

# Searching nature-based solutions to emerging diseases: a preliminary review of Cameroonian medicinal plants with potentials for the management of COVID-19 pandemic

Fongnzossie Fedoung Evariste<sup>1,2,4,5\*</sup>, Biwole Achille Bernard<sup>1</sup>, Nyangono Biyegue Christine Fernande<sup>2</sup>, Ngansop Tounkam Marlène<sup>3,4</sup>, Patrick Akono Ntonga<sup>6</sup>, Essono Damien Marie<sup>3</sup>, Forbi Preasious Funwi<sup>3,4</sup>, Tonga Calvin<sup>6</sup>, Nguenang Guy Merlin<sup>3,5</sup>, Kemeuze Victor<sup>4,5</sup>, Sonwa Denis Jean<sup>7</sup>, Tsabang Nole<sup>4,5</sup>, Isabelle Sandrine Bouelet<sup>2</sup>, Tize Zra<sup>2</sup>, Boum Alexandre Teplaira<sup>2</sup>, Momo Solefack Marie Caroline<sup>5,8</sup>, Betti Jean Lagarde<sup>9</sup>, Nougua Bissoue Achille<sup>2</sup>, Lehman Leopold Gustave<sup>6</sup>, Mapongmetsem Pierre Marie<sup>4,5</sup>, Ngono Ngane Annie<sup>10</sup>, Ngogang Yonkeu Jeanne<sup>5,11; 12</sup>

1. Laboratory of Forest Resources and Wood Valorization, University of Douala, PO Box. 1872 Douala, Cameroon
2. Laboratory of Process Engineering, University of Douala, PO Box. 1872 Douala, Cameroon
3. Laboratory of Botany, University of Yaoundé 1, PO Box 812 Yaoundé, Cameroon
4. Millenium Ecologic Museum, PO Box 8038 Yaoundé, Cameroon
5. Cameroon Ethnobotany Network. PO Box 8038 Yaoundé, Cameroon
6. Laboratory of Animal Biology, Department of Animal Biology, Faculty of Science, University of Douala, -- P.O. Box 2701, Douala, Cameroon
7. Center for International Forestry Research, PO Box 2008, Messa, Yaoundé, Cameroon
8. Laboratory of Botany, University of Dschang. PO Box 67, Dschang, Cameroon
9. Laboratory of Plant Biology and Physiology, University of Douala. P.O. Box 24157, Douala, Cameroon
10. Laboratory of Biochemistry, University of Douala. PO Box 24157 Douala, Cameroon
11. Camerron Acadmy of Science
12. Université des Montagnes

**Corresponding author:** Fongnzossie Fedoung Evariste, *University of Douala, Advanced Technical Teacher's Training School for Technical Education, PO Box. 1872 Douala, Cameroon. Email: fongnzossie@gmail.com*

## **Abstract**

Since the outbreak in December 2019 in Wuhan (China) of COVID-19, approved drugs are still lacking and the world is seeking effective treatment. The purpose of this article is to review the medicinal plants with potential to be used as complementary therapies against COVID-19. Bibliographic information was searched in several databases (Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus, ScienceDirect, PROTA), to retrieve relevant papers on (1) plants used to manage common symptoms of COVI-19, (2) plant secondary metabolites with confirmed inhibitory effects on COVI-19 and (3) plants exhibiting pharmacological activities of relevance for COVID-19 management. A total of 230 species was recorded as potential source of ingredients for the fight against the 2019 novel corona virus. Of these species, 30 contain confirmed antiCOVID-19 secondary metabolites, 90 are used traditionally to manage at least 3 common symptoms of COVID-19, 10 have immunostimulant activity, 52 have anti-inflammatory activity, 14 have antiviral properties and 78 species are documented as used to treat malaria. A PCA analysis showing cluster formatting among the recorded species recorded indicates 4 groups of species and an array of possibility of using individual species or combination of species for their complementary effects. The authors argue that Cameroonian medicinal plants can be of potential contribution to the fight against COVID-19. Further applied research is needed to provide more scientific evidence for their efficacy, to establish standard formulations and clinical studies as part of efforts to develop therapies for COVID-19.

Key words: COVID-19, medicinal plants, Ethnobotany, review, Cameroon

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Background on the outbreak and epidemiology of COVID-19 pandemic**

Corona viruses are well known in veterinary medicine. First discovered in the 1960s as parasites of infectious chicken bronchitis, they were later found to be responsible for serious epidemics in humans such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2002/2003 and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in 2012.

Huang et al. (2020) reported in late December 2019, an outbreak of a mysterious pneumonia of unknown cause in the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, in Wuhan, Hubei, China. The causal agent of this disease was isolated and identified by Chinese scientists as a new strain of Corona virus, the SARS-CoV-2 or 2019 novel corona virus (2019-nCoV). Data obtained on patients with laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV infection in the hospital of Wuhan indicated that the common early symptoms of this disease were fever (98% of patients), cough (76%), and myalgia or fatigue (44%). Complications associated with this disease as observed in hospitalized patients included acute respiratory distress syndrome (29%), RNAemia (15%), acute cardiac injury (12%) and secondary infections (10%).

Because this 2019-nCoV is spread by human-to-human transmission via droplets or direct contact (Lai et al., 2020), its emergence in China has caused a large global outbreak. According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the situation update worldwide shows that since 31 December 2019 and as of 29 October 2020, a total of 44,574,981 cases of COVID-19 have been reported worldwide, including 1,175,279 deaths (ECDC, 2020). During the same period, African continent has reported 1,750,331 cases (21,793 cases reported for Cameroon and 426 deaths); the countries reporting most deaths being South Africa (19,111), Egypt (6,234), Morocco (3,506), Algeria (1,941) and Ethiopia (1,451).

Despite the ongoing efforts to manage the disease, no specific vaccine or antiviral drug currently exist for the prevention or treatment (Chen et al., 2020), or many months may be required for their development. However, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is very dynamic and growing around the world. In response to this outbreak, the World Health Organization, on January 30, 2020 declared that the pandemic constitutes a public health emergency of international concern and issued temporary recommendations under the International Health Regulations.

## **1.2. Global therapeutic response to COVID-19**

Currently, no approved drug for COVID-19 exists and treatments provided worldwide to the affected persons are symptom based. These include antiviral drugs so far used against major groups of viruses like human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), herpes, hepatitis, influenza, SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV, antimalaria drugs, immunostimulants, anti-inflammatory drugs that may be effective against elevated levels of cytokines and useful in inhibiting viral infection (Vellingiri et al., 2020). A review by Vellingiri et al. (2020) and Liu et al. (2020) reported that the current most clinically used drugs include:

- Arbidol: a drug targeting S protein/ACE2, it is an inhibitor that may disrupt the binding of viral envelope protein to host cells, thus preventing viral entry to the target cell. It has been used earlier as influenza antiviral drug;
- Chloroquine/Hydroxychloroquine: anti-malarial drugs, which has been effective in the treatment of avian influenza A and has also shown to have anti-viral as well as immune modulating properties. It can elevate endosomal pH and consequently interfere with ACE2 glycosylation;

- Favipiravir: broad spectrum anti-viral drug, this is a purine nucleoside whose possible mechanism on COVID-19 is through its action as an alternate substrate leading to inaccurate viral RNA synthesis;
- Lopinavir: a protease inhibitor that was used along with another flu drug, oseltamivir and resulted in complete recovery of patients showing signs of COVID-19 related pneumonia;
- Nitazoxanide: drug so far used in various helminthic, protozoal, and viral infection-caused diarrhea that may inhibit viral protein expression;
- Remdesivir: an anti-viral peptide which was used in treatments against Ebola, SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV;
- Ribavirin : a broad-spectrum antiviral drug used in the treatment of hepatitis C, in combination with interferon  $\alpha$  (IFN);
- Sofosbuvir: a drug also used for the treatment of hepatitis C in combination with interferon or RBV;

Worldwide, a number of drugs which have so far been proven to be safe for humans are currently being repurposed to be used for the management of this disease.

The 2019 novel coronavirus genome encodes several structural proteins, including the glycosylated spike (S) protein that functions as a major inducer of host immune responses. This S protein mediates host cell invasion via binding to a receptor protein called angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) located on the surface membrane of host cells. Hence, the interaction between viral S protein and ACE2 on the host cell surface is of significant interest in the therapeutic response process since it initiates the infection process.

### **1.3. Herbal medicine and the COVID-19 challenge: a global overview**

Globally, herbal treatments have been proven effective to control contagious disease during the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak (Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, since the outbreak of COVID-19, there has been great attention paid on investigating metabolites secreted by plants that may be developed as medicines for COVID-19.

Historically, traditional medicine and local beliefs have always played a role in situation of epidemics through times (Zhang, 1996). A review by Jassim and Navi (2003) reported numerous potentially useful medicinal plants that need to be evaluated and exploited for therapeutic applications against genetically and functionally diverse viruses' families. Keyaerts et al. (2007) identified a variety of plant lectins as antiviral compounds against the SARS-CoV. Lelesius et al. (2019) also showed that some extracts of plants including *Thymus vulgaris* and *Desmodium canadense* were effective against avian infectious bronchitis virus, a highly contagious respiratory disease in chickens caused by a corona virus that belongs to the Coronaviridae family. From all over the world, people are witnessing a deep attachment to popular medicine to protect themselves against COVID-19.

Africa is endowed with diverse environmental conditions and a diversity of pathogenic microbes species (bacteria, fungi, and viruses), suggesting that African plants could accumulate chemopreventive substances more than plants from the northern hemisphere (Mahomoodally, 2013). Basically, more than 80% of the population in this continent is known to rely on traditional medicine for their primary health care needs.

In Burkina faso, the country's plan to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic does not rule out the use of herbal medicines and clinical trials are underway on Apivirine, a

phytomedicine from Benin which is alleged to be effective against the coronavirus (Sputniknews, 2020).

In Mexico, newspapers have reported the use of amulets to protect individuals from COVID-19 (Le Point International, 2020).

