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NILSON FERREIRA DE OLIVEIRA NETO

Própolis vermelha brasileira: ação antibacteriana contra patógenos endodônticos e avaliação *in vitro* da produção de radicais livres

Brazilian red propolis: antibacterial activity against endodontic pathogens and in vitro evaluation of free radicals production

Dissertação apresentada à Faculdade de Odontologia da Universidade Federal de Uberlândia como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de mestre em Clínica Odontológica Integrada.

Uberlândia

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Orientadora: Prof^a. Dr^a. Ana Paula Turrioni Hidalgo

Coorientador: Prof. Dr. Marcelo José Barbosa Silva

Banca examinadora

Prof^a. Dr^a. Ana Paula Turrioni Hidalgo

Prof^a. Dr^a. Paula Dechichi

Prof^a. Dr^a. Manoela Domingues Martins

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UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA
 Coordenação do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Odontologia
 Av. Pará, 1720, Bloco 4L, Anexo B, Sala 35 - Bairro Umarama, Uberlândia-MG, CEP 38400-902
 Telefone: (34) 3225-8115/8108 - www.ppgoufu.com - copod@umarama.ufu.br



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sou ferida aberta
sou garra
sou paixão
sou treva
sou grande
sou erro
soy libre
linda
loca
sou o que quero ser
derrapo
não paro
nessa selvageria
ninguém me devora
me salvo
me viro
sou minha
sou mulher
sou tudo
o que eu quiser.

Ryane Leão

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RESUMO

A manutenção da vitalidade pulpar é o principal objetivo das terapias pulpares vitais (TPV) e a seleção de um bom material irá contribuir para a longevidade do tratamento. A própolis vermelha brasileira é um excelente agente antimicrobiano e poderia ser utilizada como agente terapêutico em terapias pulpares. O presente estudo analisou a ação antibacteriana do extrato bruto da própolis vermelha Brasileira (PVB) e o seu efeito em contato direto com fibroblastos humanos da polpa dentária (FHPD), em comparação ao material padrão-ouro para terapias vitais pulpares: o Agregado Trióxido Mineral (MTA). A Concentração Inibitória Mínima (CIM) e a Concentração Bactericida Mínima da PVB foi determinada contra patógenos endodônticos anaeróbios. Os FHPD foram semeados em placas de 96 poços e colocados em contato, após 24h do plaqueamento, com PVB10 (10 µg/mL), PVB50 (50 µg/mL), MTA em diferentes diluições (1:1, 1:2, 1:4 e 1:8), dimetilsulfóxido a 0,5% (DMSO 0,5%) e meio de cultura (DMEM). Após 24h da exposição aos materiais, os grupos foram submetidos ao ensaio de viabilidade celular (MTT formazan) e produção de radicais livres (espécies reativas de oxigênio – EROS, sonda fluorescente 2,7-diclorodihidrofluoresceína-diacetato (DCFH-DA) e óxido nítrico - NO, reação de Griess). Os testes ANOVA One way e Tukey foram realizados considerando um nível de significância de 5%. Os valores de CIM/CBM para a PVB demonstraram ação antibacteriana para a maioria das bactérias testadas: *P. micra* (6,25/6,25 µg/mL), *F. nucleatum* (25/25 µg/mL) *P. nigrescens* (50/100 µg/mL), *P. melaninogenica* (50/100 µg/mL), *P. intermedia* (50/100 µg/mL) e *P. gingivalis* (50 µg/mL). Tanto o MTA quanto a PVB estimularam a viabilidade celular, destacando-se a PVB10 e o MTA 1:8 ($p=0.007$ e $p=0.001$, respectivamente). Em relação à produção de EROS e ON, foi observado que os grupos MTA 1:1, MTA 1:2 e PVB50 elevaram sutilmente a produção de EROS ($p<,001$) e ON ($p=0.008$, $p=0.007$ e $p<.001$, respectivamente) comparado ao grupo DMEM. Por outro lado, a PVB10 manteve os níveis de produção de EROS ($p=0,976$) e ON ($p=0,974$) semelhantes ao grupo DMEM. Portanto, a PVB se mostrou como um relevante agente antibacteriano para bactérias anaeróbias relacionadas à infecção endodôntica primária e, além disso, tanto o MTA quanto a PVB foram capazes de estimular a viabilidade dos FHPD sem aumentar consideravelmente a produção dos níveis de ON e EROS.

Palavras-chave: Própolis, Agente Antibacteriano, Radicais Livres.

ABSTRACT

Maintenance of pulp vitality is one of the purposes of vital pulp therapies (VPT) and selection of a good material strongly affects the long-term outcomes. Brazilian red propolis (BRP) is a great antimicrobial agent and may provide therapeutic solutions for pulp therapy. We hypothesized that BRP could show promising antibacterial activity and perform similar behavior with Mineral Trioxide Aggregate (MTA) in free radicals production and cell viability findings. The Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC) and Minimum Bactericidal Concentration (MBC) of BRP was determined against anaerobic endodontic pathogens. Human dental pulp fibroblasts (HDPFs) were seeded in 96 well-plates and exposed, after 24h, to BRP10 (10 µg/mL), BRP50 (50µg/mL), MTA extracts (1:1, 1:2, 1:4 e 1:8), dimethyl sulfoxide 0,5 % (DMSO) and cell culture medium (DMEM). Subsequently, 24h after the exposure to materials, the groups were tested for cell viability (MTT formazan assay), and free radicals production (reactive oxygen species - ROS, 2',7'-dichlorodihydrofluorescein diacetate fluorescent probe (DCFH-DA) and nitric oxide – NO, Griess reagent). The One-way ANOVA and Tukey's tests were employed considering significance level of 5%. MIC/MBC values of BRP performing antibacterial activity for *P. micra* (6.25/6.25 µg/mL), *F. nucleatum* (25/25 µg/mL), *P. melaninogenica* (50/100 µg/mL), *P. nigrescens* (50/100 µg/mL), *P. intermedia* (50/100 µg/mL) and *P. gingivalis* (50/200 µg/mL). In our cell viability findings, BRP and MTA were able to stimulate cell viability, emphasizing BRP10 and MTA 1:8 ($p=0.007$ and $p=0.001$, respectively). Furthermore, it was observed that MTA 1:1, MTA 1:2 and BRP50 slightly increased ROS ($p<.001$) and NO production ($p=0.008$, $p=0.007$ and $p<.001$ respectively) compared to DMEM group. On the other hand, BRP10 did not raised the amount of ROS ($p=0.976$) and NO ($p=0.974$) production compared to DMEM. Therefore, BRP presented high antibacterial activity for anaerobic bacteria involved in primary endodontic infection and, both BRP and MTA promoted the viability of HDPFs without greatly increased NO and ROS production.

