



Review Paper

Therapeutic Role of Phytomedicines on Obesity: Importance of Herbal Pancreatic lipase Inhibitors

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Abstract

Obesity has been declared one of the major threats to human health in 21st century. It has become the center of much clinical attention and especially clinical laboratories, whose aim is to reduce this new world syndrome. Dietary fat is associated with well known diseases like diabetes, hypertension and cardio-vascular diseases. Certain long-term medications like use of insulin, sulfonyleureas, thiazolidinediones, atypical antipsychotics, antidepressants, steroids, some anticonvulsants (phenytoin and valproate), pizotifen and some forms of hormonal contraception may also cause weight gain or changes in body composition. Retardation of nutrient absorption and digestion may be used as an approach to manage obesity and related diseases. Orlistat is the only approved drug for long-term use and widely accepted also. However, some side effects and complications are also related with this medication. Currently, plant based natural products as anti-obesity therapeutics is largely unexplored and such products may be safer and effective alternative(s) for this ever increasing pandemic. Anti-nutritional factors (ANF) are natural compounds which act to retard nutrient(s) uptake. Phyto-chemicals like kievitone and visoltricine are useful in pharmacological treatments. Phyto-chemicals like flavonoides, saponins, alkaloids and many others are reported as biologically active molecules. Plants may prove to be an alternative source(s) of a variety of anti-lipolytic therapeutic molecule(s) that can either inhibit the pancreatic lipase or the uptake/absorption of fat(s) or both. In this review we emphasize the potential role of these bioactive compounds as pancreatic lipase (PL) inhibitory molecules. Moreover, medicinal plants are promising sources for isolation, identification and characterization of bioactive compounds for developing effective anti-obesetic agents.

Keywords: Obesity, Orlistat, pancreatic lipase inhibitors and phytochemical(s).

Introduction

Obesity, the 'New World Syndrome' has been declared a global epidemic by WHO^{1,2} and is now being recognized as a major health concern especially in new world countries. There are over 400 million clinically obese and 1.6 billion overweight adults according to a WHO survey^{3,4}. In developed countries like USA⁵, Australia and Canada^{6,7} it is increasing at a faster rate. In United States, obesity has been assumed to be an important cause of human deaths⁸. One in three Americans are obese. In the European Union, half population of adults and approximate 20% of school-age children are reported as overweight. In England over a quarter of adults (26%) were reported as obese in 2010⁹. A statistical study report that in US 35% of adults and almost 17% of youth were obese in the year 2009-10¹⁰. The Indians are also reported for obesity and their consequences¹¹. There is a constant rise in obesity related deaths each year. Major health consequences associated with overweight and obesity are dyslipidemia, coronary artery disease, type-2 diabetes, reproductive and gastrointestinal cancers, sleep apnea, stroke, fatty liver and osteoarthritis¹². Recently, it has been found to promote prostate cancer, too¹³. Obese patients may lower the risk of cardiovascular diseases and type-2 diabetes by reducing only 5-10% weight¹⁴⁻¹⁶. Medication is also available,

as therapeutic compounds that can block/ inhibit fat digestion¹⁷. Orlistat which is a saturated derivative of Lipstatin¹⁸ lowers the body weight when taken under suitable dietary advice^{19,20}. This drug has also been shown to improve OGT (oral glucose tolerance)²¹.

Natural compounds from plants and microbes can be developed as anti-obesity clinical products²². Retardation of nutrient absorption and digestion may be used as an approach to manage obesity and related diseases. For example, valoneic acid dilactone from banaba²³, chestnut astringent skin extract²⁴, α -amylase inhibitor from white beans²⁵ and acarbose²⁶ showed clinical effects against diabetes and cardio-metabolic disorders. Marine algae²⁷, fungi²⁸ and some plants have been screened for anti-lipase activity²⁹.

