Identification of *Stellantchasmus falcatus* Metacercariae Encysted in Mulletts in Korea

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Abstract: A group of metacercariae encysted in the flesh of *Mugil* sp. were identified to be *Stellantchasmus falcatus* by the morphology of adult worms obtained experimentally. It is confirmed that mullets serve as a second intermediate host of this heterophyid fluke in Korea.

Key words: *Stellantchasmus falcatus*, Heterophyidae, intestinal fluke, mullets

Stellantchasmus falcatus (Trematoda; Heterophyidae), a small intestinal fluke of fish-eating birds and mammals, is an occasional parasite of humans in Korea (Seo *et al.*, 1984; Hong *et al.*, 1986), Japan (Kagei *et al.*, 1964), Philippines (Africa *et al.*, 1940), Thailand (Tantachamrun and Kliks, 1978) and Hawaii (Alicata and Schattenburg, 1938).

In Hawaii, Japan and China, brackish water snails such as *Stenomelania newcombi* or *Thiara granifera* and brackish water fishes such as mullets (*Mugil* sp., *Liza menada*) and gobies (*Acanthogobius flavimanus*, *Gobius* sp.) were reported to be its first (Noda, 1959) and second (Onji and Nishio, 1924; Alicata and Schattenburg, 1938; Kobayasi, 1968) intermediate hosts respectively. In Korea, however, intermediate hosts of *S. falcatus* were not extensively studied. Seo *et al.* (1979) discovered *Stellantchasmus* metacercariae from mullets, but the metacercariae were not definitely identified through obtaining adult worms. In the present study, a group of heterophyid metacercariae encysted in the flesh of *Mugil* sp. was identified to be *S. falcatus* by the morphology of adult worms obtained after experimental infection to albino rats.

In May 1986, total 10 *Mugil* sp., 20~30cm

long, were purchased from a local fisheries market in a southern part of Kyeongsang-nam-do (Province). They were brought to the laboratory, and artificially digested to examine heterophyid metacercariae, especially *S. falcatus*. The metacercariae which were morphologically characterized by submedially located ventral sucker and elongated seminal vesicle (expulsor) (Fig. 1) were tentatively diagnosed as *S. falcatus*. Three mullets were found infected with *S. falcatus*, from which a total of 470 metacercariae were collected. They were 0.15~0.20 mm by 0.13~0.19 mm in size and round to elliptical in shape (Fig. 1). Most of the metacercariae were found from muscles and a few were from the head and gill.

Among them 280 were used to infect 5 rats (Sprague-Dawley), 30~100 to each rat, and 7~10 days later the rats were sacrificed to harvest worms from their intestinal tract. Total 83 adult worms (29.6% of infected) were harvested.

Morphologically the worms were compatible with *S. falcatus*, both in measurements and descriptions (Onji and Nishio, 1924; Seo *et al.*, 1984). They were 0.41~0.70 mm long and 0.32~0.39 mm wide, and beset with minute scale-like spines (Fig. 2). They were characterized by the presence of ventrogenital sac (Fig.

- Fig. 1.** Metacercaria of *S. falcatus* collected from a mullet, dorsal view (Scale: 50 μ m). Note the elongated seminal vesicle (SV) and round excretory bladder (EB).
- Fig. 2.** Adult worm of *S. falcatus* recovered from an experimental rat 7 days after infection (Scale: 200 μ m).
- Fig. 3.** Magnification of Fig. 2 near the ventrogenital sac (VS) and seminal vesicle (SV), which consists of a muscular expulsor and a vesicular part (arrows) (Scale: 100 μ m).

3) containing ventral sucker armed with minute spines (less than $1\mu\text{m}$) on its inner rim, and of seminal vesicle consisted with an elongated muscular expulsor and a round vesicular part (arrows in Fig. 3).

As to the taxonomy of *Stellantchasmus* spp., at least 4 species had been reported before Chen(1951), who reduced them to only one species, *S. falcatus*. The reduction is agreed, or followed, by succeeding authors (Pearson, 1964; Seo *et al.*, 1984). Another species, *S. aspinosus*, was proposed by Pearson(1964), with the differential morphology of unarmed and little modified ventral sucker in *S. aspinosus*.

S. falcatus is, like other heterophyid flukes such as *Haplorchis* spp. and *Procerovum calderoni*, one of the potent pathogenic agents of extraintestinal (cardiac, cerebral and spinal) heterophyidiasis in man (Africa *et al.*, 1940). Nevertheless, host-parasite relationships in heterophyid infections, especially in terms of pathophysiological and immunological aspects of extraintestinal parasitism, have never been studied in detail. Since human infection with *S. falcatus* or other heterophyid flukes seems not uncommon in areas where brackish water fishes are eaten raw and cases are expected to increase, studies on host-parasite relationships are greatly needed.

The present study confirmed that the mullet serves as a second intermediate host of *S. falcatus* in Korea.

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남해산 송어(崇魚)에서 검출된 *Stellantchasmus falcatus* 피낭유충의 동정

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경상남도 남해 지방산 송어에서 *Stellantchasmus falcatus*의 피낭유충을 발견하고 흰쥐에 감염시킨 후 성충을 얻어 동정하였다. 검사한 송어는 모두 10마리로서 크기 20~30cm이었고 그중 3마리에서 *S. falcatus*로 생각되는 피낭유충이 470개 검출되었다. 피낭유충은 원형 또는 타원형으로 크기 0.15~0.20×0.13~0.19mm이었고 대부분 이 송어의 근육에서 발견되었다.

총 280개의 피낭유충을 흰쥐 5마리에 각각 30~100개씩 나누어 감염시키고 7~10일후에 흰쥐를 희생시켜 소장(小腸) 내용물을 검경한 바 총 83마리의 성충이 회수되었다. 회수된 총체는 길이 0.41~0.70mm, 폭 0.32~0.39mm이었고, 장낭형(長囊型; elongated sac-like)의 expulsor를 가진 저정낭(seminal vesicle) 등 몇가지 형태학적 특징을 근거로 *S. falcatus* Onji et Nishio, 1915로 동정되었다.

이 연구로 우리나라에서도 송어가 *S. falcatus*의 제 2 중간숙주역할을 하고 있음이 확인되었고 이 흡충의 인체 감염원이 되고 있을 것으로 추측되었다.