Characterization of TelE, a T7SS LXG effector exhibiting a

conserved C-terminal glycine zipper motif required for toxicity.

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ABSTRACT

Streptococcus gallolyticus subsp. *gallolyticus* (*SGG*) is an opportunistic bacterial pathogen strongly associated with colorectal cancer. Here, through comparative genomics analysis, we demonstrated that the genetic locus encoding the Type VIIb Secretion System (T7SSb) machinery is uniquely present in *SGG* in two different arrangements. *SGG* UCN34 carrying the most prevalent T7SSb genetic arrangement was chosen as the reference strain. To identify the effectors secreted by this secretion system, we inactivated the *essC* gene encoding the motor of this machinery. Comparison of the proteins secreted by UCN34 WT and its isogenic Δ*essC* mutant revealed six T7SSb effector proteins, including the expected WXG effector EsxA and three LXG-containing proteins. In this work, we characterized an LXG-family toxin named herein TelE displaying pore-forming activity. Seven homologs of TelE harboring a conserved glycine zipper motif at the C-terminus were identified in different *SGG* isolates. Scanning mutagenesis of this motif showed that the glycine residue at position 470 was crucial for TelE pore-forming activity. Unlike other pore-forming toxins commonly antagonized by a membrane protein, TelE activity was antagonized by a small protein TipE belonging to the DUF5085 family. Overall, we report herein a unique *SGG* T7SSb effector exhibiting a pore-forming activity against non-immune bacteria.

IMPORTANCE

In this study, 38 clinical isolates of *Streptococcus gallolyticus* subsp*. gallolyticus* (*SGG*) were sequenced and a genetic locus encoding the Type VIIb secretion system (T7SSb) was found conserved and absent from 16 genomes of the closely related *S. gallolyticus* subsp. *pasteurianus (SGP).* The T7SSb is a *bona fide* pathogenicity island. Here,

we report that the model organism *SGG* strain UCN34 secretes six T7SSb effectors. One of the six effectors named TelE displayed a strong toxicity when overexpressed in *Escherichia coli*. Our results indicate that TelE is a pore forming toxin whose activity can be antagonized by a non-canonical immunity protein named TipE. Overall, we report a unique toxin-immunity protein pair and our data expand the range of effectors secreted through T7SSb.

Keywords: *Streptococcus gallolyticus*; Type VIIb secretion system; pore-forming toxin; LXG family toxin; glycine zipper

INTRODUCTION

Streptococcus gallolyticus subsp*. gallolyticus* (*SGG*) is a commensal bacterium in the rumen of herbivores. The first complete genome of strain UCN34 provided clear insights for its adaptation to the rumen (1). *SGG* is also an opportunistic pathogen causing septicemia and endocarditis in the elderly who often have concomitant colon tumours (2-9). *SGG* was formerly known as *S. bovis* biotype I belonging to the large *S. bovis / equinus* complex, which is comprised of several opportunistic pathogens and non-pathogenic bacteria. In this complex, *SGG* is assigned into a clade with two other closely related subspecies named *S. gallolyticus* subsp. *pasteurianus* (referred to hereafter as *SGP*) and *S. gallolyticus* subsp. *macedonicus* (referred to hereafter as *SGM*) (10, 11). In general, *SGP* is considered less pathogenic than *SGG*, mainly causing neonatal meningitis (12, 13), whereas *SGM* is generally recognized as a safe non-pathogenic strain (14, 15).

The Type VIIb Secretion System (T7SSb) is a specialized secretion system exploited by Firmicutes to secrete various substrates or effectors involved in host immune system modulation or bacterial competition (16-20). T7SSb is distantly related to the Type VII secretion system originally discovered in *Mycobacterium tuberculosis.* These two evolutionarily related secretion systems have two components in common; a membrane-bound ATPase (FtsK/SpoEIII, EssC/EccC) constituting the motor of the secretion machinery, and a secreted effector named EsxA/ESAT6 belonging to the WXG100 family (21). In Firmicutes, the T7SSb core machinery is composed of 4 additional proteins namely EssA, EsaA, EsaB and EssB. This specialized secretion system is involved in the secretion of a variety of effectors including (i) WXG100 proteins such as EsxA and EsxB which are short alpha-helical proteins with a

characteristic WXG motif in the middle of the sequence (22); (ii) proteins of approximately 100 amino acids without a WXG motif (named WXG100-like proteins) such as EsxC and EsxD (23, 24); (iii) polymorphic toxins containing a N-terminal LXG domain and a variable C-terminal domain with antibacterial activity such as TelA, TelB, TelC, TelD, TspA and EsxX (18, 25-28). The LXG domain is predicted to adopt an alpha-helical structure that is reminiscent of the WXG100 proteins. Previous studies revealed that these LXG-containing effectors function as a NADase toxin (TelB) (18), a lipid II phosphatase (TelC) (18), nucleases (EsaD, YobL,, YxiD) (16, 27, 29), or a membrane depolarizing toxin (TspA) (25).

Importantly, the T7SSb of *SGG* strain TX20005 was shown to contribute to the development of colon tumors in a murine model (30). Here, using comparative genomics, we identified that the T7SSb locus residing in a 26-kb genomic island is uniquely present in *SGG* but neither in *SGP* nor in *SGM*. Subsequently, we found that six proteins were secreted through the T7SSb machinery of the reference strain UCN34, including the WXG100 effector EsxA, two hypothetical proteins, and three LXG family proteins including two TelC homologs. One of the unknown LXG family protein was characterized herein and named TelE. We show that TelE is a pore-forming protein whose activity is antagonized by a non-canonical immunity protein.

RESULTS

A T7SSb locus specific to *SGG*. To identify the specific pathogenic trait(s) of *SGG*, comparative genomics was performed on newly sequenced 13 *SGP* and 38 *SGG* clinical isolates obtained from the National Reference Center of Streptococci in France. Phylogenetic analysis of these newly sequenced genomes, together with the complete genomes of *SGG* and *SGP* publicly available on NCBI GenBank assigned *SGG* and *SGP* into two distinct clades, confirming their correct classification **(Fig. S1a)**. BLASTn-based comparative genomic analysis of the reference genome UCN34 together with the representative *SGG* and *SGP* genomes uncovered a genomic island unique to *SGG* **(Fig. 1A, Fig. S1b)**. This genomic island contains the six genes (*esxA*, *essA*, *esaB*, *essB*, *essC* and *esaA*) encoding the core components of the Type VIIb Secretion System (T7SSb) machinery **(Fig. 1B, Fig. S1b)**.

