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1 **Ellagic Acid potential use for endometriosis treatment: its effect on human endometrial cell**  
2 **cycle, adhesion and migration.**

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3

4 **Short title:** Ellagic acid possible endometriosis treatment.

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15 **Abstract**View Article Online  
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16 Endometriosis is a common and challenging condition of reproductive-aged women that is defined  
17 as the presence of endometrial-like tissue outside the uterine cavity. Despite its prevalence, there is  
18 still no effective therapeutics so we aim to evaluate the ellagic acid (EA) effect on the most relevant  
19 aspects that are known to be altered in endometriosis. Endometrial primary cultures from women  
20 with and without endometriosis and endometrial cell lines were incubated with EA (50 and 100 $\mu$ M)  
21 for 24 and 48 h. The results demonstrated that EA arrest endometrial stromal cell cycle on G2 / M  
22 phase, after 48 h. In addition, EA 100 $\mu$ M treatment significantly decreased ECC-1 cell migration at  
23 20 h and T-HESC cell migration at 10 h and 20 h; while EA 50 $\mu$ M caused a significant decreased  
24 on T-HESC cell migration at 20 h. On the other hand, we proved that treatment with EA for 24 h  
25 reduces T-HESC and ECC-1 adhesion to plastic. However, we did not find an effect of EA on cell  
26 proliferation. EA has an inhibitory effect on endometrial cell adhesion, migration and cell cycle  
27 progression *in vitro*. These highlight the idea to investigate natural compounds as a novel and  
28 promising therapeutic treatment for endometriosis.

29

30 **Keywords:** endometriosis - Ellagic Acid - migration - adhesion - cell cycle

## 31 1. Introduction

32 Endometriosis is one of the most common benign gynecological diseases in women of  
33 reproductive age and is defined by the presence of endometrial-like tissue (epithelial and stromal  
34 elements) outside the uterine cavity<sup>1</sup>. It affects approximately 10% of the female population causing  
35 severe pelvic pain and infertility in 30-50% of the patients who suffer it. This is a disease with a  
36 complex etiology and the most accepted theory for endometriosis development is Sampson's  
37 implantation theory based on retrograde menstruation<sup>2</sup>. According to this theory, for the  
38 endometriotic lesions establishment and maintenance, it is necessary that the endometrial cells  
39 reach the peritoneal cavity, adhere to the peritoneum, invade it, vascularize it and have the capacity  
40 to proliferate, therefore the migration, adhesion, and proliferation are crucial processes in  
41 endometriosis development. In addition, endometriosis is underdiagnosed because a large  
42 proportion of affected women are asymptomatic or their strong pelvic pain cannot be considered as  
43 specific symptoms of a disease. In general, the first doctor's visit are due to difficulty conceiving  
44 and, at present, laparoscopy is the only diagnostic method, which causes long delays before women  
45 acquire a definitive diagnosis<sup>3</sup>.

46 Current treatments for endometriosis involve the surgical removal of implants and/or the  
47 induction of an hypoestrogenic state using combined oral contraceptives, progestagens alone or  
48 GnRH analogues, because it is an estrogen-dependent disease. That's why current medical therapies  
49 for endometriosis do not allow conception in women under treatment<sup>4</sup>. In addition, these therapies  
50 are not completely effective and have several adverse side effects leading to high recurrence rates<sup>5,6</sup>  
51 and avoiding their long term use<sup>7-9</sup>.

52 The search for novel treatments for endometriosis, more accessible, with no side effects and that  
53 allow pregnancy, guided us to evaluate natural compounds. The consumption of berries and other  
54 polyphenol-enriched foods or juices has been associated with positive health effects like antioxidant  
55 properties, prevention of cardiovascular diseases and cancer<sup>10,11</sup>. Ellagitannins (ETs) and EA are  
56 polyphenols<sup>12</sup> present in those fruits, nuts and seeds<sup>13-15</sup>. Taking into account the diverse effects that  
57 the EA exerts on different cell types<sup>16-20</sup>, we think that this natural compound could be a good  
58 option as an alternative therapy for endometriosis. In addition to the known anti-inflammatory,  
59 antiglycolytic, antioxidant and antimicrobial effects of its metabolites<sup>21</sup>, it has been described that  
60 the EA has an antiproliferative and proapoptotic effect on colon, breast, and prostate<sup>22</sup> cancer cell  
61 lines. It also inhibits cell migration and the production of pro-matrix-metalloproteases 2 and 9 and  
62 gelatin. It has anti-angiogenic action since it decreases the levels of vascular endothelial growth  
63 factor 165. (VEGF 165)<sup>23,24</sup>.

64 In addition, considering that endometriosis is an estrogen-dependent pathology, another factor  
65 that led us to evaluate this compound as a possible treatment for endometriosis is the fact that it has  
66 been described that one of the metabolites of EA, urolithin B is an antagonist of the aromatase<sup>25</sup>,  
67 and this antiestrogenic activity of EA has been proven by other authors<sup>26,27</sup>.

