

Full Length Research Paper

Phytochemical, acute and subacute toxicity studies of *Annona senegalensis* Pers. (Annonaceae) root wood extracts

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Considered safe because being from natural origin, plant products can exhibit toxic effects during their use. To ensure safe use of *Annona senegalensis* Pers. (Annonaceae), plant widely used for its therapeutic potential, the phytochemical and safety profiles of its root wood were investigated. Standard tube characterization tests were used to highlight phytochemical groups of root wood of the plant. Acute and subacute toxicity tests were carried out in Medical Research Institute (NMRI) mice following the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) test guidelines. The phytochemical screening showed the presence of sterols and triterpens, polyphenols, reducing compounds, and flavonoids in root wood of *Annona senegalensis* (*A. senegalensis*). In toxicological studies, the results indicate that the aqueous extract has a low acute toxicity with an LD50 greater than 5000 mg/kg b.w. The results of subacute toxicity study indicate that the mice receiving 300 mg/kg b.w. of extract experienced mildly decreased body weights in comparison with the control in non-significant manner, especially at the fourth week. After 28 days of treatment, apart aspartate aminotransferase (AST), no significant changes were found in the blood serum biochemical parameters such as total proteins, alanine aminotransferase (ALT), glucose, creatinin, and lipid levels of the treated mice in comparison with the control group. In view of the current results, *A. senegalensis* root wood aqueous extract would be considered as safe in both acute and subacute exposure. However, long-term toxicity studies are needed for further toxicological profile elicitation of the plant, and a possible reinforcement of clinical relevance of the results of laboratory studies.

Key words: *Annona senegalensis*, blood chemistry, Medical Research Institute (NMRI) mice, phytochemical compounds, sex-related toxicity, traditional medicine.

INTRODUCTION

A wide range of plant species has been used by man since the dawn of medicine for his health care. Because traditional herbal medicine play significant and increasing

roles in global healthcare in Asia, Africa, Americas, Australasia, and Europa (WHO, 2005), there is a real surge on the practice over the world. At the

International Conference on Traditional Medicine for South-East Asian Countries in February 2013, the WHO Director-General, Margaret Chan, stated that “traditional medicines, of proven quality, safety, and efficacy, contribute to the goal of ensuring that all people have access to care. For many millions of people, herbal medicines, traditional treatments, and traditional practitioners are the main source of health care, and sometimes the only source of care” (WHO, 2013). This assertion is consistent with WHO estimate which indicate that approximately 80% of the populations of developing countries still rely on a traditional system of medicine based on herbal drugs for primary healthcare (OMS, 2002).

In addition to their established pharmacological properties, one of reasons of the resurgence of interest in plant-based treatments is that herbal medicines, being “natural”, are considered as harmless (Ekor, 2014). Despite this positive perception of herbal treatments, their safety has most often not been evaluated per modern standards (Cheng and Leung, 2012; Pelkonen et al., 2014), and cases of contamination, adulteration, toxicity, or poisoning are regularly detected (Vanherweghem et al., 1993; Liu et al., 2014).

Until now, only a few quality toxicological studies have been carried out on the most widely used herbs; it is estimated that toxicological data are still missing for up to 90% of traditional Chinese herbal medicines (Cheng and Leung, 2012), and the situation appears even worse for herbs used in developing countries, notably in African traditional medicine (Kahumba et al., 2015; Poivre et al., 2017).

Annona senegalensis from Annonaceae family is one of the multiple medicinal plants widely used for their therapeutic potentials. The results of ethnopharmacological studies support this folk use of the plant. Indeed, Okhale et al. (2016) reported the use of all parts of *A. senegalensis* for the treatment of different ailments including yellow fever, tuberculosis, small pox, snake bites, hernia, necrotizing venoms, erectile dysfunction, difficulty in swallowing, infectious diseases, gastritis, male sexual impotence, diabetes. These popular uses are consistent with the numerous pharmacological properties of the plant (Okhale et al., 2016; Ngbolua et al., 2017) including anticonvulsant (Konaté et al., 2012; Igwe and Nwobodo, 2014), antibacterial (Jada et al., 2014, 2015), anthelmintique (Nguessan et al., 2017), antidrepanocytary (Mpiana et al., 2012), anti-inflammatory (Yeo et al., 2011), antivenous (Adzu et al., 2005; Oladele et al., 2014; Emmanuel et al., 2014), antitripanosomal (Kabiru et al., 2010), and anti-hyperglycemic (Nanti et al., 2018) activities.

Phytochemical screening of several organs of the plant revealed presence of numerous secondary metabolites as alkaloids, glycosides, tannins, flavonoids, carbohydrates and saponins in root (Igwe and Nwobodo, 2014; Ijaiya et al., 2014), sterols and/or triterpenes, anthocyanes, glucids, coumarins, flavonoids and alkaloids in root barks (Konaté et al., 2012), polyphenols, sterols and polyterpenes, flavonoids, quinonic compounds, alkaloids, and catechic tannins in leaves (Ijaiya et al., 2014; Nanti et al., 2018). Furthermore, extracts of several parts of the plant, with the exception of the root woods ones, have undergone toxicological investigations (Konaté et al., 2012; Okoye et al., 2012; Rukayyah and Onyinyechi, 2016; Nanti et al., 2018). Phytochemical and toxicological data on root wood are therefore very scarce. The objectives of the present study was to establish the phytochemical profile of *A. senegalensis* root wood, and to evaluate the acute and subacute oral toxicity of its aqueous extract *in vivo* in experimental animal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Plant

The roots of *A. senegalensis* were collected in May 2013 in the field of the experimental station of the Research Institute for Development of Gampéla, located at 25 km at East of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso capital. The geographical coordinates of the harvest site are 12° 25 ' North latitude and 1° 21' West longitude. A sample of harvested plant was identified and authenticated at the “Laboratoire de Biologie et d'Ecologie Végétales de l'Université Ouaga 1 Pr Joseph KI-ZERBO” where the voucher specimen has been deposited under number 6794.

