

Marine Natural Products with Cytotoxic Properties against Epithelial Ovarian Cancer

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المنتجات البحرية الطبيعية ذات الخصائص السامة للخلايا في مكافحة سرطان المبيض الظهاري

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ABSTRACT. Epithelial ovarian cancer (EOC) is a common gynecological cancer and a leading cause of death, especially because the tumors develop resistance to cisplatin. New compounds are needed to achieve better disease control and survival. We examined the cytotoxic effect of Gallic acid (GA), Hymenialdisine, and Malformin A1 (MA1) on human ovarian cancer cells. Cytotoxicity was tested using cisplatin-sensitive (A2780s) and cisplatin-resistant (A2780cp) ovarian cancer cell lines, and a normal ovarian tissue cell line (HOSE6-3) using AlamarBlue assay, Hoechst dye, and flow cytometry, and the genes and proteins of interest were assessed using western blot, and qRT-PCR. The IC₅₀ of Hymenialdisine was 146.8 μM for A2780s cells and >300 μM for A2780cp cell lines. Both GA and MA1 decreased cell viability in a concentration-dependent manner. The IC₅₀ of GA was 103 μM for A2780s cells, 189 μM for A2780cp cells and 262 μM for HOSE6-3 cell lines, for MA1 IC₅₀ was 0.23 μM for A2780s and 0.34 μM for A2780cp. This was in comparison to IC₅₀ of 31.4 μM and 76.9 μM, for A2780s cells, and A2780cp cells respectively for cisplatin. The combination of GA and MA1 with cisplatin revealed synergistic action, especially in A2780cp cell lines. The results suggest that both GA and MA1 may help overcome the resistance to cisplatin through the synergistic effect. Hence, the cytotoxic potential of GA and MA1 merit further investigation.

KEYWORDS: Ovarian cancer, Marine, Natural products, Cytotoxicity, Apoptosis, Oman

الخلاصة: سرطان المبيض الظهاري (EOC) هو سرطان نسائي شائع ومسبب رئيسي للوفاة، خاصة بسبب تطور المقاومة للسيسبلاتين في الأورام. هناك حاجة ملحة لمركبات جديدة لتحقيق سيطرة أفضل على المرض وزيادة فرص البقاء على قيد الحياة. قمنا بدراسة تأثير السمية على الخلايا لثلاث منتجات بحرية طبيعية وهي حمض الغاليك (GA)، هيميبيداليسين، ومالفورمين A1 (MA1) على خلايا سرطان المبيض البشرية. تم اختبار السمية الخلوية باستخدام خطوط الخلايا الحساسة للسيسبلاتين (A2780s) والمقاومة للسيسبلاتين (A2780cp)، وخط الخلايا الطبيعية للأنسجة المبيضية (HOSE6-3) باستخدام AlamarBlue، صبغة هويشت، وتدفق الخلايا، وتم تقييم الجينات والبروتينات ذات الاهتمام باستخدام التحليل الغربي وتقنية QRT-PCR. وكانت قيمة IC₅₀ للهيميبيداليسين 146.8 ميكرومولر لخلايا A2780s وأكثر من 300 ميكرومولر لخطوط الخلايا A2780cp. أما حمض الغاليك ومالفورمين A1 فقد تناقصت قدرة الخلايا على البقاء بشكل يعتمد على التركيز. وكانت قيمة IC₅₀ لـ GA هي 103 ميكرومولر لخلايا A2780s، 189 ميكرومولر لخلايا A2780cp، و262 ميكرومولر لخطوط الخلايا HOSE6-3، وأما بالنسبة لـ MA1 فقد كانت قيمة IC₅₀ هي 0.23 ميكرومولر لـ A2780s و0.34 ميكرومولر لـ A2780cp. وكانت هذه القيم مقارنة للسيسبلاتين بـ 31.4 ميكرومولر و76.9 ميكرومولر بالنسبة لخلايا A2780s وA2780cp على التوالي. أظهرت المزيج من GA و MA1 مع السيسبلاتين تأثيرًا تآزريًا، خاصة في خطوط الخلايا A2780cp. تشير النتائج إلى أن كلاً من GA و MA1 قد يساعدا في التغلب على مقاومة السيسبلاتين من خلال التأثير التآزري. وبالتالي، فإن إمكانات السمية الخلوية لـ GA و MA1 تستحق المزيد من البحث والاستكشاف

