

Frequency of the L1014F Mutation in the Sodium Channel Gene, in *Culex quinquefasciatus* (Diptera: Culicidae) Populations From Rural and Urban Areas of Yucatan State, Mexico

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Abstract

Culex quinquefasciatus Say (Diptera: Culicidae) is a mosquito species that has attracted a lot of attention from a medical and veterinary point of view; however, little is known about the frequency of L1014F mutations that have been found in the sodium channel gene, with this being a target for DDT and pyrethroid insecticides. The distribution and frequency of the L1014F mutation in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* populations was determined in rural and urban areas of Yucatan, Mexico from January 2015 to March 2016. Nine hundred fifty adult females out of 17,727 immature states were collected and analyzed in all sites sampled ($n = 10$). Susceptible homozygotes were identified (L1014/L1014) in 12% (114/950), heterozygous individuals (F1014/L1014) in 34% (323/950), and mutated homozygotes (F1014/F1014) in 54% (513/950) during the dry and rainy seasons. In this work, study areas with a high frequency of L1014F mutation were identified. These findings may help guarantee a more effective and efficient use of the resources available for the control of this vector.

Key words: *Culex quinquefasciatus*, L1014F-*kdr*, frequency, rural and urban areas, Yucatan

Culex quinquefasciatus Say (Diptera: Culicidae) is a member of the *Culex pipiens* complex with a worldwide distribution and of medical and veterinary importance. It is one of the main vectors of *Wuchereria bancrofti* that causes lymphatic filariasis (White 1989), West Nile Virus (WNV), Rift Valley fever virus, Saint Louis encephalitis virus, and Sindbis virus under laboratory conditions (Turell 2012). It is currently not clearly known to be a Zika virus vector (Hart et al. 2017). However, in Brazil, it was reported that a vector was infected with this virus (Duschinka et al. 2017), Mexico (D Elizondo-Quiroga et al. 2018). Additionally, WNV was detected in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* in Nuevo Leon, Mexico (Elizondo-Quiroga et al. 2005). In Yucatan, Mexico, several bird and mammal species have been seropositive for WNV by the plaque reduction neutralization test (Farfan-Ale et al. 2006). *Cx. quinquefasciatus* is distributed throughout the state of

Yucatan, Mexico (Baak -Baak et al. 2017); therefore, this state would be considered a high-risk area for the transmission of arboviruses by this vector. The general control of disease-transmitting mosquito vectors is based on the application of insecticides, such as pyrethroid insecticides, which are mostly used for indoor residual spraying and mosquito net impregnation due to their low toxicity to mammals and their rapid knock-down effect on insects. However, these control strategies applied to *Aedes aegypti* are probably indirectly affecting the *Cx. quinquefasciatus* populations. (Ndiath et al. 2012, Ponce et al. 2016). In Mexico, a *kdr* Ile1,016 mutation was reported in populations of *Ae. aegypti* and was associated with resistance to pyrethroid insecticides (Deming et al. 2016, Saavedra Rodriguez et al. 2007); this indicates significant differences in the frequency of mutations associated with resistance. Insect species have presented

mutations that confer resistance to knock down and reduce the binding of insecticides to sodium channels, which is the target of DDT insecticides and pyrethroids (Williamson et al. 1996, Dong 1997, Martínez-Torres et al. 1998, 1999, Chen et al. 2017). Studies conducted (Ponce et al. 2016) in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* populations from the states of Nuevo Leon and Coahuila, which are located in northeastern Mexico, have found an L1014F mutation, which is a substitution of leucine by phenylalanine at position 1014 that causes sodium channel sensitivity (O'Reilly et al. 2006, Wondji et al. 2008). However, little is known about the frequency of the L1014F mutation in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* mosquito populations in southeastern Mexico, a broad area with conditions conducive to proliferation of these vectors. Thus, we considered it necessary to conduct studies to determine the current frequency of the L1014F mutation in different areas of the state of Yucatan, Mexico to reinforce health and sanitary measures that are applied in this state.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

This study was carried out in 10 localities of the state of Yucatan, located on the northern tip of the Yucatan Peninsula in southeastern Mexico, bordered on the north by the Gulf of Mexico, on the east and southeast by Quintana Roo, and on the west and southwest by Campeche. The 10 areas were selected for this study, based on frequent reports of dengue cases obtained in studies performed with the dengue vector *Ae. aegypti* in areas with a high rate of dengue cases including urban areas with >10,000 inhabitants and rural areas with <10,000 (www.censo2010.org.mx/; last accessed December 2014).

