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Isolation and characterisation of an antimicrobial peptide from *Enterococcus* B9510

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ABSTRACT

This work deals with the antimicrobial activity of bacteriocins produced by *Enterococcus* B9510. The greatest importance demonstrated by this work was the range of activity exhibited by this bacterium, across both Gram positive and negative pathogens. This is not typical for bacteriocins, which tend to inhibit only closely related bacteria in similar environments. While attempts to identify the peptide sequence were unsuccessful the overall results of this investigation are enough to suggest that the bacteriocin from *Enterococcus* B9510 was novel and warrants further investigation.

Bacteriocins are small peptides that demonstrate antimicrobial properties and are produced by a number of lactic acid bacteria, including *Enterococcus* sp.. Bacteriocins are important because they are a possible alternative for food preservation. As a natural product they could be used to improve customer perceptions, due to the reduced need for chemical preservatives in products. From a range of lactic acid bacteria which were tested for antimicrobial activity across a selection of pathogens the strain *Enterococcus* B9510, which was a local isolate from bovine rumen, was selected due to its high level of activity. Using 16S ribosomal DNA (rDNA) analysis and sequence alignment with the BLAST network service, B9510 showed the highest homology (97%) to *Enterococcus faecalis* in the genome database.

Fermentation trials were carried out in order to maximise the concentrations of bacteriocins produced. In a controlled pH environment, cellular growth and activity was highest at pH 5.5; however, the effect of low pH showed a higher relative activity at pH 4, possibly due to pH interactions with the bacteriocin. Multi-factor trials were carried out to find the effect of glucose concentration, salt concentration and air saturation on the bacteriocin production. High salt concentrations showed a reduced production of bacteriocins and low cellular growth whereas aeration had little effect on growth but some affect on bacteriocin activity, possibly due to a variation in stress on the bacteria. Glucose concentration effected cellular growth rates, which may be a significant factor in the production of the antimicrobial activity.

Purification of the bacteriocins was carried out using two methods. The pH binding method of attaching the bacteriocins to the cell wall by neutralising the pH of the

fermentation broth was unsuccessful over a range of pH values, pH 6-9. However, the resin binding method was successful in binding the bacteriocins from a cell free broth.

An ion-exchange resin (Macro-Prep CM) was used to purify the active fraction and remove a large pigment component associated with the fermentation media. High Performance Liquid Chromatography provided an effective means to isolate samples for molecular weight determination and N-terminal sequencing.

Antimicrobial activity of the isolated fraction was tested under a range of environmental conditions including temperature, salt concentration and pH. Bacteriocin activity was still present after being held at 100°C for an hour. Optimal activity was observed at pH 3, but activity was shown by the peptide over the range of pH 1.7 - 11. Low levels of salt (<200 mM) increased the activity of the peptides; however, high concentrations (≥ 500 mM) reduced the effectiveness of the bacteriocin. Enzymes which acted upon peptide bonds were effective at inactivating the bacteriocin, while non-peptidase enzymes were ineffective. Testing against thirteen different bacteria, including *E. coli*, *Listeria* and *Bacillus*, showed that the peptide was active against both Gram positive and Gram negative bacteria.

Mass determination showed that the active peptide was between 1.27 and 1.35 kDa. Attempts to fully sequence the purified peptide were unsuccessful, however, an N-terminal sequence of LMPPYGVIMFF was predicted, which had a molecular weight of 1.314 kDa. This sequence showed no significant homology to any known sequences in the protein databases using the BLAST network service.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	v
Table of Figures	xi
Table of Tables.....	xiii
Frequently Used Abbreviations.....	xv
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Reason for research.....	1
1.2 Project objectives.....	1
2 Literature Review	3
2.1 Summary	3
2.2 Introduction	4
2.3 Lactic Acid Bacteria	4
2.4 <i>Enterococcus</i> species	5
2.5 Bacteriocins	6
2.6 Classification of Bacteriocins.....	7
2.6.1 Class I bacteriocins.....	8
2.6.1.1 Class I, Type A bacteriocins	8
2.6.1.2 Class I, Type B bacteriocins	8
2.6.2 Class II bacteriocins	10
2.6.2.1 Class IIa bacteriocins.....	10
2.6.2.2 Class IIb bacteriocins	11
2.6.2.3 Class IIc bacteriocins.....	11
2.6.2.4 Class III and Class IV bacteriocins	11
2.6.2.5 Class V bacteriocins	11
2.6.2.6 Mode of action of Class II bacteriocins.....	12

