INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES
[ISSN: 0975-4725; CODEN(USA): IJPS00]
Journal Homepage: https://www.ijpsjournal.com

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Review Paper

Plant-Derived Neuroprotective Potential of Carex kanchii in Parkinson's Disease: A Narrative Review

Dr. D. Ravi kiran*

Assistant Professor, Sri Venkateswara College Of Pharmacy (Autonomous) Chittoor, AP.

ARTICLE INFO

Published: 03 July 2026
Keywords:
Carex kanchii, Parkinson's disease, Haloperidol, Catalepsy, Neuroprotection, and Antiparkinsonian activity.
DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21156200

ABSTRACT

Background :- Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder that primarily affects dopaminergic neurons in the substantia nigra pars compacta and leads to motor and non-motor dysfunction. Current treatment strategies remain largely symptomatic and do not halt the underlying neurodegenerative process, which has intensified interest in plant-derived neuroprotective agents. Recent reviews show that phytochemicals may offer benefit through antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-apoptotic, mitochondrial stabilizing, and anti-aggregation mechanisms, making them attractive candidates for multimodal intervention in Parkinson's disease. Methods :- The present review uses the attached Carex kanchii study as the main experimental anchor and places it within the broader literature on botanical approaches to Parkinsonism. The study demonstrated that methanolic leaf extract of Carex kanchii contained alkaloids, flavonoids, glycosides, tannins, phenolics, saponins, and triterpenoids, and that it reduced haloperidol-induced catalepsy and improved exploratory behavior in Wistar rats in a dose-dependent manner. Acute toxicity testing suggested acceptable short-term safety.Conclusion :- Although the findings are promising, the evidence remains preclinical and exploratory. For the extract to move closer to translational relevance, future studies should focus on phytochemical standardization, bioactivity-guided fractionation, mechanistic biomarker studies, repeated-dose toxicity, and validation in additional Parkinson's disease models.

INTRODUCTION

Parkinson's disease is the second most common neurodegenerative disorder after Alzheimer's disease and is characterized by the progressive degeneration of dopaminergic neurons in the substantia nigra and the resulting depletion of striatal dopamine. Clinically, this manifests as bradykinesia, rigidity, resting tremor, and postural instability, together with a wide range of non-motor symptoms such as depression, sleep

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. D. Ravi kiran
Address: *Assistant Professor, Sri Venkateswara College Of Pharmacy (Autonomous) Chittoor, AP.*
Email ✉: darlingravi19@gmail.com

Relevant conflicts of interest/financial disclosures: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

disturbances, autonomic dysfunction, and cognitive decline. [1-3]

The pathobiology of Parkinson's disease is multifactorial. Oxidative stress, neuroinflammation, mitochondrial dysfunction, proteostasis failure, and α-synuclein aggregation all contribute to neuronal death and functional decline. This complexity is one reason why single-target symptomatic drugs have not been sufficient to modify disease progression. [4-5]

Levodopa remains the mainstay of therapy, but long-term use is limited by motor fluctuations, dyskinesias, and wearing-off phenomena. Dopamine agonists, monoamine oxidase-B inhibitors, catechol-O-methyl transferase inhibitors, and anticholinergic drugs can improve symptoms, yet none of these therapies reliably prevent neuronal degeneration. This therapeutic gap has encouraged renewed investigation of medicinal plants and their secondary metabolites as neuroprotective candidates (6,7).

Natural products are especially appealing in Parkinson's disease because many of them possess poly-pharmacological activity. A single extract or phytochemical mixture may simultaneously reduce oxidative stress, suppress inflammatory pathways, stabilize mitochondria, and influence dopaminergic neurotransmission. Recent reviews of plant-derived compounds in Parkinson's disease have reinforced this multi-target framework and have called for more rigorous preclinical-to-clinical translation.

II. Pathophysiology Of Parkinson's Disease

The degeneration of dopaminergic neurons in the nigrostriatal pathway remains the hallmark of Parkinson's disease. Loss of dopamine in the striatum disrupts basal ganglia circuitry and produces the cardinal motor symptoms, while non-motor manifestations reflect broader involvement of multiple neuronal systems.

