BOVINE COAGULASE-NEGATIVE STAPHYLOCOCCI: BIOCHEMISTRY AND POLYMERASE CHAIN REACTION

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Received September 22, 1994

Abstract

Hummel, R., G. Lehmann: Bovine coagulase-negative Staphylococci: Biochemistry and Polymerase Chain Reaction. Acta vet. Brno, 63, 1994: 133–139.

Staphylococcus (S.) simulans, S. chromogenes, and S. epidermidis were the species of coagulase-negative staphylococci (CNS) most frequently involved in subclinical mastitits of dairy cattle. The same biochemical features characterized the successive isolates of a particular chronically infected udder quarter. Occurrence rate of the various species differed between the herds examined. In cases of clinical mastitis of cows S. xylosus, S. simulans, S. haemolyticus, and S. chromogenes predominated. A comparison between strains of the particular CNS species from infections in man and cattle did not show host attributable biochemical features or profiles obtained by polymerase chain reaction using arbitrary primers (AP-PCR).

Bovine mastitis, Coagulase-negative staphylococci, biochemical features, polymerase chain reaction

Coagulase-negative staphylococci (CNS) can by frequently isolated from milk samples of dairy cows, often in association with subclinical mastitis (Timms et al. 1987; Harmon and Langlois 1989; Watts et al. 1989; Davidson et al. 1992; Matthews et al. 1992; To dhunter et al. 1993). For differentiation between species of CNS several approaches have been supposed. Typing schemes primarily based on panels of biochemical tests have often been applied in tandem with other methods including composition of cell wall, isoenzyme pattern, polymorphism of whole cell protein and penicillin binding protein, pattern of rRNA gene and of endonuclease cleaved DNA, polymerase chain reaction using arbitrary primers (AP-PCR). By AP-PCR Welsh and McClelland (1990) obtained species specific patterns of AP-PCR products. Moreover, *Staphylococcus (S.) haemolyticus* of human and non-human primate origin produced different AP-PCR patterns related to their ecological origin and supposedly to host specifity of strains. The purpose of this work is to study (1) involvement of the various CNS species in udder infections of cows and (2) comparison between strains within the particular CNS species originating from man and cattle by means of AP-PCR.

Materials and Methods

Bacterial strains

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The CNS examined in this study originated from cases of clinical mastitis (54 strains) and of subclinical mastitits (57 strains) in cattle. For comparison, 8 strains from infections in man were included in these studies.

Of the strains from bovine clinical mastitis 41 were isolated from udder secretions in 39 dairy herds submitted for bacteriological examination to the regional veterinary laboratory. An additional 13 strains originated from Belgium.

The 57 strains from subclinical mastitis were selected in five large herds of cattle (Table 1) with 300 to 500 cows each. An infection of the mammary gland means isolation of CNS in pure culture together with an elevated total cell count (>300 000 cells/ml milk). Sampling of udder secretions was carried out before and after milking. Repeated isolates from a particular udder quarter possessed of the same biochemical features were considered a single strain. The 57 strains represented a total of 580 isolates. All of the herds practised post milking teat dipping but only two of them (herds Np and Lu) applied a proper hygiene at milking. There was an occasional history of *Streptococcus agalactiae* in these herds and the infected cows were removed for slaughter.

In herd Np quarter milk samples from 463 cows at freshening were investigated for the presence of CNS infections. 21 cows with 29 chronically CNS infected quarters in herd Np were resampled monthly or bimonthly to the next freshening. The 29 strains represented a total of 502 isolates. In herds Mo and Zi, respectively, 7 out of 197 and 3 out of 293 cows could be found chronically infected. Three consecutive samplings were performed and a total of 42 isolates gathered. Herds Ka and Lu have been sampled only once.

	herd of cattle Np	Мо	Zi	Ka	Lu	MST
cows/quarters examined	463/1846	197/774	293/1150	207/822	97/394	
cows/quarters CNS infected	43/59 (9%/4%)	21/21 (4%/1%)	20/26 (11%/4%)	25/29 (7%/1%)	3/3 (3%/<1%)	
cow/quarters chronically infected	21/29	7/7	3/4	ne	ne	
SCC ^x in quarters free of CNS with CNS	4x10 ⁴ 5x10 ⁵	5x10 ⁴ 6x10 ⁵	1×10 ⁵ 8×10 ⁵	8x10 ⁴ 6x10 ⁵	2x10 ⁴ 4x10 ⁵	
strains identified to species level S. simulans S. chromogens S. epidermidis S. sylosus S. warneri S. haemolyticus S. cohnii	17 9 2 1	2 1 4	2 1 1	3 9 1 1	1 2	9 6 2 11 3 8 1
S. saprophyticus total number	29 ^y	7y	4 ^y	14 ^z	3 ^z	1 41

Table 1

CNS infections in herds of cattle

Explanatory notes:

MST, strains from cases of clinical mastitis from 39 herds of cattle; x, somatic cell count from quarter milk samples of CNS infected cows only; y, chronically infected quarters; z, quarters sampled but once; ne, not examined.

