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Transcriptional landscape of trans-kingdom communication between Candida albicans and Streptococcus gordonii

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SUMMARY

Recent studies have shown that the transcriptional landscape of the pleiomorphic fungus *Candida albicans* is highly dependent upon growth conditions. Here using a dual RNA-seq approach we identified 299 *C. albicans* and 72 *Streptococcus gordonii* genes that were either up- or downregulated specifically as a result of co-culturing these human oral cavity microorganisms. Seventy five *C. albicans* genes involved in responses to chemical stimuli, regulation, homeostasis, protein modification and cell cycle were statistically $(P \t 0.05)$ up-regulated, while 36 genes mainly involved in transport and translation were down-regulated. Up-regulation of filamentationassociated *TEC1* and *FGR42* genes, and of *ALS1* adhesin gene, concurred with previous evidence that the *C. albicans* yeast to hypha transition is promoted by *S. gordonii*. Increased expression of genes required for arginine biosynthesis in *C. albicans* was potentially indicative of a novel oxidative stress response. The transcriptional response of *S. gordonii* to *C. albicans* was less dramatic, with only eight *S. gordonii* genes significantly $(P \t 0.05)$ up-regulated twofold $(g/pK,$ *rplO, celB*, *rplN*, *rplB, rpsE, ciaR,* and *gat*). The expression patterns suggest that signals from *S. gordonii* cause a positive filamentation response in *C. albicans*, while *S. gordonii* appears to be transcriptionally less influenced by *C. albicans*.

Keywords

Cell wall proteins; adhesin; bacteria-fungi interactions; GPI anchor; RNASeq

INTRODUCTION

Candida albicans is a commensal fungus and opportunistic pathogen found in the human gut, oral cavity and genital tract. It is present in 20-60% humans, depending upon the population studied (Martins *et al*., 1998). *C. albicans* can progress from commensal colonization to local invasion, according to subject susceptibility, and then to invasive candidiasis which is associated with high mortality rates (Pfaller *et al.*, 2010; Eggimann *et*

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al., 2015). In the oral cavity, *C. albicans* tends to localize to mucosal surfaces and prostheses e.g. dentures (Zomorodian *et al*., 2011), but there is also evidence for association with dental caries (de Carvalho *et al*., 2006) and periodontal disease (Canabarro *et al*., 2013). *C. albicans* therefore often coexists with other microorganisms in polymicrobial biofilm communities. There is evidence that this influences the morphogenetic, pathogenic and antifungal susceptibility properties of *C. albicans*, and therefore such infections may be more difficult to control (Wright *et al*., 2013).

Biofilm formation in *C. albicans* is a multistage process (Douglas, 2003) and is dependent upon morphological transitions from yeast to pseudohyphal or hyphal forms. The formation of biofilms involves global changes in gene expression (Garcia-Sanchez *et al.*, 2004) modulated by at least six transcription factors (Nobile *et al*., 2012). A set of eight genes has been found forming a core filamentation response (Martin *et al.*, 2013). The genes include *ALS3*, *ECE1*, *HGT2*, *IHD1* and *RBT1*, all of which encode cell wall proteins (CWPs).

Recently, RNA sequencing has been utilized to provide transcriptome maps of *C. albicans* under a range of growth conditions, both *in vitro* and *in vivo* (Bruno *et al.*, 2010; Tierney *et al.*, 2012; Grumaz *et al.*, 2013). Such studies have revealed that relatively well established pathways may be affected unexpectedly by the prevailing growth conditions. For example, the arginine biosynthesis genes (e.g. *ARG1*, *ARG3*, *ARG4*) are induced under conditions of mild oxidative stress (0.5 mM hydrogen peroxide, H_2O_2) such as those which might occur within phagocytes (Jiménez-Lopéz *et al*., 2013).

In mixed species biofilms there are clearly many opportunities for trans-kingdom signalling to occur (Nobbs & Jenkinson, 2015) and it is therefore important to understand the nature of this communication. Quorum sensing molecules and other metabolites from Gram-negative bacteria such as *P. aeruginosa* (Hogan *et al*., 2004) and *Burkholderia cenocepacia* (Boon *et al*., 2008) have been shown to block hypha formation in *C. albicans. Staphylococcus aureus* appears to inhibit filamentation under some conditions (Fox *et al*., 2013), while the oral bacterium *Streptococcus mutans* inhibits hypha formation by production of trans-2-decenoic acid (Vilchez *et al.*, 2010) and competence stimulating peptide (Jarosz *et al.*, 2009).

Streptococcus gordonii is found associated with most surfaces in the human oral cavity (Aas *et al*., 2005) and is one of several oral streptococcal species that have been shown to coaggregate with *C. albicans* (Jenkinson *et al*., 1990). It is suggested that these interactions with bacteria are crucial for *C. albicans* incorporation into oral cavity biofilms (Jenkinson, 2011), and for the development of polymicrobial communities. More recent studies have shown that one response of *C. albicans* to the presence of *S. gordonii* involves promotion of hyphal morphogenesis (Dutton *et al*., 2014). This could be influenced by cell-cell contact and modulated by secreted metabolites i.e. signalling molecules (Bamford *et al*., 2009; Jack *et al*., 2015). The aim of the work described in this paper was to outline the transcriptional responses of *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* in the early stages of their interaction, mimicking the natural biofilm communication processes that occur in the oral cavity. The expression profiles obtained reveal how early recognition responses modulate downstream events involved in dual species, trans-kingdom biofilm development.

