

Odd chain fatty acids and odd chain phenolic lipids (alkylresorcinols): Essential for diet?

1 Kelly Dornan¹, Aynur Gunenc¹, Dave Oomah² and Farah Hosseinian^{1,3*}

3 ¹Food Science, Chemistry Department, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada

4 ² Retired research scientist, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Summerland BC, Canada

5 ³Institute of Biochemistry, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada

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7 *Corresponding author: Farah Hosseinian email: farah.hosseinian@carleton.ca

Tel: +1 613 520-2600, ext. 2048; Fax: +1 613 520-3729

Abstract

8 Odd chain fatty acids (C15:0 and C17:0) from dairy fat as well as odd chain phenolic
9 lipids (alkylresorcinols) from whole grain are commonly reviewed as candidate
10 biomarkers for dietary analysis and their ingestion are inversely related to chronic disease
11 risks. Therefore, low levels of dietary intake of these odd chain molecules may be related
12 to higher risk of physiological states that cause chronic diseases or mortality. It is a
13 prerequisite to examine and understand their main role in beneficial health effects in
14 disease prevention. We propose odd chain fatty acids (OC-FA) and most importantly odd
15 chain phenolic lipids (OC-PL) as potential essential dietary compounds since they play
16 key roles in physiological mechanisms. This review evaluates potential roles of OC-FA
17 and OC-PL in mitigating chronic diseases *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies to support our
18 hypothesis for odd chain molecules as essential dietary lipids. Further studies are needed
19 to investigate the relationship between reduced intake of OC-FA and OC-PL containing
20 foods and susceptibilities to chronic diseases.

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30 **1. Introduction**

31 Observational studies have shown an association of plasma odd chain fatty acids (OC-
32 FA) with the consumption of dairy products, especially milk fat with lower risk of
33 cardiometabolic diseases (Hodson, Skeaff, & Fielding, 2008; Kröger et al., 2010;
34 Smedman, Gustafsson, Berglund, & Vessby, 1999). Similarly, epidemiologic studies
35 have also shown an inverse relationship between consumption of whole grains and the
36 risk of chronic diseases, and main contribution of this health benefits could be attributed
37 to protection effects of phytochemicals such as alkylresorcinols. Alkylresorcinols are
38 amphiphilic odd chain phenolic lipids; they play structural roles in the cell membrane
39 including antioxidant, antibacterial, cytotoxic, genotoxic, and signalling properties. Their
40 structural diversity and related biological activities have been reviewed (Kozubek &
41 Tyman, 1999).

42 The aim of this review is to propose OC-FA and OC-PL as essential dietary lipids. OC-
43 FA will first be discussed briefly in the following section; then OC-PL will be presented
44 with their health beneficial effects in mitigating chronic diseases *in vitro* and *in vivo*
45 studies to support our hypothesis for odd chain molecules as essential dietary
46 lipids. Further studies are needed to investigate the relationship between reduced intake
47 of OC-FA and OC-PL containing foods and susceptibilities to chronic diseases.

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49 **2. Odd chain fatty acids; C15:0 & C17:0**

50 OC-FA are pentadecanoic (C15:0) and heptadecanoic (C17:0) fatty acids with an odd
51 numbered acyl chain while OC-PL are phenolics with odd numbered alkyl chains. Their
52 incorporation into cell membranes can enhance functionality by effecting membrane

53 fluidity. Odd chain saturated fatty acids have lower melting points that can increase
54 fluidity of cellular membranes than their lower even-numbered homologs (Kurotani et al.,
55 2017a).

