

## INVESTIGATION OF THE ACTIVE INGREDIENT OF THE PLANT LAVANDULA ANGUSTIFOLIA AND ITS PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL PROPERTIES (REVIEW)

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### Abstract

The use of medicinal plants has been increasing in recent years, especially in traditional and complementary medicine worldwide. Many of these medicinal plants are consumed without sufficient scientific backing, which can have consequences for people's health and impose significant healthcare costs on the system. Among these, *Lavandula angustifolia* is one of the most common herbal medicines due to its widespread use in traditional medicine. The use of *Lavandula angustifolia* has been well demonstrated in various studies for some conditions such as anxiety disorders and sleep disorders. However, evidence for its effectiveness in treating other diseases is contradictory or limited. This study examines the importance of the active ingredient of *Lavandula angustifolia* and the processing and post-harvest methods in the food and pharmaceutical industries based on existing research.

**Keywords:** *Lavandula angustifolia*, psychological disorders, active ingredient.

### Introduction

Medicinal plants have long been used in the treatment of various diseases and for food and cosmetic purposes (1-6). Due to the desire of more people to consume organic products and avoid the side effects of conventional medicine the use of medicinal plants has increased especially in recent years (7). The impacts of these medicinal plants on various diseases have been attributed to their effective ingredients (8, 9). These effective ingredients may vary in the same plant based on the processing and post-harvest methods (10-12). Also, a few clinical trials to investigate the impact of medicinal plants on various diseases have not clarified the effectiveness of these treatments. It can waste treatment time with other efficient methods or impose several

side effects on patients (13, 14). In this regard, *Lavandula angustifolia* has been investigated more as a medicinal plant.

### **Description, Taxonomy**

*Lavandula angustifolia* is a flowering and evergreen plant (15) belonging to the family Lamiaceae and Genus *Lavandula* (16, 17). It is native to the Mediterranean region and Southwest Asia. It is nowadays cultivated in most parts of the world (18, 19). Growth conditions and different treatments can affect its height during maturity (20, 21). A study revealed that the mean height of this plant was between 2.7 and 33 cm in the first year and between 6.42 and 57 cm in the second year. Also, flower height was 0.7 to 7 cm in the first year and 1.4 to 20.9 cm in the second year (22). Its flowers are pale purple and grow in clusters at the top of the stem. Its leaves are linear or spear-shaped with wavy edges covered by tomentum (23, 24). .

### **Active ingredients**

*Lavandula angustifolia* has more than 100 active ingredients. The most important of them in various studies in the essential oils include Linalyl acetate, Linalool,  $\rho$ -cymene,  $\alpha$ -Campholenal, caryophyllene, (E)-3,7-Dimethylocta-1,3,6 -triene, 4-Terpineol, Acetic acid *Lavandula* ester, 1,8-Cineole,  $\alpha$ -Fenchone, Coumarin, and Borneol (24-26). A study revealed that the highest antioxidant activity of essential oil was obtained in fresh aerial parts and the lowest was obtained in dried flowers (27). It is believed that the uses of *Lavandula angustifolia* in the food industry and its therapeutic impacts depend on these chemical compounds (28, 29).

### **Mechanism of action**

The results of a study conducted on type 2 diabetic patients indicated that *Lavandula angustifolia* ethanolic extract has a great inhibitory activity against carbohydrate hydrolyzing enzymes ( $\alpha$ -glycosidase and  $\alpha$ -amylase), and pancreatic lipase (30). Another study indicated that the use of *Lavandula angustifolia* essential oil (contains 1,8-cineole, borneol, and camphor at 39, 22, and 22%, respectively) reduces edema formation, myeloperoxidase (MPO) activity, and nitric oxide (NO) production in acute inflammation due to the participation of prostanoids, NO, proinflammatory cytokines, and histamine (31). In a study on animal models of Alzheimer's disease, Soheili et al. (2015) showed that *Lavandula angustifolia* effectively restores long-term potentiation (LTP) and enhanced field extracellular postsynaptic potentials (fEPSPs) in the CA1 region of the hippocampus and improved the impaired spatial memory in Alzheimer's male Wistar rats (32).

