

## De novo assembly and transcriptome characterization of the freshwater prawn *Palaemonetes argentinus*: Implications for a detoxification response



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### ABSTRACT

*Palaemonetes argentinus*, an abundant freshwater prawn species in the northern and central region of Argentina, has been used as a bioindicator of environmental pollutants as it displays a very high sensitivity to pollutants exposure. Despite their extraordinary ecological relevance, a lack of genomic information has hindered a more thorough understanding of the molecular mechanisms potentially involved in detoxification processes of this species. Thus, transcriptomic profiling studies represent a promising approach to overcome the limitations imposed by the lack of extensive genomic resources for *P. argentinus*, and may improve the understanding of its physiological and molecular response triggered by pollutants. This work represents the first comprehensive transcriptome-based characterization of the non-model species *P. argentinus* to generate functional genomic annotations and provides valuable resources for future genetic studies.

Trinity *de novo* assembly consisted of 24,738 transcripts with high representation of detoxification (phase I and II), anti-oxidation, osmoregulation pathways and DNA replication and bioenergetics. This crustacean transcriptome provides valuable molecular information about detoxification and biochemical processes that could be applied as biomarkers in further ecotoxicology studies.

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## 1. Introduction

Major policies, actions, and control measures have been undertaken globally over recent years to reduce the disposal of hazardous substances into the aquatic environment. However, pollution remains a major problem for marine ecosystems (Vidas and Schei, 2011), especially in developing countries (Wu, 1999), and poses continuing risks to the health of the organisms inhabiting aquatic environments.

Among crustaceans, the Palaemonidae family presents an unusual diversity (it is the second family with more species), and the shrimp species grouped within this family are critical contributing elements in several essential ecological processes of marine and freshwater environments (Bauer, 2005). Because of its evolutionary history, this group is considered an ideal model for studies addressing physiological adaptations associated with successful limnic invasions by marine organisms (Freire et al., 2003). Taken together the high sensitivity to toxic pollutants, like pesticides, and its wide distribution spectrum, penaeid prawns, have been proposed as useful bioindicators for environmental monitoring of anthropogenic impact (García-de la Parra et al., 2006).

*P. argentinus* is a widely-distributed decapod species in the coastal region of Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and southern Brazil, mainly in freshwater ponds and lakes (Morrone and Lopreto, 1995). Although several recent studies have been performed on the toxicological effects of pollutants over *P. argentinus* and its detoxification response (Bertrand et al., 2015; Lavarias and Garcia, 2015; Griboff et al., 2014; Galanti et al., 2013; Montagna and Collins, 2007; Collins and Cappello, 2006), studies of genes associated with the physiologic and metabolic response of this organism to pollutants are scarce.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest and enthusiasm in applying molecular tools for understanding the impact of contaminant stressors on the health of aquatic organism, to identify specific molecular, biochemical, metabolic, physiological, and behavioral responses of marine species to pollutants, and to identify potential biomarkers of stress caused by contaminants to aquatic life (Hwang et al., 2017; Diaz de Cerio et al., 2017; Shinn et al., 2015; Gust et al., 2014; Meng et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2012). In this context, the emergence of high-throughput sequencing has undoubtedly expanded our knowledge of non-model species in which to focus future research efforts (Mehinto et al., 2012). Unfortunately, to the best of our knowledge, few high-throughput sequencing studies have described the changes in gene expression of freshwater decapods due to environmental stressors (Manfrin et al., 2015; Harms et al., 2013; Griffitt et al., 2007).

Despite the availability and extensive use of low-cost NGS platforms and the commercial value of several crustacean species, the reconstruction of their genomes has remained a particularly challenging task, mainly because crustaceans possess vast and complex genomes, and because of the presence of repetitive elements (Holland and Skinner, 1977), which interfere during sequence assembly. However, RNA-seq is a powerful alternative approach that allows analysis of genomic coding regions and differential gene expression studies. In the absence of a reference genome, *de novo* transcriptomes can deliver thousands of transcripts in a single experiment (Robertson et al., 2010). Once the individual nucleotide sequence of a transcribed gene is known, quantification experiments for gene expression of specific genes can be performed to determine changes related to certain conditions such as xenobiotic exposure, hypoxia, or other environmental parameters by reverse transcription coupled to quantitative PCR. Transcriptome annotation also provides insights about the proteins and metabolic routes present in the organisms, limited of course by the specific gene expression at the point where RNA was obtained.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to characterize the transcriptome profile of *P. argentinus* through RNA-seq techniques to identify gene signatures associated with relevant metabolic pathways related to detoxification. This study provides a solid foundation for

