

New recording genes and genetic mutations of *H. pylori* genome in gastroduodenal disease patients in Basrah province-Iraq

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Submitted: 15 November 2022; Accepted: 12 December 2022; Published: 30 January 2023

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the molecular finding of the most important *H. pylori* virulence factors *cagA*, *vacA* genotypes in gastric biopsies of patients with gastroduodenal diseases infected with *Helicobacter pylori* in Basrah-Iraq by using conventional PCR and sequencing technologies, to give acknowledge about the immunopathogenesis of the studied virulence factors in patients with gastroduodenal disorder. A case-control study included 112 confirmed gastroduodenal patients and 112 healthy individuals as a control group. Data about age, gender, smoking, alcohol abuse, family history, occupation, residence, and clinical findings for all study populations were collected. The study show a significant effect of these virulence factors with an increased risk of gastroduodenal disorder.

Keywords: *gastroduodenal disorder, Helicobacter pylori, cagA, vacA, and new genetic mutations.*

INTRODUCTION

It was first reported in 1984 that gastroduodenal diseases in humans are caused by a bacterial infection (1). In 1892, Giulio Bizzozero discovered the spiral-shaped microorganism *Helicobacter pylori* for the first time in the stomachs of dogs (2). Robin J. Warren and Barry J. Marshall in Australia 1983 observed spiral, campylobacter-like bacteria in close opposition to the gastric mucosal tissues within multiple reported cases of gastritis and duodenal ulcers. At first, they were originally known as *Campylobacter pyloridis* due to their habitat and some characteristics in common with *Campylobacter jejuni*, then *Campylobacter pylori* which were confirmed to be different from other *Campylobacter* species by Goodwin et al. in 1989 (3), and recently redesigned as *Helicobacter* and *Helicobacter pylori* became a pioneer of the new species (4). Warren and Marshall received the 2005 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine for this patent. Thus, *H. pylori* were confirmed as the primary cause of gastritis and the more severe gastroduodenal diseases (5). *Helicobacter pylori* can cause many gastroduodenal and intestinal disorders including peptic ulcer diseases (PUDs), duodenal ulcers (DUs), and low-grade B-cell mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) gastric lymphoma (6). Since 1994, the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer (WHO/IARC) has first formally classified *H. pylori* as a class I carcinogen, a definite cause of cancer in humans, and that the eradication of *H. pylori* can reduce the risk of gastric cancer (7).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A Case-control study was conducted between November 2021 to November 2022 carried for patients with gastroduodenal disorder according to a minimum sampling size equation that depends on the disease ratio. The total number of gastroduodenal disorder patients involved in this study are (112) individuals were taken from Al-Sadder Teaching Hospital in Basrah province, the age of patients range from 15-66 years, and (112) individuals considered as control group after they were checked and confirmed to be free from any clinical problems. During the collection process, data about each individual were reported in a

questionnaire paper for each one, which included age, gender, family history, smoking, alcohol drinking, occupation, residence, and clinical findings of the disease which we have highlighted in the current study. The endoscopic examinations were done and recorded under the supervision of a gastroenterologist. Each patient and control group were subjected to a biopsy urease test and urea breath test for a definitive diagnosis of *H. pylori* infection. Bacterial DNA was extracted from gastric biopsies of patients infected with *H. pylori* to evaluate the genetic changes that may occur in Iraq population

Exclusion criteria

Patients on recent antibiotics.

Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) consuming patients, two weeks before endoscopy.

Immunocompromised patients.

Pregnant women

were excluded from this case-control study.

Inclusion criteria

Any patient suffering from gastroduodenal disorder (epigastric pain, dyspepsia, abdominal pain, and heartburn) associated with *H. pylori* infection which is diagnosed by urea breath test and biopsy urease test and under the supervision of a specialist GIT physician was included in this case-control study.

Samples collection

Three to Five punch of fresh gastric biopsies were obtained from gastroduodenal disease patients and a control group to perform a biopsy urease test. The biopsies were kept in a transport media to detect virulence factors of *H. pylori*: *cagA*, *vacA* by using specific primers by conventional PCR, and to determine DNA sequencing of PCR products of each virulence factor gene, alignment, identify, and phylogenetic tree in comparison with the preserved gene in NCBI and to determine genetic mutations occur in virulence factor gene in comparison with standard genes in NCBI for possible find a new gene related to Iraqi populations.

RESULTS

DNA extraction

The pure genomic DNA was extracted from gastric biopsies of the study population by using a specialized trusted DNA extraction kit to give a

very high quality and quantity of DNA and to confirm *H. pylori* infection. Horizontal Agarose Gel Electrophoresis was carried out to check extracted DNA, and the bands of total DNA were observed on the gel by using an ultraviolet (UV) imaging system as shown in figure (1).

