Original Research Article

https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcmas.2017.604.012

Green Synthesis of Copper Nanoparticles Using *Momordica charantia* Fruit Extracts and Evaluation of Their Anti-Microbial Efficacy

Flora-Glad Chizoba Ekezie¹, W. Jessie Suneetha¹*, K. Uma Maheswari¹, B. Anila Kumari¹ and T.N.V.K.V. Prasad²

¹Post Graduate and Research Centre, Department of Foods and Nutrition, Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University, Rajendranagar- Hyderabad, 500030, India

²Nanotechnology Laboratory, Institute of Frontier Technology, Regional Agricultural Research Station, Acharya N.G Ranga Agricultural University, Tirupati 517502, India

*Corresponding author

**Abstract**

The development of nanotechnology interests the researchers for synthesis of nanoparticles with various bio-applications. The green synthesis of copper nanoparticles using *Momordica charantia* fruit extract acts as both reducing and capping agent. The biosynthesized CuNps were characterized by using UV-Vis analysis, Dynamic Light Scattering (DLS), Fourier Transform Infrared analysis (FTIR), X-ray diffraction analysis (XRD), Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) and Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM) analysis. The synthesized CuNps were in spherical structure with an average size of particle size of 86.07nm. The Antimicrobial activity of the CuNps was established using disc diffusion and agar well diffusion method. The assay showed that CuNps can be a potent antimicrobial agent against *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Pseudomonas aerogenosa* and *Escherichia coli* with no inhibition against *Aspergillus flavus*.

**Keywords**

Copper nanoparticles, *Momordica charantia*, antimicrobial activity, agar well diffusion, Disc diffusion, *S. aureus*, *P. aerogenosa*, *E. coli* and *A. flavus*.

**Introduction**

Recent research areas have been channeled to the development of anti-microbial agents from natural sources as there is an increasing trend in the emergence of resistance to synthetic anti-microbial drugs due to not only poor quality of drugs, patient non-compliance and irrational use of antimicrobial agents, but also to spontaneous mutations within the microbial populations. Primarily, multiple drug resistance (MDR) developed due to the indiscriminate use of commercial antimicrobial drugs to treat such infectious diseases (Dey et al., 2010). Owing to the side effects and the resistance that pathogenic micro organisms build against antibiotics as well diseases arising from oxidative stress, drastic measures should be adopted to control the use of anti-microbial agents. Many scientists are paying attention to medicinal plants with biologically active polyphenolic compounds isolated from plant species which possess anti-microbial, antioxidant and nutraceutical properties (Gin and Rigalleau, 2000).
An emerging area of science used to optimize the efficiency of bioactive compounds responsible for the medicinal properties of plants is “Nanotechnology” as it’s a precise and most advanced method of synthesizing highly stable bioactive compounds (Singh et al., 2010). Biological synthesis of nanoparticles from plants extracts slows enzyme kinetics for catalytic activity and offers better manipulation, control over the crystal growth and stability (Prasanth et al., 2011).

Now-a-days scientists are expanding interest in metal nanoparticles (zinc, copper, gold, silver, iron, gold and aluminum) as they provide superior material properties with functional versatility. Plant materials are also used as nanofabricators to promote green synthesis which is less expensive and less toxic (Singh, 2010).

Very few studies have been reported on the use of bitter gourd as a nanofabricator. Pandey (2012) reported the use of *M. charantia* extract for the facile synthesis of ultra-stable gold nanoparticles. Similarly, the green synthesis of silver nanoparticles in bitter gourd extract has been demonstrated by Bhor, 2014. For the first time, the present study reports the use of *Momordica charantia* for the biosynthesis of CuNps and its antimicrobial properties.

**Materials and Methods**

**Sample preparation**

Dried sample of *Momordica charantia* was subjected to exhaustive extraction by cold maceration in ethanol for 72 hours in conical flasks that were sealed to avoid evaporation. The slurry obtained was centrifuged at 3,000 rpm for 10 minutes and filtered through Whatman No. 41 filter paper. The clear filtrate of 10 ml was taken and mixed with 90 ml aqueous solution of $1.0 \times 10^{-3}$ M copper nitrate and incubated at room temperature for 24 hrs. The color change of copper nitrate indicates the formation of CuNps due to reduction of copper ion from Cu$^{+2}$ to Cu. The samples were then centrifuged at 4000 rpm for 15 min to get a clear supernatant at room temperature.

