

Proceedings

# Carvacrol Derivatives with Potential Insecticidal Activity <sup>†</sup>

Carolina M. Natal <sup>1</sup>, David M. Pereira <sup>2</sup>, Renato B. Pereira <sup>2</sup>, Maria José G. Fernandes <sup>1</sup>, A. Gil Fortes <sup>1</sup>, Elisabete M. S. Castanheira <sup>3</sup> and M. Sameiro T. Gonçalves <sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Centre of Chemistry (CQ/UM), University of Minho, Campus of Gualtar, 4710-057 Braga, Portugal; carolinanatal.97@gmail.com (C.M.N.); mjfernandes@quimica.uminho.pt (M.J.G.F.); gil@quimica.uminho.pt (A.G.F.)

<sup>2</sup> REQUIMTE/LAQV, Laboratory of Pharmacognosy, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Porto, R. Jorge Viterbo Ferreira, 228, 4050-313 Porto, Portugal; dpereira@ff.up.pt (D.M.P.); ren.pereira@gmail.com (R.B.P.)

<sup>3</sup> Centre of Physics (CFUM), University of Minho, Campus of Gualtar, 4710-057 Braga, Portugal; ecoutinho@fisica.uminho.pt

\* Correspondence: msameiro@quimica.uminho.pt

<sup>†</sup> Present at the 24th International Electronic Conference on Synthetic Organic Chemistry, 15 November 2020–15 December 2020; Available online: <https://ecsoc-24.sciforum.net/>.

Received: date; Accepted: date; Published: date

**Abstract:** Three new carvacrol derivatives **1-3** possessing aliphatic carbon chains with different sizes as hydroxyl group substituents were synthesized in order to evaluate their insecticidal activity against the insect cell line *Sf9* (*Spodoptera frugiperda*).

**Keywords:** carvacrol; biopesticides; green insecticides; natural products; *Spodoptera frugiperda*

## 1. Introduction

Synthetic pesticides have been used for decades to manage pest control in crops, in order to avoid considerable damage and production losses due to pathogens, insects and other pest species [1,2]. Nowadays, because of environmental and health issues, synthetic pesticides are being gradually replaced by botanical pesticides [2,3].

An alternative to pests control is the use of essential oils (EOs) and its major chemical constituents [4]. Essential oils plant's secondary metabolites of low molecular weight and strong organoleptic properties, have been investigated as resources of potentially useful bioactive compounds, and it is known that they have an important role in the interactions between insects and plants [5,6]. Carvacrol (2-methyl-5-(1-methylethyl)phenol) is found in the essential oils of thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), marjoram (*Origanum majorana*), oregano (*Origanum vulgari* L.), pepperwort (*Lepidium* sp.), and Alaskan yellow cedar (*Callitropsis nootkatensis* (D. Don) Oerst. ex D. P. Little) [7]. It is a phenolic compound that displays antimicrobial, antifungal, and insecticidal activities [8,9].

Considering these facts, the present investigation is focused on synthesis of new carvacrol derivatives possessing aliphatic carbon chains with different sizes as hydroxyl group substituents, and their insecticide activity against the insect cell line *Sf9* (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) was evaluated.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Typical Procedure for Carvacrol Derivatives 1-3 (Illustrated for 1)

To a solution of 5-isopropyl-2-methylphenol (0.105 mL, 1 eq.) in acetonitrile (4 mL) was added cesium carbonate (1.0885 g, 5 eq.) and 1-bromopropane ( $6.7 \times 10^{-2}$  mL, 1.1 eq.), and the reaction mixture was heated at 65 °C with stirring for 24 h. The progress of the reaction was monitored by

TLC (silica: DCM). The reaction mixture was filtered, washed with acetonitrile and then the solvent was evaporated. 4-Isopropyl-1-methyl-2-propoxybenzene was obtained as orange oil (0.0693 g; 54% yield).  $R_f = 0.56$  (petroleum ether).  $^1\text{H NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ , 400 MHz):  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  1.12 (3H, t,  $J$  7.6 Hz,  $\text{O}(\text{CH}_2)_2\text{CH}_3$ ), 1.30 (6H, d,  $J$  6,8 Hz,  $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$ ), 1.84-1.93 (2H, m,  $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.26 (3H, s,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 2.88-2.95 (1H, m,  $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$ ), 3.99 (2H, t,  $J$  6 Hz,  $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_3$ ), 6.75 (1H, d,  $J$  1.2 Hz, H-3), 6.78 (1H, dd,  $J$  7.6 Hz,  $J$  1.6, H-5), 7.11 (1H, d,  $J$  7.2 Hz, H-6) ppm.  $^{13}\text{C NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ , 100.6 MHz):  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  10.68 ( $\text{O}(\text{CH}_2)_2\text{CH}_3$ ), 15.77 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 22.80 ( $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_3$ ), 24.13 ( $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$ ), 34.14 ( $\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)_2$ ), 69.36 ( $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_3$ ), 109.45 (C-3), 117.76 (C-5), 124.13 (C-1), 130.32 (C-6), 147.79 (C-4), 157.15 (C-2) ppm.

## 2.2. Cell Culture

*Spodoptera frugiperda* cells (*Sf9* cell line) were maintained as a suspension culture and cultivated in Grace's medium with 10% FBS and 1% penicillin/streptomycin, at 28 °C. Cells were kept in a humidified atmosphere of 5%  $\text{CO}_2$ .

