

## Introduction

### 1.1 Significance and approaches to drug discovery from natural products

From the ancient times natural products have been recognized as a source of medicines worldwide for treating and preventing human diseases [1-5]. They have been derived from various sources including plants, microorganisms, marine organisms, vertebrates and invertebrates [6-8]. Despite major scientific and technological progress in combinatorial chemistry, drugs derived from natural products still make an enormous contribution to drug discovery today, and about half of the pharmaceuticals in use today are derived from natural products [6,9,10]. Natural sources possess chemical diversity; therefore, they serve as an important reservoir of bioactive leads in the development of new drugs by providing novel templates, as well as patterns for structural modifications to produce more potent and safer drugs [4,10,11].

Natural products and their derivatives represent over 60% of all drugs clinically used world-wide whereas natural products from medicinal plants alone contribute to 25% of the total drugs [12-15]. Natural products and related drugs are reportedly used, for example, as antibacterial, anticancer, anticoagulant, antiparasitic and immunosuppressant agents to treat 87% of all categorized human diseases [4,6,7,12,16]. More than 28% of new chemical entities introduced into the market are derived from natural products [17,18].

More than 100 compounds specifically, anti cancer and anti-infective agents, which are derived from natural products, are undergoing clinical trials at present and at least 100 natural products-derived compounds (primarily plant or microbial sources) are in preclinical development stage [19].

The value of natural products can be assessed using 3 criteria- (i) the rate of introduction of new chemical entities of wide structural diversity, including serving as templates for semi-synthetic and total synthetic modification [6,20], (ii) the number of diseases treated or prevented by these substances [21], and (iii) their frequency of use in the treatment of various diseases [20].

Natural products also serve as pharmacological tools, for example digitoxin from fox glove helped to elucidate the role of the sodium-potassium-ATPase pump in the human body; or morphine isolated from poppy seeds was used to explore the way endogenous opioids affect their receptors. In addition, muscarine, nicotine and tubocurarine helped to identify the different types of acetylcholine receptors [19].

Table 1.1 shows some examples of drugs derived from plant sources that are currently used in clinical practice [4,22,23].

Noteworthy, drugs derived from natural sources have different modes of action as well as they are employed to treat different types of disease. Success in natural product research from plant sources demand careful plant selection, based on several approaches such as, a) chemotaxonomic data; b) information from traditional medicine which is based on i) plants used in an organized traditional medicine system, ii) herbalism, folklore, and shamanism, iii) use of databases; c) field observations; d) random selection by chemical screening and; e) follow-up of biological activity reports.

One principal approach in the isolation of new lead compounds is bioactivity-guided isolation, in which pharmacological or biological assays are used to target the isolation of bioactive constituents [24,25]. Another effective approach is to isolate the bioactive constituents from extracts by metabolic profiling which involves the detailed analysis the chemical composition of an extract by chromatographic-spectroscopic techniques and a subsequent activity evaluation [26].