**Table 1**  
Genome and environmental features of the biosample.

Item	Description
Investigation_type	Eukaryote
Project_name	PRJNA309860
Collected_by	Carlos Fernando Garcia
Collection_date	5-August-2013
Latitude_longitude	34.9600 S; 57.7767 W
Depth	0.5 m
Temperature	15 °C
Salinity	0 psu
Environment	Fresh water
Biotic_relationship	Free living
Sequencing technology	Illumina GAIIx
Assembly	Trinity V.20140717
Biome	ENVO:01000297
Feature	ENVO:00000022
Material	ENVO:00000063
Geolocation_name	El Pescado < comma > Argentina
Assembly method	Trinity release 2014
Assembly name	Palaemon argentinus Transcriptome

future comparative studies, and for research on the functional role of particular genes involved in the detoxification response of this crustacean. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first *de novo* transcriptome study in *P. argentinus* to date.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Sample collection

*P. argentinus* adults were collected in “El Pescado” (34°57′0.36″S; 57° 46′0.36″W), a freshwater watercourse in La Plata River, Argentina in 2013 during the pre-reproductive season. The biosample information is shown in Table 1. The samples were taken to the laboratory and immediately submerged in ice-cold RNAlater reagent (Sigma-Aldrich). Samples were stored at – 20 °C until processing.

### 2.2. Sample preparation and RNA extraction for RNA-seq

The experimental methods were similar to those described previously (Ghaffari et al., 2014; Ioannidis et al., 2014;). Total RNA was isolated from five adult individuals by using the Quick-RNA MicroPrep kit (Zymo Research) using the manufacturer's protocol. RNA quality was assessed using the Agilent 2100 Bioanalyzer (Agilent Technologies). Only RNA samples with an RNA integrity number (RIN) above 7.0 were used for Illumina RNA-seq library preparation. RNA-seq libraries were generated using the TruSeq RNA Sample Prep Kit (Illumina) according to the manufacturer's protocol, followed by sequencing using an Illumina GAIIx platform for 72 paired-end (PE) cycles following the manufacturer's protocol.

### 2.3. Bioinformatic analysis

The *P. argentinus* sequence reads obtained from the Illumina platform were reconstructed using the Illumina-based Trinity Assembler 2014 (release r20140717) (Grabherr et al., 2011), executed with the Pasafly parameters to reduce the number of reported isoforms. To deduce the protein products by conceptual translation, the software Transdecoder v2.0.1 was used with default parameters. Putative mitochondrial transcripts were identified by using Transdecoder with the arthropod mitochondrial genetic code. The resulting protein sequences were compared to the *Palaemon serenus* (NC\_027601) mitochondrial proteins.

## 2.4. Functional annotation

Annotation was conducted using the Blast v2.2.30+ algorithm (Camacho et al., 2009) against the UniProtKB/Swiss-Prot database. A functional domain annotation was performed using the hmmscan from HMMER v3.1b1 suite (Eddy, 2011) to search against the Pfam-A database. SignalP v4.1 and TMHMM v2.0c programs were used to predict signal peptide and transmembrane regions, respectively. Results were integrated by the Trinotate v2.0.1 (Grabherr et al., 2011) pipeline and generated additional analyses such as Clusters of Orthologous Groups (COG) identifiers (Tatusov et al., 2000) and Gene Ontology terms (GO) (Ashburner et al., 2000). From the integrated results, the Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG) (Kanehisa and Goto, 2000), euKaryotic Ortholog Groups (KOG) (Tatusov et al., 2000), and Gene Ontology (GO) (Harris et al., 2004) count histograms were elaborated using *ad-hoc* Perl scripts. Blast2GO was also used to annotate function (Conesa et al., 2005; Conesa and Gotz, 2008).

