

Studying the molecular mechanism of *Cleome droserifolia* extract antidiabetic effect in rats

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Abstract:

Diabetes is a global disease that endangers human health. Metformin (Met) drug is used as a first-line treatment for type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2-DM). It was noted that Met had several adverse effects on vital organs. Natural products have counted as much safer agents for T2-DM treatment. This study aimed to evaluate the antidiabetic effect of *Cleome droserifolia* extract (CDE). Forty male Sprague Dawley rats were divided into 5 groups (GP) (n = 8) as the follows: The 1st group (Gp1) served as a negative control. From Gp2 to Gp5 were fed on a high-fat diet (HFD) for 12 weeks and were induced with a 30 mg/kg streptozotocin (STZ) injection as a single intraperitoneal (i.p) dose. Then, Gp3 was treated with 100 mg/kg of Met orally for 4 weeks on a daily basis. GP4 was treated with 100 mg/kg CDE. GP5 was treated with Met/CDE as in Gp3 and Gp4. Phytochemical analysis showed CDE has a high level of phenolic and flavonoids. The percentage of body weight % (b.wt.%) changes, biochemical, and histopathological investigations were evaluated. Co-treatment of T2-DM with Met/CDE led to significant improvement in the % b.wt of T2-DM rats and improved serum glucose level, increase in the C-peptide levels, and improvement in the hepatic functions and antioxidants/antioxidant status. CDE could play an important role in regulating T2-DM and can be developed as a promising natural material for diabetes management. In silico study showed an important combination with specific phenolic acids that have antidiabetic activity.

Keywords: Type 2 diabetes mellitus, Metformin, *Cleome droserifolia*, Total antioxidant capacity, Antidiabetic effect.

دراسة الآلية الجزيئية لتأثير مستخلص نبات السما *Cleome**droserifolia* كمضاد لمرض السكر لدى الجرذان

المستخلص

يعتبر مرض السكر من الأمراض الخطيرة التي تؤثر على صحة الإنسان كما يعتبر ميتفورمين من أهم العقاقير المستخدمة في علاج السكر من النوع الثاني لكنه اثار جانبية على اعضاء جسم الانسان. تم اجراء هذه الدراسة لتقييم تأثير اضافة نبات السموة لعقار الميتفورمين وذلك للحد من اثاره الجانبية. تم اجراء التحليل الفيتوكيميائي لمستخلص السموة. استخدم في هذه الدراسة ٤٠ من الجرذان يتراوح وزنهم (١٢٠-١٣٠) تم تقسيمهم الى ٥ مجموعات: المجموعة الأولى تم تغذيتها على الوجبة القياسية (مجموعة ضابطة سالبة): المجموعات من الثانية الى الخامسة تم تغذيتها على الوجبة عالية الدهن لمدة ١٢ اسبوع ثم حقنها بمادة استريبتوسيتوزين (٣٠ ملجم / كجم). المجموعة الثانية (المجموعة الضابطة الموجبة المصابة بمرض السكر من النوع الثاني)، المجموعة الثالثة والتي تناولت ميتفورمين (١٥٠ ملجم / كجم) فقط لمدة ٤ اسابيع. المجموعة الرابعة تناولت (١٠٠ ملجم / كجم) من مستخلص السموة فقط، المجموعة الخامسة تناولت عقار ميتفورمين مع مستخلص السموة وذلك لمدة ٤ اسابيع. اظهرت النتائج تأثير مستخلص السموة في ضبط وزن الجسم بالمقارنة بالمجموعة الضابطة المصابة بالسكر كما اظهرت التأثير الخافض لسكر الدم لمستخلص السموة لتأثيره المضاد للأكسدة لمحتواه من الفينولات والغلافونيدات وتحسن في وظائف الكبد والفحص الهستوباثولوجي للأنسجة. كما أظهرت الدراسة باستخدام النمذجة الحاسوبية (In silico) وجود تركيبة فعالة من أحماض فينولية معينة تمتلك خصائص مضادة لمرض السكري.

الكلمات الدالة: السكر من النوع الثاني - ميتفورمين - السموة - التأثير المضاد للأكسدة - التأثير المضاد للسكر.

INTRODUCTION

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a chronic endocrine disease characterized by persistent hyperglycemia, which is often caused by the absolute or relative deficiency of insulin secretion or insulin resistance (IR) (Shi *et al.*, 2018). DM is usually classified into three major categories including type-1 diabetes mellitus (T1-DM), T2-DM, and gestational diabetes (Nuckols *et al.*, 2018). It is estimated that there are currently 537 million adults aged 20 to 79 worldwide who have DM, and this number is expected to rise to 783 million by 2045. In 2021, diabetes resulted in 747,000 deaths in the Southeast Asia region, with the total economic impact reaching 10.1 billion USD (IDF, 2021). In T2 DM counted as the highest endemic type all over the world (Khan *et al.*, 2020). T2-DM symptoms included

blurred vision, fatigue, feeling very hungry or thirsty, increased need to urinate, slow healing of cuts or sores, and unexplained weight loss (**Yang et al., 2018**). The complications of T2-DM classified microvascular or macrovascular types (**Harding et al., 2019**). For T2-DM treatment different approaches have been approved to decrease IR sensitivity and enhance the uptake of glucose into the cells. Recently, novel approaches have been applied to treat T2-DM, for instance, the use of nanoparticles and stem cells has emerged as potential settings for treatment (**Simos et al., 2020 and Tillman et al., 2022**).

Metformin (Met), is one of the most prescribed medications as a first-line therapy for T2-DM. Met has many physiological advantages. It can activate adenosine monophosphate-activated protein kinase, upregulate glucose transporter 4 genes, increase glucose uptake and decrease oxidative stress, resulting in reduced hepatic gluconeogenesis and aiding lipid metabolism (**Hundal et al., 2000**). Met inhibits the mitochondrial respiratory chain complex 1 that responsible for energy metabolism and activation of AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK) (**Vial et al., 2019**). The most common side effect of Met concentrated on the kidney and the liver tissues. Previous studies showed an adverse effect of Met upon the treatment of diabetic persons and reported that accumulation of Met led to an impairment in renal function and was associated with lactic acidosis (**Hsu et al., 2017 and Hao et al., 2018**).

