# **Structure prediction and protein engineering yield new insights into microcin J25 precursor recognition**

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#### **MATERIALs and METHODs**

#### *Reagents, media, and strains*

All engineered protein variants described herein were derived from pTUC202.[1] The pTUC202 plasmid contains the wild-type (WT) microcin J25 (MccJ25) biosynthetic gene cluster (BGC), which encodes four genes *mcjA*, *mcjB*, *mcjC*, and *mcjD*. DNA primers for cloning and sequencing were purchased from Genomics BioSci & Technology Company (Taiwan) and are listed in Table S1. Reagents and kits for site-directed mutagenesis (E0554) and Gibson assembly (E2621) were purchased from New England Biolabs (USA). Other reagents were purchased from BioShop Canada Inc. (Canada). Constructs described herein have all been verified by Sanger sequencing by Genomics BioSci & Technology Company (Taiwan). Cloning was carried out in *Escherichia coli* DH5α grown in Luria-Bertani (LB) medium supplemented with chloramphenicol (25 μg/mL); MccJ25 production was performed in *E. coli* BL21(DE3) grown in M9 medium supplemented with chloramphenicol (25 μg/mL); growth inhibition zone assays were carried out against *E. coli*  MG1655.

#### *MBP-McjC production and analysis*

The *mcjC* gene was cloned into the pET-28a vector and expressed in *E. coli* BL21(DE3) as an N-terminal His-tagged recombinant protein. An overnight starter culture (3 mL) was used to inoculate fresh LB medium (1 L) supplemented with 50  $\mu$ g/mL of kanamycin. When the cell density reached  $OD_{600}$  0.5, McjC expression was induced by adding isopropyl- $\beta$ -D-1thiogalactopyranoside to a final concentration of 1 mM. Cells were grown at 16  $\degree$ C for 16 h after induction and harvested by centrifugation at 6,300  $\times$  g at 4 °C for 30 min. The cell pellet was resuspended in lysis buffer (500 mM NaCl and 20 mM Tris, pH 8.0), disrupted by sonication, and then centrifugated again at 16,700  $\times$  g at 4 °C for 30 min to spin down the cell debris. The McjC recombinant protein was purified using Ni-NTA affinity chromatography [HisTrap FF (Cytiva, USA)] and size-exclusion chromatography [HiLoad Superdex 16/600 200 pg (Cytiva, USA)] on a NGC Chromatography Systems (Bio-Rad, USA).

Molecular weight (MW) of the His<sub>6</sub>-McjC aggregate was estimated by size-exclusion chromatography [Superdex 200 10/300 GL (Cytiva, USA)]. Pure His<sub>6</sub>-McjC was dissolved in 0.5 mL of loading buffer (100 mM NaCl and 20 mM Tris, pH 8.0) and injected. The flow rate was fixed at 0.45 mL/min and the result was compared to a set of commercially available Gel Filtration

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Standards (Bio-Rad, USA). The estimated molecular weight of the  $His<sub>6</sub>$ -McjC oligomer is 803.6  $kDa$  (monomer = 58.7 kDa).

#### *AlphaFold2 structure prediction*

We used the default settings on Google Colaboratory (ColabFold v1.5.5) for AlphaFold2 (AF2) protein structure prediction.[2] The predicted protein structures were presented after rending by using the PyMOL Molecular Graphics System, v.2.0 (Schrödinger LLC, USA). The structures of McjA, McjB, and McjC were first predicted individually. Then, by submitting two protein sequences at the same time separated by a colon (:), the predicted structures all pairwise combinations of these proteins (McjA/McjB, McjB/McjC, and McjA/McjC) were obtained. Ten hydrogen bonds were identified at the McjB/McjC interaction interface (Figure S2),<sup>[3]</sup> and the side-chain carboxylate of Glu8 in McjA was predicted to be positioned next to the ATP binding site in McjC (Figure S3). Finally, three proteins were submitted together. The predicted structure of the McjA/McjB/McjC ternary complex was consistent with those obtained individually or as pairwise combinations.