Imbalance between energy intake and energy expenditure leads to over-weight and Obesity³⁰. High intake of dietary fat, overeating and reduced physical activity together lead to obesity³¹ that are main causes of prevalence of obesity in westernized societies. Normally, man and woman have 18-23% and 25-30% of body fat in average. Women with over 30% and men with over 25% body fat are considered obese. Overweight and obesity are determined by using weight and height to

calculate a number called the 'Body Mass Index' (BMI). The formula for calculating BMI was given by a Belgian scientist Adolphe Quetelet in 1830 to assess the body fat. BMI equals a person's weight in kilograms (kg) divided by his/ her height in meters (m) squared. But recently a modified Quetelet's BMI formula that has been proposed and it is gaining good acceptance³².

Quetelet's BMI= Weight (kg)/ Height (m²) = 703 X weight (lb)/ height (in²)

New formula BMI= 1.3 X Weight (kg)/ Height (m^{2.5}) = 5734 X weight (lb)/ height (in^{2.5})

An adult is considered overweight if he/ she has a BMI between 25 and 29.9 and is considered obese if BMI of 30 or higher (table 1).

Table-1
Grades of obesity according to BMI

BMI	Criteria
Below 18.5	Under weight
18.5 to 24.9	Healthy weight
25 to 29.9	Overweight
30 or higher	Obese

In some cases, such as athletes, may be identified as overweight according to BMI even though they do not have excess body fat. So BMI calculation does not take into account the muscular mass (*i.e.* heavy weight lifters) or the stage of development (*i.e.* when our body is still developing). A few other methods that may be useful to diagnose the level/ grade of obesity include; i. Waist circumference, saggital diameter and waist-to-hip ratio: 102 cm (40 inches) for a man and 88 cm (35 inches) for a woman is currently recommended upper limit for waist circumference in the United States. Waist-to-hip ratio greater than 1 in men or greater than 0.85 in women is considered obese⁹. ii. Skin fold caliper: This test measures fat beneath the skin, but cannot measure fat accumulated inside the abdomen³³. iii. Water displacement test: Determining how well we float provides an estimated ratio of fat to body mass³⁴. iv. Blood tests: To assess other medical conditions in which body weight increases (like thyroid disorder), some blood tests can also be performed^{35,36}.

Alimentary obesity makes up most of obesity cases and results when a person consumes more calories than he/ she can burn. Some cases of secondary obesity results in disorders like Cushing's syndrome³⁷, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)³⁸ and insulin tumors³⁹. Childhood obesity occurs when children and adolescents are above the normal body weight for their age and height. A limited number of cases are primarily due to genetics, medical reasons or psychiatric illness⁴⁰.

Sometimes weight excess is also a major feature in some syndromes⁴¹, such as Prader-Willi syndrome, Bardet-Biedl syndrome, Cohen syndrome and MOMO syndrome. A few

cases are also reported with single point DNA mutation⁴². Some cases like hypothyroidism, Cushing's syndrome and growth hormone deficiency also reported to weight gain⁴³. Some long-term medications may also cause weight gain or changes in body composition⁴⁴; these include insulin, sulfonylureas, thiazolidinediones, atypical antipsychotics, antidepressant, steroids, some anticonvulsants (phenytoin and valproate), pizotifen and some forms of hormonal contraception. Some other factors, which also play a role in obesity may include;

Age: At older age body's ability to metabolize food slows down and there is less requirement of calories to maintain body weight. So at age of 40 or after we tend to gain weight⁴⁵. There's some evidence that when an older a woman gives birth, there is a higher child's risk of obesity⁴⁵.

Gender: Women tend to be more overweight than men due to difference in resting metabolic rate. Additionally, women tend to gain weight after menopause.

Environmental factors: Environmental factors unknowingly affect our metabolism⁴⁶. We know hormones regulate body weight and many of today's pollutants affect our hormones⁴⁷. For convenience we are living in temperature-controlled rooms/ office^{48,49}. Moreover, smoking also reduces weight^{50,51}.