Keywords: Propolis, Antibacterial Agent, Cytotoxicity; Free Radicals.

1. INTRODUÇÃO E REFERENCIAL TEÓRICO

As terapias vitais pulpares (TVPs) possuem o objetivo de manter a vitalidade de dentes decíduos e permanentes jovens em casos de exposições pulpares por lesões cariosas extensas, traumas ou iatrogenias através da utilização de um material biocompatível (Smaïl-Faugeron *et al.*, 2014). O agregado trióxido mineral (MTA) é o padrão ouro para as TVPs, apresenta estímulo à diferenciação odontogênica e ausência de toxicidade (Li *et al.*, 2019). Contudo, possui limitações relacionadas à alteração de cor, tempo de presa extenso, custo elevado e atividade anti-inflamatória reduzida (Shi B *et al.*, 2020).

A investigação de produtos naturais vem sendo realizada na Odontologia com o intuito de se obter materiais com melhor performance clínica, reduzida toxicidade e preços acessíveis à população (da Silva Barboza *et al.*, 2021). Neste contexto, a própolis brasileira é um conjunto de materiais resinosos coletados de diferentes fontes vegetais e elaborada por abelhas da espécie *Apis mellifera* a partir de exsudatos resinosos de cascas e botões florais. Essas substâncias são biomodificados pela adição de cera e pela ação da enzima 13-glicosidase presente nas secreções salivares das abelhas (Sousa *et al.*, 2007; Peter *et al.*, 2017; Cardoso *et al.*, 2015).

A composição química da própolis é complexa e varia de acordo com a flora da região de onde é produzida (Ítavo *et al.*, 2009), assim como a época da coleta e características genéticas da abelha produtora. Esses fatores influenciam diretamente nos princípios ativos presentes na própolis, refletindo na atividade biológica e farmacêutica que os diferentes produtos apresentam (Castro *et al.*, 2009).

Os principais componentes da própolis brasileira consistem em resinas e bálsamos aromáticos, ceras, óleos essenciais, grãos de pólen, compostos fenólicos (flavonóides e ácidos fenólicos), minerais e vitaminas. A própolis brasileira é classificada do tipo 1 ao 13, considerando características químicas, espécie produtora e diversidade do clima no país. A própolis vermelha, marrom e verde são alvos da maioria dos estudos relacionados às propriedades biológicas desse produto (Araújo *et al.*, 2014).

A própolis verde brasileira (PVEB) é a espécie mais investigada e, também, a mais popular. Ela é encontrada no sudeste brasileiro e possui como princípio ativo a artepelinina C e se origina a partir da *Baccharis dracunculifolia* (Cardoso *et al.*, 2015). Estudos mostraram que a PVEB foi capaz de inibir a progressão de câncer pulmonar (Kimoto *et al.*, 2001), atividade antiviral (Gekker *et al.*, 2005) e atividade

anticariogênica contra *Streptococcus mutans*, *Streptococcus sobrinus*, *Streptococcus salivaris*, *Streptococcus sanguinis* e *Lactobacillus casei* (Koo *et al.*, 2000; De Luca *et al.*, 2014), assim como ação antifúngica em relação à *Candida albicans* (Berretta *et al.*, 2013).

A própolis marrom brasileira (PMB), apesar de comprovada antigenotoxicidade (Fernandes *et al.*, 2014; Fernandes *et al.*, 2015), atividade antimicrobiana (Bankova *et al.*, 1996; Silva *et al.*, 2012), esta não é tão investigada quanto à verde e vermelha. Ela é encontrada no sul do Brasil, apresenta em sua composição química principalmente benzofenonas poli-isopreniladas e têm origem botânica a partir da *Clusiarosea* pertencente à família *Guttiferae* (Herrera, 2016).

A própolis vermelha brasileira (PVB) encontrada no litoral nordestino difere dos demais tipos devido à sua origem, sendo derivada, principalmente, do exsudato resinoso vermelho da superfície da *Dalbergia ecastophyllum* (Cardoso *et al.*, 2015). Atividade antimicrobiana, antifúngica, anti-inflamatória, antioxidante e efeito citotóxico frente a linhagens tumorais já foram descritos (Moise *et al.*, 2020).

Acredita-se que tal potencial se deva ao sinergismo existente entre seus compostos aromáticos (Machado *et al.*, 2016) como a formonetina, a pinocembrina, o ácido cafeico, a liquiritigenina, o neovestitol, os flavonóides (apigenina, flavonas, chalconas) e o vestitol (Machado *et al.*, 2017). Tais compostos não são encontrados nas demais própolis, o que confere à PVB uma composição química única (De Pontes *et al.*, 2018). Além disso, os terpenos (terpineol, cânfora, ferruginol, ácido junicédrico, lanosterol e valenceno), isoflavonóides (medicarpina e isoflavona), benzofenonas preniladas e naftoquinonas já foram documentados (Trusheva *et al.*, 2006; Park *et al.*, 2002).

A despeito da presença de compostos anti-inflamatórios e antibacterianos, poucos estudos investigaram os efeitos da PVB em tecidos dentais, portanto, o presente estudo, pela primeira vez na literatura, pretende comparar as propriedades biológicas da PVB e do MTA em contato direto com fibroblastos humanos da polpa dentária, assim como testar a atividade antibacteriana da PVB em relação a nove bactérias envolvidas na infecção endodôntica primária.