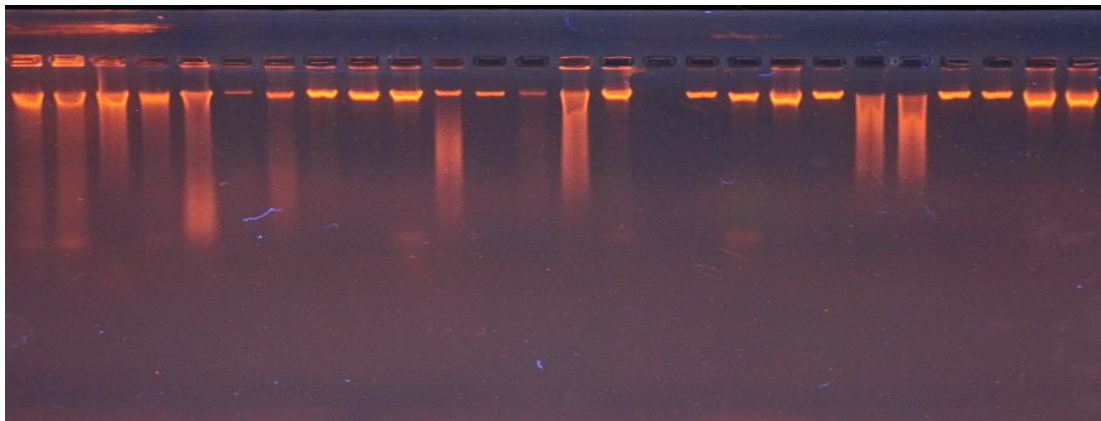


FIGURE 1: DNA products extracted from gastric biopsies running on 1% agarose gel at 100 voltages for 10 min. and then lowered to 70 volts for 60 min.

Cytotoxin-associated gene A (CagA).

PCR amplification results show in figure (2). Positive amplification bands have been confirmed by Gel Electrophoresis after the successful accurate binding of CagA-specific primer and the

target CagA DNA template as illuminating orange bands seen under UV light. The molecular determined size was 350 bp which is specific for CagA primer.

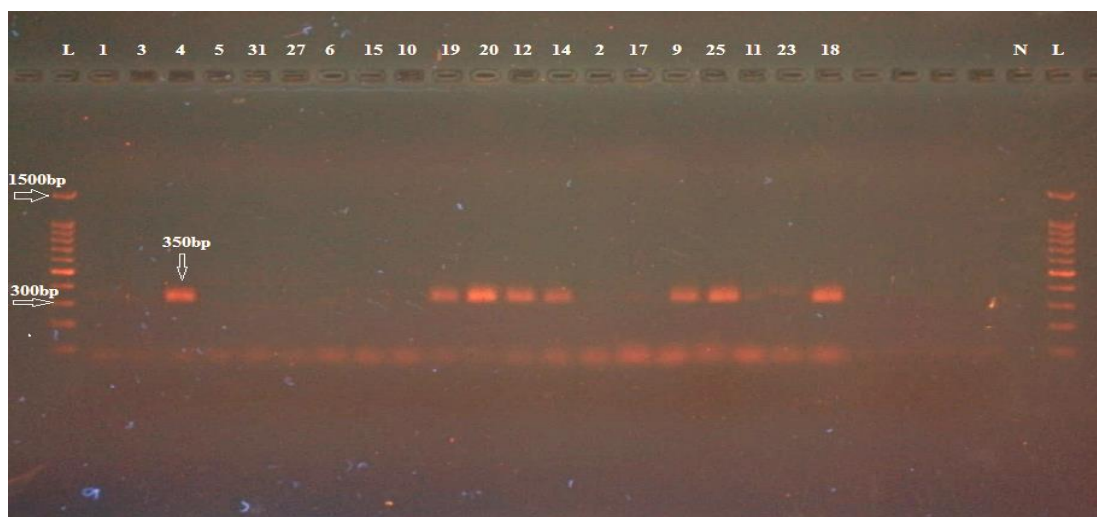


FIGURE 2: Gel Electrophoresis for PCR product of CagA primer which show 350bp at 55°C (Agarose 1%, 10min. at 100 voltages and then lowered to 70 volts for 60min.), then visualized under UV light after staining with ethidium bromide. Lane (L): DNA ladder (1500-100 bp), Lanes (4, 19, 20, 12, 14, 9, 25, and 18) represented positive results, Lanes (1, 3, 5-10, 2, 17, 11, and 23) represented negative result, and Lane (N) represented negative control.

Vacuolating cytotoxic gene A (VacA).

Figure (3) illustrate the positive PCR amplification products. DNA bands have been confirmed by the use of Gel Electrophoresis under the UV imaging system as compact

separated orange bands resulting from the accurate special binding between the target VacA DNA template and its specific primer with a molecular size of 259bp or 286bp which is specific for VacA primer.