Psychological factors: Many persons eat in response to boredom, sadness or anger. Too little sleep may also result in gain of body weight⁵²⁻⁵⁴.

Genetic factors: Some of the genetic factors predispose us to obesity⁵⁵. Some reports evidencing fertility of obese people than leaner ones⁵⁶. If obesity has a genetic component⁵⁷, the percentage of obese people in the population will increase. Moreover, union of obese spouses also promotes the chances to have obese child in generation⁵⁸.

Clinical management of obesity: drugs and surgery

In most cases patients who lose weight, regain the weight in subsequent years suggesting obesity has a high relapse rate making difficulty in treatment. So the treatment has to be a life-long commitment with proper dietary habits and increased physical activities. Pathetically obese patients may lower the risk of cardiovascular diseases and type-2 diabetes by reducing only 5-10% weight. Therapeutic treatment of overweight patients has been reviewed^{59,60}. Leptin, a peptide hormone, was discovered to regulate body weight⁶¹⁻⁶³. Details and additional guidance for the medications to treat overweight patients have been published time-to-time⁶⁴⁻⁷¹. Currently, the options of medications available to treat overweight patients are quite limited. Additionally, the side effects of these medications are also major concerns to clinicians, particularly for appetite-suppressant drugs. Fenfluramine⁷² was withdrawn from market after reports of cardiac fibrosis and pulmonary hypertension

came into light^{73,74}. Phentermine is available only for short-term use. Sibutramine (Meridia) may cause an increase in blood pressure⁷⁵.

One medication, Orlistat can lose weight up to 2.9 kg (6.4 lb) in 1 to 4 years. However, some side effects and complications are also related with this medication⁷⁶. This drug blocks the absorption of dietary fat and causes unpleasant side effects like oily stools, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, faecal spotting and some hepatic toxicity effects. Orlistat causes high rates of side-effects on gastrointestinal tract and on kidneys⁷⁷. Another drug Lorcaserin (Belviq) lose weight by 3.1 kg over a year⁷⁸. Combination of phentermine and topiramate has also been approved⁷⁹.

Surgery may help patients who are in pathetic condition. Two bariatric surgical procedures: gastric bypass and Lap-Band have proved to be effective for treating obese patients⁸⁰. Gastric bypass surgery causes permanent changes in gastrointestinal tract and its effects cannot be reversed.

Pharmaceutical potential of phyto-chemicals

Plants are in use since several years as traditional and natural pharmaceutical aids⁸¹. Plant-based medicines cover an important portion in current pharmaceuticals that we are using these days⁸². Many phyto-chemical compounds have been discovered till now for pharmaceutical values, and anti-nutrients are one of them⁸³⁻⁸⁵. Phyto-chemicals like kievitone and visoltricine are useful in pharmacological treatments⁸⁶. Antinutrients can be developed in pharmaceutical principals⁸⁷. Although they elicit deleterious effects on human health^{88,89} but they also have been shown to be of pharmaceutical importance^{90,91}. Phyto-chemicals like flavonoides, saponins, alkaloids and many others are reported as biologically active molecules (table 2 and 3) and have been identified in many pharmacological studies^{91,92}. Saponins⁹³ play an important role

