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THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL OF AERVA LANATA (MOUNTAIN KNOTGRASS) IN THE MANAGEMENT OF URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS

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Abstract

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are among the most common bacterial infections, affecting millions globally-especially women. The rising resistance to conventional antibiotics has encouraged the exploration of traditional medicinal plants as alternative therapies. Aerva lanata, commonly known as mountain knot grass, is a well-known herb in traditional Indian and African medicine, often used to treat kidney stones, urinary tract infections, and other urological conditions. This review aims to consolidate current research on the pharmacological properties of Aerva lanata. The plant is rich in phytochemicals such as flavonoids, alkaloids, tannins, saponins, and phenolic compounds, and it exhibits anti-inflammatory, diuretic, and anti-urolithiasis properties. While traditional use and preclinical studies support its therapeutic role in UTIs, further clinical trials are necessary to validate its efficacy, safety, and appropriate dosage in humans. This review brings together current scientific evidence and ethnomedical knowledge, highlighting Aerva lanata as a promising natural remedy for urinary tract infections

Introduction

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Overview of Urinary Tract Infections

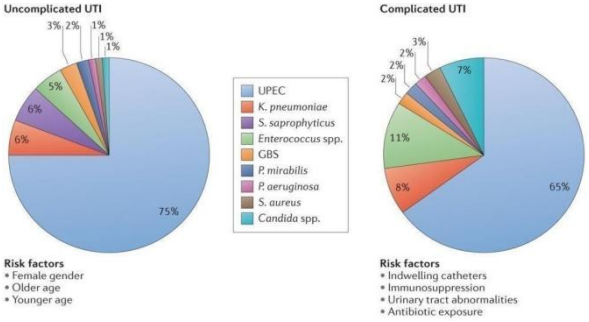
Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) are among the most common bacterial infections encountered in clinical practice. They affect individuals of all ages, from infants to the elderly, and both males and females, though women are significantly more prone due to anatomical and physiological factors. UTIs are infections that can affect any part of the urinary system, which includes the kidneys, ureters, bladder, and urethra. These infections may be asymptomatic or symptomatic, with symptoms ranging from mild to severe [1].

UTIs are classified based on the site of infection

Lower urinary tract infections include cystitis (infection of the bladder) and urethritis (infection of the urethra).

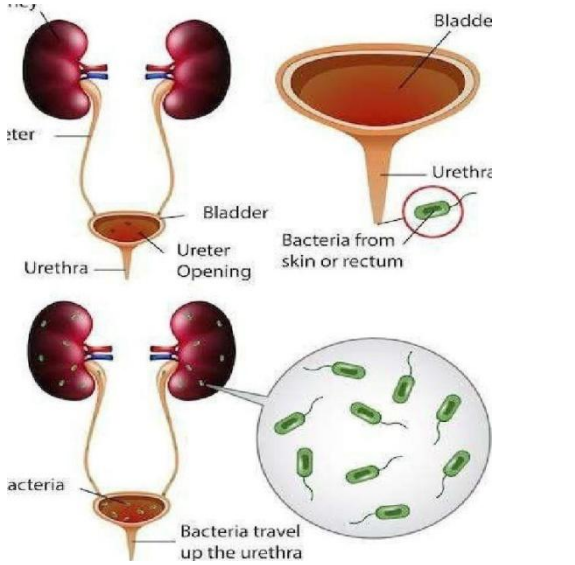
Upper urinary tract infections involve the kidneys (pyelonephritis) and ureters.

While lower UTIs are more common and generally less severe, upper UTIs can lead to significant complications if not promptly treated, including kidney damage, sepsis, and even death [2].



While UTIs predominantly affect women, they also occur in men-particularly in young infants, elderly males, and those with underlying health issues. Serious complications include recurrent infections, pyelonephritis, sepsis, kidneydamage in children, preterm births, and antibiotic-

associated problems like resistance and Clostridioides difficile colitis.



Etiology [3-4]

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) are among the most common bacterial infections, particularly affecting females, infants, and the elderly. They can involve any part of the urinary tract, including the urethra, bladder, ureters, and kidneys.

1. Causative Microorganisms

Gram-negative bacteria are the most frequent culprits.

Escherichia coli (E. coli): Accounts for ~75–95% of uncomplicated UTIs.

