IMMUNOMODULATING PROPERTIES OF SABAH SEAWEEDS *KAPPAPHYCUS STRIATUS* AND *EUCHEUMA DENTICULATUM*

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iii
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ABSTRACT

Seaweeds which are high in vitamins, minerals, proteins, polysaccharides and dietary fibers have been consumed traditionally in many East Asia countries as functional food and as sources of medicinal drugs for health promotion and disease prevention. Despite of the vast benefits, documentation on the immunological properties of Sabah seaweeds is scarce. Immunomodulators are capable to augment the immune system in order to provide protection against infections and improve our health. Thus, this study investigated the water and ethanolic extracts of Kappaphycus striatus and Eucheuma denticulatum that are widely cultured in Sabah and of economic importance. Ex vivo experiments were conducted using Balb/c mice spleens for NK cells activities, splenocytes proliferation and serum was used for Th-1 cytokine IFN-γ and Th-2 IL-4. Macrophage proliferation assay, nitric oxide production and wound healing assay were evaluated in vitro using RAW 264.7 and 3T3 cells. The K. striatus water extracts and ethanolic extracts of both seaweed samples could significantly increase the proliferation of RAW264.7 cells in a concentration-dependent manner (50 – 200 μg/mL). Both water extracts at 12.5 – 200 μg/mL were able to significantly increase considerable amounts of nitrite, while the production of nitrite was significantly inhibited when LPS-induced RAW 264.7 were incubated with the water extracts. This indicates that the water extracts of K. striatus and E. denticulatum possess anti-inflammatory activity. E. denticulatum ethanolic extracts at 100 μg/mL stimulated the migration of 3T3 fibroblasts in scratch assay indicated they exhibited wound healing properties. In addition, Balb/c mice administered with 50 mg/kg of E. denticulatum ethanolic extracts showed significant proliferation in all ex vivo tests suggesting that it is the best concentration to significantly immunomodulate the immune system. Gene expression profile were further investigated in mice treated with E. denticulatum ethanolic extracts at 50 mg/kg and 100 μg/mL to further understand the molecular mechanism involved in the immunomodulation. Gene expression results showed that the ethanolic extracts were involved in T-cell signaling pathway via the CD8B1 and CD3G cell surface receptors. This lead to subsequent multiple downstream signaling pathways including calcium-calcineurin-NFAT, MAPK and NF-κB signaling pathways which could further activate downstream targets P38, NFAT, AP-1, NF-κB to induce cell proliferation, differentiation and production of cytokines. Increased expressions were shown in CD8B1 and CD3G surface receptor genes, at a fold-change of 1.60 (p=0.039) and 1.49 (p=0.026) respectively whereas slight increased expressions which were not significant were shown in NFAT1, at 1.21 (p=1.53) and IFN-γ, at 1.54 (p=0.14) indicating that the extracts serve as a strong modulator in activating the surface receptors which could lead to the proliferation and activity of lymphocytes (T cells and NK cells), macrophage activation which mediate calcium-calcineurin-NFAT signaling pathway. In addition, the molecular mechanisms of cell-adhesion activities were also investigated. Wound healing activity involves the signal transduction and interaction of ECM to cell adhesion receptor integrins, cytoplasmic kinases, growth factors and cytokines. SPP1, an ECM protein with a fold-change of 2.11 (p=2.11) which interacts and bind to ITGB3 cell surface integrins, with a fold-change of 1.44 (p=0.004) followed by stimulating cell-to-cell and cell-to-ECM adhesion, were found to be significantly expressed in
