

Cytotoxic Activities, Determining Toxin, and Molecular Docking of Ovary Pufferfish (*Tetraodon leiurus*) in Singkarak Lake as Cancer Chemoprevention Candidate

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Abstract

The primary toxin class discovered in freshwater pufferfish is a category of neurotoxins called PSTs (Paralytic shellfish toxins) and pufferfish toxin has been observed to have biological, biochemical, and cytotoxic effects on cancer cell lines. Therefore, it is crucial to determine the cytotoxic activity, toxins present in the ovary of *T. leiurus*, and interaction between ligand (toxin compound) and receptors test. This study used the MTT method in the T47D cell lines, liquid chromatograph-tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS), and analysis of the molecular interaction using molecular docking. The ovary of *T. leiurus* had cytotoxicity on the T47D cell, having an IC₅₀ value of 229.535 µg/ml, and generated a chromatogram with a retention duration of 1.25 min that was similar to the Decarbamoylneosaxitoxin (dcNEO) standard solution. In molecular interactions between the dcNEO ligand to receptors, the lowest ΔG value was -9.29 kcal/mol at the Na_v 1.7 receptor, and the lowest KI value was 1.23 µM at the Mcl-1 receptor. These findings indicate that the ovary of *T. leiurus* is cytotoxic to the T47D cell line and contains dcNEO toxin. It is more stable for the dcNEO ligand to engage with the Na_v 1.7 receptor than with other receptors, and it inhibits the Mcl-1 receptor more potently than with other receptors. These findings indicate that the ovary of *T. leiurus* may be chemotherapy for the prevention of cancer strategy.

Keywords: Buntal fish, Cancer, Decarbamoylneosaxitoxin, Molecular docking, Singkarak lake.

Introduction

Chemoprevention refers to the reversal, inhibition, or prevention of a premalignant lesion's transformation into a malignant form using synthetic or natural substances¹. Natural cancer treatment is effective in preventing malignancies, which can be found in terrestrial or marine sources, as well as in animals, plants, and microbes². Several researchers have researched the use of natural substances as anticancer, the leaf extracts (*Anchusa strigosa*) have shown potential in suppressing the proliferation against various cancer cell lines including MCF-7, T47D, MDA-MB-231, and Caco-

2³. Peptides from the skin of Iraqi frogs (*Rana ridibunda*) exert remarkably selective effects on the cell cultures of leukemia patients and have low toxic effects on human red blood cells⁴.

Pufferfish toxin has also been reported as an anticancer and chemoprevention agent. The ovaries and liver of several pufferfish species are particularly toxic organs⁵. TTX (tetrodotoxin) from the liver extract pufferfish (*T. fluviatilis*) caused apoptosis in HeLa cells⁶. In Singkarak lake, West Sumatra, a toxic pufferfish (*T. leiurus*) is known

locally as Buntal or Jabuih fish⁷. The ovary pufferfish of Singkarak lake (*T. leiurus*) has chemopreventive action in invasive ductal carcinoma (MCF-7 cell lines)⁸, and also the ovary elevated the expression of the promoter of apoptosis, *Bax* gene, and also declined the expression of the inhibitor of apoptosis, *Bcl-2* gene. These findings raise the possibility of alternate chemotherapy for the prevention of cancer using the ovary of *T. leiurus*, Singkarak lake⁹.

In the Mekong River, in pufferfish (*T. leiurus*), STX (saxitoxin) is the dominant toxin, dcSTX (decarbamoysaxitoxin) and NeoSTX (neosaxitoxin) are secondary, and TTX is absent¹⁰. Furthermore, experimental evidence for STX's apoptosis-inducing effect elevated pro-apoptotic and reduced anti-apoptotic gene expression. Additionally, STX had negative impacts on zebrafish embryonic development that may have been brought on by oxidative stress¹¹.

Neurotoxins that are present in pufferfish include TTX and STX¹². STX can affect muscle and nerve conduction and selectively block voltage-gated sodium (Na_v) channels, it may cause death and respiratory paralysis. In terms of molecular weight, toxicity, and intoxication mechanism, it is comparable to TTX¹³. STX is a member of the PST subgroup, the carbamate PST group. PST is divided

into four subgroups from a collection of chemically related tetrahydropurines: decarbamoyl, deoxydecarbamoyl, carbamate, and N-sulfocarbamoyl. Decarbamoyl analogs include dcNEO, and Deoxydecarbamoyl analogs include doGTX2. Carbamate includes NeoSTX, GTX1-4, and STX. The N-sulfocarbamoyl includes C1-C4¹⁴.

The freshwater pufferfish naturally harbors PSTs and selectively accumulates PSTs. Marine pufferfish naturally harbor TTX and selectively accumulate TTX¹⁵. PSTs and TTX are produced by the food that pufferfish consume both marine and freshwater. Marine dinoflagellates produce TTX, PSTs whereas freshwater cyanobacteria produce PSTs¹⁶. Pufferfish toxins may vary between individuals. Geographical niches, bacterial buildup, seasonal fluctuations, and biological food chains all have an impact on these variances¹⁷.

