Evolutionary Dynamics of Vibrio cholerae O1 following a Single-Source Introduction to Haiti

Lee S. Katz, Aaron Petkau, John Beaulaurier, Shaun Tyler, Elena S. Antonova, Maryann A. Turnsek, Yan Guo, Susana Wang, Ellen E. Paxinos, Fabini Orata, Lori M. Gladney, Steven Stroika, Jason P. Folster, Lori Rowe, Molly M. Freeman, Natalie Knox, Mike Frace, Jacques Boncy, Morag Graham, Brian K. Hammer, Yan Boucher, Ali Bashir, William P. Hanage, Gary Van Domselaar, Cheryl L. Tarr

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia, USA; National Microbiology Laboratory, Public Health Agency of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; Department of Genetics and Genomics Sciences, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, New York, USA; School of Biology, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia, USA; Pacific Biosciences, Menlo Park, California, USA; Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; National Public Health Laboratory, Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics, Department of Epidemiology, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

ABSTRACT Prior to the epidemic that emerged in Haiti in October of 2010, cholera had not been documented in this country. After its introduction, a strain of Vibrio cholerae O1 spread rapidly throughout Haiti, where it caused over 600,000 cases of disease and >7,500 deaths in the first two years of the epidemic. We applied whole-genome sequencing to a temporal series of V. cholerae isolates from Haiti to gain insight into the mode and tempo of evolution in this isolated population of V. cholerae O1. Phylogenetic and Bayesian analyses supported the hypothesis that all isolates in the sample set diverged from a common ancestor within a time frame that is consistent with epidemiological observations. A pan-genome analysis showed nearly homogeneous genomic content, with no evidence of gene acquisition among Haiti isolates. Nine nearly closed genomes assembled from continuous-long-read data showed evidence of genome rearrangements and supported the observation of no gene acquisition among isolates. Thus, intrinsic mutational processes can account for virtually all of the observed genetic polymorphism, with no demonstrable contribution from horizontal gene transfer (HGT). Consistent with this, the 12 Haiti isolates tested by laboratory HGT assays were severely impaired for transformation, although unlike previously characterized noncompetent V. cholerae isolates, each expressed hapR and possessed a functional quorum-sensing system. Continued monitoring of V. cholerae in Haiti will illuminate the processes influencing the origin and fate of genome variants, which will facilitate interpretation of genetic variation in future epidemics.

IMPORTANCE Vibrio cholerae is the cause of substantial morbidity and mortality worldwide, with over three million cases of disease each year. An understanding of the mode and rate of evolutionary change is critical for proper interpretation of genome sequence data and attribution of outbreak sources. The Haiti epidemic provides an unprecedented opportunity to study an isolated, single-source outbreak of Vibrio cholerae O1 over an established time frame. By using multiple approaches to assay genetic variation, we found no evidence that the Haiti strain has acquired any genes by horizontal gene transfer, an observation that led us to discover that it is also poorly transformable. We have found no evidence that environmental strains have played a role in the evolution of the outbreak strain.

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Address correspondence to Cheryl L. Tarr, ctarr@cdc.gov.
region, most likely South Asia (6, 7). Epidemiological investigations pointed to Nepalese troops serving as United Nations (UN) peacekeepers as the source of cholera, based on reports of unsanitary conditions at the UN camp, the spatial-temporal pattern of disease clusters, and the coincidence of the outbreak with the arrival of the UN troops from Nepal (8). Phylogenetic analysis of time-relevant isolates from Haiti and Nepal provided additional support for the hypothesis that the epidemic strain was imported from Nepal (9).

