Available online on 15.08.2025 at http://jddtonline.info

Journal of Drug Delivery and Therapeutics

Open Access to Pharmaceutical and Medical Research

Open Access Full Text Article

Review Article

Coriandrum sativum: Review of Its Botany, Medicinal Uses, Pharmacological Activities and Phytochemistry

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Article Info:

Article History:

Received 15 April 2025
Reviewed 03 June 2025
Accepted 26 July 2025
Published 15 August 2025

Cite this article as:

Patel MK, Jain A, *Coriandrum sativum*: Review of Its Botany, Medicinal Uses, Pharmacological Activities and Phytochemistry, Journal of Drug Delivery and Therapeutics. 2025; 15(8):294-302
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22270/jddt.v15i8.7340

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Abstract

Coriandrum sativum L. (coriander), a member of the Apiaceae family, is a well-known aromatic herb widely used in culinary, traditional medicine, and pharmaceutical industries. This review comprehensively summarizes the botany, medicinal uses, pharmacological activities, and phytochemistry of coriander. The plant exhibits a wide range of therapeutic properties, including antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antidiabetic, neuroprotective, and hepatoprotective effects. Phytochemical studies reveal the presence of essential oils, flavonoids, phenolic acids, fatty acids, and terpenoids, which contribute to its pharmacological potential. This article highlights the importance of *C. sativum* as a functional food and a source of bioactive compounds for drug development.

Keywords: *Coriandrum sativum* L., traditional medicine, antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory,

1. Introduction

Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum* L.), commonly known as cilantro (leaves) or coriander (seeds), is an aromatic annual herb belonging to the **Apiaceae (Umbelliferae)** family. Native to the **Mediterranean region and Western Asia**, it has been cultivated for over **3,000 years** and is now grown worldwide, particularly in **India, China, Morocco, and Eastern Europe**, due to its culinary and medicinal significance[1].

Historical and Traditional Significance

Coriander has been an integral part of traditional medicine systems[2]:

- **Ayurveda:** Used as a digestive stimulant (Deepana-Pachana), carminative, and remedy for urinary tract infections, fever, and respiratory disorders.
- **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM):** Employed to relieve stomachaches, nausea, and measles, and to promote digestion.
- **Unani Medicine:** Prescribed as a diuretic, anti-inflammatory, and analgesic agent.
- **Ancient Egyptian & Greek Medicine:** Coriander seeds were found in Egyptian tombs, and Hippocrates used them for their healing properties.

Culinary and Economic Importanc

- The leaves (cilantro) are widely used in Mexican, Indian, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian cuisines for their fresh, citrusy flavor.
- The seeds are used as a spice in curries, pickles, sausages, and baked goods, contributing a warm, nutty, and slightly citrusy aroma.
- The essential oil extracted from seeds is used in perfumery, cosmetics, and food flavoring industries[3].

Modern Pharmacological Interest[4]

Recent scientific studies have validated many traditional uses, revealing coriander's:

- **Antioxidant** and **anti-inflammatory** properties.
- **Antimicrobial** effects against foodborne pathogens.
- **Antidiabetic** and **cholesterol-lowering** potential.
- **Neuroprotective** and **hepatoprotective** benefits.

Given its nutritional richness (vitamins A, C, K, and minerals like iron and magnesium) and bioactive compounds (linalool, flavonoids, phenolic acids), coriander is now recognized as a functional food and a

promising candidate for nutraceutical and pharmaceutical applications.

This review aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the botany, medicinal uses, pharmacological activities, and phytochemistry of *Coriandrum sativum*, highlighting its potential in modern medicine and industry[5].

2. Botany and Cultivation

2.1 Taxonomic Classification

Coriandrum sativum L. is a well-defined species within the **Apiaceae** family, which includes other economically important herbs like **parsley, cumin, and fennel**. Its taxonomic hierarchy is as follows[6]:

Rank	Classification
Kingdom	Plantae
Clade	Tracheophytes (vascular plants)
Clade	Angiosperms (flowering plants)
Clade	Eudicots
Order	Apiales
Family	Apiaceae (Umbelliferae)
Genus	*Coriandrum*
Species	*C. sativum* L.

