

Antimicrobial Efficacy of Traditional Medicinal Plant Extracts Against the Antibiotic Resistant Isolates from Drinking Water Sources

Jadhav A V¹, Agnihori S N¹, Sawant H¹, Bansode S¹, Bankar A², Panicker S G^{1*}

¹Department of Microbiology, Dr. D.Y. Patil Arts, Commerce and Science College, Pimpri, Pune, Maharashtra, India

²Department of Microbiology, MES-Garware College, Pune, Maharashtra, India

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ABSTRACT

Water is the second most essential factor for different life forms after oxygen. Most of the people obtain their drinking water from surface and underground sources. However both surface and ground water source could be contaminated by biological and chemical pollutants. In the rural area, majority of people directly use natural water sources like river water, bore well, lake water etc. for drinking purpose. In the present study, 12 different drinking water samples were collected from different villages of Pune, Maharashtra, India. The samples were analyzed bacteriologically and physico-chemically. The MPN positive samples were analyzed for antibiotic resistance by polydisc method. 27 bacterial isolates were reported to be resistant to antibiotic Imipenem (10mcg). Antimicrobial activity of Tulsi and Neem leaf extracts showed a great potential against these antibiotic resistant isolates. Thus, from the obtained results, it can be concluded that these plants can be used as natural therapeutic agents that may serve as lead for the development of new pharmaceuticals addressing the major therapeutic needs.

KEYWORDS: Drinking water, Antimicrobial activity, bacteriological, MPN, Antibiotic resistant.

INTRODUCTION

Water is one of the most important bacterial habitats on earth and known to be a major way of dissemination of microorganisms in nature. The water-bodies are recognized as a significant reservoir of antibiotic resistant bacteria (ARB). The development of multidrug resistant (MDR) bacteria in water supply systems is found to be a serious threat to the public health¹. The wastewater treatment plants are one of the major sources for continuous release of a variety of antibiotics into aquatic environment. Therefore, the load of ARBs in the aquatic environment has been increasing continuously. This serious issue is observed in developing countries like India due to the poor sanitization practices. The easy availability of antibiotics sometimes without a medical prescription has increased their widespread misuses². Apart from this, large quantities of antibiotics are being used in the clinical settings, agriculture, food industry and aquaculture etc.³ The global demand of antibiotics has been increased by 40% in the last decade⁴. Therefore, due to heavy usage of antibiotics results into increasing numbers of ARBs. The continuous development of ARBs in an aquatic environment may cause a serious public health issue. Sewage is the most common source of drinking water pollution due to the leakage of water supplying pipelines

and thus alters the physiochemical properties of drinking water. In addition to this, the sewage water also spreads several human pathogens via drinking water system⁵. However, it was noticed that many other water sources are also found to be highly contaminated. It is reported that 37.7 million Indians are affected due to waterborne diseases and 1.5 million children are died due to diarrhea, annually. Therefore, there is a great need of an extensive water treatment before it is consumed⁶. The microbiological safety of drinking water is of prime importance to protect public health. The protection of drinking water is generally considered as the primary strategy to make it safe for drinking purpose.

From several years, it is well known that the herbs are commonly used in the preparation of many drugs that are used for the treatment of several human diseases. Thus, the anti-microbial property of these plants made them eligible as most safe and the efficient therapeutic agents against several bacterial pathogens. The plant of Neem has been used in the preparation of the traditional medicine as a source of many therapeutic agents in the Indian culture and grows well in the tropical countries. It is well known that this plant contains several bio-active molecules, having multiple medicinal properties⁷. Similarly, Tulsi leaves also exhibited insecticidal and anti-bacterial activities and are employed in treatment of several diseases on the basis of the traditional experience⁸. Previously, it was also reported