**Characterization studies of CuNps**

UV – Visible Spectrophotometer was used to record the localized surface plasmon resonance of copper nanoparticles at 200 – 800 cm$^{-1}$. The size and morphology were examined using Dynamic Light Scattering (DLS), Scanning electronic Microscopy (SEM) and Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM). FTIR spectrum was recorded in mid IR region in the range of 400 – 4000 wavenumber (cm$^{-1}$). The structure of the nanoparticles was obtained from X-ray diffraction (XRD) technique.

**Determination of antimicrobial activity**

The effect of ethanol extract of *M. charantia* and its derivative copper nanoparticles on bacterial strains like *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and fungal strain of *Aspergillus niger* were assayed by agar well diffusion method and disc diffusion method as described by Pooloth, 2013.

**Statistical analysis**

All of the data from three independent replicate trials were subjected to analysis using Statistical package: Statistics 8.0. The data are reported as the mean + SD and significant differences between mean values were determined with one way analysis of variance (RBD) (Snedecor and Cochran, 1983).
Results and Discussion

Characterization studies

U.V Visible Spectrophotometer

The absorption spectrum was recorded for the sample in the range of 200–800 nm. The spectrum showed the absorbance peak at 235-250 nm corresponding to the characteristic localized surface plasmon resonance (LSPR) band of CuNps. The overall observations suggest that the bio-reduction of Cu$^{+2}$ to Cu was confirmed with UV–Visible spectroscopy (Figures 1 and 2).

Dynamic light scattering and zeta potential measurements

DLS is a technique used to determine the size, size distribution profile and poly disparity index of particles in a colloidal suspension. The measurement results show the DLS and zeta potential to be 88 nm and 30.0 mV respectively (Figures 3 and 4). The significance of zeta potential is that its value can be related to the stability of colloidal dispersions and also indicates the degree of repulsion between adjacent and similarly charged particles in dispersion (Sindhura et al., 2014). The result shows the extracts were stable at room temperature.

Scanning Electron Microscope and TEM

SEM analysis was used to provide information about the morphology and size of the synthesized copper nanoparticles. Figure 5 shows that the nanoparticles formed were spherical in nature and were intact coated with the material. The SEM micrograph also revealed the size of the nanoparticles was less than 100 nm (average value of 87.06 nm) which confirms the feasibility of synthesizing copper nanoparticles using *Momordica charantia* as nanofabricator.

FT-IR measurements

The FTIR spectroscopy (Figure 6) of the ethanol extract coated with CuNps showed prominent peaks at 3354, 1656,1653, 1383, 1165 and 426 cm$^{-1}$ were due to O-H stretching, C=N stretching, C=O stretching, C-H group (aromatic), C–N stretching (aliphatic amines) which were skeletal vibrations respectively. The majority of the IR bands were characteristic of triterpenes, proteins, steroids, carbohydrates, alkaloids and other compounds present in the solution. In particular, the broad and intense absorption peak at around 3354 cm$^{-1}$ corresponded to the OH stretching vibrations of phenolic compound like gallic acid (David et al., 2014).

X-Ray diffraction

XRD is a very important method to characterize the structure of crystalline materials and used for the lattice parameters analysis of single crystals or the phase texture and stress analysis of sample. XRD pattern of synthesized CuNps from ethanol extract is shown in figure 7. The sample demonstrated a good crystallinity level with diffraction angles of 32.43, 38.6, 44.80, 64.90, and 77.13 which correspond to the characteristic of face centered cubic of copper lines indexed at (111), (200), (200), (311) and (222).

Antimicrobial properties

The phytochemical profile of *M. charantia* fruit have indicated the presence of various secondary metabolites, that are known to have different therapeutic applications such as anti-hemorrhagic, antimicrobial and antioxidant properties (Supraja and Usha, 2013). In the present study, the antimicrobial efficacy CuNps and crude extracts were analysed using agar well and disc diffusion method. The results were represented as follows:
Disc diffusion method

The antimicrobial activity of the crude and copper mediated nanoparticles of *M. charantia* extract were investigated measuring the zones of inhibition of bacterial and fungal species and were presented in table 1.

The antimicrobial activity against *Staphylococcus aureus* showed that CuNps had the highest zone of inhibition of 20.013 mm while the least zone of inhibition was for ethanol crude extract (5.067 mm) (Fig. 8a) and samples where significantly differed when compared at p<0.05.

