Therapeutic Values of Fishes

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Man has been using fish right from time immemorial as a source of food. It has been proved that fish meat is the richest of all sources of animal proteins contributing 13-20% of its total body weight as proteins. For a world faced with population explosion, fish may well emerge as mankind's continuous source of food in the future. As a distinct indication of the trend, fisheries activities increased enormously to keep pace with the growing demand for fish. An emerging development, in this background, is that fish is now gaining in popularity for its wide range of therapeutic applications on humans.

Fish offers many remedial products for human disorders. Insulin from the fish pancreas is used for the control of diabetes. Fish liver oil is rich in vitamin-A, which is beneficial for eye disorders and general disability. Fish is rich in omega-3-polyunsaturated fatty acids which check excess of cholesterol. This prevents strokes by blood vessel blockage. Oil sardine, Indian Salmon and Hilsa are supposed to be some of the richest sources of omega-3-polyunsaturated fatty acids. Marine fishes have higher levels of essential fatty acids compared to freshwater fishes. Fish protein is also rich in methionine, which is considered as building block of protein. Air breathing fishes such as Magur and Kuchua are specially prescribed for anaemic patients. Smokers who eat plenty of fish may lower the risk of chronic lung diseases because fish oil inhibits the inflammatory response caused by excessive smoking. Fish eaters are likely to suffer less from emphysema bronchitis. Studies have shown that the brain contains Docosahexanoic acid and Eicosapentaenoic acid and a deficiency of these two leads to depression and suicidal tendencies. Fish oil contains these two substances and is therefore good for treating depression. Fish oil helps to cure schizophrenia, Alzheimer's disease and to an extent alcoholism.

Sharks have an extraordinary immune system, and this aspect may hold the key for future wonder drugs to fight various diseases effecting human beings. It is observed that a harpoon wound on a shark heals in less than a week. Sharks appear to be virtually immune to viral and fungal infections. Shark liver oil is used to provide vitamin-A to human body, which can be used as a curative for eye disorders and for general disability. Shark liver oil is also used to prepare a wide range of pharmaceutical products. Extracts from shark cartilage have been combined with silicon to produce a tough layer of artificial skin for burn victims. Ulcers generally do not affect shark and this may hold the answer for the use of shark cartilage as an effective treatment against cancer. Some researchers have found a steroid like substance in the liver of spiny dogfish shark, which acts against intestinal parasites, bacteria and virus. Gall bladder extracts show promise in ache treatment. The promising treatment would also be applicable to cure diseases associated with the immune system.

It has been observed that fish and fish byproducts offer a wide range of therapeutic values. This ability could be availed of with a greater focus but this needs proper further research and development.