In Vitro Antimicrobial Activity of Some Medicinal Plants against Human Pathogenic Bacteria

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Received 17 January 2019; Revised 8 March 2019; Accepted 13 March 2019; Published 2 April 2019

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The emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance, as well as the evolution of new strains of disease causing agents, are of great concern to the global health community. Effective treatment of a disease entails the development of new pharmaceuticals or some potential source of novel drugs. Commonly used medicinal plants of our community could be an excellent source of drugs to fight off this problem. This study is focused on exploring the antimicrobial properties of the plants that are commonly being used as traditional medicines. The antimicrobial potential of four different plant extracts was screened against twelve pathogenic microorganisms and two reference bacterial strains. Methanolic extracts of *Oxalis corniculata*, *Artemisia vulgaris*, *Cinnamomum tamala*, and *Ageratina adenophora* were subjected to a test of their antimicrobial properties by agar well diffusion method. The result indicated that most of the extracts exhibited antimicrobial properties. The highest potential was observed in the extract of *O. corniculata* against *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella Typhi*, MDR *Salmonella Typhi*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and *Citrobacter koseri* with zone of inhibition (ZOI) of 17 mm, 13 mm, 16 mm, 11 mm, and 12 mm, respectively. *Oxalis corniculata* also showed the highest MIC against test organisms. The methanolic extract of *Artemisia vulgaris*, *Cinnamomum tamala*, and *Ageratina adenophora* showed efficacy against *Staphylococcus aureus*. *Ageratina adenophora* also showed antifungal activity against *Rhizopus* spp. The experiment confirmed the efficacy of some selected plant extracts as natural antimicrobials and suggested the possibility of employing them in drugs for the treatment of infectious diseases caused by the test organisms.

1. Introduction

Antimicrobial agents are essentially important in reducing the global burden of infectious diseases [1]. However, emergence and dissemination of multidrug resistant (MDR) strain in pathogenic bacteria have become a significant public health threat as there are fewer, or even sometimes no, effective antimicrobial agents available for the infection caused by pathogenic bacteria [2, 3].

Thus, in the light of the evidence of the rapid global spread of resistant clinical isolates, the need to find new antimicrobial agents is of paramount importance. However, the past record of rapid, widespread emergence of resistance to newly introduced antimicrobial agents indicates that even new families of antimicrobial agents will have a short life expectancy [4, 5].

A vast number of medicinal plants have been recognized as valuable resources of natural antimicrobial compounds as an alternative that can potentially be effective in the treatment of these problematic bacterial infections [6]. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), medicinal plants would be the best source to obtain a variety of drugs [7].

Many plants have been used because of their antimicrobial traits, which are due to phytochemicals synthesized in the secondary metabolism of the plant [8, 9]. Plants are rich in a wide variety of secondary metabolites such as tannins, alkaloids, phenolic compounds, and flavonoids, which have been found in vitro to have antimicrobial properties [10, 11]. A number of phytotherapy manuals have mentioned various medicinal plants for treating infectious diseases as urinary tract infections, gastrointestinal disorders, respiratory disease, and cutaneous infections.

The indigenous people of Nepal have been using many plant species as traditional medicines long ago, including treatment of infectious diseases, but there has been paucity in data regarding their in vivo and in vitro efficacy [12].
Considering the vast potentiality of plants as sources for antimicrobial drugs, this study aimed to investigate in vitro antibacterial and antifungal activity of extracts from some selected medicinal plants from Nepal against the most common microbial pathogens including MDR bacteria.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sample Collection. Four plant materials were collected on the basis of traditional medicinal history from the local market of Kathmandu. Table 1 shows the botanical name, family, parts used, and ethnomedicinal use of plants under this study [13–15].

2.2. Preparation of Plant Extracts. The collected samples were first washed under running tap water and air-dried in shade at room temperature for a month. Using a home grinder, the plant parts were then ground to fine powder. The weight of the ground powder was taken and the extract from each plant was prepared by using a cold percolation method. This 60 gram of fine powder from each plant was dissolved in 160 ml of absolute methanol at room temperature for three successive days. The supernatant was filtered through Whatman filter paper while the residues were used for a second and third extraction. Each day the dissolved parts were filtered and stored in a glass bottle. After the third extraction, the filtrates were then evaporated under reduced pressure at 50°C using a rotary evaporator to yield the crude extract.

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\text{Percentage Yield (\%) } = \frac{\text{Dry weight of extract}}{\text{Dry weight of plant material}} \times 100
\]

The crude extract was collected in a vial for further use.

