## Investigation of *Scutellaria baicalensis* for Potential Neuroprotective Effect on the Treatment of Parkinson's Disease

Mohammad Zubair Baba <sup>1</sup>, Gomathy Subramanian <sup>1,\*</sup>, Jagdish Chand <sup>1</sup>, Umair Wahedi <sup>1</sup>, Potlapati Varakumar <sup>1</sup>, Koppula Jayanthi <sup>1</sup>, Mohammed Azeemuddin <sup>2</sup>, Talha Bin Emran <sup>3,4</sup>, Firzan Nainu <sup>5,\*</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry, JSS College of Pharmacy, JSS Academy of Higher Education & Research, Ooty-643001, The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India
- <sup>2</sup> Department of Pharmaceutical Analysis, Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences, Sehore-466001, Madhya Pradesh, India
- <sup>3</sup> Department of Pharmacy, BGC Trust University Bangladesh, Chittagong 4381, Bangladesh
- <sup>4</sup> Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, Daffodil International University, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh
- <sup>5</sup> Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Pharmacy, Hasanuddin University, Makassar 90245, Indonesia
- \* Correspondence: gomathys@jssuni.edu.in; firzannainu@unhas.ac.id (F.N.)

Scopus Author ID 36113372800

#### Received: 21.01.2023; Accepted: 19.03.2023; Published: 3.02.2024

**Abstract:** Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive neurological disorder that lacks adequate treatment, and researchers have focused on rescuing or delaying neurodegeneration in PD. *Scutellaria baicalensis* has shown promising results in reducing oxidative stress and demonstrating a neuroprotective effect on PD animal models. However, the exact mechanism by which *S. baicalensis* treats PD is not yet fully understood. To investigate the potential molecular mechanisms underlying *S. baicalensis* antiparkinsonian efficacy, this study used network pharmacology. Open-source datasets were used to compile phytoconstituents, and virtual screening was conducted to identify hit phytoconstituents that target proteins involved in PD development. The drug-likeness value, ADMET analyses, and negative consequences of the phytochemical constituent were evaluated. Regulating pathways were anticipated with the Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes (KEGG) record. 7 phytochemical constituents from *S. baicalensis* were found to alter the activity of proteins involved in PD occurrence, with 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavones having the highest docking result of -8.337 kcal/mol and active amino acids SER 91, as well as the drug-likeness value at the highest edge points. Through the networking of phytoconstituents, genes, and pathways, the study revealed that the neuroactive ligand-receptor interaction route was tightly synchronized.

# **Keywords:** Parkinson's disease; neuroactivity; computational analysis; *Scutellaria baicalensis;* phytoconstituents

© 2024 by the authors. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

## 1. Introduction

PD is characterized by the loss of dopaminergic neurons in the substantia nigra (SN) of the brain. Therapies for PD involve the use of synthetic molecules. While these synthetic compounds are effective in protecting neurons, they may cause severe adverse effects, for example, psychosis and hallucinations. Additionally, the use of synthetic molecules can generate reactive oxygen species (ROS), which can cause mitochondrial dysfunction [1-2]. PD

is a genetic variant disorder, which indicates that the disease's progression involves multiple genes [3]. Altering a particular protein's role can activate multiple pathways, leading to synergism with the pathological pathway of PD. This highlights the involvement of several genes cooperating to trigger a particular response. To address the pathology of PD, antiparkinsonian medications target specific targets from different drug target approaches. However, a focal point "selective drug target approach" may cause several pharmacological consequences [4]. Due to the complex and progressive nature of PD, a "multiple protein drug approach" using lower dose concentrations may be recommended to achieve a mutual connection. Plant-based remedies have demonstrated diverse neuroprotective properties, along with the capacity to extend dopamine levels in the SN with minimal adverse effects [5]. While many plant-extract treatments have shown promise as prolonged neuroprotective agents, the efficacy of some effective plant extracts in managing PD lacks scientific evidence. S. baicalensis is a Chinese traditional medicine known as "huangqin" and it is a member of the Lamiaceae family that possesses various pharmacological activities to manage diabetes, cancer, and neurological disorders [6,7]. These herbal plants actually contain flavonoids, which have exhibited potent antiparkinsonian effects in many in vivo studies of PD [8]. The crystalline structure of the dopaminergic receptor D4 bound to the subtype-selective ligand L745870 can be found in the database under the PDB ID-6IQL. The brain's mesolimbic system is a region that coordinates dopaminergic and complex behavior through dopaminergic receptor D4 (DRD4), a G protein-coupled receptor (GPCR), to transmit signals between neurons. Overall, the DRD4 gene's significance lies in its function in controlling the brain's dopaminergic systems and remuneration pathways, which may have implications for a range of neurological disorders as well as behavior in PD [5].

Although the mechanism by which *S. baicalensis* exerts its therapeutic effects in PD is not fully understood, it has been demonstrated to effectively alleviate inflammatory conditions, oxidative stress, and mitochondrial failure. Therefore, the objective of this research is to determine the active components of *S. baicalensis* that contribute to its efficacy, identify the various targets involved in PD progression, and provide insight into the underlying mechanisms through the network pharmacological strategy.

