AEM Accepts, published online ahead of print on 11 October 2013
Appl. Environ. Microbiol. doi:10.1128/AEM.03040-13

Dimethyl adenosine transferase (KsgA) deficiency in *Salmonella* Enteritidis confers susceptibility to high osmolarity and virulence attenuation in chickens

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Running title: characterization of *ksgA* mutant of *S.* Enteritidis

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Abstract:

Dimethyladenosine transferase (KsgA) performs diverse roles in bacteria including ribosomal maturation, DNA mismatch repair, and synthesis of KsgA is responsive to antibiotics and cold temperature. We previously showed that *ksgA* mutation in *Salmonella* Enteritidis results in impaired invasiveness in human and avian epithelial cells. In this study, we tested the virulence of *ksgA* mutant (*ksgA::Tn5*) of *S.* Enteritidis in orally challenged one-day-old chickens. The *ksgA::Tn5* showed significantly reduced intestinal colonization and organ invasiveness in chickens when compared to the wild-type parent (WT). Phenotype Microarray (PM) was employed to compare *ksgA::Tn5* and its isogenic wild-type strain for 920 phenotypes at 28°C, 37°C and 42°C. At chicken body temperature (42°C), *ksgA::Tn5* showed significantly reduced respiratory activity with respect to a number of carbon, nitrogen, phosphate, sulfur and peptide nitrogen nutrients. The greatest differences were observed in the osmolyte panel at concentrations ≥6% NaCl at 37°C and 42°C. In contrast, no major differences were observed at 28°C. In independent growth assays, *ksgA::Tn5* displayed a severe growth defect in high osmolarity (6.5% NaCl) conditions in nutrient rich (LB) and nutrient limiting (M9 minimum salts) media at 42°C. Moreover, *ksgA::Tn5* showed significantly reduced tolerance to oxidative stress, but its survival within macrophages was not impaired. Unlike *E. coli*, *ksgA::Tn5* did not display a cold-sensitivity phenotype; however, it showed resistance to kasugamycin and increased susceptibility to chloramphenicol. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report showing the role of *ksgA* in *S.* Enteritidis virulence in chickens, tolerance to high osmolarity and altered susceptibility to kasugamycin and chloramphenicol.

Introduction:

In bacteria, the *ksgA* encodes a dimethyl adenosine transferase (KsgA) protein that belongs to the KsgA/Dim1 family of universally conserved methyltransferases. According to Harris et al (1) the KsgA/Dim1 family is one of the fifty factors conserved in all kingdoms of life and probably the only one of its kind that was a part of the genetic core of the last universal ancestor. Despite being highly conserved, KsgA mediates diverse functions in bacteria. For example, in *E. coli*, KsgA acts as a 16S rRNA adenine methyltransferase by adding two methyl groups to the two highly conserved adenine residues located at positions 1518 and 1519 (numbered in the *E. coli* system) within the universally conserved helix 45 at the 3' end of the translationally inactive form of the 16S rRNA subunit (2). These methyl groups are donated by S- adenosylmethionine, which is also highly conserved among bacteria, to produce N^6, N^6- dimethyladenosine bases (3). Methylation of 16S rRNA is important in ribosomal biogenesis and impacts ribosome functions during translation initiation and elongation phases (4). Deficiency of KsgA in *E. coli* results in altered ribosome profiles characterized by accumulation of free immature small ribosomal subunits (SSU) that are unable to enter the translation cycle. Current models indicate that the KsgA mediated 30S rRNA methylation is a conserved maturation signal that enables release of KsgA from mature SSUs resulting in conformational changes that permits SSUs to join the large subunit and IF3 to initiate translation (5).

KsgA also possesses a DNA glycosylase/AP lyase activity that prevents chromosomal mutations by repairing mismatched DNA strands. More specifically, KsgA excises mismatched cytosine bases opposing oxidatively damaged thymine bases by a β-excision mechanism in *E. coli* (6). Lack of RNA methylase activity caused by mutations within the *ksgA* locus in *E. coli* and *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* results in resistance to the aminoglycoside antibiotic kasugamycin (KSG) (3, 7). KSG inhibits translation initiation in bacteria by blocking tRNA binding to the 30S ribosomal subunit, mimicking the mRNA molecule and occupying its place in the peptidyl (P) and exit (E) sites of the ribosome, which eventually disturbs the mRNA-tRNA-ribosome spatial interaction (8). Exogenous supplementation of wild-type KsgA can rescue KSG sensitivity in KSG resistant strains of *E. coli* (3). In addition, *E. coli* strains lacking KsgA also show a four-fold reduction in minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) of gentamicin (9). In contrast, *ksgA* mutant of *Staphylococcus aureus* was more sensitive to kanamycin and paromomycin, probably due to the conformational changes distal to the aminoglycoside binding site in the SSU, which are further propagated from the KsgA methylation site (10). Recently, disruption of *ksgA* in clarithromycin resistant *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* strain resulted in abolishment of resistance (11), suggesting that KsgA mediated drug resistance is likely to be strain and species dependent.

Depending on the bacterial system, lack of methylation of the 16S rRNA subunit due to KsgA deficiency also leads to a temperature-sensitive phenotype. Connolly et al., (5) showed that *E. coli* mutant strains lacking KsgA display growth defects at sub-optimal temperatures (25°C and 20°C). This phenotype was characterized by less efficient ribosome biogenesis as fewer mature and translationally active ribosomes were available at low temperature and immature ribosomal subunits accumulate in these cells (5). In contrast, *Bacillus subtilis* KsgA deficient mutant showed a significant growth disadvantage at 37°C when grown in competition assays against *E. coli*, *Streptomyces coelicolor* and *M. smegmatis* (12). Unlike *E. coli*, *S. aureus* displays a mild cold-sensitive phenotype that is not characterized by differential accumulation of free immature 30S ribosomal subunits, suggesting that KsgA may not be critical for ribosome biogenesis in this organism (10). Interestingly, overexpression of wild-type KsgA at low temperatures (25°C) can rescue the cold-sensitive phenotype in *E. coli*; however its overexpression at 37°C exerts a negative impact on growth in both wild-type and KsgA deficient mutant strain (5). In concordance, overexpression of the chlamydial KsgA ortholog, in a *ksgA E. coli* deletion mutant inhibited the growth of *E. coli* at 37°C (13). While this phenotype has not been observed in *S. aureus* at either low or high temperatures, overexpression of catalytically inactive KsgA in *S. aureus* at 37°C had a negative effect on growth (10). Similarly, overexpression of a catalytically inactive form of KsgA resulted in significant growth defects in KsgA deficient and wild-type *E. coli* strains at both 37°C and 25°C. This catalytically inactive form, produced by alanine substitution at position 66 of KsgA, does not methylate its adenine targets, although it remains attached to them thereby blocking binding sites for other ribosomal factors and preventing ribosomal maturation from entering the translation cycle, resulting in accumulation of free SSUs (2). In *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, growth assays comparing catalytically inactive dim1 (KsgA) mutants versus their wild-type counterparts showed no difference in growth rate of yeast at 18, 25, 30 or 37°C (14). In general, the above studies show that KsgA deficiency may confer temperature sensitivity; however the dependence on KsgA may not be similar among different microorganisms.