2.3. Microbial Culture. A total of 12 human pathogenic microbial strains were used in the study: *S. aureus*, MRSA and *E. coli*, *Salmonella Typhi* (*S. Typhi*), MDR *S. Typhi*, *P. aeruginosa*, MDR *K. pneumoniae*, *Citrobacter koseri* (*C. koseri*), mold *Rhizopus* spp, *Aspergillus niger* (*A. niger*), *Aspergillus flavus* (*A. flavus*), yeast *Candida albicans* (*C. albicans*), and reference strains *E. coli* ATCC 25922 and *S. aureus* ATCC 25923. A series of morphological, physiological, and conventional biochemical tests were performed to identify the selected microorganisms. The fungi were identified following growth on appropriate media and morphological and microscopic characteristics [16]. Antimicrobial susceptibility test was performed for all microbial isolates by modified Kirby Bauer disc diffusion method following the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI) guideline. Multidrug resistant (MDR) isolates were defined as those isolates that are resistant to three classes of antibiotics [17].

2.4. Antimicrobial Assay of Plant Extracts. Antimicrobial assay of extracts of different plants was performed by agar well diffusion method in Mueller Hinton Agar (MHA) plates. The test organisms were inoculated in Nutrient broth and incubated overnight at 37°C to adjust the turbidity to 0.5 McFarland standards giving a final inoculum of 1.5 × 10⁸ CFU/ml. MHA plate was lawn cultured with standardized microbial culture broth. Plant extracts of 50 mg/ml concentration were prepared in Dimethyl Sulfoxide (DMSO). Six wells of 6 mm were bored in the inoculated media with the help of sterile cork-borer (6 mm). Each well was filled with 50 µl extracts from different plants: positive control (amikacin 30 mcg and nitrofurantoin 300 mcg) for bacteria and 1 mg/ml of cyclohexylamine for fungal isolates and negative/solvent control (DMSO), respectively. It was allowed to diffuse for about 30 minutes at room temperature and incubated for 18-24 hours at 37°C. After incubation, plates were observed for the formation of a clear zone around the well which corresponds to the antimicrobial activity of tested compounds. The zone of inhibition (ZOI) was observed and measured in mm.

2.5. Determination of MIC and MBC of the Plant Extracts. The broth microdilution method was used to determine the MIC according to CLSI. Twofold serial dilutions of extracts were prepared directly in a microtiter plate containing Mueller Hinton broth to obtain various concentrations. The bacterial inoculum was added to give a final concentration

### Table 1: Medicinal plants tested for their antibacterial activity in the study.

| Scientific name | Family | Common name | Local name | Parts used | Traditional use |
|-----------------|--------|-------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| *Oxalis corniculata* (*O. corniculata*) | Oxalidaceae | Yellow sorrel | Chari amilo | Leaves | Digestion, chronic dysentery, diarrhea, headaches, intoxication, fever, inflammations, jaundice, pain, scurry, antihelmintic, analgesic, astringent, diuretic |
| *Cinnamomum tamala* (*C. tamala*) | Lauraceae | Bay leaf | Tejpata | Leaves | Diabetes, Digestion, Cardiovascular Benefits, Cold and Infection, Pain, Anti-cancer, Menstrual Problems |
| *Ageratina adenophora* (*A. adenophora*) | Compositae | Cotton weed, Eupatory | Banmara | Leaves | Cuts, wounds, boils, antiseptic |
| *Artemisia vulgaris* (*A. vulgaris*) | Compositae | Mugwort | Titepati | Aerial parts | Antiseptic, diarrhea, dysmenorrhea, asthma, antihelmintic, stomach ulcer, anorexia, heartburn, hyperacidity, spasms of digestive organs, epilepsy |

*Note: The data in Table 1 is a representation of the medicinal plants tested for their antibacterial activity.*
of $5 \times 10^5$ CFU/mL in each well. The positive control was used containing amikacin as a standard drug. The plate was covered with a sterile sealer and incubated for 24 h at 37°C. Resazurin was added in each well of the microtiter plate and was incubated at 37°C for 30 min. The wells containing the bacterial growth turned into pink color whereas the well without bacterial growth remained blue. The MIC was considered as the lowest concentration of the extract that completely inhibits the bacterial growth [17].

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Extraction Yields of the Plants Extract

By using the cold percolation method, the highest yield was obtained from *C. tamala* extract of 9.35% while the least yield was of *A. adenophora* (Table 2). This result was similar to those of other studies that reported antibacterial activity of methanolic extract of *O. corniculata* [19]. However, contrary to our result, they also reported antibacterial activity against *S. aureus*. The difference in result could be due to the use of plant extract in less concentration (50mg/ml) compared to that used by them (250mg/ml) [19]. Mohan and Pandey also reported that *O. corniculata* is effective against *S. aureus*. This difference in result may be due to the use of different solvent system [20]. It has been widely observed and accepted that the medicinal value of plants lies in the bioactive phytochemicals present in the plants that dissolve in different solvent systems [21]. The emergence of multidrug resistant *S. Typhi* and *K. pneumoniae* is posing the greatest threat to mankind. The significant activity shown by the extract of *O. corniculata* against them makes us infer that it could be an important alternative to fight this nightmare.

