



MINI REVIEW

Various Botanical Sources of Betulinic Acid: A Review

M. GHAFARI MOGHADDAM^{1,*} and F.B.H. AHMAD²

¹Department of Chemistry, University of Zabol, P.O. Box 98615-538, Zabol, Iran

²Department of Chemistry, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: E-mail: mansghaffari@gmail.com

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Betulinic acid is a naturally occurring pentacyclic lupane-type triterpene. It shows a broad range of biological and medicinal properties. This review provides the various botanical sources of betulinic acid.

Key Words: Betulinic acid, Triterpene, Lupane, Medicinal plant.

INTRODUCTION

Betulinic acid (Fig. 1) (3β -hydroxy-lup-20(29)-en-28-oic acid), pentacyclic lupane triterpene, is a known natural product, which has gained considerable attention, since it exhibits a variety of biological and medicinal properties such as inhibition of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)^{1,2}, antibacterial^{3,4}, antimalarial⁵, antiinflammatory⁶⁻⁹, anthelmintic¹⁰, antinociceptive¹¹, anti-HSV-1^{12,13} and anticancer activities¹⁴⁻¹⁷. Recently, betulinic acid has been reported to possess the ability to inhibit the growth of various cancerous cell lines *in vitro* without toxic side effects¹⁸. As far as toxicity of betulinic acid is concerned, no toxicity was observed on tumour-bearing mice at doses of 500 mg/kg body weight^{14,17}. Betulinic acid is considered as a promising anticancer agent due to the selective cytotoxicity and favourable therapeutic index^{19,20}.

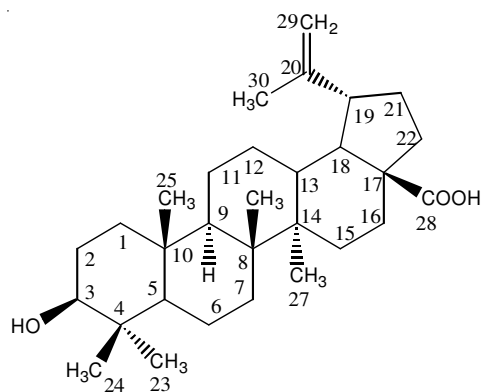


Fig. 1. Structure of betulinic acid

Betulinic acid is widely distributed throughout the plant kingdom¹⁹. The birch tree (*Betula* spp., Betulaceae) is one of the most widely reported sources of betulinic acid which can be obtained in considerable quantities²¹⁻²³. Betulinic acid could also be isolated from various sources include *Ziziphus* spp. (Rhamnaceae)^{4,17,24}, *Syzygium* spp. (Myrtaceae)^{1,25}, *Diospyros* spp. (Ebenaceae)²⁶⁻²⁸, *Triphyophyllum peltatum* and *Ancistrocladus heyneanus*⁵, *Tovomita krukovii*²⁹, *Ipomoea pes-caprae* (L.) R. Br.³⁰, *Diospyros leucomelas*²⁸, *Guizhi Fuling Capsula*³¹, *Rosa canina* L³², *Rosmarinus officinalis* L³³ and *Paeonia* spp. (Paeoniaceae)³⁴. We describe herein some recent isolation methods of betulinic acid and various botanical aspects of betulinic acid.

Procedures for isolation of betulinic acid from various botanical sources: Recently, betulinic acid was isolated from the leaves of the *Ligustrum lucidum* Ait., *Ligustrum pricei* Hayata and *Ligustrum sinensis* Lour plants³⁵ as follows: the dried leaves of the *Ligustrum* plants were extracted five times with methanol. The resultant extract was combined and concentrated under reduced pressure to obtain the methanol extract. The betulinic acid determination of the three *Ligustrum* spp. was carried out using high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) with a photodiode array detector.

