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## A review on antimicrobial efficacy of some traditional medicinal plants in Tamilnadu

MUNUSWAMY HEMALATHA<sup>1</sup>, Thirunavukkarasu Thirumalai<sup>2</sup>, Rajamani Saranya<sup>1</sup>, Erusan Kuppan Elumalai<sup>2</sup>, Ernest David<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Biotechnology, Thiruvalluvar University, Serkadu, Vellore-632115

<sup>2</sup>Post graduate and Research Department of Zoology, Physiology wing, Voorhees College, Vellore – 632001. Tamilnadu, India

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### ABSTRACT

Infectious diseases are one of the major problems in developing as well as developed countries. Traditional medicinal plants are widely used to treat the microbial diseases due to their rich source of antimicrobial activity and less cost. The different plant parts such as seed, fruit, root, bark, stem, leaf and even the whole plant were extracted using different solvents like ethanol, methanol, chloroform, acetone, petroleum ether, alcohol, and ethyl acetate. These extracts were tested by diffusion method against gram positive, gram negative bacteria and fungi to assess their antimicrobial activity. This review provides a lucid data of nearly 70 traditional medicinal plants with antimicrobial activity and this would open up the scope for further analysis of medicinal plant extracts to develop effective antimicrobial drugs.

## 1. Introduction

Plants produce a diverse range of bioactive molecules, making them rich source of different types of medicines. Most of the drugs today are obtained from natural sources or semi synthetic derivatives of natural products used in the traditional systems of medicine[1]. Thus it is a logical approach in drug discovery to screen traditional natural products. Approximately 20% of the plants found in the world have been submitted to pharmaceutical or biological test and a sustainable number of new antibiotics introduced in the market are obtained from natural or semi synthetic resources[2].

Medicinal plants are finding their way into pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and nutraceuticals. In pharmaceutical field medicinal plants are mostly used for the wide range of substances present in plants which have been used to treat chronic as well as

infectious diseases[3]. Long before mankind discovered the existence of microbes, the idea that certain plants had healing potential, indeed, that they contained what we would currently characterize as antimicrobial principles, was well accepted. Since antiquity, man has used plants to treat common infectious diseases and some of these traditional medicines are still included as part of the habitual treatment of various maladies[4].

The drugs already in use to treat infectious disease are of concern because drug safety remains an enormous global issue. Most of the synthetic drugs cause side effects and also most of the microbes developed resistant against the synthetic drugs[5]. To alleviate this problem, antimicrobial compounds from potential plants should be explored. These drugs from plants are less toxic, side effects are scanty and also cost effective. They are effective in the treatment of infectious diseases while simultaneously mitigating many of the side effects that are often associated with synthetic antimicrobials[6].

According to World Health Organization (WHO) medicinal plants would be the best source to obtain a variety of drugs[7]. Several plant species are used

\*Corresponding author: Dr. Ernest David, Professor and Head, Department of Biotechnology, Thiruvalluvar University, Serkadu, Vellore-632115.

Tel: +91-9345300236

E-mail: ernestdavid2002@yahoo.com

by many ethnic groups for the treatment of various ailments ranging from minor infections to dysentery, skin diseases, asthma, malaria and a horde of other indications<sup>[8]</sup>. Plant based antimicrobials represent a vast untapped source of medicines and further exploration of plant antimicrobials is the need of the hour. Antimicrobials of plant origin have enormous therapeutic potential. Plant-derived antimicrobials have a long history of providing the much needed novel therapeutics<sup>[9]</sup>. Plants constantly interact with the rapidly changing and potentially damaging external environmental factors. Being organisms devoid of mobility, plants have evolved elaborate alternative defense strategies, which involve an enormous variety of chemical metabolites as tools to overcome stress conditions.

The ability of plants to carry out combinatorial chemistry by mixing, matching and evolving the gene products required for secondary metabolite biosynthetic pathways, creates an unlimited pool of chemical compounds, which humans have exploited to their benefit. The use of plants by humans in both traditional and modern medicinal systems, therefore, largely exploits this principle<sup>[10]</sup>. The current review supports the updated systemic information on the use of herbal medicines and their chemical constituents for antimicrobial activity. We selected pre-reviewed papers on herbal medicines and their phytochemicals activity shown on scientific database Medline, Scopus, Science direct, Springer link, Wiley, Oxford journal and Google scholar. The following keywords were used to search for the literature inside the databases are phytochemicals, plant extract, natural product and antimicrobial. However, we excluded the papers on the antimicrobial effects of derivatives from herbal compound.

## 2. Traditional medicinal plants used in Tamilnadu

Tamilnadu is one of the most botanized areas of South India. A vast knowledge regarding how to use the plants against different illness may be expected to be accumulated in area where the use of plant still of great importance. The medicinal properties of those plants were studied by several workers in Tamilnadu.

