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Evaluation of *in-vitro* anti-oxidant and neuroprotective property of Bromelain

¹Tania Michael, ²Divyan Devasir Sathyaseelan, ³Lakshmi Thangavelu, ^{3*}Royapuram Parthasarathy Parameswari

¹Department of Pharmacology, Saveetha Dental College and Hospitals, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, Saveetha University, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India.

²Department of General Surgery, Saveetha Medical College and Hospital, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, India.

³Centre for Global Health Research, Saveetha Medical College and Hospital, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, Saveetha University, Thandalam, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India.

***Corresponding author**

Dr. Royapuram Parthasarathy Parameswari

Associate Professor

Centre for Global Health Research,

Saveetha Medical College and Hospital

Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences

Saveetha University, Thandalam, Chennai, Tamilnadu, India.

Email: paramsarathy@gmail.com; parameswarirp.smc@saveetha.com

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Abstract

Background: Bromelain, identified as a cysteine protease enzyme, is widely known for its role in aiding the digestion process by breaking down protein molecules. Extensive research has explored its potential health benefits, including chemoprotection, promotion of wound healing, systemic anti-inflammatory properties, and anticancer effects. Recently, Bromelain has attracted attention for its notable neuroprotective effects. However, additional studies are required to validate its neuroprotective potential. The current investigation focuses on examining the antioxidant capacity of Bromelain, given the crucial role of oxidative stress in the onset of Alzheimer's disease. Moreover, the study assesses the neuroprotective efficacy of Bromelain by examining its impact on acetylcholinesterase enzyme and amyloid beta peptide.

Materials and Methods: The free radical scavenging and antioxidant effect of Bromelain was evaluated using *in vitro* DPPH radical scavenging activity, ABTS radical scavenging activity and Xanthine oxidase inhibitory activity. The effect of Bromelain on acetylcholinesterase activity was measured under *in vitro* conditions. The inhibitory potential of Bromelain against synthetic monomer amyloid β peptide was also evaluated to confirm the neuroprotective activity exhibited by Bromelain.

Results: The free radical scavenging ability of Bromelain was carried out and compared with ascorbic acid. Bromelain has demonstrated significant quenching of both DPPH and ABTS free radicals. Xanthine oxidase, a major source of reactive oxygen species was also found to be markedly inhibited by Bromelain. The *in vitro* enzyme based acetylcholinesterase activity showed that Bromelain considerably inhibited acetylcholinesterase activity. The A β 1–42 *in vitro* results showed that Bromelain effectively inhibited the aggregation of amyloid beta plaques.

Conclusion: In summary, the results of the present study showed that Bromelain exhibited significant antioxidant and neuroprotective effect which contributes new insights about the compound.

Keywords: Neuroprotection; Alzheimer's disease; Bromelain; free radicals; acetylcholinesterase; amyloid peptide

Introduction

Neurological diseases are a significant global health concern, and their prevalence can be influenced by various factors, including population aging, lifestyle changes, and improved diagnostic capabilities. Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common neurological disorder and key cause of dementia in older adults; it is characterized by lesions including extracellular β -amyloid peptide (A β) accumulations, neurofibrillary tangles composed of intra-neuronal abnormally phosphorylated Tau, and neuronal and synaptic losses (1). A European collaborative study of population-based cohorts found that prevalence of AD increased continuously with age, from 0.6% in the 65 to 69 years age group to 22.2% at the age of 90

years and older. Oxidative stress and neurodegeneration are implicated in the pathogenesis of various neurological disorders, including Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and stroke (2).

Antioxidants play a crucial role in mitigating the damaging effects of oxidative stress on neuronal cells. Bromelain, a mixture of proteolytic enzymes derived from pineapple (*Ananas comosus*), has gained attention for its diverse pharmacological properties (3). Bromelain contains a combination of proteases, peroxidases, phosphatases, glucosidases, cellulases, and other enzymes, which collectively contribute to its biological activities (4, 5). Proteases in bromelain may play a role in clearing protein aggregates, which are a hallmark of several neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Studies have suggested that Bromelain may exhibit antioxidant properties by scavenging free radicals and modulating cellular redox status. Furthermore, its ability to influence various cellular processes raises the intriguing possibility of neuroprotection (6). The neuroprotective property of substances like Bromelain is of significant importance due to its potential to safeguard the health and function of nerve cells and the nervous system. While its anti-inflammatory and anticancer activities have been widely explored, there is a paucity of research regarding its potential antioxidant and neuroprotective effects (7, 8).

