



## Research article

Antiproliferative activity of biomass extract from *Pseudomonas cedrina*Leonardo Sánchez-Tafolla <sup>a</sup>, José M. Padrón <sup>b</sup>, Guillermo Mendoza <sup>c</sup>, Mauricio Luna-Rodríguez <sup>d</sup>, José J. Fernández <sup>b</sup>, Manuel Norte <sup>b</sup>, Ángel Trigos <sup>c,\*</sup><sup>a</sup> Instituto de Biotecnología y Ecología Aplicada, Universidad Veracruzana, Av. de las Culturas Veracruzanas No. 101, Colonia Emiliano Zapata, 91090 Xalapa-Veracruz, Mexico<sup>b</sup> Instituto Universitario de Bio-Orgánica "Antonio González" (IUBO-AG) Universidad de la Laguna, Avenida Astrofísico Francisco Sánchez 2, 38206 La Laguna, Spain<sup>c</sup> Laboratorio de Alta Tecnología de Xalapa, Universidad Veracruzana, Calle Médicos No. 5, Col. Unidad del Bosque, 91010 Xalapa-Veracruz, Mexico<sup>d</sup> Facultad de Ciencias Agrícolas, Universidad Veracruzana, Circuito Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán s/n, Zona Universitaria, 91091 Xalapa-Veracruz, Mexico

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The study of plant-associated microorganisms is very important in the discovery and development of bioactive compounds. *Pseudomonas* is a diverse genus of Gammaproteobacteria comprising more than 60 species capable of establishing themselves in many habitats, which include leaves and stems of many plants. There are reports of metabolites with diverse biological activity obtained from bacteria of this genus, and some of the metabolites have shown cytotoxic activity against cancer cell lines.

Because of the high incidence of cancer, research in recent years has focused on obtaining new sources of active compounds that exhibit interesting pharmacodynamic and pharmacokinetic properties that lead to the development of new therapeutic agents.

**Results:** A bacterial strain was isolated from tumors located in the stem of *Pinus patula*, and it was identified as *Pseudomonas cedrina*. Extracts from biomass and broth of *P. cedrina* were obtained with chloroform:methanol (1:1). Only biomass extracts exhibited antiproliferative activity against human tumor cell lines of cervix (HeLa), lung (A-549), and breast (HBL-100). In addition, a biomass extract from *P. cedrina* was fractionated by silica gel column chromatography and two diketopiperazines were isolated: cyclo-(L-Prolyl-L-Valine) and cyclo-(L-Leucyl-L-Proline).**Conclusions:** This is the first report on the association of *P. cedrina* with the stems of *P. patula* in Mexico and the antiproliferative activity of extracts from this species of bacteria against human solid tumor cell lines.**How to cite:** Sánchez-Tafolla L, Padrón JM, Mendoza G, et al. Antiproliferative activity of biomass extract from *Pseudomonas cedrina*. Electron J Biotechnol 2019;40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejbt.2019.03.010>.© 2019 Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso. Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

The study of plant-associated microorganisms is very important in the discovery and development of new active compounds [1,2]. These compounds are usually secondary metabolites that the microorganisms use as defense mechanisms to obtain advantage against other microorganisms and adaptation in nature [3,4].

*Pseudomonas* is a diverse genus of Gammaproteobacteria comprising more than 60 species capable of establishing themselves in many habitats, which include leaves and stems of many plants [5,6]. There are several reports of metabolites with diverse biological activities obtained from bacteria of this genus, and some of them such as safracin, fenazin, pyocyanin, and some rhamnolipids have shown cytotoxic activity against cancer cell lines [4,7,8,9,10]. In addition,

compounds named diketopiperazines have been isolated from the genus *Pseudomonas* and other genera of bacteria, showing various biological activities (Table 1).

Because of the high incidence of cancer [11] and because there are no reports of compounds obtained from *Pseudomonas cedrina* with antiproliferative activity against human solid tumor cell lines, we evaluated in our research the activity of extracts obtained from this bacterial species against five human solid tumor cell lines as well as the isolated metabolites that may be possibly responsible for this bioactivity.

