

A Comprehensive Review on Herbal Medicine in Breast Cancer Therapy

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Abstract: The search for innovative treatments derived from natural sources is prompted by the fact that breast cancer continues to be a major cause of death globally. Promising anticancer potential has been demonstrated by herbal plants like *Mangifera indica*, *Vitex negundo*, *Achyranthes bidentata*, and *Sophora flavescens*. Solvent extraction, chromatography, and spectroscopic methods have been used to isolate a variety of phytochemicals, such as triterpenoids (ursolic acid), flavonoids (quercetin, catechin), alkaloids (matrine), phytosterols (β -sitosterol), and quinones (emodin). In breast cancer models, these substances have cytotoxic, anti-proliferative, and apoptotic actions. Anticancer chemicals obtained from animals and marine sources also aid in the search for new drugs. Herbal fractions and extracts are important resources for creating safer and more potent anticancer treatments.

Keywords: Herbal Plants, Phytochemicals, Triterpenoids, Flavonoids, Alkaloids, Natural Plants Marine Medication and Breast Cancer.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Herbal drugs have emerged as promising complementary and alternative options for breast cancer management due to their multi target actions, relatively low toxicity, and wide availability^{2,4,7,12,13}. Conventional therapies like surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, and targeted agents are frequently limited by side effects, drug resistance, and incomplete control of aggressive subtypes.

These difficulties have prompted extensive research into herbal formulations and bioactive compounds derived from plants as novel or supplemental therapeutic approaches^{3,10,12,7}. Numerous phytochemicals that have been isolated from medicinal plants and, occasionally, microbes, such as flavonoids, terpenoids, polyphenols, phenolic acids, and alkaloids, exhibit cytotoxic and anti-proliferative effects against breast cancer cells both in vitro and in vivo^{4,7,8,10,13}. Inhibition of angiogenesis and metastasis, cell cycle arrest, induction of apoptosis and autophagy, modulation of oxidative stress and immune responses, and targeting of important signaling pathways (e.g., EGFR, HER2,

PI3K/AKT/mTOR, NF κ B, JAK/STAT3, MAPK, Wnt, Notch, Hedgehog, TGF β , VEGF, and estrogen receptor)^{7,4,12,3,6}. Additionally, when used in combination regimens, herbal medicines are being investigated for their potential to improve chemosensitivity, overcome multidrug resistance, and lessen the toxicity of conventional treatments^{2,6,10,12,11}. The routine integration of herbal medicines into evidence-based breast cancer care is still limited by problems with bioavailability, standardization of extracts, variability in formulations and dosing, and the scarcity of large, high-quality randomized clinical trials confirming their efficacy and safety^{1,2,5,10,12,13}. When used with conventional medications, many of these medicines seem less toxic than regular chemotherapy and may improve their effects or lessen their negative effects^{7,13,9,1,3}. Ongoing research focuses on improving delivery (e.g., nanoparticles), understanding precise molecular actions, and rigorously testing safety and efficacy in patients. However, the majority of evidence to date is preclinical (cell and animal studies), and major obstacles—low bioavailability, lack of standardization, and limited large clinical trials—still prevent routine clinical use^{4,3,15,11}.

Table : 1 Medicinal Plants Used for Breast Cancer

S. No.	Scientific Name	Common Name	Uses	Reference
1	<i>Panax ginseng</i>	Ginseng	Chemo-protective and chemotherapeutic properties in breast cancer	19
2	<i>Allium sativum</i>	Garlic	Documented anti-breast -cancer activities; interferes with proliferation and malignant progression	19
3	<i>Actaea (Cimicifuga) racemosa</i>	Black cohosh	Modulate estrogen-related pathways in breast cancer	19
4	<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Turmeric	Anti-proliferative and chemo preventive effects	18,19,20
5	<i>Camellia sinensis</i>	Green tea	Anti-breast-cancer actions and chemo preventive effects	17,18,19,20
6	<i>Echinacea</i> spp.	Echinacea	Antiproliferative/anti-tumor effects in breast cancer context	19
7	<i>Arctium</i> spp.	Burdock	Traditional medicinal plant; listed with anti-cancer properties in breast cancer management	19
8	<i>Linum usitatissimum</i>	Flaxseed	Dietary source rich in omega-3 and lignans; associated with reduced breast cancer risk	19
9	<i>Nigella sativa</i>	Black cumin	Exhibits anti-breast-cancer activities in vitro and in vivo models	19
10	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	Ginger	Dietary/medicinal plant; bioactive constituents active against breast cancer cell lines	20
11	<i>Catharanthus roseus</i>	-	Source of vinca alkaloids; active compounds tested on MCF-7, MDA-MB-231 cells	20
12	<i>Peganum normata</i>	-	Identified as promising anti-breast-cancer medicinal plant	17
13	<i>Ammi visnaga</i>	-	Reported potential anti-breast-cancer activity	17
14	<i>Peganum harmala</i> (likely “ <i>Peganum normata</i> ” group)	-	Included among plants with potential activity	17
15	<i>Annona muricata</i>	Soursop/ graviola	Listed among herbs with immune-stimulating and anti-tumor properties in breast cancer	15
16	Cruciferous vegetables (e.g., <i>Brassica</i> spp.)	Broccoli, cabbage etc	Dietary source of phytochemicals (e.g., DIM, sulforaphane) with anti-breast-cancer effects	16
17	Various fruits & cereals	Pomegranate, mangosteen, citrus, apple, grape, mango, cereals	Dietary natural products with demonstrated anti-breast-cancer effects in experimental studies	16