2.7	Bacteriocins from enterococci: The enterocins	14
2.7.1	Class IIa bacteriocins.....	14
2.7.2	Class IIb bacteriocins	15
2.7.3	Class IIc bacteriocins.....	15
2.8	Characterisation of Bacteriocins.....	16
2.8.1	Effect of temperature on bacteriocin stability.....	16
2.8.2	Effect of pH on bacteriocin activity	17
2.8.3	Effect of enzymatic action on bacteriocin activity	17
2.8.4	Production of bacteriocins	18
2.9	Methods of Bacteriocin purification	19
2.9.1	Initial purification.....	19
2.9.1.1	Ammonium sulphate precipitation	19
2.9.1.2	Non-ionic resins	20
2.9.1.3	Solvent extraction.....	20
2.9.1.4	pH-dependent binding	20
2.9.2	Final purification.....	21
2.9.2.1	Ion exchange chromatography	21
2.9.2.2	Hydrophobic interaction chromatography	21
2.9.2.3	Reverse phase chromatography.....	21
2.10	Methods of large scale bacteriocin purification.....	22
2.11	Conclusions from Literature Review	24
3	Materials and Methods	25
3.1	General	25
3.1.1	Bacteria and media	25
3.1.1.1	Working cell cultures.....	25
3.1.1.2	Agar plates	25
3.1.2	Bacteriocin assay methods.....	26
3.1.2.1	Spot on the lawn.....	26
3.1.2.2	Radial diffusion plate assay	26
3.1.3	Measurement of bacteriocin activity	27
3.1.3.1	Minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) determination	27

3.2	Fermentation.....	28
3.2.1	Design of multivariate fermentation analysis	29
3.2.2	Collection of samples from fermentation trials	30
3.2.3	Testing of fermentation supernatant.....	30
3.2.3.1	Substrate concentration.....	31
3.3	Purification	31
3.3.1	XAD-16 method for bacteriocin purification	31
3.3.2	XAD-16 bacteriocin purification, method optimisation.....	31
3.3.2.1	Temperature for binding	31
3.3.2.2	Resin volume.....	32
3.3.2.3	Effect of pH.....	32
3.3.2.4	Elution	32
3.3.3	pH binding method for the purification of bacteriocins.....	33
3.3.4	pH variation for the optimisation of bacteriocin purification	33
3.3.5	Use of ion-exchange chromatography for the purification of bacteriocins.	34
3.3.6	Gel filtration for the purification of bacteriocins from crude extract.....	34
3.4	Characterisation	35
3.4.1	Effect of temperature on bacteriocin activity	35
3.4.2	Effect of enzymes on bacteriocin activity	35
3.4.3	Effect of pH on bacteriocin activity	36
3.4.4	Effect of salt concentration on bacteriocin activity.....	36
3.4.5	Effect of bacteriocins on a bacterial spectrum.....	37
3.4.6	SDS-PAGE Gel electrophoresis of proteins	37
3.4.6.1	Activity gel for the determination of the size of the active fraction from fraction two	38
3.4.7	Protein concentration determination	39
3.4.7.1	Low protein concentrations	39
3.4.7.2	High protein concentrations.....	39
3.4.8	High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC).....	40
3.4.9	Mass spectrometry	41
3.4.10	N-terminal sequencing	42
3.4.11	Liquid Chromatography Tandem Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS-MS).....	42

4	Fermentation	45
4.1	Introduction	45
4.2	Results	48
4.2.1	Initial testing into the production of bacteriocins from <i>Enterococcus</i> B9510	48
4.2.1.1	Effect of temperature on cellular and bacteriocin production from <i>Enterococcus</i> B9510	48
4.2.2	Effect of pH on the production of bacteriocins.....	48
4.2.3	Effects of multi-factor fermentation on bacteriocin production from <i>Enterococcus</i> B9510	51
4.2.3.1	Effect of glucose on bacteriocin production	51
4.2.3.2	Effect of sodium chloride concentrations on bacteriocin production..	52
4.2.3.3	Effect of aeration on bacteriocin production.....	53
4.2.3.4	Effect of exponential growth on the production of bacteriocins.....	55
4.3	Discussion.....	57
4.3.1	Effect of media, temperature and pH on growth and bacteriocin production	57
4.3.2	Multi factor analysis of fermentation conditions on bacteriocin production and cell growth.....	59
4.4	Conclusions	62
5	Purification.....	65
5.1	Introduction	65
5.2	Results	66
5.2.1	Purification using XAD-16 resin	66
5.2.1.1	Effect of temperature on binding of antimicrobial peptides to resin..	66
5.2.1.2	Effect of pH on binding of nisin on resin	68
5.2.1.3	Effect of resin volume on binding efficiency of antimicrobial activity	68
5.2.1.4	Elution.....	69
5.2.1.5	Use of XAD-16 resin with <i>Enterococcus</i> and M17	70
5.2.2	Purification of bacteriocins by pH variation.....	71