In-vitro assessments are fundamental for elucidating the underlying mechanisms of Bromelain's antioxidant and neuroprotective effects. These experiments allow for a controlled environment where specific parameters can be measured and analysed. Understanding the *in-vitro* actions of Bromelain on neuronal cells and oxidative stress markers is crucial before progressing to *in-vivo* studies. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the *in-vitro* antioxidant potential of Bromelain using established assays, such as DPPH (2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl) radical scavenging, ABTS radical scavenging and Xanthine oxidase inhibitory assays. Additionally, we seek to explore the neuroprotective effects of Bromelain using acetylcholinesterase enzyme and amyloid β peptide by *in vitro* enzyme inhibitory assay systems. The outcomes of this research could provide valuable insights into the therapeutic potential of Bromelain for neurodegenerative disorders and contribute to the development of novel antioxidant interventions.

Materials and Methods

Chemicals and reagents

2,2- diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH), 2,2'-azino-bis (3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulphonic acid (ABTS), Xanthine, acetylthiocholine iodide, acetylcholine enzyme (0.3U/ml)

were procured from Sigma-aldrich, USA. Ascorbic acid was purchased from TCI chemicals, India. Donepezil hydrochloride was purchased as a tablet from a local pharmacy. All other chemicals, reagents and solvents used were of analytical grade and purchased from SRL chemicals, India.

In vitro antioxidant activity

DPPH Free Radical Scavenging activity assay

The antioxidant potential of the extract was assessed using the 2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH) assay, following the method described by Koleva et al., 2002 (9). A 0.004% DPPH solution was prepared in 100 ml of methanol. Subsequently, 10 μ L of Bromelain at varying concentrations (10 μ M, 20 μ M, 40 μ M, 80 μ M, 160 μ M, and 320 μ M) was added to 190 μ L of the DPPH solution in a 96-well plate. After thorough vortexing, the reaction mixture was incubated for 20 minutes at 37°C. Methanol, the solvent used to prepare the DPPH solution, served as the control blank. The reduction in absorbance of the test mixture, due to the quenching of DPPH free radicals, was measured at 517 nm. The experiments were conducted in triplicate, and the percentage inhibition was calculated. Ascorbic acid was used as the standard reference in this study. The DPPH radical scavenging activity of the Bromelain was calculated by the below equation:

$$\% \text{ Scavenging effect} = (\text{Absorbance of control} - \text{Absorbance of sample}) \times 100 / \text{Absorbance of control}.$$

ABTS radical scavenging assay

The ABTS radical scavenging activity was measured following the procedure described by González-Palma et al., 2016 (10). A 7mM solution of 2,2'-azino-bis (3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulphonic acid) (ABTS) was prepared in water. To generate the ABTS radical cation (ABTS \cdot^+), the ABTS stock solution was reacted with potassium persulfate at a final concentration of 2.45mM and the mixture was left in the dark at room temperature for 12-16 hours before use. The resulting ABTS \cdot^+ solution was then diluted with water until it reached an absorbance of 0.70 (\pm 0.02) at 734 nm. For the assay, 0.07mL of Bromelain at various concentrations (10-320 μ M) was added to 3mL of the ABTS radical solution. After incubating for 6 minutes, the absorbance was recorded at 734 nm using a spectrophotometer. Ascorbic acid was used as the reference standard in this experiment.

Xanthine oxidase inhibitory activity

The XO inhibitory activity was measured spectrophotometrically following the method described by (11). Fresh substrate and enzyme solutions were prepared for the assay. The assay mixture was composed of 50 μ L of various concentrations of Bromelain (10-320 μ M), various

concentrations of Ascorbic acid (10-320 μ M), 35 μ L of 0.1mM phosphate buffer (pH=7.5), and 30 μ L of enzyme solution (0.01 units/mL of XO in 0.1mM phosphate buffer, pH=7.5), and was prepared immediately before use. The reaction was initiated by adding 60 μ L of substrate solution (150mM of Xanthine in 0.1mM phosphate buffer) after incubating the mixture for 30 minutes at 25°C. The formation of uric acid was monitored by measuring the absorption at 295 nm at 25°C, and the initial rate was calculated. A blank was prepared in the same way. One unit of XO was defined as the amount of enzyme required to produce 1 mmol of uric acid per minute at 25°C. XO inhibitory activity was expressed as the percentage inhibition of XO, calculated using the formula $(1-B/A) \times 100$, where A and B are the activities of the enzyme without and with different concentrations of Bromelain and Ascorbic acid, respectively. IC₅₀ values were determined from the average data of three replicates. Ascorbic acid was used as a reference standard.

