

Part-1

Volume 21	Supplement 1	August 2021
-----------	--------------	-------------

CONTENTS

- Beta-Lactamases enzymes : Mechanism and classification
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1903> **Dalia Azhar Ahmed** 1903
- Free radical scavenging potentials of antioxidants present in aqueous and ethanolic leaf and bark extracts of *Peltophorum pterocarpum* (DC.) Baker ex K Heyne
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1917> **M. Jerline Babu, G. Bupesh, A. Vijaya Anand, K. M. Saradhadevi and Pranjal Bharali** 1917
- Cases of multidrug resistance (MDR) and extended spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL) producing *Escherichia coli* from broiler chicken in Blitar, Indonesia
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1923> **Freshinta Jellia Wibisono, Bambang Sumiarto, Tri Untari, Mustofa Helmi Effendi, Dian Ayu Permatasari and Adiana Mutamsari Witaningrum** 1923
- Schistosomiasis of drugs resistance in human and animal helminths : Review article
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1931> **Shaimaa A. Shlash, Mazin T. Abdul-Hasan, Samer A. Hasan, Fadhil A. Naser and Mohamed A. Zarka** 1931
- Synthesis, characterization and biological study of new complexes Schiff base derived from 4-bromo-2-methylaniline
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1941> **Marwan Yousif and Lekaa K. Abdul Karem** 1941
- Catenin- δ -1 as a potential marker of gastric cancer in a sample of Iraqi patients with gastric diseases associated with *Helicobacter pylori*
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1949> **Mustafa K. Albayaty, Salma A. Abass, Mohammed F. Al-Marjani and Safaa A. A. Razzak** 1949
- Histomorphological and histochemical investigation of infundibulum in guinea fowl (*Numida meleagris*)
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1955> **Azhar Saleem Khalaf and Shakir Mahmood Mirhish** 1955
- Effects of *Nerium oleander* extract on scaly leg mites (*Knemidocoptes mutans*) in back yard chickens
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1961> **Aws El-Muntaser H. Ali, Akram Ahmed Hasan, Sahar H. Abdulmaged and Anas A. Humadi** 1961
- Interactions of asthma severity and response to treatment with β 2-adrenergic polymorphisms in sample of Iraqi children
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1965> **Huda M. Al-Shami, Salwa Jaber Al-Awadi and Khaleed J. Khaleel** 1965
- Ability of *Cronobacter sakazakii* for adhesion and invasion to SKG-GT-4 cell line
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1971> **Hayder A. Al-Mandalawii, Luma Abdulhady Zwain and Estabraq A. Mahmood** 1971
- Validation of high performance thin layer chromatography for the identification of gymnemagenin from ethanolic leaf extract of *Gymnema sylvestre* R. Br
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1975> **Arumugam Rajalakshmi, Bupesh Giridharan, Prithiviraj Elumalai, Nandakumar Rangasamy and Govindarajan Sumathy** 1975

contd. inside i

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CONTENTS

Beta-Lactamases enzymes : Mechanism and classification DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1903	Dalia Azhar Ahmed 1903
Free radical scavenging potentials of antioxidants present in aqueous and ethanolic leaf and bark extracts of <i>Peltophorum pterocarpum</i> (DC.) Baker ex K Heyne DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1917	M. Jerline Babu, G. Bupesh, A. Vijaya Anand, K. M. Saradhadevi and Pranjal Bharali 1917
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contd. inside i

- Cases of multidrug resistance (MDR) in *Klebsiella pneumoniae* isolated from healthy pigs
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DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1987> **Mosa F. Abbas and Faraj A. Abed** 1987
- A promising oral 5-fluorouracil prodrug for lung tumor : Synthesis, characterization and release
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.1991>
Yasser Fakri Mustafa and Nohad Abdu-Alwahab Mohammed 1991
- Synthesis and identification of some new β -Lactam from N-1,2,3,4-Tetrahydrocarbazole derivatives and evaluation of antioxidant activity
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2001>
Zahraa Mohammed Abd Al-Mohson, Suaad M. H. Al-Majidi and Thikra H. Mathkor 2001
- Association of *HOTAIR* Up-regulation and MiR-193a hypermethylation with the incidence of Iraqi acute myeloid leukaemia patients
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2011>
Noha Mohammed Saleh and Hameed Majeed Jasim 2011
- Activities of sulfhydryl oxidase and xanthine oxidoreductase system in saliva and serum of women with different types of breast tumors
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2019>
Samar Ahmed Jabbar and Hathama Razooki Hasan 2019
- Biochemical correlations among liver and kidney functions with anthropometric measurements in limited numbers of individuals
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2029>
Nadya Ghassan Abdul Kareem, Wildan Talal Mahmood, Salah Hardan Ahmed and Muzahim Alkkaban 2029
- Trypanosomiasis evansi* of buffalo at Basrah, Iraq : Clinico-hematobiochemical and diagnostic studies
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2035>
Kamal M. Alsaad, Ali Jarad and Mohanad H. Lafta 2035
- Evaluation of anticancer effect of vitamin D₂ extracted from *Gladophora crispata*
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2043>
Zainab Abdul Ameer Mohammed, Nidhal Abdul Hussein Al-Bdairi and Raid Kadhim Abed Alasady 2043
- Comparison between histometric and histochemical of proventriculus of adult pigeon (*Columba livia domestica*) and duck (*Anas platyhynchos*)
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2051>
Luay Jalil Kareem and K. A. Al-Zubaidi 2051
- Different patterns of insertion regulatory sequences in genetic engineering and gene therapy vectors
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2057>
Mona N. Al-Terehi, Methak J. AL-Jboory and Raad N. Hasan 2057
- Effect of ajwa date seed on thyroid gland function in induce hyperthyroidism female albino rats
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2065>
Hala B. Thannoon AL-Bayati, Shatha Mousa Malaghee Alsafi and Saeed Hilal Khudhair AL Hasani 2065
- Laurus nobilis* extract can protect testicular functions from ketoconazole-induced testicular damage in rat
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2071>
Hujran Abduraheem Abed, Mohsin Abdulhussein Hasan and Zainab Khaleel Ibrahim 2071
- Histological changes in the testes, epididymis and seminal vesicles of adult male rabbits treated with garden cress (*Lepidium sativum* L.) seeds phenolic extract
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2079>
Ekhlas Abid Hamza Alalwany, Nada Saad Naji Altaee, Ahlam J. H. Al-Khamas and K. H. Rashid 2079
- Ability of three species of Enterobacter bacteria to synthesize iron nanoparticles and detection of the efficacy to inhibitory effect on other pathogenic bacteria
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2085>
Mohammad T. Selah and Ghada A. Mohammad 2085
- Some biochemical parameters in patients of COVID-19 in Mosul city, Iraq
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2091>
Mohammed Fadhil Haddad, Alaa Younis Mahdy Alhamadany and Anmar A. AlTaie 2091

