

Biological effects of *Lippia alba* essential oil against *Anopheles gambiae* and *Aedes aegypti*

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Abstract

Background

the management of mosquito resistance to chemical insecticides and the biting behaviour of some species are motivating the search for complementary and/or alternative control methods. The use of plants is increasingly considered as a sustainable biological solution for vector control. The aim of this study was to evaluate the biological effects of the essential oil (EO) of *Lippia alba* against *Anopheles gambiae* and *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes.

Methods

phytochemical compounds were identified by GC-MS. Knockdown and mortality were determined according to the WHO test tube protocol. Contact irritancy was assessed by observing the movement of mosquitoes from a treated WHO tube to a second untreated tube. Non-contact repellency was assessed using a standardised high-throughput screening system (HITSS). Blood meal inhibition was assessed using a membrane feeding assay treated with EO.

Results

the EO was identified as the citral chemotype (geranial + neral) and it is composed mainly of geranial (26.79%), neral (19.07%) and geraniol (14.52%). The essential oil gave 100% KD60 in both species at a concentration of 1%. Mortalities of 100% were recorded with *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti* at concentrations of 1% and 5% respectively. The highest proportions of females escaping during the contact irritancy test were 100% for *An. gambiae* at 1% concentration and 94% for *Ae. aegypti* at 2.5% concentration. The 1% concentration produced the highest proportions of repelled mosquitoes in the non-contact repellency tests: 76.8% (*An. gambiae*) and 68.5% (*Ae. aegypti*). The blood meal inhibition rate at a dose of 10% was 98.4% in *Ae. aegypti* but only 15.5% in *An. gambiae*.

Conclusion

the citral chemotype of *L. alba* EO has highly interesting biological effects in both species that make it a potentially good candidate for its use in mosquito control. The results obtained in this study encourage the further evaluation of *L. alba* essential oils from other localities and of different chemotypes.

Background

The main methods of vector control adopted by national control programmes and promoted by the WHO are mainly based on chemicals [1, 2, 3]. For instance, as part of the fight against malaria vectors, 459 million long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) were distributed worldwide between 2015 and 2017. As

for the control of mosquitoes that transmit arboviruses, national programmes use indoor residual spraying and spatial spraying of insecticides [4, 5]. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of these tools is getting limited due to the evolution of resistances in most of mosquito vector species to the insecticide molecules recommended for public health use [3, 4, 6, 7, 8]. These resistances are presumed to be due to the use of insecticides in domestic hygiene and public health, and more importantly to the use of the same insecticides types in agricultural production areas [9]. According to Agossa et al. [10], the effectiveness of LLINs decreases considerably in areas of high vector resistance. In addition to the ability of mosquito populations to develop resistance mechanisms, these chemicals can persist in the environment and poison non-target organisms [11]. Chemical control also changes the behaviour of vectors [12]. Indoor residual spraying (IRS) and LLINs can induce the majority of female *Anopheles* mosquitoes to bite and feed outside the home [13, 14, 15], which explains the persistence of high residual transmission of malaria in some areas [15, 16, 17]. These concerns associated with chemical control that are driving research into new and more environmentally friendly vector control alternatives. In this context, several studies have been carried out on the biological activities of natural plant extracts against *Culicidae* [18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24].

The study by Dua et al. [25] showed that a chloroform fraction of fresh *Lantana camara* flowers prevent 100% of *Ae. albopictus* bites for 3h45 min in the laboratory and 76% for 7h in the field against mosquitoes of the genus *Aedes*. Carotol, a major component of the essential oil extracted from carrot seeds (*Daucus carota sativus* L.), has also shown good repellent activity against *Ae. aegypti* and *An. quadrimaculatus* [26]. *Artemisia argyi* essential oils collected from seven sites in China have all shown significant repellent activity on *An. sinensis* [27].

Selected from the literature, *L. alba* (Verbenaceae) is an aromatic medicinal plant native of South America. It is used by local people for its medicinal (e.g. antimalarial, antiviral, digestive, respiratory, sedative and antihypertensive) and culinary properties [28, 29, 30, 31]. Studies have highlighted its antioxidant, antibacterial, anti-genotoxic, anti-inflammatory and neuro-sedative activities [32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37]. Unlike certain aromatic plants, *L. alba* has been understudied to evaluate its biological effects on mosquitoes. EO extracted from leaves and stems harvested in Colombia showed adulticidal activity on *Ae. aegypti* [38]. The oil extracted from the whole plant harvested in Bucaramanga (Colombia) showed significant adulticidal activity against *Ae. aegypti*, in contrast to the essential oil from leaves harvested in India (Jalukbari, Guwahati, Assam) on adults of *Ae. aegypti* and *Cx. quinquefasciatus* [39, 40]. *L. alba* EO could be used as skin repellents [40, 41, 42], although the one evaluated by Castillo et al. [39] did not repel *Ae. aegypti* females. This paper presents the phytochemical composition of the EO of *L. alba* harvested in Côte d'Ivoire and its adulticidal, repellent and blood meal inhibiting effects on *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti*.

Methods

Cultivation of *L. alba* and extraction of the essential oil

Ornamental *L. alba* plants were planted and harvested in our experimental field at Nanguì Abrogoua University (5° 23' 19" N, 4° 0' 54" W) in February 2021. Cuttings of 12 to 17 cm were planted in nursery bags previously filled with organic substrate from a former poultry farm waste pit. The plants were then watered in the morning and in the evening during one month and then once a day until harvest in May 2021.

The EO was extracted from the leaves by hydro-distillation using a Clevenger [43, 44, 45, 46]. Five hundred and thirty (530) grams of fresh leaves were placed over 2 litres of water in a pressure cooker. 4.6 mL of EO were obtained after two hours of distillation.

Mosquitoes

Bioassays were carried out on mosquitoes of the genus *Aedes* and *Anopheles* susceptible to chemical insecticides and maintained at the IRD insectarium in Montpellier: Kisumu strain of *An. gambiae* from Kenya and SBE strain of *Ae. aegypti* from Benin.

Identification of EO compounds

GC-MS was used to identify the essential oil compounds. One μL of a 2% solution of the essential oil diluted in hexane was injected into the Agilent 8860 System chromatograph coupled to the Agilent 5977B GC/MSD mass spectrometer. The oven temperature was initially 50°C for 2min, before being increased to 110°C (4°C/min), 250°C (8°C/min) and 310°C (10°C/min). The carrier gas was helium at a temperature of 250°C, a pressure of 7.6522 psi and a total flow rate of 104 mL/min in split mode. The Agilent 122–5032 column (30 m x 250 μm x 0.25 μm) had a constant flow rate of 1 mL/min. The temperature of the mass detector was 300°C.

