

RHEIN CONTENT IN *CASSIA FISTULA* POD PULP EXTRACT DETERMINED BY HPLC AND TLC-DENSITOMETRY IN COMPARISON

Savita Chewchinda^{1,2}, Pongtip Sithisarn¹, Wandee Gritsanapan^{1,*}

¹Department of Pharmacognosy, Faculty of Pharmacy, Mahidol University, Bangkok 10400, Thailand

²Faculty of Pharmacy, Siam University, Bangkok 10160, Thailand

ABSTRACT: *Cassia fistula* Linn. (Fabaceae) is an ornamental plant widely grown in tropical and sub-tropical areas. *C. fistula* pod pulp is used in traditional medicine as a purgative/laxative drug, and also used against various disorders such as skin diseases, diabetes and other ailments. The major anthraquinone derivative in the pod pulp of *C. fistula* is rhein. Although high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) is the most widely used method for quality assessment of herbal preparations, it requires high operational cost and a skilled operator. The purpose of this study is to compare the quantitative analysis of rhein content determined by HPLC and TLC-densitometric methods in the extracts of *C. fistula* pod pulp. It showed that, there was no significant difference between the mean content of rhein determined by these methods (0.0993 ± 0.002 and 0.0972 ± 0.004 % w/w for HPLC and TLC-densitometry, respectively). Thus, TLC-densitometric method, which is simple, less expensive but provides faster results than the HPLC, could be alternatively used as a routine analysis of rhein in *C. fistula* pod pulp extracts.

Keywords: *Cassia fistula*, HPLC, rhein, TLC-densitometric method

INTRODUCTION

Cassia fistula Linn. (Fabaceae) is a medium-sized, deciduous tree widely grown in various countries as an ornamental plant. It is commonly known as golden shower, Indian laburnum, pudding pine tree, and khun. The ripe pod pulp is well known as a purgative/laxative drug. Several biological activities of the ripe pod pulp were reported including antidermatophytic, antifungal, antibacterial, antioxidant, antileishmanial and hypolipidemic activities [1-5]. In Ayurvedic medicinal system, it was used as laxative and also used for diabetes, antipyretic, abortifacient, demulcent, treatments of urinary tract disorder, asthma, disorders of liver, colic, chlorosis, lessen inflammation and heat of the body [6, 7].

The ripe pod pulp of *C. fistula* contains anthraquinone derivatives both glycosidic and aglycone forms. The major anthraquinone derivative is rhein. High concentration of soluble

sugars, volatile oils, waxy and resinous substances were also reported in the pod pulp [8, 9].

Rhein, the laxative major component, was regarded as a marker compound for the quality assessment of *C. fistula* pod pulp extract. High performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) which is the most popularly used technique because of its precise and high reproducible analytical data, it requires high operation cost and a skilled operator. Thus, TLC-densitometric method might be used as an alternative routine analysis technique because it is simple, rapid and need less amount of solvents that reduce time consuming and operation cost. Therefore, the aim of this study was to compare the quantitative analysis of rhein in the extracts of *C. fistula* pod pulp determined by HPLC and TLC-densitometric methods.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Plant Materials

Six samples of the ripe pods of *C. fistula* were collected from Nakhon Si Thammarat province,

* Correspondence to: Wandee Gritsanapan
E-mail: wandee.gri@mahidol.ac.th

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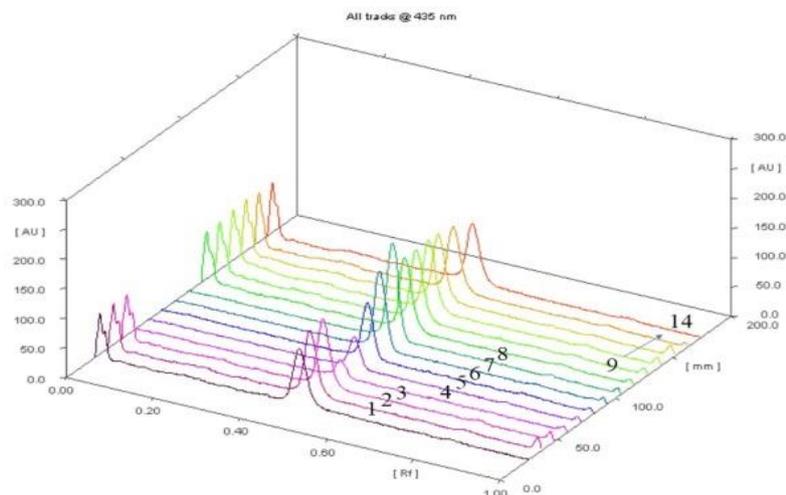


Figure 1 3D TLC-densitogram of rhein standard (track no. 4-8) and *C. fistula* pod pulp extract (sample#1 lot 1= tracks no. 1-3, lot 2 = tracks no.9-11, lot 3= tracks no. 12-14)

Thailand, in March, 2010. They were identified by comparing with herbarium specimens at the Forest Herbarium, Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Bangkok. The voucher specimens (WCF0401-6) were deposited at the Department of Pharmacognosy, Faculty of Pharmacy, Mahidol University. The ripe pods were cleaned with tap water and the pod pulp (without seed) was separated and kept in a tight container at 4°C until used.