Due to the severe side effects of the current medication for T2-DM, including Met, researchers have been directed to screen natural products (NPs) for complementary alternative therapies (**El-Said et al., 2022**). The interest in exploring NPs as a new source of different drugs, specifically anti-diabetic drugs, has increased in recent decades (**Yadav, 2024**). According to **Aboraya et al. (2022)**, variety of medicinal plants are considered to be useful in preventing and/or managing T2-DM and its problems.

Cleome droserifolia (*C. droserifolia*) belongs to the Cleomaceae family is known traditionally as Samwa. This plant fortunately was found to be widely distributed in some Arabic countries as Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and Syria (**Moustafa et al., 2019**). Various extracts of *C. droserifolia* have been utilized for their hepatoprotective and hypoglycemic properties (**Moustafa and Mahmoud, 2023**). *C. droserifolia* extract (CDE) has shown strong anti-diabetic properties (**Ismail et al., 2025**). The CDE has been found to contain a very high percentage of flavonols that showed 63.3% activity, similar to that of the Met (**Motaal et al., 2014**). Additionally, CDE is considered asistaminic, relaxant, tranquilizing, anticarcinogenic, antiparasitic, antioxidant, and antimicrobial properties (**Abdel Motaal et al., 2014 and Maksoud et al., 2020**). The various biological effects are linked to the different categories of active secondary metabolites found in CDE, such as polyphenols, terpenes, flavonoids, glucosinolates, anthocyanins, and alkaloids (**Moustafa and Mahmoud, 2023**). Consequently, this study aimed to examine the potential effects of co-treatment with CDE and Met in STZ-induced T2-DM in rats.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Chemicals

Streptozotocin (STZ) was purchased from MP Biomedicals Company, Illkirch, France. Metformin (Met) was purchased from Alfa Aesar Company, Haverhill, Massachusetts, USA. Glucose, C-peptide, aspartate transaminase (AST), alanine transaminase (ALT), total protein, malonaldehyde (MDA), superoxide dismutase (SOD) and catalase (CAT) kits were purchased from Bio-diagnostic Company (Egypt). *C. droserifolia*

Collection of *C. droserifolia* and preparation of its extract.

Samwa (*Cleome droserifolia*) plant, was obtained from the desert of North Sinai. Sinai Governorate, Egypt, in December, 2023. The collected plant was verified by the staff of the Faculty Agriculture, Sohag University, Egypt. The plant was dried in the shade ground into a powder, 50 g of powder was added to 500 ml of 70% ethanol then filtered to obtain *C. droserifolia* extract (CDE).

Phytochemicals analysis of *C. droserifolia* extract

Phytochemical analysis of CDE includes total phenolic, flavonoid, total antioxidant capacity (TAC) and DPPH scavenging capacity were determined. Total phenolic content was determined by Folin-Ciocalteu reagent according to **Miliauskas et al., (2004)**. The flavonoid content was assessed according to **(Zhishen et al., 1999)**. The phosphomolybdenum method was used to determine TAC according to **Prior et al., (2005)**. The DPPH scavenging capacity was assessed according to **El-Naggar et al., (2023)**. The scavenging activity on the DPPH % radical was expressed as the inhibition percentage using the following equation (1):

$$\text{DPPH \%} = \frac{[(AC - AS)/(AC)] \times 100}{(1)} \quad (1)$$

Where Ac is absorbance for control, As is absorbance for sample

Normal balanced and high fat diets

The normal balanced diet (NBD), consisting of 10% protein, 10% fat, 74.4% carbs, 3.5% mineral mixture, 0.1% methionine, 1% vitamin mixture, and 1% fiber, was used to feed healthy control rats. The high-fat diet (HFD), consisting of 64 g of normal chow, 32 g of animal-sourced saturated fat, 300 IU of vitamin D3, and 15% and 12% of cholesterol, was used to treat rats **(Thomas, 1998)**.

Experimental Animals

For this study, male adult albino rats (Sprague- Dawley strain) (n=40 rats) weighing approximately (120 ±5 g.) were purchased from Helwan Experimental Animals Farm. Rats were housed in clean cages, maintained on a 12-hour light/dark cycle, and provided with free access to drinking water and a standard commercial diet.

In managing the laboratory animals, the National Institutes of Health's standards for the care and use of laboratory animals, as well as the recommendations of the National Research Centre Ethics Committee, were followed. The work was authorized by the institutional Animal Care Committee (IACUC-SCI-TU-0444).

Induction of T2-DM in rats

After 12 weeks of HFD feeding, rats were given a single intraperitoneal (i.p.) injection of STZ (30 mg/kg). Blood samples were collected from the tail vein three days after the STZ injection, and the glucose level was determined using a portable glucometer (One Touch Select, Life scan, Inc., California, USA). Three days after STZ injection, blood samples were drawn from the tail vein and glucose levels were determined. Animals with a fasting blood glucose level >300 mg/dl were included in this study as T2-DM rats (Guo *et al.*, 2011). Because of the ability of STZ to induce fatal hypoglycemia as a result of massive pancreatic insulin release, the rats received 10% glucose solution after 6 h of STZ injection for the next 48 hours to prevent fatal hypoglycemia (Palsamy and Subramanian, 2008).

Experimental design

After T2-DM induction, the animals were divided into five groups (n = 8 rats) as follows: Group1 (Gp1): Normal control group (Ctrl), rats fed on NBD for 12 weeks and administered orally with dist. H₂O. Gp2: Diabetic group (T2-DM), rats were fed on an HFD for 12 weeks and then received a single dose of STZ 30 mg/kg i.p. (Gp3): T2-DM treated rats were given Met at a dose of 150 mg/kg by oral gavage daily for 4 weeks (T2-DM/Met). Gp4: T2-DM rats that were treated with CDE at a dose of 100 mg/kg by oral gavage daily for 4 weeks (T2-DM/CDE). (Gp5): - DM rats that treated with a combination of Met and CDE as in GP3 and 4, respectively (T2-DM/Met/CDE).

