



Plant- and Nutraceutical-based Approach for the Management of Diabetes and its Neurological Complications: A Narrative Review



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Abstract: Diabetes is an important metabolic disease affecting many organs and systems in the body. The nervous system is one of the body systems affected by diabetes and neuropathic complications are troublesome in diabetic patients with many consequences. As diabetes has deleterious influences almost on bodily systems, an integrative approach seems to be necessary accepting the body as a whole and integrating body systems with lifestyle and living environment. Like some traditional health systems such as Ayurveda, integrative approach includes additional modalities to overcome both diabetes and diabetic complications. In general, these modalities consist of nutraceuticals and plant products. Prebiotics and probiotics are two types of nutraceuticals having active ingredients, such as antioxidants, nutrient factors, microorganisms, *etc.* Many plants are indicated for the cure of diabetes. All of these may be employed in the prevention and in the non-pharmacological management of mild-to-moderate diabetes. Severe diabetes should require appropriate drug selection. Being complementary, prebiotics, probiotics, plants and exercise may be additive for the drug therapy of diabetes. Similarly, there are complementary approaches to prevent and cure neurological and/or behavioral manifestations of diabetes, which may be included in therapy and prevention plans. A scheme is given for the prevention and therapy of comorbid depression, which is one of the most common behavioral complications of diabetes. Within this scheme, the main criterion for the selection of modalities is the severity of diseases, so that personalized management may be developed for diabetic patients using prebiotics and probiotics in their diets, plants and drugs avoiding possible interactions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Life is simply based on homeostasis, which is a precise and complex balance between internal conditions of living organisms and external conditions in the environment. In cells, similar balances are present between the organelles at cellular and molecular levels. In higher organisms, there is also a balance between cells, tissues and physiological systems. Counterpoises within the autonomic nervous system [1, 2], between hormones [3-5], autocooids [6-8], and chemokines [9-11], are long-known examples of balances in molecules to systems. Interacting with each other through many endogenous factors, approximately 37 trillion body cells plus 100 trillion gut microflora cells, altogether participate in physiological tasks of daily life [12, 13]. In terms of etiopathogenesis of diseases, the disturbances in body systems or their tissues are expected to cause a disease. Disturbances in a group of cells involved in specific physiological tasks may cause diseases as in the case of diabetes [14, 15]. Certain diseases like diabetes may affect almost all tissues and systems of the living body [16, 17]. An integrative or holistic approach, which treats the human body as a whole including environmental and preparatory factors, has been gaining importance for rational therapy as well as in biomedical research [18-21]. Starting from psychiatric diseases evolving to personalized medicine [18, 21], the integrative approach has been combined to the microbiota as well as gaining assistance from alternative and complementary medicine [20] to solve today's complex medical problems, as well as to perform biomedical research.

2. THE INTEGRATIVE APPROACH IN MEDICINE

The terms "holistic approach" and "integrative approach" have been introduced independently by Dunbar [18] and Coleman [19]. Crosstalk mechanisms between gut and brain started to establish by the discovery of the presence of gut hormones in the brain as neurotransmitters or neuromodulators [22, 23]. The discovery of the presence of the same peptides both in neurons of the gastrointestinal tract and the central nervous system has led to understand the nature of the brain-gut axis [24-27]. So, neuromodulators and hormones in the gastrointestinal tract seem to be responsible for the modulation of gastrointestinal motility, water-electrolyte transport between lumen and blood circulation and absorption, while neuromodulators within the specific regions of brain are mainly responsible for the regulation of nutritional habits and appetite [28, 29]. After studying gut hormones and neurotransmitters, it has been understood that this axis is also important in terms of blood glucose metabolism and diabetes mellitus. A similar complex regulation also seems to be related to the pathogenesis of depression [30, 31].

An important part of the integrative approach for the neurohumoral regulation of the brain-gut axis is the immune system. It has been long-known that psychological stress causes suppression of the immune system through a corticosteroid-mediated mechanism [32]. Along with cortisol secretion, cytokine (chemokine)-regulation is now well-known to play a central role in the suppression of immune system [33, 34], and consequently, in the etiopathogenesis of a variety of diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease [35], depression [36], diabetes mellitus [37, 38], and even diabetic complications [39-41]. Although the relationship between stress-induced immunosuppression with diabetes seems paradoxical, which has autoimmune aspects, recent scientific evidence has

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Table 1. Variations in microbial numbers and composition across the length of the alimentary tract [42-44].

