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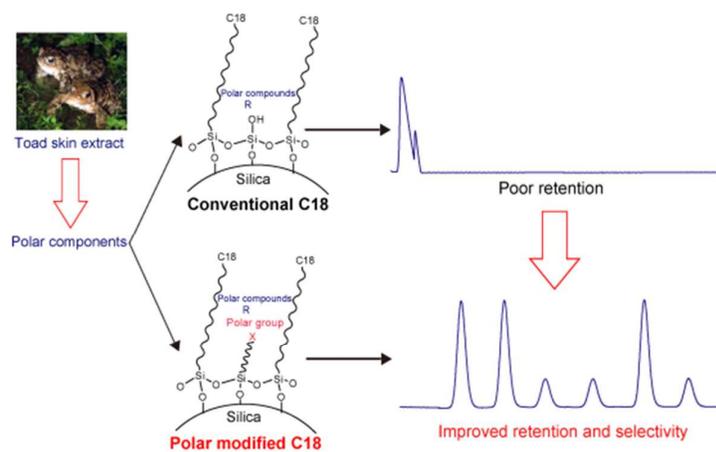


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A novel method based on the polar-copolymerized C18 stationary phase was developed to separated polar compounds from toad skin.

1 **Efficient purification of low molecular weight nitrogen polar**
2 **compounds from skin of *Bufo bufo gargarizans* Cantor by**
3 **reversed-phase high performance liquid chromatography**
4 **with a polar-copolymerized C18 stationary phase**

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Abstract

Cinobufacini (Huachansu) injections have been widely used in the treatment of various cancers in clinical application in China. As an aqueous extract of the skin of *Bufo bufo gargarizans* Cantor (toad skin), cinobufacini contains many polar compounds and the chemical profile of polar compounds was still unclear, which increase the risk of pharmacy safety. However, there are very few studies on the separation and purification of polar components from toad skin, especially in preparative scale. In this paper, a unique method based on a homemade polar-modified C18 stationary phase was developed and successfully applied to separate polar compounds from the toad skin. Compared with previous purification systems based on the C18 stationary phase, the poor retention problem of polar compounds was well resolved through use of the polar-modified C18 column and good resolutions were achieved as well. Seven compounds were purified and five of them (uracil, hypoxanthine, 3-hydroxy-4H-pyrazolo[4,5-d]pyridazin-7(1H)-one, thymine, bufothionine) were identified by MS, ^1H NMR and ^{13}C NMR. Additionally, 3-hydroxy-4H-pyrazolo[4,5-d]pyridazin-7(1H)-one was identified as a new compound and hypoxanthine was found from the skin of *Bufo bufo gargarizans* Cantor for the first time. These results indicate that the method show promise for the separation of polar compounds in toad skin.

1. Introduction

The skin of the *Bufo bufo gargarizans* Cantor (toad skin), a well-known traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), has been used in the treatment of various health problems, such as swelling, pain, heart failure, and various cancers in China¹⁻³. Several methods have been developed mainly for the separation and purification of weak polar compounds (bufadienolides) from toad skin, including thin layer chromatography (TLC)⁴⁻⁵, liquid chromatography (LC)⁶⁻⁸, and preparative high performance liquid chromatography (prep-HPLC)⁹⁻¹⁰. More than 100 bufadienolides have been found from toad skin and its preparations⁴⁻¹⁰. However, the purification of

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4 57 polar compounds remains lacking.

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6 58 The water-soluble extract of toad skin, named cinobufacini (Huachansu) injection,
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8 59 has been widely used in the treatment several cancers in China for many years¹¹⁻¹³.
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10 60 Some studies have suggested that, as an aqueous extract, alkaloids should be the
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12 61 major type of components in cinobufacini injection. But, till now, the chemical profile
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14 62 of polar compounds in this injection was still unclear, which increase the risk of
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16 63 pharmacy safety¹⁴. Recently, several analytical methods have been developed to
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18 64 obtain qualitative and quantitative information of cinobufacini injection¹⁴⁻¹⁵. However,
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20 65 the polar compounds of cinobufacini have been mainly investigated by
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22 66 high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC)-diode array detection and
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24 67 HPLC-triple quadrupole mass spectrometry in analytical scale. To the best of our
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26 68 knowledge, there are very few reports¹⁶ that have focused on the purification of polar
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28 69 compounds in the preparative scale, and only about ten polar compounds have been
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30 70 purified from toad skin due to the lack of separation materials and scarcity of proper
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32 71 methods. Therefore, it is urgently needed to develop new separation materials and
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34 72 proper separation methods for the purification of polar compounds of toad skin.

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36 73 Reversed-phase liquid chromatography (RPLC) has been widely utilized in many
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38 74 fields for the separation of medium and weak polar compounds due to its high
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40 75 separation efficiency¹⁷⁻¹⁸. But, in traditional RPLC, it is still challenging to separate
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42 76 polar compounds (e.g., highly polar natural products, contained in many drug
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44 77 components and biological samples) due to their weaker retention on the C18
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46 78 stationary phase¹⁹⁻²⁰. Also, normal-phase liquid chromatography (NPLC) has
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48 79 historically been utilized for the separations of polar compounds from TCMs using
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50 80 nonaqueous mobile phases with silica. Nevertheless, the application of NPLC for the
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52 81 separation of polar compounds has been very limited because of the drawbacks
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54 82 associated with the poor solubility, irreversible adsorption, and poor reproducibility¹⁹.
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56 83 Additionally, hydrophilic interaction liquid chromatography (HILIC) has been proved
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58 84 to be a useful technique for separation of polar compounds¹⁹⁻²⁴. However, HILIC
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60 85 might not be suitable for the purification of polar compounds from complex sample
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86 matrices mainly due to their insufficient solubility in highly organic solvents and their

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4 87 limited separation resolution in the preparative scale.