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*Ex vivo* experiments were conducted using Balb/c mice spleens for NK cells activities, splenocytes proliferation and serum was used for Th-1 cytokine IFN-γ and Th-2 IL-4. Macrophage proliferation assay, nitric oxide production and wound healing assay were evaluated *in vitro* using RAW 264.7 and 3T3 cells. The *K. striatus* water extracts and ethanolic extracts of both seaweed samples could significantly increase the proliferation of RAW264.7 cells in a concentration-dependent manner (50 – 200 μg/mL). Both water extracts at 12.5 – 200 μg/mL were able to significantly increase considerable amounts of nitrite, while the production of nitrite was significantly inhibited when LPS-induced RAW 264.7 were incubated with the water extracts. This indicates that the water extracts of *K. striatus* and *E. denticulatum* possess anti-inflammatory activity. *E. denticulatum* ethanolic extracts at 100 μg/mL stimulated the migration of 3T3 fibroblasts in scratch assay indicated they exhibited wound healing properties. In addition, Balb/c mice administered with 50 mg/kg of *E. denticulatum* ethanolic extracts showed significant proliferation in all *ex vivo* tests suggesting that it is the best concentration to significantly immunomodulate the immune system. Gene expression profile were further investigated in mice treated with *E. denticulatum* ethanolic extracts at 50 mg/kg and 100 μg/mL to further understand the molecular mechanism involved in the immunomodulation. Gene expression results showed that the ethanolic extracts were involved in T-cell Signaling pathway via the *CD8B1* and *CD3G* cell surface receptors. This lead to subsequent multiple downstream signaling pathways including calcium-calcineurin-NFAT, MAPK and NF-κB signaling pathways which could further activate downstream targets *P38, NFAT, AP-1, NF-κB* to induce cell proliferation, differentiation and production of cytokines. Increased expressions were shown in *CD8B1* and *CD3G* surface receptor genes, at a fold-change of 1.60 (*p=0.039*) and 1.49 (*p=0.026*) respectively whereas slight increased expressions which were not significant were shown in *NFAT1*, at 1.21 (*p=1.53*) and *IFN-γ*, at 1.54 (*p=0.14*) indicating that the extracts serve as a strong modulator in activating the surface receptors which could lead to the proliferation and activity of lymphocytes (T cells and NK cells), macrophage activation which mediate calcium-calcineurin-NFAT signaling pathway. In addition, the molecular mechanisms of cell-adhesion activities were also investigated. Wound healing activity involves the signal transduction and interaction of ECM to cell adhesion receptor integrins, cytoplasmic kinases, growth factors and cytokines. *SPP1*, an ECM protein with a fold-change of 2.11 (*p=2.11*) which interacts and bind to *ITGB3* cell surface integrins, with a fold-change of 1.44 (*p=0.004*) followed by stimulating cell-to-cell and cell-to-ECM adhesion, were found to be significantly expressed in
this study. Activation of \textit{SPP1} protein and \textit{ITGB3} cell surface receptor could initiate the integrin-mediated signaling pathway followed by activation of downstream pathways such as cytoskeletal organization, PI3K-Akt signalling pathway and MAPK signalling pathway. Besides, \textit{SPP1} and \textit{ITGB3} genes play an important role in cell proliferation, migration, differentiation, growth regulation which could accelerate fibroblast migration thus enhancing wound healing activity. Gene expression studies showed that Sabah seaweeds especially \textit{E. denticulatum} ethanolic extracts has immunomodulating activities by acting on cell surface receptors which could then mediate T-cell receptor signaling and integrin-mediated signaling pathway. This study stipulated that all water and ethanolic seaweed extracts especially 50 mg/kg \textit{E. denticulatum} ethanolic extracts served as a strong immunomodulator in enhancing host defence mechanisms and immune system.
ABSTRAK

