THE AMELIORATIVE EFFECT OF MORIN AGAINST METHOTREXATE – INDUCED HEPATOTOXICITY AND SOME PHYSIOLOGICAL AND BIOCHEMICAL IN MALE RATS

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Abstract
Morin possesses therapeutic properties through, which a course as an antioxidant and a sweep of free radicals, anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, heart tonic and anti-tumor. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of the Morin compound against the toxic effects of Methotrexate in white male rats.

Sixty males of white rats aged (10-12) were used in this experiment. The rats were divided randomly into six groups (10 rats per group). The first group was of a negative control (C) and was pumped with distilled water only for four weeks. The second group was of positive control (T1) with Methotrexate by (0.250) mg / kg B.W for four weeks, The third (T2) was given the Morin compound only with concentration (25) mg / kg B.W. for four weeks; the fourth (T3) was orally injected with the drug for two weeks. Then the drug was treated with Morin (25) mg / kg B.W for two more weeks. The fifth (T4) was treated with For Morin for two weeks and then Methotrexate was given in the last two weeks. The sixth (T5) was given both drugs Methotrexate and Morin at the same time and simultaneously for four weeks. The rats were sacrificed and blood was taken from them for the sake of observing the effects of the studied characteristics.

The results of the statistical analysis show a significant increase in the level of the enzymes of the liver AST, ALT, ALP, also significant increase in MDA and significant decrease in GSH, SOD and significant decrease in the level NF-κB, IL-6, HP of the given drug group (T1) as compared to negative control and other aggregates. While the groups treated by Morin were clearly improved and decreased in level AST, ALT, ALP also in the MDA level with high levels of antioxidants GSH, SOD and immunoglobulin HP, IL-6, NF-κB especially in the two groups (T2, T5). It can be concluded that Morin with a dose of 25 mg / kg has a protective and therapeutic role in reducing the toxicity of MTX in male rats.

Key words : Morin, Methotrexate, Hepatotoxicity.

Introduction
Methotrexate (MTX) is a chemotherapy and immunosuppressant, which is used to treat cancers such as breast cancer, leukemia, lung cancer, and autoimmune diseases such as psoriasis, Crohn’s disease, rheumatoid arthritis (Balk, 2011). It is a folic acid antagonist that acts on the metabolism of this acid because of the similarity in the molecular structure between folic acid and MTX (Fitzakerley, 2011). MTX biotransformation in the liver produce active metabolites that promote hepatotoxicity due to the increase of the oxidative stress (Jahovic et al., 2003). This also other common effects such as hypoproteinemia, immunosuppression, pulmonary fibrosis and kidney failure (Sneader, 2005). Methotrexate is also induced to increase the number of fat-storing cells that could be transformed into myofibroblast responsible for collagen secretion, which leads to liver cirrhosis (Ohbayashi et al., 2010). Some scientific evidence and studies suggest that the combination of chemotherapy and antioxidants in specific doses can help in improving drug effectiveness or reducing the severity of side effects (Rabovsky et al., 2010) by stimulating antioxidants, improving immunity and motivating DNA repair mechanisms by the role of protective enzymes.

Morin C15H10O7 (pentahydroxyflavone-5,7,’3,4,’2) is a yellowish pigment and potent flavonoid abundantly,
present in the plants of the Moraceae family (Yoa et al., 2017). Flavonoids are the main components of the human diet, Morin has therapeutic properties in which it acts as an antioxidant and anti-cancer, especially for liver cancer by promoting apoptosis (Sivaramakrishnan and Devaraj, 2010). Morin also shows regular preventive measures and reduces the negative side effects of many drugs without interfering with their functions. It is a promising natural medicine because of beneficial effects on many human diseases (Caselli et al., 2016). The present study is designed to evaluate the protective effect of Morin against MTX-induced hepatotoxicity in rats.

