Chloramphenicol Residues and Bacterial Contamination in Farmed African Catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*) from Banyuwangi Traditional Markets: A Risk Assessment

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine chloramphenicol residues and bacterial contamination (Aerobic Plate Count-APC, *Escherichia coli* count, *Salmonella* sp., and *Vibrio cholerae*) in farmed African catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*) that are marketed in Banyuwangi, Indonesia. A total of ninety samples of *C. gariepinus* were collected from several markets in Banyuwangi, namely, Kertosari, Blambangan, and Banyuwangi Kota. Using standard procedures, APC, *E. coli* count, *Salmonella* sp., *V. cholerae*, and chloramphenicol residues were determined. 36.37% of samples from Kertosari markets; 23.33% of samples from Banyuwangi Kota markets; and 16.67% of samples from Blambangan markets contained chloramphenicol residues, but less than 0.3 ppb. Only 40% of samples from Kertosari markets, 36.67% of samples from Banyuwangi Kota markets, and 26.67% of samples from Blambangan markets were contaminated by *E. coli*, but were less than 3 MPNg⁻¹. The highest APC was from Banyuwangi Kota, followed by Kertosari and Blambangan. No samples were contaminated by *Salmonella* sp. and *V. cholerae* from any of the markets, and there was no significant difference between all markets in APC, *E. coli* count, or chloramphenicol residues. All farmed catfish marketed in Banyuwangi were safe to eat because no samples exceeded the maximum chloramphenicol residue and bacterial contaminant standards. Further studies are needed to detect other antibiotic residues used in aquaculture, including tetracycline, sulphonamide, enrofloxacin, and nitrofuran.

Keywords: bacterial contamination, Banyuwangi traditional markets, chloramphenicol residues, *Clarias* gariepinus

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INTRODUCTION

Increasing the demand for African catfish (Clarias gariepinus) for consumption every year encourages the intensive system. During 2011-2019, the production of farmed catfish in Indonesia increased to 190.78% (Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, 2020). One of the high-risk factors in this system was fish mortality caused by infectious diseases. Infectious diseases are often associated with stress conditions because of their high density, ammonia concentration, and low immunity defenses (Assefa and Abunna, 2018). Therefore, the utilization of antibiotics, especially chloramphenicol (CAP), as a drug of choice to prevent or treat bacterial disease in farmed catfish (Chuah et al., 2016).

Currently, chloramphenicol has been banned because it can cause serious problems, including residues in fish meat and antibiotic resistance in humans (Lulijwa et al., 2020). Furthermore, chloramphenicol residues in humans can cause digestive disease. anemia, allergy. bone disruption (Prajwal et al., 2017), optic neuropathy, and brain abscess in varying degrees of severity and clinical presentations (Jayalakshmi et al., 2017). Not only residues of antibiotics in fish meat but also bacterial contamination caused the disease in humans and decreased the quality of fish meat (Roca-saavedra et al., 2016). Fish meat has promiscuous connective tissue, so the amino acid content is easier for bacteria's metabolism and production of ammonia, biogenic amines, organic acids, ketones, and sulfur components (Novoslavskij et al., 2016). Several foodborne pathogens associated with fish meat, including Escherichia coli, Staphylococcus aureus, Vibrio cholerae, V. parahemolyticus, Salmonella sp., Listeria monocytogenes, Clostridium botulinum, and Shigella spp. (Gauthier, 2015), cause diarrhea, digestive disruption, food intoxication, and human mortality because of their toxicants (Antunes et al., 2019; Jääskeläinen et al., 2019; Sheng and Wang, 2021).

Previous studies on the detection of chloramphenicol residues in fish meat have been reported in tilapia (Oreochromis niloticus) fillets in Brazil (Bortolotte et al., 2021); sea bream (Sparus aurata) and sea bass (Dicentrarchus labrax) in Turkey (Doğan et al., 2020); and seafood products in Shenzen, South China (Luo et al., 2021). Several studies reported bacterial contamination in fish meat, including Bangasius hypophanmus (Basa), Mullus surmuletus (Barboni), Saurida undosquamis (Mackerel), and Sparus aurata (Denise) (Ia and Ta, 2017); seafood products marketed in Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico (Jorge et al., 2016); salmon fillets (Møretrø et al., 2016); packaged yellowfish tuna (Thunnus albacares) and salmon (Salmo salar) (Jääskeläinen et al., 2019); catfish (Clarias sp.) and tilapia (Tilapia mossambica) (Budiati et al., 2015).

