



**UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DOM BOSCO
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM BIOTECNOLOGIA**

Flavia Silva Souto Moreno

**Avaliação da atividade antibacteriana e antitumoral de peptídeos curtos
derivados do mastoparano-L**

**Campo Grande- Mato Grosso do Sul
Dezembro-2017**

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Orientador: Dr. Osmar Nascimento Silva
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UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DOM BOSCO

Inspira o futuro

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“Você aprende que realmente pode suportar, que realmente é forte e que pode ir muito mais longe depois de pensar que não se pode mais.”

O Menestrel – William Shakespeare

Dedico este trabalho à minha família e aos meus amigos, que sempre me deram apoio mesmo quando eu acreditava que não teria coragem de continuar.

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SUMÁRIO

11	1.INTRODUÇÃO.....	
	2.REVISÃO DE LITERATURA.....	13
	2.1 Peptídeos com atividade antimicrobiana e antitumoral.....	13
	2.2 Tumor ascítico de Ehrlich: um modelo para a identificação	
	de candidatos a antitumorais	16
	2.3 Desenho racional de peptídeos	16
	3.OBJETIVOS.....	18
	3.1 Objetivo geral	18
	3.2 Objetivos específicos.....	18
19	4.CAPÍTULO I.....	
	5.REFERÊNCIAS.....	42

LISTA DE TABELAS

Tabela 1. Amino acid sequences of mastoparan-L and its analogues and analogues (mast-Ax).....	33
Tabela 2. Antibacterial activity of mastoparan-L (mast-L) and analogues (mast-Ax). Bacteria were cultured in the presence of different peptide concentrations. Gentamicin (gent), imipenem (imp) and peptide LL-37 were used as positive controls. Data are representative of three independent experiments.	34
Tabela 3. Haemolytic activity of mastoparan-L (mast-L) and analogues (mast-Ax). Assays evaluating the cytotoxic activity of the peptides against fresh mouse red blood cells (mRBCs) 1% Triton X¹⁰⁰ served as positive control (100% haemolysis).....	35
Table 4. Three-dimensional structure assessments of Mastoparan derived peptides.....	36

LISTA DE FIGURAS

Figura 1. Antitumor effect of mastoparan-derived peptides against Ehrlich's ascites tumour cells. Viability effect, after 24 h incubation time, of each designed peptide (Table 1) at different concentrations. (ANOVA, Post hoc Bonferroni, $p < 0.05$).36

Figure 2. Three-dimensional models of mastoparan-derived peptides. All peptides were predicted to have cationic and hydrophobic alpha-helical structures. Blue regions indicate cationic patches, while white ones the hydrophobic patches. Surface potentials were set to $\pm 5kT e^{-1}$ (13,356 mV).....37

RESUMO

Os peptídeos antimicrobianos são encontrados no sistema imune inato de uma variedade de organismos e agora são considerados uma alternativa promissora para as moléculas convencionais usadas contra infecções, algumas das quais demonstraram ter uma atividade antimicrobiana e antitumoral dupla. O mastoparano-L é um peptídeo antimicrobiano α -helicoidal bem caracterizado na literatura, devido às suas propriedades biológicas, o último inclui atividade antitumoral. No presente trabalho, desenhamos seis análogos do mastoparano-L e avaliamos sua atividade antibacteriana e antitumoral. Os análogos foram sintetizados, purificados e as propriedades físico-químicas avaliadas. A atividade antibacteriana foi avaliada em diferentes referências bacterianas e isolados clínicos Gram-negativos e Gram-positivos. A atividade antitumoral foi avaliada contra células do tumor ascítico de Ehrlich. Os resultados indicaram que todos os análogos sintetizados obtiveram resultados interessantes, no entanto destacamos masto-A1 e masto-A2, os quais apresentaram atividade antibacteriana em baixas concentrações, enquanto masto-A4 mostrou uma tendência à atividade antitumoral a $12,5 \mu\text{g.L}^{-1}$ em 24 horas de experimentação, os outros análogos apresentaram baixa atividade antibacteriana e antitumoral quando comparados com os análogos citados acima. Esses resultados demonstraram que as substituições em mastoparano-L levaram a diferentes características físico-químicas que alteram a atividade antibacteriana e antitumoral, abrindo novas possibilidades para a exploração do potencial terapêutico dessas moléculas.

Palavras-chave: câncer, desenho racional, infecções bacterianas multirresistentes, mastoparano-L. peptídeos antimicrobianos.

ABSTRACT

Antimicrobial peptides are found in the innate immune system of a variety of organisms and are now considered the most promising alternative for the conventional molecules used against infections, some of which have been shown to have dual antimicrobial and antitumor activity. mastoparan-L is an α -helical antimicrobial peptide well characterized in the literature, owing to its biological properties, the latter includes antitumor activity. In the present work, we designed six analogs and evaluated their antibacterial and antitumor activity. The analogs were synthesized, purified and the physicochemical properties evaluated. The antibacterial activity was evaluated in different bacterial references and Gram-negative and Gram-positive clinical isolates. Antitumor activity was evaluated against Ehrlich ascites tumour cells. The results indicated that mast-A1 and mast-A2 analogs exhibited strong antibacterial activity, while mast-A4 showed a tendency to antitumor activity at $12.5 \mu\text{g.L}^{-1}$ in 24 hours of experimentation, the other analogs showed low antibacterial activity and moderate antitumor activity. These results demonstrated that the substitutions in mastoparan-L led to different physico-chemical characteristics that alter the antibacterial and antitumor activity, opening new possibilities for the exploration of the therapeutic potential of these molecules.

Key words: cancer, rational design, multiresistant bacterial infections, mastoparan-L. antimicrobial peptides.

1 INTRODUÇÃO

No início do século XXI, a identificação crescente de bactérias multi-resistentes tornou-se um problema mundial (Arias e Murray, 2009). A Organização Mundial da Saúde já apontou a urgência na busca de novas moléculas antimicrobianas, sendo os antibióticos convencionais cada vez menos eficazes, especialmente contra os chamados patógenos ESKAPE (*Enterococcus faecium*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Acinetobacter baumannii*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* e espécies de Enterobacter), que mostraram ter uma resistência aos antibióticos (McKenna, 2013). Outra preocupação global é o aumento da incidência de câncer.

Os dados divulgados nos últimos anos revelaram 12,7 milhões de novos casos e 7,6 milhões de mortes, apenas em 2008 (Ferlay et al., 2010). Somente na Europa, 3,45 milhões de novos casos foram diagnosticados e 1.75 milhões de óbitos ocorreram durante o ano de 2012 (Ferlay et al., 2013). Atualmente, o câncer é a segunda maior causa de morte em todo o mundo (Arnold et al., 2015), causada por um crescimento celular anormal, de forma descontrolada, com a capacidade de invadir outros tecidos, levando à formação de massas tumorais, neo-vascularização (angiogênese) e metástase (Thundimadathil, 2012).

