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**Quantificação de *Listeria monocytogenes* em filé de salmão (*Salmo salar*) pronto para o consumo por PMA-qPCR e sua sobrevivência durante a simulação gastrointestinal *in vitro***

**Florianópolis**

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salar*) pronto para o consumo por PMA-qPCR e sua sobrevivência  
durante a simulação gastrointestinal *in vitro***

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Certificamos que esta é a **versão original e final** do trabalho de conclusão que foi julgado adequado para obtenção do título de doutor em Ciências dos Alimentos obtido pelo Programa de Pós Graduação em Ciências dos Alimentos.

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**Florianópolis, 2019**

*“Se não morre aquele que escreve um livro e planta uma árvore, com mais razão não morre o educador que semeia vida e escreve na alma...” Bertold Brecht*

*Aos meus alunos...*

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## RESUMO

Considerando suas propriedades nutricionais, os produtos de pescado se tornaram uma escolha mais saudável, aumentando seu consumo no Brasil e no mundo. Em função disso, o hábito do consumo de peixe cru, com destaque especial ao Salmão do Atlântico (*Salmo salar*), tem se tornado cada dia mais comum. Isso, no entanto, pode trazer riscos à população, em função da possível persistência de importantes patógenos, como *Listeria monocytogenes*. A ampla capacidade de adaptação deste patógeno a ambientes desfavoráveis tem causado preocupação para órgãos fiscalizadores, indústrias e consumidores ao redor do mundo. Dessa forma, estudos sobre o comportamento de *L. monocytogenes* frente a desafios, como os presentes na passagem pelo trato gastrointestinal, podem ser determinantes na busca por soluções eficientes visando o seu controle. Além disso, métodos rápidos e confiáveis para a quantificação deste patógeno em produtos alimentares são essenciais. Assim, este estudo consistiu na quantificação de células viáveis de *L. monocytogenes* em amostras comerciais e artificialmente contaminadas de salmão pronto para o consumo, utilizando Propidio Monoazida (PMA) associado ao PCR quantitativo (PMA-qPCR). Foi possível observar neste estudo que o uso de PMA antes da extração de DNA para amplificação por qPCR pode ser uma alternativa promissora para quantificação de *L. monocytogenes* nestes alimentos. Isso porque esse protocolo reduz a replicação de DNA de células mortas, evitando falsos positivos, superando assim a maior limitação para o uso de qPCR em alimentos. Além disso, ao comparar os resultados do método PMA-qPCR com os obtidos através de um método de cultivo dependente, ficou claro que os métodos baseados em DNA são capazes de fornecer resultados mais rápidos e seguros. Esse fato pode ser corroborado também através de uma análise do comportamento e da capacidade de adaptação da bactéria *L. monocytogenes* aos desafios encontrados ao longo de todo trato gastrointestinal humano, através de uma simulação *in vitro* destas condições. Neste estudo pode-se constatar a ocorrência da condição viável mas não cultivável (VBNC) após o stress causado pelo meio, sendo que o método de PMA-qPCR foi capaz de quantificar a bactéria mesmo onde a mesma não tinha capacidade de multiplicação através dos métodos cultivo dependentes.

**PALAVRAS CHAVES:** *Listeria monocytogenes*; *Salmo salar*; Simulação gastrointestinal; qPCR; PMA; PMA-qPCR;

## ABSTRACT

Due to their nutritional properties, fish products become a healthier food alternative, increasing their consumption in Brazil and worldwide. Therefore, the habit of eating raw fish, specially Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) has become usual. This, however, can represent a risk to the population, considering the possible persistence of important pathogens as *Listeria monocytogenes*. The adaptability of this pathogen to survive on hostile environments concerns regulatory agencies, industries and consumers around the world. Thus, investigation about the behavior of *L. monocytogenes* exposed to challenges, including those present in the passage through the gastrointestinal tract, can be crucial to find efficient solutions to control this problem. In addition, fast and reliable methods to quantify this pathogen in food products are essential. In this way, this study aimed of quantifying viable *L. monocytogenes* cells in commercial and artificially contaminated samples of ready-to-eat salmon using qPCR method associated to Propidio Monoazide (PMA) (PMA-qPCR). So, it was possible to observe that the use of PMA before DNA extraction for qPCR amplification can be a promising alternative for *L. monocytogenes* quantification in these foods. This protocol was able to reduce DNA replication of dead cells, avoiding false positives, overcoming the biggest limitation for the use of qPCR in foods. Furthermore, by comparing the results of the PMA-qPCR method with those obtained through a dependent culture method, it was clear that DNA-based methods lead to faster and safer results. This fact also was corroborated by an analysis of the behavior and adaptability of *L. monocytogenes* facing the challenges found throughout the human gastrointestinal tract, through an in vitro simulation of these conditions. In this study, it was possible to observe the occurrence of the viable but not cultivable condition (CNBV) after the stress caused by the environment, and the PMA-qPCR method was able to quantify *L. monocytogenes* even where it was not competent to multiply on the dependent culture methods.

**KEYWORDS:** *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmo salar*; Gastrointestinal simulation, qPCR; PMA: PMA-qPCR;

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## INTRODUÇÃO

O crescimento populacional e a busca dos consumidores por alimentos mais saudáveis vêm aumentando a demanda mundial por pescado (FAO, 2014). No ano de 2016, registrou-se no mundo um consumo *per capita* recorde de 20,3 kg de pescado por pessoa/ano (FAO, 2018). Isso se justifica porque os peixes se constituem uma opção mais saudável do que as outras carnes, já que são fontes de proteínas de alto valor biológico, ácidos graxos insaturados e vitaminas, além de apresentarem baixo teor de colesterol (GONÇALVES, 2013). Segundo o Relatório de 2018 da FAO (Organização das Nações Unidas para Alimentação e Agricultura), o setor da aquicultura é o setor que mais cresce em relação a outros grandes setores de produção de alimentos. Assim, a produção mundial de pescados deve alcançar 195,9 milhões de toneladas em 2025, um aumento de 17% em comparação a produção de 166,8 milhões dos anos de 2013 a 2015, ou seja, serão 29 milhões de toneladas a mais de peixe (FAO, 2016).

Estima-se que o Brasil deva registrar um crescimento de 89% na produção da pesca e aquicultura até 2030 (FAO, 2018). No entanto, mesmo que o consumo de pescados esteja em ascendência no país, Costa *et al.* (2013) relata que fatores como: a presença de tabus alimentares, o custo e a falta de facilidade do preparo contribuem para o baixo consumo de peixes pela população brasileira em comparação a outros países. Dentre os estados brasileiros, o estado de Santa Catarina se destaca como maior produtor de pescado de origem marinha, sediando o maior parque pesqueiro industrial do Brasil (IBGE, 2015). Só a região do Alto Vale do Itajaí é responsável por cerca de 20% da produção nacional de pescado, concentrando as operações de descarga de mais de 600 embarcações de porte industrial (UNIVALI/CTTMar, 2013). Além disso, Santa Catarina mantém a posição de líder nacional na produção de ostras e mexilhões, respondendo por 98% de toda a produção brasileira (BRASIL, 2014).

Apesar da importância econômica e dos conhecidos benefícios para a saúde, os produtos de pescado vêm sendo associados a muitas doenças de origem alimentar. O relatório do Sistema de Alerta Rápido para Alimentos e Rações (RASFF) da União Européia (UE) indicou que, em 2017, os produtos de pescado foram a categoria mais frequente no número de alertas ativados (UE, 2018). Os alimentos considerados prontos para o consumo, conhecidos como *Ready to Eat* (RTE) são especialmente importantes

neste contexto, já que são consumidos sem tratamento térmico posterior. Apesar de não ser considerado pela legislação brasileira como RTE, o salmão, em sua versão crua e defumada, é o alimento mais frequentemente relatado no banco de dados RASFF, sendo amplamente associado com *Listeria monocytogenes* (*L. monocytogenes*) (HOLCK *et al.*, 2018).

Devido a sua característica ubiquitária, a bactéria *L. monocytogenes* vem representando uma grande preocupação para a indústria de alimentos e para os órgãos de regulamentação, sendo que, no ano de 2017 sua presença foi a segunda causa que de retenção de produtos registrados pelo RASFF (UE, 2018). A ampla habilidade de sobreviver em condições adversas e a capacidade de se desenvolver em temperaturas de refrigeração, resistir ao congelamento e a diversos antimicrobianos são fatores que dificultam o seu controle (GANDHI; CHIKINDAS, 2007). A contaminação de produtos por *L. monocytogenes* inviabiliza o seu consumo, trazendo impacto significativo sobre o comércio internacional de pescados, causando perdas financeiras diretas e indiretas (NORHANA *et al.*, 2010).

O consumo de alimentos contaminados com *L. monocytogenes* se mostra especialmente preocupante em grupos de alto risco (mulheres grávidas, recém nascidos, idosos e adultos imunocomprometidos) podendo provocar septicemia, meningite, gastroenterite e até aborto, com uma taxa de letalidade de até 75% nestes grupos (FRETZ *et al.*, 2010). Roberts *et al.* (2009) afirmam que a capacidade da bactéria em ultrapassar a barreira placentária e hematoencefálica contribuem com esse alto índice de letalidade.

Surtos vêm sendo relatados no mundo todo, sendo que, na África do Sul, entre os anos de 2017 e 2018, *L. monocytogenes* foi responsável por um dos maiores surtos da história, que resultou em aproximadamente 204 mortes (OLANYAA *et al.*, 2019). Também em 2017, um surto envolvendo leite cru contaminado foi relatado nos Estados Unidos da América (EUA), resultando em 6 pessoas hospitalizadas e 2 óbitos (CDC, 2017). Neste país, 1600 casos foram relatados neste mesmo ano, com aproximadamente 17% de letalidade (CDC, 2017). A Europa, apesar dos consideráveis esforços para controlar esta bactéria na cadeia alimentar, também vem registrando um significativo aumento nos casos de Listeriose. Em 2013, *L. monocytogenes* foi considerada a causa mais frequente entre todas as doenças de origem alimentar registradas na Europa (EFSA, 2015).

Buscando controlar os casos de Listeriose, muitos países vêm adotando legislações rígidas, com tolerância zero para a presença de *L. monocytogenes* em alimentos considerados prontos para o consumo (*Ready to Eat* - RTE). Um exemplo disso é os EUA, cuja legislação define como ilegal a venda de produtos RTE contaminados com qualquer quantidade de *L. monocytogenes* (FDA, 2011). Já na União Européia e na Nova Zelândia, assim como, em muitos países no mundo, os alimentos marinhos são categorizados de acordo com o risco para *L. monocytogenes*, tolerando a presença de até 100 unidades formadoras de colônias (UFC)/g durante toda a sua vida útil, nos alimentos considerados de baixo risco (UE, 2005, FSANZ, 2014).

Devido a ausência de uma legislação brasileira para produtos de pescado que estabeleça o limite e a categorização do risco em relação a *L. monocytogenes* (BRASIL, 2001), o Ministério da Agricultura vem utilizando como parâmetro para as análises oficiais, ausência de *L. monocytogenes* em 25 g ou mL de produto. Estas análises são realizadas através do emprego de métodos convencionais para detecção de microrganismos, como a ISO 11290:2 (2017). Considerando o elevado tempo para um resultado positivo definitivo, este pode ser um problema para a indústria, principalmente no caso de produtos com vida útil limitada (PAGADALA *et al.*, 2011). Além disso, Vondrakova *et al.* (2018) relata que os métodos dependentes de cultivo possuem uma limitação em detectar bactérias em seu estado conhecido como viável mas não cultivável (VBNC). Morishige; Fujimori e Amano (2015) afirmam que essa subestimação pode representar um grande risco para a saúde pública, considerando que as bactérias mantêm seu potencial infeccioso.

Para contornar esses problemas, Gasanov *et al.* (2005) relatam que a identificação de *L. monocytogenes* através de métodos moleculares está se tornando cada vez mais popular em todo mundo. Umas das técnicas moleculares utilizada para a detecção de bactérias em alimentos é o PCR quantitativo (qPCR), sendo que as principais vantagens dessa técnica são: elevada sensibilidade e especificidade e excelente eficiência (CHUANG *et al.*, 2012). Os métodos baseados em DNA, no entanto, não são capazes de diferenciar DNA de células viáveis e não viáveis em amostras de alimentos, podendo levar a uma superestimação e falsos positivos (ELIZAQUÍVEL *et al.* 2012; WAGNER *et al.*, 2015). Buscando transpor esse obstáculo, protocolos incluindo tratamentos prévios com intercalantes de DNA, como o propídio monoazida (PMA) antes da extração de DNA têm sido realizados para diversas

bactérias (LI *et al.*, 2014; BANIHASHEMI *et al.*, 2015; ZHANG *et al.*, 2018). O uso de PMA tem demonstrado resultados interessantes na redução de falsos positivos quando utilizado em associação a qPCR na quantificação de *L. monocytogenes* em alimentos (RANTSIOU *et al.*, 2008; JEYALETCHUMI *et al.* 2010; RUSSO *et al.* 2014; PAGADALA *et al.*, 2012).

Fica claro que os obstáculos tradicionais utilizados no processamento e conservação de alimentos para prevenir o desenvolvimento bacteriano em alimentos podem não ser suficientes para inibir *L. monocytogenes* já que, como um patógeno ambiental, ele se adapta facilmente a diferentes condições ambientais para garantir a sobrevivência. Barbosa *et al.* (2012) afirmam que adaptação a severos estresses tornam este microrganismo mais resistente a condições desfavoráveis, incluindo as encontradas durante a passagem pelo trato gastrointestinal. Assim, diante do grande desafio que é controlar a presença de *L. monocytogenes* em ambientes industriais e, consequentemente, em alimentos, compreender os mecanismos de resistência e o comportamento destas na infecção gastrointestinal se torna cada vez mais urgente. Cunha *et al.* (2016) avalia que os métodos de simulação gastrointestinal *in vitro* são aliados neste tipo de avaliação, diante da impossibilidade do estudo destes mecanismos de ação de *L. monocytogenes* *in vivo*.

Diante do exposto e buscando oferecer subsídio para a indústria de alimentos e para a fiscalização, promovendo a segurança alimentar dos consumidores, o presente trabalho visou avaliar a aplicabilidade do método de qPCR combinado com PMA (PMA-qPCR) em comparação com o qPCR tradicional e com um método dependente de cultura (ISO 11290-2) na quantificação de células viáveis de *Listeria monocytogenes* em Salmão do Atlântico (*Salmo salar*) pronto para consumo. Além disso, esses três métodos foram utilizados para determinar a sobrevivência de *L. monocytogenes* ao longo do trato gastrointestinal humano, através da utilização de um protocolo de simulação gastrointestinal *in vitro*.

