

A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON PHARMACOLOGICAL, PHARMACEUTICAL AND ANALYTICAL PROFILE OF RITONAVIR

S. K. Rafath Sulthana¹, M. Lakshmikanth¹, K. Sushma¹, B. Baji¹, P. Jahanavi Devi¹, P. Siva Krishna^{1*}, M. M. Eswarudu¹ and P. Srinivasa Babu²

¹Department of Pharmaceutical Analysis, Vignan Pharmacy College, Vadlamudi, Guntur, 522213, Andhra Pradesh, India.

²Department of Pharmaceutics, Vignan Pharmacy College, Vadlamudi, Guntur, 522213, Andhra Pradesh, India.



*Corresponding Author: P. Siva Krishna

Department of Pharmaceutical Analysis, Vignan Pharmacy College, Vadlamudi, Guntur, 522213, Andhra Pradesh, India.

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ABSTRACT

The present study interplay between ritonavir's analytical, pharmacological, and pharmaceutical attributes, emphasizing its pivotal role in combating HIV/AIDS and its ongoing evolution in the realm of antiretroviral therapy. Ritonavir's analytical properties encompass its chemical structure, molecular weight, and spectral characteristics, which have been extensively studied using various analytical techniques, including spectroscopy, chromatography, and mass spectrometry. These methods have contributed significantly to its identification, quantification, and purity determination, ensuring reliable pharmaceutical formulations. Ritonavir is pharmacologically a protease inhibitor, it exhibits potent antiviral activity by inhibiting HIV-1 protease, a crucial enzyme for viral replication. Its pharmacokinetic profile involves rapid absorption, extensive metabolism via the cytochrome P450 system, and significant protein binding, influencing its bioavailability and half-life. Ritonavir's role as a booster for other antiretroviral drugs has revolutionized combination therapy, enhancing their efficacy by inhibiting drug-metabolizing enzymes. Pharmaceutical formulations, ritonavir presents challenges due to its low aqueous solubility and susceptibility to degradation. Formulation strategies involving solid dispersion, lipid-based formulations, and nanotechnology have been explored to enhance its solubility, stability, and overall bioavailability. Additionally, various dosage forms, including tablets, capsules, and oral solutions, have been developed to cater to different patient populations.

KEYWORDS: Ritonavir, Cytochrome P450 system, HIV-1 protease, Bioavailability, High-performance liquid chromatography, Liquid chromatography–mass spectrometry.

INTRODUCTION

Ritonavir, marketed under the name Norvir, is an antiretroviral employed in tandem with other drugs to combat HIV/AIDS, forming the basis of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART). Functioning as a protease inhibitor, it collaborates with other inhibitors and can also be part of treatments for hepatitis C and COVID-19. Administered orally, it's important to note that ritonavir tablets and capsules differ in their impact on peak plasma concentrations. Originally patented in 1989 and introduced for medical use in 1996, ritonavir has secured its place on the World Health Organization's essential medicines list. Capsules of ritonavir gained generic medication approval in the United States in 2020. Initially conceived as a standalone antiviral, ritonavir has displayed remarkable synergy in combination with low-dose ritonavir and other protease inhibitors. Its role has shifted, becoming more prevalent as a booster for other

protease inhibitors, available in liquid forms and capsules alike.^[1] Even though ritonavir doesn't actively combat hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection, it serves as a critical component in combination therapies for treating HCV infections by amplifying their effectiveness. Acting as a potent CYP3A inhibitor, ritonavir elevates both peak and trough plasma drug concentrations of other protease inhibitors like Paritaprevir, thereby enhancing overall drug exposure. The American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) and the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) guidelines advocate for ritonavir-boosted combination therapies as the primary treatment for HCV Genotype 1a/b and 4 in treatment-naïve patients, regardless of cirrhosis presence.^[2] and its structural formula is given in figure 1.^[3] Drug profile^[4,6], Chemical taxonomy^[7] and predicted properties^[8] of ritonavir was given in Table 1, 2, 3.