The roots were washed, separated from their bark and the wood was dried in shade under ventilation and then powdered using a mechanical grinder (Gladiator Est. 1931 Type BN 1 Mach. 40461 1083). The powder obtained was used for phytochemical characterization and preparation of extracts for biological investigation. Prior the operations of extraction for phytochemical and biological further investigations, the plant powder was submitted to the relative humidity rate (RHR) determination. Thus, 1 g (W_i) of root wood powder has been placed in a oven (110°C) during 1 h in order to get a constant dry weight (W_f). The operation is repeated independently five times to allow the calculation of the average RHR according to the formula (Reeb and Milota, 1999):

$$RHR (\%) = \frac{W_i - W_f}{W_i} \times 100$$

Where, W_i and W_f are the respective initial final weights of powder.

Animals

Toxic effects of the aqueous extract of root wood of *A. senegalensis* were assessed *in vivo* in NMRI mice. Mice (average weight of 31 ±

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5 g), procured from the "Centre International de Recherche-Développement sur l'Élevage en zone Subhumide" (CIRDES), Burkina Faso, were used for the study. All animals were maintained in a controlled temperature room of $22 \pm 3^\circ\text{C}$ with a 12 h dark/light cycle. Animals had free access to water and standard laboratory pellet enriched with protein (29%). The protocol of experimentation using animals was carried out in accordance with protocols already validated by the Research Institute of Health Sciences (IRSS, Burkina Faso) and that meet international standards as described in OECD Guidance Document No. 19 (Guidance Document on the Recognition, Assessment and Use of Clinical Signs as Humane Endpoints for Experimental Animals Used in Safety Evaluation) (OECD, 2000).

Plant extracts preparation

Extraction for phytochemistry

The extracts for phytochemical screening were obtained by successive leaching of dried root wood powder from *A. senegalensis* with solvents of increasing polarity (dichloromethane, aqueous methanol solution (80: 20 v/v) and distilled water). Thus, 10 g of the dry vegetable drug was macerated for 24 h with 100 mL of dichloromethane and then leached with the same solvent until exhaustion. The pomace was then dried in a ventilated oven at 40°C . On the dry pomace, the same extraction process was carried out with an aqueous methanol solution (80: 20 v/v), then with distilled water. A portion of the hydro-methanolic fraction was hydrolyzed in an acidic medium for the characterization of the total o-glycoside genins. Four fractions of extracts were thus obtained for the screening of the phytochemical groups of the sample.

Acid hydrolysis of the hydro-methanol extract

A volume of 50 mL of the hydro-methanolic extract was placed in a 250 mL flask. A volume of 25 mL of a 10% hydrochloric acid solution was added to the extract. The acid mixture is boiled under reflux for 30 min. After cooling, 25 mL of distilled water was added to the contents of the flask and the whole was transferred to a 100 mL separatory funnel. The solution was extracted by liquid-liquid partition into a separatory funnel with 4×15 mL of dichloromethane. The organic phases were combined and dried over anhydrous sodium sulfate. The dehydrated organic phase was filtered on Whatman paper. The filtrate was then concentrated by half under reduced pressure on a rotavapor-type evaporator (Rotavapor - Büchi 461).

Extraction for toxicity tests

For toxicity tests purpose, an aqueous extract of dried root wood powder from *A. senegalensis* was prepared in the distilled water. Thus, 100 g of powder sample was mixed with distilled water (1000 mL) in a sterile flask. The mixture was homogenized with a glass rod and left to macerate with mechanical stirring at room temperature for 24 h. After 24 h, the aqueous maceration was filtered and then centrifuged (2000 trs/min, 5 min). The supernatant was collected, concentrated and frozen before lyophilised. The total weight of lyophilized extract was measured for the calculation of the extraction yield (Y) by the following formula:

$$Y (\%) = \frac{W_e}{W_p \times RHR} \times 100$$

Where RHR is relative humidity rate of the plant powder, W_p and W_e

are the respective initial powder and final lyophilized extract weights.

Phytochemical screening

Phytochemical tests were performed according to the method of Ciulei (1982) adapted at the Laboratory of Phytochemistry from the Institute of Research in Health Science (IRSS), Ouagadougou (Ouedraogo et al., 2016). Fractions of extracts obtained by successive leaching of plant material were tested for the presence of alkaloids (Mayer, Wagner, and Dragendorf tests), flavonoids (Reaction of Shibata or cyanidine test), anthracenoses (reaction of Bornträger's), carotenoids (reaction of Carr Price's), coumarins (reaction of Feigl), sterols and triterpenes (reaction of Liebermann-Burchard's), tannins (Ferric chloride test), reducing compounds (Fehling liqueur test), leucoanthocyanosides (Bate-Smith test), and saponosides (foam test).

