

Antiplasmodial Activity of Some Medicinal Plants Used in Sudanese Folk-medicine

Authors: Ahmed, El-Hadi M., Nour, Bakri Y.M., Mohammed, Yousif G., and Khalid, Hassan s.

Source: Environmental Health Insights, 4(1)

Published By: SAGE Publishing

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/EHI.S4108>

BioOne Complete (complete.BioOne.org) is a full-text database of 200 subscribed and open-access titles in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Complete website, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at www.bioone.org/terms-of-use.

Usage of BioOne Complete content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non-commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

BioOne sees sustainable scholarly publishing as an inherently collaborative enterprise connecting authors, nonprofit publishers, academic institutions, research libraries, and research funders in the common goal of maximizing access to critical research.

Antiplasmodial Activity of Some Medicinal Plants Used in Sudanese Folk-medicine

El-Hadi M. Ahmed¹, Bakri Y.M. Nour², Yousif G. Mohammed¹ and Hassan S. Khalid³

¹Department of Chemistry and Pharmacognosy, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Gezira, P.O. Box 20 Wad Medani, Sudan.

²Blue Nile National Institute for Communicable Diseases, University of Gezira, P.O. Box 20 Wad Medani, Sudan. ³Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Research Institute, National Council for Research, Khartoum, Sudan. Email: yahadi54@hotmail.com

Abstract: Ten plants indigenous to Sudan and of common use in Sudanese folk-medicine, were examined *in vitro* for antimalarial activity against schizonts maturation of *Plasmodium falciparum*, the major human malaria parasite. All plant samples displayed various antiplasmodial activity. Three plant extracts caused 100% inhibition of the parasite growth at concentrations of plant material ≤ 500 $\mu\text{g/ml}$. The two most active extracts that produced 100% inhibition of the parasite growth at concentration of plant material ≤ 50 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ were obtained from the seeds of *Nigella sativa* and the whole plant of *Aristolochia bracteolata*. The ten plants were phytochemically screened for their active constituents. The two most active plants showed the presence of sterols, alkaloids and tannins.

Keywords: medicinal plants, antiplasmodial activity, folk-medicine

Environmental Health Insights 2010:4 1–6

This article is available from <http://www.la-press.com>.

© the author(s), publisher and licensee Libertas Academica Ltd.

This is an open access article. Unrestricted non-commercial use is permitted provided the original work is properly cited.



Introduction

Malaria, a mosquito-borne disease is global. It was estimated that there were over 300 million cases of malaria every year in developing countries especially in Africa Sub-sahara (90%) and other developing countries. Malaria kills over one million people a year—mainly children under five years and pregnant women.¹ Malaria is a major health problem in Sudan. It constitutes 30% of all attendance to health facilities. It is the main cause of hospital death and the failure of malaria control is largely due to the increasing parasite resistance to chloroquine and vector resistance to insecticides used.²

In all malaria endemic countries, plants are used in traditional medicine for treatment of the disease. Examples are numerous with the urgent need to develop new, safe and effective drugs against malaria. Plants may provide such drugs directly as with quinine from *Cinchona* bark or artemisinin from the Chinese herb *Artemisia annua* and/or they may provide template molecules on which to base further novel structures by organic synthesis.³

In Sudan, out of 21 compounds isolated from 9 medicinal plants used in traditional medicine, only gedunin and quercetin showed IC₅₀ of 1 μM as antiplasmodial activity when tested *in vitro* against *Plasmodium falciparum*.⁴ Moreover, an investigation of antiplasmodial activity of selected Sudanese plants revealed that most plants from the family. Meliaceae showed highly potent antiplasmodial activity against the two tested strains (3D7-chloroquine and pyrimethamine sensitive and Dd2-chloroquine resistant and pyrimethamine sensitive *Plasmodium falciparum* strains). *Khaya senegalensis* (Mahogany), *Azadirachta indica* (Neem) and *Trichilia emetic* (Dabkar) showed IC₅₀ values less than 5 μg/ml.⁵

The present study was carried out to screen 10 plant samples, representing 10 species and 9 families, for their antiplasmodial activity and phytoconstituents.

Materials and Methods

Plant material

Plants used for this study were kindly supplied by the Medicinal and Aromatic Herbs Research Institute of the National Council for Research, Khartoum (Table 1).

