Constituents of Brazilian red propolis and their preferential cytotoxic activity against human pancreatic PANC-1 cancer cell line in nutrient-deprived condition

Suresh Awale,a Feng Li,a Hiroko Onozuka,b Hiroyasu Esumi,b Yasuhiro Tezukaa and Shigetoshi Kadotaa,*

aInstitute of Natural Medicine, University of Toyama, 2630 Sugitani, Toyama 930-0194, Japan
bInvestigative Treatment Division, National Cancer Center Research Institute East, Chiba 277-8577, Japan

Received 27 August 2007; revised 18 September 2007; accepted 2 October 2007
Available online 5 October 2007

Abstract—Human pancreatic cancer cells such as PANC-1 are known to exhibit marked tolerance to nutrition starvation that enables them to survive for prolonged period of time even under extremely nutrient-deprived conditions. Thus, elimination of this tolerance to nutrition starvation is regarded as a novel approach in anticancer drug development. In this study, the MeOH soluble extract of Brazilian red propolis was found to kill 100% PANC-1 cells preferentially in the nutrient-deprived condition at the concentration of 10μg/mL. Further phytochemical investigation led to the isolation of 43 compounds including three new compounds, (6aS,11aS)-6a-ethoxymedicarpan (1), 2-(20,40-dihydroxyphenyl)-3-methyl-6-methoxybenzofuran (2), and 2,6-dihydroxy-2-(4-hydroxyphenyl)methyl-3-benzofuranone (3). Among them, (6a,R,11a,R)-3,8-dihydroxy-9-methoxypterocarpan (21, DMPC) displayed the most potent 100% preferential cytotoxicity (PC100) at the concentration of 12.5μM. Further study on the mode of cell death induced by DMPC against PANC-1 cells indicated that killing process was not accompanied by DNA fragmentation, rather through a nonapoptotic pathway accompanied by necrotic-type morphological changes.

1. Introduction

Pancreatic cancer is the most deadly of all malignancies associated with the lowest 5-year survival rates known for cancers.1 It shows resistance to almost all known chemotherapeutic agents such as 5-fluorouracil, taxol, doxorubicin, cisplatin and camptothecin, and still represents a challenging therapeutic problem at the start of the 21st century.1,2 Currently, surgery is the only treatment modality that offers any prospect of potential cure.2,3 Therefore, there is a dire need for searching new alternatives to improve the clinical outcome for patients diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. It has been estimated that more than two-thirds of human cancers could be prevented by modification of lifestyle, including dietary modification.4

Cancer cells, in general, proliferate extremely rapidly and the demand for nutrition as well as oxygen is always high. One of the ways that rapidly growing cancer cell obtains nutrition requirement is by randomly recruiting new blood vessels, a phenomenon commonly known as angiogenesis. However, newly formed blood vessels are poorly organized and despite continuous angiogenesis, large number of tumor cells are in hypoxic and anoxic states.5–7 The cancer cells below 150μm away from the blood capillary surface are in much stress for oxygen and nutrition due to the compromised and anisotropic blood supply. Thus the second way that cancer cells survive under such extreme state is by changing their energy metabolism and acquiring a tolerance against nutrition starvation. Among the different forms of cancer, pancreatic cancer cells have extremely high tolerance to nutrition starvation that enables them to survive for the prolonged period of time even in the complete absence of nutrition.8 Thus, it has been hypothesized that the search of agents that can eliminate the tolerance of cancer cells starvation might be novel approach in anticancer drug discovery.8–12 Accordingly, a novel strategy has been developed for screening of anticancer agents that

Keywords: Pancreatic cancer; PANC-1; Anti-austerity; Screening strategy; Red propolis; 3,8-Dihydroxy-9-methoxypterocarpan; Anti-cancer agent.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +81 76 434 7625; fax: +81 76 434 5059; e-mail: kadota@inm.u-toyama.ac.jp