Acute toxicity test

Acute oral toxicity test refers to those adverse effects occurring following administration of a single dose of a substance, or multiple doses given within 24 h. It was performed on both male and female NMRI mice in accordance with Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) test guideline 423 (OECD, 2001). Briefly, after a 3 h fastening period, the extract was administered orally by gavage in single dose to the mice according to the sequential procedure. While conducting the test, 2000 mg/kg body weight (b.w.) of extract was chosen as the starting dose. Animals were observed individually during the 2 h post-treatment to the end of which they were fed. They are then observed at least once daily for 14 days period for mortality and signs of toxicity such as changes in skin and fur, eyes, mucus membranes, convulsion, salivation, diarrhoea, lethargy, sleep and coma. Water consumption was monitored daily for each cage up to two weeks. Body weight and food consumption were recorded the first, second, third, seventh and fourteenth days. On the 14th day, after weighing, all the mice were euthanized using ketamine, then their internal organs removed, examined and weighted. A control group of male and female mice received a single dose of distilled water orally and have been monitored for 14 days as well as the treated group.

Sub-acute toxicity test

Subacute systemic toxicity is defined as adverse effects occurring after multiple or continuous exposure to a substance between 24 h and 28 days (De Jong et al., 2012). The sub-acute oral toxicity study was carried out according to OECD guideline 407 (OECD, 2008) with slight modification. Male mice were randomly divided into three groups of 5 animals each, each group kept in separate polypropylene cages. Group 1 served as control and received a daily administration of vehicle (distilled water). Groups 2 and 3 received extract doses of 30 and 300 mg/kg body weight, respectively. The extract and vehicle were administered daily at the same time for 28 days. All animal's were closely observed for the first 1 and 4 h of dosing to examine any adverse toxic signs, behavioural changes and at least twice a day for morbidity and mortality. Body weight and food consumption were recorded once weekly. Water consumption was monitored daily for each cage (5 mice per cage) up to 4 weeks. On the 29th day, after over-night fastening, all the mice were anaesthetized using ketamine and blood samples collected via cardiac puncture into dry tube (vacutainers) for each animal.

Table 1. Qualitative phytochemical analysis of root wood powder from *A. senegalensis*.

| Fraction | Phytochemical groups | Result |
|--|--------------------------|--------|
| Dichloromethane fraction | Alkaloids bases | - |
| | Flavonic aglycones | - |
| | Genin of anthracenosides | - |
| | Carotenoids | - |
| | Coumarins | - |
| | Sterols and triterpenes | + |
| Hydro-methanolic fraction | Polyphenols (tannins) | + |
| | Reducing compounds | + |
| | Leucoanthocyanosides | - |
| | Saponosides | - |
| Hydrolysate of hydro-methanolic fraction | Flavonic aglycones | + |
| | Sterols and triterpenes | + |
| | Coumarins | - |
| Aqueous residual fraction | Reducing compounds | + |
| | Polyphenols (tannins) | - |
| | Saponosides | - |

+ = Present; - = Absent

Blood analysis

The blood samples in dry vacutainers were centrifuged at 3000 rpm for 10 min using a table centrifuge (ROTOFIX 32A, Mettich Zenfrifugen, Germany); the sera obtained were used for biochemical assays. Blood chemistry tests were performed on an automatic biochemistry analyzer (Automate Jenway 6400). Serum alanine aminotransferase (ALT), aspartate aminotransferase (AST), creatinin (CREAT), lipides, total proteins, and glucose were determined.

Effects on vital organs

After blood collection, internal organs including heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, and spleen were collected carefully from sacrificed animal. The surface of isolated organs were dehydrated with cotton wool and weighed on a analytical balance (Sartorius, model 1702). Each weighed organ was standardized for 100 g body weight of each mouse weighed to determine relative organs weights. After that, a gross examination (macroscopic analysis) of the target organs of the control and treated animals was done to check any significant change in texture and shape.

Statistical analysis

Results are expressed as means \pm standard deviation (SD). If applicable, means and standard deviations were calculated separately for males and females. The data were processed with Graph Pad Prism.5. The statistical significance of difference between treated and control groups were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), followed by Dunett's multiple comparison tests. Differences were considered to be statically significant at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Phytochemical screening

The relative humidity rate (RHR) was $3.96 \pm 0.03\%$ and the average yield (Y) was $6.89 \pm 0.22\%$. The extract and its lyophilizate gave a bitter taste.

The phytochemical screening on *A. senegalensis* root wood powder (dichloromethane, MeOH/water solution and water) extracts indicated the presence of sterols and triterpenes, polyphenols (tannins), reducing compounds, and flavonic aglycones. The results are presented in Table 1.

