

# Study of Antidiabetic Properties of *Uvaria narum* Leaf Extract through Glucose Uptake and Glucose Transporter 4 Expression Studies in 3T3L1 Cell Line Model

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** *Uvaria narum* (UN) is known to have antipyretic, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and antimalarial properties. The antidiabetic properties of UN remains unexplored. The current study has been aimed at understanding the antidiabetic property of UN extract on an *in vitro* model using 3T3-L1 cell line. **Methods:** Methanolic extract of UN was prepared, and its cytotoxic effect on 3T3-L1 cells was assessed. Glucose uptake and glucose transporter 4 (GLUT4) translocation in 3T3-L1 cell line on treatment with the extract was evaluated against a standard drug, metformin.  $\alpha$ -glucosidase and  $\alpha$ -amylase inhibition activities of the extract were also assayed with acarbose as the standard drug. **Results:** Treatment with UN extract had no cytotoxic effect on the cells. UN extract showed a good percentage inhibition of  $\alpha$ -amylase and  $\alpha$ -glucosidase activities. UN extract showed 71.31% inhibition and the control drug Acarbose exhibited 88.54% inhibition in  $\alpha$ -amylase activity. Furthermore, the extract showed 79.11% inhibition when Acarbose exhibited 87.35% inhibition in  $\alpha$ -glucosidase activity.  $IC_{50}$  values were also determined. Further, on treatment with the extract, 75.49% of 3T3-L1 cells took up glucose and 70.67% had GLUT4 expression. **Conclusion:** UN extract enhances glucose uptake and GLUT4 expression, inhibits  $\alpha$ -amylase and  $\alpha$ -glucosidase activities, thereby demonstrating the antidiabetic properties *in vitro*.

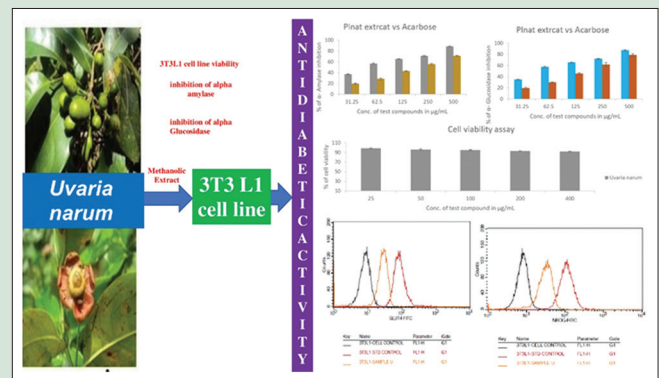
**Key words:** 3T3-L1, antidiabetic activity, glucose transporter 4, *Uvaria narum*,  $\alpha$ -amylase,  $\alpha$ -glucosidase

## SUMMARY

- *Uvaria narum* (UN) is a medicinal plant belongs to *Annonaceae* (custard apple) family and broadly disseminated in the foothills of Western Ghats
- The *in vitro* antidiabetic activities of UN leaf extract in 3T3-L1 cell line model have been studied
- We have performed biochemical studies such as  $\alpha$ -amylase and  $\alpha$ -glucosidase inhibition assays, glucose uptake, and glucose transporter 4 (GLUT4) expression studies in 3T3 L1 cell line, as part of *in vitro* antidiabetic activity
- Exposure to different concentrations of UN leaf extract for 24 h has not revealed any toxicity on 3T3 L1 cells
- methanolic leaf extract of UN has a major reduction effect on the activity of  $\alpha$ -amylase enzyme and  $\alpha$ -glucosidase enzyme
- Further on stimulation with plant extract, 75.49% of cells and 70.67% of cells

displayed glucose uptake and GLUT4 expression in 3T3 L1 cells, respectively

- The UN leaves extract has shown promising antidiabetic activity and could be used as a potential source of antidiabetic agents.