The genus *Coriandrum* consists of only two species:

Coriandrum sativum (cultivated coriander)

Coriandrum tordylium (wild coriander, less common)

2.2 Morphological Characteristics

Growth Habit

Life Cycle: Annual herb

Height: 40–70 cm (varies with cultivar and growing conditions)

Leaves

Shape: Polymorphic – lower leaves are **broad, lobed, and bipinnate**, while upper leaves are **finely divided and feathery**.

Color: Bright green (young leaves, used as cilantro) turning yellowish at maturity.

Aroma: Strong, citrus-like fragrance when crushed due to volatile oils (mainly aldehydes)[7].

Stem

Structure: Erect, slender, hollow, and branching.

Surface: Smooth to slightly grooved.

Flowers

Inflorescence: Compound **umbels** (5–10 cm diameter), typical of Apiaceae.

Flower Color: Small, **white to pale pink**, with five petals.

Pollination: Primarily **insect-pollinated** (bees, flies)[8].

Fruits (Seeds) Shape: Globular (3–5 mm diameter), ribbed, and schizocarpic (splits into two mericarps).

Color: Green when immature, turning **yellowish-brown** at maturity.

Aroma & Taste: Warm, spicy, slightly citrusy when crushed (due to **linalool**).

Root System

Type: Taproot system, moderately deep (15–25 cm).

Function: Provides stability and nutrient uptake[9].

2.3 Cultivation and Distribution

Climatic Requirements

Temperature: Prefers **15–25°C** (optimal growth); sensitive to frost.

Rainfall: Moderate (500–700 mm annually); drought-tolerant once established.

Soil: Well-drained, **loamy or sandy loam** with **pH 6.2–6.8**.

Major Producing Regions

Table: 1

Country	Primary Use	Key Production Areas
India	Seeds (spice), leaves	Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat
China	Seeds, essential oil	Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu
Russia	Seed production	Central Black Earth region
Mediterranean	Leaves, seeds	Morocco, Egypt, Turkey
Mexico	Fresh leaves (cilantro)	Puebla, Veracruz

Cultivation Practices[10]

Sowing: Direct seeding (1–2 cm depth, 20–30 cm row spacing).

Germination: 7–10 days (optimal soil temperature: 18–22°C).

Harvesting:

Leaves (Cilantro): 30–45 days after sowing (before flowering).

Seeds: 90–120 days (when 60–70% of seeds turn brown).

Yield:

Leaves: 8–10 tons/ha (fresh weight).

Seeds: 1–1.5 tons/ha.

Post-Harvest Processing[11]

Drying: Seeds are sun-dried to **8–10% moisture content** before storage.

Essential Oil Extraction: Steam distillation of seeds yields **0.1–1% oil** (linalool-rich).

Challenges in Cultivation[12]

Pests: Aphids, whiteflies, and coriander weevil.

Diseases: Powdery mildew, stem gall, and bacterial leaf spot.

Weed Competition: Requires proper field management in early growth stages.

Coriandrum sativum has been an integral part of traditional healing systems across the world for centuries. Its leaves, seeds, and essential oils have been used to treat a wide range of ailments, demonstrating its versatility in ethnomedicine[13].

3.1 Ayurvedic Medicine (India)

In **Ayurveda**, coriander is classified as a **"Tridoshic" herb**, meaning it balances all three *doshas* (Vata, Pitta, Kapha). Key traditional uses include[14]:

Digestive Health:

Relieves **indigestion (Agnimandya), bloating, and flatulence** by stimulating digestive enzymes.

Used in formulations like **"Dhanyaka Panaka"** (coriander-infused water) for acidity and heartburn[15].

Urinary Disorders:

Acts as a **diuretic (Mutrala)** to treat urinary tract infections (UTIs) and kidney stones.

Combined with **gokshura (Tribulus terrestris)** for dysuria.

Respiratory Conditions:

Decoction of seeds used for **cough, bronchitis, and asthma** due to its expectorant properties.

Mixed with honey for sore throat relief.

Detoxification & Fever Management:

Used in **"Sarsaparilla" formulations** for blood purification.

Coriander water given to reduce fever (Jvara)[16].

