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PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM MEDICINA VETERINÁRIA**

**ATIVIDADE DA CURCUMINA LIVRE E
NANOENCAPSULADA *IN VITRO* E *IN VIVO* SOBRE
RATOS INFECTADOS EXPERIMENTALMENTE POR
*Trypanosoma evansi***

DISSERTAÇÃO DE MESTRADO

Lucas Trevisan Gressler

Santa Maria, RS, Brasil.

2014

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NANOENCAPSULADA *IN VITRO* E *IN VIVO* SOBRE RATOS
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evansi***

Lucas Trevisan Gressler

Dissertação apresentada ao Curso de Mestrado do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Medicina Veterinária, Área de Concentração em Sanidade e Reprodução Animal, da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM, RS), como requisito parcial para obtenção do grau de **Mestre em Medicina Veterinária**.

Orientador: Prof^ª Dr^ª Sílvia Gonzalez Monteiro

Santa Maria, RS, Brasil.

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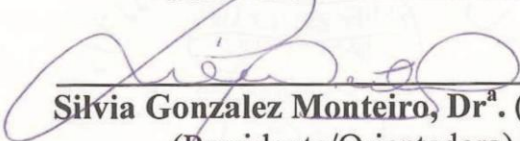
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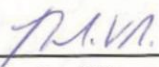
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Santa Maria, 25 de fevereiro de 2014.

A melhor de todas as coisas é aprender.
O dinheiro pode ser perdido ou roubado,
a saúde e força podem lhe falhar,
mas o que você dedicou a sua mente
será seu para sempre.

(Louis L'amour)

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A todas as pessoas que estiveram comigo nesses últimos anos, nessa longa caminhada e que me auxiliaram para realização deste trabalho, fica expresso o meu muito obrigado.

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RESUMO

Dissertação de Mestrado
Programa de Pós-Graduação em Medicina Veterinária
Universidade Federal de Santa Maria

ATIVIDADE DA CURCUMINA LIVRE E NANOENCAPSULADA *IN VITRO* E *IN VIVO* SOBRE RATOS INFECTADOS EXPERIMENTALMENTE COM

Trypanosoma evansi

AUTOR: LUCAS TREVISAN GRESSLER

ORIENTADORA: SÍLVIA GONZALEZ MONTEIRO

Data e Local de Defesa: Santa Maria, 25 de fevereiro de 2014.

O objetivo deste estudo foi avaliar a atividade tripanocida da curcumina livre (C-L) e curcumina nanoencapsulada (C-N) contra o *Trypanosoma evansi in vitro* e *in vivo*, e sua atividade antioxidante *in vivo*. Os testes *in vitro* foram realizados em meio de cultura contendo *T. evansi*, utilizando-se oito concentrações de C-L (100, 75, 50, 25, 12,5, 6,25, 3,12, 1,56 e 0,78 mg.kg⁻¹) e quatro concentrações de C-N (100, 75, 50, 25 mg.kg/L⁻¹). Em 1, 3, 6, 9 e 12 horas após a incubação, a contagem de parasitas vivos foi realizada em câmara de Neubauer. Através dos testes *in vitro*, foi possível observar a morte de todos os tripanossomas tratados com C-L um hora pós-incubação (PI), exceto em concentrações inferiores a 6,25 mg.kg⁻¹. Tripanossomas móveis tratados com C-N foram observados até a terceira hora PI, exceto na concentração mais elevada. Para realização dos ensaios *in vivo*, foram utilizados 54 animais divididos em 8 grupos (A, B, C, D, E, F, G e H), sendo esses: grupo A (não infectados e tratados com solução salina), B (não infectados e tratados com C-N), C (infectados com *T. evansi* e tratados com nanocápsulas brancas-sem curcumina), D (infectados com *T. evansi* e tratados com DMSO), E (infectados com *T. evansi* e tratados com solução salina), F (infectados com *T. evansi* e tratados com C-N a uma dose de 10mg/kg), G (infectados com *T. evansi* e tratados com C-L a uma dose de 10 mg.kg) e H (infectados com *T. evansi* e tratados com C-L a uma dose de 100 mg.kg). Este estudo pode verificar que os animais tratados com curcumina mostraram uma menor parasitemia em relação aos animais não tratados. Animais infectados apresentaram um aumento de nitritos / nitratos e de peroxidação proteica, logo os animais infectados que receberam tratamento a base de curcumina apresentaram uma redução destes parâmetros. Os grupos infectados tratados com curcumina exibiram uma redução nos níveis de ALT e de creatinina em relação ao grupo de controle positivo. Conclui-se que C-L e C-N, apresentam atividade tripanocida *in vitro*, porém a curcumina em sua forma livre apresenta-se mais efetiva. Nos testes *in vivo*, foi observado controle da parasitemia nos grupos tratados e uma possível ação hepatoprotetora e nefroprotetora da curcumina, que pode estar relacionada também com a ação antioxidante do fitoquímico, comprovada em nosso estudo.

Palavras-chave: *Trypanosoma*. Curcumina. Nanopartículas. Estresse oxidativo.

ABSTRACT

Master's Dissertation
Programa de Pós-Graduação em Medicina Veterinária
Universidade Federal de Santa Maria

ACTIVITY *IN VITRO* AND *IN VIVO* OF FREE AND NANOENCAPSULATED CURCUMIN ON RATS EXPERIMENTALLY INFECTED WITH *Trypanosoma evansi*

AUTHOR: LUCAS TREVISAN GRESSLER

ADVISER: SILVIA GONZALEZ MONTEIRO

Defense Place and Date: Santa Maria, February 25th, 2014.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the *in vitro* and *in vivo* trypanocidal activity of free curcumin (F-C) and curcumin-loaded lipid-core nanocapsules (C-LNCs) against *Trypanosoma evansi*, as well as its antioxidant activity *in vivo*. *In vitro* tests were performed in culture medium containing *T. evansi*, using eight concentrations of F-C (100, 75, 50, 25, 12.5, 6.25, 3.12, 1.56 and 0.78 mg mL⁻¹), and four concentrations of C-LNCs (100, 75, 50, 25 mg mL⁻¹). The counting of alive parasites was performed in a *Neubauer* chamber after 1, 3, 6, 9 and 12 hours of incubation. *In vitro* tested showed the death of all trypanosomes treated with F-C one hour post-incubation (PI), except at concentrations below 6.25 mg mL⁻¹. Mobile trypanosomes, treated with C-LNCs, were observed until the third hour PI, except at the highest concentration. For *in vivo* tests, 54 animals were divided into 8 groups (A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H), as follows: group A (not infected and treated with saline); B (not infected and treated with C-LNCs); C (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with blank nanocapsules of curcumin); D (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with DMSO); E (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with saline); F (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with C-LNCs at a dose of 10 mg/kg); G (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with F-C at a dose of 10mg/kg) and H (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with F-C at a dose of 100mg/kg). The results showed that the animals treated with curcumin presented a lower parasitemia compared with untreated animals. Additionally, infected animals showed an increase of nitrite/nitrate and protein peroxidation, while the infected animals, that received treatment based on curcumin, showed a reduction in these parameters. Infected groups treated with curcumin exhibited a reduction in ALT and creatinine levels when compared with the positive control group. Therefore, it was possible to conclude that F-C and C-LNCs showed trypanocidal activity *in vitro*; however, the curcumin in its free form appeared to be more effective. A control of parasitemia was observed in *in vivo* tests for the treated groups, besides a possible protective effect of curcumin on liver and kidney functions, which also would be related to the antioxidant phytochemical action proved in our study.

Keywords: *Trypanosomes*. *Curcumin*. Nanoparticles. Oxidative stress.

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APRESENTAÇÃO

Os resultados e a discussão que fazem parte desta dissertação estão apresentados sob a forma de artigo que será submetido para publicação na revista *Parasitology*, o qual se encontra no item **ARTIGO**. As seções **Materiais e Métodos**, **Resultados**, **Discussão** e **Referências Bibliográficas**, encontram-se no próprio artigo e representam a íntegra deste estudo. As **REFERÊNCIAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS** se referem somente as citações que aparecem nos itens **INTRODUÇÃO** e **REVISÃO BIBLIOGRÁFICA** desta dissertação.

1 INTRODUÇÃO

O *Trypanosoma evansi* é um protozoário digenético da seção salivaria, agente etiológico da doença conhecida como “Mal das Cadeiras” ou “Surra” em equinos (SILVA et al., 2002; HERRERA et al., 2004). Apresenta-se amplamente distribuído geograficamente, podendo ocorrer na Ásia, África, América Central e América do Sul. É relatado parasitando diversas espécies de animais, incluindo animais domésticos e silvestres (SILVA et al., 2002), sendo raramente reportado em humanos (JOSHI et al., 2005). A doença causada por este protozoário é caracterizada por rápida perda de peso, graus variáveis de anemia, febre intermitente, edema dos membros pélvicos e fraqueza progressiva (HERRERA et al., 2004; RODRIGUES et al., 2005).

O tratamento quimioterápico é provavelmente a principal forma de controle terapêutico da doença, podendo ser utilizado de forma preventiva em locais endêmicos. Atualmente a terapia para a tripanossomose equina é baseada em quatro diferentes fármacos: suramina, aceturato de diminazeno, quinapiramina e melarsomina (BRUN et al., 1998), porém, no Brasil apenas o aceturato de diminazeno e o dipropionato de imidocarb são oficialmente comercializados. As principais restrições observadas durante o tratamento são a alta toxicidade destes fármacos e surgimento de cepas resistentes devido ao uso inadequado desses medicamentos (SILVA et al., 2002).

