

Antibacterial Activities of Coelomic Fluid of Local Earthworms against Disease Causing Microorganisms

RESEARCH ARTICLE

ABSTRACT

The antibacterial properties of coelomic fluid of local earthworms (*Pontoscolex corethrurus*, *Megascolex konkanensis*, *Drawida ghatensis*) against selected pathogens like *Vibrio cholera*, *Vibrio parahaemoliticus*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Salmonella typhi* and *Escherichia coli*. The study was conducted in School of Environmental Science and College of Veterinary and Animal Science in May 2017 to November 2017. The earthworm was collected on the basis of hand sorting method and Coelomic fluid was collected due to cold shock drips. Antimicrobial activity of coelomic fluid of earthworms was assessed by agar well diffusion method. The result revealed that the maximum inhibition zone of 18mm and 16mm showed by coelomic fluid of *P. corethrurus* and *M. konkanensis* against *S. aureus*. The *Drawida ghatensis* shows least antibacterial activities against selected pathogens. The *staphylococcus aureus* shows highest inhibition zone against coelomic fluid of all the selected earthworms and least result showing in bacterial isolate *vibrio parahaemoliticus*. From the study coelomic fluid activity is good for pathogen like *salmonella typhi* and *E. coli* and have medicinal values.

Keywords: Antibacterial activity, Coelomic fluid, *Pontoscolex corethrurus*, *Megascolex konkanensis*, *Drawida ghatensis*.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Earthworm (Kingdom: Animalia, Phylum: Annelida, Class: Oligochaeta) are familiar to almost everyone. The role of some species in organic matter decomposition and mineral cycling may be important [9,16], and a great deal has been written concerning earthworm farming [2]. The activities of earthworms that affect the soil involve the ingestion of soil and the mixing of the main soil ingredients of clay, lime, and humus; the construction of burrows that enhance aeration, drainage, and root penetration. The influence of earthworms on the translocation of soil material may be quite considerable. The body of earthworm is divided into a series of uniformly placed segments. This nature of division of the body both externally and internally has enabled animal to have flexibility and for the initiation of development of good musculature. Earthworms are the first group of animals to have complete digestive system, closed circulatory system with haemoglobin in the plasma as carrier of oxygen and carbon dioxide.

The pathogens are firstly bacteria living in water or soil that are ingested during feeding or introduced into the body following injury. During the course of evolution, earthworms have developed defense strategies against these living pathogens. Earthworms lack true antibodies and hence an adaptive immune response and instead have efficient innate immunity system to defend themselves against invading foreign materials. In living organisms, peptides are an important defense component, many peptides were found in various living organisms.

The earthworms are coelomate animals and filled with coelomic fluid – a milky alkaline liquid that helps the worm in locomotion nutrition, excretion, detoxification of tissues, heavy metal accumulation and protects internal organs from external jerks, destroys bacterial attack, prevents desiccation, promotes cutaneous respiration and internal acclimation [3,20]. The coelomic fluid of earthworms and their body extracts were known to have antimicrobial and many medicinal properties since 1340. Studies done by many workers have strongly pointed out

that coelomic fluid of earthworm like *Eisenia foetida*, *Eudrilus euginae*, *Polyphertima elongate*, *Perionyx excavates*, *Lampito mauritii*, *L. rubellus* and *Perionyx sansibaricus* have medicinal and antibacterial properties. Earthworm has been recognized in prenatal medicine and anti-inflammatory, analgesic and antipyretic agent.

Except for congenital diseases, all other diseases are caused by certain microorganisms. Such microbes are called pathogens. They may affect or damage the whole body system or some specific tissues or organs. Some human diseases caused by pathogens are polio, cholera, mumps, rabies, malaria etc. Plants and animals are also victims of these microbial effects. Some microorganisms need vectors or agents for their transmission. Malaria is an example of the harmful microorganism(18).

It is the leading cause of skin and soft tissue infections such as abscesses (boils), furuncles, and cellulitis. Although most staph infections are not serious, *S. aureus* can cause serious infections such as bloodstream infections, pneumonia, or bone and joint infections. Typhoid fever, also known simply as typhoid, is a bacterial infection due to *Salmonella typhi* that causes symptoms. Symptoms may vary from mild to severe and usually begin six to thirty days after exposure. Often there is a gradual onset of a high fever over several days(4). Weakness, abdominal pain, constipation, and headaches also commonly occur. Cholera is an acute, diarrheal illness caused by infection of the intestine with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*.

