PRODUCTION AND CHARACTERIZATION OF URICASE FROM *Pseudomonas* otitidis STRAIN SN1 ISOLATED FROM A HOT SPRING

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents; Irwan Shah Lee bin Abdullah, Rahimah bt Ahmad and Ahmad bin Yaacub

My parents in law; Allahyarham Hj Nasir and Hjh Mek

For my lovely husband; Mohd Khairul Mizan bin Nasir

For my wonderful children; Muhammad Ammar Anaqi, Nur Aufa Azzahra and Muhammad Azfar Anaqi

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ABSTRACT

Uricase is an enzyme that catalyzes the oxidation of uric acid to allantoin. This study aimed to exploit bacteria isolated from hot springs to produce uricase using uric acid as substrate. Sampling was conducted at Hulu Langat hot springs and the samples were enriched in LB medium followed by inoculation into uric acid minimal medium. The isolated bacteria were screened for uricase production using plate assay method. One-factor-at-a-time (OFAT) methodological optimization was used to enhance uricase production from the selected bacteria. Uricase was then purified using anion exchange and gel filtration chromatography prior to its characterization. Four bacterial strains positive for uricase enzyme activity were successfully isolated and were identified as Pseudomonas otitidis strain SN1, Pseudomonas sp. strain SN2, Pseudomonas stutzeri strain SN3 and Pseudomonas sp. strain SN4. P. otitidis strain SN1 showed the highest uricase activity (0.12 U/mg) and was selected for further study. Optimized uricase production of strain SN1 was achieved with uric acid minimal medium supplemented with 2% (w/v) glucose, 0.2% (w/v) uric acid, 2% (w/v) yeast extract, and adjusted to pH 7.2. Statistical analyses showed that all variables were significant parameters that affect the production of uricase. The uricase was successfully purified to homogeneity using 70% (w/v) ammonium sulfate precipitation, HiTrap[™] Q Sepharose HP anion exchange chromatography and Superdex G-75 gel chromatography. The specific activity of uricase was increased by 3.52 fold, from 0.058 U/mg for crude to 0.204 U/mg for purified uricase. The purified uricase showed a size of approximately 35 kDa band on SDS PAGE gel. The kinetics of purified uricase was 16.54 µM and 0.2 U/mg (V_{max}). The purified uricase exhibited an optimum activity at 35°C and pH 8.5. The enzyme was stable from pH 8.0-9.0 and was able to retain 50% of its total activity after incubation for 30 minutes at 50°C. Activity of uricase was retained in the presence of metal ions (Cu^{2+} , Fe^{2+} , Mn^{2+}) and detergent (urea). The band corresponding to the expected size of uricase, was sent for mass spectrometry analysis for protein identification. However, the results showed that the peptide sequences matched that of ornithine carbamoyltransferase (score=780). The discrepancy was probably due to the presence of low abundance of uricase which resulted in low peptides spectra. Further literature search revealed that both uricase and ornithine carbamovltransferase are involved in the metabolic pathway producing urea. It was thus postulated that P. otitidis strain SN1 may possess two metabolic pathways (uricolysis and argininolysis) and thus, able to exhibit dual enzyme activity (uricase and ornithine carbamoyltransferase). This study is the first to report the characteristic of uricase producing bacterium, P. otitidis strain SN1 isolated from hot spring, and also suggesting the hot spring as potential source of new uricase.