Oxidative stress plays a central role because dopamine metabolism itself generates reactive oxygen species, and iron-rich regions of the substantia nigra are particularly vulnerable to oxidative injury. Endogenous antioxidant defenses may be insufficient, allowing lipid peroxidation, protein oxidation, and DNA damage to accumulate over time. Plant-derived antioxidants are therefore attractive because they may counter one of the earliest and most persistent pathogenic forces in the disease.

Mitochondrial dysfunction is another major contributor. Impairment of complex I activity reduces ATP generation and increases oxidative load, while mitochondrial injury can also activate apoptotic cascades. Because many phytochemicals enhance mitochondrial resilience or reduce oxidative damage, they are frequently investigated as neuroprotective agents in experimental Parkinsonism. (8,9)

Neuroinflammation further amplifies neuronal injury. Activated microglia release inflammatory mediators such as TNF-α, IL-1β, and IL-6, which worsen oxidative stress and contribute to neuronal death. This inflammatory-oxidative loop is one of the strongest arguments for multitarget natural products, since many botanicals can modulate both pathways at once. (10,11,12)

A final major pathological feature is α-synuclein aggregation. This process is increasingly recognized as central to the progression of Parkinson's disease and has become a target for natural product research. Several recent reviews suggest that plant extracts and phytochemicals may interfere with aggregation, promote protein homeostasis, or reduce downstream toxicity.

The attached study is worth reviewing because it evaluates a lesser-known medicinal plant, *Carex kanchii*, in an experimental Parkinsonism model. The authors report that the methanolic extract improved catalepsy and exploratory behavior, with stronger effects at the higher dose and a

phytochemical profile rich in compounds often linked to neuroprotection (13)

III. Experimental Model Used In The Study

The attached study used haloperidol-induced Parkinsonism in albino Wistar rats. Haloperidol is a dopamine D2 receptor antagonist, and its administration produces catalepsy, reduced exploratory activity, and rigidity-like motor impairment, making it a useful screening model for antiparkinsonian activity.

This model is especially appropriate for early pharmacological screening because it is simple, reproducible, and sensitive to compounds that restore motor performance. However, it primarily reflects pharmacological blockade of dopamine signaling rather than progressive neurodegeneration. That means the model is useful for preliminary efficacy screening, but it cannot by itself prove disease-modifying neuroprotection.

For a review article, this distinction is important. A compound that improves haloperidol-induced catalepsy may be acting through symptomatic dopaminergic restoration, general stimulation, or anti-stress effects, rather than direct protection of nigral neurons. More complete evaluation would require toxin-based models such as 6-OHDA, MPTP, or rotenone, along with biochemical and histological confirmation.

IV. Botanical And Phytochemical Basis

The study reported the presence of alkaloids, flavonoids, glycosides, tannins, phenolics, saponins, and triterpenoids in the methanolic leaf extract of *Carex kanchii*. This phytochemical complexity is important because most promising medicinal plants owe their pharmacological effects to a mixture of secondary metabolites rather than a single isolated constituent.

Flavonoids and phenolics are especially relevant because they are widely known for antioxidant activity. They can neutralize free radicals, reduce lipid peroxidation, and help preserve cellular membranes under oxidative stress. In Parkinson's disease research, these properties are repeatedly associated with neuroprotection and preservation of dopaminergic function.

Alkaloids may influence neurotransmission or receptor signaling, while triterpenoids and saponins often display anti-inflammatory and cytoprotective effects. Glycosides may contribute additional bioactivity depending on their aglycone structure. The net pharmacological result in a crude extract may therefore arise from additive or synergistic interactions among several compound classes.

The extraction method also matters. Methanol is a polar solvent that efficiently extracts phenolic compounds, flavonoids, glycosides, and other polar constituents. This makes methanolic extraction a rational choice for screening neuroprotective potential, especially when antioxidant activity is suspected to be one of the main mechanisms.

V. Acute Toxicity And Safety

The study reported no mortality or obvious toxic signs during acute oral toxicity testing, which is a useful early safety indicator. This supports the preliminary feasibility of further testing at the selected pharmacological doses.