In Algeria, to face the spread of this pandemic, consultation of herbalists in the search of traditional antiviral and anti-flu recipes have significantly increased (Le Point International, 2020).

Gothy et al.(2020) supported the possible role of medicinal plants in Ayurveda's medicine for the management of Corona virus disease (COVID-19). Sharma and Kaur (2020) showed that Jensenone from *Eucalyptus* essential oil was a potential inhibitor of 2019 corona virus.

In China, DU Hong-Zhi, et al. (2020) argued that traditional chinese medicine is an effective treatment for 2019 novel coronavirus pneumonia.

More recently, the Malagasy Institute for Applied Research developed an herbal tea based on *Artemisia annua* (COVID Organics), claiming preventive and curative properties against COVID-19 (Midi-Madagascar, 2020).

In China, herbal traditional medicine have been proven effective to control contagious disease during the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak and a recent screening of Chinese herbal medicine database have confirmed that herbal treatments classically used for treating viral respiratory infection contain chemical compounds that have potential anti-2019-nCoV activity (Zhang et al., 2020).

In Cameroon, since the first case was reported in the country, several herbal recipes have been popularized in social media as alledged solutions to manage COVID 19. According to a recent release from the Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation, the Archbishop of Douala, His grace Samuel Kleda has made public an attempt at

treating symptoms of the COVID-19 with a herbal remedy, free of charge and the Ministry of public health is showing commitment to support the process of development and homologation of this treatment (Crtv, 2020).

As the world is currently seeking treatment for COVID-19, there is an urgent need to boost up research so as to develop effective and affordable therapeutics.

#### **1.4. Cameroon's response strategy to COVID-19**

In Cameroon, access to health care services is challenging. One out of every 1000 patients are able to see a specialist and 3 out of 20 patients are able to buy prescribed drugs in hospitals (Kuete and Efferth, 2010). In this context, the COVID-19 situation is likely to worsen as the country stepped into phase 2 of this pandemic marked by a shift from virus importation to intra-community transmission. Based on this situation, the Government prepared a COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan of US\$ 600 million to respond to the crisis, under the leadership of the Ministry of Public Health and with the partnership of international organizations. This health response strategy has eight components:

- Multisectoral and international coordination,
- Surveillance for early detection of cases,
- Investigation and rapid intervention teams,
- Laboratory capacities,
- Infection prevention and control measures in hospitals and in the community,
- Cases management,
- Risk communication and Community engagement, and
- Logistics.



Several treatment protocols including the Chloroquine-based treatment suggested by Professor Didier Raoult (Colson et al., 2020) are being tested with more or less mitigated results.

However, since the outbreak of this disease, ethnobotanical and ethnopharmacological research geared at bringing the potentials of traditional medical knowledge into the debate over the management of this disease has been lacking. Yet Cameroon is a biologically diversified Country. Located in Central Africa, at the heart of the Congo Basin, the second world-largest rainforest after the Amazon, its floristic potential scores more than 7850 plant species recorded at the national herbarium. This ranks Cameroon among the country with high level of biodiversity in Africa. Despite the inaccuracy of statistics, the medicinal plants are important elements of health care services. However, access to such plants has so far been largely through traditional healers and herbal markets which are part of an informal economy. The huge volume of published researches on medicinal plants in Cameroon surprisingly contrasts with the paucity of approved phytodrugs. The increasing use of traditional medicines, the general weakness in translating research into concrete drug discovery and development, the evolution of international regulations on access to genetic resources and the growing concern by stakeholders vis-à-vis the demands for patenting rights, evidence of safety, efficacy, good quality traditional medicinal products and a range of other ethical issues, the shortage of essential infrastructure in both the public (universities and other governmental institutions) and private sectors, compounded by the need for integrating and promoting the potential of medicinal plants as a source of health care are among the pressing challenges that must be tackled for acceptable use of traditional and alternative medicines in modern therapeutics in Cameroon. So far, there have been significant efforts within the framework of the Cameroon Ethnobotany

Network and the Millennium Ecologic Museum, under the leadership of Late Pr Bernard-Aloys Nkongeneck, Pr Daniel Lantum Pr Jacques Kamsu Kom and Pr Jeanne Ngogang, towards the strengthening the capacity of Cameroonian traditional healers. Series of training were offered geared at improving their knowledge and practice on basic techniques of pharmaceutical sciences. Nowadays and more than ever, it is still an imperative to keep pace with the commitments of these pioneering ethnobotanists and to continue adding efforts to boost research and development in the field of medicinal plants. As new and effective drugs are urgently needed, in the fight against COVID-19, research programs into alternative therapeutics including medicinal plants investigations need to be encouraged.

### **1.5. Purpose of this review**

This review is part of the contribution of ethnobotany and ethnopharmacology sciences in the fight against the Covi-19. It aims at providing a preliminary review of available literature on medicinal plants with potentials to be evaluated and developed for the management of COVID-19 in Cameroon.

The findings of this review study will provide other researchers with opportunities to identify the right medicinal plants to be evaluated from a perspective of developing new drugs to combat COVID-19.

## **2. Methodological approach**

### **2.1. Theoretical framework to the selection of potential anti-COVID plants**

The theoretical framework for the study is based on a 3-steps review approach.

First, we acknowledge that the use of medicinal plants for the treatment of viral infections in our traditional societies is ancient. Meanwhile, COVID-19 is a novel

disease and consequently not yet known in our traditional knowledge system on diseases. However, evidence from existing literature supports the management of symptoms similar to those of COVID-19 using a diversity of plant-based recipes. Recent review by Adhikari et al. (2020) presented the most commonly reported symptoms of COVID-19. Those considered in this review were: fever/malaria, runny nose, cough, myalgia or fatigue, body pains and sore throat. This review is based on the assumption that, a plant that has been used to manage at least 3 common symptoms of COVID-19 is a potential source of anti-COVI-19 molecules.

Secondly, the inhibitory effect of some secondary metabolites from medicinal plants on the 2019 novel corona virus protease have been reported by Zhang et al. (2020) in China, Mohammadi and Shaghghi (2020) in Iran and Khaerunnisa et al. (2020) in Indonesia. In this regard, the identification of Cameroonian medicinal plants with potentials as antiCOVID-19 was based on the investigations on their phytochemical profile to select those that are source materials for these secondary metabolites. Besides the metabolites cited by the above-mentioned studies, alkaloids are also a rich source of active components of plants that have already been fruitfully developed into various chemotherapeutic compounds comprising Chloroquine, an antimalarial drug reported to be effective for the treatment of COVID-19 and many other viral infections (Moradi et al., 2017 ; Colson et al., 2020; Jianjun et al., 2020). The mechanism of the antiviral activity of alkaloids is based on the inhibition of replication of viruses. Hence, in this study, a plant known as important source of alkaloid is also considered as potential anti-COVID-19. Similar bioactivity on 2019-nCov was also reported for hydrolysable tannins, natural polyphénols (Khalifa et al., 2020; Adem et al., 2020) and terpenoids (Shagghi, 2020). Therefore, we also consider of great potential for COVID-19 management plants that are rich sources of these secondary metabolites.

Thirdly, the use of biologics that stimulate the immune responses was suggested by Zumla et al. (2020) as a way to help patients resist the invading virus. There is an abundant literature reporting the use of plants by traditional medicine practitioners to boost the immune system in people living with HIV/AIDS (Upoki Anywar et al., 2020). In addition to the important role of boosting the immune system, evidence from the literature reveal the importance of antimalaria and antiviral drugs in the global therapeutics against COVID-19 (Vellingiri et al., 2020). This is also the case for anti-inflammatory drugs that may be effective against elevated levels of cytokines and useful in inhibiting viral infection. Hence, plants with immunostimulant, antiviral, anti-malaria and anti-inflammatory properties are considered in this study as of great potentials for COVID-19 management.

## **2.2. Data collection and computation**

This review is based on data available in published literature. Bibliographic information on medicinal plants was searched in several databases including: Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus, ScienceDirect, Researchgate, PROTA, GLOBEInMED, to retrieve all relevant papers. A total of 119 papers were reviewed including books, journal articles, proceedings, preprints. The reference lists of some research articles were exploited to explore additional relevant studies. The database of the Global biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) was searched to confirm the occurrences and distribution of the plant species recorded.

From the ethnobotanical and ethnomedical literature consulted, plants were selected and recorded based on their uses (focus on plants used to treat symptoms of COVID-19), their phytochemical composition (with focus on plants rich in alkaloids, tannins, terpenoids and phenolics), their pharmacological activity (focus on plants with anti-

inflammatory, immunomodulatory, antimalarial and anti-viral properties). All the plant species recorded were compiled in an Excel database.

The documented uses of each plant, the presence or absence of the targeted secondary metabolites and their documented pharmacological activity were used to generate a new data set which was analyzed by principal component analysis (PCA) to detect cluster formatting and the patterns of variability present in the data sets of the medicinal plant species recorded.

### **3. Findings and implication**

#### **3.1. Confirmed anti-COVID19 molecules and their source plants in Cameroon**

The main protease (Mpro)/chymotrypsin like protease (3CLpro) from 2019 novel corona virus, is reported to be a potential target for the inhibition of its replication (Lu, 2020). Khaerunnisa et al. (2020) showed that luteolin-7-glucoside, demethoxycurcumin, apigenin-7-glucoside, oleuropein, curcumin, catechin, and epicatechin-gallate appeared to have the best potential to act as COVID-19 Mpro inhibitors. Faheem Khan et al. (2020) showed that epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), a major constituent of green tea (*Camelia sinensis*), was the lead compound that could fit well into the binding sites of docked proteins of SARS-CoV-2 and recommended this molecule as a drug candidate for the treatment of COVID-19.

Mohammadi and Shaghghi (2020) reported that secondary metabolites including kaempferol, quercetin, luteolin-7-glucoside, demethoxycurcumin, naringenin, apigenin-7-glucoside, oleuropein, curcumin, catechin, epicatechin-gallate, zingerol, gingerol, and allicin were potential inhibitor candidates for COVID-19 Mpro, with Curcumin showing the strongest interaction with the protease enzyme of COVID\_19.

