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Anticancer Res. 2009 Nov;29(11):4467-72.

### Multidrug resistance modulation and apoptosis induction of cancer cells by terpenic compounds isolated from *Euphorbia* species.

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**Abstract**  
**BACKGROUND:** One of the most promising strategies to overcome multidrug resistance (MDR) is to use compounds that can modulate P-glycoprotein and restore the cytotoxicity of anticancer drugs. Furthermore, the search for compounds that regulate and overcome apoptosis deficiency of cancer cells is also of great therapeutic importance.  
**MATERIALS AND METHODS:** Seven known pentacyclic triterpenes and one steroid were isolated from *Euphorbia lagascae* methanolic extracts and identified by physical and spectroscopic methods. These compounds, together with eleven terpenoids previously isolated from *Euphorbia lagascae* and *E. tuckeyana* were tested for their MDR-reversing and/or apoptosis induction activities by flow cytometry on L5178 human MDR1 gene-transfected mouse lymphoma cells.  
**RESULTS:** Four taraxastane-type triterpenes: 21alpha-hydroxytaraxasterol, 21alpha-hydroxytaraxasterol acetate, 3beta,30-dihydroxy-20(21)-taraxastene and 3beta-hydroxy-20-taraxasten-30-ol, and two steroids: stigmastane-3,6-dione and ergosterol peroxide exhibited a significant MDR-Pgp modulation activity. Some aspects of structure-activity relationships are discussed. Regarding apoptosis induction, the most significant results were obtained for the polycyclic diterpenes ent-16alpha,17-dihydroxykauran-3-one and ent-16alpha,17-dihydroxyatisan-3-one.

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