

Role of Ajwa in the treatment and prevention of ischaemic heart disease

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Madam, dates have been used as a source of nutrient all over the world for centuries. They are available in many different varieties and types. Though each type has its unique properties,¹ it has been estimated that dates contain 44-88% of carbohydrates, 2.3 -5.6% protein and 0.2-0.4% fats, 6.4-11.5% dietary fiber in addition to being rich in minerals and vitamins making them essentially a complete meal.² Ajwa is one of the type of dates, only grown in Saudi Arabia.

Recent studies show that Ajwa date extracts are beneficial for ischaemic cardiac disease. Ex vivo and in vivo studies performed on cardiac tissue of mice showed that compounds in Ajwa dates have anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant and anti-atherogenic properties.³⁻⁵ The mechanisms of these effects include inhibition of degradation of endogenous antioxidants like Nitric Oxide, inhibition of lipid peroxidation and therefore reduction in free radical formation.^{6,7} Studies show that different Ajwa varieties have different Nitric Oxide inhibitory activity.² One study showed that extract from Ajwa, either in ethyl acetate, methanolic or water, inhibit cyclooxygenase enzymes, COX 1 and COX2,³ thus having anti-atherogenic properties.

Studies also showed that pretreatment with Ajwa extract helps mitigate myocyte injury after ischaemia, indicating a potential for Ajwa extract use to preserve cardiac function in patients at high risk for ischaemic heart disease.⁶

I want to draw the attention of the reader to the need for further research on the Ajwa extract for the treatment and

prevention of ischaemic heart disease. More studies are needed to explore the exact beneficial compound, most effective extraction technique, mechanism of action, dosage, side effect profile, contraindications and effects on the foetus of the Ajwa extract as it is not only easily available but is also cheaper and has good nutritional value.

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