2. CAPÍTULO 1: *Brazilian red propolis: antibacterial activity against endodontic pathogens and in vitro evaluation of free radicals production**

Oliveira Neto NF^a, Bonvicini JFS^a, Souza GL^b, Santiago MB^c, Veneziani RCS^d,
Ambrósio SR^d, Bastos JK^e, Silva MJB^f, Martins CHG^c, Moura CCG^b, Turrioni AP^a.

^a *Department of Pediatric Dentistry, School of Dentistry, UFU – State of Minas Gerais, Uberlândia, MG, Brazil.*

^b *Department of Endodontics, School of Dentistry, UFU – State of Minas Gerais, Uberlândia, MG, Brazil.*

^c *Department of Microbiology, Institute of Biomedical Sciences, UFU – State of Minas Gerais, Uberlândia, MG, Brazil.*

^d *Nucleus of Research in Sciences and Technology, UNIFRAN – State of São Paulo, Franca, SP, Brazil*

^e *Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, USP – State of São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil.*

^f *Department of Immunology, Institute of Biomedical Sciences, UFU – State of Minas Gerais, Uberlândia, MG, Brazil.*

Corresponding author

Ana Paula Turrioni
Faculdade de Odontologia, Universidade Federal de Uberlândia – UFU
Departamento de Odontologia Pediátrica
Avenida Pará, 1720, Bloco 2G sala 02 - Campus Umuarama, CEP 38405-320
Tel: +55 (34) 3225-8146
e-mail: apturrioni@ufu.br

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Maintenance of pulp vitality is one of the purposes of vital pulp therapies (VPT) and selection of a good material strongly affects the long-term outcomes. Brazilian red propolis (BRP) is a great antimicrobial agent and may provide therapeutic solutions for pulp therapy. We hypothesized that BRP could show promising antibacterial activity and perform similar behavior with mineral trioxide aggregate (MTA) in free radicals production and cell viability findings. **Methods:** The Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC) and Minimum Bactericidal Concentration (MBC) of BRP was determined against anaerobic endodontic pathogens. Human dental pulp fibroblasts (HDPFs) were seeded in 96 well-plates and exposed, after 24h, to BRP10 (10 µg/mL), BRP50 (50µg/mL), mineral MTA extracts (1:1, 1:2, 1:4 e 1:8), dimethyl sulfoxide 0,5 % (DMSO) and cell culture medium (DMEM). Subsequently, 24h after the exposure to materials, the groups were tested for cell viability (MTT formazan assay), and free radicals production (reactive oxygen species - ROS, 2',7'-dichlorodihydrofluorescein diacetate fluorescent probe (DCFH-DA) and nitric oxide – NO, Griess reagent). The One-way ANOVA and Tukey's tests were employed considering significance level of 5%. **Results:** MIC/MBC values of BRP performing antibacterial activity for *P. micra* (6.25/6.25 µg/mL), *F. nucleatum* (25/25 µg/mL), *P. melaninogenica* (50/100 µg/mL), *P. nigrescens* (50/100 µg/mL), *P. intermedia* (50/100 µg/mL) and *P. gingivalis* (50/200 µg/mL). In our cell viability findings, BRP and MTA were able to stimulate cell viability, emphasizing BRP10 and MTA 1:8 ($p=0.007$ and $p=0.001$, respectively). Furthermore, it was observed that MTA 1:1, MTA 1:2 and BRP50 slightly increased ROS ($p<.001$) and NO production ($p=0.008$, $p=0.007$ and $p<.001$ respectively) compared to DMEM group. On the other hand, BRP10 did not raised the amount of ROS ($p=0.976$) and NO ($p=0.974$) production compared to DMEM. **Conclusions:** Therefore, BRP presented high antibacterial activity for anaerobic bacteria involved in primary endodontic infection and, both BRP and MTA promoted the viability of HDPFs without greatly increased NO and ROS production.

Keywords: Propolis, Antibacterial Agent, Cytotoxicity; Free Radicals.

INTRODUCTION

Vital pulp therapy (VPT) is indicated to preserve the vitality of the remaining pulp tissue of primary and immature permanent teeth¹. The selection of the material for this therapy can affect the success rate of VPTs². Currently, the material of choice has been the Mineral Trioxide Aggregate (MTA), a bioactive cement that became a substitute for calcium hydroxide with better capability in disinfection, biocompatibility and lack of cytotoxicity³. Additionally, MTA has shown favorable properties in pulpotomies⁴, perforation repairs in roots⁵ and apexification procedure⁶.

The search for natural products with lower toxicity, better therapeutic activity and potentially more approachable prices to the population have been performed in dentistry, especially, due to the increased popular acceptance for natural medicine⁷. In this scenario, Brazilian red propolis (BRP), found on the northeastern coast, differs from other types due to its origin which is derived mainly from the red resinous exudate on the surface of *Dalbergia ecastophyllum*⁹. Pharmacological properties of clinical interest such as anticaries effect; antibacterial, antiviral and antifungal activity; anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory effects, antioxidant and cytotoxic activity against tumor lineages have already been described¹⁰.

Researchers had demonstrated antibacterial activity of propolis with satisfactory results for *A. naeslundii*, *P. oralis*, *P. melaninogenica*, *P. gingivalis*, *F. nucleatum* and *V. parvula* due to biological activity of flavonoids and aromatic compounds¹¹. Additionally, it was seen that Iranian propolis was able to promote anti-inflammatory effects on murine macrophage cell line (RAW 264.7) exposed to lipopolysaccharide (LPS) reducing free radicals (nitric oxide – NO and reactive oxygen species – ROS) production, also *cyclooxygenase-2* (COX-2), interleukin-1 β (IL-1 β) and interleukin-6 (IL-6) expression¹². Another study demonstrated that BRP was able to promote anti-inflammatory effects on LPS activated peritoneal macrophages by decreasing NO levels and reduced the production and expression of pro-inflammatory cytokine and genes¹³.

