Review Article

SYNERGISTIC ANTIFUNGAL EFFECTS OF *OCIMUM SANCTUM* EXTRACTS WITH CONVENTIONAL THERAPIES

Kashif Saeed*, Vivek Gupta, Yogesh Kumar, Gyan Singh

Faculty of Pharmacy, PK University, Thanra - 473665, Madhya Pradesh, India, saeedkashif235@gmail.com

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Abstract;

Background – Fungal infections are a rising global health challenge, exacerbated by antifungal resistance and limited therapeutic options. *Ocimum sanctum* (holy basil), a cornerstone of traditional medicine, holds immense promise due to its diverse bioactive phytochemicals. This review explores the innovative potential of *Ocimum sanctum* extracts in synergizing with conventional antifungal therapies, focusing on mechanisms of action, advanced delivery systems, and future clinical applications.

Methods

Comprehensive literature analysis was conducted to investigate the antifungal mechanisms and synergistic interactions of *Ocimum sanctum* with standard antifungal drugs. State-of-the-art analytical techniques, including HPLC, GC-MS, and FTIR, were reviewed for profiling its active compounds. The review also evaluated modern delivery approaches like nanocarriers, transdermal patches, and polymeric films to enhance its therapeutic efficacy.

Results

Ocimum sanctum is a reservoir of bio actives like eugenol, ursolic acid, and rosmarinic acid, which disrupt fungal cell membranes, inhibit biofilm formation, and induce oxidative stress. Synergistic studies reveal its potential to enhance the efficacy of fluconazole and amphotericin B, overcoming resistance in drug-refractory fungal strains. Advanced delivery technologies, such as nanogels and lipid-based systems, significantly improve its bioavailability, stability, and therapeutic outcomes, paving the way for clinical integration.

Conclusion

Harnessing the synergistic potential of *Ocimum sanctum* with conventional antifungal therapies represents a groundbreaking strategy to combat antifungal resistance. Future research should emphasize clinical trials, precision formulations, and regulatory frameworks to translate this innovative approach into effective antifungal therapies.

Key words: *Ocimum sanctum*, Antifungal synergy, Bioactive compounds, Drug resistance, Advanced drug delivery

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* saeedkashif235@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION:

The treatment of potentially fatal fungal infections has grown more difficult due to the rise of antifungal resistance, a major concern in global health. The worrisome growth of multidrug-resistant fungal strains can be attributed to the overuse and misuse of antifungal medicines as well as the ability of fungi to adapt and evolve resistance mechanisms [1]. Because of this resistance, popular antifungals such as azoles, polyenes, and echinocandins are no longer effective, and infections that were formerly manageable are becoming much more difficult to handle [2].

Natural products are becoming an increasingly potent instrument in the investigation of alternative therapeutic options in response to these issues. Among these, *Ocimum sanctum*, more often known as holy basil, stands out due to its antibacterial and antifungal qualities, as well as its long history of usage in traditional medicine [3]. Bioactive chemicals found in this plant include eugenol, ursolic acid, and rosmarinic acid; these compounds target important fungal processes including biofilm suppression and membrane disruption, and have demonstrated encouraging antifungal efficacy [4].

This review is focused on exploring the potential synergy between *Ocimum sanctum* extracts and traditional antifungal medications. In this article, we will go over its many modes of action, how it can improve the effectiveness of current antifungals, and new drug delivery systems that make the most of its therapeutic potential [5]. *Ocimum sanctum* provides an innovative solution to the problem of antifungal resistance and poor patient outcomes by combining the efficacy of ancient herbal therapies with those of modern pharmaceutical advances [6].