68 However, EA has not been tested as a therapeutic alternative for endometriosis.

69 The aim of this work was to assess the effect of EA on proliferation, cell cycle progression,  
70 adhesion and migration in human endometrial cells in an in vitro model of endometriosis.

71

## 72 2. Experimental methods

### 73 2.1. Patients

74 In this study participated women on reproductive age who underwent diagnostic laparoscopies due  
75 to infertility, tubal obstruction or other pathology, and who had not received treatment during the  
76 last six months. They were classified into two groups: a) Patients with endometriosis diagnosed by  
77 laparoscopy and confirmed by histological studies (the stages I, II, III, and IV were determined  
78 according to the Revised American Society for Reproductive Medicine Classification<sup>28</sup>) and b)  
79 Control women who did not suffer endometriosis or other pathology that could alter the cell  
80 population to be evaluated.

81 After written consent from the patients, endometrial biopsies were taken during the laparoscopy  
82 with diagnostic and therapeutic purposes, yielding to our group a small fraction of the material.  
83 Biopsies of eutopic endometrium were obtained from all subjects as described previously<sup>29,30</sup>.  
84 Patient characteristics are provided in Table 1.

85 This study was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee of the Instituto de Biología y  
86 Medicina Experimental - Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (IBYME-  
87 CONICET) of Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 26 May 2015 (reference CE 005 - April/2015). Office  
88 of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) Assurance identification number: F16-00065 (A5072-01).

89

### 90 2.2. Isolation and culture of endometrial stromal and epithelial cells

91 We obtained epithelial and stromal cells from eutopic endometrial biopsies. The cells were  
92 enzymatically separated and isolated by successive centrifugations, and primary cultures were  
93 established for in vitro studies. Briefly, tissue was minced, washed and placed in Dulbecco's

94 Modified Eagle Medium: Nutrient Mixture F-12 (DMEM/F-12, Gibco) supplemented with  
95 antibiotic-antimycotic (penicillin 100 IU/ml, streptomycin 100 mg/ml and amphotericin B 25  
96 mg/ml, Gibco) and collagenase 0.5 mg/ml (type I, Gibco). After 2 h of incubation at 37°C in a 5%  
97 CO<sub>2</sub> atmosphere, the resulting suspension was centrifuged at 100 x g for 5 minutes, and the pellet  
98 and supernatant were separated and reserved. The pellet containing epithelial glands was  
99 resuspended in culture medium and spun again at 100 x g for 5 minutes, so the final pellet mainly  
100 contained epithelial cells. This enriched epithelial fraction was cultured with MEM D-Val  
101 supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) (Gibco) and grown to sub-confluence (70–80%)  
102 at 37°C before the experiments. On the other hand, the supernatant containing mainly stromal cells  
103 was centrifuged at 400 x g for five minutes and the pellet containing mainly stromal cells were  
104 resuspended and the cells counted and plated with DMEM/F12 supplemented with 10% FBS and  
105 antibiotic-antimycotic to grow up to sub-confluence (70–80%) in a humidified environment with  
106 5% CO<sub>2</sub> at 37°C. It has been previously shown that this method guarantees a high purity of each  
107 type of cells in culture 31.

108

### 109 2.3. Cell line and culture conditions

110 T-HESC (ATCC® CRL4003™) was derived from the stromal cells obtained from an adult woman  
111 with myomas<sup>32</sup>. The primary stromal endometrium cells were immortalized by infection with  
112 supernatant from the packaging cell line pA317-hTERT (Geron Corp.; Menlo Park, CA), which  
113 expressed the hTERT and the puromycin resistance genes. They were cultured in DMEM/F-12  
114 supplemented with 10% FBS (PAA Laboratories, USA) in a phosphate buffered saline (PBS)  
115 modified environment with 5% CO<sub>2</sub> at 37°C.

116 ECC-1 (ATCC® CRL2923™) was derived from endometrial epithelial cells from a human  
117 adenocarcinoma<sup>33</sup>. The cultures were maintained with Roswell Park Memorial Institute (RPMI)-  
118 1640 med supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum, 1% pyruvate at 37°C in the presence of 5%  
119 CO<sub>2</sub>.

120

### 121 2.4. Cell proliferation assay

122 For cell proliferation assays, 5x10<sup>3</sup> ECC-1 cells/well, 5x10<sup>3</sup> T-HESC cells/well, 5x10<sup>4</sup> primary  
123 endometrial epithelial cells/well or 2x10<sup>4</sup> primary endometrial stromal cells/well from eutopic  
124 tissue of women with endometriosis and controls were plated in 96 well culture plates with their

125 corresponding media culture supplemented with 10 % FBS and incubated at 37°C in a 5% CO<sub>2</sub>  
126 atmosphere. When cells reached a 70% confluence, cultures were washed with PBS and incubated  
127 for 24 or 48 h with 50 µM and 100 µM EA in fresh medium supplemented with 1% fetal bovine  
128 serum. Basal conditions were obtained by incubating cells with the vehicle used to dissolve the EA:  
129 1% sodium hydroxide (NaOH, Sigma-Aldrich). We based on previous in vitro studies to fix the  
130 effective dose of EA; hence we arrived at these concentrations<sup>22,34-39</sup>. Each treatment condition was  
131 carried out in quadruplicate. Cell proliferation was determined by a colorimetric assay using the  
132 WST-1 Cell Proliferation Kit according to the manufacturer instructions (Roche Applied Science).  
133 Absorbance was measured at 450 nm using a multi-well plate reader. Cell proliferation was  
134 expressed as percentage of basal conditions in each experiment.