Data preprocessing of the GC-MS data

GC-MS data were first analyzed and processed using MzMine 2.53 to visualize the chromatograms and spectra. Then, GC-MS raw data were converted to “abf” using ABF converter (<http://www.reifycs.com/AbfConverter/index.html>). Next, the converted data were pre-processed using MS-DIAL 4.70 (NSF- JST, Japan), including peak extraction, peak alignment, baseline calibration, deconvolution analysis and peak identification. We selected KovatsRI based on alkanes as a retention index for peak alignment. The deconvoluted spectra in NIST MSP format (GC-MS DB-Public-KovatsRI-VS3) were imported and matched with spectral libraries. Those peaks with an average peak width of 20 scans and minimum peak height above 10 000 amplitudes were selected for peak detection. Peaks with a s-window value of 0.5 and EI spectral cutoff of 5000 amplitudes underwent a deconvolution operation. The identification parameters were set as follows: m/z tolerance of 0.5 Da, retention time tolerance of 0.5 min, EI similarity cutoff value of 70% and identification score cutoff value of 70%. The alignment parameters of retention time tolerance and retention time factor were set to 0.075 min and 0.5, respectively.

Adulticidal tests

The insecticidal activity of the EO of *L. alba* was evaluated at dilutions of 0.1%, 1%, 2.5% and 5% (v/v). Permethrin (91.8% technical grade) was used as a positive control (0.011 and 0.11 mg/cm²). The EO was diluted in a solution of ethanol plus silicone oil Dow Corning 566 (134 mL ethanol + 66 mL silicone) and permethrin in a solution of acetone plus silicone oil Dow Corning 566 (134 mL acetone + 66 mL silicone). Two milliliters of the different solutions were used to impregnate the filter papers (12 × 15 cm, Whatman®). The tests were conducted with slight modifications to the protocol of Deletre et al. [21]. Two WHO tubes were used, one marked with a red dot for mosquito exposure to impregnated paper and one marked with a green dot containing unimpregnated paper for mosquito holding. A total of 25 to 30 females aged 3 to 7 days were introduced into three holding tubes. After 30 minutes of acclimatation, the dead mosquitoes, if any, were replaced. The mosquitoes were then transferred to the exposure tubes for 60 minutes. After exposure time the knockdown mosquitoes (KD60) were counted and all the mosquitoes were transferred back to the holding tubes. Tubes were kept in a climatic chamber at 27 ± 2°C and 80 ± 10% relative humidity for 24 hours. During this time, individuals were provided with a cotton soaked with a 10% honey solution for feeding. The number of dead mosquitoes were checked at 24 h after exposure. For each product and concentration, mosquitoes exposed to papers impregnated with the solvent only served as negative controls. Mortality for treated mosquitoes was corrected by the Abbott formula when mortality in control mosquitoes was between 5% and 20%: $(\% \text{treatment mortality} - \% \text{control mortality}) / (100 - \text{control mortality}) \times 100$.

Contact irritancy tests

The contact irritancy of the EO was evaluated at concentrations of 0.1%, 1%, 2.5% and 5%. The tests were performed in WHO tubes. Two tubes (one marked with a red dot and the other with a green dot) were connected with a slide unit and placed horizontally on the laboratory bench. Whatman® paper (12 × 15 cm) impregnated with the test solution (2 mL) was placed in the red-dotted tube and unimpregnated paper in the green-dotted tube. The papers were held against the walls of the tubes with metal clips. The device for the negative control consisted of a tube with paper impregnated with solvent (ethanol and silicone for the essential oil, acetone and silicone for permethrin) and tube with unimpregnated paper. Twenty to twenty-four (20–24) females aged 3 to 7 days were introduced into the tube containing the impregnated paper. After 30 seconds of acclimatation, the slide unit door was opened and closed after 10 minutes. The mosquitoes were then killed in a freezer. Mosquitoes present in each tube were then counted and the proportion of passage from treated to untreated tube was determined [21, 47] (Fig. 1). Permethrin was evaluated as a positive control. The test was validated when the proportion of escaped mosquitoes in the negative controls was less than 50%. The test was performed three times for each dose. The tests were performed at 27 ± 2°C and 80 ± 10% relative humidity.

Non-contact repellency tests

The repellent effect of the EO of *L. alba* was evaluated using a modified High-Throughput Screening System inspired by the methodology proposed in Grieco et al. [48] and Deletre et al. [21]. The system consisted of two cylindrical chambers (treated and untreated) connected by a door. Whatman paper (10 ×

30 cm) impregnated with the solution to be tested (3.3 mL) was placed between a rigid transparent film and a mosquito net. The assembly was rolled around a drum so that the transparent film was on the exterior of the armature and the whole was placed in the treated chamber. Unimpregnated paper was placed in the untreated chamber. The treated chamber for the control mosquitoes contained paper impregnated only with solvent (ethanol - silicone oil Dow Corning 566). Twenty to twenty-four fasting females aged 3 to 7 days were introduced into the treated chamber. The door was opened after 30 seconds of acclimatation and closed again after 10 minutes (Fig. 2). The mosquitoes in the rooms were anesthetized with CO₂ and then counted. The proportion of passage from the treated to the untreated chamber was then determined. The essential oil was evaluated at 0.1, 1, 2.5 and 5%. The test was performed three times for each dose and was validated when the proportion of escaped mosquitoes in the negative controls was less than 50%. Bioassays were carried out at 27 ± 2°C and 80 ± 10% relative humidity.

Blood feeding inhibition

Solutions of *L. alba* EO at 1%, 2.5%, 5% and 10% were prepared with absolute ethanol (v/v). The first three solutions were evaluated before the 10% essential oil solution and ethanol was used as a negative control for each test. Feeders (Ø = 16.32 mm) were connected to each other by pipes: 12 feeders for the evaluation of the first 3 solutions or 6 feeders for the evaluation of the 10% solution. They were then connected to a water bath equipped with a pump to circulate water at 37°C. The feeders were positioned on the racks at a rate of three feeders per dose. Pre-cut pig gut membranes were placed on the underside of the feeders. Ten (10) µL of the EO solutions were spread on each membrane. The feeders were then turned upside down and 100µL of rabbit blood was introduced into each feeder. Cups (440 mL) covered with mosquito netting containing 20 to 29 females aged 5–10 days old were placed under each feeder. After one hour, the mosquitoes were removed and stunned in the freezer before counting the blood fed mosquitoes (Fig. 3). The test was validated when the feeding rate in control mosquitoes was at least 75%. The blood meal inhibition rate was defined as: $[1 - (\% \text{ fed EO} / \% \text{ fed Ethanol})] \times 100$. The tests were carried out in 3 replicates at 27 ± 2°C and 80 ± 10% relative humidity.

Data analysis

The data were analysed using R-4.2.1 software. The proportions of KD60, dead or displaced mosquitoes induced by the essential oil were compared to those induced by the different negative controls using Fisher exact test. The generalized linear mixed model with binomial distribution was used for the analysis of the blood meal inhibition test data. The variables concentrations and cups represented the fixed and random effects respectively. The analysis required the lme4 package.

Results

Identification of EO compounds

The analyses identified 25 compounds, the main ones being geranial (26.79%), neral (19.07%) and geraniol (14.52%) (Fig. 4, Table 1).

