

## UNIVERSIDADE DE SÃO PAULO

## FACULDADE DE CIÊNCIAS FARMACÊUTICAS DE RIBEIRÃO PRETO

## Structural and biochemical characterization of Schistosoma mansoni class II fumarate hydratase enzyme

## Caracterização estrutural e bioquímica da enzima fumarato hidratase classe II de *Schistosoma mansoni*

IARA AIMÊ CARDOSO

Ribeirão Preto 2019

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Master dissertation presented to the Graduate Program of School of Pharmaceutical Sciences of Ribeirão Preto/USP for the degree of Master in Sciences.

Concentration Area: Chemistry and Biological Physics

**Supervisor:** Profa. Dra. Maria Cristina Nonato

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#### Abstract

Cardoso, I. A. **Structural and biochemical characterization of** *Schistosoma mansoni* **class II fumarate hydratase enzyme.** 2019. 64f. Dissertation (Master). Faculdade de Ciências Farmacêuticas de Ribeirão Preto – Universidade de São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, 2019.

Schistomiasis is a neglected tropical disease caused by trematodes worms from the genus Schistosoma. Schistosomiasis is the second most devastating parasitic disease after malaria. The disease has a high economic burden and affects mainly poor population without access to proper sanitation. Praziquantel is the only drug approved for the treatment of schistosomiasis and resistance is already reported. Fumarate hydratases or fumarases are enzymes that catalyze the reversible hydration of fumarate to L-malate. This enzyme participates in DNA repair and important metabolic processes such as the urea and the tricarboxylic acid cycles. Fumarases are divided in two classes, and Schistosoma mansoni possess both, being class I localized in mitochondria, while class II is cytosolic. The fundamental role of fundamental in the metabolism make them potential target for drug design against schistosomiasis. This work describes, for the first time, the cloning, expression and purification protocol for the class II fumarate hydratase from Schistosoma mansoni (SmFH<sub>II</sub>). In order to estimate the contribution of the reverse reaction, the enzyme was kinetically characterized using both substrates concomitantly.  $SmFH_{II}$  was shown to follow a Michaelis-Menten mechanism of catalysis with  $k_{cat}^{MAL}$  of 19 mM<sup>-1</sup>s<sup>-1</sup> and  $k_{cat}^{FUM}$  of 49 mM<sup>-1</sup>s<sup>-1</sup>, and  $K_m^{MAL}$  of 0.56 mM and  $K_m^{FUM}$  of 0.15 mM. Differential scanning fluorimetry (DSF) performed under different chemical environments shows that the highest thermal stability is reached at pH 7.5 and at higher ionic strength. The significant thermoshift observed for  $SmFH_{II}$  in presence of well known ligands makes DSF the adequate technique for ligand screening. SmFH<sub>II</sub> structure in complex with L-malate was determined by single crystal X-ray diffraction, at 1.85 Å resolution. A new construct [SmFHII<sub>( $\Lambda$ 263-277)</sub>] lacking the additional portion only found in trematode worms was also evaluated by kinetic and DSF experiments. Although not essential for activity, the results suggest that the removal of this region impacts on protein stability and may has influence on L-malate catalysis. The differences between SmFH<sub>II</sub> and human fumarase are distributed all over the structure, and could be explored to design new selective inhibitors.

Keywords: Fumarate hydratase, *Schistosoma mansoni*, X-ray crystallography, kinetic characterization.

#### Resumo

Cardoso, I. A. **Caracterização estrutural e bioquímica da enzima fumarato hidratase classe II de** *Schistosoma mansoni*. 2019. 64f. Dissertação (Mestrado). Faculdade de Ciências Farmacêuticas de Ribeirão Preto – Universidade de São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, 2019.