METHODS

Growth of microbial cells

C. albicans wild-type strain SC5314 was grown aerobically for 16 h in YPD medium (2% yeast extract, 1% mycological peptone, 2% dextrose) at 37°C, with shaking at 220-rpm. Cells were then harvested by centrifugation (5000 \times *g* for 5 min), washed twice in YPT medium ($1 \times$ Difco yeast nitrogen base, 20 mM phosphate buffer pH 7.1, 0.1% Bacto tryptone) by alternate centrifugation $(5000 \times g$ for 5 min) and suspension, and finally suspended at optical density 600 nm (OD_{600}) = 1.0 (approximately 1 × 10⁷ cells ml⁻¹) in YPT medium. Aliquots (10 ml; 1×10^7 cells ml⁻¹) were transferred into conical flasks containing YPT medium (90 ml) supplemented with 0.4% glucose (YPT-Glc). The cultures were then incubated at 37°C for 2 h with shaking at 50-rpm to induce hypha formation (Dutton *et al.,* 2014). *S. gordonii* cells were grown anaerobically for 16 h in 10 ml BHY medium (per litre: 37g Brain Heart infusion broth, 5 g yeast extract) and then harvested by centrifugation (5000 \times *g* for 7 min). The bacterial cells were washed twice with YPT (no glucose) and finally suspended at OD₆₀₀ = 0.5 (2 × 10⁸ cells ml⁻¹) in YPT-Glc medium.

Several combinations of *C. albicans*, *S. gordonii* and growth medium were designed to specifically identify changes in gene expression as a result of co-incubation (Table 1). For the dual-species cultures of *S. gordonii* and *C. albicans*, *S. gordonii* cell suspensions (50 ml; 2 × 10⁸ cells ml⁻¹) were added at 2 h, while for the *C. albicans* monospecies culture, YPT-Glc medium alone (50 ml) was added. *S. gordonii* cell suspension (50 ml) was added to prewarmed (37°C) YPT-Glc medium for 1 h for the *S. gordonii* monoculture. To prepare *C. albicans* spent medium, *C. albicans* cells were removed from the culture medium by centrifugation (5000 \times *g*, 5 min), and the supernatant was vacuum filtered through a 0.45 μ m nitrocellulose membrane. The filtered medium was transferred to a sterile glass bottle and warmed to 37°C before *S. gordonii* suspension (50 ml; 2×10^8 cells ml⁻¹) was added. All cultures were incubated at 37°C with shaking (50-rpm) for a further 1 h.

Cells were harvested by centrifugation (5000 \times *g*, 10 min) in 50 ml-Falcon tubes and all but 5 ml supernatant was aspirated. The cell pellet was suspended in the remaining supernatant, transferred to sterile 15 ml-Falcon tubes and harvested by centrifugation $(5000 \times g, 5 \text{ min})$. The supernatant was aspirated until only 0.5 ml remained, and this was used to suspend the cell pellet. The cell suspension was frozen into small balls by dropping portions (200 μl) into liquid nitrogen. The balls were stored at −70°C prior to RNA extraction.

RNA extraction

Frozen microbial cell balls were thawed on ice and suspended in ice-cold RLT buffer (Qiagen Ltd., Manchester, UK) containing 2-mercaptoethanol and transferred to a sterile screw cap microfuge tube containing acid-washed Biospec glass beads (0.6 ml). The suspension was mixed with the glass beads and the fungal and bacterial cells were disrupted by alternating shaking (30 s) using a Fast-prep 25 bead beater (MP Biomedicals, Santa Ana, CA) and incubating 1 min on ice (repeated 3 times). The beads were allowed to settle and the supernatant was transferred to a sterile microfuge tube. The disrupted cells were centrifuged (13000 \times *g*, 2 min) and the supernatant transferred to a sterile microfuge tube.

An equal volume of 70% ethanol was added and the RNA was extracted and purified using an RNeasy Mini Kit (Qiagen) with the use of an on-column DNAse digestion (Qiagen). The quality of the RNA was checked by formaldehyde agarose-gel electrophoresis. The RNA concentration of each sample was measured spectrophotometrically (Nanodrop 1000, Thermo Scientific, Fisher Scientific UK Ltd, Loughborough, Leics., UK) and stored at −20°C.

Transcriptomic analysis

ERCC RNA Spike-In Control Mix (Ambion, Foster City, CA) was mixed with 2.5 μg RNA. Ribosomal RNA was depleted with a RiboZero Magnetic Gold Kit (Epicentre) and lllumina sequencing libraries were prepared using ScriptSeq v2 (Epicentre, Illumina Inc., Madison, WI) with 10 cycles of PCR amplification. The quality and quantity of each library was determined using a Bioanalyzer and the average (modal) insert size of samples was 400 bp with the spread ranging between 200 bp and 1,000 bp. An equimolar library pool was denatured, diluted to 6.5 pM and clustered on a cBot (Illumina) to create clonal clusters from single molecule DNA templates. One hundred base pair paired-end sequencing was undertaken using HiSeq2500 (Illumina) in high output mode with Truseq v3 reagents. The resulting FASTQ data were then filtered using the fastq-mcf command from the EA-Utils suite to remove adaptor sequences and low quality bases (Aronesty, 2011). The filtered data were then aligned against the reference ERCC transcripts using Bowtie v1.0.0 using the -X 600 flag. SAMtools v0.1.19 was utilized to convert the resulting SAM formatted-file to BAM (Li *et al.*, 2009). The number of reads mapping to each transcript was extracted using the SAMtools idxstats command and used to calculate RPKM values for each ERCC transcript. Log₂ values of observed RPKM were then plotted against log₂ expected RPKM values and inspected to establish lower limits of detection.

The reads which did not map to the ERCC transcripts were then aligned to a merged FASTA file containing both the Ca21_C_albicans_SC5314 genome (Version 21 from [www.candidagenome.org\)](http://www.candidagenome.org) and the NC_009785 *S. gordonii* CH1 genome. The Tophat2 v2 2.0.8b program was used with the following parameters: -G -library-type fr-secondstrand -I 10000 -r 50, --mate-std-dev 100 -p 8. The -G parameter was followed by the combined gff file containing annotation for both organisms (Kim *et al.*, 2013). An additional analysis was carried out with the DESeq analysis tool to calculate differential gene expression (Anders & Huber, 2010). The output of Tophat2 was processed using the Bedtools multicov command (Dale *et al.*, 2011). This produces numbers of reads mapping to each annotated gff feature. The gene/read count files were then processed to separate the eukaryote and prokaryote gene features. Each was then analyzed separately using the DESeq package v1.12.1. Default parameters were utilized as outlined in the DESeq manual. DESeq uses a negative binomial model to account for the dispersion of the reads and the variation between replicates $(n = 3)$, and uses a general linear model for comparisons (Love *et al*., 2014). *P*-values were calculated from DESeq, and Benjamini-Hochberg adjusted *P*-values ≤ 0.05 were deemed significant. All transcriptional data have been submitted to the GEO repository and assigned the GEO accession number GSE68477.