The single-source introduction and geographic isolation of the Haiti epidemic, along with the extended duration of the outbreak, provide an unprecedented natural experiment for characterizing in detail the intrinsic tempo and mode of genome evolution in this deadly pathogen. We performed whole-genome sequencing on a set of well-characterized isolates collected near or after the 1-year anniversary date of the Haitian outbreak, and compared them with isolates collected early in the epidemic to gain insight into the dynamics of genome evolution in V. cholerae O1. The sample set includes isolates collected at different time points and in different localities (9, 10) as well as phenotypically and genotypically distinct isolates discovered during routine laboratory surveillance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The variants that have arisen in the course of the outbreak include various pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) pattern combinations, serotype Inaba (11), an altered antibiotic susceptibility pattern (ASP), and a nonagglutinating (NAG) V. cholerae strain. We first conducted phylogenetic analysis to determine whether the diverse set of isolates were all part of the same outbreak and then used the genome sequences to compare gene content and structural arrangement of chromosomes.

RESULTS

We sequenced 23 genomes on the Illumina platform (see Table S1 in the supplemental material). The sample set represents geographically dispersed isolates collected over an array of time points and representing multiple PFGE pattern combinations (see Fig. S1 to S3 in the supplemental material). Eighty-seven genomes were downloaded from the Sequence Read Archive (SRA) (see Table S2 in the supplemental material); two were found to have >20% non-Vibrio genetic material and were excluded from the study: hc-17a1 and hc-77a1. Comparing the 108 genomes yielded 566 core genome single-nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs). Of the 23 isolates, we sequenced 9 on the PacBio platform and resequenced the reference strain 2010EL-1786.

A phylogenetic tree constructed from the 566 core SNPs grouped all Haiti isolates and three Nepal isolates (14, 25, 26) in a single monophyletic group within the context of a global collection of 108 Vibrio cholerae O1 strains (see Fig. S4 in the supplemental material). Next, we uncovered 45 high-quality SNPs (hqSNPs) in the Haiti-Nepal group. The minimum spanning tree (MST) constructed from the hqSNPS was concordant with the clustering of isolates by maximum likelihood analysis (Fig. 1; also, see Fig. S4 in the supplemental material). The MST illustrated the radiation of numerous lineages from a single sequence type that predominated in the early part of the epidemic.

We then examined the 45 hqSNPs for potential effects on function (see Table S3 in the supplemental material). Most notable was a GAA-to-TAA substitution in the wbeT gene of 2012EL-1410, a representative of five serotype Inaba isolates from our Haiti collection. The substitution introduces a premature stop codon into the gene, which predicts a truncated protein, a result that is consistent with other studies showing that serotype conversion results from mutations in the wbeT gene (12). Comparison of three different molecular clock models showed that overall the changes at nucleotide sites were consistent with the epidemic behavior, as the highest likelihood was obtained under the exponential growth model. Using a strict molecular clock, analysis of 10$^7$ states from eight independent runs yielded a median estimate of the date of the most recent common ancestor to be 28 September 2010 (95% credible interval, 23 July 2010 to 17 October 2010).

Variation in gene content and structural arrangement. Few differences in gene content were observed (Fig. 2). The BLAST atlas showed no evidence of gene acquisition, but a few deletions were apparent, and the assembly of long reads showed similar results. In addition, three large inversions in or around the SXT region were evident in the long-read assemblies (Fig. 3). Amplification across the 3’ end of the inversion boundaries in isolates with rearrangements and in the reference strain 2010EL-1786 confirmed the structural variation observed in the assemblies.

Quorum sensing and transformation. To determine whether the Haiti clone was capable of natural transformation, one mechanism of horizontal gene transfer (HGT), standard laboratory DNA uptake assays (18) were performed on twelve isolates. Virtually no kanamycin-resistant (Kan$^\text{r}$), Lac$^{-}$ transformants were detected (Table 1) for Haiti isolates in assays using DNA from reference V. cholerae strain C6706 with a kan gene disrupting the lacZ gene (14). C6706, which is capable of quorum sensing (QS), transformed at an efficiency 10$^3$ to 10$^4$ times greater than that of each of the Haiti isolates and a QS-deficient C6706 ΔhapR strain. Similar results were observed when we attempted to transform each Haiti isolate with its own kan genomic DNA (Table 2), or with C6706 ΔhapR genomic DNA with an ampicillin resistance gene disrupting the lacZ gene (data not shown). Thus, it appears that the Haiti clone not only failed to acquire any genes by HGT but also was poorly transformable by standard laboratory DNA uptake assays. We examined the sequences of 47 genes that are involved in the QS and other signaling systems known to control transformation (14); each gene was present, and there were no loss-of-function or nonsense mutations in these genes or their promoters (data not shown). Also, each Haiti isolate was experimentally shown to be QS proficient, as expression of a QS-dependent reporter gene introduced into each of the 12 Haiti strains was similar to that of the positive control (PC) C6706 strain, while the negative control (NC) C6706 ΔhapR strain was 1,000-fold impaired, which corresponds to the detection limit (data not shown).