In Banyuwangi, not many studies were done on this subject, and there is currently no report of antimicrobial residues and microbial contamination in African catfish raised in Banyuwangi. Therefore, this study aimed to determine chloramphenicol residues and bacterial contamination of marketed African catfish from traditional markets in Banyuwangi City. This result could be used to improve the hygiene and safety of fishery products concerning human health.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ethical Approval

This study did not require animal ethics approval. All procedures were carried out based on standard operating procedures (SOP).

Study Period and Location

This study was conducted from April to November 2018 in the Instrumental Laboratory, Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences, Universitas Airlangga, Banyuwangi, Indonesia. Fish samples were collected from several fish markets in Banyuwangi City.

Sample Collection

A total of ninety samples of live African catfish were collected randomly from April to November 2018 from three traditional markets in Banyuwangi City, consisting of Kertosari, Blambangan, and Banyuwangi markets, respectively. Samples were placed in a sterile plastic bag and kept in a coolbox at approximately 4°C during transportation to the laboratory.

Determination of Chloramphenicol Residues

A total of 150 g of fillet was homogenized and accurately weighted into the 4 centrifuge tubes to approximately 10 g. Aquadest (4 mL) was added to each tube, vortexed (Thermo, USA) for 3 min, and kept at 27°C for 10 min. Ethyl acetate (12 mL) was added to the tube, vortexed (Thermo, USA) for 5 min, and then centrifuged (Thermo, USA) at 4000 rpm for 3 minutes until separated into three layers. An 8.4 mL aliquot of ethyl acetate supernatant (upper layer) was dried at 50°C under a weak steam of N₂. The residue was suspended in a 2.8 mL n-hexane and chloroform (1:1) mixture. Then 1.4 mL of 2% ethanol was added, vortexed (Thermo, USA) for 3 minutes, and centrifuged (Thermo, USA) at 4000 rpm for 10 min. One hundred µL of the ethanolic (upper) layer was used and analyzed by liquid high-performance chromatography (HPLC). The HPLC system was equipped with a quaternary pump on a silent phase C18 (150 mm \times 4.6 mm inside diameter (i.d.), particle size 5 µm). The mobile phase consisted of a mixture of methanol and water (40:60, v/v) with a flow rate of 1.0 mL/min. The injection volume was 5, 10, or 20 µL and the column temperature was set at 30°C. CAP was detected by its UV absorbance at a wavelength of 277 nm and quantified by comparison with the standard under the

Indonesian Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Regulation 39/PERMEN-KP/2019.

Determination of Aerobic Plate Count

Twenty-five grams of catfish meat were mixed with 225 mL of 0.1% peptone water (PW, Sigma Aldrich, St. Louis, USA) and homogenized using a stomacher (Interscience, Singapore) for 2 min. The dilution series was made from 10⁻¹ to 10⁻⁶ by pipetting 1 mL of aliquot and mixing it with 9 mL of 0.1% PW. 100 µL of aliquot was spread on Tryptic Soy Agar (TSA, Oxoid, Hampshire, UK) and incubated at 37°C for 24-48 hours. The total aerobic count was expressed as CFUmL⁻¹ and quantified by comparison with the standard ISO 7388-2009.

