

**LINDA PRISCILA GUAMAN BAUTISTA**

**Clonagem e super expressão dos genes do catabolismo  
de xilose em *Burkholderia sacchari* e avaliação  
de seu efeito na repressão catabólica e produção de  
polihidroxibutirato a partir de açucares hemicelulósicos**

Tese apresentada ao programa de Pós-Graduação em Microbiologia do Instituto de Ciências Biomédicas da Universidade de São Paulo, para obtenção do Título de Doutor em Ciências.

**Área de Concentração: Microbiologia**  
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## RESUMO

Guamán LP. Clonagem e superexpressão dos genes de metabolismo de xilose em *Burkholderia sacchari* e avaliação do efeito na repressão catabólica e no acúmulo de Polihidroxibutirato usando açúcares lignocelulósicos. Tese (Doutorado em Microbiologia). São Paulo: Instituto de Ciências Biomédicas, Universidade de São Paulo; 2016.

Apesar das muitas vantagens que os Polihidroxialcanoatos apresentam, uma das principais razões que limitam seu uso a grande escala, é o alto custo da fonte de carbono usada como substrato, por tanto, o uso de fontes de carbono mais baratas obtidas de resíduos lignocelulósicos são uma alternativa para reduzir os custos de produção, além de serem completamente renováveis. No Brasil, a quantidade de bagaço de cana de açúcar disponível é de  $20.8 \times 10^6$  por ano, o que representa,  $10 \times 10^6$  toneladas de xilose disponíveis, que são geralmente queimadas ou descartadas. A pesar de ser o segundo açúcar mais abundante da natureza, o uso de xilose ainda representa uma barreira técnica, devido ao fenômeno de repressão catabólica quando a glicose está presente, e também devido ao ineficiente consumo de xilose em várias linhagens. Usamos como modelo de estudo *Burkholderia sacchari*, uma bactéria isolada no Brasil, que consome xilose, e acumula até um 80% de P(3HB) como massa seca, com o objetivo de melhorar a velocidade específica máxima de crescimento ( $0.14 \text{ h}^{-1}$ ) e o teor de acúmulo de P(3HB), a través da expressão de genes metabólicos, reguladores e de transporte de xilose. Primeiro, nós descrevemos a organização dos genes responsáveis da assimilação da xilose, e avaliamos a superexpressão dos dois primeiros genes metabólicos xylAB. Nós demonstramos que a superexpressão destes genes melhorou a velocidade específica máxima de crescimento assim como o acúmulo de P(3HB), atingindo o mais alto fator de conversão de xilose a P(3HB) (0.35 g/g), com um incremento na velocidade a  $0.203 \text{ h}^{-1}$ . Depois, foram realizados ensaios em misturas de açúcares para avaliar a repressão catabólica (CCR) na presença de xilose, glicose e arabinose. Foi possível identificar uma forte CCR de glicose sob xilose, e uma CCR mais relaxada na mistura de glicose sob arabinose. A super expressão dos genes xyle-xylAB permitiu abolir a repressão catabólica melhorando assim o acúmulo de P(3HB) até 66%. Finalmente, e devido a que uma das maiores limitações para a aplicação de biologia sintética e engenharia metabólica em *B. sacchari* é a falta de ferramentas moleculares apropriadas, nos decidimos construir um set de plasmídeos adaptando o sistema BglBrick usando origens de replicação compatíveis com *B. sacchari*. Foram avaliados também, dois diferentes promotores e se identificaram os melhores níveis de cada um dos indutores. Usando este set de plasmídeos, nos reportamos que a superexpressão de XylR, o fator de regulação transcripcional do operon de xilose, nos permitiu atingir a maior velocidade máxima específica de crescimento para *B. sacchari*,  $0.25 \text{ h}^{-1}$ , quando usada xylose como fonte de carbono, o fator de conversão de xilose a P(3HB) e o teor de acúmulo foram também incrementadas. Em resumo, nos reportamos os diferentes níveis de repressão catabólica em *B. sacchari* em misturas de xilose, glicose e arabinose, e também, concluímos que a superexpressão dos genes xylAB e xylR melhoraram a velocidade específica de crescimento, o fator de conversão e o teor de acúmulo de P(3HB) em *B. sacchari* usando xilose como fonte de carbono

