



TITLE:

# Mycotoxin Detection in Urine Samples from Patients with Chronic Kidney Disease of Uncertain Etiology in Sri Lanka

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1 **Mycotoxin Detection in Urine Samples from Patients with Chronic Kidney**

2 **Disease of Uncertain Etiology in Sri Lanka**

3

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20

21 **Abstract**

22 This was a screening study that aimed to determine the presence of nephrotoxic  
23 mycotoxins in urine samples from patients with chronic kidney disease of  
24 uncertain etiology (CKDue) in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka. The  
25 percentage detection of aflatoxins (AFLs), ochratoxins (OTs) and fumonisins in  
26 31 patients were 61.29%, 93.5% and 19.4%, respectively. Geometric means of  
27 urinary AFLs and OTs were 30.93 ng/g Cr (creatinine) and 34.62 ng/g Cr in  
28 CKDue stage 1–2 patients and 84.12 ng/g Cr and 63.52 ng/g Cr in unaffected  
29 relatives of patients. In CKDue stage 3–5 patients, geometric means of urinary  
30 AFLs and OTs were 10.40 and 17.08 ng/g Cr, respectively. Non-affected relatives  
31 of patients ( $n=6$ ) had comparable levels of these mycotoxins, but healthy Japanese  
32 individuals ( $n=4$ ) had lower levels than in Sri Lanka. The higher detection rate of  
33 urinary OTs in Sri Lankans indicates that exposure is common in the region.

34 **Keywords** chronic kidney disease of uncertain etiology, Sri Lanka, urine sample,  
35 aflatoxin, ochratoxin, fumonisin

36

37 High prevalence of chronic kidney disease of uncertain etiology (CKDue) in the  
38 North Central Province of Sri Lanka has been reported. The disease  
39 predominantly affects male farming communities. Several hypotheses have been  
40 made to explain the causal associations between the high prevalence of the disease  
41 in the region and existing environmental factors (Chandrajith et al. 2010;  
42 Illeperuma et al. 2009).

43 Mycotoxins, such as aflatoxins (AFLs) (Glahn et al. 1994), ochratoxins  
44 (OTs) (Sauvant et al. 2005) and fumonisins (FBs) (Badria et al. 1996) are dietary  
45 contaminants that are known to possess nephrotoxicity. Detection of OT  
46 associated with the incidence of endemic nephropathy in some regions has been  
47 reported (Castegnaro et al. 2005; Domijan et al. 2009). A recent study by  
48 Wanigasuriya et al. (2008) has reported that the concentration of OT A in selected  
49 food items in the study region was low. Food analysis, in some instances, might  
50 not be sufficient to establish a relationship with occurrence of diseases because  
51 heterogeneity of toxin distribution over time, and even within a particular food  
52 product, casts doubt on the feasibility of sampling plans (Parson et al. 2007). In an  
53 attempt to overcome this problem and to validate the actual exposure, we screened  
54 urinary excretion levels of AFL, OTs and FBs in patients and their relatives living  
55 in a CKD endemic community.

56

## 57 **Materials and Methods**

58 Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethical Committee of Kyoto  
59 University, Japan and the Ethical Review Committees of the Faculty of Medicine,

60 University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. The urine samples were originally collected  
61 at Medawachchiya and Girandrukotte, Sri Lanka in August 2009 (106 patients and  
62 87 unaffected relatives of CKD patients) and stored at  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the Kyoto  
63 University Human Specimen Bank (Koizumi et al. 2009). A total of 41 urine  
64 samples, 31 from stage 1–5 CKD patients, six from unaffected relatives, and  
65 four from healthy Japanese individuals as controls, were randomly selected from  
66 each stratum. Definition of CKD and further classification of the stages were  
67 made according to the Kidney Disease Outcomes Quality Initiative (KDOQI)  
68 guidelines. Patients with a history and current treatment of diabetes mellitus,  
69 severe hypertension, urological disease of known etiology, glomerulonephritis, or  
70 snake bite were excluded. Creatinine concentration in urine sample was measured  
71 by enzyme assay using creatinine amidohydrolase (SRL, Tokyo, Japan).