Klebsiella pneumoniae

Proteus mirabilis

Pseudomonas aeruginosa

Enterobacter spp.

Gram-positive bacteria

Staphylococcus saprophyticus (especially in young, sexually active women)

Enterococcus faecalis

Staphylococcus aureus (rare; often associated with hematogenous spread)

Fungi:

Candida spp. – More common in immunocompromised or catheterized patients.

2. Pathogenesis and Risk Factors

Ascending infection is the most common route: pathogens enter via the urethra and move up to the bladder (cystitis) or kidneys (pyelonephritis).

Risk factors include:

Female anatomy (short urethra)

Sexual activity

Use of spermicides

Urinary catheterization

Pregnancy

Diabetes mellitus

Urinary tract obstructions (e.g., stones, tumors)

3. Nosocomial vs. Community-Acquired UTIs

Community-acquired UTIs are mostly caused by E. coli.

Hospital-acquired (nosocomial) UTIs often involve multidrug-resistant organisms:

Pseudomonas, Acinetobacter, and Enterococcus spp.

More common in patients with catheters or prolonged hospital stays.

Epidemiology of Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Urinary tract infections are among the most frequently encountered bacterial infections globally, affecting people of all ages and backgrounds. However, they are significantly more common in females, primarily due to anatomical differences such as a shorter urethra, which allows bacteria easier access to the bladder. It is estimated that nearly 50% of women will experience at least one UTI in their lifetime, and a substantial proportion will have recurrent episodes. Men are less commonly affected, but the incidence increases with age, especially in those with prostate enlargement or other urinary tract abnormalities. In children, UTIs can occur but are more often linked to anatomical or functional abnormalities of the urinary tract. In elderly populations, the risk increases due to factors like weakened immunity, urinary retention, and the frequent use of urinary catheters. In fact, UTIs are one of the most common types of healthcare-associated infections, particularly in hospitalized patients or those in long-term care facilities, often related to catheter use.

Geographically, UTIs are prevalent worldwide, and while most community-acquired infections are caused by E. coli, hospital-acquired cases often involve more resistant organisms such as Pseudomonas, Enterococcus, or extended-spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL)-producing bacteria. The widespread use of antibiotics has also contributed to the growing concern of antimicrobial resistance, making surveillance and appropriate treatment strategies more important than ever.

Pathophysiology of Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) [5-6]

The development of a urinary tract infection typically begins when bacteria-most commonly Escherichia coli (E. coli), which normally live in the intestines—gain access to the urethra. From there, the bacteria may travel upward through the urinary tract, infecting the bladder (resulting in cystitis) and potentially continuing up the ureters to infect the kidneys (causing pyelonephritis). This process, known as an ascending infection, is the most common route by which UTIs occur.

Once inside the urinary tract, the bacteria must attach to the lining of the urinary epithelium to avoid being flushed out by urine flow. Many strains of E. coli have structures such as fimbriae or pili that allow them to stick to the uroepithelial cells. After adherence, the bacteria can multiply and, in some cases, form protective biofilms-

especially on foreign surfaces like catheters-which shield them from the immune system and antibiotics.

The presence of bacteria triggers an immune response that results in inflammation of the affected tissues. This inflammatory reaction is responsible for the typical symptoms of UTIs, such as burning during urination, urgency, frequency, and pelvic discomfort. If the infection reaches the kidneys, it can cause a more serious systemic reaction, including fever, chills, and back pain.

Several factors increase the risk of UTIs, such as urinary obstruction, catheter use, pregnancy, diabetes, and a weakened immune system. In these cases, the body's natural defenses—like urine flow, immune surveillance, and mucosal barriers-are often compromised, allowing the infection to establish and progress more easily.

Symptoms of Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Urinary tract infections typically cause noticeable discomfort and changes in urinary habits. One of the most common symptoms is a burning sensation during urination, often accompanied by an increased urge to urinate frequently, even when only small amounts of urine are passed. The urine may appear cloudy, have a strong or unpleasant odor, and occasionally contain blood. Pain or pressure in the lower abdomen or pelvic region is also commonly reported, particularly in bladder infections (cystitis).

When the infection spreads to the kidneys (pyelonephritis), the symptoms become more severe. Patients may experience high fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, and pain in the lower back or flanks. These signs indicate that the infection has moved beyond the bladder and requires prompt medical attention.