It is very important to document the information about the medicinal plants from traditional healers to protect the knowledge of plant usage, because the younger generation is not interested to carry on the traditional knowledge. In Table 1 many medicinal plants are given, which are used by traditional healers for their antimicrobial properties. Hereby, the mentioned plants are taken from references which are already included in ethnobotanical surveys<sup>[11–17]</sup>. This paper reviews

specifically about the plants having antimicrobial properties.

The increasing interest on traditional ethnomedicine may lead to discovery of novel therapeutic agent. Since, plant contains potential antimicrobial components that may be useful for evolution of pharmaceutical for the therapy of ailments.

Plants with possible antimicrobial activity should be tested against some microbes to confirm the activity. Researchers are increasingly turning their attention to folk medicine looking for new leads to develop better drugs against cancer, as well as viral and microbial infections. The activity of plant extracts on bacteria and fungi has been studied by a very large number of researchers in different place of the world. The specific plants to be used and the methods of application for particular ailments were passed down through oral tradition. Plants with possible antimicrobial activity should be tested against some microbes to confirm the activity<sup>[12]</sup>. Table 2 comprise the details of plants having antimicrobial properties, which are scientifically tested.

## 3. Bioactive compounds

The medicinal value of plants lies in some chemical substances that produce a definite physiological action on the human body and these chemical substances are called phytochemicals. These phytochemicals were used to cure the disease in herbal and homeopathic medicines<sup>[18]</sup>. These are non-nutritive substances, have protective or disease preventive property<sup>[19]</sup>. There arises a need and therefore to screen medicinal plants for bioactive compounds as a basis for further pharmacological studies. With advances in phytochemical techniques, several active principles of many medicinal plants have been isolated and introduced as valuable drug in modern systems of medicine.

The most important of these bioactive compounds are alkaloids, flavonoids, tannins and phenolic compounds<sup>[20]</sup>. These are the important raw materials for drug production<sup>[21]</sup>. Most plants contain several compounds with antimicrobial properties for protection against aggressor agents, especially microorganisms<sup>[22]</sup>. Table 3 comprise the details of bioactive compounds isolated from medicinal plants.

## 4. Conclusion

This review suggests that the 70 medicinal plants posses compounds with antimicrobial properties

**Table 1**

Medicinal plants used for the treatment of antimicrobial disease.

Botanical name	Family	Local name	Parts	Mode of action/aliments
<i>Acacia nilotica</i>	Mimosaceae	Karuvellam	St	Young stem is used as toothbrush. Toothache
<i>Achyranthes aspera</i>	Amaranthaceae	Nayuruvi	L	Decoction of leaf is used for skin eruption.
<i>Acorus calamus</i>	Araceae	Vasambu	Rh	Dried rhizome is given orally for throat infection.
<i>Aegele marmelos</i>	Rutaceae	Vilvam	L	Juice of leaf extract applied for eye disease.
<i>Aerva lanata</i>	Amaranthaceae	Sirupeelai	WP	Juice of whole plant is taken orally for cough, sore throat
<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>	Asteraceae	Sethupunthalai	L	Leaves paste mixed with common salt is applied on affected part in skin diseases and itches
<i>Alangium salvifolium</i>	Alangiaceae	Alangimaram	F	Fruit juice is used for eye disease; Leaf pastes is applied externally skin disease
<i>Andrographis alata</i>	Acanthaceae	Periyangai	L	Fresh leaves juice given orally twice a day for fever; Leaves juice given orally for four to six days for diarrhoea
<i>Andrographis echioides</i>	Acanthaceae	Gopuram thangi	L	Leaf paste is applied externally on cuts and wounds
<i>Andrographis paniculata</i>	Acanthaceae	Nilavembu	L	Leaf paste is applied externally for skin diseases
<i>Andrographis serpyllifolia</i>	Acanthaceae	Siyankodi	L	Decoction of leaves is used to treat fever
<i>Annona squamosa</i>	Annonaceae	Sitapalam	L	Leaf extract is taken orally for diarrhea
<i>Aristolochia bracteolata</i>	Aristolochiaceae	Aaduthinnapai	L	Leaf paste is externally used for skin disease
<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Meliaceae	Vembu	L	Leaf paste applied externally with some other medicinal plants for skin diseases
<i>Calotropis gigantea</i>	Asclepiadaceae	Erukku	Lx	Milky latex is applied on the wounds on leg
<i>Carissa carandas</i>	Apocynaceae	Kalakka	L	Decoction of leaves given for fever
<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Zingiberaceae	Manjal	Rh	Rhizome extract is used for itches, skin eruption
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Poaceae	Arugampul	R	Root decoction is given to treat fever
<i>Euphorbia hirta</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Amanpacharisi	Lx, L	Latex is applied externally for pimples; Leaves mixed with common salt and cow's milk is used to dysentery and treat diarrhea
<i>Justicia adhotada</i>	Acanthaceae	Adathoda	L	Leaf juice given orally for dysentery
<i>Leucas aspera</i>	Lamiaceae	Thumbai	L	Fresh leaf juice mixed with turmeric powder is applied externally for throat infections
<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Anacardiaceae	Mamaram	B	Decoction of bark used for diarrhea
<i>Mimusops elengi</i>	Sapotaceae	Magizham	L	Leaves are boiled with water and decoction used as a cleansing agent for mouth to cure disease of gums and teeth.
<i>Plectranthus coleoides</i>	Lamiaceae	Omavalli chedi	L	Leaf paste applied once in two days and burns
<i>Psidium guajava</i>	Myrtaceae	Koyya	L	Leaves are used to treat dysentery
<i>Scantalum album</i>	Santalaceae	Santhana maram	St	Shoot paste on applied externally for skin disease
<i>Sesbania grandiflora</i>	Fabaceae	Agatthi	L	Juice of leaves is mixed with coconut milk and the mixture is applied topically for skin eruption
<i>Solanum surattense</i>	Solanaceae	Kandankathiri	F	Fruit paste given orally twice a day for one week for tooth ache
<i>Sphaeranthus indicus</i>	Asteraceae	Kottaikkaratai	Sd	Seeds are ground into place and applied topically for skin disease
<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	Zygophyllaceae	Nerunchi	WP	Decoction of the whole plant is taken internally for urinary disorder
<i>Tridax procumbens</i>	Asteraceae	Vettukayapoundu	L	Leaf paste is used externally used to treat cuts and wounds
<i>Vitex negundo</i>	Verbenaceae	Nochi	L	Leaf used to treat cold
<i>Zingiber officinalis</i>	Zingiberaceae	Inji	Rh	Juice of rhizome with honey is taken internally to improve digestion and relieve giddiness