Nos últimos anos, diversos trabalhos têm demonstrado resultados promissores com a utilização de componentes extraídos de plantas no controle de diferentes parasitas de importância médico-veterinária (MACHADO et al., 2010). Estudos têm demonstrado resultados promissores na utilização de moléculas antioxidantes no tratamento da tripanossomose, reduzindo dessa forma, os danos celulares causados pela ação dos radicais livres. Esses fatores têm levado à procura por princípios ativos mais eficazes e com menor toxicidade, que combatam o agente causador da doença e os agravos causados pela infecção.

A curcumina, princípio ativo isolado do rizoma da planta *Curcuma longa* L., é caracterizada por ser um pó amarelo-laranja, insolúvel em água e éter, mas solúvel em etanol e acetona (GOEL et al., 2008). Destacamos sua atividade hepatoprotetora (SAMBALIAH & SRINIVASAN, 1989) e antioxidante (AK & GÜLÇIN, 2008), a qual apresenta a capacidade de sequestrar radicais livres e inibir a peroxidação lipídica, agindo na proteção celular contra danos oxidativos (KUNCHANDY & RAO, 1990; SUBRAMANIAN et al., 1994). Nas

doenças parasitárias, a ação da *Curcuma* sp. e seus componentes, como a curcumina, são descritos contra *Leishmania* sp., *Trypanosoma* sp., *Babesia* sp., *Toxoplasma gondii*, *Cryptosporidium* sp., *Giardia* sp., *Sarcoptes scabiei*, *Schistosoma* spp., *Angiostrongylus cantonensis* e *Toxocara canis* em recente revisão realizada por HADDAD et al., (2011).

As propriedades funcionais da curcumina não são plenamente exploradas devido a sua baixa biodisponibilidade (absorção, transporte e metabolização) (IRESON et al., 2002). Várias estratégias têm sido avaliadas para aumentar a atividade biológica da curcumina. As nanopartículas são uma interessante opção para o aumento da biodisponibilidade da curcumina, uma vez que, podem proporcionar maior penetração em membranas plasmáticas devido ao seu tamanho reduzido, além de seu potencial de especificidade, tornando-se excelentes transportadoras de medicamento (KURIEN et al., 2007). Neste contexto, este estudo teve como objetivo avaliar a atividade tripanocida *in vitro* e *in vivo* da curcumina livre e nanoencapsulada sobre o parasito *T. evansi* e sua atividade sobre parâmetros relacionados ao estresse oxidativo, parâmetros bioquímicos e histopatológicos.

2 REVISÃO DE LITERATURA

2.1 *Trypanosoma evansi*

2.1.1 Etiologia

O *Trypanosoma* é um parasito flagelado pertencentes ao reino Protozoa, filo Euglenozoa, sub-filo Sarcomastigophora, superclasse Mastigophora, classe Zoomastigophora, ordem Cinetoplastida, família Trypanosomatidae. Os tripanossomas podem ser distribuídos em duas seções: Salivaria, aqueles transmitidos por picadas de vetores biológicos e Stercoraria, pela contaminação da pele ou das mucosas do hospedeiro com as fezes do vetor (HOARE, 1972). Alguns gêneros de *Trypanosoma* da seção Salivaria são muito patogênicos para pessoas e animais domésticos e estão distribuídos em quatro subgêneros: Trypanozoon (*T. brucei*, *T. evansi* (Figura 1), *T. equiperdum*), Nannomonas (*T. congolense*, *T. simiae*), Duttonella (*T. vivax*) e Pycnomonas (*T. suis*) (CONNOR & VAN DEN BOSSCHE, 2004).

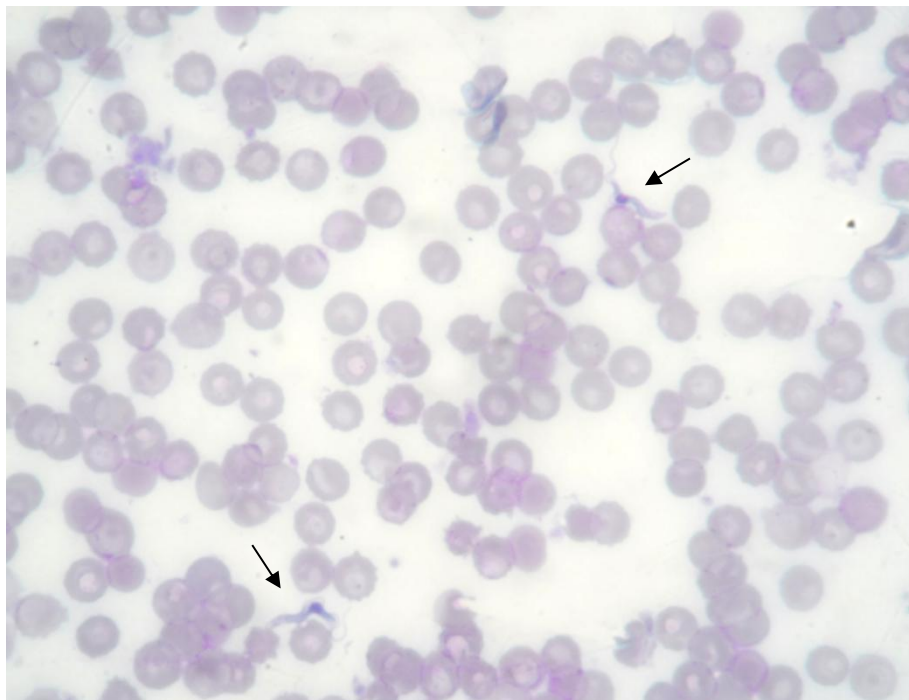


Figura 1 – Formas tripomastigotas de *T. evansi* em esfregaço sanguíneo de rato infectado experimentalmente.

2.1.2 Hospedeiros e distribuição geográfica

O *T. evansi* afeta um grande número de animais domésticos e selvagens, entre eles: cavalos, camelos, bovinos, gatos, caprinos, suínos, cães, búfalos, elefantes, capivaras, quatis, antas, tatus, marsupiais, zebuínos, veados e pequenos roedores silvestres (LEVINE, 1973; SILVA et al., 2002; ATARHOUCHE et al., 2003; HERRERA et al., 2004).

A doença é endêmica na África, principalmente nos países onde há presença de camelos. Hoje em dia, a sua distribuição geográfica é contínua da parte norte da África através do Oriente Médio para o Sudeste Asiático, sendo frequentemente relatada na península Arábica (DESQUESNES et al., 2013) (Figura 2). Na Europa, foram detectados casos na Espanha (GUTIERREZ et al., 2000) e França (DESQUESNES et al., 2008). Sua presença era suspeita na Papua Nova Guiné, mas não foi confirmada (REID et al., 1999). O *T. evansi* está presente na Índia, China, Mongólia, Rússia, Butão, Nepal, Mianmar, Laos, Vietnã, Camboja, Tailândia, Malásia, Filipinas e Indonésia (LUCKINS et al., 1988; REID et al., 2002).

Na América do Sul, o *T. evansi* é endêmico em algumas regiões. Segundo DÁVILA & SILVA (2000), há casos no Brasil, Bolívia, Colômbia, Guiana Francesa, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela e Argentina. Em humanos, há apenas um caso de infecção relatado em um fazendeiro, na Índia (JOSHI et al., 2005).

Estima-se que a chegada do *T. evansi* na América do Sul tenha ocorrido no final no século XIX com a importação de cavalos da Espanha (HOARE, 1972; SANTOS et al., 1992). Foi descrita pela primeira vez na Ilha de Marajó (Amazonas) em 1827, antes de se espalhar para a Bolívia, Venezuela, Guiana e Colômbia, estando presente na América Central até o México (HOARE, 1972). Atualmente, devido epizootias, *T. evansi* é descrito esporadicamente da Argentina ao Panamá (WELLS, 1984).

No Brasil, já foram relatados casos de infecção natural no Rio Grande do Sul (COLPO et al., 2005; CONRADO et al., 2005; FRANCISCATO et al., 2007), Mato Grosso do Sul (MOREIRA & MACHADO, 1985; BRANDÃO et al., 2002), Santa Catarina (DA SILVA et al., 2008), Paraná (KUBIAK & MOLFI, 1954) e no Pantanal, onde a doença é endêmica, com recorrentes casos (SILVA et al., 2002). Desde então, esta doença tem causado numerosos surtos com mortes em equinos, resultando em elevados prejuízos principalmente aos criadores desses animais (SILVA et al., 2002).



Figura 2 – Distribuição geográfica do *T. evansi* no mundo (DESQUESNES et al 2013).