## 2. Materials and Methods

## 2.1. Identification of phytochemical constituents and proteins involve in PD.

The bioactive phytochemical constituents of *S. baicalensis* were collected from written articles and scientific papers. The database contains important information such as SMILES, types, and PubChem CIDs for each phytoconstituent to ensure that there were no duplicates; any phytoconstituents that appeared more than once in the dataset were removed (https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih..gov/) [9-10]. Next, the various plant-derived compounds were searched in the Binding Database, and any targets with a similarity percentage between 70-90 percent were compiled into a single document [11]. Then, the Therapeutic Targeted Database index was examined to determine sites that were relevant to the course of PD. Gene IDs for these targeted receptor were acquired from the UniProt database [12]. The molecular structures of the seven collected phytochemicals have been included in the supplementary file (Fig. S1) for reference.

## 2.2. Drug-likness and ADMET analysis profile of the phytochemical constituents.

Druglikness score was estimated for the phytochemical constituents utilizing the "Lipinski rule of Five approaches" in MolSoft (https://www..molsoft.com/). ADMET study profile of the phytochemical constituents was carried out by using admetSAR2.0 (http://lmmd.ecust.edu.cn/admetsar2) [13,14].

## 2.3. Detection of adverse effects.

The SMILES of the phytochemical constituents were entered into the ADVERpred database (http://www.way2drug.com/adverpread/) to predict any potential adverse effects[15]. The probable activity (Pa) and probable inactivity (Pi) values were examined, and a threshold of 0.8 was set to determine whether a phytoconstituent's Pa value was greater than its Pi value. If the Pa count exceeded the Pi value by a factor of 0.8 or more, then the potential for side effects of the phytoconstituent was considered [16,17].

## 2.4. Recognition of protein pathways and interpretation of network.

The study utilized the STRING database (https://string-db.org/) to explore the number of proteins involved with PD. Additionally, the KEGG pathway database indexed (https://www.genome.jp/kegg/) was employed to ensure the pathways and proteins affected by PD. The obtained pathways are available in Table S1 of the supplementary file. By Utilizing Cytoscape 3.7.2, a network was constructed for the targeted pathway, proteins, and phytochemicals. The network was analyzed by counting the nodes and edges, with the heavily affected pathways and proteins possessing the highest number of nodes with connections [18,19].

## 2.5. Docking studies.

To perform molecular docking, the Schrodinger Suite 2022 was utilized. The ligand creator Maestro tool was used to create the 3-dimensional structure of 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavones, which was prepared at a neutral pH using the LigPrep module. Via the use of the Epik module and the OPLS3 force field, the ligand's overall energy level was brought down [20]. The protein database (https://www.rcsb.org/) was accessed to obtain the PDB ID: 6IQL, which represents a crystallized DRD4 dopaminergic receptor connected to L745870. The protein was constructed using a workflow tool for protein creation, and any missing heteroatoms or amino acids were included in the finished version. The glide component was used to build the grid box, and high-precision docking was accomplished using the ligand docking module in the Schrodinger Suite 2022 glide module [21]. Finally, the pose viewer was utilized to analyze the ligand-receptor associations and docking values.

## 3. Results

## 3.1. Collection of phytochemical constituents and proteins involved in PD.

Accessible sources and literature revealed that *S. baicalensis* contains 52 phytoconstituents. Among them, 7 flavones were identified to modulate PD proteins, which are mainly membrane proteins of cells. Table 1 summarizes these flavones and their effects on PD proteins.

Name of Compounds	<b>Chemical Class</b>	PubChem ID	Name of Targeted Proteins
Baicalein	Trihydroxy-	5281605	DRD4, SNCA, HTR2A, PPARG, ESR2
(5,6,7-trihydroxyflavone)	flavones		
Wogonin	Dihydroxy-	5281703	ESR2, AKR1B1, PPARG, OPRM1,
(5,7-dihydroxy-8-methoxyflavone)	methoxy-flavones		NTRK2, MKNK2, HTR2A
5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone	Dimethoxy	188316	HTR2A, HTR1A, SNCA, PPARG,
	flavones		MAOA, ALOX5, DRD4, ESR1, IGF1R,
			OPMR1, SYN1
Norwogonin	Trihydroxy-	5281674	ADOPA1 HTP2A DPD4 SNCA
(5,7,8-trihydroxyflavone)	flavones		ADORAI, III KZA, DKD4, SINCA
Salvigenin	Hydroxy-flavones	161271	HTR2A, FLT1, ADRA2A, SNCA,
(5-hydroxy-6,7,4'-trimethoxyflavone)			PPARG
5,7,2',3'-Tetrahydroxyflavones	Tetrahydroxy-	5321864	SNCA, NTRK2, APP, PPARG
	flavone		
Dihydro-oroxylin A	Flavanones	177032	PPARG, HTR1A, HTR2A, ESRRG
(57 Dibudrowy 6 mathemytlawanana)			

**Table 1.** Phytochemical constituents and altered receptors of S. baicalensis.

(5,7-Dihydroxy-6-methoxyflavanone)

3.2. Potential negative impacts, Drug-like properties of phytochemical constituents, and ADMET analysis.

It is important to evaluate the safety and efficacy of phytoconstituents' potential adverse effects, drug-likeness, and pharmacokinetic properties. Therefore, an analysis was conducted to examine these aspects using ADMET (absorption, distribution, metabolism, excretion, and toxicity) study. The ADMET study provided insights into the pharmacokinetic properties of the phytoconstituents, including their bioavailability, half-life, and potential toxicity. Additionally, the drug-likeness of the phytoconstituents was evaluated to determine their potential as therapeutic agents.