To our knowledge, cytotoxic activity in the T47D cell line, the discovery of a toxin, and molecular docking in the ovary of *T. leiurus*, a pufferfish in Singkarak Lake, have not yet been confirmed and published. Thus, using the ovary of *T. leiurus* as a breast cancer treatment and the evaluation of the effect of the toxin on proteins that play a role in apoptosis (sodium channel and B-cell lymphoma-2 protein family).

Materials and Methods

Collection of pufferfish samples

Pufferfish (*T. leiurus*) samples were taken using nets in August 2021 in Singkarak Lake, located in the Tanah Datar Regency of West Sumatra. After dissecting the pufferfish, the collected ovary and liver were stored in film bottles, briefly placed in liquid nitrogen tubes, and then transferred to a -20°C freezer.

Reagent and standard toxins

Analysis of toxins pufferfish used standard solutions of STX, NeoSTX (National Research Council Canada), dcNEO, GTX1&4 (Cifga Laboratory).

Toxin extraction of the ovary pufferfish (*T. leiurus*)

Toxin extraction from the pufferfish¹⁸. Accurately weigh 5 g of pufferfish ovary and liver, respectively and 0.1 N hydrochloric acid (HCl), 5 ml, was used to homogenize the mixture, for every 500 µl of extract sample, add 25 µl of 30% trichloroacetic acid (TCA), vortex until evenly mixed and centrifuged for five min at 7000×g. After that, add 20 µl of 1.0 M sodium hydroxide (NaOH), and vortex until evenly mixed and centrifuged. Next, the solution was filtered using an Advantec 0.2 m syringe filter. The filtered solution was heated for 10 min and centrifuged at 4 °C for 10 min, 7000×g. In the final stage by adding 0.1% acetic acid to the

supernatant up to a 10 ml capacity, then, a 2 ml sample was put through a syringe filter for analysis.

Cytotoxicity test

Cytotoxicity testing was carried out using the MTT method. The ovary and liver extract were plated in 96-well plates containing T47D cells (10000 cells) at six different concentrations (25; 50; 100; 150; 200; and 250 µg/ml) in DMEM media with three replications and incubated for 24 and 48 h. After discarding the medium in each well, 20 µl of MTT is added and incubated for 4-6 h, then adding 100 µl of DMSO, and the MTT reaction was stopped. Finally, the absorbance of each well is then calculated.

Liquid chromatograph-tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS)

At the National Police Criminal Investigation Agency, Forensic Laboratory Center, Bogor, Indonesia the LC-MS/MS test was conducted. Liquid Chromatography coupled to a triple-quadrupole mass spectrometry (Waters Alliance 2695 Quatro Premiere) was used for detection and quantification and set to condition: column XTerra® MS C18 100 mm x 2,1 mm ID, flow rate 0.3 ml/min, particle size 5 µm, injection volume 5 µL. Acquisition mode: positive polarity, resolution analyzer mode, extended dynamic range. Mobile phases with gradient concentrations are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Chromatographic gradient condition

Time (min)	Water (%)	Methanol (%)
0	97	3
5.00	75	25
6.10	97	3

Results and Discussion

Results

Cytotoxic effect of the ovary and liver of *T. leiurus*

The cytotoxic test objective is to calculate the IC50 value using the linear regression equation. The ovary and liver of *T. leiurus* elevated cytotoxicity in T47D for 24 and 48 h in a concentration- and time-dependent manner. Treatment with 250 µg/ml ovary

Molecular Docking

The pufferfish toxin ligands used in this study were from the PubChem database, using Discovery Studio Visualizer 2021, the Spatial Data File (SDF) format ligand was transformed into a Program database (PDB) file format. The Protein Data Bank database provided the receptors for this study, namely Na_v 1.1 (PDB-ID: 7tdt), Na_v 1.2 (PDB-ID: 4JPZ), Na_v 1.3 (PDB-ID: 7W7F), Na_v 1.4 (PDB-ID: 6AGF), Na_v 1.5 (PDB-ID: 4DJC), Na_v 1.7 (PDB-ID: 6J8H), Bcl-2 (PDB-ID: 4IEH), Bcl-w (PDB-ID: 1O0L), Bcl-XL (PDB-ID: 4QVF), Mcl-1 (PDB-ID: 6QFM), Bak (PDB-ID: 7M5A) and Bax (PDB-ID: 1F16). Using Discovery Studio Visualizer 2021 and AutoDock 4.2.6, the macromolecular crystal structure was generated by eliminating native ligands and water molecules, and polar hydrogen atoms and the Kollman partial charge are added. Docking research using the docking tool provided by AutoDock 4.2.6, and an RMSD value of < 2 Å was obtained by re-docking. A maximum radius of 0.375Å restricts the separation between the receptor's surface, in the x, y, and z axes, 126 Å x 126 Å x 126 Å grid boxes are present and using 10 different conformations of the Lamarckian Genetic Algorithm. PyMOL was used to display the docked complex and BIOVIA Discovery Studio Visualizer for the 2D Interaction of the molecular docking data.

extract reduced the number of cells by 17.988% and 56.764% in 24 and 48 h of incubation, respectively, in Fig. 1(a). At these time points, a liver extract treatment with the same concentration resulted in 17.304% and 33.91%, respectively, in Fig. 1(b).

