



Editorial

Integrative medicine for COVID-19: Researches and evidence



Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease and global pandemic that is still ongoing. As traditional medicine has been used in the integrative treatment and management of COVID-19 in the mild, moderate and severe cases, *Integrative Medicine Research* compiled this special issue with the purpose of sharing knowledge and evidence on the effectiveness of integrative and complementary medicine for the treatment of COVID-19.

For this special issue, a total of 114 submissions including 58 reviews, 29 original articles, and 27 editorial materials were received and reviewed. After careful evaluation, a collection of 28 articles are finally published including 8 reviews, 7 original articles, 1 study protocol, 2 discussions, 6 commentaries, 1 letter to the editor, and 3 editorials. The topics of the included articles in this special issue are diverse but focused on enhancing the healthcare in the COVID-19 pandemic era.

In this collection, two reviews provide an overview of research trends on COVID-19; one analyzed the current evidence of COVID-19 researches on traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) or integrative medicine through bibliometric analysis [100490]¹ and another one analyzed the clinical study registrations on COVID-19 as a systematic review [100426].² With the purpose of organizing information about COVID-19 symptoms management, one review drew an evidence map of 62 complementary and integrative medicine interventions for treating COVID-19 [100473].³ Another systematic review evaluated the evidence on the efficacy and safety of Chinese medical drugs used for COVID-19, assessing 23 eligible clinical trials, and concluded that Chinese medical drugs can be beneficial for COVID-19 patients [100477].⁴ Two reviews summarized and analyzed the guidelines; one analyzed 9 available eligible guidelines from China and Korea, and showed informative guide for the use of herbal medicine to manage the symptoms of COVID-19 in the medical observational period of COVID-19 [100465].⁵ and another one analyzed 5 eligible Chinese guidelines on providing home-based traditional Chinese medicine nursing interventions for discharged COVID-19 patients, and showed the significance of such interventions on them [100479].⁶ In a narrative review, herbal medicine (Xiao Chai Hu Tang) as the potential treatment option for COVID-19 was discussed and suggested [100480].⁷ Finally one review analyses rapid reviews of traditional, complementary and integrative medicine for COVID-19, and stresses the importance of methodological standard for trustworthy evidence in TCIM [100484].⁸ Then there is one study protocol that describes the methodology of a rapid review on zinc for the prevention or treatment of COVID-19 and other coronavirus-related respiratory tract infections, and this

protocol may set a standard for integrative medicine rapid review methods [100457].⁹

This issue also contains original research articles that investigate COVID-19 from diverse perspectives. Two original articles deal with efforts and experiences of Korean medicine doctors in handling the COVID-19 outbreak; one introduced a consensus-based clinical practice guideline which is intended to guide the use of herbal medicine for managing and treating COVID-19 [100470],¹⁰ and another one introduced telemedicine systems in Korea during the pandemic and evaluated the implementation through retrospective analysis of patient medical records [100492].¹¹ One pilot trial investigated the efficacy of herbal medicine (Xianfei Baidu decoction) for treating COVID-19 by comparing the decoction plus conventional medicine group with conventional medicine alone group, and found the decoction to be effective in relieving clinical symptoms of COVID-19 [100489].¹² One pretest-posttest study examined online learning as the possible alternative learning system of TCM for international students in a university [100449],¹³ and one cross-sectional study reported the beneficial effects of healthcare simulation training on enhancing personal strength of healthcare workers in hospital departments with higher risk for COVID-19 [100476].¹⁴ Another retrospective cross-sectional study investigated the tongue features of patients with COVID-19 and implied that tongue features may function as diagnosis indicators of the type and severity of COVID-19 [100493].¹⁵ One Iranian survey conveyed the participants' fear of COVID-19 and showed the importance of disseminating trustworthy information on Persian Medicine in the pandemic era [100482].¹⁶

The editorial materials, such as commentaries and discussions, tackle issues and attempt to formulate potential solutions for COVID-19. In the two online panel discussion articles, the panelists exchange their views on the role of Korean medicine in the post-COVID-19 era in terms of clinical research [100478]¹⁷ and basic research and education [100488]¹⁸ which could offer some insights for the future research direction. One commentary and one letter to the editor proposed the potential benefit of *Artemisia annua* (qinghao) [100474]¹⁹ and *Allium fistulosum* congee [100463]²⁰ respectively, as mentioned of their positive effects in Chinese classics. In other commentaries, the ethical issues in the clinical trials of COVID-19 [100425]²¹ application of artificial intelligence to fight COVID-19 [100434],²² and potential benefit of Chinese medicine for women in pregnancy during COVID-19 [100461]²³ are discussed and suggested. Through a commentary, the activity of Evidence Aid for championing evidence-based humanitarian action in COVID-19

is introduced [100468].²⁴ The current clinical practice guidelines for COVID-19 are briefly discussed by WHO Collaborating Centre for Guideline Implementation and Knowledge Translation and Guidelines International Network Asia in Lanzhou, and to fight COVID-19, the commentary calls for developing and implementing guidelines based on more high-quality evidence and standard methodology in the field of integrative medicine [100487].²⁵

Given these diverse contributions, this special issue addresses and brings together the current and traditional knowledge and insights together. There is a growing international recognition and collective understanding on the effectiveness of the integrative and complementary medicine for the treatment of COVID-19 as supported by the included articles in this special issue. We are in the middle of rapidly changing pandemic era and hope this special issue would give the readers, including clinicians, researchers, policy makers, and other health professionals, the inspiration for the future researches, decisions, and development of tools to promote public health and combat the novel disease in the pandemic era.

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Ethical statement

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Data availability

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