An extended protein homology search of each T7SSb core components across all the newly sequenced genomes confirmed the conservation of T7SSb in *SGG* genomes and its absence in the phylogenetically closest relatives *SGP* and *SGM* **(Fig. S1b)**. A closer inspection of the T7SSb genetic locus uncovered two different gene arrangements in the *SGG* isolates sequenced so far. In a vast majority of *SGG* isolates, the T7SSb locus is arranged in the order of *esxA/essA-esaB-essB-essC-esaA*, as in our reference strain UCN34. Notably, *esxA* is transcribed in the opposite direction from the other five genes *essA-esaB-essB-essC-esaA,* a unique feature distinct from other Firmicutes. In contrast, in a small minority of *SGG* isolates including the US isolate TX20005, the T7SSb genes are arranged in a different order of *esxA-esaA-essA-esaB-essB-essC* with an evident shuffling of *esaA*, and the six

genes transcribed in the same direction **(Fig. 1B, Fig. S1b)**. A detailed comparison

of the genetic organization of the entire T7SSb locus in the representative *SGG*

strains UCN34 and TX20005 is shown in **Fig. S2**. In addition to a different gene

organization of the core machinery, the set of putative T7SSb effectors is different

and appears to be strain specific.

SGG **UCN34 secretes 6 T7SSb effectors.** In order to identify the T7SSb effectors,

we inactivated the T7SSb machinery, through in-frame deletion of *essC* gene

encoding the main ATPase, in the strain UCN34. We next compared the secretome

of the UCN34 WT strain to that of the Δ*essC* mutant. This approach identified 6

proteins that were differentially expressed **(Fig. 2A, Table S2)** including the

ubiquitous WXG100 effector (EsxA/Gallo_0553) whose level was about 38-fold less

abundant in the Δ*essC* mutant, confirming that the Δ*essC* mutant is a *bona fide*

T7SSb-deficient strain. In addition, five proteins namely Gallo_0559, Gallo_0560,

Gallo_0562, Gallo_1068 and Gallo_1574 were detected only in the secretome of the

UCN34 WT but not in the Δ*essC* mutant.

Prediction of the putative function of these effectors by *in silico* SMART analysis

revealed that Gallo_0559 contains a domain of unknown function DUF5082,

Gallo_0560 as a TIGR04197 family protein, whereas Gallo_0562, Gallo_1068 and

Gallo_1574 contain the prototypical N-terminal LXG domain (pfam04740) found in

other T7SSb effectors **(Fig. 2B)**. Protein homology search indicated that Gallo_1068

and Gallo_1574 are homologous (>98% coverage, >40% similarity) to the

Streptococcus intermedius TelC effector that functions as a lipid II phosphatase (18).

Similar to TelC, both Gallo_1068 and Gallo_1574 contain an intact C-terminal

aspartate-rich motif critical for TelC enzymatic activity. We thus propose to rename

Gallo_1068 and Gallo_1574 as TelC1 and TelC2, respectively **(Fig. 2B)**. The third

LXG-containing effector (Gallo_0562) is a protein of 514 amino acids that we

propose to rename TelE in accordance with the gene nomenclature (Toxin exported

by Esx with LXG domain) proposed for *S. intermedius* (18). Of note, 4 out of 6

proteins identified in the secretome of UCN34 WT are encoded in the T7SSb locus

and three are encoded by genes likely transcribed as an operon, namely *gallo_0559*,

gallo_0560 and *telE (gallo_0562).*

TelE is toxic when overexpressed in *Escherichia coli.* LXG family proteins are

polymorphic toxins implicated in interbacterial competition (18). However, we failed

to observe any role of *SGG* T7SSb in interbacterial competition under standard

laboratory conditions. We reasoned that this could be due to the low expression of

T7SSb effectors as reflected by the low total peptide counts in the proteomics data

(Fig. 2A) and decided to test their potential antibacterial activity through

heterologous and inducible expression in *Escherichia coli* DH5α, as reported for

other T7SSb effectors such as TspA and TelD (25, 28). As shown in **Fig. 2C**,

overexpression of *telE*, but none of the other T7SSb effectors, exhibited antibacterial

activity in *E. coli* **(Fig. 2C)**.

TelE is encoded in the vicinity of the T7SSb core machinery locus (**Fig. 3A**). This

prompted us to examine the prevalence and the conservation of TelE among the

SGG clinical isolates. As shown in **Fig. S3,** TelE homologs were found in over 90%

of *SGG* isolates. Based on their primary amino acid sequences, TelE homologs can

be categorized into 7 variants named TelE1 (initial TelE found in UCN34) through

TelE7. Notably, multiple copies of TelE homologs can be found in a few *SGG*

genomes. Some of these TelE homologs are N-terminally truncated, resembling the

orphan modules commonly seen in polymorphic toxins (31) **(Fig. S3).** To assess the

antimicrobial activity of these TelE homologs, each TelE variant was expressed in *E.*

coli. As shown in **Fig. 3B,** all the TelE variants exhibited a strong toxicity upon

induction in *E. coli.* Interestingly, a multiple sequence alignment of these seven TelE

variants uncovered a highly conserved sequence motif at the C-terminus (**Fig. S4**).

This motif, rich in small hydrophobic amino acids alternating with conserved glycine

residues, is similar to the glycine zipper motif (GxxxGxxxG) found in many

membrane proteins (32) **(Fig. 3C)**. Three highly conserved glycine residue were

identified at positions 458, 470 and 474, and three less-conserved glycine residues

were found at positions 466, 478 and 480 **(Fig. 3C and 3D)**. Single replacement of

each glycine residue to a slightly bulkier valine residue demonstrated that those at

positions 466, 470 and 474 were key for TelE activity in *E. coli* **(Fig. 3E)**, with the

replacement of the glycine residue at position 470 showing the strongest impact on

TelE activity (**Fig. 3E**). Together, these data showed that nearly all the *SGG* isolates

sequenced as to date encode a functional TelE homolog whose primary sequence

varies from one isolate to another, but all 7 TelE variants contain a conserved

glycine zipper motif at the C-terminus essential for TelE antimicrobial activity.

