

The Chemical Composition and Biological Activity of the Essential Oil from the Underground Parts of *Ferula tadshikorum* (Apiaceae)

Farukh S. Sharopov^{1,2}, Payrav D. Khalifaev³, Prabodh Satyal^{4,5},
 Yanfang Sun^{2,6}, Abduahad Safomuddin⁷, Safol Musozoda³,
 Michael Wink² and William N. Setzer^{4,5*}

¹Department of Pharmaceutical Technology, Avicenna Tajik State Medical University, Rudaki 139, 734003, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

²Institute of Pharmacy and Molecular Biotechnology, Heidelberg University, Im Neuenheimer Feld 364, Heidelberg 69120, Germany

³Department of Pharmaceutical Technology and Biotechnology, National University of Tajikistan, Rudaki 17/3, 734003, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

⁴Department of Chemistry, University of Alabama in Huntsville, Huntsville, AL 35899, USA

⁵Aromatic Plant Research Center, 615 St. George Square Court, Suite 300, Winston-Salem, NC 27103, USA

⁶College of Life Sciences, Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, Hangzhou 310018, China

⁷Faculty of Chemistry, National University of Tajikistan, Rudaki 17/2, 734003, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

(Received February 12, 2018; Revised March 19, 2018; Accepted March 20, 2018)

Abstract: The underground parts of *Ferula tadshikorum* M. Pimen were collected from the southern part of Tajikistan. The essential oils were obtained by hydrodistillation and analyzed by GLC-FID and GLC-MS. A total of 26 compounds were identified representing 94.4 % of total oil composition. The essential oil was dominated by the sulfur-containing compounds (*Z*)-1-propenyl *sec*-butyl disulfide (37.3%), (*E*)-1-propenyl *sec*-butyl disulfide (29.9%), (*E*)-1-propenyl 1-(methylthio)propyl disulfide (16.8%), and propyl *sec*-butyl disulfide (4.8%). The antioxidant, antimicrobial and cytotoxic activities of the essential oil was evaluated. To our best knowledge, this is the first report concerning the chemical composition and biological activity of the essential oil obtained from the underground parts of *F. tadshikorum*.

Keywords: *Ferula tadshikorum*; essential oil composition; disulfides. © 2018 ACG Publications. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The genus *Ferula* L. includes about 130 species in the family Apiaceae, the majority of species are widespread in Asia [1]. There are thirty-seven *Ferula* species present in Tajikistan. *F. tadshikorum* M. Pimen is an endemic plant of southern Tajikistan [2]. In recent years, due to the production of an

* * Corresponding author: E-Mail: setzerw@uah.edu

oleo-gum-resin (exudate) from *Ferula* species as asafoetida, interest in *F. tadshikorum* has also increased. The oleo-gum-resin is used for needs of the medical industry and as flavoring spice for various foodstuff. Approximately, the annual volume of exported oleo-gum-resin from *Ferula* species in Tajikistan is 150 tons [3]. The harvest in the wild is harmful and endangers populations of asafoetida-containing *Ferula* species, including *F. tadshikorum*.

Ferula species have been used as herbs since ancient time in traditional medicine. Avicenna recommended *Ferula* for treatment of skin diseases (vitiligo), tuberculosis, pains in joints, against worms, inflammation of stomach and intestines, and as an antidote for toxic salts and compounds [4]. In Tajik traditional medicine, asafoetida is used as an antispasmodic, antihelminthic, and carminative agent. *Ferula* is used to treat tumors and to rejuvenate the body [5].

Tadzhiferin and tadzhikorin, two terpenoid coumarins, have been isolated from the fruit of *F. tadshikorum* [6]. Later, deacetyltadzhikorin also was isolated from the acetone extract of the roots of *F. tadshikorum* [7]. Asafoetida has a characteristic sulfurous odor and a bitter taste, due to presence of sulfur-containing compounds [8]. Regarding the chemistry and bioactivity of the essential oil of *F. tadshikorum*, to our best knowledge, until now, there have been no published reports on volatile secondary metabolites of the underground parts of *F. tadshikorum*.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Plant Materials

The underground parts of *F. tadshikorum* M. Pimen were collected near the Guli Bodom village, Yovon region of Tajikistan (1000 m above sea level), on 15 June 2016, during the period of plant harvesting. The plant was identified by comparison with voucher specimen (MW0594029) which are deposited in the herbarium of the Lomonosov Moscow State University (Mosquensis University). The fresh samples from the underground parts of *F. tadshikorum* were cut into small pieces and hydrodistilled for 3 h to give the yellow essential oil, with 1.5 % yield.