135

### 136 *2.5. Cell Cycle Analysis*

137 For cell cycle analysis, 2.5 x 10<sup>5</sup> T-HESC and ECC-1 cells/well were plated in 6 well culture plates  
138 with their corresponding culture medium supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum. After 24 h,  
139 cultures were washed and incubated with different concentrations of EA (50 and 100 µM) in  
140 medium supplemented with 1% FBS for 24 or 48 h. Then, cells were harvested using 0.25% trypsin  
141 (Gibco) and centrifuged at 300 x g for 5 minutes. The supernatants were removed; cells were  
142 washed with ice-cold PBS, and fixed by slowly adding ice-cold 70% ethanol while mixing the  
143 solution in a vortex at low speed. Cells were kept at -20°C until assayed. On the day of the assay,  
144 tubes containing cells were centrifuged at 100 x g for 5 minutes and the supernatants were removed.  
145 Pellets were carefully resuspended adding the DNA-staining solution (50 µg/ml propidium iodide  
146 (Sigma-Aldrich) in PBS) and kept in the dark for 15 minutes at room temperature. Finally, cell  
147 cycle distribution was determined using a flow cytometer (FACS Canto II, BD Biosciences). The  
148 results were analyzed using Cyflogic 1.2.1 software. All treatments were compared to the basal  
149 condition.

150

### 151 *2.6. Scratch (wound healing) assay*

152 The wound healing assay was carried out using an established procedure<sup>40</sup>. Cells were seeded in a 6  
153 well plate and allowed to adhere for 48 h. Then the monolayer was wounded by cross scratching  
154 with a 200 µl pipette tip. The detached cells were removed by rinsing with PBS. Immediately after  
155 wounding, 50 or 100 µM EA was added in culture media supplemented with 1% FBS. Images of  
156 the scratch were acquired immediately after wounding (0 h) and 5, 10 and 20 h later. All treatments

157 were compared to the basal condition. The healing rate was calculated using the closure ratio  
158 analysis method <sup>41</sup>:

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159  $\text{Healing rate (\%)} = [(0 \text{ h scratch area} - X \text{ h scratch area})/0 \text{ h scratch area}] \times 100.$

160

### 161 *2.7. Adhesion assay to plastic.*

162 Cell adhesion to plastic was evaluated in ECC-1 and T-HESC cultures treated with EA. Briefly,  
163 cells were cultured in their respective culture medium supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum,  
164 at 37° with 5% CO<sub>2</sub> until reach a 70% confluence. Then, the cells were treated for additional 24 h  
165 with vehicle or 50-100 μM EA in culture medium supplemented with 1% fetal bovine serum.  
166 Following, the cells were harvested with trypsin 0.25% (Gibco), resuspended in serum-free medium  
167 and leave to recover for 40 minutes. Following recovering, cell suspension was added to 6 well  
168 culture plates (10<sup>4</sup> cells/ml/well) and cultured in a 5% CO<sub>2</sub> atmosphere at 37°C for 60 minutes.  
169 After that, the wells were washed four times with PBS, and the adherent cells were harvested and  
170 counted. Cell adhesion was determined staining cells with trypan blue and counting them under a  
171 phase-contrast microscope. All treatments were compared to the basal condition.

172

### 173 *2.10. Statistical analysis*

174 Statistical analysis was performed using GraphPad PRISM software V4.0 (GraphPad Software Inc,  
175 San Diego, California). Statistical comparisons among groups were carrying out by the Student t-  
176 test or the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Tukey's multiple comparison tests.  
177 Results were expressed as mean ± SEM. In all cases, only a p value < 0.05 was considered  
178 significant.

179

## 180 **3. Results**

### 181 *3.1. Effect of EA on endometrial cell proliferation.*

182 The effects of both assayed concentrations of EA (50 and 100 μM) on cell proliferation are  
183 displayed in **Figure 1**. We did not find a statistically significant difference between EA and Basal,  
184 on cell proliferation in human endometrial epithelial (Figure 1A) or stromal (Figure 1B) cells. In the  
185 same way, we did not observe statistically significant effects of EA on ECC-1 (Figure 1C) and T-



186 HESCs (Figure 1D) cell proliferation. As shown in Figure 1, both cell lines and primary cultures  
187 behaved similarly, and facing the complexity conferred by the management and establishment of  
188 primary cultures<sup>32</sup>; from this point we decided to continue using the ECC-1 and T-HESC cell lines  
189 as a representative in vitro experimental model.