	Segment of Alimentary Tract	Number of microorganisms	Names of Microorganisms
Proximal	Mouth	10^8	<i>Actinobacteria, Bacteroidetes, Chlamydiae, Chloroflexi, Euryarchaeota, Firmicutes, Fusobacteria, Proteobacteria, Spirochaetes, Synergistetes, Tenericutes</i>
	Eusophagus		
	Stomach	10^1	<i>Lactobacillus, Veillonella, Helicobacter</i>
	Duodenum	10^3	<i>Bacilli, Streptococcaceae, Actinobacteria, Actinomycneae, Corynebacteriaceae</i>
	Jejunum	10^4	
	Ileum	10^7	
Distal	Colon	10^{12}	<i>Lachnospiraeae, Bacteroidates</i>

suggested diminished glucocorticoid and mineralocorticoid responses of stress condition in diabetic patients [37]. There is also a scientific emphasize on the bidirectional pathophysiological link between stress, depression and type 2 diabetes resulting from insulin resistance due to diurnal changes in blood cortisol levels, possibly through immune system mediation [38].

Every part of the gastrointestinal tract, skin and some other parts of the body have abundant amounts of symbiotic microorganisms. Among these, the alimentary tract exhibits an interesting situation: Microbiota in every part of the gastrointestinal tract have symbiotic microorganisms different in number and composition. Ranging from mouth to colon, the diversity and the number of microorganisms tend to increase, except for the mouth, which is an abundant source of symbiotic and saprophytic microorganisms (Table 1). Most probably due to its strong acidic condition, the stomach hosts the smallest number and low diversity of microorganisms.

Irrespective of the composition of the microbiota in the alimentary tract, there are evident physiological tasks for it, providing a positive effect on the host-microbiome symbiosis [42, 43]:

- Upholds a healthy gastrointestinal tract,
- Confers the resistance to colonization of pathogen microorganisms,
- Regulates most systems of the body, esp. nervous system, cardiovascular system,
- Supports host immune defense functions,
- Suppresses the inflammation,
- Provides additional metabolic potential,
- Increases antioxidant and redox capacities,
- Helps the detoxification of xenobiotics and biotransformation.

Almost two millenniums before the pioneering invention of the microscope by a Dutch scientist, Antonie van Leeuwenhoek [45], the importance of intestine has been noticed by Hippocrates stating his famous quotation “death sits in the bowels” and “bad digestion is the root of all evil” in 400 B.C. [42]. There have been more than fifty years from the discovery that it was observed that symbiotic microorganisms in gut microbiota play an important role in the biotransformation of biogenic compounds or xenobiotics to yield their active or inactive (detoxified) forms [46-48]. The microbial transformation of biogenic compounds provides invaluable nutritional factors, vitamins, neurotransmitters, endogenous regulatory factors, etc. [13, 47]. Gut microbiota not only provide microbial transformation of biogenic compounds and xenobiotics but also help build and maintain the immune system of the body. The immunogenic properties of intestinal microflora on gut mucosal epithelium have been found [49-51]. Interesting enough, some of these

microorganisms (some bacteria species) have been reported to exhibit electrochemical activities and produce electricity in the gut, so that these bacteria seem to help in the regulation of spontaneous contractile functions in response to electrophysiological activity provided by Auerbach’s or Meissner’s intestinal plexa [52-54].

Microbiome-gut-brain axis has been used as a more integrated concept in recent biomedical literature [13, 55]. In addition to brain, disturbances in gut microbiota have been reported to be involved in the pathogenesis of a wide range of diseases, such as different infections [56], immunity disorders [57, 58], wound healing [58], atherosclerosis [59], obesity [60], diabetes mellitus [61], anorexia nervosa [62], anxiety, depression, and other similar mood disorders [63, 64] viz. autism spectrum disorder [64-66] and schizophrenia [65, 67, 68]. Therefore, it is necessary to look at diabetes and its neuro-psychiatric complications from a wider perspective treating the nutrition as an integral part of them.

3. NUTRACEUTICAL APPROACH FOR DIABETES AND ITS NEUROLOGICAL COMPLICATIONS

Nutrition is a vital part of our lives, which involves consuming appropriate foods as daily meals. By and large, foods contain various nutritional elements, some active constituents, prebiotics, probiotics, etc. Among these, nutritional elements, such as proteins, carbohydrates, lipids, etc., are necessary for metabolism as an essential part of life, while the consumption profile of these elements themselves may cause some diseases or is a key to prevent them, as in the case of gestational diabetes [69] and other diseases [70]. As integral parts of foods, prebiotics and probiotics are frequently confused definitions.