3.2 Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

In **TCM**, coriander seeds are known as **"Hu Sui"** and are considered **warm and pungent**, affecting the **Spleen and Stomach meridians**. Key uses:

Gastrointestinal Issues:

Treats **stomachaches, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea** (used in herbal teas).

Combined with **ginger (Sheng Jiang)** for better digestion.

Measles & Viral Infections:

Applied externally in poultices to **reduce measles rashes and itching**.

Decoction used to **expel toxins** in childhood infections.

Appetite Stimulation:

Used in **anorexia and poor appetite** due to its carminative effects[17].

3.3 Unani Medicine (Perso-Arabic Tradition)

In **Unani Tibb**, coriander (**Kishneez**) is considered **cold and dry** in temperament, used for:

Anti-inflammatory & Analgesic Effects:

Applied as a paste for **arthritis, joint pain, and swelling**.

Seed oil massaged onto **rheumatic areas**.

Diuretic & Kidney Health:

Used in **Zimad (poultices)** for urinary retention.

Combined with **mulethi (licorice)** for bladder infections.

Cardiovascular Benefits:

Believed to **lower blood pressure** and improve heart function[18].

3.4 European Folk Medicine

In **Greco-Roman and Medieval European** traditions, coriander was used for:

Nervous System Disorders:

Sedative effects for **anxiety, insomnia, and nervousness** (infused in wine).

Used in **"nerve tonics"** alongside lavender and chamomile.

Digestive Aid:

Carminative to relieve **colic and infantile flatulence**.

Seeds chewed after meals to prevent **heartburn**.

Aphrodisiac & Menstrual Health:

Used in **love potions** in ancient Greece.

Regulated **menstrual cycles** when taken as a tea[19].

3.5 Other Traditional Uses

Middle Eastern Medicine:

Used for **halitosis (bad breath)**- chewing seeds freshens breath.

Applied in **eye washes** for conjunctivitis.

Latin American Curanderismo:

"Agua de cilantro" (coriander water) for **detoxification and stomach pain**.

Leaves used in **poultices for headaches and inflammation**.

Scientific Validation of Traditional Uses

Modern studies support many of these applications:
Digestive benefits (stimulates bile secretion, antispasmodic).
Antimicrobial (effective against *E. coli*, *H. pylori*).
Anti-inflammatory (reduces COX-2 enzymes).
Diuretic effects (increases urine output in animal studies).

Extensive scientific research has validated *Coriandrum sativum*'s diverse pharmacological properties, supporting its traditional medicinal uses. Below is a detailed examination of its key bioactive effects[20].

4.1 Antioxidant Activity

Coriander is a **potent free radical scavenger** due to its high content of:

- **Polyphenols:** Quercetin, kaempferol, rutin, and caffeic acid.
- **Essential Oils:** Linalool (monoterpene alcohol) and γ-terpinene.
- **Vitamins:** Vitamin C (in leaves) and vitamin E (in seeds)[21].

Mechanisms & Evidence:

DPPH & FRAP Assays: Coriander extracts show **strong radical scavenging activity** (IC50 ~20–50 µg/mL).
Reduces Oxidative Stress: Protects against **lipid peroxidation** in liver and brain tissues.
Therapeutic Implications:

May prevent cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and aging-related disorders**.**

Used in functional foods to enhance shelf-life and nutritional value[22].

4.2 Antimicrobial Effects

Coriander essential oil (CEO) and extracts exhibit broad-spectrum antimicrobial activity**:**

Table: 2

Microorganism	Effect	Active Compound
Escherichia coli	Inhibits growth (MIC: 0.5–1.0 µL/mL)	Linalool, α-pinene
Staphylococcus aureus	Disrupts cell membranes	Terpinene, camphor
Candida albicans	Antifungal (MIC: 0.25 µL/mL)	Geraniol, borneol
Helicobacter pylori	Reduces gastric ulcers	Flavonoids, aldehydes

Applications:

Food preservative (replaces synthetic additives like BHT).

Topical antiseptic for wound infections[23].

4.3 Anti-inflammatory and Analgesic Properties

Key Mechanisms:

Downregulates: TNF-α, IL-6, COX-2, and NF-κB pathways.