Materials and Methods

Experimental animals

In this experiment, Sixty adult male Wister rats were used, about four month old, with average weight about (160.5±13 gm) obtained from animal house in college of veterinary Medicine at University of AL-Qadisiyah. The animals housed in well ventilated wire-plastic cages with dimensions 40×60 cm and reared under controlled conditions about 12 hour light and 12 hour dark at 22°C. The animals were allowed to acclimatize for 10 days before experimentation.

Drugs and chemicals

MTX was purchased from the local pharmacy and factory by the Turkish company PFIZER and was used at a concentration of 0.250 mg/kg B.W. for 28 days. Morin was purchased from Sigma Chemical Company, St. Louis, MO, USA and was given orally by intra gastric tube (gavage) at a dose of 25 mg/kg B.W as described.

Experimental design

Sixty adult male Wister rats were divided randomly into six equal groups (10 animals for each group) and treated for 28 consecutive days as following:

1. Control group (C) was given 1 ml distilled water orally.
2. The first treated group (T1) was given MTX orally in a dose of 0.250 mg/kg B.W once daily dissolved in 1 ml distilled water for 28 days (Patel et al., 2014).
3. The second treated group (T2) was given Morin orally in a dose of 25 mg/kg B.W once daily dissolved in 1 ml distilled water for 28 days (Galvez et al., 2001).
4. The third treated group (T3) was given MTX orally (0.250mg/kg/B.W) for 14 days then given orally Morin 25 mg/kg B. W/day for 14 days.
5. The fourth treated group (T4) was given Morin orally (10 mg/kg B.W/day) for 14 days then given orally MTX (0.250 mg/kg B.W/day) for 14 days.
6. The sixth treated group (T5) was given both drugs MTX and Morin at the same time and simultaneously for 28 days.

Animals sacrificing and collection of blood samples

Twenty four hours after last administration all animals were anaesthetised by mixing of Ketamine and Xylocaine (0.3ml, 0.1m), respectively intraperitonal, to sacrificed then blood samples were collected from the heart to obtain the serum of animals. Blood was collected from each animal directly from the heart by using 5 ml disposable syringe, then putting in gel and clot activator tube and left at room temperature until clotted, then it were centrifuged at 3000 rpm for 15 minutes, the serum was aspirated from the tube and stored at -20°C until used for analysis.

Biochemical estimation

Measuring the concentration of liver enzymes

Determination of Serum Alanine Amino Transferase (ALT), Determination of Serum Aspartate Amino Transferase (AST), Determination of Serum Alkaline Phosphatase (ALP):

These enzymes were measured by placing the serum directly in a dry chemical analyzer ARKRAY Spotchem EZ SP-4430 with a special tube with a detector tape for each type of liver enzymes above. After about five minutes, the results of the test were recorded for each eye.

Assessment of MDA concentration

By using the Thiobarbituric acid (TBA) method of Buege and Aust for determination of serum MDA, in which MDA reacts with TBA to give a pink color that is read at 532 nm. (Guidet and Shah, 1989).

Determination of glutathione (GSH) concentration

The method is based on the use of the Ellman’s reagent detector as it reacts rapidly with GSH and is reduced by the sulfate group (SH group) of the clotathione, forming a color product whose absorption is read at 412 nm. (Sedlak and Lindsay, 1968).

Determination of superoxide dismutase (SOD) concentration

The effect of superoxide dismutase in the serum was measured using the chemo-optical modulation method Nitroblue tetrazolium (NBT). Using sodium cyanide as an inhibitor of peroxidase whose absorption is read at 560 nm (Durak et al., 1996).

Measure the serum level of (HP, IL-6 and NF-κB)

The concentration of HP, IL-6 and NF-κB in the serum was estimated using the Elisa device and the
equipment manufactured by CUSABIO, Chain.

**Histopathological studies**

The liver and spleen were excised and fixed in 10% formalin and stained with haemotoxylin and eosin and then observed under microscope for histopathological changes.

