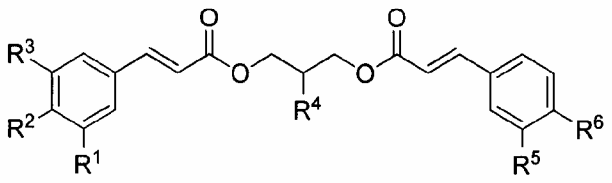
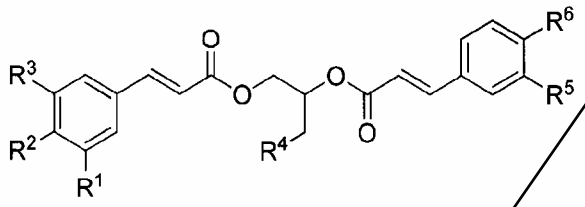
What is claimed is:

1. A compound of formula (I) or (I'):



(I)

or



(I')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

R^3 and R^4 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^5 is H, OH or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^6 is H or alkoxy,

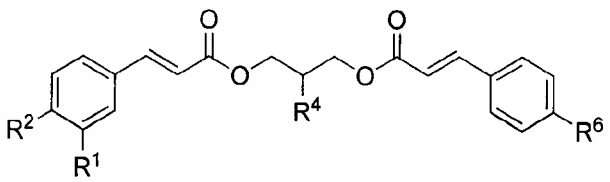
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof,

provided that the compound is not

(E)-2-acetoxy-3-(((E)-3-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)propyl 3-(4-methoxyphenyl)acrylate, or

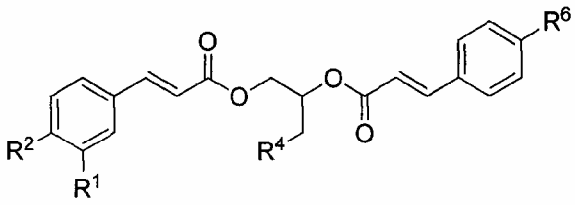
(E)-3-(((E)-3-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)-2-hydroxypropyl 3-(4-methoxyphenyl)acrylate.

2. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of formula (Ia) or (Ia'):



(Ia)

or


(Ia')

wherein:

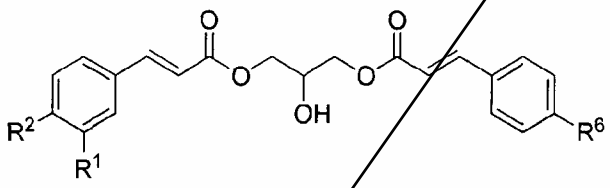
R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

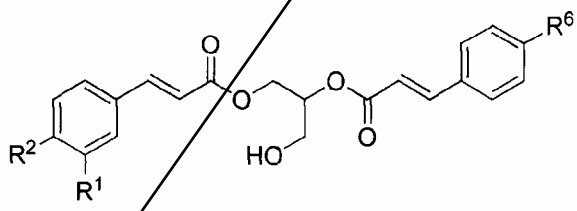
R^6 is H or alkoxy,

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

3. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of formula (Ib) or (Ib'):


(Ib)

or


(Ib')

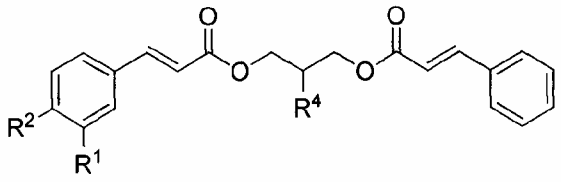
wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^6 is H or alkoxy,

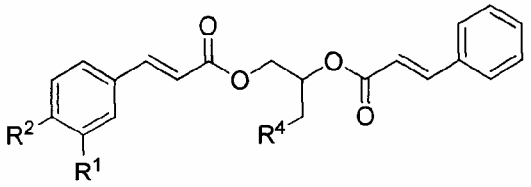
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

4. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of formula (Ic) or (Ic'):



(Ic)

or



(Ic')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

5. The compound according to claim 1, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both OH.

6. The compound according to claim 5, wherein R^4 is H.

7. The compound according to claim 5, wherein R^4 is OH.

8. The compound according to claim 6, wherein R^3 is H.

9. The compound according to claim 7, wherein R^3 is H.

10. The compound according to claim 1, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both alkoxy.

11. The compound according to claim 10, wherein R^4 is H.

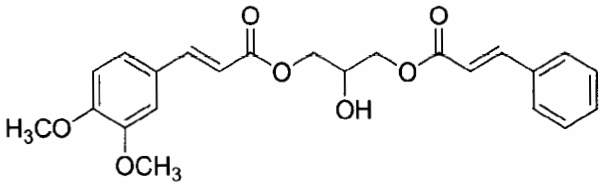
12. The compound according to claim 10, wherein R^4 is OH.

13. The compound according to claim 11, wherein R^3 is H.

14. The compound according to claim 12, wherein R^3 is H.

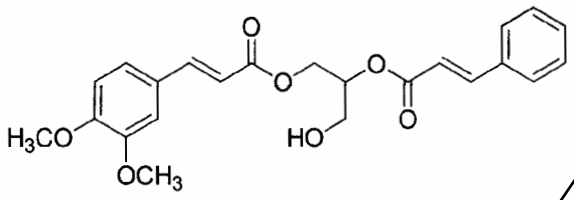
15. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of the formula (Id) or

(Id'):



(Id)

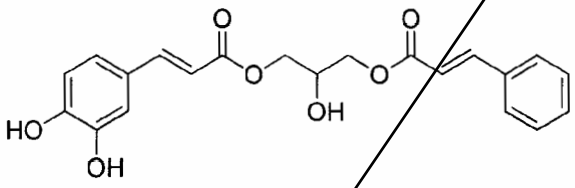
or



(Id')

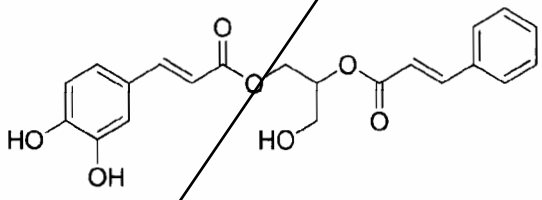
.

16. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ie) or (Ie'):



(Ie)

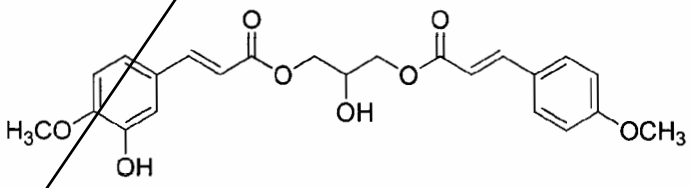
or



(Ie')

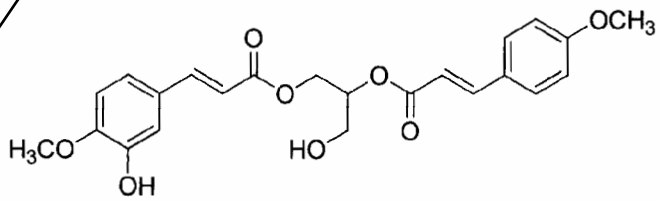
.

17. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of the formula (If) or (If'):



(If)

or

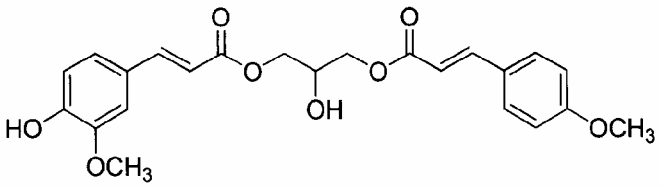


(If')

.

