

Metabolic, cellular and defense responses to single and co-exposure to carbamazepine and methylmercury in Dreissena polymorpha

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22 Abstract

Carbamazepine (CBZ) and Hg are widespread and persistent micropollutants in aquatic 23 24 environments. Both pollutants are known to trigger similar toxicity mechanisms, e.g. reactive oxygen 25 species (ROS) production. Here, their effects were assessed in the zebra mussel Dreissena polymorpha, frequently used as a freshwater model in ecotoxicology and biomonitoring. Single and 26 27 co-exposures to CBZ (3.9 μ g·L⁻¹) and MeHg (280 ng·L⁻¹) were performed for 1 and 7 days. Metabolomics analyses evidenced that the co-exposure was the most disturbing after 7 days, 28 29 reducing the amount of 25 metabolites involved in protein synthesis, energy metabolism, antioxidant 30 response and osmoregulation, and significantly altering cells and organelles' structure supporting a 31 reduction of functions of gills and digestive glands. CBZ alone after 7 days decreased the amount of 32 α -aminobutyric acid and had a moderate effect on the structure of mitochondria in digestive glands. 33 MeHg alone had no effect on mussels' metabolome, but caused a significant alteration of cells and organelles' structure in gills and digestive glands. Single exposures and the co-exposure increased 34 35 antioxidant responses vs control in gills and digestive glands, without resulting in lipid peroxidation, 36 suggesting an increased ROS production caused by both pollutants. Data globally supported that a 37 higher number of hyperactive cells compensated cellular alterations in the digestive gland of mussels 38 exposed to CBZ or MeHg alone, while CBZ+MeHg co-exposure overwhelmed this compensation after 39 7 days. Those effects were unpredictable based on cellular responses to CBZ and MeHg alone, 40 highlighting the need to consider molecular toxicity pathways for a better anticipation of effects of 41 pollutants in biota in complex environmental conditions.

42 Keywords: bioaccumulation, bivalve, cellular compensation, oxidative stress, toxicity pathways

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46 Introduction

47 Biomonitoring of freshwater ecosystems is useful to anticipate harmful effects of pollutants in aquatic biota. A current aim in stress biology is to combine endpoints at different levels of biological 48 49 organization, molecular to individual, to gain a better vision of molecular toxicity pathways in the frame of the adverse outcome pathway theory (Brinke, 2017). This strategy also allows identifying 50 51 early-warning responses, useful to anticipate undesired impacts on biota and mitigate pollutant 52 effects. In the future, these tools could help avoid long and costly processes of remediation and as 53 such will benefit a wide community. In this context, representative biota that is found widely in ecosystems are of special interest. The zebra mussel Dreissena polymorpha (Pallas, 1771) was 54 55 identified as an interesting non-model species for freshwaters due to its abundance, its wide distribution, its sessile lifestyle and its filtering activity, which favors bioaccumulation of 56 57 contaminants (Binelli et al., 2015; Louis et al., 2019; Prud'homme et al., 2020; Hani et al., 2021). 58 Nonetheless, the physiology of *D. polymorpha* remains poorly known yet, limiting its efficient use in 59 biomonitoring and ecotoxicology. A research priority is to gain a better understanding of the 60 molecular toxicity pathways of pollutants in this promising model to improve the analysis of its responses in complex exposure scenarios and in situ. 61

62 The antiepileptic drug carbamazepine (CBZ) is a personal and pharmaceutical care product (PPCP). CBZ is widely found in aquatic ecosystems due to its high consumption and poor elimination 63 by wastewater treatment plants (Celiz et al., 2009; Clara et al., 2004). CBZ was measured from <1 64 $ng \cdot L^{-1}$ to 10 $\mu g \cdot L^{-1}$ in freshwaters (Sacher et al., 2001; Miao et al., 2005; Metcalfe et al., 2009; Calisto 65 66 et al., 2011), and concentrations are expected to increase due to its persistence and high human 67 consumption (Oldenkamp et al., 2019). At the European level, no legislation for CBZ in the aquatic environment is established yet, but an environmental quality standard (EQS) of 0.5 μ g·L⁻¹ was 68 recommended (Kase, 2010; ETOX, 2011; Moermond, 2014). In bivalves, CBZ triggers oxidative stress, 69 70 defense responses, but also an alteration of the energy metabolism, genotoxicity and reprotoxicity 71 (Martin-Diaz et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; Aguirre-Martínez et al., 2015; Almeida et al., 2015; 72 Brandts et al., 2018; Magniez et al., 2018; Franzellitti et al., 2019). However, the precise molecular 73 toxicity targets of CBZ remain unknown.

Hg is a persistent and widespread pollutant in aquatic ecosystems. This metal is considered as a priority pollutant in Europe (Directive 2008/105/EC) and by the Minamata international convention (Reg. EC 1881/2006). In Europe, the current EQS for Hg is 70 ng·L⁻¹. In aquatic ecosystems, methylmercury (MeHg) is biomagnified in food chains (Kershaw and Hall, 2019) and shows a lower depuration than inorganic mercury (IHg) in biota (Beauvais-Flück et al., 2017; Metian et al., 2020). In 79 bivalves, IHg causes oxidative stress, defense responses, alteration of the energy metabolism, 80 disturbances of protein translation and genotoxicity (Franzellitti and Fabbri, 2006; Liu et al., 2011a, 81 2011b; Navarro et al., 2011, 2012; Pytharopoulou et al., 2013; Jaumot et al., 2015; Velez et al., 2016; 82 Coppola et al., 2017). Previous studies suggest that MeHg has different molecular toxicity pathways than IHg in biota, highlighting the need of assessing its impact in more detail for a better anticipation 83 of risks it poses to ecosystems (Beauvais-Flück et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2020). Nonetheless, few 84 85 studies focused on MeHg toxicity in bivalves (Gagnaire et al., 2004; Franzellitti and Fabbri, 2006; 86 Parisi et al., 2021).

87 Scarce studies assessed toxic effects of co-exposure to ubiquitous pollutants, such as metals and 88 organic pollutants (e.g. Almeida et al., 2018). CBZ and MeHg were selected here, because they are 89 likely to be co-present in aquatic ecosystems (Andreu et al., 2016). Because CBZ and MeHg trigger 90 similar cellular toxicity pathways, we hypothesized that their co-exposure would cause higher effects than single exposures. Here, metabolomic was analyzed in whole soft tissues to assess the 91 92 phenotype at the individual level in D. polymorpha. In gills and digestive glands, histological and 93 cytological analyses were performed, and lipid peroxidation, antioxidant and defense responses 94 measured. The digestive gland is the organ where pollutants accumulate in higher concentrations, 95 while gills are the most exposed organs to the environment. These two tissues are therefore highly 96 relevant for the analysis of early cellular and molecular effects (Cardoso et al., 2013; Faggio et al., 97 2018). As such, this study aimed at answering the following questions: (i) which molecular toxicity 98 pathways were induced by CBZ and MeHg? (ii) Does the co-exposure to CBZ and MeHg causes more 99 effects than single exposures? (iii) Is there a link between observed effects and the bioaccumulation?

