Introduction

Increased anthropogenic carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) emissions drive climate change and pose one of the major challenges of our century. $CO_2$ effects in the form of ocean acidification (OA) on the communities of marine microbial eukaryotes from the Timor Sea are barely understood.

Objectives

The study objective was to reveal effects of high $CO_2$ versus $in situ$ $CO_2$ seawater on the community composition of therein living marine microbial eukaryotes immediately and after 48 hours of treatment exposure.

Materials & methods

In a shipboard microcosm experiment, seawater from 65 m depth of the Timor Sea was acidified in bottles to $pH=7.6$ corresponding to a $pCO_2=1668 \mu$atm and compared to $in situ$ conditions at $pH=8.1$ and $pCO_2=463 \mu$atm (both $n=3$). After filtration and nucleic acid extraction from time zero and after 48 hours, Illumina sequencing of the V9 hypervariable region of 18S rRNA (gene) was used to study the eukaryotic community composition. In addition, chlorophyll a content, and the concentration of extracellular carbonic anhydrase, an enzyme with a role in concentrating $CO_2$, were measured.

Results

Down-regulation of a carbon concentrating mechanism within 48 hours occurred faster in the high $CO_2$ treatment. We detected significant suppressing effects by OA, compared to $in situ$ conditions on the eukaryotic operational taxonomic units (OTUs), including diatoms and haptophytes. These effects were often consistent between abundant (DNA-based) and active (cDNA-based) taxa after 48 hours, e.g. for the diatoms *Trieres chinensis* and *Stephanopyxis turris*, and also applied for OTUs with rel. abundance <0.01%. A bottle incubation effect aligned the abundance of abundant and active OTUs. It further allowed certain taxa to flourish and to study their response to the high $CO_2$ treatment.

Conclusion

The microbial eukaryotes showed some adaptation to the $CO_2$ treatment over time, but many OTUs were adversely affected by OA-driven seawater $pH$ changes. While effects on rare taxa are particularly prone to be overlooked, OA effects might fundamentally impact on the basis of marine biodiversity implicating unpredictable outcomes for food web functioning in a future ocean.

Global warming leads to permafrost thawing which stimulates microbial carbon turnover and the formation of greenhouse gases. Permafrost does not only warm and thaw on land but also on the Arctic shelf where submarine permafrost covers about three million km$^2$. Yet, very little is known about how microbial communities respond to warming and thawing of permafrost deep below the seafloor.

We studied microbial community abundance and composition in submarine permafrost relative to onshore permafrost with a focus on the microbial community response to long-term submarine permafrost warming and seawater penetration.

The microbial abundance as a measure of total cell counts and quantitative PCR, as well as community composition and diversity based on 16S rRNA Illumina sequencing were investigated in permafrost cores from two locations in the Siberian Laptev Sea, where permafrost had been subjected to submarine conditions for centuries to millennia. Molecular biological analyses were related to permafrost temperature, pore water composition, and paleo-climatic proxies in order to identify which of these factors control the response of permafrost microbial communities to submarine conditions.

The combination of centennial permafrost warming and seawater infiltration resulted in a loss both of microbial abundance and bacterial diversity. At the same time, the bacterial community of warmed permafrost without thaw was still determined by the environmental and climatic conditions at the time of sediment deposition rather than by the temperature increase over centuries. A stimulating effect of permafrost warming was reflected in an increased microbial abundance and in reduced amounts of substrate only millennia after sea water inundation.

In summary, despite the exposure to submarine conditions for centuries to millennia, the bacterial permafrost community generally resembled that of terrestrial permafrost without a clear influence on it due to submarine permafrost warming.
Arctic-alpine ecosystems show a high spatial heterogeneity, which is related to differences in elevation and microtopographic features like slopes, ridges and depressions. We hypothesize that this spatial variation supports different habitats for aerobic methanotrophic microorganisms due to changes in soil moisture and temperature regimes. We extracted DNA from 96 soil samples taken from two mountain regions in the Norwegian Scandes with strong gradients in micro-topography and elevation. Quantitative PCR and amplicon sequencing of the functional marker gene pmoA was used to investigate differences in methanotrophic abundance and community composition. To explore the effect of long-term temperature and soil moisture regimes on the methanotrophic communities, partial least square regression (PLSR) analysis was performed. First results indicate that the pmoA copy number decreases in depressions with increasing elevation, but this elevational trend was not observed within other micro-topographic locations. PLSR analysis showed that the main driver for variation in methanotrophic abundance was the long-term mean soil moisture, recorded over a period of five years. The methanotrophic community composition between sites was similarly affected by elevation and micro-topography (ANOSIM, R=0.28, P < 0.001 for both factors). Phylogenetic identification revealed that high abundant members (> 1% relative abundance) of the upland soil cluster (USC) α increased in relative abundance with elevation. Moreover, USC α OTUs were more abundant at ridges, while depressions were dominated by Cluster 5 and Methylocystis strains. PLSR with the community compositional data are ongoing to assess the relevance of soil factors (pH, organic carbon, nitrogen content), long-term temperature and soil moisture conditions on the methanotrophs in this ecosystem. Our data demonstrate that the distribution of methanotrophic bacteria is spatially very variable in an arctic-alpine ecosystem and suggest that soil moisture is likely a major driving factor for this pattern.

005-EMV
Extended-spectrum beta lactamase (ESBL)-producing E. coli released with manure and biogas plant digestates into the environment
O. E. Aigbeaka1, H. M. M. Khan1, *S. P. Glaeser1, P. Kämpfer1
1Justus Liebig University, Applied Microbiology, Giessen, Germany

Extended-spectrum beta lactamase (ESBL) producing Escherichia coli are a health care problem today. Intensive application of antibiotics in livestock increases the release of ESBL E. coli via manure into soil, ground and surface waters. Beside the direct application of manure as fertilizers on fields, manure is anaerobically digested in small scale biogas plants in Germany which should reduce the abundance of ESBL E. coli in digestates and subsequently their release to the environment if the digestate is used for fertilization. As part of the international JPI-EC-AMR collaborative project Antimicrobial Resistance Manure Intervention Strategies (ARMIS), we study the abundance and antibiotic resistance patterns of ESBL E. coli in both manure and biogas plant digestates by a cultivation approach. So far input and output samples of five German Biogas plants (four mesophilic and one thermophilic) were investigated. ESBL E. coli were cultured on TBX agar with 4 mg L-1 cephalosporins which was incubated for four hours at 37°C and 20 hours at 44°C. In addition a pre-enrichment was performed according to Schauss et al. (2015) to enhance the detection efficiency. ESBL E. coli were cultured by direct plating from manure and after pre-enrichment also form output material. Genomic fingerprinting showed the presence of the same genotypes in input and output samples indicating a transfer of ESBL E. coli through the biogas plants. The strains contained blaCTXM and blaTEM genes. Whether or not differences in the antimicrobial resistance pattern is caused by anaerobic digestion, has to be further investigated.

006-EMV
Dissemination of antibiotic residues, antibiotic resistant bacteria and antibiotic resistance genes through hospital wastewater – a weekly profile
*E. Sib1, C. Felder1, A. M. Voigt1, F. Lenz-Piet1, H. Färber1, M. Exner1, D. Skutlarek1, R. M. Schmithausen1
1University Clinic Bonn, Institute for Hygiene and Public Health, Bonn, Germany

Introduction
Bacteria and chemical pollutions are indicators for the ecological health of water bodies. In recent years antibiotic resistant bacteria, as well as antibiotic residues and antibiotic resistance genes have disseminated to surface waters. Those parameters play a crucial role in the healthcare system due to the life threatening risk multidrug resistant bacteria pose to humans.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to depict a weekly profile of antibiotic residues, antibiotic resistant bacteria and antibiotic resistance genes in wastewater of a maximum care hospital to monitor the dissemination of these parameters into the environment.

Materials & methods

In total 504 one hour mixed wastewater samples were taken to build a weekly profile of the researched clinic using an automated sampler. All water samples were analyzed for antibiotic residues, antibiotic resistant bacteria and antibiotic resistance genes. Quantitative analysis of 43 antibiotic residues was performed using LC-MS/MS. Resistance genes were examined using real time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR). Cultural analysis for multidrug resistant bacteria was performed using chromogenic selective agar plates (MRSA, VRE, ESBL) and morphological and physiological characteristics. The isolates were identified using MALDI-TOF MS and further characterized via microbroth dilution.

Results

The examined hospital wastewater contained residues of clinically important antibiotics, for example meropenem and vancomycin in varying concentrations. Further, relevant antibiotic resistance genes (carbapenemases) were detected throughout the whole sampling period. In addition, antibiotic resistant bacteria were identified in all water samples, including resistant strains of Pseudomonas aeruginosa, Enterobacter cloacae and Escherichia coli.

Conclusion

Hospital wastewater consists of high concentrations of clinically relevant antibiotic residues, highly resistant bacteria and high amounts of antibiotic resistance genes. To prevent the further dissemination and acquisition of resistance and to protect the health of society, a specific treatment of hospital wastewater is needed.

However, a standard method for susceptibility testing in drinking water analytics is still missing. The MALDI-TOF MS-based direct-on-target microdroplet growth assay (DOT-MGA) is a novel approach for rapid antibiotic susceptibility testing of bacteria and could become an alternative for testing microorganisms isolated from drinking water systems.

Objectives

We aimed to establish a DOT-MGA approach for rapid AST of Enterobacterales isolated from drinking water systems, using adapted growth conditions for these isolates.

Material and Methods

Isolates from drinking water systems were used. Overnight cultures were done on blood agar or yeast extract agar at 25°C or 35°C, respectively. Applying the new MBT FAST prototype kit (Bruker), DOT-MGA was performed with six clinically relevant Enterobacterales-active antibiotics at EUCAST breakpoint concentrations. In addition to cation-adjusted MH broth, nutrient broth (Oxoid) was used. Microdroplets of 6 µl were spotted in duplicates directly onto the spots of a MBT Biotarget 96 and incubated in a humidity chamber for 4.5, 8 and 24 h at 25°C or 35°C, respectively. Subsequently, medium was removed using absorbent pads and MBT FAST Matrix was added. Measurements were performed in duplicate using MBT FAST settings and spectra were evaluated with the MBT FAST prototype.

Results

Overall, best test performance was achieved using nutrient broth at 35°C. Comparing the results of the DOT-MGA with those obtained by the standard broth microdilution according to EUCAST after 4.5, 8 and 24 h incubation, categorical agreements of 94, 96 and 98%, respectively, with test validity of 92, 92 and 75% were observed.

Conclusion

This study indicated that rapid antibiotic susceptibility testing of Enterobacterales isolated from drinking water systems using the MALDI-TOF MS-based DOT-MGA is feasible and accurate within 4.5 h using special growth conditions. Standardization, improved spectrum evaluation and confirmation of this proof-of-principle study’s results are needed.

008-EMV

Consortium of Indigenous Endophytic Bacteria for Control of Fusarium Wilt disease (Fusarium oxysporum f.sp lycopersici) and Promote Growth and Yield of Tomato (Lycopersicum esculentum Mill.)

Y. Yanti1, W. Warnita2, H. Hamid3
1University, plant protection, Padang, Indonesia
2university, agrotechnology, Padang, Indonesia

Fusarium oxysporum f.sp lycopersici which causes wilt disease is one of serious detention in cultivating tomatoes which can cause losses up to 100%. Synthetic fungicides usage which usually used in controlling plant pathogens may caused resistance to these soil-borne pathogens, thus making it more difficult to control. Control by utilizing biological agents such as endophytic bacteria may become an alternative that can be developed. The purpose of this study was to acquire the best consortium from selected indigenous endophytic bacterial isolates that effectively control Fusarium oxysporum f.sp lycopersici and promote tomato growth and yields. This study was designed in experimental study using a completely randomized design. The treatment given was the introduction of indigenous endophyte bacteria consortium with 3 replications. The results obtained were by 6 consortia of compatible endophytic bacteria to be combined. The consortia 2, 4, 5 and 6 were the best consortia that effectively controlled Fusarium oxysporum f.sp lycopersici with incidence reduced
up to 100% and were able to increased tomato yield by fruit weight 53.60 gr / plant.

Keywords: Endophytic bacteria, Consortium, Fusarium wilt

009-DK MV
Applicability and performance of EUCAST’s rapid antibiotic susceptibility testing (RAST) on sterile body fluid in blood culture bottle
*J. K. Jasuja, S. Zimmermann, I. Burckhardt
1University Hospital Heidelberg, Department for Infectious Diseases, Heidelberg, Germany

Introduction:
It is proven that the inoculation of sterile body fluid in blood culture bottle is beneficial for isolating more significant pathogens. EUCAST’S RAST has yet only been evaluated for positive blood culture bottles, so it is still unclear if RAST is also applicable on sterile body fluids in blood culture media.

Objectives:
The objective of this study was to test the applicability of RAST on sterile body fluids in blood culture bottles and to evaluate its performance regarding category agreement and errors.

Materials and methods:
Positive blood culture bottles (BACTEC™ Aerobic, BACTEC™ Anaerobic, BACTEC™ PED) inoculated with sterile body fluid (e.g. joint fluid, ascites, dialysate) from patients were subcultured onto Columbia 5% SB agar, chocolate agar, MacConkey agar, Schaedler agar (if anaerobic) and Mueller-Hinton agar. On latter, six commonly used antibiotic discs were added (cefoxitin, ampicillin, vancomycin, pipercillin/tazobactam, meropenem and ciprofloxacin). Subculture and streaking was done in the semi-automatic part of total lab automation (TLA). Subcultures and RAST were imaged after 6h and MALDI-TOF MS was performed with 6h growth. Zone sizes were measured using the Reada Browser software of the TLA and interpreted according to RAST breakpoints for positive blood culture bottles (Version 1.0/1.1). MIC values were determined using VITEK2 panels for all isolates.

Results:
In the time period of November 2018 to August 2019 Staphylococcus aureus (n=143), Enterococcus spp. (n=72) and Escherichia coli (n=33) were the most frequent detected pathogens. Comparison of RAST and MIC results showed 5.6% of major errors for Enterococcus spp. in Ampicillin and 3.9% in Vancomycin. 7.7% of minor errors were found for E.coli. Very major errors were not found for any pathogen. 3 and 18 samples were found with area of technical uncertainty (ATU) in gram-positive cocci and E.coli, respectively. Category agreement between MIC values and RAST was 94.6%.

Conclusions:
Applicability and performance of RAST on sterile body fluid in blood culture bottle is promising and patients may benefit from the rapid procedure. Further investigation of ATU is recommended.

010-DK MV
MALDI-TOF MS-based optochin susceptibility testing for differentiation of Streptococcus pneumoniae from other Streptococcus mitis group streptococci
*J. D. Nix, E. A. Idelevich, A. Schlattmann, K. Sparbier, M. Kostrzewa, K. Becker
1University Hospital Münster, Institut of Medical Microbiology, Münster, Germany
2Bruker Daltonik GmbH, Bremen, Germany
3University Medicine Greifswald, Friedrich Loeffler-Institute of Medical Microbiology, Greifswald, Germany

Introduction:
Differentiation of Streptococcus pneumoniae from other S. mitis group streptococci (SMGS) using MALDI-TOF mass spectrometry (MS) is still challenging. For identification of S. pneumoniae, optochin susceptibility test (OST) by disk diffusion is one of the methods recommended by the WHO. Since MALDI-TOF MS has become standard for microbial identification, using this technology even for this purpose would simplify routine workflow.

Objectives:
We aimed to develop a novel MALDI-TOF MS-based OST for differentiation of S. pneumoniae from other SMGS using the recently introduced MALDI-TOF MS-based direct-on-target microdroplet growth assay (DOT-MGA).

Material and Methods:
For test development, reference strains and clinical isolates (n=13) were used. To define a provisional breakpoint (BP) for optochin susceptibility, MICs were determined by broth microdilution method according to CLSI. For DOT-MGA, bacterial suspensions in cation-adjusted MH broth with lysed horse blood were added with or without 2, 4 or 8 µg/mL optochin in duplicates directly onto the spots of a disposable MBT Biotarget (Bruker) as microdroplets of 6 µl. The inoculated targets were incubated for 24h at 35°C in the incubation chamber (MBT FAST Shuttle). Subsequently, medium was removed using the stamp device and 1 µl formic acid was added onto dried spots, before adding MBT FAST Matrix. Measurements were performed in duplicate using MBT FAST settings.

Results:
Optochin MICs for S. pneumoniae and for S. mitis /S. oralis were in range 0.25-0.5 µg/mL and 8-128 µg/mL, respectively. Provisional optochin BPs of 2, 4 and 8 µg/mL were tested. Applying the DOT-MGA, successful detection of growth control (MALDI Biotype score ≥1.7) was achieved in 100% of tests. 100% sensitivity and 100% specificity were achieved with all tested BP concentrations when Biotype score ≥1.7 was defined as optochin-resistant and score

Conclusion:
MALDI-TOF MS-based OST is a suitable method to distinguish pneumococci from viridans streptococci. Standardization, automated spectrum evaluation and confirmation of this proof-of-principle study’s results in further studies are needed.

011-DK MV
Automated antimicrobial susceptibility testing of common gram-negative pathogens – How exact are commercial systems?
*J. Dick, M. Marshai, U. Schoppemeier, S. Peter
1University Hospital Tübingen, Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hygiene, Tübingen, Germany

Introduction: Antimicrobial susceptibility testing (AST) is one of the key challenges of clinical microbiology. Automated
systems are commonly used for high-throughput AST in clinical laboratories. Compared to broth and/or agar dilution tests as reference method, automated systems facilitate AST in a standardized setting while requiring less personnel resources and are able to provide results in shorter time courses. However, in terms of minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) determination, these systems are regarded as inferior and thus reporting of MICs is controversial.

Objectives: Compare the susceptibility testing of clinically relevant gram-negative bacteria in automated AST systems of three different common manufacturers (Beckman Coulter, BD and bioMérieux) with broth microdilution tests by MERLIN or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) for molecular resistance determinants.

Methods: A total of 230 strains of Enterobacterales and 50 strains of Pseudomonas aeruginosa were tested for categorial agreement applying EUCAST interpretative criteria, and essential agreement (MIC ± one 2-log level range). For Enterobacterales, 11 antimicrobial substances, for P. aeruginosa 8 substances, respectively, were compared to broth microdilution test results. Additionally, in carbapenemase producing organisms (CPO) beta-lactam susceptibility results were compared to molecular resistance determinants.

Results: The overall agreement for all systems with the reference method was >90%, which met the criteria of the ISO 20776:2:2007 standard. Major differences appeared in "soft criteria": hands-on time and time-to-result differed considerably among AST devices. Agreement rates depended on substance and microorganism rather than on manufacturer or method.

Conclusion: Automated AST results delivered MICs more rapidly than the reference method; notably, fast results did not equal less accurate results for the majority of tested substances against gram-negative pathogens.

012-DKMV
Tick-borne encephalitis virus (TBEV) non-structural protein (NS1) IgG ELISA differentiating infection vs. vaccination antibody responses.

Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is an important central nervous system (CNS) infection in Europe and Asia caused by the tick-borne encephalitis virus (TBEV). It is a flavivirus belonging to the tick-borne group. Effective vaccines against TBE are available in the affected countries. Diagnosing TBE is challenging due to cross-reactive antibodies between different viruses of the genus Flavivirus, family Flaviviridae. Furthermore, due to the increasing vaccination rate against TBEV differentiation between infection-induced and vaccine-induced antibodies can be difficult and in many cases impossible. We present a new approach to detect antibodies against the TBEV non-structural protein 1 (NS1) as a diagnostic marker, which is exclusively indicative for virus replication in natural infection on the basis of an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) A total of 188 anonymized serum samples from the National Consultant Laboratory for TBEV were included in our study. The test was validated according to the European Laboratory Norm DIN EN ISO 15189 for diagnostic use. The enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) for the detection of TBEV NS1 specific IgG class antibodies reached a sensitivity of >94% and a specificity of >93% in broadly cross-reacting sera from patients with vaccinations against flaviviral diseases and single or multiple flavivirus infections. The detection of anti-NS1 antibodies is feasible and allows a reliable differentiation between different flavivirus infections and between TBEV infection versus TBE vaccination.

013-DKMV
False elevated minimal inhibitory concentrations for colistin due to residual detergent in re-used plastic ware

Introduction

Because of the rise of multidrug-resistant Gram-negative bacteria, susceptibility test results for colistin gain increasing importance. Broth microdilution is the reference method and warnings against the use of automated systems and gradient tests due to false susceptible results exist.

Objectives

Minimal inhibitory concentrations (MIC) for colistin measured by using commercial (E1-099-100) and customized (E1-167-100) MICRONAUT plates (Merlin, Bornheim-Hersel, Germany) were compared to test results obtained according to ISO 20776:1:2019 by the German National Reference Centre for Multidrug-resistant Gram-negative Bacteria.

Material and Methods

63 strains of multidrug-resistant Gram-negative bacteria (57 Enterobacterales, 5 Pseudomonas aeruginosa, 1 Acinetobacter baumannii complex) were included. All Enterobacterales and A. baumannii complex isolates were shown to be carbapenemase producers.

Results

65% (41/63) of colistin MIC results differed by a maximum of one two-fold dilution step. 17% (7/41) of these were clinically resistant. In 32% (20/63) the MIC measured using MICRONAUT plates was between two to seven two-fold dilution steps too high what led in 90% (18/20) to a categorical error. A thorough investigation yielded that the false-resistant results were not due to the MICRONAUT plates per se, but caused by residual detergent in re-used plastic ware.

Conclusion

Our results favor the application of single-use plastic ware for colistin MIC testing.

014-DKMV
Synergism of ampicillin, gentamicin, ceftriaxone and ceftriaxone against *Enterococcus faecalis* assessed *in vivo* using the *Galleria mellonella* infection model

"L. Thieme1, A. Hartung1, O. Makarewicz2, M. W. Pletz1
1Jena University Hospital, Institute for Infectious Diseases and Infection Control, Jena, Germany

Introduction: *Enterococcus faecalis* is the third leading pathogen causing infective endocarditis (IE). Ongoing high patient mortality rates have prompted the emergence of novel double β-lactam therapies besides aminoglycoside-containing regimes. The *G. mellonella* infection model has shown increasing popularity among the non-mammalian infection models in the last years, with the main advantages being free of ethical constraints and low resource-consuming.

Objectives: To compare the *in vitro* and *in vivo* efficiency, we have transferred a partial checkerboard set up of ampicillin+gentamicin, ampicillin+ceftaximoxone and ampicillin+ceftriazone against *E. faecalis* into the *Galleria mellonella* larvae infection model.

Materials and methods: Differentiation of synergistic from additive interactions was based on the evaluation of larval survival, haemolymph CFU quantity and a workgroup-internal pathology score. One-time and triple-dosing schemes based on the half-life of ampicillin were applied. Pharmacokinetic data of the antibiotics in the larvae were determined via agar plate diffusion assays.

Results: Ampicillin and ceftriaxone synergized in a strain-dependent manner in the larvae under both dosing regimens, while the other two combinations showed additive effects. Adaptation of the dosing interval to the half-life of ampicillin led to an increased efficiency of the mono and combined antibiotics, but hampered the determination of synergistic effects. *G. mellonella* larvae allowed for a rapid, low-cost and reproducible analysis of synergistic effects of antimicrobials in an *in vitro* setting, yet not all synergistic effects observed *in vitro* could be observed in the larvae.

Conclusion: Our results suggest superior action of ampicillin plus ceftriaxone for the treatment of high-inoculum enterococcal infections for at least some strains, but question the benefit of the current standard gentamicin combination treatment with its high side effect profile compared to monotherapy.

LFA detects GM in serum and BALF in one hour without the need for batch testing. To compare the performance of the LFA with the PlateliaTM *Aspergillus* Ag EIA (Asp-EIA) we have conducted a study on sera from patients after allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT).

Methods: All patients that underwent HSCT *during a one year period were enrolled*. Patients with IA were classified according to the EORTC/MSG 2008 guidelines. The LFA were analyzed with a digital reader provided by the manufacturer.

Results: A total of 547 sera from 101 patients after HSCT were tested. By the end of hospitalization one proven, 10 probable and 19 possible IA cases were diagnosed. The sensitivity and specificity of a single positive LFA for proven and probable IA were 80% and 57%, respectively. Repeat testing of the LFA-positive serum samples revealed that the positive result was reproducible in only 58% of samples. The sensitivity and specificity of a reproducibly positive LFA for proven and probable IA were 80% and 77%, respectively.

The Asp-EIA and the LFA are both detecting GM. To directly compare the two tests the EORTC/MSG-classification was performed with only culture and (1–3)-β-D-glucan as mycological criteria. In this case one proven, 8 probable and 21 possible IA cases were diagnosed. The sensitivity and specificity of a reproducibly positive GM-test for proven and probable IA were 22% and 97% for the EIA and 78% and 70% for the LFA, respectively. The GM levels determined by both tests correlated significantly.

Conclusions: The LFA shows a superior sensitivity compared to the Asp-EIA. Handling of the LFA is easy and time to result is below 60 min. However, it is highly recommended to use a digital reading device and to repeat testing in case of positive results.

016-DKMV
Comparison of serologic biomarkers of invasive aspergillosis: evaluation of galactomannan, β-1,3-D-glucan, and galactomannoprotein antigen testing.

1Max von Pettenkofer-Institut, Lehrstuhl für Med. Mikrobiologie und Krankenhaushygience, München, Germany
2Klinikum der Universität München, Sektion Klinische Infektiologie, München, Germany
3Klinikum der Universität München, Med. Klinik und Polikklinik 3, München, Germany
4Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Institut für Pathologie, München, Germany
5Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, Institut für Hygiene und Mikrobiologie, Würzburg, Germany

Invasive aspergillosis (IA) is an invasive fungal infection caused by *Aspergillus* species and represents a major cause of morbidity and mortality in patients with impaired immunological function. A crucial determinant for survival is early diagnosis followed by targeted therapy. In this retrospective study, we evaluated the performance of two newly available serologic tests and compared their performance with the established and widely used galactomannan ELISA (GM; Bio-Rad Laboratories) representing the gold standard of serologic diagnosis.

Sera of 45 / 4 and 47 / 7 cases of proven / probable invasive aspergillosis were analyzed with the galactomannoprotein antigen ELISA (GP; Euroimmun Medizinische Labordiagnostika) and the Wako β-1,3-D-glucan test (BDG; Fujifilm Wako Chemicals Europe), respectively. 156 and 154

015-DKMV
Performance of the sōna *Aspergillus* Galactomannan Lateral Flow Assay from serum samples for the diagnosis of Invasive Aspergillosis in Patients after allogeneic Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation

T. Erb1, T. Held2, R. Meyer1, E. Kotter1, H. Bertz2, J. Held1
1Universitätsklinik Erlangen, Mikrobiologisches Institut, Erlangen, Germany
2Schön Klinik, Anästhesie & Intensivmedizin, Fürth, Germany
3University Medical Centre Freiburg, Department of Diagnostic Radiology, Freiburg, Germany
4University Medical Centre Freiburg, Department of Haematology/Oncology, Freiburg, Germany

Question: One cornerstone for the diagnosis of Invasive Aspergillosis (IA) is the detection of galactomannan (GM). So far, enzyme immunoassays (EIA) are used for this purpose but they are usually not performed daily resulting in an undesired delay of test results. Immunochromatographic assays, like the sōna *Aspergillus* Galactomannan Lateral Flow Assay (LFA), may overcome this disadvantage. The
sensitivities of both ELISAs were found to be 40% in the proven IA cases. Including all available samples of the period of ±7 days GM and GP seropositivity was detected in 47% and 56% of proven IA patients. Both ELISAs are characterized by high specificity (GM: 99%, GP: 96%). BDG testing was less specific (92% vs. 99%) but more sensitive (57% vs. 40%) compared to GM testing. Analysis of all sera of the ±7 days subgroup resulted in increased per case sensitivities of 47% (GM) and 68% (BDG) in the proven IA population. In cases of concordant positivity (24 cases of proven/probable IA), BDG was significantly more often positive before GM (11 cases vs. one case), with a median temporal lead of nine days.

Our results demonstrate that the performance of the novel GP ELISA is similar to the Plateletia GM ELISA. The BDG assay was found to be less specific. However, higher sensitivity and significantly earlier positivity of BDG testing back its usage as a diagnostic tool in cases of suspected IA. The findings underline the importance of repeated Aspergillus antigen testing in patients at risk for IA.

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**018-MBTV**

**Construction of in vivo cascades for the sustainable production of monomers**

*S. Schäfer*, R. Karande*, A. Schmid†, B. Bühler†

†Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Solar Materials, Leipzig, Germany

**Introduction**

Polymers play an important role in our daily lives and have a high demand on the scale of megatons per year. The industrial production of polymer building blocks such as ε-caprolactone (ε-CL) is associated with critical environmental issues such as the generation of toxic waste and high energy consumption. Consequently, there is a demand for more eco-efficient and sustainable production routes.

**Objectives**

The goal of our research is the development of a platform organism that is able to produce precursors for polymers such as polycaprolactone or nylon 6.

**Material and Methods**

In order to develop a biotransformation of cyclohexane to these monomers, enzymes derived from the cyclohexane mineralizer *Acidovorax sp. CHX-100* were heterologously expressed in *Pseudomonas taiwanensis* VLB120. Different plasmid-based constructs were generated and modified to prevent the accumulation of intermediate products while retaining a high catalytic activity.

**Results**

A biocatalytic cascade based on a cytochrome P450 monoxygenase (CYP), a cyclohexanol dehydrogenase (CDH), a Baeyer-Villiger-monoxygenase (BVMO) was constructed for ε-CL synthesis from cyclohexane and optionally was amended by a lactonase to end up with the hydrolyzed precursor 6-hydroxyhexanoic acid (6OH-HA).

The construction of an expression plasmid with one operon harboring the first three enzymes resulted in a decrease of 37% in CDW. However, this activity was not stable as cyclohexanol, which inhibits the BVMO accumulated with time. The introduction of a second promoter could completely circumvent this problem. Intrinsic hydrolases of *P. taiwanensis* constituted another issue so that both ε-CL and 6OH-HA accumulated as products. The introduction of a forth enzyme, a highly active lactonase, could completely

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**017-MBTV**

**Heterologous production of the agrochemical pamamycin in metabolically engineered *Streptomyces albus* J1074/R2**

J. Stegmüller, L. Gläser, M. Kuhl, Y. Rebets, C. Rücker, J. Kalinowski, A. Luzhetskyi, C. Wittmann

Institute of Systems Biotechnology, Saarland University, Saarbrücken, Germany

Helmholtz-Institute for Pharmaceutical Research Saarland, Saarbrücken, Germany

Center for Biotechnology, Bielefeld University, Bielefeld, Germany

**Introduction:** *Streptomycetes*, mycelium forming soil bacteria, provide a range of industrially important natural polyketides [1]. A prominent example are pamamycins, discovered as regulators of cellular morphology and aerial mycelium formation in *S. alboniger* [2]. Recent studies revealed antibacterial activity of different pamamycin derivatives, which makes them promising for applications in the health and the agricultural industry [1].

**Objective:** In this work, the pamamycin producer *S. albus* J1074/R2 was characterized on the systems level to investigate the complex interplay between nutrient supply, morphology and production performance.

**Materials & Methods:** *S. albus* J1074/R2 was analyzed under a variety of growth conditions by metabolomics and transcriptomics to gain a detailed insight into the molecular mechanisms. Hereby, we studied the effect of medium supplements and talc microparticles to tailor the cellular morphology of the strain.

**Results:** The studies revealed a close link between morphology and pamamycin production. Upon supplementation with talc, *S. albus* J1074/R2 formed much smaller pellets and almost threefold more pamamycin, as compared to the control. This was accompanied by a global rearrangement of gene expression, including a strong activation of the pamamycin gene clusters. In addition, intracellular CoA-thioester pools were affected, which shifted the spectrum of the formed pamamycin derivatives to higher weight variants. Moreover, the nutrient status affected production, which was again reflected by global changes in transcriptome and metabolome. The optimized set-up, provided pamamycin at a high titer of 50 mg L⁻¹.

**Conclusion:** Pamamycin production in recombinant *S. albus* was improved. Systems biology analysis provides valuable insights for further strain improvement, using metabolic engineering.

**Acknowledgements:** This work was funded by the BMBF grant "MyBio" (FKZ 031B034A)


push the cascade towards 6-OH HA with a high activity of 45 U GlcW\(^-1\).}

**Conclusions**

The design of biocatalytic cascades requires knowledge on the in vivo (co-)operation of the involved enzymes, which is a prerequisite to rationally engineer a streamlined reaction. We could show that *P. taiwanensis* can be used as a platform organism to efficiently synthesize monomers.

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**019-MBTV**

**Metabolic Engineering of Corynebacterium glutamicum** for Production of UDP-N-acetylglucosamine

*C. Desiderato\(^1\)*, R. Gaußmann\(^1\), D. Rados\(^2\), A. Schwenkner\(^2\), G. M. Seibold\(^1\), H. Link\(^2\), B. Eikmanns\(^2\)

\(^1\)Ulm University, Institute of Microbiology and Biotechnology, Ulm, Germany

\(^2\)Max Planck Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Marburg, Germany

Uridine diphosphate-N-acetylglucosamine (UDP-GlcNAc) is an acetylated aminosugar nucleotide which serves as precursor in bacterial cell wall synthesis and is involved in glycosylation reactions. Nucleotide sugars are currently either produced chemically or in vitro by enzyme cascades. However, in vitro synthesis requires costly substrates and in most cases purified enzymes. An alternative way would be the microbial production of nucleotide sugars from cheap substrates. In this study, we aim to engineer the non-pathogenic, Gram-positive soil bacterium *Corynebacterium glutamicum* as host for UDP-GlcNAc production.

To increase UDP-GlcNAc formation, the native glmS, glmI, and glmM genes of *E. coli*, encoding the enzymes for UDP-GlcNAc synthesis from fructose-6-phosphate, were overexpressed in different combinations and on different plasmids in *C. glutamicum* GRS43 [1], which lacks among others the nagB gene for glucosamine degradation. The recombinant strains were cultivated in CGXII minimal medium supplemented with glucose as sole carbon source. Expression of the respective genes was examined by activity assays or Western blot analysis. UDP-GlcNAc concentrations were determined by LC-MS/MS analysis.

While the reference strain *C. glutamicum* GlcNCg1 with an empty plasmid in the exponential growth phase contained intracellularly only about 0.25 mM UDP-GlcNAc, the best engineered strain GlcNCg4 accumulated around 14 mM UDP-GlcNAc. The extracellular concentrations in the exponential growth phase did not exceed 2 mg/L. In the stationary phase, about 60 mg UDP-GlcNAc/L were observed extracellularly with strain GlcNCg4, indicating the potential of *C. glutamicum* to produce the activated sugar.

We here show UDP-GlcNAc production from glucose with *C. glutamicum* and its release into the culture medium. To our knowledge, the observed levels are the highest obtained with microbial hosts, emphasizing the potential of *C. glutamicum* as suitable platform for activated sugar production.


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**020-MBTV**

**Valorization of lignin-derivated aromatics using metabolically engineered Corynebacterium glutamicum**

*J. Becker\(^1\), M. Kuhl\(^1\), M. Kohlstedt\(^1\), C. Wittmann\(^1\)

\(^1\)Universität des Saarlandes, Institut für Systembiotechnologie, Saarbrücken, Germany

Introduction: As integral constituent of terrestrial plants, lignin is the second most abundant polymer on earth. Every year, 140 million tons of lignin accumulate as waste product by the plant processing industry and are mainly burned due to the lack of alternative valorization routes [1]. Lignin is hence the most underutilized biobased renewable today.

Objectives: *Corynebacterium glutamicum* is a very well-known industrial producer [2] and is able to degrade a large spectrum of aromatic compounds [3]. Here, *C. glutamicum*

Bromination of L-tryptophan in a fermentative process with Corynebacterium glutamicum

*K. H. Veldmann\(^1\), S. Dachwitz\(^2\), J. M. Risse\(^3\), J. H. Lee\(^4\), N. Sewald\(^5\)

\(^1\)University Bielefeld, Genetics of Prokaryotes, Bielefeld, Germany

\(^2\)University Bielefeld, Organic and Bioorganic Chemistry, Bielefeld, Germany

\(^3\)University Bielefeld, Fermentation Technology, Bielefeld, Germany

\(^4\)Kyungsung University, Major in Food Science & Biotechnology, Busan, South Korea

Brominated compounds such as 7-bromo-L-tryptophan (7-Br-Trp) occur in Nature. Many synthetic and natural brominated compounds have applications in the agriculture, food and pharmaceutical industries, for example, the 20S-proteasome inhibitor TMC-95A that may be derived from 7-Br-Trp [1]. Mild halogenation by cross-linked enzyme aggregates containing FADH-dependent halogenase, NADH-dependent flavin reductase, and alcohol dehydrogenase [2] as well as by fermentation with recombinant *Corynebacterium glutamicum* expressing the genes for the FADH-dependent halogenase RebH and the NADH-dependent flavin reductase RebF from Lechevalieria aerocolonigenes [3] have recently been developed as green alternatives to more hazardous chemical routes. In this study, the fermentative production of 7-Br-Trp was established. The fermentative process employs an L-tryptophan producing *C. glutamicum* strain [4] expressing rebH and rebF from *L. aerocolonigenes* for halogenation and is based on glucose, ammonium and sodium bromide. *C. glutamicum* tolerated high sodium bromide concentrations, but its growth rate was reduced to half-maximal at 0.09 g L\(^{-1}\) 7-Br-Trp. This may be, at least in part, due to inhibition of anthranilate phosphoribosyltransferase by 7-Br-Trp since anthranilate phosphoribosyltransferase activity in crude extracts was half-maximal at about 0.03 g L\(^{-1}\) 7-Br-Trp. Fermentative production of 7-Br-Trp by recombinant *C. glutamicum* was scaled up to a working volume of 2 L and operated in batch and fed-batch mode. The titers were increased from batch fermentation in CGXII minimal medium with 0.3 g L\(^{-1}\) 7-Br-Trp to fed-batch fermentation in HSG complex medium, where up to 1.2 g L\(^{-1}\) 7-Br-Trp were obtained. The product isolated from the culture broth was characterized by NMR and LC-MS and shown to be 7-Br-Trp.


should be engineered to convert aromatics into cis,cis-muconate (MA), a precursor of substantial value to derive commercial chemicals such as adipate and terephthalate [3].

Materials & Methods: The b-keto adipate pathway for aromatic catabolism was disrupted downstream of MA by deletion of catB, encoding muconate cycloisomerase, and the resulting strain was cultivated with glucose as growth substrate and different aromatics as biotransformation substrates.

Results: The strain was able to convert different aromatic compounds into MA with a molar yield of 100%. The production efficiency was substantially improved by overexpression of catA, encoding catechol 1,2-dioxygenase, the key enzyme forming MA. In a fed-batch process, the optimized MA-2 strain accumulated 85 g L⁻¹ MA from catechol with a volumetric productivity of 2.4 g L⁻¹ h⁻¹ [3]. The strain was also used to produce MA from depolymerized softwood lignin.

Conclusion: Our findings open the door to valorize lignin by metabolic engineering of C. glutamicum.

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References:

022-MBTV
The author has not agreed to a publication.

023-MBTV
Design of a H₂-driven enzymatic cascade for the synthesis of methylated N-heterocycles
A. Al-Shameri 1, N. Borlinghaus 2, L. Weinmann 2, P. Scheller 2, B. Nestl 2, L. Lauterbach 1
1 Technische Universität Berlin, Institut für Chemie, Berlin, Germany
2 Universität Stuttgart, Institute of Biochemistry and Technical Biochemistry, Stuttgart, Germany

Introduction:
N-heterocycles are valuable precursors for the synthesis of various pharmaceuticals [1]. Up to date, only a few chemical and biological strategies exist for the selective synthesis of saturated N-heterocycles.

Objectives:
Our aims are the design of a synthetic enzymatic cascade for the H₂-driven production of methylated N-heterocycles and understanding of the interplay between the individual oxidoreductases.

Materials & methods:

We designed an enzymatic cascade to synthesis methylated N-heterocycles consists of an engineered putrescine oxidase (PuO [E2023E]) [2], an imine reductase (IRED) [3] and a NADP⁺- reducing hydrogenase derivative (SH) from Ralstonia eutropha [4]. The O₂-dependent PuO [E2023E] oxidizes diamines to the corresponding imines, which are subsequently reduced by the NADPH-dependent IRED to the saturated N-heterocycles. The O₂-tolerant SH derivative catalyses the H₂-driven recycling of NADPH [4].

Results:
Substituted pyrrolidines and piperidines were obtained with up to 97% product formation in a one-pot reaction directly from the corresponding diamine substrates. The formation of up to 93% ee gave insights into the specificity and selectivity of the putrescine oxidase. The H₂-driven NADPH regeneration by the SH derivative was well sufficient and surpassed the commonly used glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase system with no by-product formation and 100% atom efficiency [2].

Conclusion:
In conclusion, we have developed an enzymatic cascade reaction, allowing access to pyrrolidine and piperidine heterocycles from substituted diamines. The described enzymatic cascade avoids the consumption of any organic solvents or toxic compounds demonstrating the sustainability and greenness of this approach.

References:

024-MBTV
Comparative evaluation of expression modules for recombinant biosurfactant-production by Pseudomonas putida
S. Kubicki 1, I. Bato 2, R. Weihmann 1, S. Linden 1, A. Loeschcke 1, T. Drepper 1, T. Tiso 2, L. M. Blank 2, K. E. Jaeger 1, 3, *S. Thies 1
1 Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf, Institute of Molecular Enzyme Technology, Juelich, Germany
2 RWTH Aachen University, Institute of Applied Microbiology iAMB, Aachen, Germany
3 Forschungszentrum Jülich, Institute of Bio- and Geosciences IBG 1: Biotechnology, Jülich, Germany

The construction of recombinant strains is an important strategy for the production of diverse natural products and thus represents a key element of a biobased economy. To this end, sufficient expression levels of biosynthetic gene clusters have to be achieved. Pseudomonas putida has emerged as a promising platform in this context with several functional expression tools available. However, comparative studies are largely lacking. Here, we compared different inducible expression systems in P. putida KT2440 with rhamnolipids as target compounds which are valuable biosurfactants with potential applications in cosmetics, agriculture, food, and pharmaceuticals.
We have used an efficient system for transfer and expression of biosynthetic modules named yTREXTn7 to establish the respective biosynthetic pathway within the host. This system features site-specific chromosomal integration to allow a comparative evaluation of different modules in terms of expression strength by measuring fluorescence and product accumulation as determined by colorimetry and HPLC.

The modular architecture of yTREXTn7 allows the straightforward exchange of bricks like cargo modules and regulatory elements. The cargo modules applied here contain rhamnolipid biosynthesis genes obtained from various organisms in transcriptional fusion with an expression reporter. In total, 16 stable production strains were constructed by implementation of different modules. Highest product titers and reporter outputs were obtained using a salicylate-responsive expression module with a yield of up to 1 g/L of *P. aeruginosa* type monorhamnolipids after 24 h at lab-scale cultivation. This was in line with the, among all strains, fastest increase of the reporter signal after induction. The optimal inducer concentration was determined to be 2 mM. We also developed a novel colorimetric assay for a fast assessment of rhamnolipid levels.

In summary, we identified efficient biosynthesis modules for the production of rhamnolipids with a modular construction of the expression cassette allowing for the addition of further bricks to enhance the productivity, such as encode genes needed for precursor supply.

025-GIMPV
Identification of antibiotics that do not cause Shiga-toxin mediated renal disease in *C. rodentium* *qstx2dact-*infected mice


027-GIMPV
The fate of phytate in the gut: myo-inositol degradation by *Salmonella* Typhimurium


References:


Small non-coding RNAs (sRNAs) are important modulators of post-transcriptional gene regulation in a broad range of bacterial species which regulate both physiological and virulence pathways. The discovery of these post-transcriptional regulatory networks has added a new layer of complexity to gene regulation in bacteria. It is now well established that non-coding RNA regulators modulate mRNA translation and stability in a wide range of bacteria, however, in C. difficile relevant RNA-binding proteins and central sRNAs are still unexplored.

We have combined dRNA-seq based annotation of sRNA candidates with density-gradient centrifugation of native cell lysates coupled to RNA-sequencing and LC-MS/MS of gradient fractions (Grad-seq) to identify functional non-coding transcripts and predict their associated RNA-binding proteins in C. difficile.

Our analyses have identified a spectrum of sRNA players that associate with the global RBP Hfq and other novel RNA-binding protein candidates. While Hfq functions have been intensively studied in many gram-negative bacteria, its role in gram-positive bacteria, and especially in C. difficile, remains elusive.

We conclude, our discovery of a wide spectrum of noncoding RNA molecules that associate with different RNA-binding proteins suggests the existence of a rich layer of post-transcriptional control in C. difficile.

Conclusions: Isolation of therapeutic bacteriophages against carbapenem-resistant A. baumannii outbreak isolate yielded five additional bacteriophages. Although these bacteriophages were able to lyse nearly all host cells, the carbapenem-resistant A. baumannii strain developed some resistant colonies. Bacteriophages isolated against these previously resistant bacteria were unable to lyse the original host strains.

Although the spectrum of bacteriophages against A. baumannii seems to be narrowly restricted, the isolation of phages seems feasible which specifically target multidrug-resistant isolates. Phage cocktails might be able to prevent the emergence of multidrug-resistant strains, especially after further modification of the host specificity of already isolated bacteriophages.

**Methods:** The recovered phages were characterized in their phenotypic (host range, plaque formation, TEM) and genotypic properties (WGS) to determine their potential for the treatment of Pseudomonas spp. bacteria.

**Results:** In general, all recovered phages exhibited a highly restricted host range, which is limited to the species P. aeruginosa. However, the spectrum and the number of lysed isolates vary substantially, and provide thus a good basis for the development of a phage cocktail with broad activity. Overall, the phages were shown to be stable under a wide range of pH and temperature conditions. On the basis of their virion morphology, the phages were allocated to different groups of Pseudomonas phages. WGS and bioinformatics analyses revealed detailed information on their phylogenetic relationship to different virus-genera. Furthermore, sequence analyses indicated that the recovered phages are suitable for therapeutic issues as they did not carry antimicrobial resistance and/or virulence determinants.

**Conclusions:** On the basis of the prevailing results, lytic phages can be used to combat P. aeruginosa with high efficacy. However, in order to develop a broad active and highly efficient phage compound that prevents development...
of phage resistant bacterial isolates, the cocktails need to be carefully composed.

031-VPV
Go with the Flow: Quantifying the Waterborne Transport of Phages in a Soil Matrix
*X. You*, R. Kallies1, K. Hild1, A. Hildebrandt1,2, H. Harms1, A. Chatzinotas1, L. Y. Wick1
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany
2Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Computational Hydrosystems, Leipzig, Germany
3Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Institute of Geoscience, Jena, Germany
4German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv), Leipzig, Germany

Background:
Phages (i.e. viruses that infect bacteria) have been considered as good tracers for the hydrological transport of colloids and (pathogenic) viruses. They are typically quantified as total virus particles or plaque forming units (PFU) of infectious phages. Little, however, is known about the transport of phages in soil as interactions with heterogeneous soil matrices may hamper their transport and infectivity, and thus have effects on soil microbial ecosystem functioning.

Objectives:
Here we quantified waterborne transport of phages in laboratory soil columns and evaluated its effects on the specific infectivity of phages. The specific infectivity is defined by the ratio of total particle to PFU and is a measure for the minimum particle numbers needed to create a single infection.

Methods:
Three lytic phages of different morphology and physicochemical surface properties (i.e. hydrophobic *E. coli* phage T4 and the hydrophilic marine *Pseudoalteromonas* phage HS2 and HM1) were applied in saturated laboratory soil columns. Breakthrough of infective and total phages was quantified by PFU and quantitative PCR (qPCR) in the column effluents and compared to breakthrough of non-reactive bromide and chloride tracers.

Results:
We found significant breakthrough of all phages in soil filled saturated columns. Infective phages were retained in a descending order of HM1 (61%), HS2 (30%) and T4 (24%). qPCR quantification however revealed even more significant retention of total particles for all phages and pointed at a clear reduction of the specific infectivity relative to the influents. All phages showed faster breakthrough through soil than non-reactive tracers.

Conclusions:
Our data suggest that phages are efficiently retained by soil matrices with retention extents depending on the phage properties. Transport decreased the specific infectivity of the phages (i.e. increased relative fractions of infective phages) in the effluents pointing at an increased infection hazard for host bacteria. Due to their absence in terrestrial systems and their high PFU-based recoveries, marine phages can be considered as good tracers to assess viral transport in soil.

032-VPV
The viral community along the Holtemme River
*R. Kallies*, G. Christian2, A. Chatzinotas1
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Department of Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany
2University of Vienna, Department of Limnology and Bio-Oceanography, Vienna, Austria

1. Introduction
Rivers carry water and nutrients, act as drainage channels for surface water and serve as habitat and food source for many earth’s organisms. Due to the increasing pressure from urbanisation and intensified agriculture, many rivers have been changing; stressors acting alone or simultaneously. These changes influence population dynamics and the diversity of river organisms, among them also microorganisms. Viruses are one key factor for microorganism mortality, drive diversification and evolution through gene transfer and are key contributors to the mineralization of nutrients.

2. Objectives
The objectives of this study were to: 1) identify viruses present along a 40 km Holtemme river stretch and 2) determine environmental factors that may influence virus community structure.

3. Materials & methods
Thirteen sampling sites were selected along the Holtemme River, a 48 km long river that starts in the Harz Mountains, Germany. Sampling sites were chosen to reflect different influences, such as natural environment, waste water treatment plants (WWTP), factories, agriculture and restored waters. Water was collected to count virus particle abundancies using flow cytometry and to extract DNA for viral metagenome analysis. Sequencing libraries were prepared from both, random amplified DNA and using the NEBNext Ultra II FS technology.

4. Results
The number of virus particles increased over the course of the river reaching peaks at WWTP introductions. Viral communities were dominated by novel sequences and members of the *Caudovirales* order and *Microviridae* family followed by insect- and plant-specific viral sequences. Highest diversity of viral sequences was found in urban areas. Viral sequence communities clustered according to their origin from natural, urban or agricultural sites demonstrating the anthropogenic impact on viral communities in this river.

5. Conclusion
Our results provide potentially valuable data for assessing spatial dynamics of river viral communities in the context of anthropogenic stress and will further help to understand how environmental factors affect virus communities in this river system.
033-VPV

Genome-informed microscopy reveals viral infections of uncultivated archaea in a terrestrial subsurface aquifer

V. Turzyński1, J. Rahlf2, C. Moraru2, A. J. Probst1
1University Duisburg Essen, Institute for Environmental Microbiology and Biotechnology - Aquatic Microbial Ecology, Essen, Germany
2Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Institute for Chemistry and Biology of the Marine Environment, Oldenburg, Germany

Introduction: Candidatus Altichaeaeum hamiconexum forms nearly pure biofilms in terrestrial subsurface aquifers (up to 95% of cells) and has an autotrophic metabolism, thus heavily impacts carbon cycling in these environments. Microbial interactions of Ca. A. hamiconexum with bacteria and symbiosis with another uncultivated archaeon are known, yet archaeal viruses infecting Ca. A. hamiconexum and their subsequent impact on the ecosystem’s food web remain uncertain.

Objectives: Here, we show that Ca. A. hamiconexum is a frequent target of a previously unknown putative archaeal virus.

Material & Methods: Putative viral infections on Ca. A. hamiconexum cells were analysed by genome-informed microscopy, based on a modified fluorescence in situ hybridization method (direct-geneFISH a.k.a. viral FISH). Probes for direct-geneFISH were specifically designed to target a putative 8.9 kb circular viral genome, which was previously in silico identified as a putative virus. Key findings were obtained via manual enumeration of viral infections, classified into three infection categories.

Results: By using genome-informed microscopy, viral infections of Ca. A. hamiconexum cells showed lytic features that could have implications for the integrity of the archaeal host and thus on the entire carbon cycle in the ecosystem. 523 infections of 18,411 counted archaeal cells revealed a low percentage of virus adsorption (7.6%), few advanced infections (17.4%), and many states of cell lysis (75%).

Conclusion: Overall, we conclude that Ca. A. hamiconexum’s viruses have major implications in terms of controlling host abundance, microbial community composition, biogeochemical cycling and nutrient fluxes in subsurface aquifers.

034-VPV

Environmental risks of nanomaterials trough prophage activation: what we can learn from the metabolic heat evolution.

* T. Maskow1, J. Xu2, F. L. Jiang2, Y. Liu2, B. Kiesel2, R. Kallies1
1Heinholdtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany
2Wuhan University, College of Chemistry and Molecular Sciences, Wuhan, China

Question: A few thousands of tons of nanoparticles and quantum dots (QDs) are yearly produced worldwide and significant parts are released into ecosystems. An important ecotoxicological aspect has been largely overlooked. It is the activation of silent bacteria by the released nanomaterial. Activated viruses once released catalyze an autocatalytic process with a potentially exponentially killing rate of bacteria. Is it possible to shed light on this underestimated process by recording the released metabolic heat in real time and interpreting the results thermodynamically and kinetically?

Methods: To answer the question Escherichia coli with (λ+) and without (λ–) lambda prophages were treated with test chemicals and QDs in different concentrations. The process of prophage activation and bacteria killing were monitored in real time as heat production rate and by off-line measurements. The off-line measurements include the number of activated phage particles and surviving E. coli cells, the intracellular levels of ROS, superoxide dismutase activity and lipid peroxidation. The influence of protective agents (radical catchers) and metal-ion chelators were investigated. Mathematical simulations were used to generate a coherent image of the prophage activation from this data.

Results and Conclusion: Calorimetry allowed the real time monitoring of the prophage activation and thus qualify itself as a future screening tool for testing chemicals concerning their ability to activate prophages. CdTe QDs as an example activate prophages at already nanomolar concentrations range. The activation is mainly triggered by DNA damages due to oxidative stress induced by the CdTe QDs. Freely dissociated Cd2+ contributes depending on the functionalization of QDs between 15 and 25 % on the prophage activation. This paper will deepen the understanding of effects of QDs on microbial environments and provide new concerns for the potential environmental risks of quantum dots.

035-VPV

Microviscosity control in Pantoea stewartii biofilms by an intrinsic exopolysaccharide modifying enzyme and by bacteriophage tailspike proteins

T. Irmischer1, Y. Roske2, V. Dunsing2, A. Singhal3, A. Grafmüller4, U. Heinemann4, S. Chiantia3, S. Barbirz1
1Universität Potsdam, Physikalische Biochemie, Potsdam, Germany
2Max-Planck-Institut für Kolloid- und Grenzflächenforschung, Potsdam, Germany
3Universität Potsdam, Physikalische Zeillobiochemie, Potsdam, Germany
4Max-Planck-Institut für Kolloid- und Grenzflächenforschung, Potsdam, Germany

The properties of bacterial biofilms are dictated by the macromolecules that build up a complex matrix to control embedding of cells, access of metabolites and defense against antimicrobials and bacteriophages. Whereas highly stable protein structures like curli or insoluble polysaccharides like cellulose may provide rigid mechanical scaffolds, biofilms may also be composed from highly soluble anionic exopolysaccharide (EPS) as the main constituent. These biofilms are functional as protective barriers due to their high viscosity.

We have analyzed the matrix properties of stewartan, a mega-dalton sized anionic polysaccharide and major EPS biofilm component of the plant pathogen Pantoea (P.) stewartii [1]. Viscosity of the stewartan matrix can be controlled by different glycan-modifying enzymes. WCEF is a putative biofilm remodeling protein encoded on a P. stewartii biofilm synthesis gene cluster [2]. Crystal structure analysis revealed that WcEF has striking structural similarity to bacteriophage tailspike (TSP) hydrolases that modify long polysaccharide chains, with a typical trimeric β-helix fold. WcEF hydrolyzes stewartan, but with notably lower efficiency than the stewartan-targeting TSP from bacteriophage ΨEa1h. These differences illustrate that stewartan is not a fully inert meshwork. Rather, fluorescence correlation spectroscopy showed that the mobility of particles in stewartan depends on their size and surface chemistry. The stewartan matrix acts as a molecular sieve with properties depending on ionic strength and divalent cations that is effective in trapping of bacteriophages. Coarse-grained
Bacteriophages, also known as phages, are viruses of bacteria and archaea. Their impact on prokaryotic evolution has been investigated for long time but until today fundamental mechanism are not fully understood. The genetic relation of phages and prophages with their hosts and among each other is barely investigated on a large scale. In this study we analysed 4,088 phage genomes and 34,981 prophages, which were before predicted from 18,872 prokaryotic genetic units (8,006 plasmids and 10,866 chromosomes). Using different comparative analysis based on shared orthologous proteins we calculated the functional similarity between all phage and prophage genomes. Phages and prophages that share a minimum set (jaccard 0.1) of orthologous genes were summarized in a graph. The full graph contains 196,354 edges (associations) between phage genomes, 3,514,604 edges between prophages and 90,659 edges connecting the phages and prophages. Statistical data and network analysis revealed that phages possessing large genomes are less likely to be associated with a prophage. Further, using connectivity analysis we identified several pathogenic species like (Salmonella enterica, Clostridium botulinum, or Bordetella pertussis) that are highly connected in the network, meaning this species possesses a high number of prophages or prophages with high similarity to many other nodes in the network. The association network is able to uncover relations of phages, prophages and their host on different levels. Further it enables the ability, from the cluster of closely connected prophages, to predict putative phages genomes that are yet not sequenced but are of clinical interest for putative phage therapies.

Methods: In order to determine potential markers correlating with pathogenicity, we combined phenomics with transcriptomics and proteomics (surfaceomics and secretomics).

Results: A holistic virulence assessment was generated considering stomach survival, adhesion, germination and motility as well as enterotoxin production. The predicted virulence correlated well with the secretion of NheB, spingomelinase and exoproteases, allowing us to establish a rapid and reliable diagnostic tool. Furthermore, so called "moonlighting proteins" – with primary functions in core intracellular pathways and secondary functions on the cell surface, mostly by binding to host proteins – were identified by surfaceomics as differentially expressed in high and low pathogenic strains, suggesting that these proteins might also contribute to the enteropathogenicity of B. cereus. First in

References:

036-VPV
Phage - prophage association network: Inferring functional similarity on large scale
*O. Popa
1Heinrich-Heine Universität, Institute of quantitative and theoretical biology, Düsseldorf, Germany

Bacteriophage infections also known as phages, are viruses of bacteria and archaea. Their importance in prokaryotic evolution has been investigated for long time but until today fundamental mechanisms are not fully understood. The genetic relation of phages and prophages with their hosts and among each other is barely investigated on a large scale. In this study we analysed 4,088 phage genomes and 34,981 prophages, which were before predicted from 18,872 prokaryotic genetic units (8,006 plasmids and 10,866 chromosomes). Using different comparative analysis based on shared orthologous proteins we calculated the functional similarity between all phage and prophage genomes. Phages and prophages that share a minimum set (jaccard 0.1) of orthologous genes were summarized in a graph. The full graph contains 196,354 edges (associations) between phage genomes, 3,514,604 edges between prophages and 90,659 edges connecting the phages and prophages. Statistical data and network analysis revealed that phages possessing large genomes are less likely to be associated with a prophage. Further, using connectivity analysis we identified several pathogenic species like (Salmonella enterica, Clostridium botulinum, or Bordetella pertussis) that are highly connected in the network, meaning this species possesses a high number of prophages or prophages with high similarity to many other nodes in the network. The association network is able to uncover relations of phages, prophages and their host on different levels. Further it enables the ability, from the cluster of closely connected prophages, to predict putative phages genomes that are yet not sequenced but are of clinical interest for putative phage therapies.

038-FMV
Assessing the enteropathogenic potential of Bacillus cereus by means of secreted and surface-located markers
*M. Kranzler1, N. Jeßberger1, C. Rademacher1, R. Dietrich2, T. Buchacher1, E. Mättbauer2, M. Ehling-Schulz1
1Institute of Microbiology / University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, Department of Pathobiology, Vienna, Austria
2Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Lehrstuhl für Hygiene und Technologie der Milch, Oberschleißheim, Germany

Question: Bacillus cereus is one of the most relevant potential threats of food safety, due to its production of virulence factors and proteases. After ingestion of contaminated food, bacteria start in the intestine with the secretion of enterotoxins, which further lead to gastrointestinal symptoms. Apart from public health issues, food contaminations with B. cereus are also an economic problem, due to recalls of charges, and cannot totally avoided. Thus, a risk assessment of the toxic potential of B. cereus is crucial to make assumptions on the hazards of concerned food. However, the toxin gene profile as well as the amounts of secreted enterotoxins, such as the tripartite toxins Nhe (non-hemolytic enterotoxin), HBL (hemolysin BL) as well as the single component cytK (cytotoxin K), do not directly correlate with strain toxicity on Caco-2 cells. Also, commercially available tests on single toxin components can barely predict the actual toxic potential of B. cereus strains.

Methods: In order to determine potential markers correlating with pathogenicity, we combined phenomics with transcriptomics and proteomics (surfaceomics and secretomics).

Results: A holistic virulence assessment was generated considering stomach survival, adhesion, germination and motility as well as enterotoxin production. The predicted virulence correlated well with the secretion of NheB, spingomelinase and exoproteases, allowing us to establish a rapid and reliable diagnostic tool. Furthermore, so called "moonlighting proteins" – with primary functions in core intracellular pathways and secondary functions on the cell surface, mostly by binding to host proteins – were identified by surfaceomics as differentially expressed in high and low pathogenic strains, suggesting that these proteins might also contribute to the enteropathogenicity of B. cereus. First in

037-FMV
Phylogenetic relationship of toxigenic C. difficile-strains isolated from chicken meat samples processed in different cutting plants
*J. Heise1, P. Witt1, C. Maneck1, S. Maurisch1
1German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany

Clostridoides difficile (also Clostridium difficile) is the most common pathogen of nosocomial infections in humans which causes about 20-30% of antibiotic-associated diarrhea. A zoonotic transmission of C. difficile to humans is indicated by closely related isolates from humans and animals as well as the isolation of C. difficile from different food products. To estimate the exposure of humans with C. difficile via food, we screened different retail products of fresh chicken meat from Brandenburg/Berlin for the occurrence of C. difficile. We revealed a relative high contamination rate of 14.1% in chicken meat with skin and detected PCR-ribotypes (RT) already found from CDI patients (e.g., RT 001, 002, 014) indicating that contaminated chicken meat may be a potential source of human infections. Moreover, we identified cutting plants with a higher risk of C. difficile-positive samples. To compare the relationship of the isolated strains from the concerning cutting plants over several months in 2018 and 2019, we analyzed them using NGS followed by core genome MLST. First results showed a contamination with the spore-forming pathogen over several months in same cutting plants. For instance, we detected a very similar strain (2-3 alleles distance) of the epidemiological RT 001 in chicken meat from a German cutting plant in January and March 2018. Next, strains of the RT 002 were detected in four cutting plants from Germany (Lower Saxony, Bavaria) and Austria, with an identical strain being persistent in one German cutting plant over 3 months. The ongoing contamination with same strains can be explained with a persistence of the pathogen within the cutting plant, or with a recurring entry of related strains e.g., originating from the same fattening farms. Further investigations of the concerning cutting plants and other levels of the food chain are necessary to clarify transmission routes and the contamination source.
vitro studies revealed that _B. cereus_ strains bind variably to different host proteins.

Conclusions: In this study, we identified toxicity-specific markers of _B. cereus_ in the secretome and on the cell surface. Moonlighting proteins presumably play an additional, hitherto underestimated, role in pathogenesis.

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**039-FMV**

Genetic and phenotypic characterization of _Vibrio cholerae_ non-O1/non-O139 isolated from German retail seafood and coastal areas

*S. Fleischmann^1, E. Strauch^2, I. Eichhorn^3, L. Landoin^4, R. Pickert^5, T. B. Schille^6, T. Alter^7*  
^1Freie Universität Berlin, Institute of Food Safety and Food Hygiene, Berlin, Germany  
^2Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), Department of Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany  
^3Freie Universität Berlin, Institute of Microbiology and Epizoootics, Berlin, Germany  
^4Universite de Brest, Ecole Superieure d’Ingénieurs en Agroalimentaire de Bretagne Atlantique, Brest, France  
^5Beuth Hochschule für Technik Berlin, University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany

_Vibrio (V.) cholerae_ belonging to the non-O1/non-O139 serogroups are present in German retail seafood as well as on the German coastal areas. These bacteria can be transmitted through the contact with contaminated seawater or the consumption of contaminated water and undercooked/raw seafood causing intestinal or extraintestinal infections. At present _V. cholerae_ infections are rare in Germany but the risk of infections increases due to the steadily rising occurrence of _Vibrio_ species caused by global warming.

In this study, 63 _V. cholerae_ strains isolated from German retail seafood and 35 strains isolated from coastal areas of the German North Sea and Baltic Sea were analyzed using phenotypical and genotypical methods comparing these strains to 18 clinical non-O1/non-O139 strains as well as 5 pandemic O1/O139 strains to assess their pathogenic potential. Phenotypic assays were performed for hemolysin activity, human serum resistance and biofilm formation. The genetic characterization was carried out with regard to the major virulence-associated factors or markers of clinical _V. cholerae_, including the cholera toxin and the toxin-coregulated pilus as well as hemolysins, repeats-in-toxin toxins, pandemic islands VSP-1/VSP-2 and the type III secretion system.

First results showed, that the main cholera virulence factors (ctx, zot, ace, tcpA, rstR and serogroups O1/O139) were absent in all non-O1/non-O139 _V. cholerae_ strains. In contrast, genes encoding for the type III secretion system and the cholixxin (ChxA) were present only in non-O1/non-O139 _V. cholerae_ strains. Hemolysin genes like hlyA and ctxA, conferring hemolysis on sheep blood agar, the resistance to human serum and the formation of biofilm were present in all groups. Additionally, a strong biofilm formation seems to be associated to non-clinical non-O1/non-O139 _V. cholerae_ strains.

Against the background of global warming and an increasing seafood consumption in Germany (including the consumption of raw products like raw oysters and sushi), an additional testing for virulence genes beside _ctx_ and _serogrouping_ of O1/O139 should be considered in food diagnostics of _Vibrio_ spp.

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**040-FMV**

Long-term stability of a recombinant _Listeria monocytogenes_ ΔprfA strain in the VBNC state as an internal sample process control (ISPC)

*C. Robben^1, B. Bromberger^2, D. Schoder^3, P. Mester^2, P. Rossmannith^2*  
^1CD-Momiko, Unit of Food Microbiology, 1210, Austria  
^2Vetmeduni Vienna, Institute for milk hygiene, Vienna, Austria  
^3Christian Doppler Laboratory for Monitoring of Microbial Contaminants, Vienna, Austria

**Introduction:**

Since its first implementation, PCR has been refined to a method that provides many opportunities for improved analysis of microorganisms. However, for its routine use in diagnosis, standardized validation protocols and guidelines, as well as supporting analytical elements (such as sample preparation), are necessary prerequisites. In order to assess and control the efficiency of each experimental step, a recombinant _Listeria monocytogenes_ ΔprfA (targeted deletion) strain containing a competitive artificial single-copy genomic target has been recently developed as an internal sample process controls (ISPCs). However, a drawback of ISPCs are the introduction of culturable bacterial cells which are closely related to the target of interest. One solution could be to use the ISPCs in the viable but non culturable (VBNC) state in which they are not able to proliferate, can be stored and are unlikely to resuscitate.

**Objectives:**

In this study the long-term stability of _Listeria monocytogenes_ ΔprfA in the VBNC state was investigated for a period of 100 days.

**Material & Methods:**

The VBNC state was investigated using a previously published induction protocol based on a salt/non-ionic detergent solution. A successful induction of the VBNC state was confirmed using cultivation methods, de-novo ATP generation, fluorescence microscopy and qPCR. Long-term stability of the VBNC ISPC cells was investigated for 100 days. VBNC cells were stored in three different buffer solutions and compared to living and killed cells.

**Results & Discussion:**

The results of this study show that it is possible to store ISPC cells in the VBNC state for 100 days. The cells remained in the VBNC state throughout the investigated period and did not resuscitate. The qPCR signal from the VBNC ISPCs remained stable for 100 days, demonstrating their applicability to be used as controls.

**Conclusion:**

Overall it could be shown that it is possible to store bacterial cells in the VBNC state for a period of 100 days and can be utilized as an ISPC throughout the storage period.

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**041-HYV**

Data from a 5-year interventional study: a strict mask policy effectively reduces nosocomial influenza

*A. Ambrosch^1, D. Luber^1, F. Klawonn^2*  
^1Krankenhaus Barmherzige Brüder, Institut für Labormedizin, Mikrobiologie und Krankenhaushygiene, Regensburg, Germany  
^2Vetmeduni Vienna, CD-Momico, Vienna, Austria
Vaccination rates among health care workers (HCW) are low in Germany and may be a risk for transmission of influenza to patients in the clinical setting (1). Therefore, other preventive strategies should be taken into account to reduce the rate of nosocomial influenza. In this view, a study was conducted to compare two different hygiene regimens in which one focuses on a strict mask policy.

Methods: Data from hospitalized influenza patients (nosocomial rates / mortality) from the influenza season 2015 and 2016 (n=419) were compared to the seasons 2017 to 2019 (n=767): During the influenza season 2015 / 2016 patients were managed according to official recommendation ("standard protocol") (2). During the season 2017 to 2019, a strict mask policy for HCW was introduced ("mask policy") containing a mandatory wearing of surgical masks during the whole shift when 3 or more Influenza inpatients were at ward.

Results: During the season with a strict "mask policy" compared to the "standard protocol", the rate of nosocomial influenza infections decreased from 21.7 % to 9.97 % (p < 0.001, OR 0.51) being most effective for nosocomial influenza A transmission (Influenza A: 24.3 % to 12.8 %, p = 0.014; influenza B: 8.6 % top 5.5 %, p = 0.118). Consequently, mortality from nosocomial influenza was also significantly reduced (p < 0.001). The vaccination rate of HCW only slightly increased during the observational period from 17 % (2015 / 2016) to 29 % (2017 to 2019) for nurses and 42 % and 53 % for doctors, respectively.

Conclusion: a strict mask policy for HCW is highly effective and reduces nosocomial influenza infection by nearly 50 % in the clinical setting. Thus the present data clearly focuses on the eminent role of hospital staffs in the transmission of nosocomial influenza.

References:

- Neufeind et al, Epi Bull 2018, 32, 313-321
- https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/Infekt/EpidBull/Merkblaetter/Ratgeber_Influenza_saisonal.html

Objectives

Defining the proportion of NI patients (NIPs) with a traceable transmission (TM) through another patient.

Material & methods

This single-center retrospective study included all patients with laboratory-confirmed influenza (LCI) during the seasons 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Definitions:

- NIP: first positive sample taken >2d after admission without any signs or symptoms of influenza on admission.
- Contagious patient (CP): 1d before first pos. sample was retrieved till 7d thereafter.
- Donor: CP infected with the same influenza species (A/B), in the same room or ward with the NIP 2 to 5 d prior the NIPs first positive sample date.

A TM was assumed, if there was at least one plausible donor. Underdiagnosing was corrected by identifying patients classified by ICD-10 J09.- to J18.-, who shared the ward with NIP for the relevant time. LCI patients were isolated in single rooms or cohorted. Patients in the ICU were considered being immobile.

Results:

- A total of 426 patients with LCI were identified, thereof 55(13%) patients with NI.
- 27/55 (49%) NIP had a plausible TM hypothesis through another patient.
- Of these 27, 20 NIPs (74%) shared only the ward with their suggested donor(s). Furthermore, the only plausible donor of 11 of those 27 (41%), was isolated or immobile.
- the 41 possible donors were treated as follows: 29(71%) neuraminidase inhibitor, 37(90%) antibiotics, 26(63%) both
- 14/28 NIP (50%) without feasible donor shared their room with a patient with virus-caused (N=2) or unspecified (N=11) pneumonia classified by ICD-10.

Conclusion:

About 74% of the plausible NI transmission events took place in the same ward, not room, and in about 40% of these TMs, the only donor was isolated or immobile. Thus, the most likely way of transmission seems to be contact transmission via HCW or droplet transmission by unidentified patients or HCW or visitors. However, underdiagnosing seems to be of importance.
Introduction and Objectives
In the BMG-funded project "HygArzt" (ZMV11-2516FSB111), the effects of a new bundle of infection prevention measures on the infection rates (IR) of nosocomial infections (NI) and in particular on surgical site infections (SSI) implemented by the infection control physician was investigated on three orthopedic/trauma surgery general wards.

Methods
As study design, a pre-/post- intervention study was chosen. Both, trauma surgery and orthopedic patients were included. As intervention, a bundle was implemented which included: Decolonization of patients before surgery, examination of preoperative antibiotic prophylaxis, standardized wound and fixator care, treatment of closed surgical wounds with remanent skin disinfectants in the operating theatre and closed incision prophylactic negative pressure wound therapy for high-risk wounds. To identify NI, clinical signs of infection were recorded according to KISS and CDC definitions. Additionally, an active surveillance, which included morning rounds three times a week in order to detect undocumented signs of infection was performed.

Results
During the pre-phase (1141 surgeries) 61 NIs were recorded (IR 5.3% (CI 95% 4.0; 6.6)) and 44 SSIs (3.1% (CI 95% 1.5; 3.2)). In the post-phase (1546 surgeries) 35 NIs were recorded (IR 2.3% (CI 95% 1.1; 2.7)) and 26 SSIs (1.7% (CI 95% 1.1; 2.3)). The post-phase showed significantly lower relative risks for NIs (RR = 0.43 (CI 95% 0.28; 0.64), p<0.001) and SSIs (RR = 0.44 (CI 95% 0.27; 0.70), p<0.001) compared to the pre-phase. A subgroup analysis for SSI of trauma patients (pre: (745 surgeries, 19 SSIs, IR 2.0% (CI 95% 1.2; 2.9)) and orthopedic patients (pre: (696 surgeries, 15 SSIs, IR 2.2% (CI 95% 1.1; 3.3)); post: (608 surgeries, 8 SSIs, IR 1.3% (CI 95% 0.4; 2.2))) revealed a significant effect only in trauma patients (RR = 0.52 (CI 95% 0.29; 0.92), p=0.02).

Conclusion
NI rates and SSI rates could be reduced by a new infection control bundle in orthopedic and trauma patients implemented by an infection control physician. The effect was pronounced and significant in trauma patients.

044-HYV
Surveillance of surgical site infections – methodical comparison of IQTIG- and KISS- strategy
*S. Rittmeier1, R. M. Waeschle2, T. Artelt1, P. Fehling1, I. Thalmann1, A. Suckow2, S. Scheithauer2
1University Medical Center Goettingen, Institute for Infection Control and Infectious Diseases, Goettingen, Germany
2University of Goettingen, Department of Anesthesiology, Emergency and Intensive Care Medicine, Goettingen, Germany
3University Medical Center Goettingen, Quality and Risk Management Department, Goettingen, Germany

Introduction
In 2017 the IQTIG surveillance of surgical site infections (SSI) for benchmark and quality improvement purposes was introduced. So far, no comparison of the IQTIG vs. the KISS surveillance is available.

Objectives
Our study compares IQTIG and KISS surveillance results in order to define the comparability and to identify factors associated with disagreement.

Materials and Methods
All patient in 2018 qualifying for coding according to IQTIG algorithms were enrolled. Coding for IQTIG was performed by physicians, coding for KISS was performed by one investigator previously trained in KISS surveillance and blinded to the IQTIG results. In cases of uncertainty two infection control experts judged the coding.

Results
In 2018 in 1,238 cases (not all underwent surgery) an electronic evaluation form according to IQTIG was triggered, thereof 1,118 (88%) were assessed by both strategies. For the remaining 120 patient cases no IQTIG evaluation was performed.

In 250 of the doubled assessed cases (22%) a SSI was diagnosed in each evaluation strategy. In 933 (83%) IQTIG and KISS strategy revealed the same results ("S"). Thus, 185 cases (17%) were evaluated with different results ("D"). Within these 185 cases, 91 (49%) were evaluated positively for SSI by IQTIG and negatively by KISS, whereas 94 cases (51%) were evaluated negatively for SSI by IQTIG and positively by KISS, respectively.

Risk factor analysis for different coding results ("D" compared with "S") revealed, that
1) in the group of differently assessed patients the number of infections other than SSI seems to be higher (26/185; 14% vs. 88/933; 9%; p=0.062)
2) differently assessed patients with surgical procedure were coded significantly less often by the department performing the surgical process (131/163; 80% vs. 551/634; 87%; p=0.045)
3) differently assessed patients with surgical procedure significantly more often had an ASA Score III or IV (93/163; 57% vs. 292/634; 46%; p=0.014)

Conclusion
The IQTIG surveillance strategy and the KISS strategy showed a high rate of consensus. Some of the results identified shortcomings which may be corrected and thus potentially improving IQTIG results.

045-HYV
1Charité - University Medicine Berlin, Institute for hygiene and environmental medicine, Berlin, Germany

Introduction
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Conclusion
The IQTIG surveillance strategy and the KISS strategy showed a high rate of consensus. Some of the results identified shortcomings which may be corrected and thus potentially improving IQTIG results.
Surgical site infections (SSI) are one of the most severe complications in joint arthroplasty. Decolonization measures prior to elective orthopedic surgeries have shown to reduce the risk of SSI especially in patients colonized *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Does implementation of universal decolonisation with polyhexanide containing substances in patient with primary joint arthroplasties have an effect on SSI-rates.

**Methods**

Between January 2015 and December 2018 patients scheduled for hip or knee joint arthroplasty in 5 participating orthopedic centres were included. From January 2017 patients received polyhexanide containing decolonization sets. Patients were instructed to perform a 5 day decolonization regimen starting 4 days prior to surgery. SSI were recorded according to CDC criteria.

**Results**

During the study period, 14189 patients received native joint replacement. After Intervention was implemented 7633 surgeries were performed, while 4437 decolonization sets were distributed to patients. 1869 patients consented to participate in the study and provide detailed feedback on compatibility and compliance. Overall SSI rate was 0.85 per 100 surgeries prior to introduction of the decolonization, while it was 0.96 per 100 surgeries during the period of decolonization and 0.59 per 100 surgeries in those using the decolonization set. SSI rates due to *Staphylococcus aureus* (SAU) were 0.24 per 100 surgeries, 0.21 per 100 surgeries and 0.05 per 100 surgeries respectively. Surgery after implementation of the intervention was identified as an independent protective factor against SAU-SSI (OR .57; 95% CI: .32-.99) in our multivariable regression analysis

**Conclusions**

A universal decolonization strategy with polyhexanide reduces *S. aureus* SSI rates in patients with elective joint arthroplasty. Further evaluations are needed.

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**047-EPAV**

Assigning a putative role in energy-conservation to the membrane subunits of the formate hydrogenlyase complex from the enterobacterium *Trabuhsiella guamensis*.

S. Zantop Linares¹, U. Lindenstraub², C. Pinske²

¹Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, General Microbiology, Halle, Germany

The formate hydrogenlyase (FHL) complex is phylogenetically related to the proton-translocating complex I of the respiratory chain, but catalyzes the disproportionation of formate to H₂ and CO₂ during mixed-acid fermentation. The soluble domain is located in the cytoplasm and comprises the activities of a [NiFe]-hydrogenase and a formate dehydrogenase and is further attached to a membrane arm. Two versions of FHL exist that differ in the number of membrane subunits, which suggests differences in their involvement in energy-conservation.

We investigated the five membrane-subunit version of FHL₉ from *Trabuhsiella guamensis* through heterologous expression in *Escherichia coli* and used membrane-truncated versions of the complex to determine the order of the membrane subunits and their susceptibility to the protonophore CCCP and the sodium ionophore EIPA during H₂-evolution on a Clark-type hydrogen electrode.
The simultaneous loss of H₂-dependent reduction of the redox dye benzyl viologen but retention of the reverse reaction (H₂-production from the redox dye methyl viologen) in crude extracts, indicated that the reaction direction is regulated. Loss of the membrane domain during enrichment of the FHL₇ complex correlated with loss of this directional regulation. Results with generation of membrane-domain variants indicated that the complex has an inverted membrane domain organization compared to complex I. While addition of CCCP or catalysis in high-salt buffer reduced the FHL₇ reaction slightly, a combination of both or CCCP with EIPA completely inhibited catalysis. Interestingly, and in contrast to the homologous system, in the E. coli system the FHL₇ complex showed increased activity with high salt and CCCP, but only when glucose was used as substrate. Similarly, deletion of two of the distal subunits HyfF or HyfD caused an increased rate of H₂ production after CCCP treatment, while loss of HyfE caused a rate-reduction in the presence of COCP.

Taken together these data shed new light on the role of the membrane arm of FHL₇ in energy conservation and catalysis by the complex. A model for proton and sodium flux through the membrane domain can be deduced.

**048-EPAV**
Pyrite formation from FeS and H₂S: a novel microbial energy metabolism
J. Thiel¹, J. Byrne², A. Kappler³, B. Schink⁴, *M. Pester³
¹University of Konstanz, Dept. of Biology, Konstanz, Germany
²Eberhardt Karls University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany
³Leibniz Institute DSMZ, Dept. of Microorganisms, Braunschweig, Germany

The exergonic reaction of FeS with H₂S to form FeS₂ (pyrite) and H₂ was postulated as an early form of energy metabolism on primordial Earth. With an annual production of more than 5 million tons, pyrite is also today the stable end product of iron compounds reacting with sulfide in reduced sediments. However, the mechanism of sedimentary pyrite formation is still being debated. We present enrichment cultures, which grew with FeS, H₂S, and CO₂ as their sole substrates to produce pyrite and methane [1]. Pyrite formation followed a clear biological temperature profile with maximum activity at 28°C. Methane formed concomitantly with pyrite and exhibited the same temperature dependence. Addition of either penicillin or 2-bromoethanesulfonate inhibited both pyrite and methane production, indicating a syntrophic coupling of pyrite formation to methanogenesis. This hypothesis was supported by a 16S rRNA gene-based phylogenetic analysis, which identified at least one archaeal and five bacterial species. The archaeon was closely related to the hydrogenotrophic methanogen *Methanospillum stamsii* while the bacteria were most closely related to sulfate-reducing Deltaproteobacteria, as well as uncultured Firmicutes and Actinobacteria. We identified a novel type of microbial metabolism driven by FeS transformation to pyrite that could sustain part of the deep biosphere in sediments and which may serve as a model for a postulated primordial iron-sulfur world.


**Citrate cleavage through citrate synthase: the reversed oxidative TCA cycle and its distribution**
*L. M. Steffens¹, E. Pettinato¹, A. Mall¹, I. Berg¹*
¹Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Institut für Molekulare Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, Münster, Germany

*Desulfurella acetivorans* is a sulfur-reducing deltaproteobacterium capable to grow autotrophically with H₂ or heterotrophically by acetate oxidation using the reversed oxidative tricarboxylic acid (roTCA) cycle [1]. Citrate cleavage (reductive direction) and citrate synthesis (oxidative direction) are both catalyzed by ATP-independent citrate synthase (CS), whereas the classical ATP-dependent citrate lyase is absent [1, 2]. *D. acetivorans* harbours three CS, two of them we characterized biochemically. While one isoenzyme is a typical citrate synthase, whose Km value to citrate (1 mM) is nevertheless close to the intracellular citrate concentration in autotrophically grown cells (1.4 mM) [1], the second CS homolog was a promiscuous enzyme with citrate and methylcitrate synthase activities [3]. The comparison of CS activity in *D. acetivorans* cell extracts and the activity of heterologously produced CS suggests that this enzyme constitutes ∼20% of cellular protein. Indeed, the only specific recognizable feature of the roTCA cycle in bacteria is its dependence on unusually high activities of CS and malate dehydrogenase (MDH). It allows to overcome unfavourable kinetic and thermodynamic properties of citrate cleavage reaction catalyzed by CS. As codon usage bias strongly correlates with the protein/transcript level, we examined whether the presence of the roTCA cycle can be predicted by analysis of the codon usage of the corresponding genes. Although the results of the analysis were not ambiguous for some studied microbial groups, we identified several bacterial species that potentially use the roTCA cycle. In the case of *Hippea maritima* (Desulfurellaceae), we were able to confirm very high activities of CS and MDH, demonstrating that this type of bioinformatic analysis opens a possibility to recognize otherwise invisible metabolic pathways. Furthermore, our results suggest that the emergence of the roTCA cycle does not require specific adaptation of CS to catalyze the thermodynamically unfavourable citrate cleavage reaction.


**050-EPAV**
Spotlight on the energy harvest of electroactive microorganisms: The impact of the redox potential of the solid terminal electron acceptor
*B. Korth¹, F. Hamisch¹*
¹ Helmholz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

**Introduction**

Electroactive microorganisms (EAM) are capable of performing extracellular electron transfer (EET) representing a unique metabolic trait. The terminal electron acceptor (TEA) is solid and can be, e.g., metal ore or anode. Although EAM attracted considerable interest, their thermodynamics is still unexplored. However, assessing the energy fluxes during EET is a prerequisite for deciphering their ecological role and for leveraging their technological potential.

**Objectives**

Electroactive microorganisms: The impact of the redox potential of the solid terminal electron acceptor
*E. Pettinato et al., poster (2020).*
Due to the peculiarity of their electron-transport chain (ETC), the energy harvest of EAM is restricted. Metabolically received electrons are transferred across the cell membrane, while a share of ETC components is located in the periplasm and at the outer membrane. Thus, these cannot contribute to the generation of proton gradient across the inner membrane subsequently utilized for ATP synthesis. Consequently, the question arises, to which extent the potential of the TEA influences the energy harvest of EAM.

Materials & methods

A previously developed model for electroactive biofilms combining thermodynamic calculations on microbial growth, electrochemical, chemical, and physical equations was applied for deciphering the impact of the anode potential on the energy harvest of the model EAM Geobacter sulfurreducens.

Results

Energy harvest of G. sulfurreducens saturates at anode potential of 0.2 V (vs. SHE) representing full exploitation of the thermodynamic frame. The anode potential affects EET rate and in turn the energy-yielding reaction (i.e., substrate oxidation) by changing reaction conditions. However, this is solely a kinetic effect, the thermodynamic frame of this EAM is not influenced by the potential of the solid TEA.

Conclusion

Assessing the energy harvest of EAM requires an adapted approach compared to classical thermodynamic calculations. Instead of calculating the energy difference between electron donor and terminal electron acceptor, the energy difference between electron donor and an intracellular electron carrier contributing to the proton gradient should be calculated.

Korth et al., 2015, Bioelectrochemistry
Korth et al., 2019, Front Microbiol

051-EPAV
The author has not agreed to a publication.

052-EPAV
Uncovering key players in anaerobic benzene degradation under nitrate-reducing conditions from over 2000 metagenome-assembled genomes in a microcosm experiment
F. Borim Corrêa1,2, S. Eziuoz1, S. Peng1, J. Schultz2, L. Adrian3, S. Kleinsteuber1, C. Vogt1, U. Nunes da Rocha1

1Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung (UFZ), Leipzig, Germany
2University of Leipzig, Department of Computer Science and Interdisciplinary Center of Bioinformatics, Leipzig, Germany
3Leibniz-Institute for Isotope Biogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany

A community mineralizing benzene under nitrate-reducing conditions, originally enriched in sand-filled bioreactors percolated with groundwater at a benzene-contaminated aquifer, has been maintained in laboratory microcosms for many years. A controlled succession experiment using multi-omics approaches could reveal microbial interactions and biomarkers for benzene degradation. In this study, we monitored the succession of species in this community during the degradation of benzene under nitrate-reducing conditions. The laboratory microcosms inoculated with our benzene-degrading community were fed with benzene (25% 

Biogas is an important renewable energy resource and is produced during the anaerobic food chain. Complex biopolymers are degraded by a consortium of microorganisms. Numerous microbial taxa interact and perform hydrolysis, many primary and secondary syntrophic fermentations producing acetate and H2/CO2. Syntrophs are crucial for converting intermediates to methane precursors. Methanogens are the terminal electron sink and convert acetate and H2/CO2 into CH4. However, substrate specific key players remain to be identified as well as rates of interconnected pathways, which are crucial for process stability and CH4 yield. Thus, a time-resolved RNA-SIP experiment was performed using material from a one-stage, thermophilic, maize-fed biogas digester. 13C-maize (97 atom.-% 13C) was supplemented to anoxic digestate incubations at 50 °C as one-time dose, and labeled intermediates and products quantified regularly by LC-MS and GC-IRMS. Six time points were chosen for density gradient centrifugation of RNA to identify active assimilators of maize derived 13C by Illumina MiSeq. Fully 13C-labeled important process intermediates were acetate and propionate, which increased immediately after maize addition, with maximal concentrations after 5 h and 11 h, respectively. Accumulation of other labeled organic acids was not observed. 13CH3 and 13CO2 increased linearly without appreciable delay. Production of 13CO2 decreased after 17 h. The highest H2 concentration of 150 ppm was

053-EPAV
Turnover of intermediates and the active microbiota during degradation of 13C-maize in a biogas digestor by RNA-based stable isotope probing (RNA-SIP)
N. Rüppel1, K. Schäfer1, F. Buegger2, M. A. Horn1
1Institute of Microbiology / Leibniz University Hannover, Hannover, Germany
2Helmholtz Zentrum, Muenchen, Germany

Uncovering key players in anaerobic benzene degradation under nitrate-reducing conditions from over 2000 metagenome-assembled genomes in a microcosm experiment
F. Borim Corrêa1,2, S. Eziuoz1, S. Peng1, J. Schultz2, L. Adrian3, S. Kleinsteuber1, C. Vogt1, U. Nunes da Rocha1

1Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany
2University of Leipzig, Department of Computer Science and Interdisciplinary Center of Bioinformatics, Leipzig, Germany
3Leibniz-Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Isotope Biogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany
4Chongqing University, Department of Environmental Science, Chongqing, China
5Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Departamento de Microbiologia Geral, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
measured after 15 h and was subsequently reduced. Organisms within the phylum Firmicutes were always 13C-labeled. Clostridiaceae and Dysgonomonadaceae were 13C-labeled after 3 h, suggesting association with primary fermentations, and Halanaerobiaceae as well as an uncultured family within the Clostridia were 13C-labeled after 9 h. Putative secondary fermenting syntrophs of the genera Syntrophomonas, Geilia and Tepidanaerobacter were labeled after 39 h. In conclusion, we identified hitherto known and unknown thermophilic key players associated with carbon turnover in such types of bioreactors, including key syntrophs that are crucial to functioning of the anaerobic food chain.

054-EPAV
A new metabolic pathway for the conversion of pentoses in gut microbiota
*L. Garschagen*, U. Deppenmeier1
1Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Institute Microbiology and Biotechnology, Bonn, Germany

The gut microbiota plays a decisive role for the human immune system and supports digestion by expanding the substrate spectrum of the host. The majority of the human intestinal bacteria belong to the Phyla Firmicutes or Bacteroidetes. These organisms are responsible for the breakdown of fibers, which are not degraded by human digestive enzymes. Although the analysis of central metabolic pathways of gut microbes is increasingly gaining importance, it has never been investigated how these species metabolize pentoses, the monomeric units of e.g. the important fiber hemicellulose. Bioinformatic analyses revealed that a transaldolase as the key enzyme of the regular pentose phosphate pathway (PPP) is absent in many species of the human gut (e.g. Bacteroides, Prevotella, Faecalibacterium and Ruminococcus species). To find evidence for an alternative pentose conversion pathway, we analyzed one of the main players in the colon, Prevotella copri, for its potential to degrade xylose. We could show that a pyrophosphate-dependent phosphofructokinase (PPI-PFK) in combination with a fructose-1,6-bisphosphate-aldolase (FBP-aldolase) was able to replace the transaldolase reaction. In summary, this newly discovered pathway for the degradation of C5-sugars differs significantly from the well-known pentose metabolism of common bacteria and represents a mixture of the PPP and a reversed Calvin cycle. Bioinformatic data showed, that in the absence of the transaldolase, the gene encoding the PPI-PFK can function as a marker that indicates the presence of this alternative pathway for pentose degradation in gut bacteria.

Methods: We operated a 15 L open system continuous stirred tank reactor for 241 days and combined flow cytometric short interval monitoring, cell sorting and 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing to investigate microbiome structure and dynamics.

Results: Flow cytometry recorded 31 sub-communities with cell abundances varying over 89 time points. It revealed a highly dynamic community, whereas the sequencing analysis displayed a mostly unchanged core community. Eight key sub-communities were linked to caproate or caprylate production (rS > |0.7|). Amongst other insights, sorting and subsequently sequencing these sub-communities revealed the central role of Bifidobacterium and Olsenella, two genera of lactic acid bacteria that drove chain elongation by providing additional lactate, serving as electron donor. Caproate and caprylate titres of up to 6.12 g/L and 1.83 g/L, respectively, were achieved. Caproate production was optimal at pH 5.5 and connected to lactate-based chain elongation, while caprylate production was optimal at pH 6.25 and linked to ethanol utilisation.

Conclusions: High-titre medium-chain fatty acid production with complex substrate is possible without the addition of external electron donors. This result will greatly ease scaling and profitable implementation of the process. The pH value influenced the substrate utilisation and product spectrum by shaping the microbial community. Flow cytometric single cell analysis enabled the fast, short interval analysis of the microbial community and was coupled with 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing to reveal the pivotal role played by lactate-producing bacteria.

056-MBTV
Genetic analysis of cellulose synthesis in acetic acid bacteria
*M. Bimmer*1, G. Wanner2, W. Liebl1, A. Ehrenreich1
1Technical University Munich, Chair of Microbiology, Freising, Germany
2Ludwig Maximilians University, Plant Sciences, Planegg - Martinsried, Germany

Among strains of the acetic acid bacteria genus Komagataeibacter are high microcrystalline cellulose producers. Due to its high capacity to store water and its mechanical strength, bacterial cellulose (BC) is a very versatile biomaterial. The strains contain three cellulose synthase operons of different complexities. All operons consist of at least the synthase itself and a channel protein. Several diguanylate cyclases (DGC) catalyze the formation of c-di-GMP that induces biofilm formation after binding to the c-terminal PILZ domain of AcsAB.

This study aims on the analysis of the role of respective cellulose synthase operons and their regulation. Several markerless multi-deletion mutants of elements of the cellulose synthase operons and the DGCs as well as fluorescent reporter fusions were constructed and used to quantify produced cellulose as well as to assess the role of the operons for biofilm formation by analyzing structural differences in biofilm composition as well as by fluorescence microscopy and scanning electron microscopy. The genetic system we developed for Komagataeibacter strains is, to our best knowledge, the only system applicable to construct markerless mutants in cellulose producing prokaryotes. K. xylinus ATCC 53582 strain shows high quantities of BC synthesis, deletion of dgc1 reduced the amount of produced cellulose significantly, while deletion of dgc2 abolishes cellulose formation completely. In K. hansenii ATCC 23769 a
significantly lower amount of cellulose was measured after deletion of elements of the AcsAB operon. The importance of AcsAB for biofilm formation, compared to AcsAB2 and AcsAB3 was supported by SEM data.

057-MBTV
Construction of an Aspergillus oryzae triple amylase deletion mutant as a chassis to produce industrially relevant amylases using multiplex CRISPR/Cas9 editing technology

"G. Haeger", A. Grankin², M. Wagner²
¹FH Aachen, Institute of Nano and Biotechnologies (INB), Jülich, Germany
²Hochschule Niederrhein, Biotechnology, Krefeld, Germany

Aspergillus oryzae is an industrially relevant organism for the secretory production of heterologous proteins. Due to high level secretion of the native α-amylase, A. oryzae is especially interesting for the expression of heterologous amylases. The activities of heterologously produced amylases, however, cannot be quantified directly within the culture broth due to the high background activity of the native α-amylase. This background activity is caused by the gene products of amyA, amyB and amyC. Deletion of all three amylase encoding genes led to the complete loss of amylase activity in the culture supernatant [1]. For heterologous expression target genes are usually randomly integrated into A. oryzae genome via NHEJ. Resulting clones vary in expression strength due to different integration genome loci. This hamperes fast and comparative enzyme screening technologies in A. oryzae.

To generate a fast and comparative A. oryzae expression platform with high secretion efficiency, the three amylase genes amyA, amyB and amyC were deleted simultaneously using multiplex CRISPR/Cas9 editing technology resulting in the strain HGR02. The rate of obtained triple knockouts was 67 % pointing out the high efficiency of the multiplex deletion system. Further genome editing of HGR02 at the amyC locus was performed to enable target integration specifically at the amyB locus.

Target integration of an amylase expression cassette specifically into the amyB locus was performed using an in vitro CRISPR/Cas9 dual RNP system. Using this system high level secretion of the heterologously produced amylase was achieved. This amylase activity could be quantified directly from the culture supernatant within purification. The target integration specific into the amyB locus resulted in comparable amylase secretion level of single clones.

This new edited Aspergillus oryzae together with the specific target integration system can be used as a chassis for the fast and precise comparable characterization of newly identified enzyme candidates.


059-MBTV
The novel phosphatase RosC catalyzes the last unknown step of roseoflavin biosynthesis in Streptomyces davaonensis

"C. Schneider", M. Mack
¹University of Applied Sciences Mannheim, Institute for Technical Microbiology, Mannheim, Germany

The two Gram-positive soil bacteria Streptomyces davaonensis and Streptomyces cinnabarinus produce the antibiotic roseoflavin (8-demethyl-8-dimethylamino-riboflavin), which is a riboflavin analog and acts as a natural antimetabolite. Roseoflavin synthesis has been studied in S. davaonensis and similar enzymes are present in S. cinnabarinus. The first step of roseoflavin biosynthesis is the phosphorylation of riboflavin to riboflavin-5'-phosphate (RP) by the flavokinase RibC. The complex synthase RosB catalyzes the conversion from RP and glutamate to 8-demethyl-8-amino-riboflavin-5'-phosphate (AFP). Roseoflavin is synthesized by the dimethyltransferase RosA from 8-demethyl-8-amino-riboflavin (AF) via the intermediate 8-demethyl-8-dimethylamino-riboflavin (MAF). The RosB product AFP is not a substrate for RosA. Therefore, the roseoflavin biosynthetic pathway depends on a yet unknown phosphatase that generates AF from AFP. We report here on the identification and characterization of such a novel phosphatase. The novel enzyme was named RosC. The roseoflavin biosynthetic pathway is now fully understood. It takes four enzymes (RibC, RosB, RosC and RosA) to convert a vitamin into a potent antibiotic.

058-MBTV
Deciphering the metabolic burden in P. putida during heterologous protein production: Development of a genetic toolbox

"A. S. Ortega Arbulu", A. Kremling¹, K. Pflüger-Grau¹, H. Löwe¹, K. Hofmeier¹
¹Technische Universität München, Mechanical Engineering, Garching, Germany

Pseudomonas putida is increasingly drawing attention as a promising host for biotechnological applications due to its highly versatile metabolism and unique resistance to endogenous and exogenous stresses. Heterologous protein overproduction, e.g. when expressing new pathways, often results in reduced cell growth and cessation of protein production as energy and metabolites, pivotal for the host's own cellular maintenance and gene expression machinery, are drained into the expression of foreign genes. In order to measure and understand the metabolic burden, we followed resource allocation during plasmid-based gene expression of eGFP, as an easily tractable model protein, in P. putida KT2440 and EM383. Strains engineered with the strong XylS/Pm expression system, were grown on M9-Minimal medium and glucose, and monitored spectrophotometrically. Surprisingly, KT2440 (pSEVA 438-eGFP) showed a slightly higher eGFP production rate (4970 ± 200 rlu/OD⁰·⁹) than the cell factory strain EM383 (pSEVA 438-eGFP) (4450 ± 120 rlu/OD⁰·⁹). Since P. putida exhibited a big gene expression leeway with no significant drop in growth rate, maltose binding protein (MBP) from E. coli and eGFP were genetically fused to increase the burden. mCherry was additionally integrated into the genome with a constitutive promoter as proxy for native gene expression. KT2440 attTn7::lacIP-mCherry (pSEVA 438-mCherryGFP) presented a prolonged lag-phase, a substantial reduction in growth rate to μ = 0.05 h⁻¹, accompanied by a surprisingly higher protein yield of YP/Xm = 108000 ± 12000 RLU/OD when compared to KT2440 attTn7::lacIP-mCherry (pSEVA 438-eGFP) with μ = 0.18 h⁻¹ and YP/Xm = 39000 ± 8000 RLU/OD. Delay of exponential growth by the fused protein might indicate metabolic stress. An increase in solubility and protein folding, as reported in literature for MBP fusions, could explain the increased eGFP yield. To rule out burden by protein toxicity, a stem-loop structure to prolong mRNA lifetime and gene expression, was constructed and is yet to be tested in shake-flask experiments. These results present a useful toolbox for the quantification of metabolic burden in the future platform organism P. putida.
More than 30,000 tons of menthol are produced every year as flavor and fragrance compound or as medical component. So far, only extraction from plant material or chemical synthesis is possible. An alternative approach for menthol production could be a biotechnological-chemical two-step conversion, starting from (+)-limonene, which is a side product of the citrus processing industry. The first step requires a limonene-3-hydroxylase (L3H) activity that specifically catalyzes hydroxylation of limonene at carbon atom 3. Several protein engineering strategies already attempted to create limonene-3-hydroxylases from bacterial P450s, which can be efficiently expressed in bacterial hosts. However, their regiospecificity is rather low, if compared to the highly selective L3H enzymes from the biosynthetic pathway towards menthol in Mentha species. The only naturally occuring limonene-3-hydroxylase activity identified in microorganisms so far, was reported for a strain of Hormonema black yeast in South Africa, but the responsible enzyme is not yet known.

We intended to identify the underlying P450 sequences in related fungi in order to make it usable for biotechnological applications.

Apart from the described Hormonema strain, we discovered different other fungi that can catalyze the intended reaction. In the genome of one of the strains we identified potential P450 monoxygenase-encoding genes. Using heterologous protein expression and biotransformation experiments in yeast, we were able to identify limonene-3-hydroxylases from Aureobasidium pullulans and Hormonema carpelatum. Further characterization of both enzymes in P. pastoris showed their high regioselectivity, their potential for limonene-based menthol production and their additional ability to convert α- and β-pinene into specific hydroxylation products.

References:
a model organism for oxygenic cyanobacteria. We have employed a mediated electron transfer process using potassium ferricyanide (K3Fe(CN)6) as electron shuttle between the cells and the anode surface. Since the current outputs of such a system are quite low, reproducibility was difficult to achieve. Careful optimization of the reactor set-up as well as a systematic screening of electrochemical interference from media components was necessary and subsequent media optimization was conducted. The resulting optimized system allowed measurement of current output and could be used to differentiate between electrons derived from light-driven water oxidation and those generated by metabolism of storage carbohydrates in darkness. Using measurement of intracellular glycogen pools, energy charge of the adenosin pool and degree of reduction of the nicotinamid pools allowed to characterize the process in more detail.

The results obtained here are currently used in combination with metabolic engineering to improve current densities. This not only provides deeper understanding of the electron flows in cyanobacteria and thus improves our understanding of photosynthesis but this also lays the basis for energy efficient light-driven production of green hydrogen without the generation of explosive oxyhydrogen.

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**064-MSRV**

**Responses to reactive oxygen and chlorine species in uropathogenic Escherichia coli**


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**063-MSRV**

**Formation of reactive oxygen species in an ATP-Synthase deficient mutant of Salmonella Typhimurium**

*S. Braetz1, P. Schwerk1, A. Thompson1,2, K. Tedin1, M. Fulde1*

1Freie Universität Berlin, Institute of Microbiology and Epizootics, Berlin, Germany
2Microbial Therapeutic Solutions, Norwich, United Kingdom

Bacteria with an increased tolerance against antibiotics without acquiring genetic resistance are termed persisters. When re-cultured in the absence of antibiotics, persisters show the same drug susceptibility as the original population. Currently, low metabolic activity, reduced ATP concentrations, as well as the activation of toxin/antitoxin modules are believed to be involved in persister formation [1-3].

Here, we investigated persister cell formation in an atp operon deletion strain of Salmonella Typhimurium by an exposition of 4-fold the MIC of ciprofloxacin (CIP). We examined the involvement of reactive oxygen species (ROS) in killing and performed persister assays under ROS diminishing conditions. In addition, we determined the metabolic activity, NADH content, and persistence in strains of S. Typhimurium harboring mutations in metabolic genes involved in pathways associated with persister formation through endogenous ROS production.

Despite reduced ATP pools, the atp operon deletion mutant was found to be more susceptible to CIP, although previous studies demonstrated that reduced ATP concentrations result in increased persister cell formation [2,3]. We show that deletion of the fre gene encoding flavin reductase in the atp deletion background partially restored persister cell formation to wild-type levels, as did ROS diminishing conditions. Furthermore, we observed higher levels of NADH, increased metabolic activity and elevated hydroxyl radical formation in the atp operon mutant.

Our results suggest that the lack of the ATP Synthase increases the metabolic activity through increased glycolysis, resulting in the accumulation of NADH/NADPH, which in turn drives the flavin reductase to elevated side reactions reducing ferric iron to ferrous iron, thus promoting hydroxyl radical formation via the Fenton reaction.


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**065-MSRV**

**TiS-dependent persister cells fail to induce an SOS response due to impeded protein biosynthesis**

*D. Edelmann1, N. E. Schmid1, B. Berghoff1*

1University of Giessen, Institute for Microbiology and Molecular Biology, Giessen, Germany

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are among the most common bacterial infections and mainly caused by uropathogenic *E. coli* (UPEC). UPEC differ significantly from commensal intestinal *E. coli* by their considerably larger genome, which enables them to survive and persist in the urinary tract. During UTI, UPEC experience an increased number of neutrophils that produce high levels of reactive oxygen and chlorine species (RO/CS), among which is hypochlorous acid (HOCl), the active ingredient of household bleach and the most commonly used disinfectant in medical, industrial and domestic settings. Due to the increased HOCl levels present in the bladder, we hypothesize that UPEC strains need particularly efficient HOCl-defense systems in order to successfully colonize the urinary tract. Therefore, our goal is to comprehensively understand the cause and effects of RO/CS stress in UPEC and identify specific defense strategies used to limit their damage.

Our growth and survival data suggest that UPEC strains are substantially more HOCl-resistant than the commensal *E. coli* strain MG1655. This is particularly significant since MG1655 is considered to be one of the most robust *E. coli* lab strains known. Moreover, the HOCl resistance of enteropathogenic *E. coli* is similar to MG1655 and significantly lower than UPEC. Contrary, no difference in sensitivity among UPEC, EPEC and commensal *E. coli* was observed in response to the neutrophilic oxidant peroxide excluding the possibility that UPEC resistance is non-specific to RO/CS in general. We found that expression of the HOCl-specific rclA gene was significantly more induced in HOCl-treated MG1655 compared to CFT073, supporting the idea that CFT073 employs additional defense systems against HOCl stress. Our transcriptomic data reveal the upregulation of UPEC-specific transcriptional regulators. Based on our observations, we propose that UPEC strains have acquired increased resistance towards HOCl, which likely contribute to UPEC pathogenesis. Identifying, characterizing and targeting HOCl-specific defense systems has the potential to increase the HOCl sensitivity in UPEC and mitigate HOCl-caused damage.

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**References**


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Bacterial persister cells are considered to be one of the major contributing factors of recalcitrant infections. Several different routes into a persister state have been identified until today, but reduced growth and cellular activity appear to be common traits. Previous studies have shown that the depolarizing toxin TisB contributes to persister formation in Escherichia coli during a ciprofloxacin treatment and that mild TisB overexpression renders E. coli extraordinarily persistent against antibiotic treatments [1,2]. New evidence suggests that TisB affects both cellular activity and protein biosynthesis. Microscopy and fluorescent protein production assays revealed that wild-type cells show massive cell elongation and protein biosynthesis even after 5 hours of ciprofloxacin treatment. In contrast, a regulatory TisB mutant with an increased population of TisB-dependent persisters stops both processes within minutes when exposed to ciprofloxacin. Reporter assays with the SOS response gene sulA as a marker for DNA damage indicate that TisB-dependent persisters effectively evade the impact of this particular antibiotic, likely due to inactivation of target molecules. However, we find the regulatory mutant maladapted when DNA damage cannot be circumvented, e.g. during a treatment with the DNA-crosslinking agent mitomycin C, which does not require a target to be active. We speculate that the inability of the regulatory mutant to mount an effective SOS response is explained by a global reduction of protein biosynthesis. The lack of an SOS response proves to be a severe disadvantage during a mitomycin C treatment. Hence, we observe a drastically reduced survival rate for a strain highly persistent against other antibiotic classes. We conclude that TisB-dependent persistence is yet another example of an antibiotic-specific endurance mechanism in bacteria.


066-MSRV
Investigation of the post-transcriptional regulation of the emerging cancer-associated bacterium Fusobacterium nucleatum

1F. Ponath1, F. Faber1, J. Vogel1,3
2Helmholtz Institute for RNA-based Infection Research (HIRI), RNA Biology of Bacterial infections (RABI), Würzburg, Germany
3Julius-Maximilians-University of Würzburg, Research Center for Infectious Diseases (ZINF), Würzburg, Germany
4Julius-Maximilians-University of Würzburg, Institute for Molecular Infection Biology (IMIB), Würzburg, Germany

Question:
The anaerobic gram-negative bacterium Fusobacterium nucleatum (FN) is increasingly gaining attention due to its role in diseases outside of its natural habitat. Recent studies found a significant association of FN with colorectal cancer (CRC) or adenoma tissue for which its increased presence correlates with worsened patient prognosis and resistance to common chemotherapeutic. Despite this, only few genes have been characterized and even less is known about the post-transcriptional regulation in FN and its possible connection to CRC. To remedy this, we take an RNA-centric approach of understanding the post-transcriptional regulation of FN by investigating key regulators such as small non-coding RNAs (sRNAs) and their function in its life style.

Methods:
We analyzed the primary transcriptome using differential RNA-seq (dRNA-seq) and total RNA-seq during growth stages and exposure to gut-associated conditions. Additional standard methods were used to investigate the function of newly identified sRNAs.

Results:

067-MSRV
Hfq-dependent and –independent mechanisms of RNA-based regulation in Caulobacter crescentus

*K. Fröhlich1
*University of Jena, Microbiology, Jena, Germany

The water-dwelling alpha-proteobacterium Caulobacter crescentus is able to thrive in nutrient-poor environments. Its lifestyle is controlled by an intricate network of transcriptional activation and repression mechanisms, differential phosphorylation of two-component system regulatory proteins, and proteolysis of regulatory and structural proteins. However, regulation at the post-transcriptional level - hence the contribution of RNA-mediated regulation - which has been identified as a central component of gene expression regulation in other bacteria is only about to be explored.

Bacterial small RNAs (sRNAs) are a heterogeneous group of post-transcriptional regulators that often act at the heart of large networks. Most sRNAs characterized today engage in direct base-pairing interactions to modulate translation and/or stability of target mRNAs. In many cases, the ubiquitous RNA chaperone, Hfq, contributes to the establishment of functional interactions. We have recently solved the X-ray crystal structure of the RNA chaperone protein, and determined its principal ability to promote RNA annealing. Here we report on the identification of sRNAs associated with Hfq in C. crescentus, and for the first time the characterization of Hfq-dependent post-transcriptional regulation in this organism. Using transcriptomics we have uncovered a large set of targets controlled by one Hfq-bound and have validated its activity both in vivo and in vitro.

In addition, we characterized a novel sRNA, ChvR, controlled by the conserved two-component system Chvl-ChvG. ChvR is expressed in response to DNA damage, low pH, and growth in minimal medium. We identified the mRNA of the
TonB-dependent receptor ChvT as the sole target of ChvR. Genetic and biochemical analyses showed that ChvR represses ChvT at the post-transcriptional level through the formation of two distinct base-pairing interactions. Finally, we show that ChvR-controlled repression of chvT is independent of Hfq, and therefore distinct from previously reported mechanisms employed by prototypical bacterial sRNAs.

The filamentous cyanobacterium *Anabaena variabilis* ATCC 29413 can differentiate heterocysts and akinetes to survive under different stress conditions. Under nitrogen limited condition, heterocysts provide the filament with nitrogen by fixing N2 [1]. Akinetes are spore-like dormant cells, which allow survival during adverse growth conditions. They differ from vegetative cells by their cellular structure, composition, and morphology and exhibit low metabolic activities [2]. They can germinate to produce new filaments under suitable conditions and are resistant to cold and desiccation [1].

Our research focuses on elucidating the mechanism of the morphological changes during akinetes formation and germination. Using scanning electron microscopy, we found that the mature akinetes have a wrinkled envelope structure and during germination, the cell size increases, surface smoothens, and the short filament emerged. Focused Ion Beam (FIB)/SEM images indicated the presence of cytoplasmic granules in immature akinetes and different layers consisting of exopolysaccharide and glycolipid in akinetes envelope. The akinete envelope was found to be required for maintenance of structural integrity and helps to withstand the osmotic stress.

Formation or deposition of the heterocyst glycolipid layer required the specific genes cluster including the gene *hetM* (Avg_2595). Since akinetes may have been the ancestors of heterocysts and share some common regulatory pathways for differentiation [1], we mutated the gene *hetM* and observed delayed heterocyst and akinete differentiation. Heterocyst formation was aberrant and the mutant was not able to grow without combined nitrogen source. Bodipy staining showed the absence of glycolipid layer in heterocysts and akinetes envelope in the mutant, which was further confirmed by electron microscope analysis and thin layer chromatography.

**References**


**068-MSRV**

The destructive side of gene regulation - or the impact of RNA degradation in stress responses

L. Yaoussar¹, G. Kostova¹, W. R. Hess¹, J. Georg²
¹University of Freiburg, Genetics and Experimental Bioinformatics, Freiburg i. Br., Germany
²University of Freiburg, Computational RNA analysis (Junior Group), Freiburg i. Br., Germany

Gene regulation is often investigated from a synthesis-centric angle. In this view, specific sigma or transcription factors activate or repress the transcription of specific genes in response to certain signals or growth phases. However, there is no equilibrium or turning off of gene expression without RNA degradation, the destructive side of the coin.

Furthermore, it is well established that RNA levels can be also controlled by post-transcriptional regulation, e.g. through small regulatory RNAs (sRNAs). Nevertheless, a standard gene expression analysis only shows the differences in the equilibrium RNA levels, but cannot disentangle if these are due to changes in the RNA synthesis (transcriptional) or changes in the degradation rates (post-transcriptional).

Here, we investigate both the differences in gene expression and the differences in RNA degradation rates at standard and iron stress conditions using the cyanobacterium *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803 as a model. The analysis allowed to estimate the relative shares of transcriptional and post-transcriptional regulation in the observed total regulation. As an example, the regulon controlled by the iron stress sRNA IsaR1² became distinctively visible. Other genes did not show a differential expression but the degradation rate was clearly changed, indicating a converse transcriptional and post-transcriptional regulation, which leveled out each other.

Furthermore, we detected different modes of regulation, e.g. degradation before the mRNA is fully synthesized or degradation not until completion of transcription. Other degradation patterns did not fit to any of these modes and indicate interesting alternative modes of degradation.

Finally, the dataset helped us to disentangle the complex transcriptional organization of the *Synechocystis* genome, with multiple instances of nested and alternative transcriptional start site as well as mRNA fragments of different stabilities, which together determine the fate of an individual transcript variant.


**069-MSRV**

Analysis of ultrastructure of akinetes and the role of *hetM* in heterocyst and akinete envelope formation

*R. Garg¹, I. Maldener²*

¹Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Organismic Interactions, University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany

The bacterial release of outer membrane vesicles (OMVs) is an important physiological mechanism of Gram-negative bacteria playing numerous key roles. One function of the release of OMVs is related to an increase in surface hydrophobicity. This phenomenon initiates biofilm formation, making bacteria more tolerant to environmental stressors. Recently, it was qualitatively shown for *Pseudomonas putida* that vesicle formation plays a crucial role in multiple stress responses. Yet, no quantification of OMVs for certain stress scenarios has been conducted. In this study, it is shown that the quantification of OMVs can serve as a simple and feasible tool, which allows a comparison of vesicle yields for different experimental setups, cell densities, and environmental stressors. Moreover, the obtained results provide insight to the underlying mechanism of vesicle formation as it was observed that *n*-alkanols, with a chain

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length of C7 and longer, caused a distinct and steep increase in vesiculation (12-19-fold), compared to shorter chain n-alkanols (2-4-fold increase).

**071-SCMCV**

Phenotypic growth heterogeneity of *C. glutamicum* under dynamic growth limiting environmental conditions


**Question**

Microorganisms can perform multiple metabolic functions, both in natural habitats as well as biotechnological production processes. The rates at which different activities are performed can vary between individual cells and the surrounding environment [1]. The molecular mechanisms with influence of metabolic heterogeneity have attracted significant research interest in the last years [2], but the difference in the environmental conditions which can affect metabolic heterogeneity have received little research attention. To investigate this, novel analytical methods and workflows need to be established.

**Objectives and Methods**

In this contribution, we introduce a microfluidic single-cell workflow for the cultivation of microbial cells at dynamic environmental conditions [3]. This system allows to oscillate between different environmental input parameters e.g. pH values or carbon sources.

**Results**

In a proof of concept study, we cultivated *Corynebacterium glutamicum* at oscillating medium conditions, switching between medium rich (complex media) and a buffer (no nutrients) with different oscillation frequencies ranging from hours to minutes intervals. We could show that the oscillating frequency has not only an impact on the overall growth rate, but significantly affects cell morphology. Especially for high oscillation frequencies (10 minutes intervals), cell physiology seems to be significantly affected [3]. Latest results, hypothesis regarding the observed growth pattern and potential application will be shown.

**Conclusion**

Our results show that the concept of dynamic microfluidic single-cell cultivation has a high potential to investigate cellular physiology at environmental perturbations. This paves the way for an improved understanding of how environmental conditions shape metabolic heterogeneity.


**072-SCMCV**

BiofilmQ, a software tool for quantitative image analysis of microbial biofilm communities


*Max-Planck-Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Marburg, Germany*

*Technische Universität Berlin, Department of Biotechnology and Biomedicine, Konstanz, Germany*

*Universität Hamburg, Department of Microbiology and Environmental Toxicology, Santa Cruz, CA, United States*

*Technical University of Denmark, Department of Biotechnology and Biomedicine, Kongens Lyngby, Denmark*

*Dartmouth College, Department of Biological Sciences, Hanover, NH, United States*

*Zentrum für Synthetische Mikrobiologie, Marburg, Germany*

Biofilms are now considered to be the most abundant form of microbial life on Earth, playing critical roles in biogeochemical cycles, agriculture, and health care. Phenotypic and genotypic variations in biofilms generally occur in three-dimensional space and time, and biofilms are therefore often investigated using microscopy. However, the quantitative analysis of microscopy images presents a key obstacle in phenotyping biofilm communities and single-cell heterogeneity inside biofilms. Here, we present BiofilmQ, a comprehensive image cytometry software tool for the automated high-throughput quantification and visualization of 3D and 2D community properties in space and time. Using BiofilmQ does not require prior knowledge of programming or image processing and provides a user-friendly graphical user interface, resulting in editable publication-quality figures. BiofilmQ is designed for handling fluorescence images of any spatially structured microbial community and growth geometry, including microscopic, mesoscopic, macroscopic colonies and aggregates, as well as bacterial biofilms in the context of eukaryotic hosts.

**073-SCMCV**

Characterizing host-pathogen interaction dynamics in single cells using scSLAM-seq

E. Saliba, S. Helaine, P. Hill, C. Toussaint

*Helmholtz Institute for RNA-based Infection Research (HIRI), Würzburg, Germany*

*Harvard Medical School, Department of Microbiology, Boston, United States*

During the *ex vivo* macrophage infection by the intracellular pathogen *Salmonella enterica* serovar Typhimurium, the host cell undergoes a two-step transition (i) from a quiescent state to a pro-inflammatory state (so-called M1) after invasion, (ii) from a pro-inflammatory state to an anti-inflammatory state (so-called M2) when the bacteria starts to replicate. These complex sequences of host cell fate changes happen in few hours and are fundamental to allow the bacteria to deploy its virulence program and establish an intracellular home allowing the pathogen to replicate or niche as a persister (Saliba et al, 2016; Stapels et al., 2018). How cells are able to transition from one state to the other remains an open question. Here we introduce a time-resolved single-cell RNA-seq method based on the measurement of nascent RNAs that allows to capture transcriptomics changes after infections.

Current transcriptomics methods have captured snapshots of these states but so far we have a very little understanding of trajectories meaning what transcription factors govern the phenotypic changes. Measurement of "fast" gene expression changes upon infections have been hindered by the presence of pre-existing RNAs and current single-cell RNA-seq have no true temporal dimensions. We propose here to use the measurement of nascent RNAs to record the cellular
history along the infection process. To this end, we used a method called scSLAM-seq that we recently introduced (Erhard et al 2019) based on nucleotide labeling, biochemical nucleotide conversion and single-cell RNA-seq. scSLAM-seq measures simultaneously total and new RNAs revealing the order of transcriptional programs that takes place upon *Salmonella* infection. scSLAM-seq is ready to be used for other bacterial infection models and to monitor drug response.


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**074-SCMCV**

Antibiotics impact on natural microbial communities - immediate effects on single cells and microbial diversity

"F. Calabrese*, S. C. Chen*, H. Stryhanuk†, F. Musat*, M. Brauns", H. H. Richnow, M. Musat

1Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung GmbH - UFZ, Isotope Biogeochemistry Department, Leipzig, Germany
2UFZ, River Ecology, Magdeburg, Germany

In the past decades, the use of antibiotics increased due to their application for treating human infections, preventing diseases in agriculture and fostering livestock growth in farms. This massive use resulted in environmental contamination with the consequent development and spread of antibiotic resistance, but also in antibiotic absorption in crops via manure as well as their run-off into streams, rivers and lakes. The currently unknown effects of antibiotics on the ecology and the physiology of natural microbial communities may have irreversible long-term impact on the biochemical elements cycling and the ecosystem functioning. Especially important are the effects caused by antibiotics on natural aquatic communities with direct impact on the water quality.

In the present study we used stable isotope probing in combination with nanoscale secondary ion mass spectrometry (SIP-nanoSIMS) to analyze the effects of two commonly used antibiotics Amoxicillin and Ciprofloxacin on single-cell microbial activities, measured as uptake of carbon and nitrogen, and 16S rRNA amplicon sequencing for monitoring the species composition and structure of two aquatic communities. River water samples were collected and incubated for 24 hours at in situ conditions in the presence of labelled carbon and nitrogen (13C-acetate and 15N-ammonium) at different antibiotic concentrations (1 µg/L, close to concentrations measured in water bodies; 1 mg/L, simulating potential spills or run-offs).

Our results show that single-cell C- and N-uptakes were strongly influenced by the antibiotics addition: the higher the concentration the bigger the gap between highly and lowly metabolically active cells. Single-cell activity measurements were supported by drastic reductions in microbial diversity or changes in species abundance, suggesting a strong selection pressure on the microbial community for both applied antibiotics at both concentrations.

We conclude that antibiotics presence has immediate effects on microbial activity, diversity and structure of natural microbial communities, already detectable after short term exposure.

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**075-SCMCV**

Using Click-CLEM to reveal the mechanism of the bactericidal effect of azido modified ceramides against *Neisseria meningitidis*

"S. Peters*, L. Kaiser², J. Fink³, J. Schlegel³, C. Stigloher², M. Sauer², J. Seibelt¹, A. Schubert-Unkmeir²²

¹Julius-Maximilians-University of Wuerzburg, Institut für Hygiene und Mikrobiologie, Würzburg, Germany
²Julius-Maximilians-University of Wuerzburg, Institute of Organic Chemistry, Wuerzburg, Germany
³Julius-Maximilians-University of Wuerzburg, Division of Electron Microscopy, Wuerzburg, Germany

Introduction: Antibiotic-resistant bacteria represent a major problem worldwide, making the identification of novel antimicrobial compounds a priority to achieve. Sphingolipids, including ceramides, are a diverse group of structurally related lipids. The sphingosine backbone alone shows antibacterial activity against a broad range of pathogenic microorganisms, including Gram-positive and negative bacteria and fungi. In addition, recent studies show a growth inhibitory effect of ceramide analogues against *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Neisseria meningitidis*.

Aim: In this study, we used a combination of click chemistry and correlative light and electron microscopy (CLEM) to analyze the mechanism of the bactericidal effect of azido-functionalized ceramides (ω-C6-Ceramide) against the human pathogen *N. meningitidis* (*Nm*) by observation of ultrastructural damage and the localization of ω-C6-Ceramide in *Nm* after treatment.

Methods: We first estimated the minimal inhibitory concentration and minimal bactericidal concentration of the ω-C6-Ceramide. Next, we used scanning/transmission electron microscopy (SEM/TEM) to observe ultrastructure alterations in *Nm* and utilized CLEM to observe the localization of ceramides in *Nm*. To visualize the ω-C6-Ceramide by CLEM we took advantage of click chemistry in which the azide of the ceramide reacts with a dye coupled to an alkyneg by strain promoted alkyn-azide cycloaddition.

Results: We observed ultrastructural damage of the bacterial outer membrane after incubation with the ω-C6-Ceramide as determined by SEM/TEM. By CLEM, we showed that the ceramide integrated into the bacterial membrane, which may explain the damage shown. Additionally, we found an accumulation of the ceramides in the bacterial cytosol.

Conclusion: CLEM, combined with click chemistry, offers a powerful tool to study the effects of antimicrobial compounds against pathogenic bacteria. Besides the easy handling, this approach has the advantage of avoiding artifacts because it precludes the need for genetic tagging or antibody labeling.

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**076-SCMCV**

Role of sRNA 5’-phosphorylation state for target RNA regulation in *E. coli*

"A. Schilder¹, B. Görlk¹

¹Max Perutz Labs, Vienna Biocenter (VBC), Wien, Austria
In *Enterobacteriaceae* RNA degradation is initiated by endoribonuclease RNase E. The 5'-end-dependent mechanism of RNase E cleavage relies on the conversion of 5'-triposphate (5'-PPP) groups of primary transcripts to 5'-monophosphate (5'-P) groups by the pyrophosphohydrolase RppH. 5'-Terminal-monophosphates can allosterically activate RNase E by contacting the catalytic domain (Bandrya et al., 2018, Mol Cell 72:1-11). Some base-pairing small RNAs (sRNAs) trigger degradation of their target RNAs by recruiting RNase E. In a previous in vitro study it was shown that the regulatory potential of MicC sRNA towards its target mRNA is higher when MicC is present in the 5'-P form as compared to the 5'-PPP form (Bandrya et al., 2012, Mol Cell 47:943-953). Thus, an RNA silencing pathway was suggested, where 5'-P sRNAs accelerate target turnover by allosteric activation of RNase E. Moreover, recently an RNA aptamer was discovered that provides so far the only tool to generate 5'-P RNA species in vivo on demand (Göpel et al., 2016, NAR 44:824-837).

In the current study, the aptamer was used to establish a conditional cleavage system allowing the release of 5'-P sRNAs to study their impact on target RNA degradation in vivo. sRNAs that are generated via primary transcription (e.g., MicC, RyhB) are highly unstable in their monophosphorylated forms in vivo. Accordingly, the 5'-P sRNA forms exerted a stronger or comparable regulatory effect on their targets as compared to the 5'-P variants. In contrast, the 5'-phosphorylation state has no impact on stability of sRNAs that are naturally monophosphorylated (e.g., CpxQ, SroC), as they are generated via processing. The latter sRNA class yielded comparable effects on its target RNAs, regardless of their 5'-phosphorylation status and the presence of RppH. In some cases, target degradation was even slightly more efficient in presence of the 5'-PPP sRNA as in presence of the respective 5'-P sRNA variant. Based on our results, it appears that 5'-P sRNA-stimulated target degradation by RNase E does not represent a mechanism operating in vivo.

### 077-SCMCV

**A gap junction analog confers cell-cell communication in multicellular cyanobacteria**

A. K. Kieninger1, G. Weiss2, M. Pilhofer2, R. Gang3, K. Forchhammer1, I. Maldener1

1University of Tübingen, IMIT Organisms Interactions, Tübingen, Germany
2ETH, Department of Biology, Institute of Molecular Biology & Biophysics, Zürich, Switzerland

Cells of the multicellular cyanobacterium *Nostoc* (Anabena) PCC 7120 communicate along the filament using direct cell-cell connections, the septal junctions (SJ)1. These proteinaceous structures traverse the septal peptidoglycan through nanopores2 and allow the exchange of small molecules between the cytoplasm of adjacent cells1.

We recently resolved the *in situ* architecture of the SJs and showed that they are gated communication channels, resembling ancient gap junction analogs3. The SJ are comprised of a tube traversing the nanopores, ending at each cytoplasmic membrane in a plug structure, which is covered in the cytosolic site by a cap module. By using different inhibitors or applying natural stress conditions we showed that the cap changes its conformation ceasing different inhibitors or applying natural stress conditions we showed that the cap changes its conformation ceasing gating of the SJs. We currently investigate the gating mechanism and the cell-cell communication between heterocysts, specialized in nitrogen fixation, and their neighboring vegetative cells.

1 Flores et al. Life 2019, 9
2 Lehner, *et al.* (2013), FASEB J, 27
3 Weiss, Kieninger et al. (2019), Cell, 178

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### 078-SCMCV

**Regulation of polar flagellar assembly in *Shewanella putrefaciens***

M. Schwann1, D. Mrusek2, V. Blagotinsek2, T. Glatter3, A. Khaledi1, S. Häußler1, K. Papenfort2, G. Bange2, K. Thomann2

1Justus-Liebig Universität Gießen, Institut für Mikro- und Molekularbiologie, Gießen, Germany
2Philippa Universität Marburg, LOEWE Zentrum für Synthetische Mikrobiologie, Marburg, Germany
3Max Planck Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Massenspektrometrie und Proteomics, Marburg, Germany

Flagella are organelles of locomotion and multiprotein complexes whose assembly and positioning requires complex spatiotemporal control. Generally, flagellar assembly is thought to be controlled in several transcriptional tiers, which is mediated through several master regulators. Here, we have studied the regulation of flagellar genes in *Shewanella putrefaciens CN-32* as a general model-organism. We show that the transcriptional order of events also exist in *Shewanella* but is not reflected at the protein level.

The major regulators, FlrA and RpoN, activate the transcription of the basal body building blocks and flagellar export gate. The sigma factor FlrA regulates the late flagella components. Notably, only a few of the early flagella proteins appear to be regulated at the protein level while most are present at normal levels also in the absence of the master regulators. The data indicates that strict control at both the transcriptional and protein level only occurs for key components for initiation of flagellar assembly (such as early C-ring components), motor activation (such as MotY) and for highly abundant proteins, such as the outside structures (such as hook proteins and flagellins).

In addition, we investigated the regulation of the MinD-like ATPase FlhG, which determines the number of flagella. A negative feedback of the FlrA-dependent gene expression is triggered by the interaction of FlhG with the HTH-domain of FlrA. These findings provide new insights into coupling of transcriptional regulation and assembly of polar bacterial flagella.

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### 079-RCV

**Controversies in bacterial taxonomy: The example of the genus *Borrelia***

G. Margos†, V. Fingerle†, A. Sing†, S. Cutler†, A. Gofton†, B. Stevenson†, A. Estrada-Peña†

†Bavarian Health and Food Safety Authority, National Reference Centre for Borrelia, Oberschleißheim, Germany

1. Introduction
The genus *Borrelia* was first described by Swellengrebel 1907 (Sekerman et al., 1989) with *Borrelia anserina* as type species. The genus currently comprises 42 named species (LPSN.bacterio.net) including 21 species within the relapsing fever-associated group (RF), 20 species within the Lyme borreliosis-associated group (LB), and one species (*B. turcica*) within the reptile-associated group. There is a wide diversity of borreliae not represented by officially named species, some of which form deeply branching unique monophyletic lineages within the genus.

In 2014 it was proposed to separate the genus *Borrelia* based on analyses of conserved signature insertions and deletions (CSI) and conserved signature proteins (CSP) of two of the groups, i.e. RF and LB species. This proposal was met with resistance from people working in the field and concerns for patient safety were raised. It was further challenged by reports using different methods.

2. Objectives

To summarize arguments for and against the recent genus separation proposed for *Borrelia* and to highlight the increasing diversity known to occur in the genus *Borrelia*.

3. Results

The percentage of conserved proteins (POCP) was used to show that all groups, RF, LB and reptile-associated, belong to the same genus. A second approach used phyloproteomics to conclude independently that a genus separation of *Borrelia* was not supported. There is overlap in ecology, clinical aspects and molecular features between clades that argue against splitting of the genus *Borrelia*. Information on members of the genus *Borrelia* is increasing but detailed knowledge on relevant features is available only for a small subset of species.

4. Conclusion

Current evidence and the increasing diversity that is being recognized in *Borrelia* suggest that division of this genus may not be justified at all, but is certainly premature. As consensus on a universal concept for bacterial taxonomy has not been reached, such taxonomic matters cannot be solved by individual research groups. Systematics is a man-made system to serve the community, thus the impact of decisions must be carefully evaluated by an interdisciplinary approach.

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**Objectives:** In this study, sediment and water samples from a landfill were used for enrichment cultures identifying the potential of microorganisms to degrade the synthetic organic filter OC.

"Materials and methods": Environmental samples from a sewage plant and soakage at a landfill site (Singhofen, Germany) were taken and used for enrichment cultures (inoculation 1 % (v/v)) with 0.35 % (v/v) OC as carbon source). Microbial diversity of the cultures was investigated by DGGE analysis. The transformation of octocrylene with selected strains was analyzed using GC-MS and LC-MS/MS.

**Results:** Enrichment cultures showed massive biomass formation of OC droplets. Four genera, assigned to *Gordonia, Mycobacterium* and *Hydrogenophaga* were identified by DGGE analysis of the OC-colonized cultures. By applying a “Reverse Discovery” approach the most potent strains *M. agri* and *G. cholesterolivorans* were identified. In the presence of *M. agri* a decrease of 19.1 % of OC compared to the control was observed by GC-MS after 10 days of cultivation. Performing LC-MS/MS analysis the transformation products DOCCA, CPAA and 5OH-OC were detected.

**Conclusion:** In this study, it was shown that applying a “Reverse Discovery” approach microorganisms can be identified for the degradation of hardly degradable synthetic chemicals such as OC. The most potent strain was *Mycobacterium agri* (Suleiman M., Schröder C., Kuhn M., Simon A., Stahl A., Freirichs H. and Antranikian G., 2019, Communications Biology, accepted).

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**081-EMV**

Effect of fertilizer regimes on microbial degradation of glyphosate in agricultural soil

*S. Aslam¹, L. Adrian², K. Nowak²*

¹Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Isotope Biogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany
²Technische Universität Berlin, Geobiotechnology, Berlin, Germany

The increasing use of pesticides has led to the contamination of the major environmental compartments including soil, water and the atmosphere. Glyphosate is one of the most widely used herbicide worldwide. Recently, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified this molecule as probably carcinogenic to humans which indicates its potential toxicity to ecosphere as well. AMPA and sarcosine pathways are the two widely reported pathways of glyphosate biodegradation with different environmental implications. However, the environmental fate of two glyphosate degradation products namely sarcosine and AMPA is widely unknown. This study elucidates the biodegradation patterns of these two degradation products in agricultural soil. In addition, effect of mineral fertilizers (additional N and P source) on glyphosate biodegradation and formation of non-extractable residues was studied. A soil sample from an agricultural plot not having prior fertilizer application was fertilized with triple superphosphate (P source) and 15N labeled or unlabeled Ammonium nitrate (P source). Fertilized and unfertilized soils were then spiked with 13C and/or 15N labeled molecules of glyphosate, AMPA, sarcosine and glycine at 50 mg kg⁻¹ soil. Spiked soil was incubated at 20°C in dark for a period of 75 days. During this period, compound mass balance including mineralization (CO₂), extractable & non-extractable residues and biomarker analyses (Phospholipid fatty acids and Amino acids) were estimated. Results have shown faster mineralization of glycine and sarcosine followed by glyphosate while AMPA had minimal mineralization (less than 9% even after 75
The degradation pathway of 2-methylpropene (2-MP) is elucidated on the genetic level in M. gordonae IBE200. A 6-component T4MO/isoprene-like monoxygenase is the key enzyme initiating the catabolic sequence.

1. Introduction

Methylpropene (2-MP) is used as precursor for polymer synthesis, MTBE/ETBE production, or as propellant. It is produced by catalytic dehydration of isobutane or in genetically engineered E. coli by fermentation of sugars. From activated sludge of an industrial WWTP we isolated a 2-MP degrading M. gordonae IBE200. Kotegoda et al. (2015) (doi:10.1128/AEM.03103-14) also reported a 2-MP degrading Mycobacterium sp. ELW1, the respective pathway proposal however based solely on metabolites excreted.

2. Question

The degradation pathway of 2-MP was to be elucidated on the genetic level in M. gordonae IBE200 as there are no metabolites excreted.

3. Methods

Substrate screening, multiple sequence alignment (MSA), inverse PCR (iPCR)/genome walking, whole genome sequencing, transcriptome analysis, gene disruption/knock-out, heterologous expression.

4. Results

Grows on: 2-MP (μ=0.03 h-1), n-alkanes (C6-C17), n-alcohols (C3-C6), but not with sugars, rich media, postulated metabolites, aromatics, isoprenoids and terpenes. In cometabolism with 2-MP, n-butane is oxidized subterminally.

MSA with oligos for alkene MOs and PCR resulted in a 1.5 kbp MMO α-subunit. Genome walking and iPCR resulted in a 10 kbp area containing a full 4-subunit sMMO including a two-component system response regulator. Full genome sequencing at HZI(2), Braunschweig, revealed a 6-component T4MO/isoprene-like MO next to the sMMO, epoxide hydrolase, alcohol- and aldehyde dehydrogenases, CoA-ligase, 3-component CoA-mutase (ICM) and a complete cluster for cobalamin synthesis. A degradation pathway was postulated, matching the metabolite based findings in ELW1, yet leaving unclear which MO used. Transcriptome upregulation analysis (1-hexanol and 2-MP grown cells) at FHG(3) Stuttgart verified the postulated pathway, favoring T4MO/isoprene-like MO. Gene disruption/knock-out: T4MO and IcmA with pK19mobsacB/pST-KO: didn’t work yet. Heterologous Expression: T4MO and Icm with VLB120.

5. Conclusions

This is the first 6-component T4MO/isoprene-like MO expressed in an active state.

Bile salts are steroids in the digestive tract of vertebrates and have a C5 carboxylic side chain. In the environment, they are subject to bacterial degradation. Aerobic bile salt degradation may proceed via different pathways: via Δ1,4,3-keto intermediates and 9,10-seco cleavage used by Pseudomonas stutzeri Chol1 or via Δ1,4,3-keto-intermediates used by Novosphingobium sp. strain Chol11. Side chain degradation is crucial for complete degradation in both pathways. In Gram-negative bacteria using the Δ1,4-pathway, the side chain is degraded by two sets of enzymes for aldolytic cleavage, with the first set releasing acetyl-CoA and the second set releasing the remaining side chain as propionyl-CoA from the steroid skeleton. However, neither genes nor intermediates of these reactions are found in strain Chol11. Therefore, proteome analysis of strain Chol11 was performed using the bile salt cholate and the intermediate 7α,12β-dihydroxy-androsta-1,4-diene-3,17-dione (DHADD) without side chain as substrates. With this analysis, a distinct up-regulated putative side chain degradation cluster was found containing genes for a putative acyl-CoA dehydrogenase (ACAD, nov2c221/222) and an enoyl-CoA hydratase (nov2c219/220) as well as the already known steroid CoA ligase Sc1 (nov2c230). In cross-complementation experiments with mutants of P. stutzeri Chol1, it was possible to re-establish complete cholate degradation by expressing nov2c221/222 in the respective ACAD deletion mutant P. stutzeri Chol1 Δscd1A. A Chol11 deletion mutant of one ACAD component (Δnov2221) was not able to grow with cholate, but with DHADD without side chain. During growth of mutant strain Chol11 Δnov2c221 with cholate, an unknown intermediate accumulated, which is currently being identified. These results support a side chain dehydrogenation function of the ACAD. However, the lack of a second ACAD and of aldolytic enzymes known from P. stutzeri Chol1 points at a different mechanism for side chain degradation which could be wide-spread in steroid-degrading proteobacteria. Therefore, further genes in strain Chol11 are currently being analysed for their role in side chain degradation.
patterns. Here, we analyzed 16 large-scale BPs using metaproteomics. All metabolic steps of AD were observed in the metaproteome, and multivariate analyses indicated that they were shaped by temperature, pH, volatile fatty acid content and substrate types. Biogas plants could be subdivided into hydrogenotrophic, acetoclastic or a mixture of both methanogenic pathways based on their process parameters, taxonomic and functional metaproteome. Network analyses showed large differences in metabolic and microbial interaction patterns. Both, number of interactions and interaction partners were highly dependent on the prevalent methanogenic pathway for most species. Nevertheless, we observed a highly conserved metabolism of different abundant Pseudomonas spp. for all BPs indicating a key role during AD in carbohydrate hydrolysis irrespectively of variabilities in substrate input and process parameters. Thus, Pseudomonas spp. are of high importance for robust and versatile AD food webs, which highlight a large variety of downstream metabolic processes for their respective methanogenic pathways.

087-EMV
Why should we care about microorganisms in the bentonite back fill material for the storage of high-level radioactive waste in deep geological repositories?
*N. Matschiavelli1, M. Dressler1, T. Neubert1, S. Kluge1, A. Schierz1, A. Cherkouk1
1Helmholtz-Zentrum Dresden-Rossendorf, Biogeochemistry, Dresden, Germany

Every year 12,000 metric tonnes of high-level radioactive waste (HLW) are produced worldwide. For the long-term storage of this highly radioactive waste, a deep geological disposal by using multiple barriers is favored. Bentonite is proposed as a potential material for sealing the space between the canister containing the HLW and the surrounding host rock. In order to investigate the microbial diversity and metabolic activity of naturally occurring microorganisms as well as their time-dependent evolution, we conducted anaerobic microcosm experiments containing bentonite and a synthetic Opalinus Clay pore water solution. During the one-year incubation at 30 and 60 °C, lactate- or H2-stimulated microcosms at 30 °C showed the dominance and activity of strictly anaerobic, sulfate-reducing and spore-forming microorganisms. The subsequent generation of hydrogen sulfide gas in the respective set ups, led to the formation of fractures and iron-sulfur precipitations. In microcosms that incubated at 60 °C, thermophilic bacteria dominated, independent from the availability of substrates. In the respective microcosms, no significant metabolic activity was detected and there was no change in the analyzed biogeochemical parameters. Our results show that indigenous microorganisms evolve in a temperature- and substrate-dependent manner. Potentially formed metabolites could affect the dissolution behavior of minerals and ions within the bentonite as well as the corrosion process of the canister material and require further investigations.

089-HYV
Results of the prevalence study on the occurrence of multi-drug resistant organisms in Saxony 2017/2018
*L. Sommer1, T. Hackel1, A. Hofmann1, J. Hoffmann2, E. Hernebach2, B. Köpke2, W. Sydow1, I. Ehrhard2, I. F. Chaberny3
1Landesuntersuchungsanstalt für das Gesundheits- und Veterinärwesen Sachsen, Humanmedizin, Chemnitz, Germany
2Landesuntersuchungsanstalt für das Gesundheits- und Veterinärwesen Sachsen, Humanmedizin, Dresden, Germany
3Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Soziales und Verbraucherschutz, Referat 23, Dresden, Germany

Introduction: Multi-drug resistant organisms (MDRO) play an important role in the German healthcare system. Their occurrence is partly registered via the obligation to report, but data on the colonisation of the population are largely lacking.

Objectives: The prevalence of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), multi-resistant gram-negative bacteria (MRGN) and vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE) was to be determined in three study groups (hospital patients, residents in nursing homes for the elderly and patients in medical practices). In addition, risk factors for carriage of MDRO should be investigated.

088-HYV
Colonization after MRSA-contacts – Is prophylactic separation of contact patients reasonable?
*A. Kühn1, P. Schipper1, B. Schock1, J. Stahlmann1, I. F. Chaberny1
1Universitätsklinikum Leipzig, Institut für Hygiene, Krankenhaushygiene und Umweltmedizin, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction: MRSA induced infections are associated with increased mortality. Accordingly, risk adapted MRSA screening is performed in in-patient areas at the University Hospital Leipzig (UKL) as recommended by the Commission for Hospital Hygiene and Infection Prevention (KRINKO) at the Robert Koch Institute. When identifying a carrier of MRSA several infection prevention measures are implemented, including separation of contact patients until negatively tested on MRSA. This procedure established more than 15 years ago at UKL is expensive and means efforts for the staff in treatment of these patients. There is no recommendation of the KRINKO regarding dealing with contact patients.

Objectives: How often occurs a pathogen transmission from patients with MRSA colonization to their roommates? Due to this hypothesis is a prophylactic separation of contacts appropriate?

Methods: To quantify the rate of MRSA transmission from indices to their contact patients, we collected all patients with nasopharyngeal MRSA colonization as well as their roommates from 2016 to 2018. Contact patients were observed over a six-month period after contact to a MRSA colonized patient. MRSA isolates of index and contact patients were spa-typed.

Results: In total 227 MRSA contact patients were included. At least 86.8% (n=197) were monitored once in a two-week period after contact. Another 4.8% (n=11) were tested on MRSA in a period of six months after contact. Contact patients were provided with one up to 15 control swabs. Altogether three contact patients were identified with MRSA. Spa-typing of two isolates showed different spa-types of the contact's isolates compared to their related index. In the third case, there was one positive PCR. Without a cultural isolate the spa-type was non-determinable.

Conclusion: Considering constantly high number of nasal swabs and declining overall prevalence of MRSA at the UKL, with a tracing rate of 91.6% no transmissions from indices on contact patients were detected. Our study revealed that preemptive separation of MRSA contacts is unnecessary. Therefore resources and costs can be saved.

089-HYV
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Conclusion: Considering constantly high number of nasal swabs and declining overall prevalence of MRSA at the UKL, with a tracing rate of 91.6% no transmissions from indices on contact patients were detected. Our study revealed that preemptive separation of MRSA contacts is unnecessary. Therefore resources and costs can be saved.
Materials & Methods: Screening for MDRO was performed as a point prevalence study in voluntarily participating persons via nasal, pharyngeal and rectal swabs or stool samples in 25 hospitals, 14 nursing homes for the elderly as well as 33 medical practices in 12 of 13 districts of Saxony. Suspicous isolates were further examined phenotypically and molecularly. Each participant completed a questionnaire on possible risk factors for MDRO colonization. The data were statistically evaluated by correlation analyses.

Results: 1,718 persons, 629 from hospitals, 498 from nursing homes and 591 from medical practices, were examined. In total MDRO was detected in 8.4 % of all participants. 1.3 % persons were tested positive for MRSA, 5.2 % for 3MRGN, 0.1 % for 4MRGN and 2.3 % for VRE. Nine persons were colonized with more than one MDRO. The following independent risk factors could be significantly associated with the detection of MDRO: presence of a degree of care, male sex, current antibiotic, antibiotic within the last 6 months, current tumor disease, peripheral artery disease as well as urinary incontinence. There was no significant correlation between MDRO detection and hygiene characteristics in clinics and nursing homes.

Conclusion: To our knowledge, this study represents the first survey on prevalence of different multiresistant pathogen groups in three study groups including outpatients in Germany, 3MRGN were most frequently detected and were also found in younger age groups. VRE were found almost exclusively in the surrounding of individual clinics.

090-HYV

Genome-based surveillance of clinical vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus faecium (VRE) reveals increased prevalence of vanB-type isolates of ST117/CT71 in German hospitals, 2010-2016

*B. Neumann1, M. Kresken2, G. Werner1, +R. Working Party4
1Robert Koch Institute, Department of Infectious Diseases, Division of Nosocomial Pathogens and Antibiotic Resistances, Wernigerode, Germany
2University of Applied Sciences Cologne, Cologne, Germany
3Antiinfectives Intelligence GmbH, Rheinbach, Germany
4Paul-Ehrlich-Society for Chemotherapy, Rheinbach, Germany

Background: Enterococci are considered as common cause of nosocomial infections, where treatment options are limited due to intrinsic and acquired resistances. Particularly vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus faecium (VRE) represent a burden, since well-adapted lineages are widespread established in healthcare facilities. In recent years, the increasing resistance to linezolid diminishes this last-line treatment option.

Objectives: Microbiological and genome-based analysis of VRE clinical isolates collected as part of the tri-annual resistance studies of the Paul-Ehrlich-Society performed at 25 medical laboratories in Germany, Austria and Switzerland in 2010, 2013 and 2016.

Materials and methods: A total of 166 VRE isolates was collected. Susceptibility to 18 antibiotics was tested by applying the broth microdilution method. Resistance breakpoints were assessed according to EUCAST guidelines (v. 9.0). Whole genome sequencing was realized with illumina technology. For high-resolution genotyping and to determine phylogenetic relations, cgMLST analyses were performed with the generated data.

Results: Different genotypes were identified and were assigned to distinct clusters in a phylogenetic tree, showing individual population composition for the different years. From 2010 to 2016, a change in vancomycin-resistance type from vanA to vanB was observed. In 2016, the predominant lineage was genotype ST117/CT71, showing the vanB-type; the predominant genotype detected in 2010 (ST192, vanA) was almost absent in 2016, while ST203 with vanA-type was present in all study years.

Conclusion: Structured surveys like the PEG resistance studies allow a snapshot of hospital pathogens' prevalence within a given time frame and geographical coverage. We observed the fluctuation of genetic lineages over time, like the rise of ST117 showing the vanB-type. cgMLST analyses determined various subtypes within ST117 such as CT71, which in turn ascertained a cross-hospital, regional or country-wide spread of distinct VRE strain types. At the same time, some lineages were present in all cohorts.

091-HYV

The ongoing challenge of vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus faecium (VREF) is of great public health significance due to limited therapeutic options. Recently, rising proportions of vancomycin resistance in enterococcal infections have been reported worldwide.

Objectives: We investigated time trends of VREF in Germany and Europe and sought to identify factors associated with an increased likelihood of vancomycin resistance.

Material and Methods: Data from routine vancomycin susceptibility testing of clinical blood culture E. faecium isolates from Germany (n=10,468) and all remaining 29 EU/EEA countries (n=51,071) in 2012-2018 were analysed using descriptive statistics and multivariable regression analyses. Data were obtained from the European Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance Network. VREF proportions were expressed as the proportion of E. faecium isolates resistant to vancomycin among all selected isolates.

Results: In Germany the proportion of VREF continuously increased from 9.1% (95%CI 6.9-12.0%) in 2014 to 24.4% (95%CI 21.0-28.1%) in 2018. The steady rise was also seen across the remaining EU/EEA countries, where VREF proportions increased from 6.8% (95%CI 5.4-8.5%) in 2012 to 18.5% (95%CI 15.7-21.7%) in 2018. Although rising trends of VREF were observed in all European regions, marked regional differences were found. For 2018, Western Europe showed the lowest VREF proportions (11.3% [95%CI 8.7-14.4%]), while Eastern Europe recorded the highest VREF proportions (33.0% [95% CI28.0-38.5%]). Multivariable regression analysis showed that adults (>20yrs) had an increased likelihood of VREF compared to children and adolescents (1-20yrs). Hospital units, such as ICUs (OR: 2.6 [95%CI 1.3-3.5]) and internal medicine units (OR: 2.0 [95%CI 1.0-3.7]), p = 0.039 were associated with an increased likelihood of VREF compared to the emergency department, which reflects patients with community origin of E. faecium infections.

Conclusion: VREF proportions are increasing in Germany and across all European regions. Increased awareness and
efforts directed at infection control and antibiotic stewardship are needed, particularly in hospitals, to combat the spread of VREF in Europe.

092-HYV

Detecting associations of antibiotic consumption and resistance in infections with *E. coli* with ARVIA – a new surveillance tool for integrated analysis of data from ARS and AVS

*A. Hoffmann*, M. J. Schneider*, M. Feig*, B. Zacher 1, H. P. Blank 1, I. Noll, B. Schweickert 1, K. Gröschner 1, M. Abu Sin 1, T. Eckmanns 1

1Robert-Koch Institut, Surveillance of antibiotic resistance and consumption, Berlin, Germany

Introduction ARVIA ("ARS and AVS – integrated analysis") is a new surveillance tool offering an integrated analysis of antibiotic consumption and resistance in hospitals based on data from the German antibiotic consumption surveillance (AVS) and antibiotic resistance surveillance (ARS) to support antibiotic stewardship. Analysis is provided for *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, coagulase-negative *Staphylococci*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Enterococcus faecium*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Acinetobacter baumannii* complex. Hospitals can access their results through an password-protected interactive database on the ARS-website.

Objective To evaluate ARVIA for detecting associations between consumption of antibiotics recommended for treatment of infections with *E. coli* and according resistances in participating hospitals.

Methods Data are analysed by time series analysis applying Poisson and logistic regression models as appropriate, with significance set at p≤0.01. Furthermore a test for trend is applied to describe evidence if there is a trend in antibiotic resistance not explained by antibiotic consumption.

We analyzed data from the first eleven hospitals participating in ARVIA. We describe the frequency of positive associations between consumption of First-, Second-, Third-, Fourth-generation cephalosporins, fluoroquinolones, carbapenems, aminoglycosides, tigecycline and sulfonamide/trimethoprim for treatment of infections with *E. coli* and according resistance, with no evidence for a variable other than antibiotic consumption affecting changes in resistance in the test for trend.

Results Positive associations were found for *E. coli* and the consumption of the following antibiotic groups (n=number of hospitals): Second-generation cephalosporins (n=2), Third-generation cephalosporins (n=3), aminoglycosides (n=3), fluoroquinolones (n=3), penicillins (n=5) and sulfonamide/trimethoprim (n=3).

Conclusion ARVIA is able to detect associations between consumption of clinical relevant antibiotics and according resistance in *E. coli* and is therefore a tool that can support antibiotic stewardship in hospitals.

094-MBT

Ongoing supraregional outbreak of clonal OXA-244-carbapenemase-producing *Escherichia coli* (CPE) in Germany, 2017-2019


1Robert Koch Institute, Postgraduate Training for Applied Epidemiology (PAE), Berlin, Germany
2Robert Koch Institute, Berlin, Germany
3National Reference Centre (NRC) for multidrug-resistant gram-negative bacteria, Medical Microbiology, Bochum, Germany

Background:

Infections with carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE) lead to considerable increased mortality and morbidity. Outbreaks occur mainly in hospitals and are most often due to person-to-person transmission. From 2017 to 2019 an increase of *Escherichia coli* with carbapenemase OXA-244 was detected at the German National Reference Centre for multidrug-resistant gram-negative Bacteria (NRC). We conducted an outbreak investigation to analyse spread and route of transmission.

Methods:

CPE infections and/or colonisations are notifiable and diagnostic laboratories are requested to send CPE-isolates to the NRC. We defined cases as patients with confirmed detection of OXA-244-producing *E. coli* from 2017 to 2019 in Germany. Whole genomes of OXA-244-*E. coli*-isolates were sequenced (Illumina) and analysed by multilocus-sequence-typing (MLST), core genome (cg) MLST and high-resolution SNP analyses. For epidemiological analyses RStudio and RegioGraph-software were applied. We collected case information on hospital stays, diagnosis and recent stays in other countries through a standard questionnaire for hospitals and cases.

Results:

The NRC detected 32 OXA-244-*E. coli*-isolates in 2017; 91 in 2018 and 110 until August 2019. cgMLST and SNP analyses of 152 selected isolates from 2017 to 2019 revealed 20 clusters of closely related strains. One major cluster harboured 63 ST38-*E. coli*-isolates; 39 correspond to data in the national notification system. Among these 39 cases 11 had infections, 6 of them bloodstream infections. Further male and female of all age-groups were equally represented, living and treated in 10 federal states of Germany. First 19 completed questionnaires showed that 71% of the patients were previously hospitalised and 69% had their family or a recent stay abroad.

Conclusions:

We confirmed occurrence of closely related ST38-*E. coli*-isolates with OXA-244 carbapenemase over a period of three years in German hospitals. Lack of an epidemiological link and the fact that 29% of the cases had not been hospitalised previously might indicate transmission other than by continuous spread from person to person or a non-healthcare-associated CPE-outbreak.

093-HYV

Ongoing supraregional outbreak of clonal OXA-244-carbapenemase-producing *Escherichia coli* (CPE) in Germany, 2017-2019


1Helmholtz Institute for Pharmaceutical Research Saarland, Saarbrücken, Germany

2Saarland University, Institute of Systems Biotechnology, Saarbrücken, Germany

3Saarland University, Institute of Pharmaceutical Biotechnology, Saarbrücken, Germany

References:

1Robert Koch Institute, Institute of Systems Biotechnology, Saarbrücken, Germany
2Robert Koch Institute, Institute of Pharmaceutical Biotechnology, Saarbrücken, Germany
3National Reference Centre (NRC) for multidrug-resistant gram-negative bacteria, Medical Microbiology, Bochum, Germany

Optimized bioprocess for production of high-value omega-3 fatty acids using recombinant *Yarrowia lipolytica*

*D. Dietrich*, S. Jovanovic*, K. Gemberlein 2,3, M. Kohlstedt 4, S. Wenzel 2, R. Müller 2,3, C. Wittmann 1

1Saarland University, Institute of Systems Biotechnology, Saarbrücken, Germany
2Saarland University, Institute of Pharmaceutical Biotechnology, Saarbrücken, Germany
3National Reference Centre (NRC) for multidrug-resistant gram-negative bacteria, Medical Microbiology, Bochum, Germany

*Yarrowia lipolytica*
1 Introduction

Long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (LC-PUFAs) have a variety of health benefits and enable various applications in the food and pharmaceutical industry. Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) is a LC-PUFA of recognized value. The omega-3 fatty acid is a primary structural component of the human brain, cerebral cortex, skin and retina, thus displaying a high-value food supplement [1]. A promising approach to derive LC-PUFAs is fermentative production using the oleaginous yeast Yarrowia lipolytica. The microbe naturally accumulates fatty acids and has proven good accessibility to genetic modification [2].

2 Objectives

Bioengineering has recently enabled recombinant Y. lipolytica strains, which express myxobacterial PUFA synthase cluster and accumulate LC-PUFAs [3]. Here, we focused on the development of a superior bioprocess to derive DHA using recombinant Y. lipolytica.

3 Materials & methods

An interdisciplinary approach of systems metabolic engineering was used.

4 Results

The production of DHA was successfully demonstrated, using different strains of Y. lipolytica, which expressed synthetic PUFA gene clusters. The created strains accumulated up to 104.8 mg/L in shake flasks. Subsequent bioprocess and medium design resulted in a fed-batch fermentation process, which yielded a DHA titer of 350 mg/L. Hereby, the synthesis of DHA was strongly enhanced among all fatty acids, which enabled a DHA content of 16.8 % of the total fatty acid pool [4].

5 Conclusion

Efficient production of DHA was achieved. Given further rounds of optimization, the developed approach has promising potential to enable industrial production of this high-value omega-3 fatty.

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096-MBTV

Utilization of cyanobacterial TCA cycles for the production of trans-4-hydroxy-L-proline

*F. Brandenburg1, E. Theodosiou2, C. Köster2, S. Klähr2, A. Schmidt2, J. Krömer2
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Leipzig, Germany
2Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Leipzig, Germany

In our project, we investigate the capacities of cyanobacterial tricarboxylic acid (TCA) cycles for the sustainable production of trans-4-hydroxy-L-proline (Hyp), a valuable chiral building block for the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industry.

The currently used method for production of Hyp is the acidic hydrolysis of mammalian collagen. It requires large volumes of solvent and produces high amounts of waste. Alternative production of Hyp via genetically engineered E. coli has been achieved via heterologous expression of α-ketoglutarate-dependent proline-4-hydroxylases (P4H). Both substrates, α-ketoglutarate and proline, are part or derivatives of the TCA cycle, respectively, and hence are provided by the host cells metabolism. Similarly, the co-product succinate is part of the

095-MBTV

A new metallophore from Variovorax paradoxus EPS

*M. Hofmann1, L. Malik1, J. H. Dietrich2, M. Nett2, D. Tischler1,3, T. Heine1
1TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Ecological Center, Freiberg, Germany
2TU Dortmund University, Department of Biochemical and Chemical Engineering, Dortmund, Germany
3Ruhr University Bochum, Microbial Biotechnology, Bochum, Germany

Metallophores are small metal chelating compounds produced by many microorganisms under iron limiting conditions. Due to their high potential for biotechnological, medical, and environmental applications, there is a great interest to identify and characterize new metallophores. Recently the siderophore production of Variovorax spp. was investigated and four different metallophores were found: variobactin, vacidobactin,1 variochelin,2 and imaqubactin.3 In order to further explore the metallophore production of the genus Variovorax, the metallophore of Variovorax paradoxus EPS was isolated and characterized. Therefore, the metallophore production was tested in different media and with different carbon sources. The metallophore activity was determined using a chrome azurol S assay. The highest amount of metallophore was obtained using low-phosphate minimal medium with glucose as carbon source. The produced metallophore was extracted with XAD and further purified using C18 columns. Experiments with different light conditions showed a photosensitivity of the compound. Bioinformatic analysis indicated some similarities, but also clear distinctions to the four known metallophores of the genus. This correlates well with the differences in the metallophore gene cluster, which shows a different gene organization and additional NRPS domains compared to metallophore gene clusters of other Variovorax strains. Although the exact structure needs to be verified by NMR analysis it is very likely, that we found a structurally new metallophore in V. paradoxus EPS.

TCA cycle and therefore further metabolized in the cell. However, carbon and energy are provided by the breakdown of glucose.

In autotrophic cyanobacteria, TCA cycles do not serve the same dominant role in provision of chemical energy in the form of ATP and reduction equivalents and thus the cells maintain only low fluxes. In fact, cyanobacterial TCA cycles were considered incomplete as the conversion from α-ketoglutarate to succinyl-CoA is not taking place. Fairly recently, several bypasses were identified and characterized like the so called cyanobacterial complete TCA cycle shunt via succinic-semialdehyde.

To produce Hyp in Synechocystis, we added an additional bypass to the TCA cycle. We fused the gene coding for the P4H of Dactylosporangium sp. strain RH1 with the copper-inducible petE-promoter, native to Synechocystis. In our latest results, we are able to produce significant amounts of Hyp from CO2 and show that it is possible to utilize the TCA cycle for the production of valuable chemical compounds. In future work we want to use our production strains to better understand the connection and regulation of photosynthesis with the central carbon metabolism, in order to improve the biotechnological applications of cyanobacteria.

097-MBTV
Evaluation of biological phosphorous removal effects in a full scale wastewater treatment plant
S. Günther1, C. Säring1, S. Müller1
1Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

Question

In the light of diminishing phosphorous (P) resources and mandatory P recovery there is, again, an increasing interest in P elimination strategies of wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs). The choice of P removal strategy will have a big impact upon the choices for recovery processes. Biological P removal may prove beneficial for some of the recovery strategies, since P can be relocated and easily recovered within the WWTP, allowing for cost effective disposal of the process wastes. Here, by means of extensive sampling and bioinformatics, we will highlight the relationship between choice of P elimination strategy and microbial community function in a full scale WWTP.

Methods

A full scale WWTP was sampled at several treatment steps over a long time period. Bulk abiotic parameters were measured. Together with cytometric information of the respective microbial communities bioinformatics analysis give insights on the influence of P concentrations on the microbial community.

Results

It was found that the effective biological P removal in the WWTP could, under certain circumstances, impair microbiological functions on other parts of the WWTP. While there was a high removal of P in the activated sludge system, the release of P in the anaerobic digester with average ortho-P concentrations of 0.6 kg P/m³ proved critical in a situation where the community was put under an additional stress. Exceedingly high P concentrations led to a complete breakdown of the biogas production process and a very slow recovery of biological functions.

Conclusion

Biological P elimination in a WWTP has several advantages like the lack of need for precipitation chemicals and precipitation technology and the facilitation of P recovery. On the other hand, high P concentrations, especially in anaerobic digestion systems of such WWTPs, can prove critical for the function of the microbial community. Therefore, either close monitoring of P or a versatile P recovery process is needed. The latter will also help to serve a circular economy by sustainable resource management.

098-MBTV
Bacterial magnetosomes as versatile tool for biomedical and biotechnological applications
F. Mickoleit1, D. Schüler1, V. Jörke2, R. Freitag2, C. Jörke2, J. H. Clement1, S. Geimer1
1Universität Bayreuth, Lehrstuhl Mikrobiologie, Bayreuth, Germany
2Universität Bayreuth, Bioprozesstechnik, Bayreuth, Germany

The biosynthesis of magnetosomes by magnetotactic bacteria like the alphaproteobacterium Magnetospirillum gryphiswaldense is an intriguing example of a mineralization process. Magnetosomes are monocrystalline single-domain nanoparticles of chemically pure magnetite enveloped by a proteinaceous phospholipid bilayer (magnetosome membrane) [1]. Because of their unprecedented properties such as high crystallinity, strong magnetization, uniform shape and size and the ability to engineer the magnetosome membrane by genetic means, the particles have been considered for many biomedical and biotechnological applications [2].

For their future use in the biomedical field we investigated potential cytotoxic effects of magnetosomes on eukaryotic cells. The vitality of a FaDu cancer cell line was shown to be not impaired when incubated with wildtype magnetosomes for up to 24 h, and no increased cell death was observed. Furthermore, short-term incubation with magnetosomes was found to be sufficient to allow for magnetic separation, with recovery rates of up to 60%.

In a systematic step-wise bottom-up approach we furthermore developed a versatile genetic toolkit for the generation of functionalized magnetic nanoparticles with several fully genetically encoded properties [3]. The optimized system was subsequently used for magnetosome display of ligands of the TNF receptor superfamly. Biological functionality of the particles could be demonstrated by efficient stimulation of sensor cells expressing the corresponding receptor, suggesting an optimal ligand density to be required for the highest cellular response [4].

Overall, this illustrates the versatile features of (engineered) bacterial magnetosomes, and our results provide a route toward the generation of novel, fully genetically encoded, functionalized biomaterials.

The necessity of novel antibiotics has been in high demand due to the increasing occurrence of multiresistant microbial pathogens. However, ongoing screening efforts for the discovery of novel active compounds have not been successful due to limitations in throughput and operational cost. For empowering antibiotic screening assays from complex microbial communities, we have developed a droplet-based optofluidic platform with integrated optical fibers. We combine our previously developed strategy for culturing microbial strains [1] with multi-color fluorescence detection using optical fibers [2]. Furthermore, a mixture of reporter strains is pico-injected so that millions of picoliter cultures can be screened for inhibition activity based on the independent survival signals of each different reporter. This approach demonstrates multiplexing capability in screening assays aimed at simultaneously discovering new bioactive compounds and exploring their molecular targets.

References


100-MBTV
Automated Fed-Batch process for microbial lipid production using volatile fatty acids
X. Qian1, M. Jiang1, “K. Ochsenreither2
1Nanjing Tech University, College of Biotechnology and Pharmaceutical Engineering, Nanjing, China
2Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, BLT 2: Technical Biology, Karlsruhe, Germany

1. Introduction

Microbial lipids are intracellular storage lipids comprised of triacylglycerols. They have been considered as alternative feedstock for biodiesel and oleochemicals. However, large-scale production of microbial lipids is challenged by high production cost, with feedstock costs as the main factor. Therefore, the exploitation of low-cost substrates for microbial lipids production is needed. Acetate is a waste- or by-product generated from lignocellulosic biomass hydrolysate, syngas and other anaerobic bioprocesses. Although acetate shows promising properties as substrate for biotechnological processes, however, acetate also inhibits microbial growth.

2. Objectives

In this study, lipid production from acetate and volatile fatty acids (VFA) as carbon source by using the self-isolated oleaginous yeast Apiotrunchum porosum DSM 27194 was investigated. Therefore, a novel fermentation strategy using acetate or VFA as the acid regent to control the pH was designed and the fatty acid composition under different conditions was analyzed and compared.

3. Methods

Automated Fed-Batch fermentations were carried out in 2 L bioreactors. Lipid content and fatty acid composition was analyzed by GC, whereas acid concentration in culture broth was monitored by HPLC.

4. Results

By supplementing glucose as the stimulant for microbial growth, a lipid content of 35-40 % based on acetate and VFA was obtained, corresponding to a lipid concentration of up to 11.5 g/L. Fatty acid composition of acetate-derived lipids were similar to vegetable oil, suggesting its potential for biodiesel production.

5. Conclusion

In this study, A. porosum was found to grow well on 10 or 20 g/L of acetate supplemented with 10 g/L of glucose as the stimulant. When acetic acid was used to maintain the pH and replenish the carbon source continuously and slowly, A. porosum could accumulate up to 40% lipids per dry biomass. These results demonstrate the promising prospect of economic microbial lipid production from acetate and VFAs through automated fed-batch.

101-MBTV
Microbiology impacting coffee culture – Defined fermentation for improving taste and quality of coffee
*C. Burkhardt1, P. Busch1,2, C. J. Bolten3, G. Antranikian1
1Technische Universität Hamburg, Institut für Technische Mikrobiologie, Hamburg, Germany
2Technical University Hamburg, Institut für Technische Mikrobiologie, Hamburg, Germany
3Institute of Material Sciences, Nestlé Research, Department of Biology, Lausanne, Switzerland

1. Introduction

Coffee is one of the most popular beverages in Germany and throughout Europe. Quality and taste of coffee is significantly influenced by the postharvest processing (fermentation, drying, roasting). For example, in so-called wet processing coffee cherries are treated unspecifically with naturally occurring microorganisms. Nevertheless, the development of new tastes and flavors and compositional changes of ingredients are limited by these natural procedures. Fermentation of coffee beans with specific microorganisms can provide new opportunities to influence and systematically improve taste of the coffee product.

2. Objectives

The aim of the project was to influence taste and quality of coffee by fermentation with defined microorganisms and roasting processes. This included the selection of pure strains and combination of appropriate microorganisms in order to improve the product properties.

3. “Materials & methods”

Microbial strains and environmental samples were stepwise adapted to green coffee beans as substrate. Different fermentation conditions (oxic/anoxic, high/moderate
temperatures) were tested. After fermentation, the coffee beans were evaluated by analysis of key ingredients with chromatographic methods.

4. Results

Fermentation conditions had high influence on the composition of coffee bean ingredients. Especially chlorogenic acid was influenced when it was oxidized at elevated temperatures. Several strains were able to growth on coffee and resulted in changed flavor, sugar, organic acid and phenolic acid profiles. Moreover, by enrichment of an environmental sample from hot springs of the Azores and a comparative analysis of the metagenomes, a community shift was observed and key species of coffee fermentation under elevated temperatures were identified.

5. Conclusion

In this proof of concept, we demonstrated the possibility of influencing coffee flavor and ingredient composition with selected microbial strains that have not been used before. Moreover, by a metagenomic approach we identified anaerobic thermophiles which are promising candidates for further fermentation experiments.

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102-MPV

Within-host evolution of bovine *Staphylococcus aureus* selects for a SigB-deficient pathotype characterized by reduced virulence but enhanced proteolytic activity and biofilm formation


1Veterinärmedizinische Universität Wien, Wien, Austria
2University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia
3Universidad de Buenos Aires and CONICET, Buenos Aires, Argentina

1. Introduction

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a major cause of bovine mastitis, commonly leading to long-lasting, persistent and recurrent infections. Thereby, *S. aureus* constantly refines and permanently adapts to the bovine udder environment. However, the genetic and molecular mechanisms allowing predominant *S. aureus* subtypes to successfully persist even for years inside the bovine udder are far from understood.

2. Objectives

In this study, we investigate *S. aureus* within-host adaptation in bovine persistent mastitis.

3. Materials & methods

We analyzed a set of *S. aureus* isolates, collected over the course of three months from a cow with chronic, subclinical and untreated bovine mastitis. To obtain a comprehensive picture of within-host adaptation, we carried out an in-depth investigation of the evolution of this pathogen within the bovine host including molecular, phenotypic and functional assays.

4. Results

Whole genome sequence analysis revealed a complete replacement of the initial predominant variant by another isogenic variant. We report for the first time within-host evolution towards a sigma factor SigB-deficient pathotype in *S. aureus* bovine mastitis, associated with a single nucleotide polymorphism in rsbU (G368A → G122D), a contributor to SigB-functionality. The emerged SigB-deficient pathotype exhibits a substantial shift to new phenotypic traits comprising strong proteolytic activity and poly-N-acetylglucosamine (PNAG)-based biofilm production. This possibly unlocks new nutritional resources and promotes immune evasion, presumably facilitating extracellular persistence within the host. Moreover, we observed an adaptation towards attenuated virulence using a mouse infection model.

5. Conclusion

This study extends the role of sigma factor SigB in *S. aureus* pathogenesis, so far described to be required for intracellular persistence during chronic infections. Our findings suggest that *S. aureus* SigB-deficiency is an alternative mechanism for persistence and underpin the clinical relevance of staphylococcal SigB-deficient variants which are consistently isolated during human chronic infections.


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103-MPV

Inter- and intracranial diversity in *S. epidermidis* prosthetic joint infection

Inter- and intracranial diversity in *S. epidermidis* prosthetic joint infection

1. Both, J. Huang, C. Lausmann, S. Weißelberg, H. Büttner, H. Rohde

1University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Medical Microbiology, Hamburg, Germany
2Helios ENDO Klinik, Hamburg, Germany

Background: While *S. epidermidis* colonizes the skin and nares of virtually all humans, the species also is a prominent pathogen causing foreign material associated infections. A plethora of factors promoting pathogenesis and biofilm formation has been identified. However, extend of and mechanisms behind adaptation processes to an invasive life style have been largely overlooked so far. In the present study, a collection of colonizing and corresponding invasive *S. epidermidis* isolates from PJIs was used to investigate pathogenicity factors facilitating the establishment of infection, and diversity driven adaptation processes fostering the shift from colonization to invasion.

Methods: Nasal swab samples and intra-operative joint fluid were cultured from all patients included. From each material multiple colonies grown from primary plates (nasal swabs: up to 30; joint fluid: at least three) were picked. Isolates identified as *S. epidermidis* were then analyzed by PFGE and whole genome sequencing. Phylogenetic trees were constructed and genomic association studies were conducted. All isolates were tested for biofilm formation, Agr activity, cell-cell aggregation, proteolysis, growth characteristics and antibiotic susceptibility.

Results: 133 PJI patients were prospectively included into the study. Twenty-eight cases were caused by *S. epidermidis* and thus selected for in-depth analysis. A total of 267 *S. epidermidis* genomes was analysed (3 to 12 infectious isolates and 1 to 12 commensals isolates per patient). Phylogenies were constructed and a genomic association study conducted. In 6/28 cases a nasal clone identical to the infectious isolate was identified. Interestingly, we observed marked intra-clonal phenotypic heterogeneity within the infection and in significant phenotypic divergence from the nasal clone. Preliminary results point to gene
expression regulation as the basis. Importantly, there was
evidence of altered antibiotic susceptibility profiles in
subpopulations of S. epidermidis within infections.

Conclusion: There is pronounced inter- and intra-clonal
diversity in PJI caused by S. epidermidis.

104-MPV
Staphylococcus aureus pathogenicity in cystic fibrosis
patients – virulence genes, phylogeny and horizontal gene
transfer
J. Lange1, D. Görlich1, *B. C. Kahl2
1University Hospital Muenster, Institute of Biostatistics and Clinical
Research, Münster, Germany
2University Hospital Münster, Institute of Medical Microbiology,
Münster, Germany

Background: S. aureus is the bacterium with the highest
prevalence in the cystic fibrosis (CF) population and it has
shown to play a vital role in CF airway inflammation. In light
of the clinical significance of S. aureus in CF on the one
hand and the lack of internationally accepted treatment
standards on the other hand, this study aims to identify
bacterial factors associated with pulmonary exacerbations.

Methods: Respiratory specimens (nose and throat swabs,
sputa) from 195 CF patients from 17 centers were studied
during an observational prospective multicenter study at a
central microbiology laboratory. From every sample,
phenotypically different (size, pigmentation, hemolysis) S. aureus
isolates were subjected to spa typing. The presence
of virulence genes (fnbA/B, clfA/B, cna, sdrC/D/F, sasG, eap,
emp, pvl, hlg, eta/etb, tst-1, sea-see, seg-sej) and the 4 agr
specificity groups were analyzed by single and multiplex
PCR. Clinical data were collected and correlated to
microbiological data to screen for links between bacterial
genetical traits and the patients’ clinical outcomes.

Results: Neither the number of S. aureus clones in the
patients’ specimens, the presence of prevalent and/or
dominant clones nor the quantity of virulence genes of the
individual S. aureus clone had an impact on clinical
parameters. None of the investigated virulence genes was
associated with exacerbations. However, for isolates
belonging to agr-types 1 and 4, there was a link to the clinical
status. Moreover, agr types showed a clear association with
the clonal background of S. aureus. Analyses concerning the
plasticity of the virulence genes revealed significantly
increased potential for horizontal gene transfer in case of
high bacterial density and the presence of several and/or
related S. aureus clones. Furthermore, the data point
towards increased rates of horizontal gene transfer in case of
antibiotic therapy.

Conclusions: Our results provide evidence for the concept
that rather the phylogenetic background than the presence of
specific virulence gene accounts for differences in S. aureus
pathogenicity. Horizontal gene transfer was high in patients
with environmental stress.

105-MPV
Staphylococcus aureus pneumonia: preceding influenza
infection paves the way for low virulent strains
*S. Deinhardt-Emmer1, K. F. Haupt2, M. Garcia-Moreno1, J. Geraci1,
C. Forstner1, M. W. Pleitz2, C. Ehnhardt3, B. Löftler1
1Jena University Hospital, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Jena,
Germany
2Section of Experimental Virology, Jena University Hospital,
Germany
3Institute for Infectious Diseases and Infection Control, Jena
University Hospital, Germany

Staphylococcus aureus (S. aureus) is a facultative
pathogenic bacterium that colonizes the nasopharyngeal
area of healthy individuals, but can also induce severe
infection, such as pneumonia. Pneumonia caused by mono-
or superinfected S. aureus leads to high mortality rates. To
establish an infection S. aureus exposes a wide variety of
virulence factors, which can vary between clinical isolates.

Our study aimed to characterize pneumonia isolates for their
venrulent capacity. For this, we analyzed S. isolates each from
nasal colonization, pneumonia due to S. aureus as a solely
identified pathogen (mono-infection), and pneumonia due to
S. aureus/influenza virus co-infection. A total of 70 strains
were tested for their genes for virulence factors and clonal
clusters. Additionally, the host-pathogen interaction was
analyzed through several functional assays in cell culture
systems of professional and non-professional phagocytes.

Strains from pneumonia due to S. aureus mono-infection
showed enhanced invasion and higher cytotoxicity against
professional phagocytes than colonizing and co-infecting
strains. This corresponded to the high presence of cytotoxic
components in primary pneumonia strains, such as defined
leucocidins, superantigens and serine proteases. By
contrast, strains obtained from acoinfection did not exhibit
these virulence characteristics and resembled strains from
colonization, although they caused the highest mortality rate
in patients.

Taken together, our results underline the requirement of
adhesins and toxins to cause pneumonia due to S. aureus
mono-infection, whereas in co-infection even low-virulent
strains can lead to pneumonia.

106-MPV
Pneumococcal adaptation to the nasopharynx and lung
during colonization and infection
M. R. Abdullah1, C. Hentschker2, D. Dittmar2, P. Hildebrandt2, S.
Michaikl2, U. Vöker1, S. Hammerschmidt1
1Universität Greifswald, Department of Molecular Genetics and
Infection Biology, Greifswald, Germany
2University Medicine Greifswald, Department of Functional
Genomics, Greifswald, Germany

Introduction: Streptococcus pneumoniae (pneumococci) are
versatile pathobionts colonizing the mucosal surface of the
upper airways of humans. This is the reservoir for
pneumococcal pneumonia, or sepsis and meningitis (PM).
Pneumococci adapt perfectly to the various host
compartments differing e.g., in nutrients and host defense
mechanisms. Thus, the proteome of pneumococci mirrors
the conditions in the host compartments. By employing an
in vivoproteome approach we recently indicated that the
competence regulator ComDE and oligopeptidase transporter
AiiB are essential for PM (Schmidt et al., 2019 PLoS Pathog
15:e1007987). Here we deciphered the proteome of
pneumococci during colonization and lung infection.

Methods: Mice were intranasally infected with GFP-
expressing serotype 4 strain TIGR4 or serotype 19F.
Pneumococci were recovered from mice by a
nasopharyngeal wash or bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL).
Pneumococci were separated from eukaryotic cells by FACOS
sorting onto a filter. After on-filter digestion with trypsin
peptides were measured using LC-MS/MS in a data-
independent acquisition mode (DIA) and analysed with the SpectronautTM software package.

**Results:** Three days post-infection we isolated TIGR4 from the nasopharynx and lungs, while we recovered 19F after 3 and 5 from the nasopharynx of infected mice. The in vivoproteome analysis of TIGR4 or 19F samples with 1-5 million pneumococci resulted in the identification of approximately 1000 proteins per sample. The in vivoproteome profiles were compared to in vitroproteome profiles of pneumococci cultured in complex or chemically defined (CD) media. In particular, the 19F showed 3 clusters with a clear separation of 19F cultured in CD or complex media and in vivosamples. Strikingly, there was no difference between the proteome profiles of 19F colonizing 3 or 5 days the nasopharynx. The strain-dependent differences in protein patterns and niche-specific adaptations will be discussed.

**Conclusion:** Pneumococci adapt to their specific host compartments and protein expression profiles differ from in vitro cultures. The differentially produced proteins are identified and their impact on colonization will be analyzed.

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**107-MPV**

Identification of drug-resistance determinants in a clinical isolate of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* by high-density transposon mutagenesis

M. Sonnabend,1 K. Klein,1 E. Walter,2 A. Angelov, R. Kluj, C. Mayer,1 I. Autenrieth,1 M. Schütz,1 E. Bohn1

1University of Tübingen, Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie und Hygiene, Tübingen, Germany
2University of Tübingen, Department of Biology, Microbiology & Biotechnology, Tübingen, Germany

*Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Pa) is one of the most important nosocomial pathogens. The incidence of multidrug-resistant strains is rising and the treatment options are continuously decreasing because Pa employs various resistance mechanisms including low permeability of the outer membrane and expression of efflux pumps and β-lactamases.

With the aim to identify potential new targets to restore antimicrobial susceptibility of multidrug-resistant (MDR) *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Pa), we generated a high-density transposon (Tn) insertion mutant library in a MDR Pa bloodstream isolate (1D40). The depletion of Tn insertion mutants upon exposure to cefepime or meropenem was measured in order to determine the common resistome for these clinically important anti-pseudomonal β-lactam antibiotics. The approach was validated by clean deletions of genes involved in peptidoglycan synthesis/recycling such as the lytic transglycosylase MltG, the murein endopeptidase MepM1, the MurNAc/GlcNAc-kinase AmgK and the uncharacterized protein YgfB that all were identified in our screen as playing a decisive role for survival of treatment with cefepime or meropenem. We found that the antibiotic resistance of Pa can be overcome by targeting usually non-essential genes that turn essential in the presence of therapeutic concentrations of antibiotics. For all validated genes, we demonstrated that their deletion leads to the reduction of ampC expression, resulting in a significant decrease of β-lactamase activity and consequently these mutants partly or completely lost resistance against cephalosporins, carbapenems and acylaminopenicillins. In summary, the determined resistome may comprise promising targets for developing drugs that could be used to restore the sensitivity towards existing antibiotics specifically in MDR strains of Pa. Current studies to unravel the function of YgfB will be discussed.

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**108-MPV**

Genome-based analyses of *Klebsiella pneumoniae* to detect possible host-associations, host-adaptation and effects on virulence

*K. Klaper,1 L. Heinrich1, R. Gerlach1, S. Fuchs1, Y. Pfeifer1, G. Werner1

Robert Koch Institut, Infectious Diseases, Wernigerode, Germany

**Introduction:** The increase of "classical" *K. pneumoniae* (cKP) with extended-spectrum β-lactamase production (ESBL-cKP) poses a serious threat to health care. In the last 10 years a new "hypervirulent" but mainly drug-susceptible pathotype of *K. pneumoniae* (hvKP) emerged, associated with community-acquired infections in otherwise healthy individuals. Nowadays, there are more and more reports on antibiotic-resistant hvKP, affecting treatment options in ambulatory care and causing nosocomial outbreaks once introduced into hospitals. Traditionally, hvKP are defined as invasive strains of capsular serotypes K1 and K2 that are string test and rmpA/A2 positive. However a consensus definition is still missing.

**Objectives:** We investigated genetic characteristics associated with host colonisation or invasion, in order to understand the pathogenicity of hvKP strains.

**Materials and Methods:** A collection of *K. pneumoniae* isolates from different German hospitals, including susceptible cKP, ESBL-cKP and hvKP isolates were subjected to whole genome sequencing (WGS). Phenotypic characterization was done by growth experiments and antibiotic susceptibility assays. To analyse macrophage-mediated phagocytosis, RAW264.7 cells were infected with *K. pneumoniae* isolates and intracellular bacteria were quantified.

**Results:** WGS-based analyses showed that the majority of K1 isolates belonged to the clonal complex CC23, whereas non-K1 isolates were clonally diverse. ESBL and carbapenemases genes were present regardless of the *K. pneumoniae* sequence type and several multidrug-resistant hvKP were detected. Not all isolates harbouring virulence-associated genes displayed a positive string test. Interestingly, in vitro phagocytosis assays revealed a lower phagocytosis rate for hvKP than for cKP and ESBL-Kp.

**Conclusion:** Our analyses revealed the emergence of ESBL and carbapenemases-producing hvKP isolates in German hospitals. The string test alone is not suitable to define hvKP; the combination of WGS-based, experimental and clinical data is needed for a reliable identification of hvKP isolates. Further studies are necessary to identify those virulence factors promoting resistance to phagocytosis.

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**109-MPV**

Prevalence and diversity of the colibactin-encoding *pks* island in prokaryotes

*H. Wami,1 A. Wallenstein,1 K. Tegelkamp1, R. von Buenau1, U. Dobrindt1

1Institute of Hygiene, Universitätsklinikum Münster, Microbial Genome Plasticity, Muenster, Germany
2Ardeypharma GmbH, Herdecke, Germany

**Introduction:** The bacterial polyketide toxin colibactin is a secondary metabolite that interferes with the eukaryotic cell cycle by causing double-stranded DNA breaks. The genotoxin is discussed to be linked to bacterially induced colorectal cancer in humans. Colibactin is encoded by a
highly conserved, ca. 50-kb genomic (pks) island, which is predominantly found in the family Enterobacteriaceae, especially Escherichia coli and Klebsiella pneumoniae isolates from diverse sources and hosts.

Objectives: To increase our understanding of the prevalence and diversity of the pks island on the genome level.

Methods: We performed a genome level study on the pks islands found in all publically available prokaryotic genomes (NCBI). We used KAlign for multiple sequence alignment of the unique pks islands found in prokaryotes. A phylogenetic tree was generated with RAxML from polymorphisms in core positions of the island.

Results: We found that ca. 7% of E. coli (mainly phylogroup B2) and K. pneumoniae, 40% of C. koseri, and 44% of K. aerogenes isolates screened harbored the island. The vast majority of pks island positive strains belonged to E. coli sequence types (ST) 73 and 95 and K. pneumoniae ST 258. Various lineages of pks islands were found in Enterobacteriaceae, which could also be associated with the presence and lineages of the yersiniabactin island, which is closely positioned in the enterobacterial genome.

Conclusions: Our data indicate that the pks island is stably maintained mainly in enterobacterial species such as E. coli, K. pneumoniae and C. koseri, but can also be found in other Enterobacteriaceae. Phylogroup- and even lineage-specific pks island variants can be described. Our study provides deeper insights into the evolution, dynamics and structure of the pks island in Enterobacteriaceae.

111-EPV
Changes in the sterole composition of Candida glabrata can be linked to increasing Amphotericin B tolerance

A. M. Aldejohann1, E. Huprich1, C. Müller2, R. Martin3, O. Kurzai1,4
1University of Würzburg, Institute for Hygiene and Microbiology, Würzburg, Germany
2Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, Department of Pharmacy, Munich, Germany
3Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology-Hans Knöll Institute-Research Group Fungal Septomics, Jena, Germany
4Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology-Hans Knöll Institute-National Reference Center for Invasive Fungal Infections, Jena, Germany

Introduction

Candida glabrata acts as a major fungal pathogen often leading to severe bloodstream infections in immunocompromised and critically ill patients. As a haploid organism it has developed various mechanisms of resistance to antifungals like Echinocandins (first line therapy in candidaemia) and Azols. Amphotericin B - a polyene antifungal substance- is the drug of choice in treating multiresistant Candida glabrata strains due to a broad susceptibility pattern and little-known resistance as it forms extramembranous aggregates which extract ergosterol out of the fungal cell membrane.