TelE is a pore-forming toxin. Structural modelling of TelE indicates a high number

of alpha helices and the C-terminal domain of TelE exhibit a small stretch of amino

acids weakly homologous to bacteriocin IIc and glycine zipper motif **(Fig. 4A).** Alpha-

helical structures with glycine zipper motifs are the two main characteristics of

membrane proteins with a high propensity to form homo-oligomeric ion channels (32),

suggesting that TelE might have a pore-forming activity. To investigate this

possibility, we used propidium iodide, a large molecule (668 Da) that is

conventionally used to assess the presence of membrane pores or membrane

disruption in bacterial cells (33, 34). Propidium iodide can only enter the cellular

cytoplasmic space through membrane lesions or large membrane pores to

subsequently bind to intracellular DNA and emit a red fluorescence signal. Using

time-lapse fluorescence microscopy, we observed a gradual increase of red

fluorescence signal in *E. coli* cells expressing TelE, but not in *E. coli* cells carrying

the empty vector **(Fig. 4B)**, indicating that TelE expression resulted in an influx of

propidium iodide into the cells. Intriguingly, this influx was preceded immediately by

shrinkage of the bacterial cell visible by phase contrast microscopy **(Fig. 4C)**. Similar

morphological changes have been observed on cells experiencing water loss or

cytoplasmic content leakage (35, 36), which can be due to the excessive presence of

membrane pores. Our microscopy observations thus indicate that TelE can form

membrane pores in *E. coli* cells. To monitor TelE expression, a chimeric TelE variant

C-terminally fused with superfolder green fluorescent protein (TelE-sfGFP) was

constructed and GFP fluorescence signals were measured to quantify TelE

expression (**Fig. 4D**). Of note, TelE-sfGFP retains TelE toxicity in *E. coli* cells (**Fig.**

S5A). The non-toxic version of TelE (TelE$_{G470V}$-sfGFP) was constructed in parallel.

As shown in **Fig. 4D**, an increase of GFP fluorescence was seen upon induction of

TelE expression over time from 10 to 60 min. TelE$_{G470V}$-sfGFP fluorescence level

was always higher compared to TelE-sfGFP. Induction of TelE-sfGFP in *E. coli* for

60 min led to a 2-log decrease in C.F.U counts as compared to the non-induced

strain or the strain expressing the mutant version of *telE,* namely TelEG470V-gfp

(**Fig. 4D**). This result demonstrates that TelEG470V punctual mutant is produced as

well as TelE and that its non-toxicity is not due to protein degradation.

The cognate immunity protein TipE antagonizes TelE toxicity. The activity of

LXG family toxins such as TelA, TelB and TelC can be antagonized by cognate

immunity proteins located downstream of LXG-encoding gene (18). To identify the

immunity protein able to counteract TelE toxicity in *E. coli*, each gene located

downstream from *telE* was cloned into a second compatible plasmid (pJN105) in

which gene expression was induced by arabinose. We found that only the co-

expression of the third gene downstream from *telE* (*gallo_0565*) rescued *E. coli* from

TelE intoxication **(Fig. 5A, Fig. S5A)**. This gene encodes a 151 amino acids-long

protein renamed herein as TipE (Tel immunity protein), which harbor a domain of

unknown function DUF5085. An additional DUF5085 domain-containing protein

(Gallo_0570), sharing ~30% protein sequence similarity with TipE, was found five

genes downstream of TipE **(Fig 3A)**. However, co-expression of this protein did not

protect *E. coli* from TelE intoxication, suggesting a specific interaction between TipE

and TelE. An AlphaFold prediction model of the TelE-TipE complex is shown in **Fig.**

5B (TelE in green and TipE in orange). The same model colored with the confidence

value is shown in **Fig. S6**. The predicted interaction of TipE with the region including

the Glycine-zipper motif of TelE (in yellow) fits well with the inhibitory effect of TipE

on TelE.

To demonstrate that TipE interacts with TelE, we constructed a functional,

recombinant TelE tagged with a hexahistidyl tagged at the C-terminus (TelE-His) and

a recombinant TipE tagged with the hemagglutinin tag (HA-TipE) at the N-terminus

to facilitate the detection of these proteins using an anti-His and anti-HA monoclonal

antibody, respectively. Of note, addition of a hexahistidyl tagged at the C-terminus of

TelE reduces its toxicity towards *E. coli* as compared to the same tag added at the

N-terminus (**Fig. S5C**). Co-expression of HA-TipE clearly increased TelE-His level as

shown in **Fig. S5B**. Next, a protein pulldown experiment was carried out using

nickel-immobilized resin that is able to retain TelE-His. Incubation of TelE-bound

resin with cellular lysate containing HA-TipE captured a significant amount of TipE,

which was detected through immunoblot using anti-HA specific antibodies following

TelE elution (**Fig. 5C**). Importantly, when using non-tagged TelE as control, HA-TipE

was not retained on the free nickel affinity column (**Fig. 5C**), indicating that TipE

indeed interacts with TelE.

Subsequently, we monitored TelE expression in living cells by observing the *E. coli*

cells expressing TelE-sfGFP under a fluorescence microscopy. Expectedly, TelE

expression in *E. coli* cells resulted in cellular influx of propidium iodide **(Fig. 5D)**.

However, instead of uniformly distributed throughout the cells as the native sfGFP

(Fig. 5D), TelE-sfGFP was found in small foci distributed around the cell body **(Fig.**

5D). In contrast, in *E. coli* cells co-expressing TelE-sfGFP and TipE, TelE lost its

distribution as foci in a majority of cells (**Fig. 5D**). Notably, a small cell population co-

expressing TelE-sfGFP and TipE remained stained red by propidium iodide,

consistent with our earlier observation that TipE only partially rescued cells from

TelE intoxication (**Fig. 5B**). Taken together, these data showed that TipE is a *bona*

fide immunity protein to TelE, counteracting TelE activity through protein-protein

interaction.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we show that a T7SSb cluster is a putative pathogenicity island conserved in all the clinical isolates of *Streptococcus gallolyticus subsp. gallolyticus* (*SGG*). Interestingly, two different T7SSb genetic arrangements can be found in *SGG* clinical isolates and a very different set of putative effectors as shown by comparing closely UCN34 and TX20005 (**Fig. S2**). The most prevalent T7SS machinery arrangement found in UCN34 resembles those found in *Streptococcus intermedius*, whereas the T7SS of a small minority of *SGG* isolates like TX20005 is identical to those of *Staphylococcus aureus* (16, 18) **(Fig. S1b)**. Of note, a second copy of the gene *essC* encoding the motor ATPase is present in TX20005 (**Fig. S2**). Six T7SSb effectors were identified experimentally in strain UCN34, including the prototypical EsxA/ESAT-6, and three LXG-containing proteins. Amongst the three LXG effectors, two encoded outside of the T7SSb locus are homologs of TelC, a lipid II phosphatase shown to inhibit peptidoglycan biosynthesis in Gram-positive bacteria (18, 37). The third LXG effector of unknown function is unique to *SGG* and is encoded in vicinity of the locus encoding T7SSb machinery. Here, we showed that this LXG-effector named TelE is toxic when overexpressed in *E. coli*. Similar to other LXG effectors, TelE toxicity in *E. coli* can be neutralized by a cognate immunity protein named TipE.