100

101 Materials and methods

102 Exposures

103 Individuals of Dreissena polymorpha were collected in the Der Lake (France; 48°36'22.02"N, 104 4°46'34.0"E) in October 2019, transported to the laboratory, cleaned, selected by size (22-28 mm) 105 and kept in water continuously aerated (82% O_2) at the field temperature (14°C). Individuals were 106 depurated for 7 days in 6 L of spring water (Cristaline Aurèle, table A1). For acclimation and to allow 107 byssal fixation, 40 individuals per aquarium were transferred to 8 aquaria containing 3 L of spring 108 water during 7 supplemental days. Animals were fed twice a week with a mixture of 50% Chlorella 109 vulgaris and 50% Scenedesmus spp. using 2 million algae cells day⁻¹ individual⁻¹ and water was 110 renewed 24 h after feeding. Histological analysis of gonads showed a post-spawning pattern (Figure A1). Four exposures were conducted in 2 aquaria each: (1) control, (2) CBZ ($3.9\pm0.6 \ \mu g \cdot L^{-1}$), (3) MeHg 111

(280±20 ng·L⁻¹) and (4) co-exposure. Effective concentrations for CBZ and MeHg corresponded to 8x
German EQS for CBZ (ETOX, 2011) and 4x European EQS for Hg (Directive 2008/105/EC).
Temperature and feeding were identical to those during acclimation, but water was renewed daily.
At D1, 2.50±1.02% of mussels died in the four aquaria, while 1.25±1.25% died at D7 in the four other
aquaria. No significant differences were observed between exposures, thus mortality appeared
negligible and unrelated to exposures.

118 For each exposure condition, mussels were sampled in one aquarium after 1 day (D1) and in 119 the other aquarium after 7 days (D7). To mimic an active biomonitoring strategy (Louis et al., 2020), 120 Individuals were elected as a replicate unit (Vaux et al., 2012) because of a high biological variability in this species (Pain Devin et al., 2014). This method ensured each individual had identical exposure 121 122 conditions, hence limiting the impact of physiological and environmental conditions on toxicological 123 effects and responses due to the pollutant (e.g. Louis et al., 2019). For bioaccumulation, whole soft 124 tissues of nine animals were deshelled, rinsed with spring water and frozen at -80°C. For 125 metabolomics, eight intact mussels were snap-frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at -20°C. Histo-126 and cytological analyses were performed on three to nine animals sampled at D7. For gene expression and biochemical analyses, digestive glands and gills of eight mussels were dissected, snap-127 128 frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at -80°C. Water aliquots (10 mL) were filtered (0.45 μm) 129 immediately after the daily water renewal. First day samples were analyzed for the 1-day-long 130 exposures, and other samples taken daily were pooled to analyze the average concentration of 7-131 day-long exposures. Water samples were frozen at -20°C for CBZ and acidified to 0.5% HCl and kept 132 at 4°C for MeHg. Temperature, pH, conductivity, oxygen concentration, and nitrate, nitrite, 133 ammonium concentrations were measured in a 40 mL aliquot before the daily water renewal with a 134 multimeter and by spectrophotometry following Permachem protocol, respectively.

135

136 CBZ and MeHg analysis

137 Water aliquots were enriched 10x through centrifugal vacuum evaporation at 37°C using a 138 Genevac HT Series (SP Scientific). The CBZ concentration in water was quantified using a High-139 Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) system (Agilent technologies, 1260 Infinity), consisting 140 of a quaternary pump and a photodiode array detector. A mobile phase containing acetonitrile (A), 141 and ultra-pure water (ALPHA Q 18.2 $M\Omega \cdot cm^{-1}$) with 0.1% orthophosphoric acid (B), was used to elute the analytes (20 μ L injection volume) on a reverse-phase Agilent Pursuit XRs 5 C₁₈ column (5 142 µmx250x3 mm) at 20°C. The elution was carried out at a flow rate of 0.80 mL·min⁻¹ with a gradient 143 144 from 35/65% to 100/0% (v/v) A/B, and CBZ was detected at 214 nm.

145 The CBZ concentration in mussels was measured in freeze-dried and ground tissues, 146 resuspended in 10 mL acetonitrile, 200 µL n-heptane and 2.5 mL ammonium acetate (0.4 M). After 147 centrifugation (1620 g 10 min), the supernatant was recovered, concentrated by a nitrogen flux evaporation at 40 °C and resuspended in 95% ultrapure water, 5% methanol and 0.1% formic acid 148 149 (eluent A). Samples of 10 µL were injected and analyzed by ultra-performance liquid-chromatography tandem mass spectrometry UPLC MS/MS (Acquity UPLC® Xevo TQ-MS system, Waters). A total 150 running time of 15 min at 0.4 mL·min⁻¹ was performed with a gradient of 8 min 95% eluent A and 5% 151 152 eluent B (95% methanol, 5% ultrapure water and 0.1% formic acid), 4 min 5% eluent A and 95% 153 eluent B, 3 min 95% eluent A and 5% eluent B. The CBZ concentration in mussels was determined using a standard curve of 0.5, 1, 2, 3, 6 and 12 ng mL⁻¹ CBZ, and by adding an internal standard of 154 deuterated CBZ at 50 ng mL⁻¹. The CBZ recovery of pretreatment method was determined at 79±8% 155 (n = 3). The analytical quality was verified by analyzing blanks. LOD of 6.8 μ g kg⁻¹ dw was calculated. 156

157 MeHg concentration in water aliquots and mussels were analyzed by MERX-M (Brooks Rand 158 Instruments). Mussel whole soft tissues were freeze-dried, ground and digested in 30% v/v HNO₃ at 159 60°C for 12h prior MeHg analysis. MeHg concentration in mussels was determined using a standard 160 curve of 0.5, 1, 2, 10, 50, 250, 500 and 1000 pg MeHg. The analytical quality was verified by analyzing 161 certified reference material (DORM-4; NRC – CNRC) and blanks. MeHg recovery was determined at 162 $100\pm12\%$ (n = 3), and LOD of 0.016 ng MeHg was calculated.