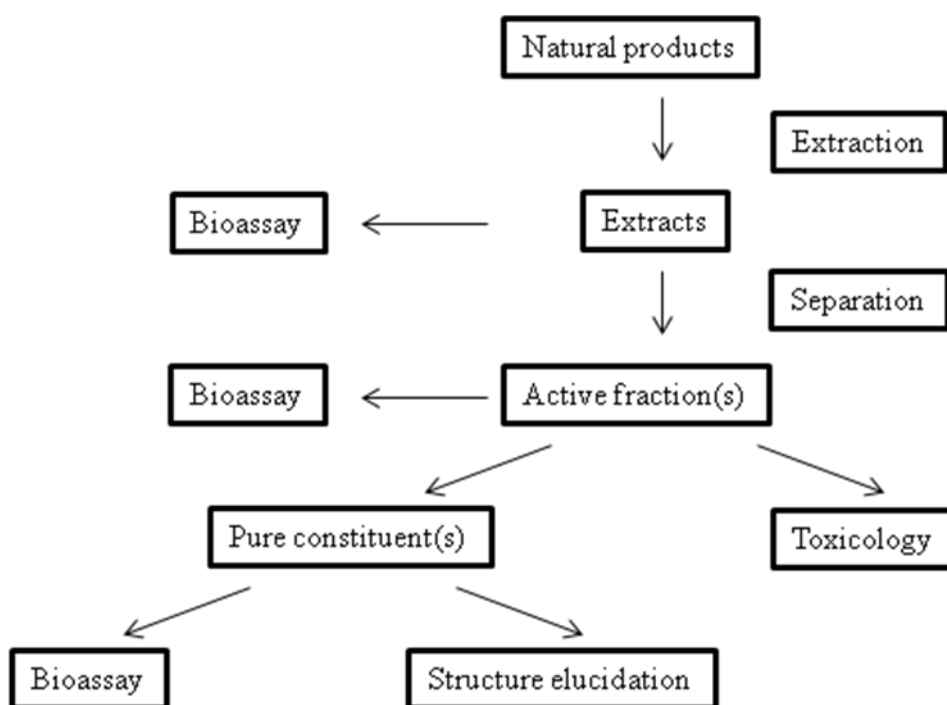
**Table 1.1.** Some drugs developed from natural products.

<b>Drug</b>	<b>Medical use</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Mechanism of action</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Aspirin	Analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antipyretic	<i>Salix alba</i>	Inhibition of COX	[27,28]
Digoxin	For atrial fibrillation and CHF	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Inhibition of the Na <sup>+</sup> /K <sup>+</sup> ATPase membrane	[29]
Quinine	Malaria prophylaxis	<i>Chincona</i>	Protein synthesis inhibition	[30]
Reserpine	Hypertension	<i>Rauwolfia serpentina</i>	irreversibly blocks the vesicular monoamine transporter (VMAT)	[31,32]
Vincristine	Leukemia	<i>Catharanthus roseus</i>	Vincristine binds to the microtubular proteins of the mitotic spindle, leading to crystallization of the microtubule and mitotic arrest or cell death	[33,34]
Taxol	Ovarian cancer	<i>Taxus brevifolia</i>	Stabilizes microtubule disassembly	[35,36]

COX= Cyclooxygenase

### 1.1.1 Bioactivity-guided isolation

Bioassay-guided isolation is a multidisciplinary approach to drug discovery, which involves the evaluation of the biological activity of a crude extract from the natural resource followed by fractionation to isolate the active ingredient (Figure 1.1). The individual fractions are then tested for their biological activity or pharmacological property. The active fraction(s) undergo further fractionation, until active fractions or pure compounds are obtained. Different technologies are used in this fractionation process, such as column chromatography, flash chromatography, vacuum liquid chromatography, thin layer chromatography, semi-preparative and preparative HPLC [37,38]. Bioactivity-guided fractionation has resulted in most of the biologically active natural products currently in use [39].



**Fig. 1.1** Overview on bioactivity-guided isolation.

### 1.1.2 Metabolic profiling

Metabolic profiling provides information on absolute or relative quantities of metabolites present in natural source extracts, thus allowing for their detection and isolation [40]. Furthermore, it provides information on the chemical composition of

extracts, with known and unknown spectra, which can lead to the isolation and spectroscopic identification of new bioactive compounds [41]. A metabolic profile of a plant extract can be obtained using techniques such as, liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS), gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) and capillary electrophoresis-mass spectrometry (CE-MS) [26].

### 1.2 Significance of medicinal plants in drug discovery

Plants have been utilized as medicines for centuries. To date, plants remain as the principal source of new drugs, new lead compounds, and new chemical entities [4,17,42]. Plant-based medicinal systems play a significant role in the healthcare systems of almost all the countries of the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 65% of the world's population and 80% of developing countries' population depend primarily on about 85% of plant-derived traditional medicines [17,20,43]. Approximately, 80% of 122 pure compounds on the market derived from 94 plant species were originally used for the same or related ethnomedical purposes [4,17]. Plant studies indicate that there are about 250,000 to 350,000 plant species identified so far, and of the about 35,000 have been used for medicinal purpose across the world [44,45].