2.1.3 Epidemiologia

Tripomastigotas são as formas dos presentes nos vasos sanguíneos de vertebrados, que são disseminados por insetos hematófagos durante o repasto sanguíneo (SILVA et al., 2002). Como a transmissão é mecânica, não há o desenvolvimento do hematozoário em nenhum órgão do vetor e quanto menor a diferença de tempo entre os repastos sanguíneos, maiores são as possibilidades de passagem do parasito para um novo hospedeiro (HOARE, 1972). Os principais vetores pertencem aos gêneros *Tabanus* sp., porém insetos dos gêneros *Stomoxys* sp, *Haematopota* sp. e *Lyperosia* sp. podem transmitir o parasito (SILVA et al., 2002). Em moscas do gênero *Stomoxys*, a sobrevivência do parasito no aparelho bucal pode chegar a 480 minutos (SUMBA et al., 1998). Segundo um modelo matemático de transmissão por tabanídeos proposto por DESQUESNES e colaboradores (2009), para que ocorram frequentes surtos em uma determinada população, a prevalência de animais infectados deve estar em torno de 10 a 15% do total. De acordo com os autores, nesse modelo novos surtos podem acontecer em períodos de 3 a 5 anos. Condições estressantes como alterações climáticas e alimentares podem iniciar os casos. Na América Central e do Sul o morcego hematófago *Desmodus rotundus* é considerado um vetor importante, uma vez que, os tripomastigotas se multiplicam na corrente circulatória destes animais, os quais podem permanecer infectados por até um mês, atuando como vetor e também hospedeiro do parasito (HOARE, 1972). Ainda, existe a possibilidade de transmissão oral em carnívoros que se alimentam da carcaça

de animais parasitados (RAMIREZ et al., 1979). A via oral pode ser importante na dispersão de infecção de *T. evansi* em cães, quatis (*Nasua nasua*) e capivaras (*Hydrochaeris hydrochaeris*), que podem ser infectados em consequência das brigas entre animais infectados e não infectados. Além disso, espécies gregárias como quatis e capivaras tem um comportamento agressivo o que pode levar a transmissão do protozoário entre eles, mantendo a infecção no grupo social, já que a forma crônica da doença causada por *T. evansi* já foi identificada em capivaras e quatis, possíveis reservatórios do agente. Cães e ruminantes também podem atuar como reservatórios do *T. evansi* quando o curso da doença for crônico (HERRERA et al., 2004). Apesar de não haver evidências de transmissão venérea de *T. evansi*, UCHE & JONES (1992) o detectaram na mucosa vaginal de coelhas experimentalmente infectadas. Em condições naturais, há relatos de transmissão transplacentária em ruminantes (OGWU & NURU, 1981; MURALEEDHARAN & SRINIVAS, 1985) e camundongos experimentalmente infectados (SARMAH, 1998).

2.1.4 Patogênese

A patogenicidade dos tripanossomas no hospedeiro varia de acordo com a cepa do *Trypanosoma* sp., a espécie do hospedeiro, fatores não específicos concomitantemente afetando o animal (como outras infecções e estresse), e condições epizootiológicas locais. Diferente dos outros tripanossomatídeos que possuem vários estágios no seu ciclo de vida (HOARE, 1972), o *T. evansi* é monomórfico, ou seja, permanece sempre na forma tripomastigota, provavelmente devido a ausência parcial ou total do cinetoplasto (BORST et al., 1987), que impede a sobrevivência por longos períodos no vetor. Na circulação do hospedeiro, o *T. evansi* se divide assexuadamente por fissão binária e essa multiplicação se inicia no local da picada (pele), seguida pela invasão dos parasitos na corrente sanguínea e no sistema linfático do hospedeiro, levando a picos de febre e induzindo uma resposta inflamatória (CONNOR & VAN DEN BOSSCHE, 2004). Os tripanossomatídeos africanos da seção Salivaria, a qual pertence o *T. evansi*, possuem uma interessante ferramenta para evadir as defesas do hospedeiro, a expressão das glicoproteínas variáveis de superfície, ou variant surface glycoproteins (VSGs). Toda a superfície do protozoário (aproximadamente 95%) é recoberta por esses dímeros, que possuem a propriedade de se alterar, “enganando” a resposta imune humoral do hospedeiro (PAYS et al., 2004). O genoma desses tripanossomatídeos

possui centenas de genes que codificam para diferentes VSGs, e apenas um é expresso por vez. As VSGs são traduzidas com um domínio N-terminal que é variável e um domínio C-terminal que é altamente conservado e possui uma sequência para âncoras de GPI (glicofosfatidilinositol) que as sustentam na superfície do parasito (CARRINGTON et al., 1991). Quando os protozoários mudam sua cobertura de VSGs ocorrem os picos de parasitemia, observados na forma crônica da doença. A parasitemia quando aumenta geralmente é acompanhada por respostas febris. Conforme os anticorpos são produzidos, há eliminação do clone corrente, mas sucessivos novos padrões de antígenos de superfície são gerados para evadir a resposta do hospedeiro (LUCAS et al., 1992).

2.1.5 Sinais Clínicos e alterações patológicas

Os sinais clínicos da infecção por *T. evansi* são, em sua maioria, inespecíficos, principalmente no início da doença (SILVA et al., 2002). Dessa maneira, os sinais clínicos dependem da distribuição dos parasitos nos tecidos e da gravidade das lesões induzidas nos diferentes órgãos e tecidos. Em infecções naturais e experimentais foi observado que a tripanossomose por este flagelado pode cursar tanto com quadro clínico agudo como crônico. Geralmente a fase aguda da infecção é caracterizada pelo surgimento de febre intermitente, edema subcutâneo, anemia progressiva, cegueira, letargia e alterações hemostáticas. Os animais podem morrer dentro de semanas ou poucos meses, ou ficar cronicamente infectados por anos (BRUN et al., 1998). Durante a fase crônica, ocorre o agravamento dos sinais clínicos, seguido de outras complicações como caquexia, edema, incoordenação motora e paralisia de membro pélvico (BRANDÃO et al., 2002; SILVA et al., 2002; RODRIGUES et al., 2005). Sinais neurológicos têm sido descritos na fase terminal da doença, (TUNTASUVAN et al. 1997; TUNTASUVAN & LUCKINS, 1998; TUNTASUVAN et al., 2000; RODRIGUES et al., 2005). Estes flagelados podem invadir o sistema nervoso central (SNC), levando a uma lesão progressiva (GIBSON, 1998). Os tripanosomas podem induzir lesões na barreira hematoencefálica (BHE), que irão provocar edema e pequenas hemorragias. O edema vasogênico (aumento de água e outros constituintes do plasma no encéfalo, causado pela lesão nos elementos vasculares do encéfalo) geralmente ocorre nos estágios finais da infecção (PHILIP et al., 1994).

2.1.6 Diagnóstico

Segundo a Organização Mundial da Saúde Animal, vários procedimentos diagnósticos são indicados. A identificação direta do agente pode ser realizada na fase aguda da doença, através da análise de esfregaço sanguíneo ou aspirado de linfonodos em microscópio. A busca por protozoários também pode ser realizada analisando-se uma gota de sangue entre lâmina e lamínula (busca por parasitos móveis), ou corando-se o esfregaço sanguíneo com Giemsa (KUBIAK; MOLFI, 1954). Segundo TOURANTIER (1993), a técnica do capilar é a mais adequada para diagnóstico em termos de praticidade, custo e sensibilidade. A técnica da reação em cadeia da polimerase (PCR) é de grande sensibilidade (VENTURA et al., 2000). Como o *T. evansi* é infectante para pequenos roedores, a inoculação em animais de laboratórios de sangue suspeito pode ser realizada. A parasitemia deve ser acompanhada a cada 48h através de esfregaço sanguíneo com sangue colhido da veia caudal, e o período pré-patente geralmente é curto (cinco dias), variando conforme a patogenicidade da cepa.

Alternativamente, uma maior sensibilidade pode ser obtida com a centrifugação do sangue e separação da camada de células brancas, sendo assim possível detectar até 1,25 parasitos/ μ L de sangue (REID et al., 2001). Métodos sorológicos também são bastante empregados na detecção de anticorpos específicos anti- *T. evansi* no soro de animais suspeitos. Podem ser utilizados vários testes, sendo que os mais empregados são imunofluorescência indireta, ELISA (*enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay*) e CATT (*card agglutination test for trypanosomiasis*). Reações cruzadas podem acontecer em testes para detecção de tripanossomatídeos, principalmente entre os da mesma seção Salivaria (WERNERY et al., 2011).

2.1.7 Tratamento

A quimioterapia é o mais importante método pelo qual a tripanossomose é controlada (Tabela 1). O tratamento para este flagelado é baseado em quatro fármacos: suramin, aceturato de diminazeno, quinapiramina e melarsomina (BRUN et al., 1998).

O aceturato de diminazeno é o produto mais comumente utilizado, pois apresenta maior índice terapêutico que outros fármacos na maioria das espécies domésticas, possui

atividade contra tripanosomas que são resistentes a outros medicamentos e apresenta baixa incidência de resistência (PEREGRINE; MAMMAM, 1993). Em um estudo de nosso grupo de pesquisa, uma nova terapia com aceturato de diminazeno apresentou sucesso de 85,7% na cura de gatos infectados com *T. evansi* (DA SILVA et al., 2009). Outro produto de eficácia curativa para *T. evansi*, não disponível para venda no Brasil, é a Suramina. Em um estudo realizado por FACCIO e colaboradores (2013) demonstrou que uma dose única de suramina de sódio a $10 \text{ mg}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}$ foi eficaz no tratamento da Tripanossomose ocasionada por cepas brasileiras. No mesmo estudo observou-se também que os isolados brasileiros não apresentam até o momento resistência ao farmaco. No entanto, este possui uma limitação para o uso em animais devido ao elevado custo do tratamento e não ser comercializada no Brasil.

