

A Comprehensive Review: Herbal Medicines for Liver Diseases and Hepatitis

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Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22300901>

Received: 01st July 2026

Accepted: 10th July 2026

Abstract

Liver diseases, including non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), alcoholic liver disease (ALD), viral hepatitis, liver cirrhosis, and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), are among the leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Despite advances in modern medicine, current therapeutic options remain limited due to adverse effects, high treatment costs, and inadequate long-term efficacy. Consequently, herbal medicines and natural products have emerged as promising complementary therapies owing to their diverse pharmacological properties and favourable safety profiles. This review highlights the therapeutic potential of medicinal plants and their bioactive phytochemicals in the prevention and management of liver diseases. Numerous medicinal plants, including *Silybum marianum*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, *Curcuma longa*, *Phyllanthus niruri*, *Andrographis paniculata*, and *Tinospora cordifolia*, have demonstrated significant hepatoprotective effects in both experimental and clinical studies. Their beneficial actions are primarily attributed to antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antifibrotic, immunomodulatory, and anticancer activities. These natural products exert hepatoprotective effects through multiple mechanisms, including the reduction of oxidative stress, inhibition of inflammatory signalling pathways, regulation of lipid metabolism, suppression of hepatic fibrosis, promotion of liver regeneration, and inhibition of viral replication. Although substantial preclinical evidence supports their efficacy, clinical translation remains challenging due to issues related to standardization, quality control, dosage optimization, bioavailability, and long-term safety. Further well-designed randomized clinical trials are essential to validate their therapeutic effectiveness and establish evidence-based recommendations for their clinical use. Overall, herbal natural products represent a promising and cost-effective complementary approach for the prevention and management of liver diseases and may contribute to the development of safer and more effective hepatoprotective therapies.

Keywords: Liver disease; Hepatitis; Herbal medicine; Natural products; Hepatoprotection.

Introduction

The liver is the largest internal organ and one of the most metabolically active organs in the human body. It performs a wide range of physiological functions essential for maintaining systemic homeostasis, including carbohydrate, protein, and lipid metabolism, synthesis of plasma proteins and bile acids, glycogen storage, detoxification of endogenous and exogenous compounds, hormone metabolism, and regulation of immune responses [1]. Owing to its anatomical location and continuous exposure to nutrients, drugs, toxins, alcohol, and

microbial products through the portal circulation, the liver is particularly vulnerable to various pathological insults [2]. Damage to hepatic tissue can disrupt normal metabolic processes, resulting in impaired detoxification, inflammation, fibrosis, and progressive liver dysfunction [3]. Liver diseases represent a major global public health concern because of their increasing prevalence, high morbidity, and significant mortality [4]. According to the World Health Organization, liver diseases account for nearly two million deaths each year, with cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) among the leading causes of liver-related mortality worldwide [5]. In addition to mortality, chronic liver diseases impose substantial socioeconomic burdens due to increased healthcare costs, reduced productivity, and diminished quality of life [6]. The spectrum of liver diseases includes viral hepatitis, alcoholic liver disease (ALD), metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD, formerly NAFLD), autoimmune hepatitis, cholestatic liver diseases, liver fibrosis, cirrhosis, and hepatocellular carcinoma [7]. Among these disorders, MASLD has emerged as the most common chronic liver disease globally because of the growing prevalence of obesity, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes mellitus, and metabolic syndrome [8]. Likewise, chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) infections continue to be major causes of chronic liver disease and liver cancer, particularly in developing countries [5]. The progression of liver disease is driven by complex molecular mechanisms involving oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, mitochondrial dysfunction, apoptosis, immune dysregulation, and excessive extracellular matrix deposition [9]. Reactive oxygen species (ROS) generated during hepatic injury promote lipid peroxidation, DNA damage, and activation of inflammatory pathways such as nuclear factor-kappa B (NF- κ B), leading to hepatocyte death and activation of hepatic stellate cells [10]. Persistent activation of hepatic stellate cells results in excessive collagen deposition, liver fibrosis, and eventually cirrhosis if left untreated [11]. Current therapeutic strategies primarily focus on managing the underlying cause of liver disease, including antiviral agents for viral hepatitis, lifestyle modification for MASLD, immunosuppressive therapy for autoimmune hepatitis, and supportive treatment for advanced liver disorders [12]. However, many pharmacological interventions are associated with adverse drug reactions, limited efficacy in advanced disease stages, high treatment costs, and poor patient compliance [13]. Furthermore, no universally effective pharmacotherapy exists for reversing advanced fibrosis or cirrhosis, highlighting the urgent need for safer and more effective therapeutic alternatives [14]. In recent years, herbal medicines and natural products have attracted considerable scientific attention because of their multitarget pharmacological actions and relatively favourable safety profiles [15]. Medicinal plants contain diverse bioactive phytochemicals, including flavonoids, alkaloids, terpenoids, phenolic acids, lignans, tannins, and saponins, which exhibit antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antifibrotic, immunomodulatory, and hepatoprotective activities. These compounds have shown promising therapeutic potential in experimental and clinical studies, suggesting that herbal natural products may serve as valuable complementary approaches for the prevention and management of liver diseases. Therefore, this review comprehensively summarizes the pharmacological mechanisms, therapeutic potential, clinical evidence, and future perspectives of herbal natural products in the management of liver diseases and hepatitis.

