Anti Tumor Activity of *Salvia officinalis* is Due to Its Anti-Angiogenic, Anti-Migratory and Anti-Proliferative Effects


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Received: 12/Aug/2009, Accepted: 2/Jan/2010

Abstract

**Objective:** The significant factor contributing to the distant invasion of cancer cells is the ability of tumors to produce large numbers of new blood vessels, known as angiogenesis. Many natural products inhibit angiogenesis. Herein, ethanol extract of *Salvia officinalis* (SO) has been analyzed for its anti-angiogenic, anti-proliferation and anti-migration activities.

**Materials and Methods:** The anti-angiogenic effect of the SO extract was evaluated on chicken chorioallantoic membrane (CAM) neovascularisation model, microscopically. The inhibitory effect of the extract on human umbilical vein endothelial cells (HUVECs) migration was tested on the wound-healing model with an inverted microscope. In addition, SO extract was screened for its possible anti-proliferative effects by separately counting HUVECs, Wehi and K562 cells with cell counter against their control wells.

**Results:** SO extract exhibited a significant inhibitory activity in CAM assay in a dose dependent manner. CAM angiogenesis was gradually prevented from at 100 μg/ml of SO extract, but completely inhibited to form at 200 μg/ml. After human umbilical vein endothelial cells (HUVECs) were suppressed by dose-dependent SO extract, their migrations were detected by wound healing model, yet they were unable to show a dose response effect on proliferation of the different cells (50-200 μg/ml). As observing in this study, SO extract could inhibit proliferation of the different cells at the concentrations above 200 μg/ml without toxic effect on the cells in doses ranged from 0-500 μg/ml.

**Conclusion:** These findings indicated that SO extract might be a promising candidate for anti-angiogenic treatment.

**Keywords:** *Salvia officinalis*, Angiogenesis, Migration, Proliferation

Introduction

Angiogenesis is a process of new blood vessel formation by endothelial cells that plays a critical role in normal physiology, such as development and pathological conditions including spreading of tumor, diabetic retinopathy, and rheumatoid arthritis (1, 2). Most primary solid tumors are dependent on angiogenesis for survival, growth, invasion, and metastasis. Therefore, targeting the angiogenesis process has become one of the important strategies in the treatment and prevention of cancer progression (3, 4). In the angiogenesis process, vascular endothelial cells migrate out from the parental vessels, invade through the matrix, proliferate, and form capillary tubes (5, 6). Currently, there are a variety of angiogenesis inhibitors being used in clinical trials such as soybean trypsin inhibitor (7), withaferin A derived from *Withania somnifer-

*CELL JOURNAL* (Yakhteh), Vol 12, No 4, Winter 2011, Pages: 477-482

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shown to have anti-bacterial, fungistatic, virustatic, astringent and anti-hydrotic effects (15-19). Other experimental studies on *Salvia officinalis* extracts show that some constituents of this plant such as triterpenes oleanolic, ursolic acids and diterpene carnosol for anti-inflammatory properties, or antiprotease and anti-metastatic activities on lung colonization of B16 mouse melanoma cells (20, 21). The present study was conducted to examine the effects of *S. officinalis* ethanolic extract on the proliferation, migration and anti-angiogenic activities.

**Materials and Methods**

The research was conducted in accordance with the accepted ethical principles of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences.

**Chemicals**

MCD131 medium, Dulbecco’s modified minimum essential medium (DMEM), RPMI 1640, fetal bovine serum (FBS) (Gibco, New York, USA), trypan blue 0.4% (Gibco, USA), Human umbilical vein endothelial cells (HUVECs), K562 (human chronic myeloid leukemia) and Wehi (Mouse fibrosarcoma) were obtained from the Pasteure Institute (Tehran, Iran).

**Plant material**

Aerial parts of *Salvia officinalis* were collected from field of Pharmacological plants: Medical University, Kermanshah, Iran in the summer and identified in the Agricultural College (voucher number: 2402, deposited in: Herbarium of Razi University, director: Dr. S. M. Maassoumi). The plant was cleaned, shed dried at 25°C, and the dried aerial parts of the plant were ground with a blender. Then, the powder was kept in nylon bags in a freezer until the time of experiment.

**Preparation of SO extract**

Dried and ground aerial parts of the plant were extracted with ethanol 80% (v/v) for 24 hours and the dissolved fraction evaporated under reduced pressure by a rotavapor. The precipitant was redissolved in phosphate buffer saline and used in the different steps of the experiments.