Furthermore, the ADMET analysis also revealed possible adverse effects of the phytoconstituents, including toxicity to the liver and kidneys and possible interactions with other medications. These findings suggest that further investigation is necessary to determine the safety and efficacy of the phytoconstituents for use as therapeutic agents.

The potential negative impacts of all seven phytoconstituents were evaluated, and the results indicated that six of them may have hepatotoxicity as a possible side effect. In addition, one of the phytoconstituents, 5-Hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone, was found to have a greater risk of causing arrhythmia, as presented in Fig. 1.

Seven phytochemical constituents were evaluated for their potential adverse effects, with Pa indicating probable activity and Pi indicating probable inactivity. Baicalein and Wogonin had a higher Pa score than Pi, showing both could cause liver toxicity. On the other hand, the 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone was associated with arrhythmic action when the Pa score was greater than the Pi score. The phytoconstituents such as nor-wogonin, salvigenin, 5.7,2',3'-tetrahydroxyflavone, and dihydrooroxylin A were found to cause hepatotoxicity.

In addition, the drug-likeness of all seven phytoconstituents was evaluated, and 5hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone obtained the maximum score, as presented in Table 2. The phytochemical constituents were also assessed for their blood-brain barrier permeationand mitochondrial toxic effect. The ADMET study profile of the seven phytochemical constituents is illustrated in the heat map shown in Fig. 2.





Table 2. Drug-inchess score, physical and chemical properties of seven phytochemical constituents.							
Name of	Molecular	Molecular	Hydrogen	Hydrogen	MolLogP*	MolLogS*	DLS*
Phytochemical	formula	weights	bond	bond			1
			acceptor	donor			
Baicalein	C15H10O5	270.24	5	3	0.52	-4.74	0.10
Wogonin	$C_{16}H_{12}O5$	284.26	5	2	0.77	-4.85	0.15
5-Hydroxy-7,8-	C17H14O5	298.29	5	1	1.01	-4.44	0.17
dimethoxyflavone							1
Norwogonin	$C_{15}H_{10}O_5$	270.24	5	3	0.52	-4.74	0.16
Salvigenin	$C_{18}H_{16}O_{6}$	328.3	6	1	0.70	-4.97	0.14
5,7,2',3'-	$C_{15}H_{10}O_{6}$	286.24	6	4	-0.03	-4.51	0.15
Tetrahydroxyflavone							1
Dihydrooroxylin A	$C_{16}H_{14}O_5$	286.28	5	2	0.96	-4.10	0.16

Table 2. Drug-likeness score, physical and chemical properties of seven phytochemical constituents

\*MolLogP: (octanol/water partition coefficient), MolLogS: (Water solubility), DLS: Druglikeness score



**Figure 2.** Screened ADMET profile of seven phytoconstituents. Within the seven phytochemical constituents, 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavones have the highest blood-brain barrier score of 0.5348. Its mitochondrial toxic effect was 0.325, and its acute oral toxic effect score was 0.328, clearly indicating that it had the lowest toxicity compared to the other phytoconstituents. Source: Cytoscape

#### 3.3. Network pathway analysis.

By performing gene set enhanced examination, 10 different pathways were identified, all mediated by proteins associated with the progression of PD. Furthermore, four pathways directly associated with the modification of PD were identified by gene enrichment analysis utilizing the KEGG database index. Table 3 shows the strongest gene relationship was found in the neuroactive ligand-receptor interaction pathway.

Table 3. Pathways and proteins associated with PD are enriched in their respective gene sets.						
Name of	Description	Count In	False Discovery Rate	Genes involved		
Pathway		Gene Set				
hsa04080	Neuroactive ligand-	6	0.0077	MAOA, ALOX5, MAOB,		
	receptor interaction			HTR2A, DRD4		
hsa04728	Dopaminergic neuron	4	0.0029	DRD4, MAOA, DRD2, MAOB		
	synapse					
hsa05012	Parkinson's disease	4	0.0136	SNCA, DRD2, MAOB		
hsa04915	Estrogen signaling	3	0.0196	ESR2, OPRM1, ESR1		
	pathway					

A network was constructed to depict the relationship between the seven phytochemical constituents, genes, and pathways. As per the network understanding, the phytochemical constituents protein-pathway has a total of 88 edges, consisting of 51 phyto chemical constituent-gene interactions and 36 gene-pathway interactions. Among the 7 phytoconstituents, 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone has the greater edge count, with eleven protein counts that included HTR2A, HTR1A, SNCA, PPARG, MAOA, ALOX5, DRD4, ESR1, IGF1R, OPMR1, and SYN1. The neuroactive ligand-receptor interaction pathway modulated ALOX12, ALOX5, MAOB, and HTR2A. Notably, proteins such as ALOX5 were regulated by 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavones and the neuroactive ligand-receptor association pathways. Moreover, several phytoconstituents modulated these proteins, as illustrated in Fig. 3.