The morphological differences between control cells and cell induced by the ovary of *T. leiurus* in Fig. 2(a) and 2(b). Control cells displaying live cells

are identified as cells with a flattened epithelium and a distinct membrane or medium border in Fig. 2(a). In contrast, Fig. 2(b) shows that the extract-induced cells had detached from the bottom of the plate and had a spherical cell shape with a torn cell membrane.

The ovary of *T. leiurus* at 48 h of incubation had the highest cytotoxicity on the T47D cell with an IC₅₀ value of 229.535 $\mu\text{g/ml}$. The classification of compounds as cytotoxic included three categories:

active ($\text{IC}_{50} < 100 \mu\text{g/ml}$), moderately active ($100 \mu\text{g/ml} < \text{IC}_{50} < 1000 \mu\text{g/ml}$), and nontoxic ($\text{IC}_{50} > 1000 \mu\text{g/ml}$)¹⁹. To reduce the negative effects of the chemotherapeutic treatment, extracts with moderate activity might be helpful in combination with chemotherapy medications. Moreover, it might stop the carcinogenesis route²⁰. Based on several evaluated variables, the ovary of *T. leiurus* may be used in chemoprevention that can stop the T47D cell from growing and inhibit it.

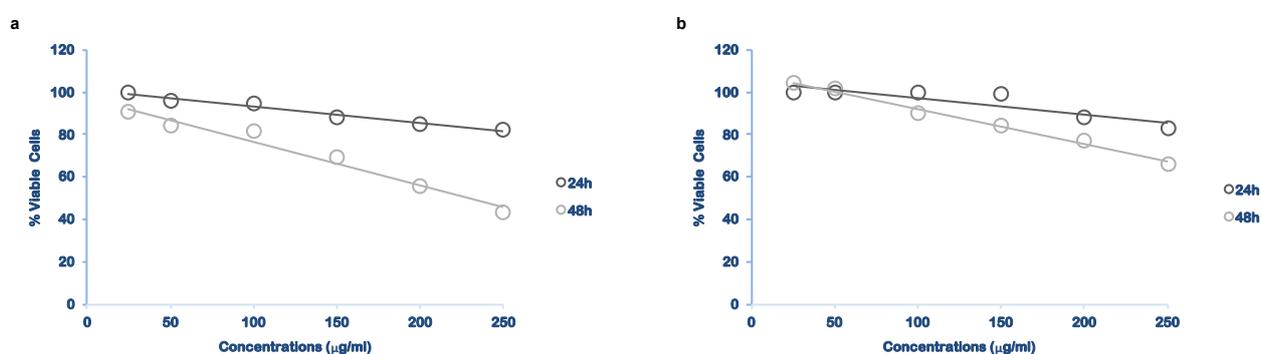


Figure 1. Cytotoxicity in the T47D cell line induced by (a) ovary extract, (b) liver extract of *T. leiurus* with various concentrations for 24 and 48 h

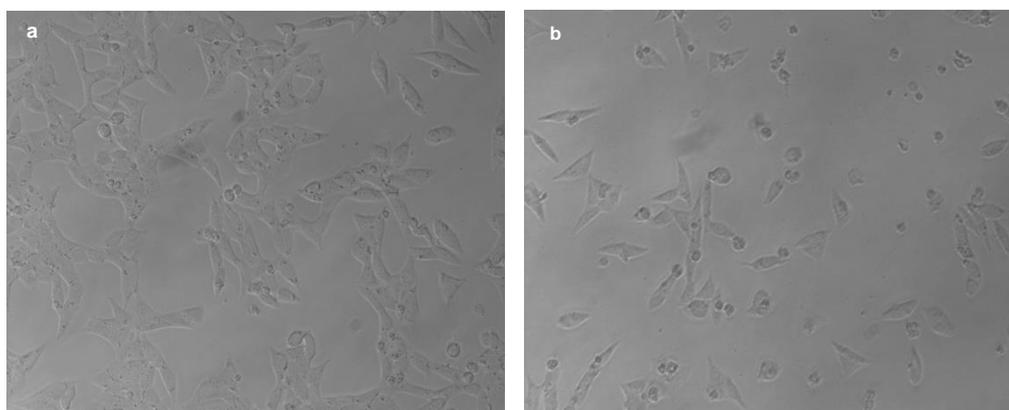


Figure 2. Microscopic the T47D cell line. (a) control cell, (b) induced by the ovary of *T. leiurus* 250 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ for 48 h incubation.