The results of a study revealed that *Lavandula angustifolia* at doses of 200 and 400 mg/kg can lead to structural and functional improvement of spinal cord injury in rats by improving hindlimbs, reducing cavity areas, and increasing the number of ventral motor neurons (33). Aboutaleb et al. (2019) indicated that *Lavandula angustifolia* can restore the activity of antioxidant enzymes and reduce lipid peroxidation in rats. *Lavandula angustifolia* also reduced the damage to peritubular capillaries and helped maintain

the normal morphology of kidney cells in rats (34). Regarding Acute Myocardial Infarction rats, the results of a study revealed that *Lavandula angustifolia* essential oil modified the ECG by suppressing the ST segment elevation led to an increase in the R amplitude and a reduction in the levels of the inflammatory marker Myeloperoxidase (MPO). In this study, the protective effect of essential oil on heart attack is attributed to its antioxidant activities. Its most significant components are linalool, linalyl acetate and some other mono and sesquiterpenes, camphor, 1,8-cineol, flavonoids like luteolin, triterpenoids like ursolic, and coumarin (35). López et al. (2017) showed that the anti-anxiety and antidepressant impacts of *Lavandula angustifolia* are due to the inhibition of the serotonin transporter (SERT) and its modulatory impacts on NMDA receptors (linalool as a secondary process plays a significant role in this process). *Lavandula angustifolia* also protects SH-SY5Y cells against hydrogen peroxide-induced neurotoxicity (36). *Lavandula angustifolia* was used for tea in ancient times (37). Nowadays, the results of studies in the area of the food industry also indicated that *Lavandula angustifolia* essential oil can reduce the growth of bacteria in food products, preserves the quality of foods containing lipids, and is safe if used properly or consumed at low levels (38).

## **Cultivation**

The use of seeds, cuttings, plant division, and layering or tissue culture is one of the most important *Lavandula angustifolia* propagation methods. Mature *Lavandula angustifolia* is relatively resistant to different weather conditions. However, it prefers hot summer and cool winter and needs a temperature of about 10-15 °C for germination. *Lavandula angustifolia* prefers relatively fertile crumbly soil with neutral to slightly alkaline pH. However, it can also grow in less fertile soils, eroded soils, and sloped lands (37, 39-46). Pot cultivation is another type of *Lavandula angustifolia* cultivation. A study investigated the effect of substrate on *Lavandula angustifolia* in Italy. The mentioned study used substrates containing mixes of peat (P), green compost (C), and/or demolition aggregates (A). Its results showed that the P: C mixture performed better than other mixtures in terms of survival rate, plant compactness, and flower production. However, the P:C: A mixture had a higher quality of essential oil with higher amounts of linalool (47). To control weeds, various methods can be used such as hand shoveling, coarse sand (increasing the temperature around the plant on sunny days), cultivator (high probability of damaging *Lavandula angustifolia*), herbicides (increasing the toxicity of the plant), and bio-herbicides (37, 39, 48-51).

## **Harvesting and post-harvest processes**

The *Lavandula angustifolia* harvesting mostly starts after the second year at the time of flowering and continues for 12 to 15 years. The duration of flowering varies depending on the geographical region (37, 41, 52). The age of *Lavandula angustifolia* at harvest is crucial, so younger aromatic plants mostly synthesize more essential oil, but older plants have a richer composition (42). The active ingredients of plants are also affected by the *Lavandula angustifolia* age (53). The yield of *Lavandula angustifolia* oil increases over time and varies from 7.8 kg per hectare to 55.5 kg per hectare (54). The

