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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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TRADITIONAL AND HEALTHY FOOD FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF CARDIAC DISORDERS: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Sedamkar, E. B.

Department of Botany, KLE Society's G .H. College, Haveri- 581110, Karnataka-India

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*Corresponding author: Sedamkar, E. B.

ABSTRACT

Cardiac disorders are among the leading causes of mortality worldwide, driven largely by lifestyle changes and unhealthy dietary patterns. Traditional food systems, developed through centuries of empirical knowledge, emphasize whole grains, plant-based foods, functional spices, fermented products, and healthy fats that collectively support cardio vascular health. This review comprehensively examines traditional and healthy foods beneficial for the prevention and management of cardiac disorders. Nutritional composition, bioactive compounds, mechanisms of cardio protection, and their relevance to modern dietary guidelines are critically discussed. The review highlights the importance of integrating traditional dietary wisdom with contemporary nutritional science to develop sustainable, culturally acceptable, and effective dietary strategies for cardio vascular health.

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INTRODUCTION

Cardiac disorders, including coronary artery disease, hypertension, stroke, and heart failure, represent a major public health challenge globally. Rapid urbanization, sedentary lifestyles, stress, and dietary shifts toward processed foods have significantly increased cardiovascular risk. Diet is a crucial modifiable factor influencing cardiovascular health.

Traditional diets, particularly those followed in Asian and Mediterranean regions, are predominantly plant-based and rich in bioactive compounds. These diets have historically supported longevity and reduced incidence of chronic diseases. Revisiting and scientifically validating traditional food practices is essential for addressing modern cardiovascular health challenges.

Cardiac Disorders: Causes and Dietary Influence

Major Cardiac Disorders

- Coronary artery disease
- Hypertension
- Atherosclerosis

- Myocardial infarction
- Congestive heart failure

Dietary Risk Factors

- High intake of saturated and trans fats
- Excess salt and refined sugars
- Low fiber consumption
- Deficiency of antioxidants and micronutrients

Healthy and traditional diets counteract these risks by improving lipid metabolism, reducing oxidative stress, and maintaining vascular integrity.

Traditional Cereals, Millets, and Whole Grains: Traditional grains form the backbone of cardio protective diets.

Table 1. Traditional Grains and Their Cardiovascular Benefits

Grain/Millet	Key Nutrients	Cardio protective Benefits
Ragi (Eleusine coracana)	Calcium, fiber, polyphenols	Lowers blood pressure, improves lipid profile
Jowar (Sorghum bicolor)	Antioxidants, fiber	Reduces cholesterol
Bajra (Pennisetum glaucum)	Magnesium, iron	Supports heart rhythm
Brown rice	B vitamins, fiber	Improves insulin sensitivity
Oats	Beta-glucan	Reduces LDL cholesterol

Pulses, Legumes, and Plant Proteins: Legumes are vital sources of plant protein and soluble fiber.

Table 2. Pulses and Their Role in Heart Health

Pulse/Legume	Active Components	Health Benefits
Green gram	Polyphenols, fiber	Reduces oxidative stress
Chickpea	Protein, saponins	Lowers cholesterol
Lentils	Folate, potassium	Regulates blood pressure
Black gram	Fiber, minerals	Improves vascular health

Traditional Edible Oils and Healthy Fats

Table 3. Traditional Oils and Cardiovascular Effects

Oil	Fatty Acid Profile	Health Impact
Mustard oil	Omega-3 & MUFA	Reduces inflammation
Groundnut oil	MUFA	Improves lipid profile
Sesame oil	Sesamol, antioxidants	Prevents atherosclerosis
Coconut oil*	Medium-chain fatty acids	Beneficial in moderation

(*Moderate consumption recommended)

Functional Traditional Foods and Spices

Garlic (*Allium sativum*): Reduces blood pressure, cholesterol, and platelet aggregation.

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*): Curcumin exhibits antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, preventing endothelial damage.

Fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*): Lowers cholesterol and improves glucose metabolism.

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*): Improves circulation and prevents clot formation.

Cinnamon, Black Pepper & Coriander: Improve insulin sensitivity and lipid metabolism.

Fruits, Vegetables, and Traditional Greens

Table 4. Cardio protective Fruits and Vegetables

Food	Key Nutrients	Benefits
Amla	Vitamin C, antioxidants	Strengthens blood vessels
Banana	Potassium	Regulates heart rhythm
Spinach	Nitrates, iron	Improves endothelial function
Bitter melon	Phytochemicals	Controls blood sugar
Drumstick leaves	Polyphenols	Reduces inflammation

Fermented and Probiotic Traditional Foods: Fermented foods enhance gut microbiota, which plays a role in lipid metabolism and inflammation.

- Curd and buttermilk
- Idli and dosa
- Fermented millet foods
- Traditional pickles (low salt)

Mechanisms of Cardio protective Action

Figure 1: Mechanisms of Action of Traditional Foods (Description)

Traditional foods protect the heart by:

- Reducing oxidative stress
- Lowering LDL cholesterol
- Enhancing endothelial function
- Regulating blood pressure
- Modulating gut microbiota

Integration with Modern Dietary Guidelines

Traditional diets align with

- WHO dietary recommendations
- DASH diet principles
- Mediterranean diet concepts

Incorporating traditional foods ensures cultural acceptance, affordability, and sustainability.

Future Research and Public Health Implications

- Need for clinical trials on traditional foods
- Promotion through nutrition education
- Inclusion in national dietary policies
- Encouraging millet-based diets

CONCLUSION

Traditional and healthy foods provide a scientifically supported, culturally rooted, and cost-effective strategy for the prevention and management of cardiac disorders. Their regular inclusion in daily diets can significantly reduce cardiovascular risk and improve overall heart health. Integrating traditional dietary practices with modern nutritional science offers a holistic approach to combating the global burden of cardiac diseases.

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