In certain populations, symptoms can be less specific. For example, infants with UTIs may present with fever, irritability, poor feeding, or vomiting, without clear urinary symptoms. In older adults, confusion, weakness, or sudden incontinence may be the only indicators of a UTI, especially in those with cognitive impairment.

It is also important to note that some people, especially those with indwelling catheters or underlying conditions, may have bacteria in their urine without showing any symptoms-a condition known as asymptomatic bacteriuria. This usually doesn't require treatment unless the patient is pregnant or undergoing urologic procedures.

2 Causes and Risk Factors

Common risk factors for UTIs include:

Female anatomy: Women have a shorter urethra than men, which allows bacteria easier access to the bladder.

Sexual activity: Sexual intercourse can introduce bacteria into the urinary tract.

Urinary catheter use: Catheters provide a direct route for bacteria to enter the bladder.

Poor hygiene: Can lead to contamination of the urethral opening.

Obstructions: Such as kidney stones or an enlarged prostate in men.

Hormonal changes: Particularly during pregnancy or menopause, can alter the urinary tract's environment.

Immune suppression: People with diabetes, HIV/AIDS, or those on immunosuppressive drugs are at higher risk.

Congenital abnormalities: In children, anatomical defects can predispose to recurrent infections.

3. Signs and Symptoms [7-8]

The symptoms of UTIs can vary depending on the part of the urinary tract involved.

Lower urinary tract infection symptoms

Frequent and urgent need to urinate

Burning sensation during urination (dysuria)

Cloudy, dark, or strong-smelling urine

Pelvic pain or pressure in women

Low-grade fever

Upper urinary tract infection symptoms:

High fever and chills

Flank or back pain (often severe)

Nausea and vomiting

General feeling of illness or fatigue

In elderly individuals, symptoms may present atypically, such as with confusion or delirium, and in infants, symptoms may include fever, irritability, or poor feeding.

4. Diagnosis [9-11]

Diagnosing a UTI involves a combination of clinical evaluation and laboratory tests. The following methods are commonly used:

Urinalysis: A quick test that detects white blood cells, red blood cells, nitrites, and bacteria in the urine.

Urine culture: Confirms the presence of bacteria and helps identify the causative organism and its antibiotic susceptibility.

Imaging studies: Such as ultrasound or CT scan may be used in recurrent or complicated

Cystoscopy: In some chronic or complicated cases, direct visualization of the bladder may be necessary.

Early and accurate diagnosis is crucial to prevent the progression of the infection and associated complications.

5. Treatment and Management [12-16

The primary treatment for UTIs is antibiotic therapy. The choice of antibiotic depends on the severity of the infection, the site of infection, and the susceptibility of the causative organism. Commonly used antibiotics include:

Nitrofurantoin

Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (TMP-SMX)

Fosfomycin

Ciprofloxacin and other fluoroquinolones

Amoxicillin-clavulanic acid

Cephalosporins

In uncomplicated lower UTIs, short-course antibiotics (3–5 days) are usually effective. For upper UTIs or complicated infections, a longer course (7–14 days) may

be required. Analgesics, increased fluid intake, and rest may be recommended to ease symptoms.

In cases involving structural abnormalities or recurrent infections, surgical or preventive interventions may be necessary.

6. Recurrent UTIs [17]

Recurrent UTIs are defined as two or more infections within six months or three or more within a year. They can significantly affect a person's quality of life and may require further evaluation and preventive measures.

Preventive strategies include:

Increased water intake

Urinating before and after sexual activity

Maintaining good personal hygiene

Avoiding irritants such as perfumed soaps or douches

Use of prophylactic antibiotics in select patients

Vaginal estrogen therapy in postmenopausal women

7. Complications [18]

Antimicrobial Resistance and Public Health Concerns

One of the major challenges in the treatment of UTIs is the increasing resistance of uropathogens to commonly used antibiotics. The emergence of multi-drug resistant (MDR) strains, including extended-spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL) producing bacteria and carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE), has made treatment more difficult and expensive.