DISCUSSION

We used genomic approaches to characterize evolutionary changes in the V. cholerae O1 population following the introduction to Haiti. Our results were consistent with previous findings that show that the Haiti cholera outbreak is clonal and that Nepalese isolates are the closest relatives to the Haiti strain identified to date (9), even when placed in a phylogeny with a larger collection of isolates representing recent cholera epidemics. A previous study based on WGS (9) showed that Nepalese isolates were almost indistinguishable from Haiti isolates; however, that phylogeny did not include isolates recovered from recent cholera outbreaks. The phylogeny presented here provides evidence that the observed variants that were detected by our surveillance are part of the same outbreak and not representatives of secondary introduc-
FIG 1  Minimum spanning tree (MST) constructed from 45 hqSNPs. Intermediate hypothetical ancestors were inferred for some lineages and manually placed in the network. Nucleotide substitutions are indicated by dashes along the branches, and deletion events are indicated by arrows. ASP, antimicrobial susceptibility pattern. The ~10 kb deletion in the SXT is inferred twice in the model, and occurs between two transposase genes, VCH1786_I0078 and VCH1786_I0087. *, nonsynonymous transversion.
Isolates

1 - vo-25  11 - 2011EL-1300  21 - 2011V-1021  31 - hc-32a1  41 - 2010EL-1801  51 - hc-62a1  61 - hcufo1
2 - vo-14  12 - 2011EL-2321  22 - 2010EL-1961  32 - hc-21a1  42 - 2010EL-2010H  52 - hc-64a1  62 - hfu-02
3 - vo-26  13 - 2011EL-2322  23 - hc-60a1  33 - 2010EL-1787  43 - 2010EL-2010N  53 - hc-65a1  63 - 2010EL-1786
4 - 2012V-1060  14 - 2011EL-2320  24 - hc-43a1  34 - 2010EL-1788  44 - 2010EL-2026  54 - hc-67a1
5 - 2012EL-1410  15 - 2011EL-2138  25 - hc-28a1  35 - 2010EL-1791  45 - hc-33a2  55 - hc-68a1
6 - 2011EL-2316  16 - 2011EL-2317  26 - hc-23a1  36 - 2010EL-1792  46 - hc-38a1  56 - hc-70a1
7 - 2011EL-2323  17 - 2011EL-2315  27 - hc-22a1  37 - 2010EL-1795  47 - hc-48a1  57 - hc-71a1
8 - 2011EL-1841  18 - 2011EL-2314H  28 - hc-19a1  38 - 2010EL-1796  48 - hc-48b2  58 - hc-72a2
9 - 2011EL-1818  19 - 2011EL-1089  29 - hc-06a1  39 - 2010EL-1798  49 - hc-49a2  59 - hc-73a1
10 - 2011EL-2319  20 - 2011EL-1133  30 - hc-40a1  40 - 2010EL-1799  50 - hc-61a1  60 - hc-81a1