Recent study by Zhang et al. (2020) has identified several Chinese medicinal plants classified as antiviral/pneumonia-effective that directly inhibit the novel coronavirus, 2019-nCoV. The metabolites tested for this bioactivity were Betulinic acid, Coumaroyltyramine, Cryptotanshinone, Desmethoxyreserpine, Dihomo- $\gamma$ -linolenic acid, Dihydrotanshinone, Kaempferol, Lignan, Moupinamide, N-cis-feruloyltyramine, Quercetin, Sugiol, Tanshinone IIa.

Khalifa et al. (2020) showed that the Pedunculagin, tercatain, and punicalin, three hydrolysable tannins, successfully inhibit the protease enzyme of 2019 novel Corona Virus.

Adem et al. (2020) evaluated the efficacy of medicinal plant-based bioactive compounds against COVID-19 Mpro by molecular docking study. They concluded that natural polyphenols including hesperidin, rutin, diosmin, apiiin, diacetylcurcumin, (E)-1-(2-Hydroxy-4-methoxyphenyl)-3-[3-[(E)-3-(2-hydroxy-4-methoxyphenyl)-3-oxoprop-1-enyl]phenyl]prop-2-en-1-one, and  $\beta,\beta'$ -(4-Methoxy-1,3 phenylene)bis(2'-hydroxy-4',6'-dimethoxyacrylophenone) were effective inhibitors of this new Corona Virus.

From the research conducted by these authors, it is clear that Cameroonian medicinal plants can provide source materials for these secondary metabolites. The review of the phytochemical screening done on Cameroonian medicinal plant species shows that 32 species native or naturalized in Cameroon are source materials for most of the above-mentioned secondary metabolites (table 1). There are also evidences from available literature indicating diverse pharmacological properties for these species including antimicrobial, antiviral, analgesic, antiinflammatry, antipyretic, antioxidant, etc. (table 1). Besides Curcumine from Tumeric (*Curcuma loonga*), some of those local plant species are interesting as they contain many of those active secondary metabolites.

This is the case of *Zanthoxylum heitzii* containing both Apigenin-7-glucoside and Oleuropein, and Citrus spp, a rich source of Diosmin, Lignan, Naringenin and Quercetin that showed high inhibitory effect on 2019 corona virus.

Table 1. Cameroonian or naturalized species containing secondary metabolites with confirmed inhibitory effect on COVID-19

Confirmed anti-Covid19 compounds*	Source plants in Cameroon	Other relevant literature evidence	Reference
Allicin	<i>Allium sativum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong antimicrobial activity</li> <li>- Stimulates the activity of immune cells,</li> <li>- Inhibits the release of TNF<math>\alpha</math>-dependent pro-inflammatory cytokines</li> <li>- Inhibits the migration of neutrophilic granulocytes into epithelia, which is a crucial process during inflammation</li> </ul>	Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Borlinghaus et al. (2014)
Apigenin-7-glucoside,	<i>Zanthoxylum heitzii</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- exert inhibitory effect on HL-60 cells through the reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation, loss of mitochondrial membrane potential and cell cycle destabilization</li> </ul>	Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Khaerunnisa et al. (2020), Pieme et al. (2014)
Catechin	<i>Khaya grandifoliola</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- n -hexane extract, crude and purified fractions are active antimalarial activities</li> <li>- contains ingredients that showed intitro activity against hepatitis C virus</li> </ul>	Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Khaerunnisa et al. (2020), Agbedahunsi et al. (1998)
	<i>Cola nitida</i>	- Antimicrobial and antiosydant	Niemenak et al. (2008)
	<i>Cola acuminata</i>	- Antimicrobial and antiosydant	Ngoupayo Joseph, et al. (2018)
	<i>Cola anomala</i>	- Antimicrobial	
	<i>Laportea aestuans</i>	- Antimicrobial effect of crude extract	Mambe et al. (2016)
Coumaroyltyramine	<i>Ochthocosmus Africanus</i>	- -	Tala Sipowo et al. (2017)
	<i>Solanum melongena</i>	- antipyretic and analgesic effect	Sakah Kaunda and Zhang (2019) Mutalik et al. (2003)
	<i>Solanum torvum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An isoflavonoid sulfate and a steroidal glycoside isolated from the fruits exhibited antiviral activity on herpes simplex virus type 1</li> <li>- wide spectrum of antimicrobial activities against human and animal clinical isolates</li> </ul>	Zhang et al. (2020), Damrongkiet et al. (2002), Chah et al. (2000)

Curcumin	<i>Curcuma longa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curcumin has antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiviral and antifungal actions. Not toxic to humans.</li> <li>- curcumin also enhances immunity</li> </ul>	Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Shaghaghi (2020), Khaerunnisa et al. (2020), Akram et al. (2010), Zorofchian Moghadamtousi et al. (2014)
Desmethoxyreserpine	<i>Rauwolfia sp.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it produces hypothermia, increased salivation, miosis, and increased gastric acid secretion.</li> </ul>	Zhang et al. (2020), Khaerunnisa et al. (2020), Packman et al. (2006)
Diosmin	<i>Cissus quadrangularis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- antagonistic effect on the biochemical mediators of inflammation, antioxidant, antimicrobial activity</li> </ul>	Mishra1 et al. (2010),
	<i>Citrus sinensis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- anti-inflammatory, antihypertensive, antiviral diuretic, analgesic and hypolipidemic properties</li> </ul>	Tarkang et al. (2012) Aboni et al. (2009)
Epicatechin-gallate	<i>Parkia biglobosa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The leaf extract of <i>P. biglobosa</i> contains biologically active principles that are relevant in the treatment of malaria</li> <li>- Antidiarrhoeal and Antibacterial</li> </ul>	Kuete et al. (2018) Tijani et al. (2009) Modupe Builders et al. (2009)
	<i>Camellia sinensis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular consumption of green tea decreases influenza infection rates and some cold symptoms, and that gargling with tea catechins may protect against the development of influenza infection</li> </ul>	Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Faheem Khan et al. (2020), Khaerunnisa et al. (2020), Isemura (2019)
	<i>Laportea aestuans</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Antimicrobial effect of crude extract</li> </ul>	Mambe et al. (2016)
Gingerol	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gingerols, in ginger root have been shown to have chemopreventive effects that have been associated with their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities</li> </ul>	Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Mehdi Sharifi-Rad et al. (2017)
Hesperidin	<i>Acacia senegal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Used in the management of cough</li> </ul>	Mahomoodally (2013)
	<i>Laportea aestuans</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Antimicrobial effect of crude extract</li> </ul>	
	<i>Citrus spp</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases antioxidant defenses, scavenges reactive oxygen species, modulates immune system activity</li> <li>- Dose-dependent inhibitory effect against dengue virus, prevents intracellular replication of chikungunya virus, and inhibits assembly and long-term production of infectious hepatitis C virus particles in a dose-dependent manner</li> </ul>	Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Salehi et al. (2019) Azantsa Kingue et al. (2017)



Kaempferol	<i>Bryophyllum pinnatum</i>	- Antimicrobial and antioxidant activity	Zhang et al. (2020), Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Ndendoung Tatsimo et al. (2012)
	<i>Laportea aestuans</i>	- Antimicrobial effect of crude extract	Mambe et al. (2016)
	<i>Tephrosia preussii</i>	- -	Mba Nguekeu et al. (2017)
	<i>Senna alata</i>	- Treatment for Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension diseases.	Rhazri et al. (2015)
Lignan	<i>Echinops giganteus</i>	- Antioxydants	Tene et al. (2004)
	<i>Kigelia africana</i>	- Anti-diarrheal, anti-malarial, analgesic, anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial activity	Zhang et al. (2020), Sidjui Sidjui et al. (2015) Saini et al. (2009)
	<i>Zanthoxylum heitzii</i>	- -	Ngouella et al. (1994)
Luteolin-7-glucoside	<i>Capsicum annum</i>	- The extract exhibited a considerable anti-HSV-1 and anti-HSV-2 activities	Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Khaerunnisa et al. (2020), Taghreed et al. (2017)
Naringenin	<i>Citrus spp</i>	- Increases antioxidant defenses, scavenges reactive oxygen species, modulates immune system activity - Dose-dependent inhibitory effect against dengue virus, prevents intracellular replication of chikungunya virus, and inhibits assembly and long-term production of infectious hepatitis C virus particles in a dose-dependent manner	Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Salehi et al. (2019) Azantsa Kingue et al. (2017)
N-cis-feruloyltyramine,	<i>Hibiscus esculentus</i>	- Antioxidant	Maganha et al. (2010)
Oleuropein,	<i>Zanthoxylum heitzii</i>	- cancer prevention	Mohammadi and Shaghaghi (2020), Khaerunnisa et al. (2020), Farooqi et al. (2017)
Pedunculagin	<i>Phyllanthus spp</i>	- Antiviral, antimicrobial, anticancer, hepatoprotective and anti diabetic	Shakya (2016)
Punicalin	<i>Terminalia catappa</i>	- , a plant used to treat dermatitis and hepatitis - Antiinflammatory activity	Mohale et al. (2009)
	<i>Combretum glutinosum</i>	- Methanolic and water extract from leaves and stem bark have Antimicrobial activity	Jossang et al. (1994) Alowanou et al. (2015)
	<i>Terminalia ivorensis</i>	- anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and anti-HIV activities	Assamoi Adiko et al. (2013)

Quercetin	<i>Morinda morindoides</i>	- leaves exhibited antispasmodic effect	Mamadou1 et al. (2011)
	<i>Citrus limon</i>	- Treatment of chronic pneumonia (naringenin) - Inhibition of cytokine production; - Inhibition of inflammation mediator (D-limonene) - Inhibition of the virus Herpes simplex.	Zhang et al. (2020), Mohammadi and Shaghghi (2020), Klimek-Szczykutowicz et al (2020)

\* Based on the studies by Khaerunnisa et al. (2020), Faheem Khan et al. (2020), Shaghghi (2020), Mohammadi and Shaghghi (2020), Zhang et al. (2020), Khalifa et al. (2020) and Adem et al. (2020)

### 3.2. Cameroonian medicinal plant used to manage symptoms of COVID 19

The review yielded a total of 230 medicinal plants of potential for the management of COVID-19. From this general list of plants recorded, 90 species were selected for being mentioned as used to manage at least 3 symptoms of Covi-19, and the remaining species were excluded (Table 3). These 90 species belongs to 53 botanical families. The families with the greatest number of representatives are Rubiaceae (8 species), Asteraceae and Euphorbiaceae (6 species), Caesalpiniaceae and Meliaceae (5 species), Solanaceae (4 species), Apocynaceae, Combretaceae, Malvaceae, Sapotaceae and Verbenaceae (3 species).

