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SPECIES OF GALIUM L. GENUS AS PROMISING ANTICANCER AGENTS

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A cosmopolitan genus *Galium* L. of Rubiaceae Juss. family comprises 659 officially registered species, 145 of which grow in Europe (*Flora Europaea*, 2010). *Galium verum* L. and *Galium aparine* L. are the most widespread species commonly used worldwide as ethnomedicinal plants. According to Hartwell, 1971, *G. verum* was traditionally used in Europe and Northern America for the treatment of cancerous ulcers or breast cancer. In Palestine, an infusion from *Galium aparine* L. leaves is used in Hodgkin lymphoma (Jaradat et al., 2016); *G. aparine* herb is used to treat cancer in Pakistan (Tariq et al., 2017).

The present manuscript is aimed to provide summarized data available in public domain on anticancer activity of *Galium* L. genus species. Also, we focused our attention on individual phytochemicals with an established antitumor activity isolated from *Galium* spp. and/or other plants as a justification for further in-depth research into anticancer activity of species of *Galium* L. genus. In addition, with reference to the results of our previous research into chemotaxonomic studies of *Galium* L. genus (Goryacha, 2013, Ilina, 2013) we intend to estimate a number of *Galium* spp. as potential sources of antitumor phytochemicals.

According to open sources, the following human tumor cell lines were used in anticancer activity studies: Ehrlich Ascites Carcinoma (EAC) cell line; nasopharyngeal carcinoma epithelioid cell line, CNE; non-small-cell lung cancer cell line, A549; colorectal carcinoma cell line, Hct-116; epitheloid cervix carcinoma, HeLa; liver cancer cell line, HepG-2; melanoma cell lines, HT168-M1 and A2058; subline of the ubiquitous keratin-forming tumor cell line, KB; gastric carcinoma cell lines, AGS and MGC-803; lung fibroblast cell line, MRC-5; lung cancer cell line, NCI-H460; colon adenocarcinoma cell lines, HT29 and Caco-2; hypopharyngeal cell line, FaDu; larynx carcinoma cell line, HLaC78; breast cancer cell lines, MDA-MB-231 and MCF7; skin cancer cell lines, SK-MEL-5 and B16F10; leukemia cell line, K562; and immortalized line of T-lymphocyte cells, Jurkat cells.

In EAC cell line, *Galium verum* L. herb aqueous extract purified from polysaccharides showed moderate cytotoxic activity (Goryacha et al., 2013); decoction from *G. verum* leaves was found toxic in HLaC78 and FaDu cell lines, cytotoxicity being influenced by the expression of *p*-glycoprotein (MDR-1) in the carcinoma cell lines. The conclusion was made that decoction from *G. verum* leaves may be useful as a preventive and/or a concomitant therapeutic approach in head and neck cancer (Schmidt et al., 2014). The results obtained by Pashapour et al., 2020 showed cytotoxic activity of the chloroform and petroleum ether fractional extracts of *G. verum* in HepG2 and HT29 cell lines. The chloroform extract showed cytotoxic effects on HT29 but increased the cell

viability of HepG2 cells. The petroleum ether extract had cytotoxic effects on HT29 and HepG2 cell lines and significantly decreased cell viability of both cancer cell lines compared to the control group.

Atmaca et al., 2016, investigated the potential anti-proliferative and apoptotic effect of *G. aparine* methanol extract on MCF-7 and MDA-MB-23 cell lines. The extract was cytotoxic in both cell lines in a concentration and time-dependent manner; the apoptosis was induced in MDA-MB-231 cells; whereas necrosis was induced in MCF-7 cells. The researchers assumed that an induction of non-apoptotic cell death besides apoptotic cell death by *G. aparine* methanol extract may enable the killing of apoptosis resistant breast cancer cells. *Shi et al.*, 2016, showed that *G. aparine* petroleum ether fraction contains mainly daucosterol, β -sitosterol and dibutyl phthalate. Under experimental conditions, these compounds inhibited the proliferation of leukemia cell K562 with dose-effect and time-effect relationship, of which dibutyl phthalate had the strongest activity. *Aslantürk et al.*, 2017, established concentration-dependent cytotoxic/apoptotic effects of ethyl acetate and methanol extracts of *G. aparine* on MCF-7 and Caco-2 cell lines. The authors suggested that *G. aparine* extracts are capable of inhibiting cancer cell growth via apoptosis; they also assumed that alkaloids and saponins are responsible for high cytotoxic effect of ethyl acetate extract on Caco-2 cells, and phenolic compounds present in methanol extract may act selectively on MCF-7.

Amirghofran et al., 2006, found *G. mite* to cause more than 40 % apoptosis in the K562 and Jurkat cells, and produce ladder formation in these cancer cell lines. The results indicated that antitumor activity of *G. mite* was due to apoptosis.

As is shown, *Galium* spp. are promising sources of different classes of biologically active compounds (BACs). In aerial parts, the best-characterized group of BACs are iridoids, reported in more than 80 species. Iridoids are mainly represented by subgroups of asperuloside, loganin and monotropein. *Camero et al.*, 2018, reported on anti-angiogenic effects of iridoids from leaves of *G. tunetanum* Lam., namely, asperuloside, geniposidic acid and V1-iridoid inhibited angiogenesis in a dose-dependent manner. In the range of iridoids with established anti-angiogenic activity, all compounds are subsequent products of the same biosynthetic pathway, and we assume that more than 30 *Galium* spp. can be promising sources of iridoids and novel phytosubstances with an anti-angiogenic activity.

