



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Estimation of Naringenin in *Salacia reticulata* Wight, Fishing Targets and Harmonizing the Ligand for Type 2 Diabetes

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ABSTRACT

Type 2 diabetes mellitus is characterized by insulin resistance and hyperglycemia and accounts for 90 per cent of diabetes cases. *Salacia reticulata* Wight, a climbing shrub indigenous to India and Sri Lanka, is an important source of anti-diabetic compounds. In this study, the abundance of naringenin was estimated in various tissues of the plant using RP-HPLC. The highest concentration of naringenin was found in fresh and dried roots at 3.4 and 3.2 %, respectively. Through in silico analysis affinity of naringenin to PPAR- γ , 11 β -Hydroxysteroid-Dehydrogenase I, PPAR- α , PPAR- δ and Glycogen Synthase Kinase - 3 β , the targets for type 2 diabetes mellitus drug targets were -8.7, -8.4, -7.1, -8.4 and -7.8 kcal/mol, respectively.

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INTRODUCTION

Diabetes mellitus is a major epidemic that is affecting lives adversely all around the world. This disease reduces the quality of life as well as lowers life expectancy (Tancredi *et al.*, 2015). There are two major types of diabetes mellitus, type 1 and type 2. Type 1 diabetes mellitus is an autoimmune disease and is a major cause of diabetes in childhood. In type 1 diabetes mellitus, the body's immune system attacks the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas. As a result, the body produces very little or no insulin. There is no known cure for type 1 diabetes mellitus. At the same time, type 2 diabetes mellitus accounts for the majority (around 90%) of diabetes worldwide. Type 2 diabetes mellitus results in hyperglycemia as the body cannot respond to insulin, which is also termed as 'insulin resistance' (IDF Diabetes Atlas, 2019). People suffering from type 2 diabetes mellitus are at constant risk of developing life-threatening cardiovascular diseases, heart failure and chronic kidney disease. These diseases are associated with premature mortality, high rates of hospitalization and high healthcare costs. Type 2 diabetes mellitus is a major burden for healthcare systems the world over.

Traditionally plants have been used by several cultures all over the globe to treat diabetes. *Salacia reticulata* Wight is a large woody climbing shrub found in South Indian states ranging from Southern Odisha to Kerala as well as Sri Lanka. It is commonly called 'Ponkoranti' in Tamil, 'Ekanayakam' in Malayalam, 'Anukudu cettu' in Telegu, 'Saptaragni'

in Sanskrit and 'Kothala himbutu' in Sinhala. The roots and stem of *Salacia reticulata* Wight have been widely used in treating diabetes and obesity, gonorrhoea and rheumatism, skin diseases and hemorrhoids (Im *et al.*, 2008; Li *et al.*, 2008; Matsuda *et al.*, 2002; Nadkarni 1993)high-fat (HF).

Several anti-diabetic compounds have been identified in *Salacia reticulata* Wight, such as Mangiferin, kotalanol and salacinol (Yoshikawa *et al.*, 1997; 2001; 1998). This plant is blessed with another major phytochemical, naringenin that also possesses anti-diabetic activity. The therapeutic potential of naringenin is well documented and its anti-diabetic properties are scrutinised (Salehi *et al.*, 2019; Hartogh and Tsiani 2019). Naringenin potentiates intracellular signalling responses to low insulin doses by sensitizing hepatocytes to insulin. Naringenin although has been reported in another related species of *Salacia*, *Salacia oblonga*, studies on quantification of naringenin available in various tissues of *Salacia reticulata* Wight was not ventured. Naringenin content has been estimated in grape fruit by RP-HPLC, as a tool for quality control (Ribeiro and Ribeiro, 2008).

PPAR- γ , PPAR- α and PPAR- δ are a group of ligand-activated transcription factors from the nuclear receptor super family (Peroxisome Proliferator-Activated Receptors (PPAR) that controls the expression of various genes entangled in glucose and lipid metabolism. The role of PPAR agonists is very important in managing metabolic disorders, but the existing PPAR agonists have undesired

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effects and researchers get going to focus on the discovery of new PPAR modulators that are safer, more beneficial without any undesired side effects. It has been hypothesized that increased 11 β HSD1 activity has a contributory role in the development of type 2 diabetes and 11 β HSD 1 inhibitors targeting metabolic syndrome, will be most useful in those with increased fasting blood glucose (Shukla *et al.*, 2019). Glycogen synthase kinase-3 (GSK-3) has been targeted for the treatment of type 2 diabetes as GSK-3 plays in glucose homeostasis (MacAulay and Woodgett, 2008). The postulated functional role of GSK-3 in insulin signalling and glucose metabolism and that fact makes it a particularly intriguing candidate target for the treatment of type 2 diabetes (Nabben and Neumann, 2016). Keeping this in view, the targets have been short listed and an attempt was made to fill in that gap in knowledge, and also to investigate the activity of naringenin on various type 2 diabetes mellitus drug targets. The main motives for the study were to estimate the naringenin content in various tissues and to ascertain its anti-diabetic potential.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Reagents

HPLC grade methanol, acetonitrile and naringenin standard (EC Number-266-769-1) were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA. Milli-Q™ type 1 water was used for the study.