Identification of toxin in the ovary of *T. leiurus*

This study uses LC-MS/MS to identify the toxin pufferfish in the ovary of *T. leiurus* as a chemoprevention. The standard solution is pufferfish toxin from the PSTs subgroup, namely STX, NeoSTX, dcNEO, and GTX1&4.

The standard solution showed that all toxins were separated within 0.50-1.36 min. The retention times

for STX at 1.36 min, NeoSTX at 0.50 and 1.29 min, dcNeo at 1.25 and 1.33 min, and GTX1&4 at 1.29 min are shown in Fig. 3(a and d). As a result, a chromatogram from the ovary of *T. leiurus* matched the dcNEO standard solution exactly at a retention duration of 1.25 min in Fig. 4. The liver extract of *T. leiurus* did not produce identical chromatograms with standard solutions STX, NeoSTX, dcNEO, and GTX1&4.

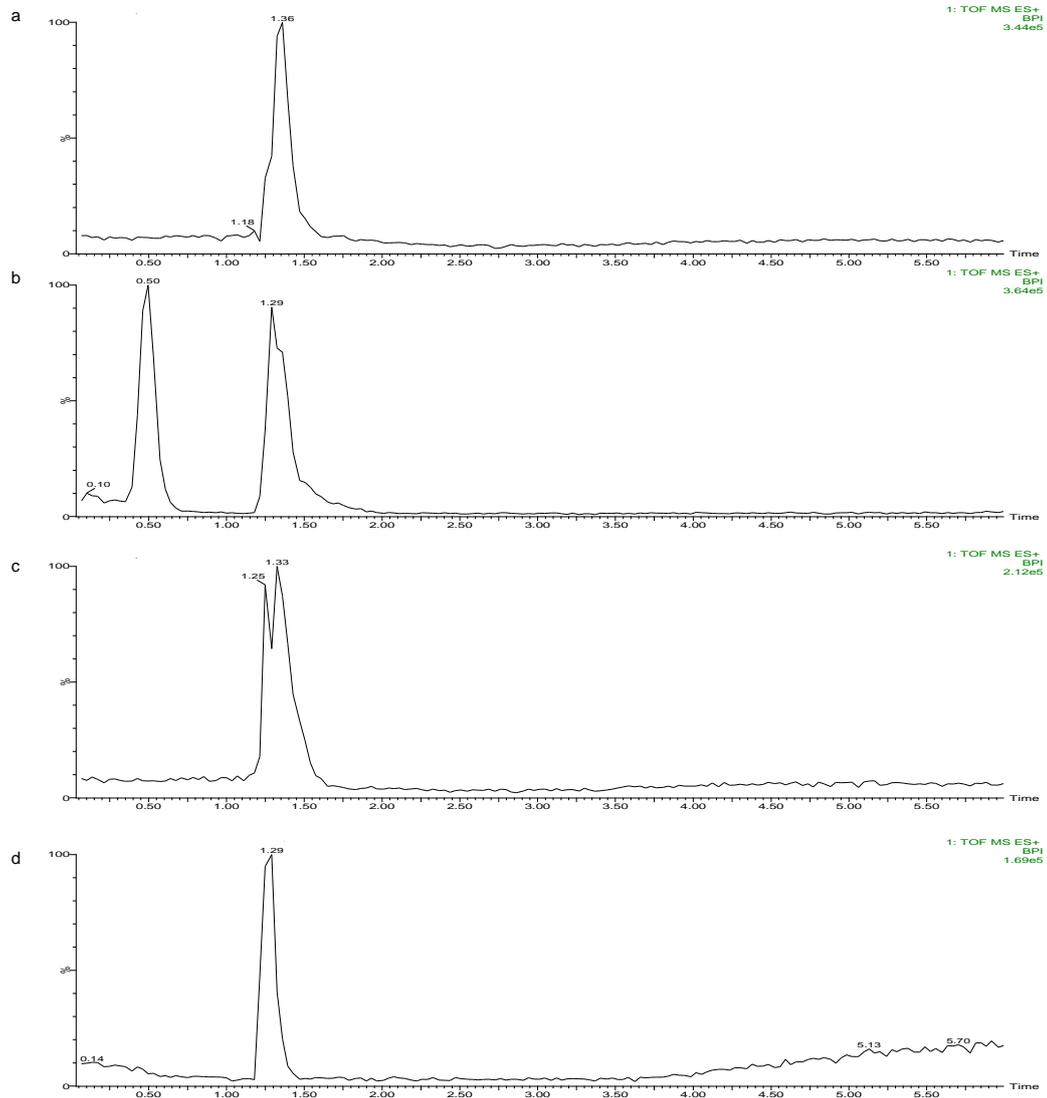


Figure 3. Liquid chromatography–tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) chromatograms of a standard solution. (a) STX, (b) NeoSTX, (c) dcNEO, (d) GTX1&4