5.2.2.1	Determination of the optimal binding pH value for binding bacteriocins.....	71
5.2.3	Use of Ion exchange chromatography in the separation of bacteriocins.....	72
5.2.4	Separation of bacteriocin using gel filtration chromatography	74
5.2.5	RP-HPLC separation of active bacteriocin peptides.....	76
5.2.6	Four hour fermentation sample.....	77
5.2.6.1	HPLC results	78
5.3	Discussion	80
5.3.1	Effect of temperature, stirring, pH and resin volume on the binding of bacteriocins to XAD-16 resin.....	80
5.3.2	Elution of the resin	81
5.3.3	Effect of the pH method on binding bacteriocins from fermentation broth	82
5.3.4	Downstream purification, Ion-exchange chromatography, P-10 gel chromatography and High Performance Liquid Chromatography	83
5.4	Conclusions	85
6	Characterisation.....	87
6.1	Introduction	87
6.2	Results	88
6.2.1	Characterisation of bacteriocins from <i>Enterococcus</i> B9510	88
6.2.1.1	SDS-page gel and activity determination of purified bacteriocin	88
6.2.1.2	Effect of temperature over time on bacteriocin activity	89
6.2.1.3	Effect of pH on bacteriocin activity	89
6.2.1.4	Effect of sodium chloride on the bacteriocin activity	90
6.2.1.5	Effect of enzymatic action on bacteriocin activity	91
6.2.1.6	Spectrum of bacterial inhibition (MIC).....	92
6.2.2	Molecular weight determination, N-terminal sequencing	92
6.2.2.1	Molecular weight determination	92
6.2.2.2	N-terminal sequencing.....	93
6.2.2.3	Liquid Chromatography Tandem Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS-MS)	94
6.3	Discussion	96

6.3.1	Effect of temperature, pH, salt and enzymes on antimicrobial activity. .	96
6.3.2	Spectrum of antimicrobial activity	97
6.3.3	Peptide sequencing and identification	98
6.4	Conclusions	100
7	Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Work	101
7.1	Conclusions	101
7.2	Recommendations for future research	103
7.2.1	Fermentation	103
7.2.1.1	Effect of the carbon/nitrogen ratio	103
7.2.1.2	Investigation into the effect of oxygen on bacteriocin production....	104
7.2.1.3	Investigation into continuous or batch-fed fermentation.....	104
7.2.2	Purification.....	104
7.2.2.1	Optimisation of purification.....	104
7.2.2.2	Pigmentation removal.....	105
7.2.3	Characterisation.....	105
7.2.3.1	Further investigation into spectrum of activity	105
7.2.3.2	Peptide identification	105
8	References	107
APPENDIX A1	117
A1.1	Bacterial identification	117
A1.1.1	Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)	117
A1.1.1.1	Method of PCR amplification	117

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Primary structure of the lantibiotics epidermin, nisin, cinnamycin and mersacidin..	9
Figure 2.2 Schematic representation of the structure of a model Class-IIa bacteriocin.	13
Figure 3.1 Electrophoresis gel of the effect of enzymes on BSA.	36
Figure 3.2 Protein dotMETRIC measurement.	39
Figure 3.3 Protein standard curve	40
Figure 3.4 Example of Fraction two HPLC graph.	41
Figure 4.1 Effect of media on the cell growth and bacteriocin production of <i>Enterococcus</i> B9510.	46
Figure 4.2 Effect of temperature on the growth rates of the bacteria and the detectable bacteriocin production in the fermentation broth.	48
Figure 4.3 μ Max values for the controlled and uncontrolled fermentations.	49
Figure 4.4 Fermentation broth and cell flocculation at controlled pH of 7.	49
Figure 4.5 Fermentation trials for each of the controlled pH values as well as uncontrolled pH fermentation.	50
Figure 4.6 Bacteriocin activity, separated based on the initial concentration of glucose in the broth.	52
Figure 4.7 Bacteriocin activity separated based on the initial concentration of salt in the broth.	53
Figure 4.8 3D representation of μ Max from the aerated and unaerated the fermentation trials.	54
Figure 4.9 3D representation of the effect of aeration on the maximum activity of bacteriocins during fermentation.	55
Figure 5.1 Effect of temperatures on the binding efficiency of XAD-16 resin to nisin.	66
Figure 5.2 Effect of temperature on the binding efficiency of XAD-16 resin for shake flasks.	67
Figure 5.3 Effect of pH values on the binding efficiency of nisin onto XAD-16.	68
Figure 5.4 Effect of resin volume on the removal of nisin from test solutions.	69
Figure 5.5 Effect of various eluent concentrations on the elution of nisin from the XAD-16 matrix.	70