Assim, esta tese contempla, em seu primeiro capítulo, uma revisão bibliográfica atual sobre o tema; já no segundo capítulo é descrito o desenvolvimento de um método de quantificação de células viáveis de *Listeria monocytogenes* em salmão cru pronto para o consumo utilizando protocolo de qPCR associado com PMA. Por fim, no terceiro capítulo, é apresentado o estudo realizado sobre a sobrevivência de *L. monocytogenes*

em salmão cru pronto para o consumo durante simulação das condições gastrointestinais *in vitro*.

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## CAPÍTULO 1

## 1. REVISÃO BIBLIOGRÁFICA

### 1.2 Salmão do Atlântico (*Salmo salar*)

Salmão é o nome comum para várias espécies pertencentes à classe dos teleósteos, a família *Salmonidae* e a ordem dos Salmoniformes (GARCIA, 2011), incluindo o Salmão do Atlântico (*Salmo salar*) e o Salmão do Pacífico.

Embora várias espécies de salmão possam ser encontradas a partir de fontes selvagens e de criação, quase todo o salmão comercialmente disponível é originado de cultivos marinhos de Salmão do Atlântico (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2019). A maior parte do salmão consumido e processado no Brasil é de Salmão do Atlântico importado principalmente do Chile (CRUZ *et al.*, 2008). Durante as duas últimas décadas, o desenvolvimento de criação de salmão no Chile tem sido baseado principalmente no cultivo de quatro espécies de salmonídeos, sendo que o Salmão do Atlântico tem sido a espécie produtiva mais importante, principalmente devido aos seus elevados preços de mercado, em comparação com as outras espécies (COLIHUEQUE, 2015).

Em 2018, a Organização para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Econômico (OECD) e a Organização das Nações Unidas para Alimentação e Agricultura (FAO) estimaram que o consumo total de Salmão do Atlântico de criação foi de cerca de 2,2 milhões de toneladas. No entanto, mesmo com aumento da produção de salmão do Atlântico em mais de 800% desde 1990, a oferta global total de salmonídeos ainda é marginal em comparação com a maioria dos outras categorias de frutos do mar (4,4% da oferta global de frutos do mar) (OECD; FAO 2018).

A cor da carne do Salmão do Atlântico ocorre devido à absorção e fixação de carotenóides oxigenados na sua carne, como a astaxantina (3,3'-dihidroxi- $\beta,\beta$ -caroteno-4,4'-diona) (BARRETO *et al.*, 2007). O salmão apresenta excelente composição em aminoácidos, vitaminas e minerais, além de possuir em sua composição valores elevados de ácidos graxos essenciais, como o ômega-3. Tonial e colaboradores (2010) atribuíram ao salmão diversos fatores benéficos para a saúde e prevenção de doenças coronarianas.

Apesar de todos os benefícios relatados, esta espécie é composta por uma alta quantidade de gordura (TONIAL *et al.*, 2010), o que torna esse alimento mais perecível e susceptível a deterioração. Deste modo, Garcia (2011) sugere que é indispensável conservá-lo em temperaturas baixas, bem como manipulá-lo em condições higiênicas desde o momento da captura, até seu destino final, incluindo as fases de processamento e transporte. Vallandro *et al.* (2011) cita que fatores como o tempo de armazenamento, refrigeração, manipulação e preparação inadequadas podem favorecer as alterações bioquímicas, autolíticas ou promover o desenvolvimento de microrganismos. Considerando que a culinária japonesa tornou-se popular entre os brasileiros (SATO, 2013) o crescimento de microrganismos devido a manipulação pode se tornar um risco para a saúde do consumidor, principalmente quando consumido cru (SARTORI; AMANCIO, 2012).

Dentro deste contexto, o Sashimi de Salmão, que consiste em fatias finas de filé de salmão, livre de qualquer tipo de cocção (CARROLI, 2009) é um dos alimentos considerados de risco para desenvolvimento de microrganismos. Assim, o aumento do consumo destes produtos *in natura* pela população tem gerado preocupações tanto com relação à qualidade inicial da matéria-prima como nas etapas de preparo, necessitando de uma atenção especial das autoridades sanitárias para garantir a qualidade do produto final (GONÇALVES *et al.*, 2013).

Os alimentos *Read To Eat* (RTE), ou seja, prontos para consumo, sem nenhuma etapa posterior de processamento bactericida (como o cozimento) têm sido implicados em muitos surtos de doenças transmitidas por alimentos nos últimos anos (KOVAČEVIĆ; MESAK; ALLEN, 2011). Dentre os microrganismos envolvidos em surtos com RTE, destaca-se a bactéria *Listeria monocytogenes* (*L. monocytogenes*) (GILMOUR *et al.*, 2010). Holck *et al* (2018) relatou que alguns tipos de preparo de salmão (cru ou defumado) faz este alimento ser considerado o mais frequentemente relatado no banco de dados RASFF, sendo frequentemente associado com *L. monocytogenes*.

## 1.2 *Listeria monocytogenes*

A bactéria *L. monocytogenes* possui habilidade de sobreviver em condições adversas e tem capacidade de se desenvolver em temperaturas de refrigeração, além de resistir ao congelamento e a diversos antimicrobianos. Essas características fazem deste um dos microrganismos de maior importância entre os patógenos alimentares, representando uma preocupação para a indústria de alimentos e para os órgãos de regulamentação (GANDHI; CHIKINDAS, 2007). Casos de listeriose resultam do consumo de alimentos contaminados, sendo que *L. monocytogenes* têm sido isoladas a partir de uma variedade de produtos, incluindo alimentos prontos para o consumo e alimentos contaminados na origem, no ambiente de processamento industrial ou doméstico (HAGE *et al.*, 2014).

Apesar de não ser uma líder como causa de Doença Veiculada por Alimentos (DVA), a *L. monocytogenes* está entre as principais causas de morte por este grupo de enfermidades. Um relatório recente do Centro de Controle e Prevenção de Doenças (CDC) estima que *L. monocytogenes* provoca em torno de 1600 casos nos EUA anualmente, com aproximadamente 260 mortes (CDC, 2017). Mammina *et al.*, 2013 relatam que a taxa de letalidade desta bactéria varia entre 20 e 50%. Um dos motivos relatados é a capacidade deste microrganismo infectar órgãos tais como o cérebro, fígado e placenta, se disseminando através da corrente sanguínea (ROBERTS *et al.*, 2009).

Dados europeus corroboram com isso, apontando que, em 2016, 2536 pessoas foram contaminadas, sendo que 410 destas vieram a óbito (EFSA and ECDC, 2017). Além disso, entre os anos de 2017 e 2018, o mundo assistiu este microrganismo provocar o maior surto global de doença de origem alimentar na África do Sul, com aproximadamente 1.034 de casos de listeriose confirmados e 204 mortes (OLANYAA *et al.*, 2019).

Algumas características são fundamentais para que esta bactéria se torne tão preocupante, sendo que é considerado um patógeno ambiental devido a sua ampla distribuição no ambiente. Jeyaletchumi *et al.* (2010a) destacam que *L. monocytogenes* é uma bactéria Gram positiva muito resistente, capaz de se multiplicar na presença de sal e em temperaturas abaixo de 1°C, ao contrário muitos outros agentes patogênicos.

Apesar de ser um patógeno termolábil, podendo ser destruído durante o cozimento, *L. monocytogenes* é um risco potencial para a indústria de alimentos devido a sua rápida capacidade de adesão superficial e formação de biofilmes, podendo sobreviver anos nestes ambientes (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2010).

Franco e Landgraf (2003) relatam que a atividade de água ótima para o desenvolvimento de *L. monocytogenes* é próxima a 0,97, no entanto, essa bactéria tem a capacidade de multiplicar-se em atividade de água 0,92, considerada baixa para o desenvolvimento de patógenos em geral.

A bactéria possui motilidade por flagelos, mas somente em temperaturas entre 20°C a 25°C, sendo que, requisita actina da célula hospedeira para se mover através e entre as células do hospedeiro, similarmente à *Shigella spp* (AL-ZEYARA *et al.*, 2011). É considerado um patógeno intracelular facultativo, sobrevivendo e se proliferando em macrófagos, enterócitos e outras células. Para colonizar o trato gastrointestinal, o microrganismo precisa sobreviver a condições adversas, como a acidez estomacal, a alta osmolaridade e a presença de sais biliares no intestino delgado (RODRÍGUEZ *et al.*, 2004). O primeiro local onde ocorre a invasão é o intestino delgado, sendo que, a partir daí *L. monocytogenes* pode espalhar-se de uma célula para outra sem sair para o ambiente extracelular, escapando assim das células T (WARRINER; NAMVAR, 2009). É muito importante para este agente patogênico conseguir entrar numa célula a fim de se replicar e invadir outros tecidos e órgãos e, provocando os sinais clínicos da listeriose (MEEKS *et al.*, 2009).

O ciclo de infecção inicia-se com a adesão da bactéria à superfície da célula eucariótica. A invasão ocorre por um mecanismo conhecido como “zíper” no qual a bactéria progressivamente vai penetrando na célula até que seja totalmente internalizada (JADHAV *et al.*, 2012). Os ligantes de *L. monocytogenes* são principalmente as internalinas A e B, que são proteínas de superfície caracterizadas por possuir repetições ricas em leucina (LRR), responsáveis por intermediar a ligação com a célula do hospedeiro. Estas proteínas são codificadas pelos genes *inlA* e *inlB* (CABANES, 2004). Em pouco tempo após fazer contato com as células dos tecidos, esta bactéria é fagocitada. Uma vez no interior do fagossomo, o microrganismo secreta hemolisinas (como a Listeriolisina O) e fosfolipases.

A Listeriolisina O (LLO) é uma proteína tóxica codificada pelo gene *hly* (JACQUET, 2002), sendo que este foi o primeiro fator de virulência identificado e

sequenciado em *Listeria spp.* Atualmente, é considerado o mais importante entre os fatores de virulência de *L. monocytogenes*, sendo amplamente estudado e utilizado inclusive para a detecção específica do microrganismo em produtos alimentícios (LE MONNIER *et al.*, 2011). A LLO produzida por este gene tem uma ação importante no ciclo de vida intracelular de *L. monocytogenes*, considerando que ela permite que a bactéria livre-se dos vacúolos, primário e secundário, de defesa da célula invadida e, então, permaneça livre no citosol para sua multiplicação e disseminação (JACQUET, 2002). Isso porque, durante a infecção, a LLO provoca rompimento das membranas, especialmente aquelas formadas entre os vacúolos fagocitários e os lisossomos, além da formação de poros ou lesões na mesma. Esses poros possivelmente facilitam o acesso das fosfolipases e de seus substratos ao interior celular. As fosfolipases irão auxiliar na degradação final da membrana da própria célula invadida (CHURCHILL *et al.*, 2006; LE MONNIER *et al.*, 2011). Esse mecanismo evita, portanto, a formação dos fagolisossomos, que poderiam destruir a bactéria, por meio das hidrolases ácidas existentes, que sobrevive e se multiplica dentro das células fagocitárias. As enzimas hidrolíticas, após a ruptura das membranas dos lisossomos, são liberadas e provocam a destruição dos macrófagos e monócitos (CABANES, 2004).

Cruz *et al* (2012) afirma que *L. monocytogenes* multiplica-se em pH entre 5,0 e 9,0 com pH ideal entre 7,0 e 7,5 e que ambientes com pH inferior a 4,5 e superior a 9,5 são considerados hostis para a bactéria. No entanto, segundo Schwab *et al.* (2005), um fator sigma alternativo responsivo ao estresse ( $\sigma$ B) pode contribuir para a sobrevivência celular de *L. monocytogenes* sob condições de estresse, incluindo a exposição a pH baixo, estresse oxidativo, falta de carbono e crescimento a baixas temperaturas. Esse fator pode ativar a expressão de numerosos genes de resistência quando a bactéria entra em fase estacionária devido a condições de estresse ambiental severo, como pode ocorrer durante infecção do trato gastrointestinal.

Assim, quando expostas a condições de estresse intenso, muitas bactérias buscam uma estratégia de sobrevivência, assumindo um estado de repouso que busca manter a integridade celular e seu potencial replicativo (LIU *et al.* 2018). Esta condição, que é amplamente conhecida como viável mas não cultivável (VBNC), pode representar um grande risco para a saúde pública, já que as bactérias mantêm seu potencial infeccioso (MORISHIGE; FUJIMORI; AMANO; 2015), mas podem não ser detectadas pelos métodos tradicionais de cultivo.

Kamp e Higgins (2011) afirmam que a temperatura também é muitas vezes utilizada como um sinal para controlar a transcrição de genes de virulência necessários para a infecção ou genes necessários para a persistência no meio ambiente. No entanto, muito pouco se sabe sobre os mecanismos moleculares que permitem as bactérias se adaptarem e responderem a flutuações de temperatura. Diversos estudos vêm sendo realizados com os genes envolvidos na virulência de *L. monocytogenes*, e novas descobertas sobre suas funções e mecanismos de ação começam a surgir (LE MONNIER *et al.*, 2011), ainda assim, mais estudos para a identificação de genes como o σB, que desempenha um papel vital na resposta geral ao estresse de *L. monocytogenes* ao obstáculo ácido são essenciais (CUNHA *et al.* 2016). Leong *et al* (2016) reforça que a caracterização molecular dos genes de virulência é uma ferramenta importante para diferenciação e classificação do potencial de patogenicidade da bactéria, mesmo que, atualmente, todas as cepas de *L. monocytogenes* devam ser tratadas como altamente patogênicas.

### **1.3 Legislação sobre *Listeria monocytogenes***

Experiências catastróficas como o surto de *L. monocytogenes* entre 2017 e 2018, na África do Sul, com prejuízo direto estimado em mais de US\$ 500 milhões de dólares (OLANYAa *et al.*, 2019) e o maior *recall* de produtos de carne da história americana, em 2002, envolvendo 13.000 toneladas de produtos de frango e peru RTE suspeitos de contaminação por *L. monocytogenes* (FSIS, 2012), tem levado inúmeras agências regulatórias estudarem e estabelecerem limites para este patógeno em alimentos. No entanto, conforme pode ser observado a seguir no **Quadro 1**, os critérios diferem significativamente entre as regiões e as autoridades alimentares (GHANBARI *et al.*, 2013), não havendo consenso sobre os “níveis aceitáveis” de *L. monocytogenes* nos alimentos no mundo.