ABSTRAK

Urikase ialah enzim pemangkin yang mengoksidakan asid urik kepada alantoin. Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk mengeksploitasi bakteria yang dipencilkan dari kolam air panas untuk menghasilkan urikase dengan asid urik sebagai substrat. Pensampelan dilakukan di kolam air panas di Hulu Langat dan sampel diperkaya dalam medium LB diikuti oleh inokulasi ke dalam medium minimal asid urik. Bakteria yang dipencilkan disaring untuk penghasilan urikase menggunakan kaedah cerakinan plat. Pengoptimuman metodologi satu faktor-padamasa (OFAT) digunakan untuk meningkatkan pengeluaran urikase daripada bakteria terpilih. Urikase kemudiannya ditulenkan menggunakan kaedah kolum kromatografi penukaran cas anion dan kolum kromatografi penapisan gel sebelum penciriannya. Empat bakteria positif aktiviti urikase telah berjaya dipencilkan dan telah dikenalpasti sebagai Pseudomonas otitidis strain SN1, Pseudomonas sp. strain SN2, Pseudomonas stutzeri strain SN3 dan Pseudomonas sp. strain SN4. P. otitidis strain SN1 menunjukkan aktiviti urikase paling tinggi (0.12 U/mg) dan telah dipilih untuk ujian selanjutnya. Penghasilan optimum urikase oleh strain SN1 telah dicapai dengan medium minimal asid urik yang ditambahi dengan 2% (b/i) glukosa, 0.2% (b/i) asid urik, 2% (b/i) ekstrak vis pada pH 7.2. Analisis statistikal menunjukkan semua faktor adalah signifikan dalam mempengaruhi penghasilan urikase. Urikase telah berjaya ditulenkan kepada homogen menggunakan pemendapan ammonium sulfat, kolum kromatografi penukaran cas anion HiTrapTM Q Sepharose HP dan kolum kromatografi penapisan Superdex G-75. Aktiviti spesifik urikase meningkat sebanyak 3.52 kali ganda, daripada 0.058 U/mg pada enzim kasar kepada 0.204 U/mg pada enzim tulen. Urikase tulen mempunyai saiz kira-kira 35 kDa telah ditujukkan dalam gel SDS PAGE. Kinetik enzim tulen adalah 16.54 µM (Km) dan 0.2 U/mg (V_{max}). Urikase tulen menunjukkan aktiviti optimum pada suhu 35°C dan pH 8.5. Enzim ini didapati stabil antara pH 8.0-9.0 dan mampu mengekalkan 50% aktiviti asalnya selepas dieramkan selama 30 minit dalam suhu 50°C. Aktiviti urikase juga tidak terjejas oleh kehadiran ion logam (Cu²⁺, Fe²⁺, Mn²⁺) dan juga detergen (urea). Jalur protein sepadan dengan saiz yang dianggapkan sebagai urikase telah iisim dianalisa spektrofotometer untuk pengenalpastian protein. Walau bagaimanapun keputusan analisis menunjukkan peptida tersebut berpadanan dengan karbamoiltransferase ornitin (skor=780). Perbezaan ini mungkin berpunca daripada kehadiran peptida urikase yang terlalu rendah lalu menghasilkan spektrum rendah. Carian literatur menunjukkan kedua-dua enzim ini terlibat dalam laluan metabolik menghasilkan urea. Oleh itu, P. otitidis strain SN1 dicadangkan mempunyai dua laluan metabolik (urikolisis dan argininolisis) dan oleh sebab itu, mampu mempamerkan aktiviti enzim ganda (urikase dan karbamoiltransferase ornitin). Kajian ini adalah yang pertama melaporkan pencirian bakteria yang menghasilkan urikase, P. otitidis strain SN1 yang dipencilkan daripada kolam air panas, dan seterusnya mencadangkan kolam air panas sebagai sumber yang berpotensi untuk pencarian urikase baru.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| ANOVA | - | Analysis of Variance |
|------------|---|---|
| BLAST | - | Basic Local Alignment Search Tool |
| bp | - | Base pair |
| BSA | - | Bovine Serum Albumin |
| CV | - | Column volume |
| DCW | - | Dry Cell Weight |
| DMSO | - | Dimethyl sulfoxide |
| E.coli | - | Escherichia coli |
| LB | - | Luria Bertani |
| PCR | - | Polymerase Chain Reaction |
| DNA | - | Deoxyribonucleic acid |
| DEAE | - | Diethylaminoethyl |
| IKBN | - | Institut Kemahiran Belia Negara |
| MEGA | - | Molecular Evolutionary Genetics Analysis |
| mw | - | Molecular weight |
| MWCO | - | Molecular Weight Cut Off |
| NaCl | - | Sodium chloride |
| nm | - | Nanometer |
| OD | - | Optical density |
| OFAT | - | One-Factor-at-a-Time |
| OHCU | - | 2-oxo-4-hydroxy-5-ureidaimidazoline decarboxylase |
| rpm | - | Rotation per minute |
| SDS PAGE | - | Sodium Dodecyl Sulfate Polyacrylamide Gel |
| | | Electrophoresis |
| TAE buffer | - | Tris-Acetate-EDTA buffer |
| Tris-HCl | - | Tris-(hydroxyl)-aminomethane hydrochloride |
| UV-Vis | - | Ultraviolet visible |
| V | - | Volt |
| 16s rRNA | - | 16 small subunit of ribosomal Ribonucleic Acid |

