

1 **CYTOTOXIC EFFECT OF *Lippia nodiflora* LEAF EXTRACT AGAINST THE**
2 **PROSTATE CANCER CELL LINE**

3 **Running title** - Anticancer activity of *L. nodiflora* leaf flower extract against prostate cancer cell

4 **ABSTRACT**

5 Prostate cancer is the second most common cause of cancer deaths for men. *L. nodiflora*
6 has been used as a natural remedy for various diseases, because of its antioxidant, anti-
7 inflammatory, anti-bacterial, and anti-tumor effect. This study was to investigate the cytotoxic
8 effect of *Lippia. Nodiflora (L. nodiflora)* ethanolic leaf extract in prostate cancer cell lines (PC-
9 3). The growth inhibitory effect of *L. nodiflora* ethanolic leaf extract was assessed by MTT
10 assay. The cell morphological changes in *L. nodiflora* leaf extract-treated cells were observed
11 using an inverted phase-contrast microscope. Apoptosis induction by *nodiflora* was determined
12 by AO/EtBr (acridine orange and ethidium bromide) dual staining. The MTT assay results
13 showed that dose-dependent (10-120µg/ml) cell growth inhibition was observed in *L. nodiflora*
14 leaf extract treated PC-3 cells. The IC-50 dose was observed at 40µg/ml. Morphological changes
15 such as reduction in the number of cells, cell shrinkage, and cytoplasmic membrane blebbing
16 were observed in the treated cells. Induction of apoptosis by *Lippia nodiflora (40µg/ml)* treated
17 cells showed an increased number of early apoptotic and late apoptotic cells. The above data
18 indicate that *L. nodiflora* inhibits cell proliferation and induces apoptosis in prostate cancer cells.
19 Therefore, it can be concluded that *L. nodiflora* exhibits anti-cancer activity, and thus it raises
20 new hope for its use in anti-cancer therapy.

21 **Keywords:** *L. nodiflora*, Prostate cancer, Cytotoxicity, Apoptosis.

22 **INTRODUCTION**

23 Cancer has become one of the major causes of the death of people worldwide (1). There are
24 various types of cancer occurring all over the body such as Oral cancer, breast cancer, colon
25 cancer, prostate cancer, etc. Oral cancer has also become the leading cause of morbidity and
26 mortality (2),(3). Prostate cancer is the second most common malignancy in men that leads to
27 death. The increase in the incidence of cancer in various countries is due to the widespread
28 adoption of the Western diet and lifestyle (4). In recent years cancer research has made splendid
29 improvements in our basic understanding and technique of cancer studies and cancer biology.

Comment [PC1]: (2,3)

30 Conventional anti-cancer therapies with standard chemotherapeutic agents have various adverse
31 effects (5). It includes nausea, vomiting, metallic taste, hair loss, etc (6). Nanotechnology has
32 played an important role in cancer treatment (7),(8). Current studies indicate the important role
33 of apoptosis in the improvement of therapeutic agents and treatment of cancer. The primary aim
34 of cancer remedy is to kill the cancer cells without causing too much harm to normal cells (1,9).
35 The knowledge about the mechanisms of apoptosis has made us understand the origination and
36 progression of cancers. Various studies have been done to understand the cytotoxic and apoptotic
37 effect of different leaf and seed extract and their use in anti-cancer therapy (10)-(11). It has also
38 made us understand that cancer remedies can work in two ways, via induction of apoptosis and
39 direct toxicity to cancer cells (12). Therefore, in the improvement of therapeutic agents and
40 treatment of cancer, regulators of cell death and cell cycle should be targeted (13). The present
41 study was designed to broaden a novel therapeutic agent from natural resources to exploit our
42 knowledge of apoptotic mechanisms to promote apoptosis of most cancer cells and limit the
43 concurrent dying of normal cells. The medicinal flowers which are used in conventional
44 medication in growing countries include an extensive range of phytochemicals that may be used
45 to deal with cancer (14). One such plant to have a curative effect is *L. nodiflora*.
46 Jalpali, which is also known as Phyla nodiflora, is a small herb that is a native of California and
47 it also grows widely in India (15). The plant contains triterpenoids, flavonoids, phenols, steroids,
48 etc. It has various pharmacological values (16). It is used for lack of bowel movement, in
49 swollen cervical glands, and also used for pain in knee joints, in ulcers, and boils (17). It has
50 been used in treating various skin diseases and as a cosmetic agent (18). It is also used in
51 gonorrhoea and hepatitis. It also has antibacterial effects against various bacteria such as *E.coli*,
52 *Pseudomonas*, *Staphylococcus*. It has been the source of medicine for liver disorders, dandruff
53 control, indigestion in children, an anticonvulsant effect, etc. Furthermore, studies reveal that *L.*
54 *nodiflora* has antimicrobial, antifungal, antitumor, antidiuretic, anti-inflammatory,
55 antiurolithiatic, antidiabetic, and neuropharmacological activity (19). Our team has extensive
56 knowledge and research experience that has translated into high quality publications (20). This
57 study was done to investigate the cytotoxic effect of *L. nodiflora* leaf extract in the prostate
58 cancer line.