Development of new antimicrobial agents

Enhanced surveillance of resistance patterns

Complications of Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are common bacterial infections that, when left untreated or inadequately managed, can lead to a range of serious complications affecting the urinary system and even systemic health. The most frequent and concerning complication is acute pyelonephritis, which occurs when the infection ascends from the lower urinary tract-usually the bladder-to involve the kidneys. This condition causes inflammation of the renal pelvis and parenchyma, often resulting in high fever, severe flank pain, chills, nausea, and vomiting. Acute pyelonephritis represents a medical emergency as it can rapidly progress to kidney damage if not promptly treated. In some cases, persistent or recurrent kidney infections can develop into chronic pyelonephritis, characterized by scarring and fibrosis of renal tissue. This chronic inflammation can lead to gradual deterioration of kidney function, contributing to hypertension and chronic kidney disease over time.

In addition to inflammation, UTIs can cause localized collections of pus within the kidney called renal abscesses. These abscesses form when bacteria overwhelm the host's immune response and localize in a confined area, resulting in a pocket of infection that often requires surgical drainage in addition to antibiotics. Similarly, infection can extend beyond the renal capsule to involve the surrounding fat, causing a perinephric abscess.

Complication	Description
Pyelonephritis	Infection spreads to the kidneys, causing flank pain, fever, and vomiting.
Urosepsis	UTI spreads into the bloodstream, potentially life-threatening.
Renal abscess	Collection of pus in the kidney due to untreated infection.
Chronic or recurrent UTI	Repeated infections can lead to long-term discomfort and kidney damage.
Kidney scarring	Especially in children or recurrent cases, leading to long-term kidney issues.
Preterm labor (in pregnancy)	UTI in pregnancy can cause premature delivery or low birth weight.
Strictures or obstruction	Inflammation can lead to scarring and narrowing of the urinary tract.
Bladder dysfunction	Particularly in cases with chronic infection or underlying neurologic disease.
Prostatitis (in males)	Inflammation of the prostate due to bacterial spread.
Infertility (rare)	In severe or chronic infections affecting reproductive organs.

Plant Profile

Taxonomic Rank	Details
Kingdom	Plantae
Clade	Tracheophytes (vascular plants)
Clade	Angiosperms (flowering plants)
Clade	Eudicots
Order	Caryophyllales
Family	Polygonaceae (knotweed family)
Genus	*Polygonum*
Species	*Polygonum alpinum*
Common Name	Mountain Knotgrass

Synonyms

- Persicaria alpina (alternate classification)
- Bistorta alpina (used in older European texts)

Feature	Description
Growth Habit	Perennial herb; erect and unbranched or sparsely branched; grows 30–80 cm tall.
Stem	Smooth (glabrous), slender, angular or slightly ridged; upright in growth.
Leaves	
- Type	Simple, alternate arrangement.
- Shape	Lanceolate to oblong, entire (smooth) margins.
- Size	Basal leaves are larger (up to 15 cm), upper leaves smaller.
- Texture	Thin and slightly leathery; often with a reddish or purple tinge near the base.
Stipules (Ochreae)	Prominent, papery sheaths encircling the stem at leaf nodes; typical of Polygonaceae.
Inflorescence	Terminal spikes or clusters (racemes) of small flowers.
Flowers	

- Color	Greenish-white to pinkish.
- Structure	Tiny, bisexual, with 5 tepals (not differentiated into sepals and petals).
- Bloom Time	Typically from June to August.
Fruit	A small, three-angled achene (dry, indehiscent fruit).
Root System	Rhizomatous; underground stems help in perennial growth and spread.
Habitat	Alpine meadows, rocky slopes, and moist mountain habitats (1,500–3,000 m altitude).

➢ Native and Natural Distribution

- **Central and Southern Europe**
  Found extensively in the Alps, Pyrenees, Carpathians, and Balkan Mountains.
- **Northern Europe:**
  Present in Scandinavia, particularly in mountainous parts of Norway and Sweden.
- **Eastern Europe and Caucasus:**
  Grows in Ukraine, Slovakia, and the Caucasus Mountains, including regions of Georgia, Armenia, and southern Russia.
- **Asia (Temperate zones):**
  Extends eastward into northern Iran, Turkey, and parts of Central Asia, especially in high-altitude areas.
- **Altitude range:**
  Typically found at elevations between 1,500 and 3,000 meters, though it may occur lower in colder northern regions.

Phytochemical Constituents of Mountain Knot Grass [19-21]

Mountain Knot Grass (scientifically known as Polygonum spp., especially Polygonum bistorta), a member of the buckwheat family, is a plant renowned for its medicinal and nutritional value. It has been studied for its various bioactive compounds, some of which exhibit promising pharmacological properties.