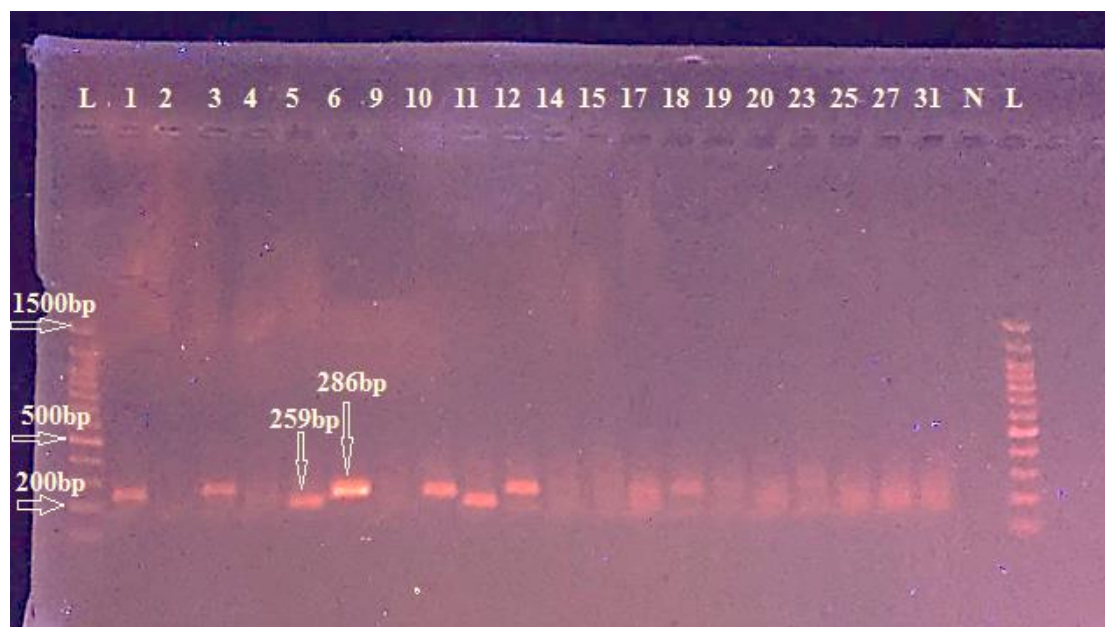


FIGURE 3: Gel Electrophoresis for PCR product of VacA primer which shows either 286bp or 259bp at 53°C, (Agarose 1%, 10min. at 100 voltages and then lowered to 70 volts for 60min.) Visualized under UV light after staining with ethidium bromide. Lane (L): DNA ladder (1500-100bp), Lanes (1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, and 17, 18, 20-31) represented positive results, Lanes (2, 4, 9, 14, 15, and 19) represented negative results, and Lane (N) represented negative control.

DISCUSSION

From a molecular standpoint, an infection with *H. pylori* can cause disorders of the extraintestinal system as well as impact the intestinal microflora biosystem. Early alterations in the microenvironment can modify the gene expression of several immune-related mediators in the host, which subsequently has an impact on the local and systemic immune system. Conventional PCR are the most fundamental techniques for the identification of *H. pylori* genes directly from gastric biopsies.

Conventional PCR

In this work, the detection of *H. pylori* gene was estimated by conventional Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR).

The DNA of *H. pylori* could be identified by PCR technique directly in human gastric biopsy with excellent sensitivity and specificity (8) .

The part of genetic detection in our study includes DNA extraction from gastric biopsies of the study population by the use of specific primers designed for each gene. Amplification of all DNA samples with agarose gel, 10 min/100 voltages/60 minutes and the results confirmed by gel electrophoresis and the products include: amplicon-size PCR product of 350 bp referred to CagA gene, amplicon-size PCR product of 259 bp referred to VacA gene.

Results of this study show the relationship between the studied virulence genes with predisposition and risks of gastroduodenal diseases. The identification of *H. pylori*-specific gene region by using molecular techniques such as PCR is faster than culture since *H. pylori* culturing requires 10-14 days to be confirmed (9). Sulo and Sipkova, (2021) reported that conventional PCR was more reliable than histology to confirm positive results (10).

In a review based on PCR analysis of gastric biopsies, Idowu et al., (2019) revealed a significant association between *H. pylori* virulence genes (CagA and VacA) and the risk for development of certain gastrointestinal complications (11). Based on data published by El-Khlousy, et al., (2016), from a total of 37 cases detected by PCR technique, out of 17 samples were positive for cagA and 5 samples were positive for VacA in gastric biopsies of *H. pylori* infected patients (12).

DNA sequencing

The DNA sequencing process through PCR results was performed by Macrogen company/ Korea. The collected data are from Gene Bank and are available at National Center for Biotechnology Information <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>.