***In vitro* acetylcholinesterase (AChE) inhibition assay (12)**

The AChE inhibitory activities of Bromelain and the standard Donepezil hydrochloride were evaluated at concentrations ranging from 10-320 μ M and 10-320 μ g/ml, respectively. To prepare these solutions, 200 μ l of each concentration of Bromelain and Donepezil hydrochloride were dissolved in 0.05M tris base. In brief, 200 μ l of acetylthiocholine iodide (15mM), 1000 μ l of DTNB (3mM), and 200 μ l of Bromelain or Donepezil at various concentrations were mixed and incubated for 15 minutes at 30°C. The mixture's absorbance was monitored spectrophotometrically at 412nm, measured 10 times at 13-second intervals. Subsequently, 200 μ l of AChE solution (0.3U/ml) were added to initiate the reaction, and the absorbance was recorded. A control sample containing all components except Bromelain or Donepezil was also prepared. The percentage of AChE inhibitory activity (% IA) was calculated by using the following equation:

$$\text{IA (\%)} = (\text{Activity of Control} - \text{Activity of Test}) / \text{Activity of Control} \times 100$$

Assessment of A β (1–42) Concentration

Preparation of A β solution

The A β solution was prepared following the method described by reference (14). In brief, synthetic β -Amyloid Peptide 1-42 (A β 1-42) (PP69, Sigma Merck, USA) was dissolved in 0.1% ammonia solution to achieve a final concentration of 250 μ M. This solution was then sonicated in ice-cold water for a total of 5 minutes (1 minute at a time, repeated 5 times) to prevent pre-aggregation. For the preparation of the working A β solution, aliquots of the initial A β solution were diluted to a concentration of 25 μ M in a buffer containing 50mM phosphate (pH 7.5) and 100mM NaCl.

Thioflavin T fluorescence assay

The thioflavin T (ThT) fluorescence assay was conducted as described in reference (13). An 8 μ L solution of A β was combined with various concentrations of Bromelain (10-320 μ M) and Donepezil (10-320 μ g/ml). This mixture was then added to 1.6 mL of ThT solution, which contained 5 μ M ThT and 50 mM NaOH-glycine buffer (pH 8.5). The samples were incubated at 37°C, and the fibrillogenesis rate was monitored using ThT fluorescence assays. ThT fluorescence levels of the samples were measured with a Biotek Synergy H4 hybrid multi-mode reader (USA), with excitation and emission wavelengths set at 446 nm and 490 nm, respectively.

Statistical analysis

Data were analysed using GraphPad prism (version 7.0). The results were expressed as Mean \pm SEM and the IC₅₀ values were obtained from the linear regression plots. Two-way ANOVA was used to assess differences between means of bromelain and standards at *** p <0.001, ** p <0.01 and * p <0.05 level of significance. The means were compared with standards groups using the Holm-Sidak Test.

Results

DPPH radical scavenging assay

Bromelain was prepared at varying concentrations of 10 μ M, 20 μ M, 40 μ M, 80 μ M, 160 μ M and 320 μ M. The different concentrations of Bromelain was tested for its potential against DPPH radical formation. The results demonstrated significant inhibition of DPPH radicals by Bromelain which is comparable to Standard Ascorbic acid. The lowest inhibition was found at 10 μ M with inhibitory percentage of 0.85% while ascorbic acid exhibited 11% inhibition at the same concentration. However, a maximum of 71.8% inhibition was observed at maximum bromelain concentration of 320 μ M.

