Widespread *Wolbachia* infection in terrestrial isopods and other crustaceans

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Abstract

*Wolbachia* bacteria are obligate intracellular alpha-Proteobacteria of arthropods and nematodes. Although widespread among isopod crustaceans, they have seldom been found in non-isopod crustacean species. Here, we report *Wolbachia* infection in fourteen new crustacean species. Our results extend the range of *Wolbachia* infections in terrestrial isopods and amphipods (class Malacostraca). We report the occurrence of two different *Wolbachia* strains in two host species (a terrestrial isopod and an amphipod). Moreover, the discovery of *Wolbachia* in the goose barnacle *Lepas anatifera* (subclass Thecostraca) establishes *Wolbachia* infection in class Maxillopoda. The new bacterial strains are closely related to B-supergroup *Wolbachia* strains previously reported from crustacean hosts. Our results suggest that *Wolbachia* infection may be much more widespread in crustaceans than previously thought. The presence of related *Wolbachia* strains in highly divergent crustacean hosts suggests that *Wolbachia* endosymbionts can naturally adapt to a wide range of crustacean hosts. Given the ability of isopod *Wolbachia* strains to induce feminization of genetic males or cytoplasmic incompatibility, we speculate that manipulation of crustacean-borne *Wolbachia* bacteria might represent potential tools for controlling crustacean species of commercial interest and crustacean or insect disease vectors.

Keywords

*Wolbachia*, endosymbiont, Crustacea, Maxillopoda, terrestrial isopod, distribution, adaptation

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Introduction

_Wolbachia pipientis_ (hereafter _Wolbachia_) bacteria are obligate intracellular alpha-Proteobacteria of arthropods and nematodes (O’Neill et al. 1997; Bourtzis and Miller 2003). These maternally-inherited bacteria are often referred to as reproductive parasites because they are able to manipulate the reproduction of their hosts to increase their own transmission, via mechanisms such as cytoplasmic incompatibility, male killing, thelytokous parthenogenesis and feminization of genetic males (O’Neill et al. 1997; Bourtzis and Miller 2003; Cordaux et al. 2011). In addition to vertical transmission, _Wolbachia_ bacteria are occasionally transmitted horizontally (Werren et al. 1995; Vavre et al. 1999; Cordaux et al. 2001). These transmission patterns probably explain, at least partly, why _Wolbachia_ bacteria are found in a highly diverse range of hosts.

_Wolbachia_ bacteria are particularly frequent in arthropods. Hence, it has been estimated that 20–75% of insect species may be infected by _Wolbachia_ (Werren and Windsor 2000; Hilgenboecker et al. 2008). These bacteria have also been reported in chelicerates such as mites (Breeuwer and Jacobs 1996), spiders (Cordaux et al. 2001) and scorpions (Baldo et al. 2007). In crustaceans, _Wolbachia_ have long been known to infect the terrestrial isopod _Armadillidium vulgare_ (Rousset et al. 1992) (order Isopoda, suborder Oniscidea; classification from Martin and Davis (2001)), in which _Wolbachia_ induce functional feminization of genetic males (Rigaud et al. 1997; Cordaux et al. 2004; Bouchon et al. 2008; Cordaux et al. 2011). A systematic search in 80 crustacean species suggested that _Wolbachia_ infection was restricted to isopods, with a prevalence of 46% in terrestrial isopod species (Bouchon et al. 1998). Based on additional screenings, this figure has recently been updated to 61% (Bouchon et al. 2008). The initial screening of 80 crustacean species also provided molecular evidence for _Wolbachia_ infection in two other isopod suborders (Asellotta and Flabellifera) (Bouchon et al. 1998).

