ANTIHYPERLIPIDAEMIC AND ANTIOXIDANT ACTIVITIES OF EXTRACTS OF DIFFERENT PARTS OF AVERRHOA CARAMBOLA AND ELUCIDATION OF THEIR MECHANISMS OF ACTION

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By

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DEDICATION

In the name of ALLAH, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED

TO

MY MOTHER AND FATHER FOR DOING THEIR BEST TO EDUCATE ME,
MY WIFE EMAN AND MY DAUGHTERS MANAL, HUDA, DUA`A AND ALAA FOR THEIR PATIENCE, UNDERSTANDING, LOVE, AND SINCERITY
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content .......................................................................................................................... Page

TITLE ............................................................................................................................. i

ACKNOWLEDGMENT .................................................................................................... ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................... iv

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................... xv

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................ xix

LIST OF SYMBOLS ..................................................................................................... xxx

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ............................................................................................ xxxi

ABSTRAK ...................................................................................................................... xxxv

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................... xxxvii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................... 1

1.1 Background ............................................................................................................ 1

1.2 Therapeutic challenges ........................................................................................ 3

1.3 Problem statements ............................................................................................. 4

1.4 Objectives ............................................................................................................. 4

1.5 Flow chart of the study ........................................................................................ 6

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ......................................................................... 7

2.1 Lipids ..................................................................................................................... 7

2.1.1 Fatty acids ....................................................................................................... 7

2.1.2 Phospholipids ................................................................................................ 8

2.1.3 Triglycerides ................................................................................................... 8
2.12 Toxicity study ........................................................................................................35

2.13 Averrhoa carambola ...............................................................................................37

2.13.1 Taxonomy of Averrhoa carambola ..................................................................37

2.13.2 Plant description ...............................................................................................37

2.13.3 Traditional uses of Averrhoa carambola .........................................................39

2.13.4 Pharmacological and toxicological aspects of Averrhoa carambola ..............40

2.13.4.1 Antioxidant capacity ..................................................................................40

2.13.4.2 Anti-inflammatory activity .........................................................................41

2.13.4.3 Acetylcholinesterase inhibitory activity .....................................................42

2.13.4.4 Antimicrobial and antifungal activity ........................................................42

2.13.4.5 Cytotoxicity activity ..................................................................................43

2.13.4.6 Anti-ulcer activity ......................................................................................43

2.13.4.7 Negative inotropic and chronotropic effect ...............................................43

2.13.4.8 Electrophysiological effects .......................................................................44

2.13.4.9 Hypotensive activity ..................................................................................45

2.13.4.10 Hypocholesterolemic activity ...................................................................45

2.13.4.11 Hypoglycaemic activity ............................................................................46

2.13.4.12 Nephrotoxic effect ..................................................................................48

2.13.4.13 Neurotoxic effect .....................................................................................48

2.13.5 Phytochemistry ................................................................................................49

2.13.6 Clinical studies ..................................................................................................56
CHAPTER 3: MATERIALS AND METHODS .....................................................................58

3.1 Materials and equipments ..................................................................................58

3.2 Collection and preparation of plant materials .....................................................61

3.2.1 Fractionation of methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola leaf by liquid-
liquid partition ..............................................................................................................62

3.3 Evaluation of antihyperlipidaemic effect .............................................................64

3.3.1 Evaluation of antihyperlipidaemic effect of methanol and aqueous extracts of
different parts of Averrhoa carambola plants in poloxamer 407-induced acute
hyperlipidaemic rat model ..............................................................................................64

3.3.1.1 Animals .............................................................................................................64

3.3.1.2 Induction of hyperlipidaemia .........................................................................64

3.3.1.3 Experimental design .......................................................................................65

3.3.1.4 Analysis of lipid profile ..................................................................................66

3.3.2 Evaluation of antihyperlipidaemic effect of different doses of
methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola leaf in high fat diet-induced chronic
hyperlipidaemic rats model and subsequently a dose-response study ..............67

3.3.2.1 Induction of hyperlipidaemia in rats ...............................................................67

3.3.2.2 Experimental design .......................................................................................68

3.3.2.3 Analysis of lipid profile ..................................................................................69

3.3.2.4 Body weight and relative liver weight ...........................................................70

3.3.2.5 Body mass index ..............................................................................................70

3.3.2.6 Daily food intake ............................................................................................70

3.3.2.7 Faecal dry weight ...........................................................................................71
3.3.2.8 Relative organ weight ........................................ 71
3.3.2.9 Histopathology of liver tissue ................................ 71
3.3.3 Evaluation of antihyperlipidaemic effect of different fractions of methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola leaf using poloxamer-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats model ........................................ 72
3.3.3.1 Induction of hyperlipidaemia in rats .......................... 72
3.3.3.2 Experimental design ............................................ 72
3.4 Evaluation of antioxidant activity .................................... 73
3.4.1 Evaluation of antioxidant activity of methanolic and aqueous extracts of different parts of Averrhoa carambola using different in vitro assays ............ 73
3.4.1.1 Determination of total phenolic content ....................... 73
3.4.1.2 Determination of total flavonoid content ...................... 74
3.4.1.3 Ferric reducing antioxidant power assay ..................... 74
3.4.1.4 DPPH free radical scavenging assay .......................... 75
3.4.1.5 ABTS radical scavenging assay ................................ 76
3.4.2 Evaluation of antioxidant activity of different fractions of methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola leaf using different in vitro assays ................... 76
3.4.2.1 Pearson correlations coefficient analysis ..................... 77
3.5 Mechanistic study of antihyperlipidaemic effect of methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola leaf and its bioactive ethyl acetate fraction .............................. 77
3.5.1 Assessment of inhibitory activity of methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola leaf on HMG-CoA reductase and pancreatic lipase enzymes ....................... 77
3.5.1.1 Effect on HMG-CoA reductase activity .......................... 77
3.5.1.2 Effect on pancreatic lipase activity.................................................................79

3.5.2 Assessment of inhibitory activity of ethyl acetate fraction of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on HMG-CoA reductase and pancreatic lipase enzymes..........................................................................................................................79

3.5.3 Assessment of *in vivo* antioxidant activity in liver homogenate and serum samples of rats treated with methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf ..................................................................................................................................................80

3.5.3.1 Preparation of liver homogenate and serum samples ......................... 80
3.5.3.2 Determination of total protein of liver homogenates and serum samples81
3.5.3.3 Evaluation of lipid peroxidation using thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (TBARS) assay .................................................................81
3.5.3.4 Superoxide dismutase assay ...........................................................................82
3.5.3.5 Reduced glutathione assay.............................................................................83
3.5.3.6 Glutathione peroxidase assay ......................................................................84
3.5.3.7 Catalase assay.................................................................................................85

3.5.4 Evaluation of effect of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf methanolic extract on liver total cholesterol and triglycerides ..........................................................................................................................86

3.5.4.1 Extraction of lipids from liver samples .........................................................86
3.5.4.2 Determination of cholesterol and triglycerides in liver tissues ...............87

3.5.5 Evaluation of effect of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf methanolic extract on lipids and bile acids excretions ..........................................................................................................................87

3.5.5.1 Extraction of lipids in faeces samples ..........................................................87
3.5.5.2 Determination of cholesterol in faeces samples .......................................88
3.5.5.3 Extraction of faecal bile acids ................................................................. 88
3.5.5.4 Determination of faecal bile acid............................................................ 88

