



# Antibacterial Effects of *Calendula officinalis* Preparations on South African ESKAPE Pathogens

## ARTICLE INFO

**Article Type**  
Original Article

**Authors**  
Tebogo Tsele-Tebakang, PhD<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Complementary Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Johannesburg, PO Box 17011, Doornfontein, Johannesburg 2028, South Africa.

### \* Correspondence

Department of Complementary Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Johannesburg, PO Box 17011, Doornfontein, Johannesburg 2028, South Africa.  
E-mail: ttsele-tebakang@uj.ac.za

### How to cite this article

Tsele-Tebakang T. Antibacterial Effects of *Calendula officinalis* Preparations on South African ESKAPE Pathogens. Infection Epidemiology and Microbiology. 2024;10(3): 193-202.

### Article History

Received: December 13, 2023  
Accepted: July 10, 2024  
Published: August 20, 2024

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Medicinal plants possess considerable potential for discovering new phytochemicals that could be considered as a solution to fight against multidrug-resistant pathogens. *Calendula officinalis* (*C. officinalis*) is used worldwide due to its antimicrobial properties. This pilot study assessed the antibacterial activity of herbal extract and homeopathic preparation of *C. officinalis* flowers against South African ESKAPE pathogens.

**Materials & Methods:** Kirby-Bauer disc diffusion method (with a 6.0 mm disk diameter) was employed to evaluate the antibacterial activity of herbal extract and homeopathic preparation against South African ESKAPE pathogens. Various ethanol concentrations of herbal extract (50, 60, and 90%) and 62% ethanol concentration of homeopathic preparation were tested.

**Findings:** The inhibitory effect of *C. officinalis* did not surpass that of antibiotics. However, the ethanol herbal extract of *C. officinalis* showed some antibacterial activity against ESKAPE pathogens compared to its homeopathic preparation. Moreover, 50% ethanol extract of *C. officinalis* (20 µL) showed significant antibacterial activity against *Staphylococcus* species compared to its homeopathic preparation.

**Conclusion:** The rapid spread of antibiotic resistance necessitates the search for plant-based antibacterials. Due to their wealth in phytochemicals, medicinal plants provide a rich resource for producing novel antibacterial drugs. The current study attempted to demonstrate the inhibitory activities of ethanol herbal extract (HEs) and homeopathic mother tincture (MT) of *C. officinalis* flowers against ESKAPE pathogens and *Escherichia coli* species.

**Keywords:** *Calendula officinalis*, Multidrug resistance, Kirby-Bauer disk-diffusion method, Herbal extract, Homeopathy

## CITATION LINKS

[1] Ak G, et al. Chemical composition... [2] World Health Organisation... [3] Givol O, Kornhaber R, Visentin D, Cleary M, Haik J, Harats M. A systematic... [4] Patil K, Sanjay CJ, DoggALLI N, Devi KR, Harshitha N. A review of... [5] Abdelwahab SI, Taha MM, Taha SM, Alsayegh AA. Fifty-year... [6] Balciunaitiene A, et al. Sustainable-green... [7] Al-Snafi AE. Medicinal plants with... [8] Kebede T, Gadisa E, Tufa A. Antimicrobial... [9] Kozłowska J. Design and characterization... [10] Rodino S, Butu M. Herbal extracts... [11] Kumar VN. Lesser-known... [12] Malik M, Hussain S, Malik JA, Adil A, Nazir S, Gondal MU. Quality... [13] Jadimurthy R, Mayegowda SB, Nayak SC, Mohan CD, Rangappa KS. Escaping... [14] Founou RC, Founou LL, Essack SY. Clinical and... [15] World Health Organisation... [16] Mulani MS, Kamble EE, Kumkar SN, Tawre MS, Pardesi KR. Emerging... [17] Bonten M, et al. Epidemiology of... [18] Panda SK, et al. Recent advances to... [19] Bhatia P, et al. Antibacterial activity of medicinal... [20] Navidinia M. Molecular characterization of... [21] De Oliveira DM, et al. Antimicrobial... [22] British Pharmacopoeia Commission... [23] Benyunes S. German Homeopathic... [24] Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute... [25] Shahen MZ, et al. Effect of... [26] Jodh R. A review on... [27] Abate G, et al. Phytochemical analysis... [28] Karnwal A. In vitro antibacterial... [29] Nouri L, Nafchi AM, Karim AA. Phytochemical... [30] Jyotisree G, Sruthi R, Biju CR, Menon AS. *Calendula*... [31] Rehman T, Saeed A. Evaluation of... [32] Shaffique S, et al. In vitro... [33] Kubiak DW. Adjunctive management of central... [34] Worley MV. Role of ethanol... [35] Tighe SL. Clinical application of... [36] Benthall G, et al. Evaluation of... [37] Subramani R. Plant-derived antimicrobials... [38] Haaber J. Transfer of antibiotic... [39] Rossi CC. Underrated... [40] Sahingil D. GC/MS-olfactometric characterization...