Preparation of *C. fistula* Pod Pulp Extract

Each sample of fresh pulp of *C. fistula* ripe pod (20 g) was boiled with distilled water (200 mL) for one hour at 95-98°C and the mixture was filtered. The extraction process was repeated until anthraquinones in the pulp were exhaustively extracted (tested by Borntrager's reaction). The filtrates were combined and evaporated to dryness on a boiling water bath to yield a decoction crude extract. The yield of crude extract was recorded and the extract ratio (weight of pod pulp: 1 g extract) was calculated.

Preparation of Sample Solution

Decoction extracts of samples of *C. fistula* pod pulp (each 0.1 g) were accurately weighed, separately dissolved in 60% (v/v) methanol, then adjusted to 10 mL in volumetric flasks for both methods. Each solution was filtered through a 0.45 µm nylon membrane filter and analyzed in triplicate.

Preparation of Standard Solution

Rhein reference standard (Sigma, USA) was accurately weighed and dissolved in methanol in a volumetric flask as a stock solution (1 mg/mL). Standard working solutions of rhein were prepared

by diluting the stock solution with 60% (v/v) methanol in the range of 1.25-20 µg/mL and 25-250 ng/spot for HPLC and TLC-densitometric analysis, respectively.

HPLC Method

A validated HPLC analysis [10] was performed on a Shimadzu Technologies modular model Class VP system consisting of a SCL-10A system, a UV-vis SPD-10A detector, LC-10 AD and auto injector SIL-10A (Shimadzu, Japan). The analysis was carried out using a BDS Hypersil C18 column (250×4.6 mm, i.d. 5 µm) (Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc., USA) with a BDS Hypersil C18 guard column (10×4 mm, i.d. 5 µm) (Thermo Hypersil-Keystone, USA). The isocratic mobile phase was 0.5% aqueous acetic acid solution and methanol (40:60). The total running time was 30 min and the flow rate was 1.0 mL/min. The UV detector monitored at 435 nm while the injection volume was 20 µL.

TLC-Densitometric Method

Thin layer chromatography was performed on an aluminum sheet of silica gel60 F₂₅₄ (20 cm x 10 cm). Sample and standard solutions were applied on the plate as 7 mm band with a Linomat V automatic sample spotter (Camag, Switzerland) under nitrogen flow, positioned at 10 mm from the bottom of the plate. The mobile phase consisted of ethyl acetate-methanol-water (100:17:10, v/v/v). The plate was developed to a distance of 8 cm in a Camag twin trough chamber. The densitometric scanning was performed by using a TLC Scanner 3 (Camag, Switzerland) with winCATS software. The wavelength of the detector was set at 435 nm. The slit dimension was 6.00 x 0.45 mm and the scanning speed was 20 mm s⁻¹. The sample was

Table 1 The contents of rhein in 6 samples of *C. fistula* pod pulp extracts analyzed by HPLC and TLC densitometric methods

Sample no.	Content of rhein (% w/w)*	
	HPLC	TLC-densitometry
1	0.1147±0.004	0.1041±0.006
2	0.1069±0.002	0.0945±0.003
3	0.0965±0.001	0.0973±0.004
4	0.0998±0.002	0.0986±0.006
5	0.0929±0.003	0.1041±0.004
6	0.0851±0.001	0.0846±0.001
average	0.0993±0.002	0.0972±0.004

*Expressed as mean ± SD (n = 3)

applied at 10 µL/spot. The used method was validated as reported in our previous work [11].

Statistical Analysis

The mean values of rhein content in *C. fistula* pod pulp extracts determined by HPLC and TLC densitometric methods were tested by paired *t*-test at 95% confident level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Six samples of *C. fistula* pod pulp collected from Nakhon Si Thammarat province in the South of Thailand were comparatively analyzed in triplicate for the contents of rhein by HPLC and TLC-densitometric methods.

For HPLC method, the contents of rhein in *C. fistula* pod pulp extracts were in the range of 0.0851-0.1147% w/w. HPLC chromatograms of the extract showed similar pattern with a major peak of rhein at a retention time of 15 minute. Regarding the quantitative analysis of rhein content by the validated TLC-densitometric method, rhein was found in the TLC chromatogram at $R_f = 0.49$ separated from other components (Figure 1). The contents of rhein in the six samples of *C. fistula* pod pulp extracts analyzed by both methods are shown in Table 1. The paired *t*-test showed no statistically significant difference between the mean contents of rhein performed by the HPLC and TLC- densitometric methods.

In conclusion, the proposed TLC- densitometric method could be used as an alternative method for the quantitative analysis of rhein content in *C. fistula* pod pulp extracts. This method showed several advantages such as simplicity, fast data acquisition, less solvents used, low cost, but high efficacy.

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