Comment [PC2]: (7,8)

Comment [PC3]: Clastogenic effect?

Comment [PC4]: (10,11)

Comment [PC5]: Suggestion to remove all etc.

Comment [PC6]: , added

59 MATERIALS AND METHODS

60 Reagents

61 DMEM (Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium), Phosphate Buffered Saline (PBS), Trypsin-
62 EDTA, Fetal bovine serum (FBS), were purchased from Gibco, Canada. Acridine orange (AO),
63 ethidium bromide (EtBr), Dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), [3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl) 2,5-
64 diphenyl tetrazolium bromide (MTT), were purchased from Sigma Chemical Pvt Ltd, USA. All
65 other chemicals used were extra pure of molecular grade and were purchased from SRL, India.

66 Cell line maintenance

67 Prostate cancer cell lines (PC-3) were obtained from the National Centre for Cell Science
68 (NCCS), Pune. The cells were grown in T25 culture flasks containing DMEM supplemented
69 with 10% FBS and 1% antibiotics. Cells were maintained at 37°C in a humidified atmosphere
70 containing 5% CO₂. Upon reaching confluency, the cells were trypsinized and passaged.

71 Preparation of the Herbal Extract

72 *L. nodiflora* Leaf powder obtained from The Indian Medical Practitioners Co-operative
73 Pharmacy and Stores Ltd (IMPCOPS) (Chennai, India) was used for the present study. About
74 50g of *L. nodiflora* powder was soaked in 500 mL of 95% ethanol and kept at room temperature
75 for 3 days in a static condition. Then the solution was filtered with crude filter paper followed by
76 Whatman paper. The fine filtrate was subjected to rota evaporation after that 3g of the material
77 was obtained. The total ethanol extract was concentrated in a vacuum evaporate and immediately
78 stored at 4°C.

79 Cell viability (MTT) assay

80 The cell viability of *L. nodiflora* extract-treated PC-3 cells was assessed by MTT assay.
81 The assay is based on the reduction of soluble yellow tetrazolium salt to insoluble purple
82 formazan crystals by metabolically active cells. PC-3 cells were plated in 48 well plates at a
83 concentration of 2x10⁴ cells/well 24 hours after plating, cells were washed twice with 500µl of
84 serum-free medium and starved by incubating the cells in serum-free medium for 3 hours at
85 37°C. After starvation, cells were treated with *L. nodiflora* at different concentrations (10-
86 120µg/ml) for 24 hours. At the end of treatment, the medium from control and *L. nodiflora*
87 treated cells were discarded and 200µl of MTT containing DMEM (0.5 mg/ml) was added to
88 each well. The cells were then incubated for 4h at 37°C in the CO₂ incubator. The MTT
89 containing medium was then discarded and the cells were washed with 1x PBS. The crystals

90 were then dissolved by adding 200µl of solubilization solution and this was mixed properly by
91 pipetting up and down. Then the formazan crystals formed were dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide
92 (200µl) and incubated in dark for an hour. Then the intensity of the color developed was assayed
93 using a Micro ELISA plate reader at 570 nm. The number of viable cells was expressed as a
94 percentage of control cells cultured in a serum-free medium. Cell viability in the control medium
95 without any treatment was represented as 100%. The cell viability is calculated using the
96 formula: % cell viability = [A570 nm of treated cells/A570 nm of control cells]×100.

