

MMP13 Polymorphism Decreases Risk for Dental Caries

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Key Words

Dental caries · Genetic susceptibility · Matrix metalloproteinases · Matrix metalloproteinase inhibitors, polymorphisms

Abstract

Recent evidence suggests that genetic studies may contribute to a better understanding of individual susceptibility to caries. Matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs) and their tissue inhibitors have been suggested to be involved in the caries process. The purpose of this study was to determine if polymorphisms in *MMP2* (rs243865), *MMP9* (rs17576), *MMP13* (rs2252070), and *TIMP2* (rs7501477) were associated with caries. Eligible unrelated children and adolescents were evaluated using a cross-sectional design. Data on oral health habits was obtained through a questionnaire and caries data was collected by clinical examination. Genotyping of the selected polymorphisms was carried out by real-time PCR. Allele and genotype frequencies were compared between individuals with and without caries experience. Of 505 subjects, 212 were caries-free and most subjects (61.2%) had

mixed dentition. Allele frequency of *MMP2*, *MMP13* and *TIMP2* was different between caries-affected and caries-free individuals, with significant association for *MMP13* ($p = 0.004$). Mutant allele carriers for *MMP13* demonstrated a significantly decreased risk for caries (OR = 0.538, 95% CI 0.313–0.926); this result remained significant after adjustment for candidate genes, type of dentition and dietary factors. Allelic and genotype frequencies of the polymorphism in *MMP9* were similar in caries-affected and caries-free individuals. Genetic variations in *MMP13* may contribute to individual differences in caries susceptibility. Our findings reinforce that susceptibility to caries results from gene-environment interactions.

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Matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs) are major regulators of extracellular matrix (ECM) turnover and constitute an important family of zinc-dependent endopeptidases, which are able to degrade most components of ECM. MMPs have been well documented to have an important function in the organization of enamel and den-

tin organic matrix, suggesting their participation in the control and progression of caries [Tjaderhane et al., 1998; Sulkala et al., 2001; Chaussain-Miller et al., 2006; Shimada et al., 2009].

The MMP family is composed of 23 enzymes that share significant sequence homologies. They can be classified into subfamilies such as collagenases, stromelysins, gelatinases and membrane-type MMPs [Hannas et al., 2007]. MMP2 and MMP9 are gelatinases that can degrade denatured collagens (gelatins) and type IV collagen, which is the major structural component of the ECM [Crouch et al., 1980; Steffensen et al., 1995]. MMP13 is a collagenase 3 that can degrade ECM components, such as collagens, gelatin, aggrecan, perlecan and fibronectin [Sulkala et al., 2004].

Tissue inhibitors of metalloproteinases (TIMPs) are endogenous inhibitors of activated MMPs that play a role in normal processes such as tissue development [Brew and Nagase, 2010]. The TIMP family consists of four members. The balance between activated MMPs and TIMPs controls the extent of ECM remodeling [Hannas et al., 2007; Brew and Nagase, 2010]. TIMP2 has been shown to interact with MMP2 contributing to many biological functions [Hernandez-Barrantes et al., 2000].

MMPs and TIMPs have an important function in dental development and they have been proposed to be involved in caries lesion progression [Chaussain-Miller et al., 2006; Hannas et al., 2007]. MMP2 can cleave amelogenin, the major structural protein component of the enamel matrix, into several fragments and therefore, play an important role during tooth development [Caron et al., 2001]. A recent study revealed increased MMP2 expression in caries-affected dentine compared to sound dentine [Toledano et al., 2010]. MMP9 is the major MMP in whole saliva and appears to be the predominant gelatinolytic enzyme in dentin caries lesions [Tjaderhane et al., 1998]. MMP13 is involved in bone development and repair [Yamagiwa et al., 1999; Inada et al., 2004] and is expressed in pulp dental tissue [Sulkala et al., 2004]. TIMP2 was detected in enamel matrix [Yoshihara et al., 2003] and is coexpressed with MMP2 and MMP9 during mouse tooth morphogenesis [Sahlberg et al., 1999]. TIMP2 is also an endogenous inhibitor of MMP13 [Knauper et al., 1996].

