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Hepatoprotective Role of Herbal Plants - A Review

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ABSTRACT

Liver plays a pivotal role in regulating various physiological processes such as metabolism, secretion and storage. It also plays an important role in removing harmful substances and toxins that enter the body. Liver cell injury caused by various toxic chemicals (Paracetamol, Carbon tetrachloride (CCl₄), Alcohol, D-galactosamine, Thioacetamide, etc.), excessive alcohol consumption and microbes are well-studied. The available synthetic drugs to treat liver disorders in this condition also cause further damage in the liver. Hence, Herbal drugs have become increasingly popular and their use is wide-spread. Herbal medicines have been used for the treatment of liver diseases for a long time. A number of herbal preparations are available on the market. The present review is aimed at compiling data on promising from medicinal plants that have been tested in hepatotoxicity models using the modern scientific system. Latest trends have shown increasing demand of phyto drugs and thus India, with its traditional background.

Keywords: Herbal Plants; Carbon tetrachloride; Paracetamol; Alcohol; Hepatotoxicity

INTRODUCTION

Nature has been a source of medicinal treatment for thousands of years. India is sitting on a gold mine of well-recorded and traditionally well-practiced knowledge of herbal medicines. This country is perhaps the largest producer of medicinal herbs and is rightly called the botanical garden into the world. There are very few medicinal herbs of commercial importance, which are not found throughout this country. It is generally estimated that over 6000 plants in India are in use in traditional, folk and herbal medicines, representing about 75% of the medicinal needs of the third-world countries (Dubey et al., 2004, Rajshekharan, 2002). Medicinal herbs have been in use in one form or another, under indigenous systems of medicines like Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani. Considerable research on pharmacognosy, chemistry, pharmacology and clinical therapeutics has been carried out on these plants, which are now significant sources of pharmaceutical drugs. Latest trends have shown increasing demand of phyto drugs and thus India, with its traditional background, needs to increase its share on the world market.

Medicinal herb is a biosynthetic laboratory, for chemical compounds like glycosides, alkaloids, resins, oleoresins, etc. There is an urgent need to evaluate the

therapeutic potentials of the drugs as per WHO guidelines. Ironically, few Indian products are available in a standardized form, which is the minimum requirement for introducing a product in the Western market (WHO, 2002).

Hepatoprotective Herbal Plants

Polygonum Bistorta (Linn.): Polygonum bistorta Linn. (bistort or common bistort, PB) is a herbaceous flowering plant belonging to family Polygonaceae. This tall perennial herb grows in moist, shady areas of higher ground in the North of India (Punjab, Kashmir, Sikkim and Himmalyan Region), England, Southern Scotland, Europe, central Asia and west of the Rockies in North America, It flowers in May and June. The plant may be propagated by division of the root stock. The rhizome is odorless, but powerfully astringent in taste, as it contains tannin to the extent of 21 percent.

Preliminary study has been conducted on *Polygonum bistorta* and its aqueous ethanolic extracts were screened for anti-inflammatory activity. Before the induction of carrageenan rat paw oedema, administration of its extract (100 and 200 mg kg⁻¹, *p.o.*) suppresses both the maximal oedema response and the total oedema response (Duwiejua *et al.*, 1994). The The The chloroform and hexane fractions and their subfractions were evaluated for their cytotoxic activity against P338 (Murine lymphocytic leukemia), *Hep* G2 (Hepatocellular carcinoma), *J82* (Bladder transitional carcinoma), *HL60* (Human leukemia), *MCF7* (Human breast cancer) and *LL2* (Lewis's lung carcinoma) cancer cell lines in culture (Manoharan *et al.*, 2007). They synergize the cytotoxicity of chemotherapeutic drug in

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human by modulating drug efflux pathway (Naus et al., 2007). Smolarz et al., 2007 demonstrated that ethanolic extracts from the roots of *Polygonum aviculare* L. showed an inductory activity on apoptosis in human leukemic Jurkat cells.

