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# GENOTOXICITY OF ALDEHYDE MIXTURES: PROFILE OF EXOCYCLIC DNA-ADDUCTS AS A BIOMARKER OF EXPOSURE TO TOBACCO SMOKE

Hélène ALAMIL<sup>a,b,c</sup>, Laurence GALANTI<sup>d</sup>, Natacha HEUTTE<sup>b,e</sup>, Marie VAN DER  
SCHUEREN<sup>f</sup>, Zeina DAGHER<sup>c</sup>, Mathilde LECHEVREL<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Normandie University, UNICAEN, ABTE EA4651, Caen, France

<sup>b</sup>CCC François Baclesse, UNICANCER, Caen, France

<sup>c</sup>L2GE, Microbiology-Tox/Ecotox team, Faculty of Sciences, Lebanese University, Fanar,  
Lebanon

<sup>d</sup>Tabacology Unit, CHU UCL Namur asbl, Belgium.

<sup>e</sup>Normandie University, UNIROUEN, CETAPS EA3832, Mont Saint Aignan Cedex, France.

<sup>f</sup>Tabacology Unit, Department of Addictology, CHU Caen Normandie, France.

## Corresponding Authors:

- Dr. Mathilde LECHEVREL, Normandie University, UNICAEN, ABTE EA4651,  
Caen, France. Tel +33 231 458 671, fax +33 231 455 172, email:  
mathilde.lechevrel@unicaen.fr

- Dr. Hélène ALAMIL, Normandie University, UNICAEN, ABTE EA4651, Caen,  
France. Tel +33 231 458 671, email: helen.alamil@unicaen.fr

## Abstract

Electrophilic compounds present in humans, originating from endogenous processes or pollutant exposures, pose a risk to health through their reaction with nucleophilic sites in protein and DNA. Among this chemical class, aldehydes are mainly present in indoor air and they can also be produced by endogenous lipid peroxidation arising from oxidative stress. Known to be very reactive, aldehydes have the ability to form exocyclic adducts to DNA that, for the most if not repaired correctly, are mutagenic and by consequence potential agents involved in carcinogenesis. The aim of this work was to establish profiles of exocyclic DNA adducts induced by aldehyde mixtures, which could ultimately be considered as a genotoxic marker of endogenous and environmental aldehyde exposure. Adducts were quantified by an accurate, sensitive and validated ultra high performance liquid chromatography-electrospray ionization analytical method coupled to mass spectrometry in the tandem mode (UHPLC-ESI-MS/MS). We simultaneously measured 9 exocyclic DNA adducts generated during the exposure *in vitro* of calf thymus DNA to different concentrations of each aldehyde along, as well as, to an equimolar mixture of these aldehydes. This approach has enabled us to establish dose-response relationships that allowed displaying the specific reactivity of aldehydes towards corresponding adducts formation. Profiles of these adducts determined in DNA of current smokers and nonsmokers blood samples supported these findings. These first results are encouraging to explore genotoxicity induced by aldehyde mixtures and can furthermore be used as future reference for adductomic approaches.

**Keywords:** UHPLC-ESI-MS/MS, biomarkers, adducts, tobacco smoke, oxidative stress, aldehydes.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings are chronically exposed to a variety of endogenous and exogenous compounds generated in response to various stresses (lifestyles, dietary, oxidative stress, inflammation, environmental, microbial, hormonal and genetic background) that can lead by their interactions to cellular and molecular modifications, predisposing in turn to the development of chronic disease including cancer. This “Whole-life” approach has been proposed by CP Wild and SM Rappaport under the name “exposome” to understand relationships between disease and life-time exposures to chemicals entering the body and internally produced (Wild, 2005; Rappaport and Smith, 2010). But today, the characterization of the exposome throughout the whole lifespan and the assessment of the causal linkages between chemicals exposures, both internally and environmental, and effect adverse remains an unresolved challenge.

Aldehydes are part of toxic contaminants that are ubiquitously present in the individual’s environment and can also be endogenously generated. High levels of aldehydes have already been measured in urban and industrial pollution, biomass combustion, food, household atmosphere, and cigarette smoking (IARC, 2012). In the body, these toxic products can be also produced by lipid peroxidation, inflammation, and natural/xenobiotic metabolism (Sosa *et al.*, 2013). Lipid peroxidation, which is one of the consequences of oxidative stress, remains the main process producing aldehydes. When the production of reactive oxygen species (ROS) exceeds natural antioxidant defense mechanisms, oxidative degradation of polyunsaturated fatty acids can occur, resulting in cell membrane damage and cell death. The final lipid peroxidation step is the formation of unstable hydroperoxides that in turn produce the electrophilic  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated highly reactive aldehydes, notably acrolein (Acro), crotonaldehyde (Croto), malondialdehyde (MDA), 4-hydroxy-2-nonenal (HNE), glyoxal (Gx) and methylglyoxal (MG). With formaldehyde (FA) and acetaldehyde (AA), most of them can

be found in the air with the exception of MDA and HNE that are mainly formed by the endogenous oxidative pathway and inflammation. Regarding aldehydes by airborne exposure, these products have been shown to be also capable of inducing oxidative stress through lipid peroxidation in both humans and animals (Wang *et al.*, 2013; Lima *et al.*, 2015). It is for this reason that they are considered as markers of lipid peroxidation and inflammation in certain physiopathological contexts (Voulgaridou *et al.*, 2011).

The aldehydes have cytotoxic and genotoxic properties (Forman, 2010; Tudek *et al.*, 2017). In fact, they are chemically unstable agents that possess a high electrophilic reactivity allowing them to interact directly with nucleic acids and proteins. DNA damage without efficient repair is thought to contribute to carcinogenesis through mutations, genome instability, and perturbed signaling. Several studies have reported that lipid peroxidation-derived aldehydes with their exocyclic adducts, can induce mutagenic lesions *in vitro* and in human tissues (Langouët *et al.*, 1998; Maekawa *et al.*, 2006; Chou *et al.*, 2010). The level of exocyclic DNA adducts, induced by endogenous sources under normal and pathological conditions *in vivo*, is approximately 0-20 lesions per 10<sup>8</sup> normal nucleotides (Medeiros, 2009). These levels were found to be highly variable and to be affected by lifestyle, the dietary intake of antioxidants and persistent chronic infection or inflammation (De Bont and Van Larebeke, 2004). A high consumption of fatty acids has been shown to cause an increase in propano-, etheno- and MDA-derived adducts in human leukocyte DNA in woman but not in men (Fang *et al.*, 1996; Nair *et al.*, 1997).