Some of the examples of plants serve as a source of bioactive compounds for direct use as drugs are- sennosides A&B from *Cassiaa culifolia* and *Cassia angustifolia*, vincristine and vinblastine from *Catharanthus roseus*, digitoxin from *Digitalis purpurea* and ephedrine from *Ephedrasinensis* [25,46]. Medicinal plants also led to the isolation of novel bioactive compounds which in turn serve as lead compounds for semi synthesis of patent able entities with enhanced activity and/or reduced toxicity [46].

These drugs are employed for the treatment of a broad array of diseases. In addition, bioactive compounds obtained from plants also serve as pharmacological tools, for example, lysergic acid diethylamide, mescaline, and yohimbine [25]. Some examples of the plant derived lead compounds are discussed below. These examples show that medicinal plants represent an important source of bioactive lead compounds, possessing chemical diversity and as such providing core scaffolds for the discovery and development of drugs (Table 1.2).

**Bronchodialator:** Khellin, isolated from *Ammivisnaga* L., led to the development of chromolyn, a bronchodilator [4,47].

**Anti-diabetic:** Galegine, isolated from *Galega officinalis* L., served as the model substrate for the synthesis of metformin and other bisguanidines used in the treatment of diabetes [4,48].

**Analgesic and anticoagulant:** Codeine was isolated from *Papa versomniferum* and served as the model substrate for the development of the analgesics, meperidine, pentazocine, and propoxyphene [49,50]. In addition, salicin is a lead compound isolated from the bark of *Salix alba*, that led to the development of a potent pain killer and anticoagulant drug, aspirin [51,52].

**Anti-hypertensive:** Papaverine obtained from *Papa versomniferum*, formed the basis for the semi- synthetic anti-hypertensive drug, verapamil [25,53].

**Anti-malarial:** The anti-malarial drug, quinine was isolated from the bark of *Cinchona officinalis*, formed the basis for the synthesis of the anti-malarial drugs, chloroquine and mefloquine. Due to resistance to chloroquine and mefloquine in many tropical regions, Chinese scientists discovered an exciting new anti-malarial lead compound, artemisinin from *Artemisia annua* which had long been used in the treatment of malaria in Traditional Chinese Medicine [4,54]. Based on artemisinin, two promising analogues, OZ277 and an artemisinin dimeric analogue, with better efficacy and utility were synthesized which are now used for the treatment of malaria in many countries [4,55]

**Anti-asthmatic:** The anti-asthmatic drug, ephedrine, was isolated from *Ephedrasinica* and has formed the basis for the synthesis of anti-asthmatic beta agonists salbutamol and salmetrol [4].

**Table 1.2.** Lead compounds isolated from medicinal plants

<b>Lead compound</b>	<b>Developed drug</b>	<b>Plant source</b>	<b>Pharmacological uses</b>	<b>References</b>
Khellin	Chromolyn	<i>Ammivis naga</i>	Bronchodilator	[47]
Galegine	Metformin	<i>Galega officinalis</i>	Anti-diabetic	[48]
Codeine	Meperidine, pentazocine, and propoxyphene	<i>Papaver somniferu</i>	Analgesics	[49,50]
Salicin	Aspirin	<i>Salix alba</i>	Analgesic and anti- coagulant	[51,52]
Papaverine	Verapamil	<i>Papaver somniferum</i>	Anti-hypertensive	[53]
Ephedrine	Salbutamol and salmetrol	<i>Ephedra sinica</i>	Anti-asthmatic	[56]
Quinine	Chloroquine and mefloquine	<i>Cinchona officinalis</i>	Anti-malarial	[30,57]
Artemisinin	OZ277 and the artemisinin dimeric analogue	<i>Artemisia annua</i>	Anti-malarial	[55]