Similarly, the antimicrobial activity against *E. coli* was also screened (Fig. 8b). The result showed that the zone of inhibition was in the order; ampicillin > CuNps > crude extracts (i.e. 14.03mm > 11.07 mm > 2.83mm). On the other hand, CuNps and crude extracts didn’t have significant inhibitory activity against *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Fig. 8c). The present study also revealed that all the assayed samples showed no activity against the fungi *Aspergillus flavus* (Fig. 8d) and were comparable with studies of Kumar *et al.*, 2010 showing active anti-bactericidal activity but no activity against fungi or yeast. The comparable antimicrobial of the green synthesized CuNps could imply that ethanol is the suitable media for liberation of phytochemical constituents screened (unpublished data) responsible for antimicrobial activity.

The antimicrobial activity of triterpenes depends on interaction between their lipid components with the net surface charge of microbial membranes. Furthermore, the bio-actives might cross the cell membranes, penetrating into the interior of the cell and interact with intracellular sites critical for antibacterial activity (Trombetta *et al.*, 2005). The mechanism by which the nanoparticles were able to penetrate the was due to changes in membrane morphology that significantly increases permeability and affects proper transport through the plasma membrane (Auffan *et al.*, 2009; Brayner *et al.*, 2006), leaving the bacterial cells incapable of properly regulating transport through the plasma membrane and resulting in cell death. It is also said that the nanoparticles penetrates inside the bacteria causing damage to phosphorus and sulfur containing compounds such as DNA (Kirchner *et al.*, 2005).

### Table 1 Antimicrobial activity of samples against selected microorganisms using disc diffusion method

| S. No | Sample                  | *S. aureus* zone of inhibition (mm) | *P. aeruginosa* zone of inhibition (mm) | *E. coli* zone of inhibition (mm) | *A. niger* zone of inhibition (mm) |
|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1     | Crude ethanol extract   | 5.07 ± 0.02 b                      | 2.07 ± 0.05 c                         | 2.83 ± 0.03 c                   | -                                |
| 2     | CuNps                  | 20.013 ± 0.02 a                     | 9.51 ± 0.02 b                         | 11.07 ± 0.04 b                  | -                                |
| 3     | Ampicillin             | 4.97 ± 0.06 c                       | 19.80 ± 0.2 a                         | 14.03 ± 0.04 a                  | -                                |

Key – No Inhibition

**Note:** Values are expressed as mean ± standard deviation of triplicates. Mean values with similar superscripts within a column row do not difference significantly.
**Table 2** Antimicrobial activity of samples against selected microorganisms using agar well diffusion

| S. No. | Sample     | *S. aureus Zone of Inhibition (mm)* | *P. aeruginosa Zone of Inhibition (mm)* | *E. Coli Zone of Inhibition (mm)* | *A. niger Zone of Inhibition (mm)* |
|--------|------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1      | Crude extract | 0.33 ± 0.046<sup>c</sup>            | 2.01 ± 0.017<sup>c</sup>              | -                                | -                                |
| 2      | CuNps       | 10.04 ± 0.036<sup>a</sup>           | 10.53 ± 0.044<sup>a</sup>             | -                                | -                                |
| 3      | Ampicillin  | 7.057 ± 0.051<sup>b</sup>           | 8.17 ± 0.05<sup>b</sup>               | -                                | -                                |

Key – No Inhibition

Note: Values are expressed as mean ± standard deviation of triplicates. Mean values with similar superscripts within a column row do not differ significantly.

**Figure 1** Observed colour change after 24hrs – Formation of CuNps

**Figure 2** U.V Visible spectrum of CuNps synthesized from *M. charantia*
Figure 3 DLS measurement for CuNps synthesized from ethanol extract of M. charantia

Calculation Results

| Peak No. | S.D. Area Ratio | Mean  | S.D. | Mole  |
|----------|----------------|-------|------|-------|
| 1        | 1.00           | 58.4 nm | 25.2 nm | 68.0 nm |
| 2        | —              | — nm  | — nm | — nm  |
| 3        | —              | — nm  | — nm | — nm  |
| Total    | 1.00           | 58.4 nm | 25.2 nm | 68.0 nm |