Determination of *E. coli*

Twenty-five grams of samples were accurately weighed, transferred into a sterile glass bottle, and then added to a 225 mL sterile Butterfield's Phosphate Buffer (BPB, Merck, Darmstadt, Germany), subsequently homogenized by blenders for 2 min. The dilution was prepared by mixing a 1 mL aliquot with 9 mL BPB until 10⁻³. A total of 1 mL diluent was pipetted and transferred to the three tubes containing 9 mL of Lauryl Sulfate Tryptose Broth (LSTB, HiMedia, Mumbai, India) and then incubated at 35°C for 24 - 48hours. Approximately 10 µL of LSTB-positive tubes (turbid tubes with gas) were inoculated into E. coli broth (ECB, HiMedia, Mumbai, India) and incubated at 45.5°C for 24–48 hours. The positive reaction was identified by a turbid tube filled with gas. The confirmation test was performed by pipetting 1 mL mixture from the positive ECB tube and spreading it onto Levine Edosin-Methylene Blue Agar (L-EMBA, HiMedia, Mumbai, India) and incubated at 35°C for 24 hours. Positive L-EMBA (metallic green colony with black center) was inoculated on Plate Count Agar (HiMedia, Mumbai, India) for morphology and biochemistry testing (Indole, MR-VP, Citrate/IMViC) for E. coli confirmation. The E. coli counts were expressed as MPN g-1 and quantified by comparison with the standard ISO 7388-2009.

Determination of Salmonella sp.

A total of 25 g of each sample was added to sterile 225 mL Lactose Broth (LB, Sigma Aldrich, St. Loius, USA) and homogenized for 2 min, then transferred to a sterile bottle and incubated at 35°C for 24 hours. A total of 1 mL solution was inoculated into 10 mL Tetra Thionate Broth (TTB, HiMedia, Mumbai, India), 0.1-10 mL Rappaport Vassiliadis (RV, HiMedia, Mumbai, India), and 1-10 mL Selenite Cystine Broth (SCB, HiMedia, Mumbai, India) and incubated at 35°C for 24 hours respectively. Isolates from each medium were spread onto Hectoen Enteric (HE, Oxoid. Hampshire, UK), Xylose Lysine Deoxycholate (XLD, HiMedia, Mumbai, India), and Bismuth Sulfite Agar (BSA, HiMedia, Mumbai, India), and incubated at 35°C for 24 hours. The Salmonella sp. colony in HE was green with black center, in XLD it was pink and in BSA it was brown. Biochemistry tests (Indole, MR-VP, Citrate/IMViC, triple sugar iron agar (TSIA), lysine iron agar (LIA), and sugar media) were used to confirm the Salmonella sp. colony.

Determination of V. cholerae

Twenty-five grams of samples were mixed with 225 mL of alkaline peptone water (APW, HiMedia, Mumbai India) in an Erlenmeyer flask, mixed well, and incubated at $35-37^{\circ}$ C for 6–8 hours. One mL of solution was pipetted and spread to thiosulfate-citrate bile salt sucrose (TCBS, Merck, Darmstadt, Germany) and then incubated at 37° C for 18–24 hours. The *V. cholerae* colony in TCBS was characterized as a smooth, yellow circle with a turbid center of 2–3 mm diameter. To verify the presence of the *V. cholerae* colony, confirmation tests involving Gram staining, Triple Sugar Iron Agar (TSIA), and Lysine Iron Agar (LIA) were necessary.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis of chloramphenicol residues, APC, and *E. coli* count was determined using One Way ANOVA and Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) (SPSS software for Windows version 18, Chicago, USA) to verify mean differences (p < 0.05) among the various markets in Banyuwangi. All data are reported as

the mean value \pm standard deviation (SD). While the *Salmonella* sp. and *V. cholerae* were analyzed descriptively with a table.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The detected and measured levels of APC, *E. coli*, *Salmonella* sp., *V. cholerae*, and chloramphenicol residues in the flesh of farmed African catfish from 3 traditional markets in

Banyuwangi are presented in Table 1. A total of 23 (25.56%) samples were detected to have chloramphenicol residues ranging from 0.07 ± 0.01 ppb. A total sample from Kertosari market contained chloramphenicol residues (36.67%) more than those from Banyuwangi Kota (23.33%) and Blambangan market (16.67%). However, there were no samples that exceeded the standard and no significant difference (p > 0.05) among chloramphenicol residues between all markets.

