**In Vitro Activity Screening of Snake Venom against Multi Drug Resistant Tuberculosis**

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**Abstract**

The re-emergence of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) events has brought to light the importance of screening effective novel drugs. In the present study, *in vitro* activities of different snake (*Naja naja, Bungarus fasciatus, Daboia russelli russelli, Naja kaouthia*) venoms have been investigated against clinical isolate of MDR-TB strains. All the venoms inhibited the mycobacterial growth for at least a week in common and two of them (*Naja naja, Naja kaouthia*) showed significantly longer inhibition up to two weeks against the MDR-TB strain with single dose and one repetition of those two venoms exhibited inhibition up to more than 4 weeks.

**Keywords:** MDR-TB; Multidrug resistance; Tuberculosis; Snake venom

**Short Communication**

Tuberculosis (TB), caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mt), is one of the world’s major health problems and still remains most common and deadly infectious disease in developing countries. According to World Health Organization (WHO) report (2013), there were an estimated 8.6 million people developed TB and 1.3 million died from the disease in 2012 globally [1]. It is projected in a previous report that nearly one-third of the world’s population is infected and more than 1.5 million people die of TB every year [2]. Among the worldwide incidents of TB, 2-3.7% are estimated to have multidrug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) with almost 0.5 million MDR-TB cases emerging each year worldwide and between 5% and 7% of them becoming extensively drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) [2-6]. MDR-TB is resistant to isoniazid (INH) and rifampicin (RMP), with or without resistance to any other anti-tuberculosis drug. Treatment for MDR-TB is much less effective than treatment for drug-susceptible TB, since it is extensively lengthy and expensive and has an even poorer success rate of only 48% worldwide, as it was in 2010 [7,8]. The by and large bacteriostatic second line drugs have a lower efficacy than the first line anti-TB drugs and hence they do consume longer time to treat MDR and XDR-TB. Moreover, considering the association of HIV with MDR-TB in the present scenario, the inconvenience arises when these second-line drugs apart from being expensive, and toxic, these are found difficult to combine with antiretroviral drugs, and also are unavailable in most of the parts of developing countries [9,10]. Therefore in the current circumstances, MDR-TB continues to be a formidable public health challenge worldwide and measures has to be taken immediately because current range of vaccines and chemotherapeutic treatments are limited in their efficacy and fail to prevent the spread of the disease. Therefore, there is an urgent need for new, inexpensive anti-MDR/ XDR-TB drugs which are more effective and with fewer side effects.

Medicinal plants and animal toxins offer a great hope to fulfill these needs and have been used as a natural source for curing diseases for many centuries. Putting aside the relatively lethal role of venoms and toxins in global morbidity and mortality, they can be attributed to be useful as potential therapeutic probe for illuminating multifaceted biological processes. In line with this, it is reported that snake venom are also loaded with biologically active components [11-13]. Therefore, to meet the pressing need to develop high efficacy drugs against both drug-sensitive and drug-resistant Mt strains from some natural source we are presenting our report showing snake venom screening for activity against clinically isolated MDR-TB.

The culture media used for Mt growth was Lowenstein Jensen (L-J) medium (Sigma-Aldrich®, United States) and Middle brook 7H9 broth (Becton-Dickinson; New Jersey, United States) were used for the sensitivity test. Both were prepared according to the manufacturer’s instruction. The reference strain *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* subsp. *Tuberculosis, TMC 102 [H37Rv]* (ATCC® 27294) was obtained from American Type Culture Collection (ATCC, USA) and the clinical isolate drug resistant strain of M. tuberculosis was obtained from the Department of Laboratory Medicine (Microbiology Division) of Advanced Medical Research Institute (AMRI) hospital, Kolkata. The bacteria were incubated at 37°C and grown in 7H9Middlebrook TB medium containing 14C-labelled palmitic acid as a source of carbon.

**LJ Media Tubes**

LJ slant was inoculated with the 0.1 ml of the processed sample and were incubated at 37°C for a maximum of 8 weeks. They were checked twice weekly for first two weeks and then once every week for maximum period of 8 weeks. Bacterial contamination was examined by performing Gram staining from the suspected colonies.