Abbreviations: Parts used = L: Leaves, F: Fruit, St: Stem, S: Shoot, R: Root, WP: Whole plant, Lx: Latex, Rh: Rhizome, Sd: Seed.

**Table 2**

Antimicrobial screening performed on various medicinal plants.

Botanical name	Family	Tamil name	Parts used	Extracts	Organism inhibited			Reference
					Gram positive	Gram negative	Fungi	
<i>Achyranthes aspera</i>	Amaranthaceae	Nayuruvi	R	C, M	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i> , <i>Bacillus subtilis</i> <i>Proteus vulgaris</i>	Nil	[23]
<i>Alternanthera sessile</i>	Amaranthaceae	Ponnaganni	v	E	<i>Streptococcus pyogenes</i>	<i>Salmonella typhi</i>	Nil	[24]
<i>Aristolochia indica</i>	Aristolochiaceae	Isvara mulli	L	E	Nil	Nil	<i>A. niger</i> <i>A. flavus</i> <i>A. fumigatus</i>	[25]
<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Meliaceae	Vembu	L	M	<i>Micrococcus luteus</i>	<i>Proteus vulgaris</i>	Nil	[26]
<i>Capsicum frutescens</i>	Solanaceae	Milaga	F	E	Nil	<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	Nil	[27]
<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i>	Lauraceae	Lavangapattai	L, B.	P, E, C, EA, A, E.	Nil	Nil	<i>A. solani</i> <i>C. lunat</i>	[28]
<i>Clerodendrum inerme</i> L	Verbenaceae	Peechangu	L	M	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	Nil	<i>A. niger</i>	[29]
<i>Cola acuminata</i>	Sterculiaceae	v	S	A, M	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	Nil	<i>C. albicans</i>	[30]
<i>Dahlia pinnata</i>	Asteraceae	Deri	L	C	Nil	<i>Enterobacter aerogenes</i> , <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	Nil	[31]
<i>Eclipta prostrata</i> L	Asteraceae	Karisilanganni	L	E	Nil	<i>Salmonella typhi</i>	Nil	[32]
<i>Euphorbia hirta</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Pacharisi Amman	WP	v	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Nil	[33]
<i>Oxystelma esculentum</i>	Asclepiadaceae	Uchippalai	L	EA	Nil	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Nil	[34]
<i>Ocimum sanctum</i>	Lamiaceae	Tulasi	WP	M	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Staphylococcus saprophytic</i>	Nil	Nil	[35]
<i>Plumeria alba</i>	Apocynaceae	Perumallari	P	M	Nil	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Nil	[36]
<i>Polyalthia cerascides</i>	Annonaceae	Nedunar	SB	DCM	<i>Corynebacterium diphtheriae</i>	Nil	Nil	[37]
<i>Plumeria rubra</i>	Apocynaceae	Perungalli	L	A, E, C, EA	<i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Nil	[38]
<i>Piper nigrum</i>	Piperaceae	Milagu	B	A, DCM	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Streptococcus fecalis</i>	<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> , <i>Bacillus cereus</i> <i>Escherichia coli</i> , <i>Salmonella typhi</i>	Nil	[39]
<i>Phyllanthus amarus</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Keelanelli	L	E	Nil	<i>Salmonella typhi</i>	Nil	[40]
<i>Spinifex littoreus</i>	Poaceae	Vettiver	G	A	Nil	Nil	Dermatophytes	[41]
<i>Terminalia chebula</i>	Combretaceae	Kaddukai	F	E	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	<i>Salmonella typhi</i> <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> <i>Bacillus subtilis</i>	Nil	[42]

