



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***PROTECTIVE EFFECTS OF BIOCHANIN A ON PC12 CELLS  
AGAINST A $\beta$  AND L-GLUTAMATE NEUROTOXICITY***

**TAN JI WEI**

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By

**TAN JI WEI**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra  
Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Master of Science**

**August 2013**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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**August 2013**

**Chairman: Prof. Daud Ahmad Israf Ali, PhD**

**Faculty: Institute of Bioscience**

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is characterised by the production of the  $\beta$ -amyloid protein (A $\beta$ ) and progressive loss of neurons in the brain. It is considered one of the major neurodegenerative diseases and there is often an association with an excessive amount of glutamate that can lead to excitotoxicity. Estrogen has been previously studied and reported to decrease the risk and delay the onset and progression of Alzheimer's disease. However, estrogen intake increases the risk of unexpected side effects such as heart disease and breast cancer. As such, more attention is being paid towards the usage of phytoestrogens as an alternative solution to replace estrogen. Biochanin A, a phytoestrogen compound found mainly in *Trifolium pretense* (commonly known as red clover), is a commercial nutraceutical that is available for women who suffer from postmenopausal symptoms. However, its beneficial potential towards human health still remains unexplored. Therefore, biochanin A was used in the

present study as a potential alternative to estrogen replacement therapy by investigating its neuroprotective ability and its potential mechanisms in cultured PC12 cells. MTT cell viability assay and LDH release test was used to evaluate the cytotoxic effect of A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> and L-glutamate on the cells. Flowcytometry and fluorescent microscopy were performed for qualitative and quantitative analysis of A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub>-induced and L-glutamate-induced cell death. Measurements of caspase-3, 8 and 9 activity were made using caspase colorimetric kits. The mitochondrial membrane potential (MMP) was accessed using spectrofluorometric assessment of rhodamine dye and Western blot analysis was used to measure the pro- and anti-apoptotic protein levels. The results showed that exposure of PC12 cells to either A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> or L-glutamate alone caused significantly lower cell viability and higher LDH release and apoptotic activity. However, all of these adverse effects were markedly inhibited in the presence of biochanin A. In addition, biochanin A also recovered the loss of MMP in A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub>-treated PC12 cells by regulating the level of pro-apoptotic (Bax and cytochrome c) and anti-apoptotic (Bcl-2) proteins. In conclusion, the protective effect of biochanin A was demonstrated in the inhibition of apoptosis induced by A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> and L-glutamate. Specifically, the apoptosis inhibition of biochanin A involved the prevention of mitochondrial mediated apoptotic processes in the cell. Hence, the present study can serve as a basic platform to further study the effects of biochanin A as it could be developed into a potential treatment agent for AD and other related neuronal degenerative diseases.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**KESAN PERLINDUNGAN BIOCHANIN A DALAM SEL-SEL PC12  
TERHADAP KENEUROTOKSIKAN A $\beta$  DAN L-GLUTAMAT**

Oleh

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Penyakit Alzheimer (PA) merupakan sejenis penyakit neurodegeneratif utama yang dicirikan dengan penghasilan protein  $\beta$ -amiloid (A $\beta$ ) serta kehilangan neuron otak secara progresif. PA juga sering dikaitkan dengan kelebihan glutamat yang mengakibatkan kesan ketoksikan dalam otak. Walaupun estrogen pernah dilaporkan dapat mengurangkan risiko dan perkembangan PA, pengambilannya dapat meningkatkan risiko kesan sampingan yang lain seperti penyakit jantung dan kanser payudara. Oleh itu, tumpuan telah mula diberikan dalam penggunaan fitoestrogen sebagai penyelesaian alternatif untuk menggantikan estrogen. Biochanin A, sejenis kompaun fitoestrogen yang boleh didapati terutamanya dalam *Trifolium pretense* (Semanggi merah) merupakan sejenis ubat komersil nutraseutikal bagi wanita yang mengalami gejala menopause. Akan tetapi manfaatnya terhadap kesihatan manusia masih belum diterokai dengan sepenuhnya. Oleh sebab itu, biochanin A telah digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk menerokai kesan perlindungannya