### **1.3 Cardiovascular diseases and cardiovascular drugs from medicinal plant**

#### **1.3.1 Cardiovascular diseases- A major burden of human life**

Diseases of the heart and circulatory system (cardiovascular disease or CVD) are the major cause of mortality and morbidity, causing over 17.9 million deaths a year worldwide (WHO, 2017). More than 75% of CVD deaths occur in low-income and middle-income countries and furthermore 80% of all CVD deaths are due to heart attacks and strokes (WHO, 2017). With the turn of the century, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) have become the leading cause of mortality in India [58-61]. In comparison with the people of European ancestry, CVD affects Indians at least a decade earlier and in their most productive midlife years [62,63]. For example, in Western populations only 23% of CVD deaths occur before the age of 70 years; in India, this number is 52% [64]. In addition, case fatality attributable to CVD in low-income countries, including India, appears to be much higher than in middle- and high-income countries [61,65]. The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that, with the current burden of CVD, India would lose \$237 billion from the loss of productivity and spending on health care over a 10-year period (2005–2015) (WHO, 2011). Reasons for the high propensity to develop CVD, the high case fatality, and the high premature mortality include biological mechanisms, social determinants, and their interactions. Addressing this significant burden requires an understanding of both the biological and social determinants, and the complex dynamics underlying their interaction, as well.

Although cardiovascular medicine has achieved many breakthroughs, ischemic heart diseases (IHD), such as myocardial infarction (MI), heart failure (HF), thrombosis remain among the most important health challenges worldwide according to a report by WHO in 2007. MI, due to coronary artery disease (CAD), is currently one of the major contributors to the development of HF [58,66] Deep vein thrombosis is a common and important medical problem. Thrombus can spontaneously form in the larger veins of the lower limb, obstructing blood flow from the leg back to the heart. Rudolf Virchow described the classic triad of factors leading to formation of thrombus: abnormal blood flow, abnormal blood vessel wall and abnormal blood coagulation (clotting) function [67-69]. Vascular blockage occurs in the circulatory system as a consequence of blood clots formed due to failure in hemostasis as an imbalance occurs in fibrin formation (coagulation) and fibrin dissolution (fibrinolysis)[70,71]. Accumulation of these fibrin



clot in the blood vessels usually leads to thrombosis, which results in myocardial infarction and other cardiovascular diseases [72]

There are many factors, for example thrombin and plasmin, which contribute in the maintenance of the hemostasis; the former transform fibrinogen to fibrin whereas the latter is mainly responsible for dissolution of fibrin clot [70,71,73]. The formation of a fibrin clot inside the blood vessels owing to uncontrolled hydrolytic action of thrombin on fibrinogen, or overproduction of thrombin leads to a pathological condition known as disseminated intravascular coagulopathy (DIC) [74,75]. Moreover, in hyperfibrinogemia where blood fibrinogen level rises, the risk of myocardial infarction through blood coagulation enhances [76]. There are a number of mechanisms by which higher levels of fibrinogen causes thrombosis, including increased blood viscosity, increased fibre density of the fibrin clot, increased resistance of the fibrin clot to fibrinolysis, and altered mechanical properties of the fibrin clot. Increase of fibrinogen levels seem to be related to age, inflammatory processes, hematocrit, hypertension, glucose intolerance, cigarette smoking, and adiposity [76,77].

Thrombus formation in the “deep veins” of the lower limb is known as deep vein thrombosis, as opposed to superficial thrombophlebitis, which affects the superficial veins [78,79]. The distinction is important, as thrombus in the smaller, more superficial veins does not carry the same risk of propagation or embolism of deep vein thrombosis. Superficial thrombophlebitis is usually treated with anti inflammatory medication and requires no further investigation or treatment [80]. An exception to this is when the vein segment affected approaches a junction with a deep vein. Some practitioners may treat these in the same way as deep vein thrombosis because of the risk of extension into the deep system [78,80]. Although 90% of deep vein thrombosis occurs in the lower limbs, less commonly it does affect other areas of the body, including veins in the arm, head and neck, pelvis and rarely other locations [78-80].