The greatest number of citations was recorded for three of the six symptoms investigated: fever/malaria, cough and myalgia/fatigue (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of medicinal plants cited in the treatment of COVID-19 symptoms

Symptoms	Number of plants recorded	Percentage
Catarrh/Runny nose	20	3.8
Cough	138	26.3
Fever	241	45.9
Myalgia/fatigue	106	20.2
Headache	8	1.5
Pains	4	1.58
Sore throat	3	0.6

Various plant parts are used in the different treatments reported in the literature. However, leaves, fruits and barks were the most used parts, indicating that their utilization may not severely affect the sustainability of the resource base.

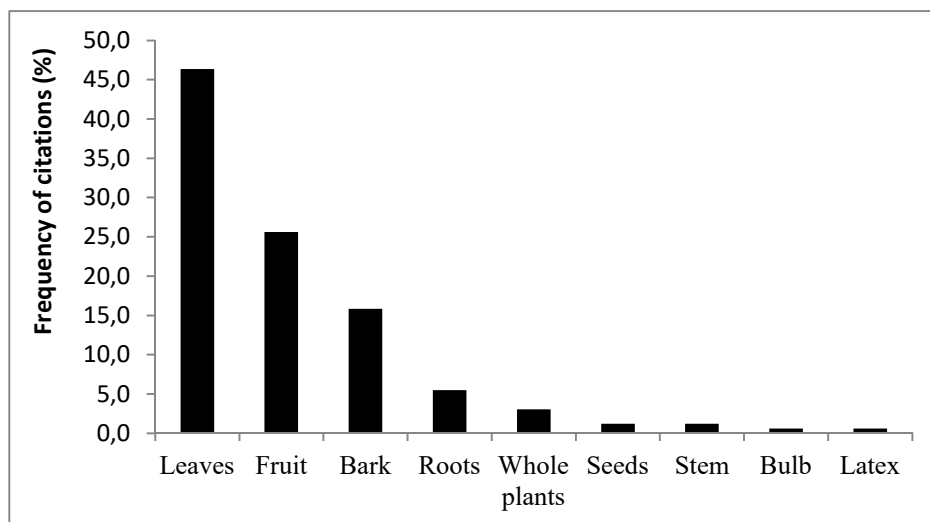


Figure 1. Frequency of plant parts used in management of COVID-symptoms

Available data on the phytochemical screening of these selected species shows that the most distributed secondary metabolite in this selected sample of plants was alkaloids (36%) (figure2). Previous studies by Ntié Kang et al (2013) also confirmed the greater distribution of terpenoids (26%), flavonoids (19.6%) and alkaloids (11.2%) in Cameroon's medicinal plants.

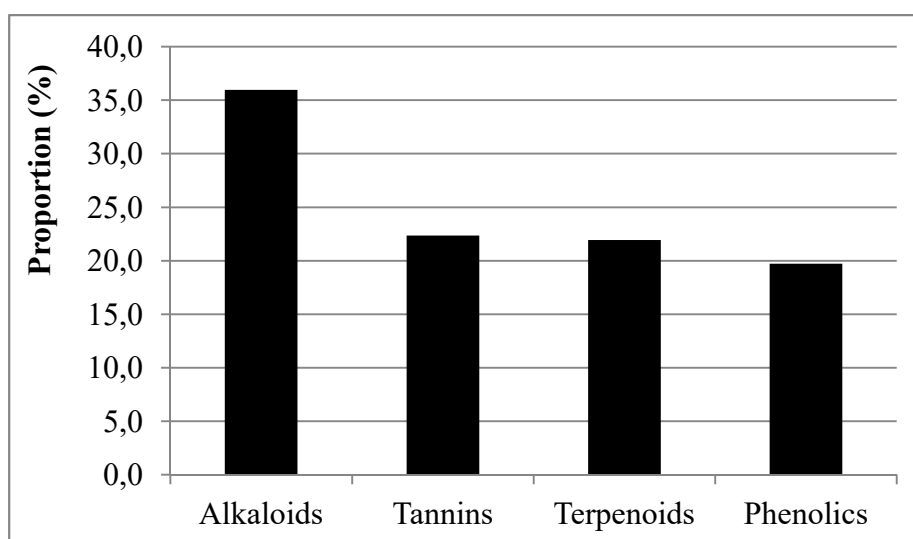


Figure 2. Distribution of secondary metabolites in the recorded plants

Table 3. Cameroonian medicinal plant species used to manage at least 3 COVID 19 symptoms

Species	Family	Part used*	Symptoms treated	Main phytochemicals**	Reference
<i>Abelmoschus esculentus</i>	Sterculiaceae	L,Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Tan, Phen, Terp	Bogninou et al. ( 2018) Tomar (2017), Alamgeer et al. (2018)
<i>Acanthus montanus</i>	Acanthaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Asongalem et al. (2004), Kuete and Efferth ( 2010), Etame et al. (2018), Fongod et al. (2013)
<i>Adansonia digitata</i>	Bombacaceae	Bk	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Yinyang et al. (2014), Arbonier (2019), Kamatou et al. (2011).
<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>	Asteraceae	L	Cough, Myalgia, fever	Alk, Terp	Ming (1999), Jiofack et al. (2008), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Alchornea cordifolia</i>	Euphorbiaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Phen	Ngaha et al. (2016), Ngoupayou et al. (2015)
<i>Allium sativum</i>	Liliaceae	Bulb	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Papu et al. (2014), Khodadadi (2015)
<i>Aloe vera</i>	Aloaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Pankaj et al. (2013), Yinyang et al. (2014),
<i>Alstonia boonei</i>	Sapotaceae	Bk, Lx, L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Terp	Jiofack et al. (2008 & 2009), Dibong et al. (2015)
<i>Amaranthus hybridus</i>	Amaranthaceae	Wp	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Terp	Ouedraogo et al. (2012), Tinitana et al. (2016), Etame et al. (2018)
<i>Ananas comosus</i>	Annonaceae	Epc	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Hossain1 et al. (2015), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Anickia chloranta</i>	Annonaceae	Bk	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan	Mekou et al. (2015), (Etame et al., 2018), Njayou et al. (2008)
<i>Annona senegalensis</i>	Annonaceae	Bk	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Phen, Tan	Tsabang et al. (2012), Njayou et al. (2008)
<i>Annona muricata</i>	Annonaceae	L, Fr, Se, Pulp	Cough, Fever, pains, catharrh	Alk, Tan	Zorofchian Moghadamtousi et al.. (2015), Yinyang et al. ( 2014), Tsobou et al. (2015)
<i>Anogeissus leiocarpus</i>	Combretaceae	Bk	Cough, Fever, body pains	Tan	Ahmad (2014), Ndjonka et al. (2008)
<i>Anthocleista djalonensis</i>	Loganiaceae	Bk	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan	Bassey at al. (2009), Leke et al. (2012)
<i>Anthocleista nobilis</i>	Loganiaceae	Bk	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Ter	Mosango (2007), Sima et al. (2015)

<i>Artemisia annua</i>	Asteraceae	Wp	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Phen	Jiofack et al. (2008), Iqbal et al. (2012), Sadiq et al. (2014)
<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Meliaceae	Se, L, Bk	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Jiofack et al. (2009, 2008), Dash et al. (2017)
<i>Brassica oleracea</i>	Brassicaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia Sore throat	Alk	Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Bridelia ferruginea</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Bk	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Terp	Ndam et al. (2014), Jose and Kayode (2009), Olumayokun et al. (2012)
<i>Bridelia micrantha</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Bk	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Arbonnier (2019), Etono et al. (2019), Maroyi (2017)
<i>Camellia sinensis</i>	Theaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Yinyang et al. (2014), Namukobea et al. (2011), Sharangi (2009)
<i>Capsicum annum</i>	Solanaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Headache, Myalgia	Alk	Salehia et al. (2018), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Capsicum frutescens</i>	Solanaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Headache, Myalgia	Alk, Terp	Salehia et al. (2018), Noumedem et al. (2013)
<i>Carica papaya</i>	Cacicaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Terp	SIvarajah (2015), Sebuja and Maroyi (2013)
<i>Catharanthus roseus</i>	Apocynaceae	L	Cough, Sorethroat, Myalgia	Alk	Das and Sharangi (2017), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Chromolaena odorata</i>	Asteraceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Terp	Vaisakh et Pandey (2012), Tamo et al. (2016),
<i>Cinchona calisaya</i>	Rubiaceae	B, Rt, L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Eyal (2018), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Cinchona officinalis</i>	Rubiaceae	B, Rt, L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Eyal (2018), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Cinchona pubescens</i>	Rubiaceae	B, Rt, L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Eyal (2018), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Citrus aurantifolia</i>	Rutaceae	L, Fr	Headache, colds, coughs, sore throats	Alk	Enejoh et al. (2015), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Cochlospermum planchonii</i>	Cochlospermaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Isah et al. (2013), Usman et al. (2013), Mamidou Koné et al. (2005)
<i>Cola acuminata</i>	Malvaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever,	Alk, Phen	Otoide and Olanipekun (2018), Tchuenguem et al.

