



## Review On Medicinal Value And Side Effect Of Ruta

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**Abstract:** *Ruta* popularly known as rue is a multipurpose herb belonging to family *Rutaceae* has been used as a source of food and medicine for thousands of years. It has played an important dietary as well as medicinal role in human history and it has been on the top list of herbal sales among people. Today, it is commonly used in much culture as a seasoning or spice. Therefore, this paper is designed with the objective to review the medicinal values and toxicity of *Ruta*. *Ruta* has the potential of curing a man from a large number of diseases by inhibiting the growth of different strains of bacteria, fungi, parasites; it has also insecticidal and anti-inflammation activities. The active constituents are a rich source of secondary metabolites mainly: *coumarins*, *alkaloids*, *volatile oils*, *flavonoids*, and *phenolic acids*. It has been used abundantly worldwide due to its diverse medicinal properties that are rapidly absorbed and metabolized. The composition of *Ruta* is consistent with their use as flavoring agents in food as well as their use herbal medicines. The chemical ingredients of *Ruta* species have also been found to be useful for treatments of cancer, diabetes, hyperlipidemia and cardiovascular diseases, also found to have antipyretic, antioxidant properties. Pregnant women and animals especially goat and horse are highly susceptible to *Ruta* species. A recent increase in the popularity of alternative medicine and natural products has renewed interest in *Ruta* species and their derivatives as potential natural remedies. Therefore, more studies are needed to refine the use and improvement of the efficacy of this important medicine plant.

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### 1. Introduction

Since the beginning of human civilization, medicinal plants have been used by mankind for its therapeutic value. According to the WHO in 2008, more than 80% of the world's population relied on traditional medicine due to their significant healing powers and lesser side effects (Shanazi *et al.*, 2006). Traditional herbal medicines are often deemed to be safe due to their natural origin (Wallace *et al.*, 2012).

*Rutaceae* is a large family of trees and shrubs predominantly tropical and subtropical family having 150-162 genera and 1500-2096 species (Scott *et al.*, 2000). *Ruta* is the richest genus of *Rutaceae* family. "*Ruta*" comes from the Greek word "*reuo*", to set free, showing its reputation as a free from disease. The genus *ruta* have 8 to 40 species, which is strongly scented evergreen sub shrubs having 20cm-1m tall, in the family *Rutaceae*. The leaves are bipinnate or tripinnate, with a feathery appearance, and green to strongly *glaucous* blue-green in colour (Groppo *et al.*, 2012). The flowers are yellow, with 4-5 petals, about 1 cm diameter, and bloom during spring and summer. The fruit is a 4-5 lobed capsule, containing numerous seeds originally native to the Mediterranean region but now genus *Ruta* is cultivated in many parts of the

world it grows on waste stony ground (Iauk *et al.*, 2004).

*Ruta* species are resources of various classes of natural products with biological activities like; antifungal, antioxidant, antiviral, antidepressant, antidote and anti-inflammatory, it has been used widely in various folk medicines as analgesic and antipyretic and for treatment of mental disorders, rheumatism, and bleeding disorders (Raghav *et al.*, 2006). For a long time, *R. graveolens* has been used as a traditional medicine for treatment of various conditions such as eye problems, pain and many inflammatory diseases (Ratheesh and Helen, 2007). Extracts from *R. graveolens* have been used as antimicrobial and antifungal properties and antidote for toxins such as snake and scorpion venoms while others are medically useful (Oliva *et al.*, 1999).

