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Antidepressant-like active ingredients and their related mechanisms of functional foods or medicine and food homologous products

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ABSTRACT

Objective To provide a new idea for the treatment of depression by summarizing the antidepressant effect and mechanism of active ingredients in functional food, and medicine and food homologous products.

Methods The literature related to the antidepressant of functional food or medicine and food homologous products from September 25, 1996 to September 5, 2022 was collected through PubMed, Google Academic, Web of Science, and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) databases. After that, their antidepressant active ingredients and mechanism of action were systematically summarized and analyzed.

Results A total of 146 pieces of literature were involved in the study, including 67 plant-derived functional foods or medicine and food homologous products, 32 antidepressant extracts (including 8 flavonoid extracts), and 87 antidepressant active ingredients. The 87 antidepressant active ingredients include 7 terpenes, 22 saponins, 15 flavonoids, 11 phenylpropanoids, 7 phenols, 6 sugars, 8 alkaloids, and 11 others.

Conclusion The study summarized and analyzed the active ingredients and mechanisms of antidepressants in functional foods and medicine and food homologous products, which provides a new vision for the development of new antidepressants and a potential alternative treatment for patients with depression.

1 Introduction

Depression is a common mental disorder in modern society. In general, patients with depression are hampered by emotional symptoms such as depression, loss of self-confidence, pessimism, and lack of interest, as well as physical symptoms like sleep disorder and lack of appetite, which pose great threat to their quality of life [1]. Following the World Health Organization (WHO) report, there are more than 350 million depression patients worldwide, accounting for 4.4% of the world population [2]. Depression is the most prominent factor leading to individual disability, and 7.5% of the disability in the world is related to depression [2]. According to the 2019 mental health survey, the lifetime prevalence of adult depression in China is 6.8%, and the number of people suffering from depression is as high as 95 million [3]. With the sudden outbreak of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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pandemic and the tightening prevention-control measures, the global population was immersed in a state of extreme tension and thus a higher risk of depression [4]. Vulnerable populations and health professionals are particularly affected by the impact of the pandemic on mental health [5, 6]. It was reported that, in 2020 alone, the global cases of severe depression increased by 27.6% [7], and the prevalence of depressive symptoms did not alleviate with the control over the epidemic [8]. At present, depression has become the second largest disease burden in China, ranking first among various mental and psychological diseases [8, 9].

Current mainstream treatments for depressive disorders include psychotherapy, electroconvulsive therapy, and drug therapy [10]. Among the three options, psychotherapies like cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and interpersonal therapy (IPT) are generally considered the initial treatment for mild to moderate major depression [10], while electroconvulsive therapy, which involves producing generalized seizures using electrical stimulation, is regarded as a final resort in cases where medication and psychotherapy have failed [11]. In contrast, drug therapy is the most extensively applied treatment. Among various antidepressant drugs, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), relatively superior to other traditional tricyclic antidepressants in safety [12], has occupied the dominant position in market. Still, it can lead to many adverse reactions, including gastrointestinal bleeding, hepatotoxicity, metabolic disturbances, weight gain, sexual dysfunction, and discontinuation syndromes [13-15]. A study has shown that up to 43% of major depressive disorder (MDD) patients may discontinue antidepressants on account of adverse reactions during treatment [16]. The therapeutic effects are not necessarily guaranteed, and meta-analyses indicated that these existing drugs were only effective in less than half of patients with depression [17, 18]; even under the treatment of Citalopram, a representative drug, symptoms cannot be completely eliminated for 70% of patients [19]. The disadvantages of low cure rates and high prices make it increasingly urgent to develop new, fast-acting, mild, and inexpensive therapeutic drugs.

In recent years, a large number of studies have focused on natural products including functional foods or medicine and food homologous plants, which display significant antidepressant activity and low side effects [20, 21]. Those plant-derived medicines and foods contain a wide variety of natural compounds with antidepressant activity, including terpenes, saponins, flavonoids, phenylpropanoids, phenols, carbohydrates, and alkaloids. These compounds exert antidepressant effect through different mechanisms, such as affecting the expression of neurotransmitters and their receptors, regulating the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis as well as modulating neuronal plasticity and related signaling pathways [22]. However, there are barely any articles to review the progress in this field. Therefore, this paper summarized the antidepressant effects of 32 extracts (including 8 flavonoid extracts) of medicine and food homologous products, 87 active components, as well as their related mechanisms as they were reported in the last 30 years, which lays the foundation for the development of new antidepressant functional foods or antidepressant drugs. Part of the representative medicine and food homologous plants and compounds are shown in Figure 1.

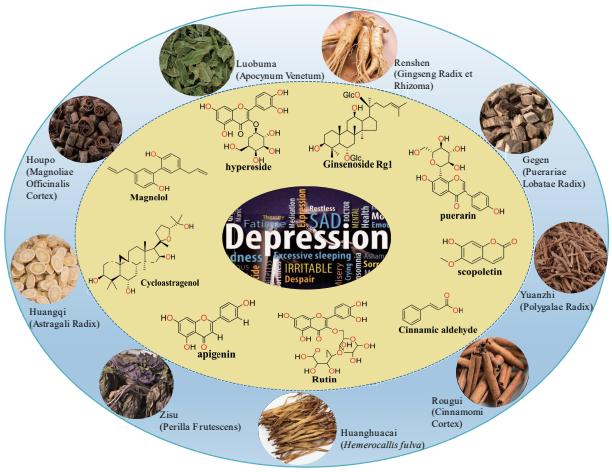


Figure 1 The representative functional foods or medicine and food homologous products with antidepressant activity and their active components

2 Data and methods

All the available information presented in this review concerning functional foods or medicine and food homologous products with antidepressant effect was gathered from academic databases, including PubMed, Google Scholar, Web of Science, and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), from September 25, 1996 to September 5, 2022. In addition, part of the information was obtained from local books, patents, and doctoral and master's dissertations. The keywords of "antidepressant" in the title, and "plant" "extract" "herb" and "active ingredients" in the whole text were used for online search. The structures of the antidepressant activity component, which were mentioned in the articles, were obtained from theses, books, databases, and other reliable sources. The articles with unclear experimental results, unreasonable research design or those neglecting the mechanisms of action were excluded. A summary of main findings is represented in Figure 2.

3 Results

Many studies concentrate on the antidepressant activity of the extracts or monomeric compounds isolated from the medicine and food homologous products. Extracts

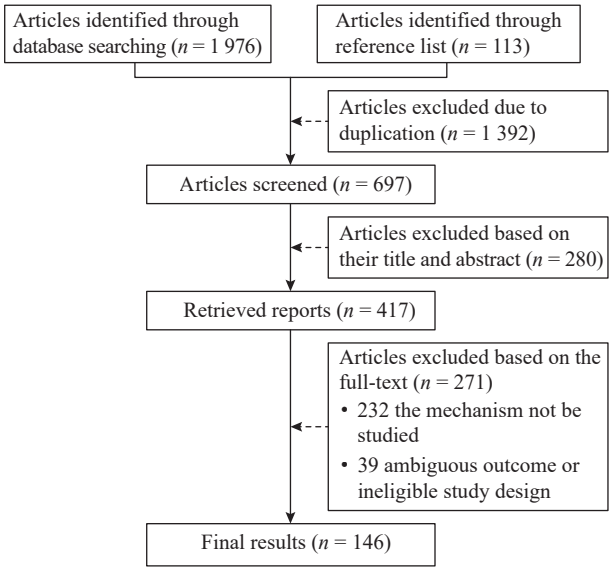


Figure 2 Flowchart of screening and selection of eligible articles

comprise ethanol extract, water extract, and organic solvent extract; monomer active ingredients consist of terpenoids, saponins, flavonoids, phenylpropanoids, phenols, alkaloids, and sugars. The top five medicine and food homological plant extracts with anti-depressive activity reported in the literature are shown in Figure 3.