in foam industries⁹⁴, beverages industries⁹⁵, agriculture⁹⁶, antibiotics⁹⁷ and in antiviral and antifungal pharmaceuticals⁹⁸. They also have been proved for their antitumor potential⁹⁹ and particularly saponin(s) like ginseng, quillaja and gypsophila are constituents of some anti-cancerous drugs¹⁰⁰. They are proved for their cholesterol lowering potential^{87,101} and for anti-diabetic¹⁰² and antiulcer¹⁰³ effects. Saponins also exhibit promising role(s) in some cardiovascular treatments¹⁰⁴ and as strong anti-inflammatory agents¹⁰⁵. They are also reported to scavenge ROS¹⁰⁶⁻¹⁰⁸. Besides potent free radical scavengers¹⁰⁹, flavonoids particularly genistein have been shown as anti-cancerous phyto-molecule^{110,111}. Flavonoids^{101,112} are also used in food processing industries¹¹³ and they also have insecticidal properties¹¹⁴. Tannins¹¹⁵ are also considered as anti-tumor agents¹¹⁶, antimicrobial agents¹¹⁷ and as anti-helminthic agents¹¹⁸⁻¹²⁰. Condensed tannins are reported to be beneficial in agriculture, in nutrition and health of ruminants¹²¹. Alkaloids are known as strong anti-inflammatory agents¹²². Protease inhibitors have also been reported for their insecticidal properties¹²³⁻¹²⁵.

Therapeutic interventions to manage obesity using phytomolecules

Phytomolecules may play the key role as an anti-obesetic agent via distinct mechanisms. They may reduce lipid absorption from food, reduce energy intake from diet, enhance energy expenditure by degrading stored fat, decrease pre-adipocyte differentiation and proliferation and boost up the lipolysis of accumulated fat in our body (figure 1). As dietary fat is responsible for adiposity so to develop lipid digestion and absorption inhibitors, pancreatic lipase may be targeted for drug development as it is the key component in fat digestion. To develop novel inhibitors those lack unpleasant side effects, phyto-chemicals and secondary metabolites from plants and microbial sources can be focused for antiobesity medication development programme.