## Introduction

Medicinal plants are widely used as remedies to cure, prevent, and manage various ailments worldwide. This is due to their easy accessibility, affordability, and less side effects, which are perceived by communities [1]. Multidrug resistance remains a challenging health care problem in developed and developing countries. This phenomenon has prompted a shift towards finding medicinal plants as alternative antibiotics. Pot marigold (*C. officinalis*) is a plant historically used in traditional medicine (TM). The World Health Organisation (WHO) [2] explains TM as “the sum of knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as prevention, diagnosis, and improvement/treatment of physical and mental illness”. *C. officinalis* is a flowering plant classified under the daisy family *Asteraceae*. It possesses various chemical constituents that contribute to its medicinal use [3]. *C. officinalis* is commonly used in homeopathy and traditional medicine as an antiseptic remedy in the form of extract, tincture, or balm to heal skin wounds and treat skin conditions [4]. This plant has also been found to possess antibacterial, anti-tumour, anti-fungal, antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant activities due to the presence of numerous secondary metabolites [5]. Research has shown that *C. officinalis* contains secondary metabolites and phytochemicals in multiple parts of the plant, including triterpenes, saponins, triterpendiol esters, polysaccharides, steroids, tannin, quinines, coumarins, flavonoids, carotenoids, amino acids, and essential and volatile oils [1, 4, 5]. These secondary metabolites are accepted and confirmed to be responsible for the antimicrobial activities of this plant [6]. Additionally, the literature has proved that

*C. officinalis* has antimicrobial potential against Gram-negative and Gram-positive pathogens [7, 8]. Using different extraction methods, *C. officinalis* metabolites have been added to different herbal formularies to treat many conditions. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of herbal extracts (HEs) depends on their ability to deliver therapeutic active compounds [9]. HEs are sources of biologically active constituents with therapeutic effects. In order for HEs to effectively exert their therapeutic and medicinal effects, their preparation method must comply with manufacturing standards [10]. A homeopathic preparation, mother tincture (MT), is a crude botanical extract of fresh or dried plants, prepared according to the guidelines in the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia. Mother tinctures are used as the starting materials for homeopathic dilutions [11, 12].

In the past decade, the medical world has witnessed the increasing prevalence of multidrug-resistant (MDR) ESKAPE pathogens (*Enterococcus faecium*, *Escherichia coli*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Acinetobacter baumannii*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *Enterobacter* species), which has increased the burden of disease and reduced treatment options for infections [13]. Additionally, a review study by Founou and colleagues (2017) [14] reported a significant association between ESKAPE pathogens and the highest risk of mortality and health care costs. According to the WHO [15], it is expected that in 2050, 10 million people will die due to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and 100 trillion USD of the world's economic output will be lost because of this health threat. ESKAPE pathogens cause several diseases and could escape the biocidal effects of antimicrobial agents [16]. In particular, Gram-positive bacteria such as *E. faecium* and *S. aureus* cause endocarditis, bacteremia, sepsis, and pneumonia, and

Gram-negative bacteria such as *A. baumannii*, *K. pneumoniae*, *P. aeruginosa*, *Enterobacter* spp., and *E. coli* commonly cause urinary tract and respiratory tract infections [17, 18]. These pathogens are associated with hospital-acquired infections worldwide [19, 20]. In a country like South Africa, where there are challenges in the healthcare system, such as lack of health resources, the emergence of infectious diseases continues to be a problem in hospitals and the community [14, 21]. Although substantial research has been conducted on *C. officinalis* (HE), little research is available on the antimicrobial potency of *C. officinalis* against resistant South African Gram-positive and Gram-negative strains. This pilot study aimed to identify new and alternative antibacterial treatments for South African ESKAPE pathogens.

**Objectives:** While several studies have reported the potential of herbal medicines as alternative antibiotics, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research has been conducted to investigate their effects on South African ESKAPE pathogens. Therefore, it is important to identify and test indigenous medicinal plants in South Africa, which are effective in eradicating resistant pathogens. This study serves as a baseline for future studies and interventions designed to eradicate ESKAPE pathogens.

## Materials and Methods

**Study design:** This *in-vitro* quantitative control study was conducted at the Complementary Research Facility (CMRF) of the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in January 2022.

**Study population Antimicrobial agents:** The herbal extract (HEs) and homeopathic mother tincture (MT) of *C. officinalis* flowers were obtained from different reputable companies based in South Africa. These companies follow good manufacturing

practices and issue certificates of analysis (CoA). *C. officinalis* HE was prepared in different ethanol concentrations (50, 60, and 90%) following the relevant monographs available in the British Pharmacopoeia (BP) [22]: 50, 60, and 90% herbal extracts (HEs) were prepared in dilutions of 1:10 (batch no. 6412), 1:5 (batch no. 6412), and 1:2 (batch no.171221), respectively. Also, homeopathic MT was manufactured in 62% ethanol according to the German Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia (GMP) [23] in a dilution of 1:10 (batch no. C23019).

**Antibacterial strains:** South African ESKAPE strains and *E. coli* clinical isolates were obtained from the University of Johannesburg (UJ) Water and Health Research Centre (WHRC) culture bank. Strain verification and drug resistance screening were performed on these clinical isolates using the VITEK®2 Compact System (BioMérieux, USA) according to Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI, 2023) guidelines [24]. To ensure the validity of the results obtained, ATTC-authenticated reference ESKAPE and *E. coli* strains were included in all experiments, including *E. faecium* ATTC2720, *S. aureus* ATCCBAA-1026, *K. pneumoniae* ATCC13883, *A. baumannii* ATCC19606, *P. aeruginosa* ATCC10145, *E. coli* ATCC35218, and *E. coli* ATCC25922. All reference strains and clinical isolates were stored at -80 °C as glycerol stocks and grown on Mueller-Hinton agar plates overnight (18-16 hours) at 35 °C.