**Abbreviations Used:** UN: *Uvaria narum*, DMSO: Dimethyl sulfoxide, DMEM: Dulbecco's Modified Eagle's medium, FBS: Fetal bovine serum, D-PBS: Dulbecco's phosphate-buffered saline, GLUT4: Glucose transporter 4, FITC: Fluorescein isothiocyanate, PNP-g-p-nitrophenyl- $\alpha$ -dglucopyranoside, MTT: 3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide, 2-NBDG: 2-(N-(7-nitrobenz-2-oxa-1,3-diazol-4-yl) amino)-2-deoxyglucose, SD: Standard deviation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is an endocrine metabolic disorder that manifests hyperglycemia (enhanced blood glucose level), hyperlipidemia (augmented lipid level), hyperaminoacidemia, and hypoinsulinemia (reduced insulin level) conditions.<sup>[1]</sup> Recurring hyperglycemia can lead to damage, dysfunction, and failure of different organs – the eyes, nerves, kidneys, and heart.<sup>[2,3]</sup> The number of diabetes cases have been spiraling with projections reaching >300 million cases by the end of 2025.<sup>[2,4]</sup>

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The onset of type 2 diabetes, the prevalent form of DM, is characterized by insulin resistance and could lead to other complications, including cardiovascular risk factors such as hypertension, dyslipidemia, and prothrombotic factors.<sup>[5-7]</sup> Existing therapeutic regimens known to have adverse effects on prolonged use.<sup>[5-7]</sup> Conventionally, ethnomedicinal plants have been known to possess phytochemicals that have therapeutic effects.<sup>[8,9]</sup> In the recent times, medicinal and nutraceutical herbs have been recognized for their holistic effects on the health of an individual.<sup>[10,11]</sup>

In diabetic patients, morbidity and mortality are due to the inability of target cells such as skeletal muscle cells, adipocytes, and liver cells to effectively use glucose from the blood.<sup>[12-14]</sup> In a healthy individual, insulin stimulation increases glucose transport in muscle cells by 3 or 4 folds. A major part of this outcome is related to the net translocation of the glucose transporter 4 (GLUT4) from the intracellular compartment to the cell surface, where it facilitates the uptake of glucose and its reduction.<sup>[12-14]</sup>

*Uvaria narum* (UN) is an ethnomedicinal plant that belongs to *Annonaceae* (custard apple) family and is found in the foothills of the Western Ghats and the Central Provinces of India. The leaves of the plant have been traditionally used to treat several diseases including diabetes.<sup>[15]</sup>

In this study, we investigated the *in vitro* antidiabetic activity of the leaf extract of UN, using biochemical assays and flow cytometric analyses, on 3T3-L1 cells.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Chemicals and reagents

Dulbecco's Modified Eagle's medium (DMEM) without glucose (#AL186, Himedia), fetal bovine serum (#RM10432, Himedia), DMEM high glucose (#AL219A, Himedia), Dulbecco's phosphate-buffered saline (D-PBS) (#TL1006, Himedia), Acarbose (#A8980, Sigma), metformin (#PHR 1084, Sigma), 2-(*N*-(7-nitrobenz-2-oxa-1,3-diazol-4-yl)amino)-2-deoxyglucose (2-NBDG) (Invitrogen: Cat no. 13195), mouse anti-anti GLUT4-fluorescein isothiocyanate (FITC) antibody (#NBP1-49533F, Novus Biologicals), dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) (#PHR1309, Sigma), 3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide (MTT) Reagent (# 4060 Himedia), FACS Calibur (BD Biosciences, USA), Microplate reader (#EC800, Biotek).

### Collection of plant material

Fresh leaves of UN were collected from local areas of Mangalore, Karnataka, India [Figure 1].