The role of KsgA in bacterial virulence has been recently recognized in at least one bacterial model. KsgA deficient mutant of *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis* was attenuated after oral infection in BALB/c mice. This mutant was significantly impaired in its survival in the intestine, invasiveness in internal organs such as liver and spleen and also in cultured HeLa cells (15, 16). We recently reported that KsgA deficiency in *S.* Enteritidis, one of the most important food-borne pathogens, results in multiple phenotypes including (i) KSG resistance, (ii) reduced invasiveness in cultured human intestinal epithelial cells (Caco-2), chicken liver cells (LMH) and (iii) reduced survival in egg-albumen (17). In this study, we hypothesized that KsgA plays a role in virulence of *S.* Enteritidis in chickens. Consequently, we tested the

120 virulence of a *ksgA* mutant of *S.* Enteritidis (*ksgA::Tn5*) in orally infected day-old chicken model and
121 demonstrated that the mutant was attenuated. We also found that, unlike *E. coli*, the KsgA deficient
122 mutant of *S.* Enteritidis does not display temperature sensitivity; however it does confer resistance to
123 kasugamycin and, in striking contrast, increased susceptibility to chloramphenicol. Finally, we also
124 demonstrate that KsgA deficiency in *S.* Enteritidis confers susceptibility to oxidative stress and high
125 osmolarity. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report showing the role of *ksgA* in *S.* Enteritidis
126 virulence in chickens, tolerance to high osmolarity and increased susceptibility to chloramphenicol.
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Materials and Methods

Bacterial Strains: *S.* Enteritidis G1 Nal^r (phage type 4), which is invasive in human intestinal epithelial cells (Caco-2) and virulent in orally infected mice and chickens (17, 18), was used as a wild-type (WT) parental strain. A caco-2 cell invasion attenuated *S.* Enteritidis mutant (*ksgA::Tn5*), kanamycin and nalidixic acid resistant, was identified previously (17). A complemented mutant (*ksgA*::Tn5-pACYC184-*ksgA*) was generated by cloning the full length *ksgA* gene into the tetracycline resistance site of a low copy plasmid pACYC184 (New England Biolabs, USA) bearing a chloramphenicol resistance cassette, as described previously (17). Unless otherwise stated, strains were cultured in Luria-Bertani (LB) broth or on LB agar plates containing 30 µg/ml of nalidixic acid (WT and *ksgA::Tn5*), or in 30 µg/ml of chloramphenicol (*ksgA*:: Tn5-pACYC184-*ksgA*).

Chicken virulence assay: Specific pathogen free (SPF) fertile eggs were obtained from Sunrise farms (Catskill, NY) and hatched in isolation at an animal facility at Washington State University. One-day-old birds were distributed in three groups of 9 birds each (experiment-1) or three groups of 15 birds each (experiment-2). Cloacal swabs were taken before placement in environmentally controlled isolation cages to screen for *Salmonella* by enrichment in tetrathionate broth (TTB) and plating onto XLD agar (Difco). Antibiotic free flock raiser diet (Purina, St. Louis, MO) and water were provided *ad libitum* throughout the experimental period. Bacterial inoculum was prepared from an overnight culture grown at 37 °C and diluted in maximum recovery diluent (MRD, 1g/L peptone, 8.5g/L NaCl, pH 7.0) to obtain the desired concentration. Chicks were orally infected with 200 µl of LB broth containing ~10^8 (experiment-1) or ~10^9 (experiment-2) colony forming units (CFUs) of *ksgA::Tn5* or G1 Nal^r WT parent strain. Negative control groups in both experiments were mock inoculated with 200 µl of LB broth. Three birds per group were sacrificed at 4 days, 8 days and 12 days post-infection (PI, experiment-1) or 24 h, 48 h, 4 days, 8 days and 12 days PI (experiment-2). Small intestine, cecum, liver and spleen were aseptically collected, homogenized in sterile phosphate buffered saline (PBS) and serial dilutions were plated onto XLD agar (Difco) to obtain number of viable colonies per gram of each tissue. Animal experiments were performed according to protocols approved by the WSU Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Data was analyzed by two-way ANOVA and Tukey-Kramer test (NCSS 2007).

Growth assays: A single colony of WT *S.* Enteritidis G1 Nal^r, mutant *ksgA::Tn5* and a complemented mutant *ksgA*::Tn5-pACYC184-*ksgA* were inoculated separately in 5 ml of LB with the appropriate antibiotics and incubated overnight (16 h) at 37°C with shaking at 200 rpm. Approximately 100 CFU of each strain was inoculated in 5 ml of LB with appropriate antibiotics and incubated at 42ºC, 37ºC, 25ºC and 20ºC for temperature effect experiments. Ten-fold dilutions of each strain were prepared in MRD at

24, 48, 72 and 96 h post-incubation and spotted in triplicate on LB agar plates to determine CFUs at each time point. Additionally, turbidity was measured at each time point (OD_{600}) using a BioTek EL808 spectrophotometer (BioTek Instruments, USA). Each strain was tested in duplicates in three independent experiments. Results were transformed to Log10 units and independent replicates were analyzed by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Tukey-Kramer test using NCSS 2007 statistical software (NCSS, Kaysville, UT).

Phenotype microarray: A total of ten 96-well PM plates constituting eight metabolic panels (PM1 to PM8) and 2 sensitivity panels (PM9 and PM10) were used according to published protocols (19). To assess the altered phenotypes of the *ksgA::Tn5* mutant, the respiratory activity (RA) units of the mutant were compared with its WT parent at 42ºC, 37ºC and 28ºC, respectively. Cell respiration is measured by reduction of tetrazolium violet dye, which turns purple upon reduction caused by respiration processes along the electron transport chain and accumulates irreversibly within the cells, allowing for colorimetric detection (20). A mean RA threshold of >50 was considered as a significant difference (21). The data were further confirmed by Student's *t* test. Selected results of the phenotype microarray were confirmed by culture in LB and M9 media (3.4 mM Na_2HPO_4, 2.2 mM KH_2PO_4, 0.85 mM NaCl, 0.93 mM NH_4Cl, 1 mM $MgSO_4$, 0.3 mM $CaCl_2$, 25 mM of sodium pyruvate), respectively. To assess effects of osmolarity, 100 CFUs of each strain were inoculated into 5 ml of LB or M9 supplemented with 6.5% NaCl and incubated at 42°C. Ten-fold dilutions of cultures were plated on LB agar plates at 24 h, 48 h, 72 h, 96 h and 6 days post-incubation. Growth was also monitored by measuring OD_{600}. Each strain was tested in two independent experiments. An unpaired student's T-test was used to assess differences (P <0.05) in growth between strains by NCSS 2007 software.

Antibiotic resistance assay: Emergence of chloramphenicol resistant spontaneous mutants was assessed using an agar dilution method. Briefly, an average of approximately 3.8 $x10^2$ CFUs of each strain (WT and *ksgA::Tn5*) were inoculated in duplicate on LB agar plates containing 10 µg/ml of chloramphenicol and incubated for 48 h at 37ºC. Colonies were counted in three independent experiments to obtain average CFU/ml. The frequency of "resistant" colonies was calculated by dividing the recovered colony number by the initial inoculum and multiplied by 100. Data was analyzed by conducting a Z test between two independent proportions (NCSS 2007).

Oxidative stress responses in ksgA deficient *S.* Enteritidis: A single colony of each strain was inoculated in 5 ml of LB broth with appropriate antibiotics at 37°C and incubated overnight (16 h) with shaking at 200 rpm. An aliquot of overnight culture was diluted to determine initial CFU followed by

centrifugation at 5000 rpm for 10 min at 25ºC. Oxidative stress was tested by resuspending bacterial pellets in 5 ml normal saline (NaCl 0.9%, pH 7.2) preheated to 42°C followed by addition of H_2O_2 to a final concentration of 15 mM and incubation at 42°C for 30 min in constant agitation (200 rpm). At the end of exposure, suspensions were diluted 10-fold in MRD and plated on LB agar. Each strain was tested in duplicate in three independent experiments. Percent survival was calculated as follows: (CFU at 30 min/initial CFU) x 100. Data was analyzed by conducting Z-test between two independent proportions (NCSS 2007).

Infection assays in chicken macrophages (HD-11 cells): The uptake and survival within chicken macrophages (HD-11 cells) was tested using a gentamicin protection assay as described previously with minor modifications (17). Briefly, HD-11 cells were cultured in Iscove's modified Dulbecco's medium (IMDM) in two 12-well plates at a density of $1x10^6$ cells per well and incubated for 2 days at 37°C with 5% CO_2. Bacterial inoculum was prepared by culturing strains overnight at 37°C in LB with appropriate antibiotics. Cells were inoculated with the bacterial preparations at MOI of approximately 20, centrifuged for 3 min at 1000 RPM and incubated at 42°C with 5% of CO_2 for 30 min to allow bacterial uptake by the cells. Next, plates were washed three times in PBS pH7.4 to remove extracellular bacteria followed by treatment with gentamicin (200 µg/ml for 30 minutes) in IMDM with 10% FBS to kill any remaining extracellular bacteria. Subsequently, gentamicin was removed by washing cells three times in PBS. At this point, cells in one plate were lysed with the addition of 0.5% (v/v) Triton X-100 for 10 min at 42°C and dilutions of cell lysates were plated on LB agar to determine bacterial uptake (30 min). The second plate was incubated for 8 h and treated as described above to determine intra-macrophage survival. Bacterial uptake was calculated using formula: (intracellular CFU at 30 min/inoculum CFU) x 100. The intra-macrophage survival of *ksgA::Tn5*, *ksgA::*Tn5-pACYC184-*ksgA* and G1 Nal^r was calculated using formula: CFU at 24 h/CFU at 30 min x100. Data was analyzed by conducting Z test for difference of proportions (NCSS 2007).

