



*Tesis Doctoral.-*

**Desarrollo de vacunas en esquistosomosis:  
Estudio preclínico utilizando moléculas  
unidas a ácidos grasos denominadas FABPs**

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Edafología y Química Agrícola



TESIS DOCTORAL

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Estudio preclínico utilizando moléculas unidas a ácidos grasos  
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CERTIFICAN:

Que la Tesis Doctoral titulada “**Desarrollo de vacunas en esquistosomosis: Estudio preclínico utilizando moléculas unidas a ácidos grasos denominadas FABPs**”, que se presenta para optar al grado de Doctor por la Universidad de Salamanca en la modalidad de *Tesis por compendio de publicaciones*, ha sido realizada por **M<sup>a</sup> Belén Vicente Santiago**, con D.N.I. 15984557-V, licenciada en Biología por la Universidad de Salamanca, bajo nuestra dirección en el Departamento de Biología Animal, Parasitología, Ecología, Edafología y Química Agrícola de la Universidad de Salamanca y en el Centro de Investigación de Enfermedades Tropicales de la Universidad de Salamanca. Consideramos que reúne, a nuestro juicio, los requisitos necesarios por lo que autorizamos su presentación para ser evaluada.

Y para que así conste, a efectos legales, expiden el presente certificado en

Salamanca, a 25 de noviembre del 2015

Fdo. Dr. Antonio Muro Álvarez

Fdo. Dr. Julio López Abán

*A mis Padres, a Miguel  
y a ti Carla, a tus besos, a tus abrazos  
y a tus palabras: "Gracias mi pequeña GRAN mamá"*

*No tienes que saber a dónde vas,  
lo importante es estar en camino.  
Wayne Dier*

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# 1 INTRODUCCIÓN

## 1.1 Historia

La esquistosomosis es una trematodosis adquirida por contacto con agua dulce contaminada con cercarias pertenecientes al género *Schistosoma* y que afecta tanto a animales domésticos como al hombre, representando un problema de salud pública (Vester et al., 1997). La enfermedad recibe también el nombre de bilharziosis en honor a Theodor Maximilian Bilharz, quien en 1851 describe la primera especie de *Schistosoma*, *S. haematobium*. Anteriormente, en el año 1798, Renault había visto episodios de hematuria que sufrieron soldados del ejército de Napoleón en Egipto. En el año 1910, Marc Arman Ruffer encontró huevos de *S. haematobium* en dos momias egipcias que databan de los años 1.250-1.000 a.c. (Cox, 2004). En 1902, Manson explica por primera vez que la esquistosomosis intestinal es causada por *S. mansoni*. Prácticamente a la vez, en 1904, Fujiro Katsurada descubre *S. japonicum*, siendo Darío Fujii quien atribuye a esta especie las infecciones encontradas en el valle de Katayama, tanto en personas como en animales. Este hallazgo determinó el nombre de fiebre de Katayama, atribuido a las manifestaciones clínicas desencadenadas en la fase aguda de la enfermedad. En años posteriores, se describen otras especies de esquistosomas humanos como *S. intercalatum* y *S. mekongi*, esta última en el año 1957 en el delta fluvial que se forma cuando el río Mekong desemboca en el mar de China Meridional, en el suroeste de Vietnam (Ohmae et al., 2004). Recientemente, en el año 2006, se describe una nueva especie en humanos denominada *S. guineensis* (Webster et al., 2006).



## 1.2 Biología y Estructura

### 1.2.1 Taxonomía

El género *Schistosoma* pertenece al *phylum Platyhelminthes*, clase *Trematoda*, subclase *Digenea*, familia *Schistosomatidae* (Alarcón et al., 2008). Las 21 especies de esquistosomas descritas hasta el momento se clasifican en 4 grupos (Tabla 1) según su distribución geográfica, la morfología de la fase de huevo y el hospedador intermediario (Rollinson & Southgate, 1987). Sin embargo la taxonomía y la filogenia de *Schistosoma* sp. está en continua revisión debido al gran número de estudios moleculares que se están llevando a cabo (Morgan et al., 2003). Cinco son las especies principales en el hombre: *S. mansoni*, *S. haematobium*, *S. intercalatum*, *S. japonicum* y *S. mekongi*, aunque también se han descrito infecciones humanas por *S. malayensis*, *S. mattheei* y *S. guineensis* (Webster et al., 2006). Otras especies del género *Schistosoma* tienen un gran interés veterinario como *S. bovis* y *S. mattheei*.

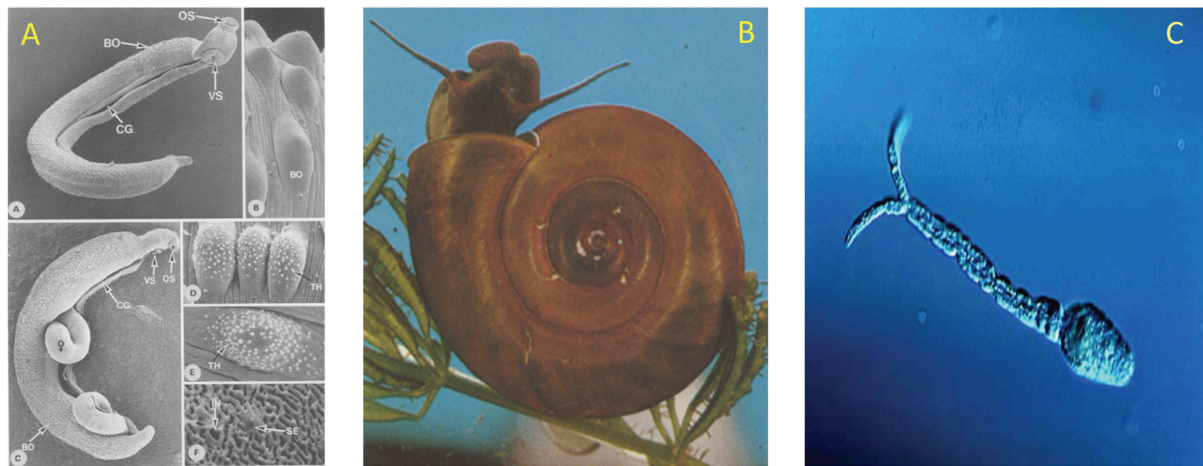
**Tabla 1.-** Grupos dentro del género *Schistosoma* (Loker y Mkoji, 2005)

| GRUPO<br><i>S. haematobium</i> | GRUPO<br><i>S. mansoni</i> | GRUPO<br><i>S. japonicum</i> | GRUPO<br><i>S. indicum</i> |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>S. haematobium</i>          | <i>S. mansoni</i>          | <i>S. japonicum</i>          | <i>S. indicum</i>          |
| <i>S. intercalatum</i>         | <i>S. rodhaini</i>         | <i>S. mekongi</i>            | <i>S. nasale</i>           |
| <i>S. bovis</i>                | <i>S. hippopotami</i>      | <i>S. malayensis</i>         | <i>S. spindale</i>         |
| <i>S. mattheei</i>             | <i>S. edwardiense</i>      | <i>S. sinensium</i>          | <i>S. incognitum</i>       |
| <i>S. curassoni</i>            |                            | <i>S. ovuncatum</i>          |                            |
| <i>S. margrebowiei</i>         |                            |                              |                            |
| <i>S. leiperi</i>              |                            |                              |                            |

### 1.2.2 Morfología, estructura y ciclo biológico

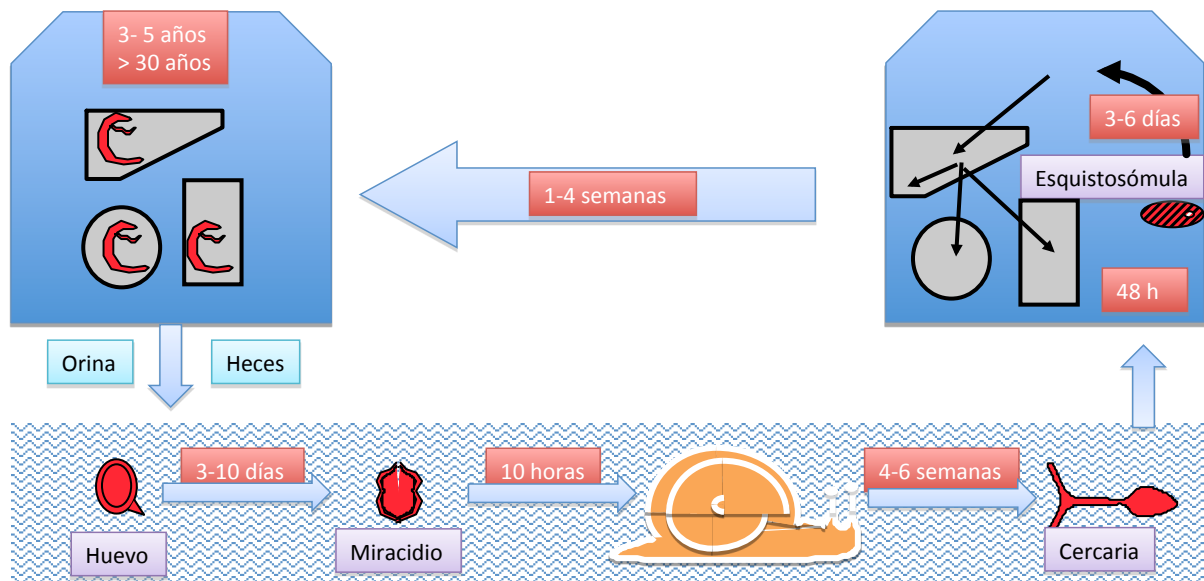
El esquistosoma es un trematodo dioico sanguíneo que presenta dimorfismo sexual, el gusano macho posee un canal ginecóforo o hendidura en el que se aloja la hembra de morfología más estrecha y alargada. La esquistosomosis es adquirida por contacto con agua dulce contaminada con larvas natatorias -cercarias- del parásito, emitidas por diferentes especies de caracoles acuáticos hospedadores intermediarios, que penetran activamente por la piel del individuo (Figura 1). Los moluscos intermediarios pertenecen a los géneros

*Biomphalaria* para *S. mansoni*, *Bulinus* para *S. haematobium* y *S. intercalatum*, *Oncomelania* para *S. japonicum* y *Neotricula* para *S. mekongi* (Ohmae et al., 2004).



**Figura 1.-** Fases del ciclo biológico de *Schistosoma mansoni*. A: Adultos. B: intermediario *Biomphalaria glabrata*. C: Cercaria con cola bifurcada

Tras su penetración, la cercaria pierde la cola y se transforma en esquistosómula, que realiza una migración necesaria para su pre-maduración. En este recorrido llegará a los pulmones, para volver a la circulación general y finalmente dirigirse a los vasos de diferentes localizaciones donde termina su maduración. Los vermes adultos de *S. mansoni*, *S. japonicum*, *S. mekongi* y *S. intercalatum* se asientan en las venas mesentéricas y vena porta, mientras que los de *S. haematobium* llegan hasta los vasos que drenan la vejiga urinaria. Una vez producida la fecundación y la oviposición, los huevos comienzan a ser eliminados tras un período que oscila entre 35 y 70 días, con la orina en el caso de *S. haematobium* o con las heces en las otras especies, alcanzando el agua y liberando los miracidios que penetran en los diferentes caracoles para multiplicarse en su interior, dando lugar a los esporocistos y las cercarias y así cerrar el ciclo biológico. Los huevos son de morfología no operculada y con una “espina” que varía en tamaño y posición, dependiendo de la especie de *Schistosoma*. Una parte de los huevos queda atrapada en diferentes tejidos, formando los granulomas que son la causa de los daños originados en la fase crónica de la enfermedad. Una representación de la cronobiología del ciclo de los esquistosomas se muestra en la Figura 2.



**Figura 2.-** Ciclo biológico de *Schistosoma* spp.

### 1.2.3 Genoma, transcriptoma y proteoma

La Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) junto a *Schistosoma Genome Network*, comenzaron en 1994 el proyecto de secuenciación del genoma de *Schistosoma mansoni* con el objetivo de conocer la expresión cuantitativa de los genes potenciales como dianas para el diseño de vacunas y fármacos. Finalmente, en el 2009 se describe la secuencia completa y se realiza el mapeo del genoma de *Schistosoma mansoni* (Berriman et al., 2009), además se anota por primera vez el genoma de *S. japonicum*. En el 2012 se describe el genoma de *S. haematobium* (Young et al., 2012). El tamaño del genoma de *Schistosoma* es superior al de la mayoría de patógenos secuenciados hasta el momento, oscila entre 381 Mb (*S. mansoni*) y 403 Mb (*S. japonicum*) (LoVerde et al., 2004), cuenta con un total de 11809 genes de un tamaño medio de 4,7 kb que codifican para 13197 transcritos. El 43% del genoma ha sido mapeado utilizando la técnica de hibridación in situ (FISH) en 8 pares de cromosomas, 7 autosomas y un cromosoma sexual. Los genes descritos presentan una estructura con grandes intrones (media de 1692 bp) y con exones mucho más cortos (217 bp). Además los intrones del extremo 5' son mucho más pequeños que los intrones del extremo 3'. Una característica importante es el gran contenido en secuencias repetitivas, 40% en *S. japonicum*, 45% en *S. mansoni* y 47% en *S. haematobium*.

El *transcriptoma* de *Schistosoma mansoni* (Verjovski-Almeida et al., 2003) y de *Schistosoma japonicum* (Hu et al., 2003) se llevó a cabo siguiendo la metodología de estudio multicéntrico en Brasil y en China respectivamente. En ambos proyectos se obtuvieron *Expressed Sequence Tag* (EST) a partir de librerías de cDNA obtenidas mediante RT-PCR en las que se amplificó la región codificante de los RNAmensajeros. En los últimos años y gracias al desarrollo de técnicas de secuenciación como RNA-seq (Mortazavi et al., 2008) se han estudiado de manera más exhaustiva los transcriptomas de diferentes fases del ciclo biológico de estos parásitos. A partir de diferentes fases del ciclo biológico de *S. mansoni* se obtuvo un transcriptoma con 163586 EST, agrupados en 30988 *assembled EST* o *clusters* (Protasio et al., 2012). El transcriptoma de *S. japonicum* se describió a partir de la fase adulta y de huevo del parásito y está constituido por 43707 EST agrupadas en 13131 clusters que abarcan la mayor parte de las regiones que codifican proteínas. Existen evidencias de la relación de parasitismo que establece esquistosoma con el hospedador y de cómo estos parásitos explotan las señales endocrinas e inmunes del mismo. Por ejemplo, apoya esta hipótesis el hecho de que el 20% de sus genes muestren similitud con secuencias descritas en mamíferos (Hu et al., 2003). Los resultados de estos estudios están disponibles en bases de datos como GeneDB ([www.genedb.org](http://www.genedb.org)) (Logan-Klumpler et al., 2012) y SchistoDB (Zerlotini et al., 2013) ([www.schistodb.net](http://www.schistodb.net)).

A mediados de la década de los 90 aparece el término *proteoma* para describir el total de proteínas expresadas por el genoma (Wilkins et al., 1996). La caracterización del proteoma de parásitos se lleva a cabo mediante el uso de dos tecnologías: la electroforesis de dos dimensiones (2DE) y la espectrometría de masas. Se han realizado múltiples estudios en los que se ha comparado la composición proteica entre las distintas fases del ciclo biológico de *Schistosoma mansoni* (Curwen et al., 2004), así como entre machos y hembras adultos de *Schistosoma japonicum* (Cheng et al., 2005). Sin embargo, de las numerosas moléculas que poseen estos parásitos en los diferentes órganos y sistemas, las de mayor interés son aquellas que están relacionadas con la interacción parásito-hospedador (Ludolf et al., 2014). Estas moléculas son accesibles a los mecanismos efectores del sistema inmunitario del hospedador y por tanto podrían ser posibles dianas para desarrollar fármacos y vacunas efectivas contra estos organismos. Se diferencian tres grandes grupos de proteínas: (i) *proteínas de superficie propias del parásito* como las proteínas

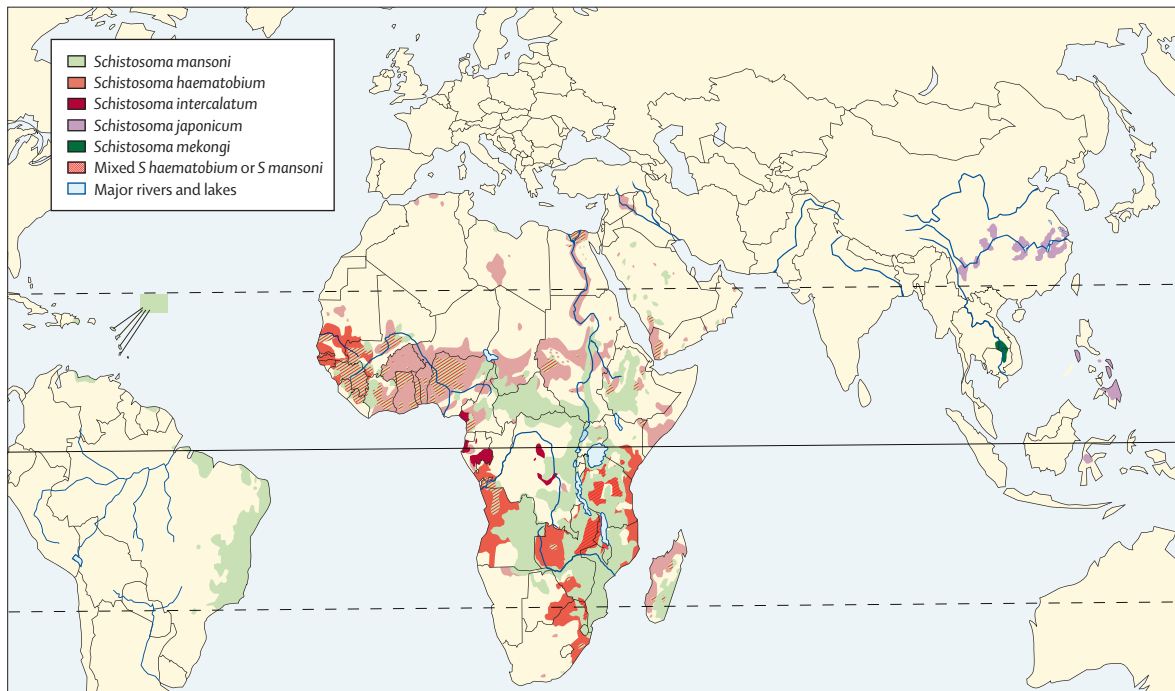
estructurales, proteínas transportadoras de nutrientes, proteínas con actividad enzimática, receptores para ligandos del hospedador; (ii) *proteínas de superficie propias del hospedador*. El parásito se rodea de moléculas propias del hospedador con el objetivo de evadir su respuesta inmune. Se han identificado inmunoglobulinas IgM, IgG1 e IgG3 y proteínas del complemento como C3 adheridas a la superficie parasitaria en *S. mansoni* (Braschi & Wilson, 2006), también se sabe de la presencia de anticuerpos y de proteínas del complemento en *S. japonicum* (Liu et al., 2007); (iii) *proteínas de excreción-secreción*. Los productos de excreción-secreción han sido caracterizados mediante estudios proteómicos demostrando tener un gran número de proteasas y un número considerable de proteínas con un fuerte carácter inmunomodulador que se correlacionan con funciones propias del parásito como la penetración en la piel (Guillou et al., 2007; Dvorak et al., 2008) o con la propia patogénesis de la enfermedad como por ejemplo la respuesta granulomatosa generada por los huevos de *S. mansoni* en los tejidos (Cass et al., 2007). Finalmente es de reseñar que además se han realizado estudios concretos, analizando el glicoma (Hokke et al., 2007), inmunoma (Gaze et al., 2014) e incluso el filoma (Silva et al., 2012) de estos parásitos.

## 1.3 Epidemiología

### 1.3.1 General

La esquistosomosis es endémica en 76 países y territorios según la Organización Mundial de la Salud. Los datos indican que 250 millones de personas están infectadas, el 85% de esta población reside en África Subsahariana, 120 millones con sintomatología, 20 millones con enfermedad grave y una mortalidad anual de 280.000. La mayor prevalencia en áreas endémicas se da entre los adolescentes y disminuye generalmente en la edad adulta. Se estima entre 60-80% de infección activa en niños de edad escolar y del 20-40% en adultos (Colley & Secor, 2014). Algunos autores señalan el gran impacto de la morbilidad causada por la esquistosomosis, reflejada en la incapacidad ponderada por año de vida (DALY) que se estima en 1,53 millones (King et al., 2005).

Respecto a su distribución geográfica, se sabe que en el continente americano solo existe *S. mansoni*. En África conviven *S. haematobium*, *S. intercalatum* y *S. guineensis* y en Asia habitan *S. japonicum* y *S. mekongi* (Figura 3).



**Figura 3.-** Distribución mundial de los países con esquistosomosis humana. Imagen tomada de Colley et al, Lancet 2014

Existen una serie de condiciones necesarias para una adecuada transmisión (Grimes et al., 2015). En primer lugar la contaminación de aguas con huevos viables depositados por el hospedador definitivo (humanos o animales domésticos en el caso de *S. japonicum*). La falta de baños y letrinas facilitan el desarrollo y mantenimiento de la infección. En segundo lugar hay que considerar las condiciones favorables para el desarrollo adecuado de los caracoles hospedadores intermediarios. Estos hospedadores son resistentes a la sequía y a los cambios climáticos, incluso a la contaminación. La construcción de embalses como la presa de Diama en Senegal, la de Akosombo en Ghana o la de las Tres Gargantas del río Yangtsé en China, han permitido la dispersión de los caracoles y por tanto la aparición de la infección en lugares en los que no existía. Por último, hay que considerar la exposición de las personas a colecciones acuáticas con cercarias. Así, niños que están en contacto con aguas infectadas son los más propensos a adquirir la enfermedad. En adultos, las actividades diarias como el lavado de ropa y utensilios, trabajadores de explotaciones agrícolas con

sistemas de irrigación y pescadores son las poblaciones más expuestas a adquirir la infección. Hay que tener en cuenta que la transmisión de la esquistosomosis es de carácter local. Existen trabajos donde se ha demostrado diferentes niveles de infección en diversas zonas del mismo lago o entre localidades vecinas (Vester et al., 1997).

### 1.3.2 Importada

Según los datos aportados por las bases epidemiológicas de *International Society of Travel Medicine* y de *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* (GeoSentinel), así como del *European Network on Imported Infectious Disease Surveillance* (TropNetEurop) de 2008, se trata de la segunda enfermedad importada más prevalente, después de la malaria. La mayoría de los casos proceden de África occidental, Mali, Costa de Marfil, República Democrática del Congo y Uganda. Algunas de las regiones turísticas que suponen un alto riesgo de infección son el país Dogon en Mali, Banfora en Burkina Faso, la orilla sur del Lago Malawi y el Parque Nacional de Omo en Etiopía. En la actualidad, el auge del turismo internacional, el incremento del fenómeno migratorio y los programas de cooperación internacional han llevado al diagnóstico cada vez más frecuente en consultas especializadas. Los pacientes diagnosticados en los países desarrollados se pueden dividir en tres grupos: (i) *viajeros a zonas rurales y perirurales de áreas endémicas*, sobre todo aquellos que realizan el turismo llamado *off track* o de aventura (Corachan et al., 1994). La base de datos del GeoSentinel refiere a la esquistosomosis como causa de morbilidad en el 4% de los viajeros que regresan del África subsahariana (King et al., 2005). Un estudio realizado en el lago Malawi determina que viajeros que se han bañado durante 10 días presentan una estimación del 90% de adquirir la infección (Pardo et al., 2004). Hace unos años se detectó un brote de esquistosomosis en viajeros que realizaban un safari en Tanzania y se habían bañado en un lago natural cerca de un hotel de lujo (Leshem et al., 2008). (ii) *expatriados por motivos laborales o de otra índole en países endémicos* (Jelinek et al., 1996); (iii) *inmigrantes provenientes de países endémicos*. En un estudio realizado en 788 inmigrantes subsaharianos que tenían eosinofilia absoluta, la esquistosomosis se diagnosticó en el 17% de los casos (Pardo et al., 2006) y fue la primera causa descrita en inmigrantes subsaharianos que presentaban eosinofilia relativa (Carranza-Rodríguez et al., 2008).

### 1.3.3 Reemergente en el sur de Europa

En Europa era considerada una enfermedad importada, pero actualmente se puede catalogar de emergente teniendo en cuenta los casos autóctonos que se han registrado en Córcega (Francia) debidos a *S. haematobium* (Rollinson & Southgate, 1987), si bien algunos investigadores apuntan a la existencia de híbridos *S. haematobium/S. bovis* en Francia, Alemania e Italia (Berry et al., 2014; Boissier et al., 2015).

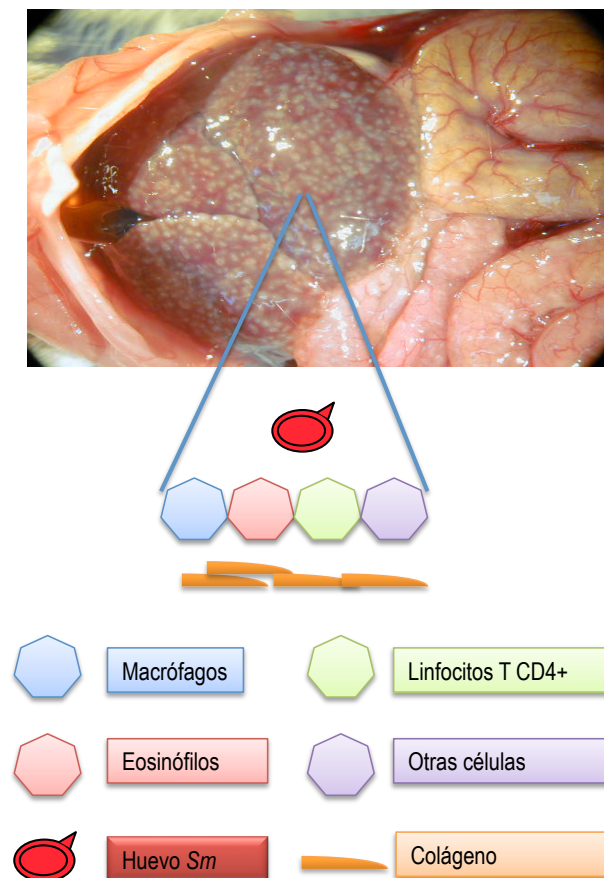
## 1.4 Patogenia e inmunidad

### 1.4.1 Mecanismos de agresión

Se pueden distinguir varias fases: (i) *fase de penetración cercariana* (Mountford & Trottein, 2009). Este complejo proceso necesita de la presencia de estímulos químicos por parte del hospedador y de la liberación de proteasas secretadas por la cercaria. El componente mayoritario de estas proteasas es una serin-proteasa de 30 kDa cuya actividad elastasa degrada la elastina de la piel facilitando la penetración de la cercaria. Varios estudios realizados en la piel demuestran que los productos de excreción-secreción cercarianos inducen la formación de edema e infiltración de neutrófilos, además de ser capaces de degradar otras macromoléculas presentes en la piel del hospedador como la queratina, fibronectina, laminina o colágeno. Sin embargo, esta reacción inflamatoria no induce protección en el individuo sino que favorece la supervivencia del parásito. La interacción inicial entre estos productos de excreción secreción de la cercaria con los receptores *Pattern Recognition Receptors* (PRRs) del sistema inmune innato es crucial para determinar el tipo de respuesta inmune adaptativa que desarrolla el hospedador (Janeway et al., 2002). Los *Toll-like receptors* (TLRs) son un ejemplo de los receptores PRRs ya que desempeñan un papel central en la inducción de señales que determinan una respuesta celular pro-inflamatoria (Akira, 2003). En función de la estimulación de los distintos TLRs o de las interacciones que se producen entre ellos se pueden generar diferentes respuestas celulares determinando un cierto grado de especificidad contra diferentes patógenos (Beutler, 2004). (ii) *fase de migración de la esquistosómula* (Caldas et al., 2008). Durante las 4-6 semanas siguientes a la infección, la esquistosómula migra por la circulación sanguínea hasta llegar a su sitio de maduración, produciéndose altos niveles de citocinas pro-



inflamatorias (principalmente  $TNF\alpha$ , IL-1, IL-6 e  $IFN\gamma$ ) cuya máxima expresión se produce a la decimosexta semana post-infección. Esta situación se asocia a una respuesta Th1 predominante, responsable de la fiebre de Katayama. (iii) *fase de formación del granuloma* alrededor del huevo (Pearce & Mac Donald, 2002). Esta fase tiene lugar a partir de la séptima semana post-infección. Aunque una gran cantidad de huevos son liberados al exterior, parte de ellos quedan atrapados en hígado, intestino o vejiga urinaria e inducen una respuesta inmunológica responsable de la patogenia de la fase crónica de la esquistosomosis. Alrededor de ellos se produce un infiltrado celular compuesto por macrófagos, eosinófilos, linfocitos CD4+ y colágeno que da lugar a una amplia reacción granulomatosa (Figura 4).



**Figura 4.**-Hígado de ratón con granulomas de *S. mansoni*. Se muestra un esquema de la composición celular alrededor del huevo del parásito

### 1.4.2 Mecanismos de defensa

La mayor parte de los estudios sobre la respuesta inmunológica se han realizado utilizando modelos animales. La infección de ratones con *S. mansoni* comparte muchas de las características que se producen en la infección humana y por tanto ha sido de gran ayuda para entender la respuesta inmunológica en la esquistosomosis. Todo lo contrario ocurre en las infecciones producidas por *S. haematobium* y *S. japonicum*. En la esquistosomosis experimental urinaria los adultos no migran hasta llegar al plexo venoso vesical con el consecuente depósito de huevos en la vejiga del ratón. Algunos autores han desarrollado modelos de infección para evitar este problema (Fu et al., 2012). En el caso de *S. japonicum* las parejas de adultos pueden llegar a su localización definitiva aunque existen pocos laboratorios que trabajen con *Oncomelania*, hospedador intermediario de esta especie de esquistosoma.

La respuesta inmunológica desarrollada contra las fases inmaduras del parásito que están en un ciclo migratorio a través del organismo ha sido estudiada en modelos experimentales de ratón, concluyendo que la respuesta más efectiva ocurría en el pulmón (Wilson, 2009). Sin embargo, los gusanos adultos cuando se localizan en sus lugares definitivos están más protegidos al ataque del sistema inmunológico. Además, en esta fase se desarrollan múltiples mecanismos de evasión parasitaria que se detallarán en el apartado 1.4.3. Los estudios realizados en estos modelos experimentales indican que la respuesta inmunológica protectora se debe a la combinación de la generación de anticuerpos y a la participación de células T (Jankovic et al., 1999). Durante los estadios iniciales de la infección se produce una respuesta predominante tipo Th1. Sin embargo cuando los huevos empiezan a depositarse, alrededor de la sexta semana de infección, se produce un cambio brusco hacia respuestas Th2. Este cambio se produce por la interacción de antígenos de huevo del parásito con células dendríticas, principalmente a través de la acción de ciertos epítomos glucídicos (Everst et al., 2012). La falta de regulación de citocinas Th2 como IL-13 induce estimulación macrofágica via arginasa produciendo L-ornitina y prolina que estimula la síntesis de colágeno originando fibrosis hepática y son la causa de las alteraciones hepatoesplénicas producidas en la esquistosomosis. Por el contrario, la disminución de respuestas de citocinas Th2 como IL-4 produce daño tisular y mortalidad del

hospedador debido al aumento de la respuesta tipo Th1 proinflamatoria. Por tanto, el incremento de las respuestas Th2, son “protectoras” para el hospedador puesto que evitan la mortalidad asociada a altas respuestas Th1. En este proceso de cambio de respuestas Th1 a Th2 interviene la IL-10, regulando el proceso y limitando la inflamación granulomatosa inicial. Si la infección continúa estos mecanismos inmunomoduladores regulan la formación del granuloma siendo estos más pequeños a partir de la doce semana postinfección e induciendo menos fibrosis que en la fase aguda de la enfermedad. Estudios realizados con ratones *knockout* deficientes en IL-4 demuestran que esta citocina es la responsable directa del tamaño del granuloma y del cambio de la respuesta inmune hacia una respuesta dominante de tipo Th2 (Brunet et al., 1997) (Fallon et al., 2000). Además estimula la expresión de IL-5 e IL-13 (Cheever et al., 1991) citocinas implicadas en la fibrosis hepática grave, hecho que ha sido demostrado tanto en el modelo animal como en el ser humano (de Jesús et al., 2004).

Respecto a la respuesta inmunológica desarrollada en seres humanos, estudios en área endémica de esquistosomosis han puesto de manifiesto diferentes patrones inmunológicos contra antígenos derivados del adulto o del huevo (Colley & Secor, 2014). En la mayoría de los estudios se han observado altas respuestas en fases tempranas y disminución en etapas crónicas con antígenos solubles de huevo. En contraste, las respuestas originadas frente a antígenos del adulto no se modifican en las infecciones crónicas. La interpretación de estos datos depende de múltiples factores: (i) *las características de las personas estudiadas* debido principalmente al tiempo de adquisición de la infección; (ii) *la posibilidad de haber recibido tratamiento con praziquantel*; (iii) *las limitaciones en el estudio* ya que exclusivamente se determinan anticuerpos o citocinas en sangre periférica. Diferentes estudios han coincidido en que la exposición continua a antígenos de huevo induce mecanismos de regulación inmunológica con producción de anticuerpos IgE y citocinas asociadas que impiden que muchos de estos pacientes no desarrollen manifestaciones clínicas graves (Maizels & Yazdanbakhsh, 2003). Hasta el momento, la forma grave de esquistosomosis se asociaba desde el punto de vista experimental con una respuesta inmunitaria tipo Th1 en la que IL-12 es un elemento crítico para el desarrollo de este tipo de respuesta. Sin embargo, la reciente descripción de la respuesta Th17 ha aportado nuevos datos a la patogenia de la esquistosomosis, de esta

manera se ha demostrado la participación de IL-23 e IL-17 en el desarrollo de la forma grave de la enfermedad (Rutitzky et al., 2008).

La asociación entre anticuerpos IgE, eosinófilos y resistencia a la reinfección ha sido observada en diferentes estudios epidemiológicos. En contraposición, la susceptibilidad a la reinfección se ha relacionado con el aumento de anticuerpos IgG4 que inhiben la acción de la IgE (Oliveira et al., 2012). Por último, se ha observado que la IL-10 está asociada con la producción de IgG4. Estudios en ratones han demostrado que bloqueando receptores de IL-10 se induce protección contra la reinfección (Wilson et al., 2011).

Finalmente, es importante destacar que la respuesta inmune frente a esquistosoma en muchos casos se complica al no desarrollarse de forma aislada, ya que una gran proporción de individuos afectados albergan otras infecciones como malaria, hepatitis B o C o VIH que modifican la respuesta inmune del individuo.

### 1.4.3 Mecanismos de evasión

Los mecanismos de evasión más importantes desarrollados por los esquistosomas son (Pérez-Arellano et al., 2001; Jenkins et al., 2005): *(i) evitar la actuación del sistema del complemento o impedir la destrucción por los macrófagos.* Se conoce la capacidad de síntesis o adquisición de moléculas reguladoras capaces de inactivar la convertasa de la vía alterna del complemento mediante las moléculas DAF (*Decay Accelerating Factor*) del hospedador. También se ha descrito una proteasa con núcleo activo de serina en *S. mansoni* con similitud funcional al factor I del complemento. La evitación macrofágica se realiza mediante el uso de enzimas antioxidantes como superóxido dismutasa, glutatión peroxidasa cuya principal función es la protección de las superficies externas frente a la peroxidación. *(ii) adquirir moléculas del hospedador,* evitando así el reconocimiento por el sistema inmune. Por un lado, se incorporan a la cubierta exterior del parásito lípidos del hospedador (p. ej. LDL: *low density lipoproteins*) que dificultan la unión a anticuerpos, y además se adquieren antígenos de histocompatibilidad de clase II, antígenos de grupos sanguíneos o proteínas reguladoras del complemento. *(iii) generar respuestas ineficaces para el control de la infección.* Se ha comprobado que generan anticuerpos de los isotipos IgG2, IgG4 o IgM que actúan bloqueando la citotoxicidad antiparasitaria mediada por IgE, IgG1 o IgG3. *(iv) eliminar antígenos durante las diferentes fases de su ciclo biológico.* Se conoce la

importancia de una glicoproteína de 38 kDa expresada en la superficie de las esquistosómulas que es eliminada al medio cuando se pasa a fase de adulto. (v) *interferir en el procesamiento y presentación antigénica*. En este punto, la prostaglandina D2 producida por el parásito es capaz de inhibir la migración de las células dendríticas, impidiendo este proceso (Hervé et al., 2003). (vi) *alterar los mecanismos efectores*. Las proteasas liberadas por el parásito tienen la capacidad de destruir de forma directa las inmunoglobulinas.

## 1.5 Manifestaciones clínicas

### 1.5.1 Fase inicio

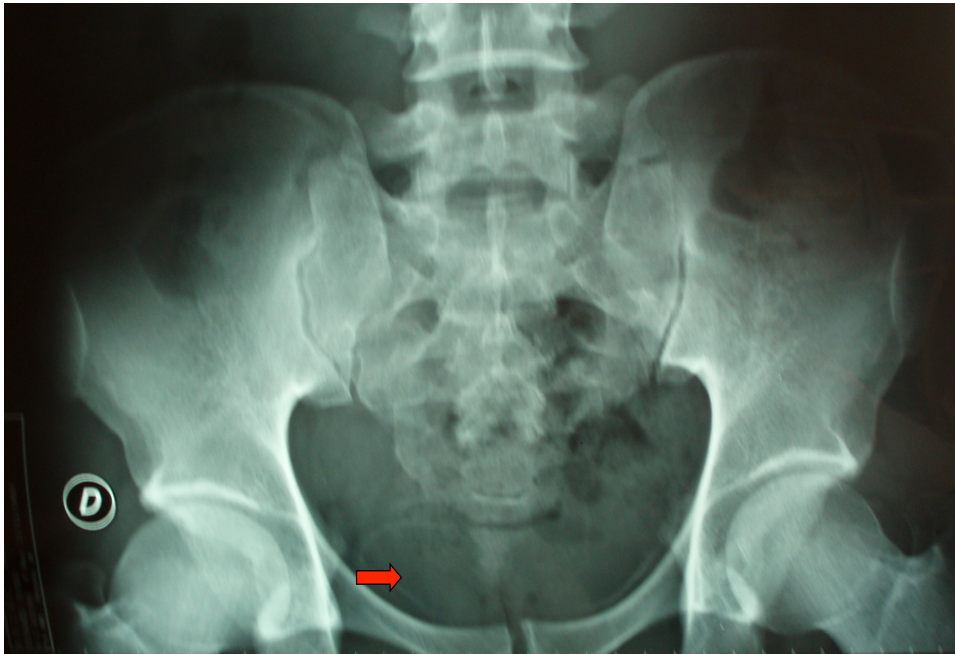
También denominada dermatitis cercariana o prurito del bañista. Se caracteriza por el desarrollo de prurito en las primeras 24 horas siguientes a la penetración de las cercarias a través de la piel. Se produce una respuesta de hipersensibilidad mediada por IgE que ocurre en el 7-36% de los pacientes infectados (Meltzer et al., 2006). Se observa más en viajeros y pasa desapercibida en personas residentes en áreas endémicas. También puede producirse por la penetración de cercarias aviares; en este caso el cuadro es más llamativo (Ross et al., 2002).

### 1.5.2 Fase aguda

La segunda fase o Síndrome de Katayama se origina entre las 2-8 semanas después de la exposición y se debe a la reacción inmunológica desencadenada frente a la fase de migración de la esquistosómula. Se caracteriza principalmente por fiebre, lesiones cutáneas (exantema, urticaria), afectación pulmonar (tos, disnea) y eosinofilia (Ross et al., 2007). En general es autolimitada, aunque en algunas ocasiones los síntomas pueden persistir más de 10 semanas presentando diarrea, pérdida de peso, dolor abdominal, hepatoesplenomegalia, etc. Radiológicamente aparecen infiltrados pulmonares y engrosamiento bronquial en radiografía de tórax y nódulos hepáticos hipoecogénicos o hipodensos en ecografía y tomografía computerizada. El síndrome de Katayama se observa con más frecuencia en viajeros procedentes de áreas endémicas y se ha descrito clásicamente en infecciones por *S. japonicum* y *S. mansoni* con alta carga parasitaria, aunque actualmente se sabe que no es especie-específica ni guarda relación con la intensidad de la infección.

### 1.5.3 Fase crónica

Se presenta con más frecuencia en personas residentes en áreas endémicas de esquistosomosis, aparece meses o años después de la infección y se debe a la reacción granulomatosa formada en torno a los huevos atrapados en hígado, bazo, intestino, vejiga urinaria y otras localizaciones más lejanas como pulmones y sistema nervioso. Las personas sin exposición previa pueden desarrollar esquistosomosis crónica tras una corta exposición, observada hasta en un 20% de los viajeros, aunque las complicaciones graves de ésta se producen siempre tras infecciones repetidas y con alta carga parasitaria (Meltzer et al., 2006). Sus principales manifestaciones clínicas se pueden agrupar en (Gryseels et al., 2006): (i) *manifestaciones habituales*. Presencia de eosinofilia y de microhematuria (en las infecciones ocasionadas por *S. haematobium*). (ii) *manifestaciones clásicas frecuentes*. Las más típicas son las urinarias, las hepatoesplénicas y las intestinales. Las manifestaciones urinarias se producen principalmente por la localización de los huevos de *S. haematobium* en plexos venosos del tracto urinario (Vester et al., 1997), provocando inflamación granulomatosa, ulceración y poliposis en la mucosa uretral y vesical. Cursan clínicamente con un síndrome miccional irritativo con disuria, polaquiuria, proteinuria y especialmente hematuria terminal. Suele ser más sintomática en niños y adultos jóvenes. El cuadro puede complicarse con litiasis y sobreinfección bacteriana. Si la enfermedad progresa puede provocar fibrosis y calcificación de uréteres y vejiga, produciendo hidroureter e hidronefrosis. Si se afecta el parénquima se puede producir fracaso renal (Figura 5).



**Figura 5.-** Calcificación de la vejiga en la esquistosomiasis urinaria en radiografía de abdomen. Cortesía del Dr. Pérez-Arellano (Hospital Insular de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, España)

Las manifestaciones hepatoesplénicas se producen cuando los huevos de *Schistosoma* (fundamentalmente *S. mansoni*, *S. japonicum* y *S. mekongi*) localizados en las venas mesentéricas acceden a la circulación venosa portal, ocasionando una oclusión gradual de las venas intrahepáticas que puede causar fibrosis de Symmers. Esto da lugar a una hipertensión portal con ascitis, esplenomegalia, desarrollo de varices esofágicas con sangrado digestivo alto y encefalopatía. Teniendo en cuenta la localización de las lesiones, no aparecen datos de insuficiencia hepatocelular. Todo ello se manifiesta sin signos o estigmas de hepatopatía como ictericia, arañas vasculares, eritema palmar, atrofia testicular o ginecomastia. Es característico que las transaminasas y la bilirrubina estén en valores normales salvo la existencia de coinfección con virus de la hepatitis B o C (Bica et al., 2000). Las manifestaciones intestinales se producen cuando los huevos atraviesan la pared intestinal produciendo hiperplasia, ulceración, formación de microabscesos y poliposis. Las lesiones se localizan frecuentemente en el intestino delgado y en el recto. Las infecciones por *S. intercalatum* se asocian frecuentemente a lesiones intestinales moderadas. Clínicamente presentan dolor abdominal y diarrea de tipo inflamatorio con o sin sangre (Gryseels et al., 2006). En ocasiones puede complicarse produciendo una enteropatía,

cuadro oclusivo o suboclusivo, prolapso anal o incluso fistulas anorectales. Todo esto plantea un diagnóstico diferencial con la enfermedad inflamatoria intestinal.