Segundo a Legislação Europeia, são considerados de risco baixo os alimentos em que o microrganismo não pode se desenvolver ou possui um potencial limitado para o desenvolvimento de *L. monocytogenes*, assim preconiza que os níveis não excedam 100 UFC/g até o prazo de validade indicado em alimentos RTE em geral. Ainda segundo a Legislação Europeia, os alimentos considerados de alto risco, os quais

possuem tolerância zero, são aqueles que favorecem o crescimento de *L. monocytogenes* e são mantidos estocados por mais de um dia, além de alimentos RTE infantis e para fins médicos (EUROPEAN COMISSION, 2007). Da mesma forma, o Canadá também determina 100 UFC/g como valor máximo em produtos enquadrados como de baixo risco para *L. monocytogenes* (HEALTH CANADA, 2011). A FSANZ (*Food Standards Australia New Zealand*) também classifica os alimentos em categoria de risco, estabelecendo limites desde ausência de *L. monocytogenes* em produtos de alto risco e tolerância de até 100 UFC/g para os outros alimentos (FSANZ, 2014).

A legislação de vários países no mundo, no entanto, prevê a verificação de ausência de *L. monocytogenes* ou a presença de até 100 UFC/g mesmo em alimentos congelados, que podem ser utilizados para sushi, por exemplo. Considerando alimentos de origem marinha RTE, os Estados Unidos da América (EUA) requer ausência da bactéria em amostras de 25 g de produtos, bem como define como ilegal a venda de produtos RTE em geral contaminados com qualquer quantidade de *L. monocytogenes* (FDA, 2011).

No Brasil, o Ministério da Agricultura, Pecuária e Abastecimento (MAPA), em 2009, por meio da Instrução Normativa nº 9, instituiu procedimentos de controle de *L. monocytogenes* em produtos de origem animal prontos para o consumo (BRASIL, 2009). Coletas oficiais de produtos prontos e pré-prontos para o consumo nas indústrias de pescado do país vem sendo realizadas desde agosto de 2013 pelo MAPA, a fim de obter um panorama da situação atual e prevenir possíveis problemas de saúde pública associados ao consumo de produtos de pescado contaminados com *L. monocytogenes*. No entanto, os produtos de pescado vendidos crus, como o salmão e outras espécies que serão utilizados na culinária japonesa, por exemplo, não são considerados RTE e, portanto, não são coletados neste programa pelo MAPA, o que pode representar um risco à saúde do consumidor.

Além disso, o Regulamento Técnico sobre Padrões Microbiológicos para Alimentos (RDC Nº 12, Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária) no Brasil não define o limite de tolerância para *L. monocytogenes* em produtos de pescado (BRASIL, 2001), assim, o Ministério da Agricultura utiliza como parâmetro para as análises oficiais, ausência de *L. monocytogenes* em 25 g ou ml de produto.

**Quadro 1:** Critérios microbiológicos para *L. monocytogenes* em produtos alimentares Ready To Eat (RTE).

País	Categoria de Alimento	Limite Microbiológico	Referência
Austrália e Nova Zelândia	RTE- Grupo 1: alimentos que suportam o crescimento de <i>L. monocytogenes</i> e são mantidos estocados por mais de um dia.  RTE – Grupo 2: alimentos que não suportam o crescimento de <i>L. monocytogenes</i> e são mantidos estocados por mais de um dia.  RTE – Grupo 3:alimentos que são consumidos imediatamente e que não são estocados por mais de um dia	Ausência em 25 g (n=5, c=0)  Ausência em 25 g se presente em <100 UFC/g (n=5, c=0)  Ausência em 25 g se presente em <100 UFC/g (n=5, c=0)	FSANZ (2014)
Canadá	Categoria 1(Alta prioridade) RTE= produtos de pescado (o crescimento de <i>L.monocytogenes</i> pode ocorrer, mas não exceder 100 UFC/g antes do fim da vida de prateleira estabelecida) por exemplo, patês de pescado refrigerados ou mousses.  Categoria 2A (Média a baixa prioridade) RTE= produtos de pescado (o crescimento de <i>L.monocytogenes</i> pode ocorrer, mas não exceder 100 UFC/g antes do fim da vida de prateleira estabelecida) por exemplo, salmão defumado e sushi.  Categoria 2B (Baixa prioridade) RTE= produtos de pescado (o crescimento de <i>L.monocytogenes</i> não pode ocorrer, durante a vida de prateleira estabelecida) por exemplo, camarão congelado;	Ausência em 25 g (n=5)  <100 UFC/g em 10 g (n=5)  <100 UFC/g em 10 g (n=5)	HEALTH CANADA (2011)
China	Para alimentos sob refrigeração (excluindo alimentos congelados) ou dietas especiais para crianças.  Para outros produtos RTE	Ausência em 25 g  <2 UFC/g (n=5, c=0)	ANÔNIMO (2007)
União Européia	Produtos RTE para crianças e propósitos médicos  Produtos RTE capazes de suportar o crescimento de <i>L. monocytogenes</i> e outros produtos de RTE para crianças e propósitos médicos  Produtos RTE incapazes de suportar o crescimento de <i>L. monocytogenes</i> e outros produtos de RTE para crianças e propósitos médicos	Ausência em 25 g se presente em <100 UFC/g (n=1, c=0)  100 UFC/g (n=5, c=0)  100 UFC (n=5, c=0)	(EUROPEAN COMISSION, (2007)
Estados Unidos da América	Produtos marinhos RTE	Ausência em 25 g	FDA (2011).

Adaptado de Jami *et al.* (2014).

#### 1.4 Métodos de Quantificação para *Listeria monocytogenes*

Existe uma variedade de métodos convencionais atualmente disponíveis para a detecção e identificação de *L. monocytogenes* em amostras de alimentos. Os métodos bacteriológicos convencionais são importantes por várias razões: seu uso resulta em uma cultura pura do organismo, o que é útil para fins de fiscalização e gestão de surtos epidemiológicos (ANDREWS, 2002). Tais métodos continuam a serem os “padrões de ouro” contra os quais outros métodos são comparados e validados. Estes métodos são geralmente sensíveis e não requerem equipamentos sofisticados e dispendiosos, facilitando o seu uso (ANDREWS, 2002).

O método europeu e internacional padrão para a enumeração de *L. monocytogenes* é a ISO 11290:2 (2017). Ele é considerado o método padrão de referência para quantificação de *L. monocytogenes* no Regulamento (CE) n.2073/2005, sendo que este método consiste em espalhar amostras após diluições decimais adicionais em placas de ágar seletivo. O Ágar Palcam, prescrito pelo método de referência, não é capaz de distinguir colônias de *L. monocytogenes* de colônias de *Listeria spp.* Portanto, cinco colônias típicas por placa devem ser confirmadas para *L. monocytogenes* através de ensaios bioquímicos e microscopia (AUVOLAT; BESSE, 2016). A especificidade do método melhorou muito desde 2004 com a introdução de um ágar específico, o Ágar *Listeria* de acordo com Ottaviani e Agosti (ágar Aloa), que distingue *L. monocytogenes* de outras espécies de *Listeria* e, assim, identifica melhor as colônias de *L. monocytogenes* para confirmação. O ágar Aloa foi adotado pela Organização Internacional Normalização (ISO) como o meio padrão para métodos de detecção e enumeração de *L. monocytogenes* (AUVOLAT; BESSE, 2016).

De qualquer forma, o uso de métodos dependentes de cultivo para análise de *L. monocytogenes* em alimentos vem demonstrando inúmeros limitantes. Entre os mais importantes, é possível citar o longo tempo e trabalho para chegar ao diagnóstico final da análise, devido aos vários passos de transferência de inóculos e incubação, necessários para a execução dos métodos (GARRIDO-MAESTU *et al.* 2018). Além disso, é preciso considerar que estes métodos podem gerar respostas falso negativas, já que, em resposta a fatores de estresse, *L. monocytogenes* pode assumir um estado

VBNC, onde permanece com seu potencial infectivo, mas não pode ser detectado por métodos tradicionais Lindback *et al.* (2010)

Assim, a busca pela melhoria dos métodos de enumeração de *L. monocytogenes* tem inspirado pesquisas extensivas, levando a criação de vários métodos alternativos ao método de referência padrão (AUVOLAT; BESSE, 2016). O desenvolvimento de métodos de detecção rápidos, sensíveis e confiáveis para detecção e quantificação de *L. monocytogenes* é muito importante para a indústria de alimentos, principalmente para produtos com vida útil limitada (PAGADALA *et al.*, 2011). A aplicação de métodos moleculares, como a técnica de Reação em Cadeia de Polimerase (PCR, do inglês *Polymerase Chain Reaction*) para a detecção de patógenos na área de alimentos, que dá suporte aos resultados obtidos pelos métodos microbiológicos tradicionais, aumentando a consistência dos resultados (ROSSMANITH; WAGNER, 2011). A PCR é uma metodologia que pode ser executada inteiramente *in vitro* sem o uso de células, que foi desenvolvida nos anos 80 por Kary Mullis, que recebeu, em 1994, o prêmio Nobel (LOEFFELHOLZ; DENG, 2006).

Em contraste com outros métodos moleculares, em que relativamente grandes quantidades de alvo DNA ou RNA são necessárias para realizar o teste, o PCR amplifica grandes quantidades de DNA a partir de quantidades diminutas do DNA alvo (GASANOV *et al.*, 2005; BOTTERO; DALMASSO, 2011). O método de reação em cadeia da polimerase é capaz de fornecer resultados rápidos e sensíveis para a detecção de patógenos em alimentos (PAGADALA *et al.*, 2011). Assim, o PCR já está estabelecido como uma técnica confiável e reproduzível para a identificação de *Listeria spp.* e, mais importante, para a diferenciação de *L. monocytogenes* (GASANOV *et al.*, 2005; BOTTERO; DALMASSO, 2011).

A primeira etapa na identificação de microrganismos baseado em DNA é o isolamento de seu DNA genômico. O isolamento de DNA a partir de matrizes alimentares para utilização em PCR é dificultada pelo fato de muitos ingredientes em alimentos poderem atuar como inibidores de PCR. A qualidade do DNA também pode ser reduzida por muitas das condições comuns a processamentos de alimentos, tais como o baixo pH, altas temperaturas, alta pressão, e hidrólise (CHAPELA *et al.*, 2007; KESMEN *et al.*, 2009; BOTTERO; DALMASSO, 2011). Existem inúmeros métodos de extração de DNA, manuais e automatizados, com uso de kits comerciais. Independente do método utilizado, os passos básicos para extração do DNA de uma

amostra consistem em lise celular, ligação, lavagem e eluição final (CHAPELA *et al.*, 2007).

Ainda, mais recentemente, a possibilidade de monitorar a PCR em tempo real (qPCR) revolucionou o processo de quantificação de fragmentos de DNA e RNA. A PCR em tempo real realiza a detecção e quantificação destes ácidos nucléicos de maneira precisa e com maior reproduzibilidade, porque determina valores durante a fase exponencial da reação. O ponto que detecta o ciclo na qual a reação atinge o limiar da fase exponencial é denominado de *Quantitation Cycle* (Cq) (LOEFFELHOLZ; DENG, 2006). A PCR em tempo real, usando sondas fluorescentes específicas de sequência (como a sonda TaqMan®) ou corantes fluorescentes não específicos (como o SYBR® Green) permitem a detecção e quantificação de fragmentos de DNA alvo, eliminando a necessidade de eletroforese pós-PCR, reduzindo assim o tempo necessário para obter o resultado (KESMEN *et al.*, 2009; CHUANG *et al.*, 2012). Além disso, a rápida tecnologia PCR é agora comercialmente disponível para ensaios em tempo real e tem sido utilizado na identificação de agentes patogênicos (LIN *et al.*, 2005; HELLBERG; MORRISSEY, 2011).

Diversos autores tem utilizado a qPCR para detecção e quantificação de DNA de *L. monocytogenes* em diversas matrizes alimentares, como Rantsiou *et al.* (2008), que desenvolveu uma técnica de qPCR para *L. monocytogenes* utilizando curvas de calibração, através de diluição seriada em amostras para diferentes matrizes alimentares pré enriquecidas. Russo *et al.* (2014) realizou uma comparação entre a metodologia de NMP (Número Mais Provável) com qPCR em vegetais frescos, demonstrando que a qPCR foi capaz de detectar um limite de  $10^1$  UFC/g de *L. monocytogenes* nas amostras de vegetais testados após 2 horas de pré-enriquecimento. Pagadala *et al.* (2012) realizou um estudo de prevalência e caracterização de *L. monocytogenes* em caranguejos, através do uso de um protocolo de qPCR. Jeyalethchumi *et al.* (2010b) desenvolveu uma pesquisa utilizando o método combinado de PCR-NMP com o objetivo de realizar a enumeração de *L. monocytogenes* em vegetais e comparar os resultados com outros métodos de enumeração de patógenos, obtendo resultados satisfatórios. Postollec *et al.* (2011) e Auvolat e Besse (2016) relataram diversos estudos de detecção de *L. monocytogenes* através de diferentes técnicas, incluindo qPCR.

No entanto, vale ressaltar que os métodos de amplificação de DNA ainda apresentam um grande inconveniente devido à sua incapacidade de discriminar bactérias

vivas e mortas presentes em amostras de alimentos (ELIZAQUÍVEL *et al.*, 2014). A ausência de discriminação entre as cópias de DNA provenientes de células viáveis e não viáveis de agentes patogênicos é especialmente problemática para a aplicação desta técnica em de segurança dos alimentos, pois diferentes métodos de processamento térmico são utilizados para esterilizar alguns alimentos. Assim, as técnicas de amplificação de DNA podem levar à superestimação dos microrganismos presentes e falsos positivos, pois o DNA de bactérias mortas é conservado durante longos períodos e pode interferir no processo de amplificação (WAGNER *et al.*, 2015).

No entanto, a adição de corantes intercalantes, tais como propídio monoazida (PMA) antes da extração do DNA associadas a técnicas como o qPCR tem sido estudados, visando superar esse obstáculo e permitir ação de discriminar células viáveis e não viáveis de bactérias patogênicas (DINU; BACH 2013). Isso porque, moléculas como PMA só podem penetrar as membranas de células não viáveis, já que são impermeáveis à membrana celular. Sendo assim, conseguem intercalar com o DNA genômico das células mortas, formando ligações covalente e inibindo a replicação do DNA pela polimerase (DESNEUX *et al.*, 2015). Estudos realizados por Garrido-Maestu *et al.*, 2018; Sheng *et al.*, 2018; Tao *et al.*, 2017 demonstraram resultados interessantes utilizando o PMA para evitar falsos positivos na PCR com diferentes espécies de microrganismos e em diferentes matrizes.

