Cumulative mortality of *Aedes aegypti* larvae treated with compounds

**ABSTRACT**

**OBJECTIVE:** To evaluate the larvicidal activity of *Azadirachta indica*, *Melaleuca alternifolia*, *carapa guianensis* essential oils and fermented extract of *Carica papaya* against *Aedes aegypti* (Linnaeus, 1762) (Diptera: Culicidae).

**METHODS:** The larvicide test was performed in triplicate with 300 larvae for each experimental group using the third larval stage, which were exposed for 24h. The groups were: positive control with industrial larvicide (BTI) in concentrations of 0.37 ppm (PC1) and 0.06 ppm (PC2); treated with compounds of essential oils and fermented extract, 50.0% concentration (G1); treated with compounds of essential oils and fermented extract, 25.0% concentration (G2); treated with compounds of essential oils and fermented extract, 12.5% concentration (G3); and negative control group using water (NC1) and using dimethyl (NC2). The larvae were monitored every 60 min using direct visualization.

**RESULTS:** No mortality occurred in experimental groups NC1 and NC2 in the 24h exposure period, whereas there was 100% mortality in the PC1 and PC2 groups compared to NC1 and NC2. Mortality rates of 65.0%, 50.0% and 78.0% were observed in the groups G1, G2 and G3 respectively, compared with NC1 and NC2.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The association between three essential oils from *Azadirachta indica*, *Melaleuca alternifolia*, *Carapa guianensis* and fermented extract of *Carica papaya* was efficient at all concentrations. Therefore, it can be used in *Aedes aegypti* Liverpool third larvae stage control programs.

**DESCRIPTORS:** *Aedes*, growth & development. Plant Oils, toxicity. Insect Control. Disease Vectors.
INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) has established various strategies for controlling the *Aedes aegypti* population, especially in the use of chemical and biological products integrated with environmental management programs capable of eliminating the larval forms and adult insects.31

Conventional chemical insecticides used to control *Aedes aegypti* have encouraged the selection of resistant populations. Increasingly strong doses are needed, leading to toxic effects when accumulated in human and animal tissue, and to environmental contamination.5,30 Ongoing use of biological control using the *Bacillus thuringiensis, israelensis* (BTI) variety also encourages the selection of resistant *A. aegypti* populations.22

Plant-based compounds are the main source of new molecules with the potential to be inserted into biological systems.13 Natural insecticides meet the needs for alternatives to controlling resistant populations of *Aedes aegypti*, a vector for a variety of viruses. They can affect different stages of development through a variety of mechanisms.18

*Azadirachta indica* and the *Carapa guianensis* are from the Meliaceae family. There are various compounds that have a larvicidal action on *Aedes aegypti*, *A. albopictus* and *Culex*,25,27 as well as acting as an insecticide, repellent, antifungal, antimicrobial, acaricide, antifeedant and growth regulator. They are effective at low concentrations and are, for mammals, of low toxicity.17,18

*Melaleuca alternifolia* belongs to the Myrtaceae family and is used for its antimicrobial, antiviral, antifungal, anti-inflammatory and healing actions.10,18 The oxygenated monoterpenes present in *M. alternifolia* essential oil are toxic to *Aedes albopictus* larvae and lethal concentration (LC₅₀) of 267.13 ppm.6

*Carica papaya* is from the Caricaceae and has bactericidal and bacteriostatic properties, and is used as a dewormer, facilitating digestion, reducing lipid...
peroxidation and an antioxidant.\textsuperscript{14} Fermented extract of \textit{C. Papaya} leaf has larvicidal, ovicidal and repellent actions against \textit{Aedes aegypti}.\textsuperscript{9}

In isolation, all of the components of the compound possess larvicidal properties, although there have been no studies on their efficacy when blended to form one single product.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of the compound of \textit{Azadirachta indica}, \textit{Melaleuca alternifolia}, \textit{Carapa guianensis} essential oils and fermented extract of \textit{Carica papaya} on \textit{Aedes aegypti} larvae (Linnaeus, 1762) (Diptera: Culicidae).

**METHODS**

The essential oils and fermented extract compound is a commercial product obtained from Gued’s Biotecnologia\textsuperscript{8}. Its formulation is as follows: essential oil from \textit{Azadirachta indica} seeds 10.0\%, essential oil from \textit{Melaleuca alternifolia} fruit 0.3\%, essential oil from \textit{Carapa guianensis} 1.0\%, bacterial fermented extract of \textit{Carica papaya} fruit 5.0\%.