Table 1
Phytochemical composition of the essential oil of *L. alba* leaves harvested in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)

Compounds	Rt (min)	Retention Indices (FAME)	Area (%)
6-methyl-5-hepten-2-one	8.845917	982.8687	2.05
Limonene	10.3026	1027.432	0.74
Linalool	12.70438	1097.762	0.87
Carane	14.41685	1146.995	0.18
Citronellal	14.54258	1150.607	0.41
z-isocitral	14.94143	1162.064	0.47
2-Butyrylfuran	15.00647	1163.932	0.13
Trans-limonene-1,2-oxide	15.56572	1179.996	0.67
Citronellol	16.90968	1223.006	0.30
Neral	17.46895	1242.874	19.07
Geraniol	17.87213	1257.197	14.52
Geranial	18.30567	1272.598	26.79
Lavandulyl acetate	18.49643	1279.375	0.43
Neryl acetate	20.47335	1364.547	0.26
Lavandulyl acetate	20.87655	1383.185	4.28
α -ylangene	21.15835	1396.212	1.72
6,9-guaiadiene	22.0731	1445.048	2.20
Cis-ethyl-linalyl acetate	22.38525	1461.933	2.62
Longifolene	22.87948	1488.667	1.32
Alpha-cedrene	23.29568	1512.689	0.91
α -bulnesene	23.30002	1512.955	0.90
Caryophyllene	23.8506	1546.758	0.37
Epoxyvulgarone A	24.61363	1593.605	3.64
Citronellyl butyrate	25.02115	1620.407	0.54
(Z)-9-Hexadecenal	30.96493	2046.739	0.37

Adulticidal tests

The 0.1% EO produced very low KD60 and mortality *An. gambiae* individuals (7.8% and 4.5% respectively). The mortality recorded at this concentration was not significantly different from the negative control. From the 1% concentration onwards the KD60 and mortality rates were 100% except for the 2.5% which resulted in 97.6% mortality. Permethrin caused 100% KD60 and mortality at 0.011 and 0.11 mg/cm² (Table 2).

Table 2

Mortality and KD60 of *L. alba* essential oil (EO) and permethrin against *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti*

<i>An. gambiae</i>			<i>Ae. aegypti</i>					
Kisumu			SBE					
n	% KD60 (IC 95%)	% Mortality (IC 95%)	n	% KD60 (IC 95%)	% Mortality (IC 95%)			
EO	0.1%	Control	86	0	10.4 (4.0-16.4)	82	0	0
		Treated	90	7.8* (2.2–13.2)	4.5 ^a (0-12.5)	84	3.6 (0-7.4)	2.3 (0-5.5)
	1%	Control	86	0	9.3 (3.2–15.4)	81	0	0
		Treated	88	100 ^{***}	100 ^{a ***}	85	100 ^{***}	16.4 ^{***} (8.6–24.2)
	2.5%	Control	77	3.89 (0–8.0)	1.2 (0-3.6)	80	1.16 (0-3.5)	1.1 (0-3.5)
		Treated	85	100 ^{***}	97.6 ^{***} (94.4–100)	84	100 ^{***}	64.2 ^{***} (54.0–74.4)
	5%	Control	87	0	13.7 (6.5–20.9)	80	5 (0.3–9.7)	2.5 (0-5.9)
		Treated	79	100 ^{***}	100 ^{a ***}	83	100 ^{***}	100 ^{***}
	Permethrin 0.011 mg/cm ²	Control	87	0	5.7 (1.0-10.4)	83	0	1.2 (0-3.5)
		Treated	84	100 ^{***}	100 ^{a ***}	80	100 ^{***}	100 ^{***}

^a: corrected mortality, ^{***}: P < 0.0001, ^{**}: P < 0.001, ^{*}: P < 0.05, n: Number of mosquitoes exposed

<i>An. gambiae</i>			<i>Ae. aegypti</i>					
Kisumu			SBE					
0.11 mg/cm ²	Control	87	0	10.3	81	0	2.4	
				(4.0-16.6)			(0-5.7)	
	Treated	83	100 ^{***}	100 ^{a ***}	83	100 ^{***}	100 ^{***}	
^a : corrected mortality, ^{***} : P < 0.0001, ^{**} : P < 0.001, [*] : P < 0.05, n: Number of mosquitoes exposed								

Contrary to the other concentrations, the KD60 and mortality induced by 0.1% EO on *Ae. aegypti* were not significantly different from the negative control. At 1%, KD60 was 100% but mortality was only 16.4%. The KD60 and mortality rates recorded with the 2.5% solution were 100% and 64.2% respectively. The 5% dose induced 100% KD60 and mortality. Permethrin caused 100% KD60 and mortality at 0.011 and 0.11 mg/cm² (Table 2).

Contact irritancy tests

The proportions of *An. gambiae* females escaping from the EO-treated tubes to the untreated tubes were 60.8% and 100% at the 0.1 and 1% doses respectively. These proportions decreased to 79.6% for the 2.5% concentration and 70.4% for the 5% concentration. At concentrations of 0.011 and 0.11 mg/cm², permethrin caused 23.1 and 48.5% displacement of mosquitoes to untreated tubes, respectively (Table 3).

Table 3
Contact irritancy effect of *L. alba* EO and permethrin on *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti*

			<i>An. gambiae</i>		<i>Ae. aegypti</i>	
			Kisumu		SBE	
			n	% escaped (IC 95%)	n	% escaped (IC 95%)
EO	0.1%	Control	71	23.9 (14-33.8)	68	17.6 (8.6–26.6)
		Treated	69	60.8 ^{***} (49.3–72.3)	72	62.5 ^{***} (51.4–73.6)
	1%	Control	67	17.9 (8.8–27)	69	14.4 (6.2–22.6)
		Treated	67	100 ^{***}	71	91.5 ^{***} (85.1–97.9)
	2.5%	Control	70	24.2 (14.2–34.2)	67	7.4 (1.2–13.6)
		Treated	64	79.6 ^{***} (69.8–89.4)	68	94.1 ^{***} (88.5–99.7)
	5%	Control	69	17.3 (8.4–26.2)	65	4.6 (0-9.6)
		Treated	71	70.4 ^{***} (59.8–81)	71	77.4 ^{***} (67.7–87.1)
	0.011 µl/cm ²	Control	68	7.3 (1.2–13.4)	67	10.44 (3.1–17.7)
		Treated	69	23.1 [*] (13.2–33)	72	31.9 [*] (21.2–42.6)
Permethrin	0.11 µl/cm ²	Control	67	10.4 (3.1–17.7)	66	10.6 (3.2–18)

n: Number of mosquitoes exposed, ^{***}: P < 0.0001, ^{**}: P < 0.001, ^{*}: P < 0.05

	Treated	68	48.5 ^{***} (36.7–60.3)	70	60 ^{***} (48.6–71.4)
n: Number of mosquitoes exposed, ^{***} : P < 0.0001, ^{**} : P < 0.001, [*] : P < 0.05					

The 0.1, 1 and 2.5% EO solutions recorded 62.5, 91.5 and 94.1% of *Ae. aegypti* mosquitoes escaping, respectively. At 5%, the proportion of escaped mosquitoes was 77.4%. Permethrin caused 31.9% displacement of mosquitoes at 0.011 mg/cm² and 60% displacement at 0.11 mg/cm² (Table 3).

Non-contact repellency tests

With *An. gambiae*, the 0.1 and 1% EO solutions repelled 68.1% and 76.8% of mosquitoes respectively, while the 2.5 and 5% solutions produced 43.5% and 26.4% repellency respectively (Table 4).