97 **Morphology study**

98 Based on the MTT assay we selected the optimal doses (IC-50: 40µg/ml) for further studies.
99 Analysis of cell morphology changes by a phase-contrast microscope. 3×10⁴ cells were seeded
100 in 6 well plates and treated with *Phyla nodiflora* (40µg/ml) for PC-3 cells) for 24h. At the end of
101 the incubation period, the medium was removed and cells were washed once with a phosphate
102 buffer saline (PBS pH 7.4). The plates were observed under a phase-contrast microscope.

Comment [PC7]: mL

103 **Determination of mode of cell death by acridine orange (AO)/ethidium bromide (EtBr) 104 dual staining**

105 The effects of *L. nodiflora* in PC-3 cell death were also determined by AO/EtBr dual staining as
106 described previously (Cury-Boaventura et al., 2004). The cells were treated with *L. nodiflora* for
107 24 h and then the cells were harvested, washed with ice-cold PBS. The pellets were resuspended
108 in 5 µl of acridine orange (1 mg/mL) and 5 µl of EtBr (1 mg/mL). The apoptotic changes of the
109 stained cells were then observed by using a fluorescence microscope.

Comment [PC8]: L

110 **Statistical analysis**

111 Statistical analyses were performed using one-way ANOVA followed by Student–Newman–
112 Keul’s (SNK) tests for comparison between treatment values and control values. Data were
113 expressed as mean ± SEM. The level of statistical significance was set at p<0.05.

114 **RESULTS**

115 Effect of *L.nodiflora* extract on cell viability of prostate cancer cell line:

116 MTT assay was used to assess the cytotoxic potential of *L.nodiflora* extract in the prostate
117 cancer cell line. The cells were treated with different concentrations (10, 20, 40, 80, 100, and
118 120µg/ml) *L* for 24 hours. With a gradual increase in concentration, the percentage of cell

119 viability was reduced. 50% growth inhibition was observed at 40 µg/ml concentration and hence
120 IC-50 dose was considered for further experiments.

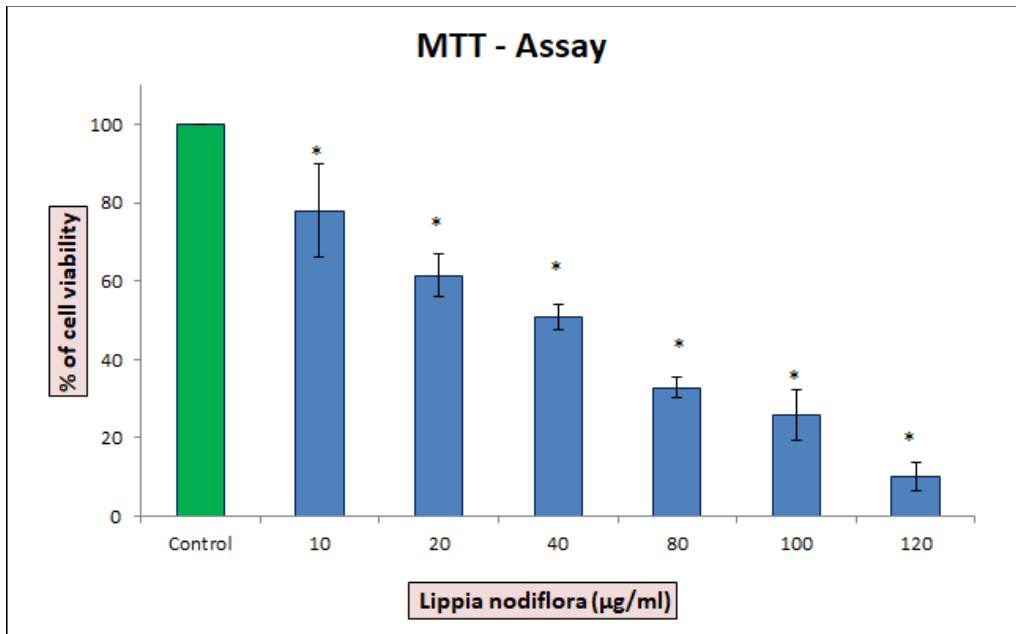
121 The effect of *L.nodiflora* on cell morphology:

122 The cell morphological analysis of *L.nodiflora* extract-treated under prostate cancer was
123 observed in a phase-contrast microscope. The PC-3 cells were treated with *L.nodiflora* extract
124 (40 µg/ml) for 24h and on comparison with untreated cells, treated cells showed significant
125 morphological changes. There was a decrease in the number of cells and cells exhibited cell
126 shrinkage and cytoplasmic membrane blebbing.

