

Differential Expression of *Streptococcus Pneumoniae* Genes during Pathogenesis



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Abstract	vii
Declaration	x
Acknowledgements	xi
List of abbreviations	xiii

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 The history of the pneumococcus	1
1.2 Cell structure	3
1.3 Pneumococcal pathogenesis	5
1.3.1 Nasopharyngeal colonisation	5
1.3.2 Risk factors for developing pneumococcal disease	7
1.3.3 Pneumococcal disease	9
1.3.4 Animal models of pathogenesis	12
1.4 Antibiotic therapy and resistance	13
1.5 Pneumococcal vaccines	14
1.5.1 Polysaccharide vaccines	15
1.5.2 Polysaccharide-protein conjugate vaccine	15
1.5.3 Serotype replacement	16
1.5.4 Protein vaccines	17
1.6 Important pneumococcal virulence factors	18
1.6.1 Choline binding proteins	19
1.6.1.1 <i>Choline binding protein A (CbpA)</i>	19
1.6.1.2 <i>Pneumococcal surface protein A (PspA)</i>	21
1.6.2 Pneumolysin (Ply)	23

1.6.3 Ion acquisition proteins	26
1.6.3.1 <i>Pneumococcal surface antigen A (PsaA)</i>	26
1.6.3.2 <i>PiaA</i>	27
1.6.4 Neuraminidase A (NanA)	28
1.6.5 SpxB	29
1.7 Differential gene expression	30
1.7.1 Phase variation	30
1.7.2 <i>In vitro</i> gene regulation	31
1.7.3 <i>In vivo</i> gene regulation	33
1.8 Aims of this work	35

Chapter Two: Materials and Methods

2.1 General reagents	36
2.2 Bacterial strains and growth media	36
2.2.1 Pneumococcal growth and storage	36
2.2.2 Opacity phase determination	37
2.2.3 Optochin sensitivity	37
2.2.4 Quellung reaction	37
2.2.5 Pneumococcal passaging	38
2.2.6 Growth curve determination	38
2.3 Oligonucleotides	38
2.4 <i>In vivo</i> pathogenesis models	39
2.4.1 Mice	39
2.4.2 Growth of challenge bacteria	39

2.4.3 IN challenge of mice	39
2.4.4 Euthanasia of mice	40
2.4.5 Enumeration of recovered bacteria	41
2.4.6 Assaying mice infected with luminescent pneumococci	41
2.5 RNA isolation and modifications	42
2.5.1 Acid-phenol RNA extraction	42
2.5.2 Enrichment for prokaryotic RNA	43
2.5.3 Linear amplification of RNA	43
2.6 RNA analysis	44
2.6.1 Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR)	44
2.6.2 Real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (Real time RT-PCR)	45
2.6.2.1 <i>Real-time RT-PCR using LUX primers</i>	45
2.6.2.2 <i>Real-time RT-PCR analysis</i>	45
2.6.3 Microarray analysis	46
2.6.4 Agarose gel electrophoresis	47
2.7 Bacterial transformation	47
2.7.1 Preparation of competent cells	47
2.7.2 Transformation of <i>E. coli</i> and <i>S. pneumoniae</i>	48
2.8 Protein analysis	49
2.8.1 Preparation of whole cell lysates (WCL)	49
2.8.2 SDS-PAGE	49
2.8.3 Western blot analysis	50
2.8.4 Haemolysis assay	50

Chapter Three: Optimisation of a mouse model of invasive pneumococcal disease and methods for extraction of RNA from *in vivo*-derived pneumococci

3.1 Introduction	52
3.2 Development of a CD-1 mouse model for RNA recovery	53
3.2.1 Establishment of an IN infection model	53
3.2.2 Isolation of pneumococci from the nasopharynx	54
3.2.3 Blood perfusion	55
3.2.4 Detection of bacterial contaminants	56
3.3 Additional studies using serotype 4 challenge strains TIGR4 and WCH43	58
3.3.1 TIGR4 infection kinetics in CD-1 mice	58
3.3.2 TIGR4 growth <i>in vitro</i>	60
3.3.3 WCH43 growth <i>in vitro</i>	61
3.3.4 WCH43 infection kinetics in CD-1 mice	61
3.4 Additional studies using serotype 6A challenge strain WCH16	62
3.4.1 WCH16 kinetics in CD-1 mice	62
3.5 Comparison between D39 and WCH16 pathogenesis in CD-1 mice	64
3.5.1 Construction of luminescent D39 and WCH16 strains	65
3.5.2 Visualisation of D39 and WCH16 pathogenesis in live CD-1 mice	66
3.5.3 Determination of Ply production by, and haemolytic ability of, D39 and WCH16 cultures	67
3.5.4 Survival of mice IN challenged with D39 or WCH16	68
3.6 RNA processing and quantitation	69
3.6.1 mRNA half-lives	69
3.6.2 Optimisation of differential centrifugation	70