TipE is an atypical immunity protein. In other pore-forming toxins similarly containing glycine zipper motifs such as CdzC/D from *Caulobacter crescentus* and Tse4 from *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, the cognate immunity proteins are multi-pass transmembrane proteins residing predominantly in the inner membrane (33, 38).

Similarly, an inner membrane protein protects the *E. coli* cells expressing the *S.*

aureus membrane depolarizing T7SSb toxin TspA (25). Remarkably, the six-pass

transmembrane protein Gallo_0563 encoded by the gene located immediately

downstream of *telE* did not protect *E. coli* from TelE intoxication **(Fig. 5A, 5B)**, and

our data showed that only TipE that contains no transmembrane domain is able to

block TelE activity through direct interaction. Notably, TipE is a DUF5085 family

protein predicted related to T7SS in the Pfam database. Based on our data, we

propose herein that DUF5085 family proteins could be a new class of immunity

protein to T7SSb toxins.

Interestingly, a diverse pool of TelE variants (TelE to TelE7) exist in the genomes of

SGG isolates, all harboring the conserved C-terminal glycine zipper motif essential

for TelE activity. Glycine zipper motif is a common feature in membrane proteins

displaying pore-forming activity. In addition to the aforementioned CdzC/D and Tse4,

glycine zipper motif is also found in the vacuolating toxin VacA from *Helicobacter*

pylori, the prion protein (PrP) and the amyloid beta peptide (Aβ) (32), many of which

display pathological roles. For instance, VacA is involved in gastric ulceration caused

by *H. pylori*, whereas PrP and Aβ are associated with prion and Alzheimer's disease,

respectively (32). In line with previous observations (32, 33, 39), mutation of the key

glycine residue in this motif abolishes TelE activity. Since the glycine residues of the

motif are usually positioned in the inner part of membrane pores, we speculate that

change of the small glycine to a bulkier valine residue may affect the oligomerization

and/or pore opening of TelE, as demonstrated for other glycine zipper toxins (32).

In addition to TelE, we discovered two additional yet to be characterized T7SSb

effectors namely Gallo_0559 and Gallo_0560 located immediately upstream of TelE

and probably encoded in the same operon. Bioinformatic analysis showed that

Gallo_0559 is a DUF5082 family protein whereas Gallo_0560 is a TIGR01497 family

protein. Proteins belonging to these two families were previously identified in *S.*

intermedius as WxgA and WxgC, respectively (18). WxgA and WxgC are chaperone

proteins essential for the secretion of LXG family proteins (Tel) in *S. intermedius* (18).

These proteins were suggested as WXG100-like proteins (18), but WxgA and

another chaperone protein WxgB are 40% longer than the canonical WXG100

proteins. These chaperones have not been detected in the *S. intermedius* bacterial

supernatant and were henceforth hypothesized to disassociate from Tel proteins

prior to or during secretion (18). Here we found that these probable Wxg-like

chaperones were detected in the supernatant of *SGG* UCN34 WT but not in the

Δ*essC* mutant, indicating that the secretion of these proteins is T7SSb-dependent,

and that they may remain associated with LXG toxins post secretion. Further

investigation on the potential interaction of these two proteins with TelE may provide

insight into T7SSb effectors secretion and delivery. Klein et al. showed that one or

two LXG-associated proteins located upstream of LXG-effector are involved in the

correct targeting of the LXG effector to the Type VII secretion machinery.

The three LXG family toxins identified in this study expands our knowledge on the

antibacterial arsenal possessed by *SGG*. It is noteworthy that *SGG* also produces

bacteriocins such as gallocin A exhibiting antimicrobial activity against gut

commensals such as *E. faecalis* (40), which together with the newly identified Tel

toxins, are likely the arsenal essential for *SGG* survival in the highly dynamic and

populated human gut environment.

Finally, our findings may have further implications in understanding the pathogenicity

of *SGG*. Indeed, it was shown in *SGG* strain TX20005 that T7SSb is a key

component contributing to *SGG* gastrointestinal tract colonization and cancer-

promoting capability (30). Of note, TX20005 belongs to the small minority of *SGG*

isolates displaying a different T7SSb gene locus arrangement together with a

different repertoire of effectors as compared to UCN34, and the impact of these

differences on the pathogenic outcome is currently unclear. The contribution of

pathogenicity associated islands in bacterial virulence is well established. For

instance, the CagA toxin, VacA toxin and Type IV secretion system encoded in the

Helicobacter pylori pathogenicity island (41, 42), or the colibactin synthase genes

encoded in the *E. coli* polyketide synthase (*pks*) genotoxic island (43-45) are key to

the progression of gastric cancer and colorectal cancer, respectively. Of particular

interest is VacA that also contains a glycine zipper motif essential for its function

causing ulceration and gastric lesions in murine model (46). Whether TelE could also

alter host cells is a perspective for future studies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bacterial culture conditions

All bacterial strains and plasmids used in this study are listed in **Table S1**. Cultures of *E. coli* strains were prepared from single colonies in lysogeny broth (LB) (BD) and incubated overnight at 37°C, 200 rpm, whereas cultures of *Streptococcus agalactiae* and *Streptococcus gallolyticus* strains were prepared from single colonies in brain heart infusion broth (BHI) (Acumedia) and incubated statically overnight at 37°C. When the use of growth medium with minimal amount of peptides were necessary, overnight culture of *SGG* were prepared from single colonies in M9YEG broth (1X M9 minimal salts supplemented with 0.5% yeast extract and 1.0% of glucose) (47) and incubated statically at 37°C. When appropriate, antibiotics were supplemented at the following concentrations: kanamycin, 50 µg/mL for Gram-negative bacteria and 500 µg/mL for Gram-positive bacteria; gentamicin, 20 µg/mL for *E. coli*; erythromycin, 2 µg/mL for Gram-positive bacteria.