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doi:10.1016/j.bmc.2007.10.004
preferentially kill the cancer cells under low nutrition state by eliminating their ability to tolerate the nutrition starvation, an approach termed as anti-austerity strategy for anticancer drug discovery.\(^9\)-\(^{12}\) Under this strategy, we screened 500 medicinal plants used in the Japanese Kampo medicine, and identified artegigenin\(^9\) and a novel compound angelmarin\(^10\) as the compounds having activity to eliminate the cancer cells, tolerance to nutrient starvation. In our continued study, we recently found that the methanol extract of red propolis collected from the Paraiba state of Brazil displayed 100% preferential cytotoxicity (PC\(_{100}\)) against human pancreatic PANC-1 cancer cell line in nutrient-deprived medium (NDM) at the concentration of 10 \(\mu\)g/mL. Thus, we carried out a detailed investigation to identify active constituents which led to the isolation of 43 compounds including three new compounds (Fig. 1). In this paper, we report the structures of these new compounds together with preferential cytotoxic activity and mode of cell death exerted by the active constituents against PANC-1 cells.

2. Results and discussion

2.1. Isolation and identification

The MeOH extract of Brazilian red propolis was subjected to a series of chromatographic separations that resulted in the isolation of three new compounds: (6aS,11aS)-6a-ethoxymedicarpin (1), 2-(2',4'-dihydroxyphenyl)-3-methyl-6-methoxybenzofuran (2), 2,6-dihydroxy-2-[4-(4-hydroxyphenyl)methyl]-3-benzofuranone (3), together with 40 known compounds: (2R,3R)-3,7-dihydroxy-6-methoxyflavanone (4), anlustinol (5), alnusinol (6), (+)-pinosresinol dimethyl ether (7), (2S)-dihydrooxyxin (8), (6aS,11aS)-medicarpin (9), (6aR,11aR)-3,4-dihydroxy-9-methoxypterocarpan (10), (2S)-dihydrobicalain (11), (6aR,11aR)-4-methoxymedicarpin (12), (7S)-dalbergiphenol (13), (2S)-7-hydroxy-6-methoxyflavanone (14), (6aR,11aR)-3-hydroxy-8,9-dimethoxypterocarpan (15), 2,4'-dihydroxychalcone (16), (3S)-7-O-methylvestitol (17), (6aS,11aS)-3,10-dihydroxy-9-methoxypterocarpan (18), (2S)-7-hydroxyflavanone (19), (+)-pinosresinol (20), (6aR,11aR)-3,8-dihydroxy-9-methoxypterocarpan (21), (3S)-Mucronulatol (22), (6aR,3R)-3,7-dihydroxyflavanone (23), biochanin A (24), formononetin (25), (3S)-ferreirin (26), 2'-hydroxybiochanin A (27), (3S)-violanolone (28), pratensein (29), xenognosin B (30), (+)-syringaresinol (31), (3S)-vestitol (32), isoliquiritigenin (33), (3S)-vestitol (34), (3R)-4'-methoxy-2',3,7-trihydroxysoflavonone (35), (2S)-liquiritigenin (36), calycosin (37), (2S)-naringenin (38), garbanzol (39), 4,4'-dihydroxy-2'-methoxychalcone (40), (3S)-isovestitol (41), (aS)-a',2',4,4'-tetrahydroxydihydrochalcone (42), and daidzein (43) (Fig. 1).

![Figure 1](image-url). Structures of the compounds isolated from Brazilian red propolis.
dated by analysis of their spectroscopic data, while known compounds were identified on the basis of spectral data comparison with those published in the literatures.