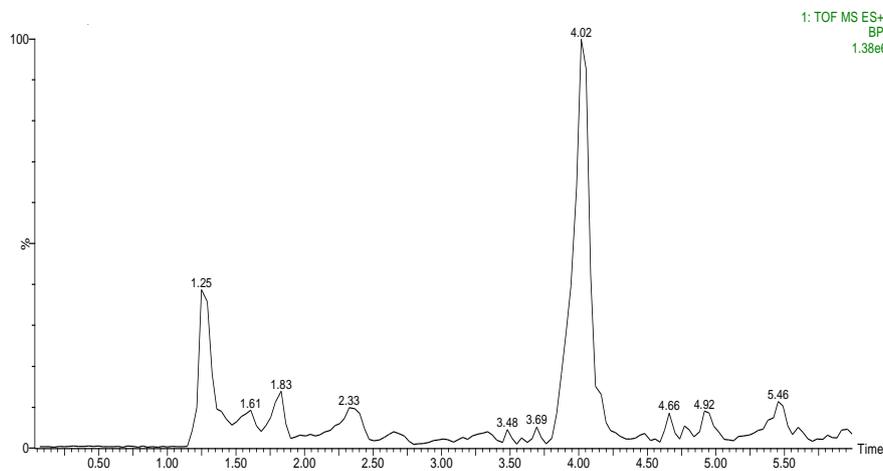


Figure 4. Liquid chromatography–tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) chromatograms of ovary extract of *T.leiurus*

Molecular interaction of the ligand and receptors

As a result of the identification of toxin in the ovary of *T. leiurus*, obtained dcNEO as a ligand for analysis of molecular interaction against receptors test. The receptors used in this study are sodium channel proteins (Na_v 1.1; Na_v 1.2; Na_v 1.3; Na_v 1.4; Na_v 1.5; and Na_v 1.7), apoptotic protein, Bcl-2 protein family; antiapoptotic (Bcl-2; Bcl-w; Bcl-X_L; and Mcl-1) and proapoptotic (Bak and Bax).

All the molecular interaction has RMSD values <2Å. In molecular interactions between the dcNEO

ligand to receptors, the lowest ΔG value was -9.29 kcal/mol at the Na_v1.7 receptor in Table 2 and Fig. 5. According to the ΔG value, the dcNEO ligand's interaction with the Na_v1.7 receptor is more stable than that of other receptors. At the Mcl-1 receptor, the lowest KI value was 1.23 M in Table 2. The Mcl-1 receptor was more effectively inhibited by the interaction of the dcNEO ligand in a small concentration than the other receptors, according to the KI value.

Table 2. Binding affinities (ΔG) and inhibition constants (KI) of dcNEO ligand to receptors

Receptors	ΔG (kcal/mol)	KI (μM)
Na _v 1.1	-8.28	853.93
Na _v 1.2	-5.01	212.42
Na _v 1.3	-7.22	5.08
Na _v 1.4	-8.62	478.3
Na _v 1.5	-7.55	2.91
Na _v 1.7	-9.29	154.02
Bcl-2	-5.98	41.59
Bcl-w	-6.81	10.27
Bcl-X _L	-6.14	31.82
Mcl-1	-3.97	1.23
Bak	-7.19	5.43
Bax	-6.11	33.4

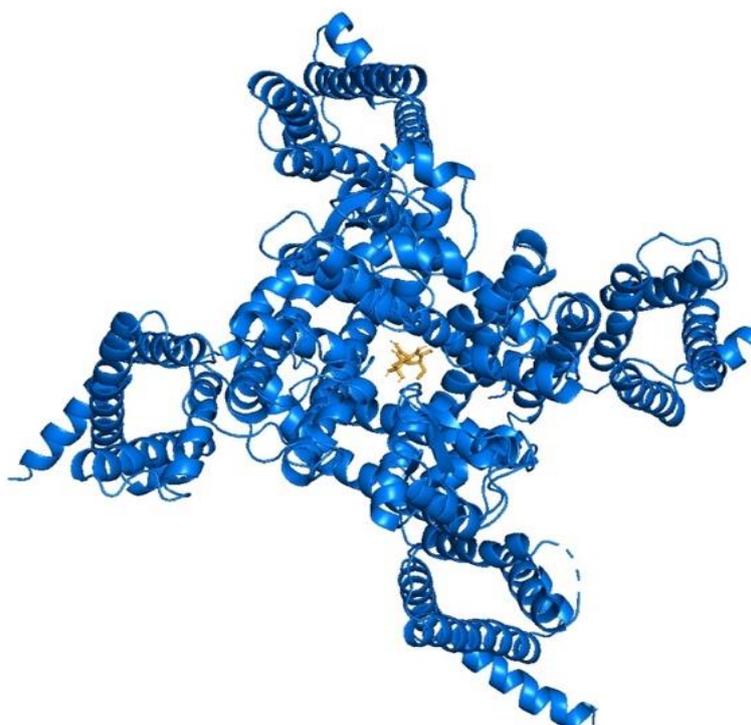


Figure 5. Structure of Na_v1.7 receptor (blue) and its binding site for the dcNEO ligand (yellow)