Genetic techniques

Standard molecular cloning procedures as previously described (48) were followed to construct plasmids for gene deletion and gene expression. All primers used in this study were synthesized by Integrated DNA Technology and listed in **Table S1**. The enzymes Q5 DNA polymerase and restriction enzymes were obtained from New England Biolabs, whereas T4 ligase was obtained from Thermo Fisher Scientific. All genetic constructs were delivered into chemically transformed *E. coli* DH5 prepared as described (49) and verified by Sanger sequencing performed at 1st BASE. For gene expression plasmids construction, the corresponding open reading frames with

the native ribosomal binding sites were cloned downstream of inducible promoters

such as P_{tetO} (anhydrotetracycline-inducible) and P_{BAD} (arabinose-inducible).

To construct plasmids for gene deletion, two ~500bp DNA fragments corresponding

to the upstream and downstream region of the gene of interest were first PCR

amplified. The resulting two DNA fragments were subsequently spliced by overlap

extension PCR and ligated into pG1 plasmid at *Sma*I restriction site. The constructed

plasmids were transformed into *E. coli* and later transformed into *S. gallolyticus* as

described in the transformation section below. Subsequently, *SGG* in-frame

chromosomal deletion mutants were generated by allelic exchange as previously

described (50).

To generate plasmids encoding TelE with a specific residue substitution, *telE* was

PCR-amplified into two fragments corresponding to the 5' and 3' regions by using

primers with the desired mutation incorporated. These two fragments were spliced

into a full-length *telE* open reading frame by overlap extension PCR and ligated into

pTCV*erm*- P_{tetO} at the *Bam*HI*/Sph*I restriction site.

Plasmid encoding TelE with the C-terminus fused with superfolder GFP was

constructed by splicing the PCR amplicons corresponding to the *telE* open reading

frame without a stop codon and the superfolder GFP open reading frame that has

been codon-optimized for *SGG* (gene synthesized at GenScript).

Transformation

E. coli DH5α was chemically transformed as described in (49). *E. faecalis* and *S.*

agalactiae were transformed by electroporation as previously described (51-53). *S.*

agalactiae carrying the respective plasmids were used for conjugal transfer into *SGG*

as described previously (50). *SGG* was also naturally transformed using a newly

established method, by supplementing the log-phase culture grown in M9YEG with

10 µM of the competence inducing peptide (ITGWWGL) outlined in the previous

study (54), at least 5 µg of plasmid DNA, 10 µM of magnesium chloride, 10 µM of

magnesium sulfate and 1 µM of ferrous (II) chloride. The mixture was incubated for

an hour at 37°C, followed by three hours at 30°C, before being plated onto BHI agar

supplemented with erythromycin.

Genomic DNA isolation

S. gallolyticus genomic DNA was extracted using either Wizard Genomic DNA

Purification Kit or Wizard SV Genomic DNA Purification Kit (Promega). The

extraction was performed according to the manufacturer's instructions, except that

20U to 50U of mutanolysin (Sigma-aldrich) was added at the lysozyme treatment

step. When necessary, an additional phenol:chloroform clean up step was performed

to remove the excessive impurities in the samples.

Genomic DNA sequencing and assembly

High integrity DNA were sequenced to at least a coverage of 100X on the Illumina

Miseq platform (reagent kit v3, 2 x 300bp) at the in-house next-generation

sequencing facility in the Singapore Centre for Environmental Life Sciences

Engineering. The paired-end sequencing reads were trimmed and assembled *de*

novo into contigs on the CLC Genomics Workbench 10.0 (Qiagen). These

assembled contigs were subsequently uploaded to the RAST server (55-57) for open

reading frame prediction and gene annotation.

Phylogenetic analysis

A core genome-based alignment was performed on Parsnp version 1.2 integrated in

the Harvest suite (58), with *SGG* UCN34 (GenBank accession no. FN597254)

served as the reference genome. The other *S. gallolyticus* complete closed genomes

available on NCBI, *i.e. SGG* ATCC43143 (GenBank accession no. NC_017576),

ATCC BAA_2069 (GenBank accession no. NC_015215) and DSM 16831 (GenBank

accession no. NZ_CP018822); *SGP* ATCC43144 (GenBank accession no.

NC_015600), NCTC13784 (GenBank accession no. NZ_LS483462) and WUSP067

(GenBank accession no. NZ_CP039457); and two additional draft genomes – *SGM*

ACA-DC-206 (unpublished genome) and the *SGG* TX20005 (NCBI Assembly ID

GCA_000146525) - were also included in the analysis for a clear distinction of these

closely related strains. The resulted alignment was subsequently visualized on Gingr

(integrated in the Harvest suite) and used for phylogenetic inference on FigTree2

based on approximate-maximum-likelihood algorithm (59).

Comparative genomics

A genome-wide comparison among *SGG* UCN34, three representative *SGG* clinical

isolates, and three representative *SGP* was performed using BLAST Ring Image

Generator v0.95 based on BLASTn search (60). Genomic islands of the *SGG*

UCN34 were downloaded from IslandViewer 4(61). NCBI tBLASTn program was

used to identify the protein homologs of the T7SS core components across all the

SGG and *SGP* clinical isolates. Easyfig v2.2.2 was used to visualize the region of

interest and to perform pairwise comparisons on the protein sequences using

tBLASTx program (62).

Comparative proteomics on the *SGG* secretomes

Single colonies of *SGG* UCN34 WT and the Δ*essC* mutant were inoculated into 20

mL of M9YEG and grown to OD_{600nm} 3.0 corresponding to the early stationary phase

of growth. The culture supernatant was collected and filtered through 0.22 µm filter

units. 15 mL of the filtered culture supernatant was first concentrated using Amicon

Ultra 15 mL Centrifugal Filters (cut-off 10 kDa, Merck), and the proteins were

precipitated out of the solution using trichloroacetic acid (TCA) as previously

described (63). The samples were further processed and analyzed at the Taplin

Mass Spectrometry Facility. Briefly, precipitated proteins were first treated with

trypsin (Promega) in 50 mM ammonium bicarbonate solution, dried in a speed-vac

and were subsequently reconstituted in HPLC solvent A (2.5% acetonitrile, 0.1%

formic acid). Peptides were loaded using a Famos auto sampler (LC Packings) into a

nano-scale reverse-phase HPLC fused silica capillary column (100 µm inner

diameter x ~30 cm length) packed with 2.6 µm C18 spherical silica beads and eluted

with increasing concentrations of solvent B (97.5% acetonitrile, 0.1% formic acid).