## 2. Materials and methods

## 2.1. Isolation of bacterial strain from vegetal samples

Samples from pine stem of *Pinus patula* were collected from a nursery garden at Huayacocotla, Veracruz, Mexico (20° 32'N, 98° 29'W, altitude 2140 m) in February 2012. The samples of the stem segment with

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**Table 1**  
Bioactive diketopiperazines isolated from bacteria.

Origin	Diketopiperazine(s) isolated	Bioactivity	References
<i>Lactobacillus plantarum</i> LBP-K10	Cis-cyclo-(L-Val-L-Pro), cis-cyclo-(L-Phe-L-Pro) and cis-cyclo-(L-Leu-L-Pro)	Antifungal ( <i>Ganoderma boninense</i> , <i>Candida albicans</i> )	[30]
<i>Lactobacillus plantarum</i> MiLAB 393	Cyclo-(L-Phe-L-Pro) and cyclo-(L-Phe-trans-4-OH-L-Pro)	Antifungal ( <i>Fusarium sporotrichioides</i> , <i>Aspergillus fumigatus</i> , <i>Kluyveromyces marxianus</i> )	[31]
<i>Pseudomonas rhizosphaerae</i>	Cyclo-(L-Tyr-Pro), cyclo-(L-Tyr-Ile), cyclo-(Phe-Pro) and cyclo-(L-Val-L-Pro)	Antibacterial ( <i>Ruegeria</i> sp., <i>Loktanella hongkongensis</i> , <i>Micrococcus luteus</i> , <i>Pseudoalteromonas piscicida</i> , <i>Bacillus cereus</i> )	[32,33]
<i>Bacillus amyloliquefaciens</i> Q-426	Cyclo-(L-Pro-Leu), cyclo-(L-Pro-Val), cyclo-(Pro-Phe) and cyclo-(Ala-Val).	Inhibition of biofilm formation ( <i>Streptococcus mutans</i> , <i>Bacillus amyloliquefaciens</i> )	[34]
<i>Streptomyces fungicidicus</i>	Cyclo-(L-Leu-L-Pro), cyclo-(L-Phe-L-Pro), cyclo-(L-Val-L-Pro), cyclo-(L-Trp-L-Pro) and cyclo-(L-Leu-L-Val)	Inhibition of fouling ( <i>Balanus amphitrite</i> )	[35]
<i>Pseudomonas rhizosphaerae</i>	Cyclo-(L-Val-L-Pro)	Antilarval ( <i>Balanus amphitrite</i> , <i>Bugula neritina</i> )	[33]
<i>Streptomyces</i> sp. Q24	Cyclo-(L-Phe-L-4-OH-Pro), cyclo-(L-Phe-D-4-OH-Pro) and cyclo-(L-Leu-L-Pro)	Antiproliferative properties against glioblastoma cells (U87-MG and U251)	[36]
<i>Pseudomonas fluorescens</i> H40	Cyclo-(L-Leu-L-Pro)	Cytotoxic against cancer cell lines (Hep-2)	[10]

the tumor were washed with sterile water and disinfected with NaClO (2% v/v), cut as small pieces with sterilized scalpel, and then macerated with sterile deionized water. Serial dilutions were prepared (1:10), and then, the suspensions were plated on King's B agar (KB, Mast Group Ltd., UK) and yeast dextrose carbonate medium (YDC, Duchefa Biochemie, The Netherlands). The plates were incubated at 27°C ± 1 for 48 h (Arsa mod. AR-130D, Mexico) [12].

## 2.2. Identification of the bacterial strain

The strain isolated was identified by the morphology of colonies, biochemical test (LOPAT) [12], and hypersensitive response (HR) in *Nicotiana tabacum* leaves [13]. Microscopic observations were made with an optical microscope (Carl Zeiss Microscopy GmbH, Jena, Germany).

