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▶ To cite this version:

Marilisa Barranca, Simona Fontana, Simona Taverna, Giovanni Duro, Isabelle Zanella-Cleon, et al.. Proteomic analysis of pollen and allergen profiling by an immunoproteomic approach. Biotechnology Letters, 2009, 32 (4), pp.565-570. 10.1007/s10529-009-0180-5. hal-00568368

HAL Id: hal-00568368

https://hal.science/hal-00568368

Submitted on 23 Feb 2011

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Section of the journal: Plant Cell Technology

Proteomic analysis of *Parietaria judaica* pollen and allergen profiling by an immunoproteomic approach

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Abstract

Parietaria judaica pollen is one of the most common causes of airway allergic disease in the

Mediterranean area. Proteome analysis of mature Parietaria judaica pollen by two-dimensional

gel electrophoresis (2-DE) and mass spectrometry allowed to establish the first reference proteome

map of this weed. Proteins involved in a variety of cellular functions as well as the occurrence of

allergens were detected. By using 2-DE and immunoblotting with sera from Parietaria judaica

allergic patients we obtained a more detailed characterization of Parietaria judaica allergen profile

so to improve our comprehension of the pathogenesis of pollen-induced allergic reaction.

Keywords: allergens, Parietaria judaica, immunoproteome, pollen

2

Introduction

Parietaria judaica belongs to the Urticaceae family, is commonly found in urban and rural areas and its pollen is one of the main causes of allergy in the Mediterranean area (Masullo et al. 1996). Parietaria judaica pollen allergens have been identified and characterized by immunochemical and molecular-biological techniques (Amoresano et al. 2003; Stumvoll et al. 2003). Par j 1 and Par j 2 represent two major allergens belonging to a family of glycoproteins known as non-specific lipid transfer proteins (Salcedo et al. 2004). Recently, the presence of minor allergens like profilin (Par j 3) and 2-EF-hand (Par j 4) proteins have been also described (Asturias et al. 2004; Bonura et al. 2008). However, other proteins, specific isoforms or posttranslational modifications (PTM) of known allergens can contribute to hypersensitivity reactions in allergic individuals. The accurate diagnosis of hypersensitive patients as well as the in-deep knowledge of the mixtures for a effective immunotherapy depend on the molecular characterization of all allergenic components from a biological source.

Proteomic profiling of pollen extracts coupled with classical immunological approaches have been applied to examine the presence of novel allergenic components in maize, grass, and other species (González-Buitrago et al. 2007; Petersen et al. 2006). An understanding of *P. judaica* pollen proteome would provide insight in the molecular nature of allergens as well as of other proteins involved in the functional specialization of pollen. Using 2-DE followed by LC-MS/MS analyses, we generated the first reference map of the *P. judaica* mature pollen proteome. In total, we identified 70 protein spots including isoforms, and by using an immunoproteomic approach with serum from *P. judaica* allergic patients, we have obtained a more detailed characterization of *Parietaria judaica* allergen profile so to improve our comprehension of the molecular determinants of *P. judaica*-induced allergic reaction. In particular, we have evidenced that the IgE from patients recognise *Par j 1* and the *Par j 2* P2 allergens while they don't recognise the polypeptide *Par j 2* P8. These results could provide important indications to develop new and more efficient vaccines for allergic patients.

Materials and methods

Pollen collection and protein extraction

Pollen from *Parietaria judaica* was purchased from Allergon (Ängelholm, Sweden) and extracted as previously described (Alessandro et al. 2009). Briefly, the pollen grains were defatted with diethyl ether, extracted in PBS at 4°C, dialysed against water and finally lyophilised and stored at -80°C until use.

2-DE, image acquisition and analysis

Aliquots of the lyophilised proteins, $60~\mu g$ for analytical gels and $1\,m g$ for preparative gels, were solubilized in a buffer containing 8~M Urea, 4%~w/v CHAPS, 40~m M TRIS and 65~m M DTE and a trace amount of bromophenol blue.

The first dimension IEF was carried out using immobilized pH gradient (IPG) strips, pH 3-10 non linear and pH 4-9 linear, 18 cm long. The first dimension, equilibration steps and the second dimension were performed as previously described (Fontana et al. 2007).