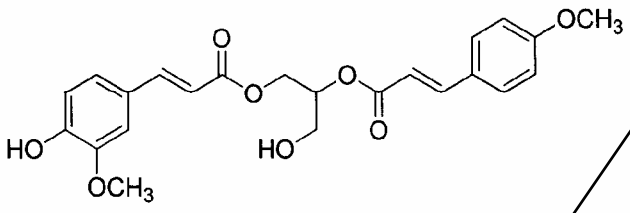
18. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ig) or

(Ig'):



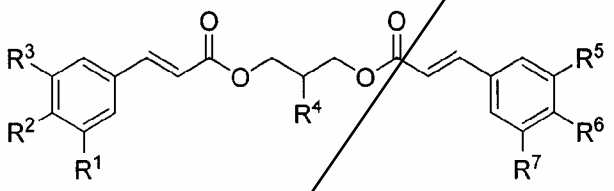
(Ig)

or



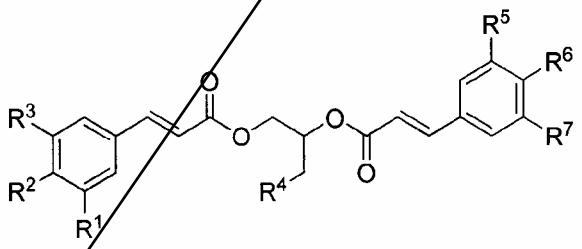
(Ig')

19. A method for treating a cancer in a subject, comprising administering to the subject a compound of formula (II) or (II'):



(II)

or

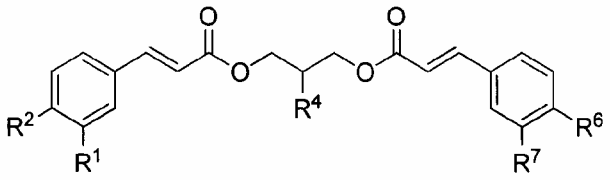


(II')

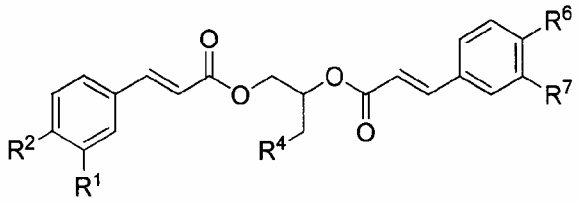
wherein R^1, R^2, R^3, R^4, R^5, R^6 and R^7 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof,

provided that the compound is other than (2E,2'E)-2-acetoxypropane-1,3-diyl bis(3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)acrylate) and (E)-2-acetoxy-3-(((E)-3-(4-hydroxy-3-methoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)propyl 3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)acrylate.

20. The method according to claim 19, wherein the compound is of formula (IIa) or (IIa'):

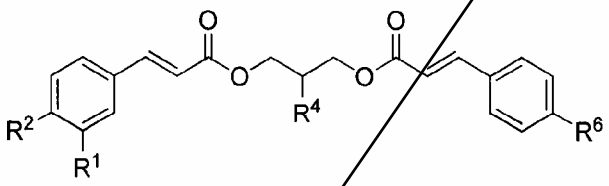

(IIa)

or

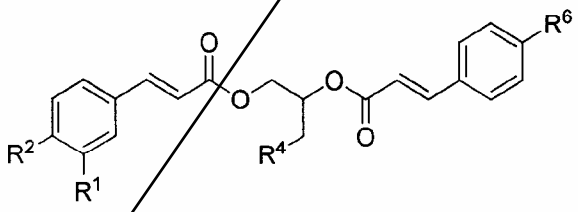

(IIa')

wherein R^1, R^2, R^4, R^6 and R^7 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

21. The method according to claim 19, wherein the compound is of formula (Ia) or (Ia'):


(Ia)

or


(Ia')

wherein:

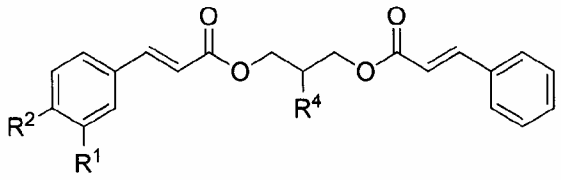
R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^6 is H, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

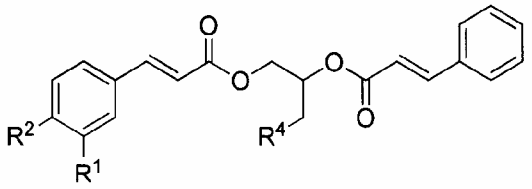
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

22. The method according to claim 19, wherein the compound is of formula (Ic) or (Ic'):



(Ic)

or



(Ic')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

23. The method according to claim 19, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both OH.

24. The method according to claim 23, wherein R^4 is H.

25. The method according to claim 21, wherein R^4 is OH.

26. The method according to claim 24, wherein R^3 is H.

27. The method according to claim 25, wherein R^3 is H.

28. The method according to claim 19, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both alkoxy.

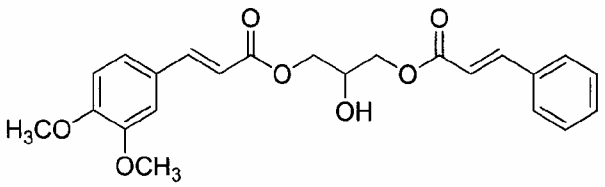
29. The method according to claim 28, wherein R^4 is H.

30. The method according to claim 28, wherein R^4 is OH.

31. The method according to claim 29, wherein R^3 is H.

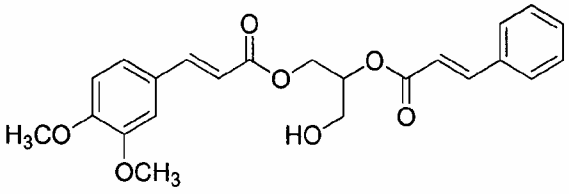
32. The method according to claim 30, wherein R^3 is H.

33. The method according to claim 19, wherein the compound is of the formula (Id) or (Id'):



(Id)

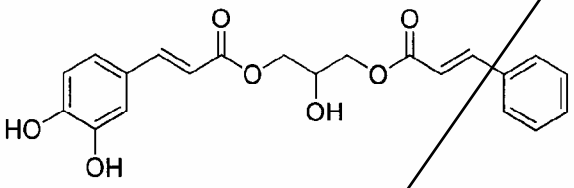
or



(Id')

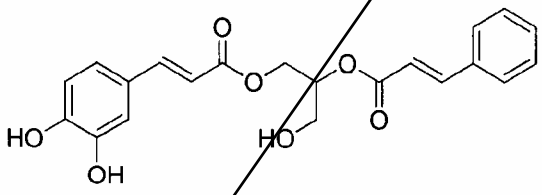
.

34. The method according to claim 19, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ie) or (Ie'):



(Ie)

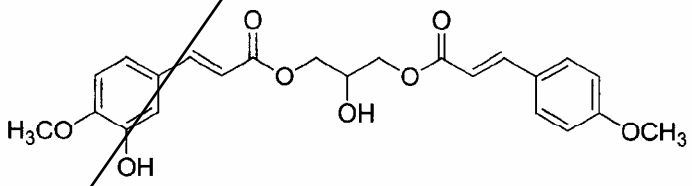
or



(Ie')

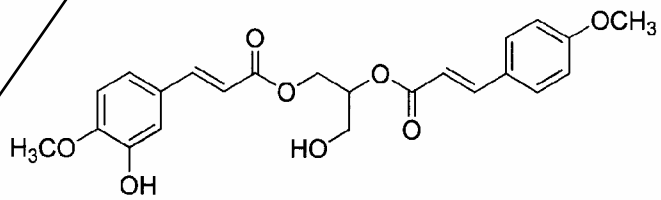
.

35. The method according to claim 19, wherein the compound is of the formula (If) or (If'):



(If)

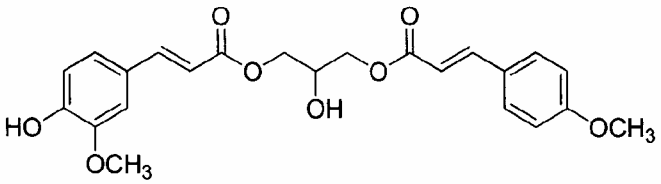
o



(If')

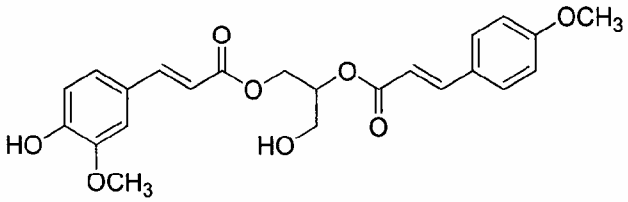
.