3.6 Toxicological evaluation of extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*........................................ 89
3.6.1 Assessment of *in vitro* cytotoxicity of methanolic and aqueous extracts of different parts of *Averrhoa carambola* ........................................................................ 89
3.6.1.1 Cell lines and cell culture maintenance ..................................................... 89
3.6.1.2 Cell viability assay ...................................................................................... 89
3.6.2 Evaluation of acute and sub-chronic toxicity of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf ............................................................................................................ 90
3.6.2.1 Experimental animals ................................................................................ 90
3.6.2.2 Evaluation of acute toxicity of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf ............................................................................................................................ 91
3.6.3 Evaluation of sub-chronic toxicity of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf ......................................................................................................................... 92
3.6.3.1 Histopathological assessment of liver and kidney tissue samples.......... 92
3.6.4 Statistical analysis ........................................................................................ 93
3.7 Standardization and quantification of selected biomarker in methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf and its ethyl acetate fraction using HPLC method........ 93
3.7.1 Development and validation of HPLC method ............................................. 93
3.7.1.1 Preparation of samples and standards for HPLC analysis ...................... 93
3.7.1.2 Chromatographic conditions .................................................................. 94
3.7.1.3 Linearity, limit of detection (LOD) and limit of quantification (LOQ) .. 95
3.7.1.4 Within-day, between-day accuracy and precision ............................... 95
3.7.1.5 Recovery ................................................................................................................. 96

3.7.2 Analysis and standardization of selected biomarker in methanolic extract of
Averrhoa carambola leaf and its ethyl acetate fraction .............................................. 97

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS ........................................................................................................... 98

4.1 Extraction and fractionation yields ........................................................................ 98

4.2 Antihyperlipidaemic effect of Averrhoa carambola ............................................. 99

4.2.1 Antihyperlipidaemic effect of methanolic and aqueous extracts of different
parts of Averrhoa carambola in poloxamer-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic
rats ......................................................................................................................................... 99

4.2.2 Antihyperlipidaemic effect of methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola leaf
in high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats and subsequently a dose
response study .................................................................................................................... 115

4.2.2.1 Antihyperlipidaemic effect of methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola
leaf in normal rat ............................................................................................................. 115

4.2.2.2 Antihyperlipidaemic effect of methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola
leaf in high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rat ......................... 122

4.2.2.3 Effects of methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola leaf on rat’s body
weight, body mass index, food intake, faecal dry weight, and relative
organ weight of normal rats ............................................................................................. 130

4.2.2.4 Effects of methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola leaf on rat’s body
weight, body mass index, food intake, faecal dry weight, and relative
organ weight of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats... 136

4.2.2.5 Histopathological analysis of liver tissues ......................................................... 143
4.2.3 Antihyperlipidaemic effect of different fractions of methanolic extract of

*Avrroha carambola* leaf in poloxamer-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats

4.3 Antioxidant activities

4.3.1 Antioxidant activity of methanolic and aqueous extracts of different parts of

*Avrroha carambola*

4.3.1.1 Analysis of relationship between TPC and TFC against antioxidant and antihyperlipidaemic activities of methanolic and aqueous extracts of different parts of *Avrroha carambola*

4.3.2 Antioxidant activity of different fractions of methanolic extract of *Avrroha carambola* leaf

4.3.2.1 Analysis of relationship between TPC and TFC against antioxidant and antihyperlipidaemic activities of different fractions of methanolic extract of *Avrroha carambola* leaf

4.4 Mechanism of antihyperlipidaemic effect of methanolic extract of *Avrroha carambola* leaf and its ethyl acetate fraction

4.4.1 Inhibitory activity of methanolic extract of *Avrroha carambola* leaf on HMG-CoA reductase and pancreatic lipase

4.4.2 Inhibitory activity of ethyl acetate fraction on HMG-CoA reductase and pancreatic lipase enzymes

4.4.3 *In vivo* antioxidant activity of methanolic extract of *Avrroha carambola* leaf
4.4.3.1 *In vivo* antioxidant effect of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf in normal rat model ................................................................. 163

4.4.3.2 *In vivo* antioxidant activity of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf in high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats model....... 165

4.4.4 Effect of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on liver total cholesterol and triglycerides ................................................................. 169

4.4.4.1 Effect of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on liver total cholesterol and triglycerides of normal rats............................... 169

4.4.4.2 Effect of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on liver total cholesterol and triglycerides levels of high fat diet-induced hyperlipidaemic rats ...................................................................................... 170

4.4.5 Effect of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on faecal lipids and bile acids .......................................................................................... 172

4.4.5.1 Effect of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on faecal lipids and bile acids excretions of normal rats............................... 172

4.4.5.2 Effect of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on faecal lipids and bile acids excretions of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats ...................................................................................... 177

4.5 Toxicological evaluation .......................................................................................................................... 183

4.5.1 Cytotoxicity of methanolic and aqueous extracts of different parts of *Averrhoa carambola* .................................................................................................................. 183

4.5.2 Acute toxicity of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf .......... 185

4.5.3 Sub-chronic toxicity of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf ....... 186
4.5.3.1 Histopathological study of liver and kidney tissue samples ............... 195

4.6 Standardization and quantification of apigenin in methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf and its ethyl acetate fraction ................................................................. 200

4.6.1 HPLC method validation ................................................................. 200

4.6.2 HPLC-UV analysis of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf and its ethyl acetate fraction ................................................................. 204

**CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION** ........................................................................ 207

**CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION** ...................................................................... 234

6.1 Conclusion .......................................................................................... 234

6.2 Limitation .......................................................................................... 236

6.3 Future work ....................................................................................... 236

**REFERENCES** ..................................................................................... 237

**APPENDICES** ....................................................................................... 263

**APPENDIX A** ..................................................................................... 263

**APPENDIX B** ..................................................................................... 267

**APPENDIX C** ..................................................................................... 274
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table No.</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.1</td>
<td>Physical properties of plasma lipoproteins</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.2</td>
<td>Mechanisms of action and side effects of common lipid lowering drugs</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.3</td>
<td>Traditional uses of different parts of <em>Averrhoa carambola</em> plant</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.4</td>
<td>Chemical constituents isolated from <em>Averrhoa carambola</em></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1</td>
<td>List of chemicals</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.2</td>
<td>List of reagents and kits</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.3</td>
<td>List of drugs</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.4</td>
<td>List of instruments</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.5</td>
<td>Preparation of reaction mixtures for measuring HMG-CoA reductase activity</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.6</td>
<td>Reaction mixtures for the measurement of SOD</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.7</td>
<td>Preparation of samples for measurement of GSH</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.8</td>
<td>HPLC gradient program for apigenin analysis</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1</td>
<td>Percentage of yields of different fractions of methanolic extract of <em>Averrhoa carambola</em> leaf</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2</td>
<td>The effect of long-term administration of various doses of methanolic extracts of <em>Averrhoa carambola</em> leaf on relative organ weight of normal rats after 5 weeks treatment</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3  The effect of long-term administration of various doses of methanolic extracts of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on relative organ weight of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats......................................................... 142

Table 4.4  Antioxidant activities of methanolic and aqueous extracts of different parts of *Averrhoa carambola*.............................................................................................................. 155

Table 4.5  Correlation coefficients between TPC and TFC against antioxidant activity and lipid parameters of methanolic and aqueous extracts of different parts of *Averrhoa carambola*.................................................................................................. 157

Table 4.6  Antioxidant activity of different fractions of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf............................................................... 158

Table 4.7  Correlation coefficients between TPC and TFC against antioxidant activity and lipid parameters of different fractions of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf............................................................... 159

Table 4.8  Effect of long term intake of methanolic extracts of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on selected *in vivo* antioxidant parameters in liver of normal rats.................................................................................................................. 164

Table 4.9  Effect of long term intake of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on selected *in vivo* antioxidant parameters in serum of normal rats.................................................................................................................. 164

Table 4.10  Effect of long term intake of different doses of methanolic extracts of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on selected *in vivo* antioxidant parameters in liver of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats ................. 167
Table 4.11  Effect of long term intake of different doses of methanolic extracts of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on selected *in vivo* antioxidant parameters in serum of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats........................................................................................................................................168

Table 4.12  The effect of methanol and aqueous extracts of different parts of *Averrhoa carambola* on cell viability of various cell lines at 50 and 100 µg/mL in comparison with the standards........................................................................................................184

Table 4.13  Relative organ weight of female rats treated with different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 28 days........................................................................................................................................188