**Statistical analysis**

A computerized program, the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data. The data were expressed as means ± standard errors (SE). Differences between group means were estimated using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with least significant difference LSD was detected to compare between groups and Results were considered statistically significant at P < 0.05 (Joda, 2008).

**Results**

There was a significant increase in the activity of AST, ALT and ALP in animal groups treated with MTX as compared to control groups. However, supplementation of MTX intoxicated rats with Morin (T3, T4) ameliorated the antitubercular drugs adverse effects as evidenced by a significant decrease in ALT, AST and ALP activity. There were no significant differences between totals (T2, T5) compared to negative control as shown in table 1.

Table 2 showed that T1 group appeared a significant increase (P< 0.05) in concentration of MDA, when compared with other groups, while there was a significant decrease in concentration of MDA in T2 group. Also, there was a significant decrease in concentration of MDA in T3 group and T4 group respectively as compared with T1 group. Likewise there were no significant differences (P ≥ 0.05) between T2, T5 and C group.

Table 2 demonstrated there was a significant increase (P< 0.05) in GSH, SOD concentration in T2 group as compared with other groups, while there was a significant decrease in GSH, SOD concentration in T1 group as compared with other groups and there was a significant difference in GSH, SOD concentration between T3 and T4 groups represented by the increase of GSH, SOD concentration in T4 when compared with T3 group. And there were no significant differences between T5 and C group.

The results of the statistical analysis of the current study showed a significant decrease (P <0.05) in the level (HP–IL-6 – NF-kB) for male rats treated with MTX (T1) at a concentration of 0.250 mg/kg compared with the negative control group (C) as well as with the other groups (T2, T3, T4, T5). There was also a significant decrease (P <0.05) in the T4 group which was treated with Morin for 14 days at a concentration of 25 mg/kg before MTX as compared to other Morin groups (T2, T3, T5). And there were no significant differences between (T2, T3, T5) and C group (table 3).

The histological examination of the liver sections showed that MTX administration caused major histological changes in comparison with the control such as inflammatory cell infiltrations, vascular congestion, sinusoidal dilatation and granular degeneration of hepatocytes, Hyperplasia and congestion of the bile duct are noted (fig. 1). Treatment with Morin showed a typical structure in liver tissue (fig. 2). While in MTX+Morin group, the histological changes were less severe than those in the MTX treated group; these changes were granular degeneration of hepatocytes and sinusoidal dilatation at low levels and simple propagation in Kupffer cells (fig. 3).

Histological examination of the spleen was shown in the group (T1) treatment with MTX clear exhaustion of white pulp with multiplication of red pulpas well as lymphocyte degeneration in the white pulp. With a presence Multinucleated gaint cells appear within the lymphatic tissue (fig. 4). Treatment with Morin showed a typical structure in spleen tissue (fig. 5). While in MTX with Morin groups, showed a clear improvement represented by the presence of a large white pulp and spread with the presence of arterioles surrounded by a red pulp as well as slight degeneration in lymphocytes (fig. 6).

**Discussion**

**Level of liver enzymes (ATS, ALT, ALP)**

The results agreed upon match with what Jwied (2009) reached at after injecting rats with MTX. Al-Fatlawiand Al-Shammari (2017) also referred to the increase of ALT and AST in rats after being given MTX. These enzymes often increase due to the hepatic degeneration, which appears two weeks to two months after the use of chemotherapy including MTX (Robinson et al., 2013). Due to oxidative damage to the liver resulting from the toxic effects of MTX, the substances that are toxic in the liver cells lead to increased permeability of the membranes of those cells and thus a significant leakage of these enzymes into the serum and its reduction in the liver (Bonnefoi et al., 1989). Toxic substances and drugs also increase the effectiveness of the lysosomes, which causes damage to all organelles within the cell leading to the death of hepatic cells a significant increase
in liver enzymes appears in the serum (Rawat et al., 1997). The ALP enzyme, another indicator of liver damage is elevated due to blockage in the bile ducts the bile flow into or out of the liver leads to a rise ALP in serum (Nair et al., 1998). As for the groups that have been treated Morin with MTX (T3, T4, T5) there has been a marked improvement in the level of liver enzymes compared to positive control (T1), but treatment in group (T5) was more efficient in maintaining liver enzymes and no significant differences were observed with negative control group, the reason is that Morin is a powerful antioxidant that works to protect hepatic cells from damage to free radicals by stimulating cellular antioxidant enzymes (Kok et al., 2000). Morin also regulates the expression of metabolic enzyme activities including cytochrome - P450 (Hodek et al., 2002). The same results are reached Subash and Subramanian (2012), agreed with study of both Zayni and Abbas (2012) the efficacy of ALT and AST in rats was improved when administered Morin at 30 mg/kg. This proves that Morin has protective properties against liver toxicity caused by MTX.

