

PHARMACOLOGICAL PROPERTIES OF POLYHYDROXY ALKALOIDS: A MINI-REVIEW

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Abstract: Alkaloids are nitrogenous compounds within heterocyclic rings grouped into pyrrolidine, piperidine, pyrrolizidine, indolizidine, and nor-tropane alkaloids. Nevertheless, the origin and biological properties of polyhydroxy alkaloids remain limited. Therefore, this article aims to review polyhydroxy alkaloid's major source and pharmacological properties. Based on the literature, the major source of polyhydroxy alkaloids primarily originate from various plant families including Asteraceae, Araceae, Boraginaceae, Fabaceae, Convolvulaceae, Lamiaceae, Orchidaceae, Piperaceae, Poaceae, and Solanaceae. The pharmacological attributes of polyhydroxy alkaloids are highlighted as glycosidase enzyme inhibitors, antibacterial, anticancer, antifungal agents, and anti-inflammatory. The current review gives an overview of the pharmacological activity of polyhydroxy alkaloids, which may be useful for researchers to explore their hidden potential in developing new drugs to treat various diseases.

Keywords: Glucosidase inhibitors, anticancer, antibacterial, antifungal agents, skin-whitening.

Introduction

Polyhydroxy alkaloids comprise a nitrogen heterocyclic ring with several hydroxyl groups attached to the ring and are soluble in water (Trapero & Llebaria, 2012). Polyhydroxy alkaloids are also known as iminosugars, azasugars, and nitrogenous glycomimetics (Elbein & Molyneux, 1999). Polyhydroxy alkaloid comprises five different subclasses (Figure 1) which are pyrrolidines, piperidines, pyrrolizidines, indolizidines, and nor-tropane (Watson *et al.*, 2001; Molyneux *et al.*, 2002). This article described the biological activities of each group of alkaloids.

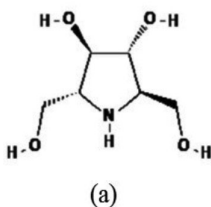
Pyrrolidine Alkaloids

Pyrrolidine is a saturated organic heteromonocyclic alkaloid consisting of five-membered rings that contain four carbon atoms and one nitrogen atom, also known as tetrahydropyrrole (Pant *et al.*, 2000). This compound has a pyrrolidine C₄N skeleton nucleus and the structure α of these alkaloids is L-ornithine (in plants) and L-arginine (in

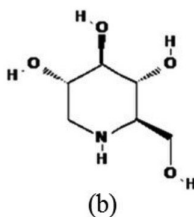
animals) (Aniszewski, 2007). Pyrrolidine is the central structure of proline and hydroxyproline amino acids and a basis of racetam compounds. Pyrrolidine has an ammonia-like odour that appears colourless to pale yellow liquid. Pyrrolidine-type alkaloids are commonly found in tobacco leaves and carrots (Felpin *et al.*, 2001). In bacteria, decarboxylation of L-proline could also produce pyrrolidine compounds (Verduyck *et al.*, 2016). Examples of natural compounds with a pyrrolidine ring structure are nicotine and hygrine (Gurusamy & Natarajan, 2013; Yu *et al.*, 2015).

Piperidine Alkaloids

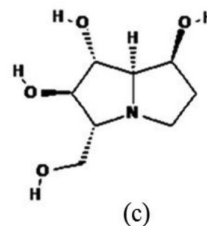
Piperidine alkaloid is a monocyclic six-membered rings alkaloid (Molyneux *et al.*, 2002). This group of alkaloid compounds consists of five methylene units and one nitrogen atom with the properties of colourless liquid, pepper-like odour, and is less dense than water but miscible in water. Piperidine alkaloids contain the piperidine nucleus with