Hydrogen bonds and hydrophobic interactions are present between the amino acid residues in these interactions in Fig. 6(a and l). Interaction, dcNEO ligand to Na_v 1.1 receptor, has eight conventional hydrogen bonds (Asp382, Glu385; 951 and Phe1431), two carbon-hydrogen bonds (Glu954 and Lys1432), one pi-alkyl hydrophobic Interaction (Phe383), one unfavorable donor-donor bond (Trp384). At Na_v 1.2 receptor, interaction dcNEO ligand has six conventional hydrogen bonds (Asp33; 37 and Thr35). Na_v 1.3 receptor and dcNEO ligand have eight conventional hydrogen bonds (Asp 1421; 1712, Glu386, Gly1710, and Tyr384), one pi-alkyl hydrophobic Interaction (Met1420), and one carbon-hydrogen bond (Gly1713). Interaction ligand to Na_v 1.4 receptor has eight conventional hydrogen bonds (Arg756, Asp1539, Glu761; 764, and Tyr 407). For the Na_v 1.5 receptor, the dcNEO ligand has five conventional hydrogen bonds (Glu88;85). At Na_v 1.7 receptor has eight conventional hydrogen bonds (Asp1701, Glu364;930, Gly1407, Phe1405) and two carbon-hydrogen bonds (Glu927 and Lys1406).

Interaction dcNEO ligand to Bcl-2 protein family, for antiapoptotic, at Bcl-2 receptor has six

conventional hydrogen bonds (Asp70, Gln77, and Glu73;95). At Bcl-w receptor has six conventional hydrogen bonds (Asp16; 40, Glu35, Pro33), one pi-alkyl hydrophobic Interaction (His43), and one carbon-hydrogen bond (Ala12). Interaction with Bcl-X_L has one carbon-hydrogen bond (His177) and six conventional hydrogen bonds (Asp176, Glu124, Trp169, and Tyr120). dcNEO ligand interaction with Mcl-1 receptor has six conventional hydrogen bonds (Asp296, Pro289, Thr293 and Tyr175), and one carbon-hydrogen bond (Glu292).

Proapoptotic protein interaction with dcNEO ligand, Bak receptor has five conventional hydrogen bonds (Asp30, Gln66, Ser69, and Pro67) and one alkyl hydrophobic interaction (Met71). The Bax receptor has two alkyl hydrophobic interactions (Ala183 and Val180) and seven conventional hydrogen bonds (Asp98; 102 and Ser184).

Based on the ligand-receptor interaction, the dcNEO ligand has the greatest hydrogen bonds with the Na_v 1.5 and Na_v 1.7 receptors, making this association more stable than that with other receptors.