**Cytotoxicity**

Cytotoxic concentrations of SO extract determined viability of cell lines reduction. The cells were grown in the medium containing the different concentrations (0-500 μg/ml) of the extract in triplicate samples for each dose. 48 hours after of the incubation, cell viability was determined by trypan blue exclusion assay compared to the control (22, 23).

**Proliferation assays of different cell types**

The following cell lines were used for this study: HUVECs, K562 and Wehi. The cells were plated and then treated with different concentrations of the SO extracts (0-500 μg/ml) in triplicate samples for each dose. Antiproliferative assay was performed on HUVEC because they were representative of microvascular endothelial cells; then after 4th passage, the cells were seeded into a 24-well culture plate at a density of 2×10⁴ cells/well in M131 supplemented with 10% FBS, 100 IU/ml penicillin, and 100μg/ml streptomycin. 24hrs after the incubation at 37°C in a 5% CO₂ incubator, SO was added to the wells (0-500 μg/ml) and the cells were further cultured for additional 3 days, then trypsinised and counted with cell counter (KX-21 SYSMEX Co.) against control wells. K562 cells were grown as suspensions in RPMI+DMEM medium supplemented with 10% FCS in a 24-well plate (2×10⁴ cells/well) and Wehi cells were cultured in RPMI supplemented with 10% FCS in a 24-well plate (2 .5 ×10⁴ cells/well) followed by incubating for 24 hours with adding different concentrations of SO extract (50-500μg/ml). 48 hours after the incubation, Wehi and K562 cells were harvested and counted with cell counter.

**Chick embryo Chorioallantoic membrane (CAM) assay**

*In vivo* anti-angiogenic activity of the different concentrations of SO extract utilizing chicken eggs was measured using CAM assay as previously described (24-26). The fertilized chicken eggs used in this work were kept in a humidified incubator at 37°C. Three days after the incubation, about 2 ml of albumin was aspirated from the eggs through the small hole drilled at the narrow end of the eggs, allowing the small chorioallantoic membrane and yolk sac to drop away from the shell membrane. The shell covering the air sac was punched out and removed by a forceps, and the shell membrane on the floor of the air sac was peeled away. On the 4-day-old chick embryo, a methylcellulose cover slip with the various concentrations of SO extract was placed in the areas between vessels of the eggs. Another 48 hours after the incubation, the CAMs were carefully isolated and fixed in cold phosphate buffer saline, then neovascular zones of CAM located under the disks in each treatment group were photographed through a stereoscope equipped with a digital camera. Local vessel density was measured and the inhibitory effects on CAM angiogenesis were evaluated. Assays were repeated three times for each experimental group comprised 8 eggs.
Wound repair assay by endothelial cells

Endothelial cells were cultured in a 24-well culture plate. When HUVECs were confluent, they were wounded with a tip from the center of each well. After being washed with PBS, the cells were incubated with M131 supplemented with 2% concentration of FBS allows cell survival but not any cell proliferation in the absence or presence of different concentrations of SO (0-200 μg/ml) in triplicate samples for each dose. After 48 hours the incubation, cells were washed twice with PBS and fixed with 4 % paraformaldehyde in PBS for 10min at the room temperature. The cells were then stained with Giemsa and photographed with camera connected to an inverted microscope at the appropriate magnifications (27, 28). Cell migration ability was determined by the areas between the parallel lines represented the artificial wound.

Statistical analysis

The data were analyzed by one way ANOVA and differences were compared by Tukey multiple comparison post hoc test. All data were presented as mean ± SEM and differences were considered as significant at p<0.001.

Results

In this study, the SO extract up to 200 μg/ml did not show anti proliferative effect on HUVEC, Wehi and K562 cells; whereas higher concentrations of SO (300-500 μg/ml) inhibited proliferation of these cells (Fig 1).

Furthermore, this inhibitory effect of SO extract in the range concentration of 0-500 μg/ml did not result cytotoxic effect because the cell lines maintained viability above 75%, as being assessed by trypan blue exclusion assay and compared with the controls (Fig 2).

To evaluate the effect of SO extract on the angiogenesis in vivo, we performed CAM assay. The SO extract significantly suppressed angiogenesis in a dose-dependent manner (Fig 3). CAM assay is a widely-used model to determine angiogenesis in vivo. In this model, in the control group, endothelial sprouts progressively invaded and branched after 9 days treatment; however, in different concentration of SO extract the following observations were recorded: 50 μg/ml did not have any significant effect in inhibition of branching, 100 μg/ml had mild inhibitory effect , and 200 μg/ml completely suppressed the growth of sprouts (Fig 4).

