UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

ANTIBACTERIAL ACTIVITY OF SEA CUCUMBER EXTRACT AND ELUCIDATION OF MEMBRANE SYNTHESIS GENES IN
Staphylococcus aureus

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FPSK(m) 2011 26
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By

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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

JULY 2011
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July 2011

Chairman : Professor Mariana Nor Shamsudin, PhD

Faculty : Medicine and Health Sciences

Sea cucumber is widely used in South East Asian country folk medicine for the treatment of wound and skin infections. It is a new alternative source of antibiotics that are from valuable biological resource for future commercial development in pharmaceutical use. This study investigated the antibacterial activity of *Stichopus badionotus* methanolic extract to elucidate its use in traditional medicine. Antimicrobial activity was assayed by the disc diffusion and broth macro dilution method. From the results, it appeared that the methanolic extract of *S. badionotus* displayed antibacterial activities against three non resistant and three multiple resistant strains of *Staphylococcus aureus*. The 3.75 mg/mL minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) value of the extract successfully inhibited the growth of non resistant *S. aureus* (MSSA) and against multi resistant strains of *S. aureus* (MRSA) the effective MIC value is 7.50 mg/mL. The *S. badionotus* extract then
combined with the antibiotics, penicillin and ampicillin gave fractional inhibitory concentration (FIC) as low as 0.375 indicating synergism activity of the mixture against MSSA and MRSA strains. This activity indicates the lower concentration usage of antibacterial agents in inhibiting resistant strains of *S. aureus*. Furthermore, based on healing rates and dosage tests in rats with wound infection model, the combination treatment of extract and antibiotics was better than antibiotic alone treatment. With the low dosage in-combination treatment of the *S. badinotus* extract 0.94 mg/mL combine with penicillin 0.125 mg/mL or ampicillin 0.05 mg/mL, the wound healed by day 6. While single treatment using high dosage of antibiotic ampicillin 0.2 mg/mL heals on day 5. These results indicate the potential of *S. badinotus* extract to become alternative choices of antimicrobial agents for in combination mode of treatment against MRSA infection.

MRSA strains treated with *S. badinotus* extract exhibited inhibitory activity as shown by the plate and tube assays. The extract then proofs to interrupt selected genes encoding for cytoplasmic membrane of bacterial structures that are important for bacterial survival. Disruption in membrane integrity will result in leakage of internal contents followed by cell death suggest the membrane a practical drug target. Based on the bacterial needs to have membrane, studies on MRSA membrane synthesis genes, *msrR* and *mprF*, were conducted via reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction approach. Alteration of nucleotide sequences at the RNA level after treatment was observed only in the *mprF* gene but not in the *msrR* gene. The nucleotide changes were up to 35% for MSSA isolates and < 10% for MRSA isolates, which both contribute to < 50% changes in
protein base after translation. A confirmatory experiment, fluorescence assay, used in confirming this gene as a drug target predicted by molecular assays revealed positive results. The extract specifically acts on the MRSA membrane, shown through this assay by the uptake of fluorescent dye upon rupturing of the bacterial membrane after treatment with the extract. The *S. badionotus* extract treatment on MRSA at the MIC level disrupts the membrane after 60 min upon application, showed by a steep curve of the fluorescence intensities indicating the membrane leakage. Selective targeting of the *mprF* gene by the *S. badionotus* extract is an invaluable finding requiring further investigation into the feasibility of utilizing this target gene in the development of anti-infective agents against MRSA.
Abstrak tesis ini dikemukakan kepada senat Universiti Putra Malaysia dalam memenuhi keperluan ijazah Master Sains

AKTIVITI ANTIBAKTERIA OLEH EKSTRAK MENTIMUN LAUT DAN PENENTUAN GEN SINTESIS MEMBRAN DALAM Staphylococcus aureus

Oleh
NORFARRAH BINTI MOHAMED ALIPIAH
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Mentimun laut banyak digunakan dalam perubatan tradisional di Asia Tenggara bagi merawat luka dan jangkitan kulit. Ia merupakan sumber alternatif baru kepada antibiotik yang berharga untuk dibangunkan secara komersil bagi kegunaan farmaseutikal. Kajian ini menyelidik aktiviti antibakteria oleh ekstrak metanol Stichopus badionotus bagi memastikan penggunaannya dalam perubatan tradisional. Aktiviti antimikrob telah diuji melalui kaedah penyerapan disk dan kaedah pencairan pati media. Hasil penemuan menunjukkan keberkesanan ekstrak metanol S. badionotus sebagai antibakteria terhadap Staphylococcus aureus iaitu tiga kultur tidak rintang (MSSA) dan tiga kultur rintang pelbagai antibiotik (MRSA). Kepekatan perencat minimum (MIC) ekstrak bernilai 3.75 mg/mL untuk kultur tidak rintang dan 7.50 mg/mL untuk kultur berkerintangan pelbagai. Ekstrak S. badionotus kemudiannya digabungkan dengan antibiotik; penicillin dan
ampicillin memberi index rencat fraksinasi serendah 0.375 yang menggambarkan hubungan kombinasi sinergi menentang kultur MSSA dan MRSA. Seterusnya, berdasarkan kadar penyembuhan luka dan ujian dos terhadap model infeksi luka pada tikus, menunjukkan rawatan kombinasi ekstrak dan antibiotik adalah lebih baik dari rawatan antibiotik sahaja. Rawatan dos rendah kombinasi ekstrak 0.94 mg/mL digabungkan dengan penicillin 0.125 mg/mL atau ampicillin 0.05 mg/mL, infeksi luka sembuh pada hari ke-enam. Manakala rawatan antibiotik sahaja sebanyak 0.2 mg/mL sembuh pada hari ke-lima. Penemuan ini menunjukkan penggunaan gamat secara tradisional dapat merawat jangkitan S. aureus, terutama kultur rintang, dan kajian lanjut perlu dijalankan bagi mengeksploitasi potensinya sebagai agen antibakteria.

