



# Antidiabetic Activity and GC-MS Analysis of *n*-Hexane Leaf Extract of *Codiaeum variegatum* (Euphorbiaceae)

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to discover bioactive fatty esters in the n-hexane leaf extract of *Codiaeum variegatum* (L.) [*C. variegatum* (L.)] through GC-MS analysis. The extract, known for its antidiabetic properties, was subjected to *in vitro* antidiabetic activity tests using  $\alpha$ -glucosidase and  $\alpha$ -amylase assays. The GC-MS analysis identified 55 potential therapeutic compounds. The main phytoconstituents comprised;, Linoleic acid, methyl ester (20.67%), 9-Octadecenoic acid, 12-hydroxy-methyl ester, [R-(Z)] (10.89%), Cyclopropane- octanoic acid, 2-[[2-[(2-Ethyl cyclopropyl) methyl]cyclopropyl]methyl], methyl ester (7.91%), Linoleic acid, hydroxy methyl ester (7.01%), Hexadecanoic acid, methyl ester (6.12%), and Methyl stearate (4.65%). The extract showed weak to moderate inhibition on  $\alpha$ -glucosidase and  $\alpha$ -amylase with IC<sub>50</sub> values of 27.40 and 24.43 µg/ml, respectively, compared to acarbose. More n-hexane extract is required for similar inhibition, indicating acarbose higher potency. This suggests *C. variegatum* (L.) has diverse bioactive chemicals. While these findings are significant for therapy development, further research is needed to understand potential applications and risks. This study opens avenues for future research into bioactive compounds and their therapeutic potential.

Keywords: C. variegatum (L.); n-hexane extract; GC-MS; Fatty esters; Antidiabetic

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

Codiaeum variegatum (L.) Rumph. ex A. Juss. (Euphorbiaceae family), native to the Moluccan Islands, Indonesia, is also found in tropical regions like the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and Australia. This species, commonly known as "garden croton", is widely cultivated with many varieties developed from it<sup>1</sup>. Traditionally, various parts of the plant have been used in folk medicine to treat ailments such as amoebic dysentery, stomachache, gastric ulcers, skin infections, fever, cough, and cold<sup>1</sup>. Various chemical classes have been identified in different parts of the plant, including flavonoids $^{2,3}$ , phenolic acids <sup>2,4</sup>, diterpenoids<sup>5</sup>, triterpenoids <sup>5,6</sup>, sterols<sup>5</sup>, alkaloids<sup>5</sup>, and volatiles<sup>7,8</sup>. The plant has demonstrated a wide range of biological activities, including anti-amoebic9, wound healing<sup>10</sup>, antiviral<sup>11</sup>, anti-inflammatory<sup>12</sup>, cytotoxic<sup>5,13</sup>, antifungal<sup>4</sup>, anticonvulsant<sup>14</sup>, antibacterial <sup>15</sup>, and anti-diarrheal properties <sup>16</sup>.

Fatty acids are known to display antidiabetic properties. For example, a study investigating the nutritional attributes and *in vitro* antidiabetic effects of blue and yellow corn extracts revealed that, despite the established biological activity of polyphenolic compounds, the fat component demonstrated the most potent *in vitro* antidiabetic activity<sup>17</sup>. Dietary free fatty acids (FFAs), including  $\omega$ -3 fatty acids, are known to control metabolic and anti-inflammatory processes. Many of these effects are due to FFAs' interaction with a group of G protein-coupled receptors. This evidence implies that fatty acids could have a substantial impact on diabetes management<sup>18</sup>. *C. variegatum* (L.) is recognized for its diverse bioactive compounds,

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including fatty acid esters<sup>19</sup>. Although specific research on the antidiabetic effects of these fatty acid esters in *C. variegatum* (L.) is sparse, studies have indicated that fatty acids can display antidiabetic properties<sup>20</sup>. This study aims to analyze the potential bioactive components in the *n*-hexane leaf extract of *C. variegatum* (L.), identify the compounds using GC-MS analysis, and evaluate the *in vitro* antidiabetic activity.

