

Pharmacological evaluation of standardized extract of *phyllanthus amarus* against arsenic induced nephrotoxicity in laboratory rats

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to evaluate the pharmacological potential of a standardized extract of *Phyllanthus amarus* against arsenic-induced nephrotoxicity in laboratory rats. Chronic exposure to arsenic is known to cause severe renal damage through oxidative stress, inflammation, and cellular apoptosis. Adult Wistar rats were divided into control, arsenic-treated, extract-treated, and combination groups. Arsenic exposure (via sodium arsenite) significantly increased serum creatinine, urea, and uric acid levels, while decreasing antioxidant enzymes such as SOD, CAT, and GSH. Histopathological examination revealed tubular necrosis and glomerular degeneration in arsenic-intoxicated rats. Co-administration of *Phyllanthus amarus* extract (standardized for total polyphenolic content) markedly ameliorated biochemical and histological alterations, restoring renal architecture and antioxidant balance. The extract exhibited strong nephroprotective activity through its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory mechanisms. These findings suggest that standardized *Phyllanthus amarus* extract offers significant protection against arsenic-induced renal toxicity and may serve as a potential natural therapeutic agent for heavy metal-induced nephropathy.

KEY WORDS: *Phyllanthus amarus* arsenic, nephrotoxicity.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. History of Nephrotoxicity

Nephrotoxicity refers to the adverse effects on the kidneys caused by exposure to certain substances. This can result in impaired kidney function and potentially lead to kidney damage or failure if not identified and managed promptly. The history of nephrotoxicity spans several decades, with research continually expanding our understanding of its mechanisms, risk factors, and management strategies.

Figure **Renal Diseases** (Harper, Guyton A.C. 1996)

Kidneys are the organs that have numerous biological roles. Their primary role is to maintain the homeostat of body fluids by filtering and secreting metabolites (such as urea) and minerals from the blood and excreting the nitrogenous wastes along with water, as urine. Because the kidneys are poised to sense plasma concentrations of ions such as sodium, potassium, hydrogen, and compounds such as amino acids, creatinine, bicarbonate, and glucose, they are important regulators of blood pressure, glucose metabolism, and erythropoiesis.

Renal diseases are classified into the six different physiological categories.

a) Acute Renal Failure (ARF)

A sudden decline in kidney function occurs in patients with pre-existing renal impairment is called Acute Renal Failure. ARF can be diagnostically classified into prerenal, intrarenal and post renal failure.

b) Chronic Renal Failure (CRF)

CRF is due a number of processes leading to permanent loss of kidney function. Its primary causes are high blood pressure and diabetes, but it can also be due to urinary tract obstruction and kidney abnormalities, like polycystic kidney disease.

Causes of CRF includes:

- i. Chronic glomerulonephritis
- ii. Hypertension
- iii. Chronic pyelonephritis
- iv. Urinary obstruction

v. Congenital abnormality

vi. Metabolic abnormalitie

c) Hypertensive Kidney Disease

Patients with severe hypertension cause renal lesion that diminish the blood flow or diminished glomerular filtration per nephron.

d) The Nephrotic syndrome

Nephrotic syndrome is a disease, which is characterized especially by loss of large quantities of plasma protein through the urine. Protein loss is due to increased permeability of glomerular membrane.

e) Specific Tubular Disorders

They can cause abnormal reabsorption or lack of reabsorption of certain substances by the tubules. If any required gene is absent or abnormal, then tubules might be deficient of one particular enzyme or carrier. This leads to different tubular disorder.

f) Drug Induced Renal Disease

Drug – induced kidney failure is a major adverse event associated with multiple medication classes. The kidney is particularly vulnerable to drugs and other agents that cause renal damage (nephrolithiasis). Medications as diverse as OTC analgesics (ibuprofen, acetaminophen), antibiotics and chemotherapeutic agents can cause kidney damage.

Acute kidney injury

Acute kidney injury is the new consensus term for acute renal failure. It refers to a clinical syndrome characterized by a fast (hours to days) decrease in renal excretory function, with the accumulation of products of nitrogen metabolism such as creatinine and urea and other clinically unmeasured waste products. Other common clinical and laboratory manifestations include decreased urine output (not always present), accumulation of metabolic acids, and increased potassium and phosphate concentrations. The term acute kidney injury has replaced acute renal failure to emphasize that a continuum of kidney injury exists that begins long before sufficient loss of excretory kidney function can be measured with standard laboratory

tests. The term also suggests a continuum of prognosis, with increasing mortality associated with even small rises in serum creatinine, and additional increases in mortality as creatinine concentration rises (Devarajan, 2006).