72         Urine samples were thawed and centrifuged at 15,000 rpm for 10 min to  
73 remove any cellular debris, and the supernatant was used for the determination of  
74 mycotoxin level. One milliliter of urine was diluted with 3 mL PBS (pH 7.4). The  
75 mixed sample was directly passed through analyte-specific immunoaffinity  
76 columns (R-Biopharm AG, Darmstadt, Germany) at a flow rate of 1–2 drops/s.  
77 The column was washed with 20 mL PBS and air was passed through the column  
78 for 1 min. The bound mycotoxin was eluted with 3 mL methanol and the eluate  
79 was evaporated to dryness using a nitrogen evaporator. The residue was  
80 reconstituted with 100  $\mu\text{L}$  10% methanol in water, and analyzed for each  
81 mycotoxin with the specific competitive ELISA kits (RIDASCREEN FAST  
82 Mycotoxins; R-Biopharm AG) using a microplate spectrophotometer (infinite

83 M200 Pro; Tecan, Tokyo, Japan) at 450 nm. ELISA kits for AFL, OTs and FBs  
84 recognized aflatoxins B1, B2, G1, G2 and M1; ochratoxins A, B and C, and  
85 fumonisins B1, B2 and B3, respectively. External standards of different  
86 concentrations and all urine samples were run in duplicate.

87 Mean recovery (CV) of fortified samples was 79% (11) for AFLs, 105%  
88 (13) for OTs and 92% (15) for FBs. Detection limits were 0.005 ng/mL, 0.005  
89 ng/mL and 0.035 ng/mL for AFLs, OTs and FBs, respectively. For values below  
90 the detection limit, half of the limit of detection value was assigned. Mycotoxin  
91 concentrations are presented in ng/mL and ng/g Cr (creatinine). Statistical  
92 significance of differences was tested by using non-parametric methods ( $\chi^2$  test  
93 and Wilcoxon two-sample test;  $P < 0.05$ ).

94

## 95 **Results and Discussion**

96 Study subjects comprised 20 men and 21 women (Table 1). The mean (range) age  
97 regardless of disease stage (31, stage 1–5) was  $41.32 \pm 15.55$  (9–65) years,  
98 whereas that of unaffected relatives and Japanese controls was 20.67 (6–34) years  
99 and 45.25 (42–53) years, respectively.

100 Results of urinary AFL, OT and FB levels are shown in Table 2. The  
101 percentage detection of AFLs, OTs and FBs in patients was 61.29%, 93.5% and  
102 19.4%, respectively. The detection rate of all mycotoxins in stage 1 disease was  
103 the highest. Disease stages were classified as early (stage 1 and 2) and late (stage  
104 3–5) for examination of concentration differences during disease progression.  
105 Detection rates of AFLs in the early and late stages were 78.57% and 47.06%,

106 respectively ( $\chi^2 = 9.323$ ;  $P < 0.001$ ). OTs were detected in all of the urine samples  
107 from 14 patients with early stage disease, whereas the rate of detection at the late  
108 stage was 88.24% ( $n = 17$ ) ( $\chi^2 = 23.516$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). Both AFLs and OTs were  
109 detected in all of the relatives of CKDue patients, but only OTs were detected in  
110 the Japanese controls.

111           The highest AFL concentration in urine samples from CKDue patients was  
112 0.8 ng/mL, whereas 90% of the samples had a concentration  $< 0.044$  ng/mL (397.1  
113 ng/g Cr). The 90th percentile for OTs was 0.098 ng/mL (60.85 ng/g Cr). The  
114 geometric means of urinary AFLs and OTs were 0.033 ng/mL (30.93 ng/g Cr) and  
115 0.037 ng/mL (34.62 ng/g Cr) in the early stage, and 0.008 ng/mL (10.40 ng/g Cr)  
116 and 0.012 ng/mL (17.08 ng/g Cr) in the late stage of the disease. Mean  
117 concentration difference for urinary OT level was observed between the early and  
118 late stages of the disease (Wilcoxon test,  $P = 0.008$ ). In contrast, comparable  
119 concentrations of OTs and AFLs were also observed in the unaffected relatives of  
120 CKDue patients ( $P > 0.05$  compared with all patients). Healthy Japanese  
121 individuals, however, had lower levels of OTs (0.007 ng/mL, 8.14 ng/g Cr) than  
122 Sri Lankan individuals had.