➤ *Phytochemical Isolated from Herbal Drugs for Breast Cancer:*

Isolating particular bioactive chemicals from plants and testing them against breast cancer cell lines is the main focus of research on herbal medicines for breast cancer.

Main chemical class isolation are:

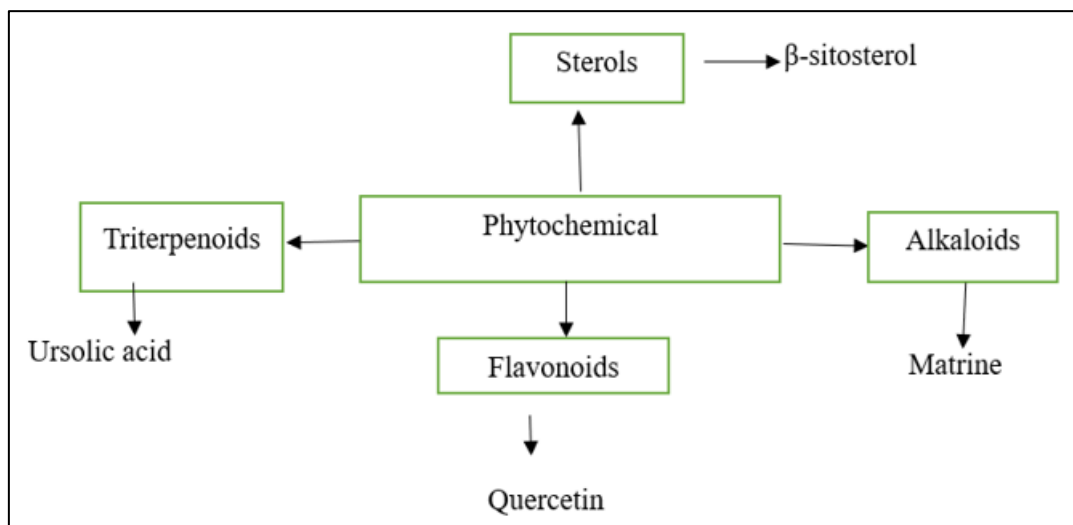
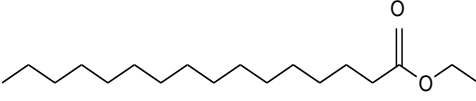
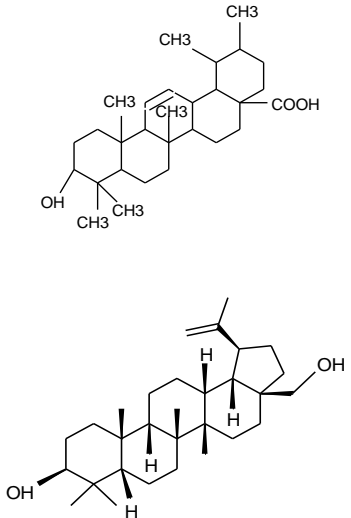
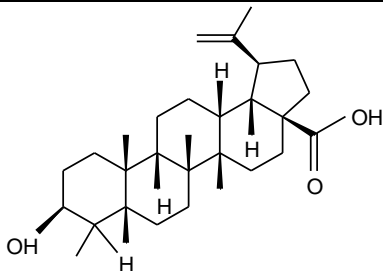
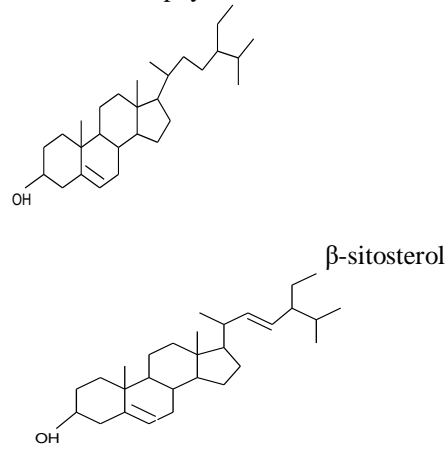
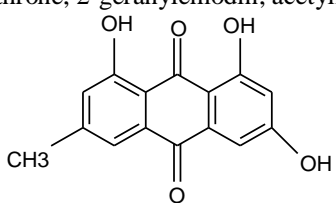
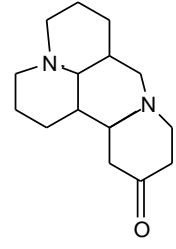
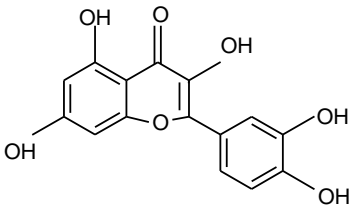
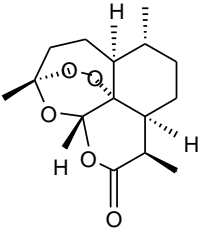