The described notions have led to a consensus definition of acute kidney injury by the Acute Dialysis Quality Initiative. This RIFLE (risk, injury, failure, loss, end-stage) criteria (figure 1.1) have been broadly supported with minor modifications by the Acute Kidney Injury Network, and both definitions have now been validated in thousands of patients and seem to work similarly to each other. A new consensus definition merging the RIFLE criteria and the Acute Kidney Injury Network definition has emerged from the Kidney Disease: Improving Global Outcomes (K-DIGO) group (Bellemeo *et al.*, 2013)

Nephrotoxicity Signs And Symptoms

Symptoms of nephrotoxicity may begin so slowly that you don't notice them right away. Healthy kidneys prevent the buildup of wastes and extra fluid in your body and balance the salts and minerals in your blood such as calcium, phosphorus, sodium, and potassium. Your kidneys also make hormones that help control blood pressure, make red blood cells, and keep your bones strong. Nephrotoxicity means your kidneys no longer work well enough to do these jobs and, as a result, other health problems develop. As your kidney function goes down, you may:

- Have swelling, usually in your legs, feet, or ankles
- Get headaches
- Feel itchy
- Feel tired during the day and have sleep problems at night
- Feel sick to your stomach, lose your sense of taste, not feel hungry, or lose weight
- Make little or no urine
- Have muscle cramps, weakness, or numbness
- Have pain, stiffness, or fluid in your joints
- Feel confused, have trouble focusing, or have memory problems

LITERATURE REVIEW

Antioxidant capacity of methanolic extracts from different plant parts of *Alpinia galanga*, *Curcuma longa* and *Etlingera elatior* exhibited varied results. Significant antioxidant activity were found in the polymeric tannin rhizome fraction of *A. galanga*, non-polymeric phenolic fraction of *C. longa* rhizomes and its extract, and in the polymeric tannin fraction of *E. elatior* leaves (Chan et al., 2011).

Mahdavi et al. (2017) found that the *Etlingera sayapensis* leaf extracts had the strongest antioxidant activity accompanied by the stem and then the extracts from the rhizome. Polarity of the solvent used in solvent extraction specifically influences the antioxidant activity of the extracts, resulting in the maximum antioxidant activity in methanolic extracts while lowest antioxidant activity is found in ethyl acetate extracts respectively.

Studies by Sattar et al. (2013) found that *Zingiber officinale* and *Alpinia allughas* had antioxidant activity (percent inhibition) ranging from 26.8 to 68.3 and 14.3 to 58.5 in various solvents, respectively. Generally, the results suggest that both spices are excellent sources of phytochemicals that can be used for medications and/or dietary supplements.

In addition to enhancing scavenging efficiency in *Curcuma alismatifolia*, Taheri et al (2014) concluded that radiation exposure up to 20 Gy would improve the consistency and volume of bioactive compounds, including phenolic compounds and flavonoids.

Barbosa et al. (2019) found that methanolic extracts from *Hornstedtia conoidea* leaves had considerably higher antioxidant potential compared with rhizomes. In addition, methanolic extracts from *Hornstedtia conoidea* leaves have slightly higher phenolic content relative to rhizomes. This is an implication that most of the phenolic compounds in *Hornstedtia conoidea* are primarily responsible for its strong antioxidant activity.

High phenolic content was found in the freeze dried peels of ginger and turmeric rhizomes. In addition phenolic compounds like 6- gingerol and curcumin increases their antioxidant potential enormously. Therefore, the peels discarded from ginger and turmeric rhizomes may be an fascinating source of bioactive compounds to be introduced as food additives preservatives, beneficial components, nutritional supplements and nutraceuticals because they are not only easy and inexpensive to manufacture but also without any perceptible danger to human safety. During a specific product/service life cycle, food waste including peels may be refined into value-added goods in this manner (Tinello et al., 2019).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Materials:

Animals:

Sprague Dawley rats weighing 180-200 gm

Instrument used:

Spectrofluorometer

Centrifuge

UV Spectrophotometer

Animal weighing electronic balance

Chemical weighing balance

Tissue Homogenizer

METHODS:

In-vivo parameters:

1)Body weight and urinary output

2)Blood parameter

Ex-vivo parameters:

1)Tissue Parameters

2)Determination of Lipid Peroxidation (MDA content)

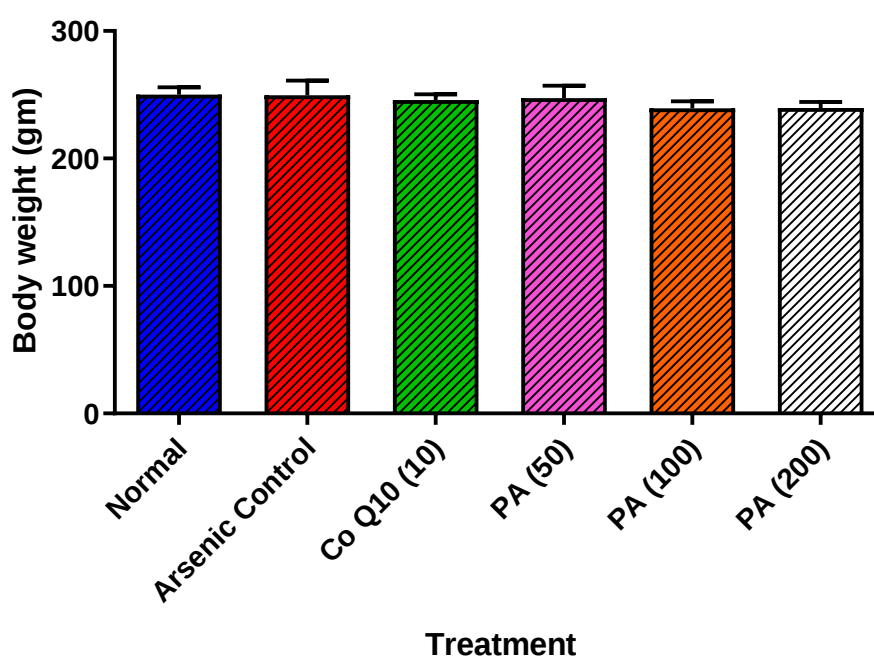
3)Determination of Reduced glutathione (GSH)4)Determination of nitric oxide (NO)

5)Determination of tissue protein

RESULTS

1.Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in body weight:

Body weight (gm) - Mean $\pm$ SEM					
Normal	Arsenic Control	Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg)	PA (50 mg/kg)	PA (100 mg/kg)	PA (200 mg/kg)
250.00 $\pm$ 2.35	249.50 $\pm$ 4.70	245.80 $\pm$ 1.82	247.30 $\pm$ 3.97	239.30 $\pm$ 2.22	239.50 $\pm$ 2.03



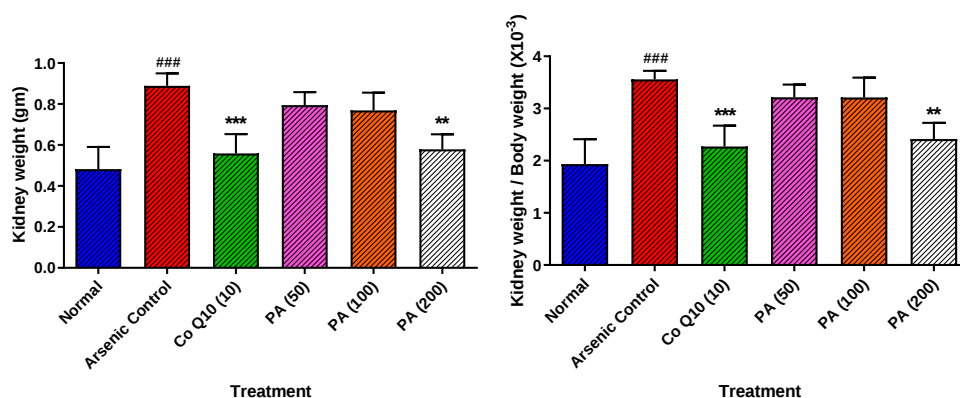
Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in body weight

Data were analyzed by One-Way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's.

