



RESEARCH COMMUNICATION

# Chemical profiles and antibacterial activity of acetone extract of two *Curcuma* species from Vietnam

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## Abstract

*Curcuma thorelii* Gagnep. and *Curcuma cotuana* Luu, Škorničk. & H.Đ.Trần are the rare species only found in Southeast Asia. The present study was the first to explore the chemical compositions and antibacterial effects of the whole plant acetone extracts of these 2 species. Altogether 41 and 31 compounds have been identified in *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana* extracts by gas chromatography/mass spectrometry. Accordingly, the *C. thorelii* extract contained (E)-labda-8(17),12-diene-15,16-dial (33.37%), vitamin E (12.33%), phytol (9.83%) as the major compounds while *C. cotuana* extract contained predominantly (E)-labda-8(17),12-diene-15,16-dial (14.58%), n-exadecanoic acid (10.96%), 3,7,11,15-tetramethylhexadec-2-en-1-yl acetate (8.13%),  $\gamma$ -sitosterol (7.97%). In addition, results from disc diffusion assay have shown that *C. thorelii* acetone extract had inhibitory effects on 5 out of 10 pathogenic bacterial strains such as *Bacillus cereus* (ATCC 11778), *Listeria monocytogenes* (ATCC 19111), *Staphylococcus aureus* (ATCC 25923), *S. aureus* (ATCC 29213) and *S. saprophyticus* (BAA750) while *C. cotuana* acetone extract was found to be effective only against *B. cereus*. The obtained results showed that the acetone extracts of *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana* possessed several valuable bioactive compounds as well as promising antibacterial activity, which place a good foundation for future pharmaceutical product development.

## Keywords

*Curcuma thorelii*, *Curcuma cotuana*, acetone extract, GC/MS, chemical composition, antibacterial activity

## Introduction

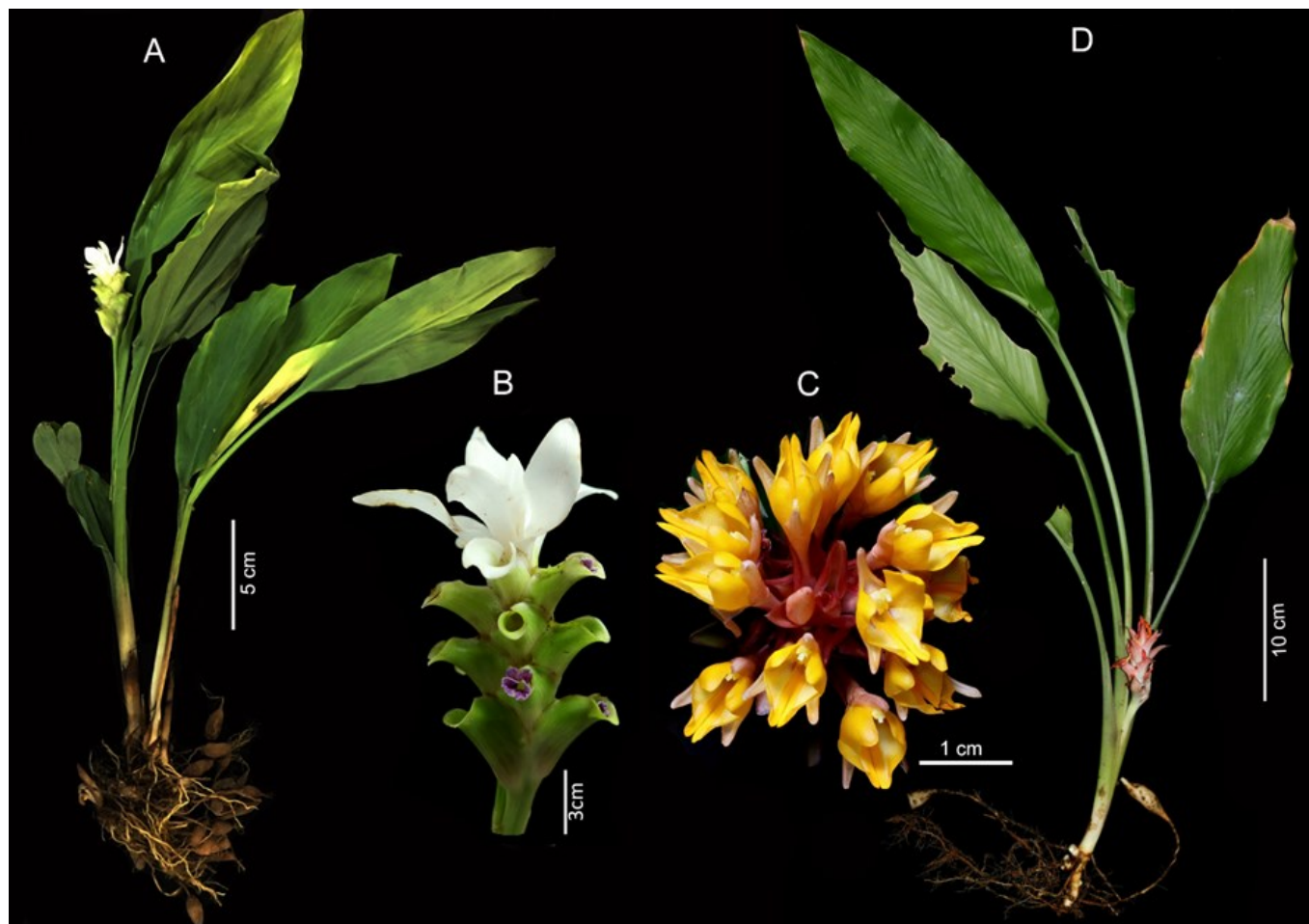
*Curcuma* genus includes about 108 species widely distributed throughout the tropical and subtropical regions, particularly in northern Australia, Malaysia, Thailand, Indochina, India and Vietnam (1, 2). Previous studies have recorded about 29 *Curcuma* species for the flora of Vietnam (2-4). Several *Curcuma* species were commercially used for their good flavoring, preservative properties (1), as well as for their uses in traditional medicine to treat abscesses, diarrhea, infectious wounds, leucorrhoea, pneumonia, bronchial complaints and insect bites (5). Moreover, bioactive compounds and biological activities of many *Curcuma* of plants have been experimentally studied