best time to harvest seems to be mid-day and during the afternoon when linalyl acetate is at the maximum level (55). The *Lavandula angustifolia* drying method significantly affects the essential oil content. A study indicated that drying in the shade has the highest level of Linalool, drying under the sun has the highest level of Terpinen-4-ol, drying in the oven has the highest level of Linalyl acetate, and drying in the microwave has the highest level of Lavandulyl acetate in the essential oil (56). A study compared *Lavandula angustifolia* drying methods at different temperatures and showed that convective drying (CD) at a temperature of 60 °C is the optimal method for recovering the total essential oil and vacuum-microwave drying (VMD) with power 360 W combined vacuum microwave finish-drying (CPD-VMFD) with power 480 W and CD at 50 °C was the optimal method for the smell quality (57). The results of a study that investigated the drying of *Lavandula angustifolia* in western Himalayan conditions showed that the essential oil content and moisture loss at 72 hours were significantly higher than at zero hours. The results also showed that as we get closer to 72 hours, linalool decreased and linalyl acetate increased (58). Storage and pre-processing methods can also affect the essential oil content, so a part of the essential oil content will be lost during long-term storage of the dried content (12). The *Lavandula angustifolia* flower has higher-quality essential oil compounds than its stem and leaves (37). Genotype, fertilization, temperature, rainfall distribution, altitude, weather conditions, and irrigation are other factors that affect the quality of *Lavandula angustifolia* for drying include (59-64). A study that investigated *Lavandula angustifolia* leaves revealed that the optimal moisture level during the growth period causes a higher yield of *Lavandula angustifolia* in the harvest year and increases the total phenolic acid (TPA), which ultimately increases the antioxidant activity of *Lavandula angustifolia* in the post-harvest stages (65). In addition to preparing essential oil from the *Lavandula angustifolia* plant, it can be also processed with other methods. Extraction is one of these methods. The highest level of volatile oil is found in *Lavandula angustifolia* calyx (66). A study investigated three methods hydrodistillation, supercritical CO<sub>2</sub> extraction (SCE), and hexane extraction. Its results showed that SCE had aromas closer to the raw material, lower thermal degradation, and more antioxidant activity than other methods. SCE oils and water distillation also showed higher antimicrobial activity than hexane extraction (67). Another study indicated that distillation with water compared to distillation with steam decomposes the content of linalyl acetate to an extent that can lead to an increase in the linalool content (66). The results of another study also revealed that essential oil extract by classic hydrodistillation and microwave-generated hydrodistillation is associated with increased coumarin and preparation of essential oil extract by microwave hydrodiffusion and gravity method will be richer in borneol (68). *Lavandula angustifolia* absolute (LA) and concrete are other methods through which *Lavandula angustifolia* can be processed (69). A study indicated that samples of Bulgarian lavender absolute (*L. angustifolia* Mill.) contain terpene, sesquiterpenes, triterpenoids, coumarins, and aliphatic compounds. Additionally, acyclic monoterpene linalool and ester linalyl acetate are two primary components of LA (70). Another study revealed that when concrete is steam-distilled; it will be richer in sesquiterpenes than steam-distilled oil (71). *Lavandula angustifolia* can be also processed as an ointment. Studies have shown that it has a high level of antioxidant activity in this state and can

play a role in healing wounds (72). *Lavandula angustifolia* ointment contains high amounts of the terpenoid rate of linalool, which has shown good wound contraction and re-epithelialization rates. It also improves antioxidant enzymes and protein synthesis (73).

## Discussion

*Lavandula angustifolia* is one of the plants used extensively in the food, pharmaceutical, and health industries. The effectiveness of *Lavandula angustifolia* is due to active ingredients such as linalool and linalyl acetate, which are affected by post-harvest and processing processes. Each of these methods has advantages and disadvantages that can reduce some of these active and effective ingredients and increase some others (74, 75). Thus, it is recommended to use a method based on the purpose of consumption to have the highest amount of active ingredients for the intended purposes. In addition to post-harvest and processing methods, pre-harvest processes also affect the final product. This issue should be addressed to provide the most active and effective ingredients for the intended purposes.

## Conflict of interest statement

There is no conflict between the authors of this article.

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