### Preparation of extract

The shade-dried leaves were cut, pulverized, and stored in airtight containers. The leaves were extracted with methanol by the soxhlation process. The extract was concentrated using Rotary Evaporator (Hahn vapor, hs-2005 v) under reduced pressure at a temperature

not exceeding 50°C. The filtrate was freeze-dried, and the extract was dissolved in DMSO for the assays

### Cell culture

3T3-L1 cell line was procured from NCCS, Pune, and cultured in DMEM (high glucose) supplemented with 10% FBS, 10,000 units of Penicillin G, and 10,000 µg/mL streptomycin sulfate and 10 mM HEPES. The cultures were maintained at 37°C with 5% CO<sub>2</sub> in a humidified incubator.

### Cytotoxicity assay

MTT assay was performed to test for the cytotoxic effect of the extract. MTT assay is a colorimetric assay that measures the reduction of yellow-colored MTT by mitochondrial succinate dehydrogenase to an insoluble, dark purple formazan product.<sup>[16,17]</sup> Reduction of MTT thus becomes a readout of the number of viable cells in the culture. 96 well plates were seeded with 3T3-L1 cells at an initial density of 20 × 10<sup>4</sup> cells per well. The cells were allowed to adhere overnight. Cells were then treated with varying concentrations of plant extract (25–400 µg/mL) for 24 h. Posttreatment, 0.5 mg/mL of MTT reagent was added to the cells and the cells were incubated at 37°C temperature for 2 h. Later, MTT reagent was removed and the formazan crystals were dissolved by adding 20 µL of DMSO. Absorbance at 570 nm was measured using microplate reader and percentage viability of the cells was calculated using the formula:

$$\% \text{ of viability} = \frac{\text{Mean OD of test at 570nm}}{\text{Mean OD of Untreated cells at 570nm}} \times 100$$

### Glucose uptake assay

3T3-L1 cells were seeded into a six-well plate at an initial seeding density of 2 × 10<sup>5</sup> cells/well. Overnight culture of cells was washed with D-PBS and then treated for 2 h with 100 µg/mL of the extract or 100 µM the standard drug, metformin, as the control. The cells were then further incubated with 2-NBDG for 2 h. Cells were then trypsinized, washed with PBS, and resuspended in 0.5 ml of D-PBS. Cellular uptake of 2-NBDG was measured by flow cytometry (FACS Calibur, BD Biosciences) and the data were analyzed using Cell Quest Pro software.

### Glucose uptake and glucose transporter 4 translocation studies

GLUT4 expression levels were analyzed using flow cytometry. 3T3-L1 cells were seeded in a six-well plate at an initial density of 2 × 10<sup>5</sup> cells/2 ml and were cultured overnight. The spent medium was aspirated, and the cells were treated with 100 µg/mL of UN extract or 100 µM of positive control, metformin, for 24 h. Posttreatment, the cells were washed with D-PBS, trypsinized, and resuspended in 0.5 ml of D-PBS. The cells were then incubated with Mouse Anti Glut4-FITC antibody (#NBP1-49533F, Novus Biologicals) for 30 min in the dark. Unbound antibody was washed with D-PBS, and the cells were assessed for GLUT4 expression in a BD FACSCalibur Flow Cytometer in FL1 channel. The data were analyzed with Cell Quest Pro software.

### α-amylase inhibition assay

The α-amylase inhibitory activity was estimated using a previously described method.<sup>[18]</sup> UN extracts of different concentrations ranging from 31.25 to 500 µg/mL in DMSO were prepared. About 100 µL of α-amylase and UN extract were mixed and incubated in microtubes for 10 min at 37°C. 100 µL of 1% soluble starch dissolved in buffer A was added to each microtube, and the mixture was incubated for 30 min at 37°C. 200 µL of dinitrosalicylic acid color reagent was added to arrest



Figure 1: *Uvaria narum* – the climbing shrub

the reaction, and the microtubes were then incubated at 100°C for 5 min. The samples were cooled to room temperature and 50 µL of the reaction mixture was transferred to the wells of 96-well microplate. This was further diluted with 150 µL of distilled water and the absorbance at 540 nm was measured in a microplate reader (EC800, Biotek). Percentage inhibition was calculated using the formula stated below, and the results were compared to the inhibitory action of the control drug, acarbose.