Vibrio parahaemolyticus is a self-limiting, enterotoxic bacterium, typically causing acute gastroenteritis in humans. More severe cases of infection can occur in immune-

compromised individuals, which can lead to septicemia and death, although this is very rare. Moderate to severe skin infections can also result from open wound exposure to *V. parahaemolyticus* in warm seawater, although this occurs less frequently than illness following ingestion of the organism(14). *E. coli* refers to a wide range of bacteria that can cause various diseases, including pneumonia, urinary tract infections, and diarrhea. Most strains of *E. coli* are harmless to humans. Some strains of *E. coli* infection can include nausea, vomiting, and fever.

- To characterize the antibacterial activities of coelomic fluid of local earthworms against disease causing microorganisms.
- To characterize the antibacterial activity of pathogenic bacteria using well diffusion method.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Collection and identification of earthworms

Hand sorting method was used for collecting earthworms. This method is widely used for sampling earthworms in India (5,14). The quadrat is provided on 20*20*30cm² and are gently broken and the worms are hand sorted (8). The earthworm samples were collected from the field where pesticides cannot be used. The collected earthworms were identified with the help of standard manual and experts. The study mainly focused on three species of earthworms both exotic and native such as *Pontoscolex corethrurus* (12), *Megascolex konkanensis* (6) and *Drawida ghatensis* (11).



Pontoscolex corethrurus



Megascolex konkanensis



Drawida ghatensis

Figure1: Earthworms selected for the study

2.2. Microorganisms used

Test organisms were collected from the Environmental Microbiology Lab, School of Environmental Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala. These include the standard cultures of *Vibrio cholera*, *Vibrio parahaemoliticus*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Salmonella typhi* and *Escherichia coli*.

2.3. Coelomic fluid collection method

The selected local earthworms were washed in distilled water and they were placed on ordinary wet filter paper in plastic tough which is covered by alluminium foil with fine pin holes. After 48 hrs, the gut was cleared of organic matter as they feed on filter paper. Coelomic fluid was collected by placing the earthworms in petri plates held in a slanting position in the palm. Their body surface was rubbed with wet finger and later with ice cubes taken in a beaker. The coelomic fluid released due to cold shock drips and gets collected at the lower side of the Petriplate. The released fluid from their body was collected by Pasteur pipette (15).

2.4. Antimicrobial activity (Well diffusion method)

The young culture of selected pathogens *Vibrio cholera* (1), *Vibrio parahaemoliticus*(2), *Staphylococcus aureus*(3), *Salmonella typhi*(4) and *E.coli*(5) were prepared in nutrient broth(1.3gm in 100ml and inoculated in 10ml) and lawn culture of different pathogens were prepared by swabbing young

culture (16-18hrs) in Muller Hinton agar and waited for 15 minutes to absorb the culture to the medium. The bacterial cultures inoculated in Nutrient Agar broth were incubated at 37 °C for 18 hr. The suspension were checked to provide approximately 10⁵ cfu/ml. Agar wells (3mm) in diameter were punched in the plates using a sterile gel puncture. 30µL of coelomic fluid were pipetted into the well and plates were incubated for 24hrs in an incubator. Zone of inhibition around the wells were recorded in mm.

2.5. Statistical analysis

The zone of inhibition was plotted with the help of GraphPad Prism 5.

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3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The coelomic fluid of selected earthworms *Pontoscolex corethrurus*, *Megascolex konkanensis* and *Drawida ghatensis* was collected by cold shock method were tested for antibacterial activity against five pathogenic bacteria using well diffusion method. The antibacterial property of coelomic fluid against selected five bacterial strains was found that *M. konkanensis* shows high zone of inhibition for *S.aureus* (18mm) fig:2(1)compare with all the three earthworms. The *P. corethrurus* shows high antibacterial activity against *S. aureus* then *V.cholera* (16mm and 14mm) and the least activity shows in *V.parahaemoliticus* (8mm)(table:1 and fig:4). In *P.corethrurus* no activity shown

in *S. typhi*. *M. konkanensis* shows higher zone of inhibition against *S. aureus*, follows *E. coli*, then *S. typhi* (18mm, 15mm, 14mm) (table:1 and fig:5) no activity shown in *V. parahaemoliticus*. *D. ghatensis* shows higher zone of inhibition in *S. typhi*, (10mm) follows *S. aureus* (9mm) and

no activity shown in both *E. coli*, *V. cholera* and *V. parahaemoliticus* (table:1 and fig:6). A maximum inhibition zone of 18mm and 16mm[fig:2(2)] showed by coelomic fluid of *P. corethrurus* and *M. konkanensis* against *S. aureus*.