Collection Sites

Approximately 17,727 immature states of *Cx. quinquefasciatus* were collected in 508 artificial breeding sites in January 2015 and March 2016 from 10 sites of the state of Yucatan, Mexico during the rainy and dry seasons. The larvae were transported to the insectarium of the Arbovirology laboratory to be identified until reaching the adult stage; fifty females were selected for each season, with a total of 100 females for each site.

Genomic DNA Extraction

We selected fifty 2-d-old female mosquitoes from each locality according to WHO criteria (1998). The mosquitoes were placed individually in 1.5-ml Eppendorf tubes for maceration and extraction of genomic DNA with the salt technique according to Black and DuTeau (1997). The concentration and purity of each sample were measured in a NanoDrop 2000 (Thermo Fisher Scientific). Then, we adjusted final concentration to 50 ng/μl for each of the samples.

Molecular Tests to Determine the Presence of 1014F Mutation

PCR was carried out; the first reaction was to amplify a fragment of the sodium channel gene of *Cx. quinquefasciatus*, the second reaction was to determine the presence of the L1014F (substitution of leucine to phenylalanine) mutation and susceptible alleles using specific primers according to Martínez-Torres et al. (1999) and Xu et al. (2011). The following temperature conditions were used in the first reaction, 95°C for 5 min, followed by 40 cycles at 94°C for 30 s, 55°C for 30 s, and 72°C for 1 min with one step of final extension at 72°C for 10 min. The conditions for the second reaction were 95°C for 1 min, 38 cycles of 94°C for 30 s, and 72°C for 1 min, 72°C for 10 min.

Data Analysis

The genotypes were calculated using a previous equation reported (García et al. 2009), dividing the number of individuals with a given genotype by the total number of mosquitoes analyzed as follows: 1) homozygous susceptible genotype frequency L1014/L1014, 2) homozygous mutant genotype frequency, F1014/F1014, and 3) heterozygous genotype frequency, L1014/F1014.

Results

Presence and Frequency of the 1014F Mutation

In total 950 *Cx. quinquefasciatus* individuals were analyzed in the two seasons. In the dry season, samples were not collected in the municipality of Motul, the frequency of homozygous susceptible (L1014/L1014) was 12% (114/950), heterozygotes (F1014/L1014) 34% (323/950), and homozygous mutated (F1014/F1014) 54% (513/950). When grouped by season, of the 450 females analyzed during the dry season, 14% (63/450) was identified as homozygous susceptible, 31.33% (141/450) as heterozygotes, and 54.67% (246/450) as homozygous mutated. In the rainy season, 500 females were analyzed with 10.2% (51/500) identified as homozygous susceptible, 36.4% (182/500) as heterozygotes, and 53.4% (267/500) as homozygous mutated. In the dry season, the presence of homozygous-mutated individuals, F1014/F1014, was similar in urban and rural areas with 58.4 and 50%, respectively (Fig. 1). However, differences were observed by study site. In the urban areas of Juan Pablo, Uman, and Kanasin, the L1014F mutation in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* was high, ranging from 71 to 98%. In the rural areas, the L1014F mutation was 96% in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* collected in Xkalakdzonot, 62% in Cauce, and 64% in Chochola (Table 1).

In the rainy season, urban areas, such as Juan Pablo II and Kanasin, maintained the F1014 mutation. A decreased frequency of the F1014 mutation in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* from Uman was observed, but the mutant gene was more frequent in mosquitos of Col. Centro. Notably, the frequency of the L1014F mutation was high in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* from all rural areas studied, ranging from 63 to 87% (Supplementary Table S2).