$$\% \text{inhibition} = \frac{\text{Mean OD of untreated control} - \text{Mean OD of test samples}}{\text{Mean OD of untreated control}} \times 100$$

### α-glucosidase inhibition assay

The α-glucosidase enzyme inhibitory activity of UN extract was carried out based on the procedure described by Shibano *et al.*<sup>[19]</sup> with slight modifications. UN extract of concentrations ranging from 31.25 to 500 µg/mL was prepared. These were mixed with 50 µL of 0.1M phosphate buffer (pH 7.0), 25 µL of 0.5 mM 4-nitrophenyl-α-D-glucopyranoside (dissolved in 0.1M phosphate buffer, with pH of 7.0), and 25 µL of α-Glucosidase (0.1 U/mL). The reaction mixture was incubated for 30 min at 37°C. The reactions were terminated with 100 µL of 0.2M sodium carbonate. Absorbance at 410 nm was read in the microplate reader (EC800, Biotek). The results were compared with the positive control, Acarbose. Percent inhibition of α-glucosidase was calculated using the below-stated formula. IC<sub>50</sub> values were also determined.

$$\% \text{inhibition} = \frac{\text{Mean OD of untreated control} - \text{Mean OD of test samples}}{\text{Mean OD of untreated control}} \times 100$$

### Statistical analysis

IC<sub>50</sub> values in enzyme inhibition assays were determined using linear regression graph (concentration versus percentage enzyme inhibition). All the experiments were conducted in triplicates, and the results are expressed as mean percentage inhibition ± standard deviation (*n*=3). Statistical significance was determined by one-way analysis of variance, followed by Bonferroni *post hoc* test for multiple comparisons, and *P* < 0.05 was considered statistically significant. All statistical analyses and IC<sub>50</sub> values determination were carried out in GraphPad Prism (version 3.1) software (San Diego, CA).

## RESULTS

### α-Amylase activity inhibition

Inhibition of α-amylase activity by UN extract was tested against the control drug acarbose. UN leaf extract inhibited α-amylase activity by 19.60% at 31.25 µg/mL and 71.31% at 500 µg/mL concentration. The IC<sub>50</sub> value of the extract was found to be 253.61 µg/mL. The control drug acarbose showed 37.15% inhibition of α-amylase activity at 31.25 µg/mL and 88.54% at 500 µg/mL concentration. The IC<sub>50</sub> value of acarbose was found to be 40.66 µg/mL [Table 1 and Figure 2].

### Inhibition of α-glucosidase activity

UN extract exhibited 19.74% inhibition of α-glucosidase activity at 31.25 µg/mL and 79.11% at 500 µg/mL, respectively. Its IC<sub>50</sub> was found to be 208.60 µg/mL. The control drug acarbose showed 34.96% inhibition in α-glucosidase activity at 31.25 µg/mL and 87.35% at 500 µg/mL concentrations, respectively. Its IC<sub>50</sub> was found to be 43.53 µg/mL [Table 2 and Figure 3].

### Cytotoxicity assay

3T3-L1 cells were treated with various concentrations (25 µg–400 µg/mL) of UN extract and were assayed for their cytotoxic effect. The extract did not show any cytotoxic effect. The concentrations of the extract used and the respective percent cell viability were tabulated and plotted [Table 3 and Figures 4, 5].

### Glucose uptake and glucose transporter 4 expression analysis

GLUT4 expression on UN extract treatment was analyzed using flow cytometry. UN extract (100 µg/mL) treatment increased GLUT4 expression. Metformin (100 µM) was used as the control. Flow cytometric analysis revealed that 70.67% of 3T3-L1 cells treated with UN extract expressed GLUT4 and 99.97% of metformin-treated cells expressed GLUT4 [Figures 6 and 7].

