

# Utilization of Licorice - Mulethi (*glycyrrhiza glabra* l.) As Natural Medical Herb

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## Abstract

Licorice commonly known as Y ashthimadhu in Ayurveda is one such plant. Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) symbolises all that is wondrous in nature because, the it is used as traditional medicine for household remedy against various human ailments from antiquity. Licorice is a very well-known herb in Chinese medicine. In China, it is called “gancao” means sweet grass and has been recorded in the Shennong's classic of *Materia Medica* around 2100 BC. which says that licorice was supposed to have life-enhancing properties. It was used to have the functions of nourishing, alleviating pain, eliminating phlegm, and relieving coughing. The canvas of the pharmacological activities when complied it stands out strongly as a drug of choice in various disorders. Licorice contains more than 20 triterpenoids and nearly 300 flavonoids. Among them, glycyrrhizin (GL), 18-beta-glycyrrhetic (GA), liquiritigenin (L TG), licochalcone A (LCA, licochalcone E (LCE) and glabridin (GLD) are main active components which possess antimicrobial and anti viral activities.

Antibacterial activity of *glycyrrhiza glabra* on oral pathogens showed that *glycyrrhiza glabra* extract showed good antibacterial activity against six bacterias including *Streptococcus mutans*, *Actinomyces viscosus*, *E coli*, *Streptococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus sanguis*. Twice daily use of herbal licorice lollipop significantly reduced, the number and relative percentage of S mutans in high-risk children for 22 days which then stabilized and begin to rebound. An unusual biflavonoid named licoagrodin was isolated from the hairy root cultures of *G. glabra* along with three prenylatedretrochalcones, licoagrochalcones B, C, D, a prenylatedaurone, licoagroaurone and four known prenylated flavonoids, licochalcone C, kanzonol Y, glyinflanin B and glycyrdione A. From the glycosidic fraction, aisoflavone glycoside, licoagroside A, and a maltol glycoside, licoagroside B were isolated together with four known isoflavone glycosides, two flavone C-glycosides, and three other glycosides. The isoflavonesglabridin and hispaglabridins A and B had antioxidant activity and both glabridin and glabrene possessed estrogen like activity.

In traditional Chinese medicine, the plant is recommended as a common remedy for gastrointestinal problems, cough, bronchitis, and arthritis. In particular, it is still widely used to treat gastritis, peptic ulcers, respiratory infections, and tremors in folk medicine. Commonly, *G. glabra* root is employed to prepare a tea that is an excellent thirst quencher. The dried root has been described as a tooth cleanser. Actually, the most important industrial use of *G. glabra* is the production of food additives, such as flavours and sweetening agents. In particular, the root is used as a flavouring agent for American-type tobacco, chewing gum, candies, baked goods, ice cream, and soft drinks. Nutritionally, licorice is a source of proteins, amino acids, polysaccharides and simple sugars, mineral salts (such as calcium, phosphorus, sodium, potassium, iron, magnesium, silicon, selenium, manganese, zinc, and copper), pectins, resins, starches, sterols, and gums. Oestrogens, tannins, phytosterols (sitosterol and stigmasterol), coumarins, vitamins (B1, B2, B3, B5, E, and C), and glycosides have been reported. A large number of biological compounds have also been isolated, mostly triterpenes, saponins (responsible for the sweet taste), and flavonoids. The main constituent of roots is glycyrrhizin, a triterpenoid saponin that is almost 50 times sweeter than sucrose, being the primary active ingredient. Glycyrrhizin represents about 10% of the licorice root dry weight, being a mixture of potassium, calcium, and magnesium salts of glycyrrhizic acid that varies between 2% and 25%. After oral administration, glycyrrhizin is metabolized to 18-glycyrrhetic acid 3-omonoglucuronide and glycyrrhetic acid by intestinal bacteria. Liquiritin apioside, an active compound reported in the methanolic extract of licorice, has the ability to inhibit capsaicin, a compound that induces cough. The effect on sore throat has been compared with that of carbenoxolone, a glycyrrhetic acid derivative with a steroid-like structure, which stimulates gastric mucus secretion.