Sampling procedures

Prior to sampling, the udder of each cow was washed, dried, and desinfected thoroughly, and about 15 ml of foremilk from each quarter were discarded. Than the two individual quarter samples, one before, one after automatic milking, were collected in separate test tubes. Samples were kept on ice until starting the laboratory examination within the next 6 to 15 hours.

Microbiology and somatic cell count

Each milk sample (0,1 ml) was streaked onto the quadrant of a 3% blood agar plate. Plates were incubated for 48 hours at 37 °C. A single colony of each primary culture of abundant growth (at least 10 colonies) yielding pure cultures with only one morphologically homogenous type of CNS was selected for further studies. Somatic cell counts (SCC) were done using a Fossomatic cell counter (A/SN, Hillerod, Denmark).

Biochemical characterization of CNS

Methods described by Kloos et al. (1974) were applied for biochemical characterization of strains. In addition, sensitivity to furazolidone was tested according to Rheinhaben and Hadlock (1981); sensitivity to novobiocin according to Devries (1979). Production of phosphatase, urease, hyaluronidase, heat stable DNase and splitting of Tween 80 was studied as described by Devries e et al. (1883). Production of glucosidase and glucoronidase was determined according to White et al. (1990). Inhibition of delta-hemolysin was detected as described by Skalka (1991). Strains were identified to genus level on the basis of culture and cell morphology, pigmentation, Gram stain, catalase activity, hemolysis, clumping factor, coagulase of rabbit and human plasmas and sensitivity to furazolidone. The identification to species level was based on features contained in table 2. Production of heat stable DNase, hyaluronidase, splitting of Tween 80 and inhibition of delta-hemolysin were only determined for differentiation between *S. hyicus* and *S. chromogenes*. From the reaction patterns thus obtained CNS species were determined by using the data base of Geary et al. (1989) modified at the Institute for Experimental Epidemiology, Wernigerode.

For control, the following strains were used: S. epidermidis (CCM 2124), S. hominis (CCM 2732), S. haemolyticus (CCM 2737), S. warneri (CCM 2730), S. saprophyticus (CCM 883), S. simulans (CCM 2705), S. xylosus (CCM 2738), S. sciuri (CCM 3433), S. cohnii (CCM 2736), S. hyicus (CCM 2368), S. chromogenes (CCM 3387), Micrococcus luteus (CCM 169).

AP-PCR

A total of 50 strains of bovine and 8 of human origin were examined. Table 3 shows the origin of the strains. Genomic DNA of the strains was isolated by the method of B i a l k o w s k a - H o b r z a n s k a et al. (1990). AP-PCR procedure was carried out according to Willia m s et al. (1990) using the following three 10mer primers already applied by Willia m s et al. (1990): namely

5'TCACGATGCA (designated primer 1), 5'ACGGTACACT (primer 2), 5'CACATGCTTC (primer 3). The primers have been synthesized by Dr. Birch-Hirschfeld, Institute for Molecular Biotechnology, Jena. Concentration of the primers used was 4 μ M and 0,2 μ M for both primers 1 and 2, while 1 μ M was applied for primer 3. Two runs

of PCR experiments in duplicate tubes were carried out with each of the template DNA. The reagent control that should not produce any amplification product contained all components used for AP-PCR but without addition of template DNA. Amplification products were analyzed by electrophoresis in 1,4% agarose gel and detected by staining with ethidium bromid. Size markers were the 1 kb DNA ladder from GIBCO BRL.