3.6.3 Enrichment of prokaryotic RNA and linear amplification	72
3.7 Discussion	74

Chapter Four: Analysis of key virulence gene expression (for D39 and WCH16) *in vivo* by real time RT-PCR

4.1 Introduction	79
4.2 Differential expression of D39 and WCH16 virulence genes <i>in vivo</i>	80
4.2.1 Recovery of bacteria from CD-1 mice	80
4.2.2 Extraction of <i>in vivo</i> -derived RNA	82
4.2.3 Preparation of <i>in vitro</i> -cultured pneumococci	82
4.2.4 Quantification of mRNAs using real-time RT-PCR	83
4.3 Discussion	86
4.3.1 Gene expression during nasopharyngeal colonisation	87
4.3.2 Gene expression during lung disease	90
4.3.3 Gene expression during sepsis	91
4.3.4 Gene expression during early meningitis	93
4.3.5 Conclusion	94

Chapter Five: Global comparison of pneumococcal genes harvested *in vivo* by microarray analysis

5.1 Introduction	96
5.2 Comparison of gene expression in pneumococci involved in colonisation, lung infection and IPD by microarray analysis	97

5.2.1 Analysis of D39 gene expression between niches	97
5.2.2 Analysis of D39 microarray results	98
5.2.3 Preliminary results from WCH16 microarray analysis	100
5.3 Discussion	102
5.3.1 Global <i>in vivo</i> gene expression analysis of <i>S. pneumoniae</i> using a single mouse model and challenge strain	103
5.3.2 Comparison of D39 microarray data with other published studies	107
5.3.3 Considerations and conclusion	110

Chapter Six: Final discussion	
6.1 Summary of this work	113
6.1.1 Recovery of pneumococci from an IN infection model and RNA extraction and modifications	114
6.1.2 D39 and WCH16 possess different pathogenesis profiles	116
6.1.3 D39 and WCH16 genes that exhibit contrasting <i>in vivo</i> regulation	117
6.1.4 D39 and WCH16 genes that exhibit similar <i>in vivo</i> regulation	119
6.1.5 Bacteria recovered from the nasopharynx and brain exhibit similar expression of some key virulence genes	120
6.1.6 Global microarray analysis identifies differentially expressed genes during carriage or disease	121
6.1.7 Conclusion	122
6.2 Future directions	123
Bibliography	126
Appendix	157

Abstract

Streptococcus pneumoniae is a nasopharyngeal commensal in most healthy individuals. However, it can translocate from this niche to deeper tissues, causing diseases such as otitis media, meningitis, sepsis and pneumonia, which are responsible for significant morbidity and mortality worldwide. At the commencement of this work, inherent difficulties in harvesting sufficient bacterial numbers from experimental animals restricted the examination of pneumococcal gene expression during pathogenesis, and thus virulence gene transcription patterns were largely unknown outside of an *in vitro* environment. This thesis aimed to investigate such transcriptional patterns *in vivo*, and to hence gain a better understanding of pneumococcal behaviour during colonisation and disease.

This work describes refinement of an intranasal *S. pneumoniae* infection model in CD-1 mice that enables pneumococci to be harvested from multiple niches with low contamination by nasopharyngeal microflora or host tissue, and minimal cross-contamination with circulating pneumococci in the vascular system. The challenge route simulates the acquisition of *S. pneumoniae* in the human population, and progression to IPD occurs naturally. RNA extraction, enrichment and linear amplification procedures were optimised so that RNA could be obtained from *in vivo* site in sufficient quantities and with sufficient integrity to be used in semi-quantitative assays. Linear amplification allowed the examination of gene expression in niches where low bacterial numbers had previously prevented such analyses.