1. Major Bioactive Compounds

Bioactive compounds are chemical constituents that have a biological effect on living organisms, and many of these are of interest in medicinal and health research.

- **Tannins**
  - These are polyphenolic compounds with antioxidant and antimicrobial properties. Tannins have been shown to help in reducing inflammation and promoting wound healing.
- **Flavonoids**
  - Polygonum spp. is rich in flavonoids, particularly quercetin and kaempferol. These compounds possess strong antioxidant properties and have been linked to cardiovascular health benefits.
- **Anthraquinones**
- **Anthraquinones**
  - These compounds exhibit strong antibacterial and anti-inflammatory activities. Some studies indicate they may have potential anticancer effects.
- **Alkaloids**
  - Alkaloids such as berberine (found in some species of Polygonum) have been shown to have antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and anticancer properties. Berberine is often studied for its effect on metabolic health.
- **Saponins**
  - Saponins are glycosides known for their ability to improve immune function and lower blood cholesterol levels. These compounds also possess antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory activities.

2. Secondary Compounds

Secondary metabolites are organic compounds produced by plants that are not directly involved in growth, development, or reproduction, but they contribute to the plant's defense mechanisms and can have various health benefits.

- Phenolic Acids
  - Phenolic compounds like gallic acid and ferulic acid are common in Polygonum species. They are well-known for their strong antioxidant properties and their role in preventing oxidative damage to cells.
- **Coumarins**
  - These compounds have anti-inflammatory, anticoagulant, and antioxidant activities. Some studies suggest coumarins may help in preventing atherosclerosis and other cardiovascular diseases.
- **Terpenoids**
  - Terpenoids, including essential oils, are present in Polygonum species and contribute to the plant's antimicrobial and antifungal properties.
- **Polysaccharides**
  - These complex carbohydrates may have immune-boosting effects and could play a role in the plant's ability to enhance overall health and fight infections.

Traditional Uses of Mountain Knot Grass (Polygonum bistorta / Polygonum aviculare)

Mountain Knot Grass has a long history of use in traditional medicine systems across Europe, Asia, and North America. Depending on the species and region, it's been valued for its astringent, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing properties.

1. **Digestive Health**
   - Astringent for Diarrhea and Dysentery: The high tannin content gives it strong astringent properties. Traditionally, decoctions of the root or aerial parts have been used to treat diarrhea, dysentery, and intestinal inflammation.
   - Stomach Tonic: It has been used to stimulate digestion and relieve indigestion or bloating.
2. **Wound Healing and Skin Disorders**
   - **Topical Poultices:** Crushed leaves or root extracts have been applied to cuts, bruises, and wounds to stop bleeding and accelerate healing.
   - **Skin Irritations:** Used in baths or compresses for eczema, rashes, and skin inflammations due to its anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial action.
3. **Respiratory Conditions**
   - **Coughs and Bronchitis:** Infusions have been used to soothe irritated mucous membranes in cases of chronic cough, sore throat, or bronchitis.
   - **Expectorant:** Some species were believed to help expel phlegm from the lungs.
4. **Women's Health**
   - **Menstrual Regulation:** In traditional European and Chinese medicine, it has been used to reduce excessive menstrual bleeding and regulate cycles.
   - **Postpartum Recovery:** Due to its toning and astringent effects, it was often recommended for women recovering after childbirth.
5. **Urinary and Kidney Suppor**
   - **Diuretic Properties:** Traditionally used to increase urine flow and support kidney function.
   - **Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs):** Used in herbal blends for managing infections and inflammation in the urinary system.
6. **Oral Health**
   - **Mouthwash and Gargle:** Decoctions were used as gargles for sore throats, bleeding gums, and mouth ulcers due to their astringent and antimicrobial qualities.

ChatGPT said

Pharmacological Activities of Mountain Knot Grass (Polygonum spp.) Related to Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Mountain Knot Grass, particularly species like Polygonum aviculare and Polygonum bistorta, has shown multiple pharmacological activities that support its traditional use in treating urinary tract infections (UTIs). These effects are mainly due to its rich content of flavonoids, tannins, phenolic acids, and other secondary metabolites.