### Glucose uptake studies

2-NBDG, a fluorescent deoxyglucose analog, was used to detect the glucose uptake in 3T3-L1 cells cultured in the presence of antidiabetic drugs. Flow cytometric analysis of the UN extract treated 3T3-L1 cells

**Table 1:** Inhibition of α-amylase activity by *Uvaria narum* extract

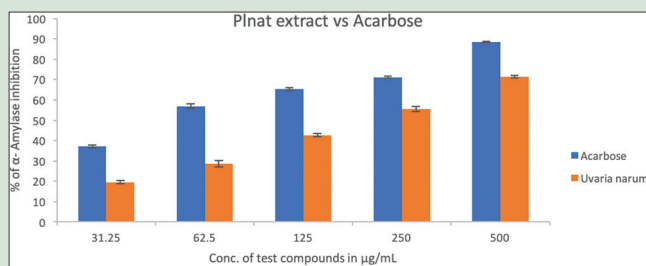
| Sample                      | Concentration (µg/mL) | Percentage inhibition of enzyme activity | IC <sub>50</sub> (µg/mL) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Acarbose                    | 31.25                 | 37.15±0.84                               | 40.66±4.22               |
|                             | 62.50                 | 56.85±1.55                               |                          |
|                             | 125.00                | 65.31±0.88                               |                          |
|                             | 250.00                | 71.14±0.73                               |                          |
|                             | 500.00                | 88.54±0.55                               |                          |
| <i>Uvaria narum</i> extract | 31.25                 | 19.60±1.3                                | 253.61±3.54              |
|                             | 62.50                 | 28.70±2.19                               |                          |
|                             | 125.00                | 42.72±0.91                               |                          |
|                             | 250.00                | 55.68±1.81                               |                          |
|                             | 500.00                | 71.31±0.84                               |                          |

**Table 2:** Inhibition of α-glucosidase activity by *Uvaria narum* extract

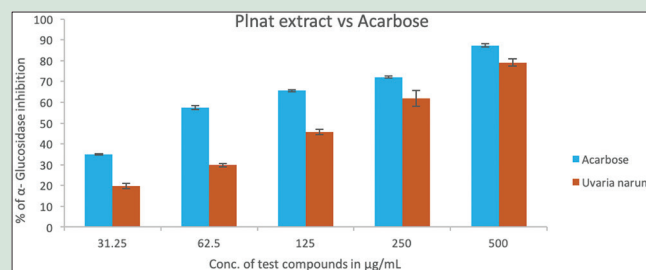
| Sample                      | Concentration (µg/mL) | Percentage inhibition of enzyme activity | IC <sub>50</sub> (µg/ml) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Acarbose                    | 31.25                 | 34.96±0.64                               | 43.53±0.40               |
|                             | 62.50                 | 57.53±1.35                               |                          |
|                             | 125.00                | 65.56±0.53                               |                          |
|                             | 250.00                | 72.12±0.81                               |                          |
|                             | 500.00                | 87.35±1.00                               |                          |
| <i>Uvaria narum</i> extract | 31.25                 | 19.74±1.70                               | 208.60±7.25              |
|                             | 62.50                 | 29.79±1.00                               |                          |
|                             | 125.00                | 45.72±1.70                               |                          |
|                             | 250.00                | 61.88±5.20                               |                          |
|                             | 500.00                | 79.11±2.65                               |                          |

