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## Prophetic Medicine: An Analysis of The Islamic Legal Law and the Scientific Wisdom Behind Drinking Camel's Urine

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### Abstract

The approach of Muslims in responding to and adopting Tibb al-Nabawi or Prophetic Medicine is varied. Various reactions or approaches emerged from both the public and Muslim scholars in responding to the concept of practicing Tibb al-Nabawi, especially on some controversial issues such as flies wing and camel's urine. Therefore, this study was conducted to clarify the exact way or approach to interact with Tibb al-Nabawi in this modern age. To this end, the issue of drinking camel's urine was specifically selected as a case study to provide guidance on drinking camel's urine for Muslims. This study used content analysis on the hadiths related to camel's urine, the books of fiqh and the scientific studies done by scientists particularly on the medical benefits of camel's urine. This study concludes that camel's urine has healing elements for some diseases that exist today. Although the scientific studies of camel's urine are few, still in its early stages, and there is still much work to be done, it has so far been acknowledged by scientists that it can be used as a method of treating diseases. However, for clinical practices it still requires more advanced and detailed scientific studies. Therefore, the practice should be referred to a physician first. As for its practice in terms of the Islamic Law, it can only be used in emergencies (darurat), as it is a substance categorised as filth (najis).

**Keywords:** Tibb Al-Nabawi, Prophetic Medicine Camel's Urine, Islam And Science, Scientific Wisdom.

### Introduction

Today, there are some Muslims who adopt a literal approach in dealing with Prophetic Medicine and Prophetic Food or Dietary. They practiced all hadiths dealing with Prophetic Medicine and Prophetic Food at face value. What is meant by Prophetic Food is referring to foods which were eaten and recommended by the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) such as honey, dates, black seed, raisins, olives, figs and many others. Meanwhile, Prophetic Medicine suggests a prescription or medical recommendation by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in treating diseases or illnesses. Some Muslims insist that the Prophetic Food is sufficient to be consumed naturally as it is

clearly mentioned in the Quran and the Hadiths. According to them, whatever is said by Allah and the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) must be true and cannot contain any error.

At the same time, they neglect modern science and believe that it is a Jewish agenda or a conspiracy to corrupt and exterminate Muslims and hence, modern medicine is a product of unbelievers that should not be accepted. Also, conventional medicine is said to contain chemicals that should not be absorbed into the human body as it will damage it. Further, these groups of Muslims also form a distorted view and reject modern medical science and sciences in general, hence they are called anti-vaccine, flat-earth and so on.

This attitude and approach is practiced without any solid foundation of knowledge. While Islam requires its believers to hold fast to the facts and data proven through a systematic, certified and convincing methods of research, Muslims are urged to obtain knowledge based on convincing proofs and not just a mere conjecture. Likewise, emotionally practicing the Prophetic medicine or diet and ignoring any scientific studies is not approved by Islam. All of these are the crisis of thought that has plagued Muslims today as mentioned by al-Qaraḍawi (1995), particularly in understanding and dealing with how to interact with the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH).

From another perspective, the issue of camel's urine is also important to be discussed because it always leads to misunderstandings of non-Muslims towards the Shariah. According to observations, there are people who often defame Islam because of the issue of camel's urine. They turn this issue into a weapon to attack Islam by stating that Islam is an ancient, unscientific, disgusting religion, and add many more insults. Whereas the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also mentioned the medicinal properties of camel's milk in the hadith concerned. Today, many scientific studies acknowledge the benefits and medical benefits in camel's milk on human health and the fact that it is better than cow's milk, but they did not highlight this feature.

Therefore, a study on the positive aspects on health from the practice of drinking camel's urine from a scientific point of view is required. This needs to be done to show that what the Prophet (PBUH) said is the truth, has scientific weightage, and is not just a product of Arabic culture from ancient times. At the same time, the practice of drinking camel's urine can be linked to the wisdom intended in its recommendation, namely maintaining health and treating diseases, a feature which is especially important to Islam that is the preservation of life.