(6-10). For instance, xanthorrhizol, a bioactive component isolated from the rhizome of *Curcuma xanthorrhiza* was found to effectively act against *Candida albicans* biofilms development (6). The essential oil extracted from *C. xanthorrhiza* has been reported to possess cytotoxic activity against YMB-1 breast cancer cell line (7). *Curcuma longa* extracts and their major bioactive compound, curcumin had anti-parasitic and anti-inflammatory potency by parenteral and oral application in animal models (10). Recently, study revealed that essential oil of *Cucurma gracillima* possessed several bioactive compounds such as  $\alpha$ -cucumene, caryophyllene, *allo*-aromadendrene, caryophyllene oxide, 3-carene,  $\alpha$ -pinene (9).

## Materials and Methods

### Plants

The whole plant sample of *Curcuma cotuana* was collected from Tay Giang district, Quang Nam province, Vietnam and *Curcuma thorelii* were collected from Binh Chau-Phuoc Buu Nature Reserve, Ba Ria-Vung Tau province, Vietnam. The vouchered specimens of *C. cotuana* and *C. thorelii* was deposited at the Herbarium of Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Faculty of Biology & Biotechnology, University of Science, Vietnam National University HCMC (PHH) with the vouchered specimen numbers Van HT 132b and Van HT 132c respectively (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** Two *Curcuma* species in this study. *C. thorelii*: A. whole plant, B. flower. *C. cotuana*: C. flower, D. whole plant.

*Curcuma thorelii* Gagnep. was first discovered in Laos by Gagnepain in 1907. To date, this plant is only found in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam (11). Meanwhile, the first specimen of *Curcuma cotuana* Luu, Škorničk. & H.Đ.Trần was collected from Quang Nam province, Vietnam in 2017 (12). To date, only one study on chemical compositions and antibacterial effects of *C. thorelii* essential oils has been conducted (13). Therefore, this study was the first to explore the information about chemical component and biological property of the acetone extracts from *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana*, thereby enhancing their potential especially in medicinal applications.

### Bacterial strains

Five Gram positive bacteria *Bacillus cereus* (ATCC 11778), *Listeria monocytogenes* (ATCC 19111), *Staphylococcus aureus* (ATCC 25923), *Staphylococcus aureus* (ATCC 29213), *Staphylococcus saprophyticus* (BAA750) and Gram negative bacteria *Escherichia coli* (ATCC 25922), *Klebsiella pneumoniae* (ATCC 13883), *Salmonella enteritidis* (ATCC 13072), *Salmonella typhimurium* (ATCC 13311), *Shigella flexneri* (ATCC 9199) were used to identify antibacterial activity of *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana* extracts.