**Table 3:** Percent viability of the cells treated with various concentrations of *Uvaria narum* extract

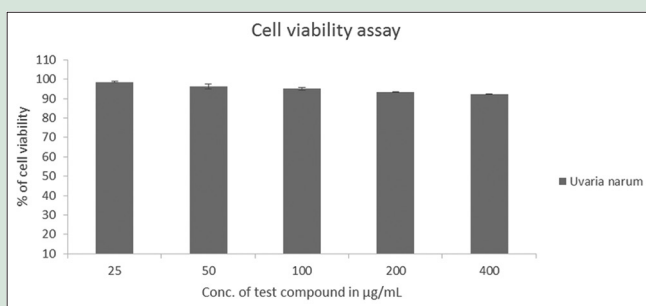
| Treatment                           | Percent viability |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Control (no treatment)              | 100±0.9           |
| <i>Uvaria narum</i> extract (µg/mL) |                   |
| 25                                  | 98.51±0.56        |
| 50                                  | 96.12±1.80        |
| 100                                 | 95.02±1.11        |
| 200                                 | 93.24±0.13        |
| 400                                 | 92.24±0.20        |
| Metformin (100 µM)                  | 93.83±1.25        |



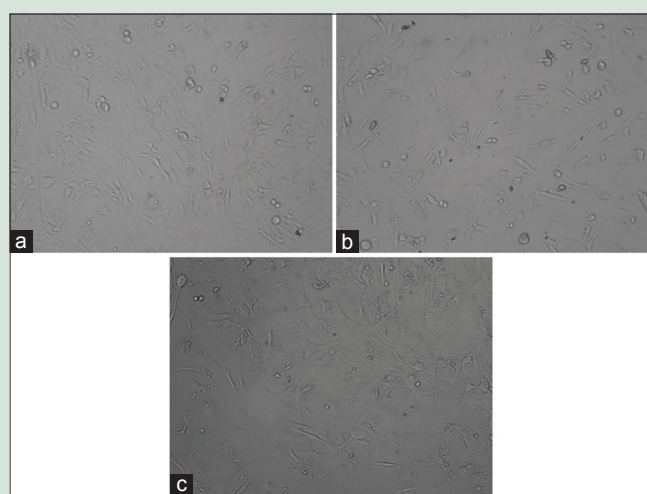
**Figure 2:** Inhibition of  $\alpha$ -amylase against different concentrations of *Uvaria narum*; the  $\text{IC}_{50}$  value of the extract was  $253.61 \pm 3.54 \mu\text{g/mL}$ . Data were presented as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation



**Figure 3:** Inhibition of  $\alpha$ -glucosidase against logarithm of different concentrations of *Uvaria narum*; the  $\text{IC}_{50}$  value of the extract was  $208.60 \pm 7.25 \mu\text{g/mL}$ . Data were presented as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation



**Figure 4:** The effect of *Uvaria narum* on 3T3L1 cell line viability as determined by 3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide assay method. Each bar graph represents percentage viability of 3T3L1 cell line against 25, 50, 100, 200, and 400  $\mu\text{g/mL}$  concentrations of *Uvaria narum* extract after 24h exposure. The data were shown as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation of triplicate experiments



**Figure 5:** Images of 3T3 L1 cell line in inverted light microscopy after the exposure to *Uvaria narum* extract. From "A" to "C" where (a) control (untreated cells), (b) Standard metformin drug, and (c) 400 $\mu\text{g}$  concentration of *Uvaria narum* extract. After incubation of 24 h *Uvaria narum* extract displayed no toxicity

showed that 75.49% had taken up 2-NBDG. Furthermore, 99.98% of the cells treated with the control drug, metformin, had taken up 2-NBDG [Figures 8 and 9].