Microscopy

Confocal scanning laser microscopy of *C. albicans* (stained with Calcofluor white) with or without *S. gordonii* (stained with fluorescein isothiocyanate, FITC) was performed as previously described (Dutton *et al.*, 2014). Transmission electron microscopy (TEM) was performed as follows: cell suspensions were centrifuged (5000 \times *g*, 10 min) and to the pellets was added TEM fixative (4% paraformaldehye, 5% glutaraldehyde, 0. 1M sodium cacodylate buffer pH 7.2, 0.05% Tween 20). Tubes were shaken gently and incubated for 15 min at 22 \degree C. The samples were centrifuged (3000 \times *g*, 2 min), the supernatant carefully removed, and the pellet suspended in TEM fixative (2% paraformaldehye, 2.5% glutaraldehyde; 2 ml) for 16 h at 4° C. The pellets were then washed 3 times in 0.1 M sodium cacodylate buffer (pH 7.2), and set into low melting point 2% agarose. The agarose pellets were cut into ~3 mm sections and incubated for 1 h at 22°C in 1% osmium tetroxide solution. The samples were rinsed in sterile H_2O , dehydrated at room temperature using sequential incubations in ethanol (30%, 50%, 75%, 90% and 100%) then propylene oxide, and embedded in Spurr resin. The resin was cut by microtome (RMC Powertome PC) into sections of 80-100 nm using a diamond knife, and sections were collected on copper grids and imaged at 80 kV by TEM.

Scanning Probe Microscopy (SPM) was performed on *C. albicans-S. gordonii* cultures deposited onto glass cover slips. Cover slips were attached to metal pucks with double sided tape and mounted on a Multimode AFM fitted with a Nanoscope IIIa controller (Veeco, Santa Barbara, CA). Cells were imaged in contact mode using triangular silicon nitride $(Si₃N₄)$ tips with a nominal spring constant of ~0.06 N m⁻¹ (Veeco). Images were obtained at typical scan rates of 25 μ m s⁻¹ and processed using Nanoscope 8 software (Veeco).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

C. albicans and S. gordonii form close physical associations

Coaggregation of *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* cells occurs rapidly after mixing of the two cell types (Jenkinson *et al*., 1990). In order to visualize these interactive events, *S. gordonii* cells, fluorescently labelled with FITC, were mixed with hyphae-forming *C. albicans* cells in YPT-Glc medium (see Methods) and incubated for 1 h at 37°C. The associations between the bacteria and fungi were then viewed by confocal scanning laser microscopy (CSLM). After 3 h growth in monoculture, ~50% *C. albicans* cells had formed hyphae of 20-50 μm in length (Fig. 1A). In the presence of *S. gordonii*, bacterial cells bound along the lengths of the hyphal filaments (Fig. 1B) and could also be seen to aggregate, forming microcolonies at discrete attachment sites (Fig. 1B). These aggregates must form mainly by recruitment of other streptococci since extensive bacterial cell division does not occur in YPT-Glc medium within the experimental time-frame of 1 h.

One characteristic of *C. albicans* hypha formation is that the hyphal filaments clump together. As expected therefore, transmission electron micrographs showed *C. albicans* hyphal filaments in close contact with each other (Fig. 2A), seemingly connected by networks of fibrillar material. *S. gordonii* cells were often seen intimately interacting with hyphal filaments, with the cell surfaces in direct contact along a length of about 100 nm

(Fig. 2B). There were also streptococci present that were not interacting with hyphae (Fig. 2B). The closeness of the bacterium-fungus interaction was further shown by scanning probe microscopy. In scans of wet mounts, streptococcal and *C. albicans* cell surfaces are apparently coalesced (Fig. 3A), while under dried conditions there appears to be a structural difference on the hyphal cell surface at the point of contact with bacteria (Fig. 3B) which could suggest some form of fungal cell wall remodelling. It is these close associations between the two cell types that led us to hypothesize that recognition signals (contact or diffusible) could be relayed through cell wall sensors to modulate gene expression in response to the other microorganism.

Transcriptional landscape studies

Following suspension of *C. albicans* cells in YPT-Glc medium, and incubation for 2 h at 37°C, fungal cells were undergoing early-stage hyphal morphogenesis (see above). At this point the *C. albicans* cells were allowed to proceed for a further 1 h, either in the presence or absence of *S. gordonii*, or in the presence of spent *C. albicans* culture medium (to correct for metabolic effects), and RNA was then prepared. Transcriptomic data therefore represent the response of *C. albicans* to the presence of *S. gordonii* for 1 h, and they take into account also the transcriptional effects of nutritional shift-down and *C. albicans* culture medium on *S. gordonii* cells (see Table 1). Under these conditions, physical trans-kingdom interactions occur, and chemical signals would carry on being exchanged between the two microorganisms since both *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* continue to metabolize within this medium (Bamford *et al*., 2009).

Illumina sequencing from the combined *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* samples yielded 258,347,928 raw reads (Table S1). A total of 6,653 open reading frames (features) from all the samples were functionally annotated to the haploid assembly 21 of the *C. albicans* genome (van het Hoog *et al.*, 2007) using the *Candida* Genome Database (CGD) [\(www.candidagenome.org](http://www.candidagenome.org)), while 2,051 open reading frames were matched to the *S. gordonii* database for annotation, visualization and integrated discovery (DAVID version 6.7 - <http://david.abcc.ncifcrf.gov>) (Huang *et al.*, 2007; Sherman *et al.*, 2007). The total numbers of candidal and streptococcal reads for all three sample replicates were calculated, and the % distribution of candidal and bacterial reads were calculated for the three combined replicates for each sample (Table S2).