The essential oil and fermented extract compound is immiscible in water and forms a film on the surface of the container, causing the larvae to die of asphyxiation. It needed to be dissolved in an organic solvent, dimethyl sulfoxide, to enable it to be mixed with water. This was tested separately to analyze its toxicity for \textit{Aedes aegypti} larvae.

\textit{Aedes aegypti} Liverpool colonies were established from strains at the \textit{Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco}, Laboratory of Domestic Animal Parasitic Diseases insectarium, Recife, PE, Northeastern Brazil, 2013. They were kept in a room with controlled temperature of 28°C (SD = 1), 80.0\% (SD = 5.0) relative air humidity and a natural 12/12h photoperiod cycle.

Plastic containers holding two liters of de-chlorinated water were used to hatch the larvae. They were fed industrialized powdered cat food.

The toxicological trials followed the methodology recommended by the WHO.\textsuperscript{11,13} Three hundred larvae were collected and transferred to a disposable container holding 50 mL of de-chlorinated water (26°C to 28°C) when they reached the third larval stage. Each test was conducted in triplicate, making 900 larvae in each experimental group, giving a total of 7,200 specimens. The larvae were exposed to the solutions for a 24h period and were monitored every 60 min. Larvae which survived the larvicidal trial remained under observation until pupae and adult emerged. The behavioral parameters of the larvae were observed during the period of the experiment to verify alterations such as: stereotyped movement, forming clusters, agitation, lethargy, change of color, shedding exuviae and death.

The experimental groups were organized as followed: treated with \textit{A. indica}, \textit{M. alternifolia} and \textit{C. guianensis} essential oils and bacterial fermented extract of \textit{C. papaya} in concentrations of 50.0\% (G1), 25.0\% (G2) and 12.5\% (G3) a positive control with \textit{Bacillus thuringiensis} serotype israelensis (BTI) industrial larvicide at concentrations of LC\textsubscript{50} 0.37 ppm (PC1) and LC\textsubscript{50} 0.06 ppm (PC2) and a negative control with de-chlorinated water (NC1) and negative control with dimethyl sulfoxide (NC2).

The data concerning the compound’s efficacy were expressed using statistics describing centrality and dispersion trends (mean and standard deviation). The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis and the Dunn post-hoc tests were used in order to analyze significance between the results and see which groups differed between themselves. The non-parametric Chi-square test ($\chi^2$) was used in the analyses regarding the behavior of the larvae during the 24h period. The GraphPad Software, Inc., 2000 program was used for analyses with a significance level of 0.05.

**RESULTS**

During the larvicide test, the behavior of the larvae in groups G1, G2 and G3 altered, $p < 0.05$, compared to that of those in NC1 and NC2 groups, 60 min after exposure to the compound. Movement gradually decreased, the larvae formed clusters and were lethargic, remaining immobile even when touched after three hours. The larvae in the positive control groups, PC1 and PC2, became lethargic two hours after exposure, remaining inert to touch and with dark, rigid cephalic capsule (Table).

The larvae in the negative control group NC1 and NC2 were fed and developed into pupae and adults within 72h of the experiment. However, the surviving larvae in G1 and G2 did not shed their exuviae and did not develop into pupae and adults during the 21 days following exposure. Compounds in concentrations of 50.0\% and 25.0\% inhibited their development.

Larvae in groups treated with the compound (G1, G2 and G3) had mortality rates of 65.0\%, 50.0\% and 78.0\%, respectively, in the first ten hours of exposure, whereas the mortality rate in the positive control groups (PC1 and PC2) was 100\%, $p < 0.05$, compared with NC1 and NC2. Larvae died in all of the treated groups. However, after 24h, the group with the most efficacious treatment was G3, in which 100\% of the larvae died, comparable to groups PC1 and PC2.

Larvae in the negative control groups using water (NC1) and dimethyl sulfoxide (NC2) did not die in the 24h following exposure. The dimethyl sulfoxide used
in diluting the compound did not provoke mortality in the NC2 group, indicating that it had no effect on larvae development or death in groups G1, G2 and G3.

_A. aegypti_ larvae were susceptible to the compound of _A. indica_, _M. alternifolia_ and _C. guianensis_ essential oils and _C. papaya_ fermented extract, especially at concentrations of 12.5%.