The reaction of  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated aldehydes with DNA bases yields cyclic-substituted propano adducts such as 1,N<sup>2</sup>-propano-2'-deoxyguanosine. Background levels of propano adducts have been detected in DNA from different rodent and human tissues (Chung *et al.*, 2000; Chen, 2011).

In the context of carcinogenetic risk exposure, the analysis of exocyclic DNA adducts may contribute to understanding the oxidative stress-related cancer process but also may be relevant as exposure/effect markers for the studies related to aldehydes exposures (Nair *et al.*, 2007).

In order to assess exposure to a carcinogenic risk and in the context of biomonitoring, the quantification of aldehydes in biological matrices is difficult because of their high reactivity and short half-lives, hence the interest in analysis of stable exocyclic DNA adducts.

Current advances are given to the adductomic approach to detect and identify DNA damage in human (Kanaly *et al.*, 2006; Carlsson and Törnqvist, 2017). Several exocyclic DNA adducts have been already identified by this strategy in human tissues (Chou *et al.*, 2010; Matsuda *et al.*, 2013; Li *et al.*, 2017). They were identified and measured by ultra high performance liquid chromatography-electrospray ionization coupled with tandem mass spectrometry (UHPLC-ESI-MS/MS) an approach that has made a great advance in detection of multiple DNA adducts simultaneously using adductomic approach. Currently researchers have been able to identify various lipid peroxidation-derived DNA adducts in human tissues and show a relationship between amounts/profile and the risk of cancer.

In our approach we opted for a pre-selection of DNA adducts induced by the aldehydes mainly present in tobacco smoke and those induced endogenously by lipid peroxidation. All the aldehydes presented in table 1 can induce a set of potentially mutagenic exocyclic DNA adducts (Maekawa *et al.*, 2006; Nair *et al.*, 2007). Thus, our recently validated UHPLC-ESI-MS/MS method aimed for the simultaneous detection and quantification of 9 selected exocyclic DNA adducts (Alamil *et al.*, 2020). Our analytical strategy was designed to establish exocyclic DNA adducts profiles for smokers and nonsmokers in a preliminary study following comparison to the variations of expression of this profile in the context of an


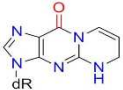

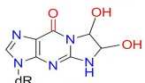
exposure *in vitro* to a single aldehyde or an equimolar mixture of aldehydes known to be produced by lipid peroxidation.


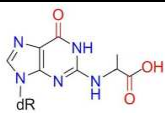
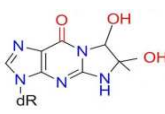

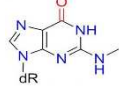

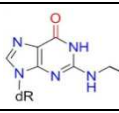
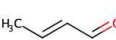


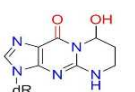
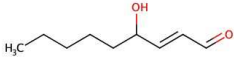
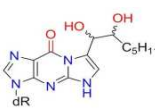
## 2. EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

### 2.1. Chemicals and Solutions

Acrolein, crotonaldehyde, acetaldehyde, formaldehyde (37% in water), glyoxal solution (40% in water), pyruvaldehyde solution (40% in water), 4-hydroxynonenal-dimethyl acetal (HNE-DMA), 1,1,3,3-tetraethoxypropane, sodium cyanoborohydride ( $\text{NaBH}_3\text{CN}$ ) and calf thymus DNA were all purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (Steinheim, Germany). Potassium phosphate monobasic ( $\text{KH}_2\text{PO}_4$ ) was procured from Fluka (Steinheim, Germany). The DNA extraction kit Nucleobond<sup>®</sup> CB 100 was purchased from Macherey-Nagel (Duren, Germany). All solvents were HPLC MS grade obtained from VWR (Kelsterbach, Germany). 4-hydroxy-2-noneal solution was prepared from HNE-DMA following the instructions of the supplier company (Sigma-Aldrich). Malondialdehyde solution was obtained by hydrolysis of 1,1,3,3-tetraethoxypropane. DNA calibration standards and quality control samples were spiked as described in our previous work (Alamil *et al.*, 2020) with nine stable adducts standards: AcroG, CrotodG, reduced AAdG, reduced FAdG, reduced MDAdG, HNEdG, GxdG, CEdG and cMGdG (structures represented in table 1) and, their isotopically labeled homologues prepared by reaction of each aldehyde with 2'-Deoxyguanosine (dG) and [ $^{13}\text{C}_{10}$ ,  $^{15}\text{N}_5$ ] dG.

**Table 1:** Structures and names of 8 aldehydes and their corresponding adducts

Aldehyde	Aldehyde structure	Adduct	Adduct structure*
Malondialdehyde (MDA)		Reduced MDAdG	
Glyoxal (Gx)		GxdG	

Methylglyoxal (MG)		CEdG	
		cMGdG	
Formaldehyde (FA)		Reduced FAdG	
Acetaldehyde (AA)		Reduced AAdG	
Crotonaldehyde (Croto)		CrotodG	
Acrolein (Acro)		AcrodG	
4-hydroxy-2-nonenal (HNE)		HNEdG	

\*dR: deoxyribose

## 2.2.Human Samples

Human blood samples, from five smokers before smoking cessation and five non-smokers, were obtained from Tabacology Unit at CHU UCL Namur asbl, Belgium. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the ethical committee of CHU UCL Namur Godinne (NUB: B039201316167). Venous blood was collected in a BD Vacutainer® spray-coated K<sub>2</sub>EDTA tube. Immediately after collection, the tubes were placed and then stored at -80° C until the DNA was extracted using Macherey-Nagel kit (Macherey-Nagel, Nucleobond® CB 100). Along with the blood samples, four tobacco smoking-related markers were collected as follows: number of cigarettes/day, delay of the last cigarette smoked, measurement of CO level in exhaled air by electrochemistry (Smokerlyser Micro+, SineFuma, Breda, The Netherlands), and urinary cotinine concentration measured by UHPLC with a photodiode array detector (Waters Acquity UPLC H-Class system, Waters Association) and a data



acquisition and processing module (Empower 2 Software, Waters Association, Milford, MA, USA).