Compound 1 was isolated as a yellow oily substance with 3725.18 –31.50° (c 0.1, CHCl3). Its molecular formula was deduced by HREIMS to be C18H18O5 [m/z 314.1113 (M+)]. The IR spectrum of 1 showed the absorptions due to hydroxyl (3515 cm−1) group and aromatic ring (1610, 1495 cm−1). The 1H NMR spectrum of 1 exhibited signals due to two sets of three aromatic protons in ABX spin system (δH 7.34, d, J = 8.2; δH 6.55, dd, J = 8.2, 2.2; δH 6.35, d, J = 2.2 and δH 7.21, d, J = 8.2; δH 6.52, dd, J = 8.2, 2.2; δH 6.37, dd, J = 2.2), an oxygenated methine (δH 5.52), two oxygenated methylenes (δH 4.23, 4.15; δH 3.47, 3.26), a methoxyl (δH 3.76), and a methyl group (δH 1.14) (Table 1). The 13C NMR spectrum of 1, on the other hand, displayed signals of 18 carbons, including twelve aromatic carbons, five oxygenated sp3 carbons, and one methyl carbon (Table 1). These data closely resembled those of (6aS,11aS)-medicarpan (9),11 isolated from the same extract, except for the disappearance of the signal due to a methine proton (δH 3.52) and the appearance of additional signals ascribable to an ethoxyl group (δC-δC 58.8; δC-δC 15.6) in 1. The location of the ethoxyl group was deduced to be at C-6a based on HMBC correlations observed between oxymethylene protons at δH 3.47 and δH 3.26 oxygenated quaternary carbon at δC 81.7 (Fig. 2a). The absolute stereochemistry of 1 was assigned as 6aS, 11aS by comparison of CD spectral data ([θ]275 +8457; [θ]235 −20,662) with that of 9.17 Thus the structure of 1 was concluded as (6aS,11aS)-6a-ethoxymedicarpan.

Compound 2 was isolated as a brown oily substance and its molecular formula was determined by HREIMS to be C16H14O4 [m/z 270.0911 (M+)]. The IR spectrum of 2 indicated the presence of hydroxyl (3500 cm−1) group, aromatic ring (1610, 1490 cm−1). The 1H NMR spectrum of 2 displayed signals due to two sets of three aromatic protons in ABX system (δH 7.41, 7.01, 6.91; δH 7.31, 6.54, 6.51), together with a methoxyl (δH 3.87) and a vinylic methyl group (δH 2.32). The 13C NMR spectrum of 2, on the other hand, exhibited the signals of 16 carbons, including twelve aromatic carbons, two olefinic carbons, a vinylic methyl carbon, and a methoxyl carbon (Table 1). These data were typical of arylbenzofuran derivative, and resemble close to 2-(2'-hydroxy-4'-methoxyphenyl)-3-methyl-6-methoxybenzofuran (44), previously reported from the Indigofera micarocarpa from Brazil.37 However, 2 showed the presence of only one of methoxyl group instead of two in 44. The location of methoxyl group was finally assigned to be at C-6 based on the HMBC correlations (Fig. 2b) between methoxyl protons at δH 3.87 and oxygenated aromatic carbon at δC 158.1 (C-6), together with the

Table 1. 1H and 13C NMR data for new compounds 1–3 (J values in parentheses)

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<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
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<td>δC</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>156.9</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>7.21 (8.2)</td>
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correlation between an ortho-coupled aromatic doublet at $\delta_H 7.41$ ($J = 8.3$ Hz) with an olefinic carbon at $\delta_C 111.8$ (C-3), C-6 and C-8. Thus the structure of compound 2 was concluded as 2-(2',4'-dihydroxyphenyl)-3-methyl-6-methoxybenzofuran.