**Kew Words:** sarcoidosis of urinary bladder; vesical sarcoidosis; sarcoidosis of the spine; biopsy; cystoscopy; high index of suspicion; neurogenic bladder; computed tomography scan; contrast-enhancement; urodynamics

## Introduction

Another accession, EC-21950, has been identified by All India Coordinated Research Project on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants; this variety is also tolerant to the root rot disease. Other varieties of mulethi are EC-114303 and EC-124587 (Zaidi, 2011). The crop remains in the field for two and a half to three years, every year the same dose has to be applied (Farooqi, 2001). The yield of mulethi depends upon the soil fertility, variety of plant, climatic conditions and method of cultivation. A yield of 5 tons of roots and 14-20 tons of trimming is considered satisfactory. The HM-1 yields 7-8 tons roots with a 7.5 per cent content of glycyrrhizin (Uniyal and Jariyal, 2003). Licorice commonly known as Y ashthimadhu in Ayurveda is one such plant. Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) symbolises all that is wondrous in nature because, the it is used as traditional medicine for household (Korhalkar *et al*, 2014) remedy against various human ailments from antiquity. Licorice is a very well-known herb in Chinese medicine. In China, it is called "ganciao" means sweet grass and has been recorded in the Shennong's classic of Materia Medica around 2100 BC. which says that licorice (Wang and Liu, 2015) was supposed to have life-enhancing properties. It was used to have the functions of nourishing, alleviating pain, eliminating phlegm, and relieving coughing. The canvas of the pharmacological activities when compiled it stands out strongly as a drug of choice in various (Korhalkar *et al*, 2014) disorders. Licorice contains more than 20 triterpenoids and nearly 300 (Wang and Liu, 2015) flavonoids. Among them, glycyrrhizin (GL), 18-beta-glycyrrhetic (GA), liquiritigenin (L TG), licochalcone A (LCA), licochalcone E (LCE) and glabridin (GLD) are main active components which (Lingaraj *et al*, 2014) possess antimicrobial and anti viral activities.

Sedighinia *et al*. (2012) conducted an in vitro study to analyse antibacterial activity of *glycyrrhiza glabra* on oral pathogens which showed that *glycyrrhiza glabra* extract showed good antibacterial activity against six bacterias including *Streptococcus mutans*, *Actinomyces viscosus*, *E coli*, *Streptococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus sanguis*. Sug *et al*. (2012) conducted an in vitro study to analyze the antimicrobial effects of deglycyrrhized licorice root extract (DG-LRE) on *streptococcus mutans* UA159 in both planktonic and biofilm cultures and concluded that it has strong antimicrobial activity against *S mutans* in planktonic phase. Peter *et al*. (2010) concluded that twice daily use of herbal liquorice lollipop significantly reduced, the number and relative percentage of *S mutans* in high-risk children for 22 days which then stabilized and begin to rebound. Jain *et al*. (2013) showed that highest number of fall in *streptococcus mutans* colony counts was observed in ethanolic liquorice group and at the same time palatable by child patients.

Vu Dang *et al*. (2011) reported that LIA and LC inhibited the secretion of interleukin 6 and chemokine in a dose dependent manner and hence can have potential for the development of novel host modulating Strategies for the treatment of cytokinin and MMP mediated disorders such as periodontitis. Farhad *et al*. (2013) resulted that the decrease in mean MMP 8 concentration was higher in doxycycline and liquorice group in comparison with the placebo group and concluded that licorice extract can prevent the production of MMP by host cell and can be useful as antibiotic like doxycycline to cure periodontitis and other inflammatory diseases, with no side effects. In a study by Geetha and Anitha (2013) on in vitro evaluation of antimycotic activity of ethanolic extract of *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, the results clearly indicated the antifungal activity of ethanolic extract of *glycyrrhiza glabra* on organisms like *candida albicans*, *aspergillus fumigates*, *aspergillus Niger*, *mucus species* and *Penicillium marneffeii* which could be enhanced with purified active components and determined adequate dose for proper administration. An in vitro and in vivo study conducted by Seleem *et al*. (2016) to check the antifungal activity of Licochalcone –A against *candida albican* biofilm. Licochalcone –A is a bio active natural compound found in licorice root.