#### *MccJ25 Production*

Procedure for MccJ25 production is based on a previous publication<sup>[4]</sup> and slightly modified as follows. A single *E. coli* BL21(DE3) colony carrying pTUC202 was inoculated into LB medium (3 mL) supplemented with chloramphenicol (25  $\mu$ g/mL) and grown at 37 °C overnight. This starter culture was diluted to  $OD_{600}$  0.1 in M9 medium (100 mL) supplemented with chloramphenicol (25 μg/mL) and grown at 37 °C for 4 days. Cells were removed by centrifugation on the 5th day, and the supernatant was extracted with 1-butanol (200 mL). The organic layer was collected and dried under reduced pressure. The crude extract was either lyophilized for long-term storage (-20  $^{\circ}$ C) or redissolved in  $H<sub>2</sub>O$  (12 mL) for quality check by HPLC and mass spectrometry (MS) analysis (Figure S4). MccJ25 productions by *E. coli* carrying the WT or the engineered plasmid (containing variants of McjA, McjB, or McjC) were carried out in the exact same way.

#### *HPLC Analysis (quality check)*

HPLC analysis was performed on a Waters Instrument (996 UV detector, 600 pump and controller) equipped with an analytical SHARPSIL-U C18 column (250  $\times$  4.6 mm ID, 100 Å, 5  $\mu$ m) using a two-solvent system. Water and acetonitrile supplemented with 0.1% (v/v) formic acid were used as the mobile phase, designated as solvent A and B, respectively. The following program was used:  $0 - 5$  min (10%B, isocratic),  $5 - 25$  min (10 to 50%B, linear gradient),  $25 - 26$  min (50

to 90%B, linear gradient), 26 – 30 min (90%B, isocratic). The flow rate was fixed at 1 mL/min and the absorbance at 210 nm was recorded. MccJ25 typically eluted at  $t_R = 26.3 \pm 0.5$  min; confirmation by MALDI-TOF MS (micrOTOF-QII, Bruker) was performed for every HPLC run. The sodium and potassium adduct [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> and [M+K]<sup>+</sup> were usually observed in MS (calculated m/z  $= 2129.55$  and 2145.40, respectively).

#### *Growth Inhibition Zone Assay*

We used the size of growth inhibition zone as a semi-quantitative assessment of the level of MccJ25 production. LB medium was inoculated by a single colony of *E. coli* MG1655, grown overnight at 37 °C, and diluted 100-fold into 10 mL of molten LB agar. The bacteria / molten agar mixture was then poured into a petri dish  $(d = 10 \text{ cm})$ , and left to solidify as it cools down in a sterile biosafety hood. Crude extracts obtained from 100 mL of MccJ25 production culture were resuspended in 1 mL of aqueous dimethyl sulfoxide (10%, v/v), which was used as the stock solution to generate a 2-fold dilution series in LB medium. MccJ25 at each dilution was spotted (5 µL) onto the LB agar embedded with *E. coli* MG1655 and incubated at 37 °C for 16 h. The most diluted extract to generate a growth inhibition zone with a diameter of 1 cm was recorded. All variants were compared to the WT, which was assigned an arbitrary score of 1,024.

#### *HPLC analysis (quantification)*

The instrument and solvent system are the same as described above (see *HPLC analysis, quality check*). A slightly different program was used: 0 – 5 min (1%B, isocratic), 5 – 30 min (1 to 50%B, linear gradient), 30 – 35 min (50 to 90%B, linear gradient), 35 – 39 min (90%B, isocratic). The flow rate was fixed at 1 mL/min and the absorbance at 273 nm was recorded; MccJ25 typically eluted at 32.5  $\pm$  0.3 min. Caffeine was premixed with the crude extract (100  $\mu q/mL$ , final concentration) and co-injected as a quantitation standard.