**Antimicrobial control agents:** Conventional antibiotics and ethanol in different concentrations used as diluents of *C. officinalis* were used as controls. Antibiotic discs containing piperacillin/tazobactam (TZP: 110 mg, CT0725B OXOID), ciprofloxacin (CIP: 5 µg, CT0425B OXOID), and vancomycin and imipenem (VAN/IMP: 30 µg, CT0466B OXOID) were purchased from Sigma Aldrich (Supelco PHR1167).

**Disc diffusion method:** Fresh bacterial cultures for each experiment were prepared by streaking bacteria on Mueller-Hinton (MH) agar culture plates and incubated at 35 °C for 24 hours. First, bacterial suspensions were prepared with MH broth media and bacteria. The concentration of bacterial suspensions was adjusted to 0.5 McFarland standard using bioMérieux densiCHEK plus to ensure consistent results. Then the adjusted bacterial suspensions were spread on MH agar plates and incubated at 35 °C for 24 hours to create bacterial lawns. The plates were then allowed to dry for three to five min before placing the sterile antimicrobial discs on them. The experiment was conducted over three days to ensure the reliability, reproducibility, validity, and accuracy of the results. Sterile discs were impregnated with 20 µL of *C. officinalis* HE (50, 60, and 90%) and homeopathic MT (62%) and placed on agar plates. Appropriate controls (5 µL of antibiotics and 20 µL of ethanol in the mentioned concentrations) were also

used and measured. Each MH agar plate was numbered before incubation. The plates were inverted and incubated at 35 °C for 16 to 18 hours. Thereafter, the plates were studied, and the growth inhibition zone diameter (in mm) was measured using an Interscience: Scan® 1200 colony counter from a programmed minimum sub-zero baseline point to a 6-mm (inhibition zone) distance from the disk.

### Findings

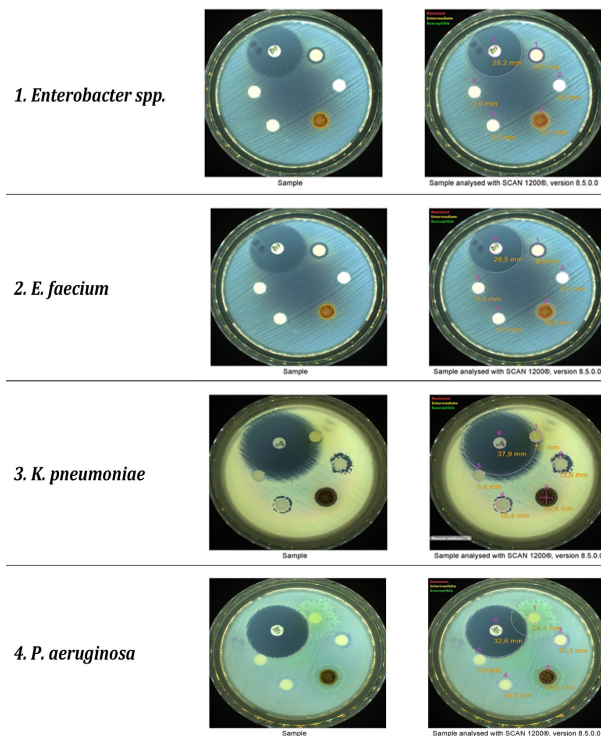
In this study, 20 µL of HEs (in 50, 60, and 90% ethanol) and 20 µL of homeopathic MT (in 62% ethanol) of *C. officinalis* flowers were tested individually against ESKAPE pathogens, including *E. faecium* ATCC2720, *S. aureus* ATCCBAA-1026, *K. pneumoniae* ATCC13883, *A. baumannii* ATCC19606, *P. aeruginosa* ATCC10145, *E. coli* ATCC35218, and *E. coli* ATCC25922, respectively. The HEs and homeopathic MT showed varying levels of efficiency against Gram-positive and Gram-negative pathogens (Tables 1 and 2).

**Table 1)** Antibacterial activity of different concentrations of *C. officinalis* HE against clinical bacterial pathogens