Prebiotics are in general leafy and non-digestible parts of foods resisting breakdown by gastrointestinal enzymes and absorption from lumen. A vast majority of prebiotics are found naturally in different fruits and vegetables. There are three indispensable criteria for prebiotics: They are 1) non-hydrolysable and absorbable components of foods, 2) provide a selective substrate/medium for symbiotic microorganism in the colon, such as *Bifidobacterium*, and 3) produce beneficial local and/or systemic effects within the host though their fermentation [71, 72]. Beyond these criteria, the appropriate use of probiotics has following helpful effects on health, most of which may also be beneficial against pathophysiological consequences of the gastrointestinal diabetic neuropathy:

- Support the regulation of mineral absorption from gastrointestinal tract,
- Reinforce intestinal microflora and suppress pathogenic microorganisms,
- Protect cellular damage in the intestine,
- Support host immune defense functions,

- Limit energy intake,
- Regulate glucose and lipid metabolisms,
- Improve overall bowel functions.

Increased calcium, magnesium and iron absorptions by the help of prebiotics have been reported in animal experiments [72-74]. Increased absorption of calcium results in bone calcium resorption [72, 73], while increased absorption leads to an improvement in hematological parameters [72, 74]. Prebiotics are also fermented by the microbiota of the intestine enabling selective stimulation of the growth and/or activity of the intestinal microorganisms [75-77]. They usually target the activity of microorganisms like *Lactobacillus*, *Bifidobacterium* and *Bacteroides* [78, 79], which have been reported to be important for the suppression of antibiotic-resistant pathogenic bacteria, such as *Clostridium perfringens* [79]. In the gastrointestinal tracts of experimental animals, prebiotics have been reported to protect cellular damage induced by chemical, such as trinitrobenzenesulfonic acid [72, 80]. Increased immunoglobulin production and secretion along with increased immunoglobulin receptor expressions have been reported in response to prebiotics in the gastrointestinal tract [81, 82]. Several human studies have demonstrated limiting effects of prebiotics on the energy intake due to the sense of satiety and satiation, which may be beneficial for the glycemic control and the prevention of diabetic complications including neuropathy [72, 83, 84]. Both the animal experiments and human studies have stated positive effects of prebiotics on glucose and lipid metabolism, which may also be beneficial for the control of diabetes and its long-term complications. Decreased glycaemia after oral glucose tolerance test, fasting blood glucose concentrations and improvement in the efficacy of antidiabetic drugs have been reported in mice given prebiotics [85]. In clinical studies, peak glucose response and insulin secretion of human subjects have been reported to be lower after consuming prebiotics [86]. In rats, decreased liver triglyceride content and malondialdehyde activity have been observed following the administration of prebiotics [87]. Another clinical report has specified decreases in postprandial triglyceride responses to prebiotics in normolipidemic, obese and hyperlipidemic subjects on high fat diet [72]. Last but not the least, prebiotics improve bowel functions by increasing gastrointestinal transit time in healthy subjects [88] and in patients suffering from constipation [89, 90]. The later effect may also be beneficial for the diabetic patients with gastrointestinal neuropathy, in which delayed gastrointestinal transit has been reported in rats with diabetic gastrointestinal neuropathy [91].

Probiotics are beneficial microorganisms for the life that are naturally created by the process of fermentation in foods. There are many variations in probiotic products and none of them can be substituted for each other. Table 2 summarizes the most common fermented dairy products. Some of these products, such as yogurt *etc.*, exhibit a wide variety depending on locality and historical background [92-100]. It has now been well-documented that regular probiotic intake has a beneficial influence on various diseases, and infections mainly in the gastrointestinal and genitourinary tracts [101]; diseases of respiratory tract, ear, nose and throat [102]; dermatological disorders including eczema, psoriasis, lactational mastitis, acne, reactive skin, UV radiation damage [103]; cardiometabolic disorders including obesity, type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia, cholesterolemia, stroke, gout, non-alcoholic liver diseases, polycystic ovary syndrome [104]; mental and neurological diseases including anxiety, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism, and depression [105, 106].