A esquistossomose é uma doença tropical negligenciada causada por parasitas trematódeos do gênero Schistosoma. A esquistossomose é a segunda doença parasitária mais devastadora do mundo, atrás apenas da malária. A doença tem um alto impacto econômico, afetando principalmente a população pobre sem acesso a saneamento adequado. Praziquantel é o único medicamento aprovado para o tratamento da esquistossomose e já existem relatos de parasitas resistentes a esse fármaco. Fumarato hidratases ou fumarases são enzimas que catalisam a hidratação reversível de fumarato em L-malato. Essa enzima participa do reparo ao dano do DNA e de processos metabólicos importantes, como os ciclos da uréia e do ácido tricarboxílico. As fumarases são divididas em duas classes e o S. mansoni possui ambas, sendo a classe I mitocondrial, enquanto a classe II é citosólica. O papel fundamental da fumarase no metabolismo faz dela um alvo potencial para o planejamento de fármacos contra a esquistossomose. Este trabalho descreve, pela primeira vez, o protocolo de clonagem, expressão e purificação da fumarato hidratase classe II de Schistosoma mansoni (SmFHII). De forma a estimar a contribuição da reação reversa, a enzima foi caracterizada cineticamente utilizando os dois substratos concomitantemente. A  $SmFH_{II}$  demonstrou seguir o mecanismo de catálise de Michaelis-Menten, tendo um  $k_{cat}^{MAL}$  de 19 mM<sup>-1</sup>s<sup>-1</sup> e  $k_{cat}^{FUM}$  de 49 mM<sup>-1</sup>s<sup>-1</sup>, e  $K_m^{MAL}$ de 0,56 mM e  $K_m^{FUM}$  de 0,15 mM. Fluorimetria de varredura diferencial (DSF) realizada em diferentes ambientes químicos demonstrou que a maior estabilidade térmica da proteína é alcançada em pH 7,5 e também com o aumento alta força iônica, além de ser uma técnica útil para a triagem de ligantes. A estrutura da SmFHII foi determinada por difração de raios-X de monocristal, com uma resolução de 1,85 Å. Uma nova construção [SmFH<sub>II( $\Delta 263-277$ )</sub>] sem a porção adicional, encontrada apenas em vermes de trematódeos, também foi avaliada por ensaios cinéticos e de DSF. Embora não seja essencial para a atividade enzimática, os resultados sugerem que a remoção dessa região afeta a estabilidade da proteína e pode ter influência na catálise do L-malato. As diferenças entre SmFH<sub>II</sub> e fumarase humana estão distribuídas por toda a estrutura e podem ser exploradas para delinear novos inibidores seletivos.

Palavras-chave: Fumarato hidratase, *Schistosoma mansoni*, cristalografia de raios-x, caracterização cinética.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1.** Neglected tropical diseases

The term neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) emerged in the 20th century to describe a group of infectious diseases that were found endemic in the tropical and subtropical areas of the globe. NTDs specially affect the poorest population with no adequate sanitation and constant contact with infectious vectors<sup>1; 2</sup>. These diseases cause important morbidity and mortality, being a serious public health problem in many countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America<sup>3</sup>. NTDs also reflect the scarce investments in research and development of new therapies or programs to their control<sup>2</sup>.

Currently, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes 20 diseases as NTDs, including schistosomiasis, Chagas disease, dengue and chikungunya, leishmaniasis, among others. These diseases affect more than one billion people, which represents one sixth of the world population<sup>1</sup>.

Neglected tropical diseases cause huge human suffering and numerous cases of death, remaining a serious impediment to socioeconomic development<sup>1</sup>. The indifference to these diseases only aggravates the scenario of global inequality, which shows the need to searching new drugs that are more effective and accessible to the low-income populations, as well as to encourage prevention and control programs for NTDs.

#### 1.2. Schistosomiais

#### 1.2.1. History

Schistosomiasis (also known as bilharziasis) is a parasitic neglected disease caused by blood flukes (trematode worms) of the genus *Schistosoma*, that can cause acute and chronic disease<sup>4</sup>. The disease is recognized as one of the oldest still existing infections. *Schistosoma haematobium* eggs were found in Egyptian mummies as old as 5,000 years<sup>5</sup>, while *Schistosoma mansoni* eggs were found in a latrine dated AD 1450-1550 in France<sup>6</sup>. The parasite was first described by the german parasitologist Theodor Maximilian Bilharz in 1851 during an autopsy performed at Cairo, and it was firstly named *Distomum haematobium*.<sup>7; 8</sup>

In Brazil, the first identification of *S. mansoni* worms was made by the doctor and researcher Manuel Augusto Pirajá da Silva in 1908<sup>9</sup>. The introduction of schistosomiasis in Brazil occurred through the trade of slaves originating from the west coast of Africa, who entered the country mainly through the ports of Recife and Salvador to work in sugarcane crops. The disease initially spread throughout the northeastern of Brazil, forming an extensive transmission area along the states of Rio Grande do Norte and Bahia. In the 18th century, with the decline of sugar production in the Northeast and the beginning of the gold and diamond cycle, an intense migratory flow introduced the disease in Minas Gerais state, and after that to the others states of Southeast region<sup>10</sup>.