127 Pro-apoptotic effect of *L.nodiflora* extract in prostate cancer cells (AO/EtBr dual staining):

128 To confirm the induction of apoptosis in *L.nodiflora* extract AO/EtBr dual staining was used.
129 For evaluating the nuclear morphology of apoptotic cells AO/EtBr dual staining was used. The
130 cells were treated with *L.nodiflora* extract (40 µg/ml) for 24h. The cells were stained with both
131 AO/EtBr staining after treatment and it was observed under fluorescence microscopy. The results
132 say that AO stained both live and dead cells and EtBr stains only the cells that have lost their
133 membrane integrity. Cells stained uniform bright green nucleus represent viable cells, early
134 apoptotic cells having bright orange areas of condensed or fragmented chromatin in the nucleus
135 and late apoptotic cells having a uniform bright red nucleus. In the present study, control cells
136 showed a uniform green color, and in *L.nodiflora* extract-treated cells showed orange and red
137 color. From the above result, it can be confirmed that *L.nodiflora* extract induces apoptosis in
138 prostate cancer cells.

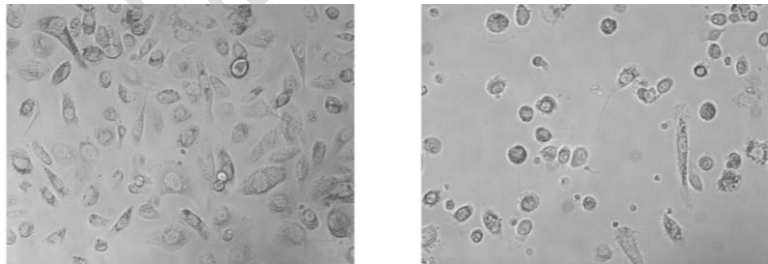
Comment [PC9]: mL



139
 140 *Figure 1: Cytotoxic effect of L. nodiflora leaf extract against the prostate cancer cell line. The*
 141 *cells were treated with different concentrations (10, 20, 40, 80, 100, and 120µg/ml) L. nodiflora*
 142 *leaf extract for 24hrs. The 50% of inhibition observed at 40 µg/ml (p-value: 0.0037)*
 143 *concentration, which has been taken as inhibitory concentration (IC-50) dose value and fixed for*
 144 *further experiments. * represents statistical significance between control versus treatment*
 145 *groups at p < 0.05 level using Student's–Newman–Keuls test.*

146 (A) (B)

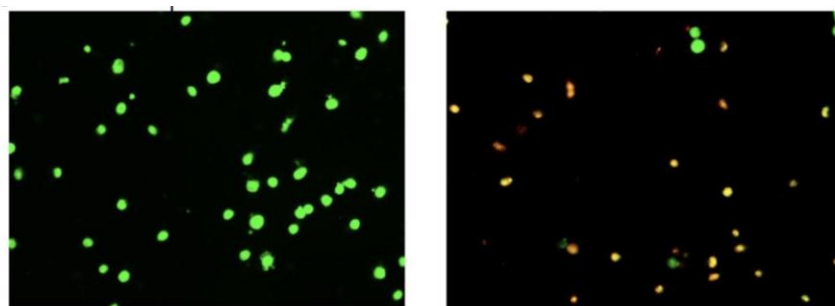
147



148
 149 *Figure 2: Effect of L. nodiflora leaf extract on cell morphological changes in the prostate cancer*
 150 *cell line. After treatment with L. nodiflora leaf extract 40 µg/mL for 24hrs and observed under*

151 phase-contrast microscope at 20x magnification. (A) Control cells, (B) lippia nodiflora leaf
152 extract (40µg/ml). Here, the number of cells was decreased after treatment and the cells
153 exhibited cell shrinkage and cytoplasmic membrane blebbing.

154 (A)



155
156 Figure 3: Induction of apoptosis in *L. nodiflora* leaf extract treated prostate cancer cell line. The
157 PC-3 cells treated with *L. nodiflora* leaf extract at 40 µg/mL concentration for 24hrs, treatment
158 cells were stained with and viewed under fluorescence microscope at 20x magnification. (A)
159 Control cells, (B) lippia nodiflora leaf extract (40µg/ml). The viable cells are possessing a
160 uniform bright green nucleus, early apoptotic cells having bright orange areas of condensed or
161 fragmented chromatin in the nucleus and late apoptotic cells having a uniform bright red
162 nucleus.

