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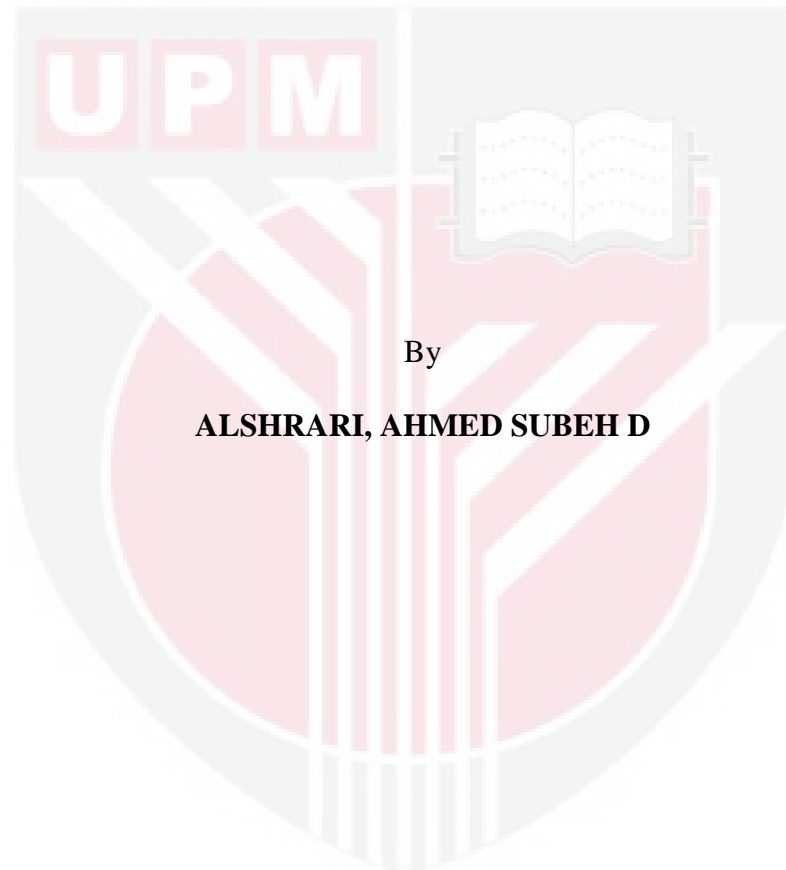
***POTENTIAL USEFULNESS OF VIRAL CAPSID SURFACE PROTEINS
(VP1, VP2, VP3 & VP4) FOR VACCINATION AGAINST
COMMON COLD***

ALSHRARI, AHMED SUBEH D

FPSK(p) 2015 16



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By

ALSHRARI, AHMED SUBEH D

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

August 2015

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This thesis is dedicated to
my late father, Subhan Maish Al-Hamlan.

And

my mother, Thakla Maish Al-Hamlan,

It is also dedicated to

my children, Faisal, Faris, Abdullah and Nora for their care, love, understanding,
and patience.



Abstract of thesis presented to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**Chairman: Prof. Zamberi Sekawi, MD, MPath
Faculty: Medicine and Health Sciences**

Rhinoviruses (RVs) represent the most important etiological agents of the common cold and it is responsible for about two-thirds of acute exacerbations of chronic bronchitis, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in both children and adults. At present, there is no effective and approved antiviral therapies for either the prevention or treatment of diseases caused by RV infections. Furthermore, there are more than 100 types of RVs with high sequence variability hindering the progression of vaccine development. Bioinformatics tools, combined with the availability of complete genome sequence of all known RV types, provides a unique opportunity to enhance the optimal selection of potential immune targets. *In vitro* production or synthetic versions of these targets could be a possible alternative approach to the vaccine of choice. This study was carried out with the aim to develop a pan-serotypic vaccine that is capable of inducing the production of cross-reactive antibodies that cover all or most of the RV serotypes.