Liver Disorders and Their Management by Herbal Remedies and Phytochemical-Based Therapeutic Approaches

Herbal Remedies for Fatty Liver Disease

Fatty liver disease (FLD), also referred to as hepatic steatosis, is one of the most prevalent chronic liver disorders worldwide and is characterized by excessive accumulation of triglycerides within hepatocytes [16]. Based on its

etiology, FLD is broadly classified into alcoholic fatty liver disease (AFLD) and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), the latter recently being redefined as metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) to better reflect its underlying metabolic abnormalities [17]. The global prevalence of FLD has increased dramatically over the past two decades owing to the rising incidence of obesity, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, and sedentary lifestyles [18]. It is estimated that nearly one-quarter of the world's adult population is affected by NAFLD/MASLD, making it one of the leading causes of chronic liver disease [19]. The pathogenesis of FLD is complex and multifactorial, involving excessive hepatic lipid accumulation, insulin resistance, mitochondrial dysfunction, oxidative stress, inflammatory responses, and alterations in gut microbiota [20]. Increased delivery of free fatty acids to the liver, enhanced de novo lipogenesis, and impaired β -oxidation contribute significantly to triglyceride accumulation within hepatocytes [21]. Persistent lipid accumulation induces oxidative stress through excessive generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS), resulting in lipid peroxidation, mitochondrial damage, activation of inflammatory cytokines, and hepatocyte apoptosis [22]. If left untreated, simple steatosis may progress to steatohepatitis, fibrosis, cirrhosis, and hepatocellular carcinoma, thereby substantially increasing liver-related morbidity and mortality [23]. Despite the growing burden of FLD, currently available therapeutic options remain limited. Lifestyle modification through dietary intervention, regular physical activity, and weight reduction remains the cornerstone of treatment; however, long-term patient adherence is often poor [24]. Moreover, no universally approved pharmacological therapy is available for reversing hepatic steatosis or fibrosis in all patients, prompting increasing interest in herbal medicines and phytochemical-based interventions [25]. Traditional medicinal plants have been extensively investigated for their hepatoprotective properties because they contain diverse bioactive compounds, including flavonoids, polyphenols, alkaloids, terpenoids, lignans, saponins, and polysaccharides [26]. These phytochemicals exert beneficial effects through multiple mechanisms, including reduction of oxidative stress, suppression of inflammatory signalling pathways, regulation of lipid metabolism, enhancement of mitochondrial function, inhibition of hepatic stellate cell activation, and improvement of insulin sensitivity [27]. Among the medicinal plants investigated for FLD, *Salvia miltiorrhiza* (Danshen) has demonstrated significant hepatoprotective activity by improving hepatic microcirculation, reducing serum cholesterol and triglyceride concentrations, suppressing oxidative stress, and inhibiting inflammatory mediators [28]. Berberine, the principal alkaloid isolated from *Coptis chinensis* (formerly *Coptidis rhizoma*), has shown remarkable efficacy in experimental and clinical studies by activating AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK), suppressing lipogenesis, improving insulin sensitivity, and reducing hepatic triglyceride accumulation [29]. Similarly, *Gynostemma pentaphyllum* has been widely used in traditional Asian medicine for the management of obesity, hyperlipidemia, and fatty liver disease. Its gypenosides improve lipid metabolism, enhance fatty acid oxidation, decrease serum lipid concentrations, and protect hepatocytes against oxidative injury [30]. Polyphenolic compounds such as catechins, procyanidins, quercetin, resveratrol, and emodin also exhibit potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities by modulating the Nrf2/HO-1 and NF- κ B signaling pathways, thereby reducing hepatic lipid accumulation and preventing progression to steatohepatitis [31]. Furthermore, several phytochemicals inhibit acetyl-CoA carboxylase (ACC) and fatty acid synthase (FAS), leading to reduced de novo lipogenesis and improved lipid homeostasis [32]. Overall, herbal medicines represent promising complementary therapeutic strategies for FLD because of their multitarget pharmacological actions, favourable safety profiles, and ability to simultaneously regulate oxidative stress, inflammation, lipid metabolism, and mitochondrial function. Nevertheless, large-scale randomized clinical