FIG 2: BLAST atlas. Genes from each de novo assembly were compared against both chromosomes of the completed genome 2010EL-1786. Absence of color (white) indicates that a strain is missing genetic material that is present in the reference. Regions of interest are denoted by black rectangles on the circumference. Three genomes have a shorter Illumina read length (36 bp), which might have resulted in fewer gene predictions, which manifests as an artifact on the atlas in the superintegron region. The isolate names are listed from the outermost to the innermost tracks.
FIG 3  Circos plot showing structural genome rearrangements. Each alternating white/gray band represents one of the nine strains sequenced on the PacBio RS platform, with an inner tenth track representing the published reference strain (7). Each band contains three tracks. The outermost, orange tiles represent contigs from *de novo* assemblies aligned back to the 2010EL-1786 reference. Inversions within contigs are highlighted in blue. Black line plots show local alignment quality over 1kb windows, in terms of Phred QV, for long read assembled contigs compared to the 2010EL-1786. Note the smallest dips in QV correspond to single SNPs. Green line plots show local coverage of Illumina short reads mapped to the reference over 500bp windows. The innermost band contains a purple track showing contigs from a separate long read *de novo* assembly of 2010EL-1786. The black QV track highlights differences between the long read and short assembly, indicating potential areas of misassembly in the original reference.
tions. The synthesis of PFGE and sequence data demonstrated the utility of WGS in establishing the clonality of isolates that exhibit greater PFGE dissimilarity than would normally be attributed to a single-source outbreak. The use of high-resolution sequence data that are amenable to evolutionary analysis will greatly enhance our ability to discern transmission pathways of virulent clones, such as the one implicated in this epidemic.

The nucleotide polymorphism that we detected was consistent with the observed epidemic behavior, as the most supported model of population growth was exponential. The molecular clock calculated with this model estimated a most recent common ancestor date of 28 September 2010 (95% credibility interval [CI], 23 July 2010 to 17 October 2010) (see Fig. S5 in the supplemental material). The credibility interval encompasses the date that the Nepalese soldiers arrived in Haiti (9 October 2010) (8), as well as the first-reported hospitalization of a cholera case (17 October 2010) (although an earlier fatal case with an onset date of 12 October may have been the index case) (15). The consistency between the molecular data and the epidemiological information demonstrates the utility of advanced statistical tools in outbreak investigations where epidemiological information may be lacking. Our results suggest that a population genomic approach can be very powerful in delimiting the time frame of an outbreak.

We observed remarkably few differences in the genetic repertoire of the V. cholerae O1 population (Fig. 2). All genes from Haiti isolates were found in the genome of the reference strain (2010EL-1786), and the differences in gene content could be attributed to loss of genetic material. The NAG isolate (2012V-1060) had a unique ~10-kb deletion, and closer examination revealed that several key components were missing from the rfb region (see Fig. S6 in the supplemental material). The isolate therefore appeared to be a serogroup O1 strain that was unable to synthesize or transport O antigen to the cell surface. Five representative strains were observed to have large deletions in the SXT, an ~100-kb integrative conjugative element that exhibits considerable diversity in gene content (16). One ~10-kb SXT deletion was found in three isolates (Fig. 1; also, see Fig. S7 in the supplemental material) that also shared an altered ASP. The typical ASP for Haiti V. cholerae includes intermediate resistance to chloramphenicol and nonsusceptibility to streptomycin, sulfisoxazole, trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole, and nalidixic acid, resistance traits that are encoded by floR, strA, strB, sul2, dfrA1, and a point mutation in gyrA (17). The isolates with the altered ASP displayed nonsusceptibility only to nalidixic acid, and both PCR and genome analysis confirmed the loss of floR, strA, strB, and sul2 resistance genes in the SXT region of these isolates. The deletion could not be placed parsimoniously on the MST (Fig. 1); however, it falls within variable region III (16) (see Fig. S7) and is flanked by transposase genes, so it is reasonable to suppose that the same deletion occurred independently in two different lineages. The SXT deletion could be made parsimonious by inferring that the nonsynonymous transversion (Fig. 1, asterisk) reverted to its original state, an event that we concluded is less likely to occur. We note that a parsimonious reconstruction indicates loss of SXT genes in the three closest Nepal isolates after divergence from the common ancestor of the Nepal-Haiti cluster (Fig. 1), as the other two most closely related Nepal lineages from Hendriksen et al. (9) (Nepal-2 and Nepal-3) possess an intact SXT (see Fig. S7). The large deletions in the SXT and rfb regions (Fig. 3) were confirmed by the continuous-long-read (CLR) assemblies. The nearly complete assemblies from the CLR and the BLAST atlas were both consistent with the notion that the Haiti V. cholerae strain has not acquired genes or genomic islands. Thus, we found no evidence that unrelated bacterial strains in the environment have contributed to the diversification of the Haiti outbreak strain.