56 Studies have linked increase in odd-chain saturated fatty acids concentrations with
57 reduced risk of coronary heart disease and diabetes. The EPIC-Norfolk prospective study
58 assessed the relationship between plasma phospholipid fatty acid concentration and
59 coronary heart disease in a European population and found that increased concentrations
60 of plasma odd chain phospholipid fatty acids resulted in a lower risk of coronary heart
61 disease (Khaw, Friesen, Riboli, Luben, & Wareham, 2012). The EPIC-InterAct case-
62 cohort study investigated the association of individual plasma phospholipid saturated
63 fatty acids and type 2 diabetes incidences in a European population. The study
64 demonstrated the inverse association of odd chain fatty acids C15:0 (pentadecanoic acid)
65 and C17:0 (heptadecanoic acid) and positive relationship of even chain saturated fatty
66 acids (C14:0, C16:0, and C18:0) with type 2 diabetes (Forouhi et al., 2014). Moreover, an
67 inverse association between longer chain saturated fatty acids (C20:0, C22:0, C23:0, and
68 C24:0) was found furthering the argument that all saturated fatty acids should not be
69 classified as adverse to health. A cross-sectional study Kurotani et al., (2017a) examined
70 the association of saturated fatty acids in serum phospholipid and circulating levels of
71 adipokines secreted from adipose tissue in Japanese population. Elevated levels of
72 C15:0 and C17:0 fatty acids were inversely associated with circulating levels of leptin
73 and PAI-1, both of which in high concentrations are associated with increased risk of
74 type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

75 Plasma OC-FA is causally associated with consumption of dairy products and humans
76 were previously thought unable to synthesize OC-FA, while cows can use propionyl-CoA
77 instead of acetyl-CoA for OC-FA synthesis (Weitkunat et al. 2017). However, a recent
78 study by Weitkunat et al. (2017) revealed that propionate production in the gut following
79 dietary fibre intake, such as inulin, can lead to OC-FA synthesis in humans. The study
80 showed evidence for a novel pathway for endogenous production of odd chain fatty acids
81 from gut derived propionate, a by-product of dietary fiber consumption. For 7 days
82 participants received daily doses of 30 g of either cellulose (control; non-fermentable
83 dietary fibre), inulin (fermentable dietary fibre), or propionate (3 carbon short chain fatty
84 acid). OC-FA were then determined in plasma phospholipids. Intake of inulin and
85 propionate increased plasma heptadecanoic (17 carbon fatty acid) by 11% ($P<0.01$) and
86 13% ($P<0.001$), respectively, and plasma pentadecanoic acid (15 carbon fatty acid) by ~
87 17% ($P<0.05$) and ~ 13% ($P=0.05$), respectively, while the non-fermentable cellulose had
88 no effect. The mechanism proposed for endogenous synthesis of OC-FA due to dietary
89 fibre consumption in humans is the absorption of gut derived propionate through the
90 portal vein and transportation to the liver where it is converted to propionyl-CoA and
91 competes with acetyl-CoA for fatty acid synthesis. Since the starter unit for the fatty acid
92 synthase reaction has 3 carbons (propionyl-CoA) instead of 2 carbons (acetyl-CoA) the
93 product is an OC-FA.

94 In a very recent study, C15:0 has been proposed as a potential essential fatty acid that
95 attenuates inflammation, anemia, dyslipidemia and fibrosis *in vivo*, potentially by
96 binding to key metabolic regulators and repairing mitochondrial function (Venn-Watson,
97 Lumpkin, & Dennis, 2020).

98 2.1 The pathway of odd chain fatty acids

99 There is an inverse relationship between higher circulating concentration of OC-FA
100 (C15:0 and C17:0) and lower risks of cardiometabolic diseases, indicating lower
101 mortality with higher odd chain fatty acids consumption (Venn-Watson et al., 2020).
102 OC-FA, commonly found in dairy fat are produced by rumen microbial fermentation and
103 microbial *de-novo* lipogenesis (Vlaeminck, Fievez, Cabrita, Fonseca, & Dewhurst, 2006),
104 then transferred into the host animal (Jenkins, West, & Koulman, 2015). The microbial
105 *de-novo* lipogenesis consists of malonyl CoA condensation reactions with acetyl CoA
106 (starter molecule). Sequential condensation reactions yield mainly even numbered fatty
107 acids; hexadecanoic acid (C16:0) and less octadecanoic acid (C18:0); they are end
108 products of *de novo* lipogenesis. Two possible pathways for odd chain fatty acid
109 synthesis have been mentioned including either α -oxidation of even number fatty acids or
110 *de novo* synthesis from propionyl-CoA as starting molecules. More specifically, OC-FA
111 is produced by alpha carbon removal from the *de novo* lipogenesis end products (C16:0
112 or C18:0), followed by decarboxylation to produce either C15:0 or C17:0, respectively.
113 Those odd chain fatty acids in the animal rumen utilized by the mammary gland produce
114 milk fat, yielding 1.5-2.5% total odd chain fatty acids. Since C16:0 is relatively abundant
115 compared to C18:0 during *de novo* lipogenesis, the ratio of C15:0 to C17:0 is ~ 2:1
116 (Jenkins et al., 2015).

