

**Pharmacokinetic study of astragaloside IV, a saponin marker of Astragali Radix,
and its intestinal bacterial metabolites in the rat**

By

Ruina Zhou



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PHARMACOKINETIC STUDY OF ASTRAGALOSIDE IV, A SAPONIN
MARKER OF ASTRAGALI RADIX, AND ITS INTESTINAL BACTERIAL
METABOLITES IN THE RAT

by
Ruina Zhou

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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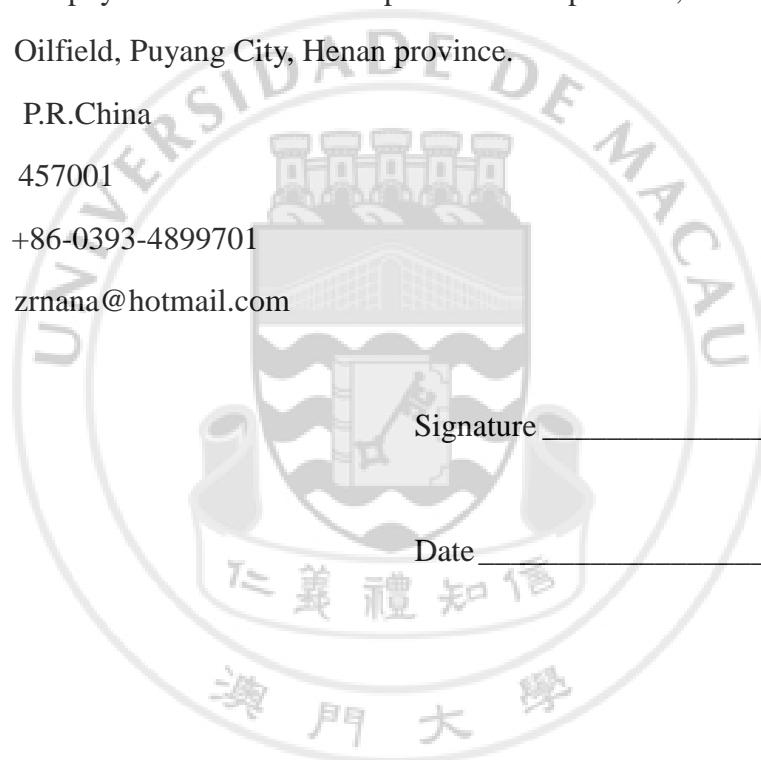
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碩士學位論文

中藥黃芪皂苷類成分黃芪甲苷及其腸道菌代謝產物的藥代動力學研究

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University of Macau

Abstract

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by

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Keywords: Astragali Radix; astragaloside IV; cycloastragenol; intestinal bacteria;; pharmacokinetics; metabolism; regio-selectivity.

As a traditional Chinese herbal medicine, Astragali Radix is widely used in clinic as well as function food nowadays in China and other Asian countries. Astragaloside IV (AIV), of which the pharmacology reports are commonly seen, is the most abundant saponin among all astragalosides, and chosen to be a marker compound in Astragali Radix. It is well accepted intestinal bacteria plays an important role in determining the absorption and systemic exposures of most saponin glycosides after oral intake. The aglycone of AIV, cycloastragenol, was reported with a moderate telomerase-increasing activity and showed perspective in the treatment of degenerating diseases and immunodeficiency diseases, which is consistent with the traditional use of Astragali Radix. For these reasons, we hypothesize that CA might be the active form after the oral administration of AIV. In this study, the intestinal bacterial metabolism of AIV and the *in vivo* pharmacokinetic profiles of AIV and its

intestinal bacterial metabolites including CA were characterized for the first time.