It is well accepted that HGT is a major force driving evolution in bacteria, including Vibrio (18, 19); thus, the lack of HGT observed in our study might be surprising. Limited data suggest that changes can accumulate over a relatively short time frame (20), and a previous study of V. cholerae from Haiti (10) reported accumulation of diversity early in the epidemic although gene acquisition was not specifically demonstrated in V. cholerae serogroup O1. In Vibrio cholerae, natural transformation, an important mechanism of HGT, occurs on chitinous surfaces and requires quorum sensing (QS) (i.e., the HapR QS transcription factor) (13, 14). Thus, we first considered whether transmission dynamics precluded the establishment of epidemic V. cholerae in the environment so that they lacked exposure to other Vibrio and to chitin, which are critical for HGT by transformation (12). Although it is possible that environmental factors could limit HGT between en-

| TABLE 1 Haiti isolates are defective for transformation with C6706 gDNA with kan at lacZ |
|--------------------------------|--------|------|--------|
| gDNA                        | Recipient strain | TF<sup>a</sup> | Range<sup>b</sup> | Fold reduction<sup>c</sup> |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | C6706   | <1.3E-5 | 1.9E-5–7.8E-6 | 1.0   |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2010EL-1786 | <3.8E-9 | –         | >3.428 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2010EL-1799 | <2.5E-9 | –         | >5.200 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2010EL-2026 | <1.9E-9 | –         | >6.948 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2011EL-1818 | <1.6E-9 | –         | >8.196 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2011EL-1841 | <1.5E-9 | –         | >8.392 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2011EL-2319 | <5.4E-9 | –         | >2.399 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2011EL-2320 | <1.3E-9 | –         | >9.588 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2011EL-2321 | <1.4E-9 | –         | >9.508 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2011EL-2322 | <3.6E-9 | <DL–8.6E-9 | >3.621 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2011EL-2323 | <1.8E-9 | –         | >7.223 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2012EL-1410 | <7.3E-10 | –         | >17.648 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | 2011EL-1300 | <9.5E-10 | –         | >13.635 |
| C6706lacZi(kan)              | C6706 ΔhapR | <6.3E-9 | –         | >2.001 |

<sup>a</sup> TF, average transformation frequency from triplicate samples.

<sup>b</sup> DL (detection limit) was <1.0E-8 for all experiments. “<” indicates transformants below the DL. 1 CFU rather than 0 was used to calculate TF.

<sup>c</sup> Fold reduction = TF of recipient/TF of C6706.
environmental and epidemic *V. cholerae*, they are likely in contact, as coisolation has been observed on several occasions from environmental and clinical samples (10) (Vince Hill [CDC], personal communication). We therefore tested the alternative hypothesis that the Haiti *V. cholerae* strain could be deficient in natural transformation and therefore unable to take up and incorporate foreign DNA. The transformation experiments on chitin showed that unlike naturally competent clinical strain C6706, each Haiti isolate was severely impaired in its ability to take up extracellular DNA derived from C6706 (Table 1) or from itself (Table 2). Further experiments confirmed that the isolates, like C6706, were quorum-sensing proficient and expressed *hapR* (data not shown). Thus, the Haiti strain appears to be limited in its ability to acquire new genetic material through transformation, but this is not due to QS deficiencies, as have been identified in other nontransformable *V. cholerae* isolates (13) (B. K. Hammer and E. E. Bernardy, unpublished results). It remains possible that *V. cholerae* isolates defective for transformation in lab settings may, nonetheless, be naturally competent in nature. However, to our knowledge no such strains have yet been described. Also, a longer time frame may be required for recombination to occur with more distantly related lineages and create mosaics that are successful enough to be observed. We note that the low rates of transformation would presumably not affect HGT via other mechanisms such as phage transduction or conjugation.