الكلمات الرئيسية: سرطان المبيض، البحرية، المنتجات الطبيعية، السمية الخلوية، موت الخلايا المبرمج، عمان

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Introduction

Ovarian cancer is the 8th most common cause of death from cancer among women worldwide and the 2nd most common cause of death from gynecological cancer (Sung et al., 2021). Epithelial ovarian cancer (EOC) accounts for 90% of all ovarian cancers, and high-grade EOC accounts for the majority (Kurman et al., 2014). The vast majority of patients with high-grade EOC are diagnosed with stage III/IV disease (Matulonis et al., 2016). A combination of debulking surgery and cisplatin-based chemotherapy with or without anti-angiogenic therapy has been the standard of care (McGuire et al., 2003). More recently, a subset of patients with mutations in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene or those with homologous reconstitution deficiency has been shown to respond to inhibitors of the poly (ADP-ribose) polymerase (PARP) enzyme, leading to a prolongation of disease-free survival (Konstantinopoulos et al., 2010; Ledermann et al., 2012). However, despite a consistent rate of initial responses, cisplatin treatment often results in the development of chemoresistance, leading to a therapeutic failure (Galluzi et al., 2012). Five-year survival is reported to be 15-25% (Sung et al., 2021). Since cisplatin constitutes the major therapeutic option, new compounds are urgently needed to overcome resistance to cisplatin, ultimately leading to better disease control and survival.

Marine organisms represent a reservoir of natural resources rich in novel bioactive metabolites that can be potential anticancer drugs (Cragg et al., 1999; Reinhardt, 2000; Pandey et al., 2013). Marine drug research has evolved rapidly in the last decade, as marine organisms have been shown to acquire remarkable cytotoxic properties. Several cytotoxic chemotherapeutic agents of marine origin, such as cytarabine, trabectedin, and eribulin, are in routine clinical use, and several others are in different stages of clinical trials (Donoghue et al., 2012; Swami et al., 2012; Poveda et al., 2011).

In our previous study, the anticancer activity of 8 marine natural products and 32 extracts of marine organisms from Oman waters were studied (Dobretsov et al., 2016). Among the tested pure compounds, gallic acid (GA), MaforninA1 (MA1), and hymenialdisine (HYM) showed potent cytotoxic activity against the MCF-7 breast cell line. In this study, we investigated the cytotoxic effect of GA, MA1 and HYM in ovarian cancer cell lines for effectiveness, and if they were cytotoxic in cisplatin-resistant ovarian cancer cell lines.