			Myalgia		(2017), Yinyang et al. (2014), Lowe et al. (2014)
<i>Cola nitida</i>	Malvaceae	L, Fr	Headache, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Olukayode et al. (2017), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Combretum micranthum</i>	Combretaceae	L	Catarrh, Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Terp	Welch (2010), Chinsebu and Hedimbi (2010), Yinyang et al. (2014), Dawe et al. (2013)
<i>Costus afer</i>	Costaceae	St	Catarrh, Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Phen	Boison et al. (2019), Tchuenguem et al. (2017)
<i>Crossopteryx febrifuga</i>	Rubiaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Salawu et al. (2008), Arbonier (2019), Maiga et al. (2006)
<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Zingiberaceae	Rz	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Terp	Velayudhan et al. (2012), Gardini et al. (2009)
<i>Cymbopogon citratus</i>	Poaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Headache, Sore throat, Myalgia	Alk, Terp	Etame et al. (2018), Yemele et al. (2014), Yinyang et al. (2014), Shah et al. (2011)
<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i>	Ebenaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan	Hegazy et al. (2019), Ahmed and Mahmud (2017)
<i>Dissotis rotundifolia</i>	Melastomataceae	L	Catarrh, Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan	Jiofack et al. (2009), Yinyang et al. (2014), Yeboah and Osafo (2017)
<i>Eleusine indica</i>	Poaceae	Wp	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Etame et al. (2018), Pattanayak and Maity (2017), Sagnia et al. (2014), Jiofack et al. (2008),
<i>Emilia coccinea</i>	Asteraceae	Wp	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Terp	Nwachukwu et al. (-2017), Tsobou et al. (2015),
<i>Eremomastax speciosa</i>	Acanthaceae	L	Catarrh, Cough, Fever, Myalgia, Pains	Alk, Tan, Terp	Jiofack et al. (2008), Tsobou et al. (2015), Sagnia et al. (2014)
<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>	Myrtaceae	L, Fr, Bk, Rt	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Phen, Terp	Jiofack et al. (2008), Sani et al. (2014)
<i>Euphorbia hirta</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Wp	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Terp	Tamo et al. (2016), Kumar et al. (2010)
<i>Eurycoma longifolia</i>	Simaroubaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Terp	Norhidayah Mohamed et al. (2015), Mohamad et al. (2010)
<i>Faidherbia albida</i>	Mimosaceae	Bk	Cough, Catarrh, Fever	Alk, Tan, Terp, Phen	Ismail et al. (2014), Arbonier (2019), Marwa et al. (2018)
<i>Garcinia cola</i>	Clusiaceae	Fr	Cough, Fever,	Alk	Jiofack et al. (2008 & 2009), Betti (2002), Yinyang et

<i>Guiera senegalensis</i>	Combretaceae	L	Myalgia Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Phen, Terp	al. (2014) Shafei et al. (2016 ), Arbonier (2019), Somboro et al. (2011) Nimenibo-Uadia and Nwachukwu (2017), Ndam et al. (2014)
<i>Harungana madagascariensis</i>	Hypericaceae	Bk	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen	
<i>Hibiscus sabdarifa</i>	Malvaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Suresh and Ammaan (2017), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Holarrhena floribunda</i>	Apocynaceae	Bk, L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk	Hoekou et al. (2017), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Hoslundia opposita</i>	Lamiaceae	Rt	Cough, Fever, Sore throat	Phen, Tan	Arbonier (2019), Sadri (2017), Ndjonka et al. (2008)
<i>Hymenocardia acida</i>	Euphorbiaceae	L, Rt	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Terp	Amoa Onguéne et al. (2013) , Tor-Anyiin Terrumun et al. (2013)
<i>Jatropha curcas</i>	Euphorbiaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Headache	Alk, Phen	Arbonier (2019), Abdelgadir and Van Staden (2013), Oskoueian et al. (2011)
<i>Kalenchoe crenata</i>	Crassulacées	L	Cough, Fever, Headache, Myalgia	Alk, Terp	Yinyang et al. (2014), Jiofack et al. (2008), Nguiefack et al. (2006)
<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>	Meliaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Chukwudi Ugoh et al. (2014), Arbonier (2019), Makut et al. (2008)
<i>Lantana camara</i>	Verbenaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Catarrh	Alk, Tan, Terp	Tsobou et al. (2015), Kalita et al. (2012)
<i>Lippia multiflora</i>	Verbenaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Catarrh	Tan, Terp	Gandonou et al. (2017), Djengue et al. (2017)
<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Anacardiaceae	Bk	Cough, Fever, Catarrh	Alk, Terp	Mahalik et al. (2020), Yemele et al. (2014), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Maytenus senegalensis</i>	Celastraceae	L	Catarrh, Cough, Fever	Phen, Tan	Arbonier (2019), Zanguueu et al. (2018), Veloso et al. (2017)
<i>Melissa officinalis</i>	Lamiaceae	L, Fr	Catarrh, Cough, Fever	Alk	Miraj et al. (2017), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Milicia excelsa</i>	Moraceae	Bk	Catarrh, Cough, Fever	Alk, Phen, Tan	Jiofack et al. (2008), Betti (2002), Akinpelu et al. (2020)
<i>Mitragyna inermis</i>	Rubiaceae	L, Bk, Rbk	Catarrh, Cough, Fever	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Mahougnan Toklo et al. (2020), Arbonier (2019), Konkon et al. (2008)

<i>Momordica charantia</i>	Cucurbitaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Pains	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Jiofack et al. (2009), Mozaniel et al. (2018)
<i>Morinda lucida</i>	Rubiaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Pains	Tan	Adeleye and Ajamu (2018), Ndam et al. (2014)
<i>Myristica fragrans</i>	Myristicaceae	L, Fr	Catarrh, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Terp,	Asgarpanah and Kazemivash (2012), Bamidele et al. (2011)
<i>Olax subscorpioidea</i>	Olacaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Osuntokun and Omolola (2019), Banjo et al. (2018),
<i>Paullinia pinnata</i>	Spindaceae	L, Rt	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Ph	Tsobou et al. (2015), MAriame et al.(2016), Arbonier (2019), Ariyo et al. (2020)
<i>Pavetta crassipes</i>	Rubiaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen	Katsayal and Danfodiyo (2002), Arbonier (2019), Bello et al. (2011)
<i>Picralima nitida</i>	Apocynaceae	Fr, Rt	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan, Terp	Tamo et al. (2016), Tsobou et al. (2015), Erharuyi1 et al. (2014)
<i>Piliostigma thonningii</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Sore Throat	Phen, Tan	Afolayan et al. (2018), Kazhila (2016), Njayou et al. (2008)
<i>Sarcocephalus latifolius</i>	Rubiaceae	Bk, L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Ter, Phen	Arbonier (2019), Yesufu et al. (2014), Kaboré et al. (2014)
<i>Senna alata</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Tan	Tsobou et al. (2015)
<i>Senna occidentalis</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Singh et al. (2019), Musa et al. (2018)
<i>Senna sieberiana</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	L, Fr	Headache, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan	Archer et al. (2019), Archer et al. (2019)
<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Solanaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Terp	Yinyang et al. (2014), Noumedem et al. (2013), Ramya et al. (2011)
<i>Solanum torvum</i>	Solanaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan	Kannan et al. (2012), <a href="#">Jaiswal</a> (2012), Kuete and Efferth (2010),
<i>Spathodea campanulata</i>	Bignoniaceae	Bk, L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Terp	Yemele et al. (2014)
<i>Terminalia laxiflora</i>	Combretaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Salih et al. (2018), Salih et al. (2017)
<i>Trema orientalis</i>	Ulmaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Ter	Akin et al. (2016), Adinortey et al. (2013)



<i>Trichilia emetica</i>	Meliaceae	Bk, L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Arbonier (2019), Kouitcheu et al. (2017), Diarra et al. (2015), Šutovská et al. (2009)
<i>Vernonia amygdalina</i>	Asteraceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Terp	Fongzossie et al. (2017), Yeep et al. (2010)
<i>Vernonia colorata</i>	Asteraceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Terp	Tsobou et al. (2015), Cioffi et al. (2014)
<i>Vitellaria paradoxa</i>	Sapotaceae	Bk, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Terp	Mbaveng et al. (2011), Maanikuu and Peker (2017), Israel (2014), Fongzossie et al. (2017)
<i>Vitex simplicifolia</i>	Verbenaceae	L	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Alk, Phen, Tan, Terp	Arbonier (2019) Salim and Dikko (2016), Salim and Imam (2016) (
<i>Ximenia americana</i>	Olacaceae	L, Fr	Cough, Fever, Myalgia	Phen, Tan, Terp	Urso et al. (2013), Hunde Feyssa et al. (2012), Monte et al. (2012)

\* L= leave, Bk= bark, St= Stem, Rt= roots, Fr= fruit, Se= seed, Fl= flower, Tbk= root bark, Wp= whole plant, Lx= latex

\*\* Alk= alkaloids, Tan= tannins, Terp= terpenoids, Ph= Phenolics

### **3.3. State of knowledge on Cameroonian medicinal plants with confirmed anti-inflammatory, anti-viral and immunostimulant properties**

Evidence from researches conducted on SARS-COV and COVID-19 shows that the weakening of the immune system is one of the major contributing factors to the increased incidence of COVID complications like pneumonia and mortality in affected patients (Curbelo et al. 2017; Taghizadeh and Akbari, 2020; Prompetchara et al., 2020). These authors argued that improving the immune system response may be effective in reducing the incidence of pneumonia and reduction of inflammation may be effective in reducing the mortality rates due to pneumonia. From the literature data compiled, about 10 species have been documented for their beneficial effect in boosting the immune system. Among these species, 3 were also cited to treat at least 3 symptoms of COVID-19: *Azadirachta indica* and *Momordica charantia* and *Vernonia amygdalina* (table 4). Of the total of 52 species documented for their anti-inflammatory activity, there are also 11 cited as used to treat Covi-19 symptoms. These are: *Acanthus montanus*, *Eleusine indica*, *Entandrophragma cylindricum*, *Eremomastax speciosa*, *Erythrophleum suaveolens*, *Jatropha curcas*, *Kalanchoe crenata*, *Picralima nitida*, *Senna alata*, *Solanum torvum*, *Spathodea campanulata* *Vernonia amygdalina*, and *Vitellaria paradoxa* (table 4). A total of 14 species were cited for their antiviral properties on other virus-induced diseases, of which 3 are traditionally used to manage COVID-19 symptoms: *Anickia chlorantha*, *Artemisia annua*, *Costus afer*, *Senna alata* and *Vernonia amygdalina* (table 4). A total of 78 species have been documented as used to treat malaria. Overall, the leaves, barks and roots are the most used plant parts (figure 3).