The relevance of the issue of camel's urine with the true way to practice the Prophetic Medicine in modern times is that it requires a scientific study to determine its effectiveness. Thus, it can be summarized that the practice of most of the Prophetic Medicine is subjected to its benefits or *maṣlahah* and the realization of its healing and medicinal properties in treating a disease or illness. It should not be understood literally and continued to be practiced without prior scientific research to determine its medical value.

### **Camel's Urine From The Islamic Law Point of View**

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) had advised to drink camel's urine as a cure for diseases. This statement is based on a hadith recorded by Bukhari and Muslim. Anas bin Malik RA said:

بِمَا يُعَلِّمُهُمْ وَيُكَلِّمُهُمْ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ فَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ  
بِمَا يُعَلِّمُهُمْ وَيُكَلِّمُهُمْ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ فَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ  
وَأَنزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُرًا فَاذْكُرُونِهَا يَذْكُرُونَ  
فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدَ الظُّلُمَاتِ أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ لَكَ نُجُومًا نُّجُومًا  
وَأَنزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُرًا فَاذْكُرُونِهَا يَذْكُرُونَ

Translation: Anas said, “Some people of ‘Ukal or ‘Urayna tribe came to Medina and its climate did not suit them. So, the Prophet (PBUH) ordered them to go to the herd of (Milch) camels and to drink their milk and urine (as a medicine). So, they went as directed and after they became healthy, they killed the shepherd of the Prophet and drove away all the camels. The news reached the Prophet (PBUH) early in the morning and he sent (men) in their pursuit and they were captured and brought at noon. He then ordered to cut their hands and feet (and it was done), and their eyes were branded with heated pieces of iron, they were put in al-Ḥarrah and when they asked for water, no water was given to them.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1:56; Muslim, 3: 1296).

There is a disagreement among the Islamic scholars about the status of camel's urine as to whether it is unclean/filthy (*najis*) or not. According to Wahbah al-Zuhayli (2008), there are categories of najis that all fuqaha unanimously agree that it is najis like pork, carcass, blood and others, and there are categories of dispute such as the camel's urine. The Maliki and Hanbali schools of jurisprudence hold that the urine of the animals which its meat is permissible to be consumed is considered to be clean and not najis. Their argument supports the hadith to drink camel's urine as mentioned above. The proposition is that if the camel's urine is filthy, then the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) would never have asked them to use camel's urine for treating illnesses as it is not allowed to treat illnesses with filthy substances in Islam (Ibn Taimiyyah, 1995):

إِنَّمَا نَهَى عَنْ شَيْءٍ نَجِسٍ أَوْ فَجِئٍ

Translation: “The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) forbade from cures that are unclean or filthy.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1:56 & Abu Daud, 4: 7).

Also, the Prophet (PBUH) did not tell them to wash their mouths or clothes after drinking it. This showed that camel's urine is not filthy. In addition, they also argued using another hadith indicating the permission of doing prayer in the sheepfold:

بِمَا يُعَلِّمُهُمْ وَيُكَلِّمُهُمْ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ فَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

Translation: “From Anas RA, he said, “Prior to the construction of the mosque, the Prophet PBUH) offered the prayers at sheep-folds.” (Narrated by Bukhari, 1:93).

From the standpoint of ratiocination (reasoning of Islamic law), the urination of an animal that is permissible to be eaten, is permissible and not filthy. Likewise, if the flesh of the animal is makruh (detestable) to be eaten, then its urine is also makruh. The same goes to animals that eat and drink





The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) ordered to pour water onto the urine which also showed that the urine is *najis*. In addition, in the Quran, Allah SWT forbids something which is disgusting and dirty (*khaba'ith*), and urine is considered dirty and disgusting by human nature. Furthermore, forbidding something that is disgusting means that it is categorized as *najis* by Shariah (al-Kasani, 2004). This is the application of *qiyas*.

Ibn Rusydi (2004) explained that the differences in opinion on this issue refer to the differences in assessing the status of human and animal waste. Islamic scholars who equate the status of human and animal waste have evaluated and considered that any kind of waste is *najis*; while for scholars who distinguish between human and animal waste will look at the proofs from different angles and find reasons for its permissibility, which is the status of the residual of an animal is in accordance with the status of its meat and flesh.

