A Comparative Antibacterial Activity of Three Common Spices Extract and their Anti-Proliferative and Apoptotic Effectiveness against Human Breast Adenocarcinoma Cells

Shabana Bano1*, Asif Jafri2*, Nashrah Ahmad1, AK Sharma1, Md Arshad2

INTRODUCTION

The plants are the imported natural resource and have been extensively studied to develop therapeutic natural therapies in the last few decades.1 Spices are also the plant-derived products and extensively used in flavouring various foodstuffs. The pungent spices have been widely used in food safeguarding as well as in embalming in India and other Islands.2,3 Spices contain the essential oil which has been recognized to possess preventive and therapeutic properties on human health. Spices have been recognized for a wide range of therapeutic effects viz. anti-oxidant, anti-microbial, anti-carcinogenic, anti-mutagenic, anti-inflammatory, and hypo-lipidemic roles.2 Basically, phytochemicals are actually responsible for medicinal value of every potent medicinal plant and their pharmacological properties are mainly depends on the phytoconstituents they possess.1 It has been reported that various spices retain anti-microbial properties.4 Therefore, spices are usually used in warmer climate countries, where there is the chance of more infectious disease. Using herbs as a potent anti-microbial agent has played a key role in almost every culture on earth; including Asia, Europe, Africa, and America.5 Approximately 80% of the prescription depends on traditional medicine in the healthcare system and almost all traditional medicine comprises of crude plant extracts or sometimes its pure bioactive components.6 The increasing side effect of chemotherapeutic agents and antibiotic drug resistance shown by various pathogenic microbes led to the transmission of many other promising natural compounds for antimicrobial effect and some natural products were found to have potent against various pathogenic micro-organisms.7,8 The spices are the natural and common anti-microbial agents present in our diet that imparts flavour to the food as well also provides anti-microbial immunity against several pathogens.9,10 The anti-microbial activities of several dietary spices are due to occurrence of numerous natural potent bioactive components.11 The plant origin drugs are often considered to be least toxic or without adverse effects as compared to synthetic ones.12 Several findings have reported the antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and immuno-modulatory effects of spices that might be responsible for the prevention as well as therapeutic agent against several cancers, including breast, lung, cervix, and prostate cancers, etc.13

In this study, we have examined the anti-microbial activity of three common Indian spices extract CAE, CIE and FEE against selected bacterial strains along with anti-proliferative and apoptotic potential in MCF-7 cells of human breast adenocarcinoma.

ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study was performed to analyse the antibacterial potential as well as the anti-proliferative and apoptotic efficacy of three common spices viz. Cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum), Cinnamon (Cinnamomum verum) and Fennel (Foeniculum vulgare). Methods: Antibacterial activity was determined by well diffusion assay against selected bacterial strains. Anti-proliferative activity was evaluated by cell viability assay and the apoptotic effect was observed by nuclear fragmentation analysis in MCF-7 cells. Results: The antibacterial activity result revealed that Cinnamon extract (CIE) showed maximum antibacterial activity against selected test organism followed by Cardamom (CAE) and Fennel (FEE). The cell viability results revealed that FEE induces the highest cytotoxicity (IC50 73.9 µg/ml) against MCF-7 cells, while CIE showed the lowest efficacy (IC50 98.2 µg/ml) as compared to control. Conclusion: The findings revealed that CIE has the most potent antibacterial efficacy, whereas FEE was found to be a more potent anti-proliferative and apoptotic agent against human breast carcinoma MCF-7 cells.

Key words: Antibacterial, Anti-proliferative, Apoptotic, Cell viability, Nuclear fragmentation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Collection and identification of plant samples
The three common spices Cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum), Cinnamon (Cinnamomum verum) and Fennel (Foeniculum vulgare) were purchased from local grocery shop of Lucknow and were authenticated by Professor Y. K. Sharma, Botanist and former Head, Department of Botany, University of Lucknow. All spices samples were gently washed with distilled water, shed dried, ground into fine powder and collected into airtight containers for further up to extract preparation.

