

Review of: "Is Indian Costus Effective Against the SARS-CoV-2 Virus?"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

When discussing plants, notably medicinal plants, it is important to make sure that the correct species is discussed. Trivial names are rarely helpful here; the same plant will have different names in different languages, e.g. costus in English has different vernacular names in India like, Kut (Gujrati), Kur (Bengali), Postkhai (Kashmiri), Sepuddy (Malayalam), Kot (Punjabi), Kushta (Sanskrit), Kostum (Tamil), Kustam (Telgu).

It is better to use the formal Latin name, but that too has some pitfalls. The plant that is discussed here is formally called *Aucklandia costus* Falc. and is a member of the Asteraceae. The name given in the manuscript, *Saussurea costus*, or more formally: *Saussurea costus* (Falc.) Lipsch. is no longer the accepted name, but a synonym.

As can be deduced from the author abbreviation 'Falc.' the same species was accidentally named twice by the same botanist, i.e. Hugh Falconer (1808-1865).

For current formal names, best check <https://www.worldfloraonline.org/>.

For more detailed information on World Flora Online, please check:

Borsch T et al. (2020) World Flora Online: Placing taxonomists at the heart of a definitive and comprehensive global resource on the world's plants. *Taxon* 69(6): 1311-1341. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/tax.12373>

When discussing the genus, rather than *Sausseria*, it may be better to check other species of *Aucklandia*. But then again, the two genera are closely related thistles.

The roots of the plant are used medicinally, and contain quite a cocktail of ingredients. The manuscript states that *Saussurea* possesses antiviral properties, and cites Saif-Al-Islam, 2020.

However, Mahmoud Saif-Al-Islam did not show that in his paper published in *Sohag Medical Journal* 24(3); 6-17. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21608/smj.2020.31144.1163>; he merely suggested that the plant may have antiviral properties.

The same is asked in this manuscript: Is Indian Costus effective against SARS-CoV-2 virus? Maybe it is, maybe not.

It is hardly worth publishing just a question. Better collate the data that may prove that Indian Costus has antiviral properties. The docking studies, with compounds known to be present in the root extract, are a first small step, but just that.



Please consider what data would constitute real proof that a root extract inhibits virus replication. Then go an collect that data.