TONIN et al. (2012) avaliaram o uso de aceturato de diminazeno, em associação com a vitamina E e selenito de sódio em ratos, concluindo que os resultados em termos de longevidade, redução de hematócrito, leucócitos e número de linfócitos e peroxidação lipídica foram melhoradas utilizando esta terapia combinatória em comparação com o uso único de aceturato de diminazeno. Há um interesse progressivo na utilização de antioxidantes na prevenção e tratamento dessa doença. Os mecanismos patogênicos do *T. evansi* incluem oxidação dos eritrócitos induzindo pelo estresse oxidativo devido à geração de radicais livres (HABILA et al., 2012). RANJITHKUMAR et al. (2011) relataram aumento nos parâmetros oxidantes e diminuição de enzimas antioxidantes em cavalos infectados, indicando uma desregulação nos índices de oxidante / antioxidantes, por isso estes autores sugerem que moléculas antioxidantes podem ser utilizados em regime terapêutico no tratamento da doença.

Tabela 1 – Compostos tripanocidas utilizados contra tripanossomose animal por *T. evansi* (Baseado em GUTIERREZ et al., 2013; PEREGRINE, 1994).

Composto	Nome comercial	Dose	Uso	Via	Animais
Aceturato de diminazeno	Berenil® Beronal® Veribem® Ganaseg® Ganatet®	7 mg/kg	T	Intramuscular	Equinos
Cloreto de Isometamidium	Trypamidium® Samorim®	0.5 to 1 mg/kg	P	Intramuscular	(Camelos)
Dimetilsulfato de Quinapiramina:	Trypacide Pro-Salt®	3 a 5 mg/kg	P	Subcutâneo	(Cães)
Cloreto Suramin	Naganol®	7 a 10 g	T/P	Intravenoso	Camelos Equinos
Melarsomina*	Cymellarsan®	0.25 mg/kg	T	Intramuscular/ Subcutâneo	Camelos Equinos

T: terapêutico; P: profilático; *: Apresenta eficácia em caprinos, suínos, bovinos e búfalos apenas em altas doses (0.5-0.75mg/Kg) (LUN et al., 1991; DIA et al., 2007; GUTIERREZ et al., 2008).

2.2 Curcumina

2.2.1 Características gerais

A curcumina consiste em uma molécula de dibenzoil-metano (1,7bis (4-hidroxi-3-metoxifenil)-1,6-heptadieno-3,5diona) e dois grupos metoxila (Figura 3) (SRINIVASAN et al., 2006). Foi isolada pela primeira vez em 1815 do rizoma da planta *Curcuma longa* L., e obtida em forma cristalina em 1870. É um pó amarelo-laranja, insolúvel em água e éter, mas solúvel em etanol e acetona (GOEL, et al., 2008).

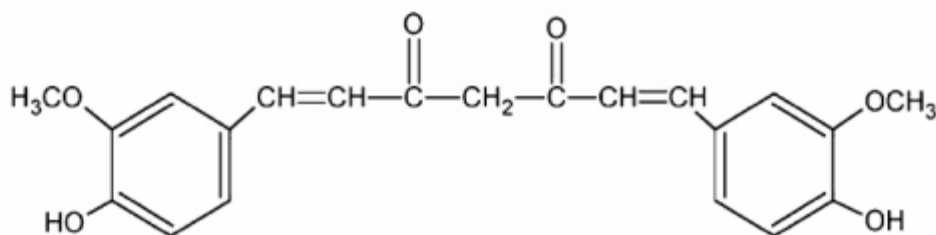


Figura 3 – Estrutura da curcumina (SRINIVASAN et al., 2006).

2.2.2 Atividades biológicas

Possui propriedades anti-inflamatória (BALASUBRAMANYAM et al., 2003), antiparasitária (HADDAD et al., 2011), antioxidante (RUBY et al., 1995; SCARTEZZINI & SPERONI, 2000; FUJISAWA et al., 2004; YOUSSEF et al., 2004; AK & GÜLÇIN, 2008), antibacteriana (NEGRI et al., 2005; NAZ et al., 2010; UECHIS et al., 2000), antifúngica (KIM et al., 2003; APISARIYAKUL et al., 1995), antimalárica (NANDAKUMAR et al., 2006), antiaterogênica (OLSZANECKI et al., 2005), anti-espasmódicos (ITTHIPANICHPONG et al., 2003), hepatoprotetora (SAMBALIAH & SRINIVASAN, 1989).

De acordo com HADDAD et al. (2011), a ação da *Curcuma* sp. e seus componentes, como a curcumina, são descritos contra *Leishmania* sp., *Trypanosoma* sp., *Babesia* sp., *Toxoplasma gondii*, *Cryptosporidium* sp., *Giardia* sp., *Sarcoptes scabiei*, helmintos como *Schistosoma* spp., *Angiostrongylus cantonensis*, *Toxocara canis*, *Eimeria tenella* (KHALAFALLA et al., 2011), *Paramecium caudatum* (CHOPRA et al., 1941) e *Acanthamoeba castellanii* (EL-SAYED et al., 2012).

Quanto à ação antioxidante, a curcumina pertence ao grupo de antioxidantes não enzimáticos (tabela 2) que impedem a peroxidação lipídica, atuando, portanto na proteção de biomoléculas, incluindo o DNA (KUNCHANDY & RAO, 1990).

Tabela 2 – Principais agentes de defesa antioxidante (Fonte: SIES, 1993).

Não Enzimáticos	Enzimáticos
α -tocoferol (Vitamina E)	Superóxido Dismutase (SOD)
β -caroteno	Catalase (CAT)
Ácido Ascórbico (Vitamina C)	NADPH - Quinona oxireductase
Flavonóides	Glutathiona Peroxidase (GSH-Px)
Selênio	Enzimas de Reparo
Proteínas do Plasma	
Glutathiona	
Clorofilina	
L-Cisteína	
Curcumina	

2.2.3 Biodisponibilidade da curcumina

As propriedades funcionais da curcumina não são plenamente exploradas devido a sua baixa biodisponibilidade (absorção, transporte e metabolização), embora se conheça que a mesma é absorvida pelo trato gastrointestinal (IRESON et al., 2002).

Várias estratégias têm sido avaliadas para aumentar a atividade biológica da curcumina. Essas abordagens incluem: adjuvantes (SHOBA et al., 1998), nanopartículas (SHAIK et al., 2009), lipossomas (CHEN et al., 2009), micelas (LETCHFORD et al., 2007; MA et al., 2007) e complexos de fosfolípidios (MAITI et al., 2007). Estas são formulações promissoras, que parecem oferecer melhor permeabilidade e resistência a processos metabólicos, visando principalmente a maior absorção e disponibilização da curcumina nos tecidos (ANAND et al., 2008).

2.3 Nanotecnologia aplicada a farmacologia

As nanopartículas são uma interessante opção para o aumento da biodisponibilidade da curcumina, uma vez que podem proporcionar maior penetração em membranas plasmáticas devido ao seu pequeno tamanho, além de seu potencial de especificidade, tornando-se excelentes transportadoras de medicamento (KURIEN et al., 2007).

A nanotecnologia farmacêutica é a área das ciências farmacêuticas envolvida no desenvolvimento, caracterização e aplicação de sistemas terapêuticos em escala nanométrica ou micrométrica. A descoberta dos lipossomas nos anos 1960 veio aumentar a variedade de ferramentas para o desenvolvimento da nanotecnologia farmacêutica com sistemas lipídicos para vetorização de fármacos (LASIC, 1998). Atualmente são desenvolvidos nanossistemas, tais como lipossomas e nanopartículas, e microssistemas, como micropartículas, emulsões múltiplas e microemulsões (SILVA, 2004).

Lipossomas são vesículas aquosas circundadas por bicamada lipídica podendo servir como veículo de fármacos a serem encapsulados na cavidade aquosa da vesícula ou na bicamada lipídica (LASIC, 1998). Nanopartículas são partículas poliméricas na forma de reservatório (cápsulas) ou matricial (matriz polimérica) nas quais o fármaco está encapsulado ou adsorvido na malha polimérica (BRIGGER et al., 2002). As nanocápsulas são sistemas

coloidais vesiculares em que o fármaco está confinado em uma cavidade oca ou oleosa, estabilizada por membrana polimérica (LEGRAND et al., 1999; BRIGGER et al., 2002). As nanocápsulas são utilizadas para vetorização de fármacos hidrofóbicos, que são incorporados na cavidade interna oleosa (SANTOS et al., 2005).

Entre as vantagens que os nanossistemas podem oferecer destacam-se: a proteção do fármaco no sistema terapêutico contra possíveis instabilidades no organismo, promovendo manutenção de níveis plasmáticos em concentração constante; o aumento da eficácia terapêutica; a liberação progressiva e controlada do fármaco pelo condicionamento a estímulos do meio em que se encontram (sensíveis a variação de pH ou de temperatura); a diminuição expressiva da toxicidade pela redução de picos plasmáticos de concentração máxima; a diminuição da instabilidade e decomposição de fármacos sensíveis; a possibilidade de direcionamento a alvos específicos (sítio especificidade); a possibilidade de incorporação tanto de substâncias hidrofílicas quanto lipofílicas nos dispositivos; a diminuição da dose terapêutica e do número de administrações e aumento da aceitação da terapia pelo paciente.

