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Genome Study of 6222 Bacteria from Livestock and Food in Spain to Understand Antibiotic Resistance

Yong Milano*

Department of Computer Science, Indiana University Bloomington, Bloomington, USA

Introduction

The rise of antibiotic resistance is a major global health concern, with bacterial infections becoming increasingly difficult to treat. Understanding the genetic mechanisms behind resistance is crucial for developing strategies to mitigate its spread. This study examines the genomes of 6,222 bacterial isolates from livestock and food environments in Spain to identify resistance genes and gain insights into the antibiotic resistome. Livestock and food environments are known reservoirs of antibiotic-resistant bacteria due to the widespread use of antibiotics in animal husbandry. The presence of resistant bacteria in these settings poses a significant threat to public health, as resistant genes can transfer to human pathogens through food consumption and environmental exposure. By sequencing and analyzing the genomes of bacterial isolates, this study aims to identify resistance determinants, their distribution, and potential transmission pathways.

Description

Whole-genome sequencing was used to analyze the bacterial isolates, providing a comprehensive view of their genetic composition. The study included a diverse range of bacterial species, including common foodborne pathogens such as Escherichia coli, Salmonella spp., and Staphylococcus aureus. Bioinformatics tools were employed to detect antibiotic resistance genes, mobile genetic elements, and mutations associated with reduced antibiotic susceptibility. The findings revealed a high prevalence of resistance genes against multiple antibiotic classes, including beta-lactams, tetracyclines, aminoglycosides, and fluoroquinolones. The presence of extended-spectrum beta-lactamase and carbapenemase genes in certain isolates raised concerns about the potential for resistance to last-resort antibiotics. Additionally, genes conferring resistance to colistin, a critical antibiotic for treating multidrug-resistant infections, were identified in some bacterial strains, indicating the growing challenge of antimicrobial resistance. Mobile genetic elements, such as plasmids, transposons, and integrons, were found to play a key role in the dissemination of resistance genes. Plasmid-mediated resistance was particularly concerning, as it enables horizontal gene transfer between different bacterial species, facilitating the rapid spread of resistance traits. The study also identified hotspots of resistance gene clusters, highlighting specific genomic regions prone to acquiring resistance elements. Comparative genomic analysis revealed differences in resistance profiles between bacterial isolates from different sources [1-3].

Livestock-associated isolates exhibited a higher prevalence of certain resistance genes, likely due to the selective pressure exerted by antibiotic use in animal production. Conversely, food-derived isolates showed evidence of resistance gene accumulation, suggesting potential transmission through the food chain. The detection of similar resistance genes in bacteria from both sources underscored the interconnected nature of livestock, food, and human health. The study also explored the evolutionary dynamics of resistance genes by reconstructing phylogenetic relationships among bacterial isolates. Genetic similarities between isolates from different geographic regions suggested the potential for long-distance dissemination of resistance determinants. The role of environmental factors, such as farm hygiene, waste management, and antibiotic usage practices, was considered in shaping the resistome composition. To address the issue of antibiotic resistance, the study emphasizes the importance of implementing surveillance programs, promoting responsible antibiotic use, and adopting alternative strategies such as probiotics, bacteriophages, and antimicrobial peptides. Strengthening biosecurity measures in livestock production and improving food safety protocols can help reduce the risk of resistance gene transmission [4,5].

Conclusion

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to monitor resistance trends over time and assess the impact of regulatory interventions. The integration of metagenomic approaches can provide deeper insights into the resistome dynamics of microbial communities in food and agricultural settings. Collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and the agricultural industry is essential for developing effective strategies to combat antibiotic resistance. In conclusion, this genome study provides valuable insights into the antibiotic resistome of bacterial isolates from livestock and food environments in Spain. The identification of resistance genes, their transmission mechanisms, and their evolutionary patterns underscores the urgent need for coordinated efforts to mitigate the spread of antibiotic resistance. By leveraging genomic data, this research contributes to the ongoing global fight against antimicrobial resistance and supports the development of evidence-based policies to safeguard public health.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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***Address for Correspondence:** Yong Milano, Department of Computer Science, Indiana University Bloomington, Bloomington, USA, E-mail: milanoyon@gmail.com*

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