Extract preparation
The aqueous extract of all three selected spices was prepared as per previously described protocol with slight modification. Briefly, 100 g of each powdered spice was soaked in 500 ml double distilled water in a separate conical flask overnight, some drops of toluene were also added, to prevent any fungal infection. Afterwards, the flasks were placed on a rotary plate shaker for 48 h at 150 rpm. Subsequently, the solutions of spices were filtered with the help of Whatman filter paper No-1 and the extracts were concentrated on a rotary plate evaporator in vacuum at 37°C.

Test micro-organisms used
Four potent bacterial strains were used for the determination of anti-microbial activity. Escherichia coli (NCIM 2065), Bacillus pumilus (NCIM 9369) and Listeria monocytogenes (NCIM 5279) were obtained from NCL Pune. Enteropathogenic E. coli E 2347 (EPEC) was obtained from KGMU, Lucknow.

Well diffusion method for anti-microbial activity
The anti-microbial effect of CAE, CIE and FEE were done by a previous method with some minor modifications. Concisely, 20 ml sterile Mueller Hinton Agar (pH 7.0) was poured in 90 mm sterile Petri plates and then kept overnight for any contamination detection. Overnight cultures of mentioned selected bacterial strains having 0.5 OD were swabbed over sterile Agar plates. A cork borer having 6 mm diameter was used for wells formation and three wells were formed on plates, first for aqueous sample extract, second for positive control and third for negative control. Thereafter, 50 mg concentrated aqueous extract of each sample was solubilized in 1 ml of 0.5% Dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) and 40 µl of it poured in first well, 20 mg Streptomycin was solubilized in 1 ml of 0.5% DMSO and 40 µl of it poured in second well as positive control and 40 µl of 0.5% DMSO poured in third well as a negative control.

In vitro cell culture
The cell line of human breast carcinoma (MCF-7 cells) is extensively used for in vitro cytotoxicity assessment. The MCF-7 cells were obtained from NCCS, Pune and were cultured in Dulbecco’s Modified Eagle’s medium (DMEM) supplemented with 10% Fetal bovine serum (FBS), 5% CO₂ and 95% humid air in a CO₂ incubator at 37°C.

SRB assay for cellular viability analysis
Sulforhodamine B (SRB) assay was performed to detect the anti-proliferative and apoptotic activity of CAE, CIE and FEE against MCF-7 cells based on protein content. Briefly, 1×10⁴ MCF-7 cells per well were plated in 96 wells plate for overnight. After overnight incubation, the cells were treated with different concentrations viz. 25, 50, 75 and 100 µg/ml of CAE, CIE and FEE for 24 h. Thereafter, cell monolayers were incubated with 10% trichloroacetic acid for 20 min and then SRB dye was added to each well for 30 min. The wells were gently washed with 1% acetic acid to remove excess dye. Afterwards, the protein-bound substrate was solubilized in tris base solution (10 mM) and absorbance was read with the help of ELISA microplate reader at 510 nm.

The percentage viability of MCF-7 cells was calculated by following formulae:

\[
\text{% cell viability} = \left[ 1 - \frac{\text{OD sample}}{\text{OD control}} \right] \times 100
\]

The percent cell viability was plotted against the respective concentration of selected spice extracts. The 50% inhibition of viable cells (IC₅₀) was evaluated by plotting the graph of concentration of each spice extract against percent inhibition of MCF-7 cells.

Cell morphology study
The cellular morphology of MCF-7 cells was analysed after treated with various concentrations of CAE, CIE and FEE. Succinctly, MCF-7 cells were seeded at 1×10⁴ cells in each well of 96 wells culture plate and then treated with 25, 50, 75 and 100 µg/ml of CAE, CIE and FEE. After 24 h incubation, the morphological changes were examined by the use of an inverted phase contrast microscope (Nikon Ti-S, Japan).