Apesar de inúmeras aplicações bem-sucedidas, o PMA-qPCR atualmente demonstra algumas limitações práticas. Conforme citado por Fittipaldi *et al.* (2012), um dos maiores desafios envolve a não supressão total dos sinais celulares, levando a uma superestimação das células intactas. Alguns autores, como Rudi *et al.* (2005) e Chang *et al.* (2010) relatam a redução de sinal de até 4 UFC células mortas. Apesar da necessidade de novos estudos na quantificação de células viáveis de *L. monocytogenes* em alimentos, inúmeras pesquisas vem indicando que o PMA- qPCR demonstra resultados promissores, principalmente por sua capacidade de quantificar DNA de bactérias em seu estado VBNC (VONDRAKOVA *et al.* 2018).

## 1.5 Simulação *in vitro*

É sabido que, antes de estabelecer seu ciclo de infecção no trato intestinal, *L. monocytogenes* precisa superar diferentes estresses encontrados no hospedeiro, sendo considerado o ambiente ácido e a presença dos sais biliares no trato gastrointestinal os desafios mais críticos (MELO *et al.* 2013). Liu *et al.* (2018) enfatiza que compreender a capacidade de *L. monocytogenes* em tolerar estresses ambientais extremos é importante para entender como ocorre de fato a colonização do trato gastrointestinal no hospedeiro. Além disso, os autores afirmam que isso pode ajudar a elucidar questões como a formação de biofilmes, os fatores que levam a persistência desse patógeno nos produtos alimentares e até mesmo explicar como os processos de manufatura e limpeza em ambientes industriais tem se mostrado ineficientes para *L. monocytogenes*.

Também é importante considerar que o trato gastrointestinal é colonizado por uma vasta comunidade de bactérias comensais, as quais têm importante função imunológica de proteger o hospedeiro contra patógenos externos (KAMADA *et al.*, 2013). Assim, a interação entre comensais e patógenos durante o crescimento é fundamental para a ocorrência de doenças e, portanto, seu estudo é importante e necessário para entender o estabelecimento da infecção (AVENDANO-PEREZ *et al.*, 2015).

Dessa forma, considerando que pouco se conhece sobre o comportamento de *L. monocytogenes* no trato gastrointestinal, estudos vêm sendo conduzidos (BARBOSA *et al.*, 2012; FERREIRA *et al.* 2013; GAHAN e HILL, 2014; CUNHA *et al.*, 2016; NICAOGÁIN e O'BYRNE 2016) buscando compreender seus mecanismos de sobrevivência, através da simulação gastrointestinal *in vitro*, considerando que a realização destes em condições gastrointestinais *in vivo* seria impraticável. Assim, a simulação gastrointestinal *in vitro* consiste em reproduzir laboratorialmente as etapas das condições gastrointestinais sequencialmente, desde a boca até o intestino grosso. Autores como Verruck *et al.* (2015) e Avendano-Pérez *et al.* (2015) descrevem protocolos que tem sido referências para a execução deste tipo de estudo. Nestes protocolos, condições como pH, temperatura, movimentos peristálticos, ação de enzimas específicas são avaliados.

Estudos como o conduzido por NicAogáin e O’Byrne (2016) demonstram que a matriz alimentar pode ter influência sobre a sobrevivência de células de *L. monocytogenes*. Barbosa *et al* (2012), através de seu estudo com cepas provenientes de plantas de processamento de queijo, analisa que Deve-se enfatizar que a resistência de *L. monocytogenes* em uma matriz alimentar a resistência demonstrada pela bactéria seria muito maior, devido à proteção conferida pelos componentes alimentares. Cunha *et al* (2016), avaliando resistência a antimicrobianos avalia que, mesmo que protocolos com a simulação gastrointestinal *in vitro* possua limitações é possível perceber com estes estudos o grande potencial de resistência de *L. monocytogenes* a fatores ambientais adversos, demonstrando o risco potencial do uso de metodologias tradicional que podem subestimar a presença deste importante patógeno em alimentos.

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## CAPÍTULO 2

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**The use of Propidium Monoazide combined with real -time quantitative PCR (PMA-qPCR) assays to quantify *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat salmon**

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## ABSTRACT

Since the culture-based method are labor-intensive, time-consuming and cannot detect viable but nonculturable (VBNC) cells state and qPCR method are rapid but unable to distinguish viable and dead cell, this study aimed to evaluate the applicability of PMA-qPCR method to quantify *Listeria monocytogenes* viable cells in ready-to-eat Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*). For this, a standard linear curve was constructed with spiked raw salmon fillet with *L. monocytogenes* 1 log to 7 log CFU/g. Furthermore, raw salmon samples were artificially inoculated with *L. monocytogenes* cell suspensions in different combination of live, heat-killed and a mixed of heat-killed:live (70:30) and concentrations ranging from 1 log to 5 log CFU/g. A total of 28 commercial raw salmon samples were harvested and analyzed, for an additional evaluation of the PMA-qPCR method. All the enumeration of *L. monocytogenes* was estimated using the PMA-qPCR method, qPCR method, and culture-dependent method, in triplicate. Overall, the PMA-qPCR method was the most efficient for *L. monocytogenes* enumeration, mainly in lower count samples. However, the use of PMA before the DNA extraction didn't promote a total loss of qPCR signal after heat treatments. The results obtained

contributed to demonstrate that PMA-qPCR method can be used as alternative method to improve the supervision and inspection of raw salmon in relation to *L. monocytogenes* quantification, ensuring the food safety and public health.

**Keywords:** *Listeria monocytogenes*; *Salmo salar*; qPCR; PMA-qPCR.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Listeria monocytogenes* (*L. monocytogenes*) is a species of gram-positive bacteria, which is considered as an ubiquitous contaminant of major safety concern for ready-to-eat (RTE) foods and in particular for deli-meats, fish, and dairy products (EFSA, 2013). This intracellular pathogen cause severe listeriosis infections in humans. Invasive listeriosis can be clinically manifested as spontaneous abortion, sepsis, meningoencephalitis and also as a febrile gastroenteritis syndrome (MACKIW *et al.*, 2016). Although an invasive form of listeriosis is an infrequent, it's a life-threatening disease (CHEN *et al.*, 2017) with case-fatality rate ranges between 20 and 50%, accounting for 30% approximately of all foodborne disease-associated deaths (MAMMINA *et al.*, 2013).

Despite the efforts by sanitary authorities and food industries, listeriosis outbreaks are still being notified, resulting in a significant economic and public health impact worldwide (GANDHI; CHIKINDAS, 2007). The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has reported a concern increasing trend of human listeriosis cases in Europe, with an overall case fatality rate of 16.2% in 2016 from 2536 cases reported - the highest among all the food diseases under EU surveillance (EFSA, 2017). Nevertheless, the most catastrophic global *L. monocytogenes* outbreak occurred in South Africa in 2017-2018, with 1,034 total confirmed listeriosis cases with 204 fatalities cases and an estimated cost of more than US\$ 500 million (OLANYAA *et al.*, 2019).

Raw Atlantic Salmon fillet is one of the RTE food categories typically associated with human listeriosis (EFSA, 2013) and is widely distributed in food processing environments (BUCHANAN *et al.*, 2017), might encounter low temperature in salmon processing area (PIERCEY; HINGSTON; HANSEN; 2016). Because of this

ability to multiply at low temperature, the persistent “house strains”, product contaminations and recalls, despite wide pathogen control and monitoring programs, *L. monocytogenes* is considerate the most challenging and burdensome pathogen for many food industry (HEIR *et al.*, 2019).

Concern about the persistence of this pathogen in fish processing environments and in products and the zero-tolerance for *L. monocytogenes* that is practiced in several countries highlights that the setting-up of a rapid, simple quantification method, with high specificity and sensitivity for *L. monocytogenes* is very important for food safety and public health (ZHANG *et al.*, 2018; SHENG *et al.*, 2018).

Although the official methods for the detection of *L. monocytogenes* in foods are culture-based (ISO 11290-2:2017), this conventional methods are labor-intensive, time-consuming and cannot detected viable but nonculturable (VBNC) cells state (TAKAHASHI *et al.*, 2017; ZHANG *et al.*, 2018). Liu *et al.* (2018) define VBNC state as a bacteria survival strategy when exposed to stressed conditions. This ability to enter into a VBNC state and escaping the detection culture can represent a human health risk (BABU; KUSHWAHA; JUNEJA; 2014) since the cells still maintain metabolic activity and may retain their infectivity (MORISHIGE; FUJIMORI; AMANO; 2015).

Real Time Quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction (qPCR) is one of the most often used alternative methods to food pathogen quantification (HEALTH CANADA, 2018) and has been widely used in the rapid detection of *L. monocytogenes* in food (GARRIDO-MAESTU *et al.*, 2018; SHENG *et al.*, 2018; TAO *et al.*, 2017). This technique is fast, simple, having high specificity and sensitivity (GE; MENG, 2009; SHENG *et al.*, 2018). However, due to inability of qPCR to discriminate between DNA from viable and dead bacterial cells in a food sample (TAKAHASHI *et al.*, 2017), it may lead to false-positive results and lead to unnecessary recalls of food products. Fortunately, the introducing of a DNA-intercalating dye, like propidium monoazide (PMA), which penetrates the membrane-damaged cells and decreasing the availability of the free DNA and DNA originating from the dead cells for amplification, improving the accuracy of the qPCR (VONDRAKOVA *et al.*, 2018).

The aim of the present study was to evaluate the applicability of PMA-qPCR combined method in comparison with qPCR and a dependent culture to quantify *Listeria monocytogenes* viable cells in ready-to-eat Salmon (*Salmo salar*), find to

improve the supervision and inspection of this product and ensure the food safety and public health.

## **2. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### *2.1 Preparation of *L. monocytogenes* suspensions*

*L. monocytogenes* (ATCC 19111) was inoculated in Tryptic Soy Broth (TSB, Oxoid, UK) supplemented with 0.6 % (w/v) of Yeast Extract (TSBYE) (Acumedia, USA) and incubated at 37 °C±1 for 24 h. The cells were harvested by centrifugation (10,000 × g for 5 min) and the cell pellet was resuspended in 0.85% (w/v) sterile saltwater. The absorbance of the bacterial cell suspension was measured using a spectrophotometer to adjust to a 0.5 McFarland standard, CFU/g counts were confirmed using Aloa Agar (Agar *Listeria* Ottaviani and Agosti, Bio-Rad Laboratories, Inc. Hercules, CA) after incubation at 37°C±1 for 48 h.

### *2.2 Preparation of heat-killed *L. monocytogenes* suspension*

The above-mentioned cell suspension was heat-killed at 90 °C for 10 min, to prepare the heat-killed suspension. 100 µL of the suspension was stroke on Aloa Agar and inoculated 1 mL in TSBYE to confirm the effect of the heat killing. The absence of any colony formation or broth turbidity after incubation at 37°C for 48h was confirmatory of the effectiveness of the treatment.

### *2.3 Salmon samples*

All the salmon (*Salmo salar*) samples used for DNA extraction and artificial inoculation experiments in this study were purchased from Florianópolis city markets (Santa Catarina, Brazil) and were transported under refrigeration temperature, between 1 and 5 °C. In order to assure the absence of *L. monocytogenes*, firstly the raw salmon fillets were analyzed by culture-dependent (ISO 11290-2: 2017) and qPCR.

### *2.4 DNA Extraction*

For bacterial genomic DNA extraction, 1 mL medium aliquots containing 10<sup>5</sup> CFU/mL of *L. monocytogenes* were centrifuged (4.000 x g, 5 min), the pellets were

used for DNA extraction using DNeasy blood and tissue kit (Qiagen, Missinauga, Ontario, Canadá) automated on the Qiacube System (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany), according to the manufacturers protocol for bacterial pellet. Salmon fillet (*Salmo salar*) genomic DNA was obtained from 1ml of Salmon homogenate using the same DNeasy blood and tissue kit, but with the protocol for tissue sample. DNA concentrations were estimated from measurements at 260 and 280 nm on a Thermo Scientific NanoDrop 1000 spectrophotometer (Wilmington, DE, USA).

### *2.5 PMA treatment*

The samples to standard curve construction, contaminated samples, and commercial samples were treated with PMA. For this, the PMA (Biotium, Inc., Hayward, CA, USA) was dissolved in DNA-free water to create a stock concentration of 20 mM and stored at - 20 °C in the dark. 50 µL of PMA final concentration was added to 500 µL sample aliquots, following an incubation time of 10 min in the dark with constant mixing. The samples were exposed to light during 15 min using a halogen light (650 W lamps) using a “ice bed” placed 20 cm from the light source to keep the sample temperature. Then, cells were pelleted at 5,000 x g for 5 min prior to DNA extraction. To study the effect of cell concentration on PMA efficiency, PMA was added to 500 µL of *L. monocytogenes* suspension before heat treatment (Sample 1), *L. monocytogenes* suspension after heat treatment (Sample 2) and a mixed of 70% *L. monocytogenes* suspension after heat treatment suspension and 30% of *L. monocytogenes* suspension before heat treatment (Sample 3) in concentrations ranging from 1 Log to 5 Log CFU/g.

### *2.6 qPCR procedure*

Forward primer (CATGGCACCAACCAGCATCT), reverse primer (CATGGCACCAACCAGCATCT) and the hydrolysis probe (FAM-GCCTGCAAGTCCTAAGACGCCA-TAMRA) targeting the *hly* gene of *L. monocytogenes* that codes for Listeriolysin O (LE MONNIER *et al.*, 2011) were adapted of Russo *et al.* (2014), as described by Barretta (2015), which used for detection of *L. monocytogenes* in fresh-cut products. Quantitative real-time polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) was performed in Real Time Rotor-Gene Q® (Qiagen,

Hombrechtikon, Switzerland). The reaction was performed using the Rotor-Gene Probe PCR kit (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany). The amplification reactions were carried out in a final volume of 25 µL containing: 5,5 µL of RNase free-water; 12.5 µL of 2× Rotor-Gene Prob Master Mix; 0,4 µM of each primer; 0,2 µM of probe and 2 µL of DNA. All reactions were carried out in duplicate under the following cycling conditions: 3 min at 95°C; 45 cycles of 15 s at 95°C and 60 s at 60°C (ON-FAM). In all reactions performed, each rotor included a negative PCR control, a reaction performed with DNA-free water with no template control (NTC) and a positive control with 50 ng/uL of *L. monocytogenes* (ATCC 19111) DNA as ISO 11290-2 norm determines (ISO 11290-2:2017).

#### *2.7 Standard curves with contaminated samples*

Standard curves were obtained from bacterial DNA extracted from independent triplicate salmon fillet samples previously inoculated with serially diluted concentrations of *L. monocytogenes* ATCC 19111 strain. A pure culture of the *L. monocytogenes* strain reference was spiked into salmon fillet samples in concentrations ranging from 1 log to 7 log CFU/g. The DNA was extracted from each sample and used as template for qPCR with the conditions described above. After qPCR was carried out, Cq values obtained from PCR from each dilution were plotted against log CFU/g of *L. monocytogenes* determined using ISO reference method. The samples were quantified by qPCR, with and without PMA treatment using this standard curve.