#### 1.2.2. Epidemiology

Schistosomiasis is second only to malaria as most devastating parasitic neglected disease in the world<sup>3</sup>. The disease has been reported from 78 countries, which affects almost 240 million people worldwide, and more than 700 million people live in endemic areas<sup>11</sup>. The disease is prevalent in tropical and subtropical areas, and especially affects poor communities with no access to adequate sanitation and drinkable water<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, according to the number of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), an important measure of overall disease burden, schistosomiasis resulted in losses of 1.4 million years of full health among global population in 2017<sup>13</sup>.

In Brazil, schistosomiasis is distributed over 19 states (**Figure 1**) and affects about 1.5 million individuals, with the highest incidence in the Northeast and Southeast regions<sup>14</sup>. Schistosomiasis in Brazil represents a great economic burden, and its major impact is related to productivity loss. It was estimated in Brazil a total cost of US\$ 41.7 million in 2015, with 94.6% belonging to indirect costs as leave, disease aid and premature dead<sup>15</sup>.



**Figure 1.** Distribution of schistosomiasis, according to the positivity range - Brazil, 2010 - 2015. (Extracted from Portal da saúde –  $SUS^{16}$ ).

#### 1.2.3. Infection and transmission

Schistosomiasis is caused by the infection of dioecious trematode platelminths, and six species are capable of causing the disease in humans: *S. mekongi, S. intercalatum, S. guineensis, S. mansoni, S. haematobium* and *S. japonicum*. The last three species cited are responsible for the largest number of disease cases, and only *S. mansoni* is found in Brazil.

The transmission cycle (**Figure 2**) begins when *Schistosoma* eggs are eliminated with feces or urine, depending on the species. The eggs hatch, releasing the ciliated larval form, called miracidium, which swim and penetrate specific snail intermediate hosts (snail of the genus *Biomphalaria*, in Brazil). The stages in the snail include the generations of sporocysts and the asexual reproduction generating cercariae. The cercariae are released from the snail and penetrate the skin and/or mucous membranes, losing their forked tail and becoming schistosomulae. The schistosomulae migrate through venous circulation to the lungs and the heart till reach the liver and develop into sexed forms. Male and female adult worms exit the liver via the portal vein system when mature, copulate and reside in the mesenteric venules. *S. haematobium* most often inhabits in the vesicular and pelvic venous plexus of the bladder, but can also be found in the rectal venules. Finally, females release the

eggs in the small venules of the portal and perivesical systems. The eggs are moved through the lumen of the intestine (*S. mansoni*, *S. japonicum*, *S. mekongi*, *S. intercalatum/guineensis*) or the bladder and ureters (*S. haematobium*), and are eliminated with feces or urine, restarting the cycle<sup>3</sup>.



**Figure 2.** *Schistosoma* spp. life cycle scheme. (Extracted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>3</sup>).

Male adult parasites are robust, tuberculate and measure approximately 6-12 mm in length and 10 mm in width (**Figure 3**). The female has a cylindrical body, slender and longer than male  $(7-17 \text{ mm in length})^3$  (**Figure 3**).



Figure 3. Schistosome worm pair. (Extracted from the Trustees of the Natural History Museum).

#### 1.2.4. Symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment

Most people do not have any symptoms when they are first infected. Within a few days after infection, individuals may develop a rash or itchy skin, called cercariae dermatitis, characterized by reddish micropapules that resemble insect bites. About one to two months later, nonspecific symptoms appear, such as fever, headache, anorexia, nausea, asthenia, myalgia, cough and diarrhea, characterizing schistosomiasis in the acute form<sup>3; 14</sup>.

The symptoms of schistosomiasis are not caused directly by the worms themselves, but due to the reaction of the immune system to the eggs. Eggs that are not eliminated by feces may lodge in the intestine, liver or bladder, causing inflammation and fibrosis<sup>3</sup>.