### **Camel's Urine as a Disease Treatment Method**

The lesson learned from the above discussion is that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) allowed the use of camel's urine to be consumed for medical purposes. This indicates that in the urine of the camel there is a medicinal element or substance that can cure diseases. Ibn al-Qayyim (1994) has quoted Ibn Sina who said, "and the most beneficial urine is *A'rabi* camel's urine (one hump camels which is used to transport the goods) and *Najib* (a powerful and fast running camel)." The method of treating and curing diseases with camel's urine has been practiced since ancient times and has also been recognized by Muslim medical doctors in the past (Ibn al-Azraq, n.d.). The majority of Arabs today also do drink camel's milk mixed with its urine and a bottle of camel's urine is even more expensive than a bottle of camel's milk.

However, in order to apply camel's urine as a disease treatment method in this modern age, it requires extensive scientific research to ensure that it truly has an effective healing effect. This is because the Prophet's recommendation and suggestion in terms of medical field, especially which is prescriptive or curative in nature, cannot be practiced and applied in modern times directly as there are many factors or elements that influence a healing outcome.

These elements differentiate one healing effect from another, from individual to individual, and so on. Among these elements are different places, changing times, individual conditions, different diet and lifestyle, different types of diseases, treatment methods and procedures and many others. Therefore, the use of camel's urine for medical purposes must be investigated and understood through scientific research before it can be applied as one of the methods of treatment and curing disease.

This is not intended to deny what the Prophet (PBUH) has said. In fact, Muslims need to recognize that whatever the Prophet (PBUH) says is a revelation. Therefore, Ibn Khaldun's (2002) view that Prophetic Medicine is a product of Arabic culture at the time of the Prophet (PBUH) is inaccurate and impractical. It can give the Prophet (PBUH) a negative image as a Prophet to the Muslims. However, from the point of view of medicine and its relevance to the preservation of life, which is emphasized by the Shariah itself, the question is whether or not the Prophetic Medicine can be practiced in modern times directly or absolutely?

If the diagnosis of a disease or an illness and all the conditions and circumstances that surrounded the atmosphere at the time of the Prophet (PBUH) were exactly the same today, then there is no problem to apply it. However, in most cases it is not the same. Changes in the pathology of the disease, the genetics of the patients, genetics of the plant used for the treatment, the change in the weather and climate are among other factors that may make a recommendation or treatment by the Prophet (PBUH) no longer appropriate in the medical and health conditions in modern times. Indiscriminate use of the remedies could be similar to using the right drug for the wrong disease or vice versa (Kasule, 2006).

In addition, differences in language and linguistics used in the early Prophet's time may have occurred. What was meant by a fever in the past may be understood differently in this age. It is possible that the plants mentioned in the hadith are not the same plants understood today. Therefore, in such circumstances, the medicine of the Prophet (PBUH) can be considered as the basis for guiding and encouraging scientific research to find treatments that fit the modern age (Kasule, 2006).

Thus, Kasule (2006) suggests that Prophetic Medicine needs to be classified or understood as an Islamic law that accept changes due to factors of differences in time, place, circumstances and the development of knowledge. Likewise, Yusuf al-Qaradawi (2002) stated that the hadiths pertaining the Prophetic Medicine should be understood in the context of means (*wasilah*) and not the objectives, main goals, or ends (*maqasid*). The Law of Means, in fact, is dependent on its objective. In this case, the objective is the preservation of health and human life. Thus, this category of Islamic Law can change according to the change or development of knowledge to achieve that objective (*maqasid*).

Prophetic Medicine and Prophetic Food or Diet also fall within the scope of the Prophet's suggestions to cure illnesses and preserve good health though it is not the only way to do so. The scope of Prophetic Medicine should not be made as the only solution to all health, medical problems or diseases that arise. In this context, Muslims are not bound to strictly practice it (Serdar Demirel & Saad Eldin Mansour, 2011). In fact, Islam as a rational religion and promotes rationality urges its believers to practice Islam by relying on concrete knowledge and solid foundations such as by doing scientific research first-hand and not based any solutions merely on feelings or solely on emotions.