Bacteria	Antibacterial activity of 20 µL of <i>Calendula officinalis</i> herbal extract in terms of inhibition zone (IZ) diameter in mm		
	20 µL of HE/5 µL of antibiotic (IMP, CIP, TZP)/20 µL of ethanol control		
	50% Herbal Extract	60% Herbal Extract	90% Herbal Extract
<i>A. baumannii</i>	8.2mm/30.2mm (IM)/ 6.0mm	10.0mm/32.5mm (IMP)/11.2mm	14.1mm/30.6mm (IMP)/16.4mm
<i>Enterobacter spp</i>	6.8mm/31.1mm (IMP)/ 6.0mm	9.5mm/32.3mm (IMP)/6.0mm	16.2mm/30.2mm (IMP)/14.5mm
<i>E. faecium</i>	9.1mm/30.5mm (IMP)/ 6.0mm	9.5mm/28.5mm (IMP)/6.0mm	15.0mm/27.4mm (IMP)/14.8mm
<i>K. pneumoniae</i>	6.0mm/35.6mm (CIP)/ 6.0mm	7.2mm/37.9mm (CIP)/12.6mm	15.4mm/34.8mm (CIP)/10.8mm
<i>P. aeruginosa</i>	8.4mm/29.2mm (TZP)/6.0mm	24.4mm/32.6mm (TZP)/10.3mm	16.4mm/28.5mm (TZP)/12.0mm
<i>S. aureus</i>	6.0mm/34.0mm (CIP)/ 6.0mm	9.1mm/34.2mm (IMP)/9.1mm	16.2mm/33.9mm (CIP) 16.2mm
<i>E. coli 1</i>	6.0mm/29.4mm (IMP)/ 6.0mm	6.0mm/29.7mm (IMP)/11.0mm	6.0mm/22.3mm (IMP)/18.8mm
<i>E. coli 2</i>	6.0mm/23.3mm (IMP)/ 6.0mm	6.0mm/34.8mm (IMP)/10.1mm	6.0mm/24.9mm (IMP)/19.0mm

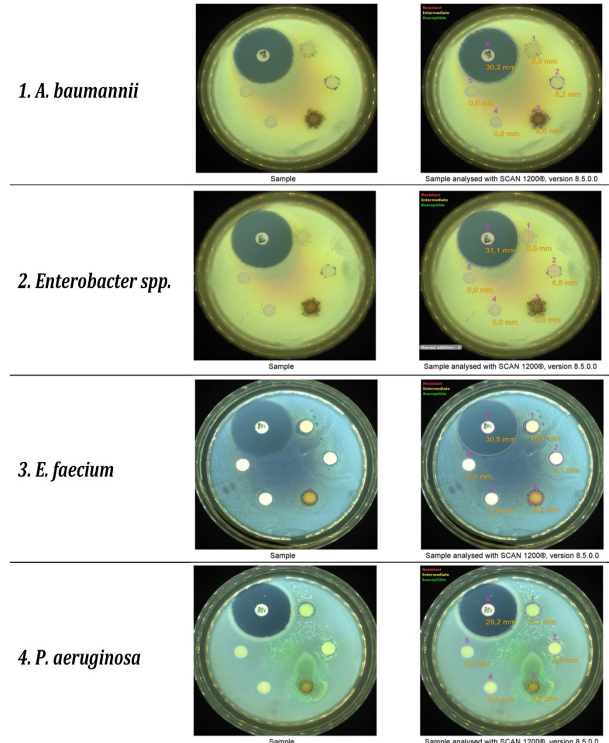
**Table 2)** Antibacterial activity of *C. officinalis* homeopathic MT against clinical bacterial pathogens

Bacteria	Antibacterial activity of 20 $\mu$ L of <i>Calendula officinalis</i> mother tincture in terms of inhibition zone (IZ) diameter in mm	
	20 $\mu$ L of MT/5 $\mu$ L of antibiotic (IMP, CIP, TZP)/ 20 $\mu$ L of ethanol	
	62% MT / antibiotic	62% Ethanol
<i>A. baumannii</i>	10.8mm/30.6mm (IMP)	11.2mm
<i>Enterobacter spp</i>	12.0mm/30.2mm (IMP)	6.0mm
<i>E. faecium</i>	19.6mm/27.4mm (IMP)	6.0mm
<i>K. pneumoniae</i>	13.6mm/34.8mm (CIP)	12.6mm
<i>P. aeruginosa</i>	12.7mm/28.5mm (TZP)	10.3mm
<i>S. aureus</i>	10.7mm/33.9mm (CIP)	9.1mm
<i>E. coli 1</i>	10.8mm/33.9mm (IMP, CIP, TZP)	11.0mm
<i>E. coli 2</i>	12.2mm/35.0mm (IMP, CIP, TZP)	10.1mm



**Figure 1)** Agar plates exhibiting the growth inhibition zones by 20  $\mu$ L of *C. officinalis* flower 90% HE against ESKAPE pathogens. The central spot represents the positive control (5  $\mu$ L of antibiotic: IMP, CIP, and TZP), the dark spot stands for *C. officinalis* extract, and the white spot stands for the negative control. 1) *Enterobacter spp.*, 2) *E. faecium*, 3) *K. pneumoniae*, and 4) *P. aeruginosa*

According to the results, *C. officinalis* HE (20  $\mu$ L) in 90% ethanol showed greater inhibitory activity than in 50 or 60% ethanol (Figure 1). The 50% HE of *C. officinalis* as a South African-made HE was further



**Figure 2)** Agar plates exhibiting the growth inhibition zones by 20  $\mu$ L of *C. officinalis* flower 50% HE against ESKAPE pathogens. The central spot represents the positive control (5  $\mu$ L of antibiotic: IMP, CIP, and TZP), the dark spot stands for *C. officinalis* extract, and the white spot stands for the negative control. 1) *A. baumannii*, 2) *Enterobacter spp.*, 3) *E. faecium*, and 4) *P. aeruginosa*.

tested against 12 *Staphylococcus* species. It showed inhibitory activity against ESKAPE pathogens (Figure 2) and some inhibitory activity against certain *Staphylococcus spp.* (Table 3 and Figure 3).

