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Detection of Hepatitis C Virus genotype-4 using nucleic acid aptamers

A thesis

Submitted as a partial fulfillment for requirements of the master degree of Science in Biochemistry

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2019



To whom I owed my deepest gratitude

My family

My father & mother

My brothers & sisters

My wife

My lovely daughter

"Arwa"

&

My sincere friends

Acknowledgment

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“First and foremost, thanks to Allah, the beneficent and gracious”

At the beginning, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to **Prof. Dr. Amina Mohamed Medhat**, Professor of Biochemistry, Faculty of Science, Ain Shams University, for being so generous with her knowledge and being so supportive in all aspects of my work. I am so grateful to her for sincere efforts and step-by-step guidance through the entire study. I learned a lot from her constructive and precious remarks during my work and writing this thesis. To her, I cannot find words to express my gratefulness and thanks.

Words cannot explicit my sincerest thanks and appreciation to **Prof. Dr. Mohamed Abbas Shemis**, Professor and Head of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department and Head of Nanotechnology Unit, Theodor Bilharz Research Institute, for suggesting the research point, setting up the plan of the work and for his enthusiastic kind supervision, generous and unlimited remarkable suggestions that motivated me a lot to do my best to achieve the right goal and finish up this thesis. I owe my deepest thanks for his precious comments, expert advice and constructive assistance during writing of this thesis. I am very proud of being one of his students and will never forget his kindness and generosity.

I would like to declare my great cordial thanks and appreciation to **Dr. Eman Mohamed Saleh**, Assistant Professor of Biochemistry, Faculty of Science, Ain Shams University, for her scientific meticulous supervision, kind constructive assistance and support, valuable comments and remarks

that helped me to accomplish this work. To her, I cannot find words to express my gratefulness and thanks.

I wish also to thank **Prof. Dr. Hanan Abdelmoniem Omar**, Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Theodor Bilharz Research Institute, for her kindly research advice and assistance in primer design.

Also, I would like to express my sincere thanks to **Dr. Hend Okasha Ahmed**, Researcher of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Theodor Bilharz Research Institute, for her effective encouragement, kind constructive assistance and support that helped me to accomplish this work. Also, for solving the daily problems faced me during my experimental study and for her extensive efforts and noteworthy comments during writing of this thesis.

This work was supported by the ASRT-project no. EGY/FR10-06. The principal investigator **Prof. Dr. Mohamed Abbas Shemis**.

Special thanks to all members of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Theodor Bilharz Research Institute, for their continuous emotional encouragement and support throughout the whole work.

Abdullah Gouda

2019

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Abstract

Egypt has the highest prevalence of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) infection with 92.5% of patients infected with genotype-4. This study aimed to clone and express the Core gene from HCV genotype-4 and used the purified proteins to develop a highly sensitive, specific and cost-effective diagnostic assay for detection of HCV infection. Using synthetic HCV genotype-4 Core gene and pET15b as *E. coli* expression vector, the HCV Core protein (MW 17 kDa) was expressed in the form of inclusion bodies (IBs). The expressed protein was purified and refolded *in vitro* using rapid dilution method. The recombinant Core protein was purified successfully using weak cation exchange liquid chromatography. The immunogenicity of the purified protein was tested using 129 archived serum samples by ELISA and it was also used as a reference standard for detection of HCV Core antigen using the HCV Core aptamer colorimetric assay. Results showed that, the HCV Core aptamer assay had 100% sensitivity and specificity where as the in-house anti-HCV Core assay had ~98.55% sensitivity and ~98.33% specificity as judged by qRT-PCR. In conclusion, the sensitivity, specificity and correlation of

the developed HCV Core aptamer colorimetric assay to qRT-PCR are higher than those for the commercially available ELISA assays, and can be used as a screening and quantification assay for detecting HCV infection.

Keywords: HCV, Core protein, inclusion bodies, refolding, ELISA, aptamer.

List of abbreviations

Abbreviated name	Full name
aa	Amino acid
Abs	Antibodies
Ags	Antigens
AuNPs	Gold nanoparticles
ALT	Alanine aminotransferase
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
cDNA	Complementary DNA
CHC	Chronic hepatitis C
CIA	Chemiluminescence immunoassays
DAAs	Direct-acting antivirals
DTT	Dithiothreitol
EDAC	1-Ethyl-3-(3-dimethyl-aminopropyl) carbodiimide
EDTA	Ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid
E1	HCV envelop1
E2	HCV envelop2
ELISA	Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent assay

ELONA	Enzyme linked oligonucleotides assay
ER	Endoplasmic reticulum
F	Forward
FRET	Fluorescence resonance energy transfer
G	Genotype
HBV	Hepatitis B Virus
HCC	Hepatocellular Carcinoma
HCV	Hepatitis C Virus
HCV coreAg	HCV Core antigen
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRP	Horse raddish peroxidase
HTAs	Host-targeted agents
IBs	Inclusion bodies
ICP-MS	Inductively Coupled Plasma-Mass Spectrometry
IDUs	Intravenous drug users
IEC	Ion exchange chromatography
IFN	Interferon
IMAC	Immobilized metal ion affinity chromatography
IPTG	Isopropyl β -D-1-thiogalactopyranoside

lac	lactose
LOD	Limit of detection
MCS	Multiple cloning sites
MNPs	Magnetic nanoparticles
MWCO	Molecular weight cut-off
NANBH	The non-A, non- B Hepatitis
NATs	Nucleic acid amplification techniques
NCR	Noncoding region
NHS	N-hydroxysuccinimide
Ni-NTA agarose	Nickel-nitrilotriacetic acid coupled to a cross- linked agarose resin
NS1-NS5	Nonstructure protein (1-5)
nts	Nucleotides
OD	Optical density
OPD	O-phenylenediamine dihydrochloride
Ori	Origin of replication
ORF	Open reading frame
PBS	Phosphate buffer saline
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PDA	Polydiacetylene
PDGF	Platelet derived growth factor