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121 **3. Odd chain phenolic lipids; (alkylresorcinols)**

122 Phenolics/polyphenols are secondary plant metabolites and they act as a natural defense
123 mechanism providing protection against external damages (Agil & Hosseini, 2012b).
124 ARs belong to a large group of phenolic lipids that differ mainly by the odd-numbered
125 hydrocarbon chain attached to position 5 on the benzene ring (Kozubek & Tyman, 1999).
126 Structurally, ARs consist of 1, 3-dihydroxy-5-alkylbenzene (5-alkylresorcinol) and is
127 alkylated at position 5 by mostly a saturated, odd numbered hydrocarbon side-chain
128 containing 13-27 carbon atoms. The structure of ARs can vary according to the degree of
129 unsaturation, chain length, ring or chain substituted functional groups on the alkyl chain
130 or aromatic ring, and position of the alkyl chain (Kozubek & Tyman, 1999; Ross, Kamal-
131 Eldin, & Åman, 2004). These isoprenoid OC-PL are present as mixtures of several
132 homologues and derivatives. ARs occur in high amount in rye (Ross et al., 2003b), wheat
133 (Kulawinek, Jaromin, Kozubek, & Zarnowski, 2008), and triticale (Ross et al., 2003b),
134 with the lowest levels reported in barley (Andersson et al., 2008; Ross et al., 2003b).
135 Phenolics in plants can act as natural antioxidants by preventing oxidation of foods,
136 enhancing their shelf life. Whole grain cereals are main sources of energy, protein, and
137 fiber in the world. Their beneficial health effects depend on how they are consumed;
138 refined or whole grain. Nowadays, they are mostly consumed in refined forms, and large
139 amount of bioactive components are removed in the bran or germ during milling
140 (Landberg et al., 2019).

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142 **3.1 The pathway of phenolic lipids (alkylresorcinols)**

143 Shikimate and polyketide (acetate) are the two main pathways of phenolic compounds
144 synthesis. The first pathway forms phenylpropanoids like hydroxycinnamic acids and
145 coumarins, and the second produces simple phenols leading to quinones formation
146 (Kozubek & Tyman, 1999). At the same time, the largest group of phenolics (flavonoids)
147 are formed through a combination of both pathways. Resorcinolic lipids are derived from
148 the polyketide (acetate) pathway by 2'-oxoalkylresorcylic acid synthase (ORAS), a type
149 III polyketide synthase (Yu, Xu, Zeng, & Zhan, 2012). The acetate pathway starts with
150 polyketomethylenic chains $(CH_2-C)_m$, which is derived from acetic acid, the activated
151 forms of acetyl-S-CoA and malonyl-S-CoA (Birch & Donovan, 1953). Both polyketide
152 and fatty acid pathways are similar since the formation of linear chains occurs by the
153 addition of C_2 units. A fatty acyl CoA reacts with malonyl CoA three times to form a
154 tetraketide intermediate by aldol condensation type reactions (Funa, Ozawa, Hirata, &
155 Horinouchi, 2006). The odd numbered ARs side chain is the direct result of the fatty acid
156 precursor (Suzuki, kurano, Esumi, Yamaguchi, & Doi, 2003). The intermediate compound
157 undergoes an aldol condensation type ring closure and hydrolysis to release the CoA to
158 form an alkylresorcylic acid. The next step follows non-enzymatic decarboxylation to
159 yield 5-n-alkylresorcinols (Figure 1) (Baerson et al., 2010).