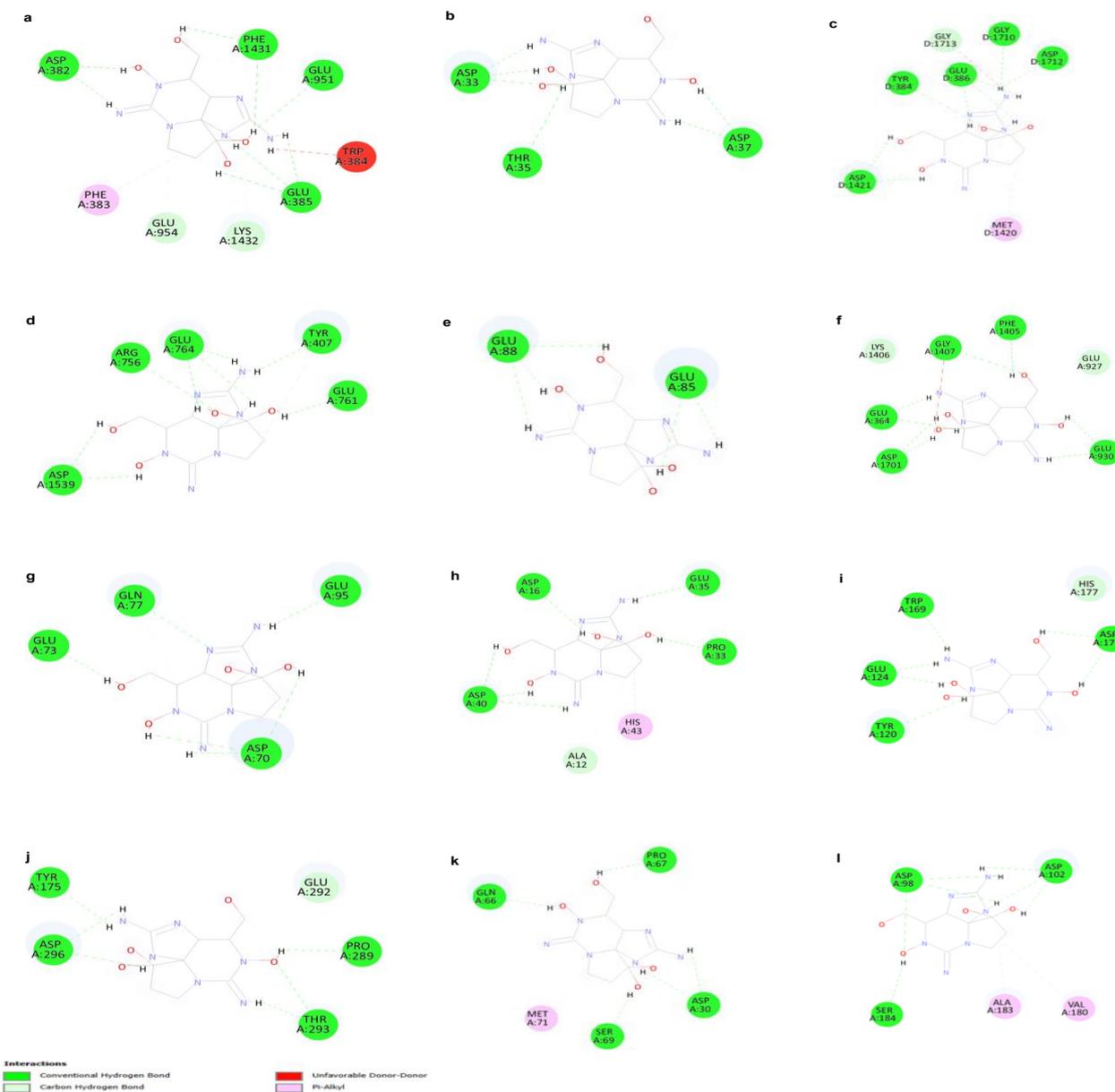


Figure 6. The interactions of dcNEO ligand with receptors. (a) Na_v 1.1 (b) Na_v 1.2 (c) Na_v 1.3 (d) Na_v 1.4 (e) Na_v 1.5 (f) Na_v 1.7 (g) Bcl-2 (h) Bcl-w (i) Bcl-X_L (j) Mcl-1 (k) Bak (l) Bax

Discussion

The freshwater and marine pufferfish are endowed with contrasting TTX/PST selectivity¹⁵. In *Takifugu pardalis* and *Takifugu niphohes* as marine pufferfish, the two types of pufferfish samples detected TTX and PST components (NEO, dcGTX2, dcGTX3, C1, C2, GTX1, GTX2, GTX3, GTX4, and GTX5)¹⁸. Others reported that *T. pardalis* had a few amounts of dcSTX, and in *P. suvattii*, freshwater pufferfish had a few amounts of TTX¹⁵. PST components (GTX2, GTX3, STX,

dcSTX, dcGTX2, and dcGTX3) were found in prior research of two freshwater pufferfish species from Bangladesh (*T. cutcutia* and *Chelonodon patoca*)²¹.

PSTs can be structurally altered by different biological agents, leading to the production of brand-new PST that cannot be produced by cyanobacteria or dinoflagellates by themselves. Moreover, PSTs that are less harmful may be changed into harmful analogs or the other way

around²². On the other hand, it has been discovered that *Placopecten magellanicus* (homogenate of the scallop) converts the GTXs and neoSTX to STX by reducing the O22-sulfate and N1-hydroxyl groups, respectively²³ and STX is the most common toxin in freshwater pufferfish, followed by dcSTX and NeoSTX¹⁰. If the selective absorption includes internal component conversion of the toxin and/or pufferfish tissues, or whether the composition of the toxin corresponds to that of harmful prey organisms, more research is required to answer these questions¹².

Pufferfish toxin content varies between individuals and tissues, and the underlying molecular pathways are still under investigation¹². A more thorough examination of the expression, distribution, and use of PSTBP/TBT-bp2 isoforms in conjunction with TTX/STX distribution patterns is required¹⁰. PSTBP and its analogs are caused for the accumulation of TTX in toxic pufferfish²⁴, and suggests that in freshwater pufferfish, TBT-bp2 is involved in STX accumulation¹².