In summary, the Haiti cholera epidemic provided a unique opportunity to study the evolutionary dynamics of an isolated population of *V. cholerae* O1. Although PFGE was initially critical for determining that a single strain caused the outbreak, subsequent changes in PFGE patterns precluded our ability to determine that observed variants traced back to a single epidemiic founder, an issue that was addressed by using WGS in our comprehensive surveillance strategy. The sample set was virtually homogenous in gene content, an observation that led to the discovery that the Haiti strain is poorly transformable. Thus, our study indicates that transformation by unrelated environmental strains of *V. cholerae* has played no detectable role in the evolution of the outbreak strain. Further studies will define the genetic mutation(s) that rendered the Haiti strain defective in HGT via natural transformation. Once the mutation(s) is identified, its temporal origin and global prevalence can be determined to understand more about the stability and success of this particular genotype and the role that transformation plays in its genome evolution and success in establishing itself in a new environment. Atypical O1 El Tor *V. cholerae* strains such as the Haiti strain have already displaced prototypical El Tor strains and emerged as the predominant clone circulating in Asia and Africa (21–24). These strains have acquired multidrug resistance and enhanced virulence traits such as classical or hybrid CTX prophage and SXT-ICE, resulting in higher infection rates and harsher symptoms (25). With the tools such as WGS now being available for epidemiological surveillance and case tracking, we argue for renewed efforts aimed at cholera prevention to avert more widespread and difficult-to-treat cholera outbreaks.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Bacterial isolates.** A total of 23 bacterial isolates were chosen for whole-genome sequencing based on phenotypic and genetic diversity that was observed during routine molecular surveillance as previously described (26, 17) (see Table S1 in the supplemental material). Clinical isolate C6706, the isogenic *ΔhapR* mutant, and the C6706 derivative carrying *kan* at the *lacZ* site (27) were from our strain collection.

**Genome sequence determination.** Single-molecule, real-time (SMRT) sequencing was performed on the PacBio RS platform using SMRTBells libraries targeting 10-kb inserts using 90-min movies and C2 chemistry (Pacific Biosciences, Menlo Park, CA) using previously established methods and commercially available chemistries (28). Single-end 70- and 100-bp Illumina reads were generated on the GAIIx platform (Illumina, San Diego, CA) using standard procedures.

**Genome data acquisition and initial data processing.** Illumina runs of publically available genomes were retrieved from the Sequence Read Archive (SRA) and the closed genome of 2010EL-1786 from GenBank (accession numbers NC_016445.1 and NC_016446.1). 2010EL-1786 is an early outbreak isolate from Haiti, which we sequenced, closed, and annotated (7). To improve assembly quality, we trimmed poor quality from the ends of reads and removed reads of bad quality using the script *run_assembly_trimClean.pl* from CG-Pipeline (CGP) with default options or with a minimum length of 30 bp and no trimming for the 36-bp read sets (29). *De novo* assembly was performed on resulting reads using CGP, which assembles with Velvet (30). Optimal parameters were determined for each assembly using VelvetOptimiser with a k-mer range from 27 to 100,000.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gDNA donor</th>
<th>Recipient strain</th>
<th>TF Range</th>
<th>Fold reduction</th>
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<tr>
<td>2010EL-1786</td>
<td>2010EL-1786</td>
<td>&lt;5.1E-9</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010EL-1799</td>
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<td>–</td>
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<td>2010EL-2026</td>
<td>&lt;1.7E-9</td>
<td>–</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011EL-1300</td>
<td>C6706 ΔhapR</td>
<td>&lt;6.4E-9</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* TF, DL, and – as defined in Table 1.