There are many active compounds in the plant kingdom and in nutraceuticals, which may affect physiological systems of the body and promote health. By preventing and curing, they may help fight against various diseases including diabetes and its complications. Infact, food ingredients of different chemical classes, such as rutin

[107], quercetin [108], polyphenols [109], lycopene [110], α -lipoic acid [111], resveratrol [112], curcumin [113], capsaicin [114], vitamin D [115], folic acid [116] *etc.*, have been found to be effective against different types of diabetic neuropathies. Therefore, all foods/nutraceuticals containing these ingredients have the potential for the management of diabetic neuropathies and glycemic control. Another important issue, which needs to be emphasized here, is the fact that most of these food ingredients are also ingredients of plants effective against diabetic neuropathy.

By the help of exercise, changes in dietary style have been known to delay the onset of diabetes [117]. As in the case of Mediterranean diet, diet itself may prevent type 2 diabetes and improve glycemic control and risks of cardiovascular complications in people with established diabetes [118, 119]. Both experimental and clinical studies have demonstrated that gut microbiota may play an important role in maintaining glycemic control and preventing metabolic diseases like diabetes [61, 120-122]. In addition, nutritional intervention through gastrointestinal microbiome seems likely to help glycemic controls in diabetes [120, 122]. Improvement of gut microbiome may also have beneficial influences on long-term diabetic complications such as gastroenteropathy [123], microvascular and cardiovascular complications [124], retinopathy [125], neuropathy [126], *etc.* Until recently, almost nothing has been known about the mechanism of action of probiotics on the nervous system. However, findings of novel studies have indicated that the retrograde transport of small and large molecules from the intestines to the brain leads to both physiological and pathological consequences, highlighting both beneficial or harmful effects on the nervous system [127-129]. Fig. (1) summarizes mechanisms of the main effects of probiotics in the intestine. Although paracrine and endocrine effects of probiotics on the intestine have been known for quite long, retrograde transport mechanisms have been established recently. However, there are limited information available on the nature of effects produced by probiotic microorganisms having different types of actions in the intestine.

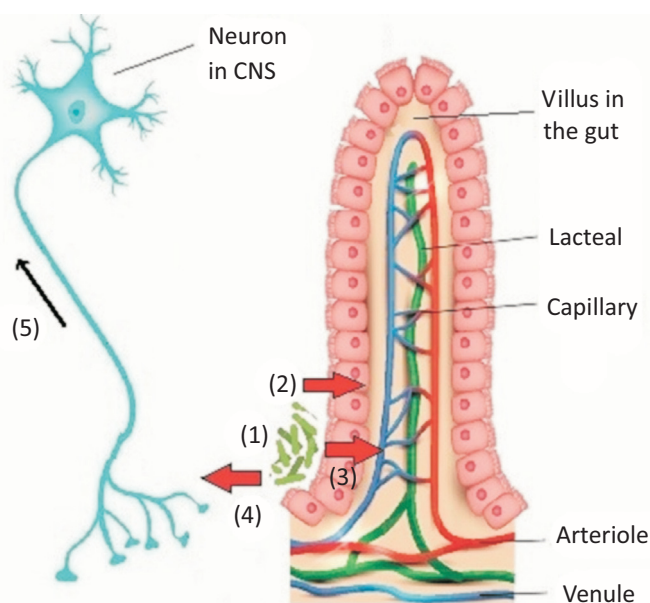


Fig. (1). Schematic representation of the mechanism of action of probiotics in the intestine. (1) Probiotic microorganisms on the villi have direct local effects, (2) Autocrine effects of factors released from probiotics both through muscles and enteric nerves, (3) Endocrine effects of factors released from probiotics after absorption from intestinal capillaries, (4) Effects of the autonomic nerve endings or uptake by them in the intestine, (5) Retrograde transport of factors by the autonomic nerve to the central nervous system. (*A higher resolution / colour version of this figure is available in the electronic copy of the article.*)

Table 2. Some fermented dairy products [92-100].

