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Wound Healing Potential of Hydrogel Extract of *Saccharum spontaneum* Leaves Using Incision Wound Healing Model in Rats

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ABSTRACT

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Saccharum spontaneum is a medicinal plant known for treating various diseases, such as wounds. Despite the potential use of this plant, there are no studies confirming its wound-healing activity. This study assessed *S. spontaneum* extract hydrogel formulation (HESs) and examined its effects on wound healing, antioxidant properties, and antibacterial activity. The disk diffusion method was used to evaluate the antibacterial activity, while DPPH and FRAP were used to measure the antioxidant activity. The rats were divided into 5 groups of 4 rats each to assess wound healing using the incision wound model. Group 1 served as the negative control, while group 2 was given 0.05% octenidine. *S. spontaneum* extract hydrogel formulation (HESs) was administered to groups 3, 4, and 5 at 5%, 10%, and 15% (%w/w) concentrations, respectively. The results showed that *S. spontaneum* extract has antioxidant activity with IC₅₀ values of 80.16 (in DPPH) and 82.70 µg/mL (in FRAP), while exhibiting an inhibitory effect on the growth of bacteria in a concentration-dependent manner. The wound healing activity test results indicated that 10% and 15% HESs significantly closed the wound area on days 4, 8, and 16. The *S. spontaneum* leaf extract exhibited wound healing potential.

Keywords: *Saccharum spontaneum*, Wound healing, Antioxidant, Antibacterial, Hydrogel.

Introduction

The skin is the outermost organ that covers the entire body surface of humans. This organ prevents the entry of pathogens, minimises fluid loss, blocks ultraviolet radiation, and regulates body temperature.^{1,2} The skin is also susceptible to injury due to several factors, including physical, chemical, thermal, microbial, and immunological. In living tissues, these elements may disrupt cellular and anatomical or functional continuity.³ After an injury, an inflammatory response is triggered, prompting the cells under the dermis to produce more collagen, and then the epithelial tissue begins to grow.⁴ Wound healing is a repair mechanism that takes place after the skin or other soft tissues are injured, to restore both the structural and functional integrity, along with replacing any damaged cellular structures and tissue layers.⁵ This process is complex and dynamic, including various cell types, leukocytes, erythrocytes, platelets, fibroblasts, and epithelial cells, as well as growth factors, inflammatory mediators, and cytokines.⁶

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In general, the wound healing process takes place through four different phases. This process begins with hemostasis, which lasts for ±24 hours, followed by the inflammatory phase for 2–5 days. The proliferation phase includes angiogenesis, ECM (extracellular matrix) deposition, granulation tissue development, epithelialisation, and wound contraction, lasting for 5 days to 2 weeks. Lastly, the connective tissue deposition occurs during the remodelling/tissue maturation phase, which lasts for 3 weeks to 24 months.⁷ Multiple components, such as the size of the wound, the blood supply to the wound area, and the presence of infection, determine the wound healing process.⁸ Bacterial infections, specifically *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus pyogenes*, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, can delay the process by prolonging the inflammatory phase.⁹ This prolongation causes excessive formation of ROS that fight pathogens, such as macrophages and neutrophils. Meanwhile, excessive ROS production reduces the natural antioxidant activity of the body, reducing free radical scavenging and causing oxidative stress. This causes damage to biomacromolecules, including proteins, DNA, lipids, and carbohydrates, along with cell membranes and the ECM. The damage triggers an increase in the inflammatory mediators as well as proteolytic enzyme production, causing a harmful cycle of inflammatory amplification that worsens tissue injury.^{10,11} This process can halt wound healing during the inflammatory phase,^{12,13} thereby leading to the formation of scar tissue.¹⁴

Most wounds can heal naturally, but it can take quite a long time in some conditions. This extension of time causes a chronic wound with more severe conditions. Consequently, treatments that incorporate bioactive healing agents and/or wound dressings are essential to facilitate the healing process.¹⁵ Many drugs are used to treat wounds, but some are expensive and can also cause several issues, including digestive problems, allergies, and drug resistance.¹⁶ Therefore, drugs

derived from medicinal plants have become the subject of the latest pharmaceutical formulations to treat various diseases, including wound healing, due to their affordable and safe nature.¹⁷ At present, more than 75% of people on the planet use medicinal herbs to cure wounds. Research has identified 62 families and 109 genera that exhibit wound-healing properties, which include *Saccharum spontaneum*, but its use is still empirical.¹⁸

S. spontaneum is a plant belonging to the Poaceae family. This perennial grass can grow up to four meters tall with deep roots and rhizomes. It can withstand various biotic and abiotic stressors, has the ability to root, higher morphological variability, and has the ability of its seeds to grow vigorously under both optimal and suboptimal conditions. The plant is widely distributed in tropical regions of the world, such as Australia, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. *S. spontaneum* is known to contain alkaloids, coumarins, saponins, quinones, steroids, terpenes, phenolics, carbohydrates, and proteins.¹⁹ Prior investigation showed that it has anti-inflammatory, antidiarrheal, antifungal, and analgesic activity.^{19,20} However, there has been no study reporting the *S. spontaneum*'s wound healing activity. The leaf extract cannot be used instantly because it does not remain on the injured experimental animals' skin for a sufficient duration. Therefore, its extract formulation into a topical preparation is necessary to achieve sustained drug delivery at the wound site, which can be carried out using a hydrogel preparation. The formulation is a clear, flexible film that exhibits strong adhesive properties, releasing and spreading the agent on the skin well.²¹ Hydrogel offers soothing moisture to the wound spot as well as a cool sensation that reduces swelling and accelerates the healing process. According to a previous study, this material reduces pain around the wound and increases comfort for patients.²² Therefore, this study aimed to determine the wound healing potential of *S. spontaneum* leaf extract hydrogel (HESs) using an incision wound model in rats, as well as determine its antioxidant and antibacterial activity.