*b* Fold reduction = TF(test)/TF(control).

(c) The C6706 ΔhapR recipient was transformed with gDNA from 2011EL-1300.
63 bp. Coding gene predictions were prepared with CG-Pipeline, which uses a comprehensive gene prediction approach (29).

Genomes of >4.2 Mb were analyzed for potential contamination by comparing the contigs against the RefSeq database of microbial genomes using BLASTn.

**Variant calling and annotation.** Illumina reads were mapped against 2010EL-1786 using the SMALT mapper (31), and variants were called with FreeBayes (32). Analysis parameters for calling high-quality SNPs (hqSNPs) were optimized by manually reviewing the pileups versus variant calls for seven random genomes analyzed under different conditions. The following parameters were used: small index -k 13 -s 6; small map -f samsoft; freebayes --pvar 0 --ploidy 1 -l left-align-indels --min-mapping-quality 0 --min-base-quality 20 --min-alternate-fraction 0.75. We removed indels and SNPs with a depth of coverage less than 10 from variant calls. The set of SNPs that passed our filters comprise the final set of hqSNPs used in all subsequent analysis. The set of 45 hqSNPs within the core genome of the Haitian and the three closely related Nepalese genomes were annotated with snpeff (33).

**Core genome phylogeny.** The Haitian isolates were first examined in a broad phylogenetic context by constructing a tree containing 108 genomes with PhyML using the K80 substitution model, best of NNI and SPR for tree topology searching, and SH-like branch supports (34) (see Fig. S4 in the supplemental material). A phylogeny was constructed for all genomes clustering with the original Haiti genomes (7, 10) plus the three related Nepal genomes (9) using the same approach (n = 63).

**Bayesian analysis.** The analysis of the date for the most recent common ancestor (MRCA) was based on the alignment of 45 hqSNPs from 32 Haiti genomes with known DOCs (see Tables S1 and S2 in the supplemental material). To estimate the date of the outbreak, the sequences were analyzed using BEAST1.72 with an HKY model (35) and 108 iterations of the Markov Chain Monte Carlo Simulation. To minimize the number of parameters estimated, we used a strict molecular clock with a starting estimate of 3E-4 hqSNPs/site/day, as estimated by Path-o-Gen (36). We tested three different growth models: constant population size, expansion, and exponential and compared models using Bayes factors based on marginal likelihoods sampled from the posterior. TreeAnnotator, with a burn-in of 1,000 trees, was used to find the best-fitting tree with default parameters.

**BLAST atlas.** The BLAST atlases were constructed using Illumina-only assemblies relative to a pan-genome, initiated by a concatenated and closed assembly of 2010EL-1786 (accession numbers NC_016445.1 and NC_016446.1). The pangenome for the BLAST atlas was constructed by iterative comparisons of gene predictions from each of the assemblies using BLASTn against the genes in the pan-genome set (37). Any genes among the other assemblies which did not have a hit to the pan-genome with >80% identity and >100 nucleotides were added to the pan-genome set.

**Detecting rearrangements with PacBio assemblies.** Ten Haiti isolates, including the reference strain 2010EL-1786, were sequenced on the PacBio RS platform using standard C2 chemistry and protocols. For each strain, reference-based alignments as well as de novo assemblies were compared to the closed reference genome of Haiti isolate 2010EL-1786 (7). The reference-based approach to detect structural variants was performed as described previously (28). A novel assembly method was employed that enabled high-quality de novo assembly using solely continuous-long-read (CLR) sequencing data from the PacBio RS5 platform. The assembly pipeline has three main components: preassembly, assembly, and assembly polishing (38).

The preassembly step utilizes the error correction framework from the AHA pipeline (39). However, rather than correcting the long reads with high-quality short reads, as previously described, long reads are used to generate a high-accuracy consensus of other long reads (28). Specifically, the full CLR data set was divided into subsets to include the longest CLRIs. The length cutoff for each strain was set to obtain at least 10x corrected read coverage; depending on the sequencing depth and read length profiles, these size cutoffs ranged from 4 to 6 kb. This read subset was then corrected using the complete CLR set for each strain.