Results and Discussion

KsgA deficient *S.* Enteritidis is virulence attenuated in chickens

We recently reported that KsgA deficiency significantly reduced invasiveness of *S.* Enteritidis in cultured human intestinal epithelial cells (Caco-2), impaired growth of *S.* Enteritidis in egg albumen at 25±2°C and also resulted in moderate reduction in the invasiveness in chicken liver (LMH) cells when compared to the WT parent (17). These finding led us to our hypothesis that *ksgA* plays a role in virulence of *S.* Enteritidis in the target host chicken. Consequently, we conducted two experiments to test this hypothesis. In experiment-1 we inoculated one-day-old chickens with the *ksgA* mutant and WT strain at an initial dose of 10^8 CFU per bird and monitored kinetics of *Salmonella* infection in the small intestine, cecum, liver and spleen by determining viable colonies at 4d, 8d and 12d PI. Significant differences in the CFUs of *ksgA* mutant and WT were found throughout the experimental period (Fig. 1). The *ksgA* mutant showed 3- to 4- log reduction in CFUs in small intestine and cecum at any given time when compared with the WT parent, indicating that the *ksgA* mutant was significantly attenuated in its ability to colonize chicken gut. Unlike WT, the mutant strain was not recovered from internal organs such as liver and spleen from any of the infected birds at any time points (Fig. 1), suggesting that the mutant was significantly attenuated in its organ invasiveness.

In the second experiment, we increased the infection dose to 10^9 CFU per bird, included group of chickens challenged with a strain expressing KsgA *in trans* (pACYC184-*ksgA*) and sacrificed infected birds early during infection process (i.e. 24 h and 48 h). With these modifications, the number of viable colonies of WT parent and mutant strain were similar at 24 and 48 h PI (ANOVA $P>0.05$) in the small intestine. After this period, the CFU of mutant strain were consistently lower than the WT parent strain ($P<0.02$), reaching a maximum difference of 2.4 log at 12 days PI (Fig. 1a). A similar trend was observed in the ceca of birds infected with the high-dose (10^9 CFU); however these differences were statistically significant only at 12 days PI ($P=0.000014$) (Figure 1b). While these results demonstrate an infectious dose response, the number of mutant bacteria recovered tapered off later during infection, consistent with attenuation. In liver, the *ksgA* mutant showed significantly lower CFUs at 48h (2.11±0.21), 8d (3.35±0.04) and 12d (1.96±0.03) PI when 10^9 CFU dose was used ($P<0.05$), yielding a maximum average difference of 5.10 logs at 48h ($P=<0.05$); although this difference was not significant ($P=0.054$) at 4 days PI (Fig. 1c), which also coincided with increased CFUs in the small intestine and ceca (Fig. 1a,b). At high-dose, the CFU counts in spleen also showed the same decreasing trends, both for WT parent and mutant strain (Fig. 1d). The mutant strain showed significantly lower CFUs than the WT parent at 48h, 8d and 12d ($P<0.05$). The most remarkable difference between the WT and the mutant was observed at 48 hours PI, reaching up to 5.5 log ($P=0.003$). *In trans* complementation of KsgA on a low-copy plasmid

pACYC184 carrying chloramphenicol resistance cassette was unable to rescue the virulence phenotype in the KsgA deficient strain (Fig. 1). The CFUs of the complemented mutant were consistently lower than the wild-type and the KsgA deficient mutant throughout the entire experimental period in all organs tested ($P<0.05$).

The role for *ksgA* in virulence has only been previously examined for *Y. pseudotuberculosis* in a murine model. Oral inoculation of BALB/c mice with $5x10^8$ CFU of a KsgA deficient mutant of *Y. pseudotuberculosis* resulted in a significantly lower bacterial burden in small intestine, Peyer's patches, spleen and liver until 10 days PI, which also translated in higher survival rates (15, 22). More importantly, this mutant was able to confer protection against the WT *Y. pseudotuberculosis* challenge (16). Similar to *Y. pseudotuberculosis*, KsgA deficiency in *S.* Enteritidis impacts the bacterial burden in intestinal and extraintestinal tissues, rendering possible attenuation in this bacterium. The molecular mechanism underlying this attenuation is currently unknown. Given the role of KsgA in ribosomal maturation, translational initiation and protein synthesis, it is possible that KsgA deficiency may have pleotropic effects in *S.* Enteritidis. While dissecting molecular mechanism of virulence attenuation is beyond the scope of this study, we performed a comprehensive phenotypic characterization to identify other altered phenotypes in the *ksgA* mutant strain of *S.* Enteritidis.

KsgA deficiency does not confer growth defects in *S.* Enteritidis: Growth defects caused by *ksgA* deletion, particularly at low temperatures, have been reported in *E. coli* and other bacterial systems (5); the extent of this effect however remains unclear due to differential dependence on KsgA (10). Consequently, we tested whether lack of KsgA activity in a *ksgA* mutant might confer growth defects in *S.* Enteritidis at a wide range of temperatures. In contrast to the aforementioned reports, we did not observe significant difference ($P>0.05$, Tukey's test) in bacterial growth between *ksgA::Tn5*, a WT strain and a complemented mutant (data not shown) cultured in LB broth at 20°C, 25°C, 37°C or 42°C, respectively (Fig. 2). These data suggest that unlike *E. coli*, KsgA deficiency does not significantly alter the growth of *S.* Enteritidis at either optimal or suboptimal temperature for growth *in vitro*, nor does it displays a cold sensitive phenotype observed in other bacterial systems.

Deficiency of KsgA significantly alters respiratory activity (RA) of *S.* Enteritidis: Phenotype Microarray (PM) technology was used to assess respiratory activity (RA) of a *ksgA* mutant and its WT parent at 42°C, 37°C and 28°C for up to 48 h, testing a total of 920 different phenotypes arranged in ten 96 well microplates (PM1 to PM10) (Table 1). At low temperatures (28ºC), the RA of the mutant was not significantly different from the WT parent strain with the exception of three (0.33%) out of the 920 phenotypes, all within the carbon panel. The *ksgA* mutant had a significantly higher RA in the presence of

L-Asparagine whereas it showed significantly lower RA in the presence of D,L-a-glycerol phosphate and D-Glucuronic acid as carbon sources (Table 1). The largest numbers of differences were found at avian body temperature (42°C), comprising 15 (1.63%) out of 920 phenotypes tested. The *ksgA* mutant showed significantly impaired utilization of D-Alanine (PM1-A09) and Tween 20 (PM1-C05) as carbon sources, glucuronamide (PM3B-E06) as nitrogen source and pyrophosphate (PM4A-A03) as phosphorus source (Table 1). The RA was also impaired for five different peptide-nitrogen combinations (Table 1). The greatest differences were observed under multiple high osmolarity panels (4 out of 15 phenotypes) composed of 6% or 6.5% of NaCl with and without supplementation with a variety of osmoprotectants (Table 1). Similar results were observed at 37°C where at least 4 out of 8 differences were observed in osmolyte panels (Table 1), indicating that KsgA deficiency in *S.* Enteritidis alters susceptibility to high osmolarity. As expected, no significant differences in the RA were observed when the principle compatible solutes such as glycine-betaine, carnitine, proline, ectoine, trehalose were supplemented as osmoprotectants (see Table 1), further confirming the reduced tolerance of the mutant strain to high osmolarity. When mild osmoprotectants such as choline, trimethylamine and trigonelline were supplemented, the RA of *ksgA* mutant was significantly lower than the WT parent (Table 1). This is not surprising because choline is not directly used as an osmoprotectant. It is taken up by cells either by the common ProU transporter or by the specific BetT system and must be enzymatically processed to betaine by the BetA and BetB enzymes induced during osmotic stress (23). Similarly, trigonelline is a cationic betaine and is usually accumulated by gram negative bacteria, such as *E. coli*, but it does not function as osmoprotectant in *Salmonella* (24, 25). Finally, trimethylamine is an osmoprotectant in many marine invertebrates and some vertebrates (26) where it induces refolding of thermodynamically misfolded proteins (27) while plant microorganisms obtain this compound from vegetable sources such as alfalfa seeds (28). Based on these data, it is reasonable to suggest that transport systems for osmoprotectants in *ksgA* mutant remain viable although internal enzymatic machinery might be impaired, potentially due to impaired protein synthesis as a result of accumulation of unmethylated immature ribosomes. Alternatively, these differences might also reflect the poor osmoprotectant activity of choline, trimethylamine and trigonelline under high osmolarity conditions tested in this study. Nonetheless, these results indicate that RA of *ksgA* mutant was significantly impaired in the presence of high osmolarity conditions.