2,5-Dideoxy-2,5-imino-*D*-mannitol

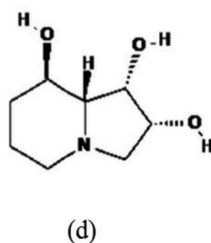
1-Deoxynojirimycin



Australine



Swainsonine



Calystegine

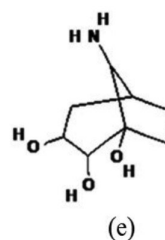


Figure 1: Examples of polyhydroxy alkaloid compounds based on their group: (a) Pyrrolidine, (b) piperidine, (c) pyrrolizidine, (d) indolizidine, and (e) nor-tropane, respectively

Source: Molyneux *et al.* (2002)

structural α being L-lysine and β cadaverine (Aniszewski, 2007). Nojirimycin and fagomine are the general structure of piperidine. N-butyl-deoxy-nojirimycin (NB-DNJ) and N-nonyldeoxynojirimycin (NN-DNJ) is an analogue of deoxynojirimycin, DNJ (Andersson *et al.*, 2004). Piperidine alkaloids can be found naturally in Piperaceae plants such as *Piper nigrum* and *Piper longum* (Reshmi *et al.*, 2010). Due to their moiety which can be found in an enormous number of bioactive natural products, piperidine is widely used as a building block and chemical reagent, especially in pharmaceuticals (Yang, 2015; Bathula *et al.*, 2016; Luescher & Bode, 2016).

Pyrrolizidine Alkaloids

Pyrrolizidine alkaloids are a bicyclic organonitrogen heterocyclic compound that resulted from the ortho-fusion of two pyrrolidine ring systems with a common nitrogen atom at the bridgehead (Molyneux *et al.*, 2002).

The nucleus of this alkaloid group α is either L-arginine or L-ornithine while β is a biogenic amine, the putrescine (Aniszewski, 2007). Pyrrolizidine alkaloids are widely distributed in plants frequently found in the Boraginaceae, Asteraceae, Orchidaceae, and Fabaceae families and less frequently in the Convolvulaceae, Poaceae, and Lamiaceae families (Haas *et al.*, 2023; Jayawickreme *et al.*, 2023). The flower is the most predominant part of plants containing pyrrolizidine alkaloids (Johnson *et al.*, 1985); therefore, these alkaloids species are widely found in raw honey and bee pollen (Dübecke *et al.*, 2011; Kowalczyk & Kwiatek, 2018). Their natural occurrence in plants is used as a defence mechanism against insect herbivores. In recent years, pyrrolizidine alkaloids have accumulated attention due to their occurrence in some species related to human and animal nutrition, as well as their toxicological and pharmacological properties (Moreira *et al.*, 2018; Wei *et al.*, 2021; Haas *et al.*, 2023; Jayawickreme *et al.*, 2023).

Indolizidine Alkaloids

A fusion of pyrrolidine-piperidine ring, yielding a bicyclic five or six-ring system is known as indolizidine alkaloids, e.g., swainsonine and castanospermine (Molyneux *et al.*, 2002). The structural development of α is L-lysine while β is α -aminoapicidic acid δ -semialdehyde (Aniszewski, 2007) for this alkaloid group. Indolizidine alkaloid occurs in diverse natural sources such as bacteria, fungi, higher plants, invertebrates, and vertebrates including terrestrial and marine sources (Michael, 2007). Swainsonine, a widely known indolizidine alkaloid is a potent inhibitor of a mannosidase that alters glycoprotein processing (Kang & Elbein, 1983; Tulsiani & Touster, 1983; Cook *et al.*, 2014), an immunomodulator (Hino *et al.*, 1985; Mohla *et al.*, 1989), and potential chemotherapy drug (Oredipe *et al.*, 2003).

Nor-tropane Alkaloids

The nor-tropane alkaloid is a fused bicyclic system, a combination of a five-membered pyrrolidine ring with a six-membered piperidine ring at positions α - to the nitrogen atom of each monocyclic system (Pant *et al.*, 2000; Molyneux *et al.*, 2002). Calystegines, a nor-tropane alkaloid has been isolated from many plants mainly Convolvulaceae, Solanaceae, and Moraceae families (Dräger *et al.*, 1995; Asano *et al.*, 1996; Asano *et al.*, 2001; Schimming *et al.*, 2005).

