RESEARCH ARTICLE

Whole-genome sequencing and key Cr(VI) reduction genes analysis of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1

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Hexavalent chromium (Cr(VI)), a prevalent heavy metal contaminant ubiquitous in industries such as metallurgy and chemistry, poses a significant threat to ecological security and human health. Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 has the ability to reduce Cr(VI) and was isolated from polluted river water. This research employed whole-genome sequencing technology to identify the Cr(VI) reducing gene and mechanism of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1. The full length Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 genome was 5,430,044 bp with 57.62% of GC content. By using GeneMarkS software to predict the coding genes of the newly sequenced genome, *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1 had a total of 5,187 coding genes. The genes cysAPUW, pstABCSU, and modABCEF might play important roles in the intake of Cr(VI). The chrA gene might encode a chromate transporter, which was an efflux transporter that could expel Cr(VI) from the cell. The genes chrR, ccmE, ccmF, ccmG, and ccmH might be the key regulatory genes for intracellular Cr(VI) reduction. The genes atpABCDEFGH, yrbG, galP, araE, nhaAB, citA, and ydjE might be involved in intracellular and extracellular proton transport, providing the necessary conditions for extracellular Cr(VI) reduction. The genes cyoABCD and cydABX might play important roles in the extracellular export of electrons. The GO annotation results revealed that these genes were associated mainly with cell transmembrane transport, oxidoreductase activity, membrane activity, hydrogen ion transmembrane transporter activity, and oxidation-reduction processes. In addition, Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 had a high diversity of primary active transporters, electrochemical potential-driven transporters, and channels/pores in Transporter Classification Database (TCDB), which provided great potential for Cr(VI) transport and reduction. This study would provide a theoretical reference for optimizing the Cr(VI) reduction ability of chromium-resistant microorganisms at the genetic level, thereby advancing the development and widespread adoption of microbial heavy metal remediation technologies.

Keywords: Klebsiella spp.; whole-genome sequencing; Cr(VI); Cr(VI) reduction.

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Introduction

Heavy metal contamination is a significant environmental issue that poses a threat to human health and ecosystems. Microorganisms play a crucial role in the bioremediation of heavy metals by reducing them to less toxic forms. Chromium (Cr) is one of the most toxic heavy metals and poses a threat to the health of millions of people worldwide. Hexavalent chromium (Cr(VI)) is a common heavy metal pollutant widely used in industries, such as metallurgy and chemistry, and can accumulate in aquatic biota, soil, and crops to severely impact

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ecological security and human health [1]. Compared with Cr(VI), Cr(III) has lower toxicity, lower mobility, and tends to form precipitates [2]. Therefore, reducing highly toxic Cr(VI) effectively to less toxic Cr(III) via scientifically efficient heavy metal treatment techniques is a viable approach in contaminated environments. Many microorganisms have evolved various mechanisms to cope with Cr(VI) stress including the reduction of Cr(VI) to Cr(III) [3]. This process, known as metal reduction, is mediated by a variety of enzymes and metabolic pathways [4]. However, the mechanism of Cr(VI) reduction by reductases in chromate-resistant bacteria is not fully understood. Therefore, exploring chromium resistance genes in microorganisms is important for optimizing microbial Cr(VI) remediation techniques.

In recent years, interest in the use of wholegenome analysis to study the microbial mechanisms of heavy metal reduction has increased. Whole-genome sequencing and analysis can provide valuable insights into the genetic basis of heavy metal reduction mechanisms in microorganisms [5]. By sequencing and analyzing the entire genome of a metal-reducing microorganism, researchers can identify the genes and pathways involved in heavy metal reduction and gain a deeper understanding of the molecular mechanisms underlying this process. Huang et al. reported that Exiguobacterium sp. PY14 contained the gene chrR, which coded for chromate reductase and might be a key gene in the metabolism of Cr(VI) through genome sequencing analysis [6]. Wang et al. analyzed the omics data of Alicycliphilus denitrificans Ylb10 and reported that CysJ, TsdA, NrfA, NorB, and ChrR genes played important roles in the reduction of Cr(VI) [7]. Sedláček et al. reported that Paracoccus denitrificans contained the gene ferB, which could encode ferric reductase B with a structure similar to that of chromate reductase [8]. These genes play crucial roles in the detoxification and sequestration of heavy metals, thereby reducing their toxicity to the environment. Therefore, the study of microbial Cr(VI) reduction mechanisms

