Identification of Experimental Herbaceous Host Range of

Citrus viroid V

L. Ebrahimi-Moghadam¹, M. Zakiaghl*¹, B. Jafarpour¹, and M. Mehrvar¹

ABSTRACT

Citrus Viroid V (CVdV) is a member of the genus Apscaviroid, in the Pospiviroidae family. It is restricted to citrus species naturally. The herbaceous host range of CVdV was determined using the viroid infectious clone. Several herbaceous plants from the Cucurbitaceae, Solanaceae, Fabaceae, and Asteraceae families were found to be susceptible to CVdV. Also, CVdV could be transmitted to these hosts through rubbing of monomeric DNA plasmids and through mechanical inoculation of infected sap. The accumulation of CVdV in the tomato was monitored up to 28 days after inoculation and a further 56-fold increase of viroid titer was observed. Analysis of sequences of the viroid progenies from herbaceous plants revealed several nucleotide substitutions, which mostly concentrated in the pathogenicity domain on the secondary structure of the viroids.

Keywords: Agro-inoculation, CVdV, Mechanical inoculation, Pathogenicity domain, Viroid species.

INTRODUCTION

Viroids are small, circular, single-stranded non-coding RNAs. They are replicated by rolling circle replication, lacking protein encoding capacity and recognized as the smallest known plant pathogens (Flores et al., 2005). More than thirty viroid species are classified based on their molecular and biological properties into the Pospiviroidae and Avsunviroidae families; which contain a Central Conserved Region (CCR) and hammerhead ribozyme, respectively (King et al., 2012). In the Pospiviroidae family, viroids with a broad host range fall into the Pospiviroid and Hostuviroid genera, howbeit the members of Apscaviroid, Cocadviroid and Coleviroid have restricted natural host range.

Citrus species are natural hosts of seven viroid species belonging to the Pospiviroidae family. They are Citrus Exocortis Viroid (CEVd) (Pospiviroid), Hop Stunt Viroid (HSVd) (Hostuviroid), Citrus Bark Cracking Viroid (CBCVd) (Cocadviroid) and Citrus Bent Leaf Viroid (CBLVd), Citrus Dwarfing Viroid (CDVd), Citrus Viroid V (CVdV) and Citrus Viroid VI (CVdVI) (Apscaviroid) (Duran-Vila et al., 1988; Hadidi et al., 2003; Ito et al., 2002; Serra et al., 2008). CEVd, HSVd, CBLVd, and CDVd are distributed worldwide (Hadidi et al., 2003), whereas CBCVd has limited distribution in citrus growing areas (Cao et al., 2010). CVdV has been reported from the USA, Spain, Iran, China, Japan and Pakistan (Serra et al., 2008; Bani-Hashemian et al., 2010; Ito and Ohta 2010; Cao et al., 2010). CVdVI seems to be restricted to Japan (Ito et al., 2002). CEVd and HSVd have broad host ranges in woody and herbaceous plants; they develop exocortis and cachexia symptoms in sensitive citrus species, respectively.

Apscaviroids infecting citrus plants induce mild symptom on commercial citrus species with complex interaction in mixed infection.

¹ Department of Plant Pathology, College of Agriculture, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Islamic Republic of Iran.

*Corresponding author; e-mail: zakiaghl@ferdowsi.um.ac.ir
CVdV produces mild leaf bending and petiole necrosis symptoms on citrus species (Barbosa et al., 2002). It is restricted to citrus species naturally. Limited studies were carried out to determine the biological properties of this viroid due to lack of suitable herbaceous host plants.

Earlier attempts failed to transmit CVdV or its artificial chimeras to herbaceous plants (Barbosa et al., 2005); but, evidence of de novo replication of Australian grapevine viroid and Apple scar skin viroid (type member of the Apscaviroid) in several herbaceous plants has been reported (Rezaian 1990; Zakiaghl and Izadpanah 2010; Walia et al., 2014). Moreover, natural infection of Grapevine yellow speckle viroid1 (GYSVd1) in Ixeridium dentatum plants was recently reported (Lee et al., 2015). These data raise the possibilities that CVdV may also have herbaceous host plants.