In Ethiopia, the Amharic name of *R. chalepensis* L. is Tena Adam literally means health of Adam, thus signifying the medicinal applications of the plant. In Ethiopian folk medicine it used to treat earache, hemorrhoids, *influenza* and intestinal disorders. The juice from the crushed leaves is mixed with water and

administered to colicky babies (Fullas, 2003). It is traditionally known for its abortive and anti-fever effects while *Ruta graveolens* is known for its antiparasitic, digestive, diuretic and molluscicidal activities (Boudoir et al., 2011). In addition to medicinal applications it's used for cooking and medicinal purposes. It is scientifically accepted that natural antioxidants exert health promoting effects and their consumption as food or as food additives or as nutraceuticals and supplements have been greatly promoted worldwide. A complex mixture of antioxidants may account for improvement of cardiovascular health and decreased incidence of cancer in individuals who consume more of these substances (Schmidt et al., 2015). The leaves of *Ruta chalepensis* are used commonly as spice during a traditional Ethiopian coffee and tea ceremony. The fruits are used as ingredients of the local "berbere" and "mitten shiro" spice mix. *Ruta* is a rich source of secondary metabolites mainly; *coumarins*, *alkaloids*, *volatile oils*, *flavonoids*, and *Miscellaneous Compounds* (Prabhu et al., 2014).

Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are:

- To review the chemical compositions and medicinal value of *Ruta*.
- To describe the toxic effects of *Ruta*.

## 2. Chemical Composition Of *Ruta*

In *Ruta* species more than 120 compounds have been identified up to now. Environmental pollution, especially with heavy metals, poses serious problem on the quality of medicinal plants and their products. Thus, the element content assessment is important for specifying the relevance of application to produce drugs, *Ruta* species are rich source of secondary metabolites mainly: *Coumarins*, *alkaloids*, *volatile oils*, *flavonoids*, and *phenolic acids* (Hammiche et al., 2013).

### 2.1. Coumarins

The main types of *Coumarins* identified in *Ruta* species are: simple *Coumarins*, *furancoumarin*, *dihydrofurancoumarins*, and *isocoumarins* among others (Hussain et al., 2012). Simple coumarins isolated from the roots of the *Ruta* species for the first time were *gravelliferone methyl ether*, *chalepensis*, *daphnoetin*, and *gravelliferone*. The *furancoumarins* with linear structure are produced in different parts of the species; studies of field grown plants showed that *furancoumarins* concentration was proportionally related to both the plant's phenological stages and the organs in which the substance is stored (Milesi et al., 2001). Fruits accumulate higher concentrations of *furancoumarins* followed by leaves, roots, and stems. On the leaf surface, concentrations and proportions of *furancoumarins* *psoralens*, *Xanthotoxin*, and

*bergapten* vary during aging (Zobel and Brown, 1990; Byshv et al., 1992).

### 2.2. Alkaloids

*Ruta* species are a valuable natural source of alkaloids which can be classified as *furoquinolines*, *Acridones*, *quinolines*, and *alkylquinolinones* (Kuzovkina et al., 2004; and, Eun-Tae et al., 2014). The *furoquinoline alkaloids* such as *dictamine*, *kokusagenin*, *Skimmianine*, and *fagarine* occur in different amounts on the leaves, shoots, roots, and flowers (Kostova et al., 1999). *kokusagenin* and *Skimmianine* are almost equally distributed in the plant's aerial parts. *Furacridone* and *rutacridone* were the first representatives from *acridone alkaloids*, to be extracted from the roots of *R. graveolens* (Meepagala et al., 2005). *Graveoline* is *alkylquinolone alkaloid* isolated from the leaves of *Ruta* species. *Graveolinine* is *quinoline alkaloids* isolated from the leaves of the species (Salib et al., 2014).

### 2.3. Volatile Oils

The *volatile oils* obtained from *Ruta* species fruits, leaves, roots, flowers, or stems have a yellowish color, as well as an intense and penetrating odor. They are composed mainly of oxygenated compounds (*ketones*, *alcohols*, *acetates*), *sesquiterpenes* and *monoterpenes hydrocarbons*, *aromatics hydrocarbons* (Soleimani et al., 2009). *Monoterpenes* and *sesquiterpenes* have been identified in this plant species include, *apinene*, *limonene*, *camphene*, *terpinolene*, *camphor*, *geijerene*, and *geyrene* (Haddouchi et al., 2013). *Pregeijerene*, *geijereneand*, *sesquiterpenes* compounds are the major constituents of the essential oil from *Ruta species* roots. *Xanthotoxin* was also found in the oil extracted from aerial parts and roots of the *Ruta* species (De Feo et al., 2002). The composition of the essential oil is affected by climatic, seasonal, and geographic conditions, harvest period, chemotypes, and/or extraction procedure (Ferhat et al., 2014).