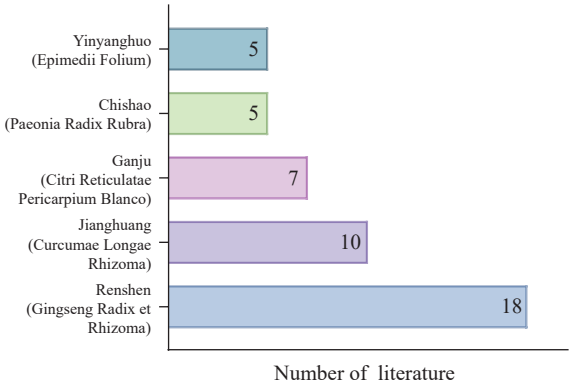


Figure 3 The top five medicine and food homologous product extracts with anti-depressive activity reported in the literature

3.1 Extracts with antidepressant activity

The ethanol extracts (YZ-30% and YZ-50%), obtained from Yuanzhi (Polygalae Radix) by conventional ethanol extraction, displayed significant antidepressant activity by reducing the immobility time of depressed mice in the forced swimming test (FST) and tail suspension test (TST). The potential mechanism was blocking the reuptake of monoamine neurotransmitters [20]. The ethanol extract of Tianma (Gastrodiae Rhizoma) could increase monoamine neurotransmitter concentrations in the hippocampus and striatum of mice and exhibits significant antidepressant activity [23]. Lianzi (Nelumbinis Semen) ethanol extract also exerted antidepressant effect by regulating depression-related neurotransmitter levels [24]. The antidepressant activity of ethanol extracts of Yuanzhi (Polygalae Radix), Tianma (Gastrodiae Rhizoma) and Lianzi (Nelumbinis Semen) are all related to increasing the neurotransmitters. The ethanol extract of Gegen (Puerariae Lobatae Radix) could reverse the decline of norepinephrine (NE) and dihydroxyphenylacetic acid (DOPAC) in depressed mice [25]. The ethanol extract of Jiaogulan (Gynostemma Pentaphyllum) could dramatically shorten the immobility time of depressed mice in TST and FST, and the antidepressant activity of the extract was the same as the positive drug named fluoxetine hydrochloride [26]. Other antidepressant-like extracts from medicine and food homologous products and the related mechanisms are shown in Table 1.

3.2 Terpenoids

Paeoniflorin (**1**) and albiflorin (**2**), two bicyclic monoterpene compounds isolated from Chishao (Paeonia Radix Rubra), displayed significant antidepressant effects. The former is related to its functions in the up-regulation of the monoaminergic neurotransmitters and brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) levels, inhibition of the HPA axis hyperfunction, promotion of hippocampus neurogenesis, alleviation of inflammatory reaction, and regulation of extracellular signal-regulated kinase 1/2 (ERK1/2) signaling pathway [45-48]. The latter exerts antidepressant effect by modulating the metabolism of amino acids and regulating gut microbes [49]. Eryngiolide A (**3**), isolated from Xingbaogu (Pleurotus Eryngii), showed notable antidepressant activity at 0.2, 1, and 5 mg/kg by reducing the immobility time of depressed mice in FST and TST [50]. Genipin (**4**) identified from Zhizi (Gardeniae Fructus) exhibited significant antidepressant activity by increasing the contents of NE and 5-HT in the brain of depressed mice [51]. Asiaticoside (**5**), asiatic acid (**6**), and madecassic acid (**7**) isolated from Jixuecao (Centella Herba), which can be eaten raw and used as an ingredient in herbal tea, have remarkable antidepressant effects and dramatically reduce the immobility time of depressed mice in FST and TST [50, 52]. The structures of terpenoid compounds **1**-**7** with significant antidepressant activity are shown in Figure 4.

3.3 Saponins

3.3.1 Total saponins Total saponins extracted from Baihe (Lilium lancifolium Thunb), Sanqi (Panax Notoginseng), Chishao (Paeoniae Radix Rubra), and Jili (Tribulus Terrestris) displayed antidepressant activity. The immobility time of depressed mice in FST and TST was significantly shortened by medium and low doses of total brownioside [53]. Notoginsenoside could alleviate

Table 1 The medicine and food homologous product extracts with significant antidepressant activity

Source	Effective component	Antidepressant activity/Mechanism	Reference
Ethanol extract			
Yuanzhi (Polygalae Radix)	Saponosides	Blocking the reuptake of monoamine neurotransmitters	[20]
Tianma (Gastrodiae Rhizoma)	/	Increasing monoamine neurotransmitter levels in hippocampus and striatum of depressed mice	[23]
Lianzi (Nelumbinis Semen)	Isoquercetin	Regulating neurotransmitter levels	[24]
Gegen (Puerariae Lobatae Radix)	Flavonoids, Coumarins	Reversing the decline of NE and DOPAC in depressed mice	[25]
Jiaogulan (Gynostemma Pentaphyllum)	/	Significantly decreasing the immobility time of depressed mice in TST and FST	[26]
Hongjingtian (Rhodiolae Crenulatae Radix et Rhizoma)	Rhodioloside B and C	Inhibition of monoamine oxidase activity	[27]
Jiegeng (Platycodon Grandiflorus)	Asruin, Delphinidin, Dihydroquercetin, Luteolin7-*O*-glucopyranoside	Regulation of glycerophospholipid and linoleic acid metabolism pathways	[28]
Luobuma (Apocynum Venetum)	Hyperoside and quercitrin	Significantly decreasing the immobility time of depressed mice in FST	[29]
Bajitian (Morindae Officinalis Radix)	Nystose, Lnulin-typepentasaccharide	Regulating neurotransmitter dopamine (DA)	[30]
Zhima (Sesamum Indicum)	Sesamol	Increasing the level of 5-hydroxytryptamine (5-HT) in hippocampus of depressed mice	[31]
Rougui (Cinnamomum Cassiapresl)	/	Inhibiting the inflammatory factor in the hippocampus of depressed mice	[32]
Xueju (Coreopsistinctoria)	Polyphenols	Reinforcement of 5-HT and activation of NE level	[20]
Jicai (Capsella Bursa-Pastoris)	Butyl formate, 2-methoxy-4-vinyl phenol, Methyl isoeugenol 1,3-isopropoxy-5-ethyl phenol	Regulating hormones, neurotransmitters, and BDNF expression in brain of depressed mice	[33]
Aqueous extract			
Hongjingtian (Rhodiolae Crenulatae Radix et Rhizoma)	Rosiridin	Inhibition of monoamine oxidase activity	[27]
Jianghuang (Curcumae Longae Rhizoma Rhizoma)	Curcumin	Inhibition of monoamine oxidase A (MAO-A) enzyme activity of depressed mice	[34]
Heshouwu (Polygoni Multiflori Radix)	/	Significantly shortening the immobility time of depressed mice in TST and FST	[35]
Wuweizi (Schisandra Chinensis)	/	Activation of JAK1/STAT3 signaling pathway to protect hippocampal neurons	[36]
Jinhuachaye (Camellia Chrysantha Tuyama)	Quercetin, Rutin, Caffeine, L-theanine, Ginsenoside Rgl	Blocking mitochondrial apoptotic signaling pathway, inhibiting corticosterone-induced apoptosis, and upregulating BDNF gene expression by activating PKA-CREB signaling pathway	[37]
Qiukui (Abelmoschus Esculentus)	/	Increasing the levels of monoamine neurotransmitters Ach and GABA in the brain, inhibiting the excessive excitation of HPA axis, and protecting brain cells	[38]
Luofumu (Rauwolfia Vomitoria)	/	Inhibition of monoamine oxidase activity	[39]
Tiandong (Asparagi Radix)	Shatavrins	Regulating the BDNF-TrkB pathway	[40]
Other extractions			
Duzhong (Eucommia Ulmoides)	/	Relieving depression of mice	[41]
Maka (Lepidium Meyenii)	Linoleic aid	Inhibiting the increase of serum corticosterone (CORT) secretion, and increasing DA and NE levels and decreasing ROS activity in the depressed mice brain	[42]
Ningmeng (Citrus Limon)	/	Regulation of DA and 5-HT	[43]
Kekedou (Theobroma Cacao Bean)	Flavonoids, Glycosides, Procyanidins, Catechins	Significantly shortening the immobility time of depressed mice in FST	[44]

depressive symptoms by modulating the concentration of monoamine neurotransmitters in the brain of depressed mice, as well as regulating the level of cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP), protein kinase A (PKA), and BDNF in depressed mice [54, 55]. The antidepressant activity of total saponins of Chishao (Paeoniae Radix Rubra) is related to regulating monoamine neurotransmitters such as NA, 5-HT and their receptors in different regions of the brain [56]. The antidepressant mechanism of Jili (Tribulus Terrestris) saponin is to increase the content of monoamine neurotransmitters such as 5-HT and γ-aminobutyric acid (GABA) in blood, and regulate the expression of specific genes in the hippocampus [57].