Materials and Methods

Drugs, chemicals, and instruments

Octenidine dihydrochloride gel (PT. Ikapharmindo Putramas Tbk., Indonesia), ketamine HCl (PT. Bernofarm Pharmaceutical Company, Indonesia), folin-ciocalteu reagent, ascorbic acid, 1,1, diphenyl-2-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH), pulvis gummi arabicum, sodium bicarbonate, aluminum chloride, sodium formate, acetic acid anhydride, potassium bromide, carbopol 940, hydroxypropyl methylcellulose (HPMC), glycerin, propylparaben, methylparaben, 96% ethanol, vanillin, mercury (II) chloride, sulfuric acid, sodium hydroxide, magnesium, potassium dihydrogen phosphate, hydrogen chloride, aquadestilata, oxalic acid, potassium ferricyanide, trichloroacetic acid, ferric chloride, zinc, gelatin, potassium iodide, bismuth nitrate, tartaric acid, iodine, 70% methanol (EMSURE® ACS Merck, Darmstadt, Germany). Bacterial cultures were purchased from Remel Inc., a part of Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc.: *Staphylococcus aureus* ATCC BAA-976 PK/5, *Streptococcus pyogenes* ATCC 19615 PK/5, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* ATCC 15442. The instruments used in the present study were a UV-Vis spectrophotometer (Shimadzu UV 1601), Shimadzu IRPrestige-21 FT-IR spectrophotometer (Shimadzu Corporation), rotary evaporator (Eyela OSB-2100), magnetic heater stirrer (Bioeurope Co., Ltd), pH meter (NeoMet, Istek Inc.), and viscometer (Lamy Rheology).

Sample collection, determination, and extraction

Fresh leaves of *S. spontaneum* were collected from Tegalwaru Sub-district (Google coordinates: 6°16'15" S and 107°34'27" E) in Karawang Regency, West Java, Indonesia, in February 2024. The leaves were identified at the Jatinangoriense Herbarium, Biosystematics and Molecular Laboratory, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia. The sample (2.0 kg) of powdered *S. spontaneum* leaves was macerated in 96% ethanol (20 L) for three consecutive days at the Pharmacognosy Laboratory at Universitas Buana Perjuangan Karawang. The macerate was filtered in Whatman No. 1 filter paper and concentrated using a rotary evaporator set at 50°C.²³

Phytochemical screening

Simple phytochemical screening was conducted to identify the presence of secondary plant metabolites, including polyphenols, flavonoids, quinones, saponins, monoterpenoids, tannins, alkaloids, sesquiterpenes, triterpenoids, and steroids contained in the plant extract using a standard procedure.²⁴

Determination of total phenolic content (TPC)

A total of 10 mL (70%) of methanol was used to extract 100 mg of powdered *S. spontaneum* leaves for 15 minutes. 2.5 mL of Folin-Ciocalteu reagent with 0.4 mL of methanol was mixed with 0.1 mL of extract, and the mixture was then allowed to sit at 25°C for 3-5 minutes. The mixture was then mixed with 0.8 mL of NaHCO₃ (75 g/L) and left at the same temperature for one hour. The absorbance was measured using a UV-Vis spectrophotometer set to 765 nm, and the results were reported in GAE.²⁵

Determination of total flavonoid content (TFC)

A total of 100 mg of powdered *S. spontaneum* leaves was extracted using 10 mL of 70% methanol for 15 minutes. A 0.1 mL sample of the extract was then liquefied in 2.4 mL of methanol, 0.1 mL of 10% AlCl₃, 0.1 mL of 1 M NaCOOH, and 2.3 mL of water. The mixture was maintained at 25 °C for 30 minutes. The absorbance was measured at a 432 nm wavelength, and the test results were reported as QE.²⁶

Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopic (FT-IR) analysis

S. spontaneum (2 mg) extract was thoroughly combined with 100 mg of dry potassium bromide (KBr) powder. The combination was then compacted in a mould using a hydraulic pump to form pellets or thin sheets. The results were evaluated using a Shimadzu IRPrestige-21 FTIR spectrophotometer at a wavelength in the mid-infrared region (500–4500 cm⁻¹) along with the 4 cm⁻¹ resolution.²⁷

Hydrogel preparation

The gel was prepared by mixing hydroxypropyl methyl cellulose (HPMC) in distilled water at 70°C and stirring with a magnetic stirrer at 300 rpm until homogeneous. Then, carbopol 940 was added and solubilised in distilled water, and stirred until homogeneous. The *S. spontaneum* extract was made into several concentrations by solubilising the substance in distilled water. At room temperature, the extract was mixed with the gel phase and agitated until the mixture was homogeneous (mass I). Glycerin was combined with methylparaben and propylparaben until the mixture was homogenous (mass II). Lastly, I and II were mixed and blended slowly until uniformity was obtained.²⁸ The composition of the hydrogel formulation utilised in this investigation is shown in Table 1.

Evaluation of *S. spontaneum* extract hydrogel (HESs) preparations

Physical examination

The evaluation commenced with a physical examination, which included visual observations of colour, homogeneity, and consistency.²⁸

Measurement of pH

The pH of the different hydrogel formulations was determined using a pH meter (NeoMet, istek inc, Seoul). The formulation for pH determination was placed in a container, the electrode was then inserted, and the results were recorded. As a standard for topical preparations, the pH value should approximate the pH of the skin, which ranges from 4.5 to 6.5. This is because a topical preparation with an overly acidic pH value can lead to skin irritation. The topical preparation can also cause scaly skin when it is too alkaline.²⁹

Spreading coefficient

Additionally, to assess the hydrogel formulation's spreadability and softness for smooth application on the skin, a spreading coefficient experiment was carried out. One gram of each HESs formulation was placed on a sheet of transparent glass covered with graph paper. To determine the area that each HESs formulation supplied, a glass plate was set over the transparent glass and loaded with 5–30 g of the gel for 60 seconds. A good topical preparation requires a spread diameter between 5–7 g.cm/sec.³⁰

Table 1: HESs formulation.

