

**NOVEL RECOMBINANT DNA AND LIVE VIRUS VACCINES
TO PREVENT OR CONTROL HIV-1 INFECTION**

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Table of contents

Table of contents	i
List of figures.....	xi
List of tables	xiii
Abstract.....	xiv
Declaration	xvii
Acknowledgments	xviii
List of abbreviations and acronyms	xix
Chapter 1.0: Literature review	1
1.1 General introduction.....	1
1.2 HIV classification.....	1
1.3 The structure and organisation of the HIV genome	1
1.3.1 The major genes	2
1.3.1.1 The <i>gag</i> gene.....	2
1.3.1.2 The <i>env</i> gene	2
1.3.1.3 The <i>pol</i> gene.....	3
1.3.2 Regulatory genes	3
1.3.2.1 The <i>tat</i> gene	3
1.3.2.2 The <i>rev</i> gene.....	3
1.3.3 The auxiliary genes.....	4
1.3.3.1 The <i>nef</i> gene.....	4
1.4 The origin of HIV/AIDS	4

1.5 Epidemiology of HIV	4
1.6 HIV distribution and the global epidemic	5
1.7 Transmission of HIV	6
1.8 Reducing HIV transmission	7
1.9 HIV life cycle	7
1.9.1 Binding and entry into the host cell.....	7
1.9.2 Reverse transcription of viral genome.....	8
1.9.3 Integration of viral DNA and translation of viral genes.....	8
1.9.4 Assembly of viral proteins and release of progeny virus	9
1.10 The natural history of HIV infection.....	10
1.10.2 The chronic stage of HIV infection	11
1.10.3 The late stage of HIV infection	13
1.10.3.1 Typical progressors, rapid progressors, and long-term survivors.....	13
1.10.3.2 Long-term non-progressors and elite controllers.....	14
1.11 Innate protection against HIV infection.....	15
1.12 Adaptive immunity and correlates of protection against HIV	16
1.12.1 Non-neutralizing antibodies	17
1.12.2 Neutralizing antibodies (NAbs).....	17
1.12.2.1 Challenges in inducing broadly neutralizing Env antibodies by vaccination..	18
1.12.3 Tat neutralizing antibodies	19
1.12.4 Cell-mediated immunity (CMI).....	20

1.13 Treatment of HIV infection.....	21
1.14 Vaccine evolution.....	22
1.14.1 Licensed vaccines against human viral infections.....	23
1.14.1.1 Live-attenuated vaccines.....	23
1.14.1.2 Killed or inactivated vaccines.....	24
1.14.1.3 Subunit vaccines.....	24
1.14.1.4 Virus-like particles vaccines.....	24
1.15 HIV vaccine development.....	25
1.15.1 Previous HIV vaccine clinical trials.....	25
1.15.1.1 The AIDSVAX HIV vaccine trial.....	26
1.15.1.2 The Merck™ STEP and Phambili trials.....	26
1.15.1.3 The Thai trial: RV144.....	27
1.16 Improving HIV vaccine efficacy.....	28
1.16.1 Mucosal vaccination.....	28
1.16.2 Adjuvants.....	29
1.16.2.1 The C4-binding protein (C4b-p).....	30
1.16.2.1.1 The C4-bp as an adjuvant.....	31
1.17 New HIV vaccine development strategies.....	33
1.17.1 HIV-VLP-based vaccines.....	33
1.17.2 Recombinant plasmid DNA-based HIV vaccines.....	34
1.17.2.1 Improving DNA vaccine efficacy.....	35

