



**DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF MUCOSAL TUBERCULOSIS
VACCINE UTILIZING IN-TRANS SURFACE DISPLAY SYSTEM OF
Lactobacillus plantarum Pa21 IN MICE**

ANHAR DANIAL BIN MUSTAFA

FBSB 2017 50



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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

November 2017

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This thesis is dedicated to my wife and children.



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Abstract of a thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairperson: Professor Khatijah Yusoff, PhD
Faculty : Biotechnology and Bimolecular Science

The severity of tuberculosis is significant since it has been estimated to have latently affected almost a third of the world's population with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the causative agent for tuberculosis. Fortunately, the disease is being prevented and controlled by the Bacille Calmette Guérin (BCG) vaccine, the only viable vaccine approved for human usage since 1921. Nevertheless, the protective efficacy of the BCG vaccine has been highly variable and substandard (0-80%) in adults especially in endemic regions due to pre-existing immune responses to the vaccine. Therefore, there is a strong need for new and effective tuberculosis vaccine to be developed either as a replacement or as a booster in order to overcome the limitations from BCG vaccine. In this project, candidate mucosal tuberculosis vaccines utilizing protein surface display system of *Lactobacillus plantarum* carrying and displaying five combinations of *M. tuberculosis* subunit epitope antigens (Ag85B, CFP-10, ESAT-6, Rv0475 and Rv2031c) fused with LysM anchor motif were constructed, cloned and expressed in *Escherichia coli* Rossetta expression host. By using the *in trans* approach, the recombinant protein of interest were expressed in *E. coli* and extracted before being applied for extracellular attachment onto the cell wall of *L. plantarum*. Subsequently the binding capability of the recombinant protein of interest to the cell wall of *L. plantarum* was examined via the immunofluorescence microscopy and whole cell ELISA approaches where successful attachment and consistent stability of cell wall binding up to four days period was determined. Although the five recombinant protein of interest were expressed successfully, their expressions were found to be deposited in the inclusion bodies (IBs) of the *E. coli*. To overcome this, the solubilization on the IBs was optimized via the 5% (w/v) N-lauryl sarcosine treatment but among the five recombinant protein of interest, only ACERL was managed to be recovered optimally (38.2% extractability) for further usage in animal study. Therefore the immunization of the female Balb/c mice with the developed vaccine of *L. plantarum* surface displaying ACERL (Lp ACERL) via the oral and intranasal route of administration were studied for its immunogenicity effects. Significant increase in total IgG antibody response and high CD4+/CD8+ ratio from the Lp ACERL immunized oral group as compared to nasal group indicates high reactivity

of the developed vaccine in being recognized by the host immune system. Moreover, unlike the nasal group, Lp ACERL of orally immunized mice was able to invoke strong mucosal and systemic immune responses as indicated by the specific IgA antibody response from the immunized mice's gastrointestinal tract (GIT), fecal and serum samples. More importantly, Lp ACERL of orally immunized mice showed immune response that favors the Th1 type response as indicated by the immune response outcome from the cytokine profiling of spleen, lung and GIT, and the re-stimulation of the splenocytes from the immunized mice. In contrast, the Lp ACERL intranasally immunized mice does not show significant correlation for inducing neither Th1 nor Th2 immune response. However, this may be due to severe inflammation on the lung of the nasally immunized mice that might compromised its overall immune response outcome. The effect of adding adjuvant consisting of *Lactococcus lactis* secreting mouse IL-12 (LcIL-12) co-administered with Lp ACERL was also determined as it shown to induced a more favorable condition for the candidate vaccine to further generate significant and bias of Th1 protective immune responses as compared to the immune response from the immunization with Lp ACERL alone. The enhancement of the Th1 type responses were observed from the serum IgG sub-types and the cytokine profiling of spleen, lung and GIT immune response outcome. Thus, this study shows that the developed candidate vaccine of Lp ACERL with or without LcIL-12 adjuvant was able to stimulate favorable Th1 type response which is the key indicator for inducing effective protective memory response required for the prevention of tuberculosis. In conclusion, this study represents a proof of concept in the development of *L. plantarum* as a carrier for a non-genetically modified organism (GMO) tuberculosis vaccine, which may be the strategy in the future for tuberculosis vaccine development.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PEMBANGUNAN DAN PENILAIAN VAKSIN TUBERKULOSIS MUKOSA
MENGUNAKAN SISTEM PAPARAN PERMUKAAN *Lactobacillus plantarum*
Pa21 SECARA *IN-TRANS* TERHADAP TIKUS**