If not treated, schistosomiasis become chronic and can persist for years. In the chronic phase, the disease may have different manifestations, and the liver is the most frequently affected. Signs and symptoms of chronic schistosomiasis include: abdominal pain, enlarged liver, bloody stools, bloody urine, and problems passing urine. In the most severe form of the disease, eggs lodge in the brain or spinal cord and can cause seizures, paralysis, or inflammation of the spinal cord<sup>3; 14</sup>.

The most commonly technique used for diagnosing schistosomiasis is the Kato-Katz method, which consists of identifying and counting the parasite's eggs in the feces or urine samples. Such method is a quick and simple way of diagnosis of the disease. Also, a serologic test (antibodies and/or antigens detected in blood samples) can be performed to confirm the infection<sup>3; 12; 14</sup>.

Praziquantel is the only treatment for human schistosomiasis recommended by the World Health Organization. However, it fails to prevent immediate reinfection, a common feature of the disease for people who live in tropical areas with poor sanitary conditions. Moreover, the emergence of drug resistant and praziquantel-insensitive parasites has increased due to its continuous and large-scale use for almost four decades<sup>17; 18; 19</sup>. In Brazil, praziquantel is available as 600 mg tablets and it is administered orally as a single oral dose of 50 mg/kg for adults and 60 mg/kg for children<sup>10</sup>.

Although praziquantel have been used as large-scale treatment, also called preventive chemotherapy, its molecular mechanism of action remains unclear. Some studies suggest that schistosome worms calcium ion channels are the target of praziquantel, causing a rapid  $Ca^{2+}$  influx and severe spasms and paralysis of the worms' muscles<sup>20; 21; 22</sup>. Other study demonstrated that praziquantel can cause morphological alterations (vacuolation and blebbing) near on the worm surface<sup>20; 23</sup>.

Although there are no current commercially available vaccines for schistosomiasis, there are few initiatives for vaccine development in different stages of clinical trials <sup>24; 25; 26; 27</sup>. One example is the Sm14/GLA-SE schistosomiasis vaccine, which has successfully completed phase I and phase IIa clinical trials, with phase IIb/III trials in progress. The vaccine was formulated with recombinant protein Sm14 and with glucopyranosyl lipid A (GLA) adjuvant in an oil-in-water emulsion (SE). Sm14 is a protein member of the fatty acid binding protein (FABP) family that plays an important role in the uptake, transport and compartmentalization of fatty acids from the host into the parasite, since helmints are not capable of synthesizing fatty acids by themselves. Besides being constituents of membranes, lipids also have important roles in the development of different lifecycle stages and the evasion of immune responses by adult worms and larvae. The research and development of Sm14/GLA-SE vaccine have been carried by the coordination of FIOCRUZ, a public institution linked to the Brazilian Ministry of Health<sup>28</sup>.

Victims of schsistosomiasis are concentrated in low and middle income country markets, and thus the disease remains away from the spotlights. With scarce investments in research dedicated to schistosomiasis, the world is far to achieve concrete improvements in prevention, treatment and quality of life for this representative fraction of vulnerable people of our society.

In the recent decades, academic research has been playing an important role in the identification, characterization and validation of new therapeutic targets against schistosomiasis<sup>29</sup>. Different potential targets from *Schistosoma spp* have been described and have been widely studied: dihydroorotate dehydrogenase<sup>30; 31</sup>, dihydrofolate reductase<sup>32</sup>,

histone deacetylases<sup>33</sup>, cathepsin B1<sup>34</sup>, glutathione S-transferase<sup>35</sup>, thioredoxin glutathione reductase<sup>36</sup>, among others.

In this work, we want to bring up to discussion the relevance of exploiting the fumarases as potential drug targets against schistosomiasis.

#### 1.3. **Fumarate Hydratase**

Fumarate hydratases (EC 4.2.1.2), or fumarases, are enzymes that catalyze the estereospecific and reversible hydratation of fumarate to L-malate (Figure 4).



Fumarate

Figure 4. Reversible reaction catalyzed by fumarase enzyme.