The level of antioxidants and oxidants (SOD, GSH, MDA)

These results were consistent with both Sail et al. (2013) and Tousson et al. (2014), when male rabbits and male rats were treated respectively with MTX and caused a significant increase in MDA and also coincided with the results of Zheng et al. (2014) of the presence of a high level of MDA with a decrease in the level of both GSH, SOD when rats were treated with Cisplatin. The lipid peroxidation is an indicator of harmful oxidative stress in tissues that causes damage to cellular fat content free compounds such as malondialdehyde, the final product of lipid peroxide are released (Berryman et al., 2005). This is associated with a decrease in the effectiveness of antioxidant enzymes GSH, SOD because they are antioxidant enzymes that contribute to the prevention of oxidation induced by the drug by direct removal of free radicals and that these enzymes are depleted because they represent a defensive line against the toxicity of the reactive oxygen species generated by the effect of MTX, which may be reduced due to increased demolition or lack of manufacturing (Hudson, 1999). As a result of deficiency in the raw materials necessary to build these enzymes during oxidative stress (Weiji et al., 2004). For example, MTX causes enzyme inhibition glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase, which contributes to the reduction of the chemical compound NADPH, which is a factor in important biological reactions thus, the reduction of NADPH inhibits the GSH cycle (Rouse et al., 1995). In contrast, the Morin showed the ability to increase the GSH NADPH structure by regulating the activation of the nuclear factor 2(Nrf2) (Rizvi et al., 2015). So that Nrf2 increases the synthesis of Glutathione by stimulating GCLC and GCLM (Glutamate Cysteine Ligase) to regenerate gathering GSH in the liver. She agreed with the results of Sreedharan et al. (2009), when treating male rats with Morin at a concentration of 50 mg/kg of low MDA and high levels of enzymatic and non-enzymatic antioxidants GPx, GSH, CAT, SOD. The same results were reported by both Heeba and Mahmoud (2014) from low MDA concentration and elevated GSH to normal levels when rats were treated with 30 mg/kg of Morin. Morin protects the mitochondrial membranes from damage to free radicals thereby ensuring continuous energy production and the effectiveness of oxidative enzymes (Lee et al., 2016). Morin was also effective in balancing the levels of these enzymes in liver tissue of mice (Singh et al., 2015).

Level of immunological standards (NF-κB, IL-6, HP)