### Extraction procedures of total acetone extract

The whole plant samples of each species were dried at 50°C until constant weights were obtained and then ground into powder. Five hundred mL of acetone solution

99% (Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA) was used to soaked 100 g powder for 72 hrs at room temperature. The extracts were filtered using Whatman paper and this process was repeated thrice. The rotary evaporator was used to concentrate the filtrates under the reduced pressure at 40°C, resulting in the brown extracts (14). Each of the extracts was divided into 2 parts, one for GC/MS analysis and the other for antibacterial assay.

#### Gas chromatography–mass spectrometry assays

The chemical compositions of the acetone extracts obtained from *C. cotuana* and *C. thorelii* were identified by TRACETM 1310 Gas Chromatograph (Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc., Waltham, MA, USA) coupled with ISQ 7000 single quadrupole mass spectrometer. The DB-5MS column (30 m x 0.25 mm X 0.25 µm) was used as the stationary phase and Helium at a flow rate of 1.2 mL/min was used as the carrier gas. Samples were injected into the GC system by splitting method with split ratio of 30:1, splitless time 1 min, at 250°C in the flow rate of 36 mL/min. The transfer line temperature was set at 250°C. The oven temperature was set at 80°C for 5 min, and was increased 20°C/min until it reached and held at 280 °C for 10 min. The electron impact ionization was set as 70 eV and the filament source temperature was set at 250°C. The acquisitions scan mass range of MS was 29–650 m/z with the scanning frequency of 2 scans/sec. The chemical components of the acetone extracts were identified based on the comparison between their mass spectra and the NIST 2017 library (15).

#### Determination of antibacterial activity of the extracts

The antibacterial properties of the acetone extracts obtained from *C. cotuana* and *C. thorelii* were determined by disc diffusion assay (16). The bacterial strains were grown in Luria-Bertani broth until the turbidity reached 0.5 McFarland standards then 100 µL of the cultures was spread on Mueller Hinton agar plates. The sterile paper discs impregnated with 10 µL of acetone extracts were placed on the agar surface. Sterilized distilled water and gentamycin discs (10 µg) (supplied by Nam Khoa BioTek, Vietnam) were used as the negative and positive controls, respectively. The plates were incubated at 37°C for 18–24 hrs. before measuring the zone of inhibition.

#### Data analysis

Three independent experiments were performed, and the results were expressed as mean ± standard deviation (SD). The Statgraphics Centurion XV software was used for statistical analysis of the results using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) procedure.

## Results and Discussion

#### Chemical compositions of acetone extract from *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana*

The GC/MS data showed that there were 41 and 31 constituents found in the acetone extracts of *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana*, respectively (Table 1 and Fig. 2). The *C. thorelii*