3.3.2 Monomer saponins The antidepressant effect of Renshen (Gingseng Radix et Rhizoma), a common medicinal and edible food that has always been regarded as the king of herbs, has become a research hotspot in recent years (Figure 3). The antidepressant active ingredients of Renshen (Gingseng Radix et Rhizoma) have been widely studied, and it is shown that ginsenoside Rg1 (**8**) shows significant antidepressant activity by regulating glucocorticoid receptor (GR) expression, amino acid, and BDNF levels, as well as improving synaptic ultrastructure in prefrontal cortex [58-61]. Recent studies have found that it can upregulate Cx43 expression and protect astrocyte gap junctions within the prefrontal cortex in animal models of depression [62-64]. The antidepressant mechanism of ginsenoside Rb1 (**9**) may be related to regulating brain-derived neurotrophic factor/TrkBtyrosine kinase receptor (BDNF/TrkB) signaling pathway and AKT pathway, suppressing inflammation, and modulating the HPA axis [65-67]. In addition, other saponins isolated and identified from Renshen (Gingseng Radix et Rhizoma), such as ginsenoside Rh2 (**10**) [68], ginsenoside Rg2 (**11**) [69], ginsenoside Rg3 (**12**) [70], ginsenoside Rb3 (**13**) [71], ginsenoside Re (**14**) [72], ginsenoside Rd (**15**) [73], and ginsenoside **16**-**23** [50, 74] have significant antidepressant activity. The above data indicate that Renshen (Gingseng Radix et Rhizoma) extract and its saponins are essential plant-derived candidates for developing new antidepressants.

Two saponins, cyprotusides A (**24**) and cyprotusides B (**25**), isolated from Xiangfu (Cyperi Rhizoma), displayed significant antidepressant effect [75]. Anemarrhena asphodeloides B-II (**26**), B-III (**27**), and Anemarrhena asphodeloides saponin (**28**) can be obtained from Zhimu (Anemarrhenae Rhizoma). Compound **26** exerts antidepressant activity by inhibition of monoamine oxidase activity as well as elevation of 5-HT in the nervous system and DA in the brain [76]; compound **27** shows antidepressant activity via the regulation of inflammatory cytokines, the BNDF signaling pathway, and synaptic plasticity-related proteins [77]; the antidepressant mechanism of compound **28** is linked to increasing the 5-HT and NE levels in the hypothalamus and the hippocampus, and inhibiting monoamine oxidase type A and B activity [78]. Glycyrrhizic acid (**29**) is a triterpenoid saponin derived from Gancao (Glycyrrhizae Radix et Rhizoma), and its antidepressant effect has been found to be related to ameliorating the kynurenine pathway [79]. The structures of saponins **8**-**29** with antidepressant activity identified from the traditional medicine and food homologous products are shown in Figure 5.

3.4 Flavonoids

3.4.1 Total flavonoids In recent years, the research on the antidepressant effect, structure-activity relationship, and related mechanism of flavonoids has been dramatically developed. A large number of studies have reported that the total flavonoids extracted from Gancao (Glycyrrhizae Radix et Rhizoma) , Suanzaoren (Ziziphi spinosae Semen), Xuancao (Hemerocallis Fulva), Yuxingcao (Houttuyniae Herba) and other functional foods or

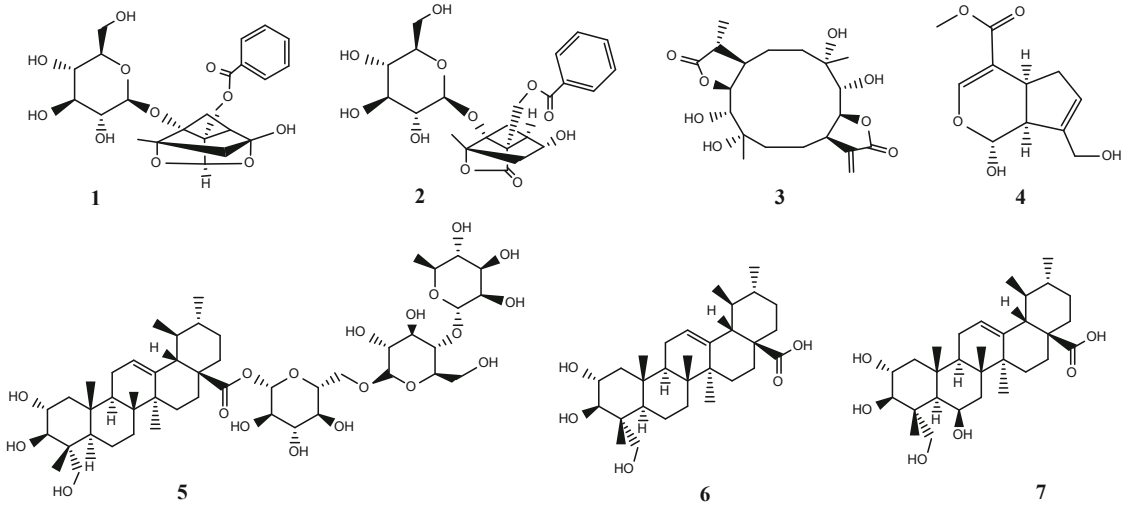
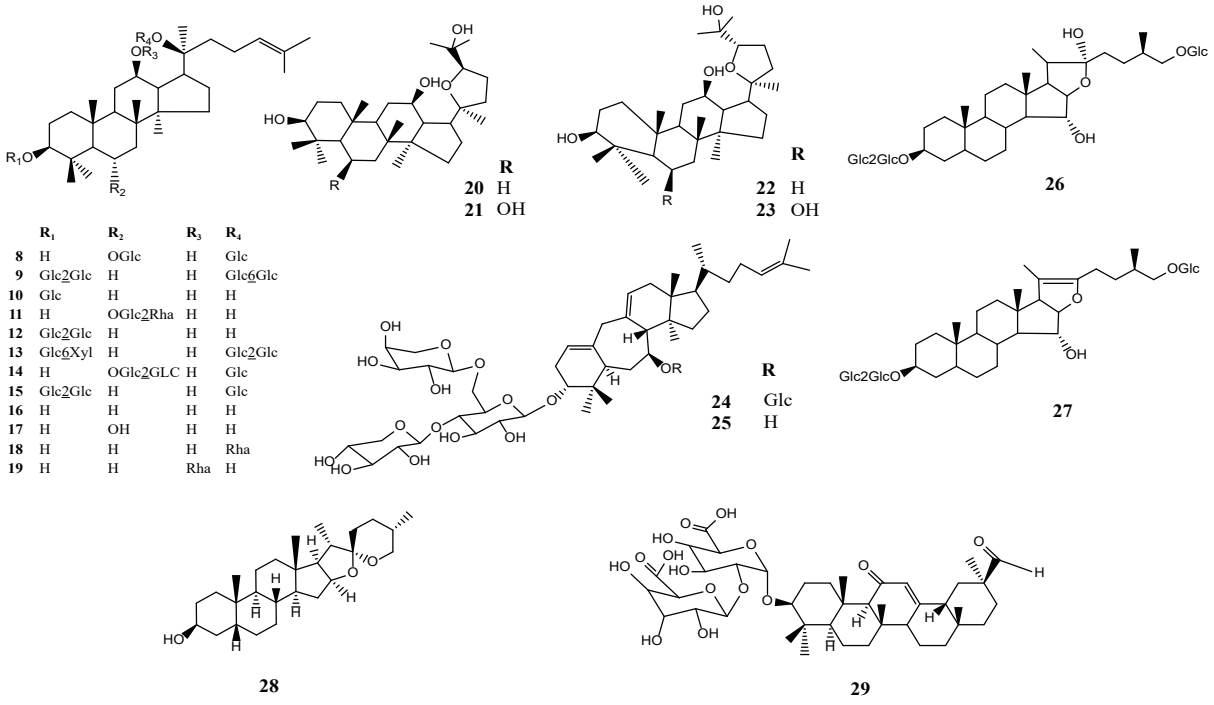


Figure 4 The structures of terpenoids **1**-**7**

(**1**) Paeoniflorin; (**2**) Albiflorin; (**3**) Eryngiolide A; (**4**) Genipin; (**5**) Asiaticoside; (**6**) Asiatic acid; (**7**) Hydroxyl asiatic acid.

medicine and food homologous products have significant antidepressant activity. Total flavonoids extracts from antidepressant food and medicine products are shown in Table 2.