For investigation on intestinal metabolism and disposition of AIV and CA, intestinal bacteria metabolism model and *in vitro* hepatic subcellular fractions metabolism model were employed in the present study. When incubated anaerobically with rat intestinal bacteria, AIV generated five metabolites with three (monoglycosides brachyoside B and cyclogaleginoside B, the aglycone cycloastragenol (CA)) via stepwise deglycosylation and two from further isomerization (3-*epi*-cycloastragenol, CA-iso) and dehydrogenation (CA-2H) of CA. For the further *in vivo* study of AIV and CA, the plasma concentration of the parent compounds and according metabolites were determined on S.D. rat model. When AIV was orally administered at 40 mg/kg to the rat, the intestinal metabolites CA and CA-iso presented as main components in the plasma following AIV and their $AUC_{0-\infty}$ values were 88.60 ± 9.66 (CA), 179.06 ± 28.53 (CA-iso) and 452.28 ± 43.33 nM·h (AIV). AIV kept intact in rat liver microsomes, while CA underwent a certain extent phase I metabolism and produced several products via oxidation. CA-2H was a predominant form in feces but not detected in urine and plasma. This agreed well with rapid hepatic metabolism of CA-2H to form CA and CA-iso and reversible conversions between CA-2H and CA/CA-iso by intestinal bacteria. Very interestingly, CA-iso was also detected in rat plasma after intravenous injection of CA (2.5 mg/kg). The AUC_{0-t} of CA-iso was 166.10 ± 36.70 nM·h, accounting for about 24% of that of the parent compound (688.32 ± 73.38 nM·h). When CA was dosed orally at 25 mg/kg, both CA and its isomer existed in rat plasma with AUC_{0-t} of 1241.17 ± 141.64 nM·h and 628.55 ± 84.88 nM·h respectively. The systemic exposure of CA-iso was about half (53%) that of CA. Contrasting to the results of hepatic metabolism *in vitro*, no other phase I or II metabolites were detected in the plasma after the intravenous or oral administration of CA, except tiny amount of CA-2H. Moreover, a positional preference of intestinal bacteria-mediated deglycosylation at the C-3 position rather than the C-6 position of saponin compounds was evidenced in a preliminary structure-metabolism relationship study with AIV and several other compounds.

Both *in vivo* and *in vitro* data obtained in the present study support a crucial role of gut bacterial conversion of AIV in traditional application of Astragali herb and warrant further investigational emphasis on AIV metabolites formed by gut bacteria.



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摘要

中藥黃芪皂苷類成分黃芪甲苷及其腸道菌代謝產物的藥代動力學研究

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關鍵字：黃芪，黃芪甲苷，環黃芪醇，腸道細菌代謝，肝微粒體，脫氫，異構化，藥代動力學，位點選擇性。

傳統中藥黃芪，具有具有補氣固表、利水退腫、托毒排膿、生肌等功，如今廣泛用於臨床和食品。黃芪的皂苷類成分，被確認為一類重要的活性物質，黃芪甲苷 (astragaloside IV, AIV) 作為代表，更是成為了中國藥典規定的黃芪藥材的質控指標，並同時在臨床上有多種應用。眾所周知，皂苷類成分口服後會經歷脫糖等腸道系統代謝反應，代謝產物往往能同時被吸收發揮效力。黃芪甲苷的苷元——環黃芪醇 (cycloastragenol, CA)，近年來被揭示出可以提高端粒酶活性，在促癒合、治療退行性疾病、抗衰老和免疫疾病方面具有廣闊前景，雖在藥材中含量極低，卻又與中藥黃芪的傳統應用相吻合。因此，環黃芪醇是否同時是黃芪甲苷及其他黃芪皂苷口服後在體內的起效物質需要驗證。同時環黃芪醇自身的藥代動力學也非常缺乏相關報導。本研究旨在通過結合體外模型和整體動物研究，揭示以黃芪甲苷為代表的黃芪皂苷類成分在體內的腸道代謝，原

藥和代謝產物在體內的藥代動力學行為和機制。

本研究利用體外腸道細菌孵育模型系統研究了黃芪甲苷的腸道細菌代謝路徑。黃芪甲苷與大鼠或人的腸道系統共孵育時，共檢測並鑒定出五種代謝產物，其中三個為黃芪甲苷脫糖分別脫糖的產物，兩個為環黃芪醇脫氫產物（CA-2H）或 3 位羥基差向異構化產物（CA-iso）。在此基礎上利用體外肝代謝模型推測原藥和各個腸道菌代謝產物在體內的代謝情況。在體外肝代謝研究中，AIV 未發現明顯的一相或二相反應，CA 則代謝生成大量氧化產物，CA-2H 可被代謝生成 CA 和 CA-iso。

SD 大鼠口服 AIV (40mg/kg) 後，除原藥外血漿內同時檢到 CA 及 CA-iso，二者 AUC 分別為 88.60 ± 9.66 nM·h 和 179.06 ± 28.53 nM·h，AUC 之和達到了原藥 AIV 的 AUC (452.28 ± 43.33 nM·h) 的 59%。尿液中只檢測到原藥 AIV，未檢測到其他各代謝產物。體外腸道細菌孵育模型中檢出的五個代謝產物在糞便裡均有檢出。

