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HYDROETHANOLIC EXTRACTS OF *FICUS PUMILA* LINN. IS PROTECTIVE AGAINST GENATAMICIN-INDUCED KIDNEY DAMAGE IN RATS

Abstract

The aim of this study was to evaluate the nephroprotective effect of hydroethanolic leaves extracts of *F. pumila* on gentamicin-induced kidney damage in rats. Twenty seven female Wistar albino rats were divided into 9 groups. Group 1 being normal; group 2 was the gentamicin (GM) induced only (80 mg/kg b/w ip for 5 days); groups 3, 4, & 5 rats were treated with gentamicin (80mg/kg b/w ip for 5 days) and *F. pumila* extract at 100, 250, and 500mg/kg b/w orally respectively; groups 6, 7 & 8 rats received the extract only (100, 250, and 500mg/kg b/w orally) respectively and group 9 being gentamicin and silymarin (100 mg/kg b/w orally) for 21 days. Blood samples were taken 24 hrs after the experimented period by cardiac puncture under ether anesthesia and biochemical and hematological parameters were analyzed. GM nephrotoxicity was characterized by a significant increased levels of serum creatinine, urea, sodium, potassium and WBC, while reduced RBC, HGB, MCH, MCV levels compared with normal group. Rats treated with gentamicin and the extract showed a significant reduction in the levels of these markers. The results suggest that hydro-ethanolic extract of *Ficus pumila* leaves protect against gentamicin-induced nephrotoxicity in female Wistar albino rats.

Keywords: Nephrotoxicity, *Ficus pumila* Linn. Creatinine, Urea, electrolytes

Introduction

Nephrotoxicity is known to be one of the most common kidney problems worldwide. It occurs when the body is exposed to high dosages of a drug or a toxin. Kidney damage is characterized by increased levels of serum urea and creatinine and imbalance of blood electrolytes such as potassium and magnesium (Peesa, 2013)[1]. Aminoglycoside antibiotics are commonly used in the treatment of bacterial infections. They have potent antibacterial activity against infections produced by gram negative bacteria (Chen and Kaye, 2009)[2]. Gentamicin is an aminoglycoside antibiotic isolated from the bacterium *Micromonospora purpurea*. It has a hexose ring to which various amino sugars are attached by glycosidic linkages (Eslami *et al.*, 2011)[3]. Despite its clinical benefits, it is known to be the most nephrotoxic of all the aminoglycosides (Edson and Terrell, 1999)[4]. Gentamicin-induced nephrotoxicity is indicated by elevated levels of plasma creatinine and urea with severe necrosis of the renal proximal convoluted tubules followed by failure of renal functions (Mingeot-Leclercq and Tulkens, 1999)[5]. According to Al-Majed *et al.* (2002)[6], its nephrotoxicity is as a result of the selective accumulation of reactive oxygen species in renal cortical areas leading to damage of membranes.

Some species of the Moraceae have been shown to possess significant nephroprotective activity. They include *F. religiosa* latex on cisplatin (Yadav and Srivastava, 2013)[7], *F.*

44 *dalhousiae* leaf methanolic extracts on gentamicin and acetaminophen (Ghori *et al.*, 2016)[8],
 45 *F. carica* leaf extract on gentamicin (Ghaffar *et al.*, 2015)[9], *F. racemosa* aqueous bark
 46 extract on gentamicin (Shivalinge and Vrushabendra, 2012)[10] and *F. benghalensis* latex on
 47 cisplatin (Yadav, 2016)[11]. *Ficus pumila* Linn. is a creeping vine-like fig plant which also
 48 belongs to the family *Moraceae*. It is native to South and east China, Malaysia, Vietnam and
 49 Africa (Liao *et al.*, 2012)[12]. *F. pumila* is ingested to treat conditions such as diabetes,
 50 dizziness, skin diseases and high blood pressure (Kaur, 2012)[13]. The hydroethanolic extract
 51 of *Ficus pumila* L. is a rich source of tannins, saponins, general glycosides, alkaloids,
 52 flavonoids, triterpenes, and sterols and has been demonstrated to be hepatoprotective in
 53 animals (Larbie *et al.*, 2015, 2016)[14,15], and it is a potent anticancer agent. The leaves of
 54 this plant have been shown to have antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-mutagenic, anti-
 55 inflammatory and analgesic activities (Sirisha *et al.*, 2010)[14, 16].