Table 4.14  Relative organ weight of male rats treated with different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 28 days........................................................................................................................................189

Table 4.15  Haematological parameters for female rats treated with different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 28 days........................................................................................................................................191

Table 4.16  Haematological parameters for male rats treated with different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 28 days........................................................................................................192

Table 4.17  Biochemical parameters for female rats treated with different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 28 days........................................................................................................193

Table 4.18  Biochemical parameters for male rats treated with different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 28 days........................................................................................................194
Table 4.19  LOD, LOQ and linearity of standard curves for apigenin………………… 200
Table 4.20  Recovery precision and accuracy values for apigenin…………………………………… 203
Table 4.21  Within-day and between-day precision and accuracy value for
apigenin……………………………………………………………………………………………………… 203
Table 4.22  Contents of apigenin in methanolic extract of Averrhoa carambola leaf and
its ethyl acetate fraction………………………………………………………………………………… 204
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure No.</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1</td>
<td>Flow chart of the study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Simple outlines of the classic and alternative pathways in bile acids synthesis</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>Biosynthesis of cholesterol, triglycerides and phospholipids</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>Exogenous pathway of lipid metabolism</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.4</td>
<td>Endogenous pathway of lipid metabolism</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.5</td>
<td>Reverse cholesterol transport pathway</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.6</td>
<td><em>Averrhoa carambola</em> tree</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.7</td>
<td><em>Averrhoa carambola</em> plant parts used in this study</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Flow chart of fractionation of <em>Averrhoa carambola</em> leaf methanolic extract</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Effect of methanolic extract of different parts of <em>Averrhoa carambola</em> on total cholesterol level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.2</td>
<td>Percentage changes of total cholesterol level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treated with different parts of methanolic extracts of <em>Averrhoa carambola</em></td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.3</td>
<td>Effect of methanolic extract of different parts of <em>Averrhoa carambola</em> on triglycerides level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.4 Percentage changes of triglycerides level of p-407 induced hyperlipidaemic rats after treated with different parts of methanolic extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*………………………………………………... 104

Figure 4.5 LDL-C level of p-407 induced hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with different parts of methanolic extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*……………… 105

Figure 4.6 HDL-C level in p-407 induced hyperlipidaemic rats after treated with different parts of methanolic extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*……………… 106

Figure 4.7 VLDL-C level of p-407 induced hyperlipidaemic rats after treated with different parts of methanolic extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*……………… 107

Figure 4.8 AI level of p-407 induced hyperlipidaemic rats after treated with different parts of methanolic extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*……………… 107

Figure 4.9 Effect of aqueous extract of different parts of *Averrhoa carambola* on total cholesterol level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats……… 109

Figure 4.10 Percentage changes of total cholesterol level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treated with different parts of aqueous extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*………………………………………………………… 110

Figure 4.11 Effect of aqueous extract of different parts of *Averrhoa carambola* on triglycerides level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats……………………………………………………………………………… 111

Figure 4.12 Percentage changes of triglycerides level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treated with different parts of *Averrhoa carambola* aqueous extracts………………………………………………………… 112
Figure 4.13  LDL-C level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treated with different parts of aqueous extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*………………………………………………………………………………………………………..113

Figure 4.14  HDL-C level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treated with different parts of aqueous extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..113

Figure 4.15  VLDL-C level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treated with different parts of aqueous extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*………………………………………………………………………………………………………..114

Figure 4.16  AI level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with different parts of aqueous extracts of *Averrhoa carambola*……………..114

Figure 4.17  Effect of 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on total cholesterol level of normal rats after 5 weeks treatment……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..116

Figure 4.18  Percentage changes of total cholesterol level of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..117

Figure 4.19  Effect of 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on triglycerides level of normal rats after 5 weeks treatment………………...118

Figure 4.20  Percentage changes of triglycerides level of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………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Figure 4.21  LDL-C level of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks............................ 120

Figure 4.22  HDL-C level of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks......................... 120

Figure 4.23  VLDL-C level of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks......................... 121

Figure 4.24  AI level of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks............................ 121

Figure 4.25  Effect of various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on total cholesterol level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after 5 weeks treatment.............................. 124

Figure 4.26  Percentage changes of total cholesterol level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks.................... 125

Figure 4.27  Effect of various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on triglycerides level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after 5 weeks treatment ......................... 126

Figure 4.28  Percentage changes of triglycerides level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks..................... 127

Figure 4.29  LDL-C level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa*
Figure 4.30 HDL-C level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks……………………………………… 128

Figure 4.31 VLDL-C level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks……………………………………… 129

Figure 4.32 AI level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks……………………………………… 130

Figure 4.33 Average body weight of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf at day 1 and at day 45………………………………………………………………………… 131

Figure 4.34 Percentage changes in body weight level of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks……………………………………………………………………………………………… 132

Figure 4.35 BMI values of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks……………………………………………………………………………………………… 132

Figure 4.36 Average daily consumed food of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks……………………………………………………………………………………………… 133
Figure 4.37 Faecal dry weight values of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks................................................................. 133

Figure 4.38 Relative liver weight of normal rats after treatment with 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf......................................................... 134

Figure 4.39 Average body weight of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf............................................................... 137

Figure 4.40 Percentage changes in body weight levels of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 5 weeks................. 137

Figure 4.41 BMI values of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf............................................................... 138

Figure 4.42 Average daily consumed food in high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf............................................................... 139

Figure 4.43 Faecal dry weight values of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf............................................................... 140

Figure 4.44 Relative liver weight of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with various doses of methanolic extract of
**Averrhoa carambola** leaf………………………………………………. 141

Figure 4.45a Effects of 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on rat liver gross and histology of normal rats as assessed by H & E staining……………………………………………………………………. 144

Figure 4.45b Effects of different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on rat liver gross and histology of high fat diet induced-chronic hyperlipidaemic rats as assessed by H&E staining……………………….. 145

Figure 4.46 Effect of different fractions of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on total cholesterol level in p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats…………………………………………………………………... 147

Figure 4.47 Percentage changes of total cholesterol level of different fractions of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats………………………………………………………………….. 148

Figure 4.48 Effect of different fractions of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on triglycerides level in p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats……………………………………………………………………... 149

Figure 4.49 Percentage changes of triglycerides level of different fractions of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats………………………………………………………………….. 150

Figure 4.50 LDL-C level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with different fractions of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf………………………………………………………………….. 151
Figure 4.51 HDL-C level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with different fractions of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf………………………………………………………………………………. 152

Figure 4.52 VLDL-C level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with different fractions of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf………………………………………………………………………………. 152

Figure 4.53 AI level of p-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats after treatment with different fractions of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf………………………………………………………………………………. 153

Figure 4.54 HMG-CoA reductase inhibitory activity of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf………………………………………………………………………………. 160

Figure 4.55 Pancreatic lipase inhibitory activity of methanol extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf………………………………………………………………………………. 161

Figure 4.56 HMG-CoA reductase inhibitory activity of ethyl acetate fraction of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf……………………………………………………………………….. 162

Figure 4.57 Pancreatic lipase inhibitory activity of ethyl acetate fraction of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf………………………………………………………………………………. 163

Figure 4.58 Level of liver total cholesterol of normal rats treated with 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf……………………………………………………………………….. 169

Figure 4.59 Level of liver triglycerides of normal rats treated with 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of *A. carambola* leaf………………………………………………………………………………. 170

Figure 4.60 Effect of various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf
on liver total cholesterol level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats……………………………………………………………………. 171

Figure 4.61  Effect of various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on liver triglycerides level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats…………………………………………………………… 172

Figure 4.62  Effect of 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on faecal total cholesterol level of normal rats………………………………………. 174

Figure 4.63  Effect of 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on faecal total cholesterol level of normal rats……………………………………………………………. 174

Figure 4.64  Effect of 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on percentage changes of faecal total cholesterol level of normal rats……………………………………………………………………………. 175