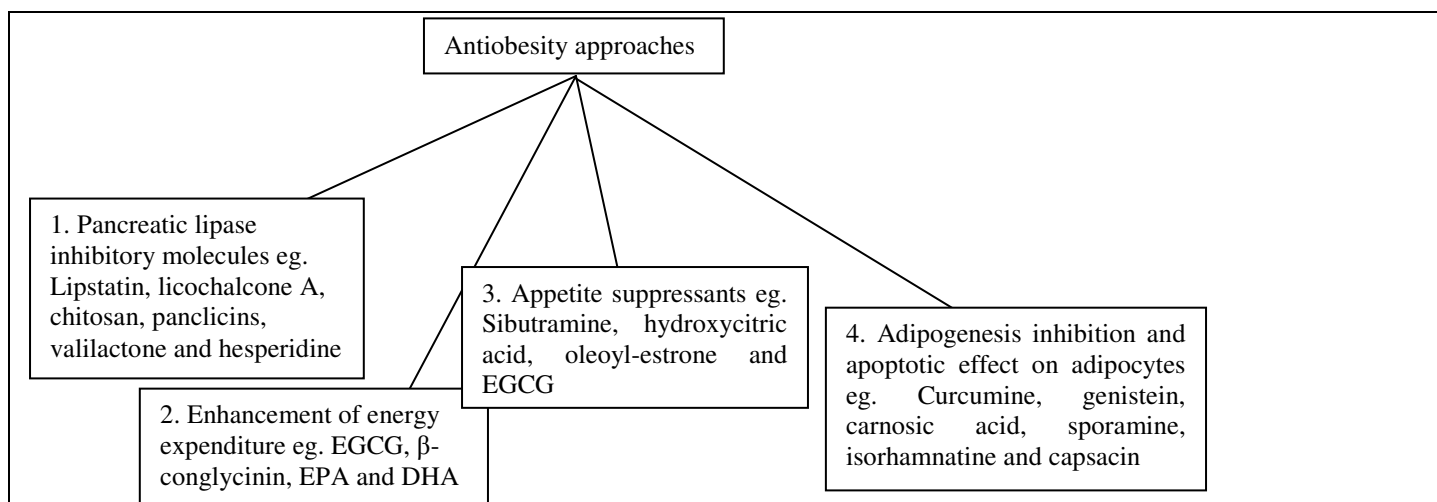


Figure-1
 Antiobesetic medication strategies

Many phyto-chemicals and metabolites that possess pancreatic lipase inhibitory actions have been reported (table 2, 3 and 4). Energy intake reduction via appetite suppression also provides an option for obesity treatment¹²⁶. Sibutramine is an appetite suppressant that acts by controlling noradrenaline, serotonin, hydroxytryptamine and dopamine¹²⁷. Some natural appetite suppressants have also been discovered like *Hoodia gordonii*¹²⁸, *Garcinia cambosia*¹²⁹ and *Cissus quadrangularis*¹³⁰. Some of the herbal remedies also reported lose weight via enhanced energy expenditure like EGCG from green tea¹³¹, *Pinellia turnate*¹³² and *Panax ginseng*¹³³. Some phyto-chemical compounds like quercetin, esculetin, genistein, resveratrol and capsaicin shown as antiobesity agents act via adipogenesis inhibitors and apoptotic on adipocytes¹³⁴.

Anti-obesetic phyto-molecules as pancreatic lipase inhibitors

The main issue, need to be kept in mind before any effective drug widely accepted, is the toxicity of therapeutic and of course it must also not be addictive. In this concern plants may prove to be an alternative source(s) of a variety of anti-lipolytic therapeutic molecule(s) that can either inhibit the pancreatic lipase or the uptake/absorption of fat(s) or both. Phyto-chemicals present in plants offer us the safer natural products that can be developed in the form of therapeutics (table 2). These bioactive compounds can be extracted and purified in many ways¹³⁵. For the pandemic cases these bioactive compounds can be targeted on lipid metabolic pathways. A very large pool of enzymes related to fat digestion has been discovered and can be targeted for development of therapeutics for obesity and related diseases¹³⁶.

Table-2
Antiobesetic molecules reported from plants

Source	Family	Antiobesetic agent	Ref. (s)
<i>Oryza sativa</i>	Poaceae	Phenylboronic acid	137
<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Lamiaceae	Carnosic acid (Diterpene)	138
<i>Platycodon grandiflorus</i>	Campanulaceae	Platycodin D (Saponin)	139-141
<i>Glycyrrhiz auraleensis</i>	Fabaceae	Licochalcone A (Polyphenol)	142
<i>Scabiosa tschiliensis</i>	Caprifoliaceae	Prosapogenin (Saponin)	143
<i>Acanthopanax sessiliflorus</i>	Araliaceae	Sessiloside and chiisanoside (Saponins)	144
<i>Panax japonicas</i>	Araliaceae	Chikusetsusaponins (Saponin)	145
<i>Dioscorea nipponica</i>	Dioscoreaceae	Dioscin (Saponin)	146
<i>Aesculus turbinata</i>	Sapindaceae	Escins (Saponin)	147
<i>Cyclocarya paliurus</i>	Juglandaceae	Cyclocariosides (Saponin)	148
<i>Gardenia jasminoids</i>	Rubiaceae	Crocin (Terpene)	149

Pancreatic lipase, a key enzyme, which is responsible for hydrolysis of a majority of dietary fats¹⁵⁰, may be targeted for the concerned obesity pandemic. Like, Orlistat and Cetilistat acts by inhibiting gastro-intestinal and pancreatic lipases but have side effects including greasy stools, and faecal spotting¹⁵¹. And also, it needs supplementation of fat soluble vitamins in diet¹⁵². So in search of safer anti-obesetic therapeutic several efforts have been made and still going on as pancreatic lipase (PL) inhibitory agents. Many bioactive phyto-chemicals have been screened for their anti-obesetic potential (table 3). Some anti-lipolytic metabolites have been discovered from a variety of microbial and other sources (table 4). Many plant extracts¹⁵³⁻¹⁵⁹, fungal extracts^{160,161} and chemical compounds like polysaccharides¹⁶², ε-polylysine¹⁶³, protamines¹⁶⁴, cholestyramine¹⁶⁵ and soya proteins¹⁶⁶ have been shown to possess anti-lipolytic function(s) against pancreatic lipase.