3.4.2 Flavonoids and dihydroflavonoids Takahiro and other scholars have attributed the antidepressant activity of perilla to Apigenin (**30**), a flavonoid compound widely distributed in nature, which could regulate the level of DA [89]. It also exists extensively in Ganju (Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium Blanco) and displays significant antidepressant activity by increasing the concentration of 5-HT in the brain of rats with chronic mild stress (CMS), and reducing the concentration of serotonin metabolites (5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid, 5-HIAA), DA, and the ratio of 5-HIAA/5-HT, inhibiting interleukin (IL)-1β



	R_1	R_2	R_3	R_4
8	H	OGlc	H	Glc
9	Glc2Glc	H	H	Glc6Glc
10	Glc	H	H	H
11	H	OGlc2Rha	H	H
12	Glc2Glc	H	H	H
13	Glc6Xyl	H	H	Glc2Glc
14	H	OGlc2GLC	H	Glc
15	Glc2Glc	H	H	Glc
16	H	H	H	H
17	H	OH	H	H
18	H	H	H	Rha
19	H	H	Rha	H

Figure 5 The structures of saponins **8**-**29**

(**8**) Ginsenoside Rg1; (**9**) Ginsenoside Rb1; (**10**) Ginsenoside Rh2; (**11**) Ginsenoside Rg2; (**12**) Ginsenoside Rg3; (**13**) Ginsenoside Rb3; (**14**) Ginsenoside Re; (**15**) Ginsenoside Rd; (**16**) 20(*S*)-Protopanaxdiol; (**17**) 20(*S*)-Protopanaxatriol; (**18**) Dammara-3-*O*-α-L-rhamnosy-l3β,12β,20-triol; (**19**) Dammara-12-*O*-α-L-rhamnosy-l3β,12β,20-triol; (**20**) Dammara-20(*S*),24(*R*)-epoxy3β,12β,25-triol; (**21**) Dammara-20(*S*),24(R)-epoxy3β,6β,12β,25-tetrol; (**22**) Dammara-20(*S*),24(*S*)-epoxy-3β,12β,25-triol; (**23**) Dammara 20(*S*),24(*S*)-epoxy3, 6β,12β,25β-tetrol; (**24**) Cyprotusides A; (**25**) Cyprotusides B; (**26**) Timosaponin B-II; (**27**) Timosaponin B-III; (**28**) Sarsasapogenin; (**29**) Glycyrrhizic acid.

Table 2 Total flavonoids extracts with antidepressant activity

Source	Antidepressant activity/Machanism	Reference
Yinyanghuo (Epimedium Brevicornum)	Improving the level of monoamine neurotransmitters such as NA, 5-HT in different regions of the brain	[56]
Gancao (Glycyrrhizae Radix et Rhizoma)	Reducing the elevation of serum corticosterone induced by chronic stress, enhancing brain 5-HT nerve function, and regulating the expression of key synaptic plasticity proteins	[80-82]
Suanzaoren (Semen Ziziphi Spinosae)	Shortening the immobility time of depressed mice in FST and TST	[83]
Xuancao (Hemerocallis Fulva)	Increasing of 5-HT, NE, and DA levels in the brain, and inhibiting excessive hyperstimulation of HPA axis	[84]
Yuxingcao (Houttuyniae Herba)	Alleviating corticosterone-induced cell damage	[85]
Shiliu (Punica granatum L.)	Improving chronic unpredictable mild stress (CUMS)-induced depressive symptoms	[86]
Zanghonghua (Crocus sativus L.)	Shortening the immobility time of depressed mice in FST and TST	[87]
Huluba (*Trigonella foenum-graecum L.*)	Exhibiting antidepressant-like effect by down-regulating KLF11/SIRT1-MAO-A pathway, up-regulating monoamine neurotransmitter levels, and inhibiting MAO-A expression	[88]

production and NOD-like receptor protein 3 (NLRP3) inflammasome activation in the rat brain [90, 91]. Chuanchenin (**31**), which was detected from Chenpi (Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium), also has remarkable antidepressant effect via regulating 5-HT_{1A}, 5-HT_2, α_1-epinephrine, DA-D1, and DA-D2 receptors [92]. Luteolin (**32**), a natural flavonoid existing in many plant-derived foods or medicines, exerts antidepressant effect on depressed mice by inhibiting the expression of endoplasmic reticulum stress-related proteins [93]. In addition, Daji (Cirsii Japonici Herba) displayed significant antidepressant effect mainly due to the presence of Luteolin, possibly by enhancement of γ-aminobutyric acid A (GABAA) receptor Cl-ion channel complex [94]. Naringin (**33**), which was isolated from Youzi (*Citrus maxima*), has antidepressant activity by increasing the concentrations of 5-HT, NE, and GR, as well as reducing the content of CORT and modulating the expression of BDNF/Nrf2 in the hippocampus of the depressed mice [95, 96]. Naringin (**34**), hesperidin (**35**), and neohesperidin (**36**) detected in Ganju (Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium Blanco) possess remarkable antidepressant effect with inhibition of MAO-A activity [50]. Compound **35** elicits antidepressant effect in mice possibly via the enhancement of Glo-1 function, the activation of the nuclear erythroid 2-related factor 2/antioxidant response element (Nrf2/ARE) signaling pathway, inhibition of L-arginine-nitric oxide (NO)-cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP) pathway [97-99].

3.4.3 Flavonol and its glycosides Quercetin (**37**), a flavonol compound isolated from Honggua (Carthami Flos), showed antidepressant effect and significantly shortened the immobility time in FST of depressed mice [100]. Kaempferol (**38**) and quercitirin (**39**), widely distributed in plant-derived medicines and foods, were isolated from Xianrenzhangguo (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) and displayed significant antidepressant activity by decreasing the immobility time in FST and TST of depressed mice [101]. The antidepressant mechanism of hyperoside (**40**) in Luobuma (*Apocynum venetum*) has been related to the regulation of the 5-HT_{2a} receptor [102]. Icariin (**41**), a flavanol glycoside isolated from Yinyanghuo (Epimedii Folium), exhibits its considerable antidepressant effect by reduction of corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF), monoamine neurotransmitters, and monoamine oxidase activity, altering the expression of glucocorticoid receptor and promotion of hippocampus neurogenesis [103-107].

3.4.4 Isoflavone and chalcones The antidepressant mechanism of isoflavones in Gegen (Puerariae Lobatae Radix) may be linked to monoaminergic neurons in the nervous system [108]. For example, Puerarin (**42**), one of the vital isoflavone compounds identified from it, displayed significant antidepressant activity by up-regulating the contents of monoamine neurotransmitters such as 5-HT, NE, and DA in brain tissue, and inhibiting the damage and apoptosis of hippocampal neurons in depressed mice [109]. It can also reduce CUMS-induced depression-like behavior in rats by reducing pro-inflammatory factors, increasing anti-inflammatory factors, remodeling their gut microbiota, and modulating hippocampal glucagon-like peptide 1 receptor/brain-derived neurotrophic factor/TrkBtyrosine kinase receptor B (GLP-1R/BDNF/TrkB) signaling to alleviate CUMS-induced depression-like behavior in rats [110-112]. Two chalcone compounds, isoliquiritin (**43**) and liquiritin (**44**), isolated from Gancao (Glycyrrhizae Radix et Rhizoma), could shorten the FST and TST in depressed mice, and their mechanism of antidepressant effect may be linked to the elevation of 5-HT and NE levels in the hippocampus, hypothalamus, and cortex [113]. Additionally, compound **44** may attenuate depression-like behavior via antioxidant stress and inhibition of NLRP3 inflammasome activation in the hippocampus [114]. The structures of flavonoids **30**-**44** with significant antidepressant activity are shown in Figure 6.

