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Introduction: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an acute respiratory infectious disease. At present, there is no specific and effective therapy for the treatment and prevention of this disease. Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has accumulated thousands of years of experience on the use of Chinese herbal medicine (CHM) to prevent and treat infectious diseases. The aim of this study was to present the evidence on the therapeutic effects and safety of Chinese herbal medicine (CHM) used with or without conventional western therapy for COVID-19.

Methods: Clinical studies on the therapeutic effects and safety of CHM for COVID-19 were included. We summarized the general characteristics of included studies, evaluated methodological quality of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) using the Cochrane risk of bias tool, analyzed the use of CHM, used Revman 5.4 software to present the risk ratio (RR) or mean difference (MD) and their 95% confidence interval (CI) to estimate the therapeutic effects and safety of CHM.

Results: A total of 58 clinical studies were identified including RCTs (17.24%, 10), non-randomized controlled trials (1.72%, 1), retrospective studies with a control group (18.97%, 11), case-series (20.69%, 12) and case-reports (41.38%, 24). Fig.1 shows the flow diagram for the searching and screening of published articles. No RCTs of high methodological quality were identified. The most frequently tested oral Chinese patent medicine, Chinese herbal medicine injection or prescribed herbal decoction were: Lianhuaxingwen granule/capsule, Xuebijing injection and Maxing Shigan Tang. Table 1 lists the CHM used at least twice. In terms of aggravation rate, pooled analyses showed that there were statistical differences between the intervention group and the comparator group (RR 0.42, 95% CI 0.21 to 0.82, six RCTs; RR 0.38, 95% CI 0.23 to 0.64, five retrospective studies with a control group), that is, CHM plus conventional western therapy appeared better than conventional western therapy alone in reducing aggravation rate. In addition, compared with conventional western therapy, CHM plus conventional western therapy had potential advantages in increasing the recovery rate and shortening the duration of fever, cough and fatigue, improving the negative conversion rate of nucleic acid test, and increasing the improvement rate of chest CT manifestations and shortening the time from receiving the treatment to the beginning of chest CT manifestations improvement. For adverse events, pooled data showed that there were no statistical differences between the CHM and the control groups.

Conclusion: Current low certainty evidence suggests that there may be a tendency that CHM plus conventional western therapy is superior to conventional western therapy alone. The use of CHM did not increase the risk of adverse events.

Keywords: traditional Chinese medicine, Chinese herbal medicine, novel coronavirus pneumonia, coronavirus disease 2019, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, review, clinical study

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An exploration into the impact of COVID-19 on mental wellbeing and the self-care strategies employed

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Introduction: It has been widely reported that the mental well-being has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposed social isolation restrictions. It is essential to investigate, comprehend and acknowledge the profound influence Covid-19 has had on anxiety levels and explore approaches that people have used to manage this in order to inform future interventions and promote self-care behaviours to improve mental wellbeing. The aim of this study was to explore the anxiety experienced by adults during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they manage it.

Methods: A specifically designed questionnaire containing open and closed questions was disseminated using social media in 4 countries including the UK. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used and data collected from the free-text questions were analysed using the thematic analysis. Ethical approval was obtained from St Marys University Research Ethics Committee.

Results: To date n = 382 adult respondents aged 18 plus completed the survey. Analysis is on-going, full results will be available by the symposium date. Preliminary analysis indicated that the most common self-care behaviours used for anxiety self-management pre and during the pandemic were walks, virtual family/social peer support, cooking and aerobic exercise. Additionally, it was apparent that both a lack of a sustained reciprocation of ongoing family/social support was a key predictor for the proclivity of anxiety-inducing thoughts to be experienced and reduced family/social support led to negative thought processes and feelings such as isolation, loneliness and uncertainty about the future. Individuals who continually engaged in activity generally reported more positive mood states irrespective of the social isolation environment.

Conclusion: This study highlights the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental wellbeing and stresses the significance of ongoing peer support during social isolation. Facilitating self-care and opportunity for peer support may be an effective strategy for interventions to improve mental wellbeing during times of social isolation.

Keywords: COVID-19; mental wellbeing; survey; self-care; social isolation

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Complementary Medicine Strategies during the COVID-19 Pandemic - a Cross-Sectional study

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Introduction: Complementary and Integrative Medicine (CIM) may provide an opportunity for health preventive or supportive self-treatment regarding COVID-19 infections. The study aims to explore self-help and prevention strategies and the emotional state during the pandemic in people who are familiar with CIM.

Methods: We conducted an explorative cross-sectional study with an anonymous 41-item online-survey in German language among adults familiar to CIM (e.g. through a membership in a CIM association) from September 2020 to February 2021. A selection of 17 popular CIM methods was presented to capture self-help and prevention strategies used by the respondents and to assess the expected success of utilized methods.