**Table 3)** Antibacterial activity of 20 µL of *C. officinalis* extract (50%) against different *Staphylococcus* spp.

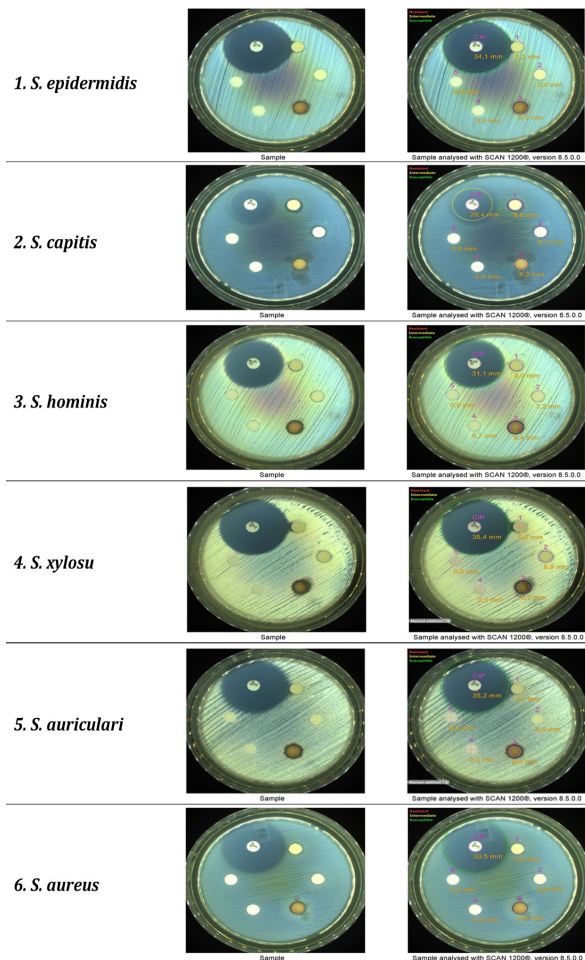
<i>Staphylococcus</i> Species	<i>Calendula officinalis</i> 50% HE	Ethanol 50%	Blank control	Antibiotics (IMP, CIP, and TZP)
<i>S. epidermidis</i>	6.0mm	6.0mm	6.0mm	34.0mm
<i>S. capitis</i>	7.2mm	6.7mm	6.0mm	31.1mm
<i>S. hominis</i>	6.0mm	0.0mm	6.0mm	35.2mm
<i>S. xylosum</i>	8.9mm	6.0mm	6.0mm	35.4mm
<i>S. sciuri</i>	6.0mm	6.0mm	6.0mm	24.7mm
<i>S. auriculari</i>	8.2mm	6.0mm	6.0mm	20.4mm
<i>S. aureus</i>	6.0mm	6.0mm	6.0mm	33.5mm
<i>S. caprae</i>	6.0mm	6.0mm	6.0mm	33.4mm
<i>S. cohnii</i>	6.0mm	6.0mm	6.0mm	31.3mm
<i>S. warneri</i>	6.0mm	6.0mm	6.0mm	30.7mm
<i>S. saprophyticus</i>	8.2mm	7.8 mm	7.2mm	27.0mm
<i>S. haemolyticus</i>	8.4mm	8.0mm	7.4mm	27.1mm

*S. epidermidis* (ATCCP19), *S. capitis* (ATTCPET20), *S. hominis* (ATCCP13), *S. xylosum* (ATCCBB33592), *S. caprae* (ATCCNP7B7), *S. cohnii* (ATCCJR3X), *S. warneri* (ATCCKS18A), *S. saprophyticus* (ATCCKS18A), and *S. haemolyticus* (ATCCKS16).

## Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate the antibacterial effects of herbal extract (HE) and homeopathic mother tincture (MT) of *C. officinalis* flowers in various ethanol concentrations. The Kirby-Bauer disc diffusion method results showed that the tested *C. officinalis* flower extracts had antibacterial activity against Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria. Although the current study used only the disc diffusion method, these results could be a baseline for distinguishing medicinal plants with potential antibacterial activities. The HEs and homeopathic MT of *C. officinalis* flowers showed some antimicrobial potential against Gram-positive and Gram-negative pathogens (Tables 1 and 2). *C. officinalis* (20 µL) HE in 90% ethanol displayed greater antimicrobial activity than in 50 or 60% ethanol. The growth inhibition zone diameter of bacterial isolates was as follows: *E. faecium*: 15.0 mm, *S. aureus*: 16.2 mm, *K. pneumoniae*: 15.2 mm, *A. baumannii*: 14.1 mm, *P. aeruginosa*: 16.4 mm, and *Enterobacter* spp.: 16.2 mm. No inhibitory activity was observed against *E. coli* (6.00 mm) species (Figure 1). According

to the WHO [2], *A. baumannii* and *P. aeruginosa* are classified in the critical priority group, and *E. faecium* and *S. aureus* are classified in the high priority group, highlighting the need to develop unexplored medicinal plants [13]. These findings are supported by similar studies documenting the significant inhibitory activities of ethanol extracts of *C. officinalis* against *E. coli*, *P. aeruginosa*, *Enterococcus* spp., and *Staphylococcus* spp. [4, 25, 26]. The results indicate that 90% ethanol as an effective extraction solvent could significantly influence the efficiency of phytochemicals and secondary metabolites in HE [27]. Moreover, these findings could be attributed to the fact that ethanol extracts of flowers are rich in alkaloids, saponins, and tannins with potent antimicrobial properties [28]. A study by Nouri and colleagues (2021) [29] demonstrated that 90% ethanol extracts of flowers showed significant antibacterial activities against Gram-positive and Gram-negative pathogens. A review study [19] confirmed that ethanolic extracts had the highest antibacterial activities compared to other organic solvents. The homeopathic MT (20 µL) in 62% ethanol showed some