3.5 Phenylpropanoids

3.5.1 Phenylpropanoic acids Dehydrogingerone (**45**), a common phenylpropanoid isolated from Shengjiang (Zingiberis Rhizoma Recens), showed antidepressant activity related to 5-HT and NE [115]. Danshensu (**46**) and salvianolic acid B (**47**), identified from Danshen (Salviae Miltiorrhizae Radix et Rhizoma), possessed significant antidepressant activity. The antidepressant mechanism of the former is related to inhibiting the hyperactivity of the HPA axis, increasing the release of monoamine neurotransmitters in the hippocampus and activating CREB/BDNF pathway [116]. The latter relieves CMS-induced depressive-like state by activation of NLRP3 inflammasome and the adenylate-activated protein kinase/silent information regulator 1 (AMPK/SIRT1) signaling pathway [117, 118].

3.5.2 Coumarins Psoralen (**48**) and psoralidin (**49**) are common coumarin-type compounds identified from Buguzhi (Psoraleae Fructus). The former could reverse the increase in CRF and CORT concentrations caused by FST stress via elevation of 5-HT and 5-HIAA levels, thereby ameliorating the HPA axis function to play an antidepressant role [119], while the antidepressant mechanism of the latter may have a relation to increasing the contents of 5-HT, 5-HIAA, and DA, and decreasing the contents of adreno-cortico-tropic-hormone (ACTH), CRF, and corticosterone in serum [120]. In addition, scopolamine (**50**) isolated from Yuanzhi (Polygalae Radix) exhibits antidepressant effect via increasing the levels of 5-HT, NA, and DA [121], and auraptenol (**51**) reported from Baizhi (Angelicae Dahuricae Radix) exerts the same activity by regulating the 5-HT_{1A} receptor [122].

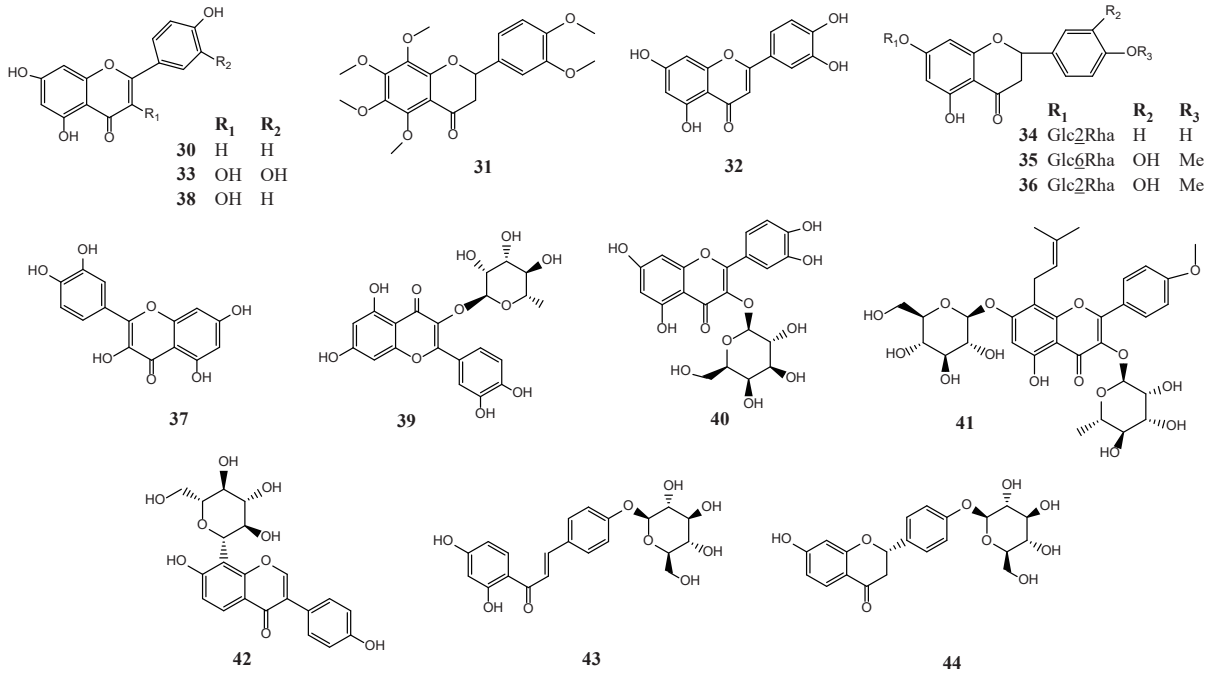


Figure 6 The structures of flavonoids **30**-**44**

(**30**) Apigenin; (**31**) Nobiletin; (**32**) Luteolin; (**33**) Naringenin; (**34**) Naringin; (**35**) Hesperidin; (**36**) Neohesperidin; (**37**) Quercetin; (**38**) Kaempferol; (**39**) Quercitirin; (**40**) Hyperoside; (**41**) Icariin; (**42**) Puerarin; (**43**) Isoliquiritin; (**44**) Liquiritin

3.5.3 Lignans Magnolol (**52**) and honokiol (**53**), two lignan compounds isolated from Houpo (Magnoliae Officinalis Cortex), are suggested to be helpful in the treatment of depression. The mechanism of compound **52** is associated with the elevation of BDNF expression in mice's hippocampus and frontal cortex, the accentuation of 5-HT system function, the enhancement of hippocampal neurogenesis, and neurotrophin-related intracellular signaling as well as the modulation of the HPA axis [123, 124]. A study has demonstrated that it can reduce the increase of proinflammatory cytokines IL-1β, IL-6, and tumor necrosis factor-α (TNF-α) in the prefrontal cortex of mice exposed to chronic mild stress [125]. Furthermore, the mixture of the two compounds could reverse the decrease of 5-HT in the brain regions of the depressed mice and increase the levels of 5-HT and 5-HIAA [126]. Rosmarinic acid (**54**) in Zisu (*Perilla frutescens*) can up-regulate BDNF levels in the hippocampus and hippocampus-derived astrocytes and activate BDNF/Nrf2 signaling and autophagy pathway [127, 128]. Rosavin (**55**) was identified and isolated from Hongjingtian (Rhodiolae Crenulatae Radix et Rhizoma), and exhibited significant antidepressant effect by the suppression of NA and DA reuptake, thereby increasing the content of NA and DA in the synaptic cleft [50]. The structures of flavonoids **45**-**55** with significant antidepressant activity are shown in Figure 7.

3.6 Phenols

Four phenol-type compounds, maned curcumin (**56**), demethoxycurcumin (**57**), bisdemethoxycurcumin (**58**), and tetrahydrocurcumin (**59**) were observed from Jianghuang (Curcumae Longae Rhizoma) and displayed significant antidepressant effect. Among them, curcumin (**56**), a diarylheptane compound, showed antidepressant effect in different animal models of depression by repressing monoamine oxidase and enhancing the levels of 5-HT and DA, reducing levels of inflammatory cytokines such as IL-1β and TNF-α, activating the mitogen-activated protein kinase/extracellar-signal-regulation kinase (MAPK/ERK) and Nrf2-ARE signaling pathways, as well as regulating hippocampal neuronal midbrain-derived neurotrophic factor [129-137]. α-Tocopherol (**60**) from Yumi (Zea Mays) was reported to possess antidepressant effect via significantly reducing the immobility time of TST induced by TNF-α in the depressed mice [138]. Gastrodin (**61**) displayed antidepressant effect by attenuating the levels of inflammatory factors TNF-α, IL-6, IL-17, and IL-1β in the hippocampus, protecting hippocampal neural stem cells (NSCs) against the proinflammatory cytokine IL-1β, and elevating the content of BDNF [139-141]. The antidepressant effect of methyl jasmonate (**62**) reported from Gancao (Glycyrrhizae Radix et Rhizoma) is related with the modulation of 5-HT and NE [21]. The structures of phenolic compounds **56**-**62** with significant antidepressant activity are shown in Figure 8.