Parameter	Markets	Total sample	Number of positive samples (%)	Mean ± SD ¹	Number of samples over standard (%) ³
Chloramphenicol	Kertosari	30	11 (36.37)	$0.06\pm0.01^{\rm a}$	0 (0)
residues (ppb)	Blambangan	30	5 (16.67)	$0.06\pm0.01^{\rm a}$	0 (0)
	Banyuwangi Kota	30	7 (23.33)	0.09 ± 0.01^{a}	0 (0)
APC	Kertosari	30	30 (100)	$5.67\pm0.39^{\rm a}$	30 (100)
(×10 ⁵ CFU mL ⁻¹)	Blambangan	30	30 (100)	$4.75\pm0.38^{\mathrm{a}}$	10 (33.33)
	Banyuwangi Kota	30	30 (100)	6.40 ± 0.43^{a}	30 (100)
E. coli counts	Kertosari	30	12 (40)	$1.08\pm0.67^{\rm a}$	0 (0)
$(MPN g^{-1})$	Blambangan	30	8 (26.67)	$0.57\pm0.07^{\rm a}$	0 (0)
	Banyuwangi Kota	30	11 (36.67)	$0.49\pm0.06^{\rm a}$	0 (0)
Salmonella sp.	Kertosari	30	0 (0)	N/A^2	0 (0)
	Blambangan	30	0 (0)	N/A	0 (0)
	Banyuwangi Kota	30	0 (0)	N/A	0 (0)
V. cholerae	Kertosari	30	0 (0)	N/A	0 (0)
	Blambangan	30	0 (0)	N/A	0 (0)
	Banyuwangi Kota	30	0 (0)	N/A	0 (0)

Table 1. Occurrence and levels of APC, *E. coli* count, *Salmonella* sp., *V. cholerae*, and chloramphenicol residues in farmed African catfish (*C. gariepinus*) from different Banyuwangi markets

¹The values with the same superscript in the same parameters means no significantly different (p > 0.05) ²N/A = not available

³Based on the standards in ISO 7388-2009 and Indonesian Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Regulation 39/PERMEN-KP/2019; APC less than 5×10^5 CFUmL⁻¹, *E. coli* count less than 3 MPNg⁻¹, *Salmonella* sp. negative, *V. cholerae* negative, and chloramphenicol residues less than 0.3 ppb.

In this study, the mean APC values ranged from 4.75 to 6.4×10^5 CFU mL⁻¹. All samples from the Kertosari and Banyuwangi Kota markets were above the standard of APC, and only 10 samples (33.33%) from Blambangan market were above the standard of APC. There was no significant difference (p > 0.05) among APCs in the 3 markets.

From the 90 samples obtained from 3 traditional markets in Banyuwangi, 12 (40%), 8 (26.67%), and 11 (36.67%) samples were contaminated by *E.coli*, particularly in Kertosari, Blambangan, and Banyuwangi Kota markets,

with a range of 0.49 to 1.08 MPN g⁻¹. No sample has exceeded the standard and no significantly different (p > 0.05) in terms of *E. coli* count between the 3 markets. The results of the *Salmonella* sp. and *V. cholerae* tests showed that all samples of African catfish taken from the Kertosari, Blambangan, and Banyuwangi Kota traditional markets were not contaminated by the pathogen i.e. *Salmonella* sp. and *V. cholerae*.

Antibiotic residues (Hassan *et al.*, 2021) and bacterial contamination (Sheng and Wang, 2021) in fish flesh could have negative effects on consumer's health. The present results showed that chloramphenicol residues were detected in catfish muscles in all locations, however, the residues were less than the standard set by the Indonesian Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Regulation 39/PERMEN-KP/2019 (< 0.3 ppb), indicating that the catfish sold in the markets are safe to consume. Similar food safetyrelated studies were conducted outside Indonesia such as those reported by Duncan et al. (2022), who demonstrated that C. gariepinus cultivated in Ghana contained chloramphenicol residues (4.154 µg/L). Chloramphenicol residues were also detected in Nile tilapia muscle from the Rosetta branch of the river Nile, Egypt (Eissa et al., 2020), and in other seafood products such as crustaceans, and mollusks in Shanghai, China (Ni et al., 2021).