Figure 4.65  Effect of 1000 mg/kg *Averrhoa carambola* leaf methanolic extract on faecal bile acids level of normal rats……………………………………………………………. 175

Figure 4.66  Effect of 1000 mg/kg *Averrhoa carambola* leaf methanolic extract on faecal bile acids level of normal rats……………………………………………………………. 176

Figure 4.67  Effect of 1000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on percentage changes of fecal bile acids level of normal rats………………………………………. 176

Figure 4.68  Effect of various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on faecal total cholesterol level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats……………………………………………………………. 178

Figure 4.69  Effect of various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola*
leaf on faecal total cholesterol level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats................................................................. 179

Figure 4.70 Effect of various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on percentage changes of faecal cholesterol level of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats................................................................. 179

Figure 4.71 Effect of various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on faecal bile acids of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats......................................................................................... 181

Figure 4.72 Effect of various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on faecal bile acids levels of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats......................................................................................... 182

Figure 4.73 Effect of various doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on percentage changes of faecal bile acids levels of high fat diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats......................................................................................... 182

Figure 4.74 The effect of oral administration of single dose of 5000 mg/kg methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on body weight of female rats.......................................................................................................................... 185

Figure 4.75 Body weight of female rats treated with different doses of methanolic extract of *A. carambola* leaf for 28 days................................................................. 187

Figure 4.76 Body weight of male rats treated with different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf for 28 days................................................................. 187

Figure 4.77 Effects of different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola*
leaf on liver histology of female rats in sub-chronic toxicity study for 28 days as assessed by H&E staining ........................................ 196

Figure 4.78 Effects of different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on kidney histology of female rats in sub-chronic toxicity study for 28 days as assessed by H&E staining ........................................ 197

Figure 4.79 Effects of different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on liver histology of male rats in sub-chronic toxicity study for 28 days as assessed by H&E staining ........................................ 199

Figure 4.80 Effects of different doses of methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf on kidney histology of male rats in sub-chronic toxicity study for 28 days as assessed by H&E staining ........................................ 199

Figure 4.81 HPLC chromatogram for apigenin .................................................. 201

Figure 4.82 UV-vis spectrum of apigenin .......................................................... 202

Figure 4.83 Calibration curve of apigenin .......................................................... 202

Figure 4.84 HPLC chromatogram for methanolic extract of *Averrhoa carambola* leaf .......................................................... 205

Figure 4.85 HPLC chromatogram for ethyl acetate fraction .................................. 206
# LIST OF SYMBOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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<td>4MUO</td>
<td>4-methyl umbelliferoneo</td>
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<td>ABC</td>
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<td>ABTS</td>
<td>2, 2-azinobis (3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic acid)</td>
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<td>ACAT</td>
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<td>ARASC</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSD</td>
<td>Relative standard deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>Sodium dodecyl sulfate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Standard error mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET</td>
<td>Single electron transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOD</td>
<td>Superoxide dismutase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR-B1</td>
<td>Scavenger receptor class B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STZ</td>
<td>Streptozotocin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC</td>
<td>Total cholesterol</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBARS</td>
<td>Thiobarbituric acid reactive substances</td>
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<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Trolox equivalent</td>
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<td>TFC</td>
<td>Total flavonoid content</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Triglycerides</td>
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<tr>
<td>TP</td>
<td>Total protein</td>
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<td>TPC</td>
<td>Total phenolic content</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPTZ</td>
<td>2, 4, 6-Tri (2-pyridyl)-s-triazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWR-1339</td>
<td>Triton-WR-1339</td>
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<tr>
<td>T X-100</td>
<td>Triton X-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>VLDL-C</td>
<td>Very Low-density lipoprotein cholesterol</td>
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AKTIVITI ANTIHIPERLIPIDEMIK DAN ANTIOKSIDAN EKSTRAK BAHAGIAN BERBEZA BAGI AVERRHOA CARAMBOLA DAN ELUSIDASI MEKANISME TINDAKANNYA

ABSTRAK

Averrhoa carambola, biasanya dikenali sebagai belimbing merupakan salah satu herba yang digunakan secara meluas dalam perubatan tradisional masyarakat Malaysia, daun dan buahnya merupakan bahagian yang paling banyak digunakan. Kajian ini bertujuan menyiasat kesan antihiperlipidemik, aktiviti anti-oksidan dan toksisiti ekstrak metanol dan akueus bahagian yang berlainan daripada A. carambola dengan tumpuan untuk elusidasi mekanisme tindakannya. Daripada semua ekstrak yang diuji, ekstrak metanol bahagian daun A. carambola menunjukkan aktiviti antihiperlipidemik terbaik dalam model tikus hiperlipidemik akut teraruh oleh poloxamer-407 berbanding kawalan hiperlipidemik yang setanding dengan aktiviti atorvastatin. Berikut pemberian kronik sehingga lima minggu, tiada penurunan signifikan diperhatikan dalam aras parameter lipid bagi tikus normal yang dirawat dengan 1000 mg/kg ekstrak metanol daun. Sebaliknya, perbezaan yang signifikan diperhatikan dalam parameter lipid tikus hiperlipidemik teraruh diet tinggi lemak selepas dirawat dengan 500 dan 1000 mg/kg ekstrak metanol daun berbanding kawalan normal. Hasil kajian ini mencadangkan ekstrak metanol daun tersebut bertindak sebagai agen antihiperlipidemik dan bukan sebagai agen hipolipidemik. Selepas proses pemeringkatan, ujian menggunakan tikus hiperlipidemik akut teraruh oleh poloxamer-407 menunjukkan fraksi etil asetat bagi ekstrak methanol daun A. carambola mempamerkan kesan paling poten dalam penurunan semua parameter.
lipid kecuali meningkatkan aras HDL-C. Bagi penilaian antioksidan, ekstrak metanol daun dan batang *A. carambola* menunjukkan aktiviti antioksidan paling tinggi. Kandungan fenolik dan flavonoid total bagi ekstrak *A. carambola* menunjukkan korelasi yang kuat dengan aktiviti antioksidan, tetapi tiada korelasi diperhatikan dengan kesan antihiperlipidemianya. Ekstrak metanol daun dan fraksi etil asetatnya menunjukkan kesan perencatan bergantungan dos ke atas enzim HMG-CoA reductase pada kepekatan 5 dan 10 mg/mL, manakala kesan perencatan yang lemah dikesan pada enzim lipase pankreas *in vitro*. Tambahan lagi, ekstrak metanol daun meningkatkan aras enzim antioksidan *in vivo* secara signifikan dan menurunkan aras peroksidasi lipid dalam sampel serum dan homogenat hepar secara bergantungan dos. Selain itu, ekstrak metanol daun yang diberikan kepada tikus diet tinggi lemak pada dos 500 dan 1000 mg/kg menunjukkan keberkesanan dalam menurunkan penghasilan kolesterol dan trigliserida di dalam hepar dan meningkatkan perkumuhan kolesterol dan asid hempedu di dalam tinja. Penyiasatan menggunakan empat titisan sel kanser (K-562, HL-60, kasumi-1 dan HCT-116) mendapati kesemua ekstrak *A. carambola* tidak menunjukkan kesan sitotoksik. Kajian toksisiti akut dan sub-kronik menunjukkan ekstrak tersebut adalah selamat dan tiada perubahan signifikan diperhatikan bagi kedua-dua parameter biokimia dan hematologi dalam tikus rawatan berbanding kumpulan kawalan. Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini mencadangkan ekstrak metanol daun *A. carambola* mempunyai kesan penurunan lipid yang boleh dibangunkan selanjutnya sebagai agen antihiperlipidemik.
ANTIHYPERTENSION AND ANTIOXIDANT ACTIVITIES OF EXTRACTS OF DIFFERENT PARTS OF AVERRHOA CARAMBOLE AND ELUCIDATION OF THEIR MECHANISMS OF ACTION