disamping menyiasat mekanisme yang terlibat dalam sel-sel PC12. Ujian MTT dan LDH telah digunakan untuk menguji kesitotoksikan bagi  $A\beta_{25-35}$  dan L-glutamat terhadap sel. Flowcitometri dan mikroskopi kependarfluoran telah digunakan untuk analisis kualitatif dan kuantitatif kematian sel yang diakibatkan oleh  $A\beta_{25-35}$  dan L-glutamat. Pengukuran aktiviti caspase-3, 8 dan 9 telah dinilai dengan menggunakan kit caspase. Potensi membran mitokondria (MMP) telah diakses menerusi penilaian spectrofluorometrik rhodamine manakala teknik Western blot telah digunakan untuk mengukur tahap pro- dan anti-apoptotic protein. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pendedahan sel-sel PC12 terhadap sama ada  $A\beta_{25-35}$  atau L-glutamat menyebabkan penurunan yang ketara dalam kebolehhidupan sel serta peningkatan dalam pembebasan LDH dan juga aktiviti apoptosis. Walau bagaimanapun, semua kesan-kesan negatif yang ketara ini dapat direncatkan dengan perawatan biochanin A. Selain itu, biochanin A dapat memulihkan penurunan MMP sel-sel PC12 yang didedahkan dengan  $A\beta_{25-35}$  menerusi kawalan protein pro-apoptotic (Bax dan cytochrome c) serta protein anti-apoptotic (BCL-2). Sebagai kesimpulan, hasil kajian ini telah menunjukkan bahawa biochanin A dapat memainkan peranan perlindungannya menerusi pencegahan apoptosis yang dicetuskan oleh  $A\beta_{25-35}$  dan L-glutamat. Jika dipandang dengan lebih teliti, pencegahan apoptosis ini melibatkan peranan mitokondria dalam sel. Justeru, kajian ini dapat dijadikan sebagai platform asas dalam pengajian kesan biochanin A pada masa hadapan agar fitoestrogen ini dapat dijadikan sebagai ejen rawatan yang berpotensi bagi penyakit Alzheimer dan penyakit-penyakit degeneratif yang lain.

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Tan Ji Wei

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 2 August 2013 to conduct the final examination of Tan Ji Wei on his thesis entitled "Protective Effects of Biochanin a on PC12 Cells against A $\beta$  and L-Glutamate Neurotoxicity" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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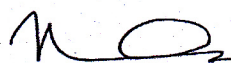
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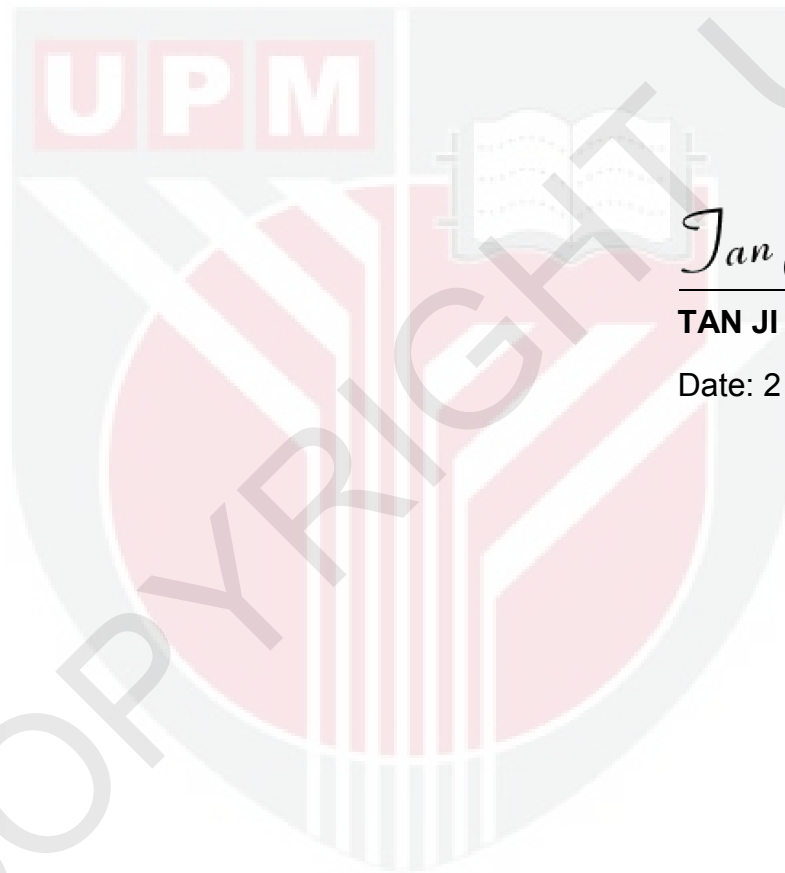
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## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for the quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institutions.