When compared to normal group, administration of sodium arsenite did not cause any significant change in body weight in arsenic control group. Treatment of Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg) and *Phyllanthus amarus* (50, 100 and 200 mg/kg) for 28 days also did not show any significant change in the body weight.

2. Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in absolute and relative kidney weights:

Time (in days)	Absolute kidney weight (gm) and Relative kidney weight - Mean $\pm$ SEM					
	Normal	Arsenic Control	Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg)	PA (50 mg/kg)	PA (100 mg/kg)	PA (200 mg/kg)
Kidney weight (gm)	0.48 $\pm$ 0.04	0.89 $\pm$ 0.03 ^{###}	0.56 $\pm$ 0.04 ^{***}	0.80 $\pm$ 0.03	0.77 $\pm$ 0.04	0.58 $\pm$ 0.03 ^{**}
Kidney weight / Body weight (X10 ⁻³)	1.93 $\pm$ 0.20	3.56 $\pm$ 0.07 ^{###}	2.27 $\pm$ 0.16 ^{***}	3.22 $\pm$ 0.10	3.21 $\pm$ 0.16	2.42 $\pm$ 0.13 ^{**}



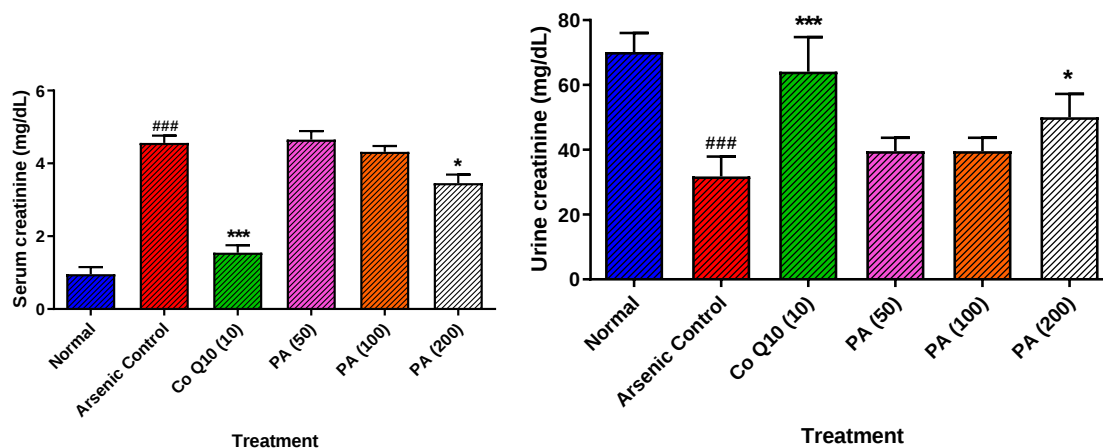
Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in absolute and relative kidney weights

Data were analyzed by One-Way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's. ^{###} $P < 0.001$ as compared with normal group and ^{**} $P < 0.01$, ^{***} $P < 0.001$ as compared with Arsenic Control group on respective days.

When compared to normal group, administration of sodium arsenite caused a significant increase ($P < 0.001$) in kidney weight (absolute) and kidney weight to body weight ratio (relative kidney weight) in arsenic control group. On the other hand, treatment of Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg) for 28 days resulted in the significant attenuation ($P < 0.001$) of ratio of kidney weight to body weight and kidney weight as compared with arsenic control group. When compared with arsenic control rats, *Phyllanthus amarus* (200 mg/kg) treated rats also showed the significant decreased ($P < 0.01$) in the absolute and relative kidney weights. Administration of *Phyllanthus amarus* (50 and 100 mg/kg) did not show any significant protection against Arsenic-induced increased renal weights.

3. Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in serum and urine creatinine levels:

Parameter	Serum creatinine (mg/dL) and urine creatinine (mg/dL) - Mean $\pm$ SEM					
	Normal	Arsenic Control	Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg)	PA (50 mg/kg)	PA (100 mg/kg)	PA (200 mg/kg)
Serum creatinine (mg/dL)	0.96 $\pm$ 0.08	4.56 $\pm$ 0.08 ^{###}	1.55 $\pm$ 0.08 ^{***}	4.65 $\pm$ 0.09	4.32 $\pm$ 0.07	3.46 $\pm$ 0.10 [*]
Urine creatinine (mg/dL)	70.15 $\pm$ 2.41	31.75 $\pm$ 2.51 ^{###}	64.11 $\pm$ 4.36 ^{***}	39.57 $\pm$ 1.67	39.55 $\pm$ 1.71	50.04 $\pm$ 2.95 [*]



