INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NOVEL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (IJNRD)
© 2026 IJNRD | Volume 11, Issue 5, May 2026 | ISSN: 2456-4184 | IJNRD.ORG

FORMULATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF POLYHERBAL FORMULATION FOR ANTILIPIDEMIC EFFECT: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Hyperlipidemia is a major risk factor for cardiovascular diseases including atherosclerosis, coronary artery disease, and stroke. Elevated levels of serum cholesterol, triglycerides, low-density lipoprotein (LDL), and reduced levels of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) contribute significantly to the development of metabolic disorders. Although several synthetic hypolipidemic drugs such as statins and fibrates are available, their long-term use is associated with adverse effects including hepatotoxicity, myopathy, and gastrointestinal disturbances. Herbal medicines have gained considerable attention due to their safety, efficacy, and minimal side effects. Polyherbal formulations, which combine multiple medicinal plants, provide synergistic therapeutic effects and improved efficacy in managing complex disorders such as hyperlipidemia. Various medicinal plants such as *Allium sativum*, *Trigonella foenum-graecum*, *Emblica officinalis*, *Curcuma longa*, and *Moringa oleifera* have demonstrated significant lipid-lowering properties. The formulation and standardization of polyherbal products are essential to ensure quality, safety, and reproducibility. Standardization includes pharmacognostic evaluation, physicochemical analysis, phytochemical screening, and quality control tests. This review discusses the role of polyherbal formulations in the management of hyperlipidemia, methods of formulation, and approaches for standardization and evaluation. The review highlights the potential of herbal combinations as safe and effective alternatives to synthetic antihyperlipidemic agents.

Keywords: Hyperlipidemia, Polyherbal formulation, Antilipidemic activity, Herbal medicine, Standardization.

1. Introduction

Hyperlipidemia is characterized by abnormally elevated levels of lipids, including total cholesterol (TC), low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C), and triglycerides (TG), often accompanied by low levels of high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C) [1]. It is the cornerstone of atherosclerosis, leading to coronary artery disease, stroke, and peripheral vascular ailments.

The concept of **Polyherbalism** is rooted in the "Synergy" principle, where the combination of multiple herbs enhances therapeutic efficacy and reduces the required dose of individual components, thereby minimizing adverse effects [2]. Unlike single-molecule drugs, polyherbal formulations act on multiple targets, such as inhibiting HMG-CoA reductase, enhancing bile acid excretion, and providing antioxidant protection to prevent lipid peroxidation [3].

2. Selection of Herbs for Antilipidemic Activity

The success of a PHF depends on the selection of herbs based on traditional evidence and pharmacological validation. Common herbs used in antilipidemic formulations include:

2.1. *Allium sativum* (Garlic)

Contains Allicin, which inhibits HMG-CoA reductase and reduces platelet aggregation [4].

2.2. *Commiphora mukul* (Guggul)

The active guggulsterones act as antagonists to the Farnesoid X receptor (FXR), a key regulator of cholesterol homeostasis [5].

2.3. *Terminalia arjuna* (Arjuna)

Rich in flavonoids and glycosides, it provides cardioprotective benefits and improves the HDL/LDL ratio [6].

2.4. *Trigonella foenum-graecum* (Fenugreek)

The high fiber content and saponins inhibit intestinal cholesterol absorption [7].

2.5. *Curcuma longa* (Turmeric)

Curcumin enhances the expression of LDL receptors in the liver, facilitating the clearance of "bad" cholesterol [8].

3. Formulation Development

The development of a PHF follows a systematic pharmaceutical approach to ensure the stability and bioavailability of the active phytoconstituents.

3.1. Design of the Formulation

The formulation can be designed in various dosage forms:

- **Solid dosage forms:** Tablets, capsules, or powders (Churna).
- **Liquid dosage forms:** Syrups, decoctions, or hydro-alcoholic extracts.

