

Artemisia and Covid-19

Press release from the French National Academy of Medicine

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The announcement of the President of Madagascar on 20 April 2020 about the effectiveness of the "Covid-Organics" was widely covered by the media. It is a herbal tea or decoction based on *Artemisia*, developed by the Malagasy Institute for Applied Research (IMRA). Distributed in 33 cl bottles or in dry herbal sachets under the brand name "CVO Tambavy", it contains 62% *Artemisia annua* and a mixture, in confidential proportions, of Malagasy medicinal plants used in the composition of traditional remedies as antiseptics and bronchial fluidizers.

However, the preventive and curative effectiveness of CVO Tambavy, proclaimed by government authorities and some infectious disease specialists from the capital, is not unanimous in the Malagasy medical community. The "Houses of Artemisia" network supports this initiative as well as several African countries that have already purchased, or received as donations, batches of "Covid-Organics".

Since May 2020, IMRA has been preparing an injectable form for patients in respiratory distress. After having expressed significant reservations, the WHO Director-General ended up accepting to include Covid-Organics in the clinical trials of the "Solidarity Trial" program.

The National Academy of Medicine,

Noting:

- the lack of data on the molecules present in the dry matter of *Artemisia annua* produced in Madagascar,
- the absence of a preliminary study demonstrating antiviral activity of artemisinin in relation to SARS-CoV-2 in vitro,
- the lack of proof of concept and the empirical nature of the proposed therapeutic protocol,
- the lack of controlled clinical studies of tolerance and efficacy;

Considering that the difficulty of conducting a clinical study to prove the efficacy of herbal medicine in the treatment of Covid-19 does not allow to bypass scientific rigor;

And recalling that the large-scale consumption of Artemisia herbal teas is likely to lead to the development of resistance to artemisinin-based antimalarials, essential for the treatment of uncomplicated Plasmodium falciparum malaria [1];

- Formally advises against the reckless use of Artemisia-based herbal teas or decoctions, in any form, for the treatment of Covid-19 until rigorously codified and scientifically supported therapeutic protocols have demonstrated their efficacy and safety in this indication.

[1] Danis M. Proposal for treatment of malaria with Artemisia leaves. Bull Acad Natl Med (2019) 203: 122-3. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.banm.2019.04.004>