

Moringa oleifera, or the horseradish tree, is a pan-tropical species that is known by such regional names as benzolive, drumstick tree, kelor, marango, mlonge, mulangay, nébéday, saijhan, and sajna. Over the past two decades, many reports have appeared in mainstream scientific journals describing its nutritional and medicinal properties. Its utility as a non-food product has also been extensively described, but will not be discussed herein, (e.g. lumber, charcoal, fencing, water clarification, lubricating oil). As with many reports of the nutritional or medicinal value of a natural product, there are an alarming number of purveyors of “healthful” food who are now promoting *M. oleifera* as a panacea. While much of this recent enthusiasm indeed appears to be justified, it is critical to separate rigorous scientific evidence from anecdote. Those who charge a premium for products containing *Moringa* spp. must be held to a high standard. Those who promote the cultivation and use of *Moringa* spp. in regions where hope is in short supply must be provided with the best available evidence, so as not to raise false hopes and to encourage the most fruitful use of scarce research capital. It is the purpose of this series of brief reviews to: (a) critically evaluate the published scientific evidence on *M. oleifera*, (b) highlight claims from the traditional and tribal medicinal lore and from non-peer reviewed sources that would benefit from further, rigorous scientific evaluation, and (c) suggest directions for future clinical research that could be carried out by local investigators in developing regions.

This is the first of four planned papers on the nutritional, therapeutic, and prophylactic properties of *Moringa oleifera*. In this introductory paper, the scientific evidence for health effects are summarized in tabular format, and the strength of evidence is discussed in very general terms. A second paper will address a select few uses of *Moringa* in greater detail than they can be dealt with in the context of this paper. A third paper will probe the phytochemical components of *Moringa* in more depth. A fourth paper will lay out a number of suggested research projects that can be initiated at a very small scale and with very limited resources, in geographic regions which are suitable for *Moringa* cultivation and utilization. In advance of this

fourth paper in the series, the author solicits suggestions and will gladly acknowledge contributions that are incorporated into the final manuscript. It is the intent and hope of the journal's editors that such a network of small-scale, locally executed investigations might be successfully woven into a greater fabric which will have enhanced scientific power over similar small studies conducted and reported in isolation. Such an approach will have the added benefit that statistically sound planning, peer review, and multi-center coordination brings to a scientific investigation.

The following paper is intended to be useful for both scientific and lay audiences. Since various terms used herein are likely not familiar to the lay reader, nor are many of the references readily available to either scientific or lay audiences, we encourage active on-line dialog between readers and both the author and the journal staff. Both will attempt to answer questions and to direct readers to the experts in an open and public manner.

 [Moringa oleifera: A Review of the Medical Evidence for Its Nutritional, Therapeutic, and Prophylacti \(440.85 kB \)](#)