Discussion

High L1014F mutation frequencies have been determined in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* populations in 10 important sites in the state of Yucatan, Mexico, where strategies have been applied for the control of *Ae. aegypti*, a vector that has developed resistance to pyrethroid insecticides due to the frequency of mutations (Ile1016) (Flores et al. 2006, García-Rejon et al. 2018) found in the sodium channel gene. It has been shown that resistance to insecticides is not only caused by mutations in the sodium channel gene, but also by enzymatic mechanisms involved in their development (Bregues et al. 2003, Rodríguez et al. 2005, Deming et al. 2016). However, studies based on resistance in populations of *Ae. aegypti* in Merida City, Yucatan, have presented different variations in mutation frequencies associated with resistance to groups of insecticides such as chlorpyrifos (Deming et al. 2016) and organophosphate (Flores et al. 2006, Aponte et al. 2013), in places near the city of Merida (Flores et al. 2012). In the *Cx. quinquefasciatus* populations in Yucatan, Mexico, the frequency of the L1014F mutation related to insecticide resistance has been similar to studies conducted by Ponce et al. (2016) in northeastern Mexico, where the presence of the mutation was determined in 16 *Cx. quinquefasciatus* populations; nevertheless, the presence of this mutation has also been reported in *Anopheles* spp.,

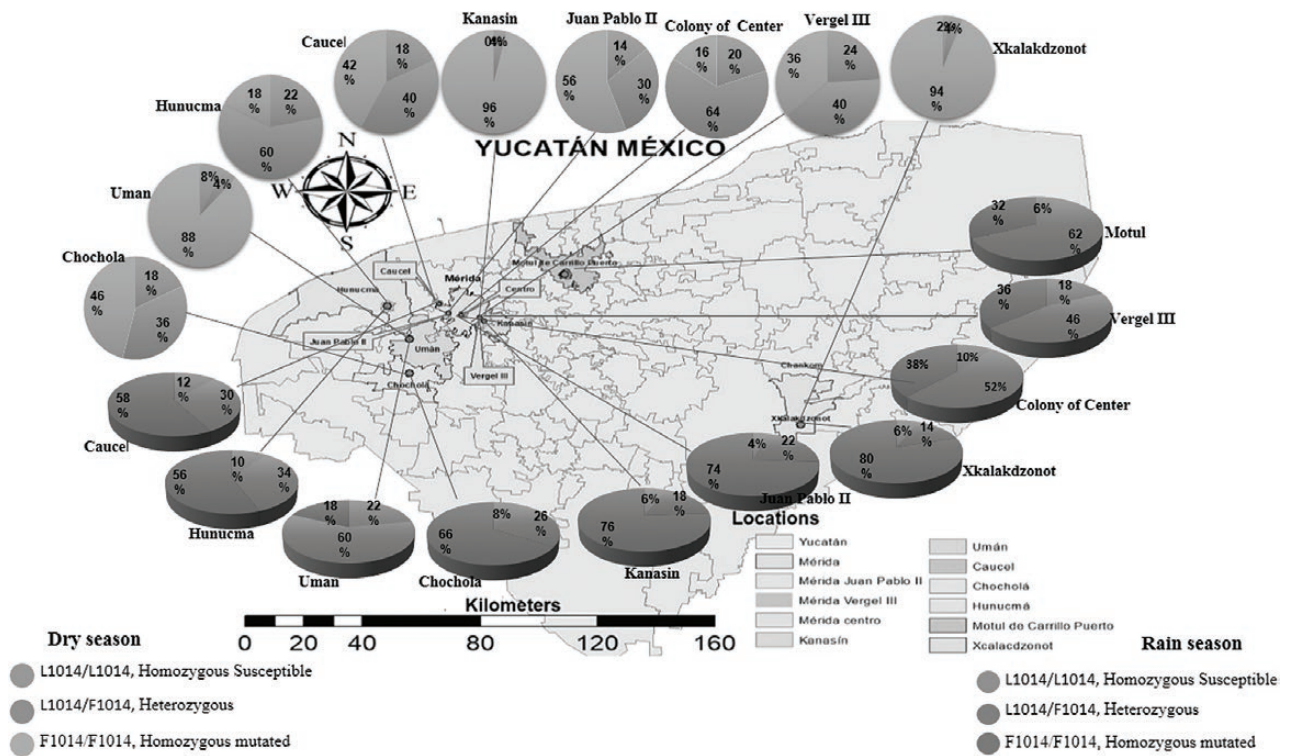


Fig. 1. Distribution of alleles L1014/L1014, L1014/F1014 and F1014/F1014 in populations of *Cx. quinquefasciatus* during the dry (from Chochola to Xkalakdzonot, upper part) and rain (from Caucel Motul, lower part) seasons. Circular plots represent the percentage of alleles present at each site.