Name of Probiotic Product	Starting Material	Locality of Origin	Probiotics Involved
Curd	Buffalo's or cow's milk	India	<i>L. lactis</i> subsp. <i>lactis</i> , <i>L. delbrueckii</i> subsp. <i>bulgaricus</i> , <i>L. plantarum</i> , <i>Streptococcus lactis</i> , <i>S.thermophilus</i> , <i>S. cremoris</i>
Yoghurt	Buffalo's or cow's milk	Mesopotamia (5000 B.C.) ¹	<i>L. acidophilus</i> , <i>S. thermophilus</i> <i>L. bulgaricus</i>
Airan (Ayran, Yoghurt drink)	Buffalo's or cow's milk	Bulgaria, Turkey, Central Asia	
Cultured butter milk	Buffalo's or cow's milk	US ²	<i>S. lactis</i> subsp. <i>diacetylactis</i> , <i>S. cremoris</i>
Lassi	Buffalo's or cow's milk	India	<i>L. bulgaricus</i>
Acidophilus milk (Acidophiline)	Cow's milk	Russia	<i>L. acidophilus</i>
Bulgarian butter milk	Cow's milk	Bulgaria	<i>L. delbrueckii</i> subsp. <i>bulgaricus</i>
Shrikhand (Shikhrini)	Buffalo's or cow's milk	India	<i>S. thermophilus</i> , <i>L. bulgaricus</i>
Kumiss (Koumiss, Kumys)	Mare's, camel's or donkey's milk	Central Asia (2000 B.C.)	<i>L. acidophilus</i> , <i>L. bulgaricus</i> , <i>Saccharomyces micrococci</i>
Kefir	Sheep's, cow's, goat's or mixed milk	China/Caucasia	<i>S. lactis</i> , <i>Leuconostoc</i> sp., <i>Saccharomyces kefir</i> , <i>Torula kefir</i> , <i>Micrococci</i>
Leben	Goats, sheep's milk	Iraq	<i>S. lactis</i> , <i>S. thermophilus</i> , <i>L. bulgaricus</i> , Lactose fermenting yeast
Cheese	Cow's, Buffalo's, goat's milk, sheep milk	Ancient Egypt (6000 B.C.)	<i>L. lactis</i> subsp. <i>lactis</i> , <i>L. lactis</i> subsp. <i>cremoris</i> , <i>L.lactis</i> subsp. <i>diacetylactis</i> , <i>S. thermophilus</i> , <i>L.</i> <i>delbrueckii</i> subsp. <i>bulgaricus</i> , <i>Priopionibacterium-</i> <i>shermanii</i> , <i>Penicillium roqueforti</i> etc.
Dahi (A version of Curd)	Cow's, Buffalo's, goat's milk	India (6000-4000 B.C.)	<i>L. lactis</i> , <i>S. diacetylactis</i> , <i>S. cremoris</i> , <i>L. delbrueckii</i> subsp. <i>bulgaricus</i> , <i>S.thermophilus</i> .
Chhash, (Ghol, Moru, Ale, Laban, Buttermilk)	Cow's, Buffalo's, goat's milk	India (6000-4000 B.C.)	(A diluted version of Dahi)
Laban zeer (Khad, Laban rayeb)	Buffalo's or cow's milk	Egypt, Sudan (5000-3000 B.C.)	<i>Lactobacillus</i> (30 different strains), <i>Leuconostoc</i> (18 different strains)
Zabadi	Cow's milk	Egypt, Sudan (2000 B.C.)	Natural type (strained or unstrained) yoghurt
Cultured cream	Buffalo's or cow's milk	Mesopotamia (1300 B.C.)	<i>L. acidophilus</i> , <i>S. thermophilus</i> , <i>L. bulgaricus</i>
Shrikhand	Cow's, Buffalo's, goat's milk	India (1300 B.C.)	Sweetened and concentrated Dahi
Kishk	Cow's milk, goat's milk	Egypt and Arab World	Dry fermented product from labanzeer and parboiled wheat
Mast	Sheep milk	Iran	Natural type of yoghurt with flavor
Viili		Finland	<i>Geotrichumcandidum</i> , <i>L. lactis</i> subsp. <i>cremoris</i> , <i>Lactococcus lactis</i> subsp. <i>lactis</i> biovar. <i>diacetylactis</i> , <i>Leuconostoc mesenteroides</i> subsp. <i>cremoris</i> .

(Table 2) Contd....