3.7 Carbohydrates

Chrysanthemum oligosaccharides (**63**), the primary active ingredient of Xuelianguo (*Smallanthus sonchifolius*), shows the same antidepressant activity as the positive

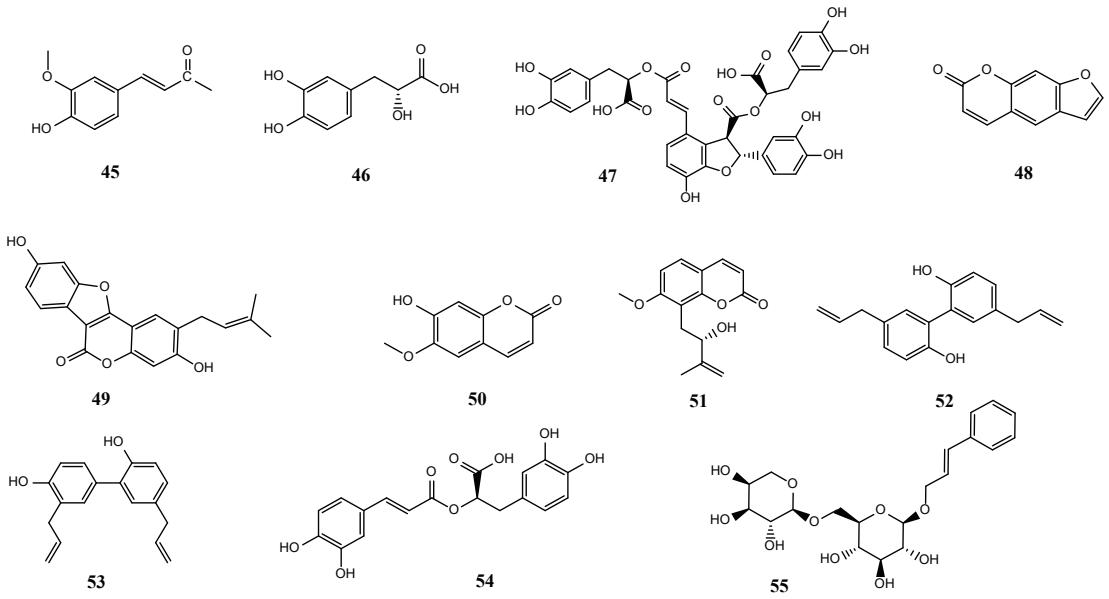


Figure 7 The structures of penylpropanoids **45**-**55**

(**45**) Dehydrozingerone; (**46**) Tanshinone; (**47**) Salvianolic acids; (**48**) Psoralen; (**49**) Psoralidin; (**50**) Scopoletin; (**51**) Auraptenol; (**52**) Magnolol; (**53**) Honokiol; (**54**) Rosmarinic acid; (**55**) Rosavin.

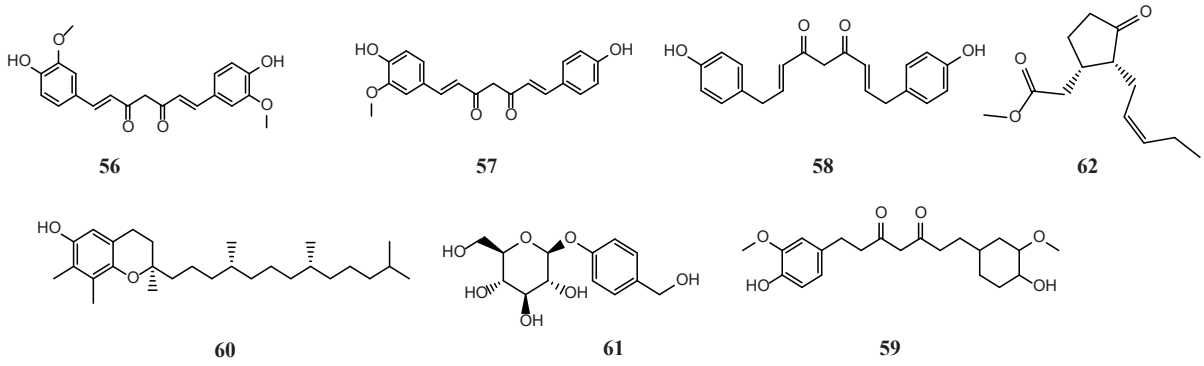


Figure 8 The structures of phenolics **56**-**62**

(**56**) Curcumin; (**57**) Demethoxycurcumin; (**58**) Dimethoxycurcumin; (**59**) Tetrahydrocurcumin; (**60**) α-Tocopherol; (**61**) Gastrodin; (**62**) Methyl jasmonate.

drug desipramine [142]. The structure of chrysanthemum oligosaccharides (**63**) is similar to that of chrysanthemum starch oligosaccharides reported from Bajitian (Morindae Officinalis Radix), which can antagonize depression-like behavior induced by chronic stress by regulating neurotrophic factor pathway and synaptic plasticity [143]. Nystose (**64**), 1F-Fructofuranosylnystose (**65**), chrysanthemum starch hexasaccharide (**66**), and chrysanthemum starch heptasaccharide (**67**) are four chrysanthemum starch oligosaccharides isolated from Bajitian (Morindae Officinalis Radix) with significant antidepressant activity [144]. 3,6'-Di mustard acyl sucrose (**68**) identified from Yuanzhi (Polygalae Radix) may generate antidepressant effect on drug-induced depression model mice via modulation of 5-HT and NE [145]. In addition, the polysaccharides extracted from Shaji (Hippohgae Fructus) and Xianggu (*Lentinula edodes*) displayed significant antidepressant effect by modulation of neurotransmitter levels [146, 147]. The structures of carbohydrates **63**-**68** with significant antidepressant activity are shown in Figure 9.

3.8 Alkaloids

Yongchongcao (*Cordyceps militaris*), a famous medicine and food homologous plant, has been listed as a new resource of food. Cordycepin (**69**) is its primary active component which can up-regulate the level of BDNF in the hippocampus of CUMS mice and down-regulate the level of the 5-HT2α receptor [148]. Piperine (**70**), a kind of cinnamphthalamide alkaloid abundant in Hujiao (Piperis Fructus), has remarkable antidepressant activity by regulating the proliferation, migration, and differentiation of neural stem cells as well as protecting and promoting functional nerve regeneration [149]; other researchers proposed that its mechanism is perhaps related to the up-regulating of hippocampal BDNF levels and modulating

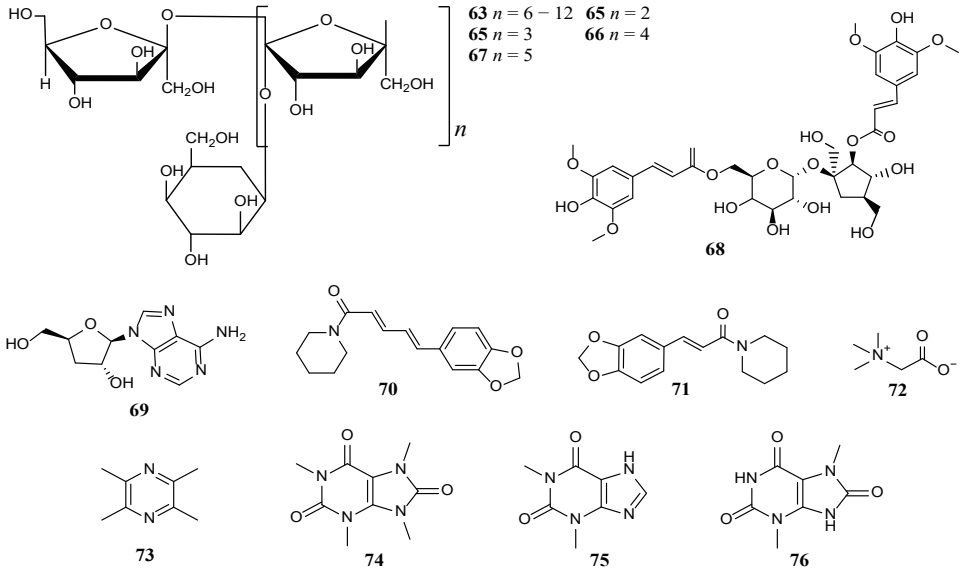


Figure 9 The structures of saccharides (**63**-**68**) and alkaloids (**69**-**76**)

(**63**) Chrysanthemum starch oligosaccharides; (**64**) Nystose; (**65**) 1F-Fructofuranosylnystose; (**66**) Chrysanthemum starch hexasaccharide I; (**67**) Chrysanthemum starch heptasaccharide II; (**68**) 3,6'-Di mustard acyl sucrose; (**69**) Cordycepin; (**70**) Piperine; (**71**) Antiepilepsirine; (**72**) Betaine; (**73**) Tetramethylpyrazine; (**74**) 1,3,7,9-Tetramethyluric acid; (**75**) Theophylline; (**76**) Theobromine.