Table 4
Repellent effect of *L. alba* EO on *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti*

		<i>An. gambiae</i>		<i>Ae. aegypti</i>	
		Kisumu		SBE	
		n	% escaped (IC 95%)	n	% escaped (IC 95%)
0.1%	Control	66	16.6 (7.7–25.5)	67	1.4 (0-4.2)
	Treated	66	68.1*** (56.9–79.3)	67	7.4 (1.2–13.6)
1%	Control	71	18.3 (9.4–27.2)	71	7 (1.1–12.9)
	Treated	69	76.8*** (66.9–86.7)	70	68.5*** (57.2–79.8)
2.5%	Control	66	4.54 (0-9.5)	63	1.5 (0-4.5)
	Treated	62	43.5*** (31.2–55.8)	68	33.8*** (22.6–45)
5%	Control	63	9.5 (2.3–16.7)	64	1.5 (0-4.4)
	Treated	68	26.4* (16-36.8)	67	11.9* (4.2–19.6)
n: Number of mosquitoes exposed, ***: P < 0.0001, **: P < 0.001, *: P < 0.05,					

At 1% EO, the proportion of escaped females was 68.5% for *Ae. aegypti* mosquitoes. Repellency rates were 33.8% for the 2.5% solution and 11.9% for the 5% solution (Table 4).

Blood meal inhibition

The proportions of blood fed females did not significantly decrease with increasing concentrations in *An. gambiae* (Tables 5 and 6). The EO produced 34.2%, 37.5% and 49% blood feeding inhibition in *An. gambiae* at concentrations of 1%, 2.5% and 5% respectively. Surprisingly, a significantly lower inhibition (16.7%) was observed with the 10% concentration (Fig. 5).

Table 5
Parameters of generalized linear mixed model of mosquito feeding

Parameter	Estimate	SE	t-value	P
<i>An. gambiae</i> Kisumu				
Intercept	0.73	0.18	3.92	0.0003
Concentrations	-0.03	0.03	-0.87	0.3861
<i>Ae. aegypti</i> SBE				
Intercept	1.46	0.23	6.18	0
Concentrations	-0.29	0.05	-5.79	0
Number of observation: 54, Number of mosquito cups per specie: 54, SE: standard error of parameter estimate, t-value: estimate to standard error ratio, P: statistic for t-value.				

Table 6
Feeding rate of *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti* females exposed to membranes impregnated with essential oils of *L. alba*

		<i>An. gambiae</i> Kisumu		<i>Ae. aegypti</i> SBE	
		n	% Feed (IC95%)	n	% Feed (IC95%)
1st Phase	Control	205	80 (74.6–85.4)	205	88.2 (83.8–92.6)
	1%	201	52.7 (45.8–59.6)	215	63.2 (56.8–69.6)
	2.5%	224	50 (43.5–56.5)	223	57.8 (51.4–64.2)
	5%	218	40.8 (34.3–47.3)	218	38.5 (32.1–44.9)
2nd Phase	Control	210	91.9 (88.3–95.5)	204	93.1 (89.7–96.5)
	10%	218	76.6 (71–82.2)	209	1.4 (0–2.9)
n: Number of mosquitoes exposed					

The mean rates of blood fed *Ae. aegypti* significantly decreased as concentrations increase (Tables 5 and 6). The blood feeding inhibition rates increases from 28.4% for the 1% concentration to 98.5% for the 10% concentration (Fig. 5).

Discussion

The objectives of this study were to identify the molecules present in the essential oil of *L. alba* and to determine its biological effects (insecticidal, repellent and blood meal inhibition) on *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti*. This essential oil has shown very promising results for mosquito control. Permethrin was highly toxic and moderately irritant to both strains of mosquitoes.

The essential oil evaluated in this study consists mainly of citral (45.86%, geranial and neral being the two isomers of citral) and geraniol (14%). The chemotypes of *L. alba* EOs, which can be associated with the genetic forms of the plant species, have been characterised according to their main compounds, the variability of which can be related to the morphological characteristics of the leaves and the localities or environmental conditions of production [29, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55]. Hennebelle et al. [49] classified the essential oils of *L. alba* into seven chemotypes on the basis of the phytochemical profiles of 4 samples from the French overseas departments and those of 54 other samples reported in 35 publications. This classification can be summarised as follows: I) citral, linalool, caryophyllene as the major compounds (four subtypes); II) tagetenone; III) limonene, carvone in variable amounts, often replaced by related biosynthetic monoterpene ketones (two subtypes); IV) myrcene; V) γ -terpinene; VI) camphor-1,8-cineole and VII) estragole [29]. The EO evaluated in this study and those studied by Peixoto et al. [56], da Silva et al. [57], Ferreira et al. [58], de Brito et al. [41] and Gallardo et al. [59] would correspond to chemotype I. Other studies have presented oils that would belong to chemotype II due to their high concentrations of carvone and limonene [39, 56, 59]. However, extracts composed essentially of 2, 7 octadione-1-butoxy (11%), 2-isopropenyl-5-methyl hex-4-enol (11%), aromadendrene oxide (10%), caryophyllene oxide (10%) [40], caryophyllene (26%), β -elemene (11%), germacrene-D (10%), δ -cadinene (9.5%) [60] and geraniol (21–47%), elemol (9–22%), geranial (3–16%), neral (2–8%), p-cymene (0.3-8%) [61] do not comply with the classification established by Hennebelle et al. [49].

The insecticidal activity of some essential oils may be related to the inhibition of mitochondrial enzymes and acetylcholinesterase (AChE) activities by their compounds [62, 63]. In this study, the EO of *L. alba* has been shown to be toxic to insecticide susceptible strains of mosquitoes, as it induced 100% KD60 in *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti* at doses as low as 1%. Dua et al. [18] also obtained 100% KD60 with the EO of *Lantana camara* (Verbenaceae) consisting of 43% caryophyllene, eucalyptol, α -humelene and germacrene-D, at a dose of 4% with *An. culicifacies*, *An. fluviatilis*, *An. stephensi*, *Cx. quinquefasciatus* and *Ae. aegypti*. The EOs of *Ocimum americanum* and *Nepeta cataria* showed a KD60 effect from 1 and 3% doses on *An. minimus* and *Ae. aegypti* respectively. KD60 was observed with *Cymbopogon nardus* oil at a dose of 3% for both mosquito species [64]. The essential oil of *Clausena anisata* (main molecules: 34% (z) anethole and 16% p-Cymene) had a knocked down effect on *An. coluzzii* [23].