Ingredient	Concentration (%w/w)				
	NC	PC	F1	F2	F3
<i>S. spontaneum</i> extract	-		5.00	10.00	15.00
Propylparaben	0.02		0.02	0.02	0.02
Methylparaben	0.18		0.18	0.18	0.18
HPMC	0.25	Octenidine	0.25	0.25	0.25
Carbopol 940	0.25	dihydrochloride gel	0.25	0.25	0.25
Glycerin	5.00		5.00	5.00	5.00
Aquadestilata	ad 100		ad 100	ad 100	ad 100

NC: negative control; PC: positive control; F1: formula 1; F2: formula 2; F3: formula 3.

Rheological (viscosity) studies

A cone and a plate viscometer were used to measure the viscosity of each HESs formulation, and spindle 7 was used to measure the duration of HESs formulation in contact with the skin. The assembly was associated with a thermostatically regulated water bath at a temperature of 25°C. Furthermore, viscosity was tested by placing all formulations in a glass covered with a thermostatic jacket. The spindle was free to move around inside the HESs for 10 minutes at 100 rpm.³¹ Good viscosity in a hydrogel preparation ranges from 2000 to 4000 cPs, and this value gives the hydrogel a longer contact time with the skin.³²

Stability test

Hydrogel samples of *S. spontaneum* extract were stored at cold (4±2°C), room (27±2°C), and hot temperatures (40±2°C) for ninety days, and the physical appearance, pH, spreadability, and viscosity tests on all formulations and all temperatures were observed. This is an accelerated test aimed at obtaining the optimum HESs formula for proper storage due to changes that usually occur in normal conditions³³

*Antioxidant activity**DPPH assay*

Different test concentrations of *S. spontaneum* extract (25, 50, 75, 100, and 125 µg/mL) were solubilised in 25 mL of methanol and subjected to DPPH antioxidant screening. 2.5 mg of DPPH was solubilised in 50 mL of methanol to create a DPPH stock solution with a concentration of 50 µg/mL. Additionally, 2 mL of each *S. spontaneum* extract solution was mixed with 2 mL of the DPPH stock solution, allowed to mix thoroughly, and then incubated at 30°C for half an hour. The blank solution was prepared by combining 2 mL of DPPH with 2 mL of methanol, which was then measured at the same wavelength as the extract. Ascorbic acid in concentrations of 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 µg/mL was used as a standard drug in this experiment. A UV-Vis spectrophotometer was used to measure the antioxidant activity in 4 replicates at 515.50 nm wavelength.³⁴ Antioxidant activity was expressed in % inhibition with the equation:

$$\text{Inhibition (\%)} = \frac{C_b - C_s}{C_b} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

Where C_b denotes blank absorption, while C_s indicates sample absorption.

Ferric reducing antioxidant power (FRAP) assay

S. spontaneum extract (100 mg) was dissolved in 100 mL of 96% ethanol and diluted to obtain various test concentrations, including 25, 50, 75, 100, and 125 µg/mL. This was followed by adding 1 mL of each *S. spontaneum* extract solution to 1 mL of 0.2 M phosphate buffer (pH 6.6) and 1 mL of 1% $K_3Fe(CN)_6$, and stirring until a homogeneous mixture was formed. The mixture was incubated at 50°C for 20 minutes. 1 mL of trichloroacetic acid was added and then centrifuged at 3000 rpm for 10 minutes. Furthermore, 1 mL of supernatant (top layer) was taken into a test tube and mixed with 1 mL of water and 0.5 mL of 0.1% $FeCl_3$. The solution was left for 10 minutes, and the absorbance was measured using a UV-Vis spectrophotometer at a wavelength of 720 nm in 4 replicates. A 1% oxalate solution mixture was used as a blank.³⁵ The same steps were carried out on standard ascorbic acid solutions

with concentrations of 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 µg/mL. Antioxidant activity was represented as a percentage of reducing power using the following formula:

$$\text{Reducing power (\%)} = \frac{C_b - C_s}{C_b} \times 100 \quad (2)$$

Where C_b represents blank absorption, and C_s represents sample absorption.

Antibacterial activity

This study utilises the disc diffusion technique to determine antibacterial activity. A total of 300 µL (1.0×10^8 cells) of bacterial suspension (*Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus pyogenes*, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*) was pipetted from a sterile petri dish and then poured into 15 mL of MHA media until homogeneous and solid. Subsequently, discs containing 15 µL of HESs with concentrations of 6.25, 12.5, 25, 50, and 100% were placed on the media. This experiment used the hydrogel base and chloramphenicol as a negative and positive control, respectively. The clear zone was measured using a calliper after the plate was incubated for 18–24 hours at 37°C. The MIC was simultaneously determined using the serial dilution approach. After the MIC determination of the HESs, aliquots of 50 µL from all the tubes that showed no visible bacterial growth were seeded on MHA plates and incubated for 24 hours at 37°C. The MBC endpoint is the lowest concentration of an antimicrobial agent at which 99.99% of the bacterial population is killed. This was done by observing pre and post-incubated agar plates for the presence or absence of bacteria.³⁶

*Wound healing screening**Experimental animals*

This experiment used 20 healthy male Wistar rats weighing 150–250 g and 8–12 weeks old. The rats were obtained from Animal House, CV. Mitra Putra Animal, Indonesia, and kept in plastic cages with softwood shavings at the Pharmacology and Toxicology Laboratory, Universitas Buana Perjuangan Karawang. A 12-hour light and 12-hour dark cycle was ensured, and free access to standard pellets and water *ad libitum* was provided.