However, acute toxicity is only the first stage of safety assessment. It does not address repeated-dose toxicity, organ-specific toxicity, reproductive toxicity, genotoxicity, or herb–drug interactions. These unanswered questions are particularly important for botanical products intended for chronic neurodegenerative diseases, where prolonged use would be expected.

Safety also depends on extract standardization. Two batches of the same plant collected from different locations or harvested at different seasons may vary significantly in phytochemical content. For this reason, future work should include

chemical fingerprinting and marker-based standardization before any translational claim is made.

VI. Behavioral Outcomes

The most important result in the attached study was the dose-dependent reduction in haloperidol-induced catalepsy. In practical terms, this suggests that the extract improved motor responsiveness under conditions of dopamine receptor blockade. Because catalepsy is a central feature of extrapyramidal dysfunction, improvement in this endpoint is a meaningful signal of antiparkinsonian activity.

The extract also improved exploratory behavior in the hole-board test. Better head-dipping and line-crossing activity indicate enhanced locomotor and exploratory performance, which supports the view that the extract improved functional behavior rather than merely affecting one isolated test endpoint.

The dose-response trend strengthens the interpretation because pharmacological consistency is an important sign of biological plausibility. The higher dose showing stronger activity and approaching the standard therapy suggests that the extract may contain active constituents capable of producing substantial behavioral benefit in this model.

Nevertheless, behavioral improvement alone is not sufficient to establish neuroprotection. It is possible for a compound to alter movement, sedation, motivation, or stress responsiveness without protecting neurons. Therefore, the behavioral data should be interpreted as encouraging but incomplete evidence.

VII. Mechanistic Interpretation

The most plausible mechanism is antioxidant neuroprotection. Parkinson's disease is strongly linked with oxidative injury, and plant-derived phenolics and flavonoids are well known to counter this process. If the extract reduces free radical burden or enhances endogenous antioxidant defense, this could partly explain the improved motor performance.

A second possible mechanism is anti-inflammatory action. Neuroinflammation is a well-established driver of dopaminergic injury, and many plant-derived compounds can suppress inflammatory mediators, inhibit microglial activation, or reduce downstream cytokine signaling. This is consistent with the broader literature on botanicals in Parkinson's disease.

A third possibility is modulation of dopaminergic neurotransmission. In the haloperidol model, any agent that improves dopamine signaling, receptor responsiveness, or downstream motor integration may reduce catalepsy. However, because the attached study did not measure dopamine levels, receptor expression, or neurotransmitter turnover, this remains a hypothesis rather than a demonstrated mechanism.

Mitochondrial support is another biologically reasonable explanation. Many plant extracts protect neuronal cells by preserving mitochondrial membrane potential, limiting ATP loss, and reducing apoptotic signaling. Given the growing recognition of mitochondrial dysfunction in Parkinson's disease, this mechanism should be explored in future *Carex kanchii* research.

Multi-target synergy may be especially important. Crude botanical extracts often act through several pathways simultaneously, which may be an advantage in a multifactorial disease like Parkinson's. The combination of antioxidants, anti-inflammatory agents, and neurotransmission-modulating compounds may produce a broader benefit than a single purified molecule.

VIII. Comparison With Other Plant-Derived Agents

The broader literature contains several examples of plant-derived neuroprotective agents in

Parkinson's disease. Resveratrol, curcumin, and ginsenosides are among the best studied, and they have been shown to influence oxidative stress, inflammation, apoptosis, and protein aggregation pathways.

A 2025 review of plant-derived compounds emphasized that preclinical evidence for phytochemicals is now extensive, but clinical translation remains limited. This conclusion applies directly to *Carex kanchii*, which is promising but still far from human validation.

Monoterpene research adds another important comparator. A systematic review and meta-analysis found that plant-derived monoterpenes improved motor function, increased tyrosine hydroxylase, lowered oxidative stress markers, and reduced inflammatory cytokines in parkinsonian animals. This supports the general concept that botanical compounds can influence disease-relevant biology in a meaningful way.