*(iii) manifestaciones clásicas poco frecuentes.* Se denominan también esquistosomosis ectópicas. Las más frecuentes son las cardiopulmonares, renales, genitales y las de afectación del sistema nervioso central. Las manifestaciones cardiopulmonares se producen como consecuencia de la salida de huevos desde las venas vesicales (en el caso de *S. haematobium*) o desde la circulación portal a través del *shunt* porto-cava. Como consecuencia de la localización de los huevos en la circulación pulmonar se produce fibrosis de las arterias pulmonares presentándose hipertensión pulmonar con insuficiencia cardiaca derecha (Bethem et al., 1997). Ocasionalmente la esquistosomosis provoca lesiones a nivel parenquimatoso renal afectando específicamente el glomérulo, originando glomerulonefritis (Barsoum, 2004). En general la glomerulonefritis se asocia a la existencia de una esquistosomosis hepatoesplénica con *shunt* porto-sistémico. El tipo más frecuente es la glomerulonefritis mesangial que suele presentarse con una discreta proteinuria y microhematuria. Las lesiones a nivel genital son de dos tipos: inflamatorias en relación a huevos viables y fibrosas e hipertróficas en relación a huevos no viables o calcificados. En mujeres afecta a vulva, vagina y cervix. Son indoloras pero en el caso de ulcerarse, fistulizarse o sobreinfectarse pueden producir dispareunia y leucorrea (Poggensee et al., 2000) que facilitan la transmisión de otras enfermedades infecciosas, como el VIH. En los hombres las más frecuentes son la prostatitis crónica y la infección de las vesículas seminales. La clínica más habitual es la alteración en la eyaculación y la hematoespermia (Corachan et al., 1994). Las dos manifestaciones más típicas de la neuroesquistosomosis son el síndrome cerebral y el medular. La localización de los huevos de *Schistosoma* spp. en territorio cerebral puede debutar como una crisis comicial y suele progresar hasta una encefalitis focal cerebral (Ferrari, 2004). Se describe hasta en un 6% y se relaciona con *S. mansoni* y *S. japonicum* y, en menor medida, con *S. haematobium* (Ross et al., 2002). La localización medular de los huevos de esquistosoma es más frecuente que la encefálica y puede producir varias formas de mielitis siendo las más características la mielitis granulomatosa, la mieloradiculitis, la mielitis isquémica o vascular, siendo la más frecuente la mielitis transversa (Nobre et al., 2001). Los pacientes presentan de forma prácticamente constante una vejiga neurógena asociada en ocasiones a un nivel sensitivo-motor con



debilidad en piernas, incapacidad para la marcha, dolor lumbar y parestesias. Es una complicación poco habitual pero que puede verse en fases precoces de la infección por *S. mansoni* y *S. haematobium* en viajeros. *S. japonicum* se asocia con lesiones granulomatosas cerebrales que cursan con crisis comiciales o bien una franca encefalitis focal, habitualmente en pacientes procedentes de zona endémica (Ferrari et al., 2008).

#### **1.5.4 Coinfecciones y cáncer**

La esquistosomosis a menudo cursa junto con otras infecciones. Además de sus infecciones directas, la esquistosomosis puede afectar al sistema inmunológico y a las relaciones fisiológicas entre el hospedador y el parásito.

##### ***Esquistosomosis y cáncer***

Se ha demostrado como las cistitis crónicas producidas por *S. haematobium* se comportan como lesiones precancerosas que mediante alteraciones en la metilación del DNA degeneran con el tiempo en carcinomas de vejiga urinaria de tipo escamoso (Yosry, 2006; Mitreva, 2012; Conti et al., 2015). Esta asociación no ha sido aceptada con otras especies de esquistosomas en relación con carcinomas de colon o hepatocarcinomas, aunque algunos autores indican casos de asociación entre carcinoma colorrectal e infecciones producidas por *S. mansoni* (Salim et al., 2010).

##### ***Esquistosomosis y otras infecciones***

Los pacientes con esquistosomosis presentan mayores índices de portador crónico del antígeno Australia del virus de la hepatitis B y anticuerpos frente al virus de la hepatitis C. Se piensa que las campañas de tratamiento masivo parenteral con praziquantel en algunos países como Egipto contribuyeron a la transmisión de la infección del virus de la hepatitis C (Rao et al., 2002). La coinfección de esquistosomosis e infección crónica por virus de la hepatitis B y C se manifiesta con una fibrosis más intensa y precoz que en individuos no coinfectados (Kamal et al., 2004). Se cree que las lesiones de la esquistosomosis genital pueden alterar la barrera muco-cutánea favoreciendo la transmisión de las enfermedades de transmisión sexual, entre las que destaca la infección por VIH (Karanja et al., 2002; Mbabazi et al, 2001).

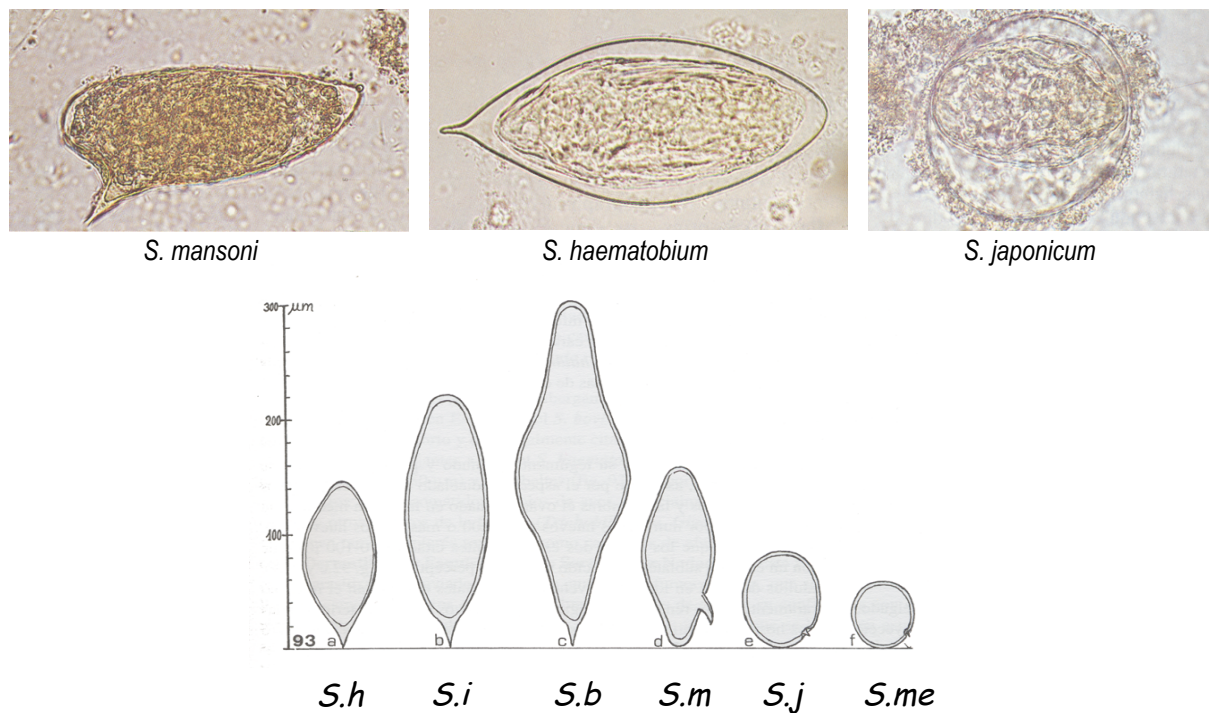
Por último, se ha descrito asociación entre abscesos hepáticos piogénicos por *Staphylococcus aureus* y la infección por *Schistosoma* spp. (Teixeira et al., 2001), así como septicemias ocasionadas por enterobacterias y esquistosomosis crónica intestinal (Gendrel et al., 1994).

## 1.6 Diagnóstico

El diagnóstico de la esquistosomosis humana está basado en datos clínicos y epidemiológicos. Sin embargo, estos datos, son en la mayoría de los casos, insuficientes para realizar un diagnóstico certero y seguro de esta parasitosis. Por tanto, se recurre a distintas técnicas de diagnóstico directo e indirecto.

### 1.6.1 Métodos parasitológicos

En la esquistosomosis crónica el diagnóstico parasitológico mediante el examen de muestras de heces o de orina es el método más utilizado para el diagnóstico de esta parasitosis, ya que permite identificar las diferentes especies de esquistosomas, visualizando su morfología característica de la fase huevo (Figura 6).



**Figura 6.-** Características morfológicas de huevos de *Schistosoma* spp. (Gállego Berenguer, 2014)

*S. mansoni*, *S. haematobium* y *S. intercalatum* presentan una fase de huevo con morfología ovoide y mayor tamaño (entre 100-200  $\mu\text{m}$ ), mientras que la fase de huevo de *S. japonicum* y *S. mekongi* tiene aspecto redondeado y menor tamaño (entre 50-100  $\mu\text{m}$ ). Además *S. haematobium* y *S. intercalatum* tienen una espina terminal prominente, mientras que *S. mansoni*, *S. japonicum* y *S. mekongi* tienen una espina lateral, el primero prominente y los otros dos vestigial.

La técnica utilizada para la detección de *S. mansoni*, *S. japonicum*, *S. intercalatum* y *S. mekongi* es el examen de heces mediante la técnica de Kato-Katz (Katz et al., 1972) examinando microscópicamente una muestra fresca de 50 mg de heces en extensión, pudiéndose llegar a detectar muestras con un mínimo de 20 huevos por gramo de heces. Se pueden observar huevos de *S. haematobium* en orina, mediante técnicas de filtración o sedimentación (Gyorkos et al., 2011). Se debe intentar recoger las muestras entre las 10:00 y las 14:00 horas, ya que aumenta la emisión de huevos por el ritmo circadiano del parásito. Si se sospecha que el paciente presenta una baja parasitemia se puede recurrir al test de eclosión, incubando las heces hasta que se consiga la salida de los miracidios desde los huevos, los cuales migran hacia una fuente de luz que se debe aplicar sobre la muestra.

La búsqueda de huevos de esquistosomas representa un método de diagnóstico específico, de bajo costo y sencillo de realizar, pudiendo utilizarse en laboratorios con estructuras precarias y con personal poco entrenado. Estas características hacen que este método sea aplicable en estudios de campo en áreas endémicas. Sin embargo, presenta graves inconvenientes en cuanto a su sensibilidad, especialmente cuando la intensidad de la infección es baja, tal como ocurre en áreas de baja prevalencia o en individuos con infecciones recientes (Berhe et al., 2004). Además, solo se pueden realizar después de que la producción y eliminación de huevos haya comenzado, la cual se inicia a los 42 días de la infección.

En áreas de baja transmisión, donde la sensibilidad obtenida por los métodos clásicos es baja, se utiliza la técnica COPT (test de precipitación circumoval), descrita por Oliver-González en el año 1954. Consiste en incubar huevos de *S. mansoni* con sueros de pacientes, considerándose positiva si existe más del 9% de precipitación alrededor de los huevos maduros (Alarcón de Noya, 2008).

### 1.6.2 Métodos serológicos

La esquistosomosis aguda supone un reto diagnóstico basado en un cuadro clínico compatible y una buena anamnesis que incluya un posible contacto de la piel con agua dulce (baño o deportes acuáticos) en áreas endémicas. El diagnóstico serológico es el método de elección en pacientes con sospecha clínica de esquistosomosis no inmunizados previamente. Se realiza habitualmente mediante ELISA, que puede confirmarse con inmunoblot. La serología suele positivizarse entre 4-6 semanas tras el contacto, por lo que en numerosas ocasiones su utilidad es únicamente como diagnóstico de confirmación. La detección de los antígenos circulantes anódicos (CAA) y catódicos (CCA), es el método más utilizado en el diagnóstico inmunológico directo (Gendrel et al., 1994). Estos antígenos son glucoconjugados que derivan de vermes adultos. Ambos pueden detectarse en sangre y orina, y el CCA en leche materna, permitiendo el diagnóstico de *S. mansoni*, *S. haematobium* y *S. japonicum*. Sin embargo, son compartidos por las especies nombradas y por tanto permiten solo el diagnóstico a nivel de género, aunque se presentan pocas reacciones cruzadas con otros parásitos. Se ha comercializado un test para detectar CCA en orina, utilizando tiras de nitrocelulosa (*dipstick*). La sensibilidad de esta prueba ha sido baja (Stothard et al., 2009).

La infección por esquistosomas es altamente inmunogénica y no es difícil demostrar la presencia de anticuerpos anti-esquistosomas en los sujetos infectados (Doenhoff et al., 2004). Se han descrito numerosos métodos, siendo el ELISA el más utilizado. Se han ensayado extractos totales de vermes adultos y huevos (mejor que los antígenos larvarios), fracciones purificadas de dichos extractos o proteínas recombinantes. El uso de antígenos de vermes adultos (los más fáciles de obtener), incluso procedentes de otros esquistosomas como *S. bovis*, han permitido diagnosticar infecciones humanas con *S. mansoni*, *S. haematobium* y *S. intercalatum* en inmigrantes subsaharianos (Pardo et al., 2004). Además este test se ha utilizado para confirmar el diagnóstico de pacientes con fiebre de Katayama (Pardo et al., 2007). Se ha comercializado un test denominado SEA-ELISA, en el que se utilizan antígenos solubles de huevo. Un estudio realizado en 150 niños en Zanzibar mostró una sensibilidad del 89% y una especificidad del 70% (Stothard et al., 2009). La alternativa para reducir la reactividad cruzada es por un lado eliminar los carbohidratos

responsables (Alarcón de Noya, 2008) y por otro aislar y purificar moléculas más específicas. Así se han ensayado diferentes preparaciones procedentes de vermes adultos como extractos microsomales, polisacáridos asociados a intestino, fosfatasa alcalina, proteínas de choque térmico y aislados de antígenos de adulto Sm31 y Sm32, obteniéndose diferentes resultados. También se han usado antígenos purificados de huevos, tales como los antígenos  $\omega$ -1,  $\alpha$ -1 y  $\kappa$ -5. Antígenos recombinantes procedentes de vermes adultos como RP26 o de huevos como CEF6 aún no han resuelto el problema (Pérez del Villar & Muro, 2013).

En conclusión, los métodos de inmunodiagnóstico, tanto directos como indirectos, presentan en general mayor sensibilidad que las técnicas utilizadas para el diagnóstico parasitológico directo. No obstante, el inmunodiagnóstico continúa planteando una serie de problemas, relacionados con la obtención de antígenos y la detección de reactividad cruzada. Además, la detección inmunológica de la esquistosomosis se retrasa habitualmente hasta la aparición de los correspondientes antígenos o anticuerpos, constituyendo una opción limitada para el diagnóstico en la fase aguda de la enfermedad. Por último, muchas veces la persistencia de antígenos, y especialmente de anticuerpos tras una terapia eficaz, hacen que se detecten “falsos positivos” correspondientes a pacientes que ya han eliminado el parásito.

### 1.6.3 Métodos moleculares

Para solucionar las limitaciones que presentan los métodos parasitológicos y serológicos en el diagnóstico de la esquistosomosis, en los últimos años se está trabajando en el uso de nuevos métodos moleculares más sensibles y específicos. En general, los métodos moleculares más utilizados han sido aquellos basados en la técnica de PCR y sus variantes, como PCR a tiempo real (RT-PCR) (Lier et al., 2008) o PCR-ELISA (Gomes et al., 2010) que permiten la detección de una secuencia nucleotídica específica de DNA de *Schistosoma* spp. en distintos tipos de muestras. La técnica de PCR ha sido poco usada en el diagnóstico de la esquistosomosis humana, habiendo sido utilizada principalmente para estudios filogenéticos y para la detección del parásito en aguas contaminadas o en su hospedador intermediario (Hamburger et al., 2001). La primera PCR descrita para el diagnóstico humano se debe a la amplificación de *S. mansoni* en muestras humanas de

suero y heces de pacientes infectados con este parásito (Rabello et al., 2002) (Pontes et al., 2002). Estos autores consiguen un amplicón de 121 pares de bases (pb) utilizando DNA de *S. mansoni*. Esta reacción de amplificación es capaz de detectar hasta 1 fg de DNA parasitario. Este producto de amplificación no se detecta al utilizar como DNA molde los extraídos de *Ascaris lumbricoides*, *Ancylostoma duodenale*, *Taenia solium* y *Trichuris trichiura*. Sin embargo, estos autores no comprueban la especificidad de esta reacción con DNA de otras especies de *Schistosoma* o de otros parásitos potencialmente presentes en el mismo nicho ecológico que *S. mansoni* (p.e.: *Plasmodium* spp., *Leishmania* spp., *Trypanosoma cruzi*, etc.). En la aplicación de la técnica sobre heces de donantes procedentes de un área endémica para *S. mansoni*, los autores detectan un número de muestras positivas en PCR y negativas en el diagnóstico parasitológico directo, Kato-Katz, y a la inversa (Pontes et al., 2003). Los primeros se atribuyen a pacientes con una infección leve, resultando en un diagnóstico negativo al examinar las heces, pero positivo al utilizar una técnica más sensible como la PCR. Los falsos negativos son atribuidos bien a la presencia de inhibidores en muestras concretas o, más probablemente, al hecho de que se recoge una porción de heces en la cual los huevos parasitarios pueden estar ausentes.

Posteriormente Sandoval et al, (2006a) empleando muestras de orina de pacientes infectados con diferentes especies de esquistosomas, amplifican un fragmento de 877 pb género específico y uno de 350 pb específico de *S. mansoni*. Esta reacción es capaz de detectar hasta 0,98 pg de DNA parasitario, presentando una sensibilidad del 94% con la amplificación género específica y del 100% cuando se amplificó el fragmento específico de *S. mansoni*. También se valoró la especificidad utilizando muestras de orina de pacientes diagnosticados de diferentes protozoosis y helmintosis, obteniendo una especificidad del 99% con la PCR género específica y del 98% con la PCR especie específica de *S. mansoni*. Además, en un experimento controlado realizado en ratones infectados con *S. mansoni* y comparándolo con la técnica de Kato-Katz y detección de anticuerpos específicos, estos autores observan que se puede amplificar DNA parasitario desde la primera semana postinfección (Sandoval et al., 2006b). En este punto se abre un nuevo camino para conseguir un método de diagnóstico directo y útil en la fase aguda de la esquistosomosis a partir de muestras de orina de fácil adquisición y manejo.

Estudios recientes han propuesto que los microRNAs podrían utilizarse como dianas terapéuticas (Jourdan et al., 2013) y también como biomarcadores de infección (Kjetland et al., 2006). Los microRNAs son pequeñas moléculas de RNA no codificantes producidas por animales, plantas y virus que tienen un papel fundamental en procesos fisiológicos y patológicos. Se incorporan en el complejo silenciador inducido por RNA (*RNA-induced silencing complex, RISC*) y mediante unión específica al RNA mensajero inhiben su traducción o desestabilizan su estructura. Dependiendo de la diana molecular sobre la que actúen regularán diversos procesos biológicos como el desarrollo, proliferación, diferenciación celular, muerte celular, metabolismo, etc. (Leutscher et al., 2000). Recientemente se han identificado varios microRNAs específicos en suero de conejos y ratones infectados experimentalmente con esquistosomas que podrían actuar como biomarcadores para el diagnóstico de la esquistosomosis: Bantam, miR-3479 y miR-10, en el caso de conejos infectados con *S. japonicum* (Cheng et al., 2013) y Bantam, miR-3479-3p y miR-277, en el caso de ratones infectados con *S. mansoni* (Hoy et al., 2014). Para aumentar la sensibilidad en su detección, algunos autores han utilizado otras técnicas aún más complejas como «RAKE assays», «rollingcircle amplification» o «DNA concatamers-based amplification» así como combinaciones de novedosas técnicas para la detección de la señal utilizando complejos microscopios electroquímicos o de fluorescencia (Zhu et al., 2014). Por tanto, el uso de estas moléculas y métodos para su detección requieren de una especialización técnica y de un aparataje costoso y sofisticado que dificulta también su estandarización en el diagnóstico de esta parasitosis.

En los últimos años se están desarrollando test rápidos y sencillos basados en métodos oligocromatográficos así como en técnicas de PCR a tiempo real. El primero de ellos (*oligochromatographic dipstick test*) se puede realizar en 10 minutos, detectándose hasta 10 fg de DNA genómico (Akinwale et al., 2008). Esperemos que en los próximos años, este método de diagnóstico rápido se pueda aplicar con éxito en áreas endémicas. La PCR a tiempo real (Wichmann et al., 2009) ha sido desarrollada a partir de grandes volúmenes de plasma (10 ml). Presenta las ventajas de su validez en esquistosomosis crónica y en la fiebre de Katayama, a pesar de que las muestras humanas utilizadas hasta el momento son escasas. Es de difícil aplicación en áreas endémicas debido a su alto coste. Sin embargo, puede ser útil para el diagnóstico de esquistosomosis importadas en países industrializados.

En este punto y teniendo en cuenta todas las limitaciones que presentan las actuales técnicas de diagnóstico molecular se hace necesario el desarrollo y aplicación de nuevos métodos que reúnan las características para un diagnóstico ideal de la esquistosomosis: alta sensibilidad y especificidad, facilidad de uso e interpretación, aplicabilidad a diferentes tipos de muestras, rapidez, bajo coste y uso fácil en zonas endémicas de la enfermedad. La técnica molecular de amplificación isotérmica de ácidos nucleicos tipo LAMP (*Loop-mediated isothermal amplification*) reúne estos requisitos y la convierte en una herramienta alternativa a otros métodos moleculares más complejos para el diagnóstico de la esquistosomosis. El método LAMP fue desarrollado en el año 2000 como un método de amplificación de ácidos nucleicos en condiciones isotérmicas de elevada sensibilidad (Notomi et al., 2000) que permite la discriminación visual de los resultados positivos sin equipos especializados de alto coste (Tomita et al., 2008). Se ha utilizado con éxito para la identificación de multitud de agentes infecciosos, incluyendo parásitos (Fu et al., 2010) y se considera que tiene un elevado potencial para su aplicación como método rápido de diagnóstico en áreas endémicas por su facilidad de uso e interpretación (Njiru, 2012). En relación a la esquistosomosis, ya se han realizado con éxito diversos estudios mediante LAMP para el diagnóstico temprano y el seguimiento post-tratamiento de la infección por *S. japonicum*, tanto en un modelo experimental utilizando conejos (Wang et al., 2011) como en muestras clínicas de pacientes (Xu et al., 2015). También se ha comprobado su eficacia en el diagnóstico temprano de la infección por *S. mansoni* utilizando muestras de heces de un modelo murino de infección experimental (Fernández-Soto et al., 2014). En este estudio, se detectó DNA de *S. mansoni* en las heces de los ratones infectados a la primera semana postinfección, cuando todavía no ha comenzado la eliminación de huevos del parásito, demostrando así la elevada sensibilidad del LAMP como método de diagnóstico temprano de la esquistosomosis. También se ha desarrollado un LAMP para el diagnóstico de *S. haematobium* denominado "Rapid-Heat LAMP Method" capaz de detectar hasta 1 fg/μl de DNA de *S. haematobium* en muestras de orina (Gandasegui et al, 2015). Algunos trabajos han demostrado también la utilidad del LAMP en estudios epidemiológicos y de control de la enfermedad en laboratorios de campo en zona endémica, aplicando el método para la detección del DNA de *S. mansoni*, *S. haematobium* (Abbasi et al., 2010; Hamburger et al.,

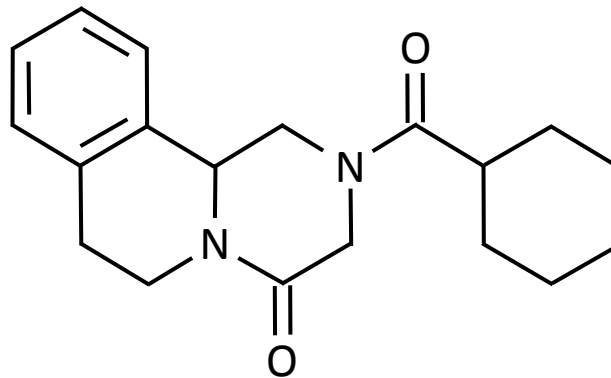


2013) y *S. japonicum* (Kumagai et al., 2010; Tong et al., 2015) en los caracoles que actúan como sus hospedadores intermediarios.

Es de gran importancia disponer de métodos de diagnóstico más sensibles y específicos como herramientas útiles para hacer estudios de campo donde se evalúen fármacos para el tratamiento y moléculas como posibles candidatos a vacunas frente a la esquistosomosis.

## 1.7 Tratamiento

Durante la década de 1970, en los laboratorios farmacéuticos alemanes de E. Merck, Darmstadt (Seubert et al., 1997) y Bayer A.G. Leverkusen (Reich et al., 1998), se sintetizaron una serie de compuestos derivados del sistema de anillos isoquinolina-pirazina, estructura del núcleo del praziquantel (Figura 7), moléculas con un potencial efecto sedante. Este fármaco se utiliza como tratamiento de elección para las diferentes formas de esquistosomosis (Cioli et al., 2003). El praziquantel se administra por vía oral, es poco tóxico y además de muy bajo coste. Sin embargo, no previene la reinfección y para su administración hay que tener en cuenta la fase de la enfermedad y la especie responsable (Pérez-Arellano et al., 2007). En fase aguda el praziquantel es altamente eficaz para formas adultas, siendo menor en esquistosómulas. Por ello, el tratamiento de elección en esta fase es praziquantel 20 mg/kg cada 12 horas junto con dexametasona 20 mg/día durante 3 días. Es necesario repetir la dosis de praziquantel a las 3-4 semanas. En fase crónica la dosis de praziquantel depende de la especie involucrada. Para infecciones por *S. mansoni* y *S. haematobium* la dosis recomendada es de 20 mg/kg cada 12 horas durante un día. En el caso de *S. japonicum*, 20 mg/kg cada 8 horas durante un día. Como tratamiento alternativo se utiliza oxamniquina, 10 mg/kg cada 12 horas durante 2-3 días (Muro et al, 2010).



**Figura 7.-** Representación gráfica de la fórmula del praziquantel, (R)-2-(ciclohexanecarbonyl)-11b-methyl-1,2,3,6,7,11b-hexahydro-4H-pyrazino [2,1-a] isoquinolin-4-one (C<sub>19</sub>H<sub>24</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>) con masa molecular de 312,41 g/mol

La OMS ha reconocido la necesidad de identificar nuevos compuestos como alternativas al praziquantel. En la última década tan solo los derivados de la artemisina han surgido como un complemento a la terapia frente a la esquistosomosis. La utilización de estos derivados en combinación con el praziquantel puede ser una buena estrategia de control (Pérez del Villar et al., 2012), ya que los derivados de la artemisina son efectivos contra las formas juveniles del parásito (Fenwick et al., 2003). Además se ha demostrado en numerosos ensayos clínicos la actividad de los derivados de artemisina como agentes quimioprolácticos (Xiao, 2005). También se ha utilizado la mefloquina contra la esquistosomosis, con buenos resultados en modelos experimentales (Keiser et al., 2009). De forma similar se ha utilizado edelfosina (derivado alquilfosfolípido) aislada o en combinación con praziquantel (Yepes et al., 2014; Yepes et al., 2015).

Para erradicar esta enfermedad, son necesarias medidas de educación sanitaria, principalmente evitando el contacto con aguas infectadas. También son necesarias mejoras en las viviendas, en los tratamientos de aguas de consumo y residuales y en los sistemas de irrigación como construcción de presas y pantanos. La aplicación generalizada de tratamientos preventivos ha permitido disminuir la prevalencia de la enfermedad en determinadas zonas. No obstante, con estas actuaciones no ha sido posible erradicar la enfermedad y además se han generado resistencias al praziquantel. Recientemente se sugiere que transportadores SMDR2 están involucrados en la resistencia generada al praziquantel en infecciones por *S. mansoni* (Pinto-Almeida et al., 2015).

## 1.8 Vacunas

A pesar de los esfuerzos realizados para la eliminación de la esquistosomosis utilizando praziquantel en aplicaciones masivas, aún sigue existiendo una gran prevalencia en regiones endémicas de la enfermedad. Se estima que son necesarios casi dos mil millones de comprimidos de praziquantel para tratar a 400 millones de personas por año en África subsahariana. Esto tendría un coste total de 100 millones de dólares en los 5 últimos años. Otro inconveniente al tratamiento masivo con praziquantel es que en países en vías de desarrollo el tratamiento con este fármaco está restringido a niños escolarizados (Siddiqui et al., 2011). Sin embargo, en estos países existe una gran cantidad de niños que no acuden al colegio de forma habitual. Además hay que tener en cuenta que los tratamientos con dosis repetidas de praziquantel no han sido capaces de eliminar la infección. Un estudio realizado en Kenia demuestra la persistencia de la transmisión en áreas del lago Victoria después de realizar un tratamiento masivo a la población (Black et al., 2010). También es bien conocida la resistencia originada por el praziquantel (James et al., 2009). Por último y teniendo en cuenta que los esquistosomas no se multiplican en el hospedador definitivo, tan solo una reducción parcial en la carga parasitaria tendría un gran impacto en el control de la enfermedad. Todas estas razones justifican la búsqueda de una vacuna, cuyo desarrollo y disponibilidad sería una herramienta imprescindible para el control de esta infección. A pesar de que muchos grupos de investigación a lo largo de las últimas décadas han puesto empeño en lograrlo, solamente dos de ellas han llegado a fase clínica en seres humanos (Toscano et al., 2015). En el momento actual todavía no se conocen los mecanismos de protección involucrados. No obstante existen datos que nos hacen pensar que es posible el desarrollo de una vacuna efectiva contra esta enfermedad. Se podrían resumir en tres aspectos principales (Siddiqui et al., 2011): *(i) estudios en ratones han demostrado que la inmunización con una dosis de cercarias irradiadas produce una reducción entre el 50-70 % de los vermes adultos, la cual puede aumentar hasta el 80% cuando se utilizan dos o tres inmunizaciones; (ii) en modelos experimentales resistentes a la infección se conoce que existe una eliminación de esquistosomas mediante una respuesta inmune coordinada del propio hospedador; (iii) datos en población humana de áreas endémicas* demuestran el desarrollo de cierta protección natural tras infecciones repetidas

con el parásito. Por lo anteriormente expuesto, se deduce que es posible desarrollar una vacuna contra la enfermedad y que la protección de esta vacuna va a ser diferente a la obtenida por vacunas utilizadas contra infecciones bacterianas y víricas, ya que la complejidad en estos organismos es mucho menor. En este sentido algunos autores opinan que una protección inicial del 50% sería suficiente para aplicar una vacuna contra la esquistosomosis, en términos de reducción importante en la morbilidad y la mortalidad originada por esta infección (Todd et al., 2002).

El principal elemento de una vacuna es el componente activo o también denominado componente antigénico. Su característica principal es estimular una respuesta inmunológica específica en el sujeto vacunado. En las vacunas modernas donde se utiliza una molécula o incluso parte de la misma, es necesaria la utilización de otros componentes que por un lado protejan al antígeno y por otro activen una respuesta inmunológica dirigida. En este sentido son necesarios adyuvantes e inmunomoduladores como elementos complementarios de la vacuna. Por último, la aplicación en zonas geográficas remotas y con pocos recursos requiere de soportes estables que permitan conjugar todos los elementos anteriores en vehículos que se adapten a las circunstancias requeridas.

Hasta el momento actual se han utilizado alrededor de cien antígenos con potencial inmunoprotector contra la esquistosomosis. De ellos el 25% confieren diferentes niveles de protección. Las moléculas que presentaron mayor protección son: glutatión S-transferasas (Sm28GST, Sh28GST), tetraspaninas (TSP1 y TSP2), calpaina (Smp80), una proteína del tegumento denominada Sm29, 14-3-3 y proteínas de unión a ácidos grasos (Sm14 y Fh15). De estas moléculas solamente Sh28GST (Riveau et al., 2012) y Sm14 han llegado a estudios clínicos en fase 2 (Oswaldo et al., 2000). Por otro lado, TSP2 entrará en estudios clínicos en fase 1 próximamente (Curti et al., 2013).

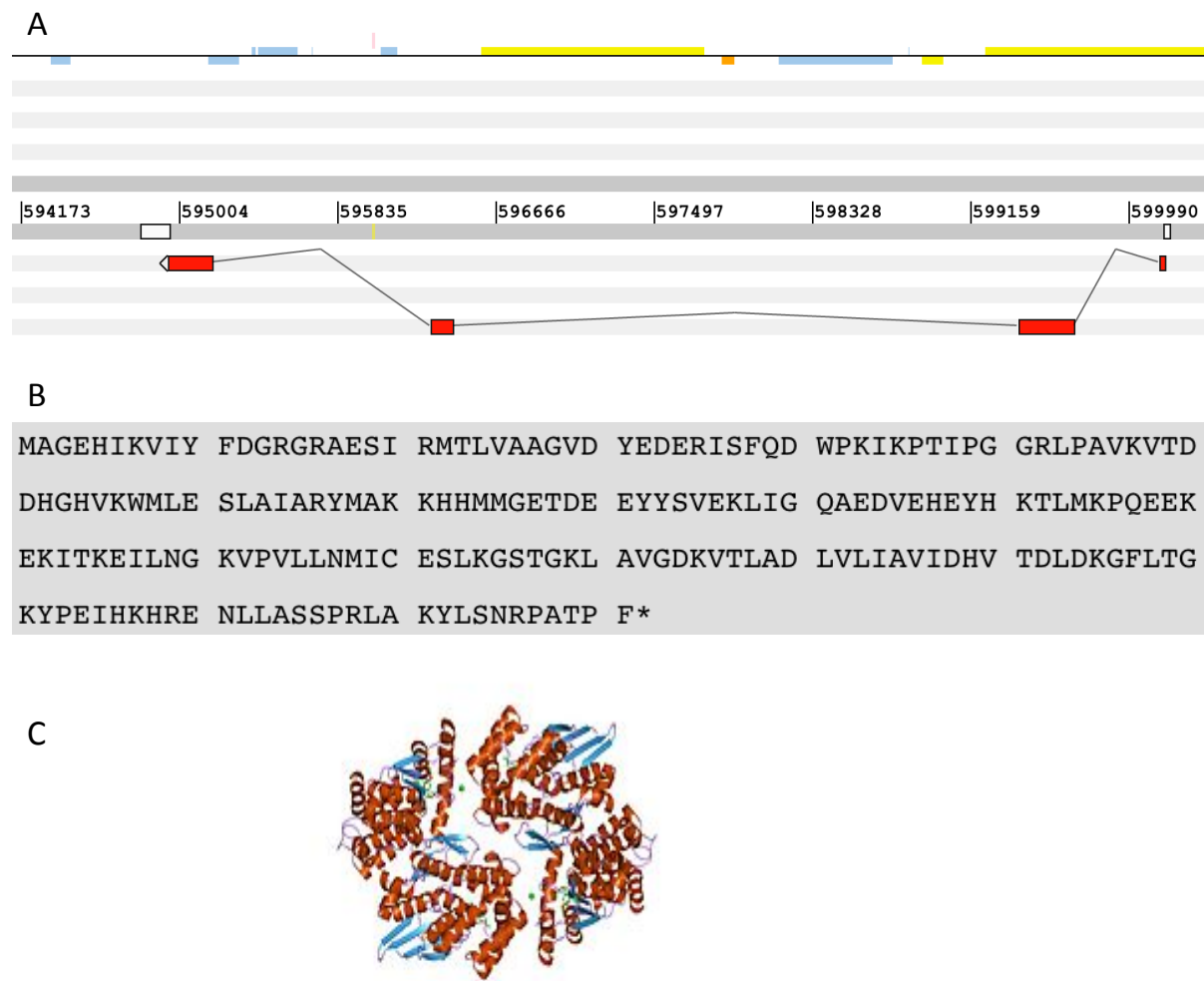
### **1.8.1 Glutatión S-transferasa(GST)**

Es una familia de isoenzimas con actividad catalítica que desempeña un importante papel en los sistemas de detoxificación parasitaria. También se relaciona con el incremento de la solubilidad de la hematina en el tubo digestivo del parásito. Las GSTs son enzimas responsables de la eliminación a nivel celular de un gran número de compuestos tóxicos, actuando sobre diferentes sustratos. Neutralizan los compuestos tóxicos a través de la

conjugación con glutatión, lo que las hace más solubles en agua para que sean rápidamente excretados (Smith et al., 1986; Balloul et al., 1987b; Sexton et al., 1994; McTigue et al., 1995; Morrison et al., 1996).

Basándose en la especificidad de sustrato y en su estructura primaria, las GSTs se han clasificado en 6 grupos:  $\alpha$ ,  $\theta$ ,  $\kappa$ ,  $\mu$ ,  $\pi$ ,  $\zeta$ . Generalmente la identidad entre isoformas de la misma clase es cercana al 70%, mientras que en isoformas de diferente clase no pasa del 30%. Su estructura posee tres plegamientos que pueden subdividirse en dos dominios; uno de ellos el N-terminal que adopta el plegamiento  $\beta\alpha\beta\alpha\beta\alpha$  de unión a la GSH y que es conservado en todas las clases, y el otro un dominio C-terminal formado completamente por hélices  $\alpha$  unido al sustrato. Este dominio es menos conservado tanto en la secuencia como a nivel estructural, ya que sus hélices varían en número, longitud y orientación (Rossjohn et al., 1997). En *S. japonicum* y *S. mansoni* han sido caracterizadas dos isoformas con pesos de 26 y 28 kDa, denominadas Sj26 y Sm26, que están ubicadas en la clase  $\zeta$ , y Sj28 y Sm28 ubicadas en la clase  $\alpha$  (Wright et al., 1991; Rossjohn et al., 1997).

En la figura 8A se representa el gen de Sm28GST que aparece en la hebra *reverse* del genoma de *S. mansoni*, constituido por cuatro exones. Además se representan las características de su proteína, compuesta por 211 aminoácidos (Figura 8B). Por último se muestra, la estructura tridimensional del dominio C terminal (Figura 8C).



**Figura 8.-** Proteína Sm28GS Sm\_054160: A. Gen con cuatro exones; B. Secuencia de aminoácidos. C. Estructura tridimensional. Información obtenida de GeneDB

Las GSTs se localizan en diferentes tejidos de adultos y esquistosómulas como se indica en la tabla 2 (Taylor et al., 1988).

**Tabla 2.-** Fase de expresión y localización de antígenos utilizados en vacunas contra la esquistosomosis

| ANTÍGENOS            | FASE EN LA QUE SE EXPRESAN | LOCALIZACIÓN  |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---|
| <b>GST</b>           | Adulto                     | Tegumento, parénquima y células epiteliales excretoras                          |
| <b>Tetraspaninas</b> | Adulto                     | Tegumento   |
|                      | Esquistosómula             | Tegumento   |
| <b>Calpainas</b>     | Adulto                     | Tegumento   |
| <b>Sm29</b>          | Adulto                     | Tegumento   |
|                      | Esquistosómula             | Tegumento   |
| <b>14-3-3</b>        | Adulto                     | Tegumento, subtegumento, capa muscular, parénquima, células vitelinas y oocitos |
| <b>FABPs</b>         | Adulto                     | Tegumento, capa muscular, intestino   |
|                      | Esquistosómula             |   |
|                      | Cercaria                   |   |
|                      | Huevo                      |   |

Los diferentes estudios de protección en animales experimentales se muestran en la Tabla 3. Se han realizado estudios utilizando proteínas nativas, recombinantes y vacunas de DNA, combinadas con diferentes adyuvantes (algunos no pueden ser utilizados en ensayos clínicos como el adyuvante de Freund). Las protecciones varían entre el 23- 68% en cuanto a la reducción de vermes adultos.

Experimentos *in vitro* demuestran que la protección originada por Sh28GST está relacionada con una citotoxicidad celular mediada por anticuerpos con participación de eosinófilos. Además se han encontrado altas concentraciones de IFN $\gamma$  e IL-2. (Toscano et al., 2015).

**Tabla 3.-** Tipo de vacuna, adyuvantes utilizados y niveles de protección de antígenos utilizados en vacunas contra la esquistosomosis

| ANTÍGENOS        | TIPO DE VACUNA | ADYUVANTE                            | PROTECCIÓN       |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Sm28GST</b>   | Nativa         | Freund                               | 40-68%           |
|                  | Recombinante   | AL(OH) <sub>3</sub>                  | 46%              |
|                  | DNA            | IL-18                                | 23%              |
| <b>Sh28GST</b>   | Recombinante   | Freund                               | 77% (fecundidad) |
|                  |                | BCG                                  | 60%              |
| <b>TSP1</b>      | Recombinante   | Freund                               | 29-38%           |
| <b>TSP2</b>      | Recombinante   | Freund                               | 53-61%           |
| <b>Smp-80</b>    | Recombinante   | Agonista TLR7 y TLR8                 | 51%              |
|                  | DNA            | Citocinas: IL-2, IL-4, IL-12, GM-CSF | 39-57%           |
| <b>Sm29</b>      | Recombinante   | Freund                               | 51%              |
|                  |                | AL(OH) <sub>3</sub> y CPG            | 20 %             |
| <b>Sj 14-3-3</b> | Recombinante   | IL-12                                | 34-45%           |
| <b>Sm 14-3-3</b> | Recombinante   | Freund                               | 25-46%           |
| <b>Sb 14-3-3</b> | Recombinante   | Sistema ADAD                         | 40-77%           |

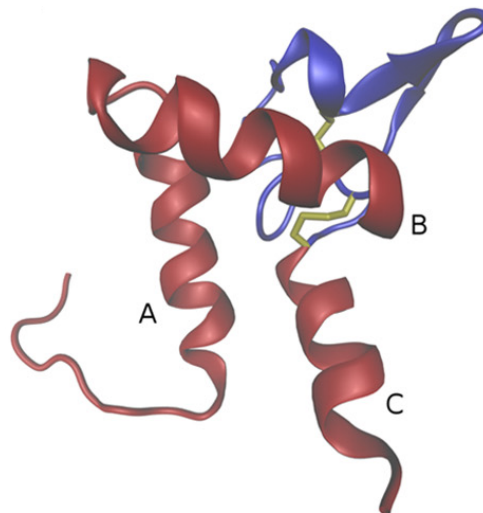
Como hemos comentado previamente la GST ha sido una de las candidatas a vacuna que ha llegado a fase clínica utilizando la molécula Sh28GST. En un estudio realizado en voluntarios humanos por Riveau et al. (2012) se determinó la seguridad y tolerancia de la Sh28GST. Las personas vacunadas recibieron 100 µg de antígeno recombinante en hidróxido de aluminio. La vacuna no generó toxicidad. Se observaron altos niveles de anticuerpos IgG1 e IgG3 y bajos títulos de anticuerpos IgG2 e IgGA. También se detectaron niveles significativos de IL-5 e IL-13. Por tanto la vacuna Sh28GST induce respuestas tipo Th2.



## 1.8.2 Tetraspaninas

Las tetraspaninas son una familia de proteínas que se expresan en la membrana plasmática de organismos eucariotas. Su función está relacionada con procesos que ocurren en la superficie de las células, formando complejos con otras proteínas de membrana denominados microdominios enriquecidos en tetraspaninas. Estas moléculas participan en procesos de invasión, desarrollo celular, proliferación e inducción de respuestas inmunológicas específicas. También se ha puesto de manifiesto que las tetraspaninas son liberadas en vesículas denominadas exosomas y se piensa que estas moléculas pueden estar implicadas en la formación y excreción de estas vesículas (Jia et al., 2014).

La estructura de las tetraspaninas contiene cuatro dominios transmembrana, tres dominios intracelulares pequeños y dos dominios extracelulares en forma de bucle denominados EC1 y EC2 (Maecker et al., 1997) (Figura 9).



**Figura 9.-** Estructura tridimensional de TSP2 (Tomado de Jia J et al., 2014)

Las tetraspaninas se han localizado en el tegumento de adultos y esquistosómulas (Tabla 2). Por otro lado, los diferentes estudios en animales experimentales se muestran en la Tabla 3. De las dos tetraspaninas ensayadas, TSP2 indujo los mayores niveles de protección, alcanzando el 61% (Tran et al., 2006; Toscano et al., 2015). Sin embargo, cuando se utiliza TSP2 con hidróxido de aluminio y CPG como adyuvantes, los porcentajes de protección se reducen al 27%.

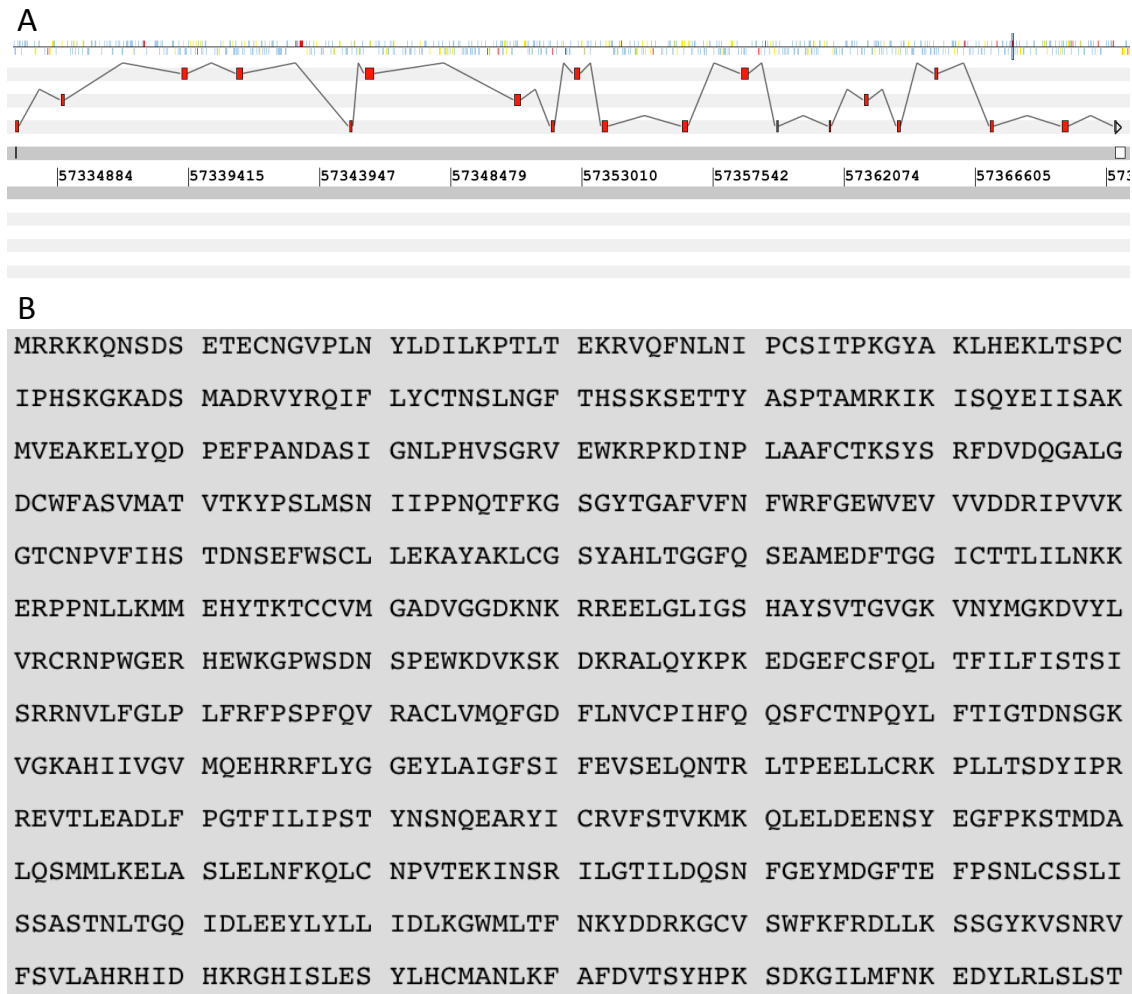
Experimentos en ratones inmunizados con las formas recombinantes de las tetraspaninas inducen un incremento en los títulos de anticuerpos IgG1 e IgG2a. Se observan altos niveles de IL-4 e IL-10 en ratones inmunizados con una proteína quimérica compuesta por TSP2 y por aspártico-proteasa (Na-APR-1) procedente de uncinarias (Pearson et al., 2012). Es de destacar, que recombinantes de TSP2 ortólogos en *S. japonicum* no inducen protección ya que existe un alto grado de polimorfismo de TSP2 en las diferentes especies de esquistosomas (Cai et al., 2008). En la actualidad, TSP2 está siendo producida a gran escala para ser evaluada en estudios en fase 1 (Curti et al., 2013).

