

ISOLATION OF *IXODES RICINUS* SALIVARY GLAND mRNA ENCODING FACTORS INDUCED DURING BLOOD FEEDING

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Abstract. In tick salivary glands, genes induced during blood feeding result in the expression of new proteins secreted into tick saliva. These proteins are potentially involved in modulation of vertebrate host immune and hemostatic responses. In this study, subtractive and full-length cDNA libraries were constructed by use of mRNA extracted from salivary glands of unfed and 5-day engorged *Ixodes ricinus*. Sequences from these 2 libraries were compared with European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL)/GenBank databases, which led to their classification into 2 major groups. The first group comprises cDNAs that failed to match or showed low homology to genes of known function. The second group includes sequences that showed high homology to genes of known function—for example, anticoagulants, inhibitors of platelet aggregation, and immunomodulatory proteins. Analyses of corresponding proteins suggest that they may be secreted by salivary gland cells. To study the properties of the recombinant proteins, selected cDNAs were expressed in mammalian or bacterial systems.

INTRODUCTION

Ticks are remarkable blood-sucking arthropods. Three hundred million years of evolution has led to the development of strategies that allows them to interact with a wide diversity of hosts such as mammals (including humans), birds, and reptiles.¹ Although ticks feed on blood, which may take several days, vertebrate host defenses are raised against the ectoparasite with variable efficiency.² Ticks can ingest as much as 15 mL of blood.³ Moreover, they are vectors of numerous human or animal pathogens, including viruses (e.g., tick-borne encephalitis virus, Thogoto virus), bacteria (e.g., *Borrelia burgdorferi sensu lato*, *Rickettsia* spp.), protozoans (e.g., *Babesia* spp., *Theileria* spp., *Trypanosoma* spp.), and helminths.⁴ In view of this diversity of transmitted pathogens, ticks are important pathogen vectors.

Most tick-borne pathogens invade salivary glands before being transmitted to the host via saliva. Substantial evidence demonstrates that ticks are more than simple injecting needles.⁵ Different saliva-activated transmission factors are secreted from the salivary glands that facilitate the transmission of pathogens to vertebrate hosts.⁶ Other bioactive factors also secreted by the salivary glands play a key role in the completion of the bloodmeal. Among these, proteinaceous factors are of particular importance. Several anticoagulant proteins have been described: some inhibit the extrinsic and intrinsic pathway of blood coagulation,^{7,8} and others inhibit platelet aggregation.^{9–11} Tick salivary gland extracts also modulate both innate and acquired immunity.^{12–14} Indeed, the alternative pathway of the complement is inhibited^{15,16} and the activity of lymphoid cells is modified.^{17–23} For tick infestation, interleukin (IL)-4, IL-5, and IL-10 induction and IL-2 and interferon gamma inhibition^{24–26} are observed, indicating a polarized Th2 host immune response.¹³ It has also been observed that during the bloodmeal, new mRNAs are induced in the salivary glands, leading to the synthesis of a wide range of new proteins.^{27,28} It is hypothesized that among these induced genes, several are essential for the completion of the tick feeding process and for the transmission of pathogens such as *B. burgdorferi*.

The goal of this study was to characterize tick salivary gland proteins that influence pathogen-host-vector relationships.

Such an understanding could lead to the establishment of new means of control and prevention against tick bites and pathogen transmission. Our approach was to create a subtractive cDNA library by which cDNAs of 5-day blood-fed *Ixodes ricinus* salivary glands would be enriched for novel messages compared with unfed ticks. This approach led to the identification of several mRNAs specifically induced in 5-day blood-fed *I. ricinus* salivary glands, followed by characterization of these gene products.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Preparation of *I. ricinus* salivary glands mRNA and protein extracts. Salivary glands of 5-day engorged or unfed pathogen-free *I. ricinus* female adult ticks were removed and then immediately frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at -80°C . Glands were crushed in liquid nitrogen with a mortar and pestle. mRNAs were purified by oligo-dT chromatography (Fast Track 2.0 kit, Invitrogen, Groningen, The Netherlands). Two micrograms and 1.5 μg of mRNAs were extracted from 200 salivary glands of engorged ticks and from 1,000 salivary glands of unfed ticks, respectively. Five-day-fed and unfed tick salivary glands protein extracts were obtained from 70 and 300 *I. ricinus* salivary glands, respectively. This material was crushed for 10 min with a mortar and a pestle in 400 μL (fed tick salivary glands) or 1,600 μL (unfed tick salivary glands) of extraction buffer (1 \times phosphate-buffered saline, pH7.4; ethylenediamine-tetraacetic acid 10 mM, 4-(2-aminoethyl)benzenesulfonyl fluoride hydrochloride 1 mM (Sigma-Aldrich, Bornem, Belgium). The samples were centrifuged for 8 min at 10,000 $\times g$, and the supernatants were recovered and stored at -20°C .