Pharmacological Properties

Glycosidase Enzyme Inhibitors

In the past two decades, the discovery of polyhydroxy alkaloids has progressively occurred due to their natural properties as glycosidase inhibitors (Molyneux *et al.*, 2002). Sugars have been found to play a key factor in the selective inhibition of various enzymatic functions. Therefore, their contribution is beneficial in the pharmacology field, specifically in the treatment of metabolic disorders (Major *et*

al., 2011). Polyhydroxy alkaloids are also helpful in therapeutic and biochemical applications as anticancer agents, chemotherapeutic agents, anti diabetic agents, anti viral agents, treatment for Glycosphingolipid Lysosomal Storage (GLS) diseases, treatment of infectious agents, and treatment of autoimmune diseases (Watson *et al.*, 2001).

Several plants and parts were reported to contain various polyhydroxy alkaloids with glycosidase enzyme inhibition properties, as shown in Table 1. These include α -glucosidases (Nash *et al.*, 1990; Molyneux *et al.*, 1990; 1991; Asano *et al.*, 1997; 2001; Katavic *et al.*, 2006; Niger *et al.*, 2018), β -glucosidase (Nash *et al.*, 1990; Molyneux *et al.*, 1991; 1993c; Kato *et al.*, 1997; Asano *et al.*, 1997; 1998), myloglucosidase (Nash *et al.*, 1990; Pastuzak *et al.*, 1990; Molyneux *et al.*, 1991), α -galactosidase (Molyneux *et al.*, 1993a; 1993c), β -galactosidase (Nash *et al.*, 1990; Molyneux *et al.*, 1993a; 1993c; Kato *et al.*, 1997; Asano *et al.*, 1998), α -mannosidase (Dorling *et al.*, 1980; Asano *et al.*, 1997; Kato *et al.*, 1997), β -mannosidase (Molyneux *et al.*, 1993b), isomaltase (Molyneux *et al.*, 1993a; Asano *et al.*, 1998), α -L-fucosidase (Asano *et al.*, 1998), and trehalase (Asano *et al.*, 1998).

Anticancer, Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory and Other Properties

Other than glycosidase enzyme inhibitors, each group of polyhydroxy alkaloids also exhibit various pharmacological properties such as anticancer, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antiviral, antidiabetics, and skin-whitening agents. Table 2 lists the biological activities of polyhydroxy alkaloids from the respective group. Additionally, a compound from the indolizidine group known as phenanthroindolizidine isolated from the whole plant of *Tylophora atrofoliculata* possesses the hypoxia-inducible factor-1 inhibitor (Chen *et al.*, 2016).

Table 1: A list of various polyhydroxy alkaloids based on their group obtained from different part of plant species and glycosidase enzyme inhibition activity