2. Background

2.1 Overview of Antifungal Resistance

Antifungal resistance is rapidly becoming a critical global health issue, complicating the management of fungal infections. Fungi develop resistance through several mechanisms, including biofilm formation, drug efflux pumps, and genetic mutations. Biofilms act as a protective shield for fungal cells, preventing antifungal agents from penetrating effectively and rendering them less susceptible to treatment [7]. Drug efflux pumps actively expel antifungal agents from fungal cells, reducing the drug's intracellular concentration and efficacy. Additionally, genetic mutations in key drug targets, such as the lanosterol demethylase enzyme in azole-resistant strains, alter drug binding sites and render treatments ineffective [8]. These resistance mechanisms have resulted in an increase in multidrug-resistant fungal strains, leading to treatment failures, prolonged infections, and higher mortality rates, particularly in immunocompromised patients [9].

2.2 Pharmacological Profile of Ocimum sanctum

The antifungal capability of *Ocimum sanctum,* more often known as holy basil, is one of its many noteworthy pharmacological features. Eugenol, rosmarinic acid, and ursolic acid are three of the plant's most important bioactive components they have a wide range of antibacterial effects [10]. The antifungal activities of rosmarinic acid are bolstered by its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant actions, which work in tandem with eugenol's capability to break fungal cell membranes. By disrupting cell wall formation and other essential cellular processes, ursolic acid helps to suppress fungal development. *Ocimum sanctum* has shown promise as an adjunctive

* saeedkashif235@gmail.com

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treatment option for fungal infections and drug resistance, according to studies that have shown its effectiveness both in vitro and in vivo against various fungal pathogens, such as *Candida spp.* and *Aspergillus spp* [11].

2.3 Conventional Antifungal Therapies

Antifungal treatment has relied on traditional drugs like fluconazole and amphotericin B for many years. The fungal ergosterol production that is crucial for the integrity of cell membranes is inhibited by the widely used azole fluconazole. Leakage of cellular contents occurs when the fungal cell membrane binds to ergosterol with the polyene amphotericin B [12]. The toxicity of these medications, particularly with long-term usage, and the development of resistance are some of their limits, despite their effectiveness. When fungal strains acquire resistance mechanisms, the effectiveness of these drugs declines over time, making them less effective overall. Thus, it is critical to investigate alternative or supplementary treatments like *Ocimum sanctum* that may combat the rising tide of antifungal resistance while simultaneously enhancing the efficacy of traditional antifungals [13].

3. Synergistic Effects of Ocimum sanctum with Antifungal Therapies

3.1 Mechanisms of Synergy

Ocimum sanctum enhances the antifungal activity of standard antifungal medications through a number of mechanisms that work in tandem with them. One important process is that *Ocimum sanctum* can break up fungal biofilms. Because they offer a safe haven for fungus, biofilms greatly increase their resistance to antifungal treatment. Inhibiting biofilm formation and even disrupting existing biofilms, *Ocimum sanctum* extracts, especially its phenolic components like eugenol, have been demonstrated to enhance the efficiency of antifungal drugs [14].

The improvement of medication permeability across fungal membranes is another postulated mechanism of synergy. Bioactive components of *Ocimum sanctum*, like eugenol, can enhance the efficacy of antifungal medications by causing fungal cell walls to become more permeable. The drug's antifungal activity is enhanced as a result of an increase in its intracellular concentration [15].

Ocimum sanctum has shown synergy with standard antifungal medicines like fluconazole and amphotericin B in both in-vitro and in-vivo investigations, according to the existing research. Ocimum sanctum in conjunction with antifungal medications shows promise in the fight against fungal infections and resistance, according to these results [16].

3.2 Evidence from Key Studies

There is strong evidence from multiple studies that Ocimum sanctum works synergistically with traditional antifungal treatments. Researchers Patel et al. (2024) found that fluconazole and Ocimum sanctum extract worked together to kill more *Candida albicans* than either drug alone. A synergistic effect was likely at work here since the combination dramatically lowered fluconazole's minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) [17]. In a similar vein, research by Dhama et al. (2023) showed that Ocimum sanctum extracts enhanced the antifungal action of amphotericin B against *Aspergillus flavus*, leading to more effective inhibition of fungal growth than either therapy alone. These trials provide more evidence that Ocimum sanctum can enhance the efficacy of traditional antifungals, which could shorten treatment times and lead to better results for patients [18].

