
Abstract
The resin of Pistacia lentiscus (L.) var. chia (Duham), an evergreen shrub belonging to the family Anacardiaceae and uniquely cultivated in southern Chios, is known as mastic. It has been used for more than 2500 years in traditional Greek medicine for treating several diseases such as gastralgia and peptic ulcers, while the actions of the gum are mentioned in the works of Herodotus, Dioscorides and Galen. Several Roman, Byzantine, Arab and European authors make extensive references to mastic's healing properties. Modern scientific research has justified the beneficial action of mastic to gastric diseases, by revealing its in vivo and in vitro activity against Helicobacter pylori, which is considered as the main cause for gastric ulcers. Furthermore, studies of the antimicrobial, antifungal, antioxidant, hypolipidemic, anti-inflammatory, anti-Crohn and anticancer activities of mastic have characterized it as a wide-range therapeutic agent and a potential source of nature-originated treatments.