Acute toxicity study of the plant extract

Mice mortality record

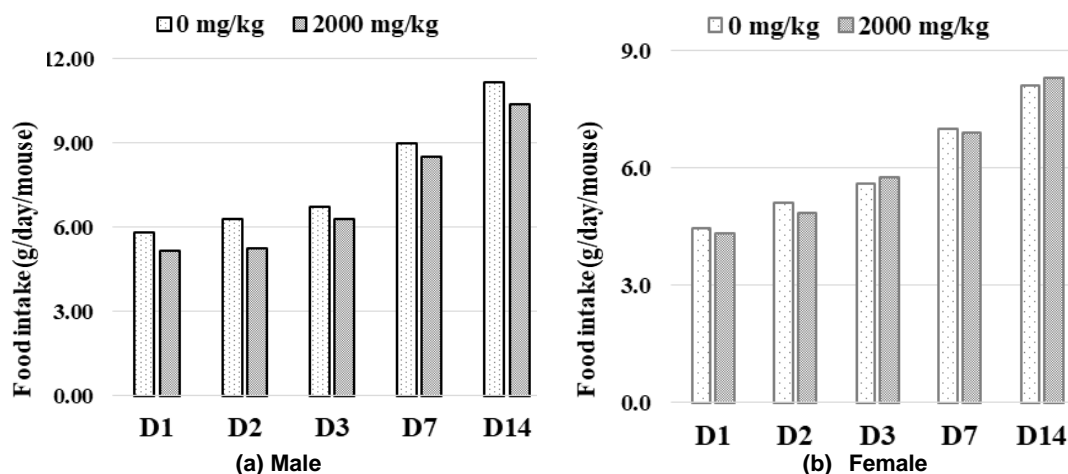
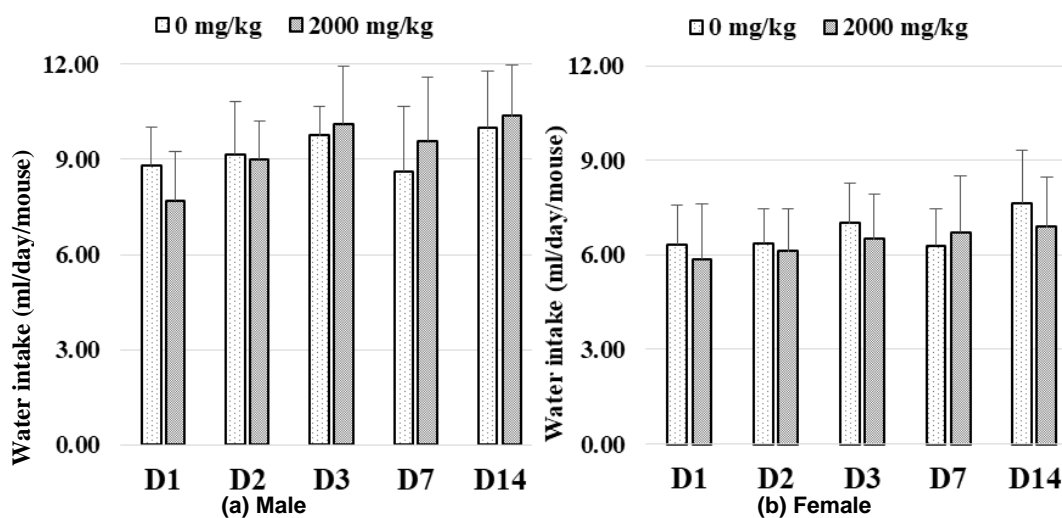
After 2000 mg/kg single dose administration of *A. senegalensis* extract, there was no animal death in the first step of the study. Further more, upon the 14-day observation period, no sign of toxicity was noted in the wellness parameters of the animals. A similar observation was made in the second step study. The results of acute toxicity study are presented in Table 2. According to the OECD acute toxic class method, the oral LD₅₀ of the tested extract is estimated to 5000 mg/kg b.w.

Effect of oral acute administration of extract on mice food and water intake

The food intake of both control and treated mice was

Table 2. Mortality of male and female mice in acute oral toxicity study.

| Dose (mg/kg b.w.) | No. of death / Initial No. of male mice | | No. of death / Initial No. of female mice | |
|----------------------|---|-------------|---|-------------|
| | First step | Second step | First step | Second step |
| 0 | 0/3 | 0/3 | 0/3 | 0/3 |
| 2000 | 0/3 | 0/3 | 0/3 | 0/3 |

**Figure 1.** Food intake evolution on control and mice acutely exposed to *A. senegalensis* root wood extract.**Figure 2.** Water intake evolution on control and mice acutely exposed to *A. senegalensis* root wood extract.

increased continuously with respect to their initial food intake (Figure 1). This observation was the same in both male and female mice. In male mice receiving the plant extract, there was a decrease in food consumption compared to controls. This decline of food intake ranged from 0.5 to 1 g. Unlike males, no significant changes in food consumption were observed in treated female mice

compared to controls.

The results of the water consumption are as shown in Figure 2. Compared to the values recorded in the controls, it is noted that the aqueous extract of *A. senegalensis* root wood, at a single dose of 2000 mg/kg b.w. did not affect water intake, either in male mice or in female mice.

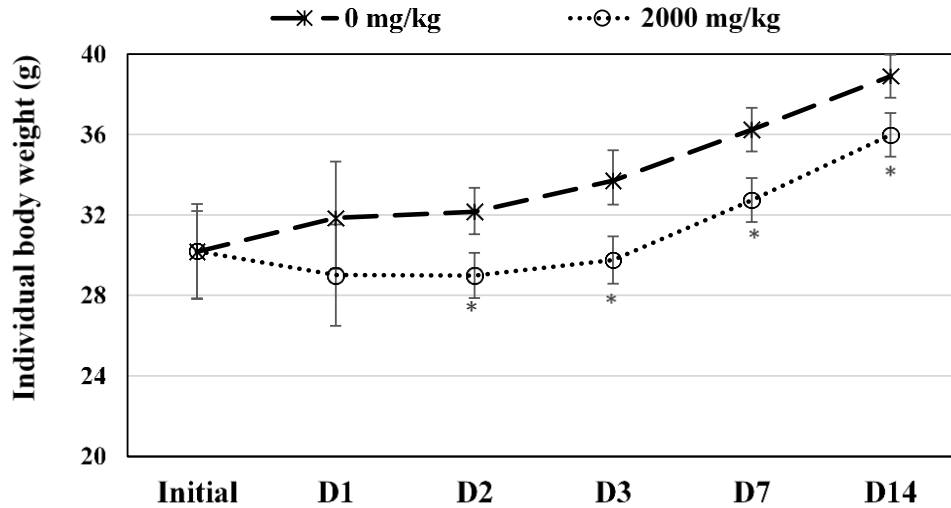


Figure 3. Mean body weight of both control and acute treated male mice.