Thus, we investigated, for the first time, the antibacterial activity of crude extract of BRP against anaerobic bacteria involved in primary endodontic infection and also cell viability and free radicals production (NO and ROS) compared to MTA in direct contact with human dental pulp fibroblasts (HDPFs). The null hypothesis was that BRP could show promising antibacterial activity and perform similar behavior with MTA regarding ROS and NO production and cell viability findings.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Hydroalcoholic extract of BRP

BRP was obtained from the association of beekeepers of Canavieiras (Cooperativa de Apicultores de Canavieiras—COAPER, Bahia, Brazil) from March 2019 to February 2020. Concerning the extraction, the BRP samples were frozen and minced. Two hundred grams of BRP were submitted to dynamic maceration at 30 °C and 120 rpm using a shaker incubator (INNOVA 4300), with 70% hydroalcoholic ethanol solution in the ratio of 1:10 (w/v). The extracts attained were concentrated under vacuum using a rotary evaporator and then lyophilized to complete dryness. Previously, our research group isolated and identified the main compounds presented in this sample of BRP (SisGen: AF234D8), which are flavonoids and derivatives such as liquiritigenin, biochanin A, isoliquiritigenin, formononetin, calycosin, vestitol, neovestitol, 7-O-methylvestitol and medicarpin¹⁴.

Bacterial strains

To test BRP against anaerobic endodontic pathogens, five standard strains from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC, Manassas, VA, USA) and four clinical isolates (CI) were used, namely *Prevotella melaninogenica* (ATCC 25845), *Actinomyces viscosus* (ATCC 43146), *Prevotella nigrescens* (ATCC 33563), *Porphyromonas endodontalis* (ATCC 35406), *Veillonella parvula* (ATCC 17745), *Porphyromonas gingivalis* (CI), *Prevotella intermedia* (CI), *Parvimonas micra* (CI), *Fusobacterium nucleatum* (CI). The evaluated clinical isolates were obtained from clinical trials and kept in the Laboratory of Research on Antimicrobial Trials library under cryopreservation.

Determination of the Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC) and of the Minimum Bactericidal Concentration (MBC)

MIC was determined in triplicate by using Broth microdilution method in 96-well microplates, as the lowest concentration of an antimicrobial that will inhibit the visible growth of a microorganism. For this purpose, BRP samples were prepared at concentrations ranging from 0.195 to 400.0 µg/mL. The culture media employed for the representative strains of endodontic infections were Schadler broth or Schadler agar (Difco, Kansas City, MO, USA), both supplemented with hemin (5 µg/mL, Sigma-Aldrich, San Louis, Missouri, USA), and horse blood (5%), as recommended by Clinical Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI, 2007)¹⁵. Samples were dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (1 mg/mL, DMSO, LGC Biotecnologia, Cotia, São Paulo, Brazil) and diluted in the desired broth. The final DMSO content was 5% (v/v) and this solution was used as negative control while metronidazole (Sigma) was used as an assay control. The inoculum was adjusted for each organism to yield a cell concentration of 5×10^6 CFU/mL. The strains were incubated in an anaerobic chamber (Don Whitley Scientific, Bradford, UK) for 72h under an adequate atmosphere containing 5-10% H₂, 10% CO₂, and 80-85% N₂. Thereafter, resazurin (30 µL, Sigma) diluted in an aqueous solution (0.02%) was added to the microplates, to indicate microorganism viability¹⁶. The development of a blue and pink color indicated the absence and presence of bacterial growth, respectively. To determine MBC, an aliquot of the inoculum was removed from each well before the addition of resazurin and seeded in an appropriate culture medium. MBC was defined as the lowest concentration of the sample where no bacterial growth occurred.

MTA extracts

In this study, white MTA (Angelus, Londrina, Paraná, Brazil) was used to prepare the extracts. MTA samples were prepared in 24-well plates according to the manufacturer's recommendations and incubated at 37 °C for 24 hours immediately after mixing. Specimens were then covered with 2.5 mL of cell culture Dulbecco modified Eagle medium (DMEM - LGC Biotecnologia, Cotia, São Paulo, Brazil) and incubated at 37 °C in the dark for 24 hours¹⁷. After incubation, the original extract (1:1) was prepared according to ISO 10993-5 recommendations¹⁸ and then, serially diluted (1:1; 1:2; 1:4; 1:8) in cell culture medium before testing¹⁹.

HDPFs culture

This study was accomplished with a primary culture of HDPFs according to the methodology applied in previous studies²⁰⁻²². The HDPFs were grown in DMEM supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum and 1% penicillin/streptomycin. Following approval of the research project by the Ethics Committee of the Institution (protocol number 47122321.3.0000.5152), the pulp cells were obtained by the explant outgrowth method from third molars freshly extracted for orthodontic reasons.

To use non-cytotoxic BRP concentrations, a cell viability assay (MTT formazan) was performed in different concentrations (**fig. 1**). Based on these results, concentrations of 10 e 50 µg/mL were chosen and employed in the following experiments. Cells were incubated in DMEM without FBS with MTA serially diluted (1:1; 1:2; 1:4; 1:8), BRP (10 e 50 µg/mL), DMEM (assay control group), and DMSO 0.5% (negative control group).

After an incubation period of 24h, the cells were immediately tested for cell viability by MTT formazan assay, quantitative and qualitative ROS production by a fluorescent probe and release of NO by Griess method. This study was repeated three times using 4 samples for each group at every time period.

Cell viability (MTT formazan assay)

Cell viability was assessed using the methyl tetrazolium (MTT) assay (tetrazoline 3- (4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl) – 2,5-diphenyl bromide). Previously, this well-standardized protocol has been fully described^{23,24}. In addition, antiproliferative activity was assessed by using the parameter of 50% inhibition of cell growth (IC₅₀) after 24h of treatment with different concentrations (100 – 1000 /mL) of BRP. The selective index (SI) was used to verify whether BRP has more affinity for bacteria or HDPFs. The concentrations that reduced cell viability by 50% (IC₅₀) and the MIC against the tested bacteria were calculated by using the formula: $SI=IC_{50}/MIC$.