The second most abundant group of BACs in *Galium* L. genus are flavonoids, identified in more than 60 species. The dominant are diosmetin, luteolin and apigenin derivatives. *Zhao et al.*, 2011 reported that diosmetin from *G. verum* could inhibit tumor growth and protect tumor-induced apoptosis of the thymus, and the mechanism is closely associated with reduced cell death in the thymus and a Fas-FasL-dependent pathway. Diosmetin-7-O- β -D-xylopyranosyl-(1 \rightarrow 6)- β -D-glucopyranoside from *G. verum* could obviously inhibit the proliferation and induce the apoptosis in HepG-2 cells through the modulation of the expression level of bax/bcl-2 mRNA (*Li et al.*, 2013). Based on the given information, app. 20 *Galium*

spp., as plants producing diosmetin and derivatives, thereof merit attention as prospective objects for in-depth phytochemical and specific pharmacological research.

A recent study reported the presence of ursane derivatives in *G. aparine* herb, the dominant compound being euscaphic acid; in the herb of *G. verum* saponins of lupane derivatives were found with lupeol predominant (Ilina *et al.*, 2018). Dai *et al.*, 2019, demonstrated that euscaphic acid reduced cell proliferation and induced apoptosis and cell cycle arrest by suppressing the PI3K/AKT/mTOR signaling pathway, which is related to cell activities such as proliferation, migration, and invasion. In the study by Pitchai *et al.*, 2014, lupeol induced an effective change in the cell viability of MCF-7 cells via apoptosis, induced cell death, change in cell morphology and population of the cancer cells, whereas normal cells were not affected. In HeLa cells, lupeol exhibited the growth inhibitory activity through induction of S-phase cell cycle arrest and apoptosis (Prasad *et al.*, 2018).

In underground parts, the dominant group of BACs are anthraquinone derivatives of alizarin group, identified in more than 30 species. The most abundant are lucidine, lucidineprimveroside, alizarin, purpurin and rubiadin. The inhibitory activity of hybrids of alizarin and diamide scaffold, and novel alizarin α -aminophosphonate and O-methoxide derivatives against AGS, KB, NCI-H460, HepG-2, A549, MGC-803, Hct-116, CNE and Hela cells was shown (Ye *et al.*, 2014; Yao *et al.*, 2014; Nguyen *et al.*, 2020), established with alizarin α -aminophosphonate derivatives was induction of apoptosis through a mitochondrion-dependent pathway. In the study by Lajkó *et al.*, 2015, alizarin inhibited growth of MRC-5 cells; purpurin displayed a concentration and time-dependent growth inhibitory effect on A2058 and HT168-M1 cells and significantly reduced their number. Bajpai *et al.*, 2018, reported on activity of xanthopurpurin and lucidin- ω -methyl ether against SK-MEL-5, B16F10, MCF7 and MDA-MB-231 cell lines. More than 15 *Galium* spp. as sources of alizarin and purpurin, as well as other biosynthetically related compounds, can be regarded as candidates for in-depth studies from both phytochemical and pharmacological points of view.

The present mini-review data give a theoretical contribution to a targeted search within *Galium* species as sources of phytochemicals with established anti-angiogenic and antitumor activities, and novel phytosubstances as prospective objects for in-depth phytochemical and pharmacological research.

Зміст

Goryacha Olga V., Ilina Tetiana V., Kovaleva Alla M. SPECIES OF GALIUM L. GENUS AS PROMISING ANTICANCER AGENTS.....	4
Kashkur Y.V., Bizunok N.A. MAPex A NEW OPEN-SOURCE TOOL FOR LIGAND-BASED MOLECULE ALIGNMENT AND PHARMACOPHORE FEATURE EXTRACTION	7
Kazimova A.U., Aliev A. N., Yaqubov K. M. PHYTOTHERAPY DURING PREGNANCY.....	9
Khoma V., Martyniuk V., Matskiv T., Yunko K., Zacik U., Gnatyshyna L., Stoliar O. BIOCHEMICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF CHLORPROMAZINE EFFECT IN THE SINGLE AND COMBINE EXPOSURES ON THE MODEL ORGANISM	11
Kucher Tetyana APPLICATION OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY RELATIONS TECHNIQUE AS A COMPONENT OF THE "CASE-STUDY" METHOD FOR FORMATION IN MEDICAL STUDENTS THE PRINCIPLES OF CLINICAL THINKING.....	13
Kudriavtsev A., Kudriavtseva T., Zeldakova V. GHRELIN AND FEATURES OF THE COURSE OF GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE WITH COMORBID TYPE II DIABETES MELLITUS IN PATIENTS OF YOUNG AGE	16
Lytkin D., Shebeko S., Mackiv T., Khoma V., Martynyuk V., Formanchuk R., Gnatyshyna L., Stoliar O. THE INVOLVING OF ZINC-METALLOTHIONEINS IN THE JOINT TISSUES RESPONSE UNDER THE ACUTE CARRAGEENAN-INDUCED GONARTHRITIS IN RAT	18
Martyniuk V., Khoma V., Mackiv T., Nikonchuk A., Kravchuk O., Gnatyshyna L., Stoliar O. MULTI-MARKER APPROACH IN THE ENVIRONMENTALLY RELEVANT CO-EXPOSURE OF BIVALVE MOLLUSK WITH MICROPLASTIC CONFIRMS NEW PHARMACOLOGICAL TARGETS OF IBUPROFEN	20
Mishchenko O., Yurchenko C. STUDY OF ANALGETIC ACTIVITY EXPRESSED BY THE THICK EXTRACT OF COMMON TANCY FLOWER.....	22