Nuclear fragmentation analysis
The apoptotic activity of CAE, CIE and FEE was analysed by 4,6-diamidino-2-phenylindole dihydrochloride (DAPI) dye on MCF-7 cells of breast carcinoma. Briefly, the cells were seeded and treated with selected effective doses of CAE, CIE and FEE for 24 h. After the incubation period, the cells were fixed in PFA and then incubated for 10 min in permeabilizing buffer. Afterwards, 10 mM DAPI dye was added to each well and then photomicrographs were captured under Nikon fluorescent microscope.

Statistical analysis
All the experiments were performed in triplicates and data were implied as means ± SEM. The data were analyzed with the help of GraphPad Prism software. The ANOVA (one-way analysis of variance) was applied and a P value less than 0.05 were deliberated as statistically significant.

RESULTS
Anti-microbial effect
The anti-microbial activity result revealed that all tested spices possess potent antibacterial effect against selected bacterial strains (Table 1, Figure 3). The CIE showed significant antibacterial effect against all selected strains of bacteria with diverse degree of sensitivity, maximum activity was observed against E. coli (23.83 ± 0.57) followed by Listeria monocytogenes (23.3 ± 0.92) and least against Bacillus pumilus (20.37 ± 0.61). Whereas, CAE showed moderate activity and its maximum activity was seen on Enteropathogenic E. coli (21.62 ±0.93) and least for E. coli (17.5 ± 0.69); however, FEE showed least anti-bacterial activity and its maximum activity was found against Listeria monocytogenes (17.37 ± 0.43) and least against E. coli (11.43 ± 0.27).

Cell morphology analysis
Cell morphology study reveals that all selected spices CAE, CIE and FEE induce the cellular alterations in the morphology of breast carcinoma MCF-7 cells in a concentration-dependent manner (Figure 1A, B and C). The typical morphological features of apoptosis were observed in breast carcinoma cells viz. alteration in cellular morphology, cells acquired round shape detached from the surface, as compared to the elongated and spindle-shaped untreated MCF-7 cells suggests the cellular apoptosis. As evident from the photomicrographs, these selected spices extract at higher doses i.e., 75 and 100 µg/ml concentrations induced more cell death whereas, on another hand, at lower concentration (25 and 50 µg/ml) induces lesser cytotoxicity as compared to control. As compared to all selected spices, the FEE induces more cytotoxicity in MCF-7 cells as compared to CAE and CIE.
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**Table 1: Anti-microbial activity of Cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum), Cinnamon (Cinnamomum verum) and Fennel (Foeniculum vulgare) extract (CAE, CIE and FEE) on selected bacterial strains measured by well diffusion assay. The values are expressed as mean ± SD of three replicates.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Microorganism used</th>
<th>Diameter of zone of inhibition for test compound CAE (in mm)</th>
<th>Diameter of zone of inhibition for test compound CIE (in mm)</th>
<th>Diameter of zone of inhibition for test compound FEE (in mm)</th>
<th>Diameter of zone of inhibition for positive control i.e., Streptomycin (in mm)</th>
<th>Diameter of zone of inhibition for negative control i.e., DMSO (in mm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Escherichia coli</em></td>
<td>17.5 ± 0.69</td>
<td>23.8 ± 0.58</td>
<td>11.4 ± 0.27</td>
<td>25.3 ± 0.88</td>
<td>NI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enteropathogenic <em>E. coli</em> (EPEC)</td>
<td>21.6 ± 0.93</td>
<td>23.4 ± 0.54</td>
<td>15.7 ± 0.95</td>
<td>27.4 ± 0.33</td>
<td>NI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Bacillus pumilus</em></td>
<td>18.1 ± 0.83</td>
<td>20.4 ± 0.61</td>
<td>12.4 ± 0.49</td>
<td>23.1 ± 0.66</td>
<td>NI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Listeria monocytogenes</em></td>
<td>18.6 ± 0.92</td>
<td>23.3 ± 0.93</td>
<td>17.4 ± 0.44</td>
<td>20.9 ± 0.333</td>
<td>NI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results are given as mean ± SD of zone of inhibition in mm (n=3)

