

UNIVERSITI MALAYA

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

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Name of Degree: **MASTER OF BIOTECHNOLOGY**

Title of Project Paper/Research Report/Dissertation/Thesis ("this Work"):

"PHENOTYPIC CHARACTERIZATION OF AMOEBOID FORMS OF *TRICHOMONAS VAGINALIS*"

Field of Study: **MEDICAL PARASITOLOGY**

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ABSTRACT

Trichomonas vaginalis a flagellated protozoan parasite that causes significant health drawbacks to humans, predominantly in women by causing a non-viral sexually transmitted disease known as trichomoniasis. Different morphological properties of *T. vaginalis* were recognized as the key for infections in humans with trophozoites and pseudocysts as the two notable forms. Recently, amoeboid form was identified in suspension cultures and was reported as an integral life cycle of *T. vaginalis*. The present study was conducted to study the phenotypic characteristics of amoeboid forms in suspension culture i.e. growth profile, evaluating factors that trigger formation of this shape, staining characteristics and transformational changes to amoeboid forms. The study showed that out of nine symptomatic isolates consisting of six cervical neoplasia (CN) and three non-cervical neoplasia (NCN), only the CN isolates showed viable amoeboid forms. Amoeboid forms were distinguished based on morphological properties such as formation of pseudopodia-like cytoplasmic extensions, non-motile, none or inactive flagella, flattened, larger in size with abnormal shapes and presence of more inclusion-like bodies. Growth profile of amoeboid forms showed an initial formation in the culture on day one itself with significantly optimal count on day three cultures with total mean average of $3.22 \pm 0.11 \times 10^4$ *T. vaginalis*/ml ($p < 0.05$) for all CN isolates (CN1 – CN6) and none in NCN isolates (NCN2 – NCN4). This was mainly attributed to the virulence and high proliferation rate of *T. vaginalis* in CN isolates compared to NCN isolates. The study also confirmed a significant formation of amoeboid forms in suspension cultures of CN isolates (CN1 – CN6) under the three growth parameters tested. Firstly, optimum amoeboid forms were observed on day 3 when the growth media were overcrowded with parasites with mean average of $9.88 \pm 0.50 \times 10^5$ *T. vaginalis*/ml ($p < 0.05$). Increased concentration of horse

serum (15 %) also observed a significant development of amoeboid forms with mean average of $9.95 \pm 0.47 \times 10^4$ *T. vaginalis*/ml ($p < 0.05$). The third parameter on the effect of metronidazole drug (0.0001 mg/ml) reported optimal amoeboid forms with mean average of $3.61 \pm 0.06 \times 10^4$ *T. vaginalis*/ml ($p < 0.05$). The study for the first time introduced Modified Field's stains as a rapid detection method (15 seconds) compared to Giemsa stain. The staining provided better and sharper contrast which differentiated the nucleus and cytoplasm. The staining showed amoeboid forms to have irregular shapes, rough surfaces and with single or multi-nucleated. Using light microscopy, different morphological changes based on size and shapes were observed as the trophozoites of *T. vaginalis* transformed into amoeboid forms. The amoeboid forms measured approximately 25 μ m to 27.5 μ m in length and 20 μ m to 22.5 μ m in width and were seen predominantly in cultures after 48 hours culture. The study opened new prospects for further research to understand better the role of amoeboid forms of *T. vaginalis* in contributing to the pathogenesis and development of cervical cancer in women.