Firstly, a bioinformatics analysis was carried out to characterise the capsid proteins (VP1, VP2, VP3 and VP4) of all known RV serotypes and to predict potential immune motifs. In brief, complete protein sequences of each of the 100 distinct RV genomes were downloaded from the GenBank database. The sequences obtained were grouped based on their original classification [RV-A divided into two sub-groups, minor LDLR(n=10) and major ICAM(n=65), and RV-B group (n=25)]. Upon grouping, sequence editing was carried out using a number of software in order to study each protein individually. The edited protein sequences were then aligned and analysed for sequence conservation, variability and to generate consensus sequences and distance matrices. This led to determining the relations between strains and identifying the ideal ones that are highly identical to others. Conserved motifs consisting at least nine-mers common across all RV-A or B serotypes (minor/major receptor) and exhibiting at least 80% representation were selected and synthesized chemically. These peptides were used alone or in combination to vaccinate groups of rabbits. On the other hand, four tagged full-length genes coding the capsid proteins of an ideal strain (HRV-74), VP1, VP2, VP3 and VP4, whose codon uses were optimized, were constructed and cloned *in vitro*.

Upon expression, the purified recombinant proteins adsorbed into incomplete Freund's adjuvant (IFA) as a single or combined proteins were also administered subcutaneously to other groups of rabbits. The responses and cross-reactivity of the specific immunoglobulin M (IgM) and G (IgG) to the peptides, proteins and whole viruses were measured by in-house indirect enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA). Moreover, *in vitro* cross-neutralizing antibody titres against several variant strains of RV were also measured.

Based on the bioinformatics analysis, 7, 8, 5 and 3 conserved regions were found among minor receptor serotypes for VP1, VP2, VP3 and VP4, respectively. The analysis of RV-A ICAM-receptor serotypes showed 3 conserved regions in each of VP1, VP2 and VP4, while 4 conserved regions were found upon alignment of VP3 sequences, respectively. The study also showed that the capsid protein of HRV-B contained at least one conserved site upon multiple sequences alignments of each protein separately. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that 72% of VP4 sequence (69 amino acids in length) as highly conserved among the RV-A major receptor group, but VP3 did not show well conserved regions. The current study also showed that VP4 sequences of the minor receptor groups (n=10) contained three highly conserved sites which accounted for 85% of its total length. RV-B VP4, in contrast, contained less conserved regions which exhibited only 25% of the protein's total length. Upon multiple sequence alignment of all RV-A, three highly conserved region were identified for each of the VP1, VP2 and VP4, while VP3 did not contain any.

Based on distance matrices analysis, HRV-74 was found to be the ideal strain for vaccine development. VP1 amino acid sequence of HRV-74 was found to be identical by 80% or more of 22 serotypes, with a median identity of 75% within the RV-A group. Also, the analysis revealed HRV-74 as having the highest homology (86%) to the VP1 consensus sequence of all RV-A. A further analysis showed that HRV-74 is fully identical (100%) to the consensus sequence of RV-A VP4. Therefore, HRV-74 has been considered as the source genetic information of the recombinant proteins produced in this study.

Antibodies raised to the synthetic peptides exhibited cross-reactivity against the corresponding recombinant proteins and antigenically distinct RV strains coated on plates via ELISA assay. Moreover, the specific immunoglobulin G (IgG) response to the peptides given in combination exhibited greater reactivity. Interestingly, the anti-peptide antibodies obtained exhibited a cross-neutralizing activity for different RV strains *in vitro*. In addition, the induced antibodies against recombinant proteins also reacted successfully with relevant proteins and with whole virus particle (HRV-74) and other variant strains, as shown by ELISA. They also showed strong cross-neutralizing ability against various variants of RVs.

Based on the antibody cross-reactivity and neutralization towards different studied serotypes, the selected RV strain HRV-74 seemed to be the type of choice for developing RV broad protective vaccine and multiple RVs antibody based on detection assay. The findings have indicated that the peptides corresponding to the conserved region of the RV capsid proteins are potent immunogenic and suggest that their combination is crucial for extending the cross-protection against variant RVs.