CA 單獨靜注 SD 大鼠 (2.5mg/kg) 後，CA-iso 作為主要的代謝產物出現在大鼠血漿中，其 AUC_{0-t} (166.10 ± 36.70 nM·h) 達到了原藥 CA 的 AUC_{0-t} (688.32 ± 73.38 nM·h) 的 24%。而大鼠口服 CA (25 mg/kg) 後，血漿中主要的藥物存在形式依然為 CA ($AUC_{0-t} = 1241.17 \pm 141.64$ nM·h) 與 CA-iso ($AUC_{0-t} = 628.55 \pm 84.88$ nM·h)。除 CA-iso 和 CA-2H (極少量) 外，未有其他的一相和二相代謝產物在靜注組或口服組的血漿或尿液中檢出。

此外通過對體外人腸內菌系統的考察得到了孵育過程中細菌數量的變化趨勢，並證實了腸道細菌在對於四環三萜類皂苷成分的代謝上存在位點選擇性。

通過本研究可以證實，腸道細菌代謝在黃芪皂苷的口服藥動學中發揮了至關

重要的作用。腸道菌代謝產物與原藥一起進入體內歷經複雜的分佈代謝排泄過程，並共同構成體內的起效形式。而口服 CA 或 AIV 後，CA-iso 在體內較高的系統暴露量，則是由腸道細菌代謝，體內肝代謝，及 CA-iso 自身較差的腎排泄共同造成。本研究對黃芪皂苷的藥代動力學研究，生物標誌物的選擇，日後黃芪皂苷的藥理學研究方向和環黃芪醇的臨床應用均提供了指導和參考。



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	IV
ABSTRACT.....	V
摘要.....	VIII
TABLE OF CONTENTS	XI
LIST OF FIGURES	XV
LIST OF TABLES	XVIII
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	XIX
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 ASTRAGALI RADIX	1
1.2 ASTRAGALOSIDE IV.....	4
1.3 INTESTINAL BACTERIAL METABOLISM.....	5
1.4 CYCLOASTRAGENOL.....	5
1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY	6
CHAPTER 2 METABOLISM OF ASTRAGALOSIDE IV AND CYCLOASTRAGENOL BY RAT INTESTINAL BACTERIA	7
2.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS	7
2.1.1 Chemicals and reagents.....	7
2.1.2 Preparation of rat intestinal bacteria	7
2.1.3 Preparation and structural identification of CA-2H.....	8
2.1.4 Metabolism of AIV, CA and CA-2H by rat intestinal bacteria	8
2.1.5 Quantitative determination of AIV and CA in vitro.....	9
2.1.6 LC-MS/MS analysis.....	9
2.1.7 NMR analysis of CA and CA-2H	11
2.1.8 Data analysis	11
2.2 RESULTS	11

2.2.1 HPLC-MS/MS analysis of AIV and CA	11
2.2.2 Conversion of AIV by rat intestinal bacteria	14
2.2.3 NMR analysis of CA-2H	16
2.2.4 Rat intestinal bacterial biotransformation of CA and CA-2H.....	18
2.2.5 Time course of AIV metabolism by rat intestinal bacteria	21
2.3 DISCUSSION.....	22
CHAPTER 3 HEPATIC METABOLISM OF ASTRAGALOSIDE IV AND ITS INTESTINAL BACTERIAL METABOLITES IN THE RAT	25
3.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	25
3.1.1 Chemicals and reagents.....	25
3.1.2 Metabolism of AIV and CA by rat liver microsomes	25
3.1.3 Phase I metabolism of CA-2H in rat liver microsomes and S9	26
3.1.6 LC-MS/MS analysis.....	26
3.2 RESULTS	27
3.2.1 Metabolism of AIV and CA in rat liver microsomes	27
3.2.2 Metabolism of CA-2H in rat liver microsomes and S9	28
3.3 DISCUSSION.....	30
CHAPTER 4 IN VIVO PHARMACOKINETIC STUDY OF ASTRAGALOSIDE IV IN THE RAT	32
4.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	32
4.1.1 Chemicals and reagents.....	32
4.1.2 In vivo pharmacokinetic study	32
4.1.3 Determination of AIV and CA in in vivo pharmacokinetic study	33
4.1.4 LC-MS/MS analysis.....	34
4.1.7 Data analysis	34
4.2 RESULTS	35
4.2.1 In vivo pharmacokinetics of AIV.....	35
4.3 DISCUSSION.....	37