Table 1: Antibiotic Resistance of different isolates

Isolates	Antibiotic	Antibiotic Resistance							
		Imipenem (10mcg)	Meropenem (10mcg)	Ciprofloxacin (5mcg)	Tobramycin (10mcg)	Moxifloxacin (5mcg)	Ofloxacin (5mcg)	Sparfloxacin (5mcg)	Levofloxacin (5mcg)
DS I	DS I 1	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS I 2	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS I 3	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
DS II	DS II 1	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS II 2	R	R	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS II 3	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS II 4	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
DS III	DS III 1	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS III 2	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS III 3	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
DS IV	DS IV 1	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS IV 2	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS IV 3	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS IV 4	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
DS V	DS V 1	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS V 2	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS V 3	S	S	R	S	S	S	R	S
DS VI	DS VI 1	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS VI 2	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS VI 3	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	DS VI 4	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
SS I	SS I 1,2,3	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	SS II 1	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
SS II	SS II 2	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	SS II 3,4	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
SS III	SS III 1,2	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
SS IV	SS IV 1,2,3,4	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
SS V	SS V 1	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	R
	SS V 2	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
SS VI	SS VI 1,3,4	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	SS VI 2	R	S	S	S	S	S	S	S

that the Tulsi leaves (*Ocimum sanctum*) and Neem leaves (*Azadirachta indica*) have been used in purification of contaminated drinking water. Thus, the use of such plants for contaminated water treatment could be a safer, cost effective and an eco-friendly process⁹. The side effects of antibiotics and quick development of bacterial resistance are the major problems. Therefore, several bioactive compounds of different plants species can be an alternative to these antibiotics¹⁰. In the present study, anti-microbial activities of plant leaves extracts of Tulsi and Neem were tested against the antibiotic resistant microorganisms isolated from different drinking water sources of the villages in Pune district, Maharashtra, India.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Drinking water Sample collection

12 samples water samples were collected from different drinking water sources (surface water and borewell water)

of Dehugaon and Sudumbare villages of Pune, India. The water samples were collected in sterile screw capped sterile glass bottles. The bottles were labeled properly with details of source, date and time of collection. The bottles were carried in icebox and brought to the laboratory and stored in the refrigerator until further analysis.

Evaluation of bacterial load

Enumeration of bacterial colonies was performed by using spread plate technique. The water samples were serially diluted with sterile distilled water. The different dilutions (0.1 ml) were spread on sterile MacConkeys agar plates and incubated at 37°C. The bacterial colonies formed on sterile MacConkeys agar plates were counted. The obtained colonies were also tested for antibiotic resistance study.

Antibiotic resistance study

40 isolated colonies were tested against eight different antibiotics on Mueller Hinton Agar by Kirby-Bauer disk

Table 2: Antibiotic Resistant organisms identified from Bergey's Manual

Sr. No.	Sample & Isolate No.	Genus Name
1	DSI isolate 1	<i>Salmonella</i>
2	DSI isolate 2	<i>Escherichia</i>
3	DSI isolate 3	<i>Escherichia</i>
4	DSII isolate 2	<i>Hafnia</i>
5	DSII isolate 4	<i>Cedecea</i>
6	DSIII isolate 1	<i>Cedecea</i>
7	DSIV isolate 1	<i>Erwinia</i>
8	DSIV isolate 2	<i>Citrobacter</i>
9	DSI V isolate 4	<i>Vibrio</i>
10	DSV isolate 3	<i>Vibrio</i>
11	DSVI isolate 2,3,4	<i>Unidentified</i>
12	SSII isolate 1	<i>Escherichia</i>
13	SSII isolate 2	<i>Vibrio</i>
14	SSV isolate 1	<i>Cedecea</i>
15	SSVI isolate 2	<i>Edwardsiella</i>

diffusion method reported earlier.^[11] Briefly, overnight grown bacterial cultures in broth were spread separately on sterile Mueller Hinton agar plates and antibiotic impregnated octadisk was placed on it. All plates were incubated overnight at 37°C and observed for a clear zone of growth inhibition. The obtained results were interpreted using a reference table. The bacterial isolates that showed resistance for two or more antibiotics (multidrug resistant) were further characterized and identified. Antibiotics of different classes used in this study were: Imipenem (10 mcg), Meropenem (10 mcg), Ciprofloxacin (5 mcg), Tobramycin (10 mcg), Moxifloxacin (10 mcg), Ofloxacin (5 mcg), Ofloxacin (5 mcg) and Levofloxacin (5 mcg).

Characterization of antibiotic resistant isolates

The antibiotic resistant bacterial isolates were characterized morphologically and biochemically. The colonial morphology, Gram staining, spore staining, IMViC test, Catalase test, starch and casein hydrolysis were carried out to characterize the obtained isolates. Bergey's manual of systematic bacteriology and the manual of identification of medical bacteria were used for partial identification of antibiotic resistant isolates.