Upregulates: Anti-inflammatory IL-10.

Clinical Evidence:
Arthritis: Reduces joint swelling in rat models (comparable to diclofenac).
Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD): Decreases colon inflammation by **50%** in ulcerative colitis studies.
Pain Relief: Coriander seed oil shows **peripheral and central analgesic effects** (hot-plate test)[24].

4.4 Antidiabetic Potential

Coriander acts via **multiple hypoglycemic pathways**:

Stimulates insulin secretion (pancreatic β-cells).**Inhibits α-glucosidase** (reduces carbohydrate absorption).

Enhances glucose uptake (GLUT4 activation in muscles).

Research Findings:

Human Trial (Type 2 Diabetes): 3 g/day seed powder **reduced fasting glucose by 15%** in 8 weeks.

Animal Study: Improved lipid profile (↓ LDL, ↑ HDL) in diabetic rats[25].

4.5 Neuroprotective Effects

Protective Mechanisms Against Neurodegeneration:

Reduces oxidative stress in brain tissue (↑ SOD, ↓ MDA).

Inhibits acetylcholinesterase (AChE) → helps manage **Alzheimer's**.

Prevents dopamine neuron loss (Parkinson's models).

Notable Studies:

Scopolamine-induced amnesia: Coriander extract improved memory retention by **40%**.

Aβ plaque reduction: Observed in Alzheimer's cell lines[26].

4.6 Hepatoprotective and Cardioprotective Effects

Liver Protection:

CCl4-induced hepatotoxicity: Coriander seed oil ↓ ALT/AST by **60%**.

Fatty liver disease: Reduces hepatic triglycerides via PPAR-α activation.

Heart Health:

Hypolipidemic Action: ↓ Total cholesterol (15–20%), ↑ bile acid excretion.

Antihypertensive: ACE-inhibitory activity (similar to captopril).

4.7 Gastroprotective and Carminative Actions

Digestive Benefits:

Spasmolytic: Relaxes intestinal smooth muscle (via Ca^{2+} channel blockade).

Carminative: Volatile oils (limonene, linalool) reduce **bloating and gas**.

Anti-ulcer: ↑ Mucus secretion, ↓ gastric acid (H^+/K^+-ATPase inhibition)[27].

Clinical Use:

IBS Management: Reduces abdominal pain and distension.

Infant colic: Coriander water decreases crying duration by **30%**.

Table 3: **Summary of Pharmacological Activities**

Activity	Key Compounds	Mechanism	Potential Applications
Antioxidant	Quercetin, linalool	Free radical scavenging	Anti-aging, cancer prevention
Antimicrobial	Terpenes, flavonoids	Cell membrane disruption	Natural preservatives, antiseptics
Anti-inflammatory	Kaempferol, TNF-α inhibitors	COX-2/NF-κB suppression	Arthritis, IBD treatment
Antidiabetic	Fiber, essential oils	Insulin sensitization	Diabetes management
Neuroprotective	AChE inhibitors	Oxidative stress reduction	Alzheimer's/Parkinson's therapy
Cardioprotective	Phytosterols, fatty acids	LDL oxidation inhibition	Cardiovascular disease prevention
Gastroprotective	Volatile oils	Smooth muscle relaxation	Digestive aid, anti-ulcer

5. Future Research Directions

Clinical trials to standardize dosages for diabetes and neuroprotection.

Nanoencapsulation of Coriander Oil for Enhanced Bioavailability

Synergistic studies with other herbs (e.g., turmeric, fenugreek).

The medicinal and nutritional properties of *Coriandrum sativum* are attributed to its diverse array of bioactive compounds, which vary between leaves (cilantro) and seeds. Below is a detailed breakdown of its phytochemical constituents[28].

5.1 Essential Oils

Coriander contains volatile oils that contribute to its aroma, flavor, and therapeutic effects. The composition differs significantly between leaves and seeds.

Leaves (Cilantro) Essential Oil

Dominant Compounds:

Aliphatic aldehydes (60–80% of total oil):

Decanal ($C_{10}H_{20}O$) – Citrusy, floral note.

Dodecanal ($C_{12}H_{24}O$) – Fatty, waxy aroma.