Name of Probiotic Product	Starting Material	Locality of Origin	Probiotics Involved
Taette	Cow's milk	Norway	<i>S.lactis</i> var. <i>hollandicus</i> , <i>Saccharomyces taette</i> , <i>L.taette</i> , <i>Bacillus acidactislogus</i>
Lagfil (Tattemjolk)	Cow's milk	Sweden	-
Ymer	Cow's milk	Denmark (1937 A.D.)	<i>Lactococcus lactis</i>
Skyr	Cow's milk	Iceland (870 A.D.)	<i>Streptococcus thermophilus</i> , <i>L. delbrueckii</i> subsp. <i>bulgaricus</i>
Trahana (Tarana, Tarhana)	Cow's milk + grain	Balkan region	<i>Pediococcus acidilactici</i> , <i>P. pentosaceus</i> , <i>Streptococcus thermophilus</i> , <i>L. fermentum</i> , <i>L. plantarum</i> , <i>L. delbrueckii</i> spp. <i>bulgaricus</i> , <i>L. paraplantarum</i> , <i>L. casei</i> , <i>Leuconostoc citreum</i> , <i>Leuconostoc pseudomesenteroides</i> , <i>Enterococcus faecium</i> , <i>Weissella cibaria</i> .
Yakult	Buffalo's or cow's skimmed milk	Japan (1935 A.D.)	<i>Lactobacillus paracasei</i>

¹ Although the term "yoghurt" has been derived from Turkish "yoğurt", the exact origin and inventors have not been known. It has been defined in many old inscriptions of different ancient cultures. ² First commercial production has been made in 1920.

Table 3. Plants and nutraceuticals indicated for the treatment of diabetes [136-138].

Plant Name	Plant Scientific Name	Parts Used	Effect	Side Effects	Contraindications	Interactions
Alfalfa	<i>Medicago sativa</i>	Whole-plant, seeds	Decreases lipid absorption, lowers blood glucose (STZ)	Hypokalemia	Gout, Systemic lupus Pregnancy	Azathioprine Cyclosporine Prednisone Anticoagulants
Alpine Ragwort	<i>Senecio nemorensis</i>	Herb	Lowers blood glucose	Hepatotoxicity Carcinogenicity	Not known	Not known
Bean Pod	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	Pods and beans; also used as Food	Diuretic, Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Not known
Behen	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	Seeds	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Pregnancy (possibly abortive)	Not known
Bilberry	<i>Vaccinium mytilus</i>	Fruits and leaves; also used as food	Lowers blood glucose and regulates lipids; protects some diabetic complications	Longer use at higher amounts causes gastrointestinal complaints	Pregnancy and lactation	Anticoagulants, anti-thrombotics
Bitter melon	<i>Momordica charantia</i>	Fruits; also used as food	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Pregnancy (possibly abortive) and lactation	Antidiabetic drugs possibly potentiate cholesterol-lowering drugs

(Table 3) Contd....

Plant Name	Plant Scientific Name	Parts Used	Effect	Side Effects	Contraindications	Interactions
Black Catnip	<i>Phyllanthus amarus</i>	Whole Herb	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Not known
Centauray	<i>Centaurium erythraea</i>	Aerial parts	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Not known
Cocoa	<i>Theobroma cocoa</i>	Seeds and seeds' skin; also used as food	Lowers blood glucose	Uses at large amounts may cause constipation, cns stimulation, palpitation etc.	Not known	Not known
Cranberry	<i>Vaccinium macrocarpon</i>	Fruits; also used as food	Lowers blood glucose	Uses at large amounts may cause gastrointestinal complaints	Aspirin allergy, atrophic gastritis, hypochlorhydria, kidney stones, safety in pregnancy is not known	Warfarin, H2 receptor blockers, proton pump inhibitors
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Roots and leaves	Lowers blood glucose, increases bile secretion	Mild gastric complaints, prolonged use may cause hyperkalemia	Bile duct obstruction, safety in pregnancy is not known	Anticoagulants, anti-thrombotics, fluoroquinolones
Divi-Divi	<i>Caesalpinia bonducella</i>	Seeds	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Not known
Eucalyptus	<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i>	Essential oil	Lowers blood glucose	Gastrointestinal complaints, skin rushes, pruritis	Hypersensitivity conditions, Liver diseases; safety in pregnancy is not known	Antidiabetic drugs, Barbiturates
European Golden Rod	<i>Solidago virgaurea</i>	Aerial parts	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Cases of edema due to cardiac and/or renal functions; safety in pregnancy is not known	Not known
Garlic	<i>Allium sativum</i>	Bulb; also used as food	Lowers blood glucose	Anaphylaxis, gastric complaints, headache, myalgia, etc.	Surgery (increases bleeding risk), breastfeeding	Anticoagulants, Protease inhibitors, Antithrombotics, Indomethacin, Chlorzoxazone
German Sarsaparilla	<i>Carex arenaria</i>	Dried rhizomes	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Not known
Goat's Rue	<i>Galega officinalis</i>	Leaves, flowering branches	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known, possibly safe during lactation	Antidiabetic drugs
Greek Sage	<i>Salvia triloba</i>	Leaf	Reduces glucose absorption	Not known	Not known	Not known
Guar Gum	<i>Cyamopsis tetragonoloba</i>	Whole plant	Reduces glucose absorption	Gastrointestinal complaints, hypoglycemia symptoms	Diseases of esophagus, stomach and intestine	Not known

(Table 3) Contd....