Plant material collection

Fresh leaves of *O. sanctum* (Tulsi) and *A. indica* (Neem) were collected from the local area of Pune, Maharashtra, India. The collected plant leaves were washed with the sterile distilled water thoroughly, air dried and then homogenized to make a fine powder and stored in airtight bottles for further use.

Preparation of plant leaves extracts

Aqueous extraction

The dried powder (5 g) of Neem or Tulasi leaves was added separately into 200 ml of distilled water and boiled on slow heat for 2 h. After boiling, the extract was filtered through a muslin cloth and centrifuged at 5000 rpm for 10 minutes. The obtained supernatant was collected and concentrated by boiling to make one-fourth of the original volume¹¹.

Solvent extraction

The dried powder (5 g) of Neem or Tulasi leaves was added separately into 50 ml of methanol in a conical flask. The mixture was kept on rotary shaker for 24 h. The obtained solution was then filtered through a muslin cloth and centrifuged at 5000 rpm for 15 minutes. The methanol was evaporated and the leaves extract was re-suspended into 50 % of DMSO to achieve the concentration of 100 mg/ml¹².

Anti-bacterial activity of plant extracts

The anti-bacterial activity of different plant species (aqueous and solvent extract) was evaluated by agar well diffusion method. The test organisms were grown overnight in the nutrient broth. The cell suspension of 0.1ml was inoculated into the molten Mueller Hinton agar media and after proper homogenization it was poured into 100 mm Petri dishes. The wells were prepared in the seeded plates with the help of a cork-borer (8 mm). Then 0.1ml of the plant leaves extracts was added into each well separately and allowed to diffuse at 4°C for 20 min. The plates were then incubated at 37°C for 24 h. The anti-microbial activity of the plant leaves extracts was determined by measuring the diameter of zone inhibition¹³.

RESULTS

Isolation of antibiotic resistant bacteria from different water sources

Altogether, six Dehugaon samples showed presence of 22 different colony forming units and that of Sudumbre showed 18. The water samples collected from Dehugaon region were labeled as DS I-VI and the samples from Sudumbre were labeled as SS I-VI. Each of these isolate was tested for its antibiotic resistance against eight different antibiotics by Kirby-Bauer disk diffusion method. Zone of inhibition thus obtained can be seen in the table 1. It was seen that forty percent isolates were resistant to the Imipenem antibiotic. Isolates such as DS II 2, DS V 3 and SS V 1 were resistant to two antibiotics of the eight from the octadisk. DS II 2 was found to be resistant to Imipenem and Meropenem, DS V 3 showed resistance to Ciprofloxacin and Sparfloxacin while SS V 1 exhibited resistance to Imipenem and Levofloxacin.

Characterization of antibiotic resistant isolates

The Bergey's manual of systematic bacteriology and manual of identification of medical bacteria have been referred for the partial identification of bacterial isolates and is shown in Table 2. All the identified isolates belonged to *Enterobacteriaceae* family reflecting that drinking water source was fecally contaminated.

Antibacterial activity of plant leaves extracts

The antibacterial activity of different plant species was evaluated by agar well diffusion method for both aqueous and solvent leaves extracts. The aqueous extract of Neem and Tulsi showed no antibacterial activity against the bacterial isolates. However, the concentrated organic extracts of Neem and Tulsi leaves extracts showed a prominent antibacterial activity against almost all the resistant isolates. It was observed that when the leaves extracts were 1:1 diluted with DMSO, the extracts found to be only active against the isolates, *Escherichia*, *Erwinia*