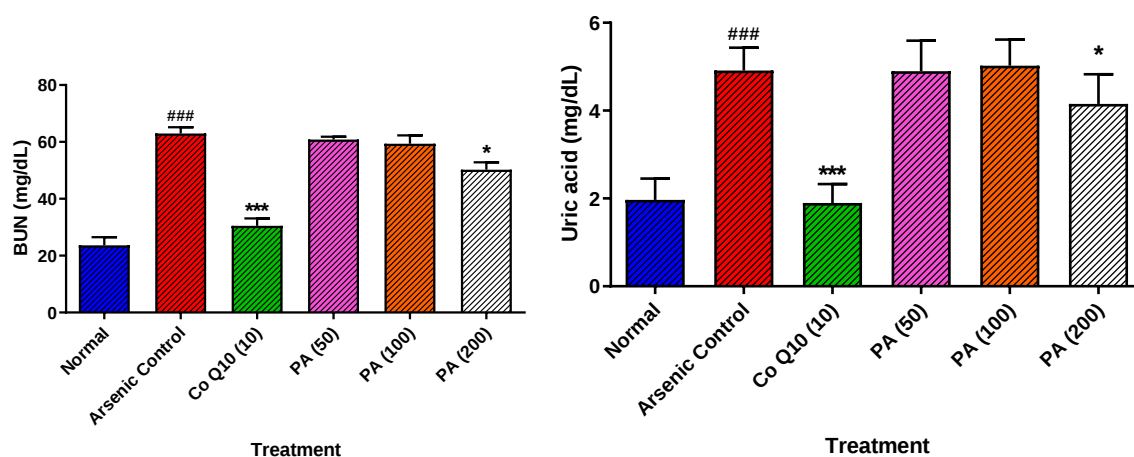
Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in Serum and urine creatinine levels

Data were analyzed by One-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's test. ^{###} $P < 0.001$ as compared with normal group and $*P < 0.05$, $***P < 0.001$ as compared with Arsenic Control group.

On 29th day, the Serum creatinine level was significantly ($P < 0.001$) increased and urine creatinine level significantly ($P < 0.001$) decreased in arsenic control group when compared to normal group. On the other hand, treatment with Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg) showed a significant ($P < 0.001$) decreased and increased in Serum and urine creatinine levels compared to arsenic control group. Treatment with *Phyllanthus amarus* (200 mg/kg) showed significant decrease ($P < 0.05$) in Serum and significant increase ($P < 0.05$) urine creatinine levels compared to arsenic control group. *Phyllanthus amarus* (50 and 100 mg/kg) did not show any significant change in Serum and urine creatinine levels compared to arsenic control group.

4. Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in BUN and Uric acid levels:

Parameter	BUN (mg/dL) and Uric acid (mg/dL) - Mean $\pm$ SEM					
	Normal	Arsenic Control	Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg)	PA (50 mg/kg)	PA (100 mg/kg)	PA (200 mg/kg)
BUN (mg/dL)	23.64 $\pm$ 1.16	62.96 $\pm$ 0.90 ^{###}	30.47 $\pm$ 1.08 ^{***}	60.85 $\pm$ 0.41	59.34 $\pm$ 1.21	50.24 $\pm$ 1.07 [*]
Uric acid (mg/dL)	1.97 $\pm$ 0.20	4.91 $\pm$ 0.21 ^{###}	1.90 $\pm$ 0.18 ^{***}	4.90 $\pm$ 0.28	5.03 $\pm$ 0.24	4.15 $\pm$ 0.27 [*]



