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Four new phenolic constituents from the rhizomes of *Gastrodia elata* Blume

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ABSTRACT

Four new gastrodin derivatives containing a *trans*-cinnamoyl unit (1–4) and nine known compounds (**5–13**) were isolated from the rhizomes of *Gastrodia elata* Blume. All these compounds were evaluated for their neuroprotective effects against 6-hydroxydopamine-induced cell death, and compounds **7** and **12** showed potent activities with EC_{50} values of 10.5 and 10.2 μ M, respectively.



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Phenolics; *Gastrodia elata* Blume; neuroprotective effects; N⁶-(4-hydroxybenzyl) adenosine; grossamide

1. Introduction

Gastrodia elata Blume (*G. elata*), commonly called 'Tian-ma' in Chinese, is an extensively used traditional Chinese herbal medicine to treat neurological disorders, such as epilepsy, stroke and convulsion (Liu and Mori 1992; Chen and Sheen 2011). The neuroprotective effect of *G. elata* has been attracting more attentions. Indeed, pharmacological studies have demonstrated that *G. elata* extract, gastrodin, p-hydroxybenzaldehyde and parishin possessed neuroprotective effect through anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidative mechanism (Ng et al.

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2016; Zhan et al. 2016; Tang et al. 2017). So far, more than 80 compounds (Li et al. 2015; Wu et al. 2017) have been isolated from *G. elata*, but only a few of them have been evaluated for their neuroprotective activity (Huang et al. 2007; Chen et al. 2016; Li et al. 2016). These results promoted us to continue to investigate the potential neuroprotective components of *G. elata*.

G. elata f. glauca S. Chow, *G. elata* f. elata, *G. elata* f. viridis Makino, *G. elata* f. flavida S. Chow, and *G. elata* f. alba S. Chow are the five varieties of *G. elata* cultivated in China, which are considered as the original plants of the traditional Chinese medicine 'Tian-ma' (Chen et al. 2015). Among these varieties, *G. elata* f. glauca S. Chow is the most widely cultivated. Here, we reported the isolation and structural elucidation of four new phenolic constituents from the ethanol extract of the rhizomes of *G. elata* (*G. elata* f. glauca S. Chow), together with nine known compounds. Neuroprotective effects of all isolated compounds against 6-hydroxydopamine-induced cell death were evaluated *in vitro*.

2. Results and discussion

Compound 1 was isolated as a light yellow powder. The molecular formula of 1 was determined as C₂₂H₂₄O₈ by HR-ESI-MS at *m/z* 439.1362 [M + Na]⁺ (calcd. 439.1363 [M + Na]⁺). The IR spectrum indicated the presence of ester (1711 cm⁻¹) and aromatic ring (1614 and 1512 cm⁻¹). The existence of a p-hydroxybenzyl alcohol moiety in 1 was evidenced by NMR signals (Table S1) at $\delta_{\rm H}$ 7.20 (1H, d, J = 8.8 Hz, H-3', 5'), 6.91 (1H, d, J = 8.4 Hz, H-2', 6'), 5.07 (1H, t, J = 5.6 Hz, 7'-OH) and 4.39 (2H, d, J = 5.6 Hz, H-7'), and at δ_c 156.3, 137.0, 128.2 (2C), 116.5 (2C), 62.9; the presence of a *trans*-cinnamoyl group was supported by the observed proton signals at δ_{μ} 7.72 (2H, m), 7.42 (3H, m), trans-olefinic proton signals at $\delta_{\rm H}$ 7.70 and 6.66 (each 1 H, d, J = 16.0 Hz), and carbon resonances at $\delta_{\rm C}$ 165.8, 145.3, 134.4, 131.0, 129.4 (2C), 128.8 (2C), 118.5. The proton resonance at δ_{H} 5.17 (1H, d, J = 8.0 Hz, H-1) and carbon signals at δ_{C} 99.0, 77.7, 74.5, 74.2, 70.4, 61.0 suggested the existence of a β -glucose. In the HMBC spectrum (Figure S0), the correlation from the anomeric proton δ_{μ} 5.17 (1H, d, J = 8.0 Hz) to δ_{c} 156.3 (C-1') confirmed the p-hydroxybenzyl alcohol moiety was linked to C-1. The HMBC correlation between δ_{μ} 4.93 (H-2) and δ_{c} 165.8 (C-9") was located the *trans*-cinnamoyl group at C-2. The detailed assignment of all NMR signals arising from 1 was performed by ¹H-¹H COSY, HSQC and HMBC spectroscopy. The absolute configuration of the sugar was determined to be D-glucose on the basis of GC-MS analysis of its chiral derivative. Thus, the structure of compound 1 (Figure 1) was determined to be 1-O-(4-hydroxymethylphenoxy)-2-O-trans-cinnamoyl-β-D-glucoside.