In this research, we aimed to provide evidence for replication of CVdV in herbaceous host plants by fulfilling Koch’s postulates and compare their experimental host range. For this purpose, the infectious clones of CVdV has been constructed, which was inoculated to various herbaceous plants by agroinoculation, direct rubbing of DNA plasmids containing the viroid sequence and mechanical inoculation of infected sap.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Construction of Infectious Clone of CVdV

cDNA clone of CVdV was kindly provided by Ricardo Flores and Pedro Serra (IBMCP, UPV, Spain). The cDNA clone was used as template for construction of viroid infectious clone.

In order to make infectious construct, the full length genome was amplified using pUC-m13 universal primers from the cDNA clone. The PCR products were digested by PstI and HindIII endonucleases; then, ligated into corresponding sites in pBin62sk binary vector under control of the 35S promoter. pBin62sk was derived from replacement of T-DNA fragment of pGreen62sk binary vector (Hellens et al., 2005) into pBin19 plasmid (Bevan, 1984). To do this, BgIII fragment of pGreen62sk was replaced in corresponding site of pBin19.

The construct was transferred to the competent cells of E. coli strain DH5α and the recombinant plasmids were recovered from bacterial cells using Plasmid DNA Isolation Kit (Denazist, Iran). Integrity of the construct was authenticated by sequencing using pUC-M13 universal primers. Finally, the construct was transformed into Agrobacterium tumefaciens strain C5850 (Holsters et al., 1978).

**Infectivity Test of Infectious Construction of CVdV**

Agrobacterium tumefaciens C5850 cells containing the monomeric construct of CVdV were grown on an optical density (OD) of 0.8 in LB broth medium, pelleted down and suspended in agroinoculation buffer (10 mM Tris-HCl pH 6.5, 10 mM MgCl2, 150 uM acetosyringone), stored for 1 hour at room temperature, then agroinoculated into the stem of Poncirus trifoliata plants. The plants were maintained in an insect-proof cage at a controlled growth chamber. Five weeks after inoculation, total RNA was extracted and RT-PCR carried out to check the integrity of the viroid.

**Determination of Host Range of CVdV**

To identify herbaceous host range of CVdV, three species of Cucurbitaceae, i.e. cucumber (Cucumis sativus), Persian melon (Cucumis melo var. inodorus), watermelon (Citrullus lanatus var. lanatus), and six species of Solanaceae, including tomato (Solanum lycopersicum), tobacco (Nicotiana tabacum var. Turkish and Nicotiana glutinosa), potato (Solanum tuberosum), pepper (Capsicum annuum), Petunia (Petunia hybrida); a species of Fabaceae, i.e. a bean (Phaseolus vulgaris); and one species...
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of Asteraceae (Gynura aurantiaca) were infiltrated with Agrobacterium cells harboring the infectious construct of CVdV. At least two young plants from each species were inoculated. Back-inoculation was performed on the same plants by mechanical inoculation of infected sap.

Three weeks after inoculation, nucleic acids were extracted from noninoculated newly grown leaves and the presence of viroids was checked by RT-PCR. Amplified products were cloned and sequenced to confirm their identity.

Mechanical Inoculation of Infected Plants Sap and Monomeric Plasmid

Leaf extracts of newly grown leaves of agro-infiltrated cucumber were prepared in 0.07 M Tris-HCl buffer pH 8.0, and then mechanically inoculated onto carborundum-dusted leaves of cucumber and tomato plants.

For mechanical inoculation, we used also cDNA inoculum of CVdV. For preparation of cDNAs inoculum, about 100 ng of plasmids containing CVdV sequence was linearized by HindIII, diluted in water and mechanically rubbed on carborundum-dusted leaves of cucumber and tomato plants.