#### *B enzymes with inverse domain arrangement*

Two out of three circular permutation variants we constructed showed robust MccJ25 production, and one of them  $(Mc|B_{CP80/81})$  can even generate milligrams of material per liter of culture extract. In light of these results, it is logical to ask whether natural lasso peptide biosynthetic B enzymes may present such an "inverse" domain arrangement, *i.e.*, having an Nterminal protease domain (B2) and a C-terminal RRE (B1). Mitchell and co-workers compiled a database of 5,193 lasso peptide BGCs, the largest lasso peptide BGC to date, wherein 1,619 of them encode a fused B enzyme.<sup>[5]</sup> Ten pairs of discrete B1/B2 proteins of diverse phylogenetic origin were chosen as the reference sequences<sup>[6]</sup> and aligned to each of the 1,619 fused B enzymes. The vast majority of them (1,615) showed the typical B1-B2 arrangement, whereas four candidate B enzymes (Table S4), all associated with Actinomycete species, appeared to have an inverse domain arrangement. The N- and C-terminal sequences of these four candidate B enzymes aligned to the reference sequences for B2 and B1, respectively (Figure S5).

Next, we used AF2 to predict the structures of these candidate B enzymes, which turned out to corroborate the sequence alignment results (Figure S6). Their N-terminal domains all have a Cys-His-Asp catalytic triad typical of cysteine proteases and C-terminal domains all show the winged helix-turn-helix (wHTH) fold typical of RREs. RREs whose structures have been determined, TbiB1<sup>[7]</sup> and TfuB1 (FusB1),<sup>[8]</sup> are highly similar to and can be superimposed with the C-terminal domains of these four candidate B enzymes. These results strongly support the notion that we have identified four lasso peptide B enzymes that are opposite in domain arrangement to the vast majority proteins in this family.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY FIGUREs**

**Figure S1** | MBP-McjC forms high MW aggregates.

a) SDS-PAGE of pure His<sub>6</sub>-McjC. Lane 1 and 2 are the marker and purified McjC, respectively. The molecular weight of the His<sub>6</sub>-McjC monomer calculated based on its sequence is 58.7 kDa and is consistent with the mobility observed on a denaturing gel. **b)** The MW calibration curve was obtained by injecting the Gel Filtration Standards purchased from Bio-Rad (USA) (black datapoints). The apparent MW of the His $_6$ -McjC aggregate (red datapoint) is estimated to be 803.6 kDa, corresponding to an aggregate of 10+ monomers (*n* = 13.7).



## **Figure S2** | Hydrogen bonds at the McjB/McjC interaction interface

Ten hydrogen bonds were identified at the McjB/McjC interface based on the AF2 predicted structure<sup>[2]</sup> and algorithm developed by Krissinel and Henrick.<sup>[3]</sup> Four residues (T65, S66, F67, and R71) within the unstructured linker region (Mcj $B_{61-80}$ ) that connects the B1 and B2 domains are involved in hydrogen bonding.



## **Figure S3** | ATP binding site in McjC

The AF2 predicted McjA/McjB/McjC ternary structure shows that Glu8, whose side-chain carboxylate will be adenylated to form an active ester, is located next to the ATP binding site in McjC; McjB is omitted for clarity. The overall structure (**a**) and close-up view (**b**) of the McjA/McjC complex are shown. The ATP binding site in McjC (residues 199-204, SGGLDS) is shown in sticks (blue), and Glu8 in McjA is shown in spheres.