- Prevalence of multi drug resistant among *Salmonella* species isolated from environmental samples of Mosul city
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2097> 2097
Muhammad Abdul-Ghani Muhammad, Mohammed Abdul-Razaq Ibraheem and Talal Sabhan Salih
- Determination of the inhibitory activity of some bacteriocin types against some multidrug-resistant bacteria species isolated from wound infection
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2103> 2103
Maryam Dana Qabl Haseeb and Mohammed Nadhir MaarooF
- Study of Cartilage Oligomeric Matrix Protein (COMP) level in serum and synovial fluid for osteoarthritis patients and its relationship level of vitamin D, parathyroid hormone and disease severity
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2111> 2111
Zahraa Mohammed Ali HAMODAT and Laith K. Omar AL-Ashou
- Assessment of genotoxic effect of *Escherichia coli* in patients with urinary tract infection
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2123> 2123
Alaa Hussein Almola, Alaa Younis Mahdy Alhamadany, Mohammed Fadhil Haddad and Safaa M. Sultan
- Comparative study between two types of waters on the ability of growth of some pathogenic and ecological bacterial species
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2129> 2129
Mohammad M. Salih, Manar Fawzi Thanoon Altaee and Mahmmod Ismail Mohammed
- How Insulin-like Growth Factor I (IGF-I) is related to age and BMI in obese adults
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2137> 2137
Ghusoon T. Witwit, Anmar D. Ghazala and Remal Adel Kadhim
- Synthesis of TiO₂ NPS by *Bacillus cereus* isolated from soil and evaluation of their activity against some pathogenic bacteria isolated from diarrhea
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2145> 2145
Shaymaa Najji Daham
- In vitro* genesis of cytotoxic effects of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacteriocin on the viability of four human cell lines
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2153> 2153
Rasha Nazar H. Al-S'adoon and Amera Mahmood M. Al-Rawi
- The effect of long-term tattoo on the skin of Syrian hamster : Histopathological and immunohistochemical studies
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2159> 2159
Abeer S. Abd Ali and Gazwa D. Al-Nakeeb
- Association of insulin-like growth factor-1 receptor gene polymorphism with diabetes and diabetic nephropathy in type 2 diabetic patients
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2171> 2171
Maytham Ahmed AbdulAemah, Moaed Emran Al-Gazally and Ali Jasim Al-Sultani
- The effect of stimulation by gibberellic acid (GA) and potassium chloride on the germination properties of salt-stressed wheat seed **DocID:** <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2177> 2177
Naeem Shtaiwi Mutar
- Assessment of health care workers knowledge towards nosocomial infections in Kut city hospitals
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2181> 2181
Qasim Abbas Khyoosh, Shrouk Abdulrazak Hassan Al Ibrahim and Tareq AL-Qassab
- Characterization and synthesis of new Schiff base compound from levofloxacin and L-cysteine with its Cu(II) and Pt(IV) complexes and estimation antibacterial and antifungal activities
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2187> 2187
Saja Ayad Jassim and Asmaa Mohammed Noori Khaleel
- Profile of phenols, tannins and antioxidant activity of some medicinal plants by using HPLC
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2197> 2197
Fyaa Raad Aldrweh and Aseel Kadhim Alanbari
- Study of antibacterial activity of silver and copper nanoparticles against *Streptococcus mutans* isolated from dental caries
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2203> 2203
Aliaa Kareem Abdulla, Talat Tariq Shammari and Hasanain Khaleel Shareef
- Investigation of biochemical parameters in patients with iron deficiency anemia (IDA) in Thi-Qar province
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2211> 2211
Hadeel Rashid Faraj, Samia Mezhr Merdas and Husam Mohammed Kredy

- Cytokines profile for intestinal and spleen homogenate for immunosuppressant BALB/c mice infected with *Cryptosporidium parvum*
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2215>
Thikra F. Hasan, Hazima M. AL-Abassi and Hayder Zuhair Ali 2215
- The appraisal of fetuin-A role in the development of metabolic syndrome in the obese individuals
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2223> **Haael Subhi Abbas and Ammer Abd. Mohammed** 2223
- Molecular detection of biofilm coding genes in extensively drug-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* isolated from Iraqi patients in Diyala
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2229>
Iman Abbas Ali, Lina Abdulameer S. Alsaadi and Saba Adnan Abbas 2229
- Antibacterial and anti-biofilm effect of zinc oxide nanoparticles against *Klebsiella pneumoniae*
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2235>
Nuha S. Jassim, Reem Jaafar Ali and Sajjad AbdulKareem Naeem 2235
- Levels of iron and copper in the blood of patients with juvenile idiopathic arthritis
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2241>
Sawsam Jaseim Al-Harbi, Mohammed R. Abd Ali and Ali H. Al-Saadi 2241
- Study the sense organs of scorpions *Androctonus crassicauda* (Scorpiones : Buthidae)
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2247> **Zeina N. Al-Azawii** 2247
- Study of some immunological anergic factors associated with urinary tract infection in women
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2251>
Rusul M. Al-Hajamy, Mohammed A. K. Al-Saadi and Asmaa Kadhim Gatea 2251
- Use of probiotics in treatment of acute gastroenteritis among rotavirus vaccinated and non-vaccinated children under two years
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2255>
Khamees M. Al-Dulaimy, Rafi Khaleel Al-Ani and Ala'a Hashim Tawfeeq 2255
- Isolation and molecular identification of *Klebsiella pneumoniae* isolated from hospitals in the Babylon province
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2259>
Salim Shamkhi Jaafar and Hassanein Khaleel Shareef 2259
- Aspergillus* species the most frequent fungi in respiratory tract secretions
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2265>
Farah Mohammed Saeed Sadeq and Kawther M. A. Hasan 2265
- Diphtheria incidence in Anbar Governorate, west of Iraq during the period 2009-2019
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2271>
Ammar M. Abdulla, Essam Mohammed Abdullah, Mothana Ali Khalil and Hekmat Ahmed Owaid 2271
- Molecular study of *S. aureus* and *S. mutans* strains isolates from recurrent caries
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2277>
Zahra K Ali, Rasha J Alwarid and Qasim A. Mohammed 2277
- Biosynthesis and characterization of silver nanoparticles by using *Teucrium polium* L. flowers extract and its antibacterial activity against clinical isolates from burns and wounds
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2281>
Shuaa Majid Mohammed and Asmma E. Al-Niaame 2281
- Anatomical and palynological study of *Agave americana* L. (Asparagaceae) growing in Iraq
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2291> **Areej A. Farman AL-Rawi** 2291
- Protective role of melatonin against effects of normal and D-galactose induced ageing on hepatocardiorenal functions markers of rats
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2295>
Govand Sh Tawfeeq and Ismail S. Kakey 2295
- Comparative histometric and histochemical study on the pancreas of adult domestic pigeon (*Columba livia domestica*) and kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2301>
Ali Abdul Hussein Taqi and K. A. Al-Zubaidi 2301
- Association of melatonin level and melatonin receptor gene polymorphism with depressive disease
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2307> **Bayader M. Abd Al-Kadim and Ali H. Al-Saadi** 2307