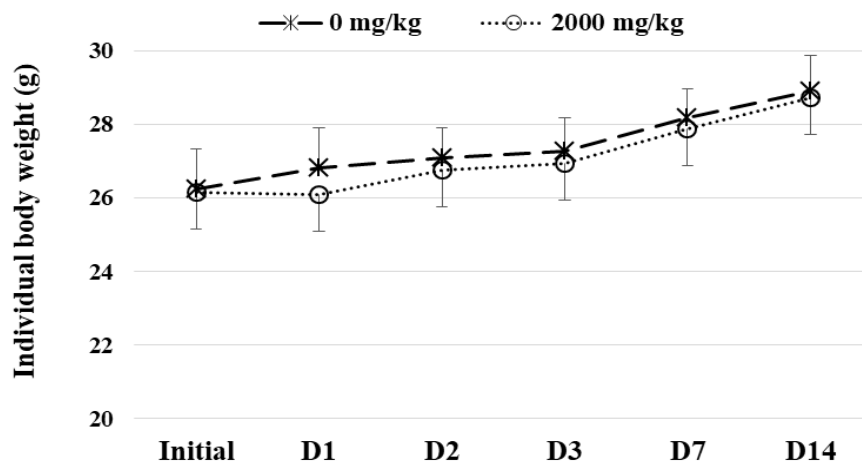


Figure 4. Mean body weight of both control and acute treated female mice.

Effect of oral acute administration of extract on mice body and organs weights

Body weight: The body weight of all the both male and female mice increased with respect to their initial value. From 2nd to 14th, the male mice received extract at dose of 2000 mg/kg b.w. single exhibited significant ($p < 0.05$) loss in body weight gain comparatively to control group (Figure 3). For female, no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) were observed in the body weight of extract treated mice compared to their respective control measurements (Figure 4).

Organs relative weight: At a single oral dose of 2000 mg/kg, the results showed there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in the relative organ weights of the extract treated mice with respect to the mice of control

group (Table 3).

Sub-acute toxicity

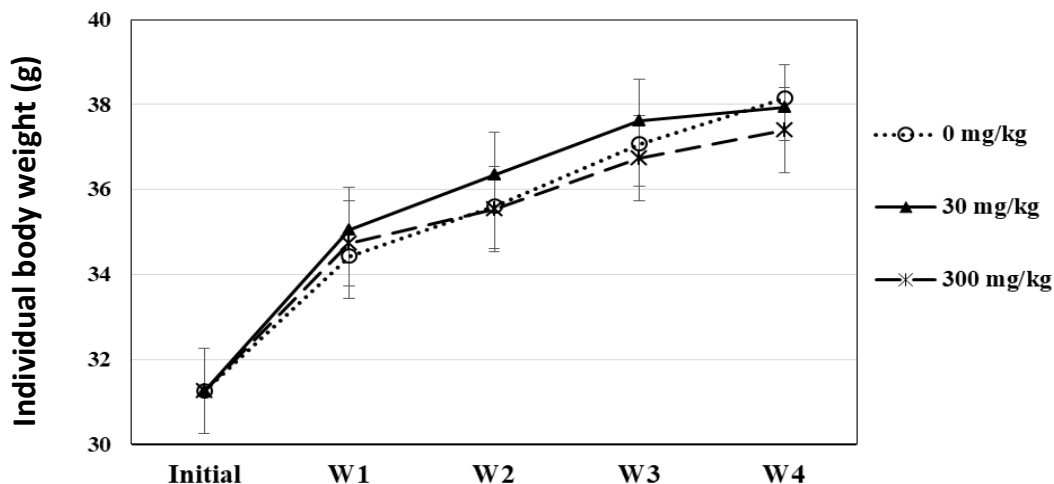
There was no change in normal behavioral pattern of animals treated with extract, and no sign and symptoms of toxicity were observed during the daily observations which were done continuously upon the 28 days of the study.

Effect of oral subacute administration of extract on mice body and organs weights

Body weight: The results of recorded body weights of the mice treated with root wood aqueous extract of A.

Table 3. Mean relative organ weights after an acute treatment with *A. senegalensis* root wood aqueous extract.

| Dose (mg/kg b.w.) | Sex | Organs relative weight (mean \pm SD) | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | | Heart | Lung | Liver | Kidneys | Spleen |
| 0 | M | 0.400 \pm 0.033 | 0.434 \pm 0.048 | 4.634 \pm 0.307 | 1.422 \pm 0.175 | 0.500 \pm 0.142 |
| | F | 0.406 \pm 0.055 | 0.444 \pm 0.058 | 4.446 \pm 0.335 | 1.350 \pm 0.136 | 0.536 \pm 0.143 |
| 2000 | M | 0.386 \pm 0.038 | 0.432 \pm 0.029 | 4.578 \pm 0.396 | 1.436 \pm 0.124 | 0.511 \pm 0.033 |
| | F | 0.410 \pm 0.071 | 0.428 \pm 0.050 | 4.514 \pm 0.312 | 1.366 \pm 0.162 | 0.486 \pm 0.140 |

**Figure 5.** Mean body weight of both control and treated mice with *A. senegalensis* root wood aqueous extract.**Table 4.** Mean relative organ weights of mice after 28 days treatment with *A. senegalensis* root wood aqueous extract.