The fumarases are classified in two distinct classes: class I fumarases (FH<sub>1</sub>s) are homodimeric, contain an iron-sulfur cluster, and have a molecular weight around 120kDa<sup>37; 38;</sup> <sup>39</sup>, while class II fumarases (FH<sub>II</sub>s) are homotetrameric, iron independent, have a molecular weight around 200kDa, and are characterized by a conserved amino acid signature (GSSxxPxKxNPxxxE) that contain the catalytic SS-loop sequence (Figure 5), common to all aspartase/fumarase superfamily members<sup>37; 38; 40; 41</sup>.

Eukaryotic cells express two isoforms of fumarase<sup>42; 43</sup>: the canonical role of fumarase is taken by the mitochondrial echoform that participates in the tricarboxylic acid (TCA) cycle and can also take part in the succinic fermentation pathways by providing fumarate for the enzyme fumarate reductase<sup>44; 45</sup>; the cytosolic echoform has been described as having an important role in the maintenance of genome integrity. By migrating from the cytosol to the nucleus, the cytosolic FHs play a key role in DNA damage response (DDR) to DNA double strand breaks (DSBs)<sup>46</sup>. Moreover, cytosolic fumarase was suggested to participate as a scavenger of fumarate from the urea cycle and catabolism of amino acids<sup>47</sup>.