Objectives

A total number of 115 clinical C. glabrata isolates from the NRZmyk strain collection -obtained between 2015 and 2018- were screened for Amphotericin B tolerance. The sterol composition of the fungal cell membrane was analysed in positive found isolates to narrow down dysfunctional enzymes involved in ergosterol biosynthesis, which lead to mutated ERG genes.

Materials and Methods

Screening was performed by microdilution according to EUCAST standards. Sterole analysis was done by MS and compared to a reference strain. Suspected ERG gens were amplified by PCR and consequently sequenced.

Results

A total of 27 strains were found to be tolerant to Amphotericin B (visible growth under 1µg/ml) and eligible for further sterole analysis. Some strains showed an increase of Ergosterol precursor sterols in the fungal cell membrane as a result of defects in enzymes linked to Ergosterol biosynthesis (i.e. C-8 sterol isomerase). A concordant decrease in Ergosterol itself as the major target of polyenes was observed. PCR revealed relevant mutations in the encrypting ERG gene family explaining the loss of function. In addition, one strain showed a dysfunctional C5-sterole desaturase
pointing to a mutation in ERG3 leading to the same decrease in Ergosterol.

Conclusion

Tolerance to Amphotericin B in C. glabrata is still a rare phenomenon. However, our findings indicate that this yeast is able to adapt to and withstand Amphotericin B by alterations in the sterol cell wall composition, exchanging the main target Ergosterol to its non-toxic precursor sterols.

112-EPV
Living with mold? Decontamination and prevention of fungal growth in manned spaceflight
S. M. Koch1, M. Cortesao1, C. E. Heilweg1, D. Müller2, M. Fieberbrandt1, R. Müller1
1German Aerospace Center (DLR), Cologne, Institute for Aerospace Medicine, Radiation Biology, Cologne, Germany
2Institute of Functional Materials, Material Engineering Center Saarland (MECS), Department of Material Science of Engineering, Saarland, Germany
3Institute for Electrical Engineering and Plasma Technology (AEPT), Bochum, Germany

Microorganisms such as archaea, bacteria and filamentous fungi (known as "mold") are an integral part of our human body and our natural environment on Earth. When human space exploration started around 1961, microbial life has been brought along with astronauts to our space stations Mir (Russian Space Station) and ISS (International Space Station).

Filamentous fungi are one of the most abundant pathogens on earth. They emit mycotoxins to our environment, causing allergies and various disease patterns, especially in immunosuppressed humans, which lead to up to over 300 Million fungal infections worldwide. Fungal spores can be a major threat to humans inside a constraint living environment and research addressing this particular health hazard is still underrepresented. The "black mold", is a filamentous fungus called Aspergillus niger and one of the main contaminants on the ISS [1, 2]. It is able to spread its spores easily under microgravity and can survive under extreme conditions [3]. Since one of the main sources of fungal infections is due to the uptake of spores via contaminated food or inhalation, a closed built environment like a space station is a major risk factor for astronauts. Due to that, basic research on the resistance of fungal spores towards extreme environments needs to be addressed more. Knowledge about how to effectively constrain and prevent fungal growth in closed environments could not only be applied to human spaceflight but lead to improvements of clean rooms and hospital building materials. In order to find possibilities for efficient decontamination on one hand and targeted preventions against mold on the other hand, investigations of plasma sterilization and antifungal surface development are conducted.


114-EPV
Structural redesign of antifungal peptides and analysis of their antifungal activity
C. Feurstein1, S. Jung1, V. Meyer1
1Technische Universität Berlin, Applied and Molecular Microbiology, Berlin, Germany

Fungal infections lead to estimated 1.6 million deaths in human and destroy one third of crop harvest every year. Antifungal peptides (AFPs), which are produced by fungi represent a strong tool to combat fungal infections in human and plants. AFPs have several characteristics in common including but not limited to a net cationic charge, an amphipathic surface, intramolecular disulfide bridges and predominant β-sheet formation, a γ-core motive as well as high membrane effectiveness.

In this study new chimeric antifungal peptides (cAFP) are designed, whose background are the three naturally occurring antifungal peptides AFP, PAF and AnAFP...
produced by *Aspergillus giganteus*, *Penicillium chrysogenum* and *Aspergillus niger* respectively. The new cAFP produced in the heterologous expression system *Pichia pastoris* will be used to perform a susceptibility assay to investigate their antimicrobial activity towards various bacteria, yeast and filamentous fungi.

Additionally, molecular dynamics simulation is performed to further investigate the interaction between the natural and/or chimeric AFPs and the plasma membrane of filamentous fungus and the model organism *A. niger*. Information about the mode of action and specificity gained from these experiments can be used to further improve and redesign AFPs while maintaining their 3D structure, including the β-barrel and the y-core motive.

Recombination of these peptides and an improved understanding of their mode of action promises to be a powerful approach to tackle multiple pathogens without causing harm to humans, including their bacteriome, or plants.

115-DKM
Impact of molecular assays on malaria screening and differentiation
E. Altangerel1, U. Loderstädt2, E. Tannich3, *H. Frickmann*1,4
1Bundeswehr Hospital Hamburg, Microbiology and Hygiene, Hamburg, Germany
2Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine Hamburg, Diagnostic Department, Hamburg, Germany
3Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine Hamburg, Head, Hamburg, Germany
4University Medicine Rostock, Institute for Medical Microbiology, Rostock, Germany

Introduction: Round about 1000 malaria infections per year are imported to Germany, which is hardly enough to maintain high-level routine skills in malaria microscopy outside specialized or reference centers. In European guidelines, less investigator-dependent molecular diagnostic approaches are encouraged for special indications, but the question arises whether they may be generally the better option for screening situations as well as for differentiation on species level.

Objectives: The study was performed to assess reliability of different available PCR approaches for primary malaria screening to replace thick blood film assessment.

Materials & Methods: In this study, we compared traditional microscopy, three commercial nucleic-acid amplification tests (NAT) for malaria (1 loop-mediated amplification assay, 2 multiplex real-time PCR tests and one in-house real-time multiplex PCR with a collection of 1020 well characterized EDTA blood samples from patients with suspected or confirmed malaria, which were sent for initial or confirmation diagnostics to the German National Reference Center for Tropical Pathogens Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine Hamburg. At least two concordantly positive results were demanded to define a sample as confirmed positive for malaria.

Results: Within the 1020 assessed samples, a total of 765 (75%) concordantly negative and 223 (21.9%) concordantly positive results of the four molecular tests were obtained, comprising both samples above and below the microscopic threshold. In contrast, discordant results were observed in 32 (3.1%) instances. For genus-specific assays, detected sensitivity and specificity ranged from 96.4% to 98.4% and from 99.6% to 99.9%, respectively. For species-specific assays, 94.0%-97.6% sensitivity and 99.6%-100% specificity were found. False negative molecular test results comprised microscopically negative samples, samples at the microscopic detection threshold as well as quantitatively less abundant species in mixed infections.

Conclusions: We recorded excellent test characteristics of all assessed molecular assays with only minor differences, suggesting suitability for initial screening.

116-DKM
GUArDIAN – Genome based ultrafast detection of bioterrorism agents
*K. Müller*1, S. Daßen2, J. Stehr2, L. Ullerich2, F. Bürgens2, S. Holowachuk1, K. Stoeckler1
1Institut für Mikrobiologie der Bundeswehr, München, Germany
2GNA Biosolutions GmbH, Martinsried, Germany
3Defence Research and Development Canada Suffield Centre, Suffield, Canada

Molecular diagnostics has become inevitable in the rapid identification of a majority of infectious diseases. In many cases the detection of nucleic acid by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) serves as the gold standard technique for the identification of various infectious agents. It offers many advantages and delivers reliable results with high sensitivity and specificity in one to two hours. However, applicability into the field for rapid on-site diagnostics as it is needed in the investigation of bioterrorist outbreak scenarios is limited. A widely used and portable alternative to PCR are immunochromatographic lateral flow assays (LFAs). They are commercially available and deliver results in just 15 minutes. Unfortunately, they are significantly less sensitive and less specific and can therefore only be used as a rough starting point for further molecular analyses. Here we present an alternative and more sensitive method for the rapid identification of infectious agents using Pulse Controlled Amplification (PCA). PCA is a new class of molecular technology that combines ultrafast wire-based nucleic acid amplification with sample purification and delivers semi-quantitative results in less than 15 minutes. It runs on a small portable battery-powered platform and thus can be taken directly into the field. To test it in the field, we developed a modified assay tailored to our requirements with a focus on fast and easy workflow for performing the PCA wearing our standard NBC protective clothing. Here we show data of our first successful test that we performed during the international CBRN live agent exercise "Precise Response" in 2019 in Suffield, Canada. We were able to detect *Yersinia pestis* via PCA on site in a simulated bioterrorist scenario, without the need of nucleic acid extraction or difficult pipetting steps. Furthermore, we present first results of validation experiments of this newly developed assay along with an outlook into further development and possible applications. In conclusion, PCA holds great potential as a more sensitive and more specific alternative to conventional LFAs for the fast investigation of outbreak scenarios.

117-DKM
Sternum osteomyelitis – impact of molecular and microscopic diagnostics
*J. Kikhney*1, N. Spindler2, A. Wießner1, A. Moter1
1Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Biofilmzentrum, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Infektiomsimmunologie, Berlin, Germany
2Universitätsklinikum, Klinik und Poliklinik für Orthopädie, Unfallchirurgie und Plastische Chirurgie, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction
Mediastinitis, in particular after open-heart surgery, is a devastating infection in a singularly vulnerable patient group.

We questioned if biofilms might play a role in the sternum wounds.

**Objectives**

Objectives of this study were to analyze the presence and spatial formation of microorganisms in clinical osteomyelitis samples. Special emphasis was laid on the detection of biofilms in the samples.

**Materials & methods**

In a pilot study, we investigated 42 sternum samples from 12 putative osteomyelitis patients from the University clinic of Leipzig by the molecular imaging technique fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) in combination with PCR and sequencing. Using FISH, we mapped the presence and formation of microorganisms throughout the samples.

**Results**

We found microorganisms by FISH/PCR in all samples investigated, thus confirming the clinical diagnosis of sternum osteomyelitis. In nine cases, we found microscopically single microorganisms that could not be detected by PCR. In three cases, FISH detected single microorganisms, microcolonies and biofilms, respectively. These were identified by PCR (3/3) and FISH (2/3) as *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Enterococcus faecium*, and *S. epidermidis*.

**Conclusion**

This pilot study confirmed that FISH/PCR detected microorganisms in mediastinitis samples, shedding light on the formation, location, and invasiveness of the bacteria in the tissue. We were able to interpret the finding of typical skin flora members, thus discriminating between contamination during sampling and infection. Skin flora may cause severe infections and should not be ignored in routine. Out of 12 patients, we found one case featuring mature biofilms. Therefore, mediastinitis is not always associated with biofilms, but microorganisms show a patchy distribution in the tissue.

**119-DKM**

**Prediction of antibiotics resistance in methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* from whole genome sequencing data**

D. De Coninck, L. Hauben, S. Guedes, “K. De Rauw”

1bioMérieux, Clinical Unit, Sint-Martens-Latem, Belgium
2bioMérieux, Marcy, France

**Introduction**

Widespread and increasing use of antibiotics has driven the emergence of antibiotic resistant bacteria. Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is of particular concern in health care as it is resistant to commonly used antibiotics and causes worldwide outbreaks. At the same time, whole genome sequencing (WGS) is becoming the method of choice for rapid and accurate identification and characterization of bacteria.

**Objectives**

To predict antibiotics resistance in MRSA strains from WGS data.

**Materials & Methods**

The BioNumerics *S. aureus* genotyping plugin v0.3 was used to predict antibiotics resistance from genome assemblies of 440 diverse MRSA strains collected from 30 countries (Castillo-Ramirez et al. 2012, Holden et al. 2013, Hsu et al. 2015). The plugin uses a BLAST-based approach with 90% minimum identity and target coverage, both for whole genes and mutations. Starting from the raw sequencing data *de novo* genomes were assembled with Spades v3.7.1 in BioNumerics v7.6.3. Predictions of the plugin were compared to classically obtained AST results to calculate specificity and sensitivity of the predictions.

**Results**

Predictions of 15 antibiotics (ciprofloxacin, clindamycin, daptofomycin, erythromycin, fosfomycin, fusidic acid, gentamycin, linezolid, tetracycline, mupirocin, oxacillin,
penicillin, rifampicin, teicoplanin and vancomycin) were compared to the classically obtained AST data. Sensitivity ranged between 0 and 1 (median = 0.21). A sensitivity of 0 was only obtained for 6 antibiotics for which no positive data was present in the dataset. For these antibiotics, true negatives were obtained for 98 to 99.5% of the cases. Specificity ranged from 0.61 to 1 (median = 0.99). For 12 of the 15 antibiotics a specificity higher than 0.95 was obtained. Lowest specificity (0.61) was obtained for the antibiotics ciprofloxacin and clindamycin. For penicillin a specificity of 0.83 was observed.

Conclusion

Based on WGS data, fairly accurate predictions of antibiotics resistance in MRSA strains can be obtained. Yet, profound knowledge of resistance mechanisms to some antibiotics is lacking, leading to less reliable predictions.

120-DKM

Proteotyping: Proteomics- and Genomics-Based Diagnostics of Infectious Bacteria, Virulence and Antimicrobial Resistance

E. R. B. Moore1,2,3, F. Salvá-Serrá1,2,3, D. Jaén-Luchoro1,3, R. Karlsson1,2,3

1University of Gothenburg, Department of Infectious Diseases, Gothenburg, Sweden
2 Sahlgrenska University Hospital, Department of Clinical Microbiology, Gothenburg, Sweden
3University of Gothenburg, Centre for Antibiotic Resistance Research (CARRe), Gothenburg, Sweden

The global expansion of bacteria manifesting anti-microbial resistance (AMR) presents challenges for treatment and prevention; the World Health Organisation (WHO) has predicted an overwhelming impact of diseases for which no antibiotic treatment will be available [1]. With escalation of AMR, combined with continuing decline in new antibiotic discovery, development of innovative, reliable, rapid and cost-efficient analytical techniques for effective diagnostics of infectious disease is increasingly essential to confront rising mortality and costs associated with AMR infections. However, the routine methodologies used today for diagnosing infectious disease depend, in most cases, upon multiple protocols requiring cultivation of the pathogenic bacteria from clinical samples. With accumulating whole-genome sequence data becoming available, Mass Spectrometry (MS)-based proteomics analyses increasingly are able to be applied to biological studies. Proteomic analyses are indirect analyses of genomes; the proteome comprises proteins from the expressed genes of a cell, organism or biological system. Proteotyping [2], using state-of-the-art LC-MS/MS analyses of generated cellular peptides, enables detection and identification of bacterial species, virulence- and AMR-factors from single MS analyses. In this study, reference strains of clinically-relevant bacteria were analysed by proteotyping, to define the reliable peptide biomarkers that could be used for diagnostics of infectious diseases (i.e., discovery). The biomarker peptides were applied for discrimination of bacterial species and detection of known virulence- and AMR-factors, in vitro, and also for detection and diagnostics of infective bacteria, without prior cultivation, in vivo (i.e., validation). Notably, comprehensive and accurate genome sequence data is key to resolving peptide matching and protein discrimination for identification and characterisation of infective bacteria and infectious diseases.

121-DKM

A host response mRNA signature from blood accurately diagnoses and prognoses acute infections and sepsis in emergency department patients

W. Bauer1, K. Kappert1, N. Galtung1, J. Wacker2, O. Liesenfeld2, R. Tauber3, R. Somasundaram1

1Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Emergency and Acute Medicine, Berlin, Germany
2Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Institute of Laboratory Medicine, Clinical Chemistry and Pathobiology, Berlin, Germany
3Inflammatix Inc, Clinical Affairs, Burlingame, CA, United States

Rapid diagnostic tests for the detection of acute bacterial and/or viral infection and sepsis are needed in the emergency department (ED). Current diagnostic and prognostic tests are impeded, e.g. by slow turnaround time for blood cultures. Differentiating between bacterial and viral infections as well as managing the appropriate level of care are critical deliverables. Thus, over-treatment leading to antimicrobial resistance, as well as C difficile infection or late diagnosis and treatment of sepsis may result. In a prospective single-site study at the ED of the Charité University Hospital (Campus Benjamin Franklin) we investigated the efficacy of a novel host response test from blood which uses 29 host response mRNA targets and a machine learning algorithm (HostDx Sepsis) to quickly and accurately differentiate between viral and bacterial infections including co-infections and non-infected patients and predict the probable clinical course. Patients who presented with signs of acute infection were enrolled. All patients were adjudicated using chart review by two expert physicians using clinical data, radiological and laboratory tests (incl. C-reactive protein (CRP) and procalcitonin (PCT)) but blinded to the HostDx Sepsis results. We here present an interim analysis of 125 patients enrolled and adjudicated since January 2019. The accuracy of HostDx Sepsis predictions was compared to standards of rapid bacterial infection detection, such as CRP and PCT. The Area Under the Receiver Operating Characteristics (AUROC) for HostDx Sepsis at predicting bacterial and co-infections vs. non-infected and virally infected patients was 0.89 compared to 0.87 for PCT and 0.83 for CRP. HostDx Sepsis also predicted viral and co-infections vs. non-infection and bacterial infection with an AUROC of 0.85. When combined with Sequential Organ Failure Assessment (SOFA)-scores the test predicted multiorgan failure with an AUROC of 0.89, compared to 0.86 for SOFA-scores alone. Our results suggest that the use of a host-response test to determine the infection status and severity allows for more informed rapid decisions on antibiotic treatment and further level of care in the ED.

122-DKM

Improved microbiological identification and antimicrobial resistance testing of clinical Nocardia ssp. isolates by 16s rRNA analysis and whole genome sequencing

*P. Chhatwal1, S. Woltermate1, T. Welte2, S. Ziesing1, D. Schlüter1, M. Vital1

1Hannover Medical School (MHH), Institute for Medical Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, Hannover, Germany

References


Introduction

Nocardiosis is a rare but life threatening infection caused by aerobic Actinomycetes of the genus Nocardia particularly affecting immunocompromised hosts. The identification of Nocardia spp. and antibiotic susceptibility testing (AST) by standard microbiological methods may be incomplete but molecular techniques may improve microbiological diagnostics.

Objectives

To determine phylogenetics and antimicrobial resistance mechanisms of clinical Nocardia isolates, we characterized Nocardia strains from patient material using different methods for taxonomic identification and AST as well as whole genome sequencing (WGS).

Materials & methods

We studied Nocardia strains isolated from patient material between 2000 and 2018. For taxonomic identification we applied different MALDI-TOF (bioMérieux, Saramis database) protocols and 16S rRNA gene-sequencing. Antibiotic resistance was tested based on a microdilution method according to the CLSI breakpoints and compared with Etests. WGS was performed using the Illumina workflow.

Results

We examined 40 Nocardia strains from 33 patients. Twenty-four patients (72.7%) were immunocompromised due to solid organ transplantation or stem cell transplantation. MALDI-TOF analysis correctly identified 31 isolates (77.5%). An advanced MALDI-TOF protocol with formic acid and acetonitrile treatment increased identification to 37 isolates (92.5%). One N. amamiensis strains was misidentified by MALDI-TOF as N. abscessus as revealed by molecular analysis. Two additional isolates were identified as N. lasii via molecular techniques. AST by Etest and microdilution, respectively, showed good concordance with an overall trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (SXT) resistance rate of 22.2%. WGS of a SXT resistant N. farcinica isolate showed a deletion of several amino acids compared to SXT sensitive N. farcinica isolates (n=10) in a homolog of dihydropteroate synthase.

Conclusion

A combination of different biochemical and molecular methods for taxonomic identification and AST improved species identification and AST results compared to standard microbiological techniques. WGS revealed molecular insights into SXT resistance mechanisms.

124-MCBV


1Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg, Sweden
2Amsterdam University Medical Centers, Location VUMC, Amsterdam, Netherlands
3University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Transmission electron microscopy (TEM) is an important imaging technique in bacterial research and requires ultrathin sectioning of resin embedding of cell pellets. This method consumes milli- to deciliters of culture and results in sections of randomly orientated cells. For rod-shaped bacteria, this makes it exceedingly difficult to find longitudinally cut cells, which precludes large-scale quantification of morphological phenotypes. Here, we describe a new fixation method using either thin agarose layers or carbon-coated glass surfaces that enables flat embedding of bacteria. This technique allows for the observation of thousands of longitudinally cut rod-shaped cells per single section and requires only microliter culture volumes. We successfully applied this technique to Gram-positive Bacillus subtilis, Gram-negative Escherichia coli, the tuberculosis vaccine strain Mycobacterium bovis BCG, and the cell wall-lacking mycoplasma Acholeplasma laidlawii. To assess the potential of the technique to quantify morphological phenotypes, we examined cellular changes induced by a panel of different antibiotics. Surprisingly, we found that the ribosome inhibitor tetracycline causes significant deformations of the cell membrane. Further investigations showed that the presence of tetracycline in the cell membrane changes membrane organization and affects the peripheral membrane proteins MinD, MinC, and MreB, which are important for regulation of cell division and elongation. Importantly, we could show that this effect is not the result of ribosome inhibition but is a secondary antibacterial activity of tetracycline that has defied discovery for more than 50 years.

123-MCBV

Stalk-terminal budding in Hyphomonomas neptunium proceeds via an FtsZ-driven process involving two spatially distinct divisome-like complexes.

M. van Teeseling1, S. Escheuer1,2, J. Zimmer1,2, M. Thanbichler1,2,3

1Max Planck Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Marburg, Germany
2LOEWE Center for Synthetic Microbiology, Marburg, Germany

125-MCBV

Predicting membrane lipid composition from in silico data – how far can we go?
Cell membranes are the most complex “organ” of the cell, with up to 50% of a cell's genome encoding components that are associated with the membrane. A key step in the formation of modern membranes is the evolution of the classical lipid-mediated “bilayer” in the form of a hydrophilic-hydrophobic sandwich. Complex lipid-lipid and lipid-protein interactions, based on the chemical and physical properties of the interacting partners, determine a membrane’s integrity and whether it is compromised, that would lead to the death of the cell. As an ever-increasing number of genomes become available, the question arises to what degree can one predict lipid contribution, based on genomic data, to the structure and functioning of the cell.

126-MCBV
Formation of magnetic organelles
*R. Ueber, M. Labrenz*
Universität Bayreuth, PI Mikrobiologie, Bayreuth, Germany

The biogenesis and assembly of membranous cell organelles requires a multitude of processes, including membrane remodeling and correct spatio-temporal targeting of proteins. These processes are relatively well characterized in eukaryotes and were shown to involve membrane bending proteins, vesicular transport and/or organelle-specific protein translocation systems. In contrast, the biogenesis and assembly of prokaryotic organelles, which usually do not have the same complexity as their eukaryotic counterparts, often remained poorly understood.

Here we analyzed the formation of magnetosomes, membrane-enclosed magnetite nanoparticles used for magnetic navigation, as a model system for prokaryotic organelle formation. Genetic analyses in Magnetospirillum gryphiswaldense MSR-1 revealed that magnetosome formation is complex process that is governed by specific magnetosome-associated proteins. MamB, a cation diffusion facilitator (CDF) family member, for example, has been implicated in magnetosome-directed iron transport. However, deletion mutagenesis studies revealed that MamB is essential for the formation of magnetosome membrane vesicles. Using site-directed mutagenesis complemented by structural analyses, fluorescence microscopy and cryo-electron tomography, we show that MamB is most likely an active magnetosome-directed transporter serving two distinct, yet essential functions. First, MamB initiates magnetosomes vesicle formation in a transport-independent process, probably by serving as a landmark protein. Second, MamB transport activity is required for magnetite nucleation.

127-MCBV
The novel shapeshifting bacterial phylum Saltatorellota
*S. Wiegand1,2, M. Jogler1, T. Kohn1, R. P. Awal1, S. Oberbeckmann1, K. Kesey3, O. Jeske4, P. Schuhmann1, S. H. Peeters1, N. Kallscheuer2, M. Straus2, A. Heuer4, M. S. M. Jetten1, M. Labenz2, A. K. Kaster1, M. Rohde1, C. Boedeker1, H. Engelhardt1, D. Schüler1, C. Jogler1,2
1Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, Microbiology, Nijmegen, Netherlands
2Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Karlsruhe, Germany
3Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Jena, Germany
4University Bayreuth, Bayreuth, Germany
5IZW, Warnemünde, Germany
6DSMZ, Braunschweig, Germany
7Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry, Martinsried, Germany

Our current understanding of a free-living bacterium - capable of withstanding a variety of environmental stresses - is represented by the image of a peptidoglycan-armed rigid casket. The making and breaking of peptidoglycan greatly determines cell shape. The cytoplasmic membrane follows this shape, pressed toward the cell wall by turgor pressure. Consequently, bacteria are morphologically static organisms, in contrast to eukaryotic cells that can facilitate shape changes. This concept of a bacterial cell is challenged by the discovery of the novel bacterial phylum Saltatorellota. Members of this phylum can change their shape, are capable of amoeba-like locomotion and trunk-formation through the creation of extensive pseudopodia-like structures. Two independent Saltatorellota cells can fuse, and they employ various forms of cell division from budding to canonical binary fission. Despite their polymorphisms, members of the Saltatorellota do possess a peptidoglycan cell wall. Their genomes encode flagella and type IV pili as well as a bacterial actin homolog, the "saltatorellin". This protein is most similar to MamK, a dynamic filament-forming protein, that aligns and segregates magnetosome organelles via treadmilling. We found saltatorellin to form filaments in both, E. coli and Magnetospirillum gryphiswaldense, leading to the hypothesis that shapeshifting and pseudopodia formation might be driven by treadmilling of saltatorellin. Furthermore, some unusual traits of Saltatorellota strains seem to be occurring only in a small fraction of newly formed daughter cells, implying some kind of cell differentiation.

128-MCBV
Analysis of the Clostridioides (Clostridium) difficile motility behaviour by video microscopy revealed a novel swimming pattern
*J. Schwarbeck1, I. Oehming1, A. E. Zautner1, U. Groß1, W. Bohne1
1Universitätsmedizin Göttingen, Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Göttingen, Germany

Introduction:

Most strains of the gastrointestinal pathogen C. difficile produce peritrichous flagella, which mediate swimming motility. Motility is most often examined in soft agar based assays. However, little knowledge exists on the actual swimming behaviour of single C. difficile cells.

Objectives:

We wondered if direct observation of swimming motility via video microscopy could offer more insights into the motility patterns of C. difficile.

Materials & Methods:

We designed an open-source python program that allows us to simultaneously track a large number of bacterial cells on standard computers. With the aid of this program it was possible to determine and quantify the most relevant C. difficile motility parameters, as travelled distance, speed, percentage of time where bacteria are motile and turning points.

Results:

The C. difficile 630Δerm and C. difficile R20291 populations were found to consist of three fractions including (i) non-motile bacteria, (ii) bacteria with a high frequency twitching

* B. J. Tindall1
1Leibniz-Institut DSMZ-Deutsches Zentralkulturenservice for Microorganisms und Zellkulturen GmbH., Braunschweig, Germany

TOpolewka
pattern, and (iii) bacteria with long run phases. The size of the individual fractions is variable and depends on the nutrient conditions. The fraction with long run phases appears to be able to swim forward and backwards without an obvious preference. This is in contrast to the usual motility pattern of bacteria, which consists of a preferred direction of travel coupled with a reorientation phase.

Conclusions:

We found that *C. difficile* displays a swimming behaviour that appears to be different from known swimming patterns of bacteria described in literature.

Acknowledgment:

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129-MCBV
Caught in the act: pervasive transcription during the low-energy phase of the budding yeast growth cycle.

1*R. Machine*, S. Bernhard*, I. M. Axmann1, P. F. Stadler4, D. B. Murray4
2HHU Duesseldorf, Synthetic Microbiology, Duesseldorf, Germany
3Universitaet Leipzig, Interdisciplinary Center for Bioinformatics, Leipzig, Germany
4Keio University, IAB Tsuorkua, Tsuorkua, Japan

When grown in continuous culture at high cell density budding yeast cells autonomously synchronize their metabolic activity into stable oscillations, and these metabolic cycles percolate throughout physiology and gate cell division cycle check-points. Metabolic cycles can persist even in non-dividing yeast cells. The industrial diploid strain IFO 0233 shows a strong decoupling from division, with metabolic cycles about 10x faster than doubling times. Despite the diversity of metabolic dynamics between strains, cycling cultures traverse through a conserved yet adaptable transcriptional program, between the expression of growth and anabolic, and catabolic and stress-response functions, respectively. The dynamics of non-coding transcription have not yet been explored.

An RNA-seq timeseries was sampled in high temporal resolution from a chemostat culture during a metabolic transient of the oscillation. The temporal program of coding transcripts encodes the spatial structure of the growing cells and is itself organized into large chromosomal domains of co-expressed clusters. This spatio-temporal organization may support co-translational complex formation and optimal proteome resource allocation. An unprecedented level of non-coding transcription from loci involved in auto-editing of the yeast genome (tRNA, mating type, CUP1) and evolution of gene regulation (transposons) indicates a recombination-prone state during the low-energy phase of the metabolic cycle. Genetically dynamic loci, tRNA, replication origins, and free-standing "long terminal repeats" are all enriched at the borders between high-energy and low-energy phase transcription domains. Our data provides a snap-shot of the spatial and functional constraints of genome evolution, and suggests a role of "pervasive transcription" in adaptive exploration of novel phenotypes.

130-MCBV
The uncharacterized DUF1127 protein from *Rhodobacter sphaeroides* binds RNA

1J. Grützner1, G. Klug1
2Institute of Microbiology and Molecular Biology, University of Giessen, Gießen, Germany

The facultative phototrophic bacterium *Rhodobacter sphaeroides* can adapt its lifestyle to changing environmental conditions. In the past our group elucidated in *R. sphaeroides* the role of protein regulators and small, regulatory RNAs (sRNAs) in stress responses, particularly to oxidative stress. The four homologous sRNAs CcsR1-4 (conserved CUCCCUCUC motif stress-induced RNA) are expressed under various stress conditions and modulate the C1 metabolism [1]. These sRNAs are derived from the 3´ UTR of the RSP_6037 mRNA. The RSP_6037 gene encodes a small protein of 70 amino acids and the residues 23-62 constitute a domain of unknown function (DUF1127). This functional unknown protein domain is structurally related to eukaryotic RNA binding proteins [2]. Small proteins with the DUF1127 domain are widely distributed among Alpha- and Gammaproteobacteria and more than 11000 bacterial sequences with DUF1127 proteins are listed in InterPro.

Our data show that the small protein RSP_6037 influences the amount of the CcsR sRNAs and that the uncharacterized DUF1127 domain is sufficient for the function. By co-immunoprecipitation we could show binding between the small DUF1127 protein, the sRNA CcsR1 and other RNA transcripts. We test the hypothesis that binding of the DUF1127 domain of RSP_6037 influences the stability and processing of RNA transcripts and may play an important role in RNA maturation.


131-MSHV
Microbiota Changes in Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis

1C. Bang1, M. C. Rühlemann1, T. Liwinski2, R. Zenouzi2, M. Kummens1, W. Lieb1, J. R. Hov1, C. Schramm2, A. Franke1
2Christian-Albrechts-University Kiel, Institute of Clinical Molecular Biology, Kiel, Germany
3Department of Internal Medicine, University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany
4Norwegian PSC Research Center, Division of Surgery,
Question

While the aetiology of primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC) remains largely unknown, several reports, including our own previous data, support a functional and potentially pathogenic link between the intestinal microbiota and liver inflammation in PSC. However, it is unclear whether the microbial signature so far described in PSC single-centre cohorts is centre-specific or if a PSC-specific microbial signature across different geographical regions exists.

Methods

We included in total 388 individuals from two separate cohorts from Norway and Germany: 137 PSC patients (n=75 with concurrent colitis), 88 patients with ulcerative colitis (UC) and 133 healthy controls (HC). The faecal bacteriota was analysed by 16S rRNA gene sequencing (V1-V2). In addition, stool samples from individuals of the German cohort (66 HC, 65 PSC patients and 38 UC patients) was subjected to ITS2 gene sequencing to unravel alterations in the mycobiome.

Results

In both cohorts, the global microbiota composition (beta-diversity) was significantly different when comparing PSC and HC (P<0.001). Multiple robust single microbial markers of PSC were identified, including novel associations with Proteobacteria and the bile tolerant genus Parabacteroides, and previous associations with e.g. Veillonella and Lactobacillus. Within the mycobiome we found a significant increase of Trichocladium griseum belonging to the class Sordariomycetes as well as of Candida species in stool samples of PSC patients confirming earlier published results within a French cohort at increased taxonomic resolution.

Conclusions

Patients with PSC display reproducible microbiota alterations compared to HC, independent from geographical region and concurrent colitis, which could relate to PSC itself and be of clinical relevance.

Short chain fatty acids (SCFA). Spores might be a source of environmental transition.

We were interested in the role of spore formers in early microbiota colonization, and their impact on butyrate production. We used a combined cultivation-dependent and - independent approach to determine cultivable spores, spore and fecal microbiota composition and SCFA formation in a cohort of infants (n=69, CARE-Childhood, Allergy, Nutrition and Environment, Switzerland) at 90, 180 and 360 days of age.

At 90 days, about 80% of the samples contained cultivable spores at a mean most probable number of log 3.4 cells/g. Cultivable spore prevalence and abundance was significantly higher in feces from 360 days (100% and log 4.2 cells/g, respectively) and compared to 180 and 90 days. Butyrate was produced by 50, 78, and 94% of the spore samples during germination at 90, 180 and 360 days.

The cultivable spore microbiota was dominated by Clostridiaceae (mean abundance 50-77%), Bifidobacteriobacteriaceae (mean abundance 90 days: 66%, 180 days 55%, 360 days 31%) were the major bacterial family in feces with Clostridiaceae contributing 1-5% of the reads. Nevertheless, the spore forming Clostridium cluster I was the most prevalent and abundant butyrate producing group at 90 days. Abundance ranged from log 6.3 to log 8.5 cells/g in approximately 40% of the samples. Abundance of non-spore forming butyrate producers Faecalibacterium prausnitzii, Eubacterium rectale / Roseburia spp. and Eubacterium hallii was low at 90 days (< log 5 cells/g) but significantly increased at 360 days together with mean fecal butyrate levels (1.7 mM/g at 90 days and 12.6 mM/g at 360 days).

Our data show the impact of spore forming butyrate producers on SCFA formation especially at the early stages of infant gut microbiota development. Our data may suggest opportunities to enhance early life butyrate concentrations through the supplementation of selected groups of butyrate producers.

133-MSHV

Exploring novel small proteins in a simplified human gut microbiome

1H. Petruschke1, C. Schori2,3, C. H. Ahrens2,3, N. Jehmlisch1, M. von Bergen1,4
1UFZ, MOLSYB, Leipzig, Germany
2Agroscope, Molecular Diagnostics, Genomics & Bioinformatics, Wädenswil, Switzerland
3SIB Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, Wädenswil, Switzerland
4University of Leipzig, Institute of Biochemistry, Leipzig, Germany

Hannes Petruschke1, Christian Schori2, Christian H. Ahrens2, Nico Jehmlisch, Martin von Bergen1,3

1Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Molecular Systems Biology, Permoserstr. 15, 04318 Leipzig, Germany; 2Agroscope, Molecular Diagnostics, Genomics & Bioinformatics and SIB Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, Wädenswil, Switzerland; 3Institute of Biochemistry, Faculty of Biosciences, Pharmacy and Psychology, University of Leipzig, Germany

The intestinal microbiota plays a pivotal role in protecting the host against pathogenic microbes, modulating immunity and regulating metabolic processes. We are using a simplified human microbial community of 8 species for the investigation of metabolic output and species interdependence. The
objective of this study is the detection of novel proteins smaller than 100 amino acids (= sProteins) that are potentially regulating the simplified intestinal human microbiota. sProteins have largely been unrecognized and little is known about their structure and function in microbes. Several studies suggested that sProteins have a wide range of functions including significant structural re-organization of microbial communities.

In this study, we applied different sProtein enrichment strategies (e.g. C8-cartridges and GelFree fractionation) before mass spectrometric analysis since most sProteins can not be identified using standard protocols. In addition, after sequencing, de novo assembly and annotation of the complete genomes of the 8 species, we created an integrated proteogenomics search database (iPtgxDB). Searching MS/MS data against the iPtgxDB, we were able to identify several novel sProteins which will be further validated using metatranscriptome analysis. Notably, several novel sProteins were not identified in single strain cultivations possibly indicating a fundamental role in microbial community organization.

Identification and the further functional characterization of sProteins will change the view on microbial community organization.

134-MSHV
Exploring pathogenic functions of host microbiota
*M. Vital*, S. Rath*, D. Pieper*, D. Schlüter*
1Hannover Medical School, Institute for Medical Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, Hannover, Germany
2Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Braunschweig, Germany

It is becoming evident that certain features of human microbiota, encoded on distinct taxa including autochthonous members, promote disease. As a result, borders between so-called opportunistic pathogens, pathobionts and commensals are increasingly blurred and specific, organism(bacterial)-centric targets for manipulating microbiota to improve host health are becoming elusive. In this study, we focus on functions of bacterial communities that have the potential to cause disease, proposing the term "pathogenic functions (pathofunctions)". The concept is presented via three distinct examples, namely, the formation of (i) trimethylamine, (ii) secondary bile acids and (iii) hydrogen sulfide that all represent metabolites of gut microbiota linked to the development of non-communicable diseases. Using publicly available metageneomic and metatranscriptomic data (n=2,975) we quantified those pathofunctions in health and disease and exposed the key players. Pathofunctions were ubiquitously present, even in healthy microbiota, though increased abundances were detected in patient groups. Overall, the three pathofunctions were measured at low mean concentrations (<1% of total bacteria) and encompassed various taxa, including uncultured members. We outline how this function-centric approach, where all members exhibiting a particular pathofunction are redundant, guides risk assessment and can assist the development of precision treatment directing gut microbiota to increase host health.

The initial feasibility study was conducted using pure cultures and enriched faecal samples in both aerobic and anaerobic conditions. To increase throughput, 96-well plates were used for cell dispensing. Enrichment trials were also tested for their ability to generate varying input bacterial compositions upstream of sorting to maximize the harvested cultured diversity.

SCD was able to sort single cells from two different pure cultures of strictly anaerobic gut bacteria at an average efficacy (percentage of sorted single-cells giving rise to growth) of 7% (motile bacteria) and 69% (non-motile bacteria). Direct processing of a frozen glycerol stock of mouse faecal sample resulted in low efficacy (ca. 4%) when compared with enriched mouse faecal cultures (ca. 37-87%), but recovered diversity of isolates was higher (9 different species out of 24 isolated vs. 18 of 1,356). Two novel bacterial species were cultured from a human faecal sample (*Bacillus* sp. nov.) and a mouse caecal sample (*Flintibacter* sp. nov.) using the new SCD approach. Out of the media tested so far, 12/15 enriched on average 54% of dominant (≥1% rel. Abund.) and 12% of sub-dominant (<1% rel. Abund.) human faecal OTUs. A combination of the five highest-scored media (YCPA, GAM, BHI, GMM and Conditioned Medium) covered ca. 40% of human faecal OTUs.

The combination of SCD and gut content enrichments is promising and is being tested further for maximal recovery of the cultured diversity from human and mouse gut microbiota.

135-MSHV
Single-Cell Dispensing for High-Throughput Bacterial Isolation
*A. Afrizal1, A. Viehof2, T. Hitch1, T. Clavel1*
1RWTH Aachen University Hospital, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Aachen, Germany
2Microbiology, Aachen, Germany

The intestinal microbiota of mammals is known to influence their health, however a large proportion of bacterial species in gut communities are still unknown. Cultivation is essential to improve genome databases and to explore the functional potential of bacteria. Agar plate-based approaches are still widely used for bacterial isolation, but are time-consuming. The use of single cell dispensers (SCD) allows high-throughput, label-free bacterial sorting. This project aimed to study the feasibility of using SCD for the isolation of gut bacteria and to design a more efficient workflow for bacterial cultivation.

Anthropogenic inputs of nitrate into groundwater pose a considerable risk to drinking water quality. However, groundwater chemistry is also affected by continued in situ microbial nitrate formation and nitrate reduction to gaseous nitrogen or ammonium. Here, we investigated nitrogen transformation processes and their microbial key players in oligotrophic karstic limestone aquifers in western Thuringia, Germany. These aquifers are characterized by a high spatial heterogeneity in the availability of oxygen, ammonium and nitrate. Under anoxic conditions, anaerobic ammonia oxidation (anammox) was the dominant N₂-forming process at maximum rates of 5 nmol N₂ L⁻¹ d⁻¹, compared to almost undetectable denitrification activity. Variation of anammox activity and transcriptional activity of hzsA genes encoding.
hydrase synthase across sites pointed to the existence of anammox hotspots, where *Brocadiaceae* accounted for up to 15% of the groundwater bacterial community. Abundances of archaeal and bacterial ammonia-oxidizers, including complete ammonia-oxidizers, were positively correlated with ammonium, while nitrite-oxidizing bacteria showed positive correlation with their product nitrate. Similar to anammox, transcriptional activity of amoA genes encoding ammonia monooxygenase and process rates suggested that nitrification activity was limited to a few oxic sites, where *Nitrospiraceae* formed up to 20% of the microbial community. Our results demonstrate a large spatial heterogeneity of aerobic and anaerobic nitrogen transformation processes in oligotrophic limestone aquifers. Availability of nitrogen compounds and oxygen are closely linked to the distribution patterns of the microbial key players but their activity, in turn, is likely to also shape groundwater nitrogen chemistry.

The discovery of a *Rhodobacteracea*–specific low copy number plasmid type without the archetypal *parAB* operon is indicative of a new mechanism of plasmid partitioning. The universal presence of *T4SSs*, experimental conjugation and the natural distribution of RepC soil plasmids reflect a highly promiscuous life style. The natural presence of plasmid-located antibiotic resistance genes in marine bacteria likely documents the anthropogenic footprint in the ocean.

Reference


### 137-MEEV

**A novel promiscuous Roseobacter plasmid mediates antibiotic resistance in the ocean**

*L. Birmes1, H. Freese2, J. Petersen3*  
1Leibniz-Institute DSMZ (German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures), Microbial Ecology and Diversity Research, Braunschweig, Germany

**Background**

Plasmids play an important role in the survival strategies of roseobacters (*Rhodobacteracea*) in marine ecosystems. Their conjugation, which is driven by characteristic type IV secretion systems (*T4SSs*), mediates the horizontal transfer of important genes and is supposed to trigger the colonization of new environmental niches.

**Methods**

1. BLASTP: Identification of *RepC_soli*-type plasmids
2. Comparative plasmid analyses: Discovery of crucial genes
3. Functionality test: Cloning of plasmid replicase & transformation in model organism (*Phaeobacter inhibens* DSM 17395)
4. Plasmid stability test: Spontaneous loss
5. Experimental conjugation: Intra- & inter-genus
6. Antibiotic resistance tests: Minimal inhibitory concentration: growth curves

**Results**

We discovered a novel *Rhodobacteracea*–specific plasmid type designated *RepC_soli*. As a unique selling point, the low copy number plasmid comprises a solitary replicase (*repC*) and lacks a typical *parAB* partitioning system. The conserved backbone of all *RepC_soli*-type plasmids also contains solitary *parA* and *parB* genes, a *T4SS* and a toxin/anti-toxin module. Phylogenetic analyses of *RepC_soli* proteins revealed the presence of four compatibility groups. We experimentally confirmed the functionality of the replicase and documented an exceptional stability of the 57 kb plasmid from *P. inhibens* P72 (*pP72_e*). The natural chloramphenicol (*Cm*) resistance gene of *pP72_e* served as selective marker for experimental conjugation across genus borders. Plasmid transfer caused a 20 to 40-fold increase of *Cm* resistance in the transconjugants.

**Conclusions**

**138-MEEV**

Tree root-associated microbiomes across Europe: respective impacts of sites' specificities and an oak clone

*J. D. D. Habiyaremye1,2,3, K. Goldmann1, T. Reitz1,4, S. Hermann1,4, F. Buscot1,4*  
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Soil Ecology, Halle (Saale), Germany  
2Leipzig University, Biology II, Leipzig, Germany  
3University of Rwanda-College of Education, Mathematics, Science and Physical Education, Kigali, Rwanda  
4German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv) Halle-Jena-Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany

Soil microbial communities are site specific and vary in response to changes of environmental factors. There are thus dissimilar microbial communities under different soil conditions or along natural gradients. In addition, tree roots recruit specific microbial partners from local soil communities and support their growth by exudates. Hence, the tree root-associated microbiome is shaped by both the host tree and environmental conditions. On this background, we analysed soil microbiomes in the root vs. root free zones of genetically identical host tree saplings, called PhytoOakmeter (*Quercus robur* L.), clone DF159, released at four grassland sites across a Europe North-South transect, from Finland to France. Soil microbial DNA was extracted, 16S and ITS2 genes were amplified to respectively target bacteria and fungi, and sequenced using Illumina MiSeq technology. Microbial communities were analysed in relation to soil chemistry and host tree growth. Species richness and Shannon diversity index in the tree root zone increased southwards for bacteria but were constant for fungi. Within southern sites of the transect, microbial diversity was higher in PhytoOakmeter root zones than in the tree root-free zones while the middle and northern sites showed similar diversity values between the two soil compartments. Analysis of similarities permutations together with non-metric multidimensional scaling showed a site effect on the analysed microbial communities. Soil parameters like pH, TOC, TON, C/N and the clonal host tree growth impacted on microbial diversity and community composition. Very young PhytoOakmeters exerted a remarkable influence on soil microbial diversity and community structure, and were able to select specific microbial genera, enriched in ectomycorrhizal fungi, yeasts and saprobes from respective local microbial pools. This validates the PhytoOakmeter approach to better unravel recruitment processes of microbial partners by host trees at large spatial scales and under broad range of environmental conditions.

**139-MEEV**

The lag phase in batch cultivation is determined by differential growth rather than adaptation

*P. Mishra1, R. U. Meckenstock1*
Introduction: The lag phase is the early phase of microbial growth in batch cultures, when bacteria adapt to the conditions after being inoculated to new growth medium. According to textbooks, bacteria do not divide during this adaption period but rather increase in cell size, repair damages, and produce enzymes needed to metabolize the substrate.

Objectives: In contrast to the established concept, we hypothesize that the lag phase appears to be an adaptation phase because only a small fraction of the population starts growing exponentially immediately after inoculation whereas the majority of cells remain inactive. Since the number of growing cells is small compared to the inactive background, the total number of cells appears seemingly constant. As soon as the initially small number of exponentially dividing cells outnumbers the inactive cells, the populations increases to a measurable extent and the batch culture eventually enters the log-phase.

Materials and methods: To evaluate this hypothesis, we studied the growth of *Pseudomonas fluorescens* with 13C-labelled glucose and deuterated water in the growth medium at the single cell level. Only actively growing cells incorporated both labels into their biomass which could be followed with Raman microspectroscopy.

Results: Raman-microscopy revealed the incorporation of 13C and deuterium into a small fraction of cells (7%) already 60 min after inoculation, indicating active metabolism. 300 min after inoculation, the total cell number and the optical density started to increase when the initially small number of labelled cells increased from 7% to over 90% of all cells. Interestingly, we also observed heterogeneity in metabolic traits in the cells of same population at different growth phases.

Conclusion: We conclude that the present concept of the lag phase is merely a phenomenological description and does not reflect a particularly cell physiology. Instead, the lag phase is determined by the ratio of active to inactive cells and the time which the actively dividing cells need to outnumber inactive cells.

141-MEEV

Analysis of microbial ecology by mass spectrometry-based metabolomics techniques

*L. Castaño*, P. Rakowska*, B. Johnston, M. Chrubasik, K. Duncan

1Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences, University of Strathclyde, Microbiology, Glasgow, United Kingdom

2National Physical Laboratory, NICE-MSI, Teddington, United Kingdom

3Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom

Mass spectrometry-based metabolomics has become a powerful tool for the study of chemical ecology. With the recent advances of mass spectrometry technologies and bioinformatics tools it is now possible to study both; all the microorganisms present in a specific environment at a specific time and the interactions with the environment and within microorganisms living in the same ecological niche. The bacterial order actinomycetales are responsible for the production of 65-70% of microbially produced specialised metabolites with diverse biological activities. Some actinomycetale strains contain over 30 biosynthetic gene clusters encoding for these metabolites. However, it is estimated that only 10% of these genes are transcribed in a mono-culture setting. Furthermore, it has been observed that microbial interactions may induce cryptic gene clusters providing a defence mechanism. Therefore, the study of bacterial competition is key in understanding the ecological role that secondary metabolites pose to microbes and in understanding the induction of cryptic biosynthetic gene clusters as a result of these microbial interactions. Methods: microbial interactions were assessed in tri-cultures (three strains) and co-cultures (two strains) using 49 actinomycetale strains, two *Pseudomonas* and one *Bacillus* strain. Metabolites were extracted for interesting interactions and assessed with mass spectrometry-based metabolomics techniques such as liquid chromatography mass spectrometry (LC-MS), ToF-SIMS (imaging mass spectrometry) and MetaboAnalyst. Results: It was found that 29 strains showed altered phenotypes as a result of bacterial competition. The analysis of these interactions with LC-MS revealed the production of metabolites that were specific to the tri-cultures and co-cultures. Furthermore, these interactions were subjected to imaging mass spectrometry in order to visualize the distribution of metabolites within the samples which allowed a better understanding of the chemical ecology during bacterial competition. Conclusions: mass spectrometry represents an exciting strategy to study bacterial chemistry and the ecology of bacterial competition.
**142-MEEV**
Negative hysteresis as a novel principle to improve antibiotic therapy

*H. Schulenburg¹, R. Roemhild¹
Max-Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology, Plön, Germany

Introduction: Evolutionary processes are responsible for the current antibiotic crisis. Surprisingly, they are usually ignored during design of novel therapy. In general, bacteria show enormous potential to adapt to constant environments, including those defined by antibiotics. Adaptation may however be more difficult if conditions change fast. Thus, rapid fluctuations in drug application may prevent resistance development, especially if the used antibiotics sensitize bacterial cells towards subsequently administered antibiotics (i.e. the phenomenon of negative hysteresis). To date, fast fluctuations and negative hysteresis are not considered for antibiotic therapy.

Objectives: The aim of our study is to test experimentally whether fast switches between antibiotics and negative hysteresis minimize the ability of bacteria to adapt to drug therapy.

Methods: The model pathogen *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was subjected to several evolution experiments with constant or fluctuating antibiotic treatments, followed by phenotypic analyses and whole genome sequencing combined with functional genetic analysis to identify possible targets of selection.

Results: Treatment with beta-lactam antibiotics induces long-lasting sensitization of *P. aeruginosa* towards aminoglycoside drugs. High levels of such negative hysteresis improve efficacy of fast sequential antibiotic therapy through three complementary effects: increased bacterial clearance, reduced adaptation rates, and reduced multidrug resistance. Genomic and functional genetic analysis revealed that negative hysteresis imposes specific selective constraints that favor an evolutionary response to the inducible sensitizing effect instead of the evolution of multidrug resistance.

Conclusion: Negative hysteresis increases bacterial extinction in fast sequential treatments and reduces selection of resistance by favoring responses specific to the induced physiological effects. Fast changes between antibiotics are key, because they create the continuously high selection conditions that are difficult to counter by bacteria. Our study highlights how an understanding of evolutionary processes can help to outsmart human pathogens.

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**144-DKMV**
Evolutionary trajectories of antibiotic resistance in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* generated in a morbidostat device

*M. Javed¹, B. Jentzsch¹, V. Ueltzhoeffer¹, M. Heinrich¹, R. Neher², M. Willmann¹
¹University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany
²University of Basel, Biozentrum, Basel, Switzerland

Introduction
Colistin is a last resort antibiotic against the critical status pathogen *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

Objectives
The aim of this study is to investigate the evolutionary trajectories towards antibiotic resistance using five clinical strains of *P. aeruginosa* which have been exposed to increasing quantities of colistin and metronidazole and a combination of those drugs over 21 days in a morbidostat device.

Materials and Methods
Five assays were performed to elucidate the effect of antibiotic resistance on the phenotype of each strain: growth curves, two biofilm assays, a serum killing assay, and a virulence assay using *Galleria mellonella*.

Results
The cell density in biofilm increases under exposure to colistin, while the addition of metronidazole can remove this effect. This indicates that metronidazole may modulate the effect of colistin on the development of vital cells in biofilms. We furthermore observed an overall increase in biomass within biofilms for both single-drug and combination.

The killing effect of serum is lost within seven days of colistin exposure. The control condition strains maintain their susceptibility to serum. This suggests that colistin drives bacterial modifications conferring a protective effect from serum complement factors.

Almost all strains show a decrease in virulence as the number of days to colistin exposure continues, in contrast to the control conditions.

**Conclusion**

Significant changes are underway with regards to the phenotype of the strains after exposure to colistin and the combination of colistin and metronidazole. Our results suggest a clinically important bacterial evolution under sublethal antibiotic concentration.

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### 145-DKMV

The author has not agreed to a publication.

### 146-DKMV

**Antimicrobial efficiency of antisense PNAs in Streptococcus pyogenes**

*G. Barkowsky*1, A. L. Lemster2, R. Pappesch1, S. Krüger1, A. Jacob2,3, B. Krekemeyer1, N. Patenge1

1University Medicine Rostock, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Virology and Hygiene, Rostock, Germany
2Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, Functional Genome Analysis, Heidelberg, Germany
3Peps4LS, Heidelberg, Germany

**Introduction**

*Streptococcus pyogenes* is an exclusively human pathogen causing a wide range of clinical manifestations from mild superficial infections to severe, invasive diseases. *S. pyogenes* is consistently susceptible toward penicillin, but therapeutic failure of penicillin treatment has been reported frequently. At the same time, streptococcal resistance to alternative antibiotics is common. Therefore, novel therapies are needed. Antisense peptide nucleic acids (PNAs) were shown to reduce growth of several pathogenic bacteria, but spontaneous cellular PNA uptake is restricted.

**Objectives**

PNAs can be coupled to cell-penetrating peptides (CPPs) that support PNA translocation. Here, we investigate the effect of 18 CPP-coupled anti-*gyrA* PNAs on *S. pyogenes* growth and virulence.

**Materials and methods**

*S. pyogenes* was incubated with CPP-coupled anti-*gyrA* PNAs for 6 h at 37 °C. Reduction of bacterial counts was determined in comparison to the untreated sample. CPP-PNA minimal inhibitory concentrations (MICs) were determined according to the protocol of Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute ("CLSI"). The *gyrA* transcript level following treatment was determined by RT-qPCR. Additionally, we tested the effect of CPP-anti-*gyrA* PNAs in a *Galleria mellonella* infection model.

**Results**

HIV-1 TAT, oligolysine (K8), and (RXR)4XB peptide-coupled anti-*gyrA* PNAs efficiently abolished bacterial growth in vitro. The MIC of TAT- and K8-anti-*gyrA* PNAs was 15.6 µM and of (RXR)4XB-anti-*gyrA* 62.5 µM. The level of *gyrA* mRNA was reduced in bacteria challenged with these three CPP-anti-*gyrA* PNAs. Treatment with antimicrobial effective CPP-PNAs increased survival of larvae in the *G. mellonella* infection model.

**Conclusion**

Out of 18 CPPs, we could identify three CPPs (TAT, K8, and (RXR)4XB) which support the uptake of PNAs in *S. pyogenes*. For treatment of *S. pyogenes* infections, these CPPs could be coupled to other essential genes or to antibiotic resistance genes.

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### 147-DKMV

**Therapeutic drug monitoring of antibiotics in intensive care patients treated with extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO): an observational single-center study**

*‘D. Kühn’1, C. Metz1, H. Wehrfritz1, M. Alqudrah1, A. Becker1, M. Hoffmann1, R. Bals1, U. Hübner1, J. Geisel1, P. Lepper1, ‘S. Becker1

1Saarland University, Homburg/Saar, Germany

**Introduction:** Effective antimicrobial treatment is key to reduce the high mortality of bacterial sepsis in patients on intensive care units (ICUs). Dose adjustments are often necessary to account for pathophysiological changes or renal replacement therapy. Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) is increasingly being used for the treatment of respiratory and/or cardiac failure. However, it remains unclear whether dose adjustments are necessary to avoid subtherapeutic drug levels in septic patients on ECMO support.

**Objective:** To evaluate and comparatively assess the mean serum concentrations of continuously applied antibiotics in intensive care patients being treated with and without ECMO.

**Materials and methods:** Between November 2018 and October 2019, we prospectively enrolled patients on a pneumological intensive care unit in southwest Germany who received antibiotic treatment with piperacillin/tazobactam, ceftazidime, meropenem, or linezolid. All antibiotics were applied using continuous infusion, and therapeutic drug monitoring of serum concentrations were performed using performance liquid chromatography. Target concentrations were defined as 4-fold above the minimal inhibitory concentration (MIC) of susceptible bacterial isolates, according to EUCAST breakpoints.

**Results:** The final cohort comprised 86 ICU patients, of whom 24 were treated with ECMO. ECMO patients were significantly younger (mean age: 47.9 vs. 62.2 years), required haemodialysis more frequently (58.3% vs. 32.3%) and had an elevated ICU mortality (54% vs. 23%). In the ECMO group, mean antibiotic serum concentrations were significantly lower for piperacillin (43.6 vs. 78.1), high-dose meropenem (24.2 vs. 42.8) and linezolid (8.5 vs. 14.8). We found high rates of insufficient antibiotic serum concentrations among ECMO patients, which did not reach
the pre-specified MIC target (piperacillin: 55% vs. 14% in non-ECMO; linezolid: 37% vs. 8%). No such difference was observed for ceftazidime and meropenem.

Conclusions: ECMO treatment was associated with significantly reduced serum concentrations of piperacillin and linezolid.

148-DKMV
Review on 5 years of screening for carbapenemase-producing strains
*N. Dietze*, N. Lippmann, A. C. Rodloff
Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Diagnostik, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction

The spread of multiresistant strains is an increasing threat for hospitalized patients especially if carbapenemase producing strains (CPS) are the cause of an infection. Extensive data on asymptomatic CPS carriers are still missing. After an outbreak of carbapenemase producing *Klebsiella pneumoniae* at the University hospital of Leipzig (2010-2013), the hospital was constantly looking for ways to avoid transmission between patients. Beside a strict adherence to hygienic orders, the clinic developed a consistent screening system.

Objectives

The following study is the first one to describe the outcome of a CPS screening after a carbapenemase outbreak.

Materials & methods

Stool specimens/rectal swabs were screened for CPS by cultural and molecular biological methods. Patient data were analyzed using the medical records.

Results

In total 92768 patients (2012-2017) were screened for the presence of CPS. Amongst them 220 (0.24%) patients were found to be carrier of CPS, out of these 240 different CPS strains were isolated. In detail 39.6% (n=95) VIM, 22.9% (n=55) OXA-48, 22.5% (n=54) KPC, 11.3% (n=27) NDM-1, 1.3% (n=3) IMP and 0.8% (n=2) GES carbapenemases were detected. Four strains were found to be positive for two different carbapenemases: VIM/OXA-48 (n=1), VIM/IMP (n=1), VIM/GES (n=1), VIM/NDM-1 (n=1). In 68.2% (n=150) cases the CPS was detected at the admission to the hospital, 32.8% were detected due to other screening reasons: 20.9% (n=46) patients hospitalized for more than 14 days, 10.5% (n=23) CPS in other material than stool/rectal swab, 0.5% (n=1) patient with contact to a CPS patient. In 16 patients (7.3%) the CPS was isolated from blood cultures indicating an endogenous infection.

Conclusions

Besides the presenting of the screening results, the study should lead to the discussion, if an extensive screening of hospitalized patients has any positive effects for patients and hospitals. However, more detailed knowledge about the duration of colonization and possible risk factors for a CPS carriage might be useful to prevent endogenous infections with resistant gram negative bacteria.

149-DKMV
The author has not agreed to a publication.

150-DKMV
Gram-negative bloodstream infections: a quality of care assessment
*C. L. Correa-Martinez*, H. Tönnies, A. Mellmann, S. Kampmeier
University Hospital Münster, Institute of Hygiene, Münster, Germany

INTRODUCTION

Bloodstream infections caused by Gram-negative bacteria (GNB) are a cause of sepsis, which remains the most important cause of death among infections in Germany. The adequate management of GNB bacteremia (GNBB) can be hampered by the lack of specialized assessment and optimal communication between clinicians and microbiology experts. In contrast to *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteremia, treatment of GNBB is difficult to standardize due to the variety of causal agents and resistance mechanisms involved.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to evaluate the quality of the GNBB management at the University Hospital Münster (UHM).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Five quality-of-care indicators (QCI) were defined to evaluate the management of GNBB cases: 1) antibiotic adjustment according to microbiological results, 2) dosage, 3) follow-up blood cultures, 4) duration of treatment and 5) source identification. One point was assigned to each QCI correctly addressed (total score: 0-5). QCI scores were calculated for all GNBB cases detected over a 6-month period at the UHM.

RESULTS

In total, 79 GNBB cases were identified. The patients’ average age was 59 years and 69.6% of them were male. In relation to the total number of cases, QCI were satisfactorily covered as follows: 1) 48.1%; 2) 34.2%; 3) 63.3%; 4) 57.0%; 5) 59.5%. The average QCI score was 3. The most commonly isolated bacteria were *Escherichia coli* (67.1%) and *Klebsiella* spp. (13.9%). GNBB was defined as hospital-acquired (diagnosis >48 h after admission) in 47 cases (59.5%).

CONCLUSION

GNBB is a potentially lethal condition that poses a challenge for the clinician. At our hospital, therapeutic management of GNBB requires optimization. Measures should be taken aiming at an overall quality improvement with a special focus on antibiotic selection and dosage. On-site ABS consultations have been shown to positively impact clinical practices and could thus contribute to increase the quality of GNBB management.

151-DKMV
QUESTION: This study investigated predominant microorganisms causing community-onset bacteremia at the medical emergency department (ED) of a tertiary-care university hospital in Germany from 2013 to 2018 and their antimicrobial susceptibility patterns.

METHODS: Antimicrobial resistance patterns in patients with positive blood cultures presenting to an internal medicine ED were retrospectively analysed.

RESULTS: Blood cultures were obtained at 5,191 of 66,879 ED encounters, with 1,013 (19.5%) positive results, and true positive results at 740 encounters (diagnostic yield, 14.3%). The most frequently isolated relevant microorganisms were Enterobacteriaceae (n=439, 59.3%), Staphylococcus aureus (n=92, 12.4%), Streptococcus pneumoniae (n=34, 4.6%), Pseudomonas aeruginosa (n=32, 4.3%), Streptococcus pyogenes (n=16, 2.2%), Enterococcus faecalis (n=18, 2.4%), and Enterococcus faecium (n=12, 1.6%). Antimicrobial susceptibility testing revealed a high proportion of resistance against ampicillin-sulbactam in Enterobacterales (42.2%). The rate of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus was low (0.4%). Piperacillin-tazobactam therapy provided coverage for 83.2% of all relevant pathogens using conventional breakpoints. Application of the new European Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing (EUCAST) recommendations increased the percentage of susceptible isolates to high-dose piperacillin-tazobactam to 92.8% (p < 0.001). Broad-spectrum carbapenems would only cover an additional 4.8%. The addition of vancomycin or linezolid extended coverage by just 1.7%.

CONCLUSIONS: Using an ureidopenicillin-beta-lactamase inhibitor combination at the high dose suggested by the new EUCAST recommendations provided nearly 93% coverage for relevant pathogens in patients with suspected bloodstream infection in our cohort. This might offer a safe option to reduce the empiric use of carbapenems. Our data support the absence of a general need for glycopeptides or oxazolidinones in empiric treatment.

152-PRV
Low energy electron irradiation is a promising novel method for sterilization of bacteria- or virus-containing liquids 

1. Introduction

Irradiation with ionizing radiation is an effective sterilization method for pathogen containing solutions. However, high energy is needed for sterilizing liquids in standard processes, hence existing irradiation techniques (gamma-, X-rays and high-energy electron beam) require big and complex radiation protection shielding constructions and thus cannot be used in a normal laboratory environment. We have previously demonstrated that low-energy electron irradiation (LEEI) is an efficient inactivation method for pathogens in liquids that does not require strong shielding and can therefore be integrated in any laboratory setting. In addition, it is extremely fast due to a high dose rate and optimally conserves biological structures, which is essential for many downstream-applications.

2. Objectives

We constructed a research-scale prototype for LEEI treatment of pathogen-containing liquids (milliliters up to several liters), that can be implemented in sterilization or manufacturing processes under GMP conditions.

3. Materials and Methods

We tested different bacteria (E.coli and B. cereus) and viruses (InfluenzaA and Zika) with LEEI using two different completely closed concepts for automation (a continuous inactivation system and a system based on disposable bags). The pathogens were tested for infectivity before and after LEEI treatment. Protein conservation was analyzed by ELISA using polyclonal antibodies. DNA of irradiated and non-irradiated samples was extracted and analyzed by PCR.

4. Results

A dose-dependent reduction of infectivity was observed, resulting in complete inactivation of all tested pathogens. As expected, bacteria required lower doses than spores or viruses. Compared to non-irradiated material, the antigenic structures in inactivated samples remained largely intact. Although LEEI treatment leads to fragmentation of nucleic acids, PCR detection (amplicons > 300bp) yielded positive results.

5. Conclusion

The unique prototype enables the efficient sterilization of pathogen containing liquids in a fast, automated process and allows the direct use of the material in sensitive diagnostic downstream assays such as ELISA or PCR.

153-PRV
Prevalence of multidrug resistant gram negative bacteria in siphons of ICU patient rooms with and without disinfection procedures

1G. E. Belmar Campos,1 G. Franke,1 E. M. Klupp1, A. Kollotzek1, J. K. Knobloch1
2University Medical Centre Hamburg-Eppendorf, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Virology and Hygiene, Hamburg, Germany
3University Medical Centre Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany

Introduction Siphon siphons in hospitals, especially in the ICU, are considered to be potential sources of nosocomial infections and/or colonizations with multidrug resistant (MDR) pathogens. After experiencing an outbreak with P. aeruginosa in 2015, disinfection of siphons in all ICU patient rooms with Perform® 2% (Schülke, Hamburg, Germany) once a week and screening of these siphons for MDR bacteria were carried out. Disinfection procedures were adjusted in two wards in April 2017. In this study we analyzed samples of six patient rooms of these wards, for the period of 22 weeks before and after stopping disinfection procedure to check if there was an increase of MDR Gram
negative bacteria, especially such producing carbapenemases.

Methods In two ICU wards (one interdisciplinary, one surgical) siphons from the washbasin in six patient rooms were sampled weekly and analyzed for the presence of carbapenem resistant Gram-negative organisms (CRGNO). Species ID was performed by mass spectrometry and AST using an automated system. Isolated CRGNO were screened by PCR for the presence of carbapenemase genes (KPC, NDM, Oxa-48 group and VIM).

Results No significant difference (p=0.4) between the disinfection (19/132 CRGNO positive samples [14%]) and none disinfection period (25/132 CRGNO positive samples [19%]) was observed. The most frequent species detected was P. aeruginosa (56%). The other isolates belonged to the group of Enterobacterales (K. pneumoniae 19%, E. cloacae complex 17% and C. freundii 8%).

A carbapenemase gene was found in 84% of all tested isolates during the whole period with VIM (55%) and Oxa48 (45%) being the only genes detected.

Conclusions CRGNO are frequently observed in sink siphons in patient rooms in the ICU ward of our hospital. A high percentage of these isolates harbor a carbapenemase gene. Disinfection of siphons with Perform® could not prevent colonization with CRGNO and there was no relevant increase of such isolates after stopping disinfection procedures. Therefore, alternative prevention strategies to avoid nosocomial transmission of CRGNO via siphons in hospitals are required.

154-PRV
Plasma activated water inactivates efficiently gram-negative and gram-positive microorganisms

"M. Hummert1, P. H. M. Leenders2, P. van Ooij3, T. Kuczius1
1Institute of Hygiene, University of Münster, University Hospital of Münster, Münster, Germany
2VitalFluid B.V., Nijmegen, Netherlands

Water activated by atmospheric pressure plasma (PAW) has been proposed as a new approach in bacterial inactivation. During water activation many active and reactive substances and radicals arise associated with a radical decrease in pH. In this study we investigated the influence of PAW on antimicrobial properties tested with bacterial strains such as Pseudomonas aeruginosa as waterborne pathogen, Escherichia coli as fecal indicator and Staphylococcus aureus as skin colonizer.

Drinking water was activated by non-thermal atmospheric pressure plasma with electric power of 60 to 120 W for 10 to 30 min. In the following PAW was used for post-discharge-treatment of planktonic cells grown in nutrients and adapted to tap water for long term survival.

Strains were exposed to PAW for defined periods of time (2 to 120 min) followed by cultivation. After treatment PAW activity was stopped by application of neutralization solution. The PAW effect on bacteria was proved by live/dead differentiation using real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) with propidium monoazid (PMA) pre-treatment and flow-cytometry.

Post-discharge treatment was highly efficient against bacteria and the disinfecting properties of PAW were dependent on the activation conditions and the treatment time for the water. Starting with 108 bacteria per mL, PAW (activated for 10 min at 100 W) achieved at least an 8-decimal-logarithm-unit reduction in 10 min treatment for all tested strains when grown in nutrient media. The treatments were less efficient on P. aeruginosa and E. coli when they were adapted to tap water and incubated for several weeks. PAW had to be activated with higher electric power (120 W) and prolonged activation (30 min) to achieve a reduction of at least 8 decimal-logarithm-units. These antimicrobial properties were upheld during storage of the PAW at room temperature for at least 120 min. PAW demonstrates a high potential in applications as disinfectant.

155-PRV
Removal of antibiotic residues, antibiotic-resistant bacteria and antibiotic-resistance genes from hospital wastewater, by using ultrasonic treatment

"C. Felder1, A. M. Voigt1, E. Sibö1, F. Lenz-Piet1, D. Skutlarek1, H. Färber1, R. Schmithaussen2, M. Exner1
1Universitätsklinikum Bonn, Institut für Hygiene und Öffentliche Gesundheit, Bonn, Germany

Introduction
Hospital wastewater is a hotspot for antibiotic residues, antibiotic-resistant bacteria and antibiotic-resistance genes. Especially with regard to reserve antibiotics, hospital wastewater is an important source for the spread of antibiotic resistances in the environment. In particular because conventional wastewater treatment plants are not able to fully remove these pollutants from the wastewater (Voigt et al. 2019).

Objectives
The aim of the study was to answer the question, whether it would be possible to reduce the concentrations of antibiotic residues, antibiotic-resistant bacteria and resistance genes in wastewater significantly, by using ultrasound treatment.

"Materials & methods"
For the simulation of the wastewater treatment, we used an ultrasonic reactor of the AIMES GmbH and a simulated Waste Water Matrix, purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (Taufkirchen, Germany). Concentrations of the antibiotic residues were measured with LC-MS/MS. Cultural analysis was performed by plating out a dilution series of the treated simulated wastewater onto chromogenic selective agar plates. The bacteria were differentiated via MALDI TOF MS and microdilution.

Results
With the help of ultrasound treatment, the concentration of antibiotic residues in wastewater can be reduced by up to 80 % within ten minutes. The amount of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and resistance also showed a great reduction.

Conclusion
Within the scope of the investigations, the principle of wastewater treatment by ultrasound has been applied for the first time to the removal of antibiotic residues, antibiotic-resistant bacteria and antibiotic-resistance genes. The study is a first step towards a decentralised in-line treatment of hospital wastewater to reduce the introduction of antibiotic resistance into the environment via hospital wastewater.
156-PRV
Change of adherence to infection prevention measures in operating rooms as part of the HYGARZT Project
J. Hofmann1, S. Herbrandt2, M. Neuwirth3, S. Akca1, U. Liggess1, C. Kugier2, F. Mattner1
1Klinikum der Stadt Köln, Institut für Hygiene, Köln, Germany
2Technische Universität, Fakultät Statistik, Dortmund, Germany
3Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Institut für Pflegewissenschaft, Freiburg i. Br., Germany

Introduction
The BMG funded HYGARZT Project investigates medical and economic advantages of infection prevention and control measures (IPCM), implemented by the infection prevention and control link practitioner (IPC-LP) in orthopedics and trauma surgery.

Objectives
Behavior of operation room (OR) staff, before and after the implementation of IPCM by the IPC-LP using a pre-after interventional study design.

Methods and Materials
During the pre-intervention phase, adherence with existing IPC-measures was observed. We focused on hand hygiene (HH), wearing of caps and masks (CM), private conversation, opening of OR doors and fluctuation of OR staff. As intervention the OR staff was trained by the IPC-LP about the IPCMs, which were observed, by using a checklist. For statistical analysis we used the Fisher-Pitman permutation test.

Results
Pre-/post-interventional 95/104 surgical procedures were observed, respectively. Overall 1945/2710 HH indications were identified. The adherence to HH before incision (excluding surgical hand disinfection) increased from 5.2% to 54.9% (p<0.001) (surgeons) and from 9.7% to 62.4% (p<0.001) (nurses), after surgery from 15.1% to 53.0% (p<0.001) (surgeons) and from 15.4% to 62.4% (p<0.001) (nurses). The adherence for correct donning of CM did not change significantly (wearing of surgical caps, about 60% (p=0.390) or surgical masks from 85.9% to 90.2% (p=0.068)). Private conversations were documented in 19.2%/29.3% (p=0.037) of observed procedures. Door openings increased from 60.0% to 98.1% (p<0.001). In 31.6%/75.0% (p<0.001) of the procedures, persons entered or left the OR.

Conclusion
In our setting the IPC-LP accomplished significant risings in adherence to HH adherence for non-aseptic indications, carried out by the OR staff. Helpful was the definition correct moments for HH and simplifed providing of disinfectants. In contrast, fluctuation of staff with associated door openings increased, which could be explained in part by personal exchange and shortages.

157-PRV
"When push comes to nudge": Is it time to nudge healthcare workers’ compliance to prevent nosocomial infections and antimicrobial resistance? Results of two systematized reviews on effects of nudging on hand hygiene and antibiotic use
J. Schewe1, T. von Lengerke2
1Hannover Medical School, Centre for Public Health and Healthcare, Department of Medical Psychology, Hannover, Germany

Question
Healthcare workers’ compliance to prevent nosocomial infections (NI) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) remains suboptimal. To improve implementation, nudging has been introduced in the field.[1,2] Nudges refer to “any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people’s behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing...economic incentives”, and choice architecture to influencing choice by "organizing the context in which people make decisions".[3] This study presents reviews on nudges aimed at hand hygiene compliance (HHC) and rational antibiotic use (RAU).

Methods
Searches were conducted in PubMed and LIVIVO in April 2019 following PRISMA. Nudges in the studies were classified using appropriate typologies [4-5].

Results
N=18 and N=13 studies using 26 and 19 nudges were included for HHC and RAU, respectively. Prompts, i.e. non-personalized information to raise awareness, were used most (24.4%). For HHC, these were followed by reminders (15.4%), frames (e.g. presentations of gains or losses), and proximal stimuli (e.g. increase of behavioral ease by placement: 11.5% each). For RAU, simplification, i.e. increasing ease of optimal choice, shared first place with prompts (21.1%), followed by frames, social norms, and availability (e.g. added behavioral options: 15.8% each). Effectiveness was reported for 71.1% of nudges. Of these, 77.7% (HHC) and 92.8% (RAU) reported statistically significant improvements.[TVL1]

Conclusions
Nudging may represent a low-threshold approach to promote NI- and AMR- preventive compliance. The magnitude and ancillary conditions (e.g. motivation, regulations) of its effectiveness have yet to be determined.

1 Jacob JT et al. Preventing healthcare-associated infections through human factors engineering. Curr Opin Infect Dis 2018;31:353-8

158-MPV
Caspase-3 dampens macrophage infiltration into Staphylococcus aureus abscess lesions
V. Winkel1,2,3, C. Schneewe1, D. Missiakas2
1TWINCORE, Centre for Experimental and Clinical Infection Research, Hannover, Germany
2Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, Hannover Medical School, Hannover, Germany
3University of Chicago, Department of Microbiology, Chicago, United States
Staphylococcus aureus is a notorious bacterial pathogen that causes fatal diseases in humans. During infection, S. aureus generates cytotoxic deoxyadenosine (dAdo) from neutrophil extracellular traps which eliminates phagocytes. Here, we demonstrate that disruption of caspase-3, a key modulator of apoptosis, protects macrophages from dAdo intoxication and impairs S. aureus disease pathogenesis. Mice lacking caspase-3 in immune cells exhibit diminished susceptibility towards S. aureus bloodstream infection, as caspase-3-deficient macrophages readily infiltrate abscess lesions thereby supporting neutrophils in the phagocytic clearance of staphylococci. Combined with a screen for single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in human CASP3 that protect macrophages from S. aureus-mediated dAdo intoxication, these data may explain variable outcomes of S. aureus infections in humans.

With the help of biofilm formation bacteria are able to evade phagocytosis by shifting the host's immune response towards an anti-inflammatory profile. Understanding biofilm related immune escape mechanisms of S. epidermidis and other biofilm forming bacteria may pave the way towards novel therapeutic approaches in the future.

159-MPV
Staphylococcus epidermidis biofilms alter the pro-inflammatory immune response in primary human macrophages
*S. Weiße1, A. Both1, H. Böttner1, H. Rohde1
1Universitätsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf, Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Virologie und Hygiene, Hamburg, Germany

Question
Polarized macrophages are the first defense line of the human immune system. Since S. epidermidis evolved sophisticated mechanisms to escape the host's immune response professional phagocytes are facing problems eradicating those pathogens. In order to understand why and how biofilms are able to persist during this study investigated the cellular effects of macrophages during infection.

Methods
Primary human macrophages isolated from buffy coats were infected with different S. epidermidis strains. Phagocytosis rates, macrophage polarization and TLR2 presentation were analyzed by confocal laser scanning microscopy and FACS analysis. For better understanding of the phagocyte's reaction during infection transcription and protein levels of IL-1β, TNF-α, II-6 and II-10 were assessed and a RNAseq experiment was carried out.

Results
Instead of being activated upon infection with bacteria embedded in a biofilm the macrophages' expression and secretion of pro-inflammatory cytokines is significantly reduced in contrast to contact with single cell bacteria. However, anti-inflammatory cytokines are highly upregulated. Along with these findings, the phagocytosis rate is dramatically decreased as soon as bacteria are protected in a biofilm. Interestingly, in an infection context the macrophages subtype is shifted towards anti-inflammatory M2 as confirmed in FACS analysis. The S. epidermidis recognition receptor is TLR-2. By blockage of this receptor the phagocytosis rate of biofilm positive strains can be recovered as well as the induction of the pro-inflammatory defense. When analyzing the overall gene expression pattern of macrophages during infection experiments it becomes clear that a dramatic dysregulation of the innate immune response takes place.

Conclusion

Bordetella (B.) bronchiseptica, as well as Streptococcus (S.) suis, are respiratory pathogens contributing to the porcine respiratory disease complex (PRDC) which causes high economic losses in the pig industry. Furthermore, both are zoonotic pathogens and infect humans.

S. suis is a frequent colonizer of the upper respiratory tract of pigs, but it can also cause invasive infections in animals predisposed, e.g., by infection with B. bronchiseptica. Though the mechanisms how B. bronchiseptica promotes infection with S. suis are still unclear, it is plausible that B. bronchiseptica induced damage of the ciliated epithelium barrier facilitates adherence and invasion of S. suis.

In this study, we established a porcine precision-cut lung slice (PCLS) model to analyze interactions during coinfections with both pathogens. We investigated the effects of B. bronchiseptica infection on colonization, invasiveness and cell damaging capacities of S. suis, with particular focus on the role of its pore-forming toxin sulyisin (SLY). For this purpose, we infected PCLS with a clinical isolate of B. bronchiseptica for 24 hours to predispose the PCLS to infection with a virulent S. suis serotype 2 strain and its isogenic SLY-deficient mutant strain, as well as the complemented mutant strain. During incubation, we determined the ciliary activity using light microscopy, the growth of B. bronchiseptica and S. suis in the supernatant by serial dilution and plating on agar plates and the extent of induced cell damage using an LDH release assay. Additionally, at certain time points, PCLS were lysed to evaluate cell-associated bacteria or were fixed for histopathology and immunofluorescence staining.

Taken together, our results showed that coinfection with B. bronchiseptica promoted adherence and cell damaging effects of S. suis independent of the presence of SLY. In addition, the PCLS coinfection model may also be used to study bacteria-host interactions ex vivo in other porcine respiratory infections, as well as in human infections, considering that pigs are generally recognized as a suitable model for human diseases.

161-MPV
Zinc metalloprotease ProA contributes to dissemination of Legionella pneumophila in human lung tissue explants
*L. Schellhauer1, S. Thiem1, S. Schmelz2, A. Dellmann3, K. Büssow2, R. M. H. J. Brouwer4, C. Unal1, W. Blankenfeldt1, M. Steiner1,5
1Technische Universität Braunschweig, institute of microbiology, Braunschweig, Germany
2Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, structure and function of proteins, Braunschweig, Germany
3Klinikum Braunschweig, pathology, Braunschweig, Germany
Legionnaires’ disease is a severe form of pneumonia that can be life-threatening. One out of ten patients dies in consequence of an infection with the causative agent *Legionella pneumophila*. The bacterium is well-adapted to colonize man-made water systems and, after inhalation, to replicate in alveolar macrophages. Using human explants of pulmonary tissue we characterized the thermolysin-like protease ProA as a L. pneumophila virulence factor. Vital lung specimens were derived from cancer patients undergoing lobe- or pneumectomy, and histological events were investigated after inoculation with the purified protease. ProA treatment results in effective degradation of collagen IV, an important structural host factor. This evoked tissue destruction in the human lung samples, which facilitates dissemination of the pathogen and was similarly observed in infected patients. Purifying high amounts of recombinant ProA we additionally crystallized the protease and managed to determine the X-ray structure at 1.5 Å resolution. ProA consists of two domains with N-terminal β-sheets and C-terminal α-helices, and contains a central zinc cofactor in the active site. Moreover, the crystal structure revealed vast homology to important virulence factors of the same enzyme family, such as pseudolysin from *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. In molecular detail we were able to gain comprehension concerning the interplay of structure and function of ProA in human lung tissue explants.

163-MPV

**Group A streptococcal pyrogenic exotoxin B (SpeB) responses to intracellular environment in necrotizing skin and soft tissue infections**

*P. Shumba*¹, T. Sura², J. Hoßmann³, D. Becher², N. Siemens¹

¹Universität Greifswald, Department of Molecular Genetics and Infection Biology, Greifswald, Germany
²Universität Greifswald, Department of Microbial Proteomics, Greifswald, Germany
³Helmholtz Center for Infection Research, Microbial Interactions and Processes Research Group, Braunschweig, Germany

**Introduction**

It is widely accepted that immune cells play a crucial role in hyper-inflammatory and tissue destructive processes of group A streptococcal (GAS) necrotizing skin and soft tissue infections (NSTIs). Several immune cells are recruited to the site of infection, including neutrophils and macrophages. Analyses of human NSTI biopsies revealed that high amounts of viable bacteria were readily detectable, even in those patients with prolonged antibiotic therapy. GAS secrete a potent cysteine protease streptococcal pyrogenic exotoxin B (SpeB). Mixed populations of SpeB-positive and negative GAS clones were identified in patient biopsies.

**Objectives**

Here, we aimed to identify host factors that interfere with GAS SpeB expression.

**Materials & methods**

To identify host factors responsible for a mixed SpeB phenotype within the biopsies, microscopic analyses of the tissue were performed. In addition, whole genome and proteome analyses of GAS NSTI isolates were conducted. Furthermore, the impact of human primary cells on GAS SpeB expression was analysed.

**Results**

Although up-to 90% of GAS genome was identical between different GAS NSTI isolates, a diverse expression pattern of SpeB during the infection was detected. Human macrophages and neutrophils were identified as major sources driving the on/off switch of SpeB. However, this phenomenon was more pronounced in neutrophils. Further, in vitro passage of SpeB-negative GAS clones revealed that the switch occurs mainly on the proteome level and not, as previously reported, on the genome level.

**Conclusion**

Our data suggest that the on/off-set of SpeB expression potentially promotes intracellular survival in phagocytes. It is a reversible process, which suggests that GAS have adapted strategies to sense potential danger signals during an infection. We are currently addressing the survival strategies by using whole proteome analyses.

164-MPV

**Describing the Interaction between Bartonella Adhesin A and Fibronectin as a Novel Therapeutic Concept to Treat Bacterial Infections**

*Klinikum Braunschweig, Braunschweig, Germany
²Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Braunschweig, Germany

Staphylococcus aureus causes very severe infections of vascular grafts. To study the pathogenesis of these infections we have developed a murine model that closely mimics the situation as it is in patients by implanting a Teflon catheter inside the carotid artery of mice followed by intravenous infection with *S. aureus*. In this model the biofilm is formed under the stress of high blood flow as well as the pressure of the host immune system. In this study we investigated the role of the global regulators sarA and sae in biofilm formation in vitro and in vivo.

**Methods:** A catheter was placed in the right carotid artery of CD1-mice. Mice were infected with *S. aureus* LS1 wild type (WT), LS1Δsae or LS1ΔsarAΔmutant one week after surgery. 10 days later the mice were euthanized and kidneys, bones and catheters were removed for CFU counting (animal experiments were approved (LANUV, approval no. 81-02.04.2018.A334) The *in vitro* biofilm formation of strains was determined by crystal violet staining and the interaction of bacteria and host cells (primary endothelial cells, neutrophils) was analyzed.

**Results:** *In vitro* *S. aureus* LS1 WT and LS1Δsae could form biofilm, LS1ΔsarA however not. Our *in vivo* model showed a completely different picture: Although the *sae* null-mutant was able to colonize the kidneys and bones, meaning that it was not immediately removed from the host, it was less able to colonize the intravascular catheter than the other strains. Subsequent *in vitro* experiments showed that the Δsae-mutant was less able to invade host cells and did not induce a proinflammatory response from neutrophils or HUVECs. In contrast to LS1 WT and LS1ΔsarA, LS1Δsae had no effect on the viability of neutrophils and could not cause a significant increase in neutrophil transmigration via a HUVEC cell layer compared to PBS control.

**Conclusion:** The result of biofilm formation *in vitro* did not reflect biofilm formation *in vivo* under the stress of the immune system. Although the ΔsarA-mutant and wild type strain induced a host response that should help the host to eliminate the bacterial infection, this response seemed to enhance the bacteria’s ability to form a biofilm.
Introduction: *Bartonella henselae* is a facultative intracellular bacterium, responsible for cat scratch disease and vascular proliferations (bacillary angiomatosis) in humans. The trimeric autotransporter adhesin *Bartonella* adhesin A (BadA) is a major pathogenicity factor of *B. henselae* mediating bacterial adherence to endothelial cells (EC) and extracellular matrix (ECM) proteins. The identification of specific binding sites between BadA and ECM proteins might give insights about the use of BadA-specific peptides to treat bacterial infections by a new class of antibiotics (“anti-ligands”).

Objective: To describe BadA binding sites in fibronectin (FN) as the basis of the interaction between BadA and ECM proteins in host-cell adhesion.

Material & Methods: *B. henselae* strains (wild type and BadA deficient) were exposed to proteolytic FN fragments to analyze binding affinity via ELISA and western blot. Competition assays were performed using bacteria and heparin or antibodies targeting specific FN regions. The BadA-FN interaction was further analyzed by mass spectrometry of cross-linked peptides. As a proof of concept for the importance of BadA-FN interaction in the infection process, FN deficient ECs (LentiCRISPR) were generated and incubated with different FN fragments and *B. henselae* strains using in vitro infection models.

Results: Binding experiments between *B. henselae* and FN fragments were performed showing higher affinity of BadA to a 30 kDa fragment located at the N-terminus and 40 kDa at the C-terminus of the FN molecule. This interaction was supported by mass spectrometry analysis of the cross-linked peptides and by the binding inhibition after competition assays with heparin. The importance of this interaction was evaluated via infection experiments. After the definition of BadA-FN binding sites, further steps will include the generation of synthetic molecules for the inhibition of bacterial adhesion to host cells (“anti-ligands”).

Conclusions: The two heparin-binding domains of the FN molecule were identified as the major BadA binding sites. The role of these binding sites will be analyzed in the course of infection using in vitro infection assays.

Objectives - This study aimed to investigate the interactions between metabolism and virulence over hundreds of generation of directed evolution in *P. aeruginosa*.

Methods - We evolved *P. aeruginosa* in 96 different growth conditions (BIOLOG GenIII plate) over the course of 300-400 generation in the presence or absence of sub-inhibitory concentrations of the antibiotics Ciprofloxacin and Tobramycin. Aliquots were frozen daily to trace evolutionary trajectories.

Results - We found that media composition influenced virulence potential (measured as ability to kill mammalian cells) both immediately and over longer time-scales. Interestingly, resistance patterns suggested media adaptation-mediated development of resistance (to Kanamycin) and development of cross-resistance in Ciprofloxacin-exposed bacteria. Virulence factors such as pyocyanin as well as quorum sensing signals showed a clear downward trend in rich media, suggesting the emergence of social cheaters in these conditions.

Conclusion - Our findings show that adaptation to media, both short and long-term has a clear impact on virulence potential, resistance and - unsurprisingly - growth of *P. aeruginosa*. The mechanisms behind these differences could be used to explore novel treatment options aiming to down-regulated virulence in the clinical setting.

166-GIV

Genome characterization of two multidrug-resistant *Arcobacter butzleri* isolates and prevalence of antibiotic resistance genes in strains isolated from poultry in Ghana

*A. E. Zautner*, K. G. Boahen*, C. W. Akenten*, T. Riedel1, J. Overmann4, J. May1, D. Dekker4

1Universitätsmedizin Göttingen, Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Göttingen, Germany

2Kumasi Center for Collaborative Research in Tropical Medicine (KCCR), Kumasi, Ghana

3Leibniz-Institut DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen, Braunschweig, Germany

4Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine, Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Hamburg, Germany

In recent years, *Arcobacter butzleri* has gained notoriety as an emerging pathogen associated with poultry and water. *A. butzleri* has been detected in about 11% of diarrhea patients in South Africa. It may therefore be one of the main pathogens for diarrhea in other African countries, but this is relativized by the variable virulence of the individual isolates.

The aim of the study was (i) to identify antibiotic resistance genes (ARGs) in generated genome sequences of two multidrug-resistant *A. butzleri* isolates, (ii) to use multilocus sequence typing (MLST) to generate a guiding phylogeny of *A. butzleri* isolates from poultry in Ghana, (iii) to examine the distribution of ARGs in the test cohort, and (iv) to assess the virulence and the possible antibiotic treatment options for arcobacteriosis based on the genome sequences and the ARG distribution.

A total of 48 *A. butzleri* isolates were isolated from poultry distributed in Ghana. These isolates were MLStyped and investigated by agar disk diffusion for their susceptibility to ciprofloxacin, tetracycline, gentamicin and erythromycin. Whole genome sequence data of two *A. butzleri* isolates were obtained by a combination of single-molecule real-time (SMRT) and Illumina sequencing technology. In the test cohort, the distribution of a total of 14 ARGs was investigated by amplicon sequencing.
With 43 different sequence types for 48 isolates, the test cohort proved to be phylogenetically very heterogeneous. A total of 14 ARGs and virulence factors similar to those of Campylobacter were identified in the two generated genome sequences. In total, only four isolates show an ARG constellation indicating a multidrug-resistant phenotype, while oxa-464, macA and macB and the quinolone determining region (QRDR) were present in the majority of isolates.

The evaluation of the virulence genes in the two A. butzleri genomes shows that the species may have a similar virulence potential as Campylobacter species.

The presence of the ARGs oxa-464, macA and macB and the QRDR in the predominant number of isolates indicates that ampicillin, macrolides and quinolones should not be recommended as antibiotic therapy for arcobacteriosis in Ghana.

167-GIV
New sustainable therapeutic options for Clostridioides difficile therapy

*M. Brauer*1,2, S. Wagner1, J. Herrmann1, S. Sievers1, D. Zühle1, V. I. Pauker1, R. Müller1, T. M. Fuchs1, K. Riedel1/2

1University of Greifswald, Institute of Microbiology, Greifswald, Germany
2Institute of Marine Biotechnology, Greifswald, Germany

Clostridioides difficile is an important nosocomial pathogen causing gastrointestinal disease in patients who have received antimicrobial therapy recently. While people with an intact intestinal microbiome show colonization resistance towards *C. difficile*, spores of *C. difficile* are able to germinate in the gut of patients with a dysfunctional microbiome. Thus, antibiotics play a dual role in *C. difficile* infections by paving the way for the infection as well as by still being first-choice therapy.

With regard to recurrence rates of up to 30 %, we aim to characterize new antimicrobials for *C. difficile* therapy that show activity against *C. difficile* but ideally omit most other bacterial species in the gut.

To do so, we first performed broth dilution assays to identify compounds with low minimal inhibitory concentrations for *C. difficile* from a selection of antimicrobials that have been isolated from microorganisms. Subsequently, broth dilution assays were repeated to test for the action of the most active compounds on selected commensals from the gut. In parallel, proteomics experiments in *C. difficile* strain 630 were performed to gain information on the mode-of-action of the same compounds. Moreover, we also fed one compound, Chlorotonil A, to piglets and analyzed its impact on the intestinal microbiota using a multi-omics approach.

Our results show that the antimicrobial compounds Chlorotonil A and B, Chelocardin and Myxopyronin B are significantly active against *C. difficile* with minimal inhibitory concentrations below 3 μg/ml. First results from our proteomics experiments revealed that Chelocardin interacts with the bacterial cell envelope. Results for Chlorotonil A/B and Myxopyronin B are expected soon. In addition, the animal experiment and broth dilution assays for the commensal bacteria showed that Chlorotonol A has a rather narrow spectrum activity affecting mainly groups of Gram-positive bacteria, e.g. families within the order Clostridiales. Therefore, we hypothesize that Chlorotonil A and B could be promising candidates in *C. difficile* therapy. Future infection experiments in mice will help to further validate this hypothesis.

168-GIV
IFN-STAT1-MLKL axis drives necroptosis during gastrointestinal infection by controlling host cell death

*I. Stolzer*, M. T. Chiriac1, M. F. Neurath1, C. Günther1

1Universitätsklinikum Erlangen, Department of Medicine 1, Erlangen, Germany

The invasive bacterium *Salmonella enterica* is a common gastrointestinal pathogen and causes severe foodborne illness worldwide. Intestinal homeostasis and the maintenance of the epithelial barrier are essential components of host defense during gastrointestinal infection and requires a strict regulation of cell death. Interferons (IFNs) are potent immune-modularity cytokines that are strongly expressed by several cell types in response to inflammation and infection. It has just recently been reported that IFNs potentially influence the pathogenesis of several inflammatory diseases by mediating regulated necrosis by altering the expression of Mlkl via STAT1. However, molecular mechanisms of cell death regulation are not fully understood. Thus, we elucidated the contribution of different forms of cell death and upstream regulatory components. An IFN-STAT1 axis ensures host defense during *Salmonella Typhimurium* infection by limiting infected cells either by Caspase8-mediated apoptosis or MLKL-mediated necroptosis. A strict cell death regulation is nevertheless required since mice lacking Caspase8, an essential regulator of apoptosis and negative regulator of necroptosis, are highly sensitive towards gastrointestinal infection and inflammation associated with lethality. Our results demonstrate that epithelial STAT1 signaling controls *Mlkl* gene expression in intestinal epithelial cells during *Salmonella Typhimurium* infection and that STAT1 signaling plays a crucial role for the course of disease based on maintaining intestinal homeostasis and for host survival. This pathway seems to be pathogen specific since STAT1 has only a minor contribution to coordinate cell death during other gastrointestinal infections. Furthermore, we suppose a contribution of STAT2 beside STAT1 to maintain intestinal homeostasis and epithelial integrity during inflammation and infection. Collectively, our study reveals that IFN-STAT-signaling maintains homeostasis of the intestinal barrier by altering cell death regulatory components. Our data suggest that IFNs and epithelial STAT1-signaling maintains intestinal tissue homeostasis during *Salmonella* infection by controlling host cell death.

169-GIV
The HopO-CEACAM interaction controls CagA translocation, phosphorylation and phagocytosis of *Helicobacter pylori* in neutrophils

*I. K. Behrens*, B. Busch1, P. Palamides1, J. E. ShivELY2, C. Stanners3, C. Chan4, N. Leung5, S. Gray-Owen6, R. Haas7

1Max von Pettenkofer Institute, Chair of Medical Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, LMU, Munich, Germany
2Beckman Research Institute, Department of Molecular Imaging and Therapy, City of Hope, Duarte, United States
3McGill University, Department of Biochemistry and Goodman Cancer Research Centre, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
4University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine, Division of Surgical Oncology and Endocrine Surgery, Iowa City, United States
Helicobacter pylori avoids its elimination by the host immune system and persistently colonizes approximately 50% of the world population. This is accompanied by a strong infiltration of neutrophil granulocytes resulting in a bacterial gastritis that may lead to peptic ulcer disease, duodenal ulcer, MALT (mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue) lymphoma or gastric cancer. A hallmark of the human pathogen is its cag type IV secretion system (cag-T4SS). Translocation of the oncprotein CagA of H. pylori via the cag-T4SS is facilitated by carcinoembryonic antigen-related cell adhesion molecules (CEACAMs), which interact with the Helicobacter outer membrane protein Q (HopQ) of H. pylori. In this work the interaction of H. pylori with human CEACAM1, CEACAM3 and CEACAM6 receptors (hCEACAMs) expressed on PMNs from humanized mice was investigated. It could be shown that human CEACAMs strongly enhance HopQ-dependent the amount of translocated CagA. Afterwards, CagA gets tyrosine phosphorylated in human PMNs. In this work the influence of the CEACAM-HopQ interaction on tyrosine-phosphorylation of CagA was shown. In addition, it could be demonstrated that CEACAMs change the functions of neutrophils in a H. pylori infection. CEACAMs enhance the production of reactive oxygen species and play a special role during phagocytosis. Moreover, the release of proinflammatory chemokines was affected by the H. pylori CEACAM interaction. Taken together, this work demonstrates the importance of the HopQ-CEACAM interaction on neutrophils for H. pylori and might lead to a better understanding of the host pathogen interaction.

170-GIV
Deciphering the bewildering variety of O-glycans derived from mammalian mucins by state-of-the-art mass spectrometry

Introduction: Mucus glycoproteins, i.e. mucins constitute as major components the mucosal protective barrier of the gastrointestinal tract. Mucins are densely decorated with O-glycans exhibiting a vast structural diversity. Specific glycan motifs play key roles in mucosal protection and also in extrinsic interaction with commensal and pathogenic bacteria. To this day, there is a substantial lack of knowledge of the precise structures of the glycans from mucin glycoproteins.

Objective: To decipher the heterogeneity of O-glycans derived from mammalian mucins an approach involving a novel sample preparation protocol combined with state-of-the-art mass spectrometry (MS) techniques is employed.

Materials and Methods: Mucins obtained from porcine stomach and from bovine maxillary gland served as model substances. O-glycans were chemically liberated from the protein backbone by use of β-elimination. Released carbohydrates were characterized by MS1 and MS2-analysis including collision-induced dissociation (CID) and ion mobility MS.

Results: The release of O-glycans from the protein backbone of mucin from porcine stomach by β-elimination reactions in combination with MS analysis revealed heterogeneous mixtures of more than 35 distinct neutral glycoforms harboring core type 1 and type 2 structures. Besides simple di- and trisaccharides complex fucosylated oligosaccharides up to octadecamers were found and their structures were elucidated by low-energy CID experiments. Chemical liberation of O-glycans from mucin of bovine submaxillary glands yielded a high number of differently fucosylated and sialylated glycoforms based on core 2 and core 3 structures. Taking advantage of the various collisional cross-sections of isomeric oxonium-type fragment ions allowed discriminating different linkage types of terminal sialic acids.

Conclusion: The present results demonstrate the potential of MS analysis of O-glycans released from mammalian mucins for their in-depth structural characterization. Knowledge on the exact glycan structure is imperative for understanding the functional role of O-glycans in the interaction of resident and harmful microorganisms with the mucosal barrier.

171-GIV
Proteoglycan-Dependent Endo-Lyosomal Fusion Affects Intracellular Survival of Salmonella typhimurium in Epithelial Cells

Introduction
Cell surface proteoglycans (PGs) are glycosylated proteins involved in cell-matrix and cell-cell interactions which also play an important role in bacterial adhesion, invasion, and immune response. PGs consist of a core protein linked to chains of glycosaminoglycans (GAGs), such as chondroitin sulphate, heparan sulphate, and heparin. The initial step of GAG assembly is facilitated by the β-D-xylulotransferase enzyme encoded by the XylT2 gene.

Objective
To elucidate a role of the PGs in Salmonella Typhimurium (S. Typhimurium) infection.

Methods
Gentamicin protection assay was employed to assess an invasion into and replication of S. Typhimurium in wild-type and xylosyltransferase-deficient (ΔXylT2) Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells. Gentamicin concentration in the CHO cells was measured by ELISA. S. Typhimurium reporter strains were used to determine the intracellular localization of Salmonella.

Results
S. Typhimurium adhered to and invaded into CHO WT and CHO ΔXylT2 cells at comparable levels. However, 24 hours after infection, proteoglycan-deficient CHO cells were significantly less colonized by S. Typhimurium compared to CHO WT. This proteoglycan-dependent phenotype was rescued by addition of GAGs (heparin) to the medium, as well as by complementation of the XylT2 gene. No
differences in the levels of intracellular gentamicin concentration between CHO WT and CHO ΔXylT2 cells were detected. Chloroquine resistance assay and immunostaining revealed that in the absence of PGs, significantly less bacteria were associated with Salmonella-containing vacuoles (SCVs) when compared to WT CHO cells. Notably, cytotoxic bacteria had similar replication rates in CHO WT and CHO ΔXylT2 cells. Inhibition of endo-lysosomal fusion by a specific inhibitor of phosphatidylinositol phosphate kinase PIP5KIII (PIKfyve) significantly increased Salmonella burdens in CHO ΔXylT2 cells, but decreased Salmonella loads in CHO WT cells, demonstrating an importance of PGs for membrane-associated intracellular bacteria.

Conclusion

Proteoglycans influence survival of Salmonella at the later time points of infection via an action of PIKfyve-dependent endo-lysosomal fusion.

172-GIV

Application of NGS as method for typing of Salmonella enterica serovar Typhi

*E. Trost1, S. Simon1, S. Fuchs2, A. Fruth1, A. Flieger1
1Robert Koch-Institut, Division of Enteropathogenic Bacteria and Legionella (FG11), Wernigerode, Germany
2Robert Koch-Institut, Unit 13: Nosocomial Pathogens and Antibiotic Resistances, Wernigerode, Germany

Since 1938, isolates of S. Typhi are classified by phage typing, based on lysis of bacterial strains by specific bacteriophages. The set comprises 110 Vi-adapted phages [1].

We describe the sequencing and analysis of S. Typhi isolates sent to the NRC from 2015 to 2019. Our aim is to establish NGS as a routine typing method. Therefore we evaluate SNP- and cgMLST-based approaches and compare it with classical typing methods.

SNP-based phylogenetic analyses were done with Geneious. SeqSphere+ was applied for cgMLST analysis based on strain CT18 and the Enterobase wgMLST scheme [6].

1. S. Typhi isolates classified as ubII are not lysed by ViI-type phages, preventing a reliable statement about epidemiological contexts. In these cases NGS-based methods showed a high degree of differentiation.

NGS data were used to identify isolates of lineage H58 and XDR, characterized by 44 SNPs and multiple antibiotic resistances. We were able to identify these SNPs in 114 isolates including 5 XDR isolates. Both, SNP- and cgMLST-based analyses were successfully applied as routine methods and outbreak detection.


173-GIV

Early in vivo genome and methylome adaptation of the cag-negative Helicobacter pylori strain BCS 100 during an experimental human infection study

*I. Estibariz1,2, F. Ailoud3, S. Woltemate5, B. Bunk4, C. Sproer4, J. Overmann5, T. Aebsischer6, T. F. Meyer6, C. Josenhans1,3,5, S. Suerbaum1,3,5
1Max von Pettenkofer Institute - LMU Munich, Med. Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, Munich, Germany
2DZIF - German Center for Infection Research, Munchen, Germany
3MHH Hannover Medical School, Med. Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, Hannover, Germany
4DSMZ, Braunschweig, Germany
5Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology, Berlin, Germany
6Robert Koch Institute, Berlin, Germany

Helicobacter pylori has been shown to undergo rapid in vivo evolution in the course of chronic infection. In contrast, little is known about genome and methylome variation during the first stages of the infection. Here, we investigated genome and methylome evolution of H. pylori strain BCS 100 in 10 human volunteers. The cagPAI-negative H. pylori strain BCS 100 is the first strain that has been used in multiple challenge trials involving human volunteers. Genome sequences were generated for 10 H. pylori clones isolated from the challenge strain, and from 20 clones re-isolated from the antrum and corpus of 10 human volunteers who participated in a H. pylori challenge study to evaluate a recombinant Salmonella-based vaccine candidate. Comparison of whole genome sequences revealed genomic variability within the challenge strain population, and provided evidence of adaptation to the individual volunteers, affecting mostly genes with an outer-membrane related role and genes involved in peptide uptake. One re-isolate displayed a duplication of the catalase gene, which might help with fighting oxidative stress in an individual with a high degree of inflammation. Methylome differences were due to the ON/OFF switching of the enzymatic activity of phase-variable MTase genes. Adaptation of H. pylori to different individuals and stomach niches with particular selective pressures included genome and methylome modifications specific to every isolate. Thus, H. pylori is a versatile bacterium able to adapt to new hosts via changes in several genes and, probably, by modifying gene expression due to changes in the epigenome.

174-IVV

Tracking of influenza-specific memory B-lymphocytes in blood by single cell analysis and deep sequencing of the variable B-cell receptor regions

*C. Jassoy1, S. Reiche1, S. Horn1, Y. Dwai1
1Universität Leipzig, Institut für Virologie, Leipzig, Germany

Background and Aim: Viral infection and vaccination induce antigen-specific memory B-cell responses. The aim of the study was to identify and subsequently track influenza nucleoprotein (NP)-specific memory B-cells in the blood of an individual by single cell analysis and deep sequencing.
Methods: Influenza NP-specific memory B-lymphocytes were isolated from blood at three time points over 19 months. BcR IgG heavy and light chain variable regions of single antigen-specific memory B-cells were amplified by RT-PCR, cloned in antibody expression plasmids and sequenced. Antibody function was determined by ELISA. At the last blood drawing, the heavy chain regions were additionally analysed by MiSeq deep sequencing. Amino acid sequences from single cell analysis and deep sequencing were compared.

Results: Single cell BcR gene amplification from memory B-cells and cloning of heavy and light antibody chains yielded 26 structurally different influenza NP-specific antibodies. Three of the BcR sequences of single memory B-cells were also found by deep sequencing 15 to 19 months later.

Conclusion: By using antigen-specific memory B-cell isolation and deep sequencing, influenza NP-specific memory B-lymphocytes are traceable in the blood for more than a year. Deep sequencing can possibly be used to longitudinally assess the antigen-specific memory B-cell repertoire and to determine the durability of memory B-cell clones in vivo.

175-IV
Single-cell RNA-seq reports growth condition-specific global transcriptomics of individual bacteria 1J. Vogel1
1Helmholtz Institute, Institute for RNA-based Infection Research, Würzburg, Germany

Single-cell transcriptomics is revolutionizing the analysis of phenotypic cell-to-cell variation in eukaryotes but technical hurdles have prevented its robust application to prokaryotes. Using poly(A)-independent single-cell RNA-seq, we report the faithful capture of growth-dependent gene expression patterns in individual Salmonella and Pseudomonas bacteria, across all RNA classes and genomic regions. These transcriptomes provide important reference points for single-cell RNA-seq of other bacterial species, mixed microbial communities and host-pathogen interactions.

176-IV
Modulation of macrophage transcription and epigenetics by Yersinia enterocolitica 1I. Bekere, J. Huang, M. Schnapp, M. Aepfelbacher
1University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE), Institute of Medical Microbiology, Virology and Hygiene, Hamburg, Germany

The pathogenic Yersinia pestis, Y. pseudotuberculosis and Y. enterocolitica suppress the host immune response by downregulating the transcription of inflammatory genes. This activity is encoded on a virulence plasmid which allows the bacteria to inhibit effector proteins (Yops) into the host cells via the bacterial type three secretion system. We investigated whether epigenetic histone modifications play a role in the global effect of Y. enterocolitica on gene transcription. Therefore we infected primary human macrophages with Y. enterocolitica strains (wild type, ΔYopM and ΔYopP mutants and the virulence plasmid deficient WAC strain) and performed Chromatin Immunoprecipitation (ChIP)-seq employing anti-H3K4me3, -H3K27ac, -H3K27me3 and -H3K4me1 antibodies in combination with RNA-seq. Wild type induced activating histone marks at ~2100 genes at promoters, which dose dependently paralleled transcription. Further, wild type Yersinia strongly modulated activating H3K27ac at enhancers of more than 5000 genes. Integration of all data revealed that wild type upregulated promoters and enhancers of genes for metabolism and small Rho GTPase signaling. In addition, wild type suppressed activation of promoters and enhancers of immune response genes. YopP did not play a significant role while YopP showed a major contribution to the wild type effects, suggesting that Yops other than YopP or YopM or the interplay of all Yops contribute to this phenomenon. Moreover, the effect of YopP on the chromatin is partially mediated through inhibition of the MAPK pathway. In summary, we provide evidence for a profound epigenetic and transcriptional reprogramming of macrophage metabolism, small Rho GTPase signaling and inflammatory response by virulent Y. enterocolitica.

177-IV
1Rostock University Medical Center, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Virology and Hygiene, Rostock, Germany
2Rostock University Medical Center, Department of Internal Medicine, Medical Clinic III - Hematology, Oncology, Palliative Care, Rostock, Germany
3Rostock University Medical Center, Center for Medical Research – Core Facility Micro-Array-Technologie, Rostock, Germany
4Rostock University Medical Center, Medical Biology and Electron Microscopy Centre, Rostock, Germany
5Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Department of Anesthesiology and Operative Intensive Care Medicine, Berlin, Germany
6Ionis Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Department of Antisense Drug Discovery, Carlsbad, United States
7Rostock University Medical Center, Core Facility Proteome Analysis, Rostock, Germany

Introduction
Sepsis causes an activation of the human contact system, an inflammatory response mechanism against foreign surfaces, proteins and pathogens. The serine proteases of the contact system, factor XII and plasma kallikrein, are decreased in plasma of septic patients, which was previously associated with an unfavorable outcome. However, the precise mechanisms and roles of contact system factors in bacterial sepsis are poorly understood.

Objectives
We studied the physiological relevance of factor XII and plasma kallikrein in streptococcal infections.

Material & Methods
In this study, we used a subcutaneous infection model with S. pyogenes with and without pretreatment of ASOs through intraperitoneal injections. We analyzed bacterial dissemination, factor XII and prekallikrein gene (klkb1) expression, plasma kallikrein concentration in septic mice plasma and we did in vitro studies to the relevance of PK during fibrinolysis.

Results and Conclusion
Decreased plasma kallikrein concentration in septic mice is a result of reduced RNA expression of klkb1 gene, indicating that plasma kallikrein belongs to negative acute phase proteins. Investigations regarding the pathophysiological function of contact system proteases during sepsis revealed different roles for factor XII and plasma kallikrein. In vitro,
factor XII decelerated bacteria induced fibrinolysis, whereas plasma kallikrein supported it. Depletion of plasma kallikrein – but not factor XII – by treatment with ASOs, dampens bacterial dissemination and growth in multiple organs in the mouse sepsis model. These findings identify plasma kallikrein as a novel host pathogenicity factor in Streptococcus pyogenes sepsis.

**Conclusion:** *S. aureus* strains isolated from our cohort of STAT3-HIES patients do not resemble *S. aureus* strains described by previous studies in regard to toxin expression, methicillin resistance and classified spa type. This study demonstrates how WGS can be used to characterize pathogens in the context of primary immunodeficiencies and improve our understanding of *S. aureus* infections in this patient group.

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**Introduction:** Hyper-IgE syndromes (HIES) are a group of primary immunodeficiencies caused by monogenic defects such as in the gene STAT3 (STAT3-HIES). Similar to patients with atopic eczema (AE), patients suffering from HIES show frequent *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*) colonization. A recent study reported that American STAT3-HIES patients did not express PVL or enterotoxins isolated from both STAT3-HIES patients and only one isolate was identified as MRSA. Spa types of STAT3-HIES patients were frequently detected in *S. aureus* strains isolated from our cohort of STAT3-HIES- and AE patients. One out of the four STAT3-HIES patients developed a lymph node abscess during the time of our study. Here WGS of *S. aureus* isolates illustrated that infection (lymph node abscess) and colonization occurred with different *S. aureus* strains instead of one single strain.

### 178-IV

The author has not agreed to a publication.

### 179-IV

Characterization of *Staphylococcus aureus* isolated from hyper-IgE syndrome patients by whole genome sequencing

*#Institute for Hygiene Münster, University Hospital Münster, Münster, Germany
*#Environmedic, UNIKA-T, Technical University Munich and Helmholtz Zentrum Munich, Munich/Augsburg, Germany
*#University Children’s Hospital, Dr. von Haunersches Kinderspital, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, Germany
*#Mikrobiologisches Institut - Klinische Mikrobiologie, Immunologie und Hygiene, Universitätsschulmedizin Erlangen and Friedrich-Alexander-Universität (FAU) Erlangen-Nürnberg, Erlangen, Germany
*#Institute for Laboratory Medicine and Microbiology, University Hospital Augsburg, Augsburg, Germany
*#Institute of Pathology, University Hospital Augsburg, Augsburg, Germany
*#Institute of Immunology and Transfusion Medicine, University Medicine Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany
*#Hochgebirgsklinik and Christine-Kühne-Center for Allergy Research and Education, Davos, Switzerland

**Materials and methods:** 11 *S. aureus* strains from STAT3-HIES patients (n=4) and 6 *S. aureus* strains isolated from AE patients (n=4) were analyzed by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and to determine virulence gene repertoire.

**Results:** *S. aureus* strains isolated from our cohort of STAT3-HIES patients did not express PVL or enterotoxins and only one isolate was identified as MRSA. Spa types of collected isolates matched the molecular epidemiology of *S. aureus* in Germany (t015, t091, t084). Immune evasion cluster (IEC) genes, such as the chemotaxis inhibitory protein (chp) gene, were frequently detected in *S. aureus* isolates from both STAT3-HIES- and AE patients. One out of the four STAT3-HIES patients developed a lymph node abscess during the time of our study. Here WGS of *S. aureus* isolates illustrated that infection (lymph node abscess) and colonization occurred with different *S. aureus* strains instead of one single strain.

**Conclusion:** *S. aureus* strains isolated from our cohort of STAT3-HIES patients do not resemble *S. aureus* strains described by previous studies in regard to toxin expression, methicillin resistance and classified spa type. This study demonstrates how WGS can be used to characterize pathogens in the context of primary immunodeficiencies and improve our understanding of *S. aureus* infections in this patient group.

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**Inflammation and infection can trigger local tissue Na+ accumulation.** This Na+-rich environment boosts pro-inflammatory activation of monocyte/macrophage-like cells and their antimicrobial activity. Enhanced Na+-driven macropage function requires nuclear factor of activated T cells 5 (NFAT5)-dependent signaling, which augments NO production and contributes to increased autophagy. However, the mechanism of Na+-sensing in macrophages remained unclear. High extracellular Na+ levels (HS) trigger a substantial Na+-influx with concomitant low Ca2+ levels. We show here that the Na+/Ca2+-exchanger 1 (NCX1) plays a critical role in HS-triggered Na+-influx, concomitant Ca2+ loss and subsequent HS-amplified antimicrobial macrophage activation. Interfering with NCX1-activity impairs immunflammatory signaling, autolysosome formation and subsequent antibacterial activity of macrophages. Taken together, this demonstrates that NCX1-dependent sensing of the ionic environment is required for amplifying antimicrobial macrophage responses upon HS. Manipulating NCX1 offers a new strategy to manipulate macropage function.
The mitochondrial apoptosis apparatus contributes to the cell-autonomous defence in the absence of cell death.


1 Uniklinik Freiburg, IMMPh, Freiburg i. Br., Germany
1 Uniklinik Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany

Many pathogens have pro-apoptotic potential but apoptosis often occurs only in some conditions and on a small scale. It has recently become clear that the apoptotic signaling pathway can experimentally also be engaged at a low level, in the absence of cell death. We have found that such sub-lethal engagement of mitochondrial apoptosis-signaling occurs during infection of human epithelial cells by all tested viruses (HSV, Influenza A, MVA), bacteria (Salmonella Typhimurium, Chlamydia trachomatis) and one protozoan (Toxoplasma gondii). All of these infectious agents activated the mitochondrial apoptosis pathway without causing actual cell death, and all caused genomic DNA damage through this pathway. We have further found that low-level activation of the mitochondrial apoptosis apparatus is sufficient to induce cytokine secretion from epithelial cells, which was controlled by the Bcl-2-protein family (Bax, Bak, Bcl-XL). Different infectious agents induced the secretion of different cytokines. In all cases, mitochondrial apoptosis-signaling, triggered by the infection, significantly contributed to this cytokine secretion. When this signaling was experimentally blocked by the deletion of the essential apoptosis regulators Bax and Bak or by overexpression of Bcl-XL, intracellular growth of Salmonella and of Chlamydia was enhanced, suggesting that sub-lethal apoptosis signaling contributes to the cell-autonomous defence. The mitochondrial apoptosis apparatus thus has an independent, sub-lethal role in the host response to infection.

182-ZOV

Comparative transcriptomics combined with RNA interference reveals basis for differential cellular Shiga toxin sensitivity

*A. Kehl*, I. U. Kouzel†, P. Berger‡, D. Steil⁵, W. Makalowski⁶, Y. Suzuki⁷, H. Karchⁱ, A. Meltmann⁸, J. Müthing⁴

1 University of Münster, Institute of Hygiene, Münster, Germany
2 University of Bergen, Sars International Centre for Marine Molecular Biology, Bergen, Germany
3 University of Tokyo, Department of Computational Biology and Medical Sciences, Tokyo, Japan
4 University of Muenster, Institute of Bioinformatics, Muenster, Germany
5 University of Muenster, Institute of Bioinformatics, Muenster, Germany
6 University of Muenster, Institute of Bioinformatics, Muenster, Germany
7 University of Tokyo, Institute for Biomedical Research and Innovation, Tokyo, Japan
8 University of Tokyo, Department of Computational Biology and Medical Sciences, Tokyo, Japan

Introduction

Enterohemorrhagic Escherichia coli (EHEC) are the main cause of the life-threatening hemolytic-uremic syndrome. The cardinal virulence factor is the Shiga toxin (Stx). Though kidney glomerular endothelial cells are the major target of Stx during pathogenesis, recent studies indicate that renal epithelial cells are susceptible to the cytotoxic action of Stx.

Objectives

To analyze the Stx receptor, globotriaosylceramide (Gb3Cer), of a toxin-sensitive, ACHN, and a toxin-resistant, Caki-2, human kidney epithelial cell line, to explore the differences in transcriptomic responses to Stx2a and to characterize the results by RNA interference (RNAi).

Methods

The cellular Gb3Cer profile was analyzed by mass spectrometry. RNAseq was applied to cells exposed to Stx2a. RNAi was employed targeting host factors involved in Stx-related retrograde trafficking. Cytotoxicity was determined using the crystal violet assay.

Results

ACHN and Caki-2 cells exhibited an opposite sensitivity towards Stx2a, even though they displayed a virtually identical Gb3Cer profile. Using comparative transcriptomics, we determined that ACHN and Caki-2 gene expression differed upon Stx2a exposure. The most differentially expressed genes are i.a. involved in the secretion of pro-inflammatory cytokines and retrograde trafficking of Stx. Targeting a selected panel of host factors mostly involved in the latter in ACHN cells by RNAi, we detected that silencing of distinct targets followed by Stx exposure yielded a substantial decrease in toxin-mediated cytotoxicity. These included the well-established YKT6, showing the validity of our approach, but also in Stx pathobiology totally unprecedented RAB5A and TRAPP/C6B. Moreover, combining the knockdowns of these targets nearly completely abolished the Stx-mediated cytotoxicity.

Conclusions

New host factors involved in the rerouting of Stx, thus representing potential targets for the inhibition of Stx-caused cellular injury, were identified by a combined approach of comparative transcriptomics and RNAi. Our study therefore may support the search for novel targets as therapeutic options to combat devastating EHEC infections.

183-ZOV

Transcriptome analysis reveals profound effect of Shiga toxin phage carriage on *E. coli* O104:H4 motility and virulence gene expression

*P. Berger*, I. U. Kouzel†, M. Berger‡, N. Haarmann†, H. Karch†, A. Meltmann

1 University of Münster, Institute of Hygiene, Münster, Germany
2 University of Bergen, Sars International Centre for Marine Molecular Biology, Bergen, Germany
3 University of Hohenheim, Institute of Food Science and Biotechnology, Stuttgart, Germany

Question

Shiga toxins (Stx) phages can lysogenize susceptible bacteria and thereby either transform commensal strains into pathogens, or increase the virulence of already pathogenic bacterial hosts. Moreover, there is evidence that Stx phage-encoded factors modulate bacterial host gene expression. We recently showed that Stx2 phage carriage has a profound impact on the transcriptome and phenotype of the commensal *E. coli* K-12 MG1655. Here, we investigate the Stx2 phage-dependent effects on the transcriptome of the highly virulent *E. coli* O104:H4 outbreak strain.

Methods

RNA-seq was performed with total RNA from wild type and Stx2 phage cured *E. coli* O104:H4. Directional cDNA libraries were sequenced on Illumina platform. Raw data were processed using READemption and differences in gene expression were determined by DESeq2. Protein levels were analysed with semi-quantitative Western blot. The swimming motility was monitored on LB plates with 0.3 % agar.

Results

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On average 11 million reads were sequenced per library and at least 96% of them could be mapped to the reference genome of *E. coli* O104:H4. DEXSeq2 analysis revealed 466 upregulated and 356 downregulated genes in the wild type strain in comparison to its Stx2 phage-cured derivative. The most populated group of upregulated genes in the wild type *E. coli* O104:H4 were genes involved in motility. FliC western blot analysis and motility assays confirmed that these changes in the gene expression resulted in stable phenotypic changes. In addition, the Stx2 phage carriage led to the upregulation of both chromosomal and pAA plasmid-encoded known virulence-associated genes, e.g. genes encoding the serine proteases Pic, SigA and SepA, as well as genes mediating the aggregative adherence of the outbreak strain (*aggR, aggD-A*).

**Conclusions.**

Our study reveals a profound impact of the Stx2 phage carriage on *E. coli* O104:H4 gene expression. We confirm the enhanced expression of flagella, which may stimulate the inflammatory response in the human host. In addition, we detect an extensive crosstalk between the Stx2 phage carriage and the expression of chromosome and pAA-encoded virulence genes.

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**184-ZOV**

Role of phage-encoded NanS-p *O*-acytly esterases of pathogenic *E. coli* O157:H7 and O104:H4 strains in mucin degradation and adherence to epithelial cell lines

1. H. Schmidt1, N. Saile1, S. Feuerbaum1, G. Pohleitze2, J. Müthing2, N. Haarmann1
2. Institute of Food Science and Biotechnology, University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, Germany
3. University of Münster, Institute of Hygiene, Münster, Germany

**Introduction.** The Shiga toxin genes of enterohemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* (EHEC) are located in distinct positions close to the antiterminator Z in the late transcribed region of prophages. Further non-Stx-encoding lambdoid prophages are present in varying numbers in the chromosome of EHEC strains. In a number of EHEC strains, the recently described nanS-p genes occur in multiple copies per strain in 3'-direction close to the stx genes and in non-Stx-phages. The nanS-p genes are homologous to the chromosomal nanS gene, the latter of which is present in most *E. coli* strains. NanS is an esterase, which is able to cleave an acetyl residue from 5-N-acetyl-9-O-acetyl neuraminic acid (Neu5,9Ac2), a sialic acid derivative occurring in intestinal mucus. The resulting Neu5Ac can be used as a carbon source.

**Objectives.** In the current study, the role of multiple nanS-p genes and their gene products for substrate utilization and adherence to epithelial cells was investigated.

**Materials & Methods.** Deletion mutants were constructed by homologous recombination. NanS-p enzymes were recombinantly expressed as His-tagged proteins. Degradation of bovine submaxillary gland mucin (BSM) was analyzed by nanoESI MS. Cell culture experiments were carried out with LS180 and HT-29 cells.

**Results.** Recombinant NanS-p proteins were shown to function as *O*-acetyl esterases. *E. coli* O104:H4 strain EDL933 grew well on Neu5,9Ac2 as a carbon source, but mutants with deletion of all seven nanS-p alleles did not. *E. coli* O104:H4 strain C227-11phc harbors four nanS-p genes and we could show that it can outcompete commensal *E. coli*, when Neu5,9Ac2 was used as carbon source. Moreover, analysis of BSM degradation by recombinant NanS-p enzymes using nanoESI MS demonstrated cleavage of up to three acetyl residues from sialic acids. In addition, we could show that NanS-p also influences the adherence of EDL933 and C227-11phc to epithelial cells.

**Conclusions.** The results of our study let us hypothesize that multiple prophage-located nanS-p genes represent a mobile gene pool of EHEC, improving substrate utilization in the intestinal mucus as well as cell adherence and colonization in the large intestine.

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**185-ZOV**

Effect of global regulators on pathogenicity of locus of enterocyte effacement-negative Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*

1. L. Heinisch1, M. Krause1, H. Schmidt1
2. Institute of Food Science and Biotechnology, University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, Germany

**Introduction.** Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) are a major cause of foodborne outbreaks worldwide. The best described virulence factors so far, are the Shiga toxins and the locus of enterocyte effacement (LEE), which is needed for the adhesion to host cells. In recent years, LEE-negative STEC have been associated with human diseases. Those STEC strains harbour different virulence factors, for example the subtilase cytotoxin (SubAB). Despite the knowledge of mode of action of this toxin, the regulation of the gene expression is still unknown.

**Objective:** The aim of this study was to address this issue focusing on the impact of the global regulatory proteins Hfq and H-NS on virulence gene regulation, especially on subAB expression. Studies were conducted with the foodborne STEC O113:H21 strain TS18/08 and the overall impact of regulatory proteins on pathogenicity of this strain was investigated.

**Material and Methods:** Isogenic deletion mutants TS18/08 Δhfq and TS18/08 Δhns were generated by homologous recombination. The deletion mutants were analysed according to impact on gene expression of virulence factors (quantitative real-time PCR) and on effect during adhesion and infection (cell culture experiments).

**Results:** Upregulation of stx, subAB, and of the cytolethal distending toxin V gene (cdt-V) were observed in deletion mutants TS18/08 Δhfq and TS18/08 Δhns. Moreover, deletion of genes hfq and hns led to an altered pathogenicity during adhesion assays.

**Conclusions:** These data reveal that toxins and factors for adhesion and pathogenicity of those STEC strains are integrated in the regulatory circuit of Hfq and H-NS. Moreover, regulation of virulence factors might be integrated in the bacterial growth cycle and therefore pathogenicity of LEE-negative STEC strains should be investigated in more detail.

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**186-ZOV**

Whole genome sequencing reveals extended natural transformation in *Campylobacter* impacting diagnostics and the pathogens adaptive potential

1. J. Götz1, L. Epping1, M. T. Knüver1, M. Borowiak1, F. Hartkopf1, C. Denecke1, B. Malorny1, T. Semmler2, K. Stingl1
2. German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Berlin, Germany
3. Robert Koch Institute, Berlin, Germany

**Introduction:** Whole genome sequencing reveals extended natural transformation in *Campylobacter* impacting diagnostics and the pathogens adaptive potential.
**Introduction:**

Campylobacter is the major bacterial agent of human gastroenteritis worldwide and represents a crucial global public health burden. Species differentiation of *C. jejuni* and *C. coli* and phylogenetic analysis is challenged by inter-species horizontal gene transfer.

**Objectives:**

To characterize Campylobacter isolates with ambiguous species differentiation results obtained by real-time PCR, we performed whole genome sequencing and further characterized the isolates.

**Method:**

Routine real-time PCR was performed on more than 4000 isolates obtained from the Federal state laboratories. The isolates with ambiguous PCR results were examined by whole-genome sequencing and data were analysed using Ridom Seqsphere+ software, web-based analysis and in-house k-mer analysis pipeline.

**Results:**

Isolates with ambiguous PCR results for species differentiation were, in particular, identified from the isolation source eggs. K-mer analysis of whole genome sequencing data indicated the presence of *C. coli* hybrid strains with huge amounts of *C. jejuni* introgression. Recombination events were distributed over the whole chromosome. MLST was not suitable, since *C. jejuni* sequences were also found in six of the seven housekeeping genes. cgMLST suggested that the strains were phylogenetically unrelated. Intriguingly, the strains shared a stress response set of *C. jejuni* variant genes, with proposed roles in oxidative, osmotic and general stress defence, chromosome maintenance and repair, membrane transport, cell wall and capsular biosynthesis and chemotaxis.

**Conclusion:**

Natural transformation can lead to immense interspecies gene transfer in *C. coli*. The results have practical impact on routine typing and on the understanding of the functional adaption to harsh environments, enabling successful spreading and persistence of thermophilic Campylobacter.

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**187-ZOV**

Carvacrol ameliorates acute campylobacteriosis in a clinical murine infection model


Charité - University Medicine Berlin, Pharmaceutical Microbiology Group, Berlin, Germany

University of Veterinary Medicine, Institute for Food Quality and Food Safety, Hannover, Germany

Justus-Liebig-University, Institute for Veterinary Food Science, Giessen, Germany

The prevalence of human infections with the zoonotic pathogen Campylobacter jejuni is rising worldwide. Therefore, the identification of compounds with potent anti-pathogenic and anti-inflammatory properties for future therapeutic and/or preventive application to combat campylobacteriosis is of importance for global health. Results of recent studies suggested carvacrol (4-isopropyl-2-methylphenol) as potential candidate molecule for the treatment of campylobacteriosis in humans and for the prevention of Campylobacter colonization in farm animals.

To address this in a clinical murine infection model of acute campylobacteriosis, secondary abiotic IL-10-/- mice were subjected to synthetic carvacrol via the drinking water starting four days before peroral *C. jejuni* challenge. Whereas at day 6 post-infection placebo treated mice suffered from acute enterocolitis, mice from the carvacrol cohort not only harbored two log orders of magnitude lower pathogen loads in their intestines, but also displayed significantly reduced disease symptoms. Alleviated campylobacteriosis following carvacrol application was accompanied by less distinct intestinal apoptosis and pro-inflammatory immune responses as well as by higher numbers of proliferating colonic epithelial cells. Remarkably, the inflammation-ameliorating effects of carvacrol treatment were not restricted to the intestinal tract, but could also be observed in extra-intestinal organs such as liver, kidneys and lungs and, strikingly, systemically as indicated by lower IFN-γ, TNF, MCP-1 and IL-6 serum concentrations in carvacrol versus placebo treated mice. Furthermore, carvacrol treatment was associated with less frequent translocation of viable *C. jejuni* originating from the intestines to extra-intestinal compartments.

The lowered *C. jejuni* loads and alleviated symptoms observed in the here applied clinical murine model for human campylobacteriosis highlight the application of carvacrol as a promising novel option for both, the treatment of campylobacteriosis and hence, for prevention of post-infectious sequelae in humans, and for the reduction of *C. jejuni* colonization in the intestines of vertebrate livestock animals.

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**188-ZOV**

Impact of milk and peptide utilization on the metabolic fitness and proliferation of *Brucella melitensis* and *Brucella abortus*

A. Stephan, S. Al Dahouk, D. Hefreuter

German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), Department of Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany

Brucellosis is a widespread zoonotic disease primarily transmitted by the consumption of unpasteurized dairy products contaminated with *Brucella abortus* or *Brucella melitensis*. Both *Brucella* species are viable in milk for weeks, but our knowledge about the impact of milk on the metabolic activity and propagation of *Brucella* is limited. We therefore examined, to what extend both *Brucella* species are able to use milk as growth substrate.

Culture experiments demonstrated that *B. abortus* and *B. melitensis* proliferate efficiently in commercial cow’s milk reaching high numbers with a 10³-fold increase after incubating 10³ bacteria for 3 days. To examine the role of milk peptides for the observed growth, we cultivated both *Brucella* species in medium with tryptic-digested casein or casein hydrolysate as sole energy sources. These experiments revealed that casein peptides efficiently facilitated *Brucella* growth. Comparative genome analyses of both *Brucella* species identified several proteases, peptidases and peptide transporters that could support the utilization of milk proteins. In addition, Micronaut analyses including various chromogenic peptidase substrates identified pronounced aminopeptidase activities that differ significantly between *Brucella* species. To characterize the substrate specificity of the *Brucella* peptidases we performed a comprehensive screening with over 250 dipeptides using
the BIOLOG™ phenotypic microarray assay. Several dipeptides are utilized by *B. abortus* and *B. melitensis*, but we also identified striking differences in the dipeptide utilization pattern of the two *Brucella* species. These results suggest distinct peptide catabolism patterns in *Brucella* species that might reflect adaptations to their different hosts or nutritional niches. Ongoing comparative analyses aim to identify the genomic variabilities that shape these altered phenotypes.

The ability of *Brucella* to grow in milk suggests a higher risk of exposure when refrigeration infrastructures for raw milk are insufficient, subsequently increasing the threat of *Brucella* spp. as select agents in case of deliberate releases of low numbers of bacteria during dairy production.

189-ZOV

Functional analysis of *ica*-like genes in livestock-associated *Staphylococcus sciuri* isolates

G. Marincola¹, G. Jaschkowitz², A. K. Kieninger³, A. Feßler⁴, S. Schwarz⁵, W. Ziebuhr⁶

¹University of Wuerzburg, Molecular Infection Biology, Wuerzburg, Germany
²Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Tierseuchen, Berlin, Germany

Biofilm formation is a common feature of staphylococci conferring protection against unfavorable environmental conditions, and contributing (in pathogenic species) to treatment recalcitrance and chronic infections. Biofilms are surface-attached bacterial communities surrounded by a self-produced extracellular matrix consisting of polysaccharides and/or proteins. In staphylococci, the main polysaccharide biofilm component is Polysaccharide Intercellular Adhesin (PIA). PIA is produced by the gene products of the *icaADBC* operon which are controlled by the adjacent repressor IcaR. We have previously characterized a multiresistance plasmid isolated from livestock-associated methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* strain Rd11. Unexpectedly, this plasmid (pAFS11) harboured, in addition to resistance genes, a novel *ica*-like gene cluster. Bioinformatic analysis demonstrated that the pAFS11 *ica* genes originated from the animal-associated species *Staphylococcus sciuri* and had been acquired by *S. aureus* Rd11 via horizontal gene transfer. We have tested livestock-associated *S. sciuri* isolates for *ica* gene presence and function and found that 75% of 158 *S. sciuri* isolates carried the *ica* gene cluster. However, none of the isolates formed a PIA-mediated biofilm. No PIA biofilm was detected in *S. aureus* strains, Rd11 harbouring its own chromosomally encoded *ica* gene cluster, and transformation of pAFS11 into a PIA-producing *S. aureus* strain resulted in reduced PIA production. Our experiments suggest a regulatory crosstalk between plasmid-encoded *S. sciuri* IcaR and the chromosomal *S. aureus* *icaADBC* operon. The data highlight ongoing genetic exchange across staphylococcal species borders which, in addition to resistance genes, may also comprise transfer of virulence traits. We hypothesize that co-selection of virulence factors by antibiotics and their integration into the regulatory circuits of the host bacterium might play an important, but still poorly understood role in the emergence of bacteria with novel resistance and virulence traits.

190-MIEV

Molecular characterization of pneumococcal isolates from children vaccinated with PCV-13 in Cape Coast, Ghana

*R. O. Mills¹,², M. R. Abdullah¹, S. Akwetey², D. Sappor², J. A. B. Muñoz², G. Gámez³, M. P. G. van der Linden¹, S. Hammerschmidt¹

¹Interfaculty Institute of Genetics and Functional Genomics Center for Functional Genomics of Microbes Universität Greifswald, Department of Molecular Genetics and Infection Biology, Greifswald, Germany
²University of Cape Coast, Biomedical Sciences, Cape Coast, Ghana
³University of Antioquia, School of Microbiology, Medellin, Colombia

Introduction: Globally, about 300,000 pneumococcal deaths occurred among HIV uninfected children less than five years in 2015 with the majority occurring in Africa and Asia. Studying pneumococcal carriage in the nasopharynx is one of the methods used to assess the impact of pneumococcal conjugate vaccines and monitor circulating serotypes. We investigated virulence factors, serotype distribution and antibiotic susceptibility patterns of pneumococcal carriage strains isolated from vaccinated children less than five years of age in Ghana.

Method: In 2018, nasopharyngeal swabs were collected from 513 fully vaccinated children attending immunization clinics and kindergartens in Cape Coast, Ghana. Standard microbiology techniques were used to identify and confirm pneumococcal isolates. Core genome virulence factors and flexible genomic regions were identified by PCR. Pneumococcal serotypes were determined by multiplexPCR and Quellung reaction. Antibiotic susceptibility was tested by the disc diffusion method.

Results: Our surveillance showed a pneumococcal carriage prevalence of 29.4% (151/513). Out of the twenty-six different serotypes identified, serotypes 23B, 6B, 23F and 19F (14.4%, 9.2%, 8.5% and 7.2%) were most prevalent. The proportion of serotypes present in PCV-13 was 39.1% (59/151). Major non PCV-13 serotypes were 23B and 13 (14.4% and 7.2%). All pneumococcal strains were positive for lytA, cps2A and pAV9 genes. In addition psrP, pcpA, pilus PI-1 and PI-2 were present in 62.7%, 87.5%, 11.8%, and 6.5%, oft he strains respectively. The isolates were highly susceptible to levofloxacin, ceftriaxone, vancomycin and erythromycin. However, we observed increased non-susceptibility to penicillin, cotrimoxazole, and tetracycline. About 52% (79/151) of the isolates were oxacillin non-susceptible; 54 of them showed intermediate resistance to penicillin and one strain was fully resistant.

Conclusion: Pneumococcal carriage prevalence was 29.4%. However, there is an increase in non-PCV 13 serotypes. with serotype 23B being the most dominant, with associated high penicillin resistance. Effective regulation on appropriate use of antibiotics is therefore of essence in Ghana.

191-MIEV

ASA³P: An automatic and scalable pipeline for the assembly, annotation and higher level analysis of closely related bacterial isolates

*O. Schwengers¹, A. Hoek¹, M. Fritzenwanker², L. Falgenhauer², T. Hain², T. Chakraborty³, A. Goessmann¹

¹Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Bioinformatics & Systems Biology, Giessen, Germany
²Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Giessen, Germany

Question

Major technological advances and the dramatic decrease in costs of bacterial whole genome sequencing is having an unprecedented effect in microbial epidemiology. These developments require the establishment of effective, efficient
and scalable bioinformatics software tools for raw processing and analysis of the high-throughput data before scientific interpretation can take place.

Methods

In order to solve core bioinformatics tasks such as quality trimming, assembly and annotation, ASA³P takes advantage of published and well performing third party tools and combines them with comprehensive databases. It is a modular and extensible software pipeline implemented in Java and Groovy. For massive scalability our pipeline takes advantage of SGE compatible compute clusters.

Results

Here, we introduce ASA³P, a fully automatic and scalable assembly, annotation and higher-level analysis pipeline for bacterial genomes. The pipeline conducts all of the necessary data processing steps, i.e. quality clipping and assembly of sequencing reads, scaffolding subsequent contigs and annotation of genome sequences. Furthermore, ASA³P performs comprehensive genome characterizations and analyses, e.g. for taxonomic classification, and detection of both AMR genes and virulence factors. Results are presented via an HTML5 based user interface providing aggregated information, interactive visualizations and access to intermediate results in standard bioinformatic file formats. ASA³P is available in two versions: a local Docker container for small-scale projects and an OpenStack cloud version able to automatically create and manage its own self-scaling compute cluster.

Conclusions

ASA³P is a software tool enabling the automatic processing, assembly, annotation and higher level analysis of bacterial NGS whole genome data in a comfortable but high-throughput manner. The burden of technical complexity is overcome by simple setup routines and the use of Docker and OpenStack images. Thus, automatic and standardized analysis of hundreds of bacterial genomes is now feasible on a daily basis with a single command on local computers as well as cloud infrastructures.

192-MIEV

Genome-wide identification of Host-Specificity of Campylobacter jejuni in Germany based on Whole Genome Data


Charité Universitätsmedizin, Institute of Medical Genetics and Human Genetics, Berlin, Germany

Freie Universität, Mathematics and Computer Science, Berlin, Germany

German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, National Reference Laboratory for Campylobacter, Berlin, Germany

German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Study Centre for Genome Sequencing and Analysis, Berlin, Germany

Robert Koch Institute, Advanced Light and Electron Microscopy, Berlin, Germany

Robert Koch Institute, Methodology and Research Infrastructure, Berlin, Germany

Robert Koch Institute, National Reference Centre for Salmonella and other Bacterial Enterics, Berlin, Germany

Robert Koch Institute, Microbial Genomics, Berlin, Germany

Introduction During the last two decades the zoonotic pathogen Campylobacter jejuni has become the main cause for food-borne infections in high-income countries. Colonization and adaptation of multiple host reservoirs leads to a tremendous risk of contamination in food products. Most commonly Campylobacter are transmitted through the consumption of undercooked poultry meat or raw milk products. While host restriction of C. jejuni lineages is known, the survival mechanisms of them to adapt to gut environments of different hosts have not been completely understood.

Objectives This study was designed to support outbreak investigations against the thread of increasing numbers of C. jejuni infections in humans. Its main aim is to gain additional insights into the C. jejuni population structure in Germany and to identify host specific determinants by using novel computational methods based on genomic data.

Material & methods Therefore, 330 C. jejuni strains from different hosts (100 each from human, chicken, cattle and 30 from pig) across Germany were randomly selected, and whole genome sequencing (WGS) was performed. To extend the dataset and compare it with international samples, 166 additional isolates from a Canadian study were included. Host-specificity was investigated by a stratified random sampling approach on top of a k-mer based genome-wide association study to increase the accuracy of the identification of host specific determinates.

Results In our study, we discovered that a strong host association can be observed in the core genome as well as in the accessory genome. The identified genetic elements code for proteins, which play important roles in mobility, energy metabolism and genetic information processing. Although, we could discover a strong recombination barrier between C. jejuni lineages within the same host, identical allelic gene variants could be found among those genes.

Conclusion Host-adaptation in a wide range of cellular functions in the whole pan-genome of C. jejuni indicates that the adaptation towards a specific host niche is most likely a long evolutionary and multifactorial process rather than a spontaneous evolution or selection pressure.

193-MIEV

Surveillance of Salmonella Agona outbreaks in Bavaria by Next Generation Sequencing

A. Dangel, A. Berger, U. Messelhäußer, R. Konrad, S. Hörmandsдорfer, A. Sing

Bavarian Health and Food Safety Authority (LGL), Oberschleißheim, Germany

S. Agona is one of the Salmonella enterica subsp. enterica serovars consistently responsible for foodborne outbreaks via various food types all over the world. In 2017, an outbreak with nearly 40 patients based on infant milk products of a French supplier occurred in several European countries. At the same time, S. Agona was detected in animal feed samples in Bavaria and a connection of both events was at question.

The aim of this study was to evaluate different data analyses approaches and necessary analysis depth for Next Generation Sequencing (NGS)-based S. Agona surveillance and outbreak detection by public health authorities. Therefore, 51 Bavarian isolates from 1994 to 2018 from food, feed and human patients, including known former outbreak isolates and the Bavarian feed isolates of 2017 were used as evaluation sample set together with a public NGS dataset of a representative isolate of the 2017 French infant milk outbreak.
NGS analysis was performed on the Illumina MiSeq. Three data analysis approaches for public health purposes were compared: core genome Multi Locus Sequence Typing (cgMLST) with two different target schemes or Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) phylogeny.

With the NGS analysis we could prove clonality of the Bavarian feed isolates and exclude any connection to the simultaneous French outbreak. The molecular approach furthermore revealed and confirmed former Bavarian clusters with known epidemiological links. The necessary genetic resolution regarding analysed genomic content and consequential cluster demarcation was evaluated by comparison of a publicly available species-specific cgMLST scheme, an in-house serovar Agona-specific cgMLST scheme and SNP phylogeny.

In conclusion, even for the genetically monomorphic serovar S. Agona, species level cgMLST can usually serve as fast and easy applicable analysis technique with reasonable resolution, being standardisable for a wide field of applications for public health laboratories. Nevertheless, in special cases of single samples or homogeneous sample sets higher resolution by serovar-specific cgMLST or SNP genotyping can facilitate the assignment to or delineation from an outbreak.

194-MIEV
Penicillin binding proteins - the one and only key to β-lactam resistance in Staphylococcus aureus?

[1] A. Sommer1, M. B. Erdmann1, S. Fuchs1, G. Werner1, B. Strommenger1
1Robert Koch-Institute, Department of Infectious Diseases, Wernigerode, Germany

**Question:** In Staphylococcus aureus resistance to β-lactamase stable β-lactam antibiotics, like methicillin, is commonly mediated by the mecA-encoded penicillin-binding protein 2a (PB2a) or the mecC-encoded PBP2c. These cell wall-associated proteins exhibit low affinity to most β-lactam antibiotics. The number of isolates showing methicillin resistance while lacking known mec genes (MRLM) sent to the German National Reference Center for Staphylococci and Enterococci increased over the past years. Therefore the present study aims to investigate the resistance mechanisms of these isolates using a combination of bioinformatics and molecular approaches. **Methods:** Minimal inhibitory concentrations to oxacillin and cefoxitin of clinical S. aureus isolates were determined by applying broth microdilution. The presence of mecA and mecC was tested via PCR. Hyperproduction of β-lactamase leading to borderline resistance phenotype (BORDA) was excluded. A strain collection of MRLM isolates for the implementation of genome-wide association studies (GWAS) was established. MRLM isolates and methicillin susceptible controls (MSSA) were whole-genome sequenced and subsequently characterized by spa typing, MLST and core genome MLST (cgMLST) analysis. **Results:** In total 141 isolates were determined as resistant to oxacillin and cefoxitin, while lacking mecA and mecC genes. The sequenced MRLM isolates were assigned to 29 sequence types (ST) and 73 spa types. Overall the established MRLM strain collection, including 142 MSSA controls, covers a wide range of clonal complexes, with cases and controls evenly distributed. **Conclusions:** GWAS will be performed to determine genetic variants associated to β-lactam resistance. Furthermore, the impact of putative resistance associated polymorphisms has to be confirmed by construction and validation of corresponding mutants.

195-MIEV
Molecular analysis of a Serratia marcescens colonization outbreak in a neonatal intensive care unit indicates a role for the type 6 secretion system

M. Werner1, A. Ensser2, G. Valenza4, F. Fahlbusch3, S. Coulthurst1, B. Kunz1, C. Bogdan2, R. Lang1
1University Hospital Erlangen, Erlangen, Germany
2Landesamt für Gesundheit und Lebensmittelsicherheit, Erlangen, Germany
3University of Dundee, Dundee, United Kingdom

The microbial spectrum of infection outbreaks in neonatal intensive care units (NICU) shows a high prevalence of enterobacteria, especially of *Serratia (S.) marcescens* that accounts for 12% of all outbreaks. To date, it is unknown why *S. marcescens* is so successful in colonization and infection of newborns.

Here, we report a colonization outbreak with *S. marcescens* in a university hospital NICU. Following detection of *S. marcescens* in clinical samples of three patients, prevalence screening by nasopharyngeal and anorectal swabs identified additional 11 carriers. The outbreak management team devised a bundle of measures (incl. cohort isolation of colonized/contact patients; admission and interval screening of patients; training of staff and parents by hygiene specialists; screening of environmental samples and personnel). Cumulatively, a total of 30 children were found to be colonized until the end of the outbreak 6 weeks later.

All *S. marcescens* isolates were analyzed for clonality by PCR-based DiversiLab-typing and by Pulsed Field Gel Electrophoresis (PFGE), revealing that 24/30 patients carried the outbreak isolate, whereas the others harbored unrelated strains. While isolates from personnel were unrelated, the outbreak isolate was found in two environmental samples from baby bottle warmers. Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) via Illumina MiSeq confirmed the PFGE-typing results and revealed identical sequences for the outbreak isolates from patients and vaporizer.

Recently, a *S. marcescens* type 6 secretion system (T6SS) for injection of effector proteins was identified as effective nano-weapon for interbacterial competition. Indeed, the outbreak isolates analyzed by MiSeq harbored a complete T6SS locus, whereas several sporadic *S. marcescens* isolates lacked specific effector genes. Bacterial competition assays revealed efficient killing of *E. coli* by the outbreak isolates, whereas *S. marcescens* lacking different effector genes displayed reduced killing capacity. These results indicate that the complete T6SS nano-machinery may provide the outbreak strain with a competitive advantage for colonization of neonates.

196-MIEV
A publicly accessible database for *Clostridioides difficile* genome sequences supports tracing of transmission chains and epidemics

M. Frentrup1, Z. Zhou2, M. Steglich1, J. Meier-Kolthoff1, M. Göker1, T. Riedel1,2, B. Bunk1, C. Spröner1, J. Overmann1,3,4, M. Blaschitz2, A. Indra2, L. von Müller2, T. A. Kohl2,4, S. Niemann2,3, C. Seybold1, F. Klawonn1,10,11, N. Kumar12, T. D. Lawley1,2, S. García-Fernández13,14, R. Cantón15,14, R. del Campo13,14, O. Zimmermann13, U. Grob15, M. Achtman16, U. Nübel17,18
1Leibniz-Institute DSMZ, Braunschweig, Germany
2Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, Warwick, United Kingdom

*Clostridioides difficile* (previously *Clostridium difficile*) is so successful in colonization and infection of neonates.
Clostridioides difficile is the primary infectious cause of antibiotic-associated diarrhea. Local transmissions and international outbreaks of this pathogen have been previously elucidated by bacterial whole-genome sequencing, but comparative genomic analyses at the global scale were hampered by the lack of specific bioinformatic tools. We have implemented a publicly accessible database within EnteroBase (http://enterobase.warwick.ac.uk) that automatically retrieves and assembles C. difficile short-reads from the public domain, and calls alleles for core-genome multilocus sequence typing (cgMLST). EnteroBase currently contains 13,515 quality-controlled C. difficile genomes which have been assigned to hierarchical sets of single-linkage clusters by cgMLST distances. This hierarchical clustering is used to identify and name populations of C. difficile at all epidemiological levels, from recent transmission chains through to pandemic and endemic strains. Moreover, it puts newly collected isolates into phylogenetic and epidemiological context by identifying related strains among all previously published genome data. For example, HC2 clusters (i.e. chains of genomes with pairwise distances of up to two cgMLST alleles) were statistically associated with specific hospitals (p<10^-4) or single wards (p=0.01) within hospitals, indicating they represented local transmission clusters. In contrast, clustering at level HC150 was largely compatible with PCR ribotyping, thus enabling comparisons to earlier surveillance data. EnteroBase enables contextual interpretation of a growing collection of assembled, quality-controlled C. difficile genome sequences and their associated metadata. Hierarchical clustering rapidly identifies database entries that are related at multiple levels of genetic distance, facilitating communication among researchers, clinicians and public-health officials who arecombatting disease caused by C. difficile.

197-MIEV
Molecular epidemiology of Vancomycin-resistant Enterococci: four years of state-wide surveillance in North Rhine-Westphalia

C. L. Correa-Martinez1, A. Jurke3, J. Schmitz2, S. Kampmeier4, A. Meilmann1
1University Hospital Münster, Institute of Hygiene, Münster, Germany
2North Rhine-Westphalian Centre for Health, Department Health Promotion Health Protection, Bochum, Germany

Introduction
Vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE) are increasingly important causal agents of nosocomial infections. Thus, reliable epidemiological data are needed to understand their spread dynamics and to describe the magnitude of the problem. The incorporation of typing data allows to define the temporal and geographical distribution of VRE, which is essential to implement effective infection control strategies.

Objectives
The aim of this ongoing study is to describe the temporal and geographical distribution of invasive VRE infections in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) by employing molecular typing methods.

Materials and Methods
Bacterial isolates of all patients with invasive VRE infections (blood cultures or cerebrospinal fluid [CSF]) were collected between 2016 and 2019. Inclusion criteria were place of residence and/or hospitalisation in NRW. For genotypic characterisation, multilocus sequence typing (MLST) and vancomycin resistance determinants were analysed.

Results
Preliminary results of 717 VRE isolates detected in blood cultures or CSF show a steady increase of annual infections: 93, 156 and 244 isolates in 2016, 2017, and 2018, respectively, as well as 224 as of October 2019. Incidence was highest among men (61%), and patients aged 70-79 (30.8%). Overall, the most prevalent MLST sequence types (ST) were ST117 (68.6%), ST80 (15.5%) and ST203 (5.3%), observing a sustained increase of ST117 and the emergence of other STs (ST1273, ST1325, ST787) over the study period. In 2016, most isolates (64.5%) displayed the vanA genotype, however, this shifted to vanB in 2017 (68.59%), a distribution that continued over the following years (2018: 83.2% and 2019: 75.3%).

Conclusion
As also reported in other countries, invasive VRE infections are on the rise in NRW. Molecular typing data indicate a growing genetic diversity among VRE isolates. However, ST117 accounts for the overall increase in the number of cases over time. vanB has overtaken vanA, historically the most prevalent resistance determinant in Germany and Europe. Our results underline the importance of infection prevention and control policies in order to reduce the regional spread of VRE.

198-EMV
Population-level transcriptional responses to wetting and desiccation in an arid biological soil crust

S. Imminger1, D. Meier1, A. Schintlmeister1,2, D. Woebken1
1University of Vienna, Centre for Microbiology and Environmental System Science, Vienna, Austria
2University of Vienna, Large-Instrument Facility for Advanced Isotope Research, Vienna, Austria

Introduction
Drylands account for the largest terrestrial biome on earth and cover about 35% of the lands surface. Low water availability is one of the major factors that limit the growth of vascular plants in these ecosystems. Therefore, drylands are mainly inhabited by diverse and diverse microbial surface communities, forming so-called biological soil crusts (BSCs). Besides limited water availability these communities face the challenges of high UV irradiation, temperature and osmotic stress. To survive long phases of drought microorganisms enter a state of low metabolic activity, but are able to resuscitate fast to use short periods when water and nutrients become available. We investigated the response of BSC microbial communities from the Negev
Desert (Israel) to a simulated rain event covering a complete wetting/desiccation cycle. Incubations with heavy water (D2O) and subsequent high-resolution secondary ion mass spectrometry (NanoSIMS) measurements revealed a fast resuscitation of single cells in the first hours. Correspondingly, the majority of microbial populations dramatically changed their transcription profiles already within first 3 hours, based on metatranscriptome data spanning time points between 15 min and 55 hours after wetting. We observed e.g. regulation patterns for stress tolerance against reactive oxygen species, organic substrate uptake and usage of atmospheric gases as energy sources. Population-resolved analysis further revealed different expression patterns for the same metabolic pathways, e.g. chlorophyll synthesis, amongst different populations, thus highlighting microbial niche differentiation. Together with the information about the metabolic potential of the different community members, these transcriptome profiles elucidate different strategies to persist unfavorable conditions during drought and to quickly respond to water availability.

199-EMV
Chemolithoautotrophic primary production sustains microbial food webs in oxic groundwater
*M. Tauber*, G. Azemtsop, P. Rösch, J. Popp, K. Küsel

Due to the absence of sunlight, microbial food webs in subsurface environments cannot be driven by photosynthetic primary production. Instead, hotspots of nitrogen- and sulfur-driven chemolithoautotrophy are present in pristine groundwater. This primary production might fuel the entire groundwater microbiome, but the microbes benefiting from the organic carbon produced are unknown. Therefore, we used $^{13}$CO$_2$ and D$_2$O metabolic labeling of groundwater microcosms to track the carbon flow through the food web. Chemolithoautotrophs were stimulated with reduced sulfur compounds, and the microbial activity was monitored over 10 weeks. After 3, 6 and 10 weeks, microbial biomass was collected for DNA-based community profiling and metaproteomics analysis. Raman microspectroscopy detected deuterium incorporation in microbial cells from 12 days onwards, indicating activity of the groundwater organisms. Thiosulfate and oxygen consumption occurred within the first 3 weeks, and increased two to three-fold after 5 weeks, suggesting sulfur-driven primary production. Putative autotrophs able to oxidize sulfur compounds, like *Thiobacillus*, *Rhodoferax* and *Hydrogenophaga*, composed up to 25% of the microbial community. Interestingly, the $^{13}$C incorporation in peptides of most of these organisms ranged from 10 to 90%, indicating assimilation of unlabeled organic carbon present in the groundwater in addition to $^{13}$CO$_2$, and thus a mixotrophic lifestyle. Only *Thiobacillus* assimilated $^{13}$CO$_2$ exclusively, resulting in a $^{13}$C incorporation of $>$ 95%. The majority of the community consisted of heterotrophs typical for groundwater, including various Proteobacteria, *Sediminibacterium* and *Flavobacterium*, as well as *Cand. Patescibacteria*. The $^{13}$C incorporation in their peptides demonstrated assimilation of organic carbon produced by sulfur-dependent primary production. Hence, in the oxicotrophic groundwater, such chemolithoautotrophic activity might form the basis for a self-sufficient community constituting more than 50% of the groundwater microbiome.

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1Wegner et al. 2019, AEM, 85(5), e02346-18

200-EMV
The Good, the Bad, and the Smelly – Ecology of the Human Axillary Microbiome
*C. Koch*, S. Nordzieke, G. Schmaus

Introduction & Objective: The human axillary microbiome, although being shaped by our daily hygiene routines, is far from being functionally understood. Knowing "the good, the bad, and the smelly" bacteria in the axillae is crucial for fighting malodor formation. Moreover, detailed investigations enable the targeted development of new deodorant actives without broad antimicrobial efficacy avoiding resistance development.

Methods: We established an ex-vivo human sweat model that is based on real human sweat samples and mirrors the natural microbiome development. The model allows determining microbiome functions based on chemical and sensory analyses as well as cell count (aerobic and anaerobic CFU) and microbiome composition. It was validated in vitro and in vivo.

Results: We were able to show the representative conversion of non-odorous precursors towards odorous products, production of malodourous volatiles from amino or fatty acid degradation, and a general increase of odor intensity based on a shift in microbiome composition and abundance. Key species for these relevant functions were identified including known malodor associated genera as well as new ones. Further, the model was used to investigate selected deodorant actives with different modes of action. One well known antimicrobial substance led to the enrichment of a resistant Pseudomonas strain.

Conclusion: The developed model represents the human axillary microbiome regarding its species composition and malodor formation. It can be used to study the microbial ecology of the axillary microbiome. Our results highlight the relevance of pre-testing new cosmetic ingredients for potential microbiome effects.

201-EMV
Cultivation experiments and genomic analysis suggest adaptation towards a host-independent lifestyle of a symbiont-related marine bacterium
*K. Sass*, S. Gülter*, W. R. Streit, M. Perner

Chemiosynthetic bacteria living in a symbiotic relationship with invertebrate hosts like mussels or snails are widespread at hydrothermal vent habitats. These endosymbionts oxidize inorganic compounds such as hydrogen or hydrogen sulfide, emanating with the hydrothermal fluids, to gain energy. This energy can be used to fuel autotrophic CO2 fixation.
Here we report on the complete genome of a newly cultured Chromatiaceae bacterium, namely CTD079. Its closest known relative is the endosymbiont of a scaly snail, which colonizes hydrothermal vents along the Central Indian Ridge. We enriched CTD079 from seawater of the open ocean using hydrogen and thiosulfate as sole electron donors.

Based on the close relationship between CTD079 and the endosymbiont the aim of this study was to compare their genomes in order to identify gene segments that mediate adaptation to a new habitat.

The complete genome of the newly cultivated bacterium was sequenced using Illumina MiSeq and Oxford Nanopore MiniON Sequencing. Additionally, we performed in vivo hydrogen consumption experiments to figure out whether hydrogen could play a role for energy generation in the water column. CTD079 consumed hydrogen (0.6 fmol cell⁻¹ h⁻¹ within the first 192 hours) under autotrophic growth conditions, which suggests hydrogen as one potential energy source. genome comparisons identified five major differences: these included gene segments that encode enzymes for the use of alternative energy sources or specific systems for the defense against viruses. These represent important attributes for a life without a host.

202-EMV

The influence of precursor feeding on the production of calcimycin derivatives in Streptomyces chartreusis

1K. Arend, C. Senges, J. Bandow
2Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Applied Microbiology, Bochum, Germany

The expression of secondary metabolic gene clusters in Streptomyces is highly connected to environmental conditions. The presence or absence of nutrients can either suppress or enhance secondary metabolite production. [1] Primary metabolites like amino acids, sugars, or fatty acids play an important role as building blocks for the more complex secondary metabolites. In this study we analyzed the influence of precursors on the production of the polyster ionophore calcimycin and derivatives by Streptomyces chartreusis. In a previous study encompassing three culture media, it was shown that their synthesis depends on the growth conditions. [2] To analyze the impact of particular precursors, we cultivated S. chartreusis in minimal medium supplemented with the respective precursors. Metabolites were extracted from the mycelia and culture supernatants, and analyzed by liquid chromatography–coulcoupled tandem mass spectrometry. Calcimycin and known derivatives were identified based on their fragmentation patterns. Unknown derivatives with similar fragmentation patterns could be identified by molecular networking. [3] The production of calcimycin and derivatives was compared across growth conditions, revealing that indeed the ratio between calcimycin and the known derivatives changes depending on the presence of precursors in the medium. Based on the results of the present study, we hypothesize that S. chartreusis synthesizes a specific cocktail of derivatives depending on the ion and nutrient availability to promote the most efficient uptake of ions. In future studies, the novel derivatives will be purified and analyzed with regard to their structure and ion transportation capabilities to shed light on their function.


203-EMV

Biological and ecological relevance of unusual sesquiterpene, sodorifen from Serratia plymuthica 4Rx13

M. C. Lemfack1, P. K. Rucjak1, N. Magnus1, B. Piechulla1
1University of Rostock, Biochemistry, Rostock, Germany

Microbes produce several volatile organic compounds (mVOCs) which are compiled in a continuously updated database called “mVOC” [1]. These low molecular-weight compounds have roles in above- and below-ground interactions [2]. For many years, most focus was on above-ground roles of these VOCs. In the last two decades, there have been more studies on mVOC activities in the soils, moreso the rhizosphere since Serratia spp. is a rich source of mVOCs [3]. Serratia plymuthica 4Rx13 is a producer of more than 100 volatile compounds, including the unusual VOC sodorifen [4]. In the last decade, the chemical structure of sodorifen was elucidated, and its biosynthesis and genetic regulation determined [5]. Nevertheless, the biological and ecological function(s) of this compound remains unknown.

Sodorifen in S. plymuthica PRI-2C increased when the bacteria were exposed to volatiles of Fusarium culmorum [6]. Biotic factors affect sodorifen levels ranging from inhibition to high induction levels. This correlates with the os-dependent transcription of sodorifen cluster genes. Analysis of the unique gene cluster shows that fungal VOCs led to expression of methyltransferase and terpene synthase, enzymes for sodorifen synthesis (Magnus unpublished results). C-cultures of S. plymuthica 4Rx13 and Bacillus subtilis 2Bg led to altered sodorifen emission (low in exponential phase, and high in the late stationary phase) as compared to controls. Altogether, these results indicate that sodorifen plays distinct roles in nature [7].

We aim to determine the biological/ecological function(s) of sodorifen. The effects of sodorifen on bacteria (receiver and emitter) and fungi through genotype, proteome, and metabolome analysis will be performed. Sodorifen activity in growth and fitness of microbes can shed new light on the role of mVOCs.

Keywords: sodorifen, Serratia plymuthica, mVOCs

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204-EMV

In vivo Mapping of the Mycosphere pH at the Microscale

1B. J. Xiong, C. Dusny, K. Lindstaedt, D. Schlosser, L. Y. Wick
2Helmholtz-Center for Environmental Research UFZ, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

In vivo mapping of the mycosphere pH at the microscale allows an in vivo visualization of the spatial distribution of mycelial growth and identification of the mycosphere pH at the microscale.
Introduction: The mycosphere is the microhabitat surrounding and affected by fungal hyphae. It forms an important ecological niche and is considered to be a hotspot of microbial activity. Little however is known, to what degree and at which scales hyphae shape this microbial habitat.

Objectives: We here present a novel, spatially and temporally resolved analysis of the influence of hyphae on the pH of mycosphere habitats at the microscale in vivo.

Materials & methods: The pH-sensitive fluorescent strain Synecocystis sp. PCC6803 periplasm was homogeneously embedded in an agar surface (pH: 6.9, size: 800 µm × 400 µm). The agar was then allowed to be overgrown by hyphae of the fungus C. cinerea. The pH change of individual bioreporter cells was quantified microscopically by optical ratiometric sensing and geostatistical approaches were applied for microscale mapping of the pH.

Results: Our data show that C. cinerea started to change the pH of a new habitat already at a distance of >1.5 mm from the hyphal tip. Ongoing habitat colonization then changed the average pH of the agar from 6.9 to 5.8 within 18 h. Strikingly, spatial analysis of the agar, however, revealed the existence and permanence of a clearly distinct and patchy pH distribution and the presence of steep microscale pH gradients in the mycosphere between pH 4.4 and pH 5.5, respectively.

Conclusion: To our knowledge this is the first spatial explicit in vivo analysis of the mycosphere pH at the microscale. Such microscale pH mapping allows us to locate and quantitatively describe hyphal influences on the pH of their microhabitats. The presence of stable and steep pH gradients in the mycosphere is supposed to be a driver of fungal enzymatic activity and fungal bacterial interactions in the mycosphere.

205-EMV

Discovering a novel plantcocymetal quorum sensing molecule


1Radboud University, Department of Microbiology, Nijmegen, Netherlands
2Leibniz Institute DSMZ, Braunschweig, Germany
3Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Braunschweig, Germany
4German Centre for Infection Research (DZIF), Braunschweig, Germany
5Friedrich-Schiller University Jena, Department of Microbial Interactions, Jena, Germany
6 Wageningen University, Bioinformatics Group, Wageningen, Netherlands

Bacterial communication mostly relies on N-acyl homoserine lactones (AHLs), quorum sensing molecules that can trigger gene regulation in response to the density of a bacterial population. In contrast, unknown bacterial species of the human microbiome employ other N-acylated amino acids for cross-kingdom interaction with their host. During characterization of the bacterial isolate Mal15 belonging to the novel genus Stieleria in the phylum Planctomycetes, we were able to identify a novel class of N-acylated derivatives of the amino acid L-tyrosine. We named these compounds stieleriacines and showed similar quorum sensing effects as described for AHLs. During further elucidating the biosynthesis pathway for stieleriacines we found a potential link to exopolysaccharide synthesis and analyzed the effects of stieleriacines on biofilm formation of Mal15 and faster-growing microorganisms competing with Mal15 for nutrient-rich biotic surfaces in marine environments. Based on the obtained results we postulate that stieleriacines can alter biofilm species composition in marine habitats, providing a growth advantage for the producer. Stieleriacines contribute to expand our knowledge on bacterial small molecule-mediated communication. While slow-growing Planctomycetes are known to dominate biofilms on marine biotic surfaces, stieleriacines might be used as biofilm scaping compounds, altering the bacterial species composition in such ecological niches. If stieleriacines serve for cross-kingdom communication, such recently observed in the human gut, remains elusive.

206-NRZV

Update on diagnosis of Whipples disease – from the gut over the heart valve into the urine?

J. Kikheney1, A. Wiesner1, V. Moos2, M. Wolters3, H. Rohde3, *A. Moter1

1Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Biologinemzentrum, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Infektionsimmunologie, Berlin, Germany
2Charité-Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Medizinische Klinik für Gastroenterologie, Infektiologie und Rheumatologie, Berlin, Germany
3Universitätsklinikum Eppendorf, Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Virologie und Hygiene, Hamburg, Germany

Introduction

Whipple's disease (WD) is a rare infection with Tropheryma whipplei that is fatal if untreated. Diagnosis is challenging, and it is based mainly on invasive sampling. We previously reported on a kidney biopsy, where we observed morphologically intact bacteria within the glomerular capsular space and tubular lumen. This lead to evaluation of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing of urine as a diagnostic test for WD.

Objectives

Here we give insights into WD using fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) and report on the performance of urine testing for the diagnosis of WD.

Materials & methods

In selected cases, we used FISH to localize T. whipplei directly within the patients’ tissue. We prospectively investigated urine samples of 25 newly diagnosed and treated WD patients by PCR. As controls, we investigated samples from 110 healthy volunteers and patients with excluded WD or acute gastroenteritis.

Results

Out of 25 urine samples from independent, therapy-naive WD patients, 19 were positive for T. whipplei PCR. In three patients, FISH visualized T. whipplei in urine. All control samples were negative, including those of 11 healthy carriers with T. whipplei-positive stool samples. In our study, the detection of T. whipplei in the urine of untreated patients correlated in all cases with WD.

Conclusion

We show that T. whipplei is detectable by PCR in the urine of the majority of therapy-naive WD patients. With a low
prevalence but far-reaching consequences upon diagnosis, invasive sampling for WD remains mandatory, but must rely on a strong suspicion. Recent results from the Consilium Laboratory strengthen the approach of urine testing as a novel, easy-to-obtain specimen for guiding the initial diagnosis of WD, in particular in patients with extra-intestinal WD. FISH sheds light on the invasiveness and biofilm potency of T. whippelii and confirmed a superinfection of a heart valve with Cardiobacterium hominis.

Conclusion

All sequencing platforms result in appropriate sequencing results to be used in epidemiological studies. For hybrid assembly, the method to use the long-read-first and correct then with short read had the best results for circularization and contiguity. Our results may help to better plan future sequencing projects of epidemiological studies.

207-NRZV

The jigsaw puzzle of genomics: Evaluation of sequencing and assembly strategies for Francisella tularensis, a re-emerging zoonotic pathogen

K. Neubert1,2, E. Zuchanke3, R. Leidenfrost4, R. Wünschiers5, H. Brendebach6, S. Al Dahouk7, H. Hotzel8, K. Reinert4, H. Neubauer9, H. Tomaso2, *A. Busch1,3
1Freie Universität Berlin, Freie Universität Berlin, Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, Algorithmic Bioinformatics, Institut für Informatik, Berlin, Germany
2German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Berlin, Germany
3Friedrich-Loeffler-Institute, IBIZ, Jena, Germany
4University of Applied Sciences, Univer Department of Biotechnology and Chemistry, Mittweida, Germany
5University Hospital, KAI, Jena, Germany

Introduction

Francisella tularensis is a highly virulent, Gram-negative bacterial pathogen and the causative agent of the zoonotic disease tularemia. Next-generation sequencing has arrived as a standard method generating short- or long-read raw sequences that are assembled to longer sequences for further analyses. Therefore, sequencing and assembly tools we evaluated theses method before routine use.

Objectives

Three objectives were assessed: (i) Analysis of the sequencing quality from five different sequencing approaches, (ii) optimal hybrid assembly techniques for long and short sequences were assessed to compare two approaches: long-read-first (with short read correction) (CANU/pilon, Flye) or short-read-first (with scaffolding on long reads) (Unicycler/ SPAdes). The third objective (iii) was to evaluate eight short-read assemblers.

Materials & methods

We sequenced five diagnostically relevant Francisella tularensis strains isolated in Germany. using the short-read sequencers Ion Torrent’s Ion S5, Illumina MiSeq, Illumina HiSeq and the long-read sequencers Pacific Biosciences RS (PacBio) and Oxford Nanopore Technologies Minion (ONT). Hybrid assembly was assessed to compare between the long-read-first (with short read correction) and short-read-first approach (with scaffolding on long reads) (CANU/pilon, Flye, Unicycler, SPAdes). The performance of short-read assembler (Abyss, IDBA, Masurca, Metaspades v3.9, Spades v3.11, Spades v3.9, Tadpole, Velvet) was compared.

Results

Our quality assessment was based on sequencing data, sequencing error, coverage evenness, and GC-bias. All five sequencing platforms provided good sequencing results. Canu/pilon was most appropriate for PacBio-based hybrid assemblies with HiSeq data. The optimal short-read assembler was SPAdes 3.11.

208-NRZV

Whole genome sequencing of Neisseria meningitidis W from Germany 2012 – 2018 during the European outbreak

*M. Krone1, T. Läm1, U. Vogel1, H. Claus1
1Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, Institut für Hygiene und Mikrobiologie, Würzburg, Germany

Question

While the number of invasive meningococcal disease (IMD) cases decreased in Germany and Europe over the last years, a rising incidence of IMD of serogroup W meningococci (MenW) caused by a unique hypervirulent clone of clonal complex (cc) 11 has been reported in several European countries (Krone, M., et al., Increase of invasive meningococcal serogroup W disease in Europe, 2013 to 2017. Euro Surveill, 2019. 24(14)). The UK Strain 2013 was responsible for the change in European epidemiology (Lucidarme, J., et al., An international invasive meningococcal disease outbreak due to a novel and rapidly expanding serogroup W strain, Scotland and Sweden, July to August 2015. Euro Surveill, 2016. 21(45)). The aim of the study is to describe MenW epidemiology in Germany from 2002 – 2018. To analyse whole genome sequencing (WGS) the population structure of German MenW strains.

Methods

Laboratory surveillance data collected by the National Reference Laboratory for Meningococci and Haemophilus influenzae (NRZMHi) and statutory data of the Robert Koch institute from were analysed. WGS was done at the core unit systems biology of the University of Würzburg on an Illumina NextSeq 500 sequencer using the Nextera XT library preparation. SeqSphere+ software (Ridom) was used for de novo assembly (Velvet) and allele calling for cgMLST assignment. BIGsdab and SeqSphere were used for phylogenetic analyses.

Results

While the share of MenW on all IMD cases in Germany had ranged from 1 to 4% before 2016, an increase in MenW IMD incidence and proportion on all IMD was observed since 2016 reaching 13 % of all IMD and 0.04 cases per 100,000 populationin 2018. While MenW cases between 2012 and 2015 were mainly caused by cc22 and cc23, an expansion of cc11 could be observed since 2016 of which the majority of the cases in 2017 (10/14) and 2018 (14/19) were caused by the “UK 2013” strain.

Conclusions

The increase of MenW cases mainly caused by the “UK 2013” strain in Germany follows developments in other European countries. However, in contrast to the UK and the Netherlands, this increase is very moderate and an epidemiologically relevant expansion cannot be confirmed yet.
209-NRZV

The rise of Enterococcus faecium ST117 - a 20 years longitudinal analysis of a successful hospital-adapted lineage

*J. Bender1, C. Fleige2, B. Neumann2, R. Weber2, I. Klare2, G. Werner2
1Robert Koch Institute, Department of Infectious Diseases, Berlin, Germany
2Robert Koch Institute, Division 13 Nosocomial Pathogens and Antibiotic Resistances, Wernigerode, Germany

Background: Enterococci are considered the second to third most common cause of nosocomial infections. Especially vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus spp. (VRE) pose a serious threat to health care institutions as limited treatment options exist for those pathogens. Vancomycin resistance is most prominent in E. faecium of which hospital-adapted lineages have emerged. Multi-locus sequence typing (MLST) has identified lineage ST117 amongst the E. faecium population that is highly prevalent in German hospitals nowadays. In order to disclose population dynamics and distribution of the resistance genotype over time, we analysed a comprehensive strain collection of E. faecium ST117 received by the NRC from 1998 until 2018.

Methods: In total, 415 E. faecium ST117 of various clinical materials and including outbreak isolates were subjected to whole-genome sequencing (WGS). Phylogenetic relatedness was assessed by core genome MLST (cgMLST) using the SeqSphere® software. The pan-genome was analysed using Roary and Scoary.

Results: WGS and cgMLST analyses allowed sub-differentiation of the ST117 population into 81 distinct complex types (CT). A plethora of novel CTs were identified; however, a few CTs such as CT71 dominate the E. faecium ST117 population and were causative for outbreaks. Most interestingly, specific CT dynamics were observed over the study period of 20 years, indicating the rise and fall of distinct sub-lineages in German hospitals. Further bioinformatics investigations demonstrate a clear association of either vanA or vanB with selected CT-lineages and the emergence of vanB in E. faecium ST117 in recent years. Gene distribution cluster analysis revealed a partially lineage-specific gene repertoire.

Conclusions: Our analyses suggest that the emergence, dissemination and the decline of hospital-adapted E. faecium ST117 clinical isolates is highly dynamic but simultaneously dominated by selected clonal lineages. Detailed molecular investigations are currently in progress to obtain insights into the genetic basis that might facilitate certain strain types to emerge as successful pathogens in clinical settings.

Introduction: Listeria monocytogenes causes foodborne infections with high mortality. The majority of cases are either sporadic or occur in small disease clusters. However, large outbreaks may occasionally arise, leading to a significant burden of disease.

Objectives: L. monocytogenes isolates from approximately two-thirds of all mandatorily notified German listeriosis cases are sent to the bi-national Consilary Laboratory for Listeria at the Robert Koch Institute and the Austrian Agency for Health, which run a subtyping program for identification of listeriosis outbreak clusters.

Materials & Methods: Whole genome sequencing (WGS) and core genome multi locus sequence typing (cgMLST) were used for subtyping of more than 1,700 human L. monocytogenes isolates collected in Germany between 2015 and 2019. Presumably food vehicles for listeriosis infections were identified through matching of cgMLST subtyping results from human isolates and food isolates collected by the National Reference Laboratory at the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment. For selected cgMLST clusters, patients were interviewed on their food consumption habits to add epidemiological evidence.

Results: Two thirds of all human isolates grouped into more than 160 different cgMLST clusters. Among them were several large clusters including one with 112 cases, which has been among the largest European listeriosis outbreaks nowadays. In order to stop and to prevent listeriosis outbreaks.

Conclusions: Our work illustrates the importance and suitability of a comprehensive WGS-based national surveillance system comprising human and food isolates in order to stop and to prevent listeriosis outbreaks.

211-NRZV

High heterogeneity of plasmid-mediated quinolone resistance in Escherichia coli isolates recovered from livestock and food in Germany

*K. Jurasech1, M. Grobbel2, A. Käsbohrer1, B. A. Tenhagen1, J. A. Hammer1
1German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany

Introduction: Resistance to quinolones can be chromosomally encoded or plasmid-mediated (PMQR). One PMQR mechanism is mediated by Qnr proteins. The horizontal gene transfer of this plasmid-mediated quinolone resistance increases the threat of fallible treatment with quinolones.

Objectives: To better understand the distribution of PMQR, in particular qnr genes, Escherichia (E.) coli isolates recovered in 2017 from livestock and food were phenotypically and genotypically characterized.

Materials & Methods: 3,409 E. coli isolates from the German National Reference Laboratory for Antimicrobial Resistance were investigated. The isolates were received in the German national monitoring program for antimicrobial resistance. Antimicrobial resistance was determined by broth microdilution according to CLSI guidelines. MIC values for ciprofloxacin and nalidixic acid were evaluated using EUCAST epidemiological cut-off values (MICNAL ≥16 mg/L, MICCIP ≥0.06 mg/L). E. coli resistant to quinolones were
subjected to qnr-PCR, XbaI-PFGE, S1-PFGE, WGS and bioinformatic analysis. Six different qnr-PCRs were conducted to identify the respective qnr-variants.

Results: Overall, 504 isolates were classified as quinolone-resistant. Of those, 107 were found to harbor a qnr gene. The most abundant qnr-variant was qnrS. PFGE profiling for the 107 qnr positive isolates demonstrated a high heterogeneity, indicating that they are not associated to a predominant E. coli clone spreading via vertical transmission. S1-PFGE plasmid profiling showed a variety of extrachromosomal elements of various sizes. 43 isolates, selected according their XbaI- and S1-PFGE pattern were further screened for their genetic setting through short read whole genome sequencing (WGS). Sequencing confirmed the high genetic diversity of the quinolone-resistant E. coli strains.

Conclusion: Quinolone-resistance could not be attributed to a specific lineage of E. coli. Further analysis is needed for a better understanding of the plasmid diversity within qnr-harboring E. coli and the prerequisites of their spread.

212-NRZV
Causative agents of invasive fungal infections in Germany and their antifungal susceptibilities determined by the National Reference Centre for Invasive Fungal Infections (NRZMyk)

The National Reference Centre for invasive fungal infections (NRZMyk) receives fungal isolates and native clinical materials from hospitals and registered doctors across Germany. All isolates are identified molecularly by the use of makers that are discriminative for the respective taxa. Antifungal susceptibility testing is performed in vitro, by microdilution testing according to the EUCAST protocol for most isolates. Additionally, molecular testing is performed for echinocandin resistance of Candida spp. and azole resistance of Aspergillus fumigatus. In Aspergillus, molecular identification revealed that clinical isolates morphologically identified as Aspergillus niger or Aspergillus nidulans in most cases represent different species with deviant antifungal susceptibility profiles. Species morphologically similar to Aspergillus fumigatus but with intrinsic antifungal resistances such as A. lentulus or A. udagawae are rarely observed by the NRZMyk. In Aspergillus fumigatus, azole resistance is seen in two thirds of the strains and is caused by mutations of the 14-α-sterol demethylase gene (CYP51A). The most frequent mutation is TR34/L98H. In the last five years, the isolates of A. fumigatus received by the NRZMyk did not show a significant increase in the azole resistance. Importantly, the NRZMyk did not detect any increases in rare Candida spp. such as Candida auris. Echinocandin resistance in C. albicans and C. glabrata is often caused by mutations of the target genes, the 1,3-β-D-glucan synthase genes and can be acquired within short periods of treatment. Molecular species identification in combination with antifungal susceptibility testing contributes to an improved management of fungal infections.

214-MSHV
Metamorphosis of the marine Hydrozoan Hydractinia echinata is mediated by bacterial membrane components

Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is the most important tick-transmitted viral infection in Europe and Asia. In Germany very high numbers of registered human cases were reported in Germany, with 486 cases in 2017 and 585 human cases in 2018. In 2018, the highest number of ticks within the last 10 years was sampled in a representative TBE natural focus areas in Germany. The geographical distribution of TBE cases in Germany showed that the high numbers of human TBE cases are due to increases in the known endemic areas. Newly emerging TBE endemic areas contribute only to a small proportion to the increase of human cases seen during the last two years. Therefore, an association between tick numbers and human TBE cases was assumed. To test this hypothesis ticks were sampled in 2019 monthly in a control TBE natural focus area and human cases reported to the Robert Koch-Institute were associated. A total of 1,638 ticks (104 males, 75 females, 1,459 nymphs) were sampled. In comparison with the year 2018 (1,875 ticks, 131 males, 104 females, 1,640 nymphs) the number of ticks was only about 10% higher than in 2019. However, the number of human TBE cases has decreased about 30% from 2018 to 2019 (estimated 400 human cases). In 2018 the minimal infection rate (MIR) in the tick population was 0.16% (3/1,875 ticks). In 2019 the MIR was calculated as 0.24% (4/1,638). The data show that the absolute number of ticks and the MIR in ticks do not correlate with the number of human TBE cases. These results imply that mainly anthropogenic activities determine the number of human cases. Most cases still occur in well-known TBE risk districts while human TBE cases from emerging risk areas are responsible for a small proportion of cases.

213-NRZV
Report of the German Consulting Laboratory on Tick-Borne Encephalitis

Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) is the most important tick-transmitted viral infection in Europe and Asia. In Germany very high numbers of registered human cases were reported in Germany, with 486 cases in 2017 and 585 human cases in 2018. In 2018, the highest number of ticks within the last 10 years was sampled in a representative TBE natural focus areas in Germany. The geographical distribution of TBE cases in Germany showed that the high numbers of human TBE cases are due to increases in the known endemic areas. Newly emerging TBE endemic areas contribute only to a small proportion to the increase of human cases seen during the last two years. Therefore, an association between tick numbers and human TBE cases was assumed. To test this hypothesis ticks were sampled in 2019 monthly in a control TBE natural focus area and human cases reported to the Robert Koch-Institute were associated. A total of 1,638 ticks (104 males, 75 females, 1,459 nymphs) were sampled. In comparison with the year 2018 (1,875 ticks, 131 males, 104 females, 1,640 nymphs) the number of ticks was only about 10% higher than in 2019. However, the number of human TBE cases has decreased about 30% from 2018 to 2019 (estimated 400 human cases). In 2018 the minimal infection rate (MIR) in the tick population was 0.16% (3/1,875 ticks). In 2019 the MIR was calculated as 0.24% (4/1,638). The data show that the absolute number of ticks and the MIR in ticks do not correlate with the number of human TBE cases. These results imply that mainly anthropogenic activities determine the number of human cases. Most cases still occur in well-known TBE risk districts while human TBE cases from emerging risk areas are responsible for a small proportion of cases.

214-MSHV
Metamorphosis of the marine Hydrozoan Hydractinia echinata is mediated by bacterial membrane components

Bacterial signalling substances induce colonisation and metamorphosis in larvae of marine invertebrates such as sponges, cnidarians, mollusca and annelids [1]. We have chosen the marine polyp Hydractinia echinata as a model system to study the initiation of metamorphosis and the chemical communication between the eukaryotic host and the associated microbiome [2]. The life cycle of the hydroid polyp H. echinata includes the bacterial induced transition of the mobile larvae into the sessile reproduction phase (polyp). The larva develops into a primary polyp only in response to a chemical cue/specific molecule provided by associated environmental bacteria.

Methods

We used a culture-dependent and independent approach to identify associated microbes. The isolated strains were investigated for their potential to induce metamorphosis of H. echinata larvae using a stable monospecies induction assay. Strains that reliably induced metamorphosis were prioritized and different purification methods were applied to isolate the involved substances by bioassay guided fractionation.

1Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology, Virology and Rickettsiology, München, Germany
2Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology Hans Knöll Institute (HKI), Chemical Biology of Microbe-Host Interactions, Jena, Germany
3University Hospital Jena, Electron Microscopic Center, Jena, Germany
Results

Several results indicated that more than one signaling substance is involved in the morphogenesis process. Further chemical analysis of active fractions caused the identification of chemically distinct types of morphogenic metabolites including certain bacterial membrane components, such as different phospholipids. Fluorescence measurement showed that synthetic phospholipid derivatives are incorporated into the cell membrane of the larvae. Likewise, a polymeric sugar, containing rhamnose-mannose units, induced full metamorphosis [3].

Conclusions

Overall, our results suggest that the metamorphic transition of the motile larva to the sessile polyp needs to be considered as an orchestrated, multi-factorial or even synergistic event, which requires most likely different bacterial-produced signaling cues.

References


215-MSHV

The RWV bioreactor: A 3D cell culture model to characterize the molecular mechanisms of bacterial (probiotic E. coli Nissle 1917) and host interaction

1Center for Molecular Biology of Inflammation, Institute of Infectiology, Muenster, Germany
2Pharma-Zentrals GmbH, Herdecke, Germany
3Institute of Hygiene, Muenster, Germany

Background: The increase of antibiotic resistance making infectious diseases a major cause for death worldwide, provokes an urgent need for the development of novel therapeutic strategies (e.g. preventive probiotics). For decades, two-dimensional cell culture provided the best way to study bacterial-host interactions in vitro. Since the 1990s, there has been a shift from the "flat biology" to advanced 3D cell culture methods of intestinal epithelia, closely mimicking the microenvironment for host-microbe crosstalk, offering "in vivo" tools for the analysis of cellular response (e.g. barrier function, protective mucin production) to infection.

Objectives: Advanced cell culture models are necessary to fast-track in vitro based research to complex in vivo models for infectious diseases.

Material & Methods: Employing the colonic cell lines HT29, HT29-MTX and LS174T we compared cellular responses to co-incubation with the probiotic E. coli Nissle 1917 and flagella variants. Corresponding gene expression profiles of cell lines were compiled (RT2 Profiler Arrays (Qiagen)). Epithelial cells on Transwell® Inserts do polarize but do not mimic a complex mucosal surface. This made us to use the rotating wall vessel (RWV) bioreactor, engineered to study cellular and molecular responses of host and microbes. It offers dynamic culture conditions for epithelial cells like low fluid shear stress influencing gene regulation and cellular differentiation of cells growing on Cytodex-3 beads.