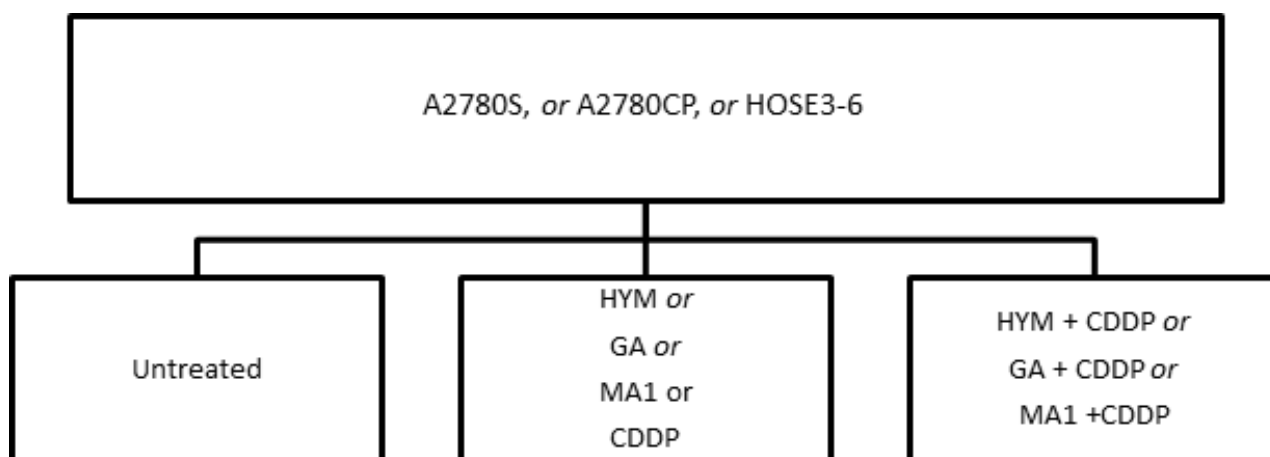
Materials and methods

Reagents

HYM was purchased from Boc Science (USA) and dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) (Sigma, USA) to make a stock solution of 3085.2 μM. GA monohydrate, $C_6H_2(OH)_3COOH \cdot H_2O$, M.W.= 188.14 g/mol, was purchased from Cica reagent, Kanto Chemicals, Japan. A stock solution of GA monohydrate (188.14 g/mol) was prepared in absolute ethanol (EMD Millipore) at 531.52 μM and stored at 4°C. MA1 was purchased from Boc Science (USA), and dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) (Sigma, USA) to make a stock solutions of 1887.9 μM. Cis-dichlorodiammineplatinum (CDDP or cisplatin) solution (1 mg/ml) solution was obtained from Mylan, France, at a concentration of 3333.2 μM.

Cisplatin-sensitive (A2780S) and cisplatin-resistant (A2780CP) ovarian cancer cell lines were generous gift from Dr. Benjamin K. Tsang (University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada). The immortalized normal ovarian cell line HOSE3-6 was a generous gift from Professor GSW Tsao, Hong Kong University. Cell lines were seeded in a 96-well plate and cultured in Dulbecco's Modified Eagle's Medium (DMEM/F12). All culturing media were supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (Gibco) and 1% penicillin-streptomycin (Gibco) in a humidified incubator (5% CO₂) at 37°C. The cell lines in the medium were maintained as described earlier (Al Bahlani et al., 2011).

Figure 1. Study Design. Cisplatin-sensitive A2780S cells, cisplatin-resistant A2780P cells, which were either left untreated (control) or treated with single agents HYM, GA, MA1 or CDDP at their respective IC_{50} concentrations. Combination of HYM+CDDP, GA+CDDP, or MA1+CDDP were administered. The immortalized normal ovarian cell line (HOSE3-6) was not treated with either CDDP as a single agent or in combination with HYM, due to its high IC_{50} value in both A2780S and A2780CP cell lines. Therefore, further investigation of HYM was not pursued



Cell Viability Assay

AlamarBlue (Invitrogen, USA) was used to determine the IC_{50} values of HYM, GA, and MA1 in A2780S, A2780CP and HOSE6-3 cell lines. Briefly, cells were seeded at a density of 15,000 cells/well in a 96-well plate (Corning) for 24 h. Following the removal of growth media, the cells were treated with various concentrations of HYM, GA, and MA1 in serum free media for 24 hours. Subsequently, then detection dye AlamarBlue was added, and the plate was incubated for 3 hours before being read using a Multiskan spectrum plate reader (ThermoFisher Scientific, USA) at 570/600 nm. The viability of the negative control cells was set as 100%. Each experiment was performed in triplicate and repeated three times to ensure the reability of the results.

Hoechst Dye Staining of Cells

Apoptosis was determined, as described previously. Briefly, A2780S and A2780CP cell lines were cultured in a 24-well plate (Corning) at a density of 150,000 cells/well and incubated overnight. Growth media was refreshed and different concentrations of HYM, GA, and MA1 were added to cells and incubated for 24 h. On the third day, cells were harvested, washed with

Dulbecco's phosphate-buffered saline, with no calcium and no magnesium (DPBS) (GIBCO, Thermo Fisher), stained with Hoechst 33258 dye (Sigma-Aldrich) in 10% formalin (1:50), and then preserved in the dark at 4°C until visualization (within 1-2weeks). Apoptotic cells were identified based on their morphology (smaller size and fragmented DNA) under a fluorescent microscope with a DAPI filter. We estimated the percentage of cells undergoing apoptosis by microscopic examination of different random fields at 40X and 100X magnification. We examined at least three different areas for each experiment, and the number of apoptotic cells was counted to estimate the percentage of survival.

Annexin V-FITC Apoptosis Assay

Flow cytometry was used to examine cell apoptosis. The cells were plated in 6 well plates at a density of 5×10^5 cells/well and incubated for 72h in the presence or absence of Malformin A₁. The apoptosis assay was performed using Annexin V-FITC Apoptosis Detection Kit (Guava Nexin® reagent, Millipore Sigma, USA) and analysed with flow cytometry according to the manufacturer's protocol. Briefly, the cells were detached using 2% EDTA in PBS, and Annexin V and 7-amino-actinomycin-D dyes were added.