ABSTRAK

Trichomonas vaginalis adalah sejenis parasit protozoa berflagela yang menyebabkan kelemahan kesihatan yang ketara kepada manusia, terutamanya di kalangan wanita dengan menyebabkan penyakit bukan-virus kelamin yang dikenali sebagai trikomoniasis. Pelbagai jenis morfologi yang dimiliki oleh *T. vaginalis* diiktiraf sebagai kunci untuk menghasilkan jangkitan kepada manusia dengan trofozoit dan pseudosista sebagai dua bentuk yang ketara. Baru-baru ini, satu lagi morfologi baru *T. vaginalis*, iaitu bentuk amoeboid telah dikenal pasti dalam kultur dan telah dilaporkan sebagai kitaran hayat penting *T. vaginalis* yang boleh dikaitkan dengan unsur patogenik. Kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk menjustifikasikan hasil dapatan ini dengan mengkaji ciri-ciri fenotip bentuk amoeboid dalam kultur berdasarkan profil pertumbuhan, menganalisis faktor-faktor yang mencetuskan kewujudan bentuk ini, kaedah pewarnaan serta memerhatikan perubahan morfologi yang berlaku dalam usaha untuk mencapai bentuk amoeboid ini. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa daripada sembilan pesakit bersimptom terdiri daripada enam isolat neoplasia serviks (CN) dan tiga lagi isolat bukan neoplasia serviks (NCN), hanya isolat CN mempunyai ciri bentuk amoeboid yang viabel. Bentuk amoeboid dikenal pasti berdasarkan lanjutan pseudopodia sitoplasma, nipis, tidak mobil atau tiada atau flagela yang tidak aktif, saiz yang besar dengan bentuk tidak sekata dan banyak granul kecil. Profil pertumbuhan bentuk amoeboid menunjukkan kewujudan bentuk ini dalam kultur seawal pada hari kedua dan kiraan menjadi lebih optima dan signifikan pada hari ketiga kultur dengan jumlah purata $3.22 \pm 0.11 \times 10^4$ *T. vaginalis*/ml ($p < 0.05$) bagi semua isolat CN (CN1 – CN6) tetapi tiada bentuk amoeboid dilihat dalam semua kultur isolat NCN (NCN2 – NCN4). Ini disebabkan oleh sifat virulen dan kadar reproduksi tinggi untuk menambahkan sel dalam isolat CN berbanding dengan isolat NCN. Penyelidikan ini juga mengesahkan pembentukan

morfologi amoeboid yang signifikan dalam kultur isolat CN apabila persekitaran pertumbuhan diletakkan di bawah tiga jenis tekanan. Pertama, lebih sel parasite (10^5 sel/ml) membentuk bentuk amoeboid dengan optimum pada hari ketiga dengan jumlah purata sebanyak $9.88 \pm 0.50 \times 10^5$ *T. vaginalis*/ml ($p < 0.05$). Peningkatan konsentrasi serum kuda (15 %) juga menunjukkan pembentukan signifikan bentuk amoeboid dengan jumlah purata sebanyak $9.95 \pm 0.47 \times 10^4$ *T. vaginalis*/ml ($p < 0.05$). Ketiga, kesan dadah metronidazole (0.0001 mg/ml) juga merekodkan jumlah pembentukan amoeboid yang tinggi dengan jumlah purata sebanyak $3.61 \pm 0.06 \times 10^4$ *T. vaginalis*/ml ($p < 0.05$). Kajian ini memperkenalkan buat kali pertama pewarna Field yang diubahsuai (“Modified Field Stain”) sebagai pewarna pantas (15 saat) berbanding pewarna Giemsa untuk mentakrifkan fenotip bentuk amoeboid dengan memberikan kontras yang lebih tajam untuk membezakan nucleus dan sitoplasma. Pewarna Field juga dapat mengesahkan bentuk amoeboid sebagai tidak teratur, permukaan kasar, satu nukleus atau multinukleus dan saiz yang lebih besar. Menggunakan mikroskop cahaya, perubahan morfologi yang nyata diperhatikan dari aspek saiz dan bentuk apabila trofozoit *T. vaginalis* berubah kepada bentuk amoeboid. Bentuk amoeboid berukuran dengan anggaran panjang dalam lingkungan 25 μ m hingga 27.5 μ m manakala lebar dalam 20 μ m hingga 22.5 μ m dan jelas diperhatikan selepas 48 jam dalam kultur yang tertekan. Kajian ini membuka prospek baru tentang morfologi *T. vaginalis* yang berbeza ini dan boleh menyumbang ke arah pathogenesis dan perkembangan kanser serviks di kalangan wanita.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank GOD whose blessings and guidance have helped me to overcome the many obstacles I encountered throughout this journey of education from the point of application up to completion of my master degree. Thank you GOD.

My heartfelt gratitude to my beloved parents and family who have never failed to pull me through the thickest moment and provided me with sufficient financial and moral support in times of need. Without them, masters would not have been possible.

I would like to extend my endless appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Dr. Suresh Kumar for being such a supportive, motivating, helpful and inspirational supervisor throughout my project. He was extremely kind to have offered me with a potential project in my most critical hour of need. The guidelines and inspiring advices given by him had helped me a lot to reach the final stage of my master programme. His patience and kindness had made me to conduct my experiment confidently. He had never failed to allocate his time whenever needed even with his tight schedule to ensure the successful completion of this project.