Compound 3 was isolated as red oily substance and its quasi-molecular ion peak at $m/z$ 272.0656 (M$^+$) in HREIMS indicated its molecular formula to be C$_{15}$H$_{12}$O$_5$. The IR spectrum of 3 indicated the presence of hydroxyl (3200 cm$^{-1}$), carbonyl (1680 cm$^{-1}$) group, and aromatic ring (1600, 1510 cm$^{-1}$). The $^1$H NMR spectrum of 3 displayed the signals due to three aromatic protons in the ABX spin system $[\delta_H 7.26, d, J = 8.3, 1.7$ Hz; $\delta_H 6.62, d, J = 1.7$ Hz and a set of symmetric pair of ortho-coupled aromatic protons at $\delta_H 6.89$ ($J = 7.3$ Hz) and $\delta_H 6.51$ ($J = 7.3$ Hz), together with geminal methylene protons at $\delta_H 2.99$ ($J = 13.6$ Hz) and $\delta_H 2.91$ ($J = 13.6$ Hz) (Table 1). Its $^{13}$C NMR spectrum showed the signals of 15 carbons, including twelve aromatic carbons, a carbonyl carbon ($\delta_C 195.8$), an acetal carbon ($\delta_C 106.0$), and a methylene carbon ($\delta_C 40.6$) (Table 1). These data closely resemble maesopsin (45), originally isolated from Maesopsis eminii. However, 3 differs from 45 due to the presence of three aromatic protons in the ABX spin system instead of signal due to two meta coupled doublets at $\delta_H 7.56$ ($J = 1.7$ Hz) and $\delta_H 5.73$ ($J = 1.7$ Hz) in 45. Thus, proton instead of hydroxyl substituent at C-4 in 3 was assumed, which was confirmed by HMBC correlations between aromatic doublet at $\delta_H 7.26$ ($J = 8.3$ Hz, H-4) and ketone carbonyl at $\delta_C 195.8$ (C-3) (Fig. 2c). Thus the structure of 3 was concluded as 4-dehydroxymaesopsin. Compound 3 exists as an enantiomeric pair ($[\alpha]_D^0$) due to the reversible nature of hemiacetal at C-2.

### 2.2. Chemical diversity

The isolated compounds comprised mainly flavonoids that include seven pterocarpsans (1, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 21), four flavanols (4, 6, 23, 39), a neoflavanoid (13), an isoflavanonol (35), three isoflavonans (26, 28, 34), four chalcones (16, 33, 40, 42), four isoflavans (17, 22, 32, 41), seven isoflavans (24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 37, 43), six flavanones (8, 11, 14, 19, 36, 38), and a flavonol (5), together with three lignans (7, 20, 31). This wide structural diversity among flavonoids in propolis have been observed for the first time in propolis, indicating the uniqueness of Brazilian red propolis among the propolis from other parts of the world.

The composition of propolis depends upon the local flora at the site of collection. Propolis from temperate zones, especially European propolis, contains predominantly cinnamic acid derivatives and flavonoids, and the poplar tree (Populus nigra) was considered as dominant plant source. The polyphenylated benzophenones which were virtually absent in the temperate propolis were found to be the main constituents in the Cuban propolis (tropical sample) and the possible plant source was identified as genus Clusia. Nepalese propolis which originates from the floral resin of genus Dalbergia mainly contains neoflavonoids, chalcones, and pterocarps. In present study, majority of the compounds have been reported from the plant belonging to genus Dalbergia. For example, four major compounds 4, 17, 25, 36 together with 9, 22, 32, 33, and 43 were known to be present in Dalbergia ecastophyllum, while 28, 30, 34 and 35 were reported from D. odorifta. Similarly 13 and 24 were reported from D. cultrate and D. frutescens respectively. Thus, the possible predominating plant source of Brazilian red propolis might be plants belonging to the genus Dalbergia.