Picrorhiza kurroa (Benth.): Picrorhiza kurroa (Pk), a known hepatoprotective plant and is an important remedy by Jivek, Charak and Vagbhatt in ancient Ayurvedic literature. The plant has been described as significantly useful in jaundice. In a double-blind trial, in the late seventies, Arogya-wardhani with its principal ingredient Pk (50%) was shown to significantly reduce serum bilirubin and transaminases in patients with viral hepatitis by some of the current authors. Experimentally, Pk has been shown to have the pharmacodynamic and biodynamic actions. Anti-necrotic effect in carbon tetrachloride induced damage in rats, and rabbits reduce fatty infiltration and lipid deposits in galactosamine and paracetamol-induced hepatic damage (Mogre et al., 1981), reverses the loss in body weight in alcohol treated rats improves food intake in CCl₄ induced liver damage (Pilankar, 1981), enhances the levels of DNA, RNA, protein, inhibition of lipid peroxidation antiviral effects on vaccinia viruses (Singh et al., 1982) and anti-inflammatory effects in carrageenin oedema and inhibition of experimental passive cutaneous anaphylaxis (Kamble et al., 2008; Thyagarajan et al., 2002).

Trichosanthes cucumerina (Linn.): It is one agent among the major constituents of important Ayurvedic preparations. It is used as blood purifier, appetizer, digestive, germicidal, aphrodisiac, hypoglycemic, anti-inflammatory activities and liver disorders (Kumar *et al.*, 2007).

Urtica urens (Linn.): *U. urens* treatment decreased the CCl₄ dependent elevated lipid peroxidation and serum LDH, ALT and AST activities. Furthermore, *U. urens* protected the inhibitory effect of CCl₄ on CYP2E1 catalyzed aniline 4-hydroxylase activities (Sen *et al.*, 2007; Chrubasik *et al.*, 2007).

Fumaria indica (Hausskn.): Whole plants of *Fumaria indica* (Fumariceae) were studied for their hepatoprotective activity against CCl₄, APAP and rifampicin-induced hepatotoxicities in albino rats. It showed similar reductions in the elevated levels of serum biochemical liver markers in a manner similar that of silymarin indicating it as a potential hepatoprotective agent (Rathi *et al.*, 2008; Rao *et al.*, 2007).

Solanum nigrum (Linn.): *Solanum nigrum* is an herbal plant that has been used as hepatoprotective and anti-inflammation agent in Chinese's medicine (Lin *et al.*, 2008) Ethanol extract of *Solanum nigrum* was investigated for its hepatoprotective activity against CCl₄-induced hepatic damage in rats. The activity was evaluated using biochemical parameters such as AST, ALT, ALP and total bilirubin (Kuppuswamy *et al.*, 2003).

Vitis coignetiae (Linn.): The methanol extracts of the Oriental medicinal plant *Vitis coignetiae* showed hepatoprotective activity in the *in vitro* assay method using primary cultured rat hepatocytes (Oshima *et al.*, 1995).

Polygala arvensis (Linn.): The chloroform extracts of *Polygala arvensis*, exhibited significant protection by normalizing the levels of AST, ALT, ALP, total bilirubin, LDH, total cholesterol, triglycerides, albumin, total protein against D-Gal (400 mg/kg) (Dhanabal *et al.*, 2006).

Taraxacum officinale (Weber): Traditionally, *T. officinale* has been used as a remedy for jaundice and other disorders of the liver and gallbladder, and as a remedy for counteracting water retention. Oral administration of extracts from the roots has been shown to act as a cholagogue, increasing the flow of bile (Chen *et al.*, 1996). The extracts of *T. officinale* have demonstrated antitumor, hypoglycemic, diuretic, antibacterial and nitric oxide regeneration activity (Sumanth and Ahmed, 2008).

Cichorium intybus (Linn.): *Cichorium intybus* is a popular Ayurvedic remedy in the treatment of liver diseases. It is commonly known as kasni and is part of polyherbal formulations used for the treatment of liver diseases. In preclinical studies, an alcoholic extract was found to be effective at chlorpromazine induced hepatic damage in adult albino rats. A bitter glucoside, Cichorin $(C_{32}H_{34}O_{19})$ has been reported to be the active constituent of the herb (Zafar and Ali, 1998; Srinivas and Shalini, 1991; Bahar *et al.*, 2008).

