PHYLLANTUS NIRURI: ETHNOBOTANY, CHEMISTRY AND PHARMACOLOGICAL PROPERTIES TOWARDS DRUG FORMULATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The plants of the genus Phyllanthus (Euphorbiaceae) have been used as traditional medicinal materials for a long time in China, India, Brazil, and the Southeast Asian countries. They can be used for the treatment of digestive disease, jaundice, and renal calculus antimicrobial, antioxidant, anticancer, antiinflammatory, antiplasmodial, antiviral, diuretic and hepatoprotective. Particularly, Phyllanthus niruri is found throughout the tropical and subtropical regions of both hemispheres showing an impressive list of medicinal uses in many countries around the world. In this review, we highlight the properties of the specie about ethnobotanical, phytochemical, pharmacological, biological and toxicological activities as it has been described in the scientific journals of the last 10 years. The emphasis is centered to liver disorders and kidney stones, different ways of drug formulations, dosage and the precaution uses.

Key words: phyllanthus niruri, Hepatitis, Gallstones, Drug Formulations.


INTRODUCTION

P. niruri is called Chanca Piedra in Spanish, which means stone breaker, because it has been used as an effective remedy to eliminate gallstones, kidney stones and other kidney disorders (Narendra, 2012). It is a typical member of family Euphorbiaceae. Small annual herb found throughout the tropical and subtropical regions of both hemispheres, the genus Phyllanthus has been used in traditional medicine for its wide range of pharmacological activities like antimicrobial, antioxidant, anticancer, antiinflammatory, antiplasmodial, antiviral, diuretic and hepatoprotective (Harish and Shivanandappa, 2006); (Patel, 2011). Phyllanthus species are extensively used in traditional medicines for the treatment of hepatic diseases due to their bioactive hypophyllanthin and phyllanthin, but P. niruri species is certainly one the most used of Phyllanthus genus in world folk medicine. The reason could probably be the fact that it is so widely distributed, both in tropical and subtropical countries (Callixto, Santos, Filho, and Yunes, 1998); (Symasundar et al., 1985). P. niruri has enormous pharmacological activities such as antiviral (against Hepatitis B), antimicrobial, hepatoprotective, anticancerous and hypocalcemic agent.

Recently, it has been used as a treatment for diabetes mellitus type 2 diabetes in Sprague-Dawley rats was achieved by a low dose of streptozotocin (STZ) (25 mg/kg bw via metabolomics approach (Mediani, 2016). In this review, we highlight the properties of the specie about ethnobotanical, phytochemical, pharmacological, biological and toxicological activities as it has been described in the scientific journals of the last 10 years, and the different formulations are suggested for drug making.

Ethnobotany: The plants of the genus Phyllanthus (Euphorbiaceae) have been used as traditional medicinal materials for a long time in China, India, Brazil, and the Southeast Asian countries. Phyllanthus niruri is a medicinal plant (commonly known as stone breaker) found in the tropics and other parts of the world. It is known for its capacity to block the formation of calcium oxalate crystals and kidney stone formation in urolithiasis. This plant has been used to treat hyperglycemia, hypertension, pain, and mild cases of malaria (Kho, W. K., Adnan, M. A., Mahalingam, T. P., Fernandez, A. R. and Jeevaratnam, K., 2016). Phyllanthus niruri, as said in introduction, has extensive medicinal properties and has long history in the health care system of tropical countries. The plant is known in traditional health care systems for mostly liver disorders and gallstones”. Apart from these, Phyllanthus niruri is also used and administered for diuretic, hypoglycemic and hypertension cases. And it also shows anti-inflammatory (Lee, 2016), anti-tumor (Zheng, 2016), antinociceptive and anti-
The study suggests that P. niruri has been shown in modern medicine to cure or treat multiple disorders.

**Dosage:** From the literature, showing best results, it is recommended to take one to two capsules, each containing 500 mg of *P. Niruri* two times a day after meals. However, it is best to consult an experienced physician and practitioner before taking these capsules to avoid reaction with any ongoing medication or side effects due to any chronic ailment.

According (Kamruzzaman, 2016), the dosage is described as following:

**Adults (18 years and older)**

Generally, an infusion or weak tea of *Phyllanthus niruri* has been taken by mouth. Traditionally, individuals drink 1-3 cups daily or weekly. Some pharmacies in South America sell concentrated extracts with a daily dose of 2-6 milliliters, taken twice or thrice daily.

- Treat acute viral hepatitis, 900 milligrams of powdered *Phyllanthus niruri* capsules has been taken by mouth three times daily for seven days.
- To treat diabetes, 100 milliliters of *Phyllanthus niruri* extract has been taken by oral twice daily for one week. Additionally, two pellets of *Phyllanthus niruri*, each 0.8 grams, have been taken three times daily by mouth for 10 days.
- To treat hepatitis B, 200-1,100 milligrams of dried *Phyllanthus niruri* has been taken by mouth three times daily for up to three months.
- To treat high blood pressure, two 0.8 gram pellets have been taken by mouth three times daily for 10 days.
- To treat liver disease, three grams of *P. niruri* powder has been taken by mouth three times daily for 30-45 days.
- To treat urinary stones, 450 milligrams of *P. niruri* has been taken by mouth three times daily for three months. Children (under 18 years old);
- Children

There is no proven safe or effective dose for *P. niruri* in children.

According (Paithankar V. V., 2011) 37 patients with chronic viral hepatitis B were treated with a daily dose of 600 mg of *P. niruri* for 30 days. 9% of the patients lost the HBsAg two weeks after the end of the treatment.