1.17.3 Recombinant virus vector-based HIV vaccines	36
1.17.3.1 Pox viruses as vaccine vectors	38
1.17.3.2 Adenoviruses as vaccine vectors	38
1.17.3.3 Herpes viruses as vaccine vectors	39
1.17.3.4 Alphavirus vectors	41
1.17.3.5 Rhabdovirus vectors	41
1.17.3.6 Paramyxovirus vectors	42
1.17.3.7 Poliovirus as vaccine vectors	43
1.17.4 Human rhinoviruses (HRVs)	44
1.17.4.1 HRV genotypes and serotypes	44
1.17.4.2 HRV structure and genome	45
1.17.4.3 Human rhinoviruses as vectors for HIV vaccines	47
1.19 Aims of the studies in thesis	49
Chapter 2.0: Materials and Methods	50
2.1 Vaccines	50
2.2 Cell culture and DNA transfection	51
2.3 Western blot analysis	51
2.4 Animals and immunisations	51
2.5 Enzyme-linked immunosorbent spot assay (ELISpot)	52
2.6 Fluorescent target array (FTA) assay	53
2.7 Intracellular cytokine staining (ICS) and flow cytometry	54

2.8 H-2Kd- Gag ₁₉₇₋₂₀₅ tetramer and antibody staining	55
2.9 Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA).....	55
2.10 Anti-Tat neutralization assay	56
2.11 EcoHIV/NL4-3 challenge	56
2.12 Statistical analysis	57
Chapter 3.0: A novel candidate HIV-Tat based DNA vaccine	59
3.1 Abstract	62
3.2 Introduction	62
3.3 Results	63
3.3.1 Tat oligomerisation.....	63
3.3.3 DNA vaccines encoding Tat induce anti-Tat Nab.....	65
3.3.4 Higher titer anti-Tat responses were induced by multiple vaccine doses	65
3.3.5 Tat DNA vaccines induce sIgA responses in CVL	65
3.3.5 DNA vaccines encoding Tat control EcoHIV viral load post-challenge.....	66
3.4 Materials and Methods	69
3.4.1 DNA plasmids	69
3.4.2 Western blot analysis.....	69
3.4.3 Animal immunisations.....	69
3.4.4 Enzyme-linked immunosorbent spot assay (ELISpot)	69
3.4.5 Fluorescent target array (FTA) assay	69
3.4.6 Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA).....	69

3.4.7 Anti-Tat neutralisation assay	69
3.4.8 EcoHIV/NL4-3 challenge	
3.4.9 Statistical analysis	69
3.5. References	70
3.6 Acknowledgements	71
3.7 Author contributions	71
3.8 Additional information.....	71
3.9 Competing financial interests.....	71
Chapter 4.0: Human rhinovirus-A1 as an expression vector	72
4.1 Summary	75
4.2 Introduction	76
4.2.1 Classification of human rhinoviruses (HRVs)	76
4.2.2 Virion structure and genome organisation	76
4.2.3 HRV genotypes and serotypes.....	77
4.2.4 Viral replication.....	77
4.2.5 Human rhinoviruses serotype A1 (HRV-A1) as vaccine vectors.....	78
4.3. Materials.....	80
4.3.1 Cells.....	80
4.3.2 Enzymes	80
4.3.3 Growth Media.....	80
4.3.4 Preparative Kits	80
4.3.5 Reagents, General Materials and Instrumentation.....	81

4.4 Methods.....	83
4.4.1 General procedure to generate recombinant HRV (rHRV).....	83
4.4.2 PCR amplification of HIV Gag or Tat inserts	87
4.4.3 Preparing the HRV vector	88
4.4.4 Dephosphorylating the vector.....	89
4.4.5 Preparing the HIV inserts	89
4.4.6 Ligating the vector and insert	89
4.4.7 Transforming bacterial cells	90
4.4.8 Colony screening	90
4.4.9 Preparing rHRV- <i>gag/tat</i> plasmid DNA mini-preps	91
4.4.10 Linearizing plasmid HRV- <i>gag/tat</i> plasmid DNA.....	92
4.4.11 Transcription of rHRV-Gag/Tat mRNA	93
4.4.12 Transfecting H1-HeLa cells with HRV-Gag/Tat mRNA.....	94
4.4.13 Harvesting rHRVs	94
4.4.14 Large scale preparation of rHRVs.....	95
4.4.15 RT-PCR	96
4.4.16 Immunofluorescence	98
4.4.17 Concentrating, titrating and storing rHRVs.....	99
4.5 Notes	101
Chapter 5.0: Engineering human rhinovirus serotype-A1 as a vaccine vector	107
Abstract	110