O câncer de pulmão, colo-retal, de próstata e de mama são as formas mais diagnosticadas desta doença (Domalaon et al., 2016). Considerando os números revelados, é urgente encontrar novas drogas anticâncer capazes de controlar o crescimento tumoral com efeitos colaterais minimizados (Dennison et al., 2007). Esta situação torna-se pior desde que o DNA-alquilação, agonistas hormonais e antimetabolitos, se mostram seletividade insuficiente e segmentação inespecífica em células saudáveis (Gaspar et al., 2013; Smith e White, 1995), contribuindo para o aumento da resistência a fármacos antitumorais (Wang et al., 2009a).

Além disso, a interseção entre infecção e câncer é destacada pelo número de mortes por câncer e novas ocorrências relacionadas ao tratamento ou infecções crônicas. Aproximadamente, 2 milhões de novos pacientes com câncer são devidos a agentes infecciosos como bactérias e vírus (Attiê, 2014; Parkin, 2006; Vedham, 2013).

Os pacientes que sofrem de uma infecção crônica são mais suscetíveis ao câncer devido ao sistema imunológico debilitado, que não pode combater o

patógeno e o surgimento de células cancerosas (Rolston, 2001). Esta debilidade também pode ocorrer devido a tratamentos de câncer muito agressivos para a saúde do paciente, como quimioterapia, radioterapia e ressecção cirúrgica, deixando-os suscetíveis a agentes infecciosos (Fishman, 2011; Xiao et al., 2015). Além disso, a exposição contínua à infecção leva à inflamação, contribuindo para o desenvolvimento de células tumorais (Vedham, 2013).

Nos últimos anos, foi identificada uma promissora classe de moléculas evolutivamente antigas, mas pouco estudadas, com diferentes tipos de vantagens no uso contra as principais preocupações em saúde pública mundial. Os peptídeos antimicrobianos (PAMs) são pequenos peptídeos essenciais para a resposta imune inata de organismos de todos os filos, mostrando atividade contra uma ampla gama de agentes patogênicos, como bactérias, fungos e vírus (Hancock et al., 2016).

Mais recentemente, a atividade anticâncer também foi descrita para alguns desses peptídeos, denominados peptídeos antitumorais (PATs) (Dennison et al., 2006). Propriedades como quadro de interação de curto prazo (que diminui a probabilidade de resistência), baixa toxicidade (que reduz os efeitos colaterais), modo de ação, especificidade, boa solubilidade e, finalmente, boa penetração do tumor são observados como uma futura quimioterapia com alta potencial (Domalaon et al., 2016, Figueiredo et al., 2014, Gaspar et al., 2015, Riedl et al., 2011, Wu et al., 2014).

2 REVISÃO DE LITERATURA

2.1 Peptídeos com atividade antimicrobiana e antitumoral

Os peptídeos antimicrobianos foram primeiro identificados devido à sua importância na imunidade inata de um grande número de organismos, ganhando interesse pela comunidade científica (Jenssen et al., 2006). Desde a primeira identificação até hoje em dia, centenas de PAMs foram identificadas e estudadas, tanto a partir de fontes naturais como de trabalhos *in silico* (Hancock et al., 2016).

Estes peptídeos são caracterizados por uma sequência de aminoácidos usualmente de 5 a 50 resíduos, alta hidrofobicidade e carga líquida positiva (Gaspar et al., 2012; Melo et al., 2011). Essas propriedades físico-químicas estabelecem a base para a atividade contra agentes patogênicos (Dennison et al., 2010). As bactérias apresentam membranas carregadas negativamente, promovendo a interação eletrostática inicial das PAMs.

Mesmo sabendo que nem todas as PAMs são PATs, a semelhança em termos de mecanismo de ação é óbvia, devido ao fenótipo da superfície das membranas das células tumorais. As células saudáveis têm na folhagem interna da membrana plasmática a fosfatidilserina (PS), um fosfolípido carregado negativamente. Esta assimetria entre folhetos de membrana interna e externa é perdida em células cancerosas, levando à presença de PS no folheto externo (Beveris et al., 1996). A exposição a PS, a presença de mucinas O-glicosiladas, gangliósidos sialilados e sulfato de heparina, em conjugação com um potencial transmembranar aumentado, área superficial e fluidez da membrana (Hilchie et al., 2011; Schweizer, 2009) promovem a atividade específica de PATs sobre as células tumorais, sem ser afetada pela heterogeneidade tumoral (Kelly et al., 2016).

Os parâmetros físico-químicos que determinam a atividade de alguns PAMs sobre células tumorais ainda não são claros, considerando que as características de PAMs/PATs são muito similares. Vários esforços têm sido feitos para melhor compreender estas diferenças, o que permitiria um desenho melhorado dos PATs (Dennison et al., 2006). Alguns PAMs também podem ser PATs independentemente da fonte de identificação ou rota de desenho sintético (Mader e Hoskin, 2006).

O número de PAMs encontrados na natureza com atividade antitumoral aumentou nos últimos anos. Aurein 1.2 é um exemplo de um ACP que mostrou alta atividade sobre 55 diferentes linhagens celulares de câncer *in vitro* (Dennison et al.,

2007; Rozek et al., 2000). O péptido neutrófilico humano 1 (HNP-1) mostrou ser ativo contra células de câncer PC-3 *in vitro* (Gaspar et al., 2015).

Os peptídeos pleuricidina 03/07, mais do que a sua actividade ACP, mostraram-se eficazes contra células de cancer da mama resistentes aos fármacos, sem toxicidade contra fibroblastos ou eritrócitos, tanto em modelos *in vitro* como *in vivo* (Hilchie et al., 2011). Gomesina e NK-lisina 2 são outros dois PATs que mostraram ser efetivos contra diferentes linhas celulares de câncer *in vitro*, em concentrações muito baixas (Rodrigues et al., 2008; Schröder-Borm et al., 2005).

Estes são apenas exemplos de PATs isolados de diferentes fontes naturais, como animais, plantas e bactérias. Os PATs naturais, mesmo com uma alta atividade antitumoral, têm uma alta probabilidade de apresentar alta toxicidade para células saudáveis e têm normalmente de 30 a 40 aa, o que aumenta o custo de produção. Portanto, trabalhos que abordam o desenho racional de PATs tem ganhado atenção.

Existem diferentes possíveis abordagens disponíveis, como a melhoria das sequências de PATs naturais ou o uso de métodos *in silico* (Lee et al., 2008; Park et al., 1998). Ambas as estratégias levam em consideração a melhora das propriedades físico-químicas, como anfipaticidade, hidrofobicidade e a carga positiva total, com o objetivo de uma melhor seletividade para às células alvo (Huang et al., 2011; Melo et al., 2011; Sinthuvanich et al., 2012).

