## EFFECTS OF SMOKE-WATER AND SMOKE-DERIVED BUTENOLIDE ON ACCUMULATION OF PHENOLIC ACIDS IN CULTURED HAIRY ROOTS OF SALVIA MILTIORRHIZA BUNG

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#### Abstract

Smoke-water (SW) and biologically active compound butenolide (KAR<sub>1</sub>) isolated from smoke show stimulating effects on the plant growth of agricultural and horticultural crops, while little has been known on their effects on the secondary metabolism of medicinal plants. Hairy root culture of *Salvia miltiorrhiza*, an important medicinal plant, was treated with SW and butenolide. The results showed that the contents of salvianolic acid (SAB) and rosmarinic acid (RA) were enhanced with the treatments of SW and KAR<sub>1</sub>. The expressions of genes (PAL, C4H, 4CL, TAT and HPPR) involved in phenolic acids biosynthesis were upregulated by treatments of SW and KAR<sub>1</sub>. Responses of C4H and 4CL to SW and KAR<sub>1</sub> treatment were later than PAL, TAT and HPPR. It suggests that SW and KAR<sub>1</sub>have the potential to be used as elicitor to increase the accumulation of secondary metabolites in *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root.

#### Introduction

Salvia miltiorrhiza, called Danshen in Chinese, is one of the most important medicinal plants in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) (Wang *et al.* 2016, Han *et al.* 2015, Su *et al.* 2015, Liu *et al.* 2011). It has been used for removing blood stasis, clearing away the heart-fire, relieving restlessness, cooling blood and eliminating carbuncle (Dowom *et al.* 2017). Bioactive compounds in *S. miltiorrhiza* mainly contain water-soluble phenolic acids and lipid-soluble tanshinones (Han *et al.* 2015). Phenolic acids have increasingly attracted the attention due to their marked pharmacological activities coupled with their traditional use from herbs steeped in boiling water in China (Zhang *et al.* 2014). Rosmarinic acid (RA) and salvianolic acid B (SAB), belonging to phenolic acids, are excellent antioxidants, used in the treatment of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, hepatic fibrosis and nephritis, and used as the index chemicals for quality control of *S. miltiorrhiza* (Song *et al.* 2015).

Hairy root culture obtained by infecting plant tissues with the natural occurring *Agrobacterium rhizogenes*, makes it convenient to improve the production of target metabolites by adding elicitors. So far hairy root culture of *S. miltiorrhiza* has been established and widely used for the mass production of bioactive components (Ming *et al.* 2013, Wu *et al.* 2016). In order to obtain a large number of phenolic acids, elicitors including yeast extracts,  $Ag^+$  and methyl jasmonate have been widely studied to stimulate phenolic acids production in *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root culture (Han *et al.* 2015). However, the content of phenolic acids in hairy root is often lower than that in mother plant, so various elicitations are being employed to increase the yield of bioactive components.

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Plant-derived smoke-water (SW), which has been investigated to show stimulatory effects on seed germination and plant growth, has great potential for use in horticulture and agriculture. Butenolide (KAR<sub>1</sub>), being considered as an active compound in SW, has been expected to be a new plant growth regulator (Martinez-Baniela *et al.* 2016, Morffy *et al.* 2016, Mojzes *et al.* 2015, Light *et al.* 2009). However, the effects of SW in promoting the accumulation of secondary metabolites in plants have not been well reported. The present research team has reported that the accumulation of indigo in *Isatis indigotica*, a Chinese medicinal plant could be improved with the treatment of SW (Zhou *et al.* 2011). Evaluation of SW and KAR<sub>1</sub> could be used as effective elicitors for improving the secondary metabolites yield in plants tissue culture. The effects and underlying mechanism of SW on phenolic acids production in *S. miltiorrhiza* are still not clear. In this study, effects of SW and KAR<sub>1</sub> on the accumulation of phenolic acids biosynthesis (PAL, C4H, 4CL, TAT and HPPR) were further detected to reveal the regulatory mechanism.