Apart from arm vein thrombus, which is diagnosed similarly to leg thrombus, when other areas are affected the signs may be subtle and will require special tests for confirmation. Acutely, lower limb deep vein thrombosis causes swelling, pain and discoloration. The natural history is either progression or resolution, although in Western medicine the condition is either treated or closely observed. In the long term, it can cause “post-thrombotic syndrome,” which affects 23-60% of individuals with deep

vein thrombosis within 2 years [81,82]. The formation of thrombus damages the vein valves and increases venous collateral circulation, leading to venous hypertension (elevated pressure). Over time, this manifests as swelling, hyper pigmentation, venous ulcers, rash and discomfort. Venous ulcers heal slowly, are difficult to treat, and are a significant cost burden on healthcare systems [82].

The major mortality associated with deep vein thrombosis is when thrombus embolises (travels) towards the heart and lungs, where it lodges in the pulmonary arteries, known as pulmonary embolism [83-85]. It obstructs blood flow from the heart to the lung, which causes impaired blood oxygenation, resulting in symptoms of breathlessness, chest pain and cough. The blood must flow through the pulmonary circulation and in adults there is no bypass route; therefore, severe obstruction will cause hypoxia, (low blood oxygenation) hypotension (low blood pressure) and ultimately cardiac arrest leading to death. A distinction is made between proximal (above-knee) and distal (below-knee) lower limb deep vein thrombosis, because proximal thrombus is much more likely than distal to embolise [85-87]. There is approximately a 20% risk of distal thrombus progressing to involve the proximal veins [88-90] and the 3-month risk of thromboembolism in patients with suspected deep vein thrombosis but negative proximal leg ultrasound is around 1%. [91].

### **1.3.2 Classification of cardiovascular drugs**

There is a range of commercial cardiovascular drugs available to clinically tackle various types CVDs such as tissue plasminogen activator, urokinase, streptokinase, Nattokinase, warfarin, heparin, argatroban, and rivaroxaban. Tissue plasminogen activator, for example urokinase and streptokinase hydrolyze the inactive plasminogen to an active plasmin [92,93] which subsequently degrades fibrin; Nattokinase commercially produced from bacterium *Bacillus natto* is a strong fibri(onogen)lytic serine protease; warfarin is a vitamin K inhibitor; heparin is an indirect thrombin inhibitor; argatroban is a direct thrombin inhibitor; and rivaroxaban exerts its anticoagulant activity by inhibiting Factor Xa [94-101].

Nevertheless, these drugs are associated with major adverse effects such as hemorrhage, recurrence at the site of the residual thrombosis, allergic reactions and vomiting and immunological responses [102-108]. Further, tissue plasminogen activators also have

low specificity towards the fibrin upon intravenous administration [58,102]. The seriousness of the cardiovascular diseases and life threatening adverse effects of the commercially available drugs has emphasized the need for the discovery of some potent anticoagulant components from natural resources which will be efficient, safe, and cost-effective.

Brief descriptions of the major category of cardiovascular drugs are summarized below.

### **1.3.2.1 Anticoagulant drugs**

Anti-coagulants are molecules that prevent the blood from clotting. They inhibit the chemical process of proteolytic formation of the three-dimensional fibrin polymer. These include natural products such as high molecular weight heparin, low molecular weight heparin, coumarins and synthetic compounds, for example argatroban, dabigatran etexilate. Some examples of commercial anticoagulant drugs are listed in Table 1.3.