Construction of a representational difference analysis subtractive library. All procedures were performed as described by Hubank and Schatz.²⁹ Double-stranded cDNAs were synthesized by means of the Superscript Choice System (Life Technologies, Rockville, MD). The cDNAs were digested with *DpnII* restriction enzyme, ligated to R-linkers, amplified with R-24 primers, and finally digested again with the same enzyme to generate a “tester” pool consisting of cDNAs from salivary glands of fed ticks and a “driver” pool consisting of cDNAs from salivary glands of unfed ticks. The subtractive

TABLE 1
Oligonucleotide primer sequences used in the RT-PCR assays

Clone	Direct primer (5'-3')	Reverse primer (5'-3')
<i>seq24</i>	ATGAGGAGGGCACAGAGG	CCTGAATGGGCGGTCAAC
<i>seq28</i>	CCGTTGGAGACCCAGAAG	GTGCTCGGTCTGTCCATG
<i>seq29</i>	CTCCTGTCGCCACCTATG	CCAAGACCGTGTCCGTAG
<i>seq16</i>	CCGATGTGCCCTTTCACCC	ACACTGGAGGATTTCAACACTC
<i>seq7</i>	TGGTAGACACAGCCAACCACAA	GGCAGTCTTCATTC AAGGCTTG
<i>seq6</i>	AACTTAGTCTCACCAATATACGTTT	TCGTACAAGCTCCGCTTTTCTC
<i>seq26</i>	ACATGCGAAGCTGCCGAC	CGTTTATCCGGTCCACGC
<i>seq17</i>	AGGCTCCATCTAGGCAGC	CCGGTCGTGCAATTGCAC
<i>seq3</i>	GTTTGTGCTGTTTGCGATTTGCA	TGGGTAAGTCGGCTCTATGCC
<i>seq2</i>	TTCAGAACCGTGAATTTGAAAAAGT	TGGAACTTCCACGTCTTCTTCAA
<i>seq1</i>	CTTGTAGCCCTTCTCATCCG	AACGAGGACATTACGCTAAACCT
<i>seq4</i>	CACTCGAAAATGGAGGCTTTGAA	GCAACGTGGCCAGTAGTAATCA
<i>seq5</i>	ATGTTACCATGTCCAACCCGGT	CTCACGACGGAGAAGAACGC
<i>seq19</i>	GACTTGCCTTAGGTTTCTTAGT	ATGTCATTTGACAACCTCATTCGGA

hybridization process consisted of 3 rounds of selection by use of a tester/driver ratio of 1:100, 1:400 and 1:200,000, respectively. The *DpnII*-digested differential products were subdivided according to their size into 4 different fractions and subcloned into the *Bam*HI site of the pTZ19r cloning vector. The ligated product was used to transform TOP-10 *Escherichia coli* competent cells (Invitrogen). From this subtractive library, 9,600 clones were randomly selected and stored at -80°C .

Construction of a full-length cDNA library from salivary gland of engorged *I. ricinus* female adult ticks. This library was set up using mRNAs extracted from salivary glands of engorged female adult ticks. The mRNAs (80 ng) were subjected to reverse transcription by means of a degenerate oligo-dT primer (5'-A(T)₃₀VN-3'), the Smart oligonucleotide (Clontech, Palo Alto, CA), and the Superscript II reverse transcriptase (Life Technologies). The single-strand cDNA mixture was used as template in a hot-start polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay including the LA Taq polymerase (Takara, Shiga, Japan), the modified oligo-dT, primer and a 3'-Smart primer specific to a region located at the 5' end of the Smart oligonucleotide. The PCR protocol consisted of 25 cycles of 1 min at 95°C , 25 sec at 95°C , and 5 min at 68°C , followed by a 10-min incubation at 72°C . The amplified double-stranded cDNA mixture was purified on a Centricon 30 concentrator (Millipore, Bedford, MA). The cDNAs were divided into 4 fractions, 0.3–0.6 kb, 0.6–1 kb, 1 kb to 2 kb, and 2–4 kb, on a 0.8% high-grade agarose electrophoresis gel. After their recovery by the Qiaex II extraction kit (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany), these fractions were ligated into the pCRII cloning vector (Invitrogen). The ligated fractions were then used to transform XL2-Blue ultracompetent *E. coli* cells (Stratagene, Amsterdam, The Netherlands). The resulting recombinant clones were stored individually in microplates at -80°C .

Screening of full-length cDNA library and rapid amplification of cDNA ends. Recombinant bacterial clones derived from the full-length cDNA library were screened by conventional hybridization procedures. Radiolabeled oligonucleotide probes derived from the selected subtractive sequences were as follows: 5'-TCCGGACGACGGACCATGCA-3' for *seq7*; 5'-AGTCCATGATTGTAGTGTGCT AC-3' for *seq16*; and 5'-GCAGCTGCAGCCTCTGTGCC-3' for *seq24*.

