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Medicinal plants: A potential source of useful plant metabolites to treat neglected protozoan infections

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Diarrhoea associated illness is associated with mortality and morbidity in rural communities in developing countries especially at <5 years of age. Emergence of opportunistic infection in immunocompromised individual has exacerbated the burden of diarrhoea in these countries. Protozoan infections caused by *Cryptosporidium spp, Entamoeba spp. Giardia intestinalis, Blastocystis hominis and Trichomonas vaginalis* have received inadequate attention because data on their prevalence and incidence are scanty. The commonly used drugs to treat infections associated with these organisms are becoming less effective and resistance has been reported. Evidence has shown that natural products from medicinal plants are proving to be alternative and complimentary therapeutic drugs to combat most protozoan infections. Natural products and their bioactive compounds could be the solution to treat protozoan infections that has developed resistance to these drugs which could make them new lead drugs. This review provides comprehensive information on the potential and shortcomings on activities of medicinal plants and its isolated compounds used in treatment of protozoan diseases especially those considered neglected diseases such as *Cryptosporidium* and other protozoans because of inadequate funding and lack of commercial interest in drug developments have made them receive little attention. Isolation and identification of bioactive natural products could be the ultimate panacea to cases metronidazole resistance and discovery of effective and novel drug for Cryptosporidium infection with inadequate treatment option.

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