

Clinical trials of 'Ashwagandha' soon

The trials will be conducted on 2,000 participants in three U.K. cities, says govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Ayush has collaborated with the U.K.'s London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to conduct a study on 'Ashwagandha' for promoting recovery from COVID-19.

A Ministry release said the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Ayush, and the LSHTM recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to conduct clinical trials of 'Ashwagandha' on 2,000 participants in three U.K. cities – Leicester, Birmingham and London (Southall and Wembley).

'Indian winter cherry'

'Ashwagandha' (*Withania somnifera*), commonly known as 'Indian winter cherry', is a traditional Indian herb that boosts energy, reduces stress and makes the immune system stronger. It is an easily accessible, over-the-counter nutritional supplement in the U.K. and has a proven safety profile. The positive effects of 'Ashwagandha' have been observed in long COVID-19,



Research on: 'Ashwagandha' is an easily accessible, over-the-counter nutritional supplement in the U.K.

which is a multi-system disease with no evidence of its effective treatment or management. It added that the successful completion of the trial could be a major breakthrough and could give scientific validity to India's traditional medicinal system.

"While there have been several studies on 'Ashwagandha' to understand its benefits in various ailments, this is the first time the Ministry of Ayush has collaborated with a foreign institution to investigate its efficacy on COVID-19 patients," the Ministry said.

According to AIIA director Tanuja Manoj Nesari, who is also a co-investigator in the

project along with Rajgopalan, coordinator (international projects), the participants have been randomly selected. Sanjay Kinra of the LSHTM is the principal investigator of the study.

"For three months, one group of 1,000 participants will be administered 'Ashwagandha' [AG] tablets, while the second group of 1,000 participants will be assigned a placebo, which is indistinguishable from AG in looks and taste. Both patients and the doctors will be unaware of the group's treatment in a double-blind trial," Dr. Nesari said.

The participants would have to take the 500 mg tablets twice a day. A monthly

follow-up of self-reported quality of life, impairment to activities of daily living, mental and physical health symptoms, supplement use and adverse events would be carried out.

It took over 100 meetings spanning about 16 months through both diplomatic as well as regulatory channels to sign the MoU, Dr. Nesari said. She added that the study had been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and certified by the World Health Organization-Good Manufacturing Practises (WHO-GMP).

Reducing anxiety

Recently, a number of randomised placebo-controlled trials of AG in humans in India had demonstrated its efficacy in reducing anxiety and stress, improving muscle strength and reducing symptoms of fatigue in patients treated for chronic conditions.

"After the trial's success, 'Ashwagandha' will be a proven medicinal treatment to prevent infection and be recognised by the scientific community worldwide," the Ministry noted.