Additionally, the strain was identified by analyzing the sequences of 16S rRNA. Isolation of the genomic DNA was performed using the technique for Gram-negative bacteria described by Cheng and Jian [14]. Amplification was performed in a 25 µL reaction mix containing DNA, 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.3), 50 mM KCl, 3 mM MgCl<sub>2</sub>, 200 µM dNTPs, 30 pmol of each primer, 1.5 units of Taq DNA polymerase (Promega, USA), and 1 µL of isolated DNA. PCR amplifications were performed in a Mastercycler (Eppendorf AG, Germany). The primers used were 8F (5'-AGA GTT TGA TCC TGG CTC AG-3', TM = 58°C) and 1512R (5'-GTG AAG CTT ACG GYT AGC TTG TTA CGA CTT-3', TM = 58°C) to amplify the 16S rRNA region [15]. Purification of PCR products was carried out with a Wizard SV Gel and PCR Clean-Up System (Promega, USA), after which sequencing was performed (Applied Biosystems, mod. 3130xl, USA). The sequence of nucleotides was compared with those present in the GenBank, NCBI, by employing the BLASTN tool to confirm identity between species. For phylogenetic analysis, the sequences were aligned using the algorithm ClustalW of MegaAlign from MEGA7 software [16]. The phylogenetic tree was constructed using the maximum likelihood estimation (Kimura 2-parameter model) of MEGA7 software. Bootstrap analysis was performed with 1000 replicates. The nucleotide sequence obtained was submitted to GenBank, and the accession number provided was **MF962580**.

## 2.3. Bacterial culture and preparation of extracts

The *P. cedrina* strain was cultivated in Petri dishes containing a solid Luria-Bertani medium (LB, Dibico, Mexico) incubated for 48 h at 27°C ± 1. After that, one bacterial colony was used to inoculate five Erlenmeyer flasks (500 mL) with 100 mL of LB broth; the flasks were placed in an orbital shaker (SEV mod. 6090, Mexico) for 48 h at 27°C ± 1 [12]. Then, 1 mL of bacterial suspension was used to scale up

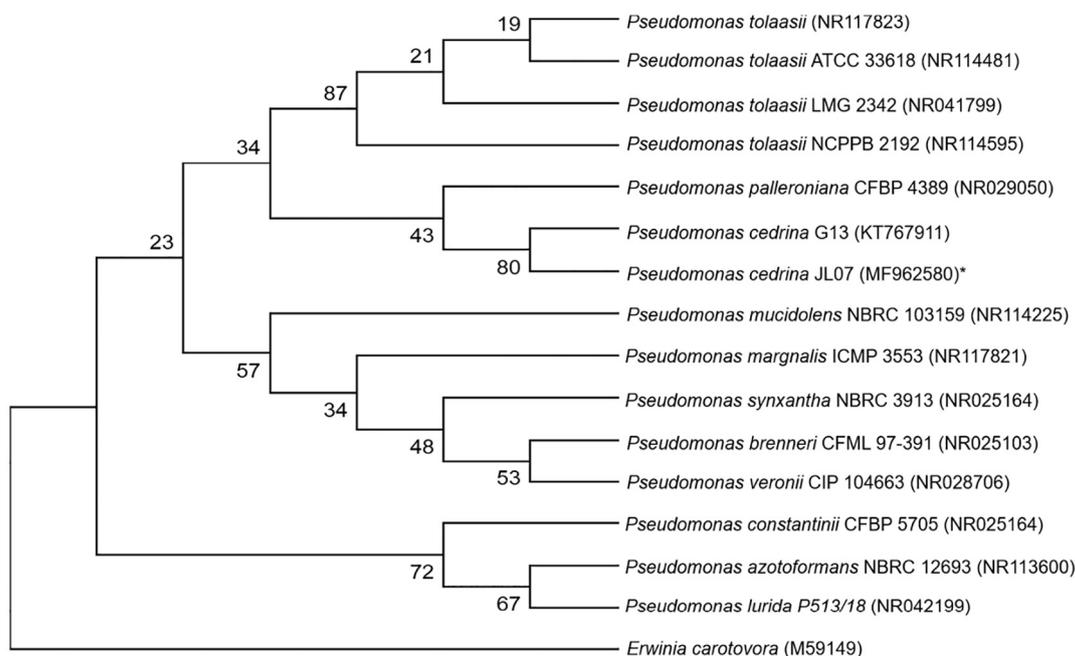
the culture in 40 L of LB broth distributed in Erlenmeyer flasks (500 mL) with 100 mL of medium. Subsequently, the broth culture was sonicated (Branson mod. 3510R-MT, USA) for 1 h, and then, the biomass and broth were separated by centrifugation (Eppendorf mod. 5416, Germany) at 7500 rpm for 10 min. Both biomass and broth were first frozen and then lyophilized (−40°C, 0.015 mbar, LABCONCO FreeZone Plus 6, Missouri). Once dry, the broth and biomass were extracted separately with a mixture of chloroform:methanol (1:1) for five days at room temperature. The extraction was repeated five times; the extracts obtained were filtered with a filtration system (Sterifil, Millipore, Germany) at room temperature and concentrated in a rotatory evaporator (40°C, 330 mbar, Büchi Olibath B-485, Flawil), and finally, the lyophilized extracts were used in an antiproliferative assay.

