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NUTRACEUTICAL FORMULATION OF CORDYCEPS TUBERCULATA CULTURED MYCELIUM AS A NEW BIO-PRODUCT FOR HUMAN HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Genus *Cordyceps* Fr. is widespread and contains many medicinal species. Some species are used in Traditional Chinese Medicine to cure several diseases. However, nutraceutical formulations of only few *Cordyceps* species have been commercialized. Under present studies dried mycelial formulation prepared from *C. tuberculata* collected Northwestern Himalayan regions were checked for nutritive and medicinal composition. Standard methods were followed for preparations of dried mycelial formulations and for analysis of nutritive and chemical constituents. The mycelial formulations were found to be richer in protein (18.50 %), carbohydrates (33.12 %), phenolics (40.18 mg/g), and carotenoids (β -carotene, lycopene) and anthocyanidins. The mycelial formulation showed significant antioxidant activities measured through EC50 values. Present studies will open the way for the large scale commercial exploitations of these formulation for nutritional and nutraceutical therapy and use in pharmaceutical industries.

KEYWORDS: *Cordyceps* formulations, *Cordyceps* species, mycelial cultivation, nutritive and biochemical constituents, antioxidant activities.

INTRODUCTION

Genus *Cordyceps* Fr. contains more than 400 widespread species distributed throughout the world on higher altitudes (Kobayasi, 1982; Stensrud, Hywel-Jones & Schumache, 2005; Kirk et al., 2008). The genus contains many medicinal species which are used in many parts of the world due to the source of disease combating natural product with tremendous biological activities. Fruitbodies and mycelial extracts of many of its species exhibit different biological activities (Ji et al., 2009).

Cordyceps sinensis is widely used species from ancient times. The role it plays to cure many diseases is well understood now. It has been used extensively to cure various types of cancers by inhibiting tumour growth as well as enhancing the immune system (Kiho et al., 1996; Chen et al., 1997; Mizuno, 1999; Kim et al., 2002; Zhao et al., 2002). The active constituents of many of *Cordyceps* species are polysaccharides and their range varies between 3-8 % among all bioactive constituents (Ma et al., 1999; Smith, Rowan & Sullivan, 2002, Lu 2005). Due

to richness with various types of bioactive constituents *Cordyceps* species have become natural remedies for several diseases. The bioactive constituents like cordycepin and others which possess liver protective effects, antioxidative activities, enhances the Tcell and macrophages activity, reduce the level of c-Myc, c- Fos, and VEGF levels in the lungs and liver by exopolysaccharide fraction, and reduce the level of cholesterol and triglyceride (Liu & Fei, 2001; Kim and Yun, 2005; Hsu et al., 2002; Li et al., 2006). Some uncommon cyclic dipeptides, including co- cyclo-[Gly-Pro], cyclo-[Leu-Pro], cyclo-[Val-Pro], cyclo-[Ala-Leu], cyclo-[Ala-Val], and cyclo- [Thr-Leu] and small amounts of polyamines, such as 1,3- diamino propane, cadaverine, spermidine, spermine, and putrescine are also present in these fungi which exhibit multiple pharmacological activities including antitumor, antiinflammatory, immunopotentiality, hypoglycemic, and hypocholesterolemic effects, protection of neuronal cells against the free radical-induced cellular toxicity, steroidogenesis, and antioxidant activities (Koh et al., 2003; Yu et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2015). The commercialized products of few *Cordyceps* species viz. *Cordyceps sinensis*, *C. militaris* are used now for nutritional therapy. There are several other species of this genus which are richer source of biochemical constituents and can be commercialized through different formulations prepared from fruitbodies as well as mycelia. Since the species of this genus are rare hence mycelial cultivation is the suitable option to exploit these fungi for commercialization. Present studies have been conducted to evaluate the composition of dried mycelial formulations prepared from *Cordyceps tuberculata* fungi for nutritive and nutraceutical potential.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Collection, culturing and processing of samples

The species was collected from Dalhousie (H.P., India) regions of northwestern Himalayas. After noting the details pertaining to morphology and habitat, culturing of the samples was performed with the tissue culture technique. The freshly infected insect body was washed thoroughly 4 - 5 times with water, dipped into 70 % ethanol for 30 seconds, and then rinsed 3 - 4 times with sterile distilled water. The sterilized fruiting body was cut into small sections and incubated on potato dextrose agar (SD Fine, India) at 25 °C. The isolated pure cultures were maintained at 25 °C. The samples were then dried in wooden drier at 45 °C and preserved in air-tight cellophane bags, with a small amount of 1-4-paradichlorobenzene in porous packets to keep them free of insects. The sample was deposited in the Herbarium Department of Botany, Punjabi University Patiala.