### 2.3. Treatment of Calf Thymus DNA with Aldehydes

In 600  $\mu$ L Eppendorf<sup>®</sup> tubes, calf thymus DNA (ctDNA, 1 mg/mL) was modified by reaction with different concentrations ranging from 0.005 to 1 mM of each aldehyde in phosphate buffer (PB) at 37 °C for 24h under constant stirring. The different experimental conditions chosen according to previous studies are described in table 2. Similarly, ctDNA (1 mg/mL) was also incubated with an equimolar mixture (1 mM) of the 8 aldehydes in 25 mM PB (pH 7). The modified DNA was precipitated by adding sodium chloride (5 M) and cold ethanol then centrifuging at 10000 rpm for 10 min at 4 °C. The DNA was washed with 70% ethanol and centrifuged once again. Following the supernatant discarding, the pellet was evaporated to dryness on Speedvac<sup>®</sup>.

**Table 2:** Different conditions of adducts induced by *in vitro* exposure of ctDNA to aldehydes

Aldehyde	Aldehyde concentrations (mM)	PB concentration and pH	References
Acro	0.005; 0.05; 0.5; 1	25 mM, pH 7	Kawai <i>et al.</i> , 2003
Croto	0.005; 0.05; 0.5; 1	25 mM, pH 7	Chung <i>et al.</i> , 1989; Budiawan <i>et al.</i> , 2000
AA	0.005; 0.05; 0.5; 1	25 mM, pH 7	Wang <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2009
FA	0.005; 0.05; 0.5; 1	25 mM, pH 7	Arif <i>et al.</i> , 2006
MDA	0.005; 0.01; 0.05; 0.1; 0.5; 1	100 mM, pH 4.3	Vaca <i>et al.</i> , 1992
HNE	0.005; 0.05; 0.5; 1	25 mM, pH 7	Douki and Ames, 1994

Gx	0.005; 0.05; 0.5; 1	100 mM, pH 7	Kasai <i>et al.</i> , 1998; Olsen <i>et al.</i> , 2005
MG	0.005; 0.05; 0.5; 1	50 mM, pH 9.5	Dennehy and Loeppky, 2005; Shuck <i>et al.</i> , 2018

## 2.4. Adducts Analysis by Liquid Chromatography Tandem Mass

### Spectrometry

DNA extracted from 10 human blood samples and ctDNA modified by the aldehydes taken separately or in a mixture were treated then analyzed on UHPLC-ESI-MS/MS as described in our previous work (Alamil *et al.*, 2020). Briefly, the DNA was dissolved in adjusted volume of ultrapure water to obtain a final concentration of 1 mg/mL, reduced by addition of NaBH<sub>3</sub>CN then, enzymatically hydrolyzed in the presence of isotopically labeled internal standards. Following hydrolysis, modified nucleosides and samples were analyzed on UHPLC-ESI-MS/MS according to our recently developed and validated method. The analytical column used for analytes separation was a reversed phase Acquity C<sub>18</sub> UPLC<sup>®</sup> HSS C<sub>18</sub> SB 1.0 x 150 mm, 1.8 µm (Waters, Ireland). The separation system interfaces with a triple quadrupole MS (LCMS–8030Plus, Shimadzu). The electrospray ionization source (ESI) was set in the positive ion mode and mass spectrometer parameters were the same as described in our previous study. MRM mode was carried out to detect and quantify adducts. The amount of each DNA adduct was quantified according to a matrix-matched calibration curve obtained by plotting peak area ratio of each analyte to its corresponding labeled IS versus standard concentrations.

The level of DNA adducts was calculated using the following formula (Li *et al.*, 2017):

$$\text{Relative adduct level} = \frac{(\text{DNA adduct Concentration} / \text{MW of DNA adduct})}{(\text{DNA Concentration} / \text{mean MW of bases})}$$

The results obtained were multiplied by  $10^7$  and the levels of adducts were expressed in adducts per  $10^7$  normal nucleotides.

## **2.5. Statistical Data Analysis for Human Blood DNA**

Statistical evaluation of human blood DNA data was performed using Student t-test or Wilcoxon test (SAS software version 9.4) for comparison between adducts levels in smokers and nonsmokers DNA. The level of statistical significance was  $p < 0.05$ . Pearson and Spearman correlations were used for establishing correlations between adducts levels and the tobacco smoking-related markers.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

One strategy to address identification of smokers who have higher cancer risk is to establish and validate smoking-related biomarkers associated with tobacco exposure and cancer risk. The aim of this work is to assess profiles of exocyclic DNA adducts induced by aldehyde mixtures which could ultimately be considered as genotoxic markers of aldehydes exposure from tobacco smoke as well as endogenous sources. We applied our previously developed UHPLC-ESI-MS/MS method (Alamil *et al.*, 2020) to detect and quantify profiles of exocyclic DNA adducts in ctDNA modified by aldehydes *in vitro*, as well as in genomic DNA isolated from smokers and nonsmokers blood samples.

### **3.1. Analysis of ctDNA treated with single aldehyde**

UHPLC-MS/MS analysis of untreated ctDNA revealed the presence of a basal level of adducts induced by Acro, AA, FA and HNE. Therefore, levels of AcroG, HNEdG, as well as both reduced AAdG and FAdG, could only be measured starting at incubation concentrations of 0.05 mM. Whereas, for the other aldehydes (Croto, MDA, Gx and MG), the increase in the level of induced adducts was noticed from the incubation concentration of 0.005 mM.

210 *In vitro* treatment of ctDNA with different concentrations of aldehydes (0.005 to 1 mM) for  
211 24h in phosphate buffer maintained at 37 °C gave rise to linear dose-response curves for the  
212 formation of their stable adducts (*Supplementary Data* figures 1-9). The concentrations were  
213 chosen taking into account the physiological concentrations already reported in humans.