36. The method according to claim 19, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ig) or (Ig'):



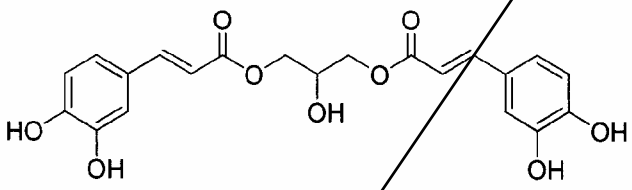
(Ig)

or



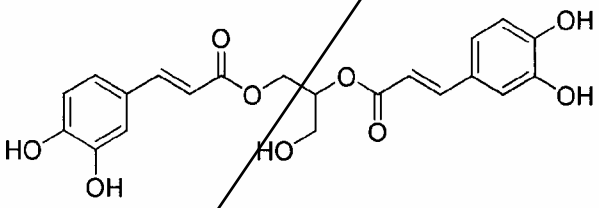
(Ig')

37. The method according to claim 19, wherein the compound is of the formula (IIb) or (IIb'):



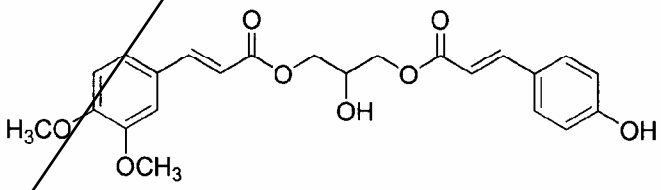
(IIb)

or



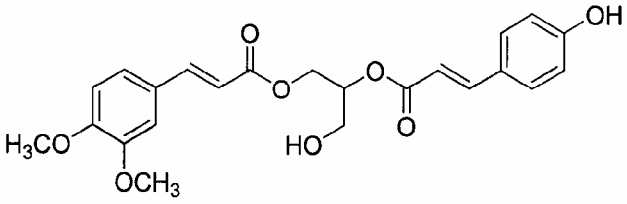
(IIb')

38. The method according to claim 19, wherein the compound is of the formula (IIc) or (IIc'):



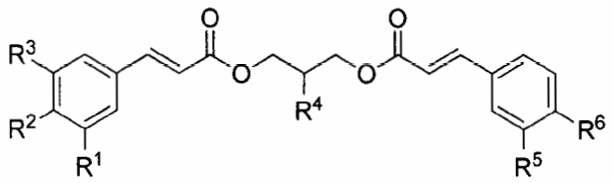
(IIc)

or

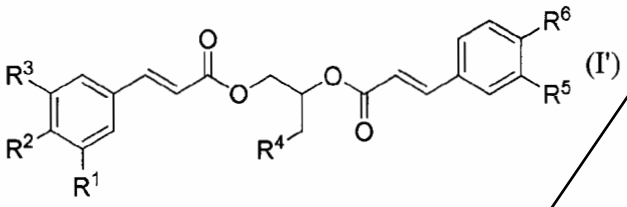


(IIc')

39. A pharmaceutical composition comprising:


(I)

or


(I')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

R^3 and R^4 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^5 is H, OH or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^6 is H or alkoxy,

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and

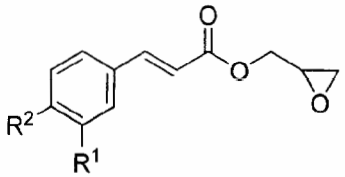
a pharmaceutically acceptable diluent or carrier,

provided that the compound is not

(E)-2-acetoxy-3-(((E)-3-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)propyl 3-(4-methoxyphenyl)acrylate, or

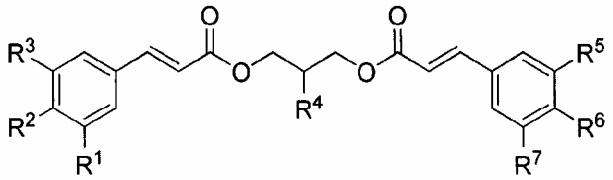
(E)-3-(((E)-3-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)-2-hydroxypropyl 3-(4-methoxyphenyl)acrylate.

40. An intermediate of the formula:



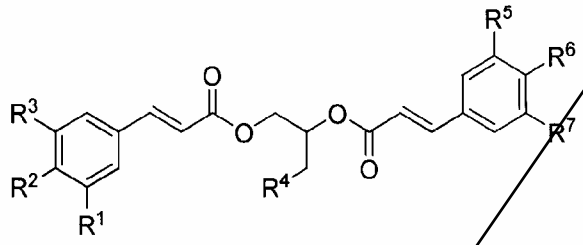
wherein R^1 and R^2 are both alkoxy.

41. A use of a compound of formula (II) or (II'):



(II)

or



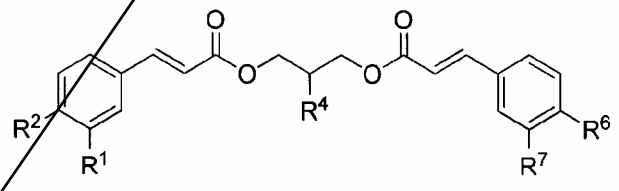
(II')

wherein R^1, R^2, R^3, R^4, R^5, R^6 and R^7 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof,

wherein the compound is other than (2E,2'E)-2-acetoxypropane-1,3-diyl bis(3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)acrylate) and (E)-2-acetoxy-3-(((E)-3-(4-hydroxy-3-methoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)propyl 3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)acrylate,

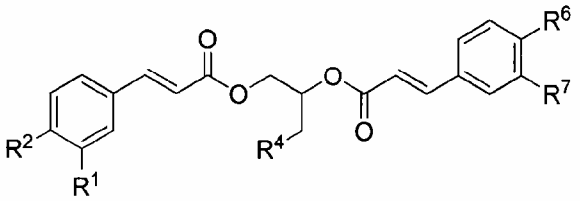
for preparing a medicament for treating cancer in a subject.

42. The use according to claim 41, wherein the compound is of formula (IIa) or (IIa'):



(IIa)

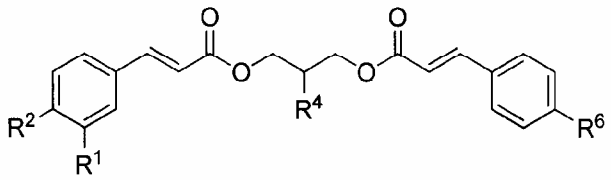
or



(IIa')

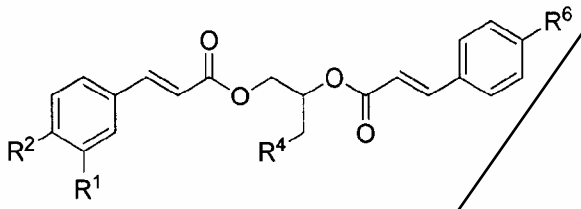
wherein R^1, R^2, R^4, R^6 and R^7 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

43. The use according to claim 41, wherein the compound is of formula (Ia) or (Ia'):



(Ia)

or

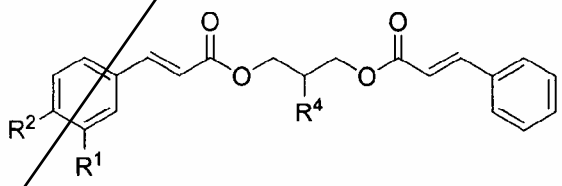


(Ia')

wherein:

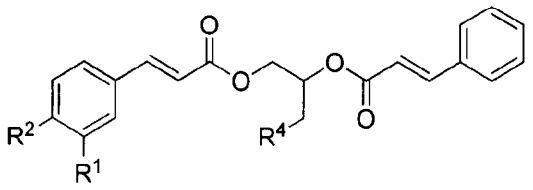
R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,
R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and
R^6 is H, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

44. The use according to claim 41, wherein the compound is of formula (Ic) or (Ic'):



(Ic)

or



(Ic')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and
R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

45. The use according to claim 41, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both OH.

46. The use according to claim 45, wherein R^4 is H.

47. The use according to claim 43, wherein R^4 is OH.

48. The use according to claim 46, wherein R^3 is H.

49. The use according to claim 47, wherein R^3 is H.

50. The use according to claim 41, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both alkoxy.

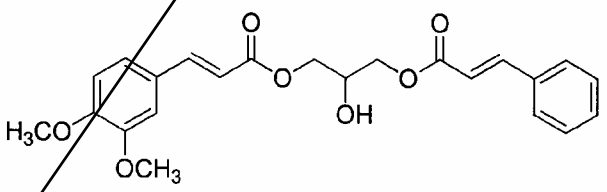
51. The use according to claim 50, wherein R^4 is H.

52. The use according to claim 50, wherein R^4 is OH.

53. The use according to claim 51, wherein R^3 is H.

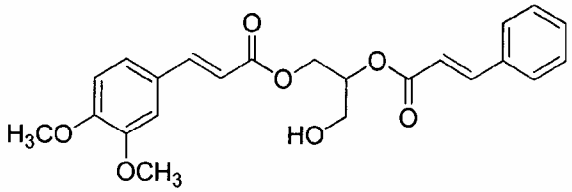
54. The use according to claim 52, wherein R^3 is H.

55. The use according to claim 41, wherein the compound is of the formula (Id) or (Id'):



(Id)

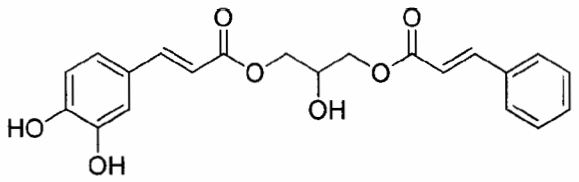
or



(Id')

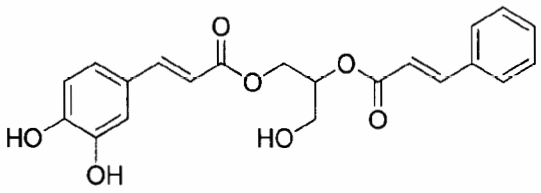
.