Free radical production (NO and ROS)

NO production

NO production was evaluated using the supernatant of the cell culture. Nitrite is formed by a diazotization reaction with Griess reagent, which includes 0.1 gN (1-naphthyl) ethylenediamine dichloride (Merck KGaA), 2.5-mL orthophosphoric acid (Mallinckrodt Chemical, St. Louis, MO, USA), 1-g-sulfanilamide (Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, HE, Germany) and 100-mL deionized water. Three aliquots of the supernatant (50 μ L) were added to 50 μ L of Griess reagent in the compartments of a 96-well plate. After a 10-min incubation, the absorbance reading was assessed using a spectrophotometer (ThermoPlate, Shenzhen, China) with a 540-nm filter.

ROS production

Quantitative analysis of ROS production was performed after application of 2',7'-dichlorodihydrofluorescein diacetate (DCFH-DA; InvitroGen, San Diego, CA, USA). In a 24-well plate, 300 μ L of a solution containing the fluorescent probe (5 μ mol/L in PBS) were added to the compartments. After a 5-min incubation, the cells were washed twice with PBS and analyzed using a GLOMAX® multimodal fluorescence microplate reader (Promega Corporation, São Paulo, Brazil) and the EVOS FL cell imaging system (Fluorescence Microscope EVOS FL Cell Imaging System, Thermo Fisher Scientific, São Paulo, Brazil) for qualitative analysis.

Statistical Analysis

First, all data were analyzed using Kolmogorov-Smirnov's test. Then, one-way ANOVA and Tukey's tests were used to compare data between the treated groups. Statistical analysis was performed using JAMOVI 1.6.23 software (New South Wales, Sydney, Australia) and considered at the pre-established significance level of 5%.

RESULTS

Determination of the Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC) and of the Minimum Bactericidal Concentration (MBC)

MIC values < 100 µg/mL were identified for *P. micra* CI (6.25 µg/mL), *F. nucleatum* CI (25 µg/mL), *P. nigrescens* ATCC 33563 (50 µg/mL), *P. melaninogenica* ATCC 25845 (50 µg/mL), *P. intermedia* CI (50 µg/mL) and *P. gingivalis* CI (50 µg/mL). In addition, MIC also showed significant bactericidal activity based on MBC values for *P. micra* (6.25/6.25 µg/mL) and *F. nucleatum* (25/25 µg/mL) also bacteriostatic effect for *P. nigrescens* ATCC 33563 (50/100 µg/mL), *P. melaninogenica* ATCC 25845 (50/100 µg/mL) and *P. intermedia* CI (50/100 µg/mL).

Cell viability (MTT formazan assay)

The cytotoxicity of the BRP and MTA based on MTT formazan assay is represented in **fig. 2**. Both MTA and BRP were capable to stimulate cell viability. Higher cell viability values were found for BRP10 compared to DMEM ($p=0.007$), MTA 1:2 ($p=0.011$) and DMSO ($p=0.011$). Moreover, we performed SI based on IC₅₀ results (IC₅₀=509.16). Relevant BRP levels of SI (SI ≥ 10) were detected (**Table 2**) for *P. micra* CI (81.5), *F. nucleatum* CI (20.4), *P. nigrescens* ATCC 33563 (10.2), *P. melaninogenica* ATCC 25845 (10.2), *P. intermedia* CI (10.2) and *P. gingivalis* CI (10.2).

Free radical production (NO and ROS)

BRP50, MTA 1:1 and MTA 1:2 has slightly raised NO production in HDPFs compared to DMEM ($p=0.007$, $p<.001$ and 0.008, respectively) (**fig. 3**). Similar to NO production, higher ROS values were found in BRP 50, MTA 1:1 and MTA 1:2 compared to DMEM ($p<.001$). On the other hand, BRP10 did not increase the amount of NO ($p=0.974$) and ROS ($p=0.976$) production compared to DMEM (**fig. 4**). According to the ROS images generated (**fig. 5**) after the fluorescent probe contact with HDPFs, it is possible to observe that quantitative analyses agreed with the images. BRP10, MTA 1:4 and MTA 1:8 had revealed lower levels of fluorescence as DMEM group, whereas BRP50 and MTA 1:1 had shown an increased ROS expression.

DISCUSSION

Maintenance of pulp vitality is one of the purposes of vital pulp therapies and the selection of a good material strongly affects the long-term outcomes¹⁰. BRP is a great antimicrobial agent and may provide therapeutic solutions for pulp therapy due to its many biological properties⁷. Herein, we believed that the positive effects attributed to BRP are because of the use of crude extract rather than isolated compounds, which are generally directed to test a particular activity²⁵. The combined action of the various compounds allowed BRP and MTA to perform, for the first time in the literature, cell viability without increasing significantly ROS and NO production in all tested concentrations.

Antibacterial activity of natural products and medicinal plants have been widely assessed by MIC assays²⁶, which is a good strategy to obtain antimicrobial activity of these products instead of four other screening techniques²⁷. There is different standardization for MIC results of compounds from crude plant extracts, nonetheless, in this study, we have considered that MIC values ≤ 100 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ correspond to a promising antibacterial activity, as Ríos et al. (2005)²⁸ had established. We demonstrated that, regarding MIC and MBC values, the crude extract of BRP demonstrated positive antibacterial activity for the vast majority of anaerobic bacteria involved in primary endodontic infection which confirms the reports related to the antibacterial properties of BRP. Moreover, it is believed that flavonoids are the main component with a relevant role in the BRP antibacterial activity²⁹⁻³¹.

One study demonstrated that propolis may act as an inhibitor effect of glucosyltransferase enzymes, that play a crucial role in dental plaque formation, of *S. mutans* and *S. sanguis* due to apigenin (flavonoids) action. Furthermore, these authors showed that flavonoid and cinnamic compounds were found to suppress bacterial motility and viability by affecting ion permeability of the cell membrane and decreasing ATP synthesis³².

Besides attested antimicrobial activity against *C. albicans*³³, propolis could be a promising intracanal medication or an irrigant in endodontics procedures due to its capability to eliminate *E. faecalis*³⁴. In addition, one *in vitro* study established that a combination of Brazilian propolis and calcium hydroxide was effective against microorganisms collected from necrotic root canals of primary teeth³⁵, confirming our

findings in regards to its efficiency against bacteria related to endodontic infection. Meanwhile, the challenge in standardizing the exact components responsible for antibacterial activity present in the propolis crude extract is already known due to the variation of environmental conditions of the collection sites, the origin and type of pollen as well as the species of bee producing it³⁶.