trials and standardized herbal formulations are required to establish their long-term efficacy and safety before routine clinical application [33].

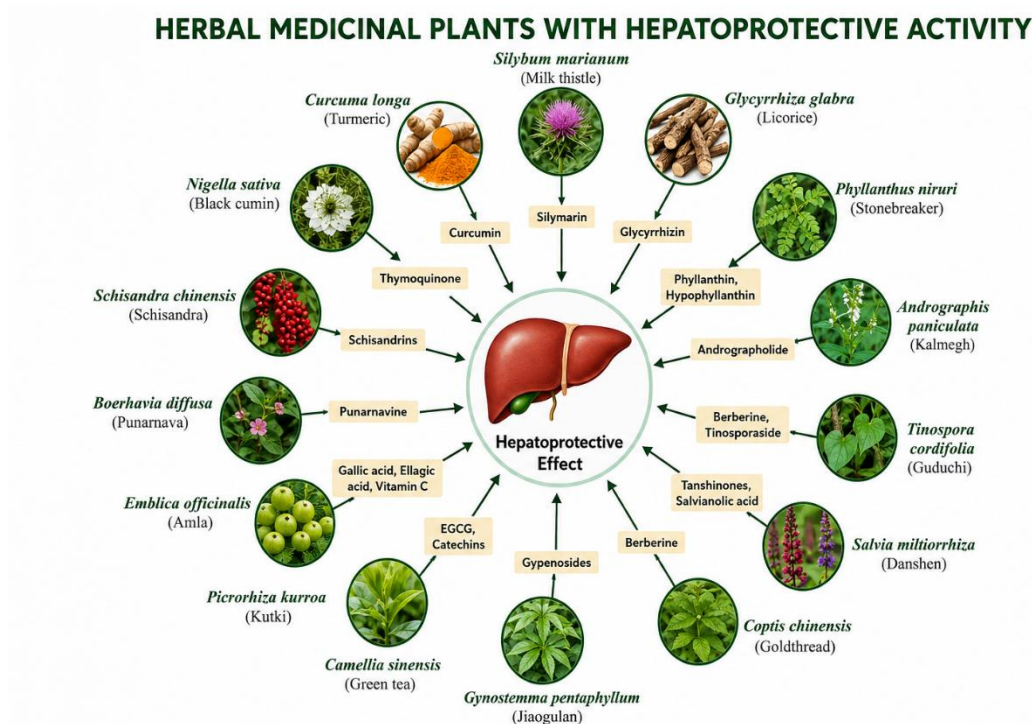


Figure 1: Herbal Remedies

Herbal Remedies for Viral Hepatitis

Viral hepatitis, primarily caused by hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV), remains a major global health challenge and is responsible for significant morbidity and mortality worldwide [34]. Chronic HBV and HCV infections can lead to persistent hepatic inflammation, progressive fibrosis, cirrhosis, liver failure, and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) if left untreated [35]. Although antiviral drugs such as nucleos(t)ide analogues and direct-acting antivirals have significantly improved treatment outcomes, challenges including high treatment costs, adverse drug reactions, viral resistance, and limited accessibility in low-income countries continue to restrict their widespread use [36]. Consequently, herbal medicines and phytochemicals have gained considerable attention as complementary therapeutic agents because of their antiviral, antioxidant, immunomodulatory, and hepatoprotective activities [37]. Among the medicinal plants investigated, *Phyllanthus niruri* has shown remarkable antiviral activity against HBV by inhibiting viral DNA polymerase and suppressing hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) expression [38]. *Glycyrrhiza glabra* (licorice) contains glycyrrhizin, a triterpenoid saponin widely used in the treatment of chronic hepatitis owing to its antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and hepatoprotective properties [39]. Experimental and clinical studies have demonstrated that glycyrrhizin reduces serum aminotransferase levels, suppresses inflammatory cytokines, and protects hepatocytes against immune-mediated damage [40]. Similarly, *Andrographis paniculata* contains andrographolide, which exhibits antiviral activity by modulating immune responses and inhibiting viral replication [41]. Polyphenols such as curcumin and

epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) have also demonstrated inhibitory effects on viral replication through modulation of oxidative stress and inflammatory signaling pathways [42].

Herbal Remedies for Alcoholic Liver Disease

Alcoholic liver disease (ALD) develops as a consequence of chronic excessive alcohol consumption and remains one of the leading causes of liver-related mortality worldwide [43]. The metabolism of ethanol generates excessive reactive oxygen species (ROS), acetaldehyde, and inflammatory mediators that induce oxidative stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, lipid peroxidation, and hepatocyte apoptosis [44]. Continued alcohol exposure promotes