CIRI-CIRI IMMUNOMUDULASI RUMPAI LAUT SABAH KAPPAPHYCUS STRIATUS DAN EUCHEUMA DENTICULATUM

Rumpai laut mengandungi vitamin-vitamin, protein, polisakarida dan serat dietari telah digunakan secara tradisional dalam banyak negara-negara Asia Timur sebagai makanan fungsian dan sebagai sumber perubatan untuk promosi kesihatan dan pencegahan penyakit. Dokumentasi tentang imunologi rumpai laut di Sabah sukar didapat walaupun terdapat banyak laporan tentang faedah-faedah rumpai laut. Imunomodulator mempunyai kebolehan untuk mempertahankan sistem imun bagi memberi perlindungan terhadap jangkitan dan membaiki kesihatan kita. Maka, kajian ini menyiaskan ekstark air dan etanol Kappaphycus striatus dan Eucheuma denticulatum yang banyak dikulturkan di Sabah dan mempunyai kepentingan ekonomi. Eksperimen-eksperimen ex vivo telah dijalankan dengan menggunakan limpa mencit Balb/c untuk aktiviti sel-sel NK, proliferasi sel-sel limpa dan serum mencit untuk sitokin Th1 IFN-y dan sitokin Th2 IL-4. Proliferasi makrofaj, produksi nitrik oksida dan eksperimen penyembuhan luka dinilai in vitro dengan menggunakan sel-sel RAW 264.7 dan 3T3. Ekstrak air K. striatus dan ekstrak etanol daripada kedu-dua rumpai laut boleh menambahkan proliferasi RAW 264.7 dengan signifikan daripada 50 – 200 μg/mL. Kedua-dua ekstrak air pada 12.5 – 200 μg/mL dapat menambahkan nitrit dengan signifikan manakala pengeluaran nitrit direncan degan signifikan apabila RAW 264.7 yang dicetuskan dengan LPS dieramkan dengan ekstrak air. Ini menunjukkan ekstrak air K. striatus dan E. denticulatum memiliki aktiviti anti-radang. 100 μg/mL ekstrak etanol E. denticulatum merangsang penghijrahan fibroblas 3T3 dalam asasi penyembuhan luka menunjukkan mereka mempunyai ciri-ciri penyembuhan luka. Sebagai tambahan, mencit Balb/c yang diberi dengan 50 mg/kg ekstrak etanol E. denticulatum menunjukkan proliferasi signifikan dalam semua kajian ex vivo dan ini mencadangkan bahawa kepekanan ini adalah kepekaan yang terbaik untuk imunomodulasikan sistem imun. Profil ekspresi gen seterusnya disiasat dalam mencit Balb/c yang diberi dengan 50 mg/kg ekstrak etanol E. denticulatum dan fibroblas 3T3 yang dieramkan dengan 100 μg/mL ekstrak etanol E. denticulatum untuk memahami mekanisma molekul yang terlibat dalam imunomodulasi. Keputusan ekspresi gen menunjukkan bahawa ekstrak etanol terlibat dalam laluan pengisyaratan sel-T melalui permukaan sel-sel reseptor CD8B1 dan CD3G. Ini menjurus kepada beberapa laluan pengisyaratan seperti laluan-laluan kalsium-calcineurin-NFAT, MAPK dan NF-kB. Laluan-laluan tersebut akan mengaktifkan gen-gen seperti P38, NFAT, AP-1 dan NF-kB yang boleh mendorong proliferasi sel, pembezaan dan pengeluaran sitokin. Peningkatan ekspresi telah ditunjukkan pada permukaan gen-gen reseptor iaitu gen CD8B1 dan CD3G yang menunjukkan perbezaan kali ganda iaitu 1.60 (p=0.039) dan 1.49 (p=0.026) manakala ekspresi yang tidak signifikan ditunjukkan di dalam NFAT1 dan IFN-γ, iaitu 1.21 (p=1.53) dan 1.54 (p=0.14) menunjukkan bahawa ekstrak rumpai laut ini berfungsi sebagai satu pemodulat kuat dalam mengaktifkan permukaan gen-gen reseptor yang boleh menjurus proliferasi dan aktiviti limfosit (sel-sel T dan sel-sel NK). Selain itu, ekstrak ini dapat mengaktifkan makrofaj yang menjadi pengantara dalam laluan kalsium-calcineurin-NFAT. Sebagai tambahan, mekanisma molekul lekatan sel juga
Kegiatan penyembuhan luka melibatkan transduksi isyarat dan interaksi ECM kepada reseptor lekat seperti sel integrin, kinase sitoplasma, faktor pertumbuhan dan sitokin. Kajian ini menunjukkan peringkatkan ekspresi gen secara signifikan apabila protein ECM, SPP1 yang menunjukkan perbezaan kali ganda iaitu 2.11 \( (p=2.11) \) berinteraksi dengan permukaan sel ITGB3, iaitu 1.44 \( (p=0.004) \) melalui perangsangan sel-kepada-sel dan perlekatan sel-kepada-ECM. Pengaktifan protein SPP1 dan reseptor permukaan sel ITGB3 boleh merangsangkan lautan pengisyaratan pengantara integrin diikuti oleh pengaktifan organisasi kerangka sel, laluan PI3K-Akt dan laluan MAPK. Selain itu, gen-gen SPP1 dan ITGB3 memainkan peranan yang penting dalam proliferasi, penghijrahan, pembezaan dan pertumbuhan sel-sel yang boleh mempercepatkan penghijrahan fibroblas maka mempercepatkan kegiatan penyembuhan luka. Kajian-kajian ekspresi gen menunjukkan bahawa rumpai laut Sabah terutama ekstrak etanol E. denticulatum mengandungi akitiviti imumomodulasi dengan mengaktifkan permukaan sel reseptor yang boleh mengantara dan menyebabkan regulasi laluan pengisyaratan sel-T dan laluan pengisyaratan pengantara integrin. Kajian ini menunjukkan semua ekstrak air dan etanol terutama 50 mg/kg ekstrak etanol E. denticulatum berfungsi sebagai pemodulat kuat untuk meningkatkan mekanisma pertahanan badan dan sistem imun.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERTIFICATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction  
1.2 Problem Statement  
1.3 Hypothesis of the study  
1.4 Objectives  