Randomisation procedure and blinding

Before randomisation, each rat was assigned an identification number. The randomisation was performed using online software (<https://www.graphpad.com/quickcalcs/randomize1/>) that generated random numbers and assigned the rats to study groups. Meanwhile, during the experiment, alphanumeric codes were utilised to label vials and syringes, and each rat was assigned a number to maintain blinding. Subsequently, each sample code was enclosed in a sealed envelope and disclosed after the experiment.

Incision wound model

Before the wound was made, all rats were given a dose of 120 mg/kg of ketamine HCl intramuscularly to induce anaesthesia.³⁷ The intended region for the incision was marked, and the rats' back fur was shaved. Using a punch biopsy and a scalpel, a 30 mm incision was created on the back, 50 mm from the ear, cutting through the muscle and running parallel to the vertebral column.³⁸

Wound healing activity of HESs

In this experiment, the rats were divided into 5 groups, consisting of four rats each. Group 1 was given a hydrogel base as the negative control, while group 2 received a gel containing octenidine dihydrochloride at a concentration of 0.05% (%w/w). Meanwhile, groups 3, 4, and 5 were treated with HESs at 5% (%w/w), 10% (%w/w), as well as 15% (%w/w) concentrations, respectively, for 15 days following the incision. On days 0, 2, 4, 8, and 16, the diameter of the wound was measured and recorded for every treatment group. A calliper was used to measure the average wound diameter in vertical, horizontal, and diagonal directions to determine the closure percentage.³⁹ Wound healing activity was expressed as a closure percentage using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Wound closure area (\%)} = \frac{\text{Wound area on 0 day} - \text{Wound area on } n \text{ day}}{\text{Wound area on 0 day}} \times 100 \quad (3)$$

Where n is the number of days (2nd, 4th, 8th, and 16th).

Ethical approvals

The Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Padjadjaran in Bandung, Indonesia, approved the research protocol under the number 553/UN6.KEP/EC/2024, in compliance with ARRIVE guidelines.

Statistical analysis

The experiment's data were presented as mean \pm SEM, with $p < 0.05$ considered significantly different. The Tukey HSD post-hoc test, as well as one-way ANOVA, were performed for statistical analysis, and GraphPad Prism version 9 (Dotmatics) was used to obtain the IC₅₀ values.

Results and Discussion

The phytochemical screening revealed that several secondary metabolites, including flavonoids, quinones, saponins, alkaloids, polyphenols, monoterpenoids, and sesquiterpenoids, were present in the *S. spontaneum* extract, as shown in Table 2. Furthermore, Table 3 shows that the TPC and TFC of *S. spontaneum* extract are 2.66 ± 0.22 mg GAE/gram and 4.54 ± 0.31 mg QE/gram, respectively. TPC and TFC are the standard tests for phytochemical studies to determine antioxidant activity in a plant extract. This is because phenolic compounds have been reported to scavenge ROS without causing other oxidative reactions, and 5,7,3',4'-hydroxy substituted flavonoid compounds have good free radical scavenging abilities.^{40,41}

Table 2: The *S. spontaneum* extract's phytochemical constituents.

Phytochemical compounds	Results
Polyphenols	+
Flavonoids	+
Tannins	-
Quinones	+
Saponins	+
Alkaloids	+
Monoterpenoids and sesquiterpenoids	+
Triterpenoids and steroids	-

(+): contained; (-): not contained.

Table 3: *S. spontaneum* extract's TPC and TFC contents.

Samples	TPC (mg GAE/g)	TFC (mg QE/g)
<i>S. spontaneum</i> extract	2.66 ± 0.22	4.54 ± 0.31

Values are shown as mean \pm SEM from four replicates in each group. TPC is denoted as mg of GAE per gram of sample, while TFC is shown as mg of QE per gram of sample.

Similarly, the FT-IR analysis result of *S. spontaneum* extract showed several different functional groups confirmed by the presence of 85 peaks in the chromatogram. Clear peaks were observed at $561.31\text{--}881.51\text{ cm}^{-1}$, representing the stretching mode of alkyl halides (C-I stretch $587.35\text{--}561.31\text{ cm}^{-1}$, C-Br stretch $683.79\text{--}607.60\text{ cm}^{-1}$, C-Cl stretch $881.51\text{--}709.83\text{ cm}^{-1}$), and peaks at $944.20\text{--}910.44\text{ cm}^{-1}$ showing the bending mode of alkenes (C=C). There was also a peak at 1026.17 cm^{-1} with strong intensity, representing the stretching mode of alkyl aryl ether (C-O). Furthermore, peaks were observed at $1716.72\text{--}1087.90\text{ cm}^{-1}$, showing the bending mode of imine (C=N stretching), aldehyde (C-H stretching), as well as amide (C-N stretching). Several other functional groups were found in the peak range of $3748.81\text{--}2832.59\text{ cm}^{-1}$, including alcohol (O-H stretching), carboxylic acid (C=O stretching), amine (N-H stretching), and alkane (C-H stretching). The FTIR analysis results of *S. spontaneum* extract are shown in Figure 1. In the HESs evaluation experiment, visual inspection was carried out for the formulations' colour, homogeneity, and consistency. The findings showed that all HESs formulations were brown and mixed homogeneously and had excellent viscosity, as shown in Figure 2. The pH value measurements also revealed that all HESs formulations, F0, F1, F2, and F3, had an average pH value of 4.98, 4.86, 4.80, and 4.62. Each formula, F0, F1, F2, and F3, had an average spreadability value of 6.60, 5.93, 5.60, and 5.56 g/cm². Meanwhile, for all measurement results of formulations' viscosity, each formula F0, F1, F2, and F3 has an average viscosity value of 6227, 5414, 4629, and 3901 cPs. The study's findings indicate that all HESs formulations have good physical