hepatic steatosis, alcoholic hepatitis, fibrosis, cirrhosis, and ultimately hepatocellular carcinoma [45]. Several medicinal plants have demonstrated protective effects against alcohol-induced liver injury. *Silybum marianum* (milk thistle) is among the most extensively studied hepatoprotective plants. Its major bioactive complex, silymarin, stabilizes hepatocyte membranes, scavenges free radicals, enhances glutathione synthesis, and suppresses inflammatory cytokine production [46]. *Curcuma longa* (turmeric) contains curcumin, which attenuates oxidative stress, inhibits NF- κ B activation, reduces inflammatory cytokines, and improves mitochondrial function in experimental models of ALD [47]. Likewise, *Tinospora cordifolia* possesses antioxidant and immunomodulatory properties that protect hepatic tissue against ethanol-induced oxidative injury and inflammation [48].

Herbal Remedies for Liver Fibrosis

Liver fibrosis represents the excessive accumulation of extracellular matrix proteins resulting from chronic hepatic injury and is considered a reversible stage preceding cirrhosis [49]. Activation of hepatic stellate cells (HSCs) is the principal event responsible for collagen deposition and fibrogenesis [50]. Oxidative stress, transforming growth factor-beta (TGF- β), platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF), and inflammatory cytokines stimulate HSC activation and promote progressive fibrosis [51]. Numerous herbal medicines possess potent antifibrotic activity by targeting multiple molecular pathways involved in hepatic fibrogenesis [52]. *Salvia miltiorrhiza* inhibits hepatic stellate cell activation, suppresses collagen synthesis, and improves hepatic microcirculation [53]. Curcumin has been shown to inhibit TGF- β /Smad signaling, reduce extracellular matrix deposition, and attenuate hepatic fibrosis in experimental studies [54]. Resveratrol, quercetin, and epigallocatechin gallate exhibit antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties while suppressing fibrogenic signaling pathways, thereby reducing collagen accumulation and improving liver architecture [55]. In addition, berberine and silymarin inhibit activation of hepatic stellate cells, reduce oxidative stress, and promote liver regeneration through modulation of AMPK, Nrf2, and NF- κ B signaling pathways [56]. Overall, herbal medicines and phytochemical-based interventions provide a promising complementary approach for the management of viral hepatitis, alcoholic liver disease, and liver fibrosis through their multitarget pharmacological mechanisms. Nevertheless, further randomized clinical trials and standardized herbal formulations are required to establish their long-term efficacy, safety, and clinical applicability in evidence-based hepatology [57].