### 2. METHODS

#### 2.1. Plant material

Fresh leaves of *Codiaeum variegatum* (L.) Rumph. ex A. Juss. were collected in May 2020 from the Experimental Plants Station at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Cairo University, Giza, Egypt. The plant was identified and authenticated by experts at the Orman Botanical Garden, Giza, Egypt. A voucher specimen (No. C.v/l/2020) was stored in the herbarium of the Department of Pharmacognosy and Medicinal Plants at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Al-Azhar University, Egypt.

#### 2.2. Extraction

In a Soxhlet extractor, 250 g of powdered C. *variegatum* (L.) leaves were individually extracted with n-hexane ( $3 \times 500 \text{ mL}$ ) at a temperature between 60 and  $65^{\circ}$ C for 24 hrs. The solvent was then evaporated using a rotating vacuum evaporator to produce viscous semi-solid masses (200mg). This semi-dry n-hexane crude extract was then subjected to GC-MS analysis<sup>21</sup>.

# **2.3.** Gas chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS) analysis

The GC-MS analysis was carried out following the established protocols<sup>21, 22</sup>.

#### 2.4. In vitro antidiabetic activity

The extract under investigation was assessed for its in vitro antidiabetic activity through  $\alpha$ -glucosidase and  $\alpha$ -amylase enzyme inhibition tests<sup>23</sup>.

#### 2.5. Statistical analysis

Mean was calculated using a Microsoft Excel worksheet. References and citations were compiled using the EndNote software.

# **3. RESULTS**

# **3.1.** GC-MS analysis of the *n*-hexane extract of *C*. *variegatum* (L.)

Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS) is an analytical method used for analyzing mixtures of organic chemicals<sup>24, 25</sup>. The NIST/NBS spectral database is a key tool for compound identification via mass spectra. It houses reference spectra for GC/MS and LC-MS/MS, and gas phase retention indices for GC. The library's main function is to identify compounds by matching ion fragmentation "fingerprints". It offers a more sensitive and robust identification method than alternatives, enhancing the success rate of confident chemical identification by providing high-quality spectra<sup>21</sup>. The study identified 58 compounds in the n-hexane leaf extract of C. variegatum (L.), constituting 94.36% of the total composition of the extract (Table 1, Figure 1). The primary chemical classes identified included fatty esters (51.91%), fatty ester derivatives (21.13%), fatty acids (5.64%), phthalate ester (5.63%), sesquiterpenoids (2.33%), acyclic hydrogenated diterpene alcohols (2.06%), and valero lactones (1.90%). The main compounds identified were Hexadecanoic acid, methyl ester n-Hexadecanoic acid (6.12%),(3.42%),Hexadecanoic acid, trimethylsilyl ester (2.11%), Linoleic acid, hydroxy-methyl ester (7.01%), Linoleic acid, methyl ester (20.67%), Phytol (1.63%), Methyl stearate (4.65%), Cyclopropaneoctanoic acid. 2-[[2-[(2-Ethyl cyclopropyl) methyl]cyclopropyl]methyl], methyl ester (7.91%), Octadecanoic acid (1.54%), 9-Octadecenoic acid, 12hydroxy-methyl ester, [R-(Z)] (10.89%), 7,10-Octadecadienoic acid, methyl ester (1.98%), cis-5,8,11-Eicosatrienoic acid, methyl ester (3.71%), Delta cuprenene (1.37%), and 2H-Pyran-2-one, tetrahydro-6-tridecyl-(1.37%). This suggests a diverse range of bioactive chemicals present in C. variegatum (L.) (Figure 2).