The annotation process consisted of a multi-approach search using programs including BlastP and BlastX against Swissprot/Unifler databases, hmmscan against PFAM-A database, signalP and TMHMM for signal peptide and transmembrane helices regions, respectively. All these results were integrated using the Trinotate package (Finn et al., 2014) with the SQLite database included. From this database, an annotation table was generated (Suppl. Table 1) with additional data from Egglog and Gene Ontology. All the sequences mentioned in the text are included in Fasta format in supplemental materials.

## 3. Results

To obtain a wider understanding of the gene content, biological processes, and overview of the gene expression in the freshwater prawn *P. argentinus*, high-quality paired-end RNA-seq libraries were constructed. After processing the data with the Trinity pipeline, 101,251,880 total paired reads led to 24,378 transcripts. The assembly and annotation statistics are shown in Table 2. All the deduced amino acid sequences mentioned in the results and discussion are included as a text file in supplemental materials.

The transcriptome shotgun assembly was deposited at GenBank/DBJ/EMBL under the accession number GEFN0100000.1 (BioProject: PRJNA309860, BioSample: SAMN04441069, Sequence Read Archive: SRR3124666). A taxonomic analysis based on Blast best hits revealed that the Nevada dampwood termite *Zootermopsis nevadensis* and water flea *Daphnia pulex* were the species with the highest

**Table 2**  
RNA-seq assembly and annotation statistics.

Total number of paired reads	101,251,880
Total number of transcripts	24,378
Total number of bases in transcripts	12,265,959
GC content	39.42%
N50/L50	621/5583
Median transcript length (bp)	343
Average transcript length (bp)	504
Total number of predicted proteins (possible ORFs)	15,476
Total number of transcripts with one or more ORFs	12,424
Total number of proteins with annotation	10,238
Total number of transcripts with one or more annotated open reading frames (ORF)	7383
Completeness of transcripts based on translation (% of total predicted proteins) <sup>a</sup>	
Complete	24%
5'partial	37%
3'partial	7%
Internal	32%

5'partial = stop codon found but not a start codon (Met);

3'partial = start codon found (Met) but not a stop codon;

Internal = start and stop codons not found.

<sup>a</sup> Complete = start and stop codons found.

number of similar proteins to *P. argentinus*, among other invertebrates (Fig. 1).

This work was aimed to provide information on the transcripts for molecular expression studies or to produce recombinant annotated proteins and advance the biochemical toxicology in invertebrates. Individual nucleotide sequences mentioned in the text may be retrieved from the following website: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Traces/wgs/GEFN01?display=contigs&page=1>. The *P. argentinus* transcriptome shotgun assembly (TSA) project has the accession number GEFN00000000, and consists of sequences GEFN01000001-GEFN01024378. Since *P. argentinus* is commonly used in ecotoxicological studies, gene families involved in detoxification were identified.

Twenty-seven transcript sequences encoding proteins of the cytochrome P450 superfamily (CYP) with sizes from 205 nt (GEFN01015458.1) to 1519 nt (GEFN01001415.1) were found. After a BLAST search against all invertebrate non-insect P450s in Nelson's database (<http://blast.uthsc.edu/>) (Nelson, 1999), and based on sequence homology to best hits, a high correspondence to CYPs from the freshwater flea, shrimp or crabs was found.

Two sequences encoding enzymes of the glutathione transferase (GSTs, EC 2.5.1.18) supergene family involved in the phase II detoxification system were found in the assembly. An 855 nt sequence (GEFN01007361.1) showed similarity with the soluble cytosolic mu-GST subclass reported in the crustaceans *Lepeophtheirus salmonis* (GenBank acc. No: ADD38533). In addition, sequence GEFN01023048.1 showed high identity to a delta glutathione transferase from *Palaemon carinicauda* (GenBank acc. No. AGZ89666.1). Finally, sequence GEFN01000783.1 showed high homology with a C-terminal fragment of the alpha helical domain of a theta-GST cytosolic subclass found in the crayfish *Procambarus clarkii* (AEB54656.1) and the shrimp *Penaeus monodon* (APP91325.1).