### **Materials and Methods**

Smoke-water was prepared by continuously bubbling smoke from smouldering *Crataegus pinnatifida* and *Magnolia denudata* plant materials through 500 ml water for 45 min at a ratio of 6 kg of raw plant materials for 10 litre of distilled water (Light *et al.* 2009, Farley 2005, Flematti *et al.* 2004). Before burning, the materials were cut into small pieces and subjected to UV-B radiation with the dosages of 10 kJ/m<sup>2</sup> for 4 hrs at a distance of 30 cm above it and dried at 105°C for 24 to 48 hrs. Three SW dilutions were tested (v/v, 1 : 500, 1 : 1000 and 1: 2000). KAR<sub>1</sub> was isolated from SW by the method of Light *et al.* (2009) and 10<sup>-9</sup> M was chosen for this experiment and the concentrations of SW and KAR<sub>1</sub> were tested in earlier experiments on *S. baicalensis* hair root culture.

S. miltiorrhiza hairy root culture was derived after infection of plantlets with Agrobacterium rhizogenes bacterium (ACCC10060). Successive transfer culture was conducted every 18 days. Experiments in this study were carried out in 250 ml shake flasks on an orbital shaker running at 110 rpm and 25°C kept in the dark. The SW and KAR<sub>1</sub> were applied to 18 day-old hairy root culture. The hairy root was harvested at 0, 1, 3, 5 and 9 days post-treatment, at which point the hairy root was harvested, respectively and fresh mass was recorded. Subsequently, an aliquot of the material was frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at  $-80^{\circ}$ C for analysis of expressions of genes. Another aliquot was oven-dried at 45°C for determination of the content of phenolic acids. All experiments were performed in triplicate and the results were represented by their means ± standard deviation (Sd).

Extraction and qualitative analysis of phenolic acids in *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root followed the methods described by Zhou *et al.* (2017) with minor modification. Briefly, the hairy root was dried until a constant weight was obtained, grounded into powder and sieved through a 0.45 mm screen. The sample powder (100 mg) was extracted with 20 ml of methanol: dichloromethane (3 : 1, v/v), sonicated for 1 hr and then kept at room temperature for 24 hrs. The supernatant was diluted with 70% methanol to 20 ml total volume, and the extract solution was filtered through a 0.45  $\mu$ m organic membrane before injection into the HPLC system.

The qualitative analysis of phenolic acids was performed by an Agilent-1260 HPLC system with a ZORBAX SB-C18 chromatographic column (250 mm  $\times$  4.6 mm, 5 µm) at 30°C, a sample injection volume of 20 µl, flow rate of 0.8 ml/min, and a detection wavelength of 280 nm. A gradient elution of A (acetonitrile) and B (0.02% phosphoric acid solution) was used as followed: isocratic elution 95% B/5% A, 0 to 5 min; linear gradient from 95% B/5% A to 50% B/50% A, 5-55 min; isocratic elution 50% B/50% A, 55 to 65 min; linear gradient from 50% B/50% A to

95% B/5% A, 65 to 67 min. Standards of RA and SAB were purchased from the National Institute for the Control of Pharmaceutical and Biological Products.

Expressions of key enzyme genes PAL, C4H, 4CL, TAT and HPPR in the biosynthesis of phenolic acids were examined during the treatments. According to the manufacturer's scheme, total RNA was extracted from hairy root of S. miltiorrhiza using TRIzol reagent (Invitrogen). Primers were designed in order to detect transcript levels of PAL, C4H, 4CL, TAT and HPPR (Zhang et al. 2014). List of primer sequences was as follows: PAL forward primer 5'-ACCTACCTCGTCGCCCTATGC -3'; PAL reverse primer 5'- CCACGCGGATCAAGTCCTTCT -3'; C4H forward primer 5'- CCAGGAGTCCAAATAACAGAGCC -3'; 4CL reverse primer 5'-GAGCCACCAAGCGTTCACCAA-3'; 4CL forward primer 5'- ATTCGCATTCGCATTCTCGG -3'; 4CL reverse primer 5'-GCGGCGTAGTGCTTCACCTTT -3'; TAT forward primer 5'- TTC AACGGCTACGCTCCAACT -3'; TAT reverse primer 5'- AAACGGACAATGCTATCTCAAT -3'; HPPR forward primer 5'- GACTCCAGAAACAACCCACATT -3'; HPPR reverse primer 5'-CCCAGACGACCCTCCACAAG -3'. As a control, part of the actin gene of S. miltiorrhiza (GenBank No. DQ243702) was amplified using the forward primer (5'-CTGCCGTGGAG AAGAACTAC-3') and reverse primer (5'-ATTCCAGCAGCTTCCATTCC-3'). PCR amplification was performed in a total volume of 50 µl. Real-time quantitative PCR was conducted in an thermocycler as follows: pre-denaturation for 4 min at 94°C for 1 cycle, denaturation for 15 s at 94°C and annealing for 60 sec at 60°C and extension72°C for 15 sec for 40 cycles, followed by 8 min at 72°C (Hao et al. 2016).