### 2.4. Flavonoid Glycosides and Flavonoids

*Ruta* species are a rich source of flavonoid glycosides, for example, rutin; a yellow pigment containing *gossypetin 7-methyl ether 3-rutinoside* and *gossypetin 7-methyl ether* has been isolated from the flowers of *Ruta* species. The leaves and flowers *Ruta* species have been reported to possess *flavonoid*, *quercetin*, *kaempferol*, and *isorhamnetin* (Saieed et al., 2006).

### 2.5. Miscellaneous Compounds

Besides the constituents listed above, other metabolites have also been reported in *Ruta* species, such as *glycosides* and *phenolic* compounds (Chien-Chih et al., 2001) Phenolic acids *gentisic acid* and *ferulic acid* were isolated from the leaves of *Ruta species* (Proestos et al., 2006)

### 3. Potential Health Benefits Of Ruta

#### 3.1. Treatments of Cardiovascular Disease

Medicinal plants have been in use all over the world to treat various diseases including inflammation, heart diseases, cancer, etc. Today the large numbers of drugs in use are derived from plants, which are rich in secondary metabolites and essential oils of therapeutic importance. The important advantages claimed for therapeutic uses of medicinal plants in various ailments are their safety besides being economical, effective and their easy availability (Verma and Kumar, 2011).

*Ruta Chalepensis* aqueous extract treatment of hypertensive rats prevented the development of hypertension, with *alkaloids*, *flavonoids*, *coumarins*, and *sterols* detected by the qualitative phytochemical analysis. These compounds have a large variety of pharmacological actions which include; stimulation of endothelial nitric oxide synthesis and inhibition of angiotensin converting enzyme (Gunaydin and Savci, 2005).

*Ruta chalepensis* is a rich source of important secondary metabolites such as *furanocoumarins* and *alkaloids*. The *furanocoumarin* is responsible for the *vasodilatory* activity regulated by nitric oxide in an endothelium dependent manner. Another compound present in *R. chalepensis* is *flavonoid* which is a *diglycoside* of *quercetin* (Raghav *et al.*, 2006). It has been demonstrated that *quercetin* possess antihypertensive activity in several models of hypertension and *thrombogenesis* (Pérez-Vizcaino *et al.*, 2009). The flavonoid *rutin* is used to support and strengthen blood vessels, which reduces pressure (Chevallier, 1996).

#### 3.2. Anti-diabetic Effect

Hyperglycemic has been found that the treatment of diabetic rats with *Ruta* species of flavonoid, *rutin* lead to significant amelioration of glucose tolerance. The hypoglycemic effect of *Ruta* species may be due to the presence of flavonoids such as *rutin*. Serum insulin concentration was increased markedly as a result of treating diabetes mellitus mice with *rutin*. By its ability to scavenge free radicals and to inhibit lipid peroxidation (Liao and Yin, 2000). *Rutin* protects  $\beta$ -cells resulting in increased insulin secretion, and decreases elevated blood glucose levels in diabetic rats at fasting state as compared with normal ones (Ahmed *et al.*, 2010).

The reduction of intestinal cholesterol absorption might have a role in the mechanism of action to augment the hypolipidemic activity in diabetes mellitus mice (Raz *et al.*, 2005). The effect of *rutin* on serum lipid variables attributed to their insulin releasing capacity, insulin binding affinity and decreasing intestinal cholesterol absorption (Ahmed *et al.*, 2010).