Eluted peptides were subjected to electrospray ionization and entered into an LTQ

Orbitrap Velos Pro ion-trap mass spectrometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific). Peptides

were detected, isolated, and fragmented to produce a tandem mass spectrum of

specific fragment ions for each peptide. Peptide sequences (and hence protein

identity) were determined by comparing the fragmentation pattern acquired by the

software program Sequest (Thermo Fisher Scientific) (64) to the protein sequences

on protein databases. All databases include a reversed version of all the sequences

and the data was filtered to between a one and two percent peptide false discovery

rate.

Downstream data analysis was performed in R studio using the Differential

Enrichment analysis of Proteomics Data 1.10.0 package (65). Proteins that were not

detected across all the three replicates of either the UCN34 WT or the $\Delta essC$ mutant

were excluded from the analysis. Next, the total peptide count of the remaining

proteins (n = 162) was scaled and variance stabilized (66) before the missing values

(*i.e.* peptide count = 0) were imputed with the assumption that the missing values are

missing not at random (MNAR), using the Deterministic Minimum Imputation (MinDet)

strategy (10^{-4} quantile) (67). The MinDet-imputed data were subsequently used for

differential expression analysis, with a cut off of false discovery rate of 5%, and a

$\log_2$ fold change of 1. The derived data set was plotted using the EnhancedVolcano

package (68).

Bacterial toxicity experiments

For an intracellular expression of the *SGG* T7SSb effectors, *E. coli* DH5⬚ or GM48

were transformed with pTCVerm-P$_{tetO}$ plasmid series (see **Table S1** for the plasmids

used in this study). Overnight cultures of these strains were serially diluted in tenfold

increments and 5 μL of each dilution was spotted onto LB agar supplemented with

an appropriate amount of antibiotics and inducer (kanamycin, 50 μg/mL;

anhydrotetracycline, 100 to 500 ng/mL). Agar plates incubated overnight at 37°C

were documented on the Gel Doc XR+ Documentation System (Bio-Rad).

For the identification of the TelE cognate immunity protein, the *E. coli* DH5α carrying

pTCVerm-P$_{tetO}$::TelE was transformed with compatible plasmids of either pJN105

(vector control) or pJN105 containing each individual open reading frames found

downstream of *telE*. The expression of these open reading frames was driven by

arabinose-inducible promoter (P$_{BAD}$). Overnight cultures of these strains were first

50x-diluted into sterile LB broth supplemented with antibiotics and incubated at 37°C

with agitation at 200 rpm for 1.5 hours. These bacterial cultures at the early log-

phase of growth were supplemented with arabinose to a final concentration of 0.5%,

and incubated further for 3 hours, before being subjected to serial dilution and

spotted onto LB agar supplemented with an appropriate amount of antibiotics and

inducer (kanamycin, 50 µg/mL; gentamicin, 20 µg/mL; anhydrotetracycline, 100

ng/mL; arabinose, 0.5%). Agar plates incubated overnight at 37°C were documented

on the Gel Doc XR+ Documentation System (Bio-Rad).

***In silico* TelE prediction and homologs identification**

The TelE amino acid sequence from the reference strain *SGG* UCN34 (protein ID

CBI13054.1) was uploaded onto the web-based I-TASSER server (69-71) for protein

structural prediction using the default settings. The same amino acid sequence was

also used to identify TelE homologs among the clinical isolates using the NCBI

tBLASTn program. Hit proteins were considered as TelE homologs if significant

similarities (e-value <10^{-11}) were identified at the N terminus, C terminus, or the full-

length protein.

Multiple sequence alignment (MSA) and sequence logo generation

MSA was performed on the online MAFFT server version 7

(https://mafft.cbrc.jp/alignment/server/) with E-INS-i iterative refinement method that

assumes all the sequences shared the same conserved motifs (72, 73). Regional

sequence logo (probability-weighted Kullback-Leibler logo type) was generated on

web-based Seq2Logo 2.0 server (http://www.cbs.dtu.dk/biotools/Seq2Logo/), with

the Heuristics clustering method applied (74).

Fluorescence microscopy imaging

For time-lapse microscopy imaging, log-phase *E. coli* (OD_{600nm} ~ 1.0 Abs) cultured in

LB was mixed with propidium iodide (1:1000 diluted from 20 mM stock solution,

Thermo Fisher Scientific) and anhydrotetracycline at a final concentration of 500

ng/mL (Sigma Aldrich), and spotted onto an 1% (w/v) low melting agarose pad

(bioWORLD). Samples were immediately imaged with the microscope Axio Observer

7 fitted with Plan Apochromat 40x/0.95 dry lens for phase contrast imaging, or Plan

Apochromat 100x/1.4 oil lens for differential interference contrast imaging (Carl

Zeiss), with temperature maintained at 37°C, and aided with Definite Focus.2 for

autofocus. When necessary, samples were excited with filter wheel 555/30 to detect

red fluorescence signals.

To image *E. coli* expressing TelE-sfGFP with or without TipE, overnight cultures

were diluted 50x into sterile LB broth, incubated at 37°C with 200 rpm for 1.5 hours

to grow to early log-phase. Samples were first induced with 0.5% arabinose for 1.5

hours and were subsequently supplemented with anhydrotetracycline to a final

concentration of 500 ng/mL and propidium iodide (1:1000 diluted from 20 mM stock

solution, Thermo Fisher Scientific), and incubated further for 2 hours at 37°C without

agitation. Following incubation, samples were spotted onto an 1% low melting

agarose pad (bioWORLD), and imaged with the microscope Axio Observer Z1 fitted

with Plan Neofluar 100x/1.3 oil lens, with excitation at 488 nm (GFP) and 535 nm

(PI).

