

**Temperate bacteriophages and the molecular
epidemiology of antibiotic resistance in *Salmonella enterica***

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Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	VI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VII
THESIS SUMMARY	IX
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	XII
PUBLICATIONS	XV
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Salmonellae.....	1
1.1.1 <i>Salmonella</i> disease and host range.....	1
1.1.2 <i>Salmonella</i> nomenclature.....	2
1.2 Salmonella Typing methods.....	3
1.2.1 Phenotypic Methods	3
1.2.1.1 Conventional Serotyping.....	3
1.2.1.2 Phage Typing	4
1.2.2 Genotypic Methods.....	6
1.2.2.1 Pulsed Field Gel Electrophoresis (PFGE).....	6
1.2.2.2 Multilocus Sequence Typing (MLST)	7
1.2.2.3 Amplified Fragment Length Polymorphism (AFLP).....	9
1.2.2.5 Multilocus VNTR analysis (MLVA)	10
1.2.2.4 Multiple Amplification of Phage Locus Typing technique (MAPLT) and related methods	11
1.3 Bacteriophages and their role in bacterial evolution.....	12
1.3.1 Lysogenic conversion	14
1.4 Genetic Transfer Mechanisms.....	15
1.4.1 Transformation.....	15
1.4.2 Conjugation.....	16
1.4.3 Transduction	17
1.4.3.1 Generalised Transduction.....	17
1.4.3.2 Specialised Transduction.....	18
1.4.3.3 Abortive Transduction.....	19
1.5 Antibiotic resistance	19
1.5.1 Mechanisms of Resistance.....	22
1.5.2 Transfer of resistance.....	23
1.5.3 Antibiotic resistance in <i>Salmonella</i>	24
1.5.3.1 Tetracycline resistance	25
1.5.3.2 Aminoglycoside resistance.....	27
Aminoglycoside acetyltransferases	28
Aminoglycoside nucleotidyltransferases	29
Aminoglycoside phosphotransferases	30

16S rRNA methylation	30
1.5.3.3 Penicillin and Cephalosporin resistance	31
1.5.3.4 Chloramphenicol Resistance	35
1.5.3.5 Trimethoprim Resistance	36
1.5.3.6 Sulphonamide resistance	37
1.5.3.7 Quinolone resistance	38
1.5.4 Multi drug resistance	39
1.5.5 Integrons and antibiotic resistance	40
1.5.6 The role of bacteriophages in the dissemination of antibiotic resistance	43
1.5.6.1 Antibiotic induction of transduction	43
1.5.6.2 Transduction of antibiotic resistance markers	44
1.6 The Role of Temperate Bacteriophages in the Dissemination of Antibiotic Resistance	45
1.7 Project Aims	46
1.7.1 Project Hypotheses	48
CHAPTER 2 - MATERIALS AND METHODS	49
2.1 Growth media	49
2.1.1 Solid Media.....	49
2.1.2 Liquid Media.....	49
2.2 Chemicals and reagents	49
2.2.1 Antibiotics.....	50
2.2.2 Enzymes.....	50
2.2.3 Oligonucleotide Primers	50
2.3 Bacterial strains	51
2.4 Bacterial typing methods	51
2.4.1 Serotyping of <i>Salmonella</i> isolates.....	51
2.4.2 Bacteriophage Typing.....	52
2.5 Extraction of chromosomal DNA	53
2.6 Induction of phages	53
2.7 Genetic transfer methods	54
2.7.1 Preparation of nalidixic acid resistant strains to use as donor or recipient strains for <i>in vivo</i> transduction or <i>in vitro</i> conjugation studies	54
2.7.2 <i>In vitro</i> transduction.....	54
2.7.3 <i>In vitro</i> conjugation studies.....	55
2.7.4 <i>In vivo</i> transduction of antibiotic resistance	55
2.8 PCR amplification of antibiotic resistance genes	56
2.8.1 PCR for <i>tet(A)</i> and <i>tet(B)</i> genes	57
2.8.3 DNA Sequencing and Analysis	57

CHAPTER 3 – MOLECULAR EPIDEMIOLOGY OF ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE GENES IN *SALMONELLA* ISOLATED FROM HUMANS, CHICKEN AND PIG SOURCES 59