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3.3 Benefits of Synergistic Therapies

Ocimum sanctum has multiple advantages when used in conjunction with traditional antifungal treatments. A significant benefit is the possibility of decreasing the dosage of traditional medications, which might lessen the likelihood of adverse effects and toxicity. This is especially true with nephrotoxic pharmaceuticals such as amphotericin B. The safety profile of antifungal medications is improved because *Ocimum sanctum* enhances the efficacy of these agents, allowing for lower doses to obtain the same therapeutic outcomes [19].

In addition, traditional antifungals have a broader spectrum of action when combined with *Ocimum sanctum*. Although traditional antifungal medications may only be effective against specific types of fungi, *Ocimum sanctum* has shown promise against many different kinds of fungal infections. As a result, the synergistic therapy is a good way to treat fungal infections that are resistant to multiple drugs, providing a more all-encompassing solution than would be possible with just one kind of treatment [20].

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Table 1: Key studies demonstrating the synergistic effects of *O. sanctum* extracts with antifungal agents [21]

Study	Fungal Strain	Antifungal Agent	Ocimum sanctum Extract Used	Methodology	MIC Reduction	Observed Effect
Yadav et al. (2019)	*Candida albicans*	Fluconazole	Ethanolic Extract	In-vitro assay, MIC determination	4-fold reduction in MIC	Enhanced antifungal activity
Kumar et al. (2020)	*Aspergillus flavus*	Amphotericin B	Methanolic Extract	In-vitro assay, growth inhibition	3-fold reduction in MIC	Potentiated antifungal effect
Singh et al. (2018)	*Candida tropicalis*	Ketoconazole	Aqueous Extract	MIC assay, zone of inhibition	2-fold reduction in MIC	Synergistic antifungal action
Gupta et al. (2021)	*Trichophyton rubrum*	Griseofulvin	Hydroalcoholic Extract	In-vitro synergy testing	5-fold reduction in MIC	Increased antifungal efficacy
Patel et al. (2022)	*Candida albicans*	Nystatin	Essential Oil	Disk diffusion, MIC determination	3-fold reduction in MIC	Enhanced antifungal activity
Sharma et al. (2017)	*Aspergillus fumigatus*	Fluconazole	Ethanolic Extract	In-vitro synergy testing	2-fold reduction in MIC	Synergistic effect on fungal growth
Verma et al. (2020)	*Candida glabrata*	Amphotericin B	Ethanolic Extract	In-vitro synergy testing	3-fold reduction in MIC	Increased antifungal efficacy
Rani et al. (2021)	*Candida albicans*	Clotrimazole	Ethanolic Extract	MIC assay, growth inhibition	4-fold reduction in MIC	Synergistic inhibition of fungal growth
Mishra et al. (2019)	*Aspergillus flavus*	Itraconazole	Hydroalcoholic Extract	In-vitro assay, MIC determination	5-fold reduction in MIC	Increased antifungal effect
Sharma et al. (2018)	*Candida albicans*	Ketoconazole	Methanolic Extract	In-vitro assay, MIC determination	3-fold reduction in MIC	Enhanced antifungal activity
Meena et al. (2020)	*Aspergillus niger*	Fluconazole	Ethanolic Extract	In-vitro assay, synergy testing	2-fold reduction in MIC	Potentiation of antifungal activity
Chaudhary et al. (2021)	*Candida albicans*	Fluconazole	Essential Oil	Disk diffusion, MIC	4-fold reduction in MIC	Synergistic inhibition of fungal

* saeedkashif235@gmail.com

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				determination		growth

4. Experimental Approaches

4.1 Extraction and Phytochemical Analysis of *Ocimum sanctum*

Ocimum sanctum's bioactive components are extracted using a variety of procedures in order to tap into this plant's potential. Eugenol, rosmarinic acid, and ursolic acid are just a few of the many phytochemicals that are frequently isolated by solvent extraction. This process typically involves the use of ethanol, methanol, or hexane as the solvents [22]. Because of their high concentration of volatile molecules, essential oils are best extracted by steaming distillation, another time-honoured technique. In order to understand the chemical make-up of *Ocimum sanctum* extracts, phytochemical screening relies on cutting-edge methods such as Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS) and High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) [23]. To ensure the extract is thoroughly profiled, GC-MS is utilized for volatile compound identification and HPLC is used for non-volatile compound separation, quantification, and identification. Because of this, scientists may link the antifungal activity they've seen to particular bioactive chemicals [24].

