

Abstract

Crude extracts of *Dracaena steudneri* bark (DSB), *Sapium ellipticum* bark (SEB) and *Capparis erythrocarpos* root (CER) were investigated for their antifungal activity in immunocompromised mice infected with *Candida albicans* in an *in vivo* mice infection model. Extracts of these plant species are commonly used to treat fungal infections in East African countries. Three groups of white albino mice were immunosuppressed with 200 mg/kg body weight of cyclophosphamide for four consecutive days after which they were administered with 0.3 ml of 0.5 McFarland standard inoculum of *C. albicans*. The groups were treated with escalating doses of 100, 200 and 400 mg/kg of body weight of dichloromethane extracts. There was substantial dose dependency in all treatments given, with mice survival to the end of the experiment correlating well to the dose levels. At a dose of 400 mg/kg, *C. erythrocarpos* was the most effective with mice survival of 60% and organ burden clearance ranging from 64.0% – 99.9% ($P < 0.0001$) in all treatments. The results revealed that *C. erythrocarpos* possessed significant potential for development into antifungal drugs suitable for control of *Candida* infections. The effectiveness of the plant extracts *in vivo* was a confirmation of the value of ethnopharmacological leads in drug discovery.