LIST OF SYMBOLS

| % | - | Percentage |
|-------------|---|------------------------------|
| μ_{max} | - | Maximum specific growth rate |
| μ | - | Specific growth rate |
| μg | - | Microgram |
| μL | - | Microlitre |
| μm | - | Micron/micrometer |
| μΜ | - | Micromolar |
| µmol | - | Micromole |
| °C | - | Degree Celcius |
| g | - | Gram |
| g | - | Gravitational force |
| g/L | - | Gram per litre |
| Μ | - | Molar |
| mM | - | miliMolar |
| mg | - | Milligram |
| mm | - | Milimeter |
| ng | - | Nanogram |
| L | - | Litre |
| V | - | Volt |
| v/v | - | Volume per volume |
| W/V | - | Weight per volume |
| | | |

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Uric acid (C₅H₄N₄O₃) is an organic heterocyclic compound which commonly present in all organisms. In the human body, uric acid is produced when the body breaks purine or naturally obtained from certain foods contain uric acid such as meat and seafood. A proper balance of diet is needed to maintain uric acid level in the body. Excessive intake of food containing high level of uric acid may cause precipitation of uric acid in blood, joints and formation of kidney stones. Overproduction of uric acid in the body may lead to few illnesses such as gout, hyperuricemia and renal disease. Patients that suffer with these illnesses should avoid food with high purine contents.

The normal level of uric acid in blood is between 3-7mg/100 mL (Yeap *et al.*, 2009; Hafez *et al.*, 2017). However, an average meal intake for adult in United States contains 600-100 mg of purines daily (Yeap *et al.*, 2009). The prevalence of gout has increased worldwide approximately two fold increase for over 30 years. It is estimated about 8 million people in United States suffer with gout and other uric acid related diseases (Mikuls *et al.*, 2005). In New Zealand, gout problems have increased about 5.5% per year while in England recorded 7.2% yearly increased starting from 1999-2009. Unfortunately, published reports regarding gout patients in Malaysia are yet available (Chow *et al.*, 2008; Teh *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, practicing healthy diet and monitoring uric acid level is very important. When levels of uric acid exceed its solubility limit, uric acid starts to accumulate and crystals of uric acid may be formed over time. The uric acid may deposits in joints and cause painful inflammation and swelling joints. This condition is known as gout attack. The gout patients will feel intense pain, functional impairment and thus hampered quality of life. This sickness can only be reduced with aid from drug treatment. Allopurinol and colchicine are the

examples of drugs used in the treatment of gout attack. However, these medicines are expensive and patients will have undesirable side effects such as allergic reactions and internal hypersensitivity (Teh *et al.*, 2014). Due to that, health practitioners are progressively searching for another type of treatment that is less risk and able to relief pain efficiently.

Uricase (urate oxidase) is an enzyme involved in purine metabolism. This enzyme is responsible to start a chain of reactions that transforms uric acid to more soluble compound known as allantoin. Initially, uricase catalyzes the reaction of uric acid and converting it to unstable product, 5-hydroxy-isourate (HIU). This unstable compound then goes through non-enzymatic hydrolysis to 2-oxo-4-hydroxy-4-carboxy-5-uredoi-midazoline (OHCU) and spontaneously decarboxylates to form allantoin (Kahn and Tipton, 1998; Ramazzina *et al.*, 2006). Uricase is mostly present in most vertebrates but absent in humans (Anderson and Vijayakumar, 2012; Garay *et al.*, 2012). The absence of uricase in humans was due to the disruption of uricase gene occurred during molecular evolution and thus, caused inactivation of the uricase gene in human (Oda *et al.*, 2002). As a result, humans lost functional uricase and excrete uric acid as the end product of purine degradation.