### 2.3. In vitro biological evaluation

Propolis has been a subject of intense research, especially in the areas of anticancer research. A large number of compounds possessing anticancer activity have been reported. Phenethyl caffeate (CAPE) and its derivatives in Netherlands propolis possessed potent cytotoxicity against colon 26-L5 carcinoma. A clerodane-type diterpene PMS-1 which was obtained from Brazilian propolis possessed cytotoxicity against human HuH13, HLC-2, HeLa, KB cancer cell lines. A prenylated cinnamic acid derivative, artepillin C, from Brazilian propolis possessed potent colon cancer-preventing activity. The prenylflavanones, propolin A-C, in Taiwanese propolis were reported for inducing apoptosis of human melanoma cells. In our present study, we found that the methanol extract of red propolis showed strong cytotoxic activity against PANC-1 cancer cell line in NDM and isolated 43 compounds. All the isolated compounds (1-43) were tested for their preferential cytotoxic activity against PANC-1 cell line in NDM. PANC-1 cell is highly resistant to nutrient starvation, and can survive in NDM even after 48 h of starvation. However, this tolerance to nutrient starvation was remarkably eliminated by the tested compounds in a concentration as well as time dependent manner. The tested compounds exhibited different potency of
toxicity (Table 2). Among them, 3,8-hydroxy-9-methoxypterocarpan (DMPC, 21) displayed the most potent preferential cytotoxicity at a concentration of 12.5 μM. Interestingly, conventional anticancer drug in clinical use, such as 5-fluorouracil, taxol was found to be virtually inactive (>100 μM). Arctigenin, an anti-austerity based anticancer agent, has been used as positive control in the present study that displayed total preferential cytotoxic activity at 1 μM.

Upon careful inspection of the activity of the tested compounds, it was observed that the compounds possessing medicarpan carbon framework with increasing number of hydroxyl group showed increased activity. Medicarpan possessing a hydroxyl group at C-4 or at C-8 was found to be stronger than that without (21, 10 > 9). The position of hydroxyl group in the pterocarpan frame was also found to influence the activity. For example, 21 with a hydroxyl group at C-8 showed the most potent activity than that of 10 and 18 having a hydroxyl group at C-4 and at C-10, respectively (21 > 10 > 18). Thus, C-8 hydroxy group might play the most important role in medicarpan derivates for the enhancement of activity (21 > 10 > 18, 9 > 1, 12, 15).

### 2.4. Inhibition of Akt signaling is an unlikely mechanism

In our previous studies, we found that arctigenin, kigamicin D, pyrinium pamoate, and troglitazone, that exhibited preferential cytotoxicity under the condition of nutrient deprivation, were shown to inhibit Akt activation. Therefore, we examined whether DMPC, the most active constituent isolated in present study, also influences Akt activation in the cells under nutrient-deprived conditions. PANC-1 cells were incubated with DMPC for varying times. Cell lysates were subjected to immunoblotting analysis to detect Ser473 phosphorylation of Akt. Contrary to our previous findings, treatment of DMPC (100 μM) significantly increased Ser473 phosphorylation of Akt in PANC-1 cells in both NDM and DMEM (within 30 min), whereas total Akt protein level was not affected (Fig. 3). Interestingly, elevated Akt phosphorylation was sustained for up to 60 min in NDM. We conclude that DMPC (21) do not inhibit Akt signaling pathway in PANC-1 cells. Therefore, inhibition of Akt signaling is unlikely to be a major antitumor mechanism of DMPC in PANC-1 cells.

### 2.5. Mode of PANC-1 cell death

In order to know the mode of PANC-1 cell death caused by DMPC in NDM, we then performed two distinct approaches: (1) annexin V/PI fluorescence detection and (2) DNA laddering.

#### 2.5.1. Analysis of cell death by flow cytometry

Cell death was assessed by flow cytometry in cells treated with DMPC (21). Both adherent and floating cells were harvested by trypsin digestion and stained with annexin-V and propidium iodide (PI) according to the manufacturer’s protocol. The X and Y axes indicate the fluorescence of annexin-V and PI, respectively. The early stages of apoptosis are characterized by the cells binding to annexin-V only (annexin-V+/PI−). Cells in late apoptosis are stained with annexin-V and PI (annexin-V+/PI+). Necrotic cells have lost the integrity of their plasma membrane and are predominantly stained with PI (annexin-V+/PI−). As shown in Figure 4, DMPC (21) triggered cell death (annexin-V+/PI+: combined necrosis, early and late apoptosis) in a time dependent manner.