SmFHII	_	β1 	β2 <b>••• τ τ</b>	α1 00000000	٥	0000000	α2 2000000000	000 00000
SmFHII	1 10 MLETDSORLE	RVVEDSLGF	20 INVPLERYS	30 GAQTARSLG	40 NFNVCTRSD	50 IMPLQIVYSLA KMPLOIIVSLA	60 AMIKEVAACT	70 NFKLGRISSKLSDA
FhFHII CsFHII	. MPSAPAIQME . MAESKEGSRE	RTVKDSLGI	VDVGEGFY IEVPLDSY	GAQTERARR	NFQISLPRDI	RMPUPLIYTL KIPLSVVYAL	ALIKEAAAIV	NCQKGGINSEKCTA NCAKSRISSDEATA
HsFH FumC	ASQNSFI	RIEYDTFGE RSEKDSMGA	LKVPNDKYN IDVPADKLV	GAQTVRSTM	NFKIGGVTEI HFRISTEI	RMPTPVIKAF( KMPTSLIHAL)	GILKRAAAEV Altkraaakv	NQDYGLDPK.IANA NEDLGLLSEEKASA
MtFH	MAVDADSANY	RIEHDTMGE	EVR <mark>V</mark> PAKALI	VRAQTQRAVE	NFPISGRGLI	ERTQIRAL	GLL <mark>K</mark> GAC <mark>A</mark> QV	NSDLGLLAPEKADA
SmFHII	α3 202020202	η1 222	ک	α 2000000000	4 0000000000	٤	π1 00000	α5 2000000000000
8 SmFHII	BO 90 IVKACREVYHO	OHDNEFPI	LOO VIWQTGSG1	110 TOTNMNVNEV	120 LSSRASELII	130 DGSR.SSRLT	140 VHPNDHVNLG	150 OSSNDIFPTAMNLS
SjFH FhFHII	IVKACREVYHO ITQACKEIYGO	GOHDCEFPI OKFDDOFPI	VIWQTGSG1 SIWQTGSG1	TQTNMNVNEV TQTNMNVNEV	VSSRASELII IAGRATEILI	EGFR.NSSLI YGSKDNANDQ	VHPNDHVNLG VHPNDDVNCG	QSSNDIFPTAMNLS QSSNDIFPTAMNIC
CsFHII HsFH FumC	IIRACREVYSC IMKAADEVAEC	GKLDDHFPI GKLNDHFPI	SIWQTGSG VVWQTGSG	TQTNMNVNEV TQTNMNVNEV	VANRATELLO ISNRAIEMLO	CGSR.TGQPR GGEL.GSKIP	I HPNDHVNCG VHPNDHVNKS	QSSNDIFPTAMNLS QSSNDTFPTAMHIA
MtFH	IIAAAAEIADO	GQHDDQFP]	DVFQTGSG	ISSNMNTNEV	IASIAAK	GGVT	LHPNDDVNMS	QSSNDTFPTATHIA
C-FUTT		α6		β3	β4		α7	β5
		70		190	200	210	220	230
STER	IAMETAWKVL	SLNHLIDS	LKIKMHEFN	ANVIKIGRTH ANVIKIGRTH	MODAVPMSV( MODAVPMSV( LODAVPMTV(	GOELSGYVSOI GOELSGYVSOI	LQQAVDSIKS	QLPLICHLAVGGTA QLPAICYLAVGGTA
CsFHII HsFH	VSLETAWNTIE	ALESLVDA	INAKASQFI	HDVVKIGRTH	LODAVPMTFO	GQELGSFGAR GOEFSGYVOO	LSNTIGLIRQ	GVKSICNLAVGGTA AMPRIYELAAGGTA
FumC MtFH	ALLALRKQLII ATEAAVAHLII	POLKTLTO ALQQLHDA	LNEKSRAFA LAAKALDWH	ADIVKIGRTH HTVVKSGRTH	LQDATPLTLC LMDAVPVTLC	GOEISGWVAM GOEFSGYARO	LEHNLKHIEY IEAGIERVRA	SLPHVAELALGGTA Clprlgelaiggta
				*				
			α8		β6	α9		α10
SmFHII	ر TT 240 25	200000000 50	260 260	270	280	290	200000000 300	<u>310</u>
SmFHII SjFH	VGTGLNCSKGE VGTGLNCCKGE	DEELCVSI DKELCVSI	TQLTDRLYP	RTMYKESTPV KTIYKESSPV	. VDLIFKPAI	ENKFAALAGHI ENKFAALAGHI	DALLQLSGCF DALLQLSGCF	NTTATALMRLSNDF NTTATALMRLSNDF
FhFHII CsFHII	VGTGLNCPQGE VGTGLNSTKGE	DFALCEQ3	NQLLKERS. TELVEGMLE	VKENM KQRYGDTASK	SVELEFQPA YMKLTFTPA	RNKFAALAGHI ENKFAALAGHI	DALLQLSGSF DDLLQLSSCF	NCVATVLLKLASDF NQTATILFKLAGDF
HsFH FumC	VGTGLNTRIGE	FAEKVAAKV (ARRVADEI	AALTG		LPFVTA	PNKFEALAAHI PNKFEALATCI	DALVELSGAM	NTTACSLMKIANDI KGLAASLMKIANDV
MCFH	VGTGLNAPDDE	FGVRVVAVI	JVAQTGL		SELRTA	ANSFEAQAAR	DGLVEASGAL	RTIAVSLTKIANDI
		07						
SmFHII	200	β7 →	T1	r <u>00000</u>	α11 000000000	2000000000	TT .	α12
SmFHII	CLLSSGPNCGI	LSEFVLPAN	EPGSSIMPO	SKVNPTQCES	LRMVCLOIM	GNHFTTSMAA	SQGQLELNVC	KPLIAANLLHTCEL
SJFH FhFHII CeFHII	ALLSSGPSCG	GEFRLPSN GEFRLPSN GETTTPPN	EPGSSIMPO EPGSSIMPO	SKINPTQCES SKINPTQCES	MSMISLQLM	GNHFTVSMAA GNHFTVTMAA CNHFTTSMAA	SOGOLOLNVE	KPIIAANLLHTCEL KPLIAHSMLHSCQL KPLIVAKMLHSCBL
HsFH FumC	RFLGSGPRSGI	LGELILPEN	EPGSSIMPO EPGSSIMPO	GKVNP TQCEA GKVNP TQCEA	MTMVAAQVM LTMLCCOVM	GNHVAVTVGG: GNDVAINMGG	SNGHFELNVF	KPMMIKNVLHSARL RPMVIHNFLOSVRL
MtFH	RWMGSGPLTGI	LAEIQLPDI	QPGSSIMPC	KVNPVLPEA	VTQVAAQVI	GNDAAIAWGG	ANGAFE LNVY	IPMMARNILÊSFKL
SmFHII	20000000000	η2 β8 2 222 →	α13 202020200	η3	α1 000000000	14 20000000000	α15 2222222	α16 2020.200
SmFHII	400 LTDSTRCFADE	10 KCVRDLQLN	420 REKIQEYVI	430 DKSLMLVTVL	440 TPHIGYDLS	450 AKLVQHASKFI	460 KKGLRESAIE	470 LNLLCGEKF.DEIV
SjFH FhFHII	LTDSTRCFADN IADSVQCFTEN	NCVKGLQLN HCVRGLQIN	LEQIQEYVN HSQLEKNLQ	NKSLMLVTAL 2HSLMLVTAL	TPHI <mark>GY</mark> DLS TPYV <mark>GY</mark> DKS	AKLVHHASKFI AELANYAREN(	KKGLRESAIE: GIPLREAALQ'	LDLLNEEKF.DEIV TKLITAEEF.DNFV
CsFHII HsFH	LRDAAISFTRN LGDASVSFTEN	NCVEGLQIN NCVVGIQAN	HRRVEEHVE TERINKLM	RNSLMLVTAL NESLMLVTAL	TPHIGYDKA NPHIGYDKA	ARLAKHAKENI AKIAKTAHKN(	NLTLREAALK GSTLKETAIE	LNMVSAEEF.DQVV LGYLTAEQF.DEWV
FumC MtFH	LADGMESFNKH LTNVSRLFAQH	ACIAGLTAN	VEHLRRLAN	NESLMLVTAL ESSPSIVTPL	NTHIGYDKA NSAI <mark>GY</mark> EEA	AEIAKKAHKE AAVAKQ <mark>A</mark> LKEI	GLTLKAAALA RKTIRQTVID	LGYLSEAEF.DSWV RGLIGDRLSIEDLD
	η4							
SmFHII	480							
SmFHII SjFH	KPMEMAFPHNN KPHEMAFPQ.	NK						
CSFHII	RPASMAFPMKE RPASMAFPFSE	EQENGENCI EENMNNN	THSQISP					
FumC MtFH	RPEQMVGSMKA RRLDVLAMAKA	AGR AEQLDSDRI						