RNA Extraction, RT-PCR, Cloning and Sequence Analysis

Total RNA was extracted by crashing of 500 mg of leaf tissue in 10 volumes of extraction buffer (100 mM Tris-HCl, pH8.0; 50 mM EDTA; 50 mM NaCl; 10 mM 2-mercaptoethanol). To the homogenate, 250 µL of 20% of SDS and 400 µL of 5M potassium acetate was added and placed at 65°C for 20 minutes, then chilled on ice. The tube was centrifuged at 12,000 rpm for 15 minutes and supernatant was transferred to a new tube. Nucleic acids were precipitated by addition of 2.5 volume of absolute ethanol followed by 15 minutes centrifugation at 14,000 rpm (Bernard and Duran Viila, 2006).

RT-PCR was performed using a specific primer pair (Table 1). The RT reaction mixture of 20 µL contained 5 µL of total RNA, 2 µL of MMuLV reverse transcription buffer, 1 µL of reverse primer (10 pmol), 2 µL of dNTP mix (40 mM), 0.5 µL of MMuLV reverse transcriptase (200 U µL−1; Parstous, Iran). The RT reaction was incubated at 46°C for one hour, followed by 10 minutes at 70°C for enzyme inactivation. PCR reaction was carried out using 4 µL of the cDNA, 1 µL of each specific primer pair (10 pmol) and 12.5 µL of ready to use PCR Master Mix (Ampliqon) in a total volume of 25 µL.

PCR parameters consisted of initial denaturation at 94°C for 5 minutes, followed by 35 cycles of 94°C for 30 seconds, annealing temperature (Table 1) for 30 seconds and 72°C for 1 minute and a final extension step at 72°C for 5 minutes. PCR products were visualized on an agarose gel containing 0.2 µg of DNA green viewer™ (Parstous, Iran).

The PCR products were ligated into pTZ57R/T cloning vector according to

### Table 1. List of oligonucleotide primers used in RT-PCR and qRT-PCR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sequence (5’-3’)</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Annealing Temp. (°C)</th>
<th>Amplicon (bp)</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CVdV-R</td>
<td>TCGACAGAAGGCCGCTGAGCA</td>
<td>CVdV</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>Serra et al., 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVdV-F</td>
<td>CGACGACAGTGGATCTCTCAC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVdV-R</td>
<td>ACAGGGAGAGGGAGACCA</td>
<td>CVdV</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>Design by author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVdV-L</td>
<td>TCTCTGTGGGAGTCGGTCTGA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GADPH-R</td>
<td>ATCAACGGCTCTGAGTGCGCTGT</td>
<td>GADPH</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Mascia et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GADPH-F</td>
<td>ACCACAAAATFGGCTTGCTCCCTTG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
manufacturer protocol (Thermo Scientific) and transformed into competent cells of *Escherichia coli* strain DH5α. Recombinant plasmids were purified from bacterial cells using Plasmid DNA Isolation Kit (Denazist-Iran). Finally, the purified recombinant plasmids were subjected to bidirectional sequencing using pUC-M13 universal primers using an ABI PRISM 377 apparatus by Macrogen Inc. (Seoul, South Korea).

Sequence comparisons against GenBank databases were performed using BLAST (http://blast.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Blast.cgi). Possible secondary structure of CVdV was predicted in mfold program (http://mfold.rna.albany.edu/?q=mfold). Multiple sequence alignment was carried out by ClustalW program implemented in MEGA6 software (Tamura et al., 2013). Sequences were compared with the viroids type members (GenBank Acc. No. NC010165) and mismatches were plotted on the viroid secondary structure.

**Dot Blot Hybridization**

DIG-labeled DNA probe was synthesized by PCR amplification of the cloned viroid in 50 µL reaction volume containing 0.5 µM of each primer (Table 1), 1.5 mM MgCl₂, 120 µM each of the four dNTPs (containing DIG-labeled dUTP) and 1 unit of Taq DNA polymerase.