Results

Mastitis and CNS species

The occurrence of subclinical mastitis associated with CNS in 1257 cows in the five herds of cattle, mean values of somatic cell count (SSC), and CNS species involved are presented in Table 1. On the basis of biochemical features six CNS species were identified among the 57 strains recovered from the five dairy herds. The same biochemical features characterized the successive isolates of a particular quarter, and the successive isolates were considered a single strain. Occurence and prevalence of the various species differed between the five herds of cattle, but, *S. simulans, S. chromogenes,* and *S. epidermidis* predominated in chronical infections. Among the 41 CNS strains from 39 farms isolated from quarters with clinical mastitis, the four species *S. xylosus, S. simulans, S. haemolyticus,* and *S. chromogenes* were found in relatively high frequency (Table 1), while another four species (*S. warneri, S. epidermidis, S. saprophyticus,* and *S. cohnii*) were infrequent.

Characteristics of the CNS strains

The features of the CNS strains investigated by biochemical methods are shown in Table 2. All of the strains could be identified to species level with high certainty except for some of the *S. chromogenes* strains. 9 out of the 26 *S. chromogenes* strains were classified being *S. chromogenes* despite their ability to split Tween 80 and their lack in pigment production.

The various patterns of biochemical reactions within the particular CNS species were detected among the strains originating from the same herd of cattle, from different dairy herds as well as among the strains from diseases in man.

AP-PCR

The AP-PCR experiments performed with 58 strains representing four different CNS species resulted in reproducible patterns of amplified DNA.

Origin and species of the strains tested, the patterns of amplified DNA, and the number of different AP-PCR profiles observed within each of the species are listed in Table 3. Here, an AP-PCR profile includes all patterns of amplified DNA generated with a given strain by each of the three primers at the various concentrations applied.

For the species S. chromogenes, S. epidermidis, S. simulans and S. xylosus two, three, five, and six AP-PCR profiles, respectively, were observed. There was no correlation between the groups of AP-PCR profiles within a CNS species and the origin of strains neither from cattle of different dairy herds nor from man or cattle.

Between one and five amplificates resulted from each fingerprinting. The size of the amplificates increased in most of the cases as the concentration of a primer in the AP-PCR reaction decreased. Each primer at each of the concentrations used gave different patterns of DNA amplificates with a potential of detecting polymorphisms between species and between groups of strains. Some of these patterns observed within a particular species, however, were rather similar or even the same.

Discussion

The results of the study indicating the infrequent occurrence of CNS associated subclinical mastitis in dairy cows are in agreement with reports from the literature (Timms and Schultz 1987; Harmon and Langlois 1989; Rainard et al. 1990; Davidson et al.

Table 2 Pattern of biochemical reactions in CNS species

species %	1%2	patte	ern o	of bi	och	emic	al re	action	1s ³									Tw D					Ori	gin a	nd n	umbe	r of	i straiı
-		N	н	v	P	L	М	Mt	Т	Ms	С	х	R	S	U	I	0	Tw D	Hy	Dn	Np	Мо	Zi	Ka	Lu l	MST I	Bel	GB B
S. sim.93	55	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	_	_	_	_	+	-	-	_									1		
97	69	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	+		-		-	+	+	+	-				1							
99	53	-	+		-	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-				3					1		
99	76	_	÷	-	-	÷	-	_	÷	_	-	_	-	+	-	_	-				1 3 2							
99 99	84	_	÷.	_	_	÷	_	+	+	+	_	_	_	÷.	+	_	_				-					2		2
00	87	-	_	_	_	÷	_	÷.	÷	÷.	_	_	_	÷	÷.	_	_				1					-		-
100	65	_	+	_	_	÷	_	_	÷	+	_	_	_	÷	+	_	_				4	1					3	
100	71	_	÷	_	_	÷	_	_	÷	÷	_	_	-	÷	_	_	_				i	-			1		•	
100	78	_	÷.	_	_	÷.		-	÷	÷	_	_	_	÷.	-	_	_								•			
100	82	_	÷.	_	_	÷	_	÷.	÷		_	_	_	÷.	÷.	_	+				3 2					1		
100	94	_	1	_	_	÷	_	1	1	-	_		_	1	1	_	<u> </u>				*	1				2		
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71	55	_	_	-	_	÷	+	-	÷	_	-	-	+	÷	÷	-	-	+ +	_	_				1				
82	41	_	_	-	+	÷	÷.	_	+	+	_	_	_	_	_	_	-	+ +	_	_				1		2		
88	100	-	-	_	÷	÷	_	_	÷	÷	-		+	+	+	-	-	÷ ÷	-	-	1			-	1	-		
89	100 75	_	_	-	÷.	÷	+	_	÷	÷	_	-	÷.	÷	÷	_	-		_	_	-		1					
99	70	_	_	_	_	÷	÷	_	÷	÷	_	_	+	÷	÷.	_	+	+ ÷	_	_		1	-			2		
100	72	_	_	-	+	÷	÷	_	÷	÷	_	_	÷.	÷	_	_	÷.	- ÷	_	_	4	-	1		1	-	1	
100	83	_	_	-	÷	÷	÷	_	÷	÷.	_	-	+	÷	_	_	_	- ÷	_	_	ż		•		•	1	•	
100	89	-	-	-	÷	÷	÷	_	÷	÷	_	_	÷.	÷	+	_		- ÷	-	-	ĩ			1		i	2	
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S. epi. 83	70	_	_	_	_	+	+	_	_	_	_	_	-	+	-	_	-									1		
97	76	_	_	+	+	÷	÷	_	_	+	-	_	_	÷	+	_	_							1		-	1	
100	81	_	_	÷	÷	÷	÷	-	_	÷	_	_	_	÷	÷.	_	_				1			6			2	2
100	95	_	_	÷	÷	÷	÷	-	-	÷	_	-	-	÷	+	_	_				i	2	1	ĭ			-	2
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98	69	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	-									1		
98	84	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-									3		1
99	83	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	-									2		
100	67	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+ -	-	-						1					
100	79	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	-										2	
100	100	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	-									3	1	1
													tota	al nu	mber	of s	trains				1		1			11	3	2