214 For HNE, mainly produced endogenously, it was found at concentrations about 0.05-0.15 µM  
215 physiologically in many tissues as well as in serum (Esterbauer *et al.*, 1991). In many  
216 pathological situations and close to the lipid peroxidation sites, its concentration can be  
217 greatly increased to more than 100 µM (Smathers *et al.*, 2012). In the literature, it is often  
218 mentioned that at these concentrations the risk of adduction to DNA - the promutagenic  
219 activity of HNE - is more frequent (Dalleau *et al.*, 2013).

220 The endogenous concentration of FA in the human blood of unexposed subjects was reported  
221 around 0.1 mM (IARC, 2006). In our study, this concentration showed the formation of  
222 adducts during the reaction of ctDNA with the FA. Likewise, the AA concentration measured  
223 in the whole blood of four normal fasting human subjects (IARC, 1985) stood at 1.30 µM. In  
224 our *in vitro* approach, we could not reach such a low concentration, since our experimental  
225 conditions did not allow it. Other authors have attempted to measure levels of reduced AAdG,  
226 by a LC-MS/MS system equipped with an online column switching valve, after reaction of  
227 ctDNA with 0.001 to 100 mM of AA. They observed a similar linear response only starting at  
228 0.5 mM of AA thus, less sensitivity comparing to our method (Singh *et al.*, 2009).

229 Regarding Gx and MG adducts, the results are consistent with previous studies that showed  
230 ascending dose-response for adducts formation after treatment of 1 mg/mL of ctDNA with  
231 rising concentrations up to 100 mM of Gx and MG for 15h (Dennehy and Loeppky, 2005;  
232 Thornalley *et al.*, 2010).

233 In the literature, MDA-induced adduct was rather studied in its unreduced form M<sub>1</sub>dG than  
234 the reduced form. We verified that the reduction does not influence the type of response. In

fact, we had the same type of curve with or without reduction (data not shown). MDA was found at concentrations of  $3.42 \pm 0.94 \mu\text{M}$  in the men's serum and  $3.10 \pm 0.62 \mu\text{M}$  in the women's serum (IARC, 1985). Even if these concentrations are slightly lower than the MDA concentrations studied in our cell-free model, they remain very close.

These first results allowed us to show that our experimental conditions maintain a good sensitivity which is likely to detect low levels of endogenously induced adducts. Thus, these findings enable us to study exocyclic adducts which were formed *in vitro* at levels close to those detected in human tissues at physiological and toxic conditions. Even if, overall, an increase in the genotoxic burden of these products is observed with ascending concentrations, the type of aldehyde and the exposure conditions (aldehyde concentration, incubation time...) remain the parameters which strongly influence the adducts levels.

### 3.2.Effect of aldehyde mixtures on the formation of ctDNA-adducts

The effect of aldehyde mixtures on the formation of dG-adducts was further investigated at an equimolar concentration of 1 mM. Mostly and as expected, the concentrations of the adducts formed by the equimolar mixture prepared at 1 mM, were either much lower than those induced by each aldehyde taken separately or even absent (*Supplementary Data* table 1). This finding could be explained by an inhibitory effect of DNA adduction when the aldehydes are mixed. We suggest that the aldehydes reacted with each other to form a new product with weaker or even absent electrophilicity towards DNA, or on the contrary, an electrophilic activity deported to other bases of DNA which were not sought in our study. Aldehydes have also been shown to be able to bind covalently with adenine, cytosine and thymine (Kawai *et al.*, 2003; Fu *et al.*, 2014). The absence of FA-induced dG adducts *in vitro* can be justified by the fact that the FA is more likely to form cross-links when it is incubated with ctDNA in the presence of AA (Cheng *et al.*, 2003; Yu *et al.*, 2015). Likewise, the very low concentration of reduced MDAdG tends to suggest strong competition between aldehydes towards dG.

260 Esterbauer *et al.* (1991) reported a decrease in the reactivity of MDA compared to  $\alpha,\beta$ -  
261 unsaturated aldehydes under physiological conditions. In parallel, a reaction between  
262 aldehydes might be possible to form other adducts, not studied in our approach (Nielsen and  
263 Houlihan, 1968; Voulgaridou *et al.*, 2011).

264 These first results *in vitro* reveal that the aldehyde mixture in liquid medium preserves an  
265 electrophilic reactivity towards DNA and in particular dG. This means that in a biological  
266 matrix, such as blood or other tissues, if these products are not degraded, they can interact  
267 with each other, but also directly with other macromolecules present in the cell, especially the  
268 human genomic DNA. The next step was to explore the genotoxic potential of aldehydes in  
269 DNA extracted from the blood of few individuals that were exposed to aldehydes in a  
270 mixture: smokers were chosen. It is well-known that the cigarette smoke contains a majority  
271 of these aldehydes in mixture and that itself can induce DNA damage.

### 3.3. Analysis of Human Blood DNA

The levels of adducts detected in human blood DNA samples from smokers and nonsmokers are shown in tables 3 and 4, respectively.

**Table 3:** Tobacco smoking-related markers and adducts levels in smokers blood DNA per  $10^7$  normal nucleotides with the standard deviations for  $n = 3$

Human blood DNA sample no.	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Sex	M	F	M	F	M
Age	40	42	61	55	40
Smoking status	smoker	smoker	smoker	smoker	smoker
Number of cig/day	20	15	25	30	13
Timing from last cig smoked (h)	2	1	3	2.5	2.25
CO (ppm)	11	19	12	16	32
Cotinine/ Creatinine	1202.53	2686.98	487.18	3003.04	2314.56
AcrodG	2.68 ± 0.54	6.90 ± 1.02	4.79 ± 0.48	4.13 ± 0.99	11.36 ± 3.33
CrotodG	48.71 ± 3.35	47.51 ± 7.38	47.97 ± 2.58	76.90 ± 2.29	39.33 ± 5.66
Reduced AAdG	3.94 ± 0.44	5.96 ± 1.51	19.75 ± 7.01	11.30 ± 0.68	9.15 ± 1.43
Reduced FAdG	12.66 ± 0.53	21.06 ± 2.78	12.60 ± 2.64	25.25 ± 1.55	17.42 ± 2.56
Reduced MDAdG	7.38 ± 1.54	10.61 ± 3.09	25.26 ± 7.87	26.21 ± 2.87	12.98 ± 2.09
HNEdG	1.24 ± 0.21	1.43 ± 0.01	n.q.	1.73 ± 0.23	1.08 ± 0.07
GxdG	108.13 ± 17.53	163.78 ± 15.64	83.55 ± 3.21	224.25 ± 16.41	345.42 ± 22.20
CEdG	148.56 ± 18.93	194.00 ± 17.84	88.47 ± 4.92	254.76 ± 26.32	127.86 ± 33.73
cMGdG	501.12 ± 47.68	506.27 ± 80.32	381.23 ± 41.76	649.19 ± 43.40	547.32 ± 52.85

n.q. not quantifiable

279 **Table 4:** Adducts levels in nonsmokers blood DNA per  $10^7$  normal nucleotides and the standard  
280 deviations for n = 3

