Aedes aegypti (L.) survival after exposure to ivermectin

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Abstract

Ivermectin has been shown in *in vitro* studies to have insecticidal properties against *Aedes aegypti* adults. This study aimed to assess these properties *in vivo. Aedes aegypti* survival was not affected by acquiring a blood meal from humans both 5 hours and 24 hours after ingestion of a typical dose of ivermectin.

Keywords

Aedes aegypti; ivermectin; survival

INTRODUCTION

Ivermectin is a macrocyclic lactone with broad anti-parasitic activity (Campbell *et al*, 1983). It has an excellent safety profile and has been used successfully in mass drug administration programs to control the nematode *Onchocerca volvulus*, the cause of river blindness (Omura and Crump, 2004). During *in vitro* studies, ivermectin appears to have insecticidal properties against various blood-sucking insects, including *Aedes* and *Anopheles*(Tesh and Guzman, 1990; Kobylinski *et al*, 2010). In addition a study showed reduced survival of *Anopheles gambiae* mosquitoes fed on humans who had taken ivermectin (Chaccour *et al*, 2010).

The aim of the experiment was to test the hypothesis that the lifespan of *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes is shortened after taking a blood meal on humans who have taken ivermectin.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

F3 adults bred from field-caught *Aedes aegypti* screened for arboviral pathogens were used in this experiment. Two healthy volunteers were each exposed to batches of *Aedes aegypti* females 0.5 hours before (Group 1), 5 hours after (Group 2) and 24 hours (Group 3) after taking 200 μg/kg ivermectin (Merck, Darmstadt, Germany). Each batch consisted of 30 4-6

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day old mosquitoes that had been pre-starved for 24 hours prior to the exposure. Each mosquito's exposure was 5 minutes in duration.The mosquitoes that had taken a blood meal were selected and then reared in the insectary at 27±2°C and 70% relative humidity with a 12:12 photoperiod in their separate batches. The number surviving in each batch was counted each day.

RESULTS

DISCUSSION

This small study revealed that *Aedes aegypti* survival was not affected by acquiring a blood meal from humans who had recently ingested a typical dose of ivermectin. Despite the small number of participants, these findings contrast with studies that demonstrate a significant effect of ivermectin on the survival of various invertebrates (References?), and may reflect an intrinsic difference in *Aedes aegypti's* vulnerability to ivermectin compared to other invertebrates. Plasma ivermectin levels peak about 4 hours after oral administration so it might have been expected that mosquitoes that fed on the volunteers in Group 2 (5 hours after ivermectin) would have been affected (Gonzalez Canga *et al*, 2009). In fact, Lee and Eng (1994) reported that adult *Mansonia uniformis* and *Aedes togoi* fed on mice 3 days after treatment with ivermectin had a high mortality.

Crude survival observations in the artificial environment of the insectary may not reflect mosquito survival in the wild. Chaccour and colleagues (2010) noted that *Anopheles* mosquitoes exposed to ivermectin had altered coordination and an inability to fly. In the wild these features are likely to reduce the chance of survival. We did not specifically study movement behavior in the batches of *Aedes aegypti* exposed to ivermectin, but noted nothing suggestive of altered behavior.

Despite the negative findings in this small study, there is recent evidence that ivermectin can inhibit nuclear import and thus inhibit dengue viral replication. (Wagstaff *et al*, 2012). This potential antiviral property is an area that warrants further research.

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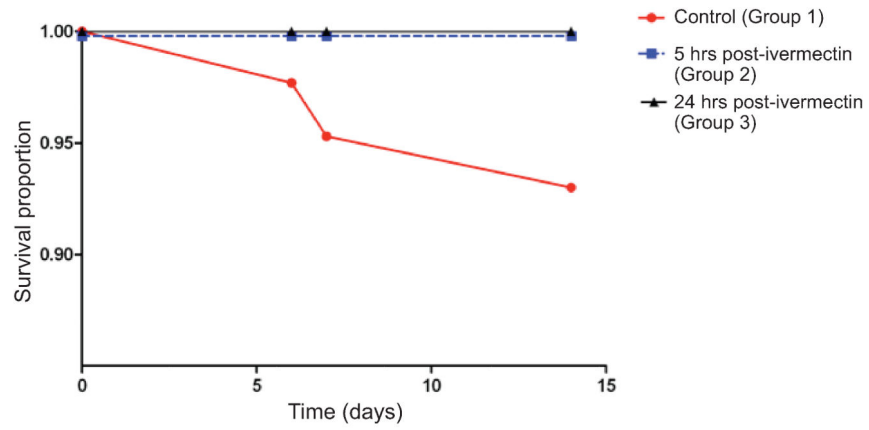
Fig 1. Survival proportions after exposure to ivermectin.
The mosquitoes in each group have been counted together (Group 1 = 43 mosquitoes; Group 2 = 54 mosquitoes; Group 3 = 37 mosquitoes).