# 3.2. $\alpha$ -glucosidase and $\alpha$ -amylase enzymes inhibition activities of *C. variegatum* (L.) *n*-hexane extract

The data presented in Figure 3, show the inhibitory effects of the n-hexane extract and acarbose on  $\alpha$ -glucosidase and  $\alpha$ -amylase activities at different concentrations. As expected, the percentage inhibition decreases as the concentration of the substances decreases, indicating less availability of the inhibitor to impede the enzyme. The  $IC_{50}$  value, which represents the concentration of the inhibitor required to suppress 50% of the enzyme's activity, is used to gauge the potency of an inhibitor. A lower IC<sub>50</sub> value signifies a more potent inhibitor. According to the current finding, acarbose appears to be a more potent inhibitor of both α-glucosidase (IC<sub>50</sub> = 2.11  $\mu$ g/ml) and  $\alpha$ -amylase (IC<sub>50</sub> = 12.29  $\mu$ g/ml) compared to the *n*-hexane extract (IC<sub>50</sub> =  $27.40 \,\mu$ g/ml for  $\alpha$ -glucosidase and IC<sub>50</sub> = 24.43 µg/ml for  $\alpha$ amylase). This suggests that the *n*-hexane extract, while still acting as an inhibitor, exhibits a moderate to weak inhibitory effect in comparison to acarbose. Therefore, a higher concentration of the *n*-hexane

extract would be needed to achieve the same level of enzyme inhibition as acarbose.

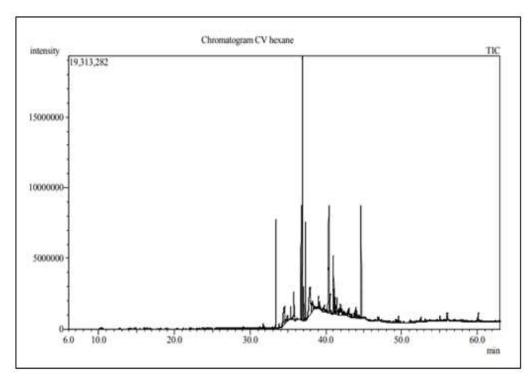


Figure 1. TIC chromatogram of the *n*-hexane extract of *C. variegatum* (L.)

### 4. DISCUSSION

Croton species are known for their wide range of biological activities, including potential antidiabetic effects<sup>57</sup>. For example, the dichloromethane extract of Croton bonplandianus has been found to inhibit a-glucosidase activity, with an IC<sub>50</sub> value of 14.93 mg/ml<sup>56</sup>. In a similar vein, n-Hexane and ethyl acetate extracts of Croton krabas have shown inhibitory activity against α-glucosidase, with inhibition percentages of 73.58% and 44.55% at a concentration of 150 µg/mL<sup>57</sup>, respectively. Additionally, the ethyl acetate extract of the leaf part of Croton thurifer has been reported to inhibit  $\alpha$ glucosidase activity, with an IC<sub>50</sub> value equal to 1.77 mg/mL<sup>58</sup>. These findings suggest that Croton species could potentially be utilized in diabetes management. This provides motivation to further explore the inhibitory effects of an *n*-hexane extract from C. variegatum (L.) and acarbose on two key enzymes:  $\alpha$ -glucosidase and  $\alpha$ -amylase. These enzymes play a crucial role in the breakdown of carbohydrates into glucose. By inhibiting these enzymes, the digestion of carbohydrates is slowed, which subsequently reduces the rise in blood sugar levels post-meal. This mechanism is particularly beneficial in managing certain types of diabetes. The *n*-hexane extract and acarbose inhibit  $\alpha$ -glucosidase and  $\alpha$ -amylase activities. As their concentrations decrease, so does their inhibitory effect due to less availability of the inhibitor. The IC<sub>50</sub> value measures an inhibitor's potency, with a lower value indicating a stronger

inhibitor. acarbose has lower IC<sub>50</sub> values (2.11 µg/ml for  $\alpha$ -glucosidase and 12.29 µg/ml for  $\alpha$ -amylase) than the *n*-hexane extract (27.40 µg/ml for  $\alpha$ -glucosidase and 24.43 µg/ml for  $\alpha$ -amylase), making it a stronger inhibitor. Thus, more n-hexane extract is needed to achieve the same inhibition level as acarbose. This comparison clearly indicates the superior inhibitory potency of acarbose over the *n*-hexane extract. These findings provide valuable insights into the potential use of these substances in managing blood sugar levels, particularly in the context of diabetes. However, it's important to note that further studies would be needed to fully understand their therapeutic effects, safety profiles, and potential side effects.

