

# Phytochemical Evaluation of Polyherbal Formulation of *Clinacanthus nutans* and *Elephantopus scaber* to Identify Flavonoids

Muhammad Shahzad Aslam\*, Muhammad Syarhabil Ahmad, Awang Soh Mamat

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Modern healthcare system recognizes herbal medicine as a form of alternative medicine and also identify as holistic approach. Everyone in life experiences different kind of wound. *Clinacanthus nutans* and *Elephantopus scaber* are well known traditional wound healing herbs. **Objective:** To develop a new polyherbal formulation in the treatment of wound and identify flavonoid by means of chromatography, chemical method and spectroscopic method. Preliminary phytochemical and fluorescent evaluation of *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus scaber* and herb-herb combination. **Methods and Material:** Preliminary phytochemical and fluorescent evaluation of *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus* and polyherbal formulation of both herb by chemical method. Identification of flavonoids by thin layer chromatography and fourier transform infrared spectroscopy. **Results:** Flavonoids have found inside polyherbal formulation by comparing the colour change after chemical analysis, Fluorescence analysis, retention time by thin layer chromatography and functional groups by fourier transform infrared spectroscopy. **Conclusions:** Flavonoids may responsible for its activity as wound healing. It may work with other bioactive compounds as synergistic effect.

**Key words:** *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus scaber*, Polyherbal formulation, Herb-Herb combination, Flavonoids, Wound healing.

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## INTRODUCTION

The trend of using herbal medicines has increased in a tremendous way in the last decade. As a result, World health Organization (WHO) has taken a broader step of including Phytotherapy. Herb-herb combinations have used in Chinese, Ayurveda and Malaysian traditional medicine practice for many years.<sup>1-3</sup> Many commercial and non-commercial polyherbal formulations exist in different part of World. Scientific evidence such as pharmacognostic evaluation, phytochemical study, and pharmacological evaluation Lacks in most of the polyherbal-formulation.<sup>1</sup> *Clinacanthus nutans* Lindau is known as snake grass belonging to the Acanthaceae family. This plant has diverse and potential medicinal uses in traditional herbal medicine for treating skin rashes, insects and snake bites, lesions caused by herpes simplex virus, diabetes, and gout in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and China.<sup>4</sup> *Elephantopus scaber* Linn. is known as Prickly-leaves elephant's foot, tutup bumi in Malay or di dan tou in Chinese. It has been used in traditional medicine to stimulate diuresis, reduce fever and eliminate bladder stones, as well as to treat nephritis, edema, dampness, chest pain, pneumonia, scabies, arthralgia and leukemia.<sup>5,6</sup> It was used in number of poly herbal formulations. The selection of both herb was based upon its activity as wound healing.

The objective of our study was development of a new formulation and phytochemical evaluation of new herbal formulation.

## METHOD AND MATERIAL

### Plant Material

The leaves of *Clinacanthus nutans* and *Elephantopus scaber* were collected from Institute Of Sustainable Agro technology, Sg. Chuchuh, University Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) and washed using clean water. After that, the leaves were dried inside a dryer at the temperature of 35-40°C for two days. Once dried, the leaves were grinded into fine powder by using mechanical grinder.

### Preparation of Plant Extract

Soxhlet extraction was used in this experiment to extract the herbs. For Soxhlet extraction, a powder sample is weighted approximately 10 g for each herb and put into the extract chamber of the Soxhlet extractor. In each running experiment, 100 ml of aqueous ethanol 50% was used as solvent for 12 hour extraction. The extract solution was then evaporated by using rotary evaporator to remove the solvent in the extract solution and dried in oven at 35-40°C for 12 hour. In order to study the synergistic effects of the herb pairs, a powdered mixture containing equal proportions of two herbs (5 g each) was extracted

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according to the above method. The final samples were stored at 4°C until it analysed and the percentage of yield was calculated by using Equation

$$Y_{\text{extract}} = m_{\text{extract}} / m_{\text{herb}} \times 100$$

where  $m_{\text{extract}}$  is the crude extract mass (g) and  $m_{\text{herb}}$  is the extracted herb mass. The extract was fractionated using different solvents viz. hexane, chloroform, ethyl acetate, n-butanol and water. The supernatant was filtered using Whatman No. 1 sheet, pooled and concentrated using vacuum rotary evaporator. The concentrated solutions were then lyophilized to get the dry form of respective fractions.