Results: Our studies of bacterial-host interaction revealed obvious differences between varying cell culture models concerning: a) bacterial induced fine tuning of host responses by miRNA regulation, e.g. TNF, MyD88 (immune response) by miR-181a or miR-200c, JamA (barrier function) by miR-320a, b) the impact of a protective apical mucin layer and c) rotating infection conditions (bacterial adhesion).

Conclusions: These differences shed light on mechanisms governing host-microbe (probiotic) interactions, delivering more physiologically relevant results about intestinal disease development and pave the way for the translation "from bench to bedside" (application of probiotics).

216-MSHV

Predatory bacteria enhance microbiome diversity and host health

1J. Johnke1, H. Schuleenburg1
2CAU Kiel, Evolutionary Ecology and Genetics, Kiel, Germany

Question:

Microbial diversity positively correlates with ecosystem stability. This relationship also applies to host-associated microbiomes. Therefore, factors contributing to microbial diversity are of great interest, especially as certain diseases are linked to microbiome dysbiosis. A so far understudied group of candidates for microbiome restoration are predatory bacteria belonging to the Bdellovibrio and like organisms (BALOs). These bacteria can be considered as probiotic (they reduce dominant species, thereby promoting less abundant species) as well as antibiotic (they kill other bacteria). A previous meta-analysis of microbiomes from distinct hosts revealed that BALO presence associates with a higher microbiome alpha-diversity. BALOs might therefore prevent microbiome dysbiosis by actively preying on dominant species, thus increasing host health.

Methods:

In order to elucidate if BALOs are drivers of microbiome diversity we performed controlled laboratory experiments in culture as well as in vivo using the nematode Caenorhabditis elegans model host. We assembled microbiome communities of different complexity and tracked the community dynamics in the presence or absence of a newly isolated BALO over two weeks via 16S rRNA gene sequencing. Host brood size and population growth were measured as proxies for host health and fitness.

Results:

We found a general decrease in community richness over time, but this decrease was significantly delayed in the presence of the predatory bacterium. Additionally, specific microbiome members became significantly more abundant in cultures containing the BALO and showed different co-occurrence pattern than in BALO-free cultures. Finally, we found a positive association between BALO presence and C. elegans health and fitness.

Conclusions:

Our results demonstrate that BALOs have a positive effect on microbial diversity and potentially host health and
therefore represent promising candidates for the restoration of disturbed microbiomes.

217-MSHV
Dual-Seq of Caedibacter taeniospiralis genome and transcriptome, obligate endosymbiont of *Paramaecium* M. Pirritano1, N. Zaburanny2, K. Grosser3, G. Gasparoni4, R. Müller5, M. Simon5, M. Schrallhammer5
1Wuppertal University, Wuppertal, Germany
2Helmholtz Institute for Pharmaceutical Research Saarland (HIPS), Department of Microbial Natural Products, Saarbrücken, Germany
3Albert-Ludwigs University of Freiburg, Microbiology, Freiburg, Germany
4Saarland University, Genetics, Saarbrücken, Germany

Interest in host-symbiont interactions is continuously increasing, not only due to the recognized importance of microbiomes. Started with the detection and description of novel symbionts, attention moves to the molecular consequences and innovations of symbioses. Molecular analysis requires genomic data that is difficult to obtain from obligate intracellular and uncultivated bacteria. How do we obtain the genome and transcriptome of the obligate endosymbiont *Caedibacter taeniospiralis*, a member of the little studied group *Fastidiosiabacteriaceae*? This symbiont confers its unicellular host *Paramaecium tetraurelia* with the ability to kill other cells, and with immunity against this effect. Based on the genomic data, which new insights are gained into the establishment and consequences of this complex modified killer phenotype?

*Paramaecia* were cultivated with hypersensitive *E. coli* allowing to remove food bacteria from the culture before DNA and RNA extraction without the risk of eliminating the symbiont. We obtained the *C. taeniospiralis* genome and transcriptome by dual-Seq of DNA and RNA from infected paramecia.

Comparison of codon usage and expression level indicates that genes necessary for a specific trait of this symbiosis, i.e. the delivery of an unknown toxin, result from horizontal gene transfer hinting to the relevance of DNA transfer for acquiring new characters. Prediction of secreted proteins of *Caedibacter* as major agents of contact with the host implies, next to several toxin candidates, a rather un-characterized secretome that appears to be highly adapted to this symbiosis.

Our data provides new insight into the molecular establishment and evolution of this obligate symbiosis and for the pathway characterization of toxicity and immunity.

219-MSMV
Deciphering the lifestyle of Pseudomonads and related species using a novel high resolution 13C metabolic flux approach
*M. Kohlstedt1, C. Wittmann1
1Saarland University, Institute of Systems Biotechnology, Saarbrücken, Germany

Introduction

Pseudomonads exhibit a complex metabolic architecture and are known to assimilate glucose via three convergent peripheral pathways [1]. After uptake into periplasm, glucose can be either phosphorylated directly into glucose 6-phosphate or it can be oxidized into gluconate, which is then taken up in the cytoplasm and phosphorylated. In addition, gluconate can be further converted into 2-ketogluconate, which is transported into the cytoplasm, subsequently phosphorylated and finally reduced via the 2-ketogluconate loop. All three catabolic steps converge at the level of 6-phosphogluconate, which is next cleaved into glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate and pyruvate via the Entner-Doudoroff pathway. These trioses can then be recycled back into hexose phosphates or further channeled into lower carbon metabolism.

Objectives

We present a simple, robust and solely GC-MS-based approach to resolve the complex metabolic architecture of Pseudomonads as demonstrated for *P. putida* KT2440 and *P. aeruginosa* PAO1.
Materials & Methods

For high resolution $^{13}$C metabolic flux analysis, we combined parallel labeling experiments on different $^{13}$C tracers with GC-MS measurements of labeling data obtained from proteinogenic amino acids, cell glycogen and peptidoglycan [2].

Results

Additional information for glucose 6-phosphate and fructose 6-phosphate from cell glycogen and glucosamine resulted in an extensive data set with sufficient power to resolve all relevant fluxome features in the investigated bacteria. Excellent fits between experimental and simulated data were obtained. Both strains reveal a high metabolic flexibility towards different carbon sources and stressors.

Conclusion

Our novel approach allows studying the metabolism of Pseudomonads to great detail (including more than 250 members of biotechnological [3] and clinical relevance [4]). Also other microbes, exhibiting a similar pathway architecture, now become accessible on the flux level.

References


220-MSMV

Genome-scale microbial community modeling with µbialSim

Microbial communities are ubiquitous in nature and impact human well-being in many ways. Due to their complexity with respect to their spatio-temporal dynamics and the intricate interaction networks driving these dynamics, they are notoriously difficult to understand. Modeling has been applied as a valid tool to untangle ecological interactions in these systems but usually not resolving intracellular metabolic fluxes. These are explicitly considered in constraint-based methods which are a standard tool for monocultures, typically relying on genome-scale metabolic networks of sequenced microbial species.

To characterize microbiome dynamics both on the species abundance and down to the enzyme-level, we here introduce µbialSim (pronounced "microbialSim"), a novel numerical simulator that implements the dynamic Flux-Balance-Analysis approach and expands it to communities. By employing a novel numerical integration scheme, our simulator can consider communities at their natural diversity, going beyond current simulator capabilities which are restricted to few species or low abundance communities.

As an example, we apply µbialSim to the entirety of a model collection of 773 species of the human gut microbiome. We demonstrate how the predicted pattern of compound exchange and its dynamics can be analyzed as the community feeds on a western-diet substrate pulse.

While quantitative predictions have to be interpreted in the light of the simulator’s current limitations – being restricted to metabolic interactions only – we envision µbialSim as a starting point for an extensive in silico characterization of community dynamics at an unprecedented level of detail. It can be used as a tool for experimental design and the design of communities for novel biotechnological applications. Combined with OMICS data on enzyme activity it will be an invaluable tool to decipher activity in experimental microbiomes and helping in elucidating general principles in microbial ecology.

221-MSMV

Observation of fluorescent FAST-tagged protein production during growth of the strict anaerobic acetogen Eubacterium limosum

*“M. Fiala*”, J. Gaibler*, F. R. Bengelsdorf*, P. Dürr*1

1*Ulm University, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, Ulm, Germany

Introduction: Fluorescent proteins are indispensable for several applications in molecular biology. Commonly, the green fluorescent protein and its derivates are used, but their usage is limited to aerobic bacteria, since chromophore maturation requires oxygen. The fluorescence-activating and absorption-shifting tag (FAST) is a fluorescence-activating protein and only shows fluorescence when bound to a fluorogenic ligand. Its fluorescence is independent of oxygen and therefore perfectly suited as a molecular biological tool in anaerobic bacteria such as Eubacterium limosum. E. limosum is an acetogen, which is genetically accessible and a promising biocatalyst for the sustainable production of chemicals from C1 carbon sources. The establishment of detailed metabolic fluxes using the FAST protein is of great interest.

Objectives: In this study, the functionality of FAST as a reporter was evaluated in E. limosum by expression using different promoters and by fusion to the protein 4-hydroxybutyryl-CoA dehydratase (AbfD).

Materials and Methods: FAST was cloned under the control of the different constitutive and inducible promoters P_{trp}, P_{lac}, P_{Psup}, and P_{pop}. In addition, the plasmid pMTL83251_ P_{bgaC}-FAST-abfD was constructed, which encodes the FAST-tagged abfD gene. E. limosum was electroporated using the resulting plasmids, and recombinant strains were analysed by measuring FAST dependent fluorescence during growth.

Results: E. limosum [pMTL83251_ P_{bgaC}-FAST] showed intense fluorescence when gene expression was induced. In the absence of lactose, however, no fluorescence was measured. The inducible promoter system bgaF-P_{bga} seems to be tightly regulated in E. limosum and causes strong gene expression when induced, making it perfectly suitable for the construction of production plasmids. During growth of E. limosum [pMTL83251_ P_{bgaC}-FAST-abfD], fluorescence increased after induction of gene expression. This indicates that the fusion protein and therefore AbfD was produced.

Conclusion: FAST is a promising molecular biological tool in anaerobic bacteria. It is suitable as reporter for promoter studies and as a fluorescent tag for fusion protein construction.
222-MSMV
Modelling phototrophic growth: from single cells to microbial communities

Introduction: Microbial life is ubiquitous in all environments on Earth, and understanding the life and growth of microbes has outstanding relevance for biotechnology, biogeochemistry, and human health. The construction of computational models is highly useful to understand the organization and functioning of microbial metabolism.

Objectives: The purpose of this contribution is to outline recent advances in modelling microbial growth from the perspective of cellular resource allocation, with a focus on cyanobacterial phototrophic growth.

Results: Over the past years, we developed a mathematical framework that describes cyanobacterial growth based on coarse-grained models of cellular proteome allocation. Of particular interest are the resulting microbial ‘growth laws’, i.e., the correlations between the growth rate and the proteome distribution observed during balanced growth. The models predict a characteristic kink for the growth laws of the light harvesting components induced by photoinhibition, the predicted growth laws are in good agreement with quantitative mass spectrometry-based proteomics data of the cyanobacterium *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803.

Conclusion: Coarse-grained microbial growth models are physiologically meaningful while remaining computationally tractable. Such models allow us to represent the physiological acclimation of cyanobacteria to different environments, co-limitation of growth by several nutrients, as well as emergent metabolic switches between alternative nutrient sources. Our next step is therefore to understand the interactions and dynamics within microbial communities, and to construct predictive models of microbial growth for ecosystems simulations.

223-MSMV
Lights on and action – optogenetic control of biosynthetic pathways

Optogenetic on switches: Broadly applicable light-responsive expression systems were developed by employing photocaged inducer molecules like caged IPTG and arabinose. Light-induced cleavage of the photosensitive protection group results in an intracellular release of inducer molecules and an immediate target gene expression. The biotechnological applicability of these phototriggers could be demonstrated by optimizing the synthesis of secondary metabolites such as violacein in *E. coli*. Furthermore, the toolbox of photocaged compounds provides inducer molecules with differing chemical properties like e.g. water solubility and enables the expression in different host strains.

Optogenetic off switches: Genetically encoded photosensitizers (PS) are proteins that produce reactive oxygen species upon illumination. Due to this feature, PS constitute suitable optogenetic tools for chromophore-assisted light inactivation (CALI) of target enzymes in living bacteria. By using the bifurcated biosynthetic pathway of the antibiotic tripyrrole prodigiosin, we could demonstrate gradual PS-mediated inhibition of the final condensing enzyme PigG.

Because of their unique properties, these newly established optogenetic switches can be applied in the near future as versatile plug-and-play tools suitable for regulating and optimizing complex production processes by light in a broad range of different bacteria.

224-MSMV
Marburg Collection: A highly flexible cloning toolbox for the emerging SynBio chassis *Vibrio natriegens*

Optimised microbial production processes often require precise control over targeted metabolic pathways and underlying regulatory networks. In recent years, optogenetic tools such as light-responsive switches have been implemented which enable a non-invasive control over cellular functions with high spatiotemporal resolution. Here, we report on the development and evaluation of different optogenetic on and off switches that allow for light-mediated control of gene expression or protein activity and demonstrate the applicability of these switches for programming bacterial production processes with light.

*Vibrio natriegens* is known as the world’s fastest growing organism with a doubling time of less than 10 minutes. This incredible growth speed proposes *V. natriegens* as a chassis for synthetic and molecular biology and for replacing *E. coli* in many applications. So far, many foundational genetic tools, e.g. inducible promoters, plasmid replication origins or reporter genes, are not yet established or not characterized in *V. natriegens* and therefore these photopread use of this promising chassis is prevented. To overcome this limitation, we created the Marburg Collection, a highly flexible Golden Gate-based cloning toolbox optimized for the emerging chassis organism *V. natriegens*. 

The Marburg Collection overcomes the paradigm of plasmid construction – integrating inserts into a backbone – by enabling the de novo assembly of plasmids from basic genetic parts. This allows users to select the plasmid replication origin and resistance part independently, which is highly advantageous when working with limited knowledge about the behavior of those parts in the target organism. Additional design highlights of the Marburg Collection are novel connector parts which facilitate modular circuit assembly and, optionally, the inversion of individual transcription units to reduce crosstalk in multigene constructs.

To quantitatively characterize the genetic parts contained in the Marburg Collection in V. natriegens, we developed a reliable plate reader measurement workflow for reporter experiments and overcame organism-specific challenges, including rapid growth and a high susceptibility towards metabolic burden. By applying this workflow, we generated a comprehensive data set about the quantitative behavior of genetic building blocks in V. natriegens. We think that the Marburg Collection as well as the acquired data of the genetic parts will provide valuable resources for the growing V. natriegens community.

### 225-MSMV

Recombinant production of prodiginines in engineered *Pseudomonas putida* strains

1. R. Weinhann1, F. Koffer1, S. Ibrahim1, F. Gätgens1, J. Gebauer2, A. Domröse1, S. Thies1, S. Kubicki1, H. U. C. Brass4, A. S. Klein1, J. Pietruszka2, T. Drepper1, K. E. Jaeger1, A. Loeschcke1
2. Institute of Molecular Enzymotechnology, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Jülich, Germany
3. Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry, Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Jülich, Germany
4. Institute of Bio- and Geosciences IBG-1: Biotechnology, Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Jülich, Germany

### Background

High-value compounds such as the bacterial tripyrrolic compound prodiginosin can readily be produced by recombinant biosynthesis in the amenable host *Pseudomonas putida*1. As prodiginine variants differ in bioactive properties, it is desirable to make a variety of related structures accessible.

### Methods

We have established the yTREX “gene cluster transplantation tool” which is based on ligase independent cloning to assemble a vector construct carrying a biosynthetic gene cluster of interest and genetic elements that enable the robust conjugal transfer to a bacterial host, and the subsequent insertion in the bacterial chromosome1. The yTREX expression tool was re-designed to obtain a modular architecture allowing for flexible cloning and effective expression of natural or customized gene clusters in different modi.

### Results

We combined prodiginine biosynthetic genes from *Serratia marcescens* and *Pseudoalteromonas rubra* for the biosynthesis of different natural prodiginines in *P. putida* KT2440. Here, random genomic integration enabled the identification of naturally highly transcribed chromosomal rDNA operons as suitable regions for gene cluster insertion and expression2. Based on this finding, we have generated strains allowing to directly integrate genes into these specific loci. Furthermore, we assembled distinct pathway parts and achieved the production of precursor molecules like the bipyrole MBC, which enables creating new-to-nature prodiginine compounds via mutasynthesis3. In the course of our studies, we have also demonstrated that the concomitant expression of reporter genes encoding enzymes like β-galactosidase or polyester hydrolase as well as fluorescent proteins proved highly useful to indicate gene cluster transcription levels in different *P. putida* clones.

### Conclusion

Our methodology enables the rapid generation of *P. putida* production strains for the synthesis of valuable compounds such as prodiginines.

2. Domröse et al. 2019, doi:10.1038/s41598-019-43405-1

### 226-MSMV

Development of *Vibrio natriegens*, and its prophage-free variant, as a novel host for biotechnology

1. R. Stella1, E. Pfeifer1, S. Lorke1, J. Frunzke2
2. Forschungszentrum Jülich, IBG-1: Biotechnology, Jülich, Germany

The marine bacterium *Vibrio natriegens* was recently demonstrated to be a promising new host for molecular biology and next generation bioprocesses[1, 2]. *V. natriegens* is a Gram-negative, non-pathogenic slight-halophilic bacterium, with a high nutrient versatility and a reported doubling time of under 10 minutes[2]. However, *V. natriegens* is not an established model organism yet, and work on different aspects is required to foster it into a microbial workhorse. In this work, improvements at the process site and at the microbial site were investigated.

In a first set of experiments, defined growth media were optimized for use in high throughput microtiter plate cultivations and evolutionary experiments. Furthermore, two biosensors, Lrp and LysG, were adapted for expression in *V. natriegens*, to facilitate the detection of positively charged amino acids, L-methionine and branched-chain amino acids. Transcription factor-based biosensors are powerful tools for various applications in biotechnology, examples are to screen and select for cells with increased product formation.

Further experiments focused on the construction of a robust chassis strain. Genome sequencing and qPCR analysis revealed that the first chromosome of *V. natriegens* ATCC 14048 contains two prophage regions (VNP1 and VNP2), which are both still inducible by the DNA damaging agent mitomycin C and which exhibit spontaneous activation under standard cultivation conditions[3]. A prophage free strain was created, which featured an improved tolerance to DNA-damaging conditions and hypo-osmotic conditions. In a competitive growth experiment, the prophage-free strain outcompeted the wild type. Consequently, this strain is a promising platform for future metabolic engineering strategies.

Sensing and responding to stimuli drive the regulation of many essential cellular mechanisms. Speed and efficiency of sensing and response systems are the cornerstone of bacterial survival and adaptability. In order to respond to signals, bacteria adopted different strategies, from synthesis of messengers to post-translational modification (PTM). Phosphorylation is the most studied PTM and is the pivotal strategy used to translate different signals into physiological responses. In euarkoyetes, Ser/Thr/Tyr kinase have a major role in this signal transduction due to the wide number and types of proteins targeted; although widespread in bacteria, this type of PTM is still relatively underexplored. Recently, we identified the YjjJ protein as a novel target of the persistence-related Ser/Thr kinase HipA7. Sequence analysis indicate that YjjJ is a putative kinase belonging to the HipA-like family, with conserved residues for phosphorylation activity. Here we aimed to characterize the kinase activity of YjjJ, identify its targets and assess its effect on E.coli physiology. We first tested the impact of YjjJ on bacterial growth and its potential role in antibiotic tolerance. Using liquid chromatography coupled with mass-spectrometry, we performed shotgun phosphoproteomics and analyzed the impact of YjjJ overexpression on the proteome and phosphoproteome. We confirmed phosphorytomic results via in vitro kinase and complementation assays. Our phosphoproteomic results revealed significant changes in phosphorylation levels on several proteins and pointed to GltX as the main YjjJ target. We then confirmed YjjJ substrates via in vitro assays coupled with complementation tests. We demonstrated that YjjJ activity is toxic for the cell and at high levels leads to cell death. Here we show for the first time that YjjJ is a Ser/Thr kinase that phosphorylates GltX (also a HipA target) and is toxic for the cell. Despite its high similarities with HipA, YjjJ does not seem to be involved in persistence, leaving the role of this kinase still unknown.

Gene transcription is readily inducible by PCE within one generation, but ceases in the absence of PCE in a long-term downregulation (>100 generations). In previous genomic, proteomic, and transcriptomic analyses evidence was found that one out of the two TCSs is involved in PCE sensing and transcription initiation.

Here, we raised the question for the presence of an operator sequence recognized by the regulator and common to all promoters of the organohalide respiration gene region. In order to analyze the interaction between the response regulator protein (RR2) and the promoter sequences, purified RR2 was tested for binding different intergenic regions in electrophoretic mobility shift assays (EMSA). For the identification of the binding sites, libraries of DNA fragments covering short sections of the intergenic regions were screened. By using this approach, the interaction of RR2 with all eight promoter sequences of the PCE regulon was observed. In addition, a direct repeat (consensus CTATW separated by 17 bp) was identified as the regulator protein's binding site either located close to the -35 box or further upstream. Finally, based on the evaluation of the transcript levels in combination with the results of the EMSA a model for the PCE-sensing regulatory network in dehalogenating Sulfurospirillum species was derived in which RR2 acts as class I and class II transcriptional activator.

227-SeSIV
Characterization of a novel Ser/Thr kinase in Escherichia coli

*S. Grenz1, R. Nitschel2, A. Millard3, B. Blombach4, J. Frunzke5, A. Feith6, M. Lenfers6
1Proteome Centre Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany
2Universität Jena, Institute of Microbiology, Jena, Germany
3Institute of Physiological Chemistry, Universität Regensburg, Regensburg, Germany
4Institute for Molecular Medicine, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Mainz, Germany
5Proteomics and Metabolomics, Institute of Molecular and Environmental Physiology, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Mainz, Germany

The genetic inventory required for the tetrachloroethene (PCE) respiration performed by Sulfurospirillum halorespirans or Sulfurospirillum multivorans (phylum: Campylobacterota) is combined in a single genetic locus comprising eight transcriptional units. The eight operons encode for the norcobamide-containing PCE reductive dehalogenase, for the norcobamide cofactor biosynthetic machinery, for components of the PCE respiratory chain, and for a pair of two-component systems (TCSs). Gene transcription is readily inducible by PCE within one generation, but ceases in the absence of PCE in a long-term downregulation (>100 generations). In previous genomic, proteomic, and transcriptomic analyses evidence was found that one out of the two TCSs is involved in PCE sensing and transcription initiation.

Here, we raised the question for the presence of an operator sequence recognized by the regulator and common to all promoters of the organohalide respiration gene region. In order to analyze the interaction between the response regulator protein (RR2) and the promoter sequences, purified RR2 was tested for binding different intergenic regions in electrophoretic mobility shift assays (EMSA). For the identification of the binding sites, libraries of DNA fragments covering short sections of the intergenic regions were screened. By using this approach, the interaction of RR2 with all eight promoter sequences of the PCE regulon was observed. In addition, a direct repeat (consensus CTATW separated by 17 bp) was identified as the regulator protein's binding site either located close to the -35 box or further upstream. Finally, based on the evaluation of the transcript levels in combination with the results of the EMSA a model for the PCE-sensing regulatory network in dehalogenating Sulfurospirillum species was derived in which RR2 acts as class I and class II transcriptional activator.

229-SeSIV
Control of the bifunctional O₂-sensor kinase NreB of Staphylococcus carnosus by the nitrate sensor NreA

*R. Klein1, A. K. Kretschmar2, G. Unden1
1Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, Institute of Molecular Physiology, Mainz, Germany
2Microbiology and Wine Research, Institute for Molecular Physiology, Johannes Gutenberg-University, Mainz, Germany

The NreABC two-component system induces expression of the nitrate reductase (narGHJL genes) of Staphylococci in the presence of nitrate and anaerobic conditions1. NreB represents the oxygen sensor while NreC acts as the response regulator2. Under anaerobic conditions the sensor kinase NreB is autophosphorylated and phosphorylates the response regulator NreC. NreA represents a nitrate sensor3 which controls NreB phosphorylation in response to nitrate availability1, resulting in a nitrate/oxygen co-sensing unit.

NreB contains a DxxxQ phosphatase motive of HisKA_3 type histidine kinases, suggesting location of the phosphatase site of the NreB-NreC system in NreB. NreB exhibited no capacity for auto-dephosphorylation. NreB was able to dephosphorylate NreC-phosphate, but required the joint presence of NreA for dephosphorylation. The NreA regulated phosphatase activity of NreB was lost in the presence of nitrate. NreB mutants of the DxxxQ motive were not able to dephosphorylate NreC-phosphate. Therefore, NreB represents a bifunctional sensor histidine kinase which regulates the phosphorylation state of NreC. The switch in NreB function is controlled by NreA by inhibiting NreB autophosphorylation and stimulating the phosphatase in the free state (apoNreA) or by stimulating NreB autophosphorylation and inhibiting the phosphatase in the nitrate bound form (NreA-nitrate complex).

[1] Nilkens et al. (2014); Molecular microbiology 91 (2): 381–393
230-SeSiV
Phenotypical and functional characterization of the bacterial phytochrome PaBphP of Pseudomonas aeruginosa
*C. Huber1, J. Pielage1, N. Frankenben-Dinkel1, K. Bilici1, L. Denig1
1Technische Universität Kaiserslautern, Institut für Mikrobiologie, Kaiserslautern, Germany

The opportunistic pathogen Pseudomonas aeruginosa encodes a red and far-red light sensing bacteriophytochrome (PaBphP). Phytochromes are photoreceptors found in plants, algae, fungi and bacteria that regulate a variety of vital processes in response to environmental light conditions and have also been linked to virulence in plant pathogens. These photochromic biliproteins form dimers with each monomer possessing a covalently linked chromophore, biliverdin IXa, and there are two spectrally distinct forms: a red light-absorbing Pr and a far-red light-absorbing Pfr form. In plants, it has been shown that the phototransformation between the two forms induces a signaling network, which includes interaction with a wide array of signaling partners and transcriptional regulation of various photoreponsive genes. However, the role of the bacteriophytochrome in P. aeruginosa is still unknown and the biochemical mechanisms of phytochrome function have not been fully elucidated.

In previous studies we established that the genes encoding the two necessary bacteriophytochrome components of P. aeruginosa BphO, a chromophore-producing heme oxygenase, and BphP, the apo-phytochrome, are co-transcribed in a bicistronic operon. Transcription was shown to be induced in the stationary phase in a cell-density-dependent manner and to be dependent on the alternative sigma factor RpoS. We furthermore demonstrated autophosphorylation of PaBphP, confirming its role as a sensor kinase and a postulated sensor of a two-component regulatory system, but the corresponding response regulator is still unknown.

In order to elucidate the biological function of PaBphP we constructed a number of Pseudomonas mutant strains of bphP, which we employed for phenotypical characterizations in red and far-red illumination. By applying homologously overexpressed bphP for cross-linking experiments and proteomics we hope to gain insight into the downstream signaling pathway of PaBphP and advance our understanding of the role of a light sensor in P. aeruginosa.

231-SeSiV
Control of light-dependent type 4 pilus activity during cyanobacterial phototaxis
*N. Schuergers1, Y. Han1, A. Jakobi1, A. Wilde1
1Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Institut für Biologie III - Molekulare Genetik, Freiburg, Germany

Many prokaryotes show complex behaviors that require the intricate spatial and temporal organization of cellular protein machineries, leading to asymmetrical protein distribution and cell polarity. One such behavior is the Type 4 pilus (TFP)-mediated phototactic motility of cyanobacteria which relies on the dynamic localization of the motility motors in response to light[1]. Although we showed that individual Synechocystis cells directly sense the direction of incoming light, we do not understand how the light signal leads to the polar activity of the motility apparatus[2]. However, experimental and genetic evidence suggest that photoreceptors, chemosensory systems and PatA-type response regulators with a PATAN-REC domain architecture are key players in establishing light-induced cell polarity during phototactic movement. We want to unravel how these signaling complexes communicate with the TFP to control localized pilus assembly.

Employing fluorescence imaging and interaction studies we found that PatA-type regulators can directly interact with components of the motility apparatus (PilB/PilC) at the cytoplasmic membrane[3]. Intriguingly, the PATAN-domain is sufficient for binding to the pilus machinery while the role of the REC domain is probably limited to a regulatory function. PATAN-domain proteins, which so far have not been functionally characterized, are commonly found in environmental bacteria like Myxococcus or Geobacter species that show complex spatial organization and it seems likely that this domain is involved in the regulation of spatiotemporal dynamics of different cellular processes.


232-SeSiV
Regulation of motility in Vibrio cholerae by RNA-binding protein ProQ
*D. Devlitsarov1, K. Papenfort1
1LMU, Jena, Germany
2Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Jena, Germany

Bacterial small regulatory RNAs (sRNAs) modulate gene expression via limited base-pairing with target mRNAs. RNA-binding proteins are often required to stabilize the sRNAs and to facilitate base-pairing of the sRNAs with their targets. In many cases, this base-pairing interaction is mediated by the RNA chaperone, Hfq. However, many sRNAs are not recognized by Hfq, and not all bacteria encode Hfq homologues. This raises the possibility of other RNA chaperones facilitating the interaction between regulatory sRNAs and their targets. ProQ is an RNA-binding protein that has recently been discovered in Salmonella enterica. ProQ has been shown to bind over 400 cellular transcripts, however, little is known about the mechanism by which ProQ recognizes its ligand sRNAs and their target mRNAs, and how it mediates their interaction. In this work, we determined the set of ProQ binding partners in V. cholerae and discovered that ProQ regulates swimming motility. We discovered dozens of sRNAs and hundreds of mRNAs binding ProQ in V. cholerae at low and high cell densities. One such sRNA, called flaX, co-immunoprecipitated with ProQ and we show that this sRNA is produced from the 3’ UTR of flaA, a gene encoding a core flagellin protein required for motility. Deletion of flaX resulted in reduced motility of V. cholerae, whereas over-expressing FlaX had the reverse effect. Deletion and overexpression of proQ showed the same trend. Using a transcriptomic approach, we identified the flaB mRNA, encoding a
Secondary flagellin, as the chief target of FlaX and showed that regulation depends on direct base-pairing of the two transcripts. Together, our data indicate a global role for ProQ in gene regulation of V. cholerae and suggest that cell motility is controlled at the post-transcriptional level by a ProQ-associated sRNA.

233-SeSIV
How the most abundant ions become toxic to Bacillus subtilis
"L. Kröger", C. Herzberg', J. Stülke
1Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Genetik, Allgemeine Mikrobiologie, Göttingen, Germany

Potassium and glutamate are by far the most abundant ions in any living cell. Thus, the cytoplasm can be regarded as a solution of potassium and glutamate [1]. Potassium is essential for many cellular processes. Its positive charge buffers the negative charges of both the DNA backbone and its counterion glutamate. Glutamate serves as amino group donor for amino acid synthesis. In order to meet the cellular demand for these two ions, efficient regulatory systems are indispensable. Cyclic di-adenosine monophosphate (c-di-AMP) is a second messenger used by the Gram-positive bacterium Bacillus subtilis and other firmicutes. C-di-AMP controls the expression and activity of the potassium transporters [2]. Glutamate acquisition can be achieved via transport and synthesis of the amino acid. We observed that a c-di-AMP-free strain was not viable at increased potassium concentrations [2] or in the presence of glutamate. However, we were able to isolate suppressor mutants that allow growth of a c-di-AMP-free strain under both toxic conditions. Characterization of glutamate suppressors revealed that they contain pairs of mutations affecting glutamate and potassium homeostasis. Several independent mutations affected a novel glutamate transporter. Moreover, we found evidence that glutamate directly affects potassium uptake. With this, we can add another layer to the complexity of the essentiality of c-di-AMP in B. subtilis.

References

234-SeSIV
Staying or leaving: c-di-GMP regulated cell behavior in probiotic E. coli Nissle 1917
"A. M. Cimmins-Ahne", V. Mele, M. Kiel, H. Bähr, V. Kaevev, U. Dobrindt
1University of Muenster, Institute of Hygiene, Muenster, Germany
2Hannover Medical School, Research Core Unit Metabolomics, Hannover, Germany

INTRODUCTION
Escherichia coli Nissle 1917 (EcN) is an established probiotic, used in treatment of gastrointestinal infection and inflammation. In vivo biofilm formation is likely to promote EcN retention in the host, while motility aids in colonization. When grown on low salt agar plates at ambient temperature, E. coli strains feature a biofilm matrix built up of curli fimbiae and cellulose. At 37°C, the EcN biofilm matrix consists of cellulose only, while standard E. coli do not form biofilms. Of note, cellulose synthesis is independent of the transcriptional activator CsgD, otherwise considered as the master biofilm regulator. In EcN, only curli genes are expressed CsgD-dependently. Moreover, c-di-GMP necessary for allosteric activation of the cellulose synthase is not provided by AdrA (DgcC), but is from an unknown source.

OBJECTIVES
We want to understand the regulation behind the decision for motility or biofilm formation at 37°C in EcN and to identify the source of c-di-GMP required for activation of cellulose synthesis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Genomes of EcN strains were analyzed for variations among the c-di-GMP turnover proteins and biofilm related genes. Phenotypical analyses included motility assays in low agar plates, biofilm assay, and gene expression analyses. Intracellular c-di-GMP levels were determined by quantitative LC-MS/MS.

RESULTS
Genomic analysis of EcN wild type and spontaneously occurred EcN biofilm-defective mutants identified the dihyguanylate cyclase YegE (DgcE) as the likely c-di-GMP provider for activation of cellulose synthesis. Indeed, yegE::cat deletion strains were likewise incapable of forming biofilm. Additionally, these strains were highly motile. Analysis of nucleotide extracts demonstrated a low amount of c-di-GMP. Increased flagella expression was excluded by qRT-PCR testing for selected flagellar genes and immunodetection of flagellin subunits.

CONCLUSION
YegE (DgcE) is known to be part of the csgD regulation cascade in model E. coli strains. Surprisingly, unlike E. coli K-12ΔyegE, EcN ΔyegE is incapable of forming biofilm. Thus, YegE, and not CsgD, is the main regulator for the motility-sensitivity switch in probiotic EcN.

235-EPV
Molecular characterization of Giardia duodenalis
1Robert Koch-Institut, FG516 Parasitology, Berlin, Germany
2Robert Koch-Institut, FG35, Berlin, Germany
3Universitätsklinikum Düsseldorf, Gastroenterologie, Hepatologie und Infektiologie, Düsseldorf, Germany
4Laboratory Enders and Partners, Stuttgart, Germany
5LADR GmbH, Geesthacht, Germany
6Charité-Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Institute of Microbiology and Infection Immunology, Berlin, Germany
7Labor 28 GmbH, Berlin, Germany

Introduction and objectives: The eukaryotic parasite Giardia duodenalis causes diarrheal disease in humans worldwide and is an important public health concern. Eight distinct genetic groups (referred to as assemblage A-H) are known, of which only assemblage A and B appear to be pathogenic to humans and animals. This pilot project aimed at applying typing methods in order to identify and discriminate assemblages and sub-assemblages of G. duodenalis at the isolate level, an approach that is currently not standardized and routinely applied. Challenges for isolate identification include the tetraploid nature of the parasite, occurrence of
mixed infections and that these organisms are not culturable at a routine level.

Materials and methods: DNA of a collection of G. duodenalis positive human stool samples were extracted and the underlying assemblage types assigned by qPCR. Subsequently, G. duodenalis isolates were classified by multi locus sequence genotyping (MLST) schemes in order to test the typing resolution of these methods.

Results: More than 120 G. duodenalis positive samples were successfully typed at one or more loci. Approximately 60% belonged to assemblage B, 20% to assemblage A and 20% were mixed with A and B. A test typing data set containing sequences from isolates longitudinally sampled from individual patients and from isolates obtained from unrelated travel associated and autochthonous cases revealed that for assemblage A and B different MLST schemes are necessary to trace linked infections. It was also found that mixed infections interfere with successful isolate tracing.

Conclusion: Established MLST schemes may be of help to trace linked infections of G. duodenalis detected in fecal human samples. However, further improvements are necessary to identify and adequately type isolates in samples with (intra-assemblage) mixed infections.

236-EPV
A novel protein essential for unconventional secretion of chitinase Cts1 in Ustilago maydis
1M. Reindl¹, J. Stock¹, K. Hussnaaer², S. Wolf¹,², M. Feldbrügge², K. Schipper¹,²
¹Heinrich Heine University Duesseldorf, Institute for Microbiology, Duesseldorf, Germany
²Heinrich Heine University Duesseldorf, Duesseldorf, Germany

The chitinase Cts1 of the smut fungus U. maydis is secreted by a novel unconventional lock-type mechanism into the extracellular environment (1). During cytokinesis of yeast-like cells Cts1 accumulates in the small compartment, the fragmentation zone, that is formed between dividing mother and daughter cells (2). Together with a second chitinase, Cts2 supports the separation of the two cells by degrading the connecting cell wall. Up to date the exact mechanism of the transport into the fragmentation zone is poorly understood. In a UV mutagenesis screen for cells deficient in Cts1 secretion the gene jps1 was identified. Encoding a protein of 60 kDa and lacking characterized orthologues, Jps1 (Jammed in Protein Secretion Screen 1) strongly influences proper localization and secretion of Cts1 (Reindl and Stock, unpublished). Localisation studies showed that Jps1, like Cts1, localises to the fragmentation zone indicating interaction of the two proteins. Interestingly, localisation of Cts1 is dependent on Jps1 but not vice versa. A putative interaction was further supported by yeast two-hybrid experiments. Analysing truncated versions of Jps1 allowed to identify a 60 amino acid region close to its N-terminus which is important for localisation and secretion of Cts1 termed Cts1 localisation domain (CLD). The CLD is rich in basic amino acids and thus might also mediate lipid binding of Jps1. In line with that, lipid interaction studies using PIP strips indicated binding of Jps1 to different PtdInsPs which was abolished in absence of the CLD. Currently the lipid binding profile of Jps1 is under further investigation using giant unilamellar vesicles (GUV). We hypothesize that Jps1 might act as membrane anchoring factor for unconventional Cts1 secretion.

(1) Aschenbroich et al., (2018): The germinal centre kinase Don3 is crucial for unconventional secretion of chitinase Cts1 in Ustilago maydis. BBA- Proteins and Proteomics


237-EPV
Human serum albumin differentially modulates Candida-induced damage of vaginal epithelium on a species level
*1M. Pekmezovic¹, A. K. Kaune¹,², S. Austemeier², S. Mogavero², M. Gresnigt², B. Hube³
¹Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology – Hans Knöll Institute, Microbial Pathogenicity Mechanisms, Jena, Germany
²Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology - Hans-Knoell-Institute, Microbial Pathogenicity Mechanisms, Jena, Germany
³MRC Centre for Medical Mycology at University of Aberdeen, Institute of Medical Sciences, Foresterhill, Aberdeen, United Kingdom

Vulvovaginal candidiasis (VVC) affects 70-75% of women at least once in their lifetime. Although Candida albicans predominately causes VVC, the prevalence of other species, like C. glabrata, has increased. Despite the same genus name, these species differ not only phylogenetically, but also in terms of pathogenicity and their interactions with the host. C. albicans can grow in both yeast and hyphal form, causes a strong immune response and secretes the peptide toxin candidalysin (CaL) that causes epithelial damage. On the other hand, C. glabrata normally exists only as yeast, elicits a weak immune response, and has pathogenicity mechanisms that remain to be elucidated.

Human serum albumin (HSA) is the most abundant protein in cervico-vaginal secretions and previous reports indicated that its concentration changes during infection. Therefore, we aimed to investigate the influence of HSA on the outcome of Candida infection of vaginal epithelial cells.

Using an in vitro vaginal infection model, we assessed the adhesion, invasion, and damage properties of C. albicans and C. glabrata in the presence of HSA. Additionally, we investigated the influence of HSA on fungal growth, morphology, iron acquisition, and CaL-induced damage.

We observed that HSA reduced the adhesion, invasion, and damage capacity of C. albicans. Although HSA was growth-promoting, it increased pseudohyphae formation and neutralized CaL-induced damage. On the contrary, adhesion and epithelial damage by C. glabrata were significantly increased in the presence of HSA. C. glabrata growth was also increased, but only in the presence of host cells. Finally, we observed that HSA influenced iron availability to C. glabrata during infection, thus providing the fungus with a mechanism to avoid host iron restriction.

Collectively, these results show that HSA influences the VVC outcome differentially in species-dependent manner. Since both species are predominantly commensals on vaginal mucosa, we hypothesize that varying concentration of albumin may influence the commensal-to-pathogen shift and determine which Candida species would have more favorable conditions for causing the VVC.

238-EPV
Conidial melanin of the human pathogenic fungus

Aspergillus fumigatus disrupts cell autonomous defenses in amoebae

I. Ferling1,2, J. D. Dunn3, A. Ferling4, T. Soldati5, F. Hillmann6
1Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology Hans Knöll Institute (HKI), Evolution of Microbial Interactions, Jena, Germany
2Friedrich Schiller University, Jena, Germany
3University of Geneva, Department of Biochemistry, Geneva, Switzerland
4Technische Schule Heid-Tech, Heidenheim, Germany

The human pathogenic fungus Aspergillus fumigatus is a ubiquitous saprophyte that causes fatal infections in immunocompromised individuals. Following inhalation, conidia are ingested by innate immune cells and can arrest phagolysosome maturation. How such general virulence traits could have been selected for in natural environments is unknown. Here, we used the model amoeba Dictyostelium discoideum to follow the antagonistic interaction of A. fumigatus conidia with environmental phagocytes in real-time. We found that conidia covered with the green pigment 1,8-dihydroxynaphthalene-(DHN)-melanin were internalized at far lower rates when compared to those lacking the pigment, despite high rates of initial attachment. Immediately after uptake of the fungal conidia, nascent phagosomes were formed through sequential membrane fusion and fission events. Using single-cell assays supported by a computational model integrating the differential dynamics of internalization and phagolysosome maturation, we could show that acidification of phagolysosomes was transient and was followed by neutralization and, finally, exocytosis of the conidium. For unpigmented conidia, the cycle was completed in less than one hour, while the process was delayed for conidia covered with DHN-melanin. At later stages of infection, damage to infected phagocytes triggered the ESCRT membrane repair machinery, whose recruitment was also attenuated by DHN-melanin, favoring prolonged persistence and the establishment of an intracellular germination replication niche in this environmental phagocyte. Increased exposure of DHN-melanin on the conidial surface also improved fungal survival when confronted with the fungivorous predator Protostelium aurantium, demonstrating its universal anti-phagocytic properties.

239-EPV

The gut commensal Bacteroides vulgatus mpk reduces Candida albicans pathogenicity in vitro and in vivo

M. J. Niemiec1,2, I. Auge1, P. van Leeuwen1, F. Gorki1, A. Steinle3,4, M. Brügmann1, J. S. Frick1,1, I. D. Jacobsen1,2,5
1Center for Sepsis Control and Care, Jena, Germany
2Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection - Hans Knöll Institute, Research Group Microbial Immunology, Jena, Germany
3Luxembourg Institute of Health, Luxembourg, Luxembourg
4University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany
5Friedrich Schiller University, Jena, Germany

In this study we aimed to test the anaerobic commensal B. vulgatus mpk for its protective properties towards C. albicans pathogenicity in vitro and in vivo.

For this, we first cocultivated C. albicans and B. vulgatus mpk for several days under normoxic and hypoxic conditions. Here, we detected prolonged survival of Bacteroides upon presence of C. albicans.

Secondly, we infected enterocytes in vitro with B. vulgatus mpk prior to C. albicans infection and compared cell damage to Candida-only infections. While B. vulgatus mpk reduced enterocyte damage by C. albicans if added prior to or simultaneously to the host cells, delayed addition of B. vulgatus mpk could not mediate rescue of the enterocytes.

Finally, we co-challenged Caenorhabditis elegans with Candida and Bacteroides and could detect prolonged survival compared to Candida-only infected nematodes.

Currently, experiments identifying key mediators during B. vulgatus mpk-mediated host cell protection are ongoing. With this we aim to foster further understanding of the vital host-bacteria-fungi triangle.

240-FMV

Combining isothermal microcalorimetry and microbiological analytics for fast and reliable detection of microbial contaminations

C. Fricke1, H. Harms2, T. Maskow1
1 Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Department Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction

One of the most important challenges in quality control is the fast detection and quantification of microbial contaminations in water, food, and pharmaceuticals. Culture-based techniques like visual counting of colony-forming units (CFUs) are still considered as the standard in microbiological analytics. The key advantages are ease of operation, simple data evaluation and low costs. However, there are two main serious weaknesses, namely slow detection and subjective decisions when quantifying bacterial contaminations. To use the advantages of classical cultivation while at the same time reducing the weaknesses, isothermal microcalorimetry (IMC) can be used as a culture-based detection method in the area of microbiological analytics. We propose to replace the ey with a much more sensitive detector (Peitler-elements) in IMC since they can detect the smallest traces of heat, which occurred as a by-product of microbial growth and the signal is directly correlated with the numbers of active bacteria.

Methods

In our study, we investigated the practicability of cultivation techniques in the context of IMC measurements using Lactobacillus plantarum 17-5 and Pseudomonas putida mt-2 KT2440 as model bacteria for an anaerobic and aerobic system, respectively. For this reason, we have monitored bacterial growth on solid and liquid culture (SC and LC) media using IMC. We compared the results by visual inspection of CFU-counting and turbidity measurements.

Results

Our results demonstrate that IMC monitoring provides reduced detection time in both SC and LC. Also, the use of
classical enrichment methods such as membrane filtration offers another possibility to shorten the detection time. By using a simple physical model, we can estimate the number of contaminating bacteria using the first appearance of the thermal signal regardless of the cultivation technique used.

Conclusion

Our study provides valuable information for the development of IMC as an early warning system for bacterial contaminations and might be incorporated into standardized protocols in microbiological analytics.

Reference


241-FMV

Repeated microwave sanitization adversely alters the genetic potential of the kitchen sponge microbiome

*S. Jacksch*, J. Thota, M. Eger

Institute of Precision Medicine / Furtwangen University, Villingen-Schwenningen, Germany

Background: Used kitchen sponges massively absorb and spread microorganisms, leading to microbial contaminations of kitchen surfaces and food [1,2]. Quick microwaving is a widely used technique to achieve a short-term reduction of the microbial load in kitchen sponges. However, long-term effects of microwaving on microbiome structure and functionality are largely unknown, although it has been speculated that sanitizing and cleaning treatments might select for potential pathogens and/or malodor producers [1].

Methods: Newly purchased domestic polyurethane kitchen sponges were distributed to 20 study participants. Each participant was instructed to use the sponge under normal household conditions for a period of ~ 4 weeks. Ten participants were asked to clean their sponges regularly by microwaving, while the remaining ten sponges remained uncleaned. After DNA extraction and Illumina MiSeq-based shotgun sequencing, all data were uploaded to MG-RAST for taxonomic and functional annotation.

Results: Sequence evaluation indicated a relative dominance of the domain of Bacteria (97%). The remaining sequences were assigned to viruses, eukaryotes and archaea. A comparison of sanitized and untreated kitchen sponges indicated a trend towards a reduced microbial diversity in regularly microwaved sponges. Microwaved sponge samples also showed higher shares of bacterial genera with a pathogenic potential, such as Acinetobacter. Furthermore, regular microwaving significantly influenced the functional properties encoded in the kitchen sponge community, such as sulfur and cell wall/capsule metabolism.

Conclusions: Microwave sanitization alters community composition and metabolic properties of microbial communities in used kitchen sponges. Clearly, further work is needed to elucidate in more detail what this means in terms of kitchen hygiene. Nevertheless, our data seem to confirm previous assumptions [1] that typical domestic sanitization strategies might alter domestic microbial communities in way that is rather negative for human health and well-being.


242-FMV

Effect of wash water additives on the microbial and sensory quality of curly parsley

S. Nübling, F. Hägle, R. M. Schweiggert, R. Carle, H. Schmidt

University of Hohenheim, Department of Food Microbiology and Hygiene, Stuttgart, Germany

University of Hohenheim, Chair of Plant Foodstuff Technology and Analysis, Stuttgart, Germany

King Abdulaziz University, Biological Science Department, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Introduction: Curly parsley (Petroselinum crispum var. crispum) is a widely used culinary herb and is mainly consumed raw. Due to its cultivation conditions and its leaf structure it contains high counts of autochthonous microbiota, which may include pathogens. The washing of leaves prior to freezing is the only step during processing for the reduction of the viable counts. Globally, water supplemented with chlorine is applied, though this might result in the formation of off-flavors and carcinogenic halogenated by-products such as trihalomethanes and chloramines.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to evaluate the impact of N-lauroyl-L-arginine ethyl ester (LAE) and lactic acid as safe alternative wash water additives in comparison to chlorine in curly parsley processing on pre-industrial scale and to assess selected quality parameters throughout deep-frozen storage.

Materials & Methods: Curly parsley was washed in cold (6°C) or warm tap water (45°C), as well as in cold tap water containing 100 mg/L LAE, 4 g/L lactic acid or 200 mg/L chlorine. Parsley without washing was used as a control. Total aerobic mesophilic bacterial viable counts (Standard I agar), *Pseudomonas* spp. (Glutamate starch phenol red agar) and *Enterobacteriaceae* (Violet red bile dextrose agar) viable counts were determined of fresh products and after deep-frozen storage for up to nine months. Dry matter contents, chlorophylls, β-carotene levels, as well as nitrate and nitrite contents were determined throughout the storage. After six months, selected sensory quality attributes were evaluated.

Results: LAE reduced total viable counts, *Pseudomonas* spp., and *Enterobacteriaceae* by more than 2.0 log10 cfu/g, while lactic acid was effective against *Enterobacteriaceae*. Chlorophylls and β-carotene were best retained in parsley washed with LAE, while insignificant differences for nitrate contents and lipoxygenase activities between the different treatments were found. Flavor was best for lactic acid treated parsley.

Conclusion: LAE and lactic acid showed equal performance to chlorine in decreasing viable counts and are therefore a safe alternative for curly parsley processing.

243-FMV

Time-dependent variation of biofilm community composition on stainless steel surfaces in milking machine

M. Weber, A. Lipski

Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, IEL - Abteilung Lebensmittel mikrobiologie und -hygiene, Bonn, Germany

Microbial biofilms in milking machines pose a massive threat to milk quality and safety as well as to udder health. Elevated production of heat resistant lipases and proteases in milking
machine biofilms can adversely affect milk quality, even after pasteurization.

As the risk potential of milking machine biofilms is strongly dependent on the community composition of its inhabitants, we aimed to retrace the process of biofilm formation on stainless steel coupons exposed in a milking machine during ongoing operation. We examined exposure time-dependent variations in surface colonization and community composition of biofilms by a combination of culture-dependent and -independent methods. These included cultivation on different selective and non-selective agar media as well as direct DNA-extraction for clone library generation and fluorescence-in-situ-hybridization (FISH). Isolates were characterized for biofilm formation on various surface materials and under different environmental conditions relevant to the dairy industry. This also includes analyses of combinations of isolates to detect cooperative or synergistic interactions regarding spoilage potential and biofilm formation. In contrast to the static character of swab samplings, this study is the first one to characterize the time-dependent dynamics of milking machine biofilms under real operating conditions. This approach also involves the analysis of mixed cultures, which is more representative for the natural ecology of dairy biofilms.

244-FMV
Reevaluation of decontamination strategies against Campylobacter jejuni and ESBL-producing Escherichia coli on chicken skin by viability qPCR

1German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), National Reference Laboratory for Campylobacter, Department of Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany
2German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), National Reference Laboratory for Escherichia coli including verotoxin-producing E. coli, Department of Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany

1. Introduction

Campylobacter and Escherichia coli are classical fecal contaminants along the poultry production chain with serious implications for human health.

2. Objectives

Viability of bacteria is commonly quantified by their capacity to form a colony on an agar plate (CFU). Upon stress exposure bacteria might cease cell division while potentially remaining infective. We developed a viability real-time PCR (qPCR) for the culture-independent quantification of living E. coli. The novel qPCR was applied in combination with our previously developed viability qPCR for thermophilic Campylobacter to reevaluate decontamination strategies based on intact and putatively infectious units (IPIU).

3. Methods

We reevaluated decontamination in a practice-oriented chicken skin model with dual spiking of an ESBL-producing E. coli and a C. jejuni strain. We applied lactic acid (LA, 1% and 5%, 3 min), peracetic acid (PAA, 0.5%, 3 min) and freezing at -25°C for 3 days up to 3 weeks. Intact bacteria were quantified by qPCR directly after treatment or after storage of the chicken skin for up to 3 weeks at 4°C. In parallel, CFU were determined on selective agar.

4. Results

The E. coli uidA-based viability qPCR was designed and validated on 146 E. coli Shigella strains, including 22 β-glucuronidase negative isolates and on exclusivity strains such as E. albertii, E. hermannii and E. fergusoni. The qPCR was proven specific and viable/dead differentiation was shown to be detectable at an at least 3 log10 ratio of artificially killed versus viable E. coli using the internal sample process control developed for the thermophilic Campylobacter qPCR.

Surprisingly, the decontamination strategies comparably affected both species. PAA caused an immediate consistent loss of CFU and intact cells. LA, in contrast, led to an immediate concentration-dependent loss of CFU, but only to a minor reduction in the number of intact cells. Over a period of 3 weeks, LA-treated cells lost cell membrane integrity more rapidly than untreated cells. In addition, reduction of CFU by freezing appeared to overestimate the loss of viability, quantified by the viability qPCRs for both pathogens.

5. Conclusion

The comparative data for CFU and IPIU will enhance safety evaluations and the choice of most effective reduction strategies against fecal pathogens along the food chain.

245-FMV
Effect of calcium on specific genes of the proteolytic system of Lactococcus lactis starter strains

*B. Forler, A. Weiß, H. Schmidt
1University of Hohenheim, Department of Food Microbiology and Hygiene, Stuttgart, Germany

Introduction: The proteolytic system of dairy Lactococcus lactis strains enables them to cleave the milk protein casein into oligopeptides, which are subsequently transported into the cytoplasm and metabolized. The most important components of the proteolytic system are the cell envelope proteinase PrtP, the oligopeptide permease system Opp, and the transcriptional regulator CodY. The calcium contained in milk is hypothesized to affect the regulation of the prtP gene and thus to contribute to an increased release of peptides, some of which confer a bitter taste to calcium enriched fermented products.

Objectives: The aim of this work is to analyze the transcriptional patterns of the genes prtP, oppA and codY of Lactococcus lactis starter culture isolates during the metabolism of caseins by quantitative real-time PCR.

Materials and Methods: A L. lactis ssp. cremoris and a L. lactis ssp. lactis strain were cultured in a milk-citrate broth with and without 50 mM CaCl2. Samples were taken after 5 h and 7 h and total RNA was isolated. The RNA was then transcribed into cDNA and the gene copy numbers were determined with external plasmid standards in a quantitative real-time PCR assay.

Results: The activity of the genes prtP, oppA and codY was highest after 5 h and then decreased. The addition of calcium significantly reduced the transcription of all three genes after 5 h and 7 h. The strongest effect was observed after 7 h, whereby oppA was the most strongly downregulated and codY the weakest downregulated gene.

Conclusion: The results of the study showed that the transcription of prtP, oppA and codY were significantly
reduced under high calcium conditions. It needs to be investigated how this contributes to the increased bitterness of fermented dairy products.

**246-FMV**

**Typing of Salmonella enterica by Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) Spectroscopy**

1. M. Cordovana, N. Mauder, S. Pongolini, L. Soliani, S. Ambretti, M. Kostrzewa
2. University Hospital Policlinico Sant’Orsola-Malpighi of Bologna, Microbiology, Bologna, Italy
3. Bruker Daltonik GmbH, Bremen, Germany
4. Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia e dell’Emilia-Romagna, Risk Analysis and Genomic Epidemiology Unit, Parma, Italy
5. University Hospital of Bologna Policlinico Sant’Orsola-Malpighi, Microbiology, Bologna, Italy
6. Bruker Daltonik GmbH, Bremen, Germany

**Background**

*Salmonella enterica* is one of the leading cause of foodborne diseases worldwide, and represents a major public health burden. Differentiation of *S. enterica* at intra-species level is crucial, for the epidemiological investigation and to control foodborne outbreaks, but also from the clinical point of view (typhoid/non typhoid serovars). Several methods are widely used for this purpose (serotyping, phage typing, molecular methods), but they all are laborious and cost-intensive. In this study, we investigated the discriminatory power of the Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy for *S. enterica* typing, in comparison with classical serotyping methods based on somatic and flagellar antigens.

**Methods**

A total of 128 well charasterized clinical, foodborne, veterinary and environmental *S. enterica* isolates (belonging to 19 different serogroups), were analysed by the IR Biotype system (IRBT - Bruker Daltonik). Infrared absorption spectra were acquired in transmission mode from a bacterial suspension in water/ethanol, placed in three technical replicates on a silicon sample plate, and let air dry.

Using the IRBT software, spectra relation within a wavenumber range from 1300 to 800/cm was analysed applying hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) with Euclidean metric and single linkage.

**Results**

Congruence of IR Biotype HCA and O-serogroups was evaluated with adjusted Wallace algorithm, indicating that IRBT can predict the O serogroup with 95% accuracy. The 19 different serogroups were clustered separately with a threshold set at 0.20. In addition, at a lower threshold, further intra-serogroup clustering was possible for some serotypes (among them particularly relevant was the separation of *S. Typhi* from the other O:9 serotypes).

**Conclusion**

IR Biotype enabled an accurate discrimination of *Salmonella enterica* isolates at serogroup level, and in some case also at serotype level (*S. Typhi* from other group D serovars, monophasic variant of *S. Typhimurium* within group B). This technique proved to be a reliable, fast, high throughput and low-cost alternative typing methodology, suitable for epidemiological investigations in routine microbiology laboratories.

**247-FMV**

**Plasma Treated Water: From lab to prototype for fresh food safety**

1. U. Schnabel1,2, J. Stachowiak1, P. Bourke2, J. Ehbeek1
2. Leibniz Institute for Plasma Science and Technology, Plasma LifeScience, Greifswald, Germany
3. Technological University Dublin, 2Environmental Sustainability & Health Institute (ESHI), Dublin, Ireland

Fresh-cut produce like lettuce may contain a very high microbial load, including human pathogens. Therefore, the need for antimicrobial agents at post-harvest stages to prevent microbial growth is evident.

Sanitation steps based on non-thermal plasma opens up innovative food processing possibilities by application at different points along the food chain; for production, modification, and preservation, as well as in packaging of plant- and animal-originated food.

Plasma differs from the gaseous state of matter by a certain amount of free charge carriers caused by ionization processes of the gas atoms and molecules due to the supply of energy.

This talk describes innovations resulting in a pilot scale fresh produce processing system based on plasma treated water. The primary focus was on antimicrobial efficacy in line with the importance of food safety to the fresh produce processing sector. The treatment of natural products with changing parameters (size, surface, water content) is challenging for the design and optimization of plasma processes. To overcome these challenges, a specific plasma process based on microwave plasma operated with compressed air was established to deliver plasma processed air (PPA) as the antimicrobial agent to process water. This served to functionalize the water (PTW) with antimicrobial properties.

To successfully scale up the application, an understanding of the antimicrobial properties, the chemical composition of PTW and the food quality characteristics of color and texture was developed. The optimized PTW production and decontamination process was implemented into pilot-plant scale lettuce-washing thus demonstrating the industrial scalability and applicability.

**248-ZHYV**

**Independent bioinformatics methods in bacterial genomics: Clustering Francisella tularensis isolates reveals old structures in a new light**

1. T. Homeier-Bachmann1,2, A. Busch1,2, M. Abdel-Gill3, A. Hackbart1, H. Hotzel1, H. Tomaso2
2. Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, IE, Riems, Germany
3. University Hospital KAT, Jena, Germany
4. Friedrich-Loeffler-Institute, IBLZ, Jena, Germany

**Introduction**

*Francisella tularensis* is the causative agent of the zoonotic disease tularemia and is a highly virulent, Gram-negative bacterial pathogen. Human infection occurs through infected blood-feeding arthropods or by ingestion or inhalation. *Francisella tularensis* is listed as a category A bioterrorism agent because the infectious dose is very low and the
resulting febrile disease may be severe to fatal. The two subspecies *Francisella tularensis* subsp. *tularensis* and *Francisella tularensis* subsp. *holarctica* are the major causes of tularemia in humans. Only the less pathogenic *Francisella tularensis* subsp. *holarctica* is endemic in Europe. It appears to be re-emerging in Germany and underestimated.

**Objectives**

We wanted to develop a genotyping and subsequent clustering strategy for *Francisella tularensis* for diagnostic purposes. For that more than 150 whole-genome sequences of *Francisella tularensis* subsp. *holarctica* isolates isolated in the years 2008–2018 in Germany were generated.

**Materials & methods**

We sequenced a comprehensive panel of German isolates and applied optimized quality and assembly strategies. We chose open source, reference independent methods to optimize the level of discrimination. Using a recently described clustering algorithm, we exploit a novel approach to the clustering of bacteria. APC is preferable to others for assigning clades and can be used for rapidly typing strains when they arise. We compared that to the more commonly used like HierBAPS.

**Results**

By combining a reference-independent SNP analysis and ANI (average nucleotide identity) with affinity propagation clustering (APC), we developed a significantly improved methodology allowing resolving phylogenetic relationships, based on objective criteria.

**Conclusion**

These bioinformatics tools can be used as a general ruler to determine phylogenetic relationships and clustering of bacteria, exemplary done here with *Francisella tularensis*. This can be applied on whole genomes of other bacteria. This should allow the rapid risk assessment in the setting of epidemics and outbreaks.

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<td>&quot;CoxBase&quot; – a unique interactive genotyping database for Q fever (Coxiella burnetii)</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Frangoulidis1, M. C. Walter1, T. Dandekar2, A. Heliβich1, K. Förstner3, M. Fasemore3,4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology, München, Germany</td>
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<td>2University of Würzburg, Würzburg, Germany</td>
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<td>3TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences, ZBMed, Cologne, Germany</td>
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The Q fever German Interdisciplinary program for research (Q-GAPS) has committed itself to investigate unsolved questions relating to the epidemiology, immunology, pathogenesis, surveillance and control of *Coxiella burnetii*, the pathogen of Q fever while striving towards attainment of the “One Health” concept.

In our sub-project "Genomic and internet based analysis of Coxiella burnetii" we aim at a modern approach of active surveillance, research and joint data integration on the causative agent of Q fever, *C. burnetii*. Currently we are conducting the integration of strain typing data from *C. burnetii* into an interactive and publicly available online information platform named "CoxBase" which offers quick retrieval and phylogenetic analysis. Data from newly sequenced strains as well as information about typing results, like tandem repeats suitable for MLVA analysis, Multi Spacer Typing (MST) and SNP-based characterization, will be provided. In-silico typing from newly generated whole genome sequences is another feature to support genomic surveillance. CoxBase is an online platform designed to be capable of presenting metadata with meaningful visual context usable on all existing internet-capable devices ("responsive design" including mobile phones). The platform will also provide evolutionary tree drawing functions to aid researches in tracing samples of similar origins as well as spatial links to geographic maps that pinpoint exact location of isolates. CoxBase is being designed to be a unique tool in the future for all molecular epidemiological and surveillance work and analysis in Q fever.

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<td>Vitamin C alleviates acute enterocolitis in Campylobacter jejuni infected mice</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. Mousavi1, E. Thunhorst2, S. Kitter2, S. Bereswill1, “M. M. Heimesaat”1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1Charité - University Medicine Berlin, Institute of Microbiology, Infectious Diseases and Immunology, Berlin, Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>2University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Institute for Food Quality and Food Safety, Hannover, Germany</td>
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Human foodborne infections with the zoonotic pathogen *Campylobacter jejuni* are on the rise and constitute a significant socioeconomic burden worldwide. The health-beneficial, particularly anti-inflammatory effects of vitamin C (ascorbate) are well known. In our actual preclinical intervention study, we assessed potential anti-pathogenic and immunomodulatory effects of ascorbate in *C. jejuni*-infected secondary abiotic IL-10/-/- mice developing acute campylobacteriosis similar to humans. Starting 4 days prior peroral *C. jejuni*-infected mice received synthetic ascorbate via the drinking water. At day 6 post-infection, ascorbate-treated mice harbored slightly lower colonic pathogen loads and suffered from less severe *C. jejuni*-induced enterocolitis as compared to placebo control animals. Ascorbate treatment did not only alleviate macroscopic sequelae of infection, but also dampened apoptotic and inflammatory immune cell responses in the intestines that were accompanied by less pronounced pro-inflammatory cytokine secretion, whereas cell regenerative measures were promoted. Remarkably, the anti-inflammatory effects of ascorbate pretreatment in *C. jejuni*-infected mice were not restricted to the intestinal tract, but could also be observed in extra-intestinal compartments including liver, kidneys and lungs. In conclusion, due to the potent anti-inflammatory effects observed in the clinical murine *C. jejuni*-infection model, ascorbate constitutes a promising novel option for prophylaxis and treatment of acute campylobacteriosis.

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<tr>
<td>Risk Factors for Anti-Hantavirus and Anti-Leptospira-Seropositivity amongst Forestry Workers in Lower Saxony, Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Klier1, C. Princk1, M. Mylius1, K. Meyer-Schlinkmann2, S. Schmitz1, M. Monazahian1, A. Bailot1, S. Rettenbacher-Riefier1, J. Dreessen1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Niedersächsisches Landesgesundheitsamt, Hannover, Germany</td>
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**Introduction:**

Hantavirus-infections and Leptospirosis are rodent-borne zoonotic diseases, causing mild to severe clinical manifestations. In Germany laboratory diagnosis of these
pathogens and Hantavirus-related haemorrhagic symptoms are subject to mandatory reporting.

To learn more about both the prevalence of these pathogens and the disease-associated risk factors, we conducted a study among an at-risk group of forestry workers (FW) in Lower-Saxony (LS).

Method:

Sera sampled in 2016 among FW in LS, Germany, were screened for both anti-Hantavirus (H) IgG and anti-Leptospira (L) IgG according to manufacturer recommendations. Data on demographics, potential risk-factors and applied preventive measures were collected by standardized questionnaire. Data were analysed by univariate and multivariate logistic regression analysis using Stata.

Result:

In total 883 FW (789 male, 94 female), age 18 to 67 years (ys) participated. 7.5% of sera were H-positive and 4.8% L-positive, respectively. H-seropositivity was highest in age group 35 – 49 ys. L-seropositivity increased with age reaching 7.5 % in age group 65+ ys. One H-seropositive FW (of n=866) recalled earlier clinical diagnosis of Hantavirus-infection; none of the L-positive FW (n=42) recalled diagnosis of Leptospirosis.

A subset of 601 FW (89.4% male, 10.6 % female, median age 53ys) answered the questionnaire. Seropositivity was higher in male than female FW (p= 0.04).

Preliminary analysis revealed that working in the office (p=0.013) and taking precautions when handling rodents (p=0.02) are protective against H-seropositivity, whereas handling wood (p=0.09) is associated with H-seropositivity. So far no specific risk factor associated with L-seropositivity could be identified in this at-risk group of FW. Further results will be presented.

Conclusion:

H- and L-Seroprevalences are within the average of other studies among FW. Findings indicate that there is missing awareness of both Hantavirus-infections and Leptospirosis, leading to underreporting. Results will be used to develop and implement measures to increase awareness towards these pathogens and concomitant infections amongst practitioners, at-risk groups and the public.

One of the most demanding challenges in infection control is the world-wide dissemination of multidrug-resistant bacteria in clinical settings. Especially the increasing prevalence of carbapenemase producing Gram-negative pathogens poses an urgent threat to public health, as these enzymes confer resistance to almost all β-lactam antibiotics including carbapenems.

Objectives

In this study, we report a prolonged nosocomial outbreak of various NDM-1-producing Enterobacterales species due to clonal spread and cross-species exchange of blaNDM-1 carrying plasmids and transposons.

Methods

Between July 2015 and September 2017, a total of 51 carbapenem-positive strains were collected from 38 patients and three environmental sources in a German hospital. To investigate the clonal relationship and involved mechanisms of blaNDM-1 gene transfer, conjugation assays, molecular typing and whole genome sequence analyses were performed.

Results

The metallo-β-lactamase gene blaNDM-1 was found to be present in 35 of 51 isolates of which seven additionally carried the carbapenemase gene blaKPC-2. KPC-2 could also be detected within 16 NDM-1 negative isolates. Core genome MLST revealed different clusters of closely related isolates of E. coli, K. pneumoniae, C. freundii, M. morganii or E. cloacae indicating clonal spread of NDM-1 producing bacteria. The detailed reconstruction of plasmids revealed that in all outbreak-associated isolates blaNDM-1 was located on composite transposons similar to Tn125, that was previously described for Acinetobacter baumannii. In contrast to Tn125, these structures were flanked by IS26 elements, which could facilitate horizontal gene transfer. Moreover, identical plasmids were found to be shared by E. coli and M. morganii isolates.

Conclusion

Our results highlight the importance of detailed genome-based analyses for resolving complex nosocomial outbreaks that include both, clonal spread of MDR pathogens and inter-species resistance gene transfer. It remains to be elucidated if standard infection prevention precautions are as effective for preventing horizontal resistance spread as it is for controlling clonal dissemination of pathogens.

252-ZHYV

IS26-mediated transfer of blaNDM-1 as the main route of resistance transmission during a polyclonal, multispecies outbreak in a German hospital

Introduction

253-ZHYV

Mutations of resistance-nodulation-cell division efflux pump regulators in tigecycline-resistant Acinetobacter baumannii observed in a worldwide surveillance study

Conclusion
Question: Previously, tigecycline resistance in Acinetobacter baumannii isolates from Southern Europe was found to be associated with mutations in resistance-nodulation-cell division (RND)-type efflux pump regulatory genes [1]. These mutations alter their regulatory function by inducing increased efflux pump expression. The objective of this study was to investigate the prevalence of alterations of these regulators among clinical isolates from a worldwide surveillance study.

Methods: 317 isolates were collected as part of the Tigecycline Evaluation Surveillance Trail 2012 and 2016 from 89 centres worldwide. TGC resistance was determined by broth microdilution using the EUCAST breakpoint for Enterobacteriales (> 0.5 mg/L). Whole-genome sequencing was performed by Illumina MiSeq. RND-type efflux pump regulators adeRS, adeN and adeL were compared to TGC susceptible A. baumannii isolates. In silico detection of resistance genes and insertion sequences was performed using ResFinder and IS-Mapper.

Results: In this study 32 TGC-resistant isolates from North and Central America (n=8), South America (n=2), Asia (n=16), and Europe (n=6) were included, within which regulatory gene disruption by ISAba1 was found in adeN and adeS. In addition, premature stop codons in adeN caused by nucleotide insertions, deletions, or substitutions were detected. These mutations were found in European, Asian, and in American isolates. Furthermore, for every investigated regulator amino acid substitutions were found. The previously identified substitutions D21V and D26N in adeS were also identified in Southern Europe (Greece, Spain) in the present study. No strain investigated in this study carried the TGC resistance determinant tet(x).

Conclusions: In most TGC-resistant isolates disruption, truncation, or amino acid substitutions of RND-type efflux pump regulatory genes were found. The present surveillance study shows that these mutations can be found worldwide. Contrary to this, various amino acid substitutions were hitherto only identified in European isolates.


254-ZHYV

Transmission Surveillance of Multi-drug Resistant (MDR- ) Escherichia coli Using Fourier-Transform Infrared (FTIR) Spectroscopy and Whole Genome Sequencing as Strain Typing Methods

S. Görttij, D. Frankj, E. Mungoi, A. Noltej, M. Hogardti, S. Besierii, T. A. Wicchelhausi 1

1University Hospital Tübingen, Institute of Medical Microbiology and Infection Control, Tübingen, Germany

Introduction: Klebsiella pneumoniae carbapenemase (KPC) is the most prevalent class A serine β-lactamase conferring carbapenem resistance worldwide. Inhibition of β-lactamases is a well-established aid in order to restore the bacterial activity of common β-lactam antibiotics against multidrug-resistant Gram-negative pathogens. Avibactam, the first diazabicyclooctane β-lactamase inhibitor in clinical use, is unique in the sense that in combination with ceftazidime it not only overcomes extended spectrum β-lactamase but also KPC mediated resistance.

Objectives: We present molecular and phenotypic characterization of ceftazidime/avibactam resistance in KPC-3 producing K. pneumoniae that emerged in vivo and in vitro.

Materials & Methods: Sequence analysis of blaKPC-3 was performed from clinical and in vitro generated ceftazidime/avibactam-resistant K. pneumoniae isolates. Time-kill kinetics and the Galleria mellonella infection model were applied to evaluate the activity of ceftazidime/avibactam and imipenem alone and in combination.

Results: The ceftazidime/avibactam-resistant clinical K. pneumoniae isolate revealed the amino acid change D179Y in KPC-3. Sixteen novel mutational changes in KPC-3 among in vitro selected ceftazidime/avibactam-resistant isolates could be described. Time-kill kinetics showed the emergence of resistant subpopulation under selection pressure with either imipenem or ceftazidime/avibactam. However, combined selection pressure with imipenem plus ceftazidime/avibactam prevented resistance development and resulted in a bactericidal activity. Concordantly, the Galleria mellonella infection model revealed that monotherapy with ceftazidime/avibactam is prone to select for resistance in vivo and that combination therapy with imipenem displays a significant better survival.

Conclusions: Ceftazidime/avibactam is a valuable antibiotic against multidrug- and carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales. Based on time kill kinetics as well as in vivo infection model we postulate a combination therapy of ceftazidime/avibactam and imipenem as a strategy to prevent ceftazidime/avibactam resistance development in KPC producing Enterobacterales in vivo.

255-ZHYV

Emergence of ceftazidime/avibactam resistance in KPC-3 producing Klebsiella pneumoniae in vivo

S. Görtti, D. Franki, E. Mungoi, A. Noltej, M. Hogardti, S. Besierii, T. A. Wicchelhausi

Introduction: Klebsiella pneumoniae carbapenemase (KPC) is the most prevalent class A serine β-lactamase conferring carbapenem resistance worldwide. Inhibition of β-lactamases is a well-established aid in order to restore the bacterial activity of common β-lactam antibiotics against multidrug-resistant Gram-negative pathogens. Avibactam, the first diazabicyclooctane β-lactamase inhibitor in clinical use, is unique in the sense that in combination with ceftazidime it not only overcomes extended spectrum β-lactamase but also KPC mediated resistance.

Objectives: We present molecular and phenotypic characterization of ceftazidime/avibactam resistance in KPC-3 producing K. pneumoniae that emerged in vivo and in vitro.

Materials & Methods: Sequence analysis of blaKPC-3 was performed from clinical and in vitro generated ceftazidime/avibactam-resistant K. pneumoniae isolates. Time-kill kinetics and the Galleria mellonella infection model were applied to evaluate the activity of ceftazidime/avibactam and imipenem alone and in combination.

Results: The ceftazidime/avibactam-resistant clinical K. pneumoniae isolate revealed the amino acid change D179Y in KPC-3. Sixteen novel mutational changes in KPC-3 among in vitro selected ceftazidime/avibactam-resistant isolates could be described. Time-kill kinetics showed the emergence of resistant subpopulation under selection pressure with either imipenem or ceftazidime/avibactam. However, combined selection pressure with imipenem plus ceftazidime/avibactam prevented resistance development and resulted in a bactericidal activity. Concordantly, the Galleria mellonella infection model revealed that monotherapy with ceftazidime/avibactam is prone to select for resistance in vivo and that combination therapy with imipenem displays a significant better survival.

Conclusions: Ceftazidime/avibactam is a valuable antibiotic against multidrug- and carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales. Based on time kill kinetics as well as in vivo infection model we postulate a combination therapy of ceftazidime/avibactam and imipenem as a strategy to prevent ceftazidime/avibactam resistance development in KPC producing Enterobacterales in vivo.

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Transmission Surveillance of Multi-drug Resistant (MDR- ) Escherichia coli Using Fourier-Transform Infrared (FTIR) Spectroscopy and Whole Genome Sequencing as Strain Typing Methods

S. Görtti, D. Franki, E. Mungoi, A. Noltej, M. Hogardti, S. Besierii, T. A. Wicchelhausi

1University Hospital Tübingen, Institute of Medical Microbiology and Infection Control, Tübingen, Germany

2German Center for Infection Research (DZIF), partner site Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany

Background: Escherichia (E.) coli is one of the most common pathogens involved in nosocomial infections. The spread of multi-drug resistant (MDR) strains in the community and within hospitals is a major concern because of limited treatment options. However, the amount of transmission of MDR E. coli occurring in the hospital is debated. Highly precise typing tools are therefore needed, which determine the relationship of two isolates to confirm or exclude a transmission event.

Objective: The aim of the study was to determine transmission events in our hospital. Also, Fourier transform infra-red (FTIR) spectroscopy was evaluated as a strain typing method in comparison to a whole genome sequencing (WGS) approach for typing E. coli.

Material and Methods: Possible transmission events were identified retrospectively over a one-year period by overlaying hospital room occupancy data and routine microbiology results. Only E. coli isolates that were MDR according to the MRGN classification were included. All isolates were analyzed by FTIR spectroscopy and whole genome sequencing (followed by multi-locus sequence type (MLST) extraction and the construction of a SNP based phylogeny) to determine their phenotypic and genetic relationship.
Results: 109 E. coli isolates were analyzed that belonged to 97 possible (sometimes bi-directional) transmission events involving 101 patients. Phylogenetic analysis revealed a very diverse strain distribution comprising 23 sequence types and 89 SNP-based clusters, which included 76 singletons. Only 7 (7.2 %) transmission events could be confirmed by WGS-based strain typing. FTIR spectroscopy had a low sensitivity for identifying related isolates but exhibited a high negative predictive value. Clustering of isolate spectra showed moderate concordance with the sequence type and SNP-based phylogeny.

Conclusion:

Most putative transmissions of MDR E. coli in our hospital were not confirmed, when molecular methods were applied to compare the isolates. FTIR spectroscopy had limitations when determining the relationship of isolate pairs in this endemic and highly diverse setting.

256-EMV

Bacterial N and P Cycle in Biological Soil Crusts of Temperate Forests of Germany

1J. Kurth1,2, M. Albrecht3, U. Karsten3, S. Kublik3, M. Schlöter1,3, S. Schulz2
1Technical University Munich, Science Center Weihenstephan, Department of Ecology and Ecosystem Management, Chair of Soil Science, Freising, Germany
2Helmholtz Center Munich, Research Unit Comparative Microbiome Analyses, Munich, Germany
3University of Rostock, Applied Ecology & Phycology, Rostock, Germany

Soil phosphorus (P) pools are strongly driven by microbial activities and vice versa. P pools shape bacterial communities and their functional potential. Biological soil crusts (biocrusts) represent a microbial hotspot for nutrient turnover. Microbes strive to maintain a stable intracellular nutrient budget. We hypothesize that the microbial potential of a higher P turnover in biocrusts depends on the initial P content as well as acquisition and mobilization of other nutrients like nitrogen (N). Consequently, we expect different abundance patterns of bacteria involved in P and N cycles in biocrusts compared to respective parent materials. This was tested by quantifying bacterial genes coding for proteins catalyzing P mineralization (phoD, phnX), solubilization (pgd) and uptake (pstS and pitA) as well as N mineralization (chiA, apr) and fixation (nifH) by using qPCR and relating the obtained data to stable and labile P and N pools. We compared biocrusts and bare soil of temperate beech (Fagus sylvatica L.) forests representing a gradient in soil texture, nutrient contents, and pH levels. As postulated, our data indicate an increase in relative abundance of bacteria involved in P turnover in biocrusts. This was accompanied by higher labile P contents in biocrusts, especially at sites where total P pools were low. However, the strategy to acquire P differed between the sites. For example, the bacteria harboring the pstS gene, which is induced under P starvation, were most abundant in biocrusts at the site with the lowest labile P content. In contrast, the site with lowest total P contents has a higher potential to utilize more stable phosphonates compared to phosphomonesters as indicated by higher abundance of phnX compared to phoD. N mineralization was strongly correlated to P turnover when both labile N and P pools were increased. Interestingly, the abundance of nifH was highest in the bare soil where total P contents were highest. Even though the correlation of N and P turnover is strongest if their availability is comparable, the acquisition strategy strongly depends on soil properties.

257-EMV

A bacterial isolate from the Black Sea oxidizes sulfide with manganese(IV) oxide

1J. Henkel1, O. Dellwig1, F. Pollehne1, D. Herlemann1,2, T. Leipe1, H. Schulz-Vogl1
1Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde (IOW), biological oceanography, Rostock, Germany
2Estonian University of Life Sciences, Centre for Limnology, Vehendi Village, Estonia

Bacterial oxidation of sulfide (H2S) with manganese oxide (MnO2) in suboxic waters of the Black Sea was investigated since the 1980s, where H2S oxidation could not be attributed to either O2, NO3 or light [1,2]. Even though isolation attempts at that time have failed [3], it was still a highly suggested energy metabolism in redox transition environments of water columns and sediments [e.g. 4]. We were now able to isolate a bacterial strain from the Black Sea, which reduces particulate MnO2 with H2S and other sulfur intermediates [5]. The isolate belongs to the genus Sulfurimonas and was named Sulfurimonas marisnigri as a reference to the origin of the species. With the cultured isolate we were able to prove the existence of this metabolism, which explains H2S oxidation together with autotrophic growth of Epsilonbacteriaceae at the chemoclone of the Black Sea [6]. The biological catalysis of this process may have significant impact on the formation and maintenance of suboxic waters, due to the faster oxidation of H2S in comparison to the abiotic reaction. Further, the activity of bacteria with the new metabolism may also foster the authigenesis of manganese carbonate, which precipitated during growth of S. marisnigri in culture experiments. The existence of this metabolism is a direct biological link between the manganese and sulfur cycles with impact on the biogeochemistry of stratified waters and sediments.

References:


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Isolation and characterization of halo-tolerant iron-oxidizing bacteria, Allicyclobacillus spp

1N. D. Huynh1, G. Haferburg2, S. Kaschabeck1, M. Schlömann1
1Institute of Biosciences, Environmental Microbiology, Freiberg, Germany
2Leibniz Institute of Lime Research, Freiberg, Germany

Bioleaching applies acidophilic sulfur- and iron-oxidizing microorganisms to extract valuable metals from sulfidic low-grade ores or concentrates. This technology has become an economical alternative to conventional techniques of metal extraction. However, acidophilic microorganisms, in general, tend to be intolerant to high concentrations of chloride. Efforts on enriching and isolations of salt-tolerant iron oxidizing bacteria have been made due to the limitation of well-known acidophilic iron–oxidizers in bioleaching with the
inputs of nitrogen species and other agricultural contaminants into rivers heavily depend on direct influx via lower-order streams. Here, the transition zone between groundwater and surface water of lower-order streams often has a decisive impact on the removal of pollutants. In contrast to higher-order streams, lower-order streams do not have extensive hyporheic zones, and strictly localized redox activities between groundwater and surface water can be expected upon transition. However, little scientific attention has been placed on microbial activities and communities of such defined reactive "hot spots". In this study, streambed sediment samples from first-order streams adjacent to the agricultural field near Tübingen, Germany were investigated. Seasonal sampling was performed at different sediment depths along transects, where distinct functionalities and redox processes are expected. Here, we present first results on whether specific exfiltration zones act either as sinks or as secondary sources of stream nitrate loading. The diversity and the abundance of microbial communities from these reactive hot spots were investigated by qPCR of N-cycling genes and by PacBio sequencing of full-length 16S rRNA amplicons. Our results indicate that a strong coupling between microbial controlled N- and S-cycling processes, and that prominent controls of microbiology by geohydrology. Our newly acquired longitudinal and seasonal insights on the distribution and the activities of sediment microorganisms enable us better understand the role of the transition zone between groundwater and surface water on contaminant attenuation in water bodies largely neglected to date.

Introduction

With a total number of approximately 1030, archaea and bacteria are the most prominent life forms on Earth. However, only about 10,000 of the estimated four million microbial species have been cultivated and are available as a pure culture today. The uncultured majority represents consequently a huge knowledge gap concerning their biochemical and biotechnological potential. The most crucial challenge is to offer the right parameters for the cultivation, concerning, e.g., carbon and energy sources as well as the physical, chemical and biological boundary conditions.

Objectives

The BMBF-project MultiKulti addresses this huge field of uncultivable organisms focusing on the deep biosphere, including continental and marine ecosystems. These ecosystems share several features, like high pressures, low nutrient concentrations and low accessibility, leading to high sampling efforts and costs. The main objectives of this project are (1) Gathering of initial information and metadata of the investigated habitats (e.g. community composition, biogeochemical cycles, etc) in order to define parameters and conditions for subsequent investigations (2) Development of specialized cultivation and sampling devices, enabling to mimic environmental conditions in order to keep thriving environmental samples in the laboratories for
(3) execution of systematic and reproducible experiments in order to get pure cultures of so far uncultivated species.

"Materials & methods"

The project synergises the know-how of biologists from different fields and engineers who are working on high pressure fermentation and in-situ probing.

Results

The BAMF-project MultiKulti started in November 2019 at an experimental stage. The contribution will show details of the planned approach and describe the current status.

262-EMV

Life in the Freezer?! – A culture-independent approach to assess potential microbial colonization of liquid nitrogen storage tanks

*F. Bajerski1, A. Bürger2, B. Glasmacher3, E. R. J. Keller4, K. Müller5, K. Mühldorfer6, M. Nagel7, H. Rüdel8, T. Müller9, J. Schenkeln, J. Overmann1

1Leibniz-Institut DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH, Department Microbial Ecology and Diversity, Braunschweig, Germany
2Helmholtz Zentrum München, German Research Center for Environmental Health, Institute of Developmental Genetics, München, Germany
3Leibniz University Hannover, Institute for Multiphase Processes, Hannover, Germany
4Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK), Department of Genebank, Seeland, OT Gatersleben, Germany
5Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research (Leibniz-IZW), Berlin, Germany
6Fraunhofer Institute for Molecular Biology and Applied Ecology IME, Schmallenberg, Germany
7BioKryo GmbH, Sulzbach, Germany
8German Cancer Research Centre, Heidelberg, Germany
9Braunschweig University of Technology, Microbiology, Braunschweig, Germany

Biobanking and cryopreservation currently gain increasing importance in the life sciences, particularly for medical and biotechnological applications. While protocols for quality management have been established to guarantee safe and clean storage of biological samples, there are also anecdotal reports of bacterial isolates and sample contamination indicating that organisms may persist in liquid nitrogen (LN) storage tanks.

In order to assess the types of organisms occurring in LN storage tanks, we systematically screened bacteria, fungi, plant and human cells in different phases of LN storage tanks maintained in ten different biobank facilities. Using state-of-the-art microscopic and culture-independent molecular approaches (group-specific marker gene amplification and high-throughput sequencing of bacterial ribosomal genes), we aimed to infer possible routes of entry and to deduce suitable strategies for quality management.

Bacterial cell counts and 16S rRNA gene copy numbers in the LN phase were in the range of the negative controls and hence below the determined detection limit of $10^2$ cells per ml and $10^3$ gene copies per ml. In the ice phase formed underneath the lids or accumulating at the bottom, small numbers of bacteria of up to $10^4$ cells per ml and up to $10^6$ gene copies per ml, as well as Mycoplasma, or fungi occurred in detectable amounts. The microorganisms may enter the LN storage tanks via the technical environment (Pseudomonas, Acinetobacter, Methyllobacterium) or the human microbiome (Bacteroides, Streptococcus, Staphylococcus) or the stored material itself (Elisabethinia, Janthibacterium) were identified as sources. Based on our results, the small bacterial load of ice and debris samples can be minimized by the reduction of ice formation and by using hermetically sealed sample containers.1

1Bajerski et al., 2019. Factors determining microbial colonization of liquid nitrogen storage tanks used for archiving biological samples. Applied Microbiology and Biotechnology, in print.

263-EMV

A breath of “fresh country air” from a microbiological point of view

1L. Laufer1, H. Kühne2, S. Ratering3, U. Jäckel1
2Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Berlin, Germany
3Saxon state company for environment and agriculture, Radebeul, Germany
4Justus-Liebig-University, Institute of Applied Microbiology, Giessen, Germany

Not only climate specialists [1] are interested in microorganisms of ambient air. At composting plants or animal fattening industries airborne microorganisms are often discussed as causatives of adverse pulmonary health effects [2, 3] and microbial analyses of “background air” are needed as reference to assess workers’ or local residents’ bioaerosol exposures. However, until now, only a few molecular analyses of bacterial composition in outdoor air have been conducted. Therefore, this project aims to investigate daily background concentration and composition of 16S rRNA genes in rural outdoor air as well as their influential parameters. Standardized sampling methods were used to collect bioaerosols over one year at three different locations in Saxony, Germany. Bioaerosol samples were analysed with Digital Droplet PCR and metabarcoding.

Between Sept. 2018 and Sept. 2019 mean concentrations of $5 \times 10^2$, $9 \times 10^3$ and $1 \times 10^4$ 16S rRNA genes were present per m$^3$ of air (n=128-136). A deeper look revealed significant seasonal differences (p < 0.001). In winter and spring mean concentrations were $4 \times 10^3$ genes m$^{-3}$ and $6 \times 10^3$ genes m$^{-3}$, respectively, while mean concentrations in summer and autumn were both $1 \times 10^4$ genes m$^{-3}$. In contrast, the percentage of bacterial DNA out of total DNA in the air was highest in winter (12 %) and lowest in summer (5 %). First results of metabarcoding analyses showed that bacterial DNA seems to be dominated by genera such as Romboutsia, Lactobacillus, Clostridium and Terrisporobacter. This indicates that bacteria in the “country air” are mainly of animal origin. A significant negative correlation was found between concentration of 16S rRNA genes and humidity at all sampling sites and at all seasons. In general the results obtained by this monitoring campaign help to identify sources of airborne bacteria as well as factors affecting microorganisms in outdoor air and thereby to improve risk assessment of bioaerosol exposure.


264-IIZV
The zoonotic disease O-fever is caused by the obligate intracellular, Gram-negative bacterium \textit{Coxiella burnetii} that replicates within phagocytes. O-fever often occurs as a self-limiting flu-like illness, but can also become chronic and develop into an endocarditis. A single nucleotide polymorphism in the TLR adapter molecule Myd88 is associated with the development of chronic O-fever in patients. We employed mice deficient in Myd88 as an \textit{in vivo} model for chronic O-fever. The attenuated strain \textit{C. burnetii} Nine Mile Phase II was injected intraperitoneally or intratracheally, followed by kinetic analysis of bacterial burden and cytokine gene expression in tissues. Myd88/-/- mice had significantly higher \textit{C. burnetii} load on days 5 and 20 after intraperitoneal infection. Additionally, after infection via the intratracheal, natural route, we observed increased bacterial dissemination from the lung to other organs in Myd88/-/- mice. Moreover, Myd88/-/- mice developed persistent infection of the lung up to day 120 after intratracheal infection, whereas most wild type mice cleared the infection by day 27. On the other hand, increased bacterial burden in Myd88/-/- mice was accompanied by reduced granulomatous inflammation and lower expression of chemokines, of IFNg and of its target genes. Validation of several IFNg-induced candidate genes using knockout mice revealed an essential role for Irg1, encoding the enzyme converting citrate to itaconate, in restricting the replication of \textit{C. burnetii} in macrophages \textit{in vitro} and in lung tissue \textit{in vivo}. Furthermore, \textit{C. burnetii} infected Irg1/-/- mice showed significant weight loss and increased pro-inflammatory gene expression in spleen and lungs. These findings indicate an important contribution of Myd88-dependent induction of Irg1 in generation of a protective host response to \textit{C. burnetii} and a role in the resolution of O-fever.

### 265-IIZV

**The role of the complement system and diabetes in invasive candidiasis**

V. Harpt,2 S. Kenno,2 D. Speth,2,3 G. Rambah,1,2, V. Fleischer1, N. Parth1, C. Lass-Förl1,2, R. Würzner1,2
1Medical University Innsbruck, Institute for Hygiene and Medical Microbiology, Innsbruck, Austria
2Christian Doppler Laboratory for Invasive Fungal Infections, Innsbruck, Austria
3Institute of Clinical Microbiology, Immunology and Hygiene, Innsbruck, Austria

**Background**

Complement is an important link between the innate and the adaptive immunity and has several crucial functions in first line defense against non-self structures. To avoid detrimental effects, complement activity is tightly controlled by several regulators, one of which is factor H (fH). \textit{Candida albicans} (CA) has developed mechanisms to escape complement. One of these is to bind fH on its surface via the “high affinity glucose transporter 1” (Hgt1p), whose expression is glucose-dependent. Hence, we aimed to study the effect of glucose and complement on CA pathogenesis.

**Methods**

Immunocompetent (wt), diabetic and C3-deficient (DC3) mice were intravenously infected with CA wild-type (wt) or a mutant lacking Hgt1p (Dhgt1). Survival and clinical status were monitored over 14 days. Immunological and inflammation parameters and fungal load were analyzed at defined time points.

**Results**

The murine model revealed that the CA wt strain is less virulent in immunocompetent mice than the Dhgt1 strain, with a lower risk of lethal outcome and a slower pathogenesis. No significant difference in virulence was detected between diabetic and wt mice infected with Dhgt1 or between diabetic mice infected with the different \textit{Candida} strains. In contrast, CA wt showed a significant higher virulence in diabetic and, in particular, DC3 mice, compared to wt mice. This proves that diabetes is a relevant risk factor for a worsened outcome of candidiasis and the causal association to complement. The higher fungal load in the urine as a parameter of a pronounced kidney infection and consecutive inflammation confirmed the survival data. Furthermore, the higher granulocyte numbers correlated with the virulence of the different \textit{Candida} strains.

**Conclusion**

The complement system is linked to the virulence of CA in diabetic animals. This might be due to lower C3b deposition on the surface of CA. Despite this, the depletion of Hgt1p cannot be attributed to be beneficial for the survival in the murine model. An explanation might be that this depletion could lead to either an up-regulation of other fH-binding molecules or other virulence factors.

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**266-IIZV**

The author has not agreed to a publication.

**267-IIZV**

Surprisingly similar humoral immune response to \textit{Cryptococcus neoformans} in patients with cryptococcal meningitis and in healthy people with presumed environmental exposure

A. E. Greßler1, B. Schulze1, D. Volke2, U. Müller1, D. Piehler1, A. Grahnert1, C. Firacative1,2, P. Escandón1,2, R. Hoffmann2, G. Alber1
1University of Leipzig, Institute of Immunology, Leipzig, Germany
2University of Leipzig, Center for Biotechnology and Biomedicine, Leipzig, Germany
3Universidad del Rosario, Translational Microbiology and Emerging Diseases, Bogotá, Colombia
4Instituto Nacional de Salud, Microbiology, Bogotá, Colombia

\textit{Cryptococcus neoformans}, the main agent causing systemic cryptococcosis in immunocompromised patients, is known to be ubiquitously present in the environment. We investigated the humoral immune response towards the fungus using sera from Colombian cryptococcal meningitis patients, with or without HIV infection, and healthy control persons. Surprisingly, sera of all groups showed similar titers of anti-cryptococcal IgG and IgM directed against a) the whole organism, b) fungal proteins, and c) capsular polysaccharides. Therefore, we conclude that the level of antigenic burden and the nature of microbial encounter (active infection vs environmental exposure) affects the anti-fungal humoral immune response only to a minor extent. This was further supported by a murine model of pulmonary cryptococcal infection, where susceptible wild type Balb/c mice developed comparable titers of anti-cryptococcal antibodies as resistant IL-4R-deficient mice, despite greatly different fungal burden in the lung. Moreover, infection of wild type Balb/c mice with a wide range of different inoculants of \textit{C. neoformans} resulted in only minor differences of anti-cryptococcal IgG titers. Therefore, we propose that exposure
of humans to low doses of Cryptococcus neoformans is sufficient to trigger a long-lasting humoral immune response towards the fungus. 2-dimensional immunoblotting was applied to further investigate the anti-cryptococcal protein response and reveal qualitative differences in the human humoral response between individual cryptococcosis patients and healthy persons. In total, 230 out of a total of 311 cryptococcal protein spots detectable in the 2D gel were recognized by the human sera investigated in our study (n=40), emphasizing the diverse repertoire of human anti-cryptococcal antibodies. Ongoing analysis is carried out on the nature of the immunoreactive antigens recognized by cryptococcosis patients (HIV+ and HIV-) and healthy control persons.

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268-IIZV

The author has not agreed to a publication.

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269-IIZV

Characterization of Arcobacter strains isolated from human stool samples – results from the prospective German prevalence study Arcopath

V. Brückner1, U. Fiebiger2, R. Ignatus3, J. Friesen3, M. Eisenblätter4, M. Höck5, T. Alter1, S. Bereswill2, M. M. Heimesaat2, G. Götz1

1Freie Universität Berlin, Institute of Food Hygiene, Berlin, Germany
2Charité - University Medicine Berlin, Institute of Microbiology, Infectious Diseases and Immunology, Berlin, Germany
3Labor 28, Berlin, Berlin, Germany
4Synlab MVZ, Berlin, Berlin, Germany
5Labor Limbach, Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Background: Arcobacter constitute emerging food- and waterborne pathogens causing gastroenteritis in humans, but the underlying mechanisms are only incompletely understood. We therefore characterized Arcobacter isolates derived from human stool samples that had been collected during a prospective prevalence study in Germany in vitro.

Methods: Thirty-six bacterial isolates belonging to the species A. butzleri (n = 24), A. cryaerophilus (n = 10) and A. lanhieri (n = 2) were genotyped by ERIC-PCR, the expression of 10 putative virulence genes was assessed and cytotoxic effects on the human intestinal cell line HT-29/B6 were analyzed applying the WST-assay.

Results: Genotyping revealed high genetic diversity within the species A. butzleri, A. cryaerophilus and A. lanhieri. Both, A. butzleri and A. lanhieri encoded for a large number of putative virulence genes, while less genes were detectable in A. cryaerophilus isolates. Notably, the three cytolythic distending toxin (CDT) genes cdtA, cdtB and cdtC were abundant in both A. lanhieri isolates. Furthermore, all A. butzleri and A. lanhieri, but only one of the A. cryaerophilus isolates exerted cytotoxic effects.

Conclusions: Our study provides evidence for the abundance of putative virulence genes in Arcobacter isolates and prominent cytotoxic effects of A. butzleri and A. lanhieri in vitro. The presence of cdtA, cdtB, cdtC in A. lanhieri points towards CDT secretion as potential mechanism underlying cytotoxicity as opposed to A. butzleri. However, the association of the Arcobacter virulence factors detected and human morbidity should be addressed in future studies.

Efficacy of recombinant BCV vaccine candidates against Mycobacterium bovis infection in goats

H. Köhler1, N. Wedlich1, J. Figl1, E. Liebler-Tenorio1, K. von Pückler1, S. Mamevor1,2, M. Rissmann1, R. Ulrich3, C. Schröder3, L. Große1, S. H. E. Kaufmann1, C. Menge1

1Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Institut of Molecular Pathogenesis, Jena, Germany
2Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Small Animal Clinic – Radiology, Giessen, Germany
3Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Department of Experimental Animal Facilities and Biorisk Management, Greifswald, Germany
4Vakzine Projekt Management GmbH, Hannover, Germany
5Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology, Berlin, Germany

M. bovis and M. caprae cause tuberculosis (TB) in domestic and wild ruminants and are important zoonotic pathogens. BCV, an attenuated TB vaccine strain derived from M. bovis, exhibits limited efficacy in adult animals and man. To generate more potent live TB vaccines, recombinant BCV (rBCV) strain VPM1002 was genetically engineered to express listeriolysin (Hly) from Listeria monocytogenes, while simultaneously deleting urease C (ΔBCV ΔureC::hly+). Derivatives VPM1002 Δpdx1 and VPM1002 ΔnuoG were further modified to improve safety and efficacy, respectively. Aim of the study was to investigate the efficacy of the recombinant BCV strains against intra-bronchial M. bovis infection in a goat model.

Four groups of goats (n=8) were vaccinated subcutaneously with either BCV, VPM1002 or its derivatives at 12 weeks of age; mock vaccinated goats served as control. Four months later, all goats were challenged intra-bronchially with 2×10^3 CFU of M. bovis and progress of infection was monitored until 5 months post infection. At necropsy, tissue samples were taken for bacterial culture, lungs fixed intra-thoracically and analyzed by Computed tomography (CT).

Subcutaneous injection of the vaccines induced local inflammatory responses which were least pronounced in the VPM1002 Δpdx1 group. After challenge, none of the goats was clinically ill and M. bovis was not shed from nose or by faeces. CT analysis unveiled lung lesions in all goats of the control group, VPM1002, VPM1002 Δpdx1 and VPM1002 ΔnuoG groups and in 6/8 BCV vaccinated animals. The extent of the lesions varied, with high numbers in control and VPM1002 Δpdx1 vaccinated goats, reduced numbers in BCV vaccinated goats and lowest numbers in the VPM1002 ΔnuoG and VPM1002 group. M. bovis was re-isolated from the mediastinal and tracheobronchial lymph nodes. The proportion of culture positive animals in the groups corresponded with the average extent of lung lesions documented for the group.

In summary, genetic modification of BCV has generated derivatives which proved to be more effective (VPM1002 and VPM1002 ΔnuoG) or safer (VPM1002 Δpdx1) when applied to protect goats from the detrimental effects of M. bovis-induced TB.

271-IIZV

The role of polymorphic membrane proteins (Pmps) in Chlamydia psittaci strains with different infectious potential

*A. Favaron1, A. Trinks1, C. Schnee2

1Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Institut of Molecular Pathogenesis, Jena, Germany

Chlamydia psittaci is the etiological agent for chlamydiosis in birds and can be transferred to humans by inhalation, causing severe systemic disease and pneumonia. C. psittaci infects a broad range of hosts and tissues; strains have been indeed isolated from both avian and mammalian hosts, and
they seem to have different infectious and zoonotic potential, with avian strains being more virulent.

Pmps are a family of chlamydial proteins. Several Pmps from different species are immunoreactive; moreover, Pmps from the human pathogens *C. trachomatis* and *C. pneumoniae* are adhesins. Pmps are highly heterogeneous, suggesting a correlation with tissue tropism and pathogenicity. *C. psittaci* harbors 21 Pmps, heterogeneously expressed during the infection.

Our hypothesis is that the different infectious potential and host tropism of avian and mammalian *C. psittaci* strains may be dependent on a different set of Pmp expression.

At first, the virulence of two avian and two mammalian strains was compared by testing the survival rate of embryonated eggs after infection.

Bioinformatic analyses of the Pmps of 10 avian and mammalian isolates confirmed a high degree of pmp gene variation, however, no correlation with host species was found. Thus, comparisons of Pmp expression profiles from different strains were conducted via RT-qPCR and showed that Pmps of the G group are expressed differently in the analyzed strains. Pmps 8G and 17G, selected as "variable" and Pmp22D, selected as "conserved", were recombiantly produced from one avian and one mammalian representative strain and their adhesion ability and relevance for the infection were tested.

Recombinant Pmp22D and Pmp8G showed strong adhesion to avian and mammalian cell lines and blocked a subsequent *C. psittaci* infection, suggesting their essential role in *C. psittaci*. Recombinant Pmp17G showed weaker binding and only to avian cells, with no relevant blocking ability towards infection of mammalian strains.

These data suggest that some Pmps might be essential for *C. psittaci* infection, while presence of other Pmps might lead to a different tropism of *C. psittaci* strains, possibly by acting on different receptor pathways.

**272-ARV**

Anaerobic enrichment cultures from the Guaymas Basin reveal an unexpected diversity of thermophilic alkane-oxidizing archaea


Max Planck Institute for Marine Microbiology, Bremen, Germany

Saturated hydrocarbons are attractive energy and carbon sources for microorganisms, but the knowledge on anaerobic hydrocarbon oxidizers that represent the primary biological sink for these compounds in marine environments is sparse. Anaerobic methane activation proceeds via the formation of methyl-coenzyme M reductase to yield CoM-bound methyl groups, which are oxidized to CO2 via the reversed methanogenesis pathway. A CoM-type alkane activation was thought to be restricted to the C1-compound methane. Recently retrieved anaerobic thermophilic enrichment cultures that oxidize the C4-compound butane were however dominated by the archaeon *Ca. Syntrophoarchaeum* that form consortia with partner bacteria, similar as observed in the anaerobic oxidation of methane (*Laso-Pérez et al., 2016, Nature,*). *Ca. Syntrophoarchaeum* contains highly divergent MCR types that allow activation of butane via alkyl-CoM formation. Metagenomic studies (*Wang et al. 2019, Nature Microbiol.*) and additional cultivation approaches (*Chen et al., 2019; Nature*) indicate that MCR-based multi-carbon alkane metabolism is widely distributed within the Archaea. Here we present our latest findings on the diversity, substrate range and metabolic pathways of novel hydrocarbon-oxidizing archaea that we enriched from the hydrocarbon-rich hydrothermal sediments of Guaymas Basin (Gulf of California, Mexico). We cultured strains of the *Syntrophoarchaeum* clade that oxidize hexane, therewith extending the substrate range of this archaeal group towards larger compounds, and new thermophilic strains of the GoM-Arc1 clade that grow C2-compound ethene as substrate with before unexpected growth rates. Additionally we detected new groups of archaea that use MCR-like enzymes for the activation of hexadecane. Phylogenetic marker genes and the divergent Mcr type of those Archaea are found in various hydrocarbon-rich environments, suggesting a dominant role of archaea in anaerobic short-chain hydrocarbon oxidation also under moderate temperatures.

273-ARV

New mode of methanogenesis observed in the coal degrading methanogen *Methermicoccus shenglensis*


1Radboud University, Microbiology Department, Nijmegen, Netherlands

2National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, Bioproduction Research Institute, Tsukuba, Japan

3Aalborg University, Department of Chemistry and Bioscience, Aalborg, Denmark

The main source of the greenhouse gas methane are methanogenic archaea. This emphasizes the importance of those organisms for the global carbon cycle. Although methanogens have been studied for more than 111 years [1], a novel methanogenic pathway was recently discovered: the thermophilic methanogen *Methermicoccus (M.) shenglensis* is able to use a large variety of methoxylated aromatic compounds as substrates for methane generation [2-4]. Despite the significance and novelty of this unique archaeon a detailed analysis of its metabolism is still missing. Here, we used transcriptomic and proteomic methods to investigate the response to growth on methoxylated aromatics. As a result we observed that *M. shenglensis* uses a demethylation system that is more related to that from acetogenic bacteria than to the methyl transferase system used for methylotrophic methanogenesis. It activates methoxy-groups using tetrahydromethanopterin as the carrier, a mechanism distinct from conventional methanogenic methyl-transfer systems dependent on Coenzyme M. We further discovered that this leads to a two-phasic metabolism. In the first phase *M. shenglensis* disproportionates methoxy groups to CO2 and CH4 which leads to an excess of reducing equivalents. In the second phase CO2 is reduced to CH4 with help of the remaining reducing equivalents from phase one. This novel two-phasic mode of methanogenesis represents an unusual redox-cyclic metabolism.


The biogenic formation of methane (methanogenesis) is a unique way of certain Archaea, to conserve energy, by coupling the pathway of methanogenesis to the generation of an ion motive force. To date, all known methanogenic archaea (methanogens) depend on methanogenesis for growth. *Methanosarcina aceticivorans* can use carbon monoxide (CO) as an energy substrate and produces, beside methane, substantial amounts of acetate via a variant of the reductive acetyl-CoA pathway. As this pathway involves ATP synthesis by substrate-level phosphorylation, the questions arose if *M. aceticivorans* can grow on CO without the need to produce methane, and if the respiratory chain of the organism is still required. To address this question, the operon encoding the membrane-integral, energy-converting N^6^-methyltetrahydrosarcinapterin (H^2^SPT):coenzyme M (HS-CoM) methyltransferase (Mtr) was deleted. The resulting mutant still needed anabolic amounts of a methyl-group donor (e.g. methanol or trimethylamine) for growth on CO. Surprisingly, this requirement could be overcome by spontaneous mutation, resulting in a suppressor strain that generated essentially no methane from CO, and that lacked the energy-conserving membrane-bound heterodisulfide reductase (HdrED), which acts as the terminal reducing complex in the respiratory chain of cytochrome-containing methanogens. By deleting the HdrED-encoding genes in the suppressor strain it was confirmed that CO metabolism of *M. aceticivorans* is independent of a substantial part of the respiratory chain. The various implications of these findings will be discussed.

**Materials & Methods:**

Biomethanation emerged as a plausible solution to the energy storage problem so that surplus electricity could be stored in a chemical fashion, that is, biomethane. By this, the anaerobic digestion technology (AD) could be integrated with other renewable energies. Biomethanation exploits the metabolic potential of hydrogenotrophic methanogens to convert H\textsubscript{2} and CO\textsubscript{2} into CH\textsubscript{4}. Here, we enriched a model hydrogenotrophic microbiome to investigate *ex situ* biomethanation, with methanogenesis and homoacetogenesis as competing reactions. Microbial community structure and dynamics of bacteria and archaea were evaluated through 16S rRNA and mcrA amplicon sequencing, respectively. We applied the concept of microbial resource management to steer the bioprocess towards selective production of CH\textsubscript{4}. Experiments were conducted under mesophilic conditions in closed bioreactors with H\textsubscript{2} (80\%) and CO\textsubscript{2} (20\%) as substrate. Acetate was concomitantly produced with CH\textsubscript{4} over several culture transfers. By controlling the media composition and the reducing agent the synthesis of this byproduct was reduced to ≤ 100 mg L\textsuperscript{-1} and obtained grid quality biomethane (≥ 96\%). Interestingly, we observed that formate was an intermediate during the bioprocess. The dominant hydrogenotrophic methanogens belonged to the genera *Methanobacterium* and *Methanoculleus*. The bacterial community was dominated by the genus *Lutispora*. The only described species belonging to this genus is a thermophile not known to be a homoacetogen, which suggests that the AD black box microbiota needs to be further explored. We found that elevated stirring speed (≥ 1000 rpm) was detrimental, most likely due to the shear force. Collectively, the results suggest that model hydrogenotrophic microbiome enrichments are suitable for basic studies but also for efficient bioprocess. Microbial resource management for *ex situ* biomethanation is possible via controlling some medium components and operational parameters. In light of these findings, it seems possible to envision the development and control of microorganisms with desired functional traits via microbial resource management, yet this subject is in its infancy for biomethanation.

**Results:**

We could show that the different strains *Methanococcus maripaludis*, *M. vannielii*, *Methanobacterium congolense*, *Methanoculleus submarinus* and *Methanocacinia petrolearia* were able to take up electrons from a cathode and convert CO\textsubscript{2} into chemical compounds.

**Materials & Methods:**

So we screened several different methanogenic strains for its hydrogenotrophic growth and its ability to perform microbial electrosynthesis of methane. We analyzed the electron uptake at -700 mV (vs. standard hydrogen electrode) with chronamperometric measurements and determined CO\textsubscript{2}, H\textsubscript{2} and CH\textsubscript{4} by gas analytics. Coulombic efficiency as well as the maximal current density was determined. The electrodes were examined with scanning electron microscopy for biofilm formation. Inhibition tests were performed to get insights into possible electron input modules during MES.

**Introduction:**

Microbial electrosynthesis (MES) provides a highly attractive perspective for the future generation of chemical products from electricity. Thereby electroactive microorganisms take up electrons from a cathode and convert CO\textsubscript{2} into chemical compounds.

**Materials & Methods:**

So we screened several different methanogenic strains for its hydrogenotrophic growth and its ability to perform microbial electrosynthesis of methane. We analyzed the electron uptake at -700 mV (vs. standard hydrogen electrode) with chronamperometric measurements and determined CO\textsubscript{2}, H\textsubscript{2} and CH\textsubscript{4} by gas analytics. Coulombic efficiency as well as the maximal current density was determined. The electrodes were examined with scanning electron microscopy for biofilm formation. Inhibition tests were performed to get insights into possible electron input modules during MES.
during MES regarding the methane productivity (8.81 ± 0.51 mmol m⁻² d⁻¹) and the Coulombic efficiency (58.9 ± 0.8%).

Conclusion:

Our results show that several methanogens are electroactive and can be used for the extracellular electron uptake from an electrode. With these methanogens it is possible to store electrical energy or excess current into the biofuel methane by MES.

277-ARV
Nanopore-based native RNA sequencing provides insights into prokaryotic transcription, operon structures, rRNA transcription, splicing, and RNA modifications

1F. Grüneberger, R. Knüppel, M. Jütter, M. Fenk1, A. Borst2, W. Hausner1, J. Soppa3, S. Ferreira-Cerca4, D. Grohmann5
1Institute of Microbiology, Department of Biochemistry, Genetics and Microbiology, Regensburg, Germany
2Biochemistry III, Department of Biochemistry, Genetics and Microbiology, Regensburg, Germany
3Goethe University, Institute for Molecular Biosciences, Frankfurt, Germany

In the last decade, next-generation sequencing (NGS) technologies revolutionized the field of microbiology. Using transcriptomics, important advances were possible in the field of RNA biology, which shaped our understanding of the transcriptional landscape in prokaryotes. However, for a long time, the analysis was limited by the short read lengths of Illumina-based sequencing and most likely biased by cDNA conversion.

Recently, Oxford Nanopore Technologies (ONT) developed a platform for highly parallel direct sequencing of native full-length RNAs. Here, we present the first native RNA-seq study of bacterial and archaeal transcriptomes using the Nanopore technology. We established an experimental workflow that includes the enzymatic polyadenylation of prokaryotic RNA to make them amenable for ONT’s direct RNA sequencing kit. The accuracy and reliability of native RNA-seq in comparison to Illumina-based sequencing was evaluated by studying bacterial (E. coli) and archaeal transcriptomes (Halofex volcnni, Pyrococcux furiosus).

Based on this approach, multiple transcriptomic features could be addressed simultaneously: The analysis included determination of transcript boundaries. We moreover demonstrate that the long RNA reads gathered on the ONT platform allow reliable transcriptional unit assignment. Strikingly, we gained insights into the so far poorly understood rRNA splicing pathway in archaea and detected new splicing intermediates. Based on these data, we furthermore define hitherto unknown rRNA processing sites. As one of the key features of Nanopore native RNA sequencing is that RNA modifications are retained, we could confirm this ability by analyzing a well-known methylation site. Notably, by expanding the approach, we were able to show that rRNA modifications are more abundant in hyperthermophilic organisms.

Taken together, performing the first whole-genome native RNA-seq study in prokaryotes provided us with a wealth of information on transcriptional and post-transcriptional processes in prokaryotic model organisms. While some improvements certainly have to be made, we believe, that the technique is an important addition to the current NGS-toolbox.

278-ARV
The DPANN way of life – insights into the interaction of a Micrarchaeon and a novel member of the Thermoplasmatales

*S. Grfferer*1,2, S. Krause1, L. Villanueva3, B. Bunke4, U. Kuhlicke5, T. Neu6, C. Reuse6, K. Schmidt-Hohagen6, K. Hiller6, J. Gescher1,2
1Karlsruher Institut für Technologie, Institut für Angewandte Biowissenschaften - Abt für Angewandte Biowissenschaften, Karlsruhe, Germany
2Karlsruher Institut für Technologie, Institut für Biologische Grenzflächen, Egggenstein-Leopoldshafen, Germany
3Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research, Microbiology & Biogeochemistry (MMB), Den Burg, Germany
4Leibniz-Institut DSMZ–Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen, Bioinformatics, Braunschweig, Germany
5Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Magdeburg, Germany
6Technische Universität Braunschweig, Department of Bioinformatics & Biochemistry, Braunschweig, Germany

Introduction

In 2013 a new superphylum within the archaea and the identifier DPANN (acronym of the first included phyla) was proposed. This superphylum includes archaea with extremely small cell and genome size, which result in limited metabolic capabilities. Therefore, symbiotic lifestyles are proposed for DPANN members. Although this superphylum is broadly distributed, most members were identified through culture-independent methods and consequently the knowledge about them is very limited. Of all the DPANN archaea, just representatives of the genus Nanoarchaeota can be cultivated to date.

Here we describe a stable co-culture, containing a representative of a second DPANN phylum, a member of the Micrarchaeota, and a novel member of the Thermoplasmatales.

Objectives

The objective of this study was, to get insights into the interaction between the organisms in the co-culture. A combination of current methods was used to further characterize the way of life of the Micrarchaeon and shed light on the mysterious lifestyle of the DPANN superphylum.

Results & Methods

Originally isolated from a biofilm, the growth in biofilm-like structures turned out to be mandatory for the Micrarchaeon-related organism. To further define its niche, lectin staining combined with CARD-FISH was used to identify sugar compounds of the matrix.

Genomic and transcriptomic analyses were used to identify metabolic and biosynthesis pathways. Furthermore, influences of the DPANN member on the Thermoplasmatales-related organism were examined on transcriptomic level. Metabolomic analysis revealed further insight into metabolic pathways of both archaea.

Finally, a lipid analysis was performed, which showed the same cell membrane composition in both organisms.

Conclusion

The performed analyses unveiled the grade of dependency of the DPANN member within this community. This co-culture represents the only described stable cultivation of a member of the DPANN superphylum, apart from the Nanoarchaeota, to date and therefore gives the opportunity...
to enlighten the microbial dark matter of this enigmatic organisms.

279-ARV

Protein glycosylation in the thermoacidophilic crenarchaeon *S. acidocaldarius* – resemblance and unique features to the eukaryal and bacterial protein glycosylation process

*B. Meyer1,2, L. Kuschmierz1, S. Meckelmann4, J. Wingender2, H. Dorfmüller2, S. V. Albers2, B. Siebert2*

1University Duisburg Essen, Biolinum Centre, Molekulare Enzytmotechnologie und Biochemie, Essen, Germany
2Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Molecular Biology of Archaea, Freiburg, Germany
3University Duisburg-Essen, Faculty of Chemistry Applied Analytical Chemistry, Essen, Germany
4University Duisburg-Essen, Biolinum Centre, Aquatic Microbiology, Essen, Germany

Within the last decade, the archaean phylogenetic tree has been dramatically expanded and reshaped, strengthening the hypothesis that the origin of Eukarya is rooted next to the archaean TACK superphylum. Here we provide new insights into the N-glycosylation process of *Sulfolobus acidocaldarius*, a member of the Crenarchaeota within the TACK superphylum, and the closest eukaryal-related archaean for which the N-glycosylation has been described.

The essentiality of the N-glycosylation have been demonstrated in *S. acidocaldarius*, however, the details of this biosynthesis process still need to be elucidated. Recently we identified that, in contrast to Euryarchaeota, the assembly of the N-glycan occur on dolichol di-phosphate (Dol-PP). In addition to this similarity with Eukarya, the N-glycan core of *S. acidocaldarius* resembles the eukaryal chitobiase N-glycan core (GlcNAcβ1-4-GlcNAc). Deletion studies and in vitro assays allowed the identification of the GTs AglH and AglI23 responsible for the first two biosynthesis steps of crenarchaeal N-glycosylation. Interestingly these two GTs resemble the eukaryal Alg7 and Alg13/14 enzymes synthesizing the N-glycan core, indicating a common evolutionary origin. To elucidate whether the assembly of the N-glycan requires, like in Eukarya, beside nucleotide-activated sugar donors also Dol-P activated sugars, the genome was analysis for the presence of known eukaryal Dol-P-glucose synthase (DPG) and Dol-P-mannose synthase (DPM) homologs. This search led to the identification of a DPM and a DPG candidate. While the deletion of the DPG homolog showed no effect on the N-glycosylation, the deletion of the DPM homolog resulted in the lack of the Dol-P-Man in the membrane as well as in a reduced N-glycan size. This demonstrates that indeed Dol-P activated sugars are involved in the archaean N-glycosylation process. Analyses of the DPM mutant showed many phenotypical changes, including the loss of motility, enhanced cell-cell aggregation, reduced cell growth at elevated salt concentrations, and an altered biofilm formation. This results underline the importance of this post-translational modification for this thermophilic archaean.

Using their T4BSS Legionella pneumophila translocates over 300 effector proteins into the host cell to promote intracellular colonization and survival. T4BSS effectors are targeted posttranslationally by their C-terminal signal sequence to the DotL/MN coupling complex of the system. The targeting of some effectors is mediated by the T4BSS chaperones LcmSW and LvgA which seem to act as an adapter between substrates and DotL/N. From there effector proteins are believed to be handed over to the ATPases of the system which introduce them into the secretion channel of the core complex [1].

Among T4- effectors soluble proteins as well as integral membrane proteins (TMD-effectors) can be found. The latter find their final destination in one of the host cell's membranes. For TMD-effectors the targeting pathway is unclear, since their hydrophobic segments can be recognized by the Signal Recognition Particle (SRP) during translation and promotes targeting to the bacterial inner membrane.

Bioinformatical analysis revealed that a subset of TMD-effectors possesses transmembrane segments of reduced hydrophobicity, whereby they can avoid SRP-targeting [2]. With the help of membrane fractionation followed by mass spectrometry of a *L. pneumophila* WT and ΔT4SS mutant strain, we could show that other TMD-effectors of higher hydrophobicity are indeed targeted and inserted into the bacterial inner membrane.

Intriguingly, T4SSs have the ability to accept substrates from the cytoplasm, the inner membrane, and the periplasm [3]. Thus, we now aim to understand the mechanism of the different targeting pathways of effector subgroups to the T4BSS. To begin with, we would like to determine which proteins of the T4BSS are needed for a successful translocation of TMD-effectors into host cells by analyzing relevant T4BSS mutants in a translocation assay. Moreover, we would like to investigate which part of the effector protein (e.g. c-terminal signal sequence, chaperone binding region) is important in which step of the translocation event (e.g. targeting, substrate recognition).


281-MPV

The T4SS effector protein AnkG of *Coxiella burnetii* modulates the 75K snRNP complex to prevent apoptosis

*A. Cordsmeier1, W. Schäfer1, M. Kraner1, M. Kranner1, U. Fischer1, A. Lührmann1*

1Universitätsklinikum Erlangen, Mikrobiologie, Erlangen, Germany
2Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Erlangen, Germany
3Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, Würzburg, Germany

**Introduction:** The obligate intracellular bacterium *Coxiella burnetii* is the causing agent of the zoonotic disease Q fever. This disease is usually acquired by inhaling contaminated dust from animal feces, urine, milk-, or birth products. Q fever is mainly a self-resolving flu-like illness. However, Q fever might develop into an atypical pneumonia, hepatitis or endocarditis.

280-MPV

There are many routes to the Type IVB Secretion System (T4BSS)
Inhibition of host cell apoptosis is crucial for \textit{C. burnetii} to maintain its intracellular niche and, thus, bacterial survival. The anti-apoptotic activity of \textit{C. burnetii} is mediated by a type IV secretion system (T4SS), which is required to inject effector proteins into the host cell. The T4SS effector protein AnkG is known to exhibit anti-apoptotic properties, which depend on its nuclear localization. How AnkG alters nuclear function is unknown.

**Objectives:** Unravelling the mode of action of AnkG within the nucleus.

**Methods:** We used different molecular biological methods including Co-immunoprecipitation, immunofluorescence, RNA-immunoprecipitation, RNA-sequencing, and immune blot analysis.

**Results:** Recently, we identified several host cell proteins involved in RNA metabolism as AnkG binding partners. Here, we focus on the binding of AnkG to one of these proteins, the nucleolar RNA helicase 2 (DDX21). Under cell death conditions DDX21 re-localizes into the nucleoplasm. Importantly, AnkG prevents DDX21 re-localization. DDX21 functions by modulating the composition of the 7SK snRNP complex and thereby influencing transcription activity. Our results demonstrate that AnkG also binds to the 7SK snRNP complex. Thus, we verify the interaction of AnkG with the scaffolding protein LARP7 and the 7SK RNA. Furthermore, we could demonstrate that AnkG leads to the release of the transcription factor p-TEFb from the 7SK snRNP complex and RNAseq experiments confirmed that AnkG alters transcription activity.

**Conclusions:** Our results suggest that the anti-apoptotic effector protein AnkG of \textit{C. burnetii} inhibits host cell apoptosis by altering activity of the 7SK snRNP complex via releasing p-TEFb and, thus, influencing transcriptional activity.

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**283-MPV**

**SPI-1 translocated effectors prolong the intracellular survival of \textit{Salmonella Typhimurium} and \textit{Salmonella Typhi}**

A. L. Becker$^{1,2}$, K. Enhardt$^{1,2}$, M. Matern$^1$, G. A. Grassl$^{1,2}$

$^1$Hannover Medical School, Institute for Medical Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, Hannover, Germany

$^2$German Center for Infection Research (DZIF), Partner Site Hannover, Hannover, Germany

**Introduction:** Protein secretion mechanisms are essential for the virulence of most bacterial pathogens. Typhoid toxin is an essential virulence factor for \textit{Salmonella Typhi}, the cause of typhoid fever in humans. This toxin is unique in that it is only produced within mammalian cells, and it must be trafficked to the extracellular space before intoxicating target cells.

**Question:** An essential and poorly understood aspect of this transport pathway is the secretion of typhoid toxin from the bacterium into the S. Typhi-containing vacuole. Protein transport across the bacterial envelope is particularly challenging in Gram-negative bacteria, where to reach the outside, proteins must first move through at least three barriers, the inner membrane, the peptidoglycan layer, and the outer membrane.

**Methods and Results:** We could show that typhoid toxin secretion requires its translocation to the trans side of the peptidoglycan layer at the bacterial poles for subsequent release through the outer membrane. This translocation process strictly depends on TtsA activity, a specialized muramidase, which requires the localized editing of peptidoglycan at the bacterial poles by a specific L-D transpeptidase YcbB. This transpeptidase introduces specific L-D crosslinks between the stem peptides that join the glycan strands of the peptidoglycan layer. We could show that peptidoglycan substrate recognition by TtsA depends on a discrete domain within its carbox terminus, which targets the enzyme to the bacterial poles to recognize YcbB-edited peptidoglycan. Comparison of the atomic structures of TtsA bound to its substrate and that of a close homolog with different specificity identified specific determinants involved in substrate recognition. Combined with structure-guided mutagenesis and \textit{in vitro} and \textit{in vivo} crosslinking experiments, this study provides an unprecedented view of the mechanisms by which a muramidase recognizes its peptidoglycan substrate to facilitate protein secretion.

**Conclusion:** These studies describe a novel protein secretion mechanism that is probably conserved in many other bacterial species.

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**282-MPV**

**Through the wall. New insights into the mechanism of typhoid toxin secretion in \textit{Salmonella Typhi}**

T. Geiger$^{1,2}$, M. Lara-Tejero$^1$, Y. Xiong$^1$, J. E. Galan$^1$

$^1$Yale University, School of Medicine, Department of Microbial Pathogenesis, New Haven, CT, United States

$^2$Max van Pettenkofer-Institut, LMU München, Medizinische Mikrobiologie und Krankenhaushygiene, München, Germany

**Introduction:** Protein secretion mechanisms are essential for the virulence of most bacterial pathogens. Typhoid toxin is an essential virulence factor for \textit{Salmonella Typhi}, the cause of typhoid fever in humans. This toxin is unique in that it is only produced within mammalian cells, and it must be trafficked to the extracellular space before intoxicating target cells.

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**Methods and Results:** We could show that typhoid toxin secretion requires its translocation to the trans side of the peptidoglycan layer at the bacterial poles for subsequent

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**284-MPV**

**Visualization of \textit{Yersinia enterocolitica} type III secretion during host-cell infection**

M. Wolters$^1$, M. Rudolph$^1$, A. Carsten$^1$, M. Aepfelbacher$^1$

$^1$University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE), Institute of Medical Microbiology, Virology and Hygiene, Hamburg, Germany

Type III secretion systems (T3SSs) are essential virulence factors of numerous bacterial pathogens. Upon host cell
contact the T3SS machinery assembles a translocation pore within host cell membranes that is required for entry of bacterial effector proteins. Visualization of T3SS structural components, the pore complex and effectors by fluorescence microscopy techniques is challenging for several reasons: i) Fusion proteins of T3SS substrates with fluorescent proteins like GFP, which are resistant to T3SS-mediated unfolding, are known to block the secretion process. ii) The small size of the structures of interest limits the applicability of conventional optical microscopy for resolving their biomolecular organization. iii) Intrabacterial proteins are not easily accessible for immunostaining with conventional IgG antibodies. We here demonstrate the application of self-labeling enzyme tags, split-GFP reporter system and small peptide tags in combination with recombiant single-domain antibodies (sdAbs) for imaging of T3SS components in fixed and live cell experiments. Self-labeling enzyme tags proved useful for tagging of structural T3SS components but were not suitable for effector imaging due to blockage of secretion. Split-GFP could be used for live-imaging of translocated effectors but was inefficient for imaging of pore proteins most likely due to a lack of sensitivity. Peptide tags in combination with sdAbs proved useful for imaging of structural T3SS components as well as the translocation pore without affecting protein function or secretion. In combination with super-resolution microscopy techniques like STED, STORM and MINFLUX these tools will likely enable the study of T3SS function with high spatial and temporal resolution.

### 285-MPV
Functional membrane microdomains coordinate staphylococcal heme acquisition
L. Adel1, A. Jochim1, L. Krick3, D. Lopez1, S. Heilbronner1
1University of Tübingen, Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Tübingen, Germany
2Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), National Centre for Biotechnology, Madrid, Spain

Iron is an essential trace element and its levels are actively limited in humans, which is referred to as "nutritional immunity". To overcome this limitation, the pathogen *Staphylococcus aureus* imports iron-scavenging siderophores using the transport systems Hts, Sir, Fhu, and Sst. Additionally, the Isd system allows acquisition of heme. All these transporters were shown to be located in "functional membrane microdomains" (FMMs), which are specific patches of the membrane containing special lipids. This suggests spatial proximity of the systems on the cell surface. In line with this, it is reported that the ATPase FhuA energizes Fhu, Hts, and Sir and we speculated that the same might be true for the Isd-dependent heme acquisition.

Using the bacterial adenylate cyclase two-hybrid system, we showed that FhuA interacts directly with the heme-permease IsdF. Additionally, a ΔfhuA deletion mutant was attenuated in the presence of heme/Hb as sole source of nutrient iron mimicking the deficits of a Δisd deletion mutant. This confirmed the central importance of FhuA for all these systems. Furthermore, we found that the Isd system is functionally dependent on the presence of FMMs. Both blockage of FMM formation by using a statin as well as mutation of the FMM-scaffolding protein FloA resulted in heme acquisition defects.

To examine the importance of FMMs for iron uptake further, we will use pull down analysis to investigate whether a direct interaction of the transporters with FloA facilitates incorporation into the FMMs.

Our experiments suggest that FMMs and appropriate membrane topology are crucial for iron acquisition and propose statins as antiinfective agents blocking pathogen proliferation during disease.

### 286-MPV
Identification of NWMN_0364, a novel virulence regulatory protein relevant for SaeRS activation in *Staphylococcus aureus*
J. Bosselmann1,2, M. Kucklick1,2, S. Engelmann1,2
1TU-Braunschweig, Institute of Microbiology, Braunschweig, Germany
2Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Microbial Proteomics, Braunschweig, Germany

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a human commensal bacterium whose lifestyle can become pathogenic, especially in immunocompromised patients, which can lead to skin infections, endocarditis, etc. Nowadays the ability of *S. aureus* to form biofilms and the increasing incidence of antibiotic resistant variants cause serious problems not only in hospitals. Therefore, it is essential to understand the adaptation to and the interaction with the human host and its immune system. In this study, we identified an up to now hypothetical protein of *S. aureus* Newman, called NWMN_0364, in a secretome analysis. 0364 is a lipoprotein and we asked whether this protein influences the bacterial virulence. Accordingly, we tested a deletion mutant of 0364 for its virulence ability by an infection assay, where human macrophages were infected with the wild type or mutant strain. Here, we observed that the mutant strain was only able to kill 50% of all macrophages while the wild type was able to kill about 95%. To find the reason for the reduced virulence, we examined the extracellular proteins of both strains with a GeLC-MS/MS proteomic approach. With this method, we could show that many virulence factors that are regulated by the two-component system SaeRS are reduced in the deletion mutant. Moreover, SaeP the negative regulator of SaeRS was also less abundant. To determine if this effect is due to genetic regulation of the SaeRS system we performed transcriptional analyses, which revealed significant reduced transcript levels of the sae operon as well as of SaeR regulated genes in the 0364 mutant. Interestingly, a co-immunoprecipitation experiment in vivo gave hints about an interaction between 0364 and SaeP. To confirm this interaction, we generated recombinant proteins of SaeP and 0364 and performed an interaction assay. Again, the results showed an interaction between 0364 and SaeP. All these results indicate that NWMN_0364 is important for virulence regulation by activation of the two-component system SaeRS.

### 287-MPV
The functional ClpXP protease of *Chlamydia trachomatis* requires distinct clpP genes from separate genetic loci
S. Pan1, D. Thomy1, I. Malik1, B. Henrichsreise2, H. Brötz-Oesterhelt1, P. Sass1
1Interfaculty Institute for Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Microbial Bioactive Compounds, Tuebingen, Germany
2University of Bonn, Institute for PharmaceuticalMicrobiology, Bonn, Germany

Bacterial Clp proteases are highly conserved and structurally versatile machines that play central roles in microbial physiology and virulence regulation of important human pathogens. Therefore, Clp proteases have attracted considerable attention as new antimicrobial and anti-virulence targets (1,2). For regulated proteolysis, associated Clp-ATPases recognize and unfold the dedicated protein substrates to feed them into the degradation chamber of the tetradecameric proteolytic core ClpP (3). While most
bacteria, including Staphylococcus aureus and Escherichia coli, encode a single clpP gene that is sufficient to build up the proteolytic core, some pathogens such as Mycobacterium tuberculosis and Listeria monocytogenes encode more than one ClpP homolog.

Here, we functionally characterized the ClpXP protease of Chlamydia trachomatis, an obligate intracellular human pathogen which carries two homologous clpP genes in different genetic loci. As a common feature among obligatory intracellular bacteria, Chlamydiaceae maintain a small genome size as a result of reductive evolution. Therefore, the existence of two clpP genes in C. trachomatis is striking and suggests their indispensability for survival. We show that ctClpXP is formed by a hetero-tetradecameric proteolytic core, composed of ctClpP1 and ctClpP2 that associates with ctClpX via ctClpP2 for regulated protein degradation. Furthermore, ADEP antibiotics interfere with ClpXP functions by both preventing the interaction of ctClpX with ctClpP1P2 and activating the otherwise dormant proteolytic core for unregulated proteolysis, validating ctClpXP as an antibacterial target (4).

Regarding genetic organization and enzyme function, chlamydial Clp protease is unique among the characterized Clp systems in bacteria to date as two distinct ClpP homologs from distant genetic loci have to team up to build a functionally active protease, suggesting a protease safeguard mechanism on the genomic level.


288-MEEV
Specific drivers of soil bacterial activity

289-MEEV
Effect of the entry of antibiotic-resistant pathogens on the community composition and the spread of resistance

Microbial functions in natural environments are driven by physiologically active cells. A large fraction of bacteria in soils has been found to be inactive, dormant, sporulated, or even dead, and hence may hardly contribute to ecosystem functions. This may bias the conclusions drawn from molecular studies which are based on extracted DNA. Methods to detect the active taxa and which can cost-effectively be applied to multiple samples on a high-throughput basis are scarce. Here we use 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequences generated from both extracted RNA and DNA. We developed a method which identifies those sequence variants (taxa) which show large rRNA:DNA ratios, which are not explained by the stochastic variations introduced by nucleic acid extraction, PCR, or sequencing reactions. By using suitable thresholds we determined the active bacterial taxa across 60 grassland soil plots from the German “Biodiversity Exploratories” (www.biodiversity-exploratories.de). Generally, on each plot, the RNA based composition of the active community is more similar to the DNA based community composition of the same plot but differs more strongly across plots. Our threshold revealed only 1-2% of all taxa to be active. Their taxonomic composition is not different from the overall community composition and they cover both rare and dominant taxa. Boosted linear modelling revealed pH, soil carbon and soil moisture to be the prominent drivers of community composition from both RNA and DNA extractions. In contrast to community composition, the proportion of active taxa is driven by completely different variables, namely C/N ratio, cumulative grass coverage, fine-root biomass but also earthworm counts. Also, the proportion of active taxa correlates positively with soil respiration. This suggests that variables such as pH, which affects community composition but apparently not the activity status of the cells, have less ecological relevance than previously thought. As our method enables us to identify variables which drive the activity status of specific but yet uncultured taxa, it also yields novel insights into the ecology of microbial dark matter.

According to forecasts by health organizations, the number of deaths due to infections with antibiotic-resistant bacteria will rise from the current 9,000,000 to 10 million annually within the next 30 years (e.g. Review on Antimicrobial Resistance). In order to prevent this dramatic development, effective strategies are needed that take both human and veterinary medicine as well as the environment into account. Little is currently known about the transfer between these compartments. In particular, there is a lack of knowledge concerning the survival of the antibiotic-resistant cells and their role in the spread and maintenance of the resistance gene in the other compartment. Through the discharge of treated wastewater, antibiotic-resistant human pathogens are permanently introduced into aquatic ecosystems. To fill this gap of knowledge, microcosm studies lasting for 22 days were conducted to investigate their impact on the microbial community composition (assembled community consisting of 21 Gram-negative species). Additionally, the effect of subinhibitory antibiotic resistance genes on the uptake of the plasmid by the respective community members was tested. In the short term, the entry of the three different Escherichia coli strains harboring the naturally occurring RP4 plasmid has significantly altered the microbial community. The observed change and subsequent recovery was independent of which Escherichia coli strain was added. In contrast to community composition, however, the latter played an important role in the spread of the plasmid carrying the resistance genes. If a species was able to pick up the plasmid, it happened at the beginning of the experiment within the first three transfers (8 days). The probability of a plasmid being acquired by a species was directly dependent on its abundance. The presence of subinhibitory antibiotic concentrations had only a secondary effect on the speed of the plasmid spread. In conclusion, resistance determinants carrying cells transferred between compartments can play a crucial role as starting points for the spread of antibiotic resistance genes even if they are not able to survive in the new environment.
**290-MEEV**

A novel plant tumorigenic *Rhizobium* sp. associated with crown gall disease of rhododendron, as revealed through genomics

*N. Kuzmanovic1*, I. Idczak2, S. Wagner2, M. Götz3, C. Spröer2, B. Bunk2, J. Overmann3,4, K. Smalla2

1Julius Kühn-Institut, Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants (JKI), Institute for Epidemiology and Pathogen Diagnostics, Braunschweig, Germany
2Julius Kühn-Institut, Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants (JKI), Institute for Plant Protection in Horticulture and Forests, Braunschweig, Germany
3Leibniz Institute DSMZ-German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures, Braunschweig, Germany
4Microbiology, Braunschweig University of Technology, Braunschweig, Germany
5Julius Kühn-Institut, Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants (JKI), Institute for Epidemiology and Pathogen Diagnostics, Braunschweig, Germany

Tumorigenic agrobacteria are causal agents of crown gall disease worldwide. Crown gall is an economically important plant disease occurring in various agricultural crops. Tumorigenic agrobacteria are commonly identified within the genera *Agrobacterium*, *Allorhizobium* and *Rhizobium*. These phytopathogens carry tumor-inducing (Ti) plasmids that are indispensable for the pathogenesis.

Although crown gall disease was reported to occur in rhododendron, little information on the causal agent is available. The primary objective of this study was to identify and characterize agrobacteria associated with the disease in Germany.

Draft whole-genome sequences of three representative tumorigenic strains isolated from crown gall tumors on rhododendron were obtained using the Illumina NextSeq 500 platform. One strain was also sequenced on the PacBio platform to obtain a high-quality complete chromosome and plasmid sequences.

Genome comparisons with reference *Rhizobiaceae* strains suggested that tumorigenic bacteria isolated from rhododendron tumors are most closely related to *Rhizobium tumorigenes*, a novel tumorigenic bacterium discovered recently on blackberry in Serbia. Analysis of genome relatedness and phylogenomic inference indicated that *R. tumorigenes* and novel rhododendron strains belong to separate species and form a homogeneous and independent clade within the genus *Rhizobium*. Moreover, tumorigenic bacteria isolated from rhododendron carry a large Ti plasmid (~380 kb), that was different to those carried by *R. tumorigenes* and Ti plasmids described so far. The novel Ti plasmid has an atypical organization of T-DNA and virulence (*vir*) regions, and carries conjugal transfer genes unusual for Ti plasmids.

The results of this study highlight the diversity of tumorigenic agrobacteria and their Ti plasmids, and contribute to the better understanding of the etiology of the crown gall disease on rhododendron.

**292-MEEV**

Metatranscriptomic insights into syntrophic propionate metabolism in anaerobic digestion

*S. Dyksma1, C. Galler1
1Hochschule Emden-Leer, Mikrobiologie/Biotechnologie, Emden, Germany

Short chain fatty acids are major intermediates in the mineralization of organic matter in methanogenic environments. The thermodynamically challenging degradation of propionate requires microbial cooperation between a bacterium and a syntrophic partner. *Candidatus Syntrophophaera (Cloacimonetes)* together with *Smithella* and *Syntrophobacter* were regularly identified as the dominant syntrophic propionate-oxidizing bacteria (SPOB) in biogas reactors from wastewater treatment plants. Here, we targeted such system as a model to study propionate...
metabolism of those three genera SPOB using metagenomics and metatranscriptomics. In laboratory-scale reactors fed with propionate as sole carbon source Ca. Syntrophosphaera, Smithihella and Syntrophobacter were among the bacteria that showed highest transcriptional activity, however, with a distinct gene expression profile. The methylmalonyl-CoA pathway (MMC) for propionate oxidation was active in Syntrophobacter and a large fraction of MMC-transcripts were also assigned to Ca. Syntrophosphaera. Contrary to the MMC expressed in Syntrophobacter, essential genes coding for enzymes involved in energy conservation were not detected. Moreover, the Ca. Syntrophosphaera highly express amino acid fermentation genes that are unique among SPOB. Using the metatranscriptomic approach we could provide novel molecular insights into the C6-dismutation pathway for propionate oxidation that has been identified only in Smithihella so far.

293-MEEV
Complex food webs in groundwater coincide with high genetic potential for chemolithoautotrophy

*M. Herrmann*1,2, P. Geesink1, L. Yan1,2, R. Lehmann1,2, K. U. Totsche1, K. Küsel1,2
1Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Institute of Biodiversity, Aquatic Geomicrobiology, Jena, Germany
2German Center for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv) Halle-Jena-Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany
3Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Institute of Geosciences, Jena, Germany

Absence of light-driven primary production, limited space and oxygen availability cause groundwater ecosystems to show lower food web complexity compared to other freshwater habitats. Chemolithoautotrophy in the subsurface provides additional input of carbon, however, its effects on groundwater food webs are poorly understood. Targeting SSU rRNA genes and genes involved in bacterial chemolithoautotrophy, we followed eukaryotic and bacterial communities in oligotrophic groundwater along a hillslope setting of alternating mixed carbonate-/siliciclastic bedrock in central Germany, covering both oxic and anoxic conditions. Across all sites, we found diverse protist communities including *Ciliophora*, *Cercozoa*, *Ichthyospora*, *Centroheliozoa*, and amoeba. Correlation with hydrochemical parameters was less pronounced for eukaryotes compared to bacteria across the hydrogeologically compartmentalized flow system. 18S rRNA sequence data also pointed to the presence of metazoan top predators such as *Cyclopoida* (Arthropoda) and *Stenostomidae* (Platyhelminthes). Interestingly, molecular evidence of these organisms was only found in groundwater wells where abundances of functional genes associated with chemolithoautotrophy were 10 to 100 times higher compared to wells without these top predators. In wells closer to recharge areas with presumably increased inputs of soil-derived substances and biota, up to 85% of the eukaryotic sequence reads were affiliated with fungi, together with a low potential for chemolithoautotrophy. Our results suggest the existence of complex food webs with several trophic levels in oligotrophic groundwater. Chemolithoautotrophy appears to provide strong support to the proposed trophic interactions, as it could feed in additional biomass produced by light-independent CO2-fixation.

294-MEEV
Predatory interactions between mycophagous amoeba and fungal pathogens

*S. H. Lau*1,2, S. Höfgen1,2, R. Lehmann1,2, K. U. Totsche1, K. Küsel1,2
1Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Institute of Biodiversity, Aquatic Geomicrobiology, Jena, Germany
2German Center for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv) Halle-Jena-Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany

Predatory interactions among microbes are considered to be a major evolutionary driving force for biodiversity, but may also have contributed to the acquisition and maintenance of microbial virulence determinants. The Amoebozoa are a major group of ubiquitous, eukaryotic micro-predators that commonly feed on microbial prey by phagocytosis and subsequent intracellular killing. However, their complex biology has often prevented species specific interaction studies at the laboratory scale. To study the impact of amoeba predation on fungi and elucidate recognition as well as killing mechanisms, we have recently isolated and characterized the amoeba *Protopustum aurantium*.

Food source screenings identified a wide food spectrum of ascomycete and basidiomycete yeasts, but also included filamentous fungi such as *Aspergillus fumigatus* which was killed via an active invasion to the fungal hyphae. Functional genomic data revealed that fungal copper and redox homeostasis were the primary targets during phagocytic interactions in *C. parapsilosis*. Gene deletions for the highly expressed fungal copper exporter *CrtP* and the peroxiredoxin *Prx1* confirmed their role in copper and redox homeostasis, respectively and further identified methionine biosynthesis as ROS sensitive target during predation. Fluorescence microscopy using GFP-labelled cells of *Candida parapsilosis* further revealed that the yeast prey was rapidly internalized and underwent lysis within minutes inside the phagolysosome of *P. aurantium*. To identify these lytic factors, we have adapted the culture conditions to grow the amoeba in shake flasks up to 1 L using *C. parapsilosis* as a single food source. Cellular extracts from such *P. aurantium* cultures reduced fungal viability in a concentration dependent manner due to rapid lysis of the yeast cells. Experiments to identify this lytic factor are currently ongoing and will not only elucidate the highly efficient killing strategies employed by this fungi specific predator, but may also provide a new perspective on antifungal therapy or biocontrol.

295-MEEV
Horizontal transfer of bacteriocin micrococcin P1 genes among nasal *Staphylococcus aureus* strains

*S. Krauss*1,2, B. Krismer1, S. Heilbronner1, A. Peschel1,2
1Eberhard-Karls Universität Tübingen, Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Tübingen - Infection Biology, Tübingen, Germany
2Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology Hans Knöll Institute (HKI), Junior Research Group Evolution of Microbial Interactions, Jena, Germany

The human nasal microbiota has recently emerged as a promising source for new antimicrobials. Steady competition for nutrients promotes the evolution of strategies to surpass competitors, for instance the production of antimicrobial active compounds.

Screening of a collection of nasal isolates for antimicrobial activity against epidemic *S. aureus* USA300 resulted in the identification of USA300-inhibiting *S. aureus* isolate D4-19. The strain also exhibited strong antimicrobial activity against other clinical relevant bacterial pathogens. Genes required for the antimicrobial effect were identified by transposon mutagenesis and are located on a 28 kb plasmid called pD4-19. The biosynthetic gene cluster shows low similarity to micrococcin P1 biosynthesis genes of *Macrococcus aurantiunum*. 

1Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology Hans Knöll Institute (HKI), Junior Research Group Evolution of Microbial Interactions, Jena, Germany
2Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Institute of Microbiology, Jena, Germany
3Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology Hans Knöll Institute (HKI), Junior Research Group Biobricks of Natural Product Biosyntheses, Jena, Germany
caseolyticus plasmid pBAC115. Mass spectrometry analysis confirmed that S. aureus isolate D4-19 but not the transposon mutant produces a compound with the mass of micrococcin P1.

This is the first report of micrococcin P1 production by S. aureus suggesting that nasal Staphylococcus strains can take up bacteriocin plasmids by horizontal gene transfer. Transformation of S. aureus RN4220 with pD4-19 enabled the production of micrococcin P1 in RN4220. Growth curves revealed that the newly acquired production of MP1 has a strong impact on RN4220 fitness. Daily passaging of S. aureus RN4220 pD4-19 generated an adapted mutant and genome sequencing will be performed to identify genomic alterations responsible for the observed fitness increase.

These results support the notion that the human nose is a rich source for new antimicrobials of high diversity and interchangeability, which evolve continuously by horizontal exchange and recombination. However, the impact of sudden antibiotic production on the cell metabolism and general fitness and resulting genetic adaptations need to be further investigated.

Recent Publications:
Czech et al. (2018) Genes 9: 177

296-SeSIMV
c-di-AMP metabolism and functions in Streptomyces

Balance of the nucleotide molecule cyclic di-AMP is crucial for bacterial adaptation to osmotic signals and virulence. Both, accumulation and reduction of c-di-AMP can have detrimental effects on microbial vitality. However, antibiotic-producing Streptomyces and many other Actinobacteria produce c-di-AMP but do not contain known proteins for c-di-AMP cleavage. Here, we show that DisA is the major diadenylate cyclase producing c-di-AMP in Streptomyces venezuelae. As a counterpart to DisA, we identified AtaC as the founding member of a novel class of highly conserved c-di-AMP-specific phosphodiesterases. AtaC homologs are widely distributed in Actinobacteria and are also present in pathogens such as S. pneumoniae and M. tuberculosis. Our biochemical and structural analysis revealed that AtaC is a monomer in solution, and that it binds Mn^{2+} to specifically hydrolyze c-di-AMP to AMP via the intermediate 5"-pApA. Inactivation of disA renders S. venezuelae highly susceptible to ionic osmotic stress and accumulation of c-di-AMP in the ataC mutant strongly delays development. We show that c-di-AMP binds to the RCK-domain protein CpeA that interacts with the cation / proton antiporter CpeB. Altogether, characterization of AtaC and CpeA as novel components of c-di-AMP signal transduction pathways in Actinobacteria demonstrates that correctly balanced c-di-AMP is needed for vitality and coordinated differentiation in multicellular Streptomyces.

Bioinformatic analysis suggests the widespread use and adaptations of this metabolic pathway, not only in the context of phylogenomic or habitat distribution, but also in the context of microbes capable of both, ectoine production and degradation.

The high osmolarity glycerol (HOG) pathway for osmoregulation in the model organism Magnaporthe oryzae is an attractive signaling pathway to study the basics of fungal physiology. The HOG pathway consists of a phosphorelay system and a MAPK cascade enabling to adapt towards extracellular osmotic changes in the environment. The major osmolyte produced as an osmotic stress response is arabitol. Individual "loss of function" (lof) mutants of the HOG pathway are impaired in osmoregulation. Lof-mutants of the HOG pathway are unable to produce arabitol and thereby being more sensitive towards osmotic changes.

The high osmolarity glycerol (HOG) pathway for osmoregulation in the model organism Magnaporthe oryzae as a model organism, we set out to learn more about the mechanisms of the degradation of ectoines and the genetic regulation of these processes.

To do so we investigated the main regulator of the operon, EnuR, a GntR-type protein which binds to two specific operator sites upstream of the ectoine utilization gene cluster and acts as a transcriptional repressor as shown by reporter gene and bandshift assays. EnuR consists of a DNA-binding domain tethered to a large aminotransferase domain by a long flexible linker. The truncated aminotransferase domain could successfully be overproduced and still showed a strong yellow colour. This originates from a lysine residue covalently binding pyridoxal phosphate (vitamin B6, PLP) as a cofactor to detect the inducers and ectoine metabolites N-α-ADABA and diaminobutyric acid (DABA). By employing an EnuR mutant unable to bind PLP and the apo-form of EnuR, we could show that this regulator needs PLP to interact with the primary aminogroup of its inducers. To further assess the catabolic route of both ectoines, we heterologously produced the core catabolic enzymes EutDE of R. pomeroyi in E. coli and could show via HPLC analysis, that not only both enzymes are needed to degrade ectoines, but that actually both, ectoine as well as hydroxyectoine are degraded by EutDE. ectoine degradation leads to the well known inducers N-α-ADABA and DABA, whereas hydroxyectoine degradation produces hydroxy-N-α-ADABA and hydroxy-DABA as further substantiated by NMR analysis.

Bioinformatic analysis suggests the widespread use and adaptations of this metabolic pathway, not only in the context of phylogenomic or habitat distribution, but also in the context of microbes capable of both, ectoine production and degradation.

Recent Publications:
Czech et al. (2018) Genes 9: 177

297-SeSIMV
Regulation and Mechanisms - Metabolism of the Osmostress protectants Ectoine and Hydroxyectoine in Ruegeria pomeroyi

A wide range of microorganisms use ectoine and hydroxyectoine as osmoprotectants. Many Bacteria including the Roseobacter species can recycle these osmolytes by using them as carbon, nitrogen and energy sources. Employing the marine species Ruegeria pomeroyi as a model organism, we set out to learn more about the mechanisms of the degradation of ectoines and the genetic regulation of these processes.

The high osmolarity glycerol (HOG) pathway for osmoregulation in the model organism Magnaporthe oryzae is an attractive signaling pathway to study the basics of fungal physiology. The HOG pathway consists of a phosphorelay system and a MAPK cascade enabling to adapt towards extracellular osmotic changes in the environment. The major osmolyte produced as an osmotic stress response is arabitol. Individual "loss of function" (lof) mutants of the HOG pathway are impaired in osmoregulation. Lof-mutants of the HOG pathway are unable to produce arabitol and thereby being more sensitive towards osmotic changes.

Long-term cultivation at high osmolarity resulted in stable mutants that arose as individuals being restored in
osmoregulation from each of the individual lof-mutant. Within a relatively short time period, compared to millions of years of evolution, a rewiring of the signaling pathway in M. oryzae could be observed after 4 weeks. Interestingly, all of the “suppressor”-mutants found to be exclusively produce glycerol as a major compatible upon salt stress instead of arabitol. The “suppressors” are reestablished in osmoregulation and are able to memorize osmoregulation-ability even after growing weeks without stress. In addition, all “suppressor” mutants are again sensitive to Fludioxonil, suggesting that the HOG path or even its function has been rewired independently in each “suppressor” strain.

This phenomenon has been further investigated by DNA and RNA sequencing of ΔMohog1(suppressed) resulting in a set of candidate genes may be responsible for the rewiring of the osmoregulation pathway.

We aim to combine theoretical approaches to integrate sequencing data from genomics and transcriptomics with modern quantitative (phospho)-proteomic techniques. Furthermore, reversed molecular genetics will be used to validate the candidate genes or even other factors found to putatively promote or constrain rapid evolutionary adaptation. We are convinced that this phenomenon is important for the comprehension of rapid evolutionary processes in eukaryotes and can be applied to other organisms apart from M. oryzae.

299-SoSiMV
Spotlight on Fungal Rhodopsins: Green Light Sensors Meet Super-resolution Microscopy and Electrophysiology
*S. Panzer, S. Sputh1,2, C. Stigloher3, U. Terpitz1
1Julius Maximilian University, Biotechnology and Biophysics, Wuerzburg, Germany
2Julius Maximilian University, Imaging Core Facility, Wuerzburg, Germany

Phytopathogenic fungi are often exposed to light, which strongly influences their physiology and behavior. Thus, they possess different photoreceptors, among them rhodopsins, which perceive green light that is prevalent in the phyllosphere. Fungal rhodopsins are of the microbial type and use all-trans-retinal as a chromophore. These proteins are widespread in the fungal kingdom, but up to date, very little is known about their biological role. In electrophysiological experiments, it was found that CarO from the ascomycete Fusarium fujikuroi, as well as UmOps1 (CarO-like rhodopsin) and UmOps2 (Leptosphaeria maculans) act as proton pumps [1,2]. Strikingly, UmOps1 is influenced by acidic pH, which greatly enhances the pump activity. An additional supporting effect is visible in the presence of weak organic acids (WOAs) like acetate or the auxin indoleacetic acid (IAA), not only in UmOps1 but also in CarO [2,3] suggesting a potential role of CarO-like rhodopsins in the plant-fungus interaction. In contrast, UmOps2 is lacking both effects. We use patch-clamp measurements on functional mutants of CarO and UmOps1 to investigate the mechanisms underlying the WOA-induced increase of the pump activity. Moreover, we use state-of-the-art fluorescent microscopic techniques including 3D-SIM to localize the rhodopsins in fungal cells. CarO as well as UmOps1 were found in the plasma membrane whereas UmOps2 mainly localizes in the tonoplast. We further use correlative light and electron microscopy (CLEM) to visualize the rhodopsins in the subcellular context.


300-SoSiMV
Identification and characterization of secondary active betaine/choline/carnitine transporters in Acinetobacter baumannii
*J. Breisch1, B. Averhoff1
1Goethe University Frankfurt, Molecular Microbiology & Bioenergetics, Frankfurt, Germany

Introduction: In the last decades the number of Acinetobacter baumannii infections of intensive care patients increased significantly, due to its multidrug resistance and its diverse persistence mechanisms. An extraordinary trait of A. baumannii is its high desiccation resistance which is based on perfect adaptation to dry or hyperosmotic conditions. One strategy to cope with osmostress is the uptake of compatible solutes such as betaine or its precursor choline from the environment via specific transporters. Interestingly, A. baumannii has a whole set of six transporters belonging to the betaine/choline/carnitine transporter family (BCCT).

Objectives: The aim of the study was the biochemical characterization of the BCCT transporters of A. baumannii and to address the role of these transporters in osmoprotection and adaptation to the human host.

Materials & methods: Heterologous expression of BCCT transporters, solute uptake and mutant studies.

Results: Uptake studies with radioactively labeled substrates revealed that three of the BCCT transporters are choline transporters whereas three mediate the uptake of betaine. Two of the choline specific and one betaine specific transporter are osmo-independent. One of the osmo-independent choline transporters is also responsible for carnitine uptake which is used by A. baumannii as sole carbon and energy source1. Furthermore, we identified a transcriptional regulator of the carnitine metabolic pathway.

Conclusions: In this study we identified and characterized six BCCT transporters of A. baumannii. Further, we showed that these six transporters have significant roles in: osmoprotection and carbon source assimilation. Taken together, the presence of multiple osmo-independent BCCT transporters and its function in metabolic adaptation linked with the high abundance of betaine, choline and carnitine in the human suggests a role of these transporters in persistence of A. baumannii in the human host.


301-SoSiMV
Phosphoglucomutase is a key regulatory point in glycolgen metabolism during nitrogen-chlorosis.
*S. Doello1, K. Forchhammer1
1University of Tübingen, Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany

One the most frequent challenges cyanobacteria face in nature is nitrogen limitation. The non-nitrogen fixing cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 has developed a metabolic strategy to survive periods of nitrogen starvation by entering a state of dormancy, which is characterized by


degradation of the photosynthetic apparatus and most cellular components and the accumulation of reserve polymers. During the awakening from nitrogen starvation, *Synechocystis* passes through a heterotrophic phase before re-entering photoautotrophic growth in which they respire the polymers they have accumulated during the preceding starvation phase (1). Here, we investigated the switch from a maintenance metabolism to heterotrophy upon addition of nitrogen. We found that glycogen is the substrate for respiration during this process. Interestingly, the key enzymes for glycogen catabolism are already expressed during nitrogen starvation, when glycogen is being synthesized, rendering cells ready for rapid resuscitation (2). These enzymes are present in their active form, but glycogen degradation only starts after the addition of nitrate. Initiation of glycogen degradation seems to depend on dephosphorylation (3), and activation, of the phosphoglucosomutase. Overall, our results show the importance of the regulation of glycogen degradation for survival of nitrogen starvation.


**302-SeSiMV**

An Hfq-binding sRNA controlling fatty acid metabolism in *Vibrio cholerae*

*M. Huber*, K. Fröhlich*1*, K. Papenfort*1*

*1Friedrich Schiller University, Institute of Microbiology, Jena, Germany*

Small RNAs (sRNAs) are a versatile group of regulators affecting bacterial gene expression at various levels. The largest class of sRNAs function by short and imperfect base-pairing with trans-encoded target mRNAs, modifying their translation and/or the stability. A vast majority of these sRNAs require the global RNA chaperone Hfq to fulfill their function. Loss of Hfq typically results in pleiotropic phenotypes and in *Vibrio cholerae*, a major human pathogen, Hfq inactivation has been linked to reduced virulence, failure to produce biofilms, and impaired intercellular communication. However, the set of Hfq-bound RNAs in *V. cholerae* is currently unknown. In this project, we use RIP-seq analysis (RNA immunoprecipitation followed by high throughput sequencing) to detect RNA-ligands of Hfq in *V. cholerae*. We discovered 682 transcripts interacting with Hfq, 85 of which are small regulatory RNAs. Interestingly, 46 of these sRNAs originate from the 3′ untranslated region (3′ UTR) of coding transcripts. Detailed investigation of one of these sRNAs, called FarS (fatty acid regulated small RNA), identified a feed-forward loop regulating the transition between fatty acid biosynthesis and degradation. FarS is expressed from the 3′ UTR of the *tabB* gene, whose gene product catalyzes the initial step in fatty acid biosynthesis, and expression of FarS is strongly repressed in the presence of fatty acids. We show that FarS inhibits the translation of two paralogous *fadE* mRNAs, encoding acyl-CoA dehydrogenase, the enzyme responsible for the first step in fatty acid degradation. Based on our findings, we hypothesize that FarS is a central regulator of fatty acid metabolism in *V. cholerae*.

**303-SeSiMV**

The critical role of Zur and SmtB in regulating zinc homeostasis of *Mycobacterium smegmatis*

*1E. Goethe*, K. Laarmann*1*, J. Lührs*1*, M. Jarek*1*, J. Meens*1*, R. Goethe*1*, A. Lewin*2*

*1University of Verinary Medicine Hannover, Institute for Microbiology, Department of Infectious Diseases, Hannover, Germany

*2Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Genome Analytics, Braunschweig, Germany*

*3Robert Koch Institute, Berlin, Germany*

Introduction

Maintenance of zinc homeostasis is crucial for bacterial viability. Bacteria efficiently regulate zinc homeostasis by using transport- or storage-systems, such as the common ZnuABC importer, the ZtA exporter, or alternative zinc independent ribosomal proteins (ARP). In mycobacteria, these systems are regulated by the antagonistically working repressors SmtB and Zur. The knowledge of zinc metabolism in mycobacteria including the apathogenic species *Mycobacterium smegmatis* (MSMEG) is poor. Therefore, in the presented study we intended to provide a comprehensive overview of MSMEG zinc homeostasis.

Materials & Methods

RNA deep sequencing and transcriptome analyses of MSMEGΔsmtB, MSMEGΔzur, MSMEGΔsmtBΔzur deletion mutants and MSMEG wildtype from standard, TPEN or zinc culture. Zur-Box analyses, promoter studies of the *smtB*-promoter and Zur/SmtB ChiP assay.

Results

Transcriptome analyses of TPEN treated MSMEGw and MSMEGΔzur revealed an exceptional genomic clustering of strongly induced genes, *msmeg_6045*, *msmeg_6065*, including genes of ARPs (*msmeg_6051*, *msmeg_6052*, *msmeg_6065*), the common zinc importer ZnuABC (encoding a putative zinc transporter) and three additional putative zinc transporters (*msmeg_6051*, *msmeg_6052*). The number of genes affected by zinc excess and deletion of *smtB* was considerably lower. The most prominently regulated gene in MSMEGΔsmtB was *msmeg_6075*, encoding a homologue to MTB Zita. Transcriptional analysis revealed interdependent regulation of the *smtB*-zur operon by Zur and SmtB, as deletion of one regulator resulted in an increased expression of the other. ChiP assay showed zinc dependent binding of SmtB and Zur to the MSMEG *smtB* promoter. Promoter studies of MSMEGw and mutants confirmed sensitive zinc dependent co-regulation of the *smtB*-zur operon by both regulators. This is in striking contrast to pathogenic mycobacteria, where *smtB*-zur is regulated by SmtB only.

Conclusion

Our works show that MSMEG is well adapted to respond to environmental zinc changes and revealed significant differences to pathogenic mycobacteria. This reflects the adaptation of each species to their specific environment and should be taken into account, when performing research in MSMEG.
Syntrophy and coexistence in a sulfido-oxidizing phototrophic bloom – Uncultured Chlorobi drive microbial community dynamics and sulfur cycling in a hypoxic habitat

1Marine Biological Laboratory, Ecosystems Center, Woods Hole, United States
2University of Calgary, Biosciences, Calgary, Canada
3University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Medicine and Public Health, Madison, United States
4University of Colorado, Geological Sciences, Boulder, United States
5Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Cambridge, United States
6University of California Davis, Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, Davis, United States

Lagoons are common along coastlines worldwide and important for biogeochemical element cycling, coastal biodiversity, coastal erosion protection and blue carbon sequestration. Here, we investigated a shallow lagoon in New England. The sulfido-methanogenic ecosystem releases hydrogen sulfide particularly upon physical disturbance, causing blooms of anoxicogenic sulfur-oxidizing phototrophs. To study the habitat, microbial community structure, assembly and function we performed in situ experiments investigating the bloom dynamics over time.

We describe coexistence patterns and ecological niches in planktonic blooms of phototrophs that are similar to those found in phototrophic microbial mats. The water column showed steep gradients of oxygen, pH, sulfate, sulfide, and salinity. The upper part of the bloom was dominated by Cyanobacteria, the middle and lower parts by anoxygenic purple sulfur bacteria (Chromatiales) and green sulfur bacteria (Chlorobiiales), respectively. We show stable coexistence of phototrophic lineages from five bacterial phyla and present metagenome-assembled genomes (MAGs) of two uncultured Chlorobiiales species. The MAGs contained genes involved in sulfur oxidation and photopigment biosynthesis, but also operons encoding for terminal oxidases. The metagenomes contained numerous contigs affiliating with Microviridae viruses, potentially affecting Chlorobi. Our data suggest a short sulfur cycle in which elemental sulfur produced by sulfide-oxidizing phototrophs is reduced back to sulfide by Desulfituromonas sp.

The release of sulfide creates a habitat selecting for anoxicogenic sulfur-oxidizing phototrophs, which in turn create a niche for sulfur reducers. Strong syntrophy between these guilds seems to drive a short sulfur cycle that may explain the rapid development of the bloom. The high biomass yield of Chlorobi-affiliated organisms implies that the studied lineages thrive in the presence of oxygen, which is corroborated by oxidases found in their MAGs. The findings improve our understanding of the ecology and ecophysiology of anoxicogenic phototrophs in hypoxic habitats and their impact on the coupled biogeochemical cycles of sulfur and carbon.

DNA methylation plays a crucial role for gene regulation among eukaryotes, but its regulatory function is less documented in bacteria. In the cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 five DNA methyltransferases have been identified. Among them, M.Ssp6803II is responsible for the specific methylation of the first cytosine in the frequently occurring motif GGCC, leading to N4-methycytosine (Gm4CC). The mutation of the corresponding gene sll0729 led to lowered chlorophyll/phytocyanin ratio and slower growth. Transcriptomics only showed altered expression of sll0470 and sll1526, two genes encoding hypothetical proteins. Moreover, prolonged cultivation revealed instability of the initially obtained phenotype. Suppressor mutants appeared where the sll0729 gene was still completely inactivated and the GGCC sites remained unmethylated. The suppressor strains showed smaller cell size, lowered DNA content per cell, and decreased tolerance against UV compared to wild type. Promoter assays revealed that the transcription of the sll0470 gene was still stimulated in the suppressor clones. Proteomics identified decreased levels of DNA topoisomerase 4 subunit A in suppressor cells. Collectively, these results indicate that Gm4CC methylation is involved in the regulation of gene expression, in the fine-tuning of DNA replication, and DNA repair mechanisms.

306-PMV
Impact of c-di-GMP on the motor ATPase PilB1 of the type IV pilus in the model cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803
T. Wallner1, H. Kuemmel2, G. van der Does2, A. Wilde1
1University of Freiburg, Institute of Biology III - Molecular Genetics, Freiburg, Germany
2University of Freiburg, Institute of Biology III - Molecular Biology of Archaea, Freiburg, Germany

Many cyanobacteria are able to move across surfaces using type IV pilus thus, enabling the cells to make decisions about lifestyle and to actively search for suitable environmental conditions. Although light-controlled movement of cyanobacteria has been observed and described for a long time, the basic biochemical and molecular mechanisms are poorly understood. The model cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 (hereafter Synechocystis) shows light-induced motility on surfaces using type IV pili depending on the quantity and quality of light. Cyclic nucleotide second messengers such like c-di-GMP and cAMP are involved in the regulation of motility. However, the molecular basis how cyclic nucleotides affect this process are not well characterised.

The c-di-GMP binding domain MshEN domain was discovered in the motor ATPase MshE of Vibrio cholerae [1]. The MshEN domain is conserved in cyanobacterial proteins and can be found in PilB1, the type IV pilus secretion motor ATPase of Synechocystis, which is crucial for photos taxis. Interestingly, the MshEN domain is also found in PilB2 protein, another PilB homologue of Synechocystis, that is dispensable for motility. Using different strategies to optimize heterologous protein expression and affinity chromatography, we were able to purify the MshEN domain of PilB1 and PilB2, which were used in a fluorescence-based approach to verify binding of the c-di-GMP ligand to this domain. Further, we mutated several amino acids that constitute the binding pocket to prevent binding of c-di-GMP. These protein variants were used in our assay as well. In addition, we currently investigate if and how the altered binding of c-di-GMP to the PilB1 protein modifies the function of the MshEN domain. Further, promoters of the PilB1 and PilB2 ATPase were shown to be c-di-GMP responsive in a fluorescence-based assay and in a biofilm formation assay. To understand the function of the PilB1 ATPase in the cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803, we aim to analyse the effect of c-di-GMP and the MshEN domain on the morphology of these cells in more detail.

305-PMV
DNA-methylation is involved in the regulation of transcription, fine-tuning of DNA replication and DNA repair in the cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803
M. Hagemann1, K. Gärtner2, S. Klähn3, I. Scholz4, S. Mikkat5, W. R. Hess2
1University of Rostock, Plant Physiology, Rostock, Germany
2UFZ, Department of Solar Materials, Leipzig, Germany
3University Freiburg, Genetics & Experimental Bioinformatics, Freiburg, Germany
4University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Medicine and Public Health, Madison, United States
5University of Colorado, Geological Sciences, Boulder, United States

DNA methylation is a mark for gene regulation in many organisms. DNA methylation increases gene expression in bacteria. This is of special interest in the cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 because five DNA methyltransferases have been identified, of which one is responsible for the specific methylation of the first cytosine in the frequently occurring motif GGCC. This results in the formation of N4-methylcytosine (Gm4CC).}

*University Rostock, Core Facility Proteome Analysis, Rostock, Germany

**University of Freiburg, Institute of Biology III - Molecular Genetics, Freiburg, Germany

***University of Freiburg, Institute of Biology III - Molecular Biology of Archaea, Freiburg, Germany
Cyanobacteria are the only bacteria performing oxygenic photosynthesis. Due to their lifestyle they are found in every light-exposed habitat. Besides their huge environmental impact (O2 production, CO2 fixation and primary production) they are of growing interest in biotechnology. However, knowledge of this bacterial clade is still limited, impeding the exploitation of their full biotechnological potential. E.g., knowledge of the regulation of cyanobacterial metabolism is scarce. Several examples indicate that cyanobacteria evolved a plethora of unique regulatory mechanisms governing metabolism. E.g., glutamine synthetase (GS) is controlled by the interaction with small proteins, so-called inactivating factors (IF) which are unique to but very common among cyanobacteria (for details see 1). Moreover, cyanobacteria evolved unique RNA-based regulation to control the synthesis of these GS inhibitors 2,3.

We identified a small protein that resembles the characterized IFs in several aspects. Gene homologs are present in most cyanobacteria, indicating an important function. Using the model strain Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803, we performed mutagenesis analysis of the corresponding gene ssr0692 and metabolite profiling in response to changes in C/N balance. We observed striking differences, e.g. in the accumulation of arginine, a precursor of the cyanobacterial N storage compound cyanophycin. In WT, arginine spikes transiently when cells are suddenly exposed to high NH4+ levels. This was absent in strains with a constitutively high amount of Ssr0692. In contrast, ssr0692 knockout strains featured a prolonged arginine accumulation compared to WT. Thus, these data suggest that, similar to the known IFs, a perfectly tuned synthesis of Ssr0692 is crucial for controlling enzyme activity, likely in arginine metabolism. Hence, deploying small proteins as regulators of metabolic enzymes could be a general strategy in cyanobacteria.


The filamentous cyanobacterium, Nostoc sp. PCC7524, produces specialised cells known as heterocytes, which house the oxygen sensitive nitrogenase responsible for biological nitrogen fixation (BNF). The thick heterocyte cell wall reduces oxygen diffusion and contains specific glycolipids that are used as biomarkers for heterocystous cyanobacteria and BNF. Despite evidence of oxygen rich niches during the mid-Archean eon, there was no free oxygen in the Earth’s atmosphere until the Great Oxidation Event (GOE), ~2.4 Ga. The delay in the expansion of early oxygenic phototrophs is thought to have been restricted by biologically accessible N. The aim of this project is to determine the effects of an oxygen free atmosphere and elevated CO2 levels on BNF, photosynthesis and heterocyte glycolipid ratios. As climate change leads to elevated CO2 in the present atmosphere, the understanding of the past may allow the prediction of changes in BNF, photosynthesis and glycolipid contents in heterocystous cyanobacteria.

Nostoc sp. PCC7524 was acclimatised to three different atmospheres under identical growth conditions: present atmospheric levels of O2 and CO2 (PAL), elevated CO2 conditions (eCO2) and an Archean atmosphere without O2 at eCO2. Differences in expression of the nitrogenase niD and Rubisco rbcL1 genes were measured via qRT-PCR and compared to active BNF (using the acetylene reduction assay) and photosynthetic rates (O2 generation). Additionally, the heterocyte glycolipid, glycogen and protein content of end point cultures were analysed.

Our results showed, increased photosynthetic rates under eCO2 conditions, while BNF rates were not substantially raised. Growth rates of Nostoc sp. PCC7524 grown under an Archean atmosphere were significantly reduced. Heterocyte glycolipids were present in the differently grown cultures, supporting their use as biomarkers of BNF. Data generated in this study will offer greater insight into BNF in heterocystous cyanobacteria under future (eCO2) and past (Archean) atmospheric conditions. Additionally, our study provides a novel view into the delay in the expansion of early cyanobacteria prior to the GOE.

Whole-cell redox biocatalysis recently has been realized in a photosynthesis-driven way within cyanobacteria. Phototrophic host organisms possess the advantage to provide both co-substrates of oxygenases, O2 and activated electrons, via the light-driven photosynthetic water splitting reaction. Thereby, oxygen mass transfer limitation, a major bottleneck in O2–dependent biocatalysis, can be avoided. We present results on the application of different oxygenases for photosynthesis-driven oxygenfunctionalization in the photoautotrophic cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC6803. The strain containing a CYP450 oxygenase converted cyclohexane into cyclohexanol. In the absence of external O2, the reaction was shown to be light-dependent, demonstrating that photosynthetically generated O2 is efficiently utilized for oxygenfunctionalization. Quantitative physiological analyses of the photosynthetic apparatus allowed the identification of the potential of cyanobacterial strains to be applied for redox biocatalysis. Comparative analyses with a second oxygenase (a BVMO) also coupled to the photosynthetic apparatus gives us insight into the complex interplay of phototrophic metabolism and heterologous enzyme operation. We analyzed enzyme
activity, product formation and photosynthetic performance. The results showed that the photosynthetic electron flow rate is enhanced under specific reaction conditions to provide electrons for biocatalysis without reducing carbon fixation rates. The results of this study provide a strong and promising basis for the future exploitation of photosynthesis for productive biocatalytic oxyfunctionalization and redox biocatalysis in general.


310-PMV
Flavodiiron proteins as potential targets to improve photosynthetically-driven biotransformations in Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803

In recent years, the potential of the photosynthetic microorganism Synechocystis PCC 6803 as a sustainable cellular factory for the production of various fine and bulk chemicals has come closer to fruition due to the development of various genetic tools and a deeper understanding of its physiology. In particular, the photosynthetic electron transfer chain (PET) endows large amounts of NADPH which can be exploited for biocatalytic applications of heterologous NADPH-dependent enzymes. However, NADPH is also cellularly valuable; whereby various regulatory, protection and acclimation mechanisms make use of it. In particular, some flavodiiron proteins (Flv1 and Flv3), are considered to be NADPH:oxygen oxidoreductases that are actively involved in the protection of the photosynthetic apparatus and permit growth under fluctuating light. In this work, we investigated the effects of a flavodiiron knock-out mutant (Δflv1) on the catalytic activity of a heterologously expressed NADPH dependent ene-reductase (YqM). We postulated that the deletion of flavodiiron proteins can lead to a higher NADPH availability within the cell without incurring significantly visible metabolic damage under controlled conditions.

We followed an in vivo substrate-in-product-out approach whereby cells were fed with 10 mM of substrate and the progress of the reaction was tracked over time. We report that following this approach, the deletion of Flv1 is beneficial for the enzymatic activity of YqM whereby a significant improvement in specific activity is noted compared to the wildtype with conversions of >99%. Additionally, we observed that different conditions during cultivation and biotransformation such as the cell density exerted a strong effect on the cellular activity.

References

311-PMV
Grad-Seq analysis of a photosynthetic bacterium rich in internal membrane systems

Compared to the well-studied RNA chaperones from enterobacterial model organisms, little is known about their functional counterparts in cyanobacteria, specifically those involved in posttranscriptional regulation via small non-coding RNAs (sRNAs). Homologues of those chaperones are either not conserved in cyanobacteria or showed no RNA binding activity (Bøggild et al., 2009 - The FEBS Journal, Schuergers et al., 2014 - Mol. Microbiology), suggesting the existence of yet non-described sRNA chaperones in cyanobacteria.

Gradient profiling by sequencing (Grad-Seq) was first established to identify novel RNA chaperones in the enterobacterial model organism S. enterica (Sminov et al., 2016 - PNAS). This method provides a tool to infer the distribution of RNA-protein complexes along a sucrose density gradient, giving information on how RNAs and Proteins sediment within the gradient on a transcriptome- and proteome-wide scale.

We adapted this experimental approach for the cyanobacterial model organism Synechocystis sp. PCC6803, including an improved data analysis strategy to provide the first dataset of this kind for a photosynthetic organism. The co-fractionation analysis covers about 70% of the whole proteome and more than different 2500 transcripts and provides very promising clues not only into the distribution of RNA-protein complexes, but also for the deeper understanding of protein-protein and multi-protein interactions.

Particularly, the analysis of functionally related proteins that exhibit divergent gradient distributions or hypothetical proteins that are co-fractionating with well-annotated proteins allows for intriguing conclusions in various aspects of the cyanobacterial metabolism.

312-MTV
Controlling the bacterial type III secretion system through protein dynamics: Reversible dissociation of the cytosolic components of the type III secretion system at low pH prevents unregulated protein secretion during infection.

To manipulate eukaryotic host cells, Gram negative bacteria can inject effector proteins via a type III secretion system (T3SS). We recently found that essential cytosolic components of the T3SS injectisome constantly shuttle between the structure and a cytosolic pool, and that this exchange is linked to the export of effectors.
We have now elucidated how bacteria benefit from this protein exchange, by using it to temporarily suppress and quickly reactivate T3SS secretion in response to external cues relevant during infection. The enteropathogen Yersinia enterocolitica uses its T3SS to invade Peyer’s patches and fend off immune cells. Premature T3SS activation in the stomach could be detrimental. Fluorescence microscopy of live bacteria revealed that while core parts of the T3SS remain stable at low external pH, the essential cytosolic T3SS components rapidly dissociate to the cytosol. This reversible dissociation correlates with a transient suppression of T3SS function. Using single-particle tracking, we found that low external pH is sensed in the periplasm, and leads to a partial dissociation of a central ring structure in the inner membrane, which conveys the signal for the temporary dissociation of the cytosolic T3SS components. This striking phenotype allows bacteria to suppress secretion under unfavorable conditions, while enabling the fast initiation of secretion at the target site in the host. In support of this hypothesis, we found that assembly of the cytosolic T3SS components in Pseudomonas aeruginosa, which does not pass the stomach, is not pH-dependent.

Our results elucidate how bacteria can use protein dynamics to regulate the function of protein complexes such as the T3SS in response to external cues. Besides the molecular mechanism and its role in bacterial infection, I will present an application of this newly discovered regulatory principle: an engineered light-controlled T3SS that allows to precisely control bacterial protein secretion and translocation into host cells in space and time.

313-MTV

Structural and mechanistic insights into phospholipase A-mediated membrane phospholipid degradation related to the bacterial virulence

F. Biebelt1, J. Granzin2, M. Caliskan1, M. Siebers2, S. N. Schott-Verdugo1, B. Thiele1, L. Rahme6, P. Dörmann2, H. Gohlke1, R. Batra-Safferling1, K. E. Jaeger1,2, *F. Kovacic1

1Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Institute of Molecular Enzyme Technology, Jülich, Germany
2Institute of Molecular Physiology and Biotechnology of Plants, University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany

Formate Channel FocA

FocA is the prototype of FNTs and it bidirectionally transports anions across the cytoplasmic membrane of prokaryotic cells. FocA is the prototype of FNTs and it bidirectionally translocates formate, the key intermediate in mixed-acid fermentation of glucose in enterobacteria, across the membrane. Although, the translocation mechanism is not understood in detail, FocA is annotated as an ion channel. In the in vivo direction, passage of formate through FocA’s hydrophobic pore is suggested to be facilitated by transient protonation via His209. This central histidine residue is conserved in more than 99% of FNT proteins and only a few pathogenic species have an FNT where the histidine is replaced by asparagine or glutamine.

Here we report on converting FocA into a unidirectional export channel by exchanging His209 to either Asn or Gln. Formate translocation by FocA variants was investigated using an in vivo reporter system based on a formate-inducible promoter. Studies on formate translocation into the cytoplasm were also performed using an E. coli strain lacking the formate-producing enzyme pyruvate formate-lyase (PFb), ensuring a low intracellular formate concentration. Our data revealed that FocA variants His209Asn and His209Gln displayed high formate efflux, even when cells were challenged with 20 mM exogenous formate. Surprisingly, formate import activity of these FocA variants was clearly detectable in strains lacking PFb. Our findings indicate that a protonatable histidine within the hydrophobic pore, as well as the cytoplasmic enzyme PFb both regulate gating of bidirectional formate translocation by FocA.

314-MTV

Converting a bidirectional channel into an unidirectional channel – Studies on the translocation mechanism of Escherichia coli Formate Channel FocA

*M. Kammel1, O. Trebb1, G. Sawers1

1Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Microbiology, Halle a. d. S., Germany

Precise control of ion movements across biological membranes is of major importance for regulation of metabolism e.g. pH, energy or redox balance. Proteins performing these ion transport processes are divided into two general classes – ion channels and pumps (active transporters). While transporters move molecules against a concentration gradient, channels allow a molecule to move down its gradient. The formate channel FocA of Escherichia coli is a pentameric membrane protein of the formate-nitrate transporter (FNT) family. FNTs translocate monovalent anions across the cytoplasmic membrane of prokaryotic cells. FocA is the prototype of FNTs and it bidirectionally translocates formate, the key intermediate in mixed-acid fermentation of glucose in enterobacteria, across the membrane. Although, the translocation mechanism is not understood in detail, FocA is annotated as an ion channel. In the in vivo direction, passage of formate through FocA’s hydrophobic pore is suggested to be facilitated by transient protonation via His209. This central histidine residue is conserved in more than 99% of FNT proteins and only a few pathogenic species have an FNT where the histidine is replaced by asparagine or glutamine.

Changes to the membrane involving degradation of membrane glycerophospholipids (GPLs), although fundamental for life, are poorly understood. Here, we describe PlaF, a cytoplasmic membrane-anchored phospholipase A of Pseudomonas aeruginosa, which modifies the membranes of this pathogenic bacterium by hydrolyzing endogenous GPLs. Fatty acids (FAs), released as products inhibit PlaF activity that is the hallmark of negative feedback regulation and underpin the role of PlaF in membrane turnover. We demonstrate that the hydrolytic activity of PlaF is regulated through reversible dimerization, which is dependent on FAs and protein concentration. The unique high-resolution crystal structure of the full-length dimeric PlaF with FAs bound to its active site reveals, for the first time, atomistic details of the homodimerization of single-pass TM proteins. Dimerization is mediated by interactions of the N-terminal transmembrane (TM) and, an unusually short, juxtamembrane (JM) domains that resemble a continuous kinked α-helix. The TM-JM helix allows constraining the active site cavity of monomeric but not dimeric PlaF, in direct contact with membrane PLs. FA-mediated interaction network which connects the catalytic and dimerization sites provides unprecedented structural details on the regulatory function of FAs on single-pass TM proteins. We propose a monomerization-triggered mode of activation of PlaF at the membrane surface by a TM-JM-dependent constraining mechanism. This mechanism, different from an allosteric response, is elicited by structural rearrangements of the membrane domains of single-pass TM proteins and might be conserved among a variety of enzymes with catalytic activity toward membrane-bound substrates. Virulence properties of PlaF observed in a Drosophila melanogaster infection model, the biofilm and swimming motility assays, pinpoint PlaF as the first target for the development of novel antibiotics interfering with PLA-mediated membrane GPL degradation.
Structural analysis of two chemically driven Na\textsuperscript+-translocating enzymes from anaerobic bacteria

*S. Vitt\textsuperscript{1,2}, S. Prinz\textsuperscript{3}, U. Emler\textsuperscript{4}, W. Buckel\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}Philips Universität, Fachbereich Biologie, Marburg, Germany
\textsuperscript{2}Max-Planck-Institut für Biophysik, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Strict anaerobic bacteria conserve energy via substrate-level phosphorylation and ion gradient forming processes. Examples are the latter are the Na\textsuperscript+-translocating enzymes glutaric-CoA dehydrogenase (Gcd) and ferredoxin: Na\textsuperscript{+} reductase (Rnf). Here we describe our initial results of the structural characterization of these multisubunit membrane complexes by single particle cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) and negative stain EM.

Gcd uses the free energy of decarboxylation ($\Delta G^\circ \approx -30$ kJ/mol) of glutaric-CoA to crotonyl-CoA to drive $2$ Na\textsuperscript{+} from the cytoplasm through the membrane of the gut bacterium Clostridium symbiosum to generate $\Delta \mu$Na\textsuperscript{+} for ATP synthesis. Gcd is composed of 10 subunits, $\text{A}_2\text{B}_2\text{C}_2\text{D}_2$, of which A\textsubscript{2} catalyzes the transfer of the carboxylate of glutaric-CoA to a biotin bound to the protein. The decarboxylation of carboxybiotin mediated by subunits B drives sodium ion translocation, whereas subunits D may serve as membrane anchor of the $\text{A}_4$ tetramer \cite{1}. Cryo-EM of purified Gcd at 7 Å resolution revealed a soluble (A\textsubscript{2}) and a membrane-bound disc (B\textsubscript{2}D\textsubscript{2}), which are connected by subunits C\textsubscript{1} and C\textsubscript{2} \cite{2}.

Rnf from the soil bacterium Clostridium tetanomorphum acts as ferredoxin:NAD reductase, which uses the reduction potential difference of ferredoxin (-420 mV) and NAD (-320 mV) for Na\textsuperscript{+} pumping. In the reverse direction, driven by $\Delta \mu$Na\textsuperscript{+}, it enables formation of H\textsubscript{2} or fixation of N\textsubscript{2} with NADH as reductant. Rnf (172 kDa) was purified from the solubilized membrane fraction and consists of six different subunits A, B, C, D, E and G. RnfD and RnfG host covalently bound FMN and riboflavin, respectively. RnfB contains five iron-sulfur clusters and the ferredoxin binding-site. RnfC, carries two ferredoxin-like [4Fe4S] clusters, one non-covalemently bound FMN and a NADH binding site. RnfJADGE shares high sequence similarity with the corresponding subunits of Nqr from Vibrio cholerae of which a crystal structure is known \cite{3}. Until to date a preliminary negative-stain EM model of Rnf gives a rough idea how the subunits are arranged.