#### *2.8 Comparison between PMA-qPCR, qPCR and the culture-dependent method*

Enumerating of *L. monocytogenes* in all Salmon sample were obtained by the PMA-qPCR method were compared with those obtained by the qPCR method and culture-dependent method.

The raw salmon samples were artificially inoculated with *L. monocytogenes* cell suspensions in different combination of live, heat-killed and a mixed of heat-killed: live (70:30) and concentrations ranging from 1 log to 5 log CFU/g, with triplicates in each concentration. For plate counting of *L. monocytogenes*, a serial dilution of each fillet

salmon homogenate was used with Aloa Agar, as recommended by ISO (ISO 11290-2:2017).

A total of 28 raw salmon samples were harvested and analyzed, for an additional evaluation of the PMA-qPCR method. The enumeration of *L. monocytogenes* was estimated using the PMA-qPCR method, qPCR method, and culture-dependent method, as described previously.

### *2.9 Statistical analysis*

To determine significant differences ( $P<0.05$ ) between results, it was used one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey studentized range test. All statistical analyses were performed using STATISTICA 13.3 software (TIBCO Software Inc., Palo Alto, CA). All data were expressed as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A standard linear curve was constructed from 1 log to 7 log CFU/g. The  $R^2$  was 0.99 and the slope of the curve was -3.2921 corresponding to an efficiency of 101,35%, demonstrating the strong correlation between qPCR method and CFU/g counts (Fig. 1). As well as Miotto *et al.* (2019), a standard curve was used to convert Cq average values obtained in molecular methods which is expressed in DNA copy number to UFC, permitting the comparison with plate counts values (Cq *versus* log CFU/mL;  $y=-3,29 x + 44,09$ ;  $R^2 = 0.99$ ).

Table 1 shows the quantification of *L. monocytogenes* viable cells from artificially contaminated samples of raw salmon with different type of treatment. On the sample 1, which was *L. monocytogenes* suspension before heat treatment, considering the same dilution, doesn't have difference ( $P < 0.05$ ) between detection methods. It was expected, since it is known that the most important advantage of use PMA treatment is the suppression of the false-positive signal from the dead cells, did not bring any evidence showing to use in known live cells. Xu-Cong *et al.* (2016) highlighted that PMA is a membrane-impermeable dye that can only penetrate dead cells through compromised cell membranes. The qPCR method show slight increase ( $P < 0.05$ ) when the contamination was 2 and 3 log UFC/g when compared with culture dependent and

PMA-qPCR methods. Considering the known characteristics of the qPCR method in not distinguish death or live DNA cells, is possible assume that this difference is DNA death cells amplification. The same was observed by Banihashemi *et al.* (2012) for *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella*, Wu *et al.* (2015) for *Vibrio cholera*, Desneux *et al.* (2016) for *L. monocytogenes* and Liu *et al.* (2018) for *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*. Kragh, Thykier and Hansen (2020) also related that omitting the use of PMA treatment prior to DNA extraction resulted in a significant overestimation of the number of viable cells by qPCR assay. Vondrakova *et al.* (2018) emphasized that the risk of count overestimation in qPCR use due to the inability of the technique to identify the origin of the signal from live and dead bacteria or free DNA. Chen *et al.* (2017) observed that only *L. monocytogenes* viable cells generated pathogenicity. These authors affirmed that even after cells lost their viability, the DNA remain in the environment. Therefore, the qPCR should be previously used with PMA treatment.

For the sample 2, as expected when employed the culture-dependent method, it was not quantified any *L. monocytogenes* colony. On the other hand, comparing the molecular methods, in all the dilutions, qPCR results were always higher ( $P < 0.05$ ) than PMA-qPCR method. This behavior confirming the observed for the sample 1. The same was noted by Kragh, Thykier and Hansen (2020) when evaluated *L. monocytogenes* dead cells quantification by PMA-qPCR. However, Vondrakova *et al.* (2018) verified a total loss of PMA-qPCR signal after heat treatments of *Campylobacter spp* species.

The sample 3 contaminated with 1 log UFC per gram of *L. monocytogenes* also showed zero count, when used the culture-dependent method. For the other log contamination, the behavior of results was similar with sample 2. In this case was observed an amplification increase tendency when compared the qPCR method with PMA-qPCR. For the culture-dependent method, the same was noted to other log.

Overall the PMA-qPCR reduced the DNA death cell amplification in all sample 2. However, it was not able to realize the total inhibition of the DNA amplification. Løvdal *et al.* (2011) overestimated an amplification of *Listeria innocua* viable and heat-killed cells using PMA-qPCR. Fittipaldi, Nocker and Codony (2012) reported that several factors have been studied to improve the signal suppression from dead cells, including PMA concentration. Nkuipou-Kenfack *et al.* (2013) cited that the PMA concentration most often used is between 50 and 100  $\mu\text{M}$ , despite this factor demonstrated different behavior for each bacteria. In the present study, the PMA

concentration utilized was equal to 50 µM, which is in accordance with Pan and Breidt (2007). These authors related a strong signal reduction for viable cells when used 50 µM of PMA to quantify *L. monocytogenes*. Løvdal *et al.* (2011) demonstrated no statistical differences between the three concentrations of PMA (25, 50, 100 µM) when applied on mixtures of *L. monocytogenes* viable and dead cells. On the other hand, Dorn-In, Gareis, and Schwaiger (2019) evaluating *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, observed a higher efficiency to discriminate dead cells from viable cells, employing 100 µM of PMA in comparison with the 25 µM and 50 µM PMA concentration. Comparing the same contaminate dilution and using the same method (Tab. 1) was possible observe the difference between the three samples. Overall, the qPCR method showed higher amplification than PMA-qPCR. The culture-dependent method only showed a significant count for the sample 1. As expected, for the sample 3 was verified few colony count.

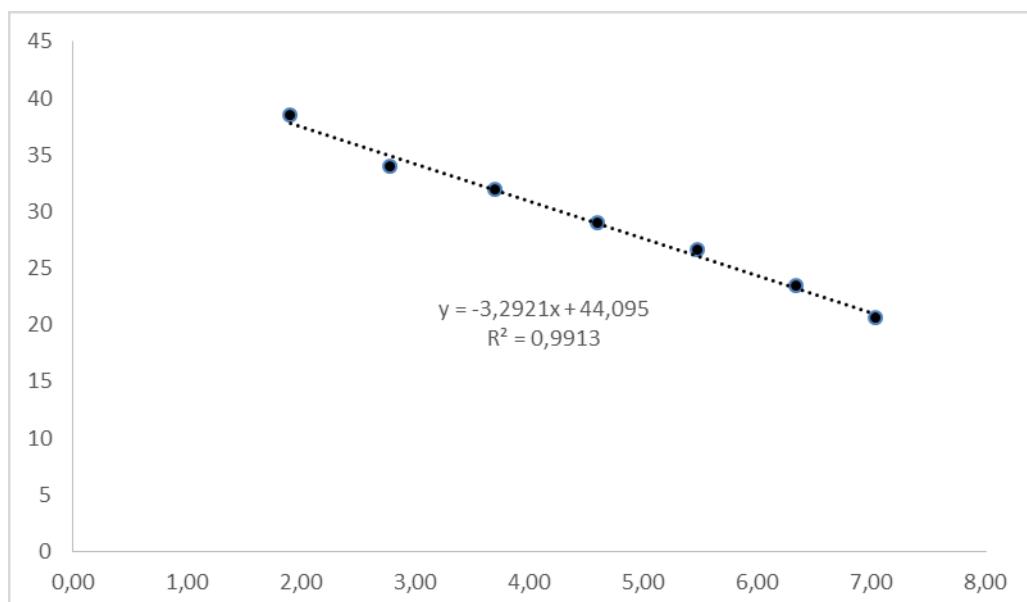
In general, in lower count samples, at least 1 to 4 log UFC/g the PMA-qPCR method reported a better performance then qPCR method when compared with high counts samples (5 log UFC/g).

When compared the detectable capacity of methods in artificially inoculated samples, it's clear that molecular methods are more sensible in low counts than culture-dependent method. It is not a novelty, because Postollec *et al.* (2011), Russo *et al.* (2014) and Leong *et al.* (2016) confirmed that the qPCR is faster than conventional culture-based methods, as well as highly sensitive and more specific. Furthermore, Oliver (2010) highlighted that even though the conventional cultivation-based method is the most frequently used method for monitoring bacteria viable cells. The same author affirmed that this type of method may underestimate the actual microbial populations, because some bacteria may achieved the viable but nonculturable (VBNC) state.

The results application of *PMA-qPCR* method in commercial raw salmon is showed in Table 2. Overall, for the high *L. monocytogenes* quantification in the commercial samples, was the same that the artificially contaminated sample. This behavior was similar those noted by Kragh, Thykier and Hansen (2020) and Overney *et al.* (2017). These authors verified a higher number of viable cells on the PMAqPCR method compared to culturable cells, which can be related with the culture-dependent method limitation to quantify VBNC cells state. Kibbee and Örmeci (2017) related that is well established that bacteria become a VBNC state, when in environmental stressed

conditions. Considering the high challenges of food industry environment, the impossibility to detect the presence of the VBNC state is a important concern. Therefore, we accept the reported by Vondrakova *et al.* (2018). These authors affirmed that since based on amplification of nucleic acids, another major advantage over standard cultivation methods is a positive detection of VBNC state.

**Figure 1:** Standard linear curve of fillet salmon samples artificially contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* suspensions.



Standard curves were obtained from bacterial DNA extracted from independent triplicate salmon fillet samples previously inoculated with 1 log to 7 log CFU/g of *L. monocytogenes* ATCC 19111 strain. The  $R^2$  was 0.99 and the slope of the curve was -3.2921 corresponding to an efficiency of 101,35%.

**Table 1:** *Listeria monocytogenes* enumeration (log CFU/g) in raw salmon artificially contaminated with different type of treatment.

		<i>L. monocytogenes</i> enumeration (log CFU/g)				
Suspension amount addition		1	2	3	4	5
Sample	Enumeration method					
1	Culture-dependent	0.80±0.00 <sup>aA</sup>	1.90±0.00 <sup>bA</sup>	3.00±0.15 <sup>bA</sup>	4.40±0.10 <sup>aA</sup>	5.00±0.25 <sup>aA</sup>
	Qpcr	1.00±0.40 <sup>aA,B</sup>	2.60±0.05 <sup>aA</sup>	3.70±0.20 <sup>aA</sup>	4.30±0.30 <sup>aA</sup>	4.80±0.60 <sup>aA</sup>
	PMA-qPCR	1.00±0.00 <sup>aA</sup>	2.40±0.10 <sup>aA</sup>	3.10±0.20 <sup>a,bA</sup>	4.10±0.10 <sup>aA</sup>	4.50±0.30 <sup>aA</sup>
2	Culture-dependent	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
	qPCR	0.70±0.10 <sup>aB</sup>	2.00±0.30 <sup>aB</sup>	3.30±0.15 <sup>aA</sup>	3.90±0.35 <sup>aA,B</sup>	4.50±0.50 <sup>aA</sup>
	PMA-qPCR	0.40±0.00 <sup>bc</sup>	1.00±0.00 <sup>bc</sup>	2.50±0.05 <sup>bc</sup>	2.90±0.00 <sup>bb</sup>	3.10±0.10 <sup>bb</sup>
3	Culture-dependent	ND	0.70±0.00 <sup>cB</sup>	1.20±0.00 <sup>bb</sup>	3.90±0.00 <sup>bb</sup>	4.20±0.30 <sup>bb</sup>
	qPCR	1.00±0.00 <sup>aA</sup>	2.10±0.20 <sup>aB</sup>	2.90±0.00 <sup>aB</sup>	3.60±0.00 <sup>aB</sup>	5.00±0.40 <sup>aA</sup>
	PMA-qPCR	0.90±0.00 <sup>bb</sup>	1.20±0.30 <sup>bb</sup>	3.00±0.30 <sup>aA</sup>	2.90±0.30 <sup>cb</sup>	4.20±0.00 <sup>ba</sup>

Culture dependent = ISO 11290-2: 2017 method; qPCR = quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction method; PMA-qPCR = PMA-combined real-time quantitative PCR method. Sample 1: *L. monocytogenes* suspension before heat treatment. Sample 2: *L. monocytogenes* suspension after heat treatment. Sample 3: a mixed of 70% *L. monocytogenes* suspension after heat treatment suspension and 30% of *L. monocytogenes* suspension before heat. Results expressed as mean were realized in triplicate for each sample and with three repetitions for each *L. monocytogenes* enumeration method. ND = lower than quantification limit of the method.

**Table 2:** *Listeria monocytogenes* enumeration (log CFU/g) in raw salmon commercial samples, expressed as means  $\pm$  standard deviations.