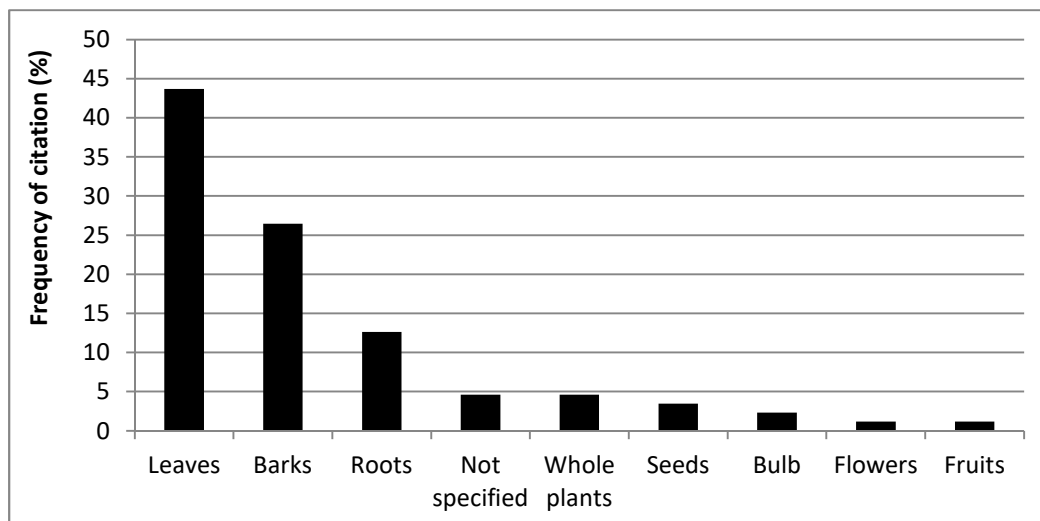


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of plant parts with immunomodulatory, anti-inflammatory or antiviral properties

Overall, these species belongs to 53 different botanical families. The families with higher number of representatives are Caesalpiniaceae (10 species), Asteraceae (3 species), Cucurbitaceae and Apocynaceae (3 species), Euphorbiaceae, Lamiaceae, Meliaceae, Acanthaceae, Combretaceae, Euphorbiaceae, Meliaceae and Mimosaceae (2 species).

Table 4. Recorded plants documented for their anti-inflammatory, anti-viral and/or immunostimulant properties

Scientific name	Family	Part used	Existing pharmacological records	Reference
<i>Acacia polyacantha</i>	Fabaceae	Leaves	Antimalaria	Bashige-Chiribagula et al. (2017)
<i>Acanthus montanus</i>	Acanthaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Adenocarpus mannii</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	L	Methanol extracts possess immunomodulatory activity	Kuate (2015)
<i>Aframomum citratum</i>	Zingiberaceae	Fruit	Antimalaria	Tane et al. (2005)
<i>Aframomum latifolium</i>	Zingiberaceae	Fruit	Antimalaria	Tane et al. (2005)
<i>Aframomum melegueta</i>	Zingiberaceae	Seeds	Antimalaria	Tane et al. (2005)
<i>Aframomum sceptrum</i>	Zingiberaceae	Fruit	Antimalaria	Tane et al. (2005)
<i>Aframomum zambesiacum</i>	Zingiberaceae	Fruit	Antimalaria	Tane et al. (2005)
<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>	Asteraceae	L	Antimalaria	Jiofack et al. (2008), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Albizia adiantifolia</i>	Mimosaceae	Leaves	Antimalaria	Bashige-Chiribagula et al. (2017)
<i>Albizia zygia</i>	Mimosaceae	L, Rt	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Albizia zygia</i>	Mimosaceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Alchemilla kiwuensis</i>	Rosaceae	Wp	Anti-inflammatory	Kamtchueng et al. (2017)
<i>Alchornea cordifolia</i>	Euphorbiaceae	L	Antimalaria	Ngoupayo et al. (2015)
<i>Allanblackia monticola</i>	Clusiaceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Allanblackia monticola</i>	Clusiaceae	Stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Allium sativum</i>	Liliaceae	Bu	Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, bronchitis, chronic fever	Khodadadi (2015)
<i>Allium sativum</i>	Liliaceae	Bulb	Antimalaria	Khodadadi (2015)
<i>Alstonia boonei</i>	Sapotaceae	Bk, Lx, L	Antimalaria	Jiofack et al. (2008 & 2009), Dibong et al. (2015)
<i>Anisophyllea pomisofera</i>	Rhizophoraceae	Leaves	Antimalaria	Bashige-Chiribagula et al. (2017)
<i>Annickia chlorantha</i>	Anonaceae	Bk	Antiviral (Hepatitis A,B; C and D)	Ngono Ngane et al. (2011)
<i>Annona muricata</i>	Annonaceae	L, Fr, Se, Pulp	Antimalaria	Yinyang et al. (2014), Tsobou et al. (2015)
<i>Anogeissus leiocarpus</i>	Combretaceae	Leaves	Antimalaria	Ahmad (2014)
<i>Anonidium mannii</i>	Anonaceae	Bk	Antiinflammatory	Mokale Kognou et al. (2020)
<i>Anopyxis klaineana</i>	Rhizophoraceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Anthocleista djalonensis</i>	Loganiaceae		Antimalaria	Bassey et al. (2009)

<i>Antidesma laciniatum</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Araliopsis tabuensis</i>	Rutaceae	Stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Artemisia annua</i>	Asteraceae	L	Anti-HIV activity	Noumi and Manga (2011)
<i>Asystasia intrusa</i>	Acanthaceae	L	Immunomodulatory activity of methanol extracts	Kuate (2015)
<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Meliaceae	L, Fl, Bk, Se	Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, immunomodulatory, antimalaria	Agbor et al. (2007), Rahmani et al. (2018), Bashige-Chiribagula et al. (2017)
<i>Bersama engleriana</i>	Meliantaceae	L, Bk, Rt	Methanol extracts from the Laves, bark and roots inhibited at 80% the activity of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) enzyme	Mbaveng et al. (2011)
<i>Bersama engleriana</i>	Meliantaceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Bidens pilosa</i>	Asteraceae	Stem bark,	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Bobgunia madagascariensis</i>	Fabaceae		Antimalaria	Bashige-Chiribagula et al. (2017)
<i>Bridelia scleroneura</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Bk, Rt	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Cajanus cajan</i>	Fabaceae	Roots, leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Calotropis procera</i>	Apocynaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Capparis erythrocarpos</i>	Capparidaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Carica papaya</i>	Caricaceae	L, Fr	Anti-inflammatory, antimalaria	Sagnia et al. (2014), Sebu and Maroyi (2013)
<i>Cassia alata</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Sagnia et al. (2014)
<i>Cassia occidentalis</i>	Fabaceae	Leaves	Antimalaria	Bashige-Chiribagula et al. (2017)
<i>Cassia sieberiana</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	Rt	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Caucalis melanantha</i>	Apiaceae	L	Immunomodulatory activity of methanol extracts	(Kuate, 2015)
<i>Ceiba pentandra</i>	Bombacaceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Agbor et al. (2007), Elion Itou et al. (2014)
<i>Clematis chinensis</i>	Ranunculaceae	L	Immunomodulatory activity of methanol extracts	Kuate (2015)
<i>Cleome ruidosperma</i>	Capparidaceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Combretum molle</i>	Combretaceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Commelina diffusa</i>	Commelinaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Costus afer</i>	Costaceae	St	Antiviral (chicken pox, influenza, measles and genital herpes)	Ngono Ngane et al. (2011)
<i>Cucurbita maxima</i>	Cucurbitaceae	L	Anti-HIV activity	Noumi and Manga (2011)
<i>Cucurbita pepo</i>	Cucurbitaceae	L, Rt	Inhibits HIV-1 reverse transcriptase	Noumi and Manga (2011)
<i>Cylicodiscus gabinensis</i>	Mimosaceae	Bk	Anti-oxidant, anti-malarial	(Agbor et al.. 2007 ; Mounquengui et

				al., 2016)
<i>Cylicodiscus gabunensis</i>	Mimosaceae	Leaf, stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Cymbopogon citratus</i>	Poaceae	L	Antimalaria	Etame et al. (2018), Yemele et al. (2014), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Apiaceae	L	Inhibits HSV-1 replication	Noumi and Manga (2011)
<i>Dichaetanthera africana</i>	Melastomataceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Oguntibeju (2018), Mokale Kognou et al. (2017)
<i>Eleusine indica</i>	Poaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Sagnia et al. (2014)
<i>Enantia clorantha</i>	Annonaceae	Stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Entada abyssinica</i>	Mimosaceae	Leaves	Antimalaria	Bashige-Chiribagula et al. (2017)
<i>Entandrophragma cylindricum</i>	Meliaceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Fogue Kouam et al. (2012)? Mokale Kognou et al. (2020)
<i>Entandrophragma angolense</i>	Meliaceae	Stem bark, leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Eremomastax speciosa</i>	Acanthaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Sagnia et al. (2014)
<i>Erythrina addisoniae</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Erythrina mildbraedii</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	Rt	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Erythrina sigmoidea</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	Rt	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Erythrophleum ivorense</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	Not precised	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Erythrophleum suaveolens</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Euphorbia hirta</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Wp	Antimalaria	Tamo et al. (2016),
<i>Ficus exasperata</i>	Moraceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Ficus exasperata</i>	Moraceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Ficus thonningii</i>	Moraceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Glossocalyx brevipes</i>	Monimiaceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Glyphaea brevis</i>	Tilliaceae	L, Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Gossypium spp.</i>	Malvaceae	Cottonseed	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Harungana madagascariensis</i>	Clusiaceae	Bark	Antimalaria	Weniger et al. (2008)
<i>Harungana madagascariensis</i>	Hypericaceae	Bk	Antimalaria	Ndam et al. (2014)
<i>Hexalobus crispiflorus</i>	Annonaceae	Leaf, seed	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Hillieria latifolia</i>	Phytolacaceae	Wp	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Holarrhena floribunda</i>	Apocynaceae	Bk, L	Antimalaria	Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Jatropha curcas</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Rt	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Kalanchoe crenata</i>	Crassulacées	Not specified	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>	Meliaceae	L, Fr	Antimalaria	Arbonier (2019), Makut et al. (2008)

