Title: Rapid metagenomic next-generation sequencing during an investigation of hospital-acquired human parainfluenza virus 3 infections

Running title: Rapid mNGS for HPIV3 outbreak

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Abstract

Metagenomic next-generation sequencing (mNGS) is increasingly

used for the unbiased detection of viruses, bacteria, fungi, and

eukaryotic parasites in clinical samples. Whole genome sequencing

(WGS) of clinical bacterial isolates has been shown to inform hospital

infection prevention practices, but the use of this technology during

potential respiratory virus outbreaks has not been taken advantage of.

Here, we report on the use of mNGS to inform the real-time infection

prevention response to a cluster of hospital-acquired human

parainfluenza 3 virus (HPIV3) infections at a children's hospital.

Isolates from 3 patients with hospital-acquired HPIV3 identified over a

12-day period on a general medical unit and 10 temporally-associated

isolates from patients with community-acquired of HPIV3 were

analyzed. Our sample-to-sequencer time was <24 hours while our

sample-to-answer turn-around time was <60 hours with a hands-on

time of approximately 6 hours. Eight (2 case isolates and 6 control

isolates) of 13 samples had sufficient sequencing coverage to yield

whole genomes for HPIV3, while 10 (2 cases and 8 controls) of 13

samples gave partial genomes and all 13 samples had >1 read to HPIV3.

Phylogenetic clustering revealed the presence of identical HPIV3

genomic sequence in the two of the cases with hospital-acquired

infection, consistent with the concern for recent transmission within the

medical unit. Adequate sequence coverage was not recovered for the

third case. This work demonstrates the promise of mNGS to provide

actionable information for infection control in addition to microbial

detection.

Introduction

Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) affect hundreds of

millions of patients around the world and cost hospitals tens of billions

of dollars each year (1). Hospital-acquired viral infections are a

particular problem in pediatric settings, with upwards of one-third of

HAIs attributable to viruses (2). Hospital acquisition of HPIVs have

been recognized as a particular problem among patients with cancer,

including pediatric patients (3). In one study, 80% of HPIV infections in

pediatric cancer patients were acquired in the hospital (4).

Recently, next generation sequencing of pathogens from clinical samples has been used to inform infection prevention, identify antimicrobial resistance, and broaden differential diagnosis (5–10). WGS of clinical isolates has been most commonly used for genomic epidemiology of bacteria in hospital-acquired infections, where culture isolates are readily attainable, part of the normal workflow, and undergo minimal mutation during the culture process (11–13). WGS for viral pathogens is considered more difficult given the lack of routine culture and propensity of viral culture to induce mutations in viral genomes (7, 14). We used mNGS to rapidly sequence whole genomes from a putative cluster of HPIV3 to determine whether there was a common source on a medical unit. This is the first reported use of metagenomic next generation sequencing in real-time to inform hospital infection prevention.

Outbreak Description

In June 2016, routine surveillance revealed three contemporaneous cases of hospital-acquired HPIV3 infection on a general medical unit. The first case was an 18-month old male with chronic lung disease who developed increased work of breathing on Day 109 of hospitalization.

The patient required increased oxygen support and admission to the
pediatric intensive care unit due to worsening hypoxemia. The patient
was managed with a short course albuterol and steroids, and he
recovered. Three days later a second case was identified. Patient 2, an 8-
month old male with chronic lung disease developed increased work of
breathing on Day 98 of hospitalization. The patient was also managed
with a short course of albuterol and steroids and recovered. Then, 12
days after the first case, the third case was identified. Patient 3, a 4-
month old male with congenital immunodeficiency developed cough
and rhinorrhea on Day 22 of hospitalization. The patient's symptoms
resolved spontaneously without any interventions. Nasal swabs from all
3 patients tested positive for HPIV3 by RT-PCR.

Outbreak Investigation

In response to the cluster, the medical unit leadership and
hospital Infection Prevention Department conducted an investigation to
identify potential sources of infection. Information about patient room
locations, nursing assignments, involved provider teams, support
services received by the patient, shared equipment, and patient
movement in the hospital (to radiology, etc.) was collected. In addition,

family members of patients and healthcare workers were queried about recent illness. The investigation identified that a healthcare worker with an upper respiratory tract infection had provided care to two of the healthcare-associated cases (patients 1 and 2).

In response to the event, nursing and physician staff received notification about the infections and education about the transmission of HPIV3. They were also reminded to stay home when ill. This information was included in weekly newsletters and daily unit-based huddles.

Isolates obtained from the 3 putative hospital-acquired HPIV3 cases and 10 control patients were sent to the University of Washington Virology Laboratory for mNGS two days after recognition of the cluster (18 days after the first patient was diagnosed with HPIV3). The original isolate for the third outbreak patient was no longer available so a second sample taken 6 days later was used for sequencing.