Rapid amplification of cDNA ends (RACE) methodology

was performed as described by Frohman.³⁰ The reverse transcription step was carried out with 10 ng of mRNAs extracted from salivary gland of engorged ticks and Thermo-script Reverse transcriptase (Life Technologies). Gene-specific primers (GSP) used for the reverse transcription step for 5'-RACE were: *seq7* 5'-CCTTCGCATCCGCCATAC-3'; *seq16* 5'-CCCGCCAGTCCATGATTG-3'; and *seq24* 5'-CCTGAATGGGCGGTCAAC-3'. The following GSP-primers were used for the amplification step: 3'-RACE: GSP1: 5'-GCGGCCTGCGAAGTGTA-3'; GSP2: 5'-GGACCATGCAGAGCACGA-3'; 5'-RACE: GSP1: 5'-TCGTGCTCTGCATGGTCC-3'; GSP2: 5'-TTACACTTCGCAGGCCGC-3', in the case of *seq7*. 3'-RACE: GSP1: 5'-GCAACTATTGCCGGAGGG-3'; GSP2: 5'-GGTACTCGGTGTAGTCG-3'; 5'-RACE: GSP1: 5'-GTATGGCTCGTCTGTGG-3'; GSP2: 5'-GCCAACGATCCTGAGCTG-3', in the case of *seq16*. 3'-RACE: GSP1: 5'-ATGAGGAGGGCACAGAGG-3', GSP2: AGTGCCACTGCCATACC-3'; *seq24* 5'-RACE: GSP1: 5'-GGTATGGCAGTGGCAGCT-3', GSP2: 5'-CCTCTGTGCCCTCCTCAT-3', in the case of *seq24*. The purified cDNAs were cloned into the pCRII-TOPO cloning vector (Invitrogen) and sequenced.

Evaluation of the differential expression of the cDNA clones isolated in the subtractive and full-length cDNA libraries by reverse transcriptase (RT)-PCR/oligo-dT or RT-PCR/GSP assays. The RT-PCR assays were carried out on mRNAs extracted from salivary glands either of engorged or of unfed ticks. The reverse transcription step of the RT-PCR/oligo-dT assay was performed by use of an oligo-dT primer and the reverse transcription step of the RT-PCR/GSP assay by use of a GSP and the Superscript II RNase H⁻ reverse transcriptase (Life Technologies), as described by the manufacturer. Each PCR assay included pair of primers specific to each target subtractive or cDNA full-length sequence, and they were performed by Expand High Fidelity polymerase (Roche, Brussels, Belgium) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Primers are provided in Table 1. Single-stranded DNA samples were amplified for 30 cycles under the following conditions: 95°C for 1 min, 72°C for 30 sec, and 60°C for 1 min, followed by a final elongation step of 72°C for 7 min.

Computational analysis. Sequence analyses were performed by the Genetics Computer Group (GCG) sequence analysis software, version 10.0 (Madison, WI).

TABLE 2
Comparison of the 27 subtraction cDNA sequences against EMBL/GenBank databases

Ac. Number	Gene	Similar sequences in databases ^{a,b}	Score	Rate(%)	Alg. ^c
AJ269635	<i>seq1</i>	N.S.		5,6	
AJ269636	<i>seq2</i>	N.S.		12,3	
AJ269637	<i>seq3</i>	N.S.		5,6	
AJ269638	<i>seq4</i>	N.S.		2,2	
AJ269639	<i>seq5</i>	N.S.		3,4	
AJ269640	<i>seq6</i>	<i>R. melioli</i> Nitrogen fixation (fixF) [M18272]	0,00089	16,8	T
AJ269641	<i>seq7</i>	<i>H. sapiens</i> Tissue factor Pathway Inhibitor PI-2 [P48307]	4.10⁻¹²	4,5	T
AJ269642	<i>seq8</i>	N.S.		3,4	
AJ269643	<i>seq9</i>	Probable integrase/recombinase [P42540]	3,3	3,4	T
AJ269644	<i>seq10</i>	N.S.		2,2	
AJ269645	<i>seq11</i>	N.S.		2,2	
AJ269646	<i>seq12</i>	N.S.		3,4	
AJ269647	<i>seq13</i>	<i>C. gloeosporioides</i> cutinase gene [M21443]	0,082	2,2	F
AJ269648	<i>seq14</i>	N.S.		10,1	
AJ269649	<i>seq15</i>	mRNA for secretory prot cont. thrombospondine motifs [D67076]	0,014	5,6	T
AJ269650	<i>seq16</i>	<i>Bothrops jararaca</i> , Jararhagin metalloprotease mRNA [X68251]	2,3.10⁻⁶	4,5	T
AJ269651	<i>seq17</i>	<i>O. aries</i> gene for ovine INF-alpha [X59068]	0,7	1,1	T
		Interferon-omega 45 [S69000]	0,88		
		RCPT PGE2 [E06016]	0,85		
AJ269652	<i>seq18</i>	N.S.		1,1	
AJ269653	<i>seq19</i>	IgG1 L chain directed against human IL2 rcpt Tac prot [S72847]	0,19	1,1	T
AJ269654	<i>seq20</i>	N.S.		1,1	
AJ269655	<i>seq21</i>	N.S.		1,1	
AJ269656	<i>seq22</i>	<i>Mus Musculus</i> neuroactin [AF010586]	0,42	1,1	F
AJ269657	<i>seq23</i>	N.S.		1,1	
AJ269658	<i>seq24</i>	<i>H. sapiens</i> thrombin inhibitor [Z22658]	2,1.10⁻¹²	1,1	T
		Human monocyte/neutrophil elastase inhibitor mRNA [P80229]	3.10⁻⁸		
AJ269659	<i>seq25</i>	N.S.		1,1	
AJ269660	<i>seq26</i>	N.S.		1,1	
AJ269661	<i>seq27</i>	N.S.		1,1	