2.2. Gas-liquid Chromatography

The gas chromatographic analysis of the essential oil was performed using a GC-2010 plus gas chromatograph (Shimadzu), equipped with a non-polar ZB-5 fused bonded column (Phenomenex) and flame ionization detector (FID). The column parameters were 30 m length, 0.25 mm inner diameter and 0.25 μm film thickness. The carrier gas was helium with a flow rate of 1.5 mL/min with the split mode. The operating temperature conditions were initial temperature 120°C for 2 min isothermal followed by linear temperature increase until 320°C at a rate of 8°C / min, and then for 10 min at isothermal mode at 320°C. Detector and injector temperatures were 320°C and 310°C, respectively. GC solution by Shimadzu was used for recording and integration.

2.3. Gas Chromatographic-Mass Spectral Analysis

GLC-MS was performed using a Shimadzu GCMS-QP2010 Ultra operated in the electron impact (EI) mode (electron energy = 70 eV), scan range = 40–400 atomic mass units, scan rate = 3.0 scans/s, and GC-MS solution software. The GC column was a ZB-5 fused silica capillary column with a (5% phenyl)-polymethylsiloxane stationary phase and a film thickness of 0.25 μm . The carrier gas was helium with a column head pressure of 552 kPa and flow rate of 1.37 mL/min. Injector temperature was 250°C and the ion source temperature was 200°C. The GC oven temperature program was programmed for 50°C initial temperature, temperature increased at a rate of 2°C/min to 260°C. A 5% w/v solution of the sample in CH_2Cl_2 was prepared and 0.1 μL was injected with a splitting mode (30:1). Identification of the oil components was based on their retention indices determined by reference to a homologous series of *n*-alkanes, and by comparison of their mass spectral fragmentation patterns with those reported in the literature [9], and stored in our in-house library [10].

2.4. Antioxidant, Antimicrobial and Cytotoxicity Assays

The antioxidant activity of the essential oil was evaluated by 2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH), 2,2'-azino-bis-[3-ethylbenzthiazoline-6-sulfonic acid] (ABTS) and ferric reducing antioxidant power (FRAP) assays as described previously [11]. The essential oil was stabilized in Tween-80 and screened against methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) NCTC 10442 and *Escherichia coli* ATCC 25922 bacteria [12]. Cytotoxicity of essential oil against CCRF-CEM (human T lymphoblast leukemia) and CEM/ADR5000 (adriamycin-resistant leukemia) cancer cell lines was determined by using 3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide (MTT) assay. Antioxidant, antimicrobial and cytotoxicity assays were analyzed as previously described [13].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Essential Oil Composition

The essential oil was analyzed by GLC-FID and GLC-MS. A total of 26 compounds were identified representing 94.4 % of total oil composition (Table 1). The essential oil was dominated by the sulfur-containing compounds (*Z*)-1-propenyl *sec*-butyl disulfide (37.3%), (*E*)-1-propenyl *sec*-butyl disulfide (29.9%), (*E*)-1-propenyl 1-(methylthio)propyl disulfide (16.8%), and propyl *sec*-butyl disulfide (4.8%) (Figure 1).

Table 1. Chemical composition of the essential oil of the underground parts of *Ferula tadshikorum*.