### 1.8.3 Calpaina

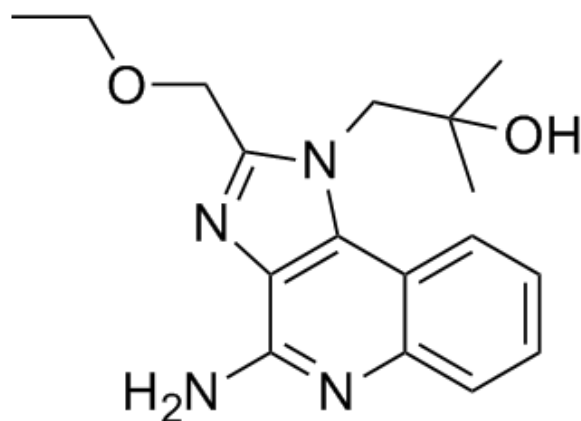
Las calpainas son tiol-proteasas no lisosómicas que se activan en presencia de calcio. En los esquistosomas están compuestas por dos subunidades, una pequeña de 28 kDa y una subunidad larga de 78 kDa. Esta última se ha denominado Smp80 y posee actividad proteolítica. Además interviene en mecanismos de evasión parasitaria involucrados en el cambio de moléculas de la superficie del esquistosoma. Sus transcritos están localizados en la hebra *forward* del genoma de *S. mansoni*. Poseen numerosos exones como se representa en la Figura 10A.

Se localizan en el tegumento de *S. mansoni*, *S. japonicum* y *S. haematobium* (Tabla 2) Smp-80 ha sido evaluada en modelos experimentales de ratones, cricetos y cobayas frente a infecciones experimentales de *S. mansoni*, *S. haematobium* y *S. japonicum*. Se han obtenido niveles de protección del 51% utilizando Smp-80 recombinante y agonistas TLR7/ TLR8 como adyuvantes, cuyo estructura química se comercializa con el nombre de resiquimod (Siddiqui et al., 2011) (Figura 11).

Cuando se han utilizado en modelos experimentales vacunas de DNA con Smp-80 se observan niveles de protección entre 39-57%, utilizándose diversos tipos de citocinas como adyuvantes (Tabla 3). Los mecanismos inmunológicos protectores inducidos por Smp-80 están relacionados con un predominio de las respuestas Th1 detectándose altos niveles de IFN $\gamma$  y de anticuerpos IgG2a (Siddiqui et al., 2003; Toscano et al., 2015). Esta molécula está en proceso de producción a gran escala con la finalidad de estudiarse posteriormente en ensayos clínicos fase 1/fase2.



**Figura 10.-** Proteína Smp-80 Smp\_214180 A. Gen de la calpaina; B. Secuencia de aminoácidos. Información obtenida de GeneDB



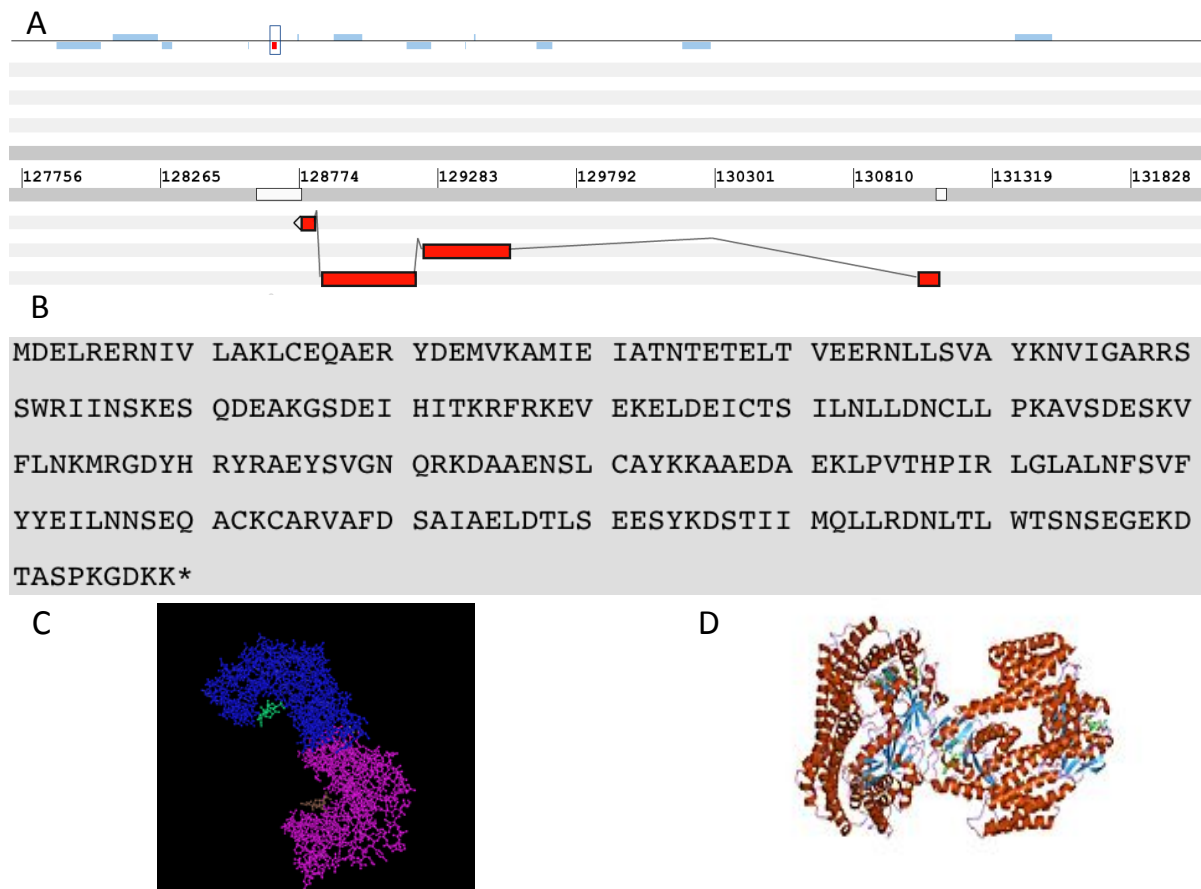
**Figura 11.-** Estructura química del resiquimod, potente agonista sintético de receptores TLR7/TLR8, utilizado como adyuvante junto con la subunidad larga de calpaina denominada Smp-80

#### 1.8.4 Sm29

La molécula Sm29 fue identificada por estudios del transcriptoma de *S. mansoni* como una de las proteínas más expresadas en el tegumento del parásito. Se ha encontrado tanto en adultos como en esquistosómulas (Tabla 2) y no se conoce hasta el momento su función específica. La protección obtenida en diferentes estudios oscila entre el 20% cuando se utiliza hidróxido de aluminio junto a CPG y del 51% cuando se asocia con adyuvante completo de Freund (Tabla 3). Los mecanismos inmunológicos asociados a la protección se atribuyen al aumento de la producción de anticuerpos IgG, IgG1 e IgG2a y a un incremento de citocinas IFN $\gamma$ , TNF $\alpha$  e IL-10. En los últimos años se ha desarrollado una vacuna quimérica compuesta por TSP2 y Sm29 cuyos niveles de protección no superan el 35% de reducción de la carga parasitaria (Cardoso et al., 2008; Pinheiro et al., 2014).

#### 1.8.5 14-3-3

Las moléculas 14-3-3 son proteínas altamente conservadas con pesos moleculares que oscilan entre 24 y 33 kDa, y están caracterizadas por tener en su secuencia una región llamada "motivo 14-3-3". Forman dímeros espontáneamente (Tzivion & Avruch, 2002) de modo que cada monómero tiene varias hélices  $\alpha$  por medio de las cuales interacciona con otras proteínas. Su estructura dimérica le permite unirse con dos o más ligandos simultáneamente (Fu et al., 2000; Mc Gonigle et al., 2002). La familia 14-3-3 está formada por varias isoformas que varían dependiendo del organismo estudiado, por ejemplo en mamíferos y concretamente en el hombre, se han descrito siete isoformas ( $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\epsilon$ ,  $\zeta$ ,  $\eta$ ,  $\sigma$ ,  $\tau$ ) cada una codificada por su gen correspondiente (Aitken et al., 1995a,d). Estas isoformas pueden encontrarse en un mismo tejido formando homodímeros o heterodímeros, lo que está relacionado con la diversidad funcional de estas proteínas (Aitken et al., 1995b,c,d). Todas las proteínas 14-3-3 presentan una estructura terciaria similar y la estructura primaria está definida por las isoformas  $\zeta$  y  $\tau$ . Cada polipéptido está conformado por 9  $\alpha$ -hélices designadas por las letras A-I, organizadas antiparalelamente, cada una separada por un pequeño bucle. Los cuatro residuos N-terminal de las hélices A-D están situados en un mismo plano y forman una extensa superficie del dímero con una cavidad central en la interfase que está alineada por los residuos polares y cargados (Tzivion & Avruch, 2002) (Figura 12).



**Figura 12.-** Proteína 14-3-3 Smp\_002410: A. Gen con cuatro exones de 14-3-3 epsilon2 de *S. mansoni* ; B. Secuencia de aminoácidos; C. Estructura molecular de un dímero de 14-3-3 unido a un péptido; D. Estructura cristalizada

Hay una caracterización muy completa de las isoformas de estas proteínas en *Schistosoma* spp. Estas isoformas varían de acuerdo al estado de desarrollo en el cual se encuentra el parásito durante su ciclo de vida. En 1995 fue aislada la isoforma llamada 14-3-3.1 de vermes adultos de *S. mansoni* (Sm14-3-3.1). En el mismo estudio se realizaron análisis del RNAm, por transcripción reversa, de esporocistos, miracidios, cercarias y adultos, encontrándose abundante señal de transcripción en adultos y miracidios, escasa en esporocistos y ninguna señal en cercarlas (Tabla 2).

Las proteínas 14-3-3 participan en una amplia variedad de procesos biológicos, actuando en diferentes mecanismos reguladores mediados principalmente a través de su unión a secuencias específicas de serina, pero también de treonina en sus proteínas blanco (Aitken., 1995d; Tzivion et al., 2001; Foucault et al., 2003). Las 14-3-3 tienen la capacidad de actuar como moduladores uniéndose a una variedad de proteínas con funciones diversas

(quinasas, fosfatasas, receptores transmembrana) (MacGonigle et al., 2001). Estas proteínas actúan en la mayoría de las ocasiones en un mismo proceso o ruta reguladora vital como la transducción de la señal mitogénica (Ford et al., 1994), la apoptosis celular y el control del ciclo celular, ejerciendo sobre ellas su función como activadores o inhibidores (Dubois et al., 1997). Más de 60 proteínas han sido relacionadas con la 14C 3C 3 *in vivo* (Skoulakis & Davis, 1998; Chung et al., 1999; Finnie et al., 1999; Fu et al., 2000; Roberts, 2000). Algunas de esas proteínas y los procesos fisiológicos en los que están involucradas son los siguientes: (i) *actuando como señales intracelulares*: Raf, MLK, MEKK, PI-3 kinasa, IRS-1; (ii) *en el ciclo celular*: Cdc25, Wee1, CDK2, y centrosomas; (iii) *en la apoptosis*: BAD y ASK-1 (Tzivion et al., 1998, 2001; Schechtman et al., 2000).

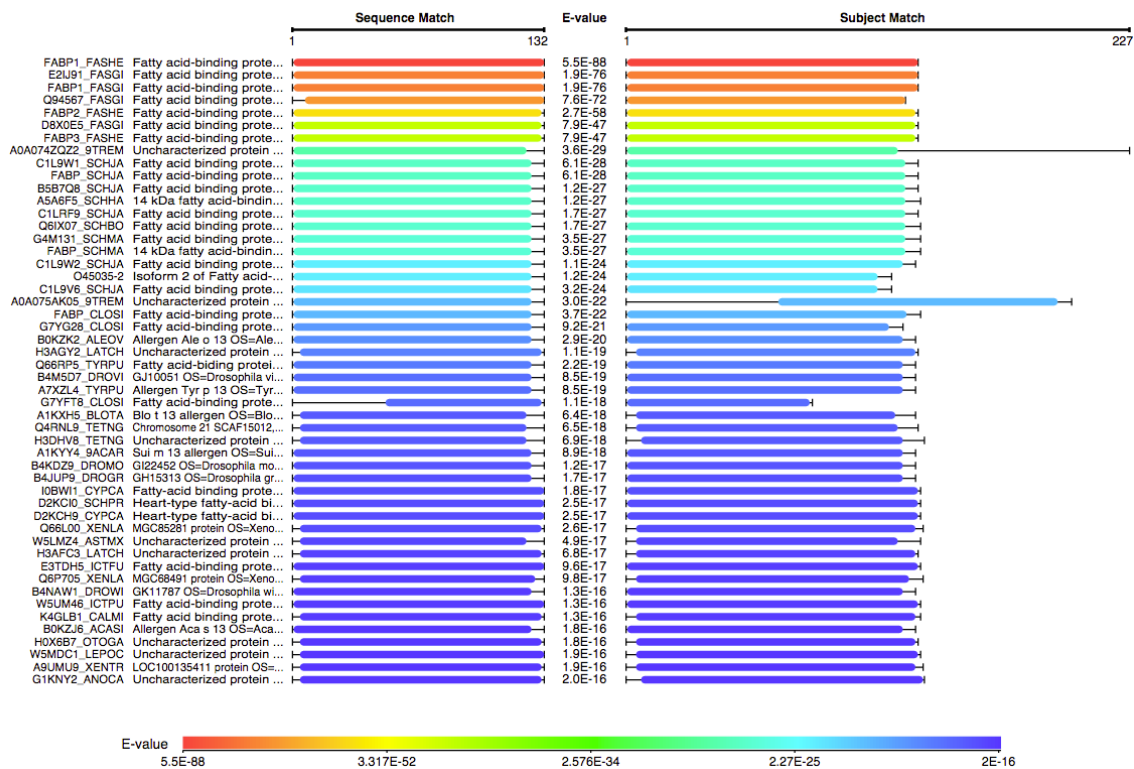
Zhang et al. (2001) emplearon una mezcla de cuatro plásmidos que codificaban cuatro moléculas de *S. japonicum* (Sj62, Sj28, Sj23 y Sj14-3-3). También fue usado un plásmido que codificaba IL-12 con el fin de observar si potenciaba las respuestas tipo Th1. Los ratones fueron vacunados tres veces con esta mezcla por vía intramuscular. La respuesta inmunológica obtenida fue de tipo Th1 caracterizada por una alta producción de IFN $\gamma$  y altos títulos de anticuerpos del tipo IgG. La protección obtenida (Tabla 3), expresada como disminución de la carga parasitaria, está situada en el rango de 34% a 45%, en dos experimentos y en el tercero no se halló protección. En otro estudio experimental de vacunación fue utilizada la proteína recombinante Sm14-3-3.1 tanto en su forma libre como fusionada con GST (Schechtman et al., 2001). La reducción de vermes obtenida fue del 25-46% en el caso de la proteína libre y de 33,7% para la fusión. Nuestro grupo de investigación aisló 14-3-3 de *S. bovis* denominado Sb14 $\zeta$ . Los estudios de protección en ratones BALB/c demostraron una reducción de vermes entre 58-77% en infecciones experimentales con *S. mansoni* (Siles-Lucas et al, 2007) y entre 40-61% frente a *S. bovis* (Uribe et al, 2007). Las respuestas inmunológicas de los animales vacunados mostraron que los mayores niveles de protección no se relacionan necesariamente con una respuesta Th1-dominante.

### 1.8.6 FABPs

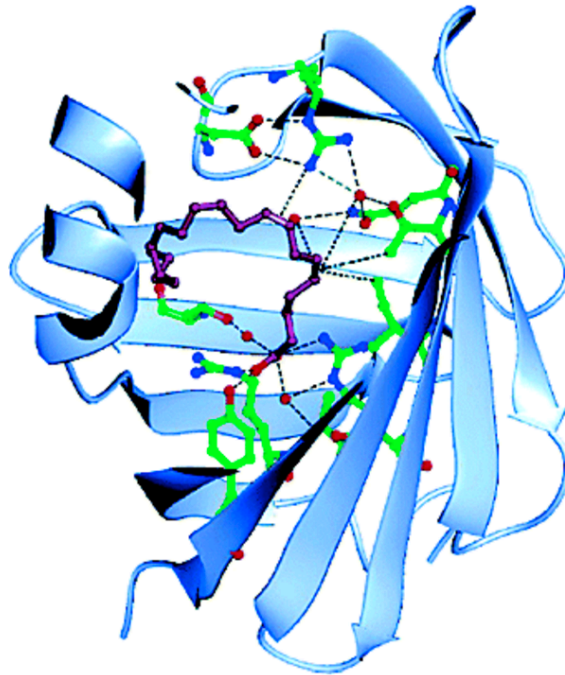
Las proteínas de unión a ácidos grasos, denominadas FABPs, son una familia de moléculas de pequeño tamaño (12-15 kDa) cuya función principal es el transporte de lípidos. Se han descrito doce FABPs en vertebrados y más de treinta en invertebrados. Están

ausentes en arqueobacterias y levaduras. Presentan entre un 20-70% de identidad en la secuencia de aminoácidos, con una estructura terciaria altamente conservada (Figura 13) (Zheng et al., 2013).

La estructura de estas proteínas fue conocida de forma más detallada por los estudios realizados con la molécula Sm14. Esta proteína tiene un peso molecular de 14,84 kDa y 133 aminoácidos, obtenida a partir de un cDNA de *S. mansoni* de 399 nucleótidos (Moser et al., 1991). Se ha demostrado que esta molécula guarda una gran homología con varios polipéptidos unidos a ligandos hidrofóbicos, pero principalmente con la proteína recombinante de 15 kDa (Fh15) de *F. hepatica* (Rodríguez-Pérez et al., 1992).



**Figura 13.-** Comparación de la proteína de unión a ácidos grasos de *F. hepatica* (rFh15) mediante BLAST



**Figura 14.-** Estructura tridimensional de Sm14 (Angelucci et al, 2004)

Para llevar a cabo estos estudios, Sm14 fue cristalizada unida a ácido araquidónico (ACD) o a ácido oleico (OLA) y la estructura fue estudiada con resoluciones de 1,85 y 2,4 Å respectivamente. La proteína, igual que las FABPs de corazón (H-FABPs) y otras, adoptan una estructura tridimensional con apariencia de barril, formada por 10 plegamientos  $\beta$  antiparalelos unidos por bucles cortos y con dos  $\alpha$ -hélices cortas que “cubren” el barril. El interior de esta estructura forma una cavidad que es el sitio de unión del ácido graso o la molécula lipídica. Esta cavidad está cubierta por aminoácidos polares e hidrofóbicos orientados hacia el interior. La unión entre la proteína y el ligando está mediada por la interacción entre los dobles enlaces de carbono del ácido graso por fuerzas de Van Der Waals con los diferentes aminoácidos. La cadena larga del ACD y la presencia de cuatro dobles enlaces *cis*, hacen de la unión del ACD con la Sm14 una estructura muy rígida incrementando el contacto entre ellas, comparado con el observado con OLA y otros ácidos grasos. La estructura cristalográfica demostró muy marcada complementariedad entre ACD y la unión a la cavidad de Sm14. Así como ésta interacción, se establecen otras, formando una red específica de interacciones entre carbonos con dobles enlaces del ACD y aminoácidos de la proteína que le confieren mayor estabilidad a la unión y la hacen más específica.



Tabla 4.- Protección frente a la esquistosomosis experimental de proteínas de unión a ácidos grasos procedentes de *S. mansoni* y *F. hepatica*

| FABP        | TIPO DE VACUNA                        | ESQUISTOSOMA      | RATÓN  | ADYUVANTE   | PROTECCIÓN |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--------|---|------------|
| <b>Sm14</b> | Nativa                                | <i>S. mansoni</i> | Swiss  | Freund  | 37-66%     |
|             | Recombinante                          | <i>S. mansoni</i> | Swiss  | Freund  | 37-55%     |
|             | Bacterias transformadas con plásmidos | <i>S. mansoni</i> | Swiss  | <i>L. delbrueckii</i><br><i>L. lactis</i> que codifica para IL-12 | 35-52%     |
|             | Péptidos                              | <i>S. mansoni</i> | Swiss  | Monofosforil lípido A   | 50-55%     |
| <b>Fh12</b> | Nativa                                | <i>S. bovis</i>   | NMRI   | Freund  | 19%        |
|             | Nativa                                | <i>S. bovis</i>   | C57/BC | Freund  | 87-96%     |
| <b>Fh15</b> | Recombinante                          | <i>S. bovis</i>   | NMRI   | Freund  | 0%         |
|             | Recombinante                          | <i>S. bovis</i>   | C57/BC | Freund  | 72%        |

Las funciones de las FABPs caracterizadas hasta ahora muestran que, gracias a su capacidad de unión a diversos sustratos hidrófobos, presentan un papel multifuncional, incluyendo la protección de membranas celulares y enzimas frente a altas concentraciones de ácidos grasos libres y sus derivados acil-CoA, el almacenamiento y transporte de ácidos grasos libres y otros lípidos, y su participación en la regulación del crecimiento y diferenciación celular (Weisiger, 2002). Esta multifuncionalidad es debida principalmente a que estas proteínas pueden unirse a muy diferentes sustratos hidrofóbicos (ácidos grasos, monoglicérols, diacilglicérols fosfatos, metabolitos del ácido araquidónico, acetil-CoA, retinoides y grupo hemo). También son capaces de unirse reversiblemente a fosfolípidos artificiales de doble capa. Por todo esto, uno de sus papeles principales consiste en el transporte intracelular de lípidos desde la membrana celular.

En 1996 Tendler et al. realizaron diferentes experimentos utilizando extracto salino de adultos de *S. mansoni* y Sm14 como candidatos vacunales, con o sin adyuvante completo de Freund (ACF). Utilizaron conejos New Zealand y ratones Swiss. Todos los grupos inmunizados presentaron datos de protección estadísticamente significativos con porcentajes que oscilaban entre 37-66%. Además, en todos los grupos inmunizados se observó disminución muy significativa de los infiltrados periportales, de la reacción granulomatosa y de las áreas de necrosis, al compararlos con el grupo control de infección.

Los investigadores también refieren en este estudio un experimento de vacunación frente a *F. hepatica* en ratones, con protecciones del 100% en la recuperación de vermes y ausencia de lesiones hepáticas.

Proponiéndose resolver el problema del escaso rendimiento en la purificación de Sm14 por el sistema tradicional (*E. coli* pGEMEX) y para obtener mayor producción, Romero et al. (2001), utilizando *E. coli* BL21 (DE3) y los sistemas pRSETA-Sm14 y pRSETA-6XHis-Sm14 obtuvieron dos recombinantes de 18 y 16 kDa que fueron reconocidos por anticuerpos anti-Sm14 y por antisuero contra antígeno excretor–secretor de adultos de *S. mansoni*. Con estos sistemas mejoraron el rendimiento en la purificación. A su vez probaron la proteína en ratones Swiss infectados con *S. mansoni* obteniendo reducciones entre 44 y 55%, protecciones muy similares a las obtenidas en otros estudios. Utilizando el sistema pRSETA-6XHis-Sm14 para producir la proteína purificada, Ribeiro et al. (2002) inmunizaron ratones Swiss con 10 y 20 µg de la proteína, mostrando reducciones de 36,9 y 49,5% respectivamente.

Conociendo que el fragmento C no tóxico de la toxina del tétano (FCTT) es altamente inmunogénico, los investigadores del siguiente estudio llevaron a cabo dos experimentos. El primero buscando evaluar la protección frente a la toxina tetánica y el segundo de nuestro interés, buscando evaluar la protección de Sm14 y FCTT frente a *S. mansoni* para preparar una vacuna multivalente, utilizando hidróxido de aluminio (Abreu et al., 2004). Los mejores resultados de protección fueron 50 y 51% con las proteínas Sm14 y de fusión rFCTT-Sm14 respectivamente. Cuando usaron la preparación rFCTT coadministrada con Sm14 la reducción de vermes descendió al 35%. En la respuesta inmunológica no se observaron diferencias en los niveles de anticuerpos IgG en los grupos inmunizados. De igual manera los isotipos predominantes fueron IgG1 e IgG2b con niveles de IgG2a muy bajos, lo que sugiere una respuesta predominante Th2 que puede ser inducida por el uso del hidróxido de aluminio. Buscando potenciar el efecto protector de Sm14 utilizando diferentes inmunomoduladores, Fonseca et al., (2004) realizaron un estudio en ratones C57BL/6. Los adyuvantes utilizados fueron: ACF e ICF, Al(OH)<sub>3</sub> 2% v/v y 1µg de IL-12 coadministrado con hidróxido de aluminio. Las protecciones que obtuvieron fueron de 42 y 25% cuando utilizaron Sm14 y IL-12 con Sm14, con o sin el ACF respectivamente. No encontraron

reducciones estadísticamente significativas del número de granulomas en los ratones vacunados solo con Sm14. Pero sí observaron disminución significativa cuando usaron IL-12 sola o con Sm14. Los resultados obtenidos indican que Sm14 sola o coadministrada con IL-12 induce respuestas dominantes Th1. El papel de las citocinas, TNF $\alpha$  e IFN $\gamma$ , muestra que son esenciales para la respuesta protectora con Sm14 e IL-12.

Diferentes estudios muestran que la administración oral de vacunas con cepas bacterianas atenuadas transformadas con Sm14 ofrece niveles de protección similares a cuando Sm14 es administrada parenteralmente. La coadministración de los adyuvantes bacterianos no significó aumento en la protección frente a la infección (Fonseca et al., 2004; Varaldo et al., 2004).

Magno et al. (2003) llevaron a cabo un estudio con epítomos comunes de Sm14 y Fh15, utilizando como adyuvantes monofosforil lípido A, dicorinomicolato de trealosa e hidróxido de aluminio. Cuatro de los péptidos escogidos presentaron protecciones entre 50 y 55%, protecciones muy semejantes al grupo control vacunado con Sm14 que redujo el recuento de vermes en aproximadamente un 50%. Las conclusiones del estudio indican que cuando se usan péptidos que contienen las secuencias VTVGDVTA o EKNSKLTQ se obtienen protecciones iguales o superiores a las obtenidas usando Sm14. De igual manera el estudio provee evidencias de que puede ser posible obtener excelentes porcentajes de protección frente a *F. hepatica* y *S. mansoni* con péptidos de tamaño menor al 10% de la molécula Sm14, lo que facilita su producción a gran escala. En resumen, los experimentos llevados a cabo con Sm14 indican que la respuesta inmunitaria protectora inducida por esta molécula está relacionada con la producción de IFN $\gamma$  y TNF $\alpha$ . También se demuestra la falta de asociación entre la producción de anticuerpos y las respuestas protectoras desencadenadas por Sm14 (Toscano et al, 2015).

Los experimentos anteriores aportan evidencias de que Sm14 es un potente inmunógeno capaz de estimular inmunidad protectora contra *F. hepatica* y *S. mansoni*, confirmando que Sm14 y Fh15 pueden representar la base molecular de la protección cruzada entre estos dos parásitos. Estos resultados corroboran el estudio llevado a cabo por Rodríguez-Pérez et al. (1992). Inicialmente se hace la presentación de la preparación llamada FhSm III (M) obtenida de extractos de *F. hepatica* que confiere altos niveles de

protección contra infecciones por *F. hepatica* y *S. mansoni* (Hillyer, 1984). Posteriores estudios demostraron que el antígeno protector en la preparación era la proteína Fh12, que es un potente inmunógeno expresado de manera temprana cuando ocurre la transformación de la metacercaria en forma juvenil. Anticuerpos frente a Fh12 fueron detectados a las dos semanas en suero de ratones infectados con *F. hepatica*, mientras que en *S. mansoni* fueron detectados en la semanas 5 y 6, lo que demuestra que Fh12 es un antígeno que genera reacción y protección cruzada. Rodríguez-Pérez et al. (1992) utilizaron el RNA de adultos de *F. hepatica* para construir una biblioteca de cDNA y a partir de éste material hicieron clonación en un fago recombinante. Los clones resultantes los probaron frente a un antisuero anti-Fh12 de conejos. El cDNA de los clones que se obtuvieron y que reaccionaron con el antisuero fueron subclonados y secuenciados, correspondiendo a una proteína de 132 aminoácidos y un peso molecular de 14,7 kDa que llamaron Fh15. Este antígeno tiene una significativa homología con Sm14 (Figura 15).

|      |  |
|------|--|
| Fh15 | 1 MADFVGSWKYGHSENMEAYLKKIGVSSDMVDKILNAKPEFTFTLEGNKMT 50    |
| Sm14 | 1 MSSFLGKWKLSSESHNFDVMSKLGVSWATRQIGNTVPTVPTFTMDGDKMT 50    |
| Fh15 | 51 IKMVSSLKTKITFTTFGEEFEEETPDGKKVMTKVKTKDSESKMTQVIKGP 100  |
| Sm14 | 51 MLTESTFKNLSCTFKFGEEFDEKTS DGRNVKSVVEKNSESKLTQTQVDPK 100 |
| Fh15 | 101 CITEVVREVVGDKMIATWTVGDVKA VTTLLKA- 132                 |
| Sm14 | 101 NTTVIVREVDGDTMKTTVTVGDVTAIRNYKRLS 133                  |

**Figura 15.-** Comparación a nivel de aminoácidos entre Fh15 y Sm14 mediante BLAST, con identidad del 43,6% y similitud del 58,6%

En nuestro grupo de investigación fue probado el antígeno Fh12 frente a una infección de *S. bovis* en diferentes cepas de ratones, utilizando adyuvante completo de Freund (Abán et al., 1999). En este estudio fueron llevados a cabo tres experimentos. En el primer experimento solo hubo un 19% de protección en el grupo de ratones NMRI vacunados con Fh12, mientras que en el segundo experimento se obtuvo una reducción de vermes de 96% en ratones C57/BL. El tercer experimento fue concebido como una repetición del segundo, en el que se obtuvo una protección del 87%. El mismo grupo de investigadores del estudio anterior, llevó a cabo otro trabajo de protección frente a *S. bovis*, esta vez utilizando la

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forma recombinante (Fh15) de la proteína nativa Fh12 (Abáne et al., 2000). Los resultados fueron similares a los del estudio anterior ya que no obtuvieron protección en los ratones NMRI y 72% de reducción de vermes en los C57/BL; además de una significativa reducción en las lesiones hepáticas. Un resumen de los experimentos de protección realizados con FABPs se muestra en la Tabla 4.

Un estudio reciente evalúa los efectos inmunológicos de Fh12 nativa en cultivos de macrófagos obtenidos de personas sanas. Los resultados indican que Fh12 inhibe la producción de óxido nítrico y la expresión de óxido nítrico sintasa, activando la producción de arginasa y la inducción de expresión de quitinasa3. De esta manera hay una reducción de citocinas proinflamatorias como TNF $\alpha$ , IL-12 e IL-1 $\beta$  y un aumento en la expresión de IL-10. En su conjunto estos resultados sugieren una gran actividad antiinflamatoria de Fh12, utilizando los receptores TLR4 (Figueroa & Espino, 2014).

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## 2 HIPÓTESIS DE TRABAJO Y OBJETIVOS

El control de la esquistosomosis se basa en el tratamiento masivo de sus hospedadores definitivos utilizando praziquantel o en la eliminación de caracoles terrestres, hospedadores intermediarios de la infección. Sin embargo, en la actualidad estas medidas no han sido suficientes para la erradicación de esta enfermedad debido a la alta tasa de reinfecciones tras la aplicación del tratamiento o incluso a la aparición de resistencias. Existen datos que nos indican la posibilidad de desarrollar una vacuna efectiva contra la esquistosomosis. Estudios realizados empleando cercarias irradiadas mostraban niveles de protección de hasta un 80%. Por otro lado, se ha demostrado experimentalmente, mecanismos inmunológicos coordinados eficaces para la eliminación del parásito así como el desarrollo de una inmunidad natural en población humana tras infecciones repetidas. Por estas razones, sería de gran utilidad disponer de una vacuna para el control definitivo de esta parasitosis. Existen diferentes dianas moleculares como potenciales vacunas contra *Schistosoma* spp. Una de ellas se basa en la incapacidad que tienen estos parásitos para sintetizar “de novo” ácidos grasos, por lo que tienen que utilizar moléculas para su transporte e incorporación dentro de su metabolismo. Esta familia de moléculas se denominan FATP (*Fatty acid transport protein*) o FABP (*Fatty acid binding protein*). Son moléculas altamente conservadas y han sido utilizadas previamente por nuestro grupo como potenciales vacunas frente a *Fasciola hepatica*. Además, se han ensayado frente a la infección experimental por *Schistosoma bovis* empleando adyuvante de Freund cuyo uso no está permitido en humanos.



Nuestra **hipótesis de trabajo** se fundamenta en el desarrollo de una vacuna efectiva contra la esquistosomosis basándose en la alta capacidad protectora de estas moléculas en la infección producida por *Schistosoma* spp. utilizando nuevos adyuvantes e inmunomoduladores. El **objetivo general** de esta tesis doctoral es estudiar la capacidad protectora contra la esquistosomosis experimental de moléculas unidas a ácidos grasos, combinadas con inmunomoduladores de origen natural o síntesis química e integrados en un sistema adyuvante de adaptación inmunológica, denominado sistema ADAD.

Los **objetivos específicos** son:

1. Caracterizar la respuesta inmunológica inducida por FABPs recombinantes combinados con inmunomoduladores naturales (PAL) y de síntesis química (diamina lipídica AA0029) en sistema ADAD de vacunación.
2. Evaluar el grado de protección de la vacuna utilizando diferentes modelos experimentales (ratones BALB/c y *Mesocricetus auratus*) infectados con *Schistosoma bovis*.
3. Obtener FABPs recombinantes en sistemas de expresión procariota (*Escherichia coli*) y eucariota (baculovirus), comparando su rendimiento inmunológico.
4. Determinar el grado de protección de la vacuna utilizando modelo experimental murino infectado con *Schistosoma mansoni*.

## **3 ARTÍCULOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

### 3.1 ARTÍCULO 1

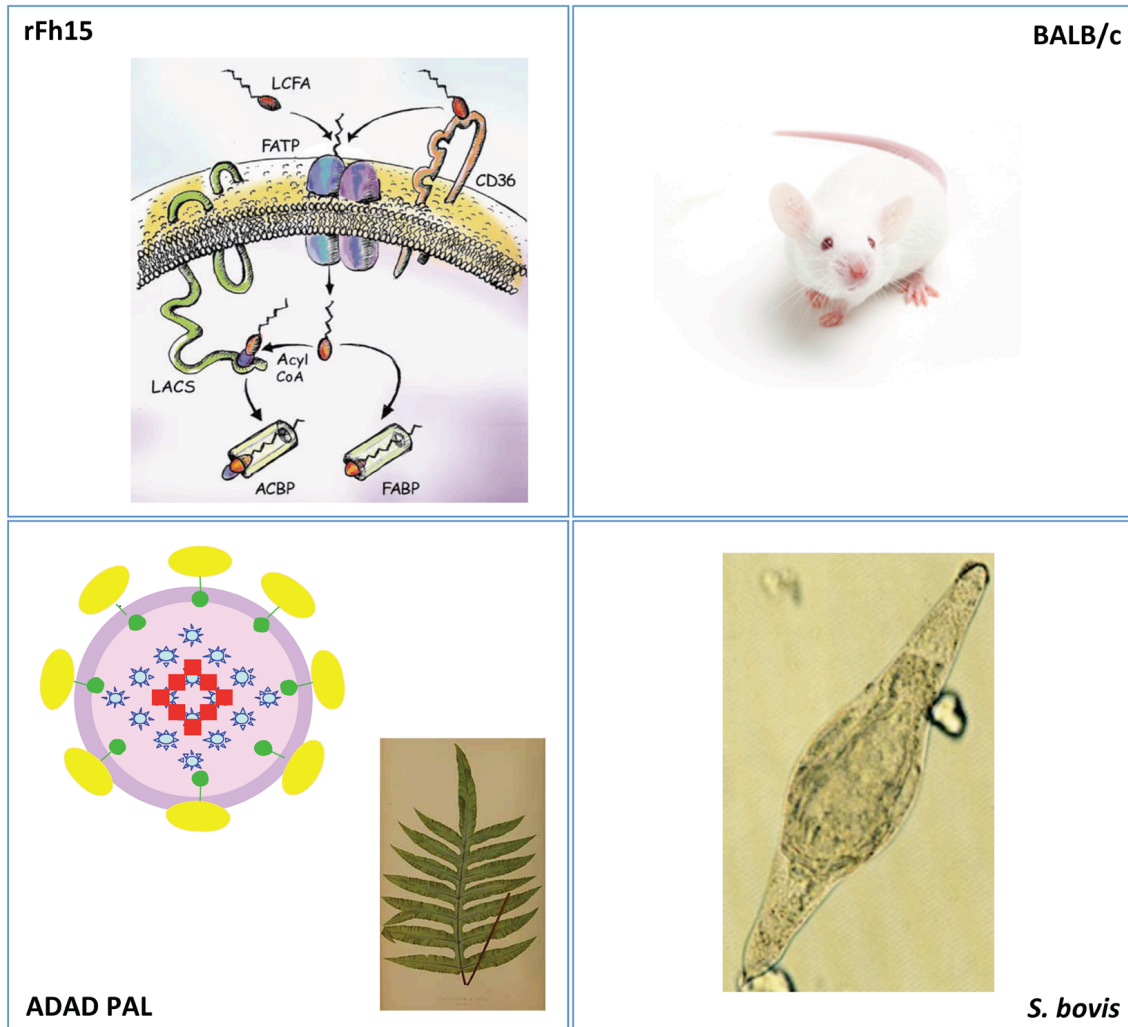
#### **A *Fasciola hepatica*-derived fatty acid binding protein induces protection against schistosomiasis caused by *Schistosoma bovis* using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system**

Belén Vicente, Julio LópezC Abán, José RojasC Caraballo, Luis Pérez del Villar, George V. Hillyer, Antonio R. MartínezC Fernández, Antonio Muro

Experimental Parasitology 2014;145:145–151

## RESUMEN

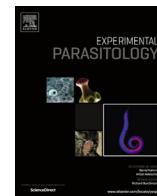
Es necesario identificar moléculas candidatas para una vacuna contra la esquistosomosis vehiculada en nuevos sistemas de vacunación. Se conoce la alta capacidad protectora en infecciones producidas por tremados de moléculas unidas a ácidos grasos denominadas FABPs. En este estudio se utiliza el sistema de vacunación de “adaptación-adyuvante” denominado sistema ADAD que incluye FBP recombinante (Fh15), inmunomoduladores naturales (PAL) y saponinas (*Quillaja saponaria*). Se detectaron altos niveles de citocinas proinflamatorias IL-1 e IL-6, así como altos títulos de anticuerpos en ratones inmunizados con la vacuna. Además se observó reducción significativa en el número de vermes (67-72%), en el número de huevos en hígado (60-93%), en el número de huevos en intestino (61-65%) y en el daño hepático (hasta el 80%). Estos resultados se han obtenido en dos experimentos independientes con ratones BALB/c infectados experimentalmente con *Schistosoma bovis*. Por tanto, este trabajo muestra que el sistema ADAD con FBP es una buena alternativa para desarrollar una respuesta inmunológica efectiva contra la esquistosomosis animal.





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## A *Fasciola hepatica*-derived fatty acid binding protein induces protection against schistosomiasis caused by *Schistosoma bovis* using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system



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### HIGHLIGHTS

- rFh15 protein induces a reduction in the parasite burden in *S. bovis* murine model.
- Vaccine effectiveness against *S. bovis* depends on adjuvant formulation.
- ADAD system using PAL as immunomodulator offer a new vaccination strategy.
- rFh15 formulated on ADAD system induced high levels of IL-1 and IL-6 cytokines.

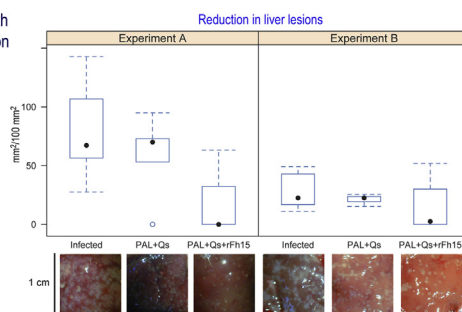
### GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

Protection of BALB/c mice using rFh15 with the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system against *Schistosoma bovis*

Reduction in worm recoveries

| Groups       | Worm recovery (mean±SEM) | Reduction (%) |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Experiment A |                          |               |
| Infected     | 12.5±1.9                 | -             |
| PAL+Qs       | 7.0±1.5                  | 44            |
| PAL+Qs+rFh15 | 3.5±1.8*                 | 72            |
| Experiment B |                          |               |
| Infected     | 12.4±1.4                 | -             |
| PAL+Qs       | 12.3±1.8                 | n.r.          |
| PAL+Qs+rFh15 | 4.1±1.5*                 | 67            |

SEM: standard error of the mean. n.r.: No-reduction. \* p<0.05 compared to respective infection controls.



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### ABSTRACT

Several efforts have been made to identify anti-schistosomiasis vaccine candidates and new vaccination systems. The fatty acid binding protein (FAPB) has been shown to induce a high level of protection in trematode infection. The adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system was used in this study, including recombinant FAPB, a natural immunomodulator and saponins. Mice immunised with the ADAD system were able to up-regulate proinflammatory cytokines (IL-1 and IL-6) and induce high IgG2a levels. Moreover, there was a significant reduction in worm burden, egg liver and hepatic lesion in vaccinated mice in two independent experiments involving *Schistosoma bovis* infected mice. The foregoing data shows that ADAD system using FAPB provide a good alternative for triggering an effective immune response against animal schistosomiasis.

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### 1. Introduction

Blood flukes from the genus *Schistosoma* are a significant cause of disease in tropical and subtropical regions, (WHO, 2011;

Gryseels, 2012). *Schistosoma* infection in animals, especially *Schistosoma bovis*, continues to be a veterinary problem in many endemic areas in Africa and Asia although prevalence data has not been well documented (Vercruysse and Gabriel, 2005). *S. bovis* belongs to the *Schistosoma haematobium* group and both species share biological features and infect the same *Bulinus* intermediate host (Lawton et al., 2011; Webster et al., 2013). *S. bovis* is also considered an analogue of *S. haematobium* from an immunological point of view and has been successfully used in diagnosing human

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schistosomiasis (Pardo et al., 2004). Due to such similarities, *S. bovis* appears to be an interesting model in schistosomiasis vaccine development (Agnew et al., 1989a,b).

Praziquantel is currently the most effective drug for treating schistosomiasis; however, it does not prevent reinfection and has low efficacy against early stages (Rollinson et al., 2013). A recent meta-analysis has suggested that incorporating artemisinin derivatives into schistosomiasis treatment combined with praziquantel may improve cure rates in endemic areas (Pérez del Villar et al., 2012); linking vaccination with chemotherapy would reduce overall morbidity and limit the impact of re-infection (Bergquist et al., 2008). The rationale behind anti-schistosomiasis vaccine development has been based on the natural protection of animals and humans living in endemic areas; the efficacy of irradiated cercariae vaccines in experimental trials has thus been ascertained (Hewitson et al., 2005). Several proteins have been proposed as vaccine candidates, such as *S. bovis* glutathione-S transferase (GST) and 14–3–3, and *Fasciola hepatica* cross-reacting fatty acid binding proteins (FABP). Using *S. bovis* GST in classical Freund's adjuvant has led to a reduction in faecal and tissue eggs in cattle (Bushara et al., 1993), whilst, a significant reduction of worm burdens and faecal eggs has been reported in goat and sheep (Boulanger et al., 1999) and reduced egg hatchability in mice (Viana da Costa et al., 1999). A large reduction in worm burden has been observed using *F. hepatica* native or recombinant FABP with Freund's adjuvant in mice (Abán et al., 1999; Abáné et al., 2000).