**Preparation of the Isolate from Solid Media**

The drug resistant clinical isolate of Mt was obtained from Department of Laboratory Medicine (Microbiology Division) of (AMRI) hospital, Kolkata. 4 ml of BBL Middlebrook 7H9 Broth was added to a 16.5 x 128 mm capped sterile tube, containing 8-10 glass beads. Many colonies, not more than 14 days old, were then scraped from the MDR growth slant (Löwenstein–Jensen media) with a sterile...
loop, and were suspended in the Middlebrook 7H9 broth. The tube was vortexed for 2-3 minutes to suspend the larger clumps. The suspension was then prepared according to the manufacturer's instructions as 1-12 = negative for culture, 13= intermediate and 14-20 = positive for culture. Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious public health problem with medical, sociological and economic consequences. Drug susceptibility testing for TB patients is one of the most effective tools of control and management of MDR-TB. Drug susceptibility testing for all TB cases to provide optimal treatment, establishing advanced diagnostic facilities for rapid detection of MDR-TB, continuous monitoring of drug resistance and control of drug resistant TB at border entry points with high-TB burden countries are recommended for prevention and control of drug-resistant TB. Natural products such as plant-derived molecules have long been valuable sources for novel medicine and previously reported as anti-mycobacterial agents [15,16]. Xie et al. (2003) has showed in vitro activities of small peptides, derived from *Naja atra*, to have useful activity against MDR-TB [17].

In this study, we found NN, BF, DRR and NK snake venoms demonstrated a dose dependent inhibition of the MDR-TB isolates in Middlebrook 7H9 media. Snake venom is rich sources of small peptides with specific functions [11,12,13,17]. It was observed that NN and NK showed anti-mycobacterial activity up to 14 days of observation in a single dose of treatment as compared to control. Interestingly, with the repetition of similar doses of NN, BF, DRR and NK venom on the 8th day of effectiveness, inhibition by NN and NK venoms could be observed for 28 and 31 days respectively. After that the pathogens rejuvenated themselves, may be due to the decomposition of the venoms in the prolonged exposure at 37°C. In case of DRR venom, the 10 µg/ml dose showed an apparent higher effectivity, though insignificant, when compared the mean of days of effectiveness with that of the 5 µg/ml dose but the 20 µg/ml did not show any further change in the effectiveness of the venom in inhibition of the pathogen. While, comparing the three different doses of BF venom, a significant change was only observed when we compared the mean of days of effectiveness in the cases where 5 µg/ml and 20 µg/ml doses had been used. But in contrast to the lower effectiveness of the aforesaid venoms, significantly longer duration of effectively was observed in the venoms from NN and NK. The 5 µg/ml dose of NK venom though did not show significant change in longevity of its inhibitory effect towards the growth of pathogen when compared with the same dose of other venoms, the similar dose of NN venoms had a significantly longer effectively compared to the DRR and BF venoms. In line with this, the higher doses of NN and NK venom showed a significantly (” p<0.001) longer duration of effectively as compared to the DRR and BF venoms. Since, the pathogen started growing again after 14 days of single treatment; we became curious whether repetition of doses could be more effective. Therefore, we introduced a second similar dose at 8th day of 1st treatment for all the samples only to find a more or less similar consequence of effectiveness of the venoms.

In our previous review regarding the life-hunting disease and ways of treatment and management we illustrated various combat processes [18]. In agreement with that, the conclusion of this study would justify the need for further investigations on the correlation between structural features and anti-tuberculosis activity as some bioactive molecules which have proved useful as model compounds or templates can be employed in the synthesis or semi-synthesis of new drugs. And the results of our study, showing all of the snake venom crude substances having anti-MDR-TB activities, may be explored for development of new anti-TB drugs. In our earlier study, we have established cytotoxic effects of *Naja kaouthia* venom derived peptide (NK-CT1) and the amino acid sequence have been explored which has sequence homology with other cytotoxins (cytotoxin-3, CTX-6, cytotoxin-2, CTX-A3) isolated from different snake venoms [12]. Cytotoxins have the ability to damage a wide variety of cells including the cancerous types. Therefore, further in vitro evaluation of anti-MDR-TB factor(s) from *Naja kaouthia* and *Naja naja* snake venoms including NK-CT1 would be of our prime interest.
Figure 1: Anti-mycobacterial activity of different snake venoms against multidrug-resistant tuberculosis strain of bacteria. 1/100 dilution of control mycobacterium culture tube was compared each day with microDigit data and represented as effectiveness in terms of number of days effective with single dose of venom treatment (a) and with repetition of treatment (b) at 8th day of 1st treatment respectively. Data represented here as mean±SD. All the data were significant when compared with their respective control values as per the instruments’ instruction manual.

(a) ***p<0.001 [days of effectiveness of NN (10 & 20 µg/ml) and NK (10 & 20 µg/ml) vs. days of effectiveness of respective doses of DRR and BF].

(b) ###p<0.001 [days of effectiveness of NN (5, 10 & 20 µg/ml) and NK (10 & 20 µg/ml) vs. days of effectiveness of respective doses of DRR and BF].

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