Despite multiple screenings of crustacean groups, _Wolbachia_ bacteria have seldom been found in non-isopod crustacean species (Bouchon et al. 1998; Fitzsimmons and Innes 2005; Maniatsi et al. 2010). To date, only two amphipod and two non-marine ostracod crustacean species outside of the Isopoda order have been reported to be infected by _Wolbachia_ (Cordaux et al. 2001; Baltanas et al. 2007). The extent to which this uneven _Wolbachia_ distribution among crustacean species reflects host spectrum specificity or biased sampling remains to be clarified. In this study, we report _Wolbachia_ infections in fourteen new crustacean species. Our results extend the range of _Wolbachia_ infection within terrestrial isopods and amphipods (class Malacostraca). Moreover, the discovery of _Wolbachia_ in the goose barnacle _Lepas anatifera_ (subclass Thecostraca) establishes _Wolbachia_ infection in class Maxillopoda. Molecular characterization indicates that the new strains are closely related to B-supergroup _Wolbachia_ strains previously reported from crustacean hosts (Bouchon et al. 1998; Cordaux et al. 2001). The identification of closely related _Wolbachia_ strains in highly divergent crustacean hosts suggests that this group of _Wolbachia_ endosymbionts can naturally adapt to a wide range of crustacean hosts, not just isopods.
**Materials and methods**

Wild-caught individuals belonging to fourteen crustacean species were studied (Table 1). Seven species have been previously detected in a survey of *Wolbachia* infection of woodlice fauna in Tunisia (Ben Afia Hatira et al. 2007). For these species, *Wolbachia* prevalence (ranging from 40% to 100%) is available in the original publication. The seven remaining species were included as part of an ongoing effort in our laboratory to sample and test novel crustacean species for *Wolbachia* infection. For these species, one or two individuals were collected. Therefore, no information on prevalence is available for these species. Genomic DNA from single individuals was extracted as previously described (Bouchon et al. 1998). *Wolbachia* infection status of each individual was tested using a PCR assay based on the standard *wsp* marker. We used primers 81f and 691r (Braig et al. 1998) and previously described PCR conditions (Cordaux et al. 2001). Purified PCR products were directly sequenced in both directions, as previously described (Cordaux et al. 2001). The *wsp* sequences generated in this study were deposited in GenBank under accession numbers HE616815-HE616830 (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Novel crustacean species infected by *Wolbachia* bacteria reported in this study.

| Class        | InfraClass (I) or Order (O) | Species          | Sampling location      | GenBank accession number for *wsp* |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Maxillipoda  | Cirripedia (I)              | *Lepas anatifera* | La Rochelle, France    | HE616817                          |
|              | Amphipoda (O)               | *Talitrus saltator* | La Rochelle, France    | HE616820 and HE616821             |
|              |                             | *Armadillidium granulatum* | Sidi Massaoud Khniss, Tunisia | HE616828                          |
| Telescopoda  |                             |                  |                        |                                   |
|              |                             | *Armadillidium pelagicum* | Ras Jbel, Tunisia     | HE616829                          |
| Malacostraca |                             | *Armadillidium sulcatum* | Natural Reserve Mhibes, Tunisia | HE616827                          |
| Isopoda (O)  |                             | *Cubaris murina* | Baie Mahault, Guadeloupe, France | HE616815                          |
|              |                             | *Hemilepistus reaumuri* | Metbasta, Tunisia     | HE616816                          |
|              |                             | *Platyarthrus hoffmansegghi* | Liniers, France       | HE616818                          |
|              |                             | *Porcellio albinus* | Kibili, Tunisia        | HE616830                          |
|              |                             | *Porcellio buddelundi* | Skhira cliff, Tunisia  | HE616823 and HE616824             |
|              |                             | *Porcellio lamellatus* | Menzel Jmil, Tunisia   | HE616825                          |
|              |                             | *Porcellio variabilis* | Jbel Ouest, Tunisia    | HE616826                          |
|              |                             | *Porcellionides cingendus* | Archigny, France      | HE616819                          |
|              |                             | *Trachelipus rathkei* | Cosne Cours sur Loire, France | HE616822                          |
Sequences were aligned using ClustalW as implemented in the software BioEdit ver. 7.0 (Hall 1999), followed by manual adjustments. Representative sequences from the B supergroup of Wolbachia diversity were included for comparison and two of the A supergroup as an outgroup, as previously described (Cordaux et al. 2001; Cordaux et al. 2004). There was a total of 618 positions in the dataset. Hypervariable regions were deleted because they could not be aligned with confidence. The resulting alignment included 512 positions of which 185 were considered informative by parsimony criteria. Recombination analyses were performed using Recombination Detection Program (RDP) v3.41 (Martin et al. 2010). Parameters were set as follows: sequences were considered linear, the highest acceptable P value cutoff was 0.01, a Bonferroni correction was applied, consensus daughter sequences were found, gaps were included, different window sizes of variable sites were tested (10, 20, and 30 VI), and 1,000 permutations were performed. Phylogenetic analyses were conducted using the Minimum Evolution (ME) and Neighbor-Joining (NJ) methods, as implemented in MEGA ver 4.0 (Tamura et al. 2007). Evolutionary distances were computed using the Kimura 2-parameter substitution model. The ME tree was searched using the close-neighbor-interchange algorithm at a search level of 1 and the NJ algorithm was used to generate the initial tree. All positions containing alignment gaps and missing data were eliminated in pairwise sequence comparisons (pairwise deletion option). Bootstrap analyses were carried out with 1000 replicates.