Our group has proposed the “Adjuvant Adaptation” (ADAD) vaccination system as an alternative to using Freund's adjuvant in vaccination against *F. hepatica* (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2004). The ADAD adjuvant system combines an antigen with non-haemolytic *Quillaja saponaria* (Qs) saponins as adjuvant and an immunomodulator together with non-mineral oil (Montanide ISA 763AVG) to form an emulsion for providing a long-term delivery system. A hydroalcoholic extract from the rhizome of the fern *Phlebodium pseudoaureum* (PAL) was used as immunomodulator as down-regulation has been shown in the Th-response in mice immunised with *Anisakis simplex*, *Trichinella spiralis* and *F. hepatica* antigens (López-Abán et al., 2012). Using of FABP formulated in the ADAD system with PAL as immunomodulator has led to a significant reduction in worm recovery and eggs in the faeces of sheep challenged with *F. hepatica* (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2004; López-Abán et al., 2007). Furthermore, vaccination with the *S. bovis* 14–3–3 $\zeta$  protein using ADAD with PAL has resulted in a significant reduction in adult worm recovery and less liver damage in mice following homologous challenge (Uribe et al., 2007).

The present study has explored the immunological effect of the recombinant 15 kDa *F. hepatica* protein (rFh15) using the ADAD vaccination system with PAL as immunomodulator in BALB/c mice. rFh15 efficacy as a vaccine candidate was then investigated in two independent protection studies against *S. bovis* infection in BALB/c mice. Our results offer insights into an immunological response against *S. bovis* infection using rFh15 formulated in the ADAD vaccination system as a new vaccination alternative.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Mice and parasites

Ninety seven-week old BALB/c female mice (Charles River Laboratories, Barcelona, Spain) weighing 18–20 g were used. They were kept in a temperature and humidity controlled environment throughout the experimental period; a 12 h light/dark cycle was used and the mice were given water and food *ad libitum* in the University of Salamanca's Animal Experimentation facilities. All animals were treated according to the provisions of current

European law regarding animal handling and experimentation. The procedures were approved by the Universidad de Salamanca's Ethics Committee (Protocol n° 8402). All efforts were made to minimise animal suffering. The *S. bovis* strain from Salamanca (Spain) was maintained in the Animal Pathology Department (IRNASA-CSIC, Salamanca) in *Planorbarius metidjensis* as intermediate host and sheep as definitive host (Oleaga and Ramajo, 2004); 4–7 mm of diameter snails were collected in the wild, individually infected with 5 miracidia and reared in batches of 200 individuals.

### 2.2. Antigen preparation

Soluble *S. bovis* (SoSb) adult worm antigens (AWA) were produced, (Abán et al., 1999); worms were suspended in sterile phosphate-buffered saline (PBS), 20 worms/ml, with 1 mM phenylmethylsulphonyl fluoride (PMSF), homogenised, frozen and thawed thrice and then sonicated with three 1-min cycles at 70 kHz. The suspension was spun at 50,000g for 30 min at 4 °C. Protein concentration was determined by using a Micro BCA Protein Assay Kit (Pierce, Rockford, Illinois).

### 2.3. rFh15 recombinant protein expression

Total *F. hepatica* RNA was isolated from adult flukes using an RNeasy Protect Mini Kit (Qiagen GmbH, Hilden, Germany) and used for cDNA synthesis with a First Strand cDNA Synthesis Kit (Roche Diagnostic, Indianapolis, Indiana). The *rFh15* gene was amplified using the following primers: forward 5'-GGATC-CATGGCTGACTTTGTGGG-3' and reverse 5'-CTCGAGCGCTTTGAG-CAGAGTG-3' in 30 PCR cycles as follows: 40 s at 94 °C, 40 s at 52 °C, and 1 min at 72 °C (López-Abán et al., 2012). Restriction sites were added from BamHI on the forward primer and XhoI on the reverse one. PCR products were then purified with a StrataPrep DNA Gel Extraction Kit (Stratagene, Madrid, Spain) and cloned into pGEX-4T2 vector (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Uppsala, Sweden) with a *Schistosoma japonicum* GST sequence for further detection and purification by affinity chromatography. Recombinant plasmid DNA was purified using a Nucleo Spin Plasmid Kit (Macherey-Nagel, Düren, Germany) and then was sequenced at the Universidad Salamanca's central Facilities to verify cloned insert integrity. pGEX-4T2 recombinant construct-containing *Escherichia coli* BL21 cells were grown for 12 h at 37 °C in 50 ml of Luria Bertani medium with 0.1 mg/ml ampicillin (final concentration); this culture was then used to inoculate 1 L of LB medium at 37 °C until reaching 0.600 absorbance. Recombinant protein expression was induced by adding 1 mM isopropyl  $\beta$ -thiogalactopyranoside (IPTG) for 5 h at 37 °C. The cells were obtained by spinning at 10,000g for 30 min at 4 °C. The protein was solubilised by adding PBS with 1 mM PMSF and 1% Triton X-100, followed by sonication. Supernatant plus recombinant protein was centrifuged at 10,000g for 3 min at 4 °C. The protein was purified by affinity chromatography with glutathione Sepharose 4B resin. Non-retained proteins were eluted with PBS and the rFh15 protein was eluted by adding PBS with 50 Unit/ml thrombin (Amersham Biosciences), fractions were analysed by SDS-PAGE and proteins quantified by using a Micro BCA Protein Assay Kit.

### 2.4. The ADAD vaccination system

The purified rFh15 protein was formulated in a micelle consisting of *Quillaja saponaria* non-haemolytic saponins (Qs, Sigma, St Louis) and *Phlebodium pseudoaureum* hydroalcoholic extract (PAL) (ASAC Pharmaceutical International Alicante, Spain). This micelle was then emulsified in non-mineral oil (Montanide ISA763A VG, SEPPIC, Paris, France) as an oil-in-water (70/30) formulation and injected subcutaneously. The ADAD vaccination system involved

a set of two subcutaneous injections (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2004); the first, (adaptation), contained Qs and PAL emulsified in the aforementioned non-mineral oil without the recombinant protein, whilst the second (administered 5 days after adaptation) contained the rFh15 protein with Qs and/or PAL in the emulsion oil. Individual doses per injection included 600 µg PAL, 20 µg Qs and 20 µg rFh15 in a final 200 µl emulsion injection volume.

### 2.5. Immunological assessment of rFh15 using the ADAD vaccination system in BALB/c mice: immunisation schedule and sample collection

Three groups of 6 female BALB/c mice were randomly divided into groups for exploring the immunological role of rFh15 in the ADAD vaccination system: untreated, treated with PAL+Qs and immunised with PAL+Qs+rFh15. Two boosters were administered on days 14 and 28 after the first immunisation. The mice were anesthetized with isoflurane and euthanized by cervical dislocation two weeks after the third immunisation. Their spleens were removed during necropsy and then perfused with sterile PBS for obtaining splenocytes for culture and cytokine profile analysis and to ascertain the splenocyte population by flow cytometry. Blood samples were collected for antibody detection before each immunisation and during necropsy.

### 2.6. Vaccination experiments

The vaccination trials involved cercariae from different snail batches in two independent experiments (A and B) at two different points in time. BALB/c mice were randomly divided into four groups of 9 animals as follows: G1 uninfected, G2 *S. bovis* infected, G3 injected with ADAD plus PAL+Qs and infected and G4 vaccinated with ADAD plus PAL+Qs+rFh15 and infected. A booster was given two weeks after the first immunisation; each mouse was challenged by tail immersion in 150 *S. bovis* cercariae for 45 min 2 weeks after the second immunisation. All mice were killed with 60 mg/kg intraperitoneal pentobarbital and perfused 8 weeks post-infection. Parasite burden was evaluated in each group by perfusing mice by citrate saline intra-cardiac injection and recording the number of recovered *S. bovis* adult worms from the portal vein. A McMaster camera was used when estimating the number of parasite eggs in liver and intestine after digestion with 30 ml 5% KOH (16 h at 37 °C with gentle shaking). ImageJ 1.45s software (Schneider et al., 2012) was used for quantifying macroscopic lesions in the liver as granuloma affected surface per 100 mm<sup>2</sup> in each animal. Worm reduction percentages were calculated using the following formula: protection percentage = (mean infected control group recovered worms – mean experimental group recovered worms) × 100/mean infected control group recovered worms. Blood samples were collected from each animal before immunisation, infection and necropsy for humoral immune response studies.

### 2.7. Cytokine measurement

Mouse splenocytes obtained from immunisation experiments were cultured in a 96-well plate at  $1 \times 10^6$  cells per well concentration in complete medium (RPMI 1640 medium containing 10% heat-inactivated foetal calf serum, 5 mM L-glutamine and antibiotics: 100 units/ml penicillin and 100 µg/ml streptomycin) (López-Abán et al., 2007). Splenocytes from immunisation and control mice were individually re-stimulated with rFh15 at 10 µg/ml final concentration for 72 h at 37 °C in a humidified atmosphere with 5% CO<sub>2</sub>. Controls containing splenocytes from untreated mice were also prepared. Culture supernatants were recovered for cytokine determination (after the incubation period) by quantitative detection flow cytometry assay using a Mouse Th1/Th2 10 Plex FlowCytomix Kit (Bender Med Systems, Vienna, Austria). Different sized

fluorescent beads coated with antibodies raised against interferon  $\gamma$  (IFN $\gamma$ ), interleukin (IL) 1 $\alpha$ , IL-2, IL-4, IL-6, IL-10, IL-17 and tumour necrosis factor  $\alpha$  (TNF $\alpha$ ) were incubated with the samples for 2 h at room temperature. After washing the beads to remove unbound antibodies, a secondary biotin-conjugated anti-cytokine antibody mixture was added and incubated for 1 h at room temperature. Streptavidin-phycoerythrin conjugate was then added to bind the biotin conjugate. Sample fluorescence was analysed on a BD FACScalibur flow cytometer (Becton Dickinson) at the Universidad de Salamanca's Flow Cytometry Central Service. A total of 8000 events were recorded and data were processed using FlowCytomix Pro 3.0 software (Bender, Med systems). Cytokine concentration was calculated from standard curves using known mouse recombinant cytokines concentrations.

### 2.8. Flow cytometry analysis of T-cell splenocytes populations

Mouse splenocytes were incubated with the blocking anti-CD16/CD32 monoclonal antibody for 5 min at room temperature and stained with commercially-available fluorochrome-conjugated antibodies at 1/50 dilution in PBS plus 2% foetal calf serum for 30 min at 4 °C. Rat anti-mouse CD45-peridinin chlorophyll protein (PerCP)-cyanine dye (Cy5.5), CD4-fluorescein isothiocyanate (FITC), CD8-phycoerythrin (PE), CD45R/B220-allophycocyanin (APC), CD197-PE (CCR7), CD62L-APC and hamster anti-mouse CD27 APC (BD Pharmingen, USA) were used. The cells were washed in PBS with 2% foetal calf serum and then spun at 1000g for 5 min; the supernatant was discarded. Cells were fixed with 100 µl of a 2% paraformaldehyde solution for 1 h at 4 °C. A FACScalibur flow cytometer was used for phenotype analysis. Data was collected regarding 30,000 events (gated by forward and side scatter) and analysed using Gatelagic Flow Cytometry Analysis software (IN-VAI technologies Pty Ltd).

### 2.9. rFh15 and SoSb specific antibody production

Indirect ELISA (Abán et al., 1999) was used for measuring specific anti-rFh15 and anti-SoSbAWA antibody production for immunological assessment and protection experiments. Briefly, 96-well polystyrene plates (Costar) were coated with 2.5 µg of SoSbAWA or 2.0 µg rFh15 antigen and then blocked with 2% bovine serum albumin. Sera were then added at 1:100 dilution, followed by adding peroxidase-labelled anti-mouse IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM and IgE antibodies at 1:1000 dilution (Sigma). The reaction was developed with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> and orthophenylenediamine (Sigma) and the absorbance was then measured at 492 nm on an Ear400FT ELISA reader (Lab Instruments).

### 2.10. Statistical analysis

The results were expressed as the mean and standard error of the mean (SEM). Normal data distribution was checked using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. Differences between groups were found using a one-way ANOVA test and Tukey's honest significance test (HSD) or Kruskal Wallis test. Statistical analysis was considered significant at  $p < 0.05$  level. Software SPSS 21 (IBM) was used for data analysis.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Using rFh15 in the ADAD vaccination system induced high IL-1 $\alpha$ and IL-6 levels but did not induce a Th2 or regulatory response

Innate inflammatory (TNF $\alpha$ , IL-6), Th1 (IFN $\gamma$ , IL-1 $\alpha$ , IL-2), Th2 (IL-4), regulatory (IL-10) and Th17 (IL-17) profile production was



measured in cultured spleen cell supernatant. It was seen that the PAL+Qs+rFh15 combination elicited a significant increase in both IL-1 $\alpha$  ( $1042 \pm 39$  pg/ml *cf*  $527 \pm 65$  pg/ml  $p = 0.001$ ) and IL-6 ( $1803 \pm 130$  pg/ml *cf*  $964 \pm 118$  pg/ml  $p = 0.012$ ) compared to untreated controls. However no differences were detected concerning Th2, Th17 and/or regulatory cytokine levels. Mice treated only with PAL+Qs had significantly increased IL-1 $\alpha$  compared with untreated controls (Fig. 1). Regarding splenocyte percentage populations in PAL+Qs+rFh15 immunised mice, a slight reduction was observed in CD4, CD27 and B220, even though the differences between experimental groups were not statistically significant amongst the experimental groups (data not shown).

### 3.2. Immunisation with rFh15-ADAD induced a specific antibody response

Specific antibodies (IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM and IgE) against recombinant Fh15 antigen were evaluated by ELISA (Fig. 2). Significant IgG, IgG1, IgE and IgM enhancement was observed after the second immunisation in PAL+Qs+rFh15 immunised mice compared to untreated mice. Interestingly, significant IgG2a production was only detected at the endpoint of the experiment ( $p < 0.05$ ).

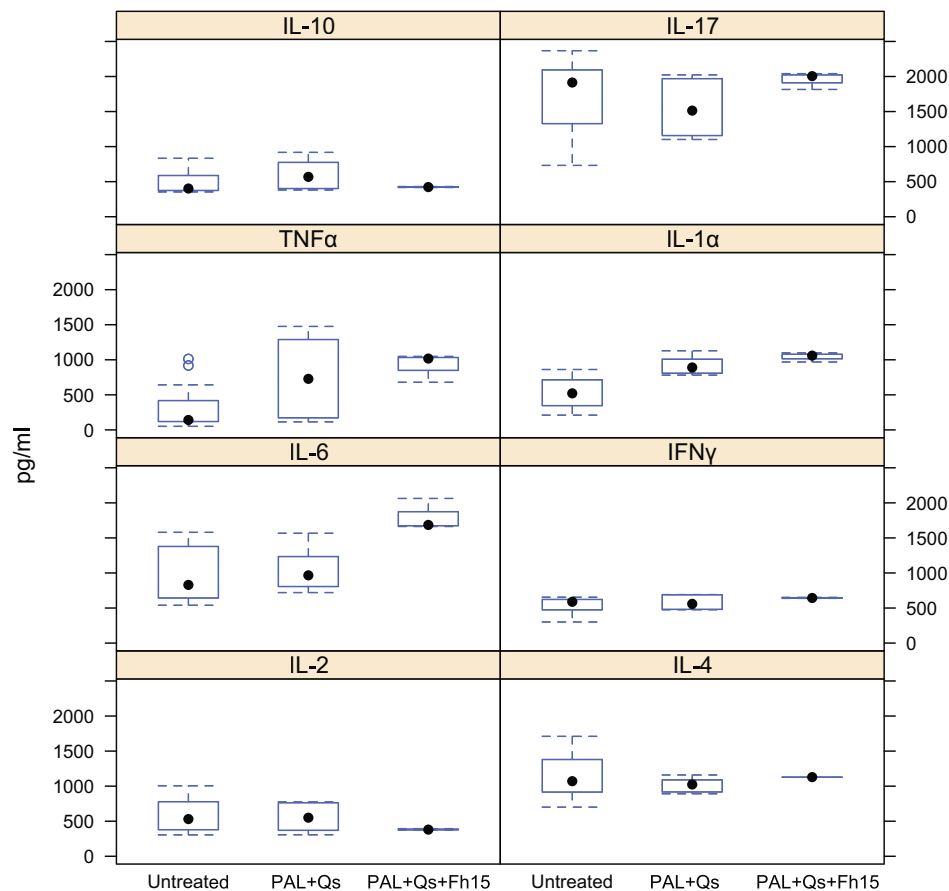
### 3.3. Protection against *S. bovis* infection in BALB/c mice vaccinated with rFh15 using the ADAD vaccination system

Two experiments were carried out independently for evaluating protection involving rFh15 and the ADAD vaccination system (experiments A and B). The adult worm population became

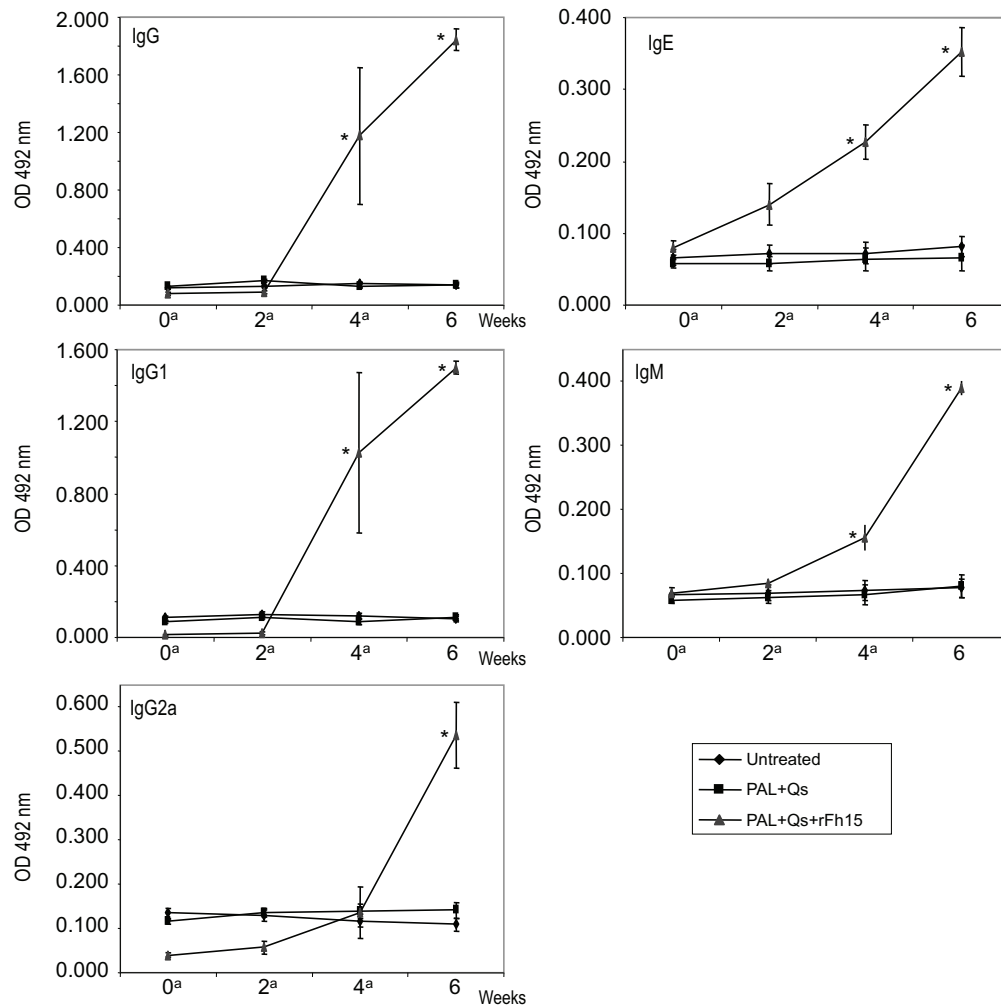
reduced by 67–72% in mice immunised with the complete vaccine (PAL+Qs+rFh15); specifically, worm recovery rates for immunised groups compared to the infected group were 12.5 *cf* 3.5 ( $p = 0.001$ ) in experiment A and 12.4 *cf* 4.1 ( $p = 0.001$ ) in experiment B. Female recovery was thus reduced between 60% and 72% ( $p < 0.05$ ) and male recovery between 68% and 75% ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 1). Reductions in eggs per gram in liver and intestine varied from 60% to 93% in experiment A and 61–65% in experiment B, ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 2). Moreover, the relationship between eggs and the number of females was evaluated as a measurement of the anti-fecundity effect, though no statistically significant reductions were observed. The degree of hepatic surface affected by granuloma reaction was quantified on 100 mm<sup>2</sup> liver surface, a significant reduction in PAL+Qs+rFh15 vaccinated mice (47–80%) being detected compared to infected mice ( $p = 0.001$ ) (Table 1). Moreover, it was found that 38% (experiment A) and 50% (experiment B) of vaccinated mice had no appreciable lesions in their livers. Such data suggested the protection-inducing ability of rFh15 formulated in the ADAD vaccination system against *S. bovis* infection.

### 3.4. Antibody profile in protection against *S. bovis* in BALB/c mice vaccinated with rFh15 using the ADAD vaccination system

Specific IgG1 and IgG2a anti-rFh15 levels, measured as optical density (OD), were analysed by ELISA in the sera of mice from experiment B before infection to confirm immunisation effectiveness. A strong IgG1 humoral response against rFh15 was detected in vaccinated mice compared to either control or PAL+Qs treated experimental groups ( $p < 0.05$ ). No significant differences were



**Fig. 1.** Interleukin (IL)-10, IL-17, TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-1 $\alpha$ , IL-6, IFN $\gamma$ , IL-2 and IL-4 production in splenocytes from mice immunised with rFh15 two weeks after immunisation. BALB/c mice were immunised with PAL+Qs+rFh15 using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system; untreated mice and treated with PAL+Qs were used as controls. Data is represented in box plots showing the median (solid symbol), Q1 and Q3 (box), percentile 10 and 90 (error bars) and outliers (open symbol).



**Fig. 2.** Serum anti-rFh15 specific IgG, subtypes IgG1 and IgG2a, IgE and IgM antibody levels (mean  $\pm$  SEM) during the immunisation experiment by ELISA. BALB/c mice were immunised with PAL+Qs+rFh15 using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system. Untreated and PAL+Qs treated controls were used. OD optical density. \* $p < 0.05$  compared to untreated control. <sup>a</sup>immunisation.

**Table 1**

Reductions in worm recovery (total counts, female and male) and hepatic damage extension ( $\text{mm}^2/100 \text{mm}^2$ ) in rFh15-vaccinated BALB/c mice using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system, challenged with 150 *S. bovis* cercariae percutaneously and perfused at 8 week post challenge in two separated experiments (A and B).

| Groups              | Total worms (mean $\pm$ SEM) | Reduction (%) | Females (mean $\pm$ SEM) | Reduction (%) | Males (mean $\pm$ SEM) | Reduction (%) | Hepatic damage (mean $\pm$ SEM) | Reduction (%) |
|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Experiment A</i> |                              |               |                          |               |                        |               |                                 |               |
| Infected            | 12.5 $\pm$ 1.9               | –             | 2.5 $\pm$ 1.3            | –             | 10.0 $\pm$ 1.6         | –             | 78.9 $\pm$ 14.8                 | –             |
| PAL+Qs              | 7.0 $\pm$ 1.5                | 44            | 1.4 $\pm$ 0.9            | 44            | 5.6 $\pm$ 1.0          | 44            | 58.2 $\pm$ 16.0                 | 26            |
| PAL+Qs+rFh15        | 3.5 $\pm$ 1.8*               | 72            | 1.0 $\pm$ 0.7*           | 60            | 2.5 $\pm$ 1.5*         | 75            | 16.0 $\pm$ 8.6*                 | 80            |
| <i>Experiment B</i> |                              |               |                          |               |                        |               |                                 |               |
| Infected            | 12.4 $\pm$ 1.4               | –             | 5.3 $\pm$ 0.6            | –             | 7.1 $\pm$ 0.6          | –             | 27.5 $\pm$ 4.9                  | –             |
| PAL+Qs              | 12.3 $\pm$ 1.8               | n.r.          | 5.7 $\pm$ 0.8            | n.r.          | 6.6 $\pm$ 1.1          | 6             | 21.5 $\pm$ 1.5                  | 22            |
| PAL+Qs+rFh15        | 4.1 $\pm$ 1.5*               | 67            | 2.3 $\pm$ 1.0*           | 72            | 1.5 $\pm$ 0.6*         | 68            | 14.6 $\pm$ 7.3                  | 46            |

SEM: standard error of the mean. n.r. No-reduction.

\*  $p < 0.05$  compared to respective infection controls.

detected regarding anti-rFh15 IgG2a levels (Fig. 3). Specific IgG1 and IgG2a isotypes against SoSbAWA were measured during experiment B. Significant differences were only found between groups 8-weeks p.i. Interestingly, infected mice treated with PAL+Qs had significantly higher IgG1 levels than infected controls. A significant increase in IgG2a was observed in PAL+Qs+rFh15-vaccinated mice compared to the infected control group (Fig. 3).

#### 4. Discussion

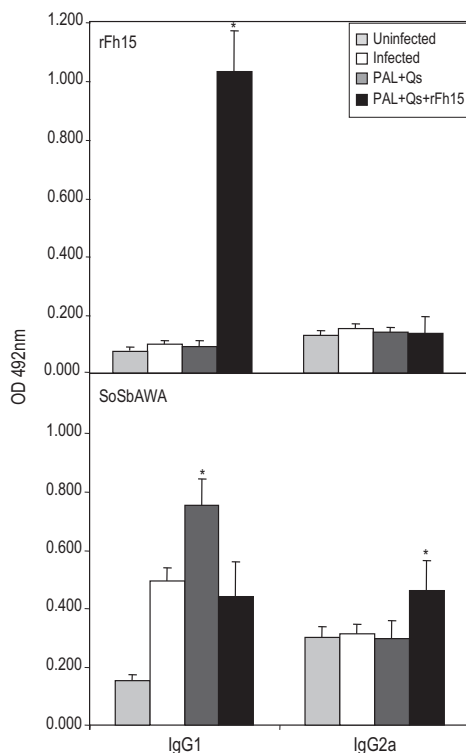
Fatty acid binding proteins (FABP) Fh12, rFh15 and Sm14 have been recognised as important vaccine candidates as they have shown immunological cross-protection against schistosomes and *F. hepatica* infection. Such FABPs' amino acid sequences have a high degree of identity specifically, between *F. hepatica* rFh15 and

**Table 2**  
Reduction in number of eggs per gram (EPG) in tissues and fecundity considering liver and intestine in rFh15-vaccinated BALB/c mice using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system, challenged with 150 *S. bovis* cercariae percutaneously and perfused at 8 week post challenge in two separated experiments (A and B).

| Groups              | EPG in liver (mean ± SEM) | Reduction (%) | EPG intestine (mean ± SEM) | Reduction (%) | Liver EPG/female (mean ± SEM) | Reduction (%) | Intestine EPG/female (mean ± SEM) | Reduction (%) |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Experiment A</i> |                           |               |                            |               |                               |               |                                   |               |
| Infected            | 1004 ± 377                | –             | 977 ± 318                  | –             | 401 ± 66                      | –             | 390 ± 64                          | –             |
| PAL+Qs              | 1077 ± 523                | n.r.          | 1074 ± 476                 | n.r.          | 769 ± 109                     | n.r.          | 767 ± 180                         | n.r.          |
| PAL+Qs+rFh15        | 73 ± 63 <sup>*</sup>      | 93            | 379 ± 340 <sup>*</sup>     | 61            | 73 ± 85 ns                    | 82            | 379 ± 16                          | 18            |
| <i>Experiment B</i> |                           |               |                            |               |                               |               |                                   |               |
| Infected            | 1107 ± 275                | –             | 709 ± 237                  | –             | 209 ± 56                      | –             | 134 ± 32                          | –             |
| PAL+Qs              | 1298 ± 184                | n.r.          | 1280 ± 387                 | n.r.          | 228 ± 25                      | n.r.          | 225 ± 104                         | n.r.          |
| PAL+Qs+rFh15        | 443 ± 331 <sup>*</sup>    | 60            | 248 ± 116 <sup>*</sup>     | 65            | 193 ± 108                     | 8             | 108 ± 46                          | 19            |

SEM: standard error of the mean. n.r. No-reduction.

<sup>\*</sup>  $p < 0.05$  compared to respective infection controls.



**Fig. 3.** Serum specific IgG1 and IgG2a antibody levels by ELISA against rFh15 protein before challenge and against *S. bovis* soluble adult worm antigen (SoSbAWA) 8 weeks post-challenge. BALB/c mice were vaccinated with rFh15 using the adjuvant adaptation system (ADAD), challenged with 150 *S. bovis* cercariae and perfused 8 week post-challenge. Data from experiment B is shown. OD optical density. <sup>\*</sup>  $p < 0.05$  compared to infected controls.

*Schistosoma mansoni* Sm14 (Hillyer, 2005; McManus and Loukas, 2008). The ADAD vaccination system appears to be an alternative to the classical Freund's adjuvant as it has had promising results in vaccination against fasciolosis using the PAL natural immunomodulator (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2004) and against schistosomiasis (Uribe et al., 2007). The immunological response elicited by rFh15 formulated in ADAD with the PAL natural immunomodulator was initially evaluated to improve characterising the antigen's immunological response in this adjuvant system in a mouse model which has been widely used for evaluating immunoprotection with different *Schistosoma* species. It was observed that mice treated with ADAD with PAL+Qs without rFh15 only showed increased IL-1 $\alpha$  levels, whereas mice immunised with ADAD with PAL+Qs+rFh15 showed increased pro-inflammatory cytokines IL-1 $\alpha$  and IL-6 compared to untreated group. High pro-inflammatory IL-1 levels were detected in both groups treated with PAL+Qs with

or without rFh15, pointing to an adjuvant effect. It was described that squalene-based oil-in-water emulsions, such as MF59, stimulate IL-1 (Mosca et al., 2008). Moreover, IL-1 seems to coordinate the immune system's early response to exogenous and endogenous pathogens, serving as a prototypic proinflammatory cytokine (Goldbach-Mansky and Kastner, 2009). However, maintaining a proinflammatory immune response may lead to progressive pathogenic fibrosis in other trematode infections, such as that caused by *Opisthorchis viverrini* (Sripa et al., 2012). The presence of IL-6 is considered a key factor in initiating an inflammatory response against *S. mansoni* because of its ability to induce an innate immune response (Rutitzky and Stadelcker, 2011). Up-regulation of proinflammatory cytokines (i.e. IL-6) in Sm-P80-immunised mice has been associated with 60% reduction in worm burden in vaccination experiments (Torben et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2011). Moreover, it is known that IL-6 enhances antibody response, since it can regulate the B-cell growth, differentiation and survival, and sustain an antibody response (Morel et al., 2011). Such data has suggested that rFh15, together with PAL and formulated in the ADAD vaccination system, has induced IL-6 and IL-1 expression. Immunisation with PAL+Qs+rFh15 elicited a strong serological specific response against rFh15 (IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM and IgE).

Once an rFh15-induced immune response was evaluated in healthy mice, the ability of rFh15 to induce protection was tested in *S. bovis*-challenged BALB/c mice using the ADAD vaccination system with Qs and PAL in two separate experiments. High rFh15-induced protection levels were observed in the present work in terms of adult worm recovery rates (i.e. becoming reduced from 67% to 72%). Hepatic damage was macroscopically evaluated, revealing reduced granuloma formation in liver (47–80%). Our group has previously described comparable reduction rates using native and recombinant FABP (Fh12 and rFh15) formulated in Freund's adjuvant (Abáné et al., 2000) and confirm cross-reacting *F. hepatica* FABP immune-protective potential in schistosomiasis. These protection levels were better than those obtained using GST in cattle, goats, sheep and mice (Bushara et al., 1993; Boulanger et al., 1999; Viana da Costa et al., 1999) and higher than protection reached with the 14–3–3 protein against *S. bovis* infection (Uribe et al., 2007). A significant increase in IgG2a in protected mice was observed regarding a humoral immune response against SoSbAWA in vaccination experiments. The ADAD system with PAL seems to activate an early pro-inflammatory immune response which could be involved in immunoprotection against *S. bovis* challenge. ADAD with PAL was able to induce a high level of protection in Th2 biased BALB/c mice in this work, whereas the classical Freund's adjuvant was only able to induce protection with increased IFN $\gamma$  and IgG2a against *S. bovis* in C57/BL mice but not in BALB/c using FABPs (Abáné et al., 1999; Abáné et al., 2000; Uribe et al., 2007). Other new adjuvant system approaches i.e. CpG-ODN (Teixeira de Melo et al., 2013), a combination of CpG

and R848 (Wang et al., 2013), cationic polymer carriers such as polyamidoamine (PAMAM) dendrimers (Wang et al., 2014) or the intramuscular injection of an adenoviral vector (Dai et al., 2014) have all induced up-regulation of Th1 response and improved the immunoprotection against experimental schistosomiasis.

This study has shown that the rFh15 protein formulated in the ADAD vaccination system with Qs and PAL was able to up-regulate proinflammatory cytokines (IL-1 and IL-6), thereby inducing an immune response having increased IgG2a levels. It has also shown that rFh15 produced a significant reduction in worm burden in two independent protection experiments against *S. bovis*. This suggested that rFh15 could be used in vaccination experiments aimed at parasite clearance and reducing worm burden in an appropriate formulation.

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### 3.2 ARTÍCULO 2

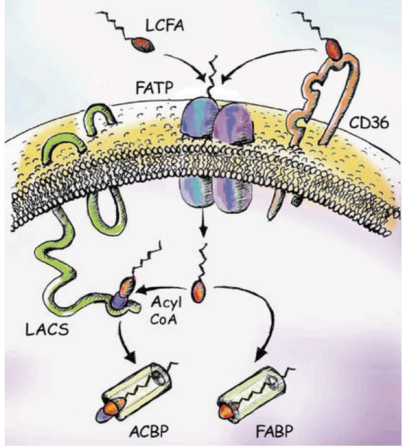

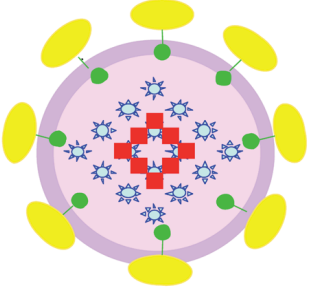

#### **The combination of the aliphatic diamine AA0029 in ADAD vaccination system with a recombinant fatty acid binding protein could be a good alternative for the animal schistosomiasis control**

Belén Vicente, Julio López-Abán, José Rojas-Caraballo, Esther del Olmo, Pedro Fernández-Soto, Vicente Ramajo-Martín, Antonio Muro

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## RESUMEN

Estudios previos han demostrado inmunidad protectora cruzada de moléculas unidas a ácidos grasos procedente de *Fasciola hepatica* (FABPs) contra la infección producida por esquistosomas. Se pretende en este estudio desarrollar una nueva formulación de una vacuna que contenga FABPs (rFh15) e inmunomodulador sintético AA0029 incorporados en un sistema adyuvante denominado ADAD. Se evalúa la respuesta inmune inducida tras la vacunación así como la protección ocurrida tras la infección con cercarias de *Schistosoma bovis*. Se detectan altos niveles de TNF $\alpha$ , IFN $\gamma$ , IL-2, IL-6 e IL-4 en sobrenadantes de cultivos de esplenocitos de ratones BALB/c inmunizados con la nueva vacuna. Además, se detectan altos niveles específicos de anticuerpos contra rFh15 de los isotipos IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgGE e IgGM. Estos datos sugieren una inducción de respuestas inmunológicas mixtas Th1/Th2. En los estudios de protección se utilizan dos modelos experimentales, ratones BALB/c y *Mesocricetus auratus*. En ratones BALB/c se obtiene hasta un 64% de reducción en vermes adultos, 66% de huevos en hígado, 77% de huevos en intestino y 42% de reducción en lesiones hepáticas. En el modelo de hámster se obtienen resultados similares con 83% de reducción en vermes adultos, 90% en huevos en hígado, 96% en huevos en intestino, 56% en lesiones hepáticas y entre el 48-80% en la evaluación del efecto antifecundidad, calculado de la relación existente entre huevos y nº de hembras. Estos resultados sugieren que la formulación vacunal compuesta por rFh15 en sistema ADAD usando el inmunomodulador sintético AA0029 puede ser una buena elección para dirigir una respuesta inmunológica efectiva contra la esquistosomosis.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>rFh15</b></p>    | <p><b>BALB/c</b><br/><i>Mesocricetus auratus</i></p>  |
|  <p><b>ADAD AA0029</b></p> <chem>NC(C)CCNC</chem> <p>Chemical structure of ADAD AA0029, showing a primary amine group (H<sub>2</sub>N), a quaternary carbon with a methyl group (CH<sub>3</sub>) and a 13-carbon chain, and a secondary amine group (NH<sub>2</sub>).</p> |  <p><i>S. bovis</i></p>                              |



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# Experimental Parasitology

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Full length article

## The combination of the aliphatic diamine AA0029 in ADAD vaccination system with a recombinant fatty acid binding protein could be a good alternative for the animal schistosomiasis control



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### HIGHLIGHTS

- rFh15 induces protection against the challenge by *S. bovis* in BALB/c mice and *Mesocricetus auratus* models.
- Immunomodulation with synthetic compounds is useful to induce immunoprotection against *S. bovis* infection.
- ADAD system using AA0029 as immunomodulator offers a new vaccination strategy.
- rFh15 formulated in ADAD system with AA0029 induces high level of TNF $\alpha$ , IL-2, IL-6 and IL-4.

### GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

Protection of mice and hamsters against *Schistosoma bovis* (mean $\pm$ SEM) using rFh15 formulated with AA0029 with adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system

| Groups                 | Worms           |                |                | EPG             |                  | EPG/Female    |                | Lesion score     |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|
|                        | Total           | Females        | Males          | Liver           | Intestine        | Liver         | Intestine      |                  |
| <b>BALB/c mice</b>     |                 |                |                |                 |                  |               |                |                  |
| Infected               | 12.4 $\pm$ 1.0  | 5.3 $\pm$ 0.6  | 7.1 $\pm$ 0.6  | 1107 $\pm$ 275  | 709 $\pm$ 238    | 209 $\pm$ 52  | 134 $\pm$ 45   | 2.75 $\pm$ 0.49  |
| AA0029+Qs              | 9.6 $\pm$ 1.4   | 4.4 $\pm$ 0.7  | 5.2 $\pm$ 0.7  | 630 $\pm$ 98    | 415 $\pm$ 78     | 143 $\pm$ 22  | 94 $\pm$ 18    | 2.59 $\pm$ 0.28  |
| AA0029+Qs+rFh15        | 4.4 $\pm$ 1.4*  | 2.0 $\pm$ 0.7* | 2.4 $\pm$ 0.7* | 377 $\pm$ 141*  | 163 $\pm$ 35*    | 189 $\pm$ 71  | 82 $\pm$ 18    | 1.60 $\pm$ 0.51* |
| <b>Golden hamsters</b> |                 |                |                |                 |                  |               |                |                  |
| Infected               | 56.3 $\pm$ 11.3 | 23.2 $\pm$ 5.0 | 33.2 $\pm$ 8.6 | 9333 $\pm$ 2881 | 15125 $\pm$ 2308 | 402 $\pm$ 179 | 652 $\pm$ 166  | 2.87 $\pm$ 0.40  |
| AA0029+Qs              | 12.7 $\pm$ 7.6* | 6.2 $\pm$ 2.8* | 6.5 $\pm$ 2.7* | 2044 $\pm$ 598* | 6894 $\pm$ 3844* | 330 $\pm$ 73  | 1112 $\pm$ 197 | 2.00 $\pm$ 0.41  |
| AA0029+Qs+rFh15        | 9.3 $\pm$ 1.7*  | 4.5 $\pm$ 0.7* | 4.8 $\pm$ 0.7* | 950 $\pm$ 391*  | 581 $\pm$ 397*   | 211 $\pm$ 54* | 129 $\pm$ 136* | 1.25 $\pm$ 0.25* |

EPG eggs per gram. SEM: standard error of the mean. \* Significant reduction compared to their respective infection controls ( $p < 0.05$ ).

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### ABSTRACT

Fatty acid binding proteins (FABP) from *Fasciola hepatica* have demonstrated immune cross-protection against schistosomes. The present study was conducted to develop a new formulation of the recombinant FABP rFh15 with the synthetic immunomodulator AA0029 in the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system and to evaluate its ability to induce immune response and protection against the challenge with *Schistosoma bovis* cercariae. Immunization of BALB/c mice showed high levels of TNF $\alpha$ , IFN $\gamma$ , interleukin (IL)-2, IL-6, and IL-4 in splenocyte supernatant culture and also high levels of serum specific anti-rFh15 IgG, IgG1, IgG2a IgE and IgM antibodies suggesting a mixed Th1/Th2 immune response. Using this approach, high levels of protection against experimental challenge with *S. bovis* cercariae were observed in the mouse and hamster models. A marked reduction up to 64% in worm burden, as well as in the number of eggs retained in liver (66%) and intestine (77%) and hepatic lesions (42%), was achieved in vaccinated BALB/c mice. Golden hamsters vaccinated and challenged in similar conditions had reductions in recovered worms (83%), liver eggs (90%), intestine eggs (96%), liver lesions (56%) and worm fecundity (48–80%). These data suggest that formulation of rFh15 in the ADAD vaccination system using the AA0029

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immunomodulator could be a good option to drive an effective immunological response against schistosomiasis.

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## 1. Introduction

The blood fluke *Schistosoma bovis* is an important cause of disease in domestic ruminants in Africa, Southwest Asia and the Mediterranean Europe. *S. bovis* belongs to the *S. haematobium* group which has species affecting humans (*S. haematobium*, *S. intercalatum*, *S. guineensis*) and domestic animals (*S. mattheei*, *S. magrebowiei*, *S. leiperi* and *S. curassoni*) (Webster et al., 2013). The infective stage, cercariae, spin around in freshwater seeking the skin of a suitable final host, they penetrate the dermis and transform into schistosomula. Then, they enter into the blood vessels and migrate to lungs, heart, liver and finally the portal–mesenteric system in which they mature into adult males and females, and live for years despite the intense immune response displayed by the host. Embryonated eggs are either eliminated in feces or trapped in tissues developing severe intestinal and liver chronic disease. Most *S. bovis* infections in grazing ruminants in endemic areas occur at a subclinical level causing significant losses due to long-term effects on ruminants as well as to an increased susceptibility to other pathogens (de Bont and Vercruyse, 1998; Vercruyse and Gabriel, 2005). Natural infections elicit a concomitant immunity acting through a reduction of female fecundity observed with reductions in fecal and tissue eggs without effects in worm burden that seems produced by serum factors (Vercruyse and Gabriel, 2005). Also, high levels of IL-4 were observed in mice with primary infections by *S. bovis* (Uribe et al., 2007). For many years, animal and human schistosomiasis control strategies have been based on control of intermediate freshwater snail and mass continuous treatment of final hosts, in particular with praziquantel. These measures have not represented a definitive solution due the high rate of post-treatment reinfections and its limited effect on morbidity and mortality reductions (Doenhoff et al., 2009; Pérez del Villar et al., 2012). A vaccine appears as a very valuable additional complement to mass chemotherapy in long-term disease control strategy. Vaccination is based on the partial resistance developed against the natural infection, the protection induced by irradiated cercariae and the cross-resistance stimulated by other flukes as *Fasciola hepatica* (Hewitson et al., 2005; Rodríguez-Osorio et al., 1993; Vercruyse and Gabriel, 2005).

Glutathione-S transferase (GST), 14-3-3 $\zeta$  from *S. bovis* and cross-reacting fatty acid binding proteins (FABP) from *F. hepatica* have been proposed as potential vaccine candidates. GST and FABP have been used with Freund's adjuvant in several experimental infection models showing reductions in fluke burden, liver damage or egg hatchability (Abán et al., 1999; Abáné et al., 2000; Boulanger et al., 1999; Bushara et al., 1993; da Costa et al., 1999). However Freund's adjuvant cannot be used in a hypothetical commercial vaccine due to its side effects. Maximum protection in experimental vaccines depends on both humoral and cellular mechanisms; therefore new adjuvant systems should be introduced. An alternative approach to the classical Freund's adjuvant is the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system, that combines the vaccine antigen together with non-hemolytic saponins from *Quillaja saponaria* and an immunomodulator, forming an emulsion with the non-mineral oil Montanide ISA 763AVG for vaccination against *F. hepatica* with FABP (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2004). Trials with the 14-3-3 $\zeta$  protein from *S. bovis* and FABP from *F. hepatica* formulated in ADAD system have been previously done (Uribe et al., 2007; Vicente et al., 2014). In this work we include the synthetic diamine AA0029, that has demonstrated immunomodulatory properties such as inhibition of lymphoproliferation, modulation of delayed type hypersensitivity, modified ratios of CD8+, CD4+, and MHC-Class II cells, and increased

nitric oxide production in LPS pre-stimulated rat alveolar macrophages (del Olmo et al., 2006). Furthermore, vaccination with FABP from *F. hepatica* formulated in ADAD with AA0029 showed less hepatic damage after the challenge with the liver fluke and resistance to lethal infection (López-Abán et al., 2012). Mouse is the most common model in vaccine development against schistosomiasis and golden hamster is a suitable host to maintain life cycle of *S. bovis* and pre-clinical studies before to test in sheep (Oleaga and Ramajo, 2004).

