

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**MECHANISM OF ALOE EMODIN-INDUCED
APOPTOSIS IN ER⁺-BREAST CANCER CELLS, MCF-7**

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PhD

September 2016

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of University Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the result of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledge as references work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any other degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknolgi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.

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ABSTRACT

Aloe emodin, an anthraquinone exhibits higher cytotoxicity to hepatoma, prostate and cervical cancer cells through cell cycle arrest and apoptosis compared to normal cells. However, its underlying mechanism on ER⁺-breast cancer cell death remains unclear. Therefore, this study was done to investigate aloe emodin cytotoxicity and its mechanism on estrogen receptor (ER)-positive (MCF-7), ER-negative breast cancer cells (MDA-MB-231) and control breast cells (MCF-10A) in comparison with tamoxifen. Cytotoxicity was determined using WST-1 proliferation assay and Trypan blue exclusion test. Apoptosis mechanism was investigated using Annexin V-FITC/PI staining and DNA fragmentation assay. Both genes and proteins involved in the regulation of cell cycle (p53, p21, CDK1, CDK2, cyclin B1 and cyclin E1) and apoptosis (Fas, FADD, Caspase-3, Caspase-8, Caspase-9, Bax, Bcl-2, and Cytochrome c) in aloe emodin-treated MCF-7 were determined using Quantigene 2.0 Plex and protein ELISA assays respectively. Maximum treatment time was set up to 72 hours in all assays. Aloe emodin inhibited the proliferation of MCF-7 with IC₅₀ of 80µM. No IC₅₀ value was obtained on MDA-MB-231 and MCF-10A, even up to 150µM. In contrast, tamoxifen was non-selective to all cells with IC₅₀ of 27µM, 19µM and 42µM, respectively. IC₅₀ values obtained were used in all the other assays. Results from Trypan blue exclusion test were in concordance with the proliferation assay. Study on Annexin/PI staining showed the presence of early and late apoptosis (18.42% ± 3.53 to 29.25% ± 0.55; p<0.05, n=3 and 28.45% ± 2.36 to 30.22% ± 0.56; p>0.05, n=3, respectively) in aloe emodin and tamoxifen-treated MCF-7 cells. Accordingly, DNA fragmentation was observed. Aloe emodin and tamoxifen enhanced MCF-7 cytotoxicity through apoptosis. In cell cycle signalling, aloe emodin upregulated the expression of p53 and p21 proteins; while downregulating CDK1. Only CDK1 protein is in accordance with gene expression. In intrinsic apoptosis signalling, Bax, Cytochrome c and Caspase-9 proteins were upregulated; while no change observed in Bcl-2 protein. Except for Caspase-9, these results are in accordance with gene expression. In extrinsic apoptosis, Fas and Caspase-8 were upregulated, contrary to gene expressions. These findings indicate that aloe emodin cytotoxic action on MCF-7 cells is through G2/M arrest; both extrinsic and intrinsic apoptosis pathways. Its actions on G2/M phase arrest and activation of intrinsic apoptosis pathways were p53-dependent, while extrinsic apoptosis was p53-independent. Data obtained suggests (i) aloe emodin has potential as a selective apoptotic inducer in ER⁺-breast cancer management and (ii) the present study could be used as a basic rationale for *in vivo* experiment setting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to Allah SWT and blessing be on His Prophet SAW for the ultimate guidance. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and heartfelt appreciation to the people who have directly or indirectly contributed to this thesis. To my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr Narimah Abdul Hamid Hasani for her patience, invaluable guidance, constant support and most importantly, for being a great advisor. I have immensely enjoyed working with you and gained much respect and admiration throughout the journey of my PhD. Without your help, the completion of this work would not have been possible. I must also acknowledge my co-supervisors, Dr Siti Hamimah Sheikh Abdul Kadir and Dr. Nik Mohd Mazuan Nik Mohd Rosdy for their helpful suggestions and continuous encouragement.

I would like to thank my parents, Mohd Amin Bin Duka and Isia Binti Mekka for their love and support; my husband Wan Abdul Rahim Bin Wan Mohd Isa, my sister: Masni Binti Mohd Amin and my children, Wan Bahiyah Sakinah Binti Wan Abdul Rahim, Wan Iqbal Salahuddin Bin Wan Abdul Rahim and Wan Solehah Sakinah Binti Wan Abdul Rahim for their encouragement, utmost understanding as well as their endless support.

A number of people have generously assisted me in reaching my goal of completing a PhD. My colleagues, lecturers and supporting staff at the Faculty of Medicine Sciences and Faculty of Dentistry, Universiti Teknologi MARA, as well as the staff at the Institute Medical Molecular and Biotechnology (IMMB), Universiti Teknologi MARA who provided the co-operation and much needed assistance. Special thanks also go to Prof. Dr Mohamed Ibrahim Abu Hassan, Dean Faculty of Dentistry for giving the opportunity and continuous support along this journey.

I would like to express my most sincere appreciation and deep sense of gratitude to my friends Farizan Binti Aris and Zulinda Ayu Zulkipli and all other friends that directly or indirectly involved in this project. Without your great helps, I could have never hoped to be what I am today.

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