ABSTRACT

Averrhoa carambola, commonly known as star fruit is one of the widely used herbs in the Malaysian traditional medicine, with the leaf and fruits being the most utilized parts. This study aims to investigate the antihyperlipidaemic effect, antioxidant activity and toxicity of methanolic and aqueous extracts of different parts of A. carambola with focus on elucidating the underlying mechanism of action. Of the tested extracts, the methanolic extract of A. carambola leaf showed the most potent antihyperlipidaemic activity in poloxamer-407-induced acute hyperlipidaemic rat model compared to the hyperlipidaemic control, which was comparable with that of atorvastatin. Upon chronic administration up to five weeks, no significant decrease was observed in the levels of the lipid parameters of normal rats treated with 1000 mg/kg of methanolic extract of leaf. In contrast, significant changes were observed in lipid parameters of high-fat diet induced hyperlipidemic rats after treated with 500 and 1000 mg/kg leaf methanolic extract as compared with the hyperlipidaemic control. These findings thus suggest that methanolic extract of A. carambola leaf works as an antihyperlipidaemic rather than a hypolipidaemic agent. Following fractionation, assessment using poloxamer-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats showed that the ethyl acetate fraction of methanolic extract of A. carambola leaf exhibits the most potent significant effect in terms of reducing all lipid parameters except increasing high density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C)
levels. For antioxidant evaluation, methanolic extract of *A. carambola* stem and leaf showed the highest antioxidant activity. The total phenolic and flavonoid contents of *A. carambola* extracts showed strong correlation with their antioxidant activities, but no correlation was found with their antihyperlipidaemic effects. Methanolic extract of leaf and its ethyl acetate fraction produced dose-dependent inhibitory effects on HMG-CoA reductase at 5 and 10 mg/mL concentrations, while weak inhibitory effect was detected on pancreatic lipase *in vitro*. In addition, methanolic extract of the leaf significantly increased the *in vivo* antioxidant enzymes levels and decreased the lipid peroxidation in liver homogenates and serum samples in a dose-dependent manner. On the other hand, methanolic extract of leaf given to high fat-diet rats at the doses of 500 and 1000 mg/kg was effective in reducing the synthesis of cholesterol and triglycerides in the liver and increasing the excretion of cholesterol and bile acids in faeces. An investigation using four cancer cell lines (K-562, HL-60, kasumi-1 and HCT-116) revealed that none of *A. carambola* extracts had cytotoxic effects. Acute and sub-chronic toxicity study of methanolic extract of *A. carambola* leaf showed that the extract was safe and no significant changes was observed in both biochemical and haematological parameters in treated rats compared with control group. Overall, this study suggests that the methanolic extract of *A. carambola* leaf has lipids lowering effect that could be further developed as an antihyperlipidaemic agent.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are responsible for the highest burden of disease globally (Merriel et al., 2014). They are the leading causes of death, morbidity and health expenses in developed and developing countries accounting around 30% of the annual global mortality and 10% of worldwide health burden (Deales et al., 2013; Nair and Wang, 2013). Despite of having several therapeutic measures, focus has now been given for establishing effective preventive strategy for detecting and controlling of cardiovascular risk factors (O'Donnell and Elosua, 2008; Valdés et al., 2014).

Cardiovascular risk factors include a set of plasma lipids such as triglycerides (TG), total cholesterol (TC), very low density lipoprotein-cholesterol (VLDL-C), low density lipoprotein-cholesterol (LDL-C) and anti-atherogenic or high density lipoprotein-cholesterol (HDL-C) (Alzaid et al., 2014; Nelson, 2013). Dyslipidaemia is a highly heterogeneous class of metabolic disorders which is characterized by abnormalities in serum levels of various lipoproteins. The abnormalities of lipoproteins include elevation in TC, LDL-C and TG along with reduction in HDL-C. It is a powerful risk factor for coronary heart disease (CHD) (Cahalin et al., 2013; Pratt et al., 2014). Etiologically, dyslipidaemia relies on specific metabolic backgrounds such as insulin resistance, thyroid dysfunction and defects in the gastrointestinal absorption of cholesterol and lipids, as well as mutations in cell
surface receptors and enzymes (Yadav et al., 2014). Additionally, dyslipidaemia could occur because of suboptimal diet, obesity, inactive life style, genetic deviations and metabolism abnormalities (Xu et al., 2014).

An increase in plasma lipids concentrations (TC, TG, LDL-C, and VLDL-C) or decreased in HDL-C levels beyond certain level give rise to physiological condition known as hyperlipidaemia which is the widest form of dyslipidaemia worldwide. It has also been reported to be the most widespread marker for susceptibility to atherosclerotic heart disease (Chen et al., 2014). Oxidative modification of LDL-C, protein glycation, glucose-auto-oxidation with production of free radicals and lipid peroxidation products are the main factors responsible for ischemic heart diseases which occurs as a result of hyperlipidaemia (Yang et al., 2008).

High levels of plasma lipids, mainly cholesterol, are a common feature of atherosclerosis, a condition in which arterial damage can lead to ischemic heart disease, myocardial infarction and cerebrovascular coincidences (Prasad et al., 2012). Hypercholesterolaemia and hypertriglyceridaemia are important risk factors, either alone or together. It was found that they are extensively contributing in the acceleration of the manifestation and development of coronary heart disease as well as the progression of atherosclerosis (Cahalin et al., 2013; Merriel et al., 2014).

Accumulation of high levels of LDL-C in the extracellular sub-endothelial space of arteries is highly atherogenic and toxic to vascular cells which may lead to atherosclerosis, hypertension, obesity, diabetes and functional depression in some organs (Catapano et al., 2000; Jain et al., 2010). Several studies documented that
there is an obvious correlation between high cholesterol level in serum and cardiovascular disease (Bays et al., 2001). According to the American Heart Association report in 2004, heart disease and stroke will become the leading cause of death and disability worldwide. It is estimated that, by 2030, more than 24 million per year will suffer from the cardiovascular problems (Reinhardt, 2005). Globally, each year approximately 12 million people die due to cardiovascular diseases. Factors such as diet high in saturated fats and cholesterol, age, family history, hypertension and life style are of great significance but high level of cholesterol, particularly LDL-C is mainly responsible for the occurrence of CHD (Farias et al., 1996).

1.2 Therapeutic challenges

Hyperlipidaemia has risen to the top in terms of causes of death in both developed and developing countries (Sunil et al., 2012). In Malaysia, the prevalence rate of hypercholesterolaemia accounts about 35.1 % (6.2 million) of adults (18 years and above) in which 8.4 % are known to have hypercholesterolaemia and 26.6 % are previously undiagnosed with hypercholesterolaemia (NHMS, 2011). There are various classes of synthetic lipid lowering agents used in current therapy belonging to the statins, fibrates or bile acid sequestrants groups. Although, they possess beneficial therapeutic effects, they are often associated with some serious side effects such as rhabdomyolysis, myopathy, elevation of hepatic enzyme levels and an increasing risk of gallstones (Javed et al., 2006; Laurance and Bennett, 1992; Shin et al., 2014). Thus, there is an exigent need for new lipid lowering agents with high therapeutic value and minimum tolerable side effects (Sefi et al., 2010; Shin et al., 2014).
1.3 Problem statements

Previously, a study among local plants indicated that different insoluble fibers prepared from *Averrhoa carambola* fruits have potential antihypcholesterolaemic activity (Wu et al., 2009). In addition, another study investigated the *in vivo* effect of micronized insoluble fiber and fiber-rich fraction from star fruit on lipids metabolism in a murine model (Herman-Lara et al., 2014).