- Phytochemical analysis and antibacterial activity of *Prosopis juliflora* against *Xanthomonas axonopodis* pv. *punicae* causing bacterial blight of pomegranate
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2313> 2313
Sanjeev Jakatimath, K. C. Kiran Kumar, R. K. Mesta, S. Raghavendra, G. Raghavendra and D. R. Patil
- Point of care test of troponin versus heart-type fatty acid-binding protein in patients with ST-segment elevated myocardial infarction
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2323> 2323
Amjad Mohammed Redha, Abbas Al-Hashmi and Abdulkarem Al-Asafer
- The effect of risk factors and etiology on the distribution of clinical cases with urinary tract infection
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2329> 2329
Zahraa Muhammad Yahya Muhammad and Kawther M. A. Hasan
- Assessment of beta-endorphin in Iraqi acute myeloid leukemia patients
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2335> 2335
Noor Tariq Naem, Ayah Natiq Fadhel and Saif Salah Abdul Hassan
- A survey of important contaminants microbial food in Hilla city
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2339> 2339
Lubna Abdul Muttalib Al-Shalah, Huda Abbas Mohammed, Khulood Abdul-Majeed Mohammed Jafeer and Azhar Omran Althahab
- Preparation and characterization of nanohybrid norfloxacin and evaluation of its inhibitory activity against isolated bacteria from urinary tract infections
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2345> 2345
Hawraa Abd AL-taie and Ali Abdul Kadhim Al-Ghanimi
- Assessment of some hematological and biochemical parameters for COVID-19 patient's in Baghdad province
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2355> 2355
Khaleed J. Khaleel, Abeer Anwer Ahmed and Alaa Abbas Fadhel
- Estimation of cardiac troponin I and some oxidative stress parameters as biomarkers in Iraqi patients with diabetes mellitus type 1
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2361> 2361
Basheer A. Khashan and Khalid Abdul Kareem Mohammed
- Estimation of super oxide dismutase (SOD) levels in vitiligo patients
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2367> 2367
Ali Mohammed Abd AL-Ameer, Ghadeer Hamid AL-Ardhi and Adil Mohammed AL-Maamory
- Antitumor activity of dextran produced from localized *Leuconostoc mesenteroides* isolates
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2371> 2371
Worood K. Shalash, Ruqaya M. Al-Ezzy and Asmaa S. Ahmaed
- Diagnostic usefulness of IL-6 and CRP in differentiating epileptic from non-epileptic seizures using video EEG as a guide
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2375> 2375
Ahmed H. Hillawi, Ghassan T. Saeed and Zaki N. Hassan
- Evaluation of Immunoglobulin E (IgE) in asthma patients in Babylon province
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2381> 2381
Israa Habeeb Naser, Saif A. J. Al-Shalah and Sarmad Jassem
- Identification of 14 *Allium* L. (Alliaceae) species in Iraq based on matK (cpDNA gene) region
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2385> 2385
A. S. Abd Al-Mohsen and M. N. Al Ani
- Significance of soluble CTLA-4 and CD28 in pathogenesis of Behcet's syndrome
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2391> 2391
Samah K. Yahya, Shahlaa M. Salih and Talib A. Hussein
- Forms and distribution of boron in soils of Dambal sub-watershed of Mundargi Taluk of Gadag district, Karnataka, India
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2397> 2397
K. S. Harshith Gowda, B. R. Jagadeesh and P. L. Patil
- Gas chromatographic-mass spectrometric analysis of cultivated species of *Allium* in Iraq
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2411> 2411
A. S. Abd Al -Mohsen and M. N. Al Ani
- Synthesis of new Azo-heterocyclic compounds derived from benzoylthiourea, evaluation of their biological activity and lethal dose
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2417> 2417
Noor Abdallah Kadhem, Ahmad Hamed Jwaid and Abdul Jabbar Kh. Atia

contd. inside on page v

- Adsorption of Crystal Violet (CV) dye in aqueous solutions by using P(PVP-Co-AAm)/GO composite as (eco-healthy adsorbate surface) : Characterization and thermodynamics studies
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2423> **Qusay K. Mojar Alshamusi, Asawer A. Mhammed Alzayd, Makarim A. Mahdi, Layth S. Jasim and Aseel M. Aljeboree** 2423
- Synthesis and characterization of 1,2,3-triazoline from creatinine and study their biological activity
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2433> **Raad M. Muhiebes and Entesar O. Al-Tamimi** 2433
- Comparison of side effects of some drugs used for the *giardiasis* treatment
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2439> **Yarub Modhar Al-Qazwini, Riyadh Hatim Haddawee and Jabbar Ashour Abbas** 2439
- Phenotypic and genotypic study of *Arcanobacterium haemolyticum* isolated from different infections
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2445> **Oday H. Kadhim AL Janabi and Ilham A. Bunyan** 2445
- The potency of vitamin D receptor gene variants on the frequency of micronuclei in Iraqi women with polycystic ovary syndrome **DocID:** <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2449> **Amran M. AL-Erjan, Mustafa Jawad Kadham, Rawaa Najim Alkhamessi and Mohammed Abdaljabbar Ahmed** 2449
- Investigation of the follicular fluid effects on *in vitro* oocyte maturation in local Iraqi ewe
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2457> **Imad Majeed Almeeni, Saad Akram Hatif, Souhayla O. Hussain and Sadeq Jaafer Zalzal** 2457
- Molecular study of the periodontal disease **DocID:** <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2461> **Lara Hashim Abd Zaid Huseeni, Israa Adnan Ibraheem and Hawraa Wahab Al-Kaim** 2461
- Molecular categorization of some antibiotic resistance genes of *Enterococcus faecalis* isolates from diabetic foot wounds **DocID:** <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2467> **Wahad A. Hashim and Mohammed Sh. Jebur** 2467
- Synthesis and characterization of novel metal complexes with new Schiff base ligand derived from 6-amino penicillic acid and toxicological studies of its complex with Au(III) on human cells for colon cancer LS-174
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2477> **Muna Abass Hadi, Ibtihal Kadhim Kareem and Ammar Kshash Atban** 2477
- Lytic phages protect Indian major carps, *Labeo rohita* (Ham.) experimentally septicaemic with the isolates of antibiotic resistant *Aeromonas hydrophila* **DocID:** <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2489> **Suneeta G., Preeti Saxena and Yogendra Prasad** 2489
- Effects of silver nanoparticles on the histology of testis and some accessory sex glands of male albino mice
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2501> **Aoss Moez Abed–Alhussian Alyassery and Manar Mohammad Hasan Al-Murshidi** 2501
- Human cytomegalovirus and heart diseases : A case control study
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2507> **Zainab Hakeem Ghani and Ahmed Hasan Mohammed** 2507
- Frequency of glucose 6 phosphate dehydrogenase enzyme deficiency among patients with neonatal jaundice
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2513> **Hussain Naji Alshammery, Zaid Mohammad Ali, Widad Hamza and Ahmed Shemran Mutlaq Alwataify** 2513
- Molecular detection on some virulence factors of *Leishmania major* in Babylon province, Iraq
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2519> **Suha Neema, Hayam Khalis Al-Masoudi and Hussein Abass** 2519
- Effect of aqueous extract of *Peganum harmala* L. on some hematological parameters in laboratory mice infected with *Giardia lamblia* **DocID:** <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2525> **Ashraf Jamal Mahmoud Zangana and Ayyub J. Al-Bayaty** 2525
- The incidence of pulmonary hypertension among pediatric thalassemia patients in Babylon hereditary blood disease center in Babylon Governorate, Iraq **DocID:** <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2531> **Rouidaa Hussain Mardan, Hakim Yousif Radi, Ahmed Shemran Alwataify and Yahia Abid Alshahid Altufaily** 2531