Table 1: Herbal medicinal plants used in the management of liver diseases

Botanical Name	Common Name	Major Bioactive Constituents	Mechanism of Action	Liver Disease
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<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Milk thistle	Silymarin, Silibinin	Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, membrane stabilization, antifibrotic	Alcoholic liver disease (ALD), NAFLD/MASLD, hepatitis, cirrhosis
<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Turmeric	Curcumin	Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, inhibits NF- κ B, antifibrotic	NAFLD/MASLD, ALD, liver fibrosis
<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i>	Licorice	Glycyrrhizin, Liquiritigenin	Antiviral, immunomodulatory, antioxidant	Viral hepatitis (HBV/HCV), chronic hepatitis
<i>Phyllanthus niruri</i>	Stonebreaker	Phyllanthin, Hypophyllanthin, Lignans	Antiviral, antioxidant, hepatoprotective	Hepatitis B, fatty liver disease
<i>Andrographis paniculata</i>	Kalmegh	Andrographolide	Anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antioxidant	Viral hepatitis, liver inflammation
<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i>	Guduchi	Tinosporaside, Berberine	Immunomodulatory, antioxidant, hepatoprotective	Drug-induced liver injury, alcoholic liver disease
<i>Salvia miltiorrhiza</i>	Danshen	Tanshinones, Salvianolic acid	Improves hepatic microcirculation, antifibrotic, antioxidant	Liver fibrosis, fatty liver disease
<i>Coptis chinensis</i>	Goldthread	Berberine	Activates AMPK, regulates lipid metabolism, reduces triglyceride accumulation	NAFLD/MASLD
<i>Gynostemma pentaphyllum</i>	Jiaogulan	Gypenosides	Lipid-lowering, antioxidant, improves fatty acid metabolism	Fatty liver disease
<i>Camellia sinensis</i>	Green tea	Epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), Catechins	Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, lipid-lowering	NAFLD/MASLD, liver fibrosis
<i>Picrorhiza kurroa</i>	Kutki	Picroside I, Picroside II	Hepatoprotective, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory	Hepatitis, cirrhosis
<i>Emblica officinalis</i> (Phyllanthus emblica)	Amla	Gallic acid, Ellagic acid, Vitamin C	Antioxidant, free radical scavenger, hepatoprotective	Fatty liver disease, oxidative liver injury
<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i>	Punarnava	Punarnavine, Boeravinones	Anti-inflammatory, hepatoprotective, antioxidant	Jaundice, liver dysfunction
<i>Schisandra chinensis</i>	Schisandra	Schisandrins	Antioxidant, hepatocyte regeneration, anti-inflammatory	Chronic hepatitis, liver injury
<i>Nigella sativa</i>	Black cumin	Thymoquinone	Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antifibrotic	NAFLD/MASLD, liver fibrosis