123           The small sample size of the control subjects and their characteristic  
124 differences with the patients limit the comparability of the results. However, the  
125 high detection frequency and urinary levels of OTs and AFLs among CKDue  
126 patients and their relatives demonstrated the potential human exposure in the  
127 region. Findings were also discussed in relation to similar studies in other  
128 countries (Table 3). The average AFL concentration in urine samples from

129 CKD patients was markedly higher, by over an order of magnitude, than the  
130 level of 0.391 ng/g Cr in the Czech Republic (Malir et al. 2004). An FB exposure  
131 study in two Portuguese populations has shown no detectable level in urine  
132 samples (Silva et al. 2008) and in Mexico 75% detection frequency was observed  
133 (Gong et al. 2008), whereas some level of FBs was detected at the early stage of  
134 the disease in the present study.

135 Higher detection of OTs was observed compared with the 61% detection  
136 rate among healthy individuals in Hungary and 43% in the endemic nephropathy  
137 area in Croatia (Domijan et al. 2009), whereas the detection was comparable with  
138 the 88–97.8% in the endemic nephropathy region of Bulgaria (Castegnaro et al.  
139 2005). Although the mean OT level in CKD patients in our study was higher  
140 than the 0.007 ng/mL in Croatia (Domijan et al. 2009) and 0.013 ng/mL in  
141 Hungary (Fazekas et al. 2004), and was comparable to the 0.022 ng/mL in  
142 Portugal (Duarte et al. 2010), the urine concentration levels in half of our CKD  
143 patients were <0.017 ng/mL ( $n = 15$ ). The potential sources of exposure to OTs in  
144 the region need to be clarified.

145 Animal studies have demonstrated the possibility of higher concentrations  
146 of OT A in kidney tissues and low levels in the urine (Zepnik et al. 2003).  
147 Likewise, an increase in OT A intake in humans in the region of endemic  
148 nephropathy did not result in an immediate increase in its elimination (Castegnaro  
149 et al. 2005). OT A is characterized by high plasma protein binding potential,  
150 therefore, its removal efficiency might be low (Petzinger et al. 2000; Ringot et al.  
151 2006), and it is possible that OT A accumulates in renal tissue. It is worth noting



152 that the cumulative effect of long-term consumption of products that contain low  
153 levels of mycotoxins could contribute to a gradual deterioration of organ function.

154 This study is believed to be the first to determine the presence of AFLs,  
155 OTs and FBs in urine samples from CKDue patients and their relatives living in  
156 communities with CKDue. The higher detection rate of OTs in Sri Lanka has led  
157 to a working hypothesis that this mycotoxin could be common in the region,  
158 which corroborates the need for further exposure assessment, associated with  
159 disease occurrence.

160

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228 **Table 1.** Baseline characteristics of CKDue patients in Sri Lanka, 2009

Disease stages	Sex	Age (yr)
	male/female (Total)	mean (range)
Stage 1 (slight)	3/4	24.14 (9–40)
Stage 2 (mild)	6/1	48 (39–59)
Stage 1–2 (early stage)	9/5 (14)	36.07 ± 15.19 <sup>‡</sup>
Stage 3 (moderate)	3/3	41 (11–60)
Stage 4 (severe)	3/3	47.5 (35–58)
Stage 5 (end stage)	3/2	49.00 (30–65)
Stage 3–5 (late stage)	9/8 (17)	45.65 ± 14.90
Total (CKDue patients)	18/13	41.32 ± 15.55 (9–65)
Relatives of CKDue patients	2/4	20.67 (6–34)
Japanese controls	0/4	45.25 (42–53)

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231 **Table 2.** Urine concentration of AFL, OT and FB in CKD patients in Sri Lanka,  
 232 2009.