**Table 1.** Components of acetone extracts from *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana*

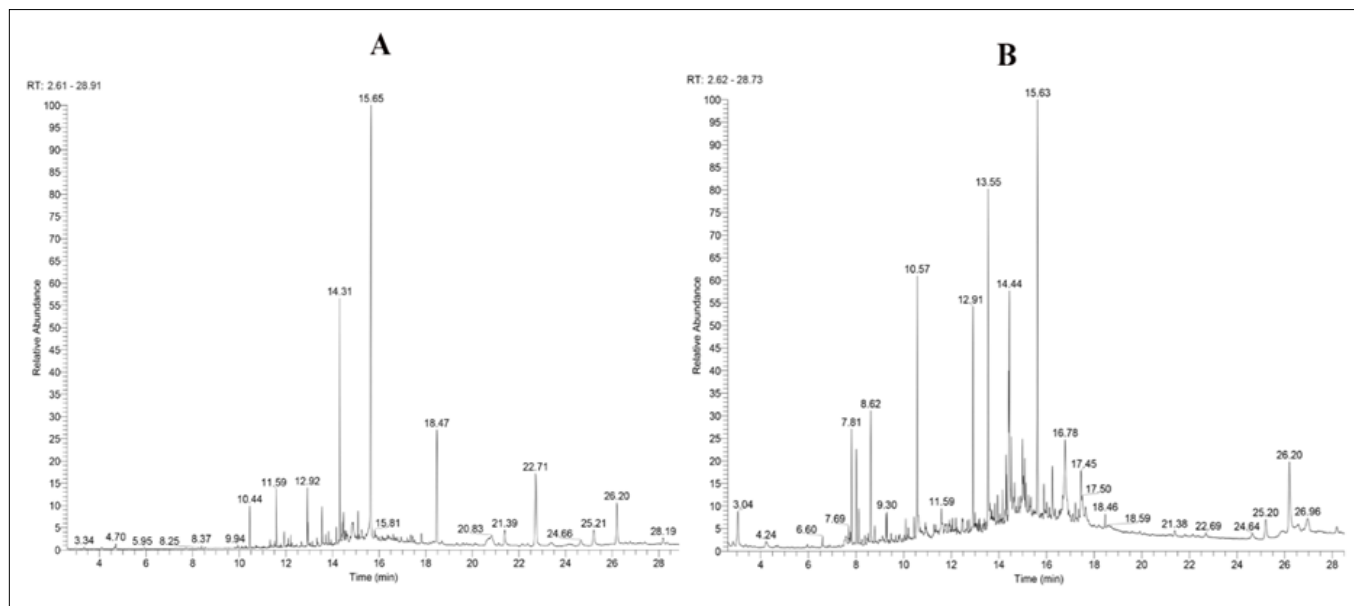
RT (min)	Compounds	<i>C. thorelii</i> (%)	<i>C. cotuana</i> (%)
3.34	2-Heptanol	0.11	-
3.74	α-Pinene	0.04	-
4.09	Camphene	0.18	-
4.62	Propanoic acid, 3-ethoxy-, ethyl ester	0.15	-
4.69	β-Pinene	0.49	-
5.27	Ethylidene acetate	0.07	-
5.95	Eucalyptol	0.08	-
6.59	Thymine	-	0.52
7.81	(+)-2-Bornanone	-	3.7
8.02	Isoborneol	-	3.02
8.12	endo-Borneol	-	1.14
8.37	2-Pinen-10-ol	0.19	-
8.52	Benzofuran, 2,3-dihydro-	0.08	-
8.63	5-Hydroxymethylfurfural	-	4.89
9.27	(-)-Bornyl acetate	-	0.74
9.3	Isobornyl acetate	-	0.76
9.83	Benzaldehyde, 4-hydroxy-	0.08	-
9.94	β-Ionone	0.14	-
10.09	Sobrerol 8-acetate	-	0.56
10.44	Caryophyllene	1.62	0.50
10.53	trans-Geranylacetone	0.09	-
10.57	α-Farnesene	-	6.29
10.71	Humulene	0.09	-
11.32	(6E)-Nerolidol	0.27	-
11.52	Longipinocarvone	0.19	-
11.59	Caryophyllene oxide	2.39	-
11.92	Caryophylladienol II	0.73	-
12.1	Isoaromadendrene epoxide	0.27	-
12.2	Longifolenaldehyde	0.43	-
12.66	Loliolide	0.24	-
12.92	Ambrial	2.12	5.36
12.95	Hexahydrofarnesyl acetone	0.78	-
13.33	5 Farnesyl acetone	0.34	-
13.55	n-Hexadecanoic acid	1.63	10.96
13.7	2-Butenal	0.30	-
13.83	3-Buten-2-one	0.52	-
14.16	Pimara-7,15-dien-3-one	0.64	-
14.31	Phytol	9.83	1.39
14.40	cis-9,cis-12-Octadecadienoic acid	-	4.36
14.44	Linolenic acid	-	7.30
14.47	5-(7a-Isopropenyl-4,5-dimethyl-octahydroinden-4-yl)-3-methyl-pent-2-enal	1.26	-
14.52	Octadecanoic acid	-	1.62

14.88	$\beta$ -Sitosterol	1.04	-
14.99	7 $\alpha$ -Hydroxydehydroepiandrosterone	-	1.57
15.02	Benzyl $\alpha$ -d-glucoside	-	0.99
15.09	Labd-14-ene-8,13-diol, (13R)-	1.08	-
15.65	(E)-Labda-8(17),12-diene-15,16-dial	33.37	14.58
16.25	Palmitin, 2-mono	-	1.72
16.78	3,7,11,15-Tetramethylhexadec-2-en-1-yl acetate	-	8.13
17.45	$\beta$ -Monolinolein	-	3.02
17.5	2-Monolinolenin	-	1.53
17.64	5 $\beta$ -Stigmastane-3,6-dione	-	0.69
18.47	Squalene	9.62	0.74
20.82	Lupeol	3.13	-
21.38	$\gamma$ -Tocopherol	2.55	0.17
22.71	Vitamin E	12.33	0.04
24.66	Campesterol	1.42	0.97
25.21	Stigmasterol	3.17	2.31
26.2	$\gamma$ -Sitosterol	5.63	7.97
28.19	$\beta$ -Tocopheryl acetate	1.18	0.69
<b>Total:</b>		99.87	98.23