In the issue of camel's urine specifically, all of the hadiths pertaining to it never mentioned the type of illness that the people of 'Uraynah suffered from, which is to be treated using the said camel's urine. In terms of treatment, the type of disease needs to be determined first before a proper treatment can be given to a patient. In this regard, medieval Muslim doctors such as Ibn al-Azraq (n.d.) and Ibn al-Qayyim (1994) believed that the disease referred to in the hadith was a kind of dropsy or *istisqa'* (accumulation of water in the body which causes abdominal pain). This is based on *tajribah* (experiment/experience) performed by medieval Muslim doctors in medical science.

On the other hand, al-Nusaimi (1984), as a contemporary doctor, stated that the disease is either one of two types: a fever causing gastrointestinal illness such as typhoid fever caused by various types of salmonella; or a chilling malaria fever (*ḥumma al-barda'*). The first type causes

swelling of the stomach and intestines while the later causes swelling of the pancreas and liver. However, this fact is in itself showed that camel's urine cannot be used directly, or in absolute sense just because it is mentioned in the hadith. Instead, it requires expert opinion or confirmation, and continuous scientific research needs to be carried out to determine its benefits in treating diseases today.

### **Camel's Urine From the Scientific Point of View**

Based on the review of scientific journals through Google Scholar, JSTOR and ScienceDirect, there have been several scientific studies conducted to reveal that healing properties do exist in camel's urine. These studies present scientific data to prove that camel's urine actually has healing elements. It has several therapeutic benefits and several types of anti-diseases such as anti-cancer, anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial. It also influences cardiovascular activity to improve health.

Scientists have found that camel's urine is cytotoxic to cancer cells. Experiments performed by Khorshid et al. (2008, 2012), showed that camel's urine weakens cancer cell's growth in animals including hepatocellular carcinoma cells (HEPG2), colon carcinoma (HCT 116), human glioma cells (U251), lung cancer and leukaemia cells. Further studies conducted by Alhaider et al. (2011, 2014), have also shown that camel's urine is capable of blocking Cyp1a1, a cancer-causing gene, and also inhibits inflammatory angiogenesis that can nourish tumours.

Among the good features of anti-cancer agents are that they can cause cancer cell death and / or prevent the proliferation of cancer cells without negatively affecting normal cell growth and disrupting the immune system (Ali, Baby and Vijayan, 2019). These three features are present in camel's urine (Nujoud Al-Yousef et al., 2012). In addition, a variety of tests conducted *in vivo* and *in vitro* demonstrated the ability of camel's urine to reduce and prevent potential metastatic (the ability of cancer cells to spread to other body organs) of breast cancer cells (Romli et al., 2017).

The mechanism by which camel's urine blocks cancer cells is to induce cancer cells to kill themselves (apoptosis) and to suppress cancer cell's mitosis. Among the major features of cancer cells is its ability to divide itself quickly (mitosis) and at the same time maintain its ability to function during these divisions. Therefore, it is essential for anti-cancer agents to reduce and stop the cell cycle mitosis of the cancer cell while also inducing it into apoptotic state. If not, the cancer cells will be able to overcome and fight against anti-cancer agents by sheer number and larger amounts only (Romli et al., 2017).

The anti-cancer properties of camel's urine have also been successfully demonstrated using GC-MS (gas chromatography-mass spectrometry) and ICP-MS (inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry) tests. This study shows that there are elements of metabolites such as canavanine in camel's urine which have higher amounts than other mammals. Canavanine is a by-product of the amino acid and urea metabolism that is quite potent in combating tumour cells (Ahamad et al., 2017).

Studies have also found that camel's urine can act as an antiplatelet that works just like conventional antiplatelet drugs such as aspirin and clopidogrel. Antiplatelet prevent blood platelets



from accumulating and form blood clots (Asthma, Galil and Alhaider, 2016). Lack of urea and ammonia's amounts in the camel's urine causes the urine not to stink and not toxic to humans (Read, 1925).