A detailed analysis of the *P. argentinus* transcriptome revealed a number of genes encoding antioxidant enzymes involved in defense against oxidative stress. Five sequences were annotated as superoxide dismutases (SODs) in the *P. argentinus* transcriptome. A small transcript of 278 nt (GEFN01021101.1) for a Cu-Zn SOD similar to *Filobasidiella/Cryptococcus* was similar to the Cu-Zn SOD of the Chinese mitten crab *Eriocheir sinensis* (AEP17493.1), to whom it had a 53% identity.

The largest transcript was 1817 nt logn (GEFN01017685.1), similar to Cu-Zn chloroplast SOD. This large SOD has a large identity with the C-terminal domain of two SOD isoforms from *Marsupenaeus japonicus* (BAP28201.1 with 76%) and BAP28203.1 with 63% identity). The whole sequence was 31% identical to an unannotated gene (GenBank EFX88223.1) from *Daphnia pulex* with 31% overall identity in the length of the protein.

In the present study, 63 unigenes annotated as proteins involved in the electron transport chain and oxidative phosphorylation pathways were identified in the *P. argentinus* transcriptome. Most of these sequences are nuclear-encoded partial or complete proteins.

Besides its key role on the respiratory chain, and its participation on the inherent, natural, continuous and harmful formation of reactive oxygen species (ROS), ATP-synthase is targeted by toxins and chemical compounds (Hong and Pedersen, 2008). Some xenobiotics are respiratory chain uncouplers (Boelsterli, 2007), therefore molecular information into the aerobic energy production machinery is fundamental for molecular toxicology. In the current RNA-seq data analysis of the *P. argentinus* transcriptome, two transcripts encoding the endogenous ATPase inhibitor IF1 protein (Chimeo et al., 2015) were identified (GEFN01024353.1 and GEFN01024354.1). The small transcript encodes a peptide that is 66% identical to *L. vannamei* IF1 mitochondrial inhibitory protein. IF1 regulates the complex V, is a highly hydrophobic protein, and contains the conserved IATP (mitochondrial ATPase inhibitor) domain that controls ATPase activity under oxidative stress conditions (van Raaij et al., 1996). IF1 maintains the ATP levels and the cellular homeostatic state. Additional sequence analysis of the *P.*