Liquid cultivation and formulations

Submerged cultivation of the mycelium was done in a standard basal medium (sucrose 30.0 g/L, yeast powder 5.0 g/L, peptone 5.0 g/L, MgSO₄.

7H₂O 1.0 g/L, and KH₂PO₄ 0.5 g/L) (Xu et al., 2009; Qinqin et al., 2012; Sharma, gautam & Atri, 2015). Isolated pure mycelium was inoculated in basal liquid medium in 200 mL baffled flasks. After 15 days mycelium was harvested with the help of Whatman no. 1 filter paper. Briefly, harvested mycelium was washed with ultrapure water and subjected to extraction with hot water (70 °C) for 12 hrs. The extracts were mixed with cyclodextrin in ratio 1 to 0.5-5 (mycelial extract to cyclodextrin ratio). The formulations were prepared by drying the mixture to powder.

Nutritive analysis

Protein contents from all the formulations were estimated using the Kjeldahl method (Atri et al., 2013). Fat content was estimated using a Soxhlet apparatus by extraction of powdered samples with petroleum ether. Ash contents were calculated by incineration in silica dishes at 525 ± 20 °C containing 5-10 g/sample. Fibres contents were estimated by using the acid-alkali method (1.25 % each). Carbohydrates percentage was calculated by the difference as the total weight - (moisture content + protein content + crude fat + ash content + crude fibres). Minerals were analyzed using Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer (Perkin Elmer Analyst A400).

Biochemical Composition

Bioactive compounds

Dried formulations (~5 g) were extracted with 100 mL of methanol at 25 °C (150 rpm) for 24 hours and filtered through Whatman no. 2 filter paper. The residues were again re-extracted with two additional portions of methanol (100 mL). These extracts were evaporated to dryness at 42 °C, then redissolved in methanol at a concentration of 50 mg/mL, and stored at 4 °C. The dried methanolic extracts (100 mg) were shaken vigorously with 10 mL of acetone/hexane mixture (4:6) for 1 min. and filtered. The absorbance of the filtrate was measured at 453, 505, and 663 nm (Nagata & Yamashita, 1992). β -carotene and lycopene contents were estimated using the following equation:

$$\text{Lycopene (mg/100mL)} = (0.0458 \times A_{663}) + (0.372 \times A_{505}) - (0.0806 \times A_{453})$$

$$\beta\text{-carotene (mg/100mL)} = (0.216 \times A_{663}) - (0.304 \times A_{505}) + (0.452 \times A_{453}).$$

Phenolic compounds were quantified using Folin and Ciocalteu's phenol reagent. Formulations were mixed with Folin and Ciocalteu's phenol reagent (1 mL). After three min., saturated sodium carbonate solution (1mL) was added to the mixture, and the volume was adjusted to 10 mL with distilled water. The reaction was kept in the dark for 90 min. and the absorbance was read at 725 nm. Gallic acid was used to calculate the standard curve (0.01-0.4 mM; $R^2 = 0.9999$) and the results were expressed as milligrams of gallic acid equivalents per gram of extract (Singleton & Rossi, 1965; Jagdish et al., 2009).²⁸⁻²⁹

Ascorbic acid contents were quantified using colorimetric assays. Standard ascorbic acid

solution (5 mL/ L-ascorbic acid in 3 % phosphoric acid) was prepared and added to 5 mL of phosphoric acid. A microburette was filled with dye, and the samples were titrated with the dye solution to a pink color, which remained for 15 seconds. The dye factor (milligrams of ascorbic acid per milliliter of dye using formula: 0.5/titrate) was determined. A sample was prepared by taking 10 g of formulation grounded in metaphosphoric acid, and the volume was increased up to 100 mL. It was titrated after filtration until a pink color appeared.²⁵ The amount of ascorbic acid was calculated with the use of the following equation: mg of ascorbic acid per 100 g or mL=titrate \times dye factor \times vol. made aliquot of extract \times wt. of sample \times 100.

Anthocyanidins were quantified by using standard protocol (Vamanu & Nita, 2013). Briefly, 0.5 g of formulations were mixed with the solvent (mixture of 85 : 15 (v/v) of ethyl alcohol and hydrochloric acid 1.5 M) followed by ultrasonication for 15 min. and filtration through Whatman filter paper no. 1. Standard solution was prepared with cyanidin chloride (con. 5-15 μ g/mL). The absorption was measured at 546 nm. The total quantity of anthocyanidins (expressed in g of cyaniding chloride/100 g extract) = $(Ap \times mst \times f \times 100)/(Ast \times mp)$, where Ap is absorption rate of the sample solution; mp is mass of the processed sample, in g; Ast is absorption rate of the standard solution; mst is mass of the processed standard solution, in g; and f is dilution coefficient.