NI- No Inhibition (0 mm value was used for statistical purpose)

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**Figure 1:** Anti-proliferative effect of Cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*), Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*) and Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) extract (CAE, CIE and FEE) via alterations in the cellular viability of MCF-7, breast carcinoma cells. (A, B and C) Morphological alterations in MCF-7 cells after treated with CAE, CIE and FEE at 25, 50, 75 and 100 µg/ml concentrations. (D) The percent cell viability of MCF-7 cells was measured after the exposure of CAE, CIE and FEE by SRB assay. The three independent experiments were performed and the values are represented as means ± SEM, **p < 0.01** and ***p < 0.001** as compared with the control.

**Figure 2:** Nuclear apoptosis in CAE, CIE and FEE treated MCF-7 cells stained with DAPI dye. (A) The fluorescent photomicrographs showing the fragmented and condensed nuclei (indicated by red arrows) of MCF-7 cells treated with 75 µg/ml and 100 µg/ml concentrations of CAE, CIE and FEE. (B) The statistical data express percent of apoptotic cells at different concentrations of CAE, CIE and FEE with respect to untreated cells. As a minimum, three independent experiments were performed and the values are expressed as means ± SEM, **p < 0.01** and ***p < 0.001** as compared to the control.

**Figure 3:** Anti-microbial effect of Cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*), Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*) and Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) extract (CAE, CIE and FEE) by the comparative length of Zone of Inhibition against selected bacterial strains. The values are expressed as mean ± SD of three replicates.

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**Cell viability analysis**

The result of % cell viability exhibits that CAE, CIE, and FEE decrease the cell viability of breast carcinoma cells in a concentration-dependent manner, as depicted in Table 2. The SRB assay also supports the morphological analysis data and FEE was found to be the most cytotoxic and the 50% inhibitory concentration (IC$_{50}$) calculated as 73.9 µg/ml against MCF-7 cell line followed by CAE 86.8 µg/ml and CIE (98.2 µg/ml) respectively (Figure 1D).

**Nuclear Condensation assay**

The result of nuclear condensation revealed the apoptotic cell death in MCF-7 cells of human breast carcinoma. As depicted in Figure 2A, showing condensed and fragmented nuclear apoptotic bodies in MCF-7 cells after treated with selected doses of CAE, CIE and FEE advocates the cellular apoptosis. The quantitative fragmented and condensed nuclei exhibited that CAE induced 14.66% and 22.00%, whereas, CIE induced 11.33% and 19.66% at 75 and 100 µg/ml concentrations, with respect to the untreated control cells (Figure 2B). The FEE induces the highest cytotoxicity and induces about 19.33% and 29.66% apoptotic cells at 75 and 100 µg/ml concentrations. Induction of condensed and fragmented apoptotic nuclei in human breast carcinoma MCF-7 cells, suggests these spices extract encouraged apoptotic cell death.
DISCUSSION