56. The use according to claim 41, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ie) or (Ie'):



(Ie)

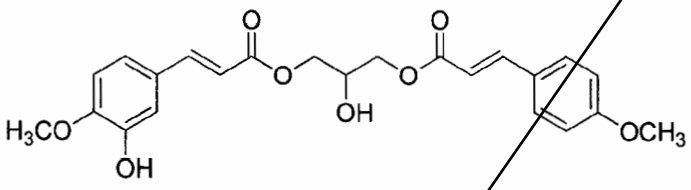
or



(Ie')

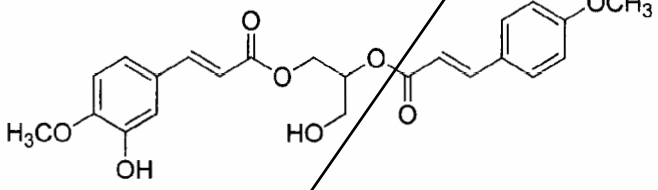
.

57. The use according to claim 41, wherein the compound is of the formula (If) or (If'):



(If)

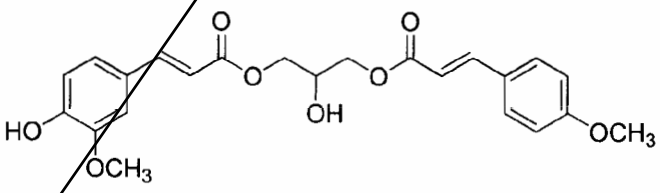
or



(If')

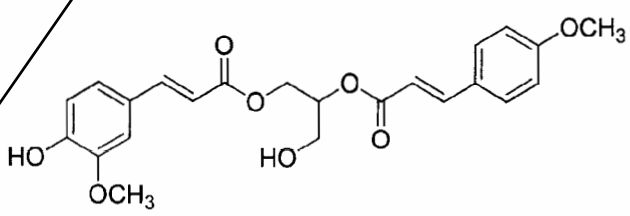
.

58. The use according to claim 41, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ig) or (Ig'):



(Ig)

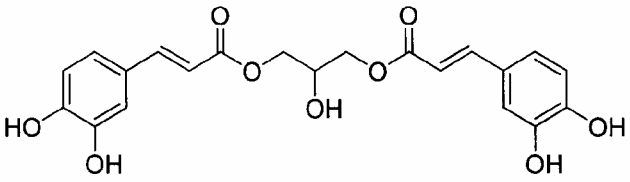
or



(Ig')

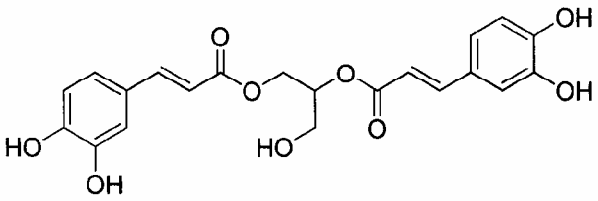
.

59. The use according to claim 41, wherein the compound is of the formula (IIb) or (IIb'):



(IIb)

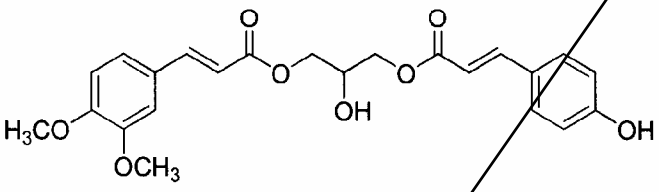
or



(IIb')

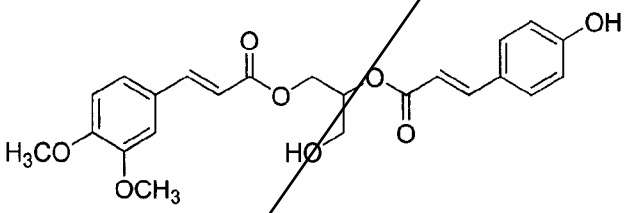
.

60. The use according to claim 41, wherein the compound is of the formula (IIc) or (IIc'):



(IIc)

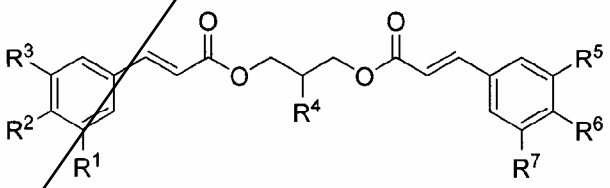
or



(IIc')

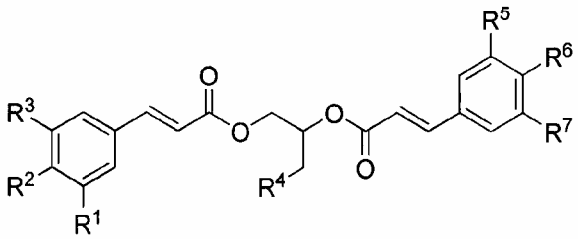
.

61. A use of a compound of formula (II) or (II'):



(II)

or



(II')

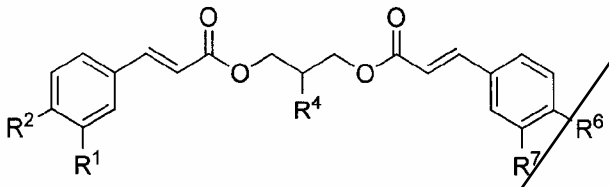
wherein R^1, R^2, R^3, R^4, R^5, R^6 and R^7 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, or

a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof,

wherein the compound is other than (2E,2'E)-2-acetoxypropane-1,3-diyl bis(3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)acrylate) and (E)-2-acetoxy-3-(((E)-3-(4-hydroxy-3-methoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)propyl 3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)acrylate,

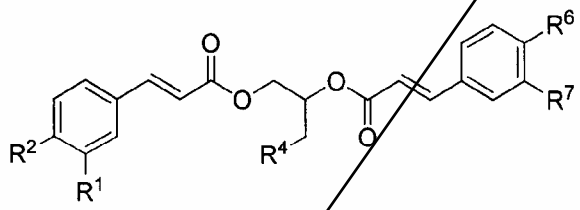
for killing cancer cells.

62. The use according to claim 61, wherein the compound is of formula (IIa) or (IIa'):



(IIa)

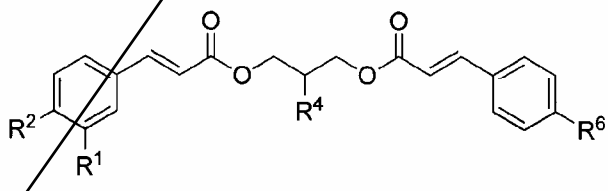
or



(IIa')

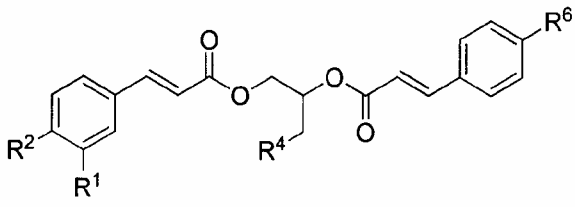
wherein R^1, R^2, R^4, R^6 and R^7 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

63. The use according to claim 61, wherein the compound is of formula (Ia) or (Ia'):



(Ia)

or



(Ia')

wherein:

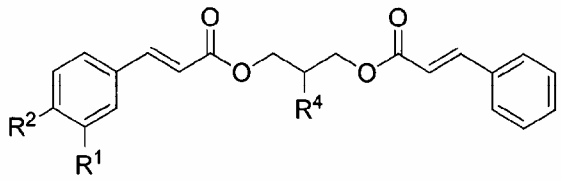
R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^6 is H, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

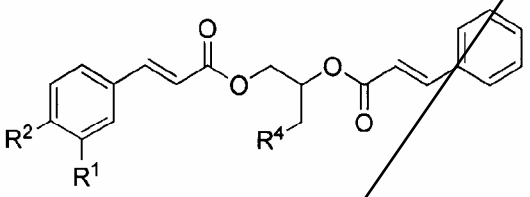
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

64. The use according to claim 61, wherein the compound is of formula (Ic) or (Ic'):



(Ic)

or



(Ic')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

65. The use according to claim 61, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both OH.

66. The use according to claim 65, wherein R^4 is H.

67. The use according to claim 63, wherein R^4 is OH.

68. The use according to claim 66, wherein R^3 is H.

69. The use according to claim 67, wherein R^3 is H.

70. The use according to claim 61, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both alkoxy.

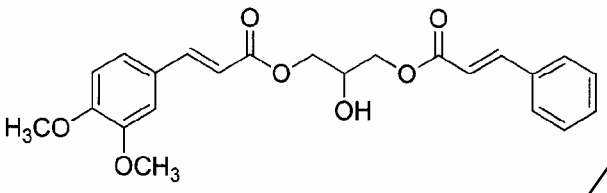
71. The use according to claim 70, wherein R^4 is H.