RP-HPLC condition

Shimadzu HPLC system equipped UV-Vis detector was used for RP-HPLC analysis. The compounds were separated using a C-18 reversed-phase column (INNO column, 5 μ m, 120 Å, 4.6 \times 250 mm). Shimadzu CLASS-VP™ software was used for data acquisition, processing, and reporting on the Windows XP platform.

The isocratic mobile phase consisting of acetonitrile : water in 60 : 40 ratio was used. Detection of naringenin was done at 260 nm wavelength. A flow rate of 1 ml min⁻¹ was maintained. Naringenin was identified in samples based upon the retention time of the standard. The injection volumes was 10 μ l. The stimulation was done using the formula:

1000 ppm solution was prepared by dissolving the naringenin standard in methanol. The stock solution was diluted to 100 ppm concentration for estimation of naringenin content in plant samples. The standard stocks were stored at - 20 °C.

Plant samples

Fresh plant samples (leaves and roots) of *Salacia reticulata* Wight were obtained from the Botanical Garden, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, India (11° 01'05.3"N; 76° 55'58.1"E).

Commercially available samples of root and root bark were obtained from sellers dealing in medicinal plant products.

Preparation of plant samples

5 g of fresh were macerated using a pestle and mortar, the macerate was moved to Falcon tubes and 10 ml of methanol was added to each. The tubes were placed on a shaker (C1 Platform Shaker, New Brunswick Scientific, Edison, NJ, USA). Extractions were carried out at room temperature with constant stirring at 110 rpm for 24 hours. The methanolic extract was then filtered using a Whatman No. 1 filter paper and left to dry completely over 24 hours in cool and dry conditions. The solid remains were then weighed and reconstituted to make a 1000 ppm solution, which was diluted to 10 ppm for analysis. The sample stocks were stored at - 20 °C.

Preparation of ligand library

The structures of the identified compounds were downloaded from PubChem. The energy of the ligand was minimized using the UFF force field and following the steepest descent optimization algorithm.

Preparation of target library

The targets were chosen based on current drug targets for type 2 diabetes mellitus. The peroxisome proliferator-activated receptors (PPAR) are the targets for insulin-sensitizing thiazolidinedione drugs (Murphy and Holder, 2000). The enzyme 11 β -Hydroxysteroid-Dehydrogenase type I plays a crucial role in modulating levels of glucocorticoids as it converts the inactive 11-keto glucocorticoids into active glucocorticoids. Excess glucocorticoids has an adverse effect on glucose and lipid levels (Ge *et al.*, 2010). Glycogen Synthase Kinase a serine/threonine kinase plays a key role in insulin signaling and glucose metabolism. Glycogen Synthase Kinase inhibits the conversion of glucose to glycogen by binding to glycogen synthase. The inhibitors of Glycogen Synthase Kinase functions by mimicking insulin and thereby increase glycogen synthesis (Nabben and Neumann, 2016). The active residues and structure sources are mentioned in Table 1.

Molecular Docking

Naringenin was docked against the targets using MTiOpenScreen web-server (<https://bioserv.rpbs.univ-paris-diderot.fr/services/MTiOpenScreen/>) (Labbé *et al.*, 2015). MTiOpenScreen performs binding site docking using AutoDock 4.2; the default exhaustiveness is set at 8. The interacting residues were found using PLIP web-server (<https://projects.biotec.tu-dresden.de/plip-web/plip/>) (Salentin *et al.*, 2015) drug discovery and biology. However, comprehensive tools are not freely available to the research community. Here, we present the protein-ligand interaction profiler (PLIP).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tissue wise naringenin quantification

The naringenin content was found to be highest in dried roots at 3.4 %, while it was slightly lower in fresh roots at 3.2 %. Significant concentrations of naringenin are also found in leaves at 0.8%. Whereas

in the root bark it is 0.28 %. The percentage content of naringenin in the various tissues have been visualized in Figure 1. The chromatograms for the samples have been displayed in Figure 2. The compound naringenin has been previously isolated from the related species *Salacia oblonga* and was shown to have potent anti-diabetic activity.