Utilization of D-glucuronic acid (PM1-B05), a structural element of the repeating unit of the colanic acid capsule (29), was significantly impaired in the *ksgA* mutant at all temperatures tested. Liver is considered as a rich source of D-glucuronic acid where it acts as a precursor for glucuronidation reaction that is involved in metabolic conversion of endogenous and exogenous substances to more aqueous soluble

compounds that are excreted into urine and bile (30). Several enzymes are involved in D-glucuronic acid metabolism to yield glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate and pyruvate that is used in the Embden-Meyerhof-Parnas pathway in the liver (31). Moreover, *Salmonella* can use glucuronic acid as a sole source of carbon (32). Therefore, it is possible that deficiency of KsgA may impair the ability of *S.* Enteritidis to use D-glucuronic acid as sole carbon source in certain tissues such as liver, thereby diminishing its ability to invade and survive within such tissues. This effect is consistent with our chicken experiment where we were not able to recover viable colonies in liver or spleen when 10^8 CFU were used for oral infection (Figure 1c) and the bacterial burden was fairly diminished even when chickens were infected with high dose (10^9 CFU).

At 42°C, the *ksgA* mutant showed significantly lower RA than that of WT parent in the presence of leucine-arginine or leucine-phenylalanine as peptide nitrogen source (Table 1). Leucine plays an important role in protein synthesis where more than 90% of intracellular leucine is incorporated for protein production implying protein synthesis may be impaired at 42°C in the *ksgA* mutant strain. Deficiency of KsgA may result in production of immature unmethylated ribosomes which may in turn lead to impaired protein synthesis during initiation and elongation steps and stimulate translation errors (33). It is possible that reduced tolerance to osmotic stress at avian physiological temperature (42°C) along with the likelihood of impaired protein synthesis could impact expression of genes necessary for intestinal invasion and colonization of extraintestinal tissues in chickens. Peptide nitrogen source utilization was impaired only at 42°C when five different peptide-nitrogen sources were used. These results indicate potential pleiotropic effects of KsgA deficiency in *S.* Enteritidis that is more obvious at the physiological temperature of its natural reservoir host. Interestingly, these defects did not seem to affect growth *in vitro* (Figure 2), highlighting the importance of using physiological appropriate models when testing bacterial strains with genetic mutations.

KsgA deficiency confers susceptibility to high osmolarity in *S.* Enteritidis: The PM analysis indicated that high osmolarity (6 to 6.5% NaCl) negatively impacted the *ksgA* mutant. Therefore, we compared the WT, *ksgA* mutant and complemented mutant strains for their ability to grow in nutrient rich LB broth containing 6.5% of NaCl (equivalent to 1.1M) incubated at 42ºC for up to 6 days post-incubation (34). The mutant strain failed to grow at any of the time points tested whereas both the WT parent and a complemented mutant strain were detectable at 72 h post- incubation (Fig. 3). The average doubling time was similar between all the three strains when cultured in LB alone at 42°C, being close to an average of 34 min for the three strains. In the presence of 6.5% NaCl, the WT doubling time increased to 273 minutes (4.5 h) whereas the complement had an average doubling time of 500 min (8.33 h), indicating a

partial ability of *in trans* complementation to rescue this specific phenotype. Increased doubling time, from 1 h to 2.6 h, in response to high osmolarity (7.5% NaCl) has also been observed in *Listeria monocytogenes* (35). While complementation of *ksgA* completely rescued *ksgA* mutant's inability to grow in high osmolarity at 6 days post-incubation, this effect was also partially observed at 72 and 96 h, suggesting that *ksgA* is indeed involved in tolerance of *S.* Enteritidis to high osmolarity. We also tested tolerance of *ksgA* mutant to high osmolarity in M9 media containing 6.5% (1.1M) of NaCl for up to four days (96 h) at 42°C. In this assay, sodium pyruvate was provided as carbon source and viable colonies were counted in LB agar at time points 24, 48, 72 and 96 h post-incubation. Similar to the growth assay in LB medium, mutant strain did not grow in M9 media up to 96 h; however, 5.64 ± 0.27 Log10 CFU/ml of the WT strain was detected at 24 h post-incubation, confirming susceptibility of the mutant to high-osmolarity . Unlike growth assay in LB; however, we were unable to rescue this phenotype by *in trans* complementation of *ksgA* in M9 minimal salts medium.

To our knowledge, this is the first report showing that *ksgA* is required for survival under high osmolarity in any bacterial models. Similar to other Gram-negative bacteria, *Salmonella* has evolved two major mechanisms that function biphasically to respond to this type of stress. A primary response involves an inducible high affinity system (Kdp) and two low affinity systems (Trk, Kup) that stimulate uptake of potassium (36). This system tolerates up to 0.5 M of NaCl before inducing a dramatic increase in cytoplasmic concentration (by uptake or synthesis) of osmoprotective compounds such as glycine-betaine, carnitine, ectoine, proline, trehalose and aminoacids that are part of the secondary response (37). Additionally, outer membrane porins OmpC and OmpF also play a role in bacterial response to osmotic shock by modulating pore size and number, thus regulating permeability (38). It remains unclear which mechanism is specifically affected in the *ksgA* mutant. The osmolarity condition (6.5% NaCl) used in this study is well above the theoretical cutoff for the potassium uptake system. It is also important to note that WT parent and mutant strain showed similar growth under moderate osmolarity (LB with 300 mM NaCl, data not shown) conditions encountered in the intestinal environment (39). Consequently, we surmise that uptake of potassium is less likely to be affected in the mutant strain.

Deficiency of KsgA alters sensitivity to chloramphenicol: Deficiency of KsgA or its homologs is known to promote resistance to the aminoglycoside KSG in *E. coli*, *C. trachomatis* and *N. gonorrhea* (13). KsgA deficiency in the *S.* Enteritidis mutant strain used in this study was confirmed by demonstration of resistance to the antibiotic KSG by monitoring growth under increasing concentrations of KSG (from 50 to 1000 µg/ml). The average MIC of KSG for *ksgA* mutant was 500 µg/ml whereas for the WT and complemented strains the MIC was 150 µg/ml and 100 µg/ml, respectively, confirming that deficiency of KsgA indeed conferred resistance to the antibiotic KSG (Fig. 4). KSG is a potent inhibitor