The samples were then incubated in the dark at room temperature for 20 mins. A flow cytometer (Beckman Coulter Life Sciences, USA) equipped with Navios Cytometer Software 1.3 was used to measure the percentage of apoptotic cells. Finally, the data were analyzed using Kaluza software 2.1.

Statistical Analysis

All experiments were performed in triplicate and repeated at least three times. The results are reported as the mean ± standard error of the mean (SEM). Means were compared using one-way ANOVA followed by a Tukey or Dunnett 2-sided post-hoc tests. Prior to analysis, the normality of the data and homogeneity of the variables were tested. The difference between means was considered significant at $p < 0.05$ (* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$).

Results

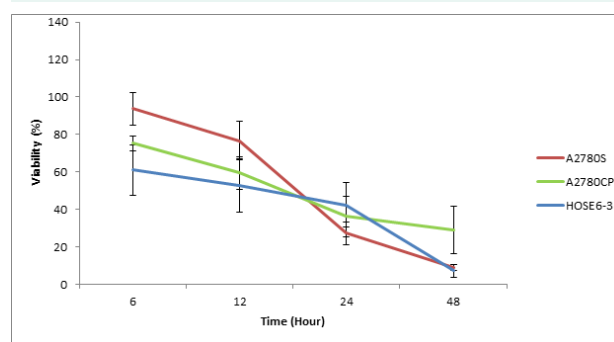
Determination of IC₅₀

We used AlamarBlue to assess cytotoxicity in A2780S, A2780CP, and HOSE6-3 cell lines exposed to different doses of the three compounds and cisplatin. The recorded IC₅₀ values (in μM) are shown in Table 1.

Due to its high IC₅₀, particularly in the A2780CP cell line, the HYM compound was not studied further. However, the IC₅₀ values for each cell line were determined for subsequent experiments. The three cell lines were exposed to the IC₅₀ concentrations of the three compounds at

different time points (6, 12, 24, and 48 hours). Figure 2 displays the cell viability in response to GA treatment at different time points. Although data for MA1 and HYM are not shown, they exhibited a similar viability pattern. Consequently, exposure at 24 hours was chosen for subsequent experiments.

Figure 2. Time-dependent decrease in cell viability following the administration of GA at the IC₅₀ concentrations specific to each cell line: 262 μM for HOSE3-6, 103 μM for A2780S, and 189 μM for A2780CP.



Apoptosis

Apoptosis was confirmed through the observation of distinct morphological changes, such as nuclear fragmentation and reduction in cell size. Figure 3 shows these changes in response to the administration of MA1, while similar changes were observed with GA treatment as well.

The degree of apoptosis was determined by exposing A2780S and A2780CP cells to different concentrations of GA and MA1 for 24 hours, followed by Hoechst dye staining. The

Table 1. Cytotoxicity of A2780S, A2780CP, and HOSE6-3 cell lines exposed to different doses of the three compounds and cisplatin

	CDDP	HYM	GA	MA1
HOSE3-6	29.39	Not studied	262	0.07
A2780S	31.4	146.8	103	0.23
A2780CP	76.9	300<	189	0.34

results revealed a dose-dependent increase in the number of apoptotic cells in response to GA treatment (Figure 4).

Figure 3. The induction of apoptosis in A2780S and A2780CP cell lines following a 24-hour application of MA1