The attached *Carex kanchii* study is comparable in spirit to this literature, but it remains more preliminary because it focuses mainly on behavioral endpoints. If future studies add biochemical and histological data, the extract will be much easier to compare with better-studied phytochemicals and plant extracts.

IX. Translational Challenges

The main translational challenge is standardization. Crude extracts are variable, and without marker compound quantification or chromatographic fingerprinting, reproducibility remains weak. This is a major issue in botanical pharmacology and is often one of the first barriers to publication-quality translational research.

A second challenge is pharmacokinetics. Even highly active phytochemicals may fail clinically if they are poorly absorbed, rapidly metabolized, or unable to reach the central nervous system in adequate concentrations. This is why many modern reviews emphasize bioavailability enhancement and formulation science as essential next steps.

A third challenge is endpoint selection. Behavioral improvement in one rodent model is a useful screening signal, but clinical relevance will require evidence of neuronal protection, biomarker modulation, and eventually tolerability in humans. The field has repeatedly learned that promising animal findings often weaken when moved to clinical testing without sufficient preclinical depth.

Herb–drug interaction is also important. Since Parkinson's disease patients often receive levodopa-based therapy and other adjunct medications, any future botanical therapy would need careful interaction testing. This is especially important for extracts with complex phytochemistry and potential effects on cytochrome enzymes or neurotransmitter pathways.

X. Strengths And Limitations Of The Study

The study has several strengths. It used a recognized experimental model, applied a dose-based treatment strategy, evaluated behavioral outcomes, and performed acute toxicity testing before pharmacological assessment. These are all important components of a sound early preclinical study.

Its main limitation is the lack of mechanistic endpoints. No oxidative stress markers, cytokine data, neurotransmitter measurements, or histopathology were reported, so the mechanism remains speculative. This limits the strength of the conclusions that can be drawn from the study alone.

The study is also limited by its reliance on a single extract type and a single animal model. Without comparative evaluation in additional models or by using fractions and purified compounds, it is difficult to determine whether the observed effect reflects a robust neuroprotective principle or a model-specific behavioral action

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future studies should begin with phytochemical fingerprinting and bioactivity-guided fractionation. Identifying the active fraction or marker compound will allow stronger reproducibility and a more convincing mechanistic narrative.

The next experimental step should be evaluation in multiple Parkinson's disease models. Rotenone, MPTP, and 6-OHDA models would help determine whether the extract protects against real neurodegeneration rather than only pharmacological catalepsy.

Biochemical work should include antioxidant enzymes, lipid peroxidation markers, inflammatory cytokines, mitochondrial indicators, and dopamine-related measures. These endpoints would provide mechanistic depth and would make the work much more suitable for a high-quality review-based manuscript discussion.

Histopathology and immunohistochemistry should also be incorporated. Demonstrating preservation of substantia nigra neurons or reduced α-synuclein-related damage would greatly strengthen translational relevance.

Finally, long-term toxicity, formulation development, and pharmacokinetic profiling are essential before any clinical consideration. Botanical neuroprotective agents are increasingly being discussed as adjuncts or lead compounds, but translation requires a much stronger evidence base than a single behavioral study can provide.

CONCLUSION

Methanolic leaf extract of *Carex kanchii* demonstrated promising antiparkinsonian activity in a haloperidol-induced rat model, with dose-dependent improvement in catalepsy and exploratory behavior and a favorable short-term safety profile. The phytochemical composition provides a plausible foundation for antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and neuroprotective activity.

However, the evidence remains early-stage and preclinical. The study should therefore be viewed as an important starting point for botanical neuropharmacology rather than proof of therapeutic efficacy. Future research must focus on standardization, mechanism-based validation, and expanded preclinical testing before clinical translation can be considered.

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HOW TO CITE: Dr. D. Ravi kiran Biswal, Dr. Ashish Plant-Derived Neuroprotective Potential of Carex kanchii in Parkinson's Disease: A Narrative Review, Int. J. of Pharm. Sci., 2026, Vol 4, Issue 7, 621-627, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21156200