Figure 5.6 Examples of ion-exchange (Macro-Prep CM) graphs from eluent of the XAD-16 resin.	73
Figure 5.7 Examples of peaks displayed by the P-10 gel.	75
Figure 5.8 Sequence of HPLC runs.	76
Figure 5.9 Two HPLC runs with a gradient of 27-33% acetonitrile.	77
Figure 5.10 HPLC graphs of active material from ion-exchange column.	78
Figure 5.11 Activity plate from the HPLC peaks.	79
Figure 6.1 SDS-PAGE Electrophoresis and activity testing of purified bacteriocin from <i>Enterococcus</i> . B9510.	88
Figure 6.2 Effect of heat on the activity of the peptide.	89
Figure 6.3 Effect of pH on the activity of bacteriocins from <i>Enterococcus faecalis</i> B9510.	90
Figure 6.4 Effect of salt on the activity of bacteriocins from <i>Enterococcus</i> B9510.	91
Figure 6.5 Molecular weight of the active peptide from HPLC samples of fraction two.	93
Figure 6.6 LC-MS-MS result for partial sequence of active peptide from <i>Enterococcus</i> B9510.	94
Figure 6.7 Mass spectrometry data for active HPLC fractions.	95
Figure A1.1 rRNA sequence of <i>Enterococcus</i> B9510.	118

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Comparison of the amino-acid sequences for a range of Class Ia bacteriocins.	9
Table 2.2 Comparison of the amino-acid sequences for a range of Class IIa bacteriocins	14
Table 2.3 Examples of Class IIb bacteriocins.....	15
Table 2.4 Examples of Class IIc bacteriocins.....	16
Table 3.1 Composition of TYT media	29
Table 3.2 Composition of PLY media.....	29
Table 3.3 Possible fermentations to be investigated for the given fermentation conditions.	29
Table 3.4 Compounds used to prepare both peptide and protein gels.....	38
Table 4.1 Biomass of <i>Enterococcus faecalis</i> B9510 produced in various fermentations.	54
Table 4.2 Time at which the end of the exponential growth phase was reached in each fermentation, and the maximum bacteriocin activity from that fermentation.	56
Table 5.1 Summary of purification from fermentation broth to resin eluent	70
Table 5.2 Bacteriocin activities at different stages of the pH binding experiment.	71
Table 5.3 Activity of fermented broth compared to the pH adjusted broth with the cells removed.....	72
Table 5.4 Summary of purification from resin eluent to ion exchange fraction 2	74
Table 5.5 Summary of purification from ion exchange fraction 2 to P-10 gel active fraction	75
Table 6.1 Effect of enzymatic digestion on the activity of the bacteriocin.	91
Table 6.2 Minimum inhibitory concentration of antimicrobial peptide from <i>Enterococcus</i> B9510.....	92
Table 6.3 Amino acid sequences reported from active peptide samples.....	93

FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Adenosine Di-phosphate
AMP	Adenosine Mono-phosphate
ATP	Adenosine Tri-phosphate
au	Arbitrary units
HIC	Hydrophobic Interaction Chromotography
HPLC	High Performance Liquid Chromatography
Da	Daltons
LAB	Lactic Acid Bacteria
LC-MS-MS	Liquid Chromatography Tandem Mass Spectrometry
MIC	Minimum Inhibitory Concentration
M	Molar
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
<i>sp.</i>	Species
rpm	Revolutions per Minute

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 REASON FOR RESEARCH

This research was carried out to investigate the bacteriocins from *Enterococcus* B9510, and to test the bacteriocin under a range of conditions. Bacteriocins are small peptides produced by bacteria as a form of physiological advantage in their natural environments, in order to kill other bacteria competing for the same resources. Interest in bacteriocins has grown around the desire for a natural preservative in food products and as an alternate to traditional antibiotics in medicine. Investigation of *Enterococcus* B9510 was undertaken after testing showed the antimicrobial activity of this bacterium was the greatest of a range of lactic acid bacteria tested, strength of the bacterial inhibition, against both Gram positive and negative bacteria were measured. The stability of the activity demonstrated by *Enterococcus* B9510 when exposed to acidic conditions and high temperatures was also higher than the other samples tested.

1.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This project had the following objectives:

- Optimise fermentation conditions for the production of bacteriocins in *Enterococcus faecalis* B9510.
- Compare methods of extraction and purification of the bacteriocins.
- Optimise one method to maximise the yield of bacteriocins.
- Test the spectrum of bactericidal activity of the semi-purified and pure bacteriocins.
- Test the effect of various environmental conditions on the bacteriocin activities.
- Determine molecular mass and amino acid sequence of purified bacteriocins.