However, to date there is neither detailed investigation on the lipid lowering effects of *A. carambola* nor report on the antihyperlipidaemic effect of other parts of *A. carambola*. This has created an interest to work on various parts of *A. carambola* to evaluate their antihyperlipidaemic effects and to further investigate the mechanism of action and toxicity.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the present study are:

i. to evaluate the antihyperlipidaemic effects of methanolic and aqueous extracts of different parts of *A. carambola* and the fractions of the most active extract in chemically-induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats model

ii. to evaluate the antihyperlipidaemic effect of the most active extract of *A. carambola* in diet-induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats model

iii. to evaluate the antioxidant activity of methanolic and aqueous extract of different parts of *A. carambola* and the fractions of most active extract

iv. to elucidate the mechanism of antihyperlidaemic effect of the most active extract of *A. carambola* and its bioactive fraction on

a. inhibition of enzyme involved in lipids synthesis
b. lipids and bile acids absorption and excretion

c. *in vivo* antioxidant and lipid peroxidation

v. to investigate the toxicity of the most active extract of *A. carambola*

vi. to standardize the most active extract of *A. carambola* using selected marker compound

The research scheme is presented in figure 1.1.
1.5 Flow chart of the study

Different parts of *A. carambola*

Methanolic & aqueous extracts

Antihyperlipidaemic studies

P-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats model for all extracts

High fat diet – induced chronic hyperlipidaemic rats model for the most active extract

Mechanism of antihyperlipidaemic for the most active extract and its bioactive fraction

Dose response study

Bioactivity- guided fractionation of the most active extract of *A. carambola* leaf

P-407 induced acute hyperlipidaemic rats for fractions

Antioxidant studies

In vitro antioxidant for extracts & fractions

TPC
TFC
FRAP
ABTS
DPPH

Effect on HMG-CoA reductase & pancreatic lipase enzymes

Effect on lipid absorption

Effect on lipids & bile acids excretions

In vivo antioxidant for the most active extract

Total protein
Lipid peroxidation
Superoxide dismutase
Catalase
Reduced glutathione
Glutathione peroxidase

Acute toxicity study

Sub-chronic toxicity study

Cytotoxicity study

Toxicological evaluation

Phytochemical analysis

Standardization using HPLC

Figura 1.1: Flow chart of the study
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Lipids

The term “Lipid” is imitative from “lipos”, which refers to animal fat or vegetable oil. Adiposity is derived from “adipo” that denotes to body fat (Driskell, 2009). Utmost amounts of body lipids are stored in the adipocytes and adipose tissue including triglycerides and free cholesterol (Bays et al., 2013). The term lipids also refer to an entire class of fats and fat-like substances in the blood. The most essential lipids in the body include; fatty acids (FA), cholesterol, cholesterol esters, TGs and phospholipids (PLs).

2.1.1 Fatty acids

Fats are defined mainly as carboxylic acids (esters) with long hydrocarbon chains which are either saturated or unsaturated. Mostly, they are derived from triglycerides or phospholipids. They are named "free" fatty acids because of not attached to the other molecules. They represent an important source of energy because they yield large quantities of ATP when metabolized (Ibrahim et al., 2013).

![Free fatty acid](image)

1 Free fatty acid
2.1.2 Phospholipids

Phospholipids (PLs) resemble the TG with small differences in which one fatty acid in TG is replaced by phosphate and a nitrogenous base (Ibrahim et al., 2013).

![Phospholipid structure]

2 Phospholipids

2.1.3 Triglycerides

Triglycerides (TG) are esters consisting of a glycerol molecule attached to three fatty acid residues. It could be found in dietary fats and can be synthesized in the liver and adipose tissue (Phan and Tso, 2001). It offers a source of stored energy when it is required, especially in case of starvation. It is found in all plasma lipoproteins and are the major component of lipoproteins with density less than 1.019 kg/L (Rosenson et al., 2002). The ideal or normal value of TG is less than 150 mg/dL (1.69 mmol/L) and values between 150 to 199 mg/dL is considered at the borderline high, while a values from 200 to 499 mg/dL are high and above that considered very high (Ducharme and Radhamma, 2008, Raza et al., 2004). They are atherogenic because they are rich in apo C-III, which delays the lipolysis of VLDL and inhibits its uptake and clearance from plasma (Poirier et al., 2006).

![Triglyceride structure]
2.1.4 Cholesterol and cholesterol esters

Cholesterol and cholesterol esters are important elements found in all human cell membranes. Cholesterol is an essential constituent of steroid hormones and bile acids. They could be synthesized in liver and many tissues as well as may be acquired from dietary fat. Their main functions are to build, repair cells and produce hormones such as oestrogen and testosterone (Rudel et al., 2005). In addition, they modulate cell membrane fluidity and work as a precursor of bile acids, which play an important role in the digestion of fats (Ahmed et al., 2009).

Cholesterol molecule is an amphipathic lipid, due to the presence of hydrophilic group (3β-hydroxyl group) attached to the hydrophobic part of the molecule. In addition to polarity, the 3β-hydroxyl reduces cholesterol ability to form esters (Pikuleva and Curcio, 2014). The desired value of TC is less than 200 mg/dL (5.17 mmol/L) and value between 200 to 239 mg/dL (5.17-6.18 mmol/L) is considered at the borderline high, while a value of 240 mg/dL(6.21 mmol/L) or more is high (Ducharme and Radhamma, 2008).

Cholesterol is stored in the cells in the form of cholesteryl esters (one cholesterol molecule bound to one fatty acid by an ester bond). Esterification is carried out by Acyl-CoA: cholesterol acyltransferase (ACAT) 1 and 2. ACAT 1 is universally expressed, while ACAT 2 is expressed only in enterocytes and hepatocytes. Esterification of cholesterol will produce a different shape molecule, which is greater in size and hydrophobicity (Lemaire-Ewing et al., 2012; Rudel et al., 2005).
Free cholesterol could be eliminated from the liver into the bile via the ATP-binding cassette (ABC) G5/G8 heterodimer. The cholesterol ring structure formed is highly stable and not easily metabolized (Parini et al., 2004). Cholesterol and other types of fats cannot dissolve in the blood. Thus, they have to be transported by attachment to specific molecules called lipoproteins in order to form macromolecular complexes (Abrass, 2004).

### 2.2 Lipoproteins

Lipoproteins are macromolecule complexes, which consist of spherical particles containing a hundreds of lipids and protein molecules. The main functions of lipoproteins is carrying and transporting the plasma lipids (Kanakavalli et al., 2014). There are five major lipoproteins; each one has its own function: chylomicrons, VLDLs, intermediate-density lipoproteins (IDLs), LDL-C and HDL-C (Kanakavalli et al., 2014).
et al., 2014, Von Zychlinski et al., 2014). Table 2.1 demonstrates the physical properties of lipoproteins and their contents of apolipoproteins (Babin and Gibbons, 2009; Crook, 2012; Von Zychlinski et al., 2014). Apolipoproteins are known as protein components of the lipoproteins or apoproteins. They assist as cofactors for enzymes and ligands for receptors. Disturbances in lipid handling will occur if there is any defect happened in apolipoprotein metabolism (Ducharme and Radhamma, 2008).
Table 2.1: Physical properties of plasma lipoproteins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Chylomicron</th>
<th>VLDL-C</th>
<th>IDL-C</th>
<th>LDL-C</th>
<th>HDL-C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gut</td>
<td>VLDL-C</td>
<td>LDL-C</td>
<td>HDL-C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>VLDL-C</td>
<td>LDL-C</td>
<td>HDL-C</td>
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<tr>
<td>VLDL-C</td>
<td>LDL-C</td>
<td>HDL-C</td>
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<td>LDL-C</td>
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<td>HDL-C</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Density g/mL
- Chylomicron: <0.95
- VLDL-C: 0.95-1.006
- IDL-C: 1.006-1.019
- LDL-C: 1.063-1.09
- HDL-C: 1.063-1.21

### Diameter nm
- Chylomicron: 800-5000
- VLDL-C: 300-800
- IDL-C: 250-350
- LDL-C: 180-280
- HDL-C: 50-120

### Desired values (mg/dL)
- Undetectable
- <30 mg/dL
- Undetectable
- <130
- >40

### Borderline-high (mg/dL)
- Undetectable
- Undetectable
- Undetectable
- 130-159
- 40-59

### Functions
- Chylomicron: Transport exogenous TG & cholesterol from intestine to all cells and tissues
- VLDL-C: Transport endogenous TG & cholesterol from intestine to all cells and tissues
- IDL-C: Formed during the conversion of VLDL-C to LDL-C
- LDL-C: Formed from VLDLs, they carry cholesterol from liver to the cells and tissues
- HDL-C: Transport endogenous cholesterol from the cells and tissues back to the liver (scavenger)