190

### 191 *3.2. Effect of EA on endometrial cell cycle progression.*

192 The effects of both assayed concentration of EA (50 and 100  $\mu$ M) on the progression of the cell  
193 cycle are displayed in **Figure 2**. Cell cycle distribution profiles of 24 and 48 h EA-treated cells were  
194 evaluated via flow cytometry. Only exposure to 100  $\mu$ M EA for 48 h caused a significant arrest of  
195 cell cycle in G2/M phase in T-HESCs cells (Figure 2B;  $p < 0.05$ ); we have no observed significant  
196 differences with EA treatment in the other conditions in T-HESs or ECC-1 cells.

197

### 198 *3.3. Effect of EA on endometrial cell migration.*

199 We evaluated the effects of EA on ECC-1 and T-HESCs cell migration by the wound healing  
200 technique (**Figure 3**). Treatment with 100  $\mu$ M EA significantly decreased ECC-1 cell migration at  
201 20 h (Figure 3A;  $p < 0.05$ ) and T-HESC cell migration at 10 h and 20 h (Figure 3B;  $p < 0.05$  and  
202  $p < 0.001$  respectively). In addition, 50  $\mu$ M EA caused a significant decreased on T-HESC cell  
203 migration at 20 h (Figure 3B;  $p < 0.01$ ) even though no significant effects on ECC-1 cell migration  
204 was observed (Figure 3A).

205

### 206 *3.4. Effect of EA on endometrial cell adhesion to plastic.*

207 We examined the adhesion of EA-treated ECC-1 and T-HESCs cells to plastic culture plates and  
208 compared this to attachment of untreated cells. As shown in **Figure 4**, the efficacy of EA-treated  
209 cells attachment was reduced on both cell lines. ECC-1 pre-treated with 50 and 100  $\mu$ M EA  
210 significantly reduced their attachment competence ( $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.001$  vs. Basal respectively), and  
211 in the same way T-HESCs cells pre-treated showed a significant reduced attachment competence  
212 ( $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.01$  vs. Basal respectively).

213

#### 214 4. Discussion

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215 Endometriosis is one of the most common benign chronic hormonal woman diseases with poor  
216 prognosis and a high recurrence rate. Long-term therapy is required, and nowadays the current  
217 treatments are surgical and/or medical approaches. The pharmacological strategy is based on drugs  
218 that are generally ineffective because there is no balance between their clinical efficacy and the  
219 personal needs of patients<sup>42</sup>. The choice between the treatments is influenced by several factors,  
220 including the type of lesion suspected, the personal insights of the patient, and the already known  
221 adverse effects that appear when hormonal drugs are used for a long period<sup>43</sup>. The variety of  
222 strategies and modalities demonstrates that treatment of endometriosis is constantly evolving and no  
223 single therapy is ideal for all patients.

224 Over the last years, evidence has been accumulated to suggest that medicinal botanicals have  
225 anti-inflammatory and pain-alleviating properties and hold promise for treatment of  
226 endometriosis<sup>44</sup>. Taking into account previous results obtained in our laboratory<sup>45,46</sup> and earlier  
227 promising results obtained in cancer<sup>15</sup>, we focus on possible natural therapies that prevent  
228 recurrences after laparoscopy. In this sense, EA is a polyphenol usually found in berries and nuts;  
229 and is one of the natural options that have lately been considered to treat different diseases. It  
230 affects a large range of biological activities and its mechanisms of action are varied. At a systemic  
231 level, EA have shown to successfully inhibit angiogenesis, cell migration and cell invasion in  
232 ovarian, colon and bladder cancer cell lines<sup>15</sup>; some of the crucial processes for the infiltrative  
233 behavior and metastatic process as well as endometriosis pathophysiology<sup>47,48</sup>. Accordingly to  
234 Sampson's implantation theory<sup>2</sup>, endometriotic cells may migrate, attach, proliferate, and invade.  
235 These sequential cellular events are involved in the initiation, progression, and growth of ectopic  
236 endometriotic lesions, and therefore in the development of the disease.

237 In the present study, we analyze cell proliferation and cell cycle progression to assess the effect  
238 of EA on endometrial growth. Our data indicate that EA does not exert any effect nor in  
239 endometrial primary epithelial and stromal cells, neither on endometrial ECC-1 and T-HESC cell

240 lines (Figure 1). These results are in agreement with a previous work which demonstrates that EA in  
241 doses up to 50 $\mu$ M has no effect on cell proliferation in ECC-1 and T-HESCs cell lines<sup>49</sup>. However,  
242 it has been shown that 50 and 100 $\mu$ M EA suppresses the cell viability of U251 cells glioblastoma<sup>50</sup>.

243 In addition our cell cycle results showed that EA causes an arrest in the G2/M phase in T-HESCs  
244 after 48 h treatment (Figure 2). These results are congruent with González-Sarrías et al.  
245 investigation<sup>51</sup> in which the exposure of Caco-2 cells to a mixture of EA and its metabolites (10  $\mu$ M  
246 EA, 40  $\mu$ M Urolithin A and 40  $\mu$ M Urolithin B (Mix)) arrested cell growth at G2/M-phase since  
247 day 2 of treatment, associated to a downregulation of cyclins A and B1. On the other hand, we  
248 demonstrated that ECC-1 cell cycle progression is not affected by treatment with EA. This is  
249 consistent with previous works<sup>24, 52</sup> in which it is demonstrated that EA has cell type-dependent  
250 effects on cell metabolism, suggesting that there is no a single target of action for this compound.