163

164 Targeted metabolomics

165 Whole individuals were freeze-dried, shells were removed, and soft tissues were weighed, 166 and homogenized into a 900 μ L mixture of methanol/chloroform (2/1, v/v). The samples were kept at 167 -20°C overnight before adding 600 µL of ultrapure water. The samples were vortexed and centrifuged 168 at 4000 g (10 min 4 °C). The upper phase was collected and kept at -20°C until analyzed. Aliquots of 169 120 μL (>90 mg dw), 180 μL (50-90 mg dw) or 220 μL (<50 mg dw) were vacuum-dried at 32°C, 170 resuspended in 30 µL of methoxyamine hydrochloride (25 mg·L⁻¹) in pyridine and shook at 40°C for 171 60 min. Then, 30 µL of N-methyl-N-(trimethylsilyl) trifluoroacetamide was added. After 60 min 172 incubation at 40°C, 1 µL of the sample was injected into the GC/MS as described by Thiébaut et al. 173 (2021). After data acquisition, the chromatograms were deconvoluted and analyzed with 174 MassHunter (MS Quantitative Analysis, Quant-My-Way, Agilent). Standard samples, containing 62 175 reference compounds at 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 750, 1000, and 1500 μ M allowed the 176 quantification of 31 metabolites by quadratic calibration (tables A2, A3 and A4), including sugars, 177 amino acids, polyols, organic acids. This approach allowed covering the main metabolic pathways.

178

179 Histology and cytology

180 For histopathology, gonads, gills and digestive glands were fixed in Bouin's aqueous solution for 24 h immediately after dissection at D7. Dehydration was performed by successive 181 182 alcohol baths from 50 to 100°, and samples were placed in butanol for at least 24 h to permeate all 183 tissues. Samples were impregnated with hot paraffin and embedded by cooling (Paris-Palacios et al., 184 2000, 2003). Sections (5 μ m) were obtained from a Leica microtome, stained with nuclear fast red (NR) and picro-indigo-carmin (PIC) and mounted on glass slides for light microscopy. Gender and 185 186 gonadic reproductive stage of mussels were determined according to Louis et al. (2020). Three 187 sections of each mussel were observed for the assessment of the frequency and the intensity of potential pathologies resulting from exposures (adapted from Jaffal et al., 2015 and Jacquin et al., 188 189 2019) and scored (table A5). A global score of histological perturbations was calculated as the 190 median value of all scores. Mussels presenting parasite(s) weren't analyzed.

191 For cytology, a piece of the digestive gland was sampled from three mussels for each 192 exposure at D7, immediately cryofixed with an EM ICE High pressure freeze (LEICA) and stored in 193 liquid nitrogen. Then, 100 nm thick cryosections were freeze-dried, observed with an electronic 194 microscope (JEM - 2100F; JEOL) and image capture were performed with a Digital Micrograph GMS3 195 (GATAN). The sensitivity of this system allows observations without any contrasting product. 196 Mitochondria in cells of digestive glands were counted and classified into different categories (figure 197 A2). Endoplasmic reticula were also analyzed, and a score was determined based on the frequency 198 and severity of alterations.

199

200 Gene expression level

201 RNA was extracted with TRI Reagent following Euromedex protocol. Reverse transcription 202 was performed at 42°C for 1 h followed by 3 min at 95°C using the verso cDNA synthesis kit on 400 ng 203 RNA with oligodT primers according to the Thermo Scientific protocol. Quantitative polymerisation 204 chain reactions (gPCR) were performed with the Absolute Blue gPCR SYBR Green kit (Thermo 205 Scientific) on 3 μ L of 1/10 dilution of cDNA reaction, using a CFX96 automaton (BioRad), 15 min at 206 95°C, followed by 40 cycles of 10 sec at 95°C and 45 sec at 60°C. Relative gene expression levels of 207 catalase (cat), glutathione-s-transferase (gst), superoxide dismutase (sod) and metallothionein (mt; table A6) were calculated following the $2^{-\Delta\Delta Ct}$ method, using actin (act) and ribosomal protein S3 (ps3) 208 209 as reference genes (Schmittgen and Livak, 2008).

210

211 Enzyme activities and lipid peroxidation

Each individual was weighed, ground (8/1 v/w) in 50 mM phosphate buffer pH 7.4, 1 mM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride and 1 mM L-serine borate as protease inhibitors. After 15 min at 3000 g (4 °C), the supernatant (= homogenate) was collected and kept at -80°C.

215 The automated spectrophotometer Gallery (Thermo Scientific) served for the determination 216 of protein concentration, GST activity (Garaud et al., 2016) and lipid hydroperoxide (LOOH) 217 concentration resulting from lipid peroxidation (Arab and Steghens 2004). Protein concentration to 218 normalize enzyme activities was measured at 600 nm after 5 min in 1/7 (v/v) of the homogenate by colorimetric method of red pyrogallol, with bovine serum sCal (66.7 µg·L⁻¹) for calibration and protein 219 220 reagents U/CSF from the manufacturer, diluted 50 to 200x (Thermo Scientific). GST activity was 221 measured at 340 nm for 4 min in 1/40 (v/v) of the homogenate by colorimetric method with 0.9 mM 222 1-chloro-2,4-dinitrobenzene, 1 mM reduced glutathione in 0.1 M phosphate buffer pH 6.5. LOOH was 223 measured at 620 nm after 30 min in 1/46 (v/v) of the homogenate with 139 mM Fe II D-gluconate 224 dihydrate, 240 mM orange xylenol in an acidic solution (H₂SO₄ 40 mM, glycerol 1.37 M, formic acid 225 20 mM and NaCl 0.9%), using a calibration curve from tert-butyl hydroperoxide at 0.125, 0.25, 0.5, 1, 226 2, 4, 8 and 16 µM.

227 CAT activity (Beer and Sizer 1952) was measured in the linear range of the reaction at 240 228 nm for 120 sec in 1/100 (v/v) of the homogenate by a spectrophotometer (Cary 50, Agilent) with 14 229 mM hydrogen peroxide in 50 mM phosphate buffer pH 7.4, using a calibration curve from purified 230 bovine serum CAT at 1.25, 2.5, 5, 10, 15 and 20 U·mL⁻¹.

SOD activity (Paoletti et al., 1986) was measured in the linear range of the reaction after 20 min in darkness, at 340 nm for 30 min in 1/85 (v/v) of the homogenate by a spectrophotometer (Spark 10M, TECAN) with 0.1 M EDTA, 0.05 M MnCl₂, 10 mM β -mercaptoethanol, 7.5 mM NADH in 50 mM phosphate buffer pH 7.4. Concentrations were determined using a calibration curve from purified bovine serum SOD at 0.125, 0.25, 0.35, 0.5 and 0.7 U·mL⁻¹.