Chemical Compounds	Plant	Plant Part	Inhibition of Enzyme Activity	Reference
Pyrrolidine group				
2R,5R-dihydroxy-methyl-3R,4R-dihydroxy pyrrolidine (DMDP)	<i>Aglaonema treubii</i>	Whole plant part	Inhibit α -glucosidases	Asano <i>et al.</i> (1997)
2-hydroxymethyl-3,4-dihydroxy-6-methyl pyrrolidine (6-deoxy DMDP)	<i>Angylocalyx pyraertii</i>	Seeds and pods	Inhibit β -mannosidase	Molyneux <i>et al.</i> (1993b)
2,5-imino-2,5,6-trideoxy-D-manno-heptitol (6-deoxy homo DMDP)	<i>Hyacinthus orientalis</i>	Bulb	Suppressed activity toward β -glucosidase, β -galactosidase, and trehalase	Asano <i>et al.</i> (1998)
2,5-imino-2,5,6-trideoxy-D-gulo-haptitol	<i>Hyacinthus orientalis</i>	Bulb	Inhibits α -L-fucosidase	Asano <i>et al.</i> (1998)
Piperidine group				
3-epi-fagomine	<i>Xanthocercis zambetica</i>	Leaves	Inhibits isomaltase and β -galactosidase	Asano <i>et al.</i> (1998)
1,2,5-trideoxy-1,5-imino-D-arabinohexitol (fagomine)	<i>Angylocalyx pyraertii</i>	Roots	Inhibits isomaltase, α , and β galactosidase	Molyneux <i>et al.</i> (1993a)
1,5-dideoxy-1,5-imino-D-glucitol (1-deoxynojirimycin)	<i>Morus alba L.</i>	Root bark	Inhibit α -glucosidase	Asano <i>et al.</i> (2001)
β -homonojirimycin & β -homomanno jirimycin	<i>Aglaonema treubii</i>	Whole plant	Weak inhibitors for β -glucosidase	Asano <i>et al.</i> (1997)
α -homomanno jirimycin	<i>Aglaonema treubii</i>	Whole plant	Very weak inhibitor of human liver α -mannosidase	Asano <i>et al.</i> (1997)
Pyrrolizidine group				
(1S,2R,3R,7S,7aR)-3-hydroxy methyl-1,2,7-trihydroxy-pyrrolizidine (1-epi-australine)	<i>Castanospermum australe</i>	Leaves	Inhibits amyloglucosidase and α -glucosidase	Nash <i>et al.</i> (1990)
(1R,2R,3R,7S,8R)-3-hydroxy methyl-1,2,7-trihydroxy-pyrrolizidine (3,7a-diepi-alexine)	<i>Castanospermum australe</i>	Seeds	Poor inhibitor of glucosidase	Nash <i>et al.</i> (1990)
(1R,2R,3R,7S,8S)-3-hydroxy methyl-1,2,7-trihydroxy-pyrrolizidine (alexine)	<i>Castanospermum australe</i>	Dried pod	Poor inhibitor of mammalian digestive β -glucosidase and β -galactosidase	Nash <i>et al.</i> (1990)

(1S,2R,3R,7R, 7aR)-3-hydroxy methyl-1,2,7-trihydroxy-pyrrolizidine (1,7a-diepi-alexine)	<i>Castanospermum australe</i>	Seeds	Potent inhibitor against α -glucosidase	Nash <i>et al.</i> (1990)
Indolizidine group				
(1S,2S,8aS)-1,2-dihydroxy indolizidine (2-epi-lentiginosine)	<i>Astragalus lentiginosus</i>	Leaves	Inactive against amyloglucosidase and another glucosidase	Pastuzak <i>et al.</i> (1990)
(1S,2R,8R,8aR)-1,2,8-trihydroxyoctahydro-indolizidine (swainsonine)	<i>Swainsona canescens</i>	Whole plant	Potent against α -mannosidase	Dorling <i>et al.</i> (1980)
6,7-diepicastano spermine	<i>Castanospermum australe</i>	Seeds	Good inhibitor for fungal α -glucosidase, amyloglucosidase, and weak inhibitor for β -glucosidase	Molyneux <i>et al.</i> (1991)
7-deoxy-6-epi-castanospermine	<i>Castanospermum australe</i>	Seeds	Inhibits amyloglucosidase and yeast α -glucosidase	Molyneux <i>et al.</i> (1990)
(1R,2S,3R,5R,8aR)-3-(hydroxymethyl)-5-methyloctahydro-Indolizidine-1,2-diol (steviamine)	<i>Stevia rebaudiana</i>	Leaf	Selective inhibitor of α -galactosidase	Michalik <i>et al.</i> (2010)
Isolaecocarpiline	<i>Elaeocarpus grandis</i>	Leaves	Potent inhibitor for yeast α -glucosidase	Katavic <i>et al.</i> (2006); Niger <i>et al.</i> (2018)
Nor-tropane group				
Calystegin A ₃	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Roots	Moderately good inhibitor of β -glucosidase and a weak inhibitor of α -galactosidase	Molyneux <i>et al.</i> (1993c)
Calystegin B	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Roots	Potent inhibitors of β -glucosidase and α -galactosidase	Molyneux <i>et al.</i> (1993c)
Calystegin C ₂	<i>Duboisia leichhardtii</i>	Leaves	Active against α -mannosidase	Kato <i>et al.</i> (1997)
Calystegin C ₁	<i>Duboisia leichhardtii</i>	Leaves	Potent inhibitor of β -glucosidase and β -galactosidase	Kato <i>et al.</i> (1997)