**Table 1.3.** Some examples of commercial anticoagulant drugs.

	<b>Anticoagulants</b>	<b>Mechanism of action</b>	<b>Clinical Scenario</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>Heparin</b>	UFH	Antithrombin and anti-Xa activity	DVT, PE, post –MI, UA/NSTEMI, coats stents	[109,110]
	LMWH (enoxaparin, dalteparin)	Mostly anti Xa activity	Similar to UFH, but easier doing, no monitoring and less	[109-111]
<b>Direct thrombin and FXa inhibitors</b>	Bivalirudin	Direct thrombin inhibitor	Used in patients with HIT	[112-114]
	Lepirirudin	Direct thrombin inhibitor	Unstable angina and PTCA for patients with HIT	[115-118]
	Argatroban	Direct thrombin inhibitor	Thrombosis	[100,119-122]
	Dabigatran	Direct thrombin inhibitor	After knee and hip replacement	[122-125]
	Ximelagatran	Binds to thrombin active site	Discontinued	[126-128]
	Rivaroxaban	Direct Xa inhibitor- binds to free and unbound Xa	After knee and hip replacement	[129-132]
<b>Vitamin K antagonist</b>	Fondaparinux	Synthetic inhibitor of factor Xa, even more selective than LWMH	Prophylaxis after knee, hip replacement	[133-135]
	Warfarin	Competitively inhibits vitamin K (II, VII, X protein C, protein S)	VTE prevention, DVT, after prosthetic heart valves, MI	[136-138]

DVT, Deep vein thrombosis; HIT, Heparin-induced thrombocytopenia; LMWH, Low molecular weight heparin; MI, myocardial infarction; PE, Pulmonary embolism; PTCA, Percutaneous transluminal coronaryangioplasty , UA, Unstable angina; NSTEMI, non–ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction; UFH, Unfractionated heparin; VTE, venous thromboembolism

### **1.3.2.2 Thrombolytic drugs**

Thrombolytic drugs are used to dissolve (lyse) blood clots (thrombi). Table 1.4 provides some examples of commercial thrombolytic drugs.

### **1.3.2.3 Antiplatelet drugs**

Antiplatelet drug is a generic term, describing agents which decrease platelet aggregation and inhibit thrombus formation. Antiplatelet drugs are most effective for arterial clots that are composed largely of platelets. Table 1.5 lists the commercial antiplatelet drugs used to prevent thrombosis associated CVDs.

### **1.3.3 Cardiovascular drugs from medicinal plants: Special example of Ayurveda**

Over the centuries, many plants have been used in the treatment of cardiovascular disease; however, without knowing in detail about their active ingredients and mechanism of action. In recent years, the usage of natural herb as drug has been increasing because of potential beneficial effects of herbs without or less side effects in comparison to chemical/synthetic drugs. In some countries, approximately 80% of the drugs supplied to the pharmaceutical market have natural origin, so that now 90% of people in these countries use herbal medicines [45,139,140].

Herbal drugs constitute a major share of all the officially recognized systems of health in India *viz.* Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy and Naturopathy, except Allopathy. More than 70% of India's 1.1 billion populations still use these non-allopathic systems of medicine [141-143]. India has 15 Agroclimatic zones and 17000-18000 species of flowering plants of which 6000-7000 are estimated to have medicinal usage in folk and documented systems of medicine, like Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy. About 960 species of medicinal plants are estimated to be in trade of which 178 species have annual consumption levels in excess of 100 metric tons. Medicinal plants are not only a major resource base for the traditional medicine & herbal industry but also provide livelihood and health security to a large segment of Indian population (The National Medicinal Plants Board). They have been identified as medicinal plants because of their therapeutic properties contributing to the treatment of various ailments such as cancer, inflammation, diabetes, asthma, digestive problems, cardiac disorders [144-149].

**Table 1.4.** Some examples of commercial thrombolytic drugs

	<b>Thrombolytic drugs</b>	<b>Mechanism of action</b>	<b>Clinical Scenario</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>Tissue plasminogen activator</b>	Alteplase	More specific for clots because fibrin acts as cofactor for tPA activation of plasminogen	MI, thrombolytics in ACS, PE, administered as IV infusion	[150-152]
	Retepase	Derivative of tPA with longer half life	Acute MI, pulmonary embolism	[150,153,154]
	Tenecteplase	Derivative of tPA with longer half life	Acute MI	[150,155]
<b>Indirect fibrinolytic enzyme</b>	Streptokinase	When complexed with plasminogen, can convert other plasminogen molecules into plasmin, massive lytic state	Rarely used	[156-159]
	Urokinase	Not specific for fibrin, so produces massive lytic state	Rarely used	[160,161]
<b>Direct fibrinolytic enzymes</b>	Nattokinase	Induces fibrinolysis by direct as well as indirect mode of action		[94,162,163]