### Chemicals

Ethyl acetate, ethanol, toluene, chloroform, methanol, anisaldehyde (Fisher Scientific, UK), Sulphuric acid, Hydrochloric acid, Ammonia, glacial acetic acid, Ascorbic acid (HmbG), Thin layer chromatography silica gel 60 F254 precoated plates, Formic acid, (Merck, Darmstadt, Germany), ferric chloride, sodium hydroxide (NaOH) (Sigma-Aldrich, USA).

### Phytochemical test

Phytochemical analysis for each sample's crude extract were carried out according to the standard procedure methods.<sup>7,8</sup>

#### Test for alkaloids

1 mL of crude extract was mixed with 5 mL of diluted hydrochloride acid (HCL) and was placed in a water bath at 60°C for 15 minutes. 1 mL of Wagner's reagent was added into 1mL of filtered suspension.

Appearance of reddish-brown precipitate showed the presence of alkaloids.

#### Test for cardiac glycoside

Crude extract was treated with 1mL of glacial acetic acid diluted (3%) ferric chloride ( $\text{FeCl}_3$ ) follow by adding concentrated sulphuric acid ( $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$ ) at the side of the test tube. The formation of brown ring indicated the presence of cardiac glycoside.

#### Test for flavonoid

Intense yellow color formed when 1 mL of sodium hydroxide (NaOH) solution was added into 1 mL of crude extract. The yellow color turned colorless upon addition of diluted  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$ , which indicated the presence of flavonoid.

#### Test for phenolic compounds and tannin

2 mL of crude extract in test tube and add 3%  $\text{FeCl}_2$  drop by drop. Appearance of bluish black precipitate indicates the presence of phenolic compounds and tannin.

#### Test for saponin

0.5 mL of crude extract was diluted with 5 mL of distill water. The suspension was shaken vigorously for a few minutes. Development of foam which is able to persist for 10 minutes shown the presence of saponin.

#### Salkowski Test for phytosterols

Crude extract was treated with 0.5 mL of chloroform, add 1 mL of concentrated  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$  from the sides of test tube. Appearance of reddish brown color in chloroform layer indicates the presence of phytosterol.

#### Liebermann-Burchard's Test for triterpenoid

0.5 mL of crude extract was treated with few drops of acetic anhydride, boil and cool. 1mL of concentrated  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$  was added from the sides of test tube. Formations of reddish brown at the junction of two layer and formation of deep red color confirm the presence of terpenoid.

### Fluorescence analysis

Fluorescence is an important phenomenon exhibited by various chemical constituents present in plant material. If the substances themselves are not fluorescent they may often be converted into fluorescent derivatives by reagents, hence some crude drugs are often assessed qualitatively in this way and it is an important parameter of pharmacognostical evaluation<sup>9</sup>

#### TLC Analysis for flavonoids

About 2 µg of extracts was loaded on TLC plates (Merck). The plates were developed in toluene: chloroform: methanol (4:4:1, v/v/v) to separate flavonoid compounds of the extracts. The developed plate was air dried. Then anisaldehyde sulfuric acid was sprayed on the surface of the plate and incubated for 20 min at 100°C. The present flavonoid compound of this extracts was detected as blue spot on developed TLC plate. The  $R_f$  value of the bands were also determined.<sup>8</sup>

#### Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrophotometer

Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrophotometer (FTIR) is perhaps the most powerful tool for identifying the types of chemical bonds (functional groups) present in compounds. The wavelength of light absorbed is characteristic of the chemical bond as can be seen in the annotated spectrum. By interpreting the infrared absorption spectrum, the chemical bonds in a molecule can be determined.<sup>10</sup> The sample of each plant specimen was loaded in FTIR spectroscope (PerkimElmer Spectrum 65, USA), with a Scan range from 650 to 4000  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  using Attenuated Total Reflection (ATR) Method. Result were obtain using Perkim Elmer Spectrum version 10.03.06.