#### 3.3. Anti-Inflammatory Properties

Although a number of steroidal or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs have been developed, researchers are changing their focus to natural products to develop new anti-inflammatory agents due to the side-effects of chemical drugs (Hyun and Kim, 2009). As a result, the search for other alternatives seems necessary and beneficial so, *ruta* is an open door for new and effective compounds. The aerial parts of *R. graveolens* have been functionally used as a traditional crude drug as a poultice against rheumatic pain (Ratheesh and Helen, 2007).

In animal models, *methanolic extracts* of *Ruta* species with a concentration of 20 mg/kg and *ethanolic* extract with a concentration of 50 mg/kg showed maximum (90.9%) inhibition on carrageenan induced rat paw edema. The effect was higher than that of the standard drug *Voveran* (72.72%). Methanol extracts with a concentration of 50 mg/kg body weight produced 81.81% inhibition, which was also high as compared to the standard drug. Significantly high anti-inflammatory activity of *methanolic* and *ethanolic extracts* of *R. graveolens* may be due to inhibition of the mediators of *inflammation* such as *histamine*, *serotonin* and *prostaglandin* (Ratheesh and Helen, 2007).

The *methanolic* extract of *R. graveolens* markedly reduces cell influx, edema used as an anti-arthritic (Ratheesh *et al.*, 2009). *R. graveolens* extract examined in mice orally administer of the extract (200 mg/kg) show an *antinociceptive* effect (Asgarpanah and Khoshkam, 2012).

#### 3.4. Anticancer Effects

The leaf of *Ruta* is said to alleviate cancer of the mouth, as well as tumors and warts (Chauhan and Singh, 2011). *Phenolics*, *tannins* and *flavonoids* represent major groups of *Ruta* species constituents that work predominantly as powerful antioxidants property which can control the lung, bladder, and stomach colon cancer (Ferguson *et al.*, 2004).

Patients with locally advanced solid tumors or metastases and previously treated with conventional anticancer drugs showed a transitory improvement in quality of life when given homeopathic preparation of *R. graveolens* 9C by oral administration; however, there was influence on the tumor progression (Freyer *et al.*, 2014). The ultra-diluted potencies of *R. graveolens* showed anticancer activity when avoided the proliferation and cytotoxic effects on normal kidney epithelial cell model (Arora *et al.*, 2014). Total extract (70% ethanol) of *Ruta* species showed *in vitro cytotoxicity* against tumor cell lines (Varamini *et al.*, 2009).

#### 3.5. Immuno-modulatory Effect

*Ruta* species was shown to stimulate immune effector cell including thymus and natural killer cell number and activity. *Ethanol* and *methanol* extracts of *R. graveolens* leaves when administered orally, considerably increased adhesion of neutrophils to nylon fibers which interrelate to the procedure of margination of cells in blood vessels (Kumar *et al.*, 2005). *R. graveolens* extracts is concentration effective on the proliferation of interleukin (IL)-2 and interferon (INF)- $\gamma$  genes expression stimulation of neutrophil towards the site of inflammation (Mishra and Ratnavali, 2005). *Ruta* species extracts reduce macrophage infection through induction of nitric oxide. (Roitt *et al.*, 2002).

The humoral immunity involves the interaction of B cell with antigens and in the end proliferating and differentiating into antibody generating cells. *Alcoholic* extracts of *Ruta graveolens* leaves may be enhanced the level of IgM, IgG, and are capable of influencing B-cells, which in turn synthesize or secrete antibodies (Gokhale *et al.*, 2003).

### 3.6. Antibacterial Effect

More than 15 compounds in *Ruta* have been identified as having in vitro antibacterial activity; *acridone alkaloids* are the most potent antimicrobial compounds; the *coumarins* inhibit growth (Tavares and Zanon, 2014). Broad spectrum antimicrobial activity of *Alkaloids* compound is against gram positive and gram negative microorganisms such as; *Bacillus subtilis*, *Bacillus cereus*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Staphylococcus epidermidis*, *Streptococcus pyogenes*, *Enterobacter aerogenes*, *Enterococcus species* *Klebsiella pneumonia*, *Morganella morganii* and *Enterobacter cloacae*, *Shigel sonnei*, *Salmonella typhimurium*, *Burkholderia cepacia*, *Escherichia coli*, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Ivanova *et al.*, 2005). *Ruta* species are used for gastrointestinal complaints, blackleg and nervous sensory of locomotory ailments and antisepticin. In Mediterranean traditional medicine, *Ruta* has been used to treat pulmonary conditions, such as tuberculosis, and to reduce swelling of the spleen, as well as externally to treat wounds (Pollio *et al.*, 2008).