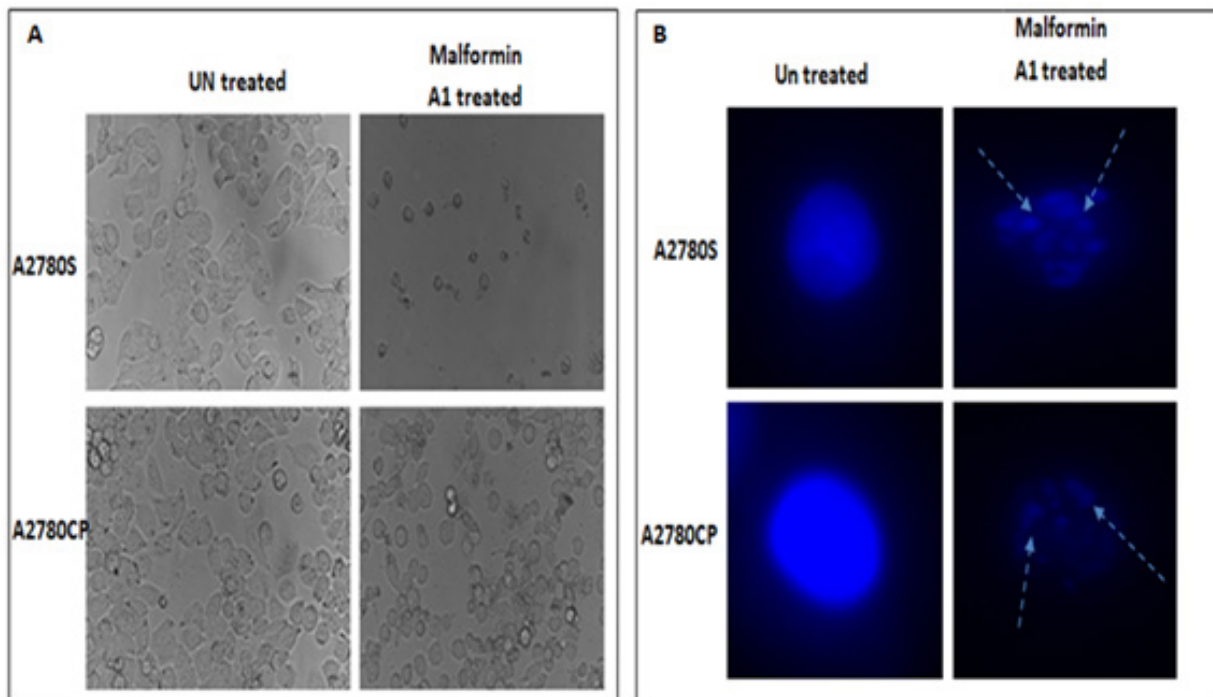
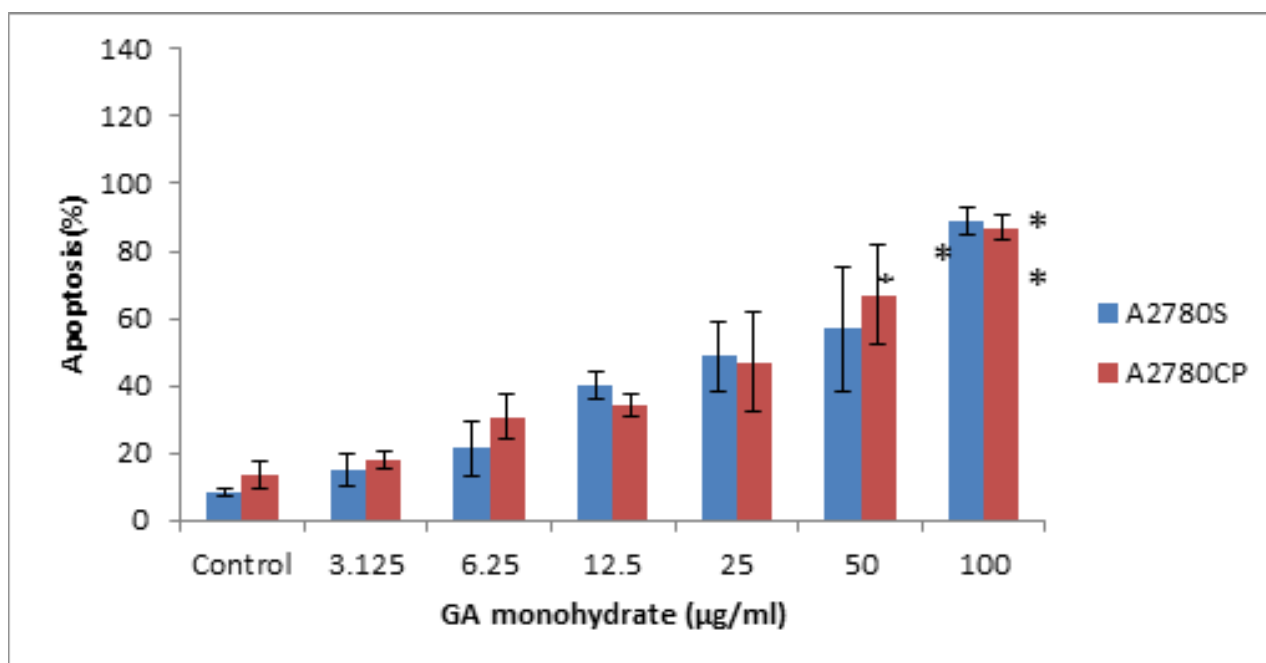