56 The aim of this study was to determine the nephroprotective effect of the 50% aqueous-
 57 ethanolic leaves extract of *Ficus pumila* Linn. in gentamicin-induced kidney damage in
 58 female wistar albino rats.

60 **Materials and Methods**

61 **Plant collection and authentication**

62 The leaves of *Ficus pumila* Linn. were collected in October, 2015 from the Republic Hall,
 63 Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) Campus. They were
 64 identified based on voucher specimen deposited at the herbarium of the Department of Herbal
 65 Medicine (KNUST, Kumasi; voucher number KNUST/HM/2014/L093).

67 **Extract Preparation**

68 The plants were washed, shade-dried for a month, and milled. 50% ethanol extraction of the
 69 plants were carried out by suspending 100 grams of the powder in 1000 ml of 50% ethanol
 70 (50: 50 ethanol, water, v/v). The leaves-solvent mixtures were allowed to stand for 24 hours
 71 at room temperature on a shaker. The extracts were filtered through cotton wool and
 72 concentrated using a rotary evaporator under reduced pressure. They were transferred into
 73 sterile bottles and freeze dried to obtain the *Ficus pumila* ethanolic leaf extract (FPE). The
 74 extract was dissolved in distilled water at respective doses and used for the study.

76 **Animal Model**

77 The study was performed on twenty-seven female Wistar albino rats (150 – 200g). They were
 78 obtained from the SMS-UG, Accra and kept at the animal holding facility at the Department
 79 of Biochemistry and Biotechnology, KNUST-Kumasi. The animals were labeled, housed in a
 80 clean standard metal cage and had free water and standard rodent feed (Agricare, Kumasi,
 81 Ghana) *ad libitum* at room temperature. Food intake by animals was monitored daily. All
 82 animal experiments were conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Committee for
 83 the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiment on Animals (CPCSEA, New Delhi,
 84 India) and guide for care and use of laboratory animals (Washington, US).

85 **Experimental Drug**

86 Gentamicin injection of 80 mg/kg body weight was administered to the rats intraperitoneally
 87 (ip) from the 16th -20th day of treatment to induce kidney damage.

Experimental Design

The rats were divided into 9 groups; 3 each group. The groups were divided as follows. Group I rats served as normal control and received 1 ml/kg distilled water throughout the duration of the experiment. Group II were injected with gentamicin, Group III, Group IV and Group V rats were treated with gentamicin and plant extract (100, 250 and 500 mg/kg body weight respectively). Groups VI, VII and VIII rats were also treated with plant extract only at a dose 100, 250 and 500 mg/kg body weight respectively. Group IX were treated with gentamicin and silymarin (100 mg/kg body weight). The experiment was terminated with an overnight fasted rats at the end of 21 days. The rats were sacrificed by cervical dislocation after mild ether anesthesia. Blood samples were taken for biochemical and haematological analysis.

Effect of Treatment on Body Weight

Body weight of the rats were taken every two days and percent change in body weight calculated with the following formula:

$$\text{Percent Change in Body Weight} = \frac{\text{Weight}_n - \text{Weight}_{\text{initial}}}{\text{Weight}_{\text{initial}}} \times 100$$

where Weight_n is the body weight on Day 4, D8 ... D21 and $\text{Weight}_{\text{initial}}$ is the body weight on D0

Effect of Treatment on Kidney Weight

The kidneys of sacrificed animals were excised, washed in buffered saline and blotted with paper tissue. They were weighed to obtain the absolute organ weight (AOW). The Relative Organ Weight (ROW) was calculated with the following formula:

$$\text{Relative Organ Weight (\%)} = \frac{\text{Absolute Organ Weight}}{\text{Body Weight at Sacrifice}} \times 100$$

Assessment of Kidney Function

The blood samples were collected into clean sterile tube and left to stand for an hour and centrifuged at 3000g for 15 minutes at 5°C to separate the serum for biochemical analysis which included urea, creatine, electrolytes, cholesterol, fasting blood glucose, alanine aminotransferase (ALT) and total protein using the Cobas Integra Autoanalyser and kits (Fortress Diagnostics, UK).