## RESULTS

Preliminary phytochemical analysis of newly polyherbal formulation is of significant importance as scientist need to understand the change upon extraction of equal portion of two different medicinal herb (*Clinacanthus nutans* and *Elephantopus scaber*). The combined herbal extract possess the bioactive compound of both herb. Results have showed shows the strong presence of Flavonoid, phenol, tannin, saponin, alkaloid. Whereas it possess moderate presence of Triterpenoid, phytosterol, cardiac glycoside. The phytochemical analysis of *Clinacanthus nutans* shows the strong presence of flavonoids, phenolic compounds, alkaloids and tannin. Whereas it possess moderate presence of triterpenoid and minimum level of phytosterol and cardiac glycoside. The phytochemical analysis of *Elephantopus scaber* shows the strong presence of phytosterol and saponin. Whereas it possess moderate presence of cardiac glycoside. Flavonoids, phenol, triterpenoid. All the result was based upon the qualitative analysis such as color change after reaction (Table 2).

Fluorescent Analysis of *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus scaber* and *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber* were performed by different solvents. Different colours gives an idea about nature of compound inside sample. An interesting observation have found during the evaluation of polyherbal powder that the colour after reaction is similar with the colour after Reaction of reagent with *Elephantopus scaber*. This may be due to dark colour of powder of *Elephantopus scaber* as compare to *Clinacanthus nutans*. *Clinacanthus nutans* is light greenish powder whereas *Elephantopus scaber* powder is dark green in nature.

Fluorescent Analysis identify possible bioactive compounds by observing the colour present inside the sample as mentioned in Table 3.

TLC Analysis of flavonoids of *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus scaber*, *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber* and their fractions have confirm the presence of flavonoids. Blue colour spots indicates that flavonoid present inside the sample (Figure 1 and 2). Retention factor shows possible bioactive compound inside the sample (Table 7).

**Table 1: %age yield of *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus scaber* and *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber***

Sample	Mass Yield (gm)	Mass Yield (%)
<i>Clinacanthus nutans</i>	2.50 gm	25
<i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	1.8 gm	18
<i>Clinacanthus nutans</i> + <i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	2.0 gm	20

**Table 2: Phytochemical analysis of *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus scaber* and *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber***

Phytochemical Analysis	<i>Clinacanthus nutans</i>	<i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	<i>Clinacanthus nutans</i> + <i>Elephantopus scaber</i>
Alkaloids	+++	-	+++
Cardiac glycoside	+	++	++
Flavonoids	+++	++	+++
Phenol	+++	++	+++
Saponin	-	+++	+++
Phytosterols	+	+++	++
Triterpenoid	++	++	++
Tannin	+++	++	+++

+++ = High amount; ++ = Moderate amount; + = Minimum amount; - = Absent.

**Table 3: Fluorescence analysis of *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus scaber* and *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber***

Treatment with reagent	Fluorescence analysis					
	Ordinary Light			U.V. Light (254nm)		
	<i>Clinacanthus nutans</i>	<i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	Combination	<i>Clinacanthus nutans</i>	<i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	Combination
Powder as such	Light green	Dark green	Dark green	Brown	Brown	Brown
Powder + Water	Turbid	Turbid	Turbid	Brown	Brown	Brown
Powder + Ethanol	Greenish	Yellowish green	Yellowish green	Yellowish Brown	Brown	Brown
Powder + Methanol	Greenish	Yellowish green	Yellowish green	Dark brown	Light brown	Light Brown
Powder + n-hexane	Yellow	White	Yellow	Dark brown	Light brown	Light Brown
Powder + Ethyl acetate	Greenish	Yellowish green	Yellowish green	Brown	Reddish orange	Dark Red
Powder + Chloroform	Dark green	Yellow	Yellowish green	Dark Brown	Dark Brown	Dark Brown
Powder + Acetone	Green	Yellowish green	Green	Dark brown	Reddish orange	Reddish orange
Powder + Glacial acetic acid	Yellowish brown	Brown	Yellowish brown	Yellow	Orange	Orange red
Powder + Sulphuric acid (10%)	Light brown	Reddish brown	Reddish brown	Yellow	Dark brown	Reddish brown
Powder + Sodium hydroxide (10%)	Turbid Orange	Clear Orange	Light orange	Dark orange	Orange	Light orange
Powder + Sodium hydroxide (1N)	Yellow	Brown	Yellowish brown	Yellow	Orange	Orange
Powder + Potassium hydroxide (5%)	Reddish brown	Brown	Light brown	Brown	Brown	Brown
Powder + Nitric Acid	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Yellowish Red	Pink Red	Pink Red

**Table 4: TLC Analysis of flavonoids of *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus scaber* and *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber***