The objective of this article is to characterize both humoral and cellular immune responses induced by FABP recombinant protein from *F. hepatica* formulated in ADAD vaccination system using the new synthetic immunomodulator AA0029 in BALB/c mice. Moreover immunoprotection levels will be studied using two *S. bovis* experimental infection models, BALB/c mice and *Mesocricetus auratus*.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Animals and parasites

Fifty-four 7-week-old female BALB/c mice (Charles River, Lyon, France) weighing 18–20 g were used in the study. Animals were maintained in a temperature and humidity controlled environment with a 12 h light/dark cycle with free access to water and food at the University of Salamanca's Animal Experimentation facilities. Eighteen 7-week-old female golden hamsters (*Mesocricetus auratus*, Charles River) weighing 100–120 g were housed at the Animal Experimentation Unit of IRNA-CSIC. Animal procedures used in this study complied with the Spanish (L32/2007, L6/2013 and RD53/2013) and the European Union (Di 2010/63/CE) regulations on animal experimentation. The University of Salamanca's Ethics Committee approved procedures used in the present study (protocol 48531). A strain of *S. bovis* from Salamanca (Spain) was maintained in the Department of Animal Pathology of IRNASA-CSIC in *Planorbarius metidjensis* as intermediate host and sheep as definitive host (Oleaga and Ramajo, 2004). The number of cercariae and their viability were determined using a stereoscopic microscope.

### 2.2. Antigens

Soluble adult worm antigens from *S. bovis* (SoSbAWA) used for ELISA were prepared as previously described (Abán et al., 1999). Twenty adult worms were suspended in 1 mL of sterile phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) containing 1 mM phenyl-methyl-sulphonyl fluoride (PMSF; Sigma, St. Louis, MO), homogenized, frozen and thawed thrice and then sonicated thrice (70 kHz) for 1 min each. The suspension was centrifuged at 20,000 g for 30 min at 4 °C. A recombinant FABP from *F. hepatica* (rFh15) was used for immunizations and ELISA, and it was prepared in accordance with López-Abán et al. (2012). Briefly, total RNA from one *F. hepatica* adult worm was isolated and used for cDNA synthesis. The rFh15 gene (accession number M95291.1) was amplified using the following primer sequences: forward 5'-GGATCCATGGCTGACTTTGTGGG-3' and reverse 5'-CTCAGCGCTTTGAGCAGAGTG-3' and restriction sites for BamHI and XhoI were added. PCR products were then purified and cloned into pGEX-4T2 vector with a *S. japonicum* GST sequence for further detection and purification. The resulting recombinant DNA plasmid was purified and then sequenced to verify integrity of the cloned insert. Transformed *Escherichia coli* BL21 cells were grown in Luria–Bertani medium with ampicillin until reaching an optical density of 0.6 and then induced by the addition of isopropyl

$\beta$ -galactopyranoside (IPTG). The cell pellet was recovered by centrifugation of the culture at 18,000 g for 30 min, suspended in PBS with 1 mM PMSF and 1% Triton X-100 sonicated and centrifuged. Solubilized protein was purified by affinity chromatography with a glutathione Sepharose 4B resin. Non-retained proteins were eluted with PBS and the rFh15 protein was eluted adding PBS plus thrombin. Protein purity was assessed by SDS-PAGE and quantified by bicinchoninic acid (BCA) method.

### 2.3. ADAD vaccination system

The rFh15 protein was formulated in a micelle composed by non-hemolytic saponins from *Q. saponaria* (Qs; Sigma, St. Louis, Missouri) and the synthetic aliphatic diamine AA0029. Then, this micelle was emulsified in a non mineral oil (Montanide ISA763A, SEPPIC, Paris, France) as an oil/water 70/30 and subcutaneously injected. The ADAD vaccination system consists of a set of two subcutaneous injections. The first injection, called “Adaptation”, contains AA0029 and Qs emulsified in the non-mineral oil. The second injection, administered 5 days after the adaptation, contains the rFh15 antigen with AA0029 and Qs in the emulsion oil. In control adjuvant group (AA0029 + Qs) two injections of AA0029 and Qs were administered. Individual doses per injection in mice included in each immunization, 100  $\mu$ g of AA0029, 20  $\mu$ g of Qs and 10  $\mu$ g of rFh15 in a final volume of a 200  $\mu$ L injection of emulsion with the non-mineral oil. In hamsters each dose contained 100  $\mu$ g of AA0029, 20  $\mu$ g of Qs and 20  $\mu$ g of rFh15 in a final volume of a 200  $\mu$ L was used (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2004; Uribe et al., 2007). The lipidic diamine AA0029 was obtained from the corresponding 2-amino-hexadecanoic acid (which was also properly obtained from diethyl acetamidomalonic acid and 1-bromotetradecane); the amino group was protected as a *tert*-butyl carbamate (*Boc*) and the acid group reduced to an alcohol (the acid was transformed into a mixed hydride and then reduced with sodium borohydride). Afterwards, the hydroxyl group was first mesylated, then transformed into the corresponding azide and further reduced to a diamine, resulting in the diamine AA0029 [*tert*-butyl (1-aminohexadecan-2-yl)carbamate] (del Olmo et al., 2006).

### 2.4. Immunological assessment of rFh15 using AA0029 in ADAD vaccination system in BALB/c mice

Three groups of six female BALB/c each were used for characterization of immunological response: Untreated, Injected with AA0029 + Qs as adjuvant control, and Immunized with rFh15 formulated in ADAD system (AA0029 + Qs + rFh15). Firstly, mice were immunized on week 0 and identical booster doses were administered 2 and 4 weeks after. Two weeks after the immunization schedule the mice were anesthetized with isoflurane and euthanized by cervical dislocation. Spleens were then aseptically removed for obtaining splenocytes by perfusion with sterile PBS to study cytokine profile and to quantify T-cell subpopulations. Blood samples were collected for antibody (IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM and IgE) detection from each animal before each immunization and at the necropsy.

### 2.5. Cytokine measurement

Splenocytes obtained from individual mice were cultured in a 6-well plate at  $1 \times 10^6$  cells per well concentration in complete RPMI 1640 medium containing 10% heat-inactivated fetal calf serum L-glutamine, 5 mM and antibiotics: 100 units/mL penicillin and 100  $\mu$ g/mL streptomycin (López-Abán et al., 2007). Splenocytes from immunization and control mice were stimulated *in vitro* with rFh15 at a final concentration of 10  $\mu$ g/mL for 72 hours at 37 °C in a humidified atmosphere with 5% CO<sub>2</sub>. Control wells were also prepared

containing splenocytes from untreated mice. Culture supernatants were recovered for cytokine determination. A flow cytometry-based technique was used for interferon  $\gamma$  (IFN $\gamma$ ), and tumor necrosis factor  $\alpha$  (TNF $\alpha$ ), interleukin (IL)-1 $\alpha$ , IL-2, IL-4, IL-6, IL-10 and IL-17 cytokine quantitation was carried out in each of the groups of mice used in this study. A FlowCytomix Mouse Th1/Th2 10plex kit (Bender MedSystems GmbH, Vienna, Austria) was used, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, different sized fluorescent beads, coated with capture antibodies specific for the aforementioned cytokines, were incubated with mouse splenocyte samples and with biotin-conjugated secondary antibodies for 2 h at room temperature. The specific antibodies bind to the cytokines captured by the first antibodies. After washing the tubes with PBS plus 2% fetal calf serum, streptavidin-phycoerythrin (S-PE) solution was added and incubated at room temperature for 1 h. S-PE binds to the biotin conjugate and emits fluorescent signals. Flow cytometry data were collected using a FACSCalibur flow cytometer (BD Biosciences) at the University of Salamanca's Flow Cytometry Central Service; 8000 events were collected (gated by forward and side scatter) and data were analyzed using FlowCytomix Pro 3.0 software (Bender MedSystems, Vienna, Austria). Each cytokine concentration was determined from standard curves using known mouse recombinant cytokine concentrations. Results were expressed as mean and standard error of the mean (SEM).

### 2.6. Flow cytometry analysis of T- cell splenocyte populations

Splenocytes from untreated, AA0029 + Qs treated and rFh15 immunized mice were incubated with the blocking anti-CD16/CD32 monoclonal antibody for 5 minutes at room temperature and stained with commercial fluorochrome-conjugated antibodies at 1/50 dilution in PBS plus 2% fetal calf serum for 30 minutes at 4 °C. Rat anti mouse CD45-peridinin chlorophyll protein (PerCP)- cyanine dye (Cy5.5), CD4-fluorescein isothiocyanate (FITC), CD8-phycoerythrin (PE), CD45R/B220-allophycocyanin (APC), CD197-PE (CCR7), CD62L-APC and hamster anti-mouse CD27 APC (BD Pharmingen, USA) were used. After incubation, cells were washed in PBS with 2% fetal calf serum and then centrifuged at 1000 g for 5 min and the supernatant was discarded. Then cells were fixed with 100  $\mu$ L of a 2% paraformaldehyde solution for 1 h at 4 °C. Phenotypic analyses were performed in a FACScalibur flow cytometer at the University of Salamanca's Flow Cytometry Central Service. Data were collected on 30,000 events (gated by forward and side scatter) and analyzed using GatedLogic Flow Cytometry Analysis Software (INIVAL Technologies Pty Ltd). Results were expressed as mean and SEM.

### 2.7. Vaccination experiment schedules

Two independent experiments were carried out with mice and golden hamsters for the vaccination challenge. BALB/c mice were randomly divided in four groups of 9 animals each as follows: Untreated and uninfected, *S. bovis* infected, Injected with ADAD with AA0029 + Qs and infected, Vaccinated with ADAD plus AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 and infected. Animals were vaccinated and boosted 2 weeks after the first immunization. Two weeks after the immunization schedule, each mouse was challenged with *S. bovis* cercariae by the “ring method”. Mice were restrained with a mixture of ketamine 50 mg/kg, diazepam 5 mg/kg and atropine 1 mg/kg injected intraperitoneally and then a suspension of 150 cercariae in 1 mL of mineral water was poured on the abdominal region during 45 min. Eight weeks post-infection all mice were euthanized with intraperitoneal injection of sodium pentobarbital (60 mg/kg) and then perfused by intra-cardiac injection of PBS plus heparin, and the number of recovered *S. bovis* adult worms from the portal and mesenteric veins was recorded. In addition, the number of parasite eggs per gram (EPG) of liver and intestine was counted after

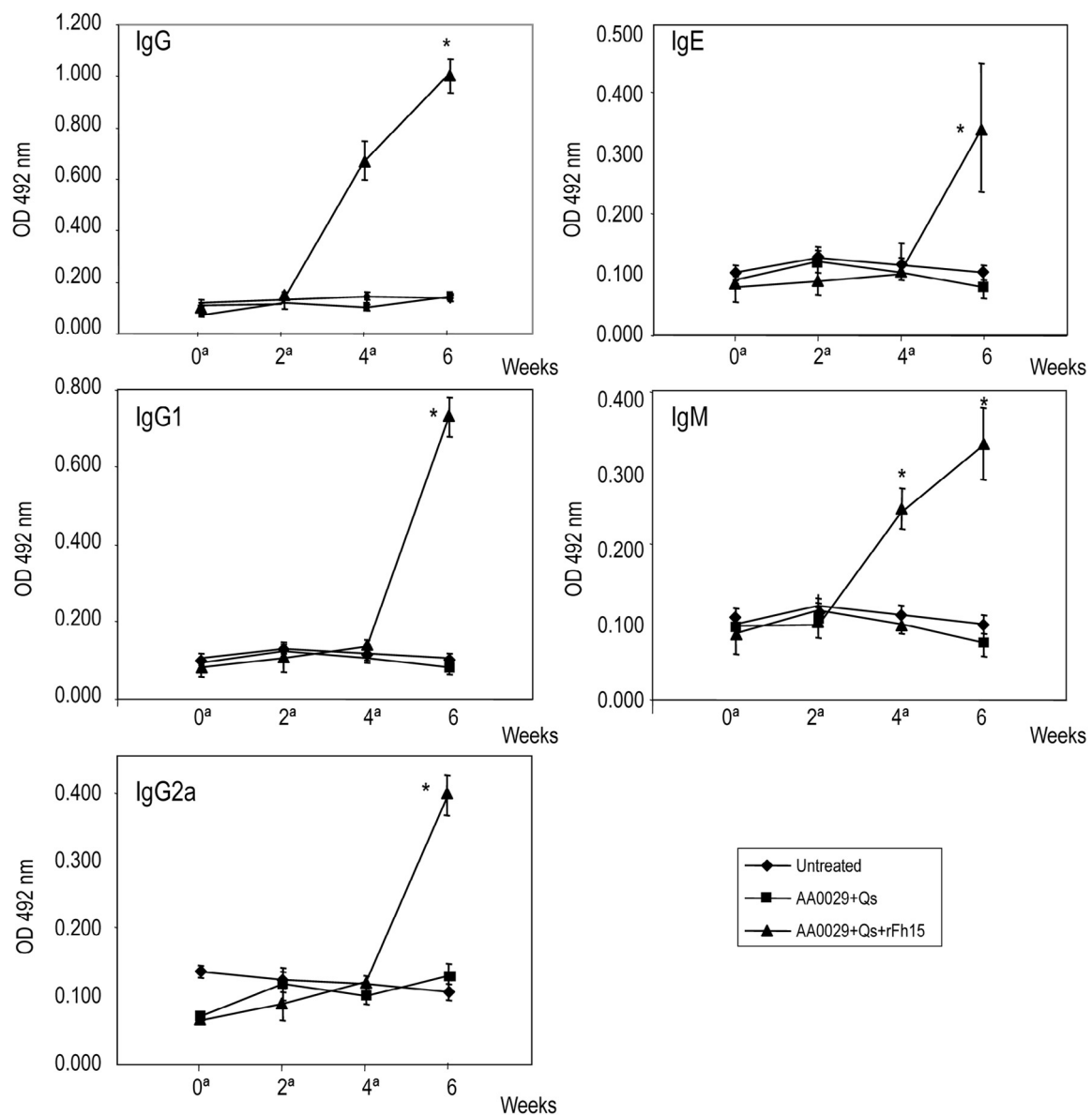
digestion with 25 mL of 5% KOH (16 h at 37 °C with gentle shaking) using a McMaster camera. The relationship between eggs and the number of females was evaluated as a measurement of a possible anti-fecundity effect. Macroscopic lesions of liver were quantified considering changes in size, consistency, color, blood vessels, and presence of schistosomal pigment and scored as follows (0) no lesions, (1) mild, (2) moderate, and (3) intense. Protection rates were calculated with the following formula: (mean infected control group recovered worms – mean experimental group recovered worms)  $\times$  100/mean infected control group recovered worms. Blood samples were collected from each animal before immunization, infection and necropsy for humoral immune response studies.

A second experiment was performed using golden hamsters. Animals were randomly divided into three groups of 6 each as follows: *S. bovis* infected, Injected with ADAD with AA0029 + Qs and infected, Vaccinated with ADAD with AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 and infected. Two weeks after the first immunization animals were boosted with the same doses. Two weeks after the immunization schedule,

each animal was challenged with 200 *S. bovis* cercariae for 45 min as above. All animals were euthanized using an intraperitoneal injection of sodium pentobarbital (60 mg/kg) and perfused 8 weeks after the infection as above. Adult worm burden, number of parasite eggs in liver and intestine, fecundity rates were recorded and percentages of reduction were calculated. Macroscopic lesions of liver were quantified as earlier criteria. Serum samples were collected during experiment for humoral immune response study.

## 2.8. Anti-rFh15 and SoSbAWA specific antibody production

Specific anti-soluble *S. bovis* adult worm antigens (SoSbAWA) or anti-rFh15 antibodies profiles were measured using an indirect ELISA as described by Abán et al. (1999). Briefly, 96-well polystyrene plates (Costar) were coated with 2.5  $\mu$ g of SoSbAWA or 2.0  $\mu$ g of rFh15 antigen for 12 h in carbonate buffer (pH 9.0) and then blocked with 2% bovine serum albumin in PBS. Sera were then added at 1:100 dilutions and incubated for 1 h at 37 °C, followed by the addition



**Fig. 1.** Serum anti-rFh15 specific IgG, subtypes IgG1 and IgG2a, IgE and IgM antibody levels (mean  $\pm$  SEM) during the immunization experiment by ELISA. BALB/c mice were immunized with AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system. Untreated and AA0029 + Qs treated controls were used. OD optical density \* $p$  < 0.05 compared to untreated control. <sup>a</sup>Immunization.

of goat peroxidase-labeled anti-mouse, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM or IgE antibodies at 1:1000 dilution (Sigma) or anti-hamster IgG antibodies at 1:1000 dilution (Sigma). The reaction was developed with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> and ortophenilenediamine (Sigma) in citrate buffer (pH 5.0) and the absorbance was measured at 492 nm with an Ear400FT ELISA reader (Lab Instruments). Results were expressed as mean and standard error of mean (SEM).

### 2.9. Statistical analysis

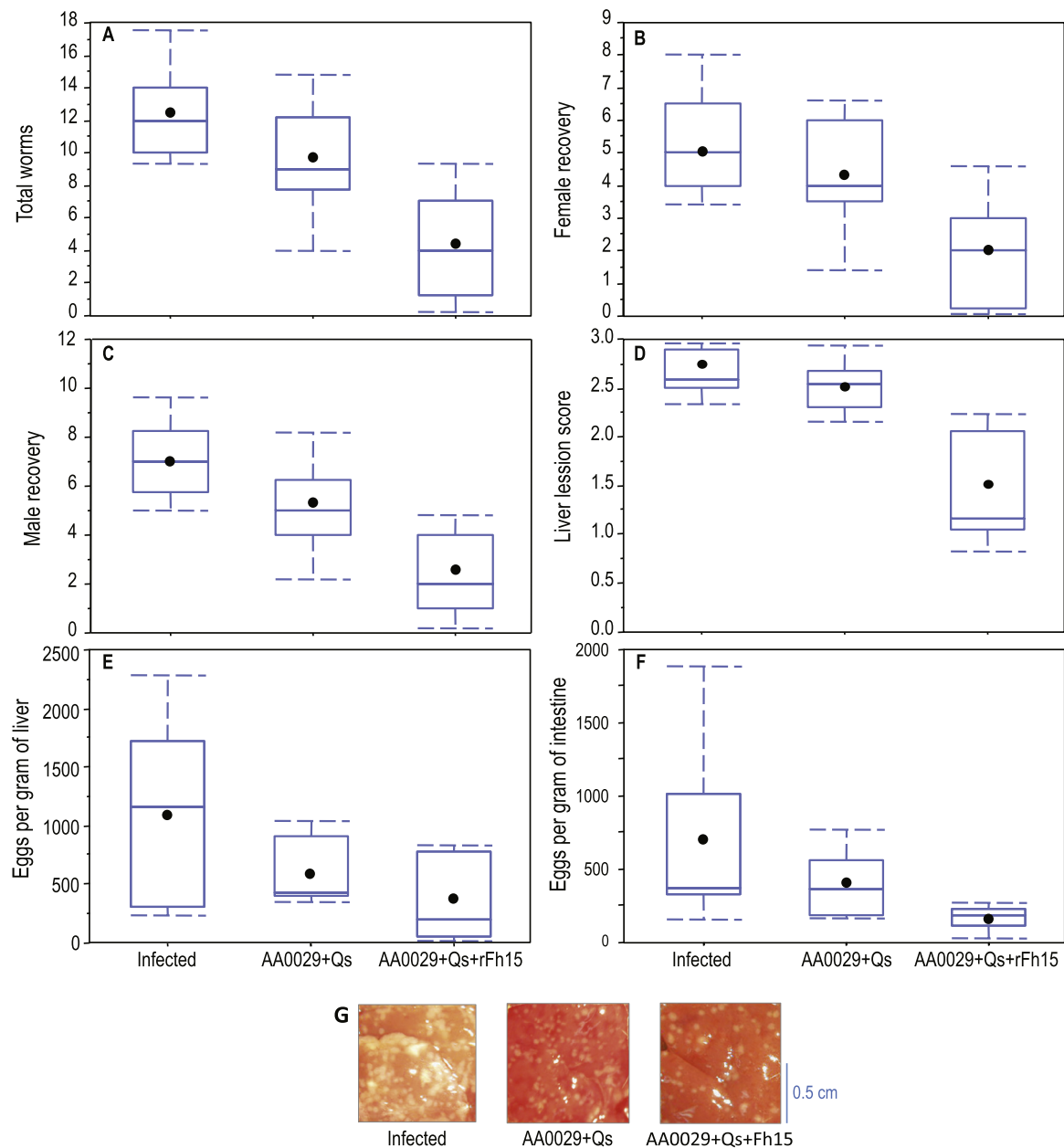
Normal distribution of data was studied by Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. Significant differences among groups were found using one-way ANOVA test and *post hoc* Tukey's honest significance test (HSD) or Kruskal–Wallis test when appropriate. All statistical analyses were

considered significant at the  $p < 0.05$ . SPSS 21 software (IBM) was used for data analysis.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Immune response induced by immunization with rFh15 in ADAD system using AA0029 as immunomodulator

Innate pro-inflammatory (TNF $\alpha$ , IL-6), Th1 (IFN $\gamma$ , IL-1 $\alpha$ , IL-2), Th2 (IL-4), regulatory (IL-10) and Th17 (IL-17) cytokine levels was measured in cultured splenocyte supernatants. It was observed that the AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 combination stimulated significant increase of TNF $\alpha$  ( $p = 0.049$ ), IL-6 ( $p = 0.001$ ), IL-2 ( $p = 0.036$ ) and IL-4 ( $p = 0.001$ ) compared to untreated control group. However no differences were



**Fig. 2.** Boxplots with number of total recovered worm (A), females (B), males (C), hepatic damage (D), eggs per gram of liver (E) and egg per gram of intestine (F), and representative photographs of the hepatic damage in the groups (G) in BALB/c mice vaccinated with AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system, challenged with 150 cercariae of *Schistosoma bovis* and perfused 8 weeks post-challenge. Data are represented in boxplots with mean (solid symbol), median, Q1 and Q3 (box), percentiles 10 and 90 (error bars).

**Table 1**

Interleukin (IL)-6, TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-1 $\alpha$ , IFN $\gamma$ , IL-2, IL-4, IL-10, IL-17 production by splenocytes and percentages of CD45, CD4, CD8, CD197, CD62L, CD27 and B220 splenocyte populations 2 weeks after immunization (mean  $\pm$  SEM). BALB/c mice were immunized with PAL+Qs + Fh15 using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system. Untreated mice and mice treated with AA0029 + Qs were used as controls.

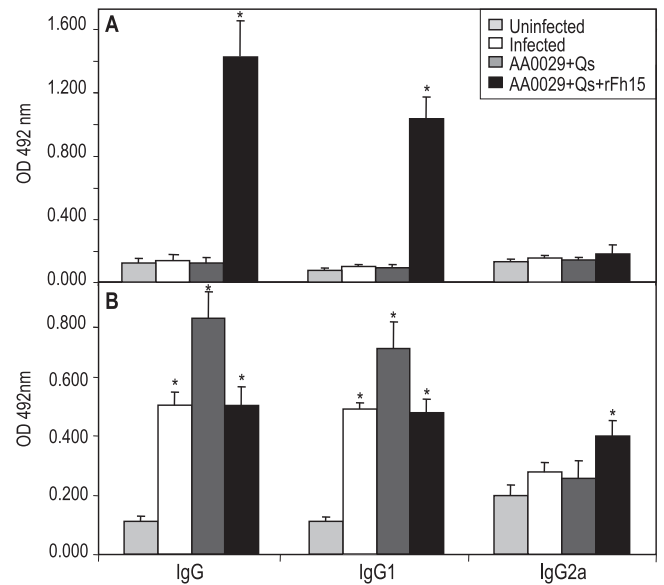
|                                | Untreated      | AA0029 + Qs    | AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Cytokine concentration (pg/mL) |                |                |                     |
| TNF $\alpha$                   | 313 $\pm$ 98   | 214 $\pm$ 20   | 937 $\pm$ 130*      |
| IL-6                           | 964 $\pm$ 118  | 1318 $\pm$ 137 | 2755 $\pm$ 226*     |
| IL-1 $\alpha$                  | 527 $\pm$ 65   | 368 $\pm$ 32   | 448 $\pm$ 23        |
| IFN $\gamma$                   | 543 $\pm$ 35   | 643 $\pm$ 16   | 735 $\pm$ 23        |
| IL-2                           | 592 $\pm$ 74   | 774 $\pm$ 84   | 1025 $\pm$ 47*      |
| IL-4                           | 1138 $\pm$ 101 | 1508 $\pm$ 82  | 2078 $\pm$ 145*     |
| IL-10                          | 481 $\pm$ 46   | 485 $\pm$ 39   | 424 $\pm$ 7         |
| IL-17                          | 1724 $\pm$ 167 | 2048 $\pm$ 43  | 2053 $\pm$ 46       |
| Cell percentages               |                |                |                     |
| CD45                           | 75.7 $\pm$ 3.4 | 77.0 $\pm$ 0.7 | 75.5 $\pm$ 2.8      |
| CD4                            | 21.1 $\pm$ 1.3 | 20.7 $\pm$ 0.4 | 21.3 $\pm$ 0.5      |
| CD8                            | 8.4 $\pm$ 0.5  | 8.4 $\pm$ 0.6  | 10.2 $\pm$ 0.6      |
| CD197                          | 16.9 $\pm$ 1.7 | 18.0 $\pm$ 2.1 | 12.6 $\pm$ 2.8      |
| CD62L                          | 23.2 $\pm$ 3.2 | 20.1 $\pm$ 5.0 | 17.2 $\pm$ 0.9      |
| CD27                           | 19.4 $\pm$ 1.9 | 18.0 $\pm$ 1.6 | 16.9 $\pm$ 0.8      |
| B220                           | 35.9 $\pm$ 3.2 | 39.4 $\pm$ 0.6 | 23.2 $\pm$ 1.7      |

\*  $p < 0.05$  in comparison with untreated controls and treated with AA0029 + Qs.

detected regarding Th17 and Treg cytokine levels (Table 1). Mice treated only with AA0029 + Qs showed similar cytokine levels to the untreated controls (Table 1). With regard to the percentage of splenocyte populations in AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 immunized mice, a slight reduction was observed in B220, even though the differences between groups were not statistically significant. No differences in T and B splenocyte populations were observed in mice treated only with AA0029 + Qs (Table 1). Specific antibodies (IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM and IgE), which increased against rFh15 antigen, were evaluated by ELISA in sera of mice along the immunization experiment (Fig. 1). A significant IgG and IgM enhancement was observed at week 4 of the experiment in AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 immunized mice compared to untreated mice or treated with AA0029 + Qs. Additionally, significant IgE, IgG1 and IgG2a were only observed at the endpoint of the experiment ( $p < 0.05$ ).

### 3.2. Evaluation of vaccination in BALB/c mice

It was observed that the AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 combination elicited a significant reduction in parasitological magnitudes. The adult worm burden became reduced by 64% ( $4.4 \pm 1.4$  cf  $12.4 \pm 1.0$   $p = 0.001$ ), in females by 62% ( $2.0 \pm 0.7$  cf  $5.3 \pm 0.6$ ;  $p = 0.016$ ), in males by 66% ( $2.4 \pm 0.7$  cf  $7.1 \pm 0.6$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), eggs in liver by 66% ( $377 \pm 141$  EPG cf  $1107 \pm 275$  EPG;  $p = 0.005$ ), eggs in intestine by 77% ( $163 \pm 35$  EPG cf  $709 \pm 238$  EPG;  $p = 0.048$ ), eggs per female in liver 10% ( $189 \pm 71$  EPG/female cf  $209 \pm 52$  EPG/female; n.s., not significant), eggs per female in intestine 39% ( $82 \pm 18$  EPG/female cf  $134 \pm 45$  EPG/female; n.s.) and liver injuries by 42% (Score  $1.60 \pm 0.51$  cf  $2.75 \pm 0.49$ ;  $p = 0.048$ ) compared to infected controls (Fig. 2). Recovered worms were all mature adults and the male/female ratio was not altered. A significant reduction of fecundity rate was not observed in vaccinated group. Moreover, mice injected only with AA0029 + Qs showed slight not-significant reduction rates regarding adult worm recovery (23% in total worms,  $9.6 \pm 1.4$  cf  $12.4 \pm 1.0$ ; 17% in females  $4.4 \pm 0.7$  cf  $5.3 \pm 0.6$ , 27% in males  $5.2 \pm 0.7$  cf  $7.1 \pm 0.6$ ), liver damage (6% in score  $2.59 \pm 0.28$  cf  $2.75 \pm 0.49$ ), egg in tissues (43% in liver,  $630 \pm 98$  EPG cf  $1107 \pm 275$  EPG; 42% in intestine  $415 \pm 78$  EPG cf  $709 \pm 238$  EPG), and tissue eggs per female (31% in liver  $143 \pm 22$  EPG/female cf  $209 \pm 52$  EPG/female; 29% in intestine  $94 \pm 18$  EPG/female cf  $134 \pm 45$  EPG/female) compared to infected controls (Fig. 2). Antibody response along the experiment was monitored by ELISA using rFh15 and SoSbAWA antigens. A strong IgG

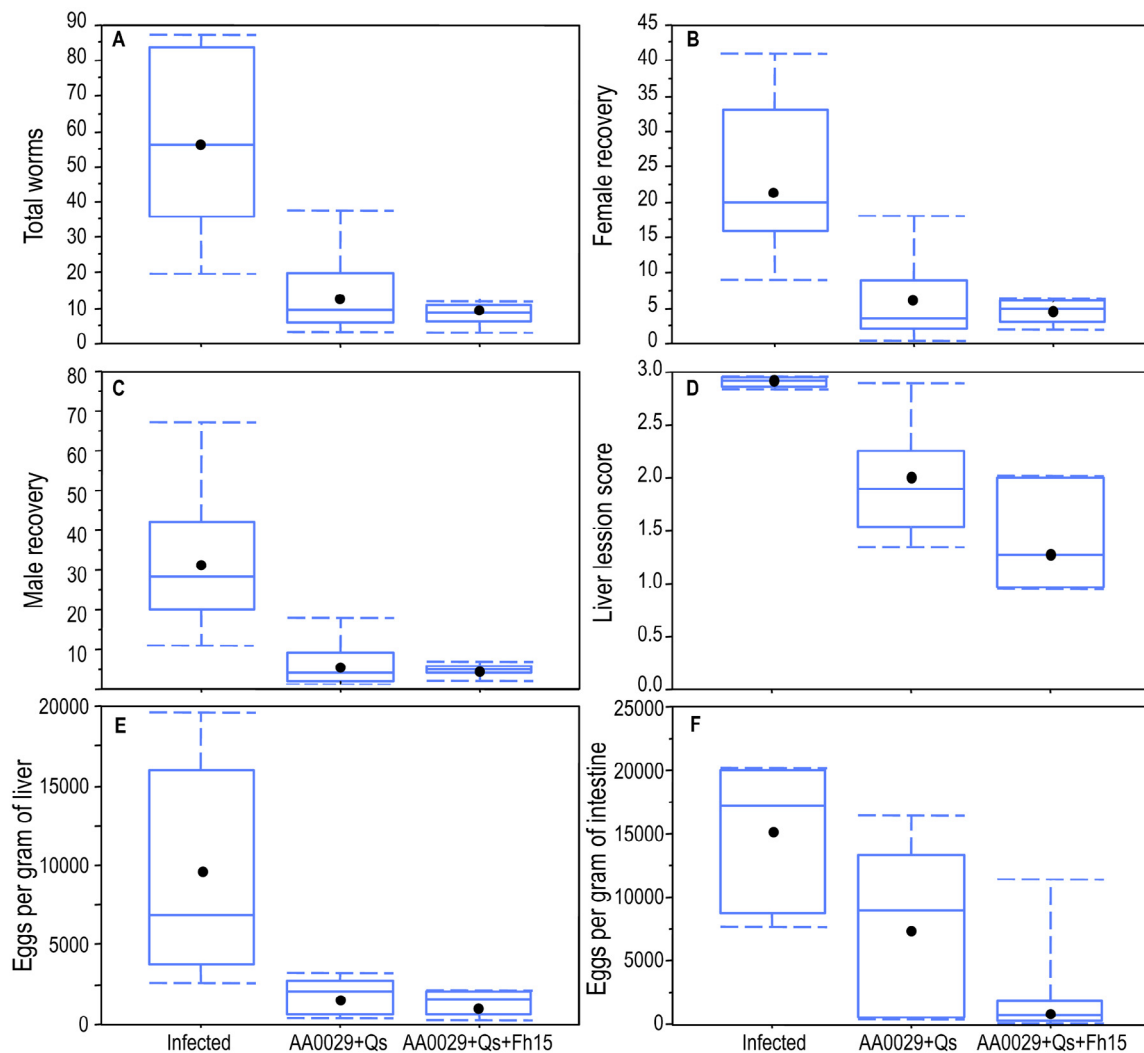


**Fig. 3.** Serum specific IgG, IgG1 and IgG2a antibody levels by ELISA 8 weeks post-challenge against rFh15 (A), and against soluble adult worm antigens from *S. bovis* (SoSbAWA) (B). BALB/c mice were vaccinated with rFh15 using the adjuvant adaptation system (ADAD), challenged with 150 cercariae of *Schistosoma bovis* and perfused 8 week post-challenge. OD optical densities \* $p < 0.05$  in comparison with uninfected controls.

response against rFh15 was detected in vaccinated mice compared to either control or AA0029 + Qs treated groups, after the immunization schedule and during the experiment (week 8 p.i. OD  $1.556 \pm 0.235$  cf  $0.145 \pm 0.050$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) (Fig. 3A). Increases in specific IgG and IgG1 against SoSbAWA were found only 8 weeks p.i. in all infected mice, but only AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 vaccinated mice showed a significant increase of IgG2a compared to other groups (Fig. 3B).

### 3.3. Evaluation of vaccination in Mesocricetus auratus

Vaccination with AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 in golden hamsters showed reductions of 83% in adult worm burden ( $9.3 \pm 1.7$  cf  $56.3 \pm 11.3$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ), 81% in females ( $4.5 \pm 0.7$  cf  $23.2 \pm 5.0$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), 85% in males ( $4.8 \pm 0.7$  cf  $33.2 \pm 8.6$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ), 90% in liver eggs (EPG  $950 \pm 391$  cf  $9333 \pm 2881$ ;  $p = 0.021$ ), 96% in intestine eggs (EPG  $581 \pm 397$  cf  $15,125 \pm 2308$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ), 48% in liver eggs per female (EPG/female  $211 \pm 54$  cf  $404 \pm 179$ ;  $p = 0.049$ ), 80% in intestine eggs per female (EPG/female  $129 \pm 136$  cf  $651 \pm 166$ ;  $p = 0.027$ ) and 56% hepatic injuries (score  $1.25 \pm 0.25$  cf  $2.87 \pm 0.40$   $p < 0.001$ ) when compared with infected controls (Fig. 4). Additionally, hamsters treated only with AA0029 + Qs showed significant reduction in total adult worms (78%,  $12.7 \pm 7.6$  cf  $56.3 \pm 11.3$ ;  $p = 0.012$ ), females (73%,  $6.2 \pm 2.8$  cf  $23.2 \pm 5.0$ ;  $p = 0.032$ ), males (80%,  $6.5 \pm 2.7$  cf  $33.2 \pm 8.6$ ;  $p = 0.030$ ), eggs in liver (EPG 78%,  $2044 \pm 598$  cf  $9333 \pm 2881$ ;  $p = 0.039$ ) and eggs in intestine (EPG 54%,  $6894 \pm 3844$  cf  $15,125 \pm 2308$ ;  $p = 0.041$ ). However, no-significant reduction was found in worm fecundity or liver lesion (Fig. 4). However, no reduction was observed in eggs per female in intestine ( $1112 \pm 197$  cf  $651 \pm 166$ ) and no-significant reduction was found in eggs per female in liver ( $18\%$ ,  $330 \pm 73$  cf  $402 \pm 179$ ) or liver lesion score (30%,  $2.00 \pm 0.41$  cf  $2.87 \pm 0.40$ ) (Fig. 4). Using rFh15 as antigen in ELISA we observed significant increased IgG at the time of the infection and after 8 weeks p.i. in AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 vaccinated animals compared to non-vaccinated indicating that all animals were correctly vaccinated (Fig. 5). High levels of specific IgG antibodies anti-SoSbAWA were observed in all infected animals at week 8 p.i. (Fig. 5).

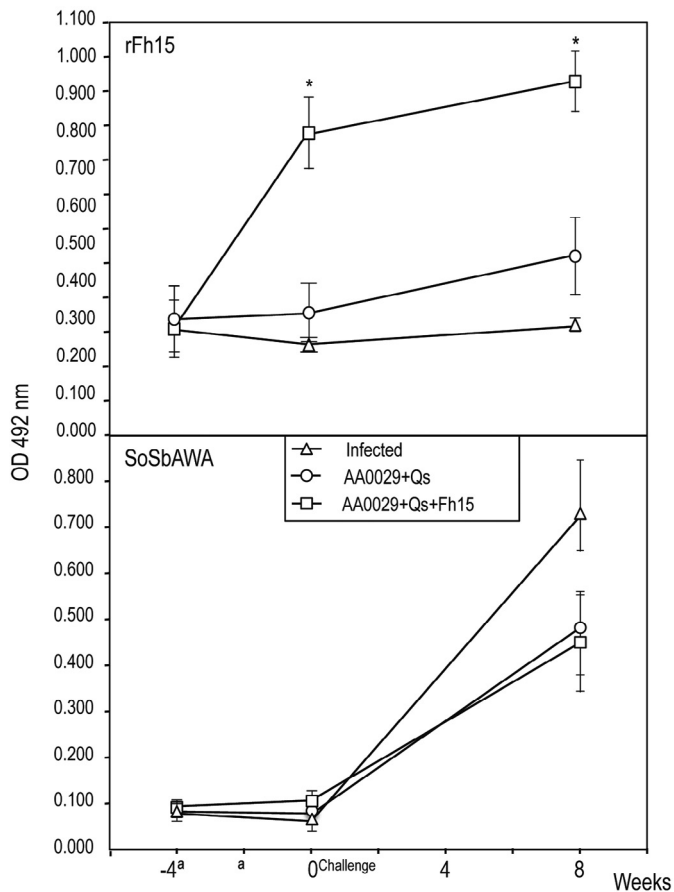


**Fig. 4.** Boxplots with number of total recovered worm (A), females (B), males (C), hepatic damage (D), eggs per gram of liver (E) and egg per gram of intestine (F) in *Mesocricetus auratus* vaccinated with AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system, challenged with 150 cercariae of *Schistosoma bovis* and perfused 8 weeks post-challenge. Data are represented in boxplots with mean (solid symbol), median, Q1 and Q3 (box), percentiles 10 and 90 (error bars).

#### 4. Discussion

Fatty acid binding proteins (FABP) have demonstrated to be reliable vaccine candidates in schistosome and *F. hepatica* vaccine development (Hillyer, 2005; McManus and Loukas, 2008). In the progress of an effective vaccine against schistosomes the use of immunogenic antigens together with appropriate adjuvant systems, which are able to induce an adequate immunological response represents an important goal. The ADAD vaccination system is a new adjuvant system proposed as alternative to Freund's in vaccination against *F. hepatica* and schistosomes including immunomodulators as the hydroalcoholic extract from the rhizome of *Phlebodium pseudoaureum* (PAL) or chemically synthesized aliphatic diamines and amino-alcohols (AA0029, AA2829, OA0012) with promising results in vaccines against these trematodes (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2004; Uribe et al., 2007; Vicente et al., 2014). In this work we studied the effects of the synthetic immunomodulator AA0029 in the immunological response induced by the recombinant FABP rFh15 formulated in ADAD vaccination system prior to use it in a vaccination trial against the infection by *S. bovis* in BALB/c mice. Immunization with ADAD plus AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 elicited increased levels of TNF $\alpha$  and IL-6 innate pro-inflammatory cytokines,

IL-2, representative of Th1 response and IL-4 of the Th2 response compared to mice from the adjuvant control group (AA0029 + Qs) or untreated controls. No significant changes in Treg or Th17 cytokines and in percentages of splenocyte populations were found. There is a broad consensus that associates protection against *Schistosoma* spp. in the mouse model with high levels of IFN $\gamma$ , TNF $\alpha$  (Wilson and Coulson, 2009) frequently associated with the presence of other cytokines as IL-12 (Cardoso et al., 2008), IL-10 (Rezende et al., 2011), IL-6, and IL-17 (Torben et al., 2011). Beside pro-inflammatory and Th1 cytokines, we observed significant levels of IL-4 as it was observed using as adjuvants, the combination of ODN and R848 (Wang et al., 2013), alum and ODN (Teixeira de Melo et al., 2013), alum (Zhang et al., 2011), peptidoglycan or thymic stromal lymphopoietin (El-Ridi and Tallima, 2012) as adjuvants. These data indicate that AA0029 formulated in ADAD with Qs and rFh15 promotes an intense mixed Th1/Th2 response. An early, intense and balanced cytokine immune response before the challenge seems determinant in the success of the rFh15 formulation with AA0029 in ADAD in concordance with experimental immunoprotection against *Fasciola hepatica* observed using synthetic peptides with ADAD (Rojas-Caraballo et al., 2014). In addition, we observed an intense specific response of IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM and IgE against the rFh15 antigen in immunized



**Fig. 5.** Serum antibody level detection (mean  $\pm$  SEM) of IgG against rFh15 and SoSbAWA antigen in ELISA of *Mesocricetus auratus* vaccinated with AA0029 + Qs + Fh15 using the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system and challenged with 200 cercariae of *Schistosoma bovis* percutaneously. OD optical density \* $p < 0.05$  compared to infected controls. <sup>a</sup>Immunization.

mice. Antibodies have been related with *in vitro* killing of schistosomula (Torben et al., 2012) and worm burden reduction in mice infected with *S. mansoni* after passive transfer of serum or purified IgG from Smp80 vaccinated baboons or mice (Torben et al., 2011) and antibodies have been related with self cure in the rhesus macaque (Wilson and Coulson, 2009).

Furthermore, we evaluated the ability of the formulation of AA0029 + Qs + rFh15 to induce protection against the cercarial challenge by *S. bovis* in terms of worm recovery, eggs in tissues and hepatic damage in two models BALB/c mice and golden hamster. These magnitudes are in concordance with protection studies in natural ruminant hosts to estimate protection (Vercruysse and Gabriel, 2005). The level of protection achieved was significantly high as compared to infected controls, and it was comparable to the previous results of vaccination against *S. bovis* using rFh15 formulated Freund's adjuvant in C57/BL6 mice (Abáné et al., 2000) or with ADAD vaccination system using PAL, the hydro-alcoholic extract from *Phlebotium pseudoaureum*, in BALB/c mice (Vicente et al., 2014), and better than protection achieved by 14-3-3 protein from *S. bovis* formulated in ADAD with PAL or AA0029 (Uribe et al., 2007). Recovered adult worms in both models did not show an altered sex ratios, which suggests that vaccination did not selectively affect one sex or the other. As would be expected the lower level of infection in vaccinated mice and hamsters was accompanied by a reduced pathology, as evidenced by a lower number of eggs found in their livers; the livers were also less injured. Reduction of disease is considered a desirable feature of a schistosomiasis vaccine candidate

(Siddiqui et al., 2011). Moreover, we observed that vaccination seems to reduce the eggs trapped in tissues per female in hamsters pointing an impairment of the oviposition capacity of the surviving females as happens in repetitive natural infections (Vercruysse and Gabriel, 2005). The anti-fecundity effect along with reduction of egg viability is considered useful for reduction transmission in schistosomiasis (Ahmad et al., 2009; Dai et al., 2014). Furthermore, a significant increase of IgG2a against SoSbAWA was observed in protected mice in vaccination experiment. Regarding the adjuvant control groups treated only with AA0029 + Qs and infected, we observed reductions in tissue eggs only in hamsters. This effect could be related to immunomodulatory activity of AA0029 due to short time between immunization schedule and infection. A similar situation was observed in vaccination against experimental strongyloidosis using AA0029 as adjuvant (Vlaminck et al., 2010). It was also observed that chitosan nanoparticles are able to modulate the granuloma area reducing liver injuries and induce a moderate protection against *S. mansoni* infection (Oliveira et al., 2012).

This work demonstrates that the use of the synthetic immunomodulator AA0029 with rFh15 in ADAD vaccination system promotes an early potent mixed Th1/Th2 type of immune response with significant production of TNF $\alpha$ , IL-6, IL-2, IL-4 and antibodies, and corroborates the immunoprophylactic properties of rFh15 against *S. bovis* with reduction in parasite burden and morbidity in two models. A defined molecule as AA0029 with immunomodulatory properties could contribute to drive immune response representing an innovative approach for the designing and implementation of trematode vaccines.

