Herbal Prevention of Pneumonia Epidemics in Multinational Refugee Camps: *Echinacea* for Refugees

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Keywords

Echinacea · Refugees · Respiratory tract infections

Summary

Considering the huge number of war refugees all over the world, taking care of their health-related problems is a critical issue for humanitarian organizations. Respiratory tract infections are one of the most life-threatening hazards among these populations. Therefore, any measure to control them with acceptable safety and efficacy will be valuable. According to recent studies, *Echinacea* supplements are potential candidates for this indication.

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Schlüsselwörter

Echinacea · Flüchtlinge · Atemwegserkrankungen

Zusammenfassung

Prävention von Pneumonie-Epidemien in multinationalen Flüchtlingslagern mithilfe von Heilpflanzen: Echinacea für Flüchtlinge
Angesichts der enormen Anzahl von Kriegsflüchtlingen auf der ganzen Welt stellen deren gesundheitsbezogene Probleme ein kritisches Thema für humanitäre Hilfsorganisationen dar. Atemwegsinfektionen sind eine der lebensbedrohlichsten Gefahren für diese Bevölkerungsgruppe, sodass jegliche Massnahme von Wert ist, um diese mit akzeptabler Sicherheit und Wirksamkeit unter Kontrolle zu bringen. Neueren Studien zufolge sind *Echinacea*-Supplementierungen potenzielle Kandidaten für die Behandlung dieser Indikation.

Short Communication

Infectious diseases considerably increase the morbidity and mortality rate among immigrated civilian survivors of war zones, armed conflicts, obligatory displacements, and even natural disasters [1]. This fact is more prominent when the refugees are resided in populated camps. Respiratory tract infections (RTIs) play a major role in such cultural hazards [2]. Pneumonia in crowded shelters with a great deal of high-risk populations including elderly and children can be accompanied by catastrophic outbreaks [2]. Therefore, any approach by humanitarian agencies to prevent and control these contagious infections would be significantly life-saving. Considering the multiple international conflicts all over the world at the present time, the lives of millions of refugees are in danger of pneumonia. This means that the costs of common preventive measures such as vaccination or antibiotic therapy can be devastating for supportive agencies.

The introduction of an economic, safe, and effective agent with both preventive and therapeutic potential in

this setting is exceedingly required. From a historical perspective, nature has frequently helped mankind in such medical crises. Herbal medicine has shown a great capacity for the management of RTIs. As a theoretical candidate, *Echinacea* supplements would be worthwhile [3].

Echinacea supplements are well-known for immune modulation and anti-RTI effects. This herb does vastly grow in different geographical territories. It is reasonably affordable as well as easily accessible almost all over the world [4]. As a result, this can decrease the cost of transportation of raw materials to the local manufacturing plants. As published previously, there is a huge amount of evidence that shows promising results for the use of *Echinacea* in both prevention and treatment of RTIs [5]. Also, it would be potentially useful in susceptible travelers such as refugees. It should be noted that despite all documented evidence in the medical literature as well as human experiences, there are some controversial findings in several scientific studies regarding the efficacy of such products. Hence, this approach should be examined further in future clinical trials in order to achieve certainty.

In addition, combinations with other immune boosters could help in reaching an assured synergy to fight outbreaks of pneumonia among camp refugees.

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