Herbal Remedies for Liver Cirrhosis

Liver cirrhosis is the advanced stage of chronic liver disease characterized by extensive fibrosis, distortion of hepatic architecture, and the formation of regenerative nodules, ultimately leading to impaired liver function [58]. Chronic viral hepatitis, excessive alcohol consumption, metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD), autoimmune hepatitis, and prolonged exposure to hepatotoxic agents are the major causes of cirrhosis worldwide [59]. Progressive hepatic fibrosis results from persistent activation of hepatic stellate cells, excessive extracellular matrix deposition, oxidative stress, and chronic inflammatory responses [60]. Patients with cirrhosis

are at increased risk of developing portal hypertension, ascites, hepatic encephalopathy, liver failure, and hepatocellular carcinoma, contributing to substantial morbidity and mortality [61]. Herbal medicines have attracted considerable interest as complementary therapeutic agents for liver cirrhosis because of their antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antifibrotic, and hepatoprotective properties [62]. *Silybum marianum* (milk thistle) has been extensively investigated for its ability to reduce oxidative stress, inhibit lipid peroxidation, stabilize hepatocyte membranes, and suppress hepatic stellate cell activation, thereby slowing fibrosis progression [63]. Curcumin, the principal polyphenol of *Curcuma longa*, has demonstrated significant antifibrotic activity by inhibiting transforming growth factor-beta (TGF- β)/Smad signaling, reducing collagen synthesis, and attenuating inflammatory cytokine production [64]. Likewise, *Salvia miltiorrhiza* (Danshen) improves hepatic microcirculation, inhibits collagen deposition, and promotes liver regeneration through modulation of multiple molecular pathways [65]. Other medicinal plants, including *Phyllanthus niruri*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, *Tinospora cordifolia*, and *Picrorhiza kurroa*, have shown promising hepatoprotective effects in experimental models of cirrhosis by reducing oxidative damage, suppressing inflammatory mediators, and enhancing endogenous antioxidant defenses [66]. Phytochemicals such as silymarin, curcumin, glycyrrhizin, berberine, quercetin, and resveratrol exert their beneficial effects through modulation of NF- κ B, Nrf2, TGF- β , and AMPK signaling pathways, leading to decreased hepatic fibrosis and improved liver function [67]. Although preclinical studies strongly support the therapeutic potential of these herbal agents, additional large-scale randomized clinical trials are required to establish standardized formulations, optimal dosages, long-term safety, and clinical efficacy in patients with liver cirrhosis [68].

Table 2: Representative clinical studies of herbal medicines for liver diseases

Herbal Medicine	Disease	Study Design	Dose & Duration	Major Findings
Silymarin	NAFLD	Randomized controlled trial	420–700 mg/day, 6 months	Reduced ALT, AST and hepatic steatosis
Curcumin	NAFLD	Double-blind RCT	500–1000 mg/day, 8–12 weeks	Improved liver enzymes and insulin resistance
Glycyrrhizin	Chronic hepatitis	Clinical study	Intravenous/Oral	Reduced ALT and hepatic inflammation
Berberine	NAFLD	Randomized clinical trial	500 mg twice daily	Improved lipid profile and liver fat
Green Tea Extract	NAFLD	Controlled trial	500–1000 mg/day	Reduced oxidative stress and BMI
Phyllanthus niruri	Hepatitis B	Clinical trial	Standardized extract	Reduced HBV markers in selected patients
Tinospora cordifolia	Drug-induced liver injury	Pilot clinical study	Standardized extract	Improved liver function biomarkers
Picrorhiza kurroa	Viral hepatitis	Clinical evaluation	Herbal extract	Hepatoprotective effect with improved liver enzymes

Herb–Drug Interactions and Safety Considerations of Hepatoprotective Herbs

Although herbal medicines are generally considered safer than many synthetic drugs, their concurrent use with conventional medications may result in clinically significant herb–drug interactions. These interactions can alter drug absorption, metabolism, distribution, or excretion, potentially reducing therapeutic efficacy or increasing the risk of toxicity. Most hepatoprotective herbs contain multiple bioactive phytochemicals capable of modulating