Fig 1: Phytochemical Isolated from Herbal Drugs for Breast Cancer

Table 2 Phytochemical Isolation from Herbal Breast Cancer.

Sr no.	Chemical class	Botanical name	Isolated compounds	Reference
1	Fatty acid ester	<i>Arisaema flavum</i>	Hexadecenoic acid ethyl ester; 5-oxo-19-propyl-docosanoic acid methyl ester. 	26
2	Triterpenoids	<i>Alstonia scholaris</i> , <i>Psorospermum guineense</i> , <i>Uncaria nervosa</i> , <i>Achyranthes bidentata</i>	Botulin, botulinic acid, ursolic acid 	27,28

			 <p>Betulinic acid</p>	
3	Phytosterols phytosterones	<i>Achyranthes bidentata</i>	<p>β-sitosterol, stigmasterol, β-sitosterol glucoside: 10phytosterones.</p>  <p>Stigmasterol</p>	27
4	Quinones & xanthones	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	<p>Emodin, 3-geranyloxyemodin, 3-geranyloxyemodin anthrone, 2-geranylemodin, acetylismione D.</p>  <p>Emodin</p>	24
5	Alkaloids (Sophora, others)	<i>Sophora flavescenes</i>	<p>Matrine, and related alkaloids.</p>  <p>Matrine</p>	21

6	Flavonoids/ polyphenols	<i>Mangifera indica</i> <i>Vitex negundo</i>	Artemetin and catechin from mangiferin, norathyriol, galloannins, gallic acid, methyl gallate, quercetin.  Quercetin  Artemetin	30
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➤ *Herbal Extract from Plant Studied for Breast Cancer:*

Numerous therapeutic plants have been studied against breast cancer in cell and animal models as extracts rather than just pure components. These extracts are typically regarded as complementary therapies rather than stand-alone treatments, and the majority of the data are preclinical^{41,42}

Table 3: Herbal Extracts and Their Anti-Breast Cancer Activity.

Sr no.	Plant & part used (extract type)	Main effect	Reference
1	<i>Mangifera indica</i> (mango; bark, kernal, leaves, peel, pulp; various extracts)	In vitro and in vivo extracts inhibits breast cancer cell growth, proliferation, migration, invasion; induce apoptosis and cell cycle arrest; reduce xenograft tumor growth.	45
2	<i>Cassia occidentalis</i> (methanol extract)	Methanolic extract cytotoxic to MCF-7 cells also anti-oxidant and anti-angiogenic.	34
3	<i>Callistemon viminalis</i> leaves & roots (methanol extract)	Strong cytotoxicity against MCF-7 and marked anti-angiogenic and anti-oxidant activity	34
4	<i>Cleome viscora</i> leaves & roots (methanol extract)	Cytotoxic against MCF-7 show anti-angiogenic and anti-oxidant effects.	34
5	<i>Mimosa hamata</i> (methanol extract)	Cytotoxic to MCF-7 with anti-angiogenic and anti-oxidant activity.	34
6	<i>Prmella vulgaris</i> (crude extract; ethanol fractions, esp.50% ethanol)	PV50 fraction inhibit proliferation of MDA-MB-231, MCF-7,4TI cells: in mice reduces tumor growth and lung metastasis: induce apoptosis: contain flavonoids and triterpenes.	38
7	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i> , <i>Momordica charantia</i> , <i>Peperomia pellucida</i> (95% ethanol extracts)	All three ethanolic extracts show dose- dependent cytotoxicity, apoptosis, ROS generation, and anti-migratory activity in MCF-7 cells; <i>A. paniculata</i> most potent.	33
8	<i>Christia vespertiloinis</i> (root, leaf; successive solvent extracts; EtOAc root most active)	Ethyl acetate root extract selectively cytotoxic to MDA-MB-231, with high phenolic content and antioxidant activity; fractions (F3) rich in flavonoids, coumarins, quinones show strong cytotoxicity.	37
9	Sri lanka plants (e.g. <i>Erigeron sp.</i> , <i>Gardenia crameri</i> , <i>Camarium zeylanicum</i> , <i>Elaeocarpus</i>)	Leaf/ bark solvent extract shows anti-proliferative effect on MCF-7 and MDA-MB-231 with limited toxicity to normal cells; several extracts have strong antioxidant and polyphenol content.	44

Table no. 3: herbal drugs for their anti-breast cancer activity.