Results and discussion

Our findings extend the range of Wolbachia infections among crustacean hosts to twelve additional terrestrial isopod species, one amphipod species and one cirriped species (class Maxillopoda) (Table 1). We performed a molecular characterization of the Wolbachia strains based on the wsp gene, a Wolbachia-specific genetic marker (Braig et al. 1998) which has been shown to be highly informative for the analysis of crustacean Wolbachia strains (Cordaux et al. 2001). In total, we identified sixteen different Wolbachia strains: two strains in the amphipod Talitrus saltator and the terrestrial isopod Porcellio buddelundi, and one strain in each of the other crustacean host species. This is the third report of multiple Wolbachia strains being harbored by a single terrestrial isopod host species and the first case reported in amphipods. Indeed three different Wolbachia strains have previously been identified in A. vulgare (Cordaux et al. 2004; Verne et al. 2007) and Porcellionides pruinosus (Michel-Salzat et al. 2001). As in A. vulgare and P. pruinosus, the Wolbachia strains found in T. saltator and P. buddelundi were identified in different individuals, and no multiple infection of single individuals have been reported so far in crustaceans, in contrast to what has been widely documented in insects (Vautrin et al. 2007).

Querying GenBank with the sixteen wsp sequences through BLASTN searches resulted in best matches to other Wolbachia strains with 98.0–100% nucleotide similarity. This analysis revealed that all novel Wolbachia strains belong to the B supergroup of Wolbachia diversity, as do all isopod and amphipod Wolbachia strains characterized.
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to date (Rousset et al. 1992; Bouchon et al. 1998; Cordaux et al. 2001; Michel-Salzat et al. 2001; Cordaux et al. 2004).

To further characterize the novel crustacean Wolbachia strains, we performed a phylogenetic analysis of B supergroup Wolbachia strains. To facilitate comparisons with previous analyses of crustacean Wolbachia strains, we added the sixteen strains reported in this study to the set of representative B supergroup strains previously used in Cordaux et al. (2001). No significant support for recombination was detected with RDP and the topologies of the ME and NJ trees (see Materials and Methods) reconstructed in this study were highly similar, as they were to the phylogenetic inferences reported previously (Cordaux et al. 2001). We also emphasize that, as far as crustacean Wolbachia strains are concerned, we have shown previously that a wsp-based phylogeny yielded essentially the same relationships between taxa as phylogenies based on other Wolbachia genes such as 16S rRNA, fisZ and GroE (Bouchon et al. 1998; Cordaux et al. 2001; Wiwatanaratanabutr et al. 2009). Because our updated phylogeny of crustacean Wolbachia strains is in agreement with phylogenetic results obtained in previous studies using various genes, we are reasonably confident that the phylogenetic analysis we present in the manuscript is reliable. Figure 1 shows the tree inferred from the ME analysis. All but one crustacean Wolbachia strains clustered together in one of the two groups Oni and Rug, previously shown to encompass isopod and amphipod Wolbachia strains (Bouchon et al. 1998; Cordaux et al. 2001; Wiwatanaratanabutr et al. 2009). Our extended dataset shows a newly emerging trend in the diversity of crustacean Wolbachia strains, in that the Oni group mostly contains strains isolated from terrestrial isopods, whereas the Rug group mostly contains strains isolated from non terrestrial isopod crustaceans. We speculate that this might reflect two major ancestral Wolbachia acquisitions in crustaceans, in terrestrial and aquatic environments. Ecosystems in the transition zones from land to sea, as estuaries and wetlands, are highly productive and therefore attract a multitude of wildlife. Moreover these ecosystems are in a continuous state of change. The finding of closely related symbionts in the Rug group suggesting recent symbiont dispersal across divergent hosts sharing the same habitats suggests that horizontal transfers of Wolbachia could be facilitated in such ecosystems.