**DISCUSSION**

The compound of essential oils and bacterial fermented extract possessed hydro-soluble active substances with larvicidal properties on third stage _Aedes aegypti_ Liverpool larvae. Such products, highly efficient, with low toxicity and little environmental contamination are preferred in studies on controlling culicidae larvae.5,24

The first sign of a product with larvicidal properties is decreased movement of the larvae.26 Arruda et al1 showed how the movement of _A. aegypti_ larvae decreased when treated with _Magonia pubescens_. Such a decrease was also observed in _A. aegypti_, _Culex quinquefasciatus_ and _Anopheles albimanus_ larvae when exposed to BTI.26

The main active ingredient in _A. indica_ essential oil is azadirachtin, which acts as a larvicide on _A. Aegypti_ and is reported to cause irreversible physiological alterations.7 Ndione et al19 investigated the larvicidal action of _A. Indica_ essential oil and found that 64.0% of fourth stage _A. Aegypti_ larvae died at concentrations of 8 mg/L (1.0%), and 82.0% of larvae when the concentration was reduced to 3 mg/L (0.3%) in 24h exposure. This data showed the best performing larvicide in the G3, group treated with the lowest concentration of the compound.

The development of _A. aegypti_ arvae exposed to _A. indica_ was compromised. Azadirachtin blocks the synthesis and release of ecdysone,13 impedes shedding the exuvia and causes the cuticle to deteriorate,1 as well as blocking ecdysopterin protein receptors. This inhibits growth, and causes deformities, sterility and death in the larvae.16,29

Silva et al28 studied the larvicide action of _C. guianensis_ on all _A. Aegypti_ Rockefeller larvae stages and reported that: LC90 and LC95 were 164 ppm and 182 ppm after 48h for first stage larvae; 212 ppm and 224 ppm for second stage; 210 ppm and 226 ppm for third stage; and 450 ppm and 490 ppm for fourth stage, respectively.5

Third and fourth stage _Aedes albopictus_, _Culex_ and _A. aegypti_ larvae also died after using the oil from this plant at different dilutions.25,27

There are various species of _Melaleuca_ spp with larvicidal actions against _A. Aegypti_, including _Melaleuca linariifolia_, _M. dissitiflora_ and _M. quinquenervia_, the essential oils of which obtained mortality of more than 80.0% in concentrations of 0.1 mg/mL in 48h of exposure.21 However, in a study of larvicides conducted by Amer & Mehlhorn,2 _M. quinquenervia_ oil in a 50 ppm solution caused mortality in 30.0% of third stage _A. Aegypti_ larvae 24h after exposure.

Rawani et al23 tested raw extract of _Carica papaya_, _Murraya paniculata_ and _Cleistanthus collinus_ on _Culex quinquefasciatus_ larvae and observed the best larvicide activity in _Carica papaya_. This may be explained by the bioactive secondary metabolites in isolation or in combination. Kovendan1 tested raw extract of _C. papaya_ leaf in isolation and obtained 92.0% mortality in _A. aegypti_ larvae at a concentration of 500 ppm.

Controlling _A. aegypti_ larvae and adults and _Culex quinquefasciatus_ larvae using extract of _C. papaya_ seed is due to inhibition of amylase, which reduces life span and fecundity in adults, as well as provoking mortality in larvae.20,23

As in the above mentioned individual studies, in this article larvicide activity remained even when associated with low concentrations of the essential oils and
fermented extract, found in the commercial product; 1 mL contains 0.01 mg/L of *A. indica*, 0.003 mg/L of *M. alternifolia*, 0.01 mg/L of *C. guianensis* and 0.05 mg/L of *C. papaya*. This concentration is below those found in isolation in the indexed journals, even when undiluted. Thus, the larvicidal efficacy remained.

To conclude, the mixture of *A. indica*, *M. alternifolia*, *C. guianensis* essential oils and *C. papaya* bacterial fermented extract act in synergy as a larvicide on *Aedes aegypti*, Liverpool at all concentrations in laboratory conditions. It is necessary to evaluate this compound against *A. aegypti* populations in the field and with larvae at other stages.

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This article was based on the doctoral thesis of Torres SM, entitled: "Avaliação estrutural e ultraestrutural de larvas e adultos de Aedes aegypti (Linnaeus, 1762) (Diptera: Culicidae) submetidos a tratamento com composto de óleos de Azadirachta indica, Melaleuca alternifolia, Carapa guianensis e extrato fermentado bacteriano de Carica papaya", presented to the Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco, in 2013. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.