The carvone chemotype of *L. alba* EO at 0.1% induced 80% mortality in *Ae. aegypti* adults [39], whereas the citral chemotype evaluated in the present study induced 4.5% mortality in *An. gambiae* and 2.3% in *Ae. aegypti* at the same dose. This difference in mortality can be explained either by the higher insecticidal effect of carvone chemotype or by the use of the CDC bottle by Castillo et al [39] and the fact that EO deposited on glass may be more effective than on paper that could adsorb a part of the EO. The EO evaluated by Mahanta et al [40] showed no adulticidal effect against *Ae. aegypti* and *Cx. quinquefasciatus* at 0.1%. Significant mortalities were observed in this study from 1% with *An. gambiae* and 2.5% with *Ae. aegypti*. A toxic effect of *L. alba* EOs (citral and carvone chemotypes) has been observed on *Ae. aegypti* and *Cx. quinquefasciatus* larvae [58, 65]. Similar observation was done with the chemotype 2-isopropenyl-5-methylhex-4-enol (11%), 2,7-octadione-1-butoxy (11%), aromadendrene oxide (10%), caryophyllene oxide (10%) [40]. Sobrinho et al. [60] also reported larvicidal activity of *L. alba* EO, composed mainly (56.16%) of caryophyllene, β -elemene, D-germacrene and δ -cadinene against *Ae. albopictus* and *Ae. aegypti*. Moreover, the EOs of *L. alba* have been shown to be toxic against other insect species. The carvone and citral chemotypes of *L. alba* EO were moderately toxic against *Ulomoides dermestoides* [59]. The EO and the isolated carvone and citral molecules were found to be toxic to *Sitophilus zeamais* and *Tribolium castaneum* [56]. In addition, the carvone and citral chemotypes of *L. alba* and their major compounds demonstrated acaricidal properties against *Rhipicephalus (Boophilus) microplus* [66, 67].

The 1% solution of *L. alba* EO gave 100% KD60 but only 16.4% mortality with *Ae. aegypti*. These results have been also observed when using intermediate concentrations of EO as for instance 3–5% solutions of *C. nardus*, *N. cataria* and *O. americanum* which caused 100% KD60 and less than 10% mortality on *Ae. aegypti* [64]. The recovery of *Ae. aegypti* females after knockdown may be explained by natural detoxification mechanisms or by reversible inhibition of receptors in the nervous system as observed with some insecticides, including natural pyrethrins [68, 69]. At the highest concentration (5%), the EO of *L. alba* induced 100% knockdown and mortality on both species. Similar results were obtained by Sathantriphop et al. [64] with the 5% solutions of *C. nardus*, *O. americanum* and *N. cataria* on *Ae. aegypti* and *An. minimus*.

The irritant effect observed in the contact repellency test may not only be as a consequence of the intrinsic irritancy of the EO, since a spatial repellency effect was observed for the two mosquito species studied. In fact, the movement of mosquitoes away from a treated surface without and after contact involves the binding of molecules to specific olfactory receptors on the antennae and specific gustatory receptors on the tarsi, respectively [70]. These two mechanisms would therefore have resulted in the escape of *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti* females from tubes treated with *L. alba* EO to untreated tubes during contact irritancy tests. This irritancy increased from 60.8–100% from 0.1–1% concentrations, but fell to 79.6% and 70.4% respectively at 2.5% and 5% on *An. gambiae*. In *Ae. aegypti*, the proportion of escaped females was 77.4% with the 5% solution, compared to 94.1% with 2.5%. As the EO showed a neurotoxic effect, the apparent reduction of irritancy are likely to be due to some mosquitoes starting to be intoxicated or being knocked down during the 10 minutes the slide unit was opened. Reduced irritability caused by a knock down effect has already been observed with DEET and IR3535 against *Ae.*

aegypti [71]. Of 18 EOs selected from the literature, Deletre et al [21] observed irritability rates of 81–84% only with *Cymbopogon citratus* (75% citral), *Plectranthus tenuicaulis* (74% epoxyocimene) and *Thymus vulgaris* L. (35% thymol, 23% *p*-cymene, 15% carvacrol) with *An. gambiae* (Kisumu strain). Permethrin was highly toxic and moderately irritant against *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti* at 0.11 mg/cm². This dual effect of permethrin has been observed on susceptible populations of *An. gambiae* [21, 47, 72].

In the present study, the 1% concentration induced 76.8 and 68.5% repellency on *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti* respectively. The 2.5 and 5% concentrations gave lower repellent rates than those obtained with 1% on both species. As the tests were carried out in hermetically closed cylinders, the 2.5 and 5% concentrations could have started to intoxicate the mosquitoes or impaired their sensory systems. Cutaneous application of the citral chemotype of *L. alba* EO protects against mosquito bites [41]. The EO of *L. alba*, composed mainly of 2, 7 octadione-1-butoxy and 2-isopropenyl-5-methyl hex-4-enol, has a repellent activity, unlike that composed mainly of carvone and limonene [39, 40]. Odour Binding Proteins (OBPs) transport repellent molecules to olfactory receptors which reside in contact with the dendrites of sensory neurons. Citral and limonene showed good docking with OBP₁ and OBP₂₂, which have been identified as mediators of olfaction in *Ae. aegypti*, in addition to acetylcholinesterase [73, 74]. One of the most probable mechanisms of action of the repellent compounds in EOs such as *Lippia thymoides*, *Cymbopogon winterianus*, *Eucalyptus globulus* and *L. alba* is their interaction with OBP₁ [41].

The proportions of blood fed *An. gambiae* ranged from 34 to 49% with doses of 1%, 2.5% and 5% of *L. alba* EO. Wangrawa et al. [75] obtained lower proportions of blood fed females using tunnel tests: 20.5% with 1.5% *Lantana camara* = 30.3% with 3% *Ocimum canum*, 35.3% with 2.5% *Hyptis spicigera* and 19.5% with 2% *Hyptis suaveolens*. This may be due to the fact that tunnel tests not only measure the direct blood feeding inhibition but also the combined effects of mortality and excito-repellency when mosquitoes are exposed to a treated netting. Blood feeding inhibition rates ranging from 60–98.4% were reported with *An. gambiae* in Tanzania by burning *Ocimum suave*, *Ocimum kilimandscharicum*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Eucalyptus globulus* and *Lantana camara* in experimental huts [76]. The highest rate of blood fed females (76.6%) observed with the 10% concentration of *L. alba* EO on *An. gambiae* in the present study may indicate that at high doses, some of the compounds interfere with the sensory system of mosquitoes. This unexpected observation has already been reported by Hodjati and Curtis [77], who obtained higher feeding rates with the highest dose of permethrin on susceptible and resistant populations of *An. stephensi*. This high dose was also associated with the lowest KD and mortality in their study. *L. alba* essential oil had a better effect on blood meal inhibition of *Ae. aegypti* with an inhibition rate of 98.4% for the 10% concentration. The EOs of *Lippia organoides* and *Eucalyptus citriodora* at 0.1% recorded the lowest proportion of blood fed females (3.3%), while that of *L. alba* produced 43.3% feeding by *Ae. aegypti* 15 minutes after application to the arm [39].

Conclusion

The investigations carried out showed that the EO of *L. alba* had very promising knockdown, toxicity, irritant and repellent effects as well as a blood feeding inhibition on *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti*. It is

clearly a good candidate for the development of sustainable biological products for mosquito control. The results obtained have prompted an evaluation of the biological effects of essential oils of *L. alba* harvested in different localities of west Africa against mosquito vectors of pathogens. It will also be interesting to investigate the impact high doses of *L. alba* EO on odorant receptors of *An. gambiae* and their consequences on mosquito behaviour.

Abbreviations

LLINs: Long-lasting insecticidal nets ; HITSS: High-Throughput Screening System ; EO: Essential Oil ; WHO: World Health Organization ; SBE: Sensitive strain of *Ae. aegypti* from Benin ; KD60: Knockdown at 60 minutes ; IRD : French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development ; MIVEGEC: Infectious diseases and vectors: ecology, genetics, evolution and control ; UT3: University of Toulouse 3 ; PHARMADEV: Pharmacochimie and biology for development ; CSRS : Swiss scientific research centre in Côte d'Ivoire ; v: volume.