the function of HPA axis [150, 151]. Anitiepilepsirinum (**71**), a derivative of piperine, regulated DA and 5-HT functions and attenuated MAO-A and B activity [152]. Betaine (**72**), which was the dominant bioactive compound of Digupi (Lycii Cortex), could dramatically regulate the function of 5-HT and NE [153]. Tetramethylpyrazine (**73**), a primary component with neuroprotective effect in Chuanxiong (Chuanxiong Rhizoma), probably displayed significant antidepressant effect by promoting BDNF signaling pathway and inhibiting toll like TLR4-NLRP3 inflammasome signaling pathway [154, 155]. In addition, three purine alkaloids named 1,3,7,9-tetramethyluric acid (**74**), theophylline (**75**), and cocoa alkaloids (**76**) identified from Chaye (*Camellia sinensis*) displayed significant antidepressant activity by ameliorating the disorder and metabolic abnormalities of monoamine neurotransmitters in the brain of the depressed mice. Among them, compound **74** has the most vigorous activity by modulating the neurological function of 5-HT and DA [156]. The structures of alkaloids **69**-**76** with significant antidepressant activity are shown in Figure 9.

3.9 Other types of compounds

Theanine (**77**), an amino acid identified in Chaye (*Camellia sinensis*), exerts antidepressant activity by regulating the central monoamine neurotransmitter system, reducing ACTH, CORT content, and cytokine expression, as well as inhibiting microglia activation [157, 158]. Three different intake methods (gavage, smelling, and feeding) of Tiancheng (*Citrus sinensis* Osbeck) essential oil can reverse the depressive behavior of the depressed mice and promote the release of monoamine neurotransmitters in the brain of mice; (+)-limonene (**78**), α-pinene (**79**), β-mene (**80**), and linalool (**81**) are the main volatile substances of the essential oil, which indicates that those volatile compounds may be the potential antidepressant ingredients [159]. Cycloastragalin (**82**) identified from Huangqi (Astragali Radix) could reduce the immobility time in FST of depressed mice by regulating the telomerase activity in the nerve cells [160]. 10-Hydroxydecenoic acid (**83**), a unique fatty acid in Fengwangjiang (Lac Regis Apis), effectively ameliorated depressive symptoms [161]. Cinnamaldehyde (**84**) displays significant depressive activity in middle-aged depressed rats by attenuating the expression and activity of cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) [162]. β-Amyrin palmitate (**85**), succinic acid (**86**), and β-carotene (**87**) are proved to be antidepressant monomers from Peilan (Eupatorii Herba) [163], Bajitian (Morindae Officinalis Radix) [144], and Huluobo (Daucus Carota) [164], respectively. The structures of compounds **77**-**87** with significant antidepressant activity are shown in Figure 10. In addition, the top six ingredients with antidepressant activity identified from medicine and food homologous products reported in the literature are shown in Figure 11, and all the compounds with significant antidepressant activity in this article are summarized in Table 3.

4 Discussion

Many complex substances are present in the crude extracts of plants, and different kinds of plants have different active ingredients. For example, in the ethanol extract of Hongjingtian (Rhodiolae Crenulatae Radix et Rhizoma), which includes phenylpropanoids and

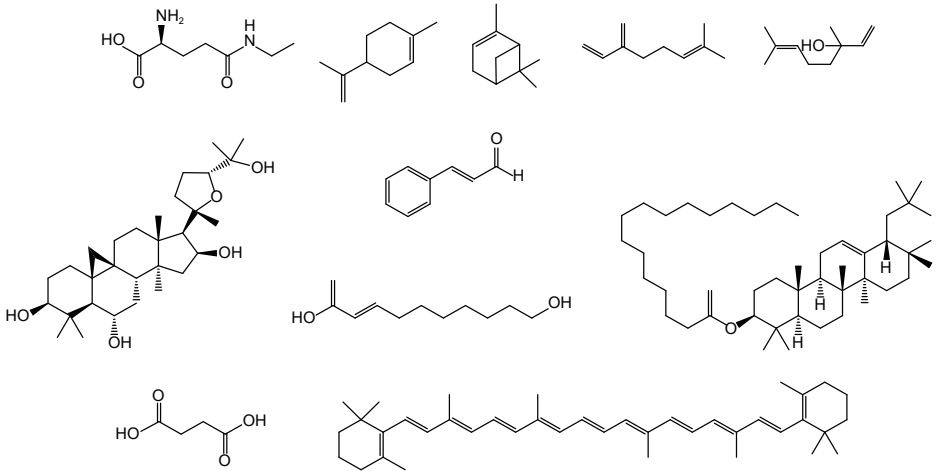


Figure 10 The structures of compounds **77**-**87**

(**77**) L-theanine; (**78**) (+)-Limonene; (**79**) α-Pinene; (**80**) β-Mene; (**81**) Linalool; (**82**) Cycloastragenol; (**83**) 10-Hydroxydecenoic acid; (**84**) Cinnamic aldehyde; (**85**) β-Amyrin palmitate; (**86**) Succinic acid; (**87**) β-Carotene.

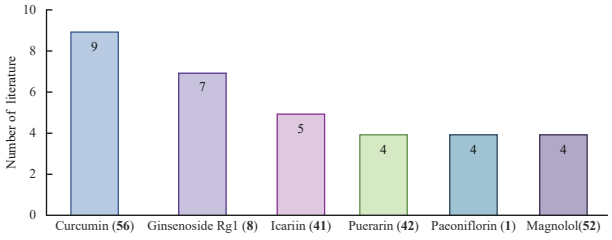


Figure 11 The top six ingredients identified from medicine and food homologous products with antidepressant activity reported in the literature

flavonoids, more than 10 compounds have been identified with significant inhibition activity for MAO-A [27]. However, none of the identified substances can achieve the same effect as the crude extraction. Therefore, it is speculated that the high activity may come from the synergistic effects of all the components in the extract. Several studies have only proved the antidepressant activity of the extract, leaving its specific components, which deserve further investigation, aside [35, 38]. A large number of studies have shown that active ingredients contained in foods have specific antidepressant effects [89, 95]; however, these studies are mainly based on preclinical trials, using a variety of experimental analyses and animal models of depression, and their structure-activity relationship, dose-effect relationship, and molecular mechanism still need further study. More importantly, the lack of in-depth study of antidepressant mechanisms has, in turn, limited the development of these functional foods. The poor industrialization of advanced processing technologies such as extraction, purification, refining and structural modification restricts products' prospect and added value [165].

The traditional treatment means (synthetic drugs) for depression has serious side effects, including sexual dysfunction, nausea, and gastrointestinal discomfort, which will bring great pain to depression patients [13-15]. In comparison, mild food therapy may effectively compensate for the shortcomings of traditional treatment, and some of the plant-derived compounds, such as sarsasapogenin and puerarin, also boast multi-target antidepressant effect [78, 109]. At present, integrated traditional Chinese and western medicine treatment also has become a common treatment method, reducing toxicity and enhancing the antidepressant effect of drugs [166]. A recent study has reported that corticosterone plays a crucial role in the vicious cycle of obesity and depression [167]. In addition to promoting the expression of BDNF in the hippocampus of mice to exert antidepressant effect [96], naringenin can also increase hippocampal glucocorticoid receptors and reduce serum corticosterone levels [95]; naringenin exists in citrus fruits, which is rich in content and may be developed into a new type of weight loss, hypoglycemic, and antidepressant multi-purpose drug in the future.

5 Conclusion

Most of the reviews focus on the study of herbs or phytochemicals, but this paper summarizes the antidepressant activity of functional foods or medicine and food homologous products for the first time; on top of that, it is also the first to summarize the antidepressant activity of extracts or monomer compounds from functional foods or medicine and food homologous plants. A total of 32 extracts (including 8 flavonoid extracts), 87 active ingredients, and related mechanisms have been summarized from 67 plant-derived functional foods or medicine and food homologous products, which lays a foundation for developing novel anti-depressive drugs from these functional foods or medicine and food homologous products, and provides an alternative treatment option for depression.