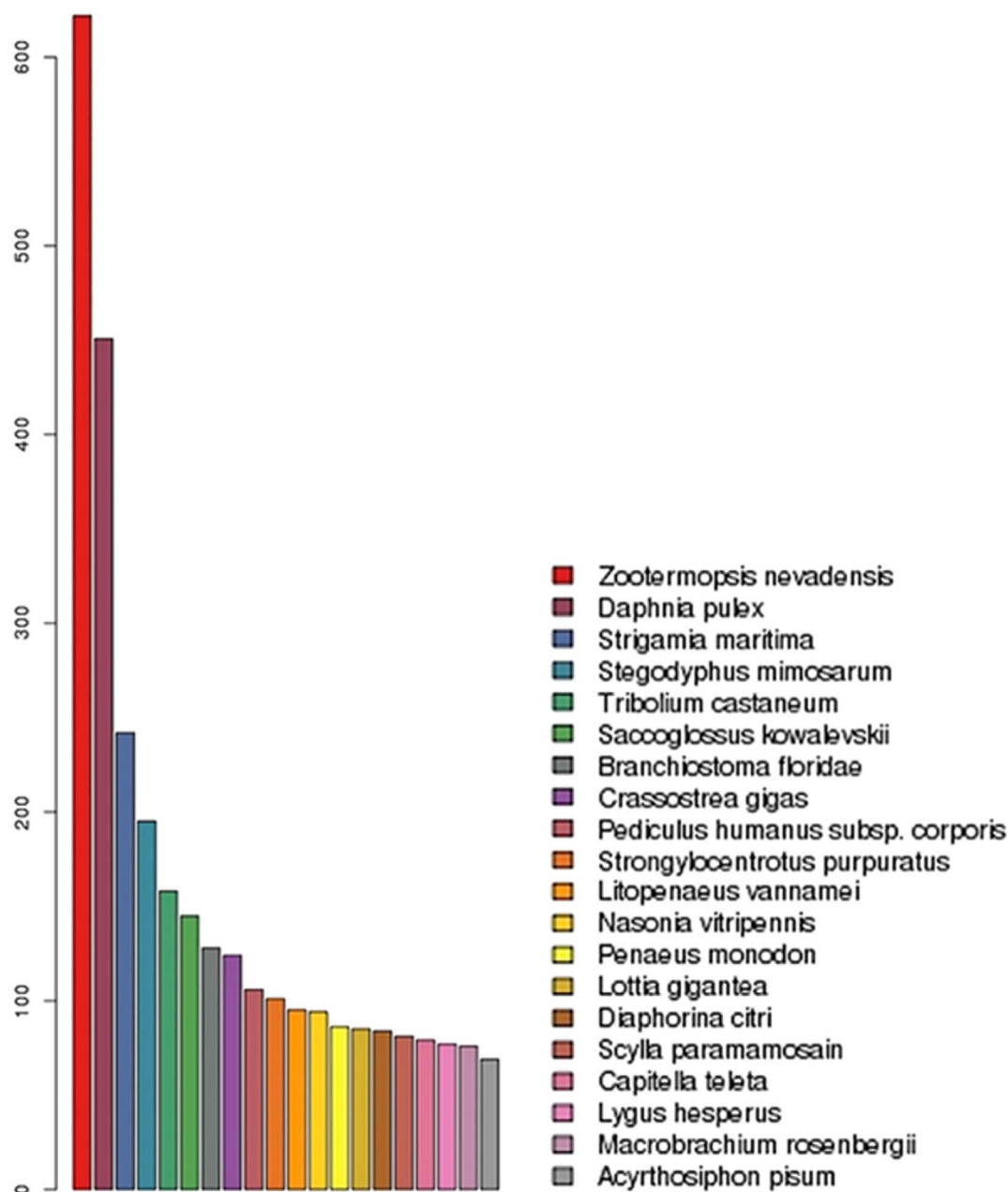


Fig. 1. Blast hits abundance based on taxonomical classification.

*argentinus* transcriptome related to phase I and II detoxification, enzymatic antioxidant defense, osmoregulation, DNA replication, bioenergetics, and digestion is presented in Supplementary Materials.

#### 4. Discussion

Studies about the analyses of transcriptomes of non-model organisms contribute, among other things, to elucidate the functions of the different genes comprising its genomes (Raheison et al., 2015). However, despite their unparalleled biodiversity, our knowledge on transcriptomes from marine invertebrate species remains scarce, which has hampered the possibility to explore proteins with novel functions. In this study, we have found functional redundancy in a number of transcripts belonging to different gene families. Thus, for example, 27 transcript sequences encoding proteins of the cytochrome P450 superfamily were found. This functional redundancy may provide a selective advantage to the organism either by buffering the effects of neutral loss-

of-function mutations over evolutionary time, or by subfunctionalization and neofunctionalization of particular tasks (Lynch and Force, 2000; Ohno, 1970), which increases the response plasticity under stress conditions. This functional redundancy suggests that the transcriptome of *P. argentinus* is highly dynamic in response to changing cell states, environmental conditions, or stressors.

Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that the highest abundance of Blast hits of our sequences showed high similarity with the Nevada dampwood termite *Zootermopsis nevadensis*. Although it may appear controversial, there are similarities between the decapod and the termite neuropeptidomes that would need to be further studied into an evolutionary perspective (Veenstra, 2016). Noteworthy is that for the *de novo* transcriptome of the freshwater shrimp *Paratya australiensis* (Decapoda: Atyidae), the termite *Z. nevadensis* appears as one of the best hits in their species transcriptome comparison (Bain et al., 2016).

From our perspective, the fact that the transcriptome of *P. argentinus* shares some similarity with other non-crustacean Arthropods



**Table 3**

List of CYPs partial expressed transcripts, identified from the *P. argentinus* transcriptome with homologs in GenBank. P450s were identified by using the BlastX tool to search against non-redundant protein sequences.