Such an alternative approach may raise hope for designing a novel broad-protective vaccine towards non-cultivable, hyper variable pathogen.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

POTENSI KEPENGGUNAAN PROTEIN *VIRAL CAPSID SURFACE* (VP1, VP2, VP3 & VP4) SEBAGAI VAKSINASI MELAWAN DEMAM SELSEMA

Oleh

ALSHRARI, AHMED SUBEH D

Ogos 2015

Pengerusi: Prof. Zamberi Sekawi, MD, MPath
Fakulti: Perubatan dan Sains Kesihatan

Rhinoviruses (RVs) mewakili agen etiologi yang paling penting bagi demam selsema dan ia bertanggungjawab terhadap dua pertiga eksaserbasi akut bagi bronkitis kronik, asma dan penyakit penghalang pulmonary kronis (COPD) bagi kanak-kanak dan orang dewasa. Sehingga kini tiada terapi antivirus yang efektif atau yang diakui berupaya sama ada untuk mencegah atau merawat penyakit yang disebabkan oleh jangkitan virus RV. Tambahan pula terdapat lebih daripada 100 jenis virus RV yang mempunyai jujukan kebolehpayaan yang tinggi dalam menghalang perkembangan vaksin. Penggunaan alatan bioinformatik bersama jujukan genom yang lengkap yang sedia ada bagi kesemua jenis RV yang diketahui, menghasilkan peluang optimum yang unik dalam meluaskan seleksi bagi sasaran yang berpotensi imun. Penghasilan *in vitro* atau versi sintetik bagi sasaran-sasaran ini berupaya menjadi satu pendekatan alternatif terhadap vaksin yang dipilih. Objektif kajian ini dibuat adalah untuk menghasilkan satu vaksin *pan-serotypic* yang berupaya untuk menggalakkan penghasilan antibodi yang tindak balas silang meliputi kesemua atau sebahagian besar serotaip RV.

Kajian dimulakan dengan satu analisis bioinformatik untuk mengenalpasti protein kapsid (VP1, VP2, VP3 dan VP4) bagi kesemua serotip RV. Prosedur ini juga bertujuan untuk meramal motif yang berpotensi imun. Secara ringkas jujukan protein yang lengkap bagi setiap 100 genom RV yang berbeza telah dimuat turun dari pangkalan data *GenBank*. Jujukan yang diperolehi telah dikumpulkan berdasarkan klasifikasi asal mereka [RV-A dibahagi kepada dua kumpulan kecil, minor LDLR (n=10) dan major ICAM (n=65), dan RV-B kumpulan (n=25)]. Setelah diklasifikasikan, pengeditan jujukan telah dilakukan menggunakan perisian komputer untuk mengkaji setiap protein secara individual.

Jujukan protein yang telah diedit kemudian dijajarkan dan dianalisa bagi mengekalkan jujukan, variability dan untuk menghasilkan jujukan yang konsensus serta jarak matriks. Ini menentukan hubungan di antara regangan dan juga mengenalpasti regangan yang mempunyai persamaan yang paling identikal dengan yang lain. Motif-motif yang dikekalkan mempunyai sekurang-kurangnya *nine-mers* lazim merentasi kesemua serotaip RV-A atau B (reseptor minor/major) dan

menunjukkan sekurang-kurangnya 80% daripadanya telah dipilih dan disintesis secara kimia. Peptida ini telah digunakan secara individu atau kombinasi sebagai vaksin ke atas kumpulan-kumpulan arnab. Sementara itu, empat gen *tagged full-length* mengkodkan protein kapsid bagi regangan yang ideal (HRV-74), VP1, VP2, VP3 dan VP4, di mana penggunaan kodon telah dioptimumkan, disusun semula dan diklon secara *in vitro*. Setelah dianalisa, rekombinan protein yang diserap ke dalam *Freund's adjuvant (IFA)* yang tidak lengkap sebagai protein individu atau kombinasi telah digunakan secara subkutan terhadap kumpulan-kumpulan arnab yang lain. Tindakbalas dan tindak balas silang bagi spesifik immunoglobulin M (IgM) dan G (IgG) ke atas peptida protein dan keseluruhan virus telah diukur oleh *enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA)* dalaman secara tidak langsung. Selain itu, *in vitro* balas yang meneutralkan titres antibodi terhadap beberapa variasi RV juga telah diukur.