The different cDNA clones were compared with sequences in the EMBL/GenBank databases by tFasta or Fasta algorithms (Genetics Computer Group, Madison, WI). Scores and homologous database sequences are presented here. The ratio of each cDNA clone in the subtractive library is shown in the column frequency.

^a N.S. = No significant identity.

^b EMBL/GenBank accession numbers are in brackets.

^c tFasta (T) and Fasta (F).

Synthesis of recombinant proteins in bacterial and mammalian expression systems. Unique restriction sites were added by PCR in order to subclone the different open reading frames (ORFs) into *E. coli* and mammalian expression vectors. Denaturing, annealing, and extension temperatures used for the PCR were 95°C for 15 sec, 58°C for 30 sec, and 68°C for 2 min, respectively, for 25 cycles, except for the amplification of *seq7* ORF, where the annealing temperature was 62°C. The cDNA, obtained from reverse transcription of 5-day fed tick salivary glands mRNA with the 3' primer, was used as template to amplify the different ORFs. pMALC2-E vector containing maltose binding protein (MBP) fusion partner and pCDNA3.1/V5-His A containing the His tag fusion partner were digested with either Asp718 and XbaI (for *seq7* and *seq16* cloning in pMALC2-E vector) or Asp718 and EcoRI (for *seq24* cloning in pMALC2-E vector) or Asp718 and ApaI (for pCDNA3.1/V5-His A) and ligated to *seq7*, *seq16*, and *seq24* cDNAs. The TG1 *E. coli* cells were transformed with the each pMALC2-E recombinant vector and

the expression of the fusion proteins induced by addition of 0.3 mM isopropyl-β-D-1-thiogalactopyranoside. *Escherichia coli* extracts containing Seq16/MBP and Seq24/MBP were solubilized with 6 M urea and purified by amylose chromatography (NEB, Hitchin, UK) according to manufacturer's recommendations. The *seq16*- and *seq24*-pCDNA3.1/V5-His A constructs were transfected into CHOK I cells by means of Fugene 6 (Roche) according to manufacturer's recommendations, and G418 selection was used to generate stable transfectants. Target proteins were purified by Ni-chelate chromatography (Ni-NTA superflow resin; Qiagen) according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Immunodetection of Seq7, Seq16, and Seq24. Ten-week-old female BALB/c mice were immunized with 5 μg of Seq7/MBP, Seq16/MBP, and Seq24/MBP in Freund complete adjuvant. Three booster immunizations were provided with the same amounts of antigen in Freund incomplete adjuvant at 15-day intervals. We performed DNA immunization by injecting 50 μg of pCDNA3.1/V5-His A vector ligated to *seq16*

TABLE 3
Comparison to EMBL/GenBank databases of 9 clones of the full-length cDNA library

Ac. Number	Clone	Seq. ^a	Length (bp)	Similar sequences in databases ^{b,c}	Alg. ^d	Score
AJ300190	412.b7	C	2378	N.S.		N
AJ300191	410.e7	P	~4000	N.S.		N
AJ300192	416.a12	C	1311	<i>A. gambiae</i> uncharacterised mRNA [U50476]	T/B	8,2.10-12 / N
AJ300193	419.c3	P	~800	<i>A. aegypti</i> chitinase protein [AF026492]	T/B	2,5.10-5 / 2.10-4
AJ300194	419.d3	P	~2400	N.S.		N
AJ269663	seq29	C	935	<i>R. norvegicus</i> leukocyte common antigen-related protein [X83546]	T/B	4,8.10-9 / N
AJ300195	419.e5	P	~2000	<i>Haloferax volcanii</i> aminotransferase [U95372]	F	2.10-7
AJ269662	seq28	C	2388	Human interferon-related protein [SKMc15] [U09585]	T/B	1,8.10-36/1,7.10-71

The different cDNA clones were compared with EMBL/GenBank databases by tFasta or Blastp algorithms (Genetics Computer Group, Madison, WI). Scores and homologous database sequences are presented here.

^a Completely sequenced (C) or partially sequenced (P).

^b No significant homology (N.S.).

^c EMBL/GenBank accession numbers are in brackets.

^d tFasta (T) and Blast (B).

ORF into 3-week-old female BALB/c mice. Three booster DNA injections were provided with the same amounts of DNA at 3-week intervals, and serum anti-Seq16/His was recovered.