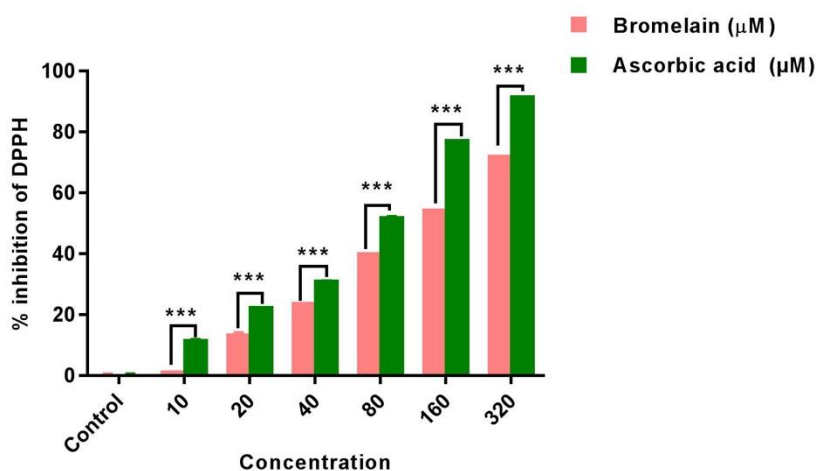


Figure 1: Bar graph showing % inhibition of DPPH free radicals by different concentrations of Bromelain compared with standard Ascorbic acid. Two-way ANOVA was used to assess differences between means of bromelain and standards at * $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$ and * $p < 0.05$ level of significance. The means were compared with standards groups using the Holm-Sidak Test.**

ABTS radical scavenging assay

Bromelain at all its tested concentrations of 10-320 μ M has exhibited marked quenching of ABTS radicals (Figure 2). The ABTS quenching ability of Bromelain was compared to Standard Ascorbic acid. Maximum inhibition of 77.85% and 92.78% was observed for Bromelain and ascorbic acid respectively at the highest concentration of 320 μ M.

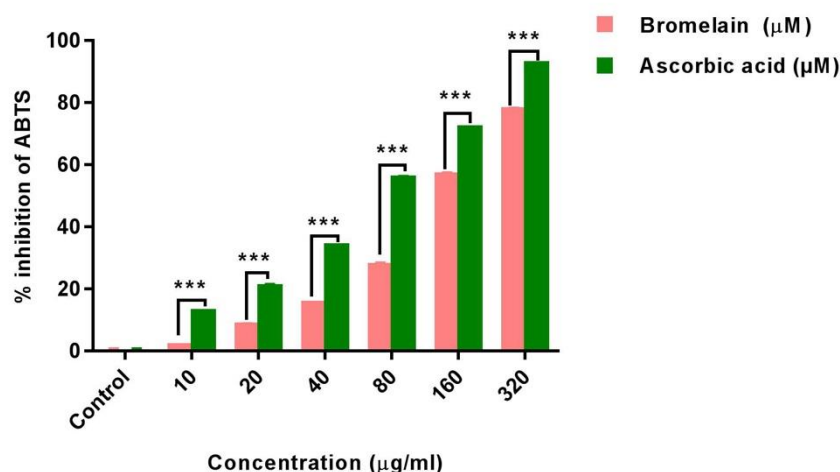


Figure 2: Bar graph showing % inhibition of ABTS free radicals by different concentrations of Bromelain compared with standard Ascorbic acid. Two-way ANOVA was used to assess differences between means of bromelain and standards at * $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$ and * $p < 0.05$ level of significance. The means were compared with standards groups using the Holm-Sidak Test.**

Xanthine oxidase inhibitory effect of Bromelain

Xanthine oxidase, major source of reactive oxygen species was found to be significantly inhibited to a maximum percentage of 81.64% by Bromelain at 320 μ M (Figure 3).