Além disso, outras estratégias, como a hibridação de diferentes PATs (Hoskin e Ramamoorthy, 2008) ou a alteração dos aminoácidos utilizados para os não naturais (D-enantiômeros ou substituição cíclica de C^α são outros exemplos) (Hicks, 2016) também foram testados. As possibilidades são infinitas e dependem do foco da melhoria para cada caso. Os algoritmos de bioinformática integrados com o aprendizado da máquina, onde o design é automático através das propriedades escolhidas, levando em consideração bibliotecas PAMs/PATs existentes, são considerados o método mais utilizado nos projetos de desenho racional (Lin et al., 2015; Tyagi et al., 2013).

Como descrito PAMs e ACP compartilham a maioria das propriedades físico-químicas já descritas. Deste modo, a estrutura desempenha um papel central na sua atividade. É geralmente aceito que a maioria das PAMs/PATs não se dobram em uma estrutura bem definida quando livre em solução, mas adotam estrutura de α -

hélice ou folha- β quando ocorrem interações eletrostáticas com membranas (Hoskin e Ramamoorthy, 2008).

As diferenças em termos de estrutura foram o primeiro método para a classificação dos PATs. Exemplos de algumas PAMs ultimamente definidas como α -ACP são cecropin, magainin, melitina e buforin II, com a lactoferricina B, HNP-1/3 sendo classificados como β -PATs (Papo e Shai, 2005). Mais recentemente, observou-se que, independentemente da estrutura secundária que o péptido adota, uma classificação considerando os mecanismos de ação sobre as células alvo era mais adequada (Wu et al., 2014).

Os PAMs foram considerados como moléculas que atuam sobre a membrana em relação à sua atividade primária, mas ao longo dos anos, foi esclarecido que eles também podem alvejar diferentes processos do patógeno (nomeadamente, metabolismo e divisão celular) e do sistema imunológico (recrutamento de células imunes) (Hancock et al., 2016). Estes aspectos também foram estudados para os PATs, com a identificação da atividade lítica da membrana celular (necrose), atividade lítica da mitocôndria (apoptose) e atividades sobre outros alvos (Wu et al., 2014). O primeiro é o método antitumoral mais comum, com as interações eletrostáticas que promovem a ruptura da membrana, levando à necrose. Polybia-MPI, um PAT natural e o BTM-P1 sintético são dois exemplos de peptídeos com tal atividade (Segura et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2009a).

Esses PATs têm alta seletividade em relação às membranas de células cancerosas e desenvolvem baixa resistência, quando comparados aos fármacos quimioterápicos convencionais. A atividade sobre a membrana mitocondrial, ocorre ativando a sinalização da apoptose, também foi observada para alguns PATs, como lactoferricina B e diferentes β -PATs (Furlong et al., 2006; Paredes-Gamero et al., 2012). Além da atividade a nível da membrana, os PATs também podem apresentar outras atividades, direcionando proteínas celulares essenciais, inibindo a angiogênese ou recrutando células imunes para atacar células cancerosas (Figura 1) (Wu et al., 2014). O HNP-1 mostrou ser um ACP que recruta e ativa células dendríticas em termos de atividade imunomoduladora (Wang et al., 2009b), mas também inibe a angiogênese, que é essencial para o crescimento e desenvolvimento de tumores (Xu et al., 2008).

2.2 Tumor ascítico de Ehrlich: um modelo para a identificação de candidatos a antitumorais

O tumor ascítico de Ehrlich (TAE) é um adenocarcinoma mamário de camundongos introduzido em 1886 por Paul Ehrlich. O tumor inicialmente se desenvolveu na forma sólida, podendo ser transplantado para outro animal por via intramuscular ou subcutânea, no entanto em 1932 houve o surgimento da forma ascítica, inoculada no peritônio do camundongo (Souza et al., 2014).

A utilização desta linhagem obteve um crescimento considerável nas últimas três décadas, devido aos benefícios do cultivo *in vitro* e *in vivo*, pelo conhecimento de características morfológicas e comportamentais das células, assim como a homogeneidade da linhagem, permitindo a padronização do número de células utilizada e facilidade de se obter uma concentração das mesmas suficientes para um estudo em pouco tempo (Ozaslan et al., 2011).

O TAE é um tumor agressivo, produzindo alterações acentuadas no sistema imunológico do hospedeiro, possuindo mecanismos de imunossupressão frente a células da medula óssea, por exemplo, devido ao alto nível de diversas células com atividade supressora. Este fenômeno pode ser observado devido a interação entre células tumorais e células imunocompetentes e também da produção de moléculas solúveis por estas mesmas células (Bromberg et al., 2010).

O tumor de Ehrlich na forma ascítica tem sido alvo de diversas pesquisas por também apresentar características como, mecanismos moleculares, alterações metabólicas, ação de hormônios sexuais e crescimento rápido e indiferenciado, semelhantes ao desenvolvimento de neoplasias mais sensíveis a antineoplásicos em humanos (Russo & Russo, 1996; 1998;).

2.3 Desenho racional de peptídeos

O desenho racional de peptídeos consiste em uma abordagem moderna para o desenvolvimento de peptídeos com potencial uso clínico. O desenho racional de peptídeos tem sido utilizado a fim de reduzir ou eliminar os efeitos adversos, de acordo com o princípio da toxicidade seletiva, uma vez que o principal obstáculo à utilização de peptídeos reside na sua toxicidade para células de mamífero. Isto não é surpreendente, pois a atividade dos peptídeos depende significativamente da interação membrana-peptídeo. No entanto, para que sejam úteis comercialmente seria necessário dissociar a toxicidade para as células de mamífero da atividade

antimicrobiana, o que pode ser alcançado através do aumento da atividade antimicrobiana ou redução da atividade hemolítica – ou ambos (Chen, 2005).

Outro obstáculo quanto à aplicabilidade dos peptídeos consiste em sua susceptibilidade à proteólise, uma vez que os peptídeos formados por L-aminoácido são sensíveis à degradação proteolítica, o que pode ser amenizado com o uso do desenho racional de peptídeos, mediante a substituição de aminoácidos, incluindo a substituição de L-aminoácidos por D-aminoácidos. Estas substituições podem promover alterações na anfipaticidade/hidrofobicidade, levando a uma redução da citotoxicidade dos peptídeos, para células de mamífero, sem alterar a atividade antimicrobiana, além de deixar os peptídeos menos susceptível à degradação proteolítica (Chen, 2005; Uggerhoj, 2015).

Os primeiros estudos que utilizaram o desenho racional de peptídeos geraram vários análogos de peptídeos conhecidos – catelicidinas, defensinas, magaininas e cecropinas. No entanto, a maioria dos análogos gerados foram menos ativos que o protótipo original, mas, estes estudos desempenharam um papel importante na identificação das propriedades físico-químicas envolvidas na atividade antibacteriana dos peptídeos. Estas propriedades serviram de base para o desenvolvimento de abordagens para previsão da atividade antibacteriana, através de vários métodos, como: máquina de vetor de suporte (MVS) (Lata, 2007), redes neurais artificiais (RNAs) (Fjell, 2009) e relações quantitativas entre a estrutura química e a atividade biológica ou alguma propriedade físico-química (QSAR/QSPR) (Jenssen, 2007). Os peptídeos surgem como uma classe promissora, apesar de suas limitações. Deste modo, os métodos de previsão e planejamento racional desempenham um papel crucial na melhoria da atividade dos PAMs frente as 'superbactérias'.