Introduction	110
5.3 Methods.....	110
5.3.1 Constructing rHRVS	110
5.3.2 Virus culture	111
5.4 Results	112
5.5 Discussion.....	112
5.6 Conflict of interest.....	113
5.7 Acknowledgement.....	113
5.8References	113
Chapter 6.0: An innovative HIV-1 vaccination regimen.....	115
6.1 Abstract	119
6.2 Importance.....	120
6.3 Introduction	121
6.4 Material and Methods	123
6.4.1 Recombinant HRV-Gag/Tat production and purification	123
6.4.2 DNA vaccines.....	123
6.4.3 Animals and immunisations	123
6.4.4 Enzyme-linked immunosorbent spot assay (ELISpot)	124
6.4.5 Intracellular cytokine staining (ICS) and flow cytometry	125
6.4.6 H-2K ^d - Gag ₁₉₇₋₂₀₅ tetramer and antibody staining	125
6.4.7 Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA).....	126

6.4.8 EcoHIV/NL4-3 challenge.....	126
6.4.9 Statistical analysis	126
6.5 Results	128
6.5.1 rHRV-DNA prime-boost vaccination elicits robust CMI	128
6.5.2 rHRV-DNA elicits superior systemic poly-functional CMI	131
6.5.3 rHRV-DNA vaccination elicits superior poly-functional CMI in the mesenteric lymph nodes.....	134
6.5.4 rHRV-DNA vaccination elicits superior Tat-specific humoral responses	135
6.5.5 rHRV-DNA controls the EcoHIV viral load post-challenge.....	137
6.6 Discussion	140
6.7 Conflict of interest.....	143
6.8 Acknowledgements	143
6.9 References	144
Chapter 7.0: General Discussion	151
7.1. A novel highly immunogenic Tat DNA-based HIV vaccine	152
7.2 Vaccination strategies to induce mucosal immunity against HIV	154
7.2.1 Human rhinovirus serotype A1 as a HIV vaccine vector	156
7.2.2 A live recombinant human rhinovirus-based HIV vaccine	159
7.3 Pre-clinical evaluation of potential HIV vaccine efficacy using the EcoHIV challenge model.....	159
7.4 Limitations and future studies	161
7.5 Conclusions	164

8.0: Appendices	166
9.0: Bibliography.....	174

List of figures

Chapter 1. Introduction

Figure 1: The structure of a HIV virion	2
Figure 2: Global prevalence of HIV	6
Figure 3: The replication cycle of HIV.....	9
Figure 4: The natural history of HIV infectionThe infection proceeds in three phase viz. primary (acute) phase, chronic (latent) and AIDS (final) phases.	11
Figure 5: Structure of the C4-bp: Structure of the C4-bp	31
Figure 6: Schematic illustration of the structure of the human rhinovirus genome	46
Figure 7. Vaccine constructs and Tat expression	63

Chapter 3. A novel candidate HIV-Tat based DNA vaccine

Figure 8.Tat DNA vaccination induces Th cell responses and humoral immunity	64
Figure 9. Humoral responses and CMI are increased after 5 doses of Tat DNA vaccine	66
Figure 10. pVAX-sTat-IMX313 vaccinated mice exhibit superior control against EcoHIV challenge	67

Chapter 4. Human rhinovirus-A1 as an expression vector

Figure 11. Cloning strategy and production of replication-competent recombinant HRVs	86
Figure 12. Agarose gel electrophoresis of RT-PCR products to examine the genetic stability of rHRVs and immunofluorescence to detect expression of Gag-1 to Gag-5 and Tat.	97
Figure 13. Cloning strategy and production of replication-competent recombinant HRVs ...	111

Chapter 5. Engineering human rhinovirus serotype-A1 as a vaccine vector

Figure 14. HIV protein expression and 2Apro Aautocleavage site sequences	112
Figure 15. Agarose gel electrophoresis and RT-PCR.....	113
Figure 16. rHRV-DNA vaccination elicits robust CMI in the spleen	130

