Comparison of the effects of anticoagulants used in blood collection to determine blood parameters of free-living stingrays from the Potamotrygon genus (Elasmobranchii: Potamotrygonidae)

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ABSTRACT: This study assessed the effectiveness of three anticoagulants in blood samples from “cururu” stingrays Potamotrygon cf. histrix. Blood from ten individuals were collected and diluted with anticoagulants EDTA 5% and 10%, heparin 2500 and 5000 UI and sodium citrate 3.2%. A blood sample without anticoagulant was also evaluated. The blood of samples without anticoagulant and with sodium citrate 3.2% coagulated in 20% and 30% of the cases, respectively. Clumps of cells were observed during erythrocyte counting in 30% of samples with EDTA 10%, 40% of samples with heparin 2500 IU and 60% of samples with heparin 5000 IU. No alterations were observed on the erythrogram of “cururu” stingrays with different anticoagulants, the values of plasma glucose were similar in all groups and total protein levels were lower in the samples with EDTA 5% and 10%. The use of sodium citrate 3.2% is not recommended for blood sample conservation of Potamotrygon cf. histrix. stingrays, but anticoagulants did not affect the parameters analyzed in the determination of plasma glucose and erythrogram. Therefore, these results indicate that in order to blood coagulation the samples should be collected directly with any of these anticoagulants concentrations.

Keywords: potamotrygonid, anticoagulants, blood, hematology.

1. Introduction

Blood is a liquid tissue distributed to the organs by the circulatory system and transports nutrients, hormones, electrolytes, water, residues from cellular metabolism and several other substances (VERRASTRO et al. 1998). The study of blood parameters have been used as an important tool for monitoring the health status of elasmobranch (WALSH; LKER, 2004; STOSKOFF, 2010) and teleost fish (TAVARES-DIAS; MORAES, 2010).

For the determination of blood parameters is essential to obtain the blood, even if an anticoagulant has been added (HATTINGH, 1975). Some anticoagulants used in teleost fish may have limitations during the processing of blood samples, causing alterations mainly in the erythropoiesis (HATTINGH, 1975; TAVARES-DIAS; SANDRIM, 1998; WALENCIK; WITESKA, 2007).

The main changes caused by anticoagulants are hemolysis (HATTINGH, 1975; WALENCIK; WITESKA, 2007), coagulation (HATTINGH, 1975), increase of erythrocyte number (HATTINGH, 1975; MAFUVADEZ; EIHWANGER, 2007), changes in the morphology of blood cells (WALENCIK; WITESKA, 2007) and leukopenia (MAINWARING; ROWLEY, 1985).

Heparin is the anticoagulant most commonly used in clinical hematology of teleosts (80%), followed by EDTA (12%), citrate (4%) and acid citrate dextrose (ACD) which is rarely used (4%) (WALENCIK; WITESKA, 2007; PÁDUA et al., 2010). The use of dipotassium ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) for the preservation of blood components for a prolonged time has been recommended (BRAXHAL; DAILSEY, 1972). On the other hand, the use of natural anticoagulants such as heparin has also been indicated, although do not preserve the blood components for a long time (SVOBODOVA et al., 1991). Therefore, there is not a pattern for the use of anticoagulant in elasmobranchs and there are particularities in the use of these substances in the species.

In shark (Carcharhinus plumbeus), blood collection has been accomplished using EDTA (ARNOLD, 2005), such as in the freshwater stingray Potamotrygon motoro (PÁDUA et al., 2010). On the other hand, in the marine ray Dasyatis americana (CAIN et al., 2004), in the shark Heterodentus portusjacksonsi (COOPER; MORRIS, 1998) and in the freshwater stingray Paratrygon aiereba (DUNCAN et al., 2009) the anticoagulant heparin has been used. Oliveira et al. (2012) recommended the use of EDTA 10% or heparin 5000 UI, despite the need to preserve the blood, there are no studies showing the effects of anticoagulants in the blood parameters of freshwater stingrays. This study aim to determine...
the appropriate anticoagulant for blood conservation of *Potamotrygon cf. histrix* stingray, popularly known as "cururu" stingray.