Flow-cytometry

To analyze TelE-gfp expression, 3 mL of bacterial culture in LB medium was

prepared (initial OD around 0.1) from fresh agar plates and grown until reaching an

OD_{600} = 0.4-0.5. At that time, we removed an aliquot of 500 μL where no inducer was

added (non-induced sample or NI). Anhydrotetracycline at 200 ng/mL was added to

the rest of the culture and 500 μL aliquots were removed at various time points from

30 to 90 min, and Hoescht 33342 was directly added to the medium (1/1000 dilution),

the tubes were left open and incubated 10 min under gentle agitation. After washing

and resuspension in PBS, samples were acquired on a MACSQuant YGV Analyzer

Apparatus (Milteyni Biotec) and data were analyzed using FlowJo[TM]10 software.

GraphPad Prism 9 was used for statistical analysis.

Protein expression, purification and pull-down

Protein samples were in general prepared as follow: overnight cultures of *E. coli*

BL21(DE3) harboring the respective protein expression pET28b plasmids were 50x

diluted into sterile LB broth supplemented with 50 μg/mL of kanamycin and grown to

an optical density of ~0.7 Abs measured at 600 nm. Subsequently, cultures were

added with isopropyl β-D-1-thiogalactopyranoside (IPTG) to a final concentration of

100 μM and incubated for an additional 3 hours at 37°C, 200 rpm. Following

incubation, cells were harvested by centrifugation at 8,000 xg for 10 minutes, and the

resulted cell pellets were stored at -80°C (for protein purification). When needed,

cells were resuspended in 100 mM HEPES pH 7.5 and lysed by sonication (10s on-

off pulse cycles, at 20 or 40% amplitude, Sonics Vibracell VCX750). Unbroken cells

were removed by centrifugation at 8,000 xg for 10 minutes at 4°C, and the resulted

supernatant was ultracentrifuged (Beckman Coulter XPN100) at 35,000 rpm for 1

hour at 4°C to separate the soluble (supernatant) and membrane proteins (pellet).

For protein purification, the membrane pellets were resuspended to a final

concentration of 100 mg/mL in Buffer A (100 mM HEPES pH 7.5, 500 mM NaCl and

1% n-dodecyl-β-D-maltoside (DDM)) and incubated for 1 hour at 4°C aided with top-

down rotation. The solubilized membrane proteins were subsequently supplemented

with imidazole to a final concentration of 50 mM and incubated with nickel-

immobilized HisLink resins (Promega) that had been pre-calibrated in Buffer B (100

mM HEPES pH 7.5, 500 mM NaCl, 50 mM imidazole and 0.1% DDM), for 30

minutes at 4°C with top-down rotation. Proteins-bound HisLink resins were washed

with 30X resin volume of ice-cold Buffer B, and finally rinsed with ice-cold buffer

containing 100 mM HEPES pH 7.5, 500 mM NaCl, 500 mM imidazole and 0.1%

DDM to elute the proteins.

For protein pulldown, the proteins-bound HisLink resins were incubated with cellular

lysate containing HA-TipE prepared in Buffer B for 20 minutes at 4°C aided with top-

down rotation. The resins were subsequently washed and the bound proteins were

eluted as described above.

SDS-PAGE and Western blot

Protein samples were mixed with an equal amount of 2X Laemmli reducing buffer and boiled for 10 minutes before being subjected to SDS-PAGE analysis on 12% polyacrylamide gels. Proteins were stained with InstantBlue solution (Expedeon) for visualization or were transferred onto PVDF membranes using iBlot Dry Blotting System (Thermo Fisher Scientific) at 20V for 7 minutes. Following protein transfer, the PVDF membranes were immediately blocked with 1X casein blocking buffer (Sigma-Aldrich), and were probed with either horseradish peroxidase (HRP)-conjugated primary antibodies against His-tag (Qiagen) or with rabbit primary antibodies against HA-tag (Sigma-Aldrich) followed by anti-rabbit HRP-conjugated secondary antibodies. Membranes were thoroughly rinsed with PBS containing 0.1% Tween 20 between the incubations. Chemiluminescent signals were detected using Amersham ImageQuant 800 System (GE Healthcare) after a brief incubation of the PVDF membranes with Immobilon Forte Western Chemiluminescent HRP Substrates (EMD Millipore). For reblotting with a different antibody after image acquisition, the membranes were incubated with Restore PLUS Western Blot Stripping Buffer (Thermo Fisher Scientific) for 30 minutes at room temperature, rinsed thoroughly before being blocked with casein blocking buffer and probed with antibodies as described above.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are very grateful to Alexandra Doloy and Nicolas Dmytruk for providing us with the collection of S. *gallolyticus* clinical isolates. We thank Ross Tomaino from Taplin Mass Spectrometry Facility for the mass-spectrometry analysis, Daniela Megrian-Nunez for her help with AlphaFold and Bruno Périchon for his help in the comparative analysis of T7SSb genetic locus shown in Fig.S1b. We thank Tarek Msadek for critical reading of the manuscript. This work was supported by the National Research Foundation and Ministry of Education Singapore under its Research Centre of Excellence Program (SCELSE). S. Dramsi would like to acknowledge the support of the Institut National contre le Cancer (INCA, grant PLBIO16-025) and from the French Government's Investissement d'Avenir program, Laboratoire d'Excellence Integrative Biology of Emerging Infectious Diseases (grant no. ANR-10-LABX-62-IBEID).

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 FIGURES LEGEND

Figure 1 - A T7SSb locus specific to *SGG*. (A) An overview of the BLASTn-based

comparative genomics analysis. From the innermost circle, the reference genome

SGG UCN34 (black ring); followed by *SGP* isolates (Gallo1, Gallo4, Gallo6, blue

rings); and *SGG* isolates (Gallo37, Gallo43 and Gallo51, red rings). The outermost

black blocks represent the genomic islands in UCN34 genome predicted by

IslandViewer 4. White spaces within each ring represent a ≤50% similarities of the

respective genomic regions to UCN34. (B) Genetic organization of the two types of

T7SSb found in *SGG* clinical isolates and absent in *SGP*. Each T7SSb gene

encoding the secretion machinery was color-coded and labelled accordingly.