The result of the study showed that 625µM Licochalcone –A significantly reduced biofilm growth compared to control group by reducing colony forming units and reducing activity of proteolytic enzymes. Messeier *et al*. (2012) in the article on Licorice and its potential beneficial effects in common orodental diseases stated that liquorice and its bioactive ingredients such as glycyrrhizin, glabridin, licochalcone A, licoricidin and licorisoflavan A possesses potential beneficial effects in oral diseases including recurrent aphthous ulcer. Rafi *et al*. (2012) stated that novel polyphenols molecule isolated from liquorice root induces apoptosis, G2/M cycle arrest, and BCL-2 phosphorylation in tumor cell lines. Sinha and Sinha (2014) stated that liquorice has shown greater biocompatibility with fibroblast cells compared to calcium hydroxide, which is severely toxic to cells. Hence a mixture of liquorice and Calcium Hydroxide can be used to minimize toxicity to fibroblasts. Kim *et al*. (2018) conducted a study to analyze the anti-inflammatory effects of licorice and roasted licorice of extracts on 12-O-tetradecanoylphorbol-13-acetate (TP A) induced acute inflammation and collagen induced arthritis in mice and suggested supplementation with licorice extract (LE) and roasted licorice extract (rLE) may be beneficial in preventing and both acute and chronic inflammatory conditions like arthritis. A yield of two tons of roots per acre for bailing, plus 3-4 cwt of trimmings is considered satisfactory (Chopra and Chopra, 2006). Root-T.S showed structure of closely resembling that of stolon except that no medulla was present; xylem tetrarch; usually four principal medullary rays at right angles to each other; in peeled drug cork showed phelloderm and sometimes without secondary phloem; all parenchymatous tissues had abundant, simple oval or rounded starch grains, 2-20µ in length. Glycyrrhizin is a nonhemolytic saponin with foaming property (Vispute and Khopade, 2011). To produce these quantities of active principles, 300 tons of *Glycyrrhiza* roots will be required. It could be cultivated on waste/marginal lands (Shinwari *et al*, 2003). An unusual biflavonoid named licoagrodin was isolated from the hairy root cultures of *G. glabra* along with three prenylatedretrochalcones, licoagrochalcones B, C, D, a prenylatedaurone, licoagroaurone and four known prenylated flavonoids, licochalcone C, kanzonol Y, glyinflanin B and glycyrdione A. From the glycosidic fraction, aisoflavone glycoside, licoagroside A, and a maltol glycoside, licoagroside B were isolated together with four known isoflavone glycosides, two flavone C-glycosides, and three other glycosides (Li *et al*, 2000). The isoflavones glabridin and hispaglabridins A and B had antioxidant activity and both glabridin and glabrene possessed estrogen like activity (Kataria *et al*, 2013). The decoction of the root is a good wash for falling and graying hair (Singh *et al*, 2006). Large randomized placebo-controlled trials on humans conducted by Upjohn Company for minoxidil, a potassium channel opener, showed efficacy in 54 % of the treated patients compared to 34 % in placebo (control) group. Thus, minoxidil (reference) was a more effective hair growth enhancer than the control group but was inferior to the 2% extract-treated group probably due the fact that *G. glabra* extract has some estrogenic property (Somjen *et al*, 2004). A recent study on *Eclipta alba* herb which validate it as a hair growth promoter showed that the presence of antigen FGF-7 and Shh and absence of BMP4 favoured anagenic state of hair (Dattaa *et al*, 2009). The extracts are currently used in pharmaceutical and food industries, as well as in the manufacture of functional foods and food supplements (Hayashi & Sudo, 2009; Herrera *et al*, 2009).

The use of liquorice predates the Greek and Roman empires, having a long history of traditional medicines and folk remedies. In fact, different geographical areas and periods are linked to different uses (Armanini *et al*, 2002). The first documents can be traced back to ancient Assyrian, Egyptian, Chinese, and Indian cultures. Theophrastus and Pedanius Dioscorides wrote about liquorice as a medicinal plant and described its therapeutic effects

(Armanini *et al.*, 2002). In traditional Chinese medicine, for example, the plant is recommended as a common remedy for gastrointestinal problems, cough, bronchitis, and arthritis. In particular, it is still widely used to treat gastritis, peptic ulcers, respiratory infections, and tremors in folk medicine. Commonly, *G. glabra* root is employed to prepare a tea that is an excellent thirst quencher. The dried root has been described as a tooth cleanser (Armanini *et al.*, 2002). Actually, the most important industrial use of *G. Glabra* is the production of food additives, such as flavours and sweetening agents (Mukhopadhyay & Panja, 2008). In particular, the root is used as a flavouring agent for American-type tobacco, chewing gum, candies, baked goods, ice cream, and soft drinks (Rizzato *et al.*, 2017). With regard to government approval, liquorice extract and glycyrrhizin have been allowed for use in foods by the United States Food and Drug Administration, the Council of Europe, and the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (FAO, 2005). The genus *Glycyrrhiza* (Fabaceae) consists of about 30 species, such as *G. glabra*, *G. uralensis*, *G. inflata*, *G. aspera*, *G. korshinskyi*, or *G. eurycarpa*. Like the other plants of Fabaceae, *G. glabra* is able to fix nitrogen, due to symbiosis with bacteria of the genus *Rhizobium*, at the root level, being suitable for sandy and clay soils, though preferring humid soils. Since the Egyptian age, the therapeutic properties of *G. glabra* are well documented (Fiore *et al.*, 2005). The roots are the most used parts whereas leaves are considered an agrochemical waste. However, in the last years, different authors studied the phytochemical composition of *G. glabra* leaves, demonstrating that certain compounds present in the roots are also identified in leaves, although in smaller quantities (Hayashi & Sudo, 2009; Siracusa *et al.*, 2011).