## 2.4. Cell lines and culture

The human solid tumor cell lines A-549, HBL-100, HeLa, T-47D, and WiDr, donated by Prof. G. J. Peters (VU Medical Center, Amsterdam, The Netherlands), were used in this study. The cells were maintained in 25 cm<sup>2</sup> culture flasks in RPMI 1640 (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA) supplemented with 5% heat-inactivated fetal calf serum and 2 mM L-glutamine (Lonza BioWhittaker, Verviers, Belgium) in an incubator at 37°C, 5% CO<sub>2</sub>, and 95% air humidity (Steri-Cycle CO<sub>2</sub> Incubator, Thermo Electron Corporation, Waltham, MA, USA). Cells growing in the exponential phase were trypsinized (Lonza BioWhittaker, Verviers, Belgium) and resuspended in an antibiotic-containing medium (100 units of penicillin G and 0.1 mg of streptomycin per mL) (Lonza BioWhittaker, Verviers, Belgium). Single-cell suspensions were counted using Orflo's Moxi Z automated cell counter (Orflow, Ketchum, ID, USA), and dilutions were made to give the appropriate cell densities for the inoculation onto 96-well microtiter plates. Based on their doubling times, the cells were inoculated in 100 µL per well at 10,000 (A-549, HBL-100, and HeLa), 15,000 (T-47D), and 20,000 (WiDr) cells per well.

## 2.5. Antiproliferative activity

Dry extracts were initially dissolved in DMSO (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA) at 400 times the desired final maximum test concentration, i.e., 10 mg/mL and diluted in the culture media until they reached an assay concentration of 250 µg mL<sup>−1</sup> [17]. Control cells were exposed to an equivalent concentration of DMSO but with no extract (0.25% v/v, negative control). The extract (i.e., drug) treatment began on the first day after plating. The extracts were incubated for 48 h, and after that, the cells were precipitated with 25 µL ice-cold TCA (50% w/v) and fixed for 60 min at 4°C. Then, the SRB assay was



**Fig. 1.** Molecular phylogenetic analysis of *P. cedrina* strain used in the research (\*). The tree was constructed using a Maximum Likelihood algorithm based on the Kimura 2-parameter model with bootstrap analysis (1000 replicates). *Erwinia carotovora* was used as an external group. Figure created with MEGA7 software.

performed using the technique described by Skehan et al. [18]. The optical density (OD) of each well was measured at 492 nm using BioTek's PowerWave XS Absorbance Microplate Reader (BioTek, Winooski, VT, USA). The percentage growth was calculated as the OD difference between the start and end of each treatment level corrected for background OD of the control and compared with untreated cells. The results were expressed as the concentration of extract causing 50% reduction in the proliferation of cancer cells ( $GI_{50}$ ) [17].

## 2.6. Purification and structural elucidation of compounds

The biomass extract was purified by silica gel column chromatography (Merck 0.040–0.063 mm) as the static phase and n-hexane-ethyl acetate gradient as the eluent. The chromatography process was monitored by TLC (Merck 60 GF<sub>254</sub>, 0.2 mm of thickness) staining under UV light (254 and 365 nm) and with iodine vapors. The compounds were identified by analysis of <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR and a comparison of their spectral data with data already published.

### 2.6.1. Cyclo-(L-Prolyl-L-Valine) (2)

From the fractions eluted with AcOEt (9.4 g) of the chloroform: methanol extract of the biomass (99.8 g of dry biomass), 3.1 mg of a white powder was obtained (Mp 144–147°C) and TLC (1:9 n-Hex: AcOEt): Rf = 0.35. <sup>1</sup>H RMN (CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 600 Hz) δ, ppm: 5.75 (1 H, sa, H-4); 4.08 (1 H, t, J = 7.81 Hz, H-6); 3.94 (1 H, sa, H-3); 3.6 (2 H, c, H-9); 2.64 (1 H, c, H-10); 2.36 (1 H, c, H-7); 2.01 (3 H, c, H-7' and H-8); 1.05 (3 H, d, J = 7.24 Hz, H-11); 0.91 (3 H, d, J = 6.76 Hz, H-12) [19].