of translation initiation which acts by preventing binding of the initiator fMet—tRNA to the P site of 30S ribosomal subunit (40). Resistance is caused indirectly because of unstable interactions between helix 45 (where A1519 and A1518 are located) and helix 44 (primary binding site of kasugamycin) (8). Recent data suggests a new role for KsgA in resistance of *M. tuberculosis* to the macrolide clarithromycin (11). While the molecular basis of *ksgA* mediated macrolide resistance is unknown, macrolides bind to the 50S subunit causing premature detachment of incomplete polypeptide chains resulting in impaired protein synthesis (41). Chloramphenicol also binds to the 50S ribosomal subunit thereby inhibiting protein synthesis by preventing growth of the polypeptide chain (42). Interestingly, one binding site of chloramphenicol lies at the entrance of the peptide exit tunnel (E site) overlapping partially the macrolide erythromycin binding site (43). Therefore, we examined the frequency of resistant (break out) colonies to moderate doses of the antibiotic chloramphenicol by means of an agar dilution method. The complemented strain was excluded from this assay because the carrier plasmid pACYC184 contains a chloramphenicol resistance cassette for appropriate selection. In this assay, *S.* Enteritidis mutant showed significantly increased susceptibility to chloramphenicol (10 µg/ml) at 48 h of incubation. The frequency of appearance of breakouts for the KsgA deficient mutant was 21.6±11.3 per 10^8 colonies whereas the WT strain had an average of 149.3±31.5 breakouts per 10^8 colonies (P<0.05) (Fig. 5). These differences indicate that KsgA deficiency in *S.* Enteritidis confers increased susceptibility to chloramphenicol. Dimethylation caused by KsgA occurs within the loop conformation of helix 45. This loop consists of bases G1516, G1517, A1518 and A1519 which compress the conserved GNRA tetraloop where the second to fourth bases stack towards the 3' end of the loop. Structurally, the fully methylated 30S lacks the hydrogen bonding between N2 of G1516 and N7 of A1519 so the loop is wider and allows binding of 50S, IF3 and direct contact of helix 45 and helix 44. Lack of methylation provides a tighter loop that inhibits these functions and impairs correct folding and stabilization of the mature ribosome (33). This structural defect might account for difference in sensitivity to antibiotics that target ribosome sites near helixes 44 and 45 since such unstable interaction might spread throughout the ribosomal P and E sites. Further studies that uncover the mechanism of *ksgA* mediated altered drug susceptibility in *Salmonella* and other bacterial models may provide clues to develop antimicrobials that can specifically target KsgA to render the bacterium more susceptible to specific therapeutic interventions.

KsgA deficiency reduces tolerance of *S.* Enteritidis to oxidative stress and impacts uptake by avian macrophages: Hydrogen peroxide produced by chicken macrophages and heterophils can penetrate cell membranes and act on intracellular targets, thereby playing a crucial role in *Salmonella* killing. We tested whether the KsgA deficiency would alter the oxidative stress response of *S.* Enteritidis to treatment with 15 mM of H_2O_2 for 30 minutes at 42°C. Interestingly, 58 ± 2.8% of *KsgA* mutant survived the H_2O_2

426 treatment whereas 71 ± 4% for the WT strain survived this treatment (P<0.05) (Fig. 6). We were unable
427 to rescue this phenotype by *in trans* complementation of *ksgA* where the proportion of survivors for the
428 complemented mutant was 16 ± 1% (P<0.05). Nevertheless, these results corroborate with Shah et al. (17)
429 who demonstrated that stress sensitive *S.* Enteritidis strains treated with 15 mM of H_2O_2 show a survival
430 proportion as low as 66%. In addition, uptake and intra-macrophage survival assays showed that the avian
431 macrophages were able to engulf significantly higher proportion (14%) of the *ksgA* mutant when
432 compared with the WT parent (7%) (Fig. 7). However the intra-macrophage survival was similar for both
433 strains, suggesting that mechanisms other than intra-macrophage killing may be responsible for reduced
434 virulence of *ksgA* mutant in chicken.
435
436 It has been reported that *ksgA* gene has a weak promoter, lacks a recognizable ribosomal binding site (44)
437 and displays an autogenous regulation during translation (45). Additionally, over-expression of *ksgA* in *E.*
438 *coli* results in growth defects suggesting that the controlled expression of this enzyme may be critical to
439 overcome such defects (5). Therefore, while constructing a complementation plasmid we incorporated
440 ribosomal binding site upstream of the *ksgA* gene to enable heterologous gene to be controlled by the
441 promoter of the tetracycline resistance gene (17). Apparently, this strategy combined with use of low-
442 copy pACYC184 plasmid vector was suitable as it did not impact growth *in vitro* at range of temperatures
443 and also successfully restored the sensitivity of *ksgA* mutant to KSG and resistance to high osmolarity in
444 LB medium. However we were unable to restore other phenotypes such as resistance to high osmolarity
445 in M9 medium, oxidative stress, uptake by cultured macrophages and virulence in orally challenged
446 chicken (data not shown). While pACYC plasmid has been successfully used as a low-copy plasmid to
447 complement gene function in *Salmonella* (46), it is possible that unlike the WT parent strain, the
448 expression levels of *ksgA* in our complemented strain is not tightly regulated which may have resulted in
449 detrimental effects on the mutant in some cases. In addition, some reports indicate that either carriage of
450 pACYC184 or chloramphenicol resistance cassette may also impact invasion efficiency of *S.*
451 Typhimurium in human epithelial (HeLa) and phagocytic (RAW 264.7) cells and can suppress expression
452 of *Salmonella* pathogenicity island-1 genes involved in intestinal pathogenesis (47, 48). Therefore, one or
453 more of the above factors may have impacted the ability of complemented strain to restore certain
454 phenotypes. *In cis* complementation may circumvent some of these difficulties.
455
456 In summary, our results clearly show that *ksgA* contributes to intestinal colonization and organ
457 invasiveness of *S.* Enteritidis in chickens. Deficiency of KsgA in *S.* Enteritidis confers no apparent growth
458 defects *in vitro* at a wide range of temperatures under nutrient rich conditions. KsgA deficiency does,
459 however, confer increased susceptibility to (i) high osmolarity (ii) chloramphenicol and (iii) oxidative

stress suggesting potential pleotropic effects on *Salmonella* physiology. Given the impaired kinetics of infection of *ksgA* mutant in the target host, it appears that the sum of all these defects might become evident within the host environment where *Salmonella* must outgrow the local microbiota and also overcome antimicrobial defenses produced by the host (49). For instance, exposure of *Salmonella* to intestinal high osmolarity and bile salts serves as a cue to modulate its own gene expression (50). The effects of bile salts include DNA damage, secondary structure formation in RNA, and misfolding or denaturation of proteins. *Salmonella* uses multiple mismatch repair proteins such as MutH, MutL and MutS to prevent DNA damage from bile activity (51). It is important to note that KsgA performs a DNA glycosylase/AP lyase activity to prevent such mutations in *E. coli* and KsgA deficiency results in increased spontaneous mutations in *mutM* and *mutY*, which also contribute to DNA repair (6). Similar conditions might be encountered in chicken intestinal lumen which may result in virulence attenuation and lower numbers of physiologically adjusted bacteria within the host.

Acknowledgements

We thankfully acknowledge the technical assistance by Gail Deckert, Dubraska Diaz (WAADL) and Russell McClanahan (FDIU). We also thank Jake Elder for helpful technical discussions and Dr. Douglas Call for critical review of this manuscript. This project was funded in part with the funds the Agricultural Animal Health Program, College of Veterinary Medicine, Washington State University. Kim Lam Chiok was supported in part by the LASPAU Academic and Professional Programs for the Americas and by the Agricultural Research Center at Washington State University.

Figure Legends

Figure 1. KsgA deficiency decreases ability of *S.* Enteritidis to survive within (a) chicken small intestine (SI); (b) cecum; (c) liver; and (d) spleen. One-day-old chicks were orally infected with 10^8 or 10^9 CFUs of *ksgA::Tn5* or WT strain. Mean Log_{10} colony forming units (CFU) ± standard error (SE) per gram of tissue were determined on XLD agar at different time points. * = significant difference $P< 0.05$; ** = significant difference between all groups at specific time point $P<0.05$.

Figure 2. KsgA deficiency does not impair growth in *S.* Enteritidis *in vitro*. Growth of *S.* Enteritidis *ksgA::Tn5*, *ksgA::*pACYC-184-*ksgA (not shown)* and wild type (WT) parent strain were assessed in LB broth with 30 µg/ml of Nalidixic acid for up to 96 hours at 20 °C, 25 °C, 37 °C and 42 °C, respectively. Mean Log_{10} colony forming units (CFU) ± standard deviation (SD) per ml were determined on XLD agar at different experimental time points for three independent replicates.

Figure 3. KsgA deficiency confers susceptibility to high osmolarity in *S.* Enteritidis. Growth of *S.* Enteritidis *ksgA::Tn5*, *ksgA::*Tn5-pACYC184-*ksgA* and wild-type (WT) parent strains were assessed in LB broth and 1.1 M of NaCl with 30 µg/ml of Nalidixic acid for up to 6 days at 42°C. Mean Log_{10} colony forming units (CFU) ± standard deviation (SD) per ml were determined on XLD agar at different time points for two independent replicates.