Figure 4 Zeta potential measurement for CuNps synthesized from ethanol extract of M. charantia

Calculation Results

| Peak No. | Zeta Potential | Electrophoretic Mobility |
|----------|----------------|--------------------------|
| 1        | 8.4 mV         | 1.005010 cm²/sV         |
| 2        | 32.7 mV        | 0.005107 cm²/sV         |

Zeta Potential (Mean) : 30.0 mV
Electrophoretic Mobility mean : 0.000233 cm²/sV

Figure 5 TEM image of CuNps synthesized from M. charantia
Figure 6 FTIR spectrum recorded from CuNps of *M. charantia* extract

![FTIR spectrum](image)

Figure 7 XRD micrograph of CuNps synthesized using ethanol extract of *M. charantia*

![XRD micrograph](image)
Figure.8 Antimicrobial activity of *M. charantia* against different microorganisms

Various researchers have also shown that gram positive bacteria are more susceptible to plant extracts than gram negative bacteria. The cell wall in gram positive bacteria is of a single layer whereas the gram negative cell wall is multi-layered (Parekh and Chanda, 2007).

The other possible mechanism of action, responsible for the enhanced activity of mediated CuNps could be the improved characteristics and morphological properties of nanoscale materials in terms of specificity and better manipulation, increased surface area available for interactions, which enhances bactericidal effect than the large sized particles and thus, they impart cytotoxicity to the microorganisms (Adams *et al.*, 2006; Supraja *et al.*, 2015).

**Agar well diffusion method**

The ethanol extract of *M. charantia* and its derivative CuNps were evaluated for their broad spectrum of activity on selected bacterial and fungal strains using agar well diffusion assay.

*Staphylococcus aureus* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* were sensitive to all the assayed
samples while *E. coli* and *Aspergillus flavus* showed no sensitivity at all (Table 2). This justifies the traditional use of the plant against *S. aureus* with clinical significance against variety of suppurative (pus forming) infections and toxinoses in humans. Not in exception was *P. aeruginosa* which caused a good number of infections such as septic burns and wounds, conjunctivitis, endocarditis, meningitis and urinary tract infections (Michael et al., 1999).

Comparison of inhibition zones of the samples against *S. aureus* shows that the assayed crude extract was not as potent as the derivative CuNps and the standard ampicillin. Maximum inhibition was observed for CuNps (10.057 mm) which differed significantly from ampicillin (7.057 mm) at p < 0.005.

It has been reported that higher plants like *M. charantia* extracts and nanoparticles screened for antimicrobial properties have potentials in protecting consumers from microbial infection and potential applications in food systems (Serra et al., 2008; Lou et al., 2010). The findings in this study may lead to the development of CuNps-based new antimicrobial systems for eco-friendly applications in packaging, preservation and storage of food as well as bactericidal, wound healing and other medical and electronic applications thus making it potentially exciting for industries.

**Acknowledgement**

The authors are thankful to ICAR for the award of African – Indian ICAR International Fellowship to Ms. Flora Glad Ekezie. The authors also thank Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University and Acharya N G Ranga Agricultural University for facilitating the completion of research work.
References

Adams, L.K., Lyon, D.Y and Alvarez, P.J.J. 2006. Comparative eco-toxicity of nanoscale TiO₂, SiO₂ and ZnO water suspensions. Water Res., 40: 3527–3532

Auffan, M., Rose, J., Bottero, J.Y., Lowry, G.V., Jolivet, J.P and Wiesner, M.R. 2009. Towards a definition of inorganic nanoparticles from an environmental, health and safety perspective. Nat Nanotechnol., 4: 634–641.

Bhor, G., Deokar, G., Hinge, S., Singh, L and Nalwade, A. 2014. Green synthesis of silver nanoparticles using fruit extract of bitter gourd and evaluation of their antibacterial activity against human and plant pathogenic bacteria. Int. J. Adv. Scientific and Technical Res., 4: 4.

Brayner, R., Ferrari-Iliou, R., Brivois, N., Djediat, S., Benedetti, M.F and Fievet, F. 2006. Toxicological impact studies based on Escherichia coli bacteria in ultrafine ZnO nanoparticles colloidal medium. Nano Lett., 6: 866–870.