I am as well very grateful and thankful to my co-supervisor Associate Professor Dr. Subha Bhassu for guiding me and helping me with the completion of my project. Her suggestions, opinions and guidance have pulled me through the hardest moment. Dr. Subha was always there when I needed to see her and helped me a lot with the completion of my dissertation successfully

My heartiest thanks to Miss AfzanYusof for her time and patience in teaching and sharing her knowledge. She was always there to assist me when problems occurred.

I also would like to thank my wonderful friends Miss Vanitah, Miss Kavimalar, Miss Suganthi and Miss Neelaveni for their continuous encouragement and support in the successful completion of this research. They are all blessings to me.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the lab assistants and my fellow lab mates for being so helpful throughout the project. I wish all the best to everyone who has helped me to complete my thesis successfully.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	i
WORK DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xv
LIST OF APPENDICES	xvii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background of study	1
1.2 Research questions	5
1.3 Justifications of study	6
1.4 Objectives of study	7
1.5 Research approach	8
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Overview of <i>Trichomonas vaginalis</i>	10
2.2 Taxonomy classification	12
2.3 General morphology of <i>T. vaginalis</i>	13
2.3.1 Trophozoite form	16
2.3.2 Pseudocyst form	19
2.3.3 Amoeboid form	20
2.4 Reproduction and life cycle of <i>T. vaginalis</i>	22
2.5 Mode of transmission	24
2.6 Etiology	26
2.7 Epidemiology	27
2.8 Clinical manifestation of <i>T. vaginalis</i>	29
2.8.1 Clinical manifestation in women	30
2.8.2 Clinical manifestation in men	32
2.9 Pathogenesis	33
2.9.1 Cell-to-cell adhesion mechanisms	35

2.9.2 Hemolytic activity	36
2.9.3 Proteinase activity	36
2.9.4 Contact-independent mechanisms and cell detaching factor	37
2.9.5 Phagocytosis	38
2.9.6 Immune evasion mechanisms	38
2.10 Predisposition of <i>T. vaginalis</i> infection to other complications	40
2.10.1 <i>T. vaginalis</i> and cervical cancer	40
2.10.2 <i>T. vaginalis</i> and acquisition of HIV	41
2.11 Growth requirements and survival of <i>T. vaginalis</i>	42
2.12 Diagnosis	43
2.12.1 Direct microscopy	44
2.12.2 Staining method	45
2.12.3 Culture method	46
2.12.4 Molecular method	48
2.12.5 Other diagnostic methods	49
2.13 Treatment and Control	50
CHAPTER 3	METHODOLOGY
3.1 Source of <i>T. vaginalis</i> isolates	53
3.2 <i>In vitro</i> cultivation for maintenance of isolates	53
3.3 Trophozoites counts of <i>T. vaginalis</i>	54
3.4 Growth profiling of amoeboid forms in <i>T. vaginalis</i>	54
3.5 Growth profiling of trophozoites forms in <i>T. vaginalis</i>	55
3.6 Giemsa Stain method for detection of amoeboid forms	56
3.7 Modified Field's Stain method for detection of amoeboid forms	56
3.8 Assessing the effect of different stress conditions in triggering amoeboid forms	57
3.8.1 Effect of different parasite concentrations	57
3.8.2 Effect of different horse serum concentrations	58
3.8.3 Effect of different metronidazole drug concentrations	58
3.9 Transformational changes analysis from trophozoites to amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i>	59
3.10 Statistical analysis	59
CHAPTER 4	RESULTS
4.1 Light micrograph of amoeboid forms	61
4.2 Growth profiles of amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i>	62
4.3 Growth profiles of trophozoites forms	67
4.3.1 Growth trend in 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml	67
4.3.2 Growth trends in 10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml	73
4.3.3 Combined growth profiles of CN isolates for 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml and 10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml	75