236

237 Data interpretation and statistical analysis

Data were presented as mean±standard error of the mean (SEM). Homoscedasticity and normality of values, and/or residuals, were verified by Bartlett's tests and Kolmogorov-Smirnov's 240 tests in Rstudio software (v 4.0.3.; α =5%). Student tests *vs* control were applied if these criteria were 241 met, while Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney tests *vs* control were applied if not (α =5%).

For metabolomics data, p-values obtained from Student or Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney tests were corrected through positive false discovery rate (pFDR) procedure (Storey and Tibshirani 2003; Storey 2015) using *cp4p* package. Metabolites were considered as significantly different when pvalue was <0.05 and fold change (FC) values >1.5 *vs* respective control. Metabolites significantly modified were analyzed in Metaboanalyst (<u>http://www.metaboanalyst.ca</u>) with the KEGG database (October 2019). Heat maps were constructed in Genesis (Sturn et al., 2002) comparing log₂transformed FC normalized by control.

The bioaccumulation factor (BAF; L·kg⁻¹) was calculated dividing pollutant concentration in mussels by effective concentration of the pollutant in water. To describe responses, the term synergism, neutral and antagonism were used when the response was higher, similar or lower for the co-exposure than the sum of the individual responses, respectively.

253

254 Results

255 Water parameters

256 Concentrations of CBZ $(3.9\pm0.6 \ \mu g \cdot L^{-1})$ and MeHg $(280\pm20 \ ng \cdot L^{-1})$ were stable among 257 exposures (n = 4). Physico-chemical parameters measured from water samples were also stable and 258 similar among exposures: pH 8.41±0.02, conductivity 530±30 μ S·cm⁻¹, oxygen saturation 78.1±0.4% 259 O₂, nitrate 9.7±0.6 mg·L⁻¹, nitrite 0.10±0.01 mg·L⁻¹, ammonium 0.19±0.03 mg·L⁻¹ and temperature 260 13.7±0.1°C (figure A3). As water physico-chemical parameters were similar among exposures from 261 D1 to D7, all the observed responses could be attributed to the impact of pollutants.

262

263 CBZ and MeHg bioaccumulation

CBZ bioaccumulation (figure 1) was similar between single and co-exposures both at D1 and D7, showing a BAF of 35±1. Compared to the control mussels, MeHg concentration increased 12x at D1 and 63x at D7 in MeHg single exposure, resulting in a BAF of 755 and 3973, respectively. In coexposure, MeHg bioaccumulation increased 23x at D1 and 109x at D7 *vs* controls, resulting in a BAF of 1471 and 6973, respectively, but showing no statistical difference with single exposure. As such responses were neutral for bioaccumulation and data highlighted a 20-40x and 100-200x higher BAF of MeHg than CBZ in mussel tissues at D1 and D7, respectively. No bioaccumulation of the other pollutant was measured in single exposures. MeHg concentration in controls reached 0.017±0.003
 mg·kg⁻¹ confirming clean exposure conditions.

273

274 Targeted metabolomics

275 Metabolites characterized *D. polymorpha* phenotype at the individual level (Figure 2, table 276 A2 and A3). Only the co-exposure at D7 significantly impacted the metabolome resulting in the 277 decrease of 25 metabolites, involved in 16 metabolic pathways of amino acids, energy metabolism 278 and antioxidant responses (table 1). CBZ exposure at D7 decreased 2.2x the concentration of α -279 aminobutyric acid, involved in cysteine and methionine metabolism. MeHg single exposure and all D1 280 exposures didn't modulate metabolites significantly. Synergism was observed for metabolomics at D7 281 when comparing co-exposure with single exposures and were congruent with the higher bioaccumulation observed at D7 vs D1 for MeHg, while CBZ bioaccumulation was similar. 282

283

284 Histology and cytology

285 To further understand metabolomic observations at D7, we compared histopathology of gills 286 and digestive glands, because of their direct exposure to the media and detoxifying role in bivalves, 287 respectively (table 2; figures 3 and A4). Exposure to MeHg and the co-exposure caused a high degree 288 of gill fibrosis, deformation, and alteration: 25 to 50% of the gills respiratory surface was altered. 289 Besides, 20 to 40% of digestive tubules showed numerous fibrosis and cell alterations, such as 290 picnotic nucleus, in progress and terminal lysis or necrosis. Because of involution and atresia, 10 to 291 20% of digestive tubules appeared non-functional. In these exposures, the infiltration of immune 292 cells and an accumulation of liquid in the tissue evoked edema inflammatory process. As such, 293 alterations observed in gills and digestive glands likely resulted in a reduction of function of those 294 organs. For comparison, control and CBZ caused few alterations in gills and no significant alteration 295 in digestive glands. Responses were neutral for histopathology when comparing the co-exposure 296 with single exposures. Histopathology was congruent with metabolomics for the co-exposure and 297 CBZ exposure, but not for MeHg exposure, as MeHg had significant cellular effects unreflected in 298 metabolomics.

In line with histopathology data, cytology in digestive glands pointed MeHg exposure and coexposure to result in most cells having high grades of alterations, while other cells presented an ultrastructure evoking high metabolic capacity (figures 3 and A4). These cells presented a higher amount of reticulum and mitochondria than healthy cells from control mussels, a large well 303 conformed nucleus and nucleolus and no alteration of organelles or membranes, thus these cells 304 were qualified as "hyperactive" cells. The altered cell type presented few and deformed reticulum, 305 mitochondria and nuclei likely related to a low metabolic capacity. More in detail, mitochondrial 306 alterations significantly increased vs control with mitochondrial bodies, cristae malformation or 307 break, inner and outer membrane impairment. Moreover, reticulum cisternae were largely dilated. A 308 reduction of the amount of cisterna and some breaks and dispersion were also observed (figures 3 309 and A2). Erosion of cilia, and modification of membrane form or thickness in cytoplasmic and nuclear 310 regions was sometimes observed. Exposure to CBZ also resulted in two types of digestive cells: 311 hyperactive and altered cells as described above. The amount of altered type cells in CBZ-exposed 312 mussels varied highly among areas of the digestive gland and among individuals masking any obvious trend. Few cells also appeared hyperactive with important alterations, *i.e.* presenting both types. In 313 314 control, 83% of digestive cells showed ultra-structural patterns typical from healthy cells, *i.e.* without 315 pathology. Only 10±4% non-functional mitochondria and a large amount of well-conformed 316 reticulum cisterns were observed. Responses were neutral for cytology when comparing the co-317 exposure with single exposures. Cytology was congruent with histopathology for the co-exposure 318 and MeHg exposure, but not for CBZ exposure. These observations together with metabolomics 319 suggested that hyperactive cells efficiently compensated altered cells in MeHg and CBZ exposures, 320 resulting in an unimpacted metabolome in single exposures, but a modified metabolome in the co-321 exposure.