Sample	<i>L. monocytogenes</i> enumeration method		
	Culture-dependent	qPCR	PMA-qPCR
1	ND	3.50 $\pm$ 0.30 <sup>a</sup>	0.80 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>b</sup>
2	2.30 $\pm$ 0.20 <sup>b</sup>	4.40 $\pm$ 0.30 <sup>a</sup>	3.70 $\pm$ 0.26 <sup>a</sup>
3	0.60 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	3.40 $\pm$ 0.36 <sup>a</sup>	0.50 $\pm$ 0.10 <sup>b</sup>
4	ND	1.90 $\pm$ 0.20 <sup>a</sup>	0.40 $\pm$ 0.20 <sup>b</sup>
5	0.51 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>c</sup>	3.30 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	1.80 $\pm$ 0.25 <sup>b</sup>
6	0.90 $\pm$ 0.20 <sup>c</sup>	1.90 $\pm$ 0.10 <sup>a</sup>	1.20 $\pm$ 0.30 <sup>b</sup>
7	1.90 $\pm$ 0.10 <sup>b</sup>	3.30 $\pm$ 0.25 <sup>a</sup>	2.00 $\pm$ 0.15 <sup>b</sup>
8	2.30 $\pm$ 0.22 <sup>b</sup>	3.40 $\pm$ 0.31 <sup>a</sup>	2.60 $\pm$ 0.15 <sup>b</sup>
9	1.20 $\pm$ 0.19 <sup>c</sup>	3.00 $\pm$ 0.15 <sup>a</sup>	2.00 $\pm$ 0.05 <sup>b</sup>
10	ND	ND	ND
11	1.90 $\pm$ 0.30 <sup>b</sup>	3.00 $\pm$ 0.30 <sup>a</sup>	2.40 $\pm$ 0.35 <sup>a,b</sup>
12	ND	ND	ND
13	0.50 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	1.90 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.40 $\pm$ 0.10 <sup>b</sup>
14	ND	1.80 $\pm$ 0.28 <sup>a</sup>	1.40 $\pm$ 0.35 <sup>a</sup>
15	ND	ND	ND
16	3.00 $\pm$ 0.10 <sup>a</sup>	3.20 $\pm$ 0.15 <sup>a</sup>	3.00 $\pm$ 0.10 <sup>a</sup>
17	0.25 $\pm$ 0.05 <sup>b</sup>	2.10 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	2.30 $\pm$ 0.25 <sup>a</sup>
18	ND	1.30 $\pm$ 0.29 <sup>a</sup>	1.50 $\pm$ 0.20 <sup>a</sup>
19	0.50 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>c</sup>	2.30 $\pm$ 0.30 <sup>a</sup>	0.90 $\pm$ 0.10 <sup>b</sup>
20	0.40 $\pm$ 0.14 <sup>b</sup>	0.90 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.80 $\pm$ 0.15 <sup>a</sup>
21	0.50 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>b</sup>	1.70 $\pm$ 0.20 <sup>a</sup>	0.60 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>b</sup>
22	0.70 $\pm$ 0.20 <sup>c</sup>	3.00 $\pm$ 0.30 <sup>a</sup>	1.45 $\pm$ 0.05 <sup>b</sup>
23	1.00 $\pm$ 0.06 <sup>b</sup>	1.40 $\pm$ 0.30 <sup>a</sup>	0.90 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>c</sup>
24	ND	1.00 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.60 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>b</sup>
25	2.80 $\pm$ 0.30 <sup>b</sup>	3.95 $\pm$ 0.14 <sup>a</sup>	3.00 $\pm$ 0.10 <sup>b</sup>
26	ND	ND	ND
27	ND	1.20 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.40 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>b</sup>
28	ND	ND	ND

Culture dependent = ISO 11290-2: 2017 method; qPCR = quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction method; PMA-qPCR = PMA-combined real-time quantitative PCR method. Results expressed as mean were realized in triplicate for each sample and with three repetitions for each *L. monocytogenes* enumeration method. ND = lower than quantification limit of the method.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The better performance method to quantify viable *L. monocytogenes* cells in raw salmon samples observed in this study was using PMA treatment prior to DNA extraction coupled with qPCR (PMA-qPCR). This method significantly improved the suppression of the false-positive signal from the dead cells, proved to be a sensitive and assured method for enumeration of *L. monocytogenes* viable cells in RTE salmon samples.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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## CAPÍTULO 3

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BARRETTA, C.; Verruck, S.; MARAN, B. M.; Maurício, L. S.; MIOTTO, M.; VIEIRA, C. R.W.; PRUDENCIO, E. S. *Listeria monocytogenes* survival in raw Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions by culture, *qPCR* and *PMA-qPCR* detection methods. *LWT - Food Science and Technology*. 107(2019). 132-137. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lwt.2019.03.015>

***Listeria monocytogenes* survival in raw atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet under in vitro simulated gastrointestinal conditions by culture, qPCR and PMA-qPCR detection methods**

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## ABSTRACT

Because the food matrix is considered as one of the significant factors in regulating colonization of microorganisms in the gastrointestinal tract, this study aimed to evaluate how *Listeria monocytogenes* survives in raw Atlantic salmon fillet under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions steps. For *in vitro* gastrointestinal conditions, raw salmon fillet samples were spiked with two *L. monocytogenes* inoculum levels at 2 and 8 log CFU/g, respectively. *L. monocytogenes* enumeration was determined using culture-dependent, qPCR and PMA-PCR methods, and these results determined *L. monocytogenes* recovery rate. The PMA-qPCR method was the most efficient for *L. monocytogenes* enumeration, mainly after oesophagus-stomach and duodenum steps. The recovery rate was higher than 76 %, while to the traditional method this value was lower than 23 %. Overall, *L. monocytogenes* showed stability against the gastrointestinal conditions steps, once the recovery rate was higher than 75 %. However, the raw salmon fillet did not contribute to *L. monocytogenes* stability under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions. The results obtained contribute to

understanding *L. monocytogenes* survival mechanism in a raw fishery product, predicting their behavior during gastrointestinal conditions.

**KEYWORDS:** *Listeria monocytogenes*, raw fishery product, gastrointestinal simulation, PMA-qPCR method, recovery rate.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the significant concerns of raw Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet as a ready-to-eat product is the potential risk of *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination (OVISSIPOUR *et al.*, 2018) because this food is consumed without cooking (Shiroodi *et al.*, 2016). *L. monocytogenes*, a psychotropic, Gram-positive and facultative anaerobe bacterium, is a food-borne pathogen capable to cause severe illness in vulnerable human populations groups such as elderly, newborns, pregnant women, and adults immunocompromised, with a fatality rate from 20 to 50 % (MCCARTHY; BURKHARDT III, 2012).

In the United States, *L. monocytogenes* causes about 1600 illness cases annually, of which 260 were fatal (CDC, 2017). From 2536 cases reported in Europe in 2016, 97.7 % resulted in hospitalizations, and 16.2 % of these case resulted in deaths (EFSA; ECDC, 2017). However, the listeriosis outbreak that began in early 2017 in South Africa is the largest recorded globally, where about 950 cases of the invasive disease had been confirmed and 180 deaths reported (CHERSICH; SCORGIE; RESS; 2018). In addition to being a public health risk, *L. monocytogenes* is an economic burden on the ready-to-eat foods, includes large amounts of costs with analysis of samples, recall of a contaminated product and the possible litigation costs, among others (LEONG *et al.*, 2016).

Gandhi and Chikindas (2007) suggested an innate potential of *L. monocytogenes* strains survival in withstanding extremely adverse conditions during the food processing. Gahan and Hill (2014) highlighted that during passage through the gastrointestinal tract, *L. monocytogenes* encounter slow pH environments in both stomach and duodenum, and the low pH of the stomach provides a significant barrier to *L. monocytogenes* infection. However, the previous study realized by Ferreira *et al.*

(2003) revealed that the acid adaptation of *L. monocytogenes* also conferred protection against the simulated gastric fluid medium. Gahan and Hill (2014) described that the environment that *L. monocytogenes* encounters before infection might influence its survival fitness in the human host and its pathogenic potential. It should also be noted that the majority of previous studies focused on how *L. monocytogenes* cells respond only to the acid of the stomach and after intestine conditions.

Nevertheless, there is still limited knowledge about how these gastrointestinal conditions steps sequentially realized, as it occurs in the human gastrointestinal tract, could influence the survival and fitness of *L. monocytogenes* cells. NicAogáin and O'Byrne (2016) stated that some stressors such as low pH, osmotic stress and low temperature in the food matrix are not sufficient to inhibit the growth of *L. monocytogenes*. These conditions also might facilitate *L. monocytogenes* survival through the human digestive system and increase the number of cells able to invade intestinal epithelial cells. Since the evaluation of *L. monocytogenes* survival present in a food matrix by *in vivo* gastrointestinal conditions is impracticable, the *in vitro* gastrointestinal models have been considered accurate to simulate the gastrointestinal conditions.

Pettersen *et al.* (2019) affirm that *in vitro* methods are cost-effective, reproducible and, in general, rapid, thus available for determining the effects of food matrices and for not raise ethical issues. Studies on *L. monocytogenes* interactions can offer new insights on the different activities of this bacterium proliferation, and its metabolism to pathogenicity and virulence. This, from a food safety perspective, could contribute to more accurate risk assessments and the development of effective strategies to evaluate the behavior of this particular pathogen.

Another essential fact to *L. monocytogenes* is related to the use of its detection method. Garrido-Maestu *et al.* (2018) mentioned that the long time for analysis of the official methods is disadvantageous. Moreover, Lindback *et al.* (2010) reported that in response to environmental stress, *L. monocytogenes* cells might become in viable but non-cultivable condition, and these cells are not detectable by these culture-dependent methods. Gurresh *et al.* (2016) suggested alternative ways such as quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction (qPCR) to explore *L. monocytogenes* viability. However, Desneux *et al.* (2016) reported that the qPCR method detects the DNA of both non-cultivable and death bacteria, leading to false positive results. Thereby, alternative PCR-

based strategies have been developed combining the use of a DNA-binding dye reagent such as Propidium Monoazide (PMA), resulting in the PMA-qPCR method (CANGELOSI; MESCHKE, 2014). In this current study, these three methods, culture-dependent, qPCR, and PMA-qPCR were used to determine the *L. monocytogenes* survival in raw Atlantic salmon fillet during *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions steps.

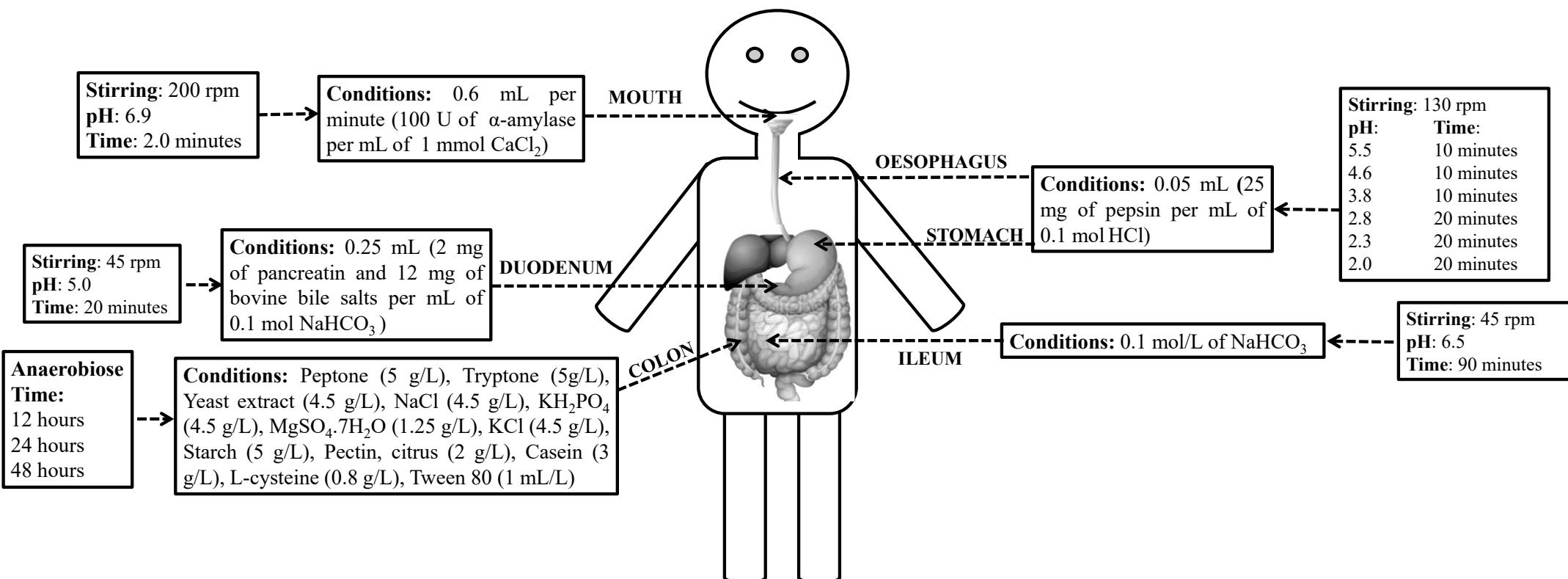
## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### 2.1 Samples preparation

#### 2.1.1 *L. monocytogenes* cell suspensions

*L. monocytogenes* (ATCC 19111) was grown until the stationary phase, overnight at 37 °C in Tryptic Soy Broth (TSB, Oxoid, UK) supplemented with 0.6 % (w/v) of Yeast Extract (TSBYE) (Acumedia, USA). Serial ten-fold dilutions of the culture were prepared in 0.1 % (w/v) peptone water (Oxoid, UK) to obtain suspensions of *L. monocytogenes* at numbers between 2 log and 8 log of Colony Forming Units per gram (CFU/g). Duplicated plates of Aloa Agar (Agar *Listeria* Ottaviani and Agosti, Bio-Rad Laboratories, Inc. Hercules, CA) were spread with 0.1 mL of the *L. monocytogenes* dilution to confirm the inoculum. The plates were incubated at 37 °C for 24 h, and the results were expressed as CFU/g. Two samples with 2 log CFU/g (S1) and 8 log CFU/g (S3) of *L. monocytogenes* cell suspensions were used for *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions. It is noteworthy that a minimum threshold dose may exist and the pathways for a pregnant woman/fetus, immunocompromised persons, and children, for example, may be different from other individuals. For this reason, 2 log CFU/g of *L. monocytogenes* cell suspension was used. Besides that, the use of an input concentration of 8 log CFU/g in gastrointestinal conditions simulates a worst-case scenario and permits evaluation of whether there is significant *L. monocytogenes* reduction.

**Figure 1:** Protocol of under in vitro simulated gastrointestinal conditions steps by Verruck *et al.* (2015) and Avendaño-Pérez *et al.* (2015). All enzymes and bovine bile salts were purchased from Sigma Aldrich (St. Louis, USA), while all others reagents were of analytical grade.



### 2.1.2 Raw salmon fillet preparation

Raw Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet purchased from Florianópolis city markets (Santa Catarina, Brazil), were maintained into the original sealed packaging, and transporting under refrigeration temperature, between 1 and 5 °C. Salmon samples were handled under sterile conditions. In order to assure the absence of *L. monocytogenes*, the raw salmon fillets were previously analyzed by culture-dependent (ISO 11290-2: 2017) and quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction (qPCR) methods. For *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions, raw salmon fillet samples were spiked with two *L. monocytogenes* inoculum level at 2 log CFU/g and 8 log CFU/g, and denoted as S2 and S4 samples, respectively.

### 2.2 *In vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions

*In vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions were realized with 25 g of S1, S2, S3, and S4 samples, according to protocols established by Verruck *et al.* (2015) and Avendano-Pérez *et al.* (2015), with some modifications. These protocols simulate the typical predominant conditions in the human mouth, oesophagus-stomach, duodenum, ileum, and colon sequentially, where in the colon step the samples were collected after 12 h, 24 h, and 48 h. However, all enzyme solutions were filter-sterilized using a 0.22 µm-membrane filter (MF-Millipore, Billerica MA, USA), maintained in an ice bath during the entire simulated gastrointestinal conditions steps. To simulate the temperature (37 °C) and peristaltic movements intensity of the human body a water bath (Dist DI950M, Florianópolis, SC, Brazil) was used. As occurs in human gastrointestinal conditions, the overall volume increased during *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions steps. Therefore, all results were calculated considering the dilution, and when necessary were corrected with peptone water (0.1 %). Simulated gastrointestinal tests were realized in triplicate, on three different days.