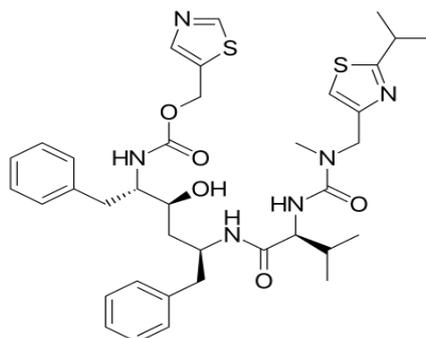


Figure 1: Chemical Structure of ritonavir.

Table 1: Drug profile of ritonavir.

Drug	Ritonavir
IUPAC Name	1,3-thiazol-5-ylmethyl <i>N</i> -[(2 <i>S</i> ,3 <i>S</i> ,5 <i>S</i>)-3-hydroxy-5-[(2 <i>S</i>)-3-methyl-2-[[methyl({[2-(propan-2-yl)-1,3-thiazol-4-yl]methyl})carbamoyl]amino]butanamido]-1,6-diphenylhexan-2-yl]carbamate
Chemical Formula	C ₃₇ H ₄₈ N ₆ O ₅ S ₂
Molecular mass	720.95 g·mol ⁻¹
Melting point	126-132°C
Physical state	Solid
Solubility	DMSO: 20mg/mL; H ₂ O: <1mg/mL; EtOH: <1mg/mL
LogP	3.9
Colour	White to light tan powder
<i>t</i> _{1/2}	3-5 hours

Table 2: Chemical Taxonomy.

Description	This compound belongs to the class of organic compounds known as <i>n</i> -carbamoyl- α amino acids and derivatives. These are compounds containing an α amino acid (or a derivative thereof) which bears a carbamoyl group at its terminal nitrogen atom.
Kingdom	Organic compounds
Super Class	Organic acids and derivatives
Class	Carboxylic acids and derivatives
Sub Class	Amino acids, Peptides and Analouges
Direct Parent	<i>N</i> -carbamoyl- α amino acids and derivatives
Alternative Parents	Valine and derivatives/ α amino acid amides\2,4-disubstituted thiazoles etc...
Substituents	2,4-disubstituted 1,3-thiazole / Alcohol / α -amino acid amide / Amphetamine or derivatives / Aromatic heteromonocyclic compound / Azacycle / Azole / Benzenoid / Carbamic acid ester / Carbonic acid derivative
Molecular framework	Aromatic heteromonocyclic compounds
External Descriptors	carbamate ester, ureas, 1,3-thiazole, carboxamide, L-valine derivative (CHEBI:45409)

Table 3: Predicted Properties.

PROPERTY	Value
Water solubility	0.00126 mg/mL
LogP	4.24
LogP	5.22
logS	-5.8
Pka	13.68
Pka	2.84
Physiological charge	0
Hydrogen acceptor count	6
Hydrogen donor count	4
Polar surface area	145.78 Å ²

Rotatable bond count	18
Refractivity	194.59 M ³ - MOL ⁻³
Polarizability	76.23 A ³
Number of rings	4
Bioavailability	0
Rules of five	NO
Ghose filter	NO
Vebers rule	NO
MDDR like rule	Yes

Pharmacological Properties

Pharmacodynamic Properties

Research on how Ritonavir affects the body in relation to its proposed use reveals some compelling findings. It appears to be markedly more targeted toward inhibiting HIV protease (about 500 times more specific) compared to any human aspartyl protease, as evidenced by its inhibition constant equivalent to 15 μM . When investigating its impact on HIV-1 and HIV-2 in laboratory settings using various human cell lines, Ritonavir displayed antiviral activity. It inhibited 50% and 90% of viral replication at concentrations approximately around 0.02 μM and 0.11 μM , respectively. The potency against HIV-1 was notably higher (about 6-to-40-fold) compared to HIV-2. Additionally, it exhibited equal effectiveness against both pre-ZDV sensitive and post-ZDV resistant HIV-1 in MT2 cells.

However, Ritonavir's binding to plasma proteins significantly increased its EC₅₀ value by more than tenfold, indicating a possible attenuation of its *in vivo* antiviral activity due to this binding. In terms of safety, Ritonavir demonstrated minimal cytotoxicity relative to its antiviral properties. It established an impressive therapeutic index of over 1000 *in vitro*. Regarding combination therapy with reverse transcriptase inhibitors, experiments indicated an additive effect when Ritonavir was combined with either ZDV or ddI, showing promise for potential combined treatments. Nevertheless, this observation was based on results obtained with a single laboratory HIV strain, and the impact of the biological phenotype of HIV from patients on monotherapy remains unclear. In summary, Ritonavir's antiviral effects have been convincingly demonstrated *in vitro*, although the submitted virology data were limited, necessitating the use of additional bibliographical references to supplement the assessment of its virological aspects.