2. Vitt, Prinz, Emler, and Buckel, submitted.

317-MTV
Biopearing of interconnected outer membrane vesicle chains by a marine flavobacterium

T. Fischer\textsuperscript{1}, M. Schorb\textsuperscript{2}, G. Reinjes\textsuperscript{3}, A. Kolovou\textsuperscript{2}, R. Santarella-Mellwig\textsuperscript{4}, S. Markert\textsuperscript{1}, E. Rhiel\textsuperscript{1}, S. Littmann\textsuperscript{4}, D. Becher\textsuperscript{4}, T. Schweder\textsuperscript{4}, *J. Harder\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}Max Planck Institut for Marine Microbiology, Bremen, Germany
\textsuperscript{2}EMBL Heidelberg, Electron Microscopy Core Facility, Heidelberg, Germany
\textsuperscript{3}University of Greifswald, Dep. of Pharmaceutical Biotechnology, Greifswald, Germany
\textsuperscript{4}Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Institute for Chemistry and Biology of the Marine Environment, Oldenburg, Germany
\textsuperscript{5}University of Greifswald, Dept. for Microbial Proteomics, Greifswald, Germany

Outer membrane vesicles are well known, however, their biogenesis is not fully understood. Here we present evidence for a biological pearling of outer membrane vesicles.

Large surface-to-volume ratios provide optimal nutrient uptake conditions for small microorganisms in oligotrophic habitats. The surface area can be increased with appendages. Here we describe chains of interconnecting vesicles protruding from cells of flavobacterium strain Hel3\textsubscript{A1}-48 affiliated with Formosa and originating from coastal free-living bacterioplankton. The chains were up to 10 μm long and had vesicles emanating from the outer membrane with a single membrane and a size of 80-100 nm by 50-80 nm. Cells extruded membrane tubes in the exponential phase, whereas vesicle chains dominated on cells in the stationary growth phase.

This formation is known as pearling, a physical morphogenic process in which membrane tubes protrude from liposomes and transform into chains of interconnected vesicles.

Proteomes of whole cell membranes and of detached vesicles were dominated by outer membrane proteins including the type IX secretion system and surface-attached peptidases, glycoside hydrolases and endonucleases. Fluorescein-labeled laminarin stained the cells and the vesicle chains. Thus, the appendages provide binding domains and degradative enzymes on their surfaces and probably storage volume in the vesicle lumen.
The flavobacterium is abundant during spring bacterioplankton blooms developing after algal blooms and has a special set of enzymes for laminarin, the major storage polysaccharide of microalgae. We demonstrated with fluorescently labelled laminarin that the vesicle chains bind laminarin or contain laminarin-derived compounds. Proteomic analyses revealed surface-attached degradative enzymes on the outer membrane vesicles. We conclude that the large surface area and the lumen of vesicle chains may contribute to the ecological success of this marine bacterium.


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**318-MTV**

The author has not agreed to a publication.

**319-MTV**

**High-resolution cryo-EM structures of respiratory complex I - mechanism, assembly and disease**


**Whole-genome analysis of vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus faecium* (VREfm) causing nosocomial outbreaks suggests the occurrence of few endemic clonal lineages in Bavaria, Germany**

Between January 2018 and April 2019, 100 non-replicate clinical isolates of VREfm originating from nosocomial outbreaks at eight different hospitals in Bavaria were investigated for genetic diversity by WGS using the Illumina MiSeq platform (Illumina Inc., San Diego, USA) and laboratory procedures according to the manufacturer's instructions. Afterwards, complex types (CTs) were identified by core genome multilocus sequence typing (cgMLST) using SeqSphere+ software version 6.0.2 (Riskom GmbH, Muenster, Germany). Furthermore, a single-nucleotide polymorphisms (SNP)-analysis was conducted for all VREfm strains using BioNumerics 7.6 software (Applied Maths, Sint-Martens-Latem, Belgium).

**Results**

Most of the isolates of this study (84%) belonged to three major clonal groups: ST80/CT1065like vanB (n = 45; 6 hospitals), ST117/CT71like vanB (n = 20; 5 hospitals) and ST78/CT894like vanA (n = 19; 3 hospitals). Isolates of the predominant lineage ST80/CT1065like vanB occurred in 6 different Bavarian hospitals and showed by SNP analysis a maximum difference of 34 SNPs. Forty-two Isolates of the above-mentioned lineage could be grouped into two subclusters (subcluster I: 28 genetically closely related isolates from 4 hospitals with a maximum difference of 13 SNPs and subcluster II: 14 genetically closely related isolates from 4 hospitals with a maximum difference of 12 SNPs).

**Conclusion**

Whole-genome analysis of VREfm causing nosocomial outbreaks suggests the occurrence of few endemic clonal lineages (ST80/CT1065like vanB, ST117/CT71like vanB and ST78/CT894like vanA) in Bavarian hospital settings.

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**002-HYP**

Hijacking of host cellular function in *Staphylococcus aureus* infections

"V. Behrends"

1. University of Roehampton, Life Sciences, London, United Kingdom

**Introduction** - *Staphylococcus aureus* is one of the leading causes of hospital-acquired infections and a major human pathogen worldwide. As a facultative intracellular pathogen,
**Introduction**

The incidence of vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE) infections considerably increased during the last decades. In hospitals, VRE are able to persist in the environment for several years; these environmental contaminations can serve as a reservoir for nosocomial infections. We hypothesize that the patient’s environment is a relevant source of nosocomial VRE transmissions and that there is an increased risk of VRE acquisition for individuals assigned to rooms previously occupied by VRE-positive patients.

**Objectives**

This study aims to analyze the role of the environmental contamination in the transmission of VRE by using whole genome sequencing (WGS)-based typing.

**Materials and Methods**

Environmental samples were collected from 2013 to 2019 during infection control visits and sent to the microbiological laboratory for VRE detection. Confirmed VRE strains underwent WGS using Illumina sequencing technology. The resulting sequences were retrospectively compared with patient isolates that were detected during the study period. Using multilocus sequence typing (MLST) and core genome (cg) MLST, their genotypic relationships were determined. Strains differing in ≤3 cgMLST alleles were rated as closely related suggesting a nosocomial transmission.

**Results**

In total, 53 environmental samples containing VRE were identified. Of these 11 harbour vanA, 42 vanB and MLST ST203 (67.9%), ST192 (15.1%) and ST117 (9.4%), respectively. Comparison using cgMLST revealed that 97 patient isolates were genetically related to environmental strains. Among these, 67 were vanA, 26 vanB and four vanA and vanB positive and exhibited MLST ST203 (40.2%), ST192 (23.7%) and ST117 (21.6%), respectively. Deeper analysis of cgMLST showed that 49 of the 53 environmental isolates were closely related to patient isolates obtained.

**Conclusion**

Inanimate surfaces in the hospital environment serve as relevant reservoir and potential source of transmission of VRE. Improving hand hygiene compliance to prevent environmental VRE contamination and optimizing cleaning procedures of possibly contaminated surfaces is an important aspect in preventing nosocomial VRE transmissions.
infection could be confirmed by molecular analyses of vaginal swabs and feces of a nearby sheep flock. This mission was organized and conducted within 48 hours and proofed the RDOIT concept as a strong tool for outbreak management.

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**005-HYP**

Rifaximin resistance of *Clostridioides difficile* associated with *rpoB* alleles and MLST clades

J. Schwanbeck1, T. Riedel2, J. Overmann3, U. Groß4, B. Wolfgang5

1Universitätssmedizin Göttingen, Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Göttingen, Germany
2DSMZ, Braunschweig, Germany
3University Medical Center Göttingen, Medical Microbiology, Göttingen, Germany

**Introduction**

*Clostridioides difficile* is the most prevalent cause of nosocomial diarrhea and infectious enteritis. Rifaximin (RFX) was recently proposed as a possible alternative therapy option for *Clostridioides difficile* infection (CDI), especially in recurrent cases.

**Objectives**

The aim of the study was to perform a survey regarding RFX susceptibility in a *C. difficile* test cohort that was representative for five clinically relevant clades. At a MIC (RFX) > 32 µg/mL the *rpoB* gene was sequenced to determine the underlying resistance alleles. All RFX-resistant isolates were whole genome sequenced to determine their phylogenetic relatedness.

**Materials & Methods**

Agar dilution assays were used to determine RFX MICs of 136 clinical *C. difficile* isolates from Germany (86), Indonesia (29) and Ghana (21). Whole genome sequence data were obtained by a combination of single-molecule real-time (SMRT) and Illumina sequencing technology in addition to amplicon sequencing of *rpoB* genes. Ribotypes and MLST STs were deduced from the whole genome sequences.

**Results**

The epidemiological cut off of RFX was determined at a maximum MIC of 0.5 µg/mL while RFX resistance was determined at a MIC > 32 µg/mL. 10.3% (14/136) of the isolates was found to be resistant against RFX. The resistance rate is distributed among the individual regions as follows 4.7% (4/86) for Germany, 27.6% (8/29) for Indonesia, and 9.5% (2/21) for Ghana. Three different *rpoB* alleles could be associated with RFX resistance. One of them had not been described before. The presence of a specific *rpoB* allele correlates with the MLST clade of the isolate, i.e. the RFX-resistant isolates belonged to the MLST STs 1.2, and 4.

**Conclusion**

(i) The overall RFX resistance rate in our test cohort was 10.3% due to the significant increased RFX resistant rate of Indonesian isolates of 27.6%. This may be due to the use of rifampicin e.g. in the treatment of tuberculosis in Indonesia.

(ii) RFX resistance could be associated with three MLST STs.

(iii) We were able to identify one novel *rpoB* allele.

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**006-HYP**

Horizontal Transfer of Carbapenemase-Encoding Plasmids from *Enterobacteriaceae* to *P. aeruginosa*

*K. Kocer*1, S. Boulin1, K. Heeg1, D. Nurjadi1

1Universitätsklinikum Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany

**Introduction**

The emergence of carbapenemase-producing *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is a major global concern. Resistance may occur through genetic mutations or acquisition of transferable plasmids. While some carbapenemase-encoding plasmids are confined to certain species, broad range plasmids may be transferred across species.

**Objectives**

In this study, we looked at various carbapenemase-bearing plasmids, if and under which condition a natural plasmid transfer between *Enterobacteriaceae* and *P. aeruginosa* can occur.

**Method**

Conjugative transfer was performed in vitro by liquid mating using susceptible PAO-1 and PA14 *P. aeruginosa* strains as recipient strains. Donor strains were clinical isolates of *Enterobacteriaceae* carrying various carbapenemase genes (*blaVIM*, *blaOXA-48*, *blaNDM* and *blaKPC*) on plasmids of different incompatibility types isolated from patients with in vivo carbapenemase transfer between their different *Enterobacteriaceae* species. To investigate the impact of quorum sensing inhibition, liquid mating experiments were performed with or without addition of macrodiles. Transconjugants were selected using a meropenem-supplemented selective medium. Whole genome sequencing was performed to confirm conjugative transfer and to investigate transferred genomic content by comparative genomic analysis.

**Results**

Our results showed that the natural transfer of *blaVIM-* and *blaKPC*-encoding plasmids to *P. aeruginosa* was successful from two donors isolated from different patients. No difference was observed in the presence and absence of erythromycin. Alignment of the assembled draft genome and plasmid content of the donors, recipients and transconjugants confirmed horizontal plasmid transfer.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the results demonstrate the potential for the dissemination of integron-encoded carbapenemase from *Enterobacteriaceae* to *P. aeruginosa* by natural plasmid conjugation without manipulation or inhibition of quorum sensing. Moreover, the horizontal transfer from *Enterobacteriaceae* might be the source of recently emerging KPC carbapenemase-producing *P. aeruginosa*.

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**007-HYP**

Compliance in German acute care hospitals over 4 years. A longitudinal study with data from the national surveillance system HAND-KISS.
Hand hygiene plays a crucial role in the prevention of healthcare-associated infections and transmission of multidrug-resistant bacteria. In 2008 the campaign “Aktion Saubere Hände” (ASH) was launched in Germany, based on the World Health Organization's "Clean Care is Safer Care” initiative. Direct observation and feedback of the results are key components in the improvement of hand hygiene compliance. In 2014 a voluntary national surveillance electronic tool for the documentation of directly observed compliance to hand hygiene was introduced (HAND-KISS).

Methods

Direct observation of compliance to hand hygiene is voluntarily performed in the participating hospitals by trained local staff according to adapted recommendations of the WHO. We evaluated wards that reported annually at least 150 hand hygiene opportunities (HHO) of hand hygiene per observation period from January 1st 2015 until December 31st 2018.

Results

296,191 HHO observed on 278 wards in 98 hospitals were included into analysis. Overall mean compliance increased from 73% to 79% (p<0.0001). Compliance improved in nursing staff from 77% to 82% (p<0.0001), physicians from 68% to 74% (p<0.0001) and other healthcare workers from 65% to 73% (p<0.0001) respectively.

Compliance significantly increased for all individual moments of the WHO-model except moment 2 “before aseptic procedures”.

Multivariable regression analysis revealed that risk factors that a compliant handdesinfection was performed were every moment except prior to aseptic tasks, nurses creating the opportunity and ICUs being the type of ward were it was performed.

Conclusions

Overall compliance in German hospitals increased over time. To improve HH compliance “before aseptic procedures” appears to be especially difficult and should be addressed explicitly. Underlying reasons need to be the focus of future investigations.
Stenotrophomonas maltophilia is one of the most frequently isolated multidrug resistant opportunistic pathogens. It contributes to disease progression in cystic fibrosis patients and is found in wounds, in other infected tissues and on catheter surfaces.

The aim of this study is to identify the processes and genes involved in the biofilm formation of S. maltophilia. Therefore, we analyzed biofilm profiles of 300 clinical and environmental isolates. Additionally, we analyzed the 3D structure of 40 clinical isolates and did a global transcriptome analysis of eight clinical isolates grown under biofilm conditions. Our analyzes revealed a high strain specific heterogeneity in biofilm forming capability, biofilm structure, antibiotic tolerance and virulence of the isolates independent of their phylogenetic position within the genus (Steinmann, Front Microbiol. 2018; 9:806, Gröschel et al., Nature communication, 2020 (in revision)). The transcriptome analysis in the eight strains identified a set of 106 shared and coexpressed genes among the top 250 most strongly expressed genes. Among the top 20 highly expressed genes were the alcohol dehydrogenase AdhP, the DNA competence protein ComEA, two copies of the Ax21 protein and the peptidoglycan-associated lipoprotein Pal. The involvement of ComEA and the Ax21 proteins in biofilm formation and maintenance were verified by laser scanning microscopy and microtiter plate assay of corresponding deletion mutants. Further physiological assays were conducted to verify the importance of AdhP in biofilm formation.

The transcriptome data generated in this study together with other phenotypic and metabolic data represent so far the largest data set on S. maltophilia biofilm. This study now lays the foundation for the identification of key genes involved in biofilm formation in S. maltophilia and for further development of strategies fighting S. maltophilia infections in clinical settings.

Objectives
To investigate the role of the porins OmpF, OmpC and OmpD in β-lactam resistance in Enterobacter cloacae DSM 30054

Material & methods
Porin genes ompF, ompC and ompD of Enterobacter cloacae DSM 30054 were deleted by introducing a resistance cassette into the regarding locus using the λ-Red recombination system. MICs for β-lactams of the wildtype and respective mutants were determined by broth microdilution and interpreted according to EUCAST. Growth experiments to evaluate the effect of porin deletion on bacterial fitness were performed by continuous monitoring of the cell densities.

Results
Deletion of the porin genes ompF, ompC and ompD had only minor effects on β-lactam resistance in Enterobacter cloacae DSM 30054. In contrast to this, combined knockout of ompF and ompC as well as ompF and ompD had a greater effect on MICs especially on those of the cephalosporins. Only a combination of porin loss and expression of the chromosomal AmpC increased the MICs for the carbapenems, except for imipenem. Only deletion of ompC lead to a prolonged generation time indicating a fitness-cost.

Conclusion
Here we describe that deletion of ompF, ompC and ompD had only minor effects on β-lactam resistance and that expression of chromosomal AmpC played a major role in β-lactam resistance.
Phylogenetic analyses, resistance gene detection and plasmid characterization were performed.

Results

From 2017 to 2019 the NRC detected 269 clinical S. enterica isolates with resistance to 3rd gen. cephalosporins (2.17 % of all received S. enterica), with a modest increase from 1% 2017 up to 2% in 2019. Among the 269 isolates 35 different serovars were identified, with S. Typhimurium as the most prevalent one (n=104; 38.6%). However, 72 of these isolates were attributed to one single regional event and clustered phylogenetically. Hence, S. Infantis was the most prevalent serotype (n=40). Preliminary genome analyses exhibited the presence of ESBL gene blaCTX-M-1 in the majority of the above mentioned isolates. Additional investigation of the S. Typhimurium isolates depicts a single, long time circulating clone, which acquired an approx. 200kb sized plasmid carrying blaCTX-M-1 and the gene qnrS1 contributing to fluoroquinolone resistance.

Conclusion

The occurrence of 3rd gen. cephalosporin resistance in S. enterica of various serovars is most probably due to multiple acquisition events of conjugative plasmids. Further, our data imply the spread of a distinct cephalosporin-resistant S. Typhimurium strain in a regional setting.

012-HYP

Automated Email requests for MRSA screening of long-stay patients in a maximum-care hospital with low MRSA-prevalence are effective in detecting missed nosocomial transmissions

Introduction

In Germany risk-adapted screening on admission for MRSA is recommended. The Carl Thiem Hospital (CTK) is a maximum care hospital in the federal state of Brandenburg with a low MRSA prevalence on admission (2018: 0.27 per 100 pts). In 2018, we additionally implemented MRSA screening for long-stay patients every three weeks. In order to increase compliance, an electronic Email request was automatically sent to the wards by the hospital information system on the day the screening was required.

Objectives

Our study aimed to evaluate compliance with the in-house screening algorithm and its effectiveness to detect MRSA transmission, thereby preventing further nosocomial MRSA spread.

Materials and methods

We analysed all Email requests sent between October 2018 and September 2019 and all laboratory screening orders for MRSA (NOT on admission) from the laboratory information system. Matching case numbers and dates of Email requests we determined the proportion and results of screenings carried out within 5 days, if the patient was not discharged within the following three days.

Results

In total 3,044 Email requests were sent with an average of 253 Emails per month. After 21 days 69.7% (n=2,121) of Emails were generated, after 42 days 15.4% (n=469), and 6.7% (205) after 63 days of hospitalization. Overall, 1,840 requests (60.4%) were included in the analysis. Screening was carried out in 53% (n=977) ranging from 86% (n=108) to 4% (n=1) per ward. Seven screening results were MRSA positive without prior detection of MRSA on admission to the hospital. One transmission event could be linked to a ward where members of staff were previously examined and discovered to be colonized with MRSA.

Conclusions

Although only a few MRSA colonisations were additionally detected by applying the novel screening algorithm, the procedure proved to be very effective in identifying nosocomial transmissions of MRSA that would otherwise have been missed and could probably cause outbreaks. Of special importance were wards with high risk patients and generally prolonged length-of-stay.

013-HYP

Trends of antibiotic consumption in German hospitals from 2015-2018

Introduction: The Antibiotic Consumption Surveillance (AVS)-system has been built up by the national public health institute in cooperation with the national reference center for surveillance of nosocomial infections in order to serve the hospitals in monitoring antimicrobial consumption and to support antibiotic stewardship activities.

Objectives: To analyze trends in antibiotic consumption over time.

Methods: The calculation of antibiotic consumption values is based on the ATC (Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical)/DDD (Defined Daily Dose) method of WHO (ATC/DDD-version 2019). Target value is the antibiotic consumption density (CD) expressed in DDD per 100 patient days (PD). The data of systemically applied antibiotics (A07AA, J01, J04AB02, P01AB01) are presented as medians (IQR). The analysis results rely on the data submission of general acute care hospitals from the years 2015-2018 and represent sequential cross-sectional analyses. Trend analysis was performed by linear regression.

Results: From 2015 to 2018 the number of participating hospitals increased from 103 to 209 hospitals. The median of total antibiotic consumption shows a decrease from 55.1 DDD/100 PD in 2015 to 51.2 DDD/100 PD in 2018. Analysis of the different antibiotic groups reveals a significant decline of the CD of cephalosporins from 17.4 DDD/100 PD to 12.1 DDD/100 PD, which is primarily due to a decrease of 2 generation cephalosporins while 3 generation cephalosporins remained nearly constant. A decrease can also be observed for macrodiles, fluoroquinolones, imidazoles, sulfonamides/trimethoprin and glycopeptides. In contrast, the group of penicillins shows an increase from...
14.0 DDD/100 PD to 16.2 DDD/100 PD which includes a rise of broad-spectrum as well as small-spectrum penicillins.

**Conclusion:** The surveillance data show a slight decrease of total antimicrobial consumption in German hospitals primarily driven by a decline of the use of 2. generation cephalosporins, which is partly compensated by an increase of penicillins. The data may indicate an effect of antibiotic stewardship activities and encourage for further enforcement and continuation of efforts.

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**014-HYP**

ARS Saxony: monitoring antibiotic resistance in Saxony

*K. Flihs*, E. Hennebach, S. Wiegand, W. Sydow, J. Ehrhard1, Landesuntersuchungsanstalt für das Gesundheits- und Veterinärvesen Sachsen, Medizinische Mikrobiologie und Hygiene, Dresden, Germany

**Introduction:** Increasing rates of critical antibiotic resistant organisms are a worldwide major health threat with regional distinct characteristics. In order to implement a comprehensive resistance surveillance in the Free State of Saxony, the Saxony Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection promoted the participation of Saxony microbiological laboratories in the national antimicrobial resistance surveillance system (ARS). All submitted data from Saxony institutions are taken in a Saxony data cube (ARS Saxony) for regional analyses.

**Objectives:** Resistance rates to selected antimicrobials were determined for microorganisms most frequently isolated in specimen from hospitals and the outpatient sector between 2015 and 2018.

**Materials & Methods:** We analysed routine data from 16 laboratories contributing to ARS Saxony. We included first isolates per patient and quarter in order to describe the spectrum of agents and resistance rates to selected antimicrobials. The prevalence of organisms with resistance to critical drugs and distribution by region and type of care was determined.

**Results:** We analysed resistance test information for 547,098 first isolates. Among the five organisms isolated most frequently in specimen from hospitals and the outpatient sector were *Escherichia coli* (25.6% and 36.2% respectively), *Staphylococcus aureus* (14.5% and 13.9%), *Klebsiella pneumoniae* (6.4% and 4.1%) and *Proteus mirabilis* (5.5% and 5.2%). MRSA rates were decreasing between 2015 and 2018. Rates of vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus faecium* (VRE)-isolates from blood cultures were increasing significantly. The prevalence of MRSA and VRE revealed significant regional differences (lowest MRSA-rates and highest VRE-rates in the region of Leipzig). In 2018 resistance rates to cefotaxime were 11.0% in *E. coli* and 15.4% in *K. pneumoniae* isolates from hospitals as well as 7.0% and 7.4% respectively in the outpatient sector.

**Conclusion:** Data from ARS Saxony allow the surveillance of resistance rates in relevant microorganisms and the identification of regional characteristics.

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**015-HYP**

Joining forces to tackle resistant bacteria – a proposal for closer collaboration between public health authorities, physician scientists, and clinicians

*B. Panthenburg*, A. Rothen*, U. Heilig*, C. Riemschneider*, S. Walther1, I. Möller1, R. Krause-Döring1, N. Lahl1

1Gesundheitsamt Leipzig, Hygiene, Leipzig, Germany

**Introduction:** WHO lists antimicrobial resistance as a main threat to global health1. The One Health approach, based on interdisciplinary collaboration, aims at targeting this issue2. Similarly, the public health structure in Germany intends to intensify collaborations between public health authorities and the science sector3. However, public health authorities may be perceived ambiguously due to their varying tasks: from provision of counseling and support to supervision and sanctioning.

**Objective:** Taking MRSA outbreak management as an example, this abstract highlights what the public health department can add when joining forces with stakeholders such as clinicians and scientists.

**Material and Methods:** Analysis of MRSA outbreak records (8 episodes with ≥2 cases with an epidemiological link) in 4 hospitals in Leipzig (2010-2018).

**Results:** During outbreak management according to KRINKO guidelines4, the unique strengths of the public health department lie in: 1. Application of knowledge on emergency measures and prevention strategies gained in other settings to the current situation; 2. Providing the perspective of an "outsider", i.e. a "fresh" approach to existing issues; 3. Acting as a communication facilitator between stakeholders of different professions; 3. Use of the public health department's power based on the German Infection Protection Act to enforce measures in the stakeholders' common interest.

**Conclusion:** The public health department contributes valuable information during management of outbreaks with resistant bacteria. However, infrastructure for scientifically sound data analysis is scarce. Therefore, the public health department proposes a closer, and earlier, collaboration with clinicians and physician scientists: only in a joint approach major health challenges such as antibiotic resistance can be tackled.

**References**

3. https://www.bveogd.de/feiltbild/

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**016-HYP**

Isolation and characterization of bacteriophages specific for multidrug-resistant gram-negative bacteria

J. J. Bugert1, R. Wölfl1, M. Ben Moussa2, S. Handrick1, S. Michniewski3, A. Millard1, C. Hinz1, C. Bugert1, D. Fries1, F. Schwarze1, S. Mzoughi1, F. Kühni1, S. Kreissig1, M. Egold1, J. J. Bugert1

1Institut für Mikrobiologie der Bundeswehr, Virologie, München, Germany
2Military Hospital of Tunis, Microbiological Laboratory, Tunis, Tunisia
3University of Warwick, Warwick Medical School, Warwick, United Kingdom
4University of Leicester, Department of Genetics and Genome Biology, Leicester, United Kingdom
The rise of multidrug-resistant gram-negative bacteria is a growing global problem which requires new therapeutic approaches. One alternative to antibiotic therapy is treatment with lytic bacteriophages. In Eastern Europe, and the US, bacteriophages are already used as efficient therapeutics. Regulatory issues regarding their safety and Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) currently prevent their use in the EU. To address these issues, projects for establishing phage therapy, “Phage4cure” and “PhagoBurn”, have obtained funding in Germany, France and Belgium. The Leibniz Institute DSMZ - German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures collects phages on behalf of these studies as a source for host specific phage cocktails.

In our laboratory, bacteriophages are isolated from surface/sewage water and tested against a collection of multidrug-resistant gram-negative bacteria, including Klebsiella and Escherichia spp. A positive spot assay is followed by a plaque assay to isolate and purify the phage, produce a stock and determine the exact host range using high throughput methods (eg wzi capsule typing by PCR). Growth kinetics, using the TECAN Spark Instrument, are used to identify lytic and phage efficiency. Suitable phages are further characterized by electron microscopy and genome sequencing. Klebsiella phage were successfully rebooted in E. coli using purified genomic DNA in our laboratory. This will allow the production of genetically modified phage with extended host range, eg to target multiple wzi capsule types of Klebsiella pneumoniae.

The Bundeswehr Institute for Microbiology uses modern phage technology to inform and support novel approaches in adjuvant phage therapy and as an important tool for the biological defense against natural or modified multidrug-resistant gram-negative bacteria.

017-HYP
Motivation, capabilities and opportunities as determinants of self-reported compliance with 26 surgical site infection-preventive measures among orthopaedic physicians: results of a "small sample with high response"-survey in a German tertiary care university hospital

I. Tomscić¹, E. Ebadi², F. Gossel³, I. Hartlep⁴, P. Schipper⁵, B. Schock⁶, I. F. Chaberny⁷, T. von Lengerke¹
¹Hannover Medical School, Centre of Public Health and Healthcare, Department of Medical Psychology, Hannover, Germany
²Hannover Medical School, Centre for Laboratory Medicine, Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, Hannover, Germany
³Clinic of Orthopaedics of Hannover Medical School at DIAKOVERE Anstatt, Department of Spinal Surgery and Conservative Orthopaedics, Hannover, Germany
⁴Leipzig University Hospital, Institute of Hygiene, Hospital Hygiene and Environmental Medicine, Leipzig, Germany, Leipzig, Germany

Question Surgical site infection (SSI) prevention requires compliance with numerous measures [1]. Evidence regarding determinants of overall SSI-preventive compliance is lacking. Besides, orthopaedic physicians are an underresearched group. This study aims to identify associations between self-reported SSI-preventive compliance and determinants defined by the COM-B (capability, opportunities, motivation and behaviour-) model [2].

Methods In a pretest to the WACH-trial (funding: Federal Ministry of Health, grant-ID: ANNIE2016-55-038; German Clinical Trials Register-ID: DPKS00015502), N=52 orthopaedic surgeons and anesthesiologists of an orthopaedic clinic participated in a questionnaire survey (response rate: 73.2%). Compliance regarding 26 SSI-preventive measures and COM-determinants (18 items) were assessed by self-report. Factor analysis and linear regression models were used.

Results Factor analysis of capability and motivation items resulted in 3 factors (capabilities: 5 items/Cronbach's α=0.89; motivation: 4/0.83; and planning: 2/0.82), while 1 component emerged for environmental factors (opportunities: 6/0.87). Bi-variately, self-reported compliance rate across all 26 measures (mean rate: 88.9%) was significantly associated with all factors. In contrast, only capabilities (β=0.42/p<0.01) and planning (0.23/p<0.10) showed positive effects in the final regression model.

Conclusions Planning of SSI-preventive measures may be a specific determinant of compliance, i.e. distinct from motivation and capabilities. Like interventions targeting hand hygiene [3], SSI-preventive implementation interventions should highlight healthcare worker's empowerment and planning skills.

References:

018-HYP
Spread of OXA-244-producing Escherichia coli ST38 in Germany

J. B. Hans¹, B. Neumann², R. Kramer², K. Kremer², S. Hailer², N. Pfennigwerth¹, A. Reuss³, Y. Pfeiffer³, G. Werner³, T. Eckmanns³, S. Gatermann¹
¹Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Abteilung für Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Bochum, Germany
²Robert Koch Institut, Berlin, Germany

Because of their enzyme-mediated antibiotic resistance, carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE) have become a major threat for public health. Notifications of nosocomial infections and colonization with CPE are mandatory in Germany. Identification and characterization of carbapenemases is conducted at the National Centre for Multidrug-resistant Gram-negative Bacteria (NRC) through phenotypic and genotypic assays.

Between 2017 and 2018, numbers of OXA-244-producing Escherichia coli increased significantly. In 2019, case numbers continued to increase which prompted the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) to initiate an outbreak investigation.

From January 2017 until March 2019, a total of 145 OXA-244-producing E. coli isolates were identified, of which 92 isolates with known geographical origin were subjected to whole genome sequencing (Illumina). Analyses included multi-locus sequence typing (MLST), core genome (cg)MLST as well as high-resolution SNP analyses. Subsequently, a total of 60 additional isolates received between March and August 2019 were similarly processed.
Initial sequencing of 92 OXA-244-producing *E. coli* isolates identified a total of 14 different sequence types (ST) with a dominance of ST38 (n=60). Results of cgMLST and SNP analyses revealed close genetic relatedness of ST38 isolates, particularly 34 isolates formed a distinct cluster. However, detection of these 34 *E. coli* ST38 isolates was not geographically restricted but dispersed throughout the country. Furthermore, annually increasing numbers of isolates belonging to this cluster (2017: n=5; 2018: n=17; until 03/2019: n=12) suggest a continuing spread. Indeed, among the additionally 60 sequenced isolates, 28 isolates were identified to belong to this *E. coli* ST38 cluster. First detailed analyses suggest that the genomic localization of OXA-244 is diverse and associated with mobile genetic elements.

We here present a country-wide outbreak of OXA-244-CPE in Germany. However, further analyses are needed to identify routes of transmissions as well as the underlying mechanisms leading to an overall genetic homogeneity while permitting local plasticity of the OXA-244 gene.

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**019-HYP**

Control and molecular epidemiology of a Carbapenem non-susceptible *Klebsiella pneumoniae* cluster in hematologic patients

C. Baier, F. Thol, C. Koenecke, F. C. Bange, E. Ebadi

Hannover Medical School, Institute for Medical Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, Hannover, Germany

**Introduction**

Carbapenem resistance in Gram-negative bacteria (GNB) is an increasing threat for patients. Especially immunocompromised patients with hematologic diseases are at risk for colonization and infection.

**Objective**

To describe the characteristics and control of a cluster with Carbapenem non-susceptible (C-NS) *Klebsiella pneumoniae* (Kp) on a hematologic ward.

**Materials/methods**

The epidemiologic context was investigated by routine measures. Molecular strain analysis was performed with an in-house pulsed-field gel electrophoresis.

**Results**

5 patients were found with rectal C-NS Kp colonization in 4 weeks exceeding the baseline level of C-NS GNB.

The index patient was transferred to the hematologic ward from an intensive care unit, where the screening for C-NS GNB took place on admission. The transfer took place before the positive result was available and the patient was not isolated initially. When the result became available (after 4 days), the patient was placed in a single room with strict barrier precautions

In addition, we started a weekly screening (rectal) for all patients on the ward (which is part of routine management when a patient with a C-NS Kp is hospitalized). The screening found successively 4 more patients with nosocomial C-NS Kp. We suspected transmission and implemented the following measures: i) hand hygiene compliance monitoring, ii) training for healthcare workers iii) enhanced surface disinfection. The cluster was terminated and no further cases were found.

The molecular analysis showed that the cluster was caused by 3 different strains. The results suggest that three patients had the same strain (including the index). The other two patients had independent strains.

**Conclusion**

The control measures together with increased awareness terminated the cluster without relapse. The prevalence screening enabled rapid implementation of isolation precautions for newly detected patients to interrupt transmission. Interestingly, the cluster was not monoclonal. Besides the index strain, there were two independent strains which may reflect selection phenomena in this patient population with frequent antibiotic use.

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**020-HYP**

Evaluation of clean room conditions for laboratory testing of sterile products using routine data on product and laboratory environment contamination

P. Dudler, U. Vogel, M. Hagemeister

1Universitätsklinikum Würzburg, Stabsstelle Krankenhaushygiene, Würzburg, Germany

2Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Institut für medizinische Informationsverarbeitung, Biometrie und Epidemiologie, München, Germany

3Universität Würzburg, Institut für Hygiene und Mikrobiologie, Würzburg, Germany

**Introduction**

To ensure sterility of parenterally applied medications, the European Pharmacopoeia and the Guidelines of the EU for Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), Annex 1, recommend principles of sterile pharmaceutical compounding. Lower grade clean areas than recommended for sterility testing might promote secondary contamination and lead to false-positive results. On the other hand, strict regulations of laboratories according to recommendations for manufacturers leads to higher costs possibly preventing the establishment of sufficient laboratory capacity.

**Objectives**

This study describes the real world impact of limited structural clean room conditions on microbiological test results both for products and for laboratory environmental monitoring.

**Methods**

Routine data from sterility tests of total parenteral nutrition (TPN) performed at a microbiological laboratory of a German university hospital from a five-year period were reviewed. Microbiological clean area monitoring data was assessed for compliance with recommended limits according to EU-GMP Guidelines. Results of sterile filtration performed when clean room conditions complied with requested monitoring limits were compared to those when limits were exceeded.

**Results**
In the observation period, 1617 of 1617 TPN were confirmed to be sterile. Microbiological monitoring despite limited structural conditions revealed grade "B" conditions in 290 of 333 monitoring days. We could not find a correlation between room conditions and results of sterile filtrations.

Conclusion

According to our data, formal non-compliance with clean room grade recommendations of EU-GMP-Guidelines had no impact on the results of sterility testing in the observed laboratory. Organisational issues appear to be of greater importance to ensure the avoidance of false-positive results.

021-HYP

Development of a Diagnostic Stewardship Assessment Framework for Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Surveillance in Low-Resource Settings

*S. Tomczyk1, O. Ayobami2, A. Egwenu2, T. Eckmanns1
1Robert Koch Institute, Berlin, Germany
2Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, Abuja, Nigeria

Introduction: The underutilization of diagnostics, particularly in low-resource settings, undermines the ability to perform antimicrobial resistance (AMR) surveillance and patient care. "Diagnostic stewardship" promotes coordinated guidance to improve the appropriate use of diagnostics along the pre- to post-analytic pathway.

Objective: The objective was to evaluate existing relevant tools and develop an evidence-based diagnostic stewardship assessment framework that could be used as a practical approach for evaluating needs and identifying priority activities particularly in low-resource settings.

Materials & methods: A literature review was conducted using PubMed, a manual search of relevant reference lists and expert personal communications. Identified guidance documents were compared, gaps were noted, Nigeria was assessed as a case study example, and themes were qualitatively summarized. The resulting assessment framework was subsequently validated in a pilot and consensus-based exercise.

Results: The diagnostic stewardship assessment framework was structured at the 1) health-system and 2) clinical level. At the system level, themes assessed were healthcare financing supporting patient access to diagnostics and investment in laboratory infrastructure and human capacity. A priority activity included the development of policy advocacy tools for universal coverage of blood culture diagnostics. At the clinical level, themes assessed were the pre-analytic (specimen collection, handling, transport, storage), analytic (laboratory processing, quality control), and post-analytic (data analysis, results feedback, communication methods between clinicians and microbiologists) phases. Priority activities included the local adaption of standard operating procedures to stimulate the appropriate use of blood cultures among suspected sepsis patients, initial procurement support and ongoing "bench-side" mentorship.

Conclusion: Financing of blood cultures and the development of practical stewardship tools are critical in settings such as Nigeria to support the basis for AMR surveillance. This assessment framework is a resource that could be locally adapted and validated.

022-HYP

Screening clinical samples for linezolid-resistant enterococci

H. Claus1, C. Polzin1, *U. Vogel1
1Institute for Hygiene and Microbiology, Würzburg, Germany

Introduction

A recent recommendation of the German Commission for Hospital Hygiene and Infection Prevention (KRINKO) on hygiene procedures to prevent infections with enterococci emphasized the need to prevent further spread of linezolid resistance in enterococci. While screening for vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE) is well established in many hospitals, screening for linezolid-resistant enterococci (LRE) or linezolid-vancomycin-resistant enterococci (LVRE) is not available, but might be necessary for the management of increasing prevalence or outbreaks.

Objective

Establishment of a routine procedure to screen for L(V)RE.

Material and Methods

A selection of 21 clinical Enterococcus (E.) faecalis isolates from the Würzburg strain collection (2 LRE, 11 LVRE, 8 VRE) was used for primary validation of culture media. The ongoing VRE screening programme at the University hospital of Würzburg provided de-identified samples to validate performance within the programme.

Results

We defined the best suited linezolid concentrations in Enterococcus™ broth and agar in the primary validation phase using clinical isolates. E. gallinarum and E. casseliflavus turned out to potentially grow in the media. These species give positive test results with MDG medium which can be used as a rapid test to exclude E. faecium or faecalis (Devriese et al., J. Clin. Micro. 1996). In order to include linezolid containing media in routine procedures, it was necessary to prove that the sensitivity of VRE detection by broth enrichment does not suffer from splitting samples. Analysis of more than 800 samples demonstrated that this is not the case. A workflow will be proposed.

Conclusions

Linezolid containing enrichment broth and agar and a standardized workflow feasible for the clinical microbiology laboratory was established. The protocol enables to identify LRE and LVRE from anaer and rectal swabs.

023-HYP

Epidemiological investigation of KPC-producing Klebsiella pneumoniae in two different hospitals by Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIRS)

*M. Cordovana1, A. Veloo2, J. W. Rosser2, S. Ambretti1
1University Hospital Policlinico Sant'Orsola-Malpighi of Bologna, Microbiology, Bologna, Italy
2University of Groningen, University Medical Center Groningen, Department of Medical Microbiology and Infection Prevention, Groningen, Netherlands

Background
KPC-producing *Klebsiella pneumoniae* (KPC-Kp) poses a serious infection control problem. The high-resolution molecular biology techniques required to track its spread are often unaffordable and laborious to perform. In this study, we applied FTIRs to investigate the epidemiological situation regarding KPC in the intensive care wards of two very different hospitals (a tertiary care university hospital and a long term rehabilitation facility). Well characterized isolates were included as a reference.

Methods

Surveillance isolates collected from inpatients (n=48 for hospital A, n=25 for hospital B) during a 2 months time frame were analysed by the IR Biotyper system (IRBT, Bruker Daltonik). In addition, n=16 KPC-Kp strains with known ST data, derived from whole genome sequencing were added, to evaluate the discriminatory power of IRBT, and to design a possible model for typing. Infrared absorption spectra were acquired in transmission mode from a bacterial suspension in water/ethanol, placed in three replicates on a silicon sample plate, which were air dried. Using the IRBT software, spectra relation within a wavenumber range from 1300 to 800 nm was analysed applying hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) with Euclidean metric and single linkage.

Results

IRBT clustered the KPC-Kp isolates in 5 clusters in hospital A and 4 clusters in hospital B, respectively, and single/unique isolates. Comparison with the well characterized reference strains enabled to assign the IRBT clusters to the most common sequence types (ST-307, ST-101, ST-1519), with some significant differences in their distribution among the two hospitals. Further, several isolates from hospital A showed a relationship with the earlier sequence types (ST-258 and ST-512), while isolates from hospital B did not.

Conclusions

In this study, FTIRs showed to be a promising method for epidemiological investigation for KPC-producing *K. pneumoniae*. Although further investigations are necessary to confirm and strengthen our findings, these first results suggest that IRBT could represent a reliable, fast and low-cost alternative typing method, suitable for routine screening in microbiology laboratory.

024-HYP

**Process optimization and compliance with dressing change in pre-post intervention comparison after introduction of a new dressing change concept in the context of a prospective cohort study on infection prevention**

"R. Otchwemah", M. Neuwirth, B. Marche, R. Galante, S. Akca, J. Hoffmann, B. Bouillon, F. Mattner

025-HYP

**Negative pressure wound therapy in complicated spinal wounds: which impact do microbiological results have?**

J. Boettner, S. Scheithauer, A. Dudakova, V. Rohde, C. Von der Breile

University Medical Center Goettingen, Neurosurgery, Goettingen, Germany

University Medical Center Goettingen, Institute of Infection Control and Infectious Diseases, Goettingen, Germany

University Medical Center Goettingen, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Goettingen, Germany

**Introduction**

The incidence of surgical site infections (SSI) after complex spinal surgery is up to 20%. The impact of positive microbial results, above all changing ones in the course is not understood.

**Objective**

This study should characterize the course of microbial colonization/infection during negative Pressure Wound Therapy (NPWT) and the effect of changing microbiological results on the course of SSI.
Therapy (NPWT) in order to identify potential risk factors for prolonged therapy.

Materials and Methods

This is a retrospective observational study enrolling all patients after spinal surgery treated with NPWT. Outcome was analyzed categorizing therapy success (clinical and microbiological), length of hospital stay and number of NPWT procedures. Indication for wound closure was made clinically.

Results

367 NPWT procedures in 82 patients with a mean of 4 consecutive NPWTs were analyzed.

56/82 (68%) patients showed typical pathogens of a wound infection (enterobacteria, non-fermenter, s.aureus, streptococcus sp.) at least once. In 6/82 patients (7%) relevant bacteria changed during NPWT. Change was not associated with the number of NPWT (3/43, 7% <4 NPWT versus 3/39, 8% >/>=4 NPWT; p=1.00). Risk factors for multiple NPWTs were: multi drug resistant organisms (MDRO) in at least one swab (8/43, 19% <4NPWT vs. 16/39, 41% >/>=4 NPWT; p=0.031) and at least one polymicrobial wound swab (17/43, 40% <4 NPWT vs. 25/39, 64% >/>=4 NPWT; p=0.029). In 60% (49/82) wound closure was successful despite positive wound swabs. Thereof, in 14 (17%) patients MDRO were present. Both cases were not associated with mortality (cured 45/49, 92% vs. deceased 4/49, 8%; p=0.643). Latest positive wound swab even with MDRO at wound closure was not associated with extended hospital stay (15/49, 31% >/=63 days vs. 34/49; 69% </>= 63 days; p=0.102).

Conclusion Bacterial contamination of NPWT wounds seems to be common, even with changing microbes and did not impact outcome. MDRO and polymicrobial swabs did impact outcome perhaps representing surrogates.

027-HYP
Hygiene & emotion: Enjoying work forms the basis for performance and success of hand hygiene

* B. Schock, I. Hartlep, P. Schipper, I. F. Chaberny
Leipzig University Hospital, Institute of Hygiene, Hospital Epidemiology and Environmental Medicine, Department of Diagnostics, Leipzig, Germany

Numerous intervention programs have been analyzed in various study designs. PSYGIESE has shown that tailored behavioral psychological intervention for medical staff leads to a lasting improvement in hand hygiene compliance [von Lengerke et al., 2017]. Innovative concepts enable promising results during the study period, but it often remains unclear how research impulses can be incorporated into hygiene routine. Therefore, a reality check was performed after four years of behavioral psychological infection control at Leipzig University Hospital. In addition, hand hygiene results should be included to assess success. A standardized interview for hygiene staff of the Institute of Hygiene, with a questionnaire on the benefits and acceptance of tailoring was conducted (5-Likert scale, 1 = fully up to 5 = does not apply at all). The ASH hand hygiene collection sheet is used for observation in 14 clinical areas (all ICU). Compliance has been monitored since 2015. Physicians and nurses are stratified. The results are reported to the employees in feedback sessions and analyzed together. The survey included all staff members (N=15, physicians= 5). All employees were involved in the observations and feedback. Since 2015, over 17,000 hand hygiene opportunities were collected. Significant increase in hand hygiene compliance both in the ICU 2018: 76.3% (vs. 2015; p = 0.022) and in the normal wards 78.8% (p <0.001) was observed. Almost all employees agree that they give helpful feedback. The benefit of tailored intervention is well-known (80%) and the employees enjoy working since they are convinced of the tailoring. The routine application of tailored interventions is associated with positive experiences and regular exchange in the team. Recent studies have been conducted about the insufficient implementation of infection control measures by the medical staff. In order to achieve a long-term success in infection control, the infection control team should be supported with regard to their attitudes and motivation for tailored intervention. The implementation of tailored intervention takes time to be implemented carried by the hospital staff as well as the infection control team.

026-HYP
Analysis of screening for multidrug-resistant bacteria of participating intensive care units of the EFFECT-study

J. Herrmann1, D. Hasenclever2, N. Köhler1, Y. Breitenstein1, A. Kühn1, I. F. Chaberny1
1University of Leipzig, Institute of Hygiene, Hospital Epidemiology and Environmental Medicine, Leipzig, Germany
2Medical Faculty of the University of Leipzig, Institute of Medical Informatics, Statistics and Epidemiology, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction and Objectives: The ongoing EFFECT-study investigates whether daily antiseptic body wash with octenidine reduces nosocomial primary bacteremia and nosocomial multidrug-resistant organisms in intensive care units (ICU). EFFECT-data allow describing the screening behavior for multidrug-resistant bacteria of all participating ICUs. In Germany, infection control guidelines of the Commission for Hospital Hygiene and Infection Prevention at the Robert Koch-Institute (KRINKO) exist for all multidrug resistant bacteria. However, the implementation of screening and contact precautions are very variable in clinical practice. Materials&Methods: Forty-four ICUs take part in EFFECT. The first ICU started the intervention in January 2017 and the last ICU in November 2018. At inclusion, we collected information on the current screening routine for multidrug-resistant bacteria at each ICU (screening behavior and contact-precautions of new patients), separately for methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), vancomycin-resistant Enterococci (VRE), and gram negatives bacteria with multidrug-resistant (MRGN). Results: For MRSA, MRGN and VRE, 31, 22 and 13 of 44 ICUs screen 100% of patients respectively. The remaining ICUs either conduct risk-based screening or do not screen at all. Contact-precautions are also very different. Conclusion: All ICUs implemented the infection control guidelines of the Commission for Hospital Hygiene and Infection Prevention correctly. Nevertheless, the screening behavior of the ICUs participating in the EFFECT-study is variable. Evidence based and workable guidelines are needed to standardized screening and implement good infection control practice.
Introduction: The PSYGIENE-trial has shown that using custom behavioral psychology interventions to improve hand hygiene has a lasting effect within the group of healthcare professionals [von Lengerke et al., 2017]. After successfully improving hand hygiene in intensive care units at Hannover Medical School our goal was to evaluate further steps to prevent surgical site infections (SSI) in a separate trial.

Objectives: Preventing SSI requires compliance regarding many pre-, intra- and postoperative procedures. Therefore, perioperative procedures need to be investigated from an infection control point of view to answer the question, if the criteria for guideline-based preventive measures are met.

Methods: A compliance questionnaire for the OT personnel was developed based on KRINKO recommendations and AWMF guidelines (e.g. proper fitting of surgical caps and face masks), which was tested at Leipzig University Hospital. Overall, 54 standardized observations in the OTs were completed in a so-called Pre-WACH-phase. Patient-related as well as personnel-related characteristics, like wearing surgical masks correctly, were observed.

Results: The following results refer to the procedure in OTs. During 54 observations, a total of 243 employees were observed while working in daily routine. Just over half of them were wearing surgical caps correctly (compliance=53.1%; n=129). However, a higher compliance for wearing face masks correctly was observed (compliance=90.3%). In 7 out of 54 surgeries a clipper was used. No shavings were detected, which equals to a compliance of 100% regarding current recommendations. The possible use of incision drape was evaluated in 30 surgeries. It was used in 11 cases (36.7%). Iodine-impregnated incision drapes were used in 5 out of 11 cases (compliance=45.5%).

Conclusion: Compliance observations have proven to be a valuable instrument to assess the implementation of guideline compliance in OT. On this basis, we also created a questionnaire for general wards. Developing such instruments to evaluate prevention measures is a major part of the WACH-project and therefore it will contribute to improving prevention of SSI.

029-HYP
Education of infection prevention in collaboration with physicians and nursing staff – how is the demand?

1. Hartlep1, I. F. Chaberny1, B. Schock1
1Leipzig University Hospital, Institute of Hygiene, Hospital Epidemiology and Environmental Medicine, Department of Diagnostics, Leipzig, Germany

The curriculum of hygiene is in constant change and so is the education of health-care professionals. An inter-professional collaboration at eye level between aspiring physicians and nursing staff is essential. Therefore, a hygiene-workshop was developed in collaboration with physicians and nursing staff, which was implemented in the curriculum of second semester students at the local medical vocational school. The goal of this workshop is to impart knowledge and practical skills to improve the understanding of development and prevention of nosocomial infections. Using a uniquely designed questionnaire, a survey (n=281) was conducted one week in advance of the workshop.

Questions about the student’s state of knowledge and their possible need for certain topics (e.g. “I’d like to attend courses that are being supervised by nursing staff and physicians.”) were included. Furthermore, students were asked about the appreciation of guideline-based hygiene behavior as well as the implementation of hygiene by physicians and nursing staff (Likert scale; 1= I disagree, 7= I agree). More interaction with nursing staff and physicians was demanded by most of the participants (M=6.02 vs. M=5.00; p<0.001). The appreciation of correct hygiene behavior was valued much higher among nursing staff compared to physicians (M=5.02 vs. M=4.29; p<0.001).

Moreover, nursing staff reported a significantly higher self-observed compliance in implementing guideline-based hygiene compared to physicians (M=3.78 vs. 4.49; p<0.001). These findings show that an inter-professional collaboration between nursing staff and physicians as part of their education about infection prevention is highly needed. In addition to improving education, inter-professional exchange of knowledge at eye level should be implemented in order to create new perspectives for future healthcare professionals. These procedures may lead to better communication, mutual appreciation and improved cooperation between different groups of healthcare professionals and may also contribute to a higher compliance of guideline-based hygiene. As a result, the efficacy of infection prevention and patient care may benefit significantly.

030-HYP
Nasal MRSA colonization of veterinary staff in German equine clinics

1. Cuny1, W. Wüste1, U. Pansegraue2, W. Scheidemann3
2Robert Koch Institute, Section Nosocomial Infections and Antibiotic Resistance, Wernigerode, Germany
2Animal Hospital Lüsche, Bakum, Germany
3Veterinary Competence Centre Karthaus, Dülmen, Germany

Nosocomial infections with MRSA in equine clinics are common in many countries and associated with particular “hospital strains”. Actually the veterinary clinic associated subpopulation of livestock associated MRSA CC398 represents the majority of the MRSA isolates.

When emerging in equine clinics these MRSA are also found as nasal colonizers of veterinary staff. Nasal MRSA carriage bears the risk for infections in case of predisposing conditions (e.g. wounds).

Here we report a study on nasal MRSA colonization of 325 staff members in 16 German equine clinics, on the frequencies at which barrier precautions were implemented, on conditions predisposing to MRSA carriage, and on results from typing the isolates.

The average prevalence of MRSA colonization was 17.5%. Wearing gloves when carrying out relevant activities was reported by 44% of the 143 veterinarians and by 33% of the other 182 staff members. Among the veterinary assistants MRSA carriage was less frequent when wearing gloves (8.3% vs. 22%, p=0.044). Face masks were used by 8% of the veterinarians and 12.5% of veterinary assistants. Antibiotic consumption in the time period of 6 month prior to sampling proved to be a risk factor (p=0.001) for MRSA colonization.

Among the 125 MRSA isolates 91% represented the veterinary hospital associated subpopulation of clonal complex CC398.
The prevalence of nasal MRSA colonization of veterinary staff is still high and above that observed for staff in other veterinary disciplines besides that attending conventional livestock. Results from typing indicate that acquisition seems to be mainly associated with work in the clinics.

Besides measures targeting dissemination of MRSA in equine clinics the implementation of barrier precautions for prevention of nasal colonization of hospital staff is urgently needed.

Key words: MRSA, horse clinics, colonization of staff

031-DKMP
Evaluation of Medicinal Plants Extract Against Biofilm Formation in *Pseudomonas Aeruginosa*

*K. Nwanekwu*
1Imo State University, Microbiology, Owerri, Nigeria

Method: The antibacterial and biofilm inhibitory activity of leaf extracts of *Ocimum gratissimum*, *Moringa oleifera*, *Hibiscus sabdariffa*, *Azadirachta indica* and seed extract of *Garcinia kola* against clinical isolates of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* were evaluated using the agar diffusion and microtiter assay methods.

Results: The ethanol extracts of *O. gratissimum* and *H. sabdariffa* exhibited significant antibacterial activity against the *P. aeruginosa* with diameter zones of inhibition of 25mm and 30mm with minimum inhibitory concentrations (MIC) of 0.16mg/ml and 0.18mg/ml respectively. While the ethanol extracts of *A. indica*, *M. oleifera* and *G. kola* showed no antibacterial effect against the test organism. However, all five plants extract inhibited the formation of biofilm with optical density (OD) values reduction from 0.168 to 0.160 for *O. gratissimum*, 0.170 to 0.151 for *H. sabdariffa*, 0.140 to 0.138 for *A. indica*, 0.145 to 0.137 for *M. oleifera* and 0.135 to 0.130 for *G. kola*. Out of five plants extract tested, *H. sabdariffa* exhibited the best growth and biofilm inhibition activity of *P. aeruginosa*.

Conclusion: The results of this study indicate that various concentrations of the plants extract particularly *H. sabdariffa*, may provide an alternative to control biofilm-related infections caused by *P. aeruginosa*.

032-DKMP
Value of the CXCL13 ELISA and the ReaScan® Lateral Flow Immunoassay in the Diagnosis of Lyme Neuroborreliosis

*K. Ziegler*, 1A. Rath2, C. Schoerner3, R. Meyer4, T. Bertsch2, J. Held2
1Klinikum Nürnberg, Institut für Klinikhygiene, Medizinische Mikrobiologie und Klinische Infektionologie, Nürnberg, Germany
2Universitätsklinikum Erlangen and Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Mikrobiologisches Institut - Klinische Mikrobiologie, Immunologie und Hygiene, Erlangen, Germany
3Klinikum Nürnberg, Institute of Clinical Chemistry, Laboratory Medicine and Transfusion Medicine, Nürnberg, Germany
4Klinikum Nürnberg, Klinik für Neurologie, Nürnberg, Germany

Background and Objectives. Diagnosis of Lyme neuroborreliosis (LNB) can be challenging in an early disease stage especially if *Borrelia*-specific intrathecal antibodies are still negative. This study aimed to assess the performance of CXCL13 ELISA and the ReaScan® CXCL13 lateral flow immunoassay (LFA) in the diagnosis of Lyme neuroborreliosis.

Material and Methods: In this dual-center case-control study 90 CSF samples were retrospectively analysed by the Euroimmun CXCL13 ELISA and the ReaScan® CXCL13 LFA. Overall, 34 CSF samples from patients with definite LNB, 10 samples from patients with possible LNB and 46 samples from patients with other predominantly inflammatory CNS diseases (non-LNB control group) were included. Patients with definite or possible LNB were classified according to the EFNS guidelines.

Results. CXCL13 ELISA was significantly elevated in all 34 patients with definite LNB (median 1409 pg/mL) compared to 46 control patients (median 20.7 pg/mL, *p < 0.0001*). In the control group patients with possible LNB were not included. For a cut-off of 78.6 pg/mL a sensitivity of 100% and a specificity of 84.8 % (AUC 0.93) was calculated. The ReaScan® CXCL13 LFA was significantly elevated in 31 patients with definite LNB (median 223.5 arbitrary values) compared to 46 control patients (median 0 arbitrary units, *p<0.0001*). A cut-off of 22.5 arbitrary values (AV) had a sensitivity of 91.2% and a specificity of 93.5% (AUC 0.94). Overall, the agreement of the LFA with the ELISA was 90%; 96% for ELISA values < 250 pg/mL; 22% for ELISA values from 250-500 pg/mL and 96% for ELISA values > 500 pg/mL, respectively. The correlation between the CXCL13 ELISA and the LFA was *r* = 0.89 and *p<0.0001*.

Conclusion. CXCL13 ELISA and the ReaScan® CXCL13 LFA in CSF are reliable diagnostic tools for the identification of patients with definite LNB.

033-DKMP
Genomic diversity of *Achromobacter xylosoxidans* during the persistence in the airways of cystic fibrosis patients

*S. Kampmeier1, A. Meilmann2, B. C. Kahl2*
1University Hospital Münster, Institute of Hygiene, Münster, Germany
2University Hospital Münster, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Münster, Germany

Introduction

*Achromobacter xylosoxidans* are increasingly recognized as emerging pathogens in patients suffering from cystic fibrosis (CF). Detection of these pathogens in the airways of CF patients is accompanied with an impaired pulmonary function.

Objectives

To detect genomic clusters of *A. xylosoxidans* strains in different CF patients and to elucidate genetic alterations of these pathogens over time.

Materials & methods

*A. xylosoxidans* isolated during 2006 to 2018 from sputa of CF patients were analyzed by whole genome sequencing using the Illumina NextSeq 500 platform. Using SeqSphere+ software version 6.0.0, all coding regions were compared in a gene-by-gene approach (core genome multilocus sequence typing, cgMLST) using *A. xylosoxidans* NCTC 10807 (GenBank accession number NZ_LN831029.1) as a reference sequence. Genetic relation was displayed using the minimum-spanning tree algorithm, whereby close genetic relationship was assumed at 20 allele difference or less.

Results
In conclusion, a compound was developed that inhibits specifically the growth of oral pathogens *P. gingivalis*, *T. forsythia* and *P. intermedia* by targeting a physiological essential enzyme. This could be a starting point for further development of an alternative treatment for periodontitis and saving broad spectra antibiotics for other clinical indications.

037-DKMP
Diagnosis and drug susceptibility of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* from pulmonary specimens at Pasteur Institute of Algeria: Comparative study between classic Lowenstein-Jensen culture and BACTEC MGIT 960 system.

+F. DJOUDI1, D. BENREMILA1, D. YALA2
1University Of Bejaia, Microbiology, Bejaia, Algeria
2Pasteur Institute of Algeria, National Reference Laboratory of Tuberculosis and Mycobacteria, Algiers, Algeria

**Background:** tuberculosis is an infectious disease and the causative agent is *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex. The direct diagnosis stills long and fastidious since microscopic examination, with Ziehl–Neelsen (Z–N) staining, even fast, lacks sensitivity. The culture on Löwenstein-Jensen (L–J), a reference method, sometimes takes up to ten weeks to obtain the result. In order to compensate the slow growth of cultures on solid media, new automated methods have been developed, including BACTEC MGIT 960, VERSA TREK, MBREDOX, BACTEC 460, allowing early diagnosis and drugs susceptibility testing, in addition to their good sensitivity and specificity.

**Materials and Methods:** The aim of this study is to verify the contribution of BACTEC MGIT 960 in the diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis, compared to microscopic examination and culture on L-J medium, at the tuberculosis and mycobacteria unite in Pasteur Institute of Algeria. Nine hundred and fourteen specimens were collected between January 2016 and April 2017. One hundred and seventy-nine reported positive L-J culture and/or BACTEC MGIT 960.

**Results and Discuss:** Among the 179 cases, 155 were detected by the BACTEC MGIT 960, and confirmed by Ziehl control. L-J subculture and MPT64 immuno-chromatographic assay. On classic culture and Z–N staining, nevertheless, only 123 and 95 specimens respectively were positive. These results confirm the high susceptibility of BACTEC MGIT 960 in improving the diagnosis of tuberculosis in bacilli-poor specimens, compared to classic culture (p=0.037) and direct examination (p=0.014). Contamination rate was higher in L-J culture: 81/914 (8.8%), including 7 microscopic examination positive cases, whereas, in BACTEC MGIT 960, only 29/914 (3.17%) specimens were contaminated, with no positive microscopic examination cases.

**Conclusions:** The main advantage of BACTEC MGIT 960 is its ability to shorten the time of growth to an average of 7 days, compared to the solid medium. Nevertheless, there is an incompressible risk of contamination. Bacilloscopy and L-J culture remain complementary to this automat for a reliable diagnosis.

038-DKMP
Proof of Concept Evaluation of a New Diagnostic Device for Culture-Independent Microbiological Diagnosis of Infective Endocarditis

*M. Karrasch1, W. Pfister2, M. Diab3, T. Doenst3, B. Löffler2, J. Rödel2
1Jena University Hospital, Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine, Jena, Germany

**Background:** incompressible risk of contamination. Bacilloscopy and L-J culture remain complementary to this automat for a reliable diagnosis.
Question: Accurate and fast microbiological diagnosis of infective endocarditis (IE) is of vital importance for patient outcome.

Methods: Forty culture-negative heart valves were evaluated with a new multiplex-PCR cartridge (Unyvero™, Curetis AG, Holzgerlingen, Germany), advertised to detect several Gram-positive/negative bacteria and fungi, together with several antibiotic resistance genes. Those POCT results were compared to conventional 16S rDNA PCR/sequencing results.

Results: Multiplex-PCR was positive in 13 cases 
1Staphylococcus aureus (n=5), Enterococcus spp. / E. faecalis (n=5), ConS (n=1), Granulicatella adjacens (n=1), Abiotrophia adjacens (n=1)Antibiotic resistances were found in 4 specimens, from which 2 specimens were without any pathogen identification. 16S rDNA PCR was positive in 20 cases. Consecutive sequencing identified those as Staphylococcus spp (n=6), Enterococcus faecalis (n=4), Streptococcus spp (n=4), Leifsonia shinshuensis (n=1), Granulicatella elegans / G. adjacens (n=2), Abiotrophia adjacens (n=1). One case was positive in 16S PCR without any reliable signal in sequencing. When comparing both methods, identification was consistent in 9 cases and divergent in other 9 cases.

Discussion: This cartridge is easy to integrate into the daily microbiology laboratory workflow, and is less laborious than 16S sequencing PCR. For the application in routine IE diagnosis, the system needs to be optimized to include targets for viridans streptococci and HACEK group. In addition, problems with invalid resistance and pathogen target detection need to be fixed by the producer.

Conclusion: The analyzed system might be a future diagnostic tool for IE detection following assay optimization. In addition, a performance comparison with other similar culture-independent methods should be performed before using this system in routine diagnosis.

039-DKMP
Nosocomial parainfluenza virus type 3 infections at a large German University Hospital between 2012 and 2017
*M. Hönnemann 1, D. Martin 1, U. G. Lieber 1
1Institute of Virology, Leipzig University, Leipzig, Germany

Question: The clinical impact of parainfluenza virus infections is rarely studied systematically. The disease burden of parainfluenzavirus type 3 (PIV-3), however, is comparatively high and severe disease courses can occur in young children and immunocompromised patients. The aim of the study was to determine the seasonal dynamics, rate and clinical characteristics of nosocomial infections with PIV-3 in comparison to influenza viruses in five consecutive seasons.

Methods: A retrospective observational study was conducted at Leipzig university hospital (UKL) on patients with laboratory-confirmed infection with either PIV-3 or influenza from 1st October 2012 to 30th September 2017.

Results: A total of 309 patients were tested positive for PIV-3 and 638 patients for influenza virus. Nosocomial infection occurred in 13.9% (n = 89) of all influenza cases. Rates of nosocomial infection differed between influenza virus types and seasons with up to 17.4 % for influenza A/H3N2 and up to 22.2 % for season 2016/17, respectively. Regarding PIV-3, 23.9% (n = 74) of the cases were nosocomial and rates did not vary significantly between the seasons. For both, PIV-3 and influenza virus, community acquired and nosocomial cases differed in underlying medical conditions and regarding the role of immunosuppression.

Conclusions: Nosocomial infections account for a substantial proportion of infections with parainfluenzavirus type 3, especially in immunocompromised patients. Knowledge of the baseline rate of nosocomial viral infections could contribute to the implementation of appropriate infection control measures.

041-DKMP
Metabolic insights into the clinical urethral catheter isolate Myroides spp. A21
1D. Hiller 1, S. Barthel 1, M. Jahn 1, D. Jahn 1
1TU Braunschweig, Institute of Microbiology, Braunschweig, Germany

Introduction: The opportunistic pathogen Myroides spp. emits unique volatile organic compounds (mVOCs) which act as infochemicals with in part detrimental effects on other microorganisms during infection. The biochemical reaction pathways of volatiles and their role as virulence factors has to be elucidated in more detail.

Objectives: We try to shed light on the virulence of one clinical catheter isolate (A21) and the role of mVOCs from Myroides spp. during infection process of human cells.

Material & methods: We used BIOLOG Phenotype MicroArrays TM, double immunofluorescence microscopy, OLSA, GC/MS, Co-culture, KEGG pathway generation, Omics (metabolomic, transcriptomic, proteomic, voltalomic), amino-acid analytic with HPLC-FLD.

Results: Preliminary results revealed that co-culture experiments of a T24 cells, a bladder carcinoma cellline, with the Myroides A21 isolate revealed an invasive character. Proteus mirabilis looses its swarming capacity and Pseudomonas aeruginosa its green colouring when incubated with the A21 mVOCs. Current BIOLOG arrays provided information about different used carbon and nitrogen sources to let us establish a metabolomic map about Myroides.

The clinical catheter isolate A21 is able to metabolize amino-acids as the sole energy source. The newly developed defined minimal medium (Artificial Myroides Medium, AMM) was essential for further metabolite and volatile analyses. Time resolved amino-acid HPLC-FLD analyses of Myroides supernatants in AMM with glutamin, asparagine, cysteine and tryptophane resulted in consumption of more amino-acids than in AMM without additional amino-acids.

Co-culture experiments of T24 cells with Myroides showed interesting GC/MS data of intracellular metabolites. On the one hand Myroides was set in direct contact with the host and the other hand Myroides was indirectly cultivated with the host in two different chambers devided by a septum. The intracellular metabolites like citrate, aspartate, malate and 2-ketoglutarate are strongly reduced in comparison to the medium. Fumaric acid was the only TCA-cycle metabolite.
which was not reduced during co-cultivation (direct contact) in contrast to indirect cultivation

042-DKMP
Five-Year Surveillance of the Prevalence of C. trachomatis serovars L1-L3 (Lymphogranuloma venereum) in a High-Risk Patients’ Cohort

*D. Schmidt*, 1  U. Uchermann 2, S. Esser 2, J. Buer 2, P. M. Rath 2
1University Hospital Essen, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Essen, Germany
2University Hospital Essen, Clinic of Dermatology, Essen, Germany

Introduction: Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV), caused by Chlamydia trachomatis serovars L1-L3, is a rare sexually transmitted disease. Originally a tropic disease, LGV has spread across Europe since 2003, mainly affecting men who have sex with men (MSM). The disease begins with a primary lesion in the anal region and develops rapidly into severe proctitis and proctocolitis. Eradication requires prolonged antibiotic treatment and often surgical intervention, too. Data from Germany are scarce due to the abolishment of compulsory notification of LGV in 2001. Additionally, only a few laboratories have implemented molecular tests for the detection of C. trachomatis serovars L1-L3 despite the recent availability of commercial tests.

Results: Between 2014 and 2019 we have analyzed 2265 urogenital and anal samples. 38 years) who reported periodically at the HIV polyclinic of the University Hospital Essen. All samples were tested for the presence of C. trachomatis using commercial qPCR assays. Samples tested positive for C. trachomatis were tested using an inhouse qPCR detecting C. trachomatis serovars L1-L3 only. To further limit our qPCR results for serovars L1-L3 clinical manifestations were also taken into account. Results: 218 samples (9.6%) from 198 patients were tested positive for the presence of C. trachomatis. 38 samples (17.4%) from 34 patients were tested positive for the presence of C. trachomatis serovars L1-L3. 16 (47%) of these patients had clinical manifestations of proctitis. For 18 of these patients clinical manifestations of Chlamydia related proctitis had not been expressly mentioned in their electronic health report. Conclusions: Screening for C. trachomatis in general and for serovars L1-L3 in particular is recommended for a high-risk patients’ cohort. Despite an increase of samples from 237 in 2014 to 893 samples in 2019 this did not result in a higher positive rate for C. trachomatis and/or serovars L1-L3. Reason for this may be found in a greater awareness of the problem and a good surveillance of this particular patients’ cohort at our clinic.

044-DKMP
Multivalent neo-glycoconjugates as binders and scavengers of bacterial enterotoxins

V. Heine 1, R. R. Rosenkrantz 2, 3, C. Dew 1, A. Jans 3, S. Boesveld 4, D. M. Mandic 3, N. Anwar 5, V. Krens 6, U. Schnakenberg 5, C. Trautwein 7, A. J. C. Kuehne 1, L. Eiling 1
1RWTH Aachen University, Laboratory for Biomaterials, Institute for Biotechnology and Helmholtz-Institute for Biomedical Engineering, Aachen, Germany
2Fraunhofer-Institute for Applied Polymer Research IAP, Potsdam, Germany
3RWTH Aachen University, DWI – Leibnitz Institute for Interactive Materials, Aachen, Germany
4University Hospital, RWTH Aachen University, Department of Internal Medicine Ill, Aachen, Germany
5Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Microbiology, Prague, Czech Republic
6RWTH Aachen University, Institute of Materials in Electrical Engineering 1, Aachen, Germany

Introduction: Bacterial enterotoxins cause intestinal diseases with severe outcome. Increasing antibiotic resistance of enterotoxins secreting bacteria triggers the necessity for new therapies. The initial step of infection is binding of enterotoxins to cell-surface glycans of intestinal epithelial cells. Binding and scavenging of enterotoxins by neo-glycoconjugates could inhibit disease progression.

Objectives: Multivalent presentation of selective glycan ligands are crucial for binding and scavenging of enterotoxins. Together with our cooperation partners, we developed glycopolymers, neo-glycoconjugates, and glycan-functionalized micrombs for binding and scavenging of toxin A (TcdA) from Clostridium difficile and cholera toxin (CT) from Vibrio cholera.

Material & methods: Glycopolymer brushes were synthesized on a gold sensor surface and modified to obtain the Galili epitope, a non-human glycan, known for binding the TcdA-receptor domain. A multivalent BSA neo-
glycoprotein glycan ligand library presenting 40 different glycans was screened for TcdA and CT binding.\(^2\) Microgels functionalized with the glycan epitope GM1\(\alpha\) were synthesized and investigated for CT binding and scavenging.\(^3\)

Results: Localized surface-plasmon resonance reveals nanomolar binding of TcdA-R to a Galili-functionalized glycopolymer brush biosensor.\(^1\) BSA neo-glycoprotein with Lewis\(^\text{a}\)-Lewis\(^\text{b}\) glycans facilitates scavenging of TcdA and protects human colon cells in the presence of TcdA.\(^2\) GM1\(\alpha\) functionalized microgels scavenges CT and protect colorectal cells.\(^3\)

Conclusion: Multivalent neo-glycoconjugates are highly effective in binding the bacterial enterotoxins TcdA and CT.

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047-DKMP
Identification of genetic factors increasing carbapenem resistance in Klebsiella pneumoniae with bla\(^{\text{OXA-48}}\)
*M. Oremans\(^1\), S. G. Gatemann\(^1\), N. Pfennigwerth\(^1\)
Ruhr-University Bochum, Department of Medical Microbiology, Bochum, Germany

Introduction: Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales became the most clinically significant multi-drug resistant bacteria. In Germany, Klebsiella pneumoniae with bla\(^{\text{OXA-48}}\) are most frequently detected, as shown in the annual report 2018 of the National Reference Laboratory for multidrug-resistant bacteria (NRZ). Although OXA-48 usually mediates distinct resistance to carbapenems some clinical isolates show low minimal inhibitory concentrations (MIC) of carbapenems and are categorized susceptible using EUCAST breakpoints.

Aim: The aim of this study is to reveal possible genetic causations for varying MICs of carbapenems in K. pneumoniae with bla\(^{\text{OXA-48}}\).

Material & Methods: Clinical K. pneumoniae isolates with bla\(^{\text{OXA-48}}\) showing low MICs of carbapenems were put under gradually rising selective pressure of meropenem to select for mutants with elevated MICs. This was done with disc diffusion or with broth macrodilution. Whole genome sequencing were performed with the low MIC primary isolates and the high MIC selected mutants to check for mutations. A hybrid assembly of Illumina MiSeq and Oxford Nanopore sequencing data was carried out to generate whole genome sequences.

Results: Only few spontaneous mutations were found comparing genome sequences of primary isolates and corresponding mutants. Mutations or IS elements possibly leading to elevated MICs were predominantly found in genes associated with outer membrane porins. To check if these genomic alterations lead to elevated MICs of carbapenems, they were integrated into the primary clinical isolates via CRISPR/Cas system. Clinical K. pneumoniae isolates with bla\(^{\text{OXA-48}}\) showing high MICs will be screened for the found mutations.

Conclusion: There are only few single mutations having huge impact on the MICs of carbapenems in K. pneumoniae with bla\(^{\text{OXA-48}}\). As shown by sequencing data of clinical isolates and selected mutants. Clinical K. pneumoniae isolates with high MICs of carbapenems will be screened for the found or
similar mutations in the same genes to check if bla\textsubscript{OXA-48} or bla\textsubscript{OXA-48} in combination with an mutation in an appropriate gene leads to high MIC in clinical isolates.

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048-DKMP

Novel monoclonal antibodies for detection and serotyping of *Legionella* spp.

*A. Helming*\textsuperscript{1}, E. Müller\textsuperscript{2}, R. Ehricht\textsuperscript{2}, M. Fischer\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}Izmb GmbH, IVD, Erfurt, Germany

\textsuperscript{2}Leibniz-IPHT, InfectoGnostics Research Campus, Jena, Germany

**Introduction**

*Legionella* is increasingly recognized as the causative agent of pneumoniae. Most cases are caused by *L. pneumophila* serotype 1, but other serogroups and species like *L. anisa* may also be pathogenic. Since the widely used urinary antigen test detects only *L. pneumophila* serotype 1 and the gold standard of *Legionella* detection is still time consuming cultivation, there is a growing demand on fast and solid detection of all serogroups as well as non-pneumophila species.

*Legionellae* are often associated to amoeba or biofilms, resulting in modified surface structures, which limit the properties of existing antibody-based detection systems. Further, *Legionellae* may enter a VNBC-state, which limits cultivation.

**Objectives**

In order to provide new tools for an antibody-based detection of all potential pathogenic *Legionellae* a novel panel of monoclonal antibodies was raised against *L. pneumophila* and non-pneumophila species.

**Material & Methods**

Monoclonal antibodies were developed using hybridoma technique. Immunisations were carried out with antigen variants carrying specific surface structures due to different cultivation methods (e.g. amoeba-associated). Serotype-independent surface structures we also employed. Experiments were performed with 29 *Legionella* strains including 9 substrains of SG 1 and representatives for SG 2-14 as well as 7 non-pneumophila strains.

**Results**

25 monoclonal antibodies were raised. Three single antibodies react with all serotypes of *L. pneumophila*. Other mABs recognize separate serotypes or more than one. Using mixtures of these mABs detection of all serogroups is feasible. One antibody turned out to detect most of the non-pneumophila species like *Legionella anisa*. Microarray studies revealed potential for SG-discrimination via specific microarray-patterns.

**Conclusion**

The developed panel of monoclonal antibodies offers great opportunities for the establishment of novel assay platforms for a fast and reliable detection of all existing *Legionella pneumophila* serotypes and substrains, as well as relevant non-pneumophila species.

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049-DKMP

Direct MALDI identification from positive blood cultures: evaluation of Rapid Sepsityper with a large collection of routine samples

*M. Cordovana*, A. Zignolib, S. Ambrettic

\textsuperscript{a}University Hospital Policlinico Sant’Orsola-Malpighi of Bologna, Microbiology, Bologna, Italy

\textsuperscript{b}University Hospital of Dornbirn, Austria

\textsuperscript{c}University Hospital Of Bologna Policlinico Sant’Orsola-Malpighi, Microbiology, Bologna, Italy

**Background**

The rapid identification of the causative agent of sepsis plays a key role for the adoption of an appropriate antibiotic therapy, and hence is crucial for the patients’ clinical outcome.

In this study, we evaluate the implementation into the routine workflow of the Rapid Sepsityper kit for the rapid bacterial identification by MALDI-TOF MS directly from positive blood culture bottles.

**Methods**

From February 2018 to September 2019, a total of 5,047 routine positive blood cultures samples underwent direct MALDI identification by Rapid Sepsityper (Bruker Daltonik).

The bacterial pellet extracted from 1 ml of positive blood culture by the lysis/centrifugation Sepsityper protocol was spotted directly onto the MALDI target for the species identification.

For 1,648 samples, the same pellet was then used to set up the antibiotic susceptibility testing by Microscan WalkAway (Beckman Coulter) broth microdilution panels.

**Results**

Overall, the Rapid Sepsityper enabled the direct identification of 4,303/4,848 (88.2%) monomicrobial samples. It showed a very good performance for enterobacteria, non-fermenting gram-negative rods, staphylococci and enterococci. The missed identification were restricted mainly to a few groups of microorganisms (streptococci, corynebacteria, *Bacteroides* spp. and yeasts).

Among the polymicrobial samples, in 62/200 samples both species were identified, in 73/200 only one species, in 65 sample none of them.

Susceptibility testing was successful for 1549/1648 samples (94%) (for 99 samples the growth in the panel was insufficient).

**Discussion**

The Rapid Sepsityper proved to be a reliable and robust method for the bacterial identification directly from positive blood cultures, with an excellent efficacy (near to 100%) for the most clinically relevant causative agents of sepsis (enterobacteria, *S. aureus*, enterococci). It enables to deliver a result in a very short time (around 1 h for a batch of 10-15 samples).

Further, the same bacterial pellet used for the MALDI identification proved to be suitable to set up the antibiotic susceptibility testing, simplifying and speeding up the routine workflow and the time-to-report.
**Background:** Susceptibility of anaerobes to antibiotics has become unpredictable during the last decades, and empirical treatment of anaerobic infections is no longer satisfactory. Accurate and routine-friendly methods for MIC determination of anaerobes are demanded. Here, we evaluate the performance of a commercially available microdilution panel in comparison to a gradient MIC Strip test.

**Methods:** N=300 anaerobes clinical isolates (83 species, 31 genera) were tested with the MICRONAUT-S Anaerobes MIC panel (MERLIN Diagnostika, Germany), comprising penicillin, ampicillin, amoxicillin/clavulanate, piperacillin/tazobactam, meropenem, imipenem, ertapenem, metronidazole, clindamycin, vancomycin, doxycycline, moxifloxacin and tigecycline. The same bacterial suspension was used for the panel inoculum, and for testing by MIC Strips (Liofilchem, Italy). The panels were incubated at 37 °C in anaerobic conditions for ≥24 h, and read visually. In case of no bacterial growth for the growth control, incubation was prolonged to 48-72 h. Results were interpreted according to EUCAST guidelines. Comparison was performed in terms of essential agreement, category agreement and error rates.

**Results:** Category agreement with MIC strips resulted overall >97% (from 93.9% to 99.7%). Essential agreement resulted 92.9% for piperacillin/tazobactam, and >96% for all the other antibiotics. Overall, n=53 minor errors (1.8%), n=4 major errors and n=24 very major errors were observed (8 of which resulting from a difference of <=1 dilution steps, and 15 restricted to ertapenem). For most isolates (219/300) the panels were readable after overnight incubation, in 67 cases after 48 h, in 11 after 72 h, in 4 after 96 h (Dialister and Porphyromonas).

**Conclusions:** The MICRONAUT-S Anaerobes MIC panels proved to be a reliable broth microdilution method for antibiotic susceptibility testing of anaerobes, providing results consistent with gradient methodology, with both fast and slow growing species, in most cases in 18-24 hours. The ease-of-handling and result interpretation makes this method suitable for implementation into routine workflows.

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**050-DKMP**

Evaluation of MICRONAUT-S Anaerobes MIC broth microdilution panels for antibiotic susceptibility testing of anaerobes

* M. Cordovana1, S. Ambretti2
1 University Hospital Policlinico Sant’Orsola-Malpighi of Bologna, Microbiology, Bologna, Italy
2 University Hospital of Bologna Policlinico Sant’Orsola-Malpighi, Microbiology, Bologna, Italy

**Objectives**

We aimed to screen all macrolides following their biofilm-suppression and colistin-synergy in *K. pneumoniae* culture.

We have evaluated the anti-biofilm and bactericidal effectiveness of eight macrolides against *K. pneumoniae* ATCC1003, seven hospital isolates and five multidrug resistant (MDR) hospital isolates, with AZM showing significant anti-biofilm effects. Although colistin, an antibiotic of choice for MDR *K. pneumoniae*, showed low effectiveness against both planktonic and biofilm cultures, we found the combination of colistin and AZM led to a synergistic effect, improving the Cmin of colistin up to serum Cmax levels which could increase the therapy effectiveness of colistin in treating *K. pneumoniae* infections. Based on these findings, we applied the combination therapy for a MDR *K. pneumoniae* severe infection associated with a bad prognosis. Specifically, there were two clinical cases where MDR *K. pneumoniae* sensitive only to colistin was identified and an antibiotic therapy of imipenem, colistin and azithromycin were applied. In both cases the infection completely eradicated in 4 weeks.

Our results suggest that combination therapeutic approach using anti-biofilm compounds such as AZM with a task-specific antibiotic can be used to combat infections caused by MDR *K. pneumoniae*, and that the use of AZM to potentiate colistin may prove an effective solution for PDR and MDR infections.

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**052-DKMP**

Identification of potential factors interfering with molecular diagnostics for bloodstream infections

*S. Huber1, J. Weinberger1, M. Pilecky2, A. Schilberger2, V. Weber2,4,5, D. Orth-Höller1, A. E. Posch1*
1 Medical University Innsbruck, Institute of Hygiene and Medical Microbiology, Innsbruck, Austria
2 Ares Genetica GmbH, Vienna, Austria
3 Danube University Krems, Center of Biomedical Technology, Department of Health Science and Biomedicine, Krems, Austria
4 Danube University Krems, Christian Doppler Laboratory for Innovative Therapy Approaches in Sepsis, Department of Health Science and Biomedicine, Krems, Austria
5 Danube University Krems, Department of Biomedical Research, Krems, Austria

**Introduction**

Bloodstream infections (BSI) call for a fast and accurate identification of causative pathogens. Thus, in recent years scientists focused on the development of molecular diagnostic approaches to serve these needs. Despite several advantages compared to blood culture, these systems, in particular PCR-based approaches (eg. LightCycler SeptiFast (SF); Roche Diagnostics, Penzberg, Germany) still suffer from limitations like inhibition due to interfering matrix components.

**Objectives**

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**051-DKMP**

Azithromycin possesses biofilm-inhibitory activity against *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and potentiates colistin to combat klebsiella-associated infection

* O. Moshynets1, O. Krykyoun2, O. Iungin2, R. Jerdan3, G. Filonenko4, A. Spiers5
1 Institute of Molecular Biology and Genetics of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev, Ukraine
2 Amosov National Institute of Cardiovascular Surgery, Kiev, Ukraine
3 School of Applied Sciences, Abertay University, Dundee, United Kingdom
4 Center for Pediatric Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery, Kiev, Ukraine

Gram-negative infections have become a global health problem with *Klebsiella pneumoniae* recognised as one of the most dangerous. An intrinsic capability of many pathogens is the ability to form a biofilm which underlies persistent, survival, and resistance to the immune system and antibacterial therapy, with biofilms generally providing phenotypic resistance when genetic resistance might be restricted. However, this may not always be the case, as *P. aeruginosa* biofilms are susceptible to azithromycin (AZM) whereas planktonic cells are not. Like *P. aeruginosa*, *K. pneumoniae* also forms biofilms and shares similar antibiotic resistance profiles, and we have hypothesized that some macrolides might possess similar anti-biofilm activity against *K. pneumoniae*.

Our results suggest that combination therapeutic approach using anti-biofilm compounds such as AZM with a task-specific antibiotic can be used to combat infections caused by MDR *K. pneumoniae*, and that the use of AZM to potentiate colistin may prove an effective solution for PDR and MDR infections.

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Aim of this study was to identify potential factors interfering with molecular diagnostics of BSI directly from blood.

Methods

In this retrospective study 2148 SF results performed at the Institute of Hygiene and Medical Microbiology, Medical University Innsbruck, Austria from January 2013 to April 2019 were analyzed regarding general, laboratory and medical parameters that might be associated with test inhibition by univariate analysis with Wilcoxon and Fisher exact test.

Results

The overall inhibition rate in this study was 9.08% (n=195). Within general parameters the ward where the patient was hospitalized was significantly associated with inhibition (q-value <0.05) with the highest inhibition risk at the Department of Surgical Anesthesia (14.4%). For laboratory parameters cut off values for leukocyte counts of <5.700 cells/µL and ≥26.700 cells/µL could be significantly associated with a low (5%) and high (67%) inhibition risk (q-value <1x10^-9). Samples with a leukocyte count between this cut off values showed a significant increase of inhibition from 33% to 69% when hydrocortisone was applied during hospitalization (q-value <0.05).

Conclusion

This study investigated inhibitory factors of SF, a molecular test for BSI diagnostics. We identified the leukocyte count as the main factor for inhibition. In case of a moderate to high leukocyte count (5.700 to <26.900 cells/µL) the additional application of hydrocortisone significantly increased the risk of inhibition. These results give valuable information for further development of molecular tests. Whether other commercially available tests suffer from the same problem has to be further investigated.

054-DKMP

**Cutibacterium acnes** as cause for endocarditis: How to differentiate between contamination and infection?

L. Kursawe, J. Kikheny, A. Wießner, S. Eichinger, W. Eichinger, H. Grubitzsch*

1Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Biofilmzentrum, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Infektionsimmunologie, Berlin, Germany 2Hospital Bogenhausen, Department of Cardiac Surgery, München, Germany

**Introduction:** Timely diagnosis of Infective Endocarditis (IE) is crucial for patient outcome but may be challenging. In particular, when culture or PCR-techniques identify skin flora, like *Cutibacterium (Propionibacterium) acnes*, the relevance often remains questionable due to suspected contamination during sampling.

**Objective:** We aimed to detect *C. acnes* in heart valve tissues of IE patients by Fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH). Thus, we aimed to discriminate between contamination and infection and to explore the source of *C. acnes* IE.

**Methods:**

Using FISH with a specific *C. acnes* probe combined with 16S rRNA PCR and sequencing, we identified and visualized *C. acnes* directly within explanted heart valve tissue sections. Skin samples from sternal wound edges were taken from two of these patients to evaluate *C. acnes* colonization at the incision sites as possible source of the pathogens.

**Results:**

In 13 patients, FISH and PCR detected exclusively *C. acnes* as causative agent of IE. Blood cultures remained negative in 11 patients, and valve tissue culture was positive in 8 of these 13 cases. Moreover, FISH showed impressive biofilm formation and activity of *C. acnes* in 5 cases even after treatment with antibiotics. On the other hand, in one case, FISH and PCR identified *Streptococcus gallolyticus* biofilms on the heart valve instead of *C. acnes* that had been grown in culture.

Skin samples from two patients revealed high numbers of *C. acnes* in biofilms located at the infundibulum of chest hair follicles.

**Conclusion:** *C. acnes* can form impressive biofilms on heart valves. FISH is a valuable tool for proving or rejecting diagnosis of *C. acnes* endocarditis. Furthermore, FISH showed a high load of *C. acnes* on chest hair follicles, supporting the hypothesis of contamination of the heart valve during skin incision at surgery.

053-DKMP

**Cutibacterium acnes** as cause for endocarditis: How to differentiate between contamination and infection?

L. Kursawe, J. Kikheny, A. Wießner, S. Eichinger, W. Eichinger, H. Grubitzsch*

1Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Biofilmzentrum, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Infektionsimmunologie, Berlin, Germany 2Hospital Bogenhausen, Department of Cardiac Surgery, München, Germany

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**054-DKMP**

**Water samples containing increased ferric ions significantly reduce recovery rates of coliform and *E. coli* on selective chromogenic media**

*R. Rösner*, A. Bommer, T. Kuczus

1Institute of Hygiene, University Hospital Münster, Münster, Germany 2University of Münster, Münster, Germany

Drinking water as necessary commodity for survival of living beings is one of the best controlled foods. In order to achieve drinking water quality in accordance with the German drinking water ordinance (TrinkwV) no fecal indicator bacteria such as coliform and *Escherichia coli* are allowed to be present and thresholds of chemicals must not be exceeded. The microorganisms are detectable in water samples using the membrane filtration technique followed by incubation on selective chromogenic coliform agar (CCA) with blue and red colored colony forming units (cfu) representing *E. coli* and coliforms, respectively. Chromogenic agar such as ESBL, OXA and CARBA plates were used for detection of antibiotic multi resistant *Enterobacteria* as well. During analyses we observed that water samples with increased ferric ion contents (threshold in drinking water is 0.2 mg/l) present lower recovery rates than samples with low iron concentrations. Consequently, decreased recovery may result in false negative results. This phenomenon was not seen when Colilert was used as alternative method without membrane filtration. To analyze the influence of ferric ions on the recovery rates we analyzed specifically the cfu of *E. coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Citrobacter freundii* which were admitted to water samples with four different added iron concentrations as well as real water samples with various iron contents. We found a reproducible reduction of the cfu of at least 60% when samples contain > 1 mg/l iron on selective plates while no reduction was observed on non-selective Luria broth. We suggest that high iron contents on filter membranes in combination with ingredients of chromogenic agars may have an important influence on the recovery rate and analyze various components of the media in detail.
055-DKMP
Correlation between predicted antimicrobial resistance genes and resistance phenotype in German Campylobacter jejuni clinical isolates

*S. Banerji*, P. Aura*, A. Tille*, A. Frith†, A. Flieger†

1Robert Koch-Institute, FG11, Wernigerode, Germany
2Robert Koch-Institute, Wernigerode, Germany

Introduction: Campylobacteriosis is the most frequently reported food-borne bacterial infection in Europe. Campylobacter jejuni accounts for the majority of reported infections. Here we investigate the correlation between predicted AMR genes and the AMR phenotype in clinical isolates.

Objectives: Assessment of genotypic and phenotypic correlation of antimicrobial susceptibility in German clinical Campylobacter isolates

Materials & methods: Whole genome sequencing was performed with an Illumina MiSeq v3. In silico AMR prediction was performed with Ariba (https://github.com/sanger-pathogens/ariaba) and kmerresistance (https://bitbucket.org/genomicepidemiology/kmerresistance). Phenotypic AMR testing was performed using broth dilution according to EUCAST.

Results: A set of 96 German clinical Campylobacter jejuni isolates were analyzed with regard to their AMR profile. 85% of the isolates displayed reduced susceptibility to ampicillin with MHC≥4 and all were predicted to harbor oxa-61 or oxa-184. Susceptibility to ampicillin correlated with the absence of predicted β-lactamase genes. 53 out of 59 (90%) isolates with reduced susceptibility to ciprofloxacin showed a T86I mutation in *gyrA*. All susceptible isolates did not have predicted mutations conferring fluoroquinolone resistance. 87% of tetracycline resistant isolates harbored a putative *tetO* gene. 28% of the isolates were resistant to erythromycin with MIC>4 but only 14% showed a 23S rRNA mutation. In summary, concordance between genotype and phenotype of susceptibility to ampicillin, ciprofloxacin, tetracycline and erythromycin was 100%, 90%, 87% and 14%, respectively.

Conclusion: This study shows that phenotypic AMR testing correlates well with predicted resistance genes or mutations for β-lactams, fluoroquinolones and tetracyclines using standard prediction tools and databases. Prediction of tetracycline resistance does not correlate well with the AMR phenotype and therefore requires adjustments.

056-DKMP
Detection and Quantification of a unique 16S ribosomal RNA allele variation in *B. anthracis* by combination of Fluorescence in situ hybridization, digital PCR and Nanopore Sequencing

F. Zimmermann†, P. Braun†, S. Mantl†, M. C. Walter†, K. Aistleiter†, T. Sieper†, I. Stürz†, G. Grass†, K. Stoecker†

1Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology, Medical Bio-Recognition and Verification, Munich, Germany

*Bacillus anthracis* causes anthrax, a disease characterized by fatal septicemia in a broad range of mammals, including humans. It is part of the *B. cereus sensu lato* group of bacteria. While these species are closely related, they differ significantly concerning their phenotypes and most importantly their pathogenicity. For long, the 16S rRNA genes of *B. anthracis* were considered a poor target for diagnosis of anthrax disease because of near identity to the other species of the *B. cereus sensu lato* group. Recently identified minor, yet specific differences (Hakovirta et al. 2016) make it now possible to harness the 16S rRNA genes to detect *B. anthracis* by molecular methods.

Based on a single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) in a part of the *B. anthracis* 16S rRNA gene copies, we aimed at designing assays for the specific 16S rRNA based detection of *B. anthracis*. We further used our approach to quantify the *B. anthracis* 16S rRNA gene allele composition in 18 diverging strains of *B. anthracis* (A, B and C branch).

We developed a novel fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) assay for the specific detection of the *B. anthracis* 16S rRNA SNP using probes including locked nucleic acids (LNA). Microscopic results were further investigated with a new tetraplex droplet digital PCR approach. Overall allele distribution and validity of our assays were confirmed by nanopore long-read sequencing.

Our newly designed FISH and digital PCR assays can be applied for specific 16S rRNA based detection of *B. anthracis* versus its closest relatives. We found that FISH signal intensity with the *B. anthracis* specific probe varied widely between different *B. anthracis* strains. The digital PCR approach confirmed that 16S rRNA gene allele distribution is not consistent and that even total number of 16S rRNA genes differs. This result was verified using nanopore sequencing.

SNPs in multi copy genes like the 16s RNA region can easily be overlooked by using conventional short-read whole genome sequencing and mapping approaches. If they are detected, i.e. by long-read sequencing, they can present an unexpected target for specific diagnostic approaches, as shown here for *B. anthracis*.

057-DKMP
Detection and live/dead differentiation of *Legionella* species and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in water samples

N. Beaumart†, V. Herich†, B. Dobrindt†, T. Kuczius†

1Institute of Hygiene, University of Münster, University Hospital Münster, Münster, Germany

*Legionella* species and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* have been frequently reported as pathogens contaminating water pipelines and dental chair units. Disinfections and decontamination procedures often lead to the desired result with a dramatic decrease of cultivable microorganisms. However, bacteria may change into a viable but not cultivable status (VBNC) showing no growth by culturing but being able to regain living conditions with re-growth and infectivity under specific conditions.

For identification and for clear live/dead differentiation we developed a real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay with the use of propidium monoazid (PMA). PMA permeates through damaged cell membranes of dead cells and binds covalently into DNA under blue light influence. A following PCR reaction is inhibited. In contrast, DNA of living cells will be amplified, because PMA is not able to penetrate intact bacterial membranes.

Specific primer pairs of the 16S rRNA gene and the elastase gene for *Legionella* species and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* detection, respectively, were designed, and PCR conditions were established for efficient and specific DNA amplification. No signals were identified with other accompanying bacterial
flora. Furthermore, the PMA concentration and the light impact were optimized using this technique. To each assay an internal amplification control was added comprising heat (99°C, 10 min) or isopropanol (70%) killed bacterial cells.

This technique can be used for rapid and sensitive differentiation of membrane damaged cells and cells with intact membrane structures and will be applied in success monitoring of disinfection procedures on basis of membrane damages such as quaternary ammonium disinfectants, chlorine and hydrogen peroxide.

**058-DKMP**

Optimization of a Disc Diffusion Method for Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing of *Clostridioides difficile*  
S. Maurisch1, P. Witi1, C. Manock1, M. Grottel1  
1German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany

*Clostridioides (C.) difficile* is the major cause of antibiotic-associated diarrhoea in humans and animals. Broad spectrum antibiotics, such as cephalosporins and fluoroquinolones, are known to increase the risk for *C. difficile* infections (CDI) and have likely facilitated the epidemiological spread of highly virulent lineages (e.g. PCR-ribotype 027). The disc diffusion (DD) methodology proved to be a suitable and convenient alternative to the current gold standard agar dilution to test for antimicrobial susceptibility. Yet, DD has major drawbacks with regard to reproducibility and the unknown influence of anaerobic conditions on the test result. The aim of this study within the OHEJP IMPART project is the establishment of a robust DD protocol for *C. difficile* that allows proposing cut-off values for resistance determination using DD.

Ten *C. difficile* isolates were chosen and tested for antimicrobial susceptibility against clarithromycin, metronidazole, moxifloxacin and tetracycline using an initial DD protocol based on prior publications and EUCAST recommendations. We investigated the effect of using different inoculum densities, media and anaerobic conditions during preparation to develop an optimized protocol. Using this protocol, we conducted intralaboratory repeatability and reproducibility tests and compared inhibition zone diameters (IZD) vs. minimum inhibitory concentrations (MICs) for eight antimicrobial classes and app. 500 isolates.

The different media had no significant effect on the IZD, but to reach confluent growth for most of the strains the turbidity level must be amended from EUCAST recommendations. The largest variance resulted from different anaerobic conditions. Applying the optimized protocol, the DD method proved to be highly reproducible. DD cut-off values will be proposed based on the evaluation of app. 500 isolates.

We found different anaerobic conditions was the most critical point for standardization of the DD testing of *C. difficile* and recommend an optimized protocol for a robust procedure. The correlation of IZD (based on the optimized protocol) and MICs will be presented.

**059-DKMP**

Seeing is believing: Can molecular diagnosis guide individualized therapy in endocarditis?  
J. Kikhney1, L. Kursaw1, S. Eichinger2, W. Eichinger2, S. Julia1, A. Wiśniewska1, *A. Moter1*  
1Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Biofilmzentrum, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Infektionsimmunologie, Berlin, Germany  
2Hospital Bogenhausen, Department of Cardiac Surgery, München, Germany

**Introduction**

In Infective Endocarditis (IE), early diagnosis of the causative microorganism is crucial for correct antibiotic therapy and the patients’ outcome.

**Objectives**

We studies the impact of biofilm formation in IE samples.

**Materials & methods**

We used Fluorescence *in situ* Hybridization (FISH) combined with 16S rRNA-gene PCR and sequencing to visualize and identify the infectious agents in native as well as prosthetic valves and to study their biofilm formation. The signal intensity of the fluorescence-labelled FISH probes correlates to a high ribosome content of the bacteria indicating metabolic activity at the time point of surgery. We developed a spacer FISH assay for the detection of the 16S-23S intergenic spacer region that is only present in actively transcribing cells to detect the activity of bacterial cells more precisely on a single cell level.

**Results**

FISH visualized bacteria in the heart valves ranging from single cells to highly organized biofilms. Interestingly, we found FISH positive bacteria in culture negative samples and samples from patients under antibiotic therapy. Using the spacer FISH we visualized positive microbial cells in heart valves of patients under adequate therapy. Preliminary data point to a correlation between the biofilm state and treatment inefficiency.

**Conclusion**

FISH/PCR not only allows timely identification of the pathogens in IE, but also biofilm-staging and visualization of the effect of antimicrobial therapy at time of surgery. The technique provides crucial information for successful targeted antibiotic therapy, and it might guide therapeutic decisions in relation to biofilm state in the future.

**060-DKMP**

Multimodal analysis of *Escherichia coli* isolates from patients and carriers with EPISEQ® CS, a next-generation sequencing service for epidemiological surveillance  
K. Vranckx1, "L. Hauben", S. Guedes2, K. De Rauw3, K. De Bruyne1  
1BioMérieux, Clinical Unit, Sint-Martens-Latem, Belgium  
2bioMérieux, Marcy, France

**Background:**

In hospital environments, the presence of antibiotic resistant and/or virulent strains are of particular concern. In this work, we present a new, fast and high-resolution multimodal epidemiological analysis of WGS data with bioMérieux EPISEQ® CS that easily provides information on the relatedness, resistance and virulence of strains.

**Materials/methods:**
We analyzed WGS data of 22 E. coli publically available isolates from either patients with symptoms typical of an E. coli infection and asymptomatic carriers. This online application starts from raw reads with de novo assembly, and allows a multimodal approach for epidemiological surveillance including phylogenetic analysis based on whole genome multi-locus sequence typing (MLST), 7-gene MLST, resistome and virulome analysis.

Results:

After upload of the metadata and fastq.gz files, EPISEQ® CS allowed the analysis of the 22 K. pneumoniae isolates with a turnaround time of just over one hour. The analysis outcome provides insight in the quality of the different steps in the pipeline, and clustered all isolates together in the final phylogenetic tree. Five different STs were detected in the set, and four clusters of related strains, two clusters from asymptomatic carriers, one cluster of symptomatic patients and one mixed cluster. The virulome shows the unique presence of stx2 in the cluster of patients, confirming current knowledge on this virulence factor. The strains in the mixed cluster have an identical resistome and virulome suggesting a recent transmission even between carrier and patient.

Conclusions:

As WGS is also becoming feasible to smaller clinical laboratories, there is a need for automated and standardized analysis of these data. EPISEQ® CS is a fast, high-resolution, easy-to-use and automated WGS application, providing phylogenetic analysis, typing and resistome analysis. The phylogenetic analysis next to the quality information and uploaded metadata provides a useful overview to detect and allow the analysis of possible transmission events and will enhance rapid and accurate epidemiological surveillance in clinical environments.

062-DKMP
Synergy testing of antibiotic combinations to treat chronic Pseudomonas aeruginosa lung infections in cystic fibrosis patients
* A. Schmid1, T. Preis1, S. Schwarz1, A. Hector2,3
1Universitätsklinikum Tübingen, Medizinische Mikrobiologie und Hygiene, Tübingen, Germany
2Kinderspital Zürich, Pneumologie, Zürich, Switzerland
3Universitätssklinikum Tübingen, Kinderklinik, Tübingen, Germany

The dominant pathogen during chronic respiratory infections in cystic fibrosis (CF) is Pseudomonas aeruginosa (PSA). Although eradication of early-life PSA infections is successful in most cases, it remains the main pathogen in later life affecting 60-70% of adult patients with CF. One reason is the high intrinsic resistance of PSA to many antibiotic classes, but also its adaption to the environment and its growth in biofilms in the CF lung influence the antibiotic susceptibility. To reduce the amount of PSA during chronic infection, combinations of antibiotics from different classes were used. However until now there are not enough studies to prove that these combinations are more efficient. In our study we aimed to identify effective combinations of antibiotics under conditions that mimic the CF environment. We used different growth media in a broth microdilution method and in a biofilm model to test the susceptibility to antibiotics and antibiotic combinations most used in CF therapy and compared it to the routine measurement in our diagnostici department. In these experiments we used different laboratory PSA strains as well as an early and a chronic CF isolate and a multidrug resistant clinical isolate. We found that a PSA isolate from a chronic CF infection shows different MIC values in the standard measurement compared to the broth microdilution method. These differences were not detected for all other strains. Comparing minimal medium mimicking the CF sputum environment, with standard medium the MIC for both CF isolates did not change. All other PSA isolates showed higher MICs. These MIC changes lead for tobramycin to MICs above the breakpoint for resistance. As expected when the bacteria were grown as biofilms even a twofold MIC was not able to eradicate the bacteria. Interestingly, colistin was not able to reduce the biofilm for all used strains, despite they all show very low colistin MICs in planktonic growth. The combination of tobramycin/cefazidime showed a high

Materials and Methods: Forty-five medical students, of which 23 attended the former teaching concept and 22 the restructured format, were interviewed via focus groups. Nine physicians were interviewed individually. Guided interviews were performed to explore learning attitudes, perceptions and options to improve the learning environment. The interviews were anonymously transcribed and analyzed with the qualitative text analysis software “MAXQDA”.

Results: Medical students and physicians preferred a teaching concept focussing on aspects relevant for clinicians irrespective of the study arm. The newly implemented case-based teaching method improved students’ motivation and understanding of the subject. The predominance of the medical lecturer in the learning environment remained unaltered. Moreover, previously identified independent confounding factors (e.g., noise level, group size) were confirmed. Students of the organ system-based teaching method and physicians complained of progressive loss of specific knowledge over time.

Conclusions: The new a case-based teaching concept may improve the learning environment with the potential for an increased learning effectiveness. The long term loss of specific knowledge in our subject remains a matter of concern.

061-DKMP
Analysis of the transition process from an organ system-based to an alternative case-based teaching concept for medical students in the course of infection control, microbiology and virology at the Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
*J. P. W. Himmels1, C. Brandt1, J. Sterz2, M. Ruessele2, V. A. J. Kempf3
1Goethe University Frankfurt, Institute of Medical Microbiology and Infection Control, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
2Goethe University Frankfurt, Frankfurt Interdisciplinary Simulation Training, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Introduction: Increasing challenges in infection control, microbiology, and virology, such as multi- and panresistant "emerging pathogens", are facing medical educators with the question of alternative teaching methods. Evidence supports that problem oriented learning is a superior form of education. The former organ system-based course in "infection control, microbiology, and virology" taught at the Goethe University Frankfurt was restructured towards a case-based teaching concept in 2016/17.

Objectives: The goal of the present study was to qualitatively analyze the subjective learning progress among students during the course of infection control, microbiology, and virology dependent on the teaching method used, and the evaluation of the longitudinal knowledge retention in physicians. Furthermore, claims of medical students or physicians and confounding factors were identified.
synergistic effect for all strains grown planktonically and as biofilms. In further experiments we want to use additional sequential isolates from CF patients to validate our findings.

063-DKMP
Colistin resistance in Gram-negative rods from urine specimens: prevalence and importance of mcr isoforms
*A. Hoffmann1, M. Christner1, M. Lütgethemmann1, H. Rohde1
1Universitätsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf, Institut für medizinische Mikrobiologie, Virologie und Hygiene, Hamburg, Germany

Background: Colistin is an antibiotic of last resort to treat highly resistant Gram-negative organisms. In humans, colistin-resistance mainly develops by within host evolution during colistin treatment. Recently, however, a transmissible, plasmid-encoded colistin resistance gene (mcr) was described. Routine analysis of urine specimens using colistin-containing CNA-plates unexpectedly yielded growth of Enterobacterales and Pseudomonas aeruginosa.

Objectives: The main objective of this study to estimate the load and mechanism of colistin-resistant Gram-negative rods in a prospective collection of diagnostic urine specimens collected at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf.

Methods: From 06/2018 – 06/2019, roughly 30,000 urine specimens were subjected to microbiological analysis using Columbia blood-, UTI- and CNA-agar. Bacteria growing on CNA-plates were identified to the species level. Susceptibility was tested using a VITEK2 instrument and colistin gradient stripes. All isolates were tested for the presence of mcr using a newly designed qPCR specific for mcr-1 to mcr-6.

Results: In total, 49 / 30,000 urine specimens grew Gram-negative bacteria on CNA-agar. Susceptibility testing identified colistin resistance (MIC>2 mg/L; Median 4; SD 14) in 25 / 49 (K. pneumoniae (n=16); E. coli (n=4); P. aeruginosa (n=4)). 25/25 were resistant to third generation Cephalosporins, 9/25 to Carbapenems and over 50% to fluoroquinolones. Intriguingly, qPCR detected mcr only in 3/25 isolates. 3/3 were positive for mcr 1 (3x K. pneumoniae), whereas mcr-2 to mcr-6 were not detected in any of these isolates.

Conclusion: Primary colistin resistance in Enterobacterales and P. aeruginosa is encountered in isolates from urine specimens at a low frequency. Resistance is predominantly independent from mcr 1-6. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first prospective collection identifying mcr-1 in human specimens in Germany and only the second detection of mcr-1 in Germany in human specimens so far. Ongoing work including whole genome sequencing is aiming on deciphering the molecular basis in mcr-negative isolates.

064-DKMP
Performance and clinical impact of Rapid Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing (RAST) on management of bloodstream infections in a tertiary care hospital
*B. Berinson1, F. Olearo1, M. Christner1, H. Rohde1
1Institute for medical Microbiology, Virology and Hygiene, Hamburg, Germany

Introduction: Fast and reliable antimicrobial susceptibility testing ensures early adequate therapy and may reduce the prolonged use of empiric broad-range antibiotics in gram-negative BSI. EUCAST has validated new breakpoints for short incubation disk diffusion testing directly from positive blood cultures, interpretable after 4, 6 and 8 hours (RAST).

Objectives: We aimed to evaluate the performance of RAST in comparison to the standard of care, VITEK2, and the clinical effects of RAST on BSI management in our tertiary care center.

Materials & methods: RAST was implemented at our laboratory in addition to standard of care (SOC; Vitek2), i.e. availability of AST results a day after blood culture positivity. For all interpretable results categorical agreement (CA, concordant interpretation by SOC and RAST), very major error (VME, resistant by SOC, susceptible by RAST), major error (ME, susceptible by SOC, resistant by RAST) and minor error (mE, susceptible, increased exposure by SOC, resistant or susceptible by RAST) rates were calculated. To assess clinical impact of RAST, the proportion of patients receiving optimal antimicrobial therapy before and after communication of RAST was determined.

Results: For 97 positive blood cultures overall CA between RAST and SOC was 97.1%; ME rate was 1.5%, ME rate was 1.4 % and no VME was observed. A significant number of results (158/879) within the area of technical uncertainty were seen. Clinical impact of RAST was evaluated for 51 patients. In 90.2 % of these cases RAST was available after 4h, in 7.8 % after 6h and in 2 % after 8h. Optimal treatment was achieved in 41.2 % of the patients according to RAST and among these, RAST allowed an early escalation to a broad-spectrum antibiotic in 6 cases due to multi-resistant isolates. An unnecessary escalation based on RAST occurred in 17.6 % of the patients.

Conclusion: Our findings suggest that the implementation of RAST may be especially helpful for early treatment escalation in BSI caused by multi-resistant bacteria. RAST result communication should be integrated into structured antimicrobial stewardship programs to prevent inadequate or premature treatment adjustments.

065-DKMP
Comparison of three different methods for bacterial identification used in routine diagnostics with whole-genome based average nucleotide identity for Roseomonas mucosa
Identification
M. Trauth1,2, F. Bigge1, F. Gunzer1, B. Bunk1, W. W. Rudolph1, *P. Schleifer1
1Technische Universität Dresden, Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie und Hygiene, Dresden, Germany
2Technische Universität Dresden, Zentralbereich Anästhesiologie und Intensivmedizin, Dresden, Germany
3Technische Universität Dresden, Klinik und Poliklinik für Anästhesiologie und Intensivmedizin, Dresden, Germany

The bacterial species Roseomonas mucosa is capable to cause infections in humans but is only rarely found during routine diagnostics. A main characteristic is the slow growth and the pink color of bacterial colonies. In most cases severe diseases such as bacteraemia, osteomyelitis and cellulitis are associated with R. mucosa (1). Immunosuppression and the use of catheter systems seem to be risk factors (1). To clarify the clinical significance of rare human pathogenic bacteria (such as R. mucosa), it is advisable to choose a prospective study approach. However, prior to study planning, it is necessary to know which is the best method for identification. For this reason, different routine methods (VITEK 2, MALDI-TOF MS and sequencing of 16S rRNA gene) were compared (2). Additionally, all genomes of the strains were sequenced on a HiSeq system and used to determine the Average Nucleotide Identity (ANI) (2). ANI is regarded as gold-standard of the molecular-based bacterial
species identification and was therefore used as reference method. A total of 9 isolates primarily identified as *R. mucosa* were included. Analyses using VITEK 2 revealed misidentifications (e.g. *Roseomonas gilardi*, *Rhizobium radiobacter* or *Sphingomonas paucimobilis*) (2). Eight of nine isolates were correctly identified as *R. mucosa* by sequencing the 16S rRNA gene. MALDI-TOF MS analyzes also showed reliable identification in eight out of nine isolates. However, one isolate repeatedly revealed score values below 2.0, indicating secure identification at the genus but not at the species level. With the help of ANI, however, it could be demonstrated that this strain actually belongs to the species *R. gilardi* and was misidentified as *R. mucosa* by sequencing the 16S rRNA gene (2).

References:

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066-DKMP
The Pan-Surfome of *Aspergillus fumigatus*

*L. J. Jia*, T. Krüger, O. Kniemeyer, A. Brakhage

*Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology, Department of Molecular and Applied Microbiology, Jena, Germany*

*Institute of Microbiology, Friedrich Schiller University, Department of Microbiology and Molecular Biology, Jena, Germany*

*Aspergillus fumigatus* is one of the most common airborne fungi that causes invasive mycoses in immunocompromised patients, and also allergic diseases in immunocompetent individuals. In both cases, the surface proteins mediate the first contact with the human immune system to evade immune responses or to induce hypersensitivity. The peptides exposed to the surface may be reasonable vaccine candidates or may be used for diagnostic purposes. Several methods have been established to study the surface proteome (surfome) of *A. fumigatus*, like trypsin shaving, glucanase treatment or formic acid extraction. Biotinylation coupled with LC-MS/MS identification is a particular efficient method to identify the surface exposed regions of proteins that could mediate the interaction with host. By biotinylation modification of proteins during the germination process we detected 314 surface proteins. In combination with other surfome data, about 500 surface proteins were identified. 150 proteins, including CcpA, Alp2, AspF1, DppV, were detected by at least two different methods. Using immunofluorescence microscopy, we confirmed the surface localization of several candidate proteins, including those without signal peptides. Collectively, our study generated a comprehensive data set of the *A. fumigatus* surfome. In addition, for many proteins it uncovers the regions, which are exposed to the surface of spores or hyphae. These surface exposed regions may represent antigenic epitopes that induce protective immune responses.

068-DKMP
Comparison of different methods used in routine diagnostics with Average Nucleotide Identity and Digital DNA-DNA hybridization for identification of *Acinetobacter radioresistens*

*R. Bigge*, F. Gunzer*, B. Bunk*, W. W. Rudolph*, P. Schröttner

*TU Dresden, Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie und Hygiene, Dresden, Germany*

*Leibniz-Institut DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung für Mikroorganismen undzellkulturen GmbH, Braunschweig, Germany*

*Universitätsklinikum Carl Gustav Carus, Zentralbereich Krankenhaushygiene/Umweltschutz, Dresden, Germany*

*TU Dresden, Institut für Virologie, Dresden, Germany*

*Introduction:* The bacterial species *Acinetobacter radioresistens* was first described in the 1980s. In one study, *A. radioresistens* could be detected within up to 12% of the population proving that these bacteria are part of the natural skin flora of humans. However, detection of *A. radioresistens* from clinical specimens has been rarely reported. This may be due to the fact that *A. radioresistens* was considered non-pathogenic. Recent improvements in routine diagnostics
have led to an increase in detection of isolates. The first clinical case detecting a pathogenic potential for *A. radioresistens* dates back to the early 2000s. Since then a number of case reports has been published.

**Objectives:** Isolates have to be collected in a prospective study in order to further elucidate which methods provide a secure species identification. Different routine methods of bacterial diagnostics have to be compared.

**Materials and methods:** From 2013 to 2019, a total of 13 isolates of *A. radioresistens* were collected from the clinical routine diagnostics at the Institute for Medical Microbiology and Hygiene of the TU Dresden, Germany. Investigations were performed with VITEK 2, MALDI-TOF MS and sequencing of 16S rRNA and *rpoB* gene. In addition, whole genomes sequences of all strains were obtained using Illumina NextSeq. Based upon genome sequencing results Average Nucleotide Identity and Digital DNA DNA Hybridization are currently considered as molecular gold standard for bacterial species identification. For this reason, both were used as reference methods in this study but also compared to each other.

**Results:** The species *A. radioresistens* was securely identified in all isolates with ANI, dDDH as well as MALDI-TOF MS and 16S rDNA/rpoB gene sequencing. The identification using VITEK 2, however led to ambiguous results, affecting both species and genus.

**Conclusion:** MALDI-TOF MS may be considered the most suitable method for screening of *A. radioresistens*. Results are generated quickly and the species is securely identified. In case of questionable results, sequencing of the 16S/rpoB gene or a determination by ANI values or dDDH should be performed.

069-DKMP

Comparison of two PCR tests for the detection of Aspergillus spp. in bronchoaerolar lavage fluid

*L. D. Frielingshaus*, T. Kautz¹, M. Luetgheetmann⁴, H. Rohde¹, M. Christner⁰
¹University Medical Center Hamburg Eppendorf, Medical Microbiology, Virology and Hygiene, Hamburg, Germany

Invasive aspergillosis (IA) is the most common mold infection in immunocompromised patients and associated with significant mortality. Current guidelines encourage the use of Aspergillus PCR in bronchoaerolar lavage fluid (BAL) to improve the diagnostic yield. We have compared two Aspergillus PCRs, the commercially available Bruker Fungiplex Aspergillus IDV PCR (CA-PCR) and a laboratory developed qPCR published by Walsh et al. 2011 (LD-PCR), in BAL samples sent to our laboratory for galactomannan testing (GM) and fungal culture.

Surplus material from clinical samples was prospectively stored at -80 °C. All 218 available GM positive and 70 arbitrarily selected GM negative samples were subjected to bead beating and automated nucleic acid extraction. DNA extracts were subjected to single CA-PCR testing according to manufacturer’s instructions or to duplicate LD-PCR testing following an in-house protocol previously validated with spiked samples.

Overall agreement between CA- and LD-PCR was 87.5 % with similar positivity rates in culture positive (80.0 % and 75.6 %) and culture negative (22.2 % and 22.2 %) as well as in GM positive (39.0 % and 37.6 %) and GM negative samples (7.1 % and 8.6 %). Cq-values from 71 samples which tested positive by both PCRs were found to be strongly correlated (r(69) = 0.92, p < 0.001) with slightly lower Cq values obtained with LD-PCR. Cq-values from both PCRs moderately correlated with GM levels (r(83) = -0.45, p < 0.001 for CA-PCR and r(80) = -0.51, p < 0.001 for LD-PCR).

Satisfactory agreement was found between two PCR tests when applied to BAL samples. In concordance with previous studies, PCR showed higher positivity rates than fungal cultures. The staggering rate of 51.8 % of GM positive samples which could neither be confirmed by culture nor PCR-testing fuels recent concerns about the specificity of GM in lower respiratory tract secretions and mandates judicious assessment of test utilization, especially in populations at lower risk for IA.

070-DKMP

Care duties, support systems and career challenges among medical microbiologists in Germany

Results of the "Family and career within microbiology" survey conducted by the Young German Society for Hygiene and Microbiology (yDGHM)

*K. Last¹, C. M. Koch², V. Schwierzeck², S. L. Becker³, J. Forster³, C. Papan³, N. Jazmati³*
¹Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hygiene, Saarland University Medical Center, Homburg, Germany
²Institute for English and American Studies, Philipps University Marburg, Marburg, Germany
³Institute of Hygiene, University Hospital Münster, Münster, Germany
⁴Institute of Hygiene and Microbiology, University of Würzburg, Würzburg, Germany
⁵Labor Dr. Wisplinghoff, Cologne, Germany

**Introduction:** Approximately 65% of all medical graduates in Germany are female, yet, leading positions within the hospital setting are disproportionately more often held by men. One reason for this representation gap in high rank positions are family and care duties which are most prevalent for women at early career stages. Nevertheless, care duties are not only restricted to child care duties. Other periods in life may also be filled with care duties regarding parents, siblings or other family members.

**Objectives:** To estimate the overall burden of care duties among medical microbiologists in Germany, to picture the current infrastructure of work-place related support systems and to localize specific hurdles for parents and care-givers to engage in career-relevant activities such as research and scientific conferences.

**Materials/methods:** A cross-sectional web-based survey was conducted among members of the DGHM by using the online platform LimeSurvey (LimeSurvey GmbH, Hamburg, Germany). Eligibility was irrespective of specialist training status, hierarchic position and training background (medical or biological). Participants were asked to answer 37 questions. Invitation to the survey was disseminated via the official newsletters of yDGHM and DGHM.

**Preliminary Results:** The survey is currently online (http://survey-wbs.imb.nrw-aachen.de/survey/index.php/331532?lang=de) and is scheduled to close on November 17th 2019. A full analysis of the survey will be conducted subsequently and results will be presented during the conference.
071-DKMP
Investigation of the Bovine mastitis causing bacterial strains and Confirmation of its Virulence and Zoonotic Potential

1*F. Adnan1, A. Jalil2
1National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Industrial Biotechnology, ASAB, Islamabad, Pakistan
2National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan

Bovine mastitis is the inflammation of the mammary glands due to physical injury or microbial infection. It is one of the most common and expensive disease of dairy industry resulting huge economic loss due to reduced milk production. Mastitis can be further classified into clinical and sub-clinical types based on the degree of inflammation. In this study, prevalence of mastitis among cows and buffaloes was investigated in the Rawalpindi district of Pakistan. The investigative parameters included in this study were herd size, sanitary conditions, management system, and hygiene of cows and buffaloes. After confirmation of Mastitis with surf field mastitis test (SFMT), prevalence of mastitis causing bacteria (Escherichia coli, Staphylococcus aureus, Klabsiata etc.) was analysed. *E. coli isolates from bovine mastitis were classified into main phylogetic groups by triplex-PCR based on the presence of the chuA and yjaA genes and the DNA fragment TSPE4.C2. E. coli strains were further screened for their antibiotic resistance and extended spectrum beta lactamases (ESBLs) production. Furthermore, virulence associated genes and toxin genes were also investigated by multiplex PCR. In vitro pathogenicity assays were performed for the estimation of disease causing potential of selected isolates. In vitro pathogenicity assays including biofilm formation, Congo red binding assay, growth in human urine, swimming and swarming motility, and hemolytic assay were performed for the estimation of the virulence and zoonotic potential of the selected isolates.

073-DKMP
Evaluation of the new Bruker MALDI Biotyper sirius MALDI-TOF MS system in comparison to microflex LT

1*A. Pranada1, T. Wenzel1, A. Sägers1, C. Rompel1, M. Kostrzewa2
1MVZ Dr. Eberhard & Partner Dortmund (ÜBAG), Mikrobiologie, Dortmund, Germany
2Bruker Daltonik GmbH, Bremen, Germany

Introduction: All currently available commercial systems for MALDI-TOF MS based microorganism identification work in positive ion mode. Recently applications for negative ion mode – like detection of colistin resistance in bacteria – have been published. The MALDI Biotyper sirius system comprises a mass spectrometer capable of working in positive as well as negative ion mode.

Objectives: We have evaluated the performance of the new MALDI Biotyper sirius system for standard identification in positive ion mode in comparison to a microflex LT/SH system.

Materials and Methods: N=520 bacterial isolates and yeasts of 87 different species from clinical routine were identified by the MALDI Biotyper sirius system as well as the microflex LT/SH system in parallel. Identification was performed using the Direct Transfer procedure (DT) and subsequently extended Direct Transfer (eDT) and extraction (Ext) procedure if the log(score) values were below 2.0. On both systems the latest version of the MBT Compass IVD software was used.

Results: Of the N=520 isolates the MBT sirius system identified 509 (97.9%) at high confidence level with log(score) values ≥2.0 in the combined workflow (DT+eDT+Ext) and 520 (100%) at low confidence level (log(score)≥1.7). For the microflex LT/SH system the results were 516/520 (99.2%) and 519/520 (99.8%), respectively. With Direct Transfer only, the MBT sirius system identified 484/520 (93.1%) at high confidence level and the microflex LT/SH system 488/520 (95.8%). None (0%) of the isolates were misidentified.

Conclusion: Both, the new MBT sirius system as well as the MBT standard system, reliably identified the set of 520 clinical strains. In the combined workflow of DT+eDT+Ext, both systems achieved >97% identifications to species level at high confidence level without any misidentifications. Even with only DT procedure more than 93% of the isolates yielded log(score) values at high confidence level. The MBT sirius is a reliable system for microorganism identification in routine laboratories. In combination with the possible applications of the integrated negative ion mode it could further improve the workflow in microbiology in the future.

074-DKMP
Investigation of the Bovine mastitis causing bacterial strains for the detection of pathogenic organisms.

1*F. Adnan1, A. Jalil2
1National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Industrial Biotechnology, ASAB, Islamabad, Pakistan
2National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan

Application-oriented systems include assays for microfluidic lab-on-chip devices and the usage in rudimentary diagnostic equipment.

Conclusion:
The flexibility of isothermal nucleic amplification offers new possibilities for point-of-care tests and may complement existing methods and technologies as PCR and immunochromatographic on-site tests.
German physicians are largely unaware of the new EUCAST definitions of S, I and R and the consequences thereof for antibiotic prescription

1N. Wantia, S. G. Gatermannb, K. Rothec, R. Laufenberga
2Technische Universität München, Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Immunologie und Hygiene, München, Germany
3Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Institut für Hygiene und Mikrobiologie, Bochum, Germany
4MVZ SYNLAB Leverkusen GmbH, Mikrobiologie, Leverkusen, Germany

Objective: Since January 1st 2019, the new EUCAST definitions of susceptibility testing categories S, I and R are valid. The new definitions and breakpoints reflect the need for correct exposure of the microorganism to the antimicrobial agent at the site of infection. Microbiological departments working with EUCAST rules are obliged to implement the new definitions and teach physicians how to interpret the modified antibiograms. We conducted a nationwide web-based survey reaching across disciplines. We questioned in our survey, if German physicians know the new definitions of S, I and R, if they feel well-informed about the changes, and if they are aware of the consequences for clinical practice.

Method: We performed a web-based survey using LamaPoll. The survey targeted clinicians across all disciplines and was active from May 9th to July 30th 2019. 902 questionnaires were included in the analysis, and 852 questionnaires were completely answered. Participating physicians were mainly employed at hospitals (79.3%) and had completed specialist training (86.1%). 59.8% were male, and the predominant specialty was internal medicine (50.6%).

Results: Of all participants, 45.7% did not know that there was a change in the definitions and 65.4% did not feel well-informed about the changes. In a knowledge quiz, substantial knowledge gaps were apparent, e.g., only 70.7% correctly named the new definition of I (i.e., "susceptible, increased exposure"), and merely 41.6% knew that some pathogen/antibiotic-combinations are no longer reported S but I to emphasize the need for a higher treatment dose. The participants reached an average of 5.5 points of 11 possible. Test performance mainly depended on whether participants were aware of the changes in EUCAST 2019 (in average, 7.0 compared to 3.8 points), whereas geographic region, age or sex had no clear impact. Worst results were achieved by those physicians who work in a practice. Conclusion: Though our survey might not be representative, it clearly shows that there are considerable knowledge gaps in Germany. This might severely hamper optimal treatment of infectious diseases, thus further education is strongly needed.

075-DKMP
Population-wide antibiotic profiling of human L. monocytogenes isolates from Germany identifies phylogenetic clades with reduced cephalosporine resistance

M. Fischer1, A. Flieger1, S. Halbedel1
1Robert Koch-Institute, German-Austrian Binational Consilory Laboratory for Listeria, FG11 - Enteropathogenic Bacteria and Legionella, Wernigerode, Germany

Listeria monocytogenes is an important food-borne pathogen mostly associated with milk products, but also occurring on meat and vegetables and is the causative agent for listeriosis, which ranges in its symptoms from gastroenteritis to sepsisemia, meningoecephalitis and abortion in pregnant females. Case numbers are increasing during the last decade with almost 700 notified cases in 2018 in Germany. Fatality rates range between 7 to 30 %, making listeriosis one of the most fatal gastrointestinal infections. L. monocytogenes is intrinsically susceptible to a variety of antibiotics, but the number of reports on antibiotic-resistant L. monocytogenes isolates is steadily increasing.

Monitoring the development of antibiotic resistance and identifying genetic determinants involved in resistance formation is of utmost importance. The German consiliary laboratory for Listeria collects clinical isolates from all over the country and sequences their genomes for phylogenetic subtyping (1). Guided by a genome sequence based analysis of the L. monocytogenes population structure, we created a collection of ~500 clinical L. monocytogenes isolates constituting a representative subset of the entire L. monocytogenes population. This collection was screened for susceptibility towards clinically relevant antibiotics. All isolates were sensitive against penicillin and gentamycin and were resistant towards ceftriaxone. Intrinsic resistance towards cephalosporins is a known feature of L. monocytogenes, however, reduction of cephalosporine resistance level was observed in certain phylogenetic clades. We employed different comparative genomic approaches to identify alleles or mutations explaining this reduced cephalosporine resistance observed in these clades. Among the observations made was a variation of the Imo0441 allele, encoding penicillin binding protein PBP B3, which was exclusively associated with cephalosporine sensitivity. This is in good agreement with previous results demonstrating a role for PBP B3 in cephalosporine resistance of L. monocytogenes (2) and Bacillus subtilis (3). Current results of this ongoing research will be presented.

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076-DKMP
An automated system for colony counting and classifying bacteria

J. Beck-Nafz1, A. Klimeovík2, R. Preyer2, D. Drissner1
1Abstait-Sigmaringen University, Microbiology, Food Hygiene and Consumer Health Protection, Department of Life Sciences, Sigmaringen, Germany
2AID/GenID Diagnostika, Strassberg, Germany

Colony counters can be used in the food and pharmaceutical industries to replace manual counting, i.e. the counting process of agar plates, through automation. Here, we present the procedure of validation of an automated, image processing based system, the Colony Counter BAC051806013 (AID/GenID Diagnostika, Straßberg, Germany). The objective of our study was to give recommendations regarding the light and count settings of the counter, under which the best counting results can be achieved. We performed several test series using the counter with different bacterial species and agar plates and established specific adjustment recommendations regarding
count settings like intensity, size, roundness, object dimension and object intensity for optimal detection of various Legionella species and the Bacillus cereus group. The Colony Counter presented in this case study can make a significant contribution towards optimizing the process of colony counting on agar plates in microbiological testing in various industries including medical diagnostics, pharmaceutical microbiology as well as food quality and safety control.

077-DKMP
Survey on antimicrobial resistance patterns in Aeromonas spp. from German patients
*K. Schwartz1, J. A. Hammerl1, E. Strauch1
1German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Department of Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany

Keywords: Aeromonas spp., clinical isolates, antimicrobial resistance pattern, broth microdilution, disk diffusion

Aeromonas spp. bacteria are present in aquatic environments and can be isolated from insects, domestic animals, and foods of animal or plant origin. As opportunistic pathogens, they are associated with human infections most often manifested by gastroenteritis, wound infection or septicemia. In spite of sometimes severe to life-threatening infections in immunocompromised hosts, no data on antimicrobial susceptibility of German clinical Aeromonas isolates exist. Given the increasing superannuation of the German population, the study aimed to investigate antimicrobial resistance patterns in Aeromonas isolates from German patients.

We selected 61 well documented clinical strains associated with intestinal and extraintestinal infections between 2016 and 2019. Antimicrobial susceptibility was determined by broth microdilution and disk diffusion according to the guidelines of the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI).

The majority of German clinical Aeromonas isolates were susceptible to most of the 28 antimicrobial agents tested. Non-susceptibility was found towards aminopenicillins. In addition, a noticeable proportion of strains showed intermediate to full resistance to carbapenems, quinolones, polymyxins and/or cephamycins. Non-susceptibility towards third- or fourth-generation cephalosporins, fluoroquinolones, folate pathway inhibitors, tetracyclines, phenicols and macrolides, respectively, was sporadically observed.

Antimicrobial agents recommended for treatment of Aeromonas infections were found to be effective in vitro. However, the occurrence of sporadic resistances towards third- or fourth-generation cephalosporins as well as fluoroquinolones highlights the need for systematic monitoring of antimicrobial susceptibility in Aeromonas spp. in Germany.

Microorganisms are able to produce a plethora of secondary metabolites for their defense and survival. Among them, terpenoids are a major class of biologically active substances. They are mostly synthesized by Streptomyces species, while other bacterial cladres are less well known to produce these secondary metabolites. The rhizobacterium Serratia plymuthica (Gamma Proteobacteria, Enterobacteriaceae) is capable to synthesize a unique and unusual polymethylated, bicyclic sesquiterpene named sodorifen (C16H26) [1, 2]. This compound was found to possess toxicity against colorectal carcinoma cell lines and its production can be significantly up regulated during co-cultivation with other microorganisms [3, 4]. Transcriptome analysis and genome sequencing revealed a cluster of four genes involved in the biosynthesis of sodorifen (sodorifen cluster). These genes encode a terpene cyclase, C-methyltransferase, DXP synthase and IPP isomerase. The biosynthesis of sodorifen was elucidated recently [4]. Interestingly, unlike other terpene synthases, this S. plymuthica terpene cyclase (S.p. SODS) does not accept the canonical C15 substrate farnesylpyrophosphate (FPP), but a C16 pre-sodorifen pyrophosphate. The latter is formed by the C-methyltransferase of the sodorifen cluster (S.p. FPPMT) which not only methylates the FPP substrate but also induces a first cyclization reaction [5]. Subsequently, this methylated, cyclized FPP (pre-sodorifen-pyrophosphate) is the substrate of the terpene cyclase which performs additional cyclisation cascades to finally produce sodorifen. To our knowledge, this is the first methyltransferase described which catalyzes a methylation with simultaneous five-ring cyclisation of a prenyl pyrophosphate substrate during terpene biosynthesis.

5 von Reuß et al., (2018) JACS.

079-MCBP
Transcription factors and chromatin-modifiers involved in sexual development of Sordaria macrospora
*R. Lütkenhaus1, J. Breuer1, M. Nowrousian1
1Ruhr-University Bochum, Molecular and Cellular Botany, Bochum, Germany

Introduction and Objectives: The model fungus Sordaria macrospora belongs to the ascomycetes and is ideal to investigate multicellular development. In this study, we focused on transcription factors and chromatin-modifiers to investigate the regulatory networks of fruiting body development. Comparative transcriptomics of three different ascomycetes and RNA sequencing of developmental mutants from S. macrospora led to identification new putative developmental genes. Genes of interest were either upregulated in young fruiting bodies in all three ascomycetes or downregulated in protoperithecia of developmental mutants. The chromatin-modifiers encoded by spt3 and scm1 were chosen by comparative genomics. Two transcription factor genes, SMAC_03952 and asm2 (ascospore maturation factor 2), were down regulated in the protoperithecia of two different sterile mutants.

Methods: To investigate the function of the genes we constructed knockout strains. For characterization studies, the deletion strains were complemented with GFP-tagged constructs, which enabled localization studies. For RNA-Seq, strains with a developmental phenotype were chosen.

078-MCBP
Novel C-methyltransferase activities: Methylation and simultaneously five-ring cyclisation is a prerequisite for the biosynthesis of the sesquiterpene sodorifen of Serratia plymuthica
N. Magnus1, M. C. Lemfack1, S. von Reuβ2, D. Domik1, M. Kai1, T. Weise1, *P. Ruciaka1, B. Piechulla1
1University of Rostock, Biochemistry, Rostock, Germany
2Université de Neuchâtel, Institut de chimie, Neuchâtel, Switzerland

The deletion strains were complemented with GFP constructs, which enabled localization studies. For RNA-Seq, strains with a developmental phenotype were chosen.
Results: Three of four knockout strains showed a developmental phenotype as single knockout except for SMC1, which seemed not to be involved in fruiting body formation. However, its function is redundant with three other chromatin-modifiers, since multiple deletion strains showed reduced fertility up to sterility. Deletion of the other chromatin-modifier SPT3, subunit of the SAGA complex, resulted in the most conspicuous phenotype. ∆spt3 forms only few unpigmented protoperithecia. Also sterile but forming deformed perithecia with ascus precursors is the ∆3952 mutant strain. The knockout strain of asm2 showed defects in ascospore maturation hence is not essential but developmentally relevant. RNA from ∆asm2, ∆3952 and ∆spt3 as well as from wild type was isolated for RNA-seq. The RNA-Seq data revealed SPT3 as regulator of a vast number of genes, whereas SMAC-03952 and ASM2 regulated more genes in perithecia than in sexual mycelium. Analysis of the data will help to close gaps in the regulatory network behind fruiting body formation.

080-MCBP
The Na+-shuttle catalyzed by DcuA and AspA is regulated in E. coli by the nitrogen-regulator protein PII
C. Schubert, A. Strecker, G. Under

The alternative C4-dicarboxylate transporter DcuA of E. coli is required together with aspartase AspA for aerobic growth with L-aspartate as a nitrogen source [1]. By the combined action of DcuA and AspA L-aspartate was taken up by the bacteria and fumarate was excreted in equimolar amounts. L-Aspartate was taken up in amounts required for nitrogen but not for carbon metabolism. Therefore, DcuA catalyzes an L-aspartate/C4-dicarboxylate antiport which serves as a nitrogen shuttle for nitrogen supply without net carbon supply [1]. This ammonium supplying [N]-shuttle was regulated by the nitrogen regulator protein PII. PII in presence of 2-oxoglutarate stimulated AspA (L-aspartate deaminating reaction) resulting in the acquisition of ammonium under nitrogen-limiting conditions. Ammonium is then assimilated by the main nitrogen assimilation GS-GOGAT pathway of E. coli. Growth experiments show that L-aspartate is a preferred nitrogen source of E. coli which agrees with the regulation by the central N-regulation pathway [2] and the physiological role of L-aspartate as a N-source for E. coli in the bovine intestine [3].

[1] Strecker et al., 2018 Molecular Microbiology 00(0), 1–11
[2] Schubert et al., submitted
[3] Bertin et al., 2018 Environmental Microbiology Vol. 20 No. 18

081-MCBP
Biogenesis of Fe-S cluster proteins of Vibrio cholerae

The Na+ - ion translocating NADH:quinone oxidoreductase (NQR) from Vibrio cholerae is a membrane bound respiratory enzyme which harbors flavins and Fe-S clusters as redox centers. The NQR is the main producer of sodium motive force (SMF) and drives energy-dissipating processes such as flagellar rotation, substrate uptake, ATP synthesis and cation-proton antiport. In our proteome study [1], we compared the abundance of proteins in the V. cholerae O395N1 (reference strain) with its mutant Δnqr derivative strain, where the six structural genes nqrABCDEF of the operon encoding for the membrane bound NQR respiratory complex were deleted. The proteomic study revealed that most of the iron homeostasis proteins were present in similar abundances in both strains. These included proteins predicted to participate in the assembly of Fe-S clusters, in the transport and storage of iron, and in the binding and transport of heme. However, interestingly, some of these proteins were differentially regulated. The genome predicts that V. cholerae, unlike E. coli which harbors the Isc, Suf and Csd-Suf hybrid systems [2] for Fe-S assembly biogenesis, possesses only a single Isc system for assembly of Fe-S clusters. The proteins predicted to participate in the biosynthesis of Fe-S clusters were present in similar abundance in the V. cholerae wt and Δnqr strains, indicating constitutive expression of these essential proteins in the two strains. Even though V. cholerae does not encode an additional Fe-S cluster assembly system, the presence of iron responsive regulators that are responsible for tight Fe-S homeostasis regulation point towards Fe-S assembly via different routes which may replace a part of the Isc machinery under stress conditions. We also show that the nqr operon comprises, besides the structural nqrABCDEF genes, the downstream apbE and nqrM genes on the same operon, which represent a flavin insertase (ApbE) and a putative assembly factor (NqrM) [3]. The possible pathway of FeS insertion in NQR is discussed.

References:
[1] C Toulouse et al J Bacteriology 200; 761-17, 2018

082-MCBP
Towards understanding the link between the ABC transporter EslABC and lysozyme resistance in L. monocytogenes
J. Rismondo1,2, M. Yacoub1, A. Wadhawan2, M. S. Dionne2, A. Gründer2

1Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Department of General Microbiology, Göttingen, Germany
2Imperial College London, Medicine, London, United Kingdom

The human pathogen Listeria monocytogenes is intrinsically lysozyme resistant. Lysozyme functions by hydrolysing the peptidoglycan (PG) layer of bacteria. The PG deacetylase PgdA and PG O-acetyltransferase OatA are two known factors contributing to the observed lysozyme resistance of L. monocytogenes. Furthermore, it was shown that the absence of components of an ABC transporter, here referred to as EslABC, leads to a reduction in lysozyme resistance. However, the function of the transporter and how its activity is linked to lysozyme resistance are still unknown. To investigate this further, a strain deleted for the membrane component of the ABC transporter EslB was constructed. The eslB mutant showed a 40-fold reduction in the MIC for lysozyme, confirming previous results. Interestingly, the absence of EslB had no impact on the resistance towards other cell wall-acting antibiotics, such as penicillin and moenomycin under standard growth conditions. To determine whether the lysozyme sensitivity is a result of a change in the PG structure, the PG was isolated from the wildtype strain 10403S, the eslB deletion and an eslB complementation strain and analysed by HPLC. The PG of the eslB deletion strain is slightly more crosslinked and de-
acetylated as compared to the PG of the wildtype strain. However, it is not clear whether these changes could explain the decreased lysozyme resistance as deacetylation of PG is a modification that supports resistance. The ABC transporter EslABC is transcribed in an operon with a RpiR-regulator. All characterized RpiR regulators are involved in the control of sugar phosphate metabolic pathways. Growth comparisons using different media revealed a growth defect of the eslB mutant in the presence of high concentrations of sugars as compared to the wildtype strain. In addition, we observed that the autoysis of the eslB deletion strain was drastically increased after growth in BHI medium supplemented with 0.5 M sucrose. The cell lysis of the eslB deletion strain could be further enhanced by the addition of penicillin. These findings suggest that the absence of EsIB leads to a change in cell integrity of L. monocytogenes.

**083-MCBP**

Growth rate constraints in *Corynebacterium glutamicum*  
*S. Matamoros*, T. Gensch*, I. Abdollahzadeh†, J. Hendriks‡, C. Sachs*, N. Tenhaefe*, M. Graf*, R. Takors*, S. Noack†, K. Nöh†, M. Bott†  
†Forschungszentrum Juelich, IBG-1, Juelich, Germany  
‡Forschungszentrum Juelich, ICS-4, Juelich, Germany  
*University of Stuttgart, IBVT, Stuttgart, Germany

**Introduction**  

Bacterial growth rate is directly linked to the translational capacity of the cell, which is determined by nutrient availability and ribosome abundance. Ribosomes are large multimeric RNA-protein complexes that constitute a significant fraction of the cellular RNA and protein content. Therefore, ribosome abundance must be tightly controlled to avoid loss of fitness due to resource misallocation. This complex regulation has been mostly studied in *Escherichia coli*, a fast-growing bacterium that exhibits a broad range of growth rates (up to 2.14 h⁻¹). *Corynebacterium glutamicum* is an important model organism in industrial biotechnology that although robust and easy to use presents a maximal growth rate (up to 0.6 h⁻¹) that lags far behind that for *E. coli*.

**Objective**  

To understand growth rate constraints in *C. glutamicum* the relationship between growth rate, ribosome abundance and translation elongation rate was examined.

**Methods**  

Ribosome abundance at different growth rates was determined via super-resolution microscopy using fluorescently tagged ribosomal proteins as well as total RNA-protein ratio. Translation elongation rate at different growth rates was measured via an inducible fluorescent reporter fusion assay.

**Results**  

The two independent methods for estimating ribosome abundance show that at low growth rates *C. glutamicum* maintains a minimal ribosomal level. Ribosome abundance only starts to increase sharply above a certain growth rate, which is approximately the point at which translation elongation rate reaches a maximum.

**Conclusion**  

*C. glutamicum* maintains a relatively high abundance of ribosomes at low growth rates. As growth conditions improve translation elongation rate increases. Once translation elongation rate reaches its maximum value, growth rate rises via increased ribosome abundance to support the higher demand for protein synthesis. When compared to *E. coli*, *C. glutamicum* produces more ribosomes per cell to support a similar growth rate. This extra burden could be one of the reasons behind the lower maximal growth rate observed for *C. glutamicum*.

**084-MCBP**  

Loss of RNase Y provokes massive decrease in transcription  
*M. Benda*, L. Krásky†, J. Stükê†  
†Institute of Microbiology and Genetics, Georg-August University Göttingen, General Microbiology, Göttingen, Germany  
‡Institute of Microbiology, Czech Academy of Sciences, Laboratory of Microbial Genetics and Gene Expression, Prague, Czech Republic

RNA turnover is an essential regulatory process in all domains of life. The membrane bound endonuclease RNase Y (rny) is one of the key components involved in RNA metabolism of the model organism *Bacillus subtilis*. It has been a matter of discussion, whether RNase Y is essential or not, since deletion of *rny* gene is possible, but leads to severe phenotypic effects including defects in cell wall biosynthesis, loss of sporulation, loss of natural competence or reduced growth rate [1]. Furthermore, the *rny* deletion strain is genetically highly unstable and quickly evolves suppressor mutations to at least partially alleviate these defects. To better understand the key role of RNase Y in *B. subtilis* physiology, we have examined several suppressor mutants by whole genome sequencing. This identified the presence of an identical duplication of an about 60 kb long genomic region in all sequenced suppressors, always accompanied by distinct mutations in diverse transcription related genes. The duplicated region is flanked by rRNA operons and contains 76 genes including those coding for all three core subunits of the RNA polymerase – α, β, β’. We hypothesized that duplication of the RNA polymerase genes is the key for this suppression, and therefore decided to interfere with the possibility of a simultaneous duplication of the three genes. For this purpose, the *rpoA* gene (coding for α subunit) was relocated in the *B. subtilis* genome. Indeed, when the *rny* gene was then deleted in this background and suppressor mutants evolved, no duplication was observed. Instead, each mutant carried a single distinct point mutation in evolutionary conserved regions of genes coding either for the β or β’ subunits of the RNA polymerase. *In vitro* transcription assays with the mutated polymerase variants showed massive decrease in transcription efficiency as well as malfunction of common regulatory processes. Altogether, these results suggest a tight connection between RNase Y and the RNA polymerase in maintaining optimal RNA homeostasis within *B. subtilis* cells.


**085-MCBP**  

Analysis of putative STRIPAK-interaction partners in *Sordaria macrospora*  
*A. Gibron*, E. Reschka*, S. Pöggeler†  
†Institute of Microbiology and Genetics, Department of Genetics of Eukaryotic Microorganisms, Goettingen, Germany

The *striatin*-interacting phosphatase and kinase (STRIPAK) complex is a multiprotein complex that is involved in diverse signaling pathways like cell growth and–fusion, cytokinesis, ...
endocytosis and apoptosis. In animals and fungi, STRIPAK complexes are tightly regulated by striatin-like scaffolding proteins. In the coprophilic ascomycete *Sordaria macrospora* (Sm) the SmSTRIPAK was shown to play an important role in vegetative growth, hyphal fusion and sexual development involving the human striatin homolog PRO11. In addition, the SmSTRIPAK complex consists of the STRIP1/2 homolog PRO22, the SLMAP homolog PRO45, SmMOB3, the scaffolding subunit of phosphatase PP2A SmPP2AA and its catalytic subunit SmPP2Ac1. Recently the coiled-coil protein SmSC11 was identified as a core subunit of the SmSTRIPAK that interacts with PRO11 and PRO45. In a previous pulldown using SmSC11-EGFP as bait, the nucleoporin SmPOM33 and the vacuolar protein SmVAC14 were ascertained as putative interaction partners. Moreover, the dynactin component SmARP1 was found in a pulldown with PRO11-EGFP.

Our work focusses on the question in which pathways the SmSTRIPAK might be involved. Here, we analyze the localization of the SmSTRIPAK complex to the nucleus focusing on the identified nucleoporin SmPOM33. We could show the localization of SmPOM33 at the nuclear envelope (NE) and also the endoplasmic reticulum (ER). To characterize SmPOM33, a knockout strain ∆Sm pom33 was generated for phenotypic analysis. To investigate if the SmSTRIPAK is somehow involved in vacuolar trafficking, the SmVAC14 will be analyzed including the construction of the deletion strain ∆Sm vac14 for complementation analysis. To learn about the SmSTRIPAK being involved in vesicular transport, the actin-related dynactin compound SmARP1 was investigated and shown to localize at hyphal tips. For further information about the protein, a ∆Smarp1 strain will be generated. Furthermore, pulldown experiments with SmPOM33, SmVAC14 or SmARP1 as bait will be performed to verify the interaction with SmSTRIPAK-complex components.

086-MCBP

Host cell signal triggering virulence mechanism in *Escherichia coli*

1. Introduction

*Escherichia coli* colonization and infection results in formation of adhesion patterns which in turn contribute to pathotyping of intestinal *E. coli*. The adhesion patterns of 282 *E. coli* isolates on different cell lines were determined to establish various adhesion patterns such as diffusely distributed, microcolonies, chains and clumps. Only two strains of *E.coli* were found to form huge biofilm like three-dimensional clumpy structures upon adhesion specifically to 5637 cell line.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this study are to identify factors determining the tissue host specificity of clumpy adhesion phenotype of *E. coli*.

3. Materials & Methods

Genomes of clumpy-forming *E. coli* were sequenced and compared with genome of *E. coli* K-12. RNA was isolated from bacteria forming clumps and bacteria from supernatants during adhesion assays to 5637, PK-15 and Caco-2 cells and sequencing was performed on 100 bp paired-end read Illumina HiSeq2000. Differentially expressed genes were identified with use of edgeR.

4. Results

Genome comparison revealed differences between K-12 and clumpy *E. coli*. RNA-Seq data analysis of strain 4972 revealed differential expression of 623 genes between bacteria in clumps and supernatant. Out these 623 genes, 148 genes were unknown or hypothetical proteins. 478 known genes of total 623 were assigned functions in the light previously published research.

It was noted that 36 of total 46 motility and fimbriae genes were downregulated. Interestingly, 87 genes were found to be biofilm associated and 51 of these were upregulated. Stress genes also followed a similar pattern where 69 of 93 genes were upregulated. Only 5 genes were assigned the category of Virulence genes and all of them were slightly upregulated. The most upregulated was Spy periplasmic chaperone protein.

Inactivation of genes in strain 4972 is still being carried out and the initial results show involvement of various genes contributing to clump formation.

5. Conclusion

We were able to determine the set of microbial genes that were responsible for clumpy adhesion phenotype upon signal from specific host cells. To confirm role of selected genes deletion mutants will be generated.

087-MCBP

The functional diversity of the prokaryotic sulfur carrier protein TusA

1. T. S. Tanabe1, S. Leimkühler2, C. Dahl1
2. Rheinisches Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, Bonn, Germany
3. Universität Potsdam, Institut für Biochemie und Biologie, Potsdam, Germany
4. *TusA* protein has been identified as a central element supplying and transferring sulfur as persulfide to a number of important biosynthetic pathways. In recent years, surprising links between these biosynthetic pathways and prokaryotic metabolism of inorganic sulfur compounds became apparent when the enzymatic generation of persulfidic sulfur as well as sulfur transfer reactions were not only identified as important steps during sulfide detoxification but also recognized as essential components of sulfur oxidation pathways in lithotrophic bacteria and archaea [1]. We intend to categorize the multiple roles of *TusA*-like proteins in sulfur transfer pathways in different organisms to shed light on the remaining mysteries of this versatile protein.

Question

The TusA protein has been identified as a central element supplying and transferring sulfur as persulfide to a number of important biosynthetic pathways. In recent years, surprising links between these biosynthetic pathways and prokaryotic metabolism of inorganic sulfur compounds became apparent when the enzymatic generation of persulfidic sulfur as well as sulfur transfer reactions were not only identified as important steps during sulfide detoxification but also recognized as essential components of sulfur oxidation pathways in lithotrophic bacteria and archaea [1]. We intend to categorize the multiple roles of *TusA*-like proteins in sulfur transfer pathways in different organisms to shed light on the remaining mysteries of this versatile protein.

Results

Here, we identify common features of all *TusA* proteins. These include a strictly conserved sulfur-binding cysteine residue within a C-P-X-P motif and αβαβαβ fold. In addition,
we summarize predicted and proven roles of TusA proteins. A phylogenetic tree is presented based on 101 proteins representing diverse physiological contexts and genetic environments. This tree does not mirror the phylogenetic tree of prokaryotes. Rather, TusA proteins cluster according to probable cellular functions. This is best exemplified by the TusA proteins related to oxidation of sulfanesulfur in the cytoplasm of dissimilatory-sulfur-oxidizing bacteria. They are used a library of purified proteins representing diverse physiological contexts and genetic environments. This tree does not mirror the phylogenetic tree of prokaryotes. Rather, TusA proteins cluster according to probable cellular functions. This is best exemplified by the TusA proteins related to oxidation of sulfanesulfur in the cytoplasm of dissimilatory-sulfur-oxidizing bacteria. They stem from different bacterial phyla, i.e., the Proteobacteria, the Chlorobi and the Aquificae. Some organisms contain several TusA variants, that have evolved to pursue specific roles in cellular pathways and cannot replace each other. Other organisms like Allochromatium vinosum contain only a single copy, which is indispensable for viability.

Conclusions

TusA has evolved as an optimal and versatile sulfur carrier protein involved in multiple cellular pathways with specific roles adapted to the requirements of each organism. Numerous open questions exist including how target and route specificity is achieved and how pleiotropic cellular defects are caused by the absence of TusA.


088-MCBP
Protein-protein interactions of the energy generation supracomplex of Pseudomonas aeruginosa
K. Müller1, J. Wissing2, L. Jänsch3, M. Jahn1, D. Jahn1
1 TU Braunschweig, Institut für Mikrobiologie, Braunschweig, Germany
2 Helmholtz-Zentrum für Infektionsforschung, Zelluläre Proteomforschung, Braunschweig, Germany

Biological energy generation is usually accomplished by membrane spanning electron transport chains composed of multiple protein complexes. Previously, we elucidated involved protein-protein interactions for the denitrification machinery of Pseudomonas aeruginosa using a proteomics based interactomics approach (1). A highly complex protein network was observed for the investigated supracomplex responsible for anaerobic energy recovery. Here, we were investigating the dynamics of the corresponding protein complexes for aerobic respiration. For the used interactomics approach 3 bait proteins were selected: NuoJ of the NADH dehydrogenase (complex I), FdhE from electron donating respiratory formate dehydrogenase and Napa as part of the periplasmic nitrate reductase. Tagged versions of the bait proteins were expressed in the corresponding mutant background. After cultivation at the end of the exponential phase, formaldehyde-mediated protein complex cross-linking was performed. Stabilized protein complexes were purified using Streptavidin-tagged column chromatography and the bound prey proteins then identified via LC/MS/MS. Obtained data were used to reconstruct the protein network of the supracomplex involved in aerobic respiration. Furthermore the same approach was performed with a shift from aerobic to anaerobic growth to investigate the dynamic rearrangements of these complexes.


089-MCBP
Microscopy-based identification and initial characterization of novel inhibitors of bacterial cell division
C. Matos de Opitz1, P. Sass1,2
1 University of Tuebingen, Microbial Bioactive Compounds, Tübingen, Germany
2 German Center for Infection Research (DZIF), Tübingen, Germany

The discovery and implementation of antibiotics as therapeutic agents helped to significantly reduce mortality related to microbial infections. However, the current rise and spread of multi-resistant pathogens, along with a dwindling pipeline in antimicrobial discovery, seriously limit our available options to treat life-threatening bacterial infections and seriously challenges our healthcare systems. Hence, the search for novel antibiotics with promising modes of action is crucial. In this context, we investigate bacterial cell division, an essential process in most bacteria, to explore its potential as a new antimicrobial target pathway. To date, bacterial cell division is not targeted by any clinically applied antibiotic. Antimicrobial compounds affecting cell division in bacteria, often by deregulating the core cell division protein FtsZ, commonly induce a filamentous phenotype in rod-shaped bacteria (1-3). In this study, we used a library of purified natural products from diverse Streptomyces species in cell-based assays to identify compounds that provoke such a filamentation phenotype. To this end, we established a semi-automated microscopy method that led to the identification of two novel compounds interfering with bacterial cell division. Current localization studies using cell division proteins as well as fluorescent staining of cellular structures will help to reveal the distinct stages during cell division that are deregulated by these compounds.


090-MCBP
Functional impact of lipid logistics on mycobacterial infection in Dicyostelium
C. Barisch1, I. Hubel1, S. Deise1
1 University of Osnabrück, Molecular Infection Biology, Osnabrück, Germany

Tuberculosis (Tb) is a wide-spread infectious disease caused by the bacterium Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb). The high lipid content of this pathogen accounts for many of its unique clinical manifestations. One of the main characteristics of Tb is the formation of lipid-loaded, foamy macrophages during chronic infection. A growing body of evidence indicates that Mtb mobilizes lipid droplets (LDs) to scavenge lipids from their host cell. However, how this pathogen remodels the lipid metabolic network of the host is so far poorly understood. Using Dicyostelium as an experimental model for foamy macrophages in Mtb infections, I found that mycobacteria accesses host LDs to build up their own lipid storage organelles and exploits ER-derived phospholipids when LDs are lacking.

Moreover, I observed that mycobacteria that escaped from the mycobacterium-containing vacuole (MCV) to the cytosol recruit LD-derived enzymes and regulatory proteins on their hydrophobic surface. Previous work indicated that these pathogens not only hijack LDs, but also lipid metabolic enzymes and various components of the lipid trafficking machinery.

However, a comprehensive understanding of the underlying molecular principles and their relevance for mycobacterial
infection is missing at present. We will unravel the molecular mechanisms by which mycobacteria acquire and exploit host lipids using the Dictyostelium/Mycobacterium marinum infection model. To this end, we will chart the lipid flows between mycobacteria and their host that are potentially relevant for infection and identify lipid species acquired by intracellular mycobacteria using metabolic tracing studies and mass spectrometry lipidomics. In addition, we plan to disrupt lipid flows from the host to the pathogen during infection using genetics or drugs. With the help of fluorescent and clickable lipid probes, we will first analyze the impact of these disruptions on host-to-pathogen lipid flows. Next, we will determine the consequences of blocking specific lipid supply routes on various stages of the mycobacterial infection course. Collectively, these efforts may uncover novel therapeutic targets to fight mycobacteria infection.

091-MCBP

Roles of glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase homologs in Pseudomonas aeruginosa metabolic fluxes

*A. Klotz*, U. Jenal

Pseudomonads are ubiquitous, environmental bacteria with a great potential for rapid adaptation to changing environmental conditions. A highly versatile and tightly regulated metabolism allows Pseudomonas aeruginosa to adapt to various environmental conditions, infect a wide range of hosts, and successfully dwell on different host tissues causing acute and chronic infections. Thus, P. aeruginosa is one of the most dangerous human pathogens and has recently been listed as one of the highest priority infectious threats by the World Health Organization. Surprisingly, little is known about the role of the central carbon metabolism and its complex regulation within the host.

Here, we analyzed distinct physiological functions of three paralogs of glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH), a key enzyme of the central carbon metabolism. Preliminary experiments indicated that while GAPA is bifunctional, GapB and GapC primarily catalyze glycolytic and gluconeogenic reactions, respectively. To dissect the role of the single GAPDH, transcriptional reporters were constructed allowing us to examine the carbon fluxes in vivo and at single cell level, notifying distinct expression profiles depending on growth phases and medium composition, used for growth. In contrast to gapA and gapB mutants, a strain lacking GapC completely lost its virulence in a Galleria mellonella animal model, indicating that in this host gluconeogenesis is of key importance for the pathogen.

This study contributes to a better understanding of how carbon metabolism contributes to growth of this important human pathogen providing detailed insights into the control of central metabolic processes. The long-term goal is to use this information to assess important bacterial metabolic processes in the human patient.


092-MCBP

Discovery and verification of cellular substrates of the ClpXP protease involved in bacteriochlorophyll a biosynthesis in Dinoroseobacter shibae

*A. Rommerskirch*, D. Jahn*, E. Härtig

Technische Universität Braunschweig, Institute of Microbiology, Braunschweig, Germany

Introduction: The marine bacterium Dinoroseobacter shibae is capable to perform aerobic anoxygenic photosynthesis. Screening of our transposon mutant library of D. shibae for loss of pigmentation and Bchl a absorbance identified Dshi_1387, encoding the ATP-dependent protease subunit ClpX of the ClpXP protease in D. shibae. Transcriptome analyses comparing transcript levels of the photosynthetic gene cluster (PGC) from wild type strain D. shibae DFL12T with ΔclpX mutant strain grown in the dark indicated a light-dependent regulation of photosynthetic genes.

Objectives: Determination of cellular substrates of the ClpXP protease involved in Bchl a biosynthesis and pigmentation in D. shibae.

Material & Methods: To identify substrates of the ClpXP protease, a proteolytic inactive form of ClpP (ClpP<sup>inactive</sup>) was expressed in the D. shibae ΔclpP mutant strain that will retain but not degrade substrates translocated into its proteolytic chamber. Substrates captured inside the proteolytic barrel were co-purified along with the Strep-tagged ClpP complex and identified by LC-MS/MS. To verify potential substrates in vitro and in vivo degradation assays were established. Potential substrates were heterologously produced in E. coli as Strep-tagged fusionproteins and subsequently exposed to an active ClpXP protease system in vitro. For the in vivo protease assay, the potential targets were expressed homologously in D. shibae. Degradation of the expressed target proteins will be monitored by Western Blot analysis.

Results: About 78 potential substrates of the ClpXP protease were identified in D. shibae. Interactionpartners of ClpP like ClpX or ClpA were co-purified. Moreover, proteins already known to be ClpXP targets like the transcriptional regulators CtrA and LexA were identified indicating the validity of the established trapping system. Newly identified ClpXP substrates include proteins essential for bacteriochlorophyll a biosynthesis: 5-aminolevulinate synthase (HemA1, HemA2) and subunit I and H of the magnesium chelatase (Bchl, BchH).

Conclusion: Our study support the role of proteolysis by ClpXP for the bacteriochlorophyll a biosynthesis pathway in D. shibae.

093-MCBP

PHB in cyanobacteria is not what it is meant to be

*M. Koch*, K. Forthhammer

University Tübingen, Organismic Interaction, Tübingen, Germany

Poly-Hydroxy-Butyrate (PHB) is a very versatile biopolymer and present in numerous microbial species. Among its functions are the protection against UV light, oxidative pressure, osmoregulation and many others. However, its main function is to serve as a storage polymer.

It is known for more than 60 years, that PHB is also produced in cyanobacteria. A recent study found its
presence in 134 out of 137 investigated cyanobacterial species (Kaewbai-Ngam et al., 2016). However, its physiological function for this phylum of bacteria remains unknown.

The aim of this study was to gain further insights into the importance of PHB for a cyanobacterial lifestyle. Besides at growth under nutrient depleted conditions, such as nitrogen or phosphorus limitation, PHB related genes were also upregulated during the night. We compared viability between Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 wildtype and a PHB-free mutant (ΔPhaAEC) under numerous abiotic stress-conditions and analyzed the recovery from prolonged nutrient starvation. However, in none of the tested conditions the PHB-deficient mutant showed reduced fitness. Hence, the true physiological function of PHB in cyanobacteria remains puzzling.


094-MCBP
Analysis of STRIPAK-dependent phospholipid signaling in Sordaria macrospora

*S. Erb', E. Reschka', S. Pöggeler'
1Institute for Microbiology and Genetics, Department for Genetics of Eukaryotic Microorganisms, Göttingen, Germany

Multicellular development and differentiation in eukaryotes needs tightly controlled signaling mechanisms. One multi protein complex involved in this process of regulation is the striatin-interacting phosphatase and kinase (STRIPAK) complex. This complex is conserved in metazoans and fungi and owns especially highly conserved components between fungi and animals. The STRIPAK complex is involved in various signaling processes like cell growth and fusion, cytokinesis, endocytosis and apoptosis and is tightly regulated by striatin-like scaffolding proteins. In the coprophilic ascomycete Sordaria macrospora (Sm), the SmSTRIPAK complex is important for the control of fungal sexual development, hyphal fusion and vegetative growth. The SmSTRIPAK complex consists of the human striatin-like homologue PRO11, the STRIP1/2 homologue PRO22, the SLMAP homologue PRO45, SmMOB3 and the scaffolding subunit of phosphatase PP2A, named SmPP2A2A, including its catalytic subunit SmPP2A2Ac1. Additionally, recent studies identified another core subunit of the SmSTRIPAK complex: the coiled-coil protein SmSCI1, which interacts with PRO11 and PRO45. LCMS analysis of SC11 and PRO11 pull downs revealed an interaction with an orthologue of the yeast PDR16 phosphatidylinositol transfer protein and a putative interaction with the oxysterol-binding protein OSH6, indicating a potential role of the SmSTRIPAK in phospholipid signaling.

The interaction of SmSTRIPAK components with PDR16 and OSH6 will be verified by Co-IP experiments and co-localization studies. The ongoing generation of the deletion strains ∆Smpdr16 and ∆Smoh6 will be accomplished to analyze their functions with regard to fruiting-body development and hyphal fusion. To monitor dynamic changes in the patterns of phospholipids with regard to the STRIPAK complex, fluorescent biosensors, consisting of lipid-binding domains that specifically interact with known phosphatidylinositol phosphate or phosphatidylserine species, will be analyzed in wild type (wt) and STRIPAK mutant strains. Additionally, changes in phospholipid composition of membranes will be analyzed of samples from ∆pdr16 and ∆osh6 in comparison to the wt.

095-MCBP
Transcriptional organization of magnetosome gene cluster in Magnetospirillum gryphiswaldense

*C. N. Riese', C. Schüler'
1University of Bayreuth, Department of Microbiology, Bayreuth, Germany

The Alphaproteobacterium Magnetospirillum gryphiswaldense orients itself along the earth’s magnetic field by biominalerizing membrane enveloped magnetite crystals, the magnetosomes. The approximately 30 genes with diverse functions in iron uptake, membrane vesicle formation, magnetite biominalerization and magnetosome chain formation are organized in the operons mamAB (16 kb), mamGFDC (2 kb), mamXY (5 kb), mms6op (3.5 kb) and feoAB (2.5 kb), which are clustered in a single chromosomal region called Magnetosome Island (MAI) 1.

However, transcriptional regulation as well as promoters are largely unknown. To address these questions, we applied up-to-date transcriptome-wide techniques to investigate the transcriptional organization as well as differential expression under various well-defined oxygen conditions for magnetosome biosynthesis in an oxystat-fermenter.

Preliminary data reveal a complex transcriptional architecture with multiple transcriptional start sites (TSS), regulatory and terminator regions. In case of mamAB two additional TSS within coding regions of mamH and mamQ could be detected, indicating transcription as at least two sub-operons. Additionally, novel termination and putative regulator sites could be detected by Term-sequencing, further expanding the transcriptional architecture of the mam-operons. Furthermore, oxygen conditions affect transcriptional expression of several mam-operons for example mms6op showing significant downregulation under oxic conditions in comparison to microoxic standard conditions. Moreover, organization of mamGFDC and feoAB in single operons with one primary promoter and distinct transcriptional termination could be verified.

The gathered insights uncover a much more complex transcriptional organization as previously assumed, expanding the current transcriptional model by a new level of mam-gene regulation. In depth-bioinformatic mining of the datasets for conserved promoter- as well as regulatory sequence motives is in progress to further enhance knowledge about magnetosome bioproduction regulatory networks.


096-MCBP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

097-MCBP
Surface Acclimation of the Cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803
Many bacteria exhibit planktonic as well as sessile lifestyles. We investigate the acclimation to these environmental conditions in the cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 (hereafter Synechocystis).

To this end, a microarray experiment of Synechocystis cells, which were incubated either on agar plates or in liquid medium, was performed. It revealed, amongst others, an altered transcription of genes potentially involved in extracellular polymeric substances (EPS) production. Indeed, we could determine varying extracellular polysaccharide compositions between sessile and planktonic cells. Both findings hint at a role of EPS in surface acclimation and biofilm formation in cyanobacteria.

Furthermore, transcription level of minor pilin genes differ between the two conditions in the microarray analysis. The Synechocystis genome encodes at least 10 potential minor pilin proteins with so far unknown functions. In Pseudomonas aeruginosa, a role of the minor pilins in pilus formation and function is proposed. Now, our studies of minor pilin mutants in Synechocystis reveal several distinct roles of these proteins. They seem to be involved in attachment to surfaces, flocculation, motility and natural competence.

Upon acclimation to surfaces, levels of second messengers, such as c-di-GMP and cAMP, change rapidly. A microarray analysis demonstrates that the level of the second messenger c-di-GMP alters the minor pilin gene transcription. Moreover, other genes encoding cell surface components, such as chaperone usher pili, were differentially transcribed.

In conclusion, we propose that sensing of surfaces leads to modified levels of the second messengers c-di-GMP and cAMP, resulting in an altered transcription of minor pilin genes. Thus, we assume that minor pilins of Synechocystis are involved in surface acclimation.

**099-MCBP**

**Targeting the cell division protein FtsZ by antibiotic action**

*S. Silber1, S. Pan1, S. Schäkermann2, C. Mayer1, H. Brötz-Oesterhelt1, P. Sass1*

1University of Tübingen, Department of Microbial Bioactive Compounds, Tübingen, Germany
2Ruhr University Bochum, Applied Microbiology, Bochum, Germany

ADEP antibiotics act by deregulating ClpP, the proteolytic core of bacterial Clp proteases. By this means, ADEPs effectively kill multidrug-resistant Gram-positive pathogens including enterococci (VRE), streptococci (PRSP), and Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) (1). For regulated proteolysis, ClpP strictly depends on the interaction with partner Clp-ATPases that together with adapter proteins are responsible for substrate recognition as well as for unfolding and feeding the substrates into the barrel-shaped ClpP core (2). ADEPs activate ClpP in the absence of such regulatory Clp-ATPases, conferring independent proteolytic activity to the otherwise dormant proteolytic core (3,4). Although ADEP-mediated activation of ClpP may lead to degradation of nascent polypeptides and other protein substrates in the bacterial cell, not all proteins seem equally susceptible. In a previous study, we identified the cell division protein FtsZ to be particularly sensitive to ADEP-ClpP (5), and to date FtsZ is the only folded bacterial protein that has been confirmed to be degraded by ADEP-activated ClpP in vitro as well as in living cells. By analyzing a series of FtsZ mutant proteins using biochemical assays, we unraveled the molecular reasons for this preferred degradation of FtsZ. Unexpectedly, ADEP-ClpP leads to the unfolding of the fully-folded globular core region of FtsZ in the absence of any ATP-fueled Clp-ATPase, thereby providing insight into the structural flexibility of the FtsZ protein. Importantly, such an intrinsic unfolding capability of ClpP has yet not been reported. Furthermore, FtsZ degradation is hampered by nucleotide binding. Using super-resolution fluorescence time-lapse microscopy, we thus followed the fate of FtsZ rings in ADEP-treated bacteria, which provided new insight into the activity of ADEP inside the bacterial cell.

1) Brötz et al. 2005, Nat Med 11: 1082-87
4) Gersch et al. 2015, Nat Commun. 6: 6320

**100-MCBP**

**The role of protein secretion systems in prey cell killing of the predatory soil bacterium *Myxococcus xanthus***

*S. Thiery1, C. Kaimer1*

1Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Department for Biology and Biotechnology, Bochum, Germany

RNA chaperones are RNA binding proteins that aid folding of RNA to their functional secondary structure. They influence cellular processes such as transcription, translation and RNA degradation. RNA chaperones such as Hfq, the ProQ/FimO family, or the cold-shock proteins (CSPs) and their action on specific RNAs have been well studied in Escherichia coli. For Hfq as well as the CSPs, homologs exist in Bacillus subtilis. CSPs have been shown to bind RNA and ssDNA and have been proposed to act as RNA chaperones. The aim of our study is to uncover their mechanism of action and RNAs affected by them in B. subtilis. A cspB cspD double mutant has lost competence, exhibits a strong reduction in growth rate and genetic stability indicating the critical importance of these RNA chaperones. We isolated suppressors and identified either a point mutation in the ribosomal binding site (RBS) of the veg gene of unknown function, or point mutations in the 5’UTR of cspC. The mutation in the RBS of veg lowers its expression. The construction of a cspB cspD veg triple mutant indicated that veg expression prevented growth of the strain lacking the major RNA chaperones.

Promoter-reporter gene fusions showed that the mutation in the 5’UTR of cspC results in a two-fold increased cspC expression. Promoter activity assays showed that expression of cspC is up-regulated at 15°C and down-regulated by CspB and CspD but not CspC. RNA fish experiments with CspD followed by RNA-Sequencing suggested binding of CspD to ribosomal RNAs. Our results demonstrate that the expression of cspC is tightly regulated and that the presence of CSPs is essential for the viability of B. subtilis even at 37°C. We identified multiple possible targets of the CSP proteins and anticipate our results to be the starting point to uncover their mechanism of action.

**908-MCBP**

**Cold-shock proteins are key players in the physiology of Bacillus subtilis**

*P. Fadhauer1, J. Stüke1*

1Institute for Microbiology and Genetics, General Microbiology, Göttingen, Germany

Myxococcus xanthus is a social soil bacterium that exhibits distinct multicellular behavior. Moreover, M. xanthus is a predator that actively kills a broad range of bacterial species to feed on the released biomass. It has been established that predation by myxobacteria is a complex, multi-component process that involves hydrolytic enzymes, secondary metabolites and outer membrane vesicles. However, the detailed molecular mechanism of prey cell killing remains largely unknown. Real-time microscopy of M. xanthus predation towards Escherichia coli on single cell level revealed that lysis of prey occurs within several minutes and only upon direct cell-cell contact. This observation suggests that M. xanthus secretes lytic factors in a targeted manner and possibly dedicated protein secretion systems.

To investigate the putative role of protein secretion systems for the predation process, we generated deletion mutants and analyzed their predatory behavior. Our analysis includes co-cultivation assays that assess predation of different prey bacteria on population and single-cell level, and on time scales ranging from 30 minutes up to several days. Deletion of the M. xanthus type VI secretion system did not significantly affect predation of Gram-negative and Gram-positive prey bacteria. However, a mutation in an alternative type II secretion system resulted in a predation defect on Gram-negative prey, while predation of Gram-positive bacteria was unaffected. This distinct predation phenotype allows us to further exploit secretome differences between the M. xanthus mutant and wild type strain, potentially leading us to the identification of unknown protein effectors that kill prey bacteria.

101-MCBP
AmyGreen is a new amyloid-sensitive stain for biofilm research
*O. Moshyneyt1, S. Cherni2, Y. Shnihirova1, R. Czerwieniec2, V. Chernii3, S. Yarmoluk3, V. Kovalska1
1Institute of Molecular Biology and Genetics of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev, Ukraine
2Regensburg University, Regensburg, Germany
3Institute of General and Inorganic Chemistry NASU, Kiev, Ukraine

Pathological amyloid fibrils are high stable protein aggregates that are associated with some human congenital/diseases. The functional amyloids appeared in bacterial biofilms where they may enhance bacterial virulence and pathogens spread. Since fluorescence assay is an effective tool for detection of fibrillar aggregates, there is an interest in the development of new amyloid-specific dyes for their visualization.

We aimed to study the amyloid sensitivity and specificity of the new dye AmyGreen.

Insulin and lysozyme were used to create amyloid fibrils in vitro. CLSM was used to visualize amyloids in biofilms.

Here we report that alkylamino β-ketoenole dye AmyGreen is able to detect both amyloid-produced biofilms and pathological fibrils. Beta-ketoenole dyes were shown as dyes able to increase the emission intensity in the presence of insulin and lysozyme fibrils with quantum yield up to 0.5. AmyGreen possesses no fluorescent response upon presence of dsDNA and RNA, while other widely used amyloid-sensitive dye Thioflavin T shows fluorescent response on RNA presence (quantum yield reaches 0.14). CLSM was used to assess an applicability of AmyGreen as a probe for fluorescence imaging of amyloid fibrils in bacterial biofilms. It was shown that AmyGreen visualized matrix components in biofilms of amyloid-produced bacterial strains E. coli K12, S. aureus ATCC25923, P. fluorescens SBW25, K. pneumoniae ATCC 27853; B. avium 61. AmyGreen allowed visualization of structural elements of the biofilm matrix with a higher resolution compared to Thioflavin T. Co-staining of bacteria biofilm E. coli K12 by AmyGreen with an EtBr allowed suggesting that the dye did not bind to nuclear and extracellular DNA such as stain Thioflavin T did. Co-staining of AmyGreen and Calcofluor-white of cellulose-containing E. coli K12 biofilm demonstrates a difference in staining patterns of stains, which suggests no high specific binding of beta-ketoenole to biofilm matrix polysaccharides. Observed dyes co-localization is probably connected with the location of bacteria on cellulose islands. Thereby, we proposed AmyGreen as a stain for visualization of amyloids in bacterial biofilms.

102-MCBP
Demonstration of a novel PLP-dependent decarboxylation-oxygenation of pyoverdine as catalyzed by PvdN from Pseudomonas fluorescens
*M. F. Sugue1, A. Burdur1, G. Dräger2, T. Brüser1
1Leibniz Universität Hannover, Institut für Mikrobiologie, Hannover, Germany
2Leibniz University Hannover, Institute of Organic Chemistry, Hannover

Fluorescent pseudomonads are widespread bacteria, including well-known pathogens, such as Pseudomonas aeruginosa, or important plant growth promoting rhizobacteria, such as Pseudomonas fluorescens. Under the iron-limited conditions typically found in host environments, these pseudomonads produce fluorescent siderophores, termed pyoverdines, from N-terminally acylated nonribosomal peptides that undergo multiple maturation steps after being transported into the periplasm. First, the N-terminal acylation is removed, followed by cyclization and oxidation steps that result in formation of the fluorophore. In addition, a strictly conserved N-terminal glutamate residue is modified. While the deacylation likely permits the release of the pyoverdine and while the fluorophore formation is important for the formation of two of the six ligands for iron complexation, the function of the N-terminal modifications is not known so far. We recently have identified the enzymes that are responsible for the conversions of the N-terminal glutamate. PtaA is a transaminase that converts the glutamate into α-ketoglutarate [1], whereas PvdN is a novel PLP-dependent enzyme that is required for the transformation of the glutamate to succinamide [2]. The latter reaction has so far only indirectly been concluded from in vivo analyses of wild type and pvdN mutant strains. Here we report the purification of PvdN and of its substrate, the glutamate variant of the pyoverdine from Pseudomonas fluorescens strain A506. With these components, we could demonstrate the direct enzymatic conversion of the glutamate form of pyoverdine to the succinamide form. Thereby, the in vitro data confirm that PvdN indeed is able to catalyze the novel PLP-dependent decarboxylation-oxygenation reaction.


Staphylococcus aureus is an opportunistic pathogen and causes a multiplicity of important clinical infections. Although S. aureus is classically considered as an extracellular pathogen recent studies indicate an association between chronic courses of disease and long-term persistence of internalized bacteria in host cells. The adaptation to intracellular persistence is a dynamic process and seems to enable S. aureus to escape the hosts immune system and antibiotic treatments. Persisting intracellular S. aureus are characterized by upregulation of SigB and simultaneous downregulation of agr. Nevertheless, little is known about gene regulation determining the dynamic decision between growing and non-growing persisting populations. Besides SigB, CodY may play a crucial role by regulating the agr and SaeRS system. We have developed a reporter vector to examine up to three different physiological states during internalization and long term infection/colonization. The reporter vector pTricolor contains the three codon optimized fluorescent reporter genes d-tomato, e-gfp and e-cfp. The d-tomato gene is constitutively expressed from an optimized pgp-SigA promoter and allows copy-number correction and normalization between different experiments. To investigate the activation pattern of SigB and CodY e-gfp is placed under the control of the cpl promoter and e-cfp under the control of the saHPF promoter, respectively (both derived from S. aureus subsp. aureus NCTC 8325). Reportergene expression is monitored by flow cytometry and fluorescence microscopy. We show that pTricolor is stably passed on also under non-selective conditions. The induction of SigB and CodY regulated promoters was shown under defined in vitro conditions. Thus pTricolor is a suitable reporter vector to investigate central questions of differential gene regulation of a pathogen and characterization of subpopulations during in vivo infection.

103-MCBP
Construction of a fluorescence-based reporter gene system for in vivo analysis of differential gene expression and subpopulation-analysis in Staphylococcus aureus

H. Wolfram, P. Hildebrandt, S. Michalik, U. Vöker, A. Reuter
University Medicine Greifswald, Interfaculty Institute for Genetics and Functional Genomics, Greifswald, Germany

Therefore, we infected A549 human lung epithelial cells for 24 h with the S. aureus patient isolate 3878 followed by a secondary IV infection for up to 32 h [A/Puerto Rico/8/34 (H1N1); A/Panama/1/68 (H3N2)]. At different times of infection progeny viral and bacterial titers were analyzed. Pathogen-mediated effects on protein and mRNA expression of cytokines and chemokines were investigated by FACS analysis and qRT-PCR.

Interestingly, the infection with S. aureus 3878 prior to IV infection neither resulted in changes of viral and bacterial titers nor affected the expression of specific antiviral genes in comparison to single IV infections. However, in presence of both pathogens, enhanced proinflammatory cytokine and chemokine levels were detected compared to single-infected cells. By use of an 84-gene PCR array we were able to detect changes in the regulation of cellular signaling factors that are involved in the mounting of innate immune responses. Among these NOD-like-, TLR- and RIG-I-mediated signaling pathways seem to be of major importance.

So far our data indicate a minor effect of colonizing bacteria on antiviral responses. Nevertheless, a significant impact of colonizing bacteria on the regulation of pro-inflammatory factors was observed, probably contributing to an imbalance of cell intrinsic innate immune response and severe outcome of infection.

105-MCBP
Characterization of an RNase III mutant strain of Rhodobacter sphaeroides

J. Börner1, G. Klug1
1Institut für Mikrobiologie und Molekularbiologie, Giessen, Germany

As bacteria are exposed to an ever-changing environment, they have evolutionarily developed complex regulatory networks to adapt their proteome to different environmental conditions. At the same time, protein biosynthesis is one of the most resource- and energy intensive biological processes in all living organisms. Therefore bacteria use different exo- and endoribonucleases to regulate gene expression quickly by degrading transcripts that are no longer needed. RNase III is a highly conserved dsRNA processing endoribonuclease. Previous studies have shown that RNase III plays a crucial role in RNA metabolism, by regulating the abundance of rRNAs, mRNAs and regulatory ncRNAs. In this work an RNase III deletion mutant of the facultative phototrophic bacterium Rhodobacter sphaeroides was characterized. The aim of this study was to identify differences in phenotype and RNA physiology between wild type and mutant, which can be explained by a loss of RNase III activity. We analyzed the growth behaviour of the mutant and the wild type under different growth conditions, including oxidative and cadmium stress. As Rhodobacter sphaeroides is known for its metabolic versatility, we were also interested in regulation of the transcriptome, especially under oxidative, heat and cadmium stress conditions. To investigate the influence of RNase III on gene expression, we performed Northern blot and qRT-PCR experiments. The results suggests that the deletion of the RNase III coding gene widely impacts phenotype and transcriptome in Rhodobacter sphaeroides.

104-MCBP
Colonizing bacteria increase the pro-inflammatory immune response after secondary influenza virus infection

J. Wilden1, E. Hriniciu1, S. Niemann2, S. Ludwig1, C. Ehrhardt1,2
1Westfälische Wilhelms-University, Institute of Virology, Muenster, Germany
2Westfälische Wilhelms-University, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Muenster, Germany

Influenza viruses (IV) are causative agents of severe respiratory infections. Beyond the virulence of the virus itself, epidemiological data suggest that bacterial superinfections are the major cause for increased morbidity and mortality. Hallmarks of disease are enhanced pathogen load, dysregulation of immune response and tremendous tissue damage. Among the bacteria that induce secondary pneumonia, Staphylococcus aureus (S. aureus) has been frequently identified as being present during severe influenza seasons. However, half of the population either carries the human commensal S. aureus persistently or intermittently without showing any medical symptoms. In consequence we focused the question how primary bacterial exposure affects a secondary IV-infection.
Introduction: A-to-I editing of nuclear transcripts has recently been described in fungi, but occurs also in metazoans and in bacteria. In fungi from the class of ascomycetes, editing has hitherto only been detected during the formation of sexual fruiting bodies. Editing sites mostly reside in coding regions, potentially leading to changes in the amino acid sequence of the encoded proteins. Remarkably, editing also targets UAG stop codons, leading to the formation of UGG tryptophan codons and C-terminally elongated proteins (stop loss). However, how fungal editing is catalyzed, which editing sites are of biological relevance and if editing evolved for the purpose of fruiting body formation is still unclear.

Objectives: Our study aimed to identify editing sites that cause protein changes, quantify these changes and analyze their biological role during development in the model ascomycete Sordaria macrospora.

Materials and Methods: We used RNA-seq, Proteomics and Proteogenomics to identify editing sites. Further, we characterized genes whose transcripts undergo editing by generating deletion strains as well as complemented strains carrying different alleles.

Results: We identified a diverse set of editing sites in distinct sexual tissues by RNA-seq as well as Proteogenomics. Proteomics and Proteogenomics provided evidence that editing indeed changes protein sequences. Quantitative mass spectrometry showed that C-terminally elongated protein isoforms from stop loss editing accumulate in maturing sexual tissues. We show that transcripts undergoing editing encode proteins required for proper sexual spore formation and that both, short genome-encoded protein isoforms as well as long protein isoforms generated by editing, have functional significance in this process.

Conclusion: A-to-I RNA editing in fungi leads to functionally different protein isoforms occurring simultaneously. Since editing is highly correlated with the formation of fruiting bodies, we hypothesize that a diversified proteome is a prerequisite for the formation of generative tissues and sexual spores, a much understudied process that requires massive cellular re-organization.

108-MCBP
Dissecting the binding behavior of the multi-RRM protein Rrm4 during endosomal mRNA transport in Ustilago maydis

107-MCBP
Bacillus subtilis mainly copes with the loss of the glutamine domain PdxT of the pyridoxal synthase complex PdxST by genomic amplification of the synthase domain gene pdxS

Pyridoxal-5'-phosphate (PLP), the biologically active form of Vitamin B6, serves as an essential cofactor for roughly 4% of the known enzymatic reactions. Two pathways for de novo synthesis of PLP exist in nature: the DXP-dependent pathway, which is a 7-step reaction occurring in α-/γ-proteobacteria and the DXP-independent pathway that is present in lower eukaryotes, plants and in some bacteria, including the Gram-positive model bacterium Bacillus subtilis. B. subtilis synthesizes vitamin B6 via the pyridoxal synthase (PdxST) complex, which converts glutamine together with pentoses and trioses to PLP. PdxT is the glutaminase subunit that cleaves glutamine to 2-oxoglutarate and ammonium, of which the latter is provided to the PLP synthase domain PdxS. PdxS can also synthesize PLP in the absence of PdxT if high amounts of ammonium are provided. In this study, we addressed the question of how a B. subtilis pdxT mutant strain adapts to PLP limitation during growth with low levels of ammonium. We hypothesized that amino acid exchanges might improve the activity of the PLP synthase subunit and thus allow the bacteria to synthesize sufficient PLP for rapid growth under ammonium limitation. For this purpose, we established a reporter system to distinguish between different classes of suppressor mutants. Genome sequencing analyses revealed that all isolated suppressor mutants had amplified a 16 kb-long genomic region containing pdxS gene. A subset of the suppressor mutants had acquired mutations in the trnA and glnA genes encoding the transcriptional regulator TrnA and the glutamine synthetase GlnA, respectively. TrnA is involved in global nitrogen regulation and GlnA controls the DNA-binding activity of TrnA. The characterization of the suppressor mutants carrying mutations in the trnA and glnA genes revealed that the uptake of ammonium by the bacteria was enhanced. Thus, the amplification of the pdxS gene and the enhanced ammonium uptake compensate for the loss of the pdxT gene. Another subset of suppressor mutants had acquired mutations in genes that are unrelated to nitrogen metabolism. The characterization of these mutants is underway and will be presented.