Alcohols & Esters:

2-Decenal – Green, coriander-like scent.

Tetradecanal – Mild, sweet odor.

Characteristics:

Fresh, herbaceous aroma (used in perfumery).

Antimicrobial & insect-repellent properties[29].

Seeds Essential Oil

Dominant Compounds:

Monoterpenes (70–90% of total oil):

Linalool (60–80%) – Floral, lavender-like scent (major bioactive compound).

γ-Terpinene (1–8%) – Citrusy, slightly peppery.

α-Pinene (1–6%) – Pine-like aroma.

Camphor (3–5%) – Cooling, medicinal note.

Other Minor Components:

Geranyl acetate – Fruity, rose-like.

Limonene – Citrusy, refreshing[30].

Characteristics:

Warm, spicy aroma (used in food flavoring).

Stronger pharmacological activity (antioxidant, sedative, antimicrobial).

5.2 Phenolic Compounds

Coriander is rich in polyphenols**,** contributing to its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and anticancer effects.

Table 4: ***Flavonoids***

Compound	Structure	Biological Role
Quercetin	Flavonol	↓ Oxidative stress, anticancer
Rutin	Glycoside of quercetin	Anti-inflammatory, vasoprotective
Kaempferol	Flavonol	Cardioprotective, antimicrobial

Table 5: Phenolic Acids

Compound	Structure	Biological Role
Caffeic acid	Hydroxycinnamic acid	Antioxidant, hepatoprotective
Chlorogenic acid	Ester of caffeic acid	Antidiabetic, neuroprotective
Gallic acid	Trihydroxybenzoic acid	Antiviral, anticancer

Total Phenolic Content (TPC):

Leaves: 12–18 mg GAE/g (higher than seeds).

Seeds: 8–12 mg GAE/g.

5.3 Fatty Acids

Coriander seeds contain unique fatty acids with nutritional and medicinal value[31].

Table 6: Major Fatty Acids in Seed Oil

Fatty Acid	Structure	% Composition	Health Benefits
Petroselinic acid (C18:1ω-12)	Monounsaturated	65–75%	↓ LDL cholesterol, anti-inflammatory
Linoleic acid (C18:2ω-6)	Polyunsaturated	12–18%	Essential for brain function
Oleic acid (C18:1ω-9)	Monounsaturated	5–8%	Cardioprotective
Palmitic acid (C16:0)	Saturated	3–5%	Energy source

Characteristics:

High petroselinic acid – Rare in plants, used in **cosmetics & lubricants**.

Omega-6/Omega-9 balance – Supports cardiovascular health[32].

5.4 Other Bioactive Compounds

Terpenoids

Limonene (antitumor).

Borneol (analgesic).

Geraniol (antifungal).

Tannins

Condensed tannins (anti-diarrheal, astringent).

Sterols

β-Sitosterol (lowers cholesterol).

Stigmasterol (anti-arthritic).

Alkaloids & Coumarins

Traces of **coriandrine** (hypotensive).

Scopoletin (antispasmodic)[33].

Table 7: **Comparative Phytochemical Profile: Leaves vs. Seeds**

Compound Class	Leaves (Cilantro)	Seeds
Essential Oils	Aldehydes (decanal)	Linalool (60–80%)
Phenolics	Higher flavonoids	More phenolic acids
Fatty Acids	Low content	Petroselinic acid (65–75%)
Fiber	Moderate	High (dietary fiber)

Extraction Methods & Yield

Essential Oils: Steam distillation (0.1–1% yield).

Phenolics: Methanol/water extraction (highest yield).

Fatty Acids: Cold-pressing (seed oil yield: 15–20%)[34].

6. Safety and Toxicity of *Coriandrum sativum*

While coriander is widely consumed and considered safe, understanding its potential toxicity and allergenic effects is crucial for therapeutic and dietary applications[35].

6.1 Regulatory Status

FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration):

Classified as **GRAS (Generally Recognized As Safe)** for use in food and beverages.

Approved coriander seed oil as a **flavoring agent** (21 CFR 182.20).

EFSA (European Food Safety Authority):

Listed as a **safe culinary herb** with no significant toxicity concerns.