Experiments aimed at exploring additional pharmacological effects of ritonavir unveiled limited impact on the central nervous systems of mice and rats when administered doses ranging from 5 to 50 mg/kg. Similarly, minimal influence was observed on the cardiovascular systems of conscious rats and anesthetized dogs. In isolated guinea pig ileum, ritonavir exhibited neither antagonist nor agonist effects. However, the relatively low exposure levels of ritonavir in these tests, compared to doses used in human patients,

severely restrict the extent to which conclusions can be drawn. Unfortunately, no further tests were conducted to delve into other potential pharmacodynamic actions of ritonavir.^[9]

Pharmacokinetic Properties

The estimated oral bioavailability of Ritonavir falls within the range of 60% to 80%. When compared to the fasting state, the capsule formulation shows an approximate 15% increase in the AUC of ritonavir when taken with food. Conversely, the oral solution experiences a 7% decrease in AUC when administered alongside a meal.

Absorption

The precise absolute bioavailability of ritonavir remains undetermined. After oral intake, peak concentrations typically occur around 2 hours under fasting conditions and approximately 4 hours when taken without fasting (T_{max}). Notably, it's important to highlight that ritonavir capsules and tablets aren't deemed bioequivalent.

Protein binding

Ritonavir is highly protein-bound in plasma (~98-99%), primarily to albumin and alpha-1 acid glycoprotein over the standard concentration range.

Metabolism

Ritonavir primarily circulates in the plasma in its original, unchanged form. Among the five identified metabolites, the isopropyl thiazole oxidation metabolite (M-2) holds prominence at low plasma levels and maintains a comparable antiviral potency to the unchanged ritonavir. The metabolic breakdown of ritonavir primarily involves the cytochrome P450 enzymes CYP3A and CYP2D6.

Elimination

The primary route of elimination for Ritonavir is through fecal excretion. After oral administration of a single 600mg dose of radiolabelled ritonavir, roughly 11.3 \pm 2.8% of the dose was eliminated via urine, with 3.5 \pm 1.8% being the unchanged parent drug. In the same study, approximately 86.4 \pm 2.9% of the administered dose was excreted in the feces, with 33.8 \pm 10.8% being the unchanged parent drug.^[10]

Mechanism of action

Ritonavir functions by binding to HIV-1 protease, disrupting its ability to cleave protein precursors and

impeding the generation of new viral particles. However, its significance in treating HIV and HCV often stems from another crucial mechanism: inhibiting the liver enzyme cytochrome P450 3A4 (CYP450-3A4). This particular pathway is responsible for metabolizing various protease inhibitors. By inhibiting CYP450-3A4, ritonavir boosts the bioavailability of other antiretroviral

drugs. This inhibition also reduces the breakdown of ARVs, thereby elevating serum drug levels. Caution should be exercised when using ritonavir alongside medications metabolized through this pathway, such as statins, anti-arrhythmic agents, anti-epileptic drugs, and anti-fungal agents.^[11] The mechanism of action of ritonavir is depicted in Figure 2.

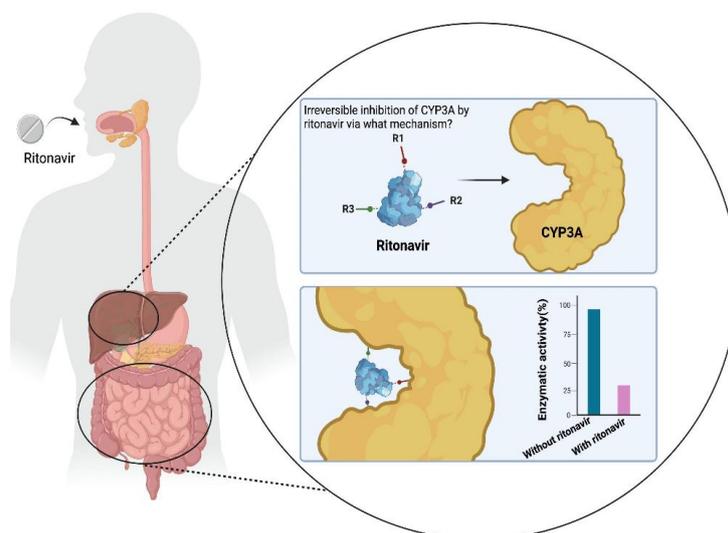


Figure 2: Mechanism of action of Ritonavir.