3.2 Pharmacokinetics of OC-PL (ARs)

The primary pharmacokinetic data in the literature comes from alkylresorcinols. Since OC-FA share similar structures with phenolics lipids (alkyl chain and phenol head group), they presumably follow similar absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion. Generally humans absorb approximately 60% of ingested alkylresorcinols by the small intestine via the lymphatic pathway (Linko et al., 2007; Ross et al., 2003a). However, about one-third of alkylresorcinols can be absorbed through the portal vein and metabolized to DHBA and DHPPA by the liver before entering circulation (Marklund et al., 2014). Alkylresorcinols are absorbed and transported in chylomicrons through the lymphatic system, bypassing the liver, and enter circulation intact where they are incorporated into erythrocytes or present in lipoproteins (Linko & Adlercreutz, 2007). They are then circulated to the liver where they either undergo phase I or phase II metabolism or are repackaged into lipoproteins with higher proportions found in HDL and VLDL compared to LDL (Linko-Parvinen, Landberg, Tikkanen, Adlercreutz, & Peñalvo, 2007; Marklund et al., 2014). From circulation they can also be stored in adipose tissue with longer chain derivatives having a higher affinity to adipose cells compared to their shorter chain homologues (Jansson et al., 2010). In the liver, metabolism of fatty acids similar to alkylresorcinols are initiated by cytochrome P450 dependant ω -oxidation. The two-step oxidation converts the hydroxyl group to a carboxylic acid thereby shortening the alkyl chain through several β -oxidation rounds producing hydrophilic DHPPA and DHBA as phase I metabolites which can further be conjugated through phase II metabolism (Marklund, McKeown, Blumberg, & Chen, 2013). From the liver, these metabolites are either secreted via bile to the intestine, where they are either reabsorbed or excreted through feces, or secreted into plasma and eliminated via kidneys to urine (Marklund et al., 2014).

3.3 Bioactivity of Alkylresorcinols (ARs)

ARs are well known for their bioactivity such as antimicrobial, antibacterial, antifungal, and antitumor (Kozubek & Tyman, 1999). Their presence in biological membranes and lipoproteins may provide antioxidant protection by anchoring the alkyl chain into the lipid bilayer and stabilizing their free radical ; incorporating themselves directly in the membrane (Ross, Kamal-Eldin, & Åman, 2004). Phospholipids in membranes have an alkyl chain ~18 carbons (Gropper, Smith, & Groff, 2005).

The fat-soluble nature and structure of phenolic lipids enable them potentially to cross the blood brain barrier. There has yet to be a study proving this concept but multiple *in vitro* studies have shown their potential beneficial effects on pathologies of the nervous system. In a study (Rania et. al., (2016), mice fed a high fat (HF) diet supplemented with 0.5% AR and 0.5% triticale bran extract showed a significantly improved antioxidant status ($p<0.05$) in liver and heart tissues compared to control mice fed a non-supplemented HF diets. Moreover, the level of reduced glutathione (GSH) content increased and the ratio of oxidized glutathione to reduced glutathione (GSSG/GSH- a significant marker of oxidative stress) decreased in heart and liver tissues of mice fed the HF- AR supplemented diet as shown in Figure 2. These results are significant since high fat diet causes oxidative stress through increased levels of reactive oxygen species. The improved antioxidant status with AR supplementation indicates AR's ability to provide protection against oxidative stress in various body tissues. Further studies are required to establish the mechanism of action responsible for this added protection.

Ross et al. (2004a) reported elevated γ -tocopherol levels in the liver and lungs of rats fed purified rye ARs at concentrations reflecting levels similar to whole-grain rye (1g/kg) and rye bran (4g/kg). Rats fed the highest concentration had 47% less liver cholesterol ($P<0.001$) and

35% less cholesterol in liver lipids ($P < 0.05$) compared to the control diet. The study also showed that the effect of alkylresorcinols on γ -tocopherol levels may be mediated through competitive inhibition of the γ -tocopherol eliminating pathway.

In a cell line study Gliwa et al. (2011) PC-12 AC cells were treated with an extract of the outermost fraction of Hazlet rye, containing high amount of ARs (1598 $\mu\text{g/g}$), and MTT cell viability determined to measure mitochondrial activity and biogenesis. AAPH was added as a free radical generator to determine the cytoprotective effect of the rye extract on metabolic activity. Metabolic activity increased significantly when cells were treated with the outermost fraction of Hazlet rye extract in the presence of AAPH, returning the activity to a normal state. Furthermore, mitochondrial biogenesis increased when cells were treated with the extract. The treatment of the cells with the extract presumably increased mitochondrial efficiency by producing more ATP, fuel required for cell function, simultaneously reducing ROS, a by-product of mitochondrial activity, thus resulting in a more efficient use of oxygen.

