

PDF - DETERMINING THE PHYTOCHEMICAL AND ANTIMICROBIAL PROPERTIES OF GARLIC AND BITTERLEAF EXTRACTS AGAINST SKIN DISEASE - researchcub.info

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of study

Plant extract or secondary metabolites have served as antioxidants in phytotherapeutic medicine for the treatment of various diseases for centuries (Olabinri et al., 2013). The use of chemicals to control infections associated microorganisms have created more problems rather than addressing them. There are lots of antimicrobial drugs of which some are discovered and over 250,000 undiscovered flowering plants with medicinal properties exist worldwide (Madureira, 2008).

Diseases of varying degrees and illness caused by microorganisms have showed great resistance to varying classes of antibiotics in use. This is no longer news as records have already shown that even before Alexander Flemings discovered penicillin in 1928 (Bauer et al., 1966), the resistance to these drugs already existed. Skin diseases are numerous and a frequently occurring health problem affecting all ages from the neonates to the elderly and cause harm in number of ways. Maintaining healthy skin is important for a healthy body. Bacterial infections are caused by a variety of bacteria, most common types being Staphylococci and Streptococci. Bacteria may infect the top most layers of the skin, follicles, or the deeper layers of the skin. If not properly treated, infections may spread throughout the body.

Fungal infections are caused when harmless fungi present on the surface of the skin penetrates the body and become pathogenic and thereby causing diseases. These infections are usually superficial, affecting the skin, hair, nails, causing diseases such as ring worm and eczema. However, infecting people with suppressed immune system or people who have been taking antibiotics for long period, the fungi may spread deep within the body, causing more serious diseases. Infectious diseases particularly skin and mucosal infections are common in most of the tribal inhabitants, due to lack of sanitation, portable water and awareness of hygienic food habits (Caceres et al., 1993;). It has been estimated that skin diseases accounts for 34% of all occupational diseases (Spiewak, 2000). The growing need for more potent and effective means of microbial depopulation and inhibition of their cell proliferation has over the last few years become more aggressive and is continually at its increase, as more and more scientist worldwide are strenuously working to end the menace of antimicrobial resistance. It is for this reason and many more that the World Health organization (WHO) has begun to advocate for new and novel antimicrobials that would be more effective and efficient against diseases and infections caused by microorganisms with reduced resistance. This development has powered the need to explore nature in research of phytotherapeutic agents with novel targets and mode of actions.

This practice of complementary and alternative medicine is now on the increase in developing countries in response to the World Health Organization (WHO) on determination of antimicrobial agent causing skin diseases using traditional plant extract such as garlic and bitter leaf to treat skin infections. Garlic (*Allium sativum*) and bitter leaf (*Vernonia amygdalina*) are two major plants which have shown to be very effective against a number of infections and diseases. They have over time been recommended as a major phytotherapeutic agent whose extracts are contained in different medicinal products and drugs as well as cosmetic products because of health benefits believed to be conferred by them. Their clinical constituents set them apart from numerous other phytochemical plants and thus could prove effective against most skin diseases such as: ringworm, eczema and scabies, as contained in this project work.

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