Materials and Methods

Setting. Seattle Children's Hospital is a 316-bed quaternary care pediatric facility located in Seattle, Washington. The medical unit involved is located on one floor and includes 32 beds. Patients housed

on the unit are newborn to 21 years of age and have a wide variety of acute and chronic health issues. Respiratory viral testing is routinely performed on symptomatic patients using nasal swabs evaluated using FilmArray Assay (BioFire, Salt Lake City, UT).

Ethical Concerns. The study protocol was approved by the Children's Institutional Review Board. Consent from patients was deemed unnecessary as all data already existed and were made anonymous for purposes of this study.

Cluster and control isolates. Cluster isolates were clinical samples positive for HPIV3 by PCR from a patient hospitalized on the general medical unit who met criteria for hospital-acquired HPIV3 (clinical symptoms that developed >6 days after admission). These criteria were based on the incubation period of HPIV (15).

For strain comparison, clinical microbiology records were used to identify a convenience sample of control isolates from inpatient and outpatient children testing positive for HPIV3 by RT-PCR obtained

during the same month as the cluster from patients with community-

acquired HPIV3.

mNGS library generation and sequencing. 500uL of swab-inoculated

viral transport media was filtered through a 0.45um Ultrafree-MC spin

filter (Millipore) and 200uL of filtrate was used as input for extraction

in a ZR Viral RNA Kit (Zymo Research). Extracted RNA was treated with

Turbo DNAse (LifeTech) and first and second-strand synthesis was

performed using random hexamers SuperScript III (Life Tech) and

Sequenase enzynes (Agilent) (16). cDNA was purified using DNA Clean

and Concentrator-5 kit (Zymo) and used as input for Nextera XT library

generation with 20 cycles of PCR amplification. Sequencing libraries

were purified using 1.0X AMPure XP beads (Beckman Coulter),

quantified on the Qubit 3.0 (LifeTech) and Bioanalyzer 2100 (Agilent)

(17). Samples were mixed equimolarly to achieve approximately 2

million reads per sample and sequenced using 1x180bp run on a MiSeq

desktop sequencer (Illumina).

Sequencing reads were adapter- and quality-trimmed using

cutadapt and mapped to the NCBI reference genome for HPIV3

(NC_001796) using Geneious v9.1 software (18). Consensus sequences

of regions with >1X coverage were called by majority-voting base with hand curation. Genome alignments were made using MAFFT and phylogenetic trees were created using MrBayes (19, 20). HPIV3 genomes are deposited in Genbank under accessions KX574704-574711.

Results

Case patients. The cluster of 3 male patients with hospital-acquired HPIV3 ranged in age from 4-18 months. Additionally, all case patients had underlying medical conditions requiring frequent or prolonged hospitalization. None of the case patients had recent travel.

Control patients. The 10 patients with community-acquired HPIV3 identified to serve as controls tested positive for HPIV3 by PCR within 15 days of the first case patient. Control patients were a median age of 9 months (range 2 weeks to 7 years) and 60% were male. Additionally, 60% of the control patients were previously healthy. One of the control patients (patient 9) had recent travel from the Midwest. All other patients came from western Washington state.

Metagenomic sequencing reveals outbreak strain

A total of 22,904,287 quality/adapter-trimmed reads were derived from the 13 samples with a median trimmed read count of 1,666,529 reads per sample. The number of HPIV3 reads in each sample ranged from 4 reads to 202,946 reads (median 5,823 reads, Table). A total of 8 of 13 samples (2 case isolates and 6 control isolates) had sufficient coverage to yield near whole genomes for phylogenetic analysis. Phylogenetic analysis revealed that the 8 samples came from 6 distinct lineages, with the two hospital-acquired strains sharing the exact same sequence across the entire genome and identical to none of the control strains (Figure). Extending the tree to include 10 partial genomes from all samples with >50 reads mapping to HPIV3 (2 case isolates and 8 control isolates) showed 9 strains (Supplemental Figure 1). The third sample from a hospital-acquired case had 4 reads, each of which had identical sequence to the genomes recovered from the 2 outbreak strains (Supplemental Figure 2).

BLASTN analysis of the outbreak strain revealed 100% nucleotide identity to HN genes from a 2011 Argentinian strain HNRG.036.11 (1146bp, KT765972), March 2010 Colombia strain FLI2812 (352bp, JQ268865), and 2012 Japan strain 70-PIV3 (147bp, AB831638). The closest whole genome sequence was from the October 2007 FLU8652

strain from Piura, Peru. BLASTN analysis of the farthest outgroup strain
(patient 13) revealed 99.8% nucleotide identity to HN genes from the
1995 nosocomial outbreak strain from Massachusetts (427bp,
AF039925) and 98.3% nucleotide identity to whole genome sequence
from the HPIV3 cell culture strain 14702 originally isolated from
Canada (15,462bp, EU424062).

Bayesian analysis has revealed an average 7.61×10^{-4} nucleotide
substitutions per site per year across the HPIV1 genome (with 1.37×10^{-3}
in the HN gene) (21). An analysis of HPIV3 strains in Japan showed
approximately the same rate of evolution in the HN gene for HPIV3 (22).
These data indicate approximately 11 sites change per year across the
HPIV3 genome, suggesting the resolution of one nucleotide change in
the HPIV3 genome in terms of transmission is approximately one
month.