The microbial production of uricase has been extensively studied. Several studies reported uricase produced from bacteria such as *Microbacterium sp.* ZZJ4-1 (Zhou *et al.*, 2005), *Bacillus thermocatenulatus* (Lotfy, 2008), *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Anderson and Vijayakumar, 2012) and *Streptomyces exfoliates* UR10 (Magda *et al.*, 2013). Several fungi also demonstrated to produce uricase such as *Aspergillus carbonarius*, *Aspergillus sydowii* and *Botrytis fabae* (Mahmoud and El-Fallal, 1996). Tanaka *et al.*, (1977) also suggested that uric acid was effective for inducing uricase in *Candida tropicalis*. The uricase from these microorganisms can be isolated from environment such as soil, poultry waste and marine sediment. Besides that, uricase is also purified from leaves of chickpea (*Cicer arietimum L.*), broad beans (*Vicia faba major L.*) and wheat (*Triticum aestivum L.*) (Pineda *et al.*, 1997). To date, there are two clinically approved uricases, Elitek® (Rasburicase) (Coiffier *et al.*, 2003) and Krystexxa® (Pegloticase) (Sundy *et al.*, 2011). Rasburicase is a recombinant uricase enzyme produced by a genetically modified

Saccharomyces cerevisiae strain. The cDNA coding for rasburicase was cloned from a strain of *Aspergillus flavus*. On the other hand, pegloticase is a fusion protein constituted uricase from porcine and baboon. This pegloticase is also hyper-PEGylated to minimize immunogenicity and extend shelf life. Both of these uricase are used in the treatment of severe and chronic gout by metabolizes the conversion of uric acid to allantoin. The advantage of uricase is they allow more rapid resorption of urate kidney stone compared to allopurinol treatment (Nyborg *et al.*, 2016).

The biology of uricase producing bacteria and characterization of purified uricase was investigated as it can build knowledge on novel strain on producing uricase. Hence, it is very important to screen the diverse microbial populations in the environment for more uricase producing microorganisms. Isolation and characterization of uricase producing bacteria from the environment would provide the fundamental studies for improving therapeutic treatment of gout and hyperuricemia. At present, there are limited studies that describe uricase producing microorganisms.

Hot springs are water that brings the heat from the Earth's mantle to the surface through a permeable path of the aquifer (Belkova et al., 2007). Chemical content of the water in hot springs changes according to the chemical composition of rocks situated on the path of the hot water flow. When the water temperature increases, it causes the dissolving rate of minerals to increase. Therefore, it has been proposed that this increases the treatment value of water in hot springs (Rajapaksha et al., 2014). Thus, the water of the hot springs is well known for relief of gout, rheumatism, paralysis and skin diseases. Hot spring water is rich in magnesium, calcium, sodium and all sorts of naturally occurring trace minerals (Etani et al., 2016). However, bacterial enumerations from the hot springs water are scarce and restricted. Microorganisms that exist in the hot springs were left abundance without further studied of their potential (Mohammad *et al.*, 2017). Interestingly, to the best of our knowledge, uricase producing microorganisms have to be isolated from the hot springs. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the physiology and the new properties of uricase from Pseudomonas otitidis strain SN1 for providing insights into the potential of therapeutic enzyme. In addition, comparison of different uricase

from various organisms can be a great importance for comparison of protein structure and its properties.

1.2 Problem Statement

Uricase is an endogenous enzyme found in most mammals but absent in human. This occurs because of the nonsense mutation occurred during molecular evolution. Thus, due to high level of uric acid produced in human body, it contributes to many negative effects. This is caused from deposition of urate in the joints and tissues. The prevalence of diseases related to uric acid are rising yearly and become as major health issue in developed countries (Winnard *et al.*, 2012). Varieties of medicines are available in the market. For example, allopurinol is the most commonly used as urate lowering medication. Allopurinol works by inhibit xanthine oxidase enzyme during synthesis of uric acid and thus reducing production of uric acid in the body (Dubreuil *et al.*, 2015). However, most of the drugs are prone to show adverse effects such as allergic reaction, severe abdominal pain, nausea or painful during urination. Without effective urate lowering drugs, many patients developed to chronic gout by persistent pain, enlarging tophi and functional disabilities (Sundy *et al.*, 2011).

