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## Some throat lozenges found effective against Covid-19

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Whenever people have sore throat, there are a lot of remedies available and readily used by most people. There's the trusted (mostly reliable) ginger concoction called "salabat," while some would simply use a saline solution (warm water and some salt) and gargle to get rid of bacteria that causes sore throat, and of course, the ever-trusted over-the-counter lozenges to help relieve sore throat problems and manage coughs and colds.

however, the pandemic put sore throat front and center as one of the early symptoms of Covid-19 that scared the wits of many. how will they know if it's simply sore throat or already a symptom of the dreaded disease?

But lately, the ordinary lozenges took a different turn and given a different look. researchers at the Microbiology and Immunology Institute of the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia found that throat lozenges containing a combination of Benzydamine hydrochloride (Bh) and Cetypyridinium Chloride (CPC) may have a virucidal effect against Covid-19, help reduce the risk of viral transmission, and found efficacious in Covid-caused sore throat.

Why lozenges?

The study's abstract illustrated that viruses are the most common causative agents of inflammation in the oral cavity and throat areas. It said that most respiratory tract infections (rtis) are self-limiting and does not need any specific treatment.

respiratory diseases are mainly transmitted via respiratory secretions during exhalation in the form of droplets, though indirect contact with contaminated fomites were also shown to spread infection.

Proponents of the study who published its results, namely, Andrej Steyer, Misa Marusic, Marko Kolenc and Tina Triglav, set up a defined and controlled laboratory environment that was designed to mimic the physiological conditions of the mouth's oral cavity which, by itself, is already a stiff challenge.

For this study, throat lozenges with a fixed combination of Benzydamine hydrochloride (Bh) and Cetypyridinium Chloride (CPC) were used. results in the use of throat lozenge in a high concentration demonstrated the fastest action when it comes to destroying the virus as it reduced viral concentration by 99.99 percent, or about a 10,000-fold reduction.

Preliminary findings based on three test settings showed strong virucidal or virus-killing action against SARS-COV-2, the virus which causes the Covid-19 infection.

Encouraging step

WHILE it's important to note that the study is yet to be peerreviewed, with economic activities opening up and the country on Alert Level 1, these results are extremely encouraging and a positive step in finding ways to manage the spread of Covid-19, especially through a simple and effective method such as through the use of widely available medicated sore throat lozenges.

Getting vaccinated and with booster shots, and the observance of minimum public health standards (MPHS) such as proper handwashing, physical distancing and wearing of masks

continue to be the current champions when it comes to the reduction of virus spread. however, Benzydamine hcl and Cetylpyridinium Cl containing throat lozenges could prove to be another valuable tool.

For Dr. Anthony Leachon, an independent health reform advocate and a former national Task Force to Covid-19 and past president of the Philippine College of Physicians, said the country should already say “no” to another Omicron-like surge in the country. he noted that Omicron infections often start with a scratchy throat, which many doctors say is evidence of the changing nature of Covid-19 symptoms.

Dr. Leachon was elated that from the vaccines, the treatment modalities are slowly evolving to oral medications like Paxlovid and Molnupiravir, and now current scientific research and developments have provided the option of going down through over-the-counter lozenges for Covid-19 prevention that would be much easier to access. “It’s now about prevention at an early onset of Covid-19 symptoms like sore throat and to further prevent the risks of viral transmission.”

Though the number of cases have declined, Dr. Leachon said Filipinos should remain prepared and not be complacent as preventing the spread of Covid-19 has indeed experienced a shift toward individual responsibility. “During our road to recovery, we should emerge stronger and smarter.”

Leachon also noted what the acting World health Organization (WHO) representative to the Philippines, Dr. rajendra yadav, said the pandemic is not over yet so there is still the need to continue masking, physical distancing, ensuring proper ventilation, and practicing hand hygiene to be ready for the next Covid-19 wave. “If we stop taking precautions too soon, we will be wasting the lessons we have learned from the two years of living with the pandemic,” yadav said.