In the last years, the chemical constituents of liquorice have been extensively investigated by different authors (Hayashi *et al.*, 2016; Siracusa *et al.*, 2011). Nevertheless, few studies were carried out on the nutritional composition of *G. glabra*. Nutritionally, liquorice is a source of proteins, amino acids, polysaccharides and simple sugars, mineral salts (such as calcium, phosphorus, sodium, potassium, iron, magnesium, silicon, selenium, manganese, zinc, and copper), pectins, resins, starches, sterols, and gums (Wang *et al.*, 2015). Oestrogens, tannins, phytosterols (sitosterol and stigmasterol), coumarins (B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>3</sub>, B<sub>5</sub>, E, and C), and glycosides have been reported (Wang *et al.*, 2015). A large number of biological compounds have also been isolated, mostly triterpenes, saponins (responsible for the sweet taste), and flavonoids (Rizzato *et al.*, 2017; Wang *et al.*, 2015). The main constituent of roots is glycyrrhizin, a triterpenoid saponin that is almost 50 times sweeter than sucrose, being the primary active ingredient (Yu *et al.*, 2015). Glycyrrhizin represents about 10% of the liquorice root dry weight, being a mixture of potassium, calcium, and magnesium salts of glycyrrhizic acid that varies between 2% and 25% (Rizzato *et al.*, 2017). After oral administration, glycyrrhizin is metabolized to 18-glycyrrhetic acid 3-omonoglucuronide and glycyrrhetic acid by intestinal bacteria (Albermann *et al.*, 2010).

Glabridin is the principal isoflavone identified, ranging between 0.08% and 0.35% of roots' dry weight (Simmler *et al.*, 2013). The minor phenolic compounds are isoprenoid-substituted flavonoids, chromenes, coumarins, dihydrostilbenes, coumestans, benzofurans, and dihydrophenanthrenes. Furthermore, many volatile components are present in roots, such as geraniol, pentanol, hexanol, terpinen-4-ol, and  $\alpha$ -terpineol, conferring the characteristic odour. The essential oil obtained from *G. glabra* is also rich in propionic acid, benzoic acid, furfuraldehyde, 2,3-butanediol, furfuryl formate, maltol, 1-methyl-2-formylpyrrole, and trimethylpyrazine (Chouitah *et al.*, 2011). The phenolic content is probably responsible for the powerful antioxidant activity observed (Rackova *et al.*, 2007). Varsha and Sonam (2013) attributed this activity to flavonoids, whereas Singh *et al.* (2015) reported that mostly isoflavones, such as glabridin, hispaglabridin A, and 30-hydroxy-4-O-methylglabridin, are the responsible compounds. Biondi *et al.*

(2003) reported a huge antioxidant activity of the dihydrostilbene derivatives present in *G. Glabra* leaves. Also, licochalcones B and D are present in *G. glabra*, showing a strong scavenging activity on DPPH radical and the ability to inhibit the micro-somal lipid peroxidation (Biondi *et al.*, 2003; Sharma *et al.*, 2016). According to Castangia *et al.* (2015), the topical application of liquorice extract formulations may be of value in innovative dermal and cosmetic products as it counteracts oxidative stress damage, maintaining the skin homeostasis due to its high antioxidant content.

The anti-inflammatory activity of *G. glabra* and its use in the treatment of inflammatory diseases have been documented since ancient times (Yang *et al.*, 2017). Shalaby *et al.* (2004) evaluated the anti-inflammatory activity of *G. glabra* in male rats after 4 weeks of food intake. The authors observed a significant decrease in the total cholesterol and triglyceride levels as well as in the levels of serum liver enzymes. Harwansh *et al.* (2011) reviewed the positive effects of *G. glabra* on the treatment of the upper respiratory tract and gastric system diseases. These pharmacological effects were due to an increase in the secretion of serotonin and prostaglandins in the stomach that led to a decrease of gastric inflammation (Bahmani *et al.*, 2014). Different authors described that the anti-inflammatory action is primarily mediated by glycyrrhizin, which *in vitro* could inhibit factors responsible for inflammation as well as promote the healing of stomach and mouth ulcers (Rackova *et al.*, 2007; Yin *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, *G. glabra* is used in renal and liver complications on the basis of its strong anti-inflammatory effects (Xiao *et al.*, 2010). Xiao *et al.* (2010) reported the inhibition of liver granuloma formation and the inflammatory cytokine production by glycyrrhizin, whereas Wang *et al.* (2017) described the anti-inflammatory effects on endometriosis. Moreover, Liu *et al.* (2017) proved the anti-inflammatory activity of glabridin on RAW cells.