environment and may ultimately lead to the development of novel strategies for mitigating the environmental impact of Cr(VI) pollution. Klebsiella has attracted much attention because of its ability to reduce Cr(VI). Hossan et al. successfully isolated chromate-resistant bacteria from tannery wastewater and identified them as Klebsiella species [9]. Yu et al. prepared Klebsiella variicola H12-CMC-FeS@biochar, which was based on the Cr(VI) reduction capacity of Klebsiella variicola H12 and could efficiently remove Cr(VI) from sewage [10]. Through transcriptomic analysis, Lara et al. elucidated the mechanism of the chromium stress response in the Klebsiella strain AqSCr. However, the key genes involved in Cr(VI) reduction in Klebsiella still need to be further explored [11]. Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 demonstrates the ability to reduce Cr(VI). However, the key genes and mechanisms of Cr(VI) reduction need to be

via whole-genome analysis holds great promise

microorganisms interact with Cr(VI) in the

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mechanisms of Cr(VI) reduction need to be further elucidated. This study used wholegenome sequencing technology to identify the Cr(VI) resistance gene(s) of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1 and investigate Cr(VI) reduction mechanism. The study would provide a theoretical reference for optimizing the Cr(VI) reduction ability of chromium-resistant microorganisms at the genetic level. In addition, the findings could have important implications for the development of novel biotechnological strategies for chromium detoxification and environmental remediation.

Materials and methods

Medium preparation

The growth medium was prepared by mixing 0.6 g of KCl, 1.5 g of NH₄Cl, 0.3 g of KH₂PO₄, 0.1 g of MgCl₂, 0.1 g of CaCl₂, 10 mL of trace mineral solution, and 10 mL of vitamin solution in 1 L of Luria–Bertani (LB) medium made by mixing 1 g of tryptone, 0.5 g of yeast extract, and 1 g of NaCl in 100 mL of distill water [12]. The trace mineral solution contained 0.1 g of MnCl₂·4H₂O, 0.5 g of

FeSO₄·7H₂O, 0.17 g of CoCl₂·6H₂O, 0.1 g of ZnCl₂, 0.05 g of NiCl₂, 1.5 g of N(CH₂COOH)₃, 0.03 g of CuSO₄·5H₂O, 0.1 g of Na₂SeO₄, 0.005 g of H₃PO₃, 0.09 g of Na₂MoO₄, and 0.02 g of Na₂WO₄·2H₂O. The vitamin solution contained 0.002 g of folic acid, 0.01 g of pyridoxine HCl, 0.005 g of riboflavin, 0.002 g of biotin, 0.005 g of thiamine, 0.005 g of nicotinic acid, 0.005 g of pantothenic acid, 0.0001 g of vitamin B12, 0.005 g of Paminobenzoic acid, and 0.005 g of thioctic acid. All reagents were purchased from Sinopharm Chemical Reagent Co., Shanghai, China. All media were adjusted to pH 7.2 prior to sterilization,

