In Vitro Effect of Sulfamethoxazole-Trimethoprim against Histoplasma capsulatum var. capsulatum

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Histoplasmosis is an infection caused by the dimorphic fungus Histoplasma capsulatum. It is endemic in the Americas (3) and is currently one of the most important systemic infections in Brazil (6). In a retrospective study carried out in Ceará state (northeastern Brazil) from 1995 to 2004, 164 histoplasmosis cases were found in HIV-positive patients (4).

The treatment of histoplasmosis depends on the infection’s severity and clinical manifestation, along with individual risk factors (9, 13). Because of the increase in histoplasmosis, particularly in HIV-positive patients, as well as the development of antifungal resistance associated with refractory and repeated infections (13), there is a need for seeking new therapeutic options for this mycosis. Therefore, this study aimed at testing the in vitro activity of sulfamethoxazole-trimethoprim (SMX-TMP) against H. capsulatum var. capsulatum strains isolated from AIDS patients.

A total of 84 clinical strains of H. capsulatum isolated from two different biogeographic regions in Brazil were included in this study. Of them, 68 came from Ceará (northeastern semi-arid region) and 16 from southeastern states (a subtropical region). The strains were obtained from the collection of the Specialized Medical Mycology Center of Ceará Federal University and were handled in our level 3 biosecurity laboratory.

For each strain, a combined solution of SMX-TMP (Roche, Brazil) was used at a concentration range of 0.0025 mg/ml SMX/0.0005 mg/ml TMP and 20/4 mg/ml. The inocula were prepared as described by Li et al. (10), with some modifications. Briefly, H. capsulatum strains were cultured in the mycelial phase onto brain heart infusion (BHI) agar for 7 days at 28°C, and then 2 ml of sterile saline was added to each culture. The surfaces of the mycelia were harvested with a swab. To obtain yeast cells, isolates were cultured on agar BHI with sheep blood (10%) at 35°C and were maintained through weekly passages (7). The supernatant was read in a spectrophotometer at 530 nm, and the transmittance was adjusted to 90 to 95%.

Susceptibility tests were carried out as described by Nakai et al. (11), except that the readings were performed after 7 or 4 days for mycelial and yeast growth, respectively. For SMX-TMP, the MIC was defined as the lowest concentration at which no visible growth was observed (14). The differences in the MICs between northeastern and southeastern strains were evaluated by Student’s t test (P < 0.05). Susceptibility control tests were performed with amphotericin B (AMB) against 84 and 7 H. capsulatum strains in mycelial and yeast-like forms, respectively. SMX-TMP quality control was carried out with Escherichia coli ATCC 25922 and Pseudomonas aeruginosa ATCC 27853.

All H. capsulatum strains were inhibited by SMX-TMP, with MICs ranging from 0.039/0.0078 to 0.625/0.125 mg/ml for the mycelial forms and 0.0025/0.0005 to 0.02/0.004 mg/ml for the yeast-like forms. The SMX-TMP MICs for strains from northeastern Brazil presented geometric means of 0.1544 mg/ml for sulfamethoxazole and 0.0309 mg/ml for trimethoprim for the mycelial forms and 0.0141 mg/ml for sulfamethoxazole and 0.0079 mg/ml for trimethoprim for yeast-like forms (Table 1).

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Susceptibility control tests showed MICs (geometric means) of 0.1168 and 0.0762 μg/ml for AMB against H. capsulatum for mycelial and for yeast-like forms, respectively. E. coli ATCC 25922 was sensitive and P. aeruginosa ATCC 27853 was resistant to SMX-TMP.

Previous studies have described the effect of sulfamethoxazole or SMX-TMP against other pathogenic fungi, such as Cryptococcus neoformans (8) and Aspergillus fumigatus (1). The results of this study demonstrated for the first time the inhibitory effect of SMX-TMP against H. capsulatum. They show that the MICs for strains from northeastern Brazil were higher than those from the southeast. These findings can be related to population profile and/or geoclimatic differences, but further investigation is necessary to explain these hypotheses. The medium composition also may alter the drug effect. H. capsulatum strains were inhibited by SMX-TMP diluted in RPMI medium. Yeast nitrogen base (YNB) was not used because no strains were inhibited by SMX-TMP diluted in RPMI medium composition also may alter the drug effect.

### TABLE 1. MICs of SMX/TMP against strains of H. capsulatum var. capsulatum in yeast-like and mycelial forms from northeastern and southeastern Brazila

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMX-TMP MICs (mg/ml)</th>
<th>No. of NE strains</th>
<th>No. of SE strains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.0025/0.0005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.005/0.001</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.01/0.002</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.02/0.004</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.039/0.0078</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.078/0.0156</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.156/0.0312</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.312/0.0625</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.625/0.125</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Geometric mean MICs for mycelial (M) and yeast-like (Y) forms of strains from northeastern (NE) Brazil were 0.1544/0.0309 and 0.0141/0.0028 mg/ml, respectively. Geometric mean MICs for mycelial and yeast-like forms of strains from southeastern (SE) Brazil were 0.1152/0.0230 and 0.0079/0.0016, respectively.

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### REFERENCES