To examine the expression of native proteins in salivary glands and to detect purified Seq16/His and Seq24/His, the same quantities of fed and unfed tick salivary glands and 50 ng of Seq16/His and Seq24/His were subjected to sodium dodecyl sulfate-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE) and transferred onto nitrocellulose membranes. The membranes were probed with diluted sera directed against Seq7/MBP (1:1,000) or Seq16/MBP (1:500) or Seq24/MBP (1:1,000) or Seq16/His (1:200) and developed with nitro-blue tetrazolium chloride-5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolylphosphate toluidine.

RESULTS

Establishment of subtractive cDNA library and characterization of select clones. The representational difference analysis technique was performed to identify cDNAs encoding proteins specifically expressed during the blood meal in

the salivary glands of *I. ricinus* female ticks. This method consists of an amplification-associated subtractive process that allows the isolation of cDNAs corresponding to mRNAs differentially expressed in 2 distinct physiological stages of the *I. ricinus* salivary glands. The library was set up with mRNAs extracted from salivary glands of unfed and 5-day fed *I. ricinus* female ticks. Ninety-six randomly chosen clones were sequenced. Twenty-seven distinct cDNAs were identified. The frequency of sequences in each pool is indicated in Table 2. We used BLAST searching to compare each cDNA and deduced amino acid sequence against EMBL/GenBank nonredundant databases. Twenty-four sequences showed low or no homology to any known sequences (Table 3). Three sequences had significant hits (E value < 10⁻⁴): the human tissue factor pathway inhibitor gene (TFPI) (*seq7*); a snake venom zinc-dependent metalloprotease (the *Bothrops jararaca* jararhagin gene [*seq16*]); and the human thrombin inhibitor gene (*seq24*) (Table 4). The deduced amino acid sequences of the 27 DNA fragments were also analyzed by the GCG motifs search algorithm. The peptide sequences of clones *seq7* and *seq16* are predicted to include Kunitz and metallopeptidase motifs, respectively. Clones *seq5* and *seq8*

TABLE 4
Analysis of translated sequences of selected subtracted cDNA clones

Clone	Full-length sequences similarity to databases	tFasta/Blastp Scores ^a	ORF (aa)	Motives	Signal peptide scores ^b
Seq16	Mouse mRNA for secretory protein containing thrombospondin motifs [D67076] ^c	0,002 / 6.10 ⁻⁷	489	Metallopeptidase	7,9 / S
Seq24	Pig leukocyte elastase inhibitor mRNA. [P80229]	0 / 7.10 ⁻⁶⁷	378	Serpin	8,5 / S
Seq7	Human Tissue Factor Pathway Inhibitor [P48307]	4,8.10 ⁻¹² / 2.10 ⁻⁵	87	Kunitz	6,5 / S

Complete cDNA sequences of 3 selected clones were compared with EMBL/GenBank databases by tFasta or Blastp algorithms (Genetics Computer Group, Madison, WI). Their sequences were analyzed for the presence of either motifs (motifs algorithm) or a specific signal peptide sequence (von Heijne and McGeoch analysis).

^a N = No score.

^b Succeeded (S) and failed (F).

^c EMBL/GenBank accession numbers are in brackets.

encode a predicted prokaryotic membrane lipoprotein attachment site motif (Table 2). On the basis of their high homology to known sequences, the partial *seq7*, *seq16*, and *seq24* cDNA sequences were selected for further characterization of their corresponding complete mRNA sequences. Their full-length cDNA sequences were recovered either by screening of a full-length cDNA library (*seq16*) or by RACE (*seq7* and *seq24*).

Characterization of a full-length cDNA library from blood-fed tick salivary gland mRNA. A full-length cDNA library was constructed with mRNAs from 5-day fed tick salivary glands. To assess the recombinant character of this library, 24 randomly chosen clones were subjected to enzyme restriction analyses. All these clones incorporated cDNA fragments ranging from 0.2 to ~3.5 kb. Eight clones were sequenced and similarities sought by BLAST search of public databases. Three cDNAs had no hits; 5 showed significant similarity to known genes. Two cDNAs were homologous to mosquito genes (*Aedes aegypti* and *Anopheles gambiae*), and 2 others showed similarity to proteins with potential immunomodulatory properties. *seq28* resembles a human putative interferon-related gene, whereas the *seq29* shows homology to the *Rattus norvegicus* leukocyte common antigen-related, or *LAR*, gene (Table 3).

Differential expression of cDNA clones isolated from the subtractive and full-length cDNA libraries. The differential expression of 13 subtractive clones (including *seq7*, *seq16*, and *seq24*) and of 2 clones of the full-length library (*seq28* and *seq29*) was assessed via 2 types of RT-PCR (RT-PCR/oligo-dT and RT-PCR/GSP) assays. mRNA expression of the subtractive sequences is upregulated in salivary glands of 5-day engorged ticks (Figure 1). *seq29* mRNA was detected only in salivary glands of blood-fed ticks, whereas *seq28* mRNA was expressed at a similar level both in engorged and unfed ticks' salivary glands. Among upregulated mRNAs, some showed either increased expression (e.g., *seq7*, *seq16*, and *seq24*) in the salivary gland of engorged ticks or no expression (e.g., *seq6* and *seq29*) in the salivary gland of unfed ticks.