Subjects		AFL		OT		FB	
		ng/mL	ng/g Cr	ng/mL	ng/g Cr	ng/mL	μg/g Cr
Stage 1 ( <i>n</i> = 7)	Range (n>MDL)	ND–0.800(6)	ND–734.00	0.013–0.360 (7)	17.63–93.90	ND–0.042 (4)	ND–0.14
	Mean	0.359	230.21	0.044	39.67	<MDL	<MDL
	GM	0.092	87.41	0.035	33.33	<MDL	<MDL
Stage 2 ( <i>n</i> = 7)	Range (n>MDL)	ND–0.037 (5)	ND–53.05	0.006–0.058 (6)	11.87–74.81	ND–0.036 (1)	ND–0.07
	Mean	0.018	19.58	0.085	65.07	-	-
	GM	0.012	10.95	0.039	35.95	-	-
Stage 1–2	GM	0.033	30.93	0.037	34.62*	-	-
Stage 3 ( <i>n</i> = 6)	Range (n>MDL)	ND–0.039 (4)	ND–44.74	ND–0.028 (5)	8.57–41.25	ND–0.130 (1)	ND–0.19
	Mean	0.023	25.57	0.022	21.76	-	-
	GM	0.022	18.75	0.016	19.36	-	-
Stage 4 ( <i>n</i> = 6)	Range (n>MDL)	ND–0.800 (4)	ND–991.57	ND–0.019 (4)	ND–34.27	-	-
	Mean	0.140	174.82	0.016	18.75	ND	ND
	GM	0.009	12.71	0.012	17.07	-	-
Stage 5 ( <i>n</i> = 5)	Range (n>MDL)	ND	ND	0.010 (4)	ND–27.06	ND	ND
	Mean	-	-	0.044	16.56	-	-
	GM	-	-	0.080	14.72	-	-
Stage 3–5	GM	0.008	10.40	0.012	17.08*	-	-
Stage 1–5	GM	0.012	17.01	0.020	23.50	-	-
Relatives controls ( <i>n</i> = 6)	Range (n>MDL)	0.020–0.800 (6)	5.9–1000.00	0.032–0.223 (6)	28.63–278.00	ND–0.093 (1)	ND–0.14
	Mean	0.298	249.09	0.104	88.95	-	-
	GM	0.112	84.12	0.085	63.52	-	-
Japanese controls ( <i>n</i> = 4)	Range (n>MDL)	ND	ND	0.005–0.012 (4)	4.4–19.40	ND	ND
	Mean	-	-	0.007	9.69	-	-
	GM	-	-	0.007	8.14	-	-

233 ND: not detected; MDL: method detection limit; GM: geometric mean

234 \*Wilcoxon test for mean OT concentration difference between early and late stages ( $P = 0.008$ )

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239 **Table 3.** Urine mycotoxin level in other countries

Mycotoxin Type	Detection rate	Mean (range) ng/gCr	Study subjects	Country	Reference
AFL	61.29%	17.0 (ND–991.6)	CKDue patients	Sri Lanka	Present study
	58%	391.0 (19.0–19,219.0) pg/g Cr	General population	Czech Republic	(Malir et al. 2004)
OT A	100%	37.1 (12.4–360.0) pg/mL	CKDue patients (early stage)	Sri Lanka	Present study
	88.24%	12.0 (ND–58.2) pg/mL	CKDue patients (late stage)	Sri Lanka	Present study
	100%(n=6)	85.0 (32.0–223.0) pg/mL	Relatives of CKDue patients	Sri Lanka	Present study
	61%	13.0 (6.0–65.0) pg/mL	Healthy individuals	Hungary	(Fazekas et al. 2004)
	43%	7.0 (5.0–15.0) pg/mL	Endemic nephropathy	Croatia	(Domijan et al. 2009)
	92.20%	22.0 (ND–69.0) pg/mL	General population	Portugal	(Duarte et al. 2010)
	88%	50.8 (1.0–330.0) pg/mL	Endemic nephropathy	Bulgaria	(Castegnaro et al. 2005)
	97.6%	191.7 (1.0–191.0) pg/mL	Endemic nephropathy	Bulgaria	(Castegnaro et al. 2005)
FB	19.4%	(ND–130.0 pg/mL)	CKDue patients	Sri Lanka	Present study
	0% (LOD = 5 ng/mL)		General population	Portugal	(Silva et al. 2008)
	75%	70.1 (ND–9312.0) pg/mL	General population	Mexico	(Gong et al. 2008)

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