examination, pH value, spreadability, and viscosity. The HESs evaluation results are shown in Table 4. The stability test results showed that all formulations of HESs maintained consistent colour, homogeneity, and viscosity at different test temperatures over a period of ninety days. Additionally, each formulation exhibited pH values, spreadability, and viscosity that satisfy the standards for good hydrogel preparations. The antioxidant activity of the *S. spontaneum* extract was assessed using the DPPH and FRAP methods. The extract's stability as a free radical and its ability to evaluate free radical scavenging activity *in vitro* in biological systems served as the foundation for the DPPH method.⁴² In this research, the antioxidant activity was assessed by evaluating the capability of *S. spontaneum* extract to neutralise the DPPH free radical cation, which has a peak absorption at 515.50 nm wavelength as measured by a UV-Vis spectrophotometer.⁴³ Based on the results, the *S. spontaneum* extract can scavenge DPPH radicals in a concentration-dependent manner with an IC₅₀ value of 80.16 $\mu\text{g/mL}$. Additionally, the overall strength of the extract was directly tested using the FRAP method. This method relied on the extract's ability to decrease Fe³⁺ ions to Fe²⁺ ions, measured at 720 nm wavelength.⁴⁴ The results showed that *S. spontaneum* extract could inhibit free radicals in a concentration-dependent manner, with an IC₅₀ value of 82.70 $\mu\text{g/mL}$. Meanwhile, it appears that the antioxidant activity of ascorbic acid was still higher than that of *S. spontaneum* extract, where the IC₅₀ value for each test method was 6.26 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ (DPPH method) and 8.40 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ (FRAP method). Table 5 shows the extract antioxidant activity using the DPPH and FRAP methods.

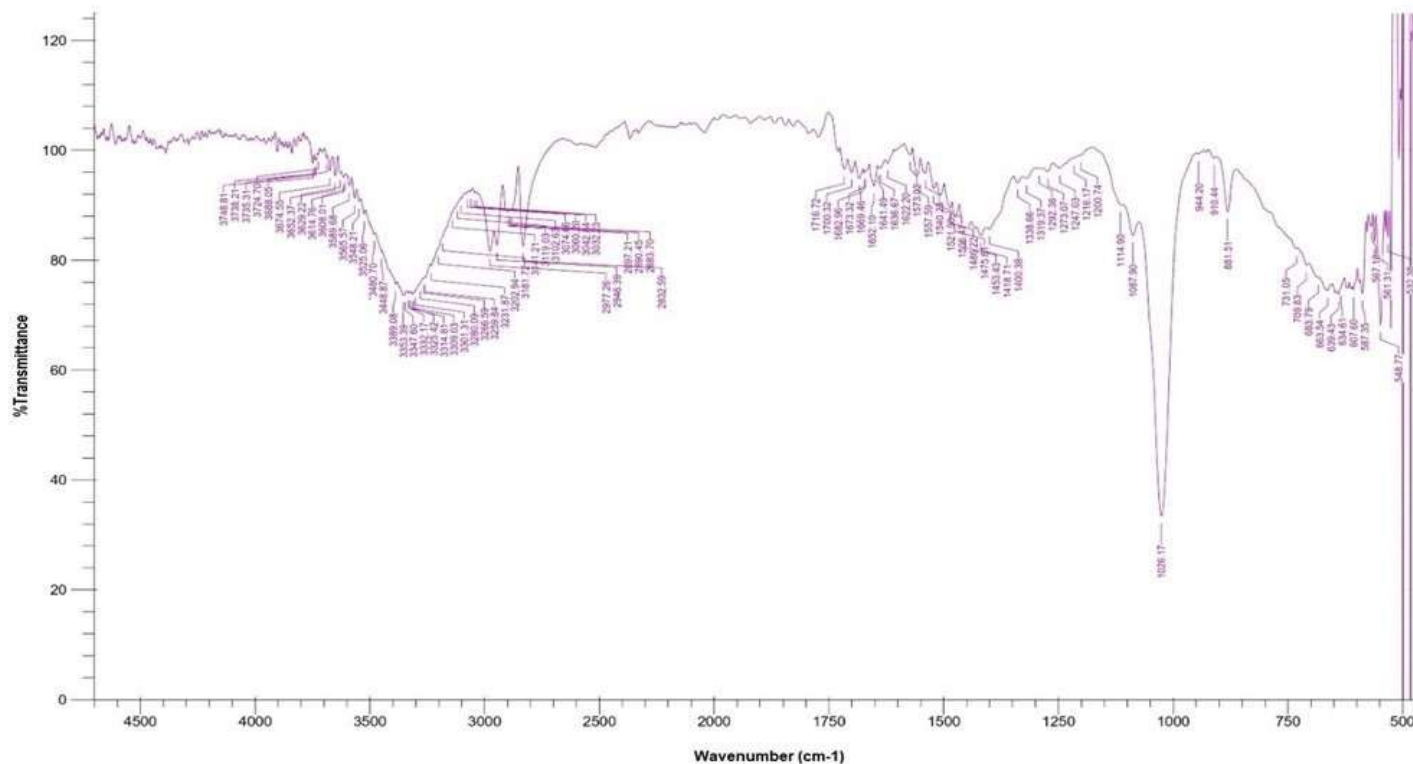


Figure 1: Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy analysis of *Saccharum spontaneum* extract.