Biochemical analysis

At the end of the experimental period (16weeks), rats were deprived of food overnight and sacrificed. Blood samples were collected, and then sera were separated by centrifugation for 10 minutes at 3000 rpm to separate the serum. The serum was carefully aspirated, transferred and frozen at -20°C for biochemical analysis. Furthermore, liver tissues were homogenized and centrifuged and then frozen at -20 C° for oxidant/antioxidant biomarkers.

Determination the total body weight changes

All rats of all groups were weighed at the beginning (initial b.wt) and at the end of the experiment (final b.wt). The percentage of the change in the total body weight (%b.wt) was calculated as follows in equation (2):

$$\text{b.wt}\% = (\text{final b.wt} - \text{initial b.wt} / \text{initial b.wt}) \times 100 \quad (2)$$

Estimation of biochemical analysis

Serum glucose and C-peptide were determined according to Tietz, (1995) and Jones and Hattersley, (2013). Serum AST and ALT activities were determined as described by Thomas, (1998) and Rei (1984). Serum total protein levels were determined as described by Tietz, (1995). MDA was assessed based on the methods that have been previously described by Li *et al.* (1994). SOD activity was determined as described by Sun and Oberley, (1988). CAT activities were measured following the methodology of Aebi, (1984).

Histopathological investigations

Tissue specimens of the livers of all experimental groups were harvested and fixed in 10% formalin. Paraffin blocks were prepared after completing the tissue processing in different grades of alcohol and xylene. Sections (5µm) were prepared from paraffin blocks using microtome stained with hematoxylin and eosin and observed under a light microscope (Optica light microscope, B-350) to examine gross cellular damage (Bancroft, 2008).

In silico study

Ligand preparation

Ligand structures were retrieved based on the results of RP-HPLC extraction (Hashem *et al.*, 2021) from the PubChem database. The 3D structure was optimized for energy using Avogadro 1.2.0 software (Hanwell *et al.*, 2012) with the MMFF94 force field.

Protein Preparation

The 3D structures of proteins (PI3K_O70173, PPAR_Q9QYK2, IRS_P35570 and glut4_P19357) were obtained from the UniProt database. The binding sites for these proteins were identified based on previously published literature and further validated using the CB-DOCK2 tool (Liu *et al.* 2022). Protein preparation for molecular docking was carried out using AutoDock Tools 1.5.7 (Morris *et al.*, 2009), including the removal of water molecules, addition of polar hydrogens, and assignment of Gasteiger charges.

Molecular docking

Molecular docking studies was conducted using AutoDock Vina (Trott and Olson, 2010) to evaluate the binding modes and affinities of the compounds with their respective protein targets. Docking grid boxes were centered on the predicted binding sites, with the exhaustiveness parameter set to 8. The default scoring function was used for the docking calculations.

Visualization and analysis

The docked complexes were visualized and analyzed using BIOVIA Discovery Studio Visualizer 2020 (BIOVIA Discovery Studio, 2020). The binding affinities (ΔG values) and intermolecular interactions, including hydrogen bonds and hydrophobic interactions, were analyzed and reported.

Statistical analysis

All data are the means of 3 replicates. The data was expressed as mean \pm SD. Comparison between groups was carried out using one-way ANOVA. If there were significant differences between means, Tukey post hoc comparisons among different groups were performed. For all statistical tests P values ≤ 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant. Data and statistical analysis were performed using Excel 2013 (Microsoft Corporation, USA, and Minitab version 18) (Kotz *et al.*, 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Phytochemicals analysis of *C. droserifolia*.

The obtained results in Table 1, revealed the phytochemical analysis of CDE. The total phenolic and total flavonoid contents were 17.54 ± 1.15 mg GAE/g DW and 29.78 ± 2.49 mg QUE/g DW, respectively. The total antioxidant capacity (TAC) of the CDE was 251.63 ± 5.82 mg AE/g DW. The DPPH scavenging activity (%) of CDE was $78\% \pm 1.89$, the concentrations of CDE, which able to inhibit 50% of DPPH (IC_{50}) was 6.95 ± 0.74 mg/ml. The obtained results are in accordance with previous studies that reported CDE contains high amount of active secondary metabolites including phenolics, carotenoids, flavonoids, anthocyanins, polysaccharides, terpenoids, triterpenoids, alkaloids and glycosides (Muhaidat *et al.*, 2015 and Korkor *et al.*, 2022)

Table 1. Quantitative phytochemical analysis of *C. droserifolia*

Phytochemical analysis	CDE
Total phenolic(mg GAE/g DW)	17.54 ± 1.15
Total flavonoids (mg QE/g DW)	29.78 ± 2.49
TAC (mg AAE/g DW)	251.63 ± 5.82
DPPH scavenging%	$78\% \pm 1.89$
IC_{50} of DPPH (mg/ml)	6.95 ± 0.74

DW: Dry weight, **GAE:** Gallic acid equivalent, **QUE:** Quercetin equivalent. **TAC:** Total antioxidant capacity, **AAE:** Ascorbic acid equivalent **IC_{50} :** Inhibitory concentration 50%.

Effect of co-treatment /CDE and Met on the total body weight changes in T2-DM rats

Data presented in figure 1 show the changes in body weight during the experimental period in all experimental groups; Ctrl, T2-DM, T2-DM/Met, T2-DM/CDE, and T2-DM/Met/CDE for 16 weeks. At Wk-0, all groups start at similar baseline levels (~120–130). Over time, the control group shows a slower, steady increase in body weight compared to diabetic groups. T2-DM shows the steepest increase, reaching near 280 by week 16. T2-DM/Met, T2-DM/CDE, and T2-DM/Met/CDE show slower progression in body weight than T2-DM after week 12. T2-DM/Met/CDE shows the best control after week 12, with a slight decrease, suggesting improved outcomes compared to other groups. Additionally, data illustrates the longitudinal progression of body weight in all groups. As expected, the untreated T2-DM group demonstrated a continuous and steep increase in body weight, consistent with the natural progression of uncontrolled diabetes (American Diabetes Association [ADA], 2023). In contrast, groups receiving Met (T2-DM/Met), a common first-line pharmacotherapy, exhibited slower progression after Week 12, supporting prior findings that Met effectively delays disease progression and improves glycemic control (Foretset *al.*, 2014). The combination therapy group (T2-DM/Met/CDE) showed the most pronounced improvement post-Week 12, with the trend plateauing and even slightly declining toward Week 16. This observation aligns with previous reports emphasizing that lifestyle modifications (CDE: Counseling, diet, and exercise

interventions) synergize with Met to produce superior metabolic outcomes compared to pharmacotherapy alone (Knowler *et al.*, 2002 and Umpierre *et al.*, 2011).