ACS, Acute coronary syndrome; MI, Myocardial infarction; PE, Pulmonary embolism; tPA, tissue plasminogen activator; IV, Intravenous

**Table 1.5.** Some examples of commercial antiplatelet drugs.

	<b>Antiplatelet drugs</b>	<b>Mechanism of action</b>	<b>Clinical Scenario</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>ADP receptor antagonists</b>	Aspirin	Irreversible, non selective COX-1 and 2 inhibitors	Angina, acute MI, TIA, stroke	[28,164,165]
	Dipyridamole	Blocks uptake of adenosine, PDE inhibitors	Prophylaxis	[166-168]
	Clopidogrel	Irreversibly inhibits ADP receptors	Recent MI, unstable angina, recent stroke, PAD, post stenting	[169]
	Prasugrel	Irreversibly inhibits ADP receptors	Prevention of CV, thrombosis, PCI	[170]
	Ticagrelor	Reversibly inhibits ADP receptors	Prevention of CV, thrombosis after MI	[171,172]
<b>GPIIb/IIIa inhibitors</b>	Abciximab	Monoclonal Ab that block GPIIa/IIIb	During PCI	[173-175]
	Eptifibatide	Small molecule that block GPIIa/IIIb	During PCI	[176]
	Tirofiban	Small molecule that block GPIIa/IIIb	During PCI	[177]

Ab, Antibody; ADP, Adenosine diphosphate; COX, Cyclooxygenase; CV, Cardiovascular; GP, Glycoprotein; MI, Myocardial infarction; PAD, peripheral artery disease; PDE, Phosphodiesterase; PCI, coronary intervention; TIA, transient ischemic attack.

Although many plants suitable for commercial developments as therapeutics have already been recognized but they still remain unexplored scientifically. Proper scientific evaluation both pharmacologically and phytochemically are required for the development of safe and potent drugs. Some of the plants used in traditional medicine [147,149,178-181] are mentioned below.

- i. Herbs which decrease blood pressure – *Rauwolfia serpentine* (Sarpagandha), *Fumaria indica* (Parpata), *Daucus carota* (Carrot seeds), *Cassia absus* (Chaksu), *Acorus calamus* (Vacha).
- ii. Herbs which are Diuretic – *Tribulus terrestris* (Gokshura, Small Caltrops), *Boerha aviadiffusa* (Punarnava, Spreading hogweed), *Phyllanthu sniruri* (Bhumi amalaki), *Tinospora cordifolia* (Guduchi), *Taraxacum officinale* (Dugdha, Dandelion)
- iii. Herbs which reduce serum cholesterol – *Commiphora mukul* (Guggulu)
- iv. Herbs which act as cardiac tonics - *Terminalia cordifolia* (Arjuna), *Saussurea lappa* (Kushtha), *Sidacordi folia* (Bala), *Digitalis purpurea* (Hatapatri, Foxglove)
- v. Herbs which decrease platelet aggregation - *Allium sativum* (Rasona, Garlic)
- vi. Herbs which possess antistress/ general tonic properties- *Withania somnifera* (Ashwagandha), *Bacopamon niera* (Brahmi), *Evolvulusal sinoides* (Shankhpushpi)

#### **1.4 Selection of Indian medicinal plants for the current study**

In the present study, six medicinal plants (*Centella asiatica*, *Solanum indicum*, *Momordica charantia*, *Hibiscus rosasinensis*, *Allivum sativum*; *Leucas indica*) were selected for screening of anticoagulant, fibrinogenolytic, thrombolytic and platelet aggregation inhibition activities. Figure 1.2 depicts the photographs of the selected plants. All 6 plants have been used traditionally as antihypertensive, anti-inflammatory, for treatment of stomach ailments, fever, sinusitis, anti-infectious agents albeit none of them were explored for their anticoagulant activities. The decision to study the selected species was based on the availability of adequate quantity of plant material and has wide traditional uses.