#### 2.5.2. DNA fragmentation and cell death detection

To investigate the precise mechanism of the cell death induced by DMPC under nutrient-deprived conditions, we examined the mode of cell death using the Hoechst 33342/propidium iodide staining method, as described previously. As shown in Figure 5b, no nuclear fragmentation or chromatin condensations were observed, and the nuclear structures of PANC-1 cells were found to be maintained even after 24 h of treatment with 25 μM of DMPC. To further confirm these findings, we conducted the genomic DNA isolation from PANC-1 cells cultured in presence of DMPC (21) to examine whether it produced a typical “ladder” pattern when analyzed on an agarose gel. The DLD-1 cultured for 48 h in the absence of DMPC showed the presence of the genomic DNA fragments, indicating the occurrence of apoptosis.

### Table 2. Preferential cytotoxic concentrations of the tested compounds in NDM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>Preferential cytotoxic concentration (μM)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 3, 8, 11–13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22–43</td>
<td>&gt;100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2, 9, 14, 18</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10, 17</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>5-Fluorouracil</td>
<td>&gt;100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arctigeninb</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Concentration at which 100% cell death was observed in the cells cultured in nutrient-deprived medium (NDM).

b Positive control.

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**Figure 3.** Effect of 3,8-dihydroxy-9-methoxypterocarpan (DMPC, 21) on the activation of Akt as determined by Western blotting for the phosphorylated form (P-Akt Ser473) in nutrient-deprived condition (NDM) and in DMEM.
sence of amino acid treated with 1 mM of 3-methyladenine is used as positive control (PC) in this study. As shown in Figure 5, DMPC did not induce typical DNA fragmentation. These results suggested that DMPC kills PANC-1 cells under NDM via nonapoptotic pathway, that does not lead to fragmentation of chromosomal DNA, but is accompanied by necrotic-type morphological changes of the cells.47

3. Conclusion

The methanol extract of red propolis collected from the Paraiba state of Brazil displayed 100% cytotoxicity, preferentially in nutrient-deprived medium (NDM) at the concentration of 10 μg/mL against PANC-1 cell line. Detailed phytochemical investigation led to the isolation of 43 compounds including three new compounds, (6αS,11αS)-6α-ethoxymedicarpan (1), 2-(2′,4′-dihydroxyphenyl)-3-methyl-6-methoxybenzofuran (2), and 2,6-dihydroxy-2-{(4-hydroxy-phenyl)methyl}-3-benzofuranone (3). All the isolated compounds were tested for their preferential cytotoxic activity against human pancreatic cancer PANC-1 cells under nutrient-deprived condition. Among them, (6αR,11αR)-3,8-dihydroxy-9-methoxypterocarpan (DMPC, 21) displayed the most potent 100% preferential cytotoxicity at the concentration of 12.5 μM. DMPC triggered PANC-1 cell death in NDM in a time dependent manner via nonapoptotic pathway, that does not lead to fragmentation of DNA, but is accompanied by necrotic-type morphological changes.

4. Experimental

4.1. General methods

Optical rotations were measured on a JASCO DIP-140 digital polarimeter. IR spectra were measured with a Shimadzu IR-408 spectrophotometer in CHCl₃ solution or in KBr. NMR spectra were taken on a JEOL JNM-LA400 spectrometer with tetramethylsilane (TMS) as
an internal standard, and chemical shifts are expressed in δ values. HR-EI-MS measurements were performed on a JEOL JMS-700T spectrometer using a direct inlet system at the ionization voltage of 70 eV. CD spectra were measured in a JASCO J-805 spectropolarimeter. Medium pressure liquid chromatography (MPLC) was performed with Yamazen MPLC system using a reversed-phase column (4.0 × 60 cm). Column chromatography was performed with BW-820MH silica gel (Fuji Silysis, Aichi, Japan) and LiChroprep RP-18 (Merck, Darmstadt, Germany). Analytical and preparative TLC was carried out on precoated silica gel 60F254 or RP-18F254 plates (Merck, 0.25 or 0.50 mm thickness).