No.	Compound	Rt(mi n)	M.wt.	M.F.	Area %	Chemical class	Reported bioactivity	Reference
1	2-Undecanone, 6,10-dimethyl	31.67	198	C13H26O	0.29	Long chain ketone	Antimicrobial	26
2	Tetradecanoic acid, trimethylsilyl ester	31.79	300	$C_{17}H_{36}O_2Si$	0.11	Fatty esters	Antibacterial	27
3	Hexadecanoic acid, methyl ester	33.43	270	$C_{17}H_{34}O_2$	6.12	Fatty esters	Antibacterial, Antidiabetic	27, 28
4	n-Pentadecanoic acid, trimethylsilyl ester	33.82	314	$C_{18}H_{38}O_2Si$	0.22	Fatty esters	Antibacterial	27
5	n-Hexadecanoic acid	34.46	256	$C_{16}H_{32}O_2$	3.42	Fatty acids	Antimicrobial, Antidiabetic	29, 30
5	Hexadecanoic acid, methyl ester	34.64	270	$C_{17}H_{34}O_2$	0.68	Fatty acids	Antimicrobial	31
7	α-Methyl linolenate	34.89	292	$C_{19}H_{32}O_2$	0.39	Fatty esters	Antibacterial	27
3	Heptadecanoic acid, methyl ester	35.37	284	$C_{18}H_{36}O_2$	0.54	Fatty esters	Antibacterial	27
)	Hexadecanoic acid, trimethylsilyl ester	35.79	328	$C_{19}H_{40}O_2Si$	2.11	Fatty esters	Antibacterial	27
10	l-(+)-Ascorbic acid 2,6-dihexadecanoate	36.18	652	$C_{38}H_{68}O_8$	0.11	Fatty ester derivatives	Antibacterial	32
1	Linoleic acid, hydroxy-, methyl ester	36.74	294	$C_{19}H_{34}O_2$	7.01	Fatty esters	Antimicrobial	33
2	Linolenic acid methyl ester	36.92	292	$C_{19}H_{32}O_2$	20.67	Fatty esters	Analgesic, Antipyretic, Anticonvuls ant, Antidiabetic	34
3	Phytol	37.09	296	$C_{20}H_{40}O$	1.63	Acyclic hydrogenated diterpene alcohol	Antioxidant, Antidiabetic	35, 36
4	Methyl stearate	37.32	298	$C_{19}H_{38}O_2$	4.65	Fatty esters	Antifoaming	37
15	Cyclopropaneoctanoic acid, 2-[[2-[(2- ethylcyclopropyl) methyl] cyclopropyl] methyl], methyl ester	37.89	334	$C_{22}H_{38}O_2$	7.91	Fatty ester derivatives	Antioxidant	38
16	Octadecanoic acid	38.19	284	$C_{18}H_{36}O_2$	1.54	Fatty acids	Antibacterial	39
7	9-Octadecenal, (Z)-	38.50	266	$C_{18}H_{34}O$	0.34	Fatty aldehyde	Antibacterial	40
8	Ethyl 3-hydroxyhexadecanoate	38.89	300	$C_{18}H_{36}O_3$	0.13	Fatty ester derivatives	Antibacterial	41
9	Unknown	39.02	-	-	0.83	-	-	-
20	Linolenic acid methyl ester	39.16	292	$C_{19}H_{32}O_2$	0.44	Fatty esters	Anti-inflammatory	42
21	Hexadecanoic acid, 2-hydroxy-, methyl ester	39.60	286	$C_{17}H_{34}O_3$	0.52	Fatty ester derivatives	Antibacterial	41

Table 1. Reported activity and chemical composition of the *n*-hexane extract of *C. variegatum* (L.)