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### 3.3 ARTÍCULO 3

#### **Protection against *Schistosoma mansoni* infection using *Fasciola hepatica*-derived fatty acid binding protein from different obtaining systems**

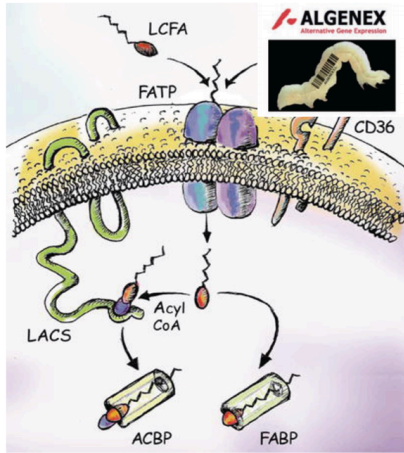
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Pedro Fernández-Soto, Antonio Muro

Enviado al Parasites & Vectors

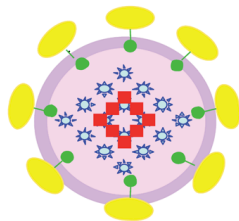
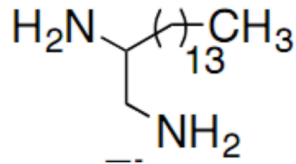
## RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza el potencial inmunoprotector de moléculas unidas a ácidos grasos de *Fasciola hepatica* (FABPs), tanto en su forma nativa (nFh12) como en formas recombinantes expresadas en *E. coli* (rFh15) como en baculovirus (rFh15b) contra la infección producida en *Schistosoma mansoni*. Se vacunaron ratones BALB/c utilizando inmunomoduladores naturales (PAL) o sintéticos (AA0029) todos ellos infectados con 150 cercarias de *S. mansoni*. Los resultados de los ratones vacunados con nFh12 e inmunomodulador PAL mostraron reducciones significativas en vermes adultos (83%), en huevos en tejidos (82-92%) y en lesiones hepáticas (85%). Por otro lado, cuando se utilizó rFh15 y PAL se observó reducciones en vermes adultos del 56%, en huevos en hígado del 21%, huevos en intestino del 30% y reducción del daño hepático del 66%. Cuando se utilizó rFh15 con AA0029 encontramos reducciones en vermes del 64%, en huevos en hígado del 61%, en huevos en intestino del 77% y en daño hepático del 69%. En contraste, ratones vacunados con rFh15b mostraron exclusivamente reducciones en número de huevos en hígado e intestino (53 y 60% respectivamente) y lesiones hepáticas (45%). Desde el punto de vista inmunológico se detecta un incremento significativo en los niveles de TNF $\alpha$ , IL-6, IL-2 y IL-4. Y altos niveles de IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgGM, IgGE en ratones inmunizados tanto con rFh15 como con rFh15b. Además, los ratones inmunizados con rFh15b mostraron altos niveles de TNF $\alpha$  y disminución de células B220, así como menores títulos de IgG1 e IgGM en comparación con los niveles mostrados por ratones inmunizados con rFh15.

nFh12  
rFh15  
rFh15b



BALB/c



ADAD PAL  
ADAD AA0029



*S. mansoni*

## Parasites & Vectors

# Protection against *Schistosoma mansoni* infection using *Fasciola hepatica*-derived fatty acid binding protein from different obtaining systems

--Manuscript Draft--

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|--|--|--|-----------------------|--|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Manuscript Number:</b>  |  |  |                       |  |                |                    |                      |
| <b>Full Title:</b>   | Protection against <i>Schistosoma mansoni</i> infection using <i>Fasciola hepatica</i> -derived fatty acid binding protein from different obtaining systems  |  |                       |  |                |                    |                      |
| <b>Article Type:</b>   | Research   |  |                       |  |                |                    |                      |
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| Regional Government of Castile and Leon (SA342U13)   | Not applicable   |  |                       |  |                |                    |                      |
| Instituto de Salud Carlos III (RICET VI PN I+D+I 2008-2011, ISCIII FEDER (RD12/0018/0002)) | Not applicable   |  |                       |  |                |                    |                      |
| Banco de Santander   | Jose Rojas-Caraballo   |  |                       |  |                |                    |                      |
| <b>Abstract:</b>   | <p><b>Background:</b> This study reports the immunoprotection induced by cross-reacting <i>Fasciola hepatica</i> fatty acid binding proteins, native (nFh12) and recombinantly expressed using two different expression systems <i>Escherichia coli</i> (rFh15) and baculovirus (rFh15b) against the <i>Schistosoma mansoni</i> infection.</p> <p><b>Methods:</b> BALB/c mice were vaccinated with native or recombinant FABP formulated in adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) system with natural or chemical synthesized immunomodulators (PAL and AA0029) and then challenged with 150 <i>S. mansoni</i> cercariae. Parasite burden, hepatic lesion and antibody response was studied in vaccination trials. Furthermore differences between rFh15 and rFh15b immunological responses (cytokine production, splenocyte population and antibody levels) were studied.</p> <p><b>Results:</b> Vaccination with nFh12 induced significant reductions in worm burden (83%), eggs in tissues (82-92%) and hepatic lesions (85%) compared to infected controls using PAL. Vaccination with rFh15 showed less total worm (56-64%), eggs in liver (21-61%), eggs in the gut (30-77%) and hepatic damage (67-69%) using PAL and AA0029 as immunomodulators. In contrast mice vaccinated with rFh15b showed only reductions in eggs trapped in liver and intestine (53% and 60% respectively), and hepatic lesion (45%). We observed significant rise of TNF<math>\alpha</math>, IL-6, IL-2, IL-4 and high antibody response (IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM and IgE) in mice immunised with either rFh15 or rFh15b. Moreover, immunisation with rFh15b showed increase of IFN<math>\gamma</math> and decrease of B220 cells compared to untreated mice, and less production of IgG1 and IgM than immunised by rFh15.</p> <p><b>Conclusions:</b> Higher level of protection is obtained using <i>Fasciola hepatica</i>-derived fatty acid binding protein against <i>Schistosoma mansoni</i> infection. The percentage of protection varies depending on the expression system used.</p> |  |                       |  |                |                    |                      |
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# Protection against *Schistosoma mansoni* infection using *Fasciola hepatica*-derived fatty acid binding protein from different obtaining systems

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16th November 2015

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## Abstract

**Background:** This study reports the immunoprotection induced by cross-reacting *Fasciola hepatica* fatty acid binding proteins, native (nFh12) and recombinantly expressed using two different expression systems *Escherichia coli* (rFh15) and baculovirus (rFh15b) against the *Schistosoma mansoni* infection.

**Methods.** BALB/c mice were vaccinated with native or recombinant FABP formulated in adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) system with natural or chemical synthesized immunomodulators (PAL and AA0029) and then challenged with 150 *S. mansoni* cercariae. Parasite burden, hepatic lesion and antibody response was studied in vaccination trials. Furthermore differences between rFh15 and rFh15b immunological responses (cytokine production, splenocyte population and antibody levels) were studied.

**Results:** Vaccination with nFh12 induced significant reductions in worm burden (83%), eggs in tissues (82-92%) and hepatic lesions (85%) compared to infected controls using PAL. Vaccination with rFh15 showed less total worm (56-64%), eggs in liver (21-61%), eggs in the gut (30-77%) and hepatic damage (67-69%) using PAL and AA0029 as immunomodulators. In contrast mice vaccinated with rFh15b showed only reductions in eggs trapped in liver and intestine (53% and 60% respectively), and hepatic lesion (45%). We observed significant rise of TNF $\alpha$ , IL-6, IL-2, IL-4 and high antibody response (IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM and IgE) in mice immunised with either rFh15 or rFh15b. Moreover, immunisation with rFh15b showed increase of IFN $\gamma$  and decrease of B220 cells compared to untreated mice, and less production of IgG1 and IgM than immunised by rFh15.

**Conclusions:** Higher level of protection is obtained using *Fasciola hepatica*-derived fatty acid binding protein against *Schistosoma mansoni* infection. The percentage of protection varies depending on the expression system used.

**Key words:** *Schistosoma mansoni*, *Fasciola hepatica*, PAL, AA0029, Fatty acid binding protein, vaccine.

## Background

The blood flukes *Schistosoma mansoni*, *S. haematobium* and *S. japonicum* are the main responsible of schistosomiasis in humans in Africa, Asia and South America. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 261 million people living in 78 countries required treatment in 2013, of whom 121 millions were school-age children and 92 % of them live in Africa [1]. Presently, the main strategy against schistosomiasis involves the use praziquantel to reduce worm burden and morbidity presenting good efficacy, affordable cost, operational convenience and limited side effects [2]. High rates of reinfection and the reduced susceptibility of schistosomula leads to sub-optimal cure rates. After decades of continuous treatment the concern of resistant lineage selection or spreading of native tolerant strains is an important threat [3]. The use of artemisinin derivatives and combinations with praziquantel could be used to improve cure rate in endemic areas [4, 5]. Many researchers believe that immunoprophylaxis could be an attractive tool together with chemotherapy, safe water supply, adequate sanitation, hygiene education or snail control [6]. Reduction of parasite burden, amelioration of pathology and blocking of transmission are considered desirable features of the vaccine [7]. The basis of vaccines against schistosomes are demonstrated by the partial resistance developed against natural infection and the high protection induced by irradiated cercariae reaching worm reductions of 41-75% depending on the total number of immunising parasites [8].

A plethora of proteins have been proposed as potential vaccines against schistosomiasis using different methods of discovering: cDNA library screening with sera raised against whole or fractions of schistosomes, PCR amplification from a cDNA library, identification of membrane protein signal sequences, mining the genome to identify membrane or secretory proteins by reverse vaccinology [9, 10]. Only a little number of vaccines have reached Phase I clinical trials and only the glutathione-S transferase rSh28GST (Bilhvax) have reached Phase III against urinary schistosomiasis [12]. The protein Sm14 from *S. mansoni*, derived from a cloned gene exhibited affinity to fatty acids was able to protect outbred mice and rabbits against the challenge with *S. mansoni* cercariae. Further works led to *Pichia pastoris* expression and the use of the synthetic adjuvant GLA-SE, which has been utilised in Phase I clinical trials [13]. Also, Sm14 shows significant homology to rFh15 from *Fasciola hepatica*, identical basic three-dimensional structure and shared discontinuous epitopes. Moreover, Sm14 induces abolition of liver damage in mice sheep and goats against the experimental infection by *F. hepatica* [13-15]. The native nFh12 and the recombinant rFh15 FABP from *F. hepatica* have shown protections in terms of worm and liver lesion reductions using Freund's adjuvant in C57/BL6 mice against *S. bovis* infection [16-17]. Moreover, large parasite burden reduction, liver lesion amelioration and anti-fecundity effect were observed in BALB/c mice and golden hamster vaccinated with the rFh15 using the ADAD (adjuvant adaptation) vaccination system against the *S. bovis* challenge [18-19]. Furthermore a FABP of 14.6 kDa purified from *Fasciola gigantica* has proved reductions in parasite measurements and liver lesion against *S. mansoni* infection in CD1 mice [20].

New expression systems are needed to allow a better conservation of post-translational modifications than in prokaryotic production systems. Baculovirus based expression system is a safe, versatile and powerful cloning tool for production of recombinant proteins in eukaryotic cells that could be interesting to test against the *S. mansoni* challenge and study the immunological response [21,22].

Immunity adjuvants are recognised to have crucial importance in vaccine development. Adjuvant Adaptation (ADAD) vaccination systems was developed as an alternative to Freund's adjuvant in vaccination against trematodes as *F. hepatica* and schistosomes, since its side effects do not permit the use in commercial vaccine. ADAD combines the antigen together with non-haemolytic saponins from *Quillaja saponaria* and a natural or synthetic immunomodulator, forming an emulsion with the non-mineral oil Montanide ISA 763AVG to obtain a long-term delivery system [22]. The natural immunomodulator PAL is a hydroalcoholic extract from the rhizome of the fern *Phlebodium pseudoaureum* able to down-regulate the Th-response in mice immunised with *Anisakis simplex*, *Trichinella spiralis* and *F. hepatica* antigens [23]. The synthetic diamine AA0029 inhibits lymphoproliferation, modulates of delayed type hypersensitivity in a *T. spiralis* model, modifies ratios of CD8+, CD4+ and MHC Class II cells, and increases nitric oxide production in LPS pre-stimulated rat alveolar macrophages [24]. Experiments using 14-3-3 protein from *S. bovis*, and FABP from *F. hepatica* formulated in ADAD system have yielded high protection in terms of parasite burden and liver damage [18, 19, 25].

The aim of this study is to show the immunoprophylactic properties of three FABP from *Fasciola hepatica* (nFh12, rFh15 and rFh15b) using the ADAD vaccination system against *Schistosoma mansoni* infection in BALB/c mice. Also immunological response to immunisation is studied using one recombinant obtained in *Escherichia coli* (rFh15) and one produced in baculovirus transformed *Trichoplusia ni* caterpillars (rFh15b).

## Methods

### Animals, ethics statement and parasites

Animal procedures used in this study complied with the Spanish (L32/2007, L6/2013 and RD53/2013) and the European Union (Directive 2010/63/EU) regulations on animal experimentation. University of Salamanca's Ethics Committee approved procedures used in the present study (protocol 48531). SPF female CD1 and BALB/c mice obtained from Charles River (Lyon, France) weighing 19-26 g used in this work were maintained in a temperature and humidity controlled environment with a 12 hours light/dark cycle with water and food *ad libitum* in the University of Salamanca's Animal Experimentation facilities. The animals' health status was monitored throughout the experiments by a health surveillance program according to Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations (FELASA) guidelines. Mice were humanely euthanized with an intraperitoneal injection of pentobarbital (100 mg/kg), according to protocols supplied by the University of Salamanca's animal facilities at the



end of the experimental procedures or when any deterioration of mice health status was evidenced. Size of groups was calculated by power analysis using “size.fdr” package for R and following the 3Rs recommendations [26,27]. All efforts were made to minimise suffering. LE strain of *S. mansoni* was maintained in our laboratory in *Biomphalaria glabrata* snails as intermediate host and CD1 mice as definitive host. The number of cercariae and their viability were determined using a stereoscopic microscope.

### *S. mansoni* soluble adult worm antigen and *F. hepatica* native nFh12 obtaining

Soluble adult worm antigens from *S. mansoni* (SoSmAWA) used for ELISA were prepared as previously described [16]. Twenty adult worms were suspended in 1 mL of sterile phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) containing 1mM phenyl methyl sulphonyl fluoride (PMSF; Sigma, St Louis, MO), homogenised, frozen and thawed thrice and then sonicated thrice (70 kHz) for 1 min each. The suspension was centrifuged at 20000 g for 30 min at 4 °C. Native 12 kDa *F. hepatica* antigen (nFh12) was purified as described by Hillyer [28] by a combination of gel filtration using Sephadex G-50 and two-step iso-electric focusing runs with 3–10 and 4–6 ampholytes. A rabbit monospecific, polyclonal anti-Fh12 antiserum was then used in SDS-PAGE and immunoblot to confirm that the purified polypeptide was Fh12.

### Recombinant rFh15 and rFh15b protein expression and purification

The recombinant fatty-acid binding proteins from *F. hepatica* were produced as recombinants using two different expression systems. The first one of them was based on the use of *E. coli* BL21 bacteria (rFh15). The obtaining of such recombinant protein was manufactured following Rodríguez-Pérez et al. [29]. Briefly, total RNA from one *F. hepatica* adult worm was isolated and used for cDNA synthesis. The rFh15 gene (GeneBank M95291.1) was amplified using the following primer sequences: forward 5'-GGATCCATGGCTGACTTTG TGGG-3' and reverse 5'-CTCGAGCGCTTTGAGCAGAGTG-3' and restriction sites for BamHI and XhoI were added. PCR products were then purified and cloned into pGEX-4T2 vector with a *S. japonicum* glutathion S-transferase sequence for further detection and purification. The resulting recombinant DNA plasmid was purified and then sequenced to verify integrity of the cloned insert. Transformed *E. coli* BL21 cells were grown in Luria Bertani medium with ampicillin until reaching an optical density of 0.6 and then induced by the addition of isopropyl β-tiogalactopyranoside (IPTG). The cell pellet was recovered by centrifugation of the culture at 18000 g for 30 min, suspended in PBS with 1 mM PMSF and 1 % Triton X-100 then sonicated and centrifuged. Solubilised protein was purified by affinity chromatography with a glutathione Sepharose 4B resin. Non-retained proteins were eluted with PBS whilst rFh15 was eluted by addition of PBS plus thrombin.

The second method to obtain the recombinant rFh15 protein was based on the use of a baculovirus expression vector system, manufactured by

ALGENEX (Madrid, Spain) using standardised protocols. Briefly, nucleotide sequence from 15 kDa fatty acid binding protein (GeneBank M95291.1) was synthesized and a Kozak sequence was inserted into the N-terminus extreme, together with *Bam*HI and *Xba*I restriction sites at N- and C-terminus, respectively and used to be cloned into the pFasBacHis vector. The plasmid pMA (ampR) with the cloned Fh15 gene between KpnI / SacI sites was used to amplify DNA by transformation of *E. coli* (DH5alpha) cells and isolating ampicillin-resistant colonies. The resulting amplified DNA together with the cloning vector (pFasBacHis) were cut with restriction enzymes BamHI and XbaI and the corresponding band (412 bp) from Fh15 insert was isolated and purified. pFasBacHis vector was then dephosphorylated with alkaline phosphatase treatment and the Fh15 insert was then ligated. The resulting product was then used to transform *E. coli* (DH5alpha) cells and ampicillin and gentamicin resistant colonies were then isolated. The DNA from this isolated colonies was then isolated and characterised by using the restriction enzymes for BamHI and XbaI sites, respectively, and automated sequence was performed to verify the sequence of the insert. The resulting vector and the sequence of the Fh15 insert is depicted in Figure 1A. To obtain the recombinant baculovirus, *E. coli* special competent (DH10B) cells were transformed starting from previously generated vector (pFBFh15His). These cells carry the receptor bMON14272 that contains a beta-galactosidase codifying gene. Upon incorporation in the same cell the vector and the receptor, the recombinant baculovirus presents resistance to kanamycin, tetracyclin and geneticin and losses its beta-galactosidase activity. One colony resistant to the three antibiotics was selected, the DNA isolated and used to transfect insect cells sf21 using the cellfectin reagent (Invitrogen). Seventy-two hours after the transfection the so-called progeny 1 from the recombinant baculovirus was collected and stored until its use. Finally, thirty *Trichoplusia ni* larvae were inoculated with the previously obtained recombinant virus. Larvae were harvested during the next 48 – 96 hours and the expression of the recombinant protein was then assessed by using both Coomassie blue staining and Western blot with monoclonal anti-6His antibodies.

### ADAD vaccination system

The rFh15 protein was formulated in a micelle composed by non-haemolytic saponins from *Quillaja saponaria* (Qs; Sigma, St Louis, Missouri) and natural (PAL) or the synthetic aliphatic diamine (AA0029) as immunomodulator. Then, this micelle was emulsified in a non mineral oil (Montanide ISA763A, SEPPIC, Paris, France) as an oil/water 70/30 and subcutaneously injected into BALB/c mice. The ADAD vaccination system consists of a set of two subcutaneous injections. The first injection, called "Adaptation", contains Qs and PAL or AA0029 emulsified in the non-mineral oil. The second injection, administered 5 days after the adaptation, contains the rFh15 antigen with Qs and PAL or AA0029 in the emulsion oil. Individual doses per injection included in each case were as follows: 20 µg of Qs, 600 µg of PAL or 100 µg of AA0029, and 10 µg of nFh12, rFh15 or rFh15b in a final volume of a 200 µL injection of emulsion in the non-mineral oil [18, 25].

## Vaccination experiment schedules

BALB/c mice were randomly allocated in groups of 9 animals each as follows: Untreated and uninfected; *S. mansoni* infected; control adjuvant (injected with ADAD with Qs and the natural immunomodulator PAL or the synthetic AA0029) and Vaccinated groups (Vaccinated with ADAD with the corresponding FABP nFh12, rFh15 or rFh15b formulated with the corresponding immunomodulator PAL or AA0029 and infected). Two weeks after the first immunisation animals were boosted with the same doses. Two weeks after the second immunisation, each mouse was exposed to 150 *S. mansoni* cercariae for 45 min. Eight weeks post-infection all mice were euthanized with intraperitoneal injection of sodium pentobarbital (100 mg/kg) and then perfused by intra-cardiac injection of PBS plus heparin, and the number of recovered *S. mansoni* adult worms from the portal and mesenteric veins was recorded. In addition, the number of parasite eggs in liver and intestine was counted using a McMaster camera after digestion with 25 mL of 5% KOH for 16 hours at 37 °C with gentle shaking. Macroscopic lesions of liver were quantified as granuloma affected surface per 100 mm<sup>2</sup> in each mouse using ImageJ 1.45s software [30]. Protection percentage was calculated for all parasitological and pathological magnitudes as follows: (mean in the infected control group – mean in experimental group) x 100 / mean in infected control group. Blood samples were collected from each animal before immunisation, infection and necropsy for humoral immune response studies.

## Specific antibody response against FABP and SoSmAWA

Specific anti-rFh15 or anti-SoSmAWA antibodies profiles were measured using an indirect ELISA as described by Abán et al. [16]. Briefly, 96-well polystyrene plates (Costar) were coated with 2.0 µg of nFh12, rFh15, rFh15b or 2.5 µg of SoSmAWA antigen for 12 hours in carbonate buffer (pH 9.0) and then blocked with 2 % bovine serum albumin in PBS. Sera were then added at 1:100 dilutions and incubated for 1 hour at 37 °C, followed by the addition of goat peroxidase-labelled anti-mouse IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM or IgE antibodies at 1:1000 dilution (Sigma, St. Louis MO). The reaction was developed with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> and orthophenylenediamine (OPD, Sigma) in citrate buffer (pH 5.0) and absorbance was measured at 492 nm with an Ear400FT ELISA reader (Lab Instruments).

## Immune response in BALB/c mice immunised with the recombinant FABP rFh15 and rFh15b

Four groups of six female BALB/c each were used for the characterisation of immunological response. Untreated; Injected with ADAD only with AA0029+Qs as adjuvant control; Immunised with rFh15 formulated in ADAD system with AA0029 (AA0029+Qs+rFh15); and Immunised with rFh15b formulated in ADAD system with AA0029 (AA0029+Qs+rFh15b). Mice were immunised and two booster doses were given after 2 and 4 weeks respectively. Two weeks after the immunisation schedule all the mice were anaesthetised with isoflurane and euthanized by cervical dislocation. Splens

were then aseptically removed for obtaining splenocytes by perfusion with sterile PBS to study cytokine profile and to quantify T-cell subpopulations. Blood samples were collected for antibody detection from each animal before each immunisation and at the necropsy.

### Cytokine measurement

Splenocytes obtained from individual mouse were cultured in a 6-well plate at  $1 \times 10^6$  cells per well in complete RPMI 1640 medium containing 10% heat-inactivated foetal calf serum, 5 mM L-glutamine and antibiotics: 100 units/mL penicillin and 100  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$  streptomycin as previously described [31]. Cells were *in vitro* stimulated with rFh15 or rFh15b at a final concentration of 10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$  for 72 hours at 37 °C in a humidified atmosphere with 5%  $\text{CO}_2$ . Culture supernatants were recovered for cytokines determination. Splenocytes belonging to untreated mice were used as controls. A flow cytometry-based technique was used for interferon  $\gamma$  (IFN $\gamma$ ), tumor necrosis factor  $\alpha$  (TNF $\alpha$ ), interleukin (IL) 1 $\alpha$ , IL-2, IL-4, IL-6, IL-10 and IL-17 quantitation in each of the groups of mice used in this study. The FlowCytomix Mouse Th1/Th2 10plex kit (Bender MedSystems GmbH, Vienna, Austria) was used according to the manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, different size fluorescent beads, coated with capture antibodies specific for the aforementioned cytokines were incubated with mouse splenocyte samples and with biotin-conjugated secondary antibodies for 2 hours at room temperature. The specific antibodies bind to the analytes captured by the first antibodies. After washing the tubes with PBS plus 2% foetal calf serum, Streptavidin-Phycoerythrin (S-PE) solution was added and incubated at room temperature for 1 h. S-PE binds to the biotin conjugate and emits fluorescent signals. Flow cytometry data was collected using a FACSCalibur flow cytometer (BD Biosciences) at the University of Salamanca's Flow Cytometry Central Service; 8000 events were collected (gated by forward and side scatter) and data was analysed using FlowCytomix Pro 3.0 software (Bender MedSystems, Vienna, Austria). Each cytokine concentration was determined from standard curves using known mouse recombinant cytokines concentrations.

### Flow cytometry analysis of splenic B and T-cell populations

Splenocytes from untreated, AA0029+Qs-treated, rFh15-immunised and rFh15b-immunised mice were incubated with the blocking anti-CD16/CD32 monoclonal antibody for 5 min at room temperature and stained with commercial fluorochrome-conjugated antibodies at 1/50 dilution in PBS plus 2 % foetal calf serum for 30 min at 4 °C. Rat anti mouse CD45-peridinin chlorophyll protein (PerCP)- cyanine dye (Cy5.5), CD4-fluorescein isothiosyanate (FITC), CD8-phycoerythrin (PE), CD45R/B220-allophycocyanin (APC), CD197-PE (CCR7), CD62L-APC and hamster anti-mouse CD27 APC (BD Pharmingen, USA) were used. After incubation, cells were washed in PBS with 2% foetal calf serum and then centrifuged at 1000 *g* for 5 min and the supernatant was discarded. The cells were then fixed with 100  $\mu\text{L}$  of a 2% paraformaldehyde solution for 1 hour at 4 °C. Phenotypic analyses were performed in a FACSCalibur flow cytometer. Data

were collected on 30000 events (gated by forward and side scatter) and analysed using Gatelagic Flow Cytometry Analysis Software (INIVAI technologies Pty Ltd).

### Statistical analysis

The results were expressed as mean and standard error of the mean (SEM). Normal distribution of data was studied by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Significant differences among groups were found using one-way ANOVA test and post hoc Tukey's honest significance test (HSD) or Kruskal-Wallis test. All statistical analyses were considered significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Software SPSS 21 software (IBM) was used for data analysis.

## Results

### Recombinant expression and detection of antigens

Expression and purification of *F. hepatica*-derived recombinant proteins nFh12 and rFh15 was previously reported. Here, we used a baculovirus expression vector system that improves the production of recombinant proteins compared to the classical expression systems based on the use of bacteria or yeast, which also retains recombinant proteins native configuration along the production and purification steps to produce a *F. hepatica*-derived fatty acid binding protein (Figures 1A and 1B). Starting from 30 *T. ni* larvae inoculated with recombinant virus, cells were recovered during the next 48-96 hours to assess recombinant protein expression, which was confirmed using both Coomassie blue staining and western blot using anti-6His monoclonal antibody as shown in Figure 1C. As it can be seen, Coomassie blue staining detected a majority band with an estimated molecular weight of 15.7 kDa in the crude extract. Specific detection with monoclonal antibody confirms the presence of one single band with the same molecular weight. Upon detection of the recombinant protein, it was on-column purified by affinity chromatography using a Ni-NTA column (Figure 1D). As depicted, a single band with a molecular weight of 15 kDa was detected using Coomassie blue staining, coming from pooled column-retained fractions, dialysed against ammonium carbonate (50 mM), lyophilized and resuspended in high-purity distilled water. Western blot from the same fraction also reveals the presence of one single band with the same molecular weight (Figure 1D). Protein quantitation revealed the recovery of 5 mg of pure recombinant protein.

### Vaccination with the native nFh12 formulated in ADAD with PAL triggers protection against *S. mansoni* infection

Significant reductions in recovered total worms (83%), males (87%) and females (82%) were observed in BALB/c mice immunised with nFh12 formulated in ADAD with the natural immunomodulator PAL (PAL+Qs+nFh12) compared to the infected control group (Table 1). Also, a significant decrease in the number of eggs present in liver (82%) was detected, but not in the number of eggs in intestine (20%) in comparison with infected group (Table 1). In concordance, hepatic damage extension was

significantly reduced (85%) compared to infection control group (Table 1, Figure 2). Furthermore, mice injected only with PAL+Qs showed not significant protection in terms of parasite burden or hepatic lesions (Table 1). A significantly higher production of specific anti-nFh12 IgG was observed in nFh12 vaccinated group compared to uninfected, infected or adjuvant controls after the second immunisation which remains until the end of the experiment (Figure 3A). Also all infected groups showed significant production of IgG, IgG1 at 8 week post-infection against SoSmAWA but only vaccinated with PAL+Qs+nFh12 showed significant IgG2a production (Figure 4A).

### Vaccination with the recombinant rFh15 formulated with ADAD using PAL stimulates high protection against *S. mansoni* infection

Mice vaccinated with rFh15 formulated in ADAD with the natural immunomodulator PAL (PAL+Qs+rFh15) induced significant reduction in worm burden (56% in total worms, 63% in females and 49% in males) compared to infected controls (Table 1). Slight but significant decreases in the number of eggs present in the liver (21%) and the gut (30%) of the vaccinated group were observed in comparison to infected group in concordance with the reduction in worm burden (Table 1). Moreover, liver surface damage showed significant reduction (69%) compared to infected group (Table 1, Figure 2B). Mice injected with PAL+Qs showed not significant reductions in parasite burden or hepatic lesions (Table 1). A significantly higher production of specific anti-rFh15 IgG, was observed in rFh15 vaccinated group compared to uninfected control group (Figure 3B). Also all infected groups showed significant increasing of IgG, IgG1 against SoSmAWA at 8 weeks post-infection, but only vaccinated with PAL+Qs+rFh15 showed statistically significant IgG2a increase (Figure 4B)

### Vaccination with rFh15 induces more protection than rFh15b against *S. mansoni* infection in BALB/c mice using ADAD vaccination system with the immunomodulator AA0029

Vaccination with rFh15 formulated in ADAD with the synthetic immunomodulator AA0029 (AA0029+Qs+rFh15) induces significant reduction in worm burden (64% in total worms, 69% in females and 58% in males) in comparison with infected controls (Table 1). Also significant decreases in the number of eggs recovered from the liver (61%) and the gut (77%) of the vaccinated group were observed in comparison with infected group agreeing with the reduction in worm burden. Moreover, liver surface damage showed significant reduction (67%) compared to infected mice (Table 1, Figure 2). Vaccination with rFh15b obtained from *T. ni* larvae (AA0029+Qs+rFh15b) showed significant protection in terms of recovered females (44%) eggs confined in liver (53%), eggs in the gut (60%) and hepatic lesion (75%). However, no significant reduction was observed in the recovery of total and male adult parasites (Table 1, Figure 2). Adjuvant controls treated with AA0029+Qs showed no-protection against the

*S. mansoni* challenge (Table 1). A significantly higher production of specific anti-rFh15 and anti-rFh15b IgG, were observed against their respective vaccinated group compared to uninfected control group at the time of infection and the end of the experiment particularly in mice vaccinated with rFh15 (Figure 3C). Also all infected groups showed significant increasing of IgG, IgG1 against SoSmAWA at 8 weeks post-infection but not IgG2a (Figure 4C).

### Cell immune response induced by rFh15 and rFh15b using ADAD vaccination system with AA0029 as immunomodulator

Cytokine levels were measured in cultured splenocyte supernatants to analyse Th1, Th2, Treg and Th17 T-cell responses. It was observed that mice immunised with AA0029+Qs+rFh15 showed a significant increase of TNF $\alpha$ , IL-6, IL-2 and IL-4 compared to untreated and adjuvant controls (Table 2). Similarly, mice treated with AA0029+Qs+rFh15b, had high levels of TNF $\alpha$ , IL-2 and IL-4 compared to untreated and adjuvant controls (Table 2). Additionally, we observed less IL-6 production and high significant levels of IFN $\gamma$  than mice vaccinated with AA0029+Qs+rFh15 (Table 2). We observed that untreated mice and adjuvant controls (PAL+Qs) showed similar cytokine patterns. Also, no differences were found in IL-17 and IL-10 cytokine levels neither rFh15 nor rFh15b immunised mice. Regarding to the percentage of splenocyte populations only mice vaccinated with AA0029+Qs+rFh15b showed a significant reduction of B220 cells compared with untreated and PAL+Qs treated animals (Table 3). No differences in T and B splenocyte population were observed between untreated mice and those treated with PAL+Qs.

### Differential antibody patterns in mice vaccinated with rFh15 vs rFh15b

Antibody response of rFh15 and rFh15b-immunised mice were studied to know the intensity of the humoral response elicited by the two recombinant proteins, due to the importance of antibodies in resistance to schistosomiasis and in an attempt to explain the different protection observed between these molecules. Two weeks after the immunisation schedule a significant high production of specific IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM, IgE anti-rFh15 or anti-rFh15b was observed in AA0029+Qs+rFh15 and in AA0029+Qs+rFh15b vaccinated respectively, compared to adjuvant and untreated controls (Figure 5). Furthermore, we observed significant higher levels of IgG1 and IgM in vaccinated with rFh15 than those mice vaccinated with rFh15b (Figure 5).

## Discussion

Many efforts have been focused on schistosomiasis vaccine development because the potential contribution to control or eradication the disease. FABP from *F. hepatica* have demonstrated a valuable cross-protection against *S. bovis* in experimental models [16-19] as well as FABP of 14.6 kDa from *F. gigantica* [20]. Also the *S. mansoni* FABP Sm14 have reached Phase I studies [15]. However, the immunoprotective potential of *F. hepatica* FABPs have not been tested against *S. mansoni* infection until now. In this

study, we present the immunoprotective potential of FABP obtained from *F. hepatica* represented by the native form (nFh12) and two recombinants (rFh15, rFh15b) against the *S. mansoni* infection in BALB/c mice. These molecules have been expressed in prokaryotic and eukaryotic systems. This inbred mice has a biased Th2 genetic background considered of choice since resembles the immunological profile observed in people living in endemic areas [32] (Alves et al., 2015). In this study, we used the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system using natural (PAL) and synthetic (AA0029) immunomodulators developed by our research group for vaccination against fasciolosis and schistosomiasis to improve limitations of the classical Freund's adjuvant [22, 25, 31, 33].

We observed high protection in terms of worm recovery, eggs trapped in tissues and hepatic damage in mice vaccinated with the native nFh12 and the *E. coli* recombinant rFh15. These results are close to those obtained in vaccination against *S. bovis* with both antigens formulated in ADAD vaccination system with PAL as well as AA0029 [18-19]. These results are comparable to those shown using the FABP Sm14 obtained from *S. mansoni* in experimental models [15] or using the *F. gigantica* 14.6 kDa molecule [20]. These results together reinforce the value of FABPs in schistosomiasis vaccination development. We observed a high production of specific IgG by ELISA against the three antigens used for vaccination indicating an intense immunological response. A vigorous humoral response is found in natural resistance to infection of people living in hyperendemic areas [33, 34, 35] and experimental models [36]. Also, vaccinated animals generated high levels in both IgG and IgG1 against SoSmAWA at week 8 post-challenge but there was significant production of IgG2a only using the natural immunomodulator PAL. This effect has been observed in previous works related with the use of PAL in vaccination against *F. hepatica* and *S. bovis* and it was associated with protection and down regulation of the dominant Th2 established in schistosomes or *F. hepatica* infections [18,19, 37, 38]. An appropriate adjuvant system able to induce an adequate immune response is recognised as an important tool for developing vaccines and a good feature is the specific adjuvant activity driving the immunological response together with the antigen [32, 39]. We did not find any protection induced in mice treated neither with PAL+Qs or AA0029+Qs after the challenge with *S. mansoni* when compared with infection controls. This indicates the specific activity of both adjuvants in our experiments.

Additionally, we observed that the antigen obtained using baculovirus as vector (rFh15b) formulated with AA0029 in ADAD showed high reduction in egg tissues and liver damage, but there was slight not-significant reduction in total worm burden compared to AA0029+Qs+rFh15 vaccinated mice after the challenge. So we studied the immune response to rFh15 and rFh15b. Mice immunised with the synthetic immunomodulator AA0029 with *E. coli* recombinant rFh15 in ADAD vaccination system promotes an early potent mixed Th1/Th2 and pro-inflammatory immune response with significant production of TNF $\alpha$ , IL-6, IL-2, IL-4 and high level of specific antibodies that could explain the protection against the *S. mansoni* challenge as it was



pointed out in a previous work of experimental protection against *F. hepatica* and *S. bovis* using AA0029 formulated in ADAD [19, 31, 32]. Vaccination with the protein produced in *T. ni* (AA0029+Qs+rFh15b) showed high levels of TNF $\alpha$ , IL-6, IFN $\gamma$  IL-2, IL-4 and antibodies, but reduction in B220 cells percentage compared to untreated mice. Moreover, we observed less IL-6, IgG1 and IgM compared to immunised with AA0029+Qs+rFh15. This indicates a potent proinflammatory and Th1/Th2 mixed response with an impairment of humoral response involving B memory cells and immunoglobulins that could be responsible of the low protection in terms of worm recovery [40]. Another possible explanation of the differences in protection could be the post-translational modifications that happen in the different expression systems involving glycoxilation [41].

In conclusion our data show the ability of FAPB obtained from *F. hepatica* to induce protection against the infection of *S. mansoni* in BALB/c mice. Also the use of PAL seems to induce an increase of Th1 like immune response during infection. ADAD formulation with the immunomodulator AA0029 showed an intense pro-inflammatory and mixed Th1/Th2 immune response. These molecules could have valuable effects on reduction of pathology and transmission of the disease. These studies warrant further studies in other animal models closer to human beings to state the actual protection ability of FAPB against *S. mansoni* infection.

## List of abbreviations

ADAD: Adjuvant adaptation vaccination system; ANOVA: analysis of variance. FAPB: fatty acid binding proteins; nFh12: native FAPB of 12 kDa; Qs: non haemolytic saponines from *Quillaja saponaria*. rFh15: recombinant FAPB of 15 kDa expressed in *Escherichia coli*; rFh15b: recombinant FAPB of 15 kDa expressed in *Trichoplusia ni*; SoSmAWA: soluble adult worm antigens from *Schistosoma mansoni*.

## Competing interests

Sponsors had no role in study design, or collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Authors are the only responsible in writing and submitting for publication.

## Author's contributions

BV, JL-A and AM, conceived and designed the study. BV, JL-A, JR-C and EO performed experiments. BV, JL-A, JR-C PF-S and AM analyzed the data. BV JR-C and JL-A drafted the first manuscript. AM critically revised the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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**Table 1:** Protection levels (% of reduction, R) in worm recovery (total counts, female and male), hepatic damage extension ( $\text{mm}^2/100 \text{mm}^2$ ) and in number of eggs per gram (EPG) in tissues in vaccinated BALB/c mice using natural and recombinant FABP (nFh12, rFh15 or rFh15b) formulated with the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system with the natural immunomodulator PAL or the synthetic AA0029.

| Groups              | Total worms<br>(mean $\pm$ SEM) | R (%) | Females<br>(mean $\pm$ SEM) | R (%) | Males<br>(mean $\pm$ SEM) | R (%) | Hepatic lesion<br>(mean $\pm$ SEM) | R (%) | EPG in liver<br>(mean $\pm$ SEM) | R (%) | EPG intestine<br>(mean $\pm$ SEM) | R (%) |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|---------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| <i>Experiment 1</i> |                                 |       |                             |       |                           |       |                                    |       |                                  |       |                                   |       |
| Infected            | 36.3 $\pm$ 4.9                  | -     | 19.7 $\pm$ 2.9              | -     | 16.6 $\pm$ 2.0            | -     | 64.1 $\pm$ 7.1                     | -     | 17432 $\pm$ 3586                 | -     | 14812 $\pm$ 3934                  | -     |
| PAL+Qs              | 23.4 $\pm$ 2.5                  | 36    | 12.4 $\pm$ 1.4              | 37    | 11.1 $\pm$ 1.0            | 33    | 74.4 $\pm$ 6.4                     | NR    | 16551 $\pm$ 2620                 | 5     | 17367 $\pm$ 2277                  | NR    |
| PAL+Qs+nFh12        | 6.0 $\pm$ 1.7*                  | 83    | 3.6 $\pm$ 1.0*              | 82    | 2.1 $\pm$ 0.8*            | 87    | 9.4 $\pm$ 3.0*                     | 85    | 3089 $\pm$ 1001*                 | 82    | 1186 $\pm$ 523*                   | 92    |
| <i>Experiment 2</i> |                                 |       |                             |       |                           |       |                                    |       |                                  |       |                                   |       |
| Infected            | 49.0 $\pm$ 6.1                  | -     | 24.0 $\pm$ 7.3              | -     | 25.0 $\pm$ 8.8            | -     | 61.2 $\pm$ 8.3                     | -     | 18008 $\pm$ 2362                 | -     | 18197 $\pm$ 2079                  | -     |
| PAL+Qs              | 31.6 $\pm$ 3.4                  | 35    | 18.6 $\pm$ 2.1              | 22    | 13.5 $\pm$ 1.2            | 46    | 71.0 $\pm$ 6.2                     | NR    | 17098 $\pm$ 2706                 | 5     | 21700 $\pm$ 2968                  | NR    |
| PAL+Qs+rFh15        | 21.8 $\pm$ 2.5*                 | 56    | 9.0 $\pm$ 1.2*              | 63    | 12.8 $\pm$ 1.5*           | 49    | 18.7 $\pm$ 2.2*                    | 69    | 14247 $\pm$ 668                  | 21    | 12724 $\pm$ 488                   | 30    |
| <i>Experiment 3</i> |                                 |       |                             |       |                           |       |                                    |       |                                  |       |                                   |       |
| Infected            | 34.5 $\pm$ 6.9                  | -     | 18.0 $\pm$ 3.6              | -     | 16.5 $\pm$ 3.4            | -     | 61.8 $\pm$ 14.4                    | -     | 9986 $\pm$ 2360                  | -     | 7748 $\pm$ 1315                   | -     |
| AA0029+Qs           | 42.5 $\pm$ 8.0                  | NR    | 20.0 $\pm$ 4.4              | NR    | 22.5 $\pm$ 3.9            | NR    | 77.0 $\pm$ 19.0                    | NR    | 13242 $\pm$ 1597                 | NR    | 8084 $\pm$ 775                    | NR    |
| AA0029+Qs+rFh15     | 12.5 $\pm$ 3.8*                 | 64    | 5.5 $\pm$ 2.0*              | 69    | 7.0 $\pm$ 2.0*            | 58    | 20.6 $\pm$ 14.0*                   | 67    | 3872 $\pm$ 1814*                 | 61    | 1800 $\pm$ 730*                   | 77    |
| AA0029+Qs+rFh15b    | 25.1 $\pm$ 7.8                  | 27    | 10.1 $\pm$ 3.2*             | 44    | 15.0 $\pm$ 4.8            | 9     | 15.2 $\pm$ 7.1*                    | 75    | 4692 $\pm$ 1181*                 | 53    | 3098 $\pm$ 800*                   | 60    |

NR no-reduction.  $p < 0.05$  in comparison with infected controls

**Table 2.** Cytokine production (TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-6, IL-1 $\alpha$ , IFN $\gamma$ , IL-2, IL-4, IL-10, IL-17) in supernatants of splenocyte cultures in untreated BALB/c mice, treated with AA0029+Qs and immunised with AA0029+Qs+rFh15 and AA0029+Qs+rFh15b two weeks after immunisation schedule. (Mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean)