Extraction method

Twenty grams of dried and coarsely powdered plant materials were extracted by maceration in a conical flask for 24 hours using petroleum ether/chloroform (1:1) and continuous shaking.⁶

Each extract was first filtered, then was concentrated by evaporation under vacuum at 60 °C using a rotary evaporator to give 20 ml (1 g of plant material/ml crude extract) and kept in a refrigerator until use (for easy calculation and practical procedure).

Preparation of working solution

The required concentration corresponding to 10, 100 and 1000 μg/ml was taken from the concentrated extract and evaporated to dryness and were prepared in complete medium (RPMI 1640 Invetrogen, UK + 10% human serum), on the day of the test.⁵

Phytochemical methods

Phytochemical screening for the secondary plant constituents present in the plant extracts was carried out using methods adopted in similar surveys.⁶ This quantitative and phytochemical analysis of the 10 plants was determined as follows: Sterols and terpenoids (Lieberman's—Burchard's reaction; alkaloids (Mayor's/Wagner's/Dragendroff's reagents); flavonoids (conc HCl + magnesium ribbon); cardiac glycosides (Keller—Kiliani test); tannin (FeCl₃ test); saponins (frothing test); cyanogenic glycosides (sodium picrate paper); anthraquinone (5 g plant material in 20 ml 20% H₂SO₄ and 2 ml 2% FeCl₃, refluxed for 30 minutes, cooled, filtered and extracted with CHCl₃ + 5 ml 10% ammonium hydroxide. Pink—red colour in the alkaline layer indicated the presence of anthraquinones).

Parasite cultivation and *in vitro* testing

In vitro testing of extracts were carried out according to the method recommended by WHO.⁷ In this method, sterile heparinized capillary tube was used to take blood samples (isolate) from patients with symptomatic malaria and who had not recently received antimalarial drug and who had mono-infection with *Plasmodium falciparum* and asexual parasitaemias in excess of 1000 parasites but less than 80,000 parasite per μL blood. The sample was maintained in blood-medium mixture BMM (1:9), i.e. each 100 μL blood

Table 1. Plants screened for their antiplasmodial activity and phytoconstituents.

Botanical name and (family)	Local name	Folk use	Morphological part tested	Geographical source
<i>Aerva javanica</i> (Amaranthaceae)	Um-Shariaa	Forfevers and to relief intestinal gases	WP	Khs
<i>Ambrosia maritima</i> (Asteraceae)	Damsisa	Anti-inflammatory in kidney diseases, diabetes mellitus and malaria	WP	Khs
<i>Aristolochia bracteolata</i> (Aristolochiaceae)	Um Galagel	Roots used fo Scorpion stings and anti-inflammatory, leaves for malaria	WP	Khs
<i>Citrullus colocynthis</i> (Cucurbitaceae)	El-Handal	For haemoroids, arthritis, eczema, laxative and for malaria	S	GS
<i>Croton zambesicus</i> (Euphorbiaceae)	Um-Geleigla	Anti-hypertensive and for malaria	Fr	CS
<i>Gardenia lutea</i> (Rubiaceae)	Um Gawy	Fruit is eaten by human	FrP	Khs
<i>Pulicaria crispa</i> (Asteraceae)	El-Rmeit	As a source of essential oil	WP	Khs
<i>Nigella sativa</i> (Ranunculaceae)	Kamun-Aswad Habat ElBaraka	Anti-inflammatory, allergies, eczema and for malaria	S	NS
<i>Solenostema argel</i> (Ascepiadaceae)	El-Hargel	Carminative, Antispasmodic and for malaria	L	NS
<i>Tinospora bakis</i> (Menispermaceae)	Erg-El-Hagar	For fevers, diarrhoea and dysentery	WP	CS

Abbreviations: L, leaf; WP, Whole plant; Fr, Fruit; FrP, Fruit Pulp; S, Seed; Kh S, Khartoum State; GS, Gezira State; CS, Central Sudan; NS, Northern State.

sample (isolate) required 0.9 ml of RPMI 1640 liquid medium to make a total of 1 ml BMM.

The unpre-dosed wells (12/plate) of tissue culture plates (WHO, *in vitro* microtest plate. VCRU, USM, Malaysia), were dosed with 50 μ l of prepared working solution of drugs of 10, 100 and 1000 μ g/ml separately 50 μ l of the BMM were added to each well using fixed volume Eppendorf pipette and a disposable sterile tip. The resultant testing solutions were diluted thereafter by the addition of equal volume of BMM to give: 5, 50 and 500 μ g/ml. Dosing of wells with BMM was always done starting with control wells. Chloroquine (standard) tested concomitantly on each occasion. Blood/drug concentration was mixed well by shaking plates gently. Plates were then placed in candle Jar with candle on. The candle Jar was closed when the candle is about to go off. The candle jar was then placed in an incubator at 37 °C for 42 hours.