Declarations

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Availability of data and materials

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Authors' contributions

FHC, AA planted the *L. alba* plants and extracted the EO. CG provided the mosquitoes. MR wrote and contributed to the insecticide and repellent test protocols. DC designed the blood meal inhibition test system. FHC carried out the bioassays with the help of MR and AV. FHC, MH, DC carried out the phytochemical investigations. FHC analysed the bioassay data. FHC, MH, DC, FC, MWK wrote the

manuscript. MWK, FC provided the scientific supervision of the study. All authors have read and approved the latest version of the manuscript.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable

Consent for publication

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests

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Figures

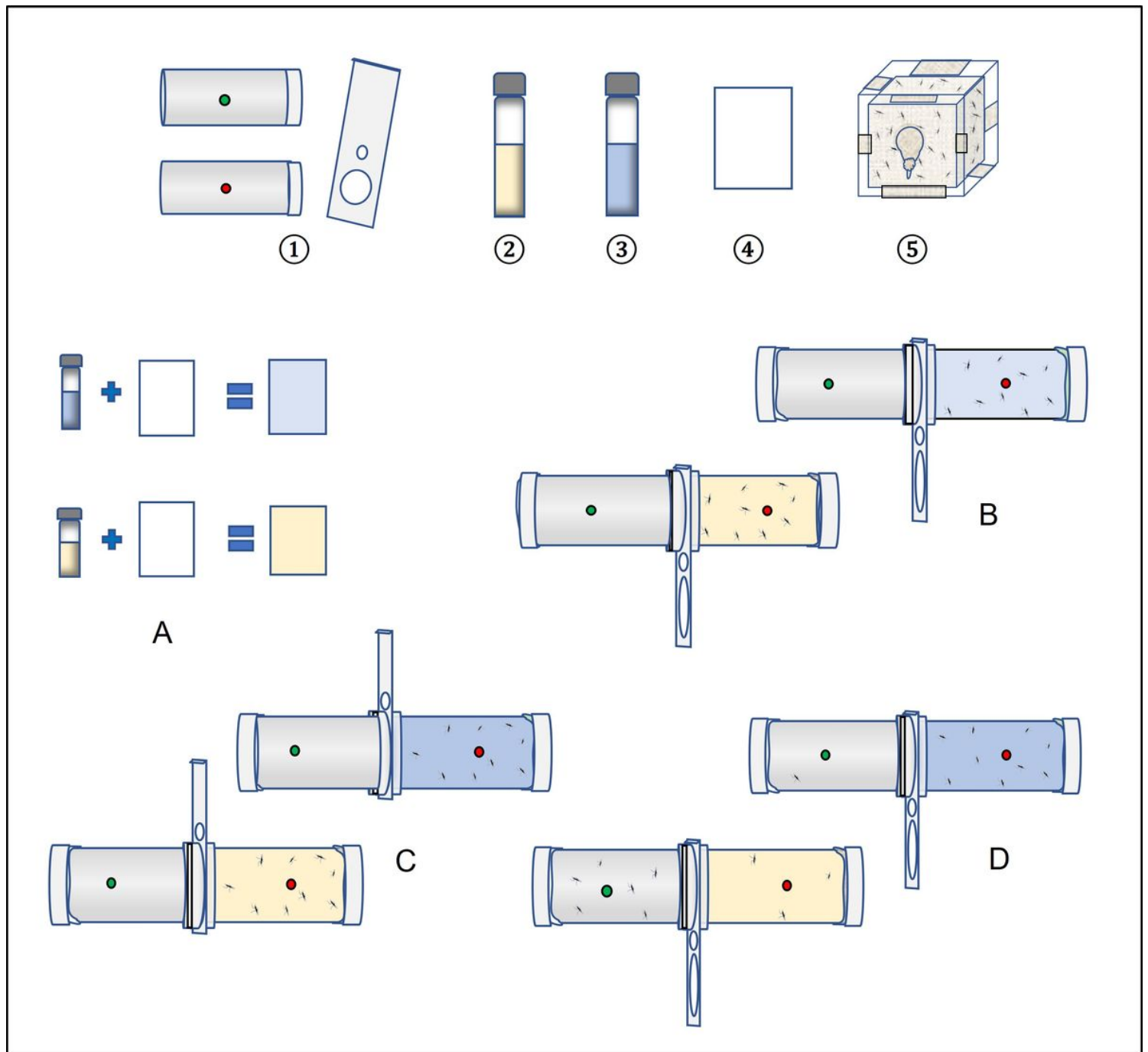


Figure 1

Descriptive diagram of the contact irritancy test □ : WHO tubes and slide unit □ : Essential oil or permethrin solution □ : Control solution □ : Whatman papers (12×15 cm) □ : Mosquitoes **A** : Impregnation of papers **B** : Connecting the tubes and introducing the mosquitoes into the treated tubes **C** : Opening of the slide unit after 30s of acclimatisation **D** : Slide unit closed after 10 minutes and mosquitoes counted