**Figure 3)** Antibacterial activity of 20  $\mu\text{L}$  of *C. officinalis* 50% HE against different *Staphylococcus* species. The central spot represents the positive control (5  $\mu\text{L}$  of antibiotic: IMP, CIP & TZP), the dark spot stands for *C. officinalis* extract, and the white one represents the negative control. 1) *S. epidermidis*, 2) *S. capitis*, 3) *S. hominis*, 4) *S. xylosu*, 5) *S. auriculari*, 6) *S. aureus*

potential to inhibit ESKAPE pathogens, including *E. faecium* (19.6 mm) and *S. aureus* (10.7 mm) (Table 2). This finding suggests that despite the controversy around homeopathic remedies, it is essential to investigate the role of homeopathic MTs as an alternative treatment for ESKAPE pathogens. A study by Jyotisree et al. (2020) [30] suggested *C. officinalis* MT as a promising antibacterial agent. These findings are supported by another study in 2019 [31], where *C. officinalis* MT in 70% ethanol was shown to possess antibacterial properties against *E. coli*, *S. aureus*, and *P. aeruginosa* in

*vitro*. Although HE and MT did not surpass the antibiotics, they showed some zones of inhibition. This study tested only 20  $\mu\text{L}$  of HE and MT. If different volumes were tested, the results might have shown larger inhibition zones. A study by Shaffique et al. (2020) [32] showed that increasing the volumes of HE and MT affected concentration-dependent inhibition zone. Ethanol control concentrations were also tested, and 50% ethanol showed no zone of inhibition (6.0 mm), whereas 60, 62, and 90% ethanol showed a zone of inhibition more than 6 mm (Tables 1 and 2). This is not surprising since ethanol is known for its ability to kill a broad spectrum of microorganisms, denature proteins, and eradicate bacterial biofilms [33]. This is evident in its use in ethanol lock therapy (ELT) to eradicate and kill central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSIs), including *S. aureus*, *S. epidermidis*, *P. aeruginosa*, *E. coli*, and *K. pneumonia* [34, 35]. The HE and homeopathic MT were extracted with ethanol according to the German Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia and British Pharmacopoeia. Manufacturers of medicinal plants usually use ethanol as a solvent because it makes the end products safe for consumers.

The results indicate that 50% HE of *C. officinalis* has potential inhibitory activity and is not an organic solvent (Figure 2). The susceptibility variation observed in the tested pathogens could be due to the difference in the permeability of their cell membranes to HEs and MTs. Commercially available antibiotics tested as positive controls showed high inhibition zones against all tested bacterial species (Tables 1 and 2). These results were expected because antibiotics have a better ability to penetrate the biofilm cells of pathogens [36].

In this study, the inhibitory effect of 50% HE of *C. officinalis* was tested on 12 *Staphylococcus* spp., although no inhibitory

activity was observed against *S. aureus*. The reason behind testing only the 50% HE was to evaluate the inhibitory effect of South African *C. officinalis* against South African species.

The findings showed that *C. officinalis* exhibited the highest inhibitory activity against *S. xylosum* (8.9 mm), *S. haemolyticus* (8.4 mm), *S. saprophyticus* (8.2 mm), and *S. auricular* (8.2 mm), but no inhibitory activity was shown against *S. epidermidis*, *S. hominis*, *S. sciuri*, *S. aureus*, *S. caprae*, *S. cohnii*, and *S. warneri* (6 mm).

The 50% ethanol as a control showed no inhibitory effect, except for *S. saprophyticus* (7.8 mm) and *S. haemolyticus* (8.0 mm) (Table 3 and Figure 3).

*S. aureus* is one of the pathogens causing various infections in healthcare facilities, such as life-threatening endocarditis [37]. Although *Staphylococcus* spp. are harmless inhabitants of the microbiota, each of them could be a potential threat and transfer antibiotic resistance genes to more pathogenic species and intensify their ability to resist drugs [38, 39]. A similar study by Sahingil (2019) [40] found that *C. officinalis* had some inhibitory activities against *S. aureus* species. The South African *C. officinalis* herbal extract may be considered as a possible alternative treatment for resistant pathogens.

#### **Limitations and recommendations:**

This pilot study had some limitations. Regarding data collection, the concentration-dependent effects of different HE concentrations were not evaluated. Therefore, special attention should be paid to test the concentration-dependent characteristics of *C. officinalis* in different ethanol concentrations to gain in-depth information about the inhibitory activity of *C. officinalis*. Only one method (Kirby-Bauer disc diffusion method) was used to collect data. The study focused on the inhibitory effect and did not statistically analyze the results using relevant soft-

ware. There is limited research on the antimicrobial activities of herbal extracts (HEs) and homeopathic mother tinctures (MTs). Therefore, this study serves as a baseline for further studies to evaluate the potential of medicinal plants as antibiotics.