### 2.6.2. Cyclo-(L-Leucyl-L-Proline) (2)

From the fractions eluted with AcOEt (9.4 g) of the chloroform: methanol extract of the biomass (99.8 g of dry biomass), 3.6 mg of a colorless crystal was obtained (Mp 168–172°C) and TLC (1:9 n-Hex: AcOEt): Rf = 0.45. <sup>1</sup>H RMN (CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 600 Hz) δ, ppm: 5.88 (1 H, sa, H-4); 4.16 (1 H, t, J = 7.82 Hz, H-6); 4.05 (1 H, dd, J = 3.74, 9.52 Hz, H-3); 3.59 (2H, c, H-9); 2.38 (1 H, c, H-7); 2.10 (3 H, c, H-10 y H-8); 1.96 (1 H, c, H-7'); 1.78 (1 H, c, H-11); 1.56 (1 H, c, H-10'); 1.01 (3 H, d, J = 5.9 Hz, H-12); 0.97 (3 H, d, J = 6.1 Hz, H-13) [10,19].

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Isolation and identification of bacterial strain

The bacterial strain was isolated from tumors located in the stem of *P. patula* samples, and when an HR test in *N. tabacum* was carried out, the strain caused a notorious necrotic effect in the leaves. This strain was cultivated in KB medium, and after 48 h, the bacterial strain showed light yellow colonies that were smooth and convex with regular margins and that produced a pigment that demonstrated a light green fluorescence when irradiated under UV light ( $\lambda = 360$  nm) characteristic of the genus *Pseudomonas* [12]. When a biochemical LOPAT test was carried out, the strain showed production of levan, cytochrome oxidase, arginine dihydrolase, and pectolytic activity. All these biochemical characteristics are consistent with those described by Dabboussi et al. [20] for *P. cedrina*.

Additionally, the strain was genetically identified using the 16S rRNA, and the obtained sequence was compared against nucleotide entries in the databases of GenBank, NCBI. The strain shared a sequence similarity of 100% with *P. cedrina* (GenBank accession no. KT767911.1) and was placed in the *P. cedrina* clade (Fig. 1).

### 3.2. Antiproliferative activity

Using the *P. cedrina* strain, biomass and culture broth extracts were prepared. Following this, assays against five human solid tumor cell lines were carried out employing these extracts. The extract obtained from biomass exhibited 50% growth inhibition at concentrations below 50  $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$  against three of the studied solid tumor cell lines: A-549 (44  $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ ), HBL-100 (32  $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ ), and HeLa (33  $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 2**

Values of growth inhibition 50% ( $GI_{50}$ ) ( $\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ ) of the extract obtained from the biomass of *P. cedrina* against five solid tumor cell lines.

A-549 (lung)	HBL-100 (breast)	HeLa (cervix)	T-47D (breast)	WiDr (colon)
44	32	33	64	55

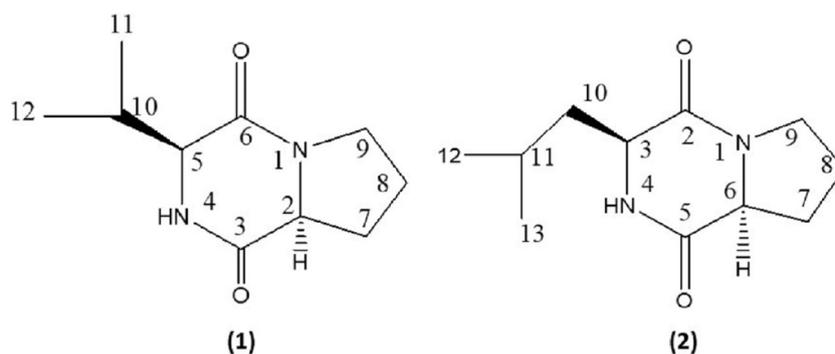


Fig. 2. Structure of the compounds isolated from *P. cedrina*. Figure created with ChemDraw Ultra 8.0 software.