➤ *Herbal Anti-Cancer Agents from Marine and Animal Origin:*

Bioactive substances from marine and animal sources are being used in natural anticancer "herbal-type" medications. Important marine anti-cancer drug:

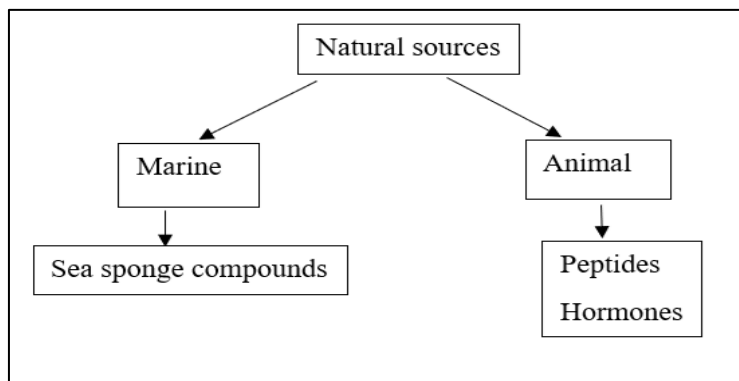


Fig 2: Natural Sources from Marine and Animal Source

Table 4: Major Approved Marine-Derived Anticancer Drugs and Sources.

Sr no.	Drug /Compound	Marine Source	Main Cancer Uses
1	Cytarabine	Sponge-derived nucleoside lead	Leukemia treatment: first marine anti-cancer drug approved ^{50,61,58}
2	Trabectedin	Tunicate <i>Ecteinascidia turbinata</i>	Soft tissue sarcoma, ovarian cancer ^{50,61,56}
3	Eribulin mesylate	Synthetic analogue of sponge metabolite halichondrin B	Metastatic breasts cancer ^{50,61}
4	Brentuximab vedotin (ADC using monomethyl auristatin E, a dolastatin analogue)	Cyanobacteria/ sea hare peptide scaffold	Hodgkin lymphoma and other CD30+ lymphoma ^{50,58,61}

➤ *Other Important Metabolites of Marine Anticancer:*

- In numerous tumor cell lines, compounds such as psammaplin, didemnin, dolastatin, ecteinascidin, halichondrin, bryostatin, calyculin, mycalamides, and halomon are produced by sponges, tunicates, soft corals, bryozoans, cyanobacteria, and seaweeds. These compounds have strong cytotoxic and antimetabolic activity^{54,48,61,49,52}
- Fucoidan, polysaccharides, polyphenols, carotenoids, and terpenoids produced from seaweed exhibit broad anticancer action in vitro and in vivo and cause apoptosis, cell cycle arrest, and anti-angiogenesis^{52,58,59}

➤ *Anticancer Agents Derived from Animals:*

Venoms and peptides: Both terrestrial and marine species (fish, amphibians, mammals, and invertebrates) contain anticancer peptides (ACPs). They are frequently cationic antimicrobial peptides that specifically damage the membranes of cancer cells, trigger apoptosis, prevent angiogenesis and metastasis, and alter immunity^{60,57,53,49}.

➤ *A Few Examples are:*

- Melittin from bee venom,
- Esculentin¹ from frog skin,
- Brevinin²

Scorpion venom contains chlorotoxin, while snake venom contains L amino acid oxidase^{47,47,49,56,51}.

Various peptides, enzymes, and toxins from venom-derived combinations (bee, wasp, scorpion, and snake) are currently being investigated as cancer treatments or as warheads in targeted conjugates^{60,57,47,56}

II. CONCLUSION

Natural products are being investigated extensively for the treatment of breast cancer, a significant worldwide health concern. Bioactive substances with anticancer properties include flavonoids, alkaloids, and polyphenols found in medicinal plants including turmeric, neem, and green tea. Herbal medications and extracts can cause apoptosis and stop the growth of tumors. Polysaccharides and carotenoids are among the special anticancer metabolites found in marine creatures such as algae and sponges. Bee venom and peptides are examples of chemicals originating from animals that show promise in attacking cancer cells. All things considered, plant, marine, and animal sources present encouraging substitutes for breast cancer treatment; however, more investigation is required to verify their safety and therapeutic efficacy.

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