When *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* were co-cultured in YPT-Glc medium, the overall ratio of reads was 37.7% *C. albicans* to 62.7% *S. gordonii*. This showed there was a suitable distribution of *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* reads with no undue bias towards one single organism. It should be noted that features can include any sequence belonging to the genome, including reads that are not translated into proteins. This explains why there were a small number of reads (0.09% and 0.03%) from the *S. gordonii* samples that matched to the *C. albicans* genome. These relate to regions of the genome with some homology that are similar in the two organisms e.g. tRNA or mitochondrial RNA.

One technical consideration was if there might be a bias towards long or short transcripts. To check this, the gene (orf) coordinates from the 6,653 orfs in the CGD were used to prepare a dataset of the lengths of every orf. The normalized expression reads (tag counts)

for every gene were then plotted against gene length for the entire *C. albicans* genome. The plot was compared with a corresponding graph of normalized expression reads versus gene length for the up- and down-regulated *C. albicans* genes in the presence of *S. gordonii*. These data, presented in Fig.S1, show that there was no shift in length distribution between total *C. albicans* orfs and differentially regulated genes, and no obvious change in range of distribution. Therefore it was concluded that the expression data were not biased by gene length.

The Illumina sequencing data from co-incubated cultures of *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* were compared to the data obtained from *C. albicans* grown with only the addition of growth medium (YPT-Glc) minus *S. gordonii*. This was to rule out the likelihood that any changes in gene expression were caused by the addition of the extra growth medium after 2 h rather than an effect caused by *S. gordonii* cells. Volcano plots of *P*-value vs. mean fold change in gene expression (Fig. 4) derived from analysis of the Illumina data (by the statistical DESeq package v1.12.1 with default parameters) showed that when *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* were co-cultured in YPT-Glc medium the expression levels of a large number of *C. albicans* genes were significantly $(P \t 0.05)$ up- or down-regulated by at least a twofold change (Fig. 4A, Table 2). On the other hand, only one *S. gordonii* gene was significantly $(P \t 0.05)$ decreased in expression when the bacteria were incubated with *C*. *albicans*. *S. gordonii* gene expression significantly increased only slightly overall, with the majority of increases around twofold or less (Fig. 4B). Statistical analysis using DESeq v1.12.1 also showed the total number of genes with altered expression (either up- or downregulated) was much higher in *C. albicans* (299 genes) compared with *S. gordonii* (72 genes).

Table 2 shows all genes identified as significantly $(P \t 0.05)$ up- or down-regulated by DESeq in *C. albicans* when hypha-forming cells were incubated with *S. gordonii* for 1 h. Eighteen out of 75 genes up-regulated twofold are annotated as being associated with stress responses (core, oxidative, acid, macrophage up-regulated), while 15 genes are annotated as being up-regulated in biofilm formation (Table 2). Only one up-regulated gene (*TSA1*) was associated with both stress and biofilm formation, suggesting that at least two response pathways were being activated. These results, together with the volcano plots, indicated that when *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* were co-incubated there was a much larger overall effect on *C. albicans* compared to a relatively small effect on *S. gordonii*.

GO Biological Processes

Within the Gene Ontology (GO) category for Biological Processes, from 152 *C. albicans* up-regulated genes (Table 2), 75 were significant $(P \ 0.05)$, while 36 of the 147 downregulated *C. albicans* genes were found to be significantly (P 0.05) down-regulated. The genes with significant differential gene expression were assigned to 41 GO Slim categories (Fig. 5). The numbers of genes assigned to *biological process, other* and *chemical stimulus* (the most abundant) were all found to be significantly $(P \t 0.05)$ affected (Fig. 5). From the *C. albicans* down-regulated genes the terms *biological process* and *transport* were the most abundant (25%) and the terms *other* and *translation* were the next highest in abundance

(13.9%). The genes assigned to *transport* were found to be significantly $(P \t 0.05)$ affected (Fig. 5).

GO Cellular Components

Cellular Components describe locations, at the levels of subcellular and macromolecular complexes. For GO category Cellular Components, 75 up-regulated *C. albicans* genes were assigned to 27 Slim categories (Fig. 6). From the up-regulated *C. albicans* genes the term *cytoplasm* (48.6%) was the most abundant with the terms *cellular component* (37.8%) and *mitochondrion* (28.4%) showing the next highest abundance. Gene ontology terms associated with the *nucleus, mitochondrion,* and *cell wall* were all found to be significantly (*P* ≤0.05) enriched in the up-regulated gene sets (Fig. 6). For the down-regulated *C. albicans* genes, GO Slim terms assigned to *cytoplasm* and *cellular components* were found to be significantly $(P \t 0.05)$ affected (Fig. 6).

GO Molecular Functions

Molecular Functions describe activities, such as catalytic or binding activities that occur at the molecular level. For the GO category Molecular Function, the 75 significantly upregulated *C. albicans* genes (from a total of 152 up-regulated genes) (Fig. 7) and 36 significantly down-regulated *C. albicans* genes were assigned to 26 GO Slim categories. From the up-regulated *C. albicans* genes, the term *molecular function* (36.5%) was the most abundant, with the terms *oxidoreductase activity* (25.7%) and *transferase* activity (14.9%) showing the next highest abundance. The number of genes assigned to *oxidoreductase activity* and *hydrolase activity* were found to be significantly $(P \ 0.05)$ affected (Fig. 7). From the *C. albicans* down-regulated genes the term *molecular function* (27.8%) was the most abundant, with *oxidoreductase activity* (16.0%) and *transporter activity* (16.7%) significantly ($P_0.05$) affected.

Colonization and pathogenesis genes

From 211 genes associated with pathogenesis by CGD, only 10 genes were shown to be upor down-regulated by ≥ twofold (Table 3). The genes *ALS1*, *CAT1* and *TEC1* are strongly associated with the transition from yeast to hyphae during filamentous growth as well as pathogenesis. The up-regulation of *TEC1* in this study tends to suggest that *S. gordonii* stimulation of *C. albicans* hyphal growth might occur through the Cyr1/cAMP signalling pathway (Sudbery, 2011).