Transport of mRNAs is crucial to regulate protein expression at the spatio-temporal level. The localization of mRNA is coupled to the intracellular transport machineries by RNA-binding proteins (RBPs). A well-studied translocation mechanism is the endosomal mRNA transport along microtubules in infectious hyphae of the plant pathogen Ustilago maydis. The key component of endosomal mRNA transport is the RBP Rrm4, which is crucial for proper growth of fungal hyphae. Rrm4 contains three RNA Recognition Motifs (RRM) and two MLLE for protein-protein interactions. Recently, we obtained a transcriptome-wide view of Rrm4 and an accessory RBP Gpr1 by using a comparative in vivo UV-crosslinking approach. Rrm4 binds predominantly to the 3'UTR of target transcripts and landmarks of translation, such as start and stop codons, which, this supports the current model of local translation on endosomes. Furthermore, Rrm4 binds the sequence motif UAUG, which is present in one third of all identified binding sites. The motif occurs mostly in binding sites mapping to the Open Reading Frame (ORF) and start codons and is bound by the third RRM domain (RRM3). Mutations within RRM3 however do not interfere with hyphal growth, whereas mutating the first RRM domain leads to a loss of function of Rrm4. This indicates that the RRM domains differentially contribute to RNA binding and may selectively affect distinct
mRNA target sets. However, the principles of RNA recognition by multi-domain RBPs are not well studied. Therefore, we started - to dissect the binding behavior of the different RRM domains of Rrm4 by applying in vivo UV-crosslinking to alleles of Rrm4 carrying mutations in their RRM domains. This should enable us to further characterize their roles during endosomal mRNA transport.

109-MCBP
Classification of small RNAs with unknown function in *B. subtilis*

'M. Schedlewski1, P. Hildebrandt1, S. Michalk1, U. Völker1, A. Reder1

1University Medicine Greifswald, Functional Genomics, Greifswald, Germany

To fully understand global transcriptome data the functionality of each transcription unit has to be characterized. Especially small transcripts, potentially encoding very small proteins or regulatory RNAs are difficult to characterize. Nevertheless, these small effector molecules might be a missing link in understanding fundamental aspects of major life processes and therefore have to be investigated systematically. Omics approaches do provide very good basic data but do not displace detailed and focused functional in vivo analyzes. We started the current study with the aim to establish an efficient way to differentiate transcription units with unknown functions into non-coding and coding RNAs. Therefore, we created the plasmid based screening system pMAX_TREP for the overexpression of transcribed genomic loci in *B. subtilis*. The pMAX_TREP system incorporates multiple elements allowing the combination of diverse features e.g. an efficient and fast cloning of desired features via the SLIC In-Fusion system, unidirectional replication and transcription, tight target promoter repression, easy screening and real time quantifications via a CFP reporter gene expression and very quick purification by a C-terminal TWIN-STREP-tag (IBA) for subsequent identification and proof by mass spectrometry in one workflow. Furthermore, the tight transcriptional control as well as the translational fusion of the target feature to the reporter gene-Strep construct allows a broad variety of functional follow up experiments like protein-protein-interaction analyses via SPINE or global transcriptome and proteome experiments. The pMAX_TREP system was successfully tested on 5 small RNAs of *B. subtilis* with unknown function. This first pilot experiments already provided phenotypic data as well as explicit division into coding (small proteins) and non-coding RNAs.

110-MCBP
A handy tool for in vivo characterization of promoter elements in *Bacillus subtilis*.

*M. Harms1, J. P. Hildebrandt1, S. Michalk1, U. Völker1, A. Reder1

1University Medicine Greifswald, Institute for Genetics and Functional Genomics, Greifswald, Germany

The initiation of messenger RNA synthesis is mediated by various cis-acting DNA elements. The core promoter is essential for assembly and translocation of the RNA polymerase holoenzyme. However, the magnitude of gene transcription is not only depending on the core promoter. Additional promoter elements, which can be located up- and downstream of the core promoter, are able to enhance or repress the transcription efficiency. Deciphering the contribution of these different promoter elements to overall promoter strength is tedious. Therefore, we constructed a plasmid based screening system pHIS (High Screen) to easily address aspects like (i) effect of spacer length and sequence, (ii) conserved regulatory sequences which are located up- or downstream of the core and (iii) fast efficient cloning of desired promoter variants via SLIC method. The most important features are (iv) an easy read out of promoter activity via fluorescent reporter gene expression and (v) in vivo analysis of all desired promoter constructs. Furthermore, the plasmid pHIS offers the opportunity to compare different biological or technical replicates through a constant internal normalization. To proof the functionality of the pHIS plasmid we characterized the promoter of the ydbD gene which is part of the general stress response of *B. subtilis*. The regulation of the ydbD gene is complex involving the alternative sigma factor SigB as well as the transcription factor MgsR. By using the pHIS plasmid a conserved upstream sequence was identified, which has a significant effect on promoter activity of ydbD and finally on the global transcription patterns of the entire MgsR regulon.

111-MCBP
The *Legionella pneumophila* GDSL hydrolase PlaA, a highly active lysophospholipase, is processed and activated by the zinc metalloproteinase ProA

*M. Hiller1, C. Lang1, J. Döllinger2, M. Dwo3, W. Blankenfeldt3, A. Flieger1

1Robert Koch Institute, Division of Enteropathogenic Bacteria and Legionella, Wernigerode, Germany
2Robert Koch-Institut, Division of Proteomics and Spectroscopy, Berlin, Germany
3Heilmoltz Center for Infection Research, Structure and Function of Proteins, Braunschweig, Germany

Introduction

The facultative intracellular pathogen *Legionella pneumophila* is the causative agent of Legionnaire’s disease, a potentially fatal pneumonia. *L. pneumophila* is ubiquitous in aqueous habitats and amoebae are a natural host. However, the pathogen can also colonize lung macrophages and epithelial cells. *L. pneumophila* blocks phagosome maturation and thus evades degradation in the lysosome. Instead, the *Legionella* containing vacuole (LCV) is established which allows replication of *Legionella*. During infection *L. pneumophila* secretes proteins, among others phospholipases, into the lumen of the LCV and the host cell cytoplasm via its type II and type IVB secretion systems. At least 15 phospholipases A, which divide into the patatin-like proteins, the PlaB-like proteins and the GDSL hydrolases, are encoded in the genome. The GDSL hydrolase PlaA was previously described as exit factor of *L. pneumophila*.

Objectives

We here focus on the characterization of the phospholipase PlaA which belongs to the family of GDSL hydrolases. In the presented project we investigate the mode of action, activation mechanism and 3D structure of PlaA.

Materials and methods

The mode of secretion was assessed by Western blotting. For detection of enzymatic activity, recombinant PlaA was purified and subjected to lipid hydrolysis assay and thin layer chromatography. Additionally the effect of the zinc metalloproteinase ProA on PlaA integrity and activity was determined. Moreover, the 3D structure of PlaA was determined via crystallization.

Results
We showed that PlaA is secreted via the type II secretion system and exhibits strong lysophospholipase A activity. Moreover, PlaA was processed by the \textit{L. pneumophila} zinc metalloproteinase within a disulfide loop after secretion which increases its lysophospholipase A activity. Additionally, we present the 3D structure of PlaA which revealed that the uncleaved disulfide loop stabilizes a lid covering the catalytic triad.

**Conclusion**

As PlaA is secreted via the type II secretion system and thus present within the LCV lumen we propose that its lysophospholipase activity is directed towards the LCV membrane and thus promotes the exit of \textit{L. pneumophila}.

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**112-MCBP**

*In vivo characterization of the mechanisms of antibiotics on the bacterial cell envelope*

*A. B. Schäfer*, M. Wenzel

1Chalmers University of Technology, Department of Biology and Biological Engineering, Division of Chemical Biology, Gothenburg, Sweden

Our healthcare system is facing a major challenge due to rising multidrug resistance, causing previously curable infections to evolve into complicated diseases. At the same time, the discovery of new antibiotics is lacking far behind.

One promising way to tackle multi-resistant strains is to target their cell envelope. Not only constitutes the cell envelope the first line of defense against antibiotic compounds, it is also essential for the survival of the cell. Furthermore, it harbors a multitude of crucial cellular processes, which makes it sensitive to drugs. Due to the complexity of the outer membrane, cell wall, and cytoplasmic membrane resistance against compounds targeting the cell envelope develops much slower compared to compounds with single protein targets. However, to exploit this drug target more efficiently, we need to better understand its biology and how antibiotics disturb its function.

In recent years, \textit{in vivo} techniques became more advanced, so that it is now much more feasible to investigate the effects of antimicrobial compounds on the cell wall and membrane in living bacteria. In this project, we systematically study the effects of membrane and cell wall-active antibiotics on bacteria using fluorescence microscopy and cell biological tools.

To our surprise, we found that classical antibiotics, which are assumed to have one specific intracellular target, in fact also affect the cell envelope of bacteria, especially membrane domain organization and localization of membrane-bound proteins.

These findings demonstrate, that even widespread clinically used antibiotics are not fully understood. In order to develop the next generation of effective antibacterial drugs, it is pivotal to thoroughly understand how exactly antibiotics kill bacteria.

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**114-MCBP**

ReoM and ReoY connect cell wall integrity surveillance with peptidoglycan biosynthesis via an essential protein phosphorylation event


1Robert Koch Institute, FG11 Division of Enteropathogenic bacteria and Legionella, Wernigerode, Germany

2Institute for Cell and Molecular Biosciences, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom

3Newcastle Drug Discovery, Northern Institute for Cancer Research, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom

4Section of Microbiology and MRC Centre for Molecular Bacteriology and Infection, Imperial College London, London, United Kingdom

In \textit{Listeria monocytogenes} the late cell division protein GpsB is required for cytokinesis and peptidoglycan biosynthesis. These effects are explained by an interaction of GpsB with the major peptidin binding protein PBP A1, which is responsible for polymerization and cross-linking of peptidoglycan strands \cite{1, 2}. We noticed that a \textit{L. monocytogenes} \textit{ΔgpsB} mutant rapidly acquires mutations suppressing the \textit{ΔgpsB} phenotype. A first set of these suppressor mutations has been described to increase the influx of precursor molecules into cell wall biosynthesis by proteolytic stabilization of MurA, the first enzyme of this pathway, through mutations in the protease subunit ClpC \cite{3}.

We here show that inactivation of two yet uncharacterized suppressor genes, \textit{reoM} and \textit{reoY}, also leads to accumulation of MurA, indicating that these genes represent novel factors contributing to ClpCP-dependent MurA synthesis in \textit{Listeria monocytogenes}.

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**113-MCBP**

Posttranscriptional regulation of SAM in the alpha-proteobacterium \textit{Sinorhizobium meliloti}

*R. Scheuer*, H. Melior*, E. Evgueniawa-Hackenberg

1Institute of Microbiology and Molecular Biology, Giessen, Germany

Methionine is used together with ATP to synthesize S-adenosylmethionine (SAM), the main methyl donor in the cell. We have shown that in the nitrogen fixing plant symbiont \textit{Sinorhizobium meliloti}, \textit{R}Nases E and J are needed for homeostasis of SAM \cite{1}. In the \textit{S. melloti} 2011 mutants with mini-Tn5 insertions in the corresponding genes \textit{me} and \textit{mj} the SAM level was increased and several sRNAs were affected in gel migration, probably due to hypermethylation \cite{1}. In bacteria the SAM biosynthesis is posttranscriptionally regulated by SAM-binding riboswitches. In several alpha-proteobacteria SAM-II riboswitch was predicted in the 5'-UTRs of particular methionine genes \cite{2}. In \textit{S. melloti} SAM-II riboswitches were predicted in the 5'-UTRs of the genes \textit{metaA} and \textit{metaZ}. To address the mechanisms of posttranscriptional SAM regulation in \textit{S. melloti}, we analyzed \textit{metaA} and \textit{metaZ} by qRT-PCR and the corresponding liberated SAM riboswitches (sRNA Rsw) by Northern blot hybridization. We expect under high methionine conditions increased levels of sRNA Rsw and lower mRNA levels when compared to low methionine conditions. In line with this, in the wild type strain 2011 we observed in rich TY medium when compared to minimal GMX medium increased levels of the two liberated riboswitches, while the mRNA levels were decreased. In agreement with this, plasmid reporter fusions of \textit{metaA} and \textit{metaZ} (promoter region and first 6 nucleotides of ORF are fused to eGFP) showed increased eGFP expression in minimal medium. Interestingly, the P\textit{metA}:e\textit{gfp} fusion, which increases the promoter copy number and the riboswitch level in the cell, led to an increase on the \textit{metaZ} sRNA Rsw level. In contrast, the P\textit{metaZ}:egfp fusion decreased the \textit{metaA} sRNA Rsw level. Currently we are investigating the cross-talk between the \textit{metaA} and \textit{metaZ} regulation and its relation to RNases E and J in \textit{S. melloti} 2011.


degradation. These results were supported by the elucidation of the crystal structure of one of these gbsS suppressor genes roeM (regulator of MurA degradation), identifying it as a homolog of IreB from Enterococcus faecalis, a small phosphoprotein substrate of the serine/threonine protein kinase IreK (4). In vitro and in vivo studies showed that ReoM is phosphorylated by PrkA, the corresponding homolog of the kinase in L. monocytogenes; and that phospho-ablatible mutations in reoM are lethal. Furthermore, it has been observed that inactivation of the kinase PrkA or the cognate phosphatase PrkP has opposing effects on MurA levels in a ClpCP-dependent manner, supporting the idea that proteolytic stability of MurA is controlled by the PrkA/PrkP protein pair. Our data are consistent with a model in which the PrkA substrate identified here provides a novel link between peptidoglycan biosynthesis and cell wall integrity sensing. Moreover, they provide an explanation for many observations on the regulation of peptidoglycan biosynthesis by PASTA-domain containing serine/threonine protein kinases previously made in other firmicutes.


115-MCBP
The benzothiazinone BTZ043 blocks apical growth and affects septum formation in Corynebacterium glutamicum

Corynebacteria and Mycobacteria share a complex, multilayered envelope architecture where a peptidoglycan layer with covalently bound arabinogalactan provides a scaffold for an out-facing bilayer composed of mycolic acids and trehalose mycolates. This results in a hydrophobic barrier against water-soluble chemicals, including some antibiotics. However, synthesis and maintenance of the cell envelope provides a potential Achilles' heel to combat these bacteria. Many first line antibiotics for tuberculosis treatment such as isoniazid and ethambutol act in the cell envelope. Many subdrugs, including some second line drugs. New compounds with different working mechanisms are therefore of special interest. One novel anti-tuberculosis drug candidate is benzothiazinone 043 (BTZ), a compound that is currently entering phase I for clinical trials. It was shown that BTZ blocks the DprE1 enzyme involved in the arabinose synthesis. However, the effect of BTZ on the single cell level and the subsequent inhibition of cell growth were not understood in detail. Here we used Corynebacterium glutamicum to address this question. Our results suggest that BTZ only affects one of the two distinct cell-wall synthesis machineries present in C. glutamicum, namely the elongosome. Whereas the apical elongation is completely stopped, the activity of the divosome is less affected. Using comprehensive imaging of fluorescently labeled nascent peptidoglycan synthesis we find that BTZ treated cells grow from active septa in a way similar to coccoidal cells. Thus our data reveal how flexible C. glutamicum cells adapt to the presence of cell envelope acting antibiotics.

116-MCBP
An archaeal / bacterial consortium from a Costa Rica petrol well: analysis by electron tomography

L. Dengler1, J. Flechslér2, A. Klingl2, H. Huber1, D. Grohmann1, *R. Rachel1
1University of Regensburg, Dept of Microbiology and Archaea Centre, Regensburg, Germany
2LMU Munich, Plant Development, Martinsried, Germany
3University of Regensburg, Centre for Electron Microscopy, Regensburg, Germany

Microbial biofilms are widespread in nature and are often composed of several species. Biofilm formation has great impact in biotechnological applications and in medical care. Our current research aims to get a deep understanding of the biofilm composition, formation, and cell-cell interaction. In this study, we analyse a biofilm originally isolated from an ancient petrol well in Cahuita, Costa Rica. It consists of cells of the archaeal genus Methanobacterium and a sulfate-reducing bacterium (SRB) of the genus Desulfomicrobiium. Both are novel species. The co-culture is stable under laboratory conditions. Our analyses revealed that the biofilm matrix surrounding the cells is mainly produced by SRB and acts as an assembly centre for metal sulfides. Currently, we analyse the cell structure and cell-cell interaction structures by electron tomography.

Methods: Cells are analysed by electron tomographic methods (Rachel et al, 2010) following cryo-sample preparation: high-pressure freezing, freeze-substitution, and resin embedding. We obtain ultrathin (70 nm) and semithin (400 nm) sections, which are analysed by transmission electron microscopy / tomography. For even thicker sections (900 nm), we employ parallel beam STEM tomography, enabling us to eliminate the focus gradient at high tilt, by increasing the depth of focus.

Results: The tomography datasets help us to visualize the cells with minimal distortion, using the improved sample preparation protocol. The natural shape of the cells is trapped in an undisturbed way, before their structure is analysed at an almost isotropic resolution of at least 5 nm. The methanogens are almost straight, rod-shaped cells, while the SRB show a cell wall with an outer membrane, enclosing an unusually wide periplasm.

Conclusion: Our tomographic analyses, together with fluorescence microscopy, physiological and biochemical analyses of this consortium exhibit a complex cell architecture and help to visualize the extracellular polymeric substances (EPS). We plan to complement our studies using electron cryo-tomography, in the near future.

References:

117-MCBP
Mdh (metal-dependent hydrolase): The unknown of the methionine biosynthesis operon in Staphylococcus aureus

*F. D. R. Wencker1, Y. A. Ramirez2, W. Koelme2, D. Steigerwald3, E. Rogalski1, M. Peindl1, C. Kisker2, W. Ziebuhr2
1Julius-Maximilians Universität Würzburg, Institut für Molekulare Infektionsbiologie, Würzburg, Germany
2Julius-Maximilians Universität Würzburg, Rudolf Virchow Center for Experimental Biomedicine, Institute for Structural Biology, Würzburg, Germany

*F. D. R. Wencker1, Y. A. Ramirez2, W. Koelme2, D. Steigerwald3, E. Rogalski1, M. Peindl1, C. Kisker2, W. Ziebuhr2
1Julius-Maximilians Universität Würzburg, Institut für Molekulare Infektionsbiologie, Würzburg, Germany
2Julius-Maximilians Universität Würzburg, Rudolf Virchow Center for Experimental Biomedicine, Institute for Structural Biology, Würzburg, Germany
The opportunistic human pathogen *S. aureus* is capable of synthesising methionine *de novo* when the amino acid becomes scarce. Genes required for methionine biosynthesis are encoded by the *met* operon whose expression exclusively takes place under methionine-deprived conditions. Next to the *met* genes (*metL, C, F* and *E*), the operon is predicted to comprise an additional gene encoding for a metal-dependent hydrolase (*mdh*) of unknown function.

Here we demonstrate co-transcription and –expression of *mdh* with the *met* operon. We succeeded in overexpressing, crystallising and solving the structure of Mdh at high resolution. Crystal structure analyses identified zinc as a cofactor and a dimeric state as preferred conformation of the protein. Amino acid residues suggested to be crucial for catalytic activity and substrate recognition were targeted, and *mdh* variants were chromosomally integrated into *S. aureus* for *in vivo* viability analysis. Interestingly, while deletion of the entire *mdh* gene had no effect, catalytic site variants were growth impaired under methionine deprived conditions. Initial protein-protein interaction studies indicated co-localization of Mdh with (some of) the methionine biosynthesis enzymes of the operon. Furthermore, the association of *mdh* with the *met* operon was found to be highly conserved among staphylococci, strongly suggesting a link with methionine metabolism. Although the substrate of Mdh is still unknown, BLAST analyses identified some similarities of Mdh with kynurenine formamidases, cleaving N-formyl-kynurenine into kynurenine and formic acid in *Pseudomonas*. Formic acid is required for formylation of methionine residues charged onto initiator-tRNAs, whose availability is decisive for bacterial translation initiation. We hypothesise that co-expression of Mdh with methionine biosynthesis enzymes might allow coupling of methionine synthesis and methionine formylation for accelerated translation initiation under methionine deprived conditions. Mdh could provide formic acid (for example) by cleaving formylated substrates such as f-methionine or f-glutamate. Experiments are currently underway to substantiate this hypothesis.

118-EPAP
The composition and function of the electron transport chain catalyzing *Wolinella succinogenes* nitrous oxide respiration *C. Werner*1, S. Hein*1, S. Deusch*1, J. Seifert*1, J. Simon*1
1Technische Universität Darmstadt, Department of Biology, Microbial Energy Conversion and Biotechnology, Darmstadt, Germany
2University of Hohenheim, Institute of Animal Science, Stuttgart, Germany

Over the last decades, climate change is moving more and more into public consciousness. Besides the commonly mentioned carbon dioxide and methane, nitrous oxide (*N₂O*) is an important greenhouse gas with substantial global warming potential. Most of the anthropogenic *N₂O* emissions derive from agricultural soils, mainly due to the application of synthetic nitrogen-containing fertilizers. The increasing concern about *N₂O* emissions directed interest on bacterial species harbouring the copper-containing *N₂O* reductase (*NosZ*), which is the only known enzyme that is able to convert *N₂O* to *N₂*. During anaerobic *N₂O* respiration, NosZ acts as the terminal reductase of an electron transport chain that conserves energy through proton motive force generation. Based on phylogenetic analyses, it has been recognized that NosZ enzymes can be categorized into clade I or clade II and that this classification also applies to the genetic context of the corresponding *nos* gene clusters.

Here, we present experimental work on the *N₂O*-respiring clade II model bacterium *Wolinella succinogenes*. Apart from periplasmic NosZ, at least five different *nos* gene cluster-encoded proteins as well as a membrane-bound Rieske/cytochrome bc complex were found to be essential for *N₂O* respiration. Transcriptome and proteome experiments will be presented that contribute to the elucidation of the assumed membrane-bound *N₂O* respirasome.

119-EPAP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

120-EPAP
Function and phylogeny of DsrL, a NAD(P)H oxidoreductase involved in dissimilatory sulfur metabolism
K. Wallerang1, M. Löffler1, C. Dahl1
1Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, Bonn, Germany

DsrAB-type dissimilatory siroheme-sulfite reductase is a key enzyme of microbial sulfur-based energy metabolism and occurs in sulfate/sulfite reducers as well as in sulfur oxidizers. The dsr gene clusters of sulfur oxidizers typically encode DsrL, which is essential for sulfur oxidation in *Allochromatium vinosum*. It acts as NAD(P)H oxidoreductase and physiological partner of AvDsrAB. Recent genome analyses and metagenomic studies revealed that *dsrL* is not restricted to sulfur oxidizers as previously assumed but also occurs in *dsr* clusters of (probable) sulfate/sulfur-reducing bacteria, e.g. *Desulfurella amilisi*2,3. We elucidated differences between DsrL proteins from sulfur oxidizers and from organisms reducing inorganic sulfur compounds. Phylogenetic analysis revealed early separation of reductive and oxidative DsrL types. All DsrL proteins consist of an N-terminal ferredoxin domain and a central FAD and NAD(P)-binding part linked to a second ferredoxin domain. Oxidative-type DsrLs have longer substrate binding and linker domains, while the vast majority of reductive-type DsrLs shares a conserved double arginine-motif in their substrate binding domain. The latter has been identified as binding the NADP-phosphate in the related NfB protein1. In accordance, DsrL from *D. amilisi* is active with NADP(H) but not with NAD(H), while *A. vinosum* DsrL uses both substrates albeit with a strong preference for NAD(H). Among the oxidative-type DsrLs, the green sulfur bacterial proteins form a separate cluster. They are completely inactive with NADP(H) as shown for the enzyme from *Chlorobaculum tepidum*. In conclusion, DsrL proteins have evolved to serve specific functions in organisms oxidizing or reducing sulfur compounds. In sulfur oxidizers, NAD+ appears as suitable *in vivo* electron acceptor for DsraBL-catalysed sulfur oxidation, while NADPH is required as electron donor for sulfite reduction. This observation can be related to the much lower redox potential for NADPH/NAD+ as compared to the NADH/NAD+ couple under physiological conditions.

1Anantharaman et al 2018 ISMEJ 12, 1715
2Florentino et al 2019 Env Microb 21, 209
3Demmer et al 2015 JBC 290, 21985
Parageobacillus thermoglucosidasius is a facultative anaerobic thermophile frequently isolated from both mesophilic and thermophilic environments. Previous genomic studies have shown that all *P. thermoglucosidasius* strains harbour three anaerobic CO dehydrogenase (CODH) and twelve H$_2$-evolving hydrogenase genes that are co-localised on the chromosomes. Furthermore, gas analysis revealed that most of the *P. thermoglucosidasius* strains readily oxidise CO and produce H$_2$ via water-gas shift reaction (WGS) with DSM 6285 showing the highest H$_2$ production rate among the compared strains. To determine the genetic control of the WGS in *P. thermoglucosidasius* DSM 6285, total RNA was extracted from cultures grown under 50% CO and 50% air gas atmosphere at four timepoints in duplicates and the rRNA depleted fraction was sequenced using Illumina NextSeq, v2.5, 1x75bp (stranded) chemistry. The expression pattern of the transcripts was determined using DP_BP cluster analysis. The RNA-Seq data revealed 28 distinct gene expression trajectories across the four time points. Evaluation of the trajectories of the fifteen CODH and hydrogenase genes associated with WGS revealed that the transcripts are distributed in three clusters showing similar expression pattern of an initial rapid up-regulation with O$_2$ depletion and subsequent down-regulation with decreasing CO and increasing H$_2$ concentrations. This trend suggests a possible influence of both O$_2$ and CO on the expression of the anaerobic CODH and H$_2$-evolving hydrogenase genes. EggNOG annotation of the similarly expressed genes in the three clusters showed an overrepresentation of the functional category metabolism consistent with the DSM 6285 growth based on OD600 readings. Overall, the data revealed a clear partitioning of the transcripts that reflects the metabolic shift associated with the transition from aerobic to anaerobic metabolism and the evolution of hydrogen via water-gas shift reaction.

References


Motivated by dwindling fossil resources and progressive climate change, the search for alternative energy sources is in full swing. Hydrogen is an energy carrier with more than twice the gravimetric energy density of conventional natural gas. *Parageobacillus thermoglucosidasius* DSM 6285 is a gram-positive, hydrogen-forming, facultative anaerobic bacterium. It can grow in the presence of high concentration of carbon monoxide and catalyzes the water gas shift reaction (1) for the production of H$_2$. Genomic analyses showed that this organism contains the genes for a [Ni-Fe] group 4a hydrogenase forming a complex with the anaerobic (Coo) CO dehydrogenase.$^{1,2}$

$$\text{CO} + \text{H}_2\text{O} \leftrightarrow \text{CO}_2 + \text{H}_2 \quad (1)$$

For extended biotechnological application a profound understanding of the regulation of the water gas shift reaction is a prerequisite. The gas conversion as well as growth and activity of the carbon monoxide dehydrogenase (CO-DH) was monitored in batch experiments with and without CO in the gas phase. The transcription of three CO-DH and two hydrogenase genes were examined with RT-qPCR. Activity of the CO-DH was measured with whole cells as the reduction of methyl viologen in the presence of CO.

The expression of the CO-DH seems to be inhibited in the presence of oxygen. Under anoxic conditions the expression of the CO-DH is induced but specific activity is significantly higher with CO in the gas phase.


124-EPAP

Is the formate dehydrogenase H of *Escherichia coli* promiscuous?

*1D. Lubeck, C. Pinske*

1. Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, Biology/Microbiology, Halle (Saale), Germany

The ubiquitously distributed small subunits of redox enzymes harbor iron-sulfur clusters for electron transfer and the protein fold often resembles that of the electron-transferring ferredoxins. Direct protein interactions ensure that the maximum electron-transfer distance of about 13 Å is maintained. Two of the 25 ferredoxin-like proteins in *Escherichia coli* are located within the formate hydrogenlyase (FHL) complex, which catalyzes the oxidation of formate to CO$_2$ through the formate dehydrogenase H (FDH-H) enzyme with concomitant production of H$_2$ through proton reduction via a hydrogenase (Hyd-3). It has been shown that the FDH-H protein can also interact with an alternative FHL complex. This helps explain why the encoding *fdhF* gene is not part of the *hyc* operon encoding *Hyd*-3, but is co-regulated with it. A recent study identified an
interaction network of ferredoxin-like proteins and identified YsaA and HydN as novel interaction partners of the FDH-H protein by bacterial two hybrid assays and through impaired FDH-H activity in ysaA and hydN deletion strains.

Using protein interaction studies we aim to verify the findings of the bacterial-two-hybrid interaction, shed light on the electron pathway involved and understand the physiological role of this protein interplay.

Essentially nothing is known about the functions of YsaA and HydN. Initially, we studied ysaA gene expression and found that in contrast to fdhF, it is not regulated by formate, but rather is constitutively expressed. Affinity chromatography and optimization of the expression conditions allowed the isolation of correctly folded iron-sulfur cluster-carrying HydN. YsaA and FDH-H proteins, which serve as the basis for pull-down experiments and for quantification of the interaction strength.

Taken together, our findings suggest that the highly conserved FDH-H protein might provide reducing equivalents to several electron-transfer complexes, which ultimately likely increases the metabolic flexibility of the cell. This makes both FDH-H and these ferredoxin-like proteins useful future drug targets.

1 Lindenstrauß & Pinske J Bacteriol 201:1480; 2019
2 Pinske Front. Microbiol. 9:1238; 2018

125-EPAP
Laboratory evolution of Thermaanaerobacter kivui towards reduced growth temperatures

M. Lehmann\textsuperscript{1}, E. Zschabitz\textsuperscript{1}, M. Basen\textsuperscript{1}
\textsuperscript{1}University of Rostock, Microbiology, Rostock, Germany

Live on earth might have originated in a hydrothermal setting with the last universal common ancestor (LUCA) being an autotrophic thermophilic anaerobe using the Wood-Ljungdahl pathway for CO\textsubscript{2} fixation [1]. Proceeding from a thermophilic LUCA growing optimally at temperatures over 45 °C, organisms that grow at moderate temperatures (mesophiles) possibly emerged out of a thermophilic lifestyle. This would require alterations regarding membrane structure or stability of nucleic acids and proteins. Thermaanaerobacter kivui is the most thermophilic aceticogenic bacterium characterized yet, growing optimally at 66 °C and using the Wood-Ljungdahl pathway to produce acetate [2]. Its physiology possibly resembles that of LUCA, making it a perfect model organism to study the evolutionary changes necessary to grow at moderate temperatures. Here, we show first results of the adaptive laboratory evolution towards a reduced optimal growth temperature of T. kivui using continuous culture and serial passaging, respectively. In continuous culture, we established a steady state at 66 °C with subsequent decrease of the incubation temperature. Surprisingly, the culture’s response to lower temperatures was quite robust resulting in a rather stable optical density. Especially, morphological changes of the cells were noticeable after incubation at temperatures below 50 °C. This could be observed during passaging experiments as well. Serial passaging resulted in an isolate that indeed showed adaption to reduced growth temperatures, indicated by a higher growth rate and a shorter lag phase at lower temperature than the type strain. The results from these experiments lead to the conclusion that T. kivui responds rapidly to suboptimal temperatures. Currently, we are studying the genotypic and phenotypic changes in the adapted strain.

The emerging role of aldehyde:ferredoxin oxidoreductase in microbiobially-catalyzed alcohol production

L. Nissen1, J. Moon2, M. Basen1,2
1University Rostock, Microbiology, Rostock, Germany
2Goethe University Frankfurt, Molecular Microbiology & Bioenergetics, Frankfurt, Germany

With the increasing need for alternative liquid fuels and reduction of CO2 emissions, production of alcohols from biomass and from synthesis gas (mainly H2, CO, CO2) becomes important. Promising whole-cell biocatalysts are anaerobic microorganisms that utilize a pathway involving aldehyde:ferredoxin oxidoreductase (AOR). This enzyme catalyzes the reduction of organic acids to aldehydes with reduced ferredoxin. The aldehydes are then reduced to the corresponding alcohol by an alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH). AORs are oxygen-sensitive proteins containing tungsten, which is not widespread in biological systems, and they have wide substrate spectra reducing aliphatic, branched-chained aliphatic and aromatic acids.

While first hints for the AOR-ADH pathway came from Clostridia (1), it has recently been demonstrated using genetics that production of various alcohols from their corresponding acids in an engineered strain of Pyrococcus furiosus is catalyzed by AOR-ADH (2). Currently, evidence increases that this pathway is widespread and of biotechnological importance. A variety of microorganisms with aor genes present were compared in their alcohol production with regard to yield, efficiency and productivity (3).

Among the candidates which may use an AOR-ADH pathway for alcohol production, are some Thermoaerobacter species. Thermoaerobacter spp. are thermophilic sugar fermenters well known for their high ethanol yields; with one known exception: the acetogen Thermoaerobacter kivui (2). Since T. kivui is genetically available and has no aor in its genome, the aor gene from Thermoaerobacter sp. strain X514 was cloned into T. kivui for heterologous expression, with the goal to purify and biochemically characterize the protein.

With the emerging role of AOR in biological alcohol production, it is important to learn more about the biochemical properties of these tungstoenzymes, also with regard to possible applications.

REFERENCES

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128-EPAP

Insights into structure and function of a benzene-mineralizing, nitrate-reducing consortium

S. Ezioz1, F. Corrêa1, S. Peng3, J. Schultz2, S. Kleinsteuber2, U. Nunes da Rocha2, L. Adrian5, S. Vogt1
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Isotope Biogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany
5Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany
3Chongqing University, Department of Environmental Science, Chongqing, China
4Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Departamento de Microbiologia Geral, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The pathway how benzene is metabolized by microbes under anoxic conditions is not fully understood. Here, we studied the degradation pathway of a benzene-mineralizing, nitrate-reducing enrichment culture using a multi-omics approach. Benzene mineralization pattern and microbial community dynamics were determined in a time-series experiment using 25% fully labelled 13C-benzene as sole source of carbon and energy. Benzene mineralization was dependent on the presence of nitrate and started after a lag-phase of around 70 days; benzene was mineralized at rates of 21.9±0.4 µM d-1. DNA was extracted at four different time points during mineralization and sequenced for 16S rRNA gene amplicons and shotgun-metagenome. Likewise, proteins were extracted and analyzed using liquid chromatography coupled to an Orbitrap Fusion mass spectrometer. Amplicon sequencing of 16S rRNA gene showed that the consortium was dominated by Betaproteobacteriales, Ignavibacteriales and Anaerolineales at time points of highest mineralization. A putative anaerobic benzene carboxylase was identified among other proteins, indicating that benzene is activated via carboxylation.

129-EPAP

Flavodoxin hydroquinone provides electrons for the ATP-dependent reactivation of protein-bound corrinoid cofactors L. Kißling1, Y. Greiser2, H. Dürchen3, S. Studenik4
1Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Jena, Germany

Introduction & Objectives

Corrinoid-dependent enzyme systems rely on the super-reduced state of the protein-bound corrinoid cofactor to be functional, e.g. in methyl transfer reactions. Due to the low redox potential of the [CoII]/[CoI]-couple, autoxidation of the corrinoid cofactor occurs and leads to the formation of the inactive [CoIII]-state. For the reactivation, which is an energy-demanding process, electrons have to be transferred from a physiological donor to the corrinoid cofactor by the help of a reductive activator protein. In this study we elucidated the reaction sequence by which low-potential electrons are generated in vivo and transferred to the protein-bound corrinoid cofactors of bacterial O-demethylases.

Materials & Methods

All proteins used in this study were heterologously produced in Escherichia coli as C-terminal Strep-tag fusions. The enzyme activities were measured photometrically under anaerobic conditions. The midpoint potential of flavodoxin was determined via redox titration with titanium(III) citrate as electron donor.

Results & Conclusion

We identified reduced flavodoxin as electron donor for the ATP-dependent reduction of protein-bound corrinoid cofactors of bacterial O-demethylases. Reduced flavodoxin was generated enzymatically using pyruvate:ferredoxin/flavodoxin oxidoreductase rather than hydrogenase. Two of the four flavodoxins identified in Acetobacterium dehalogenans and Desulfitobacterium hafniense DCB-2 were functional in supplying electrons for corrinoid reduction. They exhibited a midpoint potential of about -400 mV (E_SHE, pH 7.5) for the
semiquinone/hydroquinone transition. Reduced flavodoxin could be replaced by reduced clostridial ferredoxin. It was shown that the low-potential electrons of reduced flavodoxin are first transferred to the iron-sulfur cluster of the reductive activator and finally to the protein-bound corrinoid cofactor. This study further highlights the importance of reduced flavodoxin, which allows maintaining a variety of enzymatic reaction cycles by delivering low potential electrons.

130-EPAP
Insights into the mechanism of ketone carboxylases
* A. C. Böhringer1, J. Heider1, K. Schühle1
1Philips-Universität Marburg, Marburg, Germany

Aromatoleum aromaticum is a metabolically versatile denitrifying β-proteobacterium, which is able to degrade ketones like acetone or acetophenone under oxic or anoxic conditions. The key-enzyme of acetone metabolism is the acetone carboxylase (AcxABC), which forms acetocacetate by ATP-dependent carboxylation of acetone. The enzyme consists of three subunits (85/75/20 kDa) and is arranged as hexamer (Schühle and Heider, 2012). In a first step, the β-subunit phosphorylates acetone and HCO3 and thereby creates the highly reactive intermediates phosphoenolacetone and carboxyphosphate. The intermediates have to be translocated over 30 Å to the α-subunit to react at a Fe2-ion of the active site to form acetoacetate. It is proposed that the enzyme forms a tunnel between the α- and β-subunit to transfer and protect the intermediates from hydrolysis (Mus et al., 2017). The substrate spectrum of the enzyme seems to be limited by the size of the tunnel. While ATPase activity is observed with different branched and elongated ketone-substrates, carboxylation activity is only possible with butanone and acetone (Schühle and Heider, 2012). Acetocacetate is further activated to acetoacetyl-CoA, which can be split to two molecules of acetyl-CoA. A succinyl-CoA: 3-ketoacid CoA-transferase or an acetoacetate-CoA-ligase maybe is involved in the activation of acetoacetate, which are both encoded in the same gene cluster as AcxABC. We investigate AxcABC with regards to the structure and function relation and the proposed mechanisms of substrate-channeling and compare it to acetone carboxylases from different organisms.


132-EPAP
Lactate metabolism in the acetogenic bacterium *Moorella thermoacetica*
*F. Rosenbaum1, M. Schömmerich1
1University of Hamburg, Microbiology & Biotechnology, Hamburg, Germany

Introduction: Lactate is a common substrate for many strictly anaerobic microorganisms, but the biochemistry and bioenergetics of lactate oxidation is obscure. This is because the redox potential of the lactate/pyruvate pair is E°′ = -190 mV, excluding a direct reduction of NAD+ (E°′ = -320 mV). Some organisms circumvent this by using an electron-coupling lactate dehydrogenase/electron transfer flavoprotein (LDH/Etf) complex that couples lactate oxidation to the simultaneous exergonic electron flow from reduced ferredoxin to NAD+. *Moorella thermoacetica* is an acetogenic bacterium that is able to grow on lactate, but it does not possess genes encoding an LDH/Etf complex. Hence, lactate metabolism must occur via another mechanism in this organism.

Objectives: The objective of this work was to assess growth of *M. thermoacetica* DSM521 on lactate and unravel how lactate is metabolised in this acetogen.

Materials & methods: Growth experiments and experiments with resting cells were performed to elucidate lactate metabolism.

Results: *M. thermoacetica* was able to grow on lactate after an adaptation. L- but not D-lactate sustained growth. Growth on lactate was stimulated by CO2. Subsequent experiments with resting cells revealed that lactate could only be metabolised by cells prepared from cultures pre-grown on lactate, but not glucose, indicating that lactate metabolism is regulated. The cells metabolised lactate to acetate at a ratio of 2:3 in bicarbonate-buffered medium and lactate was not converted in the absence of CO2. Furthermore, experiments showing carbonic acids [1]. While only low amounts of AOR are present under standard growth conditions, a deletion strain lacking phenylacetaldelyde dehydrogenase (SR7Δpdp) has been shown to produce high amounts of active AOR which compensates for the missing enzymes during the degradation of phenylalanine [3]. Therefore, it is assumed that the physiological function of AOR is the elimination of toxic aldehyde intermediates [2].

AOR consists of three different subunits which form a εβεεε- heterohexamer. The catalytic site is located in the largest subunit AorB and contains a tungsten bis-molybdopterine cofactor. Electrons are proposed to be transferred via a FeS4-cluster in AorB and four further FeS4-clusters in AorA to a FAD molecule in the subunit AorC. In vitro AOR uses either NAD+ or benzyl viologen as electron acceptor which suggests that NAD+ or ferredoxin are the natural electron acceptor [2].

We recently developed a heterologous expression system that allows recombinant expression of highly active affinity-tagged AOR. We will perform further studies including site-directed mutagenesis to validate the proposed electron transport mechanisms as well as structure biological approaches.


131-EPAP
Experiments on the Structure-Function Relationship of Aldehyde Oxidoreductase of *Aromatoleum aromaticum*
*D. Hege1, F. Arndt1, J. Heider1
1Philips-Universität Marburg, Biologie, Marburg, Germany

Aldehyde Oxidoreductase (AOR) from *Aromatoleum aromaticum* EbN1 is a tungsten containing enzyme and belongs to the subfamily of bacterial AORs. It was first isolated from cultures of *Aromatoleum aromaticum* that were grown anaerobically on phenylalanine and catalyzes the oxidation of a broad spectrum of different aldehydes to the corresponding carbonic acids [1]. While only low amounts of AOR are present under standard growth conditions, a deletion strain lacking phenylacetaldelyde dehydrogenase (SR7Δpdp) has been shown to produce high amounts of active AOR which compensates for the missing enzyme during the degradation of phenylalanine [3]. Therefore, it is assumed that the physiological function of AOR is the elimination of toxic aldehyde intermediates [2].
Cysteine metabolism in the acetogenic bacterium *Moorella thermoacetica*

L. Göbbels1, M. Schölmerich1

University of Hamburg, Microbiology & Biotechnology, Hamburg, Germany

Introduction: It was recently reported that the acetogenic bacterium *Moorella thermoacetica* can use light energy to fuel CO2 fixation when it is coated in cadmium sulfide nanoparticles (CdS) [1]. This bioinorganic hybrid system relies on cysteine as a sacrificial reductant, producing cystine in a chemical process. At the same time, cysteine is an amino acid that is central to numerous cellular processes in microorganisms. A biological conversion of cysteine in this system is thus feasible and so far unelucidated in *M. thermoacetica* and other acetogens.

Objectives: The objective of this work was to shed light on aspects of the bioinorganic hybrid system with a particular focus on the fate of cysteine.

Materials & methods: Growth and resting cell experiments were performed to assess the bioinorganic hybrid system and cysteine metabolism in *M. thermoacetica* DSM521. Furthermore, key enzyme activities were measured in crude extracts of normal cells and cells covered in CdS.

Results: Experiments with resting cells revealed that both normal cells as well as cells covered in CdS produced acetate from cysteine. This process was independent of light. Acetate production increased with increasing cysteine concentrations and CO2 was not required. Acetate was also produced from cysteine, but this was tied to the presence of molecular H2. Growth experiments revealed that neither cadmium nor light energy affected growth of *M. thermoacetica* and cysteine alone did not support growth.

Conclusion: *M. thermoacetica* can use cysteine or H2 + cystine as energy and carbon source to make acetate.


N2O is a potent greenhouse gas with a global warming potential of app. 300x that of CO2 and is mostly produced in agriculture. Grasslands under agricultural use are hotspots for N2O production due to the input of reactive nitrogen compounds like nitrate and ammonium by fertilizer application. Nitrate and ammonia are keystones in the nitrogen cycle. N2O is a byproduct and intermediate from dissimilatory nitrate reduction to ammonium (DNRA) and denitrification, respectively. Denitrification senso stricto is the stepwise reduction of nitrate via nitric oxide to N2O. Optional reaction modules include nitrate reduction to nitrite and N2O reduction to molecular nitrogen. Many bacteria from different phyla are known to denitrify whereas for fungi only 95 genera are known to denitrify. Fungal denitrifiers known to date lack N2O reductases. Despite their potential to produce N2O, their role for N2O emissions is largely debated. To broaden the knowledge about denitrifying fungi, we isolated more than 300 fungi from the top soil of eight different agriculturally used grasslands under conditions favoring denitrification (i.e., anoxia, organic electron donors, and nitrate). We obtained isolates from 38 different genera as indicated by ITS analysis and tested them for their ability to denitrify. The genera Fusarium and Chlonostachys contained the most potent N2O producers. N2O producing species in 20 genera like Westerdykella and Apiotrichum that were hitherto unknown to denitrify were identified. N2O production in fungal isolates was often associated with the production of significant amounts of nitric oxide, which is a toxic intermediate of the denitrification pathway and usually undetected because of a high turnover rate to N2O. Most nitric oxide was produced by species belonging to the genera Penicillium, Chlonostachys and Trichoderma. Thus, we expanded the known biodiversity of denitrifying fungi from grasslands and identified hitherto underappreciated physiological traits relevant to climate change.

137-EPAP
Bacterial microcompartment in Bilophila wadsworthia for taurine metabolism and organosulfonate respiration
*A. Burrichter*, 1 S. Dörn, 1 S. Haß, 1 D. Schleheck 1
1 Universität Konstanz, FB Biologie, Konstanz, Germany

The strictly anaerobic, sulfite-reducing bacterium Bilophila wadsworthia is a normal member of the human-gut microbial community but has also been associated with the development of diseases such as appendicitis and colitis. B. wadsworthia is specialized on the utilization of organosulfonates such as taurine (2-aminoethanesulfonate) as sulfite donors for sulfite respiration (thus, ‘organosulfonate respiration’), producing harmful hydrogen sulfide (H2S). The taurine desulfoxination pathway of B. wadsworthia was recently shown to involve a glyceryl radical enzyme (GRE), isethionate sulfite-lyase (IsLAB), which cleaves isethionate (2-hydroxyethanesulfonate) into toxic acetalddehyde and sulfite. Here we show that this reaction takes place isolated within bacterial microcompartment (BMCs). First, we confirmed an inducible production of BMCs during growth with taurine by proteomic, transcriptomic and electron microscopical analyses. Then, we isolated the BMCs from taurine-grown cells by density-gradient ultracentrifugation and analyzed their composition by proteomics as well as by enzymes assays, which suggested that the GRE reaction and the further conversion of the acetalddehyde take place within the BMCs. Hence, we characterized a novel subclass of BMCs and also provide more details on biomedically relevant microbial organosulfonate respiration and H2S formation.

138-EPAP
HybG-HypD scaffold complex of the [NiFe]-Hydrogenases Maturation Machinery has an ATPase activity
*A. Haase*1, K. Nutschan2, R. Golbik1, G. Sawers1
1 Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, Institute of Biology/Microbiology, Halle (Saale), Germany
2 Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, Institute of Biochemistry and Biotechnology, Halle (Saale), Germany

[NiFe]-hydrogenases are iron sulphur-cluster containing enzymes and have an unusual bimetallic NiFe(CN)2CO cofactor in the active site of the large subunit. Six conserved Hyp proteins (HypA-HypF; HypG as a HypC isoform in E. coli) are required for assembly of the bimetallic cofactor. While the CN ligands are generated from carbamoylphosphate by the HypEF proteins, the origin of the CO ligand remains unclear. The (FeS)-cluster-containing HypD protein is the only one that is redox-active and it likely plays a key role in the biosynthesis of the CO ligand. The CO ligand might originate from endogenously produced CO2 already bound to an Fe ion on a HypD-HypG subcomplex. The reduction of CO2 to CO, however, requires a redox potential of approximately -535 mV (in solution), but the redox potential of the FeS-Cluster of HypD (E0 = -260 mV) is too positive to be able to reduce CO2 directly. The reduction step could be achieved if it were coupled to ATP hydrolysis; however, HypD has no obvious ATP-binding sites. Our data revealed that HypD indeed catalyses ATP hydrolysis. Using an HPLC-based ATPase assay, we could show that the HypG-HypD and HypC-HypD complexes have a 5- to 10-fold higher ATPase activity than the intrinsic activity of these Hyp proteins alone. The conserved Cys41 residue of HypD is essential for the ATPase-activity and is suggested to be important for an ATP-dependent conformational activation of HypD. Using limited proteolysis, we could show that HypD undergoes a conformational change when it binds ATP. In addition, the Cys41 residue of HypD appears to be involved in the conformational change induced by ATP because, while wildtype HypD without bound ATP is resistant to trypsin digestion, a HypD(C41A) variant is sensitive to trypsin. Together, our results suggest that HypD undergoes an ATP-dependent conformational activation step that facilitates binding of HypG or HypC and subsequent activation of ATP hydrolysis, which is proposed to be necessary for substrate reduction.


139-EPAP
Biochemical insights into the electron confurcating lactate dehydrogenase of Acetobacterium woodii
*A. Katsy*1, V. Müller1
1 Goethe University Frankfurt, Molecular Microbiology & Bioenergetics, Frankfurt, Germany

Introduction: Flavin-based electron bifurcation is a novel mechanism to couple endergonic and exergonic redox-reactions widespread in anaerobes. However, knowledge about the mechanism of coupling is still limited. The aceticogenic model organism Acetobacterium woodii has three different bifurcating enzymes: the hydrogenase, the caffeyl-CoA reductase and the lactate dehydrogenase. The LDH of A. woodii forms a stable complex with two electron-transfer flavoproteins (Etf) and uses flavin-based electron
confurcation to drive endergonic lactate oxidation according to:
\[
\text{lactate} + \text{Fd}^2 + 2 \text{NAD}^+ \rightarrow \text{pyruvate} + \text{Fd} + 2 \text{NADH}.
\]

Objectives: We aimed to elucidate the molecular basis of electron flow in the electron-confurcating lactate dehydrogenase reaction.

Materials & methods: For creating site-directed enzyme variants, we established a heterologous production system. The encoding LDH/Etf genes from \textit{A. woodii} fused with a Streptag were cloned into a pET-based expression vector and expressed in \textit{Escherichia coli} BL21(DE3)::iscR. The LDH/Etf complex was purified under anoxic conditions by Strept-Tactic affinity and size exclusion chromatography. Activity of the variants was analysed spectrophotometrically.

Results: The confurcating LDH/Etf complex was purified to apparent homogeneity and catalyzed electron-confurcation from reduced ferredoxin and lactate to NAD\(^+\) with a specific activity of 14.5 U/mg. The bifurcation reaction could be observed with 1.2 U/mg. Certain variants with alterations in \(\beta\)-flavin- or NAD\(^+\)-binding site as well as the possible electron transfer pathway were generated. These mutations all abolished confurcation/bifurcation up to 85-90%. The deletion of Fe/S-cluster and of the whole Fe/S-domain even resulted in a complete lost of confurcation ability but reduced bifurcation only by 80%.

Conclusion: Key amino acids, coordinating catalytic centers like FAD, NAD\(^+\) or Fe/S and the possible electron transfer pathway, were identified and shown to have an impact on the confurcational/bifurcational mechanism. For the first time, evidence is present that especially the Fe/S-domain is indeed essential for the confurcation reaction.

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140-EPAP
Determination of yield coefficients of electroactive microorganisms – example of \textit{Geobacter sulfurreducens}

F. Sscarabotti\(^1\), B. Korth\(^1\), M. Schmidt\(^1\), L. Rago\(^1\), K. Bühler\(^1\), F. Harnisch\(^1\)

\(^1\)Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung - UFZ, Department of Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction:
Electroactive microorganisms (EAM), e.g. \textit{Geobacteraceae}, are able to use solid terminal electron acceptors like metals or anodes. This is known as extracellular electron transfer (EET) and can be exploited in primary microbial electrochemical technologies. However, although several details of the molecular mechanisms of EET are deciphered, there is a significant lack of quantitative information on EAM.

Objectives:

Due to the lack of knowledge about yield coefficients and kinetic data of EAM proliferation, it was the aim of this study to reveal these on the (averaged) single cell level. Therefore, the (averaged) charge per replication per single cell of the model organism \textit{Geobacter sulfurreducens}, biomass, cell density, and the influence of the anode potential was analyzed.

Materials & methods:

\textit{Geobacter sulfurreducens} was cultivated in 100 mL single and double chamber batch reactors with 5 mM acetate using a transparent conductive material as working electrode (glass sputter-coated with 10 nm of Cr and 25 nm of Au/Pd 80/20 \%), a graphite rod as counter electrode, and an Ag/AgCl sat. KCl (+197 mV vs. SHE) as reference electrode. In addition to mechanistic electrochemical analysis (cyclic voltammetry), HPLC samples were taken and the biofilm was imaged with CLSM. The biomass dry weight was quantified and related to the volume of one single cell assuming rod shape (1.5 \(\mu\)m length and 0.6 \(\mu\)m width).\(^1\)

Results:

For single chamber systems, it was demonstrated that the applied potential did not influence the coulombic efficiency, but the growth kinetics. Further, cell density within biofilm and the formal potential of the EET redox centers were constant. The yield coefficient of the biofilm grown at +0.2 V was lower (2-3 pmol e\(^-\) per replication) compared to −0.2 V and 0 V (0.2-0.6 pmol e\(^-\) per replication).

Conclusion:
We demonstrated that the potential has a strong impact on biomass yield per electron. The lower yields at more positive potentials indicate a metabolic shift of the growth of \textit{G. sulfurreducens} from effectiveness to speed, as also supported by modelling.\(^2\)

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\(^2\)Bioelectrochemistry 2015, 106, 194

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141-EPAP
Degradation of the sugar alternative 5-keto-\(\alpha\)-fructose by the human intestinal microbiota

J. Schiessl\(^1\), K. Kosciow\(^1\), U. Deppenmeier\(^1\)

\(^1\)Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Institut für Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, Bonn, Germany

Obesity and diabetes belong to the major health problems of today’s society. High-calorie food and the excessive consumption of sugars contribute to the development of these diseases. It became evident that the elevated intake of these compounds leads to an altered microbiota composition in the human gut. Hence, the analysis of the physiology and the growth requirements of the corresponding bacteria is of major interest. One aim of this study was to examine the degradation of the potential low-calorie sugar substitute 5-keto-\(\beta\)-fructose (5-KF). We identified different 5-KF reductases that are able to reduce 5-KF to D-fructose or L-sorbos, which are channelled into the central catabolic pathways of the corresponding microorganisms. Such enzymes were found in \textit{Tatumella morbirosei} and \textit{Glucobacter oxystans}, which do not belong to the intestinal microbiota. Homologous proteins were also detected in the anaerobic soil bacterium \textit{Clostridium pasteurianum}. For a detailed characterization the ketofructose reductase (KFR) of \textit{T. morbirosei}, the enzymes Gox0644 and Gox1432 of \textit{C. pasteurianum} were heterologously produced in \textit{E. coli} and purified. The highest activity was detected for the KFR from \textit{T. morbirosei} (1428 ± 82.8 U/mg protein). In addition, the substrate spectrum of the enzymes was investigated. The KFR of \textit{T. morbirosei} specifically reduced 5-KF to D-fructose and can be used as a sensitive tool to quantify even very low 5-KF concentrations in different foods. All other enzymes reduced 5-KF to L-sorbos. These enzymes had a broad substrate spectrum.
and reduced different ketones, aldehydes and sugars. Although highly similar enzymes are encoded by most of the intestinal microorganisms, none was able to metabolize 5-KF.

142-EPAP
Phthalate degradation via phthaloyl-CoA in anaerobic and aerobic bacteria

*R. A. Geiger*, M. Boll

1University of Freiburg, Faculty of Biology, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany

The environmentally relevant xenobiotic phthalic acid esters (PAEs) are annually produced at the million ton scale and are mainly used as plasticizers that are non-covalently incorporated into high-molecular weight polymers such as polyvinyl chloride1. After migration of PAEs into the environment, microbial hydrolysis via esterases into respective alcohols and phthalates occurs under aerobic and anaerobic conditions. Until recently, aerobic PA degradation only was associated with the introduction of hydroxyl functionalities by dioxygenases to facilitate the further decarboxylation step to protocatechuate via cofactor-free decarboxylases1. In contrast, denitrifying and sulfate-reducing bacteria activate PA to the possibly most instable CoA ester present in nature – phthaloyl-CoA (half-life ~7 min), by either ATP-dependent CoA ligases or CoA transfersases, followed by decarboxylation to the central intermediate benzoyl-CoA via ubiD-like phthaloyl-CoA decarboxylase (PCD)2. Surprisingly, we identified three denitrifying PA degraders use a hybrid pathway for aerobic PA degradation including the activation and decarboxylation of PA to benzoyl-CoA. We present the properties of phthaloyl-CoA decarboxylase that accomplishes decarboxylation at a prenylated FMN cofactor that depends on Fe2+- and K+ ions.


143-EPAP
The microbial conversion of estrogens into androgens via a SAM-, ATP- and Co-dependent methyl transfer

*J. Krull*, C. Jacoby, M. Boll

1Faculty of Biology, Freiburg, Germany

Estrogens such as 17β-estradiol (E2) or estrone (E1) are biologically active hormones and their release to the environment causes endocrine disruption in wildlife. Estrogens are biosynthesized from cholesterol and their formation from androgens is catalyzed by cytochrome P450 aromatases. Estrogen biosynthesis is exclusively found in eukaryotes, but only bacteria are capable of using estrogens as sole carbon and energy source. Aerobic bacteria use the O2-dependent 4.5-secO pathway to activate and break down the aromatic A-Ring of estrogens1. However, the genes and enzymes involved in denitrifying estrogen degraders have remained elusive. Recently, an E2-induced gene cluster emtABCD was identified in *Denitratisoma sp.* strain DHT3 that encodes a putative Co-methytransferase2. Proteome analysis in *Denitratisoma oestradioliucum* clearly identified next to emtABCD also genes involved in SAM recycling suggesting a cobalamin-dependent methyltransferase that uses SAM as methyl donor. In vitro assays revealed the SAM- and ATP-dependent methyl transfer to estrogen resulting in the deaeromatization of ring A to 1-dehydrotestosterone.


144-EPAP
Three enzymes involved in enzymatic hydroxylation of a primary carbon with water during anaerobic cholesterol degradation

*C. Jacoby*, M. Boll

1University of Freiburg, Faculty of Biology, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany

The functionalization of C-H-bonds represents a challenging enzymatic reaction and is accomplished by oxygenases in aerobic organisms. In anaerobic bacteria such reactions are no option and a number of unprecedented enzymatic strategies have been identified for O2-independent C-H-bond activation. In the denitrifying cholesterol degrading *Sterolibacterium denitificans* the primary C-26 is oxidized to a carboxylic acid in the absence of oxygen. Surprisingly hydroxylation takes place at the tertiary C-25 by a Mo-dependent Steroid C25 hydroxylase (S25DH) using water as hydroxyl-donor1,2. We identified that the tertiary alcohol is dehydrated in an ATP-dependent manner, yielding an allylic alkenic product. This dehydration is essential for the subsequent hydroxylation of the terminal C26 carbon atom via an allylic cation intermediate. The C26 hydroxylation and further oxidation to an aldehyde is catalyzed by a bifunctional S25DH-like Mo-containing enzyme (S26DH) that is indispensable for the consecutive degradation of the steroidal side chain by β-oxidation like reactions. Remarkably, oxidation of the primary carbon takes place by alternating periplasmic and cytoplasmic enzymatic reactions.


145-EPAP
Contrasting Apparent Michaelis-Menten Constants of Nitrate/Nitrite Reduction in Cell Suspensions of Denitrifiers and Nitrate Ammonifiers

*D. Frohloff*, M. A. Horn

1Leibniz Universität Hannover , Institut für Mikrobiologie, Hannover, Germany

- *D. Frohloff*, M. A. Horn

- *Leibniz Universität Hannover*, Institut für Mikrobiologie, Hannover, Germany
Denitification is an anaerobic respiratory process where nitrate and/or nitrite serve as electron acceptors and are converted to gaseous products like N₂O and/or N₂ via several intermediates. This process is favored at high nitrate concentration and a low C/N ratio relative to the dissimilatory nitrate reduction to ammonium (DNRA). DNRA is a competing process for nitrate reduction performed by nitrate ammonifiers and is favored at low nitrate concentration and a high C/N ratio. Contrasting kinetics for electron acceptor usage for denitrifiers and nitrate ammonifiers might help to explain their competitiveness for nitrate and nitrite. However, few studies to date have addressed such kinetic parameters for nitrate and nitrite reduction (apparent Michaelis-Menten kinetics, maximum uptake rate $V_{\text{max}}$ and half-saturation constant $K_m$). Thus, the objective of this study was to determine apparent Michaelis-Menten parameters for nitrate and nitrite with intact cells of denitrifiers, nitrate ammonifiers and bacteria capable of both processes. Selective bacterial strains of five denitrifiers, one DNRA and one strain that is capable of both processes were grown under anoxic conditions with nitrate as an electron acceptor until the late exponential phase. After several washing steps and resuspension in modified medium, the culture was spiked with different nitrate/nitrite concentrations ranging from 5 – 600 $\mu$M. Subsequently, the rates of nitrate/nitrite reduction were determined for each concentration. The apparent $K_m$ were in the range of 10 – 43 $\mu$M (NO₃⁻) and approximated 15 $\mu$M (NO₂⁻) for denitrifiers. In contrast, the apparent $K_m$ for DNRA were approximately 3 $\mu$M for NO₂⁻ and NO₃⁻. Consequently, the data suggest a higher affinity of DNRA for nitrate and nitrite relative to denitrifiers, which helps to explain the competitive advantage of DNRA under low nitrate/nitrite conditions.

**Materials & methods:** For generating site-directed mutagenesis- and deletion variants of the HDCR, we established a homologous overproduction system. The genes for the $hdcr$ operon variants were cloned into an expression vector and transformed into a $T. kivui \Delta hdcr$ strain. The HDCR derivatives were purified by affinity chromatography and activity of the variants was analyzed.

**Results:** The $T. kivui$ HDCR complex was overproduced homologously in $T. kivui$, resulting in a strain showing a 35-fold increase in HDCR activity. The HDCR complex was purified in a single step and catalyzed its specific reaction in both directions with the highest rates shown to date. Different enzyme variants with alterations in its subunit composition as well as modifications in the active sites or Fe/S-clusters were created to reveal the organization of the complex as well as the reaction mechanism during the HDCR reaction.

**Conclusion:** Deletion variants reveal HycB3 and HycB4 as central electron transferring proteins flanked by the catalytic HydA2 and FdhF. Identifying essential Fe/S-clusters and amino acids coordinating the active centers allowed us to create a 3D-model of the HDCR.

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**147-EPAP**

**Antimicrobial resistance: the interplay of biocides and antibiotics affecting resistance evolution in bacteria**

*F. Schreiber¹, S. Schmidt¹, N. Nordhoft², F. Pietsch³, G. Heidrich¹*

¹Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing (BAM), Materials and Environment, Berlin, Germany

Biocides are important to ensure hygiene in sensitive settings like hospitals and to protect materials used in industry and buildings. Therefore, in many applications biocides are used near to humans and the microbiomes of human-inhabited environments are exposed to biocides. An important issue related to the use of biocides is that bacteria can evolve resistance to biocides and that the evolved mechanisms can confer cross-resistance to antibiotics. In this presentation, I will discuss the evolutionary mechanisms that affect resistance evolution by the interplay of biocides and antibiotics. Furthermore, I will highlight examples of our current work on biocide resistance evolution with an emphasis on 3 aspects: (i) effects of biocides on basic evolutionary drivers for resistance including mutation rates and horizontal gene transfer, (ii) evolution of persistence to biocides as a survival strategy on the single-cell level, (iii) synergy and antagonism induced by biocide-antibiotic combinations. We show that biocides increase mutation rates but not horizontal gene transfer by conjugation. In addition, persistence is a potential survival strategy for bacteria against biocides; especially against those that are membrane active. Specific biocide-antibiotic combinations display strong antagonistic or synergistic activities leading to potential selection effects. I will further present molecular data that explains the underlying mechanisms of these phenomena.

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**146-EPAP**

**Illuminating the function of the hydrogen-dependent CO₂-reductase**

*H. M. Dietrich¹, V. Müller¹, V. Müller¹*

¹Goethe University Frankfurt, Molecular Microbiology & Bioeenergetics, Frankfurt, Germany

**Introduction:** Acetogenic bacteria utilize the Wood-Ljungdahl pathway for CO₂ fixation and energy conservation. In some of these bacteria, as in Thermoanaerobacterium kivui, the initial step in CO₂ reduction is catalyzed by a hydrogen-dependent CO₂-reductase (HDCR). This enzyme complex consists of a hydrogenase (HydA2), a formate dehydrogenase (FdhF), and two putative electron-transferring subunits (HydB3 & HycB4). The HDCR reduces CO₂ to formate, using molecular hydrogen as direct electron donor but is also able to perform the reverse reaction with the same efficiency. This highlights the HDCR as an auspicious candidate for a bio-based system for hydrogen storage as well as formate production. The operating principle of the HDCR is yet to be understood. To pave the way for the development of a competitive biotechnological process, specific knowledge of the enzymatic reactions is needed.

**Objectives:** We aimed to unravel the structure, molecular function and electron flow in the hydrogen-dependent CO₂-reductase.

**Materials & methods:** For generating site-directed mutagenesis- and deletion variants of the HDCR, we established a homologous overproduction system. The genes for the hdcr operon variants were cloned into an expression vector and transformed into a $T. kivui \Delta hdcr$ strain. The HDCR derivatives were purified by affinity chromatography and activity of the variants was analyzed.

**Conclusion:** Deletion variants reveal HycB3 and HycB4 as central electron transferring proteins flanked by the catalytic HydA2 and FdhF. Identifying essential Fe/S-clusters and amino acids coordinating the active centers allowed us to create a 3D-model of the HDCR.

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**148-EPAP**

**Moderated Evaluation of Anaerobic Ammonium Oxidizing (Anammox) Bacteria Activities during Anoxic Treatment Work Flows**

*E. Ude¹, C. Ding², L. Adrián³, J. L. Amann¹*

¹UFZ, ISOBIO, Leipzig, Germany

²UFZ, ISOBIO, LEI, Germany

³Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Biotechnology, Berlin, Germany

⁴Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Geobiotechnology, Berlin, Germany

The Anammox process has been put forward as a new and promising way to treat wastewater containing high ammonium concentration using nitrite as electron acceptor. However, the implementation has been limited by various challenges. In spite of strong efforts, obtaining a pure culture of anammox bacteria has not been possible. The process is not fully understood in its interactions with different
Compounds such as reductant, organic solvents, and antibiotics that are found potentially in animal waste or wastewater. Here, we hypothesize that understanding the metabolic and physiological activities of anaammox bacteria within short term and long term period in various conditions is a key strategy to overcome the limitations in its implementations. In this study, a series of batch reactors containing synthetic medium, effector and inoculum were set for anaammox cultivation and enrichment. Nitrification, CO2 reduction, ammonium oxidation, nitrogen gas production, and heme production were monitored. Proteomic analysis and mathematical modelling were performed. Our results shows that at low cell densities, the rate of metabolism and activities of anaammox bacteria declined compared to higher cell densities. Much of this inhibitors effect is due to density-dependent reductions in the effective concentration of inhibitors. Therefore, moderated inoculum and effectors are key strategy for anaammox activities. Our results can help to determine favorable conditions for implementation of the process in large scale.

Keywords: Anaammox, growth, metabolism, effectors, activities

149-EPAP
Thermal Proteome Profiling—A High-Throughput Screening of the Proteome for Interactions with Substrates

D. Türkowsky1, P. Lohmann1, M. Mühlenbrink1, T. Schubert1, L. Adrian2, T. Goris3, N. Jehmlich1, M. von Bergen1
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Molecular Systems Biology (MOLSYB), Leipzig, Germany
2Friedrich Schiller University, Institute of Microbiology, Department of Applied and Ecological Microbiology, Jena, Germany
3Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Isotope Biogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany

In anaerobic bacteria, identification of protein-substrate interactions is a fundamental challenge. Thermal proteome profiling (TPP) is increasingly applied in eukaryotes. This technique allows assessing protein-ligand binding by quantifying protein melting curve shifts induced by the presence of a ligand.

We applied TPP to Sulfurospirillum multivorans, a bacterium which uses trichloroethene (TCE), a widespread groundwater pollutant, as electron acceptor for growth. Thereby, the interaction of TCE with the proteome of S. multivorans was investigated. We extended the protein detection range and facilitated the investigation of oxygen-sensitive bacterial proteins by several modifications of the original protocol (e.g., incubation under anaerobic conditions or increasing the temperature range up to 97°C). Omitting the electron donor during incubations allowed preventing enzymatic reductive dehalogenation.

As a result, we detected the interaction of TCE and the key enzyme of S. multivorans, the trichloroethene reductive dehalogenase PceA. As TCE is a known substrate of this enzyme, this confirmed the suitability of the method. Interestingly, a putative response regulator as part of a two-component regulatory system showed a similar trend as PceA. This is the first biochemical hint for its suggested role in TCE respiration.

We proved that our TPP approach serves to identify protein-substrate interactions of strictly anaerobic reductive dehalogenases and probably their regulators. This strategy can be used for the proteome-wide identification of proteins binding to other chemicals or even endogenous metabolites. It has the potential to be applied to bacteria which are difficult to investigate, for which only low amounts of biomass are available or which are part of complex microbial communities.

Keywords: Protein interaction; Mass spectrometry; Organohalide respiration; Quantitative Proteomics

150-EPAP
Carbon source dependent reprogramming of anaerobic metabolism in Staphylococcus aureus

A. Giese1, K. Methling2, D. Zühlke1, M. Lalk2, G. Bange3, K. Riedel1, J. Bernhardt1, J. Pant-Farre1
1Universität Greifswald, Mikrobiologie, Greifswald, Germany
2Universität Greifswald, Biochemie, Greifswald, Germany
3Universität Marburg, Symmikro, Marburg, Germany

To be a successful pathogen, S. aureus has evolved a large spectrum of virulence strategies to counteract the highly effective innate and adaptive immune response of its host. However, of equal importance to establish an infection is the ability of S. aureus to adapt its metabolism to the host environment. For instance, inactivity of the respiratory chain, e.g. caused by the destructive action of nitric oxide radicals released by activated immune cells, will tie S. aureus survival to its capacity to produce energy by substrate level phosphorylation and mixed acid fermentation.

Using a combination of proteome, transcription and metabolome analyses, we show that fermentation pathways are fine-tuned in S. aureus in response to the available carbon source. In the absence an energy source that can be metabolized by glycolysis, the available carbon sources are channeled towards the production of Acetyl-CoA in a pyruvate formate-lyase (Pfl) dependent reaction and ATP is generated by the concerted activity of phosphate acetyltransferase (Pta) and acetate kinase (AckA). In parallel, expression of pathways that would divert the Acetyl-CoA from Pfl are downregulated. This switch in substrate channeling is controlled by the Catabolite control protein A (CcpA). The high flexibility in the adaption of the S. aureus anaerobic metabolism further highlights the importance of anaerobiosis as effective survival strategy in low oxygen environments.

151-EPAP
Structural Insights Into ATP-dependent Enzymatic Benzene Ring Reduction

J. Fuchs1,2, O. Tiedt1, U. Demmer2, U. Ermeler1, M. Boll1,2
1Institute of Biology II / University of Freiburg, Microbiology, Freiburg i. Br., Germany
2University of Freiburg, RTG1976 - Cofactors, Freiburg i. Br., Germany
3Max-Planck-Institute for Biophysics, Molecular Membrane Biology, Frankfurt a. M., Germany

Anaerobic bacterial degradation of monoaromatic compounds proceeds via the central intermediate benzoyl-CoA (BCoA), catabolized by deamortising benzoyl-CoA reductases (BCRs). Class I BCRs couple the reduction of the substrate to cyclohexa-1,5-diene-1-carboxyl-CoA to a stoichiometric ATP hydrolysis to ADP and P1. A "Birch-like" reaction mechanism via radical intermediates was proposed to achieve substrate reduction at E0° = −622 mV, one of the most negative redox potentials of a redox couple in biology.

During studies on 3-methylbenzoate degradation in several denitrifying bacteria, a class I BCR was identified with an unprecedented wide substrate spectrum including methylated and chlorinated substrates. We succeeded in...
heterologous production of the enzyme in Escherichia coli and solved the crystal structure of the catalytic subunits at 1.8 Å. The result provides evidence for the proposed radical-based mechanism at an active site [4Fe-4S]-cluster.

2. Kung et al., 2010. J.Am.Chem.Soc. 132, 9850-9856
3. Tiedt et al., 2018. J.Biol.Chem. 293(26), 10264-10274

152-EPAP
Glutamate fermentation in Enterobacteria
J. Eggers1, I. Berg1
1Institut für Molekulare Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, WWU Münster, Münster, Germany

The methylaspartate pathway is one of five known pathways for bacterial fermentation of glutamate. In this pathway, glutamate is isomerised to methylaspartate, which is further deaminated to mesaconate, hydrated to (S)-citramalate, and the latter compound is finally cleaved to acetate and pyruvate. In our former studies [1] we have shown that the genomes of most of the Escherichia coli O157:H7 strains possess a cluster coding for the key enzymes of the methylaspartate pathway. Nevertheless, our attempts to detect the activities of corresponding enzymes in cell extracts of E. coli O157:H7 strain ATCC 700728 failed, and this strain could not ferment glutamate [1]. However, this strain is classified to Biosafety level 2 and might be deficient in some pathogenicity-related features in comparison to other enterohemorrhagic E. coli (EHEC) strains (Biosafety level 3). Here we decided to study another strain of enterobacteria, Raoultella planticola JCM 20069, in which the activity of methylaspartase was measured previously [2]. The genome sequencing of this strain showed the presence of a gene cluster similar to the glutamate fermentation cluster found in the EHEC strains. Furthermore, the studied strain was able to ferment glutamate, and we were able to detect activities of several key enzymes of the pathway during anaerobic growth on glutamate. We conclude that this pathway is used by R. planticola and most probably by EHEC strains to ferment glutamate. The presence of the methylaspartate cycle genes in EHEC strains suggests that glutamate and glutamine present in intestinal tract serve as energy sources, promoting pathogenicity.


153-EPAP
Proteogenomic analysis of the denitrifying betaproteobacterium Aromatoleum aromaticum pCyN1
P. Becker1, A. Strijkstra1, L. Wöhlbrand1, R. Reinhardt1, R. Rabus1
1Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, Institut für Chemie und Biologie des Meeres (ICBM), Oldenburg, Germany
2Max Planck-Genome-centre Cologne, Cologne, Germany

Introduction

Aromatoleum aromaticum pCyN1 is a facultative denitrifying betaproteobacterium capable of anaerobic degradation of a wide variety of monoaromatic compounds and terpenes. A. aromaticum pCyN1 is a close relative of the model organism A. aromaticum EbN1.

Materials & methods

Manual genome annotation and functional predictions were based on public non-redundant protein and protein domain databases. Analysis of the soluble and membrane protein-enriched fractions of substrate adapted cells of strain pCyN1 was performed by 2D DIGE and SDS-PAGE coupled to MS-based identification.

Results

The genome of strain pCyN1 consists of a single circular 4.37 Mbp chromosome harboring 4,194 genes. Gene clusters for the anaerobic degradation modules are scattered across the genome. The elucidated catabolic network comprises of 112 proteins, 104 of which have been identified. Individual reaction sequences are to the most part regulated with high substrate-specificity. Notably, strain pCyN1 possesses three parallel central pathways: (i) the classical benzoyl-CoA pathway serving 16 aromatic compounds, (ii) a terpene (6 different)-specific benzoyl-CoA reductase in conjunction with a likewise specific modified β-oxidation, and (iii) a third β-oxidation sequence for the degradation of cyclohexanecarboxylate. Comparison with A. aromaticum EbN1 underlined high plasticity of the genomes of both species, and revealed specific genomic regions for the characteristic substrates p-cymene (pCyN1) and ethylbenzene (EbN1).

Conclusion

The present study furthers our understanding of the catabolic potential harbored in degradation specialists of the new genus Aromatoleum.

154-EPAP
Lactate-based microbial chain elongation for n-caproate production: genomic and metabolic features of three novel Clostridiales isolates
B. Liu1, D. Popp1, H. Sträuber1, H. Harms1, S. Kleinsteuber1
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

Caproate (C6) is a valuable product of the carboxylic platform that can be used, for instance, as precursors for the production of antimicrobials and drop-in biofuels. The cyclic reverse β-oxidation pathway, also known as microbial chain elongation (CE), is a key metabolic function to produce C6. Hitherto, only few species have been reported for the conversion of lactate to C6. Here we describe three novel bacterial strains that were isolated from an anaerobic bioreactor producing medium-chain carboxylates from maize silage. They can produce C6 and n-butyrate using lactate as sole carbon source. Two of them can additionally produce i-butyrate in different proportions. All three strains showed low sequence similarity to previously described species based on whole 16S rRNA gene sequencing analysis. They share the highest similarities with Clostridium iucellarii (97.34%), C.
Mitracarpus scaber is a widely used plant in traditional medicine practice in West Africa. This study was designed to investigate the bioactive components of the ethanolic leaves extracts of *Mitracarpus scaber* using Gas Chromatography – Mass Spectrometry (GC - MS) analysis. The GC-MS analysis of the ethanolic leaves extract of *M. scaber* was performed on a GS-MS equipment (GC-MS QP 2010 plus fused with a GC column (AOC 2)) coated with polymethyl silicon with a dimension of 0.25mm X 30mm. The GC-MS analysis revealed the presence of 19 bioactive components of *M. scaber*. The bioactive components present in the ethanolic extract include 5-Nanonoil (29.71%), 5-hydroxy-2-(hydroxy methyl)4H-pyran-4-one (24.95%), 2-octenoic acid (0.34%), 1-piperidin-4-one (12.72%), Pentadecanoic acid (6.37%), 1-2-epoxyhexadecane (0.07%), Phytol (2.53%), 6-octadecenoic acid (7.23%), 1,2-Benzenedicarboxylic acid (8.60%) and 11-bromoundecanoic acid (1.10%). The results of the study revealed that *Mitracarpus scaber* leaves possess antimicrobial effects. The presence of these components in the plants extract are known to be responsible for the pharmacological properties of *M. scaber*, as it is recommended as a plant of phytotherapeutics importance.

Keywords: GC-MS, *Mitracarpus scaber*, leaves, ethanol and bioactive compounds.

**155-BTP**

Phytochemical screening and GC-MS analyses of ethanolic leaves extracts of *Mitracarpus scaber*

F. O. Ekhaise

University of Benin, Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Life Sciences, Benin City, Nigeria

*Mitracarpus scaber* is a widely used plant in traditional medicine practice in West Africa. This study was designed to investigate the bioactive components of the ethanolic leaves extracts of *Mitracarpus scaber* using Gas Chromatography – Mass Spectrometry (GC - MS) analysis. The GC-MS analysis of the ethanolic leaves extract of *M. scaber* was performed on a GS-MS equipment (GC-MS QP 2010 plus fused with a GC column (AOC 2)) coated with polymethyl silicon with a dimension of 0.25mm X 30mm. The GC-MS analysis revealed the presence of 19 bioactive components of *M. scaber*. The bioactive components present in the ethanolic extract include 5-Nanonoil (29.71%), 5-hydroxy-2-(hydroxy methyl)4H-pyran-4-one (24.95%), 2-octenoic acid (0.34%), 1-piperidin-4-one (12.72%), Pentadecanoic acid (6.37%), 1-2-epoxyhexadecane (0.07%), Phytol (2.53%), 6-octadecenoic acid (7.23%), 1,2-Benzenedicarboxylic acid (8.60%) and 11-bromoundecanoic acid (1.10%). The results of the study revealed that *Mitracarpus scaber* leaves possess antimicrobial effects. The presence of these components in the plants extract are known to be responsible for the pharmacological properties of *M. scaber*, as it is recommended as a plant of phytotherapeutics importance.

Keywords: GC-MS, *Mitracarpus scaber*, leaves, ethanol and bioactive compounds.

**156-BTP**

Electrode-driven anaerobic production of chemicals using *Pseudomonas putida*

B. Lai1, A. V. Nguyen1,2, J. Krömer1,2

1Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research - UFZ, Leipzig, Germany
2TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Environmental Microbiology, Freiberg, Germany

*Pseudomonas putida* (P. putida) can be a promising industrial chassis for biochemical production because of its versatile cellular metabolism. While many limiting factors needs to be addressed for its industriation, one of them will be its solely dependency of cellular metabolism on oxygen, which makes the process engineering complicated and costly. In our group, we are trying to tackle this issue using electrochemical approach. By providing electrode as the electron acceptor, a high yield and robust biosynthesis process of chemicals based on electrode was established. Systems biology and metabolic engineering approaches were applied to reveal the molecular machnism for further strain and process development.

The electron transfer route between *P. putida* and anode was established with the presence of redox mediator. A screening of different redox chemicals demonstrated effective mediator should have a minimum redox potential of 0.207V vs SHE. A further comparative proteomics analysis revealed the membrane respiratory components were all upregulated and combining with the electron inhibitors tests, cytochrome c reductase was demonstrated to be the protein interacting with mediator for extracellular electron transfer.

Driven by the electrode, a high yield and "redox-imbalanced" anoxic sugar acids production was subsequently developed. Over 90% of glucose was converted into 2-ketogluconate, a precursor for erythorobic acid production, in such a system. The production rate could be improved by 644%, if the glucose dehydrogenase was overexpressed. Other than glucose, this process was also applicable to other monosaccharides for specific unusual sugar acids production, including both growth and non-growth substrates for *P. putida*.

In summary, the first anaerobic process using an obligate aerobe was established by applying electrode as the final electron acceptor, and this unique platform can be developed into biosynthesis of value-added sugar acids from varied carbohydrates.

**157-BTP**

Styrene and indole degradation pathways provide access towards monooxygenases with reversed enantioselectivity

D. Tischler1, T. Heine2

1Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Microbial Biotechnology, Biology and Biotechnology, Bochum, Germany
2TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Environmental Microbiology, Freiberg, Germany

Styrene is a small aromatic compound mainly introduced to nature by anthropogenic activity while indole is a natural compound derived from plant material or produced during tryptic metabolism. However, the microbial degradation pathways have many things in common. Especially, the first step is an enantioselective epoxidation by means of a flavin-dependent monooxygenase.

A phylogenetic study, production and biochemical validation of selected enzymes, and initial biotechnological investigations allowed describing this class of monooxygenase in more detail.

About 150 amino acid sequences of related styrene/indole monooxygenases have been analyzed with respect to sequence similarity, conserved motifs, adjacent genes, and host strains. More than 30 enzymes have been screened by means of recombinant production while 23 were obtained in an active form. All enzymes had in common that they produce solely (S)-styrene oxide from styrene and most likely
the same indole oxide from indole which is under debate. In all cases, the mono-oxygenases could be fueled by reduced FAD obtained either from a NADH-consuming flavin-reductase or an artificial reduction by an additional electron donor, 1-benzyl-1,4-dihydronicotinamide. Besides those natural substrates, it is known that flavin-dependent mono-oxygenases convert sulfides to chiral sulfoxides, which was evaluated for all enzymes obtained in this study. The indole mono-oxygenases preferably produced the (S)-enantiomer while styrene mono-oxygenases showed a tendency to produce the (R)-enantiomer of respective sulfoxides. This interesting finding was combined with our sequence analysis and a molecular docking approach of various substrates. Thus it was possible to identify two distinct fingerprint motives for the styrene (N46-V48-H50-Y73-H76-S96) and indole (S46-Q48-M50-V173-I76-A96) mono-oxygenases which allows to predict enantioselectivity in sulfoxidation reactions. Scale up experiments verified the applicability of these enzymes in biocatalysis.

Heine et al., ChemCatChem 2019, 11, 1–12

158-BTP

Fermentation and downstream processing in PILOT scale for the development of novel veterinary vaccines based on Kluyveromyces lactis yeast

Our novel technology platform for veterinary vaccines is based on recombinant K. lactis expressing individual pathogen proteins which act as immunogens. These vaccines are highly effective, easily combinable and inexpensive to produce. K. lactis as a Crabtree-negative budding yeast shows low ethanol formation, high biomass and protein yields under high glucose concentration. The gene of interest (GOI) expression is regulated by the transcriptional activator KlGal4 and its repressor KlGal80. Multiple genetically engineered expression cassettes allow multivalent vaccines generation.

Therefore, a highly efficient, stable and reproducible fermentation and downstream process is needed that combines both a high biomass and GOI yield.

First, a transfer from laboratory scaled growth in shaking flasks using complex yeast media to a controlled batch fermentation (scale 1-8 L) using synthetic defined media was performed. By varying process parameters (e.g. temperature, pH, nutrients) we mapped growth characteristics.

After this, we established a 3-stage fed-batch fermentation (15 L pilot scale) that are performed under the aspects of enhancing the biomass and GOI formation as well as on industrial economic point of views. The 1st step, a glucose batch fermentation for initial biomass formation is followed by subsequent glucose feeding to force biomass formation (2nd step). The 3rd step (induction) starts after a directed carbon source overlap with the inducer molecule. Depending of the GOI and its cytotoxic properties, the biomass formation is influenced and specific growth rates on lactose are lowered compared to growth rates on glucose. Finally, we established different exponential feeding strategies, initial biomass concentration and induction times to obtain a highly efficient, stable and reproducible process.

The downstream process consists of biomass separation, freeze-drying, grinding and yeast inactivation. The dried and inactivated yeast powder is thermostable for longer periods and may be beneficial for the use in emerging and developing countries. The direct use of the complete material without any antigen purification is a simple and inexpensive process.

159-BTP

Glucobacter oxydans strains for the production of the non-nutritive natural sweetener 5-ketofructose

Introduction 5-Ketofructose (5-KF) is considered as a promising natural low-calorie sweetener and due to the increasing demand for such compounds a highly interesting product. It can be formed by oxidation of fructose with the membrane-bound enzyme complex fructose dehydrogenase from Glucobacter japonicus, which is encoded by the fdhSCL genes. In recent studies it was shown that plasmid-based overexpression of the fdhSCL genes in the biotechnologically established production host Glucobacter oxydans allows efficient 5-KF production from fructose [1,2].

Objectives In order to generate a plasmid-free 5-KF-producing G. oxydans, we compared different genomic integration sites in the genome of the engineered G. oxydans strain IK003.1 [3] for their suitability to allow high-level fdhSCL expression.

Materials & methods Four chromosomal integration sites were selected and the G. japonicus fdhSCL gene cluster under control of the strong constitutive P264 promoter was integrated with pAJ63a-based plasmids [4]. Fructose and 5-KF concentrations of shake flask cultivations were determined via HPLC.

Results Integration of a single fdhSCL copy in three intergenic regions and in an inactive sorbitol dehydrogenase gene lead to four G. oxydans strains that slightly differed in the rates of 5-KF production, indicating position-specific effects. A strain with two genomic fdhSCL copies at the two most efficient integration sites was generated that showed two-fold increased 5-KF production rates, approaching plasmid-based 5-KF production, and yields of 0.73 g 5-KF per g fructose.

Conclusion A series of plasmid-independent G. oxydans strains capable of 5-KF production were generated, which will serve as basis for future strain development. Furthermore, four suitable chromosomal integration sites for heterologous gene expression were identified, which will be useful for further projects.

References

160-BTP

*Vibrio natriegens* as host for biotransformation with a flavin-dependent monooxygenase

H. Fuchs1, T. Heine1
1TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Institute of Biosciences, Freiberg, Germany

Introduction

Beyond *Escherichia coli*, various expression hosts have been investigated and are in use for biotechnological applications.1 Therewith, several hosts are available for specific requirements of a biotechnological reaction setup. However, due to drawbacks of each individual system, there is continuous research on improvement of expression strains. Recently, the marine bacterium *Vibrio natriegens* gained interest, as it offers a remarkable fast growth rate.2

Objectives

In this study, we aimed introducing a flavin-dependent group E monooxygenase into a modified *V. natriegens* (Vmax) for expression and biotransformation of aromatic compounds.

Materials & methods

For transfer of the plasmid, the oriT from pK18mobsacB-tacle_GFP was introduced into the pET16bp plasmid backbone, which also carried the gene encoding for a group E monooxygenase (GlnA). This construct was introduced into *E. coli* S17-1, which was applied as donor strain allowing for transfer of the vector into *V. natriegens* (Vmax). Success of the conjugation was tested by PCR and the monooxygenase was expressed and assayed as described previously.3

Results

The generated expression construct was successfully transferred from *E. coli* into *V. natriegens* via conjugation. Expression of the monooxygenase was induced by IPTG and successful protein production was proven by SDS-PAGE. A whole cell biotransformation was performed using styrene as substrate, which was converted by the monooxygenase to styrene oxide. However, the product concentration decreased after 30 min indicating that the *Vibrio* is able to decompose the epoxide.

Conclusion

*V. natriegens* is, i.a. due to the fast growth rate, a promising candidate for the expression of proteins as well as organism for biotransformations. This is the first study in which this strain was used for the conversion of aromatic compounds. However, further optimization and characterization is needed to establish *V. natriegens* as real alternative to other strains.

References

detected in culture extracts of the recombinant strain. Our results prove the feasibility of plasmid-based multigene expression in myxobacteria.


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**163-BTP**

**Photoinduced monooxygenation involving NADPH-FAD sequential electron transfer**

*S. Ernst*, S. Rovida, A. Mattevi, S. Fetzer, S. L. Drees

1 Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Institut für Molekulare Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, Münster, Germany
2 University of Pavia, Biology and Biotechnology, Pavia, Italy

**Introduction**

Photocatalysis provides a multitude of perspectives for implementation in biocatalysis, however, the number of applicable light-responsive enzymes is still limited. Engineering of photoenzymes is often based on flavoproteins, whose natural cofactor absorbs blue light and can undergo photoreduction with various organic electron donors. A major obstacle for flavoprotein photoenzyme research is that the protein thoroughly shields the flavin cofactor, thereby suppressing photoreactivity. We studied the flavoprotein monooxygenase PqsL from *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, which catalyzes the N-hydroxylation of an aromatic amine. The enzyme shows no intrinsic activity with NAD(P)H as cosubstrate, but catalytic activity fueled by NAD(P)H can be triggered by blue light illumination.

**Objectives**

We aimed to unravel the mechanism of light-induced catalysis of PqsL in order to provide a basis for future engineering of photoenzymes.

**Methods and Results**

Spectroscopic, chromatographic and oxymetric techniques for monitoring PqsL photoreduction and -activity were developed. By illuminating PqsL with blue light in presence of various electron donors, we found that PqsL prefers NAD(P)H and shows typical Michaelis-Menten kinetics. EDTA, a common electron source for flavin photoreduction is not accepted. Rapid UV/Vis and fluorescence spectroscopy of the photoreduction revealed the formation of a transient flavin semiquinone, which indicates a sequential electron transfer from NAD(P)H to the protein-bound FAD. This observation is further supported by kinetic isotope effects. X-ray crystallographic studies suggested that a single prolin impedes the classical hydride transfer mechanism between NAD(P)H to FAD.

**Conclusion**

Our data provide evidence for an unprecedented photoreduction of protein-bound FAD by a radical mechanism. We propose that simultaneous binding of FAD and NAD(P)H, a photoceptive flavin and the impairment of the canonical hydride transfer from NAD(P)H to FAD are prerequisites for flavoprotein-mediated photocatalysis.

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**164-BTP**

**Elucidating Biological Networks of *Vibrio campbellii* RT-1 and *Vibrio harveyi* RT-6 strains Conferring Pan-genome and Comparative genomic analysis**

*T. RAJENDRAN*, I. Dhinakarasamy, J. C. Hø, P. Lingesan, S. Bhoopathi, K. Chandrasekaran, S. A. Louis

1 Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, Centre for Ocean Research, Chennai, India
2 Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, Department of Bioinformatics, Chennai, India

**Vibrio** species are abundant in marine coastal waters, estuaries and marine sediments. *Vibrio campbellii* and *Vibrio harveyi* are foremost colonizers of vibriosis infection in aquaculture farms causing high mortality and economic losses. To acquire a greater understanding of these closely related species, in terms of phylogenetic analyses, evolutionary relationships, and functional features, we performed the pan-genome and comparative genome analysis of *Vibrio campbellii* RT-1 (Vc RT-1) and *Vibrio harveyi* RT-6 (Vh RT-6) strains using various bioinformatics perspectives. A next-generation sequencing (NGS) strategy was executed using Illumina Hiseq 2500 platform followed by core- and pan-genome analysis. *De novo* assembled Vc RT-1 strain were aligned and compared the gene level with the Vh RT-6 genome sequences, which was isolated from an infected shrimp in aquaculture farms located in the Tamil Nadu region of India. Concurrently, common and unique genes have been identified between the two strains based on single-copy genes. Furthermore, Protein-protein interaction (PPI) network biology has emerged as a classic and powerful framework to visualize and analyze large data clusters in novel ways in the identification of hub proteins with unprecedented plasticity. Network-associated approaches have revealed molecular and biological pathways that may influence the vibriosis infection, suggesting novel mechanisms that contribute to pathogenicity that may form the basis of new therapeutic and diagnostic approaches.

**Keywords**: Aquaculture; Vibriosis; Next-generation sequencing; Pan-genome; Network analysis.

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**165-BTP**

**Tailoring *Corynebacterium glutamicum* for the efficient production of malonyl-CoA-dependent small molecules**

*J. Marienhagen*, N. Kallscheuer, L. Mike

1 Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, IBG-1: Biotechnology, Jülich, Germany

*Corinebacterium glutamicum* is an important organism in industrial biotechnology for the microbial production of bulk chemicals, in particular amino acids. Functional integration of plant-derived biosynthetic pathways also allows for the microbial synthesis of various plant polyphenols such as flavonoids or stilbenes either from supplemented phenylpropanoid precursor molecules or directly from glucose.

However, similar to other microorganisms engineered for plant polyphenol synthesis, insufficient malonyl-CoA supply is also limiting polyphenol production with *C. glutamicum*. To date, the antibiotic cerulenin inhibiting fatty acid synthesis is added during microbial cultivations to improve malonyl-CoA availability for product formation at lab-scale. Unfortunately,
supplementation of cerulenin is very costly, which prohibits large-scale microbial polyphenol production.

We extensively engineered the central carbon metabolism of C. glutamicum with a focus on the TCA-cycle and the fatty acid metabolism to increase malonyl-CoA availability for polyphenol synthesis. In the context of this work, rational metabolic engineering strategies and FACS-based high-throughput screenings using transcriptional biosensors were successfully combined, yielding strain variants accumulating high polyphenol concentrations without supplementation of cerulenin.

We believe that, availability of these new C. glutamicum platform strains opens the door towards microbial production of plant polyphenols as well as other high-value aromatic compounds from cheap carbon sources at larger scale.

References:


166-BTP

Design of O2-tolerant hydrogenase with ferredoxin binding site for light-driven H2-production

"E. Lettau", B. Bühler, L. Lauterbach

1Technische Universität Berlin, Institut für Chemie, MVL, PC14, Berlin, Germany
2Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research, Department Solar Materials, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction: Hydrogenases convert reversibly molecular hydrogen into protons and electrons. Coupling hydrogenases with the photosystem would be make light-driven hydrogen production possible. [1]. To link both systems, an electron mediator with a suitable redox potential for H2-reduction (E0 – 413 mV) is required. Ferredoxin (Fd, E0 – 430 mV) interacts with the O2-sensitive NAD(P)H-reducing hydrogenase from Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 (SynSH) [2]. However, the exact Fd binding site of SysSH is unknown. Additionally, an O2-tolerant hydrogenase is required, because O2 is produced during photosynthesis. Such a O2-tolerant hydrogenase is the NADH-reducing hydrogenase from Ralstonia eutropha H16 (ReSH) [3].

Objectives: We aim to (1) determine the Fd binding site of SysSH and (2) combine both key features of SysSH and ReSH hydrogenases, namely Fd binding and O2 tolerance.

Methods: Amino acid exchanges and deletion of subunits of potential Fd binding sites were performed. Chimeric ReSH derivatives were constructed, which contains subunits from SysSH related to Fd binding.

Results: We produced SynSH derivatives and a set of chimeric SHs in R. eutropha and purified them by using affinity chromatography. The chimeric SHs showed H2-dependent NADH-reducing activity, which demonstrates intact electron transfer within the chimeric enzymes and thus the feasibility of our approach. Preliminary results of O2 tolerance studies and Fd to hydrogenase interaction will be presented.

Conclusion: Our study represents a synthetic system for coupling photosystem with hydrogenases for light driven H2 production. Thus, our approach holds considerable potential for application of sustainable biofuel production in order to prepare humanity for the post-fossil fuel age.

References:


Conclusions

ADI from *S. pyogenes* is a potent proliferation inhibitor of arginine auxotrophic tumor cells. ADI stability and therefore its usability in animal models and patients is increased by conjugating the enzyme with PEG20.

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168-BTP

Microfluidic platform designed for cultivation and integrated characterization of biofilms under various environments

Introduction: Microbial cultivation with the aid of microfluidic flow chambers has a great potential to form biofilms on an easy to handle laboratory scale. Our microfluidic cultivation platform with a modular design offers versatility and precision in terms of simulating different environments to study multiple growth conditions. Thus, a long-term cultivation of biofilms can easily be obtained with the possibility of integrated on-line analysis.

Objectives: Our goal was to present two unique biofilm systems using the platform.

Methods: The channel geometry of the PDMS-based microfluidic chips can be chosen as required and combined modularly. Anoxic cultivation is possible as well as the use of gas as feeding source. The biofilms can be analyzed with different integrated analytical methods such as fluorescence in situ hybridization, optical coherence tomography and ion analysis.

Results: The integration of a switch system enabled the cultivation of biofilms under cyclic change of two media and gases according to the aerobic granular sludge (AGS) principle. During cultivation, samples were taken directly from the microfluidic cultivation channels with a robotic sampling device. Analysis of the cultured biofilms included ion analytical methods and spatiotemporal amplicon sequencing, as well as imaging at the micro- and mesoscale.

In a second approach, we show that electroactive microorganisms such as *Shewanella oneidensis* can be cultivated by incorporating electrodes into the cultivation channel. The extended respiratory chain of these microbes enables extracellular electron transfer from the cytoplasm through the cell membranes to an insoluble electron acceptor, such as an anode. Different deletion strains were cultivated and could be examined and compared with each other by current measurements and confocal laser scanning microscopy.

Conclusion: In summary, biofilm growth under both oscillating oxic/anoxic conditions as well as solely anoxic conditions using an anode as electron sink can be studied using our microfluidic flow technology. Examples of the versatility of the system as well as future outlooks on further biofilm growth conditions will be presented.

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169-BTP

Immobilisation of Microbial Siderophores using Solid Phase Extraction Columns

Introduction. Siderophores are natural chelating compounds having a high affinity to iron(III) and further metal ions. According to their complexing properties, siderophores are applied in many fields including medicine, agriculture, bioremediation, ecology, and biosensors. Attachment to solid phases can simplify the utilisation of these metallophores and enables continuous processes.

Objectives. The siderophores produced by *Rhodococcus erythropolis* B7g, *Variorovax paradoxus* EPS and *Pseudomonas chlororaphis* DSM 50083 were immobilised using three different types of solid phase extraction columns.

Materials and Methods. Siderophore containing culture supernatants were applied to NH2, silica and C18 columns and eluted by increasing the methanol concentration. To determine the optimal binding conditions the pH value and salt content were varied. The amount of unbound siderophore in the collected fractions was quantified via chrome azurol S (CAS) assay. The columns with the best immobilisation results were loaded with a defined amount of Fe(III) to investigate the metal binding ability of the immobilised siderophores. ICP-MS measurement was used to analyse the metal content of the flow through.

Results. The best immobilisation of *R. erythropolis* B7g siderophore was achieved using silica and C18 columns at pH 2. In the case of *V. paradoxus* EPS, only C18 columns were able to bind 100 % of the loaded siderophore. The immobilisation of *P. chlororaphis* DSM 50083 siderophore on C18 columns enabled the best results for this strain and was almost pH-value independent. All three siderophores were still active in bound state.

Conclusion. In general, acidic supernatants applied to C18 columns showed the best immobilisation results, while NH2 solid phases did not bind any of the investigated siderophores in a sufficient way. The salt content had no major impact on the binding process.

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170-BTP

A highly active UDP-glucose pyrophosphorylase from *Thermocrispum agreste* DSM 44070 - TaGalU

*1A. Kumpf*, 1M. Hofmann, 1D. Tischler, 1M. Schlömann, 1H. Heine

1TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Ecological Center, Freiberg, Germany

2Ruhr University Bochum, Microbial Biotechnology, Bochum, Germany

Introduction. UDP-glucose pyrophosphorylase from *Thermocrispum agreste* DSM 44070 is a potent galactosyltransferase. In order to immobilise this enzyme for biochemical applications, several strategies have been developed. Here, the immobilisation of the enzyme via conjugation with *PEG*-alkylamines was studied.

Materials and Methods. UDP-glucose pyrophosphorylase from *T. agreste* was purified to homogeneity. The enzyme was conjugated to PE through the epsilon amino group of the lysine residues using *PEG*-amine. The specific activity of the immobilised enzyme was determined using UDP-[14C]glucose and galactose as substrates in an assay using the triphosphoryl form of the enzyme.

Results. The specific activity of the immobilised enzyme was found to be 1.5-fold higher than that of the unmodified enzyme. This increase in activity is attributed to the increased accessibility of the enzyme to the substrate due to the PEGylation of the enzyme.

Conclusion. The immobilisation of UDP-glucose pyrophosphorylase from *T. agreste* using PEGylation has been shown to increase the specific activity of the enzyme. This approach provides a useful tool for the immobilisation of enzymes for biochemical applications.

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References

1. *S. pyogenes* strain was kindly provided by Prof. Dr. E. Klein, Institute of Biological Chemistry, KIT, Germany.

2. *Thermocrispum agreste* DSM 44070 was kindly provided by Dr. A. Kumpf, TuB, Germany.

3. *Pseudomonas chlororaphis* DSM 50083 was kindly provided by Dr. D. Tischler, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany.

4. *V. paradoxus* EPS was kindly provided by Dr. M. Hofmann, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany.

5. *R. erythropolis* B7g was kindly provided by Dr. M. Schlömann, TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Germany.

6. *P. chlororaphis* DSM 50083 was kindly provided by Dr. H. Heine, TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Germany.

7. *S. pyogenes* strain was kindly provided by Prof. Dr. J. Weiler, Institute of Applied Biology, KIT, Germany.

8. *Thermocrispum agreste* DSM 44070 was kindly provided by Dr. A. Kumpf, TuB, Germany.

9. *Pseudomonas chlororaphis* DSM 50083 was kindly provided by Dr. D. Tischler, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany.

10. *V. paradoxus* EPS was kindly provided by Dr. M. Hofmann, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany.

11. *R. erythropolis* B7g was kindly provided by Dr. M. Schlömann, TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Germany.

12. *S. pyogenes* strain was kindly provided by Prof. Dr. J. Weiler, Institute of Applied Biology, KIT, Germany.

13. *Thermocrispum agreste* DSM 44070 was kindly provided by Dr. A. Kumpf, TuB, Germany.

14. *Pseudomonas chlororaphis* DSM 50083 was kindly provided by Dr. D. Tischler, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany.

15. *V. paradoxus* EPS was kindly provided by Dr. M. Hofmann, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany.

16. *R. erythropolis* B7g was kindly provided by Dr. M. Schlömann, TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Germany.
Activated sugar moieties are of importance for various (bio)synthetic routes as for example sugar and starch metabolism or biosynthesis of antibiotics. One of the most important activated sugars is UDP-glucose, which can be converted by UDP-glucose pyrophosphorylase (GalU; EC 2.7.7.9) out of UTP and glucose 1-phosphate.

For the production, either free GalU can be used or microbial cells. However, often the cell metabolism does not allow overproducing activated sugars or secretion and thus downstream processing is complicated. Here enzyme catalysis comes into focus and in order to stabilize the enzyme as well as to make the overall process economical feasible, enzyme immobilization is one of the major strategies to provide a proper biocatalyst.

Besides a robust immobilization method, a highly active and stable GalU enzyme is needed to efficiently produce UDP-glucose, which can then be employed to produce other compounds such as trehalose or UDP-glucuronate.

By following a genome mining approach the galU gene of the thermostable soil actinobacterium Thermocrispum agrestae DSM 44070 (TaGalU) was identified. It was codon optimized and expressed in the recombinant host E. coli BL21(DE3) pLysS, the protein was biochemically characterized, as well as immobilized on micro cellular foams (MCF) via either epoxy or amino group functionalization. Only the latter led to an active and useful biocatalyst.

The soluble and highly active TaGalU revealed a Vmax of 1698 U mg\(^{-1}\) (UTP) and a Km of 0.15 mM (UTP). The optimum reaction temperature was determined to be 50 °C. TaGalU was stable at this temperature for up to 30 min with a maximum loss of activity of 85 %. Interestingly immobilized TaGalU was stable at 50 °C for at least 120 min without a significant loss of activity. Further, the immobilized TaGalU had a specific activity of 1445 U mg\(^{-1}\).

In conclusion, the genome mining approach was successful, as the highest GalU activity was found compared to literature. An increased stability and retained activity with a stable conversion rate of 90 % after five subsequent reaction cycles made the immobilized TaGalU an interesting biocatalyst for chemical synthesis of UDP-glucose.

171-BTP
Generation of multifunctional magnetic nanoparticles by magnetosome display of peptides and reporter enzymes

C. Lanzloth, F. Mickoleit, D. Schüler
Universität Bayreuth, Mikrobiologie, Bayreuth, Germany

Magneto tactic bacteria like the alphaproteobacterium Magnetospirillum gryphiswaldense biosynthesize magnetosomes for their navigation along magnetic field lines. Magnetosomes consist of a monocristalline magnetite core, which is surrounded by a biological membrane. The latter harbours a set of specific proteins with important functions in magnetosome biosynthesis [1]. Due to subtle control on each of biomineralization, particles with unprecedented properties like uniform sizes and shapes, as well as high crystallinity and strong magnetization are formed. In addition, the composition of both the magnetite core as well as the magnetosome membrane can be manipulated by genetic engineering. Foreign proteins are expressed as translational fusions to highly abundant magnetosome membrane (Mam) proteins, which serve as membrane anchors. Because of these characteristics, magnetosomes have already been envisioned for many applications in the biomedical and biotechnological field. The latter would benefit from multimodal particles that in addition to their magnetic properties simultaneously display functional moieties on the surface, such as enzymes, receptors or antibodies.

For a selective and controllable functionalization of the magnetosome surface, an optimized expression system was developed [2], utilizing highly abundant Mam proteins as anchors for the surface display of foreign peptides and enzymes. The versatility of this approach was demonstrated by the simultaneous expression of different gene fusions, thereby creating magnetic “model” nanoparticles with several fully genetically encoded functionalities, i.e. different enzymatic activities, fluorescence and coupling groups (nanobodies) that allow binding of any complementary-tagged group and thus, the generation of new composite materials.

In summary, this illustrates the versatile features of engineered bacterial magnetosomes, with enhanced potential for numerous biomedical or biotechnological applications.

References:

172-BTP
Metabolic engineering of Corynebacterium glutamicum for high-level ectoine production: design, combinatorial assembly, and implementation of a transcriptionally balanced heterologous ectoine pathway

Saarland University, Institute for Systems Biotechnology, Saarbrücken, Germany

KAIST, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, Daejeon, South Korea

TU Kaiserslautern, Molecular Biotechnology and Systems Biology, Kaiserslautern, Germany

Introduction: Microbes produce ectoine as compatible solute to cope with environmental stress like extreme osmolarity and temperature. Since many years, ectoine is a product of recognized commercial value for cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, due to its outstanding ability to protect macromolecules, cells, and tissues. Commercial ectoine manufacturing today is based on a complex high-salinity process using the extremophilic bacterium Halomonas elongata.

Objectives: The aim of this work was to establish a simple low-salt production process for ectoine using Corynebacterium glutamicum. For this purpose, transcriptional fine-tuning of the heterologous ectABC gene cluster from Pseudomonas stutzeri aimed to create a superior producer.

Methods: An ectoine pathway library was constructed, randomly combining each gene of the ectABC cluster with one out of 19 synthetic promoters and one out of three linker sequences, theoretically yielding 185000 unique combinations. The library was transformed into C. glutamicum, followed by screening of hundreds of mutants for production performance and genomic and proteomic analysis of most promising candidates.

Results: The analysed 400 clones ranged from very low to high ectoine production and included several candidates, which surpassed the control strain with a conventional
monocistronic ectABC expression design more than 5-fold. Enhanced ectoine production was supported by a strong expression of the ectB gene and specific balance in the expression levels of ectA and ectB. In a fed-batch process, the best strain C. glutamicum ectABC<sup>opt</sup> achieved a final ectoine titer of 65 g L<sup>-1</sup> within 55 hours [1].

**Conclusion:** Transcriptional balancing of the biosynthetic pathway was identified as a key to drive ectoine formation. The created strain C. glutamicum ectABC<sup>opt</sup> is a milestone towards industrial production of ectoine at low salt levels.


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**174-BTP**

BioTrans: Biodiversity of Iranian soil bacteria with ω-Transaminases for the production of chiral amines

N. Gord Noshari*, U. Engel, J. Rudai

1Azahra University, Department of Biotechnology, Faculty of Biology Science, Tehran, Iran

2Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), BLT II: Technical Biology, Karlsruhe, Germany

Chiral amine building blocks are essential elements of approximately 40% of new chemical entities in recent years [1]. ω-Transaminases (ω-TA) are promising enzymes for the synthesis of chiral amines, amino acids and amino alcohols from prochiral substrates [2].

Major challenges in the application of ω-TA are a restricted substrate scope for large molecules as well as rather low enzyme stability under extreme reaction conditions associated with pH, temperature and organic solvents [3, 4]. Iranian landscapes contain highly diverse microbial storages due to considerable variety in geographical features and thus can be considered a rich source for special extremophile biocatalysts [5].

In this study, enrichment cultures from Iranian soils using (rac)-α-methylbenzylamine (MBA) as sole nitrogen source were screened for ω-TA activity by a colorimetric assay. The most promising strains were identified by 16S rDNA sequencing and subjected to determine optimal conditions for ω-TA activity.

A *Bacillus halotolerans* strain showed a highly versatile substrate spectrum toward a plethora of aromatic amino donors over a wide pH range, exhibiting excellent solvent tolerance [6]. In contrast to other ω-TA that usually show their maximum activity at slightly alkaline pH, two strains with high similarity to *B. endophyticus* and *B. stercoris* showed highest ω-TA activity under acidic conditions with 70% remaining activity at pH 3.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report on ω-TA activity under acidic conditions.


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**Introduction**

Dynamic control of gene expression mainly relies on inducible systems which require supplementation of (costly) inducer molecules such as IPTG. In contrast, synthetic regulatory circuits which allow the timed shutdown of gene expression are rarely available and therefore represent highly attractive tools for metabolic engineering. *Corynebacterium glutamicum* uses the cheap compound vanillic acid as carbon and energy source (Merkens et al., 2005). Expression of the vanABK operon which is required for vanillic acid utilization is activated by the transcriptional regulator VanR in the presence of vanillic acid (Heravi et al., 2014). Since vanillic acid is co-metabolized with e.g. glucose, this regulatory circuit represents an elegant system to turn-off gene expression when vanillic acid is depleted.

**Methods and Results**

The pyruvate dehydrogenase complex (PDHC) is essential for growth of *C. glutamicum* on glucose and was previously shown to be an attractive target to improve pyruvate availability for the production of e.g. L-valine or isobutanol (Eikmanns and Blombach, 2014). To control expression of the PDHC in a vanillic acid-dependent manner, we replaced the native promoter region of the aceE gene, which encodes the E1p enzyme of the PDHC, by vanR and the altered promoter P<sub>vanABK</sub>. Growth experiments in minimal medium with glucose and varying amounts of vanillic acid (1 to 20 mM) revealed a clear concentration dependent growth phenotype of the mutant strain; i.e. cell proliferation stopped when vanillic acid was metabolized. As expected, when growth ceased due to consumption of vanillic acid, the mutant strain utilized the residual glucose to produce significant amounts of pyruvate, L-alanine and L-valine.

**Conclusions**

As shown in our study, the regulatory circuit based on vanR and the mutated promoter P<sub>vanABK</sub> represents a useful metabolic engineering tool to shutdown gene expression with vanillic acid as cheap and abundant effector molecule.

**References**


175-BTP
Systems metabolic engineering of Corynebacterium glutamicum for the production of D-Lysine derived products
*S. Pauli*, C. M. Rohlies*, G. Gießelmann*, M. Kohlstedt†, J. Becker†, C. Wittmann
†Saarland University, Institute for Systems Biotechnology, Saarbrücken, Germany

Introduction. The soil bacterium Corynebacterium glutamicum is a major workhorse in industrial biotechnology. Interesting products today include 5-aminovalerate and glutarate, which have recognized value as building blocks for bio-based plastics [1].

Objectives. De novo 5-aminovalerate production should be enabled using the engineered -lysine producer C. glutamicum LYS-12 as chassis [2]. The conversion of -lysine into the product of interest should be catalyzed by heterologously expressing -lysine 2-monoxygenase (davB) and 5-aminovaleramide amidase (davA) from Pseudomonas putida together with the endogenous 5-aminovalerate transaminase (gabT) and glutarate semialdehyde dehydrogenase (gabD) [3].

Materials & methods. An interdisciplinary set of methods including genetic and metabolic engineering, enzyme analysis, process optimization, and analytics was used to create and characterize the strains.

Results. A microbial 5-aminovalerate cell factory could be established successfully. C. glutamicum AVA-3 accumulated 5-aminovalerate at a yield of 275 mmol mol⁻¹, after deletion of the native -lysine exporter and the endogenous 5-aminovalerate transaminase. In a fed-batch fermentation the strain produced 28 g L⁻¹ 5-aminovalerate with a maximal space-time yield of 0.9 g L⁻¹ h⁻¹. The high performance was supported by a well-balanced activity of DavB and DavA. Enzyme studies identified 5-aminovalerate as inhibitor of DavB activity, leaving space for further improvement.

Conclusion. The newly derived strain C. glutamicum AVA-3 enabled de novo production of 5-aminovalerate. In future studies, the elimination of the undesired feedback inhibition of -lysine 2-monoxygenase could contribute to further strain optimization.


176-BTP
Development of an enzyme cascade process for biocatalytic production of chiral beta amino acids
U. Engel*, J. Rudat†
*Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT), IBLT II: Technische Biologie, Karlsruhe, Germany
†Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT), IBIT: Technische Biologie, Karlsruhe, Germany

Development of an enzyme cascade process for biocatalytic production of chiral beta amino acids
Jens Rudat, Ulrike Engel

Chiral β-amino acids are valuable building blocks for pharmaceuticals and fine chemicals (Rudat, Brucher, & Syldatk, 2012). Within this project chiral β-amino acids are to be produced applying a modified hydantoinase process using racemic dihydroriprimidinines as educts. The process is to be based on two enzymes. A dihydroriprimidinase will be used for hydrolytic cleavage of the dihydroriprimidine ring followed by the reaction of a linear amidase able to decarbamoyle N-carbamoyl β-amino acids. Both enzymes are to be immobilized and applied in a microfluidic system.

It was already demonstrated in previous work that hydantoinases/dihydropirimidinases can hydrolyze racemic 6-substituted dihydroriprimidinines to the corresponding N-carbamoylated β-amino acids (Engel, Syldatk et al. 2012). For several hydantoinases the determination of kinetic parameters for the model substrate phenyldihydrouracil, the evaluation of optimal reaction conditions and immobilization experiments are ongoing.

Within a screening novel decarbamoyleating enzymes were discovered, recombinantly expressed and characterized. It was shown that these enzymes hydrolyze several different novel N-carbamoyl-β-amino acids as well as N-carbamoyl-β-homo-amino acids to their corresponding β-amino acids. A comparison of these enzymes gave novel insight into their mechanism and biological function.

In upcoming work the enzyme cascade consisting of hydantoinase and decarbamoyleating enzyme is to be assembled, characterized and optimized in order to produce chiral β-amino acids.


177-BTP
Enantioselective epoxidation of poorly water-soluble substrates by flavin-dependent monooxygenases in the presence of organic solvents
*O. Eggerichs*, J. Mayweg†, D. Tischler†
†Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Mikrobielle Biotechnologie, Bochum, Germany

Styrene monooxygenases catalyze the introduction of a single oxygen atom into an organic molecule using atomic oxygen as cosubstrate. After each reaction cycle, the flavin cofactor is reduced by a reductase on the expense of NADH. Because water is the only side product of the reaction, the process is overall environmentally friendly. In contrast, the enantioselective functionalization of organic molecules is still a large hurdle for classical chemical processes which can only be overcome by the price of toxic transition metal-based catalysts and a huge waste production. Thus, in terms of sustainability and the transition to green chemistry, enzymes gain more and more attention for the use in chemical industry.

But so far, many substrates are only poorly soluble in aqueous solutions and by this not accessible for enzymes. So, the usage in industry requires often the addition of organic cosolvents. Due to this issue, several strategies were developed to improve either the stability of the enzyme (e.g. directed evolution, immobilization) or to optimize the reaction conditions for the enzyme (e.g. two phase system).
Here, the reaction conditions of the solvent-tolerant indole monoxygenase A from Gemmobacter nectariphilus (GnlnDA) were optimized. For this, the enzyme was obtained in pure form by a His-tag purification and used in two-hour biotransformations with the artificial NADH mimic 1-benzyl-1,4-dihydronicotinamide (BNAH) as electron donor.

HPLC analysis revealed a stable product formation in the presence of up to 20 vol% cosolvent. Furthermore, additional solvents increased the product amount in a concentration and hydrophobicity (log PO/W) dependent manner. An applied concentration of 10 vol% methanol increased the product amount about +56% while the same concentration of 1-propanol caused a decrease of more than -90%. At the same time, the enzymes enantiomeric excess of GnlnDA was determined by chiral GC-FID and is not influenced by the applied solvent.

In conclusion, our results indicate a correlation between cosolvent-mediated substrate accessibility and enzymatic activity. These results make GnlnDA a promising candidate for further applications.

178-BTP
Evidence for a unique PDH/ODH supercomplex in Corynebacterium glutamicum

"L. Sundermeyer", "M. Baumgart", "M. Bott"
"Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Institute of Bio- and Geosciences: Biotechnology (IBG-1), Jülich, Germany

Introduction: The corynebacterial 2-oxoglutarate dehydrogenase (ODH) differs from most other bacterial ODHs. The typical ODH complex consists of three different subunits, the 2-oxoglutarate decarboxylase (E1o), a dihydrolipoyl transsuccinylase (E2o), and the dihydrolipoyl dehydrogenase (E3), which is shared between ODH and the pyruvate dehydrogenase complex (PDH). In C. glutamicum, E1o, called OdhA, is fused with the succinyltransferase domain of E2, while a separate E2o subunit is missing. Since OdhA lacks the lipoyl-binding domains of a standard E2o, an interaction of OdhA with the E2 subunit (AceF) of PDH is necessary for PDH activity [1,2].

Objectives: Since ODH and PDH both play an important role in central metabolism, an important aim of our research is to gain further insights into the structure of these dehydrogenase complexes and how AceF and LpdA are shared between ODH and PDH.

Materials & methods: The integration vector pK18mob was used to add tags for affinity purification to the genes odhA, aceE and aceF in the genome of C. glutamicum. These tagged versions of OdhA, AceE and AceF were used for affinity chromatography to analyse the protein composition of the ODH and PDH complexes. The enzymatic activities of the purified dehydrogenase complexes were analysed in NAD+ dependent activity assays.

Results: The purification of Strep-tagged OdhA enabled the copurification of AceF and LpdA as well as the copurification of the PDH E1 subunit AceE. Furthermore, the protein eluate possessed PDH activity of 0.3 U/mg besides the expected ODH activity of 2.5 U/mg. Copurification experiments with AceE-Strep as well as the shared E2 subunit AceF also enabled the copurification of active PDH and ODH complexes.

Conclusion: The observation that it is possible to purify both dehydrogenase complexes in an active state with one of the E1 subunits suggests that AceF and LpdA are not only part of both dehydrogenase complexes, but that the four proteins OdhA, AceE, AceF and LpdA form a metabolic supercomplex possessing ODH and PDH activity.


179-BTP
Heterologous Production of the Polyphenol Pinosylvin with Pseudomonas taiwanensis VLB120

"T. Schwanemann", "M. Otto", "N. Wierckx"
"Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, IBG-1, Microbial Catalysis, Jülich, Germany

The production of polyphenols from plants is mainly based on isolation processes from plants. These approaches are limited by laborious, wasteful purification procedures and low yield. The heterologous production of stilbenes in microbial hosts is frequently demonstrated in popular bacterial workhorses although these approaches are faced with multiple major drawbacks like product- or intermediate toxicities and poor precursor supply, requiring costly supplementation.

Pinosylvin, a stilbene from coniferous wood, has various health promoting effects including antimicrobial activity. The bacterium Pseudomonas taiwanensis VLB120 shows astonishing resistance against this polyphenol compared to Escherichia coli. A genome-reduced-chassis strain of P. taiwanensis with improved bioprocess features surpasses even the wildtype in resistance and is an established and reliable host for the efficient production of amino acids. The availability of aromatic amino acids or phenylpropanoids for the synthesis of stilbenes often limits their cost-effective heterologous microbial production. Thus, a phenylalanine overproducing strain of P. taiwanensis is elaborated to constitutively produce pinosylvin as a representative polyphenol without the requirement of antibiotics. This approach reaches comparable titers to T7-driven, plasmid-based published results. Metabolic engineering and process optimization is carried out to enhance precursor availability further and increase polyphenol production titers in this unique host.

180-BTP
The electric-gut microbiome: selecting electroactive microorganisms from mouse feces

"L. Ragó", "J. T. Heiker", "D. Popp", "F. Harnisch"
"UFZ - Helmholtz Zentrum für Umweltforschung, UMB, Leipzig, Germany
"Helmholtz Institute for Metabolic, Obesity and Vascular Research (Hi-MAS), Helmholtz Zentrum München an der Universität Leipzig und dem Universitätsklinikum Leipzig AöR, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction
Electroactive microorganisms (EAM) are performing extracellular electron transfer (EET) representing a unique metabolic trait. Although the most studied EAM are belonging to Geobacter and Shewanella genera, many more species were recognized as EAM. It was also demonstrated that there is not a specific ecological niche for EAM. Thus, more electroactive species presumably exist, and they can be found in complex ecological niches, e.g. the mammalian gut microbiome. Recently, we demonstrated in pure culture studies that Clostridium coclearium, Lactobacillus reuteri...
and *Staphylococcus xylosus* -being inherent to the mouse gut microbiome- are EAM.

**Objectives**

With the aim of the identification of new -so far unknown- EAM, a follow-up study for the electrochemically driven selection from mouse feces was performed.

**Materials & methods**

Glucose-fed bioelectrochemical reactors (n=3) were inoculated with the feces of male mice (C57BL/6N) and operated for 4 fed-batch cycles (~one week for each), applying a potential of +0.2V vs. Ag/AgCl sat. KCl. Control reactors (n=3) were run in parallel without applying any potential (open circuit condition). For characterizing the mode of EET, cyclic voltammetry (CV) was performed. The DNA of the inoculum, of the planktonic cells collected at the end of each cycle and of the anodes (after the 4th cycle) was extracted and analyzed with 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing (Illumina MiSeq).

**Results**

A maximum current density of 122±23mA cm$^{-2}$ after 19h was achieved and related to glucose consumption. After the 4th cycle, the presence of an anodic biofilm was demonstrated by optical microscopy. CV analysis revealed contributions of biofilm and planktonic cells to EET. Genetic analysis is still ongoing.

**Conclusion**

We have provided further evidence on the presence of EAM in the mammalian gut. The future study of their diversity, metabolic pathways and trophic interactions, will shed further light and may bring to the possibility of designing prebiotic drugs for improved diet.

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**182-BTP**

**Metabolic network analysis of mannose-grown Corynebacterium glutamicum**

*P. Cao*1, S. Schwechheimer1, J. Becker1, C. Wittmann1
1*Institute of Systems Biotechnology*, Saarland University, Saarbrücken, Germany

**Introduction:** The soil bacterium *C. glutamicum* is an industrial producer for a broad spectrum of added-value products [1]. Efforts in metabolic engineering of *C. glutamicum* over the past decades have greatly benefited from a detailed understanding of its cellular physiology, mainly using glucose and sucrose as raw materials [2] [3]. For a sustainable bio-economy, we need, however, more than glucose and sucrose. Spent sulfite liquor (SSL) is a potentially attractive waste stream of the forestry industry to be used by *C. glutamicum* for industrial bio-production. It is a crude mixture of different sugars and contains mannose as major ingredient.

**Objectives:** Naturally, *C. glutamicum*, grows very poor on mannose, hence, we need to overcome the bottleneck and understand the central metabolism with mannose as carbon source.

**Materials & methods:** Genetic engineering, 13C metabolic flux analysis and in silico pathway modelling using elementary flux modes.

**Results:** Here, we have created a mutant, which exhibits over expression of manA encoding mannose-6-phosphate isomerase for enhanced interconversion of mannose-6-phosphate and fructose-6-phosphate [4]. The genomic modification restored mannose-based growth and the intracellular flux distributions of the newly created metabolism on mannose were determined.

**Conclusion:** The data provide interesting insights into the physiology of the microbe and promise valuable knowledge for industrial use of SSL based raw materials.

**Acknowledgement**

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**References**


**181-BTP**

**Synthesis of the alternative sweetener 5-ketofructose from sucrose by fructose dehydrogenase and invertase producing Gluconobacter strains**

*J. Hoffmann,*1 U. Deppenmeier1
1*Institute for Microbiology and Biotechnology, University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany

In the last decades, a rapid increase of first-world diseases such as insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes or obesity linked to sugar-added food and sweetened beverage consumption was observed. Hence, there is a crucial demand for low-calorie, sugar-free foods containing nonnutritive sweeteners. A promising alternative to artificial sweeteners is the microbially produced fructose derivative 5-keto-fructose (5-KF), which possesses a very natural sweetness without any aftertaste. The compound was already successfully produced from fructose by overproduction of the key enzyme fructose dehydrogenase (Fd), in *G. oxydans*. For a renewable and cost-efficient production, we developed a method for the synthesis of 5-KF from sucrose, based on a biotransformation process with two different *G. oxydans* strains. However, it is complicated to standardize parameters for a stable industrial production by using two strains due to deviating growth behaviors. In order to generate a single-strain system for the synthesis of 5-KF, the *fdh* genes were integrated into the chromosome of *G. oxydans* (*G. oxydans Lmgdh:*fdh). The mutant showed a Fdh activity of 404 ± 10 mU/mg cell protein, which corresponded to 56% of the activity of *G. oxydans* *fdh* used in the previous system. Since *G. oxydans* did not contain a
Plant material in ruminants and some other herbivores [1]. They have been shown to have the most lignocellulose degrading enzymes inside the fungal kingdom [2]. In addition, they produce valuable metabolites as hydrogen during their mixed acids fermentation [3]. Hence until now their potential remains mainly unexploited. The potential use of Neocallimastigomycota for biotechnology consists of two main topics:

1. The exploitation of their already mentioned enzymes for lignocellulose degradation.
2. The direct use of these fungi in fermentation for sugar degradation or metabolite production.

Here we present the heterologous expression of a xylosidase from the anaerobic fungi Neocallimastix Californiae found by bioinformatic screening and the characterization of its kinetic properties in reactions with 4-Nitrophenyl-β-D-xylopyranosides. In addition, we present first fermentation results from these fungi evaluating metabolite production and c-source consumption.


Our analyses show, that milling by-products are a suitable substrate for clostridial ABE fermentation. The plant material is produced year-round in large quantities and is of low economic value. However, polysaccharide composition (starch, hemicellulose and cellulose content) and relative abundance make milling by-products, like wheat middlings, suitable substrates for small and medium scale fermentation plants. Our economic evaluation of these approaches showed that annually 20 – 100 kt of wheat middlings could reasonably be utilized for an economically viable ABE fermentation in Bavaria. In addition, a large collection of wild-isolate clostridia strains was screened and revealed nine strains, which exhibited adequate n-butanol yields and were able to efficiently utilize milling by-products as substrate. These results indicate that a cost-efficient production of the platform chemical n-butanol is possible and that further applications of this solvent, e.g. as lubricant or biofuel, can be developed in the near future.

In conclusion, a continuous flow system with low hormone concentrations is feasible for enriching biofilm-forming hormone degraders from activated sludge. In the next step, these bacteria will be introduced into lab-scale wastewater treatment plants.

187-BTP Optimization of Fermentation Parameters in Ethanol Production from Cane Molasses (The case of Metahara Sugar Factory Ethanol Plant)

"H. Seidl", A. Neumann", G. S. Shiferaw
1Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Institute of Process Engineering in Life Science 2, technical Biology, Karlsruhe, Germany
2Ababa Institute of Technology, School of Chemical and Bio Engineering, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Bioethanol is a high-octane number biofuel which can be produced from the fermentation of starch and sugars. Among the crucial factors affecting bioethanol production, fermentation parameters play significant role on growth of yeast as well as on ethanol yield. The main objective of this study is to optimize the fermentation parameters in ethanol production from cane molasses (the case of Metahara sugar factory ethanol plant). The study has been conducted in such a way that, cane molasses and schizosaccharomyces pombe yeast samples collected from Metahara sugar factory ethanol plant and the main composition of cane molasses is analyzed. Then the yeast strain has been cultured in YPD media and cane molasses media. The batch fermentation of molasses samples using schizosaccharomyces pombe was carried out at different combinations of fermentation parameters in Erlenmery flask of 500 ml. After fermentation of molasses the samples were collected and analyzed for residual sugar concentration, viability of the cell, and ethanol concentration. The experimental design was done by using the Design Expert ® 7.0.0 software five levels; three factors central composite design (CCD) with full type in the optimization study, requiring 76 experiments. To determine the effect of temperature, sugar concentration and fermentation time experiments were done in the ranges of 29 °C to 34 °C, 13% to 22% and 33 hr to 48 hr subsequently. Ethanol yield of 11.04% and residual sugar of 2.6% were obtained under optimum conditions of temperature of 30 °C, sugar concentration of 20% and fermentation time of 45 hr. Validation experiments verified the reliability and the accuracy of the model. These results suggest that to maximize ethanol production in Metahara sugar factory ethanol plant, the optimum fermentation parameters should be control.

188-BTP Establishment of a microfluidic platform using gelmicrodroplets to provide access to the previously unknown microbial diversity

"B. Kästner"1, C. Neubauer2, M. Rosenbaum3
1Beuth University of Applied Sciences, Bioprocess Engineering, Berlin, Germany
2Technical University of Berlin, Bioprocess Engineering, Berlin, Germany
3Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology – Hans Knöll Institute, Bio Pilot Plant, Jena, Germany

Antibiotic resistance is rising to higher levels in all parts of the world, but the development and approval of new antibiotics have been declining over the last decades [1]. Most of the obvious targets for antimicrobial activity have already been discovered. The detection of biosynthetic gene clusters have revealed that many more bacteria than...
Introduction & Objectives:

Lactate is a common substrate for major groups of strictly anaerobic bacteria, and the biochemistry and bioenergetics of lactate oxidation has been described in detail for Acetobacterium woodii.1,2 Besides A. woodii, lactate utilization has been mentioned for several other strains including Butyribacterium methylotrophicum, Clostridium drakei, Clostridium scatologenes, Clostridium sp. BPYS, and “Ruminococcaceae bacterium CPB6”. Lactate oxidation is mediated by the LDH/Etf complex encoded by the genes lctBCD encoded in the lct operon. The objective was to study lactate utilization kinetics, product spectrum as well as growth kinetics for A. woodii DSM 1030, B. methylotrophicum DSM 3468 Clostridium scatologenes DSM757.

Materials & Methods:

1. woodii, B. methylotrophicum, C. scatologenes were cultivated anaerobically in either modified ATCC 16123 medium or modified Tanner medium4 using lactate as substrate. Moreover, the genetic organization of the lct operon in different bacterial strains was analyzed using the IMG/ER platform.

Results & Conclusion:

Gene clusters similar to the lct operon of A. woodii were found in genome sequences of a variety of different anaerobic strains. However, organization of respective genes differs among the analyzed strains. Growth and lactate consumption rates were found to be similar for A. woodii, B. methylotrophicum, and C. scatologenes. The metabolic end product(s) determined for A. woodii was acetate, for B. methylotrophicum acetate and butyrate, and for C. scatologenes acetate, butyrate, and caproate. In conclusion, anaerobic oxidation of lactate can lead to higher value products such as butyrate and caproate or the corresponding alcohols, if bacterial strains are genetically engineered.
References:

1 Weghoff et al., 2015, Environ Microbiol 17, 670-677.
2 Schoelmerich et al., 2018, Environ Microbiol 20, 4587-4595.
3 Hoffmeister et al., 2016, Metab Eng 36, 37-47.
4 Bengelsdorf et al., 2016, Front Microbiol 7, 1036.

191-BTP
A Biotechnological Approach towards Mono-functionalized Diamines as Platform Chemicals

Aliphatic terminal diamines are a great and versatile basis for functionalization into bulk and fine chemicals. Some of them can easily be obtained from bio-based sources. However, it is extremely difficult to achieve selective mono-functionalization of one amino group by standard synthetic methods. N-hydroxylation monoxygenases (NMOs, EC 1.14.13.B10) are a family of flavin-dependent enzymes with the ability to selectively hydroxylate one terminal amino function while keeping the other untouched. The resulting N-monohydroxy-diamines can serve as starting components for highly interesting further derivatizations to produce a wide range of fine chemicals.

We aimed at the development of an enzymatic cascade to generate the desired target compounds from ω-amino acids. For this purpose, the coupling of a suitable amino acid decarboxylase (AAD) with an NMO was pursued. Since NMO requires NADPH to provide the necessary redox equivalents, a regeneration system based on formate dehydrogenase (FDH) also needed to be combined into the enzymatic cascade.

All enzymes were produced in Escherichia coli BL21(DE3). NMO from Gordonia rubripertincta CWB2 and an FDH mutant capable of providing NADPH was produced in good yields. The enzymatic activities were screened at different conditions (buffer, salt concentration, temperature) using a photometric NADPH assay and a compatibility window of the two processes established. Several AAD were furthermore produced and investigated for their ability to decarboxylate lysine and ornithine with focus on maximum overlap with reaction conditions required for the subsequent step. Towards this aim, a photometric assay based on trinitrobenzene sulfonate was established to quickly identify optimum conditions.

Optimum conditions for each individual enzymatic step were established and a setting suitable for a productive combination of all enzymes was found. All intermediates and products were identified with GC-PID or LC-MS analysis.

A compatibility window for the desired two-step-three-enzyme cascade was established and N-monohydroxylated aliphatic diamines as valuable platform chemical produced from bio-based sources.

192-BTP

Immobilized natural compounds of entomopathogenic bacteria on different surfaces inhibit bacterial biofilm formation

Bacterial biofilms can not only affect health and environment but also lead to a huge economic loss worldwide. Essential for biofilms to evolve is bacterial communication via small diffusible molecules, also referred to as quorum sensing (QS). Under high cell density, bacteria start to organize in so called biofilms by producing extracellular polymers to attach and grow on nearly every surface. Biofilms are problematic in several sectors such as the shipping industry, health institutes or the drinking water distribution. Entomopathogenic bacteria of the genus Photorhabdus and Xenorhabdus produce a huge number of novel secondary metabolites. Here we show, that a large number of those natural compounds inhibit biofilm formation without being biocidal. Therefore, we assume that these natural compounds might interfere with QS of the target bacteria to block their communication, a process that is referred to as quorum quenching (QQ). We observed, that bacteria of equal biofilm habitats exhibited similar susceptibility towards the same QQ-compounds. Interestingly, three of the tested compound classes had a severe effect also at very low concentrations. A self-constructed microfluidic flow cell gave us the opportunity to analyze the structure and composition of different bacterial biofilm communities via microscopy on the one hand and visualize the effect of the natural compounds on the other hand. We were then able to coat different materials with the compounds and immobilize those on the respective surface. In order to simulate more realistic native conditions, we constructed another specific microfluidic cell, placed the coated material inside and analyzed bacterial attachment under constant flow. These coated materials were used to test the effect of the natural compounds in native environments e.g. water pipes, ship hulls and harbors. In summary, our data indicate that entomopathogenic bacteria represent an excellent reservoir of QQ-compounds that are putatively applicable as specific biofilm prevent agents.

193-BTP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

194-BTP
Metagenomic nanopore sequencing for the characterization and abundance tracking of complex microbial communities in biogas reactors

Introduction

Anaerobic digestion (AD) has been a critical technology for green energy for many decades. However, the majority of the microorganisms involved are unknown and not cultivable, which makes abundance tracking difficult. The accessibility
of Nanopore (ONT) sequencing may provide a tempting alternative to monitor the microbial community via metagenomic sequencing. Although long reads are less accurate, the higher information richness may allow for a similar specific taxonomic classification, e.g., via Illumina. Additionally, the sequencing yield still reflects the absolute abundance of an organism.

For reliable monitoring of AD via long reads, a robust protocol for less fragmented and high-quality DNA, while preserving bacterial composition needs to be established. Additionally, identifying the most suitable index database for the best overall classification performance is crucial.

Materials & methods

We investigated 20 different biogas/waste-water reactors (DNA isolation protocol available at dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.w7afhie). All samples were subject to Nanopore and Illumina sequencing. Read classification was performed using Centrifuge. Different Index databases were built from RefSeq and GTDB to compare read classification performance.

Results:

We retrieved a median of 20 Gb sequencing data per flow cell. Taxonomic classification achieved a dramatic classification increase when using an Index build from GTDB compared to the RefSeq index. The improvement of classified reads ranged between 1.8 to 13-fold increase. Moreover, phyla estimations via GTDB are in line with 16S studies and MAG studies pointing to Firmicutes and Bacteroidetes as the main phyla for most ADs.

Conclusion

Long-read sequencing via Nanopore provides a cheaper and more accessible alternative for taxonomic read classification. The ongoing effort on GTDB for more phylogenetically-coherent taxonomic species definitions incl. meta-assembled genomes have a clear advantage over traditional classification databases such as RefSeq. Compared to conventional 16S studies, Metagenomic read classification allows us to monitor the abundance of the unknown microbial fraction.

195-BTP

*Cupriavidus necator* as versatile biocatalyst powered by electrochemically generated H2

H. Wohlers1, D. Holtmann1,2

1DEHEMA Forschungsinstutit, Industrial Biotechnology, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
2Technische Hochschule Mittelhessen, Life Science Engineering, Gießen, Germany

*Cupriavidus necator* is a gram-negative bacterium which is able to grow chemolithoautotrophically. During lithoautotrophic growth it fixes carbon dioxide using hydrogen as an electron donor and oxygen as an electron acceptor. *C. necator* harbours oxygen-tolerant hydrogenases which allow the use of hydrogen as a cheap reducing agent for cofactor regeneration in an aerobic whole cell bioprocess. Therefore, *C. necator* is a promising platform for whole cell biotransformations using oxygen-requiring, NAD(P)H dependent enzymes, such as cytochrome p450 monoxygenases and ene-reductases. Both enzyme classes are of great interest for the synthesis of fine chemicals since they provide the opportunity to overcome the obstacles of classic chemical synthesis concerning the activation of inert carbohydrates. For instance P450 BM-3 (CYP102A1) from *Bacillus megaterium* is a soluble, catalytically self-sufficient monoxygenase which is able to catalyze regio- and stereospecific hydroxylations of non-activated carbon-hydrogen bonds by inserting one oxygen atom from molecular oxygen into the substrate and the ene-reductase YqjM from *Bacillus subtilis* is a flavoprotein that can catalyze the trans-hydrogenation of conjugated C=C bonds.

The successful expression of the P450 monoxygenase (unpublished work) and the ene-reductase1 in *C. necator* as well as its growth inside a bioelectrochemical system2 has already been shown. Here we present the coupling of the enzyme expression with the electrobiochemical cultivation of *C. necator*. This system will provide the opportunity for chemical storage of surplus energy from renewable sources while producing chemicals of high value.


196-BTP

Biofilm formation in CSTR biogas reactors at very low hydraulic retention times

D. Popp1, A. Weimer1,2, T. R. Neu2, F. Centler1

1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany
2Saarland University, Institute for Systems Biotechnology, Saarbrücken, Germany
3Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, River Ecology, Magdeburg, Germany

Anaerobic digestion is an efficient biotechnological process by which agricultural, municipal, and industrial organic waste can be converted into biogas which is utilized as electricity, heat, and fuel. One important process parameter of biogas reactors is the hydraulic retention time (HRT) which is adjusted as a compromise between degradation efficiency and reactor size – both crucial for the economics of biogas production. In this study, the HRT of duplicate, lab-scale continuous stirred tank reactors (CSTR) digesting volatile fatty acids (acetic, propionic, and butyric acid) was systematically lowered starting from 8 d. A third reactor was operated as control constantly at the initial HRT.

Efficient biogas production was still observed at 3.9 d HRT and an organic loading rate of 7 g VFA L−1 d−1 for both reactors. Process breakdowns due to accumulation of volatile fatty acids occurred at 2.7 d and 1.9 d HRT for the first and the second reactor, respectively. Differences between duplicate reactors at the fatal HRTs were also observed regarding the microbial communities as analyzed by amplicon sequencing of 16S rRNA and *mcrA* genes. In the first reactor *Methanosetaea* was the dominant methanogen (72% relative abundance) which is solely able to produce methane from acetate. Furthermore, the hydrogenotrophic methanogens *Methanoculleus* (25%) and *Methanosipillium* (2%) were found. In the second reactor the
methanogen Methanosarcina was increasingly detected with lower HRTs with up to 31% relative abundance. Biofilms formed mainly at the bottom of the reactors for both experimental and control reactors. These biofilms were also dominated by Methanoseta. The dominance of Methanoseta was consistent with the filamentous cells dominantly present in the biofilm as revealed by confocal laser scanning microscopy.

Biofilm formation in CSTRs might be a microbial survival strategy to prevent washout at very low HRT. Even though CSTR reactors are not intended to retain biomass, enforced biofilm formation by an adapted reactor design might present a promising option to further optimize biogas production in such reactors.

197-BTP
Isolation of a new Streptomonospora species producing a new peptide antibiotic
*S. Khodamoradi*, R. Hahnke, M. Stadler, F. Surup, J. Wink, P. Schumann, M. Steinert, M. Rohde
*1Helmholtz center for infection research, Microbial group collection, Braunschweig, Germany

Most important antimicrobial drug classes, such as tetracyclines, rifamycins, aminoglycosides, macrolides, beta-lactams, and glycopeptides are produced by actinomycetes. However, more and more pathogenic bacteria show resistances against these common antibiotics. Today, one of the major challenges is to treat infection diseases, caused by (multi-) drug-resistant strains. New antibiotics have to be created synthetically or found by screening natural resources from the environment. Especially new species, genera and families of actinobacteria harbour a high potential to produce new antibiotics.

Within the search for new antibiotic producing actinobacteria, two strains of rare actinomycetes were isolated from the coastal sand (Cuxhaven beach/ Germany). The strains are closely related to each other, are Gram-positive, rod shape, non-motile, spore forming and exhibit extensively branched substrate mycelia and aerial hyphae. They will be described as members of a new species within the genus Streptomonospora. Based on 16S rRNA gene sequence the closest strain is S. halophila DSM 45075 with (98%) similarity. Crude extracts showed interesting antibacterial activity against Gram-positive bacteria (Staphylococcus aureus, Micrococcus lutes, Clostridium difficile). After optimization, fermentation, HPLC and mass spectrometry analysis, the accurate mass of the active compound was determined and proposed as a new derivation of a peptide antibiotic class. Next steps will be optimization of production media, scale-up, structure elucidation with NMR and bioactivity spectrum against a large panel of test (pathogenic) organism to determine the MIC-values of the new antibiotic.

198-BTP
Evaluation of “Impure” Syngas derived from Biomass Gasification as Substrate in Syngas Fermentation
*A. Infantes*, A. Neumann
*KIT (Karlsruher Institut für Technologie), Institute of Process Engineering in Life Sciences, Section II: Technical Biology, Karlsruhe, Germany

In this study, the effect of various biomass-derived syngas bottled directly at the gasification site on a Clostridium ljungdahlii fermentation process has been evaluated.

Acetogenic microorganisms, including C. ljungdahllii, represent a promising platform to advance towards the production of renewable, environmentally friendly chemical building blocks and commodity chemicals, as opposed to the current ones, mainly fossil-fuel based.

As opposed to traditional chemical catalysts, this group of microorganism can tolerate some impurities that are present in the syngas as well as being able to use various mixtures of CO and/or CO2 and H2. These features make them an attractive alternative to chemical processes.

The typically expected impurities in the “real” syngas are: methane (CH4), ethane (C2H6), ethylene (C2H4), acetylene (C2H2), tar components like benzene, and hydrogen sulphide (H2S). Moreover, traces of other C3, C4, C5 and C6 components can be present. The exact quantities and type of impurities will variagrate depending on the syngas source, due to the intrinsic natural variability of the biomass used in the gasification process.

Objectives
Most of the research performed to date has used pure syngas, containing only a defined composition of CO and/or CO2 and H2. Here, we analyse how the impurities, or the combined effect of the components in the “real” syngas, which is derived directly from the gasification of biomass, affects the outcome of the process, in comparison to pure syngas.

Methods
The effects of the different gases compositions was exhaustively monitored on a well-established, robust fermentation system with continuous monitoring of the gas consumption via GC.

5 batch fermentations were done in triplicate with C. ljungdahllii, using gases from 4 different gasification plants. Gas consumption, growth and products were analysed.

Moreover, 3 synthetic gas mixtures, with the same CO, CO2 and H2 composition as the “real” syngas here tested, but without the impurities, were also fermented in order to clearly assess the impurities’ effect.

The results are being analysed and will be presented here.

199-BTP
A sugar-independently regulated gene expression system for Pseudomonas fluorescens
*L. Hoffmann*, T. Brüser
*1Leibniz Universität Hannover, Institut für Mikrobiologie, Hannover, Germany

Species of the genus Pseudomonas are important organisms for medical and environmental research. Studies that analyze these organisms often use tools of molecular microbiology, such as targeted mutagenesis and genetic complementation. There are only sugar-regulated promoter systems established for the recombinant expression of genes in pseudomonads. As sugars themselves can strongly influence metabolic pathways in possibly non-desired ways,
we sought after a promoter that could permit the tightly regulated gene expression in a sugar-independent manner. We therefore screened the genome of our model organism P. fluorescens strain A506 for likely AraC-family regulators that are encoded in direct vicinity of an assigned metabolic operon unrelated to sugar metabolism. Among the identified regulators, the gene PIA506-4486 encodes for a putative anthranilic acid inducible regulator, as this gene is located directly upstream of the antABC operon for anthranilic acid degradation to catechol. The homolog of this putative regulator has been shown to activate antABC expression in the related pathogen P. aeruginosa [1]. We thus cloned PIA506-4486 and the putative promoter region for antABC expression, and used the gene for mCherry as reporter to examine promoter activity. For comparison, we constructed the accordant reporter system also for the standard rhamnose-inducible promoter. The direct comparison of the two expression systems is shown.


200-BTP

A new carbonyl reductase from Yarrowia lipolytica stereospecifically converting α-substituted β-keto esters


*Zittau/Goerlitz University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Zittau, Germany

*Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Molecular Systems Biology, Leipzig, Germany

For the synthesis of novel chiral building blocks, e.g. Evans auxiliaries, suitable biocatalysts for stereoselective reductions of α-substituted β-keto-esters are of major interest. Therefore, different yeast strains were analyzed in whole cell biotransformation assays for the reduction of ethyl acetoacetate (EAA) and prochiral hydrophobic derivatives of EAA. Reaction products were analyzed by HPLC and GC. Yarrowia lipolytica DSMZ 3286 was able to reduce ethyl 2-benzylacetoacetate with an excess of the diastereomer (de > 99%). A respective NADPH-dependent carbonyl reductase with a molecular mass of 96.7 kDa could be purified to homogeneity from wild-type cells of Y. lipolytica. The protein was identified by peptide mass-fingerprinting (nanoLC / ESI-MS of tryptic peptides with 94% coverage) as a member of the short-chain dehydrogenase/reductase protein family. Its gene was expressed in Escherichia coli fused to a hexahistidine-SUMO-tag and proved to be active for the reduction of ethyl 2-benzylacetoacetate as a substrate. Kinetic properties, substrate specificities and stereoselectivity of the enzyme will be presented.

Since antibiotic resistance is growing at alarming rates, causing a global health threat, there is an urgent need for the development of innovative strategies for the discovery of new antibiotic substances. While former strategies for antimicrobial drug discovery mainly focused on synthetic chemicals, modern approaches are now returning to the investigation of natural resources [1]. Recently, colicins are regaining attention as potential alternatives to traditional antibiotics [2]. Colicins are antimicrobial proteins produced by Escherichia coli (E. coli) strains that inhibit or kill closely related bacteria with high specificity.

To approach this urgent task, we aim to establish a laboratory for the isolation and production of new antimicrobial agents from natural products. State-of-the-art technology is used to design an advanced robot-based discovery platform, with a specific focus on automated high throughput screenings (HTS) for the isolation of microorganisms from environmental samples as well as for antimicrobial activity testing, purification of the substance and fermentation process development.

A small-scale robot-based HTS was conducted to isolate bacteria with antagonistic activity against human pathogenic bacteria from sludge. The screening revealed a promising candidate, identified by MALDI Biotyper System and 16S rRNA gene sequencing as a non-pathogenic E. coli. The E. coli showed antimicrobial activity against two enteropathogenic E. coli (EPEC) strains. While a PCR-analysis revealed the existence of three genes encoding the colicins B, E1 and M, analyses by SDS-overlay assays indicated that only colicins E1 and M are effectively inhibiting cell growth of the EPEC strains. Further analysis is focusing on the development of a novel purification strategy for colicins and the optimization of the induction of colicin synthesis.

Further steps will comprise the optimization of colicin purification by establishing a small-scale robot-based automated purification unit as well as the improvement of the fermentation process.


202-BTP

Proteolytic enzymes of Aspergillus with activity in relation to components of the hemostasis system for diagnosis of thromboembolic diseases

*A. Osmolovsky¹, A. Orekhova², A. Ochneva²

¹Moscow State University, Microbiology, Moscow, Russian Federation

²Lomonosov Moscow State University, Microbiology, Moscow, Russian Federation

Huge interest for practical medicine have proteinases with the ability to activate some of the hemostatic system proteins by their limited proteolysis. Fungi from Aspergillus genus are able to secrete proteases, activating protein C and factor X - core proteins of the hemostatic system, changing the content of which in the blood stream leads to various diseases. Such enzymes are highly specific to these target proteins and may prove to be very promising for the development of drugs and diagnostic products to replace the existing foreign counterparts, mainly of animal origin.
Aim of the research was study of biotechnological potential of some *Aspergillus* fungi for production proteases for determination concentration of protein C and factor X in human plasma.

Aspergilli were cultivated under submerged conditions, protease activity detection was made using chromogenic peptide substrates specific for activated protein C (S-2366) and factor Xa (S-2765) after the addition of blood plasma (activator activity).

10 strains from *Aspergillus* genus were tested for the ability to produced proteases with activating activity toward protein C and factor X of human plasma. Proteases of *A. ochraceus* and *A. sclerotorum* were promising as producers of activators target enzymes. Their properties are similar to proteinases-activators derived from the venom of the southern American copperhead snake and Russell’s viper, respectively, and which used for the diagnosis of these proteins is currently. The character of the calibration curves for determination in plasma protein C and factor X levels in case of usage proteinase of *A. ochraceus* is very close to the character of commercial analogs schedules (based on snake venom proteases). Applicability of the calibration curves was checked by suitable reactions with plasmas with artificially reduced level of protein C and factor X or deficient plasmas. It was shown that the level of their content reliably is determined using of proteases of *A. ochraceus*.

So, that micromycetes extracellular proteases of *A. ochraceus* and *A. sclerotorum* can be used for mesuring of the amount of protein C and factor X in human plasma.

### 203-BTP

**How much can you bear? - Alcohol tolerance in microbial expression strains**

*F. Schultes*,† M. Haarmann*,† D. Tischler*,† C. Mügge†

†Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Mikrobielle Biotechnologie, Bochum, Germany

Alcohols, as well as many other organic solvents, are mostly toxic to microorganisms. Due to the rising demand for environmentally friendlier ways to produce chemicals, the need for biocatalysts, expression organisms and whole cell bioconversions has increased. During bioconversion processes, alcohols can be used as both, substrates and solvents. Taking this, we aim to test *Pseudomonas putida* KT2440 and *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) expression strains for their tolerance towards short to middle length carbon chain alcohols.

For testing these tolerances, the different expression organisms/strains were subjected to rising concentrations of alcohol with carbon chain lengths from C1 to C8 until no growth was observed and cell death occurred. Due to different deletions within typical expression strains, alcohol tolerance can differ significantly. To determine if gene knocked outs helped the tolerance or leveled the sensibility towards alcohols, single knock out strains were investigated to check if and what impact a certain knock out has on alcohol tolerance.

Results showed that *E. coli* BI21 (DE3), *E. coli* Top10 and *E. coli* BW25141 have slightly different tolerances towards hexanol, which is also the most toxic alcohol tested. The other alcohols tested were far less toxic for the cells. In comparison to this, *Pseudomonas putida* KT2440 showed a relatively high tolerance towards hexanol but was very sensible towards the other alcohols with a very low threshold.

There are substantial differences in alcohol tolerance and sensibility within the investigated strains, depending on the knockout pattern or intrinsic capabilities to cope with certain substances. Further tests should reveal different strain capabilities as well as function on sensibility of single knock out mutants and enable us to determine which strain to use for specific bioconversions.

### 204-BTP

Enriching the diversity of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) degrading enzymes from metagenomes

1. H. Zhang1, D. Danso1, J. Chow1, B. Voss1, J. Pleiss3, W. R. Streit1
2. University of Hamburg, Institute of Plant Science and Microbiology, Germany, Hamburg, Germany
3. University of Stuttgart, Biochemical Engineering - Computational Biology, Stuttgart, Germany

**Introduction:** Polyethylene terephthalate is a durable and strong, chemically and thermally stable polyester. Due to these desirable properties, PET is used widely for a variety of applications in industry. However, PET plastics do not degrade to a large degree when released into the environment (1). Its accumulation has become one of the major concerns of plastic pollution. Compared to traditional PET recycling processes requiring lots of energy resources and usually produce harmful contaminants, the use of microorganism-derived enzymes has provided a novel environmentally friendly option for the recycling of PET materials.

**Objective:** This project mainly focus on the isolation and characterization of the novel potential enzymes that have the ability to degrade PET. We combine enrichment cultivations and metagenomics to identify enzymes with activity on this persistent polymer.

**Methods:** The environmental samples were collected from an area in Wietze (Lower Saxon, Germany), where soils are heavily contaminated by crude oil. To obtain potential Enzymes that can degrade PET, the enrichment cultivations, metagenome sequencing, bioinformatics analysis, heterologous and in vitro expression combined with functional test have been employed.

**Results:** Four consortia with ability to degrade plastics were isolated from the environmental samples. Based on metagenome sequences and hmm searches, we have been synthesizing 30 potential PET hydrolases found by a PEnase-specific hidden Markov model (2). By using combined bioinformatics analysis and functional test methods, we were able to identify at least 15 novel PET hydrolases from different bacterial phyla and have expand the diversity of these enzymes significantly.


### 205-BTP

Analysis of regulatable heterologous expression systems in *Gluconobacter oxydans* 621H

*P. M. Frickie*,† C. Davoudi†, T. Link†, C. Sonntag†, L. Flachbart†, M. Bott†, T. Polen†

†Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Institut für Bio- und Geowissenschaften IBG-1: Biotechnologie, Jülich, Germany

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I.: *Glucobacter oxydans* 621H is an acetic acid bacterium known for its ability to incompletely oxidize numerous carbohydrates in the periplasm by membrane-bound dehydrogenases (mDHs). Industrial applications make use of *G. oxydans*’ many mDHs that provide a regio- and stereospecific conversion of a broad range of substrates. Also, the heterologous expression of uncharacterized mDHs is interesting for their analysis. However, hitherto no inducible expression system with a high dynamic range could be established in *G. oxydans*.

O.: Here we analyzed in *G. oxydans* 621H the performance of heterologous expression systems well-established in bacteria other than acetic acid bacteria.

M.: *G. oxydans* expression plasmids harboring *eyfp*, mNeonGreen, or *uidA* as reporter genes were constructed based on pBBR1. Recombinant *G. oxydans* strains were analyzed for growth, reporter expression, and cell heterogeneity using Biolector, FACS, DNA microarray, and LC-MS/MS-based proteome analysis as well as UidA enzyme assays.

R.: Heterologous LacI-controlled *eyfp* expression required high IPTG concentrations (10 mM) and reached only a 7-fold increase in fluorescence. When using genomically integrated and IPTG-inducible T7 RNA polymerase and T7 promoter-controlled *eyfp* expression, induction reached only a 3-fold increase. In the TetR-dependent expression system, a maximal induction of 11-fold was determined. DNA microarray analysis revealed very high *eyfp* reporter mRNA levels already in non-induced samples, yet only low *eyfp* fluorescence was measured which peaked after 8 h and then rapidly decreased by ~50%. Both, LacI and TetR repressor proteins were present according to LC-MS/MS results.

C.: The performance of inducible expression systems well-established in several bacteria is low in *G. oxydans*. In spite the presence on the protein level repressor proteins did not sufficiently repress reporter gene expression. Also, the apparent decrease of the reporter signal/activity remains unclear.

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**206-BTP**

The author has not agreed to a publication.

**207-BTP**

Utilizing cyanobacterial photosynthesis as power supply for whole-cell-biocatalysis

*A. Hochkeppel*, J. Toepel, M. Uhl, A. Hoschek, B. Bühler, A. Schmid

1Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung (UFZ) Leipzig, Solar Materials, Leipzig, Germany

Cyanobacteria are promising microbial hosts for sustainable biotechnological production processes. They are photosynthetically active and relatively easy to genetically engineer, two features paving the way for their use in photo-biotechnology. The model organism *Synechocystis* sp. PCC6803 has been used to connect different reactions to the photosynthetic light reaction [1][2]. Photosynthesis-derived oxygen and reduction equivalents make the linkage of oxygenation reactions to photosynthesis particularly interesting, as these reactions require oxygen and reduction equivalents. We engineered *Synechocystis* sp. PCC6803 with a Baeyer-Villiger-Monoxygenase (BVMO) from *Acidovorax* sp. CHX100 catalyzing the conversion from Cyclohexanone to ε-Caprolactone, a precursor for biopolymer synthesis[2]. Two strategies were used: a) Genome-integration of the BVMO gene and b) episomal expression of BVMO from a pPMQAK1 based plasmids. Genome-based expression of BVMO led to remarkable ε-Caprolactone production with a specific activity up to 33.0 U gCDW-1. Besides side-reactions, the low BVMO expression is suspected the main hindrance for a more efficient biotransformation. Our studies show *Synechocystis* sp. PCC6803 being an attractive whole-cell-biocatalyst for photo-biotechnological production processes, as ε-Caprolactone formation. Future research objectives are the further development of molecular tools to precisely engineer cyanobacteria for biotechnology application. Furthermore, a more in-depth analysis of the metabolism of photosynthetically active cell will help to establish photobiotechnology in *Synechocystis* sp. PCC6803.

**References:**


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**208-BTP**

Electrode assisted production of platform chemicals in *R. sphaeroides*

*F. Schmid*, J. Gescher

1Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Institute for Applied Biosciences (IAB) - Department of Applied Biology, Karlsruhe, Germany

Introduction: The aim of this study is using methods of synthetic biology to supply bacterial production strains with reducing power directly through electrical energy. By using the provided reducing power, highly oxidized substances as CO2 can be used to synthesize reduced platform chemicals.

Objectives: The photosynthetic non sulfur purple bacterium *Rhodobacter sphaeroides* is cultivated in a bioelectrical system (BES) in which light, CO2 and electrical current is provided. By fixing CO2 via anoxic photosynthesis, acetoin should be produced via the heterologous expression of the corresponding metabolic pathway. By introducing electron transporting c-type cytochromes in *R. sphaeroides* a direct microbe electrode interaction should be established. This would change the photolithoautotrophic to a photoelectroautotrophic lifestyle.

Methods: The BES is operated by a potentiostat running a chronopotentiometry, in which the electrochemical potential necessary to maintain a set current is measured. Afterwards the biofilm formation on the cathode is quantified (total protein / total DNA per cm2) and analysed by microscopy (DAPI, Life/dead staining) to investigate the formation of biofilm. The concentration of acetoin is measured with the vogens-proskauer test.

Results: There is evidence that cultivation of *R. sphaeroides* mutants which express cytochromes shows a less negative photo-biotechnological potential needed to maintain a set current than cultivation of *R. sphaeroides* without c-type cytochromes. This could be a result of the electrons being transferred directly to the cell instead of forming H2 which is then oxidized by *R. sphaeroides*. The presence of cytochromes enhances biofilm formation on the cathode. Also acetoin can be produced in *R. sphaeroides*.

Conclusion: There are hints for a direct microbe cathode interaction which is mediated by c-type cytochromes.
Experiments for further investigation on the exact nature of this interaction will be performed. This work is a step towards the photoelectroautotrophic production of acetoin in R. sphaeroides.

209-BTP
Real-time monitoring of fungal growth on solid substrates

“H. L. Duong1, T. Maskow1, D. Schlosser1
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

Fungal solid-state fermentation (SSF) is useful for different biotechnological applications such as lignocellulose pretreatment for biorefinery approaches, composting, mushroom production, and certain bioremediation schemes. Indirect methods for monitoring fungal growth during SSF are commonly laborious and time consuming.

We therefore aimed to investigate whether fungal growth could be sufficiently recorded using an alternative direct method, i.e. real-time biocalorimetry targeting the metabolic heat evolution. For this purpose, we recorded the metabolic heat production rate generated by the ubiquitous ascomycetous mold Stachybotrys chlorohalonata during growth on a solid lignocellulosic substrate (wheat straw). Fungal ergosterol determination was additionally applied as a conventional indirect method for fungal biomass estimation, and correlated with biocalorimetric data.

The biocalorimetric measurements demonstrated that the growth-related metabolic activity of S. chlorohalonata rapidly increased during the initial phase of growth and was highest already at culture day 6. This pattern is in accordance with an R-selected fungus, which colonizes new resources and preferentially degrades easily available compounds while rapidly collapsing in response to nutrient depletion. Fungal biomass as determined by ergosterol determination exhibited a strong linear correlation with the integral of the heat production rate (Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient > 0.97).

Our results prove biocalorimetry suitable for the rapid and non-destructive real-time monitoring of fungal growth during colonization of solid substrates.

210-BTP
Towards construction of C. acetobutylicum ATCC824 and C. saccharobutylicum NCP262 strains for efficient conversion of milling by-products in butanol.

“H. Edelmann1, J. Müller1, C. Pires2, N. Saunders2, W. Liebl2, A. Ehrenreich1
1Technical University Munich, Mikrobiologie, Freising, Germany
2Brunel University London, Systems and Synthetic Biology, Uxbridge, United Kingdom

The aceton-butanol-ethanol (ABE) fermentation of lignocellulosic waste materials by Clostridia would be a sustainable and CO2 neutral alternative for the production of butanol. Recent developments in fermentation and product separation techniques, as well as construction of genetically optimized production strains make this process an alternative to petroleum-based butanol.

In this study, we use genetically optimized clostridia strains for the production of butanol from milling by-products. These substrates contain sizable amounts of starch but are also rich in hemicelluloses. The problem in the usage of this substrate is the catabolite repression of the utilization of the pentoses xylose, arabinose and the hexoses mannose and galactose resulting from hemicellulose degradation by the glucose from starch. This results in ineffective overall utilization of the whole complex substrate.

In order to solve this problem, we generated mutant strains of C. acetobutylicum ATCC 824 with altered carbon catabolite repression (CCR) in continuous cultures. Sites of mutations of the most efficient mutants, able to metabolize various hexoses and pentoses in the presence of glucose where characterized by whole genome sequencing. The mutations are located in the glucose- and mannose-specific phosphotransferase systems as well as in a gene coding for a sigma factor of the SigD/WhiG family. Besides faster sugar uptake, one group of CCR-deficient mutants showed a threefold higher butanol yield in batch fermentation on straw hydrolysate than the wild-type. This was accompanied by a complete reabsorption of butyric acid. A marker-less genetic system established for C. saccharobutylicum is adapted to C. acetobutylicum in order to combine the mutations for most effective sugar utilization with heterologous expression and secretion of hemicellulases in order to improve breakdown efficiency of the complex substrate. Similar work is done on C. saccharobutylicum NCP262 in order to construct efficient solvent forming strains also from this organism.

211-BTP
Identification and evaluation of novel subtilases from Bacillaceae

“F. Falkenberg1, J. Rahba1, P. Siegent1, J. Bongaerts1
1FH Aachen-University of Applied Sciences, Campus Jülich, Institute of Nano- and Biotechnologies, Jülich, Germany

Proteases have long been used to catalyze the hydrolysis of peptide bonds in aqueous solutions. Especially extracellular alkaline proteases of microbial origin are well established in many technical applications, e.g. as ingredients in household laundry detergents worldwide, where they have been a component since 1985 (Coker 2016). Proteases make up about 60% of the total world enzyme production (Kalisz 1988; Maurer 2004). Due to the high demand of technical enzymes on the global market, there is still a need for novel and improved molecules. Most commercially used alkaline proteases are based on subtilisin backbone (Maurer 2004, Siezen and Leunissen 1997). In order to broaden the sequence space of bacterial alkaline proteases from subtilisin to subtilase family, a systematic database analysis was performed. Besides the genus bacillus, a specific focus was placed on further genera of the family bacillaceae. A set of new uncharacterized protease genes was compared to known subtilisins and differences were analyzed in more detail by bioinformatic tools. Thus, the proteases are interesting optional candidates for characterization and evaluation for the industrial application. Selected protease genes were cloned and expressed. First results of biochemical investigations will be presented.

References:
**212-BTP**

Characterization of the marine bone degrading microbiome: a road map for bioinformatics driven enzyme discovery

2GEMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel, Marine Symbioses, Kiel, Germany
3CSIC - Institute of Catalysis, Applied Biocatalysis, Madrid, Spain
4NORCE, Marine Biotechnology, Bergen, Norway

**Introduction:**

Bone is a rather recalcitrant material that remains as leftover by the food industry in the range of millions of metric tons annually. To date only low value chains make use of this potentially valuable bio-composite material. In the ERA-NET Marine Biotechnology project "ProBone" we endeavor to understand the microbial processes in the marine environment that access bone as source for nutrition in otherwise food scarce habitats.

**Objective:**

Understanding and deciphering the mechanisms of marine microbial bone degradation.

**Methods:**

Metagenomic sequencing and analysis, HMM profiling, heterologous expression, amplicon sequencing

**Results:**

Marine microbial metagenomes have been generated from microbial mats and bone-eating Osedax worms collected from artificially deployed turkey bones in Byfjorden, outside Bergen, Norway. Differential binning of biofilm and Osedax metagenomes yielded 59 high quality bins, spanning 11 different phyla, 14 classes and 23 orders, with 63% of the bins being taxonomically novel. The bins were profiled with HMM models for the occurrence and abundance of 13 different enzyme families, thought to be necessary for bone degradation. More than 800 “bone degrading” enzymes were identified in the reconstructed genomes. The extracted enzyme sequences were investigated via sequence similarity networks and class specific clustering was observed. A portfolio of “bone degrading” enzymes was chosen for heterologous expression in E. coli and B. subtilis.

**Conclusion:**

Marine microbial bone degradation appears to be a joint effort of different classes of bacteria, with members of the Bacteroidia, Alphaproteobacteria, Campylobacteria and Gammaproteobacteria representing the major players. Especially Bacteroidia bins are enriched in “bone degrading” enzymes, while Alphaproteobacteria are predisposed to dissolve bone material via several lactate dehydrogenases and so allowing access to the organic bone compounds for other community members. We present here the predicted metabolic interplay within a specialized microbial community for bone degradation and discuss the implications for potential biotechnological application in food industry.

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**213-BTP**

Development of a purely biological, chemical-free phosphorus recovery process in a full-scale wastewater treatment plant for the production of phosphorus-rich organic fertilizer

1V. Vucec, S. Günther, C. Süring, L. Feissel, F. Schattenberg, J. Lambrechts, Z. Liu, S. Müller
2Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

**Introduction:**

Phosphorus (P) is a non-renewable resource that is concentrated in wastewater and is a limiting nutrient in otherwise food scarce habitats. The problem of phosphorus recovery is especially the case for phosphorus (P) concentrated within wastewater streams. Rising demand for P as non-renewable, critical raw material, especially in agriculture sector calls for P recovery from as many as possible waste streams. Wastewater and connected process streams rich in P are considered a good choice for P recovery. A biological P recovery approach utilizing a novel biological P recovery (Bio-P-Rec) module for application in a full-scale wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is designed to produce P rich organic fertilizer. To accomplish the latter, knowledge of the biotic and abiotic parameters that can affect microbial community P uptake, and also influence available reactive P, must be gathered.

**Methods:**

P recovery can be carried out at various points of the WWTP. WWTP streams will be characterized with regard to the P content. In addition, different biotic and abiotic bulk parameters will be measured. Flow cytometric microbial community parameters, P content and dependencies between them will be investigated. A flexible Bio-P-Rec module will be developed and its harvesting capabilities will be investigated together with phosphorus enriched microbial biomass as P rich organic fertilizer.

**Results:**

The project aims are to get a complete picture of P balance in a WWTP together with biotic, abiotic and microbial community parameters. Furthermore, to achieve a sludge recovery rate that allows the P content in the biosolids to decline below the limit of 20 g P per kg of dry weight specified by the amended Sewage Sludge Ordinance (1). The Bio-P-Rec module should produce a biological phosphorus fertilizer that is low in pollutants and is readily plant available.

**Conclusion:**

With multidisciplinary scientific approaches of studying microbial communities and P concentration dependencies, we want to overcome the present P resource depletion issue, coupled with environmental protection and new technological development.

**Literature**

N-methylated amino acids (NMA) are found in many pharmaceutically active compounds and have been shown to improve pharmacokinetic properties as constituents of peptide drugs since N-methylation of amino acids typically result in conformational changes, improved proteolytic stability and higher lipophilicity of the peptide drug. NMA are mainly produced chemically or by biocatalysis, however with low yields or high costs for co-factor regeneration. Therefore, a more versatile route for NMA production was established.

Corynebacterium glutamicum is used since decades for safe production of amino acids L-glutamate and L-lysine at the million ton scale. Metabolic engineering of C. glutamicum enabled the access to other compounds such as amino acids and diamines. Besides, C. glutamicum was engineered for production of 2-oxoacids like pyruvate. Implementation of DpkA, an N-methylamino acid dehydrogenase from P. putida, into C. glutamicum strains accumulating 2-oxoacids pyruvate and glyoxylate enabled fermentative production of N-methylalanine, sarcosine, and N-ethylglycine with alkylamines added to the growth medium. Due to the broad substrate range of DpkA, further N-methylated amino acids may be produced using strains providing the respective 2-oxoacid precursor. This work aims at establishing N-methylphenylalanine production using DpkA in a phenylpyruvate accumulating C. glutamicum strain. Additionally, N-methylnorleucine will be produced using DpkA in 2-ketocaproate accumulating C. glutamicum strains.

The search for new sustainable materials was significantly focused in recent years due to the scarcity of traditional petroleum derivatives, these materials must be produced in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, it can be observed that AABs are able to withstand several antibiotics. This study investigates the potential of mDHs of AAB to oxidize antibiotics with the result of modification of their structure and efficacy.

The antibiotics cefoxitin, gentamicin, kanamycin A, lincomycin, polymyxin B and tetracycline are tested in final concentrations spanning 5 μM to 100 μM using a whole cell DCPIP assay. This assay uses the change in absorbance maximum generated by electrons from oxidation by mDH transferred via PMS to DCPIP. The resulting reduction of DCPIP can be monitored by decreasing absorption at 530 nm over time. Screening a strain library of AAB identified some Gluconobacter strains that show a highly specific oxidation of kanamycin A, lincomycin, polymyxin B in low concentrations of 5 or 10 μM and above, as well as oxidation of cefoxitin and tetracycline in higher concentrations of 75 μM and above.

These results will be used to identify the responsible mDHs and characterize the generated oxidation products in further experiments. While AAB are no pathogenic organisms mDHs can also be found in several Pseudomonads and related organisms among which are numerous pathogenic strains. The role of mDHs for intrinsic resistance of such organisms against antibiotics is therefore an interesting aspect of this work.
These, and other substances, may be used as monomers for the production of new materials from renewable sources. Therefore, we will focus on interesting substances that may be used as building blocks in chemical synthesis.

217-BTP
New metabolites from old pathways - exploring the potential of artificial biosynthetic pathways to produce novel compounds

1J. E. Kufs†, 1 S. Hoelgen†, 1 J. Rautscheck, 1 V. Valiante 1, 2
2Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology – Hans Knöll Institute (HKI), Biobricks of Microbial Natural Product Syntheses, Jena, Germany
3Friedrich Schiller University, Jena, Germany

Natural products are a valuable source for novel drug candidates with beneficial effects for the society regarding pharmaceutical, agricultural and environmental applications. However, most natural products are not easily accessible by cultivation of their natural hosts due to slow growth rates or minor production yield of the desired compound. Furthermore, the synthetic production of complex natural products is often associated with a high effort regarding chemical syntheses.

In order to find new technologies for the discovery of novel compounds, we developed a system for the combinatorial biosynthesis of plant polyketide derivatives in E. coli using a multi-genec single-plasmid expression vector. First, a coumarate-CoA ligase from Nicotiana tabacum, as well as a chalcone synthase and chalcone isomerase from Arabidopsis thaliana were heterologously expressed in E. coli and analyzed for polyketide production. HPLC and HRSMS data showed the in vivo production of the flavanone, naringenin. We also included further tailoring enzymes that act on the flavanone to produce naringenin derivatives of high structural diversity. Additionally, we determined the promiscuity of the chalcone synthase to accept various coumaroyl-CoA derivatives to further modify the core polyketide. In this study, we demonstrated the flexibility and applicability of our bacterial multi-genec expression system to produce natural and artificial derivatives of an already known compound.

218-BTP
Synthesizing diverse polyketide building blocks from carboxylic acids via a one-pot enzymatic route

1A. Bennion†, P. D. Gerlinger†, T. J. Erb†
2Max Planck Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Biochemistry and Synthetic Biology, Marburg, Germany

Polyketides represent a large group of compounds displaying a myriad of valuable biological activities including antibacterial, antifungal and immunosuppressant. Polyketides are synthesized by enzyme complexes called polyketide synthases (PKSs) via the stepwise condensation of acylmalonyl-CoA extender units after priming with an acyl-CoA starter unit. Though PKSs show tolerance toward non-natural extender units, the structural and functional diversity of downstream products is limited by the lack of convenient synthesis routes for extender units with chemically active ester groups. To address this issue, we aim to develop a fully enzymatic route for converting carboxylic acids into atypical acyl-CoA starter units and their respective extender units through subsequent oxidation and carboxylation. We have selected a representative set of three CoA ligases from different clades, each described to possess a unique substrate specificity. We screened each enzyme with a range of substrates including phenylated, halogenated, and aminated carboxylic acids. We first used LCMS to observe the formation of product over time at varying physiological conditions and then used to spectrophotometry to determine their Michaelis Menten kinetics. The most promising CoA ligase was then coupled with an acyl-CoA oxidase and enoyl-CoA carboxylase/reductase, demonstrating the ability to enzymatically generate a library of atypical and chemically diverse extender units. Furthermore, this initial screening identified potential candidates for enzyme engineering and pointed toward a phylogenetic clade of CoA ligases from which we will search for homologs with improved substrate promiscuity and reaction velocity. This convenient, one-pot synthesis route can be used to provide a versatile set of middle- and long-chain starter and extender units with a variety of rest groups in order to introduce structural and functional diversity in the downstream products of PKSs to produce novel compounds.

219-BTP
Self-immobilizing biocatalysts for continuous stereoselective reactions in microfluidic systems

1P. Bitterwolf†, K. S. Rabe†, C. M. Niemeyer†
2Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Institute for Biological Interfaces 1, Karlsruhe, Germany

Biocatalytic flow processes enable the sustainable and continuous production of value-added chemicals for the industrial “white” biotechnology sector. Apart from optimizing the biocatalytic performance by methods of directed protein evolution, maximizing the effective immobilization capabilities of enzymes is essential to enable efficient fluidic micro reactor processes. In order to retain the biocatalysts under continuous flow conditions, we are developing self-immobilizing biocatalysts, such as whole-cells and isolated enzymes for functionalization of superparamagnetic micro particles, as well as reactor modules manufactured by 3D printing of bioinks containing thermostable enzymes. To further increase the volumetric activity of such reactors, we have recently developed self-assembling all-enzyme hydrogels with cofactor-regenerating capabilities, consisting of either an (R)- or an (S)-enantiospecific ketoreductase combined with the NADPH-regenerating glucose 1-dehydrogenase. Mounted in microfluidic reactors, the gels show excellent stereoselectivity (> 99% ee.) with near quantitative conversion (> 90%) for the reduction of prochiral ketones along with high robustness under process and storage conditions. The gels constitute a compartment in which reaction intermediates are retained, thereby enabling extraordinarily high total turnover numbers of the expensive cofactor NADP(H). Coupling of such reactor modules allows to facilitate multi step reaction cascades.

References
220-BTP
Identification and heterologous expression of putative NRPS-like and PKS coding genes from *Guignardia bidwellii* in *Magnaporthe oryzae*

1. H. Neumann1, A. Borger2, L. Schirling1, A. Antelo3, K. Andresen1, E. Thines1,2  
2. Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz - Institute of Molecular Physiology, Microbiology and Wine Research, Mainz, Germany  
3. Institute of Biotechnology and Drug Research (IBWF), Kaiserslautern, Germany

*Guignardia bidwellii* is the causal phytopathogenic fungus of black rot in vines posing a massive threat to organic viticulture. The phytotoxic dioxolanoines phenguinigradic acid and guignardic acid have been identified as potential virulence factors involved in the infection process of the black rot fungus.

To date a genetic manipulation of *G. bidwellii* has not been successfully established and therefore a heterologous expression system has been established for the study of the secondary metabolites involved in the biotic interaction.

The genome of *G. bidwellii* has been sequenced and two putative NRPS-like coding genes have been identified. Moreover, transcriptome analysis led to identification of one polyketide-synthase gene which expression correlates with the production of dioxolanoines.

In contrast to NRPS, NRPS-likes consist of only one module with adenylation, thiolation and thioesterase domains, but lacking a condensation domain. The catalyzed reaction is the coupling of exactly two deaminated aromatic amino acids as building blocks, which can be modified by other proteins.

These three genes (GbNRPS-like1/2 and GbPKS1) have been introduced into *Magnaporthe oryzae* in order to express these enzymes under the control of a constitutive promoter.

Several new compounds could be isolated from the culture of the heterologous expression strains that are not present in the wild type of *M. oryzae*: phenguinigradic acid, when GbNRPS-like1 was expressed, and guignardianone C, by the co-expression of the GbNRPS-like1 and the GbPKS1 genes.

221-BTP
Disruption of the PEP-Pyr-OAA node as a strategy to improve ectoine production in *Halomonas elongata*

1. K. Hobmeier1, K. Pflüger-Grau1, A. Kremling2, A. Martin-Sanguino1  
2. Technical University of Munich (TUM), Systems Biotechnology, Garching, Germany

The compatible solute ectoine is a natural stress-protection molecule highly demanded in cosmetics and biomedical industries. It is naturally produced by many organisms including *Halomonas elongata* which can survive at salt concentrations up to 30% by accumulating ectoine in its cytoplasm. To develop an improved ectoine producing strain, the leaky mutant was chosen as a starting point for additional modifications [Grammann et al., 2002]. By combining experiments and computational simulations we identified areas in the central metabolism crucial for ectoine synthesis, like the PEP-Pyr-OAA node. This node includes the anaplerotic reactions that replenish the OAA drawn out of the TCA cycle. Within the node two gluconeogenic enzymes PEPCK and NADP-ME were selected for knock-out (KO) by homologous recombination. A screening of the KO mutants (*H. elongata ΔpckA* and *ΔpckA ΔmaeB*) in a 96-well plate testing various salt concentrations and carbon sources (glycolytic and gluconeogenic) revealed that inhibitory effects on the growth are present only at low salt concentrations regardless of the carbon source. In a shaking flask experiment on glucose at 1 M salt the growth rates of both mutants were observed to be 10 to 20% slower. However, they achieved ectoine titers of 40% higher than the leaky strain. The disruption of the PEP-Pyr-OAA node by pckA and *maeB* KO initially leads to an increased supply of OAA due to the suppression of futile cycles. In non-halophilic bacteria such as *E. coli*, an increase in OAA reduces growth rates by decreasing anaerobic flux through Ppc. In contrast, *H. elongata* was shown to behave differently, presumably due to an alternative anaerobic reaction catalyzed by a salt-dependent membrane bound Oxaloacetate decarboxylase (oad). In conclusion, the PEP-Pyr-OAA node was identified as an important junction for metabolic engineering towards more powerful ectoine producing strains.


222-BTP
Development of a two-step hydrocyclone system for continuous processing in biotechnological production

1. H. Al-Kaidy1, J. Millauer2, B. U. Wilhelm 3, J. Bader4  
2. Beuth University of Applied Sciences, Life Sciences and Technology, Berlin, Germany  
3. bbi-biotech GmbH, Berlin, Germany

Hydrocyclones are widely used in all areas of particle separation [1]. However, commercially available systems have not been used for cell harvesting since cells are sensitive to shear forces and the separation of cell debris is another major challenge due to short retention times and prevailing g-forces. In order to use hydrocyclones for cell culture separation, a special control of the technological parameters such as flow velocity, inflow rate and g-forces is required.

In the present project, a two-stage, fully automated continuous separation process is being developed. In the first step of the separation, the cells will be separated from the liquid phase in a hydrocyclone and will then be returned to the fermenter. In a second step, the solution is led through another hydrocyclone where cell fragments and released DNA will be separated. This can be achieved by an automated precipitation process, which will be developed in this project. Finally, the clear supernatant will be further processed by a continuous chromatography system.

Using CAD and 3-D printing, prototypes of hydrocyclones in different geometries and radii were developed. In these, the cell separation of different cells is model-tested with yeasts and animal cells and characterized with respect to the cell
separation behavior in the hydrocyclone. Flow rates will be correlated with separation rates, the process stability will be determined with respect to different process parameters.

In first tests, it could be shown that the use of hydrocyclones is basically suitable for the separation of yeast cells. The first prototypes showed also that at flow rates of 500 ml min\(^{-1}\), the viability of the CHO cells after separation is about 77 percent. In order to optimize the separation process, there is an ongoing research to find the optimal design of the hydrocyclone, the best precipitation medium and suitable process parameters.


**223-BTP**

Employing microfluidic bioreactors for machine–assisted cultivation and analysis of productive biofilms

*P. Lemke\(^1\), K. S. Rabe\(^2\), H. Horn\(^2\), J. Gescher\(^2\), C. M. Niemeyer\(^1\)

\(^1\)Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Institute for Biological Interfaces, Karlsruhe, Germany

\(^2\)Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Engler-Bunte-Institut, Water Chemistry and Water Technology, Karlsruhe, Germany

Biofilms are one of most abundant forms of life in the ecosystem, however they are far from being fully understood. The self-assembled network of diverse bacterial species and other microbial organisms forms a complex community, which is usually robust and stress resistant. On the one hand these properties make them hard to handle and unwanted in the field of medicine, on the other hand they can potentially be utilized in terms of biotechnology or environmental biology. Employing biofilms could have great impact for the production of pharmaceuticals or the selective removal of undesirable substances. However, a much more detailed analysis and better biological understanding of biofilm genesis, growth and productivity is the key to successful application of these complex communities.

By utilizing microfluidic bioreactors for the cultivation of productive biofilms a precise control of the conditions and biomass sampling can be achieved. This, however, also requires an analytical method compatible with the reactor. To this end a dedicated platform for automated cultivation and analysis of multi-species biofilm under flow has been developed\(^1\). The platform is designed to support multiple microfluidic flow cells of various geometries while keeping environmental conditions such as temperature and flow rate constant. Flow cells can be easily manufactured as PDMS chips or PDMS–glass hybrids\(^2\), are compatible with analytical instrumentation such as automated light microscope, fluorescence reader or optical coherence tomography devices. The advantages of automated sampling are the ability to only remove very small amounts of sample volume while minimally invading the grown biofilm as well as in high spatiotemporal resolution in analysis of metabolites and biofilm composition. These features enable the detailed investigations of biocatalytically active biofilms in order to understand and optimize such biological systems.

**References**


**224-BTP**

Steryl esters, a new class of storage compounds in steroid-degrading bacteria

*J. Holert\(^1,2\), K. Brown\(^2\), A. Hashimi\(^2\), B. Philipp\(^2\), L. Eltis\(^2\), W. Mohn\(^2\)

\(^1\)Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Münster, Germany

\(^2\)University of British Columbia, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, Vancouver, Canada

Steryl esters are important neutral-lipid storage compounds in eukaryotes, but their formation has not been reported in bacteria. Strikingly, sterols can be used as growth substrates by many oleaginous bacteria, particularly by members of the Corynebacterineae order, which are known to produce other high-value neutral lipids such as triacylglycerols (TAG) and wax esters (WE). Here we demonstrate that selected Rhodococcus, Mycobacterium, and Amycolatopsis strains as well as some strains of the oligotrophic marine Gammaproteobacteria (OMG) group are also able to synthesize sterol esters and to sequester them into cytoplasmic lipid droplets when grown on sterols.

Using GC-MS based neutral lipid analysis tools and lipid droplet staining techniques, we found that cholesteryl esters maximally accumulated under nitrogen-limiting conditions, suggesting that sterol ester formation plays a crucial role for storing excess organic electron donors and carbon under adverse conditions. *Rhodococcus jostii* RHA1, an emerging model organism for the biotechnological production of valuable TAG and WE storage compounds, was able to synthesize phytosterol- and cholesteryl esters, the latter reaching up to 7% of its cellular dry weight and 70% of the lipid droplets. Purified lipid droplets from cholesterol-grown RHA1 contained cholesteryl esters, free cholesterol and TAGs. Interestingly, the majority of fatty acids stored in TAGs and cholesteryl esters were odd-numbered. In addition, we found formation of cholesteryl esters in *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* when grown with cholesterol plus an additional fatty acid substrate.

This study provides the first evidence for sterol ester accumulation in free-living and pathogenic bacteria and offers novel approaches for the biotechnological production of sterol esters with potential applications in the functional food, nutraceutical, and cosmetic industries. As such, phytosterols and their esters were recognized as potential agents to lower serum cholesterol levels and are approved in many countries as safe food additives for use in functional foods.