Extract	Solvent System	Revealing reagent	No. of spots	Rf Value
<i>Clinacanthus nutans</i>	toluene: chloroform: methanol (4:4:1, v/v/v)	anisaldehyde sulfuric acid	1	0.13
<i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	toluene: chloroform: methanol (4:4:1, v/v/v)	anisaldehyde sulfuric acid	3	0.4, 0.66, 0.9
<i>Clinacanthus nutans</i> + <i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	toluene: chloroform: methanol (4:4:1, v/v/v)	anisaldehyde sulfuric acid	2	0.7, 0.97

**Table 5: TLC Analysis of flavonoids of *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber* fractions**

Fractions of <i>Clinacanthus nutans</i> + <i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	Solvent System	Revealing reagent	No. of spots	Rf Value
n-hexane	toluene: chloroform: methanol (4:4:1, v/v/v)	anisaldehyde sulfuric acid	4	<b>0.26,0.62,0.80,0.92</b>
Chloroform	toluene: chloroform: methanol (4:4:1, v/v/v)	anisaldehyde sulfuric acid	4	0.21, <b>0.56</b> ,0.71,0.90
Ethylacetate	toluene: chloroform: methanol (4:4:1, v/v/v)	anisaldehyde sulfuric acid	3	0.21,0.76,0.97
n-butanol	toluene: chloroform: methanol (4:4:1, v/v/v)	anisaldehyde sulfuric acid	4	0.21, <b>0.66</b> , <b>0.80</b> ,0.95

**Table 6: Predicted bioactive compounds after Fluorescence analysis under (a) ordinary light and (b) UV-254nm**

Colors seen under ordinary light	Possible bioactive compounds
Greenish, Yellow brown, Yellowish green	Chlorophyll pigments such as Pheophytin b, Chlorophyll a
Bright Yellow or Pale Yellow	6-hydroxylated flavonols, flavone, some chalcone glycosides, flavone glycosides

(a)

Colours seen under UV-254nm	Possible bioactive compounds
Dark brown	6-hydroxylated flavonols, flavone, some chalcone glycosides, flavone glycosides

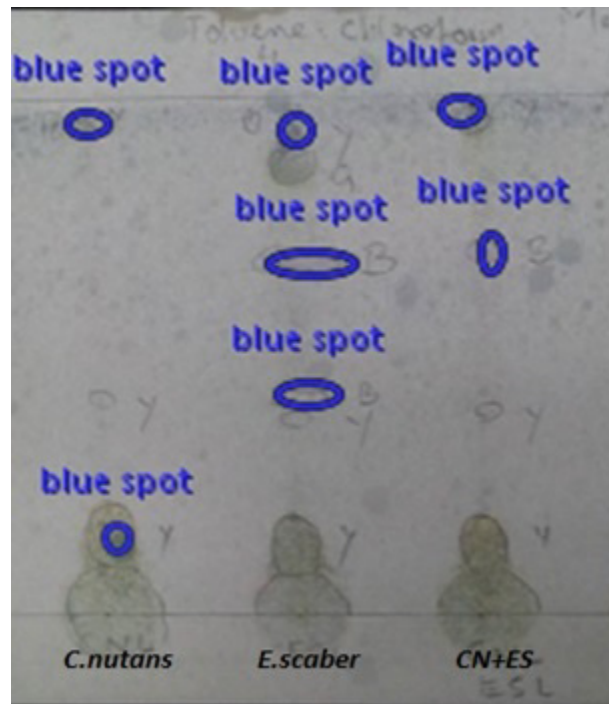
(b)

