

DOCTORAL THESIS

Integrating metabolomics and glycomics for understanding the traditional usage of morindae officinalis radix

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ABSTRACT

Morindae Officinalis Radix (MOR), Bajitian in Chinese, is the dried root of *Morinda officinalis* F.C.How. (Rubiaceae). It is one of the most popular herbal medicines used in the southeast region of China. Various types of chemical constituents have been experimentally shown to be bioactive components of MOR, among which secondary metabolites and saccharides predominate. Pharmacological studies revealed MOR shows kidney tonifying, anti-osteoporosis, antidepressant, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effect. Since 2002, MOR has been approved as a food supplement for daily healthcare, hence increasing consumption and demand for better quality of MOR. However, selection of MOR with superior quality is largely based on traditional experience which lacks scientific basis. For example, 3-4-year-old MOR is usually used without xylem; and processed MOR are believed to show different bioactivities. Therefore, to promote the rational utilization and ensure efficacy of MOR, overall qualitative and quantitative characterization of MOR in different traditional usage is needed. Anthraquinones, iridoid glycosides and oligosaccharides are the common reference compounds for chemical characterization of MOR. However, they are usually selectively characterized, which is not comprehensive enough in herbal quality evaluation. To deal with this, metabolomics targeting secondary metabolome and glycomics targeting glycome can be applied. And the integration of metabolomics and glycomics could be a promising approach to investigate overall chemical variations in MOR according to its traditional usage.

Therefore, in this study, chromatographic methods for metabolomics and glycomics were firstly developed to study the traditional usage of MOR. In Chapter 2, they were applied for studying chemical variation and differences in growth year and plant tissue of MOR. In Chapter 3, chemical differences in processed products of MOR were also studied using the established metabolomics and glycomics methods. Further bioactivity differences of them were studied by cell metabolomics with HEK 293 cells under high glucose microenvironment. Besides that, in Chapter 4, consumption method of not only MOR, but other herbal medicines were studied. Conventional boiling water extraction (BWE) and ultrasound-assisted extraction (UAE) were compared to understand their effects on polysaccharides.

For the study of growth year and tissues of MOR, the results showed that various types of bioactive components reached a maximum between 3-4 years of growth; and that xylem contained more potentially toxic constituents, but less bioactive components, than cortex. For the study of processing products, the results showed that secondary metabolome and glycome of raw MOR and other processing products was found qualitatively and quantitatively different. Contents of secondary metabolites were generally increased in processed products, while saccharides were decreased instead. Also, steamed MOR (F) seemed to show preventive effect of diabetic nephropathy and different MOR processing products had induced different metabolic changes on high glucose induced HEK 293 cells. In the study of extraction methods, the results showed that the polysaccharides from the herbal medicines by UAE were quantitatively and qualitatively different with those by BWE. The powerful extraction ability and polysaccharide degradation caused by ultrasound collectively contributed to these differences. It was revealed that not only the UAE conditions but also the polysaccharide structures could affect the extraction ability and polysaccharide degradation.

To conclude, metabolomics and glycomics were integrated in this study to investigate the variations in secondary metabolome and glycome in MOR. We had successfully applied these methods to study and provide scientific basis for traditional practice of MOR. We had proved that 3rd to 4th years of growth are the key period for the development of the biochemical signature of MOR. Xylem and cortex of MOR were qualitatively and quantitatively different and removing xylem could help to remove potentially toxic components. This study also provided scientific evidences for the justification of MOR and its processed products, as well as their metabolic effects on high glucose induced DN in HEK 293 cells. Besides, this study revealed both UAE parameters and structural properties of polysaccharides affects extraction recovery of polysaccharides in herbal medicines. Hence, we suggest UAE should be carefully considered before employing it in relevant chemical and pharmacological analysis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures.....	x
List of Abbreviations.....	xv
CHAPTER 1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 General introduction of Morindae Officinalis Radix.....	1
1.1.1 Plant and crude drug morphology.....	2
1.1.2 Phytochemistry.....	3
1.1.3 Quality control.....	15
1.1.4 Pharmacology.....	19
1.2 Objectives of this study.....	24
CHAPTER 2 STUDY OF GROWTH YEAR AND TISSUE OF MORINDAE OFFICINALIS RADIX.....	27
2.1 Introduction.....	27
2.2 Experimental.....	30
2.2.1 Reagents, chemical and materials.....	30
2.2.2 Sample preparation for metabolomics.....	32
2.2.3 Sample preparation for glycomics.....	32
2.2.4 UPLC-QTOF-MS analysis for metabolomics.....	33
2.2.5 HPGPC-CAD and HPLC-CAD analysis for glycomics.....	36
2.2.6 Method validation.....	37
2.2.7 Multivariate statistical analysis.....	39
2.3 Results and discussion.....	41
2.3.1 Method optimization and validation.....	41
2.3.2 Chemical identification.....	51
2.3.3 Data processing with multivariate statistical analysis.....	65
2.3.4 Secondary metabolites and saccharides variation in MOR with 1-7 years of growth.....	69

2.3.5	Secondary metabolite and saccharide variations in xylem and cortex of MOR	82
2.4	Concluding remarks	91
CHAPTER 3 STUDY ON VARIATIONS OF DIFFERENT PROCESSING PRODUCTS OF MORINDAE OFFICINALIS RADIX		93
3.1	Introduction	93
3.2	Experimental	95
3.2.1	Reagents, chemicals and materials	95
3.2.2	Sample preparation and extraction of different processing products ..	97
3.2.3	HEK 293 cell line culture and cell viability test	100
3.2.4	Sample preparation for cell metabolomics study	100
3.2.5	Instrumental condition	102
3.2.6	Method validation	104
3.2.7	Multivariate statistical analysis	105
3.3	Results and discussion	108
3.3.1	Method optimization and validation	108
3.3.2	Chemical identification results	114
3.3.3	Data processing with multivariate statistical analysis	123
3.3.4	Secondary metabolites variation in MOR of different processing products	135
3.3.5	Saccharides variation in MOR of different processing products	145
3.3.6	Metabolic changes of different processing products of MOR	150
3.4	Concluding remarks	158
CHAPTER 4 POLYSACCHARIDES EXTRACTION		160
4.1	Introduction	160
4.2	Experimental	163
4.2.1	Chemical and materials	163
4.2.2	Sample preparation	164
4.2.3	Phenol-Sulphuric Acid Analysis	168
4.2.4	HPGPC-CAD analysis	168
4.2.5	Spiked Recovery Testing on Standard Glucans	169
4.3	Results and discussion	170

4.3.1	Optimization of Sample Preparation.....	170
4.3.2	Quantitative Comparison of Polysaccharides in Herbal Medicines by UAE and BWE.....	174
4.3.3	Qualitative Comparison of Polysaccharides in Herbal Medicines by UAE and BWE.....	175
4.3.4	Effects of Extraction Conditions on Polysaccharide Recovery by UAE	178
4.3.5	Effects of Structural Properties on Polysaccharide Recovery by UAE	185
4.4	Concluding remarks	188
CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS		190
5.1	Summary	190
5.2	Future prospectus	192
	References.....	194
	Publications.....	209
	Curriculum vitae	211