### 3.3. Purification and structural elucidation of compounds

The biomass extract (9.4 g) was purified to identify the metabolites with antiproliferative activity, and the following compounds were isolated: (1) cyclo-(L-Prolyl-L-Valine) and (2) cyclo-(L-Leucyl-L-Proline) (Fig. 2). Both were identified by comparison with an authentic sample and with their previously reported  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  spectroscopic data [10,19].

## 4. Discussion

There are reports of different bacterial genera that can be associated with plants, with *Pseudomonas* as the most abundant genus in the phyllosphere, a region that includes leaves, stems, and trunks. Usually, this genus is opportunistic and, in some cases, potentially phytopathogenic [5,21].

In addition, another characteristic of the genus *Pseudomonas* is their versatility to produce secondary metabolites depending on environmental conditions [22]. These metabolites show a wide variety of biological activities, such as siderophores [23], cellular signaling molecules [24], antimicrobial [10], cytotoxicity against some cancer cell lines [7,8,9,10,25], and toxins [5,26]. Some metabolites such as safracins and phenazines obtained from bacteria of the genus *Pseudomonas* have been identified to exhibit antitumor activity [7] or diketopiperazines, isolated from *P. fluorescens* H40, which exhibited cytotoxicity against Hep-2 cell lines [10].

According to the methodology for evaluating *in vitro* anticancer drug discovery screen suggested by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) of the USA [18], the biomass extract from *P. cedrina* evaluated in this study exhibited antiproliferative properties against three of the studied solid tumor cell lines: A-549, HBL-100, and HeLa.

On the other hand, the compounds (1, 2) were identified by analyzing their  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  spectroscopic data as two diketopiperazines (DKPs). These compounds are cyclic dipeptides that are obtained by the condensation of two  $\alpha$ -amino acids and are produced by both bacteria and fungi [27]. Previously, it was thought that they were “artifacts” of the microorganisms that were produced as part of the assimilation of the culture medium. However, recent studies have shown that these compounds are synthesized by the action of the cyclodipeptide synthases, a family of enzymes involved in the synthesis of non-ribosomal peptides [27,28]. Some biological activities that have been identified for this type of compounds are antifungal [29,30,31], antibacterial [32,33], inhibition of biofilm formation [34], inhibition of fouling [35], antilarval [33], antiproliferative against glioblastoma cells [36], and cytotoxic against some cancer cell lines [10].

Particularly, it has been reported that DKPs and their derivate molecules exhibit biological activities against human carcinoma cells through different mechanisms such as DNA-binding agents [37], inhibition of cell cycle [38], inhibition of the (BCRP/ABCG2) multidrug transporter [39], depolymerization of tubuline [40], and

inactivation of the antiproteolytic activity of the serpin plasminogen activator inhibitor-1 (PAI-1) [41]. These biological activities of the 2,5-diketopiperazines and their derivate compounds are associated with their scaffold that provides them with different chemical properties such as conformational rigidity, resistance to proteolysis, and mimicking peptidic pharmacophoric groups and donor or acceptor groups for hydrogen bonding essential for interaction with biological targets [42].

Finally, the reports related to *P. cedrina* describe only new isolations of this species from different samples such as grasses [21], spring water [20], herbal plants [22], and desert soil [43]. Although it is known that bacteria of the genus *Pseudomonas* produce a wide variety of bioactive metabolites [5], for the species *P. cedrina*, it has not been reported whether this species produces this type of metabolite, and has antiproliferative activity against human tumor cell lines of the cervix (HeLa), lung (A-549), and breast (HBL-100).

## 5. Conclusions

This is the first report on the association of *P. cedrina* with the stems of *P. patula* in Mexico and the antiproliferative activity of extracts from this species of bacteria against human solid tumor cell lines of the cervix (HeLa), lung (A-549), and breast (HBL-100). In addition, we isolated the bioactive diketopiperazines cyclo-(L-Prolyl-L-Valine) and cyclo-(L-Leucyl-L-Proline), which could be responsible for antiproliferative activity.

## Conflict of interest

None.

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