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6 88 Besides the above mentioned methods, development of polar-modified C18
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8 89 stationary phase (such as polar embedded or polar end-capped C18 stationary phase)
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10 90 is an alternative approach to separate polar compounds²⁵. With the introduction of
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12 91 polar group, the polar-modified C18 stationary phase display more symmetrical peaks,
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14 92 alternative selectivity and stable retention in highly aqueous which also enhance the
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16 93 retention of polar compounds²⁶⁻²⁷ Recently, based on the approach of horizontal
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18 94 polymerization on silica surface a polar-modified C18 stationary phase (C18HCE)
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20 95 was prepared in our laboratory²⁸. As demonstration, the C18HCE column exhibited
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22 96 100% aqueous mobile phase compatibility, suggesting that this material may have a
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24 97 great potential for the separation of polar compounds.

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26 98 In the present study, based on this polar-modified C18 column, the poor retention
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28 99 problem of polar compounds on conventional C18 was successfully resolved and
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30 100 good resolution was obtained. Thus, seven polar compounds were successfully
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32 101 purified with high purity on the semi-preparative C18HCE column by preparative
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34 102 HPLC. Additionally, 3-hydroxy-4H-pyrazolo[4,5-d]pyridazin-7(1H)-one was
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36 103 identified as a new compound and hypoxanthine was found from the skin of *Bufo bufo*
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38 104 *gargarizans* Cantor for the first time. These results indicate the homemade
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40 105 polar-modified C18 show promise for the separation and purification of polar
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42 106 compounds in complex samples.

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45 46 108 **2. Materials and methods**

47 48 49 109 **2.1. Apparatus**

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51 110 An industrial HPLC system was assembled for the preparation of polar fraction
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53 111 from the crude sample in our laboratory. This system consists of a binary gradient
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55 112 module (P6000), a UV detector (UV6000) and a sample injector (A1359). Data were
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57 113 collected using a CXTH-3000 chromatography workstation.

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59 114 A Waters Purification Factory was used for further purification and consisted of
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115 two 2525 binary gradient module (Waters, Milford, MA), an autosampler (Leap

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4 116 Technologies, Carrboro, NC), and a 2498 UV detector (Waters). Data were recorded
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6 117 by MassLynx software (Waters, V. 4.1).
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8 118 The analytical experiments were performed on an Alliance HPLC system
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10 119 consisting of a Waters 2695 HPLC pump and a Waters 2489 UV detector. The
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12 120 temperature was maintained at 30 °C for analytical separation. Data were collected by
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14 121 Waters Empower software (Milford, MA, USA).
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16 122 The HPLC system was interfaced with a ZQ single quadrupole mass
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18 123 spectrometer from Waters Corporation. The main parameters of MS were as follows:
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20 124 capillary voltage was 3.0 kV; cone voltage was 25.00 V; source temperature was 120
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22 125 °C; desolvation temperature was 320 °C; desolvation gas flow rate was 700 L/h; and
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24 126 cone gas flow rate was 50 L/h. The mass spectrometer was equipped with an ESI ion
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26 127 source and controlled by MassLynx version 4.0 (Holliston, MA, USA).
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28 128 Identification of pure compounds was carried out using NMR. ¹H NMR spectra
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30 129 and ¹³C NMR spectra were measured on a Bruker Ar III-600 spectrometer (¹H NMR
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32 130 at 600 MHz; ¹³C NMR at 150 MHz) with DMSO-*d*₆ as solvent.
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37 132 2.2. Reagents

39 133 Industrial grade ethanol and analytical grade methanol were purchased from
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41 134 Yuwang (Shandong, China). HPLC grade acetonitrile was purchased from Merck
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43 135 (Darmstadt, Germany). Trifluoroacetic acid (HPLC grade) was obtained from Acros
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45 136 (Cambridge, USA). Water for Alliance HPLC system was prepared by a Milli-Q
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47 137 system (Billerica, MA, USA). All reagents used in analysis were HPLC grade. The
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49 138 XUnion C18 column (250 mm × 4.6 mm, I. D. , 10 μm), XUnion C18 column (150
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51 139 mm × 4.6 mm, I. D. , 5 μm), XCharge C18PN column (150 mm × 4.6 mm, I. D. , 5
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53 140 μm) and XAqua C18 column (150 mm × 4.6 mm, I. D. , 5 μm), were purchased from
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55 141 Acchrom Techeologies Co. , Ltd. (Beijing, China). The Xterra MS C18 column (100
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57 142 mm × 4.6 mm, I. D. , 5 μm), Symmetry C18 column (150 mm × 4.6 mm, I. D. , 5 μm)
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59 143 were purchased from Waters (Massachusetts, USA). C18HCE column (150 mm × 4.6
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4 144 mm, I. D. , 5 μm) and C18HCE column (250 mm \times 20 mm, I. D. , 5 μm) were
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6 145 prepared by our laboratory.
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10 11 147 **2.3. Preparation of the sample**

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13 148 Dried skin of the toad *Bufo bufo gargarizans* Cantor was collected from
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15 149 Shandong Province, and authenticated by the Institute of Medication, Xiyuan Hospital
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17 150 of China Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The dried skin of *Bufo bufo*
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19 151 *gargarizans* Cantor (2 kg) was cut up into pieces, and then extracted with
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21 152 water/ethanol (v/v 5:95, 3 \times 20 L, 2 h each) at 78 $^{\circ}\text{C}$. The combined decoctions were
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23 153 dried by rotary evaporation at 60 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ in vacuum. The extract (70 g) was dissolved in
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25 154 1.6 L of water/ methanol (v/v 30:70), and then extracted by n-heptane (3 \times 1.6 L each).
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27 155 The methanol fraction was combined and concentrated to dryness in vacuo, which
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29 156 yielded 40 g of residue, and 20 g of residue was dissolved in 45 mL methanol at a
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31 157 concentration of 440 mg/mL and filtered through 0.45 μm membrane filter as the
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33 158 sample for preparation.
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37 38 160 **2.4. Polar fraction preparation**