1. **Antibacterial Activity**
- **Mechanism:** Extracts from Polygonum spp. exhibit broad-spectrum antibacterial effects against common UTI pathogens such as:
  - Escherichia coli
  - Staphylococcus saprophyticus
  - Proteus mirabilis
  - Klebsiella pneumoniae
- **Bioactive Compounds Involved:**
  - Flavonoids (e.g., quercetin, kaempferol) disrupt bacterial cell walls and inhibit bacterial DNA synthesis.
  - Tannins bind to proteins on bacterial membranes, leading to cell lysis.

2. **Anti-inflammatory Activity**
- UTIs often cause bladder and urethral inflammation. Anti-inflammatory effects of Polygonum help reduce symptoms such as burning and urgency.
- Key Effects:
  - Inhibition of pro-inflammatory cytokines (e.g., TNF-α, IL-6)
  - Reduction of COX-2 enzyme activity, leading to decreased prostaglandin production

3. **Diuretic Activity**
- Promotes increased urine flow, which helps flush out bacteria from the urinary tract.
- **Mechanism:**
  - The aqueous extract stimulates kidney filtration and urine output, aiding in mechanical removal of pathogens.
  - Often used in traditional formulas to "cleanse" the urinary tract.

4. **Antioxidant Activity**
- Oxidative stress contributes to inflammation and tissue damage in UTIs.
- Phenolic compounds in Mountain Knot Grass scavenge free radicals, protecting the urinary tract lining from oxidative damage.

5. **Biofilm Inhibition**
- Uropathogens like E. coli often form biofilms, which make them resistant to antibiotics.
- Tannins and flavonoids in Polygonum spp. have shown potential in inhibiting biofilm formation, making the bacteria more susceptible to the immune response and treatment.

6. **Analgesic Properties (Mild)**
- Helps reduce discomfort during urination, a common symptom in UTIs.
- While not as potent as NSAIDs, compounds in Polygonum may modulate pain by reducing local inflammation and nerve sensitization.

Activity	Benefit for UTI	Key Compounds
Antibacterial	Kills/inhibits UTI causing bacteria	Flavonoids, Tannins
Anti inflammatory	Reduces bladder/Urethra inflammation	Phenolics, flavonoids
Diuretic	Flushes bacteria via increased urine nation	Poly saccharides,phenolic acids

Antioxidant	Protects urinary tissue from oxidative damage	Flavonoids,phenolic acids
Bio film Inhibition	Prevents bacterial resistance and recurrence	Tannins,flavonoids
Mild Analgesic	Relieves pain during urination	Flavonoids

Traditional and Ethnobotanical Uses

1. Traditional Uses

Mountain Knotgrass has been used for centuries in traditional medicine systems. Its applications include:

Urinary tract health: Acts as a diuretic and helps flush toxins from the body.

Kidney stones: Traditionally used to dissolve and eliminate stones.

Cough and cold: Its expectorant properties help alleviate respiratory conditions.

Skin and wound care: Used in paste form to treat cuts, wounds, and boils.

Fever and infections: Acts as an antipyretic and antimicrobial agent.

2. Ethnobotanical Significance

In various tribal and rural communities across India and Africa, Aerva lanata is an integral part of household medicine. Decoctions and infusions made from its leaves and roots are used for:

Urinary retention
Dysuria (painful urination)
Diabetes management
Menstrual problems

Photochemical Constituents

1. Key Photo chemicals

Research indicates that Aerva lanata contains several bioactive compounds, including:

Alkaloids
Flavonoids
Tannins
Phenolic compounds
Saponins
Steroids

These compounds contribute to its medicinal properties like antioxidant, antimicrobial, and anti-inflammatory activities.

2. Pharmacological Properties

Diuretic: Promotes urine production and detoxification.

Anti-urolithiatic: Helps prevent and dissolve kidney stones.

Antioxidant: Protects cells from oxidative stress.

Antimicrobial: Effective against certain bacterial and fungal strains.

Anti-inflammatory: Reduces inflammation in internal and external applications.