Berdasarkan analisis bioinformatik 7, 8, 5 dan 3 kawasan-kawasan terpelihara telah ditemui di antara serotaip reseptor minor bagi VP1, VP2, VP3 dan VP4, masing-masing. Analisis serotaip reseptor RV-A ICAM menunjukkan terdapat 3 kawasan yang terpelihara dalam setiap satu daripada VP1, VP2 dan VP4. Sementara itu 4 kawasan terpelihara telah ditemui dengan menjajarkan jujukan VP3 masing-masing. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan protein kapsid bagi HRV-B mengandungi sekurang-kurangnya satu kawasan terpelihara apabila penjajaran jujukan dilakukan beberapa kali bagi setiap protein secara berasingan. Tambahan pula analisis menunjukkan bahawa 72% daripada jujukan VP4 (yang mempunyai 69 asid amino panjang) sebagai sangat terpelihara di antara kumpulan reseptor major RV-A. Walau bagaimana pun VP3 tiada menunjukkan kawasan yang terpelihara. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa jujukan VP4 bagi kumpulan reseptor minor (n=10) mengandungi tiga kawasan terpelihara yang menyumbang 85% daripada jumlah panjangnya. Sebaliknya, RV-B VP4 mempunyai kawasan yang kurang terpelihara iaitu hanya 25% daripada jumlah panjang keseluruhan protein. Apabila penjajaran jujukan dilakukan beberapa kali terhadap kesemua RV-A, tiga kawasan yang sangat terpelihara telah dikenal pasti bagi setiap satu daripada VP1, VP2 dan VP4, manakala VP3 pula tidak mengandungi apa-apa.

Jarak analisis matriks telah mendapati HRV-74 sebagai regangan yang ideal bagi perkembangan vaksin. Jujukan asid amino VP1 bagi HRV-74 didapati identikal sebanyak 80% atau lebih daripada 22 serotaip yang mempunyai identiti median sebanyak 75% dalam kumpulan RV-A. Analisis juga mendapati HRV-74 mempunyai homology paling tinggi (86%) terhadap jujukan konsensus VP1 bagi kesemua RV-A VP4. Analisis selanjutnya menunjukkan bahawa HRV-74 identikal sepenuhnya (100%) terhadap jujukan konsensus bagi RV-A VP4. Oleh itu, HRV-74 telah diambil kira sebagai sumber informasi genetik bagi protein rekombinan yang dihasilkan dalam kajian ini.

Antibodi yang ditingkatkan kepada peptida sintetik menunjukkan tindak balas silang terhadap protein rekombinan dan regangan antigenetik RV yang berbeza yang berselaput di atas permukaan piring melalui ELISA assay. Tambahan pula, immunoglobulin G (IgG) yang spesifik bertindakbalas terhadap peptida yang diberi di mana kombinasi tersebut menunjukkan tindakbalas yang lebih besar. Menariknya, antibodi anti-peptida yang diperolehi menunjukkan aktiviti peneutralan balas bagi regangan RV *in vitro* yang berbeza. Disamping itu penambahan antibodi terhadap

protein rekombinan juga berjaya bertindakbalas ke atas protein yang relevan dan juga terhadap keseluruhan partikel virus (HRV-74) serta regangan varian yang lain seperti ditunjukkan oleh ELISA. Selain itu didapati juga kebolehpayaan peneutralan balas yang kuat terhadap pelbagai varian RV.