Compound **2** was obtained as a light yellow powder. The molecular formula of **2** was determined as $C_{22}H_{24}O_8$ by HR-ESI-MS at m/z 439.1366 [M + Na]⁺ (calcd. 439.1363 [M + Na]⁺). The absorption bands in the IR spectrum suggested the existence of ester (1712 cm⁻¹) and aromatic ring (1613 and 1512 cm⁻¹). Careful comparison of the NMR data (Table S1) of **2** and **1** demonstrated they possessed the similar structural moieties. The major differences were upfield shift at C-2 ($\Delta \delta_c$ – 2.5 ppm) and C-4 (δ_c – 2.4 ppm), and downfield shift at C-3 ($\Delta \delta_c$ + 3.7 ppm). This revealed that the locations of *p*-hydroxybenzyl alcohol moiety or *trans*-cinnamoyl group in compound **2** may be changed. The HMBC correlations from δ_H 5.05 (1H, d, *J* = 7.2 Hz, H-1) to δ_c 156.5 (C-1'), and from δ_H 5.06 (1H, t, *J* = 9.6 Hz, H-3) to δ_c 166.2 (C-9") confirmed *p*-hydroxybenzyl alcohol moiety and *trans*-cinnamoyl group was respectively connected to C-1 and C-3. The sugar moiety was identified as D-glucose in the same way to that of **1**. Thus, the structure of **2** was established as 1-*O*-(4-hydroxymethylphenoxy)-3-*O*-*trans*-cinnamoyl- β -D-glucoside.



4: $R_1 = R_2 = R_3 = H$; $R_4 = S$

Figure 1. Structures of compounds 1–4.

Compound **3** was isolated as a light yellow powder. It was found to have the same molecular formula of $C_{22}H_{24}O_{0}$ as compound **2** from HR-ESI-MS at m/z 439.1368 [M + Na]⁺ (calcd. 439.1363 [M + Na]⁺). The absorption bands in the IR spectrum suggested the existence of ester (1695 cm⁻¹). The data of ¹H and ¹³C (Table S1) were similar to those of **2** except for the upfield shift at C-3 ($\Delta\delta_c$ – 3.9 ppm) and C-5 ($\Delta\delta_c$ – 2.2 ppm), and downfield shift at C-2 ($\Delta\delta_c$ +2.1 ppm) and C-4 ($\Delta \delta_c$ +3.6 ppm), which suggested the different connections of p-hydroxybenzyl alcohol moiety or *trans*-cinnamoyl group in compound **3**. In the HMBC spectrum, the correlations of H-1 with C-1', and of H-4 with C-9" located the p-hydroxybenzyl alcohol moiety and trans-cinnamoyl group at C-1 and C-4, respectively. The sugar moiety was identified as D-glucose followed the same protocol for **1**. Thus, compound **3** was deduced to be 1-O-(4-hydroxymethylphenoxy)-4-O-trans-cinnamoyl-β-D-glucoside.