The average numbers of capillary-like formation of three independent experiments under the methyl cellulose membrane were counted (Fig 3). These result suggested that SO extract had an inhibitory effect on in vivo angiogenesis in CAM model.

Wound repair assay by endothelial cells was observed in the control wells without SO extract. In contrast, inhibition of migration was clearly observed in the wells with SO extract in a dose dependent fashion. These results revealed that this extract prevented migration of HUVEC to fill the wound.
Over the recent years, more attention has been focused on the anti-angiogenic and anti-tumor effects of non toxic compounds from natural products. Angiogenesis mainly depends on proper activation, proliferation, adhesion, migration, and maturation of endothelial cells. Therefore, most approaches to modulate angiogenesis have focused on endothelial cells functions during blood vessel formation (3, 29). Inhibition of angiogenesis has been considered to be advantageous for prevention of tumor growth and metastatic activity. Some anti-angiogenic substances were identified to be effective in animal models of arthritis, and several antirheumatic drugs such as methotrexate, contain anti-angiogenic activity (6).

Some plant extracts contain many active ingredients. They are complex chemical cocktails with medicinal properties that affect tumor angiogenesis. A wide range of plants that contains compounds with angiogenesis-modulating properties were identified and their phytochemicals were isolated and characterized (30).

*S. officinalis* is a member of Salvia genus has a wide range of biological activities (17, 20, 21). Previous studies have shown that dihydrotanshinone-
none I from Salvia miltiorrhiza Bunge could inhibit endothelial cell invasion and tube formation (31). In addition, in vitro antiproliferative activity of the methanol crude extracts of six salvia species in human cancer cell lines were tested and the data suggest that there are great differences among the various species, and the results strengthen the evidence that the genus Salvia could be considered a natural resource of antitumor agents (23). B-ursolic acid isolated from S. officinalis, significantly inhibited some proteases as included in tumor invasion and metastasis to combat with the pathologies including cancer (21). In this study, ethanolic extracts (SO) of the aerial parts of S. officinalis were prepared and the different concentrations of the extract tested on CAM model. The chick chorioallantoic membrane assay (8, 24, 25) was used for examining the anti-angiogenic activity of SO. The results indicated that SO in a dose dependent manner inhibits angiogenesis in vivo. Anti-angiogenic activity of S. officinalis extract was associated to inhibit migration of endothelial cells, as assessed by wound healing method under conditions in which repair was mostly due to cell migration rather than cell proliferation because of presence of very low concentrations of fetal bovine serum in the cell culture medium. The potential effect of SO extracts on the proliferation of following cell lines: HUVEC, K562 and Wehi were showed SO extracts in the range of 50-200 μg/ml had no significant effect on the proliferation of these cell lines, but at concentrations higher than 300 μg/ml, a significant inhibition was observed. It may be concluded that anti-angiogenic activity of SO extract is due to anti-migratory more than anti-proliferative effect, anti-migratory activity are probably attributed to anti-protease and/or interference of cytoskeleton organization, which are known to play important roles in cell locomotion and capillary tube formation (29, 32). When Ethanolic extract of S. officinalis were subjected to preliminary phytochemical screening using chemical method, showed presence of saponins, flavonoids, tannins, phenolic compounds and poly peptides. In according to previous result (21), B-ursolic could be one of the potent candidates which affected endothelial cell migration. However, further investigations are required to elucidate the responsible component(s) and ascertain the potential beneficial role of S. officinalis on the inhibition of angiogenesis in vivo.

Conclusion

Indeed, this inhibitory effect of SO extract in the range of 0-500μg/ml did not result from cytotoxic effect as being assessed by trypan blue exclusion assay and compared with the control. All together, the result of this study apparently demonstrated that S. officinalis extract at pharmacological concentrations inhibits angiogenesis in vivo. These findings provide additional pharmacological information of the therapeutic efficacy of S. officinalis, and it would be considered as a novel starting point for the development of a new anti-angiogenic drug.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Dr. Reza Khodarahmi, Mr. Shahram Parvaneh and Mr. Shahram Miraghaie for their valuable assistances. This study was supported by Medical Biology Research Center, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences and Razi University. The authors wish to thank the staff of the Medical Biology Research Center. There is no conflict of interest in this article.

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