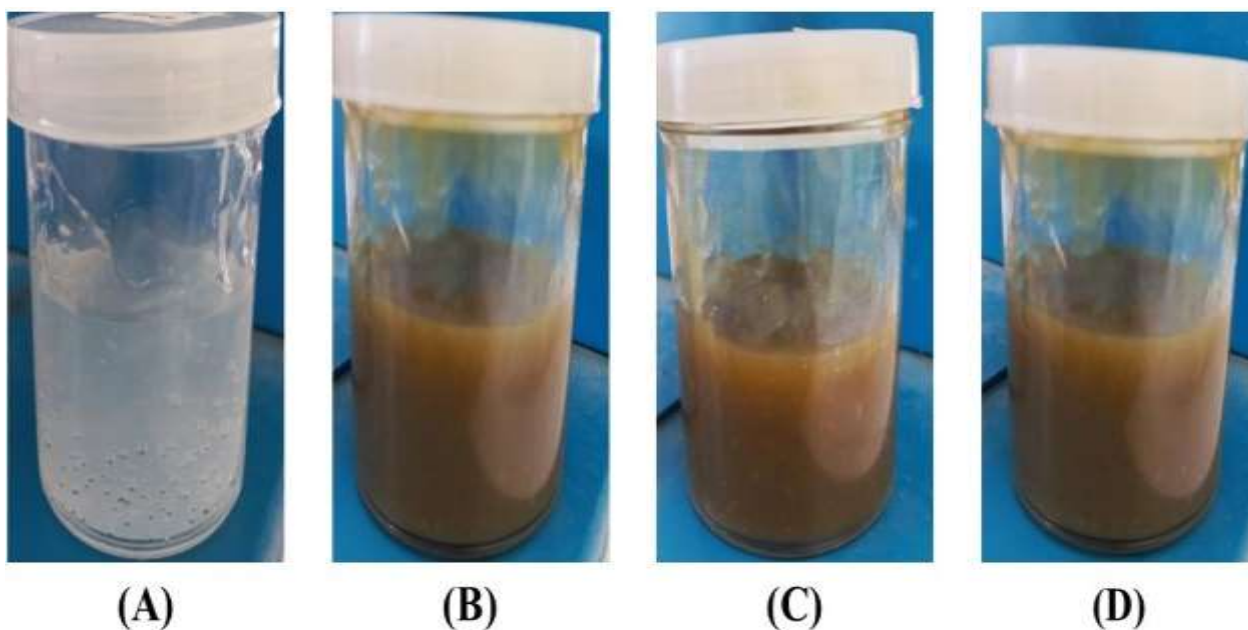


Figure 2: Hydrogel formulations of *S. spontaneum* extract. A: Formula 0; B: Formula 1; C: Formula 2; D: Formula 3.

Table 4: HESS' formulation evaluation physical chemical parameters.

Physical parameters Formulations	Color	Homogeneity	Consistency
F0	Clear	Homogeneous	Excellent
F1	Brown	Homogeneous	Excellent

F2	Brown	Homogeneous	Excellent
F3	Brown	Homogeneous	Excellent
pH value			
F0	4.98 ± 0.09		
F1	4.86 ± 0.10		
F2	4.80 ± 0.12		
F3	4.62 ± 0.18		
Spreading coefficient (g.cm/sec)			
F0	6.60 ± 0.10		
F1	5.93 ± 0.11		
F2	5.60 ± 0.10		
F3	5.56 ± 0.23		
Viscosity (cPs)			
F0	6227 ± 8.51		
F1	5414 ± 11.45		
F2	4629 ± 14.61		
F3	3901 ± 16.39		

The data are shown as the mean ± SEM of four replicates in each group

Table 5: Antioxidant activity of *S. spontaneum* extract and ascorbic acid using DPPH and FRAP methods.

Samples	DPPH method			FRAP method		
	Concentration (µg/mL)	Inhibition (%)	IC ₅₀ (µg/mL)	Concentration (µg/mL)	Inhibition (%)	IC ₅₀ (µg/mL)
<i>S. spontaneum</i> extract	25.00	22.70 ± 1.63	80.16 ± 1.75	25.00	31.45 ± 1.29	82.70 ± 1.86
	50.00	32.78 ± 1.91		50.00	39.17 ± 1.47	
	75.00	42.82 ± 1.47		75.00	45.25 ± 1.82	
	100.00	54.70 ± 1.35		100.00	59.80 ± 1.68	
	125.00	73.06 ± 1.82		125.00	72.78 ± 1.87	
Ascorbic acid	2.00	22.96 ± 1.15	6.26 ± 1.52	2.00	7.05 ± 1.58	8.40 ± 1.45
	4.00	37.07 ± 1.68		4.00	13.55 ± 1.82	
	6.00	46.36 ± 1.96		6.00	22.45 ± 2.08	
	8.00	57.67 ± 1.29		8.00	28.50 ± 1.73	
	10.00	64.11 ± 2.04		10.00	55.86 ± 1.78	

Data are shown as mean ± SEM from four replicates in each group. IC₅₀ shows the half-maximal inhibitory concentration.

The results of this study showed that HESs exerted an inhibitory effect on the growth of *S. aureus*, *S. pyogenes*, and *P. aeruginosa* in a concentration-dependent manner. A higher concentration of HESs leads to a larger inhibition zone for the development of *S. aureus*, *S. pyogenes*, and *P. aeruginosa*. These results also showed that the MIC and MBC value of HESs on the growth of *S. aureus*, *S. pyogenes*, and *P. aeruginosa* was 6.25%, 12.50%, 12.50%, 25.00%, 25.00%, and 50.00%, respectively. Meanwhile, chloramphenicol provided antibacterial activity based on the MIC and MBC against all three species of bacteria (*S. aureus*: MIC = $1.75 \times 10^{-3}\%$; MBC = $1.25 \times 10^{-2}\%$, *S. pyogenes*: MIC = $15 \times 10^{-3}\%$; MBC = $3 \times 10^{-2}\%$; and *P. aeruginosa*: MIC = $6.2 \times 10^{-3}\%$; MBC = $5 \times 10^{-2}\%$). Table 6 shows the inhibition zone and MIC and MBC of HESs and chloramphenicol on *S. aureus*, *S. pyogenes*, and *P. aeruginosa*.