The RAD18 gene polymorphism relation with oxidative stress status in diabetes mellitus type 2 patients		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2539	Thanaa Chasib Kareem and Mona N. Al-Terehi	2539
The expected methylation loci of red fluorescence protein vector using <i>Escherichia coli</i> JM109		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2543	Ali Ahmed Nayyef and Mona N. Al-Terehi	2543
Knowledge and practice of breastfeeding and weaning in mothers lives Samarra city, Iraq		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2547		
Hind Mutar Ibrahim, Luay Farhood Jumaah, Shihab Ahmed Khalaf and Mohammed Ahmed Mustafa		2547
Evaluation of <i>Rotavirus</i> vaccine in children under five years in Babylon province, Iraq		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2551		
Mohammed Mohsen Mohammed, Zaytoon Abdulridha Alkhafaji and Yahya Abd ALTufaily		2551
Biosynthesis of MgO nanoparticles by using <i>Streptococcus</i> species. and its antibacterial activity		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2557	Yousif M. Jebur and Frial G. Abd	2557
Detection of Varicella-zoster virus among adult patients suffering from skin lesion in Hilla province, Iraq		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2565	Jwan Ahmed Ali Ahmed	2565
Evaluation of some hormones in a aborted women infected with <i>Toxoplasma gondii</i>		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2571		
Meaad Hassan Abid, Hayam Khalis Al-Masoudi and Suhaila Fadhil Al-Shaikh		2571
Isolation of pathogenic bacteria from local chicken in Hillah and Diwaniyah markets and farms		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2575	Shaimaa Jassim AISultany	2575
Antibiotic sensitivity pattern of pathogenic bacteria isolated from eyes infection		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2579		
Anmar Mahdi Kadhum AL-Maamori and Shaimaa Jassim AISultany		2579
Morphological and histological study of liver in barn owl, <i>Tyto alba</i> (Scopoli, 1769)		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2585		
Issra Adnan Auda Khadhim, Iman Sami AL-Jumaily and Intidhar Mohammed Mnati		2585
Correlation between coronary sinus blood flow results before and after Percutaneous Coronary Intervention in patients with chronic stable coronary arterial disease	DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2589	
Zianab Abdulkhaleq Alrikabi, Affan E. Hasan and Ghazi F. Haji		2589
Improvement of the sensory and physiochemical properties of functional yogurt, fortified with frankincense extract (Kinder)		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2595	Zainab H. Alaameri	2595
Clinical significance of tumor necrosis factor alpha measurement in patients with rheumatoid arthritis		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2601		
Leen K. Mustafa Kamil, Sura K. Majeed and Hayfaa Al-Hadithi		2601
Positive correlation of circulating tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF α) with spirometric pulmonary tests in adult asthmatic patients	DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2605	
Enas K. Alkhazraji, Ahmed Abdulla Alkhafaji, Mahir Abdulkhadhum Alzughaibi, Hayder Abdul-Amir Alhindy and Mazin J. Mousa		2605
Effect of crude phenolic compounds extract for leaves of <i>Carissa macrocarpa</i> on some biological aspects of <i>Culex pipienes</i> (Dipterta : Culicidae)	DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2611	
Tiba Habib Saifi and Hadi M. AL-Rubaei		2611
The criminal and judicial important of genetic fingerprint in detecting crime		
DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2617		
Mohammed Rafeq Ali, Ahmad M. Tarek and M. A. Shatha Ahmed		2617
Preparation, physicochemical and biological study of Schiff base derived from 2- amino-5-mercpto-1,3,4 thiadiazole with some metal ions	DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2625	
Hadeel Hamid Mahmood and Shaymaa R. Baqer		2625
Assessment of LAG3 and GALNT11 gene expression in patients with chronic lymphocytic leukemia and their impact on disease progression	DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2635	
Naseer Khaleel Alobaidi, Alaa Fadhil Alwan and Abdulameer Nasser Al-Rekabi		2635