Indication: Treatment of HIV infection as part of combination boosted protease inhibitor (PI).

diseases, cardiac conduction disturbance, ischemic heart disease, cardiomyopathy, diabetes mellitus, haemophilia.^[12]

Contraindications: Hypersensitivity; Caution if hepatic impairment, HBV or HCV co-infection, structural heart

Table 4: List of available marketed brand names for Ritonavir.

S. No	Trade name	Company name	Formulation	Dosage form
1	Norvir	Abbvie inc	Tablet, Oral Solution, Oral powder	100mg 80mg/mL 100mg/packet
2	kaletra	Abbvie inc	Oral solution/Tablet	100mg/25mg 200mg/50mg (400mg/100mg)/5mL
3	Aluvia	Abbvie inc	film-coated tablets	200 mg/50 mg
4	Technivie	Abbvie inc	Tablets	12.5 mg / 75 mg/ 50 mg
5	Viekira Pak	Abbvie inc	Tablets	50 mg
6	Avikivir	Cipla	Chewable Tablet	40 mg/600 mg/700 mg and 20 mg/600 mg/700 mg,
7	Lopimune	Cipla	Chewable Tablet	20 to 250 mg, 40 to 240 mg
8	Ritonavir Mylan	Mylan	film-coated tablets	100 mg
9	Ritocom	Emcure pharmaceuticals	Tablet	200 mg/50 mg
10	Darunavir/Ritonavir	Janssen pharmaceuticals	Tablet, oral suspension	75 mg, 150 mg, 600 mg, 800 mg, 100 mg/mL

Table 5: List of UV methods reported for Ritonavir.

S. No	Wavelength (nm)	Linearity range (µg/mL)	LOD (µg/mL)	LOQ (µg/mL)	Correlation coefficient
1 ^[13]	Method (A) 271 Method(B) 258	10-50	Method I 0.24 (µg/ml)	Method I 0.75 Method II 1.42	(A) 0.9994 (B) 0.9989

	Method(C) 260-281		Method II 0.45 ($\mu\text{g/ml}$) Method III 0.38 ($\mu\text{g/ml}$)	Method III 1.14	(C) 0.9999
2 ^[14]	239	Method I 15-90 Method II 15-75	Method I 0.08314($\mu\text{g/ml}$) Method II 0.1493($\mu\text{g/ml}$)	Method I 0.25198 Method II 0.4525	Method I 0.99996 Method II 0.9987
3 ^[15]	260	5-100	-	-	0.999
4 ^[16]	255	30-210	0.495	1.502	0.999
5 ^[17]	256.75	10-20	0.595	1.804	0.994
6 ^[18]	266	10-30	2.62	7.96	0.9961
7 ^[19]	222.3	10-30	-	-	0.9995

Table 6: List of HPLC methods reported for Ritonavir.

S. No	Column type	Mobile phase	Run time (min)	Retention time(min)	Flow rate (mL/min)	Wavelength (nm)	Linearity range ($\mu\text{g/mL}$)	LOD ($\mu\text{g/mL}$)	LOQ ($\mu\text{g/mL}$)	Correlation coefficient
1 ^[20]	RPC ₁₈ Column (150×4.5 mm, 3.5 μ)	10mM phosphate buffer and acetonitrile (35:65, v/v)	-	6.3	1	254	1.7 – 40	0.0521	0.1042	0.9996
2 ^[21]	BDS Hypersil C18 column (250×4.6 mm, 5 μm)	Ethanol: water (80:20, v/v)	-	6.8	1	215	1 – 20	0.32	0.96	0.9998
3 ^[22]	C18 Column (Shim-pack) 250 ×4.6 mm, 5 μm	Methanol: water (80:20)	15 min	7.7	1	251	50 – 100	8.9	27.2	0.9993
4 ^[23]	RP-C18 Kinetix column (5 mm, 150 mm 4.6 mm ID)	(0.15 M sodium lauryl sulfate and 0.01 M sodium dihydrogen phosphate, pH 6.2) and ethanol (56:44)	-	4.5 min	1 mL/min	254 nm	3-100 mg/mL	0.9 mg/mL	2.6 mg/mL	0.999

Table 7: List of LC-MS methods reported for Ritonavir.