An *in vitro* study³⁷ demonstrated great antileishmanial activity of dichlorometane fraction from Brazilian brown propolis also low cytotoxicity towards macrophages due to its highest selectivity index (SI), determined as the ratio between IC₅₀ and MIC. SI is used to identify potential drugs and to evaluate their therapeutic window. Indexes ≥ 10 mean drug affinities for the pathogen and demonstrate lower toxicity towards human cells, which certify its safeness in developing new medicines³⁸. Here, BRP crude extract showed marked values for *P. micra* CI (81.59) and *F. nucleatum* CI (20.4) as well as performed SI=10.2 for *P. melaninogenica* (ATCC 25845), *P. nigrescens* (ATCC 33563), *P. intermedia* (CI) and *P. gingivalis* (CI).

After the antibacterial activity, we analyzed cell viability, NO and ROS production by HDPFs on direct contact with BRP10 (10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$), BRP50 (50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$) and MTA extracts (1:1, 1:2, 1:4 e 1:8). The solvent used here (DMSO 0.5%) had no effects on the cell viability thus the cytotoxic effects were solely reported due to the presence of BRP. MTT Formazan assay demonstrated that BRP and MTA, in all tested concentrations, were able to stimulate cell viability which is a promising finding that showed similar behavior of BRP compared to a well-established material.

According to our results, one *in vitro* study revealed that both propolis at 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ and MTA at 1:8 dilutions were not cytotoxic to HDPFs after 1, 5, 7 and 9 days³⁹. Additionally, another study demonstrated that gray MTA and Jordanian propolis showed similar cell viability data for human periodontal ligament cells compared to the cell culture medium group (control) which confirms the favorable outcome of MTA in terms of biocompatibility to formocresol and ferric sulfate in studies analyzing primary teeth pulpotomy agents⁴⁰. Nevertheless, propolis combined with MTA showed no inhibition of cell growth besides the promotion of differentiation and mineralization of dental pulp stem cells (DPSCs)⁴¹. Further animal and clinical studies are required to verify the application of isolated BRP or associated with MTA in vital pulp therapies in primary teeth and immature permanent teeth.

In moderate concentrations, NO and ROS act positively in vasodilation, cytokine signaling and expression, cell differentiation and phagocytosis of pathogens⁴². On the other hand, when their production is exacerbated, these molecules can inhibit COX and thereby induce pro-apoptotic enzymes that cause cell death with consequential tissue damage⁴³. Remarkably, our results demonstrated that BRP50, MTA 1:1 and MTA 1:2 slightly increased free radicals amount compared to the other groups. However, we strongly believed that this increase would not be able to promote a pro-inflammatory environment.

It is shown that BRP attenuates multiple signaling pathways in macrophages involved in the inflammatory process when stimulated by LPS^{44,45}. Considering that NO production is activated by this endotoxin, cells in the present study were not stimulated in the same manner, because we intended to analyze whether the crude propolis extract would be able to maintain the concentration of these free radicals at basal levels. Based in our results, it is possible to state that both BRP concentrations stimulated cell viability and were capable to maintain basal levels of NO and ROS. **Fig. 5** demonstrated the low fluorescent intensity of ROS to BRP10 similar to the control group (DMEM), which is in agreement with quantitative analysis.

The searching for products of natural origin in VPT increased significantly due to the growing demand for new materials presenting great therapeutic performance, good antimicrobial activity, low toxicity, affordable cost to the population, and better biocompatibility. Our promising findings suggested that BRP is a strong candidate for future animal and clinical studies due to its high antibacterial activity against anaerobic bacteria involved in primary endodontic infection. Even with limitations regarding the absence of anti-inflammatory challenge and lack of different times of cytotoxicity evaluation, both BRP and MTA promoted the viability of HDPFs without greatly increasing NO and ROS production.

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TABLES

Table 1: In vitro antibacterial activity of the Brazilian red propolis extract against nine bacteria involved in primary endodontic infection through determination of Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC) and Minimum Bactericidal Concentration (MBC).

<i>Brazilian red propolis</i> (µg/mL)			
<i>Endodontic bacteria</i>	MIC	MBC	Metronidazole (control)
<i>Parvimonas micra</i> (CI)	6.25	6.25	x
<i>Fusobacterium nucleatum</i> (CI)	25	25	x
<i>Prevotella nigrescens</i> (ATCC 33563)	50	100	x
<i>Prevotella melaninogenica</i> (ATC 25845)	50	100	x
<i>Prevotella intermedia</i> (CI)	50	100	x
<i>Porphyromonas gingivalis</i> (CI)	50	200	x
<i>Veillonella parvula</i> (ATCC 17745)	200	200	x
<i>Porphyromonas endodontalis</i> (ATCC 35406)	200	> 400	x
<i>Actinomyces viscosus</i> (ATCC 43146)	400	> 400	x
<i>Bacteroides fragilis</i> (ATCC 25285)*	x	x	1.48
<i>Bacteroides thetaiotaomicron</i> ATCC (29741)*	x	x	2.95

*Control strains; x: Not tested

Table 2: Determination of the SI of Brazilian red propolis (BRP) for nine bacteria involved in primary endodontic infection.

Brazilian Red Propolis	
Bacterial strains	Selectivity Index (IC₅₀/MIC)
<i>Parvimonas micra</i> (CI)	81.5
<i>Fusobacterium nucleatum</i> (CI)	20.4
<i>Prevotella nigrescens</i> (ATCC 33563)	10.2
<i>Prevotella melaninogenica</i> (ATC 25845)	10.2
<i>Prevotella intermedia</i> (CI)	10.2
<i>Porphyromonas gingivalis</i> (CI)	10.2
<i>Veillonella parvula</i> (ATCC 17745)	2.6
<i>Porphyromonas endodontalis</i> (ATCC 35406)	2.6
<i>Actinomyces viscosus</i> (ATCC 43146)	1.3

IC₅₀: inhibitory concentration of 50% of cell viability; MIC:, minimum inhibitory concentration.