Table-3
Phytochemicals reported to possess *in vitro* and *in vivo* pancreatic lipase inhibition activity.

Source	Phytochemical(s)	Reference(s)
<i>Camellia sinensis</i>	Proanthocyanidins and catechins	167
<i>Cassia mimosoides</i>	Proanthocyanidins	168
<i>Malus domestica</i>	Procyanidins	169
<i>Coffea arabica</i>	Saponins	170, 171
<i>Cyclocarya paliurus</i>	Saponins	148
<i>Dioscorea nipponica</i>	Saponins	146
<i>Eleutherococcus senticosus</i>	Saponins	172, 173
<i>Eleutherococcus sessiliflorus</i>	Saponins	174
<i>Gardenia jasminoides</i>	Saponins	149
<i>Aesculus turbinata</i>	Saponins	147, 175
<i>Kochia scoparia</i>	Saponins	176
<i>Malus domestica</i>	Saponins	169
<i>Panax ginseng</i>	Saponins	177
<i>Panax japonicus</i>	Saponins	145
<i>Platycodi grandiflorum</i>	Saponins	140, 141
<i>Ilex paraguariensis</i>	Polyphenols and saponins	178
<i>Arachis hypogaea</i>	Polyphenols	153, 154
<i>Camellia sinensis</i>	Theasaponins and polyphenols	179, 180
<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i>	Polyphenols	181
<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Polyphenols	153, 154
<i>Cassia nomame</i>	Condensed tannins	168
<i>Salacia reticulata</i>	Polyphenols	182

Table-4
Anti-lipolytic metabolites discovered in algae, bacteria and fungi

Source	Kingdom	Antiobesetic metabolite	Reference(s)
<i>Streptomyces toxytricini</i>	Bacterium	Lipstatin	18
<i>Streptomyces sp. NR0619</i>	Bacterium	Panclitics	183, 184
<i>Streptomyces aburaviensis</i>	Bacterium	Ebelactones	185
<i>Boreostereum vibrans</i>	Fungus	Vibrilactone	186
<i>Monascus sp.</i>	Fungus	Penicillamine Derivative	187
<i>Caulerpa taxifolia</i>	Algae	Caulerpenyne	27, 188
<i>Streptomyces albolongus</i>	Bacterium	Valilactone	189
<i>Streptomyces lavendulae strain MD4-C1</i>	Bacterium	Esterastin	190]
<i>Stereum complicatum, ST 001837</i>	Fungus	Percyquinin	191
See weeds	Algae	Fucoxanthinol (carotenoid)	192

Conclusion

Complete understanding of metabolites involved in fat metabolism in our body will open the ways to develop the therapeutics to combat obesity. Pancreatic lipase, a key lipolytic enzyme, is a most attractive target for this purpose. In brief, efforts should be made to develop safer medication to counter the gigantic problem of ever increasing obesity. None of the drugs has been established for long time to cure obesity. The only approved drug, Orlistat, has non ignorable side effects. So in search of nontoxic therapeutic, plant based clinical products are a good option. Pancreatic lipase can be targeted for the concerned pandemic. Pancreatic lipase inhibitors form plant sources as anti-obesetic metabolites has been discovered but none of them reached up to clinical level. Hence concerted efforts are required to explore plants as important natural resources for their therapeutic potential, not only for obesity but for other diseases, too.

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Abbreviations: ANF: Anti nutritional factors; PL: Pancreatic lipase; WHO: World Health Organisation; USA: United States

of America; BMI: Body Mass Index; MOMO: Macrosomia Obesity Macrocephaly Ocular syndrome; DNA: Deoxyribose nucleic acid; EPA: Eicosapentaenoic acid; DHA: Docosahexenoic acid; EGCG: Epigallocatechin gallate; OGT: Oral glucose tolerance; PCOS: Poly cystic ovary syndrome.

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