contd. inside on page vii

- Capillary rise and water content distribution in homogeneous and stratified soil columns
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2645> **Nameer T. Mahdi and Duaa H. Akrm** 2645
- A prevalence of menstrual dysfunction and hirsutism in women with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2645> **Reem M. Obaid** 2653
- Investigation on the effect of adding diverse concentrations of aqueous extract of oregano leaves (*Origanum vulgare*) on physiological and immunological behaviors of broiler
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2657>
Nihad Abdul-Lateef Ali, Mamdooh A.M. Al- Nasrawi and Galib A. Al-Kassie 2657
- The astaxanthin effect on the differential count of inflammatory cell in nickel allergy balb/C mice model
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2663>
Dwi Andriani, Agni Febrina Pargaputri, Rima Parwati Sari, Moh. Basroni Rizal and Meinar Nur Ashrin 2663
- Correlation of Fat Mass-Obesity associated (FTO) gene polymorphism with the occurrence of asthma in Babylon province
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2669>
Ruwaida Wahab Salmon AL-jebery and Hassan Rajih Ghazi 2669
- Molecular typing of the skin pathogen *Staphylococcus aureus* clinical strains in Iraq using PCR detection of *mecA*, *tst-1* and *etb* virulence genes
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2677>
Samira Ggir Jremich 2677
- Estimating the concentrations of some heavy elements in the meat of male Kurdish sheep for meat in some areas of Sulaymaniyah Governorate
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2683>
Rekawt M. Mohammed and Adnan Sh. A. Alperkhtri 2683
- Comparison of the effect of adding bromelain enzyme and Butylated Hydroxy Toluene (BHT) to the diet on the blood parameters for laying hens Lohmann brown
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2695>
Riam Majeed Sahib and Nihad Abdul-Lateef Ali 2695
- The immunological detection about some viral etiologies in children with acute gastroenteritis in Al-Diwaniyah city, Iraq
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2699>
Mohammad Sarim Hamza and Ghaidaa Jihadi Mohammed 2699
- Effect of static magnetic field on some parameters of germination barley seeds using two mathematical models
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2707> **Samir Khairi Lazim** 2707
- Adding different levels of ginger oil to Ross 308 broiler diet and its effect on physiological characteristics
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2713> **Waad Ahmed Al-Obaede, Ammar Qahtan Shanoon, Rashid Hasan Hameed Al-Dalawi and Mohammed Jalal Brakhas** 2713
- Effect of chronic exposure to silver nanoparticles on histopathological manifestations of common carp, *Cyprinus carpio* L
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2719>
Sanaa Abdulaziz Mustafa and Ahmad Abduljabbar Ashour 2719
- Antimicrobial activity of chitosan and/or gum Arabic in the local produce soft and hard cheese in Baghdad city
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2727> **Zina Saab Khudhir** 2727
- Estimation of CRP and IL-6 in the blood of periodontitis in Iraqi patients
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2735>
Ghanyia Jasim Shanyoor and Shurooq Ibrahim Mahmood 2735
- Uzi fly [*Exorista bombycis* (Louis)] - A menace to sericulture industry : A review
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2739> **P. Sowmya and K. Rajitha** 2739
- Response of cowpea (*Vigna sinensis* L.) to microbial inoculation and application of iron and boron
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2745>
Najlaa Zaki Manwar Al-Saedi and Kadhim Hassan Huthily 2745
- The effect of adding different levels of cinnamon oil on the carcass and some antioxidant properties of broilers Rose 308
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2753> **Mohammed Jalal Brakhas, Rashid Hasan Hameed Al-Dalawi, Ammar Qahtan Shanoon and Waad Ahmed Al- Obaede** 2753
- The effect of addition date and different levels of nitrogen on yield and components crop of the wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.)
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2759>
Mahmood T. Al-Jayashi, Dhafer A. Shaker and Haydar A. Al-Ibrahimi 2759

- Effect of adding alcoholic and nano alcoholic extract of *Moringa oleifera* leaves to drinking water on some blood parameters for laying hens Lohmann brown
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2765>
Dakhil Hasan Oraibi and Nihad Abdul-Lateef Ali 2765
- The effectiveness of coenzyme Q10 adjuvant therapy in statin-induced muscle symptoms in patients with dyslipidemia
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2771>
Aya Nabeel Yasser, Manal Khalid Abdulridha and Mustafa Abdulfatah Shafek 2771
- Study on the levels of serum nitric oxide synthase (NOS) in type-2 diabetic patients with and without retinopathy
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2783>
Mays Nazar Abdel Azim, Raid Jassim Al-Timimi and Zeena Adnan Abdel Rasoul 2783
- Assessment on cytotoxicity of conjugation galardin (GM6001) with Ag-PEG on A375 cell line
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2789>
Hussein A. Dawood and Ali S. Ahmed 2789
- Effect of bio-digester products on the exchangeable, non-exchangeable potassium values and its sorption in soil
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2801>
Bashar Mezhar Jader Al-Zubaidi 2801
- Effect of vermicompost, seaweed extracts and nitrogen fertilizers on nitrogen and phosphorous content in maize leaves
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2807>
Luma Salih Jabbar Al-Taweel and Zahraa Jassim Kadhum Al-Budairy 2807
- Molecular detection and phylogenetic tree analysis of *b-tubulin* and *nad-4* genes of *Haemonchus* species
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2813>
Balkes Fadel Hade, Suha Tarik Al-Biatee and Haider Mohammed Ali Al-Rubaie 2813
- Relationship between POU1F1 gene polymorphisms and some economical traits in goats
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2819>
Ali N. Abdullah and Wasan J. Al-Khazraji 2819
- Study of the distribution genes responsible for adhesion and gene related to the proteins synthesis of the capsule in uropathogenic *Escherichia coli*
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2827>
Ahmed Remthane Hussein 2827
- Clinical and histological study of the effect platelet-rich and poor-plasma therapeutic model on regeneration of the sciatic nerve in rabbits
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2831>
Jinan A. Bannai, Abdulbari A. Alfaris and Aseel Kamil Hameed 2831
- Alteration in some biochemical parameters in male and female of ventricular septal defect patient in Thi-Qar Province, Iraq
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2839>
Ahmed Abdulhadi Jabbar, Intessar Amer Hashim and Ali Hussein Mohammed 2839
- Evaluation of the effect of some inflammatory markers, serum lactate dehydrogenase, gamma-glutamyl transpeptidase, alkaline phosphatase on breast cancer in pre-and post-menopausal women
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2845>
Aseel Jassim Albdairi, Roaa Hameed Alwaidh, Oras Kadhim Baqer Alasadi and Ammar Jabbar Hamad 2845
- Effect of newcastle disease challenge on phytogetic and *Escherichia coli* vaccine in broilers
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2853>
Sameer Mezher Abdullah, Abtisam J. Ali and Nawal S. Jafer 2853
- Genome wide analysis uncovers gene regions associated with liver fluke and paratuberculosis resistance in Iraqi Jenoubi cattle breed
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2859>
Akil Farouk Alshawi 2859
- Evaluation of the the antimalarial activity of *Momordica charantia*
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2865>
Mayada Hussain Ali, Izyanti Ibrahim, Malina Jasamai and Hasidah Sidek 2865
- Study on the histopathological changes due to aluminum chloride (AlCl₃) and ameliorate effects of vitamin A on the salivary glands of the mouse
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2869>
Nuha Shaker Ali 2869
- Isolation and identification of commonly occurrence of *Enterobacteriaceae* from poultry's meat
DocID: <https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2875>
Ahmed Hussein AL-Tamimi and AL-Khafaji Nazar Jabbar 2875

contd. inside on page ix

Pathological and histochemical studies on lungs lesions in slaughtered goats in the Abattoir of Basrah Province in Southern Iraq	DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2885	Enas N. Abbas and Methaq A. Abd Alsamad	2885
Hormonal profile of men during infertility	DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2895	Zainab I. Mohammed and Maytham T. Qasim	2895
Dermestid beetle [<i>Dermestes ater</i> (De Geer)] : A pest in silkworm (<i>Bombyx mori</i> L.) seed production	DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2899	K. Rajitha and P. Sowmya	2899
Antioxidant and antimicrobial evaluation of lycopene isolated from watermelon	DocID: https://connectjournals.com/03896.2021.21.2905	Jamela K. Abd-Alhassen, Ali H. Daghir Janabi and Mohammed A. Aboktifa	2905