Glychyrrhiza glabra (Linn.): Glychyrrhiza glabra, commonly known as licorice contains triterpene saponin, known as glycyrrhizin, which has potential hepatoprotective activity. It belongs to a group of compounds known as sulfated polysaccharides. Several studies carried out by Japanese researchers have shown glycyrrhizin to be for anti-viral, and it has been potential for therapeutic use in liver disease (Selvam et al., 1995). It reduces experimental hepatitis and cirrhosis, promotes the regeneration of liver cells. Favourable results have been reported in children suffering from cytomegalovirus after treating with glycyrrhizin (Hamza, 2007; Rajesh and Latha, 2004a).

Wilkstroemia indica (Linn.): W. indica is a Chinese herb and has been evaluated in patients suffering from hepatitis B. A dicoumarin, daphnoretin is the active constituent of the herb. The drug has shown to suppress HbsAG in Hep3B cells. It is said to an activator of protein kinase C (Datta et al., 1999).

Curcuma longa (Linn.): Like silymarin, turmeric has been found to protect animal livers from a variety of hepatotoxic substances, including CCl₄ (Hamza, 2007), D-Gal, pentobarbitol, 1-chloro-2, 4-dinitrobenzene, 7 4-hydroxy-nonenal, (Selvam *et al.*, 1995) and APAP.

Table 1: Recent plants investigated for hepatoprotection

S. no.	Plants	Hepatotoxicants	Parameters	References
1	Bauhinia ra- cemosa	Paracetamol and CCl ₄	AST, ALT, SALP, TP, Albumin, Bilirubin, LPO, GSH, SOD and Catalase.	Gupta <i>et al.</i> , 2004b
2	Ichnocarpus fru- tescens (Linn.)	Paracetamol	AST, ALT, TP, SALP, Bilirubin, LPO, GSH, SOD and Catalase.	Dash <i>et al.,</i> 2007
3	Ginkgo biloba	CCI ₄	AST, ALT, Albumin, and plasma antioxidants.	He <i>et al.,</i> 2006
4	Chamomile capitula	Paracetamol	Serum markers enzymes, LPO, GSH and ATPase	Gupta and Misra, 2006
5	Ventilago madrespatana	CCI ₄	AST, ALT, SALP, LPO, GSH, Acid, Alkaline PO4, ATPase, SDH, Protein and Glyco- gen	Bhadauria <i>et al.,</i> 2007
6	Hibiscus sabdar- iffa	CCI ₄	AST, ALT, LPO and total protein	Dahiru <i>et al.,</i> 2003
7	Pterocarpus san- talinus	CCl ₄	AST, ALT, LPO, Bilirubin, protein and Histopathology	Manjunatha, 2006
8	Sarcostemma brevistigma	CCI ₄	AST, ALT, ALP, Total Bilirubin and GGT	Sethuraman et al., 2003
9	Momordica Cym- balaria Fenzl.	CCl ₄	AST, ALT, ALP, bilirubin, total protein, cholesterol, triglyceride, GSH, CAT and SOD and Histopathology.	Koneri <i>et al.,</i> 2008
10	Leucophyllum frutescens	CCI ₄	AST and ALT	Balderas-Renteria et al., 2007
11	Foeniculum vul- gare	CCI ₄	AST, ALT, ALP and bilirubin	Ozbek <i>et al.,</i> 2004
12	Pisonia aculeata L.	CCI ₄	AST, ALT, ALP, GGT, bilirubin, LPO, SOD, CAT, GPx and GST	Palanivel <i>et al.,</i> 2008
13	Rosmarinus to- mentosus	Thioacetamide	AST, ALT, GDH, TD, ALP, GGT and G-6- pase	Galisteo <i>et al.,</i> 2006
14	Hygrophila spinosa and cassia occidentalis	CCI ₄	AST, ALT and GGT	Usha <i>et al.,</i> 2007
15	Lupinus termis	Aflatoxin-Bl	Histopathology	Saber et al., 2006
16	Phyllanthus niruri	Paracetamol	AST, ALT and Bilirubin	Iqbal <i>et al.,</i> 2007
17	Limonium sinense	CCI ₄ and D-galactosamine	AST, ALT and Electron microscope	Tang <i>et al.,</i> 2007
18	Alchornea cordifo- lia	Paracetamol	AST, ALT, Bilirubin and cholesterol	Olaleye <i>et al.,</i> 2006
19	Ficus carica Linn.	CCI ₄	AST, ALT, ALP, Total bilirubin and LPO	Krishna Mohan <i>et</i> al., 2007
20	Cymbropogon citratus	Paracetamol	Malondialdehyde, Vitamin C, Catalase, Cholesterol and Phospholipids	Ojo <i>et al.,</i> 2006
21	Moringa oleifera Lam	CCI ₄	Total and Direct Bilirubin , AST, ALT	Selvakumar and Natarajan, 2008
22	Oldenlandia Um- bellata	CCI ₄	AST, ALT, ALP, LPO and GSH	Gupta <i>et al.,</i> 2007
23	Teucrium polium L.	CCI ₄	LPO, GSH, SOD and Catalase	Panovska <i>et al.,</i> 2007
24	Amburana cearensis	CCI ₄	AST, ALT, LPO and catalase	Leal <i>et al.,</i> 2005
25	Eclipta alba and Piper longum	CCI ₄	SGOT, SGPT, ALP, LDH, ACP, GGT and 5' Nucleoti- dase,	Samudram et al., 2008