Haematological Analyses

Part of the blood sample was placed in EDTA tubes for haematological analyses which included red blood cell (RBC), hemoglobin (HGB), hematocrit (HCT), mean cell hemoglobin concentration (MCHC), mean cell volume (MCV) and platelets (PLT) count using the Sysmex KX21N autoanalyzer to run a full blood count in the whole blood mode.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analysed using GraphPad prism 5 for windows. The results were expressed as the Mean ± Standard error mean (SEM). One – way Analysis of variance followed by Newman-Keuls multiple comparison test was used for comparison between groups (i.e. control and treated groups). All statistical tests were run at a 95% confidence interval and values of $P < 0.05$ were considered statistically significant. Percentage protection was calculated with following formular based on significant indicators of nephroprotection including urea, creatinine,

128 **Results**

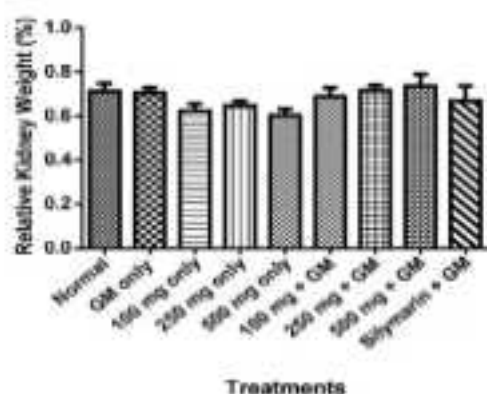
129 **Effect of treatment on body weight**

130 Table 1 shows the effect of treatment on the body weight of the rats. There was a reduction in
131 the body weight of rats treated with gentamicin only compared with the normal. However, the
132 body weight of groups treated with plant extract only was almost the same as the normal but
133 comparing the body weights of groups treated with gentamicin and plant extract at varying
134 concentration to the gentamicin only group, a decrease was observed.

135

136 **Effect of treatment on relative kidney weight**

137 Figure 1 shows the effect of the treatment of FPE on relative weight of the kidneys.
138 Administration of FPE to the animals did not provoke any significant increase in the relative
139 kidney weights.



140

141 **Fig. 1: Effect of treatment on kidney weight. Each column represents a mean \pm SEM.**

143 **Effect of treatment on some biochemical parameters**

144 Table 2 shows the biochemical data obtained for the normal and treated rats. The rats to
145 which GM only was administered showed a significant increase in the blood urea, serum
146 creatinine, total protein and fasting blood sugar levels and a decrease in ALT levels compared
147 to the normal. Those parameters however, had reduced levels in the groups that were treated
148 with FPE and GM suggesting nephroprotection, while GM significantly reduced the serum
149 potassium, sodium and chloride levels as compared to normal, the electrolyte levels were
150 however significantly increased in the treated groups.

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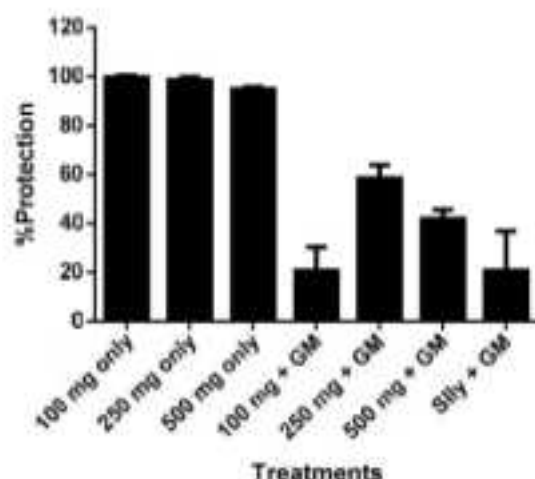
152 **Effect of treatment on haematological parameters**

153 Table 3 shows the effect of treatment on some haematological parameters. There were no
154 significant changes in the haematological parameters assayed excepted a significant increase
155 in animals treated with both GM and extract.

156 **Percentage Protection**

157 Fig. 2 shows the percent protection of extract alone and with GM on the liver. The extract at
158 all doses protected the kidney (94-99%). With GM, only the 250 mg/kg showed a good
159 protection of 58%.