### 3.7. Antifungal Property

*Ruta* species are active ingredients have antifungal and insecticidal properties that could prove beneficial to agriculture as well (Ojala *et al.*, 2000, and Mancebo *et al.*, 2001). *Ruta graveolens* was found to have activity against various fungi such as *Aspergillusniger*, *A. flavus*, *Penicillium crysogenum*, *Sacharomyces cerevisiae* *Rhizopusstolonifer*, *Candida albicans*, *Saprolegnia spp*, and *Cryptococcus* species (Oliva *et al.*, 2003).

The presence of antifungal agent in *R. graveolens* against agriculturally important fungi in *ethylacetate* extract similarly has demonstrated the fungicidal

activity against *Colletotichum fragariae*, *C. gloeosporioides*, *C. acutatum*, *Botrytis cinerea* and *Fusarium oxysporium*. They found that *Rutacridone* epoxide was the bioactive constituent from the ethylacetate extract of *R. graveolens* roots which showed fungicidal activity, *Rutacridone* epoxide also showed significantly higher fungicidal activity than commercial fungicides, *captan* and *benomyl* (Hashemi *et al.*, 2011). In *Ruta graveolens*, the existence of *saponin*, *tannin*, *alkaloid phenols*, *flavonoids*, *terpenes*, and *coumarins* and *glycosid* has been proved antifungal effects. *Saponin* has soap characteristics and its anti-fungal effect (Aderotimi and Samuel, 2006).

*R. chalepensis* are common economic food spices in Ethiopia and thus, it is an advantage to develop safe botanical food preservative against toxigenic *Aspergillus* species that have strong affinity to colonize various food commodities due to its secretion of hydrolytic enzymes and *Cladosporium herbarum* (Haddouchi *et al.*, 2013). *Dictamnine* and *furoquinoline alkaloid* has been found to possess antifungal properties (Zhao *et al.*, 2005). Chloroform extracts isolated from the leaves of this species were active against the *Fusarium solani*, *Sclerotium rolfsii* and *Rhizoctonia solani* (Emam *et al.*, 2010).

### 3.8. Antiparasite Effects

The antiparasitic activity of ether extract of leaves is active against *Strongyloides stercoralis*, *nematode* that causes *strongyloidiasis*. The *molluscicidal* activity of *hexane* and *ethanol* extracts from leaves and stem of *R. graveolens* and found to be effective against the intermediate host of *Schistosoma* species (Hmamouchi *et al.*, 2000).

In vitro study performed with hydro alcoholic extract of aerial parts of *R. graveolens* show the reductions in viability, potential for invasion, and multiplication rate of the parasites *Leishmania amazonensis* and *Trypanosoma cruzi* and indicated that these *Ruta* species extract may be potential candidates for developing drugs to treat *leishmaniasis* and *Chagas* disease (Queiroz *et al.*, 2014). *Quinolinone alkaloids* is against a form of *Plasmodium falciparum* (Biavatti and Vieira, 2002).

In Italian countryside, *R. graveolens* leaves were set under the bed to repel bugs and mice and a decoction of *Ruta* species also has been used topically against scabies, lice, and fleas, to repel insects and to treat intestinal worms in livestock. *Rue* can also drive away pests like mosquitoes, cockroaches and flies It can also be used as *vaporizers*, *fumigants*, incense sticks and burners in-order to ward off insects (De feo *et al.*, 2002).