Statistical analyses (one-way ANOVA) were conducted using SPSS 20.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) and the differences were considered statistically significant at p < 0.05.

### **Results and Discussion**

Smoke-water at the concentrations of 1 : 500, 1 : 1000 and 1 : 2000 (v/v) and KAR<sub>1</sub> at the concentrations of  $10^{-9}$  M were separately added into the culture to investigate their effects on the accumulation of phenolic acids in *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root. Effects of smoke-water and KAR<sub>1</sub> on the accumulation of SAB and RA in *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root were shown in Fig. 1. In this experiment the treatments of SW and KAR<sub>1</sub> markedly increased the content of SAB (p < 0.05). With the treatment of SW at dilution of 1 : 500 (v/v), the accumulation of SAB in hairy root was dramatically stimulated on day 1, 3, 5 and 9 post-treatment, which increased by 32-, 17-, 4- and 3-folds of that in the control, respectively (Fig. 1A). The content of SAB was found to enhance significantly by 2833.08, 1134.85, 224.74 and 199.09% (p < 0.05), respectively with the treatment of KAR<sub>1</sub> at  $10^{-9}$  M. The accumulation of RA in *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root was dramatically increased on day 1 and day 3 post-treatment, while it was mildly increased on day 9 (Fig. 1B). The highest contents of SAB and RA were observed at SW at dilution of 1 : 500 treatment and increased to 1.12 to 10.26-folds (SAB) and 4.40 to 32.99-folds (RA) of the control. Time course of the treatment showed that the contents of SAB and RA were higher than the control levels during all the periods.

Elicitors, which could induce disease-resistance of plants, have been applied to stimulate the production of bioactive ingredients in plants (Han *et al.* 2015). Water-soluble phenolic acids have been suggested to be responsible for passive defense against microbial invasion in *S. miltiorrhiza*, and the content of RA could be increased by yeast elicitor (Chen and Chen 2000). In this study accumulation of phenolic acids in *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root was found to be promoted by smokewater and KAR<sub>1</sub> treatments. *Tulbaghia ludwigiana* treated with SW (1 : 500, v/v) had significantly higher contents of phenolic, flavonoid and condensed tannin comparing to the control. These results suggest the potentiality of smoke-water and KAR<sub>1</sub> used as an external elicitor enhance the

phytochemical content in medicinal plants tissue culture (Okem *et al.* 2015). Over all, smokewater was more effective than  $KAR_1$  and achieved the higher content of SAB and RA in *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root.

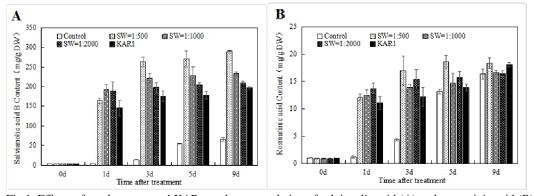


Fig.1. Effects of smoke-water and KAR<sub>1</sub> on the accumulation of salvianolic acid (A) and rosmarinic acid (B) in *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root.