Human blood DNA sample no.	NS1	NS2	NS3	NS4	NS5
Sex	M	F	F	M	F
Age	29	38	53	32	54
Smoking status	nonsmoker	nonsmoker	nonsmoker	nonsmoker	nonsmoker
AcrodG	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
CrotodG	n.d.	4.12 $\pm$ 2.24	3.18 $\pm$ 1.86	n.d.	1.10 $\pm$ 0.15
Reduced AAdG	1.80 $\pm$ 1.10	n.d.	n.d.	7.00 $\pm$ 3.07	n.d.
Reduced FAdG	3.32 $\pm$ 0.80	n.d.	n.d.	4.86 $\pm$ 2.95	n.d.
Reduced MDAdG	12.34 $\pm$ 1.05	17.30 $\pm$ 4.51	13.91 $\pm$ 2.64	18.40 $\pm$ 5.83	4.58 $\pm$ 0.91
HNEdG	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.q.	n.q.
GxdG	n.q.	n.q.	n.d.	n.q.	n.d.
CEdG	66.63 $\pm$ 12.15	n.q.	138.16 $\pm$ 37.81	n.d.	39.91 $\pm$ 7.10
cMGdG	472.35 $\pm$ 182.70	85.41 $\pm$ 22.06	55.78 $\pm$ 22.19	n.d.	25.61 $\pm$ 11.22

281 n.d. not detectable / n.q. not quantifiable

282 For the first time, we were able to detect simultaneously 9 adducts in all DNA samples except  
283 for AcrodG which was absent in non-smokers DNA. When the quantification was possible,  
284 significant differences were noticed in adduct mean levels between smokers and non-smokers  
285 with the exception of reduced MDAdG as shown in table 5. The average level of reduced  
286 MDAdG was just slightly higher in smokers DNA ( $16.49 \pm 4.34$  adducts per  $10^7$  normal  
287 nucleotides) comparing to its average level in nonsmokers DNA ( $13.31 \pm 2.73$  adducts per  $10^7$   
288 normal nucleotides). This is consistent with previous studies which have reported no



significant relationship with smoking, but rather with factors such as diet, lifestyle and chronic inflammation (Everett *et al.*, 2001; Leuratti *et al.*, 2002). The average level of AcroG for all DNA samples from smokers was  $5.97 \pm 1.69$  adducts per  $10^7$  normal nucleotides. Whereas, this adduct was neither quantifiable nor detectable in the 5 DNA samples of nonsmokers. This difference in AcroG levels was statistically significant between smokers and nonsmokers ( $p = 0.0079$ ). The mean CrotodG level of all smokers DNA samples ( $52.08 \pm 7.19$  adducts per  $10^7$  normal nucleotides) was significantly higher than that found in nonsmokers DNA ( $2.8 \pm 0.77$  adducts per  $10^7$  normal nucleotides) with  $p = 0.0079$ . Similarly, the averages levels of both reduced AAdG and FAdG were significantly increased in smokers DNA ( $p = 0.0238$  and  $0.0079$ , respectively).

**Table 5:** The mean of adducts levels in smokers and nonsmokers DNA per  $10^7$  normal nucleotides

	Means of adducts levels per 10 <sup>7</sup> normal nucleotides in				<i>p</i> value
	5 smokers		5 nonsmokers		
AcrodG	5.97	± 1.69	n.d.		0.0079
CrotodG	52.08	± 7.19	2.80	± 0.77	0.0079
Reduced AAdG	10.02	± 3.07	4.40	± 1.84	0.0238
Reduced FAdG	17.80	± 2.74	4.09	± 0.54	0.0079
Reduced MDAdG	16.49	± 4.34	13.31	± 2.73	> 0.05
HNEdG	1.37	± 0.14	n.q.		0.0052
GxdG	185.03	± 52.40	n.q.		0.0196
CEdG	162.73	± 31.99	81.57	± 25.40	0.0184
cMGdG	517.03	± 48.21	159.79	± 104.90	0.0159

n.d. not detectable / n.q. not quantifiable

However Gx-induced DNA adduct, just like HNEdG, was not quantifiable in non-smokers DNA, making the difference statistically significant ( $p = 0.0196$  and  $0.0052$  for GxdG and HNEdG, respectively). Concerning MG-induced adducts, CEdG and cMGdG were the most abundant in all samples. The calculated averages of MG-induced adducts in smokers DNA

306 were significantly higher than those found in non-smokers DNA samples ( $p = 0.0184$  and  
307  $0.0159$  for CEdG and cMGdG, respectively).