*Tan Ji Wei*

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**TAN JI WEI**

Date: 2 August 2013

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	ii
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	iv
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	vi
<b>APPROVAL</b>	viii
<b>DECLARATION</b>	x
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	xiv
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xv
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS / NOTATIONS</b>	xvii
 <b>CHAPTER</b>	
 <b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	 1
1.1. Objective	6
1.2. General objective	6
1.3. Specific objectives	6
1.4. Hypothesis	7
 <b>2. LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	 8
2.1. Alzheimer's disease	8
2.2. Biochemistry of Alzheimer's disease	9
2.1.1. Endoproteolysis of amyloid precursor protein	10
2.3. Beta-amyloid and Alzheimer's disease	14
2.1.1. Extracellular and intracellular beta-amyloid	14
2.1.2. Assembly state of A $\beta$ peptide	16
2.1.3. Mechanism of action of A $\beta$ peptide in neuron cell	17
2.4. Glutamatergic System and Alzheimer's Disease	18
2.5. Apoptosis and Alzheimer's Disease	19
2.1.1. Mitochondrial dysfunction	21
2.1.2. BCL-2 and caspase family proteins	22
2.6. Phytoestrogens	24
2.1.1. Types of phytoestrogen	25
2.1.2. Mechanism of action of phytoestrogens in human	27
2.1.3. Benefit of phytoestrogens in our daily life	28
2.1.4. Phytoestrogens in Alzheimer's disease and cognitive disorders	29
2.1.5. Biochanin A	31
2.7. <i>In vitro</i> model of Alzheimer's disease	32
2.1.1. PC12 cell line	33

<b>3. MATERIALS AND METHODS</b>	<b>34</b>
3.1. Materials	34
3.2. Methods	35
3.1.1. Media preparation	35
3.1.2. Cell culture	36
3.1.3. Cell counting	36
3.1.4. Preparation of amyloid- $\beta$ protein and L-glutamate stock solution	37
3.1.5. Bovine collagen type 1 thin coating	37
3.1.6. Cell treatment	38
3.1.7. MTT assay	39
3.1.8. Lactate dehydrogenase activity assay	40
3.1.9. Cell death analysis	42
3.2.9.1. Flowcytometry assessment	42
3.2.9.2. Fluorescent microscopy assessment	43
3.1.10. Caspase colorimetric test	45
3.1.11. Western blotting	46
3.2.11.1. Protein extraction and quantification	47
3.2.11.2. SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE)	48
3.2.11.3. Semi-dry protein transfer	49
3.2.11.4. Immunoblotting	50
3.2.11.5. Membrane visualization	51
3.1.12. Mitochondrial membrane potential measurement	51
3.1.13. Statistical analysis	52
<b>4. RESULTS</b>	<b>53</b>
4.1. Non-cytotoxic effect of biochanin A on PC12 cells	53
4.2. Cytotoxic effect of A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> peptide/L-glutamate on PC12 cells	55
4.3. Inhibitory effect of biochanin A on cytotoxicity in A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> /L-glutamate treated PC12 cells	58
4.4. Effect of Biochanin A on LDH release in A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> /L-glutamate-treated in PC12 cells	61
4.5. Effect of Biochanin A on A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> /L-glutamate-induced cell death in PC12 cells	63
4.6. Effect of Biochanin A on nuclear morphologic changes induced by A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> /L-glutamate in PC12 cells	68
4.7. Effect of Biochanin A on caspase activity in A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> /L-glutamate-induced apoptosis.	72
4.8. Effect of Biochanin A on protein level of Bcl-2, Bax and cytochrome c in A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> -induced apoptosis.	76
4.9. Effect of Biochanin A on mitochondrial membrane potential in A $\beta$ <sub>25-35</sub> -treated PC12 cells.	81
<b>5. DISCUSSIONS</b>	<b>83</b>

<b>6. CONCLUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION</b>	92
6.1. Conclusion	92
6.2. Recommendation for future investigation	93
<b>REFERENCES</b>	94
<b>APPENDICES</b>	110
<b>BIODATA OF STUDENT</b>	123
<b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>	125