Isolation and identification of single purified bacterial species

5 mL of water from Lianjiang River (33.00 N, 114.00E) (Zhumadian, Henan, China) was added to 40 mL of growth medium supplemented with 0.2 mM Cr(VI) (K₂Cr₂O₇), and incubated in MaxQ 8000 shaking incubator (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA) at 37°C for 2 days to screen for chromium-tolerant bacteria. After tenfold gradient dilution, the agar plate was used to isolate pure cultures. The single purified species were separated by agar plate scribing more than five times until the colony morphology and shape were identical. A total of 1.64 g/L acetate was used as the carbon source. The culture growth was conducted at 30 ± 1°C. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) analysis was then conducted using the universal primers 27F (5'-AGA GTT TGA TCA TGG CTC AG-3') and 1492R (5'-TAC GAC TTA ACC CCA ATC GC-3'), which were complementary to the conserved regions of the bacterial 16S rRNA gene [3]. The universal primers were designed and synthesized by Sangon Biotech, Shanghai, China. The PCR amplification was performed in a total volume of 25 μL reaction mixture containing 1 µL of DNA template, 12.5 µL of Tag PCR Master Mix (Sangon Biotech, Shanghai, China), 1 µL of each primer, and 9.5 µL of distill water. The PCR reaction was carried out in MyCycler Thermal Cycler (Bio-Rad, Hercules, CA, USA) with 94°C for 5 min followed by 30 cycles of 94°C for 30 s, 55°C for 45 s, 72°C for 90 s, and a final extension at 72°C for 10 min. The PCR products were then stored at -4°C before sending out to Sangon

Biotech, Shanghai, China for sequencing. The DNA sequences were compared with available sequences in the GenBank database of the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/) via Basic Local Alignment Search Tool (Blastn) software. The sequences with the highest hits on the 16S rRNA gene were extracted to preliminarily identify the species of bacteria.

Determination of the Cr(VI) reduction capacity of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1

Identified *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1 was inoculated in LB media supplemented with Cr(VI) at 30°C for 96 h, while blank LB media supplemented with Cr(VI) was used as the control. The cultural media were collected and the diphenylcarbonic dihydrazine spectrophotometric method was used to determine the residual amount of Cr(VI) in the medium [3]. The absorbances at 540 nm were determined using Multiskan SkyHigh spectrophotometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA). A linear relationship (R² = 0.9999) was explored between the Cr(VI) concentrations of 0, 0.4, 0.8, 1.2, 1.6, and 20 µg/mL and solution absorbances.

Whole-genome sequencing and analysis

Bacterial genomic DNA from pure cultures was extracted using Quick-DNA Miniprep Plus Kit (Zymo Research, Irvine, CA, USA) according to the manufacturer's instructions, followed by agarose gel electrophoresis to assess the purity and integrity of the DNA, and quantification using Qubit 4.0 Fluorometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA). The sequencing library was then constructed by Novogene Bioinformatics Technology Co., Ltd. (Beijing, China). The whole genome of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 was sequenced through the Nanopore PromethION platform and Illumina NovaSeq PE150 at the Novogene Bioinformatics Technology Co., Ltd. (Beijing, China). GeneMarkS (http://topaz.gatech.edu/ GeneMark/) (version 4.17) was used to predict the coding genes of the sequenced genome, Five databases including Gene Ontology (GO), Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG), Clusters of Orthologous Groups (COG),

Nonredundant Protein Database (NR), and Transporter Classification Database (TCDB) were employed to predict gene functions. A wholegenome BLAST search with *E* value less than 1e-5, minimal alignment length percentage greater than 40% was performed against the above databases. Carbohydrate-active enzymes were predicted using the Carbohydrate-Active enZYmes Database.

Results and discussion

Isolation and Cr(VI) reducing capacity determination of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1

Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 was isolated from polluted river water. A comparison with sequences in GenBank suggested that Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 was related to the Klebsiella pneumoniae strain HCD13-4 with a similarity of 100%. The reduction performance of Cr(VI) by Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 showed that, when the LB medium was inoculated with *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1, the Cr(VI) concentration decreased from 0.13 ± 0.0068 mM to 0.023 ± 0.011 mM after 96 hours. Moreover, when the LB medium was not inoculated with Klebsiella spp. Shm-1, the Cr(VI) concentration essentially did not decrease after 96 hours (Figure 1). These results indicated that Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 has the ability to reduce Cr(VI) and were the same as those previously reports [10, 11].