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 General overview of seaweeds  
2.2 Seaweed cultivation in Malaysia  
2.3 Seaweed in Sabah  
  2.3.1 *Eucheuma denticulatum*  
  2.3.2 *Kappaphycus striatus*  
2.4 General uses of seaweeds  
2.5 General nutritional values of seaweeds  
  2.5.1 Seaweed polysaccharides  
  2.5.2 Proteins and amino acids  
  2.5.3 Vitamins and minerals  


2.6 Seaweed as functional food

2.6.1 Addition of seaweed as dietary fibre

2.6.2 Addition of seaweed as food preservatives

2.7 Overview of the immune system

2.7.1 Innate immunity

2.7.2 Adaptive immunity

2.8 Organs of the immune system

2.9 Cells of the immune system

2.9.1 Lymphocytes

2.9.1(a) B cells

2.9.1(b) T cells

2.9.1(c) NK cells

2.9.2 Macrophages

2.10 Cytokines

2.11 Immunomodulation

2.11.1 Immunomodulating activities of seaweeds

CHAPTER 3: MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Seaweed samples

3.2 Seaweed extraction

3.3 Cell lines and culture conditions

3.4 In vitro immunomodulatory assays

3.4.1 Macrophage proliferation assay

3.4.2 Nitric oxide production

3.4.3 In vitro splenocyte proliferation assay

3.5 Ex vivo immunomodulatory assays

3.5.1 Preparation of laboratory animals

3.5.2 Preparation and culture of Balb/c mice splenocytes

3.5.3 Natural killer assay

3.5.4 Ex vivo splenocyte proliferation assay

3.5.5 Cytokine production assay

3.5.5(a) IL-4

3.5.5(b) IFN-γ
3.6 *In vitro* scratch assay

3.7 RNA extraction
   3.7.1 RNA extraction from Balb/c mice spleens
   3.7.2 RNA extraction from NIH 3T3 fibroblasts

3.8 PCR array

3.9 Quantitative real-time PCR (qPCR)
   3.9.1 Reverse transcription
   3.9.2 qPCR on RNA obtained from Balb/c mice spleens
   3.9.3 qPCR on RNA obtained from NIH 3T3 fibroblasts

3.10 Statistical analysis

3.11 Experimental design

**CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

4.1 Extraction yield of seaweeds

4.2 *In vitro* immunomodulatory activities
   4.2.1 Macrophage proliferation activity
   4.2.2 Nitric oxide production
   4.2.3 *In vitro* splenocyte proliferation activity

4.3 *Ex vivo* immunomodulatory activities
   4.3.1 Body weight and spleen weight
   4.3.2 Natural killer activity
   4.3.3 Splenocyte proliferation activity
   4.3.4 IFN-γ and IL-4 cytokine production