No.	Compound	Rt (min)	M.wt.	<b>M.F.</b>	Area %	Chemical class	Reported bioactivity	Reference
22	Phytol	39.81	296	$C_{20}H_{40}O$	0.43	Acyclic hydrogenated diterpene alcohol	Antioxidant	43, 44
23	Cyclohexene, 1-acetyl-2-(1-hydroxyethyl)-	40.05	168	$C_{10}H_{16}O_2$	0.27	Cycloalkene derivatives	-	-
24	9-Octadecenoic acid, 12-hydroxy-, methyl ester, [R-(Z)]-	40.38	312	$C_{19}H_{36}O_3$	10.89	Fatty ester derivatives	Hepatoprotective, antihistaminic	45
25	7,10-Octadecadienoic acid, methyl ester	40.55	294	$C_{19}H_{34}O_2$	1.98	Fatty esters	Anti-inflammatory	42
26	1-Heptatriacotanol	40.67	537	C37H76O	0.31	Long chain alcohol	Anti-hypercholesterolemic effects	42
27	cis-5,8,11-Eicosatrienoic acid, methyl ester	41.0	320	$C_{21}H_{36}O_2$	3.71	Fatty esters	-	-
28	Delta cuprenene	41.09	204	$C_{15}H_{24}$	1.37	Sesquiterpenoids	-	-
29	Linolenic acid methyl ester	41.23	292	$C_{19}H_{32}O_2$	0.94	Fatty esters	Anti-inflammatory	42
30	2H-Pyran-2-one, tetrahydro-6-tridecyl-	41.45	282	$C_{18}H_{34}O_2$	1.90	Delta valerolactones	Bioactive compounds suitable for human use	46
31	Unknown	41.71	-	-	0.72	-	-	-
32	Cis-5,8,11-Eicosatrienoic acid, methyl ester	41.92	320	$C_{21}H_{36}O_2$	1.64	Fatty esters	-	-
33	Unknown	42.22	-	-	0.30	-	-	-
34	5-hydroxy-7-methoxyflavanone	42.43	270	$C_{16}H_{14}O_4$	0.56	Flavonoids	-	-
35	Naphthalene, decahydro-1,6-dimethyl-	42.94	166	$C_{12}H_{22}$	0.84	Polycyclic hydrocarbons	-	-
36	2,6-Difluorobenzoic acid, tridec-2-ynyl ester	43.04	336	$C_{20}H_{26}F_2O_2$	0.79	Unsaturated esters	Antioxidant,	47
37	6,9,12,15-Docosatetraenoic acid, methyl ester	43.18	346	$C_{23}H_{38}O_2$	0.32	Fatty esters	Antibacterial and antibiofilm	48
38	Unknown	43.44	-	-	0.23	-	-	-
39	Doconexent	43.76	328	$C_{22}H_{32}O_2$	0.65	A polyunsaturated long- chain fatty acid	Antineoplastic	49
40	6,7-Epoxyoctadecanoic acid methyl ester	43.87	312	$C_{19}H_{36}O_3$	0.67	Fatty esters	-	-
41	Hexadecanoic acid, 2-hydroxy-1- (hydroxymethyl)ethyl ester	44.02	330	$C_{19}H_{38}O_4$	0.83	Fatty ester derivatives		-
42	Unknown	44.33	-	-	0.35	-	-	-
43	Unknown	44.47	-	-	0.10	-	-	-
44	9,12,15-Octadecatrienoic acid, 2,3- dihydroxypropyl ester, (Z, Z, Z)-	46.93	352	$C_{27}H_{44}O_3$	0.74	Fatty ester derivatives	Urine acidifier, increase zinc bioavailability	50