26	Thespesia lampas	CCI ₄	SGOT, SGPT, ALP, bilirubin and Protein	Sangameswaran et al., 2008
27	Berchemia flori- bunda.	D- galactosamine	MTT assay, IR spectrum and NMR	Wei <i>et al.,</i> 2008
28	Cajanus indicus	D- galactosamine	Creatinine and Blood urea nitrogen, SOD, GR CAT, , GST, GSH, total thiols, GSSG & LPO	Sinha <i>et al.,</i> 2007
29	Phyllanthus rheedii	D- galactosamine	ALT, AST, LDH, GGT, ALP and total bilirubin, cytokines (TNF-a, and TGF-β), RT-PCR. Histology	Suresh and Asha, 2008
30	Trianthema de- candra	CCI ₄	SGOT, SGPT, ALP, total protein and albumin	Sengottuvelu <i>et al.,</i> 2008
31	Commiphora berryi (Arn)	CCI ₄	SGOT, SGPT, ALP, bilirubin, SOD, GPx and CAT	Gowri Shankar <i>et al.,</i> 2008
32	Trianthema de- candra Linn.	CCI ₄	AST, ALT, ALP, TP, albumin, GPx, GR, SOD, CAT and Histology	Balamurugan and Muthusamy, 2008
33	Platycodon gran- diflorum	CCI ₄	GPx and SOD	Lee <i>et al.,</i> 2008
34	Gongronema latifolium	CCI ₄	ALT, AST and ALP	Etim <i>et al.,</i> 2008
35	Euphorbia an- tiquorum Linn.	CCI ₄	Bilirubin, cholesterol, TG, LPO and GSH	Jyothi <i>et al.,</i> 2008
36	Aegle Marmelos	Alcohol	LPO, GSH, SOD, GPx, CAT, Vitamin A and C	Singanan et al., 2007
37	Picrorrhiza Rhi- zoma	CCI ₄	ALT, AST, LPO and hydroxyproline contents	Lee <i>et al.,</i> 2007

Diarylhepatonoids including curcumin is the active constituent of the plant (Jain *et al.*, 2007).

Tamarindus indica (Linn.): It grows as a large tree and is found all over India. *T. indica* was found to be used in jaundice and other liver complaints in folk medicine Tamarind fruit contains the high amount of ascorbic acid and β-carotene. Pharmacological studies on the plant revealed that tamarind possess antibacterial, antidiabetic, antifungal, antiinflammatory, antimalarial and antioxidant activities (Abukar *et al.*, 2008; Pimple *et al.*, 2007).