3.1 Introduction.....59
3.1.1 Aims of this chapter 61

3.2 Results62
3.2.1 PCR to identify tetracycline resistance genes, *tetA* and *tetB* 62
3.2.2 PCR to identify ampicillin resistance gene *bla*_{TEM-1} 63
3.2.3 PCR to identify streptomycin resistance genes *aadA1*, *aadA2*, *strA* and *strB* 63
3.2.4 More than one resistance gene detected for the same antibiotic..... 64
3.2.5 Integrons and resistance genes..... 65
3.2.5 Molecular epidemiology of class 1 integrons 65
3.2.6 PCR to amplify gene cassettes in class 1 integrons 66

3.3 Discussion67

3.4 Summary.....72

CHAPTER 4 – DETECTION OF BACTERIOPHAGES AND *IN VITRO* TRANSFER OF ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE GENES..... 74

4.1 Introduction.....74
4.1.1 Aims of this chapter 76

4.2 Results77
4.2.1 Induction of Temperate Phages by mitomycin C induction 77
4.2.1.1 Bacteriophages induced from *Salmonella* 77
4.2.1.2 Induction of bacteriophages from *E. coli* 78
4.2.1.3 *Shigella* and *E. coli* as indicator strains 79
4.2.2 Experiments investigating *in vitro* transduction of antibiotic resistance 79
4.2.2.1 *In vitro* transduction of ampicillin resistance (*bla*_{TEM-1} gene) using *S. Enteritidis* recipient strains..80
4.2.2.2 *In vitro* transduction of *bla*_{TEM-1} gene encoding ampicillin resistance using *Shigella flexneri* ATCC 12022 and *Shigella sonnei* ATCC 9290 as recipient strains.....80
4.2.2.3 *In vitro* transduction of the *aadA1* gene encoding streptomycin resistance and Class 1 integrons..81
4.2.2.4 *In vitro* transduction of the *cat 1* gene conferring chloramphenicol resistance 81
4.2.2.5 *In vitro* transduction of *tetA* gene conferring tetracycline resistance 81
4.2.3 *In vitro* transduction of ampicillin and tetracycline resistance with *S. Typhimurium* DB21 *Tn10*.....82
4.2.3.1 *S. Enteritidis* 949 (*Tn10*), 1727 (*Tn10*) and 7307 (*Tn10*) donor strains for the transfer of *Tn10* and tetracycline resistance 83
4.2.3.2 *S. Enteritidis* 949 (*Tn10*), 1727 (*Tn10*) and 7307 (*Tn10*) as recipient strains.....84
4.2.4 *In vitro* phage type conversion of *S. Enteritidis* 949 PT1 with bacteriophage lysates induced from DB21 *Tn10* (P22 lysogen) and *S. Kiambu* 5809 (unknown phage)84

4.3 Discussion85

4.4 Summary.....91

CHAPTER 5 - IN VIVO STUDIES OF ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE GENE TRANSFER.....	93
5.1 Introduction.....	93
5.2 Rationale for the study	96
5.2.1 <i>Salmonella</i> donor and recipient strains.....	96
5.2.2 Preparation of spontaneous nalidixic acid resistant strains to use as donor or recipient strains.....	97
5.2.3 Standard growth curve for the growth of putative donor and recipient <i>Salmonella</i>	97
5.2.4 Administration of <i>Salmonella</i> to a chicken model.....	98
5.2.5 Detection of <i>Salmonella</i> in chicken faeces	98
5.2.6 Confirmation of putative donors, recipients and transductants	100
5.2.7 Multilocus Variable Number Tandem Repeat Analysis (MLVA).....	100
5.3 Results.....	102
5.3.1 Detection of <i>Salmonella</i> in chicken faeces	102
Animal Study 1- Donor DB21 <i>Tn10</i> (<i>S. Typhimurium</i>) and Recipient 949 <i>S. Enteritidis</i>	102
Animal Study 2 – Donor 5809 (<i>S. Kiambu</i>) and Recipient 949 (<i>Tn10</i>)(<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	104
Animal Study 2A – Donor 5809 (<i>S. Kiambu</i>) and Recipient 949 (<i>Tn10</i>)(<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	106
Animal Study 3 – Donor DB21 <i>Tn10</i> (<i>S. Typhimurium</i>) and Recipient 949 (<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	107
Animal Study 4 – Donor 5809 (<i>S. Kiambu</i>) and recipient 949 (<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	108
Animal Study 5 – Donor DB21 <i>Tn10</i> (<i>S. Typhimurium</i>) and Recipient 1727 (<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	109
5.3.2 Phage typing to detect phage type conversion.....	110
Animal Study 1- Donor DB21 <i>Tn10</i> (<i>S. Typhimurium</i>) and Recipient 949 <i>S. Enteritidis</i>	110
Animal Study 2 – Donor 5809 (<i>S. Kiambu</i>) and Recipient 949 (<i>Tn10</i>)(<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	111
Animal Study 2A – Donor 5809 (<i>S. Kiambu</i>) and Recipient 949 (<i>Tn10</i>)(<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	112
Animal Study 3 – Donor DB21 <i>Tn10</i> (<i>S. Typhimurium</i>) and Recipient 949 (<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	112
Animal Study 4 – Donor 5809 (<i>S. Kiambu</i>) and recipient 949 (<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	113
Animal Study 5 – Donor DB21 <i>Tn10</i> (<i>S. Typhimurium</i>) and Recipient 1727 (<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	113
5.3.3 MLVA typing on donor, recipient and transductant strains from chickens.....	114
Animal Study 1- Donor DB21 <i>Tn10</i> (<i>S. Typhimurium</i>) and Recipient 949 <i>S. Enteritidis</i>	114
Animal Study 2 – Donor 5809 (<i>S. Kiambu</i>) and Recipient 949 (<i>Tn10</i>)(<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	115
Animal Study 2A – Donor 5809 (<i>S. Kiambu</i>) and Recipient 949 (<i>Tn10</i>)(<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	116
Animal Study 3 – Donor DB21 <i>Tn10</i> (<i>S. Typhimurium</i>) and Recipient 949 (<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	116
Animal Study 5 – Donor DB21 <i>Tn10</i> (<i>S. Typhimurium</i>) and Recipient 1727 (<i>S. Enteritidis</i>)	117
5.4 Discussion	117
5.5 Summary.....	123
CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....	126
Concluding Remarks	132
BIBLIOGRAPHY	133
APPENDICES.....	170