Oleh

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Keterukan kesan daripada tuberkulosis adalah sangat ketara kerana ianya telah dianggarkan hampir satu pertiga daripada penduduk dunia sudah secara terpendam dijangkiti *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, iaitu agen penyebab untuk tuberkulosis. Mujur, penyakit ini dapat dikawal serta dicegah oleh Bacille Calmette Guerin (BCG) vaksin, satu-satunya vaksin yang diluluskan untuk penggunaan manusia sejak tahun 1921. Walau bagaimanapun, keberkesanan perlindungan vaksin BCG adalah berbeza-beza dan subpiawai (0-80%) terutamanya tindak balas imun terhadap vaksin di kawasan-kawasan endemik yang telah sedia terkesan daripada tindak balas vaksin tersebut. Oleh itu, terdapat keperluan yang kukuh untuk vaksin tuberkulosis yang baru dan berkesan untuk dibangunkan sama ada sebagai pengganti atau penggalak untuk mengatasi kelemahan daripada vaksin BCG. Dalam projek ini, calon untuk vaksin mukosa tuberkulosis menggunakan sistem paparan permukaan protein *Lactobacillus plantarum* membawa dan memaparkan lima kombinasi *M. tuberculosis* antigen epitop subunit (Ag85B, CFP-10, ESAT-6, Rv0475 dan Rv2031c) bergabung dengan LysM sebagai motif pautan di mana pembinaan, pengklonan dan ekspresi berlaku di dalam perumah ekspresi *Escherichia coli* Rosetta. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan *in-trans*, pengespresan and ekstrak protein rekombinan berkepentingan dalam *E. coli* dilakukan dahulu sebelum dilampirkan secara luar sel ke dinding sel *L. plantarum*. Selepas itu keupayaan pautan protein rekombinan berkepentingan ke sel dinding *L. plantarum* telah diperiksa melalui mikroskop imunopendarfluor dan ELISA sel menyeluruh di mana pautan yang berjaya dan kestabilan yang konsisten sehingga tempoh empat hari telah ditentukan. Walaupun lima protein rekombinan berkepentingan telah berjaya diekspresikan, ekspresi mereka didapati tersimpan di jasad rangkuman (IB) di dalam *E. coli* berkenaan. Bagi mengatasinya, perlarutan pada IBs telah dioptimumkan melalui 5% (w/v) rawatan N-lauryl sarcosine akan tetapi di antara lima protein rekombinan berkepentingan, hanya ACERL telah berjaya dipulihkan secara optimum (38.2% keterekstrakan) untuk kegunaan seterusnya dalam kajian haiwan. Oleh itu, imunisasi daripada tikus muncit betina BALB/c dengan vaksin yang di bina daripada *L. plantarum* yang permukaan sel dindingnya memaparkan ACERL (Lp ACERL) melalui laluan mulut dan intranasal telah