Currently, health practitioners become interested with the use of uricase enzyme in the treatment of diseases related to uric acid. Uricase is used as biodrug for therapeutic treatment associated with gout and hyperuricemia (Crittenden and Pillinger, 2013; Xiaolan *et al.*, 2013) as well as important tools for uric acid assay in clinical laboratories (Zhao *et al.*, 2009; Huang *et al.*, 2015). In addition, uricase is able to convert uric acid into allantoin with higher solubility and no obvious adverse actions were reported. Thus, uricase becomes a promising therapeutic enzyme for handling uric acid related diseases (Sundy *et al.*, 2011). However, the introduction of uricase enzyme for treating this problem, the limited capacity concurrent with the low uricase efficacy in commercially available uricase remains a problem (Gurung *et al.*, 2013). Researchers undertook to manage these problems by genetically

engineering those available uricase as it could enhance the rate of its activity. However, the high cost of engineered enzyme production, specificity and reliability problem circumscribe their widespread use (Liu *et al.*, 1994). In light of this, it is important to identify and investigate new uricase enzyme that are more specific and safe for therapeutic treatment of gout and hyperuricemia. Furthermore, the uses of microbial enzymes acquiring many attentions because of the rapid development of enzyme technologies. The use of microbial enzymes are preferred because of their economic feasibility, rapid growth of microbes using inexpensive media, ease of product modification and optimization and greater catalytic activity (Gurung *et al.*, 2013).

1.3 **Objectives of Study**

This study was carried out to investigate the ability of new uricase producing bacteria from local hot spring that is responsible for uricase production. The specific objectives of this research were as follows:

- i) To study the biology of the organisms with respect to uric acid
- ii) To optimize the uricase production by selected bacteria in batch culture
- iii) To purify and characterize the uricase produced by selected bacteria

1.4 Scope of Study

In this study, a few bacteria that can produce uricase were successfully isolated and identified from local hot springs. The isolates were investigated for their ability to produce uricase. As a result, a novel bacterium, *Pseudomonas otitidis* strain SN1 was selected for study of effects of different nutritional components on maximizing uricase production. This research was then proceeds with purification

works and enzymatic studies where the isolated microbial uricase was purified by using ammonium sulfate precipitation, anion exchange and gel filtration chromatography. Purity of isolated uricase was verified using SDS PAGE. Characterization of uricase was carried out in terms of biochemical studies. At the end of the study, highly possible uricase was identified using tandem mass spectrometry.

1.5 Significance of Study

Microbial uricase enzymes isolated from environment has significant potential and hopes for patients that suffer with uric acid related diseases. The uricase enzyme was known to provide better effect compared to commercial medicine available in markets. This is because injection of uricase permits rapid dissolution of urate kidney stone and thus relief intense pain promptly (Nyborg *et al.*, 2016). In addition, uricase from environments are considered low-risk compared to the use of medicine drug (Garay *et al.*, 2012).

Investigation to find new isolates from new sources (hot springs) with the capability to produce uricase enzyme are relatively good strategies to obtain uricase producing microorganisms. This is because the hot springs were known as places that left unexplored. Due to their increased importance, potential applications and roles in different fields, scientists have focused their studies to discover new genus and species from hot springs (Mohammad *et al.*, 2017). To date, no study has reported on the isolation of uricase producing bacteria from hot springs. The study of uricase enzyme from other bacterial strains and their properties are important, because the diversity may produce beneficial knowledge towards expanding uricase enzymes with high value potential. To the best of our knowledge, the biology of novel *Pseudomonas otitidis* in producing uricase isolated from hot springs has yet to be discovered and reported.

Besides that, this study provides important environment parameters in increasing the production of uricase isolated from hot springs. The uricase

production was affected by physicochemical parameters such as carbon and nitrogen source, pH and temperatures. Thus, by studying the parameters, this will provide information of the growth rate and kinetics in enhancing the production of uricase of the isolated bacteria. This study also presents the purification work and characterization of uricase from *Pseudomonas otitidis* strain SN1. This anticipates additional information for uricase purified from wild type strain. This is because only limited studies on purification of uricase and its properties from wild type were reported.

At the end of the study, the mass spectrometry analysis revealed the potential uricase also shared the similarity function with ornithine carbamoyltransferase in producing urea via alternative metabolic pathway. The analysis also shows that working with protein originated from wild type is more diverse and challenging because wild type bacteria exhibited different physiologies and unpredicted metabolic pathway. The new findings about relationships of uricase and ornithine carbamoyltransferase enzyme promote additional knowledge and value to the novel strain of *Pseudomonas otitidis*.

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