MTX is an immunosuppressant. Chemotherapy reduces the level of albumin in the serum causing a decrease in total protein, including immune proteins (Parrish et al., 2006). In line with Darwish et al. (2013) study that the use of MTX for three weeks in rats inhibits NF-κB, Chiad and his Cohort (2015) reported that treating patients with MTX resulted in a decrease in pro-inflammatory cytokines such as (IL-1β, IL-6, TNF-α). MTX was found to have a inhibitory effect on infiltration macrophages, which secrete high levels of these cytokines, Gerards et al. (2003) reported that MTX is an effective inhibitor for the production of cytokines, including IL-6 because of the drug caused by the metabolism of folate they observed that when folic acid was added, it reversed the inhibitory effects of methotrexate on the production of cytokines. As for the reduction of (HP) haptoglobin found Cronstein et al. (1993) the treatment of mice for four weeks with MTX has prevented the proliferation of immunoglobulin cells for peripheral blood cells by reducing the synthesis of polyamine. The increase in HP is also associated with activation of transcription of genes by pro-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-6 (Bauermann et al., 1989). Morin has a role in inhibiting this activity by deactivating NF-κB and promoting apoptosis (Manna et al., 2007). Bachewal et al. (2017) reported the treatment of oral Morin rats at 50 and 100 mg/kg it’s inhibited NF-κB by reducing (ROS) and increasing antioxidant activity. The Morin activates the enzyme kinase (IKK) it works on
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IκB-α protein phosphorylation which works to keep NF-κB isolated and inactive in the cytoplasm (Karin, 1999). This was supported by the study of Imam et al. (2017) that the effect of routine (flavonide) in male white rats prevented the activation of NF-κB by increasing the expression of IκB-α, Abu Hashish et al. (2013) indicated that the Maureen concentration of 30 mg/kg reduced the elevation of pro-inflammatory cytokines (IL-1β, IL-6, TNF-α) in rats. The role of Morin in inhibiting these factors is in the case of cancer in our experiment, however, we did not notice the effect of the negative control group as treated rats are intact.

Table 1: Effect of Morin treatment on the level of some liver enzymes (ALP-ALT-AST) in male rats treated with MTX.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>L.S.D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASTIU/L</td>
<td></td>
<td>47.1±2.04D</td>
<td>61.9±3.06A</td>
<td>45.1±2.58D</td>
<td>52.73±1.50C</td>
<td>59.03±2.13B</td>
<td>50.23±2.06D</td>
<td>6.512</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALT IU/L</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.07±2.05C</td>
<td>35.63±2.53A</td>
<td>22.80±1.05C</td>
<td>28.21±1.51B</td>
<td>27.55±1.51B</td>
<td>21.22±1.05C</td>
<td>8.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP IU/L</td>
<td></td>
<td>121.04±2.55D</td>
<td>209.5±2.71A</td>
<td>128.11±1.05D</td>
<td>137.77±2.04B</td>
<td>175.83±1.55C</td>
<td>133.21±2.05C</td>
<td>7.199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers = mean ± Standard Error (S.E). Different litters = Significant Differences (p<0.05).

C= Control group, drenched orally with distilled water for (28) days.

T1= Drenched orally with MTX (0.250 mg/kg B.W/day) for (28) days.

T2= Drenched orally with Morin (25mg/kg B.W/day) for (28) days.

T3= Drenched orally with MTX (0.250 mg/kg/B.W) for (14) days then with Morin (25 mg/kg/B.W) for (14) days.

T4= Drenched orally with Morin (25 mg/kg/B.W) for (14) days then with MTX (0.250 mg/kg/B.W) for (14) days.

T5= Drenched orally with MTX and Morin at the same time and simultaneously for 28 days.

Table 2: Effect of Morin treatment at (MDA – GSH-SOD) level in male rats treated with MTX.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
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<th>C</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>L.S.D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MDA (µmol/L)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.69±0.04C</td>
<td>3.38±0.02A</td>
<td>1.65±0.02C</td>
<td>1.56±0.01D</td>
<td>1.85±0.02B</td>
<td>1.79±0.02C</td>
<td>0.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSH (µmol/L)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.01±0.33B</td>
<td>1.47±0.03F</td>
<td>2.88±0.01A</td>
<td>1.55±0.02D</td>
<td>1.62±0.02C</td>
<td>1.87±0.03B</td>
<td>0.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOD(U 8 mL)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.82±0.04B</td>
<td>1.69±0.03F</td>
<td>3.63±0.02A</td>
<td>2.04±0.03D</td>
<td>2.25±0.02C</td>
<td>2.61±0.05B</td>
<td>0.395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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T4= Drenched orally with Morin (25 mg/kg/B.W) for (14) days then with MTX (0.250 mg/kg/B.W) for (14) days.