| Dose (mg/kg b.w.) | Relative organ weights (mean \pm SD) | | | | |
|-------------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Heart | Lung | Liver | Kidneys | Spleen |
| 0 | 0.402 \pm 0.037 | 0.474 \pm 0.200 | 4.234 \pm 0.340 | 1.402 \pm 0.054 | 0.536 \pm 0.159 |
| 30 | 0.396 \pm 0.023 | 0.476 \pm 0.170 | 4.150 \pm 0.460 | 1.350 \pm 0.025 | 0.526 \pm 0.091 |
| 300 | 0.398 \pm 0.043 | 0.458 \pm 0.140 | 4.176 \pm 0.440 | 1.346 \pm 0.033 | 0.535 \pm 0.037 |

senegalensis (doses of 30 and 300 mg/kg b.w.) are presented in Figure 5. For control as well as treated mice, the results show a steady increase in the body weight (from \approx 31 to \approx 38 g) upon the 28 days of study. According to Figure 5, mice treated with extract at the daily dose of 30 mg/kg for 28 days showed increased body weight gain in comparison with the control in a non-significant fashion, the second and third weeks. The mice receiving 300 mg/kg showed non-significant decrease of body weight gain in comparison with the control, especially at the fourth week.

Macroscopic effects of *A. senegalensis* extract on vital organs: Macroscopic examination of vital organs such as heart, lung, liver, kidney, and spleen of control and treated animals with root wood aqueous extract show

that extract does not affect vital organs as there was no change in color and aspect of different organs.

Relative organ weights: After 28 days daily dosing of mice with *A. senegalensis* extract or distilled water and animal organs were prelevated and weighted. Table 4 shows the results. No significant differences were observed in the weights of all organs compared to their respective control measurements.

Effect of oral administration of *A. senegalensis* root wood aqueous extract on water and food consumption

Food intake: During the 28 days of study, the food intake

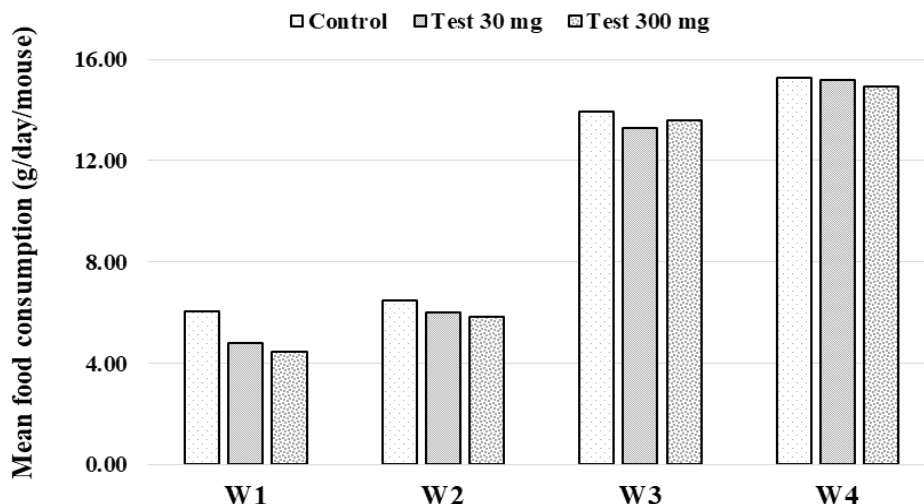


Figure 6. Food intake in subacute toxicity study.

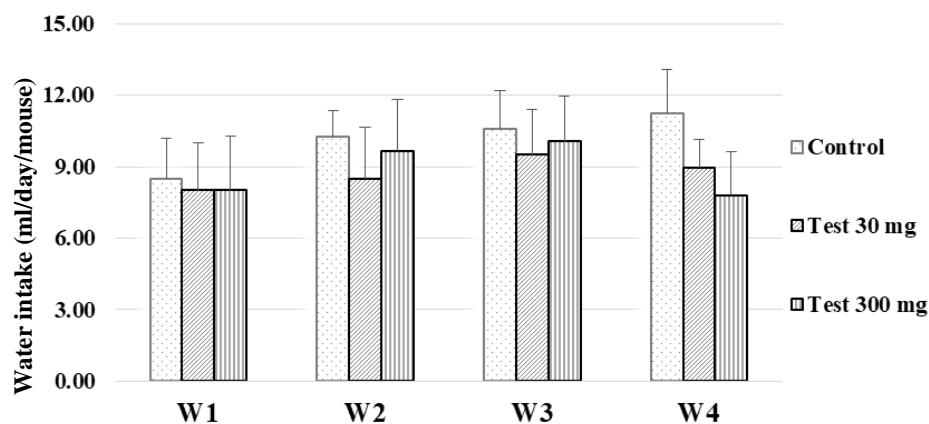


Figure 7. Food intake in subacute toxicity study.

of both control and treated mice was increased continuously with respect to their initial food intake (Figure 6). During the first week, a clear decrease in food consumption was noted in mice receiving the plant extract compared to controls. This decline of food intake ranged from 1.24 to 1.54 g at 30 and 300 mg/kg/day, respectively.

Water consumption: The results of daily water intake measure during the 28 days of the study period are presented in Figure 7. The average water consumption of treated groups showed a decrease, especially during the fourth week, in comparison with the control but in a non-significant manner.

Effect of extract on biochemical parameters of mice

Table 5 shows the results of biochemical parameters of

treated animals and control ones. Except for AST, *A. senegalensis* root wood aqueous extract did not cause significant changes in blood serum biochemical parameters such as total proteins, alanine aminotransferase, glucose, creatinin, and lipid levels when compared with control group. Both dose of extract (30 and 300 mg/kg b.w.) induced significant changes ($p < 0.05$) in AST value of treated mice comparatively to control animals.

