



# **Studies in Natural Products Chemistry: Chapter 8. Marine Resource: A Promising Future for Anticancer Drugs**

*Ajai Prakash Gupta, Pankaj Pandotra, Rajni Sharma, Manoj Kushwaha, Suphla Gupta*

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Cancer is a dreadful human disease, increasing with changing lifestyle, nutrition, and global warming. Its treatments do not have potent medicine as the currently available drugs results in severe side effects. Past activities in this area focused on the natural products derived from medicinal plants. According to the WHO, 80% of the world's population primarily those from developing countries rely on plant-derived medicines for the health care. Over the past few decades, significant efforts have been made, jointly by pharmaceutical and academic institutions, to isolate and identify new marine-derived natural products. With the advancement of technology and methodology in this area, numerous new compounds have been isolated and several novel anticancer compounds are under clinical investigations. The ocean biomass, covering two-third of the earth, with huge unexplored natural product offers enormous scope and presents an effective alternative in natural product drug discovery. The uniqueness in oceanic mega-diversity is due to spatial as well as temporal competition along with unique habitat with extreme pressure, temperature, and saline conditions. As a result of this, marine organisms have adapted and evolved themselves successfully since centuries in these conditions by producing molecules which are unique in structures, biosynthesis, and function. This "chemical adaptations" is an excellent source of novel chemical entities which is absent in land-based organisms. The past decade has seen more than 10,000 compounds isolated from marine sources which have dramatically increased the number of preclinical anticancers drug under evaluation, and over 300 patents on bioactive natural products from marine sources were granted during this tenure. Efforts, in this direction, became more serious and focused with National Cancer Institute, USA taking a lead role. By collaborative interactions between pharmaceutical companies and research organization, numerous drug-like molecules with several of them having clinical and preclinical potential were discovered. Ecteinascidin-743/ET-743 from Caribbean tunicate and Didemnin and Aplidine from *Aplidium albicans* are some of the successful examples. Sterols and dietary fibers from seaweeds also hold immense potential. However, investigation of the marine floras chemical entities as drug-like molecule is still in its embryonic stage. The present chapter showcases the past research and reviews the baseline data for promoting further research in this field.

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