dikaji bagi melihat kesan keimmunogenan. Peningkatan ketara IgG antibodi dan ratio CD4+.CD8+ daripada kumpulan tikus mincit yang telah diimmunisasi dengan Lp ACERL berbanding kumpulan nasal telah menunjukkan peningkatan reaktiviti oleh vaksin yang dibangunkan terhadap pengenalan sistem imunisasi induk. Seterusnya, berbanding kumpulan nasal, tikus mincit yang telah diimmunisasi dengan Lp ACERL secara mulut dapat memberikan gerak balas imun yang kuat terhadap sistem imunisasi daripada mukosa dan gerak balas sistemik berdasarkan tindak-balas spesifik IgA antibodi daripada salur gastrousus, najis dan serum sampel oleh tikus mincit yang telah diimmunisasi. Seterusnya, tikus mincit yang telah diimmunisasi oleh Lp ACERL telah menunjukkan kesan immunisasi yang menjurus kepada jenis Th1 respon yang berdasarkan kesan immunisasi terhadap profil cytokine daripada limpa, paru-paru dan salur gastrousus serta stimulasi semula oleh splenocytes daripada tikus mincit yang telah diimmunisasi. Sebaliknya, tikus mincit imunisasi dengan Lp ACERL secara intranasal tidak menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan untuk mendorong tidak tindak balas imun Th1 mahupun Th2. Walau bagaimanapun, ini mungkin disebabkan oleh keradangan teruk paru-paru pada tikus mincit imunisasi secara intranasal yang mungkin menjejaskan hasil tindak balas imun secara keseluruhan. Kesan adjuvan yg terdiri daripada *Lactococcus lactis* yang merembeskan tetikus IL-12 bersama dengan Lp ACERL telah terbukti dalam memberi kesan yang lebih memihak kepada keadaan calon vaksin untuk menjana lagi tindak balas imun Th1 berbanding immunisasi hanya dengan Lp ACERL sahaja. Kesan peningkatan yang memihak kepada Th1 respon dapat dilihat berdasarkan kepada hasil tindak-balas immunisasi daripada serum IgG sub-kelas dan profil cytokine daripada limpa, paru-paru dan salur gastrousus. Oleh itu, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa vaksin yang dibangunkan iaitu Lp ACERL bersama atau tidak bersama adjuvan dapat memberi stimulasi Th1 yang diinginkan serta sangat penting sebagai penanda aras kepada kebolehan vaksin tersebut untuk menggalakkan dan mencapai tindak balas memori pelindung yang berkesan. Kesimpulanny, kajian ini membuktikan keberkesanan konsep dalam pembangunan *L. plantarum* sebagai pembawa untuk vaksin tuberkulosis bukan organisma dimodifikasi secara genetik (GMO), dan membolehkannya menjadi strategi pilihan bagi pembangunan vaksin tuberkulosis pada masa hadapan.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

%	percentage
°C	degree Celsius
µg	microgram
µl	microliter
Abs	absorbances
ACMA	N-acetylglucosaminidase
APC	antigen presenting cell
BCG	Bacilli Calmette–Guérin
bp	base pair
BSA	bovine serum albumin
CD4	cluster of differentiation 4
CD8	cluster of differentiation 8
CFU	colony forming unit
CO ₂	cytotoxic T-lymphocyte-associated protein 4
DAB	3,3'-diaminobenzidine
DCs	dendritic cells
dH ₂ O	distilled water
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
ELISA	enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay
FITC	Fluorescein isothiocyanate
GALT	gut-associated lymphoid tissue
GFP	green fluorescent protein
GM	genetically modified
GMO	genetically modified organism
GRAS	generally regarded as safe
h	hour
His (H)	histidine
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HRP	horseradish peroxidase
IBs	inclusion bodies
IFN-γ	interferon gamma,
IL-10	interleukin 10
IL-12	interleukin 12
IL-2	interleukin 2
IL-4	interleukin 4
IL-6	interleukin 6
kDa	kilo Dalton
L	litre
LAB	lactic acid bacteria
LAM	Lipoarabinomannan,
LB	Luria Bertani
LTA	lipoteichoic acid
LysM	Lysin motif
M	molarity
mAb	monoclonal antibody
MALT	mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue
MCS	multiple cloning site