Compound 4 was obtained as a light yellow powder. The molecular formula of 4 was deduced as $C_{22}H_{24}O_8$ based on a sodium adduct ion at m/z 439.1364 [M + Na]⁺ (calcd. 439.1363 [M + Na]⁺). The IR spectrum showed the characteristic absorptions for ester at 1696 cm⁻¹ and aromatic ring at 1613 and 1512 cm⁻¹. The 1D NMR data (Table S1) of **4** showed similar to those of 3. The major differences between 4 and 3 were the downfield shift of proton signals at δ_{μ} 4.44 ($\Delta \delta_{\mu}$ +0.98 ppm, H-6a) and δ_{μ} 4.22 ($\Delta \delta_{\mu}$ +0.85 ppm, H-6b), and of carbon resonance at δ_c 64.1 ($\Delta\delta_c$ +3.2 ppm, C-6), indicating that the position of C-6 may be substituted. The HMBC correlation from H-6 to C-9" revealed that the trans-cinnamoyl group was linked to C-6. The position of p-hydroxybenzyl alcohol moiety at C-1 was further confirmed by the HMBC correlation of H-1 ($\delta_{\rm H}$ 4.90) with C-1' ($\delta_{\rm C}$ 156.5). According to the same way as in compound 1, the sugar was determined to be D-glucose. Thus, compound 4 $(1-O-(4-hydroxymethylphenoxy)-6-O-trans-cinnamoyl-\beta-D-glucoside)$ was established as shown in Figure 1.

Additionally, the other previously reported compounds 5-13 were identified as 4hydroxybenzyl ethyl ether (5) (Zhou et al. 1981), adenosine (6) (Huang et al. 2005),

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*N*⁶-(4-hydroxybenzyl) adenosine (**7**) (Huang et al. 2006), gastrodioside (**8**) (Taguchi et al. 1981), bis(4-hydroxybenzyl) ether (**9**) (Taguchi et al. 1981), 4,4'-dihydroxybenzyl sulfoxide (**10**) (Yun-Choi and Pyo 1997), bis(4-hydroxybenzyl) sulfide (**11**) (Huang et al. 2007), grossamide (**12**) (Lajide et al. 1995), and S-(4-hydroxybenzyl) glutathione (**13**) (Andersson et al. 1995) by comparing NMR and MS data reported in the literature.

All isolated compounds were evaluated *in vitro* for their neuroprotective effects against 6-hydroxydopamine-induced cell death, with curcumin used as a positive control (EC_{50} : 6.5 μ M). Compounds *N*⁶-(4-hydroxybenzyl) adenosine (**7**) and grossamide (**12**) exhibited potent activities with EC_{50} values of 10.5 and 10.2 μ M, respectively, while the other compounds were inactive with EC_{50} far beyond 50 μ M.

3. Experimental

3.1. General methods

NMR spectra were recorded on Varian INOVA-600 (¹H: 600 MHz, ¹³C: 150 MHz) and Bruker Avance III 400 (¹H: 400 MHz, ¹³C: 100 MHz) instruments, with tetramethylsilane as internal standard. Mass spectra were obtained on an Agilent Technology 6520 Accurate-Mass Q-TOF spectrometer. UV spectra were recorded using a Shimadzu UV-2550 spectrophotometer. IR (KBr disks) spectra were performed on Bruker Vertex 70 spectrometer. Optical rotations were measured on an Anton Paar MCP 200 polarimeter. Macroreticular resins (D101, Cangzhou Bon Adsorber Technology Co., Ltd., Cangzhou, China) were used for column chromatography. Medium pressure liquid (MPLC) was performed on an Agela CHEETAHTM MP instrument using prepacked RP-C₁₈ column (500 × 80 mm). Preparative HPLC was carried out using a RIGOL L-3000 series instrument with a YMC-PEAK RP-C₁₈ column (250 mm × 10.0 mm, 5 µm). Gas chromatography analyses were performed using a Thermo Trace 1310 system equipped with a FID detector.