Berdasarkan antibodi tindak balas silang dan peneutralan terhadap kajian serotaip yang jauh berbeza, regangan RV yang dipilih iaitu HRV-74 seperti merupakan pilihan bagi perkembangan vaksin protektif RV yang luas serta pelbagai antibodi RV berdasarkan pengesanan assay. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan peptida yang bertindakbalas terhadap kawasan terpelihara oleh protein kapsid RV adalah poten imunogenik dan kombinasi ini penting bagi meluaskan kawalan balas terhadap varian RV. Pendekatan alternatif sebegini berkemungkinan dapat meningkatkan harapan dalam penghasilan vaksin baru yang mempunyai kawalan yang luas terhadap pathogen yang tidak boleh dibiak dan sangat mudah berubah.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 12 August 2015 to conduct the final examination of Alshrari, Ahmed S on his thesis entitled "Potential Usefulness of Viral Capsid Surface Proteins (VP1, VP2, VP3 & VP4) for Vaccination Against Common Cold" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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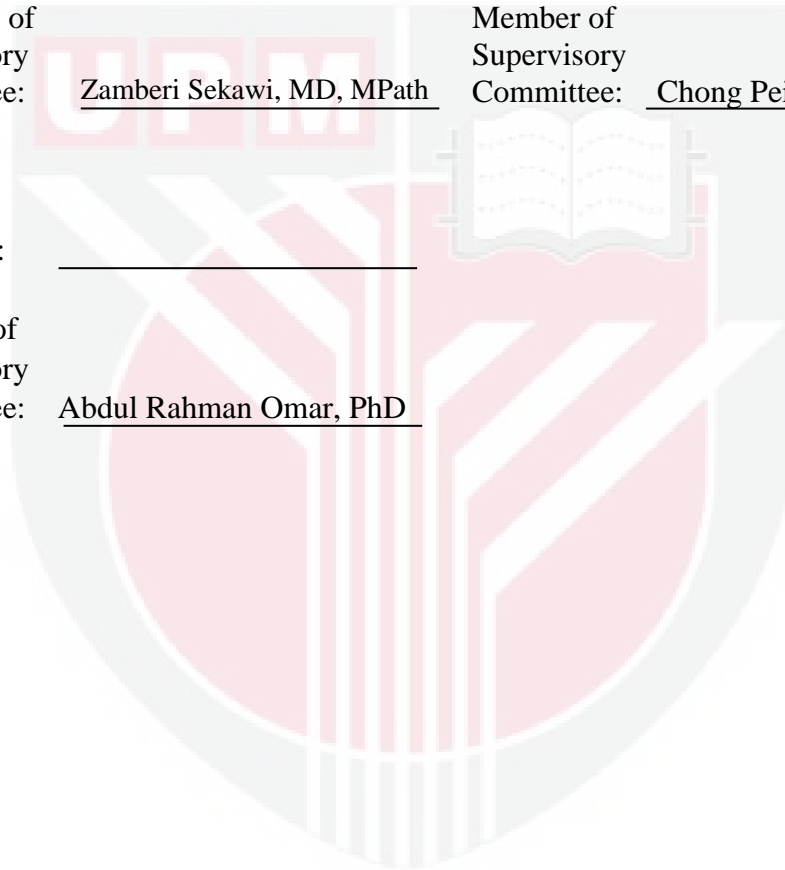


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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

+ssRNA	Positive sense single-stranded RNA
Aa	Amino acid
Ag	Antigen
Amp	Ampicillin
ATCC	American Type Culture Collection
BLAST	Basic Linear Alignment Search Tool
bp	Base pair
BSA	Bovine serum albumin
C-terminus	Carboxy terminus
CDC	Centers for disease control and prevention
cDNA	Complementary DNA
CFA	Complete Freund's adjuvant
COPD	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
CPE	Cytopathic effect
D1-D5	Extracellular Ig-like domains
DAA-I	Des-aspartate-angiotensin I
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
dH ₂ O	Distilled water
dNTPs	Deoxynucleotide triphosphate
dsDNA	Double strand DNA
ELISA	Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay
EMEM	(DJOH Ψ 0LQLPXP(VVHQWLDO0HGLXP
Fab	Fragment antigen-binding
FBS	Foetal bovine serum
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
g	Gram
GC	Guanine-Cytosine
Gp	Envelope glycoprotein

H	Hour
H&L	Heavy and Light chains
H ₂ SO ₄	Sulfuric acid
HA	Hemagglutinin (influenza viruses)
His-tag	Histidine residues Tag
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HLA	Human leukocyte antigen
HPLC	High-performance liquid chromatography
HRP	Horseradish peroxidase (enzyme)
HRV	Human rhinovirus
ICAM-1	Intercellular adhesion molecule 1
ICTV	International Committee for Taxonomy of Viruses
IFA	Incomplete Freund's adjuvant
Ig	Immunoglobulin
IgA	Immunoglobulin A
IgG	Immunoglobulin G
IgM	Immunoglobulin M
IPTG	Isopropyl-P-d-thiogalactopyranosi
Kb	Kilobase
kDa	Kilodalton
l	Litre
L-15	Leibovitz's L-15 Medium
LB	Luria Bertani
LDLR	Low-density lipoprotein receptor
LFA-1	Lymphocyte function-associated antigen 1
LRI	Lower respiratory infections
LRT	Lower respiratory tracts
M	Molar
mAb	Monoclonal antibody
MM	Millimolar