Guanidinium alkaloids are a class of neurotoxins that includes STX and TTX analogs that have a strong affinity for the Nav channel and ion flux blockage abilities²⁵. Inhibition of Nav channel

Conclusion

The ovary of *T. leiurus* is cytotoxic to the T47D cell line and contains decarbamoylneosaxitoxin (dcNEO) toxin. The molecular interaction of the dcNEO ligand with the Nav 1.7 receptor is more

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Author's Declaration

- Conflicts of Interest: None.
- We hereby confirm that all the Figures and Tables in the manuscript are ours. Furthermore, any Figures and images, that are ours, have been

expression in astrocytoma cells caused a reduced Na⁺ concentration²⁶ and an elevator in the Ca²⁺ concentration from intracellular storage²⁷. Ca²⁺ has a crucial part in intrinsic apoptosis, hence an excessive accumulation in the mitochondria can result in apoptosis. It was discovered that many proteins regulate the Ca²⁺ by controlling Ca²⁺ flux between the endoplasmic reticulum (ER) and the mitochondria²⁸.

Pufferfish toxin (TTX/STX) is a cytotoxic compound⁶ that can trigger the development of apoptosis mechanisms and its application in the treatment of cancer²⁹. STX increases reactive oxygen species (ROS)¹¹, which also activates P53 and JNK, and the promoter of apoptosis such as Bax, Noxa, and Puma, and can interfere with the activity of the inhibitor of apoptosis including Bcl-2 and Bcl-X_L proteins. In addition, cardiolipin oxidation, which is a result of ROS, releases and allows cytochrome c to enter the cytosol. Procaspase 9, cytochrome c, and APAF-1 are the cause of caspase 9 activations³⁰. Following the activation of the initiator caspase 9, the executioner's caspases are triggered, which causes a feedback stimulation of the initiator caspases and direct substrate proteolysis, both of which end in cell death (apoptosis)³¹.

stable than other receptors and was more effective in inhibiting the Mcl-1 receptor than other receptors.

permitting us to do fieldwork and lab work. Finally, we appreciate the participation of Andalas University's Genetic and Biomolecular Laboratory students who helped us with sample collection and lab work.

included with the necessary permission for republication, which is attached to the manuscript.

- Ethical Clearance: The project was approved by the local ethical committee in Andalas

University.

Author's Contribution Statement

D.I.R, D.H.T, and M.M.H. were involved in the conception and planning of the research. M.M.H. has performed the experiments. D.I.R, D.H.T, and M.M.H. developed and designed the experiment,

and also evaluated the data, and wrote the report. D.I.R, and D.H.T. supervised the work, revising and approving the paper. The findings were discussed and the text was reviewed by all authors.

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الأنشطة السامة للخلايا، وتحديد السموم، والالتحام الجزيئي لسمكة المبيض المنتفخة (*Tetraodon leiurus*) في بحيرة سينغارك كمرشح للوقاية الكيماوية من السرطان

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الخلاصة

فئة السموم الأولية المكتشفة في أسماك المياه العذبة المنتفخة هي فئة من السموم العصبية تسمى PSTs (سموم المحار المشلولة) وقد لوحظ أن سموم الأسماك المنتفخة لها تأثيرات بيولوجية وكيميائية حيوية وسمية للخلايا على خطوط الخلايا السرطانية. ولذلك، فمن الأهمية بمكان تحديد النشاط السامة للخلايا، والسموم الموجودة في المبيض من T. ليوروس، والتفاعل بين يجند (مركب السم) واختبار المستقبلات. استخدمت هذه الدراسة طريقة MTT في خطوط الخلايا T47D، ومقياس الطيف الكتلي السائل بالترادف (LC-MS/MS)، وتحليل التفاعل الجزيئي باستخدام الالتحام الجزيئي. كان لمبيض *T. leirus* سمية خلوية في خلية T47D، حيث بلغت قيمة IC50 229.535 ميكروغرام/مل، وأنتج مخططاً كروماتوغرافياً بمدة استبقاء قدرها 1.25 دقيقة كان مشابهاً للمحلول القياسي (Decarbamoylneosaxitoxin (dcNEO). في التفاعلات الجزيئية بين يجند dcNEO والمستقبلات، كانت أدنى قيمة ΔG هي -9.29 كيلو كالوري/مول عند مستقبل Nav 1.7، وكانت أدنى قيمة KI 1.23 ميكرومتر عند مستقبل Mcl-1. تشير هذه النتائج إلى أن مبيض *T. leirus* سام للخلايا لخط الخلايا T47D ويحتوي على توكسين dcNEO. يعد تفاعل dcNEO ligand مع مستقبل Nav 1.7 أكثر استقراراً مقارنة بالمستقبلات الأخرى، كما أنه يثبط مستقبل Mcl-1 بشكل أكثر فعالية من المستقبلات الأخرى. تشير هذه النتائج إلى أن مبيض *T. leirus* قد يكون علاجاً كيميائياً لاستراتيجية الوقاية من السرطان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أسماك البونثال، السرطان، ديكاربامويل نيوساكسيبتوكسين، الالتحام الجزيئي، بحيرة سينغارك.