Gels were stained with ammoniacal silver nitrate for analytical gels (Hochstrasser et al. 1988) or comassie staining for preparative gels. The gels were scanned by densitometer ImageScanner II (GE Healthcare Life Science, NJ, USA) and the ImageMaster 2D Platinum 6.0 software (GE Healthcare Life Science, NJ, USA) was used to perform the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the 2-DE maps. Human serum was used as internal standard for isoelectric point (pI) and Molecular Weight (MW) calibration of the 2-DE gel with pH 3-10 non linear gradient (Bjellqvist et al. 1993).

In-gel protein digestion

Coomassie blue or silver-stained protein spots were excised from the preparative gels and cut into 1-mm pieces. In-gel digestion was performed as described by Shevchenko et al (Shevchenko, Wilm, Vorm and Mann 1996) with minor modifications. De-staining was obtained by successive washes with 20 mM NH₄HCO₃ buffer and H₂O/CH₃CN (50/50) mixture for Coomassie blue. For proteolytic digestion, the gel was treated by 5-15 µl of a trypsin solution (20ng/ul in 50 mM NH₄HCO₃) for 5 h at 37°C. The resulting tryptic peptides were extracted from the gel by centrifugation and the supernatant fraction was recovered. A second extraction step was performed using 10-15 µl H₂O/CH₃CN/HCOOH (60/36/4; v/v/v) mixture for 30 min and, finally, all extracts were pooled. For LC-ESI/MS/MS experiments, extracts were dried in a vacuum concentrator and re-suspended in 0.1 % TFA solution.

NanoLC/nanospray/tandem mass spectrometry (LC-ESI/MS/MS)

Experiments were performed on a Q-STAR XL instrument (Applied Biosystems, Courtaboeuf, France) equipped with a nanospray source using a distal coated silica-tip emitter (FS 150-20-10-D-20, New Objective, USA) set at 2300V. Information Dependent Acquisition (IDA) mode allowed +2 to +4 charged peptide ions within a m/z 400-2000 survey scan mass range to be analyzed for subsequent fragmentation. MS/MS spectra were acquired in the m/z 65-2000 range. The collision energy was automatically set by the software (Analyst 1.0) and was related to the charge of the precursor ion. The MS and MS/MS data were recalibrated using internal reference ions from a trypsin autolysis peptide at m/z 842.510 [M+H]⁺ and m/z 421.759 [M+2H]²⁺. Deconvolution of the TOF MS spectra were done with Bayesian Peptide Reconstruct tool of Analyst. Multicharged ions in 700 to 1800 m/z range with 0.2 Da mass tolerance were used to calculate glycopeptide masses from 2000 to 4000 Da.

Tryptic peptides were separated using an Ultimate-nanoLC (Dionex, Voisins Le Bretonneux, France) with a C_{18} PepMap micro-precolumn (5µm; 100Å; 300 µm x 5 mm; Dionex) and a C_{18} PepMap nano-column (3µm; 100Å; 75 µm x 150 mm; Dionex). After a 3 min. wash with 0.05% TFA in H_2O/CH_3CN (98/2) of the injected sample solution on the micro-precolumn, the chromatographic separation was developed using a linear 60 min gradient from 0 to 50 % B, where solvent A was 0.1 % HCOOH in H_2O/CH_3CN (95/5) and solvent B was 0.08 % HCOOH in H_2O/CH_3CN (20/80) at approximately 200 nl/min flow rate.

Protein identifications were performed using the ParagonTM Algorithm thorough search mode in ProteinPilotTM software (Applied Biosystems, Courtaboeuf, France).

Patient sera

For the identification of IgE-reactive proteins, sera from patients (n = 10) sensitized to *Parietaria judaica* whose radioallergosorbent test (RAST) exhibited scores over 3, were used. Control sera were from healthy, non-allergic subjects and from subjects sensitized to other allergic sources (dust mite, Olea and Cupressus). All sera were stored at -80 °C until use.