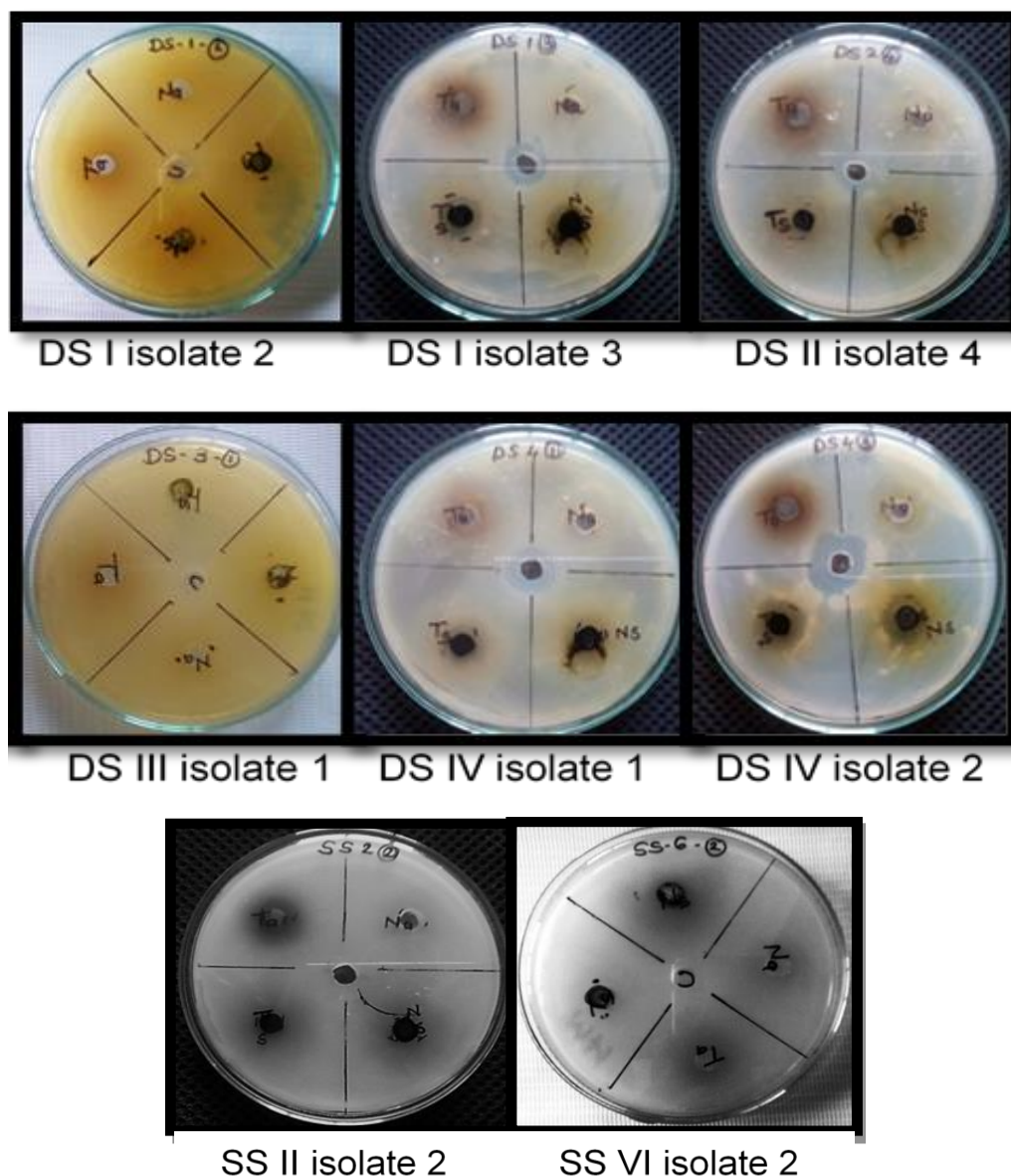


Fig 1: Antibacterial activity of herbal extracts against Resistant Isolates

and *Citrobacter*. The antimicrobial activity of the extracts is shown in the representative figure 1 and the diameter of the zone of inhibition measured is presented in table 3.

DISCUSSION

Forty different isolates were obtained from 12 different drinking water sources. The antibiotic resistance of different isolates was tested against eight broad spectrum antibiotics having activity against both Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria. It was observed that almost 40% isolates were found to be resistant to the Imipenem antibiotic. The isolates DS II 2, DS V 3 and SS V 1 were resistant to two different antibiotics from the octadisk. The antibiotic, imipenem is a particularly active against *Pseudomonas* and *Enterococcus* species. The Gram negative bacteria are found to be resistant to imipenem to varying degrees was reported earlier¹⁴. Important clinical infections like urinary tract infection are caused due to *Enterococcus*. The meropenem is similar to Imipenem in