Figure 3. Network schematic representation between phytochemical constituents, protein, and pathways. Source: Cytoscape.

The network analysis showed that 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone was the most modulated phytoconstituent, as it interacted with the neuroactive ligand-receptor and DRD4

gene. Both neuroactive ligand-receptor interaction and DRD4 have been demonstrated to reduce ROS and oxidative stress, resulting in neuroprotection. Phytoconstituents, genes, and metabolic pathways were linked to a network.

## 3.4. Gene ontology enrichment and pathways assessment.

Gene ontology enrichment and pathway analysis involve identifying cellular activities, molecular functions, and cellular components linked with a bunch of genes and mapping them onto known pathways to learn about the fundamental causes of biological mechanisms. This can better grasp cellular biology involved in disease development or other biological phenomena.

In this study, gene ontology enrichment analysis demonstrated 202 cellular activities, and further investigation identified the metabolic reaction to dopamine (GO:1903351) as the process with the minimum rate of false findings, which was modulated by 5 genes (DRD4, HTR1A, DRD2, OPRM1, HTR2A). Additionally, the analysis identified 32 molecular activities, with the lowest false detection rate being transmembrane signaling receptor activity (GO:0004888) and being modulated by eleven genes (NGFR, DRD4, HTR1A, DRD2, OPRM1, HTR2A) a total of 188 genes. Analogously, 25 biological components and 11 genes were revealed modulating a necessary component of the plasma membrane (GO:0005887) (NGFR, DRD4, FLT1, HTR1A, DRD2, OPRM1, HTR2A), as shown in Fig. 4. This information can provide valuable insights into the molecular mechanisms underlying the biological processes being studied.

The current study identified twenty KEGG pathways associated with PD. Among these pathways, hsa04080 had the lowest rate of false detection and was found to modulate 7 genes (ALOX12, HTR1A, MAOA, ALOX5, MAOB, HTR2A, DRD4). Furthermore, the networking study of the phytochemical constituent 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavones showed that it had greater protein regulation, with a considerable number of pathways directly found to be involved in the regulation of PD. These findings provide insights into potential targets for therapeutic interventions to manage PD.



**Figure 4.** Gene ontology enrichment study of phytochemical constituents that modulate genes. Among the phytoconstituents, 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone had the maximum degree of modulation across various targets and genes, including several pathways that have the potential to result in a neuroprotective effect. The identification of these pathways and genes can be used to guide further study on the neuroprotective effects of phytoconstituents and their potential therapeutic applications. Source: Cytoscape.

## 3.5. Molecular docking results.

Seven phytochemical constituents examined in this study, 5-hydroxy-7,8dimethoxyflavones demonstrated the essential binding energy of -8.337 kcal/mol with dopaminergic receptor D4 (PDB ID: 6IQL). The interaction between the phytoconstituent and the protein was characterized by a 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional hydrogen bonding association with the Ser91 amino acid residue of the protein, as shown in Figure 5. The remaining 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional interactions between the other 6 phytochemical constituents and proteins are detailed in Table 4 and the Supplementary Files (Supplementary File-Fig.S2 and Supplementary File-Fig.S3). These findings provide information about the prospects for therapeutic applications of these phytoconstituents for treating PD. The study utilized different modules in the Schrödinger Suite 2022 to perform molecular docking simulations. The LigPrep module was used to design the ligands, and the Epik module and OPLS3 force field were employed to minimize the ligand's energy. The protein preparation module was used to prepare the protein by removing water molecules, adding missing amino acid residues, and assigning a partial charge to each atom. Finally, the Glide module was utilized to prepare the receptor grid for molecular docking simulations. These methods and tools provide a reliable and robust approach to investigating the interactions between phytoconstituents and proteins, providing insights into their potential therapeutic applications.

The Ligand Docking module was then employed to perform molecular docking simulations between the lower energy ligands in the mol format and the protein using the Extra Precision (XP) method. The docking score was examined using the Glide XP visualizer, evaluating the best docking and glide scores and the interactions with amino acid residues. These analyses identified the most favorable binding modes between the phytoconstituents and their protein targets, providing valuable information for further optimizing and developing potential therapeutic agents.





Name	Binding affinity (kcal/mol)	Active amino acid residues		
ivanie	Dinung anning (Keal/mor)	H-bond	Hydrophobic	
Baicalein	-6.337	Ace182, Ser192	-	
Wogonin	-7.232	Cys116, Ser191	Ser191	
5-Hydroxy-7,8-	9 277	Sor101	Sor 01	
dimethoxyflavones	-0.577	561191	56171	
Norwogonin	-6.936	Cys116, Ser191	Ser191	
Salvigenin	-6.557	-	-	
5,7,2',3'-Tetrahydroxyflavone	-7.1	Ser191, Ace182	Ser191	
Dihydrooroxylin A	-6.275	Ser191, Cys116	Ser191	

Table 4. The molecular docking outcomes of seven phytoconstituents (PDB ID: 6IQL).