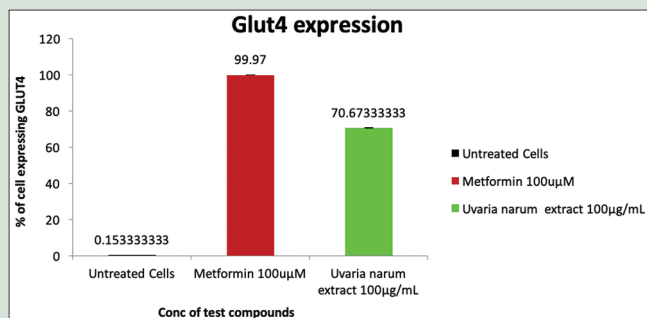
## DISCUSSION

The major enzymes that metabolize carbohydrates in the small intestine are pancreatic  $\alpha$ -amylase and  $\alpha$ -glucosidase enzymes, which convert polysaccharides to monosaccharides. Antidiabetic drugs reduce the action of these enzymes and regulate the postprandial blood glucose level in type 2 diabetic patients. The mechanisms of control of glucose levels vary with the drug. Some drugs stimulate insulin secretion or synthesis by the pancreatic beta-cells, others help in regenerating damaged pancreatic beta-cells, still others increase insulin sensitivity triggering glucose uptake by fat and muscle cells, and certain others modify the activity of enzymes pertinent to glucose metabolism to reduce the absorption of sugars from the gut.<sup>[20,21]</sup> Contemporary antidiabetic drugs that specifically inhibit the activity of enzymes include acarbose, voglibose, and miglitol. However, usage of these drugs can have adverse effects such as flatulence and abdominal bloating.<sup>[22]</sup>

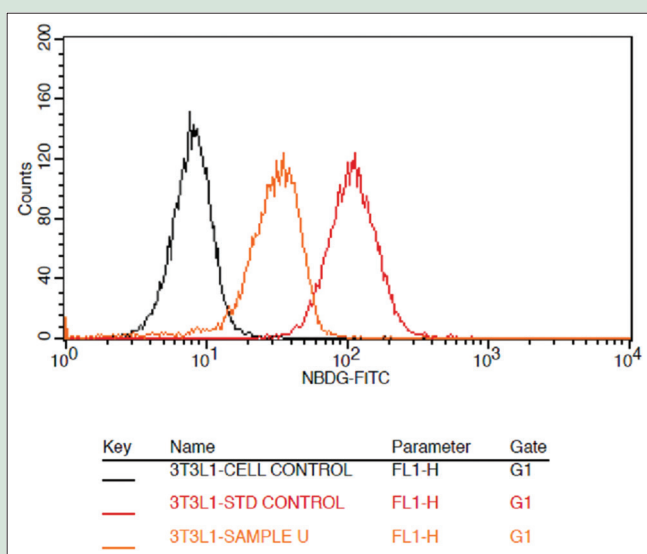
Natural compounds from ethnomedicinal plants that do not manifest such effects could be used to treat type 2 diabetes.<sup>[23]</sup> Such medicinal plants play a vital role in herbal medicine, particularly in treating ailments such as diabetes.<sup>[20,21,24,25]</sup> UN, an ethnomedicinal plant that belongs *Annonaceae* (Custard apple) family is a primary plant with several varieties, many of which have been traditionally used for medicinal and ethnobotanical purposes.<sup>[26-28]</sup> In this study, we investigated the antidiabetic properties of UN.

Our results showed that methanolic extract of UN effectively inhibited  $\alpha$ -amylase and  $\alpha$ -glucosidase activities. These inhibitory effects were estimated with acarbose as the standard drug. Furthermore, UN had no cytotoxic effects on the cells. The implications of this study corroborate the previous studies on inhibitory effect of other natural compounds on  $\alpha$ -amylase and  $\alpha$ -glucosidase activities.<sup>[29-31]</sup>