MDR-TB	multi-drug resistance tuberculosis
Met (M)	methionine
MHC-I	major histocompatibility complex I
MHC-II	major histocompatibility complex II
min	minute
mM	millimolar
MRS	de Man, Rogosa and Sharp agar
MTB	<i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis</i>
MVA85A	modified vaccinia Ankara 85A
NAG	N-Acetylglucosamine
NaOH	sodium hydroxide
ng	nanogram
NK	Natural killer cell
NLS	N-lauryl sarcosine
nm	nanometer
NO	nitrogen oxide
PBMC	peripheral blood mononuclear cell
PBS	phosphate buffered saline
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
PG	peptidoglycan
pH	potential of hydrogen
PIM	phosphatidylinositol mannoside
PVDF	Polyvinylidene fluoride
RE	restriction enzyme
RNA	ribonucleic acid
ROS	reactive oxygen species.
RPMI	Roswell Park Memorial Institute medium
RT	room temperature
SDS	sodium dodecyl sulfate
SDS-PAGE	sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
TAE	tris-acetate EDTA
Taq	<i>Thermus aquaticus</i>
TB	terrific Broth
Tc	T cytotoxic cell
TCA	trichloroacetic acid
TEMED	tetramethyl-ethylene diamine
Th	T helper
Th1	type 1 T helper
Th17	type 17 T helper
Th2	type 2 T helper
Tm	melting temperature
TNF- α	tumor necrosis factor alpha
Treg	T regulatory
TTFC	tetanus toxin fragment C
UV	ultra-violet
v	volt
v/v	volume per volume
w/v	weight per volume

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Tuberculosis is one of the most common and deadliest infectious disease apart from ebola, malaria and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) syndrome. Almost a third of the world's population has been latently infected with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the causative agent for tuberculosis. It was estimated that in 2014, out of the 9.6 million infected cases, 1.5 million tuberculosis related-deaths were reported worldwide (WHO, 2015); over 95% of which occur in low- and middle-income countries, predominantly in Africa, South East Asia and Eastern Europe (Pareek *et al.*, 2016). Although drugs are available for the treatment of these patients, these tend to be relatively expensive and the long duration of 6 months required for the treatment has led to poor compliance by the patients. This inevitably gives rise to the emergence of multiple drug resistant strains. The disease is being prevented and controlled by the Bacille Calmette Guérin (BCG) vaccine, the only viable vaccine approved for human usage since 1921. Nevertheless, the protective efficacy of the BCG vaccine has been highly variable and sub-standard (0-80%) especially in the endemic tropical and sub-tropical regions, due to pre-existing immune responses to the vaccine (WHO, 2010). Therefore, there is a strong need for a new and effective tuberculosis vaccine to be developed either as a replacement or as a booster in order to overcome the limitations from the BCG vaccine.

At present, research for novel tuberculosis vaccination strategies are intensely focused on the attenuated mycobacterial vaccine as well as subunit vaccine, and viral vector vaccines (Delogu and Fadda, 2009). Among these approaches, the subunit vaccine approach has shown to give the most promising outcome as indicated by its success in clinical trials stage I or II (Sarhan, 2010). Nonetheless, the progress of these vaccines are often hampered by concerns on the safety aspects with regards to genetically modified organism (GMO)-type vaccine, induction of negative side-effects, and failure to ensure significant protective immune responses (Clark and Cassidy-Hanley, 2005). For example, although the attenuated mycobacterial and viral vector vaccines often showed strong protective immune response, the safety concern on the possible reversion to a pathogenic and virulence state has become one of the main issues for these vaccine strategies (Minor, 2015). In contrast, a subunit vaccine is regarded to have a higher safety approval but typically suffers from the lack of any significant protective immune response and requires adjuvant in order to improve dramatically the immunogenicity response (Mohan *et al.*, 2013).

A different approach towards developing an effective tuberculosis vaccine is to use the probiotic lactic acid bacteria (LAB) as a mucosal delivery vehicle to exhibit the antigenic protein(s) on their cell surface. This strategy has already been successfully performed with promising results in giving protective immunity against rotavirus, group B streptococcus, HPV16-induced tumors, tetanus, chicken anemia virus and enterovirus

(Wells and Mercenier, 2008). The growing interest in the use of the LAB protein surface display system for mucosal vaccination purposes is due to strong requirement for effective strategies in delivering vaccine antigens, microbiocides and therapeutics to the mucosal tissues (Wells and Mercenier, 2008). The rationale of developing a tuberculosis vaccine through the mucosal route is due to the *M. tuberculosis* target entry site at the mucosal lining of the respiratory tract. By focusing on this route for vaccine administration, effective protection gain by the mucosal cells against the pathogen can be achieved primarily by the enhancement of mucosal cells to vaccine interaction whilst having reduced potential side effects when compared to systemic routes of administration (Czerkinsky *et al.*, 1999). This is because studies have shown that protection against mycobacterial infection were conferred by mucosal immunity that induces both mycobacterial-specific T helper cells-1 (Th-1) and secretory IgA responses which are the key immune response against *M. tuberculosis* (Badell *et al.*, 2009; Hockey and Misra, 2011). Moreover, this approach provides painless and easy vaccine administration with higher compliance rate than the other known invasive administration methods.