RI ^a	RI ^b	Compound	%
860	860	2-Methyloctane	0.2
900	900	Nonane	t
925	926	Tricyclene	t
932	939	α -Pinene	0.8
949	954	Camphene	0.1
968	973	2-Pyrone	0.2
978	979	β -Pinene	0.4
989	990	Myrcene	0.1
995	---	Methyl <i>sec</i> -butyl disulfide	t
1010	1010	2,3,5-Trimethylthiophene	t
1017	1017	α -Terpinene	t
1024	1024	<i>p</i> -Cymene	t
1029	1029	Limonene	t
1035	1037	(<i>Z</i>)- β -Ocimene	0.3
1045	1050	(<i>E</i>)- β -Ocimene	0.5
1058	1059	γ -Terpinene	t
1108	1103	Dipropyl disulfide	0.1
1164	1164	Propyl <i>sec</i> -butyl disulfide	4.8
1169	1169	(<i>Z</i>)-1-Propenyl <i>sec</i> -butyl disulfide	37.3
1174	---	(<i>E</i>)-1-Propenyl <i>sec</i> -butyl disulfide	29.9
1212	1212	Di- <i>sec</i> -butyl disulfide	0.5
1421	1421	(<i>Z</i>)-1-Propenyl 1-(methylthio)propyl disulfide	2.5
1427	1427	(<i>E</i>)-1-Propenyl 1-(methylthio)propyl disulfide	16.8
1452	1456	(<i>E</i>)- β -Farnesene	t
1503	1505	(<i>E,E</i>)- α -Farnesene	0.3
		Terpenoids	2.5
		Sulfur-containing compounds	91.8
		Others	0.2
		Total identified	94.4

^a Retention Index (RI) determined with reference to a homologous series of *n*-alkanes on a ZB-5 column.

^b Retention Index from the databases [9,10]. t:trace

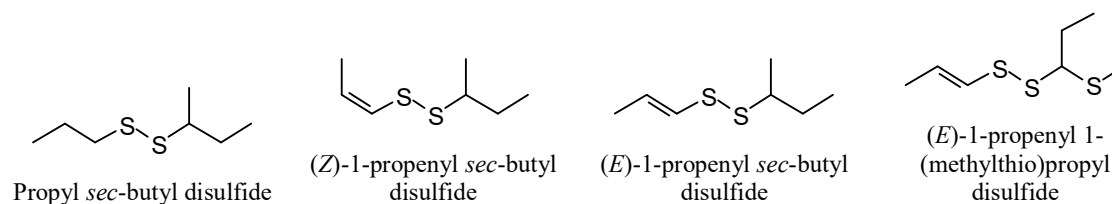


Figure 1. Structure of the major components of the essential oil of *Ferula tadshikorum*.

According to literature reports, the sulfur-containing compounds are the major components of the essential oils of many *Ferula* species, including *F. assa-foetida* [14], *F. fukanensis* [15], *F. latisecta* [16,17], *F. persica* [18,19] and *F. sinkiangensis* [15]. The most prevalent sulfur-containing compounds in the *Ferula* oils were (Z)-1-propenyl *sec*-butyl disulfide and (E)-1-propenyl *sec*-butyl disulfide [20], which is in agreement with the *F. tadshikorum* essential oil composition.

3.2. Antioxidant, Antimicrobial and Cytotoxic Activities

The essential oil of *F. tadshikorum* exhibited low antioxidant activity as compared to the positive control, caffeic acid. The results of the DPPH, ABTS and FRAP analyses are represented Table 2. Median inhibitory concentration (IC₅₀) for radical scavenging of the essential oil was 17.8 mg/mL for DPPH and 8.2 mg/mL for ABTS, respectively. The ferric reducing antioxidant power value was 1072.4 μM Fe(II)/mg of the oil sample.

Table 2. Antioxidant and cytotoxic activities of the essential oil of *Ferula tadshikorum*.

Sample	DPPH IC ₅₀ , mg/mL	ABTS IC ₅₀ , mg/mL	FRAP μM Fe(II)/mg of samples	CCRF-CEM IC ₅₀ , μg/mL	CEM/ADR 5000 IC ₅₀ , μg/mL
<i>F. tadshikorum</i> essential oil	17.8	8.2	1072.4	21.6	142.5
Positive control	0.002 ^a	0.0015 ^a	2380 ^a	0.25 ^b	1.4 ^b

^aCaffeic acid, ^bdoxorubicin

The antimicrobial activity of the essential oil was screened against one Gram-positive and one Gram-negative bacteria (MRSA NTCT 10442 and *E. coli* ATCC 25922). The essential did not exhibit antimicrobial activity at a concentration 20 mg/mL. Our results indicate that the essential oil has weak antioxidant and antimicrobial activities, similar to other sulfur-containing *Ferula* oils [21].