322

323 Oxidative stress and defences

324 Because both CBZ and MeHg are expected to trigger ROS production, we analyzed oxidative 325 stress and defense endpoints (figure 4). At the transcript level, CBZ significantly upregulated 1.7 and 326 1.9x mt gene in gills and digestive glands respectively at D1, and 1.8x sod gene in gills at D7, while it 327 increased 1.4x CAT activity in digestive glands at D7. MeHg significantly upregulated 1.8x cat at D1 328 and 2x sod at D7 in gills and increased 1.6x and 1.2x SOD activity in gills and digestive glands 329 respectively at D7. Co-exposure also upregulated 2x mt expression in digestive glands at D1 and increased 1.5x SOD activity and 1.5x CAT activity in gills at D7. GST activity or LOOH concentration 330 331 wasn't significantly modified here. Data suggested a ROS production by CBZ and MeHg in gills and the 332 digestive gland, suggesting an antagonism on these endpoints in the co-exposure, except for mt gene 333 expression and SOD activity that were neutral. Effects globally suggested different responses in 334 organs depending on the pollutant and no obvious correlation with bioaccumulation.

336 Discussion

337 CBZ exposure

338 Data here suggested that CBZ alone triggered a low stress level. At D7, cytology of digestive 339 glands revealed (i) the occurrence of cells defined as "hyperactives", with ultrastructure typically 340 linked to an increased metabolism (e.g. higher amount of endoplasmic reticulum, mitochondria and 341 nucleus size higher than control), and (ii) the occurrence of other cells with cytological features of a 342 reduced metabolism and an important rate of alterations (e.g. broken cristae in mitochondria, 343 abnormal nucleus). Concomitantly few damages were observed at the tissue level by histopathology. 344 The link between the ultrastructure of cells and its functions was fully demonstrated by others in 345 most types of cells (Segner and Braunbeck, 1990, 1998; Biagianti-Risbourg, 1997). Ultrastructural perturbations were recognized as a biomarker of interest in ecotoxicology (Segner and Braunbeck, 346 347 1990, 1998; Biagianti-Risbourg, 1997). Few studies focused on structure and ultrastructure of cells in 348 bivalves, and to our knowledge no studies investigated CBZ effect at the cytological level (Au et al., 349 2004). A juxtaposition of cells showing important alterations, and cells showing indications of 350 increased activity (forming a mosaic), was also reported in the liver of fish exposed to copper and 351 procymidone (Paris-Palacios et al., 2000; Paris-Palacios et al., 2003). Authors suggested a 352 compensation of damaged cells by "hyperactive" cells (Paris-Palacios et al., 2000; Paris-Palacios et al., 353 2003). Similarly, here, damages observed in altered cells appeared efficiently compensated by the 354 increased metabolic activity of the "hyperactive" cells. Consequently, the metabolome was efficiently 355 maintained, except for the significant decrease of α -aminobutyric acid amount at D7. In Daphnia magna exposed 48h to 1.75 to 14 mg·L⁻¹ CBZ, a significant decrease by 3 to 15% of alanine, glycine, 356 357 leucine, proline, serine and tryptophan concentrations, suggested an increase of protein biosynthesis and amino acid metabolism (Kovacevic et al., 2016). In the same line, in 96h post-fertilization larvae 358 of *Danio rerio*, 24h exposure to 3.54 μ g·L⁻¹ CBZ mainly reduced amino acids (Huang et al., 2016). 359 360 Nonetheless, studies were performed at high CBZ concentrations for the former, and for the latter in 361 juveniles who are more sensitive than adults (Huang et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2017), limiting a direct 362 comparison with our experimental conditions. Besides, here CAT activity increased in digestive glands 363 at D7, without lipid peroxidation, supporting that cellular defenses copped well ROS production by CBZ. For comparison, in Scrobicularia plana, a 96h exposure to 3 µg·L⁻¹ CBZ reduced CAT and SOD 364 365 activities 1.5x in soft tissues, and increased 1.3x lipid peroxidation (Freitas et al., 2015), suggesting 366 that D. polymorpha might be more tolerant than S. plana thanks to an efficient defense response. In 367 the same line, here the mt gene was upregulated in gills and digestive glands at D1. MT is mainly 368 known for its role in metal detoxification but was also described as a ROS scavenger and suspected to 369 have an anti-apoptotic function (Takahashi, 2012). MT content increased 10x in liver of fish Rutilus 370 *rutilus* exposed 4 days to 200 μ g·L⁻¹ of the fungicide procymidone (Paris-Palacios et al., 2003). As 371 such, MT might be involved in tolerance against ROS in *D. polymorpha* in our experimental 372 conditions.

373

374 MeHg exposure

375 Here, MeHg exposure, similarly to CBZ exposure, resulted in cellular damages without impact on the metabolome, supporting that D. polymorpha could cope with this stress level thanks to an 376 377 efficient defense response. Indeed, no metabolite was modulated, while numerous necrosis, altered 378 cells and degenerative alterations in gills and digestive glands such as ciliary erosion, cell necrosis and 379 tissue malformations were observed. The inflammation by Hg was previously reported in bivalves in 380 several histopathological studies (Bigas et al., 2006; Cappello et al., 2013; Chalghmi et al., 2016; do Amaral et al., 2019). It is considered as nonspecific consequences of physiological adaptation to a 381 382 stress (Bigas et al., 2006; Cappello et al., 2013; Chalghmi et al., 2016; do Amaral et al., 2019). 383 However, cytological observations here evidenced altered digestive cells, showing damaged 384 membranes and mitochondria. Concomitantly, we observed an increased number of cells presenting 385 a high number of mitochondria and a development of their REG, pointing to a high metabolic activity, 386 likely compensating the loss of activity of damaged cells. Similarly, exposure of Anguilla anguilla 11 days to 50 ng·L⁻¹ MeHg, upregulated (10-500x) genes cox1 and 12s involved in mitochondrial 387 388 metabolism, while altered mitochondria were likely compensated by an increased number of 389 mitochondria observed in muscle fibers by electron microscopy (Claveau et al., 2015). Mitochondria 390 are expected targets of MeHg in animals (Ferreira et al., 2018; Correa et al., 2020). For example, 391 MeHg depolarized mitochondrial membrane in synaptosomes (Hare and Atchinson, 1992). Here, 392 MeHg at D1 also upregulated cat gene expression level in gills and increased SOD activity in digestive 393 glands. MeHg at D7, increased sod gene expression and SOD activity in gills. Data for MeHg 394 supported a ROS production in tissues not resulting in lipid peroxidation and an efficient antioxidant 395 response in our experimental conditions. An increase of intracellular ROS levels by 1.2 to 1.5x was 396 previously reported in copepods Tigriopus japonicus and Paracyclina nana exposed to 1 to 1000 ng.L ¹ MeHg 24h, together with an increase of GST activity by 1.3 to 1.5x (Lee et al., 2017a; Lee et al., 397 2017b). Here, data globally suggested that MeHg induced cellular damage and altered organelle 398 399 functions, but cellular compensation and defense responses resulted in tolerance in D. polymorpha 400 to MeHg exposure.