The genetic analysis of bacterial genome facilitates the characterization of specific genotypes associated with different diseases. A recent study revealed an association between genetic diversity and the development of gastric cancer and peptic ulcer diseases. *H. pylori* is one of more than twenty microbial genomic that have been completely sequence (13).

Throughout the world, the DNA sequencing of *H. pylori* genome shows a great divergence. The current study aims to determine the gene accessibility of virulence factors in the isolated *H. pylori* strains.

In the present study, the results of DNA sequencing for *H. pylori* genes CagA and VacA show there is a convergence between the isolated genes and that of the Gene Bank database (NCBI).

Two gastric biopsy samples have been sequenced, the results of CagA sample (1) identity show that the studied CagA gene is present in 45(50.4%) samples from the total cases with 303/309 (98%) identity in forward primer when compared to Gene Bank database (NCBI) with six mutations appeared as L→F; Stop codon→S; N→N; and V→V; I→no functional protein; and S→S, while the reverse primer show 298/303 (98%) identity, when compared to Gene Bank database (NCBI) with five mutations, appeared as no functional protein→Stop codon, N→N; L→L; Stop codon→Stop codon; and S→no functional protein. The forward primer of CagA in sample (2) show two mutations appear as V→V; and I→ no functional protein and the reverse primer of CagA show 295/303(97%) identity and characterized with five mutations appeared as L→L; A→G; S→R; Y→Q; and R→R.

The results of VacA sample (1) identity show that the studied VacA gene appear in 79(88.5%) samples from the total cases and show 179/196 (91%) identity in forward and reverse primer when compared to that of the Gene Bank database (NCBI) with nine mutations appearing as P→P; C→W; V→G; G→G; G→no functional protein; P→P; K→N; P→P; and K→K. The VacA forward primer show 210/291(96%) identity in sample (2) and identified with nine mutations appeared as R→R, S→S, G→G, A→A, S→S, N→N, K→K, R→R, R→G, the reverse primer show 213/219(97%) identity and characterized with six mutations appear as Q→Q, P→P, A→A, K→K, T→T, and F→L.

*The letters represent specific amino acid and all amino acids are illustrated in the table (1).

TABLE 1: Amino acids symbols.

Amino acids		Symbol	Codons
Alanine	Ala	A	GCA, GCC, GCG, GCU
Cysteine	Cys	C	UGC, UGU
Phenylalanine	Phe	F	UUC, UUU
Glycine	Gly	G	GGA, GGC, GGG, GGU
Isoleucine	Ile	I	AUA, AUC, AUU
Lysine	Lys	K	AAA, AAG
Leucine	Leu	L	UUA, UUG, CUA, CUC, CUG, CUU
Asparagine	Asn	N	AAC, AAU
Proline	Pro	P	CCA, CCC, CCG, CCU
Glutamine	Gln	Q	CAA, CAG
Arginine	Arg	R	AGA, AGG, CGA, CGC, CGG, CGU
Serine	Ser	S	AGC, AGU, UCA, UCC, UCG, UCU
Threonine	Thr	T	ACA, ACC, ACG, ACU
Valine	Val	V	GUA, GUC, GUG, GUU
Tryptophan	Trp	W	UGG
Tyrosine	Tyr	Y	UAC, UAU

Due to high mutation rates and mismatch homologous recombination frequency, *H. pylori* strains exhibit very great genetic variations. Most of bacterial resistance cases are related to point mutation during bacterial DNA synthesis (14). Antibiotic-resistant bacteria are one of the most important challenges for the world's health and *H. pylori* is the most important example, for example, mutations on the gene coding for *H. pylori* outer membrane proteins such as penicillin binding proteins (PBP-coding gene) resulting in β -lactam resistant genotype (15). Suzuki et al., (2019) reported that from the 17 studied genes, 5 genes were identified with a mutation coding for outer membrane proteins which is potentially accelerate colonization and inflammation (16). Vianna et al., (2018) identified seven mutation in 23s rRNA region related to antibiotic resistance, whereas the results of Jabar & Alfaisal, (2017) documented that no mutations were observed in the codons but the sequencing analysis detect point mutations in exons (17,18). In a study by Dai et al., (2022) which enrolled a total of 133 *H. pylori* positive patients they reported that no significant link was detected between *VacA* genotypes patients and antibiotic resistance (19).

Aziz et al., (2022) detect a number of specific virulence proteins in gastric biopsies of gastroduodenal disease *H. pylori* infected individuals, these proteins were controlled by *CagA* pathogenicity island (20).

In view of the different mutations that have been observed in this study, we hypothesized that the large number of mutations could lead to increase *H. pylori* resistance and emergence of disease complication such as gastric cancers in Iraqi population, our results were in line with many studies of (21, 22, 23, 24, and 25).

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