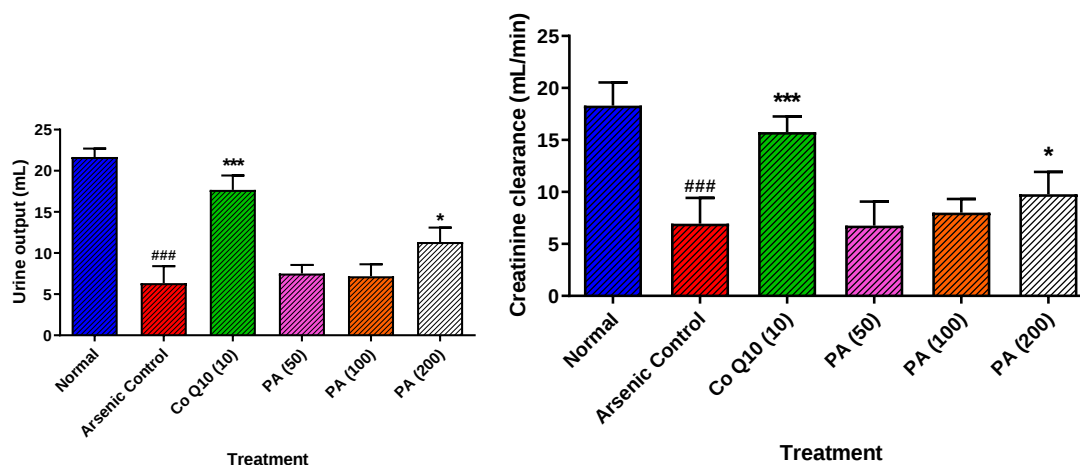
Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in BUN and Uric acid levels

Data were analyzed by One-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's test. ^{###} $P < 0.001$ as compared with normal group and $*P < 0.05$, $***P < 0.001$ as compared with Arsenic Control group.

Administration of sodium arsenite caused significant increased ($P < 0.001$) in BUN and Uric acid levels in arsenic control group when compared to normal group on day 29. When compared with arsenic control group, Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg) treatment significantly ($P < 0.001$) decreased BUN and Uric acid levels. Treatment with *Phyllanthus amarus* (200 mg/kg) also showed a significant ($P < 0.05$) decrease in BUN and Uric acid levels as compared to arsenic control group. *Phyllanthus amarus* (50 and 100 mg/kg) showed a non-significantly decrease in BUN and Uric acid levels compared to arsenic control group.

5. Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in urine output and creatinine clearance level:

Parameter	Urine Output (mL) and Creatinine clearance (mL/min) - Mean $\pm$ SEM					
	Normal	Arsenic Control	Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg)	PA (50 mg/kg)	PA (100 mg/kg)	PA (200 mg/kg)
Urine Output (mL)	21.67 $\pm$ 0.42	6.33 $\pm$ 0.84 ^{###}	17.67 $\pm$ 0.71 ^{***}	7.50 $\pm$ 0.43	7.17 $\pm$ 0.60	11.33 $\pm$ 0.71 [*]
Creatinine clearance (mL/min)	18.31 $\pm$ 0.91	6.95 $\pm$ 1.01 ^{###}	15.75 $\pm$ 0.61 ^{***}	6.75 $\pm$ 0.95	8.01 $\pm$ 0.53	9.78 $\pm$ 0.88 [*]



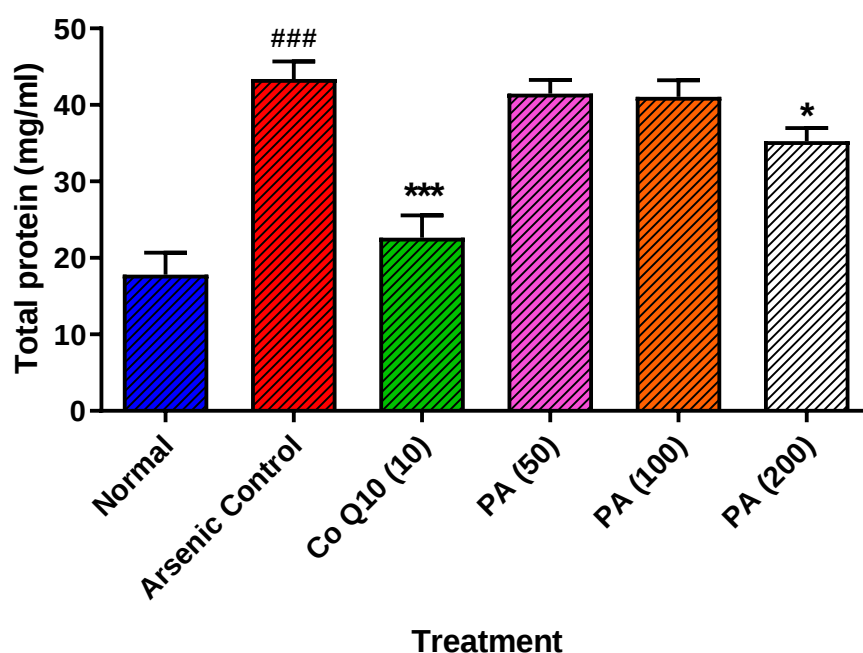
Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in urine output and creatinine clearance level

Data were analyzed by One-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's test. ^{###} $P < 0.001$ as compared with normal group and $*P < 0.05$, $***P < 0.001$ as compared with Arsenic Control group.