### 2.3 *L. monocytogenes* enumeration

*L. monocytogenes* enumeration was assessed in each *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions steps (Figure 1) using the following methods: culture dependent (ISO 11290-2: 2017), qPCR, and PMA-combined real-time quantitative PCR

method (PMA-qPCR) methods. *L. monocytogenes* enumeration was expressed as log CFU/g. Therefore, from each *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions step, one aliquot was used for direct DNA extraction and qPCR amplification (qPCR method).

For the PMA-qPCR method, a pre-treatment with Propidium Monoazide (PMA) (Biotium, Hayward, CA, USA) at a final concentration of 100 µM was realized as described by Elizaquivel, Sanchez and Aznar (2012). After an incubation period of 10 min, protected from light, with occasional stirring, the samples were exposed to 500 W halogen light source for 15 min. The sample tubes were placed about 20 cm from the light source and maintained on ice, and constantly rotated. After PMA pre-treatment, the analyses sequences were the same for both methods, qPCR and PMA-qPCR. Therefore, for the bacterial genomic DNA extraction, aliquots were centrifuged (4,000 x g; 5 min), and the pellets were submitted to DNA extraction using DNeasy Blood and Tissue Kit (Qiagen, Missinauga, Ontario, Canadá) automated on the Qiacube System (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany) according to the manufacturer's protocol for Gram-positive bacterial pellet.

For qPCR amplification primers and probe adapted of Russo *et al.* (2014), as described by Barretta (2015), such as forward primer (CATGGCACCAACCAGCATCT); reverse primer (ATCCGCGTGTTCCTTTCGA); and hydrolysis probe (FAM-CGCCTGCAAGTCCTAACGACGCCA - TAMRA) were used. The target DNA consisted of a well-conserved region of the single gene hly encoding Listeriolysin O (LE MONNIER *et al.*, 2011).

The qPCR method was performed in Real Time Rotor-Gene Q® (Qiagen, Hombrechtikon, Switzerland), and the reaction was conducted using the Rotor-Gene Probe PCR kit (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany). The amplification reactions were carried out in a final volume of 25 µL containing 5.5 µL of RNase free-water; 12.5 µL of 2× Rotor-Gene Prob Master Mix; 0.4 µM of each primer; 0.2 µM of the probe and 2 µL of DNA. All reactions were carried out in duplicate under the following cycling conditions: 3 min at 95 °C; 45 cycles of 15 s at 95 °C and 60 s at 60 °C (ON-FAM) as described by Barretta (2015). A negative PCR control, i. e., a reaction performed with DNA-free water without template control, and a positive control of *L. monocytogenes* DNA (50 ng/uL) were included. The Cq values obtained from qPCR and PMA-qPCR were used to enumerate *L. monocytogenes* in CFU/g through a standard curve. The standard curve

was obtained by spiking salmon fillets with serial dilutions of *L. monocytogenes* in concentrations ranging from 1 log to 8 log CFU/g into salmon fillets.

After the simulated gastrointestinal steps, *L. monocytogenes* recovery rate (RR) (%) was determined using the Eq. (1).

$$RR (\%) = \frac{\text{Enumeration after each gastrointestinal step}}{\text{Initial enumeration}} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

#### 2.4 Statistical analysis

Three experimental trials were carried out in independent days and three replicates were analyzed each time ( $n = 9$ ). To determine significant differences ( $P < 0.05$ ) between results, it was used one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey studentized range test. All statistical analyses were performed using STATISTICA 13.3 software (TIBCO Software Inc., Palo Alto, CA). All data were expressed as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to explore the adaptation of *Listeria monocytogenes* in raw Atlantic salmon fillet under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions, detecting by three different methods. Therefore, Table 1 shows the enumeration results of *L. monocytogenes*, before and after *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions steps. For a better understanding, in Figure 2 can also be visualized the general behavior of the RR values.

Overall, it was clearly observed differences in *L. monocytogenes* enumeration between the three methods used during *in vitro* gastrointestinal steps evaluation. These differences were evident after oesophagus-stomach and duodenum steps where, by using the culture-dependent method, it was not possible to quantify *L. monocytogenes*; however, PMA-qPCR showed counts which suggesting a viable but non-cultivable state for *L. monocytogenes*. According to Chen *et al.* (2017) this fact is expected because molecular methods, such as those based on DNA amplification, are highly sensitive and specific than conventional methods. However, as cited before, despite their advantages,

one of the main problems associated with DNA based methods is their inability to discriminate among viable and dead cells. Therefore, a reliable approach for the specific detection of viable bacterial cells through molecular-based methods is needed. Garrido-Maestu *et al.* (2018) reported that different approaches have risen to try to overcome this limitation, by application of specific chemicals, such as PMA, which bind to free DNA from dead cells and block its amplification. In our study, this fact can be observed, through *L. monocytogenes* enumeration and recovery rate reduction (Table 1 and Figure 2, respectively). Additionally, the inability of qPCR, without PMA treatment, to distinguish dead from live cells since we observed uniformity in *L. monocytogenes* counts during *in vitro* gastrointestinal steps using qPCR. These results were also detected by several studies as Li, Hu and Elkins (2014), Banihashemi *et al.* (2015) and Tantikachornkiat *et al.* (2016), which highlighted that PMA could only penetrate the membranes of non-viable cells, binding with the genomic DNA and blocked the replication by the PCR (DESNEUX *et al.*, 2016). However, after oesophagus-stomach and duodenum steps it was not possible to enumerate *L. monocytogenes* by the culture-dependent method. Using this method, Ferreira *et al.* (2003) also did not detect *L. monocytogenes* under stomach conditions using culture-dependent-method and the authors affirmed that *L. monocytogenes* could be induced to viable but non-cultivable state after exposure to mildly acidified media (~pH 5.0), as we observed in the present study in the ileum condition step.

After the mouth step, it was possible to verify that *L. monocytogenes* enumeration practically not decreased (Table 1). According to Schwab *et al.* (2005), this behavior could be due to the  $\sigma^B$ , a stress-responsive alternative sigma factor that has been identified in some Gram-positive bacteria, such as *L. monocytogenes*. In *L. monocytogenes*,  $\sigma^B$  contributes to cell survival under stress conditions, including exposure to low pH, oxidative stress, carbon starvation, and growth at low temperatures. Melo, Andrew and Faleiro (2015) reported that sigma factors are subunits of prokaryotic RNA polymerase responsible for the recognition of particular DNA sequences in promoter sites. These authors stated that conditions affecting the cell homeostasis trigger the promoter recognition by the polymerase. This factor activates the expression of numerous genes under environmental stress conditions and micro-organism entering into stationary phase (SCHWAB *et al.*, 2005). Cunha *et al.* (2016) affirm that the identification of stress response genes, in particular, an alternative  $\sigma^B$  that

plays a vital role in the general stress response of *L. monocytogenes* to acid hurdle. For this reason, these authors affirmed that *L. monocytogenes* strains could tolerate and survive under harsh environmental conditions such as extreme pH values (< 4.0 or >9.0). Additionally,  $\sigma^B$  has been linked with the regulation of virulence gene expression in *L. monocytogenes* (KAZMIERCZAK *et al.*, 2003).

As expected, when exposed to the next steps, oesophagus-stomach, duodenum, ileum, and colon, respectively, *L. monocytogenes* enumeration of all samples using PMA-qPCR method showed a slight decrease when compared with PCR method. This behavior can be confirmed by RR values (Figure 2). Therefore, it was possible to observe in these simulated steps that *L. monocytogenes* remained present in all samples evaluated. In our case, and as observed by Pettersen *et al.* (2019), the results obtained make us believe that the  $\sigma^B$  was a critical regulation for *L. monocytogenes* to survive adverse and fluctuating stressors present in these steps.

On the other hand, Melo, Andrew and Faleiro (2015) also credited the survival of *L. monocytogenes* to the cross adaption. An important cellular event is cross adaption occurring from prior exposure to stress, e.g., salt or low pH, which confers protection against different types of stress. Cross adaption enables the pathogen to more effectively pass through the host as a result of prior exposure to stress either in the food processing environment or in the food product which induces cross-protection against stressful conditions occurring *in vivo*. Such stressful conditions include exposure to gastric and bile fluids, and conditions of the small intestine. Therefore, pathogen's response to sublethal hurdles in food or during food storage may lead to increased resistance to conditions found in the gastrointestinal conditions. We also believe that the exposure of *L. monocytogenes* firstly to the mouth step may have induced the development of tolerance of the other stress generated by the next steps. These behavior were also noted by Shen, Soni and Nannapaneni (2015). These authors concluded that this bacterium could preserve well the acquired acid adaptation after initial sublethal acid pre-exposure. Thereby, *L. monocytogenes* adaptation to acid condition for a short period, as encountered in the mouth conditions step, not only enhances survival at lethal pH conditions but also provides cross-protection against other causes of injuries from the subsequent gastrointestinal steps. Vasilev *et al.* (2010) highlighted that the occurrence of cross adaption in a psychrotrophic bacterium, such as *L. monocytogenes*, is of particular

importance for refrigerated and ready-to-eat foods, such as salmon, one of the food vehicles of listeriosis outbreaks.

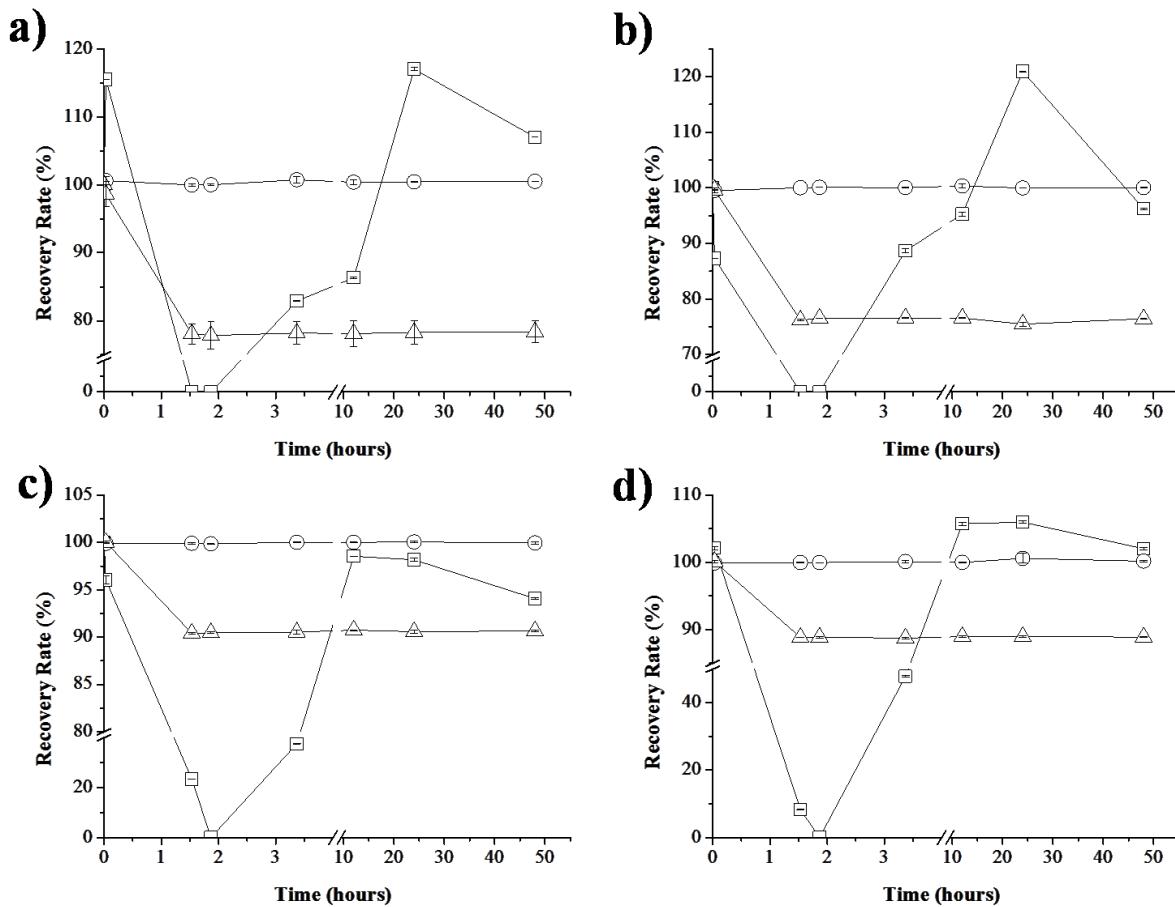
**Table 1:** *Listeria monocytogenes* enumeration (log CFU/g), expressed as means  $\pm$  standard deviations, before and after *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions steps.