Sequence analyses of selected cDNAs. The *seq7*, *seq16*, and *seq24* cDNA and deduced amino acid sequences were analyzed by the tFasta, Blastp, and Motifs algorithms of the GCG Wisconsin package software. The size of the deduced amino acid sequences from these coding sequences ranged 87–489 bp (Table 3).

Seq7 is highly homologous ($E = 2.10^{-5}$) (Table 4) to the human TFPI, an anticoagulant protein with 3 tandemly arranged Kunitz-type protease inhibitor (KPI) domains. *Seq7* is homologous to the first KPI domain of the human TFPI (Figure 2). *Seq16* is homologous to a mouse secretory metalloprotease containing thrombospondin motifs ($E = 3.10^{-7}$) (Figure 2). *Seq24* is homologous to the pig leukocyte elastase inhibitor ($E = 7.10^{-67}$) and to human thrombin inhibitor ($E = 5.10^{-55}$), which both belong to the serpin superfamily of protease inhibitor (Table 4) (Figure 2).

As one approach to determining whether these proteins are secreted, the deduced amino acid sequence of the 3 selected cDNAs were analyzed for the presence of a signal peptide sequence by means of both the von Heijne³¹ and McGeoch³² methods (Table 4). Both methods indicated that these cDNAs encode putative secretory signal peptide motifs.

Expression and immune detection of *seq7*, *seq16*, and *seq24* gene products. *Seq7*, *Seq16*, and *Seq24* proteins were

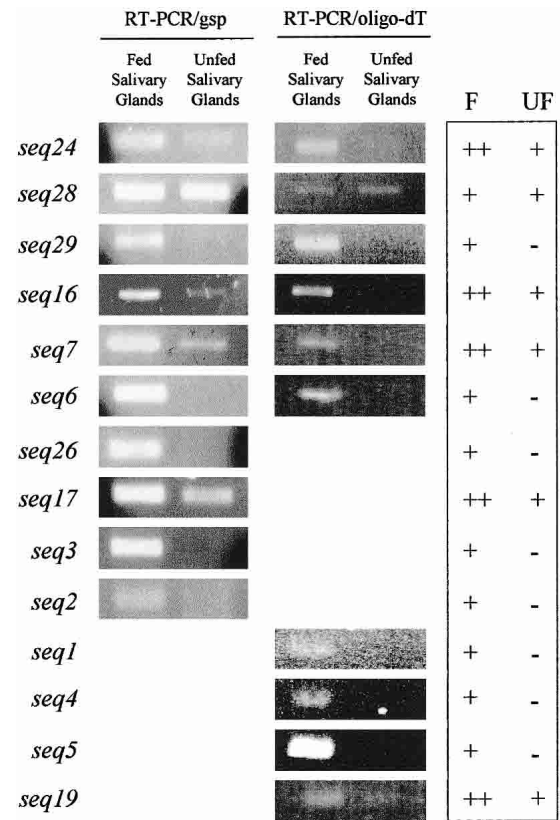


FIGURE 1. Differential expression analysis of 5 full-length cDNAs and 9 cDNA fragments isolated from the subtraction library. Reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) assays were carried out on mRNAs extracted from salivary glands either of engorged (F) or of unfed (UF) ticks. The RT step of the RT-PCR/oligo-dT and RT-PCR/GSP assays was performed with an oligo-dT primer and gene-specific primer (GSP), respectively. ++ = strongly positive; + = positive; - = negative.

expressed in *E. coli* by the pMALC2-E vector (NEB) fused to the 42-kDa MBP. *Seq7*, *Seq16*, and *Seq24* recombinant proteins were purified and the predicted 52-kDa (*Seq7*/MBP), 97-kDa (*Seq16*/MBP), and 82-kDa (*Seq24*/MBP) products were visualized by Coomassie blue-stained SDS-PAGE (Figure 3A). In addition, *Seq16*/His and *Seq24*/His proteins were produced in a mammalian expression system as V5 epitope/6X His tag fusions by use of the pCDNA3.1/V5-His A as vector (Invitrogen). Purified *Seq24*/His was detected by Western immunoblot that used anti-V5 antibodies at the predicted size of 46 kDa (Figure 3B). Detection of purified *Seq16*/His by means of the anti-V5 antibody revealed a major band at 68 kDa and 2 double bands at ~53 and 43 kDa.