4.4 Wound healing activity on NIH 3T3 fibroblasts

4.5 Gene expression profiling
   4.5.1 RNA quality
      (a) Optical density of RNA samples extracted from Balb/c mice
      (b) Optical density of RNA samples extracted from NIH 3T3 fibroblasts
   4.5.2 Identification of possible genes involved in immunomodulation using PCR array
   4.5.3 Identification of possible genes involved in wound healing activity
   4.5.4 KEGG Orthology (KO) analysis for pathway identification
4.6 Validation of gene expression by QPCR
4.6.1 Validation of gene expression involved in immunomodulation
4.6.2 Validation of wound healing gene expression

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION
5.1 Seaweed extraction
5.2 Macrophage proliferation activity and nitric oxide production
5.3 *Ex vivo* immunomodulating activity
5.4 Wound healing activity
5.5 Functions of regulated genes involved in immunomodulation using PCR array
5.6 Functions of regulated genes involved in wound healing using PCR array
5.7 *E. denticulatum* ethanolic extracts modulate T-cell receptor signaling pathway
5.8 *E. denticulatum* ethanolic extracts modulate integrin-mediated signaling pathway
5.9 Summary of immunomodulating activity by *K. striatus* and *E. denticulatum* extracts

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

REFERENCES
APPENDIX
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.1</td>
<td>Classification of algae</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.2</td>
<td>General nutrient composition of tropical seaweeds collected from Malaysia</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1</td>
<td>Morphological description of <em>K. striatus</em> and <em>E. denticulatum</em></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.2</td>
<td>Assay ID for Taqman gene expression assay</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.3</td>
<td>Fold-difference in expression</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1</td>
<td>Yield of water and ethanolic extracts obtained from <em>K. striatus</em> and <em>E. denticulatum</em> seaweeds</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2</td>
<td>Body weights and spleen index of Balb/c mice treated with <em>K. striatus</em> and <em>E. denticulatum</em> water and ethanolic extracts</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.3</td>
<td>Optical density of control group and ED ETOH 50 group</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.4</td>
<td>Optical density of 3T3 control group and 3T3 ED ETOH group</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.5</td>
<td>Fold-change expression on mouse T-cell and B-cell activation and mouse common cytokines RT² profiler PCR array</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.6</td>
<td>Fold-change expression on mouse wound healing RT² profiler PCR array</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.7</td>
<td>KEGG pathways classification of regulated genes of Balb/c mice administered with 50 mg/kg <em>E. denticulatum</em> ethanolic extracts (ED ETOH 50)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.8</td>
<td>PCR efficiency of Taqman gene expression assays</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.9</td>
<td>Relative gene expression in ED ETOH 50 group (n=10) as compared to control group (n=10)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.10</td>
<td>PCR efficiency of Taqman gene expression assays</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.11</td>
<td>Relative gene expression in 3T3 ED ETOH (n=3) as compared to 3T3 control group (n=3)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Seaweed global production from year 1980-2010</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>Fresh <em>Eucheuma denticulatum</em> red seaweed obtained from Semporna, Sabah</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>Fresh <em>Kappaphycus striatus</em> var. <em>sacol</em> (flower) seaweed obtained from Semporna, Sabah</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Experimental design of the immunomodulating properties of <em>K. striatus</em> and <em>E. denticulatum</em></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Figure 4.1 | Sabah seaweeds obtained from Semporna, Sabah  
  (A) *Kappaphycus striatus*; (B) *Eucheuma denticulatum* | 56   |
| Figure 4.2 | Percentage of water and ethanolic extracts of *K. striatus* on Raw 264.7 cells proliferation | 58   |
| Figure 4.3 | Percentage of water and ethanolic extracts of *E. denticulatum* on Raw 264.7 cells proliferation | 58   |
| Figure 4.4 | Nitric oxide production of water extracts and ethanolic extracts of *K. striatus* and *E. denticulatum* incubated with Raw 264.7 cells for 24 hours | 60   |
| Figure 4.5 | Nitric oxide production of water extracts and ethanolic extracts of *K. striatus* and *E. denticulatum* incubated with Raw 264.7 cells with 1 μg/mL LPS for 24 hours | 60   |
| Figure 4.6 | *In vitro* splenocyte proliferation assay on Balb/c mice splenocytes treated with different seaweeds at a concentration of 0, 12.5, 25, 50, 100 and 200 μg/mL | 62   |
| Figure 4.7 | Natural killer cell activity of *Eucheuma denticulatum* and *K. striatus* water and ethanolic extracts in Balb/c mice | 65   |
| Figure 4.8 | Splenocyte proliferation assay on Balb/c mice orally administered with *E. denticulatum* seaweed concentrations at 10, 50 and 100 mg/kg of water and ethanolic extracts | 66   |
| Figure 4.9 | Splenocyte proliferation assay on Balb/c mice orally administered with *K. striatus* seaweed concentrations at 10, 50 and 100 mg/kg of water and ethanolic extracts | 68   |
Figure 4.10: IFN-γ cytokine production of Balb/c mice orally administered with *E. denticulatum* and *K. striatus* seaweed concentrations at 10 mg/kg, 50 mg/kg and 100 mg/kg of water and ethanolic extracts