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40 161 In this study, a preparative XUnion C18 column (250 mm \times 100 mm, 10 μm) was
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42 162 adopted in the preparative HPLC system at a flow rate of 330 mL/min and the
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44 163 detection wavelength was 300 nm. The mobile phases used were water (A) and
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46 164 methanol (B₁) and gradient condition was: 0-7 min, 25-40 B₁%; 7-60 min, 40-65 B₁%;
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48 165 60-65 min, 65-100 B₁%; 70-75 min, 100-100 B₁%. In this system, about 18 g extract
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50 166 of toad skin was fractionated in 1 injection and 22 fractions (labeled as F1–F22) were
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52 167 collected. The fraction 1 (F1) was eluted near at the dead time and was selected as
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54 168 polar compounds for further separation.
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58 59 170 **2.5. Chromatographic conditions in analysis of F1**

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171 Initially, the F1 was injected on the XUnion C18 (250 mm \times 4.6 mm, I. D., 10

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4 172 μm) column using an analytical HPLC system with the same gradient condition in
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6 173 Section 2.4 (0-7 min, 25-40 B₁%; 7-60 min, 40-65 B₁%; 60-65 min, 65-100 B₁%;
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8 174 70-75 min, 100-100 B₁%) and the flow rate was 0.7 mL/min (shown in Fig. 1).
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10 175 Secondly, three conventional C18 columns, XUnion C18 column (150 mm \times 4.6
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12 176 mm, I. D. , 5 μm), XTerra MS C18 column (150 mm \times 4.6 mm, I. D. , 5 μm),
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14 177 Symmetry C18 column (150 mm \times 4.6 mm, I. D. , 5 μm) with a weaker elution
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16 178 condition were used. The mobile phases were 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid aqueous
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18 179 solution (A) and 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid acetonitrile (B₂); the flow rate was 1.0
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20 180 mL/min; the gradient condition was 0-30 min, 5-10 B₂%; the column temperature was
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22 181 maintained at 30 °C; the detective wavelength was 230 nm; the flow rate was 1.0
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24 182 mL/min.
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26 183 Finally, another three polar-modified columns: C18HCE column (150 mm \times 4.6
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28 184 mm, I. D. , 5 μm), XAqua C18 column (150 mm \times 4.6 mm, I. D. , 5 μm) and
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30 185 XCharge C18PN column (150 mm \times 4.6 mm, I. D. , 5 μm) were tried. The mobile
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32 186 phases were 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid aqueous solution (A) and 0.1% trifluoroacetic
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34 187 acid acetonitrile (B₂). The gradient condition was 0-30 min, 0-10 B₂%. The column
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36 188 temperature was maintained at 30 °C, the detective wavelength was 230 nm and the
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38 189 flow rate was 1.0 mL/min.
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42 191 **2.6. Polar compounds isolation procedure**

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45 192 The isolation of polar compounds was performed on the semi-preparative HPLC
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47 193 system with the C18HCE column (250 mm \times 20 mm, I. D., 5 μm). The mobile phases
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49 194 were 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid aqueous solution (A) and 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid
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51 195 acetonitrile (B₂). The gradient condition was 0-30 min, 0-10 B₂%; 30-40 min, 10-10
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53 196 B₂%; the detective wavelength was 230 nm and the flow rate was 18 mL/min. F1 (500
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55 197 mg) was eluted with the above gradient program for 3 times to afford compounds
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57 198 **P1-P7**.
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200 **3. Results and discussion**

3.1. Preparation of polar components

As a biological sample, toad skin contains large numbers of compounds covering a wide range of polarity and molecular weight. To simplify the crude sample, a conventional C18 column was used for the rough separation mainly according to their differences in hydrophobicity. Although the C18 is not suitable for the separation of polar compounds due to their poor retention, we can take advantage of the hydrophobic property of C18 to cluster the polar compounds. In present study, the fraction 1 (F1, as shown in Fig. 1A, corresponding time range was 2.7 min to 5.8 min), which was eluted nearly at dead time on the C18 column, was selected as the polar components for further purification. In addition, to further test the reliability of the preparation of F1, with the same gradient condition in Section 2.4, the F1 was injected on an analytical XUnion C18 (250 mm × 4.6 mm, I. D., 10 μm) column using an analytical HPLC system (shown in Fig. 1B). By compared with Fig. 1A and Fig. 1B, the consistency in retention times between the analytical scale and the preparative scale indicated that the pre-fractionation strategy by prep-HPLC is reproducible and reliable. According to the above results, we may preliminarily deduce that the F1 is rich in polar components.

3.2. Optimizing the purification method for polar fraction using C18 columns

As displayed in Fig. 1B, although only one main peak was observed, it may still contain many polar compounds which were co-eluted near the void volume of the column. In this elution condition, purification of polar compounds may be impossible due to their poor retentions on the C18 column. Thus, with three conventional C18 columns, mild elution conditions were tried to enhance the retentions of polar components. As displayed in Fig. 2A, Fig. 2B and Fig. 2C, the retentions of polar compounds were enhanced, and more peaks were separated from the cluster peaks (Fig. 1). Unfortunately, the poor retentions and the inadequate separation resolutions of polar compounds also suggested that the conventional C18 stationary phase is not

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4 230 suitable for the separation of polar compounds even when using a mild elution
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6 231 condition.