Immune sera directed against MBP fusion proteins or *Seq16*/His protein were used to detect recombinant and native proteins by Western immunoblot. By use of an anti-*Seq24*/MBP sera (Figure 4A), a similar double-band pattern was revealed both in 5-day fed tick salivary gland extract (at 43 and 40 kDa) and purified recombinant *Seq24*/His protein (at 46 and 40 kDa). Native *Seq24* was not detected in unfed tick salivary glands. Anti-*Seq16*/MBP (data not shown) and anti-*Seq16*/His (Figure 4B) sera revealed the following: for *Seq16*/His, the same pattern of bands detected by anti-V5 antibody; and for native *Seq16*, a 43-kDa band in fed tick

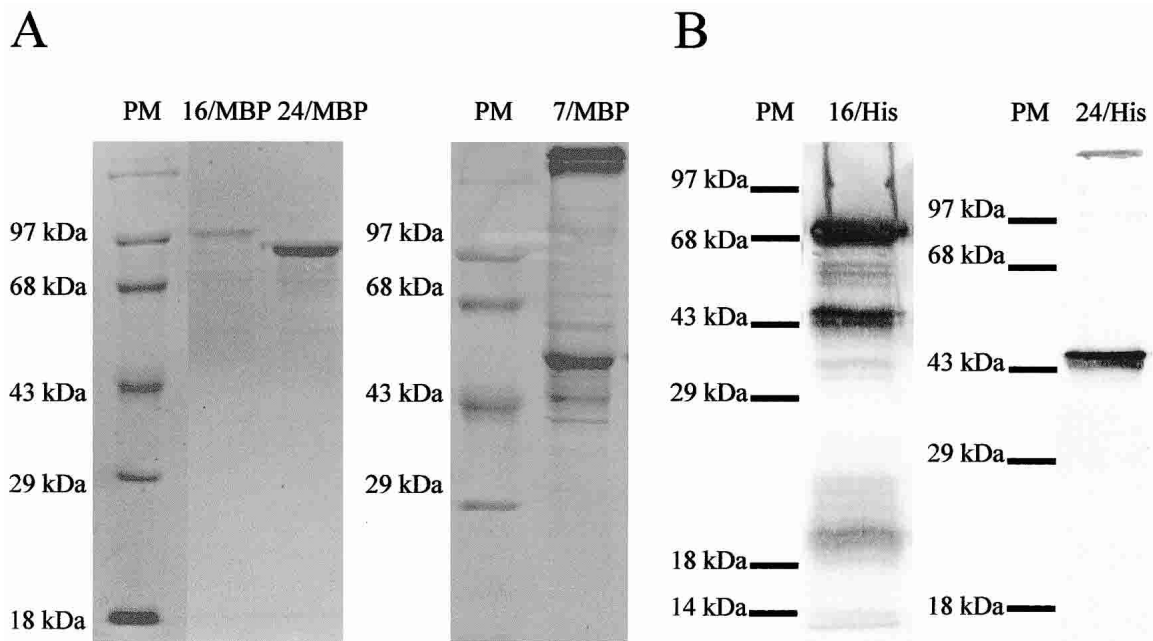


FIGURE 3. Western immunoblot detection of recombinant proteins. **(A)** Purified recombinant Seq7/maltose binding protein (7/MBP), Seq16/MBP (16/MBP), and Seq24/MBP (24/MBP) proteins were visualized on Coomassie blue-stained 10% sodium dodecyl sulfate-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE) gels. **(B)** Purified Seq16/His (16/His) and Seq24/His (24/His) were separated on 10% SDS-PAGE gels, and recombinant proteins were detected by an anti-V5 antibody.

during blood meal ingestion. *seq29*, a clone originated from the full-length cDNA library, was detected only in the salivary glands of engorged ticks. In this manner, we have identified 28 partial or complete *I. ricinus* mRNAs differentially expressed between the salivary glands of 5-day fed and unfed

ticks. Some show increased expression in the salivary glands of engorged ticks or no expression in the salivary glands of unfed ticks.

seq7, *seq16*, and *seq24* were selected for further analysis because they were found to be homologous to immunomod-