#### **Conclusion**

The rapid spread of antibiotic resistance necessitates the search for plant-based antibacterials. Due to their wealth in phytochemicals, medicinal plants provide a rich resource for producing novel antibacterial drugs. The current study attempted to demonstrate the inhibitory activities of ethanol herbal extract (HEs) and homeopathic mother tincture (MT) of *C. officinalis* flowers against ESKAPE pathogens and *E. coli* species.

#### **Acknowledgement**

The author would like to thank the University of Johannesburg (UJ), Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), Water and Health Research Centre (WHRC), and Complementary Medicine Research Facility (CMRF) for the use of their laboratory and equipment.

**Author contributions:** T-T analyzed the data and wrote and reviewed the final manuscript.

**Ethical considerations:** This study was approved by the University of Johannesburg Ethics Committee (REC-01-05-2022) before the commencement of the research.

**Fundings:** This study was supported by the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa Competitive Support for Unrated Research Reference (Grant number: 138090).

**Consent to participate:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of interests:** There is no conflict of interest.

#### **References**

1. Ak G, Zengin G, Ceylan R, Fawzi Mahomoodally M, Jugreet S, Mollica A, et al. Chemical composition



- and biological activities of essential oils from *Calendula officinalis* L. flowers and leaves. *Flavour Fragr J.* 2021;36(5):554-63.
2. World Health Organisation (WHO). Traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine. Geneva: World Health Organisation; 2020.
  3. Givol O, Kornhaber R, Visentin D, Cleary M, Haik J, Harats M. A systematic review of *Calendula officinalis* extract for wound healing. *Wound Repair Regen.* 2019;27(5):548-61.
  4. Patil K, Sanjay CJ, DoggALLI N, Devi KR, Harshitha N. A review of *Calendula officinalis*: Magic in science. *J Clin Diagn Res.* 2022;16(2):ZE23-7.
  5. Abdelwahab SI, Taha MM, Taha SM, Alsayegh AA. Fifty-year of global research in *Calendula officinalis* L. (1971– 2021): A bibliometric study. *Clin Complement Med Pharmacol.* 2022;2(4):100059.
  6. Balciunaitiene A, Puzeryte V, Radenkova V, Krasnova I, Memvanga PB, Viskelis P, et al. Sustainable-green synthesis of silver nanoparticles using aqueous *Hyssopus officinalis* and *Calendula officinalis* extracts and their antioxidant and antibacterial activities. *Molecules.* 2022;27(22):7700.
  7. Al-Snafi AE. Medicinal plants with antimicrobial activities (part 2): Plant based review. *Sch Acad J Pharm.* 2016;5(6):208-39.
  8. Kebede T, Gadisa E, Tufa A. Antimicrobial activities evaluation and phytochemical screening of some selected medicinal plants: A possible alternative in the treatment of multidrug-resistant microbes. *PLoS One.* 2021;16(3):e0249253.
  9. Kozłowska J, Pauter K, Skopinska-Wisniewska J, Sionkowska A. Design and characterization of porous collagen/gelatin/hydroxyethyl cellulose matrices containing microspheres based on  $\kappa$ -carrageenan. In: Silva L, editor. *Materials design and applications II.* Springer, Cham; 2019, p. 151-157.
  10. Rodino S, Butu M. Herbal extracts: New trends in functional and medicinal beverages. In: Grumezescu AM, Maria A, editors. *Functional and Medicinal beverages.* Academic Press; 2019, p.73-108.
  11. Kumar VN. Lesser-known mother tincture in homeopathy. *Int Sci Res J.* 2019;5(6):1-3.
  12. Malik M, Hussain S, Malik JA, Adil A, Nazir S, Gondal MU. Quality assessment of frequently available mother tinctures in the market by employing standard values. *Afr J Pharm Pharmacol.* 2021;15(4):61-70.
  13. Jadimurthy R, Mayegowda SB, Nayak SC, Mohan CD, Rangappa KS. Escaping mechanisms of ESKAPE pathogens from antibiotics and their targeting by natural compounds. *Biotechnol Rep.* 2022;34:e00728.
  14. Founou RC, Founou LL, Essack SY. Clinical and economic impact of antibiotic resistance in developing countries: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS One.* 2017;12(12):e0189621.
  15. World Health Organisation (WHO). Global priority list of antibiotic-resistant bacteria to guide research, discovery, and development of new antibiotics. Geneva: World Health Organisation; 2017.
  16. Mulani MS, Kamble EE, Kumkar SN, Tawre MS, Pardesi KR. Emerging strategies to combat ESKAPE pathogens in the era of antimicrobial resistance: A review. *Front Microbiol.* 2019;10:539.
  17. Bonten M, Johnson JR, van den Biggelaar AH, Georgalis L, Geurtsen J, de Palacios PI, et al. Epidemiology of *Escherichia coli* bacteremia: A systematic literature review. *Clin Infect Dis.* 2021;72(7):1211-9.
  18. Panda SK, Buroni S, Swain SS, Bonacorsi A, da Fonseca Amorim EA, Kulshrestha M, et al. Recent advances to combat ESKAPE pathogens with special reference to essential oils. *Front Microbiol.* 2022;13:1029098.
  19. Bhatia P, Sharma A, George AJ, Anvitha D, Kumar P, Dwivedi VP, et al. Antibacterial activity of medicinal plants against ESKAPE: An update. *Heliyon.* 2021;7(2):e06310.
  20. Navidinina M, Goudarzi M, Rameshe SM, Farajollahi Z, Asl PE, Mounesi MR. Molecular characterization of resistance genes in MDR-ESKAPE pathogens. *J Pure Appl Microbiol.* 2017;11(2):779-92.
  21. De Oliveira DM, Forde BM, Kidd TJ, Harris PN, Schembri MA, Beatson SA, et al. Antimicrobial resistance in ESKAPE pathogens. *Clin Microbiol Rev.* 2020;33(3):10-128.
  22. British Pharmacopoeia Commission. *British Pharmacopoeia.* Stationery Office Publishers; 2017.
  23. Benyunes S. *German Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia.* MedPharmScientific publishers; 2005.
  24. Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI). M100: Performance standards for antimicrobial disk susceptibility testing. 33rd ed. Wayne, PA: Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute; 2023.
  25. Shahen MZ, Mahmud S, Rony MH, Sohana SN, Imran MA, Al Maruf MA, et al. Effect of antibiotic susceptibility and inhibitory activity for the control of growth and survival of microorganisms of extracts of *Calendula officinalis*. *Eur J Med Health Sci.* 2019;1(1):1-9.
  26. Jodh R, Tawar M, Behere S, Randhave N, Jirapure P, Ingle S. A review on *Calendula officinalis*. *Res J Pharmacogn Phytochem.* 2023;15(1):5-10.
  27. Abate G, Zhang L, Pucci M, Morbini G, Mac Sweeney E, Maccarinelli G, et al. Phytochemical