Figure 2. A *SGG* T7SSb effector exhibits toxicity in *E. coli*. (A) List of proteins

that were significantly more abundant in the secretome of the UCN34 wildtype than

the Δ*essC* mutant. The total peptide count of each protein was expressed as means

± standard deviation from three biological replicates. N.D., not detected; N. A., not

applicable. (B) The domain architecture of the six proteins identified in (A). Both

Gallo_1068 and Gallo_1574 are homologous to the lipid II phosphatase TelC. The

conserved aspartate-rich motifs essential for TelC activity are indicated by black

boxes. (C) Viability of the bacterial cells harboring either an empty vector (pTCVerm-

P_{tetO}) or a vector encoding the full-length *telE* with the expression inducible by

anhydrotetracycline (aTc). Bar chart on the right showed the logarithm-transformed

CFU count of the *telE*-expressing cells in relative to the control. Error bars represent

mean + standard deviation (n = 3).

Figure 3. T7SSb Effector TelE contains a C-terminal glycine zipper motif

essential for its activity. (A) The genomic region encoding the T7SSb core

components, TelE and TipE in *SGG* UCN34. Black, T7SSb core components; blue,

TelE (LXG domain-containing protein); red, DUF5085 domain-containing protein);

white, hypothetical proteins. (B) Viability of the *E. coli* cells harboring either an empty

vector ((pTCVerm-P$_{tetO}$) or a vector encoding various *telE* variants (*telE1* to *telE7*)

with the expression inducible by anhydrotetracycline (aTc). Bar chart on the right

showed the logarithm-transformed CFU count of the *telE*-expressing cells in relative

to the control. Error bars represent mean + standard deviation (n = 3). (C) Alignment

of the C-terminus sequence of the *telE* variants expressed in (B) revealed a

conserved region (underlined) enriched with hydrophobic residues. (D) Sequence

logo of the underlined region in (C) generated from all aligned TelE variants

identified a sequence motif highly similar to glycine zipper motif (GxxxGxxxG). The

number at the bottom of the sequence logo represents the position of the respective

amino acid residue in reference to the TelE sequence from UCN34. Shrunk residues

(*i.e.* residues at position 462 to 465) reflected the presence of gaps in the sequence

alignment. (E) Viability of the *E. coli* cells harboring either an empty vector

(pTCVerm-P$_{tetO}$) or a vector encoding the mutated *telE* with the expression inducible

by anhydrotetracycline (aTc). Bar chart on the right showed the logarithm-

transformed CFU count of the *telE*-expressing cells in relative to the control. Error

bars represent mean + standard deviation (n = 3).

Figure 4. TelE is a pore-forming toxin. (A) The Pfam domains found in TelE

protein using SMART (upper part) and motif search from KEGG Gene databases

(lower part). The number in parenthesis next to the Pfam domain indicates the E-

value score. (B) Differential interference contrast (DIC) micrograph of *E. coli* cells

harboring an empty vector or a vector encoding *telE* with the expression inducible by

anhydrotetracycline (aTc). The physiological changes of the *E. coli* cells following

protein induction were documented at the indicated time. Cells with membrane

lesions were stained red by propidium iodide. Arrows indicate the region with visible

cell shrinkage. Scale bar, 2 μm. (C) Phase contrast micrograph of *telE*-expressing *E.*

coli documented at the indicated time. Arrows indicate the region with visible cell

shrinkage. Scale bar, 2 μm. (D) Monitoring of TelE expression through translational

reporter constructs TelE-sfGFP or TelE$_{G470V}$-sfGFP expressed in *E. coli* under the

control of PtetO promoter. GFP fluorescence signal was measured at different time

points following anhydrotetracyclin addition (I 10min- I 60 min) and compared to the

initial non-induced (NI) culture. Cell viability was also monitored in parallel and

shown for the 60 min induction time point.

Figure 5. The cognate immunity protein TipE antagonizes TelE toxicity (A)

Viability of *E. coli* cells harboring two vectors (pTCVerm-P$_{tetO}$ and pJN105-P$_{BAD}$) for

single expression of *telE* inducible by anhydrotetracycline (aTc), or co-expression of

telE and the indicated gene candidates with the expression inducible by arabinose.

Bar chart on the right showed the logarithm transformed CFU count of the cells co-

expressing two genes in relative to the control. Error bars represent mean +

standard deviation (n = 3). (C) AlphaFold modelling of monomeric TelE (in green)

without or with TipE (in orange). TipE is predicted interacting with the TelE zipper

motif shown in yellow. (C) Immunoblot with anti-His or anti-HA on the proteins eluted

from the TelE-bound nickel-immobilized resins incubated with cellular lysate

containing HA-TipE. The TelE-free resins subjected to the same treatment were

used as the control. I, input (cellular lysate containing HA-TipE); W, wash fraction; E,

eluted fraction. (D) Fluorescence micrograph of *E. coli* cells expressing superfolder

GFP (sfGFP), TelE-sfGFP, or co-expressing TipE and TelE-sfGFP. Cells with

membrane lesions were stained red by propidium iodide. Scale bar 10 μm; 2 μm for

inlets. Bar chart (bottom) showed the quantification of cells fluoresced green or red

(n ≈ 300).

Figure 1

A

B

General T7SSb genetic organization in most *SGG* isolates

esxA *essA* *esaB* *essB* *essC* *esaA*

UCN34

SGP

1 Kbp   100%

31%

Second T7SSb genetic locus in a few *SGG* isolates

esxA *esaA* *essA* *esaB* *essB* *essC*

1 kb

Figure 2

A

Locus tag	Total peptide count		Coverage	Fold change*	Adjusted p-value#
	UCN34 WT	ΔessC			
Gallo_0553	401.67 ± 41.50	10.67 ± 3.06	100.00%	37.64	6.71 x 10⁻¹⁵
Gallo_0559	34.00 ± 7.00	N.D.	47.83%	N.A.	6.71 x 10⁻¹⁵
Gallo_0560	8.33 ± 0.58	N.D.	48.39%	N.A.	6.71 x 10⁻¹⁵
Gallo_0562	42.33 ± 6.04	N.D.	29.77%	N.A.	6.71 x 10⁻¹⁵
Gallo_1068	9.33 ± 3.09	N.D.	17.50%	N.A.	2.42 x 10⁻⁸
Gallo_1574	13.00 ± 1.00	N.D.	20.77%	N.A.	6.71 x 10⁻¹⁵

* value expressed as WT vs ΔessC

B

C

Figure 3

Figure 4

A

B

C

telE

D

Figure 5