The cytotoxicity of the oil was tested against CCRF-CEM and CEM/ADR5000 cancer cell lines: IC₅₀ values were 21.6 μg/mL for CCRF-CEM, and 142.5 μg/mL for CEM/ADR5000 cell lines. CEM/ADR5000 over-expresses the ABC transporter p-gp. The reduced cytotoxicity of the essential oil suggests that it contains substrates of p-gp, which would be rapidly pumped out of the cells. Bagheri and co-workers reported that methanol extracts of different *Ferula* species and the oleo-gum-resin of *F. assa-foetida* exhibited cytotoxic effect with IC₅₀ values in the range of 6-321 μg/mL [22].

In conclusion, this work is the first report concerning the chemical composition and biological activity of the essential oil of the underground parts of *F. tadshikorum*. The chemical compositions of the essential oil were dominated by the sulfur-containing compounds (Z)-propenyl *sec*-butyl disulfide, (E)-propenyl *sec*-butyl disulfide and (E)-1(1-propen-1-yl)-2(2-thiopent-3-yl) *trans* disulfide. These components have been found in essential oils of several other *Ferula* species as major constituents. The cytotoxicity of the essential oil against CCRF-CEM and CEM/ADR5000 cancer cell lines is in agreement with its traditional use as antitumor drug.

Acknowledgments

F.S.S. is grateful to the joint scholarship program of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the University of Central Asia (UCA). P.S. and W.N.S. participated in this work as part of the activities of the Aromatic Plant Research Center (APRC, <https://aromaticplant.org/>). The authors are grateful to dōTERRA International (<https://www.doterra.com/US/en>) for financial support of the APRC. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

ORCID

Farukh S. Sharopov: [0000-0003-0378-8887](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0378-8887)

Payrav Khalifaev: [0000-0002-7148-1695](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7148-1695)

Prabodh Satyal: [0000-0002-2950-1074](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2950-1074)

Yanfang Sun: [0000-0003-2704-0478](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2704-0478)

Abduahad Safomuddin: [0000-0001-9553-8302](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9553-8302)

Safol Musozoda: [0000-0001-8512-8019](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8512-8019)

Michael Wink: [0000-0002-7875-4510](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7875-4510)

William N. Setzer: [0000-0002-3639-0528](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3639-0528)