72. The use according to claim 70, wherein R^4 is OH.

73. The use according to claim 71, wherein R^3 is H.

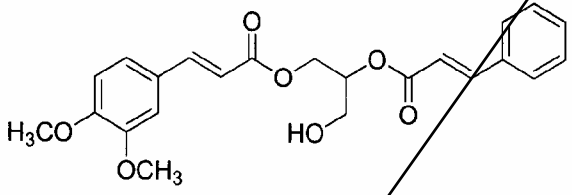
74. The use according to claim 72, wherein R^3 is H.

75. The use according to claim 61, wherein the compound is of the formula (Id) or (Id'):



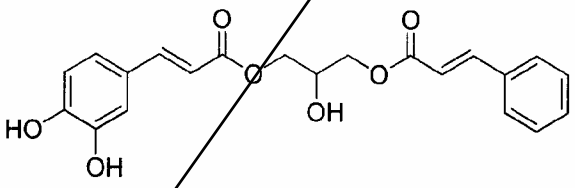
(Id)

or



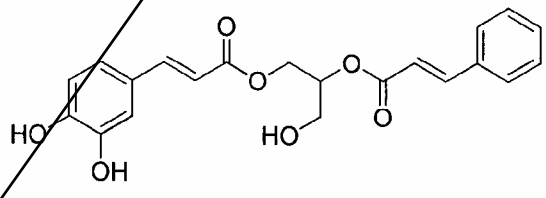
(Id')

76. The use according to claim 61, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ie) or (Ie'):



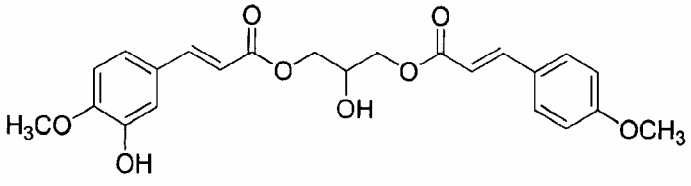
(Ie)

or



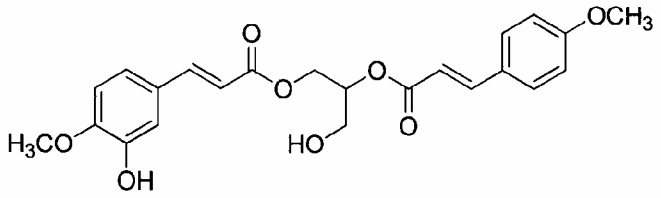
(Ie')

77. The use according to claim 61, wherein the compound is of the formula (If) or (If'):



(If)

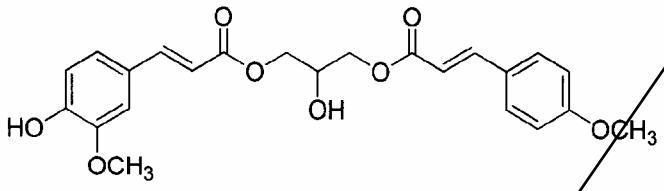
or



(If')

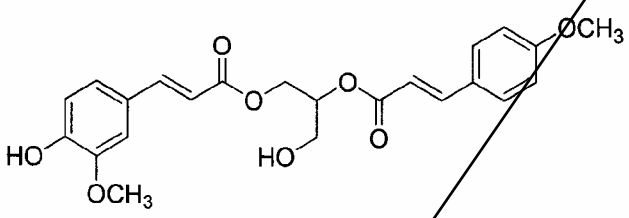
.

78. The use according to claim 61, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ig) or (Ig'):



(Ig)

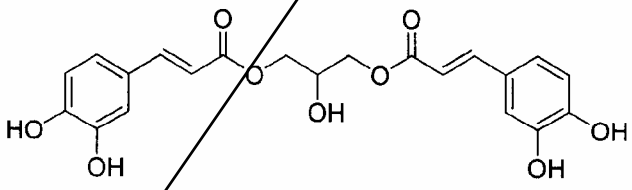
or



(Ig')

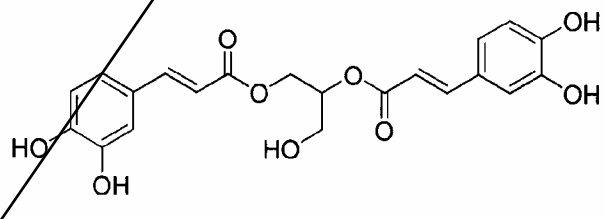
.

79. The use according to claim 61, wherein the compound is of the formula (IIb) or (IIb'):



(IIb)

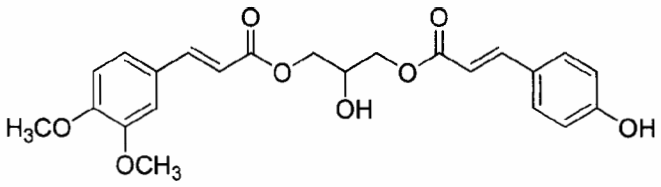
or



(IIb')

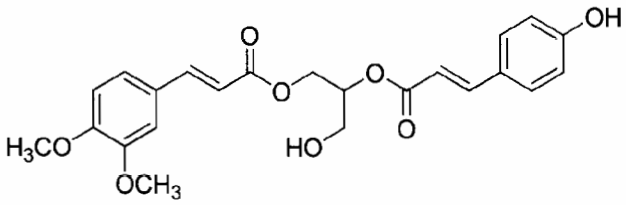
.

80. The use according to claim 61, wherein the compound is of the formula (IIc) or (IIc'):



(IIc)

or



(IIc')

81. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 1-18 for preparing a medicament for treating cancer in a subject.

82. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 1-18 for killing cancer cells.

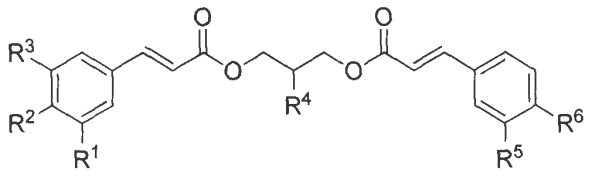
83. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 1-18 for killing cancer cells by apoptosis.

84. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 19-38 for killing cancer cells by apoptosis.

85. A method of killing cancer cells by apoptosis, comprising contacting the cancer cells with the compound defined in any one of claims 1-38.

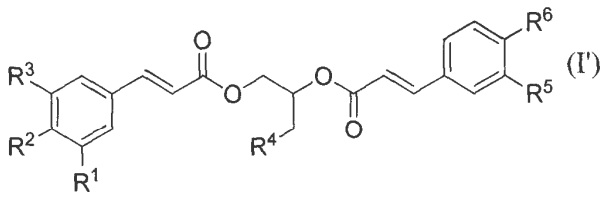
What is claimed is:

1. A compound of formula (I) or (I'):



(I)

or



(I')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

R^3 and R^4 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^5 is H, OH or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^6 is H or alkoxy,

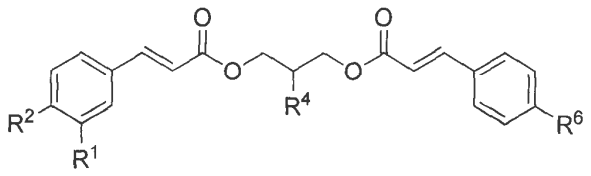
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof,

provided that the compound is not

(E)-2-acetoxy-3-(((E)-3-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)propyl 3-(4-methoxyphenyl)acrylate, or

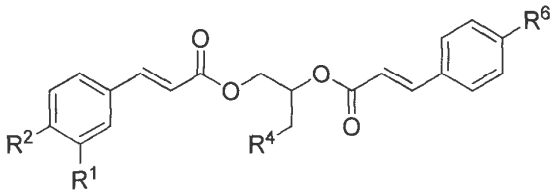
(E)-3-(((E)-3-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)-2-hydroxypropyl 3-(4-methoxyphenyl)acrylate.

2. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of formula (Ia) or (Ia'):



(Ia)

or



(Ia')

wherein:

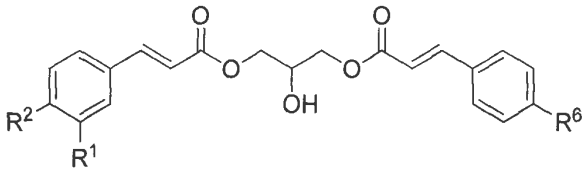
R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^6 is H or alkoxy,

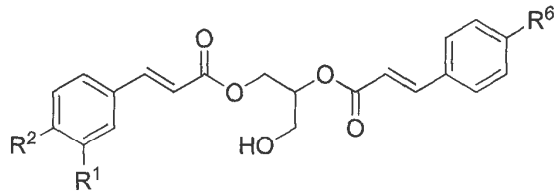
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

3. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of formula (Ib) or (Ib'):



(Ib)

or



(Ib')

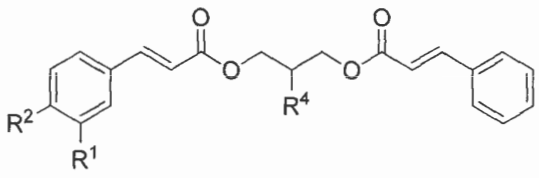
wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^6 is H or alkoxy,

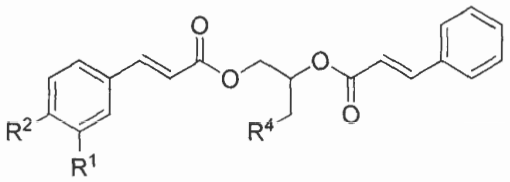
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

4. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of formula (Ic) or (Ic'):



(Ic)

or



(Ic')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and
R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

5. The compound according to claim 1, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both OH.

6. The compound according to claim 5, wherein R^4 is H.

7. The compound according to claim 5, wherein R^4 is OH.

8. The compound according to claim 6, wherein R^3 is H.

9. The compound according to claim 7, wherein R^3 is H.

10. The compound according to claim 1, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both alkoxy.

11. The compound according to claim 10, wherein R^4 is H.

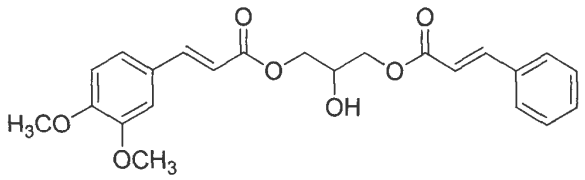
12. The compound according to claim 10, wherein R^4 is OH.

13. The compound according to claim 11, wherein R^3 is H.

14. The compound according to claim 12, wherein R^3 is H.

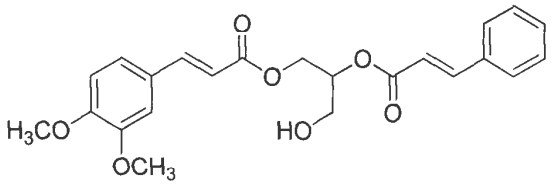
15. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of the formula (Id) or

(Id'):



(Id)

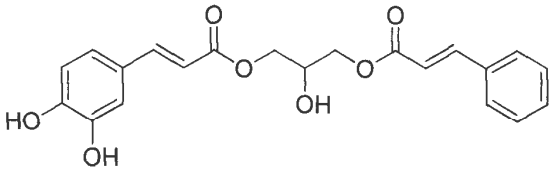
or



(Id')

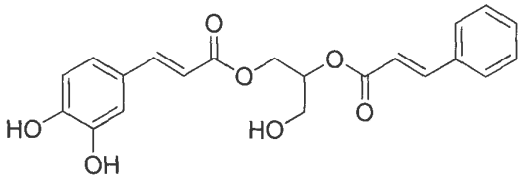
.

16. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ie) or (Ie'):



(Ie)

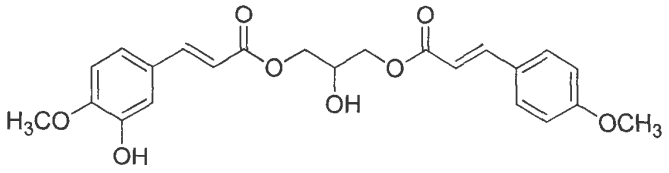
or



(Ie')

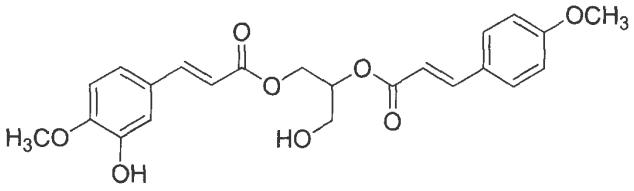
.

17. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of the formula (If) or (If'):



(If)

or

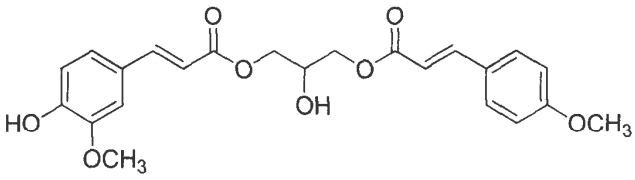


(If')

.

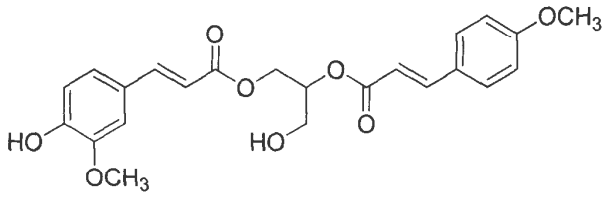
18. The compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ig) or

(Ig'):



(Ig)

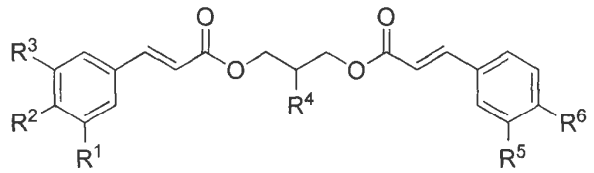
or



(Ig')

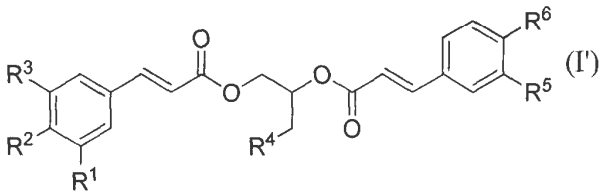
.

19. A pharmaceutical composition comprising:



(I)

or



(I')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,

R^3 and R^4 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^5 is H, OH or alkylcarbonyloxy, and

R^6 is H or alkoxy,

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and

a pharmaceutically acceptable diluent or carrier,

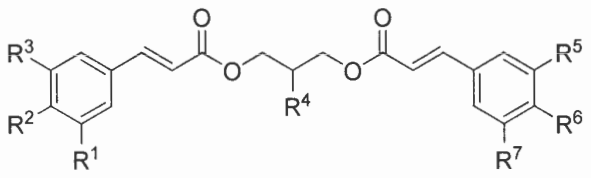
provided that the compound is not

(E)-2-acetoxy-3-(((E)-3-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)propyl 3-(4-

methoxyphenyl)acrylate, or

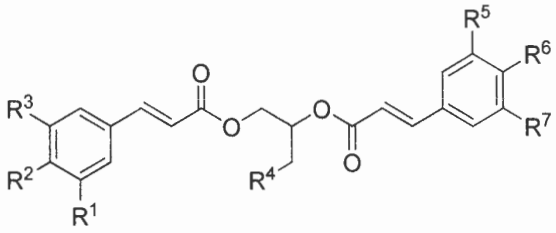
(E)-3-(((E)-3-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)-2-hydroxypropyl 3-(4-methoxyphenyl)acrylate.

20. A use of a compound of formula (II) or (II'):



(II)

or



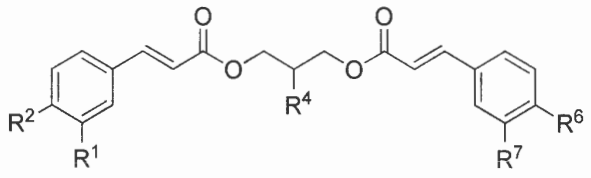
(II')

wherein R^1, R^2, R^3, R^4, R^5, R^6 and R^7 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof,

wherein the compound is other than (2E,2'E)-2-acetoxypropane-1,3-diyl bis(3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)acrylate) and (E)-2-acetoxy-3-(((E)-3-(4-hydroxy-3-methoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)propyl 3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)acrylate,

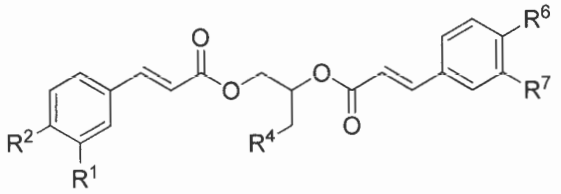
for preparing a medicament for treating cancer in a subject.