Plant extract from *C. tamala* was found to have antimicrobial activity against only one tested bacterium, *S. aureus* (ATCC 25293). Hassan Waseem et al. [22] detected the antimicrobial activity of *C. tamala* against a number of organisms. They found different degrees of antimicrobial activity against all tested gram positive bacteria only. The MIC value shows that these plant extracts have the least antimicrobial activity.

#### A. adenophora

A. adenophora was reported to produce structurally diverse chemicals including (mono-, sesqui-, di-, and tri-) terpenoids, phenylpropanoids, flavonoids, coumarins, sterols, and alkaloids that show antibacterial activity [23, 24]. The extract of *A. adenophora* was found to possess a broad spectrum antimicrobial potential against *S. aureus*, MRSA, and *S. Typhi* as well as *Rhizopus* spp., which was in accordance with the result of Rajamani et al. [25]. The extract of *A. adenophora*
Table 3: Diameter of zones of inhibition (mm) of plant extracts against microorganisms at 50mg/ml concentration.

| Test organism | Plant extract | O. corniculata | C. tamala | A. adenophora | A. vulgaris |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| E. coli       | -             | 17             | -         | -            | -         |
| S. aureus     | -             | -              | 10        | 10           | 10        |
| MRSA          | -             | -              | 12        | 10           | -         |
| S. Typhi      | 13            | -              | -         | 13           | -         |
| MDR S. Typhi  | 16            | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| P. aeruginosa | -             | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| K. pneumoniae | 11            | -              | 12.5      | 12.5         | -         |
| MDR C. koseri | 12            | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| Rhizopus spp  | -             | -              | 11        | -            | -         |
| A. niger      | -             | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| A. flavus     | -             | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| C. albicans   | -             | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| E. coli ATCC 25922 | 15       | -              | 10        | 10           | 10        |
| S. aureus ATCC 25923 | -       | -              | 12.5      | 25           | 25        |

(-): no antimicrobial activity.

Table 4: MIC value of plant extracts against microorganisms (mg/mL).

| Test organism | Plant extract | O. corniculata | C. tamala | A. adenophora | A. vulgaris |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| E. coli       | 25            | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| S. aureus     | -             | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| MRSA          | -             | 100            | -         | -            | -         |
| S. Typhi      | 50            | -              | 12.5      | 12.5         | -         |
| MDR S. Typhi  | 25            | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| K. pneumoniae | 25            | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| MDR C. koseri | 25            | -              | -         | -            | -         |
| E. coli ATCC 25922 | 20       | -              | 12.5      | 25           | 25        |
| S. aureus ATCC 25923 | -       | 20             | 12.5      | 25           | 25        |

(-): no antimicrobial activity.

showed a significant MIC value against S. aureus signifying that they could be a potential alternative to fight it [26]. The different nature of the cell wall makes gram positive bacteria more susceptible to different compounds than gram negative bacteria.

The extract of A. vulgaris showed activity against S. aureus. Some studies reported the antimicrobial property of A. vulgaris against S. aureus and E. coli similarly to our finding [27]. The extract of A. vulgaris also showed significant MIC value against S. aureus.

Although a certain number of extracts exhibited good antibacterial potency, in contrast to our expectation, a limited antibacterial potency of some plants suggests that there is no complete agreement between the traditional uses of medicinal plants in the crude form for the remedy of infectious diseases. Further study, however, is still warranted to explore their effectiveness in inhibiting the growth of parasites, viruses, and/or fungi. Another possibility for the limited antibacterial potency of some plants may be due to the cold percolation extraction method and the use of crude extracts.

5. Conclusion

In this study, antimicrobial activities of four traditional medicinal plants from Nepal were assessed by cold percolation method. The result showed potential antibacterial effects of O. corniculata extracts against bacterial strains tested, whereas C. tamala, A. adenophora, and A. vulgaris were effective only against S. aureus. The extract of A. adenophora also exhibited antifungal activity.

Even though we showed potent in vitro activity of a few traditional plant extracts for certain bacteria, it may not be translated in vivo. Instead of cold percolation method, soxhlet extraction, subfraction, semipure compound, or a pure compound isolated from these plants might exhibit better antibacterial activity. Further investigations are necessary to evaluate antimycobacterial, antiviral, and antiparasitic
activity. Moreover, other parts of the plants need to be studied to evaluate the studied plant extracts as a potential antimicrobial agent.

Data Availability

No data were used to support this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgments

The authors are thankful to the National College, Khushibun, for providing laboratory facilities to carry out the experiments.

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