3.2. Plant material

The rhizomes of *G. elata* (*G. elata* f. glauca) were collected at the plantation field of Xiaocao Ba, Yunnan province, China, in December 2015, and were authenticated by Dr. Da-Hui Liu (Institute of Medicinal Plants, Yunnan Provincial Academy of Agricultural Sciences, China). A voucher sample (No. GE-201511) was deposited at Shandong Analysis and Test Center, Shandong Academy of Sciences, China.

3.3. Extraction and isolation

The steamed and air-dried *G. elata* rhizomes (12 kg) were powdered, and extracted with 85% EtOH under reflux. The EtOH extract was evaporated under reduced pressure to yield a concentrated solution (2.6 L), which was subjected to macroporous resin column (D101, 12 cm \times 70 cm), and eluted successively with 10% EtOH, 20% EtOH, 30% EtOH, 50% EtOH, 70% EtOH, 95% EtOH, to give six further fractions (Fr. MR-1–MR-6). Fr. MR-1 (37.4 g) was applied to a prepacked ODS MPLC column (500 \times 80 mm) and eluted with MeOH-H₂O (5:95, 10:90, 15:85, 30:70, 40:60, 100:0) to give five sub-fractions (MR-1A–MR-1E). Sub-fraction MR-1B was purified by repeated preparative RP-HPLC (10% methanol in water containing

0.1% formic acid) to afford compound 1 (25 mg, 11.5 min). Compound 2 (2.6 mg, 14.5 min) was obtained from Fr. MR-1C by preparative HPLC (28% methanol in water containing 0.1% formic acid). Sub-fraction MR-1D was recrystallized by methanol to yield compound 4 (890 mg). Sub-fraction MR-1E was purified by RP-HPLC using MeOH-H₂O (28:72, containing 0.1% formic acid) as mobile phase to give compound 3 (11.9 mg, 11.9 min). Fr. MR-3 (35.8 g) was chromatographed on MPLC (ODS) successively eluted with 10, 25, 30, 35, 40% methanol in water to obtain seven sub-fractions (Fr. MR-3A–Fr. MR-3G). Compound 5 (528 mg, 17.1 min) was obtained from Fr. MR-3E by RP-HPLC (18% acetonitrile in water containing 0.1% formic acid). Fr. MR-4 (11 g) was chromatographed on silica gel eluted with CH₂Cl₂-MeOH (100:0 to 0:100) to afford six fractions (Fr. MR-4A-Fr. MR-4F). Compounds 10 (51 mg, 6.4 min) 11 (4 mg, 6.8 min) and 12 (10 mg, 14.5 min) was isolated from Fr. MR-4C by repeated preparative HPLC (MeOH-H₂O, 50:50, 0.1% formic acid). Fr. MR-4D was separated by preparative HPLC eluted with 50% methanol in water containing 0.1% formic acid to yield compounds 8 (29 mg, 11.0 min) and 9 (15 mg, 9.0 min). Fr. MR-4E was purified by repeated preparative HPLC (MeOH-H₂O, 50:50, 0.1% formic acid) to obtain compounds **6** (71 mg, 9.7 min) and **7** (8 mg, 12.4 min). Fr. MR-5 (18 g) was subjected to silica gel eluted with CH₂Cl₂-MeOH (100:0 to 0:100) to give six sub-fractions (Fr. MR-5A-Fr. MR-5G). Fr. MR-5C was purified by preparative HPLC with acetonitrile-H₂O (47:53, containing 0.1% formic acid) to obtain compound 13 (20 mg, 6.1 min).

3.4. Compound 1

Light yellow powder; $[\alpha]_D^{20}$: -4.6 (c = 0.1, methanol); UV λ_{max} (acetonitrile) nm (log ε): 277 (4.30), 217 (4.39); IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3395, 2922, 1711, 1637, 1614, 1512; ¹H- and ¹³C-NMR spectral data: see Table S1; ESI-MS *m/z*: 439.1 [M + Na]⁺; HR-ESI-MS *m/z*: 439.1362 [M + Na]⁺ (Calcd for C₂₂H₂₄O₈Na: 439.1363).