Table 1. The active residues for the various drug targets for type 2 diabetes mellitus

S.No	PDB IDs	Target (Mode of action)	Active Residues	Sources
1	20M9	PPAR- (Agonist)	LYS256, HIS266, SER342, PHE264, ILE281, PHE282, GLY284, CYS285, VAL339, ILE341, MET348, LEU353, LEU356	(Ambrosio <i>et al.</i> , 2007)
2	2ILT	11 -Hydroxysteroid-Dehydrogenase type I(Inhibitor)	THR124, LEU126, SER170, TYR177, TYR183	(Valeur <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Sorensen <i>et al.</i> , 2007)
3	3ET1	PPAR- (Agonist)	TYR314, TYR464, PHE318, HIS440, GLN277	(Artis <i>et al.</i> , 2009)
4	3OZO	PPAR- (Agonist)	THR289, HIS323, HIS449, TYR473	(Luckhurst <i>et al.</i> , 2011)
5	4J1R	Glycogen Synthase Kinase - 3 (Inhibitor)	ASP133, ILE62, GLY63, PHE67, VAL70, VAL110, LEU132, TYR134, VAL135, PRO136, LEU188, CYS199, ASP200	

The compound was able to reduce blood glucose levels in streptozotocin-induced diabetic rats (Singh *et al.*, 2017).

Molecular docking analysis

The anti-diabetic potential of naringenin is an established fact, but the mechanism of its action is

not. It has been suggested that naringenin binds to PPAR- γ , but it could also potentially be having other modes of action (Singh *et al.*, 2017). Naringenin showed the highest affinity for PPAR- γ with a binding affinity of -8.7 kcal/mol. It forms three hydrogen bonds facilitated by the residues LYS265, HIS266 and ARG280.

Table 2. The binding affinity of naringenin and interacting residues for the different targets.

S.No	Target	Binding Affinity (kcal/mol)	Hydrogen Bonds	Hydrophobic Interactions	Stacking
1	PPAR-	-8.7	LYS265, HIS266, ARG280	HIS266	
2	11 -Hydroxysteroid-Dehydrogenase I	-8.4	LYS44, ILE46, GLY47, ILE121, ILE218	ILE46, ILE218	
3	PPAR-	-7.1	GLN277, SER280, HIS440, HIS457	PHE273, VAL444, LEU460	
4	PPAR-	-8.4	PHE327, HIS449	PHE327, LEU330, VAL334, LEU339, ILE364, LYS367	HIS449
5	Glycogen Synthase Kinase - 3	-7.8	ILE62, PHE67, VAL70, ALA83, LEU132	ASN64, ASP133, VAL135, ASP200, GLY262	

The binding affinity for 11 β -Hydroxysteroid-Dehydrogenase type I is -8.4 kcal/mol, while forming five hydrogen bonds with the residues are LYS44, ILE46, GLY47, ILE121, ILE218. The binding affinity for naringenin with PPAR- α and PPAR- δ are -7.1 and -8.4 kcal/mol. In contrast, the binding affinity for Glycogen Synthase Kinase is - 7.8 kcal/mol. The binding affinities of naringenin for the various receptors have been elucidated in Table 2. The binding pockets have been visualized in Figure 3. The residues ILE62 and VAL135 seem to be crucial for interacting with inhibitors. In a

study conducted to find the inhibitory effects of the compound olanzapine, the compound formed hydrogen bonds with Glycogen Synthase Kinase via ILE62 and VAL135, while also having hydrophobic interactions with residues ALA83, VAL110 and LEU132 (Mohammad *et al.*, 2007).

For this study, RP-HPLC technique was used to quantify the amount of naringenin in various tissues. In *Salacia oblonga* NMR based metabolomics analysis was used to identify naringenin (Singh *et al.*, 2017). While in silico study was done to identify the anti-diabetic potential of naringenin. From the