cytochrome P450 (CYP450) enzymes, ATP-binding cassette (ABC) transporters, and various drug-metabolizing enzymes, making careful evaluation of herb–drug interactions essential [69]. *Silybum marianum* (milk thistle), one of the most extensively investigated hepatoprotective herbs, is generally considered safe and well tolerated. However, silymarin may influence CYP3A4 and CYP2C9 enzyme activity, potentially affecting the metabolism of statins, warfarin, diazepam, and certain anticancer drugs [70]. Similarly, curcumin from *Curcuma longa* possesses excellent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities but may enhance the effects of anticoagulant and antiplatelet medications, thereby increasing the risk of bleeding in susceptible individuals [71]. *Glycyrrhiza glabra* (licorice) requires particular attention because prolonged consumption of glycyrrhizin may cause pseudoaldosteronism, characterized by hypertension, hypokalemia, sodium retention, and edema. These effects may potentiate the toxicity of corticosteroids, cardiac glycosides, and diuretics [72]. Likewise, berberine, an alkaloid present in *Coptis chinensis* and *Tinospora cordifolia*, can inhibit CYP2D6, CYP3A4, and P-glycoprotein, thereby altering the pharmacokinetics of cyclosporine, tacrolimus, metformin, and several cardiovascular drugs [73]. Herbal products possessing hypoglycemic activity, including *Tinospora cordifolia*, *Nigella sativa*, and *Gynostemma pentaphyllum*, may produce additive glucose-lowering effects when administered together with insulin or oral antidiabetic agents, increasing the risk of hypoglycemia [74]. Similarly, green tea (*Camellia sinensis*) extracts may interfere with warfarin therapy because of their vitamin K content and modulation of drug metabolism, necessitating careful monitoring of the international normalized ratio (INR) [75]. Another important challenge associated with herbal medicines is the lack of standardization. Variations in plant species, cultivation conditions, harvesting time, extraction procedures, storage conditions, and manufacturing processes may significantly influence phytochemical composition and therapeutic efficacy [76]. Furthermore, contamination with heavy metals, pesticides, microbial toxins, or adulteration with synthetic pharmaceuticals has been reported in some commercial herbal products, raising concerns regarding product quality and patient safety [77].

Table 3: Herb–drug interactions and safety considerations of hepatoprotective herbs

Herbal Medicine	Potential Drug Interaction	Possible Clinical Concern	Safety Consideration
Silymarin	CYP3A4 substrates	May alter drug metabolism	Generally, well tolerated
Curcumin	Anticoagulants (Warfarin, Aspirin)	Increased bleeding risk	Use cautiously before surgery
Glycyrrhiza glabra	Diuretics, Corticosteroids	Hypokalemia, hypertension	Avoid prolonged high-dose use
Berberine	Metformin, Cyclosporine	Altered glucose and drug metabolism	Monitor blood glucose
Green Tea Extract	Warfarin	Reduced anticoagulant effect	Monitor INR
Andrographis paniculata	Immunosuppressants	Possible immune stimulation	Use cautiously after transplantation
Tinospora cordifolia	Antidiabetic drugs	Additive hypoglycemic effect	Monitor blood glucose
Nigella sativa	Antihypertensive drugs	Additive hypotension	Monitor blood pressure
Ginseng	Anticoagulants	Altered coagulation	Clinical monitoring recommended
Garlic	Antiplatelet drugs	Increased bleeding tendency	Discontinue before major surgery

