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Larvicidal efficacy of monoterpenes against the larvae of *Anopheles gambiae*

Eliningaya J. Kweka[1,2*], Tamires Cardoso Lima[3], Chrian M. Marciale[1], Damião Pergentino de Sousa[3,4]

[1]*Division of Livestock and Human Diseases Vector Control, Tropical Pesticides Research Institute, P.O. Box 3024, Arusha, Tanzania*

[2]*Department of Medical Parasitology and Entomology, Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences, P.O. Box 1464, Mwanza, Tanzania*

[3]*Department of Pharmacy, Federal University of Sergipe, CEP 49100-000, São Cristóvão, Sergipe, Brazil*

[4]*Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Federal University of Paraíba, CEP 58051-970, João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brazil*

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To evaluate the larvicidal efficacy of eight volatile components of essential oils against 3rd instar larvae of *Anopheles gambiae s.s.*

Methods: Larvicidal effects of each compound were evaluated in both laboratory and semi-field trials. Stock solution was prepared and serial dilutions were made in six concentrations for each compound. A total of 20 larvae were exposed to larvicides for each replicate and monitored at intervals of 12, 24, 48 and 72 h. Larvae monitoring was done on basis of dead and live larvae in all intervals.

Results: All assayed compounds were larvicides and presented varying degrees of larval toxicity, with LC_{50} values ranging from 1.28 to 1 938.92 mg/L depending on the treatment time (12, 24, 48 or 72 h). (−)-Perillyl alcohol presented the strongest larvicidal activity towards *Anopheles gambiae* larvae, with LC_{50} values of 73.60, 18.36, 1.72 and 1.28 mg/L after 12, 24, 48 and 72 h of exposure, respectively. The next strongest were (−)-isopulegol (LC_{50} = 135.10, 49.39, 34.39 and 20.22 mg/L) and (−)-carvone epoxide (LC_{50} = 168.86, 124.74, 80.84 and 23.46 mg/L). After 12, 24 and 48 h of treatment, hydroxydihydrocarvone was the least toxic compound, with LC_{50} values of 1 938.92, 1 172.18 and 401.03 mg/L, respectively.

Conclusions: The data obtained in this study suggest that all evaluated monoterpenes, especially (−)-perillyl alcohol, have remarkable larvicidal effects and may be considered as potential sources for the development of suitable natural larvicides for mosquito management programs. Further small-scale field trials should be conducted.

1. Introduction

Mosquitoes constitute an important group of arthropods for public health. They transmit a wide range of human diseases such as filariasis, malaria, dengue, yellow fever and Japanese encephalitis, causing millions of deaths worldwide each year [1,2]. Global patterns of climate change and urbanization have increased the threat of humans contracting arthropod-borne viral infections [3].

Malaria is among the most important vector-borne diseases, being endemic to more than 100 countries worldwide, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions [4]. The disease is caused by one-celled parasites that are transmitted to humans via the bite of infected anopheline mosquitoes such as *Anopheles gambiae s.s.* Giles (*An. gambiae s.s.*), *Anopheles arabiensis* Patton and *Anopheles stephensi* Liston [5]. In the last 30 years, malaria incidence has increased, due mainly to the emergence of drug and insecticide resistance in parasites and vectors, respectively, as well as poor socioeconomic conditions [6]. But

*Corresponding author: Eliningaya J. Kweka, Division of Livestock and Human Diseases Vector Control, Tropical Pesticides Research Institute, P.O. Box 3024, Arusha, Tanzania.
Tel: +255 787745555
E-mail: pat.kweka@gmail.com

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in the recent past, malaria vector and parasite populations have declined drastically due to increased investments in intervention, diagnosis and treatment [7,8].

Plants are a rich resource of alternative synthetic compounds for the control of mosquito larvae. They possess a wide range of bioactive phytochemicals that are selective, biodegradable, and have minor or no adverse effects on non-target organisms and the environment, making them potentially appropriate for use in integrated pest management programs. Approximately 2000 species of terrestrial plants have been described for their insecticidal properties [9–11].

Various studies have focused on the use of natural products, especially plant-derived essential oils, as suitable bioactive agents against the larvae of *An. gambiae s.s.* and other mosquito species [12–15]. Essential oils are complex natural mixtures of volatile organic compounds, principally mono- and sesquiterpenes, which are considered to be among the best alternatives for the control of disease vectors [16,17].