Whole-genome sequencing of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1

The full length of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1 genome was 5,430,044 bp with the GC content of 57.62% and 5,187 coding genes. According to the NR analysis, 4,466 genes of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 belonged to the genus Klebsiella, accounting for 86.10% of all genes (Figure 2). The results confirmed that Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 belonged to the genus Klebsiella. The whole-genome map of the Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 gene was then drawn in Figure 3. The whole-genome DNA sequence of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 was submitted to NCBI with the BioSample accession number of SAMN42391532.



Figure 2. NR database annotation of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1.

Cr(VI) reduction mechanism of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1

The currently known genes that may be involved in extracellular and intracellular Cr(VI) reduction and transfer were analyzed. The results showed that CrO_4^{2-} could enter biological cells through phosphate transport channels because it could form stable binding bonds with inorganic phosphate transport proteins through chemical compatibility [13]. Moreover, CrO_4^{2-} , MOO_4^{2-} , and SO_4^{2-} have similar structures, and CrO_4^{2-} competes with MOO_4^{2-} and SO_4^{2-} for transporting carriers to enter cells [14]. The genes *cysA* (Shm-



Figure 3. Whole-genome map of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1.

Table 1. Genes involved in Cr(VI) reduction in *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1.

Gene Id	Gene name	Gene production
Shm-1_GM002278	chrA	chromate transporter
Shm-1_GM005172, Shm-1_GM005173, Shm-1_GM005171, Shm-1_GM005170, Shm-1_GM005174	pstABCS, phoU	phosphate transport system protein
Shm-1_GM000302, Shm-1_GM001521, Shm-1_GM001522, Shm-1_GM001523	cysAPUW	sulfate transport system protein
Shm-1_GM002197, Shm-1_GM003653, Shm-1_GM003652, Shm- 1_GM003656, Shm-1_GM003657	modABCEF	molybdate transport system protein
Shm-1_GM005180	chrR	chromate reductase
Shm-1_GM002247, Shm-1_GM002248, Shm-1_GM002249, Shm-1_GM002250	ccmEFGH	cytochrome c-type biogenesis protein
Shm-1_GM004046, Shm-1_GM004047, Shm-1_GM004048, Shm-1_GM004049	cyoABCD	cytochrome o ubiquinol oxidase
Shm-1_GM003679, Shm-1_GM003678, Shm-1_GM003677	cydABX	cytochrome bd-I ubiquinol oxidase
Shm-1_GM005163, Shm-1_GM005159, Shm-1_GM005166, Shm-1_GM005165, Shm-1_GM005160, Shm-1_GM005161, Shm-1_GM005164, Shm-1_GM005162	atpABCDEFGH	F-type H ⁺ -transporting ATPase
Shm-1_GM000697	yrbG	cation:H ⁺ antiporter
Shm-1_GM000936	galP	galactose:H⁺ symporter
Shm-1_GM001055	araE	arabinose:H ⁺ symporter
Shm-1_GM002042	citA	citrate/tricarballylate:H ⁺ symporter
Shm-1_GM002504	ydjE	putative metabolite:H ⁺ symporter
Shm-1_GM004425, Shm-1_GM002008	nhaAB	Na⁺:H⁺ antiporter

1_GM000302), *cysP* (Shm-1_GM001521), *cysU* (Shm-1_GM001522), and *cysW* (Shm-1_GM001523) encoded sulfate transport system proteins were detected in *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1. The genes *pstA* (Shm-1_GM005172), *pstB* (Shm-

1_GM005173), *pstC* (Shm-1_GM005171), *pstS* (Shm-1_GM005170), and *phoU* (Shm-1_GM005174) encoded phosphate transport system proteins were also detected in *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1. In addition, *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1 had



Figure 4. Schematic diagram of the Cr(VI) reduction mechanism of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1. The blue font represented the gene encoding the relevant protein.

