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Exploring the role of "Brahmi" (Bocopa monnieri and Centella asiatica) in brain function and therapy.

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Abstract

It has been envisaged that in this century, disorders of the central nervous system will have a significant bearing on the healthcare concerns of the human population worldwide. Such neurological and psychiatric disorders are generally associated with loss of memory, cognitive deficits, impaired mental function etc. Due to the multi-factorial nature of these diseases, modern medicine based psychoactive drugs have met with limited success. Therefore, there is a growing demand for novel products that could target multiple pathways and improve the mental capabilities either independently or in combination with conventional drugs. In the recent times, herbal products based on traditional knowledge have been increasingly used both in developed and developing countries. According to "Ayurveda", the Indian traditional system of medicine, "medhyarasayanas" represent herbal therapeutics that boost memory, restore cognitive deficits and improve mental function. The current review deals with the components and application of such a traditional herb "Brahmi" that corresponds to two plants, Bacopa monnieri and Centella asiatica. Research evidences clearly indicate that both plants possess neuroprotective properties, have nootropic activity with therapeutic implications for patients with memory loss. The field has witnessed exciting patent activity with most inventions aiming at either (i) improving the methods of herbal extraction or (ii) enrichment and purification of novel compounds from brahmi or (iii) providing novel synergistic formulations for therapeutics in various human ailments. In this review, clinical trials related to the therapeutic properties of brahmi and current patents relevant to the preparation, composition and application have also been included.

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