For successful colonization and pathogenesis, once *C. albicans* blastospores adhere to host surfaces they rapidly begin to produce hyphal filaments. Hyphae physically penetrate host endothelial and epithelial cells. Aided by a large array of hyphal surface proteins they also create stronger attachments to the host surfaces. Overall there were 18 genes associated with filamentous growth whose expression was affected (six significantly) when *C. albicans* was challenged with *S. gordonii* (Table 3). *FRG42*, *ALS1*, *CAT1*, and *TEC1* each showed a mean > four-fold increase. *ALS1* and *TSA1* transcripts were of highest abundance (Table 3). Tec1 and Fgr42 proteins are both filamentous growth regulators (Sudbery, 2011), so are involved in the switch from yeast form to hyphal form, suggesting that the gene expression network associated with the yeast to hypha transition was stimulated by the presence of *S. gordonii* in

the culture. This is supported by evidence for growth synergy of streptococci and *C. albicans* in biofilms (Bamford *et al.*, 2009) and morphological observations of more extensive hyphal filament formation with *S. gordonii* present (Dutton *et al*., 2014).

Oxidative stress related genes

Up-regulation of *CAT1* (catalase) during the yeast-hypha transition might be consistent with reports that reactive oxygen species (ROS) levels are increased under hypha-forming conditions (Schroter *et al.*, 2000). During the transition of yeast to hyphal filament, the cell wall must go through a considerable conformational change, involving restructuring, which ultimately requires a greater energy input from the cell. The energy comes from oxidative phosphorylation in mitochondria, which generate ROS as a by-product. The ROS will attack and inhibit the functions of proteins, lipids and DNA if not decomposed by Cat1 and other anti-oxidant enzymes. So an increased energy output during hypha formation will generate a need for an increase in anti-oxidants.

HSP21, one of the up-regulated genes in Table 3, encodes a multifunctional heat shock protein, with a role in both stress adaptation and virulence in *C. albicans* (Mayer *et al.*, 2012). Hsp21 modulates thermal stress by fine tuning homeostasis of compatible solutes and activation of the Cek1 pathway, which has previously been shown to be influenced by *S. gordonii* (Bamford *et al*., 2009). Hsp21 also mediates adaptation to oxidative stress, while an $hsp21/$ mutant forms shorter hyphae than the wild-type and is strongly attenuated in virulence *in vivo* (Mayer *et al.*, 2012).

Numerous *C. albicans* anti-oxidant genes in addition to *CAT1* responded to the presence of *S. gordonii* including *ORF19.3537* a putative sulfiredoxin, two oxidoreductases (*ORF19.2262* and *CIP1)*, cytochrome c peroxidase (*CCP1*), glutathione reductase (*GLR1*), glutathione-S-transferase (*GTT11*), glutathione peroxidase (*GPX2*), thioredoxin reductase (*TRR1*) and the thiol-specific antioxidant protein (*TSA1)*. *TSA1*, *TRR1*, *CAT1*, *GLR1* and *CPA2* transcripts were of high abundance (Table 2). However, not all known oxidative stress response genes were up-regulated e.g. *TRX1*, *SOD1*, *GRX2*, *GPX31-33* (da Silva Dantas *et al.,* 2015) suggesting a more specific type of response to *S. gordonii.* Many of the antioxidant genes are reported to be regulated by Cap1 (Wang *et al*., 2006) and their products are up-regulated upon H_2O_2 treatment of *C. albicans* (Kusch *et al.*, 2007). Overall, protection against H_2O_2 potentially confers added resistance to macrophages and cells of the innate immune system that utilize oxidative stress to kill *C. albicans*.

ARG1, ARG3, ARG4, ARG5,6, CPA1, and *CPA2* are all involved with arginine biosynthesis are also greatly up-regulated in *C. albicans* with *S. gordonii* present. Conversely *CAR1*, an arginase, is strongly down-regulated suggesting that increased arginine production is important for the response of *C. albicans* to *S. gordonii*. Since the *ARG* genes are upregulated in the presence of H₂O₂ (Jiménez-Lopéz *et al.*, 2013) these effects could be in direct response to the production of H₂O₂ by *S. gordonii* (Liu *et al.*, 2011). The importance of arginine biosynthesis is further strengthened by the up-regulation of *PUT1*, a putative proline oxidase that is expected to convert L-proline into 1 -pyrroline-5-carboxylate and glutamate-γ-semialdehyde that act as the main precursors for arginine production and

polyamine production. In *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, exposure to H₂O₂ and freeze-thaw stress also leads to an accumulation of arginine (Almeida *et al.*, 2007; Momose *et al*., 2010), with supplementary arginine conferring resistance to oxidative and thermal stress (Nishimura *et al*., 2010).

Covalently linked cell wall proteins (CWPs)

The *C. albicans* cell wall consists of an internal scaffold of (β-1,3)- and (β-1,6)-linked glucan and chitin, to which an outer protein coat is attached (Klis *et al.*, 2001; Ruiz-Herrera *et al.*, 2006). The protein coat is thought to contain about 20 different polypeptides attached to the cell wall by covalent bonds linking proteins to the inner glucan/chitin skeleton (Klis *et al.*, 2009). These cell wall proteins (CWPs) have been associated with many functions including host cell adhesion and invasion, biofilm formation, cell-cell and intergeneric aggregation, and enzymatic functions such as superoxide dismutases and yapsin-like aspartic proteases (Monod *et al.*, 1998; Martchenko *et al.*, 2004; Krysan *et al.*, 2005). Because of the diversity of their roles, it is not surprising that expression of CWP-encoding genes can vary enormously, not only with mode of growth, but also with environmental signals and input from distinct signalling pathways, triggered by changing environmental conditions (e.g. temperature, pH, *N*-acetyl-D-glucosamine etc.). This analysis investigated 36 experimentally-validated covalently-linked CWPs of *C. albicans* (Klis *et al.*, 2009) and how their gene expression profiles changed when *C. albicans* cells were co-incubated with *S. gordonii* (Table S3).