## 4. Discussion

Traditional medicine has emerged as an effective therapeutic approach to treating various disorders in recent decades. Virtual methods, which include networking pharmacology, have become well-established methods for studying the therapeutic effects of natural products. Several studies have investigated the potential of *S.baicalensis*, a traditional Chinese herb, in managing PD using networking pharmacology [22]. While the important mechanism of S. baicalensis in treating PD remains unclear, this research aimed to build a network linking phytochemical compounds, genes, and pathways to better understand the most probable approach. The study's results identified flavonoids as potent phytochemicals that interact with proteins linked with the progression of PD. Among all the phytochemicals, 5-hydroxy-7,8dimethoxyflavones and dimethoxyflavones demonstrated promising properties in managing PD. Further research on S.baicalensis has highlighted the need for these phytoconstituents to be tested in clinical trials [23,24]. It is important to highlight that 5-hydroxy-7,8dimethoxyflavone exhibited promising interactions with other genes, indicating its potential as a therapeutic agent in slowing the progression of PD and promoting neuroprotection. Among the highly regulated genes, dopamine receptor D4 (DRD4), which plays a crucial role in activating dopaminergic neurons responsible for suppressing the progression of PD, was identified [25-27]. It is possible that 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone may initiate the dopaminergic system, contributing to the biosynthesis of dopamine[28]. Altering the levels of proteins such as sirtuin 3, alpha-synuclein, and peroxisome proliferator-activated receptors may also stimulate mitochondrial biogenesis. Having their expression reduced may cause ROS to be produced, which may cause dopaminergic neurodegeneration [29]. Thus, 5hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone may be a potent therapeutic agent for PD through its modulation of various proteins and pathways, including the dopaminergic system. Previous studies have reported the potential of S. baicalensis to reduce oxidative stress in manyPD animal models [27,30]. Also, four highly regulated pathways were found by doing a gene enrichment analysis using KEGG[31]. On the other hand, the dopaminergic synapse pathway (hsa:04728) directly modulates PD. It is associated with critical motor symptoms of PD, such as movement abnormalities, due to its potential to project dopamine [32]. Previous studies have shown that S. baicalensis has the potential to decrease apoptosis in dopamine neurons in vitro and in vivo PD models, as well as reduce various PD-induced effects in SH-SY5Y cells [33]. Dopaminergic receptor D4 (DRD4) has been found to be a general target between 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone and the neuroactive ligand-receptor interaction pathway, and both are involved in cell apoptosis through inflammation. DRD4 is also associated with the excitation of neuregulin 1, a coactivator of the development of cells that promotes neuron growth and survival [34,35]. Neuronal inflammation and ROS are known to contribute to the development of cell apoptosis through cytokines. Furthermore, several studies have reported that mitochondrial dysfunctioning can enhance neuroinflammation, leading to PD [36]. Functional receptors like dopamine receptors are often engaged in signaling pathways and are associated with pro-inflammatory actions, and this pathway's most abundantly discovered regulatory site was DRD4 [37]. Dopamine neurons may be protected and supported in their function through the neuroactive ligand-receptor interaction pathway, activated by the interaction of 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavones with DRD4. According to the results of this research, 5-hydroxy-7,8dimethoxyflavone is the most common flavone out of the 52 active phytochemical ingredients

that interacted with the highest number of genes related to PD. Moreover, additional study is necessary to transform these promising findings into compelling research.

## 5. Conclusions

When dopamine levels decrease, it can lead to a range of motor and non-motor complications, along with PD, which is mainly caused by neuronal death due to an accumulation of ROS in the brain. Researchers have discovered that phenyl-based derivatives like resveratrol may efficiently activate sirtuin 3, a protein critical in mitochondrial biogenesis. The malfunctioning of mitochondria and the resulting creation of ROS may lead to neurodegeneration. Dopamine deficiency is considered the major reason for PD. ROS, oxidative stress, and low antioxidant levels play a role in the course of PD. Further investigation is essential for a complete understanding of the complex mechanisms involved in the development and progression of PD. According to our research, we have found that 5-hydroxy-7,8-dimethoxyflavone has a high docking score of -8.337 kcal/mol and actively interacts with amino acid SER 91, as well as a high drug-likeness score and edge count. These results suggest that the flavonoid found in *S. baicalensis* may positively protect the brains of PD animal models against neuronal loss and neurotoxicity by attenuating oxidative stress. While this finding needs to be confirmed by other *in vitro* and *in vivo* experiments, we believe that *S. baicalensis* is the potential to be used as an antiparkinsonian agent.

## Funding

This research received no external funding.

## Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the generous research infrastructure and supports from JSS College of Pharmacy, JSS Academy of Higher Education & Research, Rocklands, Ooty, The Nilgiris, Tamilnadu, India.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

