



This occasional section within the journal surveys visions and achievements, often not on the main track of the developing biomedical sciences, but all relating to discoveries and developments of medicinal – both ancient and modern. What they have in common, in one way or another, is providing further background and glances around the edges of the core discipline of pharmacognosy, as it has been and continues to evolve within our times.

South African Researchers are Screening Traditional Southern African Medicinal Plants as Leads for COVID-19 Treatments

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South Africa has a well-documented history of medicinal plant usage to treat a myriad of medical conditions, including for the prevention and treatment of bacterial¹ and viral respiratory diseases.² Those studies have highlighted a number of plant species that may provide promising leads for drug leads against respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. An ongoing study by researchers from the Durban University of Technology and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa have screened 29 compounds identified in several South African plants that are used for multiple medicinal purposes, including respiratory infections.³ That study highlighted four compounds that may inhibit SARS-CoV-2 replication and may therefore be useful as COVID-19 therapeutics. The study focused on molecular docking techniques to detect phytochemicals that bind to SARS-CoV-2 viral proteins. However, it is noteworthy that

this is still a preliminary study and the compounds have to be tested *in vitro* in cell line assays, as well as *in vivo* in animal models.

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Is Honey a Better Therapeutic Option than Over-the-counter Medicines to Relieve Coughing?

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Medications to relieve coughing are one of the most common over-the-counter therapies globally, although many individuals with sore throats and/or problem coughs also turn to complementary and alternative therapies to alleviate these symptoms. One of the most popular complementary therapies is honey. Interestingly, a recent new study has indicated that honey may be a substantially more effective treatment for coughs and colds than many commercial therapies.⁴ Notably, honey has well established antimicrobial properties and is effective against both bacterial and viral infections.⁵⁻⁶ The Oxford study⁴ determined that treatment with honey had improved the symptoms of colds and coughing substantially better than over-the-counter medicines did. However, this

was only a preliminary study and substantially more work is required to confirm the findings.

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