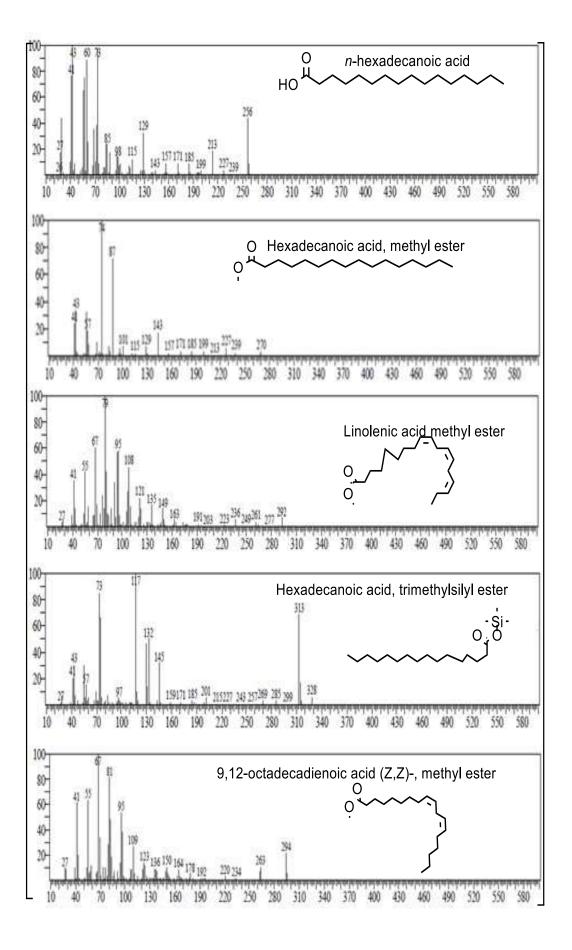
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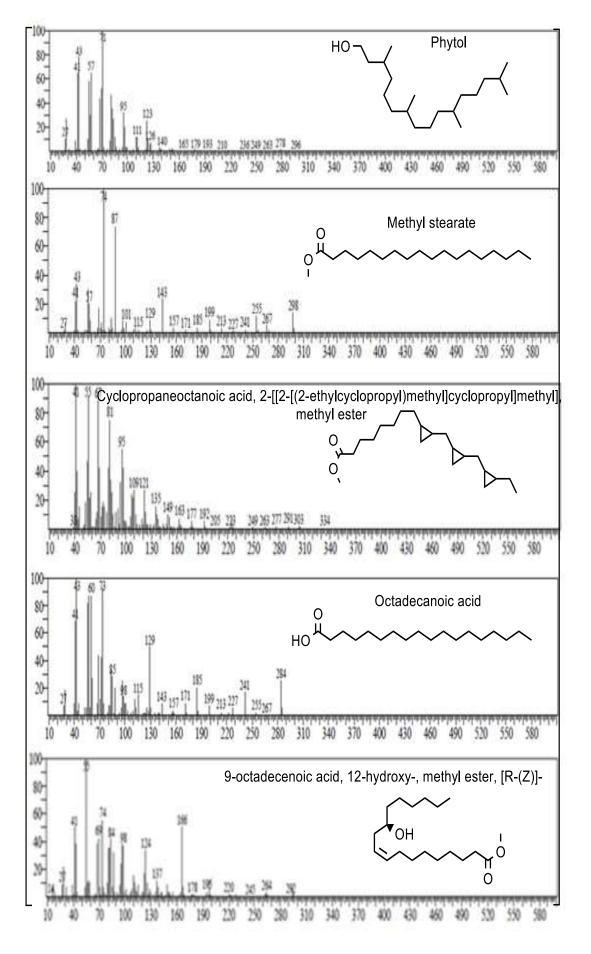
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No.	Compound	Rt (min)	M.wt.	M.F.	Area %	Chemical class	Reported bioactivity	Reference
45	Tetracosanoic acid, methyl ester	47.32	382	$C_{25}H_{50}O_2$	0.16	Fatty esters	-	-
46	α-Tocospiro A	49.23	462	$C_{29}H_{50}O_4$	0.38	Sesterterpenoids	Antioxidant	51
47	α-Tocospiro A	49.55	462	$C_{29}H_{50}O_4$	0.58	Sesterterpenoids	Antioxidant	51
48	Nonanoic acid, 9-(nonyloxy)-, methyl ester	51.16	314	$C_{19}H_{38}O_3$	0.13	Fatty esters	Antibacterial	52
49	Unknown	51.89	-	-	0.08	-	-	-
50	Unknown	52.50	-	-	0.38	-	-	-
51	Vitamin E	53.08			0.15		Antioxidant, Antidiabetic	35, 53
52	Stigmasterol	55.05	412	$C_{29}H_{48}O$	0.29	Steroid derivative	Antifungal	54
53	Unknown	55.57	-	-	0.23	-	-	-
54	r-Sitosterol	56.0	414	C <sub>29</sub> H <sub>50</sub> O	0.55	Steroids	Decreases in serum cholesterol, Antidiabetic	55
55	Unknown	56.92	-	-	0.20	-	-	-
56	Unknown	58.0	-	-	0.18	-	-	-
57	Phytol decanoate	60.10	450	$C_{30}H_{58}O_2$	0.85	Fatty acid phytyl ester	Antioxidant	56