Tephrosia purpurea (Linn.): Oral administration of *Tephrosia purpurea* at 500 mg/kg and *Tecomella undulata* at 1000mg/kg resulted in a significant reduction in serum AST, ALT, ALP, γ -GT, total bilirubin, liver LPO and significant improvement in liver GSH when compared with TAA damaged rats (Khatri *et al.*, 2009; Pavana *et al.*, 2007; Deshpande *et al.*, 2003).

Andrographis paniculata (Burm.f.): For centuries Andrographis has been an important herb in the Asian healing systems of Ayurveda, Unani and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Traditionally, this herb has been used to potentiate immune system response to inflammation and infections, and as an anti-inflammatory, antipyretic and a hepatoprotective. The active constituent Andrographolide showed a significant dose dependent protective activity. It completely antagonized the toxic effects of APAP in serum as well as in isolated hepatic cells. Andrographolide was found to be more potent than silymarin (Visen et al., 1993).

Boerhavia diffusa (Linn.): An alcoholic extract of whole plant *Boerhavia diffusa* given orally exhibited hepatoprotective activity against experimentally induced CCl₄ hepatotoxicity in rats and mice. The extract also produced an increase in normal bile flow in rats suggesting a strong choleretic activity. The extract does not show any signs of toxicity up to an oral dose of 2g/kg in mice (Muthulingam, 2008; Ujowundu *et al.*, 2008).

Eclipta alba (Linn.): The hepatoprotective effect on the ethanol/water (1:1) extract of *Eclipta alba* was studied at subcellular levels in rats against CCl_4 induced hepatotoxicity. The study shows that hepatoprotective activity of *Eclipta alba* is by regulating the levels of hepatic microsomal drug metabolizing enzymes (Sagar *et al.*, 2006; Tabassum *et al.*, 2004).

Terminalia belerica (Roxb.): Compound I isolated from fraction TB_5 of *Terminalia belerica* and finally identified as 3,4,5-trihydroxy benzoic acid (gallic acid) led to significant reversal of a majority of the altered parameters. Our results confirm the presence of hepatoprotective activity in altered parameters. Our results confirm the presence of hepatoprotective activity in compound, I (Jain *et al.*, 2008; Jadon *et al.*, 2007; Rasool *et al.*, 2007).

Tinospora cordifolia (Willd.): Outstanding results in people suffering from jaundice have been obtained using an herb called *Tinospora Cordifolia*: Rege *et al.*, (1994) used the herb in malignant obstructive jaundice, half of the group received conventional treatment-drugs and drainage - the other half was treated with

drainage plus *T. Cordifolia*. After the conclusion of treatment, 50% of the drug-treated groups were found to have blood poisoning while none of the herbs treated group developed this problem. After surgery, only 40% of the drug-treated group survived, whereas an amazing 92.4% Of, those treated with the herb lived. It proved effective for the prevention of fibrosis, and in stimulating regeneration of hepatic tissue.

According to Latha et al., (2005) some plants as Ixora coccinea, Lawsonia inermis, Nyctanthes arbor-tristis, Phyllanthus myrtifolius, Spilanthes ciliata and Wedelia calendulacea were discussed along with their hepatoprotective properties that had been confirmed pharmacologically (Panchabhai et al., 2008; Adhvaryu et al., 2008).

DISCUSSION

Our current investigation verifies for the first time, the hepatoprotective effects of *Various herbal plants* against hepatotoxicants. The hepatoprotective action is likely related to its potent antioxidative and anti-inflammatory activity. Neutralizing reactive oxygen species by non enzymatic mechanism and enhancing the activity of original natural hepatic antioxidants enzymes may be the main mechanisms against injury. These data provide a scientific explanation for the folk-loric uses of in the treatments of hepatic disorders. The findings provide a rationale for further studies on pharmacological evaluation.

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