1 percent probability of diagnosis; 2 percent security of probability; N sensitivity to novobiocin; h hemolysis; V acetoin; P phosphatase; L lactose; M maltose; Mt mannitol; T trehalose; Ms mannose; C cellobiose; X xylose; R ribose; U urease; I glucosidase; Tw Tween 80; D inhibition of delta hemolysin; Hy hyaluronidase; DN DNase; dairy herds Np, Mo, ZI, KA, Lu; MST clinical mastitis, Bel Belgium; GB Great Britain; Bo Bonn

1992). A prevalence of S. chromogenes and S. simulans in subclinical mastitis (Watts et al. 1984; Harmon and Langlois 1989; Jarp 1991; Matthews et al. 1991; 1992; To dhunter et al. 1993; own data in table 1) suggest a rather good adaption of these two species to the bovine udder, although occurrence rate of the various CNS species can differ between dairy herds. On contrary, occurrence of the species S. xylosus, S. epidermidis, S. haemolyticus, and S. saprophyticus in quarters with clinical mastitis, sometimes with higher frequency than S. chromogenes and S. simulans (B a b a et al. 1980; Brown 1983; M at the ws et al 1992; own data in table 1) may demonstrate the potential of an environmental strain to enter the bovine udder. Their occurrence may primarily be related to an inflammation of the mammary gland and one should suppose that, exept for S. xylosus, they have directly originated from the milkers. S. xylosus has been isolated from used straw and from fresh unused straw (White et al. 1989), it was also detected being the predominant species of CNS on the skin of domestic animals (S h i m i z u et al. 1992) and occurred in large numbers on the teat skin of cows (Devriese and DeKeyser 1980). This environmental CNS species rarely occurring in chronically infected udders should be considered a transient rather than a resident microflora.

In identification the CNS strains studied by biochemical methods we met no difficulties except for 9 strains assigned to S. chromogenes. They take a somewhat intermediate position between S. chromogenes and S. hyicus, a finding already ruled out by Skalka (1991). Two of the crucial features discriminating both species were atypical for S. chromogenes: the strains produced pigment weakly or not at all and splitted Tween 80.

Table 3
Patterns and sizes (kilobases) of AP-PCR amplificates for CNS strains from man and cattle