Recently, the use of antibiotics, especially chloramphenicol, in Indonesia's aquaculture has been tightly controlled. Based on the Indonesian Fisheries and Maritime Ministry Regulations number 01/PERMEN-KP/2019, only several types of antibiotics are permitted to be used in aquaculture, for instance, amphenicol (thiamphenicol, chloramphenicol, and fluorphenicol); nitrofuran (nitrofurantoin, nifurpirinol, furazolidone, nifurtoinol, and furaltadon); nitroimidazole (dimetridazole, metronidazole, fluconazole, and tinidazole); and macrolide (virgiamycin, tilosina, and spiramycin). The restriction of antibiotics used in aquaculture because of their residues could harms human health, for example, antibiotic resistance in bacteria which could cause devastating effects to human health and the environment. Prajwal et al. (2017) showed that antibiotic residues could lead to drug hypersensitivity, carcinogenic effects, disruption of normal intestinal flora, mutagenic effects, and teratogenic effects.

Arsène *et al.* (2022) reported the impact of antibiotic residues could be seen in multiple biological aspects such as organ toxification (disruption of liver, kidney, and hematopoietic tissue), microbial community in the host (disruption of normal intestinal flora), immunopathology (drug hypersensitivity), and neurological dysfunction (Alzheimer's disease). It is important to note that chloramphenicol residues have been closely associated with deadly blood dyscrasia, aplastic anemia, bone disruption, hepatic problems, reproductive abnormalities, and myelotoxicity (Kyuchukova, 2020; Falaye *et al.*, 2024).

Aerobic plate count (APC) of microbes in catfish flesh (4.75– 6.4×10^5 CFU mL⁻¹) obtained from Kertosari and Banyuwangi Kota traditional markets were found above the ISO 7388:2009 standard. This indicated poor personal hygiene of fish handlers and poor sanitation of the environment were responsible for the bacterial contamination. Fish can become contaminated throughout the handling, processing, and transportation phases. The raw materials, workers, and processing equipment could all be connected to this contamination. Furthermore, contamination of seafood can occur during processing and storage. Contamination may be caused by food-borne pathogens which naturally exist in waters (Novoslavskij et al., 2016; Fikri et al., 2022). The contaminated aquaculture products can be harmful to human health through disease transmission or intoxication (Ali et al., 2020; Wiradana et al., 2023). The presence of several bacteria in fish, including human pathogenic bacteria, has been connected to direct contact with a contaminated water environment as well as the consumption of bacteria from sediments or contaminated feed (Kartikasari et al., 2019; Wardhana et al., 2021; Praja et al., 2024). As a result, bacteria found in fish reflect the health and safety of aquatic habitats (Gufe et al., 2019). Similarly, Wong et al., (2015) and Kim et al., (2017) demonstrated the total viable counts (TVCs) of bacteria in raw ready-to-eat seafood were significantly higher than standard (5 log CFU mL⁻¹) from Taiwan and Korea, respectively.

Our results showed that *E. coli* was detected in catfish muscles in all fish markets (34%), however, the bacterial count is lower than the tolerance level based on the ISO 7388:2009 standard (less than 3 MPN g⁻¹). Studies showed that fish products are prone to *E. coli* contamination. *E. coli* is a commensal bacterium that is commonly found in the intestinal of numerous healthy animal species, including humans. Nevertheless, certain strains have the potential to induce certain illnesses (Abebe et al., 2020). Furthermore, Li et al., (2021) reported the presence of E. coli bacteria was utilized to predict fecal contamination levels more accurately than total coliform counts. It is caused by E. coli can express the enzyme activity of B-Dglucuronidase, a sensitive and specific marker for detecting fecal contamination. Ava et al. (2020) reported that 75.6% of farmed and 75 % of marketed fish in Dinajpur, Bangladesh, were contaminated by E.coli. Other studies by Yohans et al., (2022) found that 20% of raw and 13.8% of cooked fish (Nile tilapia, Labeo barbus, and African catfish) were contaminated by E.coli in Northwest Ethiopia. In Nairobi, Kenya, 35.29% of tilapia (Oreochromis niloticus) were found contaminated with E. coli (Mumbo et al., 2023).