The antitussive and expectorant effects of liquorice have been reported by different authors, particularly its useful effects on the treatment of sore throat, cough, and bronchial catarrh (Damle, 2014; Fiore *et al.*, 2005). These effects are associated with the presence of glycyrrhizin that helps to expel congestion in the upper respiratory tract and accelerates tracheal mucus secretion (Sharma *et al.*, 2016). Likewise, liquiritin apioside, an active compound reported in the methanolic extract of liquorice, has the ability to inhibit capsaicin, a compound that induces cough (Kamei *et al.*, 2003). The effect on sore throat has been compared with that of carbenoxolone, a glycyrrhetic acid derivative with a steroid-like structure, which stimulates gastric mucus secretion (Damle, 2014).

The use of *G. glabra* extract as antiulcerative is widely known. For the gastrointestinal system, it is used in gastric and duodenal ulcers, whereas for the treatment of spasmodic pains of chronic gastritis, it is employed as an adjuvant (Armanini *et al.*, 2002). The benefits of *G. Glabra* in the treatment of duodenal and peptic ulcers has been reported since the 1970s, and this traditional use is related to the presence of anti-inflammatory saponins (Krause *et al.*, 2004). The major compound responsible for this activity is glycyrrhizin, which can raise the concentration of prostaglandins in the digestive tract, promoting stomach mucus secretion (Jafarian & Ghazvini, 2007). In addition, liquorice prolongs the lifespan of stomach surface cells, demonstrating an antipepsin effect (Ram *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, deglycyrrhizinized liquorice has shown some effects in the treatment of gastrointestinal ulcers, suggesting the presence of other active ingredients (Zadeh *et al.*, 2013). Indeed, carbenoxolone, a glycyrrhetic acid analogue, is reported to inhibit two important enzymes for the metabolism of prostaglandin, 15-hydroxyprostaglandin dehydrogenase and  $\Delta$  13 prostaglandin reductase, raising prostaglandin levels and leading to positive effects in clinical trials for gastric and duodenal ulcers (Damle, 2014). Different authors reported the antimicrobial properties of *G. glabra*, particularly on Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Candida albicans*, and

*Bacillus subtilis* (Gupta *et al.*, 2008; Wang *et al.*, 2015). The antibacterial activity observed is due to the presence of secondary metabolites, namely, saponins, alkaloids, and flavonoids (Wang *et al.*, 2015).

Glabridin 75 mg/kg In vivo—oral administration to mice Decrease of MIP 1 $\alpha$  expression (Xiao *et al.*, 2010) Glycyrrhizin 1–100 $\mu$ M DPPH, AAPH Protection against lipid peroxidation of liposomal membrane Inhibition of ROS (Rackova *et al.*, 2007) 50–200 $\mu$ g/ml LPS inflammatory mediators production (TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-1 $\beta$ , COX-2, PG2) Decrease of endometriosis (Wang, *et al.*, 2017) 10, 20, 100 mg/kg In vivo—mice Decrease of LPS inflammatory mediators (Yin *et al.*, 2017) ALT: alanine aminotransferase; AST: aspartate aminotransferase; DHV: duck hepatitis virus; FRAP: ferric reducing antioxidant potential; ICR: Institute of Cancer Research; IVF: in vitro fertilization; LDL: low-density lipoprotein; LPS: lipopolysaccharide; MBC: minimum bactericidal concentration; MIC: minimum inhibitory concentration; ROS: reactive oxygen species; SOD: superoxide dismutase B, 40-methylglabridin, and 3-hydroxyglabrol, isolated from *G. glabra*, are responsible for this activity (Wang *et al.*, 2015). The mechanism behind this could be the decrease of bacterial gene expression, the inhibition of bacterial growth, and the reduction of bacterial toxin production (Gupta *et al.*, 2008; Wang *et al.*, 2015). In 2014, Ahn *et al.* (2014) demonstrated that liquorice prevents bacterial caries caused by *Streptococcus mutans* and *Streptococcus sobrinus*. Likewise, in vitro studies proved that aqueous and ethanolic extracts of liquorice have an inhibitory activity on *Streptococcus pyogenes* (Fukai *et al.*, 2002a, b; Wang *et al.*, 2015). On the other hand, the ability to inactivate methicillin-resistant *S. Aureus* (MRSA) by decreasing the expression of *SaeR* and *Hla*, the key virulence genes of MRSA, have also been reported by different authors (Fukai *et al.*, 2002a, b; Wang *et al.*, 2015). It is also suggested that licochalcone E could be used for chemical synthesis of novel anti-*S. aureus* compounds, reducing the production of  $\alpha$ -toxin in both methicillin-sensitive *S. Aureus* and MRSA (Wang *et al.*, 2015). Besides,  $\alpha$ -haemolysin is an important exotoxin in the pathogenesis of *S. ureus* infections (Berube & Bubeck-Wardenburg, 2013). Liquiritigenin, one of the most active compounds of liquorice, demonstrated the capacity to prevent human lung cells (A549) from  $\alpha$ -haemolysin-mediated injuries, by decreasing  $\alpha$ -haemolysin production (Wang *et al.*, 2015). Similarly, glabridin and glycyrrhetic acid have shown antibacterial activity against *S. aureus* (Singh *et al.*, 2015).