#### **Figure S4** I The workflow for MccJ25 production, QC, and MS confirmation

A typical workflow includes extraction (not shown), inhibition zone assay, HPLC analysis (QC), and confirmation by MS. The results of culturing *E. coli* BL21(DE3) carrying the pTUC202 plasmid (WT) is displayed below to illustrate this process. **a)** The most diluted sample in a two-fold dilution series of the extract to generate a growth inhibition zone with a diameter of 1.0 cm was recorded. **b)** The crude extract was analyzed by HPLC, wherein MccJ25 typically eluted at  $t_R = 26.3 \pm 0.5$ min based on our run program. **c)** The peak presumed to be MccJ25 was collected and confirmed by MALDI-TOF MS.



## **Figure S5** | McjB<sub>F67</sub> plays an important role in McjB/McjC interaction

The McjBF67 residue is involved in at least two types of interactions at the McjB/McjC interface. **a)** Refer to Figure S2 for the hydrogen bond network; shown herein is its cation- $\pi$  interaction with McjC<sub>R438</sub>. **b)** The guanidinium group to the center of the phenyl ring is approximately 3.5 Å. **c)** The McjBF67R variant produces MccJ25 at a much lower yield compared to the WT.



*Figure S6* | B enzymes with inverse domain arrangement (sequence alignment)

Four B enzymes with inverse (B2-B1) domain arrangement were identified (see Materials and Methods for details). They belong to lasso peptide BGCs found in the genomes of *Amycolatopsis sulphurea*, *Amycolatopsis panacis*, *Nocardia panacis*, and *Saccharothrix australiensis* (Table S4). The sequences of these four B enzymes were aligned to 10 representative B1 and B2 protein sequences (Table S3). The results clearly showed that all B2 proteins mapped to the N-termini and all B1 proteins mapped to the C-termini of these inverse B enzymes.



#### *Figure S7* | B enzymes with inverse domain arrangement (AF2 structure predictions)

AF2 predicted structures of candidate inverse B enzymes supported the notion that their domain arrangement is in fact opposite to the vast majority of proteins of this kind. In each predicted structure, The N- and C-termini are shown in gray and black spheres, respectively. TbiB1 (PDB: 5V1V) superposition showed that this archetypical RRE mapped to the C-terminus of these B enzymes.[7] The Cys-His-Glu catalytic triad characteristic of a cysteine protease is shown in sticks and clearly mapped to their N-terminal domains. These B enzymes belong to lasso peptide BGCs found in the genomes of *A. sulphurea* (orange, **a**), *A. panacis* (cyan, **b**), *N. panacis* (pink, **c**), and *S. australiensis* (yellow, **d**) (Table S4).



*Figure S8* | The McjB <sub>S80/81</sub> construct is predicted to form a quaternary complex

McjA, McjB<sub>1-80</sub>, McjB<sub>81-208</sub>, and McjC were submitted as four separate proteins for AF2 structure prediction. The resulting predicted structure is a quaternary complex that is nearly identical to the McjA/McjB/McjC ternary complex. The leader and core segments of McjA are shown in orange and black, respectively; the first 13 residues of the leader peptide are omitted for clarity. McjB<sub>1-80</sub> and McjB<sub>81-208</sub> (numbering based on original McjB sequence), which correspond to the RRE and the protease domains, are shown in blue and cyan, respectively. McjC is shown in light green.



## **SUPPLEMENTARY TABLEs**

**Table S1** | Structurally characterized RiPP biosynthetic "B" enzymes

Note that RiPP biosynthetic enzymes containing the RRE are not always designated "B". Nevertheless, throughout this manuscript, we referred to the protein for leader recognition and cleavage as the "B1" and "B2" proteins, respectively.





## **Table S2** | DNA primers used in this study



## **Table S3** | Representative B proteins for McjB sequence alignment (Figure 4)

Throughout this manuscript, we referred to the protein for leader recognition and cleavage as the B1 and B2 proteins, whereas in some literature they are named the E and B proteins, respectively.







<sup>a</sup> This collection of proteins was reported in the Supporting Information of the publication by Marahiel and co-workers;<sup>[6] b</sup> A number of proteins have been assigned new accession numbers and the originals were given in parentheses.





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