##### **1.4.1 Previous pharmacological and phytochemical evaluation of the selected medicinal plants**

A literature search on the selected plants for this study revealed specific information on pharmacological and phytochemical activities (Table 1.6).



**Table 1.6.** Some pharmacological activities of the selected medicinal plants.

<b>Plant Species</b>	<b>Pharmacological activities</b>	<b>References</b>
<i>Allivum sativum</i>	Anticancer property, Prevention of cardiac ailments and atherosclerosis, antileishmanian, immunomodulatory activity	[182-185]
<i>Centella asiatica</i>	Used for treatment of vericous veins, chronic venous insufficiency, Psoriasis, minor wounds, bronchitis, diarrhoea, dysentery , epilepsy, gastritis, skin diseases, antimicrobial, antiviral, immunomodulatory effects,	[186-189]
<i>Hibiscus rosasinensis</i>	Peptic ulcer treatment, Hypoglycemic effect, antimicrobial, hair growth potential	[190-193]
<i>Leucas indica</i>	Antifungal, antioxidant, prostaglandin inhibitory activities, antimicrobial, antinociceptive, antipyretic, used for treatment of sinusitis	[194-199]
<i>Momordica charantia</i>	antidiabetic, abortifacient, anthelmintic, contraceptive, dysmenorrhea, eczema, emmenagogue, antimalarial, galactagogue, gout, jaundice, abdominal pain, kidney (stone), laxative, leprosy, leucorrhea, piles, pneumonia, psoriasis, purgative, rheumatism, fever and scabies	[199-203]
<i>Solanum indicum</i>	Analgesic, antipyretic, antiinflammatory, CNS depressant activity, antitumor activity, antimicrobial activity	[204-206]

CNS, Central nervous system.



*Allium sativum*



*Centella asiatica*



*Hibiscus roasinensis*



*Leucas indica*



*Momordica charantia*



*Solanum indicum*

**Fig.1.2** Photographs of the selected plants

### 1.5 Rationale of the project

As already discussed, cardiovascular disease is considered to be one of the life threatening diseases worldwide. The therapeutic agents to prevent and/or treat cardiovascular diseases are associated with adverse pharmacological effects in patients, for example, internal hemorrhage, severe anaphylactic reaction, and lacks specificity. Herbs with antithrombotic activities suggested that harnessing of our own natural resources such as medicinal plants might lead to discovery of novel therapeutic agents to treat thrombosis associated diseases [16,207-211]. Based on the ethnomedical information, chemical diversity, and current literature, Indian medicinal plants may serve as great source of new bioactive compounds. *Unfortunately, there is no scientific validation to prove the pharmacological effect of the many of the traditionally used medicinal plant(s) in treating cardiovascular disorders.* Therefore, in the present

investigation, an effort was given to investigate the thrombolytic, anticoagulant, fibrinogenolytic/fibrinolytic and anti-platelet properties of an unexplored plant(s) with an aim to develop a safer herbal drug to treat cardiovascular disorders.

### **1.6 Aims and objectives of the project**

The overall aim of the PhD work is to identify and characterize new or previously uncharacterized anticoagulant, thrombolytic and/or antiplatelet fractions/protein/component(s) from medicinal plants of North-East India that were unexplored till date, and their mechanisms of anticoagulant action. Another important aim was to explore the possibility of development of potential antithrombotic therapeutic agents from medicinal plants that can be used to treat and/or prevent cardiovascular associated disorders such as thrombosis and hyperfibrinogenemia.

Therefore, the objectives of the present study were:

1. Screening of selected medicinal plants of Assam for assessment of anticoagulant property and preparation of active anticoagulant fraction from selected plants
2. Identification of the components present in the active anticoagulant fraction and comparison of anticoagulant, thrombolytic, and antiplatelet properties of active fraction with commercial drugs
3. Elucidation of mechanism of anticoagulant, anti-platelet, and thrombolytic activities of major components of active fractions
4. Assessment of *in vivo* toxicity, antithrombotic, and anticoagulant potential of active fractions and their components in rodent models

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