Figure 4.11: IL-4 cytokine production of Balb/c mice orally administered with *E. denticulatum* and *K. striatus* seaweed concentrations at 10 mg/kg, 50 mg/kg and 100 mg/kg of water and ethanolic extracts

Figure 4.12: Percentage of water and ethanolic extracts of *K. striatus* on NIH 3T3 cells proliferation

Figure 4.13: Percentage of water and ethanolic extracts of *E. denticulatum* on NIH 3T3 cells proliferation

Figure 4.14: Effects of *E. denticulatum* ethanolic extracts by *in vitro* wound healing activity

Figure 4.15: Effects of *E. denticulatum* ethanolic extracts by *in vitro* wound healing activity

Figure 4.16: mRNA expressions of *SPP1, CD8B1, CD3G, IFN-γ, NFAT1, CTLA4, CDKN1A, IL-4, P38B* and *IFNyR1*

Figure 4.17: mRNA expressions of *ITGB3, PDGFA, TIMP1* and *CXCL5*

Figure 5.1: Schematic diagram of T cell signaling receptor pathway and downstream signaling calcium-calcineurin-NFAT, MAPK and NF-kB signaling pathways

Figure 5.2: Schematic diagram on integrin-mediated signaling pathway and its downstream MAPK signaling pathway and PI3K signaling pathway

Figure 5.3: Summary of *in vitro* and *ex vivo* immunomodulating activity of water and ethanolic extracts *K. striatus* and *E. denticulatum* seaweed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>°C</td>
<td>Degree celcius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μg</td>
<td>Microgram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μL</td>
<td>Microliter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>μm</td>
<td>Micrometer</td>
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<tr>
<td>μM</td>
<td>Micromolar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bp</td>
<td>Base pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAC channels</td>
<td>Calcium release activated channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMSO</td>
<td>Dimethyl Sulfoxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dNTP</td>
<td>Deoxynucleoside triphosphate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDTA</td>
<td>Ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITAM</td>
<td>Immunenoreceptor tyrosine-based activation motif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPS</td>
<td>Lipopolysaccharide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Molarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mg</td>
<td>Milligram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>min</td>
<td>Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mL</td>
<td>Milliliter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm</td>
<td>Millimeter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mM</td>
<td>Millimolar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NK</td>
<td>Natural killer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nm</td>
<td>Nanometer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCR</td>
<td>Polymerase Chain Reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pmol</td>
<td>pico molar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNA</td>
<td>Ribonucleic Acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rpm</td>
<td>Revolution per minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Relative quantity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sec</td>
<td>Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v/v</td>
<td>Volume per volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/v</td>
<td>Weight per volume</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Cell culture media</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Chemicals, reagents, buffers</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Bioanalyzer results</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Standard curves</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td><em>In vitro</em> scratch assay results</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Marine macroalgae or seaweeds are classified into red (Rhodophyta), brown (Ochrophyta) and green (Chlorophyta) macroalgae based on their pigmentation (Chan, Ho, and Phang, 2006). Seaweeds are low in calories, rich in vitamins, minerals, proteins, polysaccharides and dietary fibers (Dhargalkar and Pereira, 2005; Gupta & Abu-Ghannam, 2011b; Holdt and Kraan, 2011). Seaweeds are also known for their diverse claims health promotion and disease prevention. Red, brown and green seaweeds have been reported to exhibit antibacterial, antitumor, antioxidant, immunomodulatory, anti-inflammatory activities and anticoagulant properties (Zhou, Sun, Xin, Zhang, Li, and Xu, 2004; Cox, Abu-Ghannam and Gupta, 2010; Na, Kim, Kim, Park, Lee, Kim, Synytsya, and Park, 2010; Vairappan, Kamada, Lee and Jeon, 2013).