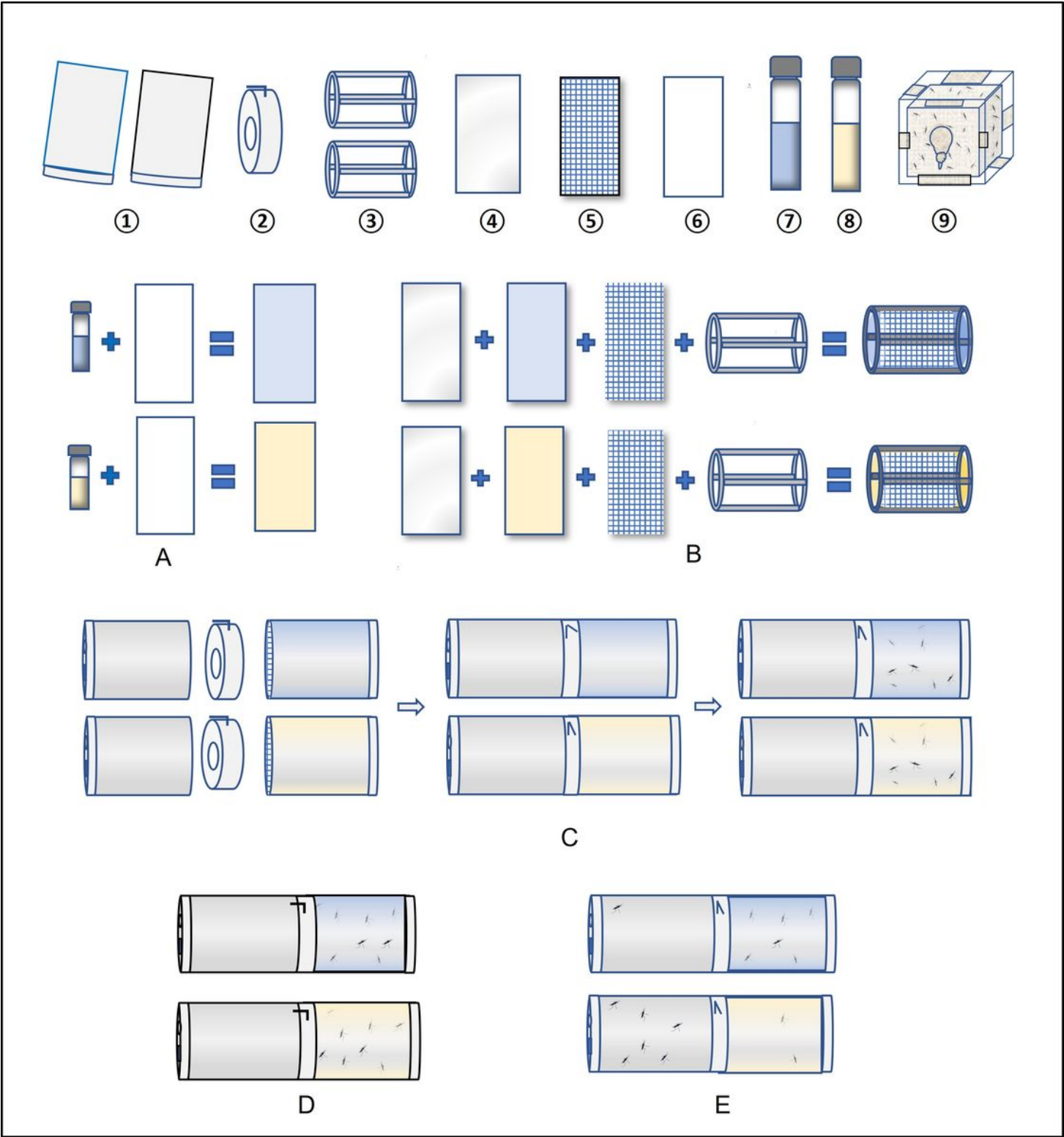


Figure 2

Steps to perform the non-contact repellency test □ : HITSS metal cylinders □ : Linking section □ : drum □ : Rigid transparent film □ : Insect screen □ : Whatman paper (30×10 cm) □ : Control solution □ : EO solution □ : Mosquitoes **A** : Paper impregnation **B** : Positioning paper around drum **C** : Connecting the cylinders and introducing the mosquitoes into the treated cylinders **D** : Opening of the link section doors after 30 seconds of acclimatation **E** : Link section doors closed after 10 minutes and mosquitoes counted

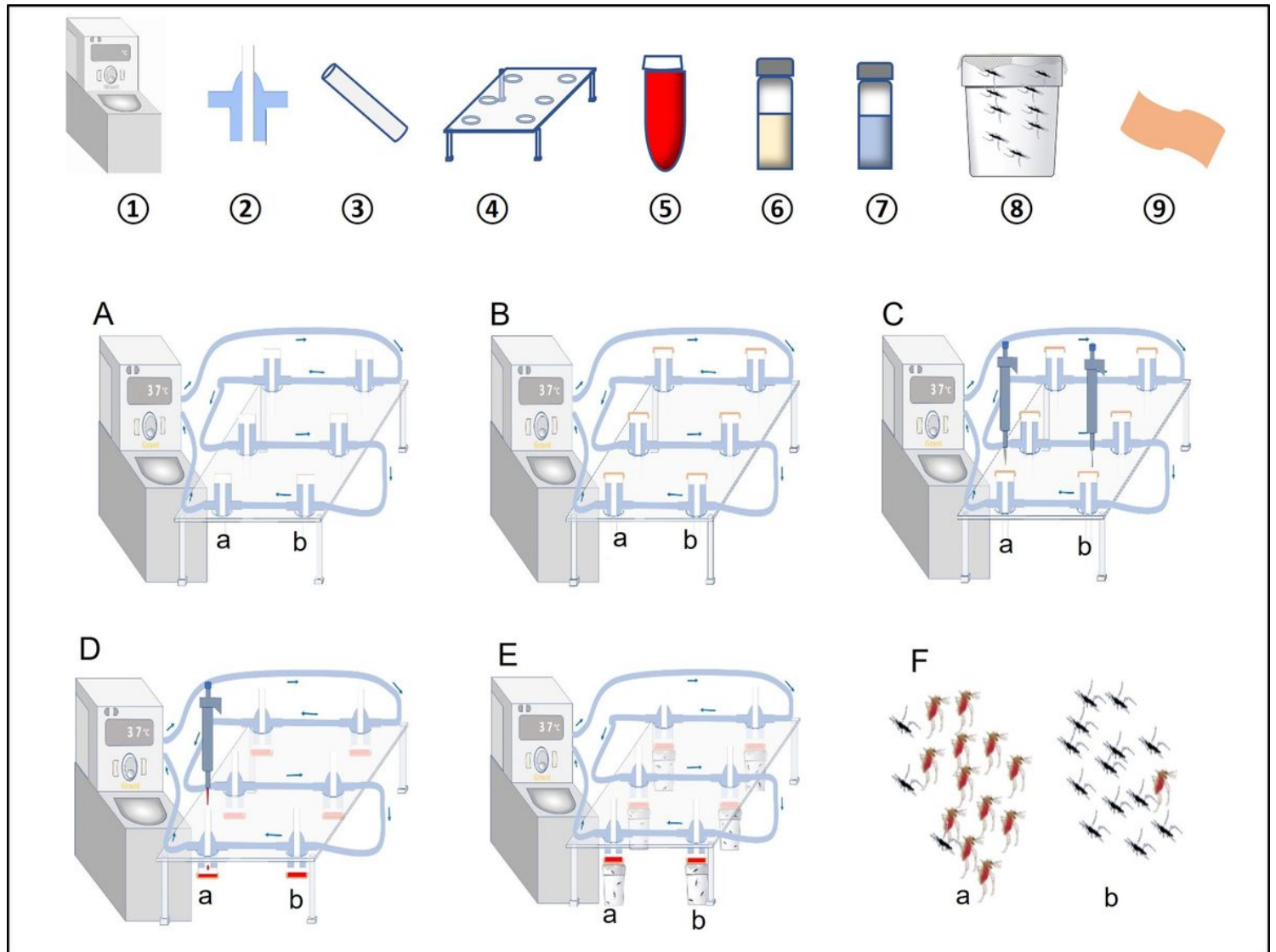


Figure 3

Descriptive diagram of the blood meal inhibition test □ : Water Bath □ : Feeder □ : pipe □ : Rack □ : Rabbit blood □ : Essential oil solution □ : Control solution □ : Mosquitoes □ : Pig membrane **a** : Control line **b** : Treated line **A** : Setting up the system **B** : Laying of pig membranes on the bottom surfaces of feeders **C** : Impregnation of pig membranes **D** : Introduction of blood into feeders **E** : Place mosquito cups underneath the feeders for 1 hour **F** : Count of blood fed and non fed mosquitoes