The resulting corrected (or “preassembled”) reads were trimmed to eliminate any low-quality regions in the consensus for each read. The resultant trimmed long reads were then size selected again to obtain at least 10x long-read coverage of the genome (cutoffs ranged from 3 to 6 kb for the preassembled reads). These high-quality reads were passed directly into the Celera Assembler (40).

We performed a final finishing step using Quiver from Pacific Biosciences (https://github.com/PacificBiosciences/GenomicConsensus), which leverages specific quality values and features unique to single molecule sequencing. For each strain, all raw reads were aligned back to the de novo assembled output from the Celera Assembler using BLASR (41). Consensus calling was performed using Quiver to obtain the final finished assemblies.

**Sequencing for the superintegron.** To validate the PacBio assemblies, we employed Sanger sequencing of the integron region of one isolate. Fosmid libraries were constructed from genomic DNA fragments of 2011EL-2320 using the PCC2FOS Vector (Epipcentre, Madison, WI). Libraries were screened with attC-targeted primers (reference PMID 17464063) to find integron-containing fragments. Transposons were introduced into the selected fosmids with the EZ-Tn5 <KAN-2> insertion kit (Epipcentre) and sequenced using EZ-Tn5-specific primers. Geneious v.6.0.3 (Biomeatters Ltd., Auckland, New Zealand) was used to assemble sequences to generate the full-length integron sequence. The Sanger consensus sequence was compared to the PacBio assembly.

**Confirmation of genome rearrangements.** We used PCR to confirm the inversions observed in the CLR assemblies for strains 2011EL-2319, 2011EL-2320, and 2011EL-2323. The sequences around the inversion breakpoints were compared to that of reference strain 2010EL-1786, and nucleotide alignments were viewed in MEGA5 (42). The primer sequences (5’ to 3’) are as follows: 2011EL-2319, GACATATATCCGTCGTTTA and TCTGTCAATGAATACGCAGA; and 2011EL-2320, ATTTATGATTATGAATATGTA and GAAACACTAATACAATGCCAG.

**Chitin-induced natural transformation assay for HGT.** As described previously (13, 14), sterile crab shells in triplicate wells were inoculated with each V. cholerae strain in a 12-well plate and provided with 2 μg of genomic DNA (gDNA) marked with a kanamycin resistance (kan) gene. Following a 24-h incubation, attached cells were harvested and plated to quantify transformation frequency (TF), defined as kan CFU ml−1/total CFU ml−1. Experiments were performed in triplicate. For the experiments whose results are shown in Table 1, each strain was provided with donor gDNA from a C6706 derivative with kan at the lacZ locus, and the fold TF defect was calculated relative to C6706. In a separate assay (Table 2), twelve pools of donor gDNA were generated from >1,000 Tn5(kan) mutants of each isolate, and each pool was used to transform that same isolate and C6706. The fold TF defect was calculated for each isolate relative to C6706 that was also incubated with Tn5(kan) gDNA from that isolate. Transposon mutagenesis of C6706 and the Haiti isolates was performed as described elsewhere (43).

**Quorum-sensing assay.** As described (44), a quorum-sensing reporter plasmid (pBB1) was introduced into each isolate, and then triplicate cultures were grown overnight at 30°C. Luciferase levels and optical density at 600 nm (OD600) were determined for each culture to calculate the relative light units (RLUs), expressed as (lux/ml)/(OD600 units/ml). A quorum-sensing assay was also performed as previously described (44) (data not shown).

**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL**

Supplemental material for this article may be found at http://mbio.asm.orglookup/suppl/doi:10.1128/mBio.00398-13/-/DCSupplemental.

Figure S1, PDF file, 0.4 MB.
Figure S2, PDF file, 0.7 MB.
Figure S3, PDF file, 0.1 MB.
REFERENCES