3 OBJETIVOS

3.1 Objetivo geral

O presente trabalho tem como objetivo principal a avaliação da atividade antibacteriana e antitumoral *in vitro* de seis análogos do mastoparano-L obtidos através de desenho racional.

3.2 Objetivos específicos

- ✓ Avaliar a concentração inibitória mínima (CIM) dos peptídeos análogos Mast-A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 e A6 sobre bactérias Gram-positivas e Gram-negativas;
- ✓ Determinar a atividade citotóxica *in vitro* dos peptídeos sobre células do tumor ascítico de Ehrlich;
- ✓ Avaliar a atividade hemolítica;
- ✓ Realizar análises estruturais dos peptídeos através de modelagem molecular e dinâmica molecular

4 CAPÍTULO I

Artigo a ser submetido a revista *Frontiers in Microbiology*

Evaluation of the antibacterial and antitumor activity of short peptides derived from mastoparan-L

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ABSTRACT

Antimicrobial peptides (AMPs) are found in the innate immune system of a variety of organisms. The AMPs are considered the most promising alternative for the conventional molecules used against infections, some of which have been shown to have antimicrobial and antitumor activity. Mastoparan-L is an α -helical antimicrobial peptide well characterized in the literature, owing to its biological properties, the latter includes antitumor activity. In the present work, we designed six analogs and evaluated their antibacterial and antitumor activity. The antibacterial activity was evaluated in different bacterial references and Gram-negative and Gram-positive clinical isolates. Antitumor activity was evaluated against Ehrlich ascites tumour cells. The results indicated that mast-A1 and mast-A2 analogs exhibited strong antibacterial activity, while mast-A4 showed a tendency to antitumor activity at $12.5 \mu\text{g.L}^{-1}$ in 24 hours of experimentation, the other analogs showed low antibacterial activity and moderate antitumor activity. These results demonstrated that the substitutions in mastoparan-L alter the antibacterial and antitumor activity, opening new possibilities for the exploration of the therapeutic potential of these molecules.

Key-words: cell selectivity, mastoparan, rational design.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the number of people diagnosed with cancer and multiresistant infections has increased significantly, and currently both diseases are a major cause of death and morbidity worldwide (Felício et al., 2017). In addition, chronic infections are a major cause of cancer due to the instability in the immune system that allows proliferating cancer cells (Goldszmid et al., 2014). Similarly, physical weakness/fatigue associated with chemotherapy itself opens the way for opportunistic infections (Klastersky and Aoun, 2004).

In this scenario, the development of new compounds has been needing. Antimicrobial peptides (AMPs) are among the new alternatives, which have become the target of research by several research groups, mainly due to their ability to inhibit growth and/or kill a variety of microorganisms responsible for pathologies in animals, plants and animals. AMPs are small peptides (<50 amino acid residues) essential for the innate immune response of organisms from all phyla, showing activity against a wide range of pathogens such as bacteria, fungi and viruses (Hancock, 1997; Hancock et al., 2016; Silva et al., 2011). In addition to the described activities, several studies have demonstrated the anticancer activity of some peptides, called antitumor peptides (PATs) (Dennison et al., 2006, 2007, 2010).

The rational design of AMPs consists of a modern approach to the development of antibiotics, and detailed characterization of the target, since antibiotics that target the pathogen specific and do not interact with the host are of extreme importance in order to reduce or eliminate adverse effects based on the selective toxicity principle (Chen et al., 2005b). The main obstacle to the commercial use of AMPs as previously mentioned is their cytotoxicity to mammalian cells.

Ehrlich's ascitic tumor (EAT) is a mammary adenocarcinoma of mice introduced in 1886 by Paul Ehrlich. The use of this lineage has grown considerably in the last three decades, due to the benefits of *in vitro* and *in vivo* culture, knowledge of morphological and behavioral characteristics of the cells, as well as homogeneity of the lineage, allowing the standardization of the number of cells used and (OZASLAN et al., 2011). Ehrlich's tumor in the ascitic form has been the subject of several studies because it also presents characteristics such as molecular mechanisms, metabolic alterations, action of

sex hormones and rapid and undifferentiated growth, similar to the development of neoplasias more sensitive to antineoplastic agents in humans (RUSSO and RUSSO, 1996, 1998; RODRIGUEZ, 2012).

However, in general the use of AMPs/PATs as therapeutic agents presents some limitations, such as stability, cytotoxicity, and especially the number of amino acids, we also reduced the cost of large-scale production. The rational design of AMPs appears as an important tool in the search for smaller and efficient peptides, thus reducing the cost of synthesis, increase of activity, decrease of cytotoxicity (Porto et al., 2012). An obstacle to the applicability of AMPs is toxicity and their susceptibility to proteolysis. The rational design of peptides has been used in order to reduce or eliminate adverse effects according to the principle of selective toxicity, since the main obstacle to the use of peptides is their toxicity to mammalian cells. This is not surprising, since peptide activity depends significantly on membrane-peptide interaction. However, to be commercially useful it would be necessary to dissociate toxicity to mammalian cells from antimicrobial activity, which can be achieved by increasing antimicrobial activity or reducing hemolytic activity (Chen et al., 2005a; Hao et al., 2015).

Mastoparan-L (Ile-Asn-Leu-Lys-Ala-Leu-Ala-Ala-Leu-Ala-Lys-Lys-Ile-Leu-NH₂) is a 14-residue peptide isolated from wasp venom *Vespula lewisii*. In general, this peptide shows cytolytic, hemolytic activity, besides promoting mast cell degranulation and leukocyte chemotaxis (Higashijima et al., 1988). Recently, it was demonstrated that whit mastoparan-L is active against leukemia, myeloma, and breast cancer cells, and showed toxicity towards both slow-growing and MDR cancer cells (Hilchie et al., 2016).

In the present study, we synthesized six analogs of mastoparan-L obtained by rational design of peptides and evaluated its effect in vitro against Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria, and evaluated its effect on the viability of Ehrlich ascites tumor cells.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

Design of Peptide

The peptides were designed using the ToxinPred server

(<http://crdd.osdd.net/raghava/toxinpred/design.php>). The peptide sequences were chosen based on the following properties: 1. Hydrophobicity, 2. Hydrophobicity, 3. Hydrophilicity and 4. Charge. The six analogs of mastoparan-L designed here were named as: mastoparan analogs and sequence numeric (mast-A 1-6)

Peptide Synthesis and Purification

Peptides were synthesized by Shanghai Hanhong Chemical (R.P. of China) using the solid-phase with the N-9-fluorenylmethyloxycarbonyl (Fmoc) strategy and purified by high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) (GE, USA). The identity of each peptide was confirmed by MALDI ToF MS (Bruker, Germany). Peptide purity used in biologic assays was higher than 95% and the analogs have four residues less than the original molecule.

