Occurrence of Enteropathogenic, Kanagawa-positive Strains of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* in Fresh Finfish and Shellfish*

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Kanagawa phenomenon of 225 strains of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* isolated from fresh finfish and shellfish of marine and brackish water origin and their environments was studied. 20.56% of the isolates from different parts of finfish, 22.9% of the isolates from shellfish, 33.33% of the isolates from mud samples and 12.5% of the isolates from water samples were found Kanagawa-positive. Among isolates from different parts of finfish, 16.41% of the isolates from surface tissues, 19.05% of the isolates from gills and 36.84% of the isolates from the gut were Kanagawa-positive. All the strains of *V. parahaemolyticus* isolated from cooked, shucked clams were Kanagawa-negative and 50% of the isolates from mussels were Kanagawa-positive.

Key words: Kanagawa-positive *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, fish, shellfish

Earlier days it was thought that all strains of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, regardless of their source might be enteropathogenic for man. Kato *et al.* (1965) found that vibrio strains isolated from diarrhoeal stools gave a haemolytic reaction on autoclaved brain heart infusion agar containing 5% human blood, 3% sodium chloride and 0.001% crystal violet, whereas the strains isolated from marine sources were non-haemolytic. This medium was modified by Wagatsuma (1968) to give more clear-cut haemolysis by *V. parahaemolyticus* and the test was named “Kanagawa reaction”. The studies of Sakazaki *et al.* (1968) have shown that Kanagawa reaction and enteropathogenicity are related and his findings were confirmed by many Japanese workers (Sakazaki, 1973). An interesting feature of the organism is that most of the strains isolated from human sources are Kanagawa-positive, whereas the majority of strains occurring in the natural environment are Kanagawa-negative. Even though sufficient information is available about the occurrence of *V. parahaemolyticus* in fish and aquatic environments of India and abroad, the information regarding the occurrence of Kanagawa-positive strains of *V. parahaemolyticus* is scarce. So the present study was taken up to find out the occurrence of Kanagawa-positive strains of *V. parahaemolyticus* in and around Cochin.

Two hundred and twentyfive strains of *V. parahaemolyticus* were isolated from market samples of fresh finfish (*Rastrelliger kanagurta*, *Sardinella longiceps*, *Anchovielia* sp., *Leiognathus* sp., *Lactarius lactarius*, *Nemipterus japonicus*, *Pampus argenteus*, *Oreochromis mossambicus*, *Mugil cephalus*, *

* Formed part of the Ph.D. Thesis of the the first author, approved by Cochin University of Science & Technology, Cochin.
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Etropus suratensis) and shellfish (Penaeus indicus, Penaeus monodon, Metapenaeus affinis, Parapenaeopsis stylifera, Scylla serrata, Crassostrea sp., Mytilus viridis) of marine and brackishwater origin, cooked-shucked clams (Villosita sp.), water and mud samples collected from places in and around Cochin (Sanjeev, 1990). The method described in Bacteriological Analytical Manual (Anon, 1969) was used for the isolation of V. parahaemolyticus. Kanagawa test was performed on Wagatsuma agar (ICMSF, 1978). Clear transparent zones around the colonies indicated a positive test.

Table 1. Kanagawa phenomenon of Vibrio parahaemolyticus isolated from different sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>No. of strains tested</th>
<th>No. of strains found positive</th>
<th>% positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finfish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin and muscle</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gills</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gut</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total from finfish</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shellfish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prawn</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyster (Crassostrea sp.)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crab (Scylla serrata)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooked, shucked clams (Villosita sp.)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussel (Mytilus viridis)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total from shellfish</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mud</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kanagawa phenomenon of 225 strains of V. parahaemolyticus isolated from different sources are given in Table 1. In general 21.33% of the 225 strains of V. parahaemolyticus isolated from finfish and shellfish of marine and brackishwater origin and their environments were found Kanagawa-positive.

Sakazaki et al. (1968) reported that 96.5% of the V. parahaemolyticus strains isolated from human patients were Kanagawa-positive, while only 1% of the isolates from environment were Kanagawa-positive. Other investigators have also reported similar observations (Sutton, 1974; Leistner & Hechelmann, 1974; Bockemuhl & Triemer, 1974; Thomson & Vanderzant, 1976; Spite et al., 1978). Ayrs & Barrow (1978) found no Kanagawa-positive strains out of 1484 isolates obtained from British coastal waters. In Asia, Quadri & Zuberi (1977) were the first to report a very high percentage of Kanagawa-positive isolates (52.5%) from fish and shellfish samples of Karachi. The present findings are in agreement with that of Karunasagar & Mohankumar (1980). Bandekar et al. (1982) noticed 12% Kanagawa-positive strains among isolates from shrimp in Bombay, while Lall et al. (1979) reported 11.5% positive isolates from Port Blair. In Calcutta, a Kanagawa-positive strain of V. parahaemolyticus was isolated by De et al. (1977).

Studies of Karunasagar (1987) have shown that Kanagawa-positive V. parahaemolyticus strains in the environment are not derived from faecal contamination and are probably autochthonous flora of the estuaries just as their Kanagawa-negative counterparts. The widespread distribution of Kanagawa-positive strains of V. parahaemolyticus in market samples of fish, shellfish and its environments stresses the need for hygienic handling of sea foods at every stage.

The authors are thankful to Shri M.R. Nair, previous Director and Dr. K. Gopakumar, Director, Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin for the facilities provided and for the permission to publish this paper.
References