<i>Lactuca capensis</i>	Asteraceae	Not specified	Treatment of HIV/AIDS and related opportunistic infections	Tchuenguem et al. (2017)
<i>Landolfia kirkii</i>	Apocynaceae	Leaves, Stem bark	Antimalaria	Bashige-Chiribagula et al. (2017)
<i>Mallotus oppositifolius</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Anacardiaceae	Bk	Antimalaria	Yemele et al. (2014), Yinyang et al. (2014)
<i>Milletia griffoniana</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Milletia versicolor</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Milletia griffoniana</i>	Leguminoceae-Papilionoideae	Leaf, stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Momordica charantia</i>	Cucurbitaceae	L	Immunomodulatory activity, antiviral (Chicken-pox Measles Genital herpes Shingles)	Mahamat et al. (2020), Ngono Ngane et al. (2011)
<i>Momordica charantia</i>	Cucurbitaceae	L	Antimalaria	Jiofack et al. (2009), Mozaniel et al. (2018)
<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	Moringaceae	L, Se	Boost appetite and immunity, anti-HIV activity	Noumi and Manga (2011)
<i>Musa paradisiaca</i>	Moraceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Neoboutonia velutina</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf, stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Newbouldia laevis</i>	Bigoniaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Occimum gratissimum</i>	Lamiaceae	L	Immunomodulatory activity of methanol extracts	Kuate (2015)
<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Lamiaceae	L	Inhibits HIV-1 reverse transcriptase	Noumi and Manga (2011)
<i>Ocimum gratissimum</i>	Lamiaceae	Leaves		Bashige-Chiribagula et al. (2017)
<i>Odyendyea gabonensis</i>	Simaroubaceae	Leaf, stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Pachypodanthium confine</i>	Annonaceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Palisota hirsuta</i>	Commelinaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Panda oleosa</i>	Pandaceae	Bk	Used in traditional medicine in Kisangani city to treat various diseases including diabetes and HIV/AIDS	(Muhoya et al., 2017)
<i>Peniantus longifolius</i>	Menispermaceae	Stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Pentadiandra brazzeana</i>	Pentadiplandraceae	Leaf, stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Peperomia vulcanica</i>	Piperaceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Phyllanthus muellerianus</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Wp	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020), Ogunwande et al. (2019)
<i>Phyllanthus muellerianus</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Leaf, stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)

<i>Picralima nitida</i>	Apocynaceae	Se	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Picralima nitida</i>	Apocynaceae	Fr, Rt	Antimalaria	Tamo et al. (2016), Tsobou et al. (2015)
<i>Piper nigrum</i>	Piperaceae	Seed	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Piper unbellatum.</i>	Piperaceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Polyscias fulva</i>	Araliaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Sagnia et al. (2014)
<i>Prunus africana</i>	Rosaceae	Bk		(Agbor et al., 2007)
<i>Pseudoceadrela kotschy</i>	Meliaceae	Bk	Extracts stimulate monocyte proliferation response	Oumar et al. (2017)
<i>Psidium guayava</i>	Myrtaceae	L	Antibacterial, anti-malarial, anti-diarrhoeal, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant activity? antimalaria	Agbor et al. (2007, Titanji et al. (2008), Kaur et al (2018)
<i>Pteleopsis hylodendrom</i>	Combretaceae	Bk	Antiviral (chicken pox, influenza, measles and genital herpes)	Ngono Ngane et al. (2011)
<i>Pycnanthus angolensis</i>	Myrtaceae	Leaf, stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Raphanus sativus</i>	Brassicaceae	L, Bk, Rt	Antiviral activity	Noumi and Manga (2011)
<i>Rauvolfia macrophylla</i>	Apocynaceae	Stem bark	Antimalaria	Weniger et al. (2008)
<i>Rauvolfia vomitoria</i>	Apocynaceae	Stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Reneilmia cincinnata</i>	Zingiberaceae	Fruit	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Schumanniohyton magnificum</i>	Rubiaceae	Stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Sclerocarya birrea</i>	Anacardiaceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Scoparia dulcis</i>	Scrophulariaceae	Whole plant	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Senna alata</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	L	Inhibits HIV-1 reverse transcriptase	Noumi and Manga (2011)
<i>Solanum torvum</i>	Solanaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Spathodea campanulata</i>	Bignoniaceae	L, Bk	Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant Antiviral (Chicken-pox Genital herpes)	Pone (2017), Etame et al. (2018), Ngono Ngane et al. (2011)
<i>Stachytapheta cayenensis</i>	Verbenaceae	Leaf	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Stereospermum acuminatissimum</i>	Bignoniaceae	Bark	Antimalaria	Weniger et al. (2008)
<i>Stereospermum zenkeri</i>	Bignoniaceae	Bark	Antimalaria	Weniger et al. (2008)
<i>Strychnos icaja</i>	Loganiaceae (?)	Root	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Symphonia globulifera</i>	Clusiaceae	Bark	Antimalaria	Weniger et al. (2008)
<i>Synedrella nodiflora</i>		Wp	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Tapinanthus globiferus (harvested from Persea americana)</i>	Loranthaceae	L	Anti-inflammatory, immunomodulatory and antioxidant properties	Gounoue et al. (2019)



<i>Thomandersia hensii</i>	Acanthaceae	Leaves, stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Trichilia emetica</i>	Meliaceae	Bark	Antimalaria	Diarra et al. (2015)
<i>Trichilia monadelph</i>	Meliaceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Turreanthus africanus</i>	Meliaceae	seed	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Uapaca guineensis</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Not specified	Anti-inflammatory	Kuete and Efferth (2010)
<i>Vernonia amygdalina</i>	Asteraceae	L	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Vernonia amygdalina</i>	Asteraceae	L, Rt	Anti-HIV activity	Noumi and Manga (2011)
<i>Vitellaria paradoxa</i>	Sapotaceae	Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Foyet et al. (2015)
<i>Vitex thyrsoiflora</i>		Bk	Anti-inflammatory	Mokale Kognou et al. (2020)
<i>Voacanga africana</i>	Apocynaceae	Bk	Antioxidant	Adu et al. (2015), Agbor et al. (2007)
<i>Xylopi aethiopica</i>	Annonaceae	Fr	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)
<i>Xylopi parviflora,</i>	Annonaceae	Seed	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Xylopi phloiodora,</i>	Annonaceae	Seed	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Xymolox monosperma</i>	Annonaceae	Leaf, stem bark	Antimalaria	Titanji et al. (2008)
<i>Zanthoxylum heitzii</i>	Rutaceae	Bk	Antioxidant, antimalarial, anti-inflammatory, immunorestorative	Agbor et al. (2007), Sadeer et al. (2019), Mokondjimobe et al. (2012)
<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	Zingiberaceae	L, Rt	Antimalaria, anti-HIV-1 activity	Titanji et al. (2008), Noumi and Manga (2011)
<i>Ziziphus abyssinica</i>	Rhamnaceae	Rt	Anti-inflammatory	Asante-Kwatia et al. (2020)

\* L= leave, Bk= bark, St= Stem, Rt= roots, Fr= fruit, Se= seed, Fl= flower, Tbk= root bark, Wp= whole plant, Lx= latex

### 3.4. Summary and implication for the fight against COVID-19

From this review, it appears that 230 Cameroonian medicinal plant species that are promising source of ingredients for the fight against the 2019 novel corona virus. Among these species, about 32 contain secondary metabolites that have already been confirmed as anti-COVID 19 molecules. These are *Abelmoschus esculentus*, *Acacia Senegal*, *Allium sativum*, *Bryophyllum pinnatum*, *Camellia sinensis*, *Capsicum annum*, *Cissus quadrangularis*, *Citrus limon*, *Citrus sinensis*, *Citrus spp*, *Cola acuminata*, *Cola anomala*, *Cola nitida*, *Combretum glutinosum*, *Curcuma longa*, *Echinops giganteus*, *Khaya grandifoliola*, *Kigelia Africana*, *Laportea aestuans*, *Morinda morindoides*, *Ochthocosmus africanus*, *Parkia biglobosa*, *Phyllanthus spp*, *Rauwolfia sp.*, *Senna alata*, *Solanum melongena*, *Solanum torvum*, *Tephrosia preussii*, *Terminalia catappa*, *Terminalia ivorensis*, *Zanthoxylum heitzii* and *Zingiber officinale*.

Of the 230 species recorded, 102 are already documented for their traditional use to manage at least 3 common symptoms of COVID-19. The PCA analysis separated 4 groups of medicinal plant species with axis 1 and 2 explaining 65.7% of the variability within the sample (figure 4).

The first group consists of plants treating at least three symptoms of COVID 19, containing key phytochemicals reported as being of interest for COVID management (alkaloids, phenolics, tannins and terpenoids) and having antimalaria properties. Representative species include *Abelmoschus esculentus*, *Artemisia annua*, *Capsicum annun*, *Curcuma longa*, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Eremomastax speciosa*, *Kalenchoe crenata*, *Lippia multiflora*, *Morinda lucida*, *Senna alata*, *Solanum torvum*, etc.

