Structure and Function Predictions of Hypothetical Proteins in Vibrio Phages

Abstract

The Vibriophages are the potential agents for the transfer of the virulence factor to their host through lateral gene transfer. The complete genome sequencing of various known vibriophages has been done which deciphered the presence of various gene sequences for hypothetical proteins whose function is not yet understood. We analyzed complete genome of 21such Vibriophages for hypothetical proteins from which 13 phages were sorted for our studies. Our attempt is to predict the structure and function of these hypothetical proteins by the application of computational methods and Bioinformatics. The probable function prediction of the hypothetical protein was done by using Bioinformatics web tools like CDD-BLAST, INTERPROSCAN, PFAM and COGs by searching sequence databases for the presence of orthologous enzymatic conserved domains in the hypothetical sequences. While tertiary structures were constructed using $PS²$ Server (Protein Structure Prediction server). These study revealed presences of enzymatic functional domain in 92 uncharacterized proteins; their roles are yet to be discovered in Vibriophages*.* These deciphered enzymatic data for hypothetical proteins can be used for the understanding of functional, structural, evolutionary and metabolic development of Vibriophages and its life cycle along with their role in host evolution and pathogenicity.

Keywords: Bioinformatics Web Tools, Conserved Domains, Protein Structure Prediction, Uncharacterized Proteins, Life Cycle and Pathogenicity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The etiologic agent of cholera, *Vibrio cholerae* is a gram negative bacterium which has been reported to be infected by various specific filamentous phages (Campos, et al., 2003, Faruque, et al., 2005, Waldor, et al., 1997, Ikema, et al., 1998, Jouravleva, et al., 1998, Kar, et al., 1996, Honma, et al., 1996). CTXΦ phage has been the most studied due to its role in pathogenicity and horizontal gene transfer (Davis, et al., 2003). The phage is potentially responsible for transducing the cholera toxin genes into nonpathogenic environmental strains along with replicating directly from the bacterial chromosome for producing infective phage particles (Davis, et al., 2003, Waldor, et al., 2003). The VGJΦ is able to recombine with the CTXΦ genome to originate a hybrid phage with the full potential for virulence conversion. The hybrid phage shows an increased infectivity due to its specificity for the receptor mannose-sensitive hemagglutinin (receptor mannose- sensitive hemagglutinin pilus), which is ubiquitous among environmental strains (Campos, et al., 2003a, Campos, et al., 2003b). The vibriophages KVP40 differs from many described vibriophages in having a broad host range and is reported to infect eight *Vibrio* species, including *Vibrio cholerae* and *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, the nonpathogenic species *Vibrio natriegens*, and *Photobacterium leiognathi* (Matsuzaki, et al., 1992).

Vibriophages (family Vibrionaceae) contains the greatest number of reported phage-host systems for the marine environment (Moebus 1987), with the genus *Vibrio* comprising most of the hosts (Moebus & Nattkemper 1981). The phage VpVs phage infect only *V. parahaemolyticus* strains (Koga et al., 1982; Kellogg et al., 1995), phage P4 (Baross et al., 1974) and KVP20 (Matsuzaki et al., 1998) infect other *Vibrio* spp. (as the VpVs in this study), whereas phage V14 (Nakanishi et al., 1966) and KVP40 (Matsuzaki et al., 1992) have been reported to infect other genera. Vibriophage has also proved to be useful in studying the host chromosomes (Guidolin and Manning, 1987).

Vibrio cholera-specific filamentous bacteriophages CTXf was first identified in 1996 (Waldor and Mekalanos, 1996). Its genome includes the genes encoding cholera toxin, an AB 5- subunit type toxin secreted by *V. cholera* during its growth in the small intestine which causes secretory diarrhoea (Lencer and Tsai, 2003). The acquisition of CTXf is an important factor for *V. cholera* virulence. Virulence factors are frequently encoded within mobile genetic elements such as phages and plasmids (Davis and Waldor, 2002). The first reported filamentous phage horizontally transmitting a virulence factor that results in lysogenic conversion of a host to become virulent was CTXf (Waldor and Mekalanos, 1996; Ochman et al., 2000). Most of the characterized phages that integrate into their respective host chromosomes also undergo a reverse reaction wherein the phage genome excises from the chromosome (Azaro and Landy, 2002). However, excision of the CTXf prophage from the *V. cholera* chromosome has never been observed (Davis and Waldor, 2000). Instead, the chromosomally integrated CTXf prophage acts as a template for synthesis of viral DNA (Davis and Waldor, 2000; Moyer et al., 2001).