The present study investigated the larvicidal effects of eight monoterpenes found in volatile oils against the malaria vector mosquito *An. gambiae s.s.*

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Mosquito larvae

The *An. gambiae s.s.* larvae used in laboratory and semi-field assays were obtained from the insectary of the Tropical Pesticides Research Institute. Only 3rd instar larvae were used, according to World Health Organization protocol [18]. Larval rearing in the insectary was carried out according to the protocol developed by Balestrino *et al.* [19]. Larvae were reared at (27.0 ± 2.0) °C, a photoperiod of 12:12 h (light: dark), and (78 ± 2)% relative humidity. Larvae were fed a diet of TetraMin fish food.

2.2. Larval assays in the laboratory

The assayed compounds (−)-perillyl alcohol, (−)-isopulegol, (+)-limonene epoxide, (+)-limonene, terpinen-4-ol, and terpinolene were acquired from Sigma–Aldrich, USA. The (−)-carvone epoxide [20] and (−)-hydroxydihydrocarvone [21] were prepared as previously described.

Larvicidal bioassays were conducted as described by Mdoe *et al.* [12,13]. A stock solution was prepared for each test compound by dissolving the compound in 98 mL normal laboratory larval rearing water and 2 mL dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO) in a 100 mL plastic container. The solution was thoroughly mixed to get a homogeneous mixture, and serial dilutions of 200, 100, 50, 25 and 12.5 mg/L were prepared. Each experiment was replicated at least six times with two controls: one containing normal laboratory larval rearing water, the other containing an aqueous solution of 1% DMSO to evaluate the effect of the solvent on the larvae. For the larvicidal experiments, each replicate and each control received 20 live 3rd instar larvae. No nutritional supplements were added during the assays. Larval mortality was registered after 12, 24, 48 and 72 h of exposure. The larvae were considered dead if they did not present movement.

2.3. Larval assays in the semi-field

Semi-field larvae bioassays were conducted using the same concentrations used in the laboratory assays. Semi-field environment structures used in this study were designed according to previous studies [12,22] and following World Health Organization recommendations [18]. Each experiment was carried out in six replicates with two controls, one having an aqueous solution of 0.5% DMSO and the other having normal laboratory larval rearing water. For the larvicidal assay, 20 live 3rd instar larvae were placed in each assay replicate and in each control.

2.4. Statistical analysis

Scheffé's multiple comparison procedure was used to determine the statistical significance of the larvicidal activity of the tested compounds, with results expressed as mean ± SE. Statistical analysis was performed using SAS. Assessments of surviving larvae were recorded after 12, 24, 48 and 72 h of exposure. Mortality was reported as LC_{50}, the concentration that produced 50% mortality. The 95% confidence intervals (*CI*) for LC_{50} were also recorded.

3. Results

In this study, the larvicidal toxicity of a series of eight monoterpenes (Figure 1) present in volatile oils was evaluated against 3rd stage larval instars of *An. gambiae s.s.*, one of the most anthropophilic vectors of malaria. Larval mortality rates were registered after 12, 24, 48 and 72 h of treatment in varying concentrations of the test solutions. The result of each bioassay was reported as the lethal concentration estimated to kill 50% of the treated larvae (LC_{50}), expressed in mg/L. The LC_{50} values for each compound and treatment time, along with 95% *CI*, were given in Table 1.

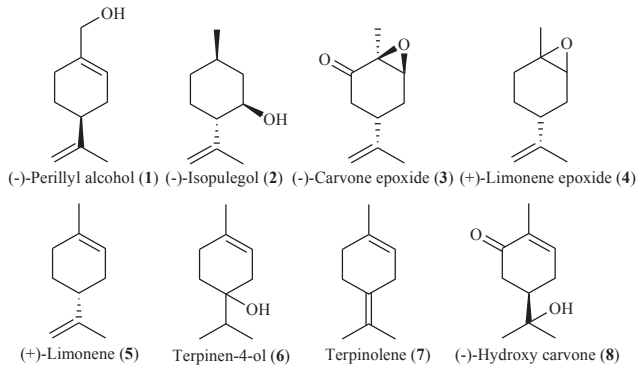

Figure 1. Chemical structures of the evaluated compounds.

All the assayed compounds had larvicidal effects and exhibited different degrees of larval toxicity, with LC_{50} values varying between 1.28 and 1938.92 mg/L depending on the treatment time (12, 24, 48 or 72 h). Among the eight monoterpenes, (−)-perillyl alcohol (1) showed the strongest larvicidal activity towards *An. gambiae* larvae, with LC_{50} values of 73.60, 18.36, 1.72 and 1.28 mg/L after 12, 24, 48 and 72 h of exposure, respectively. The next strongest were (−)-isopulegol (2) (LC_{50} = 135.10, 49.39, 34.39 and 20.22 mg/L) and (−)-carvone