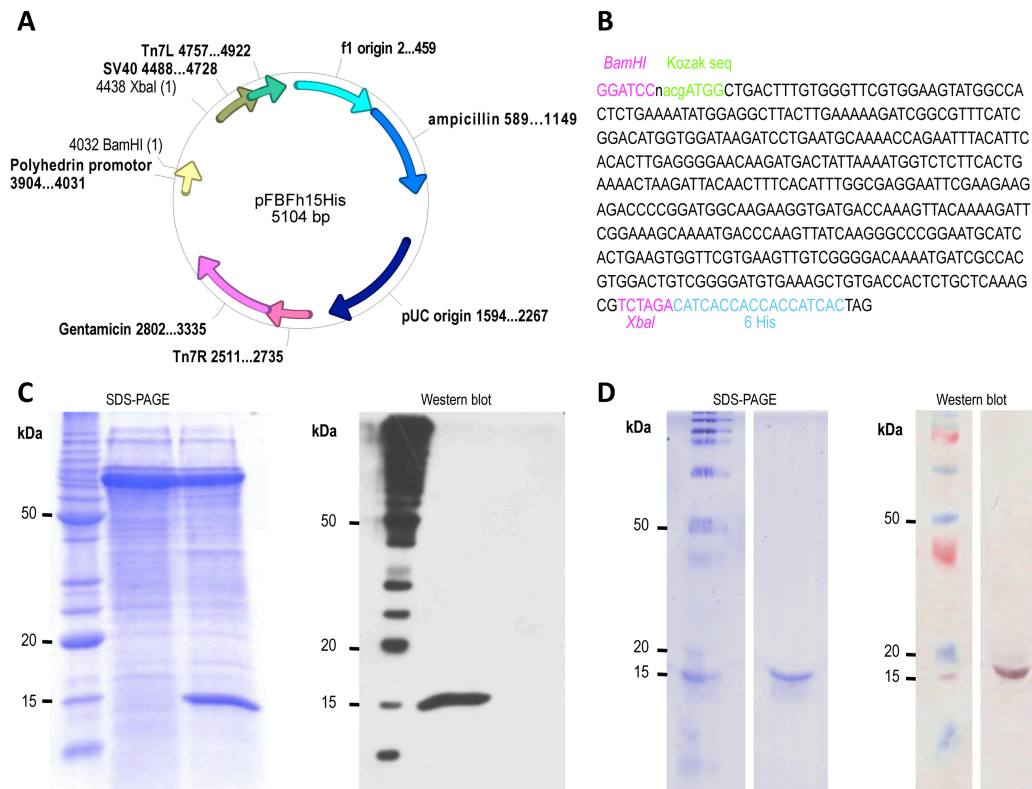
|                  | Untreated      | AA0029+Qs      | AA0029+Qs+rFh15 | AA0029+Qs+rFh15b |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Cytokine (pg/ml) |                |                |                 |                  |
| TNF $\alpha$     | 313 $\pm$ 98   | 214 $\pm$ 20   | 937 $\pm$ 130*  | 1074 $\pm$ 89*   |
| IL-6             | 964 $\pm$ 118  | 1318 $\pm$ 137 | 2755 $\pm$ 226* | 1613 $\pm$ 137*† |
| IL-1 $\alpha$    | 527 $\pm$ 65   | 368 $\pm$ 32   | 448 $\pm$ 23    | 581 $\pm$ 142    |
| IFN $\gamma$     | 543 $\pm$ 35   | 643 $\pm$ 16   | 735 $\pm$ 23    | 890 $\pm$ 79*    |
| IL-2             | 592 $\pm$ 74   | 774 $\pm$ 84   | 1025 $\pm$ 47*  | 888 $\pm$ 41*    |
| IL-4             | 1138 $\pm$ 101 | 1508 $\pm$ 82  | 2078 $\pm$ 145* | 1653 $\pm$ 18*   |
| IL-10            | 481 $\pm$ 46   | 485 $\pm$ 39   | 424 $\pm$ 7     | 459 $\pm$ 21     |
| IL-17            | 1724 $\pm$ 167 | 2048 $\pm$ 43  | 2053 $\pm$ 46   | 1988 $\pm$ 268   |

\*  $p < 0.05$  in comparison with untreated controls and treated with AA0029+Qs. †  $p < 0.05$  compared to mice treated with AA0029+Qs+rFh15

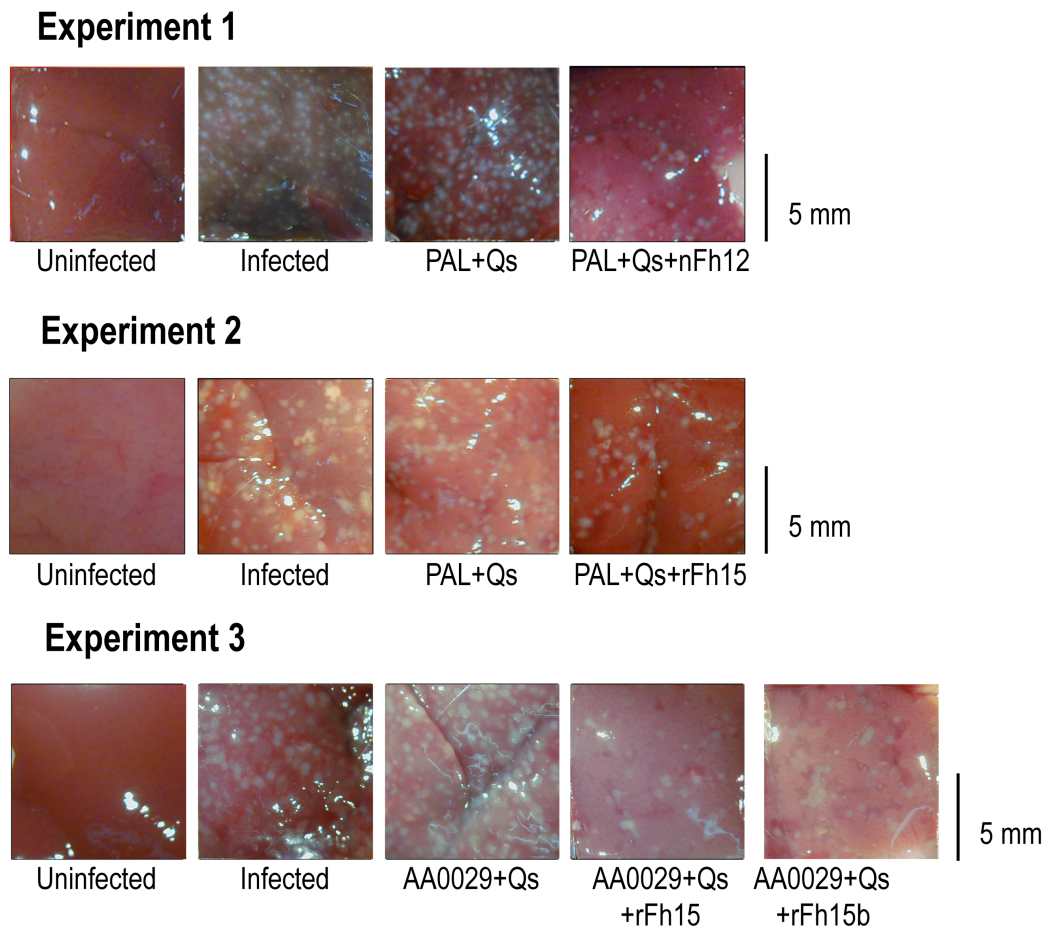
**Table 3.** Percentages of splenocyte populations (CD45, CD4, CD8, CD197, CD62L, CD27, B220) in untreated BALB/c mice, treated with AA0029+Qs and immunised with AA0029+Qs+rFh15 and AA0029+Qs+rFh15b two weeks after immunisation schedule. (Mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean)

|                  | Untreated      | AA0029+Qs      | AA0029+Qs+rFh15 | AA0029+Qs+rFh15b |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Cell percentages |                |                |                 |                  |
| CD45             | 75.7 $\pm$ 3.4 | 77.0 $\pm$ 0.7 | 75.5 $\pm$ 2.8  | 66.7 $\pm$ 1.3   |
| CD4              | 21.1 $\pm$ 1.3 | 20.7 $\pm$ 0.4 | 21.3 $\pm$ 0.5  | 21.7 $\pm$ 4.0   |
| CD8              | 8.4 $\pm$ 0.5  | 8.4 $\pm$ 0.6  | 10.2 $\pm$ 0.6  | 9.5 $\pm$ 1.3    |
| CD197            | 16.9 $\pm$ 1.7 | 18.0 $\pm$ 2.1 | 12.6 $\pm$ 2.8  | 14.9 $\pm$ 0.6   |
| CD62L            | 23.2 $\pm$ 3.2 | 20.1 $\pm$ 5.0 | 17.2 $\pm$ 0.9  | 15.2 $\pm$ 5.0   |
| CD27             | 19.4 $\pm$ 1.9 | 18.0 $\pm$ 1.6 | 16.9 $\pm$ 0.8  | 16.7 $\pm$ 3.6   |
| B220             | 35.9 $\pm$ 3.2 | 39.4 $\pm$ 0.6 | 23.2 $\pm$ 1.7  | 21.3 $\pm$ 0.7*  |

\*  $p < 0.05$  in comparison with untreated controls and treated with AA0029+Qs.

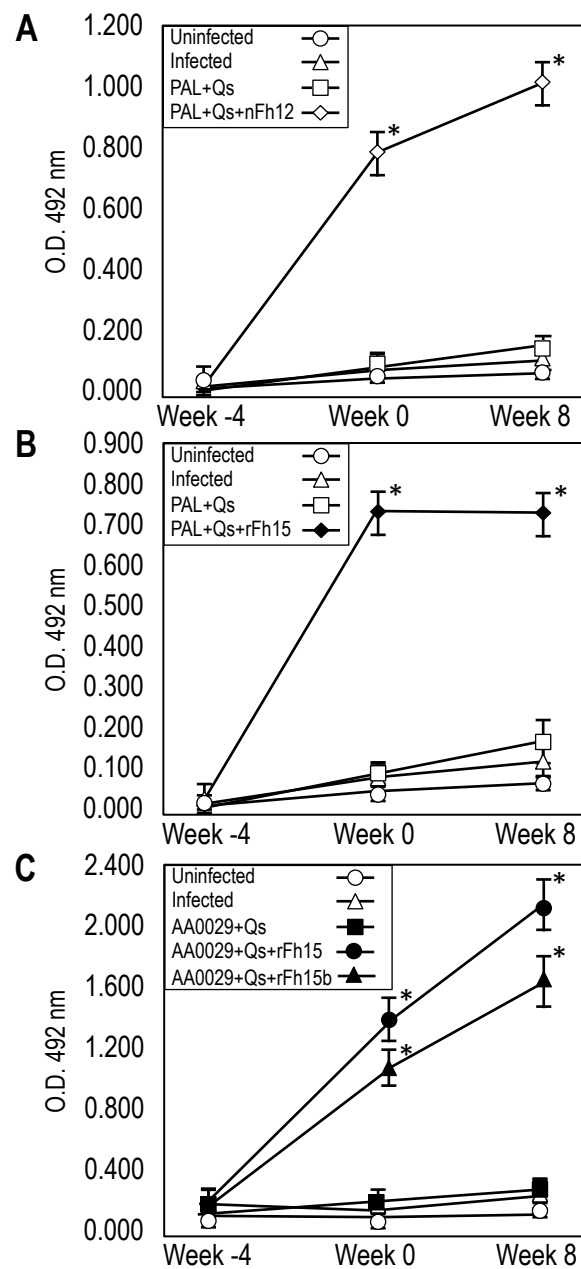


**Figure 1. The expression and purification of rFh15b using the baculovirus system.** A. The generated vector pFBFh15His. B. The nucleotide sequence from Fh15, including the Kozak sequence, the C-terminus 6-His tag and the restriction sequences for BamHI and XbaI, C. The expression of rFh15b detected with Coomassie blue staining (lane 1, molecular weight marker; lane 2: non-induced baculovirus; lane 3, induced baculovirus ) and Western blot using anti-6His monoclonal antibody (lane 1, molecular weight marker; lane 2, non-induced baculovirus; lane 3: IPTG induced baculovirus). D. Purification of rFh15b by affinity chromatography detected with Coomassie blue staining and Western blot using anti-6His monoclonal antibody

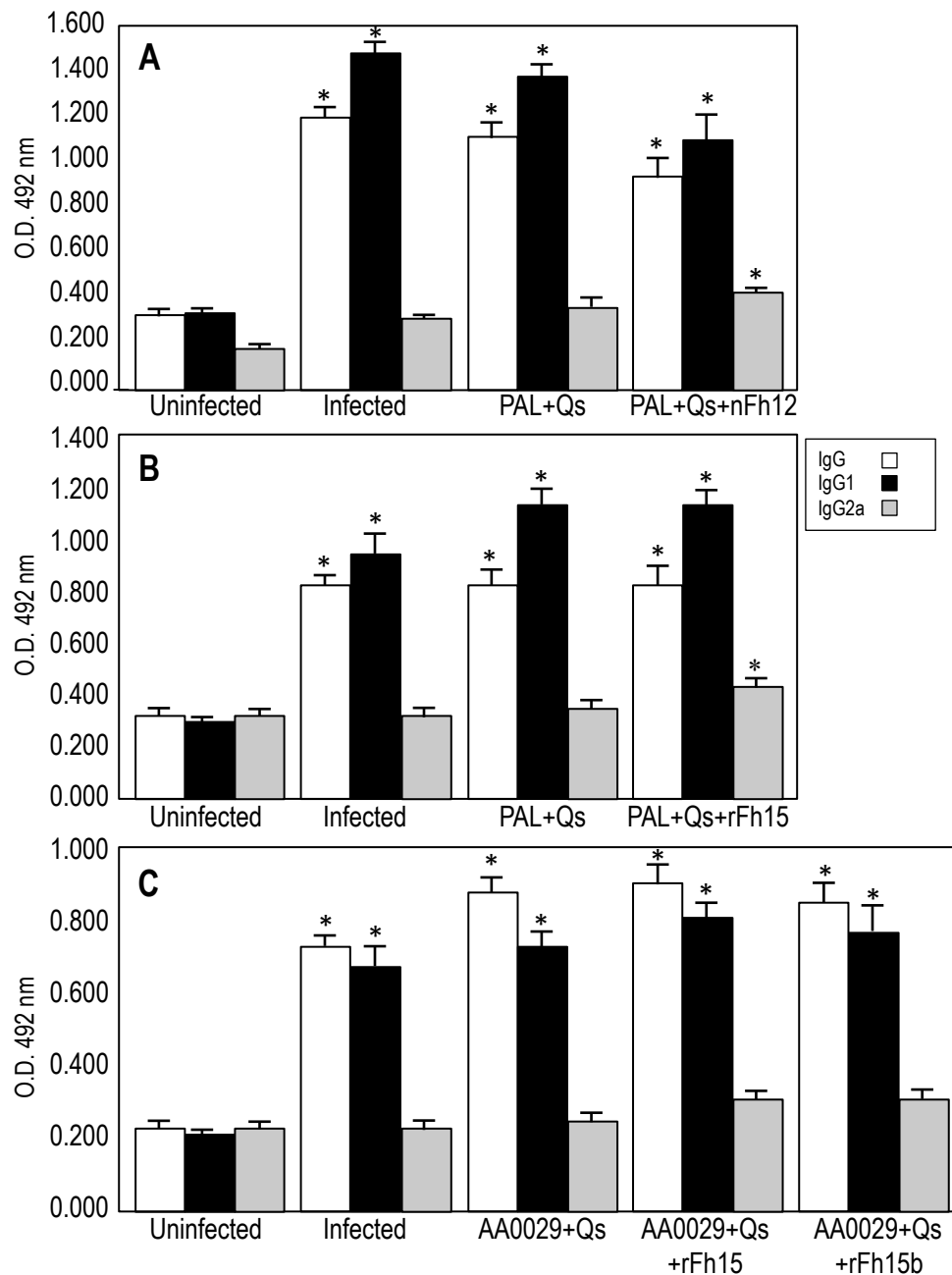


**Figure 2. Representative hepatic lesion area reduction in BALB/c mice after vaccination.** Natural and recombinant FABP (nFh12, rFh15 or rFh15b) formulated with the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system were used with the natural immunomodulator PAL or the synthetic AA0029 and challenged with 150 cercariae of *S. mansoni*, in three separated experiments.

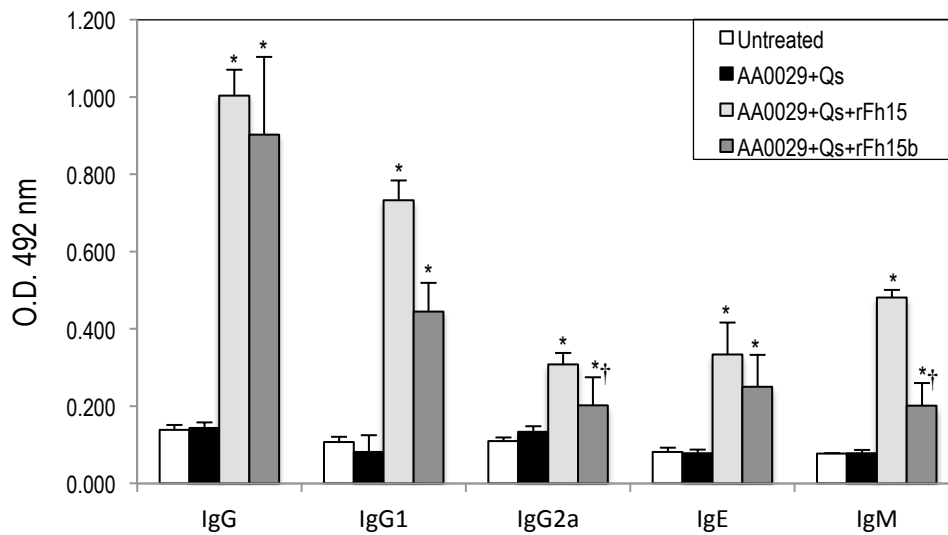




**Figure 3. Serum specific IgG antibody levels by ELISA during vaccination trials against nFh12, rFh15 or rFh15b.** BALB/c mice were vaccinated with their respective antigens formulated with the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system with the natural immunomodulator PAL or the synthetic AA0029 and challenged with 150 cercariae of *S. mansoni*. A, Vaccination using nFh12 formulated with PAL. B, Vaccination with rFh15 using PAL. C, Vaccination using rFh15 or rFh15b formulated with AA0029. O.D. optical densities. \*  $p < 0.05$  compared to uninfected controls.



**Figure 4. Serum specific IgG, IgG1 and IgG2a antibody levels by ELISA 8 weeks post-challenge against soluble adult worm antigens from *S. mansoni* (SoSbAWA).** BALB/c mice were vaccinated with their respective antigens formulated with the adjuvant adaptation (ADAD) vaccination system with the natural immunomodulator PAL or the synthetic AA0029 and challenged with 150 cercariae of *S. mansoni*. A, Vaccination with PAL+Qs+nFh12+PAL. B, Vaccination with PAL+Qs+rFh15. C, vaccination using AA0029+Qs+rFh15 and AA0029+Qs+rFh15b. O.D. optical densities. \*  $p < 0.05$  compared to uninfected controls.



**Figure 5. Antibody detection (IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgE and IgM) against rFh15 or rFh15b two weeks after immunisation schedule in BALB/c mice.** Groups: Untreated, Treated with AA0029+Qs, Immunised with AA0029+Qs+rFh15 and Immunised with AA0029+Qs+rFh15b. (Mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean). O.D. optical density. \*  $p < 0.05$  in comparison with untreated controls and treated with AA0029+Qs. †  $p < 0.05$  compared to mice treated with AA0029+Qs+rFh15.

## 4 CONCLUSIONES

1. Las respuestas mixtas Th1/Th2 generadas por ratones BALB/c vacunados con FABPs indican que los mecanismos protectores contra la esquistosomosis necesitan respuestas inmunomoduladoras coordinadas.
2. Los elevados niveles de protección obtenidos mediante la vacunación en dos modelos experimentales de *Schistosoma bovis* sugiere su uso en animales infectados naturalmente, con la finalidad de alcanzar una reducción en la morbilidad desencadenada por esta parasitosis.
3. Las diferencias en inmunoprotección con la molécula recombinante unida a ácidos grasos en distintos sistemas de expresión podrían deberse a la disminución en respuestas tipo Th2 en FABPs expresados en baculovirus.
4. El grado de protección alcanzado frente a la infección experimental por *Schistosoma mansoni* es adecuado ya que supera el límite del 50% establecido, si bien la asociación con otras moléculas sería una excelente alternativa para desarrollar una vacuna definitiva contra la esquistosomosis humana.

## **5 Anexos**

## Anexo 1. Metodología

### 1. Animales de experimentación

Para el mantenimiento del ciclo biológico de *Schistosoma mansoni* se utilizaron ratones CD1 (Charles River, Lyon, Francia) de 6-8 semanas de edad con pesos de 20-35 g como hospedadores definitivos y para el ciclo de *S. bovis* se utilizaron corderos de raza castellana de 45 días de edad de 15-18 kg.

En los experimentos de vacunación se utilizaron ratones BALB/c hembras SPF, *specific pathogens free* (Charles River) de 7 semanas de edad y un peso de 18-20 g, así como hámsters dorados hembras (*Mesocricetus auratus*) de 7 semanas de edad y un peso entre 100 y 120g. Todos los animales de experimentación se mantuvieron en un ciclo de día/noche de 12h con libre acceso a agua y comida, y temperatura entre 20-25 °C. Los ratones se mantuvieron en el servicio de experimentación animal de la Universidad de Salamanca (SEA). Los corderos y hámsters dorados se mantuvieron en el animalario del Instituto de Recursos Naturales y Agrobiología de Salamanca (IRNASA) del Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC). Se aplicó la legislación española vigente sobre experimentación animal (L32/2007, L6/2013 y RD 53/2013) y transposición de las normas de la Unión Europea (Di 2010/63/CE). Los estudios con animales de experimentación han sido aprobados por el comité de bioética de la Universidad de Salamanca (Protocolo 8402 y 48531). El estado sanitario de los animales fue controlado de acuerdo con las recomendaciones de *Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations* (FELASA). Los animales fueron sacrificados al final de los experimentos o en caso de grave deterioro de su salud, aplicándoles una dosis de pentobarbital sódico (100 mg/kg; Sigma, San Luis, EE UU) de acuerdo con los protocolos de trabajo normalizados del SEA. El tamaño de los grupos fue calculado de acuerdo a la potencia del análisis utilizando el paquete informático "Size.fdr" para R y siguiendo las recomendaciones de 3Rs (Charan et al., 2013;

Festing and altman, 2002). Se tomaron todas las medidas a nuestro alcance para reducir al mínimo el sufrimiento de los animales.

## 2. Parásitos

La cepa de *S. mansoni* es la denominada LE, se mantuvo en el CIETUS (Centro de Investigación de Enfermedades Tropicales de la Universidad de Salamanca). Este proceso se llevó a cabo por pases en la colonia de caracoles *Biomphalaria glabrata* del CIETUS y ratones CD1. Los ratones se infectan con 150 cercarias de *S. mansoni* por animal, suspendidas en agua mineral y aplicadas sobre la piel del abdomen. Los ratones fueron inmovilizados con una mezcla de ketamina 50 mg/kg de peso vivo, diazepam 5 mg/kg y atropina 1 mg/kg en inyección intraperitoneal. A la octava semana después de la infección se sacrificaron mediante la administración de una dosis letal vía intraperitoneal de pentobarbital sódico (100mg/kg). Se utilizó solución salina (NaCl 8,5 g/l) con heparina (500 UI/litro) para perfundir y extraer los vermes adultos de la vena porta. Se extraían los hígados y se homogeneizaban en solución salina y se obtenían los huevos tras dos sedimentaciones de 20 minutos. Después se provocaba la eclosión de los huevos con temperatura de 26°C y luz para obtener los miracidios, con los que se infectaban a los caracoles de la especie *Biomphalaria glabrata* (5-9 miracidios/caracol). Finalmente, tras 28 días se obtenían las cercarias mediante la exposición a la luz de los caracoles infectados mantenidos a 26°C con el objeto de infectar unos nuevos ratones. Se utilizó la cepa de *S. bovis* procedente del Departamento de Patología Animal IRNASA-CSIC. El hospedador intermediario fue *Planorbarius metidjensis* y se utilizan corderos de raza castellana como hospedadores definitivos (Oleaga et al., 2004). La obtención de cercarias de *S. bovis* se realizó de manera similar a la descrita para *S. mansoni*.

## 3. Obtención de FABP nativo (nFh12)

Se purificó a partir del extracto soluble en solución salina de trematodos de *Fasciola hepatica*. Se utilizó filtración a través de gel Sephadex G50 y cromatografía de intercambio iónico. El aislamiento de la proteína se confirmó utilizando geles de poliacrilamida (SDS-PAGE) y western blot utilizando un antisuero monoclonal de conejo contra nFh12 producido en conejo (Hillyer, 1995).

#### 4. Obtención de FABP recombinante expresado en sistema procariota (rFh15)

Para obtener la proteína recombinante en sistema procariota con *E. coli* se siguió el protocolo de López-Abán et al. (2012) El RNA total de un verme adulto de *F. hepatica* fue aislado mediante *RNeasy Protect Mini Kit* (Qiagen GmbH, Hilden, Alemania) y usado para sintetizar DNA complementario con *First Strand cDNA Synthesis Kit* (Roche Diagnostic, Indianapolis, EE UU) y posteriormente expresar rFh15 FABPs en *Escherichia coli*. El gen rFh15 (número de acceso M95291.1) fue amplificado utilizando las siguientes secuencias de primers: *forward* 5'-GGATCCATGGCTGACTTTGTGGG-3' y *reverse* 5'-CTCGAGCGCTTTGAGCAGAGTG-3', en 30 ciclos con las siguientes temperaturas: 40 s a 94°C, 40 s a 52°C y 1 min a 72°C. Se añadieron secuencias de restricción para *BamHI* en el primer *forward* y *XhoI* en el primer *reverse*. Los productos de PCR fueron purificados mediante *StrataPrep DNA Gel Extraction kit* (Stratagene, Madrid, España) y clonado en el vector pGEX-4T2 (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Upsala, Suecia) donde hay una secuencia de glutatión-S transferasa (GST) de *S. japonicum* para su posterior detección y purificación. El plásmido recombinante resultante fue purificado utilizando *Nucleo Spin Plasmid Kit* (Macherey-Nagel, Düren, Alemania) y secuenciado en la Plataforma Nucleus de Apoyo a la Investigación de la Universidad de Salamanca para verificar la identidad de la secuencia insertada. Las células de *E. coli* BL21 transformadas, se cultivaron en medio Luria-Bertani con ampicilina (0,1 mg/ml) hasta alcanzar una densidad óptica de 0,600 a 37°C. Posteriormente se indujo la producción de la proteína recombinante mediante la adición de isopropil  $\beta$ -tiogalactopiranosido (IPTG) durante 5 horas a 37°C. El sedimento fue recogido mediante centrifugación del cultivo a 18000 g, 30 minutos a 4°C. Seguidamente se resuspendió en PBS con 1 mM de PMSF y 1% de Tritón X-100 y se aplicaron tres series de ultrasonidos 70 kHz durante 1 minuto cada una, centrifugándose a 18000 g, 30 min a 4°C. La proteína soluble fue purificada por cromatografía de afinidad con resina de Sepharose 4B con glutatión. Las proteínas no retenidas fueron eluidas con PBS y finalmente se obtuvo la proteína rFh15 añadiendo PBS con trombina (50 UI/ml. Amersan Biosciences). Las fracciones fueron analizadas mediante electroforesis en geles de poliacrilamida (SDS-PAGE) y cuantificadas por el método del ácido bicinconínico (BCA) utilizando albúmina sérica bovina.



## 5. Obtención de FABP recombinante expresado en baculovirus (rFh15b)

Para la obtención de la proteína recombinante en el sistema de baculovirus (rFh15b), se tomó la secuencia del GeneBank M95291.1 del FABP de *F. hepatica* denominado rFh15. Para ser clonada se le añadió una cola de 6 histidinas (6His) en el extremo carboxilo, la secuencia Kozak en el extremo amino y los lugares de restricción *BamHI* y *XbaI* en los extremos amino y carboxilo respectivamente para ser clonados en el vector pFasBachHis. El plásmido pMA con un gen de resistencia a la ampicilina y con el gen Fh15 clonado entre *KpnI* y *SacI* fue utilizado para amplificar DNA tras la transformación en *E. coli* DH5 $\alpha$  en colonias resistentes a la ampicilina portadoras del inserto. Tanto el DNA amplificado como el vector de clonación pFasTBACHis se cortaron con las enzimas de restricción *BamHI* y *XbaI*. Se aisló una banda purificada de 412 pares de bases que correspondía con el inserto Fh15 que fue aislado y purificado. El vector pFasTBACHis abierto se desfosforiló con fosfatasa alcalina y el inserto Fh15 fue introducido. El producto resultante se utilizó para transformar *E. coli* DH5 $\alpha$  y obtener colonias resistentes a la ampicilina y la gentamicina. El DNA de estas colonias fue aislado utilizando *BamHI* y *XbaI* y secuenciado para verificar la integridad del inserto. Para obtener el baculovirus recombinante se transformaron bacterias *E. coli* DH10B a partir del vector pFBFh15His previamente generado. Estas bacterias llevan la construcción (bMON14272) que contiene un gen que codifica la enzima  $\beta$ -galactosidasa, incorpora los sitios de transposición Tn7 y el gen que codifica la transposasa. Una vez en la misma bacteria el vector donador y el báculo receptor producen la transposición de las secuencias y se obtiene un báculo resistente a la kanamicina, tetraciclina y la gentamicina, con la pérdida de la actividad  $\beta$ -galactosidasa. Seguidamente se aislaron colonias resistentes a los tres antibióticos citados, siendo de color blanco en presencia del sustrato de la  $\beta$ -galactosidasa (Xgal). El báculo fue extraído y utilizado para transformar células sf21 de insecto con ayuda de celfectina (Invitrogen). Tras 72 horas de incubación se recogió la primera progenie del baculovirus recombinante. En los siguientes pasos se titularon las unidades formadoras de placas (PFU) en células sf21. Se obtuvieron entre  $1 \times 10^6$  y  $6 \times 10^9$  PFU/ml. Se inocularon lotes de 30 orugas de *Trichoplusia* spp, se recolectaron a las 48 - 92 horas de la inoculación y se almacenaron a  $-28^{\circ}\text{C}$  hasta su procesamiento. Se realizó electroforesis en geles de poliacrilamida (SDS-PAGE) que fue teñido con azul de Coomassie y

se llevo a cabo western blot utilizando un anticuerpo monoclonal contra la cola de histidinas. Este proceso fue realizado por ALGENEX (Madrid, España).

## 6. Inmunomoduladores

### *Inmunomodulador natural*

Se utilizó PAL, extracto hidroalcohólico del rizoma de una especie de helecho originario de zonas tropicales y subtropicales de América, llamado *Phlebodium pseudoaureum*, suministrado por ASAC Pharmaceutical International (Alicante, España).

### *Inmunomodulador de síntesis química*

La diamina lipídica AA0029 fue sintetizada en el departamento de Química Farmacéutica de la Facultad de Farmacia de la Universidad de Salamanca, a partir del correspondiente ácido 2-aminohexadecanoico, anteriormente obtenido a partir del dietilacetamidomalonato y 1-bromotetradecano; el grupo amino fue protegido con carbamato de terc-butilo o grupo Boc y el grupo ácido fue reducido a un alcohol. A continuación el ácido fue transformado en un hidruro mixto y reducido con borohidruro de sodio. Posteriormente, el grupo hidroxilo, fue metilado y transformado en su correspondiente azida, para después ser reducido a una diamina, dando como resultado la diamina AA0029 [terc-butilol (1-aminohexadecano-2-yl) carbamato] (Del Olmo et al., 2006).

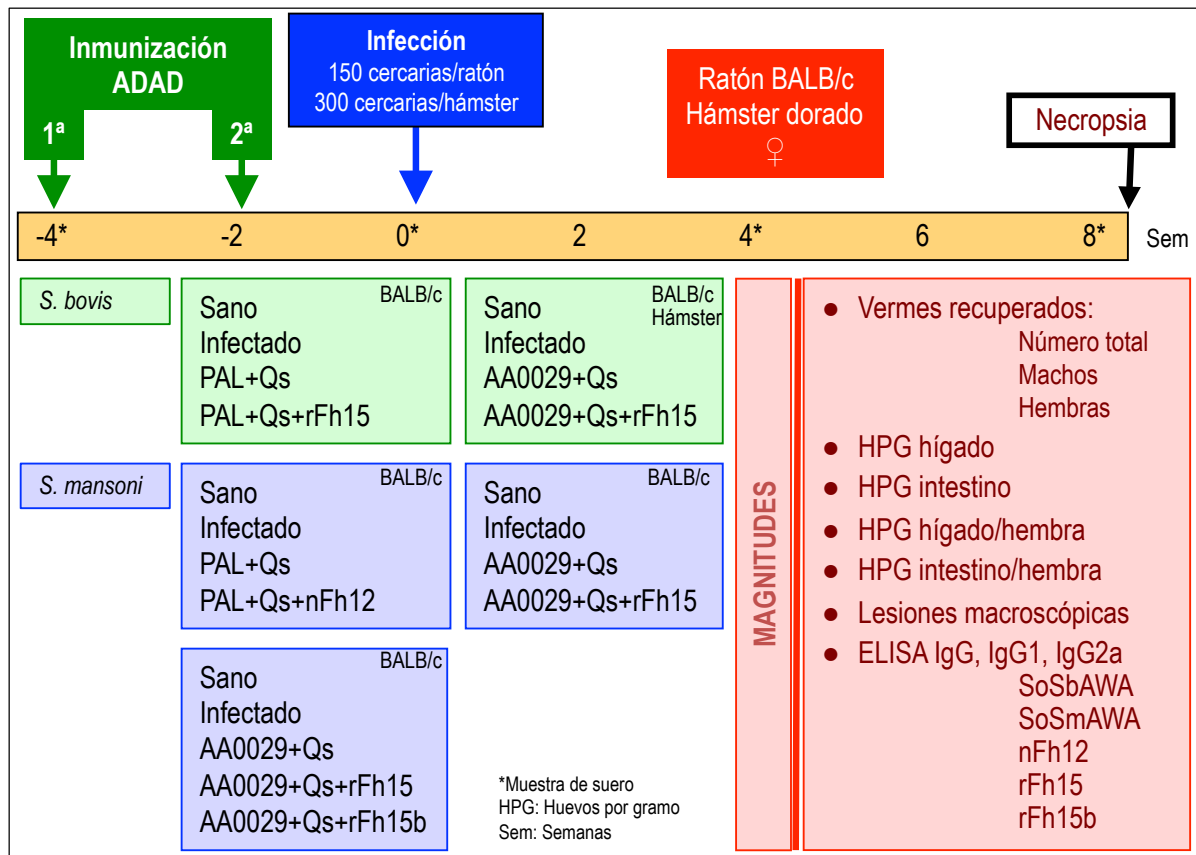
## 7. Sistema adyuvante adaptación (ADAD) de vacunación

La proteína se formuló en una micela compuesta por saponinas no hemolíticas de *Quillaja saponaria* (Qs; Sigma) y el inmunomodulador natural PAL o la diamina alifática sintética AA0029. La micela fue emulsionada en un aceite no mineral biodegradable (Montanide ISA763A, SEPPIC, Paris, Francia) en una proporción aceite/agua de 70/30 inyectada subcutáneamente en un volumen final de 200 µl. El sistema de vacunación ADAD consta de dos inyecciones subcutáneas. La primera inyección, llamada "Adaptación", contiene PAL o AA0029 y Qs emulsionada en el aceite no mineral. La segunda inyección, administrada 5 días después, contiene el antígeno (nFh12, rFh15 o rFh15b) con PAL o AA0029 y Qs en la emulsión de aceite. Las dosis individuales por inyección en los ratones fueron de 600 µg de PAL o 100 µg de AA0029, 20 µg de Qs y 10 µg de FABP (nFh12, rFh15, rFh15b) en un volumen final de 200 µL de emulsión. En hámsters cada dosis contenía 100

µg de AA0029, 20 µg de Qs y 20 µg de rFh15 en un volumen final de 200 µL (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2004; Uribe et al., 2007).

## 8. Diseño de experimentos de vacunación

Se utilizaron grupos de ratones de 9 animales y grupos de hámsters dorados de 6 animales formados al azar: Grupo Sano, Grupo Infectado con *S. bovis* o *S. mansoni*; Grupo Inmunomodulado con PAL o AA0029 y Qs e infectado; Grupos vacunados con nFh12, rFh15 o rFh15b formulado con PAL o AA0029 y Qs e infectados (Figura A1). Los animales reciben una primera vacunación y dos semanas después el recuerdo. Dos semanas después de la vacunación cada ratón fue infectado con 150 cercarias de *S. bovis* o *S. mansoni* mediante el método del “anillo”. Para ello los ratones fueron inmovilizados con una mezcla de ketamina 50 mg/kg, diazepam 5 mg/kg y atropina 1 mg/kg inyectada intraperitonealmente. Los hámsters dorados fueron infectados con 300 cercarias de manera similar a los ratones. Después se les colocó un anillo de plástico sobre la piel del abdomen con la suspensión de cercarias en 1 ml de agua mineral. Los animales permanecieron expuestos durante 45 minutos. A las 8 semanas post-infección todos los ratones fueron sacrificados con inyección intraperitoneal de pentobarbital sódico (100 mg/kg) y perfundidos por inyección intracardiaca de PBS y heparina (500 UI/l). Se hizo recuento del número de adultos recuperados de las venas porta y mesentéricas diferenciando el número de parejas, machos y hembras. Además se hizo el recuento del número de huevos por gramo (EPG) de hígado e intestino tras su digestión con 25 ml de 5% KOH durante 16 h a 37°C en agitación. Se utilizó una cámara McMaster para realizar los recuentos de huevos. La relación entre el número de huevos y el número de hembras se evaluó como medición de un posible efecto antifecundidad. Los hígados fueron fotografiados y posteriormente se determinó la superficie afectada por lesiones hepáticas mediante el programa Image J (Schneider et al., 2011). Los niveles de protección en vermes recuperados (número total, número de hembras, número de machos, huevos por gramo de hígado, huevos por gramo de intestino o fecundidad) se calcularon con la siguiente fórmula:  $(\text{media en el grupo control infectado} - \text{media en el grupo experimental}) \times 100 / \text{media en el grupo control infectado}$ . Se obtuvieron muestras de suero de cada animal antes de la inmunización, infección y necropsia para estudios de respuesta immune humoral.

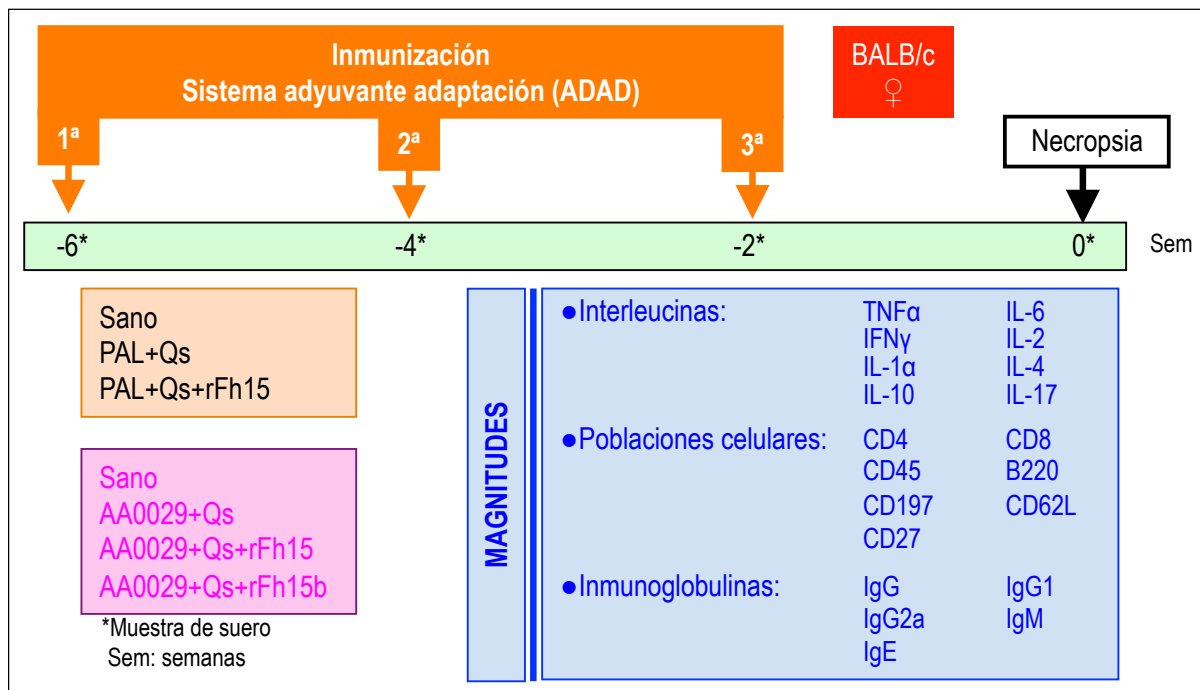


**Figura A1.-** Diseño experimental de vacunación contra *S. bovis* y *S. mansoni* utilizando proteínas de unión a ácidos grasos de *F. hepatica* (nFh12, rFh15, rFh15b) en ratones BALB/c y hámster (*M. auratus*)

## 9. Diseño del estudio de la respuesta inmunológica a la inmunización con rFh15 y rFh15b

Se realizaron grupos de seis BALB/c hembras formados al azar para caracterizar la respuesta inmunológica celular y humoral frente a la vacunación con rFh15 y rFh15b: Grupo no tratado, Grupo tratado con el inmunomodulador (PAL o AA0029) y saponinas no hemolíticas de *Quillaja saponaria* (Qs) y Grupos inmunizados con rFh15 y rFh15b formulados en ADAD con el inmunomodulador (PAL o AA0029) y Qs. Tras la primera inmunización se aplicaron dos dosis de recuerdo separadas entre sí dos semanas cada una. Dos semanas después del protocolo de inmunización los animales fueron sacrificados una vez anestesiados con isoflurano. Se recogieron los bazo para obtener esplenocitos mediante perfusión con PBS estéril para ser cultivados y estimulados con el correspondiente FABP. Parte de los esplenocitos fueron utilizados para cuantificar las poblaciones celulares.

También se recogió suero para estudiar la respuesta de anticuerpos IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM e IgE.



**Figura A2.-** Diseño experimental del estudio de la respuesta inmunológica inducida por rFh15, rFh15b utilizando los inmunomoduladores PAL y AA0029 en ratones BALB/c

### 10. Obtención de antígenos SoSbAWA y SoSmAWA

La obtención de antígenos específicos no solubles de vermes adultos de *S. bovis* (SoSbAWA) y de *S. mansoni* (SoSmAWA) se realizó siguiendo la metodología descrita por Abán et al. (1999). Se tomaron vermes adultos y se suspendieron a razón de 20 parejas por ml de PBS. La mezcla se homogeneizó en solución salina con PBS. Se agregó PMSF (Fluoruro de fenilmetilsulfonilo, Sigma, España) 0,33M en etanol y se sometió a tres ciclos de congelación a -80°C y descongelación a temperatura ambiente y se le aplicaron tres periodos de 1 minuto de sonicación (Virsonic300, Virtis). Se centrifugó a 16000 g durante 30 minutos a 4 °C y se recogió el sobrenadante para posteriormente determinar la concentración de proteínas por el método BCA.

### 11. ELISA indirecto para la detección de anticuerpos

Los perfiles de anticuerpos anti-nFh12, rFh15, rFh15b, SoSbAWA y SoSmAWA se midieron usando un ELISA indirecto. Se utilizaron placas de poliestireno de 96 pocillos

(Costar), tapizadas con 2,5 g de extracto bruto (SoSbAWA, SoSmAWA) o 2µg de extracto purificado (nFh12, rFh15, rFh15b), en tampón carbonato (pH 9,0) y se mantuvieron durante 12 h a 4°C. Se bloqueó con 2 % de albúmina de suero bovino en PBS-Tween 20 (PBS-T). Los sueros se procesaron en una dilución de 1:100 y fueron incubados a 37°C durante 1 h. En el paso siguiente se incubó con 100 µl de la anti-inmunoglobulina apropiada, marcada con peroxidasa para medir IgG, IgG1, IgG2a, IgM o IgE de ratón en dilución 1:1000 (Sigma) o anticuerpos IgG de hámster 1:1000 (Sigma). El revelado se realizó con H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> y ortofenildiamina (Sigma) en tampón citrato (pH 5,0). Se midió la absorbancia a 492 nm con un lector de ELISA Ear400FT (Lab Instruments).

## **12. Análisis de poblaciones celulares mediante citometría de flujo**

Los esplenocitos de ratones no tratados, tratados con inmunomodulador+Qs y de ratones inmunizados con FABPs recombinantes formulados en ADAD con el correspondiente inmunomodulador, fueron incubados con un anticuerpo de bloqueo anti-CD16/CD32 durante 5 minutos a temperatura ambiente y teñidos con anticuerpos conjugados con fluorocromos comerciales a dilución 1/50 en PBS más 2 % de suero fetal bovino durante 30 minutos a 4°C. Los anticuerpos monoclonales (BD Biosciences) empleados fueron los siguientes: CD4 marcado con isocianato de fluoresceína (CD4-FITC); CD8 marcado con ficoeritrina (CD8-PE); CD197 marcado con ficoeritrina (CD197-PE); B220 marcado con alofocianina (B220-APC); CD27 marcado con alofocianina (CD27-APC); CD62L marcado con alofocianina (CD62L-APC) y CD45 marcado con la proteína peridina de la clorofila y colorante de cianina (CD45-PerCP-Cy5.5). Posteriormente, los esplenocitos fueron incubados con los anticuerpos mencionados anteriormente en una dilución 1/50 (v/v) en tampón PBS-SFB durante 30 minutos a 4 °C. Se realizaron diferentes preparaciones de esplenocitos de la misma muestra para aquellos anticuerpos monoclonales que están marcados con el mismo fluorocromo. Después del periodo de incubación, las células se lavaron con PBS-SFB, centrifugándose a 1200 rpm durante 5 minutos y el sobrenadante fue descartado. Los esplenocitos se fijaron tras añadir 100 µL de una solución al 2% (p/v) de paraformaldehído en PBS-SFB por un periodo máximo de 12 horas hasta la adquisición de los datos. Las muestras se analizaron en un citómetro de flujo Becton Dickinson FACScalibur de cuatro colores del Servicio de Citometría de Flujo del Centro de Investigación del Cáncer

de la Universidad de Salamanca. Los datos se estudiaron utilizando el software *GateLogic Flow Cytometry Analysis* (Inivai Technologies Pty Ltd).