Figure 4. A dose-dependent increase in the degree of Apoptosis was observed in both A2780S and A2780CP cell lines following a 24- hour application of GA at different concentrations



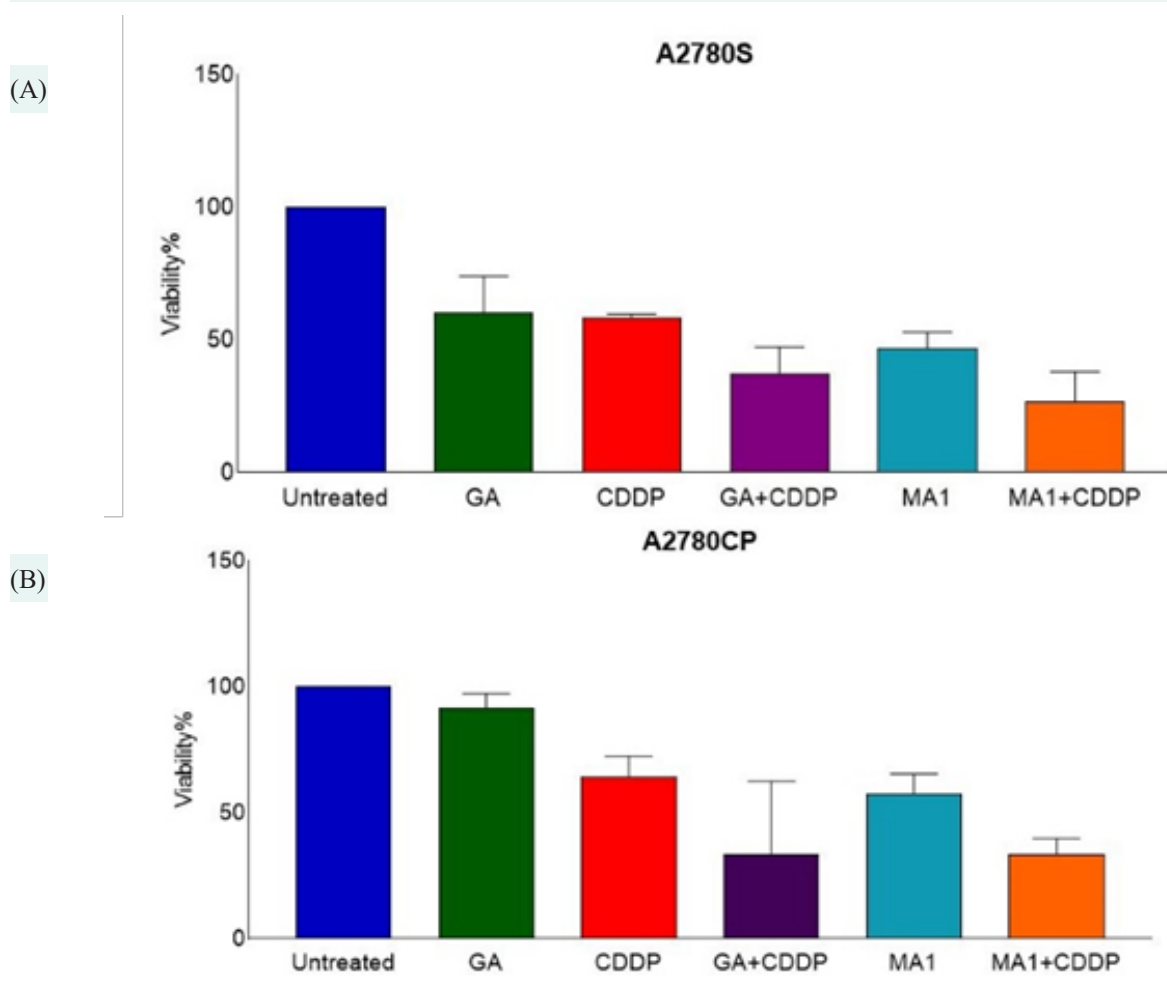
Cell Viability of Single Agents and in Combination

Cell viability was determined using the Alamar-Blue assay with the viability of control cells set at 100%. The cells were exposed to either CDDP, GA, or MA1, or in combination (GA+CDDP and MA1+CDDP), and the results are shown below. It is evident that all agents led to a significant reduction in cell viability. In the A2780S cell line, viability was reduced to 20% with a combination of MA1+CDDP in the A2780S cell line, and 35% in the A2780CP cell lines, and this was significantly lower than the two agents separately. Viability was reduced to 15% with the combination of GA+CDDP.