The Diabetes Prevention Program notably demonstrated that intensive lifestyle interventions reduced the incidence of diabetes by 58% compared to placebo, whereas Met alone reduced it by 31% (Knowler *et al.*, 2002). The treatment of T2-DM group with CDE alone (T2-DM/CDE) improved body weight as compared to T2-DM group but did not outperform the combined Met and CDE group, suggesting that while lifestyle changes are beneficial, their effectiveness can be potentiated when combined with pharmacological intervention (Umpierre *et al.*, 2011). Ctrl. group maintained relatively stable and lower values throughout, further underscoring the pathogenic role of metabolic dysregulation in T2-DM. Overall, these findings reinforce the current understanding that a multifactorial approach, combining both medication and lifestyle interventions, is the most effective strategy for managing T2-DM progression (ADA, 2023).

According to the obtained results, there was a correlation between hyperglycemia and the decreased body weight of T2-DM animals (Carpéné *et al.*, 2022). Zafar and Naqvi, (2010) revealed that rats treated with STZ-induced diabetes showed signs of ill health and weight loss due to the harmful effects of STZ, which resulted in DNA alkylation, hyperglycemia, and necrotic lesions. Additionally, Wickramasinghe *et al.*, (2022) found that a significant decrease in body weight following STZ injection in T2-DM. Recently, Maaliah *et al.*, (2024) demonstrated that rats given STZ saw a modest drop in body weight. Furthermore, Treatment of T2-DM rats with CDE showed a marked improvement in body weight as compared to T2-DM group as confirmed by Hashem and Shehta, (2021). Additionally, these findings were in line with a recent study by AbouHaleka *et al.*, (2023).

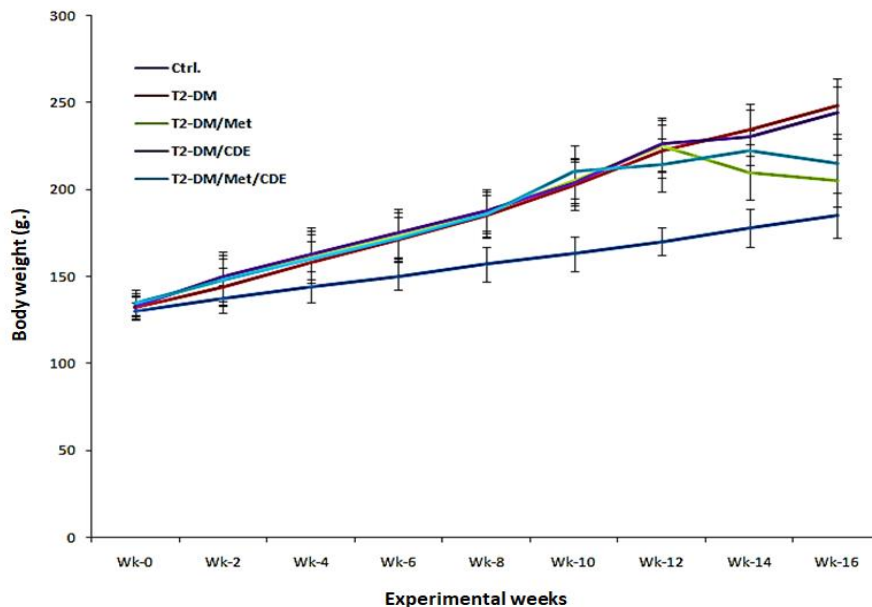


Figure 1. Ctrl.: Control group; T2-DM: Diabetic group; T2-DM/Met: Diabetic group treated with Metformin; T2-DM/CDE: Diabetic group treated with *C. droserifolia* extract; T2-DM/Met /CDE: Diabetic group treated with *C. droserifolia* extract.

Effect of co-treatment with CDE and Met on T2-DM rats on serum glucose and C-peptide levels

It has been reported that, DM considered one of the most common endocrine diseases that affects negatively on human health. Induction of DM causes various metabolic disorders, including hyperglycemia, hyperlipidemia, hypertension, atherosclerosis, retinopathy, neuropathy, and nephropathy (Jörns *et al.*, 2014 and Krajewski *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, Alrasheedi *et al.*, (2024) mentioned that DM induced by STZ produced significant increase in serum glucose levels.

Data are presented in Table (2) illustrated that the mean values of serum glucose(mg/dl) and C-peptide (ng/ml). It was remarkable that T2-DM, exhibited a significant increase in glucose levels. The mean values of glucose of T2-DM rats were significantly increased as compared to normal rats. The data showed a significant increase in the serum glucose level in T2-DM group (295.23 ± 4.32 mg/dl) compared to control group (89.87 ± 2.55 mg/dl) ($P < 0.05$). STZ is a glucosamine-nitrosourea compound that causes hyperglycemia by alkylating DNA and destroying pancreatic β cells. The impairment of β -cell function resulted in a decline of glucose homeostasis (Zafar and Naqvi, 2010). Recently, Maaliah *et al.*, (2024) reported that STZ injection led to a significant increase in serum glucose levels in experimental animals. The obtained results showed that administration of Met or CDE to T2-DM rats led to a significant reduction of serum glucose level (161.44 ± 3.15 or 157.25 ± 3.41 mg/dl, respectively). Co-treatment with Met/CDE showed the most pronounced decrease in glucose level (119.97 ± 2.66 mg/dl) compared to diabetic group (295.23 ± 4.23 mg/dl).