Chapter 6. An innovative HIV-1 vaccination regimen

Figure 17. rHRV-DNA elicits superior systemic poly-functional CMI132

Figure 18. rHRV-DNA vaccination elicits superior poly-functional CMI in the mesenteric lymph nodes.....134

Figure 19. rHRV-DNA vaccination elicits superior Tat-specific humoral responses136

Figure 20. rHRV-DNA vaccination controls EcoHIV viral load post-challenge138

List of tables

Chapter 1. Introduction

Table 1. Summary of ARVs in clinical practice23

Table 2. Summary of virus vectors in vaccine development37

Chapter 4. Human rhinovirus-A1 as an expression vector

Table 3. HIV Gag-1 to Gag-5 fragment length84

Table 4. Generating gag/tat inserts.88

Table 5. Colony PCR91

Abstract

Background

Vaccination is the most cost effective and long-term solution to the global human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) pandemic. The HIV Gag and Tat proteins are attractive components of a HIV vaccine as immune responses targeting these proteins confer protective benefits against HIV infections in humans. This thesis has developed two innovative candidate HIV vaccines viz. a DNA vaccine encoding oligomerised and secreted Tat (pVAX-sTat-IMX313), and a recombinant live human rhinovirus serotype A1 (HRV-A1)-based vaccine encoding Gag and Tat (rHRV-Gag/Tat).

Methods

To construct pVAX-sTat-IMX313, Tat was fused with the oligomerisation domain of IMX313 to form Tat heptamers and linked to the leader sequence of tissue plasminogen activator to ensure that the bulk of oligomerised protein is secreted. To develop the rHRV-Gag/Tat vaccine, initially, the full length *tat* gene and 5 discrete overlapping fragments corresponding to the full length *gag* gene were individually inserted into the junction between the HRV-A1 genes encoding structural and non-structural proteins (P1/P2 junction) to ensure that the exogenous HIV Gag or Tat proteins were separated from the recombinant polyprotein using the HRV encoded 2Aprotease enzyme. Thus, one recombinant HRV encoding Tat (rHRV-Tat) and 5 rHRVs each encoding a unique Gag fragment (rHRV-Gag1-5) were generated. The individual rHRVs were then mixed into a single cocktail vaccine (rHRV-Gag/Tat), purified and titrated for inoculation in mice.

The immunogenicity of these vaccines was evaluated in female BALB/c mice that received up to five intradermal injections of pVAX-sTat-IMX313 (50 µg per dose) at 2 weekly intervals in one study. In another study, mice were vaccinated intranasally with 2 doses (5×10^6

TCID₅₀/dose) of the rHRV-Gag/Tat followed by a single 50 µg booster dose of a cocktail DNA vaccine containing pVAX-sTat-IMX313 and pVAX-Gag-Perforin. Vaccine-induced immune responses were examined 2 weeks after the last dose by antibody ELISA, *in-vitro* Tat transactivation neutralization, IFN-γ ELISpot, KdGag₁₉₇₋₂₀₅ tetramer staining and intracellular cytokine staining assays.

Results

Data showed that fusing Tat with IMX313 results in complete heptamerisation of Tat. Furthermore, the data suggested that pVAX-sTat-IMX313 vaccination elicited higher titers of serum neutralizing Tat-specific IgG, secretory IgA (sIgA) in the vagina and CMI responses, and showed superior control of ecotropic HIV (EcoHIV) infection, a surrogate murine HIV challenge model, compared with animals vaccinated with other DNA vaccines tested in this study. Human rhinovirus serotype A1 (HRV-A1) was successfully engineered into a replication-competent genetically stable recombinant vector to deliver a mucosally-targeted vaccine, rHRV-Gag/Tat, by inserting exogenous HIV *gag* and *tat* sequences into the HRV-A1 genome. Finally, intranasal administration of 2 doses of rHRV-Gag/Tat followed by a single DNA booster dose induced superior poly-functional Gag-specific CD8 T cell responses in the spleen (systemic) and mesenteric lymph nodes (mucosal), higher Tat-specific serum IgG and sIgA in the vagina, and effective control of EcoHIV infection compared to other vaccination regimens tested in this study.