Discussion

Liver diseases continue to represent a significant global health challenge due to their increasing prevalence and complex pathogenesis. Despite considerable advances in pharmacotherapy, the management of chronic liver disorders remains difficult because currently available treatments primarily target disease symptoms or specific etiological factors rather than addressing the multiple molecular mechanisms involved in disease progression. The evidence summarized in this review indicates that herbal medicines and phytochemical-based therapies offer promising complementary strategies owing to their multitarget pharmacological actions. A major finding across experimental and clinical studies is that oxidative stress serves as a central mechanism underlying the development of fatty liver disease, viral hepatitis, alcoholic liver disease, fibrosis, and cirrhosis. Excessive generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) promotes lipid peroxidation, mitochondrial dysfunction, inflammatory cytokine production, and hepatocyte apoptosis, ultimately accelerating hepatic injury. Most medicinal plants reviewed, including *Silybum marianum*, *Curcuma longa*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, *Phyllanthus niruri*, *Tinospora cordifolia*, and *Salvia miltiorrhiza*, demonstrated potent antioxidant activity by enhancing endogenous antioxidant enzymes while reducing oxidative damage. These observations suggest that modulation of oxidative stress is one of the principal mechanisms responsible for the hepatoprotective effects of herbal medicines. Another important aspect highlighted in this review is the ability of phytochemicals to regulate multiple intracellular signaling pathways simultaneously. Bioactive compounds such as silymarin, curcumin, berberine, glycyrrhizin, andrographolide, quercetin, resveratrol, and epigallocatechin gallate have been shown to suppress NF- κ B-mediated inflammatory responses, activate the Nrf2 antioxidant pathway, inhibit TGF- β -induced hepatic stellate cell activation, and improve AMPK-mediated lipid metabolism. Such multitarget mechanisms distinguish herbal medicines from conventional drugs that frequently act through a single molecular target and may explain their beneficial effects in complex chronic liver diseases. The reviewed literature also demonstrates disease-specific therapeutic potential. Berberine, *Gynostemma pentaphyllum*, and green tea catechins showed encouraging efficacy in reducing hepatic lipid accumulation in fatty liver disease. *Phyllanthus niruri* and glycyrrhizin exhibited antiviral activity against hepatitis B virus and improved biochemical markers of liver function. Likewise, silymarin, curcumin, and *Salvia miltiorrhiza* effectively attenuated hepatic fibrosis by inhibiting collagen deposition and suppressing hepatic stellate cell activation. These findings support the potential role of herbal medicines as adjunctive therapies alongside standard clinical management. Although preclinical evidence is substantial, translation into routine clinical practice remains limited. Considerable variability exists in plant species, geographical origin, cultivation conditions, extraction methods, phytochemical composition, dosage, treatment duration, and study design. These factors complicate comparisons among studies and reduce reproducibility. Furthermore, comprehensive evaluation of herb–drug interactions, pharmacokinetics, bioavailability, and long-term safety remains insufficient for many medicinal plants. Large multicentre randomized controlled clinical trials using standardized herbal formulations are therefore required to generate high-quality evidence supporting clinical use. Recent advances in phytochemistry, metabolomics, network pharmacology, molecular docking, artificial intelligence-assisted drug discovery, and nanotechnology-based drug delivery systems are expected to accelerate the development of evidence-based phytopharmaceuticals for liver diseases. Standardized botanical extracts, improved quality control procedures, and personalized therapeutic approaches may further enhance clinical outcomes while minimizing adverse effects. Overall, the available evidence indicates that herbal medicinal plants and their bioactive phytochemicals possess considerable therapeutic potential in the prevention and management of liver diseases.

through antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antifibrotic, immunomodulatory, and hepatoprotective mechanisms. While these natural products should not replace established medical therapies, they represent valuable complementary interventions that warrant further investigation through rigorous clinical research before widespread integration into routine hepatology practice.

Conclusion

Herbal medicines and natural products have emerged as promising complementary therapies for the prevention and management of liver diseases, including MASLD/NAFLD, alcoholic liver disease, viral hepatitis, liver fibrosis, cirrhosis, and hepatocellular carcinoma. Medicinal plants such as *Silybum marianum*, *Curcuma longa*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, *Phyllanthus niruri*, and *Tinospora cordifolia* exhibit significant hepatoprotective effects through antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, and antifibrotic mechanisms. Their bioactive phytochemicals modulate multiple molecular pathways involved in liver injury, making them attractive multitarget therapeutic agents. However, challenges related to standardization, bioavailability, herb–drug interactions, and limited clinical evidence remain. Future well-designed clinical trials and advanced technologies, including nanotechnology and artificial intelligence-assisted drug discovery, are essential to validate their efficacy and facilitate their integration into evidence-based clinical practice. Overall, herbal natural products offer a safe, cost-effective, and promising strategy for improving liver health and developing novel hepatoprotective therapies.

Acknowledgment

The authors sincerely thank Raosaheb Patil Danve College of Pharmacy, Badnapur, Maharashtra, India, for providing continuous support, encouragement, and the necessary academic facilities during the preparation of this review article.

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