**Figure 5.** Sequence alignment of class II fumarases. SmFHII (*S. mansoni*), SjFH (*S. japonicum*), FhFHII (*Fasciola hepatica*), CsFHII (*Clonorchis sinensis*), HsFH (*Homo sapiens*), FumC (*Escherichia coli*), MtFH (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*). The conserved residues are indicated in pink boxes. The conserved B site is indicated in blue boxes. The amino acid signature (GSSxxPxKxNPxxxE) is indicated in green box. The additional fragment is indicated by a dark line box. The catalytic residues are indicated by star symbols. The alignment was performed using MULTALIN and graphically displayed using ESPript<sup>48</sup>.

Despite the functional relevance of fumarases, its reaction mechanism is not fully understood yet. The fumarate to L-malate conversion involves the hydration of fumarate by trans-1,4-addition of a hydroxyl group and a proton across the carbon-carbon double bond of fumarate resulting in the formation of L-malate. The reverse reaction proceeds with the elimination of a molecule of water from L-malate, generating fumarate<sup>49</sup>.

The first class I fumarase three-dimensional structure was just described in 2016 for cytosolic *Leishmania major* fumarase (LmFH-2)<sup>39</sup>. The LmFH-2 structure is distinct from class II fumarases, revealing a dimeric architecture that resembles a heart, with each lobe containing two domains that are arranged around the active site. Recently, the structure of mitochondrial *Leishmania major* fumarase (LmFH-1) was also solved, showing high structural similarity with LmFH-2<sup>50</sup>.

Class II fumarases are known to share high structural similarity, having a tertiary and quaternary fold common to all aspartase/fumarase superfamily members. Each tetramer subunit has three domains: an N-terminal domain, a large central domain composed of 5  $\alpha$ -helices, and a C-terminal domain. The association of the four central domains in the tetramer forms a paired 20  $\alpha$ -helices core that is structurally rigid (**Figure 6**).



**Figure 6.** Fumarase structure encoded by Rv1098c *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* gene. The figure shows the central, N-terminal, and C-terminal domains in two different views. (Extracted from Mechaly, et al. 2012<sup>51</sup>).

The class II fumarases active site is composed by residues from three different chain regions, highly conserved among this class, and each region belongs to a distinct tetramer subunit. Thus, there are 4 active sites in the functional tetrameric enzyme.

#### **1.3.1.** Fumarase as a target to schistosomiasis

Fumarases are considered potential drug/therapeutic targets, since they are involved in important biological pathways. Recently, studies have been reported promising selective inhibitors to both classes: class II fumarases from *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*<sup>52</sup>, class I fumarases from *Leishmania major*<sup>50</sup>, *Trypanosoma cruzi*<sup>53</sup> and *Plasmodium falciparum*<sup>54</sup>.