Immunoblotting

For immunoblot analysis, 2-DE gel was transferred to nitrocellulose membrane (Hybond-ECL, Amersham Bioscience, Little Chalfont, UK) and the membrane was incubated in blocking solution (5% w/v non-fat dry milk, 20 mM Tris, 140 mM NaCl, 0.1% Tween-20) (TBST) at room temperature. After several washings in TBST buffer, the filters were incubated overnight at room

temperature with sera from allergic patients diluted 1:10 followed by horseradish peroxidase (HRP)-conjugated rabbit anti human IgE (1:2000 dilution). After washings in TBST buffer, immunocomplexes were detected by the enhanced chemiluminescence detection system (Super Signal, Pierce, Rockford, IL, USA).

Results and Discussion

Proteome map of Parietaria judaica pollen

Parietaria judaica represents the main cause of allergy in the Mediterranean area where up to 80% of pollinosis patients are sensitized against the proteins composing the *P. judaica* pollen. With the aim to obtain a comprehensive and detailed analysis of *Parietaria judaica* pollen content, we extracted total protein from 1.5 gr of mature pollen. Aliquots of the protein samples were subjected to 2-DE analysis and representative silver-stained 2D gel is shown in Fig. 1. Good reproducibility and resolution were achieved throughout the experimental procedures. On average 975 protein spots were clearly resolved using IPG strips pH 3-10 non-linear.

Protein identification

To obtain a first reference proteomic map of P.j pollen, 100 protein spots were excised from Coomassie blue stained gels and among these, 70 protein spots (corresponding to 21 different proteins) were identified by LC-MS/MS technology (Table 1; Supplementary Material). Identified proteins ranged in calculated molecular mass from 92 to 7.5 kDa and in calculated pI from 4.30 to 7.10. All proteins were designated with arbitrary spot numbers as shown in Fig. 1. While the identification of proteins by proteomics methodology has found extensive application with organisms which have a complete sequence of their genomes already available, cross species identification has been used to identify proteins from several plant species (Faulkner et al. 2005; Fernando 2005; Wang, et al 2005). In fact, in our work, due to the poor protein and DNA sequence database coverage in Parietaria judaica (only 7 proteins are present in Uni-Prot database for this plant), MS analyses allowed the recognition of 25 protein spots from P.j and 45 from other species (Table 1; Supplementary Material). Multiple spots corresponding to the same protein were also identified, as described in other proteomic studies, and reasonably corresponding to posttranslational modifications, protein degradation, different isoforms derived from different genes of a multigene family or products of alternatively spliced mRNAs. Fig. 2 shows the distribution of P.j pollen proteins according to their functional classification. Briefly, the proteins were grouped in four distinct functional classes: proteins involved in carbon metabolism and energy generation, cytoskeletal and calcium-binding proteins, stress-related proteins, pollen allergens and proteins involved in the methionine metabolism. As concerns specifically P.j allergens, we identified 11 spots (37-47) correspond to Par j 2 P2 protein, 13 spots (49-61) correspond to Par j 2 P8 protein, while 1 spot (36) corresponds to *Par j 1* P1 protein. A search of *Par j 1* and 2 protein sequence, using specific softwares supported by ExPaSy Proteomics Server evidenced both O-glycosylation sites and phosphorylation sites (http://ogpet.utep.edu/OGPET and http://www.cbs.dtu.dk/services/NetPhos).

In particular, *Par j 1* P1 protein has 1 glycosylation sites and 5 phosphorylation sites, *Par j 2* P8 protein has 5 phosphorylation sites and *Par j 2* P2 protein has 3 phosphorylation sites. These post-translational modifications do not change significantly the molecular weight of a protein but they may be responsible of the shifts in isoelectric points. At the same time, post-translational modifications might have an influence on the Ig binding so that the knowledge of the structure of allergens is important to improve diagnosis and therapy of allergy (Ferreira et al. 2006).