Table 2: A list of polyhydroxy alkaloids from each group with therapeutic activities

Compounds	Activity	Description	Reference
Pyrrolidine alkaloid			
3,4-dihydroxy pyrrolidinone derivative	Anti-cancer	A 100 to 300 μM of the compounds were tested on human glioblastoma LN18 and brain-derived endothelial LNZ308 cell cultures. The growth of both cancer cells was inhibited with IC_{50} at 100 μM .	Fiaux <i>et al.</i> (2008)
Nicotine or 3-(1-methyl-2-pyrrolidinyl) pyridine and analogues	Anti-inflammatory	The effects of nicotine vary depending on the types of administered and animal models. For instance, in ulcerative colitis-induced mice with dextran sodium sulphate (DSS), 0.1 mg/mL nicotine administrated in drinking water suppressed the mucosal vascular in cell adhesion molecule-1 (MAdCAM-1). Nicotine at 10 $\mu\text{g/kg/day}$ reduced the histologic inflammation in colon tissue in DSS-induced adult mice. Oral administration of 0.1 to 1.0 mg/kg nicotine effectively in habiting hyperalgesia in mice.	Han and Lau (2014); Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2022)
	Anti-fungal	The 3-(5-(4-fluorophenyl) nicotinoyl)-1-methylpyrrolidin-2-one at a concentration of 5 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ strongly inhibits the growth of <i>Candida albicans</i> .	Gandhi and Athmaram (2016)
	Anti-bacterial	The 3-(5-(5-acetyl thiophene-2-yl) nicotinoyl)-1-methyl pyrrolidine-2-one at a concentration of 100 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ moderately inhibit the growth of <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> and <i>Escherichia coli</i> .	Gandhi and Athmaram (2016)
Piperidine alkaloid			
1-Deoxynojirimycin (DNJ)	Antioxidants and anti-inflammatory	DNJ at concentrations of 5 μM and 10 μM (50 mg/kg) improve oxidative stress and inflammation responses in the chicken by increasing the malondialdehyde, total superoxide dismutase, catalase, glutathione peroxidase, and inflammatory cytokines (IL-6, IL-1 β , and TNF- α) in plasma and intestinal tissues. DNJ treatment was associated with significant changes in the expression of genes of inflammatory cytokines. DNJ at 5 $\mu\text{mol/L}$ mitigated oxidative DNA damage and cell senescence in human umbilical vein endothelial cells (HUVEC) cultured in a medium containing 50 mmol/L glucose. DNJ treatment also stimulates the expression of an anti oxidative response regulator, Nuclear factor (erythroid-derived 2)-like 2 (NRF2) by around 50% in cells cultured with high glucose.	Wang <i>et al.</i> (2023); Chen and Wang <i>et al.</i> (2024)