401

402 Co-exposure

403 Here, the co-exposure in *D. polymorpha* was the most disturbing for the metabolome at D7, 404 and showed a synergistic response vs single exposures. In contrast to single exposures, in the co-405 exposure hyperactive cells didn't efficiently compensate for damaged cells, resulting in the reduction 406 of 25 of the 31 quantified metabolites. Here, co-exposure also triggered ROS production as shown by 407 increased mt gene expression level in digestive glands at D1, and CAT and SOD activities in gills at D7. 408 Besides, a 2x decrease of glutamic acid and glycine supported glutathione biosynthesis at D7. Those 409 responses suggested a higher ROS production for co-exposure than single exposures, in line with the 410 known ability of both pollutants to trigger ROS production (Freitas et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2017a; Lee 411 et al., 2017b). Nonetheless, lipid peroxidation wasn't measured here, which supported an efficient 412 antioxidant response maintaining the RedOx balance of *D. polymorpha* in the co-exposure. However, 413 the impact of the co-exposure at D7 wasn't predictable based on the low toxicity level triggered by single exposures. Similarly, in *Ruditapes philippinarum*, exposure 21 days to 10 μ g·L⁻¹ IHg and 3 μ g·L⁻¹ 414 benzo[a]pyrene resulted in synergistic effects on glutathione content and lipid peroxidation, while 415 GST and CAT activities weren't modified by the co-exposure (Jiang et al., 2019). In contrast, in R. 416 *philippinarum* exposure 7 days to 10 μ g·L⁻¹ IHg and 25 μ g·L⁻¹ microplastics caused antagonistic 417 responses on histological alterations, and no modification of CAT activity, GSH content or lipid 418 419 peroxidation in gills and digestive glands, compared to single exposures (Sıkdokur et al., 2020). 420 Although microplastics are a different type of pollutants likely having distinct modes of action, the 421 number of studies investigating combined effects of pollutants is very low, limiting comparisons with 422 the literature. Here, antioxidant defenses didn't seem directly related to pollutant bioaccumulation, 423 cellular and metabolome impact. As such, data suggested that other molecular toxicity pathways 424 triggered by the co-exposure could contribute to observed damages.

425 Modulated metabolites were further analyzed to identify additional putative molecular 426 toxicity pathways occurring here. An alteration of tRNA-aminoacyl biosynthesis and the metabolism 427 of several amino acids were observed, suggesting an impact on protein biosynthesis. For example, 428 branched chain amino acids (BCAAs; isoleucine, leucine and valine) were decreased in line with observations in *D. magna* exposed 48h to 1.75 to 14 mg·L⁻¹ CBZ (Kovacevic et al., 2016). BCAAs are 429 430 known precursors for the synthesis of stress response proteins in aquatic invertebrates such as 431 chaperon proteins that maintain molecular and cellular functionalities (Calder, 2006). Free amino 432 acids are also known to be central for cell osmoregulation in mollusks (Viant et al., 2003, Kovacevic et 433 al., 2016). The decreased concentrations of free amino acids in the co-exposure here might suggest 434 an osmotic stress of D. polymorpha. In adductor muscles of R. philippinarum, IHg decreased amino acid concentrations, which was likely compensated by an increase of other osmolytes such as 435 436 betaine, homarine and taurine (Liu et al., 2011a). Similarly, the increase of amino acids in gills of R. 437 philippinarum was likely compensated by a decrease of these same osmolytes (Liu et al., 2011b). In 438 both studies, authors hypothesized that IHg disturbed osmoregulation functions, potentially causing 439 an osmotic stress. In the same line, an increase of osmolality, suggesting osmotic perturbation, was 440 measured in the plasma of *Solea senegalensis* 48h after 1 mg·kg⁻¹ CBZ injection (González-Mira et al., 441 2016). Here, obvious alterations of gill filaments and digestive cells were observed in *D. polymorpha* 442 in the co-exposure, which could result from osmoregulation disturbances together with ROS 443 production. However, other analyses beyond the scope of the present work are needed to conclude.

444 Pathway analysis of metabolites also indicated an alteration of energetic and carbohydrate 445 metabolism, such as galactose and pyruvate metabolism in *D. polymorpha* co-exposed to CBZ+MeHg. 446 Similarly, cellular and mitochondrial alterations pointed to an alteration of functions essential for the 447 energy metabolism (Rodrigo and Costa 2017; Faggio et al., 2018). Here, glucose, inositol and 448 mannose, glyceric, fumaric and malic acids were significantly reduced, suggesting a higher energy 449 consumption and an increased energy production through alternative pathways, such as the citric 450 cycle. In aquatic invertebrates, stress is known to reshuffle metabolism, *i.e.* using amino acids to 451 produce energy through an alternative pathway (Sokolova et al., 2012). At higher stress levels, the physiological homeostasis can be altered, eventually resulting in dysregulation of the metabolite 452 fluxes in and among metabolic pathways. In *R. philippinarum*, exposed 48h to 20 µg·L⁻¹ IHg ATP/ADP 453 454 ratio, succinic and citric acid decreased in adductor muscle, while ATP/ADP ratio, lactic acid and α ketoglutarate increased in gills (Liu et al., 2011a; Liu et al., 2011b). Similarly, in R. philippinarum, 21 455 days exposure to 2 μ g·L⁻¹ IHg decreased 1.5x glycogen in hepatopancreas (Jiang et al., 2019). In *M*. 456 galloprovincialis, exposure 96h to 6 µg·L⁻¹ CBZ decreased glycogen and protein contents 1.5 and 1.3x 457 458 respectively, while the mitochondrial electron transport system (ETS) increased 1.2x (Oliveira et al., 459 2017). All these studies highlighted a high impact on the energy metabolism, evidenced by a high energy demand. It would be interesting to measure ETS in the future, as it could be a relevant 460 461 indicator of metabolic capacity of mussels (Bielen et al., 2016). In sum, both CBZ and MeHg could 462 alter energy metabolism, and have the potential to disrupt physiological homeostasis at high 463 concentration individually. The co-exposure to CBZ+MeHg might result in a similar stress level than 464 single exposures at a much higher concentration.