Antioxidant activities

DPPH scavenging activity was measured by adding DPPH (200 μ L) solution at different concentrations (2-10 mg/mL) to the formulations (0.05 mL) dissolved in ethanol. A control was prepared by adding an equal amount of ethanol to ascorbic acid (Vamanu, 2012). The absorbance was read after 20 min at 517 nm and the inhibition was calculated using the formula DPPH scavenging effect (%) = $(A_0 - AP) / A_0 \times 100$ absorbance in the presence of the sample.

ABTS radical scavenging activities of all the dried formulations were measured through spectrophotometric method (Li et al., 2011). Briefly, 10 μ L of the sample was added to 4 mL of the diluted ABTS⁺ solution (prepared by adding 7 mM of the ABTS stock solution to 2.45 mM potassium persulfate, kept in the dark, at room temperature, for 12-16 h before use). The solution was then diluted with 5 mM phosphate-buffered (pH 7.4) and absorbance was measured at 730 nm after 30 min. The ABTS radical scavenging activity was calculated as $S\% = (A_{control} - A_{sample} / A_{control}) \times 100$.

Reducing power estimation was done by mixing the samples (200 μ L) with sodium phosphate buffer (pH 6.6), 1 mM FeSO₄, and 1 % potassium ferricyanide and incubated for 20 min. at 50 °C after that trichloroacetic acid was added and the mixtures were centrifuged. Supernatant (2.5 mL) was mixed with an equal volume of water and 0.5 mL FeCl₃ (0.1 %). The absorbance was measured at

700 nm (Papuc et al., 2010). Iron chelating activities of the samples were measured by mixing them with 3.7 mL of ultrapure water. The mixture was reacted with ferrous chloride (2 mmol/L, 0.1 mL) and ferrozine (5 mmol/L, 0.2 mL) for 20 min and the absorbance was read at 562 nm with using EDTA as control. The chelating activities were calculated using the formula: chelating activity (%) = $[(Ab - As) / As] \times 100$, where Ab is the absorbance of the blank and As is the absorbance in the presence of the extract (Oyetayo, Dong & Yao, 2009).

The scavenging activities of superoxide anion radicals were measured following standard method (Marklund & Marklund, 1974). Formulations (0-2.0 mg/mL, 1 mL) and Tris-HCl buffer (50.0 mM, pH 8.2, 3 mL) were incubated in a water bath at 25 °C for 20 min. and to this pyrogallol acid (5.0 mM, 0.4 mL) was added. HCl solution (8.0 M, 0.1 mL) was added to terminate the reaction after 4 min. The absorbance of the mixture was measured at 320 nm. The scavenging ability of a sample was calculated using the following formula: scavenging ability (%) = $(1 - A_{sample} / A_{control}) \times 100$. Where $A_{control}$ is the absorbance of control without the sample and A_{sample} is the absorbance in the presence of the sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nutritive analysis

The nutritive composition of mycelial formulations is shown in table 1. Protein contents of dried mycelial formulations were observed 18.50 \pm 3.2 %. Fat contents of the formulations were documented in lesser amounts 0.24 %. In general all the formulations of dried mycelium were found to be richer in protein and low in fat. Crude fibres were found to be 0.80 %. Carbohydrates were found to be major nutritional components in all the formulations. The percentage of carbohydrates was documented 33.12 \pm 2.5 %. Minerals composition showed the presence of Fe, Na, K, Ca, Mg and Cu. Amongst all the minerals, Mg was detected in major quantity as compared to other minerals.

Upon analysis of nutrients, the results obtained for all the formulations showed comparable values similar to other edible and commercially used species viz., *Agaricus bisporus*, *Boletus edulis*, *Morchella esculenta*, *Cordyceps sinensis*, and *Lentinula edodes*. (Manzi, Aguzzi & Pizzoferrato, 2001; Manzi et al., 2004; Krbavcic & Baric, 2004; Agrahar & Subbulakshmi, 2005; Sharma & Gautam, 2015; Sharma, Gautam & Atri, 2015). Results are also in confirmity with several commercially cultivated medicinal fungi with high protein and carbohydrate contents and low fat levels (Diez & Alvarez, 2001; Barros et al., 2008; Atri et al., 2013). The values documented for *Cordyceps tuberculata* were significantly higher than previously analyzed and commercially used species viz., *Agaricus arvensis*, *Pleurotus cystidiosus*, *Amanita caesarea*, *Agaricus campestris*, *Cantharellus cibarius*, and *Lentinus cladopus* etc. (Sharma and Gautam, 2015; Sharma, Gautam & Atri, 2015). There was no significant difference observed

in fat contents of the mycelial formulations species. Small percentages of crude fibres were also detected from all the formulation which is showing their nutritional values (Sharma & Atri, 2014).