*Guinda et al.*³⁶ obtained betulinic acid from the fruit pulp of *Argania spinosa* by solid/liquid extraction with absolute ethanol according to the procedure described as follows: the whole fruits of *Argania spinosa* were washed with distiller water and air-dried for a week. Then, the whole organs were twice extracted by maceration with absolute ethanol.

Betulinic acid was isolated from the *Bacopa monniera* (L.)³⁷ as follows: the air-dried and powdered whole plant of the

TABLE- 1
SOME BOTANICAL SOURCES OF BETULINIC ACID

| Plant (Binomial name) | Part of Plant | Reference |
|---|---|-----------|
| <i>Syzygium claviflorum</i> | Leaves | [2] |
| <i>Vitex negundo</i> L | Leaves | [3] |
| <i>Zizyphus joazeiro</i> | Stem Bark | [4] |
| <i>Berlina grandiflora</i> | Stem Bark | [10] |
| <i>Jacaranda mimosaeifolia</i> | Stem Bark | [44] |
| <i>Ilex pubescens</i> var. <i>glabra</i> . | Stem | [45] |
| Pneumatophores of <i>Avicennia marina</i> (Forssk.) Vierh | Aerial roots | [46] |
| <i>Ficus lutea</i> Vahl (Moraceae) | Woods | [47] |
| <i>Dorstenia convexa</i> . | Leaves | [48] |
| <i>Rhaphidophora hongkongensis</i> | Whole of plant | [49] |
| <i>Gladiolus segetum</i> (Iridaceae) | Aerial parts | [50] |
| <i>Anemone tomentosa</i> | Root | [51] |
| <i>Hyptidendron canum</i> | Stem | [52] |
| <i>Eucalyptus globulus</i> | Harvesting residues and bark generated by the pulp industry | [53] |
| <i>Forsythia suspensa</i> VAHL | Fruit | [54] |
| <i>Peltophorum africanum</i> | Stem Bark | [55] |
| <i>betuale cortex, Betula pendula roth., betulaceae</i> | Inner and external birch bark | [56] |
| Rosae pseudofructus cum/sine fructibus, <i>Rosa canina</i> L., Rosaceae | Rose hip with and without fruits | [57] |
| <i>Platanus orientalis</i> | Bark | [58] |
| <i>Betula platyphylla</i> suk. | Bark | [59] |
| <i>Cratoxylum arborescens</i> | Leaves and Twigs | [60] |
| <i>Betulae cortex</i> | Outer Bark | [61] |
| <i>Avicennia officinalis</i> | Bark | [62] |
| <i>Eucalyptus globules</i> | Fruits | [63] |
| <i>Amoora cucullata</i> | Stem Bark | [64] |
| <i>Bischofia javanica</i> | Bark | [65] |
| <i>Nerium oleanderand</i> | Leaves | [66] |
| <i>Engelhardtia serrata</i> | Stem Bark | [67] |
| <i>Calophyllum brasiliense</i> | Root | [68] |
| <i>Clusia ellipticifolia</i> | Stem Bark | [69] |
| <i>Caesalpinia paraguariensis</i> Burk. | Aerial | [70] |
| Quisqualis Fructus | Ground of the Plant | [71] |
| <i>Coussarea paniculata</i> | Twigs | [72] |
| <i>Ilex macropoda</i> | Twigs | [73] |
| <i>Anemone raddeana</i> | Roots | [74] |
| <i>Eucalyptus globules</i> | Inner and outer bark | [75] |
| <i>Doliocarpus schottianus</i> | Bark (top and bottom), wood and leaves | [76] |
| <i>Orthosiphon stamineus</i> | Aerial | [77] |
| <i>Syncarpia glomulifera</i> (Myrtaceae) | Bark | [78] |
| <i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i> var. <i>obtuse</i> | Leaves | [79] |
| <i>Physocarpus intermedius</i> | Stem Bark | [80] |
| <i>Tetracentron sinense</i> | Stem Bark | [81] |
| <i>Combretum quadrangulare</i> | Leaves | [82] |
| <i>Uapaca nitida</i> Müll-Arg. (Euphorbiaceae) | Root Bark | [83] |
| <i>Vochysia divergens</i> | Stem Bark | [84] |
| <i>Tetracera boiviniana</i> | Twigs and Stem Bark | [85] |
| Malaysian <i>Callistemon speciosus</i> D. E | Leaves | [86] |
| <i>Chaenomeles lagenaria</i> | Fruit | [87] |
| <i>Paeonia lactiflora</i> | Aerial | [88] |
| <i>Melaluca cajuputi</i> | Seed | [89] |
| <i>Paeonia japonica, Paeonia lactiflora</i> and <i>Paeonia suffruticosa</i> | Callus tissues derived from the stem | [90] |