251 Interestingly, we observed that EA arrests cell cycle at G2/M-phase in T-HESCs cells but has no  
252 effect on cell proliferation. We think that this may be due to the fact that the arrest was observed at  
253 48h, the same time that cell proliferation was evaluated. Therefore it would be reasonable to find a  
254 decrease in cell proliferation at a later time, which was not analyzed in this work. In this regard, it  
255 has been reported that endometrial carcinoma KLE and AN3CA cell lines treated with EA 20 $\mu$ M  
256 for 24, 48 and 72 h, showed a significant decrease in cell viability only after 48 h<sup>53</sup>. However,  
257 during the same investigation, the arrest of the cell cycle in the G1 phase was evident at 24 h of  
258 treatment. Likewise, a study performed with apigenin, another natural compound, on pancreatic  
259 cancer cells<sup>54</sup> detected a cell cycle arrest in the G2/M phase at 24 h of treatment, although the  
260 decrease in the number of cells was confirmed only at 72 h.

261 Studies of the cellular mechanisms involved in the pathology of diseases are ideally carried out  
262 on primary cultured cells. However, the limited availability of tissue, the difficulties in establishing  
263 the culture, and the short useful life of these cells in subsequent passages leads to low  
264 reproducibility of assays<sup>32</sup>. Consequently, in this study we mainly use ECC-1 and T-HESCs cell

265 lines since they have been widely utilized as a model of endometriosis due to the close  
266 physiological<sup>55</sup> and molecular<sup>32, 56-60</sup> similarities they share with primary cultures.

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267 As we mentioned before, cell migration and adhesion are key processes for the establishment of  
268 the lesions and the development of endometriosis<sup>1, 61, 62</sup>. Accordingly, we assessed the effect of EA  
269 on these cell abilities. We demonstrated that EA treatment reduces cell migration in both ECC-1  
270 and T-HESCs cells. In agreement with our results, Huidi Liu and col.<sup>63</sup> demonstrates that the  
271 ovarian cancer cells (A2780) underwent inhibition of cell migration upon exposure to 5, 10 and  
272 15µg/ml EA. In addition, our results showed that pretreatment with EA decreases the ability of both  
273 cell lines to adhere to plastic (Figure 4). Congruently, a previous study conducted on neuroblastoma  
274 SH-SY5Y cells has already demonstrated that EA treatment (30µM) induces detachment and lower  
275 viability of adherent cells<sup>64</sup>.

276 It is know that many intracellular and soluble cellular adhesion molecules are differentially  
277 expressed in endometrial cells from women with and without endometriosis<sup>65, 66</sup> which may  
278 facilitate the implantation of endometrial cells in an ectopic place. Moreover, Zhao Q. and col.<sup>67</sup>  
279 demonstrated that endometrial stromal cells from ectopic endometrium have a higher rate of  
280 migration than stromal cells from normal endometrium. These reports highlight the importance of  
281 targeting cell migration and adhesion as they are central processes in endometriosis  
282 pathophysiology and support the use of EA as a putative compound for the treatment of this disease.

283 Nevertheless, EA is a polyphenolic compound from the family of ellagitannins, which have low  
284 water solubility and absorption leading to a poor bioavailability<sup>68, 69</sup>. This disadvantage could be a  
285 difficulty thinking it as a possible treatment for endometriosis. However, new promising approaches  
286 are being developed. Recently, poor water soluble drugs have been successfully delivered by the  
287 use of nanoscale systems<sup>70-72</sup>. Growing evidence demonstrates that this strategy allows the delivery  
288 of higher local concentrations of drugs, which can enhance their therapeutic efficacy<sup>73, 74</sup>. In this  
289 sense, novel drug-delivery systems that overcome the low EA solubility and bioavailability (i.e.,  
290 biocompatible polymers-based nanoparticles/ microcapsules/ biofilms/ micelles) are being tested *in*

291 *vitro* and *in vivo*<sup>75-79</sup>. In summary, we found that EA affects cell cycle progression of endometrial  
292 stromal cells through the arrest at G2/M phase. Moreover, EA also inhibited the migration and  
293 adhesion of both stromal and epithelial cells suggesting that it could interfere with the early stages  
294 of lesion establishment. To the best of our knowledge our report constitutes the first study to test the  
295 effect of EA on endometriosis. Our results are promising even though more studies are needed to  
296 better understand the mechanisms of action of EA and it is the potential use as a preventive or  
297 therapeutic agent for endometriosis. Full characterization of this natural compound will likely  
298 provide new insights into alternative medicines with potential for therapeutic applications in  
299 women. In this context, further evaluation of the EA and its active metabolite(s) are currently being  
300 carry out by our group, in order to provide therapeutic alternatives for the inhibition of the  
301 development of endometriotic-type lesions.