In this study, the administration of topical HESs significantly affected the healing process of the incision wound in rats. Wound closure assessments were conducted on days 0, 2, 4, 8, and 16. According to the results, wounds in all treatment groups were nearly fully healed by day 16. The group with HESs 15% (w/w) exhibited the most significant healing effect compared to the others. This shows that a greater concentration of HESs administered led to improved wound closure in

the rats. Figure 3 illustrates the wound healing activity of HESs in the rat incision wound model. In comparison to negative controls, the results showed that HESs considerably aided wound contraction on days 4, 8, and 16. On days 4 ($p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$), 8 ($p < 0.01$; $p < 0.001$), and 16 ($p < 0.01$; $p < 0.01$), the 10% and 15% (w/w) HESs groups displayed significant wound closure. The group that received 5% (w/w) HESs showed a higher wound area closure than the negative control, but there was no discernible difference in healing activity ($p > 0.05$). On days 4, 8, and 16, the group that received 0.05% octenidine gel demonstrated a considerable closure of the wound area ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.001$, and $p < 0.01$, respectively). The study found that HESs administration promoted wound healing in a manner that depended on both time and concentration in the rat incision wound model. Figure 4 shows the HESs' effect on the percentage of wound closure area. Wound healing is the result of intricate interactions between dermal and epidermal cells, ECM, angiogenesis regulation, and proteins produced from plasma. Several cytokines and growth factors significantly influence this interaction. Hemostasis, inflammation, proliferation, and remodelling are the four overlapping, ongoing phases that make up the dynamic process.^{45,46} The first phase begins with hemostasis immediately following an injury, followed by the formation of a fibrin

clot and vascular constriction. Platelet-derived alpha granules then release growth factors, like TGF- β , EGF, PDGF, and IGF, which activate and draw neutrophils, macrophages, endothelial cells, and fibroblasts to aid in the healing of wounds. The inflammatory phase features infiltration by neutrophils and monocytes, along with differentiation related to macrophage and lymphocyte presence. This phase marks the beginning of the granulation tissue creation as macrophages produce growth factors and pro-inflammatory cytokines

variation, including IL-1 and IL-6. In the proliferation phase, fibroblast migration occurs with the newly synthesised ECM, angiogenesis deposition, and the formation of granulation tissue. In the final remodelling phase, type III collagen fibres are largely substituted by type I collagen, which can better endure substantial pressure. In this phase, there is also an increase in cross-linking between collagen fibre monomers that are consistent with the skin pressure line.⁴⁷⁻⁴⁹

Table 6: The inhibition zone along with MIC and MBC of HESs and chloramphenicol in *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus pyogenes*, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

Samples	Concentration (%w/w)	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>			<i>Streptococcus pyogenes</i>			<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>		
		Zone of inhibition (mm)*	MIC (%w/w)	MBC (%w/w)	Zone of inhibition (mm)*	MIC (%w/w)	MBC (%w/w)	Zone of inhibition (mm)*	MIC (%w/w)	MBC (%w/w)
HESs	6.25	9.83 \pm 3.40			6.98 \pm 1.86			5.35 \pm 2.15		
	12.50	14.60 \pm 1.25			14.85 \pm 1.65	12.50	25.00	6.18 \pm 1.55		
	25.00	19.50 \pm 1.32	6.25	12.50	22.68 \pm 2.11			15.57 \pm 2.84	25.00	50.00
	50.00	20.10 \pm 1.75			26.45 \pm 1.52			18.77 \pm 1.65		
	100.00	28.00 \pm 1.80			29.73 \pm 1.28			21.85 \pm 1.12		
Chloramphenicol	30.00	22.50 \pm 2.17	1.75 $\times 10^{-3}$	1.25 $\times 10^{-2}$	24.10 \pm 2.85	15 $\times 10^{-3}$	3 $\times 10^{-2}$	10.05 \pm 0.01	6.2 $\times 10^{-3}$	5 $\times 10^{-2}$
Hydrogel base	-	UD	UD	UD	UD	UD	UD	UD	UD	UD

*Data are shown as mean \pm SEM of four replicates in each group. HESs: hydrogel extract of *S. spontaneum*; UD: undetected.



Figure 3: Wound healing effect of HESs on rats. 5% HESs: hydrogel extract of *S. spontaneum* concentration 5% (%w/w); 10% HESs: hydrogel extract of *S. spontaneum* concentration 10% (%w/w); 15% HESs: hydrogel extract of *S. spontaneum* concentration 15% (%w/w).

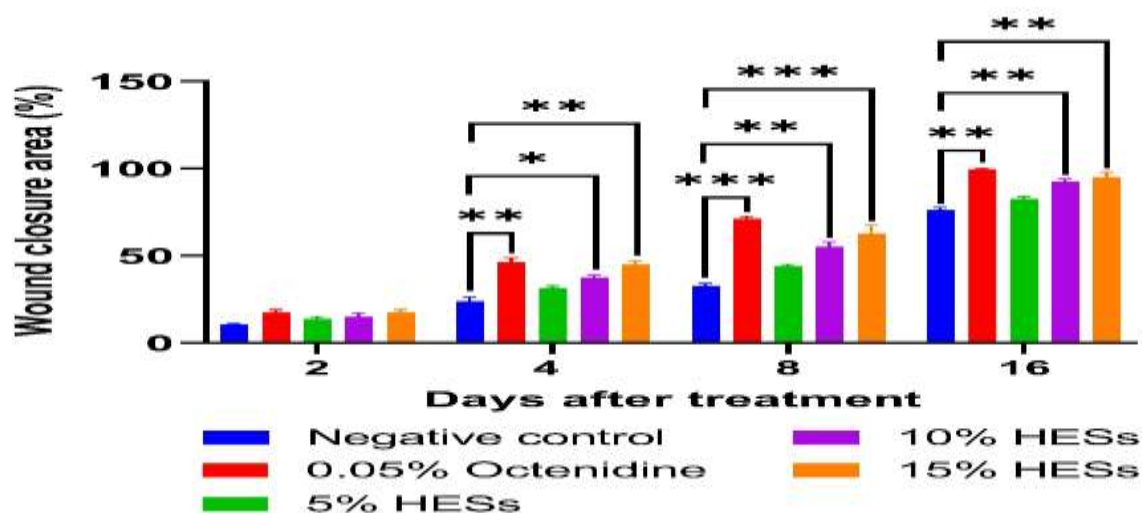


Figure 4: The effects of HESs on the wound closure area percentage in a rat incision wound model. Data are shown as mean \pm SEM for four animals in each group. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$ versus negative control. 5% HESs: hydrogel extract of *S. spontaneum* concentration 5% (%w/w); 10% HESs: hydrogel extract of *S. spontaneum* concentration 10% (%w/w); 15% HESs: hydrogel extract of *S. spontaneum* concentration 15% (%w/w).