Real-time RT-PCR and microarray analyses were used to examine bacterial RNA samples recovered from the nasopharynx, lungs, blood and brains of CD-1 mice, providing the first comparative transcriptional data for pneumococci during carriage and disease, within the same animal model. Two pneumococcal serotypes were examined; a type 2

(D39) and a type 6A (WCH16) strain. CbpA, Ply, and SpxB were shown to be important for carriage in both strains, with pneumococci up-regulating the expression of the genes encoding these virulence proteins in the nasopharynx. This provides *in vivo* evidence supporting the ascribed roles of these proteins in reducing the level of competing microflora and promoting nasopharyngeal adherence. Similarly, D39 *nanA* and *pspA* transcription levels were up-regulated in the nasopharynx. The level of *pspA* mRNA was also higher in the blood than the lungs, suggesting an increased requirement in the bloodstream, where PspA is involved in reducing complement-mediated opsonisation. Despite the anti-phagocytic role of the pneumococcal polysaccharide capsule in the bloodstream, D39 *cpsA* mRNA was present in similar quantities in the nasopharynx, lungs and blood, which may support previous studies indicating post-transcriptional regulation of capsule expression. However, *cpsA* expression was up-regulated in the blood for WCH16. These results may indicate the existence of strain-specific differences in virulence gene regulation.

Microarray analysis of *in vivo*-harvested *S. pneumoniae* D39 found that mRNAs encoding components of phosphotransferase systems, CbpA, a putative neuraminidase, and v-type sodium ATP synthase subunits were significantly higher in bacteria involved in carriage than bacteraemia. Conversely, the expression of genes involved in competence, and *dinF* (present on a competence-induced operon), were up-regulated in the blood compared to the nasopharynx, providing evidence that competence is induced during bacteraemia. Pneumococci also showed increased expression of genes involved in fatty acid metabolism, *pgdA*, *lytB* and *cbpG* in the blood compared to the nasopharynx. This study used a single pneumococcal strain and infection model and, therefore, overcomes inherent issues of serotype/strain- and animal model- specific gene expression that may have complicated interpretation of data in previous studies.

This thesis reports some of the first *in vivo* pneumococcal gene expression data gained using a single animal model and pneumococcal strain. The data reinforce the

putative roles of several virulence factors, and provides novel transcription data for pneumococci during carriage. Results suggest the existence of core genes that are essential for infection in multiple pneumococcal serotypes, whereas other genes appear to have strain-specific roles.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Published work included in this thesis:

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviations acceptable to the American Society for Microbiology are used without definition in this thesis. Additional and frequently used abbreviations are defined when first used in the text, and are listed below.

A ₂₆₀ , A ₂₈₀ , A ₆₀₀	Absorbance at 260nm, 280 nm, or 600nm respectively
BA	Blood agar
BBB	Blood-brain barrier
BMEC	Brain microvascular endothelial cells
C3b	Complement component 3b
CbpA	Choline binding protein A
CBP	Choline binding protein
CBR	Choline binding region
CFU	Colony forming units
ChoP	Phosphorylcholine
CPS	Capsular polysaccharide
CSF	Cerebrospinal fluid
CSP-1	Competence stimulating peptide 1
CSP-2	Competence stimulating peptide 2
C-terminus	Carboxy terminus
Ct	Cycle threshold
DFI	Differential fluorescence induction
DIG	Digoxigenin
dNTP	Deoxynucleoside triphosphate
EDTA	Ethylene diamine tetraacetic acid
Ery	Erythromycin
<i>g</i>	Gravity units
hr	Hour(s)
Ig	Immunoglobulin
IN	Intranasal
IP	Intraperitoneal
IPD	Invasive pneumococcal disease
Ig	Immunoglobulin
kDa	Kilodalton(s)
LB	Luria Bertani broth

LytA	Autolysin A
M	Molar
min	Minute(s)
mRNA	Messenger ribonucleic acid
NanA	Neuraminidase A
N-terminus	Amino terminus
O/N	Overnight
ORF	Open reading frame
PAF	Platelet activating factor
PBP	Penicillin binding protein
PBS	Phosphate buffered saline
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PiaA	Pneumococcal iron acquisition A
pIgR	Polymeric immunoglobulin receptor
Ply	Pneumolysin
PS	Polysaccharide
PsaA	Pneumococcal surface antigen A
PspA	Pneumococcal surface protein A
PTS	Phosphotransferase systems
rRNA	Ribosomal ribonucleic acid
RT-PCR	Reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction
SD	Standard deviation
SDS	Sodium dodecyl sulphate
sec	Second(s)
SEM	Standard error of the means
STM	Signature-tagged mutagenesis
THY	Todd-Hewitt broth supplemented with yeast extract
TLR	Toll-like receptor
WCL	Whole cell lysate
WT	Wild-type