### Apolipoproteins
- A1, A4, B48, C1, C2, C3, E
- B100, C1, C2, C3, E
- B100, C1, C2, C3, E
- Abo B100
- A1, A2, A4, C1, C2, C3, E

### Lipids (%)
- Total lipid: 98 – 99
- Protein: 1
- Cholesterol: 4
- TGs: 90
- PL: 5

### Functions
- Chylomicron: Transport exogenous TG & cholesterol from intestine to all cells and tissues
- VLDL-C: Transport endogenous TG & cholesterol from intestine to all cells and tissues
- IDL-C: Formed during the conversion of VLDL-C to LDL-C
- LDL-C: Formed from VLDLs, they carry cholesterol from liver to the cells and tissues
- HDL-C: Transport endogenous cholesterol from the cells and tissues back to the liver (scavenger)

### Values (mg/dL)
- Total lipid: 98 – 99
- Protein: 1
- Cholesterol: 4
- TGs: 90
- PL: 5

(Babin and Gibbons, 2009; Crook, 2012; Ducharme and Radhamma, 2008; Von Zychlinski et al., 2014)

### 2.3 Bile acids

Bile acids (BA) are functional compounds that simplify emulsification, absorption, and transportation of fats and sterols in the liver and intestine through formation of soluble mixed micelles with lipids (Ye et al., 2013). Daily, in the liver of the adult human about 500 mg of cholesterol is transformed into BA (Staels et al., 2010).
They are the cornerstones, which play vital role in maintenance of mammalian cholesterol homeostasis. The liver represents the unique source and site of BA formations (Cherrington et al., 2013).

Besides their role in lipid digestion, bile acids also denature dietary proteins, enhancing their rate of cleavage by pancreatic proteolytic enzymes. Bile acids also possess antimicrobial activity which remain poorly understood (Liu et al., 2013b). Synthesis of bile acids requires a group of enzymes belonging to the cytochrome P450 (CYP450) superfamily (Alrefai and Gill, 2007). BA biosynthesis involves modification of the ring structure of cholesterol, oxidation and shortening of the side chain and lastly conjugation with an amino acid (Zwicker and Agellon, 2013). These modifications are paramount to increase the polarity and consequently the solubility of these molecules (Hofmann et al., 2010).

Figure 2.1 illustrates the two main pathways of bile acids synthesis; the standard (classic) and the alternative pathway. The standard pathway is controlled by an enzyme encoded by cholesterol 7α-hydroxylase (CYP7A1) gene which is the rate limiting enzyme in bile acid synthesis. It catalyses and initiates the major pathway in cholesterol catabolism and bile acid synthesis (Alnouti et al., 2008, Ogawa et al., 2013, Pols et al., 2011).
Figure 2.1: Simple outlines of the classic and alternative pathways in bile acids synthesis. (CYP7A1, cholesterol 7alpha-hydroxylase; CYP27A1, sterol 27-hydroxycholesterol) (Adapted from Thomas et al., 2008a).

The standard pathway initiates with hydroxylation of the 7α position in the cholesterol ring structure, which will end with the formation of either cholic acid (CA) or chenodeoxycholic acid (CDCA) (Hofmann, 2009). CA and CDCA constitute the two primary bile acids in humans. CA and CDCA share a common precursor; 7α-hydroxy-4-cholestene-3-one (C4), which can be hydroxylated in the C12 position by sterol 12α-hydroxylase (CYP8B1) to form CA. Otherwise, without 12α-hydroxylation, it is converted to CDCA (Lake et al., 2013). The alternate pathway is commenced by sterol 27-hydroxylase (CYP27A1) and results in formation of CDCA. Small changes appear in the bile acid synthesis in mice compared with human. In mice, most of the synthesized CDCA is converted into muricholic acids (MCAs) (Alnouti et al., 2008).
2.4 Cholesterol biosynthesis

Cholesterol is an essential constituent in the plasma membranes of the eukaryotic organisms and it acts as a precursor for the biosynthesis of some vitamins, steroid hormones and bile acids (Faust and Kovacs, 2014). The biosynthesis of cholesterol is initiated by the reaction of acetate with citrate to produce acetyl-coenzyme A (acetyl-CoA). Then, two molecules of acetyl-CoA under the action of thiolase forms acetoacetyl-CoA. Acetoacetyl-CoA is transformed to hydroxyl methylglutaryl-CoA (HMG-CoA) upon the effect of HMG-CoA synthase. The subsequent reduction of the thioester in HMG-CoA in the presence of HMG-CoA reductase produces mevalonate. HMG-CoA reductase enzyme is called the rate limiting enzyme and this step is called the rate-limiting step in cholesterol biosynthesis (Groen et al., 2014).

Decarboxylation, dehydration and double phosphorylation of mevalonate provide isopentenyl pyrophosphate. Condensation of six isoprenyl moieties of isopentenyl pyrophosphate results in the triterpene squalene. In cholesterol biosynthesis process, NADPH is used as a cofactor in all reduction reactions. Epoxidation of squalene to squalene oxide and cyclization afford the steroid lanosterol (Burg and Espenshade, 2011). Conversion of lanosterol to cholesterol required 19 steps including threefold demethylation and double-bond isomerization (Figure 2.2).
Figure 2.2: Biosynthesis of cholesterol, triglycerides and phospholipids.

(HMG-Co A, hydroxymethylglutarylco A reductase; LDL, low density lipoprotein; NADP, nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate; NADPH, reduced from of NADP) (Adapted from Groen et al., 2014).
2.5 Digestion and absorption of lipids

Lipids digestion is initiated in the stomach and catalysed by lingual lipases, which are secreted by tongue glands. In the stomach, lingual and gastric lipases continue digestion and emulsification of dietary fat and fat-soluble vitamins. Emulsified lipids enter the duodenum and subsequently mix with bile and pancreatic juice to go through many chemical and physical changes and the emulsification continues beside hydrolysis to be prepared for the absorption throughout the intestinal wall (Phan and Tso, 2001).

Pancreatic lipase, colipase and bile salts are working together to enhance the competence of lipid digestion and absorption. Decreased rate of lipid absorption in humans reflects the importance of bile. It was found that, the activity of pancreatic lipase could be inhibited through elevated concentrations of bile salts in the duodenum. Nevertheless, colipase plays a critical role in dietary lipids digestion and it could be restored the pancreatic lipase activity in vitro (Lowe, 2002).

2.5.1 Digestion and absorption of cholesterol

In the body, two types of cholesterol exist; endogenous, which is being produced in the liver and peripheral tissues and exogenous (dietary), which is absorbed from the intestine. Free sterol composed the most dietary cholesterol, while cholesterol esters represent only 10-15%. Cholesterol esters will be hydrolysed by cholesterol esterase to release free cholesterol for absorption (Nair and Wang, 2013, Van Heek et al., 2000). About 400 mg of cholesterol being provided via human diet daily and around 1g cholesterol is secreted by the liver (Siddiqi, 2008). Almost 50 % of the cholesterol is absorbed in the intestine and the residue is excreted in faeces (Clearfield, 2003).
Only non-esterified cholesterol can be combined into bile acid micelles and absorbed by enterocytes. Cholesterol enters bile salt micelles, and then it will be transported to the brush border of the enterocyte to be absorbed (Voshol et al., 2001). Cholesterol absorption depends on the presence of bile acids in the intestinal lumen and it relates directly with the total bile acid pool (Voshol et al., 2001). Subsequently, cholesterol will be transferred to the unstirred water layer under the help of bile salt micelles (Moreau et al., 2002).