465

466 Bioaccumulation and observed effects

467 Here, bioaccumulation of MeHg measured in *D. polymorpha* at D1 and D7 corresponded to 468 values found at moderately ($\leq 0.4 \text{ mg} \cdot \text{kg}^{-1} \text{ dw}$) and highly contaminated sites ($\leq 1.9 \text{ mg} \cdot \text{kg}^{-1} \text{ dw}$), 469 respectively. For comparison, MeHg concentration reached 0.4 mg $\cdot \text{kg}^{-1}$ dw in *Cerastoderma glaucum* 470 tissues (Dominik et al., 2014) and 0.21 mg $\cdot \text{kg}^{-1}$ MeHg dw in *Crassostrea virginica* (Apeti et al., 2012) in

moderately contaminated sites. Besides, all values were <0.5 mg kg⁻¹ fw (*i.e.* ~ 2.5 mg kg⁻¹ dw), the 471 472 threshold for seafood commercialization in Europe (EC 1881/2006). For CBZ, a BAF of 37 was observed here. Similarly, a BAF of 25 was determined in *M. galloprovincialis* exposed 20 days to 15.7 473 μ g·L⁻¹ CBZ (Serra-Compte et al., 2018). On the contrary, CBZ bioaccumulation was 10x lower in *D*. 474 475 *polymorpha* after 1 to 6 months exposure to 5 μ g·L⁻¹ CBZ (Daniele et al., 2017; Magniez et al., 2018) and in bivalves sampled in polluted sites ($\leq 11 \ \mu g \cdot k g^{-1}$ dw; Almeida et al., 2020). The latter studies 476 477 didn't use an internal standard, while Serra-Compte et al. (2018) and here did, likely explaining those 478 differences. Further analyses of environmental samples with internal standards are needed to 479 conclude. Metabolites of CBZ (e.g. acridine, 2-hydroxy-CBZ) weren't analyzed here, because previous analysis in *D. polymorpha* suggested their absence after 1 to 6 months of exposure to 5 μ g L⁻¹ CBZ 480 481 (Magniez et al., 2018). Here we hypothesized that the drug parent was mainly causing biological 482 effects.

483 Biological effects are generally expected to be linked with bioaccumulation (Sijm and Hermens, 2001; Le Guernic et al., 2016; Kershaw and Hall, 2019). Here, bioaccumulation of MeHg in D. 484 485 polymorpha increased from D1 to D7, while CBZ bioaccumulation was similar, but metabolome and 486 defense responses weren't altered after single exposure. As such, bioaccumulation and biological 487 responses didn't seem linearly correlated here. Since bioaccumulation of MeHg and CBZ were similar 488 for all exposures at D7, data supported that CBZ and MeHg impacted similar molecular toxicity pathways. Previous studies also showed that bioaccumulation was unrelated to effects observed. For 489 example, in *R. philippinarum*, co-exposure 21 days to 2 μ g·L⁻¹ IHg and 3 μ g·L⁻¹ benzo[a]pyrene caused 490 lipid peroxidation, while single exposures didn't (Jiang et al., 2019). Besides, single exposures 28 days 491 of *R. philippinarum* to 1 μ g·L⁻¹ CBZ and 0.5 μ g·L⁻¹ Cd caused lipid peroxidation and altered GST 492 493 activity, while the co-exposure resulted in a similar bioaccumulation, but unaltered defense 494 responses (Almeida et al., 2018). Contrasting responses in co-exposures underline the need to better 495 understand the molecular toxicity pathways of pollutants in *D. polymorpha* to improve biomonitoring in complex environments, and anticipate effects. 496

497

498 Conclusion

Data presented here investigated the toxicity of CBZ and MeHg at 8x and 4x EQS concentrations, respectively in a freshwater bivalve. Single exposures didn't alter the metabolome despite an increased number of altered cells, likely compensated by hyperactive cells. This compensation didn't appear efficient enough for the co-exposure CBZ+MeHg at D7, resulting in a decrease of metabolites involved in RedOx, amino acid, osmoregulation and energy metabolism. We attributed these 504 responses to similar molecular toxicity pathways induced by CBZ and MeHg. However, such effects 505 were unpredictable based on responses to single exposures, confirming the need to study more in 506 detail molecular toxicity pathways. Indeed, co-exposure to pollutants should be better considered by 507 the legislation and may well modify current EQS. Studies linking bioaccumulation and molecular 508 toxicity pathways of pollutants at environmental concentrations are thus a research priority to better 509 anticipate effects in situ. Further non-targeted analysis (e.g. proteomics, RNAseq) at the individual 510 level and on specific organs will give supplemental clues on the involved molecular toxicity targets, 511 and could help to identify early-warning responses.

512

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519

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- **Table 1**: List of metabolic pathways significantly modulated at D7 in soft tissues of *D. polymorpha*
- 855 exposed to $3.9\pm0.6 \ \mu g \cdot L^{-1}$ CBZ, 280±20 ng $\cdot L^{-1}$ MeHg and CBZ+MeHg.

	Impacted metabolic pathways at D7	p-value
CBZ	Cysteine and methionine metabolism	0.021
MeHg	-	-
CBZ + MeHg	tRNA-aminoacyl biosynthesis	8.4e ⁻¹⁵
	Biosynthesis of branched chain amino acids BCAAs	3.0e⁻⁵
	Arginine biosynthesis	4.0e ⁻⁵
	Glyoxylate and dicarboxylate metabolism	8.7e⁻⁵
	Alanine, aspartate and glutamate metabolism	7.1e⁻⁴
	Glycine, serine and threonine metabolism	0.001
	Galactose metabolism	0.008
	Glutathione metabolism	0.008
	Cysteine and methionine metabolism	0.013
	Arginine and proline metabolism	0.019
	Degradation of BCAAs	0.022
	Histidine metabolism	0.024
	Biosynthesis of neomycin, kanamycin and gentamicin	0.031
	Pantothenate and CoA biosynthesis	0.033
	Citrate cycle	0.037
	Pyruvate metabolism	0.044

Table 2: Alteration scores determined by histological and cytological observations after exposure to

 $3.9\pm0.6 \ \mu g \cdot L^{-1} \ CBZ$, 280±20 $ng \cdot L^{-1} \ MeHg$ and CBZ+MeHg at D7 in gills and digestive glands of *D*.

polymorpha.

	Control	CBZ	MeHg	CBZ+MeHg
Histology				
Gills	0.7±0.2	0.9±0.1	2.9±0.1	2.0±0.5
Digestive glands	0.5±0.0	0.5±0.0	2.2±0.2	3.0±0.0
Cytology of digestive cells				
General aspect				
Healthy	83%	0%	11%	11%
Altered	11%	60%	86%	88%
Hyperactive	6%	53%	29%	19%
Mitochondria				
Altered	30±5%	50±20%	70±20%	60±10%
Mitochondrial	12±7%	13±8%	43±24%	34±14%
Reticulum				
Alteration score	0.4±0.3	1.0±0.4	1.9±0.5	2.1±0.3

Figure 1: Bioaccumulation and bioaccumulation factor (BAF L·kg⁻¹) of CBZ (**A**) and MeHg (**B**) in *D.* polymorpha soft tissues at D1 (light) and D7 (dark), exposed to $3.9\pm0.6 \ \mu g \cdot L^{-1} \ CBZ$, 280±20 ng·L⁻¹ MeHg and the co-exposure (mean±SEM, n=3 animals; *p< 0.05 vs control).