Thirteen out of 18 *C. albicans* CWP genes showed twofold up-regulation of gene expression, while five were twofold down-regulated (Table 4). Chi-squared tests showed that cell wall protein genes *PGA57*, *ALS1*, *PGA34*, *PHA36* (*IHD1*), *PGA61*, and *ORF19.4653* were all significantly up-regulated (*P* 0.05). *PGA10* was up-regulated > fourfold, though this was not considered significant at *P* 0.05 . Pga10 (Rbt51) belongs to a subset of fungal proteins with an eight cysteine residues domain CFEM (Common in several Fungal Extracellular Membrane proteins). Pga10/Rbt51 along with other proteins Rbt5 and Wap1/Csa1, each contain CFEM domains, which play key roles during biofilm formation (Perez *et al.*, 2006).

The up-regulation of expression of *HYR1* is most likely to be associated with an increase in the extent or rate of hypha formation. Studies have shown *HYR1* is induced specifically in response to hyphal development when morphogenesis is stimulated by growth conditions such as serum, temperature elevation, pH and the addition of *N*-acetyl-D-glucosamine (Bailey *et al.*, 1996). The findings suggest that the just over twofold increase in expression of *HYR1* could be associated with yeast to hypha transition, as shown by Spiering *et al*. (2010), stimulated by the addition of *S. gordonii* to the culture.

GPI-modified proteins

Glycophosphatidylinositol (GPI)-modified proteins all share conserved features of an Nterminal signal sequence and C-terminus tethered to the cell wall or cell membrane by a preformed GPI anchor. *In silico* predictions suggest that there are 115 genes encoding GPImodified proteins in *C. albicans* (Richard & Plaine, 2007). Several lists of *C. albicans* GPI-

modified proteins (GpiPs) published in the literature (De Groot *et al.*, 2003; Garcera *et al.*, 2003; Eisenhaber *et al.*, 2004) have been amalgamated and refined (Richard & Plaine, 2007) to avoid duplications and allow for differences in the algorithms used to define GpiPs.

The functions of the majority of these GpiPs (66%) still remain unknown. The others can be assigned to functions related to cell wall biosynthesis or remodelling, and cell-cell adhesion and interactions. Since the compilation of this list of GpiPs, 45 knock-out mutants of computer predicted GpiPs have been screened for their roles in cell wall structure (Plaine *et al*., 2008). Deletion mutants that result in cell wall modifications and reduced caspofungin sensitivity included *DFG5*, *PHR1*, *PGA4* and *PGA62*.

In our data, from the 115 predicted GpiPs, only 16 had a change in expression > twofold in the presence of *S. gordonii* (Table S4). A small number of genes (five) were down-regulated while 11 genes showed up-regulation (Table S4), six of which were significant $(P < 0.05)$. These were *ALS1*, *ORF19.4653*, *PGA34*, *PGA36*, *PGA57* and *PGA61* (Table 4). The CGD provides information on *PGA34* (role in host infection) and *PGA36* (induced during hyphal development), while *ORF19.4653*, *PGA57* and *PGA61* are currently uncharacterized but clearly respond transcriptionally to *S. gordonii*.

Adhesins

C. albicans cells within the oral cavity must avoid being washed away by the continuous flow of saliva, therefore adhesion to a multitude of host surfaces including epithelial cells, teeth, and dentures is of paramount importance. *C. albicans* possesses numerous potential adhesins (Zordan and Cormack, 2012) and this part of the study investigated 23 proteins which have been linked to cell adhesion in the CGD.

When *C. albicans* was co-incubated with *S. gordonii*, 19 out of the 23 *C. albicans* cell wall protein genes associated with adhesion showed up-regulation of gene expression, while four were seen to be down-regulated (these were all less than twofold changes). Both *ALS1* and *TEC1* showed the highest mean fold change in up-regulated adhesion-associated genes with significant four-fold changes (*P* 0.05) (Table 4). *ALS1* expression is known to be associated with hypha formation and, on the emergence of the germ tube, Als1 is the first member of the Als family to be expressed. Interestingly, the expressed protein is localized at the neck of the growing hypha (Fu *et al.*, 2002). Differential expression patterns of the *ALS* genes have shown that there is a major spike in *ALS1* expression when cells are inoculated into fresh medium, a procedure which also triggers hyphal growth, indicating that Als1 might have a regulatory role as well as an adhesin function. The up-regulation of *TEC1*, a TEA/ATTS transcription factor, is consistent with its reported role in regulating hypha formation and virulence (Schweizer *et al.*, 2000).

EAP1 (2.6-fold increase), *HIS4* (three-fold increase) and *HYR1* (2.1-fold increase) were also seen to be up-regulated. Eap1 is a glucan-cross-linked cell wall-localized protein that has been reported to be required for *C. albicans* to form robust biofilms on polystyrene surfaces (Nobbs *et al.*, 2010) and in central venous catheters (Li *et al.*, 2007) under shear flow *in vitro* and *in vivo.* Although expressed in both yeast and hyphal cells, it has been suggested that Eap1 protein expression is not directly associated with hypha formation (Li and

Palecek, 2003). However, there are contradicting reports where transcriptional profiling studies of the yeast to hypha transition reveal a twofold increase in Eap1 at 6 h (Nantel *et al.*, 2002) similar to the approximately three-fold up-regulation seen here. Interestingly, studies of *S. cerevisiae s*trains expressing Eap1 have confirmed that Eap1 is able to bind *S. gordonii* in planktonic culture (Grubb *et al.*, 2009). This indicates that Eap1, along with a number of other adhesins such as Als3 and Hwp1, promotes trans-kingdom interactions with other microorganisms to aid successful colonization and the formation of polymicrobial communities (Nobbs *et al.*, 2010; Xu *et al*., 2014). Although *EAP1* expression was upregulated, expression of the genes encoding other *C. albicans* adhesins *ALS3* and *HWP1* was not over the time-course of the experiment.

S. gordonii transcriptional response to C. albicans

A total of 72 *S. gordonii* genes were either up- or down-regulated specifically in response to co-culturing with *C. albicans* (Table 5). Eighteen *S. gordonii* genes were significantly upregulated including ≥ twofold increases in *glpK*, *rplO, celB*, *rplN*, *rplB, rpsE, ciaR, and gat* (Table 5). Glycerol kinase (GlpK) allows glycerol to be utilized as a carbon source. Notably, a highly up-regulated gene in *C. albicans* biofilms was *RHR2* encoding the glycerol biosynthetic enzyme glycerol-3-phosphatase. Glycerol is five times more abundant in *C. albicans* biofilm cells (Desai *et al.*, 2013) so it seems possible that *S. gordonii* may respond to glycerol production or secretion by *C. albicans* hypha-forming cells by utilizing this as an alternate carbon and energy source.

