

pH-sensitive Microcapsules Containing Clarithromycin-loaded Lipid Nanocarriers for the Treatment of *H. pylori* in Gastric Diseases †

Sofía V. Sánchez ^{1,2,3}, Eva. C Arrua ², Valeria Trincado ¹, Javier O. Morales ^{1,2,3,*}

¹ Drug Delivery Laboratory, Departamento de Ciencias y Tecnología Farmacéuticas, Universidad de Chile

² Advanced Center for Chronic Diseases (ACCDiS)

³ Center of New Drugs for Hypertension (CENDHY)

* Correspondence: jomorales@ciq.uchile.cl (J.O.M.);

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Abstract: *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) is a bacterium involved in the pathogenesis of severe gastric diseases being the most frequent cause of infection-induced cancer worldwide. *H. pylori* colonizes the gastric mucosa increasing its pH from 1-3 to 5-7. Antimicrobial agents, such as clarithromycin (CLA), are essential to eradicate *H. pylori* infection. Thus, the objective of this research is to develop and characterize CLA-loaded lipid nanocarriers (CLA-LNC), incorporate them into alginate-carrageenan microcapsules for pH-specific localized release of CLA, determine the entrapment efficiency (%EE) and the *in vitro* release at pH 2 and pH 4. CLA-LNC was successfully developed by the phase inversion-based process. The physicochemical characteristics of CLA-LNC, such as size (110.2nm), PDI (0.022), and zeta potential (-16.96mV), suggest a stable system with suitable characteristics for drug delivery. pH-sensitive alginate-carrageenan microcapsules containing CLA-LNC were obtained by complex coacervation. The %EE of CLA in the LNC was 85.73%, and microcapsules were able to encapsulate 76.87% of CLA-LNC, revealing high incorporation of CLA in both systems. Moreover, the poor release of CLA from microcapsules at pH 2 (about 20%) and the effective release at pH 7.4 suggest that this is a promising formulation for the administration of CLA to *H. pylori* treatment in gastric diseases.

Keywords: clarithromycin; lipid nanocarriers; pH-sensitive microcapsules; gastric diseases.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.