21. The use according to claim 20, wherein the compound is of formula (IIa) or (IIa'):



(IIa)

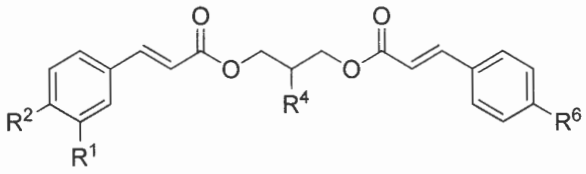
or



(IIa')

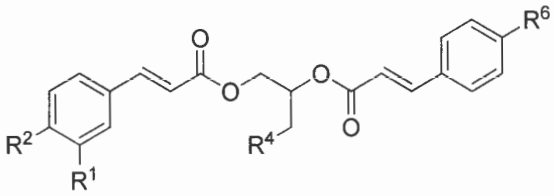
wherein R^1, R^2, R^4, R^6 and R^7 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

22. The use according to claim 20, wherein the compound is of formula (Ia) or (Ia'):



(Ia)

or

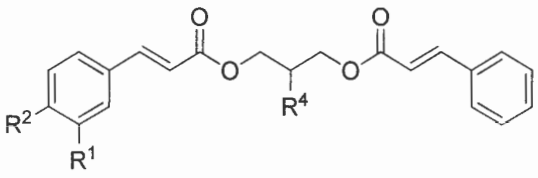


(Ia')

wherein:

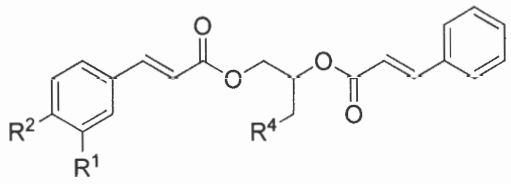
R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,
R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and
R^6 is H, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

23. The use according to claim 20, wherein the compound is of formula (Ic) or (Ic'):



(Ic)

or



(Ic')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and
R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

24. The use according to claim 20, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both OH.

25. The use according to claim 24, wherein R^4 is H.

26. The use according to claim 22, wherein R^4 is OH.

27. The use according to claim 25, wherein R^3 is H.

28. The use according to claim 26, wherein R^3 is H.

29. The use according to claim 20, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both alkoxy.

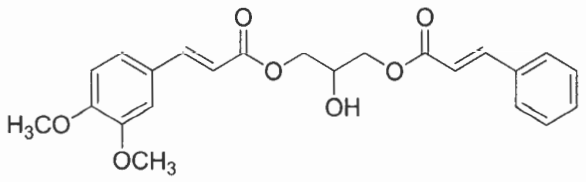
30. The use according to claim 29, wherein R^4 is H.

31. The use according to claim 29, wherein R^4 is OH.

32. The use according to claim 30, wherein R^3 is H.

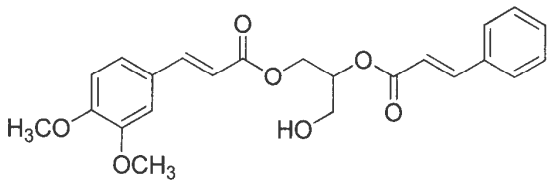
33. The use according to claim 31, wherein R^3 is H.

34. The use according to claim 20, wherein the compound is of the formula (Id) or (Id'):



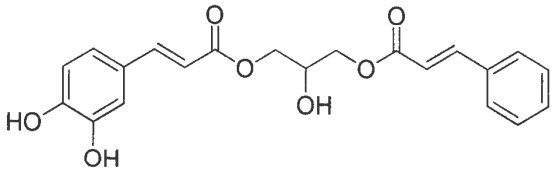
(Id)

or



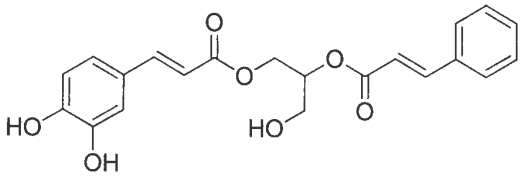
(Id')

35. The use according to claim 20, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ie) or (Ie'):



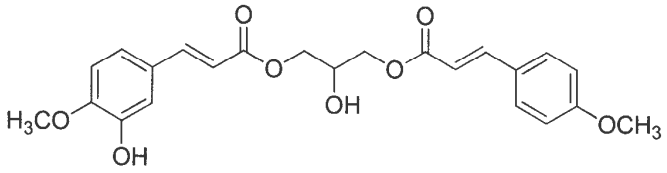
(Ie)

or



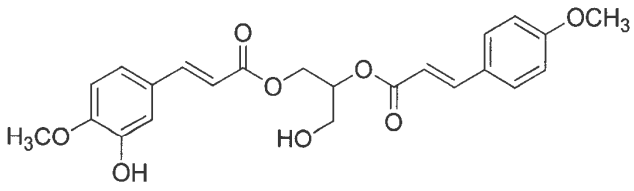
(Ie')

36. The use according to claim 20, wherein the compound is of the formula (If) or (If'):



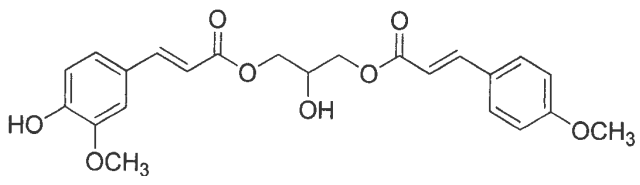
(If)

or



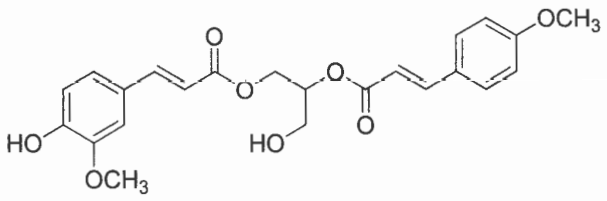
(If')

37. The use according to claim 20, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ig) or (Ig'):



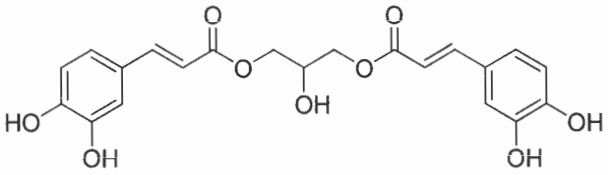
(Ig)

or



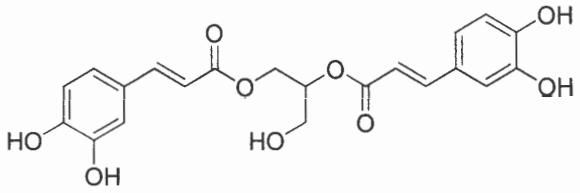
(Ig')

38. The use according to claim 20, wherein the compound is of the formula (IIb) or (IIb'):



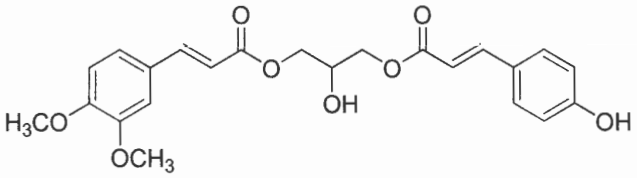
(IIb)

or



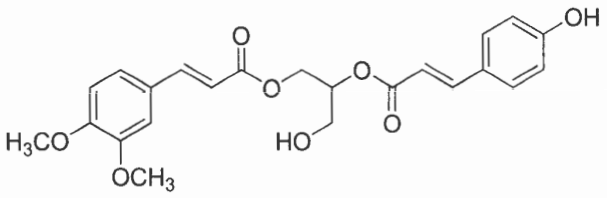
(IIb')

39. The use according to claim 20, wherein the compound is of the formula (IIc) or (IIc'):



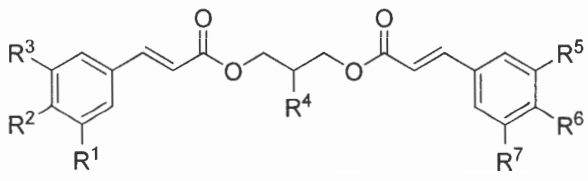
(IIc)

or



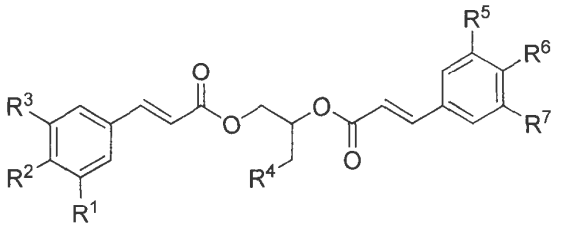
(IIc')

40. A use of a compound of formula (II) or (II'):



(II)

or



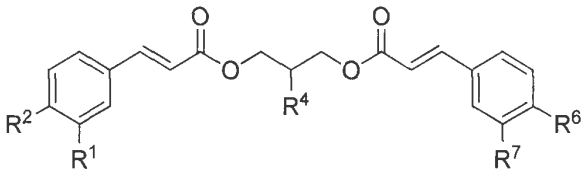
(II')

wherein R^1, R^2, R^3, R^4, R^5, R^6 and R^7 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof,

wherein the compound is other than (2E,2'E)-2-acetoxypropane-1,3-diyl bis(3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)acrylate) and (E)-2-acetoxy-3-(((E)-3-(4-hydroxy-3-methoxyphenyl)acryloyl)oxy)propyl 3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)acrylate,

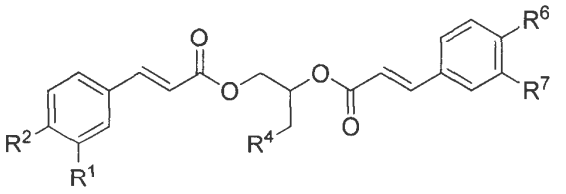
for killing cancer cells.