3.5. Compound 2

Light yellow powder; $[\alpha]_D^{20}$: +26.5 (c = 0.1, methanol); UV λ_{max} (acetonitrile) nm (log ε): 276 (4.33), 217 (4.40); IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3416, 2920, 1712, 1636, 1613, 1512; ¹H- and ¹³C-NMR spectral data: see Table S1; ESI-MS *m/z*: 439.1 [M + Na]⁺; HR-ESI-MS *m/z*: 439.1366 [M + Na]⁺ (Calcd for C₂₂H₂₄O₈Na: 439.1363).

3.6. Compound 3

Light yellow powder; $[\alpha]_D^{20}$: -41.0 (c = 0.1, methanol); UV λ_{max} (acetonitrile) nm (log ε): 275 (4.20), 216 (4.32); IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3430, 2924, 1695, 1637, 1512; ¹H- and ¹³C-NMR spectral data: see Table S1; ESI-MS *m/z*: 439.1 [M + Na]⁺; HR-ESI-MS *m/z*: 439.1368 [M + Na]⁺ (Calcd for $C_{22}H_{24}O_8$ Na: 439.1363).

3.7. Compound 4

light yellow powder; $[\alpha]_D^{20}$: -50.2 (c = 0.1, methanol); UV λ_{max} (acetonitrile) nm (log ε): 275 (4.28), 217 (4.38); IR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3428, 2922, 1696, 1637, 1613, 1512; ¹H- and ¹³C-NMR spectral

data: see Table S1; ESI-MS m/z: 439.1 [M + Na]⁺; HR-ESI-MS m/z: 439.1364 [M + Na]⁺ (Calcd for C₂₂H₂₄O₈Na: 439.1363).

3.8. Sugar analysis

The absolute configuration of the sugar was determined according to the method previous reported (Wang et al. 2012). Compounds **1–4** (each 3 mg) dissolved in acetonitrile (3 mL) and 2 M HCl (3 mL) was respectively refluxed at 90 °C for 3 h. After this period, the reaction solution was concentrated under reduced pressure, and then the residue was suspended with H₂O and extracted with EtOAc (3 mL × 3). The aqueous layer was evaporated to dryness and then dissolved in 0.3 mL of anhydrous pyridine, to which 5 mg of L-cysteine methyl ester hydrochloride was added. The mixture was reacted at 60 °C for 2 h, and then hexamethyld-isilazan (0.3 mL) and trimethylsilyl chloride (0.3 mL) were added, continued to react at 60 °C for 1 h. After partitioning between H₂O and *n*-hexane (each 0.4 mL), the *n*-hexane extract was analyzed with gas chromatography under the following conditions: column, HP-5MS (30 m × 0.25 mm × 0.5 µm); column temperature, initial temperature of 150 °C for 5 min. In the acid hydrolysates of **1–4**, only D-glucose was detected by comparison of the retention time with that of authentic samples prepared in the same way (the *t*_R of D- and L-glucose was 39.47 and 40.06 min, respectively).

3.9. Determination of HT22 cell viability against 6-OHDA

The potential neuroprotective effects of all isolated compounds were conducted as previous reports (Kwon et al. 2016). HT22 cells (mouse hippocampal neuronal cells) were plated in a density of 5×10^3 cells/100 µL/well in 96-wellplates. After 24 h, the cells were treated with 6-OHDA (100 µM) and a series of concentrations of samples (50, 20, 10, 5 and 1 µM) for an additional 24 h. The cell viability was determined by SRB assay and curcumin was used as a positive control.

Supplementary material

1D, 2D NMR and MS spectra of the compounds **1–4** are available as supplementary material, alongside Table S1 and Figure S0.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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