For dot blot hybridization, total nucleic acids were extracted at 3 wpi. The purified nucleic acid was treated with *Dnase I* (Sinaclon, Iran) followed by 10 minutes at 70°C for enzyme inactivation.

One microgram of total RNA was diluted with one volume of 1X standard saline citrate (SSC) containing 6% formamide and vacuum-blotted on nitrocellulose membrane, which were treated with 10X SSC (10 minutes) before use. Membrane was then air dried and baked at 80°C for 2 hours.

Processing of the blots for pre-hybridization (4 hours), hybridization (20 hours), and washing were carried out as described by Green and Sambrook (2012). The DIG-labeled hybrids were detected with an anti-DIG-alkaline phosphatase conjugate and visualized with the substrate solution (nitro-blue tetrazolium chloride/5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolylphosphate p-toluidine salt, NBT/BCIP) in the dark.

**Semi-Quantitative Real-Time PCR (qRT-PCR)**

Accumulation of CVdV in inoculated tomato plants was monitored up to 28 days at seven days intervals. Total RNA were extracted (Bernard and Duran Vila 2006) and treated with *Rnase-Free DNase I* (Sinaclon, Iran) following the manufacturer instructions.

Specific primers for CVdV (CVdV-R/L) were designed by using the GenScript Real-time PCR Primer Design software (Table 1). The amounts of CVdV in the RNA preparations were estimated by reverse transcription followed by SYBR Green I based semi-quantitative PCR assay. Real-time PCR assay was performed in the CFX96™ Touch System (BioRad) using thermostable MMuLV Reverse Transcriptase (Parstous,Iran) and SYBR® Green qPCR Master Mix (Parstous,Iran) according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

The real-time PCR program parameters consisted of an initial denaturing step at 95°C for 5 minutes, followed by 40 cycles of 95°C for 15 seconds and 59°C for 30 seconds and 72°C for 30 seconds. Immediately after the final PCR cycle, specificity of the reaction was verified by melting curve analysis by a thermal denaturing cycle of 60–95°C at 1°C increments with 5 seconds between each step. All reactions were performed in triplicate and included no-template control and no reverse transcriptase as negative controls.

For quantification of CVdV in tomato plants, the tomato *GAPDH* gene (GenBank Accession No. ES437736) was used as an internal control (Mascia et al., 2010) for normalization of host RNA. Primer validation experiments were performed with fourfold serial dilutions of the plasmids containing DNAs of GAPDH and CVdV. Relative
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quantification was measured using the comparative Ct ($2^{-\Delta \Delta Ct}$) method (Livak and Schmittgen, 2001). In this method, change in amount of CVdV progeny was normalized to the expression of GAPDH gene. The $2^{-\Delta \Delta Ct}$ data analysis is where $\Delta \Delta Ct = (Ct$ of target $- Ct$ of GAPDH) TimeX$(Ct$ of target $- Ct$ of GAPDH) Time1 which gives mean fold change in expression of target genes at each time point. In our experiments, time 1 was amplification of target gene at two weeks after inoculation.

Moreover, standard curve was constructed using serial dilutions of the plasmid containing sequence of CVdV. Quantification of CVdV in the tomato plants was performed by plotting the Ct value of each sample on the standard curve. The amount of starting template in a PCR reaction, expressed as the copy number of the target CVdV cDNA, was determined by this method.

RESULTS

Infectivity of CVdV Infectious Clone

The binary vector containing full length of CVdV was agro-inoculated to five Poncirus trifoliata plants. The plants were checked for the presence of the viroid by RT-PCR at 5 wpi. Amplification of 294 bp product from uninoculated leaves of inoculated Poncirus trifoliata plants revealed replication of CVdV in these plants (Figure 1). No amplification was observed in mock-inoculated plants. Sequencing of the RT-PCR products from three randomly selected plants confirmed the amplified fragments were identical to CVdV genome (data not shown). No visible symptom was observed in the inoculated trifoliate orange until 9 wpi.