Original order	Sequence ID	Locus	Sequence length (nt)	Name and best hit	Identity (%)	Aln length (aa)
1	cds.comp234_c0_seq1	GEFN01018194	261	CYP2-clan-fragment1, CYP330A1_Carcinus maenas (shore crab)	48.28	58
2	cds.comp738_c0_seq1	GEFN01017694	257	CYP3217-fragment2, CYP3217A-fragment1_Hyalella azteca	67.00	52
3	cds.comp3323_c0_seq1	GEFN01019097	548	CYP3213F-fragment2, CYP3213A8_Hyalella azteca	55.06	178
4	cds.comp4034_c0_seq1	GEFN01017675	1010	CYP370C1, CYP370A10_Daphnia pulex	42.77	325
5	cds.comp4034_c0_seq2	GEFN01017676	850	CYP370C1, CYP370B2_Daphnia pulex	36.68	199
6	cds.comp6449_c0_seq1	GEFN01007680	421	CYP355E-fragment1, CYP355A2_shrimp (Litopenaeus)	52.67	150
7	cds.comp7192_c0_seq1	GEFN01022480	537	extra-macrochaetae-like, CYP3044B10_Brachionus rotundifloris	32.69	52
8	cds.comp7195_c0_seq1	GEFN01022480	537	CYP4V-fragment4, CYP4V21_Orconectes limosus (crayfish)	74.77	111
9	cds.comp7882_c0_seq1	GEFN01021267	784	CYP4V-fragment3, CYP4V16_Carcinus maenas (shore crab)	81.63	196
10	cds.comp8133_c0_seq1	GEFN01020629	311	CYP3213A-fragment9, CYP3213A-fragment6_Hyalella azteca	55.34	103
11	cds.comp8133_c1_seq1	GEFN01019097	548	CYP3213F1, CYP3213A8_Hyalella azteca	50.59	340
12	cds.comp8480_c0_seq1	GEFN01022022	291	CYP4V-fragment5, CYP4V18_Litopenaeus vannamei (Pacific white shrimp)	74.07	81
13	cds.comp9484_c0_seq1	GEFN01022757	435	CYP3217-fragment1, CYP3217A-fragment1_Hyalella azteca	53.00	134
14	cds.comp10618_c0_seq1	GEFN01000904	323	CYP355E1, CYP355A1_shrimp (Litopenaeus)	52.03	296
15	cds.comp10618_c1_seq1	GEFN01000904	323	CYP355-fragment, CYP355A1_shrimp (Litopenaeus)	62.38	101
16	cds.comp10704_c0_seq1	GEFN01001415	1519	CYP4V41, CYP4V20_Macrobrachium nippinense (fresh water shrimp)	87.89	355
17	cds.comp10704_c0_seq2	GEFN01001414	1503	CYP4V41, CYP4V20_Macrobrachium nippinense (fresh water shrimp)	87.32	355
18	cds.comp10732_c3_seq1	GEFN01023848	786	CYP3213E1, CYP379A1_green shore crab Carcinus maenas	56.25	96
19	cds.comp10732_c3_seq3	GEFN01023848	786	CYP3213E1, CYP379A1_green shore crab Carcinus maenas	56.25	96
20	cds.comp10732_c3_seq4	GEFN01023847	1299	CYP3213E1, CYP3213A8_Hyalella azteca	44.44	405
21	cds.comp14724_c0_seq1	GEFN01007778	684	CYP3213F-fragment1, CYP3213A1_Hyalella azteca	54.76	210
22	cds.comp15764_c0_seq1	GEFN01015294	811	CYP379-fragment1, CYP379B7_lobster	57.96	157
23	cds.comp18760_c0_seq1	GEFN01010697	309	CYP4V-fragment1, CYP4V16_Carcinus maenas (shore crab)	76.47	102
24	cds.comp18980_c0_seq1	GEFN01008408	343	CYP4V-fragment2, CYP4V20_Macrobrachium nippinense (fresh water shrimp)	73.91	115
25	cds.comp19393_c0_seq1	GEFN01015458	205	CYP379B-fragment1, CYP379B1_Petrolisthes cinctipes (crab)	59.00	44
26	cds.comp19795_c0_seq1	GEFN01015321	258	CYP3012-fragment1, CYP3012B2_Limulus polyphemus	49.09	55
27	cds.comp19982_c0_seq1	GEFN01012645	215	CYP3213-fragment2, CYP3213A7_Hyalella azteca	45.16	62

(*Zootermopsis nevadensis*, *Strigamia maritima*, *Nasonia vitripennis*, among others), as well as other invertebrates as mollusks, accurately reflects the complex dynamics of transcriptome evolution in this species. However, further investigation is required to fully understand the evolutionary origin of these sequences.