David, S.A., Ponvel, K.M., Fathima, M.A., Anita, S., Ashli, J and Athilakshmi, A. 2014. Biosynthesis of silver nanoparticles by Momordica charantia leaf extract: Characterization and their antimicrobial activities. J. Nat. Prod. Plant Res., 4(6):1-8.

Dey, S.K., Banerjee, D., Chattapadhyay, S and Karmakar, B.2010. Antimicrobial activities of some medicinal plants of West Bengal. Int. J. Pharma and Bio Sci., 1(3): 1-10.

Gin, H. and Rigalleau V. 2000. “Post-prandial hyperglycemia and diabetes” Diabetes and Metabolism, 26: 265-272.

Kirchner, C., Liedl, T., Kudera, S., Pellegrino, T., Munoz, J.A., Gaub, H.E., Stolze, S., Fertig, N and Parak, W.J. 2005. Cytotoxicity of colloidal CdSe and CdSe / ZnS nanoparticles. Nano Lett., 5: 331–338.

Kumar, D.S., Sharathnath, K.V., Yogeswaran, P., Harani, A., Sudhakar, K., Sudha, P and Banji, D. 2010. A Medicinal Potency of Momordica charantia. J. Pharmaceutical Sci. Rev. Res., 1: 2.

Lou, Z., H. Wang, W. Lv, C. Ma, Z. Wang, and S. Chen. 2010. Assessment of antibacterial activity of fractions from burdock leaf against food-related bacteria. Food Control, 21: 1272-1278.

Normanno, G., M. Corrente, G. La Saldana, A. Dambrosio, N.C. Quaglia, A. Parisi, G. Greco, A.L. Bellacicco, S. Virgilio, and G.V. Celano. 2007. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in foods of animal origin product in Italy. Intern. J. Food Microbiol., 117: 219-222.

Ozuasaglam, M.A and Karakoca. K. 2013. Antimicrobial and antioxidant activities of Momordica charantia from Turkey. African J. Biotechnol., 12(13): 1548-1558.

Pandey, S., Oza, G., Mewade, A. and Sharon, M. 2012. Green synthesis of highly stable gold nanoparticles using Momordica charantia as nano fabricator. Archives of Appl. Sci. Res., 2(2):1135-1141.

Parekh, J. and Chanda, S. 2007. In-vitro screening of antibacterial activity of aqueous and alcoholic extracts of various Indian plant species against selected pathogens from Enterobacteriaceae. African J. Microbiol. Res., 1(6): 92-99.

Patra, A.K. 2012. An overview of antimicrobial properties of different classes of phytochemicals. In: Patra AK (Ed.), Dietary phytochemicals and microbes, XII; 1-32.

Pooloth, J. 2013. Biosynthesis of silver nanoparticles using Trigonella foenum graecum and the determination of their antimicrobial activity. Int. J. Sci. Res.,
characterization and evaluation of effect of phytoogenic zinc nanoparticles on soil exo-enzymes. *Appl. Nanosci.*, 4: 819–827.

Supraja, P. and Usha, R. 2013. Antibacterial and phytochemical screening from leaf and fruit extracts of *Momordica Charantia* *Int. J. Pharm. Bio Sci.*, 4(1): 787–793.

Supraja, N., Prasad, T.N.V.K.V and Krishna, T.G and David, E. 2015. Synthesis, characterization, and evaluation of the antimicrobial efficacy of *Boswellia ovalifoliolata* stem bark-extract-mediated zinc oxide nanoparticles. *Appl. Nanosci.*, 204: 15-20.

Taylor, L. 2002. Herbal secrets of the rainforest. In: Texas A, editor. Bitter melon (*Momordica charantia*) 2nd ed. USA: Sage Press; pp. 1–100.

Trombetta, D., Castelli, F., Sarpietro, M.G., Venuti, V et al., 2005. Mechanisms of Antibacterial action of three monoterpenes. *Antimicrobial Agents Chemometer*, 49(6): 2474-2478.

**How to cite this article:** Flora-Glad Chizoba Ekezie, W. Jessie Suneetha, K. Uma Maheswari, B. Anila Kumari and T.N.V.K.V. Prasad. 2017. Green Synthesis of Copper Nanoparticles Using *Momordica charantia* Fruit Extracts and Evaluation of Their Anti-Microbial Efficacy. *Int.J.Curr.Microbiol.App.Sci.* 6(4): 99-109. doi: [https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcmas.2017.604.012](https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcmas.2017.604.012)