Identification of the Experimental Host Range

Experimental host range of CVdV was determined by inoculation of several herbaceous plants from various families with the viroid infectious clones.

RT-PCR, dot blot hybridization and mechanical inoculation indicated that some of these plants were susceptible to CVdV (Figure 3, Table 2).

As shown in Table 2, eleven species of herbaceous plants were susceptible to CVdV. It was replicated in Cucumis sativus, Cucumis melo, Citrullus lanatus, Solanum lycopersicum, Nicotiana tabacum, Nicotiana glutinosa, Solanum tuberosum, Capsicum annuum, Petunia hybrid, Phaseolus vulgaris, and Gynura aurantiaca plants.

Most of the infected plants were symptomless, except for tomato and bean plants. In tomato, CVdV generated mottling, epinasty, bushy growth, leaf deformation and leaf curl (Figure 2, Table 2) within 2 months after inoculation. Phaseolus vulgaris plants infected with CVdV showed leaf crinkle, crazy top, and leaf deformation 2 months after inoculation (Figure 2, Table 2). Cucumber plants only showed stunting (data not shown).
Table 2. Identification of herbaceous host range of CVdV.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hosts</th>
<th>No. plants</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cucurbitaceae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cucumis sativus</em></td>
<td>5/5 (4/5)</td>
<td>Leaf deformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cucumis melo</em> var indorus</td>
<td>3/3 (3/3)</td>
<td>Symptomless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Citrullus lanatus</em></td>
<td>2/3 (2/3)</td>
<td>Symptomless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Solanum lycopersicum</em></td>
<td>4/5 (3/3)</td>
<td>Leaf curl, leaf deformation, epinasty, mottling, bushy growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Solanum tuberosum</em></td>
<td>4/4 (2/2)</td>
<td>Leaflet joining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Capsicum annuum</em></td>
<td>4/4 (3/3)</td>
<td>Symptomless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Petonia hybrida</em></td>
<td>3/3 (2/3)</td>
<td>Symptomless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nicotiana glutinosa</em></td>
<td>3/3 (2/2)</td>
<td>Increased in leaf thickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nicotiana tabacum</em> Var. turkish</td>
<td>3/3 (2/2)</td>
<td>Symptomless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solanaceae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Phaseolus vulgaris</em></td>
<td>4/4 (3/3)</td>
<td>Leaf crinkle, crazy top, leaf deformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asteraceae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gynura sarmentosa</em></td>
<td>3/3 (1/3)</td>
<td>Symptomless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutaceae</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Poncirus trifoliata</em></td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Symptomless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a No. positive plants/No. of agro-inoculated plant. 
b No. positive plants/No. of plants inoculated by infected sap of the same species.

Figure 2. Symptoms of CVdV in herbaceous hosts. Mottling and bushy growth of CVdV (A) in tomato; Open petiolar sinus and leaf crinkle (B) in bean; leaflet joining (C) and bushy growth of leaf (D) in potato and mottling and crinkle in *Nicotiana glutinosa* (E).

Figure 3. Identification of de novo population of CVdV in non-inoculated leaves of herbaceous plants using RT-PCR (Top) and dot blot hybridization with the full-length DIG-labelled probe of the viroids (Bottom), confirming the infectivity of the viroids in various inoculated plants.

Cucumis melo, Citrullus lanatus, Nicotiana glutinosa, Nicotiana tabacum and Petunia hybrid; either, mock-inoculated controls did not show any symptoms.

**Accumulation of CVdV Progenies in Inoculated Tomato Plants**

To ascertain replication of CVdV in tomato plants, a time-course experiment assay was carried out to monitor accumulation of the viroid progenies over 28 days post-inoculation with 7 days interval using semi quantitative real time RT-PCR.

