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Herbal Drugs With Anti Ulcer Activity

Dilpreet Kaur, A. C. Rana, Nidhi Sharma and Sunil Kumar

**Dilpreet Kaur, A. C. Rana,
 Nidhi Sharma and Sunil Kumar**
 Rayat Institute of Pharmacy,
 Railmajra, S. B. S. Nagar, Punjab,
 India.

ABSTRACT

A peptic ulcer is an erosion in a segment of the gastro intestinal mucosa, typically in the stomach (gastric ulcer) or first few centimeters of duodenum (duodenal ulcer) that penetrates through the muscularis mucosae. Contrary to popular belief, ulcer is not caused by spicy food but instead is most commonly due to either an infection or long term use of medications. Standard treatment is a combination of drugs including antibiotics and a proton pump inhibitors. Literature suggests that number of synthetic drugs are used in the management of peptic ulcers but elicit several adverse effects. Therefore Indian herbal plants stand out as being exceptional for its ethnic, ethobotanical and ethno-pharmaceutical use. In this review attempts have been made to know about some plants which may be used in treatment or prevention of peptic ulcers. Various plants like *Cynodon dactylon*, *Ocimum sanctum*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, *Ficus religiosa* proved active in antiulcer therapy.

Keywords: Peptic ulcer, medicinal plants, antiulcer activity.

INTRODUCTION

Peptic ulcer is defined as a break off in the continuity of the mucosa of stomach or duodenum as a consequence of some medications like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), gastric acids and pepsin finally causes lesions in intestinal mucosa (Verma *et al.*, 2010). Basically, word "peptic" is derived from Greek term "peptikos" whose meaning is related to digestion. Various reports indicates that old age group patients are more prone to gastric ulcer. Younger individuals have higher risk of duodenal ulcers (Richardson, 1990, Lunevicius and Morkevicius, 2005, Pahwa *et al.*, 2011). The pathogenesis of peptic ulcer disease includes a complex imbalance between gastric offensive factors like acid, pepsin secretion, *Helicobacter pylori* (*H.pylori*), bile salts, ethanol, some medications like NSAIDS, lipid peroxidation, nitric oxide (NO) and defensive mucosal factors like prostaglandins (PG's), gastric mucus, cellular renovation, blood flow, mucosal cell shedding, glycoproteins, mucin secretion, proliferation and antioxidant enzymes like catalase (CAT), superoxide dismutase (SOD) and glutathione levels (Marietta and John, 2010). Peptic ulcer can be categorized on the basis of location and on the severity of disease. Numerous other factors are also responsible for progression of peptic ulcers like tumor necrosis factor- α (TNF α), reactive oxygen species (ROS), release of histamine, incidence of apoptosis and bile acids secretion (Singha *et al.*, 2008; Fatemeh *et al.*, 2011).

For Correspondence

Mr. Sunil Kumar
 Assistant Professor
 Department of Pharmacology
 Rayat Institute of Pharmacy
 Railmajra, S. B. S Nagar.
 Pin Code-144514
 Contact No. +91-9815520843
 Fax- 188125001

Evidences indicate that NSAIDs-induced ulcers are very common (Griffin, 1991). NSAIDs helps in progression of ulcer by conquering the expression of enzyme cyclo-oxygenase (COX) which has been documented to inhibit the conversion of arachidonic acid (AA) to PG's (Vane and Botting, 1995) that impairs the mucosal barrier and results in corrosive action with pepsin that together are responsible for progression of peptic ulcers. There is pronounced evidence that oxygen derived free radicals plays a crucial role in the pathogenesis of the injury of various tissues, including the digestive system (Vaananenn *et al.*, 1991). The role of TNF- α in the pathogenesis of gastric ulcer is well established. TNF- α is a cytokine which initiates the inflammatory process through stimulation of migration of leukocytes into inflammatory sites therefore plays a significant role in formation of gastric ulcers (Lyckova *et al.*, 2010). Besides TNF- α also activates extrinsic apoptotic pathway through caspase-3 initiation which leads to gastric injury (Hwang *et al.*, 2008). Increased TNF- α activate caspase-3, which is one of the major effector caspases involved in apoptotic cell death. Finally, caspases leads to neutrophil activation through various chemoattractants thus a vicious cycle exists which leads to gastric damage (Abuzarova *et al.*, 2008). Moreover *H.pylori* is too implicated in peptic ulcer progression. *H.pylori* is a gram negative bacillus, motile, microaerophilic, flagellated, spiral shaped bacterium, which secretes the distinct enzyme urease that converts urea to ammonia, which further reduces the acidity of stomach, making it sanatorium for *H. pylori* (Pandey *et al.*, 2010). Type I strains of *H.Pylori* possess a pathogenic activity, that encodes the effector protein cytotoxin-associated gene A (cagA). After translocation into the host cell, cagA effects cell shape, increases cell motility, disturbs cell junctional activity and thus responsible for gastric carcinomas and gastric ulcers (Buti *et al.*, 2011).