Naringenin content

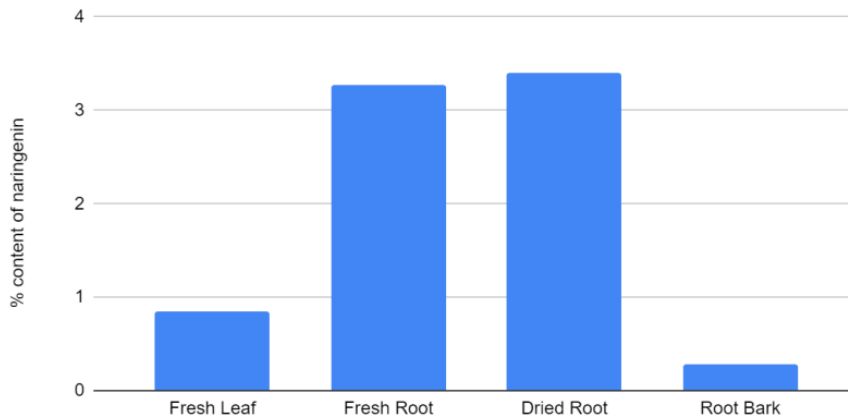


Figure 1. Naringenin content in various tissues of *Salacia reticulata* Wight.

study, it was found that the highest concentration of naringenin was found in the roots (fresh and dried) of *Salacia reticulata* Wight. Though the presence of naringenin is observed in the leaves and the root

bark, the quantity is supplementary. The affinity of naringenin is highest for PPAR- γ which is consistent with past findings (Singh *et al.*, 2017; Rigano *et al.*, 2017). The PPARs are isotypes encoded by separate



Figure 2. Naringenin estimation chromatograms for: 1 Fresh Leaf; 2 Fresh Root; 3 Dried Root; 4 Root Bark.

genes, which share a high degree of sequence similarity and structural homology. The ability of naringenin to bind to PPAR- α and PPAR- δ has been suggested due to their structural similarity to PPAR- γ (Rigano *et al.*, 2017). Naringenin as an inhibitor of

11 β -Hydroxysteroid-Dehydrogenase type I has also been studied before through *in vitro* studies on the enzyme obtained from guinea pig kidneys (Zhang *et al.*, 1994).

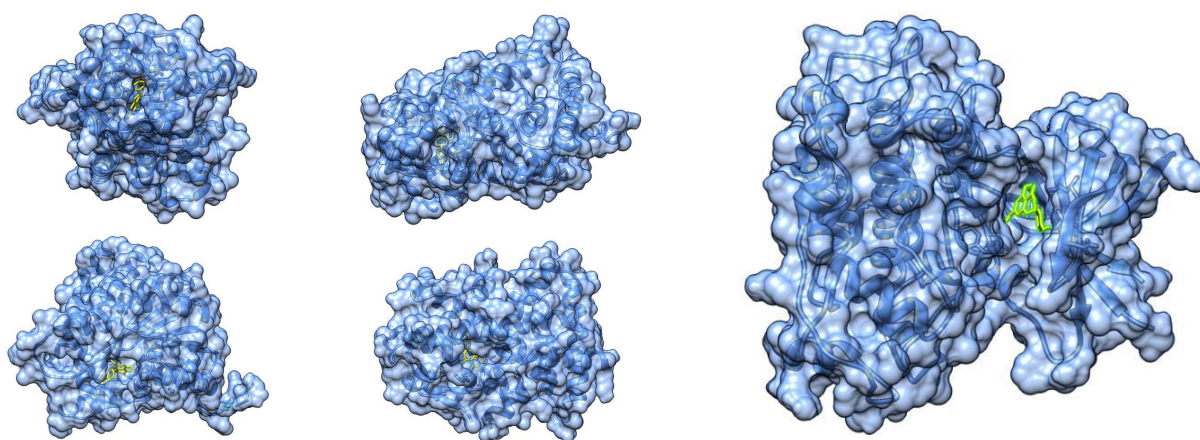


Figure 3. Docked poses of naringenin with the following receptors: 1 PPAR- γ ; 2 11 β -Hydroxysteroid-Dehydrogenase type I; 3 PPAR- α ; 4 PPAR- δ ; 5 Glucosekinase Regulatory Protein.

Though the effects of naringenin is well studied, it includes lowering of lipid peroxidation biomarkers, protein carbonylation induces carbohydrate metabolism scavenges for reactive oxygen species, modulates immune system activity, and also exerts anti-atherogenic and anti-inflammatory effects (Salehi *et al.*, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2015). Studies such as X-ray crystallography are required to further validate the binding modes of naringenin to the targets.

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Ethics statement

No specific permits were required for the described field studies because no human or animal subjects were involved in this research.

Consent for publication

All the authors agreed to publish the content.

Competing interests

There were no conflict of interests in the publication of this content

Author contributions

Research grant - AC; Idea conceptualization - RG; Experiments - AC; Guidance - RG, SVP, JS; Writing-original draft - AC; Writing- reviewing & editing- RG

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