CiaR is a response regulator of competence for DNA uptake (Mascher *et al.,* 2003) and biofilm formation (Blanchette-Cain *et al.,* 2013) in *Streptococcus pneumoniae.* We have shown recently that *S. gordonii* competence-development is involved in formation of dual species biofilms with *C. albicans* (Jack *et al*., 2015), and so CiaR may be a factor in this process. *cel* genes annotated as encoding components of cellobiose metabolism were upregulated, perhaps indicating that *S. gordonii* is responding to the presence of *C. albicans* cell wall glucans. Up-regulation of *rplO, rplN, rplB*, and *rpsE*, all involved in translation, may be an artefact of ribosomal depletion. Only *glgP-2* (maltodextran phosphorylase) was significantly down-regulated (Table 5). Regions of the *S. gordonii* genome containing ORFs SGO_1105 to SGO_1108 showed coordinated down-regulation, and are all implicated in pyrimidine biosynthesis. Overall, these results suggest that *S. gordonii* was transcriptionally much less reactive to the presence of *C. albicans* for 1 h in mixed culture, while the effects of CiaR up-regulation in *S. gordonii* are a topic of future investigation.

Summary and conclusions

This work describes the responses of *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* to each other at the transcriptional level. The experiments were undertaken under growth conditions that induce filamentation in *C. albicans.* The results presented suggest that *S. gordonii* has a range of significant effects on the biological processes occurring within *C. albicans* during the early phase of co-culture, with a large number of genes affected in *C. albicans* in comparison to a smaller number in *S. gordonii*. Genes involved in responses to chemical stimuli, regulation, homeostasis, protein modification and cell cycle were up-regulated, while genes involved in

transport and translation were down-regulated. These patterns suggest that *C. albicans* was responding positively to signals produced by *S. gordonii*. Mitochondrial genes were upregulated together with genes encoding cell wall proteins, suggesting triggering of metabolic functions.

On the other hand, down-regulation of triplet codon-amino acid adaptor and transporter activities suggest modulation of the rate of protein synthesis. Oxidoreductase activities were up- and down-regulated, while hydrolase activity genes were up-regulated, suggesting perhaps that new macromolecular substrates e.g. polysaccharide, peptidoglycan etc. were now available for metabolism by *C. albicans*. Overall the data are consistent with *C. albicans* not being growth-inhibited in the presence of *S. gordonii*, unlike the inhibitory effects of some other bacteria (e.g. *P. aeruginosa*) on growth and hyphal development (Hogan & Kolter, 2004; Fox *et al*., 2013). There was some evidence of up-regulation of genes that might be linked with growth-stimulatory effects, supporting previous observations from biofilm experiments (Bamford *et al.*, 2009; Dutton et al., 2014; Xu *et al.*, 2014).

The major changes in expression of morphogenesis-related genes in response to *S. gordonii* were upregulation of *TEC1*, *ALS1*, and *CAT1*. Notably, Tec1 is a hyphal-development activator (Nobile & Mitchell, 2005) that regulates expression of cell wall protein genes, but probably not *ALS1* (Nobile & Mitchell, 2006). *ALS1* also appeared in the up-regulated genes encoding covalently-linked CWPs and GPI-modified proteins. Clearly *TEC1*, *ALS1* and antioxidant genes seem to be major players in the response of *C. albicans* to *S. gordonii*. The Als1 protein is not thought to be a component of the hyphal cell wall, but appears at the initial site of hyphal filament growth from the mother cell (Coleman *et al.*, 2012). *ALS1* has been shown to be one of the genes that is first up-regulated following adhesion to a surface (Garcia-Sanchez *et al.*, 2004) that then leads onto biofilm formation. Further work is required to establish the factors affecting expression of *ALS1* and if it is involved in regulation as well as adhesion. Of the GPI-modified proteins, six genes (including *ALS1*) encoding these were significantly $(P \quad 0.05)$ up-regulated in the presence of *S. gordonii*. The functions of the other five *PGA* (Protein with Glycosylphosphatidylinositol Anchor) genes are unknown. Further studies could help to identify the functions of the proteins encoded by these genes and they may reveal new factors for adhesion, biofilm formation and pathogenesis. In summary, these transcriptional data findings seem to correlate with the biological data indicating that *S. gordonii* promotes hyphal development and grows synergistically with *C. albicans*. They also identify a number of new target genes for further study of their roles in development of interkingdom biofilm communities.

Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

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Fig. 1.

Light micrograph images of *C. albicans* SC5314 cells interacting with *S. gordonii* DL1 cells. *S. gordonii* cells were fluorescently labelled with fluorescein isothiocyanate (FITC) and incubated with filamentation-induced (2 h at 37°C) *C. albicans* for 1 h at 37°C with gentle agitation. Calcofluor white (0.3 μg ml−1) was added to fluorescently label *C. albicans*. Panel A, *C. albicans* alone; Panel B, *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* (green). Scale bar 5 μm.

Fig. 2.

Transmission electron microscope (TEM) images of *C. albicans* SC5314 cells interacting with *S. gordonii* DL1. Filamentation-induced *C. albicans* cells in YPT-Glc were incubated with *S. gordonii* cells for 1 h at 37°C. Cells were fixed, resin embedded and sectioned (see Experimental procedures) for visualization by TEM. Panel A, vertical cross section of a *C. albicans* hyphal filament (a) shows cell wall in close contact (arrowed) with the cell wall of a longitudinally-sectioned hyphal filament (b). Smaller streptococcal cells (c) can clearly be seen nearby expressing surface fibrillar structures. Panel B, shows the cell membrane (cm) and cell wall (cw) of a vertical section of a *C. albicans* hyphal filament (d) with the cell wall physically associated with the outer wall of an *S. gordonii* cell (e). The interaction is occurring at the newly forming septum of the streptococcal cell and the fibrils appear to interdigitate with the material on the *C. albicans* cell surface (yellow arrowed). Scale bars: A, 0.5 μm; B, 200 nm.