Conclusion

First, the data support the inclusion of IMX313 as a molecular adjuvant for Tat-based HIV DNA vaccines. Second, the data demonstrated that intranasal vaccination with rHRV-Gag/Tat followed by a single DNA booster dose is effective in eliciting HIV-specific immunity pan-mucosally and systemically. Collectively, the data support further testing of the pVAX-sTat-

IMX313 and rHRV-Gag/Tat vaccines in macaques, preferably in a heterologous prime-boost vaccination strategy, and results from these studies might influence future HIV clinical trials.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AIDS: acquired immune deficiency syndrome

Ad5: Adenovirus serotype 5

APCs: Antigen presenting cells

ADCVI: Antibody-dependent cell-mediated virus inhibition

ADCC: Antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity

ADCP: Antibody-dependent cellular phagocytosis

ADCD: Ab-dependent complement deposition

Ad5: Adenovirus serotype 5

APOBEC-3G: Apolipoprotein B mRNA editing enzyme, catalytic polypeptide-like-type 3G

~: Approximately

cDNA: Complementary DNA

CCR5: Chemokine receptor 5

CCR5 Δ 32: CCR delta 32

CD4⁺: Cluster of differentiation 4 positive

CD8⁺: Cluster of differentiation 8 positive

Δ *Nef*: delta Nef

DNA: Deoxyribonucleic acid

DCs: Dendritic Cells

DC-SIGN: Dendritic Cell-Specific Intercellular adhesion molecule-3-Grabbing Non-integrin

ELISA: Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay

ELISpot: Enzyme-linked immunosorbent spot assay

eIF-4GI: Eukaryotic initiation factor 4GII

ESCRTs: Endosomal sorting complexes required for transport

gp120: Glycoprotein 120

gp41: Glycoprotein 41

g: Gram

\geq : Equal to or greater than

HIV-1 or HIV-2: Human immunodeficiency virus type 1 or 2

HIV LTR: HIV long terminal repeats

HLA: Human leukocyte antigen

HAART: Highly active anti-retroviral therapy

HeLa cells: Henrietta Lacks cells

HEK cells: Human embryo kidney cells

HCV: Hepatitis C Virus

IRES: Internal ribosome entry site

IN: Intra nasal

IFN- γ : Interferon gamma

IL-2: Interleukin-2

IL4: Interleukin-4

IL-7: Interleukin-7

ISCOMs: Immune stimulating complexes

IAVI: International AIDS Vaccine Initiative

sIgA: Secreted immunoglobulin A

IgG: Immunoglobulin G

IgE: Immunoglobulin E

I.e: That is to say

Kb: kilo base

kDa: kilo dalton

$<$: Less than

LRAs: Latency reversing agents

LEDGF/p75: Lens epithelium-derived growth factor/p75

MHC-I/II: Major histocompatibility complex class I or II

MHC-E: Major histocompatibility complex class E

MPER: Membrane proximal external region

ml: millilitre

mg: milligram

µl: micro litre

mRNA: messenger RNA

MSM: Men-who have-sex with men

Nabs: Neutralizing antibodies

NF-κB: Nuclear factor NF-κB

NFAT: Nuclear factor of activated T-cells

NK cell: Natural killer cells

%: Percentage

/: Per

RNA: Ribonucleic acid

STDs: Sexually transmitted diseases

SIV: Simian immunodeficiency

SIVmac251: Simian immunodeficiency for macaques strain 251

SIVmac239: Simian immunodeficiency for macaques strain 239

SIVsm E660: Simian immunodeficiency for macaques strain E660

SIVsmm: Simian immunodeficiency virus for sooty mangabeys

Th1 and 2: Type 1 and Type 2 immune responses

TNF-α: Tumor necrosis factor-alpha

UTR: untranslated region

UNAIDS: United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS

Viz: namely

WHO: World Health Organisation