

CURRENT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN BIOTECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING AT IIUM

VOLUME II

Editors:

Ibrahim Ali Noorbatcha
Hamzah Mohd. Salleh
Mohamed Elwathig Saeed Mirghani
Raha Ahmad Raus



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**Department of Biotechnology Engineering
Faculty of Engineering
International Islamic University Malaysia**



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CHAPTER 43

SCREENING ANTI-CANCER COMPOUNDS FROM MEDICINAL MALAYSIAN PLANTS

Raha Ahmad Raus, Yusuf Johari and Azura Amid

Department of Biotechnology Engineering, Faculty of Engineering,
International Islamic University Malaysia, P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

In the fight against cancer, novel chemotherapeutic agents are constantly being sought to complement existing drugs. In this study, 80% methanolic extracts prepared from seven tropical plants with ethnomedical uses were tested for their cytotoxic ability *in vitro* against cancer cell lines. The plants studied were *Carica papaya* (papaya), *Coleus blumei* (ati-ati), *Cosmos caudatus* (ulam raja), *Ficus deltoidea* (mas cotek), *Piper sarmentosum* (kaduk), *Pluchea indica* (beluntas), and *Premna cordiflora* (bebuas). The cytotoxicity screening test, SRB (sulforhodamine B) was carried out to determine plants with potential anticancer properties. Results indicated that *P. sarmentosum* and *P. cordiflora* extracts demonstrated significant cytotoxicity against MCF7 cell line where the IC_{50} were 125 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ and 113 $\mu\text{g/mL}$, respectively, and at the same time showed less activities against normal cells. With respect to these results, *P. sarmentosum* and *P. cordiflora* extracts could be studied further for their potential to treat cancer.

Keywords: cytotoxic, SRB assay, *Piper sarmentosum*, *Premna cordiflora*.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, cancer is a leading cause of death where it accounts for 13% of all deaths (World Health Organization, 2006). Breast cancer for instance, is the most common cancer in women globally. The National Cancer Institute (USA) estimates that in year 2007, 178,480 women in the USA will be diagnosed with and 40,460 women will die of breast cancer (National Cancer Institute, 2007). Nevertheless, extensive scientific studies for the past several decades have led to the identification of various sources of chemotherapeutic drugs. More than 60% of presently used anticancer agents are derived from natural sources including plants and marine organisms (Newman et al., 2003).

Plants have played a dominant role as a source of highly effective conventional drugs for the treatment of many forms of cancer. From 1967–1971, Hartwell published a series of articles of over 3000 species of plants which had been reported to have alleged anticancer properties (Hartwell, 1971a,b,c,d). In the year 2000, Graham et al. continued the work by