The only exception to the clustering of crustacean Wolbachia strains in the Oni or Rug groups is the Wolbachia strain isolated from the terrestrial isopod Cubaris murina (Fig. 1). Indeed, the latter strain falls within the Pip group, closely related to Wolbachia strains from mosquitoes and drosophila. This result suggests the possibility of a Wolbachia horizontal transfer between isopod and insect hosts, as previously proposed to explain the similarity between strains of the Rug group with other insect Wolbachia strains (Bouchon et al. 1998; Cordaux et al. 2001). In any event, it is noteworthy that C. murina is a terrestrial isopod with a pan-tropical distribution (Schmalfuss 2003). Interestingly, a similar result has been obtained by Wiwatanaratanabutr et al. (2009) who showed that the Wolbachia strain isolated from an endemic isopod sampled in Thailand also belongs to the Pip group. This is in contrast to most terrestrial isopods screened so far for Wolbachia infection, which were generally sampled in temperate regions (Bouchon et al. 1998; Bouchon et al. 2008). This suggests that screenings of
Figure 1. Phylogenetic tree of B-supergroup Wolbachia strains based on wsp sequences, using Minimum Evolution analysis. The tree is rooted with two A-supergroup Wolbachia strains. Bootstrap values inferred from 1000 replicates are shown as percentages. Strains are identified by the host species from which they were isolated. Wolbachia strains from terrestrial isopods and non-terrestrial isopod crustaceans are shown in blue and red, respectively. New crustacean Wolbachia infections reported in this study are underlined. Wolbachia strains from insects are shown in black. Names assigned to groups of Wolbachia strains are shown on the right, following Cordaux et al. (2001).
terrestrial isopods and other crustaceans in regions that have not been extensively studied so far may have the potential to uncover a tremendous and unexpected Wolbachia diversity that we are only beginning to realize.

An important result of this study is the discovery of Wolbachia in the goose barnacle Lepas anatifera. This is the first report of Wolbachia infection in the class Maxillopoda, a major crustacean group comprising ~15,000 species, that is, more than one quarter of all described crustacean species (Martin and Davis 2001). Interestingly, the Maxillopoda Wolbachia strain is closely related to other crustacean Wolbachia strains in the Rug group, being 99.8% similar to the Wolbachia strains from the terrestrial isopod Porcellionides pruinosis, the intertidal isopods Sphaeroma rugicauda and S. hookeri and the amphipod T. saltator, based on the wsp marker (Fig. 1). This result thus indicates that highly divergent crustacean hosts can harbour highly similar Wolbachia endosymbionts. By implication, our results suggest that this group of Wolbachia endosymbionts can naturally adapt to a wide range of crustacean hosts. Given the demonstrated ability of terrestrial isopod Wolbachia strains to induce feminization of genetic males or cytoplasmic incompatibility between infected males and uninfected females (Legrand and Juchault 1986; Rigaud et al. 1997; Bouchon et al. 1998; Moret et al. 2001; Cordaux et al. 2004; Bouchon et al. 2008; Cordaux et al. 2011), we speculate that manipulation of crustacean-borne Wolbachia bacteria might represent potential tools for controlling crustacean species of commercial interest and crustacean or insect disease vectors. For example, it has been shown that freshwater crustaceans could be used as predators to control immature forms of the mosquito Aedes aegypti, the vector of the Dengue fever, one of the major infectious diseases in several tropical and subtropical countries in Asia, Africa, and The Americas (Kosiyachinda et al. 2003). The finding of Wolbachia infection in a wide range of crustacean species, including freshwater crustaceans, may open new opportunities in the biological control of insect disease vectors via a Wolbachia-based strategy. This might allow researchers to manipulate the population dynamics of crustacean predators of insects, to enhance their efficacy as biological control agents.

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