extract was characterized by the predominance of

*laceum* and *A. stipulata* (19). This compound has been reported to possess cytotoxic activity against four cancer cell lines, including MCF-7, Ca Ski, PC-3 and HT-29 (20). Vitamin E was considered as a strong peroxy radical scavenger and chain-breaking antioxidant which prevented the multiplication of free radical damage in biological membranes (21) and showed strong cytotoxic effect against human breast cancer cells (22, 23). In addition, stigmasterol has been demonstrated to have strong cytotoxic activity against human hepatoma HepG2 cell (24). Phytol has been found to display a wide range of biological properties, including anxiolytic, cytotoxic, metabolism-modulating, autophagy and apoptosis inducing, immune modulating, antioxidant, antinociceptive, antimicrobial, and anti-inflammatory activities (25). It was reported that  $\gamma$ -sitosterol increased insulin secretion in response to glucose in rats and thus, could be used as an antidiabetic agent (26). This compound has also been reported to inhibit the proliferation of MCF-7 and rA549 cells (27).

Besides acetone, other solvents have been used for chemical analysis of different *Curcuma* species, which led to the identification of a vast and diverse repertoire of bioactive compounds. For example, xanthorrhizol; 1H-3a, 7-methanoazulene, and curcumene were the major compounds in the essential oils and hexane extract obtained



**Fig. 2.** Gas chromatogram of acetone extracts from *C. thorelii* (A) and *C. cotuana* (B).

(E)-labda-8(17),12-diene-15,16-dial (33.37%), vitamin E (12.33%), phytol (9.83%), squalene (9.62%),  $\gamma$ -sitosterol (5.63%), stigmasterol (3.17%), and lupeol (3.13%). On the other hand, the *C. cotuana* extract was found to be rich in (E)-labda-8(17), 12-diene-15,16-dial (14.58%), n-hexadecanoic acid (10.96%), 3,7,11,15-tetramethylhexadec-2-en-1-yl acetate (8.13%),  $\gamma$ -sitosterol (7.97%), linolenic acid (7.30%),  $\alpha$ -farnesene (6.29%) and ambriol (5.36%).

The most abundant component in the acetone extracts of *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana*, (E)-labda-8(17), 12-diene-15,16-dial, has also been found in some other Zingiberaceae members such as *Renalmia alpinia* (17), *Alpinia speciosa* (18), *Aframomum daniellii*, *A. albovivo-*

from *C. aromatica* (28). The ethanolic extract of *C. longa* rhizome was found to contain 11 major components such as alkaloids, glycosides, carbohydrates, saponins, proteins, steroids, terpenoids, flavonoids, phlobotannins, anthraquinones and tannins (29). Out of these 11 compounds, the hydroalcoholic extract contained only 10, except phlobotannins while the chloroform extract possessed only 7, except terpenoids, proteins, flavonoids and tannins (29). In addition, the chemical constituents of methanolic extract isolated from the rhizomes of 3 *Curcuma* plants have been investigated, in which the *C. decipiens* extract predominantly contained 4, 4-di methyl-2, 4, 5, 6-tetrahydro-1H-inden-2-yl) acetic acid, cycloheptyl ethyl methylphosphonate, and trispiro [4.2.4.2.4.2.] hene-



icosane, the *C. angustifolia* extract was identified as a mixture of oleic acid, n-hexadecanoic acid, nitrous oxide, and acetic acid while the *C. longa* extract was found to be rich in ar-tumerone, curlone and tumerone (30).