DISCUSSION

A. senegalensis is a plant widely used in several countries of South-Saharan Africa and even outside the continent, in human or veterinary medicine. Numerous ethnomedicinal uses have been attributed to different parts of the plant, as well as its use as food and food additives (Okhale et al., 2016). *A. senegalensis* root

Table 5. Biochemical parameters for mice after 28 days treatment with *Lannea microcarpa* trunks barks aqueous extract.

| Dose (mg/kg b.w.) | Biochemical parameter | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | ALT (U/L) | AST (U/L) | CREAT (mmol/L) | Glucose (mmol/L) | Proteins (g/dl) | Lipids (mg/dl) |
| 0 | 38.03 ± 5.91 | 4.86 ± 0.67 | 0.94 ± 0.16 | 7.49 ± 2.52 | 4.55 ± 0.18 | 539.90 ± 66.79 |
| 30 | 39.28 ± 4.30 | 8.42 ± 1.81** | 1.25 ± 0.17 | 8.87 ± 2.94 | 6.04 ± 0.28 | 370.09 ± 56.59 |
| 300 | 43.25 ± 6.42 | 9.68 ± 1.41** | 1.15 ± 0.10 | 9.16 ± 2.80 | 5.22 ± 1.08 | 425.52 ± 75.65 |

wood is used as a toothpick in Burkina Faso (Nacoulma, 1996) and Central African Republic (Ake et al., 1978) for smoking cessation. Generally, the resurgence of interest in plant-based treatments seems to have various origins: it may come from patients disappointment with standard treatments (in terms of efficacy and/or safety), from the rewarding feeling of active participation in the choice of therapeutic means, from the beliefs that the use of herbs is associated with a healthier lifestyle, and that herbal medicines, being “natural”, are therefore harmless (Ekor, 2014). However, although often perceived as innocuous by the general public, herbal substances harbor phytochemicals responsible of toxic effects (Babu et al., 2016; Poivre et al., 2017; Hudson et al., 2018). However, both phytochemical and toxicological investigations on root wood are very scarce. For safe use of *A. senegalensis* root wood, it was necessary to establish its toxicological and phytochemical profiles.

In the present study, the relative humidity rate (RHR) of the powder from the root wood of the plant were determined. This parameter, which measures the water content of the drug, was less than 10%. This indicates that the powder of the plant can be stored for a long time in good conditions without major risk of deterioration of chemical principles (Paris and Moyse, 1965; WHO, 1998). The extraction yield measuring the solvent efficiency to extract specific components from the original material (Fayera et al., 2018) was $6.89 \pm 0.22\%$. Igwe and Nwobodo (2014) obtained a yield of 30% by extracting *A. senegalensis* root with water. The yield obtained is slightly upper relative to that reported by Adzu et al. (2005) with *A. senegalensis* root bark extracted with methanol (5.58%).

Chemical constituents determine the biological activities of the plant, whether the activity is a toxicity or a pharmacological property. Many plants produce toxic secondary metabolites as natural defence from adverse conditions. In some toxicologically and medicinally relevant plant species, these toxic substances are not distinguished from therapeutically active ingredients (Ifeoma and Oluwakanyinsola, 2013). In the present study, qualitative phytochemical analysis made for the root wood of *A. senegalensis* revealed the presence of sterols and triterpenes, polyphenols (tannins), reducing compounds, and flavonic aglycones. Konaté et al. (2012) had shown the presence of sterols and/or triterpenes, anthocyanes, glucids, coumarins, flavonoids and alkaloids

in root bark of *A. senegalensis* from Burkina Faso. Comparing the present results with those of Konaté et al. (2012), one can speculates that root bark is qualitatively richer in chemical groups than root wood. Indeed, in addition to the chemical groups present in the wood, the barks also contain anthocyanins, coumarins, and alkaloids. However, the wood contains tannins that are not highlighted in bark. Either one or combination of detected chemicals may be responsible of biological activities of root wood.

In view of the strong traditional use of the root, this study investigates the safety of this part of the plant by determination of eventual detrimental effects. For the toxicological investigation, the oral administration of a single dose of aqueous extract in both male and female mice at 2000 mg/kg b.w. is performed. No effect on mortality, examined clinical sign, water consumption and relative organic weight are observed. Absence of mortality permits to estimate the median lethal dose (DL_{50}) at 5000 mg/kg b.w. in accordance with the Guideline 423 of OECD (2001). With such median lethal dose, aqueous extract of *A. senegalensis* is classified to belong to substance unlikely to present acute hazard according to the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals of the United Nations (ONU, 2017). These results is in agreement with those of previous studies which has noted the absence of mortality by intraperitoneal single dose of 3000 mg/kg b.w. (Konaté et al., 2012) and oral single dose of 5000 mg/kg b.w. (Nanti et al., 2018) with root bark of the plant. In male mice, a mild decrease in food consumption was noted comparatively to control male mice. Interestingly, the decrease in food intake is correlated with a reduction in weight gain upon exposure to aqueous extract of root wood of *A. senegalensis*. Such results was not observed by Nanti et al. (2018) in rat. These authors showed that single oral doses of aqueous extract of *A. senegalensis* root barks (550, 1,750, and 3,000 mg/kg b.w.) administered to the rats, did not induce significant variation of weight in these animals after two weeks of monitoring.

