Sir,

Nowadays, there are numerous reports about the bioactivity and pharmacological effects of the plants as well as finding the active phytoconstituents.[1] In diverse countries, there is a great interest to treatment of several illnesses by traditional herbal medicine. This is because of the documented side effects and cost of synthetic drugs and not exactly on the basis of the higher safety or effectiveness of herbal medicine.[2]

Recently, some reports have been published about the clinical evaluation of the efficacy of saffron in mild to moderate depression.[3] The studies reported that saffron was more effective than placebo and at least equivalent to therapeutic doses of Imipramine and Fluoxetine and no significant differences were found in adverse effects in any of the studies. Unfortunately, clinical trial of saffron is restricted to the administration of dried stigma parts of the species *Crocus sativus*. Saffron is the object of frequent adulteration. Furthermore, the certification of the origin and quality of saffron as a medicinal food led to the frequently usages of chemical and molecular techniques.[4]

There has been another important point that saffron is generally not toxic when ingested in culinary amounts but a lethal dose at 20 g and an abortifacient dose at 10 g have been indicated in the literature. Adverse reactions such as rhinoconjunctivitis, bronchial asthma, cutaneous pruritus, and a case report of anaphylaxis have been existed.[5]

Based on the traditional usage of saffron as a spicy plant, a concern about the mentioned studies is the lack of adequate high-quality clinical studies by different group of scientists which is necessity to prove this effectiveness in other nationalities. Another question raised from those studies is how can treat the depressed patients by such an expensive natural medicine? However, *Crocus sativus* is the most expensive cultivated herb in the world and hence, saffron is the high price spice in the world market, which is due to the labor cultivation, harvesting, and handling. For this reason, the researches on this field should be directed to the methods in which higher amount of safranal (as the main effective compound) can be produced by chemical synthesis and/or biotechnological productions. Despite consuming many reports about the various pharmacological activities from this valuable medicinal herb,[6], more well-designed clinical studies are suggested before administration in psychological conditions as well as the physicochemical studies on various populations of this valuable spicy plant to standardize the plant material.[7]

REFERENCES

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Soodabeh Saeidnia

Medicinal Plants Research Center, Faculty of Pharmacy, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.