4.2. Biological material

Brazilian red propolis was collected from South coast of Paraiba State, Brazil, in 2005. A voucher specimen (TMPU 25226) is preserved in the Museum of Materia Medica, Research Center for Ethnomedicines, Institute of natural Medicine, University of Toyama, Japan.

4.3. Extraction and isolation

Brazilian propolis (49 g) was extracted with MeOH under sonication (500 mL × 1.5 h × 3 times) to give methanol extract (25 g). The MeOH extract was chromatographed on silica gel (8 × nol extract (25 g). The MeOH extract was sonicated (500 mL

4.3.1.187

Fraction 4 (2.5 g) was rechromatographed on ODS (Yamazen ultra pack ODS-P-40C, 4 × 60 cm) using MPLC (Yamazen Prep. UV 254) with CH3CN–MeOH–H2O (1:1:2) to afford four subfractions (4-1, 561 mg; 4-2, 376 mg; 4-3, 301 mg; 4-4, 1.2 g). Subfraction 4-1 was subjected to reversed-phase preparative TLC with MeOH–H2O (2,3), to give 27 (2.4 mg) and 28 (88 mg). Subfraction 4-2 was subjected to reversed-phase preparative TLC with acetone–H2O (1:2) to give 34 (3.5 mg), 35 (3.6 mg), 36 (18.2 mg), 37 (2.1 mg), and 38 (20.5 mg). Subfraction 4-3 was rechromatographed on ODS (Yamazen ultra pack ODS-P-40C, 4 × 60 cm) using MPLC (Yamazen Prep. UV 254) with CH3CN–MeOH–H2O (2,2,3) to give 26 (2.4 mg) and 29 (2.0 mg), respectively. Subfraction 4-4 was subjected to reversed-phase preparative TLC with 3% MeOH–CHCl3 to give 21 (2.1 mg), 22 (5.5 mg), and 23 (2.5 mg).

Fraction 5 (3.9 g) was rechromatographed on ODS (4 × 40 cm) with CH3CN–MeOH–H2O (1:1:2 → 2:1:2:1) to afford four subfractions (5-1, 273 mg; 5-2, 254 mg; 5-3, 675 mg; 5-4, 217 g). Subfractions 5-1 and 5-2 were separately subjected to reversed-phase preparative TLC with MeOH–H2O (1) and MeOH–H2O (1:2) to give 42 (2.8 mg), 43 (7.6 mg), and 3 (4.2 mg) and 40 (7.2 mg), respectively. Subfraction 5-3 and 5-4 were separately rechromatographed on ODS using MPLC with MeOH–H2O (2,3), to give 39 (13.5 mg), 37 (7.8 mg), 40 (2.3 mg), and 41 (20.7 mg).

4.3.1.1. 6α,11α,5α-6α-Ethoxymedicarpin (1). Yellow oily substance, δCD3 −31.5°C (c 0.1, CHCl3); CD λmax (EtOH, 0.318 mM) nm: 275 ([O]1 +8457), 235 ([O]0 −20662); IR νmax (CHCl3) 3515, 3000, 2400, 1610, 1495, 1310, 1130, 1050, 1030, 1010 cm−1; HR-EI-MS [calcd for C15H18O5 (M+) 314.1154]; 1H and 13C NMR, see Table 2.

4.3.2. 2-(2′,4′-Dihydroxyphenyl)-3-methyl-6-methoxybenzofuran (2). Brown oily substance, IR νmax (CHCl3) 3500, 2750, 1610, 1490, 1460, 1440, 1270, 1150, 1110, 1070, 1045 cm−1; HR-EI-MS 270.0911 [calcd for C16H14O4 (M+) 270.0892]; 1H and 13C NMR, see Table 2.