In this project, candidate mucosal tuberculosis vaccines utilizing *in-trans* protein surface display system of *Lactobacillus plantarum* carrying and displaying five combinations of *M. tuberculosis* subunit epitope antigens (Ag85B, CFP-10, ESAT-6, Rv0475 and Rv2031c) fused to the LysM anchor motif, designated as ACERL, ACEL, ARL, CERL and RL were constructed, cloned and expressed in *Esheria coli* Rossetta expression host. Subsequently, these expressed fusion proteins were harvested and purified before being externally attached onto the cell wall of *L. plantarum*. This strategy of using an independent expression host for protein expression and external attachment of the expressed protein onto the cell wall of the intended bacterial carrier is referred as the *in-trans* surface display system concept. The recombinant *M. tuberculosis* antigen-LysM protein fusions were studied for their functionality in their binding capability to the cell wall of *L. plantarum* and their immunogenicity effects based on mouse animal model. The effect of adding adjuvant consisting of *Lactococcus lactis* secreting IL-12 co-administered with the candidate vaccines was also determined as it has the potential to induce a more favorable condition for the candidate vaccine to further generate significant and improved protective immune responses.

The delivery system in this project is novel compared to other tuberculosis vaccination approaches since it uses non-pathogenic and non-engineered *L. plantarum* as the carrier vehicle to surface display *M. tuberculosis* antigens. Moreover, the *L. plantarum* has a GRAS status (Raha *et al.*, 2005) that provides an attractive option compared to the use of other mucosal delivery systems, such as liposomes, microparticles and attenuated pathogens (Brandtzaeg, 2003). *L. plantarum* also poses adjuvant properties that have showed to help skew the mix Th1/Th2 immune response commonly elicited by *M. tuberculosis* antigens to a more preferred Th1-type cellular immune response, thus providing strong protective memory immunity against tuberculosis (Ghadimi *et al.*, 2010). However, even with the advantages of this unique strategy, there are no reports yet that have fully investigated its potential for tuberculosis vaccine development specifically in the use of *in-trans* surface display system of *L. plantarum*. Thus, this project is intended to determine the potential response using LAB of *L. plantarum* as non-GMO vaccine carrier via the *in-trans* surface display system for the development of candidate mucosal tuberculosis vaccine.

The hypotheses of this project are as follow:-

1. The constructed candidate vaccine consisting of LysM anchor protein fused with a combination of selected *M. tuberculosis* antigen epitopes of Ag85B, CFP-10, ESAT-6, Rv2031c and Rv0475, attached onto the cell wall of *L. plantarum* when administered via the oral and nasal route of mouse animal model will stimulate effective immune response that favour the Th1 type response which is a key indicator for potential protective memory response;
2. The use of *L. lactis* secreting mouse IL-12 as an adjuvant co-administered with the constructed candidate vaccine via the oral and nasal route in mouse animal model will further improve the immune response to favour the Th1 type response as compared to the immune response outcome from the administration of candidate vaccine only.

The project specific objectives are:-

1. To construct candidate vaccines consisting of LysM anchor protein fused with a combination of selected *M. tuberculosis* antigen epitopes of Ag85B, CFP-10, ESAT-6, Rv2031c and Rv0475 in *E. coli* Rosetta expression-based system;
2. To study the binding capability of the *M. tuberculosis* antigens-LysM protein fusion onto the cell wall surface of *L. plantarum* Pa21;
3. To compare the immunogenicity effect of the candidate vaccines administered via oral and intranasal route using a mouse animal model; and
4. To determine the immunogenicity effect of the candidate vaccine co-administered with an adjuvant consisting of *L. lactis* secreting mouse IL-12 on mouse animal model.

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