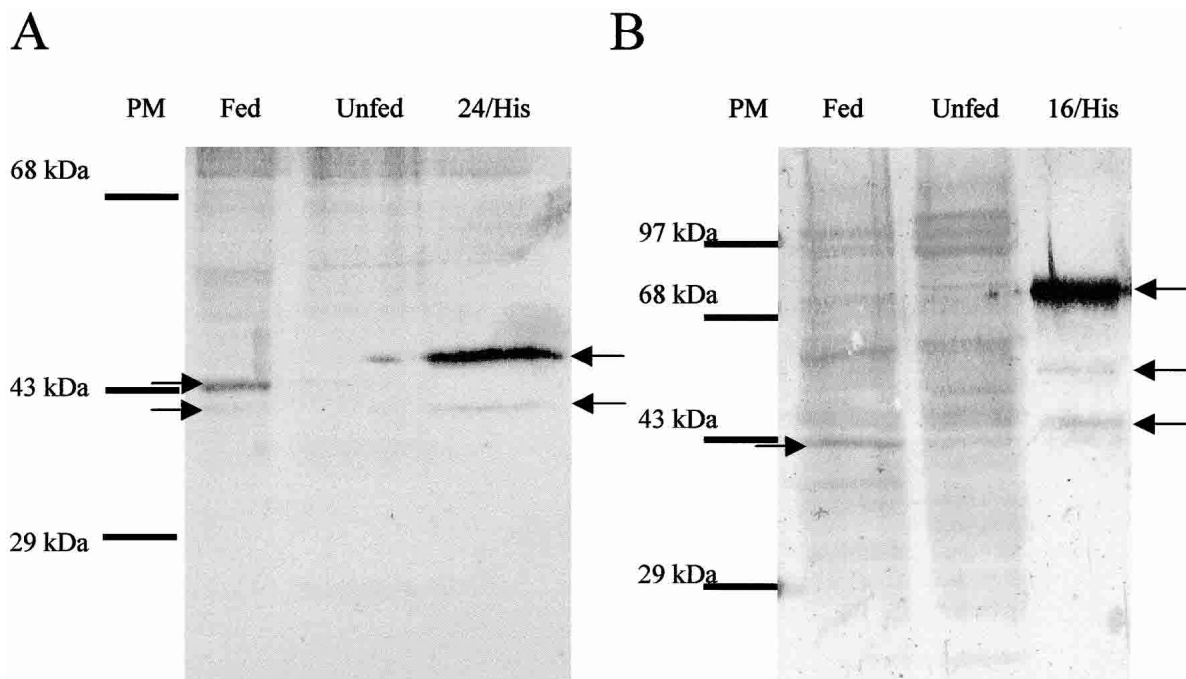


FIGURE 4. Western immunoblot detection of native, Seq16/His, and Seq24/His proteins. **(A)** Detection of a double band pattern both in fed tick salivary glands (fed) and in Seq24/His (24/His), whereas no protein was detected in unfed tick salivary glands (unfed). **(B)** Anti-Seq16/His serum detected Seq16/His (16/His) and native Seq16 in fed tick salivary glands (fed), whereas Seq16 was not detected in unfed tick salivary glands (unfed).

latory and anticoagulant proteins. Computational analysis of the full-length deduced amino acid sequences suggested that Seq7 was homologous to TFPI, a Kunitz-type protein, possessing 3 KPI domains, which is involved in the regulation of blood coagulation by inhibiting FXa and FVIIa.³⁴ Seq7 contains a domain with homology to the KPI domain 1. Therefore, Seq7 might inhibit factors in the vertebrate coagulation cascade such as FVIIa.³⁵

Seq16 was found to have a conserved motif suggesting that it is homologous to different zinc-dependent metalloproteinase proteins of the Metzincin superfamily.³⁶ Among them, both a mouse secretory protein containing thrombospondin motifs and the *Bothrops jararaca* Jararagin are known inhibitors of platelet aggregation mediated by different adhesive proteins.^{37,38} Thus, we hypothesize that Seq16 encodes a metalloproteinase that may inhibit platelet aggregation during blood feeding.

Seq24 is homologous to several genes from the serine protease inhibitor (Serp) family, among them the human thrombin inhibitor³⁹ and the pig monocyte/neutrophil elastase inhibitor proteins.⁴⁰ These similarities, and the fact that Seq24 is predicted to encode a Serpin motif, prompt us to suggest that this protein may be a serine protease inhibitor that acts in the modulation of host defenses or interferes with the coagulation cascade.

Recombinant Seq7, Seq16, and Seq24 proteins were produced in bacterial or mammalian expression systems to study expression of the genes in tick salivary glands. Recombinant Seq16 and Seq24 used to immunize mice generated polyclonal antisera that detect the corresponding native proteins in unfed or 5-day fed tick salivary glands extracts or the purified Seq16/His and Seq24/His proteins. Native Seq24 was detected in salivary glands of blood-fed ticks, but not in salivary glands of unfed ticks (Figure 4A). Anti-Seq16/His serum detected recombinant Seq16/His protein expressed in mammalian cells (Figure 4B). The native protein was recognized less specifically in fed tick salivary glands extracts, and no or low expression was detected in unfed tick salivary glands extract (Figure 4B). Recombinant Seq16 was mainly detected at 68 kDa and less abundantly at 43 kDa, whereas the native counterpart was mainly detected at 43 kDa. This could suggest that the 68-kDa form of the Seq16 protein is a propeptide, whereas the 43-kDa form is the active form. The similar patterns of bands observed between the recombinant and the native proteins indicate that *seq16* and *seq24* mRNAs encode proteins that do have their counterpart in *I. ricinus* salivary glands at the fifth day of engorgement. In addition, the lack of detection of the proteins, or their low level of expression, in unfed tick salivary glands confirms the differential expression of Seq16 and Seq24, as was previously showed by RT-PCR.

This work initiates the molecular characterization of a novel set of genes whose expression is induced by the fifth day of tick engorgement. By analyzing 2 cDNA libraries, several mRNAs were identified. Those induced mRNAs may be of particular importance for a better understanding of tick-host-pathogen relationships. Further experiments will evaluate mechanisms by which these genes contribute to the *I. ricinus* blood feeding process and in pathogen transmission.

Acknowledgments: We thank J.-C. Renauld (Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels), for critical reading of the article in manuscript and Olivier Rais for pro-

viding the *I. ricinus* ticks. This work was supported by an International Brachet Stiftung grant (GR97-1/6). G.L. is supported by a grant from the Fonds de la Recherche Industrielle et Agricole.

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