A recent of Meshginfar et al. (2020) has reviewed the pathways and mechanisms associated with the pathogenesis of Alzheimer's disease and the modulatory effects of phenolic lipids on these pathways (Meshginfar, Tavakoli, Dornan, & Hosseini, 2020). This study emphasizes the multi-dimensional influences of phenolic lipids roles in membrane incorporation and protection; potential in combating Alzheimer's disease. Main factor in Alzheimer's disease is the deficiency in cholinergic neurotransmission via the neurotransmitter Acetylcholine (ACh). Also the enzyme breaking down ACh extracellularly (AChE) could be integrated in to amyloid aggregates and causing to the formation of stable AChE-induced B-amyloid complexes. The most importantly AChE could be inhibited due to the hydrophobic properties of the inhibitors and their cationic nature of alkyl side chains (phenolic compounds) (Figure 3).

Beta-amyloid plaque, known as a second major agent to initiate Alzheimer pathogenesis, accumulates outside of the neurons of the cerebrum (extracellular accumulation). Since the B-amyloid protein is originated from the excision of an extracellular integral membrane protein (APP-Amyloid Precursor Protein) (Groemer et al., 2011). As shown in Figure 4, the incorporation of phenolic lipid into the cell membranes is one of the possible inhibitory effects on formation of acetylcholin esterase-Acetyl choline complex (Meshginfar et al., 2020).

In the study of Kurotani et al (2017), odd chain fatty acid (eg. Pentadecanoic acid C15:0) has enhanced leptin delivery to its membrane receptors (OB-Rb) as well as higher efficiency in receptor binding (Kurotani et al., 2017b). Leptin could bind to Janus kinase receptors through JAK/STAT pathway that brings an increased level of peroximose proliferator-activated receptor- γ (PPARs- modulator of amyloid aggregation) (Greco, Sarkar, Johnston, & Tezapsidis, 2009). It has been reported that odd chain phenolic lipids could show a similar improvement of leptin due to their unique hydrophobic alkyl chain (Stasiuk, Kleta, & Kozubek, 2011) (Figure 4).

The Table 1 summarizes all the studies carried out in our research laboratory since 2011 at Carleton University, Chemistry Department. Based on outcomes of those mentioned studies, it can be supposed that ARs may serve as a preventive measure against oxidation linked with high fat diet and obesity (Agil et al., 2016); higher AR content provides higher protection against free radical damage (Gliwa et al., 2011).

3.4 Studies related to bioactivity-defense mechanism

Diet and lifestyle can be the most important factors effecting the occurrence and development of neurodegenerative diseases as reported in a recent systematic review (Solfrizzi et al., 2017). Neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson diseases, generally result from oxidative stress and mitochondrial dysfunction causing pathological processes, including loss of dopamine neurons (Zeng et al., 2019). For instance, a recent meta-analysis showed significant association between Mediterranean diet and a reduced risk of major chronic degenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's disease (Sofi, Macchi, Abbate, Gensini, & Casini, 2010). Many studies confirm that consumption of whole grain decreases the risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, breast cancer, and cardiovascular diseases (Pauline & Rimm, 2003; Sytar, Boško, Živčák, Brestic, & Smetanska, 2018). In addition, lower whole grain consumption has been associated with a higher risk of cognitive impairment in older aged people (Ozawa, Shipley, Kivimaki, Singh-Manoux, & Brunner, 2017). Recently, wheat alkylresorcinols protected human epithelium cells (ARPE-19) from oxidative stress induced cell damage (Wang et al., 2019). This protection could be through Akt-dependent Nrf2/H)-1 signalling; induced in a dose-dependent manner. As shown in the Table 2 the neuroprotective effect of AR-C17 homologue against (H₂O₂)-induced apoptosis and mitochondrial dysfunction in PC-12 cells suppressed oxidative damage and mitochondria mediated apoptosis via the SIRT3/FOXO3a signalling pathway (Liu et al., 2020).

277 A hospital based case study ($n=990$) (Sun et al., 2019) found an inverse relation with ischemic
278 stroke risk and plasma metabolites of ARs (DHPPA-3-(3,5-dihydrophenyl)-1-propionic acid).
279 This study provides further evidence to support the health benefits of whole-grain consumption.
280 All reported studies in Table 2 support our hypothesis “OC-PL need to be essential in diet.”