WHO (World Health Organization):

Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) for coriander oil: **0–0.1 mg/kg body weight**.

6.2 Toxicity Studies

Acute & Subchronic Toxicity

Animal Studies (Rats/Mice):

LD_{50} (Oral, seed extract): >5,000 mg/kg (indicating **low toxicity**).

No observed adverse effects (NOAEL): Up to 1,000 mg/kg/day for 90 days.

Human Studies:

Safe dose: Up to **3 g/day of seeds** (clinical trials for diabetes).

Genotoxicity & Carcinogenicity

Ames Test (Mutagenicity): Negative (no DNA damage).

Long-term Studies: No evidence of carcinogenicity[36].

6.3 Allergic Reactions & Sensitization

Allergenicity: Rare but documented (IgE-mediated hypersensitivity).

Symptoms:

Oral Allergy Syndrome (OAS): Itching/swelling of lips, tongue.

Contact Dermatitis: Skin rashes (from handling leaves/oil).

Respiratory Reactions: Asthma exacerbation (inhalation of pollen/oil vapors)[37].

Cross-Reactivity:

Mugwort pollen (Artemisia) – Shared allergenic proteins (e.g., **Cor a 1**).

Celery, caraway, fennel (Apiaceae family members).

High-Risk Groups

Individuals with:

Existing pollen/food allergies (especially to Apiaceae).

Dermatitis-prone skin (essential oil may irritate)[38].

6.4 Contraindications & Drug Interactions

Pregnancy & Lactation:

Safe in culinary doses, but **essential oil may stimulate uterine contractions** (avoid high doses).

Drug Interactions:

Hypoglycemic Drugs: May **potentiate blood sugar-lowering effects** (monitor glucose levels)[39].

Anticoagulants (Warfarin): Theoretical risk due to **vitamin K content** in leaves (limited evidence).

Sedatives: Linalool may **enhance CNS depression** (e.g., benzodiazepines).

6.5 Essential Oil Safety

Phototoxicity: None (unlike citrus oils).

Dermal Irritation: Possible at **>1% concentration** (always dilute in carrier oil).

Oral Toxicity (Pure Oil):

Children: Avoid (risk of **neurological symptoms** at >0.1 mL/kg).

Adults: Limit to **1–2 drops/day** in formulations[40].

6.6 Case Reports of Adverse Effects

1. **Allergic Contact Dermatitis** (2018):
   - A chef developed **hand eczema** from prolonged cilantro handling (patch test confirmed allergy).
2. **Anaphylaxis (Rare, 2020):**
   - A patient with **celery allergy** had severe reaction to coriander seeds[41].

Table 8: Recommendations for Safe Use

Application	Safety Guideline
Culinary Use (Fresh/Dried)	No restrictions for most adults.
Therapeutic Doses (Seeds/Extracts)	≤3 g/day (consult physician if diabetic).
Essential Oil (Topical)	Dilute to 0.5–1% in carrier oil.
Essential Oil (Aromatic)	Diffuse ≤30 mins/hour in ventilated space.
Allergy-Prone Individuals	Patch test before use; avoid if Apiaceae-sensitive.

7. Conclusion and Future Perspectives

Coriandrum sativum L. has emerged as a pharmacologically versatile medicinal plant with demonstrated antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antidiabetic, and neuroprotective properties, validating its traditional uses across multiple healing systems. While current research has identified key bioactive compounds like linalool, quercetin, and petroselinic acid, future studies should focus on standardizing extracts, conducting rigorous clinical trials, and developing innovative delivery systems to enhance bioavailability. The plant's excellent safety profile and multitarget therapeutic effects position it as a promising candidate for nutraceutical and pharmaceutical development, particularly for metabolic and neurological disorders. However, more comprehensive human studies are needed to establish optimal dosages and fully elucidate mechanisms of action. As interest grows in plant-based medicines, coriander presents significant opportunities for both therapeutic applications and agricultural innovation, bridging traditional knowledge with modern scientific validation.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no potential conflict of interest concerning the contents, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Author Contributions: All authors have equal contributions in the preparation of the manuscript and compilation.

Source of Support: Nil

Funding: The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The data supporting this paper are available in the cited references.

Ethical approval: Not applicable.

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