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8 232 As demonstrated, the polar-modified C18 stationary phase is an alternative
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10 233 approach to separate polar compounds. On the one hand, the introduced polar group
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12 234 increases the polar interaction between the solutes and absorbents; on the other hand,
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14 235 the polar-modified C18 stationary phase exhibits 100% aqueous compatibility, which
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16 236 allows use of all the aqueous mobile phase. To enhance the retentions of polar
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18 237 compounds, with milder elution conditions, three polar-modified C18 stationary
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20 238 phases were introduced for the separation of polar compounds. Compared to the
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22 239 conventional C18 stationary phases, the retentions of polar compounds were enhanced
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24 240 significantly on the columns by introduction of polar groups, which increased polar
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26 241 interactions between the solutes and absorbents. Additionally, the polar-modified C18
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28 242 columns (Fig. 2D, Fig. 2E and Fig. 2F) have higher resolution and better selectivity
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30 243 than those of conventional C18 columns (Fig. 2A, Fig. 2B and Fig. 2C). Among the
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32 244 polar-modified C18 columns, the XAqua C18 column (Fig. 2E) and the C18HCE
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34 245 column (Fig. 2F) showed better resolution than the XCharge C18PN column (Fig. 2D).
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36 246 Moreover, the peaks were more evenly distributed on the C18HCE column, which
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38 247 could benefit separation, especially in preparative scale. In addition, when the loading
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40 248 amount was increased ten-fold (injection volume: from 10 μL to 100 μL , 2 mg), we
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42 249 found that the resolutions (Fig. 3B) were as good as those of Fig. 2F on the C18HCE
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44 250 column, while on the XAqua C18 column, the last two peaks overlapped each other
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46 251 (Fig. 3A). Based on the discussion mentioned above, the separation of polar
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48 252 components on homemade C18HCE showed better retentions and resolutions. These
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50 253 better phenomena on the column could be ascribed to the characterization of
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52 254 polar-modified alkyl stationary phase. As demonstrated in our previous study²⁸, the
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54 255 C18HCE stationary phase (C18-C3Cl) exhibited 100% aqueous mobile phase
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56 256 compatibility and low silanol activity. Moreover, by compared with conventional C18,
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58 257 with the introduction of 3-chloropropyl trichlorosilane, C18HCE showed different
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60 258 selectivity in the separation of polar components. Therefore, the preparative C18HCE
259 column was employed for separation of polar compounds in the following purification

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4 260 process.
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8 262 **3.3. Purification of polar fraction**

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10 263 To further validate the practicality of this method, the preparative separation of
11 264 F1 was performed. A semi-preparative C18HCE column (250 mm × 20 mm, 5 μm)
12 265 and a suitable HPLC condition (Section 2.6) were employed to increase the
13 266 preparative resolution. As shown in Fig. 3, good separation of most compounds from
14 267 fraction F1 was achieved. Three injections of F1 (500 mg) were separated (Fig. 4A,
15 268 Fig. 4B and Fig. 4C) and satisfactory reproducibility of different injections was
16 269 obtained in the preparative chromatography. Peaks eluted in the same retention time
17 270 for different injections were combined and dried by rotary evaporation at 40 °C in
18 271 vacuum. Ultimately, seven compounds with high-purity were obtained.
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31 273 **3.4. Identification of polar compounds**

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33 274 As demonstrated in Section 3.3, seven compounds were purified and five of them
34 275 were identified by ¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR, DEPT-135 and 2D-NMR. As shown in Fig. 5,
35 276 seven purified compounds of F1 were tested on the analytical C18HCE column with
36 277 the same HPLC condition (see Section 2.5). The five compounds (shown in Fig. 6) are
37 278 identified as uracil (**P1**, 15.2 mg)^{16, 29}, hypoxanthine (**P2**, 30.8 mg)³⁰,
38 279 3-hydroxy-4H-pyrazolo[4,5-d]pyridazin-7(1H)-one (**P3**, 6.5 mg), thymine (**P4**, 22.0
39 280 mg)^{16, 29}, and bufotoxine (**P7**, 60.0 mg)^{16, 31} respectively. Till now, the structure of
40 281 **P5** (8.3 mg) and **P6** (35.8 mg) were not identified. However, **P5** was isolated as a
41 282 white amorphous powder, positive ESI-MS m/z: 160.0 [M+H]⁺, which suggested that
42 283 it might be a low molecular weight nitrogen polar compound according to the nitrogen
43 284 rule. **P6** was also isolated as a white amorphous powder, positive ESI-MS m/z: 202.9
44 285 [M+H]⁺, which indicated that it could be a nitrogen compound with even number of
45 286 nitrogen atoms according to previous report¹⁴. Additionally,
46 287 3-hydroxy-4H-pyrazolo[4,5-d]pyridazin-7(1H)-one was identified as a new compound
47 288 and hypoxanthine was isolated for the first time from *Bufo bufo gargarizans* Cantor.
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289 Identifications of five compounds were listed as follows:

290 Compound **1 (P1)**, the molecular formula: C₄H₄N₂O₂, positive ESI-MS m/z:
291 112.9 [M+H]⁺; ¹H-NMR (600 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆): δ, 5.46 (1H, d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, H-1), 7.40
292 (1H, dd, *J* = 7.6 Hz, H-2), 10.8 (1H, s, H-3), 11.0 (1H, s, H-5); ¹³C-NMR (150 MHz,
293 DMSO-*d*₆): δ, 100.7 (C-5), 142.7 (C-6), 152.0 (C-2), 164.8 (C-4). The ¹H-NMR and
294 ¹³C-NMR spectral data were in agreement with those of uracil^{16,29}.

295 Compound **2 (P2)**, the molecular formula: C₅H₄N₄O, positive ESI-MS m/z:
296 137.0 [M+H]⁺; ¹H-NMR (600 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆): δ, 8.21 (1H, s, H-2), 8.97 (1H, s,
297 H-8); ¹³C-NMR (150 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆): δ, 147.8 (C-2), 150.2 (C-4), 117.2 (C-5) ,
298 154.4 (C-6), 139.9 (C-8). The ¹H-NMR and ¹³C-NMR spectral data were in agreement
299 with those of hypoxanthine³⁰.