At the end of the incubation period, the tissue culture plates were removed and placed on a clean bench. The supernatant was removed using glass Pasteur pipette and the red blood cells deposited at the bottom were mixed and transferred to a glass slide. Smears were made and stained with 1% Giemsa in phosphate buffer, pH 7.2 for 30 minutes, then dried and examined under the microscope. Schizonts containing 3 or more merozoites per 200 trophozoites were enumerated, they were considered successful if $\geq 10\%$ of the parasites in the control well developed into schizonts. The highest drug concentration at which no schizonts grow was considered to be the end point value for the test. Each extract was evaluated in triplicate, and the mean was calculated as follows:

$$\text{a. Maturation percentage} = \frac{\text{No. of developed schizonts for test}}{\text{No. of developed schizonts for control}} \times 100$$



b. Inhibition percentage = 100-maturation percentage.

Statistical method

The collected data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA.

Ethical approval

The ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Blue Nile Research and Training Institute/University of Gezira (Wad Medani, Sudan) and from Gezira State Ministry of Health.

Results

Antiplasmodial activity

Table 2 shows the effects of extracts from 10 Sudanese medicinal plants on schizonts maturation of *Plasmodium falciparum*.

It was shown that, at plant material concentration ≤ 5 $\mu\text{g/ml}$, six plant extracts were found to possess more than 50% inhibition of the parasite growth; these are: *Ambrosia maritima*, *Aristolochia bracteolata*, *Citrullus colocynthis*, *Gardenia lutea*, *Nigella sativa* and *Solenostema argel*. All plant extracts tested showed $>50\%$ inhibition of the parasite at plant material concentration ≤ 50 $\mu\text{g/ml}$. *Aerva javanica*, whole plant, caused 100% inhibition of the parasite growth at the incubation concentration ≤ 500 $\mu\text{g/ml}$.

The two most active extracts that produced 100% inhibition of the parasite growth at plant material concentration ≤ 50 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ were obtained from the seeds of *Nigella sativa* and the whole plant of *Aristolochia bracteolata*.

Phytochemical screening

phytoconstituents detected in plant samples as: sterols, triterpenes, alkaloids, flavonoids, cardenolides, tannins, saponins, cyanogenic glycosides and anthraquinones are shown in Table 3. Out of the 10 plant samples tested, none had shown the presence of cyanogenic glycosides. Alkaloids and sterols were detected in 8 plant samples while tannins were found to occur in 7 plant samples. Cardenolides were detected in trace amounts in 3 plant samples; *Ambrosia maritima*, *Citrullus colocynthis* and *Croton zambesicus*. Flavonoids were evident in 5 plant samples while triterpenes were found to exist in only 2 samples and traces of anthraquinones were detected in 2 samples.

Discussion

The present study examined the antiplasmodial activity of 10 plants used traditionally as crude drug powders as for *Nigella* and *Pulicaria* or in a form of water extracts as for others, to treat fever and/or malaria,

Table 2. *In vitro* antiplasmodial activities of extracts from certain Sudanese medicinal plants on *Plasmodium falciparum*.

Plant species	Maturation of the parasite (%)*					
	Control	Concentrations used in $\mu\text{g/ml}$				
		5	50	500		
<i>Aerva javanica</i>	100	88.24	2.35	0.0		
<i>Ambrosia maritima</i>	100	35.29	17.65	5.88		
<i>Aristolochia bracteo-lata</i>	100	2.35	0.00	0.00		
<i>Citrullus colocynthis</i>	100	17.65	3.53	2.35		
<i>Croton zambesicus</i>	100	52.94	42.35	17.65		
<i>Gardenia lutea</i>	100	4.71	3.53	2.35		
<i>Pulicaria crispa</i>	100	58.82	14.12	3.35		
<i>Nigella sativa</i>	100	2.35	0.00	0.00		
<i>Solenostema argel</i>	100	6.06	4.71	1.18		
<i>Tinospora bakis</i>	100	72.94	29.41	7.06		
Chloroquine		Concentration used in $\mu\text{g/ml}$				
		0.2	0.4	0.8	1.6	3.2
	100	76	8.24	1.18	0.0	0.0

*In relation to negative control, the difference being statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

on the number of developed schizonts expressed in maturation percentage of the parasite (Table 2).