THE ASTAXANTHIN EFFECT ON THE DIFFERENTIAL COUNT OF INFLAMMATORY CELL IN NICKEL ALLERGY BALB/C MICE MODEL

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ABSTRACT : Nickel is a material that commonly used in dentistry, but in some individuals, it can cause *type IV* delayed-type hypersensitivity (DTH) reaction. In this case, DTH reaction pathway involves T cell helper 1 (Th1) activation that stimulates macrophages to release pro-inflammatory cytokine. Meanwhile, astaxanthin (AST) is carotenoid from red algae that has an anti-inflammatory effect by inhibiting inflammatory mediators. Hematology evaluation is one of the evaluation methods for allergies. This investigation aimed to determine the effect of astaxanthin supplementation on the differential count of inflammatory cells in nickel allergy of mice model. Sixteen Balb/C mice were randomly divided into 4 groups: normal group (N), without therapy group (NA), Astaxanthin 12 mg treatment group (Ast12) and Astaxanthin 6 mg treatment group (Ast6). All groups were given an injection of Nickel(II) chloride (NiCl₂), Complete Freud's Adjuvant (CFA), and Incomplete Freud's Adjuvant (IFA) to obtain the nickel allergy model. Analysis of differential count in an inflammatory cell (neutrophil, lymphocyte, monocyte and eosinophil) performed by utilizing flow cytometry, then, the data were analyzed using Univariate Analysis ($p < 0.05$). As the result, there were no any significant differences between groups for neutrophil and lymphocyte showed by One-Way ANOVA test. Kruskal-Wallis test for eosinophil and monocyte also exhibited no significant difference. In sum, astaxanthin supplementation did not have any effect on the differential count of inflammatory cells (neutrophil, lymphocyte, monocyte and eosinophil) in nickel allergy mice model compared to the normal and without therapy ones.

Key words : Delayed-type hypersensitivity, red algae, astaxanthin, anti-inflammatory, inflammatory cells.

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INTRODUCTION

Nickel is a metal that is often used as a mixture of several alloys including dentures, orthodontic wire, and dental implants; however, nickel also potentially cause a metal allergy (Radkevich *et al*, 2013; Saito *et al*, 2016; Goenharto *et al*, 2020a; Goenharto *et al*, 2020b). The metal is considered as a trigger of recurrences in atopic dermatitis and the types of metal that give a high frequency of positive patch test are Nickel, chromium, and cobalt (Widia *et al*, 2017; Sitalaksmi *et al*, 2020). Previous study reported the prevalence of sensitization to nickel, cobalt and chromium were, respectively, 14.5%, 2.1% and 0.8% in the European general population in 2010 (Schuttelaar *et al*, 2018). Other study also reported the same result, from positive metal allergy patients for about 77% had nickel allergy at Dermatology clinic in Brazil between 2003-2015 (Duarte *et al*, 2018).

Furthermore, based on Widia *et al* (2017), there was about 17.39% gave a positive result from 23 patients with atrophic dermatitis tested with patch tests of nickel sulfate.

Nickel is commonly found in stainless steel brackets and classified as a chemical carcinogen (Hafez *et al*, 2011). Several factors such as saliva and exposure time can create an effect of nickel corrosion in the oral cavity leading to ion release from nickel resulting in a harmful effect; such as allergic, toxicity, and mutagenicity (Karlina *et al*, 2016; Narmada *et al*, 2018). Moreover, some of the symptoms reported as the allergic reactions to nickel contained in the alloy among others were severely inflamed hyperplastic gingival tissue around the crowns or space maintainers, alveolar bone loss and the edema in the gums, palate, and throat (Kulkarni *et al*, 2016).

Correspondingly, the hypersensitivity of an allergic contact to metals is a delayed-type allergy or Type IV

reaction that involves the sensitized T cells and happens once T cells are sensitized to an antigen (Saito *et al*, 2016; Uzzaman and Cho, 2012; Maker *et al*, 2019; Ernawati *et al*, 2017). T cells activated by an exposure to nickel antigens will produce inflammatory cytokines and chemokines at the exposed site which triggers allergic reactions leading to skin lesions progression (Saito *et al*, 2016; Mahdani *et al*, 2020). Meanwhile, Type IV allergic reactions are subcategorized into four groups based on the type of specific T cells involved (Maker *et al*, 2019). Nakasone *et al* (2018) argued that CD8 + T cells involve in the production of high levels of T helper 1 cytokines accumulated in nickel-induced intraoral metal contact allergy murine model

Meanwhile, studies on metal allergy in mice models have been carried out. Previous studies revealed that histological examination carried out on mice ear with nickel mice model exhibited that there was a massive infiltration of inflammatory cells involving mononuclear cells, neutrophils, monocytes, and macrophages. The model of intraoral metal contact allergy is induced by two stages of nickel sensitization; first, the sensitization stages start after nickel exposure to the skin; and second, the elicitation stages, which are characterized by edema and an increase in T cells (Saito *et al*, 2016; Nakasone *et al*, 2018). Based on research conducted by Ashrin *et al* (2014), it displayed that injection of siRNA (Small interfering Ribonucleic acid), TSLP (Thymic Stromal Lymphopoietin) and atelocollagen, as the therapy in mice's ears 3 days before the elicitation or the second injection phase of nickel induction, could have an effect that significantly reduced the thickness of mice's ear compared to mice in the control group. Furthermore, topical corticosteroids or calcineurin inhibitors may be estimated for more rapid control of symptoms for Type IV hypersensitivity therapy, however, some patients have not responded to therapy with steroids due to the contact allergy to gluco-corticosteroids (Maker *et al*, 2019; Kot *et al*, 2017).

Furthermore, astaxanthin (3,32 -dihydroxy- β , β 2 -carotene-4,42 -dione) contained in red and green microalgae such as *Haematococcus pluvialis*, *Chlorella zofingiensis* and *Chlorococcum* is a carotenoid xanthophyll that recently has been established to have anti-inflammatory effects and to regulate the expression of inflammatory cytokines (Ambati *et al*, 2014; Yoshihisa *et al*, 2016). Astaxanthin (AST) provided as a nutritional supplement, antioxidant and anticancer agent which can prevent diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, neurodegenerative disorders; enhance the immune response and reduced a DNA oxidative damage

biomarker and inflammation (Ambati *et al*, 2014; Park *et al*, 2010). A study discovered anti allergic and anti inflammatory impacts of AST in a dinitrofluorobenzene (DNFB) induced contact dermatitis (CD) mouse model and RBL 2H3 cell lines (Kim *et al*, 2015). Moreover, AST can also be found within various commercial products in the market with effective dosage on human health benefits around 2–12 mg/day (Ambati *et al*, 2014).