4. Key regulated pathways in fat cell metabolism

More than 150 diseases have been linked to lipids, such as obesity (Manninen et al., 1992), type 2 diabetes (Investigators, 2003), cancer (Vlaeminck et al., 2006), neurological disorders (Reitz, Tang, Luchsinger, & Mayeux, 2004), high blood pressure and artery plaque (Miettinen, Railo, Lepäntalo, & Gylling, 2005). Many studies carried out in the fatty acid metabolism emphasis on even numbered fatty acid chains (C2 to C26), representing over 99% of human plasma total fatty acid concentrations (Hodson et al., 2008). At the same time, there is also low concentration of four odd chain fatty acids in human tissues; C15:0, C17:0, C17:1 (Çoker, de Klerk, Poll-The, Huijmans, & Duran, 1996), and C23:0 (Phillips & Dodge, 1967). Investigations of these OC-FA attract interests in the research community since they are used as internal standards in quantitative analysis; act as biomarkers for dietary intervention studies, type 2 diabetes and coronary heart diseases; and can be evidence for alternate endogenous metabolic pathways (Jenkins et al., 2015).

ARs have been reported to reduce or inhibit triglyceride accumulation (Andersson, Dey, Holm, & Degerman, 2011) beside their anti-inflammatory properties and antioxidant protection (Gliwa, et al., 2011). ARs addition in diet can prevent the risks of obesity and glucose intolerance (Oishi et al., 2014) and help increase insulin sensitivity and cholesterol excretion. This is one of very few studies that have investigated the physiological effects of ARs.

Understanding of fat cell metabolism will provide better understanding on body homeostasis and its function although information is limited on metabolic adipogenesis processes. Halama et al (2016) used metabolomics and transcriptomics approaches to determine crucial metabolic pathways related to fat cell metabolism in their study (Halama et al., 2016). They reported significantly regulated metabolites correlating with significantly regulated genes at different

stages of adipogenesis. Most specifically, the key identified regulated pathways were: phosphatidylcholines synthesis, even and odd chain fatty acids metabolism, and branched chain amino acids (BCAA; leucine, isoleucine and valine) catabolism. The most interesting findings were propionyl-CoA (a product of isoleucine degradation) determination as a putative substrate for OC-FA synthesis and relationship between BCCA degradation products and intermediates of the cholesterol synthesis. OC-FA and glycerophospholipids are mentioned as novel biomarkers of adipogenesis. Previously it has been reported that OC-FA cannot be metabolised in the body and only ingested by diet (Wolk, Furuheim, & Vessby, 2001), Halama et al. (2016) demonstrated that OC-FA can be produced by adipocytes. Before it was only hypothesized that leucine could be degraded into lipids and sterols (Rosenthal, Angel, & Farkas, 1974), in the study of Halama et al. (2016), it was shown that leucine degradation product 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-CoA can play a role as a substrate for cholesterol biosynthesis.

5. Conclusion

In this review, it was aimed to propose-first time- OC-PL as an active dietary lipid that prevents chronic disease, potentially by providing antioxidant protection in biological membranes. Pairing with our findings from Table 1 and literature outcomes (Table 2), here we suggest OC-PL (ARs) as an active dietary fatty acid. Similarly, C15:0 (OC-FA) has already been suggested as an essential dietary lipid by a recent study (Venn-Watson et al., 2020). Further studies are needed to investigate the relationship between reduced intake of OC-FA and OC-PL containing foods and susceptibilities to chronic diseases.

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Figure 1- The biosynthesis of phenolic lipids (alkylresorcinols) and various polyketide (triketide, tetraketide and pentaketide) resorcylic acids, adopted from Yu et al.(Yu et al., 2012)

Figure 2 Theoretical illustration of a hydroxyl radical (OH) scavenged by ARs incorporated in cell membrane (Agil & Hosseinian, 2012a)

Figure 3 Cation- π interaction between phenolic lipid moiety (Eugenol) and tryptophan residue of acetylcholinesterase (Wille et al., 2010).

Figure 4 Schematic pathways of Alzheimer's disease that are affected by bioactivity of phenolic lipid. Amyloid plaques are a consequence of β and γ secretase on amyloid precursor protein (APP), then accumulation of the released amyloid beta (AB) pieces. Incorporation of phenolic lipid into the cell membranes is one of the possible inhibitory effects on formation of acetylcholin esterase-Acetyl choline complex (Meshginfar et al., 2020).