MEM	Minimum essential medium
min	Minute
mm	Millimeter
MOI	Multiplicity of infection
mRNA	Messenger ribonucleic acid
MW	Molecular weight
N-terminus	Amino terminus
NCBI	National Centre for Biotechnology Information
NCR	Non-coding region
NdeI	Restriction enzyme sites
Ng	Nanogram
NIm	Neutralizing immunogenic site
NJ	Neighbour-joining
Nm	Nanometer
OD	Optical density
ORF	Open reading frame
qPCR	Quantitative real-time polymerase chain reaction
PAGE	Polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
PBS	Phosphate buffered saline
PBST	Phosphate-buffered saline and Tween 20
PVDF	Polyvinylidene difluoride
RDRP	RNA-dependent RNA polymerase
RG	Rabbit group
RNA	Ribonucleic acid
Rpm	Revolutions per minute
RT	Room temperature
RT-PCR	Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction
RV	Rhinovirus
RV-A	Rhinovirus group A
RV-B	Rhinovirus group B

RV-C	Rhinovirus group C
RVs	Rhinoviruses
s	Second
SC	Subcutaneous
SDS-PAGE	Sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
SVDV	Swine vesicular disease virus
TBE	Tris-Borate-EDTA
TBS	Tris Buffered saline
TCID	Tissue culture infectious dose
TMB	• -tetramethylbenzidine
URT	Upper respiratory tracts
UTR	Untranslated region
V	Volt
V	Volume
VLDL	Very low-density lipoprotein
VRIs	Viral respiratory infections
VP	Virus protein
VPg	Viral priming protein
XhoI	Restriction enzyme sites

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Rhinoviruses (RVs) represent the most important cause of common cold and are well recognised as causative agents for the self-limiting disease of the respiratory tract. The use of advanced diagnostic methods in a wide variety of studies has demonstrated that RVs are also associated with severity of respiratory symptoms. According to several reports, RVs are responsible for about 75% of acute asthma exacerbations and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in both children and adults (Mallia *et al.*, 2011; Kameel & Steve, 2014). The number of cases is growing globally in each consecutive year which increases the burden of providing care worldwide (Peter, 2014). RVs are also implicated in more severe disease manifestations such as pneumonia (Broberg *et al.*, 2011), acute bronchiolitis in young children (Renwick *et al.*, 2007), croup (Choi *et al.*, 2006) and otitis media (Chantzi, *et al.*, 2006). To date, exacerbation of these diseases has been poorly responsive to the current therapies.

RVs, which were formerly known as human rhinoviruses, were first isolated by Pelon *et al.* and Price in 1956 (Brooks *et al.*, 2010). RVs represent a large number of small non-enveloped viruses of about 28 to 30 nm in diameter within the genus *Enterovirus* of the *Picornaviridae* family (Knowles *et al.*, 2012). The viral genome is positive sense single-stranded RNA (+ssRNA) of approximately 7,200 bases (Turner & Lee, 2009). Within 50 years since their discovery, RVs have been divided into three groups, RV-A, -B and -C, with the latter, RV-C, which only reported in 2007 (Lau *et al.*, 2007). There are more than 100 types of RV-A and B, while the discovery of new RV-C still continues (Simmonds *et al.*, 2010; McIntyre *et al.*, 2013).