**Precautions:** *P. niruri* showed few negative side effects in human and animal studies, but you should still use caution. It may cause stomach upset or diarrhea. Because it hasn’t been studied, there’s no proven safe dose for children. This herb is not recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women. Pregnant women should abstain from taking *P. Niruri* supplement; feeding mothers on the other hand may take this herb if medically prescribed.
Table 1. Worldwide Ethnobotanical uses (Narendra, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Ethnobotanical uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amazonia</td>
<td>Aperitif, anodyne, colic, carminative, digestive, diabetes, dropsy, diuretic, dyspepsia, dysentery, flu, fever, gonorrhea, gallstones, itch, kidney stones, jaundice, malaria, laxative, proctitis, stomachache, vaginitis, tumor, vermifluence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas/Caribbean</td>
<td>Antiviral, aperitif, antispasmodic, antihepatotoxic, appetite stimulant, bacterecidal, constipation, cold, diuretic, fever, typhoid, flu, laxative, hypoglycemic, stomachache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Analgesic, Abortifacient, aperient, anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory, anticancerous, antiviral, arthritis, ache (joint), antithetic, albuminuria, antispasmodic, bladder stones, calculi, cystitis, catarrh (liver and kidney), diabetes, digestion stimulant, diaphoretic, diuretic, fever, gout, gastrointestinal problems, hepatoprotective, hepatitis, hydropsy, hypoglycemic, hypotension, jaundice, kidney stones, malaria, obesity, muscle relaxant, purgative, prostatitis, renal problems, stomachic, tonic, uric acid excess, uterine relaxant, urinary problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>Colic, carminative, diuretic, digestive, indigestion, fever, spasmyotic, malaria, stomachache.</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Asthma, anemia, astringent, conjunctivitis, bronchitis, cough, dropsy, diarrhea, diabetes, dysentery, diuretic, eye disorders, galactagogue, gonorrhea, genitourinary disorders, jaundice, hepatitis, menorrhagia, leucorrhea, ringworm, oligogalactia, stomachic, scabies, tuberculosis, thirst, urogenitaltract infections, tumor (abdomen).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaya</td>
<td>Caterpillar sting, diarrhea, dermatitis, diuretic, itch, piscicide, miscarriage, renosiosis, purgative, vertigo, syphilis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Bronchitis, analgesic, deobstruent, chologogue, fever, diabetes, gallstones, gallbladder problems, hepatitis, gout, hypertension, kidney stones, kidney problems, uric acid excess, liver disease, urinary tract infections.</td>
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Table 2. Specific diseases cured by *P. Niruri*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diseases</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tr>
<td>Liver Diseases</td>
<td>It helps cure several liver related ailments like jaundice, liver cancer and hepatitis.</td>
<td>(Mekha Mohan, 2015); (Li, 2017)</td>
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<td>Gastrointestinal problems</td>
<td>The herb is used as a medication to treat flatulence as well as, aid digestion. This herb is also often prescribed to patients suffering from stomach pain and intestinal parasites as well</td>
<td>(Melo, 2015); (Sousa, 2018)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kidney and gall bladder stones</td>
<td>This herb is primarily used to prevent formation of calcium stones in the kidney and gall bladder. The name ‘stone-breaker’ was in fact given to this plant because of its ability to cure as well as, prevent the formation of gall bladder and kidney stones.</td>
<td>(Paithankar, 2015); (Pucci, 2018)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-HIV and anti-hepatitis B properties</td>
<td>It possesses hepatoprotective qualities and helps treating Hepatitis B. Its effectiveness in relieving acute symptoms of HIV has also been established through many studies. Research conducted in this field has also shown that <em>Phyllanthus Niruri</em> helps treat Hepatitis B to a great extent.</td>
<td>(Bagalkotkar, Sageinedu, Saad, &amp; Stanslas, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes:</td>
<td>The herb effectively helps cure and manage diabetes.</td>
<td>(Asare et al., 2012); (Najari Beidokhti et al., 2017)</td>
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<td>Anti-ulcer activity</td>
<td>Leucorrhrea and menorrhagia in women, Urinary disorder, chronic fever, excessive thirst, as diuretic and immunity booster, blennorrhagia, dysmenorrhoea and menorrhagia</td>
<td>(Okoli et al., 2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other disorders</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Narendra, Swathi, Sowjanya, &amp; Satya, 2012)</td>
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Figure 2. Chemical structures of Terpenoids

Figure 2. Chemical structure of Flavonoids
Flavonoids

Figure 3. Chemical structures of ellagic acid, gallic acid, ellagitannin hexahydroxydiphenoyl moiety and methyl brevifolin carboxylate

Figure 4. Different Ayurveda formulations of *P. niruri*: powder (a), tablets (b), Syrup (c), capsules (d) and tea (e).
Heart patients too are advised to take *P. niruri* only after consulting their doctors, as this herb may contradict the medication being taken for the heart already. Similarly people on diabetes medication should also consult their GP before taking this herb, as their ongoing medication may require modifications if this herb is consumed alongside. This product may at times result in increased need to urinate. It is advised that this product be stored in a cool dry place and away from hot and cold temperatures; as well as reach of children.

**Conclusion**

A large number of features on the chemistry, pharmacology, and several other aspects on *P. niruri* have been discussed in several scientific papers. The specie has undoubtable medicinal properties supported by the evidences from scientific investigations. Those properties are due to all its active compounds such as quercetin rhamnose, gallic acid, geraniin and quercetin glucoside. They were identified and proved with properties supported by the evidences from scientific papers. The specie has undoubtable and several other aspects on the chemistry, pharmacology, and its herbal formulations.

**REFERENCES**


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