genes such as modA (Shm-1 GM002197), modB (Shm-1 GM003653), modC (Shm-1 GM003652), modE (Shm-1_GM003656), and modF (Shm-1 GM003657), which encoded molybdate transport system proteins (Table 1). These genes might play important roles in the intake of Cr(VI) by Klebsiella spp. Shm-1. When Cr(VI) enters a cell, it can cause DNA damage [15], and the active expulsion of Cr(VI) is one of the important methods by which microorganisms resist chromium toxicity [16]. The gene chrA (Shm-1_GM002278) of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 encoded a chromate transporter, which was an efflux transporter that could expel hexavalent chromium from the cell [17]. In addition, the extracellular reduction and intracellular reduction of Cr(VI) constitute another important way for microorganisms to resist chromium toxicity [18]. For intracellular Cr(VI) reduction, a series of soluble reductase-mediated enzymatic

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reductions are important pathways for microbial intracellular resistance to Cr(VI) [19]. The gene chrR (Shm-1 GM005180) of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 encoded an intracellular chromate reductase, while the genes ccmE (Shm-1 GM002247), ccmF (Shm-1 GM002248), ccmG (Shm-1 GM002249), and ccmH (Shm-1 GM002250) of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 encoded cytochrome C-type biogenesis proteins (Table 1). Chromate reductase and cytochrome C can transfer electrons to Cr(VI) and reduce it to Cr(III) [20, 21]. Therefore, the genes chrR, ccmE, ccmF, ccmG, and ccmH might be the key regulatory genes for intracellular Cr(VI) reduction. For extracellular Cr(VI) reduction, microorganisms can secrete protons through the cell membrane surface to facilitate the reduction of Cr(VI) to Cr(III) in the extracellular environment [22]. The H⁺ produced in the cell is transferred to the outside of the cell through channels such as the proton pump on the cell



Figure 5. GO functional classification of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 genes. BP: biological processes. CC: cellular components. MF: molecular functions.

membrane [22]. The genes *atpA* (Shm-1 GM005163), atpB (Shm-1 GM005159), atpC (Shm-1 GM005166), atpD (Shm-1 GM005165), atpE (Shm-1_GM005160), atpF (Shm-1 GM005161), atpG (Shm-1 GM005164), and atpH (Shm-1 GM005162) of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 encoded F-type H⁺-transporting ATPases. The genes yrbG (Shm-1 GM000697), galP (Shm-1 GM000936), araE (Shm-1 GM001055), nhaAB (Shm-1 GM004425, Shm-1 GM002008), citA (Shm-1_GM002042), and ydjE (Shm-1 GM002504) encoded cation:H⁺ antiporters, galactose:H⁺ arabinose:H⁺ symporters, symporters, Na⁺:H⁺ antiporters. citrate/tricarballylate:H⁺ symporters, and putative metabolite:H⁺ symporters, respectively

(Table 1). These genes might be involved in intracellular and extracellular proton transport, providing the necessary conditions for extracellular Cr(VI) reduction. In addition, electrons are important participants in the microbial reduction of Cr(VI) [23]. The genes cyoA (Shm-1 GM004046), cyoB (Shm-1 GM004047), cyoC (Shm-1 GM004048), and cyoD (Shm-1 GM004049) of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 encoded cytochrome or ubiquinol oxidase, while the genes cydA (Shm-1_GM003679), cydB (Shm-1 GM003678), and cydX (Shm-1 GM003677) encoded cytochrome bd-I ubiquinol oxidase (Table 1). These genes might play important roles in the extracellular export of electrons. Based on these results, a possible Cr(VI) reduction



Figure 6. KEGG metabolic pathway annotation of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1 genes.

mechanism diagram of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1 was constructed (Figure 4).