Strains and growth conditions

Different bacteria was used, included clinical isolates *E. coli* KPC-positive ID N°.1812446 (Mandal et al., 2014), *E. coli* multiresistant ID N°.2101123 (Mandal et al., 2014) and carbapenemase-producing *K. pneumoniae* 1825971 (KPC971), as well as reference strains *B. subtilis* ATCC 6633, *E. faecalis* ATCC 12953, *S. aureus* ATCC 29213, Methicillin-Resistant *S. aureus* ATCC 33591, *S. pyogenes* ATCC 19615, *E. coli* ATCC 8739, *K. pneumoniae* ATCC 13885, *P. mirabilis* ATCC 25933, *P. aeruginosa* ATCC 15442 and *S. enterica* ATCC 14028. Bacteria were plated on brain heart infusion (BHI) agar (Himedia, India) from a frozen stock. Following 24 h incubation, three isolated colonies were transferred to 1 mL of BHI broth. The broth culture was incubated overnight (12–16 h) at 37 °C with shaking (Kokai-Kun et al., 2007).

Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC) Determination

The MIC of peptides was evaluated using the broth microdilution technique in BHI with an initial inoculum of 5×10^5 cells in non-treated polystyrene microtiter plates (Corning, USA) as described by Wiegand and collaborators (Wiegand et al., 2008). MICs were interpreted as the lowest concentration of peptide or antibiotic that completely inhibited the visible growth of bacteria after 12 h of incubation at 37°C. Each agent was tested in triplicate in at least three independent experiments (Silva et al., 2015a, 2016).

Ethics Statement

The use of mice was conducted in accordance with the regulations set forward by the respective national animal protection committees and in accordance with European Community Directive 86/609 and the U.S. Association for Laboratory Animal Care recommendations for the care and use of laboratory animals. All the techniques/procedures have been refined to provide for maximum comfort/minimal stress to the animals. The performed experiments have been approved by Animal Ethics Committees of the Universidade Catolica Dom Bosco (AECs/UCDB), number 005/2016.

Anticancer activity

Ehrlich ascites tumour (EAT cells) were provided as courtesy sample by Department of Pathology of UNESP, Botucatu-SP, Brazil. Cells were maintained *in vivo* in ascites form by successive transplantation of 6×10^6 cells/mice in a volume of 0.2 mL in PBS (Patra and Muthuraman, 2013). Seven days after the inoculation of EAT cells in the abdominal cavity of the mice; cells were harvested by needle aspiration, washed with PBS (Justo et al., 2000). Cells were cultured in RPMI 1640 supplemented with HEPES (25 mM), L-glutamine (2 mM), sodium bicarbonate (25 mM), 10% FBS antibiotics (100 U.mL⁻¹ penicillin and 100 µg.mL⁻¹ streptomycin) at 37° C in 5% in CO₂ incubator. Cell viability was determined by the trypan blue dye exclusion test (Patra and Muthuraman, 2013).

Cells were seeded in 96-well microtiter plates in a concentration of 2.0×10^5 cells per well, in RPMI medium, supplemented with different concentrations of peptides (1.6-100.0 µg.mL⁻¹). After 24 h of the incubation, a 3-[4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl]-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide (MTT) (Sigma, USA) protocol was performed. Briefly, 60% of the medium was removed, and 0.1 mg.mL⁻¹ of MTT was added to each well and the plate was incubated for 4 h, in 5% CO₂, at 37 °C in the dark. The blue formazan product generated was dissolved by the addition of 100 µL of DMSO (Mallinckrodt, Germany) per well. Plates were then gently swirled for 5 min, at room temperature, to dissolve the precipitate. Absorbance was monitored at 575 nm using a microplate spectrophotometer (Bio-Tek, USA). Viability was determined as a percentage of

the maximum value after subtracting the background. Results were expressed as the percentage of each sample compared to the negative control (medium).

Haemolysis assays

Haemolytic activity of peptides was evaluated against fresh mouse red blood cells (mRBCs) by measuring the peptide-induced change in the optical density (OD) at 540 nm (Victor X, Perkin-Elmer, Germany) (Dathe et al., 1996) of a mRBC cell suspension [a 20% (v/v) erythrocytes/phosphate buffered saline (PBS) suspension]. Maximum lysis (100%) was determined by analysing the supernatant of erythrocytes that had been incubated with 1% Triton X-100 while PBS was used as a negative control (Dathe et al., 1996; Lima et al., 2011; Silva et al., 2012, 2015b).

Molecular Modelling

The molecular modelling was performed according Irazazabal et al. (2016), with minor modifications. One hundred molecular models for each analogue were constructed by comparative molecular modelling using MODELLER 9.19, using the structure of mastoparan L with detergents (PDB ID: 1D7N) . The models were constructed using the default methods of automodel and environ classes from MODELLER. The final models were selected according to the discrete optimized protein energy score (DOPE score). This score assesses the energy of the models and indicates the best probable structures. The best models were evaluated through PROSA II and PROCHECK. PROCHECK checks the stereochemical quality of a protein structure by means of Ramachandran plot, where good quality models are expected to have 90% of amino acid residues in most favoured and additional allowed regions, while PROSA II indicates the fold quality. The solvation potential energy was calculated by Adaptive Poisson-Boltzmann Solver (APBS) under default parameters (Baker et al., 2001). APBS evaluates electrostatic interactions in biomolecular assemblies by continuum solvation methods. The utility PDB2PQR using the AMBER force field (Dolinsky et al., 2004) was used for the conversion of pdb files into pqr files. The grid dimensions for APBS calculation were also determined by PDB2PQR. Structure and electrostatic surface visualization was done in PyMOL.

Statistical analysis

Data are presented as the mean \pm standard error (S.E.) for all replicates ($n = 9$). Significant differences among groups was performed by ANOVA followed by Bonferroni correction. $p < 0.05$ values were considered significant. GraphPad Prism v6.0 (GraphPad Software, USA) was used for the determination of the IC_{50} value for the cell toxicity and haemolytic activity assays using a $\log(\text{inhibitor})$ vs. response – variable slope regression model.

RESULTS

Mastoparan analogs design

In the present work six peptides were designed based on mastoparan-L, considering the characteristics of natural PATs, including small size (maximum 10aa), hydrophobicity, hydrophobicity, hydrophilicity and charge. Peptide sequences and their physicochemical characteristics can be observed in Table 1.