**Palavras chave** - Xilose. *Burkholderia sacchari*. Poli-3-Hidroxibutirato. Lignocellulose.

## ABSTRACT

Guamán LP. Cloning and overexpression of xylose catabolism genes of *Burkholderia sacchari* and evaluation of the impact on catabolic repression and Polyhydroxybutyrate production using hemicellulosic sugars. [Ph.D. thesis (Microbiology). Microbiology] São Paulo University, São Paulo Instituto de Ciências Biomédicas, Universidade de São Paulo; 2016

Despite the many advantages of polyhydroxyalkanoates, their higher production costs when compared with petroleum-based polymers still represent a barrier for make them competitive. One of the major reasons is the high cost associated at the carbon source used as substrate, therefore, the use of low-cost carbon sources obtained from lignocellulose residues, is an alternative to reduce production costs, besides of being completely renewable. In Brazil, the amount of sugarcane bagasse available is around  $20.8 \times 10^6$  tonnes year $^{-1}$  which means  $10 \times 10^6$  tonnes year $^{-1}$  of xylose available, mostly burned or discarded. Despite of being the second most abundant sugar in nature, xylose utilization still represents a technical barrier, because of carbon catabolite repression when in presence of glucose, and due to inefficient xylose uptake in several strains. In this research we study *Burkholderia sacchari*, a bacterium isolated in Brazil, which consumes xylose and accumulate up to 80% of the cell mass as P(3HB), with the aim of improving its specific growth rate ( $0.14\text{ h}^{-1}$ ) and P(3HB) yield, through overexpression of xylose catabolic, transport and regulator genes. First, we described the organization of the genes responsible for xylose assimilation, and we tested the first two metabolic genes (*xylAB*) demonstrating through its overexpression, that it is possible to improve *B. sacchari* ability to growth and use xylose as a sole carbon source and production of P(3HB). The highest conversion rate of xylose to P(3HB) (0.35 g/g) was achieved and also, the highest titer ( $11.3\text{ g L}^{-1}$ ) at a specific growth rate of  $0.203\text{ h}^{-1}$ . Then a series of sugar mixtures assays were performed to assess carbon catabolite repression (CCR) in mixtures of xylose, glucose, and arabinose. We identified strong CCR over xylose when glucose is supplied, and a relaxed CCR in glucose arabinose mixtures. *xylE-xylAB* genes were overexpressed to abolish CCR allowing us also improve P(3HB) accumulation up to 62%. Finally, and because one of the major limitations for applying metabolic engineering or synthetic biology approaches in *B. sacchari* is the lack of appropriate molecular tools, we decided to construct a set of inducible vectors adapting the existing BglI Brick system, using compatible replication origins to *B. sacchari*, two different promoters were assessed, and the best induction levels were described. Using this set of plasmids we reported that XylR (transcriptional xylose regulator) overexpression allowed us to achieve the highest growth rate reported to *B. sacchari* when cultivated in xylose as the sole carbon source ( $0.25\text{h}^{-1}$ ), improving also P(3HB) conversion factor and yield. In summary, we report *B. sacchari* has different levels of CCR in mixtures of xylose, glucose and arabinose; and also, we conclude that overexpression of *xylAB* and *xylR* genes improve growth rate, conversion factor and yield when P(3HB) is produced using xylose as carbon source in *B. sacchari*.

**Keywords** - Xylose. *Burkholderia sacchari*. Polyhydroxybutyrate. Lignocellulose.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHA's), are intracellular granules of polyester, accumulated as carbon and energy storage materials, synthesized by many microbial strains under unbalanced growth conditions such as the presence of excess carbon source and limitation of at least one essential nutrient. Its biodegradability, biocompatibility and similar physical properties to synthetic polymers make them an environmentally friendly alternative to petrochemical based plastics (1).