Genes related to enamel development and mineralization such as *amelogenin*, *ameloblastin*, *tuftelin* and *amelysin* have been associated with caries [Slayton et al., 2005; Deeley et al., 2008; Patir et al., 2008; Tannure et al., 2012b]. Also, an association between caries and saliva levels of specific proline-rich proteins (encoded by *PRH1*

and *PRH2* genes), a saliva component that influences the attachment of bacteria, was reported [Zakhary et al., 2007]. Genetics also controls saliva function as there is evidence of association between buffer capacity and polymorphisms in the carbonic anhydrase 6 gene in children [Peres et al., 2010]. Host response to bacterial colonization is also controlled by individual genetic background. Variation in the bacterial ligand *CD14* was associated with the presence of four or more carious lesions in children [De Soet et al., 2008]. Beta-defensins have also been associated with high caries experience in adults [Ozturk et al., 2010].

Functional polymorphisms in the *MMP* and *TIMP* genes could lead to either increased or decreased activities and can affect the enamel development and caries establishment. The positive hypothesis of this study is that polymorphisms in *MMP2*, *MMP9*, *MMP13* and *TIMP2* are associated with caries susceptibility.

Materials and Methods

The Human Ethics Committee of the Health Department of the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (113/09) approved this study. Informed consent was obtained from all participating individuals or parents/legal guardians.

Eligible unrelated children and adolescents from 3 to 21 years of age were enrolled using a cohort design in the Pediatric Dental Clinics of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro during the period of February 2009 to February 2011.

The ethnicity definition was ascertained based on self-reported information. The institution where the subjects were recruited is located in the Southeast of Brazil, the most densely populated and industrialized region of the country. The Southeast region of Brazil comprises an ethnic admixture of Caucasians (European descent, 53.6%) and people of African descent (obviously of mixed European, 33.6% or not obviously mixed Africans, 12.3%). The remaining 0.5% of the population is of Amerindian or Asian descent [IBGE, 2007].

All subjects or parents/caregivers answered a questionnaire about fluoride exposure history and oral hygiene habits. Information was also sought on the child's frequency of ingesting cakes, cookies, and sweets between meals on the day prior to completing the questionnaire [Tannure et al., 2012a].

Determination of Caries Experience

Two pediatric dentists (P.N.T. and E.C.K.) conducted the clinical examinations [Tannure et al., 2012a]. Cohen's kappa values for agreement between examiners were 0.91. Caries was diagnosed in primary and permanent teeth by visual examination and was registered if there was definite visual evidence with a breach in the enamel and extension into dentine. Subjects were seated in a dental chair, and the examiner used a probe and dental mirror according to the criteria recommended by the World Health Organization guidelines. Caries was assessed using the DMFT and/or dmft indexes. The subjects were classified according to caries

Table 1. Candidate gene markers studied

Gene and base change	Location in the gene	SNP	Allele	Alteration	Locus	References
<i>MMP2</i> (C/T)	promoter	rs243865	T	down-regulation ^a	16q13–q21	Rodriguez-Lopez et al. [2006]
<i>MMP9</i> (A/G)	exon 6	rs17576	–	Gln279Arg ^b	20q1–q13	Singh et al. [2010]
<i>MMP13</i> (A/G)	promoter	rs2252070	A	up-regulation ^a	11q22.3	Rodriguez-Lopez et al. [2006]
<i>TIMP2</i> (G/T)	promoter	rs7501477	T	down-regulation ^a	17q25	Peterson et al. [2009]

^a Change in transcription; reported regulation of gene expression determined by the mentioned allele.

^b Missense; boldface indicates ancestral allele.

experience level. They were categorized into two groups: caries-free (subjects with dmft/DMFT = 0) and caries experience (dmft/DMFT ≥ 1).

Determination of Genotypes

Genomic DNA for molecular analysis was extracted from buccal cells based on the modified reported method [Küchler et al., 2012]. Genetic polymorphisms in the *MMP2*, *MMP9*, *MMP13* and *TIMP2* were genotyped by real-time polymerase chain reactions using the Taqman assay [Ranade et al., 2001] (Agilent Technologies, Stratagene Mx3005P). Primers, probes and universal master mix were provided by Applied Biosystems (Foster City, Calif., USA).