The demand of healthy food is progressively gaining attention over the years. Application of synthetic preservatives and additives such as sodium nitrite, sodium benzoate, butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) and butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT) to preserve the quality of food have been reported to be toxic and exert carcinogenic effect (Yamazaki, Yamaguchi, Yamauchi, and Kakiuchi, 1994; Massey, 1997; Sarhan, Shati, and Elsaid, 2014). This has opened up the necessity to search for natural food preservatives (Shan, Cai, Brooks, and Corke, 2007). The demand of seaweeds to be used as food, fodder, fertilizer and sources of medicinal drugs have also increased and thus lead to the study of seaweeds as potential for functional food development (Sánchez-Machado, López-Cervantes, López-Hernández, and Paseiro-Losada, 2004; Hong, Hien, and Son, 2007). In this regards, cultivated tropical seaweeds were chosen for their diverse claims for health promotion and disease prevention.
Despite the vast reports, documentation on immunomodulating properties of Sabah seaweeds is scarce and majority of the researches were focused on its chemical contents, anti-cancer and anti-oxidant activities. Natural immunomodulators are host defense stimulators and are being used as immunotherapy in some diseases such as cancer, immunodeficiency disorders, inflammation, and infectious diseases (Masihi, 2000; Peakman, Dayan and Thomas, 2001; Heo, Yoon, Kim, Ahn, Kang, Kang, Affan, Oh, Jung, and Jeon, 2010). Immunomodulators are capable to enhance host defence mechanisms which involve immune system cells such as lymphocyte subsets, macrophages and natural killer (NK) cells in order to provide protection against infections (Peakman, Dayan, & Thomas, 2001).

Marine bioresources are known to contain promising potential for discovering novel compounds with a diversity of bio-activities (Fujikura, Lindsay, Kitazato, Nishida, and Shirayama, 2010; Radulovich, Umanzor, Cabrera, and Mata, 2015). The rich marine biodiversity has attracted biomedical and medical scientists on the immunomodulating activities of the seaweeds. To date, researches on immunomodulating activities have been focused on red, brown, green seaweeds obtained from China, Japan, Korea and Spain. Polysaccharides from green seaweeds Enteromorpha intestinalis and Enteromorpha prolifera collected from China and Japan exerted immunomodulating activities as they induced cytokines production, nitric oxide production, T-cells splenocytes proliferation and also inhibit S-180 tumours (Jiao, Jiang, Zhang and Wu, 2010; Kim, Cho, Karnjanapratum, Shin, and You, 2011). Besides, sulphated polysaccharides obtained from Ulva rigida harvested from Spain could augment the immune system by inducing nitric oxide production, iNOS production from RAW 264.7 cells and increase chemokines expression (Leiro, Castro, Arranz, and Lamas, 2007). Also, polysaccharides obtained from brown and red seaweed Hizikia fusiformis and Meristotheca papulosa harvested in Japan could induce the proliferation of human lymphocytes indicated seaweeds exhibit immunomodulating activities and they might be useful in clinical applications for the treatment of tumours (Shan, Yoshida, Kuroda, and Yamashita, 1999).
Functional food is defined to have vast nutritional effects and thus improving the state of health or reducing the risk of illness and disease (Roberfroid, 2002). Seaweed showed potential as functional food ingredients as they possess medicinal characteristics, anticancer and anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory activity (Hong et al., 2007; Karnjanapratum, Tabarsa, Cho, and You, 2012; Vairappan et al., 2013). Seaweeds such as Nori, Kombu, Wakame and Hijiki are widely used in food showed diverse health benefits (Okai, Higashi-Okai, Ishizaka, Ohtani, Matsui-Yuasa, and Yamashita, 1998; Ismail and Tan, 2002; Kuda, Hishi, and Maekawa, 2006; Negishi, Mori, Mori, and Yamori, 2013). Carrageenans, agar, and alginates from seaweeds were applied as functional food ingredients (Tseng, 2001).