Normalization of host RNA using an internal control gene GADPH was performed before the quantification of CVdV in tomato plants. The normalized templates were then used for quantitative assay of CVdV. Utilizing the comparative Ct \((2^{-\Delta\Delta Ct})\) method for relative quantification of viroid needs validation of efficiency of the cv5F/R primers with respect to the endogenous control primers, GAPDH. Comparison of the standard curves generated from amplification of four fold dilutions of GAPDH and CVdV demonstrated that the efficiencies of viroid and GAPDH amplification were similar (Figure 4).

As shown in Figure 4, a significant correlation between levels of accumulation of the viroid progenies and sampling time was observed. A 7.1 fold increase in accumulation of the CVdV progenies at 21 dpi was observed compared to 14 dpi (Figure 4). Then, level of CVdV RNA leaped at 28 dpi to 56.5 fold. Four weeks after inoculation, the number of viroid
copies ng\textsuperscript{-1} of total RNA was in the range of $6.57 \times 10^7$ to $7.06 \times 10^7$ in the tomato plants, without substantial differences between them.

The symptoms induced by CVdV, such as rugosity, leaf epinasty, and stunting in tomato could be observed in 8 weeks post inoculations (Figure 2).

**Figure 5.** Locations and sequence variations found in 22 isolates of CVdV on the secondary structures of the viroid.

**Increasing levels of CVdV in time-course experiments in the tomato plants indicated replication of the viroid in this plant.**

Sequence Analysis of the Viroids Progeny

To determine whether the replicated RNA preserves its primary sequence or suffers nucleotide alteration, viroid progenies were sequenced. The sequencing data, provided from 22 clones, revealed the presence of several mutations in the progenies of CVdV.

The sequencing of the CVdV clones revealed the progenies were 96% identical to the wild type, but differing at 11 nucleotide positions: C43A, A48U, A53G, G55C, C56A, A60G, T163G, C222T, C224T, +243A, T257C. These mutations lie in the Pathogenicity (P), Central Conserved Region (CCR) and Terminal Right (TR) domains of the viroid secondary structure (Figure 5).

**Comparison of Different Inoculation Methods**

Three different inoculation methods including agro-inoculation, mechanical inoculation of infected sap, and mechanical inoculation of linearized plasmid were compared. To do this, three groups of 5 cucumber plants were separately inoculated by bacterial cells harboring CVdV infectious construct, linearized plasmid containing the viroids genome, or sap of CVdV-infected cucumber. The plants were checked for the presence of the viroids at 3 wpi by RT-PCR. Amplification of a single expected band using viroids specific primers indicated successful transmission of the viroids.

Comparison of the percent of infectivity for each inoculation method revealed that agro-infiltration and mechanical inoculation of sap were the best inoculation methods, with approximately 100% efficiency. All plants (5 cucumbers) inoculated using agroinoculation or mechanical inoculation of the infected sap were infected by CVdV, but in the case of linearized plasmid as inoculum for mechanical inoculation, only 3 out of five inoculated cucumbers were infected by CVdV.

**DISCUSSION**

Without encoding protein, viroids are infectious in many plant species (Ding, 2009; Flores \textit{et al.}, 2009). They are interesting biological entities, which may be used as models in biological research (Ding and Itaya, 2007). Therefore, many studies have been carried out to determine factors involved in replication, movement, and pathogenicity of the viroids, especially for the genus pospiviroids (Ding, 2009; Flores \textit{et al.}, 2009; Gora-Sochacka \textit{et al.}, 1997; Owens \textit{et al.}, 1996; Owens and Hammond,
Past attempts had failed to transmit CVdV to non-citrus species (Barbosa et al., 2005; Serra et al., 2008). In this study, eleven herbaceous plant species were identified as systemic hosts for CVdV. Cucumis sativus, Cucumis melo, Citrullus lanatus, Solanum lycopersicum, Nicotiana tabacum, Nicotiana glutinosa, Solanum tuberosum, Capsicum annum, Petunia hybridra; Phaseolus vulgaris and Gynura aurantiaca are reported for the first time as experimental hosts for CVdV. However, only Solanum lycopersicum and Phaseolus vulgaris plants displayed visual symptoms (Table 2). These plant species were also symptomatic hosts for AGVd (Zakiaghl and Izadpanah, 2010) and ASSVd (Walia et al., 2014).