300 Compound **3 (P3)** was isolated as a white amorphous powder. Its molecular
301 formula was deduced to be C₅H₄N₄O₂ by HRESIMS [*m/z* 153.0409[M+H]⁺, calcd for
302 C₅H₅N₄O₂, 153.0409]. ¹H-NMR (600 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆): δ_H, 11.40 (1H, s, H-1), 10.96
303 (1H, s, H-4), 7.88 (1H, s, H-6) and 12.40 (1H, s, OH); ¹³C-NMR (150 MHz,
304 DMSO-*d*₆): δ_C, 153.4 (C-3), 145.9 (C-3a), 145.1 (C-6), 109.3 (C-6a) and 151.1 (C-7).
305 The ¹³C NMR and DEPT spectra furnished four quaternary carbons, one methine
306 and all signals of compound **3** were ascribed completely on the basis of HSQC and
307 HMBC experiments. In Long-range correlations (HMBC), correlations H-1 (δ_H, 11.40)
308 with C-3 (δ_C, 153.4) and C-6a (δ, 109.3); H-4 (δ_H, 10.96) with C-3, (δ_C, 153.4), C-3a
309 (δ_C, 145.9) and C-6a (δ_C, 109.3); H-6 (δ_H, 7.88) with, C-3a (δ_C, 145.9), C-6a (δ_C,
310 109.3) and C-7 (δ_C, 151.1) confirmed the skeleton of compound **3**. On the basis of
311 these observations and other HMBC correlations (Fig. 6 and Table 1), the structure of
312 **P3** was established and named 3-hydroxy-4H-pyrazolo[4,5-*d*]pyridazin-7(1H)-one.

313 Compound **4 (P4)**, the molecular formula: C₅H₆N₂O₂, positive ESI-MS m/z:
314 127.1 [M+H]⁺; δ, 7.25 (1H, s, H-3), 10.59 (1H, s, H-4), 11.00 (1H, s, H-5), 1.73 (3H,
315 s, CH); ¹³C-NMR (150 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆): δ, 108.1 (C-5), 138.2 (C-6), 152.0 (C-2),
316 165.4 (C-4), 12.3 (CH₃). The ¹H-NMR and ¹³C-NMR spectral data were in agreement
317 with those of thymine^{16,29}.

318 Compound **5 (P7)**, the molecular formula: C₁₂H₁₄N₂O₄S, positive ESI-MS m/z:

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4 319 282.7 [M+H]⁺; ¹H-NMR (600 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆): δ , 11.36 (1H, s, NH), 7.33 (1H, d, *J*
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6 320 = 11.2, 2-H), 3.26 (2H, t, *J* = 5.8 Hz, H-3), 4.06 (2H, t, *J* = 5.8 Hz, H-4), 3.74 (6H, s,
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8 321 CH₃-N⁺-CH₃), 7.35 (1H, d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 7-H), 7.46 (1H, d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 8-H); ¹³C-NMR
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10 322 (150 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆): δ , 132.1 (C-1a), 120.7 (C-1b), 120.7 (C-2), 105.2 (C-2a),
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12 323 18.7(C-3), 68.2 (C-4), 125.4 (C-5a), 137.4 (C-6), 119.2 (C-7), 105.2 (C-8), 54.5 (CH₃),
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14 324 54.5 (CH₃). The ¹H-NMR and ¹³C-NMR spectral data were in agreement with those of
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16 325 bufothionine^{16,31}.
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327 4. Conclusions

328 In this study, a new separation method based on a homemade polar-modified
329 C18HCE was developed to purify the polar compounds from *Bufo bufo gargarizans*
330 Cantor. With the application of a polar-modified C18 column, the poor retention
331 problem was resolved and good resolutions were obtained as well. Therefore, seven
332 high pure compounds were obtained via preparative HPLC. Among them, compound
333 **2 (P2)** was found to be hypoxanthine, which was isolated for the first time from skin
334 of *Bufo bufo gargarizans* Cantor. Compound **3 (P3)** was identified as a new
335 compound (3-hydroxy-4H-pyrazolo[4,5-d]pyridazin-7(1H)-one). Totally, seven
336 compounds were purified and five of them were identified by MS and NMR. As an
337 alternative method used to separate polar compounds under RPLC mode, the
338 established method was demonstrated to be feasible and potent for the separation and
339 purification of polar compounds from toad skin. This methodology is anticipated to be
340 extended to other complex mixtures, such as TCMs, pharmaceutical preparation and
341 biological samples.
342