CHAPTER 5 IN VIVO PHARMACOKINETIC STUDY OF CYCLOASTRAGENOL IN RATS	40
5.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS	40
5.1.1 Chemicals and reagents.....	40
5.1.2 In vivo pharmacokinetics of Cycloastragenol.....	40
5.1.3 Determination of CA in in vivo pharmacokinetic study	41
5.1.4 LC-MS/MS analysis.....	42
5.1.5 Data analysis	42
5.2 RESULTS	43
5.2.1 Pharmacokinetic features of CA and its metabolites following intravenous administration in rats.....	43
5.2.2 Pharmacokinetic profile of CA and its metabolites following oral administration in rats.....	45
5.3 DISCUSSION.....	48
CHAPTER 6 PRELIMINARY STRUCTURE-METABOLISM RELATIONSHIP STUDY OF AIV AND ANALOGS IN HUMAN INTESTINAL BACTERIA.....	51
6.1 MATERIALS AND METHODS	51
6.1.1 Chemicals and reagents.....	51
6.1.2 Preparation of human intestinal bacteria.....	51
6.1.2 Metabolism of AIV by human intestinal bacteria	51
6.1.3 Regio-selective metabolism of ginsenosides by human intestinal bacteria	52
6.1.4 Alterations of bacterial density in in vitro intestinal bacterial	53
6.1.5 Data statistics	54
6.2 RESULTS	54
6.2.1 Human intestinal bacterial metabolism of AIV	54
6.2.2 Regio-selective metabolism of ginsenosides by human intestinal bacteria	55
6.2.3 Alterations of bacterial density in in vitro intestinal bacterial biotransformation study	57
6.3 DISSCUTION	59

CHAPTER 7 OVERALL CONCLUSION	62
REFERENCE.....	64
PUBLICATIONS AND AWARDS.....	69



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. 1 Structures of saponins in Radix Astragali	3
Figure 1. 2 Structure of cycloastragenol	6
Figure 2. 1 Representative MRM chromatograms of incubates of AIV with pooled rat intestinal bacteria for 0, 12, 24, 96h, and controls reactions without drug (-) or bacteria (-) for 24h.....	13
Figure 2. 2 Chemical structures of astragaloside IV (AIV), cycloastragenol (CA) and their MS ¹ and MS ² mass spectra.	14
Figure 2. 3 MS ² spectra of intestinal bacterial metabolites of AIV. M1: brachyoside B; M2: cyclogaleginoside B; M3: cycloastragenol (CA); M4: 3- <i>epi</i> -cycloastragenol (CA-iso); M5: 20R,24S-epoxy-6 α ,16 β ,25-trihydroxy-9,19-cycloartan-3-one (CA-2H).....	15
Figure 2. 4 Representative MRM chromatograms of incubates of CA with pooled rat intestinal bacteria. M4: 3- <i>epi</i> -cycloastragenol (CA-iso); M5: 20R,24S-epoxy-6 α ,16 β ,25-trihydroxy-9,19-cycloartan- 3-one (CA-2H). M6: unknown.....	19
Figure 2. 5 Representative MRM chromatograms of incubates of M5 with pooled rat intestinal bacteria. M4: 3- <i>epi</i> -cycloastragenol (CA-iso); M5: 20R,24S-epoxy-6 α ,16 β ,25-trihydroxy-9,19-cycloartan- 3-one (CA-2H). M6: unknown.....	20
Figure 2. 6 Proposed metabolic pathways of AIV in rat intestinal bacteria. M1: brachyoside B; M2: cyclogaleginoside B; M3: cycloastragenol (CA); M4: 3- <i>epi</i> -cycloastragenol(CA-iso); M5: 20R,24S-epoxy-6 α ,16 β ,25-trihydroxy-9,19- cycloartan-3-one (CA-2H).....	21
Figure 2. 7 The time-course of AIV metabolism by rat intestinal bacteria. Left: concentration-time plots; Right: peak area ratio-time plots. M1: brachyoside B; M2: cyclogaleginoside B; M3: cycloastragenol (CA); M4: 3- <i>epi</i> -cycloastragenol (CA-iso); M5: 20R,24S-epoxy-6 α ,16 β ,25-trihydroxy-9,19-cycloartan-3-one (CA-2H).....	22