B. monniera was defatted with petroleum ether. The defatted material was then extracted with methanol. The crude extract was evaporated in vacuum. The residue was then suspended in water and successively partitioned with chloroform, ethyl acetate and *n*-BuOH. The chloroform fraction was subjected to the column chromatography on silica gel to obtain betulinic acid.

Kumar *et al.*³⁸ isolated betulinic acid from the fruits of *Dillenia indica* L. according to the procedure described as follows: the dried fruits (calyx) of *Dillenia indica* L. were extracted with methanol. The extract was then filtered and the solvent was evaporated under vacuum. The methanol extract

was suspended in water and partitioned successively with ethyl acetate and *n*-butanol. The ethyl acetate fraction was chromatographed on silica gel using increasing polarity of different solvents to isolate betulinic acid.

Betulinic acid was isolated from the leaves of *Pentalinon andrieuxii* (Apocynaceae)³⁹. The dried leaves of *P. andrieuxii* were extracted with ethanol. The solvent was then evaporated. The crude extract was fractionated by successive liquid-liquid partition with hexane, ethyl acetate and butanol. The low polarity fraction was subjected to the column chromatography on silica gel to obtain pure betulinic acid.

Subramanyam *et al.*⁴⁰ isolated betulinic acid from the roots of *Tephrosia calophylla* according to the following procedure: betulinic acid was extracted into methanol from dried and powdered roots of *Tephrosia calophylla*. The total extract was concentrated in vacuum. The residue was suspended in water and then partitioned successively with chloroform and *n*-butanol. The chloroform part was subjected to the column chromatography on silica gel. The fractions were further purified by repeated silica gel column chromatography followed by column chromatography to give betulinic acid.

Choi *et al.*⁴¹ isolated betulinic acid from the roots of *Saussurea lappa* C.B. Clarke using the following procedure: the dried roots of *S. Lappa* were extracted three times with MeOH at room temperature for seven days. The MeOH extract was suspended in water and partitioned with EtOAc. The EtOAc-soluble fraction was subjected to the silica gel chromatography to isolate the betulinic acid.

Betulinic acid was isolated from the stem barks of five *Uapaca* species (Euphorbiaceae) including *Uapaca acuminata*, *Uapaca guineensis*, *Uapaca heudelotti*, *Uapaca paludosa* and *Uapaca vandhoutei* by Nyasse *et al.*⁴². The dried bark pieces of *Uapaca* were extracted with ethyl acetate. The extracts were then evaporated to dryness. The crude extracts were stirred in cool methanol to participate significant amounts of betulinic acid which was recrystallized in methanol to afford substantial amounts of very pure betulinic acid.

De Melo *et al.*⁴³ isolated betulinic acid from the *Clusia nemorosa* L. (Clusiaceae). The dried and powdered roots of *Clusia nemorosa* were extracted with *n*-hexane and ethanol. The ethanol extract was concentrated to obtain a participate which was filtered and recrystallized with ethanol to yield the pure betulinic acid.

Botanical sources of betulinic acid: Some other sources of betulinic acid are presented in Table-1.

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