*Schistosoma mansoni*, as well as other trematode worms, possesses the two classes of fumarases. Class I fumarase from *S. mansoni* (*Sm*FH<sub>I</sub>) is the mitochondrial enzyme and as such is predicted to contain an oxygen sensitive [4Fe-4S] cluster as a cofactor and to be involved in energy metabolism in *schistosoma spp*. Class II fumarase from *S. mansoni* (*Sm*FH<sub>II</sub>) is predicted to be the cytosolic enzyme responsible for metabolizing fumarate in the cytosol and when migrating to the nucleus may play an important role in maintaining genomic stablity in the parasite.

Giving those distinct and relevant metabolic pathways in which  $SmFH_I$  and  $SmFH_{II}$  participates, we are interested in evaluating the inhibition of fumarase activity as a strategy to treat schistosomiasis.

Important to emphasize that since eukaryotes have the ability to shuttle malate and fumarate between mitochondria and cytosol, it is expected that the inhibition of only one isoform (SmFH<sub>I</sub> or SmFH<sub>I</sub>) would be inefficient to generate a complete deleterious effect on fumarase activity to the parasite. In fact, this hypothesis has been corroborated by different studies. For instance, fumarase knock out studies performed in *Trypanosoma cruzi* demonstrated that, although the cytosolic or mitochondrial fumarase activities are individually dispensable, their combined activity is essential for parasite viability<sup>53</sup>. Moreover, studies using class II fumarase of *Bacillus subtilis* showed that when this single bacterial enzyme is expressed in a mutant yeast strain it can complement both TCA cycle and DDR eukaryotic functions.<sup>55</sup>

Deeper comprehension of the relevance of fumarase activity in *Schistosoma* spp. will help us to fully understand the function of fumarases for the parasite and validate the fumarases as drug targets to treat schistosomiasis. This work focused on the structural and kinetic characterization of  $SmFH_{II}$  and represents the very first step towards this goal.

#### 2. CONCLUSION

This work presents the first step towards structural and kinetic characterization recombinant cytosolic class II fumarase from *Schistosoma mansoni* (*Sm*FH<sub>II</sub>).

We successfully established a protocol for  $SmFH_{II}$  expression in *E. coli* BL21(DE3), and we obtained soluble protein with a good yield. The gel filtration chromatography showed that the enzyme is tetrameric, as expected for class II fumarases.

Differential Scanning Fluorometry (DSF) was performed to quantify the change in thermal denaturation temperature under varying pH and salt concentrations, and the results reveal that pH 7.5 and high salt concentration increases the thermal stability of  $SmFH_{II}$ . Also the DSF has proved to be a useful technique to find new ligands.

We also determined the optimal pH for  $SmFH_{II}$  activity, and the results indicates that the maximum activity is reached in the range (7 and 7.5) using fumarate as substrate, and pH 8 using L-malate. Enzyme kinetics using both substrates (L-malate and fumarate) were performed, and the results reveal K<sub>m</sub> of 0.56 ± 0.08 mM and 0.15 ± 0.02 mM for L-malate and fumarate, respectively. Comparing with the human fumarase, the K<sub>m</sub> values were found to be similar, although the k<sub>cat</sub> values were much higher for *Hs*FH than *Sm*FH<sub>II</sub>, probably due the differences between the residues around the catalytic pocket.

The additional portion present in the  $SmFH_{II}$  structure, and also other trematode worms, is a prolongation of an  $\alpha$ -helix and part of a loop that seems not to be essential to enzyme activity, but its absence compromises the protein stability.

 $SmFH_{II}$  crystals were obtained using PEG as precipitant agent, and the structure was solved for the first time, by molecular replacement at 1.85 Å, complexed with its substrate L-malate. The final structure was deposited in PDB (accession code 6U4O).

Although class II fumarases share a high level of structural similarity, the main differences between  $SmFH_{II}$  and HsFH structure could be explored to map new allosteric sites and design selective inhibitors.

The results obtained are promising and consisted in the development of a new pipeline to evaluate the potential of  $SmFH_{II}$  as a drug target against schistosomiasis.

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