- 1. Zaman, V.; Shields, D.C.; Shams, R.; Drasites, K.P.; Matzelle, D.; Haque, A.; Banik, N.L. Cellular and molecular pathophysiology in the progression of Parkinson's disease. *Metab. Brain Dis*.**2021**, *36*, 815–827, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11011-021-00689-5.
- Tirozzi, A.; Modugno, N.; Palomba, N.P.; Ferese, R.; Lombardi, A.; Olivola, E.; Gialluisi, A.; Esposito, T. Analysis of Genetic and Non-genetic Predictors of Levodopa Induced Dyskinesia in Parkinson's Disease. *Front. Pharmacol.*2021, *12*, https://doi.org/10.3389/fphar.2021.640603.
- 3. Bellou, E.; Stevenson-Hoare, J.; Escott-Price, V. Polygenic risk and pleiotropy in neurodegenerative diseases. *Neurobiol. Dis.***2020**, *142*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nbd.2020.104953.
- Cheong, S.L.; Federico, S.; Spalluto, G.; Klotz, K.N.; Pastorin, G. The current status of pharmacotherapy for the treatment of Parkinson's disease: transition from single-target to multitarget therapy. *Drug Discov. Today*2019, 24, 1769–1783, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drudis.2019.05.003.
- 5. Zhang, Y.; Xu, X. Chinese Herbal Medicine in the Treatment of Depression in Parkinson's Disease: From Molecules to Systems. *Front. Pharmacol.***2022**, *13*, https://doi.org/10.3389/fphar.2022.879459.

- Shen, J.; Li, P.; Liu, S.; Liu, Q.; Li, Y.; Sun, Y.; He, C.; Xiao, P. Traditional uses, ten-years research progress on phytochemistry and pharmacology, and clinical studies of the genus Scutellaria. *J. Ethnopharmacol.*2021, 265, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jep.2020.113198.
- Zhou, X.; Fu, L.; Wang, P.; Yang, L.; Zhu, X.; Li, C.G. Drug-herb interactions between *Scutellaria baicalensis* and pharmaceutical drugs: Insights from experimental studies, mechanistic actions to clinical applications. *Biomed. Pharmacother*.2021, *138*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopha.2021.111445.
- Lei, K.; Lei, K.; Shen, Y.; He, Y.; Zhang, L.; Zhang, L.; Zhang, J.; Tong, W.; Xu, Y.; Xu, Y.; et al. Baicalin Represses C/EBP β via Its Antioxidative Effect in Parkinson's Disease. Oxid. Med. Cell. Longev.2020, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/8951907.
- Jia, Y.; Zou, J.; Wang, Y.; Zhang, X.; Shi, Y.; Liang, Y.; Guo, D.; Yang, M. Action mechanism of Roman chamomile in the treatment of anxiety disorder based on network pharmacology. *J. Food Biochem*. 2021, 45, https://doi.org/10.1111/jfbc.13547.
- 10. Meng, F.; Xi, Y.; Huang, J.; Ayers, P.W. A curated diverse molecular database of blood-brain barrier permeability with chemical descriptors. *Sci. Data***2021**, *8*, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-021-01069-5.
- Souza, L.R.; Picanço, L.C.S.; Brito, M.F.B.; Almeida, M.R.S.; Marino, B.L.B.; Sousa, K.P.A.; Ferreira, J. V.; dos Santos, C.B.R.; Silva, G.M.; Silva, C.H.T.P.; et al. Theoretical Study of Monoamine Oxidase B Inhibitors as Drug Candidates for Treatment of Parkinson's Disease. *Cent. Nerv. Syst. Agents Med. Chem.* 2020, 20, 128–143, https://doi.org/10.2174/1871524920666200217110211.
- 12. Rath, S.N.; Ray, M.; Patri, M. Computational discovery and assessment of non-synonymous single nucleotide polymorphisms from target gene pool associated with Parkinson's disease. *Gene Reports***2020**, *21*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.genrep.2020.100947.
- Wu, J.; Kong, L.; Yi, M.; Chen, Q.; Cheng, Z.; Zuo, H.; Yang, Y. Prediction and Screening Model for Products Based on Fusion Regression and XGBoost Classification. *Comput. Intell. Neurosci.*2022, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/4987639.
- Khan, A.; Unnisa, A.; Sohel, M.; Date, M.; Panpaliya, N.; Saboo, S.G.; Siddiqui, F.; Khan, S. Investigation of phytoconstituents of Enicostemma littorale as potential glucokinase activators through molecular docking for the treatment of type 2 diabetes mellitus. *Silico Pharmacol*.2022, *10*, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40203-021-00116-8.
- 15. Manzoor, S.; Prajapati, S.K.; Majumdar, S.; Raza, K.; Gabr, M.T.; Kumar, S.; Pal, K.; Rashid, H.; Kumar, S.; Krishnamurthy, S.; et al. Discovery of new phenyl sulfonyl-pyrimidine carboxylate derivatives as the potential multi-target drugs with effective anti-Alzheimer's action: Design, synthesis, crystal structure and in-vitro biological evaluation. *Eur. J. Med. Chem.*2021, 215, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejmech.2021.113224.
- 16. Shntaif, A.H.; Khan, S.; Tapadiya, G.; Chettupalli, A.; Saboo, S.; Shaikh, M.S.; Siddiqui, F.; Amara, R.R. Rational drug design, synthesis, and biological evaluation of novel N-(2-arylaminophenyl)-2,3-diphenylquinoxaline-6-sulfonamides as potential antimalarial, antifungal, and antibacterial agents. *Digit. Chinese Med.* 2021, *4*, 290–304, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcmed.2021.12.004.
- Khan, S.; Kale, M.; Siddiqui, F.; Nema, N. Novel pyrimidine-benzimidazole hybrids with antibacterial and antifungal properties and potential inhibition of SARS-CoV-2 main protease and spike glycoprotein. *Digit. Chinese Med.*2021, *4*, 102–119, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcmed.2021.06.004.
- Niu, K.; Li, Q.; Liu, Y.; Qiao, Y.; Li, B.; Wei, C.; Wang, K.; Cui, L.; Zheng, C.; Wang, R.; et al. Molecular Targets and Mechanisms of Scutellariae radix - Coptidis rhizoma Drug Pair for the Treatment of Ulcerative Colitis Based on Network Pharmacology and Molecular Docking. *Evidence-based Complement. Altern. Med.*2021, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/9929093.
- Liu, Y.Y.; Yu, L.H.; Zhang, J.; Xie, D.J.; Zhang, X.X.; Yu, J.M. Network Pharmacology-Based and Molecular Docking-Based Analysis of Suanzaoren Decoction for the Treatment of Parkinson's Disease with Sleep Disorder. *Biomed Res. Int.*2021, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/1752570.
- David, T.I.; Adelakun, N.S.; Omotuyi, O.I.; Metibemu, D.S.; Ekun, O.E.; Eniafe, G.O.; Inyang, O.K.; Adewumi, B.; Enejoh, O.A.; Owolabi, R.T.; et al. Molecular docking analysis of phyto-constituents from Cannabis sativa with pfDHFR. *Bioinformation*2018, 14, 574–579, https://doi.org/10.6026/97320630014574.
- Gajjar, N.D.; Dhameliya, T.M.; Shah, G.B. In search of RdRp and Mpro inhibitors against SARS CoV-2: Molecular docking, molecular dynamic simulations and ADMET analysis. J. Mol. Struct.2021, 1239, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.molstruc.2021.130488.
- 22. Xu, T.; Ma, C.; Fan, S.; Deng, N.; Lian, Y.; Tan, L.; Du, W.; Zhang, S.; Liu, S.; Ren, B.; et al. Systematic understanding of the mechanism of baicalin against ischemic stroke through a network pharmacology approach. *Evidence-based Complement. Altern. Med.***2018**, *2018*, https://doi.org/10.1155/2018/2582843.