Table 1: Zone of inhibition of earthworms against selected bacterial strain

Bacterial isolates	Zone of inhibition(mm)		
	<i>P. corethrurus</i>	<i>M. konkanensis</i>	<i>D. ghatensis</i>
<i>V. cholera</i>	14	10	0
<i>V. parahaemoliticus</i>	8	0	0
<i>S. aureus</i>	16	18	9
<i>S. typhi</i>	0	14	10
<i>E. coli</i>	11	15	0

The extraction of coelomic fluid from earthworms, cold shock method is a novel method as it won't require any apparatus and more importantly used earthworms are unharmed and show normal activities even after collection of coelomic fluid several times. The coelomic fluid of selected earthworms shows good antibacterial properties and has good medicinal value. The antibacterial property of coelomic fluid in the *Megascolex konkanensis* shows high medicinal values against *Staphylococcus aureus* and *E. coli*. The selected pathogens are common disease causing bacteria. The coelomic fluid contains several bioactive compounds such as proteins, exhibits a variety of biological functions such as antibacterial, anticancer, haemolytic, cytotoxic, hemagglutinating and proteolytic activities etc (18).

Recently, another two antimicrobial peptides (PP1 and OEP3121) have been identified from earthworms of *Pheretima tschiliensis* and *E. foetida*, respectively(19). The antimicrobial peptide, lumbricin-PG was identified from skin secretions of the earthworm, *Pheretima guillelmi*(21).(1,6) found that earthworm coelomic fluid contains biologically active molecules and leukocytes that participate in phagocytosis, encapsulation and killing of HeLa, HEp-2, PC-12 and PA317 cells in vitro(13). Earthworms synthesize and secrete several effective modulators of innate immune responses such as antibacterial molecules, cytotoxic proteins and cytokines(4). The gut extracts of earthworms have antibacterial and antifungal activity (15). The new bacterial strain with antimycobacterial activity has been isolated from the midgut of *Dendrobaena veneta* (10).

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(1) (2) (3)

Figure:2 Sensitivity of high zone of inhibition *M. konkanensis* against *S. aureus* (1)
P. corethrus against *S. aureus* (2) and *D. ghatensis* against *S. typhi*(3)



(1) (2) (3)

Figure:3 Sensitivity of least zone of inhibition *M. konkanensis* against *V. cholera* (1)
P. corethrus against *V. parahaemoliticus* (2) and *D. ghatensis* against *S. aureus*(3)

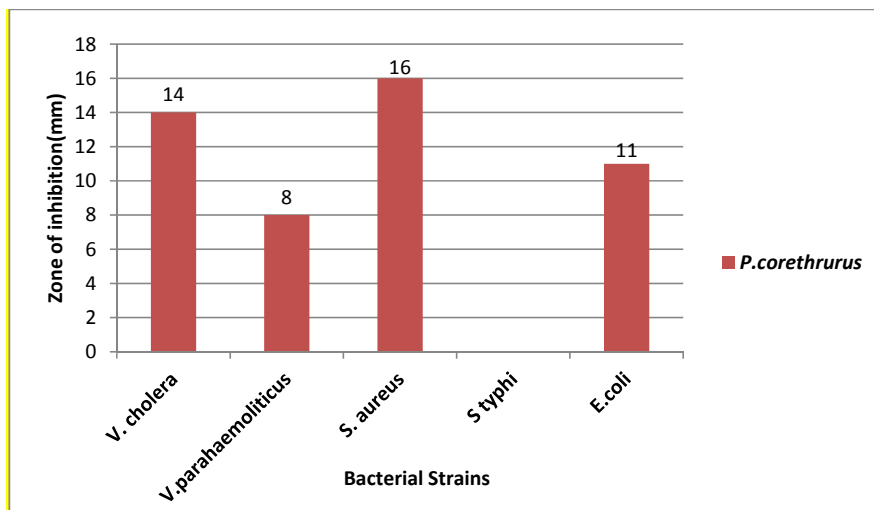


Figure 4: Antibacterial activity of *P. corethrus* against selected bacterial strains