**Table 7: Predicted bioactive compounds after TLC Analysis(16)(17)**

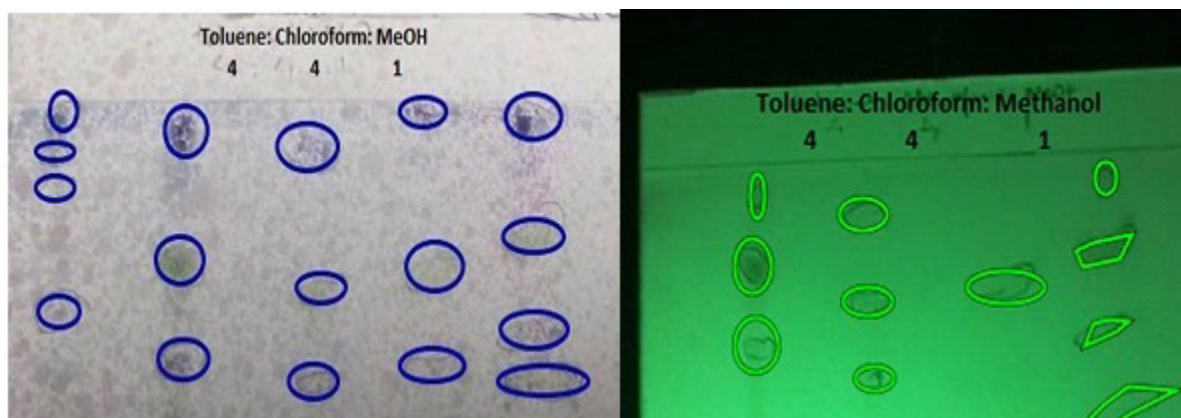
Rf values	Possible flavonoids
0.28	Luteolin
0.62	Galangin
0.39	Kaempferol
0.27	Quercetin
0.13	Myricetin
0.26	Isorhamnetin
0.82	Apigenin