## 4. Adverse Effects Of Ruta

The standard of homeopathic therapy is which animals are diagnosed on basis of individual pattern of

clinical signs. The advocated most parenteral does is 10ml for large animal. The corresponding oral preparation of 1:1000 in tablets, globuli, or drop. Apart from the valuable medicinal properties *Ruta* species may also act toxically when overdosed, (Sharma *et al.*, 2001).

The experimental oral administration of *R. graveolens* leaves (5 g/kg) to the goats caused toxicity with pathological changes in numerous organs. The adjustments covered alterations in serum aspartate and copper, iron, zinc, manganese, calcium, and phosphorus with animal dying report. Lyophilized hydroalcoholic extract of aerial parts of *R. graveolens* resulted in fetal death when administered orally (1000 mg/kg/day) for the duration of the pregnancy and that *Ruta* species contains an alkaloid referred to as pilocarpine, that is utilized in veterinary medicinal drug to result in abortion in horses (Freitas *et al.*, 2005).

Intra-peritoneal administration high level of *R. graveolens* extracts (30 and 100 mg) in Wistar rats for three days ended in morphological modifications in the liver and caused hepatotoxicity. Aqueous extract (20%) of *R. graveolens* leaves when administered orally in rats precipitated a significant decrease inside the number of normal embryos and increase in cases of chronic late embryonic improvement accordingly demonstrating toxic impact of the extract (Benavides *et al.*, 2014).

It has been reported also ethanolic and aqueous extracts of *R. graveolens* seeds resulted in change in body weight, biochemical and hematology parameters and accordingly induced toxicity whilst administered orally to male Wistar rats at 200 mg/kg/day (for four weeks), The ethno botanical look at done in health care service of pronounced the potential dangers and poisoning outcomes of *R. graveolens* such as a result of death due to stomach injury, inhibition of spermatogenesis, reduced concentration of sialic acid in the testes, epididymis and seminal vesicles together with decrease leyding cell function reflects ant-androgenic effects of *Ruta* species, anemia, weight loss and failure to grow due to lysis of red blood cell in rats (Marinoff *et al.*, 2009).

Among the impacts in human beings mention the case of 26 years old pregnant girl led to abortion after drinking *R. graveolens* tea in combination with chocolate and cinnamon. In other case; the use of decoction of *R. graveolens* through 78 years old woman caused bradycardia, renal failure with acute hyperkalemia, and coagulopathy. Additional report was indicated the case of acute phytophoto dermatitis in 2 years old child after contact with this plant species (Furniss and Adams, 2007). Nausea and vomiting are major adverse effects and care should be taken in consuming high quantities (Liao, and Yin, 2000).

## 5. Conclusion And Recommendation

*Ruta* has been used over thousands of years for medicinal purpose, and health claims credited to the ingestion of *Ruta* have predominantly come from anecdotal evidence and traditional use, it is a nature's boon to mankind. *Ruta* has health benefits such as: treatment of cardiovascular diseases, including hypertension, thrombosis and hyperlipidemias, as well as uses treatments of cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes. *Ruta* has also antimicrobial effect, antiparasite, antifungal, and anti-inflammatory activities. A recent increase in the popularity of alternative medicine and natural products has renewed interest in *Ruta* and their derivatives as potential natural remedies. Today with the ever-growing resistance organism, taking of *Ruta* extract remains a powerful antimicrobial agent. Although *Ruta* is believed to be a safe substance; excessive *Ruta* ingestion produces toxic effects especially on pregnant women and animals. Moreover, higher concentrations of *Ruta* powder (extract) cause considerable cell injury, anemia, weight loss, and failed to grow due to lysis of red blood cells.

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations are forwarded:

- Overdose supplementation of *Ruta* should be avoided.
- Medicinal plants like *Ruta* should be consumed as flavoring food to get constant source of medicaments for the exposure of many diseases.
- Avoid the use of *Ruta* during pregnancy for both human and animals.
- Future studies should be conducted on active ingredients of *Ruta* safety, efficacy, and mechanism of action, dose standardization and toxicity effects of *Ruta*.

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