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1	Glycosaminoglycan content in term and preterm milk during the first month of
2	lactation
3	¹ Giovanni V. Coppa, ¹ Orazio Gabrielli, ¹ Lucia Zampini, ¹ Tiziana Galeazzi, ² Francesca
4	Maccari, ² Dania Buzzega, ² Fabio Galeotti, ³ Enrico Bertino, ² Nicola Volpi
5	
6	¹ Pediatric Division, Department of Clinical Sciences, Polytechnic University of Marche,
7	Ospedali Riuniti, Presidio Salesi, Ancona, Italy (Prof. G.V. Coppa MD, Prof. O.
8	Gabrielli MD, Dr. L. Zampini PhD. Dr. T. Galeazzi PhD);
9	² Department of Biology, University of Modena & Reggio Emilia, Modena, Italy (Prof.
10	N. Volpi PhD. Dr. F. Maccari PhD. Dr. D. Buzzega PhD. Dr. F. Galeotti PhD);
11	³ Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Department of Pediatrics, University of Turin, Turin,
12	Italy (Prof. Bertino MD).
13	
14	Contributors
15	N.V. developed the applied methodologies. L.Z., T.G., F.M., D.B. and F.B. performed
16	the experimental procedures and analyses. E.B. contributed in milk sample collection.
17	N.V., G.V.C. and O.G. designed and developed the experimental design, performed
18	data analysis and wrote the manuscript.
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25	Glycosaminoglycans in human milks
26	Corresponding authors
27	Prof. Nicola Volpi
28	Department of Biology, Via Campi 213/D
29	University of Modena & Reggio Emilia, 41100 Modena, Italy
30	e-mail: volpi@unimo.it
31	fax number: 0039 59 2055548
32	tel number: 0039 59 2055543

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34 Abstract

Background. In a recent study, we performed a complete structural characterization of glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) in human mature milk. However, no data are available on the total content of GAGs in human milk from healthy mothers having delivered term or preterm newborns.

Objectives. In this study, we evaluated the total content of GAGs in pooled milk from healthy mothers having delivered term or preterm newborns during the first month of lactation.

Methods. Highly specific and sensitive analytical approaches were used to quantifyhuman milk total GAGs.

Results. Highest GAGs values are present at 4th day (~ 9.3 g/L and ~ 3.8 g/L in preterm and term milk, respectively), followed by a progressive decrease up to day 30th (~ 4.3 g/L and ~ 0.4 g/L). The more remarkable differences are related to the first phases of lactation in which a strong decrease of GAGs was observed between days 4th and 10th (~-73% in term and ~-50% in preterm).

49 *Conclusions.* During the first month of lactation the absolute amount of 50 polysaccharides was constantly and significantly higher in preterm milk than in term 51 one, with a similar behaviour in the decrease. These data further indicate that human 52 milk GAGs may have an active role in protecting newborns during the first phases of 53 lactation.

54

55 *Keywords*. Human milk; Glycosaminoglycans; Chondroitin sulfate.

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57 Introduction

In a recent study [1], we performed a complete structural characterization of 58 glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) in human mature milk in comparison with bovine milk. 59 Quantitative analyses yielded 0.41 g/L of GAGs in human milk, ~7 times more than in 60 bovine milk. In particular, chondroitin sulfate (CS) and dermatan sulfate (DS), were 61 62 found to differ considerably from one type of milk to the other. In fact, in human milk a low-sulfated CS was the main component (~56%), while DS was observed in very low 63 amount ($\sim 2\%$). On the contrary, bovine milk was demonstrated to be composed of 64 ~66% DS and ~34% CS. Structural analysis also showed the presence of fast-moving 65

heparin (FM-Hep) that account for ~30-40% of total GAGs in both milk samples. The 66 same research [1] offered the first full characterization of GAGs in human milk, 67 providing useful data to gain a better understanding of their physiological role, as well 68 as of their fundamental contribution to the health of the newborn. In fact, several types 69 of microorganisms have also been demonstrated to use CS as receptors for the adhesion 70 to and infection of host cells [1-3]. Furthermore, in human milk, Newburg et al. [4] 71 demonstrated that CS or a CS-like moiety is able to inhibit the binding of the HIV 72 envelop glycoprotein gp120 to the cellular CD4 receptor. From these studies it emerges 73 74 that human milk GAGs, on the contrary of bovine milk, could play a role as soluble receptors. In fact, intact GAG molecules reach the small intestine, as no specific 75 76 digestive enzyme able to degrade them is present on the intestinal wall.

In this study, we evaluated the total content of GAGs in pooled milk from healthy 77 78 mothers having delivered term or preterm newborns. To include in our study a relatively homogeneous but representative population we selected women who had both the 79 80 Secretor and Lewis phenotypes, as determined in their saliva by the hemoagglutinationinhibition test. This is the most common phenotype in Europe, as it is present in about 81 82 70% of the general population [5]. Furthermore, we used pooled milk to have a robust characterization of the total content of GAGs. Additionally, we already observed no 83 great variations between different term healthy mothers at the same time of lactation for 84 the quali/quantitative composition of GAGs that was confirmed quite similar in all 85 human Subjects [1]. 86