Different authors reported the antibacterial action of *G. Glabra* against *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (Gupta *et al.*, 2008), demonstrating that glabridin is the responsible compound for this activity, instead of hispaglabridin B (Simmler *et al.*, 2013). The antitubercular phenolic compounds were previously identified as licoisoflavone and licochalcone A (Chakotiya *et al.*, 2017). In a mice lung infection model, *G. glabra* was therapeutically active against multidrug-resistant strain of *P. aeruginosa* (Chakotiya *et al.*, 2016), and the hydro-alcoholic extract led to a reduction of the microbial load in the blood, mainly due to the presence of stigmaterol, ergosterol, licochalcone, and glabridin (Chakotiya *et al.*, 2017). The activity of *G. glabra* against *Helicobacter pylori* has been also reported, as mentioned in the previous subsection (Krausse *et al.*, 2004). According to Krausse *et al.* (2004), the compounds responsible for this activity are glabridin and glabrene. Cao *et al.* (2016) also reported that 18 $\beta$ -glycyrrhetic acid significantly attenuated the gastritis infection caused by *H. pylori*. Asha *et al.* (2013) found that the flavonoid glabridin exhibits activity against *H. Pylori* whereas glycyrrhizin did not present activity even at a concentration of 250 $\mu$ g/ml. These flavonoids also showed activity against *H. pylori* strains resistant to clarithromycin and amoxicillin (Fukai *et al.*, 2002a, b). The probable mechanism behind these actions is the inhibition of the protein synthesis, DNA gyrase, and dihydrofolate reductase (Fukai *et al.*, 2002a, b). Moreover, the liquorice polysaccharides also present activity against *Porphyromonas gingivalis* adhesion, which is of huge importance because

no specific adhesion inhibitors have been described (Chinsembu, 2016). The antifungal activity of *G. glabra* is also detailed (Sato *et al.*, 2000). Sato *et al.* (2000) reported that the methanolic extract of liquorice presents fungicidal activity against *Arthrinium sacchari* and *Chaetomium funicola*, whereas glabridin was found to be the active compound responsible for the observed effects (Sato *et al.*, 2000). In fact, isoflavonoids, such as glabridin, glabrol, and their derivatives, are responsible for the in vivo inhibition of *Mycobacterium smegmatis*, *Shigella*, *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, *S. mutans*, and *Lactobacillus acidophilus* (Ajagannavar *et al.*, 2014). Recently, Chandra and Gunasekaran (2017) also proved the antifungal activity of crude methanolic extract of *G. Glabra* against *Aspergillus niger*. Different authors reported that *C. Albicans* is susceptible to liquorice extracts due to their richness in liquiritigenin, liquiritin, licochalcone A, and glabridin (Chandra & Gunasekaran, 2017; Lee *et al.*, 2009; Singh *et al.*, 2015). Nevertheless, according to Karahan *et al.* (2016), the antimicrobial activity could be influenced by the environmental conditions that may affect the chemical compound contents and the biological activity. Licochalcone A and glabridin present a therapeutic potential against *C. albicans* oral infections, whereas glycyrrhetic acid had no effect (Messier & Grenier, 2011; Moazeni *et al.*, 2017).