4.4	Assessment of amoeboid morphology by staining method	78
4.5	Effect of different stress conditions in triggering amoeboid forms	81
4.5.1	Effect of different sizes of inoculum	81
4.5.2	Effect of different concentrations of horse serum	85
4.5.3	Effect of different concentrations of metronidazole drug	87
4.6	Transformational changes analysis from trophozoites to amoeboid forms	89
CHAPTER 5	DISCUSSIONS	
5.1	General discussion	95
5.2	Observation of amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i> in suspension culture	96
5.3	Growth profiles of amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i>	97
5.4	Growth profiles of trophozoites forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i>	99
5.5	Assessment of staining methods for detection of amoeboid forms	101
5.6	Effect of different stress conditions on the development of amoeboid forms	102
5.6.1	Effect of different inoculums sizes	103
5.6.2	Effects of different horse serum concentrations	104
5.6.3	Effects of different concentrations of metronidazole drug	105
5.7	Significance on the effects of stress factors in triggering amoeboid forms	107
5.8	Transformational changes analysis	108
CHAPTER 6	CONCLUSIONS	110
	References	114
	Appendices	130

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	First morphological illustration of <i>Trichomonas vaginalis</i> by Donné (1837).	14
Figure 2.2	Trophozoite form of <i>Trichomonas vaginalis</i> .	17
Figure 2.3	Epifluorescence image of pseudocyst of <i>T. vaginalis</i> stained with Acridine orange.	19
Figure 2.4	Electron micrograph of amoeboid form of <i>T. vaginalis</i> .	20
Figure 2.5	The life cycle of <i>T. vaginalis</i> .	23
Figure 2.6	Frothy vaginal discharge of trichomoniasis with strawberry spots.	31
Figure 2.7	Example of wet mount preparation of <i>T. vaginalis</i>	45
Figure 2.8	Three different types of staining method; A) Giemsa stain B) Modified Field's stain C) Gram stain performed for the diagnosis of <i>T. vaginalis</i> .	46
Figure 4.1	Light micrograph showing comparison of (a) round trophozoite form and (b) pseudocyst form with (c - d) amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i> in suspension culture of CN isolates.	61
Figure 4.2a	Growth profiles of amoeboid forms of <i>T.vaginalis</i> in CN isolates (CN1 – CN6) at 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml.	64
Figure 4.2b	Percentages of amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i> in CN isolates (CN1 – CN6) grown in Hollander medium from day 1 to day 4 of culture.	65
Figure 4.3	Light micrograph showing different types of amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i> observed on day 3 of suspension culture in cervical neoplasia (CN) isolates; (a-b) CN1, (c-d) CN2, (e-f) CN3, (g-h) CN4, (i-j) CN5, (k-l) CN6.	66
Figure 4.4	Growth profiles of trophozoite forms in CN isolates (Isolates 1 – Isolates 6) at 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml.	71

Figure 4.5	Growth profiles of trophozoite forms in NCN isolate (Isolates 2 – Isolates 4) at 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml.	72
Figure 4.6	Growth profiles of trophozoite forms in CN isolates (Isolates 1 – Isolates 6) at 10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml.	74
Figure 4.7	Comparison of combined growth profiles of average trophozoites form of <i>T. vaginalis</i> between 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml and 10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml in all CN isolates (CN1-CN6).	77
Figure 4.8a	Morphological comparison between Giemsa stained (a-b) trophozoites and (c-d) amoeboid forms.	79
Figure 4.8b	Morphological comparison between Modified Field's stained (e-f) trophozoites and (g-h) amoeboid forms.	79
Figure 4.9	Comparison of staining method between (a-c) Modified Field's Stain and (d-f) Giemsa stain of amoeboid forms in CN isolates of <i>T. vaginalis</i> .	80
Figure 4.10	Growth profiles of amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i> in CN isolates (CN1 – CN6) at 10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml.	83
Figure 4.11	Comparison of combined growth profiles of average amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i> between inoculum size of 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml and 10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml in all CN isolates (CN1-CN6).	84
Figure 4.12	Effect of different horse serum concentrations in triggering amoeboid forms in CN isolates (CN1 – CN6) grown in Hollander medium.	86
Figure 4.13	Effects of different concentrations of metronidazole drug against control in CN isolates (CN1-CN6).	88
Figure 4.14	a-f Light micrograph showing transformational changes of <i>T. vaginalis</i> from trophozoite to amoeboid forms in non-stress culture conditions.	91
Figure 4.15	a-i Light micrograph showing transformational changes in <i>T. vaginalis</i> from trophozoite to amoeboid forms in suspension culture under the effect of increased cell concentration (10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml) from one hour (day 0) up to 120 hours (day 5) in CN isolates.	93