4.2 Synergy Testing

To assess the synergistic effects of *Ocimum sanctum* extracts in conjunction with traditional antifungal drugs, *in vitro* approaches are essential. To find synergy between antifungal drugs and *Ocimum sanctum* extracts, the checkerboard assay measures the minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) at different concentrations. Another crucial method is the time-kill assay, which involves tracking the fungicidal action over a period of time to see how rapidly the combination treatment can halt fungal growth [25]. A significant synergy is indicated by values ≤ 0.5 in the Fractional Inhibitory Concentration (FIC) index, which is used to measure the degree of synergy. Furthermore, researchers can explore the pharmacokinetics, bioavailability, and therapeutic efficacy of formulations based on Ocimum sanctum in a more complicated biological setting using *in vivo* approaches, such as animal models for fungal infections. To determine the efficacy and safety of these synergistic treatments in a clinical setting, research in animals is essential [26,27].

4.3 Formulation Studies

Bringing the therapeutic potential of *Ocimum sanctum* extracts into clinical practice requires the development of viable formulations that combine them with traditional antifungal medicines. Creams and gels are examples of topical formulations that are frequently investigated due to their targeted distribution and simplicity of administration, particularly in cases of fungal skin diseases [28]. Their antifungal effectiveness can be enhanced by adding *Ocimum sanctum* extracts to these compositions. Because the bioactive components of the extracts are best administered orally, they are also being evaluated for systemic fungal infections in the form of pills or capsules.

Improving these formulations' bioavailability, release rate, and stability so they work synergistically with antifungal drugs is a major challenge [29]. The pharmacokinetics and targeted administration of these combination medicines are often improved through the use of sophisticated techniques including hydrogels, nanoencapsulation, and liposomes in formulation studies. New antifungal formulations aim to lessen the negative effects of high-dose conventional antifungal medication use while simultaneously improving therapeutic outcomes [30].

* saeedkashif235@gmail.com

5. Applications and Challenges

5.1 Potential Applications in Clinical Practice

Holy basil, or Ocimum sanctum, has great potential as a remedy for fungal infections, especially when used in conjunction with traditional antifungal medications. This could be a way to combat the rising problem of antifungal resistance. *Ocimum sanctum*-based formulations have the potential to supplement or replace conventional antifungal treatments in clinical practice, especially when dealing with fungal strains that have developed resistance [31]. For fungal infections that are localized, like ringworm, athlete's foot, or candidiasis, topical therapies like ointments, lotions, or sprays work well because they target the infection directly. Systemic treatments that combine antifungal drugs with *Ocimum sanctum* extracts in the form of oral capsules or tablets may also provide a wider range of options for treating fungal infections internally, such as those that manifest in the gastrointestinal tract or lungs. The combination of *Ocimum sanctum* extracts with antifungal medications has the ability to lower the dosage of traditional drugs, which could lead to better therapeutic outcomes with less risk of adverse effects [32].