163 DISCUSSION

164 Apoptosis is a programmed cell death that serves as an important mechanism for tissue
165 homeostasis and cell eradication. The use of medicine-derived bioactive compounds as a
166 replacement for anti-cancer and chemotherapeutic medicines is becoming increasingly popular.
167 Plant-derived products are being tested as apoptotic inducers in anticancer research (23, 36).
168 Several cancer treatments based on plant-derived bioactive compounds, such as flavonoids and
169 limnoids have recently been proposed. By inhibiting metabolic activation, boosting
170 detoxification, or offering alternate targets for electrophilic metabolites, these substances aid in
171 the prevention of carcinogenesis (13, 20).

172 The cytotoxic effect of *L.nodiflora* extract on cell lines was calculated by micro-culture
173 tetrazolium assay (MTT). The multiple concentration of *L.nodiflora* extract was used and IC50

174 doses were calculated. The MTT assay results showed that dose-dependent (10-120µg/ml) cell
175 growth inhibition was observed in *L. nodiflora* leaf extract treated against PC-3 cells. The IC-50
176 dose was observed at 40µg/ml. Since *L.nodiflora* has better cytotoxic activity against PC-3 cells
177 it was used for further investigation.

178 Morphological investigation of apoptosis revealed that *L.nodiflora* extract at a concentration of
179 20µg/ml induced cell death in the PC-3 cell line by apoptosis (figure 2). Phenotypically
180 apoptosis is characterized by cell shrinkage, DNA fragmentation, chromatin condensation,
181 plasma membrane blebbing, and collapse of the cell into small membranes. The phase-contrast
182 image shows that *L.nodiflora* extract has shown morphological changes such as reduction in the
183 number of cells, cell shrinkage, and cytoplasmic membrane blebbing in the treated cells when
184 compared with untreated cells. Isolated compound-like flavonoids exhibited exceptional
185 antioxidant activity in all antioxidant tests and significantly reduced lipid peroxidation at a
186 concentration of 50 g/ml, according to prior research (41). The findings showed that extracts or
187 phytocompounds derived from *L. nodiflora* might be utilised as a bioactive source of natural
188 antioxidants with health benefits (42).

189 AO\EtBr (acridine orange and ethidium bromide) dual staining was performed to determine if
190 exposure to *L. nodiflora* leaf extract causes cell death by apoptosis in PC-3 cell lines. In the
191 AO\EtBr staining, the viable cells will possess a uniform bright green nucleus. The early
192 apoptotic cell will have bright orange areas of condensed or fragmented chromatin in the
193 nucleus. Late apoptotic cells will have a uniform bright red nucleus. It was found that untreated
194 cells were mostly green with an intact nucleus (Figure 3). AO\EtBr analysis showed that *L.*
195 *nodiflora* leaf extract was cytotoxic towards PC-3 cells through apoptosis when treated with
196 IC50 concentration (40 µg/mL). In the AO\EtBr analysis, cells treated with IC50 value of *L.*
197 *nodiflora* leaf extract showed a red color nucleus, which further confirmed the induction of late
198 apoptosis in PC-3 cells by *L.nodiflora* extract. This finding was characterized by membrane
199 blebbing and nuclear shrinkage. The above data indicate that *L. nodiflora* inhibits cell
200 proliferation and induces apoptosis in prostate cancer cells.

201 CONCLUSION

202 In summary, the present results indicate that *L. nodiflora* leaf extract induced apoptosis
203 which was further confirmed by characteristic morphological changes and cytotoxic effect.

204 Therefore, *L. nodiflora* leaf extract leaf extracts exhibit anti-cancer activity and can be used for
205 developing anti-cancer agents (11) (21) (22) (23) (24) (25) (26) (27) (28) (29) (30) (31) (32) (33)
206 (34). However, further investigations and studies are required to employ them as anticancer
207 drugs for prostate cancer.

Comment [PC10]: (11, 21-34)

208 **COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:**

209
210 Authors have declared that no competing interests exist. The products used for this research
211 are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is
212 absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we
213 do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of
214 knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded
215 by personal efforts of the authors.

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