Step	Method	log CFU/g			
		S1	S2	S3	S4
<b>Before simulated conditions</b>					
	Culture-dependent	2.42 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>f, C</sup>	2.29 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>d, D</sup>	8.55 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>a, A</sup>	8.37 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>h, B</sup>
	qPCR	2.51 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>e, D</sup>	2.61 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>b, C</sup>	8.35 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>d, B</sup>	8.64 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>d, e, A</sup>
	PMA-qPCR	2.55 $\pm$ 0.02 <sup>d, D</sup>	2.60 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>b, C</sup>	8.34 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>d, e, B</sup>	8.63 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>f, A</sup>
<b>After simulated conditions</b>					
Mouth	Culture-dependent	2.79 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>b, C</sup>	2.00 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>h, D</sup>	8.21 $\pm$ 0.03 <sup>f, B</sup>	8.55 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>g, A</sup>
	qPCR	2.53 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>d, e, D</sup>	2.59 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>c, C</sup>	8.34 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>d, e, B</sup>	8.63 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>e, f, A</sup>
	PMA-qPCR	2.51 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>e, D</sup>	2.59 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>b, c, C</sup>	8.34 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>d, e, B</sup>	8.64 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>d, e, f, A</sup>
Oesophagus-stomach	Culture-dependent	ND	ND	2.00 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>k, A</sup>	0.69 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>k, B</sup>
	qPCR	2.51 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>e, D</sup>	2.61 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>b, C</sup>	8.34 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>d, e, B</sup>	8.64 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>e, A</sup>
	PMA-qPCR	1.99 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>i, C</sup>	1.98 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>h, l, C</sup>	7.54 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>i, B</sup>	7.67 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>i, A</sup>
Duodenum	Culture-dependent	ND	ND	ND	ND
	qPCR	2.51 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>e, D</sup>	2.61 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>b, C</sup>	8.34 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>d, e, B</sup>	8.64 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>d, e, f, A</sup>
	PMA-qPCR	1.98 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>i, C</sup>	1.99 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>h, C</sup>	7.55 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>h, l, B</sup>	7.67 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>i, A</sup>
Ileum	Culture-dependent	2.01 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>h, D</sup>	2.03 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>g, C</sup>	3.21 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>j, B</sup>	4.01 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>j, A</sup>
	qPCR	2.53 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>d, D</sup>	2.61 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>b, C</sup>	8.35 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>d, B</sup>	8.65 $\pm$ 0.02 <sup>d, e, f, A</sup>
	PMA-qPCR	1.99 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>i, C</sup>	1.99 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>h, l, C</sup>	7.55 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>h, l, B</sup>	7.66 $\pm$ 0.02 <sup>i, A</sup>
Colon after 12 h	Culture-dependent	2.09 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>g, D</sup>	2.18 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>f, C</sup>	8.43 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>b, B</sup>	8.85 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>b, A</sup>
	qPCR	2.52 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>e, D</sup>	2.62 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>b, C</sup>	8.35 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>d, B</sup>	8.64 $\pm$ 0.00 <sup>e, A</sup>
	PMA-qPCR	1.99 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>i, C</sup>	1.99 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>h, l, C</sup>	7.57 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>h, B</sup>	7.68 $\pm$ 0.01 <sup>i, A</sup>

Colon after 24 h	Culture-dependent	$2.83 \pm 0.00^{a,c}$	$2.77 \pm 0.00^{a,D}$	$8.39 \pm 0.01^{c,B}$	$8.87 \pm 0.00^{a,A}$
	qPCR	$2.52 \pm 0.00^{e,D}$	$2.61 \pm 0.01^{b,C}$	$8.35 \pm 0.01^{d,B}$	$8.69 \pm 0.02^{c,A}$
	PMA-qPCR	$1.99 \pm 0.00^{i,C}$	$1.97 \pm 0.01^{i,D}$	$7.55 \pm 0.01^{h,I,B}$	$7.68 \pm 0.01^{i,A}$
Colon after 48 h	Culture-dependent	$2.59 \pm 0.01^{c,C}$	$2.20 \pm 0.00^{e,D}$	$8.04 \pm 0.00^{g,B}$	$8.54 \pm 0.00^{g,A}$
	qPCR	$2.52 \pm 0.01^{e,D}$	$2.61 \pm 0.00^{b,C}$	$8.35 \pm 0.00^{d,B}$	$8.65 \pm 0.01^{d,e,A}$
	PMA-qPCR	$1.99 \pm 0.01^{i,C}$	$1.99 \pm 0.00^{h,C}$	$7.56 \pm 0.01^{h,I,B}$	$7.67 \pm 0.01^{i,A}$

Culture dependent = ISO 11290-2: 2017 method; qPCR = quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction method; PMA-qPCR = PMA-combined real-time quantitative PCR method. S1 = *L. monocytogenes* cell suspensions with 2 log of Colony Forming Unity per gram (CFU/g). S2 = Raw salmon fillet spiked with 2 log of *L. monocytogenes* Colony Forming Unity per gram (CFU/g). S3 = *L. monocytogenes* cell suspensions with 8 log of *L. monocytogenes* Colony Forming Unity per gram (CFU/g). S4 = Raw salmon fillet spiked with 8 log of *L. monocytogenes* Colony Forming Unity per gram (CFU/g). Three experimental trials were carried out in independent days and three replicates were analyzed each time ( $n = 9$ ) for each sample (S1, S2, S3, S4); and with three repetitions for each *L. monocytogenes* enumeration method. ND = lower than quantification limit of the method. <sup>a-k</sup> Within a column, different superscript lowercase letters denote significant differences ( $P < 0.05$ ) for the same sample. <sup>A-D</sup> Within a line, different superscript uppercase letters denote significant differences ( $P < 0.05$ ) among samples.

**Figure 2:** *Listeria monocytogenes* mean recovery rate (RR) under in vitro simulated gastrointestinal conditions steps:



(a) S1 = *L. monocytogenes* cell suspensions with 2 log of Colony Forming Unity per gram (CFU/g); (b) S2 = Raw salmon fillet spiked with 2 log of *L. monocytogenes* Colony Forming Unity per gram (CFU/g); (c) S3 = *L. monocytogenes* cell suspensions with 8 log of *L. monocytogenes* Colony Forming Unity per gram (CFU/g); and (d) S4 = Raw salmon fillet spiked with 8 log of *L. monocytogenes* Colony Forming Unity per gram (CFU/g). Three experimental trials were carried out in independent days and three replicates were analyzed each time ( $n = 9$ ) for each sample (S1, S2, S3, S4); and with three repetitions for each *L. monocytogenes* enumeration method. The error bars represent standard deviations of means.

- RR data from Culture dependent = ISO 11290-2: 2017 method.
- RR data from qPCR = quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction method.
- △ RR data from PMA-qPCR = PMA-combined real-time quantitative PCR method.

From the ileum step (pH 5.0), the environmental conditions are not a significant obstacle for the survivor of *L. monocytogenes*. In this step and the colon step (pH 6.5) (after 12, 24 and 48 hours), a low acid level is relatively a less stressful environment for this pathogen. In our study, we observed similar in both these steps; the large amount of *L. monocytogenes* that survived the passage from the stomach to the intestinal steps

would be able to penetrate the host via invasion of intestinal epithelial cells. Melo *et al.* (2013) and Iglesias *et al.* (2017) also observed resistance of *L. monocytogenes* after *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions. However, the study development by these authors did not evaluate gastrointestinal conditions sequentially. We believe that our subsequent study, using simulated conditions by exposure of *L. monocytogenes* in raw Atlantic salmon fillet to the gastrointestinal environment, including digestive enzymes, served as a biological key-event for dose-response models. We verify that by the PMA-qPCR method the external stresses often result in injury and growth inhibition. However, Liu *et al.* (2005) reported that once the stress conditions stop, *L. monocytogenes* will be capable of multiplying. It was also observed that both *L. monocytogenes* inoculum concentrations (2 log UFC/g and 8 log UFC/g) used in our study during *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions, could reach an infecting dose. However, the similar behavior between all samples, make us conclude that our food matrix, i. e., the raw Atlantic salmon fillet was not responsible for facilitating *L. monocytogenes* survival under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions, nor the increase of the cells number able to invade intestinal epithelial cells.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

At the end of our study, the PMA-qPCR method has shown its fitness-for-purpose for the fast and simple screening of viable *Listeria monocytogenes* in the raw Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet sample, as an alternative to the traditional culture-based method. In our study, this fact is evident firstly from the enumeration and recovery rate of *L. monocytogenes* results after oesophagus-stomach and duodenum steps. Both *L. monocytogenes* inoculum concentrations used in our samples under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions could reach an infecting dose because *L. monocytogenes* recovery rate was higher than 76 %. Finally, our findings indicated that *L. monocytogenes* showed stability during the gastrointestinal conditions. However, the food matrix, in this case the raw salmon fillet was not responsible for contributing to *L. monocytogenes* survival under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions.

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## CONSIDERAÇÕES FINAIS

Ao final deste estudo foi possível concluir que o uso do Propídio Monoazida (PMA) combinado com o método de PCR quantitativo em tempo real (PMA-qPCR) mostrou um ótimo desempenho na quantificação células viáveis de *L. monocytogenes* em salmão pronto para o consumo. Assim, este método pode ser uma promissora alternativa ao uso dos métodos dependentes de cultivo, considerando que o PMA-qPCR demonstrou maior confiabilidade do que a ISO 11290:2, graças a sua capacidade de quantificar células no estado viável mas não cultivável (VNBC). Isso foi evidenciado primeiramente nos resultados encontrados nas amostras comerciais e artificialmente contaminadas e posteriormente se confirmaram no estudo utilizando a simulação gastrointestinal *in vitro*. Neste último, isso ficou claro ao se observar a taxa de enumeração e recuperação de *L. monocytogenes* após etapas do esôfago-estômago e duodeno e pelo fato de ser possível recuperar 76% da quantidade de *L. monocytogenes* ao final da simulação, nas duas concentrações da bactéria.

Assim, nossos achados indicaram que *L. monocytogenes* mostrou estabilidade durante a simulação das condições gastrointestinais, demonstrando a importância de um diagnóstico preciso por parte das agências de fiscalização, buscando assegurar a saúde da população em produtos prontos para o consumo, como o salmão. Além disso, ficou claro que a limitação do método qPCR em distinguir DNA de células vivas e mortas de *L. monocytogenes* pode ser minimizada através do uso de PMA antes da extração do DNA neste tipo de produto.

**ANEXO 1 - Carta de Submissão do Artigo “The use of Propidium Monoazide combined with Real-Time Quantitative PCR (PMA-qPCR) assays to quantify *Listeria monocytogenes* in Ready-To-Eat Salmon” para a revista Food Control.**



Federal University of Santa Catarina  
Department of Food Science and Technology

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Florianópolis, October 11, 2019.

To: Dr. Editor-in-Chief: G. Campbell-Platt  
Editor-in-Chief: Food Control

Dear Editor,

We are pleased to submit our new recent original manuscript entitled: “**The use of propidium monoazide combined with real-time quantitative PCR (PMA-qPCR) assays to quantify *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat salmon**” for peer review publication into your journal.

Thank you for the time and effort involved in the reading and consideration of our article, and we look forward to your comments.

Best regards,

Prof. Dr. Elane Schwinden Prudencio  
Federal University of Santa Catarina - Department of Food Science and Technology  
Rodovia Admar Gonzaga, 1346, Itacorubi  
88034-001- Florianópolis - Santa Catarina - Brazil

**ANEXO 2 - Carta de Aceite do Artigo “*Listeria monocytogenes* survival in raw Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions by culture, qPCR and PMA-qPCR detection methods na revista LWT - Food Science and Technology.**

**Date:** Mar 04, 2019  
**To:**  
**From:**  
**Subject:**

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Date: Mar 04, 2019  
To: "Elane S Prudêncio" elane@cca.ufsc.br  
From: "LWT - Food Science & Technology" eesserver@eesmail.elsevier.com  
Reply To: "LWT - Food Science & Technology" lwt@elsevier.com  
Subject: Your Submission  
Ms. Ref. No.: LWT-D-18-03999R2  
Title: Listeria monocytogenes survival in raw Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions by culture, qPCR and PMA-qPCR detection methods  
LWT - Food Science and Technology

Dear Elane,

I am pleased to inform you that your paper "Listeria monocytogenes survival in raw Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions by culture, qPCR and PMA-qPCR detection methods" has been accepted for publication in LWT - Food Science and Technology.

Below are comments from the editor and reviewers.

Your accepted manuscript will now be transferred to our production department and work will begin on creation of the proof. If we need any additional information to create the proof, we will let you know. If not, you will be contacted again in the next few days with a request to approve the proof and to complete a number of online forms that are required for publication.

Thank you for submitting your work to LWT - Food Science and Technology.

Yours sincerely,

Vijay K. JUNEJA, Ph.D.  
Editor  
LWT - Food Science and Technology

Comments from the editors and reviewers:

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**ANEXO 3 – Primeira página da Publicação do Artigo “*Listeria monocytogenes* survival in raw Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions by culture, qPCR and PMA-qPCR detection methods na revista LWT - Food Science and Technology.**



***Listeria monocytogenes* survival in raw Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions by culture, qPCR and PMA-qPCR detection methods**

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ABSTRACT

Because the food matrix is considered as one of the significant factors in regulating colonization of microorganisms in the gastrointestinal tract, this study aimed to evaluate how *Listeria monocytogenes* survives in raw Atlantic salmon fillet under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal condition steps. For *in vitro* gastrointestinal conditions, raw salmon fillet samples were spiked with two *L. monocytogenes* inoculum levels at 2 and 8 log CFU/g, respectively. *L. monocytogenes* enumeration was determined using culture-dependent, qPCR and PMA-PCR methods, and these results determined *L. monocytogenes* recovery rate. The PMA-qPCR method was the most efficient for *L. monocytogenes* enumeration, mainly after oesophagus-stomach and duodenum step. The recovery rate was higher than 76%, while to the traditional method this value was lower than 23%. Overall, *L. monocytogenes* showed stability against the gastrointestinal conditions steps, once the recovery rate was higher than 75%. However, the raw salmon fillet did not contribute to *L. monocytogenes* stability under *in vitro* simulated gastrointestinal conditions. The results obtained contribute to understanding *L. monocytogenes* survival mechanism in a raw fishery product, predicting their behavior during gastrointestinal conditions.

1. Introduction

One of the significant concerns of raw Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) fillet as a ready-to-eat product is the potential risk of *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination (Oveisipour, Shiroodi, Raseo, Tang, & Shyam, 2018) because this food is consumed without cooking (Shiroodi, Oveisipour, Ross, & Raseo, 2016). *L. monocytogenes*, a psychotropic, Gram-positive and facultative anaerobe bacterium, is a food-borne pathogen capable to cause severe illness in vulnerable human populations groups such as elderly, newborns, pregnant women, and adults immunocompromised, with a fatality rate from 20 to 50% (McCarthy & Burkhardt III, 2012).

In the United States, *L. monocytogenes* causes about 1600 illness cases annually, of which 260 were fatal (CDC, 2017). From 2536 cases reported in Europe in 2016, 97.9% resulted in hospitalizations, and 16.2% of these case resulted in deaths (EFSA & ECDC, 2017). However, the listeriosis outbreak that began in early 2017 in South Africa is the largest recorded globally, where about 950 cases of the invasive disease had been confirmed and 180 deaths reported (Chersich, Scoglio & Ross,

2018). In addition to being a public health risk, *L. monocytogenes* is an economic burden on the ready-to-eat foods, includes large amounts of costs with analysis of samples, recall of a contaminated product and the possible litigation costs, among others (Leng, Alvarez-Ordóñez, Jonate, & Jordan, 2016).

Gazdila and Chikinda (2007) suggested an innate potential of *L. monocytogenes* strains survival in withstanding extremely adverse conditions during the food processing. Gahan and Hill (2014) highlighted that during passage through the gastrointestinal tract, *L. monocytogenes* encounter low pH environments in both stomach and duodenum, and the low pH of the stomach provides a significant barrier to *L. monocytogenes* infection. However, the previous study realized by Ferreiro, Sue, O'Byrne, and Ross (2003) revealed that the acid adaptation of *L. monocytogenes* also conferred protection against the simulated gastric fluid medium. Gahan and Hill (2014) described that the environment that *L. monocytogenes* encounters before infection might influence its survival fitness in the human host and its pathogenic potential. It should also be noted that the majority of previous studies focused on how *L. monocytogenes* cells respond only to the acid of the stomach and

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