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161

162 **Fig. 2: Effect of treatment on percent liver protection**

163 **DISCUSSION**

164 Owing to the increasing kidney disease burden annually and the high cost of treatment, there
 165 is the need to develop new therapies to overcome these challenges. Therefore, in this study,
 166 the nephroprotective effect of the aqueous-ethanolic leaves extract of *F. pumila* Linn. was
 167 investigated. Administration of gentamicin (80 mg/kg b/w ip) for 5 consecutive days caused
 168 marked nephrotoxicity as is evident from Table 2, showing significant increase in serum
 169 creatinine (332.80 mg/dL \pm 12.96 mg/dL, at $p < 0.0001$) and serum urea (261.50 mg/dL \pm
 170 26.32 mg/dL, at $p < 0.0001$) compared with normal serum creatinine (34.60 mg/dL \pm 2.428
 171 mg/dL) and urea (59.12 mg/dL \pm 2.43 mg/dL). The elevation of the serum creatinine is
 172 produced by kidney damage, which lead to a decreasing glomerular filtration rate (GFR) and
 173 serum creatinine filtration. The increase in the serum creatinine levels in the gentamicin
 174 (GM) treated group is due to decreased GFR caused by the gentamicin (Abdel-Gayoum *et al.*,
 175 1994)[17]. The gentamicin nephrotoxicity was significantly protected in groups treated with
 176 gentamicin and the FPE and the 250mg + gentamicin group reduced the urea and creatinine
 177 levels even better than the Silymarin (test drug used). The results thus indicated that FPE is
 178 effective in reducing serum creatinine and urea level in gentamicin toxicity. According to
 179 Larbie *et al.*, (2015)[14], the hydroethanolic extract of FPE had significant antioxidant
 180 activity and contains tannins, saponins, general glycosides, alkaloids, flavonoids and
 181 triterpenes. The nephroprotective effects of FPE in gentamicin induced nephrotoxicity may
 182 be due to flavonoids and tannins present in the extract. These findings are in accordance with
 183 those reported earlier in which *Ficus carica* fruit extract caused marked reduction in serum
 184 urea and creatinine levels in gentamicin induced nephrotoxicity (Kore *et al.*, 2011)[18].
 185 Serum potassium, chloride and sodium were significantly reduced in groups treated with
 186 gentamicin only compared with normal which indicated kidney damage since the kidneys are
 187 involved in osmotic and ion balance in the body, therefore an imbalance in serum electrolytes
 188 was indicative of kidney damage (Stry *et al.*, 2005)[19]. The effects induced by gentamicin
 189 were significantly prevented by FPE which further buttress the fact that this plant has the
 190 potential to be used to ameliorate gentamicin nephrotoxicity. Again FBG and total protein
 191 increased while ALT decreased in groups treated with gentamicin only compared with

192 normal. This can also be attributed to the fact that gentamicin is known to be nephrotoxic
193 rather than hepatotoxic.

194

195 There was observed decreases in RBC indices (HCT, MCH, MCHC, PLT and HGB) in rats
196 treated with gentamicin only as compared to the normal, possibly indicating an impairment of
197 kidneys because at normal conditions the kidneys produce enough of erythropoietin for the
198 production of red blood cell (Stryer *et al.*, 2005)[19]. On the other hand, the aqueous
199 ethanolic extract of the leaves of *Ficus pumila* was able to increase the levels of these
200 parameters upon treatment. This protection may be because the plant extract was able to
201 increase the production of erythropoietin to enhance the production of red blood cells in the
202 bone marrow.

203 Balakumar *et al.*, (2010)[20] revealed that gentamicin in the cytosol acts on mitochondria
204 directly and indirectly to activate the intrinsic pathway of apoptosis, interrupts the respiratory
205 chain, impairs ATP production and causes oxidative stress by increasing superoxide anions
206 and hydroxyl radicals which further contribute to cell death. This means that gentamicin
207 administration enhances the production of free radicals indicating oxidative damage at the
208 cellular level of the renal cortex. Other manifestations of gentamicin nephrotoxicity include
209 electrolyte imbalance and water and non-electrolyte transport in a variety of cells and tissues,
210 the principal target organ being the kidneys. Flavonoids, one of the phytochemical
211 constituents of the leaves of *Ficus pumila* Linn. has been reported to show strong antioxidant
212 activity (Larbie *et al.*, 2015)[14]. This may account for the mechanism of the
213 nephroprotective effect of *Ficus pumila*. In addition, Further, the extract was observed to
214 restore electrolytes to near normal levels in treatment group. Summarizing all these facts, it
215 can be said that these phytoconstituents are responsible for the observed biological protective
216 effect in this study.

217

218 CONCLUSION

219 In conclusion, this study gives the experimental evidence that the aqueous ethanolic extract of
220 the leaves of *Ficus pumila* Linn. was able to produce considerable protection from the
221 nephrotoxic action of gentamicin in female albino rats. Further studies will be required to
222 understand the mechanism of protection and also its protective effect against other
223 nephrotoxic agents.