Identification of IgE reactive spots by 2-DE and pollen allergens

Although molecular biology and immunological methodologies have allowed the identification of Par j 1 and Par j 2 as the major pollen components responsible of allergic reaction and profilin as a minor allergen (Asturias et al.), the study of P.j pollen allergens have never been completed by using an immunoproteomic approach. Since Par j 1 and Par j 2 are basic proteins, to improve the separation of their several isoforms, the pollen protein samples were run on IPG strips 6-9 linear, whih allows a better separation of polypeptides with a pI higher than 7. Figure 3A shows a representative Coomassie-stained 2 D gels and corresponding immunoblot obtained by using pooled sera of allergic patients (Fig. 3B). In order to better characterize the biochemical identities of immunoreactive spots (Fig. 3A, #1-7) they were excised from Coomassie stained 2-DE gel and subjected to LC-ESI MS/MS. Table II in Supplementary Material shows the results of protein spot identifications. Protein spots n° 1 an 2 are isoforms of Par j 1 allergen, protein spots n° 3-5 are isoforms of Par j 2 P8 while protein spots n° 6 and 7 are isoforms of Par j 2 P2 allergen. Fig. 3B, shows a representative western blot using the pooled sera from patients. In particular, the spot indicated with arrows corresponds to Par j 1 and spot included in the square corresponds to Par j 2 P2. Control experiments, carried out with pooled sera from 10 nonsensitized subject, indicated the specificity of antibody detection (Figure 3 C). Interestingly, no reaction was ever observed against Par j 2 P8 suggesting that Par j 2 P2, together with Par j 1, are the main allergenic components present in Parietaria judaica pollen.

The data presented in our study show for the first time the identification of *Parietaria judaica* pollen allergens through bidimensional western blot thus representing satisfactory tools for immunological characterization and classification of the proteins from a raw plant extract.

Acknowledgments

M.B. was a fellow of Regional Agency for Environmental Prevention, ARPA Sicilia. This work was supported by ARPA Sicilia; Università di Palermo (International Cooperation) to R.A.; ex 60 % MURST to R.A. and to G.D.L.

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14

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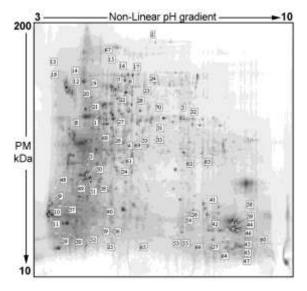
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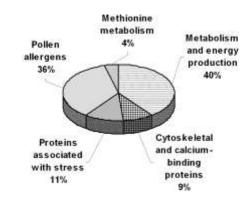
Figure Legends

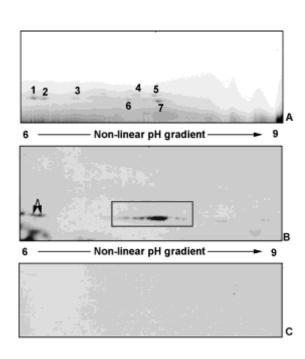
Figure 1 Representative proteomic map of *Parietaria judaica* pollen, proteins (60 μg) were loaded on IPG strips (18 cm, 3.5–10 nonlinear pH). The second dimension was performed on a vertical linear-gradient slab gel (9–16%). Gel was silver stained.

Figure 2 Pie chart representing the percentage distribution of identified pollen proteins within functional classes

Figure 3 2-DE analysis of *Parietaria judaica* pollen extract using a non linear pH 6-9 gradient in the first dimension followed by a 9-16% SDS-PAGE gradient in the second dimension. The separated proteins were stained by Coomassie (A) or transferred in to a membrane for the detection with patients sera (B) or control subjects (C). In B arrows indicate *Par j 1* polypeptides detected by patients sera while spots corresponding to *Par j 2* P2 are bordered by a square