Recently, however, a new disease outbreak has struck humans and has been identified as having a relationship with camels. Since it was first discovered in 2012 in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, medical experts have identified that camels are the hosts (reservoir) for this infectious disease outbreaks named, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-Cov). This disease spreads through close contacts, whether directly or indirectly, with camels and other patients affected with this disease (Wit et al., 2020).

MERS-Cov is a zoonotic virus that spreads from animals to humans. The disease was found to be harmless to camels itself but after it had infected humans the effects were rather severe. It is estimated that 35% of all human-related cases result in death. So far 27 countries have been diagnosed with the disease. The method, process or mechanism of its transmission from animal to human remains unknown. Therefore, at present, the WHO recommends that any activities relating to camels must be avoided (World Health Organization, 2019).

## Discussion

From the scientific point of view, the data presented above have proven that camel's urine has healing elements or properties. This means that camel's urine is scientifically certified as having a positive effect in the medical field. It also serves as proofs that the Prophet's advice is indeed true. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) knew the healing elements which existed in the camel's urine through divine revelation. Whereas science simply presents the scientific data of that truth. This is in line with the view that Islam and true science will not contradict each other as both originated from Allah SWT. This has been the correct view of the ulama since time immemorial regarding the relationship between Islam and science.

However, all these scientific studies are not yet sufficient to present a concrete evidence for its usage in modern medical science. Most of the studies are still in its early stages, using *in vivo* and *in vitro* studies on animal cells and still do not involve actual patients. Therefore, scientific research in this particular issue needs to be carried out continuously and extensively especially by Muslims themselves to ensure that it is fully practicable and has a positive impact on curing and treating illnesses. It still needs a lot of Evidence-based Medicine studies in which randomized controlled trials (RCT) and meta-analyses involving RCT studies and others to be done properly (Burns, Rohrich and Chung, 2012).

From the Islamic Law point of view, as a religion claiming that it is in line with human nature (El-Mesawi, 2003), and nothing in its teachings contradict human nature, in addition to the strength of the arguments from the schools of jurisprudence, the practice of drinking camel's urine should be held within the framework of understanding it as *najis*. This would mean that its use as a treatment method is only allowed in emergency situations. One of the principles in the Islamic Law of Medicine stated that Muslims should not seek treatment with filthy and forbidden substances except only in

emergency situations such as the absence of other halal or permissible drugs (Nurul Aiman & Izhar Ariff, 2018). Furthermore, its use must be referred to a physician first.

More importantly, the Prophet's suggestion to drink camel's urine - or any suggestion within the scope of Prophetic Medicine for that matter - is to follow the benefits, *hikmah* or *maşlahah* meant from its suggestion in the first place. If its benefits are not achieved and could cause harm or *mafsadah* instead, then the camel's urine is forbidden. In other words, the Hadith pertaining to Prophetic Medicine especially in the category of curative medicine should be classified as *naşş* (sacred text) that follow its *maşlahah*. It should not be practiced directly, literally or taken at face value on the grounds that it is mentioned in the Quran and Hadiths.

At the same time, the above concept is not to be equated with understanding the Prophet's advice would certainly bring about *mafsadah* or harm in it. This is because what the Prophet (PBUH) suggested or mentioned only happens most of the time, not all the time. The same thing is mentioned by al-SyaTibi (1997) about bee honey. When a fact from medical science acknowledges that honey is not suitable for people with yellow illness (*şafra'*), it does not deny the Quran's statement (*tanaqud*) which attests to the fact that honey contains cures and healing properties.

Thus, even though the Quran mentions that honey has a healing element, the opinion of the expert should be addressed first when Muslims want to consume it. This is because it does not heal in every situation and condition. It is only mentioned generally (*kulli*) in the Quran and does not necessarily happened in every case (*juz'i*). In some cases, there can be a number of future events that can cause harm by consuming honey (al-SyaTibi, 1997).