Embora estas vantagens sejam significativas, alguns inconvenientes não podem ser ignorados, como por exemplo, uma possível toxicidade, ausência de biocompatibilidade dos materiais utilizados e o elevado custo de obtenção dos nanossistemas comparados com as formulações farmacêuticas convencionais (VERMA & GARG, 2001; DUNNE et al., 2003; TAO & DESAI, 2003).

3 ARTIGO

(Artigo a ser submetido ao periódico *Parasitology*)

Trypanocidal activity of free and nanoencapsulated curcumin on *Trypanosoma evansi*

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SUMMARY

This study aimed to evaluate the trypanocidal activity of free and nanoencapsulated curcumin against *Trypanosoma evansi*, *in vitro* and *in vivo*. *In vitro* efficacy of free curcumin (CURC) and curcumin-loaded lipid-core nanocapsules (C-LNC) against *T. evansi* was evaluated post-incubation (PI), verifying that both, CURC and C-LNCs, had lethal effect on *T. evansi*. To perform the *in vivo* tests, animals infected with *T. evansi* were treated with CURC (10 and 100 mg/kg, intraperitoneal (i.p.)) and C-LNC (10 mg/kg, i.p.) during six days, with results showing that these treatments significantly attenuated the parasitemia. Infected rats (not-treated) showed protein peroxidation and an increase of nitrites/nitrates, while animals treated with curcumin showed a reduction of these variables. As a result, the activity of antioxidant enzymes (superoxide dismutase and catalase) differs between groups ($P < 0.05$). Infected animals and those treated with CURC exhibited a reduction in the levels of ALT and creatinine, when compared with the positive control group. The control of parasitemia was observed (*in vitro*) in the treated animals, besides an antioxidant activity, as well as a possible protective effect on liver and kidney functions.

Key words: Trypanosomes, Curcumin, nanoparticles, oxidative stress.

INTRODUCTION

Trypanosoma evansi is a protozoan salivare section, the etiologic agent known as "*Mal das Cadeiras*" or "*Surra*" in horses (Silva *et al.* 2002; Herrera *et al.* 2004). This disease presents widely distributed geographically, occurring in Asia, Africa, Central America and South America is reported parasitizing several species of animals, including domestic and

wild animals (Silva *et al.* 2002) and is rarely reported in humans (Joshi *et al.* 2005). The disease caused by this parasite is characterized by rapid weight loss, varying degrees of anemia, intermittent fever, edema of the hind limbs and progressive weakness (Herrera *et al.* 2004; Rodrigues *et al.* 2005).

Chemotherapy is probably the main form of therapeutic control of the disease and can be used preventively in endemic areas. Currently therapy for equine trypanosomiasis is based on four different drugs: suramin, diminazene aceturate, and quinapyramine and melarsomine (Brun *et al.* 1998), but in Brazil only diminazene aceturate and dipropionate imidocarb are officially marketed. However, the high toxicity of these drugs, the emergence of resistant due to inappropriate use, especially in endemic regions (Silva *et al.* 2002), as well as some drugs do not provide satisfactory curative efficacy, leading to the researches for a more effective and less toxic agent(s).

In this sense, several studies have shown promising results using components extracted from plants in the control of parasites of different medical and veterinary importance (Machado *et al.* 2010). Curcumin active principle, isolated from the rhizomes of the plant *Curcuma longa* L., is characterized as a yellow-orange powder, insoluble in water and ether, but soluble in ethanol and acetone (Goel *et al.* 2008). Include in its antioxidant activity (Gülçin and Ak, 2008), the ability to scavenge free radicals, inhibit lipid peroxidation, acting in cellular protection of cellular macromolecules (including DNA) from oxidative damage (Kunchandy and Rao, 1990; Subramanian *et al.* 1994). In parasitic diseases, the parasiticide action of *Curcuma* sp. and its components, such as curcumin are described against *Leishmania* sp. *Trypanosoma* sp. *Babesia* sp. *Toxoplasma gondii*, *Cryptosporidium* sp. *Giardia* sp. *Sarcoptes scabiei*, *Schistosoma* spp., *Angiostrongylus cantonensis* and *Toxocara canis* (Haddad *et al.* 2011).

The pharmacological use of curcumin still not fully exploited due to its low aqueous solubility, chemical instability and low bioavailability (Ireson *et al.* 2002). Several strategies have been evaluated to increase its biological activity (Anand *et al.* 2007). Lipid-core nanocapsules are an attractive option to circumvent these limitations, since these carriers can increase the curcumin solubility, stability, bioavailability, as well as its clinical efficacy (Frezza *et al.* 2010; Pohlmann *et al.* 2013; Zanotto-Filho *et al.* 2013). In this context, this study aimed to evaluate, through *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies, the trypanocidal effects of free curcumin (CURC) and curcumin-loaded lipid-core nanocapsules (C-LNC) on the *Trypanosoma evansi*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Reagents

Curcumin, poly (ϵ -caprolactone) and sorbitan monostearate were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (São Paulo, Brazil), while polysorbate 80 and acetone were purchased from Vetec (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). All the other chemicals and solvents used in this study were analytically or pharmaceutically suitable or high standard products of quality.

Preparation and characterization of lipid-core nanocapsules

Curcumin-loaded lipid-core nanocapsules (C-LNCs) were prepared by interfacial deposition of preformed polymer method (Jäger *et al.* 2009; Venturini *et al.* 2011). At 40 °C, curcumin (0.1 g), poly(ϵ -caprolactone) (1.0 g), grape seed oil (1.65 mL) and sorbitan monostearate (0.385 g) were dissolved in acetone (270 mL). This organic phase was injected into an aqueous phase containing polysorbate 80 (0.77 g) dissolved in water (540 mL). Acetone was eliminated and the formulation was concentrated to 100 mL at 40 °C under reduced pressure. As control, nanocapsules suspensions without curcumin, named as blank

lipid-core nanocapsules (B-LNCs), were prepared. The suspensions were produced in triplicate and they were protected from light exposition.

After preparation, the formulations were characterized according to their mean particle size, polydispersity index (PDI), and zeta potential using a Zetasizer Nano ZS equipment (Malvern Instruments, Malvern, UK). The analyses were performed at 25 °C after dilution of the samples with ultra-pure water (particle size and PDI) or 10 mM NaCl aqueous solution (zeta potential). The pH values of the suspensions were measured using a calibrated potentiometer (VB-10, Denver Instrument, USA). The curcumin content and the encapsulation efficiency were determined by high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC - Perkin Elmer, Shalton, USA), according to the method previously validated (Zanotto-Filho *et al.* 2013). The drug content was determined after appropriate dilution of the suspension with acetonitrile. After 30 minutes in the ultrasonic bath, the samples were centrifuged at 4120 xg during 10 minutes. An aliquot of the supernatant was taken and diluted with the mobile phase for HPLC quantification. The curcumin encapsulation efficiency was determined by ultrafiltration-centrifugation technique (Ultrafree-MC 10,000 MW, Millipore, Ireland).

***Trypanosoma evansi* isolate**

T. evansi isolate used in this research was originally obtained from a naturally infected dog (Colpo *et al.* 2005). Two rats (R₁ and R₂) were intraperitoneally infected with blood that was cryopreserved in liquid nitrogen. This step was carried out in order to allow the strain reactivation and achievement of a large amount of bloodstream forms of the parasite. Once reached the enough amounts, it was possible to perform the infection of the experimental groups, as well as the *in vitro* tests. The procedure was approved by the Animal Welfare Committee of Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (protocol number: 095/2013).

***In vitro* test**

T. evansi cultivation technique was adapted from Baltz *et al.* (1985). Briefly: the culture medium was composed by minimum essential medium (MEM) without glutamine (0.376 g), glutamine (0.016 g), sodium bicarbonate (0.088 g), glucose (0.04 g), HEPES free acid (0.238 g), nonessential amino acid solution (200 μL), penicillin (1596 U mL^{-1}) and streptomycin ($100 \mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$) were used. The components were dissolved and homogenized in 30 mL of water, after adjustment of the pH to 7.1 with NaOH. The volume of the solution was then raised to 42 mL with sterile distilled water at an osmolarity of 0.30. Later, the culture medium was sterilized by filtration at $0.22\mu\text{m}$ and stored in a refrigerator. On the day of testing, 10 mL were separated into a *Falcon* tube to which were added $1\mu\text{L mL}^{-1}$ of 50 mM hypoxanthine (dissolved in 0.1 M NaOH) and $2\mu\text{L mL}^{-1}$ of 1.2 mM 2-mercaptoethanol. Subsequently, the complete culture medium was equilibrated in a CO_2 incubator for 2 h (37°C and 5% CO_2).

When the animal R_1 (previously infected) showed high parasitemia (10^7 trypanosomes/ μL), it was anesthetized (isoflurane/anesthetic chamber) for blood drawing. The sample was stored in tubes with anticoagulant (EDTA 10%). Then, 7 mL of blood was diluted (in order to the lymphocytes separation) in culture medium stabilized (1v/v). The new solution was stored in microtubes and centrifuged at 400 xg during 15 minutes. The supernatant, rich in parasites, were removed and placed on the culture medium. Posteriorly, the trypomastigotes count was performed in *Neubauer* chamber, based on the methodology described by Gillingwater *et al.* (2010).