Three single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in the promoters of the genes encoding *MMP2*, *MMP13* and *TIMP2* [Rodriguez-Lopez et al., 2006; Peterson et al., 2009] and one SNP in a coding region in *MMP9* [Singh et al., 2010] were selected for this study (table 1).

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0). The Student's test, odds ratio calculations and χ^2 test were used to analyze the age, ethnicity, gender, preventive habits between groups with caries experience and caries-free groups. Odds ratio calculations and χ^2 test at a level of significance of 0.05 were also performed to evaluate if subgroups presented preferential genotype and allele associations. The binary logistic regression was adjusted for genotype, type of dentition and dietary factor. Gene-gene interactions were also ascertained with binary logistic regression analysis. The standard χ^2 test was used to test for deviation from Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium.

Results

Of 505 subjects recruited in this study, 212 (41.9%) were caries-free. Caries-free subjects were older than subjects with caries experience ($p = 0.044$). The mean DMFT was 0.73 (SD ± 1.53) and the dmft was 2.35 (SD ± 2.85). A significant difference for factors like age, type of dentition and dietary factors amongst caries experience and

caries-free were observed in the present study. The institution where the study was conducted, as well as children's residence, is in a geographic area with fluoridated water supply, and all subjects/guardians reported the use of fluoridated dentifrice. The demographic and clinical details of the subjects are presented in table 2.

The genotype and allele frequency distribution of four polymorphic sites in genes selected amongst caries-free subjects and subjects with caries experience is presented in table 3. All SNPs were in Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium in unaffected individuals. The variant allele frequencies of *MMP2*, *MMP13* and *TIMP2* were different between groups with caries experience and caries-free groups, with significant association in *MMP13* ($p = 0.004$). For *MMP13* a significant difference in genotype distribution was also observed between subjects with caries experience and the caries-free group ($p = 0.042$). Allelic and genotype frequencies of the polymorphism in *MMP9* were similar in caries-affected and caries-free individuals (table 3). No difference was observed when we analyzed the genotype and allele distribution according to caries experience in deciduous teeth (dmft) and caries experience in permanent teeth (DMFT; data not shown, $p > 0.05$).

In order to verify if the association between genetic variants and caries susceptibility could be affected by other factors, we performed a binary logistic regression adjusted for genotypes, type of dentition and dietary factor (table 4). In *MMP13*, the genotype GG showed significant association with caries experience ($p = 0.025$), demonstrating a decreased risk for caries (OR = 0.538, 95% CI 0.313–0.926). In the multivariate analysis, this result together with caries experience in mixed dentition and ingestion of sweets between meals remained significant when adjusted for variables selected. When *TIMP2* genotype alone was used as the dependent variable, no

Table 2. Demographic data and risk factors for caries in the study subjects (n = 505)

	Caries experience (n = 293)	Caries-free (n = 212)	OR (95% CI)	p value
Mean age ± SD, years	8.83 ± 2.95	9.40 ± 3.39	0.943 (0.891–0.999)	0.044
Type of dentition (%)				0.001
Permanent dentition	52 (17.7)	71 (33.5)	reference	
Mixed dentition	201 (68.6)	108 (50.9)	2.541 (1.657–3.896)	
Primary dentition	40 (13.7)	33 (15.6)	1.655 (0.923–2.966)	
Gender (%)				0.528
Female	141 (48.1)	96 (45.3)	1.120 (0.786–1.598)	
Male	152 (51.9)	116 (54.7)	reference	
Ethnicity (%)				0.533
Caucasian	166 (56.7)	126 (59.4)	0.892 (0.623–1.277)	
Afro-descendants	127 (43.3)	86 (40.6)	reference	
Tooth-brushing (%)				0.385
1 ×	20 (6.8)	16 (7.5)	1.126 (0.566–2.238)	
2 ×	109 (37.2)	68 (32.1)	1.312 (0.892–1.931)	
3 × or more	149 (50.9)	122 (57.6)	reference	
No answer	13 (4.4)	6 (2.8)		
Use of dental floss daily (%)				0.181
Yes	81 (27.7)	71 (33.5)	reference	
No	199 (67.9)	134 (63.2)	1.302 (0.884–1.916)	
No answer	13 (4.4)	7 (3.3)		
Dietary factors (sweets between meals) (%)				0.001
Yes	186 (63.5)	90 (42.5)	2.356 (1.641–3.383)	
No	107 (36.5)	122 (57.5)	reference	

χ^2 test, $p \leq 0.05$ indicates statistical significance.