The viral capsid, which surrounds the genomic RNA, is composed of 60 identical copies each of four structural proteins, designated as VP1, VP2, VP3 and VP4. The three larger proteins (VP1, VP2, and VP3) are exposed on the capsid surface and account for the virus' antigenic diversity, while the smallest one (VP4) lies at the interface between the capsid and the viral genome. The exposed proteins (VP1-3) have the same overall structural conformation, an eight-stranded antiparallel β -barrel and without any remarkable sequence homology. C-termini of the exposed proteins are located on the surface of the virion, while amino (N) termini are in the interior. Among the four capsid proteins, VP1 is the largest and the most exposed, and it serves as the site of attachment to the cell surface receptors (Rossmann *et al.*, 1985; Jacobs *et al.*, 2013). The surface of the RVs capsid contains neutralization antigenic and host cell binding sites. The latter allows the virus to start its replication cycle by attaching to the host cell receptors (Rossmann *et al.*, 1994).

The N-terminus of VP1 and VP4 in several closely related *Picornaviruses* has been suggested to be externalized during the uncoating process. Together, they allow the viral particle to interact directly with the host cell by shaping a pore in the cell membrane, through which the viral RNA is released to the cytoplasm (Seechurn *et al.*, 1990; Danthi *et al.*, 2003; Tuthill *et al.*, 2006; Davis *et al.*, 2008).

The RV variants are also divided based on their receptor into major and minor groups. The major receptor group (100% of RV-B and 85% of RV-A) uses ICAM-1 for cell entry, while the minor group binds the low-density lipoprotein(LDL) receptor family including the LDL receptor itself, the very low-density lipoprotein (VLDL) receptor and the LDL receptor-related protein. In addition to ICAM-1, some types of the major group can use heparan sulphate as an additional receptor (Fuchs & Blaas, 2010). RV-C receptor is still not known, while at least one RV-C isolate (HRV-C15) utilizes a cellular receptor other than ICAM-1 or LDL (Bochkov *et al.*, 2011).

Due to its transmission, avoiding RV infections is nearly impossible. Beside direct contact, millions of viral particles are transmitted via hundreds of droplets that can be released in a single sneeze, cough, or exhale during conversation. Although aerosol droplets travel only short distances (1-2 meters) before settling on surfaces, viruses can remain infectious for a relatively long time (La Rosa *et al.*, 2013). Under experimental conditions, RVs will survive in an indoor environment for up to hours and days (Hendley *et al.*, 1973).

To date, there have been no effective and approved antiviral therapies for either the prevention or treatment of diseases caused by RVs infections. Several factors such as the large number of RVs serotypes with hypervariable sequence, the lack of animal model and the rapid emergence of new strains have hindered the progression of vaccine development. Meanwhile, many molecular epidemiological studies of RVs conducted in different regions have revealed that there are no predominant circulating serotypes which could be considered for vaccine development (Chan *et al.*, 2012; Rahamat-Langendoen *et al.*, 2013; Miller & Mackay, 2013; Etemadi *et al.*, 2013). However, as a group, RV-A is the most predominant species, and this is followed by the newly discovered group "RV-C", whereas RV-B is the least frequently detected species. Due to these facts, vaccines conventionally designed to generate neutralising antibodies are unlikely to provide sufficient and overall protection to frequent infections which occur throughout life. With the high RV burden which is poorly responsive to the current therapies, alternative approaches to overcome their infections are therefore needed.

Eliciting cross-neutralizing antibodies has been considered the words of interest in the search for effective RV vaccines. Capsid proteins (VP1-4) or antigenic peptides corresponding to one of them have been claimed to induce cross-neutralising antibodies against different RV strains (McCray & Werner, 1987; Edlmayr *et al.*, 2011).

In the current study, alternative strategies were applied in an attempt to design a broad-spectrum RV vaccine based on the reverse approach. In the era of genomics, the starting point of designing an ideal vaccine against RVs could be from the available information on their genomes. Recently, the full-length genome sequences of all RV-A and RV-B serotyped strains have been reported (Palmenberg *et al.*, 2009). This is a major step forward in the path of RVs vaccination. The reverse approach to vaccine development takes advantage of the pathogen's genome sequence. For instance, such approach has been used to develop a broadly protective vaccine against serogroup B *Neisseria meningitidis* by identifying five proteins that are conserved across the strains (Please refer to Giuliani *et al.*, 2006; Toneatto *et al.*,

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