GO database annotation

The GO annotation results showed that Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 had a total of 3,762 genes with GO annotation functions, which were classified into biological process (BP), molecular function (MF), and cellular component (CC) categories. In BP, gene functions were involved mainly in localization (889 genes), cellular process (1,812 genes), single-organism process (1,428 genes), metabolic process (2,099 genes), biological regulation (665 genes), cellular component organization or biogenesis (184 genes), signaling (148 genes), regulation of biological process (648 genes), and response to stimulus (273 genes). In MF, gene functions were involved mainly in catalytic activity (2,000 genes), signal transducer activity (101 genes), transporter activity (367 genes), binding (1,647 genes), and nucleic acid

binding transcription factor activity (345 genes). In CC, gene functions were mainly involved in cell parts (561 genes), membranes (519 genes), organelles (161 genes), membrane parts (470 genes), and macromolecular complexes (202 genes) (Figure 5). Furthermore, the genes that might be involved in Cr(VI) reduction were analyzed. The results showed that these genes were involved mainly in cell transmembrane transport, oxidoreductase activity, membranes, hydrogen ion transmembrane transporter activity, and oxidation–reduction processes. The results also revealed that these genes were important for the resistance of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1 to Cr(VI).

KEGG database annotation

KEGG annotated a total of 5,088 genes, which were divided into 6 categories (Figure 6), including cellular processes (195 genes), environmental information processing (532



Figure 7. COG functional annotation of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 genes.

genes), genetic information processing (198 genes), human diseases (174 genes), metabolism (2,616 genes), and organismal systems (43 genes). Among these genes, the most annotated genes were associated with the metabolism pathway, followed by the environmental information processing pathway. In metabolism, genes' functions were mainly involved in nucleotide metabolism (126 genes), metabolism of cofactors and vitamins (214 genes), global and overview maps (975 genes), energy metabolism (188 genes), carbohydrate metabolism (420 genes), and amino acid metabolism (269 genes). In environmental information processing, genes were involved mainly in signal transduction (145 genes) and membrane transport (387 genes). Among the cellular process terms, there were 168 genes involved in the cellular communityprokaryotes.

COG database annotations

COG is a database used for direct homologous classification of proteins. By comparing the amino acid sequences of sequenced genes with

those of the eggNOG database, the functions of these proteins can be predicted, and statistical functional classification can be conducted [24]. A total of 4,355 genes from Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 strain were annotated with COG annotation, accounting for 83.96% of the total number of genes (Figure 7). The number of genes with unknown functions was the highest with a total of 1,120 genes, accounting for 16.04% of the annotated genes. The functional classification of COGs related to heavy metal reduction was analyzed, and the results revealed that energy production and conversion, amino acid transport and metabolism, nucleotide transport and metabolism, coenzyme transport and metabolism, and inorganic ion transport and metabolism accounted for 275, 535, 114, 258, and 332 genes, respectively, representing 5.30%, 10.31%, 2.20%, 4.97%, and 6.40% of the total number of annotated genes.

Transporter classification database annotation

Microorganisms can counteract chromium toxicity through the active excretion of Cr(VI) and



- Channels/Pores
 Electrochemical Potential-driven Transporters
 Primary Active Transporters
- 4: Group Translocators
- 5: Transmembrane Electron Carriers
- 8: Accessory Factors Involved in Transport
- 9: Incompletely Characterized Transport Systems

Figure 8. TCDB functional annotation of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1 genes.

extracellular reductase with membrane transport proteins playing a pivotal role in this process [25]. The Transporter Classification Database (TCDB) was utilized to analyze the membrane transport protein classification system of Klebsiella spp. Shm-1. The results showed that a total of 1,092 genes from the Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 strain were annotated with TCDB annotation, accounting for 21.05% of the total number of genes. These functional categories of TCDB annotation included channels/pores (135 genes), electrochemical potential-driven transporters (307 genes), primary active transporters (428 genes), group translocators (77 genes), transmembrane electron carriers (22 genes), accessory factors involved in transport (26 genes), and incompletely characterized transport systems (97 genes) (Figure 8). The results indicated that Klebsiella spp. Shm-1 had a high diversity of primary active transporters, electrochemical potential-driven transporters, and channels/pores in TCDB, which provided great potential for Cr(VI) transport and reduction.

The whole genome DNA sequence of *Klebsiella* spp. Shm-1 was submitted to NCBI with the BioSample accession No. SAMN42391532.

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Availability of data

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