٠	Fatty esters and derivatives	73.04
•	Fatty acids	5.64
•	Sesquiterpenoids	2.33
•	Acyclic hydrogenated diterpene alcohols	2.06
•	Valerolactones	1.90
•	Others	9.39

Total	94.36
	%





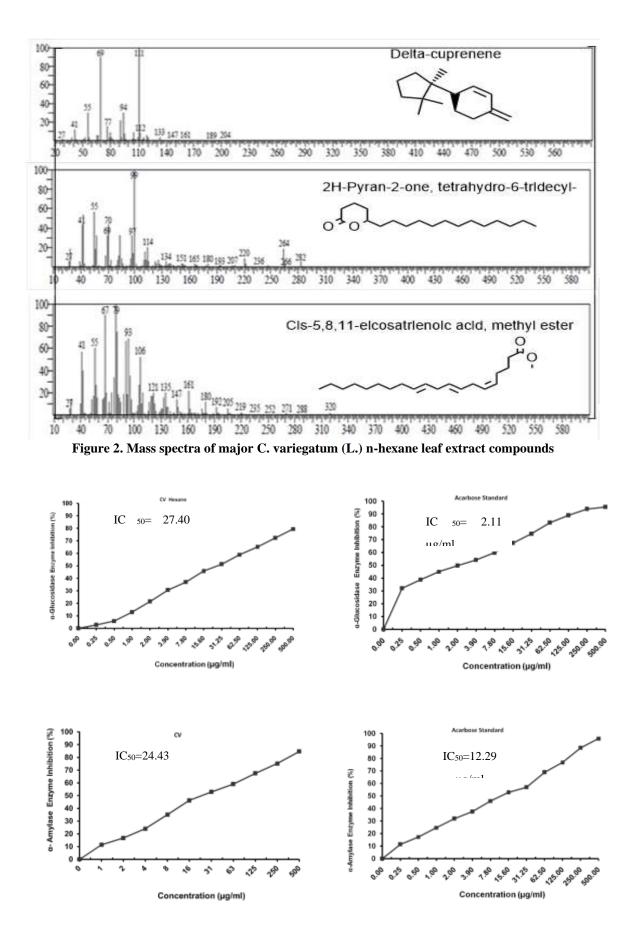


 Figure 3. Inhibitory effects of C. variegatum (L.) leaf n-hexane extract and acarbose on α-glucosidase and α-amylase enzymes activity

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# **5. CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, the study reveals a significant link between antidiabetic inhibitor enzymes and the inhibitory effects of both acarbose and the n-hexane extract from Codiaeum variegatum (L.) leaves. The IC50 values indicate that acarbose has a stronger inhibitory effect on a-glucosidase and a-amylase activities than the n-hexane extract. This suggests that a higher concentration of the n-hexane extract is needed to match acarbose's enzyme inhibition level. These findings have important implications for developing treatments and therapies. However, further research is needed to fully explore potential applications and understand any associated risks or side effects. The identification of bioactive compounds and their potential therapeutic applications provides a promising avenue for future research.

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Author Contribution: All listed authors have contributed significantly to the manuscript.

List of Abbreviations: GC-MS: Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry; Rt: Retention time; M.wt.: Molecular weight; M.F. Molecular formula.

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