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Correlation of *Giardia duodenalis* assemblages with clinical and epidemiological data in Turkish children

Z.G. Sonmez Tamer¹, M. Kasap², D.K. Er³, B. Pektas⁴

¹Kocaeli University Medical School Department Of Medical Microbiology, Kocaeli, Turkey

²Kocaeli University Medical School Department of Medical Biology, Kocaeli, Turkey

³Institute of Health Sciences- Department of Medical Microbiology, Kocaeli University, Kocaeli, Turkey

⁴Katip Celebi University Medical School- Ataturk Education and Research Hospital, Medical Microbiology Laboratory, izmir, Turkey

Introduction: *Giardia duodenalis* (*G. duodenalis*) highly prevalent intestinal parasite in Turkish children. To date, eight main assemblages of *G. duodenalis* have been described, but only A and B genetic groups are known to infect humans. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of different *G. duodenalis* assemblages among children with giardiasis, and investigate associations with clinical and epidemiological data collected from children.

Methods: In the present study, 987 fecal samples from children were collected from Kocaeli University Hospital during 2012-2013 to search for the presence of *Giardia* by microscopy. To the microscopically positive samples, PCR was used to generate a 384 bp fragment for β -*giardin*. The PCR products were sequenced and the sequences were subjected to phylogenetic analysis by using PHYLIP.

Results: Of 987 stool samples examined, 85 were positive to *G. duodenalis* by microscopy. DNA from 68 of 85 (80%) samples was successfully amplified by PCR for β -*giardin*. Based on the phylogenetic analysis of the sequences, assemblage A, B and mixed (AB) were determined. Of 68 isolates, 45 were identified to be assemblage A (66%), 16 were assemblage B (24%) and 7 were assemblage AB (10%). No association between epidemiologic data and assemblages was detected. Nevertheless, assemblage A was more frequently encountered in children with diarrhea, flatulence or abdominal pain than assemblages B and AB ($P > 0.01$).

Conclusions: Since assemblage A is more prevalent compared to assemblage B, it might be responsible for common *Giardia* infections in Turkey. Further molecular epidemiological studies are needed to be done in other regions to identify the prevalence of the species to develop novel strategies in the control and prevention of *G. duodenalis* infection in Turkey.