Then, the culture medium with the parasites was distributed in microtiter plates (225 μL /well). Formulations containing curcumin were dissolved in 1% DMSO at final concentrations of 100, 75, 50 and 25 mg mL^{-1} (C-LNCs) and 100, 75, 50, 25, 12.5, 6.25, 3.12,

1.56 and 0.78 mg mL⁻¹ (CURC) and added per each well. Control groups with B-LNCs), DMSO 1% (used to dissolve curcumin), distilled water (used in the dilutions) and diminazene aceturate (Ganazeg[®]: 3µg mL⁻¹) were used for test validation. At 1, 3, 6, 9 and 12 hours after the onset of the experiment, the counting of living parasites was performed in a *Neubauer* chamber. All tests were performed in triplicate.

***In vivo* test**

Animals

Fifty four adult male Wistar rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), average 60 days old and 250 g in weight, composed our experimental groups. These animals were housed in cages in the experimental room with controlled temperature and humidity (23 °C, 75% RH, 12 hours dark/light) and subjected to an adaption period of 10 days. Throughout the experiment the animals were fed with commercial ration and received water *ad libidum*.

Experimental design and trypanosome infection

The animals were divided in eight groups, A to H, as follows: group A (not-infected and treated with saline/negative control/n=4); B (not-infected and treated with C-LNCs/n=4); C (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with B-LNCs/n=5); D (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with DMSO/n=5); E (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with saline/positive control/n=6); F (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with C-LNCs [10 mg kg⁻¹], n=10); G (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with CURC [10 mg kg⁻¹], n=10) and H (infected with *T. evansi* and treated with CURC [100 mg kg⁻¹], n=10). Animals of groups C, D, E, F, G and H were inoculated with 0.1 mL of blood containing 3x10⁶ trypanosomes (coming from R₂), while groups A and B (not-infected) served as negative controls. Twelve (12) hours PI the

treatment with curcumin was started, intraperitoneally (i.p.). This treatment was kept during 6 days with interval of 24 hours between doses.

Parasitemia evaluation

Parasitemia was estimated daily by microscopic examination of blood smears. Each slide was prepared with blood collected from the tail vein (Da Silva *et al.* 2006), stained by the *Romanowsky* method and visualized at a magnification of 1000 \times .

Collection of samples

On day seven post-infection, the animals were anaesthetized (isoflurano/anesthetic chamber) for blood drawing (cardiac puncture). The samples were stored in tubes without anticoagulant, in order to obtain the serum. Thereafter, all the rats were euthanized, and livers and kidneys were removed and preserved for histological analysis.

Nitrite/nitrate

Serum NO levels were analyzed indirectly by nitrite/nitrate (NO $_x$) quantification according to a modified Griess method (Cobas Mira automated analyzer) described in detail by Tatsch *et al.* (2011). The results were expressed as $\mu\text{mol/L}$.

Advanced oxidation protein products (AOPP)

AOPP levels in serum were measured according to the techniques described by Benzie and Strain (1996), using a Cobas Mira automated analyzer. The results were expressed as $\mu\text{mol/L}$.

Catalase (CAT) and superoxide dismutase (SOD) activity in whole blood

Determination of CAT activity was carried out in accordance with a modified method of Nelson and Kiesow (1972). This assay involved the change in absorbance at 240 nm due to CAT dependent decomposition of hydrogen peroxide. An aliquot (0.02 mL) of blood (diluted 1:10 with saline) was homogenized in 0.910 mL of potassium phosphate buffer 50 mM, pH 7.0. The spectrophotometric determination was initiated by the addition of 0.07 mL of hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) 0.3 mol/L. The change in absorbance at 240 nm was measured for 2 min. CAT activity was calculated using the molar extinction coefficient ($0.0436 \text{ cm}^2/\mu\text{mol}$) and the results were expressed as nmol CAT per milligram protein.

SOD activity measurement was based on the inhibition of the radical superoxide reaction with adrenalin as described by McCord and Fridovich (1969). In this method, SOD present in the sample competes with the detection system for radical superoxide. A unit of SOD is defined as the amount of enzyme that inhibits by 50% the speed of adrenalin oxidation. It leads to formation of the red-colored product, adrenochrome, which is detected by spectrophotometer. SOD activity is determined by measuring the speed of adrenochrome formation, observed at 480 nm, in a reaction medium containing glycine–NaOH (50 mM, pH 10) and adrenalin (1 mM). The results were expressed as UI SOD per milligram protein.

Hepatic and renal function

Hepatic function was evaluated by the assessment of alanine aminotransferase (ALT), aspartate aminotransferase (AST) and alkaline phosphatase (AP), while renal function was evaluated by the assessment of creatinine levels. All the analysis were carried out in serum samples.

Histology

Representative fragments of liver and kidney were fixed in 10% buffered formalin. Sagittal sections of every 6 μm were obtained and stained with Hematoxylin and Eosin (H&E) method. The respective slides were analyzed for the presence of histopathological changes, measuring the dimensions of structures present in the cells of liver and kidney. In each slide were evaluated 10 cells, randomly chosen, considering the mean area of hepatocytes nucleus, as well as the renal glomerular area, quantified by the number of hepatocyte nuclei.

Statistical analysis

Firstly, the data were subjected to normality test, and the data that showed abnormal distribution were, then, transformed into logarithms. The results from *in vitro* tests (normal data) were analyzed by ANOVA (followed by Student test ($P > 0.05$)). *In vivo* results were subjected to analysis of variance (ANOVA), followed by Duncan test. The histological results were analyzed by Bonferroni method, followed by the Duncan test. Results were considered significant when $P < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Characterization of lipid-core nanocapsules (LNCs)

Macroscopically, nanocapsule suspensions presented a homogeneous and opalescent appearance. After preparation, the formulations showed particle sizes around 200 nm with narrow size distributions ($\text{PDI} < 0.2$) and negative zeta potential. The pH values were in the range of 6.1 to 6.5. The curcumin content was in agreement with the expected concentration (1.0 mg mL^{-1}) and the encapsulation efficiency was close to 100% (Table 1).

***In vitro* test**

It was observed that all the concentrations higher than $3.12 \mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$ and containing CURC were lethal to the parasite, within the first hour PI (Figure 1-A). On Figure 1-B it is possible to observe a dose-dependent activity of the C-LNCs from the first hour PI reducing the concentration of mobile trypanosomes. In the third hour PI it was possible to verify the absence of mobile parasites at the highest concentration ($100 \mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$), with significant reduction of trypomastigotes in the other concentrations. Six hours PI, it was not visualized living parasites in all the concentrations tested, differently of the control groups (water, medium and DMSO at 1%), which they were mobile even between the 9th and 12th hours PI. These results validated our tests. In diminazene aceturte group (control), all the parasites died within six hours post-treatment (Figure 1-A and B).

***In vivo* test**

Observing the figure 2, it is possible to verify a significant parasitemia reduction in the animals treated with both concentrations of CURC and C-LNCs, when compared with positive control groups (C, D and E), on the 7th day PI.

Hepatic and renal function

Results of the biochemical analyses are shown in Table 2. A significant decrease in the levels of AST was observed in the serum of rats treated with CURC at the highest concentration. There was a decrease in ALT levels in the groups treated CURC (Group F and G) and C-LNCs (Group H). Creatinine levels were significantly reduced in both groups treated with CURC. Serum AP levels, in the animals treated with CURC did not show significant change, when compared with the infected control group.

Oxidative and antioxidants markers

The results of oxidative and antioxidants biomarkers in serum are shown in Table 3. The serum concentration of AOPP showed a significantly reduction in the group treated with CURC, at the lowest concentration. Serum levels of NO_x, in rats treated with CURC (in both concentrations) and in C-LNCs significantly reduced, when compared with the control group. Blood levels of CAT significantly reduced in groups treated with CURC, when compared with the control group. By the other hand, the levels of SOD in total blood significantly increased in animals treated with the highest concentration of CURC (in the control group).

Histology

Non-infected rats did not show histological alterations (Group A and B), while animals infected with *T. evansi* (group C, D and E) showed moderate liver tissue with multifocal lymphoplasmacytic inflammatory infiltrate, and moderate and diffuse perivascular lymphocytic inflammatory infiltrate. In these animals was also observed necrosis of hepatocytes (isolated), characterized as mild and diffuse. In renal capsule and pelvis it was observed moderate lymphocytic inflammatory infiltrate. The animals treated with CURC (Groups F, G and H) showed only mild perivascular and diffuse lymphocytic inflammatory infiltrate.

Based on statistical analysis, it was possible to detect an increase in the area of the hepatocytes nucleus, in animals treated with nanocapsules, with or without curcumin (Groups B, C and F), when compared with group - A ($P < 0.001$); however there was no difference between groups, regarding the number of nuclei ($p > 0.05$). In the kidney samples it was observed a significant reduction ($P < 0.001$) in the renal glomerular area of the animals of all

the groups, when compared with the negative control (Group A), but there was no visible morphological glomerular alteration.

DISCUSSION

The development of new therapies against trypanosomes it is an important subject and it has been subject of some investigations, mainly due to the limitations of the available therapy currently (Baldissera *et al.* 2013; Wolkmer *et al.* 2013). This study showed the curcumin efficacy, in its free or nanocapsules forms against *T. evansi*, as well as this is the first study assessing the activity of nanoencapsulated curcumin against this parasite. Nanotechnology is a powerful tool to circumvent the limitations of curcumin, such as low aqueous solubility, chemical instability and low bioavailability (Anand *et al.* 2007). In our study morphological alterations in healthy rats that received B-LNCs were not displayed, but these animals showed increased hepatocyte nuclei area and reduction in the kidney glomerular area. These findings were similar as the ones observed in the groups treated with other nanocapsules with curcumin, which can be interpreted the onset of tissue alterations, fact already described in other researches (Linkov *et al.* 2008).