Figure 4. KsgA deficiency confers resistance to kasugamycin (KSG) in *S.* Enteritidis. Growth was monitored under increasing concentrations of KSG (50 to 1000 µg/ml) in LB broth by measuring OD_{600}. The average Minimal Inhibitory Concentration of KSG was of 500 µg/ml, 150 µg/ml and 100 µg/ml for *ksgA::Tn5*, *ksgA*::Tn5-pACYC184-*ksgA* and WT, respectively.

Figure 5. KsgA deficiency reduces tolerance to chloramphenicol in *S.* Enteritidis. Frequency of resistant colonies to chloramphenicol (10 µg/ml) was assessed through agar dilution method in wild-type (WT) and KsgA deficient mutant (ksgA::Tn5) strains. Results of three independent experiments are expressed as average number of resistant colonies per 10^8 bacteria ± SD.

Figure 6. KsgA deficiency reduces tolerance to oxidative stress in *S.* Enteritidis. Oxidative stress response was assessed as average percentage of survival ± SD after treatment with 15mM of H_2O_2 for 30 minutes at 42°C in *S.* Enteritidis *ksgA::Tn5*, *ksgA::*Tn5-pACYC184-*ksgA* and wild-type (WT) parent strain. Three independent experiments were performed, different letters (a, b and c) represent statistical significant difference ($P<0.05$).

Figure 7. KsgA deficient *S.* Enteritidis reduces the ability to survive within chicken macrophage HD11 cells. A gentamicin protection assay with a MOI of 20 was performed at 42°C. Mean Log_{10} colony forming units (CFU) ± standard deviation (SD) per ml were determined at 30 minutes (invasion) and 8 hours (survival) post infection. The uptake of *ksgA::Tn5* (a) was significantly higher than that wild-type parent strain (b) ($P<0.05$). Three independent replicates were included in these experiments.

521 **Table 1.** Differences in the respiratory activity (RA) between wild-type (WT) and KsgA deficient *S.* Enteritidis mutant (*ksgA::Tn5*) grown at
522 different temperatures as tested by Phenotype Microarray™ (Biolog, USA). Phenotypes with mean difference in RA of >50 and a *P* value of <0.05
523 were considered significantly different.

Temperature	Plate type	PM Well	Phenotype	RA of WT±SE	RA of ksgA±SE	Mean difference	P value
42ºC	Carbon sources	PM1-B05	D-Glucuronic acid	258±3	179±1	78.5	0.023
		PM1-A09	D-Alanine	237±1	181±0.3	56	0.023
		PM1-C05	Tween 20	207±10	125±10	81.5	0.004
	Nitrogen sources	PM3-E06	Glucuronamide	199±0.3	119±1	79.5	0.020
	Phosphorus and sulfur sources	PM4A-A03	Pyrophosphate	209±3	156±1	53.5	0.042
	Peptide-nitrogen sources	PM6-C08	Asn-Val	197±0.3	146±3	51	0.050
		PM6-G07	Ile-His	177±2	125±0.3	52.5	0.042
		PM6-H05	Leu-Arg	165±0	91±1	74.5	0.021
		PM6-H12	Leu-Phe	150±3	97±2	53	0.024
		PM8-E09	Val-Lys	120±2	63±2	57.5	0.006
	Osmolytes	PM9-A08	6.5% NaCl	170±12	107±13	63	0.020
		PM9-B02	6% NaCl + Betaine	198±8	177±15	21	0.335
		PM9-B03	6% NaCl + N.N dimethyl glycine	189±3	151±4	38	0.034
		PM9-B07	6% NaCl + Ectoine	197±7	112±11	85.5	0.231
		PM9-B08	6% NaCl + Choline	189±1	129±1	60	0.011
		PM9-B12	6% NaCl + L-Carnitine	193±3	144±1	50	0.032
		PM9-C02	6% NaCl + L-Proline	192±3	160±8	32	0.156
		PM9-C08	6% NaCl + Trehalose	173±4	125±5	49	0.033
		PM9-C10	6% NaCl + Trimethylamine	189±3	123±0	66	0.048
		PM9-C12	6% NaCl + Trigonelline	188±3	121±3	67.5	0.005
		PM9-D04	6% Potassium chloride	226±5	167±6	59.5	0.027
37ºC	Carbon sources	PM1-B05	D-Glucuronic acid	264±11	156±9	108	0.02
		PM1-H06	L-Lyxose	64±1	132±5	-68	0.004
	Osmolytes	PM9-A07	6% NaCl	221±1	164±8	57	0.020
		PM9-B01	6% NaCl	224±3	171±6	53	0.016
		PM9-B05	6% NaCl + Dimethyl Sulphonyl Propionate	114±7	62±4	52	0.020
		PM9-C05	6% NaCl + g-Amino-N-Butyric acid	208±3	158±8	51	0.025
		PM9-E03	3% Sodium Formate	166±8	110±8	56	0.037
		PM9-F09	9% Sodium Lactate	181±1	109±7	73	0.008
28ºC	Carbon sources	PM1-B05	D-Glucuronic acid	229±5	140±9	89	0.013
		PM1-B07	D,L-a-Glycerol Phosphate	225±6	164±4	61	0.011
		PM1-D01	L-Asparagine	62±4	146±3	-85	0.003