Antibacterial activity

The antibacterial activity of the peptides was tested against Gram-negative bacteria (*E. coli*, *K. pneumoniae*, *P. mirabilis*, *P. aeruginosa* and *S. enterica*) and Gram-positive bacteria (*B. subtilis*, *E. faecalis*, *S. aureus* and *S. pyogenes*) including reference strains (ATCC) and clinical isolates, the experiments was performed using microdilution technique. The MICs of mastoparan-L and analogs are listed in table 2. Both the original peptide and its analogs showed antibacterial activity (Gram-negative and Gram-positive), with MICs ranging from 1.6-100.0 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$. The peptide Mast-A2 presented the best antibacterial activity, being more active against Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria, with MIC ranging from 1.6 to 12.5 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$, being more active against *S. pyogenes* (1.6 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$), and the highest MIC against *S. aureus* (MRSA) (12.5 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$). On the other hand, against Gram-negative bacteria with MIC varying between 3.1 to 25.0 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$, being more active against *E. coli* (3.2 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$), and the highest MIC against *K. pneumoniae* KPC+ (25.0 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$). The analogs the Mast-A5 peptide was the one that had the worst performance with MIC ranging from 50.0 to 100.0 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$. Mastoparan-L showed a strong antibacterial activity, presenting MICs (3.1-25.0 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$) lower or close to the controls used,

the peptide already characterized in the LL-37 literature, and the antibiotics gentamicin and imipenem.

Haemolytic activity

In the present study we determined the haemolytic effects of the peptides against mouse red blood cells (mRBCs). On here we determined the haemolytic activity by calculating the percentage of lysis of mRBCs. Mastoparan-L was the peptide with the highest haemolytic activity (15%), when the cells were treated with $200 \mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$ of the peptide, that is, a higher concentration of 8x that presented antibacterial activity ($25.0 \mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$).

Antitumor activity

The antitumor activity of mastoparan-L and its analogs against Ehrlich's ascites tumour was evaluated by incubating the peptides with the tumour cells for 24 hours. As can be seen in Figure 1, both mastoparan-L and its analogs have affected the viability of tumour cells. Among the analogs, mast-A4 was the one that presented the best results, significantly inhibiting (approximately 30%) the viability of the tumour cells when they were treated with $12.5 \mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$ of the peptide, and completely inhibiting (100%) the cell viability when the cells were treated with $100 \mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$, presenting similar performance to that of mastoparan-L

Molecular Modelling

Figure 2 shows the three-dimensional structures predicted for each mastoparan derived peptides. The six peptides were predicted to be α -helical peptides, similar to their template structure, mastoparan-L. The structural assessments are summarized on Table 4. All structures are cationic and amphipathic, the cationic character is given by the N-terminal and the lysine residues, except for mast-A5, which has no charged residues. The solvation potential energies are listed on Table 4.

DISCUSSION

In order to reduce costs related to the production of AMPs since the 1990s, several methods for the rational design of AMPs have been developed in order to generate analogs with improved activity, thus reducing the limitations

and increasing the advantages regarding the use of AMPs (Loose et al., 2006; Rapsch et al., 2014; Uggerhøj et al., 2015). However, for commercial use, it is of utmost importance to dissociate the toxicity to mammalian cells from antimicrobial activity. This reduction can be achieved by increasing antimicrobial activity, reducing haemolytic activity or, ideally both (Chen et al., 2005b). The rational design of AMPs has been used to revolve these problems through amino acid substitutions, including the substitution of L-amino acids by D-amino acids, and identification of amino acid patterns responsible for antimicrobial activity. These substitutions may promote changes in amphipathy/hydrophobicity, leading to reduced cytotoxicity of peptides to mammalian cells without altering antimicrobial activity, in addition to rendering AMPs less susceptible to proteolytic degradation (Chen et al., 2005b; Pag et al., 2004).

Here we modify known peptide, mastoparan-L, in order to reduce the length and increase the antibacterial activity of resulting peptides. The obtained peptides (Mas-A1 –A6) show a reliable *in vitro* antibacterial activity against clinically relevant Gram-positive and Gram-negative strains, including resistant bacteria MRSA and *E. coli* carbapenemase-positive. An interesting finding were obtained with Mast-A2, which showed *in vitro* antibacterial activity close to or better than mastoparan-L (Table 2). As for antitumor activity, all peptides affected cell viability, and mast-A4 showed the best activity, an activity that is statistically the same as that presented by mastoparan-L (Figure 1).

The great structural diversity of the AMPs makes it difficult to understand the structure-activity relationship to design competitive AMPs. In an attempt to improve the antimicrobial activity of a peptide, several primary sequence optimization strategies have been adopted, such as cyclization (Wessolowski et al., 2004), increase in the positive charge, or hydrophobicity (Dathe et al., 2002).

Several works studying the structure-function relationship of AMPs suggest that AMPs activity is determined by a subtle combination of factors such as hydrophobicity and the position of amino acid residues (Dathe et al., 2001, 2002; Tossi et al., 2000). However, despite extensive studies, little is known about the molecular basis underlying the selectivity of AMPs to attack bacterial cells rather than mammalian cells. A general indication seems

impossible to obtain because of the complexity of the target and the mechanism of action involved. In the present study the modification significantly affected the hydrophobicity of the mastoparan-L (0.05) and between 0.16 to 0.21 for the mast-Ax peptides, these data suggest that a higher hydrophobicity in short peptides (up to 10aa) appears to be unrelated to cytotoxic activity of peptides, considering that relatively high values of mast-Ax in relation to mastoparan-L, no significant differences in the cytotoxicity of these peptides were observed for erythrocytes.

The present work presented novel peptides that could be used on the fight against multiresistant bacteria and tumour cells, since the mastoparan-L analogs obtained here present a smaller sequence (28%) than the original peptide, and even then, have been shown to be effective in eliminating resistant bacteria, as well as being effective in eliminating tumour cells. In addition, the study in question covers the prospects for further studies as molecules obtained from mastoparan-L due to significant results at low concentrations.

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TABLES

Table 1. Amino acid sequences of mastoparan-L and its analogs and analogs (mast-Ax).

Peptide	Sequence	Hydrophobicity	Hydropathicity	Hydrophilicity	Charge	MW (Da)	Changes
Mastoparan-L	INLKALAA LAKKIL- NH ₂	0.05	1.16	-0.26	3.00	1480.13	-
Mast-A1	CFL PLAA LGK - NH ₂	0.17	1.44	-0.69	1.00	1032.45	6
Mast-A2	II LAALAK KI -NH ₂	0.18	1.87	-0.45	2.00	1053.55	3
Mast-A3	P LAALGK VFG-NH ₂	0.19	1.19	-0.56	1.00	972.34	6
Mast-A4	PII INLKAL A -NH ₂	0.19	1.57	-0.68	1.00	1065.52	3
Mast-A5	II INLKALA AL -NH ₂	0.21	1.84	-0.73	1.00	1039.48	1
Mast-A6	II INLKALA ALA -NH ₂	0.16	1.57	-0.60	1.00	997.39	4

Table 2. Antibacterial activity of mastoparan-L (mast-L) and analogs (mast-Ax). Bacteria were cultured in the presence of different peptide concentrations. Gentamicin (genta), imipenem (imp) and peptide LL-37 were used as positive controls. Data are representative of three independent experiments.