its action and spectrum. However, the antibiotic meropenem is more active against *Enterobacteriaceae* and less active against the Gram positive bacteria. It is administered to adults with complicated UTI. The identified antibiotic resistant bacteria from the drinking water sources in the present study belong to *Enterobacteriaceae* family which is well known to cause urinary tract infection or gastrointestinal diseases. The presence of co-resistance and MDR signifies that there might be continuous heavy usage of antibiotics in the community. The non-human use of highly-important antibiotics also contributes to the drug resistance against a range of antibiotics^{15,16}. The relatively cheap and commonly prescribed drugs commonly favor a high co-resistance is reported previously^{17,18}. In rural communities, the high level of bacterial contamination is reported in drinking water sources due to poor sanitation practices and thus results into lack of safe-water supply for domestic purposes¹⁹. Studies illustrate that surface water

Table 3: Effect of Herbal extracts on antibiotic resistant organisms

Sr. No.	Isolated Bacteria (Genus)	Resistant	Zone of Inhibition (mm)				
			Tulsi (Aqueous extract)	Neem (Aqueous extract)	Tulsi (Methanol extract)	Neem (Methanol extract)	Tulsi (Methanol extract) Concentrated
			1:1 diluted	1:1 diluted	1:1 diluted	1:1 diluted	
1	DS I 2 (<i>Escherichia</i>)		0	0	0	0	12
2	DS I 3 (<i>Escherichia</i>)		0	0	14	15	17
3	DS II 4 (<i>Cedecea</i>)		0	0	0	0	15
4	DSIII 1 (<i>Cedecea</i>)		0	0	0	0	0
5	DS IV 1 (<i>Erwinia</i>)		0	0	11	10	16
6	DSIV 2 (<i>Citrobacter</i>)		0	0	18	16	22
7	SSII 2 (<i>Vibrio</i>)		0	0	0	0	0
8	SSVI 2 (<i>Edwardiella</i>)		0	0	0	0	0

contamination occurs mainly from livestock operations and human sewage and that decreasing livestock access to surface water reduced the fecal coliforms levels by an average of 94%²⁰. Recent study also revealed that six imipenem resistant and 29 meropenem resistant isolates were reported in a village from Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh, India²¹.

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first of its type for this region and highlights the need for drinking water source monitoring in the community for the presence of fecal contamination along with resistance profiles of the isolates. However, various studies around the world assessing different water sources have revealed total coliform contamination rates 0-100%^{22,23,24}.

With the widespread development of drug resistance of bacterial pathogens against currently available modern antibiotics, the medical science is now making efforts to discover novel antibiotics. The traditional medicinal plant such as Neem (*A. indica* L.) and Tulsi (*O. sanctum* L.) have been proved to be a better alternative to the antibiotics. In the present study an effort has been made to access the susceptibilities from aqueous and organic extracts of Neem (leaves) and Tulsi (leaves) against the antibiotic resistant bacterial species isolated from different drinking water sources. It was noticed that *Vibrio* and *Escherichia* were found to be more susceptible followed by *Erwinia* and *Citrobacter*. Previous studies have showed that extracts of *A. indica* were found effective against *Escherichia coli* and *Streptococcus faecalis* with fairly high degree of sensitivity (IZ=18-33 mm) to methanol extracts²⁵. A study by group²⁶ revealed that ethanolic extract of Neem bark was more significantly active at 250 µg concentrations than the Neem leaves at all the studied concentrations. *E. coli* was highly susceptible to ethanol extract of Tulsi leaves at 250 µg concentration. Most bacterial strains were resistant at lowest concentrations (5 µg) of various extracts of both plants. The results obtained in present study are in good agreement with the previous reports. In the present study, it is clearly revealed that the organic leaves extracts was more effective against all the tested bacterial isolates from drinking water sources. However, it was also noticed that aqueous leaves extracts did not show anti-bacterial activity at the lower concentrations.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate the poor sanitary conditions of the sampling sites and unhygienic practices of people leading to the presence of organisms belonging to the *Enterobacteriaceae* family. Furthermore, it also indicates the overuse and / misuse of antibiotics as antibiotic resistant bacteria were isolated from the drinking water samples. The study suggests the additional measures (hygienic and sanitary practices) are required by the individual to avoid post contamination of drinking water. From the above studies, it can also be concluded that the traditional plants are new sources of antimicrobials that can establish a scientific base for the use of modern medicine.

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