302

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307

### 308 **Conflict of Interest**

309 Authors declare no conflict of interest. NONE

310

### 311 **Authorship**

312 BMC, did all the experimental work and contributed new ideas. MAB taught and collaborated in the  
313 realization of the cell cultures, DM and AGR collaborated in the processing of the samples, JJS  
314 provided the endometrial tissue biopsies; RIB proposed the evaluation of the ellagic acid as a  
315 possible treatment for endometriosis, elaborated the work plan and direct the laboratory.

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540 **Figure captions**View Article Online  
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541 **Figure 1:** Effects of EA on cell proliferation in epithelial (A) and stromal (B) primary cell cultures  
542 from patients with Endometriosis and controls; and in ECC-1 (C) and T-HESCs (D) cells. Cell  
543 cultures were treated with EA 50 and 100  $\mu$ M or vehicle (Basal group) for 24 or 48 h and cell  
544 proliferation was assessed by WST assay. N is expressed between parentheses in each bar.

545

546 **Figure 2:** Effect of EA on cell cycle distribution in ECC-1 (A) and T-HESCs (B) cells. Cell  
547 cultures were treated with EA 50 and 100  $\mu$ M or vehicle (Basal group) for 24 or 48 h. Cell cycle  
548 was assessed by staining DNA with propidium iodide and analyzed with flow cytometer.  
549 Fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS) analysis of the cell cycle distribution for the Basal  
550 condition and for 50 and 100 $\mu$ M EA treatment for 24 h (i) and 48 h (iii). Comparison of percentage  
551 of cells in each stage of the cell cycle after EA treatment for 24 h (ii) and 48 h (iv). N=5. \*P < 0.05  
552 versus Basal.

553

554 **Figure 3:** Effect of EA on cell migration in ECC-1 (A) and T-HESCs (B) cells. Cell cultures were  
555 treated with EA 50 and 100  $\mu$ M or vehicle (Basal group) and images were captured at 0, 5, 10 and  
556 20 h after scratch. Quantitative analysis of the open wound was performed using Image J software  
557 and expressed as the percentage of 0 h wound for each treatment. Each point represents the mean of  
558 five experiments, performed in duplicate. \*P < 0.05 and \*\*\*P < 0.001 100  $\mu$ M EA versus Basal; ##  
559 P < 0.01 50  $\mu$ M EA versus Basal.

560

561 **Figure 4:** Effect of EA on ECC-1 (A) and T-HESCs (B) cell attachment to plastic. Cell cultures  
562 were treated with EA 50 and 100  $\mu$ M or vehicle (Basal group). After 24 h cells were harvested and  
563 let them to adhere to plastic for 1 h, and the number of attached cells was counted under a  
564 microscope. \*\*P < 0.01 and \*\*\*P < 0.001 versus Basal. N is expressed between parentheses in each  
565 bar.

566

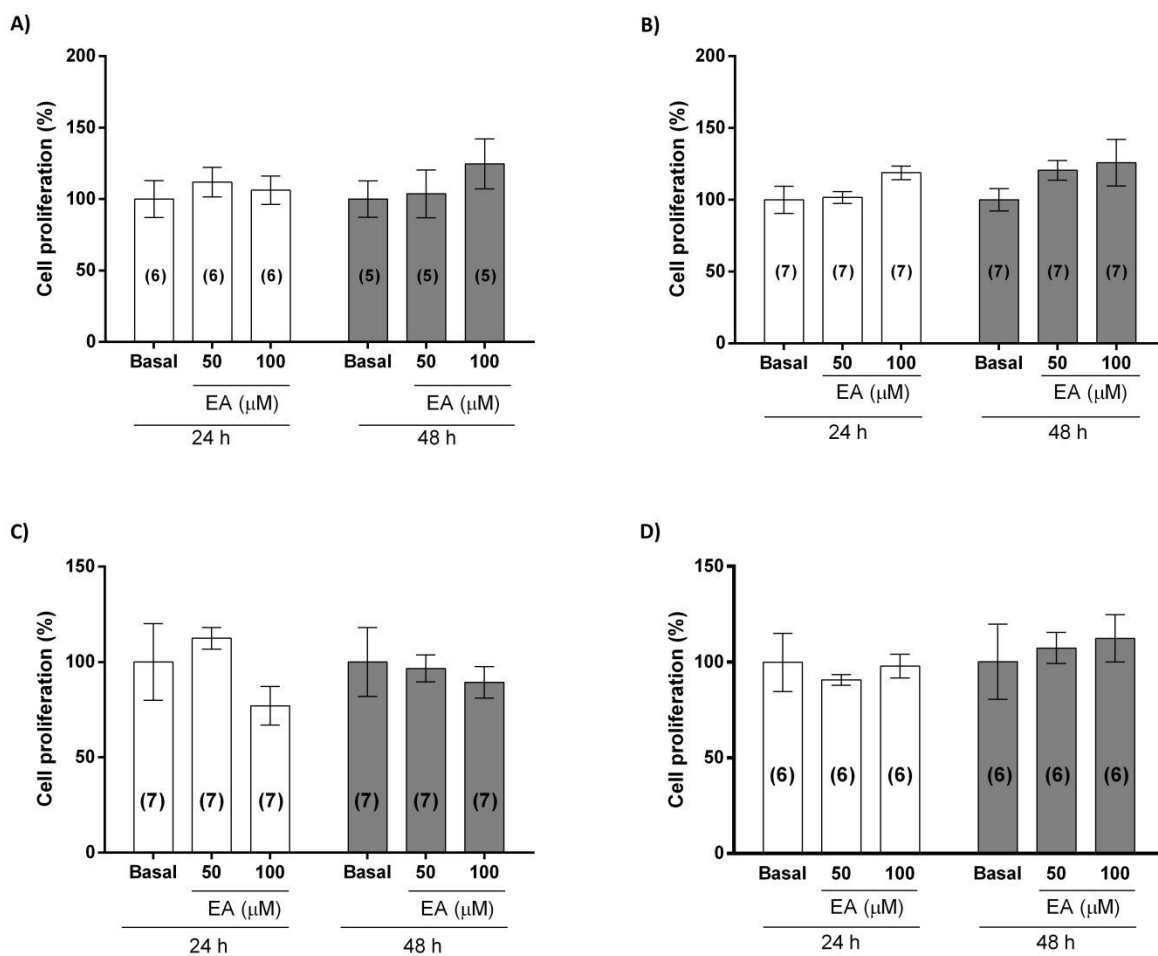
567 **Table1:** Characteristics of biopsies.