Fig. 3.

Scanning Probe Microscope (SPM) images of *C. albicans* SC5314 hypha-forming cells interacting with *S. gordonii* DL1. Filamentation-induced *C. albicans* cells in YPT-Glc medium were incubated with *S. gordonii* cells for 1 h at 37°C. Cells were then deposited onto glass cover slips and imaged in contact mode as described in Experimental procedures. Panel A, undried specimen showing hyphal filament (a) with smaller streptococcal cells attached along its length. A budding pseudohypha (b) appears also to have streptococci attached. Panel B, dried specimen showing numerous streptococcal cells in close physical

contact with a *C. albicans* hyphal filament. At the point of contact there is an annular modification visible on the *C. albicans* cell surface (arrowed), implying a hyphal cell surface structural response. Note that quite often the streptococcal cell septum region was involved in binding hyphae (see also Fig. 2B). Scale bar 0.5 μm.

А

B

Fig. 4.

Distribution of differentially regulated genes of *C. albicans* and *S. gordonii* following coincubation for 1 h at 37°C. RNA was extracted and gene transcriptional levels were determined following Ilumina HISeq2500 sequencing. The transcriptional profiles were constructed and analyzed using the statistical software DESeq. Volcano plots of *P*-value vs. mean fold change in gene expression were constructed for *C. albicans* genes when incubated with *S. gordonii* (A) and *S. gordonii* genes when incubated with *C. albicans* (B). Green horizontal lines represent $P = 0.05$.

Fig. 5.

Distribution of significantly up- and down-regulated *C. albicans* genes in the Gene Ontology (GO) category Biological Process following *C. albicans* co-incubation with *S. gordonii.* Transcriptional profiles were analyzed with DESEQ. There were 75 significantly upregulated genes, and 36 significantly down-regulated genes, which were assigned as a percentage to 41 identified level-2 GO-categories associated with the GO namespace Biological Process. *Denotes significance (*P* 0.05) based on hypergeometric distribution test. Red, up-regulated; blue, down-regulated.

Fig. 6.

Distribution of significantly up- and down-regulated *C. albicans* genes in the Gene Ontology (GO) category Cellular Component following *C. albicans* co-incubation with *S. gordonii.* Transcriptional profiles were analyzed with DESeq. There were 75 significantly upregulated, and 36 significantly down-regulated genes, which were assigned as a percentage to 27 level-2 GO-categories associated with the GO namespace Cellular Component. *Denotes significance (*P* ≤0.05) based on hypergeometric distribution test.

Fig. 7.

Distribution of significantly up- or down-regulated *C. albicans* genes in the Gene Ontology (GO) category Molecular Function following *C. albicans* co-incubation with *S. gordonii*. Transcriptional profiles were analyzed by the statistical software DESeq. There were 75 significantly up-regulated genes and 36 significantly down-regulated genes which were assigned as a percentage to 26 identified level-2 GO-categories associated with the GO namespace Molecular Function. *Denotes significance (*P* 0.05) based on hypergeometric distribution test.

Table 1

Composition of microbial cultures utilized to determine transcriptional changes in *C. albicans* or *S. gordonii* genes following co-incubation.

1 included to account for effects of adding fresh growth medium in (2)

2 included to account for effects of *C. albicans* spent medium on *S. gordonii*

3 used to correct for effects of nutritional shift-down in (2)

Table 2

List of 111 Candida albicans genes significantly (P 0.05) differentially expressed following co-incubation of C. albicans filamentation-induced cells *P* 0.05) differentially expressed following co-incubation of *C. albicans* filamentation-induced cells with S. gordonii for 1 h at 37°C in YPT-Glc medium. with *S. gordonii* for 1 h at 37°C in YPT-Glc medium. List of 111 *Candida albicans* genes significantly (

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4

P-values were calculated from DESeq and adjusted

P-values 0.050 were considered to be significant

*3*Abundance reads represent the fractional expression of all targets in the genome

 $^3\!$ Abundance reads represent the fractional expression of all targets in the genome

Table 3

Mean fold changes in transcription levels of genes associated with *C. albicans* filamentous growth and pathogenesis following co-incubation with *S. gordonii*.

*1*Positive values, up-regulated; negative values, down-regulated (log₂ ≥ 1.0 equivalent to twofold linear change)

2 Information from CGD [\(www.candidagenome.org](http://www.candidagenome.org))

3 Abundance reads represent the fractional expression of all targets in the genome. The most highly-expressed genes on this Table are therefore (in order): *ALS1*, *TSA1*, *CUP9* and *CHT2*

4
 P-values were calculated from DESeq and adjusted *P*-values ∪0.05 were considered to be significant

^{*}Bold type significant change *P* 0.05

Table 4

Mean fold changes in expression of *C. albicans* genes associated with adherence, or encoding covalentlylinked cell wall proteins or GPI-modified proteins, following co-incubation with *S. gordonii*.

¹ Adh, adhesion; CL, covalently linked; GPI, Glycophosphatidylinositol-modified

² Positive values, up-regulated; negative values, down-regulated (log₂ ≥ 1.0 equivalent to > twofold linear change)

3 Abundance reads represent the fractional expression of all targets in the genome

4
 P-values were calculated from DESeq and adjusted *P*-values ∪0.05 were considered to be significant

^{*} Bold type significant change *P* 0.05

Table 5

Mean fold changes in expression of *S. gordonii* genes following co-incubation with *C. albicans*.

*1*Positive values, up-regulated; negative values, down-regulated (log₂ ≥ 1.0 equivalent to γ twofold linear change)

2 Description details from the *S. gordonii* CH1 annotated genome sequence

3 Abundance reads represent the fractional expression of all targets in the genome

4
 P-values were calculated from DESeq and adjusted *P*-values ∪0.05 were considered to be significant

^{*}Bold type significant change *P* 0.05