308 The major findings of this study were marked by a significant difference in the profiles of  
309 exocyclic adducts of DNA extracted from the blood cells of smoking and non-smoking  
310 subjects. This increase strongly suggests the contribution of genotoxic effect of aldehydes,  
311 which are certainly partly released by tobacco. In fact, tobacco smoke consists of solid  
312 particles and toxic mixture of more than 7000 chemicals and compounds that cause immediate  
313 damage to the body. The compounds reach the lungs quickly every time smokers inhale the  
314 smoke and the blood carries toxicants to different organs. Volatile organic compounds  
315 (VOCs) contain mainly the aldehydes that are targeted in our study. The latter aldehydes were  
316 found at much higher levels than polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and nitrosamines  
317 (Carmella *et al.*, 2009; Sampson *et al.*, 2014). The literature reports that these aldehydes  
318 damage DNA by reaction with the exocyclic amino group of bases in various animal and  
319 human tissues. By this mechanism, they can cause the formation of promutagenic lesions  
320 rising the risk of developing cancer (for review, Voulgaridou *et al.*, 2011; Sapkota and Wyatt,  
321 2015; Hecht, 2017). In mice, recent obtained data suggested that damages caused by FA, AA,  
322 Croto and Acro in the lung and bladder may be preponderant than those induced by other  
323 smoke carcinogens (Weng *et al.*, 2018). In fact, the authors' hypothesis was based on the  
324 mechanisms referring to cellular events that initiate tumor development. They focused on the  
325 presence of exocyclic DNA adducts in these tissues coupled to the study of inhibitions of  
326 DNA repair and metabolic activation of other tobacco procarcinogens such as PAHs. Also,  
327 many studies have observed different variations between smokers and non-smokers adducts  
328 levels in various tissues. DNA exocyclic adducts induced by  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated aldehydes have  
329 already been detected at significantly high levels in bronchoalveolar cells as well as in  
330 bronchial and pulmonary epithelia of smokers (Hecht *et al.*, 2016). In other studies, these

adducts were also detected in the lung tissue, but without significant differences between the subjects exposed or not to tobacco smoke (Singh *et al.*, 2009; Weng *et al.*, 2018). Yet, these studies have a lack of data concerning the smoking status for each individual. In smoking exposure conditions, the levels of reduced FA-derived DNA adduct were detected by LC-ESI-MS/MS, in human smoker saliva samples at the average levels of  $99.6 \pm 75.7$  adducts per  $10^7$  normal nucleotides (Li *et al.*, 2017). These levels are much higher than those measured in smoker leukocytes in our study ( $17.80 \pm 2.74$  per  $10^7$  normal nucleotides), this can be due to the fact that in respiratory tracts, the buccal cell is the first cell line that is exposed to cigarette smoke, followed by bronchial epithelial cell and macrophage in the lung. In another study with the same analytical method, CrotodG was detected in saliva smokers samples ( $n = 16$ ) at  $26 \pm 21$  adduct per  $10^7$  normal nucleotides (Yang *et al.*, 2019). Weng *et al.* (2018) detected, by an immunochemical approach, CrotodG in human buccal cells ( $p < 0.0001$ ) and sputum ( $p < 0.05$ ) at significantly higher levels in smokers ( $n = 33$  and  $n = 22$ , respectively) comparing to nonsmokers ( $n = 17$  and  $n = 8$ , respectively). Concerning adducts derived from Acro, these authors obtained also a significant increase in smokers comparing to nonsmokers samples, both in saliva ( $p < 0.0001$ ) and in sputum ( $p = 0.0093$ ). Similarly, in our study, the levels of CrotodG and AcrodG obtained in blood cells are significantly higher in smokers than nonsmokers. However, other studies detected AcrodG in saliva and in human leukocytes DNA without significant variation between the subjects exposed or not to tobacco smoke (Zhang *et al.*, 2011; Li *et al.*, 2017). To explain this contradiction, we suggest that parameters such as the delay of last cigarette smoked, the duration and the intensity of exposure before sampling should be always considered. In our study, smokers were exposed to tobacco few hours before sampling as indicated by the smoking-related markers: the cigarette intake before the consultation within short time period ( $2.15 \pm 0.74$ h), and the measure of CO ( $18.00 \pm 8.46$  ppm) in exhaled air, an immediate and non-invasive method., along with the number of daily-

consumed cigarettes and the concentration of cotinine, the main metabolite of nicotine in the urine (Hecht, 2003; Deveci *et al.*, 2004; Kim, 2016). Our results provided cotinine levels in smoker urines that are maintained below 100 µg/g of creatinine (cutoff between smoker and non-smoker) with a median cotinine concentrations of 2315 µg/g of creatinine (Goniewicz *et al.*, 2011; Paci *et al.*, 2018). This biomarker can be related to the number of cigarettes that remains elevated for each smoke user (median 20 cig./day, 13 - 30 cig./day). Taking into consideration the number of daily consumed cigarettes and estimating the compounds amounts already found in tobacco smoke condensates provided by IARC, smokers in our study are certainly exposed to high concentrations ranging from µg to mg of aldehydes including FA, AA, Croto and Acro (IARC, 1986). It is worth noting that dietary or environmental exposures can contribute a little to the body burden of these biomarkers (Paci *et al.*, 2018).

No significant relationship between a specific smoking-related marker and levels of all aldehydes-induced DNA adducts was observed among smokers in our study. However, even if it is misleading to establish a relationship between an exocyclic DNA adduct and one marker of active smoking exposure, preliminary correlations were observed between consumed cigarettes number and CrotoG levels ( $r = 0.9000$ ,  $p = 0.0374$ ) and between urinary cotinine concentrations and each of the following adducts: reduced FAdG ( $r = 0.93053$ ,  $p = 0.0218$ ), HNEdG ( $r = 0.9000$ ,  $p = 0.0374$ ), CEEdG ( $r = 0.9000$ ,  $p = 0.0374$ ) and cMGdG ( $r = 0.9000$ ,  $p = 0.0374$ ). The CO level correlated with GxdG ( $r = 0.92904$ ,  $p = 0.0224$ ) and AcroG ( $r = 0.96560$ ,  $p = 0.0076$ ). Reduced AAdG correlated with the delay from the last cigarette smoked ( $r = 0.9000$ ,  $p = 0.0374$ ). These correlations must be considered with much caution for several reasons: *i*) data are available for a small population impairing the power test that was too low *ii*) kinetic clearance parameters of each adduct are unknown for the most samples and, *iii*) the epidemiologic data concerning diet and endogenous oxidative stress are

unknown and consequently interactions between all agents are not integrated. The fact that we don't have a significant relationship to all tobacco-related biomarkers tends to rule out that one biomarker is not sufficient. The availability of a pattern of exposure biomarkers would be necessary to integrate a set of simultaneous exposures.