568

569 **Figures**

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570 **Figure 1:**



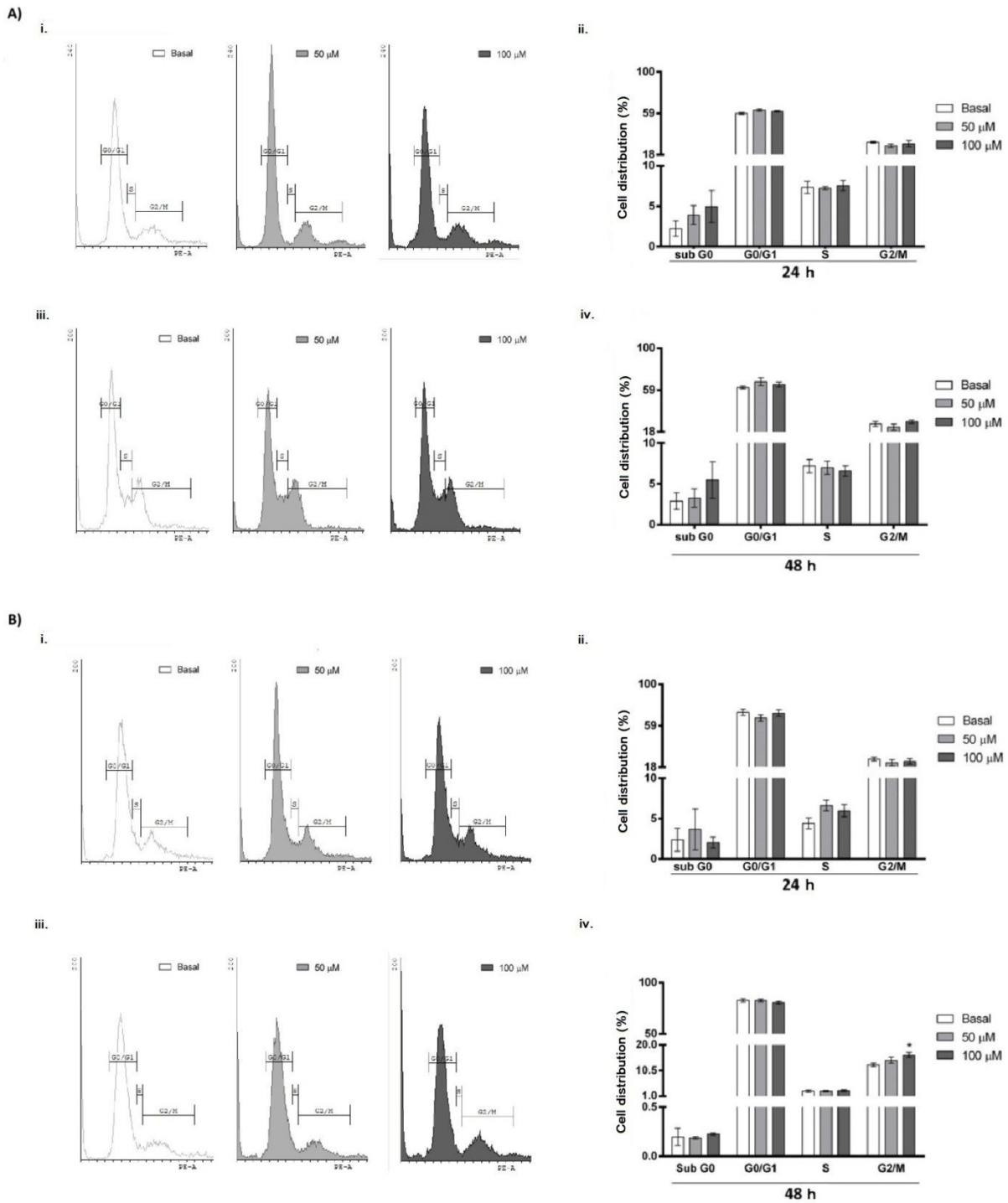
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574 **Figure 2:**

