



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***IN VITRO AND IN VIVO EFFECTS OF SELECTED MALAYSIAN
MEDICINAL PLANT EXTRACTS ON *Toxoplasma gondii****

KUMARESWARAN A/L DEVANTHRAN

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By

KUMARESWARAN A/L DEVANTHRAN

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

April 2016

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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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Chairman: Professor Hj Wan Omar Abdullah, PhD
Faculty : Medicine and Health Sciences

The sporozoan parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* is tissue parasite commonly causing infection to humans and animals, particularly in the immunocompromised hosts. Latest report stated that approximately one third of the global population has been infected with *T. gondii*. The World Health Organisation considers toxoplasmosis as one of the major parasitic diseases infecting human in the developing countries. General therapeutic drug for toxoplasmosis is pyrimethamine. Since it presents several adverse side effects, the need to develop new drugs for this condition is critical.

The aim of this study is to investigate anti-*toxoplasma* effect of some selected medicinal plants. Assays were developed to determine the anti-*toxoplasma* effects *in vitro* and *in vivo*. Four medicinal plants have been used, which are *Tinospora crispa*, *Piper sarmentosum*, *Andrographis paniculata* and *Curcuma longa*. The plants are reputed in traditional medicine for many treatments of diseases.

These medicinal plants reported in literature as antimalarial agent, were evaluated for their *in vitro* cytotoxicity activity against mammalian cell lines, Vero cell line, which was used as host cell in this anti-*toxoplasma* activity study. Methyl thiazolyl diphenyl tetrazolium (MTT) assay was used to measure *in vitro* cytotoxicity activity. The cell culture-based assays were performed in this study to evaluate the plant extract and determine their effectiveness in inhibiting the growth of *T. gondii in vitro*.

In *in vivo* experiment, survival analysis was conducted to estimate the survival time of *T. gondii* infected mice treated with plant extract. *T. gondii* brain cysts were inoculated orally in mice. In each study, three groups of mice were assigned to treatment with plant extract prior to *T. gondii* infection (prophylactic), after infection (therapeutic), or left untreated (infected untreated control). The plant extract effect on toxoplasmosis was evaluated by the assessment of survival rate and brain cyst burden.

All four plant extracts were found non toxic towards Vero cells. The IC₅₀ value for all plant ethanolic extracts were above 100µg/ml. The least toxicity was the extract of *C. longa* followed by *T. crispa*, *P. sarmentosum* and *A. paniculata*. *T. gondii* tachyzoites was inhibited by plant extracts in Vero cells by concentration-dependent manner. Even at low concentration as at 25µg/ml, *T. crispa* and *P. sarmentosum* extract dramatically inhibited *T. gondii* tachyzoites in Vero cells. *T. crispa* extract showed the greatest inhibition on *T. gondii* tachyzoites growth in Vero cells followed by *P. sarmentosum*, *A. paniculata* and *C. longa*. *T. crispa* and *P. sarmentosum* extracts were comparable with positive control, clindamycin.

T. crispa extract was found as a potent anti-*toxoplasma* agent followed by *P. sarmentosum*, *A. paniculata* and *C. longa* for both *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies. In infection induced by inoculation of cysts of *T. gondii*, plant extract in prophylactic or therapeutic regimens significantly enhanced protection of infected mice against death. Delayed deaths of treated mice compare to untreated mice were observed throughout the 60 days observation period. The brains of infected mice treated with plant extract prophylactic or therapeutic groups showed low brain cyst burden compared to the infected untreated control. *T. crispa* and *P. sarmentosum* extracts reduced the brain cyst count almost to 25% compared to untreated infected mice.

These results suggest that all four plant extracts have potent anti-*toxoplasma* effect against *T. gondii* especially *T. crispa* and *P. sarmentosum* extracts. These plant extracts can be exploited for development of alternative medicine to treat *T. gondii* infections.

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

**KESAN *IN VITRO* DAN *IN VIVO* EKSTRAK TUMBUHAN HERBA
MALAYSIA TERHADAP PARASIT *Toksoplasma gondii***

Oleh

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Parasit *Toksoplasma gondii* adalah parasit tisu yang menyebabkan jangkitan kepada manusia dan haiwan, terutamanya dalam perumah yang mempunyai sistem imun yang lemah. Satu pertiga daripada jumlah penduduk dunia kini telah dijangkiti parasit ini. Pertubuhan Kesihatan Dunia mempertimbangkan toksoplasmosis sebagai salah satu penyakit parasit utama menjangkiti manusia di kalangan negara membangun. Ubat umum terapeutik untuk merawat toksoplasmosis adalah 'pyrimethamine'. Memandangkan ubat tersebut menyebabkan beberapa kesan sampingan yang buruk, keperluan untuk menghasilkan dan menilai ubat-ubatan baru adalah penting.

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji kesan anti-toksoplasma daripada herba. Kajian telah direka untuk menentukan kesan anti-toksoplasmal *in vitro* dan *in vivo*. Empat herba telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Herba tersebut ialah *Tinospora crispa*, *Piper sarmentosum*, *Andrographis paniculata* dan *Curcuma longa*. Herba tersebut biasa digunakan dalam perubatan tradisional untuk merawat pelbagai penyakit.