On 29th day, the urine output and creatinine clearance level in the arsenic control group was found to be significantly ($P < 0.001$) decrease in normal group. On the other hand, pretreatment of Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg) for 28 days showed significant ($P < 0.001$) increase in urine output and creatinine clearance level as compared to arsenic control group. Treatment with *Phyllanthus amarus* (200 mg/kg) also significantly ($P < 0.05$) increased the urine output and creatinine clearance level when compared with arsenic control group.

6. Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in renal total protein level:

Renal total protein (mg/gm) - Mean $\pm$ SEM					
Normal	Arsenic Control	Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg)	PA (50 mg/kg)	PA (100 mg/kg)	PA (200 mg/kg)
17.82 $\pm$ 1.17	43.39 $\pm$ 0.95 ^{###}	22.66 $\pm$ 1.18 ^{***}	41.48 $\pm$ 0.73	41.06 $\pm$ 0.89	35.29 $\pm$ 0.69 [*]



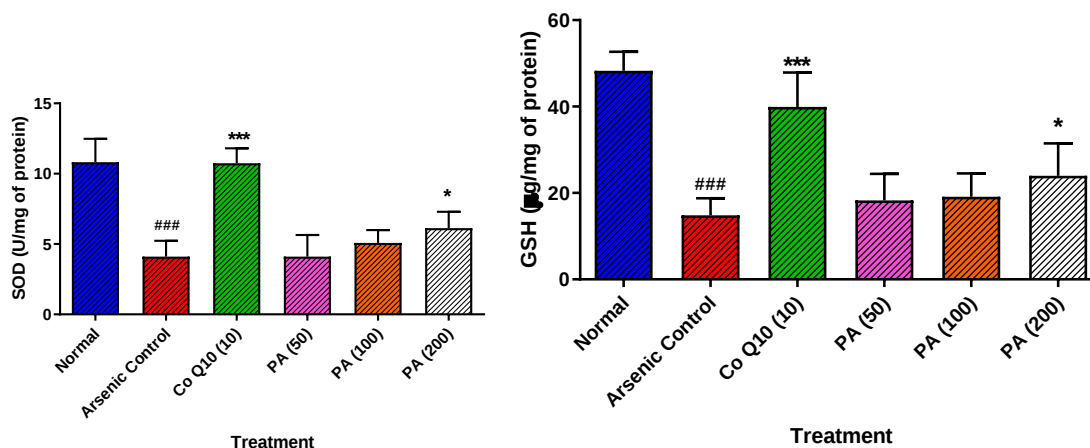
Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in renal total protein level

Data were analyzed by One-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's test. ^{###} $P < 0.001$ as compared with normal group and $*P < 0.05$, $***P < 0.001$ as compared with Arsenic Control group.

There was a significant increase ($P < 0.001$) in renal total protein level in arsenic control group when compared to normal group. Administration of Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg) for 28 days significantly ($P < 0.001$) decrease total protein level in renal tissue compared to arsenic control rats. Treatment with *Phyllanthus amarus* (200 mg/kg) also significantly ($P < 0.05$) decreased the renal total protein level compared to arsenic control rats.

7. Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in renal SOD and GSH level:

Parameter	Renal SOD (U /mg of protein) and GSH $\mu\text{g}/\text{mg}$ of protein) levels - Mean $\pm$ SEM					
	Normal	Arsenic Control	Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg)	PA (50 mg/kg)	PA (100 mg/kg)	PA (200 mg/kg)
SOD (U /mg of protein)	10.82 $\pm$ 0.68	4.11 $\pm$ 0.46 ^{###}	10.74 $\pm$ 0.44 ^{***}	4.11 $\pm$ 0.63	5.08 $\pm$ 0.37	6.14 $\pm$ 0.47 [*]
GSH ($\mu\text{g}/\text{mg}$ of protein)	48.29 $\pm$ 1.79	14.81 $\pm$ 1.63 ^{###}	39.94 $\pm$ 3.23 ^{***}	18.25 $\pm$ 2.52	19.14 $\pm$ 2.20	23.99 $\pm$ 3.06 [*]



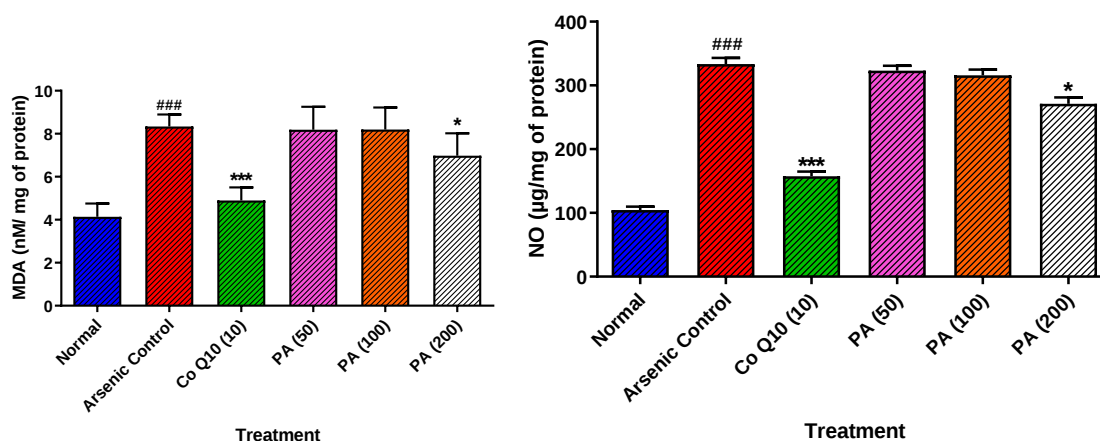
Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in renal SOD and GSH level

Data were analyzed by One-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's test. ^{###} $P < 0.001$ as compared with normal group and $*P < 0.05$, $***P < 0.001$ as compared with Arsenic Control group.

The renal SOD and GSH level in the arsenic control rats was significantly decreased ($P < 0.001$) as compared to normal rats. The SOD and GSH level in the renal tissue of Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg) treated rats was significantly increased ($P < 0.001$) as compared to arsenic control rats. The 28 days treatment of *Phyllanthus amarus* (200 mg/kg) significantly ($P < 0.05$) attenuated this Arsenic-induced decreased level of SOD and GSH as compared to arsenic control rats.

8. Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in renal MDA and NO level:

Parameter	Renal MDA (nM/mg of protein), nitric oxide (µg/ml) - Mean ± SEM					
	Normal	Arsenic Control	Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg)	PA (50 mg/kg)	PA (100 mg/kg)	PA (200 mg/kg)
MDA (nM/mg of protein)	4.14 ± 0.25	8.34 ± 0.23 ^{###}	4.90 ± 0.25 ^{***}	8.19 ± 0.44	8.19 ± 0.42	6.98 ± 0.43 [*]
Nitric oxide (µg/ml)	104.40 ± 2.22	333.50 ± 3.94 ^{###}	157.60 ± 2.93 ^{***}	323.20 ± 3.16	315.90 ± 3.61	271.30 ± 4.05 [*]



Effect of *Phyllanthus amarus* on Arsenic-induced alteration in renal MDA and NO level

Data were analyzed by One-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's test. ^{###} $P < 0.001$ as compared with normal group and $*P < 0.05$, $***P < 0.001$ as compared with Arsenic Control group.

There was significant increase in renal MDA and NO levels in arsenic control rats as compared to normal rats. When compared to arsenic control rats, the MDA and NO level in renal tissue of Coenzyme Q10 (10 mg/kg) was significantly decreased ($P < 0.001$). *Phyllanthus amarus* (50 and 100 mg/kg) treatment failed to produce any significant decrease in MDA and NO level compared to arsenic control rats. However, administration of *Phyllanthus amarus* (200 mg/kg) showed significant ($P < 0.05$) decreased level of MDA and significant ($P < 0.01$) decreased level of NO as compared to arsenic control rats.

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