Consuming natural antioxidants lowers the risk of diseases such as diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and other aging-related conditions (Greenwell and Rahman, 2015). Phytochemicals, also known as phytonutrients, are compounds derived from plants that are known to be good sources of natural antioxidants (Sharma *et al.*, 2018). Previously, it has been reported that bioactive compounds particularly derived from plant resources acts as antitumor and antidiabetic agents (Tran *et al.*, 2020). Polyphenolics, the main constituents of certain ancient medicinal herbs, have captured attention for their biological properties (Xiao, 2022). These findings are consistent with previous studies on Samwa extracts and powders (Abdelfattah *et al.*, 2019; Abdel Maksoud *et al.*, 2020 and Ismail, 2022).

Recently, Ismail *et al.*, (2025) reported that treatment with samwa extract showed improvements included reductions in serum glucose, oxidative stress in T2-DM rats induced by alloxan. C-peptide level, however, was significantly decreased in T2-DM rats (0.05 ± 0.014 ng/ml) as compared to negative group (0.16 ± 0.013 ng/ml). Treatment with Met or CDE in T2-DM rats have significant increase in their levels (0.09 ± 0.012 or 0.08 ± 0.009 ng/ml, respectively). Co-treatment with Met/CDE, however, in T2-DM rats showed the most significant increases in C-peptide level (0.12 ± 0.008 ng/ml) ($P < 0.05$) (Table 2). C-peptides, which are released from pancreatic β -cells during the biosynthesis of insulin, are an indicator of endogenous insulin production (Landreh and Jörnval, 2021).

Table 2. Glucose and C-peptides levels in the different groups.

Groups	Glucose (mg/dl)	C-peptide (ng/ml)
Ctrl	89.87 ± 2.55 ^e	0.16 ± 0.013 ^{b,d}
T2-DM alone	295.23 ± 4.32 ^a	0.05 ± 0.014 ^a
T2-DM /Met	161.44 ± 3.15 ^b	0.09 ± 0.012 ^d
T2-DM CDE	157.25 ± 3.41 ^b	0.08 ± 0.009 ^d
T2-DM /Met/CDE	119.97 ± 2.66 ^c	0.12 ± 0.008 ^{d, e}

The values represented mean ± SD. **Ctrl.**: Control group; **T2-DM**: Diabetic group; **T2-DM/Met**: Diabetic group treated with metformin; **T2-DM/CDE**: Diabetic group treated with *C. droserifolia* extract; **T2-DM/Met/CDE**: Diabetic group treated with *C. droserifolia* extract. Means that do not share the same letter are significantly different (P-value< 0.05).

Co-treatment with CDE and Met improve liver functions in T2-DM rats

As indicated in Table (3), the obtained results illustrated that serum AST, ALT activities were significantly increased in T2-DM when compared to the corresponding values of negative control group. Treatment of T2-DM rats with Met or CDE led to significant decreases in ALT and AST activities when compared with T2-DM rats alone ($P < 0.05$). T2-DM rats showed significant decrease in the total protein levels (6.12 ± 0.16 g/dL) as compared to normal group (8.95 ± 0.19 g/dL). However, treatment of T2-DM rats with Met or CDE led to significant increase in the total protein levels ($P < 0.05$) as compared to T2-DM rats (Table 3). The liver is the vital organs involved in the regulation and homeostasis of blood glucose (Röder *et al.*, 2016). AST and ALT activities were important in the hepatic function diagnosing for various diseases (Thakur *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, the presence of elevated transaminases can be an indicator of liver damage. Furthermore, El-Khawaga *et al.*, (2010) reported that diabetes-induced liver disorders which led to an increase in liver transaminases. Liver disorders in diabetes probably cause cell lysis resulting in release the of intracellular enzymes into the blood (El-Khawaga *et al.*, 2010 and Sayed-Ahmed *et al.*, 2020).

These results are in accordance with previous study by Ahmed *et al.* (2001) who reported that the treatment with CDE resulted in significant dose-dependent decreases in the activities of liver enzymes. (AbouHaleka *et al.* (2023) reported that CDE pre-treatment significantly decreased AST, ALT, and alkaline phosphatase (ALP) of rats exposed to adrenaline. The hepatoprotective effect of CDE may be due to its high amount of active secondary metabolites including phenolics, carotenoids, flavonoids, anthocyanins, polysaccharides, terpenoids, triterpenoids, alkaloids and glycosides (Muhaidat *et al.*, 2015; Korkor *et al.*, 2022 and Elhassaneen *et al.*, 2024). This effect of the phytochemical compounds of CDE may be due to their antioxidant and scavenging properties, inhibition of lipid oxidation, consequentially, they play an important role in protecting the liver from many complications resulting from many diseases including diabetes (Abdelalal *et al.*, 2022; El-Hawary, 2023; Mahmoud, 2023). With the same context, many studies indicated that plant parts contain phenolics, carotenoids, anthocyanins, polysaccharides and terpenoids such as those present in CDE, which demonstrated protection against liver injuries induced by

toxic chemicals (Mahran and Elhassaneen, 2023; Elhassaneen and Mahrran, 2024). Recently, Ismail *et al.* (2025) confirmed hepatoprotective effect of CDE.

Table 3. ALT, AST activities, and total proteins levels in the different groups

Groups	ALT (U/L)	AST (U/L)	Total protein (g/dL)
Ctrl	34.55 ± 2.72 ^b	187.21 ± 7.41 ^{b,c}	8.95 ± 0.19 ^{a,b,c}
T2-DM alone	56.72 ± 2.79 ^a	227.14 ± 8.93 ^a	6.02 ± 0.16 ^a
T2-DM /Met	44.65 ± 3.41 ^{a,b}	208.23 ± 10.44 ^{b,c}	7.32 ± 0.29 ^c
T2-DM CDE	42.52 ± 2.21 ^{a,b}	201.75 ± 9.65 ^{b,c}	8.02 ± 0.20 ^{b,c}
T2-DM /Met/CDE	39.60 ± 1.96 ^b	195.15 ± 8.76 ^{b,c}	8.56 ± 0.21 ^{b,c}

The values represented mean ± SD. **Ctrl.:** Control group; **T2-DM:** Diabetic group; **T2-DM/Met:** Diabetic group treated with metformin; **T2-DM/CDE:** Diabetic group treated with *C. Droserifolia* extract; **T2-DM/Met/CDE:** Diabetic group treated with *C. droserifolia* extract. **ALT:** Alanine transaminase; **AST:** Aspartate transaminase. The means that do not share the same letter are significantly different (P -value < 0.05).