Table 1. Genotypes present in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* mosquito populations during the dry season in 2015

Zone	Colony/Municipality	Year	No. of mosquitoes	AA	AT	TT	Allele frequency	
							R	S
Urban	Col. Juan Pablo II	2015	50	7	15	28	0.71	0.29
	Col. Vergel III	2015	50	12	20	18	0.56	0.44
	Col. Centro	2015	50	10	32	8	0.48	0.52
	Kanasin	2016	50	0	2	48	0.98	0.02
	Uman	2016	50	4	2	44	0.90	0.10
	Hunucma	2015	50	11	30	9	0.48	0.52
Rural	Motul	2015	50	-	-	-	-	-
	Caucel	2015	50	9	20	21	0.62	0.38
	Chochola	2015	50	9	18	23	0.64	0.36
	Xkalaktzonot	2016	50	1	2	47	0.96	0.04

Col. = colony; AA = homozygous Susceptible; AT = heterozygous; TT = homozygous mutated.

three *Culex* spp., and *Cx. pipiens* (Qiang et al. 2011, Dong et al. 2014, Scott et al. 2015, Bkhache et al. 2016) in urban and rural sites in Morocco, modifying the structure of the sodium channel (Singh et al. 2015, Bkhache et al. 2016, Niang et al. 2016). The control programs focused on *Ae. aegypti* have had an indirect impact on *Cx. quinquefasciatus* populations (Flores et al. 2013, Ponce et al. 2016, Vazquez-Prokopec et al. 2017).

The frequencies of the L1014F mutations observed in the *Cx. quinquefasciatus* populations in rural and urban areas sampled in our study probably may be related to their feeding habitat, their reproduction in wastewater as well as in containers contaminated with insecticides that are used by farmers and which cause changes in the epidermal structure of the insect. This makes them more tolerant to insecticides and increases the production of metabolic enzymes and mutations that affect the target sites of insecticides (Osta et al. 2012).

The distribution of the frequency of the L1014F mutation, four sites in the urban area (Col. Juan Pablo II, Col. Centro, Uman, and Kanasin), revealed high frequencies of the mutated allele (1014F) during the dry and rainy seasons, whereas in the rural area, the municipality of Xkalakdzonot was the site that showed high frequencies of the mutated allele (1014F) in the two seasons, showing a statistically significant difference in the frequency of the mutation in *Cx. quinquefasciatus* populations in the dry season ($X^2 = 108.48, P \leq 0.05$) and the rainy season ($X^2 = 161.78, P \leq 0.05$). Also shown that there is an association between the mutation frequency and the *Cx. quinquefasciatus* collection area in rural communities ($X^2 = 10.413, gl = 4, P = 0.034$) and urban areas ($X^2 = 19.257, gl = 4, P = 0.001$). These findings are probably due to the use of personal consumption products, such as household insecticides as mentioned by Loroño-Pino et al. (2014) as well as the frequent use of pyrethroids for the

control of *Ae. aegypti* around houses, generating a selection pressure in urban areas mentioned by Saavedra-Rodríguez et al. (2015). This causes the increase of mutant 1014F alleles related to insecticide resistance, an event that could explain the high frequencies found in some urban areas. On the other hand, rural areas such as Motul and Xkalakdzonot showed high percentages of 1014F mutations in mosquito populations collected in these sites. It is worth mentioning that the municipality of Xkalakdzonot was the one that presented the highest frequency of mutant 1014F alleles in both seasons of the year (rainy and dry). This shows high values with respect to other sites in the rural area. High frequency of the L1014F mutation is probably due to several factors, such as the gene flow in a range of 180 km (Gorrochotegui 2002, Sarkar et al. 2009), as well as the exposure of these vectors to the insecticides used in agriculture (Molly 2016). In many rural communities, people work in crop fields with various types of insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides available on the market and apply them for the control of pests. This increases the probability of inducing resistance to insecticides (Nkya et al. 2014, Molly 2016). This possibly explains the differences observed in each site.

In this work, we conclude that the L1014F mutation related to insecticide resistance in *Cx. quiquefasciatus* populations in urban and rural areas in the state of Yucatan, Mexico is present in all sites and at different times of the year and that there are variants of allelic frequency depending on the weather conditions of the year, which is of great importance for early detection to exercise control by selecting suitable insecticides.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are available at *Journal of Medical Entomology* online.

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