Here we report the first rapid use of metagenomics to inform
infection prevention in a hospital setting. Prior approaches of using
next-generation sequencing to inform infection control were entirely
retrospective, focused on pure bacterial isolates, and/or utilized PCR
tiling approaches based on a known organism (12, 13, 23–28). In this
study mNGS retrieved identical whole genome HPIV3 sequences from

two patients, confirming an association between the two cases and suggesting transmission from a single source. mNGS also recovered reads from a third outbreak patient that had identical sequence to the two patients in the cluster but the read coverage was not sufficient to determine with confidence that this case arose from the same source. Metagenomic sequencing was performed in a rapid turn-around time (<3 days) with approximately 6-8 hours of hands-on time. Linked bioinformatics analyses could potentially perform the same task from sample-to-answer in under 30 hours based on currently available Illumina sequencers and the depth of sequencing required. Nanopore sequencing could reduce this turnaround time even more; however, this method is not amenable to mNGS due to limited depth of sequencing (29, 23).

The main limitation of the approach taken here is the reduced sensitivity of mNGS relative to PCR (30). mNGS is not routinely able to recover whole genomes from FilmArray-positive specimens. In this study near complete genomes were recovered from only 8 of 13 specimens with a median of 1.7 million trimmed reads per sample, while partial genomes were recovered from 10 of 13 samples. One of the specimens for which whole genome HPIV3 sequence could not be

retrieved was part of the putative cluster, reducing the ability to confidently link further transmission within the hospital. Of note, this specimen was obtained via a repeat swab approximately six days after the patient's first positive test for HPIV3, and thus it is not surprising that little sequence could be recovered. In addition, whole genomes are not required to link cases as phylogenetic information can be recovered with only partial sequences (31).

A definitive advantage of mNGS is the use of only one protocol for detection and genome-wide analysis of a myriad of infectious diseases, which can aid in personnel training and reduction in turn-around time relative to other genome portioning methods. A potential limitation of this approach is cost, as we estimate that the marginal reagent cost of this sequencing was approximately $2000. However, the cost for mNGS versus capture sequencing methods is approximately the same and the temporal resolution and epidemiological information afforded by whole genome methods greatly exceeds that afforded by Sanger-based candidate gene sequencing.

Molecular tools enable the investigation of infection clusters and outbreaks, both in community and hospital settings. mNGS adds to the available tools and allows for unbiased pan-pathogen detection with

single-nucleotide resolution that can enable detection and inference of transmission. In the hospital setting, this molecular data can play a critically important role in convincing healthcare workers and administrators that transmission is occurring and can provide rationale for expending resources and targeting interventions to prevent further transmission. The ability of metagenomic NGS to provide whole genome epidemiologic data in a rapid and actionable timeframe will advance clinical care as this technology moves from the research to the clinical setting.

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Legends

Figure. Whole genome phylogeny of HPIV3 sequences reveals identical sequence in putative outbreak samples. Near-complete genomes recovered from HPIV3 positive specimens were aligned by MAFFT and phylogenetic trees were constructed using MrBayes. Specimens are denoted by sample identifier name with the two identical clinical cases highlighted in orange. The NCBI reference genome for HPIV3 (NC_0001796) was used as an outgroup and its negative-stranded genome is highlighted in green. Consensus support values are denoted on branch labels. Normalized coverage maps are shown with no coverage areas shown in red and nucleotide changes relative to the outbreak sequence highlighted in black.

Supplemental Figure 1. Partial genome phylogenetic analysis of samples with >50 HPIV3 reads reveals that additional community-acquired cases were not part of the hospital outbreak.

Supplemental Figure 2. Phylogenetic analysis of most informative 99bp trimmed read from patient 3 across all 10 samples for which

sequence was available at that locus. Patient 3 clusters within the

hospital outbreak; however, this limited sequence is not present in all

low-coverage samples.

Table: **Specimens sequenced in this study**

Patient	Day positive compared to index case	Age	Sex	Filtered Reads	HPIV3 reads	
1	0	18 mo	Male	1,814,866	5,823	
2	3	8 mo	Male	1,864,624	16,901	Hospital acquired
3	12	4 mo	Male	1,097,618	4	
4	-8	2 yr	Male	1,286,425	11,605	
5	-2	2 mo	Female	1,960,840	21	
6	1	1 yr	Male	1,444,230	4	
7	2	9 mo	Male	1,565,065	132,401	
8	3	2 wk	Female	1,573,141	54,369	Community acquired
9	8	7 yr	Female	1,054,320	88	
10	10	22 mo	Female	1,956,632	631	
11	11	1 mo	Male	1,666,529	31,502	
12	13	2 mo	Male	2,223,697	356	
13	15	1 yr	Male	3,396,300	202,946	