Table 3. Summary of allele and genotype frequencies

Subjects	Alleles (%)		p value	OR (95% CI)	Genotypes (%)			p value
	T	C			CC	CT	TT	
<i>MMP2 rs243865 (C>T)</i>								
Caries experience	172 (29.6)	408 (70.4)	0.059	1.31 (0.98–1.76)	157 (54.1)	94 (32.4)	39 (13.5)	0.232
Caries-free	103 (24.2)	321 (75.8)			130 (61.3)	61 (28.7)	21 (10.0)	
<i>MMP9 rs17576 (A>G)</i>								
Caries experience	186 (31.8)	398 (68.2)	0.785	1.04 (0.79–1.37)	153 (52.3)	92 (31.5)	47 (16.2)	0.115
Caries-free	131 (31.0)	291 (69.0)			104 (49.3)	83 (39.3)	24 (11.4)	
<i>MMP13 rs2252070 (A>G)</i>								
Caries experience	160 (27.5)	422 (72.5)	0.004	0.67 (0.51–0.89)	163 (56.0)	96 (33.0)	32 (11.0)	0.042
Caries-free	150 (36.0)	266 (64.0)			96 (45.4)	80 (37.9)	35 (16.7)	
<i>TIMP2 rs7501477 (G>T)</i>								
Caries experience	119 (20.5)	459 (79.5)	0.059	1.38 (0.97–1.95)	181 (62.6)	97 (33.5)	11 (3.9)	0.201
Caries-free	65 (15.8)	345 (84.2)			145 (69.0)	55 (26.2)	10 (4.8)	

$p \leq 0.05$ indicates statistical significance.

Table 4. Regression analysis of children and adolescent sample

Variables	Univariate analysis		Multivariate analysis	
	p value	OR (95% CI)	p value	OR (95% CI)
<i>MMP2</i>				
CC	reference		reference	
CT	0.229	1.276 (0.858–1.898)	0.344	1.229 (0.802–1.885)
TT	0.145	1.538 (0.862–2.744)	0.214	1.503 (0.791–2.856)
<i>MMP9</i>				
AA	reference		reference	
AG	0.152	0.753 (0.511–1.110)	0.164	0.744 (0.490–1.129)
GG	0.309	1.1331 (0.767–2.310)	0.320	1.354 (0.745–2.458)
<i>MMP13</i>				
AA	reference			
AG	0.081	0.707 (0.479–1.043)	0.100	0.705 (0.464–1.070)
GG	0.025	0.538 (0.313–0.926)	0.046	0.554 (0.310–0.990)
<i>TIMP2</i>				
GG	reference		reference	
GT	0.088	1.413 (0.950–2.100)	0.048	1.532 (1.004–2.339)
TT	0.779	0.881 (0.364–2.133)	0.782	0.872 (0.332–2.293)
Type of dentition				
Permanent dentition	reference		reference	
Mixed dentition	0.001	2.541 (1.657–3.896)	0.001	2.639 (1.676–4.155)
Primary dentition	0.091	1.655 (0.923–2.966)	0.259	1.427 (0.770–2.644)
Sweets between meals				
Yes	0.001	2.356 (1.641–3.383)	0.001	2.412 (1.641–3.547)
No	reference		reference	

p ≤ 0.05 indicates statistical significance.

significant association was observed but it became significant after adjustment for genotypes, type of dentition and diet (p = 0.048; OR = 1.532, 95% CI 1.004–2.339).

Gene-gene interactions that could involve any of the four ECM protease SNPs were ascertained with binary logistic regression analysis. Different genotype combinations of studied polymorphisms were tested and no influence of combinations on caries experience was observed (data not show).

Discussion

To the best of our knowledge this is the first report that investigates gene polymorphisms in MMPs and their associations in caries experience. Our present work provided evidence that the polymorphisms studied in the *MMP13* gene is associated with alterations in risk for caries experience in a group of Brazilian children and adolescents with similar access to oral care and fluoride exposure.

