Editorial

Flavonoids and Their Dual Anti-inflammatory and Antioxidant Potentials

Gulfreen Waheed[1], Sadia Zafar[2]

[1]Cheif Editor, Avicenna Journal of Health Sciences/ Principal & Director, Department of Medical Education,, Avicenna Medical & Dental College, Lahore, Pakistan; [2]Professor & Head of Physiology Department, Avicenna Medical & Dental College, Lahore, Pakistan

Correspondence: sadia.farqaleet@gmail.com

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Flavonoids are naturally occurring polyphenolic compounds found in fruits, vegetables, tea, cocoa, legumes and medicinal plants. They possess metabolic, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant qualities. Flavones, flavanols, flavanones, flavan-3-ols, anthocyanins, and isoflavones are some of the subclasses of flavonoids. Their biological activities include cellular metabolism, endothelial function, oxidative stress, and inflammatory signaling. Experimental and epidemiological research provide signs of beneficial health impacts.

The flavonoids are plant-based naturally occurring substances, a part of the polyphenol class that act as powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory. It supports overall human health by helping protect the body from cell damage and chronic illnesses. These include a broad class of naturally occurring substances found in plants having a variety of phenolic structures. Fruits (berries, apples and cherries), vegetables (onions, spinach, beans, olives), cocoa, green and black tea, are the primary sources of flavonoids. Flavonoids' physicochemical and structural characteristics affect how they are absorbed, digested, and transformed biochemically.[1]

Flavonoids share the C6-C3-C6 carbon skeleton, which consists of two aromatic rings connected by a heterocyclic ring. They fall into subclasses with unique pharmacokinetic and biological traits based on their chemical differences. The primary subclasses are flavones (apigenin and luteolin), flavanols (quercetin and kaempferol), flavanones (hesperidin and naringenin), flavan-3-ols (catechin, epigallocatechin gallate) and isoflavones (genistein and daidzein).[2]

The Antioxidant and Cytoprotective Effects of Flavonoids

Flavonoids possess cytoprotective and antioxidant qualities. Oxidative stress is the result of reactive oxygen species generation exceeding biological antioxidant defense. Elevated oxidative stress damages proteins, lipids, and DNA and contributes to the development of several chronic illnesses. Additionally, flavonoids can influence endogenous antioxidant mechanisms and interact chemically with ROS. They influence the nuclear factor erythroid 2-related factor 2 (Nrf2) pathway, which controls the expression of a number of cytoprotective and antioxidant enzymes.[1]

The Anti-inflammatory Activity

Inflammation is a key feature of many heart, blood vessels, blood sugar, nerve, and autoimmune diseases. Some flavonoids have been observed in experimental studies to modulate inflammatory pathways such as mitogen activated protein kinases, phosphatedylinositol 3-kinase/protein kinase B (PI3K/PKB) and nuclear factor kappa B (NF-κB). Such actions through these pathways could involve modulation of inflammatory mediators and cytokines.[3]

Effects of Natural Flavonoids

Through the suppression and stimulation of biological processes including oxidative stress, inflammation, and cell signaling molecules, the bioactive component of natural products plays a crucial role in protection against cells damage and lowering the risk of chronic disease. Natural products can be useful adjuvants or a kind of supportive therapy, but they should not be used in place of medication. Citrus fruits frequently contain hesperidin, a flavonoid with well-known potential antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and hepatoprotective qualities as well as cardio-preventive factors for disease prevention. Berries, like blueberries and strawberries, contain anthocyanins that protect against cell damage, reduce inflammation, and improve blood flow to support brain and heart health. Dark chocolate and green tea have powerful antioxidant properties that improve vascular functions and reduce inflammation.

Furthermore, the anticancer potential of flavonoids has been suggested to be a promising alternative in

cancer management. Flavonoid-containing foods like apples, berries, citrus fruits, and green tea may help lower the risk of certain cancers such as breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer. These have anti-cancer effects including modulation of signal transduction pathways and oxidative stress caused by reactive oxygen species and scavenging enzyme activities. Additional potential impacts of flavonoids on cell proliferation, mitochondrial function, apoptosis, and metabolic signaling have also suppress cancer cell proliferation and invasiveness. Researchers are interested in using these qualities to treat neurological illnesses, diabetes, and cancer.[4]

Potential Clinical Applications

1. Cardiovascular Health

One of the most widely researched topics in flavonoids is cardiovascular disease. These proposed mechanisms involve enhanced endothelial function, vascular inflammation modulation, regulation of oxidative stress, and platelet activity and lipid metabolism.[3]

Citrus flavonoid supplementation was associated with enhanced flow-mediated vasodilation, a marker of endothelial function, according to a 2024 comprehensive review and dose response analysis of eight randomized controlled trials including 596 participants. However, significant inter-study variability was seen, and the researchers stressed the need for longer and more extensive clinical trials.[5]

2. Metabolic Disorders

The effect of flavonoids on glucose homeostasis, insulin sensitivity, lipid metabolism and obesity related inflammation, have been studied. By controlling lipid metabolism that is, boosting reverse cholesterol transport or guarding against HDL dysfunction, they preserve lipid homeostasis.[6] Research indicates that different flavonoids substances can impact hepatic metabolic pathways, insulin signaling pathways, and glucose transport. Increased flavonoid intake has been linked in observational studies to a lower incidence of type 2 diabetes. However, some foods strong in flavonoids are also rich in minerals, fiber, vitamins and other healthful components.

3. Neurological and Neurodegenerative Disorders

Flavonoids have drawn attention in neurological research because of their role in several neurodegenerative conditions, including oxidative stress, neuroinflammation, and mitochondrial failure. Studies have demonstrated that some flavonoids affect synaptic functioning, inflammatory processes and neural signaling. Nevertheless, the ability of flavonoids or their metabolites to get through the blood-brain barrier is not as good.[7]

4. Cancer Research

There are several potential anti-cancer mechanisms that have been identified in vitro and in animal studies, such as the regulation of apoptosis, cell cycle, angiogenesis, and inflammatory signaling. The results have spurred research into compounds like quercetin, epigallocatechin, genistein and epigallocatechin gallate.[1] Luteolin, a flavonoid that has been extensively studied both in vitro and in vivo, plays significant role in the prevention and treatment of disease. Additionally, this substance has the capacity to fight cancer by altering cell-signaling pathways in a variety of cancer types. Luteolin has been shown to decrease angiogenesis, invasion, metastasis, STAT3, cell-cycle arrest, mTOR/PI3K/Akt, and apoptosis. Additionally, research indicates that this substance is essential for the up-regulation or down-regulation of microRNAs in cancer treatment.[8]

5. Clinical limitations

Diet containing foods high in flavonoids is generally suitable for healthy eating patterns. The benefits of supplements will vary according to the type of supplement, the dosage, the form of the supplement, how long the supplement is taken and the patient's individual characteristics. Certain flavonoids can affect drug metabolizing enzymes and transport proteins, so they could interact with certain prescribed medications. The clinical relevance of these interactions between the compounds is unclear and should be investigated further.

Conclusion

Plants contain biologically active substances called flavonoids, which have substantial nutritional and medicinal potential. According to experimental studies, they may be able to influence cell signaling, oxidative stress, inflammation and vascular function.

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