524 Figure 1

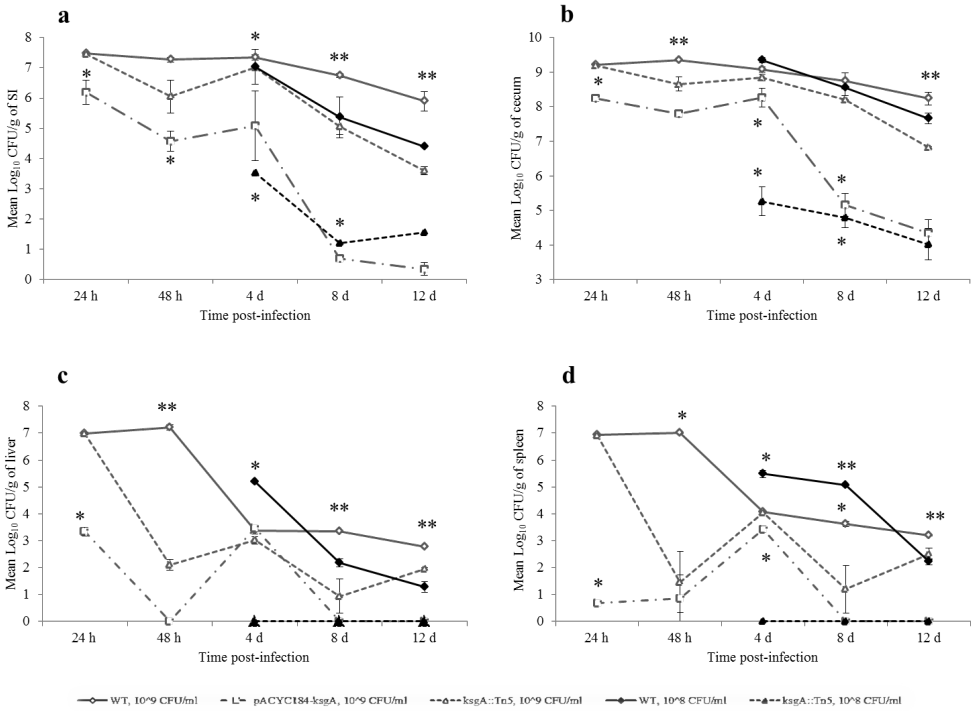

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Figure 2

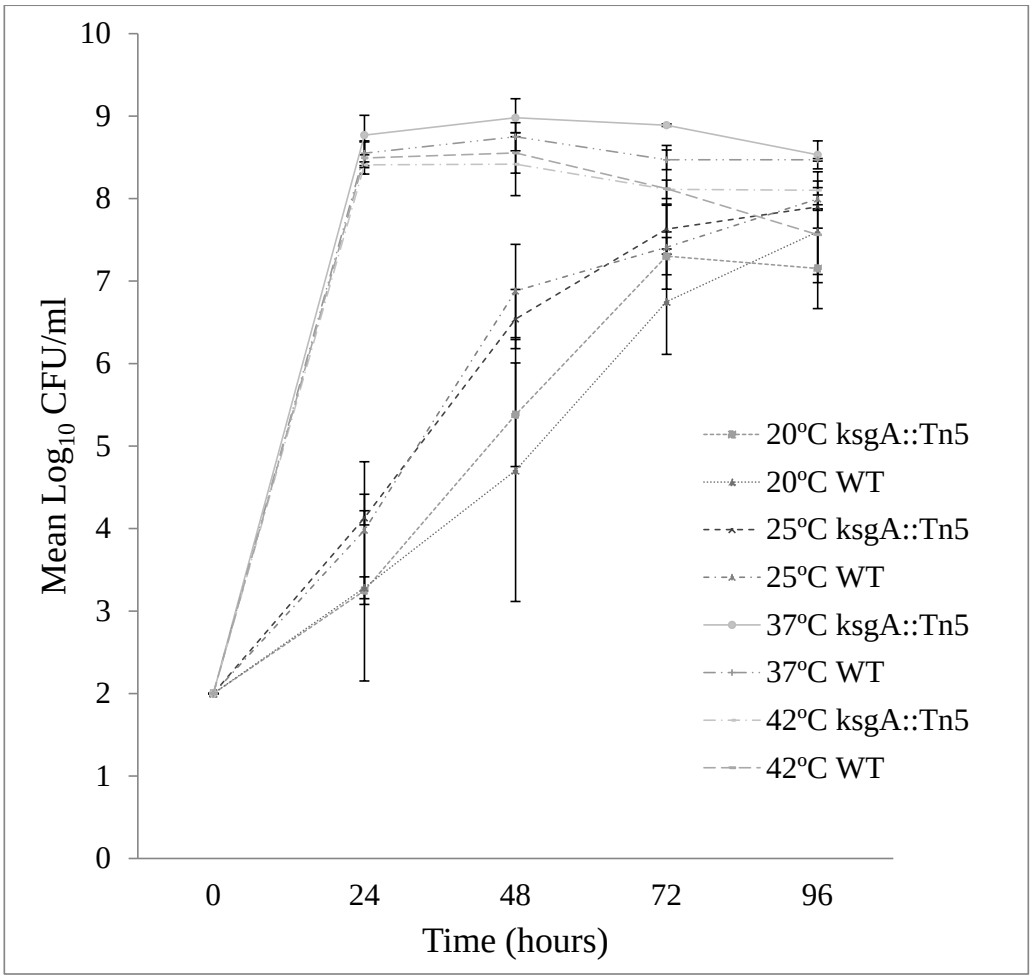
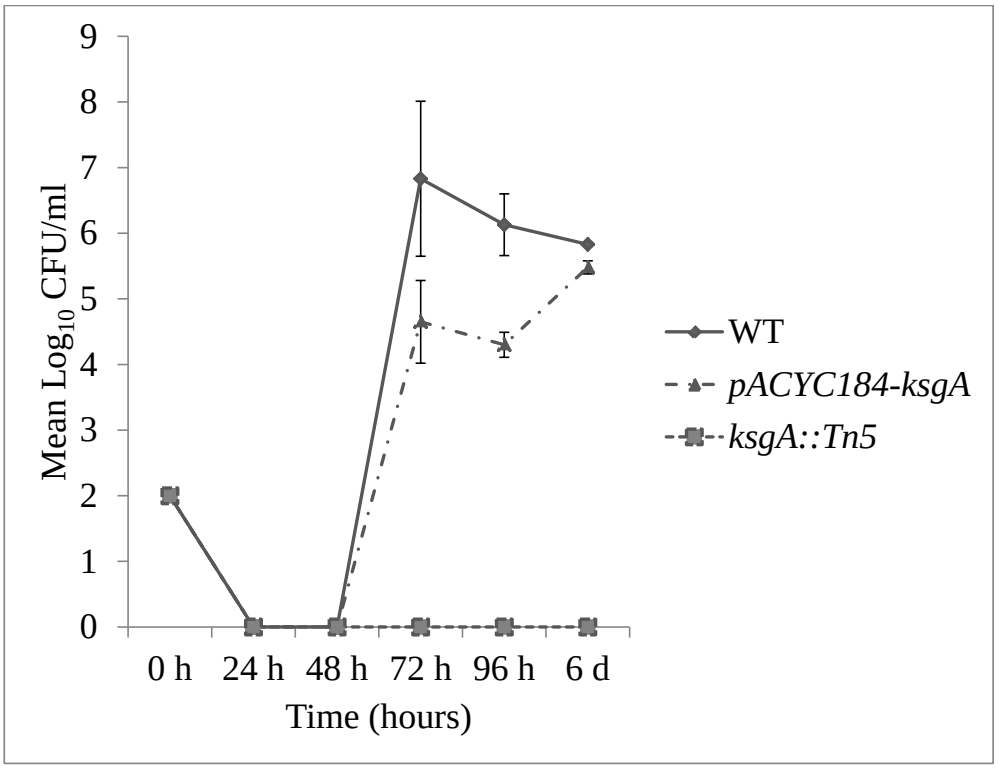


Figure 3



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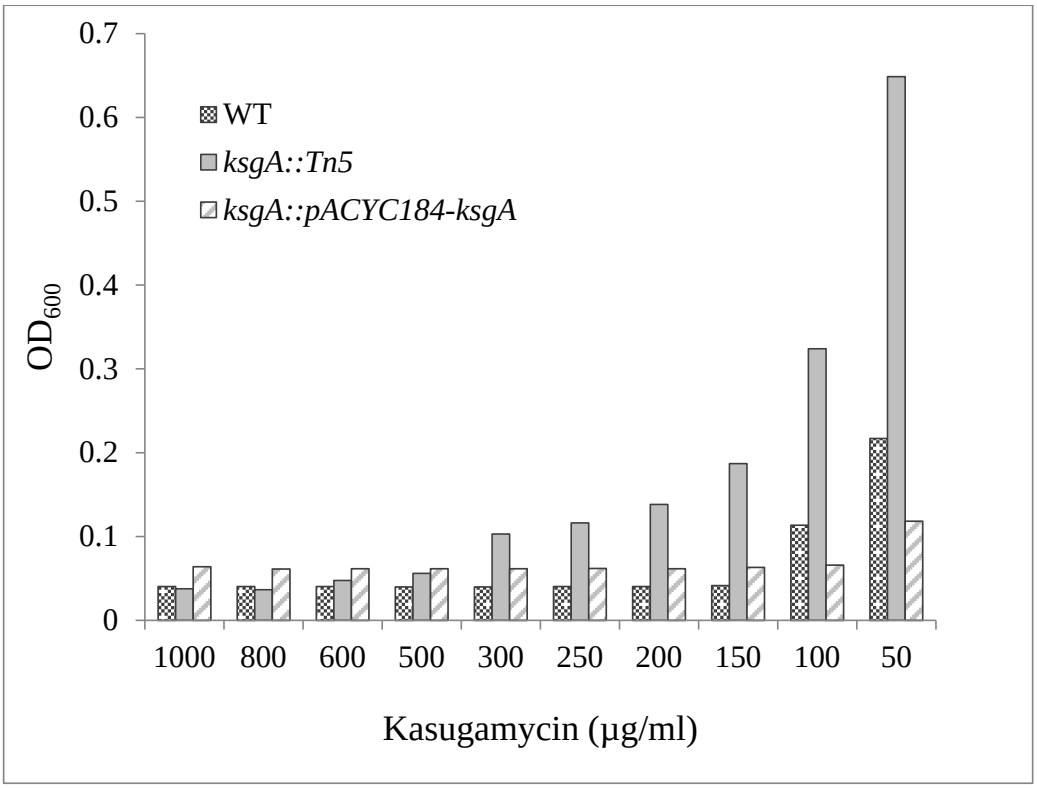