Declaration

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Sophia Tan

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Thesis Summary

Foodborne diseases caused by non-typhoidal *Salmonella* represent an important public health problem worldwide (Zhao *et al.*, 2003). The transmission of *Salmonella* between animals and humans has been well established in epidemiological studies. In the case of complicated illness caused by *Salmonella* where antibiotics need to be administered, treatment can be compromised if the infecting organism is resistant to the prescribed antimicrobial agent. This study and earlier studies have shown that many *Salmonella* carry temperate bacteriophages as lysogens. Many of these bacteriophages are capable of mediating generalised transduction (Schicklmaier and Schmieger, 1995; Schicklmaier *et al.*, 1998; Mmolawa *et al.*, 2002). Schmieger and Schicklmaier (1999) demonstrated that bacteriophages ES18 and PDT17 are capable of transduction of antibiotic resistance genes from DT104.

Phage-mediated transduction of antibiotic resistance genes has been largely neglected in the study of genetic transfer of antibiotic resistance in bacteria. This study investigates whether bacteriophages exist in antibiotic resistant *Salmonella* isolates. Such temperate phages in antibiotic resistant isolates could play a significant role in the transfer of resistance to other species of enteric bacteria, such as *E. coli*.

Molecular epidemiology studies of antibiotic resistance genes were undertaken with *Salmonella* isolates from chicken, pig and human sources that were subjected to PCR for ampicillin (*bla*_{TEM-1}), tetracycline (*tetA*, *tetB*) and streptomycin (*aadA1*, *aadA2*, *strA*, *strB*) resistance genes as well as Class 1 integrons. The *bla*_{TEM-1} gene was widely detected in isolates from pigs and chickens but rarely detected in human isolates. The *tetB* gene was more commonly found in pig isolates, while the *tetA* gene was associated with tetracycline resistance in chicken isolates. The *strA* and *strB* genes were responsible for streptomycin resistance in the *S. Typhimurium* isolates while the *aadA1* gene was commonly detected in *S. Kiambu* and *S. Virchow* isolates. The *aadA2* gene was associated with streptomycin resistance in the *S. Ohio* isolates from pigs. Class 1 integrons were widely distributed across serovars tested from chicken, pig and human sources.

Temperate bacteriophages were induced using mitomycin C from antibiotic resistant *Salmonella*. These phages were able to infect antibiotic-sensitive *Salmonella* isolates from humans. Bacteriophages induced from one *S. Sofia* isolate also plaqued on *Shigella flexneri*. Bacteriophages induced from one *S. Kiambu* isolate and *S. Typhimurium* DB21 with an inserted *Tn10* transposon (*S. Typhimurium* DB21 *Tn10*) were capable of transducing ampicillin and tetracycline resistance, respectively into *S. Enteritidis* PT1 isolates by *in vitro* methods. The molecular basis for resistance was established in subsequent PCR for antibiotic resistance genes in donor and recipient strains. This finding, in particular in the wild-type *S. Kiambu* strain, indicates that *Salmonella* from a natural source are able to infect and transfer antibiotic resistance by generalised transduction in controlled laboratory experiments.

