A Bufadienolide-Enriched Fraction of *Bryophyllum pinnatum* Inhibits Human Myometrial Contractility *In Vitro*

S. Santos1,2, C. Haslinger1, K. Klaic1, M.T. Faleschini1, M. Mennet3, O. Potterat2, U. von Mandach1, M. Hamburger2, A.P. Simões-Wüst1

1 Department of Obstetrics, University Hospital Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland
2 Division of Pharmaceutical Biology, University of Basel, 4056 Basel, Switzerland
3 Clinical Research, Weleda AG, 4144 Arlesheim, Switzerland

**Introduction:** *Bryophyllum pinnatum* has been used in the treatment of premature labour, first in anthroposophic hospitals and, recently, in conventional settings often as an add-on medication [1, 2]. However, the compounds contributing to the tocolytic effect are still unknown.

**Aims:** To investigate the effects of a flavonoids-enriched fraction (FEF), the corresponding flavonoid aglycon mixture (A-Mix), a bufadienolide-enriched fraction (BEF) [3], and *B. pinnatum* juice (BPJ) on human myometrial contractility *in vitro*.

**Methods:** Myometrial biopsies were collected during elective Caesarean section. Strips of tissue were mounted in an organ bath system (myograph), and spontaneous contractions were recorded. Aliquots of a stock solution of FEF, A-Mix, BEF, *B. pinnatum* juice (BPJ) or a vehicle control (Krebs solution or DMSO), were repeatedly added (4 times) in 20-min intervals. The strength (i.e. AUC and amplitude) and the frequency of contractions were recorded for each 20-min period. After a washout period, vitality of strips was observed for additional 30 min. Cell viability assays were performed with the human myometrial hTERT cell line.

**Results:** Compared to initial values, the repeated addition of FEF, A-Mix, BEF or BPJ led to significantly lower contraction strength (AUC and amplitude) in a concentration-dependent manner (in all cases, p<0.05). BEF was the most active (e.g. 1 µg/mL BEF lowered AUC to 40.1 ± 11.8% of initial, whereas 150 µg/mL FEF, 6.2 µg/mL A-Mix, and 1% BPJ (i.e. 10 µg/mL) were required to obtain comparable inhibition). All test substances, except A-Mix, led to a progressive increase of contraction frequency. A-Mix, BEF and BPJ did not decrease viability of hTERT cells at concentrations up to 40 µg/ml, 15 µg/ml and, FEF only at the highest test concentration of 1000 µg/ml.

**Conclusion:** The data confirm previous observations showing that *in vitro* myometrial contractility can be inhibited by *B. pinnatum* leaf press juice and fractions without affecting viability. The fraction enriched in bufadienolides appears mainly responsible for the observed relaxant effect.

**Keywords:** *B. pinnatum*, bufadienolides, flavonoids, myometrium, *in vitro*

**References:**