In animal models, specifically in growing rat incisors, it was shown that MMPs 2, 3, 9, and 20 play a critical role [Goldberg et al., 2003]. Another study found differential expression of MMPs 2, 9 and RECK in the different phases of amelogenesis, signifying that tissue remodeling is rigorously controlled during dental mineralization [Paiva et al., 2009]. These previous results suggested potential candidate genes for caries susceptibility.

In line with our results, other studies demonstrated that genes involved in enamel development were associated with increased caries susceptibility [Slayton et al., 2005; Deeley et al., 2008; Patir et al., 2008; Tannure et al., 2012b]. Genetic variations in these genes contribute to structural alterations of the enamel that may cause enamel porosity, decreased mineral content, presence of enamel crystal inhibitory proteins, higher levels of mineral loss under acid conditions and/or facilitate bacterial attachment and biofilm deposition [Shuler, 2001; Patir et al., 2008].

Considering the multifactorial nature of the caries disease, environmental factors such as low socioeconomic

status, poor oral hygiene, and cariogenic diet are variables contributing to its development. Human saliva contains gelatinases [van Strijp et al., 2003] and indeed, MMP2, MMP8 and MMP9 can be activated at low pH level followed by neutralization [Tjaderhane et al., 1998]. According to our results, ingestion of sweets between meals was the environmental factor that interacted with MMPs, resulting in an increased risk to caries experience. Following this pattern, subjects with poor oral hygiene and cariogenic diet ingestion have intermittent pH fluctuations. These fluctuations could lead to MMP activation (under acidic conditions) and MMP action (at neutral pH) that destroy the dentin matrix [Chaussain-Miller et al., 2006].

We assume that MMPs and TIMPs are highly expressed in two key moments that modify caries susceptibility. First, these genes participate in enamel formation, in histomorphogenesis and cytodifferentiation [Yoshida et al., 2003]. Both events are accompanied by changes in cellular organization and remodeling of the ECM [Yoshida et al., 2003]. MMP2 is expressed by ameloblasts and odontoblasts and plays a role in the biomineralization processes responsible for the formation of enamel and dentin [Caron et al., 2001]. Second, these enzymes are activated by pH fluctuations in saliva and again could influence caries experience.

Results of the present study indicate that MMP13 polymorphism shows an association with dental caries susceptibility. It is known that the polymorphism selected in our study is located in the promoter region of MMP13 and seems to alter the expression of the gene [Fernandez-Cadenas et al., 2011]. However, the exact role of MMP13 in enamel and/or dentin cannot be explained by the current knowledge of tooth development. *MMP13*-null mice have profound defects in growth plate cartilage and delay in endochondral ossification and formation and vascularization of primary ossification centers, however, no description of the dentition status was provided [Inada et al., 2004]. It is reasonable to hypothesize that tooth mineralization may also be affected in these animals.

Considering the limits of this genetic epidemiological approach, our study did not evaluate other mechanisms of enzyme expression in the oral environment. We can speculate that a high ratio of MMP13 to TIMP2 is the result of a cariogenic oral environment, mainly due to a low pH level after the ingestion of sweets between meals. In our regression analysis, genetic markers in *MMP13* and *TIMP2* in combination with other genes, type of dentition and dietary factors were associated with caries sus-

ceptibility. *MMP13* is expressed during the bud stage of dental development in the mouse [Morris-Wiman et al., 2000] and variation in expression of *MMP13* in humans due to hypomorphic alleles could generate enamel that is more susceptible to high cariogenic challenges.

MMP9 was shown by zymography and Western blot to be the main gelatinase in whole saliva, in gingival crevicular fluid and several caries lesions [Tjaderhane et al., 1998; van Strijp et al., 2003]. On the other hand, a lack of association between *MMP9* polymorphism and dental caries was verified and no gene-gene interactions could be observed in our findings.

In summary, our results suggest that genetic variations in *MMP13* may contribute to caries susceptibility and that susceptibility to caries results from gene-environment interactions. Further studies that include genes involved in enamel development, salivary function and immune response may lead to a better understanding of genetic determinants of caries risk.

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Disclosure Statement

No conflicts of interest.

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