**Table 8: Predicted functional group after Fourier Transform Infrared spectroscopy**

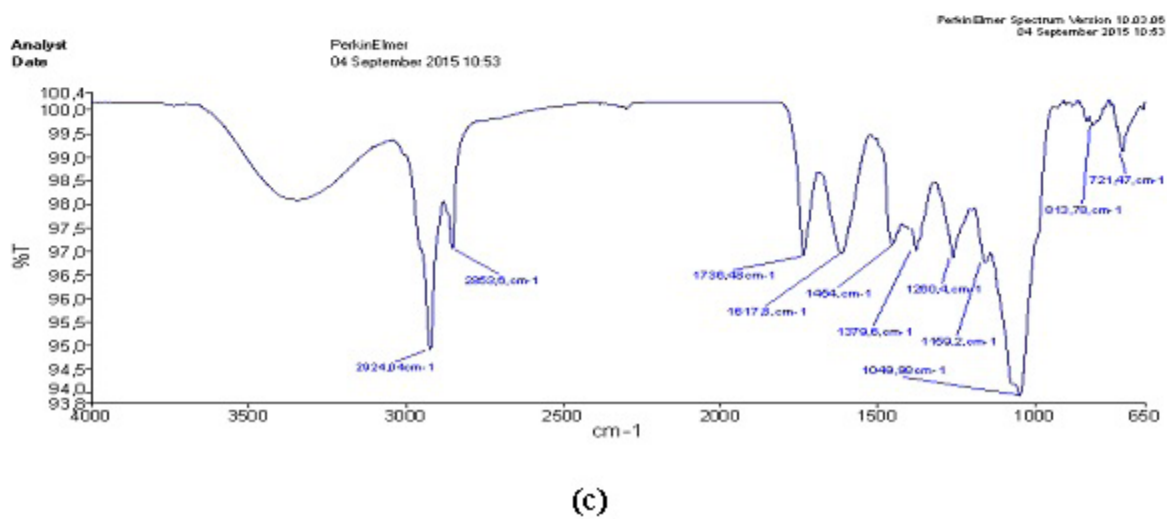
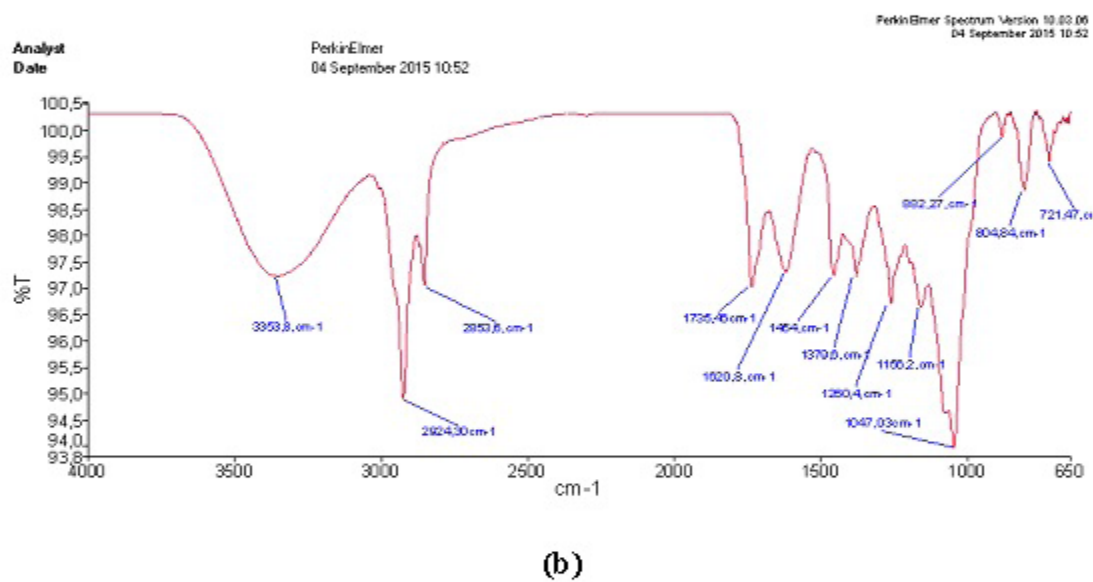
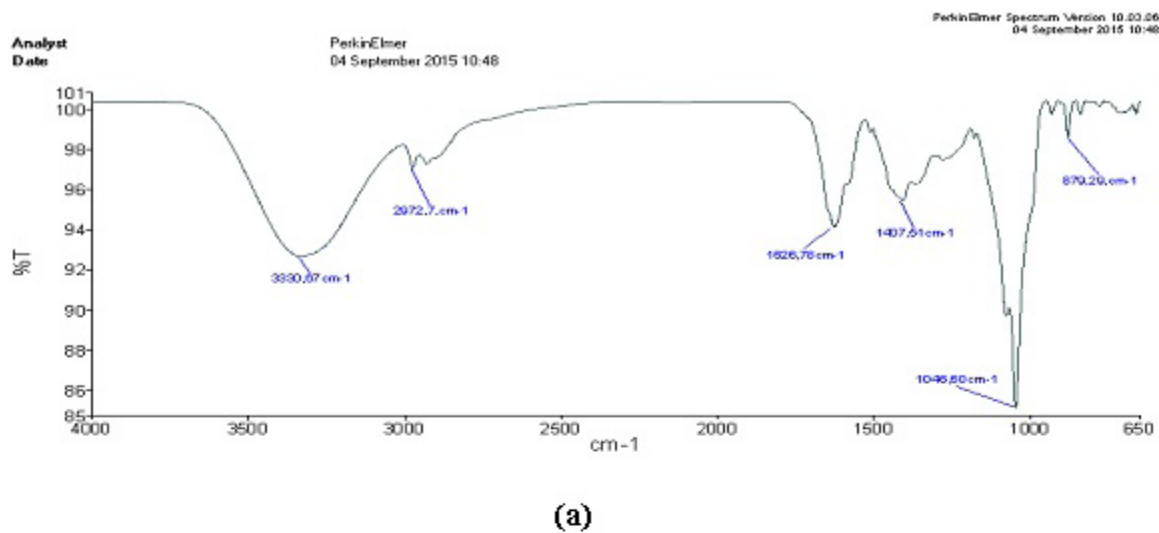
Samples Prepared	Peak values(cm-1)	Functional groups
<i>Clinacanthus nutans</i>	3330,2872,1626,1407,1046,879	3500–3200 = (OH) Stretching (alcohol and Phenol), 2850–2957 = (CH) Stretching (alkyl)
<i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	3353,2924,2853,1735,1620,1454,1379,1260, 1156,1047,882,804, 721	1585–1626 = Aromatic 1620–1680 = C=C 1850–1650 (C=O)
<i>Clinacanthus nutans</i> + <i>Elephantopus scaber</i>	3353,2924,2853,1736,1617,1454,1379,1260,1159,1049,813,721	(C=O conjugation with C=C, the frequency lowered from 1700 to 1650 Depending upon number of unsaturation)
N-hexane	3392,2922,2850,1736,1451,1382,1263,1165,1038,720	1394–1451 = (CH) Bend
Chloroform	3410,2921,2853,1736,1451,1370,1260,1084,1017,797	1320–1000 = C–O stretch,
Ethyl acetate	3349,2919,1610,1394,1263,1051	1054 = representing either ether or alcohol
N-butanol	3334,2957,2930,2874,1722,1611,1458,1382,1071	1250 = carboxylic acid
Remaning aqueous fractions	3365,2924,1616,1401,1054	