The body weight decrease in this study may be the consequence of plant extract compounds actions on the digestive system of the test animals. Indeed, tannins, water-soluble polyphenols highlighted in *A. senegalensis* root wood by this study, have been reported to be responsible for decreases in feed intake, growth rate,

feed efficiency, net metabolizable energy, and protein digestibility in experimental animals (Chung et al., 1998). They are the ability to form indigestible complexes with the nutrients of foods such as iron and food proteins (Butler, 1992), or with the proteins of the organism such as digestive enzymes (Kumar and Singh, 1984). This results in an inhibition of the absorption of complexed nutrients and the decrease in the activity of digestive enzymes with consequent reduction of nutritional efficiency. The action of these compounds can be maintained for up to 15 days after ingestion of the product containing them (FAO, 1992). Note that this action of the extract is practically absent in female mice, since the weight loss is not significant with animals of this sex. Such a dimorphic biological reaction to a chemical is a common phenomenon reported by previous work (Nicolson et al., 2010).

In the sub-acute toxicity study, the daily oral administration of root wood aqueous extract from *A. senegalensis* at doses of 30 and 300 mg/kg /day b.w. during four weeks did not cause any death or clinical signs of toxicity in mice. During the study period, a steady increase in the body weight was observed in both treated and control animal groups. Measures of animal growth are routinely evaluated in toxicology studies and are key to interpretation of compound-related effects (Hoffman et al., 2002). After 28 days of treatment, the mice which received extract at dose of 300 mg/kg/day b.w. experienced mildly decreased body weights in comparison with the control in non-significant manner, especially at the fourth week. This drop in weight is not sufficient to conclude to a toxicity of the extract. Interestingly, the food intake and water consumption were similar in the treated groups comparatively to the control one.

Macroscopic examination of vital organs such as heart, lung, liver, kidney, and spleen of control and treated animals show that the extract does not induce change in color and aspect of different organs. In addition, no significant differences were found in the organ weights of the treated animals in comparison with the control groups. As organ weight evaluation is an essential part of the toxicologic and risk assessment of chemicals from miscellaneous sources (Michael et al., 2007), the results suggest a possible absence of extract-related organs toxicity.

In addition to organs macroscopic examinations and the determination of their relative weight, blood biochemical parameters are commonly used as indicators of organ damages in toxicity study. The results of subacute toxicity study indicate that, with the exception of the AST value, no significant changes were found in the blood serum biochemical parameters such as total proteins, alanine aminotransferase, glucose, creatinin, and lipid levels of the treated mice in comparison with the control groups. Rukayyah and Onyinyechi (2016) showed that a subacute intraperitoneal administration of

dried carpels methanol/water (1:1) extract of *A. senegalensis* did not induce significant increase in the serum level of ALP and ALT in mice, a concentration dependent decrease of AST. Alanine amino transaminase (ALT) and Aspartate amino transaminase (AST) are largely used for the assessment of liver damage by drugs or any other hepatotoxin (Ramaiah et al., 2011). Although both Aspartate and Alanine aminotransferases are highly concentrated in the liver, AST is also diffusely represented in the heart, skeletal muscle, kidneys, brain and red blood cells, while ALT has low concentrations in skeletal muscle and kidney. An increase in ALT serum levels is, therefore more specific for liver damage (Giannini et al., 2005). Furthermore, the liver is well designed for its central role in carbohydrate, protein and fat metabolism. While ALT and AST are used for specific damaging reaction of liver to toxic, blood proteins, glucose, and lipids level can serve to assess global hepatic functional status. No change was noted in blood glucose concentration. These results are similar to those of Nanti et al. (2018) who noted that *A. senegalensis* root bark extract, at the oral single doses of 50, 200, and 300 mg/kg b.w., does not significantly alter blood glucose values 180 min after the treatment. However, it should be noted that the study design was different, the present study repeated administration in mice while that of Nanti et al. (2018) was single-dose in rats. In the present study, with the absence of significant changes in blood level of both ALT, proteins, glucose, and lipids, one can speculate that aqueous extract of root wood of *A. senegalensis*, at up to daily dose of 300 mg/kg/day b.w. for 28 days, is safe to the liver in mice. However, these results must be supplemented by anatomopathological analyses and long-term toxicity studies (subchronic and chronic) before reaching unequivocal conclusions.

Serum creatinine, an endogenous cation produced mainly by muscle metabolism, is the most widely used marker to assess renal injury (Tschuppert et al., 2007). In the present study, no significant change in creatinine values was found when comparing treated and control groups. This would suggest a safety of aqueous extract of root wood of *A. senegalensis* for mice kidneys at the tested doses, even if these results deserve to be confirmed by anatomopathological examinations.

Conclusion

In the present study, phytochemical profile and toxicological effect of *A. senegalensis* were investigated. In the present study, phytochemical profile and toxicological effect of root wood from *A. senegalensis* were investigated. Phytochemical screening revealed several chemical groups in the root wood of *A. senegalensis*. The results show that the aqueous extract did not induce mortality in both male and female mice up

to the dose of 2000 mg/kg b.w. However, a sex-related dimorphic profile in the adverse reactions of the extract has been noted. Indeed, male mice showed a significant decrease in body weight correlated with loss of food intake. This weight loss could be attributable to the toxic action of certain compounds of the extract such as tannins. The subacute toxicity test showed that the aqueous extract of wood from the root of the plant exhibit no significant toxic effect up to a dose of 300 mg/kg/day b.w. In view of the current results, subject to results of hematological and anatomopathological analysis, the root wood aqueous extract of *A. senegalensis* would be safe in both acute and subacute exposure conditions. For further clinical relevance of the results, toxicity study must be extended to long term toxicity test as subchronic (90 days repeated administration) and chronic (at least 6 months repeated administration in rodent) toxicity study.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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