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4 407 **Figure captions**
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8 409 **Fig. 1.** Preparative HPLC chromatogram of the methanol extract fraction on the
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10 410 XUnion C18 column (250 mm × 100 mm, I.D., 10 μm). The gradient elution
11 411 condition was shown in Section 2.4; flow rate: 330 mL/min; UV detection at 230 nm
12 412 (Fig. 1A); Analytical HPLC chromatogram of F1 on the XUnion C18 column (250
13 413 mm × 4.6 mm, I.D., 10 μm). The gradient elution condition was shown in Section 2.4;
14 414 flow rate: 0.7 mL/min; column temperature: 30 °C; UV detection at 230 nm (Fig. 1B).
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22 416 **Fig. 2.** HPLC chromatograms of F1 on XUnion C18 column (150 mm × 4.6 mm, I.D.,
23 417 5 μm) (A), XTerra MS C18 column (150 mm × 4.6 mm, I.D., 5 μm) (B), Symmetry
24 418 C18 column (150 mm × 4.6 mm, I.D., 5 μm) (C), XCharge C18PN column (150 mm
25 419 × 4.6 mm, I.D., 5 μm) (D), XAqua C18 column (150 mm × 4.6 mm, I.D., 5 μm) (E)
26 420 and C18HCE column (150 mm × 4.6 mm, I.D., 5 μm) (F). The gradient elution
27 421 condition is shown in Section 2.5; injection volume: 10 μL; flow rate: 1 mL/min;
28 422 column temperature: 30 °C; UV detection at 230 nm.
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38 424 **Fig. 3.** HPLC chromatograms of F1 on XAqua C18 column (250 mm × 4.6 mm, I.D.,
39 425 5 μm) (A) and C18HCE column (250 mm × 4.6 mm, I.D., 5 μm) (B). The gradient
40 426 elution condition is shown in Section 2.5; injection volume: 100 μL; flow rate: 1
41 427 mL/min; column temperature: 30 °C; UV detection at 230 nm.
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48 429 **Fig. 4.** Preparative chromatograms of F1 on C18HCE column (250 mm × 20 mm, I.D.,
49 430 5 μm). The gradient elution condition was shown in Section 2.8; injection volume:
50 431 800 μL; flow rate: 18 mL/min; column temperature: 30 °C; UV detection at 230 nm.
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56 433 **Fig. 5.** The chromatograms of F1 and seven purified compounds from F1. The
57 434 gradient elution condition was shown in Section 2.6; injection volume: 10 μL; flow
58 435 rate: 0.7 mL/min; column temperature: 30 °C; UV detection at 230 nm.
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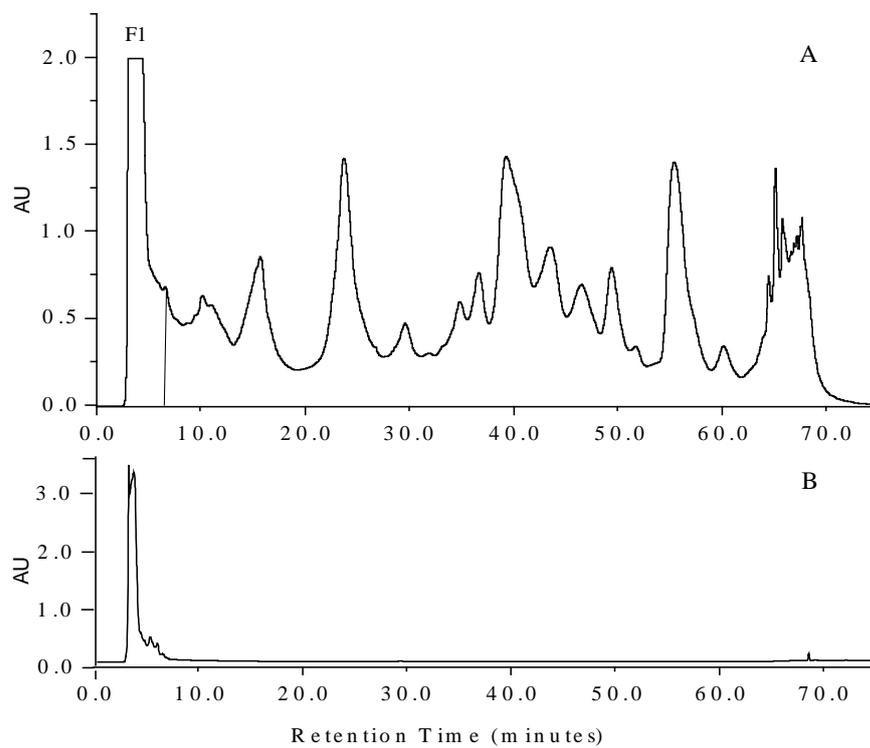
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437 **Fig. 6.** Structures of polar compounds **P1-4, P7** and HMBC correlations of compound
438 **P3.**