Supplementary Table 1. Proteins identified by LC-MS/MS analysis

Supplem	Supplementary Table 1. Proteins identified by LC-MS/MS analysis										
Nr Spot (a)	Entry name	AC number (b)	Protein Name	. , , , ,		. , , , ,		Score (e)	No. of matched peptides (f)		
1	ACOC_CUCMA	P49608	Aconitate hydratase, cytoplasmic		98005	5,28	41029	80,8	5		
2	ACOC_CUCMC	Q42669	Aconitate hydratase [Fragment]		83273	5,74	91193	4,26	2		
3	ALF_SPIOL	P29356	Fructose-bisphosphate aldolase, cytoplasmic isozyme	5,96	38471	4,98	19630	5,76	4		
4	ALF_SPIOL	P29356	Fructose-bisphosphate aldolase, cytoplasmic isozyme		38471	5,55	30161	4,17	3		
5	ALF_SPIOL	P29356	Fructose-bisphosphate aldolase, cytoplasmic isozyme	5,96	38471	6,08	34151	4,01	2		
6	ATPBM_MAIZE/O RYZA	P19023	ATP synthase subunit beta, mitochondrial [Precursor]	5,19	54062	5,42	48662	10,07	5		
7	ATPBM_ORYSA/M AIZE	Q01859	ATP synthase subunit beta, mitochondrial [Precursor]	5,18	53990	5,37	49663	4,53	3		
8	BIP2 MAIZE	P24067	Luminal-binding protein 2 [Precursor]	5,07	70937	4,68	30076	3,09	3		
9	CALM1 ORYSA	Q7F8I8	Calmodulin-1	4,1	16715	4,34	13828	4,07	3		
10	CALM1 ORYSA	Q7F8I8	Calmodulin-1	4,11	16700	4,34	13001	2,74	1		
11	CALM1 ORYSA	Q7F8I8	Calmodulin-1	4,11	16716	4,34	12401	4	2		
12	CALR ORYSA	Q9SLY8	Calreticulin	4,43	45623	4,63	46341	6,55	4		
13	CALR PRUAR	Q9XF98	Calreticulin	4,38	46091	4,23	48071	5,26	4		
14	CALR PRUAR	Q9XF98	Calreticulin	4,38	46091	4,63	49663	9,3	4		
15	CH60B_ARATH	Q8L7B5	Chaperonin CPN60-like 1, mitochondrial	5,33	58351	5,17	58943	4,02	2		
16	CH60B_ARATH	Q8L7B5	Chaperonin CPN60-like 1, mitochondrial	5,33	58351	5,36	58943	4,03	2		
17	CH60B_ARATH	Q8L7B5	Chaperonin CPN60-like 1, mitochondrial	5,33	58351	5,47	59097	5,4	3		
18	ENO_ALNGL	Q43321	Enolase	5,41	47597	4,3	45208	8	4		
19	ENO_ALNGL	Q43321	Enolase	5,41	47597	5,1	48267	9,72	6		
20	ENO_ALNGL	Q43321	Enolase	5,41	47597	5,15	48267	7,22	3		
21	ENO_ALNGL	Q43321	Enolase	5,41	47597	5,37	45880	10,12	6		
22	ENO_ALNGL	Q43321	Enolase	5,41	47597	5,41	45923	13,76	6		
23	ENO_ALNGL	Q43321	Enolase	5,41	47597	5,52	46720	14,53	7		
24	ENO_ALNGL	Q43321	Enolase	5,41	47597	5,54	48464	4	2		
25	ENO1_HEVBR	Q9LEJ0	Enolase 1	5,57	47830	5,24	9050	4	2		
26	ENO1_HEVBR	Q9LEJ0	Enolase 1	5,57	47830	5,35	33107	6,7	4		
27	ENO1_HEVBR	Q9LEJ0	Enolase 1	5,57	47830	5,39	41287	6,14	5		

Supplementary table 2. Proteins identified by LC-MS/MS analysis

Nr Spot (a) Entry name		AC number (b)	Protein Name	Theoretical pI MW (Da)		ProtScore (c)	٩
1	NLT13_PARJU	Q40905	Probable non-specific lipid-transfer protein 1 (Protein P1)	7,03	10922,66	19,7	[
2	NLT13_PARJU	Q40905	Probable non-specific lipid-transfer protein 1 (Protein P1)	7,03	10922,66	13,52	
3	NLT22_PARJU	O04403	Probable non-specific lipid-transfer protein 2 (Protein P8)	8,63	11109,99	9,15	
4	NLT22_PARJU	O04403	Probable non-specific lipid-transfer protein 2 (Protein P8)	8,63	11109,99	15,2	
5	NLT22_PARJU	O04403	Probable non-specific lipid-transfer protein 2 (Protein P8)	8,63	11109,99	25,52	
6	NLT21_PARJU	P55958	Probable non-specific lipid-transfer protein 2 (Protein P2)	8,16	11345,19	10	
7	NLT21_PARJU	P55958	Probable non-specific lipid-transfer protein 2 (Protein P2)	8,16	11345,19	23,68	

⁽a) Spot number reported in the maps in Figure 3; (b) Accession number used in the SWISS-PROT database; (c) and (d) data from (peptide sequences).