A significant *in vitro* trypanocidal activity of curcumin on *T. evansi* was observed 1 h PI, corroborating with the findings of Nagajyothi *et al.* (2012) and Nose *et al.* (1998), who demonstrated curcumin activity (*in vitro*) on *T. cruzi* and *T. brucei*, respectively. Additionally, it was observed that C-LNCs treatments, at doses lower than $100 \mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$, were not able to destroy all the parasites into 1h PI, differently of the results observed for CURC. However, after 6h, no living parasites were observed, independently of the used dose. These results are in accordance with Zanotto-Filho *et al.* (2013), who observed that non-encapsulated curcumin was more cytotoxic than nanoencapsulated curcumin in C6 glioma cells into the first hours, showing similar cytotoxicity at later time points. This better efficacy at later time points can

be related with the slow release of curcumin from lipid-core nanocapsules (Zanotto-Filho *et al.* 2013).

Considering the *in vivo* findings, both treatments, C-LNCs and CURC, showed activity on the parasitemia of infected rats, differently of the results reported by Wolkmer *et al.* (2013), who used oral treatment with curcumin at 20 mg kg⁻¹. According to Pan *et al.* (1999), Dohare *et al.* (2008) and Moon *et al.* (2008) the curcumin has low absorption in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, which justifies our choice for intraperitoneal route, since we aimed to provide a greater absorption of this phytochemical, reaching, then, its higher biological activity.

The infiltration and dissemination of *T. evansi* in the central nervous system of equines have been described (Berlin *et al.* 2009). This infiltration causes severe and fatal clinical disease, limiting the treatment effectiveness due to the blood brain barrier (Wolkmer *et al.* 2013). Recent reports have shown that nanoencapsulation can increase the drug concentration into the brain (Bernardi *et al.* 2009; Frozza *et al.* 2010; Bernardi *et al.* 2012). The formulations prepared in this study consisted of aqueous suspensions, enabling the development of systems for intravenous use. Also, the C-LNCs are composed by a hydrophobic core, surrounded by a polymeric wall and a hydrophilic surfactant (Pohlmann *et al.* 2013). Generally, lipophilic molecules like curcumin are localized in the core, which provides a controlled drug release and protection against degradation (Fontana *et al.* 2009). Thus, taking into account, the development of nanoencapsulated curcumin may represent a potential alternative for the treatment of this disease.

Free radicals and reactive oxygen species (ROS) have been implicated to play an important role in tissue damage in a variety of pathological processes (Nohl *et al.* 1996). In our study it was found an increase in NO_x and AOPP levels in serum of the animals infected with *T. evansi* on 7 day PI. These results differ from those found by Da Silva *et al.* (2012),

who reported an increase in the levels of these both variables only 15 days PI in rats infected with *T. evansi*. Our results showed a reduction in nitrite/nitrate and AOPP levels in curcumin-treated animals, suggesting a damage tissue reduction, usually produced by the disease.

Rats with *T. evansi* respond to oxidative stress increasing the activity of antioxidant enzymes, such as SOD and CAT, in whole blood. Activation of these enzymes was reported by Omer *et al.* (2007), corroborating with our findings. Infected animals treated with CURC at concentration of 100 mg kg⁻¹ showed increased levels of SOD. Singh and Sharma *et al.* (2011) when induced oxidative stress in rats and, then, treated these animals with curcumin at 100 and 200 mg kg⁻¹, reported increased levels of non-enzymatic antioxidant (reduced glutathione) e enzymatic antioxidants (CAT, SOD, Glutathione peroxidase, Glutathione-S-transferase, Glutathione reductase and quinone reductase).

Hepatic damage can affects the body metabolic processes due to the role of liver in general metabolism. It is well known that nzymes are necessary for normal cellular metabolism, and in this sense, the hepatic enzymes play a fundamental role (Rajamanickam and Muthuswamy, 2008). Increases in ALT and AST activity have been, also, observed in natural infection by *T. evansi* (Sandoval *et al.*, 1994). Although the serum levels of AST did not show significant increase, when compared with the negative control group, it was observed that in infected animals treated with the highest concentration CURC, a decreased serum levels of this enzyme occurred. ALT levels were also reduced in CURC and C-LNCs groups, thus, demonstrating a hepatoprotective effect of this phytochemical, an action easily justified due to its antioxidant capacity (Singh and Sharma *et al.* 2011). Additionally there is growing evidence that the hepatoprotective effect of curcumin takes place directly at the level of hepatocytes, by reducing the intercellular levels of cholesterol and cytotoxic bile acids (Sambaiah and Srinivasan, 1989). The reduction in the activity of liver enzymes, mainly ALT, indicates a better response of hepatocytes when facing the infection, since the

serum transaminase activities returns near to normal when the regeneration of the liver parenchyma occurs (Shahidi and Wanasundara, 1992).

The increase in serum creatinine levels observed in our study corroborate with the findings of Brandão *et al.* (2002) and Colpo *et al.* (2005), who believe that the increase in urea and creatinine in serum can be related to glomerulonephritis, caused by the deposition of immune complexes in the glomerular basement membrane, in response *T. evansi* immunoglobulin production. Our findings show that the CURC can provide a nephroprotective effect, since creatinine levels were restored to values close to the ones observed in non-infected animals.

Histological analysis confirmed the hepatic and renal biochemical assessment, as well as oxidant/antioxidant markers mentioned above. Infected animals treated with curcumin showed only mild inflammatory infiltrates in the liver and absent of it kidney, unlike the positive control. Two hypotheses for this alteration are the minor or absent curcumin in rats (significant lower parasitemia), or an anti-inflammatory effect of curcumin, as described in *T. evansi* infections (Wolkmer *et al.* 2013), associated with hepatoprotective action (Mathews *et al.* 2012).

CONCLUSION

CURC and C-LNC presented trypanocidal activity against *T. evansi in vitro*. CURC showed a faster trypanocidal activity, when compared with C-LNCs. According to our *in vivo* results, both, CURC and C-LNCs, showed activity on parasitemia; however, these formulations cannot be used as single antiparasitic compounds. Therefore, we concluded that curcumin improves the biochemical variables, stimulating the antioxidants enzymes, which were previously induced in rats infected with *T. evansi*. Thus, we suggest the use of these curcumin formulations as a supportive therapy in animals with trypanosomosis, mainly due to

their antioxidant activities, assisting in the reduction of tissue damage, as well as helping to maintain the integrity of liver and kidney functions.

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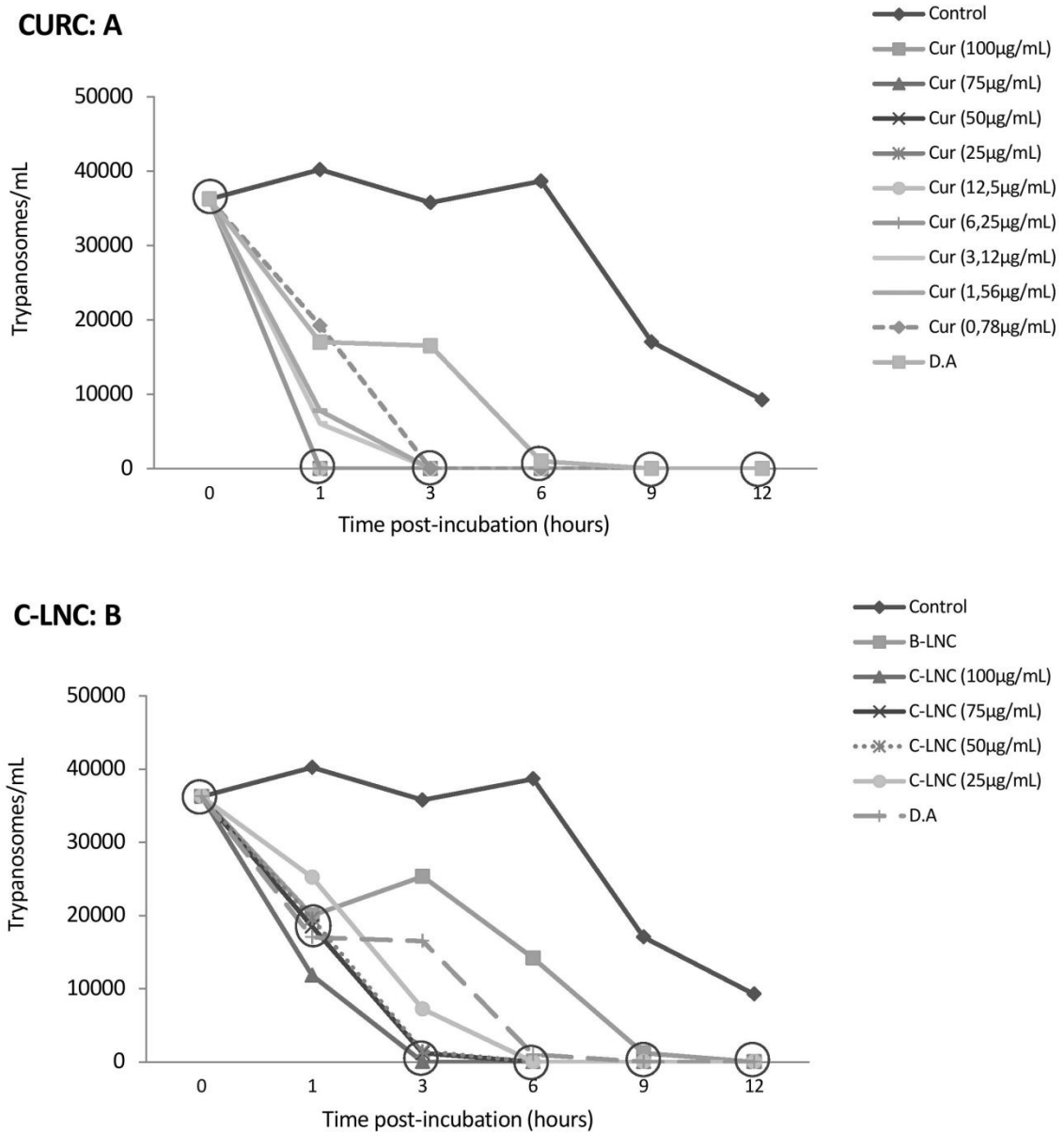