The antiviral activity of *G. glabra* extracts against different viruses has been reported, including herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Japanese encephalitis, influenza, and vesicular stomatitis virus (Wang *et al.*, 2015). Different studies have demonstrated that two triterpenoids are responsible for the antiviral activity reported: glycyrrhizin and 18 $\beta$ -glycyrrhetic acid (Wang *et al.*, 2015). These compounds have the ability to inhibit virus gene expression and replication, decreasing the adhesion force and stress and reducing HMGB1 binding to DNA (Wang *et al.*, 2015). Also, they can enhance host cell activities by blocking the degradation of I $\kappa$ B enzyme involved in the propagation of the cellular response to inflammation, activating T lymphocyte proliferation, and suppressing host cell apoptosis (Wang *et al.*, 2015). The antiviral mechanisms of both compounds are similar, inhibiting the adsorption and penetration of the virus in the early steps of the replicative cycle. Nevertheless, Cinatl *et al.* (2003) reported that these active principles are less effective if added during the adsorption period than after virus adsorption. On the other hand, Soufy *et al.* (2012) found that glycyrrhizin has excellent immunostimulant properties and induces a synergistic effect with duck hepatitis virus (DHV) vaccine by activating T lymphocyte proliferation. Thus, the treatment with glycyrrhizin alone or in combination with DHV vaccine could lead to an immune stimulation and antiviral effect against DHV (Soufy *et al.*, 2012).

Herpes simplex virus (HSV) is one of the most common viruses infecting humans and animals. During HSV infection, the cellular adhesion is increased, playing a key role in inflammatory response. Huang *et al.* (2012) reported that the adhesion force and stress between the cerebral capillary vessel endothelial cells and the polymorphic nuclear leukocytes were amplified during HSV infection. Glycyrrhizin stimulates the mouse defence system against HSV-1 infection (Sekizawa *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, glycyrrhetic acid was found to have a distinctive effect against Kaposi sarcoma-associated herpes virus (KSHV). It was proved that glycyrrhetic acid could terminate the latent infection of KSHV when all current drugs are ineffective (Damle, 2014). Also, glycyrrhetic acid down-regulates the expression of latency-associated nuclear antigen in B lymphocytes leading to natural cell death (apoptosis) of the KSHV-infected cells (Damle, 2014). Recently, the antiviral activity of glycyrrhizin against severe acute respiratory syndrome virus was evaluated (Cinatl *et al.*, 2003). Glycyrrhizin affects the cellular signaling pathways such as protein kinase C, casein kinase II, and transcription factors, namely, activator protein 1 and nuclear factor  $\kappa$ B (Cinatl *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, glycyrrhizin and its aglycone, 18 $\beta$ -glycyrrhetic acid, up-regulate the expression of inducible nitric oxide

synthase and the production of nitric oxide in macrophages (Cinatl *et al*, 2003). Zhang *et al*. also reported that glycyrrhizin reduces the expression of proinflammatory cytokines affecting coxsackievirus B3-induced myocarditis (Wang *et al*, 2015; Zhang *et al*, 2012). Also, the activity against human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) was evaluated (Sasaki *et al.*, 2002). Glycyrrhizin has been used to treat patients with HIV-1 (Wang *et al*, 2015). The results revealed a low concentration of P24 antigen in patients, probably due to the up-regulation of chemokines (Sabde *et al*, 2011).

Glycyrrhizin, when compared with the placebo, presents clinical interest for the possible treatment of chronic hepatitis C, inducing a significant reduction of the serum aminotransferases and an improvement in the liver histology (Ploeger *et al.*, 2001). Intra-venous glycyrrhizin can be also used for the treatment of acute-onset autoimmune hepatitis (Yasui *et al.*, 2011). Another study shows that glycyrrhizin interferes with highly pathogenic H5N1 influenza A virus replication (Michaelis *et al.*, 2011). Glycyrrhizin can also be used as a novel therapeutic method to control porcine epidemic diarrhoea virus (PEDV) infection, inhibiting the infection of Vero cells (namely, the entry and replication of PEDV) and decreasing the mRNA levels of proinflammatory cytokines (Huan *et al*, 2017). The hepatoprotective activity of glycyrrhizin and 18 $\beta$ -glycyrrhetic acid by inhibition of free-radical generation and lipid peroxidation has been extensively reported (Huo *et al*, 2011). One of these studies indicated that the hydromethanolic root extract of *G. Glabra* exhibits a significant protection against hepatotoxicity induced by carbon tetrachloride in the liver tissue of mice (Sharma & Agrawal, 2017). The effects of liquorice on nonalcoholic fatty liver disease have also been investigated (Hajiaghahmohammadi *et al.*, 2012). According to Rizzato *et al*. (2017), glycyrrhizin and glycyrrhetic acids prevent drug-induced liver injury and ensure the disruption of bile acid metabolism in humans.