The study of Vibriophages is limited to the expressed genetic characteristics which are observed through experimental studies, but to get some insight of the Vibriophages and how its acquisition imparts host to gain various new characteristics leading to virulence and evolution of both phagehost systems, the study of phage genome is essential. The *in-silico* studies of hypothetical proteins (Uncharacterized proteins) for identifying their structure and function is an attempt to understand Vibriophages and their genomes with some possible implications.

Computational biology assists us to predict the functionality in the uncharacterized sequences using the different strategies of comparative proteomics. The program's ability of homology searching using defined databases and by choosing standard parameters, the presence of the enzymatic conserved domain/s in the sequences could be searched out and it may assist in the categorizing protein into specific enzymatic family.

Bioinformatics web tools like CDD-BLAST,INTERPROSCAN, PFAM and COGs can search the orthologous sequence in biological sequence databases for the target sequence, while assist in classification of target sequence in particular family (Edward et al., 2000; Dilip and Alankar,

2009). This study will helps us to understand the probable functions of hypothetical proteins in Vibriophages.

Several online automated servers are available which can predict the three dimensional structures for protein sequences by using the strategy of aligning target sequences with orthologous sequences by virtue of sequence homology and based on that, constructs the 3Dstructure for target protein using best scored template of orthologous family member. Here, we have predicted 3-D structure using Protein Structure Prediction Server (PS² server) (Dilip and Alankar, 2009; Zafer et al., 2006; Chih-Chieh et al., 2006).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Sequence Retrieval

The Complete protein sequences for 21 different Vibrio phages *were* downloaded from the Database of KEGG (http://www.genome.jp/kegg/). The phages under study includes Vibrio phage kappa (Ehara, et. al., unpublished), Vibrio phage VP93,Vibrio phage VEJphi (Campos, 2010), Vibrio phage N4 (Das, et. al., Unpublished),Vibrio phage fs1 (Honma, et. al., 1997),Vibrio phage K139 (Kapfhammer, et. al., 2002),Vibrio phage KVP40 (Miller, et. al., 2003),Vibrio phage fs2 (Ikema, et. al., 1992),Vibrio phage VfO3K6,Vibrio phage VfO4K68,Vibrio phage Vf33,Vibrio phage Vf12,Vibrio phage VSK (Basu, Unpublished), Vibrio phage VpV262 (Hardies, et. al., 2003),Vibrio phage VHML, Vibrio phage VGJphi (Campos, et. al., Unpublished), Vibrio phage VP2 (Wang, Unpublished),Vibrio phage VP5,Vibrio phage VP882,Vibrio phage KSF-1phi (Faruque, et. al., 2005) and Vibrio phage VP4.

2.2 Functional Annotations

Hypothetical proteins were screened for the presence of enzymatic conserved domains using sequence similarity search with close orthologous family members available in various protein databases using the web-tools. Four bioinformatics web tools like CDD-BLAST (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/BLAST/) (Altschul et al., 1997; Schaffer et al., 2001; Aron et al., 2006), INTERPROSCAN (http://www.abi.ac.uk/interpro) (Zdobnov and Rolf, 2001), Pfam (http://www.pfam.sanger.ac.uk/) (Alex et al., 2004) and COGs (http://www.ncbi.nih, gov/cog) (Roman et al., 2000) were used, which shows the ability to search the defined conserved domains in the sequences and assist in the classification of proteins in appropriate family.

2.3 Functional Categorization

Hypothetical proteins analyzed by the function prediction web tools such as CDD-BLAST, INTERPROSCAN, PFAM and COGs have shown the variable results when searched for the conserved domains in hypothetical sequences.