For example, in this age, physicians do not recommend giving honey to babies under the age of one as this can cause harm to them. This harm is called Infant Botulism which attacks children below the age of one year because their immune system is still unable to fight the Clostridium Botulinum bacteria found in honey. Taking precautionary steps by not feeding honey to babies below one-year old is a good idea and also an experts' recommendation as most reported cases involved giving honey to these babies (CO Abdulla et al., 2012).

From another perspective, this issue is the best example to show the importance of adopting science in Islamic Jurisprudence in order to reveal the wisdom behind the Prophet's Traditions especially in the form of *maşlahah* to find out whether or not it is realized. This is the correct approach particularly regarding issues of Prophetic Medicine and Dietary or Foods. Literal approach in understanding this matter will not realize *Maqaşid al-Syari'ah*, instead it can even deny it. This is because the level of human health is varied from one another and has different conditions. In addition, there are many other factors such as the differences in time, place, situation, reality of the disease, and so on which demand this matter to be referred to physicians until the benefits or harm from the practice is well understood. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (n.d.) when clarifying a Hadith narrated by al-Bukhari which means "Black seed cure all diseases" mentioned "it is beneficial for cool diseases only, while for the warm diseases, it is not!"

## Conclusion

In conclusion, drinking camel's urine generally requires expert confirmation first-hand. Scientists especially Muslims need to carry out continuous scientific research to ensure that this practice produces the desired *hikmah* which is the aspects of preservation of human health and does not cause any harm. Theoretically speaking, if scientific studies show that the practice of drinking camel's urine or the camel's urine itself does not have any medical benefit, then even in an emergency situation it is not permissible to be taken as it does not have any healing elements in it.

Not to mention the negative effects that could arise from drinking it such as the infection of the MERS-Cov disease. The Prophet's advice on such issues is based on its *maqasid* which is curing illness, so if it leads to another harm, *mafsadah* or illness, it must be postponed or forbidden in the meantime. Moreover, it should be taken only in an emergency situation as the camel's urine is classified as *najis* or filth.

Through scientific studies, the accusations of some non-Muslims and sceptic Muslims can be refuted. Scientific facts about the healing elements present in the camel's urine indicate that the Prophet's recommendation was not based merely on Arab's culture or custom, rather the knowledge of healing elements that existed in camel's urine must have originated from the Creator of this world Himself.

Moreover, it is very odd that the Prophet's advice in the Hadith regarding curing an illness with urine also include drinking camel's milk. Although there are many scientific studies proving the benefits of camel's milk for human health, it is not emphasized or scrutinized as the truth of the Prophet (PBUH). Obviously, these groups are simply cherry-picking this issue and made it into bullets to insult Islam without any basis whatsoever. Thus, Muslims need not be influenced by such thinking.

In the meantime, the practice of drinking camel's urine directly from its source as practiced by some Arabic societies today is not the only way - as in '*qaT'i'*' - that it cannot be changed altogether. With advances in science and technology nowadays, the healing properties in the camel's urine can be extracted so that patients do not have to drink it directly to treat their disease. Instead, it can be changed, processed, and taken in another form such as pills, tablet, capsule or liquid after the healing properties have been extracted from the original source. This is a discussion for another topic which is *istihalah*. Therefore, scientific studies to develop this idea need to be carried out by Muslim scientists.

Regarding the outbreak of the MERS-Cov, even though camels have been identified as the leading cause of this virus, the medium, mechanism or how exactly it has infected humans from camels remains unknown. Hence, WHO recommends that any camel products such as meat and milk need to be sterilized and cooked properly before it can be eaten. The camel farms also need to be tended and cleaned cautiously (World Health Organization, 2019).

Visitors and tourists to the Middle East countries including organizers of the umrah and hajj programs should avoid visiting camel farms as much as possible until this outbreak return to normal to prevent the disease from spreading any further and bringing it to home country ("Penamatan

Wabak Jangkitan MERS-Cov Di Malaysia,” 2018). For the time being, it is important to take precautions and avoid any camel products as the disease is not yet fully understood by the experts and the vaccine for it has not been created yet. The vaccine for this disease is still under development by medical experts.

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