4.3.3. 2,6-Dihydroxy-2-[(4-hydroxyphenyl)methyl]-3-benzofuranone (3). Red oily substance, δCD3 −25°C (c 0.16, MeOH); IR νmax (KBr) 3200, 1600, 1600, 1510, 1455, 1290, 1150 cm−1; HR-EI-MS 272.0656 [calcd for C15H12O5 (M+) 272.0685]; 1H and 13C NMR, see Table 2.
4.4. Preferential cytotoxicity under nutrient-deprived condition

PANC-1 cancer cell preferential cytotoxicity assay was done as described earlier. Briefly, PANC-1 cancer cells were seeded in 96-well plates (1 × 10^4/well) and incubated in fresh Dulbecco’s modified Eagle’s medium (DMEM; Nissui Pharmaceuticals, Tokyo, Japan) at 37 °C under 5% CO_2/95% air for 24 h. The cells were then washed with PBS, and the medium was changed to either DMEM or nutrient-deprived medium (absence of glucose, amino acid, and serum), followed by immediate addition of serial dilutions of the test samples. After 24-h incubation, the cells were washed again with PBS, then 100 μl of DMEM with 10% WST-8 cell counting kit solution was added to the wells, and the plate was incubated for a further 2 h. Then, the absorbance of the wells at 450 nm was measured. Cell viability was calculated by the following equation:

\[
\text{Cell viability (\%)} = \frac{[\text{Abs}_{\text{test sample}} - \text{Abs}_{\text{blank}}/\text{Abs}_{\text{control}} - \text{Abs}_{\text{blank}}]}{\times 100}
\]

4.5. Western blot analysis

The proteins were separated by gel electrophoresis on a polyacrylamide gel containing 0.1% SDS and then transferred to nitrocellulose membranes. The membranes were blocked with PBS containing 2% BSA and 5% (w/v) skim milk, washed with PBS containing 0.3% Tween 20 (Sigma), then incubated overnight at room temperature with Akt antibody and the phosphospecific (Ser^{473}) Akt antibody (New England Biolabs, Ipswich, MA) diluted with PBS. After washing, the membranes were incubated for 1 h at room temperature with horseradish peroxidase-conjugated goat anti-rabbit IgG (Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Santa Cruz, CA) as the second antibody.

4.6. Annexin V–PI staining

PANC-1 cells treated with DMPC (21) were stained with Annexin-V-fluor staining kit (Roche, Germany) according to the manufacturer’s protocol. Stained cells were analyzed using FACS caliber (BD, Franklin Lakes, NJ) and observed using DM-IRB fluorescent microscope (Leica, Germany).

4.7. Nuclear staining and DNA ladder formation assay

PANC-1 cells were cultured for 24 h in DMEM and nutrient-deprived medium with or without 25 μM of DMPC (21). After incubation, the cells were stained with Hoechst 33342 for 5 min and examined using fluorescent microscope. For DNA ladder formation assay, the cells were washed twice with ice-cold PBS and collected by centrifugation. The cell pellets were resuspended in 500 μl of lysis buffer (20 mM Tris–HCl, 20 mM EDTA, 100 mM NaCl, 0.1% SDS) containing proteinase K (0.5 mg/ml) and incubated at 55 °C for 2 h. Genomic DNA was extracted using phenol/chloroform and ethanol precipitation. Extracted DNA was dissolved in TE buffer containing RNase A (0.02 mg/ml) and incubated at 37 °C for 30 min. DNA samples were separated on 2% agarose gel and stained with ethidium bromide. Stable 100 bp DNA ladder (Sigma Aldrich) was used as standard marker. The bands were detected with an enhanced chemiluminescence system (Amersham Biosciences UK Ltd., Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom).

Acknowledgments

We thank Nihon Propolis Co., Ltd. (Tokyo, Japan) for kindly providing the samples of Brazilian red propolis as well as for their continuous support in propolis research. This work was supported in part by a grant from the Ministry of Health and Welfare for the Second-Term Comprehensive 10-year Strategy for Cancer Control and Grants-in-Aid for Cancer Research from the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

References and notes