References

- [1] D. J. Mabberley (2008). *Mabberley's Plant-Book*. Cambridge University Press.
- [2] K. S. Rahmonov (2017). *Biology and Resources of Ferula tadshikorum* M. Pimen. in the South of Tajikistan. Ph.D. dissertation, Tajik National University.
- [3] S. Rakhimov and G. R. Denisova (2017). Some features of underground organs of *Ferula tadshikorum* M. Pimen (*Ferula* L.), *Bull. Altai State Agric. Univ.* **154**, 86-90.
- [4] A. A. Sina (Avicenna) (reprinted in 1954). *Kanon vrachebnoy nauki (Canon)*. Academy of Sciences of the UzSSR.
- [5] M. Tohiri (2012). *Ferula Treats Tumors and Rejuvenates a Body* (Ферула лечит опухоли и омолаживает тело), 5th Ed. Tib, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 32 pp.
- [6] M. E. Perelson, Y. E. Sklyar, V. V. Vandyshev, K. Verkhovska-Renke, N. V. Veselovskaya and M. G. Pimenov (1976). New terpenoid coumarins from *Ferula tadshikorum*, *Chem. Nat. Comp.* **5**, 592-593.
- [7] N. V. Beselovskaya and E. Y. Sklyar (1984). Deacetyltadzhikorin from *Ferula tadshikorum*, *Chem. Nat. Comp.* **3**, 386-387.
- [8] M. Iranshahy and M. Iranshahi (2011). Traditional uses, phytochemistry and pharmacology of asafoetida (*Ferula assa-foetida* oleo-gum-resin)—A review, *J. Ethnopharmacol.* **134**, 1-10.
- [9] R. P. Adams (2007). *Identification of Essential Oil Components by Gas Chromatography / Mass Spectrometry*. 4th Ed. Allured Publishing, Carol Stream, Illinois.
- [10] P. Satyal (2015). *Development of GC-MS Database of Essential Oil Components by the Analysis of Natural Essential Oils and Synthetic Compounds and Discovery of Biologically Active Novel Chemotypes in Essential Oils*. PhD dissertation, University of Alabama in Huntsville.
- [11] F. S. Sharopov, M. Wink and W. N. Setzer (2015). Radical scavenging and antioxidant activities of essential oil components - an experimental and computational investigation, *Nat. Prod. Commun.* **10**, 153-156.
- [12] F. Sharopov, M. S. Braun, I. S. Gulmurodov, D. R. Khalifaev, S. J. Isupov and M. Wink (2015). Antimicrobial, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory activities of essential oils of selected aromatic plants from Tajikistan, *Foods* **4**, 645-653.
- [13] F. S. Sharopov (2015). *Phytochemistry and Bioactivities of Selected Plant Species with Volatile Secondary Metabolites*. Ph.D. thesis, Ruperto-Carola University of Heidelberg.
- [14] M. Khajeh, Y. Yamini, N. Bahramifar, F. Sefidkon and M. Reza Pirmoradei (2005). Comparison of essential oils compositions of *Ferula assa-foetida* obtained by supercritical carbon dioxide extraction and hydrodistillation methods, *Food Chem.* **91**, 639-644.
- [15] M. Zhi-da, M. Qi-fi, M. Mizuno, T. Tanaka and M. Iinuma (1987). Polysulfanes in the volatile oil of *Ferula* species, *Planta Med.* **53**, 300-302.

- [16] Z. Habibi, P. Salehi, M. Yousefi, Y. Hejazi, A. Laleh, V. Mozaffarian, S. Masoudi and A. Rustaiyan (2006). Chemical composition and antimicrobial activity of the essential oils of *Ferula latisecta* and *Mozaffariania insignis* from Iran, *Chem. Nat. Comp.* **42**, 689-692.
- [17] M. Iranshahi, M. Hassanzadeh-Khayat, B. S. F. Bazzaz, Z. Sabeti and F. Enayati (2008). High content of polysulphides in the volatile oil of *Ferula latisecta* Rech. F. et Aell. fruits and antimicrobial activity of the oil, *J. Essent. Oil Res.* **20**, 183-185.
- [18] M. Iranshahi, G. Amin, M. H. Salehi-Sourmaghi, A. Shafiee and A. Hadjiakhoondi (2006). Sulphur-containing compounds in the essential oil of the root of *Ferula persica* Willd. var. *persica*, *Flavour Fragrance J.* **21**, 260-261.
- [19] K. Javidnia, R. Miri, M. Kamalinejad and N. Edraki (2005). Chemical composition of *Ferula persica* Wild. essential oil from Iran, *Flavour Fragrance J.* **20**, 605-606.
- [20] A. Sahebkar and M. Iranshahi (2011). Volatile constituents of the genus *Ferula* (Apiaceae): a review, *J. Essent. Oil Bear. Plants* **14**, 504-531.
- [21] G. Kavosi and V. Rowshan (2013). Chemical composition, antioxidant and antimicrobial activities of essential oil obtained from *Ferula assa-foetida* oleo-gum-resin: Effect of collection time, *Food Chem.* **138**, 2180-2187.
- [22] S. M. Bagheri, A. Sahebkar, A. R. Gohari, S. Saeidnia, M. Malmir and M. Iranshahi (2010). Evaluation of cytotoxicity and anticonvulsant activity of some Iranian medicinal *Ferula* species, *Pharmaceut. Biol.* **48**, 242-246.

A C G
publications

© 2018 ACG Publications