Therapeutic Applications

1. In Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Aerva lanata is commonly used in herbal formulations for UTIs due to its:

Mild diuretic effect
Ability to flush out pathogens
Soothing action on inflamed tissues

2. In Kidney Stone Management

Known for breaking or softening urinary calculi
Reduces pain and discomfort during urination
Improves urinary flow and reduces recurrence

3. Other Therapeutic Applications

Respiratory relief: Helps in managing asthma and bronchitis

Hepatoprotective: Some studies suggest protective effects on the liver

Anti-diabetic: May help regulate blood glucose levels.

4. Formulations

Decoction of leaves
Powdered root for oral intake
Paste for topical application

Phyto chemicals from Mountain Knot Grass Act Against UTI Pathogens and Affect Urinary Tract Physiology

Phytochemicals found in Mountain Knot Grass (Polygonum spp.) act against urinary tract infection (UTI) pathogens through multiple pharmacological mechanisms that target both the microbes and the urinary tract's physiological environment. Compounds such as flavonoids, tannins, phenolic acids, alkaloids, and saponins exhibit strong antibacterial properties by disrupting bacterial cell walls, inhibiting DNA replication, and interfering with essential enzymatic activities. These actions are particularly effective against common UTI-causing bacteria like Escherichia coli, Klebsiella pneumoniae, and Proteus mirabilis. Additionally, these phytochemicals help prevent the formation of bacterial biofilms—protective structures that allow pathogens to resist treatment and cause recurrent infections—by blocking bacterial adhesion and communication systems (quorum sensing).

Beyond their antimicrobial effects, the phytochemicals also provide significant anti-inflammatory benefits. By inhibiting inflammatory mediators such as cytokines (e.g., TNF-α, IL-6) and cyclooxygenase enzymes, they help reduce bladder and urethral inflammation, thereby alleviating common UTI symptoms like burning sensation and urgency. Mountain Knot Grass also possesses diuretic properties that increase urine flow, aiding in the mechanical flushing of bacteria from the urinary tract and reducing their ability to adhere to the mucosal lining. This supports the natural defense mechanisms of the urinary system. Furthermore, antioxidant compounds such as flavonoids and phenolics protect the epithelial cells lining the bladder from oxidative damage caused by infection-induced stress, thereby promoting faster tissue repair.

Altogether, these combined pharmacological actions help eliminate infection, prevent recurrence, and support the overall health and function of the urinary tract.

Advantages

1. Multi-Mechanistic Action

The phytochemicals in Polygonum spp. act through multiple pathways—antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, diuretic, antioxidant, and anti-biofilm—which enhances overall therapeutic potential for UTIs.

2. Scientific Basis for Traditional Use

The described pharmacological actions support traditional medicinal uses, providing a bridge between ethnobotany and modern herbal pharmacology.

3. Natural and Gentle

Compared to synthetic antibiotics, Polygonum compounds are generally less harsh on the body, with lower risk of disrupting beneficial microbiota or causing antibiotic resistance.

4. Supports Urinary Tract Physiology

Its diuretic and anti-inflammatory effects not only target pathogens but also help restore and maintain healthy urinary function, which is critical in both treatment and prevention of UTIs.

5. Potential for Chronic/Recurrent UTI Support

The ability of phytochemicals to inhibit biofilms makes Mountain Knot Grass particularly valuable for long-term or recurring UTIs, where conventional treatment often fails.

Conclusion

Aerva lanata, commonly known as Mountain Knotgrass, demonstrates significant therapeutic potential in the management of urinary tract infections. Traditionally used in herbal medicine for treating urinary disorders, its rich composition of bioactive compounds such as flavonoids, alkaloids, tannins, and saponins contributes to its diverse pharmacological activities. These include notable antimicrobial effects against common UTI-causing pathogens like Escherichia coli and Staphylococcus aureus, which are crucial in combating infections.

Beyond its antimicrobial properties, Aerva lanata exhibits anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and diuretic effects, all of which support urinary tract health by reducing inflammation, protecting renal tissues from oxidative damage, and promoting increased urine flow to flush out bacteria. Additionally, its anti-urolithiatic activity helps prevent the formation of urinary stones, a common risk factor for recurrent infections.

While preliminary studies and traditional use strongly support the efficacy of Aerva lanata in UTI management, further clinical research is necessary to confirm its safety, optimize dosing, and fully understand its mechanisms of action in humans. Nonetheless, the plant offers a promising natural alternative or complementary approach to conventional antibiotic therapy, potentially reducing drug resistance and side effects.

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Authors Contribution

All authors are contributed equally

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