

Conservation of the Low-shear Modeled Microgravity Response in Enterobacteriaceae and Analysis of the *trp* Genes in this Response

Anjali Soni^{1,2}, Laura O'Sullivan^{1,3}, Laura N. Quick^{1,4}, C. Mark Ott⁵, Cheryl A. Nickerson⁶ and James W. Wilson^{*,1}

¹Villanova University, Biology Department, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, PA 19085

²Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Dentistry, Richmond, VA23298

³University of Pennsylvania, School of Veterinary Medicine, Philadelphia, PA 19104

⁴Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA 19104

⁵NASA/Johnson Space Center, Habitability and Environmental Factors Division, Houston, TX77058

⁶Arizona State University, Biodesign Institute, Center for Infectious Diseases and Vaccinology, Tempe, AZ85281

Abstract: Low fluid shear force, including that encountered in microgravity models, induces bacterial responses, but the range of bacteria capable of responding to this signal remains poorly characterized. We systematically analyzed a range of Gram negative Enterobacteriaceae for conservation of the low-shear modeled microgravity (LSMMG) response using phenotypic assays, qPCR, and targeted mutations. Our results indicate LSMMG response conservation across Enterobacteriaceae with potential variance in up- or down-regulation of a given response depending on genus. Based on the data, we analyzed the role of the *trp* operon genes and the TrpR regulator in the LSMMG response using targeted mutations in these genes in *S. Typhimurium* and *E. coli*. We found no alteration of the LSMMG response compared to WT in these mutant strains under the conditions tested here. To our knowledge, this study is first-of-kind for *Citrobacter*, *Enterobacter*, and *Serratia*, presents novel data for *Escherichia*, and provides the first analysis of *trp* genes in LSMMG responses. This impacts our understanding of how LSMMG affects bacteria and our ability to modify bacteria with this condition in the future.

Keywords: Enterobacteriaceae, environmental response, low shear modeled microgravity, rotating wall vessel, *Salmonella Typhimurium*.

INTRODUCTION

A large body of studies aimed at characterizing the effects of low fluid shear force environments on bacterial cells, including the microgravity environment of spaceflight and ground-based rotating wall vessel (RWV) culture, have focused on the Gram negative enteric pathogen *Salmonella enterica* serovar Typhimurium [1-7]. Other studies have also focused on additional bacteria including *Escherichia coli* [8-15], *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* [16-18], *Yersinia pestis* [19, 20], and *Staphylococcus aureus* [15, 21, 22] with a range of different phenotypic results. However, the range of bacteria capable of responding to this condition and the potential similarities/differences in this response remain poorly characterized. Additionally, to our knowledge, a systematic, "side-by-side" study to examine the conservation of the low fluid shear response in a range of different

bacterial genera using common assay conditions has not been reported in the literature. In this study, we analyzed different members of the Gram negative Enterobacteriaceae family for conservation of the low fluid shear response in the RWV using phenotypic and molecular assays to delineate the commonalities and differences of these organisms to culture in this environmental condition. Many members of the Enterobacteriaceae family are enteric organisms that inhabit the intestine as part of their lifecycles, and consequently, these bacteria likely encounter low fluid shear regions in their natural habitat such as the spaces between microvilli [23]. In addition, as bacterial engineering expands to include a larger range of bacteria, the use of novel growth conditions will be applied to a greater variety of genera.

The RWV culture apparatus (Fig. 1) allows a physiologically-relevant low fluid shear force growth environment that induces a number of phenotypic responses in bacteria including altered stress resistance [1-5, 7, 12, 16, 21], increased survival in cellular and animal hosts [1, 3, 4, 7], and altered gene expression [1, 3, 5, 7, 13, 14, 17, 18]. The RWV is used to induce prokaryotic and eukaryotic cellular

*Address correspondence to this author at the Villanova University, Biology Department, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, PA 19085; Tel: 610-519-3037; Fax: 610-519-7863; E-mail: james.w.wilson@villanova.edu

Table 1. DNA oligonucleotides used in this study.

Name	Sequence
<i>S. Typhimurium</i>	
<i>hfq</i>	acaagatccgtcctgaacgcattgcgtcg
	tgttgctgtgatgggaaaccggcgagacg
<i>trpD</i>	agcgctttgtcggcgccctgtgga
	gttgatcagcgggcccagtagtgaacag
<i>E. coli</i>	
<i>hfq</i>	acaagatccgtcctgaacgcactgcgtcg
	tgttactgtgatgagaaccggcgagacg
<i>trpD</i>	agtgcgtttgtcggcgagcctgtggg
	gttaatcaatggcccagcacattgaacag
<i>C. freundii</i>	
<i>hfq</i>	acaagatccgtcctgaacgcactgcgtcg
	tgttactgtgatgagaaccggcgagacg
<i>trpD</i>	agcgctttgtcggcgccctgtgga
	gttaatcaacggcccagcacgttaaacag
<i>E. cloacae</i>	
<i>hfq</i>	acaagatccgtcctgaacgcattgcgtcg
	tattgctgtgatgagataccggagggacg
<i>ydcI</i>	ctgaacgaactggaacaactcacc
	catcgtattgtcatggtcgcgacctg
Normalization	
<i>16S rRNA</i>	gtaacggctaccaaggcgacgatccctag
	cttcgccaccggtattcctccagatctctac
<i>lpxC</i>	ccgttgagcacctgaatgctgcttggcgg
	tctggcgcataaacgcacccagagaagt
<i>S. Typhimurium</i> recombineering	
$\Delta trpR$	ctcgtgaacagtacaacggcggtataacatgaccagccatatgaatatcctccttagttcc
	tggccgcttcgcttatccggcctacgagcaaatcaggcgtgtgtaggctggagctgcttc
$\Delta trpDE$	accacgctcgaactgtgacctgcgatccgcctatcgggatgtgtaggctggagctgcttc
	ccaaatcgcttctcgcgacgatttcgctaaaacggtttgcataatgaatatcctccttagttcc
<i>E. coli</i> recombineering	
$\Delta trpR$	cccgctaacaatggcgacatattatgcccacaacatcaccatataatcctccttagttcc
	gatgcgccagctcttatcaggcctacaaaatcaatcgcttgtgtaggctggagctgcttc
$\Delta trpDE$	acgtaaaagagtcgatattatcagcagcagaatgacccatataatcctccttagttcc
	aaccgactctgaactgtaacctgcgaaggccttatcgtgtgtaggctggagctgcttc