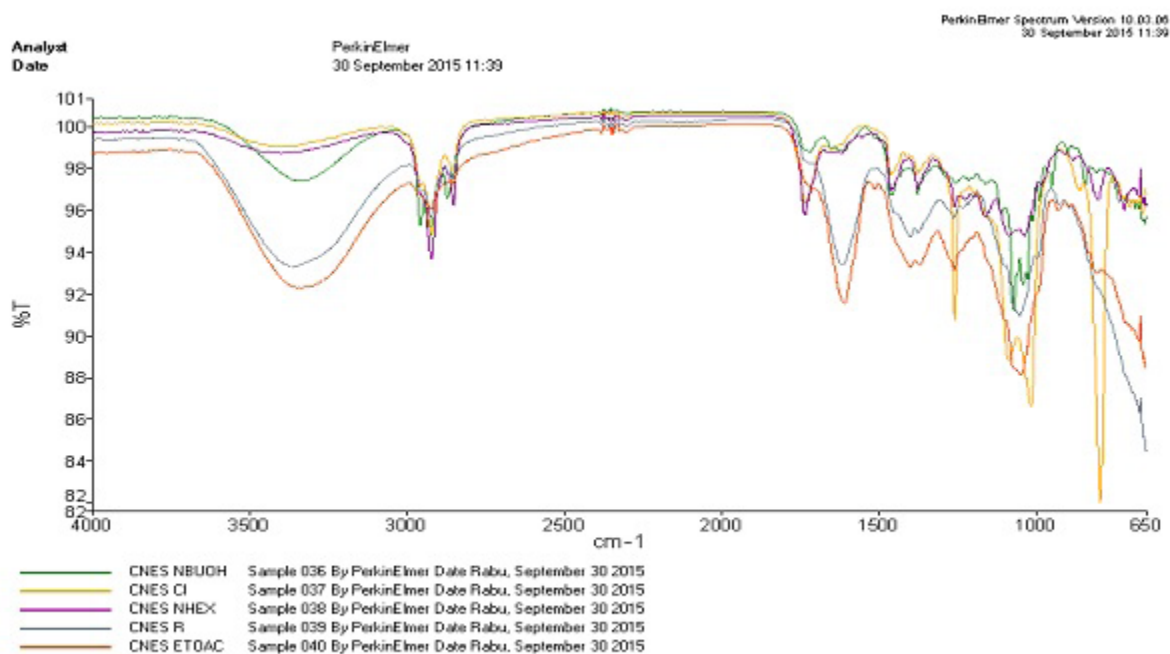
**Figure 1:** TLC Analysis of flavonoids of *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus scaber* and *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber* using reagent.



**Figure 2:** TLC Analysis of flavonoids of *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber* fractions using reagent and under UV 254 nm



**Figure 3:** FTIR spectrum of *Clinacanthus nutans*, *Elephantopus scaber* and *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber*.



**Figure 4:** FTIR spectrum of *Clinacanthus nutans* + *Elephantopus scaber* fractions.

Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrophotometer (FTIR) identify flavonoid by comparing the bonds (functional groups) present inside the sample as mentioned in Table 8.

## DISCUSSION

There is a need of time about scientific evaluation of Polyherbal formulation for the future. Development of new herbal formulation has been the success after extensive literature review. The bioactive compound of both medicinal herb present inside polyherbal extract that may result into more powerful wound healing agent. Flavonoids has played as important role as wound healing due to its anti-inflammatory potential through NF $\kappa$ B synthesis inhibition.<sup>11,12</sup> The literature review suggest that *Clinacanthus nutans* and *Elephantopus scaber* has antioxidant properties, which may be responsible and constructive for faster wound healing.<sup>13-15</sup> Further investigation on new poly herbal formulation in the treatment of wound and isolation of bioactive compounds is currently in progress.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This is no conflict of interest among authors.

## ABBREVIATION USED

CN: *Clinacanthus nutans*; ES: *Elephantopus scaber* ;HCl: Hydrochloric acid; H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>: Sulfuric acid ; FeCl<sub>3</sub>: ferric chloride ; NaOH: sodium hydroxide ; FTIR: Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrophotometer ; ATR: Attenuated Total Reflection Method ; TLC: Thin Layer Chromatography; NF $\kappa$ B : Nuclear factor kappa-light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells.

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