There are enormous chemical agents available for the treatment of peptic ulcers but proclaim serious side effects like H₂ antagonists is the precipitating cause of impotence, headache, skin rash, arrhythmias where as the use of proton pump inhibitors is a unforeseeable cause for hypergastrinemia and atrophic gastritis. The use of antacids leads to stomach distention, belching, constipation and there is risk of ulcer perforation and other drugs like anticholinergics induce constipation, dry mouth, urinary retention, blurred vision, xerostomia and precipitation of glaucoma (Reilly, 1999, Franco and Richter, 1998). Ulcer protectives causes constipation, triggers diarrhoea, dizziness, edema and hypophosphatemia where as abdominal cramps, uterine bleeding and abortion is the probable cause of prostaglandin analogues (Akthar *et al.*, 1992). So herbal drugs have preserved their importance due to relatively less toxic, better cultural acceptability, better compatibility with human body, lesser adverse effects, economical, effective and easy availability (Pandey *et al.*, 2008). This paper outlines the properties of some medicinal plants that exhibit antiulcer activity. Although extensive research has been conducted in this area, recent studies with significant findings involving *Cynodon dactylon*, *Ocimum sanctum*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, *Ficus religiosa*, are emphasized here.

Cynodon dactylon

Cynodon dactylon (L.) pers. is a creeping grass found in warm climates all over the world (Singh *et al.*, 2009). It belongs to the family Poaceae. It is also known as Durva grass, Bermuda grass, Dog's Tooth grass, Bahama grass, Devil's grass, Couch grass, Indian Doab, Scutch grass, Dhub, Doob and Durba in different regions (Oudhia, 2003). It is the most sacred plant of India next to tulsi. The plant contains crude proteins, carbohydrates, mineral constituents, oxides of magnesium, phosphorous, calcium, sodium, potassium, vitamin-c, carotene, hydroquinone, levoglucosone, furfural, hexadecanoic acid, ethyl ester, linolenic acid, ethyl ester and d-mannose (Shabi *et al.*, 2010). The plant has been long used in the traditional medicines to treat various ailments such as cancer, convulsions, cough, cramps, diarrhea, dropsy, dysentery, epilepsy, headache, hemorrhage, hypertension, hysteria, measles, rubella, snake bite, sores, stones, tumors, urogenital disorders, warts and wounds (Chopra *et al.*, 1999, Pal, 2009). Advanced studies on this plant have been reported that it possess antiulcer, antidiabetic, antidiarrheal, diuretic, antimicrobial, immunomodulatory, antiepileptic, anti-inflammatory, anti arrhythmic, antibacterial, chemoprotective and hepatoprotective activities (Parekh *et al.*, 2005, Patil *et al.*, 2005, Parekh *et al.*, 2005, Singh *et al.*, 2007, Najifi *et al.*, 2008, Surendra *et al.*, 2008, Kumar *et al.*, 2004, Ravindra *et al.*, 2009, Baskar and Ignacimuthu, 2010, Kumar *et al.*, 2010, Santhi and annapoorani, 2010, Garg and paliwal, 2011). Alcoholic extract of *C. dactylon* was screened for antiulcer activity in albino rats at dose level of 200,400 and 600 mg kg⁻¹ b.wt (Patil *et al.*, 2005). The extract at 400 mg kg⁻¹ and 600 mg kg⁻¹ showed significant (>0.001) antiulcer activity as compared to the standard drug ranitidine. The alcoholic extract inhibited ulceration by inhibiting output volume and total acidity. The ulcer healing activity of the plant extract may be due to antisecretory property associated with an enhancement of the local healing process. Aerial parts of Bermuda grass herb are reported to contain flavonoids (Nair, 1995). The preliminary phytochemical investigation of the alcoholic extract of bermuda grass showed the presence of flavanoids, which may be responsible for antiulcer property. It is hoped that *C. dactylon* would serve as a useful tool for the researchers for proper evaluation of the plant and for the development of new, safer, potent and cost effective drugs in future.