In order to evaluate the regulation mechanism of smoke-water and KAR<sub>1</sub> the content of phenolic acids in S. miltiorrhiza hairy root, the expressions of key enzyme gene PAL, C4H, 4CL, TAT and HPPR in the biosynthesis of phenolic acids were determined. As shown in Fig. 2, transcripts of PAL, key enzyme genes in the phenylpropanoid pathway, was enhanced with a maximum value by treatment of SW (1:1000) reaching about 14.82% (on 1 d) higher than the control. The expression of C4H was significantly enhanced by 23.40% (p < 0.05) and 17.96% (p < 0.05) (0.05) on 5d post-treatment with the treatment of SW at dilution of 1 : 500 and 1 : 1000. The expression of HPPR was increased on 5d, which was evaluated as 24.69% (SW 1 : 500), 40.36% (SW 1 : 1000), 29.42% (SW 1 : 2000) and 31.80% (KAR<sub>1</sub>), respectively. The SW at dilution of 1 : 500 treatment resulted in a significant increase in the expressions of HPPR by 44.84% (p < 0.05) on 9d compared to the control (Fig. 2E). The highest expression levels of TAT were observed on 5d and 9d, and increased to 50.02% (SW 1 : 500) and 36.48% (SW 1 : 500) when compared to the control. For 4CL, the highest expression level was observed to be 23.44% which was higher than the control on 3d, and then it gradually decreased to the control level on day 5 post-treatment. In comparison, transcripts of 4CL, TAT and HPPR were more sensitive to the SW and KAR<sub>1</sub> elicitation, with maximum level reaching about 1.28-, 1.45- and 1.40-folds of control at 5d respectively.

It has been reported that SAB is derived from RA, which is considered as the core structure of most hydrophilic active compounds. RA is biosynthesized by two parallel pathways, namely the phenylpropanoid pathway and the tyrosine-derived pathway. The phenylpropanoid pathway consists of three successive steps, catalyzed by phenylalanine ammonia-lyase (PAL), cinnamic acid 4-hydroxylase (C4H) and hydroxycinnamate coenzyme A ligase (4CL). And the tyrosine-derived pathway consists of two steps, catalyzed by tyrosine aminotransferase (TAT) and 4-hydroxyphenylpyruvate reductase (HPPR) (Zhang *et al.* 2014). Enzymes in the phenylpropanoid pathway (PAL, C4H and 4CL) are ubiquitous in land plants and represent branch points in formation of many different secondary metabolites, such as flavonoids, chlorogenic acid and anthocyanin. Enzymes in the tyrosine-derived pathway are related to biosynthesis of much fewer metabolites compared to the enzymes in the phenylpropanoid pathway.

that following the addition of SW and KAR<sub>1</sub> to *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root culture medium, the phenylpropanoid pathway and the tyrosine-derived pathway were activated. The enzymes in the secondary metabolic pathway show different responses to the treatments of SW and KAR<sub>1</sub>. In this study, it was observed that expressions of PAL, C4H, 4CL, TAT and HPPR were upregulated by treatments of SW and KAR<sub>1</sub>. Responses of C4H and 4CL to SW and KAR<sub>1</sub> treatment were later than PAL, TAT and HPPR.

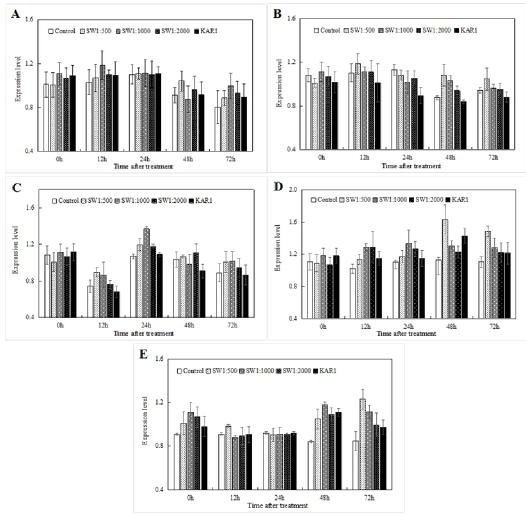


Fig.2. Effects of smoke-water and KAR<sub>1</sub> on the expression of key enzyme genes of PAL (A), C4H (B), 4CL (C), TAT (D) and HPPR (E) in the pathways of phenolic acids biosynthesis.

This work suggests that smoke-water and  $KAR_1$  have the potential to be used as an elicitor to increase the accumulation of secondary metabolites in *S. miltiorrhiza* hairy root. This work provides insights into the mechanisms of biosynthesis of water-soluble phenolic acids in *S. miltiorrhiza*, and will encourage further research on the effects of smoke-water on the accumulation of secondary metabolite of herbal medicines.

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