Most E. coli is harmless, but the virulent strains can cause important diseases worldwide. The pathogenic strains produce a toxin called verotoxin. This toxin has a distinct effect on Vero cells (Onmaz et al., 2020). Based on their antigenic properties, E. coli produces two forms of verotoxin/Shiga toxin (Stxs): Shiga toxin type 1 (Stx1) and Shiga toxin type 2 (Stx2). Purified Stx2 is 1,000 times more toxic than Stx1 to human renal endothelial cells (Terajima et al., 2017). The pathogenicity of E. coli depends on several virulence factors, such as adhesins, iron uptake factors, protectins, toxins, invasins (Sora et al., 2021), metabolism, and secretion systems (Hu et al., 2022). The diseases that are associated with E. coli in humans are watery diarrhea, hemorrhagic colitis (HC), and/or hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) (Mohamed and Habib, 2023; Wibawati et al., 2024). Infection is mainly via oral route, i.e., the ingestion of food contamination from poor handling and poor sanitation (Rahman et al., 2022; Tahir et al., 2024).

Based on the present findings, *Salmonella* sp. and *V. cholerae* were not detected in all *C. gariepinus* obtained from the markets. Previous study also reported the similar result in shellfish (shrimps, clams, and cephalopods) from landing centers and retail markets of Mumbai India (Prabhakar *et al.*, 2020) and prawns from wet markets in Besut district and Kuala Terengganu,

Malaysia (Sudin *et al.*, 2018). It indicated that there was no secondary contamination from anthropogenic pollution in the cultivation process. The accessibility of clean water for washing fresh fish and ice manufactured from potable water also contributes significantly to the reduction of *Salmonella* sp. and *V. cholerae* contamination of fresh seafood. *Salmonella* sp. and *V. cholerae* in freshwater fish have typically been linked to fecal contamination of the water where the fish was taken (Ali *et al.*, 2020). Other studies indicate that seafood contamination with two or more microorganisms might significantly raise the risk factors in consumers (Dumen *et al.*, 2020).

Salmonellosis, caused by Salmonella sp. is a significant pathogen in the animal production industry. Not only in humans, Salmonella sp. causes animal diseases and is spread by trade in animals and non-heated animal food products, including fishery products (Ehuwa et al., 2021). Salmonella sp. produces adhesins, invasins, fimbriae, hemagglutinins, exotoxins, and endotoxins (Jajere, 2019). These compounds could disrupt human bodies and subsequently lead to diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea, gastroenteritis, and mild fever. Prostation, vomiting, headache, anorexia, and enteric fever may also occur (Wang et al., 2020). Good sanitation is the best way to prevent Salmonella sp. contamination in fishery products (O'Bryan et al., 2022).

While V. cholerae is an opportunistic bacterium that can survive in freshwater and marine environments. Humans are infected by these pathogens through the ingestion of undercooked or mishandled seafood (Parlapani, 2021). The clinical symptoms of cholera are septicemia, cholecystitis, wound infections, cellulitis, necrotizing fasciitis, meningitis, and endophthalmitis (Afreen and Ucak, 2021). V. cholera produces Cholera toxin (CT), accessory cholera enterotoxin (ACE), zonula occludens toxin (ZOT), heat-stable enterotoxin (ST), cholix toxin (Chx), hemagglutinin protease (HAP), and V. cholerae cytolysin (VCC) which are highly toxic to humans (Ramamurthy et al., 2020). These bacteria are not only important in the seafood

industry, but they can also contaminate water (Fida *et al.*, 2023), fruits and vegetables, milk, cakes, and meat (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2022).

CONCLUSION

All farmed catfish marketed in Banyuwangi were safe to eat as no samples were found to exceed the limits of chloramphenicol and bacterial contaminants following the standards. Studies are needed though to further investigate other antibiotics (such as tetracycline, sulphonamide, enrofloxacin, and nitrofuran) used and their residues in aquaculture products to ensure food safety among the local markets around Banyuwangi, Indonesia.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

MFU: Supervision, Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing-original draft, writing-review and editing. HKJ: Validation, Investigation and Formal analysis. DSB: Investigation and Formal analysis. MAP: Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing-original draft, writing-review and editing. JYL: Supervision, Formal analysis, writing-review Writing-original draft, and editing. All authors have read, reviewed, and approved the final manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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