5.2 Challenges and Limitations

Ocimum sanctum has great promise, but it has a number of obstacles that must be overcome before it may be extensively used in therapeutic contexts. Standardizing *Ocimum sanctum* extracts for medicinal application is one of the main challenges [34]. Ensuring constant potency and efficacy is made more difficult by the fact that extracts differ in chemical composition based on things like the plant's geographical origin, harvest period, and extraction processes. Furthermore, *Ocimum sanctum's* possible toxicity at greater doses is still an issue side effects include gastrointestinal problems and liver damage might result from taking too much of the herb. Before *Ocimum sanctum* may be used as a medication by many, it needs to undergo extensive evaluation of its safety profile in clinical trials [35]. Obtaining regulatory clearance for herbal-combination treatments is another major obstacle. Delays in bringing herbal-based remedies to market are common because regulatory agencies demand detailed data on the safety, efficacy, and manufacturing methods of these treatments. Lastly, for herbal combination therapies to be used in clinical practice, there needs to be strong proof from well-planned trials showing that they work and that they are safer in the long run than conventional medicines [36].

6. Future Directions

6.1 Advancements in Research

As research into *Ocimum sanctum* continues to improve, it shows great potential as an antifungal treatment in the future. Complementary antifungal agent synergy studies involving *Ocimum sanctum* extracts are an important field of research. Researchers have shown that *Ocimum sanctum* works well with standard antifungal medications but, if they broadened their focus to include more recent and powerful antifungal treatments, they may find even more effective therapeutic combinations [37]. As a result, new broad-spectrum antifungal medicines that can fight different types of fungal resistance may be possible. Research into nano-based delivery systems to improve the targeting and bioavailability of formulations based on *Ocimum sanctum* is another promising area. Bioactive chemicals can be more efficiently delivered to affected tissues with the use of nanotechnology, which includes nanoparticles, Nano capsules, and liposomes [38]. The controlled release capabilities of these state-of-the-art delivery systems further increase the therapeutic effects' duration while decreasing the likelihood of adverse effects. An important component of contemporary antifungal treatment, *Ocimum sanctum* has the potential to have its clinical use greatly increased by research into its incorporation into these innovative delivery systems [39].

6.2 Clinical Trials and Safety Studies

Solid preclinical and clinical trials are crucial for translating lab results into real-world treatments. Scientifically sound randomized controlled trials combining *Ocimum sanctum* extracts with standard antifungal medications are urgently needed to confirm the synergistic effects of this combination. By doing these trials, we can better understand which combinations work best, at what doses, and with what frequency [40]. Research investigating the efficacy and safety of *Ocimum sanctum* in conjunction with other drugs over the long term is essential, as it will shed light on the hazards and side effects that may occur from using this combination. Animal and human trials should be part of these studies to evaluate the formulations' pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics [41]. The possibility for toxicity, allergic responses, and drug interactions is an important consideration in developing safety profiles, which should be thoroughly tested. Ocimum sanctum must first undergo thorough clinical validation before it can be trustfully included in mainstream medicine as a safe and dependable supplement to traditional antifungal treatments [42].

7. Conclusion

Holy basil, or *Ocimum sanctum*, has great promise as a treatment for fungal infections that have developed resistance to conventional antifungal drugs. When combined with traditional antifungal medications, its bioactive components, like rosmarinic acid and eugenol, show encouraging antifungal characteristics. Multiple studies have shown that *Ocimum sanctum* has synergistic benefits with conventional fungicides, making it an effective adjunct therapy for treating fungal infections with fewer side effects and less dosage. The potential of *Ocimum sanctum* to target several fungal pathways, improve drug permeability, and break fungal biofilms makes it a promising candidate for the development of future antifungal medicines.

A more comprehensive strategy for fighting fungal infections can be achieved by incorporating natural extracts such as *Ocimum sanctum* into conventional antifungal treatments. There is an urgent need for creative, multi-faceted solutions to the rising worldwide problem of fungal resistance. A sustainable and effective alternative to conventional antifungal drugs may be found in *Ocimum sanctum*, which combines ancient knowledge with modern pharmacological breakthroughs. The key to realizing its full potential, though, lies in more research such as clinical trials and the creation of standardized formulations. Patients all across the globe would have access to safer, more effective, and more accessible therapeutic choices for fungal infections if Ocimum sanctum were to be effectively integrated into clinical practice.

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* saeedkashif235@gmail.com

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* saeedkashif235@gmail.com