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4 467 **Figures**

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6 468 **Fig. 1**



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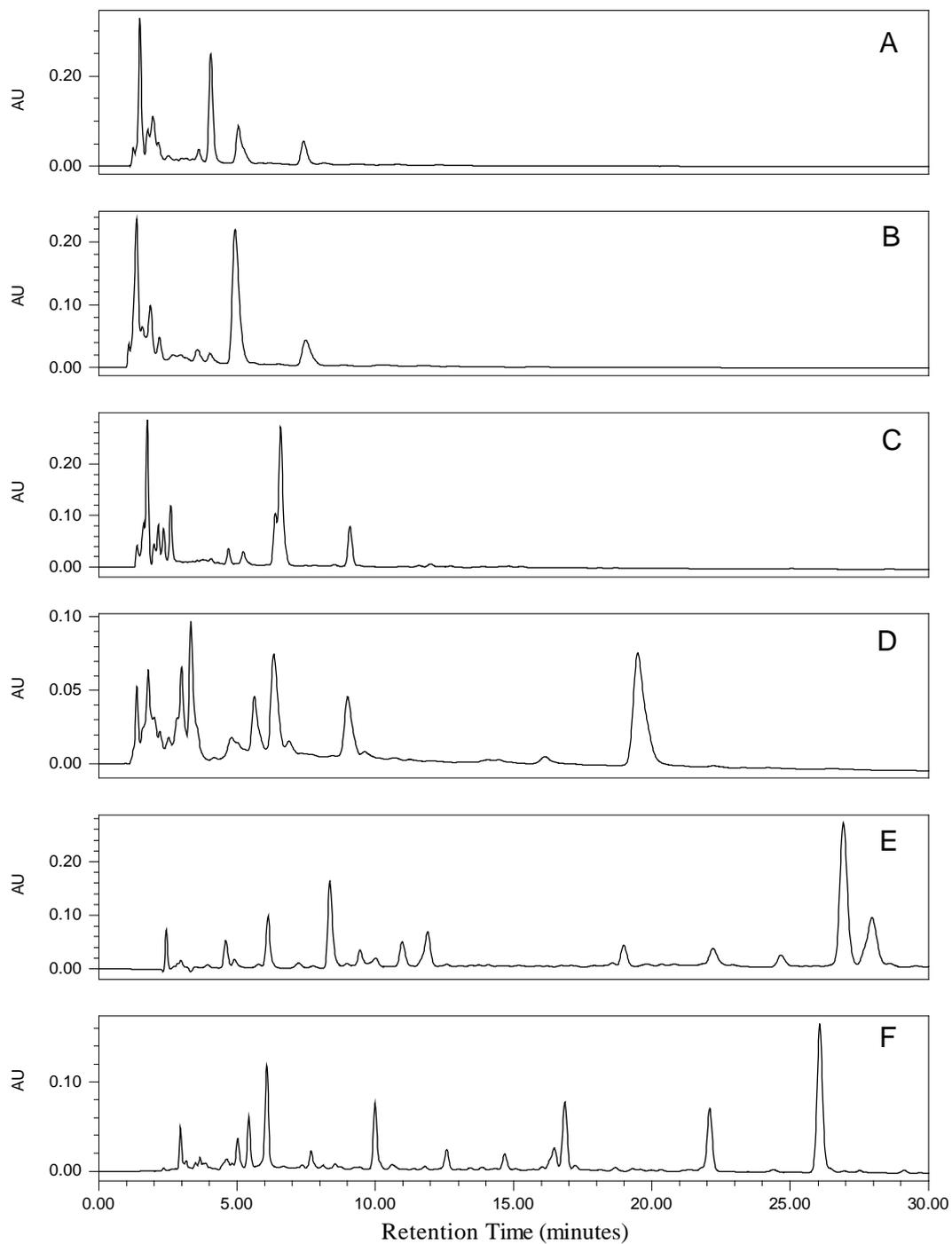
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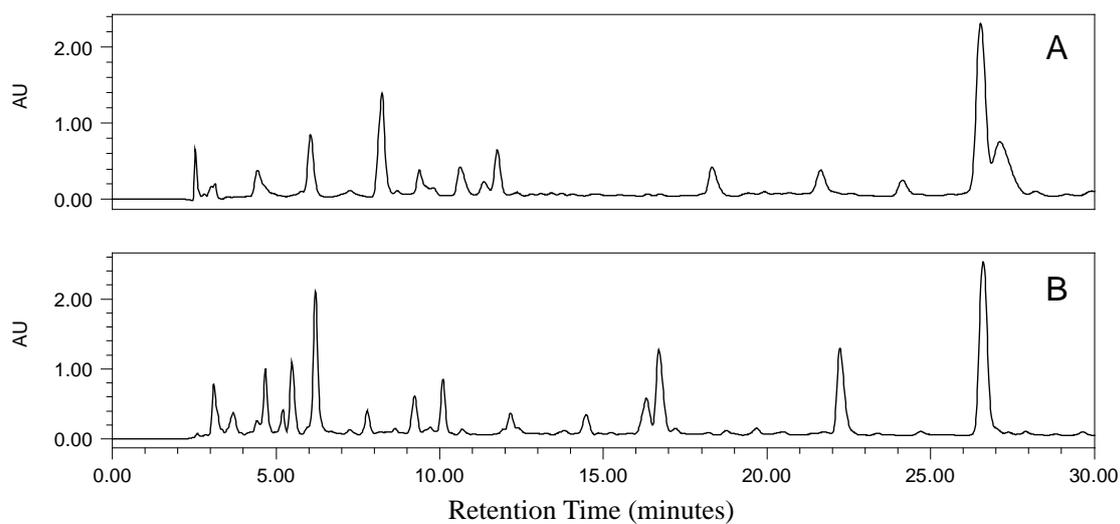
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486 **Fig. 2**



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493 **Fig. 3**

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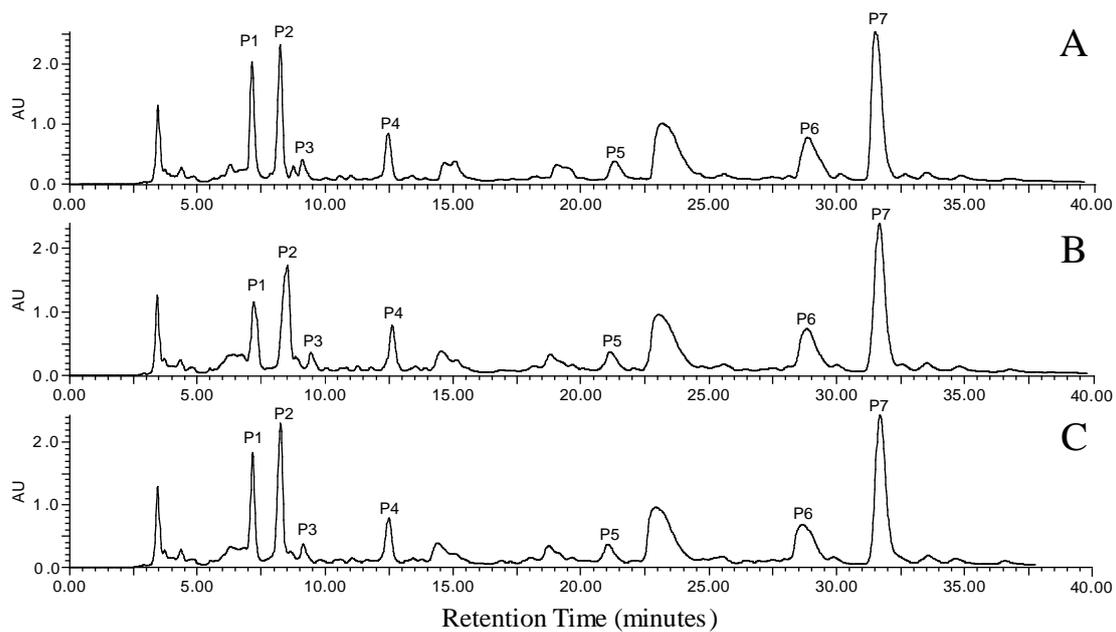
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515 **Fig. 4**