### **13. Cultivo de esplenocitos y determinación de la producción de citocinas**

Los esplenocitos obtenidos de ratones se incubaron en una placa de cultivo de 6 pocillos a 37°C, utilizándose 106 células por pocillo, en medio de cultivo completo RPMI 1640 con 10% suero fetal bovino inactivado durante 30 minutos a 50°C, 5 mM L-glutamina y antibióticos: 100 UI/ml de penicilina y 100 µg/ml de estreptomina (López-Abán et al., 2007). Los esplenocitos de los ratones inmunizados y grupo control se estimularon *in vitro* con rFh15 o rFh15b a una concentración final de 10 µg/ml durante 72 horas a 37°C, en una atmósfera húmeda con un 5% de CO<sub>2</sub>. Se prepararon también pocillos control con esplenocitos de ratones no tratados. Los sobrenadantes de los cultivos se recuperaron para realizar la determinación de citocinas: interferon γ (IFNγ), factor de necrosis tumoral α (TNFα), interleucina IL-1α, IL-2, IL-4, IL-6, IL-10 y IL-17, en cada uno de los grupos de ratones usados en el estudio. Estas fueron cuantificadas empleando el *kit FlowCytomix Mouse Th1/Th2 10plex* (Bender MedSystems GmbH, Vienna, Austria) por citometría de flujo, de acuerdo a las recomendaciones del fabricante. Las esferas fluorescentes de distintos tamaños tapizadas con anticuerpos de captura específicos contra las citocinas antes mencionadas. Seguidamente, fueron incubadas con los sobrenadante de los cultivos de esplenocitos de ratón y con los anticuerpos secundarios conjugados con biotina, se mantuvieron 2 horas a temperatura ambiente, dando como resultado la unión de las citocinas a su anticuerpo correspondiente. Después de lavar los tubos con PBS-SPF al 2%, se añadió una solución de estreptavidina/ficoeritina y se incubó durante 1 hora a temperatura ambiente. Tras este tiempo la solución se unió al conjugado de biotina emitiendo señales fluorescentes que son detectadas en el citómetro de flujo Becton Dickinson FACScalibur del Servicio de Citometría de Flujo del Centro de Investigación del Cáncer de la Universidad de Salamanca. Se estudiaron un total de 8000 casos y los datos fueron analizados usando el FlowCytomix Pro 3.0 software (Bender MedSystems, Vienna, Austria). La concentración de cada citocina se determinó a partir de curvas de calibración usando citocinas recombinantes de ratón de concentración conocida.

#### **14. Análisis estadísticos**

Los datos se expresaron como media aritmética y error típico de la media. Se realizó un estudio de la normalidad en la distribución de los datos mediante el test de Kolmogorov–Smirnov. Para determinar las diferencias entre grupos se usó el análisis de varianza (ANOVA) la prueba post-ANOVA Tukey HSD o la prueba estadística Kruskal-Wallis según los casos. Todos los análisis estadísticos se consideraron significativos con  $p < 0,05$ . Para el análisis de los datos se utilizó el SPSS 21 software.



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## Anexo 2. Publicaciones en índice de impacto sobre *Schistosoma*

### **Artículo 1. Should parasitic disease be investigated in immigrant children with relative eosinophilia from tropical and sub-tropical regions?**

Belhassen-García M, Pardo-Lledías J, Pérez del Villar L, Muro A, Velasco-Tirado V, Muñoz Bellido JL, Vicente B, Blázquez de Castro A, Cordero-Sánchez M

Paediatric Int Child Health 2015 (En prensa)

# Should parasitic disease be investigated in immigrant children with relative eosinophilia from tropical and sub-tropical regions?

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**Background:** Immigrants to Spain are mainly from low- and middle-income countries, and around 20% are children. Absolute eosinophilia is defined as  $>0.45 \times 10^9$  eosinophilic leucocytes/L of peripheral blood. Absolute eosinophilia in travelers and immigrants from tropical and sub-tropical areas is frequently associated with parasitic diseases. However, the significance of relative eosinophilia in immigrant children, defined as  $>5\%$  eosinophilic leucocytes in those with  $<0.45 \times 10^9$  eosinophils/L, is unresolved.

**Objectives:** To describe the importance of relative eosinophilia in a cohort of immigrant children ( $<18$  years) from sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and Latin America.

**Methods:** 176 immigrant children without absolute eosinophilia were prospectively evaluated.

**Results:** 25 of them (14.2%) had relative eosinophilia. 10 patients with relative eosinophilia had no diagnosis. 15 with relative eosinophilia (60%) were diagnosed with a parasitic disease, 7 (46.7%) of whom had only one parasite, while co-infection accounted for 8 of the 15 cases (53.3%). Of the parasitic infections, the most frequent causes of relative eosinophilia were filariasis spp. (7/15, 46.7%), strongyloides spp. (5/15, 33.3%), schistosoma spp. (4/15, 26.6%) and *Ascaris lumbricoides* (2/15, 13.3%).

**Conclusion:** The findings suggest that relative eosinophilia is frequently associated with helminthic infection in immigrant children from tropical and sub-tropical areas, so a thorough parasitological study is highly advisable in this group of patients.

**Keywords:** Relative eosinophilia, Child, Immigrants, Helminthiasis

## Introduction

The migratory flow from low-income countries is increasing continuously, and almost 20% of them are children and adolescents. Health problems in this group can be diverse, but imported infectious diseases, mainly parasitic, are among the most frequently detected.<sup>1</sup> Immigrants with

parasitic diseases are usually asymptomatic or oligosymptomatic with eosinophilia often being the only infection biomarker. Several studies have shown a high prevalence of parasitic infection in immigrant adults with imported eosinophilia.<sup>2-4</sup> Studies focusing on children and adolescent immigrants are scarce.<sup>5</sup> The relevance of absolute eosinophilia as a biomarker for cryptic helminthiasis in children and adolescents from low-income countries was recently demonstrated by our group, and a parasitic infection was the cause of eosinophilia in more than 75% of cases.<sup>6</sup>

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**Artículo 2. The Rapid-Heat LAMPellet Method: A Potential Diagnostic Method for Human Urogenital Schistosomiasis**

Gandasegui J, Fernández-Soto P, Carranza-Rodríguez C, Pérez-Arellano JL, Vicente B, López-Abán J, Muro A.

PLoS Negl Trop Dis. 2015 Jul 31;9(7)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Rapid-Heat LAMPellet Method: A Potential Diagnostic Method for Human Urogenital Schistosomiasis

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## Abstract

### Background

Urogenital schistosomiasis due to *Schistosoma haematobium* is a serious underestimated public health problem affecting 112 million people - particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Microscopic examination of urine samples to detect parasite eggs still remains as definitive diagnosis. This work was focussed on developing a novel loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) assay for detection of *S. haematobium* DNA in human urine samples as a high-throughput, simple, accurate and affordable diagnostic tool to use in diagnosis of urogenital schistosomiasis.

### Methodology/Principal Findings

A LAMP assay targeting a species specific sequence of *S. haematobium* ribosomal intergenic spacer was designed. The effectiveness of our LAMP was assessed in a number of patients' urine samples with microscopy confirmed *S. haematobium* infection. For potentially large-scale application in field conditions, different DNA extraction methods, including a commercial kit, a modified NaOH extraction method and a rapid heating method were tested using small volumes of urine fractions (whole urine, supernatants and pellets). The heating of pellets from clinical samples was the most efficient method to obtain good-quality DNA detectable by LAMP. The detection limit of our LAMP was 1 fg/ $\mu$ L of *S. haematobium* DNA in urine samples. When testing all patients' urine samples included in our study, diagnostic parameters for sensitivity and specificity were calculated for LAMP assay, 100% sensitivity (95% CI: 81.32%-100%) and 86.67% specificity (95% CI: 75.40%-94.05%), and also for microscopy detection of eggs in urine samples, 69.23% sensitivity (95% CI: 48.21%-85.63%) and 100% specificity (95% CI: 93.08%-100%).

## OPEN ACCESS

**Citation:** Gandasegui J, Fernández-Soto P, Carranza-Rodríguez C, Pérez-Arellano JL, Vicente B, López-Abán J, et al. (2015) The Rapid-Heat LAMPellet Method: A Potential Diagnostic Method for Human Urogenital Schistosomiasis. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis* 9(7): e0003963. doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0003963

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**Artículo 3. A loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) assay for early detection of *Schistosoma mansoni* in stool samples: a diagnostic approach in a murine model.**

Fernández-Soto P, Gandasegui Arahuetes J, Sánchez Hernández A, López Abán J, Vicente Santiago B, Muro A.

PLoS Negl Trop Dis. 2014 Sep 4;8(9)

# A Loop-Mediated Isothermal Amplification (LAMP) Assay for Early Detection of *Schistosoma mansoni* in Stool Samples: A Diagnostic Approach in a Murine Model



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## Abstract

**Background:** Human schistosomiasis, mainly due to *Schistosoma mansoni* species, is one of the most prevalent parasitic diseases worldwide. To overcome the drawbacks of classical parasitological and serological methods in detecting *S. mansoni* infections, especially in acute stage of the disease, development of cost-effective, simple and rapid molecular methods is still needed for the diagnosis of schistosomiasis. A promising approach is the loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) technology. Compared to PCR-based assays, LAMP has the advantages of reaction simplicity, rapidity, specificity, cost-effectiveness and higher amplification efficiency. Additionally, as results can be inspected by the naked eye, the technique has great potential for use in low-income countries.

**Methodology/Principal findings:** A sequence corresponding to a mitochondrial *S. mansoni* minisatellite DNA region was selected as a target for designing a LAMP-based method to detect *S. mansoni* DNA in stool samples. We used a *S. mansoni* murine model to obtain well defined stool and sera samples from infected mice with *S. mansoni* cercariae. Samples were taken weekly from week 0 to 8 post-infection and the Kato-Katz and ELISA techniques were used for monitoring the infection. Primer set designed were tested using a commercial reaction mixture for LAMP assay and an *in house* mixture to compare results. Specificity of LAMP was tested using 16 DNA samples from different parasites, including several *Schistosoma* species, and no cross-reactions were found. The detection limit of our LAMP assay (SmMIT-LAMP) was 1 fg of *S. mansoni* DNA. When testing stool samples from infected mice the SmMIT-LAMP detected *S. mansoni* DNA as soon as 1 week post-infection.

**Conclusions/Significance:** We have developed, for the first time, a cost-effective, easy to perform, specific and sensitive LAMP assay for early detection of *S. mansoni* in stool samples. The method is potentially and readily adaptable for field diagnosis and disease surveillance in schistosomiasis-endemic areas.

**Citation:** Fernández-Soto P, Gandasegui Arahetes J, Sánchez Hernández A, López Abán J, Vicente Santiago B, et al. (2014) A Loop-Mediated Isothermal Amplification (LAMP) Assay for Early Detection of *Schistosoma mansoni* in Stool Samples: A Diagnostic Approach in a Murine Model. PLoS Negl Trop Dis 8(9): e3126. doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0003126

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**Data Availability:** The authors confirm that all data underlying the findings are fully available without restriction. All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

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**Competing Interests:** The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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## Introduction

Schistosomiasis, a disease caused by parasitic worms of several species of genus *Schistosoma*, is one of the 17 neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) recognized by World Health Organization (WHO) [1]. Presently, human schistosomiasis, mainly caused by *Schistosoma mansoni* species, is one of the most widespread of all human parasitic diseases, ranking second only to malaria in terms of its socioeconomic and public health importance in developing countries in tropical and subtropical areas, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. The disease is endemic in 74 countries infecting more than 200 million people worldwide, with 732 million people

at risk of infection in known transmission areas [2], [3], [4]. On a global scale, one of thirty individuals has schistosomiasis [5]. It is also noted that the prevalence of imported schistosomiasis is increasingly a problem in non-endemic areas due to the growing number of international travelers to endemic areas, expatriates and immigrants from endemic countries [6], [7], [8].

Over time, several diagnostic techniques including parasitological and immunological methods have been tested for diagnosis of schistosome infection. As is well known, traditional parasitological methods, such as Kato-Katz assay for counting eggs in feces, are relatively inexpensive and easy to perform providing basic information on prevalence and infection intensity. However, a

**Artículo 4. Identifying phenotypes involved in susceptibility to  
*Schistosoma mansoni* infection in F1B6CBA mice**

Pérez del Villar L, Vicente B, Blanco-Gómez A, Castellanos A, Pérez-Losada J,  
Muro A.

Acta Parasitol. 2014 Sep;59(3):529-39



# Identifying phenotypes involved in susceptibility to *Schistosoma mansoni* infection in F1B6CBA mice

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## Abstract

Schistosomiasis is a disease with a strong genetic component influenced by socioeconomic and ecological factors. Epidemiological studies have identified several genetic regions involved in the schistosomiasis susceptibility. However, it is not well known what physiological traits are predisposing to the disease. The study of experimental infections in *inbred* mouse strains with variable genetic susceptibility to the disease offers a good opportunity to tackle this question. F1B6CBA hybrid between the most divergent strains was infected in order to characterize the immunophenotypes that correlate with the susceptibility of schistosomiasis disease in mice. Complete blood counts and immunophenotype were determined at 0, 3, 6, and 9 weeks post infection. Nine weeks after cercariae exposure, animals were perfused and worm recovery was assessed. A large number of hepatic lesions, a reduction in the eosinophil and basophil count in the acute phase of infection and the decreased number of monocytes, neutrophils and B-lymphocytes are phenotypes associated with increased susceptibility to *S. mansoni* infection.

## Keywords

Schistosomiasis susceptibility; *S. mansoni* infection; F1B6CBA hybrid; immunophenotypes; experimental crosses

## Introduction

Schistosomiasis is an infectious disease with a strong genetic component influenced by socioeconomic, environmental and ecological factors (Campino *et al.* 2006). The immune response plays a central role on the development of severe forms of schistosomiasis, although others factors like infection intensity, nutritional status or genetic background of patients may influence the severity of schistosomiasis (Pearce and MacDonald 2002). *S. mansoni* may cause markedly varied patterns of immune response during the course of the infection (Gryseels *et al.* 2006; Pearce and MacDonald 2002; Stadecker *et al.* 2004). The immunopathology of *S. mansoni* infection consists of skin inflammation (cercariae dermatitis) and granulomatous reaction in response to the tissue-trapped parasite eggs (Ross *et al.* 2002). Therefore, *S. mansoni* infection causes most of the damage in the liver where maximum egg accumulation occurs (Gryseels *et al.* 2006).

Mononuclear cells, neutrophils and eosinophils play a main role in the early stages of granuloma, being an impor-

tant source of proinflammatory chemokines (Burke *et al.* 2009). However, the development of long-lived organized granulomatous lesions around eggs is wholly dependent on CD4+ T lymphocytes (Gause *et al.* 2003). An effective T-cell response is known to be critical for the development of the granulomatous response and host survival. Although the role of CD8+ cells in the immune response against *S. mansoni* is still unclear, this subtype of lymphocytes around the granuloma has been identified suggesting that CD8+ cells act as suppressors of Th2 cell function thereby regulating granulomatous inflammation (Pedras-Vasconcelos and Pearce 1996).

The susceptibility to schistosomiasis presents the classic complex disease phenotype (Bethony and Quinnell 2008; Cooke and Hill 2001). Thus, mouse experimental crosses have been a suitable strategy for mapping genes involved in different complex diseases including the immune response against *S. mansoni* (Rutitzky *et al.* 2005; Smith *et al.* 2009). Several studies report differences in the hepatic fibrosis or granuloma size in different inbred mouse lines

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## **Artículo 5. Relevance of eosinophilia and hyper-IgE in immigrant children**

Belhassen-García M, Pardo-Lledías J, Pérez del Villar L, Muro A, Velasco-Tirado V, Blázquez de Castro A, Vicente B, García García MI, Luis Muñoz Bellido J, Cordero-Sánchez M.

Medicine (Baltimore). 2014 Jul;93(6):1-8

**Premio al mejor trabajo científico publicado en 2014 por “La Real Academia de Medicina de Salamanca”**

# Relevance of Eosinophilia and Hyper-IgE in Immigrant Children

Moncef Belhassen-García, MD, PhD, Javier Pardo-Lledías, MD, PhD, Luis Pérez del Villar, PhD, Antonio Muro, MD, PhD, Virginia Velasco-Tirado, MD, Ana Blázquez de Castro, MD, Belen Vicente, M<sup>a</sup> Inmaculada García, MD, PhD, Juan Luis Muñoz Bellido, MD, PhD, and Miguel Cordero-Sánchez, MD, PhD

**Abstract:** Immigrants from undeveloped countries are a growing problem in Europe. Spain has become a frequent destination for immigrants (20% of whom are children) because of its geographic location and its historic and cultural links with Africa and Latin America. Eosinophilia is frequent in adult immigrants, travelers and expatriates coming from tropical areas. However, there are few studies that focus on the incidence and causes of tropical eosinophilia and hyper-IgE in immigrant children.

We evaluated, prospectively, the prevalence and causes of eosinophilia and hyper-immunoglobulin E (IgE) in 362 immigrant children coming from Sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa and Latin America to Salamanca, Spain, between January 2007 and December 2011.

Absolute eosinophilia and hyper-IgE were present in 22.9% and 56.8% of the analyzed children, respectively. The most frequent causes of absolute eosinophilia were filariasis (52.6%), strongyloidiasis (46.8%) and schistosomiasis (28.9%). Filariasis (41.9%), strongyloidiasis (29.6%) and schistosomiasis (22.2%) were the most frequent causes of increased levels of IgE. The area under the ROC curve showed similar values between eosinophil count and IgE levels

in the diagnosis of helminthiasis (69% [95% confidence interval (CI) 63%–74%] vs 67% [95% CI 60%–72%],  $P=0.24$ ).

Eosinophilia and hyper-IgE have a high value as biomarkers of helminthiasis in children coming from tropical and subtropical areas.

(*Medicine* 93(6):e43)

**Abbreviations:** IgE = immunoglobulin E, NPV = negative predictive value, PPV = positive predictive value, ROC = receiver-operating-characteristic, TMU = tropical medicine unit, S = sensitivity, Sp = specificity.

## INTRODUCTION

The migratory flow from developing to developed countries is continuously increasing. Therefore, imported infectious diseases and the health status of immigrant population has become a relevant subject in developed countries.<sup>1,2</sup> Helminthiasis, such as filariasis and schistosomiasis, are an important cause of the disease burden, affecting 20% and 6% of immigrants coming from endemic areas, respectively.<sup>2,3</sup> However, specific symptoms associated with these parasitic infections are frequently absent.

Several studies have documented the relationship between eosinophilia, hyper-immunoglobulin E (IgE) and helminthiasis in immigrant adults and travelers coming from tropical areas.<sup>4–6</sup> In fact, both parameters are considered as biomarkers for parasitic infections. However, data about imported diseases focusing on immigrant children are scarce and no data on the prevalence and causes of eosinophilia and hyper-IgE in immigrant children coming from tropical and subtropical areas are available.<sup>7</sup>

The main objective of the present study is to know the prevalence and causes of eosinophilia and hyper-IgE in immigrant children coming from Sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa and Latin America areas and to describe the usefulness of eosinophilia and hyper-IgE as biomarkers for parasitic infection.

## PATIENTS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in the Tropical Medicine Unit (TMU), Complejo Asistencial Universitario de Salamanca (CAUSA), Salamanca, Spain. We evaluated, prospectively, the prevalence and causes of eosinophilia and hyper-IgE in immigrant children coming from tropical or subtropical areas between January 2007 and December 2011. The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethical Committee of the CAUSA and the written consent was obtained from legal guardians. The criteria for inclusion were as follows: 1) age

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The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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**Artículo 6. *Schistosoma mansoni* experimental infection in *Mus spretus* (SPRET/EiJ strain) mice**

Pérez del Villar L, Vicente B, Galindo-Villardón P, Castellanos A, Pérez-Losada J, Muro A.

Parasite 2013;20:27

## SHORT NOTE

## OPEN ACCESS

## ***Schistosoma mansoni* experimental infection in *Mus spretus* (SPRET/EiJ strain) mice**

Luis Pérez del Villar<sup>1,2,\*</sup>, Belén Vicente<sup>1,2</sup>, Purificación Galindo-Villardón<sup>3</sup>, Andrés Castellanos<sup>2,4</sup>, Jesús Pérez-Losada<sup>2,4</sup>, and Antonio Muro<sup>1,2</sup>

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**Abstract** – Most *Schistosoma mansoni* experimental infections are developed in several inbred strains of *Mus musculus* as definitive host. In contrast, *Mus spretus* is unexplored in *Schistosoma* infection studies. *Mus spretus* provides a high variation of immunological phenotypes being an invaluable tool for genetic studies and gene mapping. The aim of this study is to characterize hematological and immunological responses against *Schistosoma mansoni* infection in *Mus spretus* (SPRET/EiJ strain) vs. *Mus musculus* (CD1 strain) mice. Nine weeks after cercarial exposure, animals were perfused and the parasite burden was assessed. The parasitological data suggests that SPRET/EiJ mice tolerate higher parasite loads compared to CD1 strain. In addition, hematological parameters measured in *Mus spretus* group showed a significant increase in granulocytes population in early stages of infection compared to the CD1 cohort. Meanwhile, CD1 presented higher levels of lymphocytes and IgG1 in the late stages of *S. mansoni* experimental infection.

**Key words:** *Schistosoma mansoni* infection, *Mus spretus*, Immunological phenotypes, Hematological phenotypes.

**Résumé** – Infection expérimentale de *Schistosoma mansoni* chez la souris *Mus spretus* (souche SPRET/EiJ).

La plupart des infections expérimentales à *Schistosoma mansoni* sont développées chez *Mus musculus* comme hôte définitif. Au contraire, *Mus spretus* est une espèce de souris inexplorée dans les infections expérimentales à *Schistosoma*. *Mus spretus* offre une grande variation de phénotypes immunologiques, ce qui est un outil essentiel pour les études génétiques et la cartographie des gènes. L'objectif de cette étude est la caractérisation de la réponse hématologique et immunologique contre l'infection à *Schistosoma mansoni* chez *Mus spretus* (souche SPRET/EiJ) comparée à *Mus musculus* (souche CD1). Neuf semaines après l'exposition aux cercaires, les animaux ont été perfusés et les paramètres parasitologiques ont été obtenus. Les données parasitologiques suggèrent que la souche SPRET/EiJ tolère des charges parasitaires plus élevées que la souche CD1. Les paramètres hématologiques mesurés chez SPRET/EiJ ont montré aussi une augmentation significative de la population des granulocytes dans les premiers stades de l'infection par comparaison à la cohorte CD1. Cependant, la souche CD1 a présenté des niveaux plus élevés de lymphocytes et IgG1 dans les stades tardifs de l'infection expérimentale à *S. mansoni*.

### Introduction

Schistosomiasis remains one of the most important parasitic diseases affecting over 200 million human beings and causing 200,000 deaths per year [24]. However, the pathology caused by *Schistosoma* spp. infection varies widely depending on the intensity of infection and ecological factors. These issues con-

tribute toward the differential global infection and mortality rates [2]. Furthermore, schistosomiasis susceptibility is influenced by multiple genes as well as by gene-gene and gene-environment interactions [6]. In experimental infections, inbred mouse strains develop different degree of *Schistosoma* pathology; among these mouse strains, CBA/2J and C3H strains develop significantly higher hepatic pathology than C57BL/6J [5, 23]. At the late stages of experimental infections,

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**Artículo 7. Evaluation of the role of angiogenic factors in the pathogenesis of schistosomiasis**

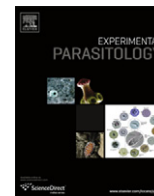
Shariati F, Pérez-Arellano JL, Carranza C, López-Abán J, Vicente B, Arefi M, Muro A.

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# Experimental Parasitology

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/yexpr](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/yexpr)

## Evaluation of the role of angiogenic factors in the pathogenesis of schistosomiasis

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### ABSTRACT

Schistosomiasis is one disease produced by helminths, which affect many people in tropical areas. Granuloma formation is the main mechanism involved in the pathogenesis of this disease. Experimental studies have demonstrated angiogenesis (blood vessels formation from pre-existing vessels) in the initial phase of granuloma formation. In the present work, VEGF (vascular endothelial growth factor) levels were analyzed in sera from people diagnosed with different helminthic infections. Patients with schistosomiasis and filariasis had significantly high VEGF levels in compared with healthy people and patients diagnosed with hookworms. In addition, the effects of angiogenesis inhibition using anti-angiogenic factors (endostatin) were evaluated in a schistosomiasis murine model. A lesion decrease was observed in mice infected with *Schistosoma mansoni* and treated with endostatin. Finally, mechanisms of angiogenesis induction were studied and observed that cercariae antigens stimulated the angiogenic factors by host alveolar macrophages.

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### 1. Introduction

*Schistosoma mansoni* is one of the blood flukes, which inhabit in hepatic portal and mesenteric veins of the host. Female adult worms produce hundreds to thousands of eggs per day, containing ciliated miracidium larva, which secretes proteolytic enzymes to migrate into lumen of the intestine (Gryseels et al., 2006). Early pathological changes arise after mechanical occlusion of the microvasculature by the eggs causing acute vasculitis with endothelial damage and necrosis. Granuloma formation results from a delayed hypersensitivity response generated by the host against antigens secreted by the parasite eggs (Van de Vijver et al., 2006). In initial phases, the inflammatory response is intense with important neovascularization. Moreover, fibrosis was produced in later phases and it was responsible of the pathological disorders of this disease (Silva et al., 2006). However, variations in the magnitude of the disease have been described among different hosts and specifically among different mouse strains (Stavitsky, 2004).

Angiogenesis, the formation of new endothelial vessels from pre-existing post-capillary venule, is a characteristic feature of inflammatory diseases, wound repair and cancer (Carmeliet and Jain, 2000). The angiogenic activity depends on the balance or imbalance between angiogenic and angiostatic mediators. Remod-

elling and degradation of the surrounding stroma is essential to start an angiogenic phenotype. These stromal changes facilitate recruitment and activation of leucocytes, fibroblast and endothelial cells. While granulomas are traditionally considered to be avascular structures, schistosome granulomas should be seen as an inflammatory condition that initiates a variable degree of wound healing response in which angiogenesis and fibrosis are highly involved (Baptista and Andrade, 2005).

The aim of this work was to evaluate the role of angiogenic factors in the pathogenesis of schistosomiasis. Firstly, vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) in sera of patients diagnosed of schistosomiasis and other helminthic diseases was studied. Secondly, the effects of endostatin (angiogenesis inhibitor) in mice infected with *Schistosoma mansoni* were determined. Finally, VEGF and fibroblastic growth factor (FGF2) expression from alveolar macrophages stimulated with different *S. mansoni* antigens were analyzed.

### 2. Materials and methods

#### 2.1. Human population

The study group was formed by 53 patients from sub-Saharan areas who mainly were from Mali and Nigeria. They had recently arrived in Canary Island of Spain. They have been living in Spain since 6 months ago and have been diagnosed only by one parasite as shown in Table 1. All patients were diagnosed by direct parasitological tests included: (i) coprology in three stool samples for ova

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E-mail address: [ama@usal.es](mailto:ama@usal.es) (A. Muro).

## Anexo 3. Publicaciones en índice de impacto de vacunas

### **Artículo 1. *In vitro* and *in vivo* studies for assessing the immune response and protection-inducing ability conferred by *Fasciola hepatica*-derived synthetic peptides containing B- and T-cell epitopes**

Rojas-Caraballo J, López-Abán J, Pérez del Villar L, Vizcaíno C, Vicente B, Fernández-Soto P, del Olmo E, Patarroyo MA, Muro A.

PLoS One 2014 Aug 14;9(8)





# *In Vitro* and *In Vivo* Studies for Assessing the Immune Response and Protection-Inducing Ability Conferred by *Fasciola hepatica*-Derived Synthetic Peptides Containing B- and T-Cell Epitopes

Jose Rojas-Caraballo<sup>1,2</sup>, Julio López-Abán<sup>1</sup>, Luis Pérez del Villar<sup>1</sup>, Carolina Vizcaíno<sup>2</sup>, Belén Vicente<sup>1</sup>, Pedro Fernández-Soto<sup>1</sup>, Esther del Olmo<sup>3</sup>, Manuel Alfonso Patarroyo<sup>2,4</sup>, Antonio Muro<sup>1\*</sup>

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## Abstract

Fasciolosis is considered the most widespread trematode disease affecting grazing animals around the world; it is currently recognised by the World Health Organisation as an emergent human pathogen. Triclabendazole is still the most effective drug against this disease; however, resistant strains have appeared and developing an effective vaccine against this disease has increasingly become a priority. Several bioinformatics tools were here used for predicting B- and T-cell epitopes according to the available data for *Fasciola hepatica* protein amino acid sequences. BALB/c mice were immunised with the synthetic peptides by using the ADAD vaccination system and several immune response parameters were measured (antibody titres, cytokine levels, T-cell populations) to evaluate their ability to elicit an immune response. Based on the immunogenicity results so obtained, seven peptides were selected to assess their protection-inducing ability against experimental infection with *F. hepatica* metacercariae. Twenty-four B- or T-epitope-containing peptides were predicted and chemically synthesised. Immunisation of mice with peptides so-called B1, B2, B5, B6, T14, T15 and T16 induced high levels of total IgG, IgG1 and IgG2a ( $p < 0.05$ ) and a mixed Th1/Th2/Th17/Treg immune response, according to IFN- $\gamma$ , IL-4, IL-17 and IL-10 levels, accompanied by increased CD62L<sup>+</sup> T-cell populations. A high level of protection was obtained in mice vaccinated with peptides B2, B5, B6 and T15 formulated in the ADAD vaccination system with the AA0029 immunomodulator. The bioinformatics approach used in the present study led to the identification of seven peptides as vaccine candidates against the infection caused by *Fasciola hepatica* (a liver-fluke trematode). However, vaccine efficacy must be evaluated in other host species, including those having veterinary importance.

**Citation:** Rojas-Caraballo J, López-Abán J, Pérez del Villar L, Vizcaíno C, Vicente B, et al. (2014) *In Vitro* and *In Vivo* Studies for Assessing the Immune Response and Protection-Inducing Ability Conferred by *Fasciola hepatica*-Derived Synthetic Peptides Containing B- and T-Cell Epitopes. PLoS ONE 9(8): e105323. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0105323

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**Competing Interests:** The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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## Introduction

Fasciolosis is one of the most important helminthiasis worldwide affecting grazing livestock due its widespread geographical distribution and resulting economic loss; it is caused by the common liver fluke *Fasciola hepatica*, along with the related species *Fasciola gigantica* [1]. Besides being a well-known veterinary problem, fasciolosis has also recently become considered as an emerging parasitic human disease, having a significant impact on public health, causing millions of people to be at risk of infection. Reports have indicated its increase in many Latin-American, African, European and Asian countries [2,3]. Taking its impact on human health and wide emergence into account, human fasciolosis has been recently included in the World Health Organization's (WHO) list of priorities related to Neglected Tropical Diseases [4].

It is well-known that methodological and technical difficulties related to diagnosis have limited progress in combating human fasciolosis globally, including drawbacks in diagnosing infection and assessing drug efficacy and resistance, mainly concerning triclabendazole which is still the most effective drug for combating the disease. Indeed, no commercial vaccine is currently available and developing vaccines for controlling animal and human fasciolosis thus represents a tremendous research opportunity. Many candidate proteins have been tested for a long time now as target antigens in vaccination assays against fluke, including fatty acid-binding proteins, glutathione S-transferases, cathepsin proteases, leucine aminopeptidase, fluke haemoglobin and thioredoxin peroxidase. However, no consensus regarding the factors required for immunological protection has yet emerged and there has been no report to date of a successful field trial concerning a liver fluke

**Artículo 2. Adaptive immune stimulation is required to obtain high protection with fatty acid binding protein vaccine candidate against *Fasciola hepatica* in BALB/c mice**

López-Abán J, Esteban A, Vicente B, Rojas-Caraballo J, del Olmo E, Martínez-Fernández AR, Hillyer GV, Muro A.

J Parasitol 2012 Jun;98(3):527-35

## ADAPTIVE IMMUNE STIMULATION IS REQUIRED TO OBTAIN HIGH PROTECTION WITH FATTY ACID BINDING PROTEIN VACCINE CANDIDATE AGAINST *FASCIOLA HEPATICA* IN BALB/C MICE

Julio López-Abán, Ana Esteban, Belén Vicente, José Rojas-Caraballo, Esther del Olmo\*, Antonio R. Martínez-Fernández†, George V. Hillyer‡, and Antonio Muro

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**ABSTRACT:** Fascioliasis is a parasitic disease that mainly affects cattle and sheep, causing significant economic losses with a great impact in developing countries. Human fascioliasis is becoming more important with the high endemicity in some countries of the world. Previous studies have shown the importance of *Fasciola hepatica* fatty acid binding proteins (FABP) as protective molecules against fascioliasis in various animal models including mice, rabbits, and sheep. Our studies have shown the protective efficacy of recombinant FABP (rFh15) when the protein is formulated in the adjuvant adaptation system (ADAD), using either natural or synthetic immunomodulators. The ADAD system is most effective when it is used 5 days before each dose of specific vaccine antigen. The results showed survival rates of up to 50% with less severe hepatic lesions and high levels of IgG2a or IFN $\gamma$  in immunized mice, using the ADAD system, compared to survival rates of 13% with no hepatic lesion reduction and high levels of IgG1 and IL-4 in those mice immunized with the simplified mode (ADADs).

Fascioliasis is a parasitic disease caused by the trematodes *Fasciola hepatica* and *Fasciola gigantica*. It is an important problem worldwide that affects mainly livestock, but is emerging in humans, causing significant economic losses of US \$3.2 billion per year in animal production (Spithill and Dalton, 1998). Although anti-helminthic drugs are available to treat the disease in both animals (Keiser et al., 2007) and humans (Hien et al., 2008), the need to develop a vaccine to prevent disease development is a priority. Natural definitive hosts can develop a protective immune response against a later infection, which suggests that a vaccine against *F. hepatica* is feasible (Haroun and Hillyer, 1986). Several antigens have been identified, purified, and tested as vaccines in different animal models. Among the antigens with the greatest potential as vaccine candidates for *F. hepatica* infection are glutathione S-transferase, cathepsin proteases, hemoglobin, fatty acid binding proteins (FABP), leucine amino peptidase, and saposin-like protein (Hillyer, 2005). The *F. hepatica* flatworm is not able to synthesize fatty acids de novo and must utilize those from the host by using carrier molecules. Fatty acid transport proteins (FATP) act in the membrane and FABPs act in the cytoplasm. Previous studies have shown the protective efficacy of a 15-kDa FABP recombinant fatty acid binding protein, identified as rFh15, against *F. hepatica* in rabbits and sheep (Muro et al., 1997; Casanueva et al., 2001; Ramajo et al., 2001).

The ADAD system was proposed as an alternative to classical adjuvants such as Freund's. Adjuvants combine the vaccine antigen, and an immunomodulator that can be natural (hydroalcoholic extract of *Phlebotium pseudoaureum*) or chemically synthesized (aliphatic diamines or aminoalcohol), together with saponins of *Quillaja saponaria* (Qs) to form an emulsion with the non-mineral oil Montanide 30/70 (w/o) (Martínez-Fernández

et al., 2004). The natural immunomodulator extracted from the rhizomes of the fern *P. pseudoaureum* (PAL) has shown down-regulation in the Th-response in mice immunized with somatic antigens from third stage larvae of *Anisakis simplex* (Cuéllar et al., 1997), antigens from first stage larvae of *Trichinella spiralis* (Dea-Ayuela et al., 1999), excretory-secretory antigens of *F. hepatica* (López-Abán, Andrade et al., 2007), and mice infected with *Trichomonas vaginalis* (Nogal-Ruiz et al., 2003). The synthetic molecule AA0029 has also demonstrated low cytotoxicity, inhibition of lymphoproliferation, modulation of delayed type hypersensitivity, modified ratios of CD8+, CD4+, and MHC-Class II+ cells, and increased nitric oxide production in LPS pre-stimulated rat alveolar macrophages (del Olmo et al., 2006). Mice immunized with the ADAD and FABP system with the natural PAL and the synthetic OA0012 immunomodulators revealed protection ranging between 40 and 60% in terms of survival against a lethal infection; in sheep, there were reductions of up to 43% in the number of worms recovered (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2004; López-Abán, Casanueva et al., 2007; López-Abán et al., 2008).

Vaccination with the ADAD system includes a “set” of 2 subcutaneous injections. The first, called “adaptation,” contains Qs and the immunomodulator emulsified in non-mineral oil but without FABP antigen. The second injection, administered 5 days after the adaptation, contains the FABP antigen with Qs immunomodulator in the emulsion oil (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2004). The aim of the present work is to simplify the ADAD vaccination system for use in field conditions by reducing the number of injections needed. Furthermore, in addition to the natural immunomodulator PAL, we introduce a new synthetic aliphatic amine, AA0029, which also has immunomodulatory properties.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Animals and parasites

Six-week-old female BALB/c mice weighing 20 g, from Charles River Laboratories, Criffa, Spain were used. The animals had free access to food and water and constant light and temperature conditions were maintained. The mice were housed in polycarbonate and wire cages in the animal experimentation facilities of the University of Salamanca. All animals were treated according to the current European law on animal

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**Artículo 3. The addition of a new immunomodulator with the adjuvant adaptation ADAD system using fatty acid binding proteins increases the protection against *Fasciola hepatica***

López-Abán J, Nogal-Ruiz JJ, Vicente B, Morrondo P, Diez-Baños P, Hillyer GV, Martínez-Fernández AR, Feliciano AS, Muro A.

Vet Parasitol 2008 May 6;153(1-2):176-81



## Short communication

# The addition of a new immunomodulator with the adjuvant adaptation ADAD system using fatty acid binding proteins increases the protection against *Fasciola hepatica*

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Received 16 August 2007; received in revised form 10 January 2008; accepted 15 January 2008

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**Abstract**

Fatty acid binding proteins (FABP) have shown protective immune response against *Fasciola hepatica* infection. We evaluated the protection induced by the Fh12 FABP from *F. hepatica* (Fh12) combined with the new immunomodulator the lipidic aminoalcohol OA0012 in the ADAD system in mice and sheep. In this work we introduced a lipidic aminoalcohol OA0012 as immunomodulator alone or in combination with the hydroalcoholic extract of *Phlebotium pseudoaureum*; PAL. Mice vaccinated with ADAD containing OA0012 + Fh12 or OA0012 + Qs + Fh12 had survival rates of 40–50%. Sheep ADAD-vaccinated with OA0012 + Qs + Fh12 showed lower fluke recovery, less hepatic lesions and higher post-infection daily weight gain than *F. hepatica* infected control animals. Sheep ADAD-vaccinated with OA0012 combined PAL and Qs + Fh12 showed lower fluke recovery (42%), lower adult worms count (57%) lower faecal egg count (38%), less hepatic lesions and higher post-infection daily weight gain than *F. hepatica* infected control animals. Thus, the addition of a new immunomodulator of synthesis to ADAD system with FABPs increased the protection against *F. hepatica*.

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**Keywords:** *Fasciola hepatica*; FABP; Immunomodulator; Vaccine; Lipidic aminoalcohol; OA0012

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**1. Introduction**

Fasciolosis is one of the most widespread parasitic diseases of ruminants in the world. *Fasciola hepatica*

also affects humans in 51 countries where it causes major health problems in endemic areas (Mas-Coma et al., 2005). Triclabendazole is the drug of election against juvenile and adults flukes, but presents problems of resistance (Fairweather and Boray, 1999). A vaccine would offer an alternative to drug treatments in the control of fasciolosis. Native or recombinant fatty acid binding proteins (FABP) from *F. hepatica* have

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**Artículo 4. The *Schistosoma bovis* Sb14-3-3 $\zeta$  recombinant protein cross-protects against *Schistosoma mansoni* in BALB/c mice.**

Siles-Lucas M, Uribe N, López-Abán J, Vicente B, Orfao A, Nogal-Ruiz JJ, Feliciano AS, Muro A.

Vaccine 2007 Oct 10;25(41):7217-23



## The *Schistosoma bovis* Sb14-3-3 $\zeta$ recombinant protein cross-protects against *Schistosoma mansoni* in BALB/c mice

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Received 9 October 2006; received in revised form 14 May 2007; accepted 15 July 2007

Available online 1 August 2007

### Abstract

Current control programs against schistosomiasis could be reinforced through the use of an effective vaccine. Schistosome 14-3-3 proteins have been proposed as candidates for vaccine against the respective infections, and were seen to elicit high protection levels against *Schistosoma bovis* in a previous work done by our group. We have therefore investigated the protective capacity of the 14-3-3 protein from *S. bovis* – Sb14 $\zeta$  – against *Schistosoma mansoni* in mice. In addition, we have addressed the influence of the co-administration of three different immunomodulators with the 14-3-3 polypeptide. Protection was high when the Sb14 $\zeta$  protein was combined in two independent experiments with the AA2829 and PAL immunomodulatory molecules as regards both the reduction of worm numbers (mean: 64.8%) and egg loads in liver (mean: 73.9%) or intestine (mean: 71.5%). In contrast, the degree of protection achieved with the Sb14 $\zeta$ -CpG vaccine was very low (14.9% reduction in worm numbers, and 46.6% and 32% reduction in liver and intestinal egg loads). The immune responses observed in the vaccinated animals showed that the production of IFN $\gamma$  and the absence of IL-4, accompanied by a strong humoral response, are insufficient to elicit protection against *S. mansoni*.

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**Keywords:** *Schistosoma*; 14-3-3 vaccination; Immunomodulators

### 1. Introduction

Schistosomiasis is a parasitic disease leading to chronic ill health, and it represents one of the major human health risks in certain sub-tropical and tropical areas where it is endemic. Studies on the close to sterile immunity elicited by irradiated cercariae (reviewed in [1]) and on the immune responses of individuals living in endemic schistosomiasis areas, showing an association between antigen-specific immunity and a lack of re-infection (reviewed in [2]), offer a paradigm

for the development of a vaccine against schistosomiasis. Thus, several antigens have been characterized and assayed in vaccination trials. Nevertheless, the use of different single parasite proteins for vaccination has failed to evoke the critical responses required for optimal vaccine efficacy (e.g., [3]). The failure to elicit the best protection levels could be attributed, among other reasons, to both the type of molecule used for vaccination and the immune responses triggered by respective antigens in specific combination with other components of the vaccine, including vehicle, adjuvants and immunomodulators.

It is well known that schistosomes have evolved in a complex host–parasite interaction system, developing their own, intricate strategies to escape host immune responses.

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<sup>1</sup> These authors contributed equally to this work.

## Anexo 4. Otras publicaciones en índice de impacto

### **Time-course investigation of the gene expression profile during *Fasciola hepatica* infection: A microarray-based study**

Jose Rojas-Caraballo, Julio López-Abán, Pedro Fernández-Soto, Belén Vicente, Francisco Collía, Antonio Muro

Genomics Data 6 (2015) 89-91

### **Development of a highly sensitive loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) method for the detection of *Loa loa***

Fernández-Soto P, Mvoulouga PO, Akue JP, Abán JL, Santiago BV, Sánchez MC, Muro A.

PLoS One. 2014 Apr 10;9(4)

### **Cytoplasmic signaling pathways in alveolar macrophages involved in the production of nitric oxide after stimulation with excretory/secretory antigens of *Toxocara canis***

Elsa Espinoza, José Luis Pérez-Arellano, Belén Vicente & Antonio Muro

Parasite Immunology 2002; 24:535-544



## Anexo 5. Capítulos en libros, artículos en revistas sin índice de impacto y otras actividades editoriales

### **Alteraciones hematológicas en el inmigrante: Anemia, neutropenia, trombopenia y eosinofilia importada**

Javier Pardo Lledías; María Belén Vicente Santiago; Jose Luis Pérez Arellano; Antonio Muro Álvarez.

Manual de Enfermedades Importadas. Capítulo 34, pp. 393 - 399. ELSEVIER, 2012.

### **Prevención de la malaria importada**

Cristina Carranza Rodríguez; María Belén Vicente Santiago; Antonio Muro Álvarez; Jose Luis Pérez Arellano.

Manual de Enfermedades Importadas. Capítulo 12, pp. 137 - 147. ELSEVIER 2012.

### **Amebosis, giardosis y tricomonosis**

Pérez Arellano JL; Carranza C; Vicente B; Muro A.

Medicine. Enfermedades infecciosas (VI).2010;10(54). pp. 3609 - 3620. 2010.

### **Infecciones por otros protozoos: criptosporidiosis, isosporosis, ciclosporiasis, microsporosis y toxoplasmosis**

Muro A; Pérez del Villar L; Vicente B; Pérez Arellano JL.

Medicine. Enfermedades infecciosas (VI).2010;10(54). pp. 3654 - 3663. 2010.

### **Análisis clínicos II. El laboratorio y las enfermedades tropicales: Turismo e inmigración**

Abreu N; Carmelo E; Del Castillo A; Fernández P; Foronda P; López J; Martínez E; Muro A; Piñero JE; Shariati F; Valladares B; Vicente B.

Consejo General de Colegios Oficiales de Farmacéuticos, 7. BGA Asesores. pp. 241 - 284. 2008.

**Mecanismos de evasión parasitaria. Sistemas de integración y defensa en los seres vivos**

Muro A; Espinoza E; Vicente B; Pardo J; Pérez Arellano JL.

Universidad de Salamanca.pp. 257 - 269. 2000.

**Manual de Enfermedades Importadas**

Antonio Muro; Jose Luis Pérez Arellano.

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Coordinador del monográfico. 12 - 1, 2010.

Monográfico VII Congreso de la Sociedad Española de Medicina Tropical y Salud Internacional (SEM-TSI).