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Lists of parasitic diseases and their descriptions.	2
Table 4.1	Average amoeboid count of <i>T. vaginalis</i> in CN isolates from day 1 to day 5.	63
Table 4.2	Significance analysis between days using Dunnett T3 for average amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i> in CN isolates at 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml.	63
Table 4.3	The number of trophozoites of <i>T. vaginalis</i> in all isolates from day 1 of inoculation up to day 11 where no trophozoites were detected in the culture.	69
Table 4.4	Significance analysis between days using Dunnett T3 for average trophozoite count of CN isolates in 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml.	70
Table 4.5	The average number of trophozoites of <i>T. vaginalis</i> in all CN isolates at inoculum concentrations of 10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml.	73
Table 4.6	The average growth of trophozoites in all CN isolates (CN1-CN6) at 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml and 10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml.	75
Table 4.7	Significant difference of growth rates of trophozoites in CN isolates between different inoculum concentrations using Mann-Whitney Test.	76
Table 4.8	Average amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i> in CN isolates from day 1 to day 5 in 10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml.	82
Table 4.9	The significant difference between growth profiles of amoeboid forms of <i>T. vaginalis</i> at 10^4 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml and 10^5 <i>T. vaginalis</i> /ml using Mann-Whitney test.	82
Table 4.10	Average amoeboid forms between different horse serum concentrations in CN isolates.	85
Table 4.11	Comparison of average amoeboid forms in CN isolates between control and different concentrations of metronidazole drug.	87
Table 4.12	Summary of comparison of amoeboid forms between stressed conditions and normal conditions.	113

LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Adhesins proteins
CDC	Centers for Disease and Control
CDF	Cell detaching factor
CN	Cervical neoplasia/Cervical intraepithelial neoplasia
CP	Cysteine proteinases
°C	Degree of Celcius
dsRNA	Double-stranded Ribonucleic Acid
DPX	DinButyl phthalate and Xylene
ELISA	Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay
FDA	Food and Drug Administrations
Fig.	Figure
g	gram
%	Percent
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HPV	Human Papillomavirus
HVEC	Human vaginal epithelial cell
Ig	Immunoglobulin
KCl	Potassium chloride
kDa	Kilodalton
KH_2PO_4	Potassium dihydrogen phosphate
μl	Microlitre
μm	Micrometer

ml	Mililitre
mg	Miligram
NCN	Non-cervical neoplasia/ Non-cervical intraepithelial neoplasia
n.d.	no date
PAP	Papanicolaou
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
pH	Power of Hydrogen
rpm	revolutions per minute
S.D	Standard deviation
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STD	Sexually transmitted disease
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
WHO	World Health Organization

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A	Clinical identity of each isolate from CN and NCN cultures as obtained by Afzan (2011c).	130
Appendix B	Hollander medium preparation for cultivation of <i>T. vaginalis</i> .	131
Appendix C	Statistical analysis results to test the significance of amoeboid forms in CN isolates of <i>T.vaginalis</i> between days.	132
Appendix D	Raw data of trophozoite counts in NCN and CN isolates ($10^4 T. vaginalis/ml$).	134
Appendix E	Statistical analysis results for average trophozoite count between days of CN isolates (CN 1- CN 6) in $10^4 T. vaginalis/ml$.	138
Appendix F	Raw data of trophozoites count in CN isolates of <i>T. vaginalis</i> for concentration of $10^5 T. vaginalis/ml$.	143
Appendix G	Raw data on average mean of amoeboid form in six CN isolates (CN1-CN6) at $10^5 T. vaginalis/ml$ (overcrowding of parasites).	145
Appendix H	Raw data on average mean of amoeboid form in six CN isolates (CN1-CN6) for different horse serum concentrations.	147
Appendix I	Raw data on average mean of amoeboid form in six CN isolates (CN1-CN6) for different concentrations of metronidazole drug.	154
Appendix J	Statistical analysis of average amoeboid forms in CN isolates of <i>T. vaginalis</i> between $10^4 T. vaginalis/ml$ and $10^5 T. vaginalis/ml$.	158
Appendix K	Statistical analysis between different concentrations of horse serum for amoeboid forms in CN isolates (CN1-CN6) using Dunnett T3.	159
Appendix L	Statistical analysis between different concentrations of metronidazole drug for amoeboid forms in CN isolates (CN1-CN6) using Tukey HSD.	160