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Table 1. Effect of treatment on body weight of the rats. Each point represents a mean \pm SEM of 5 animals

Days	Normal	GM	100 mg FPE	250 mg FPE	500 mg FPE	GM+100 mg FPE	GM+250 mg FPE	GM+500 mg FPE	GM+Saline
D0	8.00 \pm 0.00	8.00 \pm 0.00	8.00 \pm 0.00	8.00 \pm 0.00	8.00 \pm 0.00	8.00 \pm 0.00	8.00 \pm 0.00	8.00 \pm 0.00	8.00 \pm 0.00
D2	6.75 \pm 1.40	2.94 \pm 1.16	4.18 \pm 0.32	3.10 \pm 1.37	3.81 \pm 0.74	-0.25 \pm 0.87	-0.38 \pm 1.62	0.68 \pm 1.18	1.52 \pm 0.47
D4	9.48 \pm 1.32	7.01 \pm 0.40	4.20 \pm 1.33	3.70 \pm 1.07	4.36 \pm 0.58	-0.18 \pm 2.80	0.91 \pm 0.60	1.61 \pm 0.47	3.48 \pm 0.60
D6	13.23 \pm 0.64	7.63 \pm 0.64	11.64 \pm 0.46	6.17 \pm 1.52	6.73 \pm 1.01	2.96 \pm 1.13	0.19 \pm 1.41	3.44 \pm 0.60	8.27 \pm 0.90
D8	12.87 \pm 1.14	9.32 \pm 1.38	11.03 \pm 1.52	5.90 \pm 2.59	8.13 \pm 1.62	3.72 \pm 1.35	3.20 \pm 1.18	4.82 \pm 1.03	8.02 \pm 0.51
D10	17.98 \pm 1.43	10.42 \pm 0.83	13.22 \pm 0.45	8.44 \pm 0.03	8.43 \pm 1.43	3.67 \pm 1.70	3.63 \pm 1.70	3.64 \pm 0.80	9.97 \pm 0.75
D12	20.60 \pm 1.25	10.43 \pm 1.80	13.52 \pm 0.30	8.70 \pm 3.71	9.24 \pm 1.31	3.73 \pm 1.86	1.36 \pm 1.04	3.22 \pm 0.18	8.86 \pm 0.28
D14	24.12 \pm 2.88	11.48 \pm 0.40	19.41 \pm 0.88	10.00 \pm 1.02	7.92 \pm 3.37	3.62 \pm 1.72	3.88 \pm 1.84	6.42 \pm 0.57	10.40 \pm 1.67
D16	20.47 \pm 1.44	12.55 \pm 1.27	23.01 \pm 1.48	14.27 \pm 2.47	10.40 \pm 3.63	10.12 \pm 3.27	0.00 \pm 1.30	8.48 \pm 1.98	11.11 \pm 0.80
D18	30.21 \pm 2.34	11.69 \pm 0.70	23.39 \pm 1.19	13.71 \pm 1.01	13.89 \pm 1.70	7.68 \pm 3.40	3.41 \pm 1.27	6.86 \pm 1.96	10.83 \pm 1.26
D20	36.31 \pm 2.71	16.35 \pm 1.37	28.96 \pm 1.66	17.91 \pm 1.95	15.75 \pm 3.10	10.40 \pm 2.96	4.44 \pm 2.08	12.39 \pm 1.06	11.94 \pm 1.77
D21	37.33 \pm 2.43	16.96 \pm 1.53	28.96 \pm 1.36	16.80 \pm 2.81	16.84 \pm 3.27	13.13 \pm 2.90	9.55 \pm 2.38	13.20 \pm 1.60	12.81 \pm 1.90

b-Significant difference from Normal at $p < 0.05 - 0.001$

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Table 2: Effect of FPE on biochemical parameters in gentamicin induced nephrotoxicity.