Ocimum sanctum

Ocimum sanctum, commonly known as *Tulsi* is the most popular member of the genus *ocimum* and is considered as a sacred plant by the Hindus in India (Singh *et al.*, 2011). The name tulsi is derived from 'Sanskrit' which means "matchless one" (Bansod and Rai, 2008). The plant grows wild in India but it is widely cultivated in home and temple gardens. There are about 160 species in this genus broadly dispersed over the warm region of the globe *ocimum sanctum*, *ocimum gratissimum* (Ramtulsi), *ocimum* (Dulaltulsi), *ocimum basilicum* (bantulsi), *kilimandscharicum*, *ocimum americanum*, *ocimum camphora*, *ocimum miranthum* are examples of known important species of genus *ocimum* which

grows in different parts of world and has been used extensively used in traditional medicine for a wide range of ailments (Shahedur *et al.*, 2011, Vinod *et al.*, 2011). The whole parts of plant such as leaves, flowers, stem, root, seeds etc are known to possess a wide range of pharmacological properties and have been used by traditional medical practitioners as a expectorant, analgesic, anticancer, antiasthmatic, antiemetic, diaphoretic, antidiabetic, antifertility, hepatoprotective, hypotensive, hypolipidmic antistress agents (Heinrich, 2009). The chemical composition of *O. sanctum* is highly complex, containing many nutrients and other biologically active chemically compounds but eugenol is the principle constituent of tulsi, has been found to be largely responsible for the management of various types of diseases (Lalit *et al.*, 2011). Tulsi has specific aromatic odour because of presence of essential or volatile oil, mainly concentrated in the leaf. The leaf contains eugenol, euginal (also called as eugenic acid), urosolic acid, carvacrol, linalool, limatrol, caryophyllene, methyl carvicol (also called as estragol) while the seed volatile oil have fatty acids and sitosterol, in addition seed mucilage contains small amounts of sugars and the anthocyanins are present in green leaves (Yanpallewar *et al.*, 2004). *Ocimum* is known as general vitalizer and increases physical endurance but it does not contain caffeine or other stimulants. The stem and leaves contain number of constituents including saponins, flavonoids, triterpenoids and tannins (Shishoda *et al.*, 2003). In addition it contains phenolic compounds which exhibit antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities (Dhar *et al.*, 1968). It also contains two water soluble flavonoids orientin and vicenin shows protection against radiation induced chromosomal damage in human blood lymphocytes (Uma *et al.*, 2000). Advanced studies on this plant have been reported that it possess antiulcer activity, insecticidal activity, antiemetic activity, antistress activity, analgesic activity, antioxidant activity, heart tonic activity, antidiabetic activity, antitubercular activity, immunomodulator activity and antifertility effect (Rajeswari, 1952, Sen, 1993, Singh, 1995, Hussain *et al.*, 2001, Prakash and Gupta, 2005, Glolade and lockwood, 2008, Shankar *et al.*, 2009, Khan *et al.*, 2010, Tabassum *et al.*, 2010, Vinod *et al.*, 2011). A team of scientist evaluated the antiulcerogenic activity in Aspirin (ASP), Alcohol (AI), cold restraint (CRU), pyloric ligation (PL) induced gastric ulcer models in rats, histamine-induced (HST) duodenal ulcer in guinea pigs and ulcer healing activity in acetic-acid induced (AC) chronic-ulcer model (Dharmani *et al.*, 2004). *O. sanctum* significantly reduces acid secretion and enhances mucus secretion (Madal *et al.*, 1993). It has been reported that fixed oil of *O. sanctum* possess significant antiulcer activity against Aspirin, Indomethacin, alcohol (ethanol 50%), histamine, reserpine, serotonin or stress-induced ulcers in rats (Singh *et al.*, 2007). The fixed oil shows antiulcer activity due to its lipoxygenase inhibitory, histamine antagonistic and anti-secretory effects (Singh and Majumdar *et al.*, 1999). Research must be attempted towards purifications of tulsi components and their characterization in terms of chemical nature and bio-pharmacological activities. Probably such natural components might prove to be potentially beneficial but comparatively less toxic. So plants belonging to

Ocimum genus could contribute a lot towards economy and healthy problem.