The *in vitro* test results (Table 2), also showed that, significantly higher amounts of plant drugs were required, as compared with positive control drugs represented by the standard antimalarial chloroquine. However, these plant drugs could be considered as active antimalarial drugs, since plant extracts are considered active if they demonstrate 50% growth inhibition of the parasite at concentration $\leq 50 \mu\text{g/ml}$.⁸ Moreover, in all of the plant extracts more than 50% inhibition of the parasites at concentration $\leq 50 \mu\text{g/ml}$ was obtained, indicating that, such antiplasmodial activity of these plants have proven the ethnomedical claims to treat fever and/or malaria. *Nigella sativa* seeds are edible and used widely as condiment and/or spice.⁹ Thus, it has the advantage as crude antimalarial over *Aristoloshia* species which had been shown to be nephrotoxic, mutagenic and carcinogenic due to the cytotoxicity of the aristolochic acid constituents.^{10,11}

Hence the use of *Aristolochia bracteolata* as an antimalarial plant is not recommended in its crude form. However, the antimalarial activity may reside in a nontoxic molecule which needs to be investigated. The antiplasmodial activity was not confined to any particular family and not restricted to any morphological part of the plant. Nonetheless, we believe

that studies on these plants concerning their toxicity, teratogenicity, carcinogenicity and other biological evaluation should be pursued to end with safe and effective affordable drug.

The preliminary phytochemical screening of plants under investigation (Table 3), revealed that none of them had shown the presence of cyanogenic glycosides. The tituents was found two plants which showed high antiplasmodial activity ($< 50 \mu\text{g/ml}$), *Nigella sativa* and *Aristolochia bracteolata* showed the presence of sterols, alkaloids and tannins. It was noticed that in all plant samples more than one group of constituents were found in each morphological part tested. Physiological activity may be due to one or more than one group of constituents. Several investigations have been published in the field of antiplasmodials of plant origin related to different bioactive functional groups classified as: terpenoids,^{3-5,12} alkaloids,^{3,13-16} unsaturated fatty acids,¹⁷ volatile oils^{18,19} and phenolic compounds including flavonoids^{4,17} and quinones.^{20,21}

In conclusion, we have demonstrated the antimalarial effects and preliminary phytochemical profiles of extracts from ten commonly used Sudanese medicinal plants. Effort will be undertaken to continue biological and phytochemical evaluation to isolate and identify the active constituents as well as to understand the mechanism of action.

Table 3. Plants screened for their phytoconstituents.

No.	Botanical name	Plant part tested	Sterols	Triterpenes	Alkaloids	Flavonoids	Cardenolides	Tannins	Saponins	Cyanogenic glycosides	Anthraquinones
1	<i>Aerva Javanica</i>	WP	-	-	±	+	-	+	-	-	-
2	<i>Aristolochia bracteolata</i>	WP	+	-	+	-	-	±	-	-	-
3	<i>Solenostema argel</i>	L	+	-	±	±	-	+	±	-	-
4	<i>Pulicaria crispa</i>	WP	±	-	-	+	-	±	+	-	-
5	<i>Ambrosia maritima</i>	WP	+	-	+	-	±	-	-	-	-
6	<i>Citrullus colocynthis</i>	S	±	±	±	±	±	-	±	-	-
7	<i>Croton zambesicus</i>	Fr	±	-	-	-	±	+	-	-	-
8	<i>Tinospora bakis</i>	WP	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-
9	<i>Nigella sativa</i>	S	+	±	±	+	-	+	+	-	±
10	<i>Gardenia lutea</i>	FrP	±	+	±	-	-	-	+	-	-

Abbreviations: L, leaf; WP, whole plant; Fr, fruit; FrP, fruit pulp; S, Seed; -, Negative test (not detected); ±, Slightly positive test (traces); +, Strongly positive test (high concentration).