			_				-											
Species Profiles* Strains from	S. chron c1	nogenes c2	5. e el	pidermi e2	idis e3	s 1	S. si s2	imulans s3	s4	s5	x1	x2	S. xyle x3	x4	x5	x6		
Man totally Great Britain Bonn			2 2 -	2 - 2		1	1 	-	1 1 -	-	1 1 -	-			-	1 1 -		
Cattle totally Belgium herd Np other herds	4 2 2	11 1 10	$\frac{3}{2}{\frac{1}{1}}$	1 - - 1	6 1 4 1	9 9	3 2 - 2	3 3 -		1 - - 1	3	2 2 -	1 - - 1	1 - - 1	1 - - 1			
primer 1/4uM			•	•	•	400	400	400	400	400	500		500	•	400	400		
	750 900 1000	800 900 1000	600	600	600						500	800	500	800				
Primer 1/0,2uM	600 750														500			
	900	900	800	800	1000			1400	1400	800 1400		800	1000	800		1400		
						2000 4000				1500	2000 4000							
Primer 2/4uM	400 600	400 600	500	500	500	400	400	400	400									
			900	900	900	800					700 800			700		700 800		
			1400	1400	1400	1100	1100			1100	1000 1200		1000		1000	1000 1200		
			1600	1600	1600										2000	_		
Primer 2/0,2uM	1300	1300			1200	1100	1200	1100	1100	800								
	1300	1500	1400 1500 1600	1500	1400 1500 1600 1700 2000		1500	1500 1700	1500									
Primer 3/1uM	1000	1000	750 900	900 1000		1100												
			1400		1400	1200 1400	1400	1400	1400	1400								

The AP-PCR studies with our strains revealed only weakly pronounced species specific profiles, while Welsh and McClelland (1990) clearly distinguished CNS species by AP-PCR although a few of their AP-PCR products were shared between species. Host attributable amplificate profiles within the CNS species studied could not be detected with our strains indicating a close relationship between the strains from man and cattle. Especially, the amplificate patterns and profiles were quite similar within the species *S. epidermidis*. Findings yielded by ribotyping seem to provide a comparable view. De Buyser et al. (1992) obtained a number of equal hybridization patterns with strains of different host origin belonging to a same CNS species by ribotyping using ribosomal RNA gene probes and restriction endonuclease cleaved DNA. For example, equal hybridization patterns were observed for *S. xylosus* strains isolated from man, goat, and horse, or for *S. epidermidis*, *S. warneri*, and *S. lugdunensis* strains from man and goat. On the contrary, in strains from human and nonhuman primates, Welsch and McClelland (1990) observed different AP-PCR pat-

terns indicating the existence of host adapted subspecies. For CNS of human and non other primate origin Kloos and Wolfshohl (1979; 1983) confirmed the hypothesis of a conjugate evolution of microorganisms with their host by DNA hybridization. The question rises whether the conditions in animal husbandry favour a mutual exchange of CNS strains between man and animals, thus being the reason for a close relationship between them. To answer this question, DNA homology studies with human and bovine strains of the particular CNS species are needed that can provide the most exacting data to determine the taxonomic status and relatedness of the species and the existence of subspecies.

Bovinní koaguláza-negativní stafylokoky: biochemie a polymerázová řetězová reakce

Druhy Staphylococcus (S.) simulans, S. chromogenes, a S. epidermidis jsou druhy koaguláza-negativních stafylokoků (CNS), nejčastěji se vyskytujících při subklinických mastitidách dojnic. Izoláty z chronicky infikovaných čtvrtí mléčné žlázy byly charakterizovány stejnými biochemickými vlastnostmi. Frekvence výskytu různých druhů se u vyšetřovaných stád lišila. V případech klinických mastitid dojnic převládaly S. xylosus, S. simulans, a S. chromogenes. Srovnáním kmenů CNS humánní a bovinní provenience nebyly nalezeny odlišné biochemické vlastnosti ani profily získané pomocí polymerázové řetězové reakce.

Коагуляза-негативная крупного рогатого скота стафилококками: биохимия и цепная реакция полимеризации

Виды Staphylococcus (S.) simulans, S. chromogenes и S. epidermidis являются видами коагуляза-негативных стафилококков (CNS), чаще всего встречающиеся в время субклинических маститов дойных коров. Изоляты хронически инфицированных четвертей молочной железы отличались одинаковыми биохимическими свойствами. Частота наличия разных видов у отдельных исследуемых стад отличалась. В случае клинического мастита дойных коров преобладающими явились S. xylosus, S. simulans и S. chromogenes. Сопоставлением CNS человека и крупного рогатого скота не выявили отличающихся биохимических свойств ни профилей, полученных с помощью цепной реакции полимеризации.

Acknowledgements

We thank Dr. Francoise Schumacher-Perdreau, Bonn Federal Republic of Germany, Dr. L. A. Devriese, Gent, Belgium, and Dr. R. R. Marples, London, England, for providing staphylococcal strains. We also thank Dr. E. Birch-Hirschfeld, Institute of Molecular Biotechnology, Jena Federal Republic of Germany for synthesis of primers. The technical assistance of Annett Held and Birgit Lemser is greatly appreciated.

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This study was supported by grant of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.