Co-treatment with CDE and Met improved hepatic antioxidants

The obtained results from table (4) showed that mean values of hepatic antioxidants enzymes were MDA, SOD and CAT. It was noticed that MDA level was significantly increased in the T2-DM group (76.54 ± 3.18 nmol/mg tissue) as compared to normal group (36.94 ± 2.92 nmol/mg tissue). The serum level of MDA in the treated diabetic groups decreased after Met or CDE administration. T2-DM that received a combination Met/CDE showed a marked decrease in their MDA levels up to 47.26 ± 3.54 nmol/mg tissue compared to T2-DM group alone ($P < 0.05$).

Diabetes is accompanied by a decreased level of antioxidant enzymes SOD and CAT. The T2-DM group showed a significant decrease in their SOD and CAT activities (6.95 ± 0.57 and 54.39 ± 3.18 U/mg tissue, respectively) when compared to the normal control group (15.62 ± 1.14 and 88.59 ± 3.26 U/mg tissue, respectively) ($P < 0.05$) (Table 4). The antioxidant effect of Met and/or CDE administration showed significant increase in the SOD and CAT activities of the treated T2-DM rats. T2-DM group that was co-treated with Met/CDE showed notable increase in their SOD and CAT activities (12.75 ± 1.04 and 80.64 ± 3.79 U/mg tissue, respectively) compared to the T2-DM alone ($P < 0.05$) (Table 4). Additionally, rats' serum MDA level was reduced in a dose-dependent manner by CDE therapy. These findings are mostly in line with a number of earlier investigations (El-Khawaga *et al.*, 2010; Arafa, 2021 and Elhassaneen *et al.* 2024).

Increased lipid peroxidation disrupts the functions of the cell membrane by decreasing membrane fluidity, which changes the activities of enzymes and receptors that are bound to the membrane (Baynes, 1991). These lipid peroxidation products are extremely cytotoxic and react with the cell of organelles like mitochondria, lysosomes, and cell wall membrane (Badawy, 2017). In the same context, Grune *et al.* (1997) found

that MDA is a modulator of signal transduction pathway that disrupt cellular functions in the same setting.

Table 4. Activities MDA, SOD, and CAT in the different groups

Groups	MDA (nmol/mg tissue)	SOD (U/mg tissue)	CAT (U/mg tissue)
Ctrl	36.94 ± 2.92 ^c	15.62 ± 1.14 ^{a,b}	88.59 ± 3.26 ^b
T2-DM alone	76.54 ± 3.18 ^a	6.95 ± 0.57 ^d	54.39 ± 3.18 ^c
T2-DM/Met	60.27 ± 2.82 ^b	9.78 ± 0.83 ^{c,d}	66.95 ± 3.64 ^d
T2-DM/CDE	53.67 ± 2.34 ^{b,d}	10.68 ± 0.76 ^{b,c}	71.27 ± 3.25 ^{c,d}
T2-DM/Met/CDE	47.26 ± 3.54 ^{c,d}	12.75 ± 1.04 ^{a,b}	80.64 ± 3.79 ^{b,c}

The values represented mean ± SD. **Ctrl.:** Control group; **T2-DM:** Diabetic group; **T2-DM/Met:** Diabetic group treated with metformin; **T2-DM/CDE:** Diabetic group treated with *C. droserifolia* extract; **T2-DM/Met/CDE:** Diabetic group treated with *C. droserifolia* extract. **MDA:** Malondialdehyde; **SOD:** Superoxide dismutase; **CAT:** Catalase. The means that do not share the same letter are significantly different (P -value < 0.05).

The obtained results in table 4 revealed activities of antioxidant enzymes (MDA, SOD and CTA). MDA activity is the highest in T2-DM alone group, suggesting elevated oxidative stress as compared to control group. SOD and CAT activities are lowest in the T2-DM alone group, indicating impaired antioxidant defenses. Treatment with Metformin (T2-DM/Met), CDE (T2-DM/CDE), and combined Metformin + CDE (T2-DM/Met/CDE) improved antioxidant enzyme activities and reduced oxidative stress compared to T2-DM alone. T2-DM/Met/CDE group showed the most significant improvement, nearly approaching the control values, suggesting a synergistic or additive therapeutic effect.

The current findings align with previous studies that highlight increased oxidative stress in T2-DM, reflected by elevated MDA levels and decreased activities of antioxidant enzymes like SOD and CAT (**Maritim et al., 2003**). The significant reduction of MDA and the restoration of SOD and CAT activities following Met treatment are consistent with reports demonstrating Metformin's antioxidative effects beyond its glucose-lowering action (**Viollet et al., 2012**). Moreover, the use of CDE independently and in combination with Met appears to enhance antioxidant defenses further, in agreement with studies on phytochemicals that reveal their potent antioxidative properties (**Lobo et al., 2010**). The synergistic effect observed in the T2-DM/Met/CDE group supports earlier evidence that combining conventional drugs with plant-based therapies can lead to superior therapeutic outcomes by simultaneously targeting different pathogenic mechanisms (**Yuan et al., 2016**). The near-normalization of oxidative stress markers in the T2-DM/Met/CDE group indicates that the combined therapy not only mitigates oxidative stress but also likely offers broader protective

effects against diabetes-related complications, corroborating findings from integrative therapeutic approaches in diabetic models (**American Diabetes Association, 2022**).