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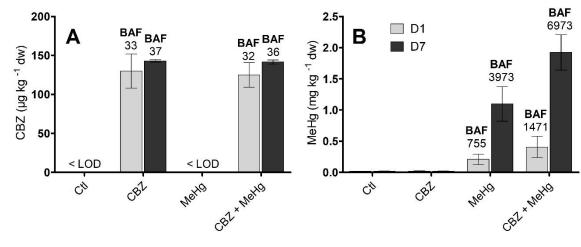
Figure 2: Log-2 fold change profiles of metabolites at D1 and D7 in soft tissues of *D. polymorpha*exposed to 3.9±0.6 μg·L⁻¹ CBZ, 280±20 ng·L⁻¹ MeHg and the co-exposure *vs* controls (n=8 animals;
*p<0.05 and FC>1.5).

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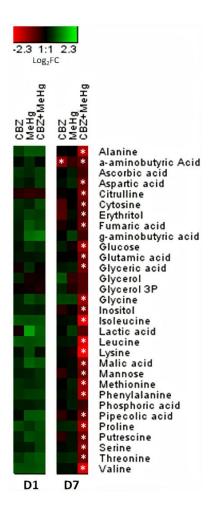
872 Figure 3: Optic (A to H) and electronic (I to L) micrographs of mussel tissues in control (A, E, I), exposed to 3.9±0.6 µg·L⁻¹ CBZ (B, F, J, K), 280±20 ng·L⁻¹ MeHg (C, G, L) and the co-exposure (D, H). Gill 873 filaments (A to D, bar=20 µm) showing erosion of the ciliated border (e), cell vacuolization (v), 874 875 necrosis (n), lysis (l), or filament with abnormal shape (*). Fibrosis was revealed in blue by indigo in 876 most filament gills (x) of exposed mussels. Digestive glands (E to H, bar=100 μ m), showing fibrosis 877 (x), hemocoel cell infiltration (I), atresia degenerative tubules (DT) and altered tubules with necrotic 878 digestive cells (arrow). Digestive cells (I to L, bar=2.5 µm) showing hyperactive cells with high amount 879 of RER and mitochondria (Mi), mostly normally conformed, and altered cells with enlargement of the 880 nuclear inter-membrane space (eim), rare and collapsed cisternae of RER (cRER), dilated cisternae of 881 rough endoplasmic reticulum (dRER) and altered mitochondria (aMi) which broken cristae, loss of 882 external membrane integrity and frequent mitochondrial bodies.

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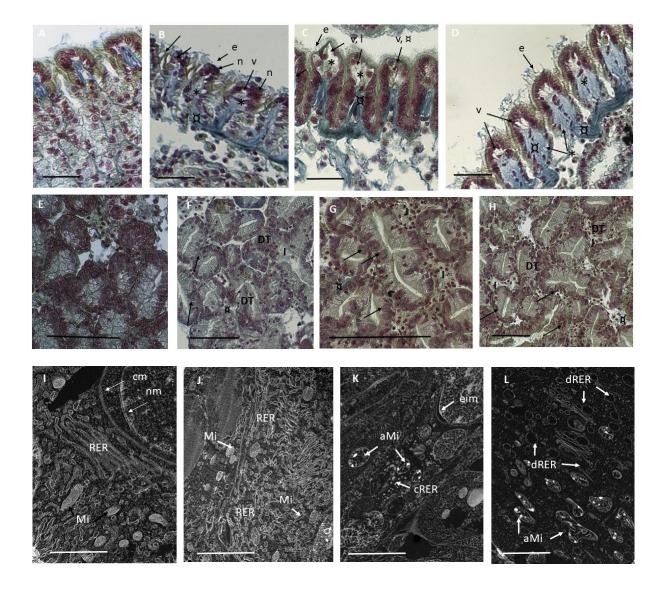
Figure 4: Relative gene expression levels of *gst* (A), *cat* (B), *sod* (C) and *mt* (D), activities of GST (E), CAT (F), SOD (G) and LOOH concentration (H) in gills and digestive glands of *D. polymorpha* at D1 and D7, exposed to control (filled, blank) $3.9\pm0.6 \ \mu g \cdot L^{-1}$ CBZ (green stripes), $280\pm20 \ ng \cdot L^{-1}$ MeHg (blue checkerboard) and the co-exposure (filled, yellow) (mean±SEM, n=6 to 8 animals; *p< 0.05 *vs* control).



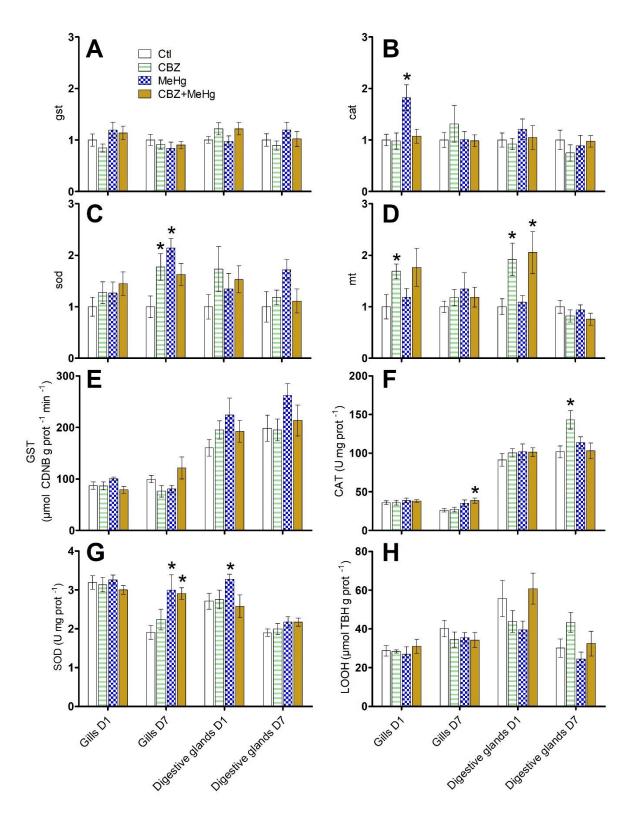




893 Figure 2



896 Figure 3





899 Figure 4