Table 3 Compounds with significant antidepressant activity

Category	Source	No.	Compound	Reference
Terpenoids	Chishao (Paeonia Radix Rubra)	**1**	Paeoniflorin	[45-48]
		2	Albiflorin	[49]
	Xingbaogu (Pleurotus Eryngii)	**3**	Eryngiolide A	[50]
	Zhizi (Gardenia Fructus)	**4**	Genipin	[51]
	Jixuecao (Centella Herba)	**5**	Asiaticoside	[50, 52]
		6	Asiatic acid	[50]
		7	Madecassic acid	[50]
Saponins	Renshen (Gingseng Radix et Rhizoma)	**8**	Ginsenoside Rg1	[58-64]
		9	Ginsenoside Rb1	[65-67]
		10	Ginsenoside Rh2	[68]
		11	Ginsenoside Rg2	[69]
		12	Ginsenoside Rg3	[70]
		13	Ginsenoside Rb3	[71]
		14	Ginsenoside Re	[72]
		15	Ginsenoside Rd	[73]
		16	20(*S*)-Promiddleanaxdiol	[50]
		17	20(*S*)-Promiddleanaxatriol	[50]
		18	Dammara 3-*O*-*α*-L-rhamnosy-l3*β*,12*β*,20-triol	[74]
		19	Dammara-12-*O*-*α*-L-rhamnosy-l3*β*,12*β*,20-triol	[50]
		20	Dammara-20(*S*),24(*R*)-epoxy-3*β*,12*β*,25-triol	[50]
		21	Dammara-20(*S*),24(*R*)-epoxy3*β*,6*β*,12*β*,25-tetrol	[50]
		22	Dammara-20(*S*),24(*S*)-epoxy-3*β*,12*β*,25-triol	[50]
		23	Dammara-20(*S*),24(*S*)-epoxy-3*β*,6*β*,12*β*,25*β*-tetrol	[50]
	Xiangfu (Cyperi Rhizoma)	**24**	Cyprotusides A	[75]
		25	Cyprotusides B	[75]
	Zhimu (Anemarrhenae Rhizoma)	**26**	Timosaponin B-II	[76]
		27	Timosaponin B-III	[77]
		28	Sarsasapogenin	[78]
	Gancao (Glycyrrhizae Radix et Rhizoma)	**29**	Glycyrrhizic acid	[79]
Flavonoids	Zisu (Perilla Frutescens)	**30**	Apigenin	[89]
	Ganju (Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium Blanco)	**30**	Apigenin	[90, 91]
	Chenpi (Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium)	**31**	Nobiletin	[92]
	Daji (Cirsii Japonici Herba)	**32**	Luteolin	[93, 94]
	Ganju (Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium Blanco)	**33**	Naringenin	[95, 96]
		34	Naringin	[50]
		35	Hesperidin	[97, 98]
		36	Neohesperidin	[50]
	Honggua (Carthami Flos)	**37**	Quercetin	[100]
	Xianrenzhangguo (Opuntia Ficus-Indica)	**38**	Kaempferol	[101]
		39	Quercitirin	[101]
	Luobuma (Apocynum Venetum)	**40**	Hyperoside	[102]
	Yinyanghuo (Epimedii Folium)	**41**	Icariin	[103-107]
	Gegen (Puerariae Lobatae Radix)	**42**	Puerarin	[109-112]
	Gancao (Glycyrrhizae Radix et Rhizoma)	**43**	Isoliquiritin	[113]
		44	Liquiritin	[113]

Table 3 Continued

Category	Source	No.	Compound	Reference
Phenyl-propanoids	Shengjiang (Zingiberis Rhizoma Recens)	**45**	Dehydrozingerone	[115]
	Danshen (Salviae Miltiorrhizae Radix et Rhizoma)	**46**	Tanshinone	[116]
		47	Salvianolic acids B	[117, 118]
	Buguzhi (Psoraleae fructus)	**48**	Psoralen	[119]
		49	Psoralidin	[120]
	Yuanzhi (Polygalae Radix)	**50**	Scopoletin	[121]
	Baizhi (Angelicae Dahuricae Radix)	**51**	Auraptenol	[122]
	Houpo (Magnoliae Officinalis Cortex)	**52**	Magnolol	[123-126]
		53	Honokiol	[126]
	Zisu (Perilla Frutescens)	**54**	Rosmarinic acid	[127, 128]
	Hongjingtian (Rhodiolae Crenulatae Radix et Rhizoma)	**55**	Rosavin	[50]
Phenols	Jianghuang (Curcumae Longae Rhizoma)	**56**	Curcumin	[129-137]
		57	Demethoxycurcumin	[50]
		58	Dimethoxycurcumin	[50]
		59	Tetrahydrocurcumin	[50]
	Yumi (Zea Mays)	**60**	α-Tocopherol	[138]
	Tianma (Gastrodiae Rhizoma)	**61**	Gastrodin	[139-141]
	Gancao (Glycyrrhizae Radix et Rhizoma)	**62**	Methyl jasmonate	[21]
Carbohydrates	Xueliangguo (Smallanthus Sonchifolius)	**63**	Chrysanthemum starch oligosaccharides	[142]
	Bajitian (Morindae Officinalis Radix)	**64**	Nystose	[144]
		65	1F-Fructofuranosylnystose	[144]
		66	Chrysanthemum starch hexasaccharide I	[144]
		67	Chrysanthemum starch heptasaccharide II	[144]
	Yuanzhi (Polygalae Radix)	**68**	3,6'-Di mustard acyl sucrose	[145]
Alkaloids	Yongchongcao (Cordyceps Militaris)	**69**	Cordycepin	[148]
	Hujiao (Piperis Fructus)	**70**	Piperine	[149-151]
		71	Antiepilepsirine	[152]
	Digupi (Lycii Cortex)	**72**	Betaine	[153]
	Chuanxiong (Chuanxiong Rhizoma)	**73**	Tetramethylpyrazine	[154, 155]
	Chaye (*Camellia sinensis*)	**74**	1,3,7,9-Tetramethyluric acid	[156]
		75	Theophylline	[156]
		76	Theobromine	[156]
Other types of compounds	Chaye (*Camellia sinensis*)	**77**	L-theanine	[157, 158]
	Tiancheng (*Citrus sinensis* Osbeck)	**78**	(+)-Limonene	[159]
		79	α-Pinene	[159]
		80	β-Mene	[159]
		81	Linalool	[159]
	Huangqi (Astragali Radix)	**82**	Cycloastragenol	[160]
	Fengwangjiang (Lac Regis Apis)	**83**	10-Hydroxydecenoic acid	[161]
	Rougui (Cinnamomi Cortex)	**84**	Cinnamic aldehyde	[162]
	Peilan (Eupatorii Herba)	**85**	β-Amyrin palmitate	[163]
	Bajitian (Morindae Officinalis Radix)	**86**	Succinic acid	[144]
	Huluobo (Daucus Carota)	**87**	β-Carotene	[164]

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Competing interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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功能性食品及药食同源产品中抗抑郁活性成分及其作用机制

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【摘要】目的 本研究通过总结归纳功能性食品及药食同源产品中活性成分的抗抑郁作用及其机制，以期为抑郁症的治疗提供一种新思路。**方法** 通过 PubMed, 谷歌学术, Web of Science 及中国知网数据库收集与功能性食品或食品同源产品抗抑郁相关的文献，检索时限为 1996 年 9 月 25 日至 2022 年 9 月 5 日，系统总结与分析其抗抑郁活性成分及作用机制。**结果** 研究最终纳入文献 146 篇，共计 67 种植物来源的功能性食品或药食同源产品、32 种具有抗抑郁活性的提取物（含 8 种黄酮提取物）和 87 种抗抑郁活性成分。87 种抗抑郁活性成份包括萜类 7 种，皂苷类 22 种，黄酮类 15 种，苯丙素类 11 种，酚类 7 种，糖类 6 种，生物碱类 8 种，其他类 11 种。**结论** 本综述对功能性食品及药食同源产品中抗抑郁活性成分及作用机制进行总结与分析，为新型抗抑郁药物的开发提供了新的视野，同时也为抑郁症患者的治疗提供一种潜在替代治疗方案。

【关键词】抗抑郁；药食同源；功能性食品；提取物；活性成分；中医药