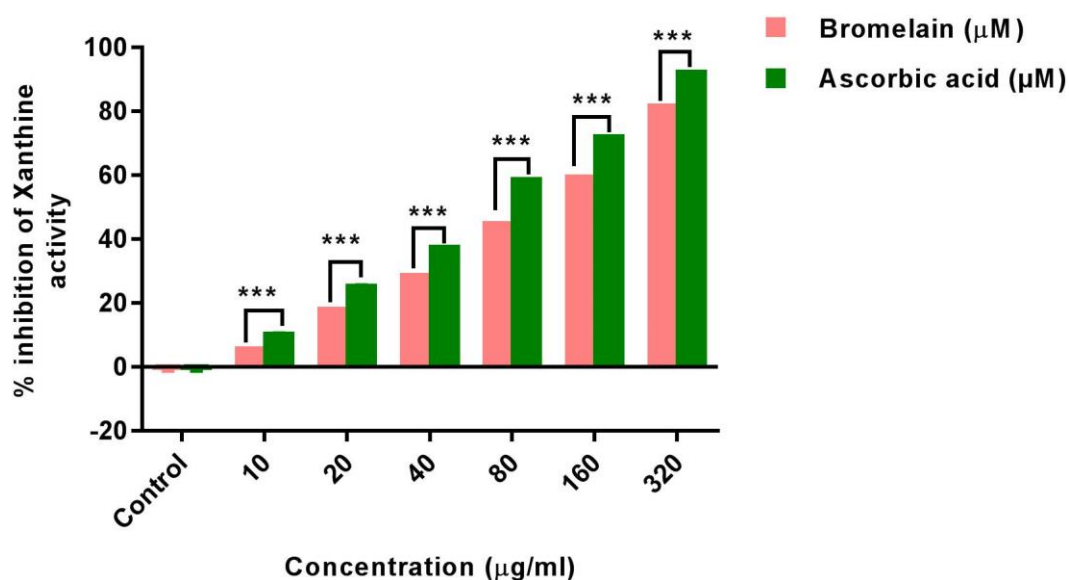


Figure 3: Bar graph showing % inhibition of Xanthine oxidase by different concentrations of Bromelain compared with standard Ascorbic acid. Two-way ANOVA was used to assess differences between means of bromelain and standards at *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$ and * $p < 0.05$ level of significance. The means were compared with standards groups using the Holm-Sidak Test.

In vitro acetylcholinesterase inhibitory activity of Bromelain

Bromelain exhibited considerable and dose-dependent decrease in the activity of acetylcholinesterase under *in vitro* conditions. A minimum inhibition of 2.33% to a maximum inhibition of 76.24% was observed for Bromelain from 10µM to 320µM. The acetylcholinesterase inhibition potential was compared with standard cholinesterase inhibitor Donepezil hydrochloride.

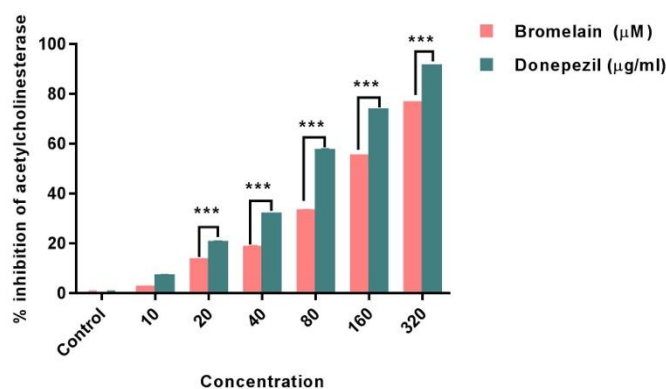


Figure 4: Bar graph showing % inhibition of acetylcholinesterase by different concentrations of Bromelain compared with standard Donepezil. Two-way ANOVA was used to assess differences between means of bromelain and standards at *** $p < 0.001$,

****p<0.01 and *p<0.05 level of significance. The means were compared with standards groups using the Holm-Sidak Test.**

***In vitro* inhibition of A β 42 by Bromelain**

The results of synthetic β -Amyloid Peptide 1-42 aggregation assay showed that Bromelain effectively inhibited the aggregation of A β 42. The % inhibition of aggregation was compared to standard Donepezil. The inhibitory activity was found to be promising.