It is well known that excessive intake of dietary sugars might interfere with lipid metabolism (Aragno and Mastrocola, 2017). Glycation is initiated by a nucleophilic addition reaction between the free amino group from a protein, lipid or nucleic acid and the carbonyl group of monosaccharides (Aragno and Mastrocola, 2017). Notably, in animals, the metabolic outcomes of a caloric restriction were attenuated by the diet enrichment with MG, demonstrating that dietary advanced glycation end products (AGEs) can induce oxidative stress (Cai *et al.*, 2008). GxdG significantly differed between current and non-smokers. Gx and MG levels were observed in plasma of diabetic (Lapolla *et al.*, 2003). It is well-known that nicotine influences the metabolism of glucose by enhancing the production of cortisol that is a hyperglycemic hormone, in blood (Tweed *et al.*, 2012). Smoking is a risk factor for diabetes of type 2. The high level of GxdG might be indirectly related with the hyperglycemic activity of tobacco nicotine.

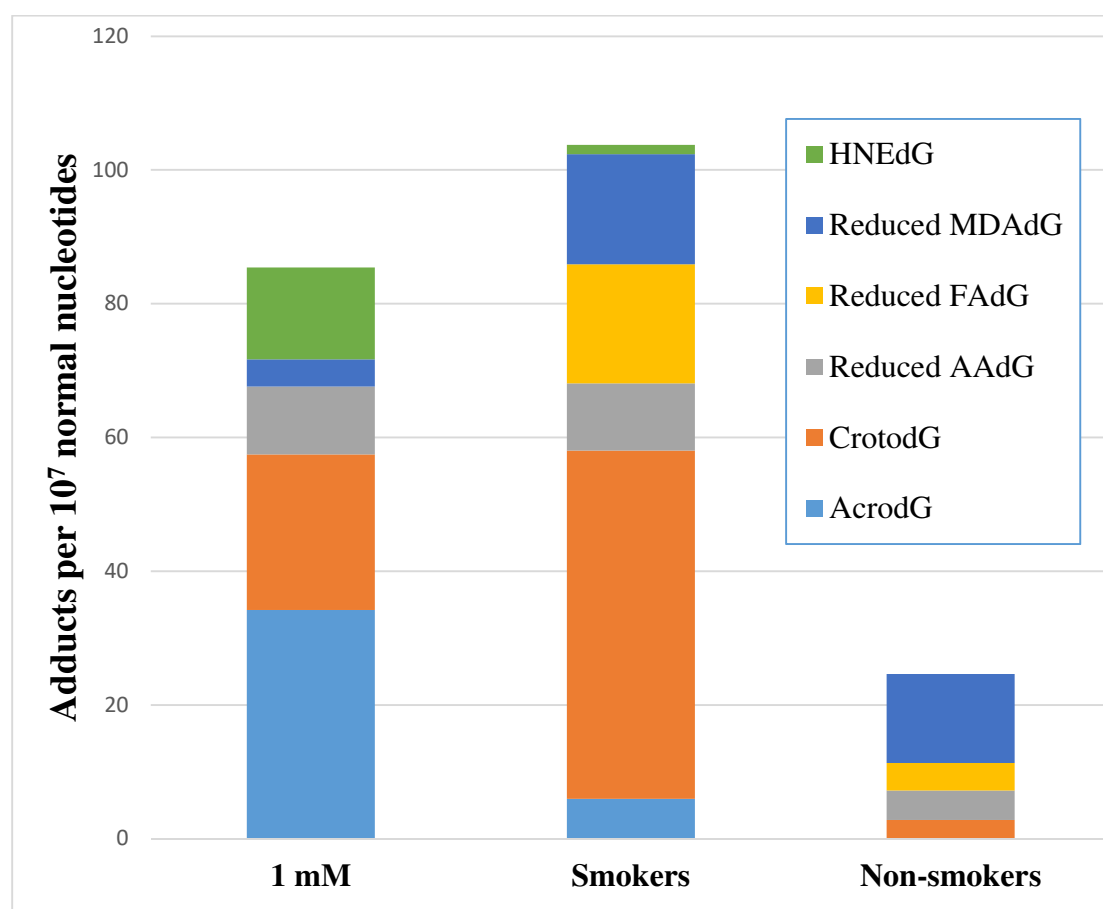
The low number of samples of this approach greatly limited this analysis. To improve the statistical power, it would be necessary to continue this study on larger cohorts with a detailed analysis of biological samples in connection with clinical data and tobacco smoke-related markers.