- analysis and anti-inflammatory activity of different ethanolic phyto-extracts of *Artemisia annua* L. *Biomolecules*. 2021;11(7):975.
28. Karnwal A. In vitro antibacterial activity of *Hibiscus rosa sinensis*, *Chrysanthemum indicum*, and *Calendula officinalis* flower extracts against Gram negative and Gram-positive food poisoning bacteria. *Adv Trad Med*. 2022;22(3):607-19.
  29. Nouri L, Nafchi AM, Karim AA. Phytochemical, antioxidant, antibacterial, and  $\alpha$ -amylase inhibitory properties of different extracts from betel leaves. *Ind Crops Prod*. 2014;62:47-52.
  30. Jyotisree G, Sruthi R, Biju CR, Menon AS. *Calendula officinalis* and *Echinacea purpurea* as antimicrobial agent. *J Appl Pharm Res*. 2020;8(2):08-12.
  31. Rehman T, Saeed A. Evaluation of antibacterial and antioxidant potential of some homoeopathic mother tinctures. *Indian J Res Homoeopathy*. 2019;13(2):100-6.
  32. Shaffique S, Anwer H, Asif HM, Akram M, Rehman A, Ahmed S, et al. In vitro evaluation of the antioxidant activity of homeopathic mother tincture and total phenolic content. *RADS J Pharm Pharm Sci*. 2020;8(1):26-30.
  33. Kubiak DW, Gilmore ET, Buckley MW, Lynch R, Marty FM, Koo S. Adjunctive management of central line-associated bloodstream infections with 70% ethanol-lock therapy. *J Antimicrob Chemother*. 2014;69(6):1665-8.
  34. Worley MV, Dollard EW, Aragon L, Henderson K, Abbo LM, Byers P. Role of ethanol locks in reducing bloodstream infections in adults on parenteral nutrition. *Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol*. 2017;38(9):1133-5.
  35. Tighe SL. Clinical application of prophylactic ethanol lock therapy in pediatric patients with intestinal failure. *Gastroenterol Nurs*. 2016;39(5):376-84.
  36. Benthall G, Touzel RE, Hind CK, Titball RW, Sutton JM, Thomas RJ, et al. Evaluation of antibiotic efficacy against infections caused by planktonic or biofilm cultures of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* in *Galleria mellonella*. *Int J Antimicrob Agents*. 2015;46(5):538-45.
  37. Subramani R, Narayanasamy M, Feussner KD. Plant-derived antimicrobials to fight against multidrug-resistant human pathogens. *3 Biotech*. 2017;7:1-15.
  38. Haaber J, Penadés JR, Ingmer H. Transfer of antibiotic resistance in *Staphylococcus aureus*. *Trends Microbiol*. 2017;25(11):893-905.
  39. Rossi CC, Pereira MF, Giambiagi-deMarval M. Underrated *Staphylococcus* species and their role in antimicrobial resistance spreading. *Genet Mol Biol*. 2020;43(1):e20190065.
  40. Sahingil D. GC/MS-olfactometric characterization of the volatile compounds, determination of antimicrobial and antioxidant activity of essential oil from flowers of *Calendula (Calendula officinalis L.)*. *J Essent Oil Bear Plants*. 2019;22(6):1571-80.