$), and marital status ($p=0.005$) in socio-demographic factors were associated with the total attitude score. Some herbal remedies demonstrated high utility (Ginger tea 79.3% and coriander tea 60.6%) among respondents. In conclusion, despite a poor attitude score, respondents believed herbal medication could be used as an immune booster against COVID-19, and herbal products should be included in mainstream treatment against COVID-19 in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *attitudes, Covid-19, herbal medication*