3.2. Extraction Methods

To maximize the yield of antilipidemic markers, standardized extraction techniques are employed:

- **Maceration and Percolation:** Traditional methods for crude extracts.
- **Soxhlet Extraction:** Efficient for exhaustive extraction of non-volatile compounds.
- **Supercritical Fluid Extraction (SFE):** A modern, solvent-free technique that preserves heat-sensitive compounds [9].

4. Standardization of Polyherbal Formulations

Standardization is the "bottleneck" of herbal medicine. It ensures that every batch of the formulation contains the same amount of active markers and is free from contaminants.

4.1. Physicochemical Standardization

These parameters define the physical quality of the formulation:

- **Ash Values:** Total ash, acid-insoluble ash, and water-soluble ash indicate the presence of inorganic minerals or earthy matter.
- **Extractive Values:** Determine the amount of active constituents in various solvents.
- **Moisture Content:** Crucial for preventing microbial growth during storage [10].

4.2. Phytochemical Screening

Preliminary screening identifies the presence of alkaloids, glycosides, flavonoids, tannins, and saponins. Quantifying these groups is essential as they are often responsible for the antilipidemic effect.

4.3. Advanced Analytical Techniques

- **HPTLC (High-Performance Thin Layer Chromatography):** Provides a unique "fingerprint" of the polyherbal mixture, allowing for the identification of multiple herbs in a single run [11].
- **HPLC (High-Performance Liquid Chromatography):** Used for the precise quantification of specific markers like guggulsterones or curcuminoids.
- **GC-MS (Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry):** Ideal for analyzing volatile components like those found in garlic or ginger.

5. Pharmacological Evaluation of Antilipidemic Effect

The efficacy of the formulated PHF must be validated through *in vitro* and *in vivo* models.

5.1. *In Vitro* Models

- **HMG-CoA Reductase Inhibition Assay:** Tests if the PHF mimics the action of statins.
- **Pancreatic Lipase Inhibition:** Measures the ability to prevent fat absorption in the gut [12].

5.2. *In Vivo* Models

- **Triton X-100 Induced Hyperlipidemia:** A rapid model to screen for acute antilipidemic activity in rodents.
- **High-Fat Diet (HFD) Model:** Mimics human lifestyle-induced obesity and hyperlipidemia. Parameters measured include TC, TG, LDL, VLDL, HDL, and Atherogenic Index (AI) [13].

6. Stability and Safety Profile

A polyherbal formulation must remain stable throughout its shelf life. **Accelerated Stability Testing** (as per ICH guidelines) involves storing the product at high temperature (40°C) and humidity (75% RH) to predict expiration dates [14].

Safety is evaluated through:

- **Acute and Sub-chronic Toxicity Studies:** Determining the LD_{50} to ensure the formulation is non-toxic to vital organs like the liver and kidneys.
- **Heavy Metal and Pesticide Analysis:** Essential for herbal products to ensure they meet WHO limits for Lead, Arsenic, Cadmium, and Mercury [15].

7. Challenges and Future Perspectives

Despite the therapeutic potential, PHFs face challenges:

1. **Complexity:** The presence of hundreds of phytochemicals makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact mechanism of action.
2. **Bioavailability:** Many antilipidemic markers (like curcumin) have poor intestinal absorption. Nano-polyherbal formulations are being developed to overcome this [16].

3. **Regulatory Hurdles:** Differing global regulations for herbal medicines complicate international marketing.

Future research should focus on **Reverse Pharmacology**, moving from clinical observation back to the lab to refine traditional recipes using modern molecular biology [17].

8. Conclusion

The formulation and standardization of polyherbal antilipidemic agents offer a holistic, effective, and safer alternative to synthetic drugs. By integrating traditional wisdom with modern analytical tools like HPLC and HPTLC, researchers can develop standardized products that provide reproducible clinical results. As the global burden of cardiovascular disease grows, these "green" therapies will play a pivotal role in preventative and therapeutic medicine.

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