Kultur S. aureus bekerintangan pelbagai (MRSA) menunjukkan potensi ekstrak sebagai penghalang aktiviti melalui ujikaji piring petri dan tiub ujikaji cairan. Ekstrak dibuktikan dapat merosakkan gen - gen terpilih mengkodkan struktur membran sitoplasmik yang penting untuk kemandirian bakteria. Kerosakan itegriti membran bakteria akan menyebabkan lelehan kandungan dalaman seterusnya menyebabkan kematian sel menjadikan struktur ini sebagai target yang praktikal. Berdasarkan keperluan bakteria untuk mempunyai membran, kajian ke atas gen yang mensintesis membran bagi MRSA; gen msrR dan mprF dijalankan melalui pendekatan bioteknologi molekular. Pengubahsuaian pada jujukan nukleotid selepas rawatan hanya dilihat pada gen mprF dan tiada bukti pengubahsuaian jujukan nukleotid dalam gen msrR. Perubahan nukleotid sebayak 35% untuk kultur MSSA dan < 10% bagi kultur MRSA yang menyebabkan < 50% perubahan dalam jujukan protein selepas pengalihan jujukan. Eksperimen
pengesahan iaitu essei pendafluoran menunjukan keputusan positif seperti yang digambarkan dari kajian molekular bagi penentuan gen sebagai sasaran agen antibakteria. Ekstrak khususnya bertindak hanya ke atas membran MRSA, ditunjukkan dengan penyerapan bahan pendafloran setelah rawatan dengan ekstrak yang merosakan membran bakteria. Rawatan ekstrak *S. badionotus* terhadap kultur MRSA pada peringkat MIC adalah sangat tinggi yang merosakan membran setelah 60 min rawatan yang ditunjukkan melalui keputusan eksperimen pendafloran. Pemilihan gen *mprF* oleh tindakan ekstrak *S. badionotus* adalah penemuan yang bermilai tinggi serta memerlukan kajian yang lebih mendalam terhadap kemungkinan gen ini boleh digunakan dalam membangunkan agen anti-infektif untuk menentang MRSA.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah, all praise and thanks to Allah, whom with his willing giving me the opportunity to complete this Master thesis which is entitled Antibacterial Activity of Sea Cucumber Extract and Elucidation of Membrane Synthesis Genes in *Staphylococeus aureus*. This thesis would not be completed without my acknowledgement to the helps of many individuals who have assisted me both in research and gathering the data for this thesis.

Firstly, I would like to express my deepest thanks to my supervisor, Professor Dr. Mariana Nor Shamsudin who had guided me all the way from starting to train me as a researcher to finalizing this research project. The appreciation also goes to my co-supervisors Professor Dr. Fatimah Md. Yusoff and Professor Dr. Aziz Arshad for giving me useful inputs in completing this thesis. I would like to specially say thanks to Mr. Zainan Ariffin for helping me in the sampling of marine invertebrates.

Deepest thanks and appreciation to my parents for their prayers that finally bring me to this stage of completing my Masters study. I also want to take this opportunity to dedicate my highest gratitude to Nik Khairul Azizi b. Nik Ibrahim my husband, Hana Farizah Zamri and Nurul Hidayah Idris my dearest sisters for their cooperation, encouragement, constructive suggestion and full support for this thesis completion, from the beginning till the end. Also thanks to all of my friends, those who have contributed by supporting my work and helped me during the years of the project until its completion. Last but not least, my thanks to the Faculty of Medicine and Health Science that provided me with facilities and our government that gave research funds to support this research. Alhamdulillah, the thesis is finally completed and thanks to all who have contributed directly or indirectly in this research. Thank you…
I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on (the date of viva) to conduct the final examination of Norfarrah Binti Mohamed Alipiah on her thesis entitled ‘Antibacterial Activity of Sea Cucumber Extract and Elucidation of Membrane Synthesis Genes in *Staphylococcus aureus*’ in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Degree of Master of Science.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for the quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at University Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

________________________________________
NORFARRAH BINTI MOHAMED ALIPIAH

Date: 6 July 2011
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