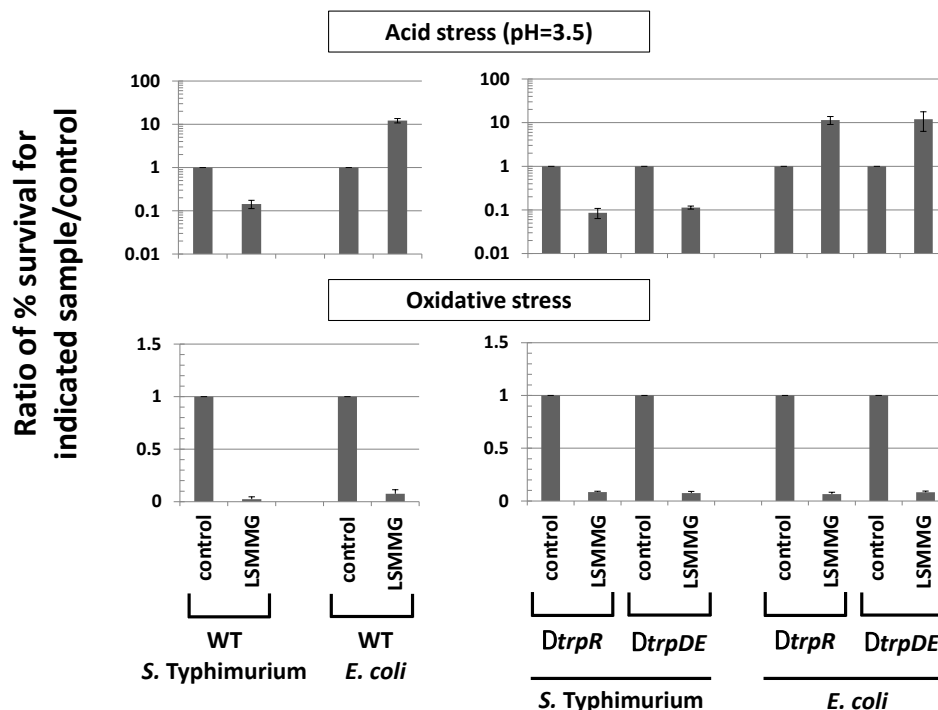


Fig. (6). Analysis of role of *trp* genes in LSMMG phenotypes. *S. Typhimurium* and *E. coli* $\Delta trpR$ and $\Delta trpDE$ strains were compared to respective WT strains for LSMMG-mediated alteration of acid and oxidative stress as described in Figs. (3, 4). The data was obtained from at least three independent experiments each plated in triplicate, and the average and standard deviation are plotted. The differences between LSMMG and control were significant at p-value < 0.05.

enzyme encoded by the *trp* operon could be having a role in the LSMMG response. Therefore, we constructed a $\Delta trpDE$ mutation in *S. Typhimurium* and *E. coli* that knocked out expression of this enzyme, and we tested these mutants for LSMMG phenotypes compared to WT (Fig. 6). As with the $\Delta trpR$ strains, we observed no effect of $\Delta trpDE$ on LSMMG responses in these genera indicating that the *trp* operon genes are not involved the LSMMG response as tested here.

DISCUSSION

The results presented here provide significant evidence using several strains and multiple assays that the response to the LSMMG growth environment is conserved across Enterobacteriaceae. Thus, the pathways and mechanisms used for sensing this environmental signal appear to be present in these different cells. This report also demonstrates that in a “side-by-side” study, the direction of LSMMG-induced regulation of phenotypes and gene expression can vary depending on genus. These results indicate that applications using the LSMMG environment (and related spaceflight conditions) have the potential to be targeted to a range of Enterobacteriaceae genera. Future work will focus on understanding the underlying causes of the variance in the direction of LSMMG regulation observed here and on the use of LSMMG/spaceflight to engineer bacteria in different ways.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors confirm that this article content has no conflict of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the Villanova University Biology Department, Sigma Xi Grants-in-Aid G20111015158058, and NASA grant NNX09AH40G for support of this work. We thank members of the Villanova Biology Department for discussions and assistance during this work.

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Received: January 30, 2014

Revised: March 19, 2014

Accepted: April 03, 2014

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