In general, wound healing aims to restore the structure and function of tissue damaged by injury, enabling a return to normalcy. Therefore, effective wound management is needed to accelerate the repair of injured tissue and prevent complications.⁵⁰ Previous studies have conducted various investigations to determine the effective wound healing medications,⁵¹ one of which is to explore medicinal plants that have the potential to treat wounds.⁵² The use of these plants in traditional medicine offers numerous benefits, such as reduced side effects, affordability, easy access, and widespread cultural acceptance.⁵³ Reports show that medicinal plants hold significant promise as wound healing agents due to their capacity to speed up the healing process, alleviate pain and discomfort, minimise scarring, and prevent infections in wounds.⁵⁴ In this study, the wound healing activity of HESs was tested using an incision wound model in rats. The results showed that topical administration of HESs to rats with incision wounds enhanced the reduction rate in wound area, facilitated a superior healing process, and provided adequate wound edge hydration through tissue regeneration. This is inseparable from the ability of secondary metabolites contained in *S. spontaneum* extract to improve the wound healing process. According to the phytochemical screening result, *S. spontaneum* extract contains various secondary metabolites, like flavonoids, quinones, saponins, polyphenols, alkaloids, monoterpenoids, and sesquiterpenoids, as shown in Table 2. This can affect one or more phases and increase wound healing. Flavonoids are known to reduce inflammatory mediator levels, such as IFN- γ , PGE2, IL-6, IL-1 β , TNF- α , and LTB-4, decrease NF- κ B expression, inhibit COX activity, and increase IL-10 levels. In addition, this compound affects cell proliferation, migration, and differentiation, as well as angiogenesis, by increasing VEGF (the main molecule that regulates vascular growth) and the expression of MMP 2, 8, 9, and 13.⁵⁵⁻⁵⁷ The compound also reduces lipid peroxidation by preventing or slowing down the onset of cell necrosis.^{4,58} Meanwhile, quinone compounds were reported to increase wound closure rate by forming new blood vessels (angiogenesis), cell migration and proliferation, collagen synthesis, re-epithelialisation, and TGF- β 1 regulation.⁵⁹ Saponin compounds were known to stimulate fibronectin synthesis through changes in TGF- β receptor expression in fibroblasts,⁶⁰ increasing VEGF and IL-1 β production,⁶¹ and reducing lesion size and suppressing scar tissue formation.⁶² Alkaloids are another component of *S. spontaneum* extract that contributes to wound healing. These compounds promote wound healing and tissue granulation by enhancing fibroblast and collagen production while decreasing inflammatory cell counts.⁶³ Additionally, alkaloids influence the SRC/MEK/ERK signalling pathway, which plays a crucial role in the wound healing process.⁶⁴ Moreover, monoterpenoids and sesquiterpenoid compounds contained

in *S. spontaneum* extract contribute to the wound healing process by decreasing the IL-6 and TNF- α production, stimulating fibroblast migration, which can help re-epithelialise the wound.^{65,66} The creation of free radicals, along with pathogens like *S. aureus*, *S. pyogenes*, and *P. aeruginosa* that frequently infect wounds, is known to hinder the healing process synergistically.^{67,68} Consequently, wound healing agents that also have antioxidant and antibacterial activity are needed to accelerate the process.^{69,70} Based on the results, *S. spontaneum* extract has antioxidant activity in the DPPH and FRAP models, as well as good antibacterial activity against *S. aureus*, *S. pyogenes*, and *P. aeruginosa*. This is also inseparable from the content of phytochemical compounds in *S. spontaneum* extract, such as polyphenols, flavonoids, and saponins, which have antioxidant activity through ROS scavenging, thereby preventing cell and tissue damage.^{71,72} Additionally, these compounds also have antibacterial effects through inhibition of nucleic acid synthesis, energy metabolism, porins in cell membranes, cytoplasmic membrane function, attachment, and biofilm formation, as well as changes in bacterial cell membrane permeability.^{73,74} According to the results of previous studies, quinone compounds, alkaloids, monoterpenoids, and sesquiterpenoids act as antioxidants by scavenging ROS and neutralising electrophiles, such as SOD, GPx, catalase, glutathione reductase, NQO1 and HO-1.⁷⁵⁻⁷⁷ These compounds also have antibacterial effects by inhibiting the synthesis of bacterial nucleic acids and proteins, modifying the permeability of bacterial cell membranes, damaging cell membranes and cell walls, and inhibiting bacterial metabolism.⁷⁸⁻⁸⁰ Therefore, the antioxidant and antibacterial effects of *S. spontaneum* extract contribute to increasing wound healing both independently and synergistically. Based on the evaluation results, all HESs formulations met the requirements for good hydrogel and are stable at various temperatures in stability testing for ninety days.

Conclusion

In conclusion, HESs formulations enhanced wound healing activity in a rat model with incision wounds, which was concentration and time-dependent. *S. spontaneum* extract also had good antioxidant and antibacterial effects. All HESs formulations also met the requirements of a good and stable hydrogel at various temperatures in ninety days stability testing. Therefore, extracts from *S. spontaneum* show promise for development as wound healing medications from medicinal plants, potentially formulated as hydrogel preparations. Future studies may examine cellular histopathology, LC-MS or HPLC characterisation of phytoconstituents of the plant.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authors' Declaration

The authors hereby declare that the work presented in this article is original and that any liability for claims relating to the content of this article will be borne by them.

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