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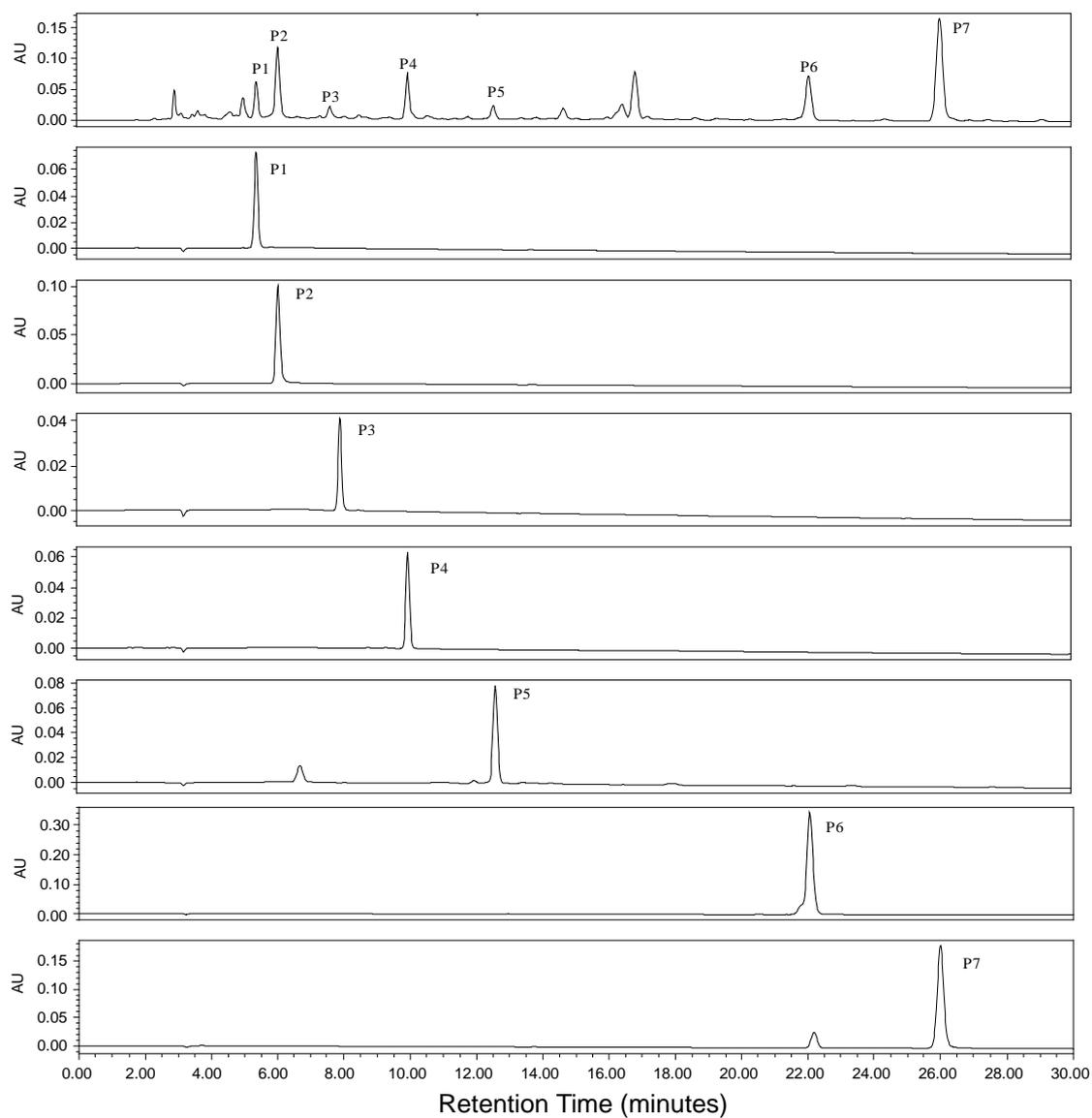
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Fig. 5



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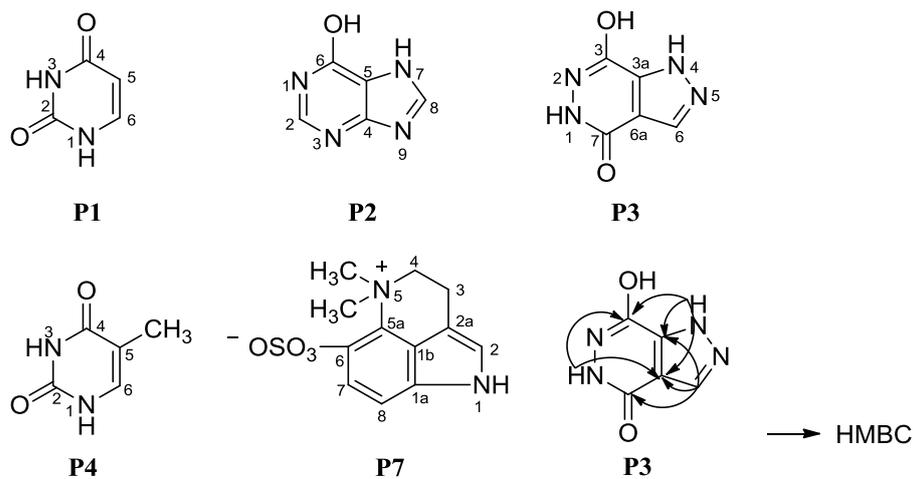
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547 **Fig. 6**

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Table 1. NMR Spectral data of **P3** (DMSO-*d*₆, δ in ppm)

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No.	δ_C	δ_H (J in Hz)	HMBC
1-NH		11.40	C-3, C-6a
2-N			
3-C	153.4		
3-OH		12.40	
3a-C	145.9		
4-NH		10.96	C-3, C-3a, C-6a
5-N			
6-C	145.1	7.88	C-3a, C-6a, C-7
6a-C	109.3		
7-C	151.1		