Disclosures

This manuscript has been read and approved by all authors. This paper is unique and is not under consideration by any other publication and has not been published elsewhere. The authors report no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Christopher H. Medicine for malaria venture. Global forum for health research, the 10/9 report on health research 2001–2002, 161–166, WHO, Geneva, Switzerland. 2002.
2. Roll Back Malaria, 2002 Malaria in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. WHO/EMRO—January 2002.
3. Phillipson JD, O'Neill MJ. Novel antimalarial drugs from plants. *Parasitology Today*. 1986;2(12):355–8.
4. Khalid SA, Farouk A, Geary TG, James B. Potential antimalarial candidates from Africa plants: An *in vitro* approach using *Plasmodium falciparum*. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*. 1986;15:201–9.
5. EL-Tahir A, Satti GMH, Khalid SA. Antiplasmodial activity of selected Sudanese medicinal plants with emphasis on *Maytenus senegalensis* (Lam) Exell. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*. 1999;64:227–33.
6. Ahmed EM. Investigation of molluscicidal activity of certain Sudanese plants used in folk medicine; Molluscicidal and phytochemical studies on *Gardena leutea*. Master of Pharmacy, Thesis, University of Khartoum, Sudan, 1983.
7. WHO, CTD/Mal/97.20 Rev. 2 2001. *In vitro* micro-test (Mark III) for the assessment of the response of *Plasmodium falciparum* to chloroquine, mefloquine, quinine, amodaquine, sulfadoxine/pyrimethamin and artemisinin, instructions for use of the *in vitro* micro-test kit (Mark III).
8. Inga K, Siems KJ, Siems K, et al. *In vitro* antiplasmodial investigation of medicinal plants from El Salvador. *Z Naturforsch*. 2002;57c:277–81.
9. Cevdet N, Semih O. Chemical composition of *Nigella sativa* L. seeds. *Food Chemistry*. 1993;48:259–61.
10. Evans WC. Text Book of Pharmacognosy. 13th edition. Bailliere Tindall, London UK. 1989.
11. Pena JM, Borrás M, Ramos J, Montoliu J. Rapidly progressive interstitial renal fibrosis due to chronic intake of a herb *Aristolochia pistolochia* infusion. *Journal of Nephrology, Dialysis and Transplantation*. 1996;11:1359–60.
12. Bray DH, Connolly JD, Peters W, et al. Antimalarial activity of some limonoids. *Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*. 1985;79(3):426.
13. Gakunju DMN, Mberu EK, Dossaji SF, et al. Potent antimalarial activity of the alkaloid nitidine, isolated from a Kenyan herbal remedy. *Antimicrobial Agents Chemistry*. 1995;39(12):2606–9.
14. Bringmann G, Saeb W, God R, et al. 5–O-Demethyl dioncophylline A, a new antimalarial alkaloid from *Triphyophyllum Peltatum*. *Phytochemistry*. 1998;49(6):1667–73.
15. Bringmann G. From Tropical lianas to novel antiplasmodial agents: the naphthoquinoline alkaloid. In Guidelines and issue for the discovery and drug development against tropical diseases. WHO. Geneva. 2003. p. 145–52.
16. Lin LZ, Fang HS, Chu M, et al. Phenolic aporphine—benzyl isoquinoline alkaloids from *Thalictrum faberi*. *Phytochemistry*. 1999;50(5):829–34.
17. Kohler I, Kirstina JS, Karsten S, et al. *In vitro* antiplasmodial investigation of medicinal plants from El Salvador. *Z Naturforsch*. 2002;57c:277–81.
18. Valentin A, Pelissier Y, Benoit F, et al. Components of *Lippia multiflora*. *Phytochemistry*. 1995;40(5):1339–442.
19. Benoit VF, Valentin A, Mallic M, Bestide JM, Besiere JM. *In vitro* antimalarial activity and cytotoxicity of *Cochlospermum tinctorium* and *C. planchonii* extracts and essential oils. *Planta Medica*. 1999;65(4):378–81.
20. Weiss CR, Moideen SVK, Croft SL, Houghton PJ. Activity of extracts and isolated naphthaquinones from *Kigelia pinnata* against *P. falciparum*. *J-Nat. Prod*; American Society of Pharmacognoc. 2000;63(9):1306–9.
21. Benzabin M, Abegaz BM, Duttal K, Croft K, Skinner AT, Davis TME. Anti Plasmodial and antioxidant isofuranonaphtha quinines from the roots of *Bulbine capitate* *Planta Medica*. 2001;67(4):349–54.

Publish with Libertas Academica and every scientist working in your field can read your article

“I would like to say that this is the most author-friendly editing process I have experienced in over 150 publications. Thank you most sincerely.”

“The communication between your staff and me has been terrific. Whenever progress is made with the manuscript, I receive notice. Quite honestly, I've never had such complete communication with a journal.”

“LA is different, and hopefully represents a kind of scientific publication machinery that removes the hurdles from free flow of scientific thought.”

Your paper will be:

- Available to your entire community free of charge
- Fairly and quickly peer reviewed
- Yours! You retain copyright

<http://www.la-press.com>