2. Material and methods

The stingrays were captured with hand net ("rapichê") in flooded areas of the Daracuá community, Barcelos, Amazonas, Brazil (Figure 1, licence: 15116-1 IBAMA). Handling procedures and withdrawal of blood samples followed the recommendations of Oliveira et al. (2012), posteriorly the animals were maintained in net-tanks and the blood of 10 specimens was collected with disposable syringes previously stored at 4°C, without use of anticoagulants. No anesthetic was used because it causes hematomatological alterations in teleost fish (INOUE et al., 2005). Using microtubes, part of the blood was homogenized and diluted 20 times (10 µl anticoagulant to 200 µl of blood) with the anticoagulants EDTA 5%, EDTA 10%, heparin 2500 IU, heparin 5000 IU, respectively. Only 20% of the blood samples collected without anticoagulant and 30% of the samples with sodium citrate (3.2%) coagulated, which was not observed for blood samples containing EDTA 5% and 10%, heparin 2500 and 5000 IU.

Clumps of cells were observed during microscopic counting of erythrocytes (RBC) in Neubauer chamber in 30% of samples with EDTA 10%, 40% of samples with heparin 2500 IU and 60% of samples with heparin 5000 IU. The use of these kind of anticoagulants can affect the RBC counting and, consequently, other erythrogram parameters of "cururu" stingray. Samples without anticoagulant and containing EDTA 5% and sodium citrate did not present clumps of cells during RBC counting. However, no significant changes were observed in the erythrogram of "cururu" stingray with different anticoagulants (Table 1). Values of plasma glucose were similar in all groups and total protein levels were lower in samples with EDTA 5% and 10% (Table 2).

3. Results

The animals presented the following body measurements (mean ± SD) for total length, width of the disc, and body weight: 21.1 ± 1.6 cm, 10.7 ± 3.8 cm and 89.2 ± 6.6 g, respectively. Only 20% of the blood samples collected without anticoagulant and 30% of the samples with sodium citrate (3.2%) coagulated, which was not observed for blood samples containing EDTA 5% and 10%, heparin 2500 and 5000 IU.

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**Table 1.** Erythrogram values of "cururu" stingray with different anticoagulants.

| Group                  | Ht (a) | Hb (g dL\(^{-1}\)) | RBC (10\(^6\) µL\(^{-1}\)) | MVC (fl) | MCH (g dL\(^{-1}\)) | MCHC (pg) |
|------------------------|--------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| Without anticoagulant  | 19.0 ± 2.6\(^a\) | 3.9 ± 1.2\(^a\)    | 0.47 ± 0.09\(^a\)           | 367.1 ± 18.8\(^a\) | 72.1 ± 7.3\(^a\) | 22.3 ± 6.2\(^a\) |
| EDTA 5%                | 17.8 ± 2.0\(^a\) | 3.5 ± 1.0\(^a\)    | 0.47 ± 0.02\(^a\)           | 364.7 ± 29.9\(^a\) | 71.9 ± 17.3\(^a\) | 23.9 ± 2.6\(^a\) |
| EDTA 10%               | 17.8 ± 2.6\(^a\) | 4.7 ± 1.4\(^a\)    | 0.43 ± 0.03\(^a\)           | 403.1 ± 63.5\(^a\) | 114.9 ± 33.9\(^a\) | 30.3 ± 6.7\(^a\) |
| Heparin 2500 IU        | 17.8 ± 2.6\(^a\) | 4.8 ± 0.2\(^a\)    | 0.49 ± 0.09\(^a\)           | 376.2 ± 103.8\(^a\) | 97.3 ± 18.5\(^a\) | 28.4 ± 6.0\(^a\) |
| Heparin 5000 IU        | 18.7 ± 5.7\(^a\) | 3.9 ± 0.4\(^a\)    | 0.43 ± 0.10\(^a\)           | 376.7 ± 55.2\(^a\) | 89.2 ± 22.7\(^a\) | 19.9 ± 4.8\(^a\) |
| Sodium citrate 3.2%    | 16.2 ± 4.1\(^a\) | 3.6 ± 0.7\(^a\)    | 0.45 ± 0.12\(^a\)           | 346.2 ± 21.9\(^a\) | 67.4 ± 4.4\(^a\) | 19.9 ± 1.4\(^a\) |

*Similar letters represent no significant statistical differences*

**Table 2.** Values of glucose and total protein of "cururu" stingray with different anticoagulants.

| Parameters       | Glucose (mmol L\(^{-1}\)) | Total protein (g L\(^{-1}\)) |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Without anticoagulant | 0.8 ± 0.1\(^a\)          | 10.0 ± 2.0\(^a\)             |
| EDTA 5%          | 0.9 ± 0.3\(^a\)          | 3.0 ± 2.0\(^a\)              |
| EDTA 10%         | 1.0 ± 0.4\(^a\)          | 4.0 ± 2.0\(^a\)              |
| Heparin 2500 IU  | 0.8 ± 0.2\(^a\)          | 6.5 ± 1.0\(^a\)              |
| Heparin 5000 IU  | 0.9 ± 0.1\(^a\)          | 6.5 ± 1.0\(^a\)              |
| Sodium citrate 3.2% | 0.9 ± 0.1\(^a\)       | 7.0 ± 3.0\(^a\)              |