	Anti-cancer	DNJ at concentrations of 0.02% (w/v) inhibits the growth of colorectal cancer by inducing apoptosis in an induced cancer model in mice using azoxymethane dextran sodium sulphate.	Shuang <i>et al.</i> (2017)
	Anti-diabetic	Diabetic mice treated with DNJ at 150 mg/kg body weight for 90 days and continued without DNJ for an additional 30 days exhibited a decrease in blood glucose levels.	Li <i>et al.</i> (2013)
Pyrrolizidine alkaloid			
Madhumidine A, Lindelofidine Benzoic acid ester, Minalobine (Isolated from leaves of <i>Madhuca pasquieri</i>)	Anti-inflammatory	Potent and moderate inhibitors on lipopolysaccharide-induced nitric oxide production in macrophage RAW264.7 cells with 50 % cell viability (IC ₅₀) at concentrations higher than 30 µg/ mL.	Hoang <i>et al.</i> (2015); Wei <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Subulacine -N-oxide, 7- angeloyl heliotrine, retronecine, heliotrine (Isolated from aerial plant of <i>Heliotropium subulatum</i>)	Anti-microbial	At 2 mg/ mL significantly inhibits the growth of <i>Escherichia coli</i> , <i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> , <i>Bacillus subtilis</i> , <i>Bacillus anthracis</i> , <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> , <i>Aspergillus fumigatus</i> , <i>Aspergillus niger</i> , <i>Rhizoctonia phaseoli</i> , and <i>Penicillium chrysogenum</i> .	Singh <i>et al.</i> (2002)
Heliotrine, lasiocarpine, monocrotaline, seneciophylline europine	Anti-cancer	Europine and monocrotaline had EC ₅₀ values ranging from 200 to 500 µM after 72 hours on in vivo model of cancer cells (adenocarcinoma 755, lymphoid leukaemia L1210, sarcoma 180, walker 256, and plasma cystoma 1). Lasiocarpine and seneciophylline reduced cell viability to 21% at 40 µM and 24% at 100 µM, respectively. Monocrotaline has mild cytotoxicity (77%) at 500 µM against the Walker 256 (intramuscular) system and strongly inhibited Adenocarcinoma 755. Heliotrine at 125 mg/kg dosage inhibited the tumour walker 256.	Culvenor (1968); Haas <i>et al.</i> (2023); Jayawickreme <i>et al.</i> (2023)
Indolizidine alkaloid			
Swainsonine	Anti-cancer	The 0.06-0.96 µg/mL concentration inhibits the viability and growth of HepG2, SMCC7721, Huh7, and MHCC97-H human hepatoma cells.	You <i>et al.</i> (2012)
Castanospermine	Anti-viral (hepatitis C virus)	Celgosivir, a castanospermine derivative combination with PEGylated IFNalpha2b plus ribavirin effectively treats chronic hepatitis C virus infection. In mice, single-dose celgosivir (25 mg/kg po) demonstrated a 5-fold greater uptake into the plasma at two and five minutes post-dosing than a single dose of Cast (16 mg/kg po).	Durantel (2009)

	Treatment of plasmodium infections	A unit dosage containing 25 to 500 mg of the castanospermine ester derivative can be taken one or more times per day with a pharmaceutical carrier using conventional dosage unit forms either orally or parenterally to reduce the adhesion of <i>P. falciparum</i> -infected blood cells in the treatment of malaria.	Bitonti <i>et al.</i> (1993)
	Treatment of autoimmune diseases	Reduce the development of arthritis due to the ability of the compounds to inhibit the passage of leucocytes via vascular sub-endothelial basement membranes by inhibition of function or expression of leucocyte cell surface-bound enzymes.	Willenborg <i>et al.</i> (1992)
Nor tropane alkaloid			
Calystegine	Anti-diabetic	Diabetic-induced mice (130 mg/kg streptozotocin) were orally administered with 10 mg/kg and 20 mg/kg calystegine for 20 days. As a result, both calystegine concentrations managed to reduce blood glucose levels and minimised the effects of streptozotocin damaging β -cells of islets of Langerhans, stimulating β -cells regeneration, and improving insulin secretion in the diabetic-induced mice.	Bourebara <i>et al.</i> (2016)

Conclusions

In conclusion, polyhydroxy alkaloids represent a diverse group of nitrogen-containing compounds in heterocyclic rings. The classification of these alkaloids into distinct categories such as pyrrolidine, piperidine, pyrrolizidine, indolizidine, and not-tropane highlights their structural variations. These alkaloids exhibit various pharmacological properties, and their origin is primarily traced back to plant families like Asteraceae, Araceae, Boraginaceae, and others. The multifaceted nature of polyhydroxy alkaloids is evident in their demonstrated abilities as glucosidase inhibitors, anticancer agents, and antibacterial and antifungal compounds. The diverse pharmacological properties of polyhydroxy alkaloids are useful information for researchers to explore their hidden potential in developing new drugs for treating various diseases, fields of research and medicine.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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