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Novel polyhydroxyalkanoate beads for use as a vaccine against tuberculosis

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Microbiology

at Massey University, Manawatū,

New Zealand.

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2017
Abstract

Tuberculosis was in 1993 declared as a re-emerging disease by the World Health Organization. The only vaccine currently available, BCG, an attenuated strain of *Mycobacterium bovis*, does not protect adults against the pulmonary disease, which is the form of transmission. New vaccine candidates are being developed to provide protection against tuberculosis. Subunit vaccines offer a safer alternative than whole cell preparations and provide the possibility of utilizing only the components that mediate protective immune responses. This thesis describes the production of bacterially derived polyhydroxyalkanoate (PHA) beads for use as a delivery system for *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* reverse vaccinology antigens and immune modulators.

In the first study, the immunogenicity of beads derived from an endotoxin-free host, *Clear coli*, displaying *M. tuberculosis* antigens Rv1626, Rv2032 and Rv1789 was evaluated in mice. Beads displaying Rv1626 were selected for further studies based on the magnitude and specificity of the immune response elicited. In a final study, the immune modulators Cpe30, CS.T3$_{378-395}$ and Flagellin were co-displayed with Rv1626 antigen on beads and the immunogenicity of these functionalised beads evaluated in mice. Vaccinations with Rv1626 beads and the immune modulators Cpe30 and CS. T3$_{378-395}$ induced a Th1/Th17 skewed immune response. These beads were then assessed for their ability to protect mice against aerosol challenge with *Mycobacterium bovis*. Rv1626 beads reduced the bacterial loads in 0.48 log$_{10}$ compared with the negative control group but the inclusion of immune modulators did not enhance the immunogenicity or protection induced by Rv1626 beads.

This study has demonstrated the potential of PHA beads delivering a single reverse vaccinology antigen for protection against tuberculosis infection in mice. While the co-display of immune modulators did not improve the protection induced by the antigen, further studies are needed to determine optimal doses for delivery of immune modulators to enhance protective immunity.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisors for their continued guidance throughout my PhD. Professor Bernd Rehm and his enthusiasm about PHA beads got me interested to come to New Zealand. He kept me motivated with exciting projects and encouraged me to achieve more than I thought was my best. Dr. Neil Wedlock always made me question my knowledge, supported my ideas and made sure I was progressing in the right direction. Dr. Natalie Parlane, her work inspired me to undertake this project and in these years she has become my role model. I thank her for her patience in teaching me and for her support.

I would also like to thank Dr. Bryce Buddle for his help and expertise, and Tania Wilson who alleviated the stress of my last experiment.

I would like to give a special thanks to Armando, Mari and Frank, as I would not be here without them. Thanks for their trust in me and imparting me with their passion for science. It was an honour to be part of their group back in Cuba.

I also thank AgResearch, Massey University and the Institute of Fundamental Sciences for the financial contribution to my project and my PhD scholarship.

Coming to New Zealand meant much more to me than leaving home to do my PhD. I want to thank my friends back home, especially Mayra, Carlos and Fidel for their support to make this dream possible. I could not have kept my sanity without my friends in Palmy. Our multi-national, multi-cultural and multi-interest group made me feel at home. Thanks especially to Thursday Dinners, La Familia Pirulí, the AA team and the Cubanitos, so many laughs will not be forgotten. I also thank the Rehm group and Polybatics team for their support, sharing protocols, solutions and space made us become friends after these years.

And last but definitely not least, le agradezco a mi prima Lynnita, con quien hice mis primeros “experimentos” hace casi 20 años en el portal de mi casa, a mi primo Frank, mis tías Laida y Lynne, mi tío Paco y mis abuelas Adelfa y Noelia. Le agradeceré toda mi vida a mi abuelo Luis, que me enseñó que no hay obstáculos mayores que los autoimpuestos y que para siempre estará en mi corazón y guiará mi manera de actuar. Le agradezco a mi hermano José Luis, mi compañero, por hacermes querer ser la persona que él cree que soy y a mis padres Alina y Luis, por enseñarme a no conformarme con menos de lo que puedo lograr y darme tanto amor, gracias a ellos soy quien soy hoy. Saber que ustedes me apoyan ha sido crucial para alcanzar mis metas.
Preface

This thesis is written according to the Graduate Research School regulations for PhD thesis by publications. The list below presents the publication status of each chapter.

Chapter 1A

Basic concepts in immunology, vaccines and tuberculosis.

This chapter was written by Patricia Rubio Reyes as an introductory section of this thesis and is not intended for publication

Chapter 1B


This review was written by all the authors. Patricia Rubio Reyes made a contribution on the section describing biomedical applications of polyhydroxyalkanoate beads.

Chapter 2


All experiments were carried out by Patricia Rubio Reyes except mice vaccinations and processing of mice samples that were co-carried out with Natalie A. Parlane.

Chapter 3

All experiments were carried out by Patricia Rubio Reyes. Natalie A. Parlane helped with mice vaccinations and processing of mice samples and Bryce Buddle assisted with challenge experiment and lungs histology.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

This chapter was written by Patricia Rubio Reyes as conclusions of this thesis and it is not intended for publication

Appendix 4


Patricia Rubio Reyes made a contribution on the preparation of the plasmid pET14:PhaC-SrtA-Rv1626, purification of Rv1626 antigen and in the demonstration of the functionality of PhaC-SrtA-MBP beads and only those parts are submitted for examination. The entire publication is included for a better understanding of the methods used.
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