41. The use according to claim 40, wherein the compound is of formula (IIa) or (IIa'):



(IIa)

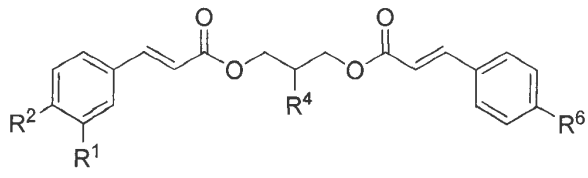
or



(IIa')

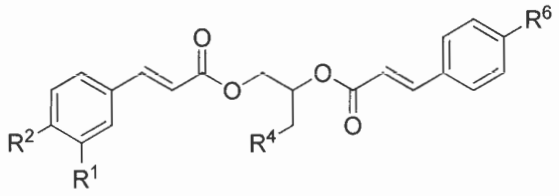
wherein R^1, R^2, R^4, R^6 and R^7 are independently H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

42. The use according to claim 40, wherein the compound is of formula (Ia) or (Ia'):



(Ia)

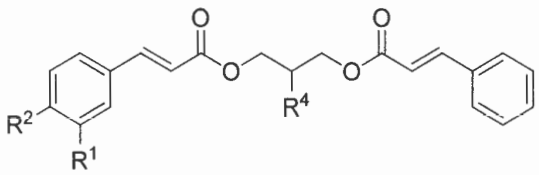
or


(Ia')

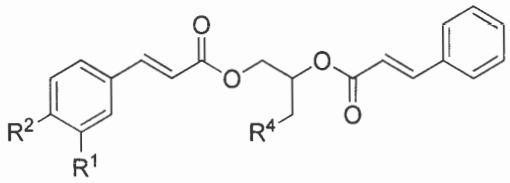
wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,
R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and
R^6 is H, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

43. The use according to claim 40, wherein the compound is of formula (Ic) or (Ic'):


(Ic)

or


(Ic')

wherein:

R^1 and R^2 are independently OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy, and
R^4 is H, OH, alkoxy or alkylcarbonyloxy,
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

44. The use according to claim 40, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both OH.

45. The use according to claim 44, wherein R^4 is H.

46. The use according to claim 42, wherein R^4 is OH.

47. The use according to claim 45, wherein R^3 is H.

48. The use according to claim 46, wherein R^3 is H.

49. The use according to claim 40, wherein R^1 and R^2 are both alkoxy.

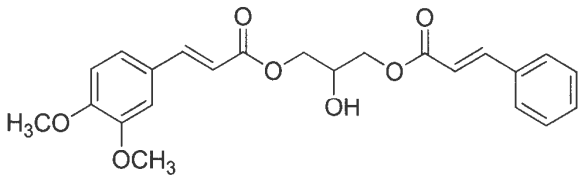
50. The use according to claim 49, wherein R^4 is H.

51. The use according to claim 49, wherein R^4 is OH.

52. The use according to claim 50, wherein R^3 is H.

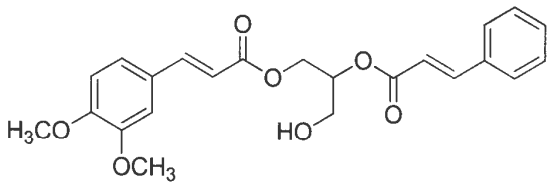
53. The use according to claim 51, wherein R^3 is H.

54. The use according to claim 40, wherein the compound is of the formula (Id) or (Id'):



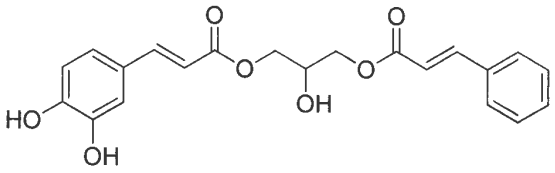
(Id)

or



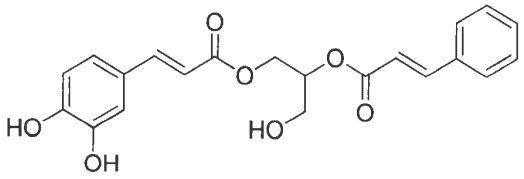
(Id')

55. The use according to claim 40, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ie) or (Ie'):



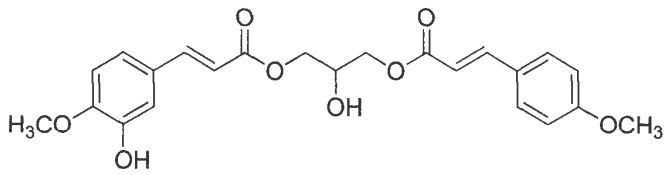
(Ie)

or



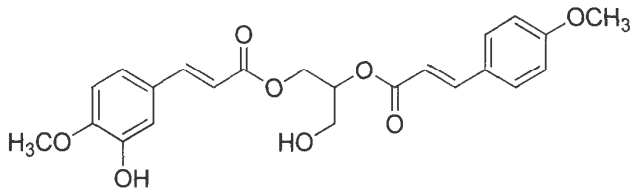
(Ie')

56. The use according to claim 40, wherein the compound is of the formula (If) or (If'):



(If)

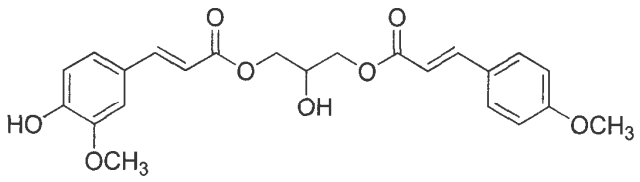
or



(If')

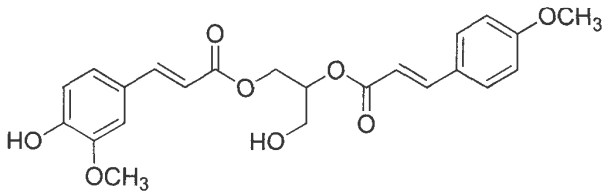
.

57. The use according to claim 40, wherein the compound is of the formula (Ig) or (Ig'):



(Ig)

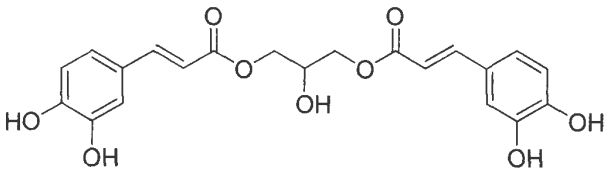
or



(Ig')

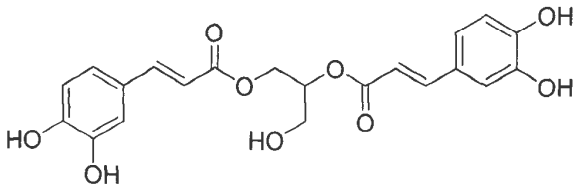
.

58. The use according to claim 40, wherein the compound is of the formula (IIb) or (IIb'):



(IIb)

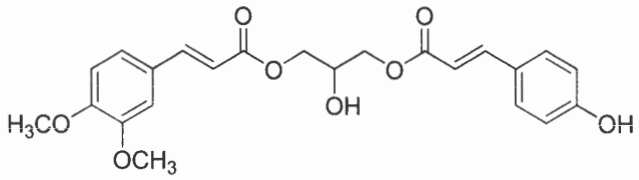
or



(IIb')

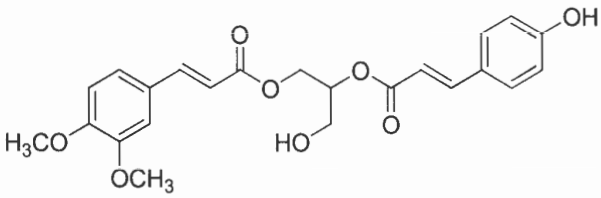
.

59. The use according to claim 40, wherein the compound is of the formula (IIc) or (IIc'):



(IIc)

or



(IIc')

.

60. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 1-18 for preparing a medicament for treating cancer in a subject.

61. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 1-18 for killing cancer cells.

62. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 1-18 and 40-59 for killing cancer cells by apoptosis.

63. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 1-18 and 20-39 for treating cancer in a subject.