Therefore, from the explanation above, this investigation was designed to investigate the impact of astaxanthin supplementation which has an antiallergy and anti-inflammatory impacts using the dosages of 6 mg and 12 mg per day in nickel allergy mice model. To evaluate the effect, this study implemented the differential count of inflammation cell in blood as a parameter.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This examination employed 16 male *Mus musculus* Balb/C mice (aged around 8-12 weeks old). They were kept in good condition with a specific-pathogen free and temperature-controlled environment and provided with a standard laboratory diet and water. This investigation was an experimental laboratory type with the design of a post-test only control group design. The utilized sampling technique was a simple random sampling technique. Additionally, the feasibility of the research had been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Dentistry, Universitas Hang Tuah, with the approval number of EC/003/KEPK-FKGUHT/VI/2020.

In the beginning, mice were divided into 4 groups, they were Normal group (N), Nickel allergy non-treatment group (NA), Nickel allergy treated with 12 mg Astaxantin (Ast12) (Landson, Indonesia) and Nickel allergy treated with 6 mg Astaxantin (Ast6) (Landson, Bekasi, Indonesia). All groups had been inducted with the Delayed-Type Hypersensitivity using Nickel as described by Ashrin *et al* (2014). The groups of NA, Ast12, and Ast6 implemented a combination of NiCl₂ (Sigma Aldrich, St. Louis, MO) and Incomplete Freud's Adjuvant (IFA) (Sigma Aldrich, St. Louis, MO) injection with 1251 Nickel(II) chloride (NiCl₂) and 125ml Incomplete Freud's Adjuvant (IFA) intraperitoneally on Day 1 (Ashrin *et al*, 2014). Then, NA was the group of nickel allergy mice treated with placebo (Aquadest), while Ast12 and Ast6 groups were treated with 12 mg and 6 mg Astaxantin orally on days 11-16, respectively.

On day 14, an intradermal injection was carried out in the mice's ears for the groups of N, NA, Ast12 and Ast6 with a combination of NiCl₂ and Complete Freud's Adjuvant (CFA) (Sigma Aldrich, St. Louis, MO) solution with a composition of 10ml NiCl₂ and 10ml CFA using

26G needle to get DTH. Before intradermal injection in the mice ears, an anesthesia was performed using ketamine 10% at the dose of 0.1 ml/kg BW intramuscularly. Then, on Day 16, all groups were sacrificed by employing euthanasia using ketamine + xylazine. After that, the blood was taken from the heart of the mice and the samples were stored in EDTA tube. These steps were conducted in the laboratory of animal trials at the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Hang Tuah, Surabaya. Meanwhile, the sample analysis was performed using flow cytometry methods (Sysmex XT 2000i Analyzer) conducted in the Regional Health Laboratory Surabaya (Balai Besar Laboratorium Kesehatan Surabaya, Indonesia).

Following those steps, neutrophil and lymphocyte data were tested for normality and homogeneity. If the results were normal, a one-way ANOVA statistical test was then performed. Compared to neutrophil and lymphocyte, eosinophils and monocytes were differently treated, if their data did not show any normally distribution and homogeneous, then the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis test would be performed. Additionally, the statistical analysis was performed using One-Way ANOVA (neutrophil and lymphocyte) and Kruskal Wallis test (eosinophil and monocyte) with p -value of < 0.05 then

the result would be considered as statistically significant.

RESULTS

The examination result in the different count of inflammatory cells (neutrophil (%), lymphocyte (%), monocyte (%) and eosinophil (%)) during 3 days after injection of NiCl₂, CFA and IFA revealed a change in differential count percentage of inflammation cells. Differential count of eosinophil cell type exhibited that under normal conditions, there was no eosinophil in the blood. However, within the allergic conditions, eosinophil appeared in the blood (systemically). The differential count of eosinophil presented the highest number in Ast12 and the lowest in Ast6 (Fig. 1).

Meanwhile, the differential count for other types of inflammatory cells (neutrophil, lymphocyte and monocyte) exhibited varies values. The highest different count of neutrophil was found in the normal group, while the lowest was presented in the no-treatment group. Furthermore, differential count of lymphocyte discovered the highest number was in no-treatment group, followed by Ast12 and Ast6, while the lowest was displayed in the normal group. Moreover, monocyte observations also differ from 3 previous indicators, where the highest value was located in Ast12, followed by no-treatment control group, Ast6 group and the least one was in the normal group (Fig. 2).

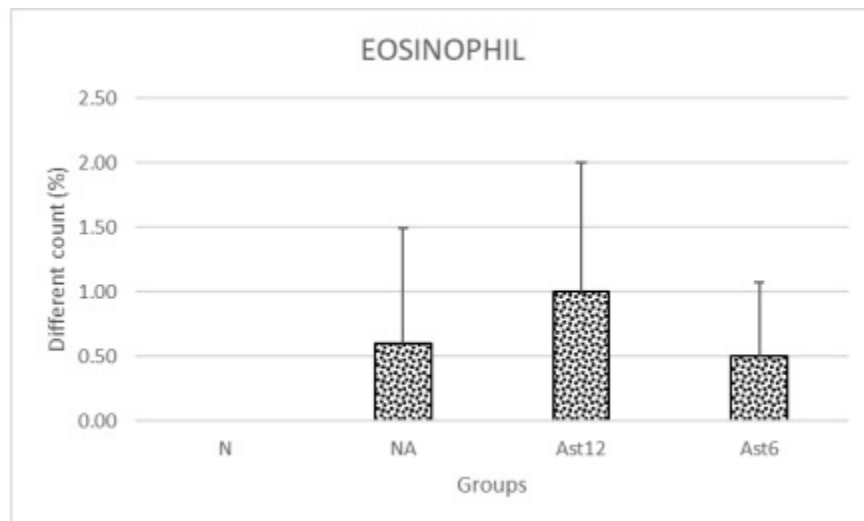


Fig. 1 : Differential count of eosinophil in blood circulation.

Table 1 : Data analyses of differential count in inflammatory cells (eosinophil, neutrophil, lymphocyte, monocyte) in blood circulation.

Groups	Eosinophil		Neutrophil		Lymphocyte		Monocyte	
	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD
N	-	-	46.75	35.34	49.50	32.64	3.75	3.10
NA	0.60	0.89	13.60	6.84	80.00	8.34	5.60	4.22
Ast12	1.00	1.00	18.80	14.75	72.00	12.90	8.00	10.67
Ast6	0.50	0.58	29.75	6.85	64.00	7.75	4.75	2.22
Univariate analysis	0.306 ²		0.090 ¹		0.111 ¹		0.783 ²	

Notes : 1 = one way ANOVA test, 2 = Kruskal-Wallis test.