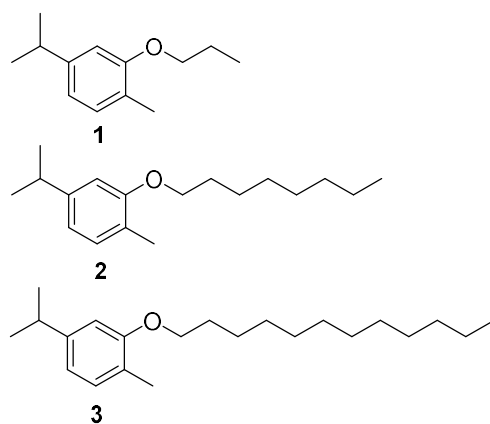
## 2.3. Viability Assessment

For the assessment of viability, a resazurin-based method was used. *Sf9* cells were plated at a density of  $3.0 \times 10^4$ , incubated for 24 h and then exposed to the molecules under study for 24 h. After this period, a commercial solution of resazurin was added (1:10) and the kinetic reaction of fluorescence increase monitored at 560/590 nm, results being used after 60 min of incubation.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Synthesis of Carvacrol Derivatives 1-3

Carvacrol derivatives **1-3** were synthesized by *O*-alkylation of carvacrol with alkyl halides possessing carbon chains of various sizes. Starting from carvacrol (5-isopropyl-2-methylphenol) and using 1-bromopropane, 1-bromooctane or 1-bromododecane, in the presence of cesium carbonate as a base, by heating at 65 °C in acetonitrile, 4-isopropyl-1-methyl-2-propoxybenzene **1**, 4-isopropyl-1-methyl-2-(octyloxy)benzene **2** and 2-(dodecyloxy)-4-isopropyl-1-methylbenzene **3** were obtained respectively, as oils in 54-62% yields (Figure 1).



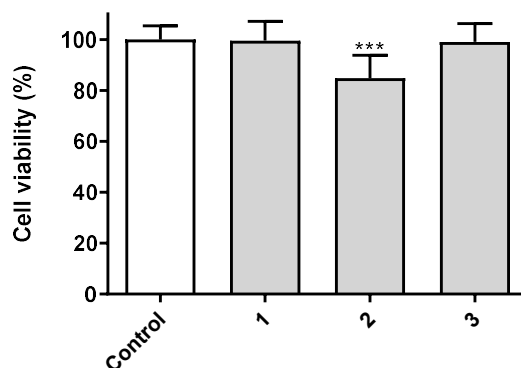
**Figure 1.** Carvacrol derivatives 1-3.

The  $^1\text{H NMR}$  spectra of compounds **1-3** showed the different characteristic signals for the protons of methylene ( $\delta$  1.35–4.00 ppm) and methyl groups ( $\delta$  0.90–1.12 ppm) of aliphatic chains, the methyl ( $\delta$  2.23–2.29 ppm) and isopropyl group of carvacrol ( $\delta$  1.28–1.35 and 2.85–3.00 ppm), as well as protons of the aromatic ring H-3, H-5 and H-6 as singlet or duplet ( $\delta$  6.73–6.78 ppm), double doublet ( $\delta$  6.75–6.82 ppm) and duplet ( $\delta$  7.08–7.15 ppm), respectively.  $^{13}\text{C NMR}$  spectra of all compounds showed the signals of methylene groups ( $\delta$  22.68–31.93 ppm), being signals of  $\text{OCH}_2$  at higher chemical shifts ( $\delta$  67.83–69.36 ppm), methyl groups of aliphatic chains ( $\delta$  10.68–14.11 ppm), as

well as methyl ( $\delta$  15.77–15.81 ppm) and isopropyl ( $\delta$  24.13 and 34.14–34.16 ppm) groups of carvacrol moiety, in addition to carbons of the aromatic ring ( $\delta$  109.39–157.19 ppm).

### 3.2. Impact of Carvacrol Derivatives 1-3 in Cell Viability

The impact of carvacrol derivatives **1-3** in the viability of *Sf9* cells was evaluated at 100  $\mu\text{g/mL}$ , following 24h of exposure. As shown in Figure 2, the molecules were mostly devoid of toxicity, the exception being **2** that elicited a small reduction in viability, around 20%.



**Figure 2.** Viability of *Sf9* cells after incubation with the indicated molecules (100  $\mu\text{g/mL}$ ) for 24 h.

## 4. Conclusions

Three new carvacrol derivatives possessing aliphatic carbon chains with different sizes as hydroxyl group substituents were synthesized. Evaluation of their impact in cell viability showed that medium size carbon chains may have some impact on the cell viability of *Sf9*. Other carvacrol derivatives are being synthesized in order to continue the evaluation of its effect in mixtures with active compounds as potential insecticides.

**Funding:** FCT under project PTDC/ASP-AGR/30154/2017 (POCI-01-0145-FEDER-030154) of COMPETE 2020, co-financed by FEDER and EU. FCT- Portugal and FEDER-COMPETE/QREN-EU for financial support to the research centres CQ/UM (UIDB/00686/2020), CF-UM-UP (UIDB/04650/2020) and REQUIMTE (UIDB/50006/2020). The NMR spectrometer Bruker Avance III 400 (part of the National NMR Network) was financed by FCT and FEDER.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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