FIGURES AND CAPTIONS

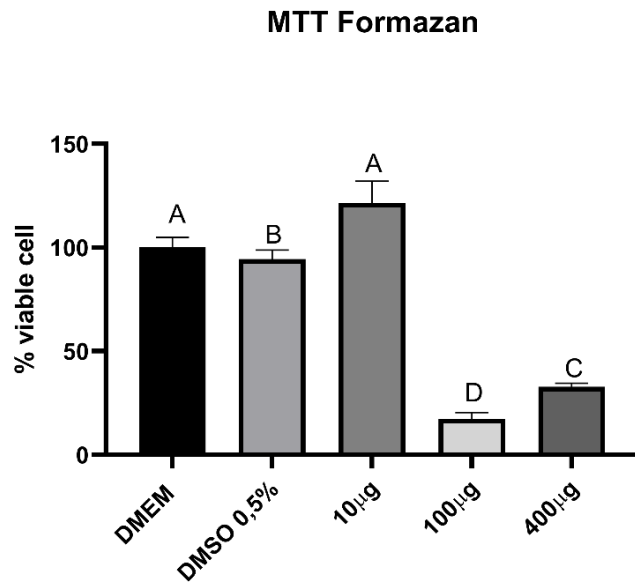


Fig 1: Cell viability assay with BRP different concentrations.

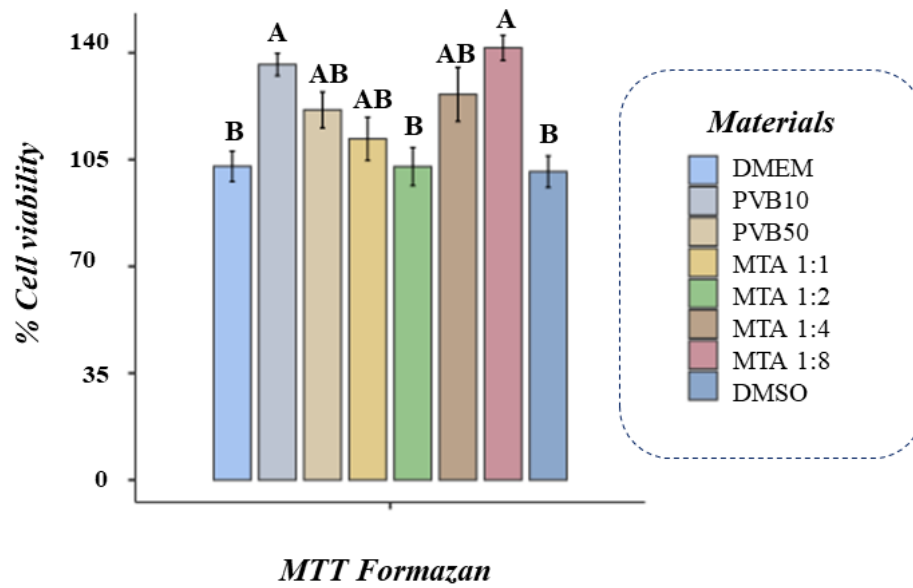


Fig. 2: Cell viability: MTT Formazan assay. Different letters represent values with statistical significance. One-way ANOVA and Tukey’s tests were used to compare data between the treated groups ($p > 0.05$).

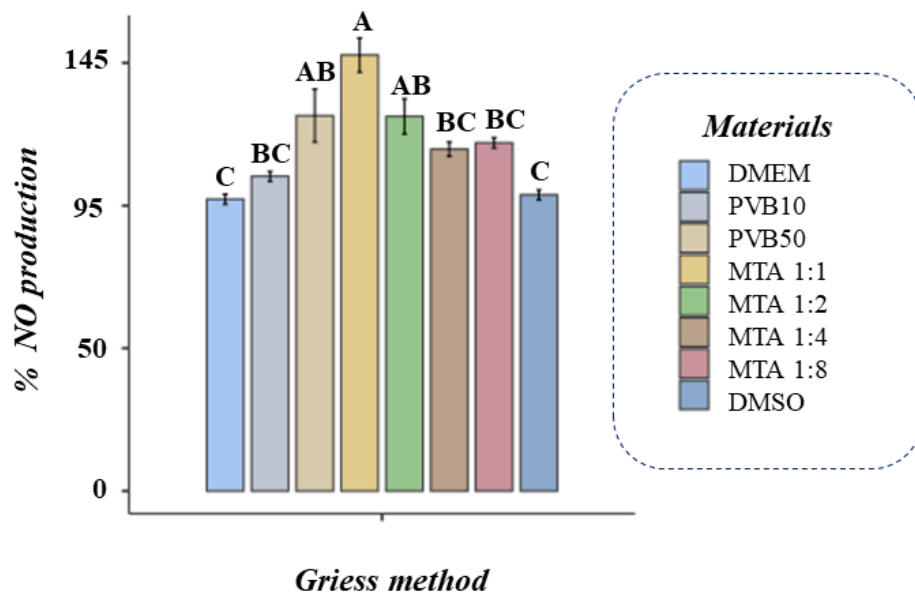


Fig. 3: NO production through Griess method. Different letters represent values with statistical significance. One-way ANOVA and Tukey's tests were used to compare data between the treated groups ($p > 0.05$).