Holert et al., 2019, AEM.02353-19; DOI: 10.1128/AEM.02353-19

**225-BTP**

A NanoBit Metabolite Sensor based on the *Synechocystis* sp. PCC6803 PII Signaling Protein with PII-interacting protein X

*R. Rozbeh\(^1,2\), K. Forchhammer\(^1\)

\(^1\)University of Tuebingen, organismic interactions, Tübingen, Germany

\(^2\), Germany

Proteins are essential components for the main physiological process of living cells by making interactive networks that are responsive to evolving conditions. The interactions are affected by a complex interplay of structural conformations compared to wild-type protein X.
226-BTP

3D-Printed Flow Reactor Modules for Chemoenzymatic Synthesis

*M. Peng1, K. S. Rabe1

1Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Institute for Biological Interfaces (IBG-1) - Biomolecular Micro- and Nanostructures, Eggenstein-Leopoldshafen, Germany

The compartmentalization of chemical reactions is a basic principle in nature, which can be implemented in technical processes by performing reaction cascades with physically separated enzymes. For the development of novel approaches in biocatalysis this principle is a major source for innovations and is therefore mimicked in several ways. The immobilization of biocatalysts in a fluidic setup is one way to achieve compartmentalization and thus precise control over artificial reaction cascades. Established state-of-the-art technologies to arrange enzymes for sequential reactions require chemical or genetically encoded modifications of the target enzymes, which can negatively influence the activities and specificities of the immobilized enzymes. We recently demonstrated that unmodified thermostable enzymes can be immobilized by encapsulation in a simple and inexpensive, agarose-based thermoreversible hydrogel.1,2 The method allows the on-demand and on-site production of catalytically active reactor modules with various shapes based on grid-structured circles and polygons using a commercially available easy-to-operate 3D printing process. As exemplary biocatalysts, we used an esterase and an alcohol dehydrogenase from thermophilic organisms as well as a phenacylamine decarboxylases and a ketoisovalerate decarboxylase from mesophilic organisms. The latter was thermostabilized by rational protein engineering combined with directed evolution. We showed that the resulting 3D-printed modules can be utilized for continuous, multi-step sequential biotransformations, which can also be run in parallel fluidic setups. Via simply changing the number of stacked modules, the reaction profile could be tuned. We further expanded the scope of this approach by integrating phenacylamine decarboxylases reactor modules into a chemoenzymatic workflow.2


227-BTP

Enrichment of microbial communities from midgut and hindgut of Sun beetle larvae (Pachnoda marginata)

*B. Grosch Schroeder1, S. Kleinstueber1, W. Logrono1, M. Nikolausz1

1 Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Environmental Microbiology (Umb), Leipzig, Germany

Certain beetle larvae have complex gut microbiota capable of effective conversion of lignocellulosic biomass, therefore, this study aimed to enrich effective cellulose degrading microorganisms from the microbiota of the larva of Pachnoda marginata. Two enrichment strategies from midgut and hindgut of the Pachnoda marginata beetle larva were compared. In the strategy 1, the inoculum was prepared partially underoxic conditions and in the strategy 2 the inoculum was prepared under anoxic conditions with a larger inoculum size. The results presented correspond to three transfers, always carried out at 30 days of cultivation. The microbiota was enriched in a modified DSMZ 1036 medium with wheat straw as substrate, at pH 9 and incubated at 37 °C. For each experiment, samples of microbial biomass, liquid and gas phase were collected every 5 days. The amplicon sequencing of mcrA gene showed that the methanogens enriched in strategy 1 were significantly different from ones in strategy 2. In strategy 1 there was a predominance of Methanobrevibacter genus for midgut and hindgut enrichment cultures whereas in the strategy 2 Methanococcus was also abundant beside Methanosarcina. The physiological parameters have shown that the efficiency in methane production were higher for strategy 2, while the highest acetic acid concentrations were observed for the strategy 1. These results suggest that the volatile fatty acids (VFAs) in the strategy 1 have not completely been converted to methane. On the other hand, the strategy 2 showed a highest efficiency in the conversion of VFAs to methane. It could be explained by the effect of inoculation strategy on the microbial community composition in the strategy 2. As the gut enrichment cultures from strategy 2 were able to produce acetic acid and the community included aceticlastic methanogens, the activity of aceticlastic methanogens could explain the lack of accumulation of acetic acids. Based on the presented results we could infer that the inoculum preparation play an important role in the enrichment cultures by influencing the microbial community.

228-BTP

Screening of Signal Peptides for Secretion of Heterologous Proteins in C. glutamicum using split GFP

*C. Müller1, I. Chika Linda1, V. Walfenschmidt1, W. Wiechert1, M. Oldiges2

1 Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, IBG-1:Biotechnology, Jülich, Germany

Corynebacterium glutamicum is an important industrial platform organism for the production of a broad set of metabolite products and small molecules, such as amino and organic acids. Moreover, the Gram-positive C. glutamicum is able to secrete proteins via SEC pathway sufficiently. A huge variety of signal peptides (SP) for protein secretion is known. However, it is still a challenge to predict a suitable SP for high-level secretion of a specific heterologous target protein. Instead, SP libraries must be tested for each host and target protein. This requires the construction of a suitable strain library for every SP target protein combination.
and the determination of secretion performance under bioprocess-relevant conditions.

The objective is to establish a high throughput screening system for heterologous protein secretion in *C. glutamicum*. Therefore, a library of approx. 120 different *Bacillus subtilis* SP for SEC secretion of heterologous proteins is constructed semi-automatically. To investigate the influence of translation initiation, the distance between Shine-Dalgarno sequence and start codon is varied. The well-known model protein cutinase from *Fusarium solani pisi* is used. Individual strain performance is tested on a lab automation platform enabling miniaturized and parallelized cultivation experiments. The quantity of secreted proteins is determined by split GFP assay. By this established detection method, target protein concentration in culture supernatant is measured activity-independently. This is enabled by attachment of the 11th β-sheet of GFP (GFPI1) to the target protein and addition of the non-fluorescent GFPI-10 protein as detector reagent. The fluorescence of the self-associated GFP fragments provides an estimation about cutinase secretion performance.

It could be successfully shown that the split GFP assay is suitable for monitoring secretion performance of a heterologous cutinase in *C. glutamicum*. The complete workflow from cultivation to detection of secreted proteins is about to be done fully automated to provide sufficient throughput for SP strain library screening.

### 229-BTP

**Development of automated workflows for the accelerated production and characterization of catalytically active inclusion bodies**

*K. Küsters*, S. Albert, W. Wiechert, M. Oldiges

Enzymes as biocatalysts play an important role in industrial biotechnology for decades. Beside the direct application of purified soluble enzyme, many immobilization techniques are known to generate immobilized enzyme variants. This is often accompanied by reduction of overall enzyme activity, but also stabilizing effects are well known. During intracellular overexpression of enzymes in *Escherichia coli* in combination with a linker and an aggregation tag catalytically active inclusion bodies (CatIBs) were found. CatIBs are known for their high stability as well as their easy and low cost production and can provide an interesting alternative approach to immobilization of enzymes. However, since their discovery a few years ago, only a few CatIB variants were described in literature. Although a substantial number of specific aggregation tags and linker sequences are known, there is not enough structural understanding to predict a suitable combination of aggregation tag and linkers to successfully generate a CatIB for a target protein. One reason is the required time and resources to establish manual cloning and characterization workflows of different target genes in combination with many linker and aggregation tags.

The aim of the project is to automate the molecular biology construction workflows as well as the characterization processes to accelerate the generation of successful CatIB variants. As a prototypic example the lysine decarboxylase (cadA) from *E. coli* is used as model for CatIB formation.

Therefore, lysine decarboxylase gene was combined with ten linker/aggregation tag variations and assembled via Golden Gate cloning in an expression plasmid. Strikingly, the ten variants showed different levels of CatIB formation based on microscopic observation, proving the hypothesis that linker/aggregation tag combinations clearly influence the ability to build CatIB for lysine decarboxylase. Afterwards, the enzymatic activity of the inclusion bodies was tested via activity measurement in microplate format and also showed different residual CatIB activities of the variants. The developed automated workflows enable a fast detection of successful CatIB variants.

### 230-BTP

**Efficient in-line extraction system for selective 1-hexanol production from synthesis gas fermentation**

*P. Kottenhahn*, G. Philipp*, S. Jennewein

1Fraunhofer Institute for Molecular Biology and Applied Ecology IME, Department for Industrial Biotechnology, Fraunhofer IME, Aachen, Germany

In recent years, *Clostridium carboxidivorans* P7 has moved into focus of scientific interest due to its rare ability to metabolize Syngas, a mixture of H₂, CO, CO₂ (and N₂) directly to the industrially relevant compound hexanol. This medium length alcohol is used in a wide range of applications as a solvent and can be further processed into surfactants, plasticizers, plastics and insect repellent. Furthermore, the use of syngas fermentation products such as butanol and hexanol has been discussed as a potential sustainable drop in fuel.

Other fermentation products of *C. carboxidivorans* P7 are ethanol and butanol and the corresponding acids, namely acetate, butyrate and caproate. Product titers and ratios are highly dependent on gas and medium composition and fermentation parameters. Hexanol titers produced by *C. carboxidivorans* P7 were low until recent publications concerning fermentation design reported optimized fermentation parameters and media composition for efficient alcohol production. To identify a potential limiting factor in hexanol biosynthesis with *C. carboxidivorans* P7, we determined inhibitory concentrations of the product. The inhibitory hexanol concentration we found matched the highest hexanol titers produced in other studies. This hints at product inhibition being the currently limiting factor in hexanol production. To circumvent product toxicity in syngas fermentation, we developed an in-line extraction system for hexanol. A threefold increase of product concentration was found when oleyl alcohol was used. Hexanol titers above toxic concentrations were reached with the product being highly concentrated in the extracting agent with only low titers of other products. This opens up the possibility to further improve hexanol yields beyond theoretically toxic titers, while simultaneously allowing for easy product harvest and purification from the extracting agent.

### 231-VPP

**Parallel and scalable workflow for the identification and analysis of Phages in sequencing data**

*M. Marquet*, M. W. Pletz, O. Makarewicz, A. Viehweger, M. Hoelzer, C. Brandt

1University Hospital Jena, Institut für Infektionsmedizin und Krankenhaushygiene, Jena, Germany

2University Hospital Leipzig, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

3EMBL-EBI European Bioinformatics, Wellcome Trust Genome Campus, Hinxton, United Kingdom

Phages will be increasingly used as platforms for antigen display, in pathogen detection, or as vaccines, e.g., as an alternative for the treatment of multiresistant bacteria. Long
read sequencing technologies, such as nanopore sequencing, allows for complete phage-genomes sequencing anytime, with comparatively low investment. Sequencing data, in general, allows us to study the occurrence, spread and the type of bacteriophages, which in return increases the demand for automated pipelines. Numerous phage prediction tools have been introduced. They all differ in dependencies, their language, the usability, the output data and more, massively increasing the difficulties for a broader audience to use.

Methods

The tool “What-the-Phage” (WtP) is written in Nextflow and utilizes Docker containers for a simplistic workflow execution in any Linux environment. All containers are written, tested and stored on hub.docker.com/u/multifractal. WtP automatically utilizes these containers which in return means that the Installation of specific tools is no longer needed. All dependencies or databases are automatically downloaded. WtP is freely available at github.com/replikation/What_the_Phage, which includes a simple installation routine for Nextflow/Docker.

Results

We established a reproducible, scalable and easy-to-use workflow for phage identification and analysis. Our tool combines currently six established phage identification tools: Virfinder, PPR-Meta, Virosorter, Deepvirfinder, Metaphinder, and MARVEL. WtP analyses and summarizes the results gathered from sequencing data or direct nanopore raw reads. For this, each sample is combined into heatmaps for comfortable results interpretation. Moreover, multiple samples are computed in parallel and if less hardware is available, WtP decreases the parallelization automatically.

Conclusion

Our ongoing effort is to incorporate additional identification tools, more downstream analysis, and visual phage annotation. The modular setup allows us to add additional tools easily. WtP is a highly robust and stable pipeline for the identification and analysis of Phages which can easily handle both single and multi-sample inputs.

232-VPP

Spatiotemporal binding dynamics of the Lsr2-type xenogeneic silencer CgpS during prophage induction in Corynebacterium glutamicum

M. Hünnefeld1, A. Filipchyk2, J. Frunzke1

1Forschungszentrum Jülich, IBG-1: Biotechnologie, Jülich, Germany
2Institute of Food Safety, Food Technology and Veterinary Public Health Department for Farm Animals and Veterinary Public Health, Christian Doppler-Laboratory for Monitoring of Microbial Contaminants, Vienna, Austria

1. Introduction

Virus-derived DNA represents a predominant cause for strain-specific differences within a bacterial species. Due to potentially toxic gene products, the expression of viral genes requires a stringent regulation. In a recent study, we have characterized the function of the Lsr2-type protein CgpS encoded by the CGP3 prophage of the actinobacterium Corynebacterium glutamicum1. Genome-wide analysis of DNA-binding revealed that CgpS binds to AT-rich genomic regions and confirmed the CGP3 prophage as the predominant target of CgpS. Interference with CgpS binding resulted in the induction of the CGP3 prophage element, highlighting the essential role of CgpS for maintaining the lysogenic state of the CGP3 prophage2.

2. Objectives

This study focused on the time-resolved analysis of the DNA binding dynamics of CgpS in the course of prophage induction in order to decipher its role on the control of the phage life cycle.

3. Methods

Time-resolved chromatin affinity purification and sequencing (ChAP-Seq) analysis combined with proteome and transcriptome analyses.

4. Results

Our data revealed that CgpS shows a dynamic binding behavior under inducing conditions. However, CgpS did not fully dissociate from the CGP3 region during induction, but rather emphasized a remodeling of the silencer nucleoprotein complex at the prophage region and a partial reallocation to further targets in the host genome. Among these host targets were several genes encoding global transcriptional regulators, proteins involved in cell envelope biosynthesis, and proteins involved in DNA replication and repair.

5. Conclusion

Altogether, our studies provide comprehensive insights into genome dynamics during the process of prophage induction and highlight the important role of Lsr2-type proteins in the coordination of the phage life cycle.


233-VPP

Investigation of Ionic Liquids for concentration of viral particles of aqueous samples

J. Sommer1, B. Bromberger2, T. Gundolf1, R. Kalb3, P. Rossmanith1,2, P. J. Mester1

1Institute of Food Safety, Food Technology and Veterinary Public Health Department for Farm Animals and Veterinary Public Health, University of Veterinary Medicine, Unit of Food Microbiology, Vienna, Austria
2Institute of Food Safety, Food Technology and Veterinary Public Health Department for Farm Animals and Veterinary Public Health, University of Veterinary Medicine, Unit of Food Microbiology, Vienna, Austria
3Proionic Production of Ionic Substances GmbH, Grambach, Austria

Introduction: Due to ongoing globalization, an increased number of virus disease outbreaks has been recorded. Although recorded outbreaks are increasing, detection methods are not underlying this trend. This results in a high number of not verified virus-associated outbreaks, which mainly can be related to determination limits of currently used detection methods. Moreover, detection of viral particles out of native, aqueous environmental samples is not very promising, since preceding separation methods, like ultracentrifugation or various membrane-filter techniques, are limited.
Objectives: Therefore, the aim of this study was the development of a two-phase-system, consisting of an ionic Liquid-phase (IL-phase), for concentration of different viruses.

Material & methods: Fourteen different hydrophobic ILs were screened for their phase-concentration potential of viral particles. The viruses were selected according to their capsid and genome structure; as a result, the first screening was performed with the bacterial viruses P100 and PRD1. The individual liquids consist of a high hydrophobic cation, anion or both. The phase-concentration potential of the liquids was investigated with plaque assay and quantitative real-time polymerase chain reaction (qPCR). Last but not least, the influences of pH, salinity as well as other external inhibitors, such as carbohydrates, proteins and lipids were also determined with the most promising phase-systems.

Results: Our results exhibited good separation properties of at least two ILs, whereas most of them also led to the inactivation of the virus particles. The investigation of external factors (like pH, salinity, etc.) exhibited influence on the two-phase-system, which need to be optimized. The results indicated that especially a pH of 7.5 and protein impurities decreased the amount of viral particles in the aqueous phase of both bacterial viruses, P100 and PRD1.

Conclusions: All in all, these preliminary results showed promising potential of IL-phase-systems for concentration of viruses.

234-VPP
Impacts of prophage encoded genes on host metabolic networks
N. Saadat1
1Heinrich Heine Universität Düsseldorf, Quantitative und Theoretische Biologie, Düsseldorf, Germany

Dynamics of bacterial populations, as well as prokaryotic evolution itself, are strikingly affected by bacteriophages. The integration of the phage genome into the host chromosome as a prophage can be for the host beneficial. Phages arose from a temperate state can pick host genetic material during their replication cycle and introduce it into the new target when getting back into the dormant, prophage state. This mechanism called transduction, enables a putative fitness advantage for the host by acquiring new genes coding for a metabolic function. The impact of these transduced genes to the host fitness is still debated and poor studied systematically. In this study we coupled a bioinformatic approach with a network expansion algorithm and developed a new method that allows to quantify the impact of prophage encoded genes to the bacterial metabolic network. Our results shows that genes with strong impact on the host metabolism are significantly under represented in all prophages along the full bacterial taxonomic range. In some cases we identify reactions encoded in prophage regions having a significantly high impact on the metabolic network. Furthermore, some of these high impact reactions are part of the pentose phosphate pathway or are associated with pentose and nucleotide metabolism. Our method shows that phage domestication towards fitness benefits is reserved just for a minority of bacterial strains.

236-VPP
Isolation and characterization of novel Streptomyces phages
A. Hardy1, L. Kevery1, V. Sharma1, J. Frunzke1
1Forschungszentrum Jülich, IBG-1: Biotechnology, Jülich, Germany

Introduction
Bacteriophages—or phages for short—are viruses which infect bacteria. Phages are the most abundant organisms in the biosphere, with an estimated $10^{31}$ phage particles on our planet. Yet, fewer than 20,000 phage genomes have been described until now—many of which having not been thoroughly characterized. A similar situation applies to Streptomyces, a bacterial genus much studied for its complex secondary metabolism. Around 80 phages infecting Streptomyces have been described so far; however model phages which have been extensively characterized are lacking.

Objectives
We aim at isolating and characterizing novel phages infecting Streptomyces.

Materials & methods
We isolated phages from soil samples capable of infecting Streptomyces venezuelae or Streptomyces coelicolor. The DNA of these phages was extracted and subjected to genome sequencing. We assembled the phage genomes
and annotated them to assign putative function to predicted coding sequences.

The novel phages were also imaged by transmission electron microscopy and experimentally characterized in terms of host-range and infection dynamics.

Results

We isolated from soil samples phages infecting *Streptomyces venezuelae* and *Streptomyces coelicolor*, respectively. Transmission electron microscopy identified all five phages as members of the Siphoviridae family. Their genomes ranged from 39 to 133kb, and their GC content was comprised between 48 and 72%. Lifestyle predictions classified four of them as temperate, one being predicted as lytic. Interestingly, three phages encode homologs of Lsr2 proteins, which are normally used by bacteria to silence foreign DNA. Further genome analyses revealed the pervasiveness of Lsr2-like proteins among phages infecting Actinobacteria, with more than 20% of *Streptomyces* phages encoding such proteins.

Conclusion

We isolated and characterized five novel *Streptomyces* phages. Three of them feature Lsr2-like xenogeneic silencer proteins, which are the subject of further investigations.

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### 237-VPP

**Phage-Paper-Scissors - A new paper-based sampling method for monitoring of viruses**

*M. Bobal1, J. Sommer1, P. J. Mester1, A. K. Witte2, D. Schoder2, P. Rossmanith1,3*

1*Vetmeduni Vienna, CD-MOMIKO, Vienna, Austria  
2*Hygiene Technologie Kompetenzzentrum GmbH, Bamberg, Germany  
3*Vetmeduni Vienna, Unit of Food Microbiology Institute of Food Safety, Food Technology and Veterinary Public Health Department for Farm Animals and Veterinary Public Health, Vienna, Austria

1. Introduction

Bacteriophages are increasingly mentioned as a potent measure to overcome hygiene-related issues in food industry as well as antibiotic resistance in medicine. Unfortunately, bacteria also tend to develop resistance against bacteriophages as well and should not be traded as a "miracle cure". Therefore, monitoring of the abundance of bacteriophages, especially of self-introduced ones, in food production areas will be an important indicator to proof the suitability of this new disinfection and therapeutic method.

2. Objectives

For surveillance of such bacteriophages, we developed and evaluated a method that is easy to use at low cost to be as sensitive as conventional swabbing systems.

3. Materials & methods

(Artificially contaminated) Stickers of plain paper were analyzed using plaque assay and qPCR. As the majority of the bacteriophages used as disinfectant belong to the order of Caudovirales, bacteriophage P100 was used as a representative in this first setup.

4. Results

After demonstrating the suitability of paper stickers to uptake and release phage P100 over a 14 day time period, additional tests were performed, such as the determination of the recovery rate compared to conventional swabs. Further, we also confirmed the feasibility of pooling, resilience to cleansing and disinfection and experiments under real conditions by sampling of various door handles. Results suggest that the presented sticker system might offer a promising cost effective alternative sampling system with improved handling characteristics.

5. Conclusion

As the use of bacteriophages is increasing, especially in food industry, the continues determination of the bacteriophage load of food surroundings is getting crucial to prevent phage resistance development, phage spread as well as phage persistence. Our investigation for a novel qPCR-based sampling system with highest sensitivity and with long-term monitoring ability, not only offers new possibilities as monitoring measure, but also facilitate the collection of viromics relevant data.

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### 238-VPP

**Expanding viromes associated with *Brevundimonas* and *Serratia***

*1. Friedrich1, B. Bodenberger2, A. Klassen1, R. Hertel1, R. Daniel1  
2*Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Genomic and Applied Microbiology, Göttingen, Germany

It is indicated that viruses of bacteria (phages) use predominantly dsDNA as genomic material and their genomes are highly diverse. To investigate both assumptions new experimental paths need to be taken. We combined isolation-based methods and different general metagenomic approaches. Two new bacterial host systems, *Brevundimonas* and *Serratia* were isolated and characterized. *Brevundimonas*, a k-strategist, with an oligotrophic lifestyle. *Serratia*, is a r-strategist, with a copiotrophic lifestyle. Both strains were used for phage enrichment using water samples of the primary treatment step derived from Göttingen (Germany) sewage plant. In this way, the generated host-based viromes were addressed with classical isolation-based approaches as well as with modern metagenomic approaches targeting putative phages containing dsDNA, ssDNA, dsRNA or ssRNA as genetic material.

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### 239-VPP

**Time series analysis of lysogeny dynamics in different environments**

*1* E. Oldenburg  
2* Heinrich-Heine Universität Düsseldorf, Institute of quantitative and theoretical biology , Düsseldorf, Germany

It is known that microbial viruses can control host abundance through the density-dependent dynamics of lytic predators and prey. However, not much is known about whether, and if so how, moderate viruses that coexist and multiply with their host affect microbial communities. It has already been shown that virus-like particles are relatively rare at high host densities. This could indicate suppressed lysis. Various established models, for example, have shown that lytic dynamics are preferred. Meta-analyses of published viral and microbial densities showed that such a trend was widespread in different ecosystems, from soil to freshwater to human lungs. To understand in detail how lysogeny dynamics affects the microbial community we investigate...
different time series data sets from different environments. In the actual study we combine bioinformatics approaches that characterizes host-associated pro-/phages, with mathematical modeling that allows explaining observed dynamics in the different data sets. Therefore we examined different lysogeny-controlling scenarios, host-triggered (defense mechanism) or phage triggered (arbitrium like mechanisms) or both. Our results shows that a single scenario can't explain observed dynamic in the different datasets and pinpoints to the influence of other factors that are yet not characterized.

240-VPP
1N. Urbanska1,2, E. Brzozowska3, A. Pyra4, K. Kili5
2Ludwig Hirszfeld Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy, Polish Academy of Sciences, Department of Immunology of Infectious Diseases, Wroclaw, Poland
3University of Wroclaw, Faculty of Biological Sciences, Institute of Experimental Biology, Wroclaw, Poland
4University of Wroclaw, Faculty of Chemistry, Department of Crystallography, Wroclaw, Poland

Question: Multi-resistant, biofilm-forming bacteria are prevalent problem in human society. Since the alternatives for antibiotics are running out, researchers’ attention has been drawn to bacteriophages. These viruses are a promising alternative for treating bacterial diseases. However, for a large number of phages, it still remains to be discovered which proteins take part in the infection process. Investigating biochemical properties of structural phage proteins is a new and promising approach. The main focus of this research, dual-function tail tubular proteins, are thought to take part not only in stabilizing the bacteriophage structure, but also to display enzymatic activity. The question we addressed was if TTPAgp11 from φYeO3-12 bacteriophage exhibits enzymatic activity towards disaccharide substrates.

Methods: Purification was conducted using batch chromatography. Clustal Omega tool was utilized to perform multiple sequence alignments among TTPAs. The substrate binding by TTPAgp11 was verified by thermophoresis, whereas the substrate-dependent stability was analyzed using nanoDSF technology.

Results: It was observed that maltose had a weak effect for TTPAgp11 stabilization. The thermophoretic profiles for both TTPAs suggested that TTPA gp11 exhibits the same enzymatic activity as TTPAgp31. Furthermore, it was confirmed that sequence similarity between TTPAs gp31 and gp11 is over 50%.

Conclusions: Until recently, tail tubular proteins have been considered as structural elements only. Our data confirms that TTPAs exhibit biochemical activity. Therefore, their ability to hydrolyze disaccharides can be associated with antibacterial properties.


242-VPP
Pseudomonas aeruginosa bacteriophages for possible therapeutic applications
1T. Martens1, G. Maschkowitz1, S. Schubert1, H. Fickenscher1
2Institute for Infection Medicine, Kiel, Germany

Pseudomonas (P.) aeruginosa is a highly relevant bacterial pathogen causing, e. g., pneumonia, sepsis, or wound infections. This species is characterized by pronounced and furthermore variable antibiotic resistances. Bacteriophages are a promising additional antimicrobial therapeutic approach.

Using clinical P. aeruginosa isolates including multidrug-resistant variants as host organisms, 13 bacteriophages have been isolated from wastewater. After several plaque purifications, the host range was assessed by spot test assays using 130 clinical P. aeruginosa isolates, again including multidrug-resistant strains. The results demonstrated that all the tested multidrug-resistant bacteria were susceptible to lytic bacteriophage infection. The isolated phages showed strongly diverse host ranges (23.7 - 62.7 %) including 11 % primarily phage-resistant isolates.

In order to further broaden the host range, single phages were passaged on initially resistant P. aeruginosa isolates and new phages were isolated against the primarily phage-resistant strains. A cocktail of five bacteriophages with the broadest host spectrum showed an extensive coverage of 130 P. aeruginosa isolates. The results are shown in the following diagram. Using clinical P. aeruginosa isolates including multidrug-resistant variants as host organisms, 13 bacteriophages have been isolated from wastewater. After several plaque purifications, the host range was assessed by spot test assays using 130 clinical P. aeruginosa isolates, again including multidrug-resistant strains. The results demonstrated that all the tested multidrug-resistant bacteria were susceptible to lytic bacteriophage infection. The isolated phages showed strongly diverse host ranges (23.7 - 62.7 %) including 11 % primarily phage-resistant isolates.

In order to further broaden the host range, single phages were passaged on initially resistant P. aeruginosa isolates and new phages were isolated against the primarily phage-resistant strains. A cocktail of five bacteriophages with the broadest host spectrum showed an extensive coverage of the 130 P. aeruginosa isolates tested. Thus, a broad-spectrum coverage of diverse P. aeruginosa variants for therapeutic purposes seems feasible.

243-SCAP
Studying bacteriophage infections using Raman microspectroscopy
1M. Monsees1, V. Turzynski1, A. J. Probst1
2Institute for environmental microbiology and biotechnology, Chemistry, Essen, Germany

Introduction

In vitro analysis of O-antigen specific bacteriophage P22 inactivation by Salmonella outer membrane vesicles
*M. S. Stephan1,2, N. K. Broeker1, A. Saragliadis3, D. Linke3, S. Barbirz4

The observed dynamic in the different TTPAgp11 was verified by thermophoresis, whereas the substrate-dependent stability was analyzed using nanoDSF technology.

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The observed dynamic in the different TTPAgp11 was verified by thermophoresis, whereas the substrate-dependent stability was analyzed using nanoDSF technology.
Viral particles were characterized by Raman spectrometers long before Raman microspectrometers were commercially available [1]. However, Raman microspectrometers have only a spatial resolution of approximately 1 mm enabling measurements of single bacterial cells but not of their respective viruses. Since studies have shown that Raman spectra of bacteria allow differentiation of cells of one species between its growth phases [2], we hypothesize that this method can also be used to differentiate between virus-infected cells and uninfected cells.

Objective

The aim of this work was to find marker Raman shifts to spot viral infections in bacterial pure cultures using multivariate data analysis.

Material and Methods

*Pseudomonas* sp. DSM 21482 was grown in TSB medium and infected with phage phi 6. Throughout the growth curve, samples for Raman spectroscopy were taken at several time points, fixed, dehydrated and stored at -20 °C until spectral acquisition using a Renishaw inVia™ confocal Raman Microscope. The acquired spectra were analyzed using the R package Micro Raman [3].

Results

We present the ordination analysis of single microbial Raman spectra for different time points of their growth curve. The hypothesis was tested using a Monte Carlo-based permutation procedure based on the categories of uninfected and infected *Pseudomonas* cells. Additionally, we describe substantial differences between spectra of the two categories.

Conclusion

Raman spectroscopy is a powerful tool to differentiate uninfected from infected microbial cells and might have high potential for providing key information for detecting viral infections in environmental samples when combined with other microscopy techniques.


244-SCAP

Neutral mechanisms and niche differentiation in steady-state insular microbial communities revealed by single cell analysis

*Z. Liu*, N. Cichocki1, T. Hübschmann1, C. Süring1, I. D. Ofişer2, W. Sloan1, V. Grimm1, S. Müller1

1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research GmbH - UFZ, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

2Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom

In completely insular microbial communities, evolution of community structure cannot be shaped by the immigration of new members. Also, when those communities are run in steady-state, the influence of environmental factors on their assembly is reduced. Therefore, one would expect similar community structures under steady-state conditions. Yet, in parallel setups variability does occur. To reveal ecological mechanisms behind this phenomenon, five parallel reactors were studied at the single-cell level for about 100 generations and community structure variations were quantified by ecological measures. Whether community variability can be controlled was tested by implementing soft temperature stressors as potential synchronizers. The low slope of the log-normal rank-order abundance curves indicated a predominance of neutral mechanisms, i.e., where species identity plays no role. Variations in abundance ranks of subcommunities and increase in inter-community pairwise β-diversity over time support this. Niche differentiation was also observed, as indicated by steeper geometric-like rank-order abundance curves and increased numbers of correlations between abiotic and biotic parameters during initial adaptation and after disturbances. Still, neutral forces dominated community assembly. Our findings suggest that complex microbial communities in insular steady-state environments can be difficult to synchronize and maintained in their original or desired structure as they are non-equilibrium systems.

245-SCAP

The author has not agreed to a publication.

246-SCAP

Insights into single-cell heterogeneity of prokaryotes by single-cell RNAseq

*C. Homberger*1, F. Imdahl1, E. Vafadamejad1, A. E. Saliba1, J. Vogel1,2

1Helmholtz-Institute for RNA-based Infection Research (HIRI), RNA Biology of bacterial infections, Wuerzburg, Germany

2University of Wuerzburg, Institute for Molecular Infection Biology (IMIB), Wuerzburg, Germany

RNA-sequencing (RNA-seq) technologies have provided much insight into the transcriptional and regulatory networks in many bacterial and host populations. However, these approaches typically report average expression profiles in populations and fail to provide information on the single-cell level. Heterogeneity at the single-cell level has been explored mostly in eukaryotic cells; however, bacterial populations that are genetically identical have also been shown to exhibit dramatic heterogeneity that has been difficult to explore due to the lack of global single-cell approaches. Here, we investigated the heterogeneity of *Salmonella enterica* serovar Typhimurium (*S. enterica*) and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (*P. aeruginosa*) under different growth conditions using a poly(A)-independent single-cell RNA-seq (scRNA-seq). We compared three different growth conditions for *S. enterica*: (i) mid-exponential, (ii) late-exponential and (iii) early-stationary phase. *P. aeruginosa* was investigated under anaerobic stress conditions and represents the first data set generated for this species. Our results show a heterogeneous behaviour in cells grown in mid-exponential growth phase compared to the late-exponential as well as early-stationary phase. The results show that our scRNA-seq workflow can be successfully implemented with different bacterial species. One relevant hurdle to take is the inefficient lysis of the different bacterial species. For this purpose, we aim to develop a lysis validation assay in order to apply the scRNA-seq approach to different bacterial species and growth conditions. Having those transcriptomes from single bacterial cells of different species will promise a better understanding of cell-to-cell heterogeneity, persister cell formation and antibiotic resistance mechanisms.
247-SCAP
Comparative analyses of plasmodial network growth in three different slime molds (Myxogastria)
*C. Westendorf1,2, C. J. Gruber1, K. Schnitzer1, S. Kraker2, M. Grube2
1Max Planck Institute for Dynamics and Self-Organization, Goettingen, Germany
2University of Graz, Institute of Biology, Graz, Austria

The plasmodium of Myxogastria is a large single cell and relies on pulsatile contractions to distribute nutrients or signalling molecules across its network. Its most prominent member, Physarum polycephalum, has emerged as a model organism to study biological fluid dynamics and foraging behavior. However, Myxogastria comprises of more than 1000 species [1], many of them with an extended plasmodial network throughout their life cycle. Here we studied the plasmodial growth and network development in two further slime mold species: Badhamia utricularis and Fuligo septica. After transferring these sampled slime molds to laboratory culture conditions we first recorded their plasmodial expansion and subsequently applied quantitative image analysis to extract the network and oscillatory properties. We discovered significant variations in chemotaxis, velocity, and oscillatory behavior of plasmodia among and within these species. This shows that the plasmodial growth of slime molds develop diverse and specifically organized networks [2].


248-SCAP
Noise in virulence gene regulation in Staphylococcus aureus
*S. George1, E. Lehmann1, A. Duque-Jaramillo1, N. Vetter1, D. Keinhörrter1, G. Hermosdorff2, E. Schäffer3, F. Oesterhelt1, C. Wolz1
1University of Tübingen, Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Tübingen, Germany
2University of Tübingen, Cellular Nanoscience, Center for Plant Molecular Biology (ZMBP), Tübingen, Germany

Bacteria respond to changing environments by various adaptive strategies. This includes mechanisms leading to phenotypic variability within a genetically homogeneous population. In Staphylococcus aureus the synthesis of capsular polysaccharide (CP) was shown to be highly heterogeneous and growth phase dependent, and correlates with expression of the capA-P operon coding for biosynthesis genes. The noise in cap expression is an example of phenotypic heterogeneity in pathogenic bacteria increasing the adaptive capacity of the population. The temporal nature of cap expression also designates it as a stationary phase marker and possibly an indicator of the metabolic status of the cell. The expression of cap is regulated at the promoter level by sigma factor B and several transcription factors such as CodY, Rot, Sae. Furthermore, metabolic cues may also impact CP synthesis at the post-transcriptional level. The high degree of noise in CP production may thus be due to noise propagation from the large number of regulators, cell to cell differences in metabolism or the convergence of these determinants.

Here we aim to decipher the primary source of noise. To this end, we established single-cell assays such as immunofluorescence, promoter-activity microscopy, mRNA fluorescent in-situ hybridisation and live cell imaging within a microfluidic device. We confirmed heterogeneity at the CP synthesis level as well on the transcriptional level in single cells. Cap promoter activity occurred only in non-growing bacterial sub-populations and ATP depletion rapidly triggers CP synthesis. Correlation of dual cap promoter activities within single cells revealed that noise in cap transcription is mainly extrinsic and thus driven by fluctuation in cellular components. We now correlate noise of candidate regulators with that of cap gene expression within the same cell under defined environmental stress conditions. This allows us to determine which factor mainly drives heterogeneity of cap and potentially other stationary phase genes.

249-SCAP
Flow Cytometric Analysis and Quantification of Clostridoides difficile and its Spores
*C. Döring1, J. Fischer1, H. Bahl1
1Universität Rostock, Microbiology, Rostock, Germany

The Clostridoides difficile infection (CDI) is one of the main causes for nosocomial diarrhoea in the EU, leading to mass outbreaks and high mortality of risk groups. Spores of C. difficile are a main factor for infection and recurrence of the disease. Thus, knowledge about spores is essential to develop treatment strategies against CDI. The analysis of spores of different C. difficile strains is difficult and time consuming with classical microbiological methods. In contrast, flow cytometry is a method that can analyse a variety of cells within short time and with high precision. Therefore, the objective of this work was to develop a method for the analysis of spores of C. difficile. First, spores of strain 630 were purified. Then vegetative cells and purified spore suspensions were stained with a live-dead-staining, containing the fluorescent dyes thiazol orange (TO) and propidium iodide (PI). Samples were then analysed by flow cytometry. These results were compared to spore counts that were obtained by plating or in a counting chamber. Finally, the method was tested by analysing mixed cultures of vegetative cells and spores, that were incubated for up to 96 h. The purification protocol yielded spore suspensions with 97 % purity. Flow cytometric spore quantification of these samples resulted in the same order of magnitude as spore counting. In comparison to vegetative cells, spores showed a difference in their ability to take up fluorescent stains, as vegetative cells displayed TO and PI intensities 10 times higher than spores. In mixed cultures, only spore concentrations higher than 1 × 10^6 spores/ml correlated with spore counting. These data suggest that high counts of cells and cell debris interfere with the spore signal and thus alter the spore count.

We conclude that flow cytometry is suitable to quantify spore concentration in pure suspensions. The analysis of spores in the presence of high cell or cell debris concentrations by flow cytometry needs further optimization.

250-SCAP
Quantitative assays for single cell studies of spore germination
*S. Schwind1, M. Killian2,1, R. Koch2,1, B. Steinfeldt1, E. Kaganovitch3, B. Wollenhaupt3, D. Kohlheyer3, L. Bischofs-Pfeifer2,1
1MPI for Terrestrial Microbiology, Marburg, Germany
2University of Heidelberg, BioQuant, Heidelberg, Germany
3Forschungszentrum Jülich, Jülich, Germany

When exposed to nutrient starvation Bacilli forms highly resistant spores which can stay dormant for many years and
revive almost instantly when conditions improve. Spore germination is a fascinating process which plays an important role for the function of many probiotics. Quantitative single cell studies of spore germination are challenging as suitable experimental and bioinformatics analysis tools are lacking. Here we present two experimental assays for a quantitative analysis of germination traits based on time-lapse microscopy by using defined hydrogels and a microfluidic device, respectively. Moreover, an image processing pipeline which segments, tracks and classifies non-germinating and germinating spores was developed. We apply both assays to study the heterogeneous germination dynamics of *B. subtilis* spores in response to L-alanine. Individual spores differ in their propensity for germination in response to specific nutrient germinants and the dynamics of spore germination is also highly variable. The average germination kinetics of spore populations are comparable in both assays. While hydrogel assays have the advantage of generating higher throughput, microfluidic devices provide superior control enabling one to precisely maintain and change environmental conditions. In summary, we developed two complementary set-ups that are suitable for single cell studies of spore germination.

**251-MSRP**

*Staphylococcus aureus* responds to allicin by global S-thioallylation - role of the Bx/BSH/YpdA pathway and the disulfide reductase MerA to overcome allicin stress


1Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Biologie-Mikrobiologie, Berlin, Germany
2Bielefeld University, Center for Biotechnology, Bielefeld, Germany
3RWTH Aachen University, Department of Plant Physiology, Aachen, Germany
4Bielefeld University, Center for Biotechnology, Bielefeld, Germany
5Emst-Montz-Ardelt-University of Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany

**Introduction:** Allicin (diallyl thiosulfinate) from garlic exhibits broad-spectrum antibacterial activity against many multidrug resistant bacteria. The thiol-reactive mode of action of allicin involves its S-thioallylations of low molecular weight (LMW) thiols and protein thiols. **Objectives:** We investigated the antimicrobial mode of action and possible detoxification mechanisms of allicin in *S. aureus* USA300.

**Materials & Methods:** We used RNA-seq transcriptomics, proteomics, redox biosensor measurements and phenotype analyses to study the stress responses, redox changes and the targets for S-thioallylation by allicin in *S. aureus*. **Results:** Allicin caused a strong thiol-specific oxidative and sulfur stress response and protein damage as revealed by the induction of the PerR, HprP, QsrR, MhqR, CstR, CtsR, HrcA and CymR regulons in the RNA-seq transcriptome. Allicin also interfered with metal and cell wall homeostasis and caused induction of the Zur, CosR and GraRS regulons. Bx/BSH/YpdA biosensor measurements revealed a strongly increased EBSH under allicin stress. In the proteome, 57 proteins were identified with S-thioallylations under allicin treatment, including translation factors (EF-Tu, EF-Ts), metabolic and redox enzymes (AldA, GuaB, Tpx, KatA, BxA, MsrB) as well as redox-sensitive MarR/SarA-family regulators (MgrA, SarA, SarH1, SarS). **Conclusion:** Phenotype and biochemical analyses revealed that BSH and the HprP-controlled disulfide reductase MerA are involved in allicin detoxification in *S. aureus*. The reversal of protein S-thioallylation was catalyzed by the Bx/BSH/YpdA pathway. Finally, the BSSB reductase YpdA was shown to use S-allylmercaptobacillithiol (BSSA) as substrate to regenerate BSH in *S. aureus*. **Conclusion:** Allicin results in an oxidative shift of EBSH and protein S-thioallylation, which can be reversed by YpdA and the Bx/BSH/YpdA electron pathways in *S. aureus* to regenerate thiol homeostasis (1).


**252-MSRP**

The MhqR regulon confers resistance to quinone-like antimicrobials in *Staphylococcus aureus*

*V. N. Fritsch*, S. Weilner, V. V. Loi, T. Busche, A. Sommer, K. Tedin, D. Nürnberg, J. Kalinowski, J. Bernhardt, M. Fulde, H. Antelmann

1Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
2Bielefeld University, Center for Biotechnology, Bielefeld, Germany
3Universität Greifswald, Department for Microbial Physiology and Molecular Biology, Greifswald, Germany

**Introduction:** *Staphylococcus aureus* is a major human pathogen which can cause life-threatening diseases. During infection, *S. aureus* has to cope with reactive oxygen and reactive electrophilic species (ROS and RES). ROS and RES can cause different post-translational thiol-modifications, such as reversible disulfide formation and irreversible S-alkylations. Quinones have antimicrobial properties and were shown to act as electrophiles and oxidants in bacteria. **Objectives:** Here, we aimed to elucidate the quinone stress response in *S. aureus* (1). The MhqR regulon was most strongly induced under methylhydroquinone (MHQ) stress in the RNAseq transcriptome. Thus, we were interested in the role of MhqR regulon in the quinone stress response and antimicrobial resistance in *S. aureus*. **Methods:** We used genetic, biochemical and phenotype analyses to characterize the novel quinone-responsive mhqRED operon. **Results:** Transcriptional analysis showed that the mhqRED operon responds specifically to MHQ to quinone-like antimicrobials, such as ciperoxacin. It was further shown, that the non-conserved Cys95 of the MhqR repressor is not required for DNA binding and quinone sensing in *vitro* and in *vivo*. The mhqR deletion mutant was resistant to MHQ and other antimicrobials and in long-term infection studies. Interestingly, the mhqR mutant showed higher respiratory chain activity and increased ATP levels. Phenotype analysis of the mhqD deletion mutant revealed that the carboxylesterase MhqD functions in quinone detoxification. Comparative analysis of another quinone-sensing regulator QsrR showed that the QsrR and MhqR regulons confer independently quinone and antimicrobial resistance in *S. aureus*. **Conclusion:** These studies identified a link between quinone and antimicrobial resistance via the MhqR regulon in *S. aureus*. Our current studies are directed to elucidate the quinone sensing mechanism of MhqR using biochemical and crystal structure methods.


**253-MSRP**

*Staphylococcus aureus* uses the bacilli redox (BxA/B)-bacillithiol disulfide reductase (YpdA) redox pathway to defend against oxidative stress under infections


1Institute for Biology-Microbiology, Berlin, Germany
2Centre for Organisal Studies, Department IV Molecular Biology Plants, Heidelberg, Germany
Questions: The ability to develop complex multicellular structures evolved several times independently in eukaryotes. Within fungi, complex multicellular structures evolved at least twice and possibly up to eleven times. Fungal multicellular structures are often involved in sexual development, e.g. the fruiting bodies of basidiomycetes and filamentous ascomycetes. Fruiting bodies function in the production and dispersal of sexual spores; however, the molecular mechanisms underlying their formation are insufficiently understood. Previous comparative transcriptomics of fruiting body development in different ascomycetes suggested that there might be a core set of genes that are transcriptionally regulated in a similar manner across species. Conserved patterns of gene expression can be indicative of functional relevance.

Methods: In this study, we have sequenced the genome of the Pezizomycete Ascodesmis nigricans, and performed comparative transcriptomics of developing fruiting bodies of this fungus, the Pezizomycete Pyronema confluens, and the Sordariomycete Sordaria macrospora.

Results and Conclusions: With only 27 Mb, the A. nigricans genome is the smallest and most gene-dense Pezizomycete genome sequenced to date. Comparative transcriptomics indicated that gene expression patterns in developing fruiting bodies of the three species are more similar to each other than to non-sexual hyphae of the same species. An analysis of 83 genes upregulated only during fruiting body development in all three species revealed 23 genes with predicted roles in transport processes, and 13 genes with predicted roles in chromatin organization or the regulation of gene expression. Among four candidate genes analyzed by deletion in S. macrospora, three were shown to be involved in fruiting body formation, including two predicted chromatin modifier genes, confirming that genes with evolutionary conserved expression patterns are promising candidates for functional analysis.

257-MSRP
Proteomic adaptation of Streptococcus pneumoniae to the human antimicrobial peptide LL-37
*P. A. Möcke1, S. Maab1, S. Hammerschmidt2, D. Becher1
1University of Greifswald/ Institute of Microbiology, Department of Microbial Proteomics, Greifswald, Germany
2University of Greifswald/ Interfaculty Institute for Genetics and Functional Genomics, Department of Molecular Genetics and Infection Biology, Greifswald, Germany

The antimicrobial peptide LL-37 is part of the human innate immune system and can inhibit bacterial growth by membrane pore formation and the consequent loss of bacterial cell content. In human epithelial layers, like the one of the lung, LL-37 is one of the most prominent antimicrobial peptides (AMPs) and defends the host against aspirated bacteria.

However, several resistance and adaptation strategies are described for bacteria to cationic antimicrobial peptides that could also play a role in the process of pneumococcal infections.

In order to investigate the response of Streptococcus pneumoniae to physiological concentrations of LL-37 we stressed pneumococci and analyzed the proteome in comparison to the untreated state via high-resolution mass spectrometry. Indeed, our data indicate that also...
pneumococci adapt to LL-37 stress to reduce the destructive impact of the AMP, especially by significant changes in the abundance of cell wall modifying proteins. The inhibition of adaptation mechanisms could potentially sensitize the bacteria to already existing endogenous antibiotics in the human body like LL-37 and thus reduce the high burden of pneumococcal disease including otitis media, sinulisitis and pneumonia.

Introduction. Under stress conditions (acidification of the culture medium) mycobacterial cells transit into a specific state characterised by low level of metabolic activity—dormancy. This state is directly linked to the physiological drug-resistance, complicating the control over latent TB. In order to find new anti-LTB compounds the metabolic processes, which may occur in dormancy as well as in reactivation, should be characterised. Methods. In the current study we analysed the untargeted metabolic profiles of dormant and reactivating *Mycobacterium smegmatis* cells (a model microorganism mimicking MTB), on the global scale level, since such analysis of metabolites* dynamics could provide an overview on biochemical perturbations as a response to stress conditions. The reactivation process was tracked by measuring the value of transmembrane potential (ratiometric approach based on flow-cytometry). The crucial time-points: 0 hours (dormant cells), 10 hours (reactivating cells) and 26 hours (actively proliferating cells) were selected and sampled to LC-MS profiling. The metabolomic data were statistically evaluated (PCA, hierarchical clustering, differential analysis) and the succession of the metabolic pathways activation was analysed. Results. In total, 707 compounds were discovered and analysed. The most significant changes occurred between the timepoints 10 and 26 hours. 77 Metabolites were significantly changed with a global adjusted p-value <0.5. Many lipids show a constant increase over all timepoints, e.g. PI(36:1) and P(16:0/15:1(9Z)). However most of the significantly changed metabolites decrease over the analysed period, e.g. isopentenyl pyrophosphate or palmitate. A few metabolites are interestingly increased at 10 hours and decrease again to 26 hours (phosphatidylglycerol, ganoderic acid and some unknown compounds). Conclusion. Despite the long storage of dormant cells in the conditions of minimum metabolic activity, the cells still retained a large number of metabolites, demonstrating interesting biochemical patterns of changes in reactivation. In this process a gradual, incremental assembly of complete biochemical pathways could be observed.

References


206-MSRP

Adjusting ectoine biosynthesis: Crystallographic and functional analysis of the EctR regulator

L. Czeh1,4, B. Friege4,5, S. Kobus6, A. Häppner2,7, J. Reiners2,7, H. Gohlke3,4,6, S. Smits3,4, E. Bremer1,2

1Philippus-University Marburg, Laboratory for Microbiology, Marburg, Germany
2Philippus-University Marburg, SYNMIKRO - Center for Synthetic Microbiology, Marburg, Germany
3Heinrich-Heine University, Institut für Pharmazeutische und Medizinische Chemie, Düsseldorf, Germany
4Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Institute for Complex Systems - Structural Biochemistry (ICS 6), Jülich, Germany
5Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, John von Neumann Institute for Computing (NIC) & Jülic Supercomputing Centre (JSC), Jülich, Germany
6Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf, Institute for Biochemistry, Düsseldorf, Germany
7Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf, Institute of Biochemistry, Düsseldorf, Germany

Upon osmotic stress, members of all three domains of life were found to produce the cytoprotectants and chemical chaperones, ectoine and 5-hydroxyectoine, to counteract the osmotically instigated outflow of water. The expression level of the underlying biosynthetic genes [ectABC(D)] increases in response to increases in the external salinity and must be tightly controlled to avoid wasteful production of ectoines. Here, we focus on the MarR-type regulator EctR, found in 22% of putative ectoine producing bacteria. Phylogenetic analysis revealed a rather restricted occurrence of ectR in the vicinity of ectoine gene clusters of Proteobacteria. Using EctR from the Alphaproteobacterium *Novosphingobium* sp. LH128, we obtained a crystal structure at 2.2 Å resolution. Structural and biochemical analysis revealed an unexpected
tetrameric assembly of two head-to-head homodimers positioning the winged-helix-turn-helix DNA-binding domains at the outside of the protein complex. The ectR gene of Novosphingobium sp. LH128 is located upstream and divergent of the ect gene cluster. In vitro binding analysis revealed two individual binding regions of EctR upstream of the hypothetical sigma-70-type promoter of ectR and downstream of the potential sigma-70-type promoter in front of ectA. Inspection of these regions highlight two pseudopalindromic sequences as potential binding sites for the EctR regulator. Molecular dynamics simulations revealed that the DNA-binding domains of EctR are highly flexible and structural changes within the regulatory protein might be triggered by fluctuations in the ionic potential/strength.


261-MSRP
Cellular response to osmotic challenges of the potential industrial workhorse Bacillus methanolicus

1C. Frank1, T. Hoffmann1, M. F. Felle2, E. Bremer1
2Philips-University Marburg, Microbiology, Marburg, Germany
3BASF, White Biotechnology RBW, Ludwigshafen, Germany

The Gram-positive thermophilic methylophilic bacterium Bacillus methanolicus was originally isolated from freshwater marsh soil. Due to its ability to utilize methanol as sole carbon- and energy source, B. methanolicus is currently explored as a cell factory for the low-cost production of fine chemicals. Its ability to grow at high temperature (50°C) provides benefits to both low contamination risks during fermentation and reactor cooling demands. During high cell density fermentation processes, the excretion of metabolites will increase the osmolarity of the growth medium, which in turn could impair cell growth and negatively affect the productivity of biotechnological processes.

With this in mind, we have analyzed the core of the osmостress response of B. methanolicus through physiological approaches. By using natural-abundance 13C-nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy and high-performance liquid chromatography, we discovered that glutamate is synthesized as the sole osmootstress protectant by B. methanolicus. The glutamate levels increased concomitant with increases in the salinity of the growth medium. Glutamate provided only a moderate level of osmooortress protection to B. methanolicus when compared to B. subtilis, which synthesizes proline as its main osmooortress protectant. Strikingly, most of the newly synthesized glutamate by B. methanolicus was excreted. Curiously, none of the compatible solutes that can be imported and used effectively by B. subtilis as osmooortress protectants was able to provide osmooortress protection to B. methanolicus. Overall, our data indicate that B. methanolicus is a rather osmotoically sensitive member of the Bacilli and possesses only a restricted ability to cope with osmotic stress.

262-MSRP
Beyond damage repair: Cell envelope stress resistance in Haemophilus influenzae as a determinant of successful host interactions

M. Nasreen1, J. Homsler1, R. Dhoobi1, A. T. Essifite1, A. G. McEwan1, U. Kappler1
1The University of Queensland, School of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences, St Lucia, Australia

Many chronic and acute diseases of the respiratory tract are either caused or exacerbated by infections with non-typeable Haemophilus influenzae (NTHi), a WHO priority pathogen requiring immediate further action due to increasing disease severity and antibiotic resistance. NTHi thrives at sites of infection, and here we have investigated the molecular mechanisms underlying the remarkable resistance of H. influenzae to host-produced bactericidal molecules such as hypochlorite.

To overcome cell envelope stress caused by hypochlorite, all H. influenzae strains contain 2 to 3 highly conserved, periplasmic S-oxide reductases that are expressed following hypochlorite exposure and form a first line of defense against cellular damage. The loss of any one of these sulfoxide reductases reduced H. influenzae fitness in vitro and also in TC culture infection models despite very different roles in protection from S-oxide stress.

The non-traditional, Mo-containing S-oxide reductase MtsZ reduced free methionine-sulfoxide (MetSO) to Met, thus preventing uptake of MetSO and its incorporation into newly synthesized proteins. The reaction of MtsZ is linked to the Hi respiratory chain, allowing it to be used for energy generation and redox balancing.

In contrast, the MsrAB S-oxide reductase is required for Hi hypochlorite resistance, and repairs MetSO residues in HOCl-damaged proteins which includes key H. influenzae OMPs that are highly susceptible to HOCl induced damage.

Unexpectedly, a loss of the MsrAB protein led to specific changes in the host response to infection with NTHi. Increased production of AMPs such as cathelicidin (9x) and BPI (4x) was observed, while expression of two key antiapoptotic proteins, XIAP and BiR3C was reduced. Thus the conserved extracellular NTHi S-oxide reductases not only prevent and repair HOCl induce damage, but also have previously undocumented links to key virulence relevant processes such as manipulating host responses and successful energy generation.

263-MSRP
Insights into the control of nlpC- operon expression in C. glutamicum by the two-component system MtrAB and a c-di-AMP responsive riboswitch

1T. Lkhaasuren1, S. Reich1, T. Weiss2, G. M. Sebold1
1Ulm University, Institute of Microbiology and Biotechnology, Ulm, Germany
2DTU Bioengineering, Department of Biotechnology and Biomedicine, Kgs. Lyngby, Denmark

Cell wall hydrolases of the NlpC/P60 superfamily are required for the reorganization of the bacterial cell wall during vegetative growth, development, and cell division. In Gram-positive model organism Corynebacterium glutamicum the genes for two NlpC/P60 endoproteidases involved in cell growth and cell separation are part of an operon (nlpC- operon) with further genes for cell wall and sugar metabolism. Upstream of the nlpC- operon a cyclic-di-AMP riboswitch and two binding sites for the stress-related
response regulator MtrA are located, suggesting a tight control of this operon. However, physiological studies on the control of nlpC by the two-component system (TCS) MtrAB in C. glutamicum ΔmtrAB were strongly biased, as this deletion mutant has a severe growth defect coming along with an acidification of the medium, which could not be restored by reintroduction of mtrAB.

We constructed and then characterized the new mtrAB-deficient strain C. glutamicum ΔmAB, which shows an altered cell shape indicating a change in cell separation. The altered cell separation of ΔmAB, which came along with increased transcript levels of the MtrA-controlled meaA (encodes a peptidase), was restored upon plasmid-encoded expression of mtrAB. Growth of C. glutamicum ΔmAB in different media proceeded similar to WT. In difference to C. glutamicum ΔmtrAB, no acidification of the culture medium in the course of cultivation of ΔmAB was detected. As expected, no increased transcription of proP (encodes the transporter for uptake of the compatible solutes proline and ectoine) was detected in the course of osmotic upshift experiments for C. glutamicum ΔmAB; induction of proP transcription upon osmotic upshift was restored by plasmid-encoded expression of mtrAB. For nlpC we observed high transcript amounts and promoter activities for WT and increased transcript amounts and promoter activities for ΔmAB. These results confirm that MtrA acts as a repressor for transcription of the nlpC-operon. The new mtrAB-deficient strain C. glutamicum ΔmAB allows now a detailed analysis of the stimuli underlying the interplay of the TCS MtrAB and the c-di-AMP dependent riboswitch for the control of nlpC.

264-MSRP

A Respiratory Supercomplex Links Oxygen and Nitrate Reduction in the Obligate Aerobic Actinobacterium Streptomyces coelicolor A3(2)

M. Fischer1, B. Falke1, A. Haase1, A. Kieler1, C. Ihling2, A. Sinz2, G. Sawers1
1Martin-Luther-University, Institute of Biology/Microbiology, Halle, Germany
2Martin-Luther-University, Institute of Pharmacy, Halle, Germany

Respiratory supercomplexes are common in aerobic and facultative anaerobic microorganisms and their formation is thought to facilitate efficient coupling of electron flow with proton-translocation by redrecting electrons to different terminal electron-accepting complexes. As an obligate aerobic, filamentous soil-dwelling and spore-forming actinobacterium Streptomyces coelicolor A3(2) synthesizes a menaquinol:cytochrome bcc oxidoreductase (bcc complex)-copper-aa3-type cytochrome c oxidase supercomplex because, like other actinobacteria, S. coelicolor lacks a soluble c-type cytochrome. Despite requiring oxygen for growth, S. coelicolor can also use nitrate as electron acceptor. The three respiratory nitrate reductases (Nars) required to reduce nitrate are synthesized and active in different stages of the life-cycle. Surprisingly, our data revealed that spore-specific Nar1 requires the bcc-aa3 supercomplex for activity and that mycelium-specific Nar2 activity is also partially dependent on the supercomplex. Using a combination of genetics, protein purification, enzyme activity determination and mass spectrometry we could show that the composition of the bcc-aa3-supercomplex differs in spores and mycelium. We could also demonstrate that Nar2 interacts directly with components of the bcc-aa3-supercomplex in mycelium. Together, our findings suggest that, when oxygen becomes limiting, the bacterium can switch immediately to nitrate respiration by redirecting the electrons from the supercomplex to Nar, thus maintaining efficient proton translocation under oxygen-limiting conditions.

265-MSRP

Global Analysis of Changing Transcript Stability in the Acclimation to Low Iron in a Photosynthetic Cyanobacterium

L. Youssar1, G. Kostova2, W. R. Hess3, J. Georg4
1Uni-Freiburg, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany
2CNRS, Paris, France

The regulation of RNA stability is crucial in the post-transcriptional regulation of gene expression in bacteria. Here, we determined RNA half-lives in the model cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 during standard conditions and iron-deplete growth, a condition that poses substantial physiological challenges to a photosynthetic organism and involves well-studied transcriptional and post-transcriptional regulatory mechanisms. We found 3200 transcripts with half-life detected in iron stress conditions while 2567 were in the standard conditions. In total, 2315 different transcripts were detectable under both conditions and subjected to comparative analysis. The median half life was around 2 minutes in both conditions. The results allow for the first time to distinguish between the effects of transcriptional and post-transcriptional regulation in the iron starvation response. Statistical and clustering analyses will aid our understanding of mRNA decay in iron stress condition and further illuminate more about the complexity in the iron regulatory network of cyanobacteria.

266-MSRP

Investigation of the plasma-induced activation of Escherichia coli Hsp33

T. Dirks1, M. Krewing1, J. Bandow1
1Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Applied Microbiology, Bochum, Germany

Cold atmospheric pressure plasmas have a variety of different applications. They are used e.g. in clinical settings for surface decontamination or disinfection [1]. Among the mechanisms underlying bacterial inactivation by plasma, protein aggregation has been shown to be an important one [2,3].

To investigate a potential role of aggregation-preventing proteins in mediating plasma resistance, a quantitative CFU-based assay was used to compare survival of plasma treatment of wild-type E. coli to that of deletion mutants and over-production strains. All of the five different aggregation-preventing proteins investigated (Hsp33, DegP, CnoX, RidA, and ClpB) contribute to plasma resistance.

The redox-regulated molecular chaperone Hsp33 has previously been shown to positively impact on plasma survival and to be activated by plasma in vitro [3]. Here, using a clinically relevant plasma source (dielectric barrier discharge of Cinogy), we investigated the plasma-induced Hsp33 activation. To this end, Hsp33 activity was determined using a citrate synthase assay, in which active Hsp33 prevents the aggregation of citrate synthase. Oxidation of cysteines and unfolding of the protein, both thought to be crucial for Hsp33 activation, were confirmed using a DTNB assay and CD spectroscopy, respectively. The magnitude of Hsp33 activation by plasma was comparable to chemical activation with HCl. To gain insights into chemical species relevant for plasma-induced Hsp33 activation, different reactive oxygen species were tested for their ability to
activate Hsp33 in vitro, revealing that superoxide, singlet oxygen, and atomic oxygen are potential activators.

Overall, the importance of protein aggregation for plasma-based bacterial inactivation was further corroborated, since we found that aggregation-preventing proteins like chaperones or proteases play a key role in enduring plasma stress.


267-MSRP
The Cup determinant is crucial for the resistance to copper in Cupriavidus metallidurans
*N. Hirth*, M. S. Gerlach, C. Große, D. H. Nies

In its natural habitat C. metallidurans is often exposed to high concentrations of different heavy metals such as copper, gold or mercury. To survive in this toxic environment it has developed tools for detoxification. Here, mutants carrying multiple deletions in copper resistance genes were constructed and used to study the individual contribution of each system to copper and gold resistance. Deleted were operons encoding for the periplasmic copper oxidase copABCD, the P-Type-ATPase cupCAR, which is located in the inner membrane, the periplasmic spanning efflux pump cusABC as well as the gig-cluster whose function is yet unclear. A total of 14 multiple mutants was created in the AE104 wildtype background and their respective survival under copper and gold stress was tested. Preincubation with gold or copper led to lower gold resistance in all strains. When exposed to copper the Cup determinant was crucial for survival. So far CupA is the only known protein to detoxify the cytoplasm from copper. A triple mutant of the Cop, Cup and Cus clusters only containing the cup determinant was more resistant to copper than the other triple mutants. Copper or gold preincubation led to higher or lower resistance to copper respectively.1 The Cus system was not able to compensate for the loss of cup. The periplasmic copper oxidase CopA seemed to be more important for the detoxification of the periplasm than the efflux system Cus in a single mutant background. Additional disruption of the gene gshA (γ-glutamylcysteinesynthetase) led to lower copper resistance which underlines the importance of glutathione in the detoxification process of copper.


268-MSRP
Work horse strain Clostridoides difficile 630Δerm is oblivious to its anaerobic lifestyle
*D. Troitzsch*, H. Zhang, S. Dittmann, D. Düsterhöft, J. M. Borroto de Acuna, S. Sievers

*University of Greifswald, Institute of Microbiology, Greifswald, Germany*

**Technical University of Braunschweig, Institute of Microbiology, Braunschweig, Germany**

University of Leipzig, Institute of Biochemistry, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction
C. difficile is a vast problem in human health care, as it causes serious and recurrent inflammation of the intestinal epithelium often with a lethal outcome. It is considered to be an anaerobic bacterium, therefore the presence of oxygen and reactive oxygen species should hamper its growth. However, previous studies have shown a high, strain-dependent oxygen tolerance of the pathogen [1].

Objectives
To understand the high tolerance of C. difficile 630Δerm to oxidative conditions we investigated the structure and function of transcriptional repressor PerR, which is related to the oxidative stress response.

Materials & Methods
We used different bioinformatic tools to analyze the sequence and structure of PerR in various species and in C. difficile 630Δerm specifically. Transcriptional expression of perR and growth in the presence of oxygen was tested in both C. difficile strains 630 and 630Δerm. Furthermore, DNA-PerR-interaction was examined in electrophoretic mobility shift assays (EMSA).

Results
Bioinformatic analyses revealed a SNP in the perR gene of C. difficile 630Δerm, leading to an amino acid exchange of a highly conserved threonine to alanine at position 41 in the protein [2]. Growth experiments showed a significant higher susceptibility of strain 630 to O3 compared to its derivative 630Δerm. Transcription of the PerR-controlled rbr1 operon was inducible by H2O2 in strain 630 by a factor of 9, whereas transcript levels in 630Δerm were permanently very high and almost not inducible by H2O2. EMSA demonstrated a clear DNA-PerR-interaction for C. difficile 630, whereas PerR of strain 630Δerm was not capable of binding the DNA fragment of the rbr1 promoter.

Conclusion
The laboratory reference strain 630Δerm of the anaerobic human pathogen C. difficile is characterized by a remarkable high oxygen tolerance. We showed that an amino acid exchange in the DNA binding domain of the hydrogen peroxide sensor PerR results in a constitutive derepression of PerR-controlled genes. Researchers working with C. difficile 630Δerm should be aware of the permanent oxidative stress response even under anaerobic conditions in this reference strain.


269-MSRP
Spatiotemporal dynamics of the one-component signaling system CadC
*J. Schwarz*, S. Brameyer, E. Hoyer, K. Jung

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Department of Biology I, Microbiology, Martinsried, Germany

Prokaryotes developed various sensory and signaling mechanisms to withstand environmental stress. The ToxR-
receptor family represents an important member of the one-component signaling systems and is involved in virulence and acid stress response. ToxR-receptors belong to the large group of proteins found in all domains of life that are anchored in the cytoplasmic membrane by one transmembrane helix. Almost nothing is known about their spatiotemporal dynamics in whole cells. One member of this family is CadC, a pH-responsive receptor present in various genera. It has a conserved modular structure with a C-terminal periplasmic sensor domain, a single transmembrane helix and an N-terminal cytoplasmic winged helix–turn–helix DNA-binding domain. Under acid stress, CadC binds to the DNA and induces expression of cadA (lysine decarboxylase) and cadB (lysine/cadaverine antiporter). It has been shown that fluorophore-tagged CadC is randomly distributed in the membrane of an *Escherichia coli* cell at physiological pH. When the receptor is activated by acid stress, CadC is detectable as a distinct cluster. Thereby the localization of this low copy number membrane-anchored transcription factor is directed by binding to the DNA in a diffusion-and-capture mechanism (1).

To further investigate the dynamics of CadC, the DNA-binding site was relocated in the chromosome of *E. coli*, and the expression pattern as well as the localization of CadC and DNA-locus were studied. In addition, the studies were expanded for CadC in *Vibrio campbellii*, and a ChiP-Seq analysis revealed potential new CadC-binding sites highlighting the common and different aspects in the pH-stress response of various organisms.


270-MSRP

**Inhibition of ribosome rescue mechanisms leads to changes in metal homeostasis in bacteria**

*M. Vázquez-Hernández*, J. Bandow, J. Alumasa, K. Keiler

1Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Applied Microbiology, Faculty of Biology and Biotechnology, Bochum, Germany

2Pennsylvania State University, Philadelphia, PA, United States

Protein biosynthesis is the most energy consuming process in bacteria, meaning that at least 50% of the energy consumption of growing bacteria is allocated to translation. It is estimated that per cell cycle 5% of all ribosomes get stalled during translation. Mechanisms to release stalled ribosomes are essential for growth and survival. To date, five ribosome rescue mechanisms are known: trans-translation, ArfA and ArfB, ArfT and ResQ. Trans-translation and, more generally, ribosome rescue have been proposed as a new antibiotic target. The impact of ribosome rescue inhibition on bacterial physiology is poorly understood. Specific inhibitors of trans-translation belonging to different chemical classes have been identified. Six of these compounds were used to study the proteomic response to trans-translation inhibition in *E. coli* ΔatoIC and *B. subtilis* 168. 2D-gel based proteomics was used in conjunction with pulse-labeling to identify differentially regulated proteins. This study was complemented with a gel-free, label-free quantitative LC-MS/MS analysis. Surprisingly, we observed an upregulation of proteins related to copper homeostasis and protection of iron-sulfur clusters. We also found that in *E. coli*, copper supplementation protects bacteria most of the inhibitors, while in *B. Subtilis* copper and inhibitors act synergistically. Pulse-labeling followed by 2D-gel based proteomics performed after exposing the strains simultaneously to copper and inhibitors. In *E. coli*, the simultaneous exposure resulted in the differential regulation of a number of additional proteins, *B. subtilis*, however, translation was completely inhibited at inhibitor concentrations that by themselves had only minor impact on translation rates. Further experiments will be directed at elucidating the connection between trans-Translation and copper homeostasis which could aid in the development of trans-translation inhibitor-based therapies and the understanding of antimicrobial resistance.

271-MSRP

**Reconstitution of the functional Clp protease complex of streptomyces in vitro**

1L. Reinhardt, D. Thomy, J. Hauser, J. Ortega, P. Sass, H. Brötz-Oesterhelt

1University of Tübingen, Department of Microbial Bioactive Compounds, Tübingen, Germany

2University of Tübingen, Department of Infection Biology, Tübingen, Germany

3McGill University, Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, Montreal, Canada

Bacterial Clp proteases are multimeric degradation machines that play a major role in the bacterial protein stress response. In principle, a proteolytic core composed of 14 ClpP monomers associates with hexameric Clp-ATPases to degrade misfolded and specific regulatory proteins [1, 2]. Compared to most eubacteria comprising one or two ClpP homologs, streptomyces rely on a more complex and essential Clp system, involving up to five distinct ClpP homologs organized in two bicistronic and one monocistronic operon [3]. So far, knowledge on the molecular composition, interaction and operation mode of the Clp system in streptomyces is rare, and a functional Clp system has not been reconstituted in vitro.

In this study, we functionally reconstituted the Clp protease complex of *Streptomyces hawaiensis* NRRL 15010, the producer of the antibacterial complex A54556 [4]. The clpP genes of *S. hawaiensis* show high sequence similarity to other streptomyces [4]. To shed light on the interaction and functional cross-talk between the ClpP proteins in *Streptomyces*, we expressed and purified the Clp proteins of *S. hawaiensis* for functional studies using different Clp-ATPases as mediators for substrate degradation by different ClpP isoforms. In addition, ADEP1, the main component of complex A54556 that is known to deregulate ClpP in other bacteria [1, 4], was used to investigate its impact on *Streptomyces* ClpP activity in the natural context. Our data reveals the operation mode of the Clp protease in streptomyces, bacteria with highly complex physiology that is illustrated by the large number of secondary metabolites, which is an important step to better understand protein homeostasis and protein stress responses guided by the Clp protease in this genus.


272-MSRP

**N-chloramines: reduction mechanism and labeling technique**

*M. Varatnitskaya*, K. Xie, K. Rosowski, N. Lupilov, B. Sitek, L. I. Leichert

1Ruhr-University Bochum, Institute of Biochemistry and Pathobiocchemistry, Microbial Biochemistry, Bochum, Germany

Hypochlorous acid (HOCl) is a powerful oxidant produced in the phagolysosome of activated neutrophils. It rapidly reacts with all biomolecules of engulfed pathogens; however, proteins are considered to be a primary target. In proteins, HOCl most rapidly reacts with sulfur-containing amino acids, such as cysteine and methionine. Nevertheless, taking into consideration a higher abundance of amino groups over thiol groups, HOCl-induced modification of amines (N-chlorination) is frequently present in the cell. Here, we investigated a possible reduction mechanism for N-chlorinated proteins. The E. coli protein RidA turns into an effective chaperone-like holdase upon chlorination with HOCl (1). Interestingly, this chaperone activity of N-chlorinated RidA (RidAOC) can be reversed by the thiol-disulfide oxidoreductase TrxA, indicating a novel thioredoxin-induced reduction mechanism of N-chlorination. We generated the mutant TrxA_C35S, which lacks the resolving cysteine and thus is not able to resolve mixed intermediates. Using catalytic amounts of TrxA and TrxA_C35S, we demonstrated that the resolving cysteine C35 is required for the inactivation of RidAOCC. Using a gel-shift assay, a product consisting of covalently-linked RidA-TrxA_C35S was detected. We also demonstrated a covalently-linked product between TrxA and model chloramine. We propose a model of N-Cl reduction by thioredoxin, which involves the formation of an intermolecular sulfonamide between TrxA and its substrate. To identify the location of N-chlorination in RidA, we established a 5-(Dimethylamino) naphthalene-1-sulfonic acid (Dansyl sulfonic acid)-based probe. This probe can successfully label N-chloramines in RidA and we were able to gather direct evidence for N-chlorination of lysine XXX.


273-MSRP

Analysis of TisB-dependent stress responses in Escherichia coli

*N. E. Schmid³, D. Edelmann¹, B. Berghoff¹
¹Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, Institut für Mikro- und Molekularbiologie, Gießen, Germany
²Ruhr-University Bochum, Medical Proteome Center, Bochum, Germany

Persister cells represent a small subpopulation that can be found in virtually all bacterial cultures. They are highly tolerant to stresses, including various antibiotics. Bacterial persistence is often linked to toxin-antitoxin systems. One of these systems is TisB/IsfR-1 (1, 2). The toxin TisB induces dormancy by causing depolarization of the cytoplasmic membrane and subsequent ATP depletion (3). Expression of tisB is negatively controlled by the repressor LexA, the master regulator of the SOS response. Upon DNA damage LexA undergoes auto-cleavage, which results in strong tisB transcription and increasing amount of TisB protein. Hence, TisB-dependent persistence occurs during an activated SOS response. TisB insertion into the inner membrane might cause secondary stress. It was, e.g., observed that strong TisB expression leads to formation of reactive oxygen species and activation of the oxidative stress response [4]. Here, we analyzed TisB-dependent stress responses in E. coli. For this purpose, an inducible TisB expression system was constructed, which allows moderate overexpression of TisB and formation of a homogeneous TisB-dependent persister population. Induction of various stress responses was monitored at the transcriptional level using qRT-PCR. In addition, expression of individual stress response genes was validated using transcriptional sylp2-fusions. The analysis was also extended to the recovery phase after TisB overexpression. We show that the oxidative stress response, the heat shock response and the envelope stress response are triggered in a TisB-dependent manner. We speculate that these stress responses might also play a major role in TisB-dependent persistence.

References:

274-MSRP

High sensitivity against membrane targeting antimicrobials in polyphosphate deficient Pseudomonas aeruginosa

*S. Brückner³, W. Y. Wholey³, M. Hall², J. U. Dahi²
¹University of Michigan, Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology and Biotechnology, Ann Arbor (MI), United States
²Illinois State University, School of Biological Sciences, Normal (IL), United States
³Ruhr-University Bochum, Medical Proteome Center, Bochum, Germany

Infections by multi-drug resistant bacteria are a major threat to human health. Due to its intrinsic antibiotic resistance and ability to form strong biofilms, the opportunistic pathogen Pseudomonas aeruginosa is particularly difficult to treat and contributes i.a. to the progression of burn wounds. One promising approach to combat pathogens is to target bacteria-specific cellular processes that directly contribute to virulence and persistence and which become essential for bacterial survival only in the context of the host. One such candidate is polyphosphate kinase (PPK), a bacteria-specific enzyme that converts ATP into the universally conserved biopolymer polyphosphate (polyP) during various stress conditions to protect bacteria from stress-mediated protein aggregation and contribute to their survival. In addition, virulence is highly attenuated in polyP-deficient bacteria, as they are defective in biofilm formation and persistence. We recently found that colonization of porcine burn wounds by P. aeruginosa is 10 to 15-fold reduced if polyP production is compromised. Due to the many stress-related phenotypes known for ppk-deficient bacteria, we wondered whether clinically relevant antibiotics would sensitize polyP-deficient P. aeruginosa more efficiently than wild-type cells (WT) and thus could be used to reinforce the phenotype. Using the microdilution method, we compared the minimum inhibitory/bactericidal concentrations (MIC/MBC) in WT and ppk-deficient P. aeruginosa for numerous antibiotics that differ in their mode of action. No significant differences in MIC and MBC were observed for antibiotics targeting cell wall biosynthesis, translation, and DNA replication, respectively.

Intriguingly, we found that polyP-deficient cells were 100 to 100,000-fold more sensitive to different membrane-disrupting compounds including the cationic surfactant octenidine, polymyxin B, and the silver-containing antimicrobial surface-coating AgXX. Both silver and octenidine are commonly used in wound management. Future studies are necessary to determine whether the membrane-targeting compounds synergize the antimicrobial effects of the PPK-targeting drug mesalamine.

275-MSRP
Challenging antibiotic resistance – lipopolysaccharide synthesis as a potential target for an efficient treatment of Gram-negative bacteria
*A. M. Möller1, S. Schäkermann1, N. Thomanek1, F. Narberhaus2
1Ruhr-University Bochum, Microbiology and Biotechnology, Bochum, Germany

Today one of the biggest healthcare threats is the rapid emergence of antibiotic-resistant pathogens, causing an urgent need for new classes of antibiotics. Essential processes like DNA replication, protein synthesis or membrane and cell wall synthesis are suitable antimicrobial targets, illustrated by the revolutionary success of β-lactams. Contrary to most biological membranes, the outer membrane of many Gram-negative bacteria is unique due to its asymmetrical organization, with an inner leaflet of phospholipids and an outer leaflet that mainly contains lipopolysaccharides (LPS). Since many enzymes involved in LPS synthesis are essential, they are promising drug targets.

Among those, the key enzyme LpxC, which catalyzes the first committed step of LPS synthesis, emerged as a potent inhibition target for a shutdown of LPS synthesis. Today, several inhibitors of LpxC are commercially available and tested in vitro. However so far, only little is known about the cellular response to those compounds. Our investigations focus on the proteomic response of *Escherichia coli* and other clinically relevant species like *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* upon exposure to LpxC inhibitors. Interestingly, the cell uses LpxC as a checkpoint for LPS synthesis. To maintain an optimal LPS level, LpxC is degraded in a growth-phase dependent manner by the membrane-anchored protease, FtsH. To date, the underlying regulatory mechanisms of the LpxC turnover are not well understood but are presumably controlled via direct protein-protein interactions. Proteins could either shield a degradation-motif or deliver LpxC actively to the protease.

We want to validate direct LpxC interaction partners by analyzing promising candidates with the bacterial-two hybrid approach in vivo as well as in vitro using pull-down assays. Both projects attempt to pave the way for the development of a new class of antibiotics, to counteract rapidly evolving multi-resistant strains.

276-MSRP
CRISPR-Cas Systems in *Rhodobacter capsulatus*
*J. Kretz1, D. T. Spanka1, G. Klug1
1Institut für Mikro- und Molekularbiologie, Gießen, Germany

CRISPR-Cas systems are mostly seen as a kind of adaptive immune system in archaea and bacteria. Genomic fragments of invading viruses are integrated into the CRISPR locus and prevent, together with Cas-proteins, further infection of the same virus by degrading the viral genome. Over the last years CRISPR-Cas systems were investigated in other directions than just being an adaptive immune system. CRISPR-Cas systems were found to participate in internal gene regulation and regulation of developmental programs, as well as stress response in different bacteria. Mainly membrane stress was found to activate CRISPR-Cas systems, which also occurs during the attachment of viruses. This project targets the CRISPR-Cas systems of the alphaproteobacterium *Rhodobacter capsulatus* and elucidates whether it is functional beyond adaptive immunity.

Three different CRISPR-Cas systems were found through RNA-Seq data comparing non stressed with photooxidative stressed cultures, indicating a function in stress response to photooxidative stress. Besides from the indication of participation in photooxidative stress response, different CRISPR-RNAs were shown to strongly depend on growth phase. Some CRISPR-RNAs are especially active in late stationary phase and outgrowth. In order to investigate the function of the CRISPR-Cas systems, different stressors will be applied and after that RNA will be extracted and analysed via Northern Blot Analysis. Aside from the different stressors the activity of CRISPR-RNAs will be monitored in different growth phases. Furthermore, different Cas proteins will be removed and overexpressed in order to investigate the function of the proteins in *R. capsulatus*. Especially the Cas13a protein will be investigated, which cannot be knocked out. To investigate this protein, an IPTG inducible construct will be used in order to deplete the protein. Besides that, all proteins will be tested for function in the closely related bacterium *Rhodobacter sphaeroides*, which does not contain any CRISPR-Cas systems.

277-MSRP
Cyanobacterial acclimation to carbon limitation reveals complex regulation on proteome and phosphoproteome levels.
*P. Spätz1, T. Barske2, B. Maček3, M. Hagemann2
1University Tübingen, Quantitative Proteomics, Tübingen, Germany
2University of Rostock, Department of Plant Physiology, Rostock, Germany

Cyanobacteria such as Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 are phototrophic prokaryotes, which depend on a balanced carbon-to-nitrogen supply to maintain full metabolic capacity. Fluctuating supply of inorganic carbon in aquatic environments requires a fine regulation of the cyanobacterial inorganic carbon concentrating mechanisms (CCM), involving diverse CO₂ uptake systems and carboxysome proteins, as well as many associated processes. To reveal which levels of cellular regulation are involved in the acclimation to inorganic carbon limitation, we performed a quantitative phosphoproteome study, applying high-accuracy mass spectrometry. By comparing cells from carbon saturated conditions (5% CO₂) with cells from short (3 hours) and long term (24 hours) carbon limitation conditions (ambient air with 0.04% CO₂), we obtained a comprehensive and reproducible dataset. Overall, we achieved an in-depth proteome coverage, identifying 66% of all protein coding genes, with quantitative information for more than 2200 proteins between the different conditions. Furthermore, the profiles of about 120 O-phosphorylation events could be analyzed.

As expected and validated by previous transcriptome studies, CO₂ and bicarbonate uptake associated proteins were significantly upregulated, whereas the expression of proteins involved in nitrogen import and assimilation was inhibited. In contrast to overall congruent transcriptome and proteome dynamics, also distinct differences could be analyzed, which clearly point at a layer of yet not understood post-transcriptional regulation. Interestingly, we could identify subunits of the bicarbonate transporter complex to be modified by O-phosphorylation, which revealed a complex change in their abundance and phosphorylation level, when carbon supply is limited. This suggests that O-phosphorylation represents an additional level of regulation for the maintenance of the cellular carbon-to-nitrogen balance.

278-MSRP
Quantitative proteome profiling of *Coxiella burnetii* reveals major metabolic and stress differences under anaerobic and axenic culture cultivation.
*K. Mertens-Scholz1, J. Dresler2, P. Pajer2, H. Neubauer1
1Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Institut für bakterielle Infektionen und Zoonosen, Jena, Germany
2Military Health Institute, Prague, Czech Republic
Coxiella burnetii, an obligate intracellular bacterium, is the causative agent of the zoonosis Q fever. Classical genetic approaches are not routinely used and transcriptomic data often-missing confirmation on the proteome level. The aim is to use a semi-quantitative proteomics approach to identify isolate specific traits. C. burnetii phase I (NMI) and phase II (NMII) were compared during growth in axenic media with persistently infected mouse fibroblasts. Overall, 659 and 1046 C. burnetii proteins of 2132 annotated coding sequences were identified. Proteome profiles clustered accordingly to the culturing conditions used and indicated different regulation patterns. NMI proteome profiles in axenic media indicate transition from exponential to stationary phase. Regulators such as RpoS, CarA2, UspA1 and UspA2 were upregulated. Additionally, upregulation of several cell envelope processing, cell division proteins indicate transition from large cell variant to small cell variant. Translocation of proteins via the Sec translocon or type IV B secretion system is present under all conditions. Upregulation of oxidative stress response and transporters associated with osmoregulation was shown. This is the first semi-quantitative analysis of axenically grown with cell culture propagated C. burnetii at the proteomic level. Particularly, transition from exponential to stationary phase and likely adaptations in response to the environment of the parasitophorous vacuole was demonstrated.

279-MSRP
Role of the stringent response for biofilm formation in Staphylococcus aureus

1A. Salzer*, D. Kindhörl, C. Kästle, B. Kästle, C. Wolz
1University of Tübingen, Interfaculty Institute for Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Tübingen, Germany

In Staphylococcus aureus the stringent response is activated by either amino acid limitation or cell wall stress. Subsequently, the alarmones guanosine tetra- and pentaphosphate, namely (p)ppGpp, are produced by the RelA/SpoT homologue (RSH), that is activated upon amino acid starvation, and the two small alarmone synthases RelP and RelQ that are induced under cell wall stress. The stringent response was shown to impact biofilm formation in different organisms and anti-biofilm peptides were proposed to block (p)ppGpp, as important signal in biofilm development. Here, the influence of the stringent response on biofilm formation in different S. aureus mutant strains lacking one, two or all (p)ppGpp synthases was analysed in a microtiter plate biofilm assay. Under relaxed conditions, no significant differences between mutants and wild type were detectable. Addition of sub-inhibitory concentrations of cell wall active vancomycin significantly reduced biofilm formation in mutants lacking relP and relQ when compared to (p)ppGpp producing parental strain. Treatment of the biofilm with DNase, proteinase or NaIO, revealed that the biofilm matrix is mostly composed of proteins and eDNA. The proposed (p)ppGpp inhibitory peptides DJK-5 and IDR-1018 showed biofilm inhibiting activity in wild type and mutant strains indicating that in S. aureus these anti-biofilm molecules act independently of (p)ppGpp. In conclusion, (p)ppGpp produced by RelP and RelQ contributes to the maintenance of biofilm under cell wall stress conditions.

280-MSRP
The tripartite efflux pump TtgABC confers resistance to iron chelators and other toxic compounds

1N. V. Stein, T. Henriquez, T. Baldow, H. Jung
1Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Mikrobiologie, Martinsried, Germany

Pseudomonas putida KT2440 is a Gram-negative, rod shaped bacterium that colonizes the roots of plants and soil and is part of freshwater communities. In this context, P. putida is adapted to cope with toxic environmental conditions and tripartite efflux pumps, such as TtgABC (homolog of MexABC-OprN in Pseudomonas aeruginosa), belong to the main molecular players in this process. Previous publications revealed a role of TtgABC of P. putida in the secretion of toluene and beta lactams. However, the involvement of this efflux system in the transport of other compounds remains to be clarified. Therefore, in order to get a better understanding of its biological function, the aim of this work was to identify novel substrates of TtgABC of P. putida.

To that end, a mutant strain with a deletion for the gene encoding the inner membrane component of the system (ttgB) was generated and characterized. In parallel, the complementation of ttgB was assessed through the use of a low copy number plasmid. All strains were phenotypically characterized (growth curves in different conditions) and susceptibility tests for antibiotics through disc diffusion method and minimum inhibitory concentration (using strips) were performed. Additional tests, such as fluorescent microscopy, were performed to characterize specific phenotypes.

Our results revealed that TtgABC possesses a broad substrate specificity for compounds of both mutagenic and toxic nature. These compounds are ranging from dyes like ethidium bromide to metabolites like deoxycholic acid. In addition, one widely used iron-chelator, 2’-bipyridyl, is extruded by this system. Additionally, different classes of antibiotics showed decreased minimum inhibitory concentrations if tested on the mutant strains.

These results indicate that a wide substrate specificity represents a conductive survival strategy of Pseudomonas putida KT2440. Due to the broad range of compounds transported by TtgABC, a fast adaption into new environmental circumstances is possible.

281-MSRP
The impact of a novel ClpA mutation on MazEF antitoxin-toxin system in Escherichia coli in the presence of antibiotic stress

1A. Schwarz^, A. Heisig, P. Heisig
1Universität Hamburg / Institut für Biochemie und Molekularbiologie, Pharmazeutische Biologie und Mikrobiologie, Hamburg, Germany

Question

ClpA is the ATP-binding subunit of the ATP-dependent protease complex ClpAP, which mediates the degradation of misfolded and some specific labile proteins. Mutations in clpA have been demonstrated to prevent the formation of this protease complex. Consequently, beside affecting the general protein turn-over, the degradation of specific target proteins such as MazE is affected. MazE is the labile antitoxin component of the MazEF antitoxin-toxin system in Escherichia coli.

The aims of this study were to investigate (1) the impact of clpA mutations on the activity of the MazEF antitoxin-toxin system and (2) the ability of clpA mutants to survive after exposition to antibiotic stress.

Methods
The mutation ClpA-Ala569Arg/s12 was introduced into the genome of an *E. coli* wild-type strain by using CRISPR/Cas9 (no-SCAR method of Reisch&Prather).

Susceptibility testing followed EUCAST protocol for broth dilution, but using linear dilution steps.

For the growth experiments the wild-type strain and the isogenic clpA mutant were grown to early exponential phase followed by induction with 1x MIC of the respective antibiotic. The growth was measured with the live-cell imaging system oCelloScopeTM.

**Results**

For both strains (wild-type and mutant) susceptibility and the growth curves in the absence of antibiotic generated with the oCelloScopeTM were identical. However, in the presence of e.g. rifampicin (1x MIC) the clpA mutant strain showed a faster growth compared to the wild-type.

**Conclusions**

The survival rate of the clpA mutant strain after induction by rifampicin was higher than that of the wild-type. This may be explained by a probably higher amount of MazE due to the diminished degradation. As a consequence the ratio of antitoxin to toxin is shifted.

**References**


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**282-MSRP**

The cellular interplay of zinc homeostasis and folate metabolism in *C. metallidurans*  
*V. Schulz1, M. Herzberg, D. H. Nies*  
1Martin Luther- University of Halle-Wittenberg, Molecular Microbiology, Halle, Germany

**Introduction:** Zinc as one of the biometals is an important trace element and about 5% of all proteins in prokaryotes are zinc-binding proteins, even though zinc is toxic in high concentration. Folate biosynthesis is an essential metabolic pathway that starts with the conversion of guanosine-5'-triphosphate (GTP) into 7,8 dihydronopterin triphosphate (7,8 DHNTP). This metabolite leads via branched pathways to modified RNA nucleosides, tetrahydronopterin and folic acid biosynthesis. The importance of zinc in the folate metabolism is reflected by the first step of the de novo biosynthesis, which is catalyzed by a zinc dependent enzyme, the GTP cyclohydrolase I (FolE1B). In contrast to the most common model organism *E. coli*, *C. metallidurans* possess two further enzymes of another subfamily – FolE1B1 and FolE1B2. Both of the paralogues are predicted to be cambialistic with ability to use different cofactors than Zn²⁺-like Fe²⁺ or Co²⁺ to maintenance enzyme activity.

**Objectives:** The main aim of our studies is to investigate, how a disturbed zinc and general metal homeostasis affects the folate metabolism. To underline are the role of the putative zinc chaperone CobW1, the interplay of the three FolE-paralogues and the biochemical studies of those three enzymes.

**Material & Methods:** Protein purification, enzyme activity assays and cofactor determination for biochemical characterization, reporter gene assays to determine the induction condition and creation as well as physiological characterization of deletion mutants.

**Results:** Whereas FolE1B1 is constitutively expressed, the expression of FolE1B2 is dependent on the zinc status in the cell and controlled by the Zinc uptake regulator Zur. Together with the cobW1-gene upstream and four further genes downstream, it forms a Zur-regulated gene cluster. As a part of a Zur-regulon, it is involved in the maintenance of the zinc homeostasis. The FolE1B proteins show enzyme activity with different cofactors.

**Conclusion:** Zur-regulated but zinc-independent enzymes, such as FolE1B2, facilitates this model organism the survival in zinc deficiency environments through the use of alternative metal-cofactors in cambialistic enzymes.

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**283-MSRP**

Transcriptomic and proteomic profiling of the *Aspergillus nidulans* response to low temperature stress revealed a distinct profile of secondary metabolites and the induction of sexual development  
B. Hanf1, T. Krüger1, D. J. Mattern1, M. Stroe1, T. Conrad2, B. Bunk3, A. M. Köhler1, A. Strohdiek1, G. Braus1, J. Overmann1, A. A. Brakhage1, O. Kniemeyer1  
1Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology (HKI), Molecular and Applied Microbiology, Jena, Germany  
2Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology (HKI), System Biology and Bioinformatics, Jena, Germany  
3Leibniz Institute DSMZ German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures, Braunschweig, Germany  
4Georg-August-University Göttingen, Institute for Microbiology and Genetics, Department of Molecular Microbiology and Genetics, Göttingen, Germany

Filamentous fungi are ubiquitous eukaryotic microorganisms found in the environment in association with soil, plants, animals or bacteria. The seasonal cycle exposes fungi to regular temperature changes. For tolerating low temperatures, a cellular cold stress response is essential. However, little is known about how filamentous fungi cope with low temperature-induced stress. To gain detailed insights into the low temperature adaptation of the important model fungus *Aspergillus nidulans*, we analyzed the dynamics of the transcriptome, proteome, and secondary metabolome during low temperatures that still allow growth. Our multi-omics approach revealed that genes and proteins involved in the categories cold stress protection, cell development and biosynthesis of natural products were enriched at 10°C. Common cold protective mechanisms, such as osmotic stress response proteins and DNA repair enzymes, were induced. In addition, an altered secondary metabolite (SM) production profile was confirmed at the metabolite level by LC-MS/MS analysis. Sharp temperature shifts triggered the expression of silent gene clusters such as known SMs, e.g. asperfuranone and the anthraquinone pigment asperthecin, as well as so far uncharacterized SMs. Noteworthy, cold-induced SMs extracted from culture supernatants inhibited growth of Gram-positive bacteria and fungi. Furthermore, our analyses revealed the induction of factors, which regulate the sexual cycle in *A. nidulans*. A shift towards sexual development was confirmed by the observation that Hülle cells were formed at 10°C in liquid cultures. We are now analyzing *A. nidulans* mutants defective in sexual development to provide more insights into the underlying regulatory mechanisms of cold adaptation and Hülle cell formation.
The cyclic lipopeptide Surfactin is described as a biosurfactant with antibacterial characteristics. In the case of B. subtilis 168, the Surfactin synthetase-activating enzyme sfp is inactive (sfp-). Consequently, cell growth proceeds without Surfactin production. By repairing this pseudogene (sfp+), lipopeptide production is restored.

Accordingly, the impact of Surfactin on cell physiology could be analyzed by comparing protein compositions and quantities in both strains (sfp+ and sfp-). To get an idea about the cellular adaptations during the cultivation process, multiple time points from exponential as well as stationary phase were investigated. The protein expression profiles were determined by mass spectrometry resulting in a promising list of proteins, which exhibited remarkable differences between these strains.

Apart from different transporters, regulatory systems for iron homeostasis, sporulation and biofilm formation were identified. In this way, several bacterial strategies could be revealed to deal with Surfactin accumulation in physiological concentrations. Based on these insights, novel targets were conceived for strain engineering to obtain an optimized cell growth for best possible Surfactin production.

### 287-ZOP

**Murine fecal microbiota transplantation alleviates intestinal and systemic immune responses in Campylobacter jejuni infected mice harboring a human gut microbiota**

*M. M. Heimesaat*, K. Mrazek, S. Bereswill

1Charité - University Medicine Berlin, Institute of Microbiology, Infectious Diseases and Immunology, Berlin, Germany

Human campylobacteriosis constitutes an emerging zoonotic food-borne disease of significant socioeconomic impact. We have recently shown that conventional mice are protected from Campylobacter jejuni infection, which was not the case for human microbiota associated (hma) mice indicating that the host-specific gut microbiota composition primarily determines susceptibility towards or resistance against C. jejuni infection. In our present preclinical intervention study we addressed whether gut microbiota changes in stably C. jejuni infected hma mice following murine fecal microbiota transplantation (mFMT) could alleviate pathogen-induced immune responses. Therefore, secondary abiotic C57BL/6 mice were generated by broad-spectrum antibiotic treatment, perorally reassociated with a complex human gut microbiota and challenged with C. jejuni by gavage. Seven days later C. jejuni infected hma mice were subjected to peroral mFMT on three consecutive days. Within a week post mFMT fecal pathogenic burdens had decreased by two orders of magnitude, whereas distinct changes in the gut microbiota composition with elevated numbers of lactobacilli and bifidobacteria could be assessed. In addition, mFMT resulted in less C. jejuni induced apoptotic responses in colonic epithelia, reduced numbers of macrophages and monocytes as well as of T lymphocytes in the large intestinal mucosa and lamina propria and in less distinct intestinal pro-inflammatory cytokine secretion as compared to mock challenge. Strikingly, inflammation-dampening effects of mFMT were not restricted to the intestinal tract, but could also be observed systemically. In conclusion, our preclinical mFMT intervention study provides evidence that changes in the gut microbiota composition which might be achieved by pre- or probiotic formulations may effectively lower intestinal C. jejuni loads, dampen both, pathogen-induced intestinal and systemic inflammatory sequelae and may represent a useful tool to treat continuous shedding of C. jejuni by asymptomatic carriers which is critical in the context of food production, hospitalization and immunosuppression.
Arcobacter species, particularly A. butzleri, but also A. cryaerophilus constitute emerging pathogens causing gastroenteritis in humans. However, isolation of Arcobacter may often fail during routine diagnostic procedures due to the lack of standard protocols. Furthermore, defined breakpoints for the interpretation of antimicrobial susceptibilities of Arcobacter are missing. Hence, reliable epidemiological data of human Arcobacter infections are scarce and also lacking for Germany. We therefore performed the 13-month prospective Arcobacter prevalence study Arcopath in German patients. A total of 4646 human stool samples was included and Arcobacter spp. were detected in 0.85% of specimens from 3884 outpatients and in 0.40% of samples from 752 hospitalized patients. Whereas A. butzleri, A. cryaerophilus and A. lantieri were identified in outpatients, only A. butzleri could be isolated from samples of hospitalized patients. Overall, A. butzleri was the most prevalent species (n = 24; 67%), followed by A. cryaerophilus (n = 10; 28%) and A. lantieri (n = 2; 6%). Antimicrobial susceptibility testing of Arcobacter isolates revealed high susceptibilities to ciprofloxacin, whereas bimodal distributions of MICs were observed for azithromycin and ampicillin. In summary, Arcobacter could be isolated in 0.85% of German outpatients and ciprofloxacin rather than other antibiotics might be appropriate for antibiotic treatment of infections. Further epidemiological studies are needed, however, to provide a sufficient risk assessment of Arcobacter infections in humans.

289-ZOP
Vitamin D in acute campylobacteriosis – results from an intervention study applying a clinical Campylobacter jejuni induced enterocolitis model

*S. Bereswill1, S. Mousavi1, F. D. Lobo de Sá2, J. Schulzke2, R. Böcker3, M. M. Heimesaat4
1Charité - University Medicine Berlin, Pharmaceutical Microbiology Group/ Microbiology, Infectious Diseases and Immunology, Berlin, Germany
2Charité - University Medicine Berlin, Institute of Clinical Physiology, Berlin, Germany

Human Campylobacter infections are progressively rising and of high socioeconomic impact. In the present preclinical intervention study we investigated anti-pathogenic, immunomodulatory and intestinal epithelial barrier preserving properties of vitamin D applying an acute campylobacteriosis model. Therefore, secondary abiotic IL-10/- mice were perorally treated with synthetic 25-OH-cholecalciferol starting four days before peroral Campylobacter jejuni infection. Whereas 25-OH-cholecalciferol application did not affect gastrointestinal pathogen loads, 25-OH-cholecalciferol treated mice suffered less frequently from diarrhea in the midst of infection as compared to placebo control mice. Moreover, 25-OH-cholecalciferol application dampened C. jejuni induced apoptotic cell responses in colonic epithelia and promoted cell-regenerative measures. At day 6 post-infection, 25-OH-cholecalciferol treated mice displayed lower numbers of colonic innate and adaptive immune cell populations as compared to placebo controls that were accompanied by lower intestinal concentrations of pro-inflammatory mediators including IL-6, MCP1 and IFN-γ. Remarkably, as compared to placebo application synthetic 25-OH-cholecalciferol treatment of C. jejuni infected mice resulted in lower cumulative translocation rates of viable pathogens from the inflamed intestines to extra-intestinal including systemic compartments such as the kidneys and spleen, respectively, which was accompanied by less compromised colonic epithelial barrier function in the 25-OH-cholecalciferol as compared to the placebo cohort. In conclusion, our preclinical intervention study provides evidence that peroral synthetic 25-OH-cholecalciferol application exerts inflammation-dampening effects during acute campylobacteriosis.

290-ZOP
Pathogenicity and virulence of S. schweitzeri – a new member of the S. aureus complex

*A. Großmann1, N. Frobose1, A. S. Alabi2, A. Mellmann3, F. Schaumburg1, S. Niemann1
1Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Institute for Medical Microbiology, Münster, Germany
2Centre de Recherches Médicales de Lambaréné, Lambaréné, Gabon
3Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Institute for Hygiene, Münster, Germany

Introduction
Staphylococcus schweitzeri belongs to the Staphylococcus aureus complex and is mostly found in Africa wildlife so far. The capacity of S. schweitzeri to cause disease in humans remains controversial since no clinical infection has been reported, yet.

Objectives
The aims of this work were to test the virulence of S. schweitzeri in a wide range of in vitro assays on the largest S. schweitzeri collection published so far and to screen systematically clinical samples for S. schweitzeri.

Materials & methods
Whole genome sequencing was done to construct a phylogenetic tree of S. schweitzeri (n=58) from Gabon, DR Congo, Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire. The capacity for invasion, intracellular cell death induction, cytotoxicity, phagolysosomal escape, coagulase activity, biofilm formation and host cell activation of S. schweitzeri was compared with S. aureus isolates representing the most common clonal complexes (CC) in Africa (CC15, CC121, CC152) using different host cells (Vero, A549). A collection of clinical isolates from Gabon provisionally identified as S. aureus (n=159) were screened for the presence of S. schweitzeri.

Results
The population of S. schweitzeri comprises five geographical clusters and isolates from humans are found in two different clades within the Gabonese cluster. The comparison of S. schweitzeri vs. S. aureus comparator isolates showed a similar host cell invasion (0.9 vs. 1.2 CFU/ml, Vero), host cell activation (4.1 vs. 1.7 normalized fold expression of CCL5 and 7.3 vs. 9.9 normalized fold expression of IL8) and intracellular cytotoxicity (31.5% vs. 25%, A549). The extracellular pathogenicity (52.9% vs. 28.8%) was higher for
S. schweitzeri than for S. aureus. All tested S. schweitzeri were able to escape from phagolysosomes. S. schweitzeri was not detected in clinical samples.

Conclusion

S. schweitzeri is as virulent as S. aureus in the applied in-vitro assays. Its transmission to humans was demonstrated on two occasions but clinical infections were not detected. S. schweitzeri might become an emerging pathogen in humans, if a cross-species transmission from African wildlife sustainably occurs.

291-ZOP

Single cell assay for DNA uptake in Campylobacter jejuni - a tool for monitoring the adaptive potential of the food-borne pathogen

J. Golz, K. Slingl

German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Berlin, Germany

Introduction

Campylobacter jejuni is the major cause of bacterial induced gastroenteritis in the developed countries. The adaptive potential of C. jejuni is very high. Natural transformation can increase genetic diversity and, therefore, the adaptive potential.

Objectives

In order to develop reduction strategies, it is important to understand the mechanisms of competence development and DNA uptake in C. jejuni. Therefore we developed a single cell based assay to monitor DNA-uptake.

Materials and methods

To visualize DNA uptake C. jejuni was incubated with fluorescently labelled DNA and analyzed on a single-cell level. The ratio of competent cells was calculated. We genetically constructed mutants lacking homologues of either pilQ, comE or comEC, which were shown to be essential for DNA uptake in other bacteria.

Results

Using the established single cell assay we visualized DNA uptake in C. jejuni and analyzed the competence development. Approximately 20 % to 30 % of C. jejuni cells took up fluorescently labelled C. jejuni DNA under standard conditions and showed DNase resistant fluorescent foci. The pilQ mutant was deficient for DNA uptake, as expected from the predicted role as outer membrane DNA channel in Neisseria. The comE and comEC mutants showed wild-type levels of DNA uptake (into the periplasm). Although ComE is known as a DNA-binding protein facilitating DNA uptake, our results indicate no essential role in DNA uptake in C. jejuni. Parallel transformation experiments with the comEC mutant showed no transformation activity. This is in accordance with ComEC being the inner membrane channel.

Conclusions

The developed single cell DNA uptake assay provides visualization of DNA uptake. Two mutants showed defects in natural transformation. These mutants will be further analyzed, in cooperation with members of the PAC-CAMPY consortium, for their adaptive potential in vivo and their ability to form biofilms.

292-ZOP

Genetic diversity of Mycobacterium bovis and its zoonotic potential in Ethiopia: A systematic review

B. Tulu, G. Ameni

Bahir Dar University, Medical Laboratory Sciences, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Background: Understanding the types of Mycobacterium bovis strains circulating in a country and exploring its zoonotic potential has significant contribution in the effort to design control program. The main aim of this study was to review and compile the results of studies conducted on strains of M. bovis from animal and human in Ethiopia.

Methods: A systematic search and review of articles published on M. bovis strains in Ethiopia were made. PubMed and Google Scholar databases were considered for the search while the keywords used were "Mycobacteria," "Mycobacterium bovis," "Bovine Tuberculosis" and "Ethiopia."

Result: Fourteen studies were considered in this review and a total of 31 distinct strains of M. bovis (N=211) were obtained; the most dominant strains were SB0133 (N=62, 29.4 %), SB1176 (N=61, 28.9 %), and followed by SB0134 and SB1476 each (N=18, 8.5 %). Regarding the clustering rate, 42.0 % of the similar strains of M. bovis were found to be reported more than ones. On the other hand, 6 distinct strains of M. bovis (N=11, 5.2 %) were reported from human subjects namely: SB0665 (N=4), SB0303 (N=2), SB0982 (N=2), SB0133 (N=1), SB1176 (N=1), and 1 new strain.

Conclusion: The result showed that the genetic diversity of M. bovis strains reported from Ethiopia are less diversified and highly clustered. And also the result underlines that there is an ongoing active transmission of M. bovis between human and animals in Ethiopia because a significant number of strains were reported from human and animals.

Keywords: M. bovis, zoonotic TB, M. tuberculosis, genetic diversity, Ethiopia

293-ZOP

Whole genome sequencing of methicillin-resistant staphylococci from German dairy farms revealed broad antimicrobial resistance profiles but a low risk of human infections

T. Lienen, A. Schnitt, S. Maurischat, B. A. Tenhagen

German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Berlin, Germany

Introduction: Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) can be a serious problem in dairy farming. Infections caused by MRSA cannot be treated with beta-lactam antibiotics that are the first line treatment for bovine mastitis. Beside MRSA, methicillin-resistant coagulase negative staphylococci (MR-CoNS) are frequently found on dairy farms. Considering the one health approach, MRSA and MR-CoNS might be transmitted from animals to humans and vice versa.

Objectives: The interest of the study is to analyze the genotypes, virulence factors and antimicrobial resistance gene profiles of MRSA and MR-CoNS from German dairy farms.
Materials and Methods: On preselected dairy farms with a history of MRSA detection, quarter milk, bulk tank milk and swab samples of calves, heifers and from the environment were analyzed for methicillin-resistant staphylococci. A selection of isolates was analyzed using whole genome sequencing.

Results: MRSA and MR-CoNS were detected in different sample types across the dairy farms. The methicillin-resistance was associated with the mecA gene in SCCmec types I, IVa, IVc, IVd and V as well as unknown types in various MR-CoNS isolates. Interestingly, phenotypically resistant but mecA- and mecC-negative Staphylococcus cohnii isolates from different farms showed modified penicillin-binding-protein genes. The detected MRSA strains were attributed to the livestock-associated clonal complex 398. Resistances to a broad range of antimicrobials such as aminoglycosides, beta-lactams, macrolides and tetracyclines were predicted. However, the isolates lacked typical human infection associated genes such as the immune evasion cluster genes sak, chp, snc, staphyloccocal enterotoxin genes or Panton-Valentine leukocidin genes.

Conclusion: MRSA and MR-CoNS are widely spread across the dairy farm environment carrying a broad variety of antimicrobial resistance genes. It cannot be ruled out that the resistance genes can be transmitted between the different species. According to the preliminary results on virulence factors, the risk of severe human infections by the detected livestock-associated MRSA strains seems to be low.

294-ZOP
Analysis of the Coxiella burnetii isolate-specific pathogenic potential using proteomics
*J. Andrack1, J. Dresler2, H. Neubauer3, K. Mertens-Scholz1
1Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Institute of Bacterial Infections and Zoonoses, Jena, Germany
2Military Health Institute, Prague, Germany

Q fever is a disease caused by Coxiella (C.) burnetii, an obligate intracellular zoonotic pathogen, which affects humans and animals. In ruminants (e.g. sheep, goat and cattle) the infection is mainly asymptomatic, but can lead to abortions. In humans flu-like symptoms and pneumonia (acute) and/or endocarditis (chronic) may occur.

C. burnetii isolates are genetically heterogeneous and originally classified into six genomic groups. This classification correlates with an observed group-specific virulence, identified using rodent infection models. The pathogenic differences may be a result of a variable expression of virulence factors and predisposing factors of the individual host.

Our project is part of the Q-GAPS zoonosis network (Q fever GermAn Interdisciplinary Program for reSearch) and focuses on isolate-specific differences in pathogenicity and virulence. The hypothesis of our work is that the genetic differences of various C. burnetii isolates correlates with differential expression of virulence factors. For determining the isolate-specific differences, the data from whole genome sequencing, cell culture infection models for replication fitness and corresponding proteome analysis will be compared. This will be used for the identification of protein markers for virulence determinants and may contribute to future development of new diagnostic tests and vaccines.

Decolonization of LA-MRSA positive fattening pigs – Effects of straw bedding on conventional husbandry
*S. Linnemann1, H. Müller1, I. Kobusch1, N. Effelsberg2, A. Meillmann3, M. Boelhauve1
1South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences, Soest, Germany
2Institute of Hygiene, University of Münster, Münster, Germany

Introduction: The increasing occurrence of livestock-associated methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (LA-MRSA) requires a counterstrategy. MRSA decolonization of persons with livestock exposure was not successful, although both, environment of the animals and persons were decontaminated but colonized animals cause a reinfection.

Objectives: Through the #1HealthPREVENT project, factors could be worked out which cause a change of the MRSA-status of animals and environment.

Materials and methods: This research was performed on a conventional swine farm for fattening pigs. The feature of this conventional husbandry is the open airing and straw bedding. Two different types of hygienic concepts were compared: simple cleaning (SC) and cleaning with disinfection (CD). Nasal LA-MRSA colonization of the pigs was analyzed directly after arrival on the farm and subsequently during the fattening period. The environmental contamination of LA-MRSA was analyzed as well. Nasal swab of selected animals for microbiome analysis were taken.

Results: At arrival, all pigs carried LA-MRSA. Further screenings showed comparable results in the stables. After a few weeks, pigs and environment were frequently tested negative for LA-MRSA. Group SC showed a decrease of LA-MRSA-negative findings of pigs after 11 weeks with a total conversion to LA-MRSA negativity at the end of the fattening period after 14 weeks. This development also applies to Group CD. Microbiome analysis of five samples show that the microbiome changes during the fattening period.

Conclusion: The process of decontamination is not mainly influenced by the preparation of the stables. It seems like the straw bedding with a diverse microbiome could be an important factor. The microbiome analysis shows changes in the microbiome of the samples during the fattening period. Further analysis will likely give a hint for a better understanding of this interaction and might help developing an effective strategy against the spread of LA-MRSA.

296-ZOP
Identification of housing condition factors influencing the occurrence of MRSA and ESBL in pigsties
*I. Kobusch1, S. Linnemann1, H. Müller1, M. Boelhauve1
1South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences, Germany, Soest, Germany

Introduction: Increasing evidence of livestock-associated methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (LA-MRSA) and extended-spectrum lactamase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (ESBL) as multidrug-resistant microorganisms (MDRO) in animal husbandry is shifting research to the focus of public interest. It is known that animals can change their MRSA-status during their lifetime. However, other studies have shown a different prevalence of LA-MRSA in pig herds depending on environmental parameters.

Objectives: Aim of a subproject of #1HealthPREVENT is the identification of factors determining the spread of LA-MRSA and ESBL. The MDRO-prevalence in different pig husbandry
systems with divergent housing conditions is of special interest.

Materials and methods: The research was performed on fattening pig farms with conventional husbandry, alternative systems and husbandries with ecological guidelines. At two different times in the fattening period, nasal swabs (pigs) and sponge swabs (environment) were taken for the detection of MRSA and influencing factors were collected by a questionnaire. ESBL was screened in parallel by sock swabs.

Results: Conventional systems showed increased prevalence for LA-MRSA in environment and pigs. Alternative and ecological husbandries revealed reduced LA-MRSA findings when competitive flora like straw bedding or non-disinfection were present. ESBL is verified in all husbandry systems with a reduced rate in disinfected stables.

Conclusion: Results suggest a lower rate of LA-MRSA in alternative and ecological housing systems. Possibly, there could be created a complex environmental microbiota with bacterial competition against LA-MRSA. ESBL was verified in all systems, but with higher rates in intensive contact with faeces. The #1Health-PREVENT project investigates these influences for a better understanding of the interactions to define effective strategies to reduce MRDO occurrence in livestock breeding.

297-ZOP

Analysis of Arcobacter butzleri from water poultry: Insights into antibiotic-resistance and virulence determinants

Introduction: Arcobacter is a genus of gram-negative, spiral-shaped bacteria in the class of epsilon proteobacteria. Some species are known as pathogens in both humans and animals. Therefore, they are of particular interest as zoonotic pathogens within the "One Health" framework.

Objectives: The purpose of this study was to analyze the distinct antimicrobial susceptibility of two Arcobacter butzleri strains isolated from ducks (Cairina moschata × Anas platyrhynchos) from a water poultry farm in Thuringia, Germany. We assessed their genetic relatedness, the antibiotic resistance-associated genes, and virulence-associated genes.

Materials & Methods: The isolates were cultivated, identified by MALDI-TOF MS and identification was confirmed with PCR. Antibiotic susceptibility testing was performed using the gradient strip method (E-TestTM) with eight different antibiotics. Whole-genome sequences were generated with Illumina MiSeq instruments and examined with bioinformatic tools.

Results: Strain 16CS0817-2 was susceptible to all tested antibiotics except for streptomycin and cefotaxime. The other strain was only susceptible to gentamicin, ciprofloxacin, and ampicillin. A positive correlation between phenotype and genotype was found in three antimicrobial resistance-associated genes for both strains. All virulence-associated genes were present in both isolates except for hecA and hecB.

Conclusion: Since the genotypic prediction of antibiotic resistance alone is not yet reliable, the phenotypic determination of antibiotic resistance should be maintained.

298-ZOP

Serological and molecular identification of Brucella spp. in pig from Cairo and Gizeh governorates, Egypt

Introduction: Brucellosis is considered as endemic disease of animals and humans since thousands of years in Egypt. However, brucellosis in pigs has never been reported. Thus, serological and molecular assays were applied to detect anti-Brucella antibodies and DNA in serum samples collected from pigs.

Methods: In total 331 blood samples collected from male and female pigs at slaughterhouses of Cairo and Giza governorates were investigated using Brucella c and i-ELISA and Brucella real time PCR.

Results: Anti Brucella antibodies were detected in 16 (4.83%) and 36 (10.8%) sera by i-ELISA and c-ELISA, respectively. Brucella DNA was detected in 10 (3.02%) seropositive samples and identified as B. melitensis (7/10) and B. suis (3/10). A higher prevalence was found in boars.

Conclusion: This is the first study investigating pig brucellosis in Egypt. The results of this study will arise awareness for brucellosis in these farm animals and will help to develop effective control strategies.

299-ZOP

A Mycobacterium bovis intrabronchial infection model established in goats

Introduction: Mycobacterium bovis and M. caprae, members of the Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex (MTC), cause tuberculosis in domestic ruminants with large economic impact globally and also represent important zoonotic pathogens. Goats are well suited models for veterinary and human TB research as they develop symptoms and pathomorphological lesions comparable to bovine and human TB. Aim of the study was to implement a caprine TB infection model allowing for the quantitative assessment of a multitude of relevant parameters during the course of infection.

Results: Three groups of 6 month old goats (n=4) were infected with 4.7x10^2, 8.9x10^2 and 8.3x10^3 CFU of M. bovis, and B. caprae. The goats were kept under standard husbandry conditions and were sacrificed at different times in the fattening period, nasal swabs (pigs) and sponge swabs (environment) were taken for the detection of MRSA and influencing factors were collected by a questionnaire. ESBL was screened in parallel by sock swabs.

Conclusion: Since the genotypic prediction of antibiotic resistance alone is not yet reliable, the phenotypic determination of antibiotic resistance should be maintained.
respectively. Endoscopic inoculation was performed at 5 distinctive locations in the bronchial tree and progress of infection was monitored until 5 months post infection (p.i.). Humoral and cellular immune responses were assessed ex vivo. At necropsy, tissue samples were taken for bacterial culture, lungs fixed intra-thoracically and analyzed by Computed tomography (CT) and digital X-ray.

Although none of the goats developed clinical symptoms, macroscopic lung lesions were recorded in 1 of 4, 3/4 and 3/3 animals of the low, medium and high dose group, respectively. CT analysis unveiled lung lesions in numbers increasing with inoculation dose. Lesions presented as small mineralized lesions with < 5 mm in diameter, which predominated; mineralized lesions with >5 mm; confluent and partly mineralized lesions with >5 mm. M. bovis was regularly isolated from thoracic lymph nodes. Dissemination to lymph nodes at other sites, tonsils and the gastrointestinal tract accompanied with lesions was seen in four animals. Cross-reacting antibodies against other mycobacteria were detectable as early as 28 days p.i. (dpi) whereas antibodies specific for M. bovis antigens MPB70 and MPB83 became detectable only later and increases in titers were less pronounced. Antigen-specific IFN-γ response of T-cells was measurable from 28 dpi onwards with CD4+, CD8+ as well as γδ-T-cells contributing to IFN-γ formation.

This large animal TB model by intra-bronchial inoculation can now be applied in anti-TB vaccine development.

300-ZOP
Multi-drug resistant gram-negative pathogens carried by flies from a tertiary hospital in Rwanda
S. Heiden1, M. Kurzi2, J. Bohnert3, C. Bayingana4, J. Ndoli4, A. Sendegeya4,5, J. Gahutu4,5, E. Eger2, F. Mockenhaupt2, K. Schaufler2
1University of Greifswald/Institute of Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Microbiology, Greifswald, Germany
2Charité University Medicine of Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany
3University of Rwanda, Kigali, Rwanda
4University Teaching Hospital of Butare, Butare, Rwanda
5Laboratory of Medical Microbiology, Mölbiis, Germany

Objective
Demonstration of important in vivo disease markers in an ex vivo skin infection model and thereby proving this model system suitable for dermatophytoses research.

Material and Methods
In this study, 42 flies collected from different wards of a tertiary hospital in Rwanda were tested for their carriage of extended-spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL)-producing bacteria and subsequently characterized by whole-genome sequencing.

Results
Almost 48% (n = 20) of samples contained phenotypically multidrug-resistant gram-negative (MRGN) bacteria is one of the major challenges of modern healthcare all around the globe. The carriage of such bacteria by ubiquitously occurring insects is an underrated risk factor.

Material and Methods
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virulence factor csgD such as genes encoding for adhesins (cfaC), haem-utilization (chuA) and toxins (hlyE) were identified.

Conclusion
This study highlights the potential role of flies as reservoir for harmful antibiotic-resistant bacteria.
expression of Sub6 during experimental Trichophyton-infection. The quantitative assessment of virulence factor expression is planned to enable the detailed comparison of different dermatophytes concerning these key mechanisms of infection.

302-ZOP
Metabolic traits of bovine STEC strains with different colonization properties
*S. Barth*, M. Weber1, K. Schautler1,2, C. Berens1, L. Geue1, C. Menge1
1Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Institut für molekulare Pathogenese, Jena, Germany
2University of Greifswald, Pharmaceutical Microbiology, Greifswald, Germany
3Free University Berlin, Institute of Microbiology and Epizootics, Berlin, Germany

Cattle can harbor Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) in their intestinal tract without displaying any clinical symptoms but providing an ecological niche for these microorganisms. Genotypic characterization of bovine STEC isolates showed that their ability to colonize the intestine is gut persistently (STECper) or only sporadically (STECspo) more closely linked to the accessory rather than to the core genome (Barth et al., AEM, 2016, 82:5455). Phenotypic traits beyond classical virulence factors might be crucial for the realization of a specific colonization pattern. We therefore analyzed metabolic properties of 28 STEC strains, e.g., utilization of different single-compound carbon, nitrogen, phosphorous, and sulfur sources by phenotype microarray, in correlation to the colonization type. The ability to produce biofilm was determined quantitatively.

STECspo strains produced significantly more biofilm when incubated at lower temperatures than STECper. Three STECper strains belonging to the O165/O172 cluster utilized significantly less substrates when compared to the other strains and were excluded from further statistical analysis. The substrates showing significant association with the colonization type were, beside others, glyoxylic acid and L-rhamnose, which were utilized in STECspo, but not or only to a small extent in STECper. Comparing the genomic sequences of the respective glc and rha operons revealed mutations and frameshifts in relevant uptake and/or regulatory genes, particularly in STECper.

STECper seem to have abandoned metabolic traits after adaptation to the bovine intestine, while STECspo conserved properties leveraging survival in the environment. These findings, for the first time, link persistent colonization of STEC strains in the cattle reservoir to the loss of metabolic properties and the genomic mutations in the underlying genetic regulation. Not being classical virulence factors, these specific traits of strains with enhanced reservoir adaptation may represent a bacterial Achilles’ heel to be targeted by novel intervention measures that aim to reduce long-term colonization of cattle with these potentially zoonotic pathogens.

303-ZOP
Tuberculosis in small animals living in close contact to their owners
*S. Barth*, C. Menge1, F. Attig1, W. Baumgärtner2, A. Lehmbeccker2, M. Kohlbach1, D. Hillemann3, A. Lauda4, S. Pfleghaar5
1Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Institut für molekulare Pathogenese, Jena, Germany
2Tierärztliche Hochschule Hannover, Department of Pathology, Hannover, Germany
3Veterinary Joint Practice Janssen and König, Wennigsen, Germany
4National Reference Centre for Mycobacteria, Borstel, Germany
5Veterinary Practice Dres. Schwarz and Lauda, Planegg, Germany
6Practice for Animal Pathology, München, Germany

*Mycobacterium bovis* is the causative agent of bovine tuberculosis, but also has zoonotic potential causing diseases in man and several other mammal species. Here we describe two independent cases of *M. bovis* infections, one in a cat and one in a ferret, both small animals living in the house-hold in close contact to the owners.

Case 1 was a female, 8-month-old domestic short hair cat with wound complications after castration surgery in Ukraine. A second surgery in Germany showed a focal, partly cystic mass within the mesentery. Macroscopically, several abdominal lymph nodes were enlarged. Case 2 was an intact, 9-month old female pet ferret, presented to a local veterinarian with symptoms of weight loss, apathy, and hyporexia. Explorative laparotomy identified a firm mass of approximately 2x2 cm in size in the mesentery of the jejunum. The ferret was bought in Poland and lived eight months in Germany before the infection became apparent.

Histological examinations of the abdominal masses of both animals detected acid fast bacteria laying in the cytoplasma of macrophages, leading to the suspicion of an infection with *Mycobacteria* sp. PCR confirmed presence of DNA of members of the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex, subsequently specified as *M. bovis*. Molecular genetic typing identified *M. bovis* spoligotypes never reported before in Germany (SB0950, SB2545).

The current cases must be taken as warning signals to raise the awareness of veterinarians and physicians for mycobacterial infections in small animals, as animal tuberculosis is rare in wide areas of Germany and generally not considered a differential diagnosis.

304-ZOP
Antimicrobial-resistant pathogens transmitted via pets
*C. Hackmann1, P. Gastmeier1, R. Leistner1, P. Eichhorn2
1Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Institut für Hygiene und Umweltmedizin, Berlin, Germany
2Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Charité Institute für Infektionsbiologie, Berlin, Germany

This project aims to assess the relevance of pet husbandry in the transmission of multidrug-resistant (MDR) pathogens on hospital patients. Currently, the potential role of pets as reservoirs of MDR pathogens is still unclear. The project focusses on the most common MDR pathogens in pets, namely methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), vancomycin-resistant Enterococci (VRE) and multidrug-resistant gram-negative pathogens (MRGN). Investigating pet husbandry as a risk factor for colonization or infection with MDR pathogens creates an opportunity to identify patients at risk and develop prevention strategies.

To assess the contact to household pets as a risk factor for colonization or infection with one of the above named pathogens, we perform an exploratory, unmatched case-control study. Among questions about well-known risk factors, study participants are interviewed regarding their contact especially to dogs and cats. This includes information about the number of pets in the household, the closeness of contact and diseases as well as medical treatment of the pets.

To assess the genetic relatedness of the MDR pathogens between humans and pets we collect nasal and rectal swabs of the participants in the hospital to test them for MDR
After weaning. The swine toxigenic Escherichia coli Shiga toxins with glycosphingolipid receptors of porcine renal epithelial cells 1,2,3 produce Shiga-like toxin (Stx) which causes the porcine edema disease that occurs shortly after weaning. The swine-pathogenic STEC strains release the Stx2e subtype as their key virulence factor. Stx2e damages endothelial cells of a number of animal organs including the kidney. The interaction is mediated by the Stx-binding glycosphingolipids (GSLs) globotriaosylceramide (Gb3Cer) and globotetraosylceramide (Gb4Cer). So far, the involvement of renal epithelial cells in Stx2e-mediated injury of the swine kidney is unknown.

Objective: The major aims were the identification of Stx2e-binding GSLs and determining the Stx2e-mediated damage of porcine kidney epithelial cells.

Materials and Methods: The porcine PK15 and LLC-PK1 kidney epithelial cell lines were cultured under serum-free conditions. The neutral GSLs were isolated from lipid extracts by anion-exchange chromatography. Antibody and Stx thin-layer chromatography (TLC) overlay assays were applied for immunochemical detection of Stx-binding GSLs. Their precise structures were identified by mass spectrometry. Neoglycolipids, composed of Gb3 and Gb4 glycans linked to phosphatidylethanolamine (PE), respectively, were produced and probed as potential Stx2e inhibitors in cytotoxicity assays.

Results: PK15 and LLC-PK1 cells were found to exhibit the two Stx receptors Gb3Cer and Gb4Cer. Gb4Cer, the preferential receptor of Stx2e, dominated over Gb3Cer in both cell lines. TLC overlay immunochemical detection revealed strong binding of Stx2e towards Gb4Cer compared to weak recognition of less abundant Gb3Cer. This binding preference was different to that of human-pathogenic Stx1a and Stx2a, which preferred Gb3Cer. Co-application of the neoglycolipids Gb3-PE and Gb4-PE in cytotoxicity assay increased the survival rate upon Stx2e treatment of both cell lines indicating the potential of neoglycolipids as Stx inhibitors.

Conclusion: In this study we provide first data on Gb3Cer and Gb4Cer as main GSLs of porcine epithelial cells and Stx2e-mediated cellular damage. Our results suggest involvement of the kidney epithelium in the edema disease of pigs.

306-ZOP
Tick feces as a potential infection source of Q fever examined in an in vitro feeding system
1S. Körner, D. Pfeffer, H. Karch, H. U. Humpf, M. Müthing, H. Karch, J. Müthing
2Fraunhofer Institute for Cell Therapy and Immunology, Leipzig, Germany
3Institute of Animal Hygiene and Veterinary Public Health, Leipzig, Germany

Coxiella burnetii is an intracellular replicating bacterium that may cause the zoonosis Q fever in a wide range of hosts. Domestic ruminants are the most relevant reservoir for human infection whereby transmission mainly occurs via inhalation of infected dusts. Since the first isolation from a tick, Q fever was also assumed to be tick-borne. However, ticks carrying this pathogen are found rarely and close related Coxiella-like endosymbionts could have caused an overevaluation. Thus, the significance of ticks in Q fever transmission is unclear.

To address open questions concerning the vector role of ticks, different routes of tick excretion were examined in an in vitro feeding system.

Adult Ixodes ricinus and Dermacentor marginatus were fed on blood inoculated with different concentrations of C. burnetii in silicone-membrane based feeding units. Tick feces was removed daily and tested by quantitative real-time PCR and cultivation in L-929 cells. In order to investigate transstadial transmission, I. ricinus nymphs were fed on inoculated blood and left for molting. One part of molted adults was tested by qPCR whereas the other part was fed again on sterile blood for testing excretion via saliva as well via feces.

When feeding on blood inoculated with 10^5 or 10^6 C. burnetii GE/ml, adult ticks excreted infectious C. burnetii in feces especially one week after inoculation. Transstadial transmission from I. ricinus nymphs to adults occurred in 25% of ticks. Some of the molted females, which were fed again on sterile blood, excreted feces containing C. burnetii DNA during the entire duration of feeding in amounts of up to 10^9 C. burnetii GE/mg feces. The blood, which was removed during blood changes, was tested negative.

D. marginatus and I. ricinus adults can excrete infectious C. burnetii when feeding on blood containing a sufficient concentration of bacteria. This demonstrates an infection risk by inhalation of contaminated tick feces. Transstadial transmission was observed under laboratory conditions, proving a potential vector competence of I. ricinus. The role of the tick bite as a further potential transmission pathway still needs to be investigated.

307-ZOP
Project ZooM - Zoonotic importance of multidrug-resistant pathogens: FAQs at the interface veterinary/human medicine
1S. Kutzora
2Bayerisches Landesamt für Gesundheit und Lebensmittelsicherheit, München, Germany

In recent years, the number of infections caused by multidrug-resistant bacteria (MDRB) has increased. MDRB are also increasingly important in the private sector (e.g.
companion animals), but this aspect has not been sufficiently addressed in previous recommendations. In addition, many persons (e.g. farmers, veterinarians and their household members) acquire MDRB through contact with farm animals. The guidelines of the Commission for Hospital Hygiene and Infection Prevention (KRINKO) at the Robert Koch-Institute as well as the Technical Rules for Biological Agents (TRBA) in Germany focus on recommendations for healthcare facilities for the prevention of nosocomial or occupational infection risks. There are no recommendations for the private sector or for non-medical facilities and institutions. Consequently, in the public health service, answers regarding many questions related to (zoonotic) MDRB at the interface between veterinary and human medicine. Afterwards, information on possible transmission pathways of MDRB between humans and animals will be presented as FAQs. In order to generate the FAQs, guideline-based expert interviews were conducted. For this purpose, interviews were carried out on five different occasions. From the resulting pool of questions, overarching central questions were formed and answered with the help of scientific literature and an interdisciplinary panel of experts. Subsequently, the FAQs and their dissemination will be evaluated with regard to their benefit/usefulness for the daily work of the public health service (human and veterinary medicine). The ZooM project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the Zoonotic Infectious Diseases Research Network.

308-ZOP
Investigations into coinfections of the obligate intracellular ruminant pathogens *Chlamydia abortus* and *Coxiella burnetii*
B. Sara¹, E. Liebler-Tenorio¹, *C. Schnee*¹
¹Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Institut für molekulare Pathogenese, Jena, Germany

*Chlamydia abortus* and *Coxiella burnetii* are obligate intracellular gram negative bacteria that infect small ruminants.

Both target the placenta, can cause abortion and possess a zoonotic potential. *Chlamydia* and *Coxiella* share even more striking similarities on the cellular and molecular level such as a biphasic life-cycle with extracellular, infectious variants and intracellular, non-infectious forms residing in a membrane-bound vacuole. By hijacking intracellular organelles and redirecting transport vesicles, the bacteria acquire essential nutrients, but in a different mode. While the vacuole of *Coxiella* is an acidified phagolysosome which fuses with endocytic vesicles, *Chlamydia* in non-acidified vesicles from the Golgi apparatus and the endoplasmatic reticulum. Field studies in small ruminants have shown coinfections of *Chlamydia* and *Coxiella* in placental tissue from abortions. We have screened 65 placenta samples collected after normal parturition from infected sheep flocks. 52.3 % of these samples were PCR-positive for *Chl. abortus*, 61.5 % for *Cox. burnetii* and in 40.0 %, a coinfection of both agents was detected. To investigate whether the interaction of the two pathogens is of synergistic, competitive or neutral nature and to better assess the contribution of such polymicrobial infections to disease progression, we analyzed the interaction of *Chl. abortus* DC59 and *Cox. burnetii* RSA 439 NMII in cell culture models.

Fluorescence and electron microscopy revealed that different cell lines can be coinfected with *Coxiella* and *Chlamydia* and that a single cell can harbour both pathogens. They reside in distinct vacuoles but in close proximity to each other with occasional fusion of vacuole membranes. A preinfection of cells with *Coxiella* does not alter general *Chlamydia* morphology, but growth and infectivity was negatively influenced as shown by qPCR analysis of DNA replication and titration.

309-ZOP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

310-ZOP
Review on selected bacterial zoonoses in Bulgarian citizens: 2004-2018
R. Nenova¹, I. Tomova¹, I. Ivanov¹, *S. Panaiotov¹, V. Tolchkov¹
¹National Center of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, Department of Microbiology, Sofia, Bulgaria
Objective: An overview on anthrax, tularemia and brucellosis cases in Bulgarian citizens for 15 years.

Materials and methods: Data from the National Reference Laboratory "Special bacterial Pathogens", Microbiology department, NCIPD, Bulgaria.

Results: Nineteen cases of anthrax (17 sporadic and 2 clustered), including 3 fatal, were reported. With the exception of one primary septic form, the rest of the patients were with typical cutaneous anthrax. For the above mentioned period 91 patients with tularemia were diagnosed. These data indicate a change in the nature of the epidemic process since it’s beginning in 1997: reducing of the intensity and spreading of the infection to new regions in the country. One-pharyngeal, glandular and rarely oculo-glandular and pulmonary clinical presentations were observed. During the last 15 years 178 humans were infected with brucellosis in Bulgaria, including imported cases, 2 autochthonous outbreaks and autochthonous sporadic cases. Classical microbiological methods, such as cultivation and direct immunofluorescence microscopy were used for the diagnosis of anthrax. For the other infections, specific antibody response was the main method for diagnosis. Isolation of B. melitensis was successful from 10 clinical samples and F. tularensis- from 4 samples. Molecular methods (real-time qPCR, MLVA, Bruceladder) were used for diagnostic purposes, as well as for typing of the isolates.

Conclusion: Human anthrax cases still occurred in enzootic Bulgarian regions. Autochthonous cases of tularemia and brucellosis re-emerged in Bulgaria. The effective infection control led to incidence reduction in the past several years. However, the possibility B. anthracis, F. tularensis and Brucella sp. to be used as bioterroristic agents requires our vigilance during the investigation of human infections caused by them.

Key words: human zoonoses, anthrax, tularemia, brucellosis

311-ZOP
One year follow-up of patients with acute Q fever: results from an outbreak in Southwest Germany, 2014-2015
L. Dangel1, *S. Fischer1
1Landesgesundheitsamt Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart, Germany

Background:
In July 2014, a Q fever (QF) outbreak with over 250 notified cases occurred among visitors of a farmers’ market with sheepfold in rural Southwest Germany. The outbreak gave the special opportunity to screen a large number of patients over a long period, who have been infected with one natural point source.

Methods:
In this cohort, IgG Phi/II antibodies against Coxiella burnetii were analysed using IFA at defined time points as follow-ups. Twelve months post infection (p.i.) a short fatigue-based-questionnaire was conducted.

Results:
Highest IgG Phi/II antibody titers were detected 3 months p.i. and persisted at this level until 9 months p.i.. Still, 12 months p.i. 76.2% of patients revealed high IgG Phi antibody titers. IgG Phi antibody titers were also increased 12 months p.i. in 18% of patients. One patient was identified with chronic QF on the basis of serological and clinical testing. Furthermore a high number (40%) of patients complained of fatigue symptoms 12 months p.i..

Conclusions:
Our study clearly demonstrates the importance of long-term antibody surveillance after acute Q fever. At least 3, 6 and 12 months p.i. patients should be monitored for chronic QF. Therefore our study shows that both serology and clinical symptoms should be analysed for the detection of long-term health impacts such as chronic QF and fatigue symptoms. Due to these possible long-term consequences, prevention of Coxiella-infection, such as animal vaccination, is highly recommended.

312-MSHP
Antitumor anthraquinones from an Easter Island sea anemone: animal or bacterial origin?
I. Sottorff1, *J. Wiese1, S. Künzel2, M. Lipfert3, N. Preuške3, F. D. Sönning1, J. F. Imhoff4, U. Hentschel5
1GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel, Marine Symbioses, Kiel, Germany
2Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology, Plön, Germany
3Otto Diels Institute for Organic Chemistry, Kiel, Germany

The presence of two known anthraquinones, Lupinicadin A and Galvaquinone B, which have antitumor activity, has been identified in the sea anemone (Gyractis sesere) sampled from the coastal zone of Easter Island [1]. So far, these anthraquinones have been characterized from terrestrial and marine Actinobacteria only. In order to identify the anthraquinones producer, we isolated Actinobacteria associated with the sea anemone and obtained 28 representatives of seven actinobacterial genera, i.e. Arthrobacter (11 strains), Cellulosimicrobium (2), Dietzia (2), Micromonospora (3), Rhodococcus (1), Streptomyces (2), and Verrucosispora (7) [2]. Studies of cultures of these bacteria by HPLC, NMR, and HRLCMS analyses showed that the producer of lupinicadin A and galvaquinone B indeed was one of the isolated Actinobacteria [1]. The producer strain, SN26_14.1, was identified as a representative of the genus Verrucosispora. Genome analysis of this strain revealed, that the production of the identified metabolites apparently follows a recently characterized PKS type II pathway with a Baeyer-Villiger type rearrangement assembly line.

Our study adds Verrucosispora as a new genus to the anthraquinone producers, in addition to well-known species of Streptomyces and Micromonospora. By a cultivation-based approach, the responsibility of symbionts of a marine invertebrate for the production of complex natural products found within the animal’s extracts could be demonstrated. This finding re-opens the debate about the producers of secondary metabolites in sea animals. Finally, it provides valuable information about the chemistry of bacteria harbored in the geographically-isolated and almost unstudied, Easter Island.

References
[2] Sottorff I, Wiese J, Imhoff JF. High diversity and novelty of Actinobacteria isolated from the coastal zone of the

313-MSHP
Elucidating the gut microbiome–metabolome correlations in Wistar rats
1A. Murali, V. Giri, R. Habermehl, C. Behr, S. Sperber, T. Walk, B. van Ravenzwaay
2BASF SE, Experimental Toxicology, Ludwigshafen am Rhein, Germany
3BASF Plant Science LP, North Carolina, United States
4University College Cork, Biosciences Institute, Cork, Ireland
5BASF Metabolome Solutions GmbH, Berlin, Germany

The gut microbiome is known to play a huge role in the health and development of the host organism. “Omics technologies” provide better understanding of gut microbial functionality. The correlation between gut microbial communities with changes in the metabolome of plasma, feces and caecum matrices following a 28-day oral study with 6 antibiotics (streptomycin, vancomycin, roxithromycin, sparfloxacin, lincomycin and clindamycin) in rats was investigated.

Analyses of the 16S data of the antibiotic treatments were performed using QIIME 2. A predictive functional profiling was developed to estimate the metagenomic composition of the 16S dataset using PICRUSt software. The correlation of respective results regarding the presence and absence of specific bacterial communities and/or genes with the metabolite levels in different treatments using the programming language R.

Antibiotics were observed to specifically alter the levels of lipids and fatty acid, bile acid and amino acid metabolism. Specifically, Hippuric acid and indole-3-acetic acid were observed on the gut flora composition and the two lincosamides show very similar response, confirming a class-dependent effect. Streptomycin treatment showed similar bacterial abundance as the controls, dominated by Bacteroidetes and Firmicutes families. Vancomycin and Sparfloxacin showed reduced Bacteroidetes and Proteobacteria families while the two lincosamides showed increased Firmicutes and Proteobacteria levels. Lincomycin showed dose-dependent alterations in Actinobacteria family levels. PCoAs of microbiome data showed clustering similar to the PCA of the metabolome data, indicating dependence of various metabolite levels on the gut community. Stronger correlations between the gut flora composition with the caecum and feces metabolome profiles of the antibiotic treated rats have been observed, compared to plasma. Differential gene regulation with respect to antibiotic treatments was observed and could be associated with the metabolite profiles. Hence, the gut microbial composition but also gene regulation profile could be correlated with the metabolome data.

314-MSHP
Characterization of oral bacteriome dysbiosis in type 2 diabetes
1M. K. Azim, F. Saleem, J. Kori
2Mohammad Ali Jinnah University, Biosciences, Karachi, Pakistan

Question
We aimed to characterize the relationship of oral microbiome with diabetes in Pakistan.

Methods
Saliva samples were collected from diabetic patients (n = 49) and healthy individuals (n = 55). 16S metagenomics saliva was carried out by next generation DNA sequencing.

Results
We observed that the phylum Firmicutes (p-value = 0.024 at 95% confidence interval) was significantly more abundant among diabetic patients than among the controls. We found that abundance of phylum Actinobacteria did not significantly vary among both groups in contrast to a similar report from USA (Long et al., 2017). On genus level, acidogenic bacteria Prevotella (p-value = 0.024), Veillonella (p-value = 0.013) and Lactotrichia (p-value = 1.5 x 10^-3) were found to be in higher abundance in diabetic patients. Stratified analysis by gender revealed healthy and diabetic females to be more divergent. Abundance of Prevotella (p-value = 4.4 x 10^-3) and Lactotrichia (p-value = 0.015) was significantly associated with male patients.

Conclusion
Comparison of oral bacteriome between two groups revealed dominance of acidogenic bacteria in diabetics. These bacteria are found in dental biofilm and produce organic acid(s) from fermentable carbohydrates. Significant abundance of acidogenic bacteria suggested involvement of these eubacteria in periodontal diseases in diabetic patients.

315-MSHP
Towards an Antibiotic-free Antimicrobial Therapy of Skin Disorders by Applying Probiotics
G. Khalifallah1, E. Heine1, R. Lütticken1
1DWI Leibniz-Institute for Interactive Materials, Aachen, Germany

Introduction: Many skin disorders, including acne and infected neurodermitis lesions, require topic and/or systemic antibiotic treatment. This also applies for other skin lesions like infected wounds or venous leg ulcers.

Objectives: The potential of certain lactic acid bacteria (probiotics) was evaluated with respect to their activity against bacterial skin pathogens. The aim of the study was to develop a plaster/bandage utilizing inhibitory substances produced by probiotics.

Materials & Methods: Two S. salivarius strains and one L. plantarum were employed as model probiotics. Their ability to produce antimicrobials (bacteriocin-like substances) active against skin and wound pathogens was tested using established methods. A newly designed membrane test was applied to secure that the probiotics produce antimicrobials diffusible through semipermeable membranes. Target organisms investigated were (among others) C. acnes, S. aureus, P. aeruginosa, and Enterobacterales. For the purpose of a “probiotic pad” (bandage) to be applied onto the skin, the probiotics were cultivated in suitable media and transferred with the addition of a protectant into a pouch made of two sealed polymer films, one tight and one semipermeable. After vacuum-drying, the probiotics enclosed in the pads were tested on agar surfaces for their antimicrobial activity against the skin pathogens.

Results: The probiotics used were active against all skin pathogens tested. Moreover, these probiotics could be enclosed between polymer membranes – one tight for
bacteria, the other permeable for their products, preserved by vacuum drying, and reactivated after prolonged storage by applying them onto agar – as a model for their potential application onto skin. The reactivated polymer-pads demonstrated antibacterial activity on agar against all pathogens tested – including antibiotic-resistant isolates of *S. aureus*, *K. pneumoniae*, and *P. aeruginosa*.

**Conclusion:** Our results suggest that the probiotics containing pads might be topically applied for the treatment of skin disorders, e.g. acne, without the need for a regular antibiotic treatment or as an adjunct supporting antibiotic therapy.

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**316-MSHP**

**Towards the role of primary metabolites in the intestinal ecosystem under normal and inflamed conditions**

"A. Weiß"1, D. Ring2, W. Eisenreich2, K. Jung3, B. Stecher1

1Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Max von Pettenkofer-Institut, Munich, Germany
2Technische Universität München, Biochemistry, Munich, Germany
3Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Microbiology, Munich, Germany

The composition of the mammalian gastrointestinal microbiome is not only determined by stochastic processes such as dispersal or ecological drift, but is strongly influenced by deterministic interactions between species and the individual host environment. In the healthy gut, the enteric microbiota faces frequent changes in the availability of nutrients, as the source of metabolites varies in space and time with dietary composition, as well as with host-dependent factors. Especially inflammatory processes can create metabolic niches in the gut that may affect the composition of available nutrients. Therefore, complex metabolic interaction networks between the bacterial species have evolved in the dynamic chemical environment of the mammalian gut, shaping the composition and function of the microbial ecosystem.

A prime example of bacterial metabolic interaction is syntrophic cross-feeding of primary gut luminal metabolites, specifically short chain fatty acids and intermediate reaction products as lactate, hydrogen and pyruvate. To gain a better understanding of the spatial, temporal and compositional complexity of metabolic microbial community interactions, we are investigating the role of primary metabolites in a defined subset of community members *in vitro*, as well as in mouse models of gut inflammation, using growth and metabolome profiling approaches. To this end, we are working with a synthetic bacterial consortium, the Oligo-MM12 consortium, a defined and well-characterized community of 12 commensals. Using experimental and theoretical approaches, we aim to identify primary metabolites being exchanged and keystone species dominating community interactions under normal conditions and during infection with pathogenic organisms, as *Salmonella enterica* serovar Typhimurium.

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**317-MSHP**

**Elucidation of the impact of (co-)infections on gut microbiome structure and function by metaproteomics**

"L. C. Gierse"1, A. Meene1, C. Wünsche1, D. Zühlke1, N. Siemens2, D. Becher1, T. Unch1, K. Riedel1

1Institute of Microbiology, University of Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany
2Institute for Genetics and Functional Genomics, University of Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany

Pathogenicity models like swine and mouse play an important role in modern medical research. The large similarity to humans in physiology, immune system and biomass, makes especially the swine an ideal model for infectious diseases, e.g. influenza A or Staphylococcus infections. In contrast to most studies only addressing microbiome composition by using 16S rRNA gene sequencing, we aim to elucidate the structure and function of the metabolically active gastrointestinal tract microbiome prior and after bacto-viral mono- and co-infections employing a metaproteomics approach.

As a starting point a robust metaproteomic pipeline has been established, which enabled us to identify more than 5000 protein groups for each fecal sample of mouse and swine.

In healthy swine most of these protein groups belong to the families *Prevotellaceae* (35%), *Lactobacillaceae* (12%), *Lachnospiraceae* (12%) and *Clostridiaceae* (10%). While longitudinal shifts in the healthy gastrointestinal microbiota on the taxonomical level (e.g. *Spirochaetaceae* and *Streptococcaceae*) were observed, most functions stayed stable over a time span of 30 days, indicating functional redundancy. Notably, more than 60% of the protein groups could be assigned to major functional categories, such as translation (28%), carbohydrate transport and metabolism (6%), energy production and conservation (4%), or cell motility (4%). After influenza A infection of swine changes within the relative abundance of several families of the porcine gut microbiota e.g. *Lactobacillaceae*, *Veillonellaceae* and *Streptococcaceae* were observed, suggesting a systemic effect of the respiratory tract infection. Next, structure and function of the gastrointestinal microbiome will be analysed in response to Streptococcal and bacto-viral co-infections by our metaproteomics approach.

In the mouse model, nasal colonization with *S. pneumoniae* does not significantly affect the metaproteome of the intestinal microbiome. We are currently analyzing the effect of respiratory *S. pneumoniae* infections on the mouse gastrointestinal tract microbiome. First results indicate a reduction of microbial diversity in diseased animals compared to healthy controls.

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**318-MSHP**

**Establishing an in-vitro co-cultivation system to analyze interaction of biofilms and human endothelial cells**

"V. I. Pauker"1, L. Rieckmann1, T. Petscheleit1, L. Maletzkii1, A. Strohbach1, R. Busch2, S. Ilner2, N. Grabow2, K. Riedel1

1Institute of Microbiology, University of Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany
2University Medicine Greifswald, Clinic und Polyclinic for Internal Medicine B, Researchcluster III, Greifswald, Germany
3Institute for Biomedical Engineering, University Medicine Rostock, Rostock, Germany

**Question:** Biofilm formation on cardiovascular implants can lead to life-threatening conditions such as infective endocarditis, short IE. The major cause of IE are bacteria of the genera *Streptococcus*, *Staphylococcus* and *Enterococcus*, which colonize the implants and are able to form biofilms. After implantation of the device a race between reendothelialization and biofilm formation begins. Infections of cardiovascular implants can lead to life threatening conditions and early diagnosis of these infections is a prerequisite for an effective treatment. Thus, this study aimed to establish an in-vitro co-cultivation system for biofilms and human endothelial cells in order to determine biofilm-relevant and species-specific proteins that can be used as diagnostic marker.
Methods - A micro-titer assay with cultivation inserts was established for an indirect co-cultivation of human coronary artery endothelial cells (HCAEC) with different strains of *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Staphylococcus epidermidis* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. An LC-MS²-based proteomics approach was used to record first protein signatures of *S. aureus* biofilms in co-cultivation with human endothelial cells. A flow-through system with subsequent confocal laser-scanning microscopy was used for a qualitative evaluation of the biofilm formation on human endothelial cells.

Results and conclusion - The use of cultivation inserts prolonged the survival time of HCAEC in co-cultivation with the bacteria and assured formation of mature biofilms. First proteomic analysis revealed differential expression of proteins associated with virulence and protein metabolism. The flow-through system will be further used in order to evaluate possible compounds as possible coating substances for endothelialized TAVI surfaces.

319-MSHP
Impact of salinity on the gastrointestinal bacterial community of the snail *Theodoxus fluviatilis*
C. Kivisikka, J. Knoblach, K. Käri, V. Kisand, H. Tammet, J. P. Hädebrandt, D. Herlemann
1 Estonian University of Life Sciences, Centre for Limnology, Vehendi küla, Estonia
2 University of Greifswald, Zoological Institute and Museum, Greifswald, Germany
3 University of Tartu, Institute of Technology, Tartu, Estonia

Differences in salinity are boundaries acting as barriers for dispersal for many organisms, including bacteria. This creates distinctive biota on freshwater vs brackish water (mesohaline) environments. To test how saline boundaries influence the diversity and composition of host-associated microbiota we analyzed the digestive tract microbiome of *Theodoxus fluviatilis*, an organism able to cross the freshwater and mesohaline boundary. Alpha-diversity measures in the samples were indifferent between freshwater vs brackish water. However, the bacterial community composition of the freshwater *T. fluviatilis* microbiome were significantly different compared with mesohaline *T. fluviatilis* and typical bacteria could be determined for the freshwater and the mesohaline digestive tract microbiomes. An artificial increase of salinity for freshwater snails resulted in a strong change of the bacterial community and typical marine bacteria became part of the digestive tract microbiome of the freshwater *T. fluviatilis*. In contrast to freshwater snails, the mesohaline snails digestive tract microbiome composition did not change cardinally after the salinity increase/decrease. In all samples *Pseudomonas*, *Pirellula*, *Flavobacterium*, *Limnohabitans* and *Acinetobacter* were among the most abundant bacteria. These bacterial genera were largely unaffected by environmental conditions and as permanent members of the gut microbiota in *T. fluviatilis* they may support the digestion of the algal food. Our results show that freshwater and mesohaline water host-associated microbiomes respond differently to changes in salinity. Therefore salinization of coastal freshwater environments due to sea level rise can influence the gut microbiome and its functions with currently unknown consequences for the host.

320-MSHP
Analysis of skin surface decontamination methods to assess unbiased tick-borne microorganisms
A. Hoffmann, V. Fingerle, M. Noll

Various microbial pathogens have been found in *Ixodes ricinus*, a common tick in central Europe. However, most studies assess microbial communities of ticks without prior decontamination of the tick skin surface, which may alter the results and lead to false conclusions regarding the tick microbiome. The aim of this study was to test four different skin decontamination methods namely i.) 70% Ethanol, ii.) DNA away, iii.) 5 % sodium hypochlorite and iv.) Reactive skin-decontamination-solution (RSDL) that were previously reported for tick, surface, animal or human skin decontamination. To test efficiency of decontamination, we contaminated each tick with a defined mixture of *Escherichia coli*, *Micrococcus luteus*, *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, *Cocksfoot mild mosaic virus* (CfMMoV), dog saliva and human sweat. As control no contamination or no decontamination strategy was carried out. After DNA- and RNA-extraction the recovery rate of contaminants was determined by qPCR and and tick-borne bacterial community analyses by 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing. QPCR results showed that 5% sodium hypochlorite is the best decontamination strategy followed by DNA away, RSDL and 70% ethanol. Correspondence analyses (CA) of the bacterial community composition confirmed our qPCR results. Moreover, bacterial community composition of ticks decontaminated by 5% sodium hypochlorite clustered with negative controls in CA, indicating that removal of tick contaminants was superior. In contrast, common decontamination by 70% ethanol were less efficient. Decontamination of outer skin microbiome from ticks is essential to retrieve unbiased tick microbiome and to detect its pathogens.

321-MSHP
Targeted design and manipulation of defined microbial consortia by bacteriophage
A. von Strempel, J. Wittman, B. Stecher-Letsch
1 Institute of Vetentkofer-Institut, München, Germany
2 DSMZ-German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures GmbH, Braunschweig, Germany

The human gut is a complex and diverse ecosystem, consisting of eukaryotic cells, bacteria and viruses. Bacteriophages are the most abundant viruses in the gut and yet one of the least understood. Through our modern diet and drugs like antibiotics, changes in the microbial and viral communities can occur which are associated with diseases like inflammatory bowel disease or gut cancer.

To obtain functional insights, we aim to investigate the interaction of bacteriophages and cognate host bacteria in the mammalian gut. Therefore, we isolated specific phages from environmental samples for one member of a minimal bacterial consortium, the Oligo-MM12, which consists of 12 well-characterized bacterial strains that colonize gnotobiotic mice in a stable and reproducible manner. Phages were characterized by genome sequencing and in terms of host-specificity and infection kinetics on the cognate host bacteria. In future studies, we aim to analyze the dynamic effect of phages on the stable bacterial community in the murine gut with respect to compositional, transcriptomic and metabolomic changes. Our work will yield insights into the ecological importance of phages in the gut, which will be important for evaluating the future use of phages for targeted microbiome manipulation.
Enterohemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* (EHEC) is a food-borne human enteric pathogen that causes haemorrhagic colitis. A fraction of infected patients develop haemolytic uraemia syndrome (HUS), which is potentially fatal. HUS is mediated by bacterial production of Shiga toxins (Stx) in the gut. A generally accepted causal therapy of haemorrhagic colitis in order to prevent the development of HUS is missing. Since recent outbreaks concur with the appearance of more virulent strains, there is a great need to explore novel treatment strategies.

Stx is an AB toxin encoded on lambdoid prophages. The toxin is induced by the bacterial SOS response and expressed during the phage lytic cycle. Besides DNA-damaging antibacterials, little is known on environmental risk factors promoting Stx production in the human gut. Here we aim to assess the effect of non-antibiotic drugs on EHEC growth and induction of Shiga toxin production, as they are known to substantially affect bacterial growth and physiology.

For screening, we use a reporter strain expressing Gaussia luciferase (gluc) instead of stx-2 (*E. coli* C600W34 stx2A:gluc aph3'). This reporter is unique as it emulates both, Stx-2 production in the bacteria and the release into the environment by phage lysis. This reporter system is employed to screen a 1,200-component library for drugs inhibiting or promoting Stx-2 release by EHEC.

Based on these data we envision to identify drugs promoting Stx production during EHEC infection, which may therefore increase the risk of HUS development in infected patients. On the other hand, we aim to discover drugs inhibiting Stx production, which can be repurposed to prevent HUS development in infected patients.

### 323-MSHP

**Dyadobacter** sp. HH091 stimulates microalga growth and photosynthesis

1. A. Astafyeva
2. D. Hanelt
3. W. R. Streit
4. I. Krohn

*Institute of Plant Science and Microbiology/Universität Hamburg, Microbiology & Biotechnology, Hamburg, Germany

Microalgae are of high relevance for the global carbon cycling and it is well-known that they are associated with a diverse microbiota. However, it remains not well defined if the associated microbiota is specific for the microalga and which role individual bacterial taxa play. Further it is not understood which signals are involved in this complex interaction.

Our goal is to identify key mechanisms and signals involved in the tight interaction of bacteria and microalga. Therefore, we sequenced the microbomes of the different alga and isolated various bacterial strains affiliated with the alga. In addition, we established synthetic plant-bacteria systems of various microalgae and bacteria isolates. One of the obtained isolates, HH091, which is affiliated with the phylum Bacteroidetes and the genus *Dyadobacter* strongly stimulated growth and photosynthesis of the alga when it was added to "axenic" cultures. To further advance, we are currently studying the interaction of the isolate HH091 with the microalga *Scenedesmus acuminatus* SAG 38.81 and *Micrasterias radians* MZCH 672. For this, the whole-genome of the strain HH091 and the two microalga were established. The bacterial genome had a size of 7.8 Mb and the alga had sizes of approximately 119 Mb. The genome of HH091 contains multiple quorum sensing (QS) and quenching mechanisms possibly involved in the alga-bacteria interaction. Current work focuses on characterizing the main QS signaling compounds.

### 324-MSHP

Rearing strategies in the black soldier fly influence microbial community composition and antibiotic/detergent-resistance gene abundance in the gut and feed residue

1. Y. A. Clifuentes Triana
2. S. P. Glaser
3. J. Miyv
4. J. O. Bartz
5. A. Müller
6. H. Gutzeit
7. A. Vilcinskas
8. P. Kämpfer
9. M. Dormeyer
10. H. Gutzeit

*Institut für Mikrobiologie Universität Gießen, Gießen, Germany

*Hermetia illucens*, commonly known as black soldier fly (BSF), is one of the most promising insects for future application to recycle organic waste in combination with the production of high-quality proteins as feed for agricultural animals. The gut microbiota plays a key role in the digestion efficiency and the detoxification of potential pathogenic bacteria of the organic waste used as substrate. We aimed to determine the bacterial core microbiota of BSF larvae; investigated changes in the bacterial community diversity and composition present in feed residues during BSF growth; and studied changes in the presence and/or transfer of antibiotic/disinfectant-resistance genes among the gut and residue microbiota. BSFs were reared in chicken feed. At three rearing stages the gut and residual feed microbiota were investigated in parallel by 16s rRNA gene amplicon sequencing. Antibacterial resistance and disinfectant genes were quantifying using realtime PCR assays. Non-metric multidimensional scaling of bacterial community patterns indicated that the gut microbiota and the residue-associated bacterial communities were clearly different among each other. Both changed over time. Significant changes of the bacterial diversity and community compositions were only observed in the residue. Many representatives of bacterial genera containing potential pathogens, as *Staphylococcus* spp. or *Acinetobacter* spp., strongly decreased in relative abundance in the residue during rearing. Neither antibiotic nor disinfectant resistance genes accumulated in larvae but the abundance of qacE genes significantly increased in the residue of the given substrate. Rearing of BSF larvae has a significant impact on the bacterial community in the feed residue. The gut microbiota remains more stable with a set of abundant taxa that are persistent throughout the larval development and may be considered as the BSF gut core microbiome. The prevalence of antibiotic/disinfectant-resistance genes indicates, that this is another factor that must be evaluated carefully.

### 325-MSHP

**Lactobacilli boost bioavailability of polyphenols in onion**

1. M. Dormeyer
2. L. Garbe
3. A. Brauner
4. D. Guyonnet
5. R. Wittlake
6. C. Koch

*Symrise AG, CI - Microbiology Research, Holzminden, Germany

**Diana Nova, Paris, France

**Symrise AG, Analytical Research Center, Holzminden, Germany**

Our goal is to identify key mechanisms and signals involved in promoting the digestion of polyphenols in onion. To further advance, we are currently studying the interaction of the isolate HH091 with the microalga *Scenedesmus acuminatus* SAG 38.81 and *Micrasterias radians* MZCH 672. For this, the whole-genome of the strain HH091 and the two microalga were established. The bacterial genome had a size of 7.8 Mb and the alga had sizes of approximately 119 Mb. The genome of HH091 contains multiple quorum sensing (QS) and quenching mechanisms possibly involved in the alga-bacteria interaction. Current work focuses on characterizing the main QS signaling compounds.
Introduction: Traditional fermentation procedures as Natto from Japan and Sauerteig from Germany have been conserved throughout continents and centuries. Using bacteria to improve the healthy impact of food is anchored in most cultures. This passes out of mind in the young western world, where many people are suffering from different types of inflammation in the small intestine like the irritable bowel syndrome. The best help is a change of nutrition to a high-fiber diet including the uptake of probiotics as present in fermented products.

Objective: Onion peels contain fiber and are a great source of healthy polyphenols as quercetin. Unfortunately, quercetin is not bioavailable in its glycosylated form. Our idea is to find a probiotic Lactobacillus strain to degrade the sugar residues and make the quercetin bioavailable.

Methods: A quantitative screening was established ranking the Lactobacilli according to their abilities to degrade sugars. Afterwards onions were fermented and analyzed using the best candidates. The effect of bioavailable quercetin was investigated in an inflammation assay using human intestinal cells. To test common probiotic characteristics, we mimicked stomach transition by an in vitro stomach assay and examined the antimicrobial impact against common gut pathogens.

Results: Lactobacilli have very different metabolic abilities reflected in the varying emergence of quercetin in the fermented onion extract. This quercetin, but not quercetin-derivatives, is able to reduce inflammation caused by Escherichia coli in intestinal cells. The in vitro stomach passage assay reveals increased survival for some Lactobacilli correlating with their ecological niche. Furthermore, we show that E. coli and Salmonella enteritidis cannot establish growth in the presence of certain Lactobacilli.

Conclusion: Our research shows the great variation of species across the genus Lactobacillus in terms of sugar metabolism, acid tolerance, and interaction with both onion extracts and intestinal pathogens. The overall workflow turned out to be well suited to test probiotic bacteria with vegetable extracts and develop the best combinations for successful fermentation.

326-MSHP
A multi-omics approach for fecal swine microbiomes reveals insights into structural and functional dynamics during viral infection.

327-MSHP
Microbial community composition in microalgae cultures infected with aphelid parasites

Objective: The aim of this study was to establish a high throughput multi-omics method for homogenization of heterogeneous fecal samples for data-integration of 16S rRNA gene-sequencing with metaproteome and metabolome datasets to get new insights into host-microbiome relationship within this complex environment which had been remained hidden when targeting only one single molecule.

Methods: Deep frozen homogenization protocol opened an integrated sample preparation for different Omics-techniques out of one sample. Nucleic-acid extractions from fecal powder and intestinal samples were performed via phenol-chloroform extraction followed by state-of-the-art 16S rRNA gene-sequencing and bioinformatic processing in R.

Results: Targeting the 16S rRNA gene reveals highly stable intestinal community compositions in healthy swine with reproducible successions in relevant families e.g. Lactobacillaceae and Streptococcaceae. These longitudinal shifts were also detected in the metaproteome data. Furthermore, we tested the possibility of using fecal samples as proxy for the intestinal status and observed a good accordance of fecal microbiota with the one from the proximal and distal colon.

Conclusions: The robust multi-omics pipeline enables a high throughput sample preparation with highly reproducible community composition in different target molecules. The opportunity of taking feces as proxy for the large intestine could pave the way for simple predictions of what is going on in the intestine with "minimal-invasive" sampling techniques and enables to screen a longer period of time without taking animals out of the experiment by dissection.

Introduction

Having access to appropriate pathogenicity models is crucial to investigate host-pathogen interactions during bacto-viral co-infections, which are characterized by their high mortality. Due to its large accordance to humans regarding its physiology, intestinal commensals and its immune system, swine has become an attractive alternative. Recent studies indicate a clear correlation between structure and function of the human microbiota, progression of infections and consequently also the host health status.

The aim of this work is to investigate aphelid infection patterns on monocultures of several microalgae species commonly used in biotechnology. Microbial communities of microalgal cultures were retrieved from axenic or open industrial microalgal settings. Controlled contamination
experiments revealed a broad host specificity within the Chlorophyta displaying a decreasing degree of the aphelid infection with increasing phylogenetic distance to the main host. Beyond host species, composition of bacterial communities derived from open settings had a considerable impact on the development of the aphelid infection. Unialgal cultures harboured a highly diverse, algae specific indigenous microbiome. Bacterial community composition changed in aphelid presence over time, while it remains stable against the exposure to the open environment.

In conclusion, results indicate that complex microbial, bacterial and fungal community compositions are affecting the patterns of aphelid infection. Findings will help to achieve a more stable microbial production in industrial photobiorreactors.

**328-MSHP**

The lichen microbiome and its role in adaptation to climate associated factors


1University of Greifswald, Institute of Microbiology, Greifswald, Germany

2Bücherstraße 71, Rostock, Germany

Lichens, symbiotic organisms composed of a myco- and photobiont, represent a frequent and successful lifestyle on earth. In comparison to other lichens, Lobaria pulmonaria L. Hoffm. is less stress-resistant. It only tolerates a quite narrow range of ecological conditions and prefers relatively cool and humid habitats with hardly any air pollution. Our ongoing project aims on deciphering genotypic and phenotypic traits enabling this model lichen to adapt to changing environmental and especially climate conditions.

Within the last decade, bacterial communities were identified as surprisingly abundant, stable, specific, and structurally integrated elements of the classical lichen symbiosis. The diverse microbiota seems to contribute multiple aspects to the symbiotic system, including essential functions such as nutrient supply, pathogen defense, resistance against abiotic factors or support of fungal and algal growth. We hypothesize that especially changes in the composition and functionality of the lichen microbiome may enable the holobiont to cope with environmental changes and, thus, can be considered as an important ecological trait mediating lichen plasticity.

To strengthen our hypothesis we performed state-of-the-art metaproteome analyses of 15 lichen samples which have been collected along gradients of varying environmental factors such as high/less precipitation, maritime/alpine influence as well as maritime/continental climate. In general, Alphaproteobacteria, Gammaproteobacteria, Actinobacteria and Firmicutes seem to dominate the bacterial lichen microbiome that remains constant to a certain degree but shows some variations regarding the sampling sites. In a first attempt, we looked for correlations in the microbiota’s metaproteome composition or the lichen phenotype with the changing environment. To approve these findings, a reciprocal transplantation experiment with samples from two different sites is currently under investigation.

**329-MSHP**

Investigating the mode of action of Bisphenols on the simplified human intestinal microbiota (SIHUMIx)


1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Molecular Systems Biology, Leipzig, Germany

2Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Immunology, Leipzig, Germany

3Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Biotechnology, Leipzig, Germany

4University of Leipzig, Institute of Biochemistry, Faculty of Biosciences, Pharmacy and Psychology, Leipzig, Germany

Bisphenols are industrial chemicals used in the process of polymerization of polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins. Based on the variety of plastic products used in our everyday life, we are exposed to Bisphenols through the skin or diet. After banning Bisphenol A (BPA) in several products, Bisphenol S (BPS) and Bisphenol F (BPF) are widely used as alternatives. The microbial disrupting effect of BPS to intestinal microbial communities has already been reported, but less is known on how BPS affects bacterial activity and function. To analyze effects of BPS, we cultivated the simplified human gut model community (SIHUMIx, composed of 8 species) in bioreactors in order to determine the impact of BPS exposure (45 μM) on the community structure and function. By determining biomass and applying targeted metabolomics and metaproteomics, it was shown that biomass and short-chain fatty acid (SCFA) production remained unaffected. Functional analysis revealed increased lipid, phospholipid and glycan metabolism in BPS exposed SIHUMIx. E. coli was identified to be affected in lipid biosynthesis whereas B. theitotaomicron is affected in phospholipid metabolism. To investigate membrane fluidity, fatty acid methyl esters (FAMES) profiles were compared. Changes in individual membrane fatty acid composition could not be clearly described; however the saturation level of the membranes slightly increased during BPS exposure. So far, this is the first study revealing functional changes of intestinal bacteria after BPS exposure when cultivated in continuous bioreactors. In addition, the effects of BPF on a single strain of SIHUMIx were investigated to identify the mode of action. Analyses will be performed regarding growth, targeted metabolomics and proteomics. This will give a closer insight into the effect mechanism of bisphenols, used as BPA alternative, onto the human microbiome.

**330-MSHP**

Gut microbiota in Foxp3-in regulatory T cell depleted mice


1University Hospital Essen, University of Duisburg-Essen, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Essen, Germany

2University of Duisburg Essen, Institute of Cell Biology (Cancer Research), Essen, Germany

3University of Duisburg Essen, Biochip Laboratory, Institute for Cell Biology -Tumor Research, Essen, Germany

4Freie Universitaet Berlin, Institute of Veterinary Pathology, Berlin, Germany

**Introduction**

The intestine contains a high abundance of Foxp3-in regulatory T (Treg) cells. They are fundamental for maintaining the intestinal homeostasis by controlling immune responses of the innate and adaptive immune system but their precise impact on the gut microbiota is unclear.

**Objective**

We analysed the effects of Treg cell depletion on inflammation of the gut mucosa and studied gut microbiota...
before and after Treg cell depletion using the DEREG (DEpletion of REGulatory T cells).

Materials and methods

We extracted DNA from stool samples of DEREG mice and wildtype littermates at five different time points before and after Diphtheria Toxin (DT) application to deplete Treg cells in DEREG mice. We used the V3/V4 region of the 16S rRNA gene to study the gut microbiota with Illumina MiSeq paired ends sequencing.

Results

The majority of gut microbiota samples from late time points after Treg cell depletion in DEREG mice was separated from samples of early time points before Treg cell depletion in these mice and from gut microbiota samples of wildtype mice by multidimensional scaling. Treg cell depletion in DEREG mice was followed by an increase in the relative abundance of the phylum Firmicutes and by intestinal inflammation in DEREG mice 20 days after Treg cell depletion. In addition, the variables cage, breeding and experiment number were associated with differences in the gut microbiota composition.

Conclusions

Our study indicates that Treg cells influence the gut microbiota composition. Furthermore, the variables cage, breeding and experiment number should be respected in murine studies.

Introduction: Analysing Intestinal Microbiota (IM) using stool samples and sequencing the 16S rRNA gene has become a standard application. Many factors affect the results, thus standardized methods are of major importance. However, efforts to standardize methods cannot reduce the amount of biological variation within any individual.

Objectives: To determine the temporal variation of IM composition, the IM of four individuals was observed for a period of 14 days.

Methods: Stool samples of 4 volunteers were collected during 14 days. DNA was isolated using the NucleoSpin stool DNA kit (Macherey-Nagel) with Bead Beating on a FastPrep device. The V4 region of the 16S rRNA gene was amplified using dual index primers and sequenced on Illumina MiSeq with 2x300 bp. Amplicon sequences were analysed with mothur using the SILVA SSU database and further evaluated with the R package phyloseq.

Results: The IM of all four individuals showed a typical composition dominated by Firmicutes, Bacteroidetes and Actinobacteria and each individual’s IM composition was clearly different from the others. Most of the detected bacterial genera were present in all four IM but there were also several genera specific to individual microorganisms. Variation of the IM within one individual over time was smaller in comparison to the inter-individual variation but still showing large differences from day to day. All bacterial genera were affected but none disappeared completely or occurred for the first time within the two weeks. Local variation between samples collected from the same faeces was also analysed and found to be of similar magnitude compared to the temporal variation. The results highlight the complex spatiotemporal dynamics of faecal microbiome measurements that are commonly used for IM analysis.

Conclusion: The healthy human intestinal microbiota is in a state of dynamic equilibrium that varies around a steady state from day to day and also locally within individual stools samples. Studies focusing on microbiota analysis should therefore use sample homogenization, multiple replicates or sufficiently large group sizes to mitigate the effect of this "biological noise".

332-MSHIP
Towards high-resolution metagenomics to unravel gut microbiome functionality of solitary bees

Y. Pinheiro Alves de Souza, A. Keller, M. Schlöter, B. Foessel

1 Helmholtz Zentrum München, CCMU, Oberschleißheim, Germany
2 Technical University of Munich, Lehrstuhl für Bodenkunde, Freising, Germany
3 University of Würzburg, Department of Bioinformatics, Würzburg, Germany
4 Technical University of Munich, Institute for Food and Health (ZIEL), Freising, Germany

The worldwide decline of bees is not only an issue of biodiversity conservation, but strongly affects human food supply, since up to 70% of pollination is done by bees. Solitary bees, which can reach pollination rates up to 100 x higher than honey bees, are considered as key pollinators for some plant species, but the link between the gut microbiome and their health remains poorly studied. Previous data show that changes in the gut microbiome composition (caused by factors like land use, fertilization and flower diversity) make bees more prone to infection by opportunistic pathogens. However, most of the recent studies have used next generation sequencing (mainly 16S rRNA barcoding) to understand the impact of environmental conditions on the intestinal microbiome of bees, but there is still a lack of information on major functional traits of the gut microbiome of bees and genes which trigger host – microbe interactions in the gut.

The aim of this study was to optimize the pipeline for metagenomic library construction, by addressing issues like minimum number of individuals needed, optimization of DNA extraction, minimum DNA amount for a functional metagenomic library building, host DNA depletion, and Multiple Displacement Amplification (MDA) bias using guts from commercially acquired Osmia bicornis pupae. Our result indicate that the microbial communities are well represented with minor differences introduced by the DNA extraction procedure, with Alphaproteobacteria (21%), Actinobacteria (21%) representing the most abundant phyla which is in accordance with recent 16S rRNA gene based barcoding data. Host-DNA depletion using the methylation of the host DNA as a target, did not result in a significant reduction in host DNA, indicating low methylation levels of the host DNA. Using MDA based pre-amplification, DNA amounts of less than 0,1 ng resulted in DNA libraries which could be used for the generation of metagenomes. However MDA introduced a significant shifts in the microbiome structure mainly when DNA amounts
Influence of gut commensal bacteria on intestinal barrier function
*N. Mohebali*, B. Kreikemeyer*, A. Breitrück1,2
1Institute of Medical Microbiology, Virology and Hygiene University Medicine Rostock, Rostock, Germany
2Fraunhofer Institut für Zelltherapie und Immunologie - IZI, Extrakorporale Immunmodulation (EXIM), Rostock, Germany

**Introduction:**

Chronic intestinal inflammation disrupts intestinal barrier function and may contribute to the pathology of gastrointestinal disorder as seen in inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). There is evidence that gut microbiota regulate intestinal barrier function and may contribute to the protective mechanism of the intestinal mucosa against the development of chronic inflammation.

**Objective:**

In this study we investigate the protective effect of three anaerobic commensal bacterial species of *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii*, *Roseburia intestinalis* and *Bacteroides faecis* independently and in combination on intestinal barrier function and intestinal inflammation.

**Methods:**

Differentiated Caco-2 and HT29-MTX cells on transwell inserts were used as a model of intestinal barrier permeability. The barrier integrity of cells was assessed by measuring transepithelial electrical resistance (TEER) and flux of 4 kDa fluorescein isothiocyanate-dextran (FD) after incubation with or without the commensal bacteria. In the next step to mimic IBD conditions, differentiated cells were treated with a pro-inflammatory stimulus and incubated with commensal bacteria. The expression level of pro-inflammatory cytokines was measured by multiplex bead ELISA assay.

**Results:**

Experimental results indicated that all three species positively affected the barrier function of differentiated Caco-2 and HT29-MTX cells. The pro-inflammatory decreased TEER value was significantly increased after incubation of cells with bacteria. The same trend was observed for co-administration of all three strains. Significant decrease in FITC-labeled dextran flux of inflamed epithelial cells after incubation with bacteria supported the TEER result. Pro-inflammatory cytokines levels were attenuated compared to cells that had not been treated with commensal bacteria.

**Conclusions:**

In conclusion all three examined commensal bacterial species were found to have a high potential for re-establishment and curing of intestinal barrier function in IBDs condition. The therapeutic and prophylactic potential of our commensal species is currently assessed in an experimental colitis animal mode.

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**333-MSHP**

**Can bacteria adapted to leaf defense metabolites influence the secondary colonization of Arabidopsis thaliana leaves?**

*K. Unger1, P. Baumann1, T. Mayer1, M. Reichelt1, M. Gershenzon1, M. Agler2*

1Friedrich-Schiller-University, Plant Microbiology Lab - Department of Microbiology, Jena, Germany
2Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology, Department of Biochemistry, Jena, Germany

**Introduction**

Secondary metabolites are critical for defense in most plants. A well understood example is the glucosinolate-myrosinase system in Brassicaceae which plays roles in drought stress, defense against herbivores and microbial pathogens. Isothiocyanates, the hydrolysis products of glucosinolates, are important in terms of non-host resistance, by contributing antimicrobial activity against some plant pathogens. In turn, several colonizers of *A. thaliana* express sax genes that confer tolerance to isothiocyanates, in part by degrading them.

**Objectives**

We hypothesize that well-adapted members of the leaf microbiome influence the success of secondary colonization by detoxifying the environment. We aim to evaluate the role of toxic isothiocyanate compounds in this process.

**Materials & methods**

We isolated and characterized aliphatic glucosinolates in five *A. thaliana* populations from Jena, Germany. To determine whether and to what extent leaves select colonizers, we used a high-throughput gnotobiotic plant system to enrich leaf-adapted bacteria and compared their diversity to media isolates. To recover species adapted to specific plant chemistries, we are performing cross-enrichments of microorganisms from two plant populations. Using plant mutants and a metabolomics approach, we aim to characterize resistance to isothiocyanates and evaluate effects on secondary colonization and pathogen invasion.

**Results**

Plant isolates from the five populations differed strongly in terms of 14 aliphatic glucosinolates. In-planta enrichments revealed that although there is a plethora of culturable diversity on leaves, only isolates from a few major genera (*Pseudomonas, Xanthomonas, Rhizobium*) can efficiently colonize leaves alone. Ongoing experiments are evaluating resistance to glucosinolate-derived toxins in these isolates and how these resistance mechanisms affect secondary colonization.

**Conclusion**

Our results support the hypothesis that plant hosts strongly select for well-adapted microbes that in turn pave the way for secondary colonization of leaves.

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**335-MSHP**

**Evaluation of the T6SS-associated activities of four VgrG proteins in Aeromonas veronii Hm21**

1J. Marden1, J. Graf1, S. Sampath2
1University of Connecticut, Molecular and Cellular Biology, Storrs, United States
2Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, United States
Many *Aeromonas* species are beneficial symbionts of the medicinal leech and zebrafish, while others are pathogens of humans, fish and other animals. The type 6 secretion system (T6SS) has emerged as an important effector-delivery system that is involved in both bacterial and eukaryotic interactions. In a previous screen for *Aeromonas veronii* Hm21 factors important for colonization of the medicinal leech gut, we identified a mutant exhibiting a >100-fold defect in colonization compared to the wild-type strain that was subsequently shown to have a Tn5 insertion within a rearrangement hotspot (Rh) protein-encoding gene. Interestingly, further examination of the Hm21 genome revealed the presence of four gene clusters encoding T6SS-associated proteins, each of which harbors a gene encoding a valine-glycine repeat protein G (VgrG) protein, an important structural component of the T6SS. We created single and combinatorial gene deletions of these VgrG-encoding genes to study their roles in promoting the T6SS-mediated killing of *A. veronii* Hm221, which does not contain a T6SS. Our results show that deletion of vgrG2 reduces, but does not eliminate, the ability of *A. veronii* Hm21 to kill *A. veronii* Hm221. Furthermore, the deletion of vgrG2 in combination with any of the three other vgrG genes completely abrogates the ability of *A. veronii* Hm21 to kill *A. veronii* Hm221, as does the loss of vask, an essential component of the T6SS apparatus. These results demonstrate the importance of the *A. veronii* Hm21 T6SS and of specific VgrG proteins in mediating interbacterial interactions. Additional investigations are needed to elucidate whether the observed loss of killing is due to the loss of effectors that are specific to each VgrG protein or the inability of certain combinations of VgrGs to form a functional trimer.

### 336-MSHP

**Investigations of the clonal relationship of Actinomyces strains in periodontal pockets at different depths using Diversilab, an automated repetitive sequenced based PCR bacterial typing system from BioMerieux**

C. S. Stingu*, A. C. Rodloff†, H. Jentsch‡‡, P. Vielkind†, T. Borgman*, L. Lehmeyer*

1. Institut für Medical Microbiology and Epidemiology of infectious Diseases, Leipzig, Germany
2. Centre for Periodontology, Department for Cariology, Endodontontology and Periodontology, University Hospital, Leipzig, Germany

*Actinomyces naeslundii* and *A. oris* are probably the most important dental plaque formers among the members of the *Actinomyces* spp. being involved in pathogenesis of different forms of periodontitis. Most of the previous studies usually determined the composition of the biofilm up to the species level, while the clonal diversity of individual strains being ignored.

The aim of the study was to find out the clonal relationship of *A. naeslundii* and *A. oris* strains in different depths of periodontal pockets of patients with chronic periodontitis.

**Methods**

A total of 223 *Actinomyces* clinical strains from 20 patients with periodontitis (former chronic periodontitis, new classification: Stadium 2-3, Grad B) were used in this study. The strains were cultivated from supra- and subgingival biofilm of teeth with shallow pockets, deep pockets and very deep pockets. All the strains were identified using MALDI-TOF-MS method and by sequence analysis of the 16S ribosomal RNA gene. Rep-PCR typing of the cultivated strains was performed using DiversiLab 3.6.0.39.

The data were analysed using the Pearson’s Correlation. We used the following similarity rules:

1. strains that showed < 95% similarity were classified as unrelated
2. strains that showed a similarity between 95%-98% were classified as closely related isolates
3. strains that showed > 98% similarity were classified as identical isolates

**Results**

Multiple colonization patterns were found. Seven patients were individually colonized with only unrelated isolates while 13 patients harbored both similar and unrelated isolates at different sites. The similar clones were found either supra-or subgingivally or both. Identical strains occurred in subgingival shallow depths more often than in other subgingival depths. The number of clones in one patient varied from 2 to 17 different Rep-PCR genotypes.

**Conclusion**

The clonal relationship between genotypes of *A. naeslundii* and *A. oris* in one individual is variable and unpredictable. It varies from the presence of multiple genotypes with no clonal similarity between them to the presence of only two different clones supra-or subgingivally at different sites.

### 337-MSHP

**Arginase 1 promotes colitis due to L-arginine deprivation and intestinal dysbiosis**

J. Baier*, M. Gänßbauer†, K. Dettmer‡, A. Ekici†, W. Stefan*, C. Bogdan*, J. Mattner*,

Klinische Mikrobiologie Erlangen, Erlangen, Germany

1. Institute for Functional Genomics, University of Regensburg, Regensburg, Germany

2. Institute of Human Genetics, Erlangen, Germany

**Actinomyces naeslundii** and *A. oris* are probably the most important dental plaque formers among the members of the *Actinomyces* spp. being involved in pathogenesis of different forms of periodontitis. Most of the previous studies usually determined the composition of the biofilm up to the species level, while the clonal diversity of individual strains being ignored.

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**Methods**

A total of 223 *Actinomyces* clinical strains from 20 patients with periodontitis (former chronic periodontitis, new classification: Stadium 2-3, Grad B) were used in this study. The strains were cultivated from supra- and subgingival biofilm of teeth with shallow pockets, deep pockets and very deep pockets. All the strains were identified using MALDI-TOF-MS method and by sequence analysis of the 16S ribosomal RNA gene. Rep-PCR typing of the cultivated strains was performed using DiversiLab 3.6.0.39.

The data were analysed using the Pearson’s Correlation. We used the following similarity rules:

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**Conclusion**

The clonal relationship between genotypes of *A. naeslundii* and *A. oris* in one individual is variable and unpredictable. It varies from the presence of multiple genotypes with no clonal similarity between them to the presence of only two different clones supra-or subgingivally at different sites.

**1. Introduction**

The metabolism of the semi-essential amino acid L-arginine in the alimentary tract is altered in animal models of colitis. Furthermore, the expression and activity of arginase 1 (Arg1) which utilizes L-arginine as substrate are enhanced in mucosal tissues of patients with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

**2. Aims**

As dysbiosis is a signature of both, IBD patients and colitis models, we characterized the impact of L-arginine and Arg1 on intestinal microbiota and microenvironmental parameters, which mediate the induction, perpetuation and resolution of colitis.

**3. Material and Methods**

We fed L-arginine-deprived and -supplemented chow to DSS-treated Tie2-Cre-/-Arg1fl/fl mice lacking Arg1 in hematopoietic and endothelial cells and respective Arg1-expressing littermate controls. Whole-genome transcriptomic patterns, the intestinal metabolome and microbiome as well as the extent of intestinal inflammation were assessed using immunohistochemistry, high resolution endoscopy, qPCR, RNA sequence analyses, 16S rRNA sequencing, confocal laser scanning microscopy and HPLC.
4. Results

Tie2-Cre+/-Arg1fl/fl mice recovered faster from experimental colitis than Arg1-expressing littermates. This unexpected observation correlated with compositional changes in the intestinal microbiota, altered cytokine and toll-like receptor expression patterns and an accumulation of intraluminal polyanymes.

Arginine-free chow accelerated DSS-induced colitis while a supplementation of L-arginine ameliorated disease. Protection from disease was associated with an accumulation of Christensenella and Ruminococcus in L-arginine-supplemented wild-type litters, similar as observed in control chow fed Tie2-Cre+/-Arg1fl/fl mice. Accordingly, fecal microbiota transfers (FMTs) from wild-type litters supplemented with L-Arginine restored the protective, anti-inflammatory phenotype in recipient mice similar as FMTs from control chow fed Tie2-Cre+/-Arg1fl/fl donors.

5. Summary

Dietary L-arginine restriction abolished the protective effect of Arg1-deletion, suggesting that protection is related to an increased availability of L-arginine and the expansion of an anti-inflammatory microbiota.

338-MSHIP

Akkermansia muciniphila reduces bacterial colonization and intestinal inflammation by inhibiting the adhesion of Salmonella to epithelial cells

*4. Materials and Methods

Intriguingly, in the presence of AM, S.Tm caused significantly decreased histopathological changes as well as decreased levels of inflammatory cytokines such as TNF-a and IL-17 in the cecum of mice at day 14 after infection. In addition, lower bacterial counts in cecum and colon were observed in the group of mice with AM. Furthermore, in vitro experiments showed the presence of AM inhibited adhesion of Salmonella to differentiated, polarized HT29-MTX-E12 cells, but not to undifferentiated HT29-MTX-E12 cells. In addition, neither heat-killed AM nor cell-free culture supernatant of AM inhibited adhesion of S.Tm to differentiated HT29-MTX-E12 cells. These results indicate that the presence of live AM reduces S.Tm induced inflammation by inhibiting adhesion of Salmonella.

339-MSHIP

Blood microbiota assessed by light and electron microscopy

1. National Center of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, Department of Microbiology, Sofia, Bulgaria
2. Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Experimental Morphology, Pathology and Anthropology, Sofia, Bulgaria
3. Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Neurobiology, Sofia, Bulgaria

Introduction

Nevertheless, the blood microbiome is still an enigma, its existence in clinically healthy individuals was proven during the last 50 years. Indirect evidence from radiometric analysis suggested existence of life microbial forms in erythrocytes. More recently, targeted nucleic acids sequencing demonstrated rich microbial biodiversity of bacteria and fungi in the blood of clinically healthy individuals. There is lack of appropriate methods for cultivation and visualization. The morphology and proliferation cycle of normal blood microbiota in vivo and in culture are obscure.

Objectives

To understand the life cycle of blood microbiota we focused on analysis by light and electron microscopy.

Materials and Methods

Non-cultured whole blood and stress cultured lysed blood samples from healthy individuals were studied. Blood samples of healthy individuals were collected in K2 EDTA vacutainer tubes. Blood microbiota resuscitation was performed at 430C in BHI broth supplemented with vitamin K 1 mg/ml, 10% sucrose, 0.25% sodium citrate and 0.2% yeastolate. Samples were cultured for 24 hours. At every hour an aliquot was fixed in 2.5% glutaraldehyde. Preparations were observed under light and dark field microscopy, transmission and scanning electron microscopy.

Results

We demonstrate that in vivo free circulating microbiota in whole blood possess a well defined cell wall and proliferate by budding or a mechanism similar to extrusion of progeny cells through the membrane.

Conclusions

The rich biodiversity of eukaryotic and prokaryotic microbiota identified in blood and our results suggest different in vivo and in vitro mechanisms of proliferation. Blood microbiota can reproduce in stress conditions by great variety of unusual modes, such as irregular binary fission, budding, protrusion-extrusion of elementary bodies. The observed morphological plasticity of blood microbiota might be due to the bacterial and fungi composition. A tentative hypothesis of the life cycles of the blood microbiota was developed.
Acknowledgment: This work was supported by grant ДН-01-4/16.12.2016 of National Science Fund, Bulgaria.

340-MSHP
The influence of temperature and associated microbiota on the toxicity of the dinoflagellate Prorocentrum minimum

*S. Sanchez Garcia*, J. Mansky1, H. Wang1, H. Sztajer1, J. Tomasch2, J. Leinberger1, T. Brinkhoff1, J. Holster1, S. Schulz1, I. Wagner-Döbler1

1Technische Universität Braunschweig, Microbiology, Braunschweig, Germany
2Helmholtz-Centre for Infection Biology (HZI), Molecular Bacteriology, Braunschweig, Germany
3University of Oldenburg, ICBM, Oldenburg, Germany
4Technical University of Braunschweig, Organic Chemistry, Braunschweig, Germany

The dinoflagellate Prorocentrum minimum is a ubiquitous coastal algae which causes harmful algal blooms and is suspected to produce tetrodotoxin like compounds at higher temperatures. It is an invasive species in the North Sea. We cultivated four non-axenic and one axenic isolate of *P. minimum* at 20°C, 26°C and 30°C and screened for toxicity using a neuroblastoma (Neuro-2) cell line in combination with HPLC-MS-MS. The microbiota composition of the non-axenic algae strains was determined using 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing. Our aim is to describe a possible core microbiota of *P. minimum*, observe the adaptation of the microbiota towards higher temperatures, and to identify toxins produced by *P. minimum* either alone or in co-culture with its associated bacteria.