Plant Name	Plant Scientific Name	Parts Used	Effect	Side Effects	Contraindications	Interactions
Jambol	<i>Syzigium cumini</i>	Bark, seed kernels	Regulates pancreatic functions	Not known	Not known	Not known
Kudzu	<i>Pueraria lobata</i>	Roots	Corrects insulin resistance, blood lipid profile, lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Possibly interacts with estrogens, antiarrhythmics, antihypertensive drugs
Mountain Ash Berry	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Fruits; also used as food	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Not known
Noni	<i>Morinda citrifolia</i>	Leaf, fruit, root; also used as foot	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Not known
Oats	<i>Avena sativa</i>	Fruits, leaf, stem	Regulates blood glucose and lipid profile	Not known	Celiac disease	Statins
Onion	<i>Allium cepa</i>	Bulb	Regulates blood glucose and lipid profile	Gastric complaints	Not known	Not known
Plantain	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i>	Fruits	Regulates blood glucose and lipid profile	May trigger migraine attacks	Not known	Not known
Poley	<i>Teucrium polium</i>	Whole herb	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Not known
Reed Herb	<i>Phragmites communis</i>	Stem and rhizome	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Not known
Stevia	<i>Stevia rebaudiana</i>	Leaves	Increase glucose metabolism rate	Adverse CV and genito-urinary effects reported	Not known	Not known
Wild Service Tree	<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>	Fruits; also used as food	Lowers blood glucose	Not known	Not known	Not known

4. PLANT-BASED APPROACH FOR DIABETES AND ITS NEUROLOGICAL COMPLICATIONS

Being approved in 1958 for diabetes therapy, metformin, the today's miraculous antidiabetic drug, has been produced from *Galega officinalis*, whose antidiabetic properties have been known since the 18th century [130]. After this innovation, many investigators around the globe have investigated many plants to develop novel modalities for the treatment of diabetes [131-135]. Unfortunately, except for metformin, there are no active constituents of plants developed as a drug up to date, despite extensive research in this area. Some of these plants have been approved for the treatment of diabetes as a therapeutic indication (Table 3). Generally, they have been used as over-the-counter drugs for the management

of mild diabetes or as an adjunct for the dietary management of diabetes.

Many plants have been reported to be effective against diabetic neuropathy. Among these plants, *Trichilia catigua* [139], *Boswellia serrata* [140], *Ligustrum vulgare* [141], *Rosmarinus officinalis* [142], *Eruca sativa* [143], *Juglans regia* [144], and *Dillenia indica* [145] are quite recent examples reported to ameliorate diabetic neuropathy in experimental models of diabetes.

There are several plants and plant mixtures, which have been reported to be effective against diabetic wounds, which is a complex phenomenon of diabetes involving vasculopathy, neuropathy and delayed wound repair due to deformed collagen production [146]. Among these plants, *Hypericum perforatum* (St.-John's

Wort), as a long-known cure for wounds, has been reported to accelerate wound healing in diabetes [147], possibly through a mechanism depending on collagen production of fibroblasts [148, 149]. The same plant has also been reported to correct some psycho-neuropathic complications, while it normalizes elevated blood glucose levels in experimental diabetes. *H. perforatum* ameliorates pain perceptions in streptozotocin-diabetic rats [150]. As *H. perforatum* decreases blood glucose levels, it may be advantageous to use in patients with diabetic neuropathy and/or psychiatric complications [151].