Figure 1. *In vitro* tests of free curcumin (CURC: A) and curcumin-loaded lipid-core nanocapsules (C-LNC: B) against *Trypanosoma evansi*. In order to validate the test the comparison with negative control (Control) and positive control (diminazene aceturate: D.A.) was performed. Results within a circle did not differ from each other in Student T-test ($P > 0.05$).

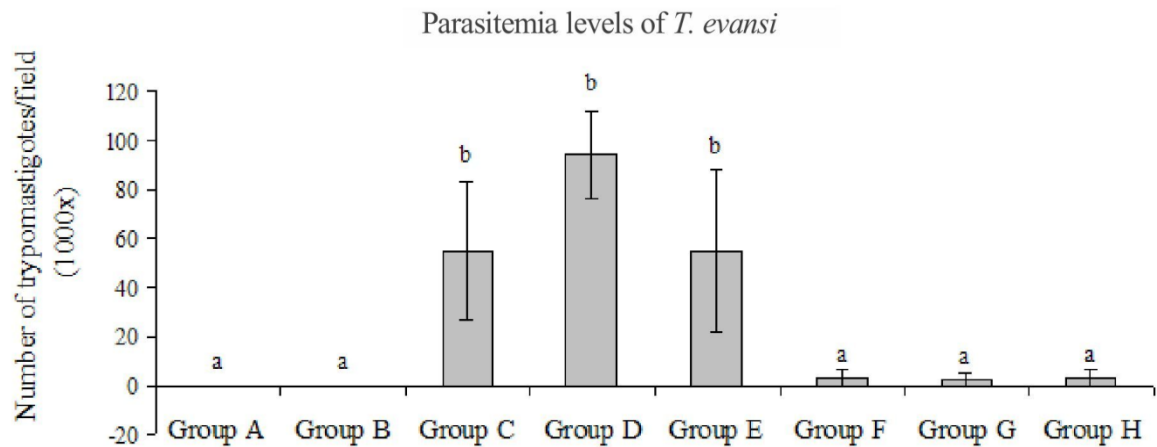


Figure 2. Average parasitemia levels of rats infected with *T. evansi* on the 7th day post-infection.: Same letters in the same column indicate that the groups did not differ statistically among themselves, at a significance level of 5% (Duncan Test). Group A (uninfected/treated with saline); B (uninfected/treated with C-LNC); C (infected/treated with B-LNC); D (infected/treated with DMSO); E (infected/saline-treated); F (infected/treated with C-LNC [10mg/kg]); G (infected/treated with free curcumin [10mg/kg]); H (infected/treated with free curcumin [100mg/kg]).

Table 1. Physicochemical characteristics of B-LNC and C-LNC after preparation.

Formulation	B-LNC	C-LNC
Particle size (nm)	194±3.46	198±0.58
PDI	0.10±0.02	0.10±0.02
Zeta potential (mV)	-9.90±3.67	-12.35±2.09
pH	6.43±0.29	6.14±0.30
Drug Content (mg mL ⁻¹)	-	1.01±0.03
EE (%)	-	99.97±0.04

Table 2. Liver and kidney function assessment in rats infected with *T. evansi* and treated with CURC and C-LNC

Groups	Serum parameters (mean \pm standard deviation)			
	AST (U/L)	ALT (U/L)	AP (U/L)	Creatinine (mg/dL)
A	198.2 \pm 29.4 ^b	74.7 \pm 6.9 ^d	218.5 \pm 84.5 ^b	0.40 \pm 0.05 ^c
B	166.0 \pm 12.4 ^{bc}	86.0 \pm 13.6 ^{cd}	226.0 \pm 22.3 ^b	0.39 \pm 0.03 ^c
C	242.3 \pm 115.8 ^b	410.3 \pm 102.1 ^b	161.6 \pm 41.4 ^c	1.27 \pm 0.67 ^a
D	400.0 \pm 56.8 ^a	1324.0 \pm 26.4 ^a	325.3 \pm 95.4 ^a	1.47 \pm 0.11 ^a
E	224.8 \pm 24.8 ^b	349.2 \pm 32.7 ^b	239.4 \pm 38.1 ^b	1.05 \pm 0.21 ^a
F	221.8 \pm 13.7 ^b	93.5 \pm 3.6 ^c	214.4 \pm 47.2 ^b	0.88 \pm 0.52 ^{abc}
G	182.6 \pm 57.2 ^{bc}	89.2 \pm 26.2 ^c	178.1 \pm 44.6 ^{bc}	0.35 \pm 0.23 ^c
H	141.2 \pm 42.3 ^c	81.2 \pm 24.8 ^{cd}	181.8 \pm 33.6 ^{bc}	0.42 \pm 0.30 ^c

AST, aspartate aminotransferase; ALT, alanine aminotransferase; AP, alkaline phosphatase. Same letters in the same column indicate that the groups did not differ statistically among themselves, at a significance level of 5% (Duncan Test). Group A (uninfected/treated with saline); B (uninfected/treated with C-LNC); C (infected/treated with B-LNC); D (infected/treated with DMSO); E (infected/saline-treated); F (infected/treated with C-LNC [10mg/kg]); G (infected/treated with free curcumin [10mg/kg]); H (infected/treated with free curcumin [100mg/kg]).

Table 3. Assessment of oxidative biomarker serum (NOx and AOPP) and antioxidant enzymes (SOD and CAT) in whole blood of rats experimentally infected with *T. evansi* and treated with CURC and C-LNC.

Groups	Variables			
	NOx ($\mu\text{mol/L}$)	AOPP ($\mu\text{mol/L}$)	SOD (UI SOD/mg of protein)	CAT (nmol CAT/mg protein)
A	217.5 \pm 52.9 ^b	34.9 \pm 7.0 ^d	3.64 \pm 0.65 ^d	3.53 \pm 0.58 ^c
B	148.0 \pm 21.2 ^c	40.0 \pm 14.3 ^{cd}	3.93 \pm 1.02 ^d	3.81 \pm 1.03 ^c
C	178.4 \pm 38.4 ^{bc}	75.1 \pm 31.3 ^b	6.48 \pm 0.06 ^b	4.47 \pm 0.02 ^b
D	331.7 \pm 75.4 ^a	101.5 \pm 6.4 ^a	5.13 \pm 0.77 ^c	1.8 \pm 0.14 ^e
E	313.9 \pm 50.8 ^a	83.4 \pm 39.5 ^{ab}	6.04 \pm 0.52 ^b	5.41 \pm 0.92 ^a
F	240.8 \pm 44.8 ^b	82.6 \pm 44.5 ^{ab}	5.08 \pm 1.36 ^{bc}	3.58 \pm 0.90 ^c
G	207.3 \pm 69.5 ^b	56.4 \pm 17.0 ^c	5.96 \pm 0.92 ^{bc}	3.13 \pm 0.68 ^{cd}
H	155.7 \pm 37.8 ^c	78.1 \pm 45.9 ^{ab}	8.33 \pm 1.83 ^a	2.53 \pm 0.16 ^d

Note: same letters in the same column indicate that the groups did not differ statistically among themselves, at a significance level of 5% (Duncan Test). Group A (uninfected/treated with saline); B (uninfected/treated with C-LNC); C (infected/treated with B-LNC); D (infected/treated with DMSO); E (infected/saline-treated); F (infected/treated with C-LNC [10mg/kg]); G (infected/treated with free curcumin [10mg/kg]); H (infected/treated with free curcumin [100mg/kg]).

4 CONCLUSÃO

Ambas as composições testadas, curcumina livre e nanocápsulas de curcumina, apresentam atividade sobre *T. evansi in vitro*. Entretanto, a curcumina em sua forma livre demonstra uma atividade tripanocida mais efetiva em comparação à forma nanoestruturada. De acordo com os resultados *in vivo*, C-L e C-N demonstraram atividade protetora contra a parasitemia, mas não eliminaram os parasitos. A utilização da curcumina contribuiu para o restabelecimento de parâmetros oxidantes, antioxidantes e bioquímicos em ratos infectados por *T. evansi*. Podendo assim, se tornar uma terapia auxiliar, quando utilizada concomitantemente a fármacos tripanocidas, reduzindo os danos teciduais decorrentes da infecção, contribuindo no tratamento dessa doença.

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