341-MSHP
Membrane vesicles in an algae-bacteria co-culture


1Technical University of Braunschweig, Microbiology, Braunschweig, Germany
2University of Oldenburg, ICBM, Oldenburg, Germany
3Leibniz Institute DSMZ, Braunschweig, Germany
4Helmholtz-Centre for Infection Research (HZI), Molecular Bacteriology, Braunschweig, Germany
5Technical University of Braunschweig, Organic Chemistry, Braunschweig, Germany

Membrane vesicles (MV) are an emerging mechanism of cell-cell communication. The marine alphaproteobacterium Dinoroseobacter shibae and the dinoflagellate Prorocentrum minimum form a so-called Jekyll-and-Hyde interaction, consisting of a mutualistic and a pathogenic phase, but both can also be grown in single culture. We isolated MVs from both organisms and determined their cargo and functions. Membrane vesicles of *D. shibae* are enriched for the terminus of chromosome replication, particularly the 22 bp recognition sequence of the XerCD recombinases, and proteins that interact with the septum prior to cell division. From the metabolome inside the vesicles, an aldehyde and a fatty acid were isolated and shown to have algidical activity. *P. minimum* secures 315 vesicles per cell throughout growth. They contain unusual sulfo-lipids in their membranes.

342-OTP
Maturation of lipoate-binding proteins in microbial sulfur oxidation

*J. Mansky*, J. Leinberger, T. Brinkhoff, J. Holster, S. Schulz, I. Wagner-Döbler

1Technische Universität Braunschweig, Microbiology, Braunschweig, Germany
2Helmholtz-Centre for Infection Biology (HZI), Molecular Bacteriology, Braunschweig, Germany
3University of Oldenburg, ICBM, Oldenburg, Germany
4Technical University of Braunschweig, Organic Chemistry, Braunschweig, Germany

Recently, an unexpected metabolic function was discovered for the well-known cofactor lipoic acid. Novel lipoate-binding proteins (LbpA) resembling classical glycan cleavage system H (GcvH) proteins are indispensable components of the new sulfur-oxidizing heterodisulfide reductase-like enzyme system (shdr) that occurs in a large number of chemolithotrophic sulfur-oxidizing prokaryotes [1,2]. LbpA proteins are specifically designed for sulfur oxidation and cannot functionally replace GcvH [2,3]. Usually, shdr-lbpa genes are linked with genes for enzymes typically involved in maturation of lipoate-binding proteins, including lipoate-protein ligases and two different radical SAM domain proteins. This is surprising because all shdr-containing sulfur oxidizers contain at least one of the established lipoate maturation pathways, i.e. lipoate scavenging or de novo synthesis involving the radical SAM domain protein LipA. We posed the question whether maturation of LbpAs from sulfur oxidizers follows a dedicated pathway.

Complementation studies revealed that sulfur oxidizer LbpA proteins do not serve as substrates for the lipoate-binding protein maturation machineries in *B. subtilis* and *E. coli* [2]. However, when provided with helper plasmids carrying LbpA maturation genes from sulfur oxidizers, *E. coli* produces modified LbpAs as shown by gel mobility shift assays. Mass spectrometry revealed that the modified LbpAs carried either octanoyl or an octanoyl residue with only one instead of the two sulfur atoms in lipoate. Formation of such monothiolated forms is unprecedented. All sulfur-inserting LipA proteins characterized so far insert two sulfur atoms in one single step [4]. Complete lipoylation of LbpAs was achieved in vitro in the presence of lipoic acid and ATP catalyzed by recombinant lipoate-protein ligase (LpLA) from sulfur oxidizers. This enzyme acts exclusively on LbpA proteins from sulfur oxidizers [2]. In conclusion, holo-LbpAs in sulfur oxidizers mature along a specific pathway that includes novel intermediates.

1*Koch, Dahl 2018 ISME J 12, 2479
2*Cao et al 2018 eLife 7, e37439
3*Cao et al 2018 PNAS 115, 647
4*Cronan 2016 Microb Mol Biol Rev 80, 429

343-OTP
Taxonomy-free dereplication of massive genome collections using embeddings of protein content

*A. Viehweger*, M. Hölzer*, C. Brandt4

1nanozoog GmbH, Leipzig, Germany
2Leipzig University Hospital, Medical Microbiology and Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases, Leipzig, Germany
3Friedrich Schiller University Jena, RNA Bioinformatics and High-Throughput Analysis, Jena, Germany
4Jena University Hospital, Infectious Diseases and Infection Control, Jena, Germany

Question: Many recent microbial genome collections curate hundreds of thousands of genomes. This volume complicates many genomic analyses such as phylogeny reconstruction and taxon assignment because the computational hardware required to handle the sheer size of the collections is substantial. However, the number of representatives of each species is highly skewed towards human pathogens, and thus many genomes are superfluous
and could be removed. We aimed to create a resource-frugal genome dereplication method that could reduce massive genome collections based on genome sequence alone, without the need for manual curation nor prior taxonomic information.

Methods: We recently created a genome representation for bacteria and archaea called "nanotext". This method treats protein domains in a genome like words in a document and embeds each genome in a low-dimensional vector of numbers that captures known taxonomic relationships. Extending nanotext, we present a workflow called "thinspace" that employs unsupervised clustering of the nanotext vectors to group similar genomes. These groups are then dereplicated based on pairwise average nucleotide frequency.

Results: We were able to shrink a corpus of about 150 thousand genomes to about 22 thousand. Highly overrepresented species of human pathogens were reduced to only a handful of representative genomes. We compare this collection to a recently published one that has received extensive manual curation and is based on the Genome Taxonomy Database. Both collections perform nearly identical on the common task of read taxon assignment. Notably, both outperform the NCBI RefSeq collection, increasing the amount of assigned reads by multiples for a set of biogas and human stool samples.

Conclusion: With thinspace, massive genome collections can be dereplicated on regular hardware with similar quality compared to manually curated collections. The software is released under a BSD-3 license and is available at github.com/phiweger/nanotext and github.com/phiweger/thinspace.

344-OTP

BacDive: Systematic Access to Phenotypic Data on 90% of the Bacterial Species

*L. Reimer*, J. Sardi, J. Overmann

1Leibniz-Institut DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen, Braunschweig, Germany

Microbial phenotypic data are scattered throughout the scientific literature, databases and unpublished lab notes. However, hotspots for metadata can be identified for example internal files of microbial collections (1) or species descriptions in the literature (2).

BacDive started in 2012 to collect data from internal files of microbial collections, standardize them and make them publicly available, starting with files from the DSMZ and private collections and then continuing to expand on other collections (e.g. CABI, CIP, CCUG). (2) In 2016 BacDive started to enlarge datasets with manually extracted information from species descriptions published in the International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology (IJSEM). So far already data from more than 6,500 species descriptions are accessible via BacDive.

Data in BacDive is collected in over 600 data fields covering taxonomy, morphology, physiology, cultivation conditions, origin, and molecular biology of the strains. The systematic access to these data enables queries like "show me all strains that are able to utilize a specific metabolite" by using the Advanced search or queries like "show me all strains isolated from a marine environment" by using the Isolation source search. With currently 9225 API® tests for 5320 strains, BacDive also offers the worldwide largest API® test collection, which can be queried using the API test finder tool.

Up to now, BacDive offers data for more than 80,000 strains including over 14,000 type strains. Thereby the systematic access to phenotypic data of approx. 90% of the so far described prokaryotic biodiversity (based on 16,000 validly described species) is granted. The continued transformation of phenotypic data into a standardized format opens up new ways to analyze microbial diversity.

345-OTP

New concepts in bacterial N-glycosylation – Substrate specificity of the EF-P arginine rhamnosyltransferase EarP

*R. Kraczky*, F. Koller, L. Lindenthal, A. Sieber, J. Jung, J. Lassak

1Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München, Mikrobiologie, Martinsried, Germany

2Max-Planck Institute, Biochemistry, Martinsried, Germany

Glycosylation is a universal strategy to post-translationally modify proteins. We discovered a new form of N-linked glycosylation that activates the polyproline specific bacterial translation elongation factor EF-P. The modifying enzyme was identified as the EF-P arginine rhamnosyltransferase EarP. The reaction catalyzed by EarP represents several novel concepts in protein N-glycosylation. Classically, this form of post-translational modification occurs on asparaginoylated extracellular and membrane proteins. The target sites for the universal glycosyltransferase are determined by a highly conserved sequon with the primary structure N-X-S/T. Conversely, EF-P - the acceptor substrate of EarP - is the first bacterial protein that is modified at an arginine and the first example of an N-glycosylated cytosolic protein. It also lacks a comparable target sequon indicating that the specialized rhamnosyltransferase EarP might utilize an alternative mechanism of acceptor substrate recognition. We previously showed that the KOW-like EF-P N-domain is sufficient for recognition and modification. Here, we generated successive truncations of the Pseudomonas putida EF-P acceptor loop and identified an eleven amino acids long minimal target peptide consisting of the seven amino acid acceptor loop and two amino acids of both the preceeding and following beta strand. Using small peptides, we confirmed this minimal motif and investigated both the preceeding and following amino acids long minimal target peptide consisting of the seven amino acid acceptor loop and two amino acids of both the preceeding and following beta strand. Using small peptides, we confirmed this minimal motif and investigated both the variability of the sequence context and the applicability of these variants as specific inhibitors of the rhamnosyl transfer reaction. Apart from this, our structural and biochemical analysis of EarP suggests that the glycosyltransferase exhibits natural substrate promiscuity towards the nucleotide sugar, possibly accepting not only TDP-β-L-rhamnose but also alternative donors. Together, these findings lay the basis for engineering EarP into a glycosynthase for targeted glycosylation of various proteins.

346-OTP

Microbial Sulfur Oxygenase Reductases: Structures, Identification of Reaction Intermediates and Implications for the Reaction Mechanism

*A. Kietzin*, P. Röhl, K. Parey, F. Folgosa, M. Teixeira, J. Vonck, C. Flogas

1Technische Universität Darmstadt, Mikrobiologie, Darmstadt, Germany

2Goethe University Medical School, Structural Bioenergetics Group, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

3Max-Planck-Institute of Biophysics, Dept. of Structural Biology, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

4ITQB NOVA, Metalloproteins and Bioenergetics Unit, Oeiras, Portugal

5ITQB NOVA, Structural Biology Laboratory, Oeiras, Portugal

Microbial sulfur oxygenase reductases catalyze the reduction of the sulfur-oxidizing enzyme and the reaction intermediate.
**Introduction:** Soluble sulfur oxygenase reductases (SOR) are the initial enzymes in sulfur oxidation pathways of the thermoacidophilic archaean *Acidianus ambivalens* (AaSOR) and of the mesophilic Gammaproteobacteria *Halothiobacillus neapolitanus* (HnSOR) and *Thioalkalivibrio paradoxus* (TpSOR); the latter being an alkaliophile. They catalyze the oxygen-dependent disproportionation of elemental sulfur and polysulfide with sulfite, thiosulfate and hydrogen sulfide as products at optimal temperatures of around 80˚C and at stoichiometries of 4-10:1 (oxidized:reduced products).

**Methods:** 3D structures were determined of TpSOR and AaSOR (cysteine-derivated with inhibitors) by X-ray crystallography and cryo-electron microscopy. *In silico* docking of was performed with polysulfide.

**Results:** The TpSOR, which branches most deeply in dendrograms of the protein family, is the only SOR with little reductase activity (≥30:1) but it has the highest oxygenase activity of all SORs so far (≥300 U/mg protein vs. +80 U/mg for HnSOR and +40 U/mg for AaSOR). All SORs are globular ball-shaped 24-subunit thermozymes with melting points of ≈80˚C for Tp- and HnSOR and ≈100˚C for the AaSOR.

The active sites in each subunit of the SORs comprise a mononuclear low-potential non-heme iron (midpoint potentials of 252 – 265 mV) and three conserved cysteines, which are localized in a spacious pocket in the Aa- and HnSORs, whereas this is more constricted and shaped differently in the TpSOR. Cysteine persulfide modifications were not identified in the TpSOR. Structure comparison showed an overall similar configuration of TpSOR to Aa- and HnSORs but with many minor differences, e.g. in the channel networks within the proteins and the orientation of the cysteines. polysulfide docking suggested substrate binding and import into the active site pocket via the essential cysteine residue C31/33/44 (Aa-, Hn-, TpSOR).

**Conclusions:** The other two conserved cysteines C101 and C104 (AaSOR) are suggested to participate in sulfane sulfur (de-)polymerization reactions. Further conclusions concerning the reaction mechanism, the thermostabilities and the differences between the SORs will be discussed.

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**348-OTP DNAzymes as catalysts for L-tyrosine and amyloid beta oxidation**

*T. Köhler*, J. Thiele

1Leibniz-Institut für Polymerforschung, Nanostrukturierte Materialien, Dresden, Germany

2Leibniz Institute of Polymer Research, Nanostructured Materials, Dresden, Germany

**Question**

Here, we present an oxidation reaction for DNAzymes that are single-stranded DNA (ssDNA) having a catalytic activity when hemin is incorporated. We investigated the oxidation of L-tyrosine to dityrosine by hydrogenperoxide (H₂O₂) which can be catalyzed by DNAzymes. We screened for optimal stoichiometry of hemin in relation to ssDNA and investigated different sequences for their catalytic activity. These optimized parameters were used to apply this model reaction to the oxidation of amyloid beta (Aβ). That way, we can investigate a possible effect of DNAzymes in neurodegenerative diseases.

**Methods**

L-tyrosine oxidation was detected by fluorescence increase at 405 nm by using a plate reader. After optimizing the oxidation of L-tyrosine and its detection, we investigated the oxidation of Aβ by the same measurement setup. Furthermore, we investigated the oxidation of L-tyrosine in the presence of fetal calf serum to underline its physiological meaningfulness.

**Results**

We found out that the fluorescence spectra of free L-tyrosine as well as the tyrosine within the peptide sequence of Aβ showed significant changes, when oxidized by free hemin as well as hemin being incorporated in DNAzymes. We observed an optimal stoichiometry of hemin-to-ssDNA of 1:10 to form a catalytically active DNAzyme. Further, we did not find an influence when adding only a single base to the
DNAzyme sequence. Additionally, we could show that Aβ can be oxidized by hemin as well as synthetic or natural DNAzyme sequences.

Conclusions

We present that DNAzymes acting as suitable catalysts for the synthesis of dityrosine by oxidizing L-tyrosine with H2O2. We further suggest a possible influence of DNAzymes in patho- and physiological processes that was exemplary shown by the oxidation of Aβ and oxidation of L-tyrosine in the presence of fetal calf serum.

349-OTP
Biosecurity Implications of Genome Editing Technologies
*M. Himmel*1
1University of Hamburg, Centre for Science and Peace Research & Dept. for Microbiology and Biotechnology, Hamburg, Germany

New genome editing tools such as CRISPR/Cas are thought to allow genome manipulation with previously unthinkable precision and efficiency. Genome editing is therefore categorized as emerging technology due to its promising features, broad range of possible application and level of maturation [1]. On the other side, the US Intelligence Community stated in the 2016 Worldwide Threat Assessment that genome editing "probable increases the risk of the creation of potentially harmful biological agents and products" [2]. The scientific community is heavily engaged in promoting the peaceful use of this technology and supports the mitigating of misuse of genetic engineering for hostile purposes. For better understanding of risks and benefits associated with genome editing, a thorough risk assessment is required. Here, we address the question how to access potential biosecurity threats emanating from genome editing techniques in a systematic approach including lab-based studies. The results obtained will support the informed scientific and societal debate about genome editing technologies.


350-OTP
Microbiology literacy: Conceptions of high school students about bacteria
C. Höffmann1, S. Kühn1, W. Manz1, J. Meier1, M. Miklowietz1, C. Thiel1
1University Koblenz-Landau, Institute for Integrated Natural Sciences, Koblenz, Germany

In contrast to the significance of microbiology for global life, science and university education, microbiology often plays only a diminutive role when it comes to high school education. In the German federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate, the biology syllabus only briefly touches single aspects of microorganisms which are embedded into very different contexts (e.g. cell structure, infection and immune system). Microbiology as genuine discipline as well as important issues of microbiologically mediated ecosystem functions and services are completely neglected. This is diametrically opposed to the societal challenges we are facing today including climate change, spread of antibiotic resistance and emerging pollutants which are urgently demanding for sufficient microbiology literacy [1]. Against this background we conducted a comprehensive survey among 660 high school students visiting grade 9 and 10 in order to investigate their conceptions of bacteria. In the questionnaire the students were requested to create a mind map and to sketch a bacterium. Furthermore, they were asked to comment on size and occurrence, the different features of life, and the relationship between bacteria and e.g. antibiotics, fever, and clean water. The preliminary data analysis indicated that the majority of the students have a conception of bacteria as living organisms. From the students' perspective the bacteria appear to be ubiquitously present and to proliferate. However, interactions with the environment were often denied. Most students considered bacteria as both “good” and “bad”. While the statements were quite precise reflecting the disadvantages of bacteria (causing diseases), the answers explaining the necessity of bacteria for our well-being remained vague. Only scarce knowledge was present about the role of bacteria in the environment. The presentation will be highlighting main characteristics of the students' conceptions about bacteria, analyzing these in respect to their compliance with scientific concepts, and identifying misconceptions and their possible sources (school-based or extracurricular). [1] Timmis et al. (2019) Environ Microbiol 21:1513-1528

351-OTP
The verification of scientific data – does it make sense? 
*B. J. Tindall*
1Leibniz-Institut DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH., Braunschweig, Germany

An ever increasing flood (Tsunami is a better description) of data it is making it increasingly difficult for individual scientist to maintain the overview. The title highlights two aspects, one whether it makes sense to verify data and secondly whether the data one has obtained make sense. It should be self-explanatory that it makes sense to verify data, but there is evidence that this is not always the case and often comes to light when data deposited in databases or in publications contain data that appears to be “anomalous”. Those who detect “anomalous” data are in fact trying to verify previous deposited/published work and recognising the fact that a data set is anomalous also indicates that the second question has been asked - whether the original data makes sense in the context in which it was deposited/published. Failing to either realise that a data set has not been verified or that the data does not fit in the biological context claimed (ie is “anomalous”) can often affect the way data is interpreted and theories and hypotheses developed. Examples will be given illustrating the importance of putting data in an evolutionary and biological context rather than accepting data deposited in a database or in a publication at face value.

352-OTP
AmpGram: a novel tool for prediction of antimicrobial peptides
M. Burdukiewicz1, J. Chilimoniuk2, K. Sidorczuk2, F. Pietluch2, D. Rafacz2, S. Röddiger2, P. Gagat2
1Warsaw University of Technology, Warsaw, Poland
2University of Wroclaw, Wroclaw, Poland
3Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus - Senftenberg, Senftenberg, Germany
Question: Antimicrobial peptides (AMPs) are ancient and evolutionarily conserved molecules widespread in all living organisms that participate in host defense and/or microbial competition. Due to their positive charge, hydrophobicity and amphipathicity, they preferentially disrupt negatively-charged bacterial membranes. AMPs are considered an important alternative to traditional antibiotics, especially in times when the latter is drastically losing their effectiveness. Therefore, efficient computational tools for AMP prediction are essential to identify the best AMP candidates without undertaking expensive experimental studies.

Methods: AmpGram is our novel tool for predicting AMPs based on the methodology that has already been used with success in our previous applications. It employs simplified alphabets to encode the information from highly variable AMPs into informative features suitable for machine learning. Next, n-gram analysis reveals amino acid motifs associated with the presence or absence of antimicrobial properties.

Conclusions: AmpGram is a novel tool for the prediction of antimicrobial peptides outperforming existing tools. Moreover, it identifies amino acid motifs that can be used to study existing AMPs or to design new ones.

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353-GIP

Gut Inflammation is Causing a Change in the Microbiome of Manduca sexta

* A. G. Müller1, T. Trenczek1
1Justus Liebig University of Giessen, General Zoology and Developmental Biology, Giessen, Germany

Question

A disturbance of the gut microbiome regularly accompanies inflammatory bowel diseases. However, it is still in debate whether this bacterial disturbance is the cause or a consequence of inflammatory bowel diseases. The purpose of the present study is to use the insect Manduca sexta as a model for inflammatory bowel diseases and to examine if an experimental inflammatory bowel like gut inflammation is leading to a change in the gut microbiome of M. sexta.

Methods

We have previously shown that the oral application of uracil is inducing an inflammatory bowel like gut inflammation through the production of ROS in M. sexta. Bacteria from feces of M. sexta fed with uracil (n = 12) and control diet (n = 14) were isolated and characterized via 16S rRNA Gene sequencing. CFUs of the feces from experimental and control larvae were quantified and analyzed.

Results

The bacterial community of M. sexta feces has not been characterized till now. The community was essentially composed of Actinomycetales and Lactobacillales.

Rarefaction curve of ACE and Chao 1 showed saturation. There was a significant reduction of the bacterial load (p = 0.0037), as well as a perturbation within the Enterococcus community (p = 0.0211) in uracil treated animals.

Conclusions

We show that an inflammatory bowel like gut inflammation in M. sexta is leading to a total reduction and a community shift in gut bacteria. These results indicate that inflammation on its own can change the abundance and composition of colon bacteria and may lead to a better understanding of inflammatory bowel diseases.

354-GIP

Escherichia coli Nissle 1917 encodes a type VI secretion system which is active in vitro and might help fight gastrointestinal pathogens.

* T. Oelschläger1, C. Niklas2
1University of Würzburg, Institut für Molekulare Infektionsbiologie, Würzburg, Germany
2University of Wuerzburg, Zentrum für Infektionsforschung, Wuerzburg, Germany

Escherichia coli Nissle 1917 encodes a type VI secretion system which is active in vitro and might help fight gastrointestinal pathogens.

Introduction

The probiotic E. coli strain Nissle 1917 (EcN) is licensed as a medication for the treatment of gastrointestinal diseases e.g. colitis ulcerosa and diarrhea. However, many of its properties involved in its probiotic nature have to be identified. One class of factors which might be responsible for EcN's ability to kill pathogenic bacteria is peptides and proteins secreted by EcN and toxic for other bacteria such as the microcins H47 and M.

Objectives

Based on EcN's genome sequence we identified a gene cluster encoding a type VI secretion system (T6SS) which was shown for other E. coli to kill prey bacteria in a contact dependent manner. We wondered if EcN's T6SS is active in vitro resulting in killing of prey bacteria.

Material & Methods

Equal numbers of killer bacteria (SK22D, the microcin-negative mutant of EcN, UPEC strain CFT073 the closest relative of EcN, Pseudomonas aeruginosa) or the T6SS-negative control strain MG1655 and prey (E. coli DH5α) bacteria were mixed and 20 μl of the mixture were spotted on an agar plate. After 5 h at 37°C the mixture was transferred from the plate into 1 ml LB medium and serial dilutions were plated on agar plates containing an antibiotic allowing only growth of the prey. The resulting colonies were used to calculate the percentage of surviving prey bacteria.

Results

The cfu of DH5α after coinoculation with MG1655 was defined as 100 %. As expected P. aeruginosa killed the prey bacteria (70 % up to 87 % killed). More efficient was CFT073 (> 99% killing). SK22D killed between 92 % and 99 % of the prey bacteria.
Conclusion

Even the microcin-negative mutant of EcN (SK22D) kills prey bacteria more efficient than *P. aeruginosa* but less efficient than CFT073. This effect is most likely due to the presence of the T6SS gene cluster of EcN. The construction of a T6SS-negative mutant is under construction to prove the observed killing to be based on the expression of the T6SS.

355-GIP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

356-GIP
The role of the accessory gene cagP for the *Helicobacter pylori* Cag type IV secretion system

Most strains of the human gastric pathogen *Helicobacter pylori*, which infects approximately 50% of the world population, harbour the cytoxin-associated gene (cag) pathogenicity island, a major virulence determinant and risk factor for development of gastric adenocarcinoma. The cag pathogenicity island encodes 20 components of a type IV secretion system, as well as the translocated effector protein CagA. Apart from these essential proteins, several accessory genes have been found to support type IV secretion-associated functions to different degrees, although their functional role has not been elucidated so far. In this study, we have analyzed one of these genes, cagP, which is required for full function of the secretion apparatus in *H. pylori*.

We have shown this via a TEM-1 β-lactamase reporter assay, which was used to determine the CagA translocation in different mutants of strain P12, that show a complete or partly lack of the cagP gene locus. The assay was also used to explore the role of a small non-coding RNA encoded upstream of cagP.

While a deletion of cagP prevents formation of a fully functional Cag type IV secretion system, this is not the case for a deletion of the small RNA. Deletion of cagP also decreases the expression of cagH, cagI and cagL, putative assembly factors for the pilus structures. The influence of cagP on CagH was shown using a NanoLuc luciferase reporter system (HiBiT assay).

To obtain evidence about the expression of cagP and its regulation the HiBiT assay was also used to evaluate the protein concentrations of CagP. HIBiT reporter strains were incubated either with or without host cells and luminescence was measured afterwards. Upon infection of AGS cells CagP levels were increased. Those experiments were also performed with cagG, another accessory gene encoded in the pathogenicity island, which showed an increase as well.

Taken together, our data reveals the influence the gene locus of cagP has on the Cag type IV secretion system activity. Furthermore it could be established, that cagP expression can be modulated by environmental conditions, which might be important for the regulation of the whole secretion system.

357-GIP
Exploring the structural diversity of mucin-derived O-glycans by reductive elimination and mass spectrometric analysis

G. Pohlentz1, M. Mormann1, S. Kruse1, J. Müthing1
1 Institute for Hygiene, Institute of Hygiene, Glycobiology Group, Münster, Germany

Introduction: Mucus covers the epithelia of, e.g., the respiratory and the gastrointestinal tract. Its main constituents are mucins, a class of heavily O-glycosylated proteins. The dense glycan coat of mucins protects the underlying epithelium from pathogenic and biochemical attack or chemical damage. Moreover, especially the O-glycans are supposed to serve as attachment sites and as nutrients for commensal and pathogenic bacteria. Investigations on the bacteria-glycan interplay require the in-depth analysis of the O-glycan structures.

Objective: In the present study we performed a combination of reductive elimination and mass spectrometry to get hands on the O-glycans of mucins.

Materials and Methods: O-glycans from porcine stomach and bovine submaxillary gland, respectively, were liberated from the protein core by reductive elimination using NaBH4. After removal of boric acid glycans were purified by solid phase extraction on i-HILIC. Subsequent nano electrospray ionization mass spectrometry (ESI MS) was performed with a Synapt GS-2 instrument.

Results: More than 40 different O-glycans derived from porcine and bovine mucin, respectively, were identified, not including isomeric and isobaric structures. The detected glycans ranged from low-end di- and trisaccharides of different core types to complex oligosaccharides composed of 14 monosaccharides. Porcine glycans contained solely neutral sugars (Gal, GalNAc, GlcNAc, Fuc), while bovine glycans exhibited a number of sialylated species additionally comprising N-acetylneuraminic acid (Neu5Ac) or N-glycoly neuraminic acid (Neu5Gc).

Conclusion: The results of the present study demonstrate that the combination of reductive elimination and state-of-the-art mass spectrometry provides an excellent tool for structure elucidation of mucin-derived O-glycans.

358-GIP
Bile acid stress response of *Clostridioides difficile* and its effects on host-pathogen interaction

N. Metzendorf1, S. Dittmann1, R. Schüller2, K. Riedel1, *S. Sievers*
1University of Greifswald, Institute of Microbiology, Microbial Physiology and Molecular Biology, Greifswald, Germany
2University of Greifswald, Imaging Center, Greifswald, Germany

Introduction: *Clostridioides difficile* is an intestinal human pathogen that infects the gut of individuals with a depleted microbiota. Bile acids of the intestinal tract have been demonstrated to play an important role in the initiation and outcome of a *C. difficile* infection.

Objectives: Characterization of the specific response of vegetative *C. difficile* cells to long-term (LT) bile acid stress and the effect on host-pathogen interactions.

Materials & methods: Proteome signatures of *C. difficile* cells exposed to long-term (LT) stress were obtained by LC-MS/MS. The four main bile acids cholic acid (CA), chenodeoxycholic acid (CDCA), deoxycholic acid (DCA) and lithocholic acid (LCA) were tested. Bacterial morphology was
determined and quantified in electron micrographs (EM). Co-cultivation experiments of bile acid stressed Clostridioides difficile with intestinal enterohelial cells (CaCo-2 cells) were performed and analyzed by EM and fluorescence microscopy.

Results: LT stress caused a significant and bile acid specific change in global protein signatures. The major structural flagellum protein FlIC was dramatically decreased in the presence of LCA compared to control conditions, while DCA and CDCA resulted in moderate down-regulation of FlIC, and CA did not affect FlIC expression at all. EM validated these findings: while CA treatment did not alter the number of flagella, DCA- and CDCA-stressed Clostridioides difficile had fewer, and LCA-treated bacteria were almost devoid of flagella compared to the control. Co-cultivation experiments showed that bacteria with flagella were in direct interaction with the host.

Conclusion: Being involved in motility, adherence and immunogenicity, flagella represent a major virulence determinant of pathogenic bacteria. We found a differential impact of bile acids on the formation of flagella in Clostridioides difficile. The individual bile acid composition of people could therefore have a large impact on the virulence of this pathogen.

359-GIP
Autopenetration of Shigella effector protein IpaH7.8 and modulation of signaling responses in cellular barriers.

Introduction:
Effector proteins are key virulence factors of pathogenic bacteria that target and subvert the functions of essential host defense mechanisms after breaking cellular barriers. Typically, these proteins are delivered into infected host cells via the type III secretion system (T3SS). Recently, several effector proteins have been found to enter host cells in a T3SS-independent manner thereby widening the potential functional range of these virulence factors. Prototypes of such bacteria-derived cell-penetrating effectors (CPEs) are the Y. enterocolitica-derived YopM as well as the S. typhimurium effector SspH1.

Objectives:
Both YopM and SspH1 belong to bacterial effectors of the LPX subtype of leucine-rich repeat (LRR) proteins which also comprises different IpaH proteins of Shigella. Due to significant homology in sequence and structure, we suggested a general concept for T3SS-independent uptake of LPX effector proteins and confirmed in a recent study their ability to autonomously translocate into eukaryotic cells.

M&M:
Here, we would like to provide further evidence of a general concept of T3SS-independent translocation of bacterial LPX effector proteins, with particular emphasis on Shigella IpaH7.8 effector protein. For this purpose, we generated several truncated versions of IpaH7.8. The purified proteins were used to assess their ability to cross the host membrane by FACS and fluorescence microscopy. By ubiquitination proteomics, we analyzed their enzymatic functionality as well as their modulation of host cell signaling pathways.

R&C:
We confirmed the ability of rIpaH7.8 to autonomously translocate into eukaryotic cells. Moreover, our results point to a major contribution of endocytosis to T3SS-independent cellular uptake of rIpaH7.8. The N-terminal α-helices of IpaH7.8 were identified as a protein transduction domain (PTD). Upon cell-penetration, rIpaH7.8 is enzymatically functional and poly-ubiquitinates Glomulin, a negative regulator of the inflammasome. Taken together, along with their natural capacity to modulate host immune signaling pathways, Shigella effectors proteins might serve as potential "self-delivering" biological therapeutics.

360-GIP
Potential of cell-free supernatants from gut commensal bacteria as inhibitor of C. difficile toxin production

Introduction:
Clostridioides difficile (C. difficile) is the most frequent cause of nosocomial antibiotic-associated diarrhea. The incidence of C. difficile infection (CDI) has been rising worldwide with subsequent increases in morbidity, mortality and health care costs. Depleting gut microbiota by antibiotic therapy, favors C. difficile germination, colonization and consecutive toxin production leading to clinical symptoms of CDI.

Objectives:
In this study we investigate the direct effect, as well as cell-free supernatant (CFS) of three commensal bacteria from Firmicutes (Faecalibacterium prausnitzii, Roseburia intestinalis) and Bacteroidetes (Bacteroides faecis) phylum on C. difficile growth and toxin production. Furthermore, the vitality of human intestinal epithelial cells under C. difficile toxins exposition w/o supernatant from commensals was assessed.

Material:
Three commensal bacteria species and two strains of C. difficile were grown under anaerobic conditions. The living commensal bacteria as wells as their CFS derived from cultures, were tested for inhibition of C. difficile by incorporating various proportions of the CFS into the growth medium with co-cultures of the pathogen. The effect on growth and toxin production were assessed. The biomass of CaCo-2 cells was determined after co-incubation of cells with C. difficile toxin containing media w/o CFS.

Results:
Experimental results indicated that in all co-cultures the toxin production was decreased, while no decrease in the number of colonies could be observed. The same effects could be observed in a concentration-dependent manner by using CFS from the commensal strains only. Furthermore, the cytotoxic effect of C. difficile toxins on CaCo-2 could be reduced by co-incubation with CFS.

Conclusion:
All three species of commensal bacteria investigated in this study showed potential for targeting the toxin-production of
C. difficile. CFS derived from these commensals was responsible for the inhibition of toxin production. Further studies will help to identify specific substances from the CFS as potential candidates in the search for alternatives to conventional CDI-therapy with antibiotics.

**361-GIP**

Development of cell-permeable antimicrobial molecules (CPAMs) to treat intracellular infections

*C. Rölle*, T. Martins, B. Köhler, L. Greune, A. Schmidt

Universitätsklinikum Münster, Institut für Infektiologie, ZMFE, Münster, Germany

Infectious diseases caused by microbial pathogens, are one of the major causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide. However, they represent a great challenge for antimicrobial therapies not only due to the threat of spreading antimicrobial resistances but also due to the fact that some major bacterial pathogens can also adopt an intracellular lifestyle. Thus, intracellular pathogens are widely protected against the usual antimicrobial therapies and they constitute a niche for recurrence and reinfection. Commonly used antimicrobial agents are characterized by poor cellular uptake. They cannot efficiently reach the intracellular target, resulting in low antimicrobial activity against intracellular pathogens. Therefore, there is a need to develop and improve strategies for the treatment of such infectious diseases. In this regard, Cell-penetrating peptides (CPPs), also called protein transduction domains (PTDs), are small peptides that are able to cross the plasma membrane autonomously and can mediate the internalization of biologically active molecules such as antibiotics into the cytoplasm.

In our previous work, we discovered novel bacteria-derived PTDs within the N-terminal α-helical domains of LPX-effector proteins and used these PTDs for the delivery of the commonly used antibiotic gentamicin to treat intracellular infections with bacterial pathogens. We showed that these CPP-gentamicin conjugates were able to penetrate different endothelial and epithelial cell lines and importantly, we confirmed that these conjugates were able to target and efficiently kill intracellular Gram-negative pathogenic bacteria, such as *E. coli* K1 RS218, *S. enterica* serovar Typhimurium, and *S. flexneri* in infected cells. Furthermore, we could show that bacteria-derived peptidoglycan-degrading proteins (PGDs) fused to a CPP can be used to kill intracellular pathogenic Gram pos. and Gram neg. bacteria, as well. Interestingly, these fusion constructs also showed a high effectiveness against bacterial biofilm formation and might represent novel therapeutic tools to treat (recurrent) infectious diseases caused by bacteria.

**362-RCP**

Polyphasic taxonomy of an antibiotic-producing *Streptomyces* sp. SHP 1-2

*C. Risdian*, T. Mozef, S. Ratnakomala, P. Lisdiyanti, R. L. Hahnke, M. Rohde, J. Wink

1 Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Microbial Strain Collection, Braunschweig, Germany
2 National Institute of Science (LIPi), Research Unit for Clean Chemistry, Serpong, Indonesia
3 Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), Research Center for Biotechnology, Bogor, Indonesia
4 Leibniz Institut DSMZ-German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures, Braunschweig, Germany
5 Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Central Facility for Microscopy, Braunschweig, Germany

**Introduction:** Strain 4-9-1-25 was isolated from an infant with a severe presentation of pneumonia and septicemia at the Leipzig University Hospital. The strain was initially identified by MALDI-TOF analysis as *Leclercia aderboxylata*, the sole member of the genus *Leclercia*. However, analysis of the 16S rRNA via Sanger sequencing yielded inconclusive results.

**Objectives:** We, therefore, performed hybrid whole-genome sequencing to characterize the isolate, which illustrated general caveats of 16S rRNA analysis.

**Methods:** We amplified a 16S rRNA fragment of 1,400 bp for phylogenetic characterization of strain 4-9-1-25 and five comparative isolates, complemented by identification based on substrate usage. The genome of strain 4-9-1-25 was reconstructed using hybrid Illumina and Nanopore sequencing. Taxonomy was resolved using a k-mer based search algorithm against an extensive genome collection and validated using marker genes and in silico DNA-DNA hybridization.

**Results:** All analyzed strains did not differ biochemically. The analysis of the partial 16S rRNA gene, however, was inconclusive for strain 4-9-1-25 due to assignment to different species of the Enterobacteriales. Additionally, multiple ambiguous nucleotides were detected for all isolates due to intragenomic heterogeneity of 16S rRNA genes, which was only revealed using haplotype reconstruction with Nanopore long reads. The final assembly of the circular genome contains 4.4 Mbp and has an average nucleotide identity below 95% to any known isolate in a comprehensive genome collection of Enterobacteriales.

**Conclusion:** Low resolution and intra-genomic heterogeneity can limit discrimination of bacterial isolates when using only 16S rRNA genes. We successfully applied a hybrid sequencing approach to mitigate these problems. Based on this whole-genome analysis, we propose that strain 4-9-1-25 represents a new species of the genus *Leclercia.*

**363-RCP**

Polyphasic taxonomy of an antibiotic-producing *Streptomyces* sp. SHP 1-2

*C. Risdian*, T. Mozef, S. Ratnakomala, P. Lisdiyanti, R. L. Hahnke, M. Rohde, J. Wink

1 Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Microbial Strain Collection, Braunschweig, Germany
2 National Institute of Science (LIPi), Research Unit for Clean Chemistry, Serpong, Indonesia
3 Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), Research Center for Biotechnology, Bogor, Indonesia
4 Leibniz Institut DSMZ-German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures, Braunschweig, Germany
5 Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Central Facility for Microscopy, Braunschweig, Germany

*Streptomyces* belong to phylum Actinobacteria and are also known as important genera in medicine because of their ability to produce more than two-thirds of the antibiotics in the world. The chance for finding novel bioactive compounds produced from new filamentous Actinobacteria is relatively high when the discovery approaches are aimed to neglected and unexplored regions. Strain SHP 1-2 was isolated from Enggano Island, Indonesia, and had antimicrobial activity. The strain was found to be closely related to the type strains of *Streptomyces virochomogenes* NRBC 3113(T) (99.03%), *Streptomyces malachitofuscus* NBRC 13059(T) (99.03%), and *Streptomyces misionensis* DSM 40306 (98.96%). The cell wall contained LL-diaminopimelic acid. The major fatty acids were anteiso-C15:0, iso-C16:0, anteiso-C17:0, iso-C15:0, and C16:0. The primary
menaquinones were MK-9(H4), MK-9(H6), and MK-9(H8). The G+C content was found to be 73.37%. The multilocus sequence analysis (MLSA) distance using five housekeeping genes of strain SHP 1-2 and the closest strains were less than 0.007. After studying polyphasic taxonomy, that includes the genotypic and phenotypic comparison between strain SHP 1-2 and the closest strains, it can be concluded that the strain SHP 1-2 is a novel species in the Streptomyces genus.

Keywords: Streptomyces, Actinobacteria, polyphasic taxonomy, Enggano Island, and antimicrobial activity.

364-RCP
The EDGAR platform for phylogenomics
1 J. Blom*, M. Dieckmann*, J. G. Schrader*, S. P. Glaeser*, A. Goessmann,1
2 Justus-Liebig-University Gießen, Bioinformatics & Systems Biology, Gießen, Germany
3 Justus-Liebig-University Gießen, Microbiology of Recycling Processes, Gießen, Germany

The deployment of next generation sequencing approaches has caused a rapid increase in the number of completely sequenced genomes. As one result of this development, it is feasible to analyze not only single genomes, but large groups of related genomes in a comparative approach. Whole genome sequencing of type strain genomes also holds huge potential for obtaining a higher resolution phylogenetic and taxonomic classification. In the last 10 years, the EDGAR platform has become one of the most established software tools in the field of comparative genomics. Since, the software has been continuously improved and a large number of new analysis features have been added. In recent years, the use of EDGAR for core-genome-based phylogenomic/taxonomic analysis has become a main application field of the software. The web-based user interface of EDGAR offers all tools required for phylogenomic inter- and intraspecies taxonomic analyses as needed for the proposal of novel species. EDGAR calculates core-genome-based phylogenetic trees with neighbor-joining and maximum-likelihood methods, furthermore the genome taxonomy database (GTDB) phylogeny pipeline is currently added to the platform. As genome similarity indices, the classical amino acid identity (AAI) and average nucleotide identity (ANI) matrices are provided, fastANI and OrthoANI results are also implemented and will be added to the web interface in 2020. Thus, the software supports a quick survey of evolutionary relationships and simplifies the process of obtaining new biological insights into the differential gene content of kindred genomes.

EDGAR also provides 322 precomputed genus-based projects comprising 8,079 complete genomes providing comparative genomics and phylogenomic results. In addition, recently 226 new public projects were created that are clustered on the family level and exclusively use type strain genomes. These new projects comprise a further 4,400 genomes. EDGAR is free for academic use and funded as a service by the German Network for Bioinformatics Infrastructure – de.NBI. EDGAR is available via the public web server http://edgar.computational.bio.

1 Cologne Merheim Medical Centre, University Hospital of Witten/Herdecke, Institute of Hygiene, Köln, Germany
2 Cologne Merheim Medical Centre, University Hospital of Witten/Herdecke, Department of Pneumology and Critical Care Medicine, Köln, Germany

Objectives: Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) is a lifesaving technology for patients with severe respiratory failure. The thermoregulatory heater-cooler unit (HCU) of the medical device adjusts the blood temperature. The open system runs with circulating water. There is a risk of bacterial biofilm formation and subsequent transmission via aerosols or contact. The aim of this study was to assess this risk by microbiological sampling.

Methods: The study was conducted at a supra-regional ECMO centre in 2019. Water samples (800 ml) were taken weekly and aseptically from the water tanks, filled with sterile water, while the device was running. Total bacteria counts and Legionella spp. were analysed according to official recommendations. For mycobacterial investigations water samples were decontaminated, concentrated and plated on Middlebrook agar. Microscopy and identification using MALDI-TOF was performed from all grown colonies. Decontamination of the device was carried out according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

Results: A total of 26 water samples from 6 different HCUs (Maquet, Medos) were analysed. We did not detect any Legionella spp. or mycobacteria. One HCU yielded a total bacteria count >100 CFU/100ml (37°C). Interestingly, we observed growth of various nonfermenters (Methylobacterium organophilum, Raistonia insidiosa, Pseudomonas veronii, Cupriavidus pauculus) in two HCU, even after disinfection. No transmissions were observed. Observations revealed possible contributing factors of contamination such as temporary storage near water sinks, disconnection of the tubing during patient transports or water refill.

Conclusion: There is a risk of biofilm formation of waterborne pathogens within the ECMO’s HCU that can be highly resistant to disinfectants. However, the infection risk remains unclear. Microbiological monitoring standards have to be implemented, especially to control for contamination of leased devices.

365-PRP
Microbiological monitoring of thermoregulatory devices used for extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO): Is there a need for standards?
1 A. F. Wendel*, C. Karagiannidis*, F. Mattner

Introduction: Regularly touched surfaces usually represent fomites, particularly if touched by different persons. This also applies for microscopes, widely used in clinical or biological laboratories. Previous, cultivation-based studies suggested that direct contact with microscope eye-pieces significantly increases the risk of eye infections.

Objectives: In order to obtain a comprehensive view of the community profile and its hygienic relevance, we performed cultivation-based and molecular analyses of the ocular bacteriota.

366-PRP
Eye-catching microbes - Quantification and NGS-based identification of the bacteriota on microscope oculars
1 B. Fritz*, K. Schäler*, F. Ziemssen*, S. Wahl*, M. Egert
2 Furtwangen University, Institute of Precision Medicine, Villingen-Schwenningen, Germany
3 Eberhard Karls University, Centre for Ophthalmology, Tübingen, Germany
4 Eberhard Karls University, ZEISS Vision Science Lab, Tübingen, Germany

Introduction: Regularly touched surfaces usually represent fomites, particularly if touched by different persons. This also applies for microscopes, widely used in clinical or biological laboratories. Previous, cultivation-based studies suggested that direct contact with microscope eye-pieces significantly increases the risk of eye infections.
Material & Methods: We swab-sampled oculars of 10 recently used microscopes from a university laboratory. Samples of the left oculars were used for quantification and MALDI-biotyping of representative isolates, following protocols previously established for spectacles. Samples from the right oculars were used for a 16S rRNA gene sequencing approach. After sampling, all oculars were carefully cleaned with isopropanol, re-sampled and analysed again.

Results: All oculars were contaminated with bacteria, with a maximum load of 1.7 x 10^6 CFU cm^-2. 114 morphologically different isolates were assigned to 64 genera and 34 species, mainly *Cutibacterium* (46%), *Staphylococcus* (21%) and *Brevibacterium* (5%), with the most abundant species being *Cutibacterium acnes* (13 %) and *Staphylococcus capitis* (6%). Cleaning reduced the microbial load up to 98%, leaving mainly cutibacteria. 15 samples yielded good sequencing results. 1517 ASVs were assigned to 10 phyla, 59 families, 137 genera and 272 species. The dominant genera before cleaning were *Cutibacterium* (78%), *Paracoccus* (13%), *Pseudomonas* (2%) and *Acinetobacter* (1%). The post-cleaning bacteriota composition was very similar, however, probably largely representing dead bacteria.

Conclusion: Here we report the first comprehensive insight into the microscope bacteriota. Used oculars were notably contaminated with skin and environmental bacteria, including potential pathogens. Regular cleaning after use is highly recommendable to prevent eye and skin infections.


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367-PRP

Adaptation of *Listeria monocytogenes* to benzalkonium chloride induced viable but not culturable (VBNC) state

The objective of our study was to investigate the effects of benzalkonium chloride (BC) on the susceptibility of *L. monocytogenes* to antimicrobial agents (BC and antibiotics) and on the viable but not culturable (VBNC) state of the bacterial cells. We adapted *L. monocytogenes* by applying BC below minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) to above minimum bactericidal concentration (MBC). The cultivable fractions and the susceptibility of adapted and parental cells to BC were assessed. In addition, cell membrane permeability and glucose uptake were analyzed by multi-parametric flow cytometry using the fluorochromes SYTO9, propidium iodide and 2-[N-(7-nitrobenz-2-oxa-1,3-diazol-4-yl)amino]-2-deoxyglucose. Adapted cells displayed a two-fold MIC increase of BC and two additional antibiotic resistances while MBC remained the same. At high BC concentrations, the decrease in the number of colony forming units was significantly lower in the population of adapted cells than of parental cells. Growth-independent viability assays revealed an adapted subpopulation that did not grow on plates, but had an intact membrane and could maintain glucose uptake, indicating an increased abundance of VBNC cells. The observed data underline, that disinfectants may trigger antibiotic resistance and the VBNC state in *L. monocytogenes* cells when inadequately applied. Standard culture techniques may fail to detect these adapted subpopulations on selective media. Moreover, adapted cells can outcompete non-adapted cells under sublethal concentrations of disinfectants, which may lead to novel public health risks.

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368-PRP

Efficient detection and treatment of biofilms

*G. Gotzmann*, D. Weile, U. König

Fraunhofer FEP, Medical & Biotechnological Applications, Dresden, Germany

Introduction Biofilms raise problems in all areas of daily life. Especially in medicine there is a high risk of infections due to biofilm growth on implants and catheters.

Objectives There is no method to effectively prevented or inactivated biofilms. Our research aims for novel approaches for detection and inactivation of biofilms. The first step for an effective biofilm treatment is the fast detection of its growth. We aimed to have an in-situ device for real time detection. In a next step, bacteria shall be eliminated by inactivation and degradation of the organic residues.

Materials & Methods Typical biofilm contaminated objects are fingerprint sensors. Technological basis of such sensors are bidirectional displays. Such devices can emit light and detect reflected light in parallel, hence allowing a real time detection of biofilms on the surface. Inactivation and removal can be conducted by photocatalytic surface cleaning using special coatings made of TiO2. The combination of detection and cleaning is done by coating the surface of above mentioned displays with specially adapted layers. The effectiveness of such layers was investigated using the stearic acid degradation test, measurement of methylene blue reduction and inactivation of *E. coli* as one example organism.

Results We found that biofilm detection on the surface is possible, independent from surrounding light, even detection in dark environment is possible. Furthermore, we were able to quantify the biofilm formation. Using the stearic acid test, we showed the degradation of surface organic contamination by photocatalysis. The same results were obtained for reduction of methylene blue in liquid environment and inactivation of *E. coli* as one example organism.

Conclusion The detection of contaminations even in dark surrounding make the application suitable also for pipes or also in the human body (implants, surgical instruments). The real time detection allows fast reaction on the biofilm formation and enables to treat them on demand and not “in advance”. The specially developed titanium coatings applied on the surface of a bidirectional display permit a combination of contamination detection and “self cleaning”.

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369-PRP

The role of ions in photodynamic inactivation


1Universität Regensburg, Lehrstuhl für Mikrobiologie, Regensburg, Germany 2Universitätsklinikum Regensburg, Klinik und Poliklinik für Dermatologie, Regensburg, Germany 3Universität Regensburg, Institut für Organische Chemie, Regensburg, Germany
Photodynamic inactivation is a method allowing efficient killing of bacteria via reactive oxygen species by means of photosensitizers and visible light. Many reports on photodynamic inactivation show diverging results for the efficiency of the method. However, the reason for this remained unclear. Investigations on novel flavin based photosensitizers show that the efficiency of photodynamic inactivation depends on multiple factors such as the presence of ions. In the presented study, an interdisciplinary approach is used for clarifying this situation.

Prior to application of the photosensitizer to bacteria, the photosensitizers were incubated with various ions and spectroscopy was carried out in order to detect undesired chemical reactions. The altered structure of the photosensitizers was then analyzed via HPLC and LC-MS. Physical behavior of the photosensitizers in the presence of ions was checked with DPBF fluorescence measurements. As photosensitizers need to attach to bacterial cells to be efficient enough, attachment assays were performed where the amount of bound photosensitizer to the cells was measured. To complete the picture, bacterial cells were treated with different photosensitizer concentrations in combination with ions and other substances. After treatment, the cells were immediately transferred into fresh and pre-warmed medium. This procedure was followed up by the measurement of growth curves and subsequent calculation of logarithmic reduction.

Chemical analysis indicated that flavin based photosensitizers are heavily influenced by ions, which for example served in some other publications as buffer substances. Chemical alterations of the photosensitizers also affect the physical properties and the capability in producing singlet oxygen. For a variety of substances, no chemical or physical alteration was obvious. However, binding assays indicate a alteration in the attachment of the photosensitizer to the cells. Besides the negative side effects of photodynamic inactivation in chemical and physical manners, the data suggest that the outer structure of bacteria might play a crucial role in the efficiency of photodynamic inactivation.

Results: The biological decontamination comprises the plasma-mediated inactivation of microorganisms including multidrug-resistant strains. Furthermore, a chemical decontamination is possible such as the elimination of toxic or unwanted pollutants (including odours and pharmaceutical residues).

Conclusion: Plasma technologies offer different advantageous properties. Cold plasma avoids high temperatures (below 40°C), pressures or disinfectants with high alcohol content. Thus, plasma is in particular suitable for the treatment of sensible goods such as heat sensitive materials or objects with complex shapes. In addition, as an essentially chemical-free physical process, plasma is especially suitable for the use in medical and healthcare facilities.

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371-PRP
Development of a flexible software solution to document and supervise flushing of drinking water pipelines in the hospital environment
*T. Schultz1,2, D. Bergmann1,2, V. A. J. Kempf1,2
1Institute for Medical Microbiology and Infection Control, University Hospital, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
2University Center of Competence for Infection Control, State of Hesse, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Introduction: Water in rarely used drinking water systems represents a potential source of bacterial contamination as it might become a reservoir for biofilm-forming bacterial species such as Legionella or Pseudomonas. Human infections with these bacteria harbour a life-threatening risk and have to be prevented especially in a hospital environment. On a legal basis, countermeasures are required to comply with the German "Infektionsschutzgesetz" (IfSG) and the "Trinkwasserverordnung" (TrinkwV).

Currently, routinely flushing of pipelines at risk is a state of the art solution to overcome this problem. However, for large facilities this results in logistical challenges of documentation supervising this process.

Objective: Development of a software tool which simplifies and standardizes the documentation process granting supervisors and authorities immediate access to these reports.

Material & Methods: To this end, a protected Microsoft Excel based project was created utilizing VBA ActiveX-controls.

Results: The first mode of the software is the administrative mode which allows creating or managing of documentation templates. The second mode is the working mode which utilizes these templates for the reoccurring documentation process. As this software runs on a mobile device such as a laptop or surface laptop, the technical staff can directly document the process while flushing the pipelines. Moreover, besides the printing of reports for paper-based documentation, the software also creates an electronic report
on an archive path thereby enabling direct supervision of the process.

Conclusion: We present a software solution simplifying the documentation of the flushing manoeuvres of drinking water pipelines.

372-PRP
Microorganisms living in water over a prolonged time process a significant increase of tolerance to disinfections
*M. Hummert1, O. Böhler1, T. Kuczius1
1Institute of Hygiene, University of Münster, University Hospital of Münster, Münster, Germany

The contamination of water sources with pathogenic and drug-resistant microorganisms is considered a major public health problem. Drinking water quality is controlled by cultivation on selective nutrients at which only planktonic and viable bacteria are verifiable. However, most of the bacteria live in biofilms or survive in an inactive state as viable-but-non-cultivable (VBNC) bacteria. Isolates cultivated in rich nutrient media are highly susceptible to disinfections and antibiotic treatments. In contrast, bacteria living in water without any additional nutrient supply demonstrate an increased tolerance to disinfections. In this study we adapted microorganisms to drinking water and followed the survival and increase of tolerance to disinfection during long term incubation, Pseudomonas aeruginosa and Escherichia coli which are human-pathogens were cultivated for more than 12 weeks under low shaking conditions to avoid biofilm formation. At distinct time periods isolates were exposed to disinfection procedures with chlorine (1.2 mg/L) and hydrogen peroxide (50 mg/L) and to antibiotic treatment.

Bacteria were susceptible to the disinfections within the first two weeks in drinking water while the tolerance increased highly over the time. This increase of tolerance is accompanied with a process of changes in bacterial physiology followed by a dormancy state with less ATP production and changes in signals detected by flow cytometry. Our results indicate long term survival of microorganisms in water sources over the time which is accompanied with significant physiological changes and high tolerance to disinfections. Periodic changes of disinfection agents may be an option to minimize such an increase in bacterial tolerances.

374-PRP
Antibacterial activity of nanostructured Zinc oxide tetrapods
*A. Büter1, G. Maschkowitz1, M. Baum2, Y. Mishra3, R. Adelung2, H. Fickenscher1
1Institute for Infection Medicine, Kiel, Germany
2Institute for Material Sciences, Department for Functional Nanomaterials, Kiel, Germany
3University of Southern Denmark, Mads Clausen Institute, Sønderborg, Denmark

Zinc oxide (ZnO) tetrapods are microparticles with nanostructured surfaces showing specific physical properties, which can be chemically modified. In comparison to globular unstructured ZnO, tetrapods show a lower toxicity in eukaryotic cell culture. Previously, antiviral activities of ZnO tetrapods against herpes simplex virus types 1 and 2 were described. Since ZnO tetrapods are non-soluble particles, they need to be applied in suspension.

The aim of this study was to investigate the antibacterial properties of ZnO tetrapods in comparison to commercially available globular ZnO. Killing rates of tetrapods and globular ZnO against Gram-negative and Gram-positive bacteria were determined for different time points and for different concentrations. While Staphylococcus aureus strains showed a cell-number reduction in average of 3 log10 levels at 1 mg/ml after 24 hours of incubation, Klebsiella pneumoniae isolates showed a similar cell-number reduction with 2 mg/ml, only. However, ZnO tetrapods did not show effects on Pseudomonas aeruginosa and Enterococcus faecalis strains.

Thus, ZnO tetrapods show antibacterial activity against Staphylococcus aureus and Klebsiella pneumoniae isolates. Surface modifications of the ZnO tetrapods might allow alterations of the host range of antibacterial activity. ZnO tetrapods add an additional principle to the spectrum of antibacterial mechanism which is independent of antibiotics.
Introduction. A prominent feature of severe streptococcal infections is the profound inflammatory response that contributes to systemic toxicity. In sepsis the dysregulated host response involves both immunological and non-immunological pathways.

Objectives. The aim of the study was to analyze the impact of group B streptococcal pigmentation in relation to systemic toxicity.

Methods. A series of molecular, biochemical, and immunological assays was performed.

Results. Here, we report a fatal case of an immunocompetent healthy female presenting with toxic shock and purpura fulminans caused by group B streptococcus (GBS). The strain was pigmented and hyper-hemolytic. Stimulations of human primary cells with hyper-hemolytic GBS strains and pigment toxin resulted in a release of pro-inflammatory mediators, including TNF, IL-1β, and IL-6. In addition, pigmented GBS induced blood clotting and showed FXII activity on their surfaces, which was linked to the presence of the pigment.

Conclusion. Detailed characterization of the pigmented GBS strains coupled to functional studies implicated the pigment as a key factor eliciting pro-thrombotic and inflammatory responses.
cytoplasmic contents through the lysosomal pathway and acts not only as an efficient recycle and survival mechanism during cellular stress, but also as an anti-infective machinery.

In 2016, our group showed for the first time the induction of selective autophagy by *S. aureus* infection, its escape from the autophagosome and proliferation in the cytoplasm, via live cell imaging. After invasion, *S. aureus* co-localises with ubiquitin and the receptor proteins SQSTM1, OPTN and CALCOCO2, leading to phagophore recruitment. Additionally, p38 MAPK activation was observed, which is a so far unrecognised bacterial strategy to manipulate the autophagic pathway.

The activation of the p38 MAPK could be due to either the bacteria triggering a host cell receptor or by direct activation by bacterial effector proteins. Here, we analyse the impact of Nod and Toll-like receptors on MAPK activation and autophagy induction during *S. aureus* infection. Additionally, bacterial and host cell signal transducers will be analysed regarding their impact on p38 MAPK and autophagy induction. Surprisingly, the *S. aureus* surface expressed kinase PknB, which has as MAP Kinase-like activity, is not involved in p38 MAPK activation and autophagy induction. Due to this observation, we are performing a global transcriptome analysis to identify proteins that might be relevant for the inhibition of the fusion of the autophagosome and the lysosome as well as the escape of *S. aureus* of the autophagosome.

A further understanding of the molecular mechanisms of this host-pathogen interaction will facilitate new strategies to combat this important pathogen.

**378-MPP**

**Impact of extracellular pneumococcal serine proteases on pneumococcal phagocytosis and virulence**

*M. Q. Ali*, N. Mehltz1, A. Wüst1, R. Bolsmann1, T. P. Kohler1, G. Burchhardt1, S. Hammerschmidt1

1Center for Functional Genomics of Microbes, Department of Molecular Genetics and Infection Biology, University of Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany

Introduction and objectives: Streptococcus pneumoniae (the pneumococcus) asymptomatically colonize mucosal surfaces of healthy human individuals. Due to its high virulence potential, pneumococci can cause pneumonia, sepsis and meningitis. Four serine proteases (HtrA, PrtA, Spf, and CbpG) are expressed by *S. pneumoniae* and surface-exposed. The impact on pneumococcal pneumonia of the individual serine proteases was low. To analyse the pathological effects caused by pneumococcal serine proteases in a more systematic approach, we generated double and triple serine protease deficient strains. Methods: We generated triple serine protease mutants, with only one functional enzyme present, by insertion-deletion mutagenesis in nonencapsulated TIGR4Δcps and encapsulated TIGR4lux to perform phagocytosis assays and in vivo infections. We infected mouse macrophages J774A.1 with strain TIGR4Δcps or isogenic serine protease mutants and enumerated the number of internalized and recovered pneumococci. In addition, to visualize the extra and intracellular pneumococci, we conducted immunofluorescence microscopy. For the acute pneumonia mouse model, mice we intranasally infected mice with TIGR4lux expressing only one serine protease. To visualize the dissemination of pneumococci from the nasopharynx to the lung and the blood, we monitored the spread of pneumococci using the IVIS® Spectrum bioimaging system at different time points. Results: The infection of macrophages resulted in a significant reduction in number of recovered triple serine protease knockout mutants compared to the wild-type strain. Furthermore, the enumeration of triple mutants internalized by macrophages was also reduced. Intranasal infection of mice showed only an attenuation and extended survival with the triple mutant, in which only the immunogenic PrtA is expressed. Conclusion: Interestingly, loss of the functional serine proteases showed a lower internalization of *S. pneumoniae* by macrophage. The results of the acute pneumococcal pneumonia model suggest that even the presence of one serine protease is sufficient to cause dramatic lung infections and septicemia. Further studies will show the impact of serine proteases on long-term colonization and mild lung infections.

**379-MPP**

**Analysis of the RNA-based regulatory mechanisms controlling virulence in *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis***

*1. Vollmer*, M. Kusmierek2, A. K. Heroven2, P. Dersch1

1Zentrum für Molekularbiologie der Entzündung, Institut für Infektbiologie, Münster, Germany

2Helmholtz-Zentrum für Infektionsforschung, Braunschweig, Germany

The human pathogen *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis* is able to adhere to the epithelial cell layer and evade the host immune response after passage through the M-cells of the small intestine, allowing the pathogen to replicate in deeper tissues and cause disease.

Virulence regulation in *Yersinia* is strictly controlled and influenced by numerous environmental factors such as an increase in temperature from 25°C to 37°C or contact to host cells. This ensures an organised expression of virulence factors necessary for infection establishment. Among the virulence proteins are those involved in the initial infection phase, such as adhesins and flagella, but also proteins of the on-going infection including the type III secretion system and its secreted Yop effector proteins encoded on the virulence plasmid pYY. Many of these virulence factors are under the control of the plasmid-encoded transcriptional regulator LcrF, whose 5'-UTR undergoes a temperature-dependent opening of a thermo-loop, leading to efficient translation of the *lcrF* mRNA.

RNases play an important role in a variety of cellular processes. Among them are the endo- and exoribonucleases RNaseE and PNPase, which are part of a multi-enzyme complex called the degradosome, and RNaseII. Recent data from our lab suggests that these RNases are involved in the regulation of different virulence traits such as type III and type VI secretion and invasion. These roles are currently under further investigation, for example by RNaseq. This will give us an important insight into the versatile role of RNases in the infection process of this enteric pathogen.

**380-MPP**

**The role of VraSR on the reduced susceptibility to vancomycin in a laboratory VISA strain**

*M. Hort*, A. S. Schröter1, A. Berscheid2, G. Bierbaum3

1University Hospital Bonn, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Immunology and Parasitology, Bonn, Germany

2University of Tübingen, Interfaculty Institute for Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Tübingen, Germany

3University of Hohenheim, Mass Spectrometry Unit, Stuttgart, Germany

Vancomycin is the drug of choice for many severe MRSA infections. However, in the past 20 years many clinical isolates with reduced susceptibility to Vancomycin, called...
vancomycin-intermediate susceptible \textit{S. aureus} (VISA), have been isolated. Common features of VISA strains comprise decreased virulence, reduced autolysis and a thickened cell wall with low peptidoglycan crosslinking \cite{1}. Here we focus on the important two-component system (TCS) VraSR of a laboratory VISA strain \textit{S. aureus} VC40 (MIC 64 µg/mL) \cite{2}. The strain was generated by serial passage of a mutant strain \textit{S. aureus} RN4220 \_\_\_\_mutS (MIC 2 µg/mL) in the presence of vancomycin. It had accumulated a total of 79 mutations, two of these leading to exchanges in VraS (D242G; L114S) \cite{3}. The VraSR TCS is known to regulate gene expression in response to cell wall active antibiotics. Also a revertant was isolated with a reduced vancomycin resistance (MIC 4 µg/mL) and an additional mutation in vraR (M54T), labelled SA Revertant. Additionally, the two mutations of vras were introduced into the \textit{S. aureus} NCTC8325 background (MIC 4 µg/mL) \cite{3}. Using microarray and qRT-PCR, it could be shown that the two mutations in vraS led to an upregulation of the vraSR regulon \cite{3}. In contrast, the mutation in vraR of the SA Revertant strain reduced transcription of the vraS gene to the level of the WT control. However, the mutated VraR (M54T) protein of the SA Revertant strain showed a slower migration in the Phos-tag SDS-PAGE, which might indicate phosphorylation. Yet this could not be confirmed by mass spectrometry. The vraS mutations seem to lead to a reduced autolysis, possibly due to a reduced binding and an altered processing of AtIA, the major autolysin in \textit{S. aureus}. The reduced autolysis also coincided with a difference in wall teichoic acid composition in SA VC40 and the strain harbouring the VraS mutations. In conclusion, these results indicate that VraSR influences autolysis by a so far uncharacterized mechanism.


\section*{381-MPP}

\textbf{Validation of a novel drug target in \textit{Mycobacterium tuberculosis}}

*S. Krysenko* 1, M. Oswald 1, A. Kulik 1, W. Wohlieben 1, A. Bera 1

1\textit{University of Tuebingen, IMIT, Microbiology and Biotechnology, Tuebingen, Germany}

Human intracellular pathogenic actinobacterium \textit{Mycobacterium tuberculosis} has developed strategies to access nutrients from the host and to exploit the host to synthesize more resources for its growth and propagation. \textit{Mycobacterium tuberculosis} can induce the polyamine biosynthesis during the shift in metabolic state of macrophages. The pathogen is able to utilize polyamines as a sole N- and C-source to support its own intracellular growth in macrophages. In our previous studies in a model actinobacterium \textit{Streptomyces coelicolor} M145, which possesses three glutamine synthetase (GS)-like enzymes, we demonstrated that only one GS-like protein GlnA3St (SCO6982), is involved in the first step of polyamine utilization pathway \cite{1,2}. GlnA3St is a gamma-glutamylpolyamine synthetase (GPS) that ensures both nutrients availability (C- and N-source) and resistance against high polyamine concentrations in \textit{Streptomyces coelicolor} \cite{1}. Since there is a homologue of GlnA3Mt (Rv1878) in \textit{Mycobacterium tuberculosis}, this GPS enzyme is a particularly interesting target for drug development. In our current studies we were able to show that GlnA3Mt can glutamylate polyamines, demonstrating GPS activity \cite{3}. Thus, GlnA3Mt is a novel specific drug target in a relevant human pathogen.

\section*{382-MPP}

\textbf{High nuclease activity of long persisting \textit{Staphylococcus aureus} isolates confers protection against NET-mediated killing within the airways of CF patients}

*S. Herzog* 1, F. Dach* 1, C. Neumann 1, D. Chaves-Moreno* 2, B. C. Kahl 1

1\textit{Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Münster, Germany}

2\textit{Helmholtz Association of German Research Centers (HZ), Helmholtz Center for Infection Research, Brunswick, Germany}

\textit{Staphylococcus aureus} is one of the first most prevalent pathogens in cystic fibrosis (CF). Airway infections in CF are characterized by a strong inflammatory response of highly recruited neutrophils. One killing mechanism of neutrophils is the formation of neutrophil extracellular traps (NETs) consisting of extracellular DNA fibers with antimicrobial granule proteins, which can be degraded by \textit{S. aureus} nuclease.

We hypothesize, that \textit{S. aureus} adapts to the airways of CF patients during persistent infection by escaping from NET-mediated killing via an increase of nuclease activity.

Sputum samples of CF patients were visualized by confocal microscopy after immuno-fluorescence staining. Nuclease activity was analyzed in long persisting \textit{S. aureus} isolates from an individual CF patient, as well as from 29 different CF patients with varying \textit{S. aureus} persistence, using a PCR-based nuclease activity assay. Clinical isolates were further selected for qRT-PCR to determine expression of \textit{nuc}1 and \textit{nuc}2. NET-killing assays were performed to evaluate bacterial survival depending on nuclease activity. To confirm the role of nuclease during NET-mediated killing, a clinical isolate with low nuclease activity was transformed with a nuclease expression vector (pCM28nuc). Two sputa from an individual CF patient were subjected to RNA-sequence analysis to evaluate the activity of nuclease in vivo.

In sputa, \textit{S. aureus} was associated to extracellular DNA structures. Nuclease activity in clinical \textit{S. aureus} isolates increased in a time-and phenotype-dependent manner. NET-mediated killing was significantly higher in \textit{S. aureus} isolates with low compared to isolates with high nuclease activity. Transformation of the clinical isolate with low nuclease activity conferred protection against NET-mediated killing confirming the beneficial role of nuclease against NETs. Nuclease expression in in vivo sputa was high, which underlines the important role of nuclease within the highly inflamed CF airways.
In conclusion, our data show that *S. aureus* adapts to the neutrophil-rich environment of CF airways with increasing nuclease secretion most likely to avoid NET-killing during long-term persistence.

383-MPP

**Life After Secretion—*Yersinia enterocolitica* Rapidly Toggles Effector Secretion and Can Resume Cell Division in Response to Changing External Conditions**


1Max Planck Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Ecophysiology, Marburg, Germany
2Reed College, Chemistry, Portland, United States

**Introduction:** The type III secretion system (T3SS) injectosome is a virulence mechanism that many pathogens utilize during infection. This system allows bacteria to manipulate the host to further allow dissemination. Secretion of effector proteins is accompanied by inhibition of growth; hence, many pathogenic species are heterogeneous for T3SS expression, which allows T3SS-inactive cells to thrive in the host and outcompete the T3SS-active cells and other competitors. In contrast, *Yersinia enterocolitica* consists of a homogeneous T3SS-active population. This homogenous behavior brings to question how *Y. enterocolitica* mediates successful infection within the host.

**Objective:** The aim of the study was to elucidate how *Y. enterocolitica* initiate and stop secretion, to describe their life after secretion, and to determine the link between growth arrest and secretion.

**Material & Methods:** Secretion kinetics upon activation and deactivation were measured using a sensitive quantitative enzymatic secretion assay. Survival and restart of growth and division following secretion was determined in different conditions. Metabolomics experiments were performed to uncover the molecular basis of the observed phenotypes.

**Results:** The results show that *Y. enterocolitica* deactivates the T3SS immediately in the absence of activating factors, resumes division within a short time, and is able to reactivate secretion using the same T3SS machinery. This fast response is not caused by energy depletion.

**Conclusion:** Our results demonstrate that *Y. enterocolitica* can respond rapidly to different environmental signals and can survive secretion. This suggests that unlike other pathogens that altruistically sacrifice themselves for the whole population, *Y. enterocolitica* behaves in a more individualistic manner to allow successful infection (Milne-Davies et al., 2019).


384-MPP

**Unraveling the protein machinery and protein-interaction dynamics essential for flagellar and vesicle formation of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa***

*J. M. Borroto de Acuna*, D. Jahn*, G. Molinari†, L. Jänsch, J. Wissing*, M. Rohde*, K. Müller†

1Technical University Braunschweig, Microbiology, Braunschweig, Germany

**Pseudomonas aeruginosa** is an opportunistic pathogen that colonizes the lung of immunocompromised patients such as those suffering from cystic fibrosis. The decreasing O2 gradient generated as a result of the thick mucosa of a cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator mutated CF lung and the biofilm density poses an adverse scenario to bacteria that *P. aeruginosa* circumvents by its versatile metabolism, which encompasses nitrate/nitrite respiration, arginine and pyruvate fermentation as predominant energy generating routes. On the other hand, a successful colonization of the human host and penetration through the thick mucus extensively depends on the construction of a highly developed flagellar machinery, which endows this monoflagellated bacterium with both motility and adhesion capacities. In a previous work our group revealed that Flic, although quantitatively scarce, was distributed alongside the extracytosolic region and not exclusively located at the pole where the sole flagellum of *P. aeruginosa* is constructed. The periplasmic location of Fic was discovered to take place in a triad-manner with two other proteins, the periplasmic nitrite reductase involved in denitrification and the presumably cytosolic ATP-dependent molecular chaperone DnaK. Beyond identifying the interlaced function of the nitrite reductase in swimming motility and flagellar assembly no further characterization of a potentially alternative role of the DnaK besides its well-understood chaperone-like function in the flagellar export, construction or functionality had been pursued. In a recent study we monitored the location of DnaK and Flic throughout the different fractions and organelles of *P. aeruginosa* by harnessing scanning and transmission electron microscopy (S/TEM) coupled with single and double immunogold labelling, confocal microscopy and immunofluorescence and mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS). Moreover, we deepened into the interactions of DnaK-Flic by employing SPOT-membrane arrays pinpointing the interacting domains of both proteins leading to ultimately infer a docking model. Finally, we link DnaK trafficking with flagellar movement and vesicle formation.

385-MPP

**The non-phosphorylating glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase GapN is the major source for NADPH and a potential new drug target in *Streptococcus pyogenes***

*P. Eisenberg*, C. Michaelis†, C. Sehlke†, B. Kreikemeyer†, T. Fiedler†

1Universitätsmedizin Rostock, Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Virologie und Hygiene, Rostock, Germany

**Question**

*Streptococcus pyogenes* (group A streptococcus, GAS) is an important Gram-positive pathogen causing local infections but also invasive or systemic diseases. The standard therapy of GAS infections is antibiotic treatment with penicillin, cephalosporine or macrolides. Allergies of patients to penicillin and resistances of GAS strains to macrolide antibiotics frequently occur and the mentioned antibiotics affect a broad range of bacteria of the physiological flora. New therapeutic agents should be more specific for the pathogen. Targets of new antimicrobials should be metabolic processes not present or not essential in human cells and in the majority of the physiological flora. The non-phosphorylating glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase GapN is a potential target. GapN converts glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate to 3-phosphoglycerate and generates NADPH. We hypothesize that this reaction is the major source for NADPH and therefore essential in GAS and...
other bacteria lacking the oxidative part of the pentose phosphate pathway (oPPP). It might therefore be suitable as a drug target.

Methods

Translation of gapN was inhibited with antisense peptide nucleic acids (asPNA) targeting the start codon region of gapN in kill assays with GAS M49 strain 591, 8 macrolide resistant clinical GAS strains, S. salivarius, S. cristatus, S. equisimilis and S. pneumoniae. GapN activity was measured via photometric detection of NADP reduction. GapN of GAS M49 591 was produced in E. coli using a pASK-IBA6 based plasmid and purified by StrepTactin affinity chromatography.

Results

The GapN activity is significantly reduced in asPNA treated GAS M49 confirming the specific effect of the asPNA. GAS strains as well as S. salivarius and S. equisimilis (all oPPP-) were efficiently killed upon gapN-specific asPNA treatment while S. pneumoniae and S. cristatus (oPPP+) were less prone to gapN asPNA treatment. Furthermore, GAS-GapN was expressed and isolated to a high purity for subsequent crystallographic analysis.

Conclusion

Our findings support the in silico predictions of the essentiality of GapN and indicate that the enzyme might be a suitable target for new antimicrobial compounds.

386-MPP

The 5'-nucleotidase S5nA is dispensable for evasion of phagocytosis and biofilm formation in Streptococcus pyogenes

M. L. Dangel1, *E. Zitzow1, J. C. Dettmann1, M. Schakat1, M. Kroghul1, B. Kreikemeyer1, T. Fiedler1
1Universitätsmedizin Rostock, Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Virologie und Hygiene, Rostock, Germany

Question

5'-nucleotidases (5NT) are widespread among all domains of life. The enzymes hydrolyze phosphate residues from nucleotides and nucleotide derivatives. In some pathobiontic bacteria, 5NT contribute to immune evasion by dephosphorylating adenosine mono-, di-, or tri-phosphates, thereby either decreasing the concentration of pro-inflammatory ATP or increasing the concentration of anti-inflammatory adenosine, both acting on purinergic receptors of phagocytic cells. The strict human pathogen Streptococcus pyogenes expresses a surface-associated 5'-NT (S5nA) under infection conditions that has previously been discussed as a potential virulence factor. Here we investigated the impact of S5nA gene deletions on virulence traits of S. pyogenes.

Methods

The S5nA genes were deleted in three S. pyogenes strains by homologous recombination. Complementation strains expressed S5nA form a pAT19-based plasmid. Surface 5NT activity was determined by measuring the release of phosphate in a colorimetric assay. Survival in human blood or plasma and phagocytosis were investigated by assessing viable counts of the bacteria before and after (i) 3 h incubation in blood/plasma or (ii) 30 min incubation with freshly isolated neutrophils. Larvae of Galleria mellonella were infected with the bacteria and survival of the larvae was observed for 7 d.

Results

Our data show that deletion of the S5nA gene does not significantly affect growth in human blood, evasion of phagocytosis by neutrophils, formation of biofilms and virulence in an infection model with larvae of the greater wax moth Galleria mellonella in S. pyogenes serotypes M6, M18 and M49.

Conclusions

The surface-associated 5'-nucleotidase S5nA is dispensable for evasion of phagocytosis and biofilm formation in S. pyogenes.

387-MPP

The external pH regulates the activity of the Yersinia enterocolitica type III secretion system

*S. Wimm1, A. Balinovic1, H. Jeckel1, D. Linke2, K. Drescher3, U. Endesfelder4, A. Diepold1
1Max-Planck-Institut für terrestrische Mikrobiologie, Ecophysiology, Marburg, Germany
2Max-Planck-Institut für terrestrische Mikrobiologie, Department of Systems and Synthetic Microbiology, Marburg, Germany
3Max-Planck-Institut für terrestrische Mikrobiologie, Marburg, Germany
4University of Oslo, Institute for Biosciences, Oslo, Norway

Introduction: Yersinia enterocolitica is a gram negative, gastrointestinal, human pathogen. One of its major virulence factors is the type III secretion system (T3SS). It resembles a molecular syringe, commonly known as injectosome, which establishes a direct cytosolic connection between the bacterial and host cytoplasm. While the structure of the injectosome is well-defined and can be separated in static and mobile components, little is known about the molecular function and regulation of T3SS activity.

Question and methods: We aimed to characterize the molecular regulation of T3SS activity and its physiological role during infection. To this aim, we combined live cell fluorescence microscopy, single particle tracking, bioinformatic analysis and functional assays. We discovered that the external pH, which strongly varies during Y. enterocolitica’s passage through the gastrointestinal tract, has a strong impact on the mobile cytosolic components of the T3SS.

Results: Our results show that at low external pH, as encountered by the bacteria during the passage of the gastrointestinal tract, the cytosolic components of the injectosome are temporarily released, thereby preventing effector secretion. Low external pH is sensed in the periplasm by the inner membrane component SctD, which partially dissociates at low external pH, and transmits the signal to the cytosolic T3SS components, which unbind from the injectosome. Once the neutral pH is restored, this effect is reversed, allowing reassociation of the cytosolic components, which results in a fast activation of the injectosome at the Peyer’s patches.

Conclusion: Our findings indicate the presence of an adaptive regulatory interface between the membrane-bound and cytosolic T3SS components. This mechanism regulates T3SS activity in response to environmental conditions and provides an additional layer of regulation. This allows to limit
the otherwise unspecific secretion of the injectisome to favorable environmental conditions, thereby preventing the loss of valuable effectors or immune responses, and ultimately promoting successful infections. (Wimmi et al., manuscript in preparation)

388-MPP
Aggregative Adherence Fimbriae Type I Determine the Superior Adherence Phenotype of Enterohemorrhagic Escherichia coli O104:H4
*M. Berger*,1, U. Dobrindt1, P. Berger1, P. Dersch2, P. Schiller1, M. Knödler1
1UKM, Institut für Hygiene, Münster, Germany
2WWU, ZMBE, Münster, Germany

Introduction: The exceptionally virulent German enterohemorrhagic Escherichia coli (EHEC) O104:H4 outbreak strain did not only encode a stx2 phage, but also aggregative adherence fimbriae (AAF), the characteristic virulence marker of enteraggregative Escherichia coli (EAEC). We have recently shown that significantly more EHEC O104:H4 bacteria (encoding AAF/I) were attached to epithelial cells than bacteria of one of the closest known relatives (EAEC 55989, encoding AAF/III). The tight adherence of high numbers of EHEC O104:H4 cells was proposed to have significantly contributed to the exceptional pathogenicity of the strain, but it was not clear if this phenotype could be directly attributed to AAF/I.

Objectives: Our objective was the phenotypic characterization of AAF/III with respect to AAF/I by heterologous expression in EAEC 55989 agg3.

Materials and methods: We heterologously expressed AAF/I, III and the control AAF operons IV and V in EAEC 55989 agg3. We analyzed the bacterial surface by electron microscopy, measured sedimentation speed following autoaggregation, analyzed mixed aggregates by fluorescence microscopy, measured biofilm formation and microscopically analyzed the AAF mediated adhesion to cultured epithelial cells.

Results: We showed the presence of AAF/I, III, IV and V on the bacterial surface, and that heterologous expression of all AAF led to rapid sedimentation of the aggregates, albeit at different speed. We demonstrated that more or less mixed aggregates are formed, if bacteria expressing different AAF were mixed. Biofilm formation capacity was overall anti-correlated with sedimentation speed following autoaggregation. EAEC 55989 agg3-expressing AAF/I were forming larger aggregates on HEP2-cells than the same strain expressing AAF/I, IV and V.

Conclusion: The previously observed exceptionally high numbers of EHEC O104:H4 on cultured epithelial cells are directly dependent on AAF/I fimbria expression.

389-MPP
Characterisation of Streptococcus suis mutants in PCLS and ALI cultures
*M. Rohde*,1, J. Arenas Busto1, A. de Greeff2, A. Nerlich1, P. Valentín-Weigand1
1University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Foundation, Institute for Microbiology, Hannover, Germany
2Heilmann Centre for Infection Research, Central Facility for Microscopy, Braunschweig, Germany
3Wageningen BioVeternary Research, Department of Infection Biology, Lelystad, Netherlands

Streptococcus suis, an emerging zoonotic pathogen, can cause invasive disease in pigs, primarily weaning piglets, with symptoms such as acute sepsis, meningitis, endocarditis, pneumonia and arthritis. Importantly, similar pathologies are also reported in humans. In order to gain a better understanding of the pathogenesis of S. suis infection, we characterized the role of new candidate virulence factors in S. suis mutants. The mutants have been generated on the basis of an in vivo screening of a transposon library.

As the natural infection of pigs with S. suis occurs via the respiratory tract, we studied the interaction of the mutants with cells of the respiratory tract. For this, we applied precision-cut lung slices (PCLS) and air-liquid interface (ALI) cultures with tracheal and bronchial epithelial cells. Both models mimic very closely the porcine respiratory epithelium. The ex vivo PCLS model preserves the structural and functional integrity of the lung, including the ciliary activity. In the ALI system, the well-differentiated respiratory epithelial cells build a pseudostratified epithelium, containing ciliated and mucus-producing cells as well as tight junctions. We investigated the adherence, colonization and invasion capacity of S. suis mutants in the above described cell culture models. In addition, microbial effects on bronchial epithelial cells, e.g., cytotoxicity, and effects on ciliary motility as well as bronchoconstriction, were analyzed. Altogether we tested 24 different mutants in the PCLS model. There were no effects on the ciliary activity detectable for up to 24 hpi. Moreover, no differences in cytotoxicity could be observed. One mutant showed a lower bacterial growth in the supernatant and a lower adherence to PCLS compared to the wildtype. The low adherence was also confirmed via immunofluorescence analysis. Besides, immunofluorescence analysis revealed morphological growth defects of a second mutant, which shows an irregular cell shape and size. Furthermore, mispositioned division septa were observed by electron microscopy. In the future such virulence determinants can be used as targets for vaccines or "pathotyping" diagnostic.

390-MPP
An enigmatic non-coding RNA links Staphylococcus aureus physiology to antibiotic resistance
*E. S. Ibrahim*,1, M. E. M. El-Hossary1, U. Holzgrabe1, K. Ohlsen1
1Institute for Molecular Infection Biology, Würzburg, Germany
2National Centre for Radiation Research & Technology, Egyptian Atomic Energy Authority, Cairo, Egypt
3Institute of Pharmacy and Food Chemistry, Würzburg, Germany

Although non-coding RNAs (ncRNAs) are vital regulatory elements that coordinate shaping the Gram-positive human pathogen Staphylococcus aureus* phenotype, they remain understudied. In this study, we explore the role of an ncRNA in mediating the oxidative stress response and conferring phenotypic resistance against a novel potential antibiotic. Using RNA-seq, we compared the transcriptome in low to high putative oxidative stress using the bisquaternary bisnaphthalimide compound MT02 (a novel antistaphylococcal agent). Under normal conditions, low-level transcription of a Firmicutes-conserved oxidoreductase enzyme (SAUSA300_RS04635) is associated with undetectable levels of an antisense ncRNA. Under putative oxidative stress induced by MT02, both the ncRNA and SAUSA300_RS04635 are massively upregulated to mediate the stress response. Sequence analysis of the genomic locus shows two potential promoters for SAUSA300_RS04635 leading to two corresponding mRNAs with varying 5'UTRs. Reporter assay for the activities of the mRNA primary promoter and the ncRNA promoter (P<sub>SAUSA300_RS04635</sub> and P<sub>ncRNA</sub>) confirms that both transcriptions start from promoters characterized by two sets
of inverted repeats and climax by the mid log-phase. \( P_{\text{SAUSA300_RS04630}} \) and \( P_{\text{ncRNA}} \) have similar transcriptional activities. We are developing a reporter assay to elucidate the possible interaction between the messenger and non-coding RNA. The interaction may influence the oxidoreductase level in the bacterium leading to the MT02 resistant phenotype and, moreover, the oxidative stress mediation. All together, we highlight unexpected transcriptional flexibility of \( S. \) \textit{aureus} by unleashing the ncRNA thought to regulate a conserved metabolic function. Investigating the ncRNA will help for better understanding of the regulation networks in staphylococci.

### 391-MPP
The role of the \textit{fdeC} gene of avian pathogenic \textit{Escherichia coli} (APEC) strain IMT5155 in adhesion to chicken intestinal epithelial cells

*A. Aleksandrowicz\textsuperscript{1,2}, R. Kolenda\textsuperscript{1}  
\textsuperscript{1}Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Wroclaw, Poland  
\textsuperscript{2}University of Wroclaw, Department of Microbiology, Wroclaw, Poland

#### 1. Introduction
\textit{E. coli} typically colonizes human and animal gastrointestinal tract as commensal. Pathogenic \textit{E. coli} utilize acquired virulence factors to colonize host tissues during infection. APEC is cause of poultry colibacteriosis that generates extensive losses in poultry industry worldwide. Successful disease development of APEC depends on the initial step—an adhesion to host cells. A number of fimbrial and non-fimbrial adhesins play a significant role in this interaction. Our results from transposon library screen identified gene \textit{fdeC} as a putative adhesion factor.

#### 2. Objectives
So far the knowledge about FdeC contribution to APEC host colonization is limited. Therefore our main objective was to determine the role of the \textit{fdeC} gene in APEC adhesion to chicken intestinal epithelial cells.

#### 3. Material and methods
To create a deletion mutant of the \textit{fdeC} gene, Datsenko-Wanner protocol was used. Mutant strains were tested for changes in morphology and growth speed. To examine the \textit{fdeC} contribution to adhesion ability, adhesion assays with \textit{CHIC}-8E11 cell line were performed. All strains used for assays were grown: overnight in LB (37°C; 16h; 180 rpm) or overnight cultures were diluted and grown to OD600= 0.5, 1 or 2 (37°C or 42°C; 220 rpm). Bacterial suspensions were diluted and added to the cell line with a MOI=100. The bacteria were allowed to adhere to the monolayer for 3h, at 37°C or 42°C and counted using spot test onto agar plates.

#### 4. Results
Tested strains did not change their morphology. Speed of growth in LB medium was similar for all bacteria. However, in infection medium, a growth rate difference between strains was visible after 3h of incubation. Wild type and mutants strains adhered similarly to monolayer at 37°C. A slight increase in adhesion was observed for \textit{fdeC} deletion mutant grown to OD600=1 or 2 at 37°C. At 42°C, the same mutant grown to OD600=1 showed analogous result.

#### 5. Conclusion
The preliminary role of the FdeC protein in adhesion to chicken intestinal epithelial cells has been determined. However, to fully understand this mechanism, further experiments should be conducted.

### 392-MPP
The effect of cis-2-decenolic acid on biofilm formation of \textit{Clostridoides difficile}

*J. Fischer*, H. Bahl  
\textsuperscript{1}Universität Rostock/ Institut für Biowissenschaften, Mikrobiologie, Rostock, Germany

Biofilm formation on implants cause severe infections which can lead to the failure of the implant. The therapy of biofilm related infections is difficult. Antibiotic treatments are less effective and need high concentrations, resulting also in a dysbiosis of the gut microbiota. This leads to outgrowth of \textit{Clostridoides difficile} spores with consecutive antibiotic-associated diarrhea and irritable bowel diseases like pseudomembranous colitis. These inflammations cause the so called leaky gut whereas \textit{C. difficile} then is able to enter the blood stream and colonizes abiotic surfaces, e.g. implant materials. The treatment of the consecutive biofilm related infection with antibiotics induces a vicious circle. Thus, alternative therapeutic agents are needed. Cis-2-decenolic acid (C2DA) is a fatty acid produced by \textit{Pseudomonas aeruginosa} which can disperse microbial biofilms. The aim of this study was to analyze biofilm formation by \textit{C. difficile} and to determine the effect of C2DA on the adhesion to surfaces \textit{in vitro}. Overnight grown cultures of \textit{C. difficile} 630 and VPI 10463 strains were transferred to 24-well plates and cultured up to 72 h. The biofilm formation was quantified by crystal violet staining and visualized by fluorescence microscopy after live-dead staining. Both strains exhibited similar biofilm formation after 24 h. A medium change every 24 h led to a stable and increased biofilm formation up to 72 h. To determine the effect of C2DA, different concentrations were added into the medium. A concentration of 125 µg/µl was able to impair biofilm formation. We conclude that under the conditions tested, C2DA is a potential candidate for treating biofilm related infections by \textit{C. difficile}.

### 393-MPP
Analyzing the fibronectin binding properties of \textit{Bartonella henselae} adhesin A

*A. Thibau*, D. J. Vaca\textsuperscript{1}, D. Linke\textsuperscript{2}, V. A. J. Kempf\textsuperscript{1}  
\textsuperscript{1}University Hospital, Goethe University Frankfurt, Institute for Medical Microbiology and Infection Control, Frankfurt am Main, Germany  
\textsuperscript{2}University of Oslo, Department of Biosciences, Section for Genetics and Evolutionary Biology, Oslo, Norway

\textit{Introduction}: \textit{Bartonella henselae} infections can result in cat scratch disease, endocarditis and vasculoproliferative disorders (e.g. bacillary angiomatosis). \textit{Bartonella} adhesin A (BadA) is a trimeric autotransporter adhesin (TAA) and mediates bacterial adhesion to human endothelial host cells (EC) or extracellular matrix (ECM) proteins (e.g. fibronectin). Fibronectin is a high molecular weight glycoprotein mediating the initial bacterial adhesion to host cells presumably via bridging to α5β1-integrins.

#### Objectives: To identify possible binding site(s) of BadA to fibronectin and to model and produce peptides that inhibit bacterial adhesion to ECs and ECM proteins. Findings might be used for developing bacterial “anti-ligands” as a new
class of antibiotics. For this, an exact domain analysis of BadA between various *Bartonella* spp. is decisive.

**Materials & Methods**: Identification of potential fibronectin binding site(s) is performed via the construction of truncated and modified BadA fusion proteins. Affinity assays are carried out via ELISA. BadA-gene sequences are analysed using long-read PacBio SMRT sequencing and BadA-expression is verified via electron microscopy. Functional read outs will be done using various *ex vivo* and *in vitro* infection models and by using lab-on-chip devices (nano-biosensors).

**Results & Conclusion**: Previous research demonstrated the crucial role of fibronectin in the first attachment of *B. henselae* to human ECs and ECM proteins. ELISA fibronectin affinity assays using truncated BadA fusion proteins have shown the significance of the BadA length and the importance of certain domain(s) within BadA. Furthermore, anti-BadA antibodies were developed and a clean BadA-negative *B. henselae* mutant is being constructed via Gibson cloning. Additionally, the genomic BadA sequences of various *Bartonella* spp. are determined via state-of-the-art long-read PacBio SMRT Sequencing. BadA, derived from *B. henselae* Marseille, has even a higher molecular weight (3,972 amino acids) than previously demonstrated (3,082 amino acids). These results represent a stable basis for the further functional approaches to verify fibronectin-binding BadA-domains.

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**394-MPP**

Simulation of blood flow-mediated shear stress in pneumococcal cell culture infection

H. Jagau1,2, K. Lahme1, I. K. Behrens1,2, M. Rohde1, M. Steinert1,2, S. Bergmann1

1Technische Universität Braunschweig, Institut für Mikrobiologie, Braunschweig, Germany
2Lund University, Department of Clinical Sciences, Lund, Sweden

**Introduction**

*Streptococcus pneumoniae* (pneumococcus) can cause severe systemic infections (1). Recently, we identified the surface-associated enolase of *S. pneumoniae* as binding factor for globular and multimerized Von Willebrand Factor (VWF), which is secreted by Weibel Palade bodies of vascular endothelial cells (2). The mechanosensitive VWF responds to shear stress with conformational changes mediating VWF multimerization to long protein strings (3).

**Objectives**

Functional analyses of the interaction between pneumococci and VWF on endothelial cell surfaces requires specific physiological parameters of the blood flow. Here, we present a cell culture infection model using a microfluidic pump system. This system enables the simulation of shear stress levels, which are typically generated by the blood flow in the vascular system.

**Materials and Methods**

A microfluidic cell culture infection model was established using the pump system from the company ibidi® in combination with microscopic real time imaging and differential immunofluorescent staining.

**Results**

We first optimized the attachment of primary human endothelial cells to the microslide surface and created a two-step flow procedure to promote a gentle shear force adaptation. After cell differentiation in flow, multimerized VWF strings were generated in response to the shear stress and attachment of pneumococci to VWF strings in flow was analysed by fluorescence microscopy in real time (4). In addition, after probe fixation and differential immunofluorescent staining, bacterial adhesion was quantified and evaluated by confocal laser scanning microscopy.

**Conclusion**

This microfluidic cell culture infection model is suitable for visualization and quantitative evaluation of pneumococcal adhesion to vascular cell surfaces in flow and can be easily adapted to study interactions of other bacterial or viral pathogens and even parasites with the host endothelium.

**References**


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**395-MPP**

Profiling pathogenicity mechanisms of *Bordetella pertussis* & *B. parapertussis*, the causative agents of whooping cough, a re-emerging disease, by proteomics approaches


1University Medicine Greifswald, Functional Genomics, Greifswald, Germany
2CINDEFI, Fac. de Cs. Exactas-UNLP, La Plata, Argentina
3Institute of Microbiology of the ASCR, v.v.i., Prague, Czech Republic

**Question**

Even in fully vaccinating countries, whooping cough caused by *Bordetella pertussis* (Bp) and *B. parapertussis* (Bpp), is regarded as re-emerging disease. Besides vaccine inefficiency, intracellular survival of the pathogens leads to dissemination in the population.

In order to elucidate bacterial adaptation to infection related conditions, we have analysed the global proteome of both pathogens to iron-limitation and additionally, upon internalization of Bp.

**Methods**

*Bp* Tohama I, an isogenic Δ*hfq* mutant, and *Bpp* CN2591 were cultivated in iron-replete and iron-depleted Stainer-
Schoite medium until late exponential growth phase. Bacterial proteomes were analysed by nanoLC-MS/MS. In addition, human monocytic THP-1 cells were infected with \textit{Bp} Tohama I (MOI 150) and after 2 h, non-internalized bacteria were killed with polymyxin B sulfate. The proteome of recovered intracellular \textit{Bp} was examined 3 h and 48 h post infection and compared to extracellular \textit{Bp} grown under similar conditions. In addition, infection assays were repeated with mutants in \textit{bpO414} or \textit{htq}, encoding an MgtC homologue or the RNA-chaperone Hfq, respectively, to assess their impact onto intracellular survival by bacterial counting.

**Results**

Hfq modulates 33% of \textit{Bp} proteins regulated during iron limitation (Alvarez Hayes et al., \textit{J Proteomics}, 2019) and influenced bacterial survival. Upon internalization, 40% of the detected proteins showed altered levels including proteins involved in stress response, iron uptake, metabolism, and virulence (Lamberti et al., \textit{J Proteomics}, 2016). A follow-up study revealed that MgtC plays a role in the adaptation of \textit{Bp} to the acidic conditions inside phagosomes (Cafiero et al., \textit{PLoS One}, 2018). Moreover, we identified proteins of stress resistance and virulence exclusively in \textit{Bpp} that might help explaining differences in pathogenesis of both species (Oviedo et al., \textit{J Proteomics}, 2019).

**Conclusions**

Here, we present comprehensive proteome data of the pertussis causing agents that help to better understand their pathogenicity mechanisms and pave the way for follow-up studies of the infected host.

**396-MPP**

**Antimicrobial efficiency of antisense PNAs in \textit{Streptococcus pneumoniae}**

*C. Abt*¹, G. Barkowsky¹, A. L. Lemster¹, R. Pappesch¹, S. Kröger¹, A. Jacob²,³, B. Kreikemeyer¹, N. Patenge¹

¹Institut für Medizinische Mikrobiologie, Virologie und Hygiene, Rostock, Germany
²Functional Genome Analysis, Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, Heidelberg, Germany
³Peps4LS, Heidelberg, Germany

**Introduction**

\textit{Streptococcus pneumoniae} is the most common bacterial cause of pneumoniae and responsible for multiple other infectious syndromes as meningitis and otitis media in children. Resistance to penicillins, macrolides and fluoroquinolones is increasing. Since introduction of pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV), vaccinal serotypes are replaced by non-vaccine serotypes. Therefore, novel therapies are needed. Antisense peptide nucleic acids (PNAs) were shown to reduce growth of several pathogenic bacteria, but spontaneous cellular PNA uptake is restricted.

**Objectives**

PNAs can be coupled to cell-penetrating peptides (CPPs) that support PNA translocation. Here, we investigate the effect of three CPP-coupled anti-\textit{gyrA} PNAs and anti-\textit{rpoB} PNAs on \textit{S. pneumoniae} growth.

**Materials and methods**

Three different \textit{S. pneumoniae} strains (TIGR4, D39, 19F) were investigated in this study: \(10^5\) CFU/ml bacteria were incubated with 2 – 20 \(\mu\)M CPP-coupled anti-\textit{gyrA} and anti-\textit{rpoB} PNAs for 6 h at 37°C. Reduction of bacterial counts was determined in comparison to the untreated sample.

**Results**

(RXR)XB peptide-coupled antisense PNAs reduced bacterial counts \textit{in vitro}. PNAs linked to HIV-1 TAT caused less reduction, while peptide oligolysine (K8) had no effect. Antimicrobial efficiency of the constructs was serotype specific. Furthermore, the antimicrobial activity depended on the target gene: anti-\textit{rpoB} caused stronger cell count reduction than anti-\textit{gyrA} PNAs.

**Conclusion**

This work provides a proof of principle that CPP-antisense PNAs can act bactericidal on \textit{S. pneumoniae}. (RXR)XB peptide-coupled anti-\textit{gyrA} and anti-\textit{rpoB} PNAs caused significant cell count reduction of the pathogen. Further CPPs should be tested to mediate translocation of PNAs into most prevalent serotypes of \textit{S. pneumoniae}.

**397-MPP**

\textit{Streptococcus pneumoniae} differently affects primary microglia and bone marrow-derived macrophages

*F. Jennert¹, J. Seele²,³, R. Nau²,³, T. P. Kohler¹, S. Hammerschmidt¹, P. Valentin-Weigand³

¹University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Institute for Microbiology, Hannover, Germany
²University Medical Center Göttingen, Institute for Neuropathology, Göttingen, Germany
³Evangelisches Krankenhaus Göttingen-Weende, Department of Geriatrics, Göttingen, Germany

³Greifswald University, Interfaculty Institute for Genetics and Functional Genomics, Greifswald, Germany

\textit{Streptococcus} (S.) \textit{pneumoniae} (pneumococcus) is a commensal bacterium of the human upper respiratory tract. It is the most common cause of bacterial meningitis and meningococcal meningitis in humans with a high mortality rate of 20-30%. Among the major pneumococcal virulence factors are the capsular polysaccharide (CPS), the cytolysin pneumolysin (Ply) and hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂), which is mainly produced by pyruvate oxidase (SpxB). The role of these virulence factors in the pathogenesis of meningitis is still not fully understood. In the central nervous system (CNS), glial cells are considered to play an important role during inflammation and injury of the brain in bacterial meningitis. Microglia are the resident macrophages of the CNS. To characterize the response of these specific brain phagocytes to pneumococcal infection, a comparative analysis of primary microglia cells and bone marrow-derived macrophages (BMDM) was performed.

Mixed glial cell cultures were prepared from neonatal C57BL/6 mice and microglial cells were isolated. Bone marrow-derived cells were prepared from adult C57BL/6 mice and differentiated into BMDM. Microglia and BMDM were infected with wild-type \textit{S. pneumoniae} D39 as well as with mutants deficient for CPS, Ply, or SpxB. The survival of phagocytes during the infection was visualized by microscopy using Hoechst and propidium iodide staining, bacterial growth was determined by plating. Furthermore, both primary phagocyte cultures were exposed to different concentrations of recombinant Ply or H₂O₂, and survival was measured.
Primary microglia were killed during pneumococcal infection independently of Ply, whereas BMDM were not affected. Catalase protected microglia during pneumococcal infection. Treatment of cells with Ply led to a dose-dependent cytotoxic effect in both phagocyte types. However, very high concentrations of Ply were necessary for this effect.

In conclusion, primary microglia and BMDM react in a different manner to pneumococcal infection, Ply and H2O2.

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**398-MPP**

Transcriptomic Response of Human Pharyngeal Epithelial Cells to (Co-)infection with *Streptococcus pyogenes* and Influenza A Virus

*K. Strey*, S. Sueto*2, R. Saβ*1, S. Kurzer*1, N. Patenge*1, W. I. Barrantes Bustinza*1, B. Kreikemeyer*1

1Institute of Medical Microbiology, Virology and Hygiene, Rostock, Germany
2Institute for Biostatistics and Informatics in Medicine and Ageing Research, Rostock, Germany

The human pathogen *Streptococcus pyogenes* causes a variety of mild to serious diseases. Influenza A viruses (IAVs), are enveloped (-)ssRNA viruses and cause seasonal outbreaks of respiratory disease (influenza). Annual influenza vaccination is recommended to prevent disease onset, but concern regarding a viral strain with pandemic potential remains. The course of disease is exacerbated in case of viral-streptococcal co-infections.

The aim of the study is to identify pathogen-specific host cell responses following mono and co-infections.

The present project employed a cell culture-based model to investigate mono-infection of the pharyngeal epithelial cell line Detroit 562 with *S. pyogenes* serotype M1 strain AP1 (M1), *S. pyogenes* serotype M49 strain 591 (M49) or IAV (H1N1). Host viability was assessed via flow cytometry. Furthermore, bacterial adherence to and viral propagation within host cells was determined. Following infection, ELISAs were performed to evaluate cytokine secretion and cell death-related marker expression/ abundance was examined by qPCR and western blot. Additionally, host cell total RNA was collected for subsequent transcriptome analyses.

M49 adherence to Detroit 562 was increased. The number of viable host cells was significantly reduced upon infection with M49 compared to M1. M49 infection resulted in increased casp3 gene expression. This effect was not observed following infection with neither M1 nor IAV. Infection with each of the three pathogens caused decreased IL-8 secretion. Transcriptome analyses revealed different response pathways following IAV and streptococcal infection. Moreover, transcriptomic changes upon M1 and M49 infection differed remarkably, with M1 inducing expression of genes involved in the electron transport chain.

In the pharyngeal epithelial cell infection model a pathogen-specific impact on the host cell response could be demonstrated. M49 compromised host cell viability. Under all three conditions, decreased IL-8 concentration in the supernatant was observed. Transcriptome data show that following mono-infection with each of the three pathogens different host cell pathways were influenced.

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**399-MPP**

Development of a multi-cell *in vitro* model of the meningeal blood-cerebrospinal fluid barrier to study *Neisseria meningitidis* infection

*L. Endres*1, B. Kim1, M. Christodoulides2, A. Schubert-Unkmeir1

1Max-Planck-Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Marburg, Germany
2Institute for Biostatistics and Informatics in Medicine and Ageing Research, Rostock, Germany

The author has not agreed to a publication.

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**400-MPP**

LITESEC-T3SS - Light-controlled protein delivery into eukaryotic cells with high spatial and temporal resolution

*F. Lindner*

1Max-Planck-Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Marburg, Germany

1. Introduction

The type III secretion system (T3SS) is a needle-like structure that is used by many pathogenic Gram-negative bacteria to translocate effector proteins from the bacterial cytosol into host cells. It has also been successfully used to deliver non-native cargo into various host cells for different purposes such as vaccination or immunotherapy. However, bacteria are not restricted to specific target cells, and T3SS inject effector proteins into any eukaryotic host cells upon contact. Lack of target specificity is therefore a main obstacle in the further development and application of the T3SS as a specific protein delivery tool.

2. Objectives

Our lab has shown that the cytosolic complex of the T3SS acts as a highly dynamic interface, in which parts permanently exchange and shuttle between the cytosol and the T3SS, and that this exchange behaviour is linked to protein secretion. These findings allow for a completely new way to control the T3SS activity via specific sequestration and release of cytosolic T3SS components. By combining light-controllable optogenetic interaction switches with essential T3SS components, we aimed to control T3SS-based protein translocation with spatial and temporal precision.

3. Materials & Methods

We used bacterial secretion assays, host-cell infection assays and fluorescence microscopy to monitor light-controlled protein secretion and translocation by the LITESEC-T3SS.

4. Results

We successfully established optogenetic interaction switches in bacteria and combined them with the cytosolic T3SS component ScTQ, to create the LITESEC-T3SS system. We could show that the secretion of native effector proteins or non-native cargo proteins, as well as the translocation of these proteins into eukaryotic host cells can be efficiently controlled by light in the engineered strains.

5. Conclusion

The combination of optogenetic interaction switches with a dynamic essential cytosolic component of the T3SS enables reversible spatial and temporal control of the T3SS function. This enhances the usage of the T3SS as a specific protein delivery tool into eukaryotic cells and enables widespread applications. Ref: Lindner et al.(2019) bioRxiv 807461
Introduction: Neisseria meningitidis (Nm, meningococcus) is a human-specific pathogen that can gain access to the central nervous system (CNS) by crossing the meningeal blood-cerebrospinal fluid barrier (mBCSFB). Much research has been conducted examining the endothelial cells of the mBCSFB, but little is known about bacterial interactions with other cell types that comprise the barrier such as leptomeningeal cells (LMCs). Including such cells in the study of Nm interaction at the mBCSFB has the potential to provide novel insights into the mechanisms underlying bacterial meningitis.

Objectives: Here we sought to develop a multi-cell mBCSFB model that is entirely human based to examine Nm interaction in vitro.

Methods: Human brain endothelial cells (BECs) (hCMEC/D3) and LMCs derived from tumor biopsies are being used in development of the model. Gentamycin protection assays were conducted to estimate meningococcal adherence and invasion. Immunofluorescence of the tight junction components was conducted to investigate impacts of bacterial challenge on barrier integrity. qPCR was used to determine the cellular response to infection. Finally, confocal and super-resolution microscopy are being explored as tools to visualize localization of meningococci in the human mBCSFB in vitro model.

Results: We observed modest amounts of meningococcal adherence to the leptomeningeal cells, whilst detecting very little bacterial invasion. Aside from expression of characteristic markers of the LMCs, we observed expression and junctional localization of tight junction proteins ZO-1 and Occludin. Preliminary results from co-culture experiments with BECs suggest barrier tightening upon addition of the LMCs as measured by trans-endothelial electrical resistance.

Conclusion: Our work highlights the usefulness of LMCs for the study of Nm interaction at the mBCSFB. Future aims include elucidating the effects of infection on expression and localization of the tight junction proteins. Co-culture with BECs will lead to an advanced co-culture in vitro model of the human mBCSFB, enabling study of meningococcal interaction that more accurately mimics the meningeal microenvironment.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to examine the mucolytic capacity of ACC on lung epithelial cells in order to improve cellular invasion of S. aureus.

Material and methods: Lung epithelial cells A549 and Calu-3 were cultured on Transwell inserts. Cells were pre-treated with ACC before infection with the S. aureus laboratory strain 6850 at a multiplicity of infection of one or five. As controls, untreated cells or cells that were treated only with bacteria were used. Three and 24 hours post-infection (hpi), media from the apical, baso-lateral, and the cellular compartment were collected and plated on blood agar plates. In addition, the activation of host cells and cytotoxicity were assessed.

Results: Pre-treatment of both cell types with ACC resulted in an increased translocation of S. aureus through the cellular barrier, as compared to control cells without ACC. With increasing time of pre-treatment, bacterial translocation was enhanced at 3 hpi. At 24 hpi, we could observe even higher translocation for all treatments. In A549, we could detect increased cell death when cells were treated with ACC alone and in combination with S. aureus. Furthermore, enhanced gene expression of ICAM-1, TNFa, and IL-1ß could be detected in A549 already at 3 hpi.

Conclusion: Our data suggest that treatment of lung epithelial cells in vitro with ACC might enhance the inflammatory response towards bacterial infection and results in increased apoptosis. Therefore, the bacteria could easier breach the cellular barrier. Whether similar effects would arise in vivo too certainly needs to be investigated.

403-MPP
Characterization of natural products as novel inhibitors of the caseinolytic protease P

A. Illigmann*, F. Wolf1, L. Kaysser1, H. Brötz-Oesterhelt1
1University of Tübingen, Pharmaceutical Biology, Tübingen, Germany
2University of Tübingen, Microbial Bioactive Compounds, Tübingen, Germany

Fighting antibiotic resistance is a challenging task. Therefore, innovative antibacterial agents urgently need to be discovered and especially microbial natural products represent promising lead-structures for antibiotic drug discovery.

Natural product β-lactones were shown to inhibit the eukaryotic proteasome and synthetic β-lactones were identified to inhibit Staphylococcus aureus ClpP (SaClpP)1. This motivated us to search for natural product β-lactones that interfere with the activity of SaClpP. ClpP, the proteolytic core of the bacterial serine protease Clp, is involved in intracellular protein turnover and regulatory proteolysis. ClpP forms a tetradecameric core-enzyme that is able to degrade small peptides. In concert with cognate Clp-ATPases, the protease complex is formed, allowing specific and tightly regulated protein degradation2.

By carrying out biochemical and microbiological analyses we were able to identify and characterize natural product inhibitors of SaClpP.

404-MPP
Integrative action of cell-wall binding proteins of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* on the interaction with the host's immune system

1C. Vithena1, S. Du1, S. Hammerschmidt2, M. Rohde3, C. Skerk2, P. Zipfel
2Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology Hans Knoell Institute, Department of Infection Biology, Jena, Germany
3Interfaculty Institute for Genetics and Functional Genomics, Department of Molecular Genetics and Infection Biology, Greifswald, Germany
4Helmholtz Center for Infection Research, Central Facility for Microscopy, Braunschweig, Germany
5Friedrich Schiller University, Department of Microbiology, Jena, Germany

*Streptococcus pneumoniae* is a Gram-positive opportunistic pathogen that colonizes the upper respiratory tract. It is a leading cause in a wide range of infections, including community acquired pneumonia, meningitis, otitis media and bacteremia. The pneumococcal causes 1–2 million deaths per year, most of which occur in developing countries, where this bacterial species is probably the most important pathogen of early infancy. In young children *S. pneumoniae* can also cause Hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), a fairly hypervirulent disease, which is characterized by the triad acute kidney injury, microangiopathic hemolytic anemia, and thrombocytopenia. We collected and characterize *S. pneumoniae* strains from children with HUS in order to understand the mechanisms underlying the establishment of pneumococcus induced HUS (pHUS).

We focus on choline-binding proteins (CBPs), e.g. LytA, LytB, LytC, CbpB, PspC and PspA, and their integration and interaction on the cell wall of S. pneumoniae. These surface exposed pneumococcal proteins are in direct contact with the host cells and have diverse functions. The pneumococcal proteins bind host plasma proteins, participate on the building up of the pneumococcal cell wall by promoting peptidoglycan synthesis; they also play a role on cell division and on the lytic phase of this organism.

The genes derived from *S. pneumoniae* strains isolated from HUS patients were sequenced and both the domain structure and cell wall integration were compared. HUS causing *S. pneumoniae* express a certain set of Cbp and PspA variants. Proteins with related choline binding surface anchors derived from single isolates have varying numbers of choline binding units. Thus the number of choline binding units is independent from cell wall and capsule composition and likely affect the strength of cell wall integration. These clinical isolates of HUS pneumococci efficiently bound human plasminogen. Hence, HUS pneumococci damage endothelial cells in the blood vessels and disturb local complement homeostasis. Thereby, HUS pneumococci promote a thrombogenic state that drives HUS pathology.

406-MPP
The role of a putative phosphoethanolamin transferase (PA_21210) in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* PA14

1J. Rehner1, S. Zehner1, K. Gerbracht1, N. Frankenberg-Dinkel1
2Technische Universität Kaiserslautern, Mikrobiologie, Kaiserslautern, Germany

Lipopolysaccharides (LPS) are the major constituents of this outer membrane of Gram-negative bacteria. They consist of three different domains: lipid A, which is anchored in the outer membrane and acts as an endotoxin if the membrane is destroyed, an inner core sugar region and an outer polysaccharide, also known as O-antigen. Lipid A carries a negative charge which can be targeted by cationic antimicrobial peptides that lead to cell lysis due to a destabilization of the outer membrane. A modification of lipid A molecules by addition of phosphoethanolamine (pEtN) leads to an increase in polymyxin resistance by functioning as a shield for the negatively charged lipid A. pEtN-transferases (EptA) are catalyzing this reaction and can be found in Gram-negative bacteria such as *E. coli*, *Neisseria meningitidis* and *Salmonella enterica*. Three orthologs of this enzyme are found in the opportunistic pathogen *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* PA14. While for two of them, a pEtN-transferase activity was confirmed, the protein encoded by PA_21210 was inactive. Interestingly, a pEtN-transferases from *Campylobacter jejuni* was shown to modify the FlgG subunit of flagella, while a homolog from *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* modifies type IV pili. Within the study presented here, we wish to explore the function of the putative pEtN-transferases encoded by PA_21210 in *P. aeruginosa* PA14. Our study will initial focus on the phenotypic investigation of a markerless chromosomal knock-out mutant. Focus will be on motility and biofilm assays as these either rely on functional flagella and/or type IV pili. Once an effect is observed, the respective structure will be isolated and tested for modification using mass spectrometry.

405-MPP
*Staphylococcus aureus* farR-mutation mediates resistance to rhodomyrtone (Rom) and causes hypervirulence

1L. Huang1, S. F. Fan1, F. Götz2, M. Maier2
2Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine (IMI), Microbial Genetics, Tübingen, Germany
3Institut für Organische Chemie, Tuebingen, Germany

Rhodomyrtone (Rom) is an acylphloroglucinol antibiotic initially isolated from the leaves of *Rhodomyrtus tomentosa*. Rom is active against an extensive range of Gram-positive bacteria. Rom does not exhibit any of the classical antibiotic targets but interacts with the cytoplasmic membrane and respiration. However, the exact mode of action of Rom is still unknown. A highly Rom resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* mutant (RomR) could be isolated several passages of growth in the presence of Rom. Comparative genome sequencing and transcriptome analysis was performed to further characterize the RomR mutant. The cytotoxicity of the RomR mutant was evaluated in three human cell lines while the pathogenicity was accessed using a mouse infection model. Whole genome sequencing revealed that the Rom resistance is due to a single point mutation in the coding region of farR. This mutation results in an amino acid change from Cys to Arg at position 116 of FarR, thus affecting its activity. Comparative transcriptome analysis showed that the transcription of many genes involving distinct pathways was influenced by the mutated farR. FarR represses the expression of its own gene as well as its flanking gene farE, an effector of fatty acid resistance. Global regulators like agr and sarA were also repressed. Accordingly, all these genes were upregulated in the RomR mutant. The upregulation of agr and sarA resulted in a higher expression of virulence genes, which is most likely responsible for the increased cytotoxicity and pathogenicity of the RomR mutant. The Rom resistance is mainly attributed to the derepression of farE, which is described as an efflux pump for linoleic and arachidonic acids. In this regard, an increased release of lipids in the RomR mutant compared to HG001 was observed. In conclusion, this study shows that the high Rom resistance is mediated by farE overexpression in the RomR mutant. FarR is appears to be a global regulator that decreases virulence gene expression. Mutation in farR rendered the clone hypervirulent (RomR mutant).
The type III secretion system is a major virulence factor expressed by many gram-negative pathogens, such as Escherichia, Shigella, Salmonella and Yersinia species. The system is energized by ATP hydrolysis and the proton motive force of the inner membrane. Bacteria use it to translocate effector proteins across their own cell membranes and into the host cell. It has been studied in detail in different organisms, however, a number of important questions remain unanswered due to the inability to directly assess the effects on secretion kinetics.

In our lab, we recently developed a NanoLuc luciferase-based type III secretion assay. This method gives us the ability to measure type III secretion and infection robustly and quickly. Now we are advancing this approach by integrating it into a newly developed microfluidic device, designed to monitor bacterial growth by fluorescence microscopy and to rapidly introduced compounds to the bacteria, while also collecting flow through fractions. Luminescence measurement of the corresponding fractions will allow us to directly record sudden changes in secretion upon perturbation due to these compounds. At the same time membrane potential dyes and specific fluorophore tags enable us to directly track the behavior of cells during the perturbation.

Once established, we are using the device to track the effects of e.g. antimicrobial peptides, cholic acids, or antibiotics on the secretion kinetics of Salmonella Typhimurium.


**407-MPP**
The author has not agreed to a publication

**408-MPP**
**Investigating the effect of antimicrobial peptides on type III secretion kinetics**
*1S. Zikenat1, S. Wagner*  
1Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine Tübingen, and Molecular Microbiology, Tübingen, Germany

The type III secretion system is a major virulence factor expressed by many gram-negative pathogens, such as Escherichia, Shigella, Salmonella and Yersinia species. The system is energized by ATP hydrolysis and the proton motive force of the inner membrane. Bacteria use it to translocate effector proteins across their own cell membranes and into the host cell. It has been studied in detail in different organisms, however, a number of important questions remain unanswered due to the inability to directly assess the effects on secretion kinetics.

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Once established, we are using the device to track the effects of e.g. antimicrobial peptides, cholic acids, or antibiotics on the secretion kinetics of Salmonella Typhimurium.

**409-MPP**
**Impact of the transcription factor SpoVG on biofilm formation of Staphylococcus epidermidis in vitro and in vivo.**
*H. Benthen1, B. Jonas1, L. Pätzold1, M. I. Elhawy1, S. Becker1, *M. Bischof2, J. Knobloch2*  
1Saarland University, Medical Microbiology and Hygiene, Homburg, Germany  
2University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Medical Microbiology, Virology and Hygiene, Hamburg, Germany

*Staphylococcus epidermidis* is a major cause of implantable device related infections. The opportunistic pathogen is capable of forming biofilms on implantable devices, a process that usually involves the formation of an extracellular matrix (ECM). Most clinical *S. epidermidis* isolates form an ECM that includes the formation of an exopolysaccharide called polysaccharide intercellular adhesin (PIA), which production requires the factors encoded by the ica operon. Transcription of the ica operon is under multiple levels of control in *S. epidermidis*, and involves the alternative transcription factor Δι. However, since the promoter region of the ica operon lacks a clear Δι consensus sequence, the impact of this sigma factor on ica expression is likely to be indirect.

Here we show that the strictly Δι-dependent transcription factor SpoVG affects transcription of the ica operon and biofilm formation of *S. epidermidis*. Deletion of spoVG in the PIA producing isolate SE1457 reduced the transcription of icaA in a similar way as an isogenic spoB mutant, without markedly affecting the transcription of the repressor of this operon, encoded by icaR. The SE1457 ΔspoVG mutant also displayed a drastically reduced PIA production, and a strongly decreased biofilm formation in microtiter plate-based assays and on catheter fragments under *in vitro* growth conditions. Both findings suggest that SpoVG might be important for pathogenesis of PIA producing *S. epidermidis*. However, when SE1457 and its isogenic spoVG mutant were tested in a murine foreign body related infection model, only minor differences in bacterial loads on the implanted catheter fragments and the surrounding tissues were detected between wild-type and spoVG mutant challenged mice, although SE1457 ΔspoVG infected mice displayed a significantly reduced edema formation at the infection site. These findings indicate that SpoVG, albeit of being of major importance for PIA production and biofilm formation of *S. epidermidis* under *in vitro* conditions, is largely dispensable for biofilm formation on implantable devices under *in vivo* conditions, but does affect the inflammatory response of the host at the infection site.

**410-MPP**
The FlhC polyproline motif is essential for flagellar motility in Salmonella Typhimurium
*C. Kühne1, I. Spöring2, K. Jung3, M. Erhardt1,2*  
1Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Institute of Biology, Berlin, Germany  
2Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Braunschweig, Germany  
3Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Department of Biology, Martinsried, Germany

**Question:** Flagella-mediated motility plays a crucial role for *Salmonella* pathogenicity by enabling directed movement. Flagella synthesis is tightly regulated by a transcriptional hierarchy. The flagellar master regulatory protein complex FlhDC initiates transcription of genes required for assembly of the bacterial flagellum. The FlhC subunit harbors a stretch of three consecutive proline residues, called a polyproline motif. This motif is abundant in proteins, but generally slows down translation due to ribosome stalling, which needs to be alleviated by the elongation factor EF-P. The functionality and role of the polyproline motif in the flagellar protein FlhC is poorly understood. Here, we characterized the role of the FlhC polyproline motif for flagellar motility in *Salmonella Typhimurium*.

**Methods:** We generated a set of FlhC polyproline mutants by replacing proline residues with alanine and analyzed their effects on flagellar motility, the transcriptional hierarchy and FlhC protein stability. Further, we performed a random mutagenesis screen followed by whole-genome-sequencing to identify bypass mutations in a FlhCΔAAA mutant.

**Results:** We found that the FlhC polyproline motif is essential for flagellar motility. We observed a motility defect and down-regulation of flagellar gene expression for all polyproline mutants, which was dependent on number and position of the exchanged prolines, but strongest for the FlhCΔAAA mutant. Also, degradation of FlhC protein was highly enhanced in FlhCΔAAA, which could be compensated by additional deletion of the proteases Lon and ClpXP. A random mutagenesis screen for motility suppressors of the
FlnCaa mutant revealed flhDC promoter mutations, which presumably increased flhDC transcription and bypassed the increased degradation of FlhC.

Conclusions: Here, we characterize the role of the conserved polyproline motif in the flagellar master regulatory protein FlhC. Our results suggest that the motif is necessary for controlling the correct copy number of the FlhD4C2complex by controlling translation speed and folding of FlhC.

411-MPP
Monoclonal antibodies against Shiga Toxin 2a uncovers different subunits by proteolytic cleavage with Furin and Trypsin

"M. Grasse1, M. O. Skjodt2, S. Kellnerova3, D. Orth-Höller1, R. Würzner1
1Medical University of Innsbruck, Hygiene and Medical Microbiology, Innsbruck, Austria
2University Hospital of Copenhagen, Rigshospitalet, Clinical Immunology and Tissue Typing Lab/Hybridioma Center, Copenhagen, Denmark

Objectives: Enterohemorrhagic Escherichia coli (EHEC) infections are a major cause of EHEC-associated Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (eHUS). Shiga toxins (Stxs) are thought to play a major role in EHEC pathogenesis. Stxs are released into the intestinal lumen and translocate into the circulation to reach their target organs, mainly kidneys and brain. Stx2a is an AB5 holotoxin that consists of one enzymatically active A subunit, which is noncovalently associated with a pentameric B subunit. The A subunit can occur in two fragments after proteolytic cleavage, A1 and A2 subunits. However, it is still unknown where and how the A subunit is cleaved.

Methods: Peptide immunization strategy in outbred mice with PEG fusion of SP2 cells and splenocytes was applied to design 3 monoclonal antibodies (mAbs), aiming to detect either the C-terminal part of Stx2a-A1, the N-terminal part of Stx2a-A2, or the uncleaved Stx2a-A subunit. Western Blots and enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISAs) were performed with Stx2a that was either digested with Trypsin or Furin, and with untreated Stx2a, to test the binding properties of the mAbs. Furthermore, the Trypsin- and Furin-digested Stx2a was analyzed for amino acid (AA) sequence by mass spectrometry.

Results: Westernblot analysis showed one mAb detecting the whole Stx2a-A subunit and several candidates of mAbs detecting either Stx2a-A1, -A2 when the toxin was digested with Trypsin. Stx2a digested with Furin couldn’t be detected with the mAbs. The ELISAs revealed, that the mAbs can only detect the denaturated Stx2a, but not the native form. The mass spectrometry analysis showed, that Stx2a digestion by Trypsin and Furin result in Stx2a-A1 and -A2 subunits that differ in a 3 AA shifted cleavage site.

Conclusion: Stx2a is digested in vitro differently by the human physiologically enzymes Trypsin (extracellular) and Furin (intracellular). It needs to be elucidated, if this is happening also in the in vivo situation and what functional consequences arise for the Stx2a-A1 and -A2 subunits. The mAbs for detecting Furin-digested Stx2a need to be designed differently than the ones for Trypsin-digested Stx2a.

412-MPP

Pneumococcal pneumolysin modulates platelet functionality

"K. Jahn1, S. Handtke2, R. Palankari2, T. Kohler1, J. Wesche2, M. Rohde1, A. Greinacher1, S. Hammerschmidt1
1University of Greifswald, Molecular Genetics and Infection Biology, Greifswald, Germany
2University Medicine Greifswald, Transfusion Medicine, Greifswald, Germany
3Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Braunschweig, Central Facility for Microscopy, Braunschweig, Germany

Introduction

Streptococcus pneumoniae is a commensal of the upper airways but can also infiltrate into sterile niches of the body and is responsible for severe infectious diseases, including pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis. During infection, pneumococci are able to enter the blood stream and interact with platelets. The activation and aggregation of platelets during bacteremia is of high clinical importance, since septic patients often develop thrombocytopenia and a low platelet count correlates with an increased morbidity. Pneumolysin (Ply), a pore-forming cholesterol-dependent cytolsyn and a major virulence factor of S. pneumoniae, has earlier been shown to activate platelets. The aim of this project was to assess systematically the impact of pneumococcal Ply on platelet activation and functionality.

Methods

Platelet activation and function was measured using flow cytometry with various activation markers, as well as by light transmission aggregometry. Furthermore, Ca2+ release and platelet viability was determined. Thrombus formation was assessed in a flow chamber with hirudinated blood.

Results

Ply induces pore formation in platelet membranes, leading to a loss of platelet viability in a concentration dependent manner. Measurement of platelet activation via integrin activation revealed no increase in signal intensity. The previous reported platelet activation via measurement of CD62P surface expression was also shown, however, due to pore formation, the antibody stains intracellular CD62P. After Ply treatment TRAP-6 was added as a test for platelet functionality. Only after incubation with sublytic Ply concentrations, platelets reacted to TRAP-6 stimulation. Also in whole blood, platelet function was significantly diminished after Ply treatment.

Conclusion

Ply perforates platelet membranes and induces a rapid loss of functionality and viability of platelets. The loss of platelet function even at low Ply concentrations might be a main contributor to capillary leakage in severe pneumococcal pneumonia.

413-MPP
Disentangling the role of Staphylococcus aureus in skin dysbiosis

"Z. Wang1, C. Hülüpsch2, V. Schwierzke3, M. Reiger4, C. Treidi-Hoffmann1, M. Schloter1, B. Foessel1
1Helmholtz Zentrum München, Comparative Microbiome Analyses, München, Germany
2Technical University of Munich, Institute of Environmental Medicine, UNIKA-T, Augsburg, Germany
3Technical University of Munich, Central Institute for Food and Health (ZIEL), Freising, Germany
Host-microbe interactions play a crucial role in the onset of atopic dermatitis (AD). Skin barrier dysfunction and microbiome dysbiosis are a hallmark of AD pathogenesis. *Staphylococcus aureus* is the most problematic pathogen of the genus causing numerous acute and chronic infections. It has been shown that skin dysbiosis in AD is characterized by reduction of microbial diversity, accompanied by an increase in *S. aureus* abundance, as well as *S. aureus* exo- and enterotoxin concentrations. A recent analysis of microbiome-transcriptome correlations shows that dysbiosis of various *Staphylococcus* species in AD is associated with skin dysregulation. However, it is still not clear whether *S. aureus* colonization is a cause of skin dysfunction or the driver of AD. Furthermore, the role of different *S. aureus* strains remains to be differentiated.

Here a set of 48 *S. aureus* strains from skin and nose of AD patients as well as the nose of healthy individuals (control) was isolated and their identity verified by MALDI-TOF analysis; 16S rRNA gene analysis confirmed species identity. However, further phylogenetic resolution beyond species level is not possible using this approach. In contrast, first physiological tests using the API® ID 32 STAPH and 50 CH series already indicate strain-level differentiation according to health status and individuals derived from. We performed a comparative genomics approach to characterize the strains beyond the species level and to provide a functional description. Genes and pathways related to metabolic differences for the isolates have been identified and linked to physiological testing.

This will provide insight into the role of different *S. aureus* strains in skin dysbiosis and the mechanism of epidermal barrier dysfunction and dysbiosis. Moreover, the knowledge obtained could provide potential novel therapeutic approaches in AD and other atopic diseases.

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**414-MPP**

Characterization of an *Escherichia coli* small colony variant descended from ABU strain 83972 during deliberate human bladder colonization

*J. Putze*, O. Mantel*; U. Dobrindt*1

1*Universitätsklinikum Münster, Institut für Hygiene, Münster, Germany*

**Introduction** Bacterial small colony variants (SCVs) grow slow and form tiny colonies compared to other strains of the same species. The observation of SCVs is reported since 1910 for several bacterial species including *S. aureus*, *P. aeruginosa*, *Salmonella* sp., *E. coli* and others. While most of the reports describe staphylococcal SCVs and SCVs of *Pseudomonas*, only comparatively few records of *E. coli* SCVs are published. Similarly, knowledge of the biological meaning, importance in disease and the underlying molecular mechanisms of *E. coli* SCVs is scarce.

**Objective** We sought to find the molecular reason of SCV formation and to unravel potential bacterial evolutionary adaptations leading to the identified SCV phenotype during colonization of the human bladder.

**Materials & Methods** Bacteria were cultivated on solid or in liquid lysogeny broth and pooled human urine. Construction of mutants and complementation were done by standard methods. The adhesive, invasive and intracellular survival abilities were determined using human urinary bladder (T24) and kidney epithelial (A-498) cells. Whole genome sequencing (WGS) was done by Illumina sequencing. Growth kinetics were recorded in a microplate reader.

**Results** We verified the identity of the SCV isolate as a descendant of 83972 by WGS. Sequence analysis further revealed 13 non-synonymous SNPs and one synonymous SNP as well as three deletions and two insertions. The highest impact have probably three frameshift variants in *cysB*, *srmB* and *gidA* as well as a stop gain in *rsd*. Indeed, deletion as well as complementation of these genes resulted in variable strong effects on growth of mutants as well as of the original SCV isolate, respectively. The growth defects of the original SCV isolate and the constructed single- and multiple gene mutants were striking when analyzed using lysozyme broth. However, when we used pooled human urine as a more "natural" medium, the differences in growth were much less pronounced. *In vitro*, we could not detect spontaneous reversion to wild-type growth and no obvious advantage compared to the ancestor 83972.

**Conclusion** We identified several genes, which can cause or provoke a SCV phenotype.

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**415-MPP**

Deciphering the role of the CRISPR/Cas system in *Neisseria meningitidis* in host cell adhesion

*D. Müller*, S. Bauniedl*; C. Schoen1

1*Institut für Hygiene und Mikrobiologie, Universität Würzburg, Würzburg, Germany*

**Introduction** *Neisseria meningitidis* (Nm) is a commensal of the human nasopharynx and a worldwide leading cause of sepsis and meningitis. The meningococcal CRISPR/Cas locus contains a CRISPR array with an extended -10 box within each spacer region, a tracrRNA, genes encoding canonical Cas1, Cas2 and Cas9 proteins as well as an uncharacterized small non-coding RNA NMc0040 [*1*].

We could recently show that the CRISPR/Cas system in Nm serogroup C strain 8013 is important for the adhesion to human nasopharyngeal cells [*2*]. In particular, Cas9 knock-out strains were impaired in the adhesion to host cells probably via affecting the expression of a small basic lipoprotein Blp along with NMc0040.

**Objectives**: Here, we want to address whether and how Blp and NMnc0040 affect meningococcal adhesion to human nasopharyngeal cells.

**Methods**: To validate the expression profile of NMnc0040 and Blp we performed northern blots analyses in different growth conditions. We further generated blp and NMc0040 knock-out strains and isogenic complemented strains and used these strains in adhesion assays with human nasopharyngeal cell lines.

**Results**: Northern Blot analyses showed that NMnc0040 is constitutively expressed. Adhesion assays further showed that, in contrast to Cas9 and tracrRNA, deletion of NMnc0040 or Blp increased the adhesion of meningococci to human cells. Of note, a double knock-out strain lacking Cas9 and Blp showed wild-type adhesion rate, indicating that Blp acts as an intergenic suppressor of Cas9.

**Conclusion**: Our preliminary genetic data suggest that Cas9/tracrRNA and Blp/NMnc0040 interact and have opposing effects on meningococcal host cell adhesion probably via affecting the function and/or expression of yet to identify adhesion molecules.

[*1*] Zhang Y et al., Mol Cell, 2013, 50(4):488-503

[*2*] Heidrich N et al., RNA Biology, 2018, 16(4):390-396
416-MPP
Role of the comE operon in Staphylococcus lugdunensis biofilm formation
*T. Grebe1, C. Rumpf1, C. Heilmann1
1University Hospital Münster, Institute of Medical Microbiology, Münster, Germany

Introduction: Coagulase-negative staphylococci (CoNS) can cause life-threatening infections, such as infective endocarditis and sepsis frequently associated with the use of medical devices. The main pathogenicity factor in CoNS infection is biofilm formation.

Objectives: In Staphylococcus lugdunensis, beside proteins extracellular (e)DNA is a major structural component of the biofilm matrix. By transposon mutagenesis, we identified a novel, lysis-independent mechanism of eDNA generation, which involves the competence gene comEB. comEB is part of the comEABC operon, whose function in staphylococci is still unclear. Its homolog in Bacillus subtilis encodes the DNA uptake machinery involved in natural competence. Thus, we hypothesize that S. lugdunensis has converted the regular functions of competence genes resulting in the secretion of DNA rather than the uptake of DNA.

Materials and Methods: To characterize the function of the comEABC operon, we constructed a comEABC deletion mutant, which subsequently was complemented by cloning the whole comEABC operon. To study the involvement of each comE gene in biofilm formation, single and double site-directed comEABC deletion mutants were constructed by inverse PCR. Biofilm formation was analysed in a quantitative biofilm assay performed in microtiter plates.

Results: The comEABC mutant exhibited a similarly reduced biofilm-forming capacity as previously observed with the comEB transposon mutant. The cloned comEABC operon was able to complement the comEABC mutant to the wild-type level of biofilm formation. Biofilm assays of site-directed comEA, comEB, and/or comEC single and double mutants revealed that only clones with an intact comEB gene formed biofilms at wild-type levels independently of the presence of comEA and comEC.

Conclusion: The functions of ComEA and ComEC, which are hypothesized to build the membrane channel in DNA secretion, may be dispensable in biofilm eDNA generation, potentially due to gene duplications or due to the use of an alternative DNA transport system. Further analyses are on the way to address this question and to study DNA secretion and subcellular location of ComE proteins.

In the studies performed were found that in the case of S. Enteritidis with low adhesion-invasive phenotype, nmpC and yidR genes are characterized by the presence of mutations in comparison to the genome of the reference strain P125109.

Objectives

Studies on the nmpC gene, which encodes OmpD protein, have so far only concerned S. Typhimurium and showed different results. On the one hand, using Int-407 cells, no differences in adhesion and invasion between wild strains and mutants with nmpC gene knockout were found. We know less about the yidR gene, which is only known to have reduced S adhesion. Typhimurium to lettuce leaves. The role of nmpC and yidR genes in adhesion and invasion of S. Enteritidis into epithelial cells is poorly understood, therefore the aim was to explain the role of these genes in the pathogenesis of S. Enteritidis infections.

Materials & methods

In order to remove the tested genes and replace them with antibiotic resistance genes, a homologous recombination according to the Datsenko and Wanner protocols was applied. Adhesion and invasion tests were performed using three lines of intestinal epithelium of human (Caco-2).

Results

Each of the strains was examined in terms of morphology -shape and formation of aggregates and growth rate. The study did not show any differences in morphology. Adhesion and invasion tests performed on strains with different variants of the nmpC and yidR genes have shown that wild strains of these genes cause higher adhesion and invasion in Salmonella Enteritidis.

Conclusion

Adhesive and invasive tests have shown that selected genes can affect Salmonella Enteritidis virulence. However, in order to fully understand the basic mechanisms involved in the infection of host cells with Salmonella, more experiments need to be conducted.

417-MPP
The role of the nmpC and yidR genes in the virulence of Salmonella Enteritidis to intestinal epithelial cells
*M. Wimonc1, R. Kolenda1, M. Ugorski1
1Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Wrocław, Poland

Introduction

Salmonella Enteritidis is currently one of the major intestinal pathogens. Adhesion to and invasion of host cells is one of the first critical steps in the pathogenesis of Salmonella infections. An important process is identification and knowledge of the function of genes associated with colonization of the gastrointestinal tract by these pathogens.

In the studies performed were found that in the case of S. Enteritidis with low adhesion-invasive phenotype, nmpC and yidR genes are characterized by the presence of mutations in comparison to the genome of the reference strain P125109.

Objectives

Studies on the nmpC gene, which encodes OmpD protein, have so far only concerned S. Typhimurium and showed different results. On the one hand, using Int-407 cells, no differences in adhesion and invasion between wild strains and mutants with nmpC gene knockout were found. We know less about the yidR gene, which is only known to have reduced S adhesion. Typhimurium to lettuce leaves. The role of nmpC and yidR genes in adhesion and invasion of S. Enteritidis into epithelial cells is poorly understood, therefore the aim was to explain the role of these genes in the pathogenesis of S. Enteritidis infections.

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Conclusion

Adhesive and invasive tests have shown that selected genes can affect Salmonella Enteritidis virulence. However, in order to fully understand the basic mechanisms involved in the infection of host cells with Salmonella, more experiments need to be conducted.

418-MPP
Klebsiella pneumoniae in porcine blood: bactericidal activity of adaptive IgM and proline-rich antimicrobial peptides
*A. K. Krieger1, T. Ludwig2, A. Krizsan1, I. Eder1, S. Öhlmann1, L. Mayer1, G. Köller1, R. Hoffmann2, C. Baums1, K. Rieckmann1
1Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Leipzig, Institute of Bacteriology and Mycology, Leipzig, Germany
2University of Leipzig, Center for Biotechnology and Biomedicine, Leipzig, Germany

Multidrug-resistant Klebsiella pneumoniae (K. pneumoniae) is considered a major global concern by the World Health Organization. Infections with hypervirulent K. pneumoniae strains may lead to severe symptoms including death in association with the liver abscess syndrome. K. pneumoniae is also an emerging pathogen in piglets causing septicemia.
Here, bactericidal assays with freshly drawn porcine blood were evaluated for investigating *K. pneumoniae* bacteremia in vitro, including comparison of strains, development of immunity and bactericidal activity of antimicrobial peptides (AMP). Specifically, we investigated the hypothesis that proliferation of invasive *K. pneumoniae* in porcine blood might be inhibited by proline-rich AMPs.

Survival of *K. pneumoniae* in porcine blood exhibited differences between strains in association with the clinical background of the strain. Through addition of the specific IgM protease rideSsuis we showed that IgM plays an important role in the early adaptive immune response leading to killing of an invasive *K. pneumoniae* strain in blood of 8 week old piglets. Addition of proline-rich AMPs reduced the survival of *K. pneumoniae* in porcine blood of younger piglets significantly and in a concentration dependent manner. As evaluated by lactate dehydrogenase release, cytotoxicity of the tested proline-rich AMPs was rather low and comparable to the cephalosporin ceftazidim. Induction of proinflammatory cytokines was determined through measurements of TNF-alpha. Results showed large differences in TNF-alpha induction between individual piglets and no significant difference in assays with ceftazidim or AMP treatment.

In summary, we established the bactericidal assay with porcine blood as a novel in vitro method to evaluate the bactericidal, cytotoxic and immunogenic activity of AMPs in *K. pneumoniae* bacteremia and show the first promising data for proline-rich AMPs.

419-MPP
D-Alanylation of Lipoteichoic Acids as Putative Immune Evasion Mechanism of *Streptococcus suis*


1Institute of Bacteriology and Mycology, Centre for Infectious Diseases, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Leipzig, Germany, Leipzig, Germany
2Research Center for Emerging Infections and Zoonoses (RIZ), University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Hannover, Germany
3Division of Bioanalytical Chemistry, Priority Area Infections, Research Center Borstel, Leibniz Lung Center, Germany, Borstel, Germany
4Center for Biotechnology and Biomedicine, University of Leipzig, Germany, Leipzig, Germany

*Streptococcus suis* (*S. suis*) is a major pathogen in piglets that leads to high economic losses in the swine industry by causing septicemia, meningitis, arthritis, endocarditis and pneumonia. As a zoonotic agent it has so far been responsible for more than 1600 human infections worldwide.

As in other Gram-positive bacteria, lipoteichoic acids (LTAs) are main constituents of the cell wall of *S. suis* [1]. Their D-alanylation is described as a bacterial evasion mechanism against killing by neutrophil granulocytes and antimicrobial peptides (AMPs) [2]. In *Streptococcus pneumoniae* adding D-alanine to LTA was suggested to increase the inflammatory response of the host resulting in more efficient shedding and transmission of bacteria [3].

Since bacteremia is a hallmark of invasive *S. suis* infections, we investigated the influence of D-alanylation of LTA on the bacterial survival in porcine and human blood, as well as its capacity to modulate the inflammatory response of blood leukocytes.

A mutant deficient in the D-alanylation of LTA was generated in order to perform loss-of-function experiments. We evaluated the survival and the induced cytokine production, tested the influence of proline-rich AMPs in bactericidal assays and determined the minimal bactericidal concentrations of a number of AMPs.

The loss of the ability to D-alanylate LTA in the isogenic mutant was confirmed by nuclear magnetic resonance. In accordance with previous studies, we observed an increase in susceptibility to AMPs in our deletion mutant. Nevertheless, D-alanylation of LTA was not crucial for survival in porcine or human blood in our set-up.


420-MPP

The *Acinetobacter* Trimeric Autotransporter Adhesin Ata drives the Pathogenicity of *Acinetobacter baumannii* and modulates the Host Cell Response

*M. Tietgen1, S. Wohra1, M. Weidensforfer1, I. Wittig3, P. Kraicz1, V. A. J. Kempf1, S. Götting1

1Institute for Medical Microbiology and Infection Control, University Hospital, Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
2Faculty of Medicine, Functional Proteomics, Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Introduction: Trimeric autotransporter adhesins (TAAs) are important virulence factors in many Gram-negative bacteria. The *Acinetobacter* trimeric autotransporter adhesin Ata is the TAA of *Acinetobacter baumannii*, one of the most clinically significant pathogens.

Aim: To analyze the impact of Ata on the host cell response during infection, human umbilical cord vein endothelial cells (HUVECs) were infected with *A. baumannii* ATCC 19606 (WT) or an isogenic ata knockout mutant (Δata).

Methods: Quantitative proteomics using liquid chromatography/mass spectrometry was carried out to analyze protein expression of HUVECs 14 h post infection. Chemokine secretion was analyzed using Multi-Analyte ELISA Array Kits (Qiagen). Chemotaxis of human THP-1 monocytes was investigated employing a transmigration assay. Recruitment of immune cells *in vivo* was evaluated using the *Galleria mellonella* infection model. Induction of apoptosis was determined using propidium iodide/annexin V staining followed by FACS analysis and the Caspase-Glo® 3/7 assay (Promega).

Results: In total 4,969 human proteins were quantified, from which 106 (WT) and 51 (Δata) proteins were differentially produced (fold change ≥ 2; FDR < 0.05). Two signaling pathways involved in inflammation/immune response and induction of apoptosis were identified and further verified in infection experiments. Upon infection of HUVECs with *A. baumannii*, interleukin-6 (IL) and IL-8 were secreted in a time- and Ata-dependent way. Likewise, chemotaxis of THP-1 cells towards HUVECs was significantly increased upon infection with the WT compared to Δata. After injection into *Galleria mellonella* larvae, ata deletion mutants were attenuated in their ability to recruit immune cells *in vivo*. Higher apoptosis rates were measured upon infection of
HUEVCs with the WT compared to Δata which were dependent on cleavage of caspase-3 and caspase-7.

**Conclusion:** Δata caused a pro-inflammatory host cell response and induced apoptosis by activation of caspase-3/-7. These results suggest that Δata is an important and multifunctional virulence factor of *A. baumannii*.

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**421-MPP**

Myo-inositol as a carbon substrate in *Francisella* and insights into the metabolism of *Francisella* sp. strain W12-1067

K. Köppen1, F. Chen1, K. Rydzewski1, W. Eisenreich2, K. Heuner1
1Robert Koch-Institut, Berlin, Germany
2Technische Universität München, München, Germany

*Francisella tularensis* (Ft) is an intracellular pathogen causing tularemia in a variety of hosts including humans and rodents. Various transmission and infection routes have been described causing different clinical manifestation like massive swollen lymph nodes and pneumonia. So far, all reported cases of tularemia in Germany have been caused by the Ft subspecies holarctica (Fth). However, a new environmental *Francisella* sp. strain W12-1067 (F-W12) not belonging to Fth was found. This isolate does not possess the Francisella pathogenicity island but in silico analysis revealed a putative alternative type VI secretion system and other virulence factors in its genome. Moreover, a putative myo-inositol (MI) metabolizing gene cluster was identified in silico exhibiting a putative inositol oxygenase. A similar MI metabolizing gene cluster has been found in other *Francisella* strains like *Francisella novicida* (Fno) strain Fx1 but is missing in Fth LVS and Fno U112. Various bacteria are able to use MI as the exclusive carbon source and inositol oxygenase is known to convert MI into glucuronic acid and further into 3-phosphoglycerate and pyruvate. To analyze the capacity of F-W12 to metabolize MI, a MI gene cluster negative mutant was generated (ΔMI). Growth experiments revealed that MI increased growth rates of strain F-W12 and Fno Fx1 in the absence of glucose but this was not observed for ΔMI mutant strain and not for Fno U112. In addition, isotopologue profiling experiments confirmed the involvement of the MI gene cluster in the metabolism of MI in strain F-W12. Labeling with 13C-glucose, serine or glycerol during growth in medium T revealed a bipartite metabolism in F-W12. Glucose is mainly metabolized via glycolysis but not through the Entner-Doudoroff or the pentose phosphate pathway. Carbon flux from 13C-glyceral and 13C-serine was less active; they were converted mostly into amino acids, lactate and fatty acids during growth in medium T. In conclusion, the metabolism of F-W12 seems to be more related to the metabolism described for Fno then for Fth, especially regarding the capacity to metabolize MI and the usage of glycerol and glucose.

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**422-MPP**

Intracellular accumulation of trehalose-6-phosphate leads to growth inhibition in *Acinetobacter baumannii*

J. Hubloher1, V. Müller1
1Goethe University Frankfurt, Molecular Microbiology & Bioenergetics, Frankfurt, Germany

**Introduction:** The nosocomial pathogen *Acinetobacter baumannii* accumulates trehalose upon osmotic and heat stress via the OtsA-OtsB pathway [1]. In this pathway OtsA catalyzes the condensation of glucose-6-phosphate and UDP-glucose, resulting in the formation of trehalose-6-phosphate (T6P). In the next step OtsB cleaves off the phosphate and releases trehalose. The absence of otsB in *A. baumannii* leads to the inability to kill *Galleria mellonella* larvae [2], suggesting that the compatible solute is involved in pathogenicity.

**Objectives:** To challenge the hypothesis that trehalose is involved in pathogenesis.

**Materials & methods:** Markerless deletion mutants of *otsA*, *otsB* and *otsAB* and strains overproducing OtsA, OtsB and OtsAB where generated in *A. baumannii* 19606. The growth behavior of the different strains was monitored and the accumulation of T6P was measured.

**Results:** *A. baumannii* accumulates trehalose upon growth at high salt (300 mM NaCl) in minimal medium with arabinose as carbon source. The same holds true for growth at 45 °C. Deletion of *otsB* led to growth inhibition, while in contrast deletion of *otsA* and *otsAB* did not. Overproduction of OtsA also led to growth inhibition. Deletion of *otsB* or overproduction of OtsA led to the intracellular accumulation of T6P in *A. baumannii*.

**Conclusion:** From the data presented, it is obvious that not the absence of trehalose but the presence of T6P causes growth inhibition in *A. baumannii*. T6P is a key signaling metabolite during plant development [3] and sugar metabolism in yeast [4]. Furthermore, deletion of *otsB* in *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* is lethal caused by T6P accumulation. The same seems to be true for *A. baumannii*. The basis for T6P inhibition is currently under investigation.


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**423-MPP**

Characterization of *Brassicaceae* smut fungal effectors responsible for plant infection

S. Gu1, N. Heßler2, A. Wendel1, A. Kraeger1, V. Goehre1
1Heinrich-Heine University, Biology, Düsseldorf, Germany

Smut fungi are a prevalent group of plant-pathogenic fungi that affect agriculturally important cereal crops. In order to establish biotrophic interaction, these pathogens depend on secreted virulence factors called effector proteins. Effectors either promote the virulence by suppressing plant defense responses or alter plant physiology to assist fungal invasion. The infection biology of the grass smut fungi *Ustilago maydis*, *Sporisorium reilianum*, and *Ustilago hordei* has been analyzed intensively to a molecular level, ultimately revealing both common and individual effector repertoires. The Brassicaceae smut fungus *Thecaphora thalipea* infects several Arabis species as well as model plant Arabidopsis thaliana and therefore arises as a novel smut infection system.

In contrast to the rapid infection cycle of *U. maydis*, *T. thalipea* establishes a long-lasting biotrophic interaction
with its perennial host plants without causing macroscopic symptoms. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore the unique and conserved effector repertoire of *T. thlaspeos*. Previous studies led to the identification of ~50 effector candidates that were group into conserved effectors with a homolog in grass smuts fungi, and unique effectors. Among these effector candidates, five have a predicted nuclear localization signal. Transient expression in heterologous systems of the first 3 unique candidates confirmed the predicted nuclear localization. In addition, heterologous delivery by pathogenic bacteria promotes bacterial virulence, suggesting they suppress the plant immune system. We expect that this data might provide a platform for studying, how *T. thlaspeos* effectors enable fungal colonization and disease establishment without causing any macroscopic symptoms.

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**424-MPP**

**Communication at the epithelial interface: the transcriptional response of epithelial cells to probiotic and extraintestinal pathogenic Escherichia coli**

*H. Klimek*, C. Cichor, J. Putze, U. Dobrindt

1 University of Muenster, Institute of Hygiene, Section of Microbial Genome Plasticity, Muenster, Germany
2 University of Muenster, Center for Molecular Biology of Inflammation, Institute of Infectiology, Muenster, Germany

### Introduction

Epithelial cells in the colon are covered by a mucus layer, which shields the cells from direct contact with bacteria. To study the molecular mechanisms responsible for *E. coli* Nissle 1917’s (EcN) well-studied probiotic traits, such as strengthening epithelial barriers and countervailing the colonisation of pathogenic *E. coli*, we use a colonic cell culture model with an adherent mucus layer. To put the mode of action into perspective, we compared the effect of EcN on host cells with the effects of its clonal strains: uropathogenic *E. coli* (UPEC) strain CFT073 and asymptomatic bacteriuria (ABU) *E. coli* isolate 83972, whose genomes exhibit an average nucleotide identity (ANI) of > 99.8 %.

### Objectives

We intended to establish how the clonal *E. coli* strains interact with the gut epithelial cells that are covered by a mucus layer and to what degree a transcriptional host response to the strains tested would differ.

### Materials & methods

We cultured HT29-MTX-E12 cells in a tranwell system under continuous shaking, to create a semi-wet interface. This triggers the secretion and formation of an adherent mucus layer; the cells polarize, form a three-dimensional architecture and functional tight junctions. The transcriptional host response was analysed via quantitative real time PCR.

### Results

On the transcriptional level we saw a common innate immune response of the gut epithelial cell line towards *E. coli* strains of different virulence phenotypes, which varied in intensity. *E. coli* Nissle, commonly used as a probiotic supplement, was a strong inducer of leukocyte recruiting factors. This could be confirmed on the protein level.

### Conclusion

The induction of pro-inflammatory cytokines by EcN was counterintuitive, which raises the question of how probiotic bacteria may protect cells of invasion by pathogenic bacteria. We believe that differential host cell response is an important factor that determines bacterial pathogenicity or probiotic traits.

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**425-MPP**

### Conclusion

Supplement, was a strong inducer of leukocyte recruiting immune response of the gut epithelial cell line towards the strains tested would differ.

### 426-MPP

#### The low molecular weight protein tyrosine phosphatase PtB of *Staphylococcus aureus* affects intramacrophage survival and infectivity

*M. I. Elhawy, L. Pätzold, L. Gannoun-Zaki, V. Mollös, S. Becker, M. Bischoff

1 Saarland University, Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hygiene, Homburg, Germany
2 Université de Montpellier, Laboratoire de Dynamique des Interactions Membranaires Normales et Pathologiques, Montpellier, France

Secretion of bacterial signaling proteins into host cells to modulate host signaling networks is a common strategy utilized by pathogenic bacteria to subvert the host innate immunity. We reported recently that the δ-controlled low molecular weight protein tyrosine phosphatase (LMW-PTPase) PtA contributes to the infectivity of *S. aureus* by enhancing the intramacrophage survival (Gannoun-Zaki et al, J Biol Chem. 293:15569–15580).

Here we show that the second LMW-PTPase produced by *S. aureus*, PtB, which is constitutively expressed under in vitro growth conditions, exerts similar functions. Deletion of ptb in *S. aureus* strain SA564 significantly reduced the capacity of the mutant to withstand the intracellulare killing by THP-1 macrophages. When injected into C57BL/6J mice, the SA564 ∆ptb mutant displayed markedly reduced bacterial loads in liver and kidney tissues in a murine *S. aureus* abscess model when compared to the wild-type. Both phenotypes were fully reverted in a SA564 ∆ptb derivative that was cis-complemented with a functional ptb. Both findings indicate that PtB exerts a critical role during infection, probably by counteracting the host innate immunity.

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**427-MPP**

### PlaD, a novel type IVB secreted effector protein of *Legionella pneumophila*

*M. Hiller, C. Lang, J. Döllinger, A. Flieger

1 Robert Koch Institute, Division of Enteropathogenic Bacteria and Legionella, Wernigerode, Germany
2 Robert Koch-Institut, Division of Proteomics and Spectroscopy, Berlin, Germany

### Introduction

The facultative intracellular pathogen *Legionella pneumophila* is the causative agent of Legionnaire’s disease, a potentially fatal pneumonia. *L. pneumophila* is ubiquitous in aqueous habitats and amoebae are a natural host. However, the pathogen can also colonize lung macrophages and epithelial cells. *L. pneumophila* blocks maturation of the phagosome and thus evades degradation. Instead, the *Legionella* containing vacuole (LCV) is established which allows replication. During infection *L. pneumophila* secretes proteins, among others phospholipases, into the lumen of the LCV and the host cell
cytoplasm via its type II (Lsp) and type IVB (Dot/Icm) secretion systems. At least 15 phospholipases A, which divide into the patatin-like proteins, the PlaB-like proteins and the GDSL hydrolases, are encoded in the genome.

Objectives

We here focus on the characterization of the phospholipase PlaD which belongs to the family of GDSL hydrolases. We aim to understand the importance and mode of action of PlaD in infection.

Materials and methods

We investigated the mode of secretion of PlaD by means of Western blotting and translocation assay. Additionally, we determined its binding to various lipids and its interactions with eukaryotic proteins by means of lipid-protein-overlay assays, proximity ligation and pull down assays. Further, we analyzed the localization of PlaD during infection via immunofluorescence.

Results

We showed that, during infection, PlaD is Dot/Icm-dependently injected into the host cell cytoplasm where it localizes to distinct organelles. Moreover, we demonstrated that PlaD binds to a subset of phosphoinositide species and interacts with a class of regulatory proteins of the host cell. Additionally, our data revealed that the C-terminal half of PlaD is essential for its secretion and phosphoinositide binding but dispensable for interaction with the regulatory proteins.

Conclusion

Based on its Dot/Icm dependent injection into the host cell cytoplasm, we classify PlaD as a novel type IVB secreted effector protein of L. pneumophila. We propose that PlaD is involved in the regulation of host cell signaling cascades during infection.

Introduction: Coxiella burnetii is the causative agent of the zoonotic disease Q fever. Apart from acute Q fever, around 2-5% of C. burnetii infected humans will develop chronic Q fever, which mainly manifests as endocarditis years after exposure to the pathogen. Usually, humans get infected through the inhalation of contaminated aerosols, often discharged from infected ruminants. Alveolar macrophages are the first line of defence against inhaled C. burnetii. Details about how C. burnetii are fought by host macrophages and how they escape the immune system and persist for years inside the host are not fully established yet.

Materials and methods: Murine bone marrow-derived macrophages (MΦ) were infected with different C. burnetii clones, under normoxia (N) or hypoxia (H). Samples for western blots, DNA/RNA isolation, and CFU counts were taken. To obtain details for localization and function, the effector protein NopA was cloned and transfected into host cells.

Results: We have shown before that under normoxic conditions, C. burnetii replicates in MΦ while exposure to H impairs C. burnetii replication. We proved that this impairment is due to hypoxia-inducible factor 1α (HIF1α) stabilization leading to a cascade of events, which results in the persistence of the pathogen. Interestingly, we noticed that although HIF1α is stabilized under N 4h after infection, this stabilization diminishes after 24h. This prompted us to investigate whether C. burnetii actively modifies the HIF1α level. Indeed, under H, viable C. burnetii reduced HIF1α stabilization compared to heat-killed or a T4SS-defective mutant, suggesting that C. burnetii destabilizes HIF1α in a T4SS-dependent manner. With the T4SS effector protein NopA we identified one responsible factor for this modification. Moreover, NopA appears to affect HIF1α stabilization via involving prolyl hydroxylases (PHD). Molecular details of NopA interfering with PHD are still under investigation.

Conclusion: Our data suggest that C. burnetii attempts to counteract the host defence mechanism through the secretion of the T4SS effector protein NopA, which triggers HIF1α destabilization.

429-MPP

A specific variant of the M-like protein SzM of Streptococcus equi subsp. zooepidemicus binds IgG, fibrinogen and collagen

*A. Bergmann1, W. Schrödl1, C. G. Baums1

1Institute for Bacteriology and Mycology, Centre for Infectious Diseases, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction

Streptococcus equi subsp. zooepidemicus (SEZ) is an important pathogen in horses causing pneumonia, arthritis and abortion, but also an invasive zoonotic agent. Its M-like protein SzM is crucial for binding of fibrinogen and for survival in blood. In the related pathogen Streptococcus pyogenes distinct M proteins bind collagen via the octapeptide PARF (peptide associated with rheumatic fever) motif. This motif plays a crucial role in the pathogenesis of rheumatic fever in humans. In this study, we describe for the first time an active PARF motif of an variant of the M-like protein SzM of SEZ.

Aims

We investigated the working hypothesis that the M-like protein SzM_C31 of SEZ is a virulence factor involved in binding of host proteins like fibrinogen, immunoglobulin and collagen.

Materials and methods

The recombinantly expressed protein rSzM_C31 as well as truncated and point-mutated constructs were investigated in Western blots and ELISAs for interactions with IgG, fibrinogen and collagen.

Results

The M-protein SzM of SEZ strain C31 bound human IgG and IgG of other species via the Fc-fragment. The binding region
was located in the C-term of the protein. Moreover, ELISAs showed binding of equine and human fibrinogen. Sequence analysis of SzM_C31 identified a PARF motif. Whereas the wt rSzM_C31 bound collagen, point mutagenesis of the PARF motif resulted in loss of collagen binding. This data is supplemented with phenotypic analysis of the SEZ strain C31 in different assays.

Conclusion

The SzM_C31 protein of SEZ is a multi-functional virulence factor, involved in the binding of IgG, fibrinogen and collagen. As the cause of recurrent arthritis in horses is very often not elucidated, we speculate that PARF-motifs in distinct SzM variants of SEZ might be involved in an autoimmune-mediated arthritis in horses.

430-MPP

Proteome analysis of *Streptococcus suis* under stress conditions and in host-pathogen interaction


*University Medicine Greifswald, Interfaculty Institute for Genetics and Functional Genomics, Department of Functional Genomics, Greifswald, Germany*

*University of Leipzig, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Institute of Bacteriology and Mycology, Centre for Infectious Diseases, Leipzig, Germany*

*Ceva Innovation Center GmbH, Geschäftsbereich Tiergesundheit, Dessau-Rosslau, Germany*

Introduction. *Streptococcus suis* is a commensal of pigs, can cause invasive infections and is responsible for high economic losses in swine farming worldwide. As an emerging zoonotic agent *S. suis* is able to induce meningitis, arthritis and septicemia. The species comprises 35 serotypes of which serotype 2 is the most prevalent serotype [1], followed by serotypes 9, 7 and 3 in Europe [2]. The mechanisms enabling the switch from commensal to an invasive pathogen are only partially resolved.

Objectives. The aim is a comparative profiling of *S. suis* proteome patterns and immunoproteome screening of *S. suis* antigens to reveal the adaptation to host niches and to identify new potential virulence/fitness factors and vaccine candidates.

Methods. Proteome analysis of serotype 2, 9 and 7 was carried out with a data-independent acquisition (DIA) mass spectrometry workflow. In addition, *S. suis* specific antibody profiles were investigated using potential immunogenic proteins in a multiplexed suspension bead array.

Results. For proteome analysis a spectral library was generated using strain-specific genome sequences and *S. suis* protein extracts from samples grown in different media, at different temperatures and after nutrient or iron limitation. Optimized peptide preparation from low bacteria numbers at different temperatures and after nutrient or iron limitation. Optimized peptide preparation from low bacteria numbers allowed monitoring of around 1100 proteins using the DIA-workflow. The proteome profiling revealed differentially abundant proteins of different cellular pathways. In addition, the antibody response of infected pigs against *S. suis* antigens was quantified by bead-based immunoproteomics. The study revealed proteins, which might be involved in adaptation to the different host niches and constitute potential new virulence factors and vaccine candidates.

Conclusion. A combination of immunogenic antigens of different strains specific for the host compartments (CSF and blood plasma) will be selected and screened for suitability as a multicomponent vaccine.

[1] Rungeirath V *et al.*, Virulence 2018


431-MPP

An ABC-transporter is necessary for *Staphylococcus epidermidis* biofilm formation in the presence of human serum


*1University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Clinical Microbiology, Hamburg, Germany*

Staphylococcus epidermidis is a leading cause of hospital-acquired infections. Invasive disease typically occurs after insertion of implanted foreign material. Key mechanism contributing to *S. epidermidis* pathogenesis of implant-associated infections is biofilm formation on abiotic surfaces. *S. epidermidis* biofilm formation is a highly variable phenotype, single isolates can switch between biofilm-positive and –negative growth depending on environmental conditions. Recently, presence of serum was identified as a factor inducing biofilm formation in otherwise biofilm-negative *S. epidermidis* isolates. We applied comparative genome wide expression analysis of *S. epidermidis* 1585 grown in TSB (no biofilm) or serum (biofilm) and identified several strongly up-regulated genes, indicating significant adaptive responses to in vivo like conditions. Two genes (SrE-1 and SrE-2) encoding for transmembrane proteins were chosen for further analysis. Knock-out mutants of SrE-1 and SrE-2 were established in *S. epidermidis* 1585 and *S. epidermidis* 1457. Inactivation did not change colony morphology, growth characteristics in TSB or serum, or antibiotic susceptibility pattern. In both strains, the loss of SrE-1 had no impact on biofilm phenotypes in TSB or serum. Similarly, inactivation of SrE-2 did not change biofilm phenotypes in TSB. However, *S. epidermidis* 1585 and *S. epidermidis* 1457 lost their biofilm positive phenotypes in the presence of serum. In both strains, biofilm phenotypes were rescued by in trans expression of SrE-2 under control of an inducible promoter, indicating the genetic linkage between loss of function and biofilm negative phenotypes.

Our work for the first time identified a factor exclusively fostering *S. epidermidis* biofilm formation in the presence of human serum. Obviously, application of assay systems more closely resembling the in vivo infection setting is of great importance for an in depth understanding *S. epidermidis* pathogenesis. Work is on the way to decipher the molecular mechanisms linking the loss of a transmembrane transporter and impaired *S. epidermidis* biofilm formation.

432-MPP

Anti-biofilm Effect of Different Titanium Alloys for Implant Materials in Orthopedy with a Focus on *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Staphylococcus epidermidis*

*L. Wolrab*, B. *Bödendorfer*, B. *Lohberger*, A. *Paulitsch-Fuchs*

*1FH Kärnten, Klagenfurt, Austria*

*2Medical University of Graz, Department of Orthopedics and Trauma Surgery, Graz, Austria*
The adhesion of bacteria to artificial joints can cause peri-prosthetic infections (PIs) which are among the most serious complications following joint replacement surgeries. New strategies for inhibiting biofilm development on prostheses involve modifications to the surface and material components. During this project various types of titanium-aluminium-vanadium (TiAl6V4) alloys such as silver-, titanium-nitride-, commercially pure titanium-, hydroxyapatite-, tricalcium phosphate- and rough blasted titanium-coatings were tested to assess their anti-biofilm effects. As parameters for biofilm development the amount of proteins and polysaccharides in the formed biofilms were measured and the number of live and dead bacterial cells was used as a measure for the viability. To induce biofilm formation, sterile coin-formed alloy plates were incubated with either S. aureus or S. epidermidis in 24 well plates with a starting cell density of McFarland 0.5 in lysogeny broth for 48h (37°C and 90 rpm). Biofilms were collected and diluted by scratching them off the surface of the plates and transferred into test-tubes for homogenization in it in phosphate buffer by vortexing. The protein concentration was determined with the BCA protein assay (Pierce TM, Thermo Scientific) and the phenol-sulfuric acid method. Flow cytometry (total cell count) was used as a parameter to assess the effect of the alloys on the microbial growth. Results show that biofilms on rough surfaces (e.g. TiAl6V4-tricalciumphosphate and rough blasting titanium) produced a higher concentration of proteins and polysaccharides whereas on smooth surfaces (e.g. TiAl6V4-TiN) lower concentrations were measured. The cell count of bacteria was higher on rough alloys compared to smooth materials. Moreover, alloys containing titanium-nitride and silver-coating display lower protein and polysaccharide concentrations. These findings confirm that the right choice of implant material could lower the risks of PIs. Future studies should provide more insight into the compatibility and tolerance of the materials by human cells.

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**433-MPP**

Anti-biofilm Effects of Different Cobalt-Chrome Alloys for Implant Materials in Orthopedy with a Focus on *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Staphylococcus epidermidis*

B. Blöndendorfer1, L. Wolrab1, B. Lobberger2, A. Paulitsch-Fuchs1

1FH Kärnten, Klagenfurt, Austria

2Medical University of Graz, Department of Orthopedics and Trauma Surgery, Graz, Austria

Peri-prosthetic infections (PIs), caused by the adhesion of bacteria to artificial joints, are among the most serious complications which can occur following joint replacement surgeries. New attempts to counter biofilm development on prostheses target surface and material components. Accordingly, the aim of this project was to evaluate to which extent various types of cobalt-chrome (molybdenum (CoCrMo) alloys, such as titanium nitrid (TiN)-, porous-, commercially pure titanium- (cpt), cpt-tricalcium phosphate (TCP)- and highly polished CoCrMo-alleys, have anti-biofilm effects. This was assessed in terms of the amount of proteins and polysaccharides formed by the biofilms as well as the number live and dead bacterial cells. Biofilm formation was induced on sterile coin-formed alloy plates with either *S. aureus* or *S. epidermidis* in 24 well plates (McFarland 0.5, lysogeny broth, 48h at 37°C and 90 rpm). To isolate the biofilm the LB was withdrawn and phosphate puffer was added to each well, the biofilm was scratched off the surface of the material chips and transferred into test-tubes to homogenise it by vortexing. The BCA protein assay (Pierce TM, Thermo Scientific) and the phenol-sulfuric acid method were used to measure protein and polysaccharide concentrations. Furthermore, flow cytometry was used as a parameter to assess the effect of the alloys on the microbial growth. Data analysis show that rough surfaces (e.g. CoCrMo-cpti) enable biofilms to form higher concentration of proteins and polysaccharides whereas on smooth surfaces (e.g. CoCrMo-TiN) lower concentrations were detected. The bacterial cell number was higher on rough alloys compared to smooth materials. Additionally, CoCrMo with titanium-nitride coating exhibited the lowest results of protein and polysaccharide concentrations. These results substantiate the hypothesis that specific CoCrMo alloys are particularly promising materials to avoid *S. aureus* and *S. epidermidis* biofilm formations in patients with implants. Future studies should focus on the compatibility of the materials with the human body.

**434-MPP**

The scavenger receptor LOX-I is a novel receptor for *Staphylococcus aureus* WTA on endothelial cells

J. Schade1, E. Lehmann1

1Institute for medical microbiology and hygiene, Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Tübingen, Germany

*Staphylococcus aureus*, is an opportunistic pathogen and the most prevalent isolate from patients with endovascular infections. These blood stream infections frequently disseminate into other organs causing subsequent acute or chronic infections. The complex multifactorial process of adherence to the vascular surfaces and subsequent dissemination into the underlying tissue is not yet fully understood. However, adhesion to the endothelial cells is the first crucial step for the onset and progression of an endovascular infection. The important role of protein adhesins in the bacterial binding to the vascular lining has been widely demonstrated. Nevertheless, especially under flow conditions wall teichoic acids (WTAs), major surface components of *S. aureus* were demonstrated to contribute to the binding to human endothelial cells. LOX-I is a C-type lectin like type-II membrane protein belonging to the family of scavenger receptors which have been implicated in bacterial binding to cellular surfaces. We analysed interaction of *S. aureus* with LOX-I using adhesion- and ligand-binding-assays. Binding of *S. aureus* to human umbilical vein endothelial cells (HUVECs) was inhibited by preincubation with the natural LOX-I ligand, OxLDL, or anti-LOX-I Fab2-fragment. Strains deficient in WTA synthesis (ΔtarO mutant) showed a similar reduction in binding to HUVEC. Evidence for a direct interaction of WTA and LOX-I was provided by *in vitro* interaction experiments in which the parental strain bound a significantly higher proportion of fluorescent-labeled LOX-I than the ΔtarO mutant. Binding experiments with immobilized purified WTA and LOX-I indicate that secondary modifications of the WTA backbone are crucial for LOX-I binding. Thus, LOX-I seems to be an important receptor for WTA mediated adhesion of *S. aureus* during bloodstream infection.

**435-MPP**

Evaluation of inhibitors of *Staphylococcus aureus* virulence in co-culture based infection models

A. Shekhar1, U. Billiowski1

1Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Braunschweig, Germany

The ability of *S. aureus* to persist in a variety of host niches and the emergence of antibiotic resistance poses a major health concern. The pathogenesis and host immune evasion of *S. aureus* is attributed to a wide array of virulence factors including cytolytic pore-forming toxins. Alpha-hemolysin forms a homoheptameric pore in host cells facilitating the influx of Ca2+ and efflux of K+. These processes
lead to cell and tissue damage, and are considered the prime cause of high lethality rates in patients having developed pneumonia caused by \textit{S. aureus}. Inhibition of alpha-hemolysin activity by low-molecular weight chemical compounds can support therapy of these \textit{S. aureus} infections. In a screening campaign, small molecule inhibitors of alpha-hemolysin activity were identified using the recombinant protein and Ca\textsuperscript{2+} influx in host cells as an indicator.

In order to evaluate the efficacy of the inhibitors, different infection models were established. They consisted of \textit{S. aureus} in contact with either the lung epithelial A549 cell line or macrophage-like phenotype differentiated THP1 cells as representative host cells. The damaging effect of alpha-hemolysin could be detected with the LDH-release assay or via the determination of necrotic death of host cells. The role of alpha-hemolysin for these cytotoxic effects was determined using the alpha-hemolysin-deletion mutant of \textit{S. aureus} as pathogen and the application of the identified inhibitors. Moreover, Western Blot and ELISA confirmed the presence of alpha-hemolysin in cell-culture supernatants. These studies were complemented by RNA-Seq transcriptome analysis highlighting additional effects of alpha-hemolysin activity and of the inhibitors on host cells.

### 436-MPP

The transcriptional regulator RpiRb affects peptidoglycan recycling and cell wall thickness in \textit{Staphylococcus aureus}

R. Gaupp, 1 K. Nofal, 1 M. Borisova, 2 H. Peisker, 1 M. Hannig, 1 M. Bischoff, 1 S. Becker, 1 C. Meyer 2

1 University of Saarland, Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hygiene, Homburg, Germany
2 University of Tübingen, Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Tübingen, Germany
3 University of Saarland, Clinic of Operative Dentistry, Periodontology and Preventive Dentistry, Homburg, Germany

The bacterium \textit{Staphylococcus aureus} is one of the most important pathogens that causes a wide variety of diseases in humans. The ability of \textit{S. aureus} to cause a broad range of infections is related to its ability to synthesize virulence factors that facilitate adaptation to specific host niches. The connection between metabolism and virulence regulation became more obvious in recent years and several metabolite-responsive regulators that mediate this linkage have been described. Recently, members of the metabolite-responsive RpiR (ribose phosphate isomerase regulator) protein family have been associated with the utilization of several carbon sources and/or virulence factor biosynthesis in \textit{S. aureus}. Of these regulators, the rpiRb gene is part of an operon also containing the mupQ, murQ, and murP genes, which are involved in peptidoglycan (PG) recycling. During cell wall turnover, bacteria break down their PG and reutilize the resulting components for the synthesis of new peptidoglycan or as an energy source. Inactivation of the rpiRb-murQ operon results in reduced cell wall thickness compared to the isogenic wildtypes. This is interesting because the adaptive resistance towards clinically highly relevant antibiotics like daptomycin (DAP) has been associated with a thickening of the bacterial cell wall. As a result, the reduced PG-thickness of rpiRb-murQ mutants has a small effect on the susceptibility to DAP in two DAP-non-susceptible clinical isolates. Furthermore, inactivation of rpiRb or the carbon catabolite protein A (ccpA) in \textit{S. aureus} altered the transcript levels of the rpiRb-murQ operon, demonstrating RpiRb and CcpA as important regulators of peptidoglycan recycling.

### 437-MPP

Monoclonal antibodies uncover and inhibit the active center of the MprF lipid flippase impairing \textit{S. aureus} virulence and resistance to host defense peptides

C. Stavetsky 3, 4, J. Hausler 1, C. Ernst 2, A. Kraus 2, A. Peschel 2

1 Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Infection Biology, University of Tübingen, Germany
2 Department of General Pediatrics, Oncology/Hematology, University Children’s Hospital Tübingen, Germany
3 Department of Molecular Biology and Center for Computational and Integrative Biology, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston; Department of Genetics, Harvard Medical School, Boston; The Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Cambridge, Massachusetts
4 United States of America, Boston, MA, United States

Increasing rates of infections by multi-resistant bacteria prompt both search for novel antibiotics and development of new types of agents to eradicate or weaken invading pathogens. To counteract the increasing therapy resistance of \textit{Staphylococcus aureus}, new anti-infective approaches such as the development of quorum sensing inhibitors, phage therapies, or vaccine have been initiated but are still far from clinical application. The lysinylation of negatively charged phosphatidylglycerol by the multiple peptide resistance factor (MprF) protein represents an important virulence strategy of \textit{S. aureus} to resist cationic antimicrobial host peptides (CAMPs) and antibiotics. MprF is a bifunctional membrane protein consisting of separable domains for lysyl phosphatidylglycerol (LysPG) synthesis and LysPG flipping.

We targeted MprF for the development of a novel antibody-based strategy, to fight \textit{S. aureus} infections. Of several MprF-binding mAbs one (mAB39) was found to sensitize \textit{S. aureus} to CAMPs and the antibiotic daptomycin without affecting LysPG synthesis suggesting that it blocked the LysPG translocation process. mAB39 was found to bind to an MprF loop, which had been localized at the inner surface of the cytoplasmic membrane in earlier studies and by prediction tools. Extensive experimental MprF topology analysis revealed that this loop could be found both, at the outer and inner surface of the membrane suggesting a high structural dynamic, which might be related to the lipid translocation process. Treatment of \textit{S. aureus} with mAB39 resulted in increased killing by CAMP-producing phagocytes and improved bacterial clearance in a mouse skin abscess model. We assume that mAB39 inhibits \textit{S. aureus} by blocking the translocation of Lys-PG and we propose to assess its suitability for the therapy of severe \textit{S. aureus} infection either alone or in combination with cationic antibiotics such as daptomycin.

### 438-MPP

Unraveling the molecular mechanism determining type III secretion of transmembrane substrates

*S. Pais*, S. Wagner

1 Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine (IMI), Eberhard Karls University Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany

Type III secretion systems (T3SS) are needle-like molecular machines that allow the transport of proteins across the cell envelope of Gram-negative bacteria, directly into host cell cytosol or membranes to ultimately promote bacterial survival. Among the delivered proteins, named effectors, are those containing transmembrane domains (TMD). Strongly hydrophobic TMD-effectors are prone to be targeted erroneously to the bacterial inner membrane, unless a cognate T3SS chaperone binds the TMD and prevents membrane targeting by the signal recognition particle (SRP). 

\textit{Salmonella}’s pathogenicity island 2 encodes SscB and SseF
that form a chaperone-effector complex. Previously, it was shown that SscB binds to the chaperone binding domain and the adjacent TMD of SseF. The presence of SscB was required to the correct targeting of SseF to T3SS.

In this work, we aim to elucidate the molecular mechanisms that lead to correct targeting to the T3SS rather than to inner membrane insertion through the Sec-dependent pathway. We are mapping the sites of interaction between SscB and SseF to investigate whether T3SS chaperones recognize special features or only the high hydrophobicity of the substrate’s TMD, and if the chaperone is specific to the TMD-effectors. Moreover, we aim to analyze how this interaction is regulated. sscB and sseF are adjacent located within a single operon, which might be relevant to the regulation of expression and interaction of the two proteins. Currently, we are examining how changes in the order, location, and in the intergenic space of sscB and sseF can affect the formation of the SscB-SseF complex and SseF secretion. Overall, the presented results will help clarify the events that lead to target discrimination of TMD-effectors.

439-MPP
The use of bacterial chromosomal mutants to study the lipopolysaccharide of Salmonella
M. Noszka1, E. Krzyżewska1, J. Rybka2
1Hirszfeld Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy Polish Academy of Sciences, Department of Microbiology, Wrocław, Poland
2Hirszfeld Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy, Polish Academy of Sciences, Department of Immunology and Infectious Diseases, Wrocław, Poland

1. Introduction
Salmonella sp. is a Gram-negative rod-shaped, facultative aerobe bacteria, which grows at a temperature from 8 °C to 45 °C and belongs to the Enterobacteriaceae family. On the chromosome of Salmonella sp. there are fourteen pathogenicity islands, which together with plasmid pSLT encode numerous virulence structures and factors, such as: type III secretion system, Sop protein, H antigen, or lipopolysaccharide (LPS), where the latter molecule builds up the upper layer of the outer membrane cellular envelope of Gram-negative bacteria. Three structural domains can be distinguished in the construction of lipopolysaccharide: lipid A, sugar core and O-specific chain, made up of several repeating polysaccharide subunits, containing from 1 to 8 sugar residues. The O-specific chain shows high variability, thanks to which bacteria use it to avoid phagocytosis and the lytic function of the complement system. The proteins Wzx, Wzz and Wzz are responsible for the biosynthesis of O antigen (OAg), they also have an effect on the control of the O-specific chain length.

2. Aim
The aim of this study was to prepare Salmonella enterica subsp. enterica serovar Typhimurium PCM 2255 deletion mutants for the wzzST, wzzST and wzy genes, and to analyze their survival in the presence of human serum.

3. Methods
The recombination-mediated genetic engineering (λ Red) technology was used to construct the mutants. For the LPS isolation the Tri-reagent method was used. The lipopolysaccharide analysis was performed using SDS-PAGE electrophoresis. The survival of the mutants was determined by absorbance analysis (λ 600 nm) and measurement of cfu/ml.

4. Results and conclusion
The experiment confirmed the hypothesis - the shorter the O-specific chain, the greater the mortality of bacterial cells upon the action of complement. The shorter OAg chain probably facilitates the absorption of the membrane attack complex (complement system) onto the outer membrane surface, while LPS with a larger number of sugar subunits prevents the direct binding of the MAC to the outer membrane of the bacterial cell, limiting the activity of the complement.

440-MPP
Role in cell exfoliation of and genomic features associated with α-hemolysin in Escherichia coli
R. Kolda1,2, U. Frommel1, M. Burdukiewicz1, M. Noszka1, R. Hiemann1, J. Weinreich1, D. Roggenbuck3, P. Schierack1
1Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg, Institute of Biotechnology, Senftenberg, Germany
2Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Wrocław, Poland
3Warsaw University of Technology, Warsaw, Poland

1Hirszfeld Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy, Department of Microbiology, Wrocław, Poland

1. Introduction
Pathogenic E. coli uses various virulence factors to promote fitness and survival during infection. The role and importance of alpha-hemolysin (α-hly) in bacterial colonization or pathogenesis remains not fully elucidated. Possible roles of α-hly in E. coli pathogenesis can be exfoliation of epithelial cells to grant access to underlying tissue sites, modulation of host immune response or cell signalling subversion and induction of apoptosis.

2. Objectives
In this study we examined exfoliation of epithelial cells after exposure to hemolysin, investigated the role of α-hly in host cell specific exfoliation and determined the virulence factor repertoire of hemolytic E. coli.

3. Materials & methods
81 hemolytic E. coli were tested for cell line exfoliation of intestinal epithelial (LoVo, IPEC-J2) and uroepithelial (5637, PK-15) cells. Genomes of 81 hemolytic and 139 non-hemolytic E. coli were sequenced. α-hly sequence was analysed and compared with exfoliation phenotype. Bioinformatic analysis of E. coli was conducted with use of Shovill, Prokka, Roary, Scoary, ARIBA, SRST2 and FastTree.

4. Results
Analysis of exfoliation and HlyA sequence revealed presence of HlyA variants responsible for intestinal cell type specific interaction in E. coli isolates from pigs. Moreover the single nucleotide polymorphism in hlyA and hlyB were shown to influence cell line exfoliation irrespectively from cell line origin. Comparison of hemolytic and non-hemolytic E. coli revealed presence of different set of genes or gene variants (in case of adhesins) associated with hemolytic E. coli. Hemolytic E. coli isolates belong to different sequence types and serotypes than non-hemolytic E. coli. Genome wide association study was performed and new virulence factors associated with hemolytic and non-hemolytic E. coli were found.
5. Conclusion

For the first time, exfoliation properties of large set of hemolytic \textit{E. coli} was investigated. We were able to characterize novel variants of \textit{a-ly} associated with cell host specificity. Moreover we characterize virulence gene repertoire for \textit{a-ly}-bearing \textit{E. coli}.

\textbf{441-MPP}

Outer membrane protein biogenesis in \textit{Acinetobacter baumannii}: links to virulence and drug resistance

*K. Leibiger*, I. Autenrieth, M. Schütz

\textit{Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hygiene, Microbiology, Tübingen, Germany}

One of the pathogens ranked with highest priority for development of new therapies are carbapenem-resistant strains of \textit{Acinetobacter baumannii} (Ab) [1]. For \textit{Yersinia enterocolitica} (Ye) and \textit{Pseudomonas aeruginosa} (Pa), our group has previously validated a number of genes (\textit{surA}, \textit{degP}, \textit{bamB}, \textit{bamC}, \textit{skp}) involved in the biogenesis of outer membrane proteins for their potential as novel targets to develop therapeutics that reduce virulence and possibly break resistance. As we had discovered significant break differences of the importance of some of our candidate genes in Ye and Pa, we wanted to determine their relevance also using Ab. To this end, we analysed K.O. mutants for \textit{surA}, \textit{degP}, \textit{bamB}, \textit{bamC} and \textit{skp} of a highly virulent multidrug-resistant Ab strain (\textit{ABS075}). A \textit{surA} knockout in Ye or a conditional \textit{surA} knockout in Pa resulted in reduced serum resistance, enhanced susceptibility to antibiotics and overall reduced virulence of both pathogens [2,3]. Surprisingly, the \textit{surA} knockout mutant of Ab only had very weak phenotypes. Our work thus demonstrates the necessity of exhaustive target validation in multiple species. We also started to analyse the redundancy of the periplasmic chaperone network in Ab. Surprisingly, and in contrast to \textit{E. coli} it seems that Ab possesses an additional bypass of the typical \textit{SurA} and \textit{Skp/DegP} chaperone pathways: we can knock \textit{surA} and \textit{skp} simultaneously without producing a lethal phenotype (as it is the case in \textit{E. coli}[4]).


\textbf{442-MPP}

Hydrolytic enzymes of \textit{Pseudomonas aeruginosa} as potential virulence factors

*N. Babic*, K. E. Jaeger, F. Kovacic

\textit{Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Institute of Molecular Enzyme Technology, Jülich, Germany}

\textit{Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Institute of Bio- and Geosciences (IBG-1), Jülich, Germany}

\textit{Pseudomonas aeruginosa} is an opportunistic pathogen that causes life-threatening infections in immunocompromised patients and is characterized by its high antibiotic resistance. Therefore, the WHO recently classified \textit{P. aeruginosa} as a critical pathogen for research and development of new antibiotics. \textit{P. aeruginosa} produces hydrolases that facilitate degradation of host biomolecules during infections, thereby contributing to virulence through toxic or growth-promoting activities. Among them are several phospholipases and proteases; however, many more hydrolases without known function are thought to be encoded in \textit{P. aeruginosa}.

Our comprehensive sequence homology and 3D structure prediction analyses of \textit{P. aeruginosa} proteins encoded by genes of unknown function revealed 378 putative hydrolases. We aim to experimentally characterize all these hydrolases to identify novel putative virulence factors of \textit{P. aeruginosa}. In a high-throughput approach, we have synthesized by PCR all putative hydrolase genes and cloned them into a newly developed pGUF expression plasmid suitable for heterologous expression in \textit{E. coli} and homologous expression in \textit{P. aeruginosa}. The completion of the expression plasmid library, which presently contains approximately 200 plasmids, is in progress. In first expression experiments using \textit{E. coli} BL21(DE3), eight novel putative hydrolases were expressed as judged by Western blotting. Their unbiased functional characterization using various hydrolase substrates is ongoing.


\textbf{443-EMP}

Multi-purpose \textit{Pseudomonas B1} strain in downstream process of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) monomers for a circular bioeconomy


\textit{Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Microbial Catalysis, Jülich, Germany}

1. Introduction: The global primary production of plastics has been reached 407 million metric tons (MT) in 2015 while polyethylene terephthalate (PET) contributed as much as 33 MT in the market. Surprisingly, 97% of that amount ended as waste and the rest was recycled (1). In the study of \textit{Ideonella sakaiaensis} 201-F6 growing on PET, this strain produces two enzymes, namely PETase and MHETase, which first enzyme is capable to hydrolyze PET and followed by the latter enzyme to convert mono (2-hydroxyethyl) terephthalic acid (MHET) into the two monomers terephthalic acid and ethylene glycol (2). In this study, \textit{Pseudomonas B1} strain, which is isolated from soil rich with brittle plastic waste in a former landfill (Möckern, Leipzig, Germany), was evolved to be able utilize ethylene glycol and terephthalic acid as sole carbon sources.

