

From Garden to Gumline: Medicinal Plants Revitalize Modern Dentistry

Iqbal MA^{1*}, Islam SMS², Subah MT³

AFFILIATION:

- Dr. Md. Ashif Iqbal**
Associate Professor,
Dept. of Periodontology & Oral Pathology,
Update Dental College and Hospital,
Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Prof. Dr. S. M. Shahinul Islam**
Professor of Plant Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Lab,
Institute of Biological Sciences,
University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh
- Myesha Tasnim Subah**
4th Phase BDS,
Update Dental College and Hospital,
Dhaka, Bangladesh

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E-mail: updcj@hotmail.com



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* Corresponding Author

Dr. Md. Ashif Iqbal
Associate Professor,
Dept. of Periodontology & Oral Pathology,
Update Dental College and Hospital,
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Email: drasif100@gmail.com
[DR. MD. ASHIF IQBAL \(0000-0002-9490-7927\) - ORCID](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9490-7927)
Cell: +8801716116080

ABSTRACT:

The editorial "From Garden to Gumline: Medicinal Plants Revitalize Modern Dentistry" discusses the growing use of medicinal plants in dental treatments, notably those for periodontal disease. Traditional medicines such as aloe vera, neem, turmeric, green tea, and propolis have been scientifically proven for their antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and healing capabilities, providing natural alternatives to traditional chemical-based therapies. These plants not only assist to manage gum disease, but they also contribute to overall oral health benefits by minimizing the need for medications and combatting antibiotic resistance. While there are barriers to standardization and additional clinical validation, the editorial emphasizes medicinal plants' potential to become a cornerstone in dental treatment, providing patients with safer, more holistic, and sustainable solutions.

KEY WORDS: Medicinal plants, Periodontal diseases, Phyto dentistry

INTRODUCTION

Over the last several years, there has been a significant trend in healthcare, including dentistry, toward more natural, long-lasting, and patient-friendly treatment alternatives. This rising tendency lends validity to preserving historical therapeutic methods while using contemporary science. One of the most significant trends in this field is the use of medicinal herbs into dental treatment. These natural treatments, which were formerly considered incompatible with standard healing systems, are now being verified by scientific study for their therapeutic advantages in modern dentistry, notably in the treatment of periodontal disease and other oral health issues. The age-old link between plants and health has now made its way into dental clinics, providing potential alternatives to chemical-based therapies.

PERIODONTAL DISEASE: A GLOBAL ORAL HEALTH CHALLENGE

Periodontal disease, also known as gum disease, is a significant global public health issue. It begins as **gingivitis**—inflammation of the gums due to plaque buildup—and can progress to more serious conditions, including the loss of bone and the connective tissues that hold teeth in place. Untreated, periodontal disease can lead to tooth loss and has been associated with other systemic health conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease (1).

Conventional treatments for periodontal disease include **scaling and root planning**, surgical interventions, and antibiotics to reduce infection. However, the overuse of antibiotics has contributed to an alarming rise in antibiotic-resistant bacteria, prompting both dental professionals and patients to seek alternative solutions. Medicinal plants, known for their antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and healing properties, are emerging as valuable adjuncts in dental treatment, offering both efficacy and fewer side effects than their synthetic counterparts.

THE POWER OF MEDICINAL PLANTS IN DENTISTRY

The incorporation of medicinal plants into dental care brings a wide array of benefits. These plants contain bioactive compounds that can fight bacteria, reduce inflammation, and promote healing—all crucial factors in managing gum disease and other oral health issues. Let's take a look at some of the key medicinal plants that are making waves in modern dentistry.

1. Aloe Vera: Nature's Healing Gel

Aloe vera has long been known for its soothing gums & treating mouth ulcers due to its anti-inflammatory & healing effects. But it is also proving to be highly effective in dental applications. Studies show that **aloe vera gel** can reduce gum inflammation, promote healing in

periodontal pockets, and enhance overall oral hygiene (2). The plant's bioactive compounds, including **glucomannan**, stimulate collagen production and expedite tissue repair, making it an excellent adjunct to periodontal treatments.

2. Neem: An Ancient Antimicrobial Solution

Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), a tree native to the Indian subcontinent, has been used for centuries in traditional medicine for its powerful antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory effects. In dental care, neem extracts have been found to inhibit the growth of **Streptococcus mutans** and **Porphyromonas gingivalis**, two key bacterial strains involved in tooth decay and periodontal disease (3). Neem-based mouthwashes and toothpaste are now widely available, offering a natural way to reduce bacterial load and improve oral health.

3. Turmeric: The Golden Healer

Its active compound, curcumin, possesses strong anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antioxidant properties that can help with gum health. These qualities make it highly effective in managing periodontal disease. Curcumin has been shown to reduce gum inflammation, decrease pocket depth in periodontal tissues, and promote faster healing (4). Turmeric gels, mouthwashes, and even turmeric toothpaste are becoming popular as natural alternatives to chemical-based oral care products.

4. Green Tea: Antioxidant Powerhouse

Green tea (*Camellia sinensis*) is another plant with remarkable dental benefits. Rich in **catechins**, particularly **epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG)**, green tea has been shown to reduce the growth of periodontal pathogens and improve overall gum health. Green tea mouthwash has been found to reduce inflammation and bacterial counts in patients with gum disease, making it a valuable addition to periodontal therapy (5).

5. Propolis: The Bee's Contribution to Oral Health

Propolis, a resin-like material produced by bees, which is packed with bioactive compounds that have antibacterial, antifungal, and anti-inflammatory properties. Studies have shown that propolis can reduce dental plaque, promote the healing of periodontal pockets, and prevent infections (6). Propolis extracts are now available in dental care products like mouthwashes and gels, that offering a natural solution to improve oral health.

MECHANISMS OF ACTION: HOW MEDICINAL PLANTS HEAL

Medicinal plants work through multiple mechanisms to benefit oral health, targeting issues like gum disease, tooth decay, bad breath, and oral infections. Their **antimicrobial properties** help control the bacterial infections that lead to gum. For example, neem and green tea inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria in the oral cavity, while turmeric reduces inflammation by modulating the body's immune response (7). These plants also have powerful **anti-inflammatory** effects, reducing the swelling and discomfort that accompany periodontal disease.

Furthermore, medicinal plants like aloe vera and propolis promote **tissue regeneration**, which is pivotal for healing damaged gums and connective tissues. By stimulating fibroblast activity and collagen production, these plants help to restore periodontal health and prevent further damage.

THE FUTURE OF DENTISTRY:

Integrating Nature and Science While the benefits of medicinal plants in dentistry are becoming increasingly obvious, there are still issues that must be addressed. Standardizing the extraction and

concentration of bioactive substances is critical for ensuring consistent effectiveness and safety. Furthermore, larger-scale clinical research are required to confirm the long-term advantages of these plants in dental care. Despite these problems, the future of dental care seems promising with the use of natural therapies. As research into medicinal plants' therapeutic potential continues, their significance in periodontal disease management and oral health promotion is expected to grow, providing safer, more holistic alternatives to synthetic medications.

CONCLUSION

From the garden to the gumline, medicinal plants are revitalizing modern dentistry can emphasize with their ability to fight bacteria, reduce inflammation, and promote healing, these natural remedies offer a powerful complement to traditional dental treatments. As we continue to seek safer and more sustainable ways to care for our teeth and gums, medicinal plants will undoubtedly play a key role in the future of oral health care.

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