The second group consists of lead promising species like *Azadirachta indica*, *Harungana madagascariensis*, *Mangifera indica*, *Momordica charantia*, *Picralima nitida*, *Trichilia*

*emetica* . This consists of plants used to treat COVID-19 symptoms which, at the same time are source of the key phytochemicals and also have relevant pharmacological activities (antiviral, anti-inflammatory, immunostimulant, or containing secondary metabolites with confirmed anti-SARSCOV2 activity. Even when used alone, they can be evaluated and developed as potential remedy, while the other species may be used in association to each other for their complementary effects.

The third group consists of potential anti-malaria, agents based on the species *Allium sativum*, *Psidium guajava*, *Phyllanthus muellerianus*, *Occimum gratissimum*, *Stereospermom acuminatissimum*, etc..

The fourth group consists of immunostimulants, antiinflammatory, antiviral agents and plants wontaining some secondary metabolites with confirmed antiCOVID19 properties, with representative species like *Moringa oleifera*, *Panda oleosa*, *Tapinanthus globuliferus*, *Zanthoxylum heitzii*, and *Vernonia amygdalina*..

Overall, the recorded medicinal plant species offers an array of possibility of using individual species or combination of species for their complementary effects, based on the clinical symptoms showed by the patients and the therapeutic objective to be achieved.

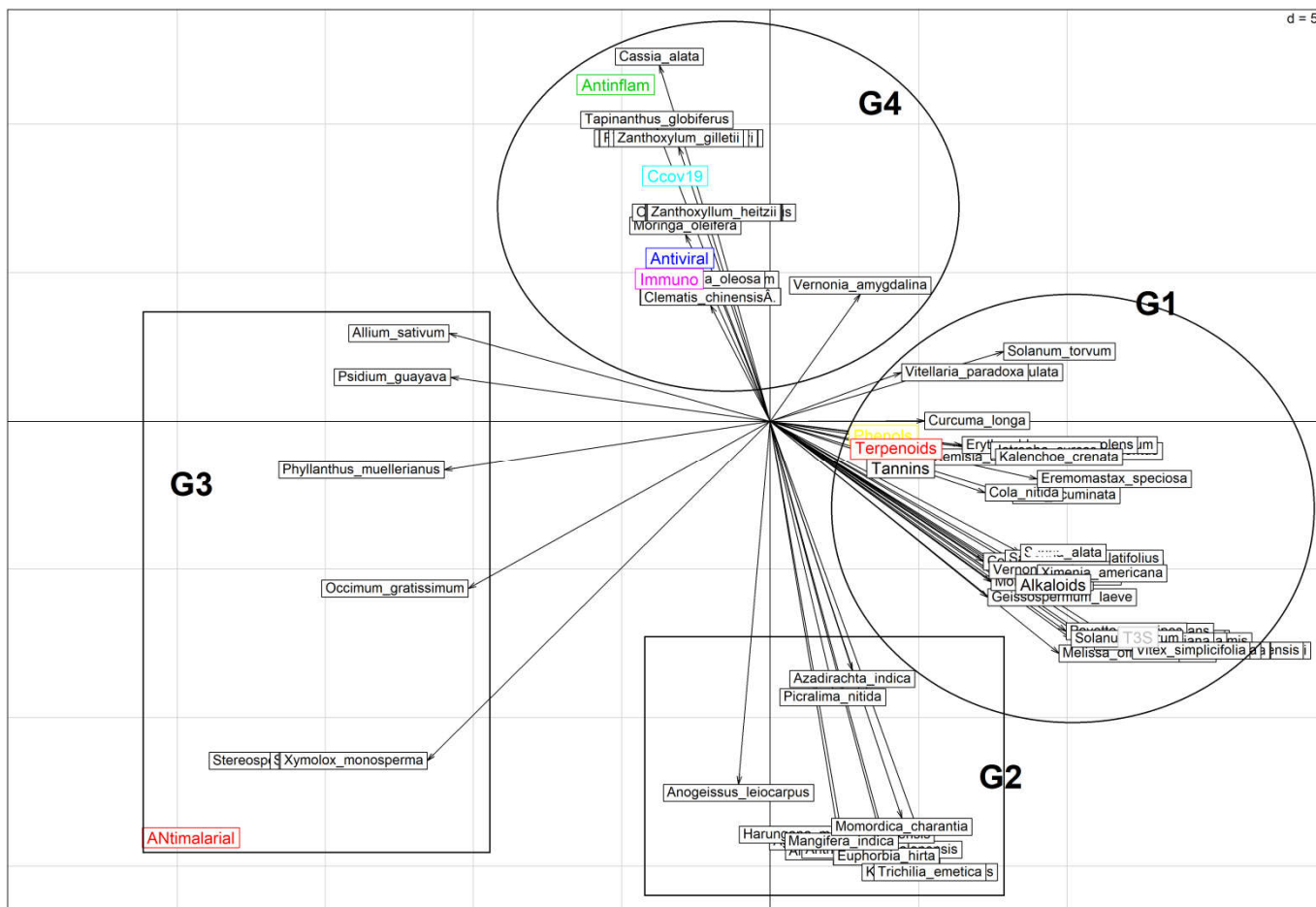


Figure 4. Results of PCA ordination showing patterns of variability among the 230 species recorded

### 3.5. Challenges and way forward

In developing countries with poor access to health facilities like Cameroon, medicinal plants are the richest and most available sources for drug discovery. In such situation when our societies are desperate to discover cures for new and deadly disease like COVID-19, the contribution of herbal medicine in early response strategies should be promoted. Though the country's pharmaceutical potentials are immense, constraints and challenges however exist at all levels. To effectively address these shortcomings, a strong political-will and support of the Cameroonian government will be highly needed.

## **Research and development**

Research in ethnobotany, ethnopharmacology and bioactive components of medicinal plants of Cameroon has been ongoing for quite some time by Universities' laboratories, by the Institute of Medical Research and Medicinal Plants Studies (IMPM) and by independent researchers. However, a systematic and concerted approach to this activity has been lacking. Much of these researches have been mainly academic and the concept of applied research in plant-based drug development has not received much attention. Although enough have been done in propagation of medicinal plants, research in support of industrial development, appropriate processing technologies to improve quality and yield, new formulations to new products and the marketing of finished products is still poorly developed. Actually, many medicinal plants sourced from Cameroon were involved in patents, most of which are owned by foreign entities.

Capacity building and financial support are a necessity at all level in order to stimulate active research on natural medicinal products at the local level. Specifically, efforts have to be geared towards developing and sponsoring applied research on natural products and drug discovery. It is in deed paradoxal that with the country's medicinal plant potentials, herbal drug discovery has not yet reached the expected performance.

## **Capacity building**

One of the main problems facing the use of herbal medicines is the proof requirement of their usefulness, safety and effectiveness. Unfortunately, research and training activities for traditional medicine practitioners has not received due support and attention. As a result, the quantity, quality, the safety and the efficacy of their herbal preparations are far from sufficient to meet the demands. These weaknesses could be

corrected by capacity building and low-cost technologies for the industrial production of traditional medicines to make them more effective, stable, reproducible, controlled, and in galenic forms that can easily be transported. Capacity building will be vital for also organizing the corporation and integrating their practices into the perspectives of modern research and development continuum. By so doing, the indiscriminate sale and advertisement of herbal products in all forms of media without compliance to the existing regulations would be discouraged.

### **Conservation of medicinal plants and documentation of available knowledge on their use**

In face of the current risk of deforestation and degradation, conservation of medicinal plants must be a central focus. In this regard, one of the challenges is the lack of complete and conserved knowledge repository on the national pharmacopoeia and the immense medicinal metabolite diversity among these plants. Such a tool will be vital in providing the scientific community with comprehensive knowledge about metabolite data generation and exploitation in early response strategy to emerging diseases. Because of the growing environmental degradation and the rapid loss of the natural habitat for some of these plants due to anthropogenic activities, it is becoming increasingly urgent to reinforce medicinal plants conservation and documentation of their uses.

To ensure the sustainability of the resource base, conservation measures for medicinal plants will also be required for continuity of research, development and commercialization of natural medicinal products to address potential risk of overexploitation that may result from excessive commercialization and unsustainable practices. The effectiveness of the future sustainability of local natural ecosystems that harbours these medicinal plants will depend upon conservation management

approaches that value the importance of involving local communities. In this light, there are lessons learned from *Prunus africana* management in the Mount Cameroon area that can fuel the step forward is the establishment of such medicinal plant conservation strategy.

The ratification by Cameroon of the Nagoya protocol on access to genetic resource and benefit sharing opens new and promising avenues to achieve the objectives of conserving the local medicinal plants, ensuring their sustainable utilization and improving their contribution in livelihoods improvement and economic development.

### **Encouraging private sector involvement in herbal drug development**

There has so far been only very poor participation of the local private pharmaceutical industries in the field of herbal drug development in Cameroon. There should be incentives developed to attract and stimulated their investment in traditional medicine research, development and commercialization.

## **4. Conclusion**

The purpose of this stock-taking study was to provide a preliminary review on Cameroonian medicinal plants with potentials to be evaluated and developed as remedy for the management of COVID-19. It appears that the country's medicinal plants potentials is immense and is a promising resource from a perspective of novel drug development against this pandemic. Based on the present findings it can be concluded that medicinal plants can be promising resources for the management of COVID-19 in African herbal medicine in general and Cameroon in particular.

Despite the great potential of local medicinal plants, it is unfortunate that they are still pejoratively referred to as “grand-mother recipes”. More than ever, there is a need for

applied research to provide more scientific evidence for the efficacy, to establish the standard formulation using the preliminary check list presented in this review and further clinical studies as part of the response strategy for the management of COVID-19.

### **Declaration of Competing Interest**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

### **Funding**

The authors declare that they did not receive any funding for carrying out this research.



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