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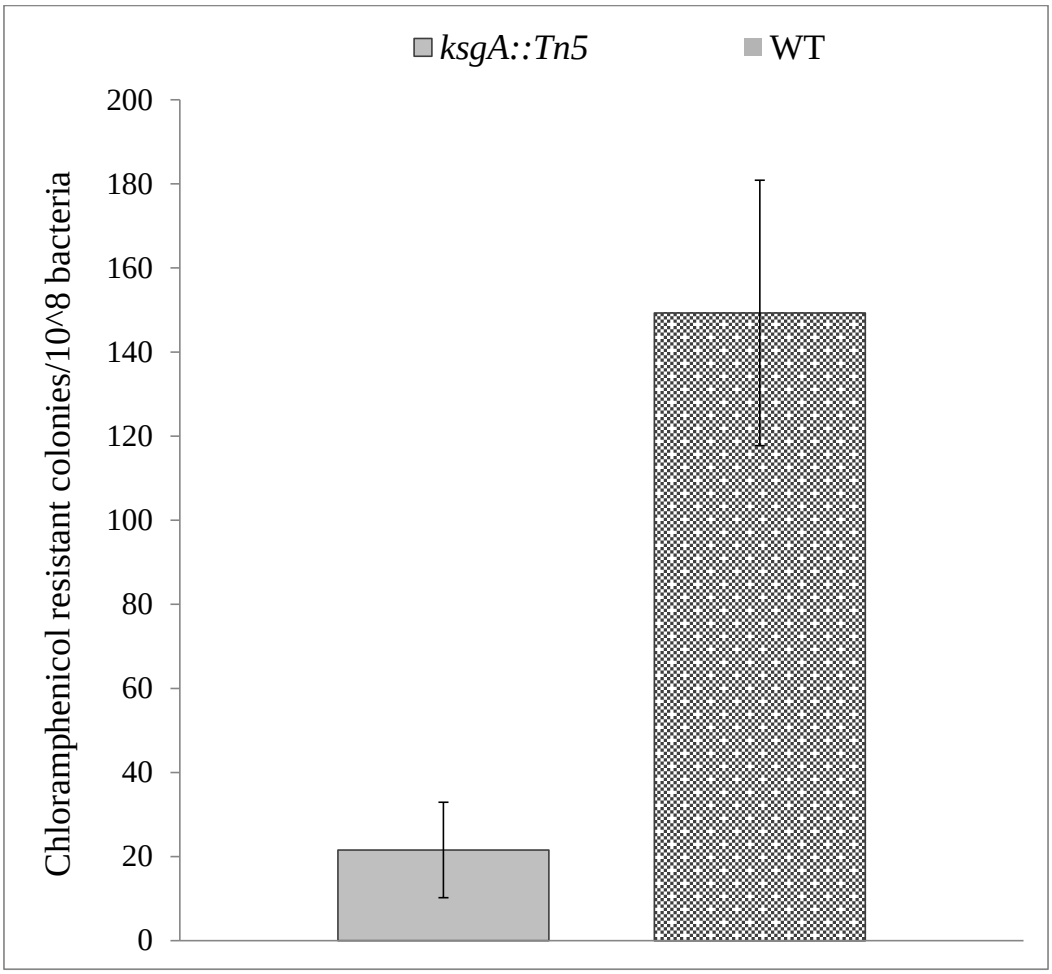

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571 Figure 6

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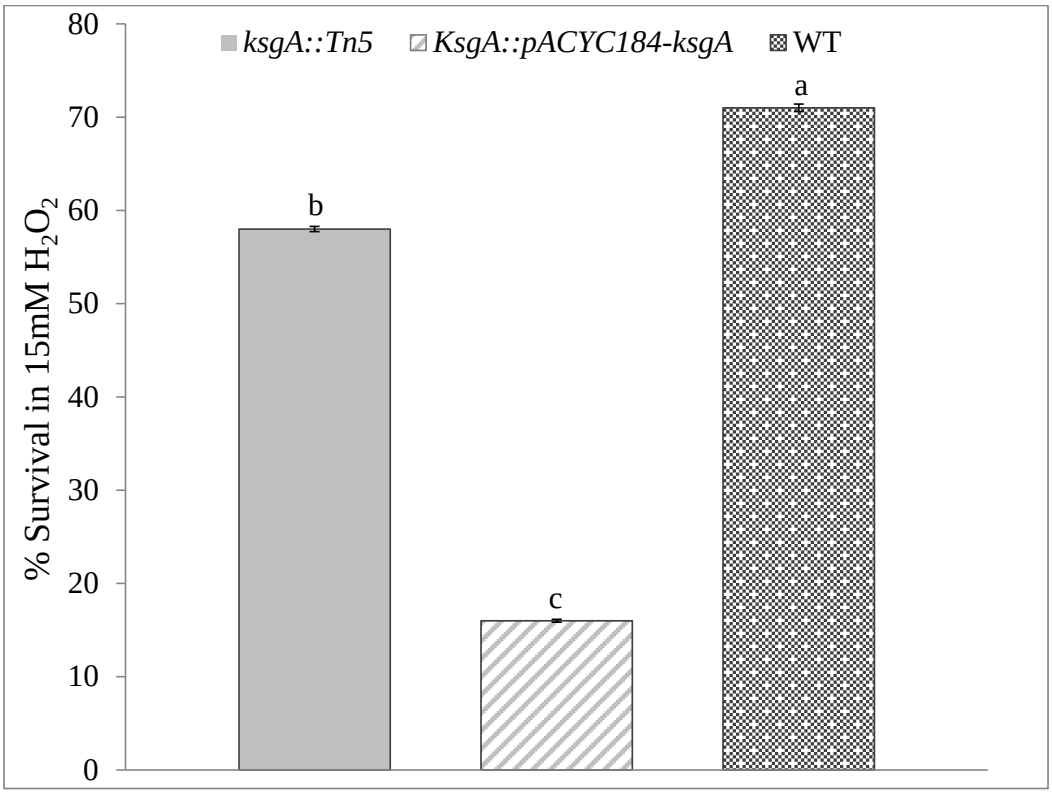

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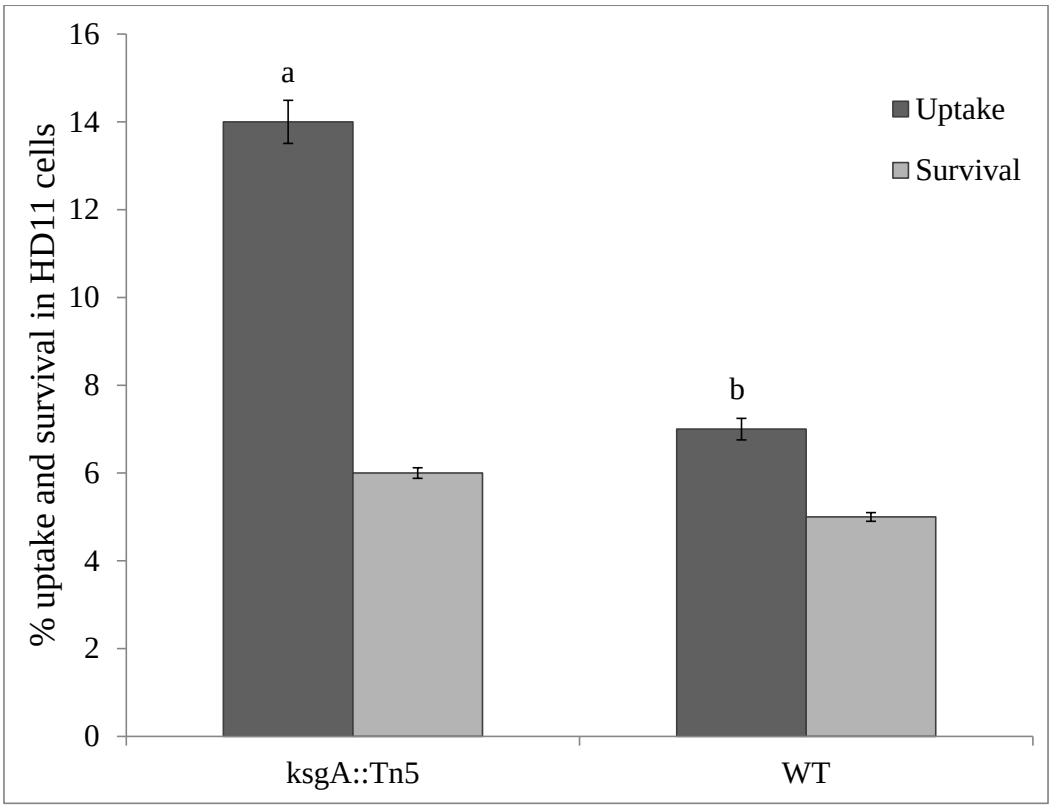

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