### **3.4.Comparison between the profiles obtained *in vitro* and in human**

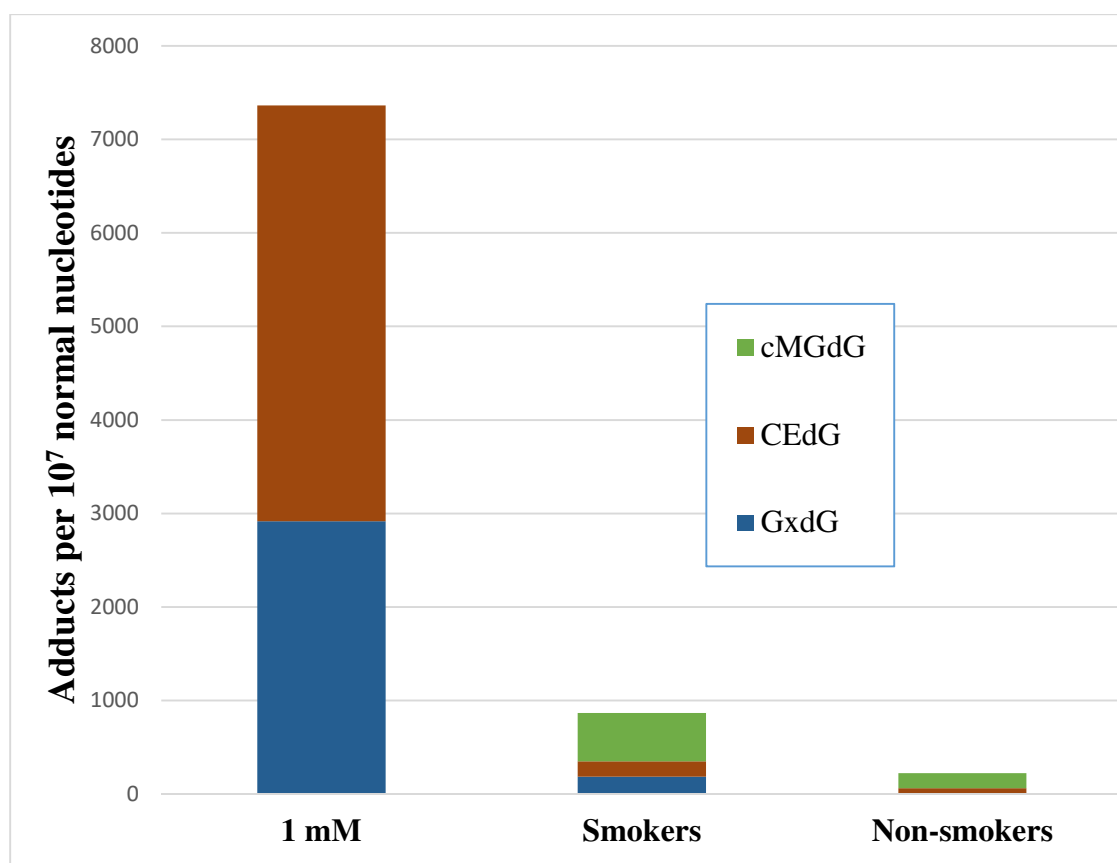
#### **DNA**

We compared the adducts profiles in the 2 groups, smokers and non-smokers, to those obtained after exposure of ctDNA to the equimolar mixture of aldehydes at 1 mM (Figure 1). GxdG and CEdG were presented separately from the others because of their relatively high

levels (Figure 2). In terms of reactivity, we observed that all the adducts induced by aldehydes were found in the modified ctDNA and in the human samples at different levels except for cMGdG and reduced FAdG absent *in vitro*. Knowing that 1 mM remains a toxicologically relevant concentration, the comparison between the 3 profiles shows that current smokers have been exposed to relatively high levels of aldehydes and therefore, unlike non-smokers, they are exposed to genotoxic and potentially carcinogenic risks.



**Figure 1:** Comparison of the average levels of 6 adducts in the blood DNA of the 5 smokers and 5 non-smokers with those obtained following the exposure of ctDNA in equimolar mixture (1 mM) of aldehydes



**Figure 2:** Comparison of the average levels of 3 adducts in the blood DNA of the 5 smokers and 5 non-smokers with those obtained following the exposure of ctDNA in equimolar mixture (1 mM) of aldehydes

The human system is a dynamic microenvironment in which aldehydes can react with proteins or other biological molecules. The content of 9 DNA adducts represents the sum of their formation and repair in the lifespan of white blood cells of several days. This means that the distribution of any induced-adduct in human reflects a DNA profile which is unique to each individual and consequently, completely different from a profile obtained in an acellular assay. The general descending order of carbonyl compounds in tobacco smoke is: AA (1110 - 2101  $\mu\text{g/cig}$ ) > Acro (238 - 468  $\mu\text{g/cig}$ ) > FA (87 - 243  $\mu\text{g/cig}$ ) > Croto (40 - 50  $\mu\text{g/cig}$ ) > MDA (18.9 - 36  $\mu\text{g/cig}$ ), MG (13.4 - 59.6  $\mu\text{g/cig}$ ) > Gx (1.93 - 6.98  $\mu\text{g/cig}$ ) (Fujioka and Shibamoto, 2006). With regard to the main aldehydes present in cigarette smoke, Acro and Croto, we found that contrarily to our *in vitro* results, CrotodG prevailed mostly over all of the

433 others in the smokers DNA. In the context of chronic exposure to both humans and animals,  
434 previous studies reported that adducts induced by Acro predominate. Weng *et al.* (2018)  
435 observed that adducts induced by Acro are predominant compared to those induced by Croto  
436 in the lungs of mice. The *TP53* tumor suppressor gene is frequently mutated in smokers' lung  
437 tumors. Feng *et al.* (2006) showed *in vitro* that the distribution of AcrodG on the *TP53* gene  
438 was similar to that described in human lung tumors. To explain our diverging results of  
439 AcrodG from those of other studies, we suggest that the electrophilicity of Acro has shifted to  
440 other bases of DNA, which may explain the low levels of AcrodG. In fact, adducts of Acro to  
441 dA and dC have already been found both in the A549 cell line and in human leukocytes, some  
442 of which may be present at levels comparable to those of the predominant AcrodG (Yin *et al.*,  
443 2013). Another explanation to consider in modifications of exocyclic DNA adducts may be  
444 the exposure of smokers to additional factors and sources of aldehydes such as exposure to air  
445 pollutants, diet, oxidative stress, disease status and occupational exposures.

446 Otherwise, earlier evidence indicates the involvement of antioxidant factors and DNA damage  
447 repair mechanisms in eukaryotic cells, particularly NER and BER, which are absent in  
448 acellular models. This greatly contributes to the formation of adducts (Minko *et al.*, 2009;  
449 Tudek *et al.*, 2017; Bukowska and Karwowski, 2018). HNEdG remained at low levels in  
450 human samples, whether smokers or not. A frequently advanced explanation in the literature  
451 is that HNE is highly toxic to the cell. It is extremely reactive, mainly towards plasma proteins  
452 with which it can bind covalently, especially if it is not consumed first by the reaction with  
453 cytosolic glutathione (GSH). Under these conditions, there are few HNE molecules that reach  
454 the nucleus, which may explain the little damage caused to DNA (Xie *et al.*, 2016). In the  
455 same way, the relatively high levels of both reduced AAdG and FAdG could be due to the  
456 proportion of the corresponding aldehydes in tobacco smoke but also to the low reactivity of  
457 AA with cytosolic GSH and proteins and to moderate FA cytotoxicity. This low reactivity



with cytoplasmic elements allows them to diffuse in the nucleus, inducing substantial damage to DNA (Xie *et al.*, 2016).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, our acellular model based on analysis of multiple DNA exocyclic adducts induced *in vitro* represents relatively a simple method of choice to assess and compare genotoxic potentials of aldehyde mixtures. For the first time, we were able to detect simultaneously 9 exocyclic adducts in human DNA leukocytes with significant differences noticed in all adducts levels between smokers and non-smokers. Due to the weak sampling level, these findings must be confirmed on a larger cohort. It will be important to consolidate the use of these profiles of exocyclic DNA adducts as specific biomarkers of systemic exposure to aldehydes present in various environments.

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