

# Persian medicine remedies a new approach for head lice infestation control

Head lice, known as pediculosis, results due to infestation of the skin by blood-sucking lice. Despite advancements in public health, head lice remain a persistent issue with a history spanning over 10,000 years. The global prevalence is estimated at 2% in adult populations. Approximately 7% of boys and 19% of girls of school-age children are affected in Iran. Although anti-lice compounds have proven effective, recurrent infections are frequent in communities.<sup>[1]</sup>

The earliest method of treating lice involved shaving the hair and manually removing the parasites from the scalp and hair using hands or a comb. Dating back to 1600 BC, after that date seed flour, oil, naphthalene, sulfur, and mercury was used for this purpose. Modern treatments include the use of organophosphates, organochlorines, carbamates, and pyrethroids. However, instances of parasite resistance to these drugs have been reported.<sup>[2]</sup>

Recently, there has been a growing interest in treatment approaches rooted in traditional medicine, particularly the use of plants and herbal products globally. Persian medicine (traditional Iranian medicine), with a 4000-year history, offers noteworthy recommendations for addressing lice infestation, prevention, and treatment. Based on the humoral theory, Persian medicine attributes lice infestation to the presence of thick and poor-quality phlegm in the skin. Consequently, modifying the dietary habits of affected individuals is a key component of the treatment program, reducing the risk of disease recurrence.<sup>[3]</sup>

Renowned Iranian physicians, such as Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, Aqili al-'Alavi al-Khurasani al-Shirazi, and Hakim Mohammad Azam Khan, have described herbal remedies against head lice infestation in their respective books.<sup>[4]</sup>

In recent years, numerous clinical trial studies have highlighted the effectiveness of herbal remedies in pediculosis, including Squill Vinegar, *Rhus coriaria* (Sumac) solution, and Peganum Harmala Oil.<sup>[5]</sup>

In light of these considerations, we propose the inclusion of these herbal products and remedies in national protocols for lice treatment and control, tailored to the social culture and accessibility of communities.

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## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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