This current study has investigated the transfer of tetracycline and ampicillin resistance from a wild-type *Salmonella* strain and a laboratory strain of *Salmonella* to wild-type *Salmonella* bacteria as it occurs within the normal flora of the chicken gastrointestinal tract. It was demonstrated that the genetic transfer of tetracycline and ampicillin resistance genes as well as Class 1 integrons can occur within the chicken gastrointestinal tract. Transfer of tetracycline and ampicillin resistance could be demonstrated both *in vitro* and by using bacteriophage lysates obtained from *in vivo* studies in transduction experiments. It was clearly shown that bacteriophage isolated from chicken faeces and caeca could infect antibiotic sensitive recipient *Salmonella*. Interaction between phages of the administered *Salmonella* strains may be occurring with phages of bacteria in the normal flora allowing previously inactive phage in the indigenous flora to plaque on indicator strains.

Additionally, strong evidence was presented to suggest that the environment of the chicken gastrointestinal tract could mediate phage type conversion in recipient and transductant strains. Phage typing of these recipient and transductant strains demonstrated a trend for recipient strains to become more resistant to phages in the *S. Enteritidis* typing panel. This led to weakened phage reactions such RDNC (reaction does not conform) and untypable. The acquisition of phages may be a way for *Salmonella* to enhance competitive fitness and generate new strains in order to evolve and diversify. Or the acquisition of plasmids either by transduction or conjugation may also mediate phage type conversion.

MLVA typing was performed on selected recipient, donor and transductant strains. The changes to tandem repeat loci in *Salmonella* isolates that have passed through a chicken

gastrointestinal tract have not been described before. The changes to fragment length suggest that the bacterial chromosome is undergoing rearrangement; this may be attributed to a number of factors including acquisition of phages, prophage integration into tRNA sites, slipped-strand mispairing or the adaption to changing environment, in this case the chicken gastrointestinal tract.

This study has provided molecular epidemiological data on the antibiotic resistance genes and integrons present in Australian *Salmonella* isolates from human and animal sources. Information on the role of bacteriophages in the transfer of antibiotic resistance genes *in vitro* and in a chicken gastrointestinal tract has also been established.

List of Abbreviations

°C	degrees Celsius
β	beta
AFLP	Amplified Fragment Length Polymorphism
AGP	animal growth promoter
Amp	ampicillin
BA	blood agar
BHI	brain heart infusion
bp, kb	base pair (s); kilobase(s)
cfu	colony forming units
CLSI	Clinical Laboratory Standards Institute
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
dNTP	deoxynucleoside triphosphate
dsDNA	double stranded DNA
DT	Definitive type
EDTA	ethylene diamine tetra acetic acid
EMA	The European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products
ESBL	Extended spectrum beta-lactamase
I	intermediate resistance
JETACAR	Joint Expert Technical Advisory Committee on Antibiotic Resistance
L; mL, μL	litre (s); millilitre (s); microlitre(s)
LB	Luria-Bertani
M; mM; μM	moles per litre, millimoles per litre; micromoles per litre
MAPLT	Multiple Amplification of Phage Loci Typing

mD	mega Daltons
mg; µg	milligram (s); microgram (s)
MAPLT	Multiple Amplification of Phage Locus Typing
MH	Mueller-Hinton
MIC	minimum inhibitory concentration
MLEE	Multilocus Enzyme Electrophoresis
MLST	Multilocus Sequence Typing
MLVA	Multilocus Variable Number Tandem Repeat Analysis
MRSA	methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus
nt	nucleotide
nM	nanometres
ORF	open reading frame
p	plasmid
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
PFGE	Pulsed Field Gel Electrophoresis
PT	Phage type
R	resistance
RDNC	reaction does not conform
RFLP	Restriction Fragment Length Polymorphism
RNA	ribonucleic acid
rRNA	ribosomal ribonucleic acid
rpm	revolutions per minute
RT-PCR	real time PCR
s	sensitive
SDS	sodium dodecyl sulphate

STTR	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium Tandem Repeat
TBE	Tris-borate EDTA
Tet	tetracycline
Tn	transposon
U	unit (s)
UT	untypable
UV	ultraviolet
VNTR	variable number of tandem repeats
VRE	vancomycin resistant enterococci
w/v	weight per volume
XLD	Xylose-Lysine-Desoxycholate

Publications

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