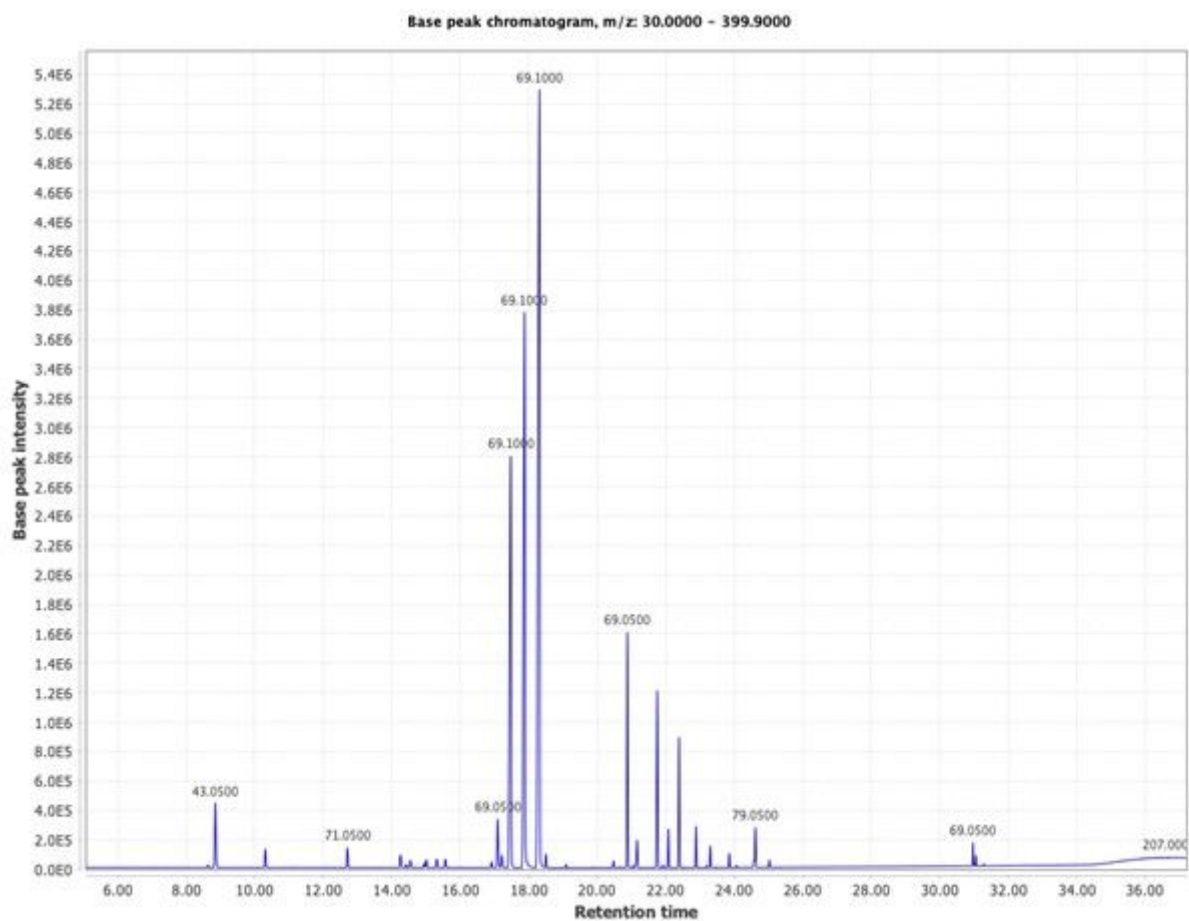


Figure 4

Total ion chromatogram of the essential oil extracted from *Lippia alba* leaves harvested in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)

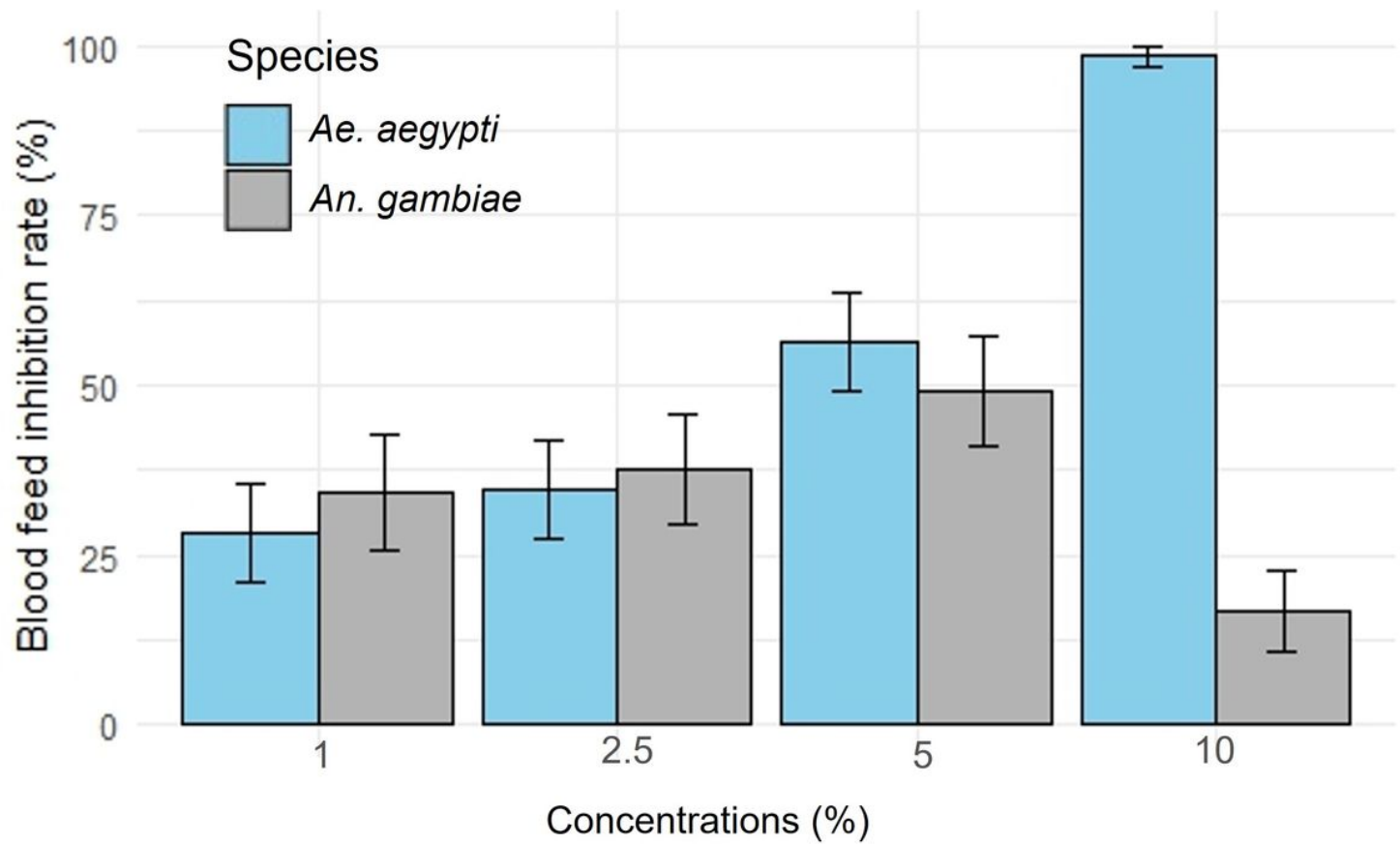


Figure 5

Blood feeding inhibition of *Lippia alba* essential oil against *An. gambiae* and *Ae. aegypti*