

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	i
LIST OF FIGURES	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
ABSTRACT	vi
1. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW OF LITERATURE	1
1.1 Regulation of gene expression by sRNAs	2
1.1.1 Translational repression.....	2
1.1.2 Translational activation	2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	4
1.2 Classification of sRNAs.....	4
1.2.1 sRNAs regulating mRNA targets	4
1.2.2 sRNAs that modify protein activity	6
1.3 Role of Hfq protein in sRNA regulation.....	8
1.4 sRNAs with dual functions	9
1.5 sRNAs regulating transcription in bacteria.....	9
1.6 Identification of small regulatory RNAs in bacteria.....	12
1.6.1 Biocomputational methods for sRNA prediction.....	12
1.6.2 Experimental methods for sRNA identification.....	12
1.7 Identification of targets for sRNAs.....	14
1.7.1 Computational methods for target prediction:	14
1.7.2 Experimental identification and validation of targets for sRNAs.....	15
1.8 Complexity in regulation by sRNAs.....	17
1.9 Regulatory outcomes of sRNAs	17
1.9.1 Regulation of cellular metabolism	18
1.9.2 Regulation of quorum sensing and biofilm formation	18
1.9.3 Stress response and adaptation to growth conditions.....	18
1.9.4 Regulation of pathogenicity by sRNAs.....	18
1.10 <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> - an opportunistic pathogen	21
1.10.1 <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> strain PAO1.....	21

1.10.2	Pathogenesis of <i>P. aeruginosa</i>	21
1.10.3	Virulence gene regulation in <i>P. aeruginosa</i>	23
1.11	Potential use of bacterial sRNAs	27
1.11.1	sRNAs as biomarkers	27
1.11.2	Targeting <i>trans</i> sRNAs for antimicrobial therapy.....	27
2	PRESENT STUDY	29
3	MATERIALS AND METHODS	30
3.1	Bacterial strains and plasmids used in the study.....	30
3.2	Media, chemicals, enzymes and kits.....	31
3.3	Media and culture conditions.....	31
3.3.1	L-Arabinose induction.....	32
3.4	Bioinformatics tools used in this study	32
3.5	Molecular Biology tools and techniques	32
3.5.1	Isolation of genomic DNA from <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	32
3.5.2	Isolation of plasmid DNA	32
3.5.3	Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)	33
3.5.4	Restriction enzyme digestion	33
3.5.5	Agarose gel electrophoresis	33
3.5.6	Elution of DNA from agarose gels.....	34
3.5.7	Ligation	36
3.5.8	Transformation of DNA into <i>E. coli</i> and <i>P. aeruginosa</i>	36
3.6	Northern Blot	36
3.6.1	Total RNA extraction	36
3.6.2	Probe labeling.....	37
3.7	Real time PCR assays	38
3.8	Rhamnolipid measurement	38
3.9	Pyocyanin assay	38
3.10	β -galactosidase assay	38
3.11	Alkaline protease assay.....	39
3.12	Protease IV assay	39
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	41
4.1	<i>in silico</i> prediction of mRNA targets of reported sRNAs in <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> PAO1	41

4.2 Functional characterization of PhrD, a small non-coding RNA	46
4.2.1 Putative targets of PhrD selected for further studies	46
4.2.2 Overexpression of PhrD from pHERD30T shuttle vector	49
4.2.3 Disruption of <i>phrD</i> chromosomal copy with gentamicin resistance marker	50
4.2.4 Complementation of PAO1 <i>phrD</i> ΩGm strain with pUCP <i>phrD</i> plasmid.....	52
4.2.5 Construction of P3- <i>rhlR</i> :: <i>lacZ</i> translational fusions	52
4.2.6 Expression of <i>phrD</i> and its levels under different nutrient conditions	53
4.2.7 PhrD positively influences <i>rhlR</i> expression	55
4.2.8 RhlR expression is regulated by PhrD in a heterologous system.....	58
4.2.9 PhrD positively influences rhamnolipid and pyocyanin production.....	59
4.2.10 Significance of PhrD sRNA in <i>P. aeruginosa</i>	61
4.3 Functional characterization of P18, a small non-coding RNA	63
4.3.1 Putative targets of P18 selected for further studies	63
4.3.2 Overexpression of P18 from pHERD30T shuttle vector	65
4.3.3 Disruption of <i>p18</i> chromosomal copy	67
4.3.4 Expression analysis of P18 sRNA.....	68
4.3.5 Effect of altered levels of P18 on expression of <i>aprE</i> and <i>piv</i>	69
4.3.6 P18 influences alkaline protease and protease IV production.....	70
SUMMARY	72
CONCLUSIONS	74
REFERENCES	75
APPENDIX I.....	92
APPENDIX II.....	98
APPENDIX III	100
PUBLICATION	101
POSTER PRESENTATIONS IN MEETINGS	101