Detoxification is a fundamental process for the maintenance of cellular homeostasis against conditions, as environmental toxins and pollutants, which threaten the fitness or survival of living organisms. This response relies on a plethora of complex biochemical processes integrated to avoid harmful effects that may cause cellular dysfunction.

In this study, the *P. argentinus* transcriptome, a species remarkably sensitive to a wide range of pollutants, was investigated using RNA sequencing (RNA-seq), with a particular emphasis on the role of genes associated with xenobiotic phase II detoxification. A total of 27 sequences encoding for different members of the cytochrome P450 superfamily (CYP) were discovered in the *P. argentinus* transcriptome. However, some of these transcripts were not clearly identified by BLASTX to be assigned to a particular P450 family reliably (sequences assigned to a P450 family are enlisted in Table 3). Prominent among these sequences are those inducible by benzo(a)pyrene (BaP). BaP, a ubiquitous environmental carcinogenic agent, is a prototypical polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) (Nebert et al., 2013), which enters the marine environment through various routes as industrial discharges, oil spills, airborne fallout, and urban runoff (Abdel-Shafy and Mansour, 2016; Xiu et al., 2014; Stout and Graan, 2010; Men et al., 2009), and its presence in the marine environment has become an increasingly serious issue in recent years (Ren et al., 2015). As any biotransformation of xenobiotics, biotransformation of BaP is divided into phases I and II. On phase I, exogenous compounds are transformed into a more polar metabolite by unmasking or *de novo* formation of functional groups (e.g. -OH, -NH<sub>2</sub>, -SH). P450 enzymes are key players in the phase I metabolism (Jancova et al., 2010). On phase II xenobiotics are further converted into water soluble less toxic or inactive

metabolites that are more easily excretable (Omiecinski et al., 2011; Jancova et al., 2010). Enzymes such as glutathione S-transferases (GSTs) play a major role in phase II metabolism. Thus, the occurrence of this gene on *P. argentinus* suggests that it may be exploited for detoxification. Also, sequences belonging to CYP3 and CYP4 clans from P450s were found in *P. argentinus*, and they are well recognized as responsible for insecticide resistance (Reddy et al., 2012). In particular, CYP4 has been postulated as a biomarker of xenobiotic exposure (David et al., 2003; Snyder, 1998).

Three sequences with high identities to the  $\mu$ -, two of the  $\theta$ - and two microsomal GST subclasses were found in *P. argentinus*. Among the phase II detoxification enzymes of crustaceans, the GSTs are probably the most extensively studied. GSTs are implicated in a wide variety of physiological processes as detoxification of endobiotic and xenobiotic toxins, protection against chemical and oxidative stress, transport of intracellular metabolites and hormones, endogenous metabolites or exogenous chemicals (Salazar-Medina et al., 2010; Zhao et al., 2010; Hansen et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2008; Adewale and Afolayan, 2005; Contreras-Vergara et al., 2004). However, there is limited genomic and proteomic information on GSTs from freshwater crustaceans. Thus, our results may provide a valuable framework to better understand, at the molecular level, the role played by GSTs in the detoxification pathways used by *P. argentinus*.

Roncagli and collaborators have identified 41 GSTs after thorough data mining in several *Calanus finmarchicus* transcriptomes (Roncagli et al., 2015). In this study, we identified 10 GST sequences from samples in the natural environment. It is possible that under exposure to xenobiotics and stress, *P. argentinus* expresses other GSTs not identified in this work. Therefore, RNA-seq would be an ideal tool to further understand the differential expression of the phase II detoxification response in this decapod. Nonetheless, the GSTs from *P. argentinus* identified here are candidate biomarkers for use in pollution monitoring studies of aquatic contamination.