Microorganisms	MIC ($\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$)									
	Mast-L	Mast-A1	Mast-A2	Mast-A3	Mast-A4	Mast-A5	Mast-A6	LL-37	Genta	imp
Gram-positive										
<i>B. subtilis</i> ATCC6633	1 2.5	25 .0	3. 1	50 .0	50 .0	50 .0	50 .0	6. 2	6 .2	0 .8
<i>E. faecalis</i> ATCC12953	3 .1	25 .0	3. 1	50 .0	50 .0	10 0.0	50 .0	6. 2	6 .2	0 .8
<i>S. aureus</i> ATCC29213	6 .2	12 .5	3. 1	25 .0	12 .5	50 .0	12 .5	12 .5	1 .6	0 .8
<i>S. aureus</i> (MRSA) ATCC33591	6 .2	50 .0	12 .5	50 .0	50 .0	>1 00.0	50 .0	50 .0	2 5.0	0 2.5
<i>S. aureus</i> MRSA #SAP0017	2 5.0	50 .0	6. 2	50 .0	50 .0	>1 00.0	50 .0	50 .0	2 5.0	0 2.5
<i>S. pyogenes</i> ATCC19615	3 .1	25 .0	1. 6	50 .0	25 .0	50 .0	25 .0	25 .0	2 5.0	0 .8
Gram-negative										
<i>E. coli</i> ATCC8739	6 .2	25 .0	3. 1	50 .0	12 .5	10 0.0	25 .0	12 .5	0 .8	0 .8
<i>E. coli</i> 1812446 (KPC+)	6 .2	25 .0	12 .5	50 .0	25 .0	>1 00.0	25 .0	25 .0	2 5.0	0 .0
<i>E. coli</i> 2101123	6 .2	25 .0	12 .5	50 .0	25 .0	>1 00.0	25 .0	25 .0	2 5.0	0 .0
<i>E. coli</i> 0157	2 5.0	25 .0	6. 2	50 .0	25 .0	>1 00.0	25 .0	12 .5	2 5.0	0 .0
<i>K. pneumoniae</i>	1	12	12	25	12	50	12	12	1	0

ATCC13885	2.5	.5	.5	.0	.5	.0	.5	.5	.6	.6
<i>K. pneumoniae</i>	2	25	25	50	25	>1	25	6.	2	
1825971 (KPC+)	5.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	00.0	.0	2	5.0	2.0
<i>P. mirabilis</i>	1	12	12	12	12	50	12	12	6	
ATCC25933	2.5	.5	.5	.5	.5	.0	.5	.5	.2	.6
<i>P. aeruginosa</i> ATCC	1	6.	12	12	12	50	12	6.	1	
15442	2.5	2	.5	.5	.5	.0	.5	2	.6	.6
<i>S. enterica</i>	1	6.	12	12	25	50	25	6.	6	
ATCC14028	2.5	2	.5	.5	.0	.0	.0	2	.2	.6

Table 3. Haemolytic activity of mastoparan-L (mast-L) and analogs (mast-Ax). Assays evaluating the cytotoxic activity of the peptides against fresh mouse red blood cells (mRBCs) 1% Triton X-100 served as positive control (100% haemolysis).

Treatments	Haemolysis (%)						
	20 0 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$	10 0 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$	50 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$	25 0 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$	12 .5 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$	6. 2 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$	3. 1 $\mu\text{g.mL}^{-1}$
Mast-L	15 .0±4.0	10 .0±3.0	6. 0±4.0	2. 0±1.0	1. 0±1.0	N/ O	N /O
Mast-A1	10 .0±4.0	5. 0±1.0	N/ O	N/ O	N/ O	N/ O	N /O
Mast-A2	18 .0±3.0	7. 0±4.0	1. 0±1.0	N/ O	N/ O	N/ O	N /O
Mast-A3	8. 0±2.0	2. 0±1.0	N/ O	N/ O	N/ O	N/ O	N /O
Mast-A4	17 .0±4.0	8. 0±1.0	2. 0±1.0	1. 0±1.0	N/ O	N/ O	N /O
Mast-A5	7. 0±2.0	2. 0±1.0	N/ O	N/ O	N/ O	N/ O	N /O
Mast-A6	12 .0±3.0	6. 0±3.0	1. 0±2.0	N/ O	N/ O	N/ O	N /O
LL-37	10 0.0±5.0	60 .0±6.0	30 .0±4.0	25 .0±5.0	10 .0±2.0	5. 0±1.0	1. 0±1.0
Gentamicin	25 .0±6.0	15 .0±3.0	10 .0±3.0	5. 0±3	N/ O	N/ O	N /O
Imipenem	20 .0±2.0	7. 0±3.0	1. 0±2.0	N/ O	N/ O	N/ O	N /O

PBS	O ^{N/}	O ^{N/}	O ^{N/}	O ^{N/}	O ^{N/}	O ^{N/}	O ^{N/}
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N/O = not observed

Table 4. Three-dimensional structure assessments of mastoparan derived peptides.

Peptide	Z-Score (Prosa II)	Ramachandran Plot (%)		Solvation Potential Energy (Kcal.mol ⁻¹)
		Favored	Allowed	
M ast-A1	-1.39	100	0	4.38E+02
M ast-A2	-1.76	100	0	7.79E+02
M ast-A3	-1.04	100	0	4.79E+02
M ast-A4	-1.67	100	0	4.47E+02
M ast-A5	-1.50	100	0	5.12E+02
M ast-A6	-1.69	100	0	5.21E+02

FIGURES

Figure 1. Antitumor effect of mastoparan-derived peptides against Ehrlich's ascites tumour cells. Viability effect, after 24 h incubation time, of each designed peptide (Table 1) at different concentrations. (ANOVA, Post hoc Bonferroni, $p < 0.05$).