Herba tersebut telah dilaporkan mempunyai kesan terhadap parasit malaria. Oleh yang demikian, herba tersebut telah dinilai aktiviti ketoksikan secara *in vitro* terhadap sel mamalia; sel Vero yang digunakan sebagai sel perumah untuk kajian aktiviti anti-toksoplasma. Aktiviti ketoksikan *in vitro* dikenalpasti melalui kajian 'methyl thiazolyl diphenyl tetrazolium'. Kajian berasaskan kultur sel telah dijalankan untuk menilai ekstrak herba yang berkesan untuk merencat aktiviti *T. gondii* dalam sel Vero melalui kaedah *in vitro*.

Dalam eksperimen *in vivo*, analisis jangka hayat hidup telah dijalankan untuk menganggarkan jangka hayat tikus yang dijangkiti *T. gondii* yang dirawat dengan ekstrak herba. Sista otak yang mengandungi *T. gondii* disuntik melalui mulut pada tikus. Dalam setiap kajian, tiga kumpulan rawatan tikus telah direka. Kumpulan rawatan tersebut adalah rawatan ekstrak herba sebelum jangkitan (pencegahan),

selepas jangkitan (terapeutik), dan kumpulan tanpa rawatan herba. Kesan ekstrak herba terhadap toksoplasmosis telah dinilai melalui pemerhatian jangka hayat hidup tikus dan beban sista otak tikus.

Kesemua ekstrak herba terbukti tidak toksik terhadap sel Vero. Nilai IC_{50} toksik untuk kesemua ekstrak etanol herba melebihi nilai $100\mu\text{g/ml}$. Nilai IC_{50} toksik terendah adalah ekstrak *C. longa* diikuti oleh *T. crispa*, *P. sarmentosum* dan *A. paniculata*. Ekstrak herba menghalang pertumbuhan *T. gondii* dalam sel Vero dengan kepekatan yang berbeza. Walaupun pada kepekatan yang rendah, iaitu pada $25\mu\text{g/ml}$, ekstrak *T. crispa* dan *P. sarmentosum* menghalang pertumbuhan *T. gondii* dalam sel Vero. Ekstrak *T. crispa* menunjukkan aktiviti perencatan yang ketara dalam pertumbuhan *T. gondii* dalam sel Vero diikuti oleh *P. sarmentosum*, *A. paniculata* dan *C. longa*. Ekstrak *T. crispa* dan *P. sarmentosum* menunjukkan potensi yang tinggi setanding dengan kawalan positif, ubat clindamycin.

Ekstrak *T. crispa* menghasilkan kesan anti-toksoplasma terbaik diikuti oleh *P. sarmentosum*, *A. paniculata* dan *C. longa* dalam kedua-dua kajian *in vitro* dan *in vivo*. Dalam jangkitan yang disebabkan oleh sista otak *T. gondii*, ekstrak herba dalam kumpulan pencegahan dan terapeutik telah meningkatkan perlindungan tikus yang dijangkiti daripada kematian. Pengurangan jangka hayat hidup tikus tanpa rawatan berbanding tikus yang dirawat telah diperhatikan sepanjang tempoh pemerhatian 60 hari. Tikus yang dijangkiti dan dirawat dengan ekstrak herba dalam kumpulan pencegahan dan terapeutik menunjukkan beban sista otak yang rendah berbanding dengan kumpulan tikus yang dijangkiti tanpa rawatan. Ekstrak *T. crispa* dan *P. sarmentosum* telah mengurangkan sista otak hampir 25% berbanding dengan tikus yang dijangkiti tanpa rawatan.

Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kesemua ekstrak herba mempunyai kesan anti-toksoplasma terhadap *T. gondii* terutamanya ekstrak *T. crispa* dan *P. sarmentosum*. Ekstrak herba ini boleh dieksploitasi untuk pembangunan perubatan alternatif bagi merawat jangkitan *T. gondii*.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on (date of viva voce) to conduct the final examination of Kumareswaran A/L Devanthran on his thesis entitled “*In vitro* and *in vivo* effects of extracts of selected Malaysian plants on *Toxoplasma gondii*” 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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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACUC	Animal Care and Use Committee
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CD4	Cluster of differentiation 4
CDC	Centers for Disease Control
CNS	Central Nervous System
CT	Computed Tomography
Da	Dalton
DHFR	Dihydrofolate Reductase
DMSO	Dimethyl sulfoxide
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
EDTA	Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
ELISA	Enzyme linked immno assay
FAS	Fatty Acid Synthesis
FBS	Fetal Bovine Serum
HBSS	Hanks' balanced salt solution
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IC ₅₀	Half maximal inhibitory concentration
IFA	Indirect fluorescent antibody
Ig	Immunoglobulin
LC ₅₀	Half maximal lethal concentration
LD	Lethal Dose
mg	miligram
mg/ml	milligram/ mililitre
ml	mililitre
MRI	Magnetic Resonance Imaging
MRSA	Methicillin-resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>
MTT	(3-(4,5-Dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5- diphenyltetrazolium bromide)
PABA	Para-Aminobenzoic Acid
PAS	Periodic Acid Schiff
PBS	Phosphate Buffer Solution
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
PI	post-infection
ppm	part per million
rpm	revolutions per minute
RPMI	Roswell Park Memorial Institute
<i>T. gondii</i>	<i>Toxoplasma gondii</i>
µg/ml	microgram/ mililitre

