ISSN: 2155-9597
Journal of Bacteriology & Parasitology

OPEN ACCESS Freely available online

Opinion Article

Implementation of Commensal Bacteria as Transgenic Killers to Protect Mucosae

Tridu Frank*

Department of Immunology and Microbiology, The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, United Sates of America

DESCRIPTION

In the human body ecosystem, a delicate balance exists between beneficial microorganisms and potential pathogens. Among these microbial combinations, commensal bacteria stand for their ability to inhabit various mucosal surfaces, offering protection against invading pathogens and maintaining immune homeostasis. However, recent advancements in genetic engineering have prepared for a novel approach to mucosal protection: transgenic killer commensal bacteria. These genetically modified microbes are engineered to target and removing pathogenic invaders while preserving the integrity of the host's mucosal barriers. In this article, they will explore the concept of transgenic killer commensal bacteria as mucosal protectants, examining their mechanisms of action, potential applications, and implications for human health.

Commensal bacteria are microorganisms that coexist harmoniously with their host without causing harm or benefitting from the relationship. These bacteria colonize various mucosal surfaces throughout the body, including the gastrointestinal tract, respiratory tract, and urogenital tract. By occupying these ecological niches, commensal bacteria play vital roles in modulating immune responses, preventing colonization by pathogenic microbes, and maintaining mucosal barrier function.

Mucosal surfaces serve as the primary interface between the host and the external environment, providing a physical and immunological barrier against invading pathogens. The mucosal immune system, consisting of specialized immune cells and secretory molecules, continuously surveils these surfaces, detecting and neutralizing potential threats. Commensal bacteria contribute to mucosal homeostasis by competing with pathogens for nutrients and adhesion sites, producing antimicrobial peptides, and stimulating the development of immune cells.

Transgenic killer commensal bacteria represent an ideal approach in the field of mucosal protection. These engineered microbes are designed to specifically target and eliminate pathogenic invaders while leaving beneficial commensal bacteria and host tissues unharmed. The concept builds upon the natural antagonistic interactions observed among commensal bacteria and pathogenic microbes, leveraging genetic modification to enhance the efficacy and specificity of these interactions.

Mechanisms of action

Transgenic killer commensal bacteria employ various mechanisms like antimicrobial peptides, bacteriocins, competitive exclusion to exert their protective effects at mucosal surfaces.

Engineered commensal bacteria can be programmed to produce antimicrobial peptides that selectively target and kill specific pathogens. These peptides disrupt microbial cell membranes or interfere with essential metabolic processes, leading to the elimination of pathogenic invaders. Bacteriocins are proteinaceous compounds produced by bacteria to inhibit the growth of closely related species. Transgenic commensal bacteria can be engineered to produce bacteriocins tailored to target pathogenic strains, providing a competitive advantage in the microbial community. By outcompeting pathogenic microbes for nutrients and adhesion sites, transgenic commensal bacteria can prevent the colonization and establishment of harmful invaders on mucosal surfaces. This competitive exclusion mechanism helps maintain the balance of microbial communities and preserve mucosal barrier function.

Potential applications

The potential applications of transgenic killer commensal bacteria as mucosal protectants are vast and diverse:

Gastrointestinal health: In the gastrointestinal tract, transgenic commensal bacteria could be used to prevent or treat infections caused by enteric pathogens such as *Clostridium difficile*, *Salmonella*, and *Escherichia coli*. By colonizing the gut and producing antimicrobial peptides or bacteriocins, these engineered

Correspondence to: Tridu Frank, Department of Immunology and Microbiology, The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, United Sates of America, E-mail: tfrank@scripps.edu

Received: 02-Jan-2024, Manuscript No. JBP-24-25020; **Editor assigned:** 05-Jan-2024, Pre QC No. JBP-24-25020 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 19-Jan-2024, QC No. JBP-24-25020; **Revised:** 26-Jan-2024, Manuscript No. JBP-24-25020 (R); **Published:** 02-Feb-2024, DOI: 10.35248/2155-9597.24.15.503

Citation: Frank T (2024) Implementation of Commensal Bacteria as Transgenic Killers to Protect Mucosae. J Bacteriol Parasitol. 15:503.

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microbes could help restore microbial balance and protect against intestinal infections.

Respiratory protection: Transgenic commensal bacteria engineered to target respiratory pathogens like *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Haemophilus influenzae* could be delivered nasally or orally to prevent upper respiratory tract infections. These engineered microbes could also be incorporated into oral probiotic formulations or nasal sprays for targeted mucosal protection.

Urogenital defense: In the urogenital tract, transgenic commensal bacteria could offer protection against sexually transmitted infections caused by pathogens such as *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. By colonizing the vaginal or penile mucosa and producing antimicrobial peptides, these engineered microbes could help reduce the transmission and spread of urogenital pathogens.

Despite their potential benefits, the development and implementation of transgenic killer commensal bacteria face several challenges and considerations. Ensuring the safety of engineered commensal bacteria is an important to their clinical translation. Concerns include the potential for horizontal gene transfer, unintended ecological consequences, and off-target effects on host tissues. Optimizing the efficacy of transgenic commensal bacteria requires careful selection of target pathogens, engineering robust antimicrobial mechanisms, and validating their efficacy in preclinical models and clinical trials. The regulatory approval process for transgenic killer commensal bacteria involves rigorous assessment of safety, efficacy, and environmental impact. Regulatory agencies must establish clear guidelines for the development and evaluation of these novel mucosal protectants.

Despite the challenges, the potential of transgenic killer commensal bacteria as mucosal protectants is immense. Future research efforts should focus on refining engineering strategies, preclinical and clinical studies, and regulatory frameworks. Advancing genetic engineering techniques enhances the specificity, stability, and safety of transgenic commensal bacteria. Conducting rigorous preclinical and clinical studies evaluates the safety, efficacy, and long-term effects of these engineered microbes in humans. Establish clear regulatory frameworks and guidelines for the development, testing, and approval of transgenic killer commensal bacteria for medical use.

CONCLUSION

Transgenic killer commensal bacteria represent a potential approach to mucosal protection, offering targeted and effective defense against pathogenic invaders. By controlling the natural symbiotic relationship between commensal bacteria and their hosts, researchers are unlocking new possibilities for preventing and treating mucosal infections. As our understanding of microbial ecology and genetic engineering continues to evolve, transgenic killer commensal bacteria hold great potential for revolutionizing mucosal health and advancing human well-being.