		TREATMENT							
PARAMETERS	Normal	GM only	100mg only	250 mg only	500 mg only	GM+ 300 mg	GM+ 250 mg	GM+ 200 mg	GM+0mg
Creatinine $\mu\text{mol/L}$									
	34.0 \pm 2.428	332.8 \pm 12.964	37.5 \pm 4.072	42.7 \pm 4.193	47.4 \pm 2.00	300.2 \pm 27.894 ^a	175.4 \pm 34.214 ^a	218.8 \pm 33.874 ^a	379.4 \pm 23.824 ^a
Urea mg/dL									
	19.12 \pm 2.43	261.3 \pm 26.824	38.2 \pm 4.128	19.33 \pm 3.42	71.27 \pm 3.73	230.0 \pm 4.004 ^a	132.3 \pm 14.974 ^a	169.4 \pm 187.004 ^a	187.0 \pm 4.874 ^a
ALT U/L									
	20.87 \pm 2.09	47.03 \pm 3.63	61.83 \pm 4.09	53.33 \pm 4.27	48.50 \pm 3.36	41.93 \pm 4.66	47.47 \pm 2.41	35.33 \pm 4.39	52.50 \pm 4.47
FBG mg/dL									
	84.57 \pm 2.18	117.8 \pm 4.15	93.09 \pm 4.10	98.30 \pm 4.89	102.14 \pm 4.24	95.60 \pm 4.00	97.93 \pm 4.20	84.10 \pm 4.13	108.00 \pm 4.35
Cholesterol g/dL									
	129.00 \pm 23.51	122.70 \pm 33.03	99.33 \pm 4.67	105.80 \pm 2.21	127.70 \pm 1.20	100.00 \pm 1.16	122.70 \pm 13.62	104.70 \pm 23.67	96.00 \pm 4.03
Proteinuria g/dL									
	0.23 \pm 1.11	4.77 \pm 4.79	2.83 \pm 0.68	7.10 \pm 0.83	4.80 \pm 0.83	6.30 \pm 0.10	8.33 \pm 1.276	3.32 \pm 0.32	8.17 \pm 0.67
Sodium g/dL									
	201.80 \pm 2.51	97.53 \pm 4.09	109.40 \pm 7.54	127.70 \pm 13.12	118.70 \pm 4.43	129.00 \pm 5.56	140.70 \pm 7.56	76.13 \pm 4.504	80.53 \pm 4.28

a Significantly different from Normal ($p < 0.05 - 0.001$), b Significantly different from GM only ($p < 0.05 - 0.001$)

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Table 3: Effect of treatment on some haematological parameters

		TREATMENT							
PARAMETERS	Normal	GM only	GM+100 mg	GM+250 mg	GM+500 mg	100mg	250mg	500mg	GM+500
WBC*10⁹/dL									
	6.30 \pm 2.16	7.70 \pm 0.25	7.50 \pm 2.20	10.57 \pm 0.62	5.80 \pm 1.38	5.13 \pm 0.17	5.67 \pm 0.96	7.23 \pm 0.172	6.77 \pm 0.67
RBC*10⁹/dL									
	6.70 \pm 0.30	6.79 \pm 0.19	6.80 \pm 0.27	6.39 \pm 0.23	6.79 \pm 0.33	7.23 \pm 0.15	7.23 \pm 0.06	7.30 \pm 0.27	6.29 \pm 0.36
Hb g/dL									
	10.83 \pm 2.42	9.67 \pm 0.23	12.77 \pm 0.38	12.37 \pm 0.28	12.93 \pm 0.54	13.80 \pm 0.046	13.53 \pm 0.286	13.67 \pm 0.386	12.50 \pm 0.19
HCT %									
	36.00 \pm 1.10	37.57 \pm 0.67	37.23 \pm 1.07	35.90 \pm 1.31	38.13 \pm 1.92	41.63 \pm 0.59	40.23 \pm 0.18	40.50 \pm 1.16	35.40 \pm 1.89
MCH pg									
	37.20 \pm 0.95	55.37 \pm 0.77	54.83 \pm 0.62	54.53 \pm 0.09	56.17 \pm 1.92	57.40 \pm 0.49	55.47 \pm 0.73	54.80 \pm 0.49	55.34 \pm 0.56
MCV fL									
	18.77 \pm 0.03	15.03 \pm 0.38	18.80 \pm 0.20	18.80 \pm 0.23	19.07 \pm 0.20	19.03 \pm 0.48	18.67 \pm 0.54	18.47 \pm 0.24	19.57 \pm 0.33
MCHC g/dL									
	33.73 \pm 0.62	27.73 \pm 0.03	34.30 \pm 0.06	34.47 \pm 0.33	33.97 \pm 0.43	33.03 \pm 0.44	33.63 \pm 0.58	33.77 \pm 0.20	35.17 \pm 0.86

PLTc 10⁹/dL 900.000.222.1 859.334233.92 1295.678141.14 1240.334107.15 1181.67452.32 1220.334264.71 1331.674190.19 1290.03447.62 1331.00487.32

314 b Significantly different from GM only (p<0.05 - 0.001)

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