- 23. Limanaqi, F.; Biagioni, F.; Busceti, C.L.; Polzella, M.; Fabrizi, C.; Fornai, F. Potential antidepressant effects of *Scutellaria baicalensis*, hericium erinaceus and rhodiola rosea. *Antioxidants***2020**, *9*, https://doi.org/10.3390/antiox9030234.
- 24. Matos, M.J. Multitarget therapeutic approaches for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases: An opportunity or an illusion? *Future Med. Chem.***2021**, *13*, 1301–1309, https://doi.org/10.4155/fmc-2021-0119.
- Magistrelli, L.; Ferrari, M.; Furgiuele, A.; Milner, A.V.; Contaldi, E.; Comi, C.; Cosentino, M.; Marino, F. Polymorphisms of dopamine receptor genes and parkinson's disease: Clinical relevance and future perspectives. *Int. J. Mol. Sci.*2021, 22, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijms22073781.
- Cai, Y.; Xing, L.; Yang, T.; Chai, R.; Wang, J.; Bao, J.; Shen, W.; Ding, S.; Chen, G. The neurodevelopmental role of dopaminergic signaling in neurological disorders. *Neurosci. Lett.*2021, 741, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neulet.2020.135540.
- Song, Q.; Peng, S.; Zhu, X. Baicalein protects against MPP+/MPTP-induced neurotoxicity by ameliorating oxidative stress in SH-SY5Y cells and mouse model of Parkinson's disease. *Neurotoxicology*2021, 87, 188– 194, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuro.2021.10.003.
- 28. Matt, S.M.; Gaskill, P.J. Where Is Dopamine and how do Immune Cells See it?: Dopamine-Mediated Immune Cell Function in Health and Disease. *J. Neuroimmune Pharmacol.***2020**, *15*, 114–164, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11481-019-09851-4.
- 29. Shen, Y.; Wu, Q.; Shi, J.; Zhou, S. Regulation of SIRT3 on mitochondrial functions and oxidative stress in Parkinson's disease. *Biomed. Pharmacother*.2020, *132*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopha.2020.110928.
- Liao, C.C.; Liao, K.R.; Lin, C.L.; Li, J.M. The Effectiveness of *Scutellaria baicalensis* on Migraine: Implications from Clinical Use and Experimental Proof. *Evidence-based Complement. Altern. Med.*2021, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/8707280.
- Kulkarni, O.; Sugier, P.E.; Guibon, J.; Boland-Augé, A.; Lonjou, C.; Bacq-Daian, D.; Olaso, R.; Rubino, C.; Souchard, V.; Rachedi, F.; et al. Gene network and biological pathways associated with susceptibility to differentiated thyroid carcinoma. *Sci. Rep.*2021, *11*, 8932, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-88253-0.
- Hernandez, L.F.; Obeso, I.; Costa, R.M.; Redgrave, P.; Obeso, J.A. Dopaminergic Vulnerability in Parkinson Disease: The Cost of Humans' Habitual Performance. *Trends Neurosci.*2019, 42, 375–383, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tins.2019.03.007.
- Song, J.X.; Choi, M.Y.M.; Wong, K.C.K.; Chung, W.W.Y.; Sze, S.C.W.; Ng, T.B.; Zhang, K.Y.B. Baicalein antagonizes rotenone-induced apoptosis in dopaminergic SH-SY5Y cells related to Parkinsonism. *Chin. Med.*2012, 7, https://doi.org/10.1186/1749-8546-7-1.
- 34. Melnikov, M.; Pashenkov, M.; Boyko, A. Dopaminergic receptor targeting in multiple sclerosis: Is there therapeutic potential? *Int. J. Mol. Sci.***2021**, *22*, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijms22105313.
- Sun, Q.Y.; Zhou, H.H.; Mao, X.Y. Emerging Roles of 5-Lipoxygenase Phosphorylation in Inflammation and Cell Death. Oxid. Med. Cell. Longev. 2019, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1155/2019/2749173.
- Lin, M. miao; Liu, N.; Qin, Z. hong; Wang, Y. Mitochondrial-derived damage-associated molecular patterns amplify neuroinflammation in neurodegenerative diseases. *Acta Pharmacol. Sin.*2022, *43*, 2439–2447, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41401-022-00879-6.
- Kongara, K.; Dukkipati, V.S.R.; Tai, H.M.; Heiser, A.; Murray, A.; Webster, J.; Johnson, C.B. Differential transcription of selected cytokine and neuroactive ligand-receptor genes in peripheral leukocytes from calves in response to cautery disbudding. *Animals*2020, *10*, 1–14, https://doi.org/10.3390/ani10071187.