Recently, **Ismail et al., (2025)** found that by enhancing insulin sensitivity and lowering oxidative stress in diabetic rats, CDE therapy of the alloxan diabetic rats eliminated some metabolic abnormalities brought on by diabetes in many cells by lowering ROS (H₂O₂), MDA production, and the hypoglycaemic impact.

Treatment with CDE/Met improves hepatic histopathological changes in T2-DM rats

The histopathological investigations of liver sections from the normal control group showed normal hepatocytes with blood sinusoids and centrally located nuclei (Figure 2A). The liver section of T2-DM rats displayed a congested and dilated central vein; some degenerated hepatocytes with vacuolated cytoplasm and nuclear changes (Figure 2B). Liver section of T2-DM groups that were treated with Met or/and CDE exhibited an improvement in the hepatic architectures that represented by regular central vein, with fewer congestion, and less cellular infiltrations (Figure 2C-E).

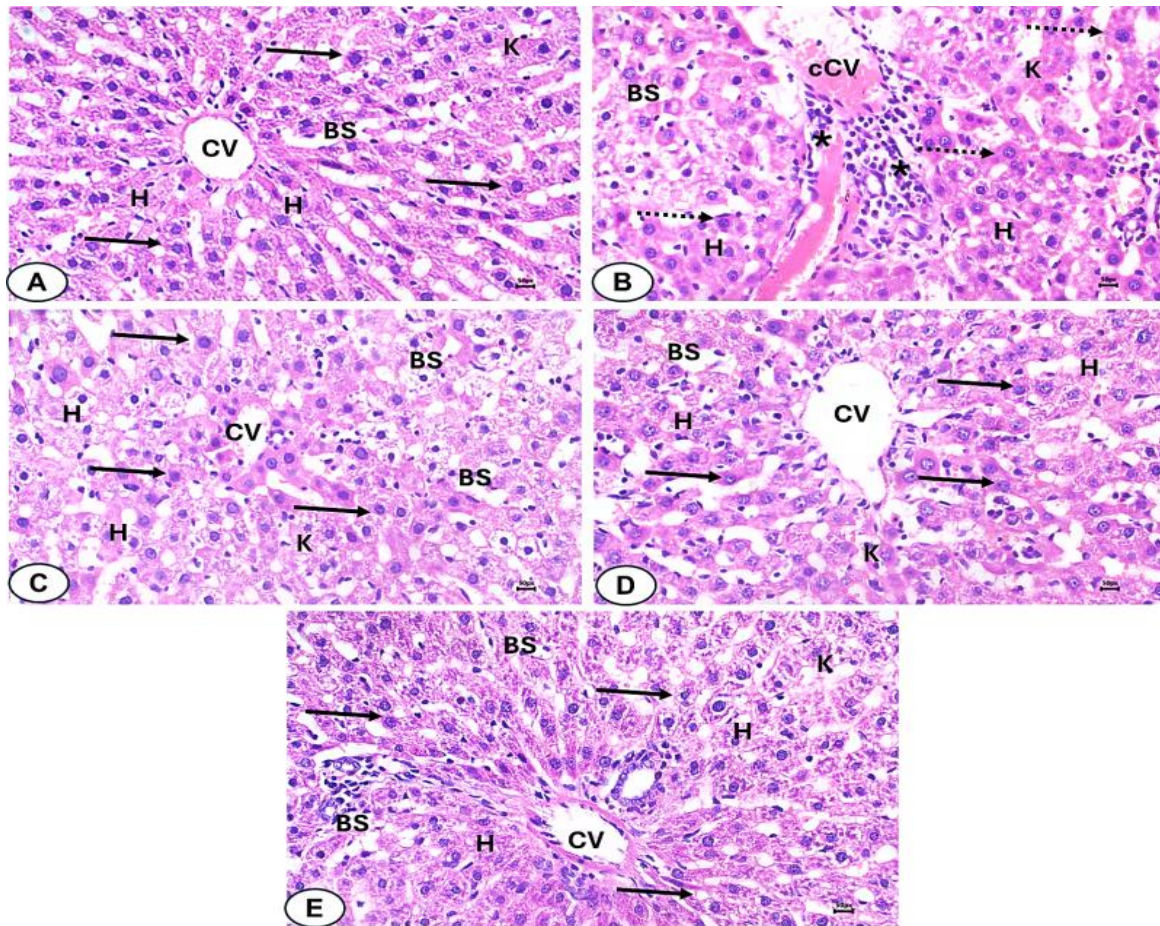


Figure 2.(A) Photomicrograph of liver section of **Ctrl**:Normal control group shows normal hepatic structure; central veins (CV), hepatocytes (H), with normal blood sinusoids (Bs) nucleus (arrows), and Kupffer cells (K) (B) Liver section of **T2-DM** group shows disorganization of hepatic tissues, congested and dilated (cCV), cellular infiltrations (*), and pyknotic nuclei (dotted arrows). (C) Liver section of **T2-DM/Met** group shows improvement in the hepatic organization with fewer congestion. (D)Liver section of **T2-**

DM/CDE group shows improvement in the hepatic structures with fewer congestion.(E) Liver section of T2-DM/Met/CDE group shows significant improvement in the hepatic architectures, less cellular infiltrations, and almost with normal Kupffer cells (X 400).

In silico study

Molecular docking analysis of *C. droserifolia* phytochemicals with anti-diabetic targets revealed significant interactions between various phytochemicals and key proteins involved in glucose homeostasis and insulin signaling pathways. The molecular interaction analysis demonstrates that rutin binds within the glucose transport channel of GLUT4, potentially modulating glucose uptake into cells, which is a critical mechanism for maintaining glucose homeostasis (Figure 3). These interactions with IRS suggest that Chlorogenic acid may enhance insulin signaling by stabilizing or modulating IRS activity, which is crucial for proper insulin-mediated glucose metabolism (Figure 4). The interaction profile suggests that Quercetin may modulate PI3K activity, potentially enhancing the insulin signaling cascade and promoting glucose uptake (Figure 5). The extensive interaction network between Rutin and PPAR suggests potential modulation of PPAR activity, which could enhance insulin sensitivity and lipid metabolism (Figure 6).

