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# Ethnopharmacology of Gardenia

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The genus Gardenia that belongs to the family Rubiceae comprises plants that are considered of economic importance. They are found naturally distributed in tropical and sub-tropical regions globally. Some species are even cultivated owing to their economic importance. They are useful in the production of wood, perfumes, supplements, essential oils in aromatherapy, tea, colouring agents and most importantly, in traditional medicine. Dikamali, also known as cumbi is a gum containing resin, consisting mainly of polysaccharides, flavonoids, alkaloids and proteins. This oleogum resin generally exudes as yellow drops from leaf buds. It has a sharp bitter taste with an offensive pungent smell. Traditionally, this gum is dosed at different concentrations to treat various ailments. Dissolved with buttermilk or warm water, the gum is used to treat indigestion or lack of appetite. The resin is often applied as a paste on wounds and tied with a cloth for reducing pain and risks of infections. A similar application in cases of dental caries prevents inflammation. The dried resin proportionately dissolved in water tends to relieve patients suffering from distension of the abdomen, piles, constipation and intestinal worms. TCM (traditional Chinese medicine) practitioners recommend taking Gardenia fruit owing to its cold properties to protect vital organs. As Gardenia shows much potential as a natural drug, it is used in indigenous medicine to cure many diseases. Indeed, a study revealed that, Gardenia extract helped with memory improvement, especially among older people associated with memory loss including Alzheimer’s disease. Gardenia possesses medicinal value traditionally but its molecular mechanisms and targets underlying pharmacological effects are not yet clearly studied for which extensive research is required.

*Keywords: Gardenia, Traditional medicine, Dikamali, Oleogum resin,  Rubiaceae, Asian medicine*

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