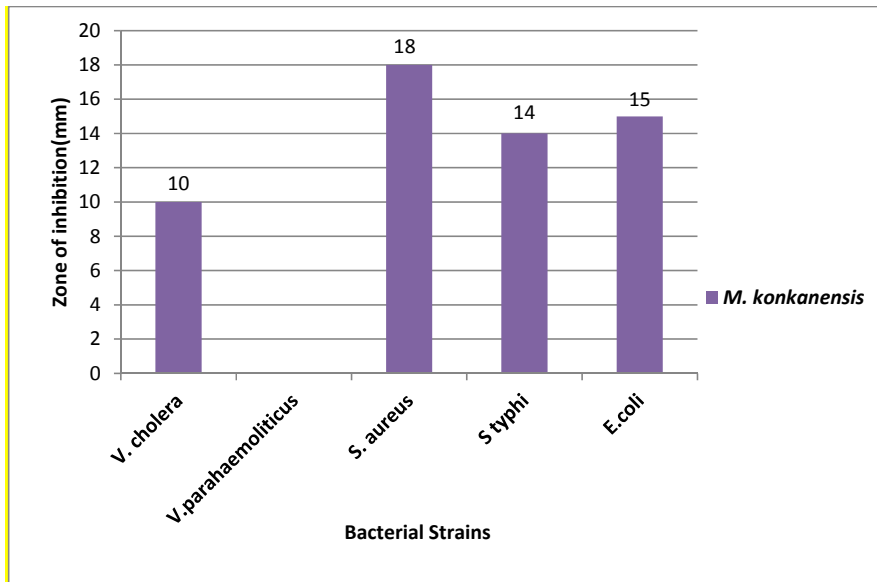


Figure 5: Antibacterial activity of *M. konkanensis* against selected bacterial strains

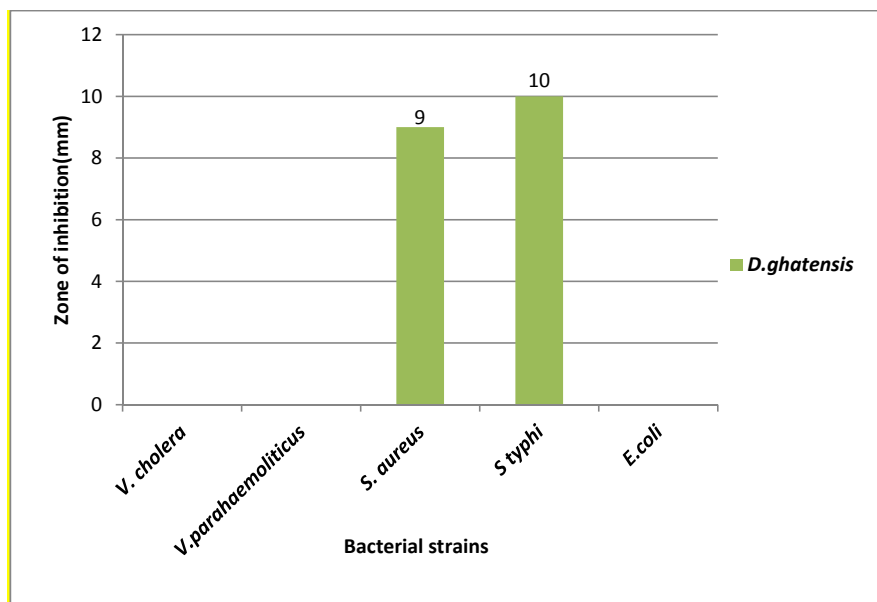


Figure 6: Antibacterial activity of *D. ghatensis* against selected bacterial strains

CONCLUSION

The experimental investigation revealed that Antibacterial Activities of Coelomic Fluid of Local Earthworms against Disease Causing Microorganisms. The coelomic fluid of *P. corethrurus*, *M.konkanensis*, *D.ghatensis* shows antibacterial properties against *V.cholera*, *V.parahaemoliticus*, *S.aureus*, *S. typhi* and *E. coli*. The *M. konkanensis* shows high antibacterial activity for these two bacterial strains. *D.ghatensis* shows least antibacterial activity. So this work suggests some of the coelomic fluid components might be useful for pharmaceutical applications and for purifying the biomolecules to introduce in the field of pharmaceuticals.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>P.corethrurus</i>	- <i>Pontoscolex corethrurus</i>
<i>M.konkanensis</i>	- <i>Megascolex konkanensis</i>
<i>D.ghatensis</i>	- <i>Drawida ghatensis</i>
<i>V.cholera</i>	- <i>Vibrio cholera</i>
<i>V.parahaemoliticus</i>	- <i>Vibrio parahaemoliticus</i>
<i>S.aureus</i>	- <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>
<i>S.typhi</i>	- <i>Salmonella typhi</i>
<i>E.coli</i>	- <i>Escherichia coli</i>

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