## **Supplementary materials**



Figure S1. Structures of seven phytoconstituents from S. baicalensis.



**Figure S2.** 2D interactions between *S. baicalensis* phytoconstituents and DRD4 Dopaminergic receptor. **A.** Baicalein **B.** Wogonin **C.** Norwogonin **D.** Salvigenin **E.** 4H-1-Benzopyran-4-one, 2-(2,3-dihydroxyphenyl)-5,7-dihydroxy- **F.** Dihydrooroxylin .



Figure S3. 3D interactions between the phytoconstituents and DRD4 Dopaminergic receptor. A. Baicalein B. Wogonin C. Norwogonin D. Salvigenin E. 4H-1-Benzopyran-4-one, 2-(2,3-dihydroxyphenyl)-5,7-dihydroxy- F. Dihydrooroxyli .

Table S1. KEGG pathways and their proteins.						
ID	Description	Observed gene count	gene count	Rate of False discovery (FDR)	protein interaction (labels)	
	Interaction of					
	Neuroactive ligand &				HTR2A , ADRA2A, DRD2,	
hsa04080	receptor	6	330	0.007	HTR1A, OPRM1, DRD4,	
					ALOX12, DRD4, HTR1A,	
					MAOA, ALOX5, MAOB,	
hsa04726	Serotonergic	7	108	0.0003	HTR2A	
					MAOA, DRD2, MAOB	
hsa04728	Dopaminergic	4	128	0.002	,DRD4,	
hsa04913	Ovarian steroidogenesis	3	50	0.003	HSD17B1, ALOX5, IGF1R	
hsa05030	addiction of Cocaine	3	49	0.003	MAOB ,MAOA, DRD2	

https://biointerfaceresearch.com/

15 of 15

					NTRK2, MAOB ,MAOA,
hsa05034	Alcoholism	4	144	0.003	DRD2
hsa00340	metabolism of Histidine	2	21	0.013	MAOB ,MAOA
	metabolism of				
hsa00360	Phenylalanine	2	17	0.0006	MAOB ,MAOA
hsa01522	resistance of Endocrine	3	95	0.0016	ESR2, IGF1R, ESR1
hsa04066	HIF-1 pathway	3	106	0.013	IGF1R, MKNK2, FLT1
					SNCA, DRD2, MAOB
hsa05012	Parkinson disease	4	240	0.013	,MAOA
					NTRK2, MKNK2,
hsa04010	MAPK pathway	4	288	0.015	FLT1,IGF1R,
hsa04915	Estrogen pathway	3	133	0.019	ESR2, OPRM1, ESR1
hsa05224	Breast cancer	3	145	0.023	IGF1R, ESR2, ESR1
hsa00350	Metabolism of Tyrosine	2	35	0.024	MAOB ,MAOA
	Metabolism of Glycine,				
hsa00260	threonine and, serine	2	38	0.026	MAOB ,MAOA
	Metabolism of				
hsa00380	Tryptophan	2	41	0.029	MAOB ,MAOA
	In cancer Abnormal				
	regulation of				
hsa05202	Transcriptional	3	171	0.029	PPARG, FLT1, IGF1R
	Metabolism of proline				
hsa00330	and Arginine	2	48	0.035	MAOA ,MAOB
	pathway of Ras-				
hsa04015	associated protein 1	3	202	0.041	DRD2, FLT1, IGF1R

The researchers investigated the potential genes that could be linked to the advancement of Parkinson's disease by utilizing a database (https://string-db.org/) to conduct the analysis of gene enrichment. They then analyzed the interaction of the protein network to determine the pathways and the genes associated (https://www.genome.jp/kegg/). The data was further examined to establish a possible connection between the genes, phytoconstituents, and pathways using Cytoscape 3.7.2.