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PAGES: 159-163

ORIGINAL PDF URL: https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/424640

# ANTIMICROBIAL ACTIVITY OF SOME PLANTS USED IN FOLK MEDICINE

# GELENEKSEL TEDAVİDE KULLANILAN BAZI BİTKİLERİN ANTİMİKROBİYAL AKTİVİTESİ

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### ABSTRACT

In this study, the antimicrobial activities of the eihanolic extracts of Plantago major (Plantaginaceae), Ononis spinosa (Leguminosae), Lythrum salicaria (Lythraceae) and Juglans regia (Juglandaceae), all used in the folk-medicine, were tested against gram-negative (Escherichia coli, Pseudomonas aeruginosa) and gram positive (Staphylococcus aureus, Bacillus subtilis) bacteria as well as yeast-like fungi (Candida albicans, Candida galabrata, Candida krusei) by the agar diffusion method. All plants showed higher antibacterial activity against E. coli and S. aureus. The highest activity against yeast-like fungi were obtained by the extracts of Ononis spinosa and Lythrum salicaria.

Key Words: Antibacterial activity, Antifungal activity, Plantago major, Ononis spinosa, Lythrum salicaria, Juglans regia

### ÖZET

Bu çalışmada halk arasında kullanımı olan Plantago majör (Plantaginaceae), Ononis spinosa (Leguminosae), Lythrum salicaria (Lythraceae), Juglans regia (Juglandaceae) 'nın etanollü ekstrelerinin antimikrobiyal aktivitesi bazı gram-negatif (Escherichia coli, Pseudomonas aeruginosa) ve gram-pozitif (Staphylococcus aureus, Bacillus subtilis) bakteriler ile maya benzeri mantarlara (Candida albicans, Candida galabrata, Candida krusei) karşı agar difüzyon metodu kullanılarak ölçülmüştür. Bütün türler E. coli'ye ve S. aureus'a karşı yüksek aktivite göstermiştir. Maya benzeri mantarlara karşı en yüksek aktiviteyi Ononis spinosa ve Lythrum salicaria ekstreleri göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Antibakteriyel aktivite, Antifungal aktivite, Plantago major, Ononis spinosa, Lythrum salicaria, Juglans regia

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#### INTRODUCTION

Herbal medicine has been improved in developing countries as an alternative solution to health problems and costs of pharmaceutical products. The development of drug resistance in human pathogens against commonly used antibiotics has necessiatated a search for new antimicrobial substances from other sources, including plants. Plants used for traditional medicine contain a wide range of substances that are used to treat chronic as well as infectious diseases.

In this study, the antibacterial and antifungal potential of four plant extracts used in the treatment of skin disorders as antiseptic has been evaluated.

*Plantago major* L. (Plantaginaceae) is used externally, in the treatment of wounds and boils. It is used internally to suppress coughs associated bronchitis and upper respiratory inflammation, to reduce skin inflammation and as a laxative (1-3). The Commision E approved the internal use of *P. major* for catarrhs of the respiratory tract and inflammatory alterations of the oral and pharyngeal mucosa. It's external application is approved for inflammatory reactions of the skin (4).

*Ononis spinosa* L. (Leguminosae) is used for inflammatory diseases of the lower urinary tract and also for the treatment of kidney stones. Externally, it is used for the healing of wounds, eczema and the other skin disorders (1,5-7).

*Lythrum salicaria* L. (Lythraceae) is used internally for diarrhea, chronic intestinal catarrh, hemorrhoids and eczema. Externally it is used in the treatment of varicose veins, bleeding of the gums, hemorrhoids and eczema. The whole flowering plant and the flowering branch tips of this plant is used in the folk medicine(1,6,8).

Juglans regia L. (Juglandaceae) is used medicinally for centuries. The plant is used as a topical remedy for dermal inflammation and excessive perspiration of the hands and feet. It is also a common home remedy for the treatment of chronic eczema, scrofula and inflammation of the lids. The Commision E approved the use of *J.regia* leaves for mild and superficial inflammations of the skin. The leaves of this plant is used topically to treat scalp itching, peeling and dandruft sunburn and superficial burns as well as an adjunctive emollient and itchreliewing treatment in skin disorders (1,4,6,9-11).

In this report, we present data on the antimicrobial activity of the aqueous ethanolic extracts from four plants traditionally used for skin disorders in Turkey. The efficacies of the ethanolic extracts against four bacteria and three fungi strains have been investigated.

#### MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Materials

Plant samples were collected from the vicinities of Kızılcahamam-Ankara. Taxonomic identies of the plants were confirmed by Prof. Dr. Hayri Duman. Designation of the individuals and their origin are given in Table 1.

Table 1. The names and origins of the plants used in this study

Plantago majör	B4 : Ankara:Kızılcahamam, 1000m, 22.7.2002, AEF 22910
Ononis spinosa	B4 : Ankara:Kızılcahamam, 1000m, 22.7.2002, AEF 22911
Lythrum salicaria	B4 : Ankara:Kızılcahamam, 1000m, 22.7.2002, AEF 22912
Juglans regia	B4 : Ankara:Kızılcahamam, 1500m, 22.7.2002, AEF 22944

#### **Extraction of plant materials**

The dried and chopped aerial parts of *Plantago major*, *Ononis spinosa* and *Lythrum salicaria* as well as the leaves of *Juglans regia* (20 g of each) were extracted with ethanol (75 % aqueous, 150 ml of each) for 24 hours by using a Soxhlet apparatus, respectively (12).

#### Antimicrobial activity

All the extracts were impregnated on empty sterilized discs having a diameter of 6 mm (Schleicher & Shüll No. 2668, Germany) in the amount of 20 ul Discs were impregnated with pure ethanol as negative control. Standard antibiotic discs of ampicillin, cephazoline and fluconozole were used for positive control. Discs was provided from Bioanalyse (Turkey). *Escherichia coli* ATCC 23556, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* ATCC 10145, *Bacillus subtilis* ATCC 6633, *Staphylococcus aureus* ATCC 25923, *Candida albicans* ATCC 10231, *Candida galabrata* (isolate) and *Candida krusei* ATCC 6258 were used as test microorganism. The strains obtained from the Refik Saydam Hygiene Center.

The disc-diffusion method (13) was used as a screening test for antimicrobial activity, using Mueller-Hinton Agar (Oxoid) for bacteria and Sabouraud Dextrose Agar (Oxoid) for yeast-like fungi.

All extracts were dissolved in 75% aqueous ethanol to obtain 133 mg/ml extract concentration. These solutions were impregnated on sterile paper discs of 6 mm diameter (15 for per disc). Discs were applied on the solid agar medium by pressing slightly. The treated Petri dishes were placed at room temperature for 10 minutes and then incubated at  $35\pm0.1$  °C for 24-48 hours. At the end of the incubation period, inhibition zones of the extracts formed on the medium were measured with a transparent ruler in millimeters and compared with those of reference antibiotics. These experiments were carried out in duplicate.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The *in vitro* antimicrobial activities of the aqueous methanolic extracts of the title plants are shown in Table 2. The inhibition zones formed by the standard antibiotic discs (positive control) and the discs injected with only ethanol (negative control) are also given in Table 2.

Diameters of the inhibition zones (mm)								
	E. coli	P. aeruginosa	B. subtilis	S. aureus	C. albicans	C. galabrata	C. krusei	
Plantago major	11	10	-	13	7	12	12	
Ononis spinosa	11	11	1	11	16	7	16	
Lythrum salicaria	11	13	9	9	12	16	16	
Juglans regia	10	10	-	12	11	8	8	
Ampicillin (25 fig)	12	N.T	13	15	N.T	N.T	N.T	
Fluconazole(25 ng)	N.T	N.T	N.T	N.T	18	20	20	
Control(Ethanol)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

Table 2. The inhibition zones diameters of free and aqueous ethanolic extracts of the plants (mm)

N.T.: not tested

(-): no inhibition zone

When compared with the standard antibiotics, all plant extracts were found to have good activities against *E. coli* and *S. aureus*. However, *P. major* and J. *regia* did not show any activity against *B. subtilis*.

Ononis spinosa showed a good activity against C. albicans and C. krusei. Previously it was reported that the aqueous ethanolic extract of O. spinosa showed the similar results against C. albicans (7). Lythrum salicaria exhibited a good pattern of inhibition against C. galabrata and C. krusei. In a previous study L. salicaria was reported to show fungusidic activity against C. albicans (8).

In conclusion, the present study shows that the extracts examined have variable antimicrobial activities.

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Received: 28.04.2003

Accepted: 02.07.2003