Glycyrrhiza glabra

Glycyrrhiza glabra is most commonly used herb in western and eastern herbal medicine and has been used in the management of various diseases for more than 4000 years. The name *glycyrrhiza* is derived from the ancient greek term “glykos” meaning sweet, and “rhiza” meaning root (Lakshmi *et al.*, 2011). It is commonly known as licorice root, réglisse (French), lacrosse (German), sweet wood. It is from the *leguminosae* family which belongs to the genus containing fourteen species. Licorice also contains amino acids, asparagin, bitters, essential oil, fat, female hormone estrogen, glycosides, gums, mucilage, protein resin, saponins, starches, steroids, sterols, tannin, volatile oil, flavonoids include liquiritin, isoliquiritin, liquiritigenin and rhamnoliquiritin and other present flavonoids are glucoliquiritin, apioside, prenyllicoflavone A, shin flavanone and shinptero carpen glycosides, female hormone estrogen, protein resin, saponins, sterols, yellow colouring matter- the yellow colour is due to the presence of anthoxanthin glycoside known as isoliquiritin (Isbrucker RA and Burdock GA, 2006). The root of *G. glabra* contains the chief constituent known as glycyrrhizin which is 60 times sweeter than sugar. In traditional siddha system of medicine, licorice is used as a demulcent, expectorant, antitussive, laxative and sweetener. It is also used in the treatment of acute respiratory problems, gastric ulcers, gastritis, inflammatory conditions in general and adrenal exhaustion (Fukai *et al.*, 2002) Components of licorice root have both estrogenic and anti-estrogenic activity. So it is therefore an important herb in the management of hormone related female disorders. *G. glabra* exhibit wide spectrum of activities antiulcer-activity, antioxidant-activity, immunostimulatory effects, antihyperglycemic, anticonvulsant, antiinflammatory, antimicrobial, anticarcinogenic effects (Segal *et al.*, 1985, Demizu *et al.*, 1988, Chopra and Simon, 2000, Ambawade *et al.* , 2002, Taro *et al.*, 2002, Krausse *et al.*, 2004, Shirazi *et al.*, 2007, Panneerselvam *et al.*, 2009). Bafna PA were studied pepticare, which is a herbomineral formulation of the ayurveda medicine consisting of the herbal drugs *glycyrrhiza glabra* linn, *Embllica officinalis* and *tinospora cordifolia* at various doses (125, 250,500,1000m/kg, P.O) of pepticare on gastric on gastric secretion and gastric ulcers in pylorus-ligation and on ethanol-induced ulcers (Bafna and Balaraman, 2005). Bennett demonstrated deglycyrrhizinized licorice using a rat model of Aspirin-induced gastric mucosal damage (Bennett *et al.*, 1980). He suggested that several components exist in the extract which promote gastric healing, although in consistencies are apparent between these studies. *Glabra* reduces stomach secretion produces thick protective mucus which covers the lining of stomach and therefore protects from peptic ulcers and other inflammatory diseases. Further it has been reported to raising the local concentration of prostaglandins which promotes mucous secretion and cell proliferation in the stomach (Khare, 2004). Presence of such a wide range of chemical compounds indicates that the plant

could serve as a “lead” for the development of novel agents having good efficacy in various disorders in the coming years.

Ficus religiosa

Ficus religiosa, commonly known as “peepal tree” is one of the foremost plants utilized from antiquity till to date (Ghani, 1998). It is also known by various other names as bo tree, bodhi tree, Buddha tree, sacred tree etc. It belongs to family moraceae (Hamed, 2011). The bark of *F. religiosa* is reputed to have a number of chemical constituents. It contains tannins, saponins, flavonoids, steroids, terpenoids and cardiac glycosides (Ruby *et al.*, 2000). The bark has also been reported to contain bergapton, bergapton, lanosterol, β - sitosterol, stigmasterol, lupen-3-one, β -sitosterol- α -glucoside (phytosterolin), vitamin K1, lupeol, lupeol acetate, α -amyrin acetate (Joseph and Justin, 2010). *Ficus religiosa* has been extensively used in traditional medicine for the management of various types of diseases like diarrhoea, asthma, cough, toothache, migraine, in gastric problems, haematuria, diabetes, diarrhoea, leucorrhoea, anxiety, cardiac tonic, vomiting (Pandit *et al.*, 2010, Khan *et al.*, 2011). *F. religiosa* possess a wide range of pharmacological activities anti-ulcer activity, anti-convulsant activity, anti-inflammatory activity, anti-microbial activity, anti-anthelmintic activity, anti-asthmatic and anti-amnesic (Malhotra *et al.*, 1960, Viswanathan *et al.*, 1990, Hemaiswarya *et al.*, 2009, Kaur *et al.*, 2010, Khan *et al.*, 2011, Patil *et al.*, 2011, Sawarkar *et al.*, 2011). The alcoholic extract of *F. religiosa* was screened for antiulcer activity in swiss albino rats against pylorus ligation induced ulcers, ethanol induced ulcers and aspirin-induced ulcers at dose level of 250 mg/kg and 560 mg/kg. The alcoholic extract of *F. religiosa* inhibited ulceration by significantly decreasing the gastric volume, total acidity, free acidity and ulcer index (Saha and Goswami, 2010). The ethanolic extract of stem bark of *F. religiosa* also exhibited potential antiulcer activity exhibited potential antiulcer activity. The antiulcer activity of *F. religiosa* was evaluated in vivo against cold restrained stress and indomethacin-induced gastric ulcers and pylorus ligation assay. The extract (100, 200 and 400 mg/kg) significantly reduced the ulcer index in all assay used (Khan *et al.*, 2011). Since *F. religiosa* is a non toxic, highly promising natural crude drug having a wide spectrum of biological functions. It is expected that it may find application as a novel drug in the near future to control various diseases.

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