To date, seaweeds also serve as a major food ingredient in food products especially in Japan, Korea and China (Ismail and Tan, 2002). However, seaweed as a food in Malaysia is not common and it is occasionally eaten as a salad dish (Norziah and Ching, 2000). Researches showed that seaweeds may be applied as functional food ingredient for lowering cholesterol and glycaemic index (Matanjun, Mohamed, Mustapha, and Muhammad, 2009). Red seaweeds Eucheuma spp. and Kappaphycus spp. and serve as an economically important source in east Malaysia as they are used for the extraction of iota and kappa carrageenan for the application in food industries (Phang et al., 2010b; Cai et al., 2013; Hurtado et al., 2014). Hence, the study of immunomodulating activities of Eucheuma denticulatum and Kappaphycus striatus might promote adding seaweeds as functional food.

1.2 Problem Statement

Seaweeds widely consumed as food contain vast beneficial effects ranging from antibacterial, antitumor, antioxidant, anticoagulant and anti-inflammatory activities. Hence, do the Eucheuma denticulatum and Kappaphycus striatus red seaweeds contain immunomodulating properties and how do these seaweeds exert the immunomodulating activities.
1.3 Hypothesis of the Study

*Eucheuma denticulatum* and *Kappaphycus striatus* obtained from Sabah exhibit immunomodulating activities including splenocytes proliferation, natural killer activity, macrophage proliferation, nitric oxide production, cytokine production and wound healing activity.

1.4 Objectives

a. To identify the potential of immunomodulatory activities of *Eucheuma denticulatum* and *Kappaphycus striatus* from Semporna, Sabah

b. To compare the immunomodulating properties between *Eucheuma denticulatum* and *Kappaphycus striatus*

c. To elucidate the molecular mechanism of *Eucheuma denticulatum* and *Kappaphycus striatus* in their immunomodulating activities using animal models
2.1 General overview of seaweeds

Marine algae are simple chlorophyll-containing organisms, composed of single cells or multiple cells, and sometimes collaborating together as simple tissues. They vary greatly in size, from unicellular organisms of 3-10 μM to giant kelps up to 70 m length. Thus, marine algae can be classified into macroalgae and microalgae based on their size inhabiting terrestrial, freshwater, brackish water and marine habitats (El Gamal, 2010; Phang, 2010). Seaweeds are macroalgae which are included in the general category of plants but they differ from terrestrial plants as they do not have true roots, stems and leaves nor vascular tissues (Rinaudo, 2007). The frond is the main part of the seaweed and the holdfast is the region of the attachment for the seaweed (Fish and Fish, 1989). Psychologists define seaweed as marine algae that are multicellular and macrothallic (Rinaudo, 2007). Seaweeds are a group of photosynthetic organisms which are able to grow where as low as 0.1% photosynthetic light is available. Seaweeds are commonly dominant in the rocky surfaces of the shallow subtidal areas in the temperate and polar regions. Some seaweeds are also found available in the intertidal and deep, clear seas up to 250 meters (Chapman and Chapman, 1980; Dhargalkar and Pereira, 2005; Rinaudo, 2007; Chopin and Sawhney, 2009).

The most common feature employed to classify and identify macroalgae is based on the presence of the accessory photosynthetic pigments of the light harvesting complex (LHC). These colored compounds, thereby, form the basis in the classification into three groups, known as red (phylum Rhodophyta), brown (phylum Ochrophyta) and green (phylum Chlorophyta) macroalgae (Chopin and Sawhney, 2009; Guiry and Guiry, 2016). Rhodophyta contain phycobiliproteins that absorb light and gives them distinct red colour, pheophyta contain carotenoid fucoxanthin which gives them brown colour while chlorophyta consists mainly of
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138


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