2.4 Protein Structure Prediction

Several online protein structure prediction servers are available. Out of that, online $PS²$ (PS Squared) Protein Structure Prediction Server was used (http://www.ps2.life.nctu.edu.tw/) (Chih-Chieh et al., 2006; Altschul et al.,1997; Schaffer et al., 2001; Cédric et al., 2000; Wendy et al.,2000), which accepts the protein (query) sequences in FASTA format and uses the strategies of Pair-wise and multiple alignment by combining powers of the programs PSI-BLAST, IMPALA and T-COFFEE in both target – template selection and target–template alignment and resultant target proteins 3D structures were constructed using structural positioning information of atomic coordinates for known template in PDB format using best scored alignment data. Where the selection of template was based on the same conserved domain detected in the functional annotations and which must be available in the structure alignment for modeling purpose.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The *in silico* structure and function of the Vibriophages was worked out for 21 phages. Out of 21 Vibriophages, conserved domain prediction in hypothetical proteins was possible in 13 phages. The hypothetical proteins were screened for the presence of enzymatic conserved domains using sequence similarity search with close orthologous family members available in various protein databases using the web tools. The 3-D structure prediction of protein (query) sequences in FASTA format and uses the strategies of Pair-wise and multiple alignment by combining powers of the programs PSI-BLAST, IMPALA and T-COFFEE in both target – template selection and target– template alignment and resultant target proteins 3D structures were constructed using structural positioning information of atomic coordinates for known template in PDB format using best scored alignment data. Where the selection of template was based on the same conserved domain detected in the functional annotations and which must be available in the structure alignment for modeling purpose.

3.1 Functional Annotations and Protein Structure Prediction

The analysis of hypothetical proteins of Vibriophages was accomplished by using web tools for their classification into particular enzymatic family based on enzymatic conserved domain available in the sequence which are represented in respective Table 1 through 13. In 13 different Vibriophages, 215 hypothetical proteins resulted in 205 functional annotations out of which 92 are showing enzymatic conserved domains.

The $(PS)^2$ Server built the three dimensional structures for hypothetical proteins. Where in 17 different Vibriophage genome analyzed, $(PS)^2$ satisfactorily predicted structures of 54 hypothetical proteins using best scored orthologous template. The resulted 10 structures out of 54 showed no functional conserved domains may be due to lack of due to the lack of defined 3D structures for the aligned templates. The 3-D structures built are represented sequentially in respective Vibriophage specific gene. The templates with best scoring with hypothetical protein sequences are represented in the order as Template ID, Identity, Score and E-value which represented in structure column of each Vibriophage gene analyzed. The structure and functional data for Vibrio phage VfO3K6 (Table 1), Vibrio phage Vf33 (Table 2), Vibrio phage KSF-1phi Table 3), Vibrio phage VP4 (Table 4), Vibrio phage kappa (Table 5), Vibrio phage fs1 (Table 6), Vibrio phage K139 (Table 7), Vibrio phage KVP40 (Table 8), Vibrio phage VP93 (Table 9) , Vibrio phage N4 (Table 10) , Vibrio phage VP2 (Table 11) , Vibrio phage VP5 (Table 12) and Vibrio phage VP882 (Table 13) are given in their respective tables.

4. CONCLUSION

This study sorted some functional hypothetical proteins of Vibriophages applying the parameters of pair-wise and multiple sequence alignment tools along with structure prediction tools, which suggests that many probable functional uncharacterized proteins are available in the Vibriophages. Development in sequence analysis programming and ever growing genome sequence databases enhanced this methodology to draw conclusive functional relationships in the hypothetical proteins under study. Bioinformatics Web Tools like CDD-BLAST, INTERPROSCAN, PFAM and COGs have shown the ability to predict structure and functions in 215 hypothetical proteins of Vibriophages, in that sense assisted in predicting functional activity in 205 hypothetical proteins, out of which 10 showed only structural results and no functional activity was found in them. In all 54 3-D structures for hypothetical proteins was constructed using (PS)² serves as fast automated homology modeling web server. This predicted three dimensional structures may assist in establishing their role in life cycle of Vibriophages whose exact role in phage-host lifecycle is still unclear and can be used in future for the study of virulence and evolution of both phage-host systems.

5. DISCUSSION

The in-silico analysis of the hypothetical proteins is proved only on expression of the selective gene through cloning. The results obtained are concluded on the bases of available information in different databases and are valid till date.

Table 1 :Vibrio phage VfO3K6

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Table 7 Vibrio phage K139

Table 8 Vibrio phage KVP40

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