Biochemical composition

β -carotene contents was documented as 0.63 g/100g. Lycopene content in the formulations was documented as 0.33 g/100g. Formulation prepared from the mycelium of *Cordyceps tuberculata* contained highest amount of β -carotene and lycopene (0.45 g/100g).

Phenols were documented in significant amounts from the formulations (40.18 mg/g). Ascorbic acid content of all the formulations was documented as 0.43 mg/100g. Anthocyanidins documented as 7.23mg cyanidin chloride/100 g extract in the formulation.

Phenolic compounds in all the mycelial formulations were documented in higher amounts than other bioactive compounds. Presence of high phenolic compounds accounts for the high antioxidant properties of all these formulations (Barros et al., 2007). However, β -carotene, lycopene, and ascorbic acids were detected in minor quantities. Anthocyanidins were detected in appreciable amounts from all these mycelial formulations. The presence of these functional medicinal compounds plays soignificant role similar to beta-glucans, selenium, ganoderic acid, triterpenes, or cordycepin from fruitbodies and mycelia of other species. In many studies it is reported that the amounts of these vary with the type of extraction as ethanolic extract yields higher amounts of anthocyanidins as compared to methanolic, hot water, and cold water extracts (Vamanu & Nita, 2013).

Antioxidant activities of mycelial formulations

Antioxidant properties of all the formulations were expressed as EC₅₀ values and are presented in table 4. EC₅₀ values obtained for DPPH radical scavenging activity higher effectiveness in antioxidant properties. Mycelial formulation of *Cordyceps tuberculata* (2.98 ± 0.1 mg/mL) showed higher DPPH, ABTS (3.99±0.3 mg/mL), scavenging ability on superoxide radical (1.94 ± 0.7 mg/mL) and iron chelating activities. Better antioxidant properties of mycelial formulations may be attributed due to the presence of higher phenolic compounds, β -carotene, lycopene, ascorbic acids, anthocyanidins, and tocopherol contents in them (Yoon et al., 1994; Klaus & Nksic, 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

The formulations prepared from *Cordyceps tuberculata* showed high nutritive and nutraceutical potential. These investigations have been carried out for the first time. The formulations were observed as richer source of nutritional constituents such as proteins, carbohydrates, minerals. Besides that biochemical composition of present formulations showed richness in carotenoids, ascorbic acids and

anthocynadins. These compounds play a vital role in human body and useful for nutritional therapy. Direct use of these formulations can be health promoting with additive effects of all the biochemical constituents. These formulations can be useful for the patients with nutritional deficiency and immune related disorders. Present investigations will lead the way to researches on commercial exploitations and their use in pharmaceutical industries.

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Table 1: Nutritive composition of mycelial formulations of *Cordyceps tuberculata* (mean±SD).

Chemical constituents	Formulation Composition (%)
Protein	18.50 ± 3.2 ^b
Crude fat	1.41 ± 0.0 ^a
Fibres	0.80 ± 0.0 ^a
Ash	0.60 ± 0.0 ^a
Carbohydrates	33.12 ± 2.5 ^b

Values are expressed as mean \pm SE and different letters represent the significant difference in each column with $p \leq 0.05$.

Table 2. Minerals content of *Cordyceps tuberculata* formulation

Minerals	(mg/100g)
Fe	6.3 \pm 1.3 ^b
Na	1.93 \pm 0.2 ^a
K	1.2 \pm 0.0 ^a
Ca	5.2 \pm 1.1 ^b
Mg	5.2 \pm 1.3 ^b
Cu	1.5 \pm 0.0 ^a

Table 3: Biochemical composition of mycelial formulations *Cordyceps tuberculata*

Bioactive molecules	Formulation
β -carotene(g/100 g)	0.63 \pm 0.0 ^a
Lycopene(g/100 g)	0.33 \pm 0.0 ^a
Phenolic compounds (mg/100 g of gallic acid)	40.18 \pm 1.2 ^c
Ascorbic acid (mg/100 g)	0.43 \pm 0.0 ^a
Anthocyanidins (mg cyanidin chloride/100 g extract)	7.23 \pm 2.1 ^b

Values are expressed as mean \pm SE and different letters represent the significant difference in each column with $p \leq 0.05$. ND=not detected

Table 4: EC50 values of different antioxidant assays

Antioxidant Assays	EC50 values
DPPH radical scavenging activity(mg/mL)	3.24 \pm 0.4
ABTS(mg/mL)	3.99 \pm 0.3
Reducing power(mg/mL)	4.16 \pm 0.5
Fe ²⁺ chelating activity (mg/mL)	3.22 \pm 0.4
Scavenging on superoxide anion radical (mg/mL)	2.45 \pm 0.2
FRAP (mol Fe ²⁺ equivalents/g DW)	2.60 \pm 0.3