Since PHA's first description in 1926 by Lemoigne (2), several advances towards PHA's large scale production have been conducted, however, currently, the high production costs make PHA's more expensive than conventional plastics. One of the main reasons, is the high cost associated to carbon source used. According to Nonato and coworkers, it can account for up to 29% of its overall production cost, even when integrated to sugarcane mills (3). Several attempts including use of inexpensive lignocellulosic biomass have been conducted in recent years (4). In Brazil sugarcane production doubled the last decade, increasing at the same level bagasse availability by around 208 million tonnes (5). It is estimated around 30% (on a dry weight basis) of the harvested sugarcane corresponds to lignocellulosic byproducts (6).

The amount of sugarcane bagasse estimated to be used only for hydrolysis process is around  $7.0 \times 10^6$  tonnes year (5) which means  $35 \times 10^3$  tons per year of xylose available, mostly burned or discarded (7). *Burkholderia sacchari* LFM 101 (8,9), is able to accumulate up to 75% of cell dry weight (CDW) as PHA (10), this bacteria can utilize a variety of carbon sources including xylose, and even hemicellulosic hydrolysates from sugarcane bagasse (11–13) to produce not only PHA's but also other high-value chemicals like xylitol and xylonic acid (9,14). Despite of its capability to use xylose as carbon source, its slow growth rate ( $0.16 \text{ h}^{-1}$ ) associated with xylose consumption, represent a barrier for using this bacteria as a chassis to produce PHA's or other high value chemicals on industrial scale. Therefore, it is highly relevant to understand the particular features of xylose metabolism in *B. sacchari* and use this information to overcome metabolic roadblocks and exploit its potential for renewable bioproduction.

Within this context, the aim of this research was to improve xylose uptake in *B. sacchari*, through (1) Genome analysis and organization of operon(s) involved in xylose metabolism in *B. sacchari*. (2) Overexpression of key genes related to xylose metabolism, transport, or regulation, (3) Evaluate gene overexpression impact in growth rate and P(3HB) production. (4) Evaluate carbon catabolite repression in glucose, arabinose and xylose mixtures. (5) Finally, we also wanted to contribute to future synthetic biology approaches constructing a set of plasmids with replications origins compatible with *B. sacchari*, testing also two different promoters and appropriate induction levels.

## 2 CONCLUSIONS

- *xylAB* overexpression in *B. sacchari* leads to biomass improvement by 32% from 12.78 to 16.89 g L<sup>-1</sup> indicating significantly improved xylose catabolism and cell growth. The enhanced utilization of xylose most strikingly improved the production of P(3HB) to 11.29 g L<sup>-1</sup>, which represents a 34% improvement compared to the parental strain (8.4 g L<sup>-1</sup>). Xylose consumption was significantly increased, achieving the highest yield of xylose to P(3HB) reported to date (0.35 g/g), representing a 35% improvement. LFM1402 accumulated 67% P3HB of cell dry weight using xylose. The specific growth rate reached a  $\mu_{max}$  of 0.20 h<sup>-1</sup> and P(3HB) productivity increased 25,5% when compared to wild type (LFM 101).
- Overexpression of *xylFGH* and *xylE* didn't not improve growth rate in *B. sacchari*. However, expression of appropriate levels of the transcriptional regulator (*xylR*) further enhance growth rate (67%), P(3HB) production (34%), and yield (80%). this research represents the first approach of improving growth rate and PH3B production using of synthetic biology in *B. sacchari*. This work emphasizes the relevance of having tools allowing precise and tunable control of expression in non-model organisms.
- Unlike glucose-xylose mixture, growth profile in arabinose-xylose does not present strong diauxic growth, leading to growth rate of 0.44 h<sup>-1</sup>. In both mixtures, sugars were totally depleted after 16 h.
- *xylE xylAB* overexpression successfully overcome glucose repression over arabinose and xylose. All three sugars were consumed simultaneously, although glucose is always the preferred carbon source, being depleted at hour 14, when 63% of arabinose and 45 % of xylose was already consumed. By hour 23 all sugars were consumed with a growth rate of 0.35 h<sup>-1</sup>, whereas, *gatC xylAB* overexpression didn't not resulted in any improvement showing a similar behavior than control strain.

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