There is an increasing need for naturally derived bioactive compounds for pharmacological application because synthetic treatments have their own side effect. The established therapies cause severe side effects and hence strong alternative therapies are required.21 The plant-derived compounds provide a vast prospect in the production of safe therapeutic drugs, that can cure various diseases without or least side effect.22 Plant products or phytochemicals have the potency to encourage various biological activities because of the capability to diffuse through the cell membrane. Spices are the plant-derived product and contain various bioactive phytoconstituents such as flavones, flavonoids, terpenoids, and alkaloids etc.23 Presence of these phytochemicals in these spices made them a promising agent for various pharmacological activities. The various therapeutic effects of spices have been reported which includes antibacterial, antifungal, anti-emetic, anti-ulcer, antiplatelet, anti-pyretic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and cytotoxic properties.24 Various previous studies have also displaying the antibacterial and bactericidal effect of some potent spices and herbs towards various pathogenic bacteria.3 In this study, we have used three spices cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum), cinnamon (Cinnamomum verum) and fennel (Foeniculum vulgare) extract (CAE, CIE and FEE) for their anti-microbial and cytotoxic activity. The result of antimicrobial activity reveals that these spices significantly inhibit the growth of all the strains of bacteria in a dose-dependent manner. Among these three selected spices, CIE was found to be the most effective as compared to CAE and FEE. Recently, it has been reported that cinnamon, common household spice has been known to possess many medicinal properties. In a previous study, it was found that the cinnamon extract was found to be the most anti-bacterial effect and inhibits five pathogenic bacteria (S. aureus, L. monocytogenes, Campylobacter jejuni, Salmonella enteritidis, E. coli), having a bacteriostatic concentration of 0.075% or less against all selected spices.25 Another study also suggests cinnamon as a potent antibacterial activity against acne bacteria.26 A previous study reported anti-microbial activity of essential oils of cinnamon bark against Porphyromonas gingivalis.27 The major constituent of cinnamon is cinnamaldehyde, known for potent anti-microbial activity.28 The results obtained from the experiment also support the hypothesis that spices have an inhibitory effect on diseased causing bacteria. In the Previous study, it has been shown that antimicrobial activity of fourteen spices including cardamom, cinnamon, and fennel by agar diffusion method and it was found that cinnamon exhibits stronger anti-microbial properties than cardamom and fennel in well diffusion assay which is in agreement with results of our experiments.29

Spices are not only conveying aroma, colour, taste to food preparations and sometimes curb undesirable odours but also afford various health benefits to human health. Spices can be allied in the prevention and remedy of various chronic diseases viz. diabetes, cancer and heart diseases deprived of apprehension of severe side effects as caused by various synthetic drugs.30 ‘Ayurveda’ the original native Indian medicine system, uses various herbs and spices in blends as potent preventive and curative agents.31 But detailed comparative studies regarding the anti-microbial and cytotoxic activity of cinnamon, cardamom, and fennel are not available. Therefore, we have selected three potent spices cardamom, cinnamon and fennel for their comparative anti-microbial and apoptotic effect against human breast carcinoma cells.

In case of cytotoxicity, fennel showed the highest cytotoxicity on MCF-7 cell lines and lowest efficacy showed by cinnamon which is just reversed in the anti-microbial assay. In another study, it has been shown that there is no correlation between cytotoxicity and anti-microbial activity.32 The apoptosis is categorized by the characteristic morphological changes like nuclear fragmentation, shrinkage and blbbing of cells as compared with the normal healthy cells.33 In this study, untreated MCF-7 display spindle shape and elongated appearance, whereas at various concentrations of CAE, CIE and FEE exhibits spherical shapes and detached from substratum reveal the apoptotic and anti-proliferative efficiency of these promising spices. A previous study, the cellular morphological changes in human colon carcinoma cells revealed that isorhamnetin, a quercetin metabolite induces the apoptosis depending upon doses.32 In present study, we have examined the anti-proliferative and apoptotic effect of CAE, CIE and FEE in vitro and found that FEE was the most cytotoxic against MCF-7 cells of human breast carcinoma, followed by CAE and CIE. A previous study revealed the strong cytotoxic effect of fennel oil against HeLa, CCRF-CEM, Caco-2, MCF-7 and CEM/ADR5000 cancer cells.34 The main bioactive component present in fennel, anethole induces anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory properties via initiation of tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-α) by transcription factor NF-kB. Studies revealed that anethole suppressing the tumour growth by modulation of these cytokines.35 A previous study also described anti-hepatic and anti-breast carcinoma effect of methanolic seed extract of fennel by modulating antioxidant defence system.37 Another study demonstrated that fennel ethanolic extract induces the apoptosis of leukaemia cells in vitro.35 Interestingly, these findings also support our study and advocate the anti-proliferative and apoptotic effects of these selected spices in a concentration-dependent manner.