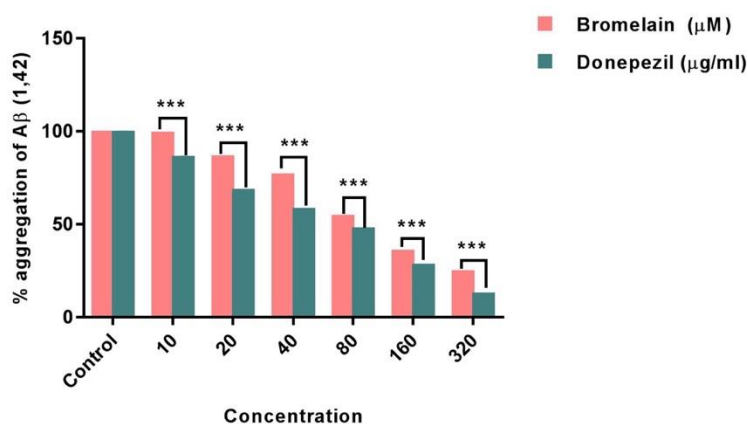


Figure 5: Bar graph showing % inhibition of aggregation of amyloid beta peptide by different concentrations of Bromelain compared with standard Donepezil. Two-way ANOVA was used to assess differences between means of bromelain and standards at *p<0.001, **p<0.01 and *p<0.05 level of significance. The means were compared with standards groups using the Holm-Sidak Test.**

Discussion

Neuroprotective drugs are substances aimed at safeguarding the nervous system, particularly the brain, against injury, deterioration, or disease. They are pivotal in halting or delaying the advancement of neurological disorders and ailments (14, 15). Many such conditions, including Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and stroke, involve the damage or degeneration of nerve cells (16, 17). A promising therapeutic approach involves targeting acetylcholinesterase and amyloid β 42 (A β 42) oligomers, potentially offering effective neuroprotective strategies for both the prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's disease (18). Against this backdrop, the current study investigates Bromelain, the active component found in pineapples, to assess its potential antioxidant and neuroprotective effects.

Oxidative stress is a primary factor in the development of diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, and it is implicated in various neurological disorders (19, 20). Addressing the complex nature of neurodegenerative conditions like Alzheimer's disease (AD) would benefit from additional actions such as scavenging free radicals and exhibiting antioxidant properties, alongside the primary targeted effects (21). Neuroprotective drugs with antioxidant properties can neutralize harmful free radicals and reduce oxidative damage to nerve cells (22). By slowing down the progression of neurological disorders or preventing further damage, these neuroprotective drugs can enhance the quality of life for individuals affected by these conditions (23). Bromelain's free radical scavenging property was demonstrated through radical scavenging assays exhibited by significant inhibition of DPPH, ABTS and Xanthine oxidase. Therefore, it can be concluded that bromelain possesses antioxidant properties, which can be utilized to prevent or slow down the progression of neurological diseases (16).

There are not many neuroprotective drugs available on the market, primarily because few compounds can cross the blood-brain barrier (BBB). Overcoming the BBB is a significant challenge for drugs and therapeutic agents (24). Previous research has demonstrated that a combination of Bromelain and Donepezil effectively reversed spatial learning and memory deficits induced by $AlCl_3$ and D-galactose. Moreover, it reduced cognitive impairment by enhancing cholinergic activity and synaptic plasticity while decreasing oxidative damage, neuroinflammation, and $A\beta$ 1–42 aggregation (6). These findings suggest that Bromelain can cross the BBB. Therefore, the present study investigated the anti-Alzheimer's effects of Bromelain on acetylcholinesterase activity and amyloid beta plaque formation in an in vitro assay. The results of this study showed that Bromelain has promising neuroprotective effects, as evidenced by significant inhibition of acetylcholinesterase and amyloid beta plaque formation.

The use of natural compounds in disease treatment has garnered increasing attention in recent years due to several associated advantages. These compounds, often derived from plants, fruits, vegetables, or other natural sources, typically have a long history of human consumption and are generally considered safe with lower toxicity compared to some synthetic drugs. For instance, natural compounds like Bromelain exhibit neuroprotective properties by reducing oxidative stress, inflammation, and apoptosis (25). These effects are particularly significant in the context of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Additionally, natural compounds often possess characteristics that enhance their ability to cross the blood-brain barrier, allowing them to reach the brain more effectively (26). This improved bioavailability contributes to their therapeutic potential in neurological diseases. Further

research using mouse models and identifying the mechanisms of action of Bromelain is crucial to validate the reported effects of Bromelain presented in this study.

Conclusion

In summary, our research suggests that Bromelain, commonly found in pineapple and widely consumed, has the potential to delay the progression of Alzheimer's disease (AD). These findings provide valuable insights that could aid in the development of novel preventive treatments for AD.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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