S. No	M/Z Value	Capillary temperature ($^{\circ}\text{C}$)	Ionization voltage (V)	Column type	Solvent mixture	Mass Spectroscopy used	Run time (min)	Retention time (min)
1 ^[24]	629.3	-	5,000 V	Inertsil ODS column (50 9 4.6 mm.)	5 mM ammonium acetate buffer (adjusted to pH 3.5) mixed with acetonitrile (20:80 v/v buffer: acetonitrile)	electro spray ionization chamber	2 min	1.20 \pm 0.50
2 ^[25]	721.3 to 296.1	-	-	Synergi Polar-RP column (100 by 2.0 mm, 4 m) (Phenomenex, Torrance, CA) with a C8 guard column (4 by 2.0 mm) (Phenomenex).	A: water B:acetonitrile C: both with 0.1% acetic acid	liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS)	-	-
3 ^[26]	721.4 \rightarrow 296.3	-	-	hypersil hypurity C18 (4.6 X 50 mm)	2% formic acid with acetonitrile in the ratio of 20:80(v/v)	Biosystems Sciex API 2000 Mass Spectrometer	-	-
4 ^[27]	140.2	-	-	Oasis HLB Direct Connect HP column (30	A:water	Triple quadrupole	5 min	3.37 min

				mm x 2.1 mm, 20 M, Waters)	B:acetonitrile	mass spectrometer Xevo TQ-S (Waters, Milford, MA, USA)		
5 ^[28]	721.4→296.3	-	-	Agilent Zorbax SB-C18 column (150 2.1 mm; 5- μ m particle size), an Agilent Zorbax SB-C8 column (150 2.1 mm; 5- μ m particle size), a Waters Acquity phenyl column (100 2.1 mm; 1.7- μ m particle size), a Thermo Scientific Hypersil Gold aQ column (100 2.1 mm; 3- μ m particle size), and a Phenomenex Synergi Polar-RP column	buffers A (water with 0.1% HAc) and B (acetonitrile with 0.1% HAc)	liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry	4.97 min	-
6 ^[29]	721.3→296.1	-	-	Hypurity Advance C18 column (50 mm x 4.6 mm, 5 μ m; Thermo Scientific Corporations)	85:15 (v/v) mixture of methanol and 5mM ammonium acetate	MDS Sciex API-3000 mass spectrometer (Foster City, CA, USA)	2 min	0.8 min
7 ^[30]	721.3204	320 °C	3.2 kV	Thermo Hypersil GOLD C18 (2.1 mm x 100 mm, 3 μ m, Thermo, USA)	0.1 % formic acid-water and methanol	Q-Exactive™ Orbitrap™ mass spectrometer (Thermo Fisher, USA)		3.83 min
8 ^[31]	727.330 → 274.100	300°C, 350°C	-	ZORBAX Eclipse XDB-C8 (4.6 x 150 mm, 5 μ m) analytical column	2 mM ammonium formate (pH 4.5) and organic mixture (10% methanol in acetonitrile) (25:75)	TSQ Quantum Ultra (USA) triple quadrupole mass spectrometer	4.3 min	-
9 ^[32]	721.3/296.1	320°C	4500 V	(ZORBAX SB-C8, Agilent Poroshell 120 SB-C18, Atlantis T3-C18)	Acetonitrile and 0.1% formic acid in water (52:48, V:V)	Agilent 6460A triplequadrupole mass spectrometer	3.65 min	2.62 min

CONCLUSION

Ritonavir's multifaceted profile underscores its significance in HIV/AIDS treatment regimens. Its analytical characterization ensures accurate quantification, while its pharmacological actions and pharmaceutical formulations contribute to its efficacy and patient compliance. Further research in formulation technologies and pharmacokinetics continues to refine its therapeutic potential and broaden its clinical applications.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All the authors have no conflict of interest.

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