

Coffee, an Overview from the Site of Asian Traditional Medicine

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SUMMARY

The medicinal properties of coffee such as diuretic and stimulant, due to the effect of caffeine, have been known since ancient times and nowadays it has been a popular beverage around the world. This study dealt with the uses of coffee in traditional medicines of Asian countries and some biological activities related to ageing, infectious diseases and cardioprotective effects.

Materials and Methods: The water extracts of coffee from different sources: Colombia, Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Tanzania were tested for the biological activities in the following methods: a) inhibitory effects on the lipid peroxidation; b) suppression of hepatitis B virus surface antigen (HBsAg); c) effects on the cultured myocardial cells.

Results: From the literature survey on Chinese and Arabic traditional systems of medicine, the uses of coffee were based on its diuretic and central nervous system stimulant properties, attributed in general to caffeine. On the various biological tests the water extract of coffee showed inhibitory activities for the lipid peroxidation and for the formation of HBsAg. A slight increase of beating rate on the myocardial cells was observed in the presence of the extract of coffee from Colombia, however this was not observed in any other sample. Caffeine, caffeic acid or chlorogenic acid did not have significant effect in this experimental conditions. This result shows that the effects of coffee in cardiac system is probably a consequence of stimulation of central nervous system.