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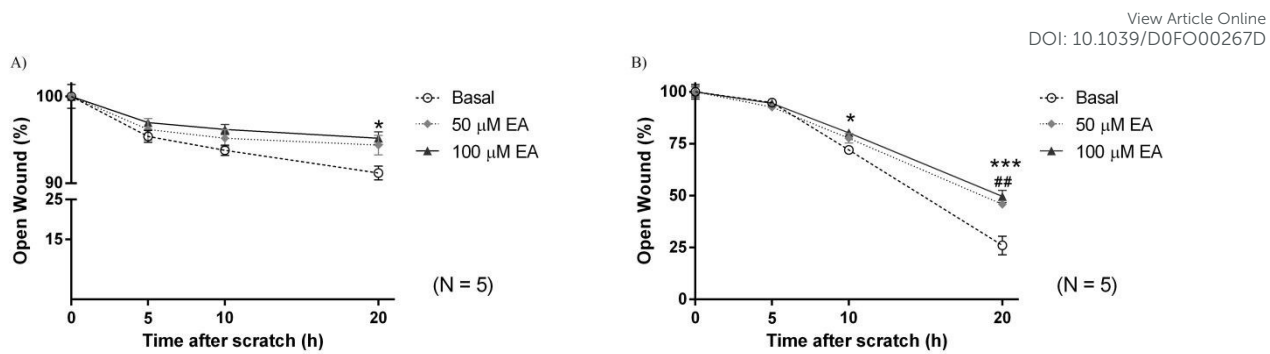
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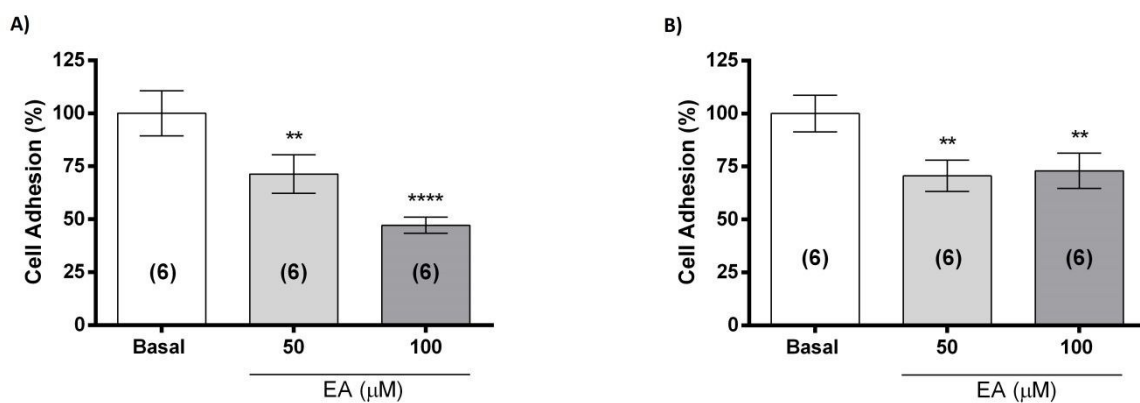
578 **Figure 3:**



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581 **Figure 4:**



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
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584 **Tables**View Article Online  
DOI: 10.1039/D0FO00267D585 **Table1:**

Laboratory Code	Patient age at biopsy	Endometriosis manifestations	Location of biopsy
<b>C99a</b>	42	EDT stage III Ovaric endometrioma	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C110a</b>	28	EDT Ovaric endometrioma	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C113a</b>	30	EDT stage II Ovaric endometrioma	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C123a</b>	33	EDT stage II - Sterility Pouch of Douglas	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C126a</b>	34	Control 2 years Sterility	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C149a</b>	no data	Control	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C150a</b>	40	Control	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C151a</b>	26	EDT stage IV Ovaric endometrioma	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C152a</b>	42	EDT stage I Bladder-Uterine	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C115a</b>	40	EDT stage IV – 4 years Sterility Ovaric endometrioma	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C146a</b>	36	Control	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C147a</b>	40	Control Sterility	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C148a</b>	34	EDT stage III Ovaric endometrioma	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C155a</b>	41	EDT stage III - Sterility Ovaric endometrioma	Uterus (eutopic)
<b>C164a</b>	46	Control Endometrial polyp	Uterus (eutopic)

586

EA treatment decreases cell adhesion and migration of endometrial cells, and alters the progression of endometrial stromal cell line cycle. [View Article Online](#)  
DOI: 10.1039/D0FO00267D

Experimental Model	Treatment	Ellagic Acid (EA) 
Stromal and Epithelial Primary Culture		We did not find an statistical effect of EA on cell proliferation in human endometrial cells
T-HESCs		No statistical effect on cell proliferation G2/M cell cycle arrest ↓ Migration ↓ Adhesion to plastic
ECC-1		No statistical effect on cell proliferation No statistical effect on cell cycle ↓ Migration ↓ Adhesion to plastic