


## Mechanisms of adaptation in the intestinal parasite *Giardia lamblia*

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### Resumen

*Giardia lamblia*, a parasite of humans, is a major source of waterborne diarrhoeal disease. *Giardia* is also an excellent system to study basic biochemical processes because it is a single-celled eukaryote with a small genome and its entire life cycle can be replicated in vitro. *Giardia* trophozoites undergo fundamental changes to survive outside the intestine of their host by differentiating into infective cysts. Encystation entails the synthesis, processing, transport, secretion and extracellular assembly of cyst wall components. To survive within the intestine, *Giardia* undergoes antigenic variation, a process by which the parasite continuously switches its major surface molecules, allowing the parasite to evade the host's immune response and produce chronic and recurrent infections. The objective of the present chapter is to provide a better understanding of the molecular mechanisms involved in adaptation and differentiation in *Giardia*, with a particular focus on the process of encystation and antigenic variation of this interesting micro-organism.

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