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Toxoplasmosis caused by the ubiquitous obligatory intracellular coccidian protozoan, *Toxoplasma gondii* (Negash *et al.*, 2008) that has many forms. There are three infectious stages of *Toxoplasma gondii*. They are tachyzoites (rapidly multiplying form), bradyzoites (tissue cyst form), and sporozoites (in oocysts). Tachyzoites are found in the acute phase of the disease and are responsible for clinical manifestations. They are susceptible to the immunological response of the host and to drug action. Cysts are the resistant form of the parasite, persisting for the host's entire life. Cyst walls are resistant to both drugs and the immune system (Hill *et al.*, 2002).

Toxoplasma gondii has a wide range of hosts which includes humans, mammals and marine mammals. About one third of the world population has been exposed to this parasite. Humans or animals can acquire *Toxoplasma gondii* infection post-natal by ingestion of undercooked or raw meat from infected animals, or ingestion of food or water contaminated with oocysts excreted by infected cats (Dubey *et al.*, 2008). The population structure of *Toxoplasma gondii* consists of three main clonal lineages; Type I (including RH,a highly virulent strain), Type II (including avirulent strains like Me49), and Type III (including avirulent strains like NED) correlated with virulence expression in mice (Howe *et al.*, 1995).

The treatment of toxoplasmosis is essential as *Toxoplasma gondii* causes serious mortality and morbidity in pregnant women and in immunocompromised patients who are suffering from the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) or those undergoing chemotherapy. It is therefore clear that anti-*Toxoplasmic* therapy need to be potent against all strains of *Toxoplasma gondii*, be capable of killing tachyzoites and have a high ocular and cerebral penetration. However, their side effects, lack of efficacy against the tissue cyst of parasite and the potential appearance of resistant strains are particular drawback of the available treatments. (Mui *et al.*, 2008)

Several⁴ treatment failures of toxoplasmic encephalitis, chorioretinitis, and congenital toxoplasmosis have been reported (Batz *et al.*, 2006; Doliwa *et al.*, 2013; Petersen 2007; Torres *et al.*, 1997). In addition, long term use of these drugs may lead to hematologic and renal toxicity (Crespo *et al.*, 2000) and the condition which lead to clinical failure by selecting drug resistant parasite variants. The current use of pyrimethamine for treatment of *T. gondii* infection is associated with suppression of bone marrow and may lead to neutropenia condition. Moreover, the combination of pyrimethamine with sulfadiazine can give rise to further concern due to allergy, kidney stones, or hepatic or renal complications (Mui *et al.*, 2005).

Nowadays, there is an increase of awareness on therapeutic potential of natural products and medicinal plants. Natural products are usually considered to be less toxic

and free from side effects than synthetic drugs in treating various diseases. The importance of these plants as sources of natural product bioactive compounds to medicine lies not only in their pharmacological or chemotherapeutic effect, but also in their role as template compounds for the production of new drug compounds (Phillipson *et al.*, 1994).

Previous studies showed that, lack of vaccine availability, and with the rise of parasite resistance towards therapeutic drugs, natural products can be efficient alternative against intracellular parasites such as *Plasmodium falciparum* and *Trypanosoma cruzi*. (Cui *et al.*, 2007, Kolodziej *et al.*, 2005) Natural products play an important role in the process of developing new drugs in the field of cancer research and infectious diseases (Newman *et al.*, 2003). The medicinal value of these plants lies in some chemical compounds that induce a definite physiological activity on the human body (Balunas *et al.*, 2005). In recent years, people have tended to use traditional medicine for the treatment of diseases. Medicinal plants are assumed to possess numerous secondary metabolites as flavonoids, alkaloids, terpenoids, tannins and others that help to protect the body from a variety of diseases.

Problem Statement

Standard therapies for toxoplasmosis involving combinations of pyrimethamine with sulfadiazine, clindamycin, azithromycin, or atavaquone. Drug treatment is often associated with severe side effects such as bone marrow suppression, cutaneous rash, leukopenia and thrombocytopenia. Alternative drugs with lesser side effects are needed to combat the disease by utilising medicinal plants.

1.1 Objectives

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the effects of selected Malaysian medicinal plants on *Toxoplasma gondii* infection.

1.2 Specific objectives

1. To determine *in vitro* activity of selected Malaysian medicinal plants against *Toxoplasma gondii* infection on Vero cell and the inhibitory concentration values for each treatment condition.
2. To demonstrate *in vivo* anti-*toxoplasma* activity in animal experiments for effective control of infection using infusions of selected Malaysian medicinal plants.
3. To determine cytotoxicity levels of selected Malaysian medicinal plants on mammalian cell.

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