*Similar letters represent no significant statistical differences*
4. Discussion

The process of coagulation in blood samples of the "cururu" stingray without anticoagulants presented similar results to the found with sodium citrate, demonstrating that this anticoagulant should not be used to collect blood of freshwater stingrays. In the teleosts Labeo umbratus and Labeo capensis, EDTA (from 0.03 to 5.0%) was inappropriate for conservation of blood samples because coagulation occurred in 100% of samples (HATTINGH, 1975). The study of Clarke et al. (1979) reported for Micropterus salmoides that heparin did not prevent blood coagulation as efficiently as EDTA. In Potamotrygon cf. histrix, no blood clotting occurred when used EDTA at 5% or 10%, heparin 2500 IU or 5000 IU. The occurrence of clumps of cells were detected in 30, 40 and 60% of the blood samples containing EDTA 10%, heparin 2500 and 5000 IU, respectively, since blood was diluted with these anticoagulants after collecting. The presence of clumps of cells were also reported for the teleost Bliennis pholis when heparin 50 IU was used (MAINWARING; ROMLEY, 1985), due to the reduced activity of heparin diluted at this concentration (OKUNO; NELSON, 1975).

In Potamotrygon cf. histrix stingrays no significant change in the erythrogram occurred when used EDTA 5% or 10%, heparin 2500 or 5000 IU and sodium citrate. Similar results were reported for erythrogram parameters of Cyprinus carpio (WALENČIČ; WITESKA, 2007) and hematocrit (Ht) of the hybrid "surubim" Pseudoplatastoma reticulum x Pseudoplatastoma corruscans (ISHIKAWA et al., 2010). Nevertheless, studies demonstrated the occurrence of changes in Ht values caused by the anticoagulant in Colossoma macropomum (TAVARES-DIAS; SANDRIM, 1998), Oreochromis aureus (ALLEN, 1993) and Clarias gariepinus (ADEYEMO et al., 2009).

The effects of blood collection on biochemical parameters using different anticoagulants is poorly described in the literature for elasmobranchs and teleosts. Glucose plasma levels did not present alterations caused by the anticoagulant used in "cururu" stingray. On the other hand, total protein plasma levels were lower when used EDTA 5% and 10%; in addition, a not significant upward trend of total protein levels was observed, proportional to the increase of the concentration of EDTA, which was also observed for the hybrid carpfish P. reticulum x P. corruscans (ISHIKAWA et al., 2010). These reductions may be associated to the coagulation process on which several plasma components, referred as coagulation factors, respond in a complex cascade, starting with the conversion of thrombin into fibrinogen in the blood plasma, and then the clot formation (TAVARES-DIAS; OLIVEIRA, 2009). The beginning of the coagulation process could be observed by the presence of clumps during erythrocytes counting in the blood of "cururu" stingray containing EDTA 5% and 10%; the protein plasma levels in this case were lower compared to blood without anticoagulant due to the initial clot formation that retains proteins, consequently reducing the total levels of plasma proteins.

5. Conclusion

In Potamotrygon cf. histrix stingrays, the use of sodium citrate 3.2% is not recommended for conservation of blood samples, because this anticoagulant was little effective. However, anticoagulants did not affect the parameters evaluated in the determination of plasma glucose and erythrocyt, although evidence of clotting was observed at erythrocytes counting when used EDTA 10%, heparin 2500 and 5000 IU. Nevertheless, no changes in RBC, MCV and MCHC were observed. For the determination of total protein in blood plasma, heparin 2500 and 5000 IU is the ideal anticoagulant. Therefore, the results indicate that samples should be collected directly with any of these anticoagulant concentrations in order to avoid blood coagulation.

6. Acknowledgements

This work was financed by Universidade Federal do Amazonas (UFAM), Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Amazonas (FAPEAM, process 925/03, 2203/05, 2204/05, 2459/08 and 126/08) and Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq, process No 486289/2006-0, 40872/2006-4 and 408795/2006-9). The main author thanks the concession of the Doctor degree scholarship by Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) and are research fellowship recipients from IFAM/Brazil. J.L. Marcon and M. Tavares-Dias are research fellowship recipients from CNPq/Brazil.

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