Indeed glycyrrhetic acid has been reported as anti-inflammatory and hepatoprotective compound (Yin *et al*, 2017). In addition, it prevents the oxidative and hepatic damage caused by aflatoxins through increasing CYP1A1 and glutathione-S-transferase activity, contributing to the anticarcinogenic activity by metabolic deactivation of the hepatotoxin (Yang *et al*, 2017). Mahmoud *et al*. (2017) reported that the treatment with 18 $\beta$ -glycyrrhetic acid significantly reduced the serum enzymes, bilirubin, and proinflammatory cytokines in the liver, decreasing the expression of P450 E1. This activity is due to the 18 $\beta$ -glycyrrhetic and glycyrrhizic acids that induce mitochondrial permeability transition, leading to the apoptosis of tumour cells (Lee *et al.*, 2008). Lee *et al*. (2008) demonstrated the toxic effect of *G. glabra* against the human cervix and uterus tumour cell line SiHa cells. The hydromethanolic root extract of *G. glabra* also exhibited antimutagenic potential by suppressing micronuclei formation and chromosomal aberration in bone marrow cells of albino mice (Sharma *et al*, 2014). Glycyrrhizin and glycyrrhetic acids are effective compounds in gastric cancer treatment, whereas glycyrrhizin suppresses thromboxane A2 in lung cancer cell with low toxicity (Deng, *et al*, 2017). According to Wang *et al*. (2017), 18 $\beta$ -glycyrrhetic acid has antitumour activities in breast and ovarian cancer, gastric tumours, and leukaemia. In liver cancer, the compound inhibits the proliferation of HepG2 cells without affecting the normal liver cell line. In particular, 18 $\beta$ -glycyrrhetic acid increases the formation of reactive oxygen species, nitric oxide production, and loss of the mitochondrial membrane potential (Hasan *et al*, 2016).

Glycyrrhetic acid derivatives have also presented promising cytotoxicity on human breast cancer cell lines (MCF-7, MDA-MB-231; Li *et al.*, 2016). Also, the anticancer activity in human leukaemia, by inducing the apoptosis of HL-60 cells through the activation of extrinsic and intrinsic apoptotic pathways, was proved by. Huang *et al*. (2016). Recently, licochalcone E, when compared with well-known antitumour agents, licochalcone A and isoliquiritigenin, exhibited the most potent cytotoxic effect (Xiao *et al*, 2011; Yu *et al*, 2017). Xiao *et al*. (2011) explored the licochalcone. A

mechanism of action in MKN-28, AGS, and MKN-45 gastric cancer cells and human gastric epithelial immortalized cells (Park *et al*, 2015; Xiao *et al*, 2011). The results indicated that licochalcone A inhibits gastric cancer cells growth in a dose-dependent way, by blocking cell cycle progression at the G2/M transition, inducing apo-ptosis. In addition, licochalcone A induced apoptosis by its effects on the expression of PARP, caspase-3, Bcl-2, and Bax (Xiao *et al*, 2011). Kanazawa *et al*. (2003) and Jung *et al*. (2006) showed that isoliquiritigenin inhibits the cell growth by G2/M cell cycle arrest in breast and prostate tumour cells.

Different studies demonstrated that isoliquiritigenin suppresses pulmonary metastasis in mice (Yamazaki *et al*, 2002) and human hep-atoma cells (Hsu *et al.*, 2005). Apoptosis was primarily mediated through mitochondrial death cascade, as shown by loss of mitochondrial membrane potential, release of cytochrome c, and activation of caspase-9. A possible explanation is that cell growth was arrested through up-regulation of p53 and p21 and down-regulation of cdk2, cyclin E, and E2F-1 while apoptosis was induced by increasing Bax protein expression and activating caspase-7 (Sharma *et al*, 2012). Glabridin exhibited antitumour properties in various human cancer cells (Jiang *et al.*, 2016). The results revealed that glabridin induced apoptosis in dose dependently in Huh7 cells through caspase-3, caspase-8, and caspase-9 activation and PARP cleavage (Hsieh *et al*, 2016).

The effects of *G. glabra* on learning and memory were investigated in mice (Dhingra & Sharma, 2006; Parle *et al*, 2004). In 2004, Parle *et al*. (2004) administered the extract of *G. glabra* orally to mice during 7 days at different concentrations (75–300 mg/kg). Chakravarthi and Avadhani (2013) and Dhingra and Sharma (2006) studied the effects of *G. glabra* root aqueous extract on the learning and memory of 1-month-old male Wistar albino mice at doses between 75 and 300 mg/kg, orally administered during six successive weeks. Both studies demonstrated a significant improvement of learning and memory in mice, but the exact mechanism behind this action remains unknown (Chakravarthi & Avadhani, 2013; Dhingra & Sharma, 2006).

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