Pollution is strongly tied to most kinds of human activities, and as a consequence aquatic environments have been seriously affected by a myriad of chemical compounds that can react in unexpected ways (Crain et al., 2008). This has exposed the aquatic wildlife to a huge variety of chemical compounds (Benedetti et al., 2015). Environmental pollutants, as heavy metals, PAHs, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), promote the intracellular formation of ROS, as the superoxide anion ( $O_2^{\cdot-}$ ) (Benedetti et al., 2015; Bayol-Denizot et al., 2000). This anion is implicated in the oxidation of proteins (Brand et al., 2004), lipid peroxidation (Kellogg and Fridovich, 1975), and DNA damage (Keyer et al., 1995). Thus, aquatic organisms must be able to deal with the oxidative stress provoked by an increasing pollutant load. In this study, five sequences were annotated as superoxide dismutases (SODs) in the *P. argentinus* transcriptome. Two transcripts showed high homology to the intracellular forms of the copper/zinc superoxide dismutase (CuZnSOD) of the shrimp *Marsupenaeus japonicas*, and one sequence was homologous to the extracellular CuZnSOD form of the Chinese mitten crab *Eriocheir sinensis*. Superoxide dismutases (SODs) are enzymes that rapidly catalyze the transformation of  $O_2^{\cdot-}$  into molecular oxygen ( $O_2$ ) and hydrogen peroxide ( $H_2O_2$ ) (Fridovich, 1995). Several studies have demonstrated the role of these enzymes in xenobiotic detoxification (Park et al., 2012; Li et al., 1996a,b; Canada and Calabrese, 1989), and less known is the effect of xenobiotics on the expression of SODs in crustaceans (Ragunathan, 2017; Gorokhova et al., 2013; Chauhan et al., 2006). Thus, this study demonstrates that *P. argentinus* harbors a remarkable arsenal of effective detoxification protective mechanisms against the ROS generated by exposure to toxic compounds.

A total of 63 transcripts encoding key enzymes involved in the electron transport chain and oxidative phosphorylation (OXPHOS) pathways were identified in the annotated *P. argentinus* transcriptome. Several studies have demonstrated that the functionality of the OXPHOS system may be impaired by different chemical compounds (Llobet et al., 2015; Nadanaciva and Will, 2011). The ATP-synthase is a tightly regulated multimeric complex that synthesizes ATP in a coupled reaction with an electrochemical proton-gradient produced by the electron transport system (Martínez-Cruz et al., 2012). This RNA-seq analysis revealed two transcripts encoding the endogenous ATPase inhibitor IF1 protein. The  $F_0F_1$ -ATPase inhibitory factor 1 (IF1) binds to the catalytic  $F_1$  domain of the  $F_0F_1$ -ATPase and inhibits the hydrolysis of ATP without affecting its synthesis (Campanella et al., 2008; Bason et al., 2011; Chimeo et al., 2015). Recently, Jimenez et al. (2000) found that the expression of IF1 mRNA in liver of rats was induced by pregnenolone-16 $\alpha$ -carbonitrile (PCN), a potent catatoxic steroid that confers resistance to toxic compounds to rats. Apparently, the induction of IF1 mRNA may be part of a complex physiological response to maintain cellular homeostasis during toxic stress. It is worth noting that, although there is no evidence yet of a detoxification role of the *P. argentinus* IF1 protein, and further studies are definitely needed to elucidate its potential contribution to the xenobiotic defense system in *P. argentinus*. This work demonstrates the presence of a complex response toward toxic compounds in this non-model organism. Although not all transcripts are complete, those could be completed using rapid amplification of cDNA ends (RACE). Furthermore, the implicit relevance of this finding is that it opens new research directions for researchers with interest in molecular toxicology.

## 5. Conclusion

This study is the first integrative analysis of RNA-seq for a palaeomid that describes a large number of transcripts of the freshwater crustacean *P. argentinus* involved in diverse biological pathways. It offers a deeper insight into the molecular mechanisms used by this organism for detoxification, bioenergetics, and osmoregulation. Our findings demonstrate the presence of phase I and II detoxification metabolic pathways in *P. argentinus*. Furthermore, as a perspective, we

propose the use of several cited genes as molecular markers to perform quantitative expression studies (RT-qPCR) challenging *P. argentinus* to a wide battery of xenobiotics for understanding the impact of environmental perturbation on this species. In future studies, RNA-seq differential expression could be used to evaluate global responses toward exposure to different pollutants and may elucidate the specific enzymes and pathways activated. Also, the proteins related to bioenergetics and osmoregulation are potential subjects of biochemical and structural study to understand the mechanisms behind salinity adaptation of this South American decapod crustacean.

## Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.margen.2017.08.009>.

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