CVdV showed mottling and leaf deformation in cucumber plants. Cucumber is known as symptomless assay host plant of three other apscaviroids, such as Pear blister canker viroid (Flores et al., 1991), Australian grapevine viroid (Rezaian et al., 1990, Zakiaghl and Izadpanah 2010) and Apple scar skin viroid (Walia et al., 2014). It seems that cucumber serves as a relatively good host plant for biological indexing of apscaviroids.

In the cases of Nicotiana tabacum, Nicotiana glutinosa and Petunia hybridra, replication of CVdV induced no symptoms. Similar results were obtained for ASSVd (Walia et al., 2014) and AGVd (Zakiaghl and Izadpanah, unpublished data).

Increase in accumulation of viroid RNA over the period of 28 days indicated the successful replication of CVdV in tomato plants. Previous data indicated that replication of Potato spindle tuber viroid (Qi and Ding, 2002), CEVd (Martin et al., 2007) and CDVd (Rizza et al., 2009) in their host plants are coupled with the accumulation of viroid transcripts in plant tissues.

In addition to identification of herbaceous host plants, different types of inoculation strategies were also examined. CVdV could be transmitted through agro-inoculation of monomeric constructs, mechanical inoculation of plasmid DNA containing viroids monomer, and through the sap

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inoculation. Agro-inoculation and mechanical inoculation of sap yielded approximately 100% efficacy. There is no report for successful transmission of CVdV to herbaceous host plants (Barbosa et al., 2005; Serra et al., 2008). However, not only this study was able to transmit CVdV to various herbaceous host plants but also it was readily transmissible via several inoculation methods.

Previous studies conducted with viroids have revealed that several variants can be generated de novo from a single sequence (Ambros et al., 1999; Gandia and Duran-Vila, 2004; Gora-sochacka et al., 1994; Owens et al., 1996). Comparison of sequences of progenies of CVdV with the wild type, revealed the presence of several mutations in de novo populations of the viroids.

Most of the substitutions concentrated at P domain on the secondary structure of the viroids. Earlier reports suggested that variability of viroids in the family Pospiviroidae is generally found in the V and P domains (Keese and Symons, 1985). In CEVd and HSVd, most changes are located in the P and TL domains, without significant changes in the secondary structure (Fagoaga and Duran-Vila, 1996; Gandia and Duran-Vila, 2004). These substitutions may de novo occur in the herbaceous host plants to protect viroids against the host defense system or to induce fitness to the new host. It has been reported for Peach latent mosaic viroid and Apple scar skin viroid that the generation of new variants may undergo transitions in the host plants (Ambros et al., 1999; Walia et al., 2014).

In conclusion, we analyzed experimental host range of CVdV, an apscaviroid naturally infecting citrus species. We fulfilled the Koch’s postulates to show that several herbaceous plants belonging to Solanaceae, Fabaceae, Cucurbitaceae, and Asteraceae families are systemic hosts for CVdV.

REFERENCES

Herbaceous Host Range of Citrus viroid V

Herbaceous Host Range of Citrus viroid V

Asteraceae

The herbaceous hosts of citrus viroid V. Studying the impact of viroid concentration on the number of infected plants and the viroid concentration in the infected plants. The study was conducted in a greenhouse with 28 plants, each infected with a different viroid concentration. The results showed a significant decrease in the number of infected plants as the viroid concentration increased. This might be due to the specific characteristics of the viroid or the susceptibility of the plants used in the study.