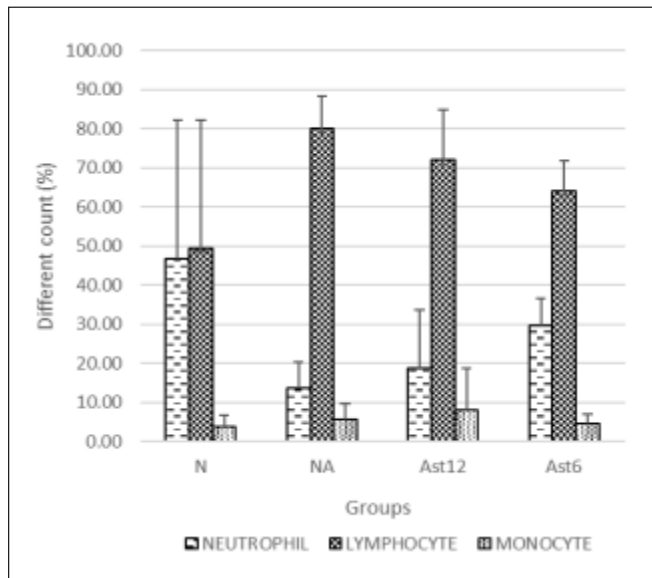


Fig. 2 : Differential count of neutrophil, lymphocyte and monocyte in blood circulation.

Despite the observations demonstrated some differences in the differential count of each inflammatory cell, however, the statistical analysis (univariate) showed there was no any significant difference, both through the Kruskal-Wallis test (for eosinophil and monocyte) and the one-way ANOVA (for neutrophil and lymphocyte) (Table 1).

DISCUSSION

The most effective and reliable method for diagnosing of Type IV hypersensitivity is by employing the patch test (Brandão *et al*, 2012). As astaxanthin itself has been tested and proven to have anti-inflammatory, immunomodulatory, and anti-allergic effects, this study performed the differential count of inflammation cell analysis to evaluate the consequence of astaxanthin therapy on the nickel allergy systemically.

Furthermore, the number of eosinophils, neutrophil, lymphocyte and monocyte in the blood in this study comparing the allergic nickel groups with the normal groups demonstrated that there was no any significant difference. Similar results were found in the earlier study conducted by Pazzini *et al* (2011), in patients using fixed orthodontics, which also revealed that there was no any difference in the amount of eosinophil, neutrophil, lymphocyte and monocyte in the blood of patients both allergic or non-allergic to nickel. However, the number of bands which stimulated by inflammation significantly increased in allergic patients compared to the non-allergic subjects. This study also exhibited that the fragment had stratified hyperplastic squamous epithelium, with chronic inflammatory cells and newly formed blood vessels, suggesting the existence of gingival hyperplasia in biopsy

results (Pazzini *et al*, 2011; Larasputri *et al*, 2018). It is indicated that blood tests for nickel allergy should be performed in examining the number of bands in the blood and histopathological examination needs to be done as well.

In the same manner, based on the results of this study, it was discovered that the number of eosinophils in the blood increased in the groups of nickel allergy without therapy and astaxanthin therapies, however, any significant difference was not seen in both groups of without or with astaxanthin therapy (6 mg and 12 mg). In contrast, a research by Yoshihisa *et al* (2016) about the efficacy of astaxanthin for the treatment of Atopic Dermatitis in a Murine Model argued that there was the decreased number of eosinophils in the skin of AST-treated mice (dose 100mg/kg, three times a week for 26 days). The difference results might be determined by the duration of administration and the dosage, and also the methods for analysis in evaluating eosinophil in which the eosinophil number was counted using histological analysis while this study applied a differential count of the blood. Moreover, the skin inflammation observed was the cases of Atrophic dermatitis, which was also one of Type IV hypersensitivity allergy characterized the increased numbers of eosinophils histopathologically (Yoshihisa *et al*, 2016).

The differential count results from neutrophils in the nickel allergy groups compared to the astaxanthin treatment groups (6 mg and 12mg) proved the non-existence of difference which indicates that astaxanthin therapy has no impact in elevating or suppressing the number of the blood neutrophil. On the contrary, a research performed by Kim *et al* (2015) presented different result in which AST topical therapy (0.1 mg/ml) may contribute to alleviate the ear swelling and hyperplasia due to its suppression of inflammatory reactions including the infiltration of neutrophils, activation of keratinocytes and proliferation of fibroblasts on dinitrofluorobenzene-induced contact dermatitis in mice. The difference of this result might be caused by the different methods of administration and the dosage of astaxanthin along with the different methods for analysis in evaluating neutrophil in which the neutrophil associated with mast cell was calculated using histological analysis, while this study employed a differential count of blood. Furthermore, neutrophils contribute greatly in the inflammatory process, but the involvement of astaxanthin does not have a systemic effect due to the nickel allergy model does not involve any systemic inflammatory cells.

Additionally, topical application of AST (0.1 mg/ml) was reported effectively reducing the inflammatory

hyperplasia, epidermal spongiosis, edema and mononuclear cell infiltration (monocytes and lymphocytes) (Kim *et al*, 2015). In this examination, the differential count results from lymphocytes and monocytes of the nickel allergy group compared to the astaxanthin treatment groups (6 mg and 12 mg) displayed the same value. It presented that astaxanthin has no effect both in lymphocyte and monocytes number. In the atrophic dermatitis case, the skin inflammation observed characterized by the infiltration of T lymphocytes and monocytes histopathologically (Yoshihisa *et al*, 2016). Furthermore, a histological examination of mononuclear cells in the astaxanthin topical treatment on cutaneous wound expressed markedly decrease compared to the control group (Meephansan *et al*, 2017). The difference of these results might be led by the distinctive methods of administration and the dosage of astaxanthin along with the incomparable methods for the analysis of both mononuclear cell (monocytes and lymphocytes) evaluation. Moreover, the immunomodulatory consequences of astaxanthin might also play a role in the results of this study.

Moreover, AST has immunomodulatory impacts by increasing proinflammatory cytokine or anti-inflammatory cytokine production without inducing cytotoxicity effects in primary cultured lymphocytes (Lin *et al*, 2016). AST also protects lymphocyte and neutrophils towards the oxidant stresses determined by the actions of certain white blood cells without reducing the white blood cells' killing effect itself (Bolin *et al*, 2012). The impacts of astaxanthin in accelerating healing was facilitated either by suppression of the level of inflammation or by accelerating the inflammatory phase which can be observed on the first day after injury during the inflammatory phase (Meephansan *et al*, 2017).

In this study, the consequence of systemic astaxanthin by analyzing the differential count of inflammatory cells may not be apparent, due to many factors apart from not having the significant differences in the differential count in the normal group compared to the allergic nickel groups; the administration duration and method of astaxanthin along with the examination method also affect the results.

CONCLUSION

This examination results indicate that astaxanthin supplementation did not have any effect in the results of inflammation cells' (neutrophil, lymphocyte, monocyte and eosinophil) differential count in nickel allergy mice model compares to the normal and without therapy groups. Further histological examination and specific marker examinations are needed to further confirm the impacts

of astaxanthin therapy on the exposed site of this nickel allergy model.

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