T5= Drenched orally with MTX and Morin at the same time and simultaneously for 28 days.

Table 3: Effect of Morin treatment at (HP – IL-6–NF-kB) level in male rats treated with MTX.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>L.S.D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HP (ng/ml)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.93±0.04A</td>
<td>2.17±0.01D</td>
<td>4.07±0.01A</td>
<td>3.58±0.02AB</td>
<td>2.23±0.04C</td>
<td>3.70±0.04A</td>
<td>1.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IL-6 (pg/ml)</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.74±0.13A</td>
<td>15.73±0.14D</td>
<td>22.98±0.3A</td>
<td>19.15±0.3AB</td>
<td>17.53±0.2C</td>
<td>21.70±0.25A</td>
<td>2.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NF-kB (pg/ml)</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.09±0.47</td>
<td>24.33±0.3D</td>
<td>46.7±0.14A</td>
<td>38.46±0.3AB</td>
<td>29.49±0.16C</td>
<td>40.18±0.2A</td>
<td>3.290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers = mean ± Standard Error (S.E). Different litters = Significant Differences (p<0.05).

C= Control group, drenched orally with distilled water for (28) days.

T1= Drenched orally with MTX (0.250 mg/kg B.W/day) for (28) days.

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T5= Drenched orally with MTX and Morin at the same time and simultaneously for (28) days.
Histopathological study

The liver and spleen were selected for histological study because they are the most affected organs because of its function in metabolism toxins and drugs. Agreed with the study of Tawfeeq and Taifoor (2014) of satisfactory histological changes in mice livers treated with MTX, as well as with the study of Al-Lami et al. (2017). Oxidative stress results in the accumulation of free radicals that cause damage to liver cells and tissue damage (Majumdar et al., 2008). Treatment with MTX also causes necrosis in hepatic cells due to accumulation of forms polyglutamate (It is a derivatives of MTX characterized by toxicity), which reduces folate levels in these cells, which may cause hepatic cells necrosis (Uraz et al., 2008). On the other hand, in this study, the pathological changes were observed in the
histopathological examination of MTX-treated rat spleen. These changes were consistent with Sakuhnol et al. (2013), when cisplatin was injected with rats. The white pulp deficiency and depletion is evident as a component of white blood cells that are reduced by the toxicity of MTX. As for the red pulp as a store of red blood cells that accumulate and hold inside the damaged pellets, which leads to increase and multiplication as a result of this accumulation, the spleen depletes its energy because of the extra effort to get rid of these pellets leading to some changes in spleen tissue (Klaassen et al., 2009). Histological examination of the Morin-treated liver sections of the two groups (T3, T4) showed clear improvement, where Rizvi et al. (2015) pointed to the ability of Morin to protect hepatic cells from oxidative damage by enhancing cellular defenses such as regulating the activity of the nuclear factor 2 (Nrf2). Which has an effect on oxidative stress and toxicity so that it senses the oxidants and regulates the antioxidant defense (Ma, 2013). This improvement in liver tissue was evident in group (T5) and the ability of Morin to reduce fatty degeneration in the liver where the study of Gu et al. (2017) the Morin is a double antigen for liver liver X (LXR) with both quality α-, β-which is a nuclear receptor for transcription factors and is important in regulating cholesterol, fatty acids and glucose balances as well as affect the development of metabolic disorders such as hyperlipidemia and arteriosclerosis. They observed the treatment of mice with a high-fat diet that leads to obesity with a dose of 100 mg of Morin led to delayed development of fatty liver (degeneration), lower body weight gains, lower levels of triglyceride and cholesterol level in serum and liver. Thus, Morin appears as a promising new treatment for fatty liver disease, Fang et al. (2005) reported that treatment with Maureen with the drug led to a significant improvement in spleen tissue in mice. Consistent with the study of both AL-Shanawi and Baker (2011) of the improvement of tissue for both liver and spleen when treated with antioxidants of flavonoids.

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