#### Antibacterial activity of acetone extract from *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana*

The acetone extract of *C. thorelii* was found to be effective against all five Gram positive bacterial strains, including *B. cereus*, *L. monocytogenes*, *S. aureus* (ATTC 25923), *S. aureus* (ATTC 29213) and *S. saprophyticus* (Table 2 and Fig. 3). Accordingly, the antibacterial effect of *C. thorelii* extract was the most potent against *B. cereus* with the inhibition zone of 16.49 mm, followed by *S. aureus* (11.32 mm), *S. aureus* (9.94 mm), *S. saprophyticus* (9.12 mm) and *L. monocytogenes* (8.13 mm). Meanwhile, the *C. cotuana* extract was found to inhibit only *B. cereus* but with stronger effect (19.83 mm) compared to *C. thorelii*.

anolic extracts of three *Curcuma* species, including *C. aromatica*, *C. zedoaria* and *C. longa* had inhibitory effects on some bacterial strains such as *Salmonella typhosa*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *P. aeruginosa*, *B. cereus* and *S. aureus* (35) whereas the aqueous and methanolic extracts of *C. aromatica* was found to be effective against *E. coli* and *S. aureus* (36).

#### Conclusion

In this study, 41 and 31 chemical compounds were successfully identified in the acetone extracts of *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana* respectively. The *C. thorelii* extract was found to be rich in (E)-labda-8(17),12-diene-15,16-dial (33.37%), vitamin E (12.33%), phytol (9.83%), squalene (9.62%),  $\gamma$ -sitosterol (5.63%) while (E)-labda-8(17),12-diene-15,16-dial (14.58%), n-hexadecanoic acid

**Table 2.** Inhibition zone of acetone extracts obtained from *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana*

Bacterial strains	Growth inhibition zone (mm)		
	<i>C. thorelii</i>	<i>C. cotuana</i>	Gentamycin
<i>Bacillus cereus</i>	16.49±0.11 <sup>a</sup>	19.83 ±1.26 <sup>b</sup>	27.05±0.14 <sup>c</sup>
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	8.13±0.05 <sup>a</sup>	-	26.99±0.04 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> (ATTC 25923)	11.32±0.10 <sup>a</sup>	-	27.68±0.12 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> (ATTC 29213)	9.94±0.25 <sup>a</sup>	-	25.76±0.10 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	9.12±0.09 <sup>a</sup>	-	28.74±0.18 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	-	-	28.33±1.15
<i>Klebsiella pneumoniae</i>	-	-	27.50±0.5
<i>Salmonella enteritidis</i>	-	-	28.16±1.26
<i>Salmonella typhimurium</i>	-	-	28.17±1.26
<i>Shigella flexneri</i>	-	-	27.83±1.44

The chemical constituents found in the acetone extracts of *C. thorelii* and *C. cotuana* could be the main factors contributing to the antibacterial activity. For instance, vitamin E was proved to have an inhibitory effect on *K. pneumoniae*, *S. aureus*, *E. coli* and *Staphylococcus epidermidis* (31). *Stigmasterol* was found to be effective against many pathogenic bacteria such as *Streptococcus faecalis*, *E. coli*, *S. aureus*, *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, *K. pneumoniae*, and *S. typhimurium* (32). Phytol has been reported to possess antibacterial effects against *E. coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, *S. aureus*, *Clostridium sporogenes*, *Sarcina lutea* and *Enterococcus faecalis* (25). Reports states that squalene could inhibit the virulence of *S. aureus* (33).

The other solvent extracts of several *Curcuma* species have also been shown to have antibacterial properties. For instance, the aqueous and ethanolic extracts of *C. longa* had antibacterial activity against *S. aureus*, *P. aeruginosa*, *E. coli* and *Salmonella enterica* (34). The eth-

(10.96%), 3,7,11,15-tetramethylhexadec-2-en-1-yl acetate (8.13%) were the major compounds in the *C. cotuana* extract. None of the Gram negative strains was inhibited by the 2 acetone extracts. The extract of *C. thorelii* was found to be effective against all 5 Gram positive strains including *B. cereus*, *L. monocytogenes*, *S. aureus* (ATCC 25923), *S. aureus* (ATCC 29213) and *S. saprophyticus* whereas the *C. cotuana* extract was only found to be highly effective against *B. cereus*. *Curcuma thorelii* and *C. cotuana* are rare species and their relatively small populations are found in very few regions of Vietnam. In order to ensure the development and conservation of these species, a small number of samples were collected and our next work is to propagate these 2 species to obtain more abundant sample sources. This study was only the first step to provide more insight and place a good foundation for future applications of *C. cotuana* and *C. thorelii* in pharmaceutical products and other related fields.

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## Authors contributions

Hong Thien Van designed this study. All authors searched and handled the data. Hong Thien Van and Tan Viet Pham drafted the manuscript and resolved all the queries of editors and reviewers.

## Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflict of interest:** No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

**Ethical issues:** None.

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