The phytochemicals in *Cleome droserifolia* exhibit potential anti-diabetic effects by modulating key proteins involved in glucose homeostasis and insulin signaling, as revealed by molecular docking studies: Rutin showed the strongest binding affinity (-9.1 kcal/mol), stabilizing GLUT4's active conformation via hydrogen and hydrophobic interactions (e.g., LYS50, TRP81), potentially enhancing glucose transport. Rutin also bound strongly to PPAR (-7.0 kcal/mol), forming hydrogen bonds with residues (e.g., CYS749, ARG751), suggesting agonist activity to enhance genes involved in glucose/lipid metabolism and insulin sensitivity. Compounds like rutin target multiple pathways (GLUT4, PPAR), while others (Chlorogenic Acid, Quercetin) enhance insulin signaling (IRS, PI3K). This multi-target approach addresses diabetes complexity by improving glucose uptake, insulin sensitivity, and metabolic regulation. Rutin is one such plant flavonoid that has anti-diabetic activity induced via reducing the expression of insulin-resistant molecules, enabling the interaction between insulin and its receptors, inducing adipose tissue peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor (PPAR) expression and adipocyte-derived protein production, according to studies through molecular and physiological mechanisms (Savych and Milian, 2021). Chen *et al.* (2020) demonstrated that rutin-containing formulations significantly improved serum insulin and C-peptide concentrations, hexokinase, hyperlipidemia, liver glycogen content, hyperglycemia, glucose-6-phosphatase, and glycogen phosphorylase activities in type 2 diabetes mellitus (DM) rats that were orally treated with rutin.

Other compounds like ellagic acid, rosmarinic acid, and chlorogenic acid, also strongly bind to GLUT4, suggesting synergistic enhancement of glucose uptake. Chlorogenic acid bound strongly to IRS (-7.5 kcal/mol), stabilizing critical residues (e.g., LYS21, ASP236), which may protect IRS phosphorylation and improve insulin sensitivity. These results are in accordance with previous study that reported that ellagic acid has antidiabetic effect (Amor *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, Inui *et al.*, (2016) reported that rosmatic acid enhances insulin sensitivity by reducing glucose levels through upregulation of GLUT4 and downregulation of phosphoenolpyruvate

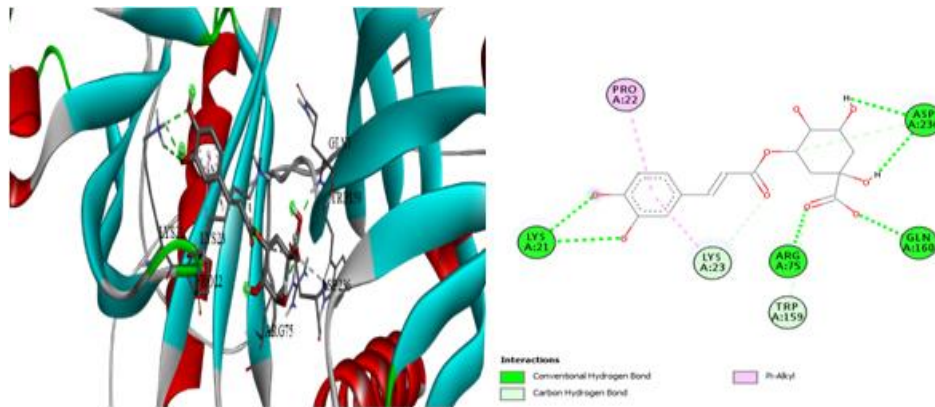


Figure (4): Mechanism of interaction 3D and 2D of IRS

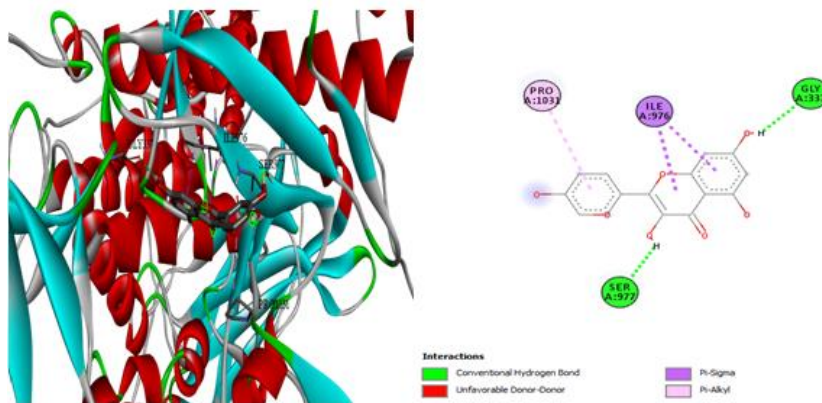


Figure (5): Mechanism of interaction 3D and 2D of PI3K

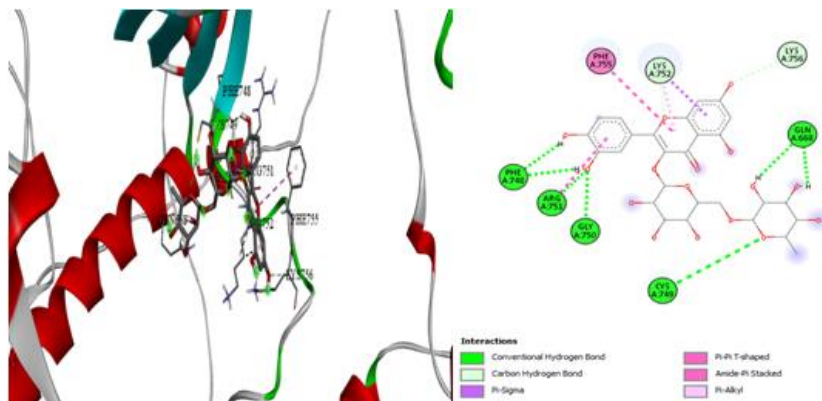


Figure (6): Mechanism of interaction 3D and 2D of ppra

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