The Plant kingdom has many active compounds in different chemical classes affecting both diabetes and diabetic complications. One of the most important groups in this context is antioxidants and antiradicals. Both nutraceuticals [152, 153] and plants [154, 155] may have active molecules having antioxidant and antiradical activities, which are helpful in correcting either impaired carbohydrate metabolism in diabetes or diabetic complications, since oxidative stress seems to play a role in the pathogenesis of diabetes [16, 156, 157] and in the development of diabetic complications including neuropathy [158-160]. These molecules may protect tissues from damages, which are due to diabetes or other factors. In diabetes, these damages usually result in diabetic complications. For example, phenolic compounds, a class of antioxidant molecules, have been reported to reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases [161, 162]. They are quite common in plant species and foods, like *Thymus* sp. [163], *Achillea* sp. [164] Pomegranate [165], *Crataegus* sp. [166], *Anethum graveolens* [167] and *Hypericum* sp. [168].

Neuroprotection and neuroplasticity are important restorative factors in neuronal damages such as diabetic neuropathy [169]. There are good examples for neuroprotective compounds and extracts both from nutraceuticals and plants, which may consequently induce neuroprotection. For instance, isofuranodiene, an active ingredient of wild celery (*Smyrniololus atrum*), has been reported to induce neurite growth of PC-12 cells as a clear evidence of for the neuroprotection and neuroplasticity [170]. Similarly, curcumin and epigallocatechin gallate have also been observed to exhibit neuroprotection by stimulating neurite growth and they have an additive interaction in terms of this action [171]. Among these two nutritional constituents, curcumin has been repeatedly reported to possess antidiabetic/antihyperglycemic activities [172, 173] and beneficial effects on comorbid neurological manifestations of diabetes [174-176]. Epigallocatechin gallate is another phytonutritional constituent having a beneficial effect on diabetes [177, 178] and neurological comorbidities of diabetes [179, 180]. From previous reports, it seems to have beneficial effects on various psycho-neurological manifestations, such as Alzheimer's disease [181], schizophrenia and bipolar disorders [182], various types of memory and cognitive deficits [183], etc. Other compounds from this group, gallic acid has been reported to correct diabetic neuropathy [184] in animal models. Another example of neuroprotection is the neurite growth of the same cells induced by the extract of gentian (*Gentiana lutea*) [185, 186], whose beneficial effects on neurological functions have been reported previously in animal experiments [187]. Its effect on diabetic neuropathy may be expected based on a study reporting its inhibitory action on aldose reductase [188]. There are certain plants and nutraceuticals, which have been reported to inhibit key enzymes involved in the development of diabetic complications including neuropathic pain. These are aldose reductase inhibitors from plants such as *Acacia catechu*, *Alangium salvifolium*, *Allium sativum*, *Carum carvi*, *Gentiana lutea*, and advanced glycation end products (AGEs) inhibiting plants, such as *Agrimonia eupatoria* [188, 189]. Also, there are also well-known examples of topical management of neuropathic pain, which include capsaicin containing extracts and *Citrullus colocynthis* extract oil [190]. All these plants and nutraceuticals may be utilized for the proper management of diabetic neuropathy.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above-mentioned findings and data, it may be concluded mainly that new strategies should be followed in the management of diabetes and comorbid neurological manifestations. Nutritional factors being related to the microbiota of the body seem to be related to both controls of diabetes and its neurological complications in high degrees. Recent findings along with the notions of traditional medicine systems have indicated that the integrative approach [19] is quite important for disease management and the body should be considered as a whole in terms of the management of diabetes and its neurological comorbidities. Due to the severity of clinical situations of diabetic neuropathic pain, plants and drugs may be analgesic ones, respectively. It should be noted that appropriate nutritional interventions are indicated in every case. Exercise should also be applied as non-pharmacological interventions when indicated.

Glycated hemoglobin (HbA_{1c}) is an important parameter of long-term glycemic control and elevated HbA_{1c} levels are a clear indicator of the risk of diabetic complications including diabetic neuropathy [191]. Plant and/or nutraceutical-based approaches seem to be effective for the maintenance of HbA_{1c} levels at lower levels [192], so that prevention of diabetic neuropathy may become possible. Another important issue is the differences between prevention and therapy of diabetes/diabetic complications. The main difference between prevention and therapy is the presence of an appropriate drug. The critical point is to avoid the interaction of a drug with other components of intervention. Neuroprotection through enhanced neuroplasticity seems to have importance for the management of neurological complications of diabetes, as it may restore neuronal damages, and consequently increase the quality of life in diabetic patients. In conclusion, both prevention and therapy in diabetes/its neuropathic complications seem to need novel approaches, which should include appropriate and convenient complimentary materials. Well organized research is necessary in the future to enhance the success of the prevention and treatment of diabetes and diabetic neuropathy.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

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