

Panacea for Cold Inflicted Respiratory Issues

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The ultimate cold this year has not only broken the record of last thirty five years but the respiratory illnesses due to its extremity were sine qua non. Apart from multiple health issues, respiratory diseases gained significance both in affecting masses and severity. The benefits of home remedies have been never overlooked. Some people have such strong believe in the robust powers of the phytomedicines that they do not use any other remedy.¹ *Ferula asafoetida* (Hing) and Calcined Borax (Suhaga) are two natural products, with known benefits, used as home remedies.²

Ferula asafoetida is an extensively researched plant, native to Afghanistan and Iran. Among numerous chemical constituents, essential oils and sulphuric compounds are the most important ones with reported health advantages. An exudate from the plant surface is scrapped off having tenacious sulphuric smell.³ Its known benefits are reported for whooping cough, asthma, ulcer, epilepsy, dyspepsia, flatulence, bronchitis, intestinal parasites and influenza.² The modus operandi of its administration range from oral ingestion in the traditional Indian cuisine as a crude spice, through skin to even concentrated or ethanolic extract forms. Among numerous benefits, there is well established literature to validate its antioxidant, antibacterial, antifungal, antiprotozoal and antiviral effects especially against Influenza H1N1.^{2,4} There are various mechanistic pathways through which *asafetida* can interact with different molecular targets, thus providing beneficial effects in combatting various diseases.³

Calcined borax is another naturally acting chemical of sodium borate. The name borax is derived from the Arabic word "buraq" implying to its white colour. Borax is formed in sediment deposits like salt lakes, beaches and is very well crystallized. It is found to reduce respiratory issues related to environmental changes including both weather and air pollution.⁵ Also known as *tankan bhasma* in subcontinent, it has a long list of properties, among which expectorant role is very well-known; others include anti-inflammatory, carminative, diuretic and antimicrobial effects.⁶ There

is not sufficient valid data on the therapeutic mechanisms and actions yet; still there are multiple questions that need to be answered about the efficacy and safety of borax. However, in our family this chemical is practiced since very long and it does soothe signs and symptoms of the cold inflicted respiratory issues.

There is a need for future larger scale surveys at multidisciplinary level in order to strengthen the inferences drawn about natural products and phytomedicines like *Ferula asafoetida* and Calcined borax.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None to declare.

GRANT SUPPORT AND FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE: None to disclose.

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- Received for Publication: 01-11-2019
- Revision received: 29-11-2019
- Accepted for publication: 06-12-2019

The author is a Histopathologist (MBBS;M.Phil) and has a considerable interest in phytomedicine that has led to share the emerging information with the readers.