Abbreviations: Parts used = L: Leaves, G: Grass, F: Fruit, SB: Stem bark, S: Shoot, R: Root, WP: Whole plant, Lx: Latex, Rh: Rhizome. Extracts= A: Aqueous, C: Chloroform, E: Ethanol, EA: Ethyl acetate, M: Methanol, PE: Petroleum ether, DCM: Dichloromethane.

**Table 3**

Bioactive compounds obtained from medicinal plants.

Botanical name	Family	Local name	Bioactive compound	Organisms inhibited	Reference
<i>Acacia nilotica</i>	Fabaceae	Karuvelai	Alkaloids	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	[43]
<i>Artocarpus communis</i>	Moraceae	Seemapila	AtoninE, 2-[(3,5-dihydroxy)-(Z)-4-(3-methylbut-1-ethyl)]	<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	[44]
<i>Ageratum fastigiatum</i>	Asteraceae	Poompul	$\beta$ -caryophyllene, Phenyl] benzofuran-6-ol	<i>Staphylococcus mutans</i> , <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Staphylococcus faecalis</i> <i>Escherichia coli</i>	[45]
<i>Allium sativum</i>	Liliaceae	puntu	Allicin	<i>Candida</i>	[46]
<i>Camellia sinensis</i>	Theaceae	Thayilar	Catechin	<i>Staphylococcus mutans</i>	[47]
<i>Cassia alata</i>	Fabaceae	Seemaigathi	4-butylamine 10-cannabinoid dronabinol, methyl-6-hydroxy	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Escherichia coli</i> , <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> , <i>Candida albicans</i>	[48]
<i>Cassia fistula</i>	Fabaceae	Sarakkonrai	4-hydroxy benzoic acid hydrate	<i>Trichophyton mentagraphytes</i> , <i>Epidermophyton floccosum</i>	[49]
<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i>	Lauraceae	Lavangapattai	Cinnamaldehyde	<i>Helicobacter pylori</i>	[50]
<i>Cinnamomum inermis</i>	Lauraceae	Kattukkaruvapattai	[5-(1,5-dimethyl-2-(4-hexenyl)-methyl phenol)]	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Escherichia coli</i>	[51]
<i>Hybanthus enneaspermus</i>	Violaceae	Orithazh thamari	Flavonoids, Tannins	<i>Proteus</i> , <i>Vibrio cholera</i>	[52]
<i>Mentha piperita</i>	Lamiaceae	Puthina	1,1-diphenyl-2-pierylhydrazyl-hydrate	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Escherichia coli</i> , <i>Candida albicans</i>	[53]
<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i>	Asteraceae	Mookuthipoo	Phenolic acid	<i>Salmonella typhimurium</i>	[54]
<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Lamiaceae	Thirunitturu pachilai	Terpenoids	<i>Salmonella</i>	[55]
<i>Polyalthia cerasoides</i>	Annonaceae	Nedunari	N-(4-hydroxy- $\beta$ -phenethyl)-4-hydroxycinnamide)	<i>Corynebacterium diptheriae</i>	[56]
<i>Piper nigrum</i>	Piperaceae	Milagu	Piperine	<i>Lactobacillus</i> , <i>Escherichia coli</i> , <i>Micrococcus</i>	[57]
<i>Senna petersiana</i>	Fabaceae	Vagaai	Luteolin (Flavonoid)	<i>Bacillus cereus</i> and <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	[58]
<i>Tricnoderrma indicum</i>	Boraginaceae	Kasi thumbai	Lanast-5-en-3 $\beta$ -D-glucopyranosyl-21(24)-oilde	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	[59]
<i>Tecoma stans</i>	Bignoniaceae	Swarna pattai	Phenoilc compound	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	[60]

which could be used as antimicrobial agents. Also it is the most useful for scientists, research scholars and scientific companies to carry out further studies on isolation and identification of active compounds that can be formulated into antimicrobial drugs.

### Conflict of interest statement

We declare that we have no conflict of interest.

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