87

88 Results and Discussion

Figure 1 illustrates agarose-gel eletrophoresis utilized to separate and quantify 89 extracted GAGs from different milk samples. Both in term and preterm milk, GAGs 90 showed a constant pattern essentially composed of two main polysaccharides, a low-91 sulfated CS (~60-70%), FM-Hep (~30-40%) and quite no DS. Quantitative data are 92 shown in Figure 2. As evident, considerable variation of GAGs concentration occurs 93 during the first month of lactation. Highest values are present at 4th day (~ 9.3 g/L and ~ 94 3.8 g/L in preterm and term milk, respectively), followed by a progressive decrease up 95 to day 30^{th} (~ 4.3 g/L and ~ 0.4 g/L). The more remarkable differences are related to 96 the first phases of lactation in which a strong decrease of GAGs was observed between 97 days 4th and 10th (~-73% in term and ~-50% in preterm). During the first month of 98

99 lactation the absolute amount of polysaccharides was constantly and significantly higher100 in preterm milk than in term one, with a similar behaviour in the decrease.

Comparative analysis of term and preterm milk demonstrate compositional 101 differences in several of their nutritional components [6]. It is well known that several 102 103 components show different behaviour during lactation. As regard as the carbohydrate component, dynamic variations were observed during the first month. In particular, 104 lactose content increases both in term and preterm milk with higher concentration in the 105 first. On the contrary, oligosaccharides decrease in both types of milk, with higher 106 107 concentration in preterm milk [7, 8]. Very interestingly, the total amount of GAGs was higher in preterm than term milk, with a strong decrease after the first days of lactation, 108 with the same trend already observed in oligosaccharides. 109

110 Recent studies showed that some cell surface receptors are constituted by GAGs [2-111 4], which in this way directly participate in infective and inflammatory processes. As a consequence, along with oligosaccharides, we can suppose that the high concentration 112 113 of GAGs could be useful for the preterm newborn in defence processes against several pathogens (viruses, bacteria and their toxins) with a receptor-like mechanism preventing 114 115 the adhesion of pathogens to epithelial cells. Furthermore, CS (and GAGs) is a well 116 known antioxidant and antiinflammatory agent [9] and remarkably, for preterm infants endowed with an immature antioxidant defense system [10], GAGs may have important 117 antioxidant properties. In fact, babies being exclusively fed with mother's milk develop 118 less oxidative stress than babies nourished with formula [11], and colostrum possesses 119 relevant antiinfective and antioxidant properties contributing to the infant's defense 120 against free radicals generated by oxygen administration, infection, or byproducts of 121 nutrient metabolism. In conclusion, further effords should be addressed to improve our 122 knowledge not only on GAGs composition and structure but also on their role in 123 physiological and pathological conditions. 124

125

126 Materials and methods

A morning milk sample was obtained with an electric breast pump at 4, 10, 20, and 30 post-partum days from 18 women who delivered at term and from 26 women who delivered between 27th and 35th week of gestation.

GAGs were extracted and quantified by analytical procedures reported in details in Coppa *et al.* [1]. 5 mL of milk were defatted with acetone. After centrifugation at

10,000 g for 10 min and drying at 60°C for 24 h, the pellet was solubilized in 20 mL of 132 100 mM Na-acetate buffer pH 5.5 containing 5 mM EDTA and 5 mM cysteine. 200 mg 133 of papain were added and the solution incubated for 24 h at 60°C in a stirrer. After 134 boiling for 10 min, the mixture was centrifuged at 5,000 g for 15 min, and three 135 volumes of ethanol saturated with sodium acetate were added to the supernatant. After 136 storing at +4°C for 24 h, the precipitate was recovered by centrifugation at 5,000 g for 137 15 min and dried at 60°C for 6 h. The dried precipitate was dissolved in 20 ml of 50 138 mM NaCl and after centrifugation at 10,000 g for 10 min, the supernatant was applied 139 to a column (2 cm x 7 cm) packed with QAE Sephadex® A-25 anion-exchange resin 140 equilibrated with the same NaCl solution. GAGs were eluted with a linear gradient of 141 NaCl from 50 mM to 1.2 M from 0 to 150 min using low-pressure liquid 142 chromatography (Biologic LP chromatography system from BioRad) at a flow of 1 143 144 ml/min. Fractions positive to uronic acid assay [1] were collected. Three volumes of ethanol saturated with sodium acetate were added to the pooled fractions and stored at 145 146 +4°C for 24 h. The precipitate was recovered by centrifugation and dried at 60°C for 12 h. The dried precipitate was dissolved in 100 µL distilled water and further analyzed. 147

Quantitative agarose-gel electrophoresis in barium acetate/1,2-diaminopropane was
performed essentially as previously reported elsewhere [1].

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188 Legends to Figures

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Figure 1. Agarose-gel electrophoresis of GAGs from human milk samples at different
days of lactation in mothers delivering term and preterm newborns. CS: chondroitin
sulfte. DS: dermatan sulfate HS: heparan sulfate. St: mix of CS, DS and HS. The
suddivision in GAG species CS, DS and HS is just related to the standard.

194

- 195 *Figure 2*. Total amount of GAGs in human milk during different days of lactation in
- 196 mothers delivering term and preterm newborns. A curve illustrating the polysaccharides
- 197 content trend is also reported for each type of milk. Data are reported as mean \pm SD.

CS DS HS	•	ŧ								ţ
	CS	St	4	10 Tei	20 rm	30	4	10 Pret	20 erm	30
									F	igure 1



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Figure 2