Figure 3. 1 Selective ion chromatograms of CA metabolites formed by rat liver microsomes as revealed by HPLC/MS (m/z 529 ($[CA+O+Na]^+$) and 527($[CA-2H+O+Na]^+$)).	28
Figure 3.2 Representative MRM chromatograms of incubates of CA-2H in rat liver microsomes in the presence of NADH or/and NADPH. CA: cycloastragenol; CA-iso: 3- <i>epi</i> -cycloastragenol; CA-2H: 20R,24S-epoxy-6 α ,16 β ,25- trihydroxy-9,19-cycloartan- 3-one	29
Figure 3. 3 Representative MRM chromatograms of incubates of CA-2H in rat liver S9 in the presence of NADH or/and NADPH. CA: cycloastragenol; CA-iso: 3- <i>epi</i> -cycloastragenol; CA-2H: 20R,24S-epoxy-6 α ,16 β ,25-trihydroxy-9,19- cycloartan- 3-one	30
Figure 4. 1 Representative MRM chromatograms of rat plasma (A), urine (B) and fecal (C) samples collected at 8h, 0-8h, and 8-16h after oral dosing of AIV at 40 mg/kg to the rat.	35
Figure 4. 2 Plasma concentration-time plots (mean \pm S.E.M) of AIV, its main metabolites CA and CA-iso after oral dosing of AIV at 40mg/kg to rats (n=5).	36
Figure 5. 1 Representative MRM chromatograms of rat plasma samples collected at 30 min after intravenous administration of CA at 2.5 mg/kg (A) and 4 h after oral administration of CA at 25 mg/kg (B).	43
Figure 5. 2 Plasma concentration-time plots (mean \pm S.E.M) of CA, its main metabolites CA isomer 3- <i>epi</i> -cycloastragenol and CA-2H after intravenous dosing of CA at 2.5 mg/kg to rats (n=5).	45
Figure 5. 3 Representative MRM chromatograms of rat urine (A) and fecal (B) samples collected over 0-12h after oral dosing of CA at 25 mg/kg to the rat.	46
Figure 5. 4 Plasma concentration-time plots (mean \pm S.E.M) of CA, its main metabolites CA-iso and CA-2H after oral dosing of CA at 25 mg/kg to rats (n=5).	47
Figure 6. 1 The time-course of AIV metabolism by human intestinal bacteria. Left:	

concentration-time plots; Right: peak area ratio-time plots. AIV-Xyl: brachyoside B; AIV-Glc: cyclogaleginoside B; CA: cycloastragenol; CA-iso: 3-epi-cycloastragenol; CA-2H: 20R,24S-epoxy-6 α ,16 β ,25-trihydroxy-9,19-cycloartan-3-one.....54

Figure 6. 2 Structure of Ginsenoside Rh1, F1, Rh2, Protopanaxatriol and Protopanaxadiol.....55

Figure 6. 3 Representative HPLC-UV chromatograms of incubates of ginsenosides (Rh1, or Rh2, or F1) with pooled rat intestinal bacteria.(1: Rh1; 2: F1; 3:PPT; 4: Rh2; 5: PPD)56

Figure 6. 4 Time course of ginsenosides Rh2 (A), Rh1 (B), and F1 (C) elimination and their aglycones formation in human intestinal bacteria, and the percentages of Rh1, F1 and Rh2 remaining with incubation time prolonged (D).....57

Figure 6. 5 Calibration curve of OD600 and cell density in BHI medium obtained from the diluted human intestinal bacterial solutions.....58

Figure 6. 6 Cell density-time curve of human intestinal bacterial incubation system.....59

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2. 1 Mass spectrometric conditions for AIV, its metabolites and internal standards.	10
Table 2. 2 ¹³ C-NMR spectral data for cycloastragenol (CA) and its dehydrogenated metabolite CA-2H.	17
Table 4. 1 Pharmacokinetics parameters of AIV, CA and CA-iso after oral administration of AIV at 40 mg/kg to the rat (mean ± S.E.M, n=5).....	37
Table 5. 1 Pharmacokinetics parameters of CA and CA-iso after intravenous (2.5 mg/kg) and oral administration (25 mg/kg) of CA to the rat (mean ± S.E.M, n=5).....	48



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIV	astragaloside IV
AIV-xyl	brachyoside B
AIV-glc	cyclogaleginoside B
CA	cycloastragenol
CA-iso	isomer of CA, 3- <i>epi</i> -cycloastragenol;
CA-2H	dehydrogenated product of CA, 20R,24S- epoxy-6 α ,16 β ,25-trihydroxy-9,19-cycloartan -3-one
HPLC	High performance liquid chromatography
IS	Internal standard
RLM	Rat liver microsome
P _{app}	Apparent permeability coefficient