Discussion

Both GA monohydrate and MA1 demonstrated significant cytotoxicity in cisplatin-sensitive and cisplatin-resistant cell lines. Their cytotoxicity effects were attributed, at least in part, to the induction of apoptosis. Interestingly, when cisplatin was combined with GA or MA1, a significantly greater level of cytotoxicity was observed compared to the use of either agent alone, suggesting a potential synergistic action. The selection of HYM, GA and MA1 for this study was based on a previous screening of anticancer compounds derived from Omani marine natural products against the MCF-7 breast cancer cell line (Dobretsov et al., 2016).

Figures 5A and 5B depict the cell viability of A2780S and A2780CP cell lines following a 24 hour application of the test compounds. A significant reduction in cell viability was observed when the combination of GA+CDDP and MA1+CDDP were administered, compared to the application of a single compound or CDDP alone. The results are presented as the mean \pm SD of three independent experiments, with untreated cells serving as controls



The three compounds have been reported to exhibit anticancer activity in different types of cancer cell lines. The IC_{50} value of HYM in our experiments, leading to its exclusion from further investigation. On the other hand, GA is a polyphenolic compound commonly found in many plants (Kahkeshani et al., 2019). GA has demonstrated anticancer activity in various types of cancer, including lung cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer, leukaemia, and cervical cancer (Madlener et al., 2007; Kaur et al., 2009; You et al., 2010a; You et al., 2010b; Wang et al., 2014). It has also been shown to induce apoptosis in stomach cancer and acute lymphoblastic leukemia (Yoshioka et al., 2000; Sourani et al., 2016). MA1 was found to exhibit cytotoxic activity against HeLa, prostate cancer cell lines, and human colorectal cancer cells (Liu et al., 2016; Park et al., 2017; Notarte et al., 2017). Notably, the cytotoxicity of all three compounds in ovarian cancer is reported by us for the first time (Abdullah et al., 2021; Abdullah et al., 2021., Al Balushi et al., 2022). The cytotoxicity of these compounds in cisplatin-resistant cell lines has not been previously reported.

The A2780 cell line, derived from an untreated ovarian cancer patient, serves as the parental cell line. The cisplatin-resistant cell line A2780CP was developed by chronic exposure of A2780 to cisplatin; A2780CP had a 6-fold resistance to cisplatin, compared with A2780S cells. An increased activity of efflux mechanisms, especially the intracellular copper ion transporters, leading to a reduction in the intracellular impact of cisplatin is considered to be the major mechanism of developing resistance (Pan et al., 2002; Kalayda et al., 2008). Post-translational modification has been suggested to be yet another important mechanism (Zhu et al., 2005).

One of the major issues in the treatment of ovarian cancer is development of resistance to platinum agents. Almost 80% of patients with high-grade EOC respond to cisplatin at the time of diagnosis, and even at the time of relapse. If the relapse occurs more than one year after the last dose of platinum compounds, the reponse rate to

further platinum-based chemotherapy is between 30-70%. However, if the disease relapses within the 6 months from the last dose of platinum containing chemotherapy, the reponse rates to subsequent lines of chemotherapy are between 10 and 30% (Matulonis et al., 2016; McGuire et al., 2003; Galluzi et al., 2012). Once the disease relapses, almost all patients develop resistance to platinum compounds, leading to cancer-related mortality. The major aim of this study was to see whether the addition of HYM, GA, or MA1 would be active against cisplatin-resistant cell lines, and would overcome the resistance to cisplatin. HYM produced cytotoxicity in A2780s and A2780CP cell lines at a high IC_{50} value and hence was not tested in combination with CDDP. However, both GA monohydrate and MA1 produced cytotoxicity at a relatively low IC_{50} value. The IC_{50} for CDDP was 31.4 and 76.9 μ M for A2780s and A2780CP cell lines respectively. The addition of GA monohydrate and MA1 led to a significant reduction in cell viability and an increase in the proportion of apoptotic cells, suggesting a synergistic action of apoptosis-mediated cytotoxicity.

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant cytotoxic activity of GA and MA1 in both cisplatin-sensitive and cisplatin-resistant cell lines. The addition of GA or MA1 to CDDP demonstrates a synergistic effect, resulting in increased cytotoxicity. The combinations need to be explored further using in-vivo models and possibly in clinical trials.

Acknowledgments

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