2.5.1.1 Cholesterol and bile acid cross-talk

There is an association between cholesterol and BA metabolism and control of various important processes. The literature confirmed the existing opinion that BA excretion represents the central route for eliminating cholesterol from the body (Briones et al., 1986, Groen et al., 2014, Kesaniemi et al., 1981, Zwicker and Agellon, 2013). Thus, it was found that loss of BA significantly contributes to cholesterol turnover. Nevertheless, around 95% of the BA present in the intestinal lumen is reabsorbed and the BA pool remains effective in the enterohepatic circulation. Consequently, it is concluded that removal of excess cholesterol is definitely not the main role of BA synthesis in whole body cholesterol metabolism (Dietschy, 1968, Zwicker and Agellon, 2013). In human, a cycling frequency of BA is about 4–5 cycles per day and in every cycle about 5% of the BA pool is lost. As the faecal BA loss is adequately recompenised for by hepatic synthesis to maintain BA pool size, de novo synthesis of BA (0.5 g/day in human) is a quantitatively significant pathway to maintain cholesterol homeostasis (Lefebvre et al., 2009).
2.5.2 Cholesterol excretion
Approximately, every day 1g of cholesterol is removed from the body which is approximately equal to the amount of absorbed and synthesized cholesterol. Almost, half of cholesterol is excreted in the faeces after conversion to bile acids in liver, and the remainder is excreted as free cholesterol. BAs serve to remove undesired cholesterol from the body and to aid in lipid digestion in the intestine (Nair and Wang, 2013). 7α-hydroxylase enzyme is the rate limiting enzyme of bile acid biosynthesis which converts cholesterol into 7-hydroxycholesterol. Then, 7-hydroxycholesterol is converted to one of the two primary bile acids, cholic acid and chenodeoxycholic acid. Bile acids are then delivered to the intestines where they aid in the absorption of lipids. In the intestine, intestinal bacteria act to modify some of bile acids to form secondary bile acids such as lithocholic acid and deoxycholic acid. However, the majority of bile acids delivered to intestine are recycled by reabsorption in the ileum and returned to the liver by enterohepatic circulation. In liver, glyco- and tauro-conjugate bile acids are formed and stored in gall bladder, from where they are released into the intestinal lumen for aid in the digestion and absorption process of fats or lipids (Nair and Wang, 2013).

2.5.3 Digestion and absorption of triglycerides
Pancreatic lipase is the enzyme responsible for digestion of TG, which starts in the upper part of the jejunum. The action of this enzyme breaks down the triglycerides in the micelles at positions 1 and 3 leaving two free fatty acids, glycerol and a 2-monoglycol (2-MAG) (Soutar and Naoumova, 2007). The predominant form in which MAG is absorbed from the small intestine is the 2-MAG. The uptake of 2-MAG from the small intestine is faster compared with the formation of 2-MAG
and 1-MAG through isomerization in an aqueous medium. Cholesterol esterase can also hydrolyse the acyl group at the sn-2 position to form glycerol and FFAs. FFAs are taken up from the intestinal lumen into the enterocytes and used for the biosynthesis of neutral fats (Ibrahim et al., 2013; Marks et al., 2003; Soutar and Naoumova, 2007;).

### 2.5.4 Digestion and absorption of phospholipids

In the lumen of the small intestine, phosphocholesterol (PC) is the major PL, which is found in mixed micelles that contain cholesterol and bile salts. Pancreatic phospholipase A2 (PLA2) with lipases secreted by the pancreas are responsible for the primary digestion process of PLs in response to food intake. These lipases interact with PLs at the sn-2 position to yield FFAs and lysophosphatidylcholine (Huggins et al., 2002). These products of lipolysis are removed from the water-oil interface when they are incorporated into the mixed micelles that form spontaneously when they interact with bile salts. PLA2 deficiency has a greater effect on the digestion of TG than that of PL hydrolysis (Huggins et al., 2002). It does not affect PL hydrolysis and absorption, possibly because its activity is compensated by other PLA2 enzymes (Richmond et al., 2001).

### 2.6 Lipid metabolic pathways

Generation and transport of lipids within the body are controlled through three main pathways which include; exogenous, endogenous and reverse cholesterol transport pathway (Ducharme and Radhamma, 2008).
2.6.1 Exogenous pathway

The free fatty acids will be combined with glycerol to form triglycerides once the digestion and absorption of dietary fat is completed. Then, cholesterol is esterified by acyl-coenzyme A: cholesterol acyltransferase (ACAT) to form cholesterol esters (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Triglycerides and cholesterol are present in the intracellular as chylomicrons. In the blood circulation, at the capillaries of the adipose tissue and muscle cells, chylomicrons interact to release the triglycerides into the adipose tissue to be stored and made available according to the body's energy needs (Crook, 2012).

Pancreatic lipase enzyme secreted from the pancreas is a key enzyme responsible for absorption and hydrolysis of triglyceride in the small intestine into glycerol and fatty acids (Sugiyama et al., 2007). Hence, the inhibition of lipase activity can lead to suppression of triglyceride absorption in the small intestine which could prevent obesity (Sugiyama et al., 2007). The enzyme lipoprotein lipase (LPL) hydrolyzes the triglycerides and releases the free-fatty acids. Some of the components of the chylomicrons are “repackaged” into other lipoproteins; for example, some apolipoproteins are transferred to HDL and the remaining chylomicrons particles are removed from the plasma by way of chylomicrons remnant receptors found on the liver (Ducharme and Radhamma, 2008) (Figure 2.3).
Figure 2.3: Exogenous pathway of lipid metabolism. (CM, chylomicron; FFA, free fatty acids; LPL, lipoprotein Lipase; CM-REM, chylomicron remnant; REM-R, remnant receptor; CH, cholesterol) (Adapted from Ibrahim et al., 2013).

2.6.2 Endogenous pathway

The endogenous pathway involves the liver-synthesizing lipoproteins. Triglycerides and cholesterol esters are packaged into VLDL particles and released into the blood circulation. Subsequently, fatty acids and glycerol will be released due to the hydrolysis of VLDL by tissue LPL (Groen et al., 2014). Once processed by LPL, the VLDL-C becomes a VLDL-C remnant. Most VLDL-C remnants are taken up by the liver by way of the LDL-C receptor and the remaining remnant particles become
IDL-C which is a smaller and denser lipoprotein than VLDL-C. Some IDL-C particles will be reabsorbed by the liver through the LDL-C receptor, whereas others are hydrolysed in the liver by hepatic triglyceride lipase to form LDL-C, which is smaller and denser particle than IDL-C (Rezen et al., 2011).

LDL-C is considered the main carrier of circulating cholesterol within the body. It is used by extrahepatic cells for cell membrane and steroid hormone synthesis. Most LDL-C particles are taken up by LDL-C receptors in the liver and the remaining particles are removed by way of scavenger pathways at the cellular level (Nair and Wang, 2013). Thus, this process will lead to suppression of the synthesis of new LDL-C receptors in the cells and activates the enzyme ACAT, which is responsible for the esterification of free cholesterol into cholesterol ester and store cholesterol in the cell (Ducharme and Radhamma, 2008).
**Figure 2.4:** Endogenous pathway of lipid metabolism. (LPL, lipoprotein lipase; FFA, free fatty acids; VLDL, very low density lipoproteins; IDL, intermediate-density lipoproteins; LDL, low density lipoproteins; LDLR, low density lipoproteins receptor; CH, cholesterol; TGs, triglycerides) (Adapted from Ibrahim et al., 2013).

### 2.6.3 Reverse cholesterol transport pathway

In this process, cholesterol is removed from the tissues and returned back to the liver. HDL-C plays the main role in the process of reverse cholesterol transport and in transferring of cholesteryl esters between lipoproteins (Groen et al., 2014). HDL-C, which is considered the smallest and the most dense lipoprotein particle is being formed through a maturation process in which the precursor particles (nascent HDL) secreted by the liver and intestine carry on through a series of conversions known as the HDL-C cycle to attract cholesterol from cell membranes and free cholesterol to the HDL particle core (Groen et al., 2014).