CONCLUSION

The overall evaluation of this study showed that these selected spices have good antibacterial potential and inhibitory effect on proliferation of breast carcinoma MCF-7 cells. The findings can revealed that these spices can be used as effective anti-microbial stuffs against selected bacterial strains and CIE has the best anti-bacterial activity in comparison of CAE and FEE. All these selected spices extract also possess anti-proliferative and apoptotic potential, FEE has the most cytotoxic potential to encouraged apoptosis in MCF-7 cells of human breast adenocarcinoma. Further, some more studies are also needed to validate their efficacy in in vivo and clinical trial level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are thankful to the Head, Department of Zoology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow for providing necessary facilities during experiments and the Central Instrumentation Facilities of Zoology Department, University of Lucknow, Lucknow for smooth conduction of experiments. Author Asif Jafri is grateful to Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) India for Senior Research Fellowship (File No. 09/107 (0393)/2018- EMR-I) and author Shabana Bano also thankful to UGC for BSR fellowship (File No. 25-1/2014-15(BSR)/7-109/2007//BSR).
CONFLCT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ABBREVIATIONS

IC₅₀: The concentration required for 50% inhibition; g: Gram; ml: Milliliter; h: Hours; °C: Degree celsius; DMSO: Dimethyl sulfoxide; μl: Microlitre; %: Percentages; CO₂: Carbon dioxide; SRB: Sulforhodamine B; μg/ml: Microgram per milliliter; mm: Micrometer; min: minutes; OD: Optical densities; SEM: Standard error of mean.

REFERENCES


SUMMARY

Three common spices viz. Cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum), Cinnamon (Cinnamomum verum) and Fennel (Foeniculum vulgare) were analyzed for their antibacterial as well as ant-proliferative and apoptotic effectiveness.

The Cinnamon extract (CIE) showed maximum antibacterial activity against selected test organism followed by Cardamom (CAE) and Fennel (FEE).

The anti-proliferative and apoptotic activity results revealed that FEE encouraged highest cytotoxicity (IC₅₀ 73.9 μg/ml) against human breast carcinoma MCF-7 cells, while CIE showed the lowest efficacy (IC₅₀ 98.2 μg/ml) as compared to untreated control cells.
ABOUT AUTHORS

Shabana Bano is a Ph.D. student under the supervision of Prof. Ajay Kumar Sharma at the University of Lucknow, Lucknow, India. Her research is related to the determination of various kinds of activities in different kinds of Indian edible plants and their products. Activities are like antibacterial, antifungal and antioxidant activity of plants extract. She has published four papers and working on many more papers.

Asif Jafri has done his masters from the Department of Zoology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow and presently pursuing Ph.D. at the Department of Zoology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow. His research area of interest is to examine the anti-proliferative and apoptotic activities of promising natural products viz. plants and animals on various cancerous cells. He is currently working as a CSIR (Council of Scientific & Industrial Research) Senior Research Fellow and presented his research findings in various National and International Conferences as well as published the research articles in the journals of high repute.

Nashrah Ahmad has done her M.Tech in Biological Science and Bioengineering from Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, India. She has worked as a research scholar at Department of Zoology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow, India. She evaluated the antioxidant and anti-microbial properties of various plant extracts. She also published three research articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Prof. Ajay Kumar Sharma has received his doctoral degree working at Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow, India, and he has more than 32 years of teaching and research experience. Currently, he is working as senior most faculty of Department of Zoology, University of Lucknow, Lucknow, India. He has immense research experience in the field of Protozology, Microbiology and Environmental Biology. He has published more than 56 research papers, more than 36 book chapters. Approximately 20 students have been awarded Ph.D. degree under his supervision and four are still pursuing.

Dr. M. Arshad has completed his doctoral study from Endocrinology Division, Central Drug Research Institute, India and post-doctoral study from Centre of Osteoarticular & Dental Tissue Engineering, INSERM- 9903, Nantes, France. He has more than 13 years of teaching experience at U.G. and P.G. level. His field of research is bone biology, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis and cancer biology. He has supervised 4 and co-supervised 3 Ph.D. students and published more than 60 research papers in the journal of national and international repute. He received research grants from UGC, UPCST, DST and ICMR.