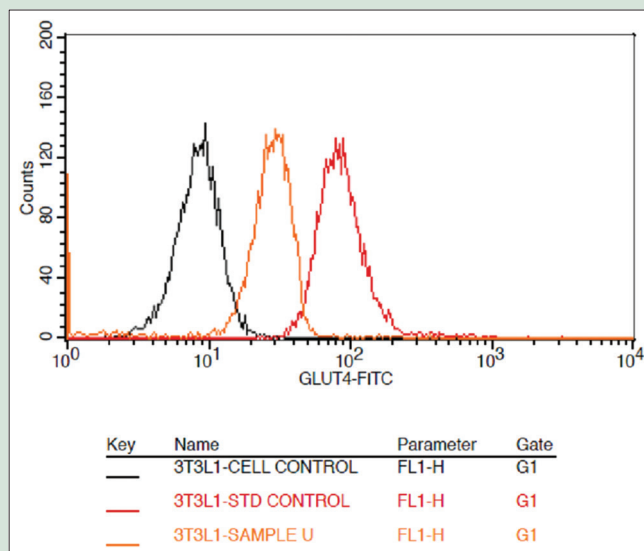
Cellular uptake of glucose from blood plays a crucial role in the reduction of DM. This is generally mediated by GLUT4 in the cell. On stimulation with antidiabetic drugs, GLUT4 is translocated from their intracellular sites to the cell surface. Insulin induces the translocation of GLUT4 through phosphatidylinositol-3-kinase pathway.<sup>[32]</sup> PKB/Akt-mediated stimulation of glucose transport by insulin has also been reported in rat adipocytes and L6 muscle cells.<sup>[33]</sup> Metformin is one of the standard antidiabetic drugs that enhance glucose uptake by inducing the translocation of GLUT4. This drug is known to act through AMP-activated protein kinase pathway.<sup>[34]</sup> In the current study, metformin was used as the positive control for glucose uptake and GLUT4 expression studies. Of all the 3T3-L1 cells treated with UN extract, 75.49% took up 2-NBDG (a glucose analog) and 70.67% expressed GLUT4. These findings suggest that the leaf extract of UN could enhance cellular glucose uptake by inducing GLUT4 translocation. However, further studies must be performed to understand the exact mechanism of action.



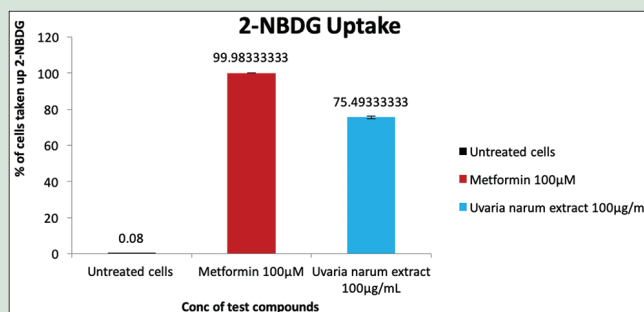
**Figure 6:** Glucose transporter 4 expression upon exposure of 3T3L1 cells to 100 µg/mL of plant extract and 100 µM of metformin. Each bar graph represents the % of cells expressing glucose transporter 4. Data were represented as mean ± standard deviation of triplicate experiments



**Figure 8:** Overlaid expression of given untreated 3T3L1 cells (black color line) and standard drug-treated cells (metformin 100 µM) (red color line) and test compound-treated cells (orange color line) against the 2-(N-(7-nitrobenz-2-oxa-1,3-diazol-4-yl) amino)-2-deoxyglucose stain



**Figure 7:** Overlaid expression of glucose transporter 4 in untreated 3T3L1 cells (black color line) and standard drug-treated cells (metformin 100 µM) (red color line) and test compound-treated cells (orange color line)



**Figure 9:** Each bar graph represents the % of cells taken up the 2-(N-(7-nitrobenz-2-oxa-1,3-diazol-4-yl) amino)-2-deoxyglucose in the presence of 100 µg/ml of *Uvaria narum* and 100 µM of metformin. The data were represented as mean ± standard deviation of triplicate experiments

## CONCLUSION

The methanolic extract of UN inhibited the activity of the enzymes  $\alpha$ -amylase and  $\alpha$ -glucosidase, enhanced glucose uptake, and GLUT4 translocation in 3T3-L1 cells. These results were comparable to the action of acarbose and metformin. Further, the extract had no cytotoxic effect on the cells. In conclusion, UN extract has potential antidiabetic applications. Further work must be done to identify lead molecules from this plant.

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Nil.

## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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