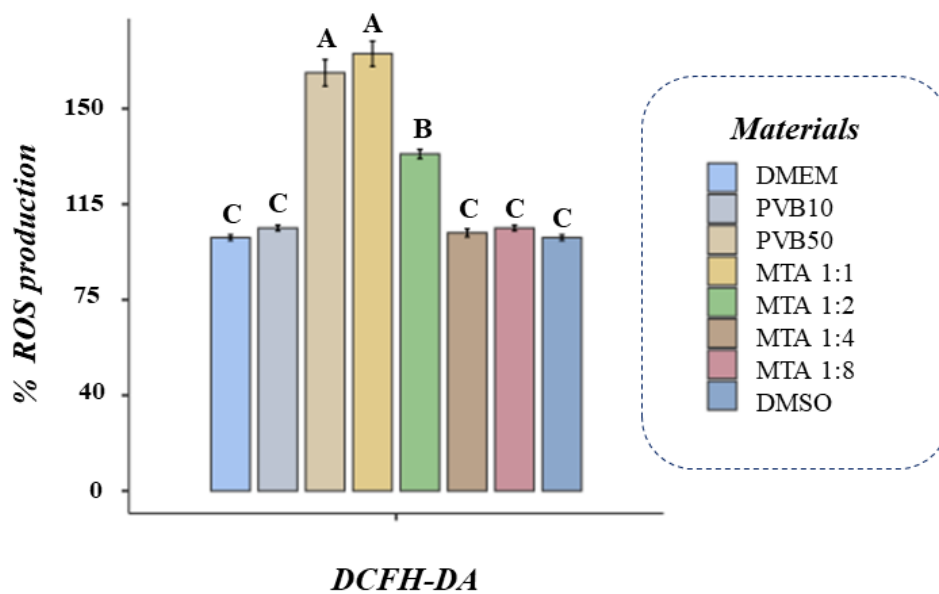


Fig. 4: ROS production through 2',7'-dichlorodihydrofluorescein diacetate (DCFH-DA) fluorescent probe. Different letters represent values with statistical significance. One-way ANOVA and Tukey's tests were used to compare data between the treated groups ($p > 0.05$).

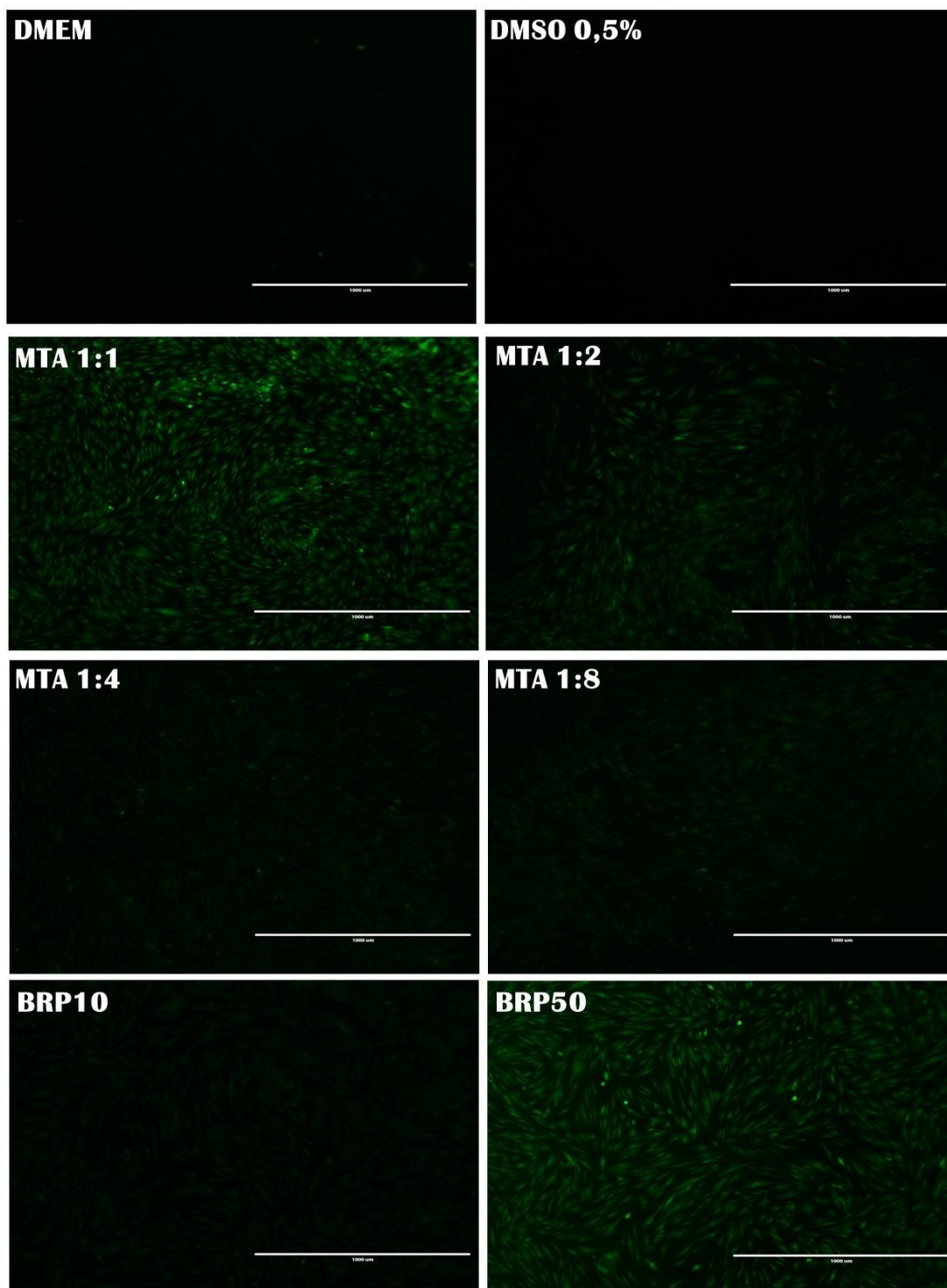


Fig.5: Images representing ROS production by HDPFs exposed to BRP, MTA and DMSO. The intensity of the DCFH-DA fluorescent probe can pervade the cell and then establish the intensity of the ROS produced by cells. Therefore, higher fluorescence indicated greater production of these oxidant agents (Fluorescence Microscope EVOS FL Cell Imaging System; scale, 400 µm).

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3. CONCLUSÕES

- A)** A PVB apresentou atividade antibacteriana significativa frente às bactérias anaeróbias envolvidas na infecção endodôntica;

- B)** A própolis vermelha brasileira foi capaz de estimular a viabilidade de células pulparem sem causar aumento considerável da produção de óxido nítrico (ON) e espécies reativas de oxigênio (eROS).

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