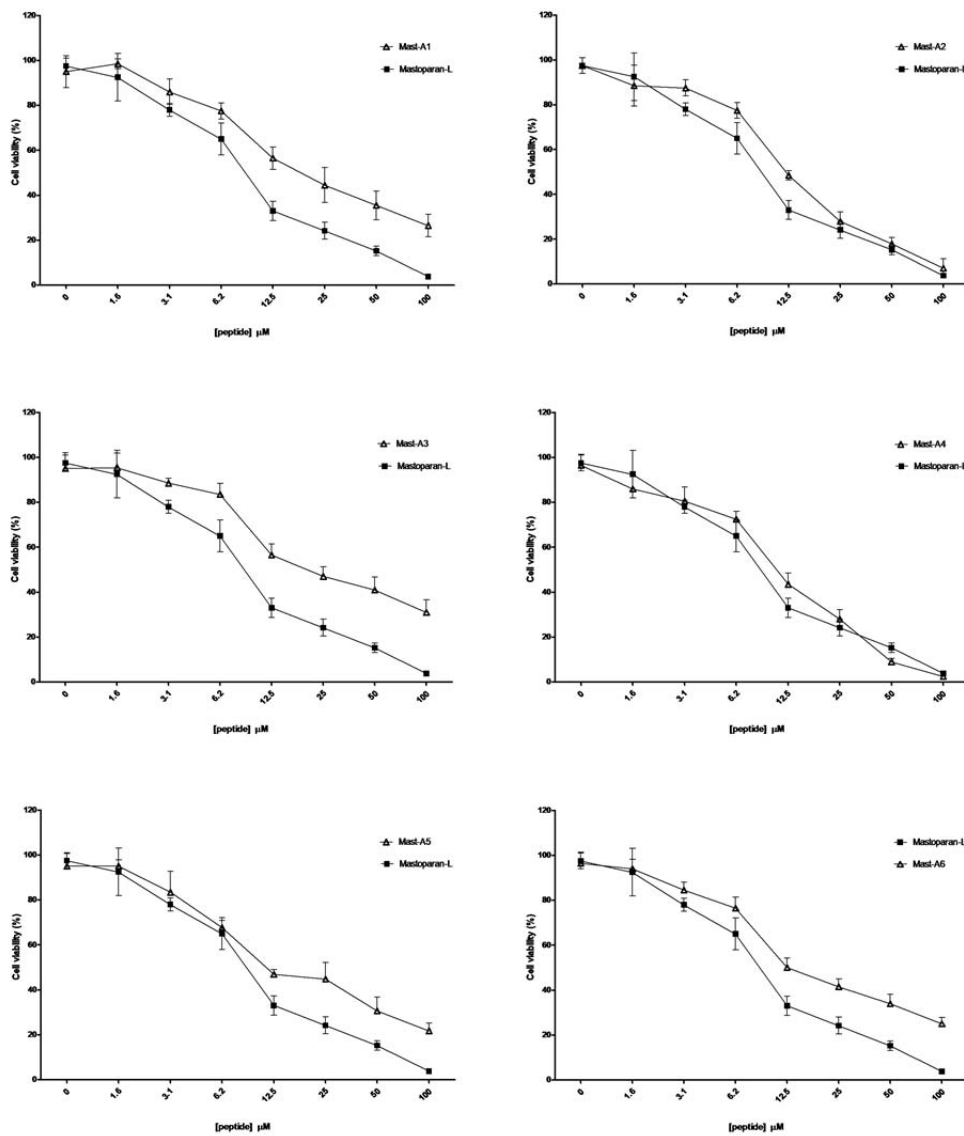
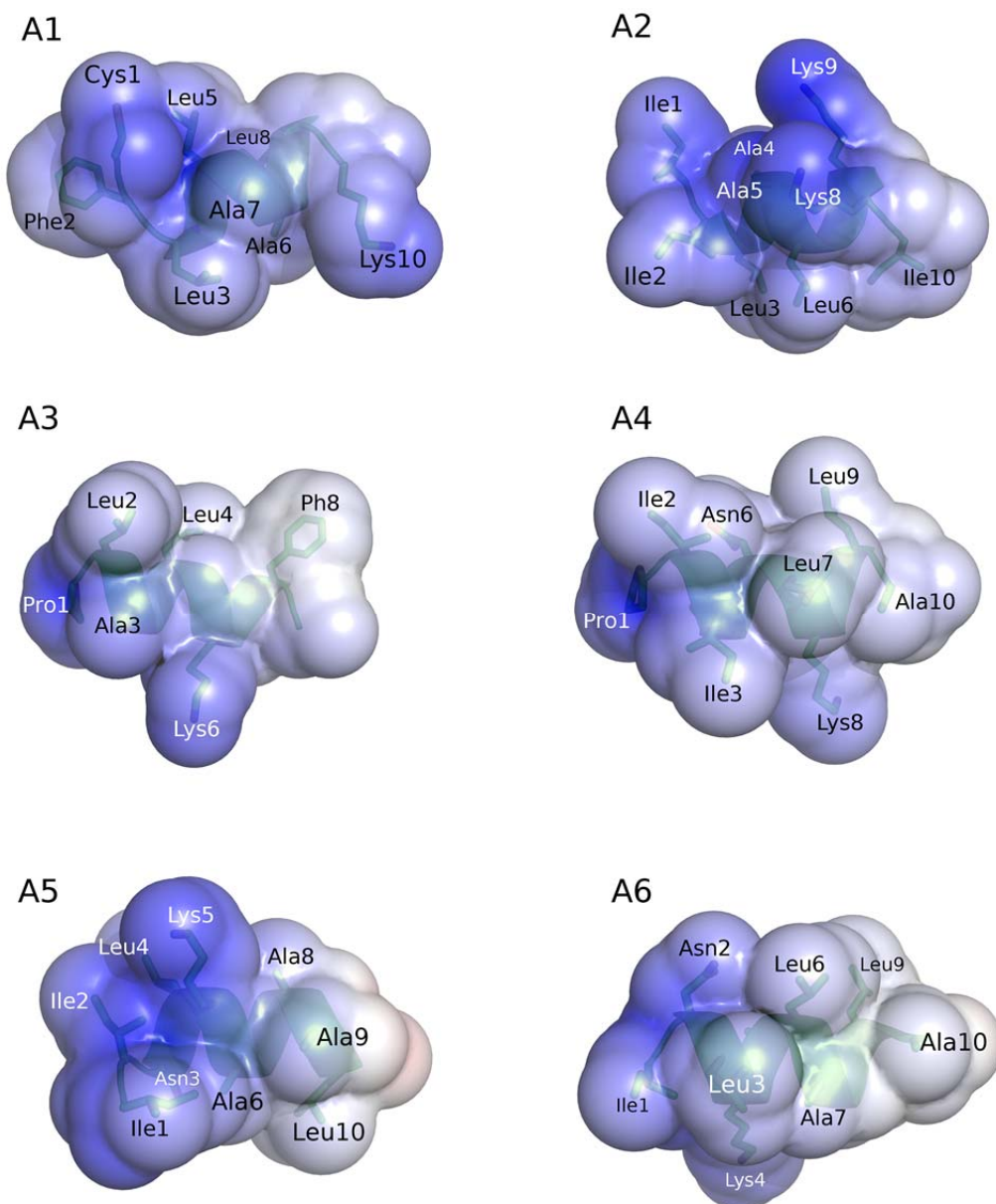


Figure 2. Three-dimensional models of mastoparan-derived peptides. All peptides were predicted to have cationic and hydrophobic alpha-helical structures. Blue regions indicate cationic patches, while white ones the hydrophobic patches. Surface potentials were set to $\pm 5kTe^{-1}$ (13,356 mV).



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