2. Objective: In the context of circular bio-economy, the monomers from depolymerized PET could be utilized by \textit{Pseudomonas B1} as sole carbon sources to produce valuable product, such as mono-rhamnolipids.

3. Materials and methods: Adaptive laboratory evolution was conducted to enable the strain to utilize ethylene glycol.
Subsequently, *tph* operon either by pBTT vector or by Tn7 transposons was introduced into strain to enable utilizing terephthalic acid.

4. Results: The optimum production (concentration and yield) of mono-hammolipid from mixed monomers by evolved B1 pBTT and evolved B1 Tn7 were 0.33 g/L, 0.06 g/g; 0.24 g/L, 0.05 g/g, respectively.

5. Conclusion: Integrated strain (evolved B1 Tn7) showed similar result as evolved B1 pBTT, which is promising strain for industrial as well as environmental application.

Keywords: waterborne bacteria, resistant genes, water sources.

445-EMP
Antibiotic resistant bacteria and their resistance genes in biofilm samples isolated from model water distribution systems of Hospitality homes in Benin City, Nigeria.

*F. O. Ekhaise1
1University of Benin, Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Life Sciences, Benin City, Nigeria

Water distributed in residential facilities such as Hotels, Inns and Guest houses are generally intended for several purposes like drinking and bathing. It is not sterile, regardless the water treatments been applied. Microbial presence in pipe borne water results in the colonization of the distribution systems infrastructure and biofilm formation. Biofilms are well structured multicellular communities which are buried in a self-produced extra-polymeric substance that functions as an obstacle to antibiotic diffusion. Bacteria in biofilms have some advantage over their free floating counterparts which include protection from disinfectants and ability to resist most antibiotics especially in water piped systems. The aim of this study was to investigate the antibiotic resistance and their resistance genes in biofilms isolated from faucets giving water to end users in hospitality homes. Thirty six biofilm samples were collected from 6 hospitality homes. A total of 108 biofilms bacteria were isolated using spread plate method on R2A medium. Antibiotic susceptibility test was determined using disk diffusion methods. Isolates were characterized using 16S rRNA gene sequencing and three resistance genes; TetA, TetM and ErmB were detected by Polymerase chain reaction. *Alcaligenes faecalis*, *Bacillus cereus*, *Enterobacter sp.*, *Lysinibacillus fusiformis*, *Methylotubacterium fujisawaense*, *Providencia aeruginosa*, *Providencia vermica*, and *Serratia liquefaciens*, were isolated. *Alcaligenes* spp. was the most frequently isolated in all Hospitality homes. TetA, resistance gene was more prevalent. It was detected in 49% of biofilm isolates, TetM, 45%, and ErmB, 46% of all biofilm samples. Bacteria isolated from Biofilm were highly resistant to Chloramphenicol (100%) while lowest resistance was reported for Imipenem (1%). In view of the above, there is therefore an urgent need for the Hotel Management to work out modalities in eliminating biofilm bacteria associated with hospitality homes, which could pose a great public health risk due to the presence of multidrug resistant bacteria harboring antibiotic resistant genes

Reference

444-EMP
Characterization of Antimicrobial Resistant Genes in Waterborne Bacteria Isolated from Various Water Sources in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State Nigeria.

*L. Iroha1,2*, U. U. Ibiarn1,2, C. Ejikegwu1,2, E. Nwakaeta1,2
1,2Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Department of Applied Microbiology, Abakaliki, Nigeria

Background: Aquatic ecosystems are recognized reservoir for antibiotic-resistant bacteria and antibiotic resistance genes. The occurrence and spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria are pressing public health problems that require further clarification. Inadequate water sources for drinking is a serious problem in developing countries like Nigeria especially in rural areas. In this study, the antibiogram and genes responsible for antimicrobial resistance of some important waterborne bacteria were investigated using standard bacteriological and molecular techniques.

Methods: A total of 736 water samples comprising boreholes, ponds, rivers, streams and wells which are source of drinking water in Abakaliki Ebonyi State Nigeria were collected and analyzed for the presence of waterborne bacteria pathogens using standard bacteriological and molecular techniques. The antibiogram of isolated bacteria pathogens to conventional antibiotics was determined by disc diffusion method. Screening for the presence of *blaSHV*, *class 1 Integrin Ac*, *IntI1*, *blaTEM* and *tet genes* in isolated bacteria pathogen was by polymerase chain reaction using specific primers. The clonal relatedness of isolated bacteria was determined using random amplified polymorphic DNA. Results: *Aeromonas hydrophila* (n=103), *Escherichia coli* (n=118) and *Vibrio cholerae* (n=87) were the bacteria pathogens isolated from the water samples. They were susceptible to gentamicin (96.12 %), meropenem (94.17 %), ciprofloxacin (89.32 %), imipenem (85.44 %) and chloramphenicol (84.47 %) but resistant to sulphamethoxazole/trimethoprim, kanamycin, azithromycin, streptomycin, cephalothin and cefuroxime. The isolates were found to be positive for antibiotic resistance genes tested namely *blaCTX-M*, *blaSHV*, *class 1 Integrin Ac*, *IntI1*, *blaTEM* and *tetB*. RAPD of isolated resistance bacteria were resolved into three clusters/groups.

Conclusion: This study revealed that all the water sources tested were contaminated with waterborne bacteria pathogens which harbors antibiotics resistant genes and underscores the need for proper water treatment.

Reference
1. V. Brauer1, A. Akbari1, H. Müller1, R. U. Meckenstock, A. Akkermans, C. P. Flockhart, R. Bruns1
1University Duisburg Essen, Biofilm Centre - Aquatic Microbiology, Essen, Germany

The world’s largest natural asphalt seep, the Pitch Lake in Trinidad and Tobago, harbors water droplets in microliter size (1 -10 µL) originating from the oil reservoir deep below. These water droplets contain diverse and metabolically active microbiomes. In this study we make use of this system to investigate the impact of the anions and cations on microbial community assembly. Ion concentrations were measured with ion chromatography for 46 water droplets
isolated from different sampling sites of the Pitch Lake. The same 46 water droplets were analyzed for their 16S rRNA gene composition by amplicon sequencing and analyzed via mothur pipeline. Multivariate statistics were applied to examine the correlation between sampling site, ion diversity and single OTUs as well as the whole droplet community. For all of the 46 water droplets, more or less different patterns of taxonomic and ion composition were detected.

Based on our measures we can distinguish, if the sampled water droplets originate from the subsurface or if they are an artefact due to sampling or mixture with surface water. We found very similar microbial communities where the inorganic ion concentrations were significantly different but we found also droplets with almost identical ion composition but unequal microbial communities. Our findings show that the ion composition is not determining the microbial community assembly in our system. Only statistically significant correlation between ions and single OTUs was found.

Our findings provide novel insights into these unique and isolated ecosystems and into the role of ion composition on microbial community assembly.


447-EMP
Seasonal shifts in the Fe-cycling microbial community in sediment from a seasonally hypoxic bay (Eckernförde Bay, SW Baltic Sea)
*K. Lauter*, C. Bryce*, F. Scholz*, V. Nik leisure, G. Gonnella*, S. Kurtz*, M. Perner*1
1*GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel, Kiel, Germany
2*Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany
3*Universität Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

Fe is an essential nutrient for almost every living organism on Earth. Marine coastal and shelf sediments are known to be an important source of Fe to the water column, where Fe concentrations are typically low and limit primary productivity in large parts of the oceans. Within sediments the fate and characteristics of Fe are controlled and changed by a variety of biotic and abiotic redox-reactions, which together form the benthic biogeochemical iron cycle. The microbial part of this cycle is driven by three physiological types of Fe(II)-oxidizing microorganisms, i.e. microaerophilic, nitrate-reducing and anoxygenic phototrophic Fe(II)-oxidizers, as well as Fe(III)-reducers. The aim of this study was to investigate how changes in bottom water oxygen concentration and sediment redox-stratification impact the abundance, diversity and distribution of the benthic Fe-metabolizing microbial community over sediment depth and over time. To achieve this, we sampled sediment cores for microbial community and geochemical analyses at Boknis Eck, located in the seasonally hypoxic Eckernförde Bay (SW Baltic Sea), at two time points. (i) In autumn, when the oxygen concentration of the bottom water was low and (ii) in the consecutive spring, when the oxygen concentration in the bottom water was higher. The changes in bottom water oxygen concentration were accompanied by changes in sediment geochemistry, e.g. in gradients and content of Fe and H₂S in the pore water. Based on the presence of 16S rRNA genes, we found that members of all three physiological types of Fe(II)-oxidizers as well as Fe(III)-reducers were present in the sediments at both sampling time points. However, the abundance, diversity and depth-distribution of potential Fe-metabolizers differed between the two sampling time points. We conclude that changes in bottom water oxygen content and sediment geochemistry lead to a change in the composition of the benthic Fe-metabolizing community and thereby potentially impact the microbial contribution to the benthic biogeochemical iron cycle.

448-EMP
Attempts to control microbial community assembly
S. Li1, Z. Liu1, S. Müller2
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

Bacteria grow as community entities in nature. This is the form where they provide their functions driving biochemical processes such as compound production and waste treatment in bio-economy. However, unlike pure strains, knowledge on how microbial communities assemble and vary is still in its infancy. Both stochastic and deterministic processes have been frequently observed in our previous studies. Simple assembly and succession processes of microbial communities or classical niche-based theory cannot explain most of the phenomena observed. The idea of the neutral theory, which regards all organisms in a system equal, could provide an alternative view on processes of community assembly. However, neutral processes might not allow a control of microbial community structures or even functions. Therefore, our aim is to increase deterministic over stochastic processes through manipulated niche selection to strengthen the controllability of microbial community.

One of the strategies which need to be followed will be a testing of environmental disturbance, which selects for certain species combinations and favors deterministic process. By a well-developed workflow based on flow cytometry, the real-time monitoring of the microbial community composition can be realized. Whether the community assembly is predominated by deterministic or stochastic processes can be determined, for instance, by the rank order of abundance distribution of the subcommunities, where a steeper geometric-like slope indicates deterministic processes and a lower lognormal-like slope indicates stochastic processes. This effort to investigate and control the microbial community assembly gives a clue to manageable microbe-driven processes concerning bio-economy.

Keywords: microbial community assembly, flow cytometry, deterministic processes, stochastic processes

449-EMP
Are bacteria key players in decay and preservation processes?
*K. Janssen1, B. Mähler2, G. Bierbaum2, J. Rust2
1Institut für medizinische Mikrobiologie, Immunologie und Parasitologie, Bonn, Germany
2Institut für Geowissenschaften und Meteorologie, Bonn, Germany

The fossilization process in aquatic environments is influenced by abiotic and biotic factors. Especially the impact of bacterial activity remains an unexplored territory. In addition to the decay of organisms, bacteria can contribute to the formation of fossils by synthesizing biofilms and biominerализation. There is nothing known about the species that mediate these processes and if they are intrinsic or extrinsic microorganisms. Experiments yielded first insights into the microbial diversity and changes in the composition of bacterial community.
To analyze microbial shifts, the decay of crayfish specimens (Cambarellus diminutus) under predefined parameters was observed. Temperature (4°C and 24°C), oxygen status (aerobic and anaerobic) and microbiome of the surrounding medium were altered during decay experiments. For 16S amplicon analysis the V4 variable region of the 16S rRNA gene sequence was amplified and sequenced. All reads with 97% identity were sorted into different OTUs which were then compared to a curated database of 16S rRNA sequences.

In all test series performed with untreated lake water (4°C and 24°C) Parabacteroides and Clostridium species dominated the decay process. The activity of these genera led to a fast disarticulation of crayfish tissue. In autoclaved lake water fast growing Aeromonas species were highly abundant and mainly at cold conditions showed hardly visible tissue degradation. Some isolated bacterial species contributed to mineralization processes by their metabolic products.

The aim of this project is to shed light on decay and fossilization processes in limnic systems connected to microbial activity. Important for the analysis is the mutual influence of abiotic and biotic factors with special regard to the complexity of the interactions between specific organisms of the microbiome. First experiments showed an alteration of the microbial community composition after the adaptation to changed abiotic parameters. Besides the observation of physical disarticulation, the influence of chemical, physical and biological parameters will be tested to identify the best conditions for mineralization and fossilization of arthropods.

450-EMP
Shifts in microbial community composition and assessment of antibiotic resistance in thermophilic compost from human faeces

The marine genus Polaribacter (class Flavobacteriaceae) was first proposed as a psychrophilic/psychrotrophic genus by Gosink et al. (1998). However, many recent members have been deemed mesophilic and environmentally diverse. This study sought to develop a species description of the Polaribacter strain ANORD1T, and in tandem enhance the current limited knowledge on the general characteristics of this genus.

ANORD1T was isolated from the biofilm of a stone along the shore at Nordstrand, Germany and phylogenically characterised. Colony and cell morphological tests were carried out, while physiological and biochemical features were defined via abiotic parameters, metabolic interactions and the biochemical constitution of the strain. The strain's antibiotic resistance profile was also assessed. Importantly, the phylogenetic relationship of ANORD1T to other species in the genus was evaluated. To establish a comparison, experiments were simultaneously carried out with the type strains of ANORD1T's next three relatives: Polaribacter gangiennensis K17-16T, Polaribacter porphyrae LNM-20T and Polaribacter reichenbachii KMM 6386T under the same conditions.

Phylogenetic analysis of the 16S rRNA gene sequence showed that ANORD1T was most closely related to P. reichenbachii KMM 6386T (96.7 % 16S rRNA gene sequence similarity), P. porphyrae LNM-20T (96.9 %) and P. gangiennensis K17-16T (96.6 %). Recently, a new species (P. aquimarinus ZY113T) was described (Xu et al., 2019) and is now the closest-related (97.6 %) to ANORD1T. Like all Polaribacter members, ANORD1T is Gram-negative, non-motile, strictly aerobic, MK-6 positive, flexirubin-negative and carotenoid-positive. Optimal growth was observed at 20 – 30 °C, 2 – 7 % salinity and at pH 7 – 10. ANORD1T's major fatty acids differed from the reference strains. ANORD1T and the reference strains shared very similar antibiotic profiles, and were all found to be resistant to aminoglycoside-class compounds.

From this polyphasic approach, ANORD1T represents a novel species in the genus Polaribacter, with the proposed name Polaribacter septentrionalilitoris sp. nov. The type strain is ANORD1T (DSM 1100391 =NCIMB 15081⇒MTCC 12685T).

452-EMP
Interactions of cyanobacteria with predators
Cyanobacteria live as primary producers in ecosystems together with many predators. Their successful propagation in these environments implies efficient defense mechanisms against predation by amoeba, fungi or predatory bacteria. This project aims to look into the recognition of the predator as well as the preparation and execution of the actual defense mechanism. Since the intercellular communication in filamentous cyanobacteria is not limited to adjacent cells but extends to the whole filament, the response of the entire filament during an attack is a main interest of the project. To investigate the defense mechanisms of *Anabaena variabilis*, we started to isolate predatory bacteria from aquatic habitats. From a pond in Tübingen, we found an unknown predatory bacterium of the phylum Bacteroidetes. A life cell imaging video shows, that it is filamentous and moves by gliding motility (probably driven by chemotaxis) towards its prey, nestles up closely and lyset a cyanobacterial filament within minutes. This finding represents one of the few examples of predatory bacteria feeding on a freshwater cyanobacterium. Recent results show that the spore like cells of *A. variabilis* (akinetes) are resistant to predation of this particular predatory bacterium.

### 453-EMP

**The bacterial indoor surface microbiome before and after entry into service of a newly built hospital wing**

*M. Grohmann*, A. K. Witte, HTK Hygiene Technologie Kompetenzzentrum, Bamberg, Germany

**Introduction:**

Built indoor environments have shown to be complex and highly dynamic microbial ecosystems. This has, especially in hospital environments, important implications for human health. Moreover, hospitals harbour daily many different patients with high fluctuation and various infections (partially acquired during hospitalisation), are specially cleaned and thus are offering special conditions for the microbiome. The factors that determine the diversity and composition of microorganisms in this environment remain unclear. Objectives: This present study examined the change of the bacterial microbiome before and after opening of a new hospital wing by 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing analysis. Further, it aimed to investigate the (long-term) influence of cleaning and disinfection intervention to the microbiome development.

**Materials & methods:** Swab samples were taken after completed construction work, after final cleaning of the rooms, and at three different time points after occupation and regular operation. Moreover, three rooms were cleaned with disinfectant wipes to monitor if and how the microbiome changes. DNA was extracted, PCR primers were used to amplify the variable regions 3 & 4 of the 16S rRNA and the corresponding libraries were sequenced in a MiSeq system. After raw data quality filtering and processing, community composition and diversity analysis was conducted. Results: Microbiomes of the door handles, floor, sink, remote controls (contact with the patient) and inside of the cabinet (almost no direct contact with the patient) were compared both between each other and between different time points. On samples with direct skin contact (door handles and remote contact), typical dermal bacteria were found. Sink samples offering a different milieu for bacterial growth differentiate from the other samples as expected. Conclusion: The longitudinal study of hospital environmental samples by high-throughput sequencing of bacterial 16S rRNA provides insights into different aspects of the microbial community composition and can be used for detection of shifts in the microbiome.

### 454-EMP

**Glutathione-dependent metabolism in actinobacteria**

*A. C. Lienkamp*, T. Heine, T. Dischler, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Microbial Biotechnology, Bochum, Germany

Actinobacteria are known to utilize mycothiol as main low molecular weight thiol. Analogous to glutathione (GSH), it maintains a reducing environment in the cells and functions as cellular redox buffer. Therefore, occurrence of GSH in actinobacteria is rare. The two verified metabolic roles of GSH in actinobacteria are the degradation of isoprene and the degradation of styrene. Both pathways follow roughly the same scheme, starting with an oxidation of the substrate to its epoxide via a monooxygenase followed by subsequent conversion by a glutathione S-transferase (GST) and a set of dehydrogenases. The final product supplies the central metabolism enabling the use of the respective compound as sole carbon source for the organism. In both cases, some aspects of the pathways still require clarification. Isoprene degradation is known for various microorganisms and is well studied in *Rhodococcus* sp. AD45 whereas GSH-dependent styrene degradation is currently under investigation in *Gordonia rubripertincta* CWB2. Though, it has been described in other microorganisms utilizing an isomerase instead of a GST. Horizontal gene transfer was postulated as origin for these pathways as for many GSH-dependent enzymes. Isoprene is a volatile, toxic compound emitted in huge amounts by plants. It is highly reactive and has complex impacts on the climate, health and air quality. Yet, little is known about the general biological cycling of isoprene making its investigation relevant. Additionally, new biotechnological tools can be drawn from the bacterial degradation pathway e.g. new routes for detoxification of chlorinated ethene epoxides. Styrene is a volatile, toxic compound produced in high quantities in industrial processing creating a necessity for its bioremediation and pollution prevention. The central metabolite in bacterial styrene degradation, phenylacetic acid, has industrial value due to its versatile use as precursor for pharmaceuticals, fragrances and flavors. This study presents a comparative analysis of the genomic background and chosen protein sequences including current protein biochemistry research. It aims at an evolutionary understanding of this diverse topic.

### 455-EMP

**Daily discharges of antibiotic resistance genes and facultative pathogenic bacteria by wastewater treatment plants with different catchment areas**

*J. Alexander*, N. Hembach, T. Schwartz, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Institute of Functional Interfaces (IFG), Department Microbiology / Molecularbiology, Eggenstein-Leopoldshafen, Germany

In total 25 wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs), which contain percentages from livestock and food processing, hospital effluents or municipal wastewater, have been investigated for their daily emission of facultative pathogens and clinically relevant antibiotic resistance genes (ARGs).

The analyzed ARGs included blaTEM, ermB, tetM, sul1 as well as the more clinically relevant ARGs CMY2, CTX-M15, CTX-M32, blaOXA48, blaNDM-1, blaVIM2, KPC-3, vanA, and mcr-1. The facultative pathogenic bacteria included

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*A. Bauer*, E. Kemeni, K. Forchhammer, *Universität Tübingen, Organismic Interactions, Tübingen, Germany*  
*Universität Tübingen, Microbial Interactions, Tübingen, Germany*
Acinetobacter baumannii, Klebsiella pneumoniae, Pseudomonas aeruginosa, Escherichia coli, and Enterococcus faecium / faecalis as well as Staphylococcus aureus. The discharges of ARGs emitted to the aquatic environments averaged about 4 x 10^{14} cell equivalents (CE) per day. The highest average abundance of ARGs was measured in a WWTP, which treated hospital wastewater. Despite a significantly higher drainage volume, larger sewage treatment plants do not necessarily show an increased emission of ARGs compared to smaller wastewater treatment plants. The emission of facultative pathogenic bacteria in the investigated WWTP effluents were up to 3-log below the average ARG abundances (1.34 x 10^{12} CE/day). An important difference between hospital wastewater-affected and non-affected WWTPs was observed in the facultative-pathogenic bacteria. In hospital-influenced WWTPs these bacteria highly correlated with the critical ARGs like blaNDM-1 (Pearson index: E. coli 0.395, K. pneumoniae 0.766, A. baumannii 0.723, P. aeruginosa 0.815, enterococci 0.782) or vanA (Pearson index: enterococci 0.718). Such positive correlations were also observed for other resistance genes against antibiotics of last resorts, but in lower ranges. To avoid a further dissemination of antibiotic resistant bacteria to the aquatic environment, advanced wastewater treatment technologies were investigated. Here, combinations of ozonation with ultrafiltration were found to be most successful to reduce these microbial contaminations below the detection limits. Now, regulations and guidelines are recommended to support the public health protection as recommended by the WHO, UN-Assembly, and G7 summit.

### 457-EMP

Genomic resolution of a Saccharibacteria-dominated enrichment culture amended with crude oil/gasoline mixture

*P. A. Figueroa-Gonzalez1, F. Révész2, A. Táncsics2, A. J. Probst1*

1University of Duisburg-Essen, Group for Aquatic Microbial Ecology, Institute for Environmental Microbiology and Biotechnology, Essen, Germany

2Szent István University, Regional University Center of Excellence in Environmental Industry, Gödöllő, Hungary

### Introduction

Saccharibacteria represent the best studied phylum of the Candidate Phyla Radiation (CPR), yet little is known about their involvement in hydrocarbon degradation. We recently described the community composition of crude oil/gasoline mix enrichment cultures based on 16S rRNA gene analyses and detected a Saccharibacteria in one of the cultures [1].

### Objectives

We investigate the strain diversity and metabolism of Saccharibacteria in a crude oil/gasoline enrichment culture.

### Methods

Duplicates (AER1 and AER2) of aerobic enrichment cultures amended with a mixture of crude oil/gasoline were studied using genome-resolved metagenomics coupled to phylogenomics along with community analyses based on ribosomal protein S3 (rpS3). To study the metabolism at the community level we searched predicted proteins from assembled scaffolds using KofamKOALA HMM profiles. Additionally, selected high-quality genomes were annotated in Genosscopes® MaGe to elucidate the metabolic potential of Saccharibacteria in the enrichment.

### Results

Three Saccharibacteria genomes were obtained from AER2, named Sac1, Sac2, and Sac3, but were absent in AER1. Sac1 and Sac2 are the same species (ANI 100%) but depicted different strains distinctly related to Sac3 (ANI 73.92%) based on phylogenetic analyses. Sac1 and Sac2 were the most abundant organisms but Sac3 had only an average coverage of eleven. While genomes of Sac1 and Sac2 appeared to have a specialized metabolism (e.g., lactate fermentation), Sac3 revealed a more generic capacity. The adaptation of the community for hydrocarbon degradation was encoded only in other bacterial genomes representing the majority of the rest of the community. Based on relative abundance, a Gammaproteobacteria could be the host of at least one of the Saccharibacteria.

### Conclusion

The presence of Saccharibacteria in hydrocarbon-degrading enrichment cultures implies an indirect influence of these organisms on the break-down of these compounds by taking up metabolites from hydrocarbon-degrading hosts. The metabolic diversity of Saccharibacteria in this culture suggest a strong adaption to the respective host’s metabolism.


### 458-EMP

Exploring activity in complex microbial communities using transcriptomic gene expression networks

*D. Becker1, M. Graf1, F. Bonk1, D. Popp1, H. Harms1, F. Center2*

1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

2While metagenomics is a popular technique to analyze the whole genome of microbial communities, metatranscriptomics additional provides information on the actual metabolic activity (gene expression) of all species present in the community. Besides the analysis of transcribed genetic information of individual species, correlating the activity of genes across species gives rise to gene expression networks (GENs), which can be explored in order to assess activity and detect microbial interactions in the context of anaerobic digestion (AD).

Two continuously stirred tank reactors digesting short chain fatty acids using two feeding regimes (continuously and pulsed) served as the experimental setup. Results of metatranscriptomics (sequenced by the Illumina HiSeq platform) were transferred into GENs using different multivariate clustering approaches.

Both feeding regimes showed similar methane production rates. Metatranscriptomic data revealed a shift of transcriptional activity of the archaea in response to discontinuous feeding compared to continuous feeding. The transcript counts for Methanoseta decreased, whereas Methanosarcina counts increased after a feeding pulse. Until the next feeding pulse, the activity level reached to the pre-pulse state. The bacterial community showed only minor differences in transcript counts.

Complex GENs were derived from the metatranscriptomic data. Depending on the applied method, GENs varied. As a proof-of-concept that biologically meaningful results can be obtained from such networks, we found mcrA-subunits to be consistently correlated with each other across all tested methods. Additionally, the propionate degradation pathway could partially be reconstructed.
Metatranscriptomic data showed that AD can be maintained despite discontinuous feeding and that other methanogens become active. The opportunity to reveal activity and interactions within microbial communities using GENs is poorly explored, yet. Our first results indicate that the reconstruction of metabolic pathways based on GENs is in principle possible. To fully assess their utility, however, the derived networks still need to be analyzed in a more systematic manner.

459-EMP
Microbial Redox Reactions During Underground Storage of Hydrogen
A. Dohrmann1, * M. Krüger1
1BGR, Geomicrobiology, Hannover, Germany

Underground storage of hydrogen (H2) could be an alternative or important supplement to store large amounts of surplus electricity gained from renewable energies. However, there is still lack of knowledge about fundamental biogeochemical aspects of underground H2 storage. The BMBF-funded project H2_ReaCT investigates fundamental petrophysical, geochemical and biogeochemical aspects of underground H2 storage. The work presented here addresses the microbial consumption of H2 and the involved microorganisms at potential underground storage sites.

Microbial consumption of H2 is still a major uncertainty factor for underground H2 storage. Microbial life is widespread in the crust of the earth and geological formations suitable for underground H2 storage often contain a deep subsurface biosphere. Thus, an underground H2 storage site needs to be seen as a habitat for microorganisms. Microbial activity at the H2 storage site might affect the stored H2 as well as the integrity of the storage site itself. A specific interest is to gain information about microbial activity that might result in a loss of stored H2 as well as the production of unwanted metabolic products e.g. H2S. The importance of specific conditions with relevance for underground H2 storage i.e. elevated pressure, high temperature and rock material, will be addressed.

Hydrogen consumption by a natural abundant microbial community from a porous rock reservoir fluid was observed. Hydrogen was consumed at different temperature and pressure conditions relevant for H2 underground storage. Currently effects of several geochemical parameters on microbial H2 consumption are studied in more detail. Microbial H2 consumption was shown to be sulfate dependent and led to the formation of sulfide. Furthermore, effects of H2 consumption on the microbial community composition were studied by high-throughput sequencing of 16S rRNA gene amplicons. Comparative studies identify an increase of sulfate reducing bacteria during microbial H2 consumption. These results indicate the oxidation of H2 by sulfate reducing bacteria to be the presumed process in this porous rock reservoir fluid.

460-EMP
Microbial hydrocarbon degradation potentials in shoreline and deep-sea sediments around Svalbard and possible ways for their stimulation
S. Bartholomaeus1, M. Blumenberg2, N. Straaten1, S. C. Chen3, * M. Krüger1
1BGR, Geomicrobiology, Hannover, Germany
2BGR, Resource Geochemistry, Hannover, Germany
3UFZ, Isotope Biogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany

The diversity and metabolic potentials of the microbial communities inhabiting sediments in the Northern Barents Sea are largely unknown. Recent reports on natural methane seeps as well as the increase in hydrocarbon exploration activities in the Arctic initiated our studies on the potential of indigenous microbial communities to degrade methane and higher hydrocarbons under in situ pressure and temperature conditions. Furthermore, the subseaflow geochemistry in these areas was studied, together with important microbial groups, like methanotrophs, methanogens, metal and sulfate reducers, which may drive seafloor ecosystems in the Northern Barents Sea. A recent focus is on the evaluation of different approaches to stimulate oil degradation by the indigenous microbial populations.

The potential of the indigenous microorganisms to degrade methane and higher hydrocarbons as well as different oils under in situ temperatures and pressures was widespread in surface sediments of the study area. Degradation rates were higher under aerobic than under anaerobic conditions, and decreased with increasing sediment as well as water depths, i.e. increasing pressures. Compared to other sites, like the Gulf of Mexico, rates in shelf surface sediments were in a similar range. However, in greater water depths rates were substantially lower, in accordance with lower cell numbers and the lower in situ temperatures. The addition of different nutrient solutions increased microbial biomass and oil degradation rates. The degradation of the added oils was verified by organic geochemical analyses. Similar activity distribution patterns were found for other metabolic processes, including sulfate, Fe and Mn reduction as well as carbon dioxide and methane production rates. Ongoing molecular biological analyses of original sediments and enrichment cultures show the presence of diverse and varying hydrocarbon-degrading microbial communities.

461-EMP
The metabolic relationship of a novel cellulolytic consortium with high potential in lignocellulose degradation
* R. Rettenmaier1, * Y. Liu1, * S. Vanderhaeghen1
1Technische Universität München, Lehrstuhl für Mikrobiologie, Freising, Germany

Nature harbours a rich diversity of polysaccharide-degrading bacteria and enzymes but to date the research in this field is mainly concentrated on a few model organisms. In order to find new industrially relevant enzymes for the degradation of plant biomass, it is vital to expand the portfolio of studied organisms and enzymes.

Therefore, cellulolytic organisms were isolated from a mesophilically-operated biogas plant fed with maize silage in previous studies. Interestingly, a mixed isolate, for which 16S rRNA amplicon sequencing indicated novel species or genera, showed high potential in lignocellulose degradation. In contrast to the pure cultures, the consortium metabolizes most of the tested polysaccharides and growth experiments indicated a potential co-evolution stabilized by intertwined metabolic adaptations of the different organisms.

To prove our hypothesis, three pure cultures isolated from the consortium, including a novel member of the family Lachnospiraceae, were characterized and their genomes sequenced. In order to clarify the relationships within the consortium, we are performing crossfeeding approaches with poly- and monosaccharides released in the supernatant. The secreted enzymes were characterized in the supernatant by secretome analysis via mass spectrometry and by enzyme
assays. Further, we choose enzymes from two gene clusters of one cellulolytic isolate for expression and characterization as this strain has a vast variety of glycoside hydrolase genes for the depolymerization of the major polysaccharides in plant cell wall. The selected enzymes showed high substrate specificities for a synergistic degradation of lignocellulose.

Those experiments will demonstrate the multiple strategies deployed by microbes to efficiently utilize the plant biomass as their diets.

462-EMP
Variation in arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal communities associated with lowland rice (Oryza sativa) along a gradient of soil salinity and arsenic contamination in Bangladesh 1S. Parvin1, M. Van Geel1, T. Yeasmin1, B. Lievens1, O. Honnay2
1University of Leuven (KU Leuven), Biology, Leuven, Belgium
2University of Rajshahi, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Rajshahi, Bangladesh

Rice is an essential food crop that nourishes more than 50% of the world population. In many regions of Bangladesh rice production is constrained by high soil salinity and heavy metal contamination due to irrigation practices. Plants may naturally overcome such stress through mutualistic interactions with arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF). Yet, little is known regarding the diversity and composition of AMF communities in rice fields with high saline and arsenic concentration. Here we used high throughput Illumina sequencing to characterize AMF communities in rice roots from 45 Bangladeshi rice fields, along a large geographical gradient of soil salinity and arsenic contamination. We obtained 77 operational taxonomic units (OTUs, based on a sequence similarity threshold of 97%) from eight AMF families, and showed that high soil salinity and arsenic concentration are significantly associated with low AMF diversity in rice roots. Soil salinity and arsenic concentration also explained a large part of the variation in AMF community composition, but also soil pH, moisture, organic matter content and plant available soil phosphorus played an important role. Overall, our study showed that even at very high salinity and arsenic levels, some AMF OTUs are present in rice roots. Their potential role in mediating a reduction of rice stress and arsenic uptake remains to be investigated.

463-EMP
High variability of plasmid transfer rates in Escherichia coli isolates
*K. Flade1,2, D. Kneis3, S. Heß1
1TU Dresden, Institute of Microbiology, Dresden, Germany
2TU Dresden, Dresden, Germany

Horizontal gene transfer is assumed to play a key role for the spread of antibiotic resistance in aquatic environments. However, it is not known at present to what extent conjugation, transformation and transduction contribute, respectively. In the laboratory, transfer rate constants have been measured for a variety of plasmids, donors and recipients. However, the employed strains typically had a long history in laboratories. Existing data are, therefore, not necessarily representative for real-world environments. Moreover, information on the inter-strain variability of plasmid transfer rates is scarce. Using a high-throughput approach, we studied the transfer of the RP4 plasmid between Serratia marcescens (donor) and various Escherichia coli recipients (conjugation) and tested the ability to uptake cell-free plasmids by the latter (transformation). The recipients were isolated from human-borne sewage and river sediments. Comparing the process rate constants of both mechanisms, conjugation was by far more effective. The rate constants of the latter generally followed a log-normal distribution with considerable variance. The conjugation rate constants for good and poor recipients (95 and 5% quantile) differed by more than three orders of magnitude. Specifically, the inter-strain variability of the conjugation rate constant was large in comparison to alterations induced by low-level antibiotic exposure. We did not find evidence for diverging transfer efficiencies between E. coli recipients of different origin. On average, strains isolated from river bottom sediments were equally efficient in the uptake of RP4 as isolates extracted from sewage. We conclude that E. coli strains persisting in the aquatic environment and those of direct human origin share a similar intrinsic potential for the horizontal transfer of certain plasmids. Our findings underline the possible importance of aquatic systems for the uptake, storage and release of resistance genes. In view of the large inter-strain variability, we propose to work towards probabilistic modeling of the environmental spread of antibiotic resistance.

464-EMP
Screening for alkaliphilic cyanide-producing bacteria
*C. Schuster1, J. Sluka1, N. Fester2, E. Popova3, M. Amberger3, Y. Tiffert1, E. Gabor1, A. Kletzin1
1Technische Universität Darmstadt, Mikrobiologie, Darmstadt, Germany
2BRAIN AG, Zwingenberg, Germany

Introduction: Some microorganisms produce cyanide as secondary metabolite, which can be used for bioleaching of precious metals. They also might provide protective benefits for plant growth, however, the best-known cyanide-producing bacteria Chromobacterium violaceum and P. aeruginosa are biosafety level-two organisms. Cyanide production is catalyzed by a membrane-associated cyanide-forming glycine dehydrogenase (CGDH) encoded by the hcn gene cluster.

Objectives: We screened neutral and alkaline soils and pond sediments aiming the isolation of alkaliphilic cyanide-producing bacteria with the biosafety-level one.

Methods: Samples collected from different habitats were serially diluted and spread on cyanide-containing solid media (pH 9-12). Cyanide production was assayed by the methemoglobin method. The hcn gene cluster of one isolate was expressed in Escherichia coli. Modeling of the CGDH was performed with the I-Tasser web server.

Results: Among 900 cyanide-resistant colonies, 121 alkali tolerant cyanide-producing microorganisms were isolated from soil samples collected around Darmstadt. The organisms grew at pH 9-10 and were related to the Gammaproteobacteria or Firmicutes, and while Actinobacteria were also identified. In addition, 49 cyanide-producing bacteria were isolated from Austrian soda lakes, most of them belonging to the Firmicutes. Some gammaproteobacterial isolates belonged to biological risk group two so that processing was discontinued. Only a few isolates showed production rates comparable to C. violaceum, the most efficient cyanide producer so far.

After expression of the hcn gene cluster of one Pseudomonas isolate in E. coli, cyanide production was in the range of 1-2 mg/L, showing that the CGDH is functional. The three subunits modeled into a heterotrimer showed two central and apparently linked FeS cluster-like arrangements.
Conclusion: Numerous bacteria were isolated from different habitats, most of which have not been described as cyanide producers before. The hcn-gene clusters in different bacteria do not always have the same gene arrangement but structure predictions are possible and will be discussed.

**465-EMP**

CO$_2$/HCO$_3^-$ accelerates the iron reduction through phenolic compounds

F. Müller, J. Rapp, A. L. Hacker, A. Feith, R. Takors, B. Blombach

1Technical University of Munich, Microbial Biotechnology, Straubing, Germany
2University of Stuttgart, Institute of Biochemical Engineering, Stuttgart, Germany

Iron is essential for almost all kind of life. Despite its great abundance in the Earth’s crust, its accessibility for microorganism is often limited because poorly soluble ferric iron (Fe$^{3+}$) is the predominant oxidation state in aerobic environments. The reduction of Fe$^{3+}$ is, thus, of central importance to meet the cellular demand of ferrous iron (Fe$^{2+}$). Since previous work had disclosed a link between an increased CO$_2$ proportion in the inlet air of a bioreactor cultivation and the iron induced transcriptional response of Corynebacterium glutamicum (Blombach et al., 2013), this study was intended to characterise the mode of interaction.

We constructed a reporter strain based on the master regulator of iron homeostasis, DtxR, to monitor the intracellular Fe$^{2+}$ concentration. To identify the origin of Fe$^{2+}$, iron reduction was addressed in a number of deletion mutants in C. glutamicum, enzyme and chemical assays as well as by LC-MS-QTOF analysis of potential reductants.

Our reporter strain indicated a greater activation state of DtxR, when it was cultivated with 20 % (v/v) CO$_2$ in the inlet air (bioreactor) or when 30 mM NaHCO$_3$ was supplemented in shaking flasks. We found that CO$_2$/HCO$_3^-$ did not provide a co-stimulus for DtxR activation nor was there an interaction with the cell physiology. However, HCO$_3^-$ accelerated the formation of Fe$^{3+}$/protocatechuic acid (PCA) complexes by 46 % and, consequently, enhanced the redox reaction yielding reduced Fe$^{2+}$ and oxidised PCA. Other phenolic compounds could replace PCA as reductants in the reaction equivalently. Since the greater intracellular Fe$^{2+}$ pool in C. glutamicum was apparently caused by the chemical iron reduction and phenolic compounds as well as CO$_2$/HCO$_3^-$ are wide spread in nature, we think that this abiotic mechanism is of broad significance in other biological as well as geochemical systems.

References:

**466-EMP**

The author has not agreed to a publication.

**467-EMP**

Hidden in soil: Omics approach for the discovery and analysis of natural products from Streptomycetes

L. Sagurna, L. S. Kaufmann, T. Busche, C. Rückert, J. Kalinowski, J. Bandow

Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Applied Microbiology, Bochum, Germany
Universität Bielefeld, Center for Biotechnology, Bielefeld, Germany

Natural products are well known to be a great source of compounds for drug discovery. More than 50% of the drugs in use originate from natural products. Hidden in soil, bacteria of the genus *Streptomyces* still have a high potential to produce novel natural products. Although many of their natural products are already known, current omics studies showed that the full biosynthetic potential of *Streptomyces* species has yet to be fully exploited.

Here we present a workflow for the discovery and analysis of natural products produced by *Streptomyces* bacteria by combing genomics and metabolomics. As a starting point, to obtain a set of diverse and potentially novel natural product producers, we isolated about 190 bacteria from different soil samples. The growth of the strains was characterized as were the siderophore- and antibiotic-production employing a chrome azurol S (CAS) dye-based assay [2] and cocultivation with gram-positive and gram-negative test strains, respectively. The DNA of the strains was subjected to nanopore and illumina sequencing to identify strains. The assembled genomes were further used to predict biosynthetic gene clusters using the software tool antiSMASH [3] to determine the genetic basis for the biosynthetic potential of the strains.

Thus, we started building a library of isolates from different soil samples and characterized their biosynthetic potential on a genomic level. Future efforts will be directed at the detection of novel natural products using metabolomics [4], their subsequent purification, structure elucidation, and finally their biological and pharmacological characterization.

[1] Maldonado-Carmona et al., COPHAR 2019, 48, 1


**468-EMP**

Improved methods for differentiation of live and dead bacteria in bioaerosol analyses

A. Grünberg, D. C. Pöther, A. Gessner, U. Jäckel

1Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Biological Agents, Berlin, Germany
2State Office for Nature, Environment and Consumer Protection, Essen, Germany

Introduction and Objectives

Bioaerosol exposure can lead to adverse health effects with risk of infection due to alive bacteria. Alive as well as dead microorganisms can cause allergic and toxic effects. Up to now, in bioaerosol analysis culture based methods (CM) are predominantly applied. However, culture independent methods (CIM) have not been tested yet to discriminate alive from dead cells in bioaerosols. Thus, the hazardous potential of bioaerosols is currently hard to assess.

Therefore, the aim of this study was the establishment and comparison of different assays to discriminate alive from dead cells for bioaerosol analyses.

Material and Methods
In this study two CIM for live-dead differentiation were established for later bioaerosol analyses. Methodological limitations were determined and results of CIM compared to results of CM. Defined cell counts of heat-inactivated and live bacteria from pure cultures of *Staphylococcus* and *Escherichia* were used for establishing differentiation methods. Quantified ratios of live and dead cells were analysed by (i) live-dead staining prior to fluorescence microscopy and (ii) PMA treatment prior to DNA extraction.

**Results and Conclusion**

Heat treatment was found to be the most appropriate method to inactivate cells but maintain cell shape. In both CIM PMA was used for labelling dead cells with defined concentrations for each target species. For both species, no significant differences between expected and determined live-dead-ratios were detected. However, cultivation underestimated the real cell counts by several magnitudes. The results show that the size of cell agglomerates correlates with the underestimation factor for different species.

The newly developed CIM will enable the quantitative differentiation between living and dead bacteria in bioaerosol analyses. Further investigations targeting e.g. the influence of the sampling filters on vitality will lead to a better understanding of the live-dead-ratio in bioaerosols and their potential health risk in different settings.

**469-EMP**

**Insights into the microbial community structure and function of a unique terrestrial subsurface ecosystem located in a geologically active rift region**

*D. Lipus*, D. Wagner²,², Q. Liu³, K. Tinker³, D. Gulliver³, J. Kallmeyer³

¹GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences, Geomicrobiology, Potsdam, Germany
²University of Potsdam, Institute of Geosciences, Potsdam, Germany
³National Energy Technology Laboratory, Geomicrobiology, Pittsburgh, United States

**Question:**

With frequent seismic activity, consistently high CO₂ concentrations, and temperatures beyond 100 °C, the Eger Rift in Western Bohemia represents a rare subsurface ecosystem and scientifically relevant location to study microbial behavior and bio-geo interactions under extreme conditions. Despite recent advances the role of microbial communities and their metabolic processes in terrestrial subsurface settings remains poorly understood, leaving the question how these microorganisms thrive and survive in such an environment unanswered.

**Methods:**

To investigate microbial life in this rare environment we collected sediment samples from a core drilled across 240 m into an active Mofette as part of the Intercontinental Drilling Program "Drilling the Eger Rift". Applying an innovative DNA extraction approach we were able to recover DNA for genomic investigations from this low biomass environment. Microbial abundance was assessed using qPCR, while 16S rRNA amplicon and metagenomic approaches were utilized to explore microbial community composition and metabolic potential.

**Results:**

Microbial abundance ranged between 10² to 10⁷ 16S rRNA gene copy numbers, and demonstrated microbial life to persist in the terrestrial subsurface below 200 meters. We discovered a novel microbial community dominated by acidophilic and fermentative Proteobacteria and Firmicutes that is driven by pH and has adapted to thrive in the unique subsurface settings. Both qPCR and amplicon sequencing revealed the presence of methanogenic Archaea across core sediments. Reconstruction and annotation of a distinct array of metagenome assembled genomes (MAGs) will allow us to investigate metabolic processes, build metabolic networks, and identify bio-geo interactions potential.

**Discussion:**

Our results suggest CO₂ to be a major energy and driving force in this unique ecosystem. Our data also demonstrates that hydrogen liberated from caverns or due to shearing stress in the rocks during seismic events may be utilized by microbes. Altogether, this study advances the current understanding of microbial life in tectonic subsurface systems and provides valuable data for future explorations.

**407-EMP**

**Characterization of *Acinetobacter* spp. isolated from input (livestock and avians manure) and output samples of German biogas plants**

*D. Pulami¹, T. Schauss², M. Mishra², G. Wilharm³, J. Bender³, J. Blom³, T. Eisenberg⁴, A. Goesmann⁵, P. Kämpfer⁶, S. P. Glaeser⁷

¹Justus Liebig University Giessen, Institute of applied microbiology, Gießen, Germany
²Robert Koch Institute, Wernigerode, Germany
³Justus Liebig University Giessen, Institute for Bioinformatics and Systems Biology, Gießen, Germany
⁴Landesbetrieb Hessisches Landeslabor, Giessen, Germany
⁵GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences, Geomicrobiology, Potsdam, Germany
⁶Landesbetrieb Hessisches Landeslabor, Giessen, Germany

Studies on the environmental occurrence and distribution of clinically relevant multidrug resistant (MDR), nosocomial and opportunistic *Acinetobacter* spp. are rare. The application of manure as biofertilizer on fields is a critical source for release of MDR bacteria from livestock husbandry into the environment. The aim of this investigation was to study the release of *Acinetobacter* spp. into environment after the anaerobic manure processing in biogas plants (BGP).

Input and output material of 15 German BGP collected in 2012 and 2013 were analysed. Abundance of *Acinetobacter* spp. in manure applied to BGP and the released digestate was quantified by a cultivation-independent approach. *Acinetobacter* spp. isolates cultured by a non-target approach from manure and digestate were characterized in detail phylogenetically by 16S rRNA and gyrB-rpoB gene sequencing, blaOXA51-typing, MALDI-TOF, Multi Locus Sequence Typing (MLST), comparative genomics, and physiological growth properties.

The concentration of *Acinetobacter* spp. 16S rRNA gene copies was in the range of 10⁶ to 10⁷ per g fresh weight in input material (mixed manure samples) and decreased (partially significantly) to a still quite high concentration in the range of 10⁵ to 10⁶ per g fresh weight in BGP digestates. Twelve *Acinetobacter* isolates were cultured from input and five from output materials. Four isolates obtained from 3 different input materials and two isolates from 2 digestates were identified as *A. baumannii*. The isolates represented partially known but also new *blaOXA51* and ST-types. The strains were able to grow at 42 °C (process temperature of BGP)s and survived 14 days of anaerobic incubation. Genome sequence analysis showed the presence of AmpC β-lactamases, several intrinsic resistance efflux and virulence genes in the *A. baumannii* strains. Beside known
intrinsic resistance of this species, all isolates lacked additional resistance against carbapenems, colistin and quinolones.

In conclusion, this study provides initial results of the release of Acinetobacter spp. including A. baumannii via manure and after the anaerobic treatment of manure in BPGs into the environment.

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471-EMP

Actinobacterial degradation of 2-hydroxyisobutyric acid

T. Rohwerder1, M. T. Rohde2, N. Jehmlich1, J. Purwarini1
1 Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany
2 Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Biophysikalische Chemie, Halle, Germany
3 Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research GmbH - UFZ, Molecular Systems Biology, Leipzig, Germany
4 University of Granada, Institute of Water Research, Granada, Spain

The tertiary branched short-chain 2-hydroxyisobutyric acid has been associated with several metabolic diseases and lystate 2-hydroxyisobutyrylation seems to be a common post-translational modification in proteins. Although the underlying biochemistry is largely unknown, it has already been demonstrated that 2-hydroxyisobutyric acid is degraded by some bacteria, such as the betaproteobacterium Aquinocola tertiaricarbonis L108 and the bacillus Kypridia tusciae DSM 2912. In these strains, specific ligases and mutases catalyze the CoA activation to 2-hydroxyisobutyryl-CoA and its subsequent isomerization, respectively, to the common metabolite 3-hydroxybutyryl-CoA. In search for alternative routes, we have now investigated the conversion of 2-hydroxyisobutyric acid in the actinobacterium Actinomycetospora chiangmaiensis DSM 45062. The latter degrades the tertiary branched acid via acetonate formation indicating the employment of a lyase reaction instead of the isomerization previously found in strains L108 and DSM 2912. In line with this, strain DSM 45062 does not possess a 2-hydroxyisobutyryl-CoA mutase but a chromosomal gene cluster encoding a 2-hydroxyisobutyrate-CoA ligase and a putative thiamine pyrophosphate-dependent lyase. Comparative proteomics revealed that this ligase-lyase gene cluster and a binuclear iron acetone monoxygenase operon are highly induced when the actinobacterium was grown on 2-hydroxyisobutyric acid. Furthermore, the lyase activity catalyzing the conversion of 2-hydroxyisobutyryl-CoA to formyl-CoA and acetone could be demonstrated in E. coli after heterologous expression of the corresponding gene from strain DSM 45062. The presence of the ligase-lyase gene cluster in isoprene-degrading actinobacteria and Pseudonocardia strains associated with tropical leafcutter ant species points to a role in degradation of biogenic volatile organic compounds via 2-hydroxyisobutyric acid and related tertiary branched acids.

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472-EMP

Acetone degradation in Desulfoarcina cetonica – Characterization of recombinant enzymes

S. Käßner1, B. Schink1, D. Schleheckl1, J. Frey1
1 University of Konstanz, Biology, Konstanz, Germany

In acetone degradation by aerobic and nitrate-reducing bacteria acetone is activated by carboxylation to acetoacetate which consumes at least two ATP equivalents. For sulfate–reducing bacteria such an expensive activation reaction is hardly feasible, due to their limited energy budget.

Recent studies on the sulfate-reducing bacterium Desulfococcus biacutus indicated an involvement of TDP (thiamine diphosphate)- and B12-dependent enzymes, leading to acetoacetyl-CoA. In enzyme assays with cell-free extracts of D. biacutus an acetone-inducible, B12-dependent isomerization of 2-hydroxyisobutyryl-CoA to 3-hydroxybutyryl-CoA, followed by an oxidation to acetoacetyl-CoA by a dehydrogenase was shown. Furthermore, activities of the mutase and the dehydrogenase were identified using recombinant enzymes.

Desulfoarcina cetonica is the only other described sulfate-reducing acetone utilizer. The sequenced genome of D. cetonica allowed comparative 2D-PAGE and total proteomics analysis leading to the identification of several proteins which are induced during growth with acetone and are potentially involved in acetone degradation. Proteomic data suggested a similar degradation pathway also for butanone and isopropanol.

Several candidate enzymes (a dehydrogenase, a TDP-dependent enzyme and a B12-dependent mutase) were successfully cloned and overexpressed in Escherichia coli. Purified recombinant enzymes were used for further characterization. The B12-dependent mutase linearized 2-hydroxyisobutyryl-CoA to 3-hydroxybutyryl-CoA and a dehydrogenase oxidized 3-hydroxybutyryl-CoA to acetoacetyl-CoA. These two enzymes were further characterized in detail. Nonetheless, the initial activation step (which appears to involve an activated formyl residue) of acetone degradation by D. cetonica, is still under research and would represent the last missing piece of this novel biochemical pathway.

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473-EMP

Identification of novel polyester hydrolases from marine Pseudomonads

R. Molitor1, A. Bolinger1, L. Turkes1, S. Thies1, K. E. Jaeger2,3
1 Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf - Institute for Molecular Enzyme Technology, Natural product biosynthesis, Jülich, Germany
2 Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Institute for Bio- and Geosciences IBG-1, Jülich, Germany
3 Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf - Institute for Molecular Enzyme Technology, Jülich, Germany

The extensive use of plastics material has led to a dramatic littering problem in our oceans with patches of garbage as wide as 1.6 million square kilometers. Due to physical erosion, plastic breaks down to plastic particles of only ≤ 5 mm in size. Marine organisms mistaking it for food ingest this so-called micro-plastic as well as macro-plastic, which can lead to congestions and death. Ingested plastic particles may subsequently accumulate through the food web and ultimately end up in humans.

Novel polyester hydrolases may help to fight this urgent problem. To find such enzymes, it seems promising to look for bacteria, which may have naturally adapted to such conditions. As freely floating plastic particles are a perfect medium for colonization, which is a scarce resource in most marine environments, it is reasonable to assume that bacteria have evolved mechanisms to utilize this source of food. Thus, we investigated the potential of marine bacteria to hydrolyze artificial polyesters by using simple screening assays and HPLC after recombinant expression of selected candidate enzymes.

To this end, we developed an agar plate based assay using emulsifiable artificial polyesters like Impranil® DLN and liquid polycaprolactone diol. This fast and easy assay allowed
identifying bacteria of the *Pseudomonas pertucinigena* lineage as a novel source for polyester hydrolases. Purified polyester hydrolases from marine born strains *P. litoralis*, *P. aestusnigri*, *P. pachastrellae*, and *P. oceani* were further analyzed for their capability to hydrolyze polyethylene terephthalate (PET). The latter enzymes indeed degraded PET at 30 °C, however, further improvement of the hydrolytic efficiency is still necessary. In conclusion, we identified novel polyester hydrolases from marine *Pseudomonas* spec. In the future, we intend to screen more marine microorganisms for their polyester hydrolase activity aiming to identify new species producing polyester hydrolases suitable for industrial applications.

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**474-EMP**

Groundwater cable bacteria conserve energy by sulphur disproportionation

1H. Müller1, A. J. Probst1, R. U. Meckenstock 1

1University of Duisburg-Essen, Biofilm centre, Essen, Germany

Cable bacteria of the family *Desulfobulbaeaceae* couple spatially separated sulphide oxidation and oxygen or nitrate reduction by a long-distance electron transfer over centimetre distances. However, the types of energy metabolism of cable bacteria are currently unknown. Here, we report on energy conservation of a highly enriched culture of cable bacteria isolated from an iron-reducing, 1-methylnaphthalene-degrading culture (1MN).

We enriched cable bacteria from culture 1MN with elemental sulphur, either as sole substrate or with additional ferricydrate or nitrate as electron acceptors. The culture was capable of growing chemo-litho-auto-thermally by sulphur disproportionation when Fe(III) was present as sulphide scavenger. Fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) revealed the presence of *Desulfobulbaeaceae* as filaments of several hundred micrometres length, but also as single cells or filaments shorter than 50 μm. The filaments showed the characteristic cable bacterial morphology with the continuous ridge pattern over the whole length. From genome-resolved metagenomics, we recovered a nearly complete genome of the enriched cable bacteria. 16S rRNA amplicon sequencing revealed that the cable bacteria enrichment was almost pure with up to 99.8 % abundance of one operational taxonomic unit.

Our results suggest that cable bacteria can conserve energy by substrate-level phosphorylation during sulphur disproportionation. The proposed energy metabolism also explains the energy source of cells that are located in the middle of the cable bacterial filaments where neither sulphide nor oxygen can be measured in environmental samples. These cells probably thrive on sulphur disproportionation which is provided in a cryptic sulfur cycle where sulphide never reaches detectable concentrations.

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**475-EMP**

Dissemination of antibiotic resistances among microbial communities in wastewater and antimicrobial efficacy of low-temperature plasma

1D. Zühlke1,2, D. Schneider1, S. Maab1, V. Hahn1, J. Kolb2, D. Becher1, R. Daniel1, K. Riedel1,2

1University of Greifswald, Department of Microbial Physiology and Molecular Biology, Greifswald, Germany

2Institute of Marine Biotechnology, Greifswald, Germany

Urban wastewater treatment plants (UWTP) are hot spots for the emergence and dissemination of antibiotic-resistant bacteria (ARB). Conventional wastewater treatment is capable of reducing the bacterial load, but may also select for resistant phenotypes. The high bacterial density in UWTP promotes horizontal gene transfer and the presence of antibiotics (ABs), even in sub-lethal concentrations, can select for resistant bacteria. Different technologies, like ozonation, UV treatment or chlorination, have already been applied for the treatment of wastewater to decrease the amount of ARB that are released into the environment.

Two German UWTP were sampled over a time span of two years. Using a metaproteomics approach, we analyzed the metabolically active microbial community and identified AB-resistance determinants in all stages of the treatment process. Low-temperature plasma was employed on samples from selected wastewater treatment stages and the effect on the microbial community and the presence of resistance-determinants analyzed by metaproteomics. Furthermore, the effect on AB concentrations present in these samples was examined.

Similar taxonomic compositions of the microbial communities in both UWTP were observed with no obvious seasonal influences. Members of the human gut microbiome and bacteria related to infections of the gastrointestinal/urinary tract that are known to carry AB resistances dominated the untreated sewage community. Treated wastewater contained significantly decreased bacterial numbers but still contains ARB and pathogens. Proteins associated to AB resistances were found at all stages of wastewater treatment. Treatment with low-temperature plasma led to reduction of bacterial numbers. Effects on the amount of resistance-associated proteins and AB residues detected in the wastewater are currently under investigation.

Conventional sewage treatment leads to reduction but not clearance of ARB and potential pathogens. Low-temperature plasma could be a promising treatment technology to eliminate bacteria and ABs and thereby prevent their release into the environment and spreading of AB resistances.

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**476-EMP**

Promotion of *Salicornia bigelovii* using rhizosphere-competent polyme-producing actinobacteria in the United Arab Emirates

1K. El-Tarabily1, B. Mathew1, R. Aljneibi1, S. AbuQamar1

1UAE University, Department of Biology, College of Science, Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates

Actinobacteria inhabiting in arid and saline soils can improve plant health. Thirty-five actinobacterial isolates obtained from *Salicornia bigelovii* rhizosphere in the United Arab Emirates, were evaluated for their potential to produce polymyines (PAs) and for their abilities to be rhizosphere-competent. Accordingly, the highly PA-producing *Actinoplanes deccanensis* UAE1 and *Streptomyces euryhalinus* UAE1 were selected. Under greenhouse conditions, application of any of the two isolates significantly (P<0.05) increased the length and weight of shoot and root tissues, photosynthetic pigments and seed yields compared to control plants, suggesting that *A. deccanensis* and *S. euryhalinus* can promote *S. bigelovii* growth. Infestation of soil with these isolates resulted in significant increases in the levels of endogenous PAs and other plant growth regulators (PGRs) including auxins, gibberellic acid and cytokinins, with a
concomitant reduction in abscisic acid in *S. bigelovii* tested tissues. Both *A. deccanensis* and *S. euryhalinus* were, however, incapable of producing significant levels of PGRs in vitro. Plant growth promotion (PGP) was strikingly evident in the presence of *S. euryhalinus* than *A. deccanensis*. Thus, this resembling excellence in performance showed the advantage of *S. euryhalinus* as rhizosphere-competent compared to *A. deccanensis* which was not. Our results indicate the importance of rhizosphere competence to be considered for the selection of PGP candidates. This is the first to report the promotion of PAs by marine actinobacteria; and to demonstrate the potential of PA-producing actinobacteria to enhance the growth of halophytic plants through the increase in the endogenous levels of PAs and other PGRs.

477-EMP

Potential to promote the growth of *Salicornia bigelovii* using rhizosphere-competent actinobacteria capable of producing plant growth regulators

*K. El-Tarabily*1, S. AbuQamar1, B. Mathew1, M. AlNuaimi1, A. Haj Ali1, S. AlDhaheri1, A. Taj Eldin1, E. Ghazal1

1United Arab Emirates University, Biology, College of Science, Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates

When heavy metals are present in excess in the soil, they act as toxicants, reducing the success of plant life. Among the metals that are most toxic to plant life are those that displace essential metal ions in biological processes; these include cadmium, zinc, mercury, copper, lead and nickel. Nickel is one of the most abundant heavy metal contaminants of the environment due to its release during mining and smelting practices and it has been the target of many cleanup strategies. High nickel concentrations in the soil have been shown to cause increased ethylene production, inhibit root and shoot development, reduce carbon dioxide fixation and limit sugar translocation. In an effort to gain the advantages provided by bacterial enzyme (1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid) (ACC) deaminase in the phytoremediation of heavy metals from the environment, the ability of rhizosphere competent actinobacteria with ACC deaminase activity to promote the growth of corn plants in soils contaminated with nickel was evaluated under greenhouse conditions. To achieve this, 55 different isolates obtained from a corn rhizosphere were selected for their ability to produce ACC deaminase as well as their abilities to tolerate different concentrations of nickel. Out of these isolates, only 18 were able to produce ACC deaminase. Under greenhouse conditions, the application of these actinobacteria increased corn growth in nickel chloride, and nickel nitrate contaminated soils. The application of a mixture of three bacteria in the nickel-contaminated soils significantly enhanced the growth of corn plants compared to the control treatments. Soil inoculation with the mixture of three bacteria in the nickel-contaminated soils significantly enhanced nickel uptake by corn plants from nickel-contaminated soils compared to control treatments which included only nickel without the application of these bacteria. The results suggest that plant growth promoting actinobacteria containing ACC deaminase offer promise as bacterial inoculum for improvement of plant growth particularly under unfavorable environmental conditions such as heavy metals contamination in soils.

479-EMP

Structure and Composition of Bacterial Communities in the Rhizosphere of *Hypericum* species

*Z. Noviana*1, J. Sikorski1, J. Overmann1

1Leibniz Institute DSMZ, Microbial Ecology and Diversity, Braunschweig, Germany

The plant genus *Hypericum* has recently gained significant importance because some species produce the unique secondary metabolites hypericin and hyperforin. These substances have antidepressant activities and mitigate Alzheimer’s disease. Despite sparse evidence that some bacterial taxa may increase hypericin production in plant shoot cultures, the role of bacteria in stimulating secondary metabolite production in natural *Hypericum* plants, e.g. via the rhizosphere, has not been explored. As a first step towards an understanding of the role of bacteria-plant interactions, we analyzed the rhizosphere bacterial communities of *H. perforatum*, *H. androsaemum* and *H. balearicum* by Illumina sequencing of V3 regions of 16S rRNA gene amplicons from both DNA and RNA extracts of rhizosphere and bulk soil samples. We observed not only differences between rhizosphere and bulk soil communities in terms diversity structure and taxonomic composition, but also between RNA-based and DNA-based data indicating differences in transcriptional activities across different taxa. We identified active taxa based on a high rRNA:rDNA ratio

478-EMP

Improving phytoremediation of nickel contaminated soil by plant growth-promoting bacteria through the production of the enzyme 1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid deaminase in the UAE

*K. El-Tarabily*1, S. AbuQamar1, L. Alnuaimi1, S. Al Zarooni1, H. Haj Ali1, S. AlDhaheri1, T. Taj Eldin1, E. Ghazal1

1United Arab Emirates University, Biology, College of Science, Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates

This study aimed to isolate and identify rhizosphere-competent plant growth promoting halophilic actinobacteria from *Salicornia bigelovii* rhizosphere and to evaluate their potential as biological inoculants to promote the growth of *Salicornia* in saline soils. Seventy-three actinobacteria obtained from *Salicornia* rhizosphere were initially examined for their abilities to tolerate high concentrations of NaCl. These halophilic isolates were screened for their potential to colonize *Salicornia* roots in vitro using a preliminary qualitative indicator root colonization bioassay. The promising 32 isolates which showed moderate to high levels of root colonization were subsequently evaluated for their plant growth promotion traits (phosphorus solubilization, nitrogen fixation, production of siderophores, HCN, ammonia, 1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid (ACC) deaminase and plant growth regulators (PGRs) including auxins and polyamines. Twelve isolates which exhibited superior abilities to produce PGRs and ACC deaminase were further selected to study their abilities to be rhizosphere competent under a naturally competitive environment using the non-sterilized soil tube assay. Only three isolates which showed outstanding rhizosphere-competent abilities were selected to investigate their effects, individually or in combination, on *Salicornia* seedling growth and on the endogenous levels of auxins, polyamines and ACC in both roots and shoots under greenhouse conditions. While the individual application of each strain resulted in a significant plant growth promotion compared to the control, the combination of the three isolates resulted in superior levels of plant growth promotion. This was also evident from the significant (P<0.05) increases in the levels of photosynthetic pigments, in planta auxins and polyamines and the significant (P<0.05) reduction in the endogenous levels of ACC, in roots and shoots compared with control plants. This study is the first report to indicate the potential of halophilic actinobacteria to promote *Salicornia* growth under saline conditions through the production of PGRs and ACC deaminase.

478-EMP

Improving phytoremediation of nickel contaminated soil by plant growth-promoting bacteria through the production of the enzyme 1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid deaminase in the UAE

*K. El-Tarabily*1, S. AbuQamar1, L. Alnuaimi1, S. Al Zarooni1, H. Haj Ali1, S. AlDhaheri1, T. Taj Eldin1, E. Ghazal1

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which cannot be explained by stochastic variation in sequence read counts. Our results demonstrate that only 1-2% of the bacterial rhizosphere communities can be classified as active. Some active taxa are shared across different soil-plant combinations while others are unique for specific combinations. The results warrant further study to determine plant-bacteria interaction between these active taxa and their specific host plant. Our ongoing study involves nine Hypericum species to disentangle the effects of plant species from those of soil substrates and includes direct quantification of secondary metabolites.

480-EMP
Bed bioelectrochemical reactors: a mosaic of electroactivity
*A. Kuchenbuch1, J. Rodrigo Quejigo1, B. Korth1, F. Hannisch1
1Helmholtz Centrum for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany

Introduction:
Microorganisms having the physical capability of extracellular electron transfer (EET), i.e. to use a solid terminal electron acceptor (TEA), are known as electroactive microorganisms (EAM). In nature, EAM transfer electrons to, e.g., metal ores, whereas in bioelectrochemical systems (BES) electrodes are used as TEA. BES consisting of a granular and porous bed electrode (bed BES) that provides a large surface area for EAM and hence a higher active area for bioelectrochemical reactions are considered as highly promising as the high ratio between active electrode area and reactor volume may pave the way to application1.

Objectives:
The aim of this study is a characterization of the spatial and temporal heterogeneity of EAM as well as their activity in bed BES. In combination with an analysis of the bioelectrochemical performance, structure-function relationships can be deciphered for fostering engineering of bed BES and for revealing underlying trophic interactions.

Material & Methods:
Tubular bed BES with graphite granules as working electrode under potentiostatic control (~0.2 V vs. Ag/AgCl) were operated in batch and continuous flow. Nine minimally invasive sampling sites were integrated to enable electrochemical characterisation of single granules by performing cyclic voltammetry (CV) with the in-house developed eCLAMP2. Additionally, molecular characterisation of the bacterial and methanogenic community was performed.

Results:
A high spatial and functional heterogeneity were observed, as eCLAMP CV results show that a high electroactivity was only obtained in proximity to the current collector. In Contrast to the varying electroactivity, the community composition is stable.

Conclusion:
Bed BESs are complex 3D-electrochemical environments with a heterogeneous distribution of EAM representing a “mosaic” of electroactivity. The established reactors allowed a representative sampling of the whole bed electrode providing insights in utilization of the provided electrode surface that will improve future engineering of bed BES.

1 Rodrigo Quejigo, J. et al., 2019 ChemTexts 5, art. 4
2 Rodrigo Quejigo, J. et al., 2018 Electrochem. Commun. 90, 78 – 82

481-EMP
An in vitro characterization of biocontrol mechanism of selected endophytic bacterial strains as biocontrol agent of bacterial wilt disease on chili
*T. Habazar1, Y. Yanti1, A. Ameti1, N. Muzi'ratul1
1Andalas University, Plant Protection, Padang, Indonesia

Introduction: Bacterial wilt cause by Ralstonia syzygii subsp. indonesiensis is the important dangerous disease in chili. Until now this disease has been difficult to control; while the bacteria attack the xylem vessel, they cannot be reached by any bactericide. Biocontrol is potential for controlling this disease. One group of important biocontrol agents is endophytic bacteria (EB). Based on in planta screening method, we have found 10 indigenous endophytic bacterial strains from healthy chili’s rhizosphere, which have the ability to control bacterial wilt and to increase growth and yield of chili.

Question: How are the characterers of the direct mechanisms of selected indigenous endophytic bacterial strains as biocontrol agents of R. syzygii subsp. indonesiensis in vitro?

Methods: The physiological characters of indigenous endophytic bacterial strains as biocontrol agents have been observed, including production of antibiotic, siderophore, HCN, haemolysine, protease, and biosurfactant.

Results: Not all biocontrol tested characters have been produced by indigenous endophytic bacterial strains. Only 3 strains (SLBE1.1BB, SLBE2.1BB and SLBE2.3BB) showed the positive on 6 biocontrol characters. All indigenous endophytic bacterial strains produced biosurfactant, the highest viscosity produced by 2 strains (SLBE1.1BB).

Conclusion: Based on these characters, indigenous endophytic bacterial strains consisted of 5 groups.

References:

482-EMP
Enhancement of growth of seedlings of the mangrove *Avicennia marina* by plant growth regulators-producing actinobacteria in the United Arab Emirates

K. El-Tarabily1, S. AbuQamar1, K. Albooshi1, S. Mekky1, A. Alil2, A. AlMansoori1, M. Mousta1

1United Arab Emirates University, Biology, College of Science, Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates

This study was aimed at isolating and identifying plant growth promoting actinobacteria from the mangrove *Avicennia marina* rhizosphere and at evaluating their potential as biological inoculants to promote the growth of mangrove seedlings in afforestation programs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Nine promising actinobacterial isolates were subsequently evaluated for their ability to produce *in vitro* plant growth regulators (PGRs) (auxins, gibberellic acid, cytokinins and polyamines), 1-aminoacyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid (ACC) deaminase, siderophores, HCN and ammonia. Three isolates were selected based on their superior abilities to produce PGRs and ACC deaminase. Greenhouse experiments were conducted to investigate the effects of these three isolates, individually and in combination on mangrove seedlings growth, photosynthetic gas exchange and endogenous levels of some PGRs in both roots and shoots. The combination of the three isolates resulted in levels of plant growth promotion, superior to those that were exposed to individual strains. This was evident from the significant (P<0.05) increases in the levels of photosynthetic pigments, *in planta* auxins (indole-3-acetic acid and indole-3-pyruvic acid), polyamines (putrescine, spermidine and spermine) and the significant (P<0.05) reduction of the endogenous levels of ACC, the immediate precursor of ethylene, in roots and shoots compared with control plants or plants grown in sediments inoculated with only individual strains. The maximal Rubisco-catalyzed carboxylation velocity (Vc,max) increased by more than four-fold in plants treated with the mixture of the three actinobacteria over the control. These three isolates are considered to have the potential to perform as plant growth promoters for mangrove production in nutrient impoverished soils in arid coastal areas. This study is the first to demonstrate the potential of indole-3-pyruvic acid, polyamine and ACC deaminase producing PGPB to promote mangrove growth under greenhouse conditions.

484-EMP
Spatial-temporal dynamics of microbial communities in floodplain sediments

L. Cramaro1
1 Helmholtz Zentrum München GmbH, Institute of Groundwater Ecology (IGOEC), Neuherr, Germany

Floodplain soils are considered hotspots of biogeochemical activities driven by strong seasonal dynamics of precipitation, soil water saturation and redox conditions. However, the interlinkage of abiotic conditions and biotic processes governing carbon, nutrients and contaminants (e.g., pesticides) turnover are poorly understood. In my work, integrated in the DFG CRC 1253 CAMPOS project, I particularly aim to evaluate the link between soil moisture and redox dynamics with changes in the composition and functional status of the soil microbial communities. We hypothesize that seasonal hydrological events cause redox dynamics that translate into dynamics in microbial key processes, while the composition of communities stay stable. Herbicide applications, on the other hand, are assumed to impact composition and function.

483-EMP
Metaproteomic Discovery and Characterization of a Novel Lipolytic Enzyme from an Indian hot spring

D. Sander1, Y. Yu1, P. Sukul1, T. Mukherjee2, S. K. Mukhopadhyay2, L. I. Leichert1
1 Ruhr-University Bochum, Institute of Biochemistry and Pathobiochemistry, Microbial Biochemistry, Bochum, Germany
2 The University of Burdwan, Department of Microbiology, Burdwan, India

Lipolytic enzymes are produced by animals, plants and microorganisms. With their chemo-, regio- and enantio-specific characteristics, lipolytic enzymes are the preferred sources for novel biocatalysts which can be useful in several industrial applications. They are widely used in the processing of fats and oils, detergents, food processing, paper and cosmetics production and the synthesis of fine chemicals and pharmaceuticals. In this work, we used a new functional metaproteomics approach, first described by Sukul (2017), to screen sediment samples of a hot spring from India for novel lipolytic enzymes. It is the first time this method was used to screen hot spring samples for enzymes which exhibit lipolytic activity. We were able to identify one enzyme which shows activity during the in-gel activity assay with the fluorogenic substrate para-methylumbelliferyl butyrate. DS001 was found in sediment samples from the Indian Bakreswar hot spring, which has a temperature of 60°C. DS001 showed the highest hydrolysis activity with substrates with shorter chain length substrates (<C8) with the maximum activity observed with p-nitrophenyl butyrate (C4). For substrates with a chain length >C10 significantly less hydrolysis activity was observed. Preference for short chain acyl groups is characteristic for esterases, suggesting that DS001 is an esterase. Because there is an increasing demand for esterases which can be used in the synthesis of enantiomerically pure compounds, we determined the enantioselectivity of DS001 with 4-methylumbelliferyl-(R)- and -(S)-ibuprofen. DS001 shows a modest preference for 4-methylumbelliferyl-(R)-2-ibuprofen. DS001 shows a temperature optimum at 55°C and more than 50% activity in a range between pH 8.0 and pH 9.5 where it has its optimum. It also exhibits a high tolerance to organic solvents in a concentration of 1% (v/v). In fact, it still shows 80% activity in the presence of 1% acetone. 1% of methanol increases the activity of DS001 to 140% in comparison to the optimum conditions without solvent. In the presence of 10% methanol, DMSO or isopropanol it still shows around 50% activity.

Site of investigations is the Ammer valley floodplain located in the area between Tübingen and Pfaffingen (Baden Württemberg), characterized by agriculturally impacted alluvial and colluvial soils. A monthly sampling took place from March 2018 until August 2019 at two different locations, i.e. a barley planted field occasionally treated with herbicides (including glyphosate) and a manured fertilized meadow. Measurements included the dynamics of key environmental parameters such as precipitation, recharge, soil water content, pore water chemistry and redox potential. Soil microbial communities were analyzed in terms of activity and bacterial fingerprints.

Porewater isotopic signatures indicate a significant recharge in spring and preferential infiltration through macropores into the fractured loamy soils. Soils of the two investigation sites show similar redox potentials with depth. Moreover, first data show seasonal changes in the number of microbes in depth until 10 cm, especially in the field. Increased microbial activities were observed always in spring (April to June) with higher values but less dynamics in meadow soil. Currently samples are further analyzed by means of deep amplicon sequencing and quantification of functional genes related to nitrogen and herbicide turnover.
Antibiotic resistant microbes are on the rise and pose one of the biggest public health challenges of our times. In times of so-called superbugs, which are resistant even against the antibiotics of last resort, new antimicrobial compounds are direly needed to combat these germs. But the progress in developing new drugs is slow and the pipelines are almost dried out. Even after decades of successful exploitation, filamentous, soil bacteria from the genus *Streptomyces* spp. are still very important potential sources for new antibiotics because of the richness and diversity of their secondary metabolism. But novel approaches are required to tap this rich source, in order to identify new compounds. A promising – and underappreciated – approach is the use of compound- or target-specific whole cell biosensors; bacteria that give an easily quantifiable and specific reporter output in response to exposure to a specific chemical compound. Here, we screened a collection of *Streptomyces* soil isolates for induction of a novel amphotericin B-specific biosensor. One isolate that gave rise to a strong and specific signal was chosen for subsequent in-depth analyses. Multi-locus sequence typing and whole genome sequencing was applied and a draft genome sequences for this new isolate of *Streptomyces* sp. #4/1 was obtained. Comprehensive genome mining was performed for identifying antibiotic biosynthesis clusters and three potential candidate clusters that might encode polyene biosynthesis pathways were identified. After optimization of the growth conditions, active cell extracts were generated and further analyzed for isolation and characterization of the corresponding compounds. Our approach demonstrates the power and efficiency of combining whole cell biosensors with genome mining for identifying new antibiotics.

**486-EMP**

**Biotransformation of organic micropollutants di-n-butyl phthalate (DBP) and diethyl phthalate (DEP) by fungi of different ecophysiological groups**

1. "L. Carstens1,2, A. R. Cowan1,2, B. Seiwert3, D. Schlosser2
2. Universität Duisburg Essen, Biofilm Centre, Aquatische Mikrobiologie, Essen, Germany
3. Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung GmbH, Umweltmikrobiologie, Leipzig, Germany

Phthalate esters (PEs, phthalates) are environmentally ubiquitous micropollutants arising from their extensive use as plasticizers and additives in diverse consumer products. Considerable concerns relate to their reported xenosterogenicity. Consequently, the potential towards microbial-based attenuation of PE concentrations in different compartments of the environment is of interest to combat harmful downstream effects. Fungal PE catabolism has received less attention than that by bacteria as of yet, and in particular fungi beyond common terrestrial species have been less intensively investigated in this respect. We have compared the biocatalytic and biosorptive removal rates of DBP and DEP, chosen as environmentally prominent PE representatives with different structures and hydrophobicities, by marine- and freshwater-derived fungal strains as well as fungi associated with various terrestrial habitats. Partial pathways for DBP metabolism by ecophysologically diverse asco- and basidiomycete strains could be proposed with the help of UPLC-QTOF-MS analysis. Individual patterns of the major biochemical reaction steps contributing to DBP metabolism were observed for the investigated strains. The involved reactions include initial cytochrome P450-dependent monohydroxylations of DBP with subsequent further oxidation of related metabolites, de-esterification via either hydrolytic cleavage or cytochrome P450-dependent oxidative O-dealkylation, transesterification, and demethylation steps, finally yielding phthalic acid as a central intermediate in all pathways.

**487-EMP**

**Seasonal Differences of Coliform Bacteria in Drinking Water Reservoirs**

1. C. Reitter1, A. Hesselshoder2, H. Petzoldt2, J. Gescher2, M. Hügerl1
2. TZW: DVGW Technologiezentrum Wasser, Microbiology and Molecular Biology, Karlsruhe, Germany
3. TZW: DVGW Technologiezentrum Wasser, Dresden, Germany
4. Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Applied Biology, Karlsruhe, Germany

**Introduction:** Microbial water quality is examined using bacterial indicators such as coliform bacteria, *Escherichia coli* and enterococci. Their detection indicates a possible fecal contamination. For coliform bacteria this concept has been relativized as they also occur in the environment. However, their hygienic relevance remains unclear. In recent years this issue has become more important due to mass proliferation of coliform bacteria in drinking water reservoirs throughout Germany which challenges the drinking water treatment.

**Objectives & Methods:** The aim of our study was to analyze and identify microbial indicator bacteria that naturally occur in drinking water reservoirs in Germany and to find seasonal differences especially during mass proliferation events. Growth experiments were conducted with these strains to find special adaptations to oligotrophic waters. Furthermore the microbial community was examined and microbial source tracking markers were tested.

**Results:** Our monitoring study demonstrates seasonal differences in the microbiology of drinking water reservoirs. During summer the maximum density of coliform bacteria reached values above 10^3 MPN/100 ml with only a few strains of coliform bacteria being dominant. These strains belong to the genera *Lelliottia* and *Enterobacter* and closely related strains were found in different reservoirs all over Germany. Growth experiments have shown that these strains have different growth potential according to the water and conditions being used. They were capable to grow in raw water but not in treated drinking water. Fecal indicators such as *E. coli* and enterococci were rarely detected. In contrast to the water body of the reservoir the inflows showed no significant seasonal differences.

**Conclusion:** This and the fact that no microbial source tracking markers could be detected leads to the assumption that the proliferation is an autochthonous process within the water column. Due to climate change, leading to higher water temperatures and fluctuating water levels, such mass proliferations of coliform bacteria are expected to occur more frequently in drinking water reservoirs in the near future.
Temporal and spatial variation of lake microbiomes in the Pyrenees
J. Laufer1, R. Kallies2, D. S. Schmeller2, A. Loyau1, A. Chatzinotas1,2
1 Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research GmbH - UFZ, Department of Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany
2 ECOEOLAB, Université de Toulouse, CNRS, INPT, UPS, Toulouse, France

Aquatic mountain ecosystems are exposed to increasingly harsh environmental conditions due to climate change, including extreme weather events and a shortened and increasingly variable growth season. Freshwater microorganisms, which play a crucial role in nutrient cycling, need to adapt to fluctuations of abiotic conditions to maintain lake functioning. However, temporal and spatial variations in microbial community composition are rarely investigated over several years, which limits our understanding of their variability with respect to environmental factors.

Here, we disentangle which environmental parameters (e.g. geographical, chemical and hydrogeological parameters) shape the water microbiome composition for bacteria and micro-eukaryotes, including protists and fungi. We hypothesize that community composition (1) reflects the effects of stable, lake specific characteristics as well as the effect of factors that fluctuate according to seasonal cycles and (2) that co-occurrence networks within and across these trophic levels will reveal inter-dependencies between different microbial groups.

We sampled 28 Pyrenean lakes with three seasonal sampling campaigns in 2016 to 2018, yielding more than 700 freshwater samples. The DNA of these samples was extracted, amplified and highly variable regions of the 16S rRNA (bacteria) and 18S rRNA (micro-eukaryotes) encoding genes were sequenced using next generation sequencing technologies (Illumina MiSeq). Biogeochemical data and hydrogeological characteristics were obtained for each of the investigated lakes.

In total, we found 26,915 bacterial and 12,040 eukaryotic ASVs. Proteobacteria and Bacteriodetes dominated among bacteria, while members affiliated to SAR (mostly Dinoflagellata, Ochrophyta and Ciliophora) and Ophistokonta (mostly Fungi) dominated eukaryocytes. First results show a high fluctuation of rare species within both bacterial and protistan communities. The abundance pattern of individual taxa was highly variable between years and seasons, leading to the conclusion that sampling of only a single time point misses the full picture of community diversity and composition in aquatic mountain ecosystems.

489-EMP
Targeted cultivation of Planctomycetes
M. Salbreiter1, M. Waqqa2, N. Kallscheuer3, W. Wiegand3, A. Heuer3, C. Bodeker1, P. Rasit1, R. W. Müller4, F. Brümmer5, M. S. Jetten4, M. Rohde4, M. Jögl1,2, C. Jögl1,2
1 Friedrich-Schiller-University, Jena, Germany
2 Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands
3 Leibniz Institute DSMZ, Braunschweig, Germany
4 Institute of Biomaterials and biomolecular Systems, Stuttgart, Germany
5 Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Braunschweig, Germany

Planctomycetes are maverick bacteria with an exceptional cell biology that are environmentally important in global carbon and nitrogen cycles. They dwell in all sorts of habitats, in particular in the association with Eukaryotes. Despite their slow growth, Planctomycetes can dominate the bacterial community of such habitats employing small molecules that might be of biotechnological interest.

Unfortunately, only few planctomycetal axenic cultures exist, limiting the discovery process of small molecules from planctomycetal origin. To overcome this limitation, we employed a targeted cultivation approach focusing on marine surfaces. Kelp macroalgae and Posidonia seagrass leaves are known to be hotspots of planctomycetal occurrence. Up to 80% of the bacterial community on the surface of these eukaryotes can be planctomycetes. Thus, we sampled giant kelp (Macrocystis pyrifera) at Monterey bay, CA, USA, Posidonia seagrass leaves from Panarea, Italy and macroalgae from Mallorca, Spain. As abiotic control, we used polyethylene particles that were incubated in the Baltic Sea at Helgoland, Germany for 2 weeks. In total, we obtained six novel strains that we characterized in detail to allow a species description. Phylogenetically, the strains form two novel genera that we suggest to name Symmachiella and Rosistilla. The genera Symmachiella and Rosistilla have only 89% and 92% 16S rRNA sequence identity to their next planctomycetal relatives. Three strains form the novel genus Symmachiella. Strain Pan258 was isolated from Posidonia leaves collected close to a subsea volcanic gas escape at Panarea Italy. This strain Mal52 was isolated from algae collected at the island Mallorca, Spain and strain CA54 was isolated from giant kelp Macrocytis pyrifera at Monterey bay, USA. The novel genus Rosistilla is formed by three further strains, obtained in our cultivation endeavor: Mal33 (from algae, Mallorca, Spain), CAS1 (from giant kelp, Monterey bay, USA) and Poly24 (from our abiotic control). This poster describes the detailed characterization and valid description of both novel genera and the species that constitute them.

490-EMP
Accessing variability of DADA2 pipeline on different parameters and databases
A. Bartholomaeus1, S. Liebner1, D. Wagner2
1 Helmholtz Centre Potsdam, GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences, Section 3.7 Microbiology, Potsdam, Germany
2 University of Potsdam, Institute of Geosciences, Potsdam, Germany

DADA2 has become one of the standard tools to analyse 16S rRNA amplicon data and uncover microbial community compositions. However, the results obtained from the pipeline can vary strongly based on used processing options and parameters. In addition, there are different taxonomic database and versions that are frequently updated, extended and reordered. As a result microbial communities detected from the same samples but by different approaches and at different times are dissimilar. The geomicrobiology section at the GFZ is working in extreme environments, such as the Atacama Desert, permafrost environments and the deep biosphere, which complicates the analysis further due to low biomass in these environments and high fraction of potential unknown microorganisms. We examined the variability of detected microbial communities from different extreme environments leading to insights into reproducibility of the results and direct rules of best practice for application of parameters and databases.
**492-EMP**

Fragmented disturbances have an influence on bacterial recolonization processes and activity.

T. Mainka¹, A. Worrich¹, T. Banitz², L. Y. Wick¹
¹Helmholtz-Center for Environmental Research, UMB, Leipzig, Germany
²Helmholtz-Center for Environmental Research, Leipzig, Germany

**Introduction:** Soil microbial ecosystems are often exposed to environmental disturbances that affect their activity and functional stability.

**Objectives:** Little is known on how the spatial structure of such disturbances affects microbial compound turnover and its functional stability. Previous *in silico* studies of our group (König et al, 2018, Frontiers in Microbiology) suggest that (i) the functional stability and activity of ecosystems exposed to spatially fragmented disturbances is increased and (ii) bacterial motility plays an important role for both speed and extent of recovery.

**Materials & methods:** To challenge these hypotheses, we developed agar-based synthetic microbial ecosystems either allowing for efficient dispersal or hindered dispersal of motile *Pseudomonas putida* KT2440-gfp. Temporally and spatially explicit disturbances of varying spatial configurations were applied by UV-light treatment. Glass fiber networks were used to promote bacterial dispersal and, hence, efficient recolonization of disturbed areas. The number of bacteria and the recolonization of disturbed areas were evaluated by spatially explicit cell counting. The degradation of benzoate was used to measure bacterial functional stability.

**Results:** Our data show an influence of the disturbance fragmentation pattern on the bacterial recolonization process and activity, and hence, confirmed our *in silico* findings: (1) recolonization of habitats exposed to highly fragmented disturbances, recovered faster and exhibited higher functional stability; (2) better bacterial dispersal and functional recovery of the synthetic ecosystem was observed in presence of glass fiber networks.

**Conclusion:** Our results underline the importance of the spatial disturbance patterns and bacterial motility for the functional stability of heterogeneous microbial ecosystems. They further stress the relevance of preferential bacterial dispersal vectors (e.g. given by the presence of fungal mycelia) for sustaining functional stability of disturbed microbial systems.

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**493-EMP**

Novel Biodiversity of Nitrate-Reducing Bacteria in Grassland Soils

T. Timsy¹, U. Behrendt¹, A. Ulrich¹, T. Spanner², M. A. Horn², S. Kolo³
¹Leibniz centre for agricultural research (ZALF), Microbial Biogeochemistry, Müncheberg, Germany
²Leibniz Universität Hannover, Institute of Microbiology, Hannover, Germany
³Leibniz-Institut für Systematische Botanik und Ökologie, Universität Ulm, Ulm, Germany

The nitrogen (N) cycle is one of the most complex and environmentally important element cycles on the earth and the key steps are mediated by soil microorganisms. Bacteria can assimilate nitrate for their growth resulting in the formation of organic compounds that are precursors for biosynthesis. Alternatively, nitrate can also be used by bacteria as a respiratory electron acceptor anaerobically and can yield energy by reducing nitrate to either ammonium (dissimilatory nitrate reduction to ammonium, i.e. DNRA) or to N gases by denitrification (i.e. to nitrous oxide or dinitrogen). DNRA keeps the N available for microorganisms and plants in soil whereas denitrification form N gases that are released to the atmosphere and contribute to N loss in soils. While there is a general agreement about the significance of denitrification in soils, the importance of DNRA is controversially debated, which is mainly attributable to the lack of knowledge on the biodiversity of these bacteria in soils; and thereby, their detectability. Aiming at a substantial increase in organismal biodiversity, we employed massive cultivation coupled with genomics from several grassland soils to reveal new genetic and organismal biodiversity of DNRA bacteria and denitrifiers. We have isolated more than 7,000 bacterial strains and de-replicated using MALDI-TOF MS and 16S rRNA gene sequencing, and we identified more than 700 phylogenotypes. Based on taxonomic affiliation and experimentally measured N metabolism traits, more than 30 new strains were genome sequenced. As a result, we extended the genetic diversity of genes involved in nitrate/nitrite reduction. Several novel bacterial strains e.g. belonging to the genera *Pseudomonas* and *Shinella*, exhibited physiological traits of nitrate ammonifiers. With the help of the retrieved genome sequences, we aim to improve the understanding of the phylogenetic, metabolic and gene marker diversity of nitrate ammonifiers and denitrifiers.

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**494-EMP**

Metabolic activities as possible stability parameter in on demand biogas production

W. Getz¹, F. R. Bengelsdorf², K. Maurus², S. Ahmed², M. Kazda²
¹Institut für Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, Universität Ulm, Ulm, Germany
²Institut für Systematische Botanik und Ökologie, Universität Ulm, Ulm, Germany

**Introduction & Objectives**

A continuous fermentation (CF) of maize silage (MS) and sugar beet silage (SBS) was performed to investigate correlations between metabolic activities and process parameters. The results obtained in this study could contribute to optimize a stable, demand-oriented biogas production.

**Materials & Methods**

CF was carried out in four 12 L bioreactors (BR1 to BR4) over 125 days. Amount of MS and SBS were equal in each bioreactor and accounted for 2 kg of volatile solids (VS) per m³ and d. BR1 served as control and was hourly supplied with MS and SBS. CF was divided into two fermentation phases (1. equilibrium phase and 2. demand-oriented phase). In phase 2, SBS was intermittent SBS supply of SBS was different for all reactors (BR2: at h0, BR3: at h0+h1, BR4: at h0+h1+h2, in period of 12 h). Samples of bioreactor content were drawn weekly to determine enzyme activities of acetate kinase (ACK), isocitrate dehydrogenase (IDH), glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) in the crude cell extracts.

**Results**

During fermentation phase 2, ACK activity increased in BR2 (from 0.17±0.03 to 0.5±0.17 U mg⁻¹) and BR3 (from 0.24±0.07 to 0.68±0.18 U mg⁻¹) during the first 9 days of fermentation. The specific methane yield decreased during this period from 333±36 to 241±24 NI kgVS⁻¹ in BR2 and from 331±23 NI kgVS⁻¹ in BR3. Furthermore, IDH activity in BR1 to 3 increased after 7 days of fermentation (e.g. BR2 0.003±0.001 to 0.016±0.002 U mg⁻¹). Furthermore, it was obvious that a pH decrease (from 8.0 to 7.5) may cause an
increased activity for the GAPDH in BR2 (from 0.02±0.01 U mg\(^{-1}\) to 0.13±0.02 U mg\(^{-1}\)) and BR3 (0.023±0.015 to 0.135±0.04 U mg\(^{-1}\)).

Conclusion

Metabolic activities of microbes react sensitively to a change in the feedstock supply. This was shown by the increased enzyme activities of ACK, IDH and GAPDH during continuous fermentation with altered feedstock supply. The enzymes IDH and GAPDH showed higher activities when pH shifted from alkaline to neutral.

495-EMP
Characterization of membrane bound metalloproteins in the anaerobic ammonium-oxidizing bacterium Candidatus Kuenenia stuttgartiensis

**R. Budrajia, S. Sarande**, C. Ding\(^1\), S. Wagner\(^2\), M. Ulrich\(^2\), T. Reemtsma\(^3\), L. Adrian\(^3\)

\(^{1}\)Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ, Isotope Biogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany
\(^{2}\)Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research GmbH, Analytical Chemistry, Leipzig, Germany

Metal ions are abundant in microbial proteins and have many roles in biological system. Metalloproteins are involved in many biological processes and constitute almost one third of total proteins in the living system. In respiration complexes, metalloproteins are often involved in generating a proton motive force across the membrane. Metal ions are well organized in these respiration complexes and form electrically conductive path. A large number of microbial metalloproteins are still uncharacterized. It is important to have a very sensitive, accurate and robust method to study the interaction between metals and proteins. Hence, we adapted and modified a proteomics and metalomics approach for the identification of membrane-associated metalloproteins. A comprehensive metalloproteomics study focused on Fe, Co, Ni, and Mo-containing metalloproteins was performed in a culture highly enriched (~90%) with the anaerobic ammonium-oxidizing "Ca. Kuenenia stuttgartiensis". The membrane proteins were separated and fractionated under native conditions using one dimensional blue native gel electrophoresis and two dimensional blue native - SDS electrophoresis for the elucidation of subunit compositions in different membrane-bound protein complexes. Proteins and metal ions were identified with liquid chromatography mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) and inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-OES-MS) coupled with an Aridus desolvator or laser ablation, respectively. We identified several known or undescribed membrane-bound metalloprotein complexes which supports the feasibility of this approach. Our data suggests the presence of Fe, Ni, Zn and Mo binding proteins involved in the anaerobic process of ammonium oxidation such as nitrite reductase, nitrite:nitrate oxidoreductase (NXR), hydrazine synthase (H2S), hydrazine dehydrogenase (HDH), hydroxylamine oxidoreductase (HAO), and NADH ubiquinone oxidoreductase (NQO). These findings reveal a potential coupling of proteomics and metalomics could be used for characterization of in the respiration complexes.

497-EMP
Isolation of antibiotic producing species from feces of animals

**D. Iliasov\(^1\), T. Mascher\(^1\)**

\(^{1}\)Technische Universität Dresden, Institut für Mikrobiologie, Professur für Allgemeine Mikrobiologie, Dresden, Germany

The rapid spread of antibiotic resistance is considered as a major threat for human and animal health (WHO, 2014). The increasing number of infections with multidrug-resistant bacteria, which are no more treatable with all currently available antibiotics, stresses the need for new antimicrobial compounds even more. Here, we study cultivable isolates obtained from 35 fecal samples of various animals regarding their potential to produce compounds with antimicrobial and antifungal activity.

Therefore, diluted feces were plated on MYM agar. Seventy potential Actinobacteria species were isolated based on the typical colony morphology of Actinobacteria. Pure cultures of the isolates were tested regarding their ability to produce antimicrobial substances. For that, well-grown colonies on MYM agar plates were overlayed with soft agar containing Bacillus subtilis or Penicillium chrysogenum spores. We found antimicrobial activity of thirty isolates against B. subtilis or P. chrysogenum. In a next step, we tested the antibiotic spectrum of these 30 isolates against several Gram-negative and Gram-positive bacteria as well as against pathogenic fungi, e.g. Candida tropicalis.

B. subtilis and the fungus P. chrysogenum were strongly inhibited by isolates obtained from feces of Diplodactylus galeatus (Gecko). The isolates derived from feces of Pachnoda marginata Peregrina larvae showed an inhibitory effect on the growth of B. subtilis, P. chrysogenum, C. tropicalis and Exophila dermatitidis. One antibiotic-producing isolate that was found in Grus japonensis's feces showed a strong and broad range antibacterial activity against Gram-positive and -negative pathogens.

In future, all isolates, which produced antimicrobial compounds, will be identified and the respective substances

496-EMP
Identification of novel glyphosate-protein interactions in Escherichia coli revealed by thermal proteome profiling

**P. Lohmann\(^1\), S. Aldehoff\(^1\), N. Jehmlich\(^1\), M. von Bergen\(^1,2\)**

\(^{1}\)Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Molecular Systems Biology, Leipzig, Germany
\(^{2}\)University of Leipzig, Institute of Biochemistry, Leipzig, Germany

The broad-spectrum herbicide glyphosate (N-(phosphonomethyl) glycine) is the most commonly and intensively used herbicide worldwide. Glyphosate interacts with the enzyme enolpyruvylshikimate-3-phosphate synthase (EPSPS) which belongs to the shikimate pathway and inhibits the de novo synthesis of aromatic amino acids phenylalanine, tyrosine and tryptophan in higher plants and microorganisms. In this study, we applied thermal proteome profiling (TPP) using the environmental widely distributed bacteria Escherichia coli as a model organism. Cultures exposed to glyphosate during growth are subjected to quantitative proteomic analysis to reveal alterations in protein and pathway abundances. Identification of significant melting curve shifts of E. coli proteins after incubation with glyphosate should also present new binding partners of the herbicide. We observed that the growth and the viability of E.coli decreased with increasing glyphosate concentration. Importantly, we identified four potential new interacting partners of glyphosate because of significant changes in their melting curves and their affiliation to affected pathways. Our study will contribute to a better understanding of the mode of action of glyphosate and encourage the ongoing risk assessment discussions about their application in the environment.

496-EMP
Identification of novel glyphosate-protein interactions in Escherichia coli revealed by thermal proteome profiling

**P. Lohmann\(^1\), S. Aldehoff\(^1\), N. Jehmlich\(^1\), M. von Bergen\(^1,2\)**

\(^{1}\)Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Molecular Systems Biology, Leipzig, Germany
\(^{2}\)University of Leipzig, Institute of Biochemistry, Leipzig, Germany
Phosphorus (P) is one of the essential nutrients for all biota on earth. Microbes are the main drivers for P turnover and control its mobilization from dead biomass as well as from bedrock materials. However, most processes triggering the mobilization of P are highly energy demanding, thus we expect that the corresponding microorganisms will be enriched in hotspots including rhizosphere and drilosphere. Many studies focused on the rhizosphere in the past, while the drilosphere has been rarely studied as a hotspot for P turnover. The drilosphere is defined as the zone in soil, where earthworms induce C accumulation, unlike rhizosphere. We propose that as a result of the C release by the earthworms copiotrophic bacteria increase in abundance and trigger P mineralization processes to maintain stable C:P ratios in the microbial cells. This might be of importance mainly in subsoils where overall concentrations of bioavailable C are low and P might be exclusively mobilized in hotspots. Thus, we collected rhizosphere and bulk soil samples in 10 cm intervals (0-70 cm depth) from a short-term coppice in Rostock, Germany. We combined potential enzyme activities, the quantification, and identification of bacteria involved in P turnover by applying qPCR and amplicon sequencing. We targeted marker genes coding for enzymes involved in mineralization (phoN, phoD and phnX), solubilization (gcd), and uptake (pitA, pstS) of P. High potential enzyme activities for P mineralization were observed in the drilosphere compared to bulk soil in all soil layers, however the differences increased with soil depth as expected. qPCR assays confirmed the higher genetic potential for P turnover in the drilosphere. The abundance of phoD gene decreased with soil depth while the genes gcd and pitA remained high in abundance also in the deeper layers. Each of the marker genes was assigned to different copiotrophic bacteria, such as Bradyrhizobium and Xanthomonas. The heterotrophic bacteria involved in P uptake processes took the most advantage of the earthworm activities in the deeper soil layers, in contrast with oligotrophic bacteria involved in P uptake processes in the bulk soil.

498-EMP
Earthworm-induced bacterial P mobilization by copiotrophic bacteria plays a central role in P turnover in subsoil horizons

*A. Chiba*, A. Zacher, M. Peine, M. Schloter, P. Leinweber, S. Schulz

1Helmholtz Zentrum München, Research Unit Comparative Microbiome Analysis, Munich, Germany
2Technical University of Munich, Chair of Plant Nutrition, Freising, Germany
3University of Rostock, Chair of Soil Science, Rostock, Germany

499-EMP
The fate of 2-heptyl-4-hydroxyquinoline N-oxide in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Mycobacteroides abscessus*

N. Ritzmann, C. Schmerling, S. L. Drees, S. Fetzner

1University of Muenster, Institut für Molekulare Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, Muenster, Germany

Introduction: Alkyl quinolones (AQs) are involved in the sophisticated quorum sensing network of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. They can contribute to the regulation of virulence factor production, or serve as antimicrobials. Whereas PQS ("Pseudomonas quinolone signal") is the predominant signaling compound, 2-heptyl-4-hydroxyquinoline N-oxide (HQNO) is a respiratory chain inhibitor. HQNO is detoxified via 3-monoxygenation by various bacteria. The reaction is catalyzed by flavoprotein monoxygenases (FPMOs) and results in PQS-N-oxide (PQS-NO). Interestingly, these FPMOs are highly similar to PqsH, the PQS signal synthase in *P. aeruginosa*.

**Objectives** Since 3-monoxygenation of HQNO is catalyzed by PqsH-like FPMOs in various AQ degraders, HQNO might also be modified by PqsH of *P. aeruginosa*. We hence wanted to investigate the fate of HQNO in *P. aeruginosa* and the AQ degrading *Mycobacteroides abscessus*. Moreover, we aimed to analyze HQNO monoxygenation by PqsH and AqdB, two isofunctional FPMOs of *P. aeruginosa* and *M. abscessus*.

**Methods** We constructed *P. aeruginosa* mutants lacking AQ biosynthetic genes to facilitate detectability of transient HQNO intermediates in biotransformations, and quantified products of HQNO conversion. We purified recombinant proteins and developed a spectroscopic assay to characterize substrate specificities of PqsH and AqdB. We moreover analyzed intermediates of *in vitro* degradation of HQNO by mycobacterial enzymes via LC/MS.

**Results** Supplementation of *P. aeruginosa* with HQNO resulted in formation of a transient PQS-NO intermediate. PQS-NO synthesis was dependent on the presence of PqsH. Remarkably PQS-NO can undergo chemical reduction to PQS in *P. aeruginosa* cultures. Reconstituting HQNO degradation of *M. abscessus* with recombinant proteins in *vitro*, we detected PQS-NO as well as its downstream intermediate N-hydroxy-N-octanoyl anthranilic acid.

**Conclusion** Our experiments indicate that both, the signal synthase PqsH and the AQ degradation enzyme AqdB hydroxylate HQNO besides HQH. The reaction product PQS-NO therefore may be regarded as an intermediate in both, *P. aeruginosa* QS signal biosynthetic and mycobacterial AQ degradation pathways.

500-EMP
Enhanced HCH detoxification by anaerobic microbial consortia enriched from HCH-contaminated sediments

M. I. Khan, C. Vogt, S. Bashi, 1Nijenhuis

1Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research-UFZ, Department of Isotope Biogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany
2University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Institute of Soil and Environmental Sciences, Faisalabad, Pakistan

**Introduction:** Organochlorine pesticides such as hexachlorocyclohexanes (HCH) contamination is a serious environmental concern because of their toxicity to biological systems and their persistence in the environment. Among the existing cleanup options, mineralization of HCH by indigenous microorganisms would be the most economical and environmentally-friendly remediation approach for HCH-contaminated sites. Although use of anaerobic microbial consortia has been considered a promising microbial resource for HCH degradation, complete HCH mineralization has yet to be achieved.

**Objectives:** Here, we aim to develop anaerobic HCH-degrading microbial consortia from HCH-contaminated sediments collected from Pakistan, and explore the microbial communities and biodegradation pathways in the newly developed consortia.
Materials & Methods: Microcosm experiments were carried out using sediments (collected from two different HCH-contaminated sites in Pakistan) as inocula, sodium lactate as an exogenous C source and e-donor, and one of the HCH isomers (i.e. α, β, γ, and δ, each added separately) as e-acceptor.

Results: Anaerobic HCH-degrading microbial consortia were successfully enriched through serial sub-culturing. Intermediates analysis by GC-FID showed that the developed consortia had the ability to transform each of the isomers of HCH to monochlorobenzene (MCB) and benzene, particularly with relatively high transformation rates of γ-HCH (i.e. 10-19 µM per day). The reduction in MCB and benzene concentrations, at later stages of incubation, indicates the further degradation or mineralization of these transformation products. In addition, the coupling of MCB- and HCH-degrading consortia may further improve the mineralization of HCH.

Conclusion: Complete HCH detoxification and mineralization is expected to be feasible under anaerobic conditions.

501-EMP
Uncultivated Chloroflexi from fumaroles and hot springs of São Miguel (Azores) harbor unusual large genomes and secondary metabolism clusters
J. Vollmers1,2, J. Gersch1, A. K. Kaster1
1KIT, IBG 5, Eggenstein-Leopoldshafen, Germany
2Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Institut for Biological Interfaces (IBGS), Eggenstein-Leopoldshafen, Germany
3Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, IAB, Eggenstein-Leopoldshafen, Germany

One of the most "undercultured" phyla is the phylum Chloroflexi, a deep-branching lineage within the domain Bacteria. In its current state, the phylum consists of eight classes (Chloroflexia, Thermomicrobia, Dehalococcoidia, Ktedonobacteria, Ardentiacatenia, Thermoflexia, Anaerolineae, and Caldilineae). Interestingly, Chloroflexi isolates exhibit a broad diversity of phenotypes and a wide range of metabolic activities. Recent analyses have shown that they might harbour a great potential for the production of novel secondary metabolites. However, their diverse physiology and metabolism make them often difficult to cultivate. A bioinformatics survey of datasets from publicly available databases showed that hot springs all around the world are often hot spots for Chloroflexi species. In this study, samples from fumaroles and hot springs of the Azores were collected, and the extracted DNA was sequenced and bioinformatically analysed. We were able to reconstruct genomes from different metagenomes datasets by covariant binnig, resulting in 35 different genomes of previously uncultivated Chloroflexi. The majority seems to represent so far unknown classes within the phylum. In addition, a high number of NRPS/PKS clusters within unusual large genomes of Chloroflexi could be identified, making these bacteria highly interesting for biotechnological applications.

503-EMP
Responses of the soil microbiota to pesticides and their microgel-based adjuvants
J. Zierul1,2, R. Geer1,2, L. Goncharenko3,4, A. Töpel2,4,5, W. Xu2,4,5, F. Jakob2,4,5, C. Knie1,2
1University of Bonn, INRES – Molecular Biology of the Rhizosphere, Bonn, Germany
2Bioeconomy Science Center, c/o Research Center Jülich, Jülich, Germany
3RWTH Aachen University, Institute of Biotechnology, Aachen, Germany
4RWTH Aachen University, DWI – Leibniz-Institute for Interactive Materials, Aachen, Germany
5RWTH Aachen University, Institute of Technical and Macromolecular Chemistry, Aachen, Germany

The usage of agrochemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides is ubiquitous nowadays. They support the protection of crop plants and ensure a successful growth for a high yield. However, these chemicals can have side effects on the environment, for instance on the soil microbiota. In this study, different agrochemicals, i.e., pesticides and adjuvants were tested for possible environmental influences. Adjuvants are substances which are added to an active ingredient in order to improve its effectiveness. Among the test objects were the fungicide chlorothalonil and the active ingredient copper acetate. In addition, a new adjuvant technology termed greenRelease was tested, which aims at a reduction of the amount of agrochemicals that need to be applied. It employs microgels, which act as loadable containers for active ingredients that are fixed onto aerial plant organs via anchor peptides and release the loaded pesticides over time. The different components were applied into soil and samples were taken from the day of the application until 240 days later. Subsequent DNA extraction, 16S rRNA gene amplification and Illumina MiSeq sequencing permitted the detection of potential responses in the bacterial community. Overall, bacterial communities were only little affected by any of the treatments, if at all. Nevertheless, changes in soil bacterial community composition were observed after the application of the ploy(N-Vinylcaprolactam) based microgel (pVCL). After a week, bacteria of the genus ‘Candidatus Saccharibacteria’ started.
to show an increase in relative abundance. These bacteria are a likely candidate to accelerate and ensure the biodegradability of the greenRelease adjuvant. Ongoing experiments with fungal communities will complete these analyses soon. Overall, the tested technology greenRelease seems promising to enable a reduction of agrochemicals in the future.

504-EMP
Surveying extended-spectrum beta-lactamase-producing Enterobacteriaceae in urban wetlands in southwestern Nigeria as a step towards generating prevalence maps of antimicrobial resistance
O. O. Adelowo1,2, O. O. Ikhimikori1,2, C. Knecht1, J. Vollmers1, M. Bhatia1, A. K. Kaster2, O. J. A. Müller1
1 Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Environmental Biotechnology, Leipzig, Germany
2 University of Ibadan, Environmental Microbiology and Biotechnology, Ibadan, Nigeria

In many countries, emission of insufficiently treated wastewater into waterbodies appears to be an important factor in the spread of clinically relevant antimicrobial resistant bacteria. Here we queried for the presence of Enterobacteriaceae with resistance to 3rd generation cephalosporins in four urban wetlands in southwestern Nigeria via isolation of strains and sequencing their genomes together with qPCR enumeration of marker genes in sediment samples. Genome analysis of multi-drug resistant and potentially pathogenic Escherichia coli isolates (members of the broadly distributed ST10 complex) revealed the presence of the extended spectrum beta-lactam resistance gene blaCTX-M-15 on a self-transmissible IncF-type plasmid. The gene was also present together with blaTEM-1B on a self-transmissible IncH-type plasmid in multi-drug resistant Enterobacter cloacae isolates. A Citrobacter freundii isolate carried blaTEM-1B on an IncR-type plasmid without discernable conjugation apparatus. All strains were isolated from a wetland for which previous qPCR enumeration of marker genes, in particular the ratio of int11 to 16S rRNA gene copy numbers, had indicated a strong anthropogenic impact. Consistent with the isolation origin of the strains, qPCR analysis in this study showed that blaCTX-M was present at abundance relative to bacterial 16S rRNA gene copy numbers of 1x10^4 in sediment samples from that wetland. The results indicate that contamination of the Nigerian urban aquatic ecosystem with clinically relevant antibiotic resistant bacteria could be substantial at some sites. Measures should therefore be put in place to mitigate the propagation of clinically relevant antimicrobial resistance within Nigerian aquatic ecosystems.

507-EMP
Importance of redox gradients in hyporheic zones: transformation potential of the recalcitrant pharmaceutical iopromide
N. Mukherjee1, B. Braun1, U. Szwazy1
1 Technische Universität Berlin, Environmental Microbiology, Berlin, Germany

The hyporheic zone, the interface between surface water and ground water, is known for its importance for the self-purification capacity of rivers. It is characterized by steep redox gradients due to the active mixing of groundwater and surface water. It is very active biogeochemically, with hyporheic passage often resulting in the conversion of nutrients and the attenuation of pollutants. It creates a highly unique environment hosting some highly specialized organisms that provide specific ecosystem functions and services. The microbial community in the hyporheic zone is yet to be properly characterized.

We aim to characterize the correlation between the redox gradient and the microbial community.

Sediments from the hyporheic zone of the Berlin-based river Erpe were transferred to columns in our laboratory. The sediment columns were then fed with a synthetic fresh water medium, a micronutrient solution and iopromide, an iodinated X-ray contrast medium which is a recalcitrant pharmaceutical found in the river Erpe. Pore water samples were then extracted from different depths of the column and analyzed for different parameters such as concentration of dissolved oxygen, different anions, iopromide and its transformation products. The microbial community in the hyporheic zone is yet to be properly characterized.

505-EMP
Does the maize rhizosphere microbial community show spatial variation and dependence on root carbon allocation?
S. Schultes1,2, R. Köller2, R. Metzner2, D. Pfugfelder2, C. Hinz2, M. Watt1, C. Kneif1
1 Bonn University, INRES - Molecular Biology of the Rhizosphere, Bonn, Germany
2 Jülich Research Center, Institute of Bio- and Geosciences, IBG 2, Enabling technologies, Jülich, Germany

As much as 20% of a crop’s photosynthetically fixed carbon is transported belowground where it is used for root growth, respiration or released into the rhizosphere. The excretion of organic carbon into the rhizosphere can significantly contribute to plant fitness and soil health. It is a substantial source of soil organic carbon and supports the development of rhizosphere microorganisms. Although root traits are now increasingly studied, little is known about the temporal and spatial distribution patterns of plant deposited carbon and its effects on the microbial community structure. To address this point, we employed a combination of the two non-invasive imaging techniques Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Positron Emission Tomography (PET) to visualize root carbon allocation over time. MRI allows 3D monitoring of root growth in its natural environment, while PET uses the short-lived radioactive tracer 11CO2 to track carbon fluxes within the roots. Maize plants were grown in a sandy loam for three weeks. Roots were scanned using MRI and PET at day 6, 13 and 20 after sowing. Root growth and 11C tracer allocation were visualized successfully, revealing an increased tracer accumulation at the root tips. Based on this information, image-guided sampling of the rhizosphere was performed at day 20 after sowing from different root types and areas. Samples of “tracer rich” and “tracer poor” root regions were taken to reveal local differences in microbial community structure. Data of microbial community analysis will be presented, along with the associated tracer allocation patterns obtained by MRI/PET. The non-invasive root imaging techniques are promising tools to monitor root growth and transport processes and define critical time points in root development. The resulting spatiotemporal maps enable targeted sampling of roots plus associated microorganisms to understand root and rhizosphere dynamic processes with spatiotemporal resolution.
The transformation potential of the sediment from the hyporheic zone could be demonstrated. It is likely that the microbial community in the sediment column adapts to iopromide over a period of time. Further investigation is required to support this claim. The transformation potential of the sediment reactor will be studied further by increasing the amount of oxygen in the initial portion of the gradient.

508-EMP
Crop rotation and addition of high carbon amendments differentially impact rhizosphere microbial communities
1C. Kamau1, R. van Duijnen2, V. Radt1, M. Schloter3
1Helmholtz Zentrum München, Research Institute for Comparative Microbiome analysis, Neuherberg, Germany
2University of Lüneburg, Institute of Ecology, Leuphana, Lüneburg, Germany

Due to the growing human population, there is a great need for increase in food production and sustainable management of agro-ecosystems. This is done through implementation of various agricultural management practices which include fertilization using organic amendments and crop rotation. However, the effect of the combined practices on soil microbial communities is not well understood. We set up a 2-year mesocosm experiment to determine the effects of addition of high carbon amendments (wheat straw, sawdust, control) and 2 different crop rotation systems (barley - barley and faba bean - barley) on rhizosphere bacteria communities. We analyzed the bacterial community structure and composition using 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing. Our results showed a significantly higher abundance of bacteria taxa from the Streptomyces, Micromonosporaeae, Pseudocardiaceae, and Chitonophagaceae families in wheat straw than for prokaryotes. We found that the Streptomycetaceae, Micromonosporaceae, and Pseudocardiaceae families were well-suited to degrade the hemicellulose and cellulose components of wheat straw. Moreover, members of Streptomyces have been known to enhance plant growth and health. On the other hand, there was a significant increase in the relative abundance of bacteria taxa from the Gemmatimonadaceae and Xanthobacteraceae families in the sawdust amended plots. Taxa from these families have been linked to the decomposition of complex soil organic matters. Our study revealed that high carbon amendments had a distinct effect on bacterial community composition in the rhizosphere of crop plants. Addition of wheat straw enriched the soil with bacterial taxa known to confer benefits to plant health.

509-EMP
DNA extraction bias is more pronounced for microbial eukaryotes than for prokaryotes
1A. Brauer1, M. Bengtsen1
1University of Greifswald, Institute of Microbiology, Bacterial physiology, Greifswald, Germany

Advances in sequencing technology and paradigm shifts in microbial ecology have led to a prolific rise in studies using SSU rRNA amplicon sequencing to assess microbial communities in various environments. Essential to all of these efforts is preservation and extraction of nucleic acids from environmental microbial communities. A majority of studies have focused on prokaryotic communities, reflecting the current emphasis on bacteria and archaea in molecular microbial ecology. However, in most natural environments, microbial eukaryotes are abundant, diverse and play essential roles in ecosystem processes. Our aim was to assess whether extraction bias affects microbial eukaryotes at a similar magnitude as prokaryotes in the same environment. We compared the effect of different commercial and custom extraction methods on the perceived community composition of prokaryotes and eukaryotes in marine biofilms growing on seagrass leaves. We used two methods to preserve the DNA in the biofilms prior to extraction with 6 different DNA extraction methods. Microbial community composition was assessed by Illumina MiSeq amplicon sequencing of the SSU rRNA genes of prokaryotes (16S rRNA) and eukaryotes (18S rRNA). Both extraction and preservation method explained a significant amount of variation (PERMANOVA p<0.01) in both eukaryotes and prokaryotes, confirming bias for both groups. However, extraction bias was more pronounced for eukaryotes than for prokaryotes (22% and 17% of variation explained, respectively). Several microbial eukaryotic taxa responded differently depending on extraction method, e.g. Nematodes were underrepresented using mechanical lysis while diatoms were underrepresented using enzymatic lysis. Most microbial DNA extraction methods have been developed and optimized for prokaryotes and may therefore be inadequate for microbial eukaryotes which have a high diversity of cell envelopes posing unique challenges for effective cell lysis and subsequent NA recovery. Based on our results, we recommend careful consideration of sample preservation and DNA extraction method depending on which microbial eukaryotes are present and of interest in the studied environment.

510-EMP
Functional characterization of the Radical SAM enzyme NirJ involved in heme d1 biosynthesis
2H. Meyer1, G. Layer2
1Albert-Ludwigs University of Freiburg, Pharmaceutical Biology, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany

During denitrification, nitrate is stepwise reduced and released as dinitrogen. Nitrite reductases catalyze the second step of denitrification, namely the one-electron reduction of nitrite to nitrogen monoxide. There are two structurally unrelated dissimilatory nitrite reductases, also distinguishable by their use of different cofactors. NirS, a cytochrome cd1 nitrite reductase, harbors the tetrapyrrole cofactors heme c and heme d1. Heme d1 is a dioxisobacteriochlorin with a central iron ion. Compared to other tetrapyrroles, heme d1 contains two unusual keto groups at rings A and B, as well as an acrylate side chain at ring D. All biosynthetic steps were elucidated in recent years, except the chemically challenging introduction of both keto groups. The Radical SAM enzyme NirJ might be a possible candidate for this particular reaction. Its gene nirJ is located together with other genes required for heme d1 biosynthesis in the nir-operon. NirJ catalyzes the removal of the two propionate side chains at rings A and B [1].

However, it is unknown whether NirJ is also responsible for the subsequent introduction of the two carboxyl functions. Also the mechanism of the propionate removal remains unresolved, because the tetrapyrrole forms lactones at rings A and B under aerobic extraction conditions.

NirJ and its substrate were co-produced and co-purified. Anaerobic extraction of the tetrapyrrole coupled with anaerobic HPLC analysis led to a different retention time of
the tetrapyrroles, compared to aerobically prepared samples, suggesting that the different extraction techniques result in tetrapyrroles with or without lactones. As a next step, anaerobic HPLC-MS analysis could elucidate the true nature of the extracted tetrapyrrole. To establish the complete reaction mechanism, the cleavage product derived from the propionate groups has to be determined. During this cleavage step, a radical intermediate occurs, which might be detectable by EPR spectroscopy. Finally, the stoichiometric concentrations of formed 5′-deoxyadenosine to reaction product should be defined.


511-EMP
Sulfur and Nitrogen Metabolism in Aerobically Growing Thioalkalivibrio paradoxus: a Proteome Study
P. Rühl1, S. Hein1, N. Benker2, *A. Kletzin1, C. Lenz3
1Technische Universität Darmstadt, Mikrobiologie, Darmstadt, Germany
2Technische Universität Darmstadt, Institut für Angewandte Genowissenschaften, Darmstadt, Germany
3Max-Planck-Institute for Biophysical Chemistry, Bioreanalytical Mass Spectrometry Group, Göttingen, Germany

Introduction: The halotolerant Gamma-proteobacterium Thioalkalivibrio paradoxus grows chemolithoautotrophically by aerobic oxidation of thiocyanate (TC), thiosulfate (TS), sulfide, and CS2 at pH 10 and 35-37°C. Nitrate was added for growth with TS but not with TC.

Methods: We conducted a proteomic study of T. paradoxus grown with TS versus TC, sampling five time points between 42 and 330 h after inoculation. Quantitative proteomic data were collected from three biological replicates with SWATH-LC/MS/MS.

Results: The cultures became transiently milky during exponential phase from extracellular sulfur (S) deposits and intracellular S globules. Later, S disappeared and cell pellets became reddish from cytochromes c.

1951 of 3450 genome-annotated proteins were identified, and the abundances of 1680 (48.7%) determined quantitatively. Proteins of S metabolism were among the five most abundant proteins, including three different B subunits of flavocytochromes c (FccB), and sulfur oxyenase reductase during late exp. and early stat. phases suggesting that the SOR plays a role during oxidation of both extracellular sulfur and intracellular globules. S globule proteins were more abundant with TS than TC. Other abundant proteins included DsrAB (sulfite reductase), while most of the remaining DSR proteins except L were medium-abundant. Surprisingly, the adenylylsulfate reductase was among the most abundant proteins, which together with ATP sulfurylase (Sat) point to a reversibly operating sulfate reduction pathway in addition to electron transport chains via DSR proteins, sulfate dehydrogenase (SoeABC), the bcc-complex, and two terminal oxidases of the cbb3-type.

TC dehydrogenase was induced with TC as expected, as were CopC, FccB3 and a membrane-bound hydrogenase. Proteins of the incomplete Sox complex were more abundant with TS, as well as nitrate and nitrite reductases, and, during stat. phase, CS2 hydrolase.

Conclusion: The results suggest that T. paradoxus uses substrate-level and electron transport phosphorylation for ATP formation during aerobic growth with mixed electron acceptors and aerobic and “anaerobic” electron transport chains.

512-EMP
Spatio-temporal patterns in the root associated microbiota of apple tree
*M. Becker1, C. Kniel1
1University of Bonn, INRES, Bonn, Germany

The rhizosphere harbors highly specific microbial communities, which have the potential to influence plant growth and development. Plants specifically select certain species from the surrounding soil, which thrive in the root-associated soil. Some of these microorganisms even enter the root and establish an endophytic lifestyle. The root system of trees is quite complex and it is assumed that rhizodeposition processes mainly occur at the root tips and in the elongation zone. Older root sections become suberized and thus are considered less relevant concerning carbon release into the rhizosphere and nutrient uptake. It is therefore hypothesized to find different microbial communities along different root regions, which were classified in this study using root diameter as proxy. In order to evaluate these community differences, four commercial apple trees (Malus domestica Borkh.) were excavated and the root system was sampled systematically with high spatial resolution and in dependence on root diameter. Furthermore, carbon release into the rhizosphere changes seasonally and thus it is hypothesized that microbial community composition changes seasonally as well. In order to evaluate these seasonal changes of the root-associated microbiota six commercial apple trees were sampled using a core drill over the course of one year. Effects on the root-associated microbiota were evaluated in two compartments: the microorganisms residing inside the roots and closely attached to the root surface were defined as tightly associated, while the microorganisms loosely bound to the rhizoplane and microorganisms found in the rhizosphere were defined as the loosely associated microorganisms. All samples were subjected to bacterial community analysis based on 16S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing. Specific root sections have a stronger impact on endophytic and tightly attached rhizoplane bacterial community composition than on the loosely associated rhizosphere bacteria. The evaluation of the seasonal changes are subject to ongoing experiments.

513-EMP
Synthetic and native consortia from sewage sludge.
*G. Angeles De Paz*, A. Ledezma-Villanueva1, T. Robledo-Mahon1, J. Purswani1, C. Pozo1, C. Caivo1, M. Manzanera1, E. Aranda1
1Institute of Water Research, Microbiology, Granada, Spain

More than 700 emerging pollutants are present alone in the European aquatic environment and are considered as potentially serious threats to human health and ecosystems1, 2. Environmental law has not regulated them and some are included in the Watch List of potential water pollutants across the EU2. Being the pharmaceutical compounds (PhaCs) frequently reported in soils and water bodies causing an important ecological instability3. They tend to accumulate in sewage sludge after wastewater treatment and represent the most difficult molecule to degrade due to its high stability4. However, some microorganisms have shown the potential to degrade these compounds successfully under specific conditions. Therefore, native fungal and bacterial communities from sewage sludge may play an important role in PhaCs degradation, being able to degrade a myriad of pollutants5.
In this work, we performed a microorganism enrichment experiment using sewage sludge from wastewater treatment plants of Granada, Spain, to obtain a native and synthetic inoculum. The composition of the native inoculum was analyzed by Illumina MiSeq, during the selective pressure with carbamazepine, ketoprofen and diclofenac. Then, a synthetic consortium was built using the BSocial online tool (http://m4m.ugr.es/BSocial.html). A High diversity of bacteria and fungi was shown habitats in the sludge. The bioaugmentation of these microorganisms could regarded as a solution to attend the problem of sewage sludge and other emerging pollutants removal.

References

514-EMP
Diversity, activity and distribution of microorganisms in the ocean-atmosphere boundary layer
1 H. Rade de Angelis1, H. M. Aardema2, H. A. Slagter1, M. L. Callejas1, A. Dragonas1, S. E. Ruff2, J. Fröhlich-Noowsky1; A. T. Kunert1, M. Prab1, T. Könemann1, B. Nill1, R. Schiebel1, G. H. Haug2, E. Thines4, U. Pöschl1, Z. G. Cardon2, C. Pöhler1
2 Max Planck Institute for Chemistry, Multiphase Chemistry, Mainz, Germany
3 Max Planck Institute for Chemistry, Climate Geochemistry, Mainz, Germany
4 Marine Biological Laboratory, Ecosystems Center, Woods Hole, United States
5 Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Institute of Molecular Physiology, Mainz, Germany

Although microbial ecosystems in soil, water and even the deep sea have been extensively studied, the air microbiome has so far received little attention. For climate modelling purposes, the air microbiome above the ocean is usually not considered, although atmospheric microorganisms have been shown to be metabolically active in clouds and to act as efficient cloud condensation and ice nuclei. Hence, the presence and activity of microbes could directly influence atmospheric chemistry, the Earth’s radiation budget and hydrological cycles. Furthermore, around 60% of Earth’s surface is covered by clouds, which may be a microbial habitat, not just a mere carrier.

Using the custom-built research sailing yacht Eugen Seibold, we intend to perform contamination-free analysis of a broad range of atmospheric aerosol characteristics in relation to water biogeochemical parameters. Sampling of water- and airborne microorganisms will provide insights into the biotic and abiotic processes occurring in the boundary layer between ocean and atmosphere. An in-house developed fluorescence in situ hybridization protocol (FISH) for atmospheric and oceanic samples will allow the determination of total cell abundance and microbial domain level classification. Microbial community structure will be assessed using 16S and 18S rRNA gene amplicon sequencing. The twin-plate ice nucleation assay will be used to determine the organisms’ capability to act as ice nuclei.

The broad spectrum of instruments and analyses available aboard the Eugen Seibold, including measurements of total atmospheric particle counts and size distribution, atmospheric and water pCO2 levels, pH, temperature and nutrient levels, together with the microbial community analysis, will allow us to obtain insights into the microbial signature and activity and related processes within the ocean-atmosphere boundary layer. We will investigate the biogeography and dispersal mechanisms of the air microbiome and its potential impact on cloud formation. This work will improve our understanding of the mutual influence of climate relevant parameters and microbial communities.

515-EMP
Halophilic life in gas storage caverns?
1 L. Schwab1, P. Bombach2, G. Nowack1, H. H. Richnow1, C. Vogt1
2 Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Isotopebiogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany
3 Isodetect GmbH, Leipzig, Germany
4 MicroPro GmbH, Gammern, Germany

The implementation of renewable energy solutions in Germany requires methods for improving their production, storage and distribution. The conversion of power into hydrogen and subsequent storage could balance fluctuations in solar or wind energy. Salt caverns have suitable geophysical properties to serve as a short- and long-term natural gas reservoir. But the effects of energy-rich H2 storage on microbial structure and function relationships in salt caverns have not been studied yet. We want to determine the biogeochemical processes that might interfere with the storage of H2 focusing on intrinsic H2-oxidizing halophilic microorganisms. Therefore, sump waters of three natural gas reservoirs and one former towngas reservoir, were sampled. Hydro-chemical analyses were done according to ISO norms, investigating the presence of organic and inorganic compounds. Cell numbers were measured based on DAPI staining. Furthermore, pH and temperature were measured during sampling. Sump water analysis revealed detectable amounts sulfate (4.1 ±0.5 g L-1), ammonia (8.6 ±3.2 mg L-1) and nitrate only in 3 of 4 caverns (1.2 ±0.6 mg L-1). Butyrate (44.6 ±1.6 mg L-1) was found in all caverns, whilst acetate (30 mg L-1) was only detected in the former towngas cavern. All caverns were characterized by DOC levels above 100 mg L-1 (292.5 ±101 mg L-1) and corresponding cell numbers ranged from 2.0E+6 to 5.3E+6 cells mL-1. Currently, microcosm experiments are running in which sump waters were amended with labelled water (D2O) and carbonate (NaH13CO3) and with H2 as sole electron donor in order to assess microbial activity and identify active microorganisms by subsequent nanoSIMS analysis. To track biological activity, analyses of H and C stable isotopes in H2, CO2 and CH4 will be performed using GC-IRMS. For the first time sump waters of different salt caverns where analyzed regarding their suitability as a potential microbial habitat. Cell numbers indicate microbial presence and chemical analysis indicate that short-chain fatty acids and alcohols may play a central role for in-situ microbial activity.

516-EMP
Evaluating the effect of chemical compounds on prophage induction in soil and groundwater bacteria
1 K. Parmari1, F. Schattenberg1, S. Müller2, M. Schmidt2, L. Y. Wick1, R. Kallies1, A. Chatzimotas1,2
2 Isodetect GmbH, Leipzig, Germany

1 Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Isotopebiogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany
2 Isodetect GmbH, Leipzig, Germany
Terrestrial systems are hotspots for unexplored viral diversity and virus-bacteria interactions. Phages (viruses of bacteria) infect bacteria via lytic or lysogenic cycle. The lysogenic cycle is characterized by integration of the phage genome into the bacterial chromosome as a prophage. Prophage get induced by environmental triggers resulting in lysis of hosts and release of new phage in environment. In this work, we studied if chemicals applied in livestock farming or agriculture, and which persist in the environment, induce prophage. Specifically, we analysed prophage induction by the antibiotics ciprofloxacin and trimethoprim, the herbicide glyphosate and mitomycin-C (standard inducer) using model bacteria, 232 isolates from soil and groundwater, and soil communities. Induction was determined by decrease in bacterial optical density (OD) and concomitant increase in phage which were quantified by an optimized flow cytometry (FCM) protocol. To achieve the latter, several parameters were tested with model phages and quantification by FCM was compared to counts by plaque forming units. Further, changes in soil bacterial communities after induction were monitored by T-RFLP. Among the environmental isolates, Actinobacteria were predominantly induced among soil isolates, while Gammaproteobacteria were mainly induced among groundwater isolates. FCM optimization showed that using TE buffer with 2X SYBR gold and glacialaldehyde fixing of phages resulted in accurate counts. The induction of model organisms by different concentrations of the tested chemicals resulted in distinct patterns: (i) 5µg/ml ciprofloxacin released maximum number of phages; (ii) phage numbers increased with increasing trimethoprim concentration; (iii) in contrast, phage numbers decreased as glyphosate concentration increased. Further, T-RFLP revealed changes in community pattern, which were accompanied by higher phage numbers. These results provide evidence that interactions of widely used chemicals with environmental bacteria may result in induction-driven changes of bacterial communities, virus-host interactions and eventually functions.

518-EMP
Apple replant disease: Towards an inoculum with biocontrol properties
S. Benning1, N. Brugnone1, D. Vetterlein2, T. Winkelmann3, M. Schloter1, V. Rad1
1Helmholtz Zentrum München, Comparative Microbiome Analysis - Plant Group, Neuherberg, Germany
2Helmholtz Zentrum für Umweltforschung, Halle, Germany
3Leibnitz Universität, Hannover, Germany

Apple replant disease (ARD) is an issue concerning apple producing areas worldwide. Trees are affected when they are planted in soil, where previously apple or closely related species had been cultivated. The plants show stunted growth, necrotic root tips and lower fruit yield and quality. This is especially a problem for apple orchards and tree nurseries, with many replantings, no space for crop rotation and cost intensively established systems for harvesting and irrigation. Although research is going on for decades, the primary cause for ARD could not be identified by now. Previous experiments pointed towards a lower abundance of many genera of the phylum Actinobacteria, as well as a lower potential for the degradation of aromatic compounds (benzoic acid) in the rhizosphere of replant affected plants. Moreover, it was shown that the effects of ARD on apple seedlings are not systemic and that different microbial communities were found in the soil-root interface of ARD and non ARD plants. Therefore, greenhouse experiments were carried out to enlighten the possible role of Actinobacteria on the apple replant disease. Apple seedlings were grown in rhizoboxes with defined zones of ARD / non-ARD soil. The data revealed a clear difference in the microbiome structure in rhizosphere of replant affected and non-affected soil. In general, Actinobacteria were more abundant in healthy soil compared to ARD soil, except for a few Actinomycetes genera, e.g. Streptomyces. Following our findings, we proceeded to isolate Actinomycetes from healthy soil and tested them for their degradation ability of benzoic acid. Of 121 isolates, 21 could degrade the aromatic compound. Their sequences could be assigned to 9 different Actinomycetes genera, Arthrobacter sp., Nocardia sp., Pseudarthrobacter sp., Terrabacter sp., and 5 Rhodococcus sp. After examining their ability to cope with lycopersicola robusta, a pathogen isolated from ARD affected roots, seven selected strains are being currently tested in a greenhouse experiment for their ability to colonize the roots and to promote the apple tree growth. Thereby, we aim to identify a bacterial inoculum able to mitigate the symptoms of ARD.

519-EMP

As part of the international JPI-EC-AMR collaborative project Antimicrobial Resistance Manure Intervention Strategies (ARMIS), we study the effectiveness of manure treatment in small-scale (farm) biogas plant systems common in Germany with respect to AMR reduction throughout the manure processing. With culture dependent and culture independent methods, the abundance of antibiotic resistance bacteria is determined with the focus on ESBL-producing Enterobacteriaceae, vancomycin-resistant Enterococci (VRE), Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), and Carbapenem-resistant Acinetobacter baumannii. First data indicate that the emissions of AMR present in manure is reduced by the anaerobic treatment but not completely stopped. ESBL-producing E. coli, VRE, and even strictly aerobic resistant bacteria as Acinetobacter baumannii survive the anaerobic manure digestion process and are released with the digestate into the environment. Knowledge on the effectiveness of the manure interventions on AMR transmission is an important to contribute efficiently to the reduction of the AMR impact caused by the livestock industry.
Cryptic sulfur cycling by cable bacteria in freshwater habitats

*C. Sachs*1, D. Kanaparthi1, K. As2, T. Lüders1
1University of Bayreuth, Ecological Microbiology, Bayreuth, Germany
2University of Bayreuth, Hydrology, Bayreuth, Germany

At diffusion-controlled redox gradients in freshwater sediments, the degradation of organic matter is often limited by the replenishment of electron acceptors. Recently discovered cable bacteria, belonging to the Desulfobulbaceae family, can form cm-long filaments, spanning different redox zones and thus able to recycle electron acceptors. They were found to play an important role in oxidative sulphur cycling in marine sediments. For freshwater ecosystems, sulfur cycling is often considered as negligible, due to generally much lower sulfate levels and energetic predictions. However, recent findings suggest that sulfur cycling plays a key role also in certain freshwater habitats, with high turnover rates, but termed "cryptic" due to low steady-state concentrations. The objective of the present study was to connect sulfur cycling in freshwater sediments to long-distance electron transfer (LDET) by cable bacteria, using direct rate measurements involving microsensor profiling to determine sulfide oxidation rates. As sulfide in the suboxic zone cannot be measured while cable bacteria consume it and thus drive the cryptic sulfur cycle, the cycle needs to be interrupted. We incubated sediments derived from lakes and rivers in facilitated diffusion gradient columns to enrich filamentous cable bacteria. Successful enrichment was verified by fluorescence in situ hybridization and biogeochemical analyses using microsensors for oxygen, sulfide and pH. For direct rate measurements, the cryptic sulfur cycle was disrupted by preventing LDET by removing the cathodic oxygen supply. Simultaneously, the bacterial community profile was analyzed over depth by next generation sequencing to identify changes in the microbial community composition over depth. Results suggest that cable bacteria are constitute a significant but overlooked cryptic sulfur cycling activity in the investigated freshwater sediments.

520-EMP

Gues for a microbial link between the cycling of methane and iodine in cave biofilms

*F. Beulig*1, C. Kawautz2, T. Lüders1
1University of Bayreuth, Chair of Ecological Microbiology, Bayreuth Center of Ecology and Environmental Research (BayCEER), Bayreuth, Germany
2University of Vienna, Department of Limnology & Bio-Oceanography, Vienna, Austria

The cave of an iodine-rich spring in southern Germany is inhabited by extensive microbial biofilms. Microorganisms in these biofilms appear to feed on geogenic exhalations of methane as the primary source of carbon and energy in the cave. Calculated Gibbs free energy yields suggest that the microbial consumption of methane could be driven by the reduction of a variety of different electron acceptors, including O2, NO3-, Fe(III), and even iodate. Our ongoing investigations focus on (i) exploration of the biofilm metabolic potentials, (ii) discovery of novel methanotrophic taxa, and (iii) identification of postulated metabolic links between the cycling of iodine species and methane. Metagenome sequencing of submersed and subaerial biofilms revealed that microbial communities in the cave were dominated by diverse methanotrophic and methylo trophic taxa, as well as members of the putatively denitrifying, methanotrophic NC10 candidate phylum. De novo assembly and binning of the metagenomic data yielded about 40 near complete genomes harboring diverse metabolic potentials, including complete pathways for methanotrophy, denitrification and haloalkane degradation. Latter may serve as a potential proxy for the microbial turnover of reactive iodine species, including iodomethane. A planned combination of cultivation and stable carbon isotope tracer experiments will help to identify and cultivate microorganisms potentially involved in the coupled cycling of methane and iodine.

521-EMP

Genome comparison of Candidatus Kuenenia stuttgartiensis strain WD and strain MBR1 revealed drastic structural changes

*C. Ding*, L. Adrian1
1lfZ, ISOBIO, Leipzig, Germany

So far there is only one reported complete genome of anammox bacteria – the "Candidatus Kuenenia stuttgartiensis" strain MBR1. Here we report another complete genome of the strain WD, which presented as planktonic cells in a semi-continuous stirred-tank reactor (semi-CSTR) with a specific growth rate μ of 0.33 d-1 at 30°C. The genome was obtained through metagenomics sequencing of the reactor culture using a PacBio RSII DNA sequencer. The genome size is 4.33 mbp with a single 16S rRNA gene. The genome of strain WD are very similar with the genome of strain MBR1 in nucleotide sequences and core genes, sharing >99% average nucleotide identity. However the two genomes show enormous differences in genome structures, with four reversed sequences of size between 150 kbp and 500 kbp. By comparing these two genomes we are able to identify essential genes for the anammox organism, and we also tried to explain the cause of the drastic structure change.

522-EMP

The author has not agreed to a publication.

523-EMP

Water environment as source of non-tuberculous mycobacteria

*A. Hummel*1, M. Koch1, S. Sandner1, C. Förster1
1Umweltbundesamt, Microbiology of Drinking Water and Swimming Pool Water, Bad Elster, Germany

1. Introduction

Non-tuberculous mycobacteria (NTM) are ubiquitous organisms, which occur in a wide variety of environmental reservoirs, including municipal and natural water. Surface water has an important role to play for circulation of NTM in the environment, because of NTM detection in different matrices, like biofilms, sediments and water. Due to the fact that one-third of NTM-species are potential pathogens and associated with human disease, these organisms play an increasing role for industrialized countries all over the world.

2. Objectives

Application of an improved workflow for isolation and detection of NTM to characterize atypical mycobacteria, which are isolated from different environmental habitats – including various types of surface water, like rivers, dams and wells.

3. Materials & methods

Our studies included the evaluation of different techniques for the detection of NTM from untreated water samples and their optimization. This especially applies to the use
of various culture media, incubation temperatures, methods for decontamination and their combination, including further identification steps.

4. Results

Systematic testing of various methods and their development has contributed to improved detection methods for NTM from a wide variety of environmental water reservoirs. We have applied a workflow to maximize the recovery rate with a simultaneous inhibition of the accompanying flora during the isolation of NTM. Further identification of isolated NTM by Mass Spectrometry allowed the characterization of NTM load in natural water habitats.

5. Conclusion

Application of this optimized workflow will be helpful for future analysis of natural water bodies in the course of microbiological risk assessment. NTM can cause disease in humans or animals. Therefore, further characterization of NTM-presence in water environments becomes an increasingly important issue.

524-EMP
Improvement of pepper mild mottle virus (PMMoV) analysis in environmental water samples
S. Pfeifer1, P. Schilbach1,2, S. Gläsels1, K. Oehms1, C. Försters1
1Umweltbundesamt, Microbiology of Drinking Water and Swimming Pool Water, Bad Elster, Germany
2University of Applied Sciences, Mittweida, Germany

Introduction

Monitoring of water sources for the presence of pathogens is fundamental for securing high microbial quality standards for the supply of drinking water.

Several studies have analysed the occurrence of PMMoV in surface water sources as a potential viral indicator for human fecal pollutions. This RNA virus infects a wide range of pepper species worldwide, and thus finds its way into processed food products. Due to its high stability it survives human gut passage intact and was found to be the most abundant virus type in human fecal samples. PMMoV shows several advantages as an indicator for contamination by human feces: it has no pathogenic effect on humans, shows worldwide distribution and is rarely found in animal feces.

Objectives

Application of a workflow for isolation, detection and quantification of PMMoV indicated several possibilities for process optimization. We aimed to increase the yield of the reverse transcription of PMMoV RNA, and to improve the robustness of the TaqMan-based qPCR assay.

Materials & Methods

The standard methodology for the detection of PMMoV in water samples includes a concentration step, followed by RNA isolation, reverse transcription into cDNA and subsequently quantification by real-time qPCR.

Results

The cDNA yield could be increased by an optimized combination of the primers and enzyme for reverse transcription. Further optimizations were performed on the qPCR primer pairs and TaqMan probes. By application of statistical analyses those primer pairs and probes giving highest robustness and lowest limits of detection and quantification within all tested sequences could be identified.

Conclusion

By increasing the yield of the reverse transcription of PMMoV RNA, and improving the robustness of the TaqMan-based qPCR assay we could lower the limits of detection and quantification compared to the method described in the literature. Application of this optimized workflow as a new standard will be helpful in future analysis of PMMoV as an indicator for human fecal pollution in water sources, as results will be more accurate and comparability between different studies will be improved.

525-EMP
Detection of viable and infectious human adenoviruses in environmental water samples
S. Pfeifer1, S. Gläsels1, K. Oehms1, C. Försters1
1Umweltbundesamt, Microbiology of Drinking Water and Swimming Pool Water, Bad Elster, Germany

Introduction

Current monitoring of drinking water for the presence of pathogens requires sampling and detection of bacterial indicator organisms to secure the high microbial quality standards. Such classical indicators have drawbacks for the detection of pathogens like viruses, as these are more persistent due to their resistance to environmental stress and can cause infections already at very low concentrations. Thus a risk-based assessment of water quality is required, including the reliable detection of pathogenic viruses in drinking water sources. Human adenoviruses are suited as indicator viruses for such examinations, as they are found in sewage-affected water sources throughout the whole year.

Objectives

Quantitative microbiological risk assessment for human adenoviruses requires quantitative methods which can discriminate between viable and non-viable viruses. Standard molecular biology techniques as real-time quantitative PCR will give a quantitative result on the presence of genetic information alone, but not on the viability of detected genomic units. We aimed to establish a robust method for the detection of viable human adenoviruses in water samples and to quantitatively characterize the microbiological quality of several surface water sources utilized for drinking water treatment.

Materials & Methods

Our studies included the evaluation of methods for virus enrichment from untreated water samples, followed by virus DNA isolation and real-time qPCR as well as cell-culture techniques for the detection of viable adenoviruses in enriched samples.

Results

By using a combination of cell-culture-based methods in combination with molecular biology techniques we were able
to establish a robust workflow for the detection of viable human adenoviruses from untreated water samples. We have applied this workflow on different surface water sources and compared the achieved results with classical methods like the quantitative detection of somatic bacteriophages.

**Conclusion**

The obtained results will be used to support future regulatory guidelines on quantitative microbiological risk assessment of surface water sources utilized in drinking water supply.

526-EMP  
**A closer look at the microbiome’s dynamics during the start-up phase of biogas fermenters**

1. K. Willenbücher1, M. Conrado2, P. Ramml2, A. Schlüter3, D. Benndorf2, M. Kloc1, J. Barrero Canosa2, U. Szewzyk2  
1Leibniz-Institut für Agrartechnik und Biöökonomie e.V. (ATB), Department Bioengineering, Potsdam, Germany  
2Institute of Agricultural and Urban Ecological Projects affiliated to Berlin Humboldt University (IASP), Department of Biogenic Raw Materials, Berlin, Germany  
3Bielefeld University, Center for Biotechnology (CeBiTec), Institute for Genome Research and Systems Biology, Bielefeld, Germany  
4Otto von Guericke University, Department Bioprocess Engineering, Magdeburg, Germany  
5Technische Universität Berlin, Environmental Microbiology, Berlin, Germany

Our study investigates the microbial processes in semi-continuously fed biogas fermenters during anaerobic digestion of lignocellulosic substrates. In our first experiment, we are focusing on the start-up phase. In this initial phase, a functional microbiological community necessary for anaerobic fermentation is formed. Our second experiment will focus on the entire microbial process over the course of one year.

The aim is to characterize the structure and functionality of the microbiome as well as its dynamics during the ongoing biogas processes. By a comprehensive analysis of the community at metagenome, metatranscriptome, metaproteome level and a chemical analysis of the start-up phase, it is possible to identify key organisms as well as key characteristics that provide information about the major factors in the biogas process. A special interest lies in the key species responsible for the hydrolysis of lignocellulosic substrates. In addition, the microbial community will be screened for phages.

An integrated -omics approach including subsequent data set analysis using bioinformatic tools is applied. The analysis of metagenome data sets allows determining both the composition of the microbial communities involved in anaerobic digestion as well as their genetic potential for anaerobic biomass degradation and biomethanization. Pre-characterization is performed by monitoring the structure and development of microbial communities using DNA-based fingerprinting (terminal restriction fragment length polymorphism, TRFLP). The phages are determined by microscopic analyses (transmission electron microscope).

The results of this study will contribute to the understanding of the establishment of functional microbial networks in technical anaerobic digestion processes.

527-EMP  
**Antibiotic-resistant bacteria mussels harvested from the river Rhine**

1. N. Zacharias1, I. Löckener1, S. M. Essert1, E. Sib2, G. Bierbaum3, T. Kistemann4, C. Schreiber1  
1Institute for Hygiene and Public Health, University Hospital Bonn, GeoHealth Centre, Bonn, Germany  
2Institute for Pharmaceutical Microbiology, University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany  
3Institute of Immunology, Medical Microbiology and Parasitology, University Hospital Bonn, Bonn, Germany

Bacteria and bacterial infections have been treated by antibiotics since the discovery of penicillin in 1928. A worldwide increase in the use of antibiotics led to the emergence of antibiotic resistant strains in almost all bacterial species, which complicates the treatment of infectious diseases. The World Health Organization (WHO) declares the increase in antibiotic resistance as one of the top 10 threats to global health. Several studies show that important pathogenic antibiotic-resistant bacteria can reach the environment by the discharge of sewage treatment plants and combined sewage overflow events. Mussels are used as bio-indicators of heavy metals, chemicals and parasites; they may also be bio-indicators for viruses and bacteria. This study focusses on the influence of treated wastewater on the bacterial flora in the mussels and whether mussels can be used as bio-indicators of the presence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in water courses.

The river Rhine is a large cross-border-river carrying considerable amounts of wastewater. It rises in the Swiss canton of Grisons and flows through Germany, further through the Netherlands and into the North Sea. In addition to a large diversity of flora it contains a variety of fish and small animal species such as insects, snails and mussels.

The river Rhine is populated by invasive mussel species, such as Corbicula spp. and Dreissena spp.. Both species are abundant in such high population densities that together, they account for the majority of mussels in the river Rhine.

An influence of the local sewage treatment plant could be shown in regard to the presence of E.coli in higher concentrations in the mussel tissue downstream the treatment plant. Antibiotic-resistant bacteria could be found in the tissue of mussels of the genera Dreissena and Corbicula at different sampling sites of the river Rhine. No multidrug-resistant bacteria could be isolated from the mussel tissue, but were found in samples of the surrounding water body. The present of antibiotic-resistant Gram-negative bacteria in the river Rhine and mussels suggests that some resistance phenotypes are now widespread or even ubiquitous.

528-EMEP  
**Modelling of the Serratia plymuthica 4Rx13 FPP C-methyltransferase and evaluation of a catalytic mechanism of pre-sordorifen synthesis**

1. M. C. Lemfack1, W. Brandt 2, B. Piechulla 1  
1Institute for Biological Sciences/University of Rostock, Biochemistry, Rostock, Germany  
2Leibnitz-Institute of Plant Biochemistry, Bioorganic Chemistry, Halle, Germany

Terpenoids are by far the most structurally diverse and dominant class of natural products. They are biosynthesized from C5 isoprene units (isopentenyl pyrophosphate, dimethylallyl pyrophosphate), which are condensed by prenyl pyrophosphate synthases to produce acyclic precursors such as geranyl pyrophosphate (GPP), farnesyl pyrophosphate (FPP), and geranylgeranyl pyrophosphate (GGPP). These
precursors serve as canonical substrates for terpene synthases to form a broad range of compounds comprising mono- (C10), sesqui-(C15) and diterpenes (C20).

Recently, we showed that several Serratia plymuthica isolates produce the unusual polymethylated bicyclic sesquiterpene sodorifen (C16H26)[1]. Our studies revealed that a terpene cyclase (S.p. SODS) and a C-methyltransferase (S.p. FPPMT) are indispensable for the biosynthesis of sodorifen [1,2,3]. The biosynthetic route of this unique sesquiterpene indicates that S.p. SODS does not accept FPP as a substrate as generally expected for sesquiterpene synthases. More interestingly, the S.p. FPPMT simultaneously catalyzes a methylation at C10 and cyclisation of FPP to produce a five member-ring compound (C16, pre-sodorifen pyrophosphate), which is the substrate of the terpene cyclase in the biosynthesis of sodorifen [3]. It is our interest to unravel the structure of this new S.p. FPPMT to better understand the mechanism involved in the synthesis of the C16 precursor.

Based on ab initio modelling and threading, using the Robetta Web Server (http://www.robbeta.org) followed by refinement with YASARA [4] a reasonable 3D protein structure model was created. After docking of SAM and FPP, and subsequent semi-empirical quantum mechanical calculations, an energetically favored mechanism for the formation of pre-sodorifen pyrophosphate was proposed.

Keywords: Modelling, FPP C-methyltransferase, sesquiterpene, pre-sodorifen pyrophosphate, site directed mutagenesis

529-MMEP

Elucidation of Dicarboxylic Acid Degradation Including Major Differences to Fatty Acid Degradation in Cupriavdus necator

*1* C. S. Strittmatter¹, V. Biesgen¹, J. Eggers¹, A. Steinbüchel¹ ²
1University of Münster - Institute for Molecular Microbiology and Biotechnology, Münster, Germany
2King Abdulaziz University, Environmental Sciences Department, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Although the betaproteobacterium Cupriavidus necator (formerly Ralstonia eutroph) is exhaustively investigated, its β-oxidation is poorly understood. The degradation monocarboxylic fatty acid occurs by β-oxidation. Presumably, dicarboxylic acids degradation is also carried out via the same way. Its elucidation in C. necator is complicated by the presence of numerous homologues genes, that all may code for enzymes of β-oxidation pathway.

In previous studies it was shown, that two different gene cluster mediate the degradation of long-chain fatty acids in C. necator. Nevertheless, the question occurred, whether dicarboxylic acids are degraded by the same homologues and whether these obtained clusters manifest themselves in degradation of shorter fatty acids.

While several Tn5-mutants showed leaky or no growth with medium-chain dicarboxylic acids adipic and pimelic acid, deletion mutants of the same genes showed no lack of growth. Only the deletion of the Acyl-CoA dehydrogenase B2555 resulted in a leaky growth. To get further insights, proteome analysis via 2D-gel electrophoresis was performed with C. necator H16 grown with adipic acid, hexanoic acid or sodium-glucanate as reference. The proteome analysis revealed that adipic acid is degraded via β-oxidation. The cluster B2019-8B2000 (3-Oxoadipate-CoA transferase and β-Ketoadipyl-CoA thiolase) codes for the responsible genes completed with mentioned B2555 and Enoyl-CoA hydratase A3593. Although hexanoic acid degradation also includes A3593, other enzymes responsible differ from the ones executing the dicarboxylic acid degradation. Furthermore, it was shown, that different homologues genes code for the degradation of hexanoic acid, compared to the ones fulfilling degradation of long-chain fatty acids previously shown.

Therefore, we can present the degradation of adipic acid as example for dicarboxylic acids and hexanoic acid as example for medium-chain fatty acids in C. necator. Further investigations will show whether the deletion of these genes leads to an abundance of growth or whether other homologues genes will adopt the function.

530-MMEP

From C1 to C21: A synthetic approach using CO₂ as a carbon source for the production of complex multi carbon products

*C. Diehl¹, S. Sundaram¹, P. Gerlinger¹, T. J. Erb¹
²Max-Planck-Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Biochemistry & Synthetic Metabolism, Marburg, Germany

The rising level of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere is the subject of investigations for decades in many fields of research. Due to the big impact of changing the climate it is often seen as a threat to human mankind. From a chemical point of view CO₂ is a free available carbon source. Plants and photosynthetic algae convert CO₂ with energy collected from light into glucose. This rather slow process, limited by the slow turnover rate of the Ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate-carboxylase/oxygenase was already improved by a faster and more efficient synthetic equivalent, the crotonyl-CoA/ethylmalonyl-CoA/hydroxybutyryl-CoA (CETCH) cycle.

Here we show how we develop new pathways for the further conversion of the fixed carbon from the CETCH cycle into complex multi carbon compounds (>C10), such as limonene, bisabolene, farnesene or 6-deoxerythronolide (6-dEB) by metabolic retrosynthesis. We purify all enzymes needed for the pathways, supply energy equivalents and test them in vitro assays. We demonstrated that metabolic networks with more than 30 enzymes work in vitro. Intermediates and products were verified by LC- or GC-MS.

The two fixed carbons from the CETCH cycle are released as the C2-com pound glyoxylate. As a first step we convert two molecules of glyoxylate to the C4-compound malate. Therefore we use the β-hydroxyspartate cycle: Using only one NADPH equivalent per reaction sequence it is the most energy efficient pathway known for glyoxylate assimilation so far. From malate we either reduce to malonate, a precursor for several terpenes and further to limonene, bisabolene or farnesene. To produce 6-dEB, the precursor for the antibiotic drug erythromycin, we feed the fixed carbon back as CoA-esters into the cycle. With this approach we accumulate
propanoyl- and methylmalonyl-CoA which are used by the type I polyketide synthase 6-deoxyerythronolide B synthase.

We successfully demonstrated that non-natural complex metabolic networks work in vitro. Once efficient synthetic CO₂-fixing pathways are implemented in vivo these pathways offer multiple possibilities to produce complex compounds such as antibiotics and fragrances from carbon harvested from the air.

531-MMEP
Genetic standardization and modularization: coming to the rescue of the in vivo implementation of synthetic CO₂ fixation pathways.

* A. Sanchez-Pascual1, T. J. Erb1
1Max Planck Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology, Biochemistry and Synthetic Metabolism, Marburg, Germany

Nowadays, the depletion of non-renewable resources (i.e. fossil fuels) is leading the accumulation of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) in a particularly worrying way. The natural biological solution to recapture atmospheric CO₂ is autotrophic CO₂ fixation, which is mainly driven by the Calvin-Benson-Bassham (CBB) cycle, the carbon fixation pathway of photosynthesis. Unfortunately, natural CO₂ fixation has been overwhelmed in its effort to maintain a sustainable carbon cycle to cover human and environmental needs. Recent advances in synthetic biology have provided new ways to harvest atmospheric CO₂ as a sustainable and profitable carbon source. One example is the crotonyl-coenzyme A (CoA)/ethylmalonyl-CoA/hydroxybutyryl-CoA (CETCH) cycle. The CETCH cycle is a synthetic pathway for the fixation of CO₂ that was designed to operate faster and more efficiently than its natural counterpart, the CBB cycle. The CETCH cycle has been fully demonstrated in vitro, however, its applicability in vivo is still pending and will provide the next step towards the development of synthetic CO₂ fixation processes. Here, we show how to address this in vivo challenge by employing genetic standardization and modularization approaches. The whole enzymatic complement of the CETCH cycle will be captured and rewired following the Standard European Vector Architecture (SEVA) and the Modular Cloning (MoClo) system. The genetic/metabolic tool, called standard CETCH (sCETCH), will allow the user-friendly implementation of functional CETCH modules in a wide range of bacteria. The rational design, in combination with a CETCH-auxotrophic Escherichia coli reporter strain, will be used to stepwise realize and optimize the CETCH cycle in vivo. The successful approach will set the basis for the development and public release of sCETCH as a new standard genetic/metabolic tool for CO₂ fixation.

532-MMEP
Clostridium beijerinckii DSM 6423: Transformation and plasmid-based overexpression of the 1,3-propanediol production gene cluster

*T. Schoch1, F. R. Bengelsdorf1, P. Dürre1
1Institut für Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, Ulm, Germany

Introduction

1,3-propanediol is a very important platform chemical, which can be used for polytrimethylene terephthalate (PTT) production. PTT is a biodegradable polyester, utilized as fibers for carpets or textiles. Microorganisms such as Clostridium pasteurianum or Clostridium beijerinckii can be used for the fermentation of crude glycerol to 1,3-propanediol. Clostridium beijerinckii DSM 6423 transports glycerol into the cell using a glycerol transporter. In the cell, one mol glycerol can either be oxidized to one mol dihydroxyacetone or reduced to one mol 3-hydroxypropionaldehyde. Dihydroxyacetone gets further metabolized and is used for growth, recovery of reduction equivalents, and production of by-products. For the reductive glycerol degradation pathway, glycerol is reduced to 3-hydroxypropionaldehyde by a glycerol dehydratase. Subsequently, 3-hydroxypropionaldehyde is converted to 1,3-propanediol using a 1,3-propanediol dehydrogenase.

Material and Methods

In C. beijerinckii DSM 6423, genes with the locus tag CLOBI_51900 and CLOBI_51910 encode the two subunits of the cobalamin-independent glycerol dehydratase. Downstream of these genes, the 1,3-propanediol dehydrogenase gene (CLOBI_51920) is located. An overexpression plasmid pMTL85251_Ppta_ack_1,3-propanediol_CLOBI containing those three genes was constructed using the Ppta_ack promoter from Clostridium ljungdahlii for constitutive gene expression.

Results and Conclusion

This plasmid was transformed in C. beijerinckii DSM 6423 via electro transformation. The effect of the plasmid pMTL85251_Ppta_ack_1,3-propanediol_CLOBI regarding 1,3-propanediol production by the newly constructed recombinant C. beijerinckii [pMTL85251_Ppta_ack_1,3-propanediol_CLOBI] strain was examined by performing heterotrophic growth experiments using glycerol as substrate.

533-MMEP
Designing novel microbiomes to enhance biogas production with metabolic modeling techniques

*R. Amarante Colpo1, B. Henriassaf2, J. McDonald1, F. Centler1
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Environmental Microbiology, Leipzig, Germany
2Aix-Marseille University, CNRS, Marseille, France
3Bangor University, Natural Sciences, Bangor, United Kingdom

Introduction

Waste biomass is a source of methane which is formed by the microbial driven process of anaerobic digestion. This process is deliberately facilitated in biogas plants, but also occurs spontaneously in landfill sites. Microbiomes of anaerobic digestion plants are typically originating from animal guts via inoculation with animal manure or slurry. While these microbial communities are already well characterized, microbiomes of landfill sites still lack a more complete understanding, especially as they encounter a more diverse and heterogeneous environment than gut microbiomes.

Objectives

The SYNBIOGAS project aims at using insights gained during the characterization and analysis of landfill microbiomes, to reach higher digestion rates in industrial digestion plants by using bioaugmentation strategies.

Methods
We will integrate metagenomic and metatranscriptome data from landfill bioreactors, with enrichment cultures, and isolated microorganisms of landfill sites to characterize novel enzymes and to construct metabolic models as a tool to design synthetic microbiomes with optimal methane production rates. We will create community-wide metabolic networks, reconstruct metabolic network models for individual species, and perform dynamic community simulations. For synthetic community models, the microbial community composition, feedstock composition, and operational parameters will be systematically varied to screen for optimal communities as candidates for experimental bioaugmentation tests. Bioinformatics pipelines will be used including PathwayTools, KBase, COBRA Toolbox, and ubialSim.

Expected results

Potential modeling results may include (i) suggestion and validation of new species or consortia to be injected into anaerobic digestion plants or landfill sites to improve biogas production; (ii) identification of critical metabolic conversion steps; (iii) identification of species whose activity must be limited to improve biogas production. The communities designed in silico will be validated in laboratory tests and tested by industrial partners for their practical application feasibility.

534-MMEP

The author has not agreed to a publication.

535-MMEP

Standalone FMN-dependent nitroreductases from thermophilic bacteria are involved in the formation of coenzyme F₄₂₀

D. Braga¹, ²M. Hasan, G. Lackner²
¹Friedrich Schiller University, Microbiology, Jena, Germany

Introduction: Coenzyme F₄₂₀ is a redox cofactor acting as a low-potential hydride carrier in biochemical reactions governing specialized metabolic pathways. It arises interest due to its potential for biotechnological exploitation. In mycobacteria, FbiB catalyzes the two last steps of F₄₂₀ biosynthesis. The N-terminal domain of FbiB (CofE) catalyzes the attachment of a polyglutamate tail to the redox core. This domain is shared among all F₄₂₀ producers. The C-terminal FMN-binding nitroreductase (NTR) domain was recently shown to reduce the dehydro form of coenzyme F₄₂₀ (DF₄₂₀) to its final form. However, the latter domain is absent in other homologs of the enzyme.

Objectives: Taking advantage of the fact that genomes of F₄₂₀-producing bacteria also encode standalone NTRs homologous to the C-terminal NTR domain of FbiB, we sought to investigate if they partake the biosynthesis of the mature coenzyme in these microorganisms.

Methods and results: An Escherichia coli strain able to produce DF₄₂₀ was generated and transformed with plasmids encoding the NTRs from Thermococcus roseum, Thermorudis pealeae, and Sphaerobacter thermophilus. HRMS analysis revealed the presence of the mature coenzyme F₄₂₀ in the intracellular content of each mutant but not in the control strain, where only DF₄₂₀ was found. Enzymatic activity of the NTRs was also confirmed in vitro, where the hexa-histidine fusion NTRs were incubated with DF₄₂₀ and FMN. As a proof-of-principle, we designed an artificial BGC to produce F₄₂₀ in E. coli consisting of T. roseum NTR, and F₄₂₀ biosynthetic enzymes from Methanocaldococcus jannaschi and Paraburkholderia rhizoxinica. The cultivation of E. coli transformed with a plasmid encoding the artificial BGC, indeed, led to the accumulation of coenzyme F₄₂₀ decorated with up to four glutamate residues.

Conclusion: In-vivo and in-vitro evidence showed that standalone NTRs can complement the missing C-terminal domain of FbiB in bacteria yielding the mature coenzyme F₄₂₀. Efforts to express customized F₄₂₀ BGCs in safe hosts are now possible. The increased availability of coenzyme will facilitate the investigation of F₄₂₀-dependent enzymes in the future.

536-MMEP

Biosynthesis of the redox cofactor mycofactocin in Mycolicibacterium smegmatis

L. A. Peña-Ortiz¹, A. P. Graça¹, H. Guo², D. Braga¹, T. Kölliner², L. Regenstein³, C. Beemelmans², G. Lackner¹
¹Friedrich Schiller University, Microbiology, Jena, Germany
²Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology – Hans Knoll Institute, Junior Research Group Chemical Biology of Microbe-Host Interactions, Jena, Germany
³Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology, Department of Biochemistry, Jena, Germany

Introduction

Mycofactocin (MFT) is a ribosomally synthesized and post-translationally modified peptide (RiPP) that has been proposed by a bioinformatics approach as a novel redox cofactor. It has attracted attention due to the widespread presence of its biosynthetic gene cluster in bacterial and some archaeal genomes, including the causative agent of tuberculosis, Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MtB). Recently it was shown that MFT is involved in ethanol metabolism. While the role of MFT in MtB pathogenesis is unknown, understanding the structure and biochemical activity of this cryptic cofactor could inspire its utilization as a potential drug target. Although some biosynthetic steps of MFT have been studied in vitro, the final structure of MFT remained unknown and the full biosynthetic pathway remained elusive.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to identify MFT in the model organism Mycolicibacterium smegmatis and to elucidate its final structure. Furthermore, the MFT biosynthetic pathway was to be established in vivo.

Methods

We used high-resolution LC-MS/MS combined with stable isotope labeling and molecular networking. Genetic studies interrogated the MFT biosynthetic pathway. The cofactor role was shown by activity-based metabolic profiling.

Results

We identified a family of congeners of MFT containing up to nine hexose residues, which were determined to be β-1,4-linked glucose units. We detected oxidized and reduced species as well as biosynthetic intermediates of MFT. We also demonstrated that oligogalactosylation is catalyzed by the predicted glycosyltransferase MtT. Furthermore, we showed that the level of MFT increases upon cultivation in ethanol
and we were able to observe cofactor activity using the proposed MFT-dependent carveol dehydrogenase LimC.

Conclusions

We elucidated the final structure of MFT congeners and established a model of its in-vivo biosynthesis in M. smegmatis. These results are a milestone for research into the mycofactocin system and will inspire future studies on the occurrence, biochemical function and physiological roles of MFT. Lastly, they can encourage the exploitation of MFT as a drug target or disease marker.

537-MMEP
A T7-based expression system for monitoring transcription and translation in vivo in Gram-negative bacteria
H. Löwe1, A. S. Ortega1, K. Pflüger-Grau1, A. Kremling1
1Technical University of Munich, Systems Biotechnology, Garching, Germany

One of the main goals of Synthetic Biology is to turn microorganisms into living machines that can be rationally engineered to perform any desired task, like the synthesis of a metabolite or protein, or the use of a defined set of substrates. To accomplish this, new genes have to be introduced into the microbial host of choice. The exact prediction of the effects of heterologous gene expression remain elusive, however, and often result in reduced growth because of so-called "metabolic burden". In this work we present a new system to measure the effects of over-expression using eGFP as a model protein. By using a mTagBF2-tagged T7-polymerase for transcription of eGFP DNA, transcription dynamics can be followed in vivo by fluorescence, in addition to translation via eGFP fluorescence.

To implement the system, a miniTn7-based integration plasmid for the expression of the T7 polymerase fused to mTagBF2 was assembled and then integrated into the genome of Pseudomonas putida KT2440, our model organism. eGFP under control of the T7-promoter was cloned into a pSEVA-based plasmid and also transferred to P. putida. The resulting strain was cultivated in shaking flasks and in microplate reader experiments at different expression levels, and blue and green fluorescence was followed in a spectrophluorometer. By spectral unmixing, fluorescence signals could be separated from the autofluorescence of the cells, revealing the dynamics of transcription and translation in vivo. In addition, a simplified, coarse-grained mathematical model of transcription and translation was set up to explain the effects of over-expression showing good agreement with the experimental data.

With this new system and the corresponding model, the dynamics of gene expression can easily be measured on a translational and transcriptional level, unveiling new insights into the involved intracellular processes. On the long run, this method might open up new ways to design and adapt genes for new hosts and accelerate the development of Synthetic Biology.

538-MMEP
Integrating genome-scale metabolic networks in dynamic models of bacterial ecosystems
O. Ebenhöh1, T. Nies1

Microbial communities are complex biological systems that are far from understood. Often, the dynamics of microbial ecosystems are described and modelled by generalised Lotka-Volterra (gLV) or Consumer-Resource models (CRM). However, these models describe the growth dynamics of the single microbial species by heuristic equations that depend on the concentration of species and, in the case of CRM, of available nutrient concentrations. We show here how genome-scale metabolic network models can be used to infer key heuristic parameters, such as carbon yield, but also the overall energetics, which then enter dynamic models as parameters. In simple models, we address the question which environmental parameters determine the number of species that may co-exist. Moreover, we quantify how robust stable microbial communities are against invasions of mutants or foreign species. Our combined modelling approach provides a starting point for the development of dynamic models describing ecosystem dynamics based on the underlying metabolism of the single organisms. It is envisaged that these models help to gain insight into material and energy fluxes in microbial ecosystems in general, and thus help clarifying according to which principles metabolic interactions within microbial ecosystems are organised.

539-MMEP
Systematic pathway engineering towards optimized heterologous triterpene production, guided by metabolic modeling in Synsechocystis sp. PCC 6803
A. Germann1, M. Dietsch1, D. Moser1, S. Tresch1, I. M. Axmann1
1Heinrich-Heine-University, Synthetic Microbiology, Düsseldorf, Germany

Triterpenes and triterpenoids build a large class of almost ubiquitous natural products with a broad structural diversity, hence gaining increased importance in pharmacology as well as in plant sciences and molecular biology, to name but a few.

Since the synthesis of those structures is a chemically highly sophisticated task, it is far from any industrial application. Therefore, the use of genetically modified microorganisms provides a sustainable alternative for large scale plant triterpenoid synthesis. Especially cyanobacteria, as autotrophs, are a promising resource for the synthesis of renewable, sustainable fuels and other high carbon compounds. One effort to overcome initially low yields of heterologous expression is constraint-based flux analysis, a mathematical approach to identify target reactions for modification to enhance product formation, using linear optimization.

The current study is focused on the cyanobacterial MEP-pathway, and the production of cycled oxidosqualene metabolites. To evidently review the modification targets suggested by modeling, key reactions in the MEP-pathway were enhanced by overexpression. Afterwards, the triterpene-directed metabolite flux was compared with the model predictions. Preliminary results, confirmed by GC-MS, show drastically enhanced triterpene yield when SQS, the precursor of all triterpenoids, is synthesized above native rates, indicating a possible bottleneck. The tested strains with the highest increase in triterpenoid synthesis also displayed impaired growth as well as reduced pigment concentrations. Furthermore, a unique blue phenotype was observed.
In summary, the presented results validate the computational predictions, and the created strains could introduce promising platforms for increased synthesis of triterpenoids.

540-MTP
Anoxic cell rupture of *Prevotella bryantii* by high-pressure homogenization protects the Na+-translocating NADH:quinone oxidoreductase from oxidative damage

1L. Schleicher, G. Fritz, J. Seifert, J. Steuber
2University of Hohenheim, Microbiology, Stuttgart, Germany
3University of Freiburg, Neuropathology, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany
4University of Hohenheim, Animal Science, Stuttgart, Germany

Respiratory NADH oxidation in the rumen bacterium *Prevotella bryantii* is catalyzed by the Na+-translocating NADH:quinone oxidoreductase (NQR). We describe a protocol to disrupt *P. bryantii* cells under exclusion of O2 using the EmulsiFlex-C3 homogenizer (Avestin), which leads to fourfold higher NQR activity compared to the oxic preparation.

541-MTP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

543-MTP
Kd-value determination of DctPAm – a substrate binding protein of the tripartite ATP-independent periplasmic transport system in *Advenella mimigardefordensis* DPN7

1L. Schäfer, C. Meinert-Berning, A. Steinbüchel
2Institut für Molekulare Mikrobiologie und Biotechnologie, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Biology, Münster, Germany
3King Abdullah University, Environmental Sciences Department, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

In this study, a tripartite ATP-independent periplasmic transport (TRAP) system in the biotechnologically interesting Gram-negative betaproteobacterium *Advenella mimigardefordensis* DPN7 was investigated. In general, TRAP systems are composed of a binding-protein-dependent three-component (DctM, DctQ and DctP) transport system, associated with two regulatory components designated as DctS and DctR. The interactions between the periplasmic binding-protein DctP and ligands like gluconate were investigated.

Therefore, site-directed mutagenesis was performed to get specific amino acid exchanges in the binding pocket of DctP. 13 amino acid exchange mutants were generated. Additionally, DctPAm (MIM_c39430) and the generated variants were purified after heterologous expression of *dctP* in *Escherichia coli* BL21 using the pET19b vector. Thermal shift assays were performed using different ligand concentrations (2.5 μM to 2000 μM) and 1 μM DctPAm. In addition to the thermal shift assays, Kd-values were determined using fluorescence spectroscopy method. The fluorescence was measured at 326 nm with a PMT voltage of 350–380 V. After volume correction and normalization the Kd-values were determined using values for the fluorescence decrease [%] plotted to the substrate concentration [μM].

In comparison to other SBPs of TRAP transport system, DctPAm accepts its ligands with similar affinities. Usually, the SBP proteins show very low Kd-values for one or two substrates and only show strongly decreased affinity to some other ligand. Kd-values of DctPAm and the generated variants were determined to analyze the impact of the different amino acid exchanges on the substrate binding. Gluconate, galactonate, erythronate, fuconate, and xylonate as ligand for the SBP. The Kd-values calculated for the wild type protein DctPAm were in the range of 2-8 μM with the different ligands. In most cases, the Kd of the generated variants are higher than the Kd of the wild type DctPAm. In some cases, no Kd-value could be determined. Especially the variants G39V, R154A, R175K and F198I led to an increase of the Kd with most ligands.

544-MTP
Structure-function relationships in the transporter and sensor kinase CbrA of *Pseudomonas putida* KT2440

1L. Wirtz, M. Eder, H. Jung
2LMU, Microbiology, Martinsried-Planegg, Germany

The transporter and histidine kinase CbrA together with the response regulator CbrB of *Pseudomonas putida* KT2440 represent a two-component system that regulates the intracellular carbon/nitrogen balance and is involved in carbon catabolite repression. CbrA contains a complete transporter domain with similarity to sodium/substrate symporters (SLC5 family) fused to cytoplasmic histidine kinase domains via a STAC domain. We set out to further explore the functional properties and interactions of the individual domains of CbrA. For this purpose, we deleted individual domains of CbrA and analyzed the impact of the deletion on the expression of known target genes in *P. putida* KT2440 using reporter gene fusions. In addition, we genetically engineered, expressed, and purified individual domains and truncated versions of CbrA and compared the functional properties with wild type CbrA. Functional analyses involved transport measurements and the detection of kinase and phosphor transfer activities with radiolabeled substrates. We found that the SLC5 domain of CbrA of *P. putida* KT2440 catalyzes the uptake of histidine into the cell. We analyzed substrate specificity, kinetics and energetics of the transport process. We demonstrated that CbrA transport activity depends on proton motive force and is specific for histidine. Furthermore, we showed that CbrA is able to phosphorylate itself and to transfer the phosphoryl group to CbrB. His766 of CbrA was experimentally proven to represent the site of phosphorylation in CbrA. So far we could not detect an impact of the SLC5 domain on the activities of histidine kinase domains. Similarly, were was not significant effect of the latter domains on transport catalyzed by SLC5. In conclusion, transport and signal transduction seem to be independent processes in CbrA.

References


545-MTP
Structural and functional analysis of bacterial phospholipid biosynthesis enzymes from *Xanthomonas campestris*

1G. Vasilopoulos, R. Moser, C. Simon, M. Aktas, F. Narberhaus
2Ruhr-University Bochum, Microbial Biology, Bochum, Germany

Recent studies revealed that membrane composition and lipid biosynthetic pathways in plant-interacting bacteria are different from *Escherichia coli*. Bacterial membranes usually
consist of phosphatidylethanolamine (PE), phosphatidylglycerol (PG) and cardiolipin (CL) [1]. Some bacteria, such as Xanthomonas campestris, also synthesize phosphatidylcholine (PC), an important lipid for host-microbe interactions [2]. Previous studies targeted two 1-acetyl-sn-glycerol-3-phosphate acyltransferases (AGPAT) Xc_0188 and Xc_0238 in X. campestris, being responsible for PC biosynthesis via a novel acylation pathway [3]. Purification of AGPATs in their active form is challenging. The difficulty derives from their tendency to lose activity after solubilization from their native membrane environment into detergent micelles. In this study, the role of Xc_0188 and Xc_0238 in lipid metabolism was further characterized. Therefore, protocols for the purification of both enzymes in their active form were established. In agreement with the previous results, Xc_0188 and Xc_0238 lead to PC synthesis upon overproduction in E. coli. Contrary to our expectations, A. tumefaciens [2] displayed Pmt activity, catalyzing all three methylations from methionine (SAM) in the conserved SAM binding site. After Tfu_0154, a bacterial Pmt that has been characterized in a mesophilic actinobacterium Thermobifida fusca [4], A. S. Mizza* 1, F. Narberhaus 1

The phospholipid phosphatidylcholine (PC) is a common component of bacterial membranes and has thus been studied extensively. The role and biosynthesis of PC in bacteria, however, is only poorly understood until now [1]. Interestingly, many PC-synthesizing bacteria interact with eukaryotic hosts, like the plant pathogen Agrobacterium tumefaciens [2]. One of the main pathways for bacterial PC-biosynthesis is the methylation pathway. Here, phospholipid N-methyltransferases (Pmts) catalyze the S-adenosyl methionine (SAM)-dependent methylation of the phosphatidylethanolamine (PE) headgroup to monomethyl-PE, dimethyl-PE and finally to PC. The three methylation steps can either be catalyzed by a single Pmt or by the consecutive action of multiple enzymes. Until now, the only bacterial Pmt that has been characterized in vitro is PmtA from A. tumefaciens, catalyzing all three methylations from PE to PC [3,4].

In the present study, we aim to unveil the biochemical properties of newly discovered Pmts. Bioinformatic analyses suggested two putative Pmts (Ttu_0154 and Ttu_0735) in the thermophilic actinobacterium Thermobifida fusca. Ttu_0154 displayed Pmt activity in vivo as well as in vitro upon purification, almost exclusively methylating PE to monomethyl-PE. Ttu_0735 carries an amino acid substitution in the conserved SAM-binding site, presumably preventing activity. This study contributes to a more detailed understanding of bacterial Pmts, highlighting the differences to previously characterized enzymes.

References


547-MTP
A Na⁺-AₐO ATP synthase with a V-type c subunit in a mesophilic bacterium

D. Litty 1, V. Müller 1
1Goethe University Frankfurt, Molecular Microbiology & Bioenergetics, Frankfurt, Germany

Introduction: ATPases/ATP synthases are present in all domains of life and arose from a common ancestor. The in vivo function of bacterial F₁Fₒ and archaeal A₁Aₒ ATP synthases is ATP synthesis, whereas eukaryal V₁Vₒ ATPases are incapable of ATP synthesis and are designed by nature to energize intracellular membranes by ATP hydrolysis. The evolutionary switch from synthase to hydrolase is thought to be caused by a doubling of the rotor subunit c, followed by a loss of the ion binding site.

Objective: To challenge the hypothesis that a V-type c subunit causes loss of ATP synthesis.

Material & methods: The ATPase of Eubacterium limosum was purified to apparent homogeneity by classical chromatography and reconstituted into proteoliposomes in order to determine ATP synthesis.

Results: Inspection of the genome sequence of the bacterium E. limosum revealed the presence of genes encoding an archaeal ATP synthase and, most interestingly, the predicted c subunit gene is of the V-type. The ATPase was purified to apparent homogeneity containing all 9 subunits. Notably, the apparent molecular mass of the c subunit (14 kDa) matched the predicted mass (15.7 kDa) indicating that the c subunit arose by gene duplication and subsequent fusion of the genes. The c subunit contains one conserved Na⁺ binding motif and biochemical analysis verified the Na⁺ dependence of ATP hydrolysis. The c subunit-directed inhibitor DCDD inhibited ATP hydrolysis, but inhibition was relieved by addition of Na⁺. Na⁺ was shown directly to abolish binding of the fluorescence DCDD derivative, NCD-4, to subunit c, demonstrating a competition of Na⁺ and DCDD/NCD-4 for a common binding site. After incorporation of the A₁Aₒ ATP synthase into liposomes, ATP-dependent primary transport of ⁴⁰Na⁺ as well as ATP synthesis driven by an electrochemical Na⁺ potential could be demonstrated.

Conclusion: The Na⁺ A₁Aₒ ATP synthase from E. limosum is the first ATP synthase with a 4 TMH c subunit for which ATP synthesis could be proven with a purified enzyme. This
disproves the hypothesis that a V-type c subunit is the cause for the inability of V-type ATPases to synthesize ATP.

548-MTP

Fragment-based drug discovery: a crystallographic approach for antibiotics development for gram-negative bacteria

*D. Stegmann1, J. Vering1, M. Marsh2, J. Steuber1, G. Fritz1
1University of Hohenheim, Cellular Microbiology, Stuttgart, Germany
2Swiss Light Source, Villigen, Switzerland

The sodium pumping NADH: Quinone Oxidoreductase (Na+-NQR) is an important respiratory enzyme in many gram-negative bacteria (1), often found within pathogenic bacteria like Acinetobacter baumannii, Pseudomonas aeruginosa or Vibrio cholerae. Inhibiting the Na+-NQR (2) is a new approach for antibiotic research, which we are pursuing using fragment-based drug discovery (FBDD). FBDD is a technique used to identify small molecular weight lead molecules in a structure-based drug development pipeline. The three-dimensional structures of protein targets (3) in combination with the derived chemical properties in regions of interest are used to develop tailor made compounds binding with high affinity and specificity to the target protein. The recent progress in data collection and crystal handling makes X-ray crystallography-based lead identification a competitive and fast method for high throughput screening of libraries of possible binding molecules. The pipeline of this approach starts by the identification of low molecular weight compounds of approximately 200 Da – so called fragments via high throughput screening of an optimized crystal system. These crystals are incubated with potential fragments dissolved in DMSO. Subsequent X-ray analysis allows to determine binding and the location of the fragments. The lipophilic nature and small size of the fragments makes them likely to bind to hydrophobic areas of the protein that often represent substrate binding pockets or reaction centers. Fragments identified can be modified and combined to yield follow-up compounds with higher affinity and specificity to the target. Typically, drug development includes several rounds of optimization and modification. With the crystallization of the FAD-domain of the F-subunit of NQR of V. cholerae (4) we have been able to establish a crystal system suitable for this task at the Swiss Light Source synchrotron and have so far screened over 100 fragments. This has already resulted in several initial hits for follow-up work.

(1) doi: 10.1515/hsz-2014-0204
(3) doi: 10.1098/rsta.2018.0422
(4) doi: 10.1038/nature14003

549-MTP

Acinetobacter baumannii phospholipases D are involved in biosynthesis of cardiolipin and monolysocardiolipin

*K. Pfefferle1, B. Averhoff
1Goethe University Frankfurt, Molecular Microbiology & Bioenergetics, Frankfurt, Germany

Introduction: The multidrug resistant human pathogen Acinetobacter baumannii is a leading cause of hospital acquired infections worldwide. Lipid rich cell membranes are upon the first barriers encountered by the pathogen. Phospholipases play an essential role in the lipid metabolism and have already been identified as virulence factors [1]. A. baumannii produces three phospholipases D (PLD) which act in a concerted manner during infection and support invasion of lung epithelial cells [2].

Objectives: The first goal was to elucidate the role of the three PLDs in modulation of lipid composition in A. baumannii. The second goal was to get insights into the role of the conserved catalytic motifs in the function of PLD3.

Materials & methods: Total lipids of single, double and triple pld deletion mutants were analyzed via TLC and MALDI-TOF. The functional essential histidines in the catalytic motifs were exchanged against aspartate or alanine and total lipids of the variants were analyzed via TLC.

Results: A pld1 mutant did not produce monolysocardiolipin (MLCL) whereas a pld2,3 and a pld1,2,3 mutant lacked both, cardiolipin (CL) and MLCL. Members of the PLD family share the presence of two copies of a conserved catalytic HxKx4xDx6GSxN motif. The PLD3 of A. baumannii contains one conserved and one modified HKD-motif. In the latter the conserved aspartate is replaced by tyrosine. Mutant studies revealed that the histidine residues of the conserved and the modified HKD-motif are essential for the function of PLD3 in CL and MLCL biosynthesis.

Conclusion: PLD1 plays a role in MLCL biosynthesis, whereas PLD2 and PLD3 are important for both, CL and MLCL formation. The absence of CL and MLCL in the total lipids of a pld1,2,3 mutant producing PLD3 variants leads to the conclusion that both HKD-motifs in the PLD3 are important for CL and MLCL production.


550-MTP

Comparing methods to study the uptake route of radiolabeled ADEP derivatives

* A. Vorbach1, H. Brötz-Oesterhelt1
1University of Tuebingen, Interfaculty Institute for Microbiology and Infection Medicine - Microbial Bioactive Compounds, Tuebingen, Germany

The increasing amount of multidrug-resistant pathogenic bacteria has caused an urgent need for novel antibiotics. In the process of characterizing and improving novel antibacterial agents it is crucial to clarify the uptake mode and the pathway of uptake into the target pathogen.

One well described way of studying antibiotic uptake is the tracking of radiolabeled derivatives. After exposure of the bacteria to the labeled antibacterial agent of interest and removal of surplus label by washing, the radioactivity associated with the treated bacteria can be measured by a photomultiplier with the help of scintillation liquid.

The standard way of separating treated bacteria from the surrounding medium is filtering them through membranes. A major problem of this workflow is that for some promising compounds there are no membranes with fitting properties available. Despite extensive washing, free compound may still adhere to the membrane causing high radioactive background values.
Here, we highlight the usefulness of silicon oil to separate the radioactive compound trapped inside the bacteria from the surplus compound in the surrounding medium. In our study, we were able to easily separate radiolabeled ADEP derivatives trapped in bacteria from surplus ADEP in the surrounding medium by using silicon oil, whereas an extended collection of filter membranes had resulted in high background values.

551-MTP
The antibiotic negamycin permeates across the cell envelope of *E. coli* by multiple routes

1* D. Hörömpöli*, C. Ciglia, K. H. Glüsenkamp, H. Falkenstein-Paul, G. Bendas, A. Berscheid, H. Brötz-Oesterl
e1 University of Tübingen, IMIT, Microbial Bioactive Compounds, Tübingen, Germany
2University of Duesseldorf, Institute for Pharmaceutical Biology, Duesseldorf, Germany
3Squarix GmbH, Marl, Germany
4University of Bonn, Institute for Pharmaceutical Chemistry II, Bonn, Germany

The increase of multidrug-resistant bacterial pathogens is one of the main health issues of today. Especially treatment of Gram-negative bacteria is challenging, as permeation of molecules across the multiple barriers of the Gram-negative envelope is limited. To better understand the routes that nature has invented for entry into the bacterial cytoplasm, we study the translocation pathways of a natural product antibiotic.

Negamycin is a pseudo-dipeptide antibiotic with promising activity against Gram-negative and Gram-positive bacteria, including Enterobacteriaceae, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Staphylococcus aureus* and good efficacy in infection models (1,2). It binds to ribosomes with a novel binding mode, stimulating miscoding and inhibiting ribosome translocation (3). No cross-resistance with other ribosome-binding antibiotics was observed. We investigated the passage of negamycin across the cell envelope using *Escherichia coli* as a model.

Our results show that negamycin is able to cross the cell envelope by more than one route. We could identify multiple transporters that are involved in the translocation of negamycin across the cytoplasmic membrane. Furthermore, uptake is influenced by the energy state of the membrane.

The example of negamycin demonstrates that passage across the bacterial cell envelope can be multi-faceted, even for a single small agent and that for cytoplasmic anti-Gram-negative drugs understanding of entry process and target interaction are equally important.

2McKinney et al. ACS Infect. Diseases 1, 222-230 (2015)

552-MTP
The membrane anchor of TatB primarily interacts with TatB, not with TatC

*M. H. Werner*, H. Geise, T. Brüser
1*Institut für Mikrobiologie, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Hannover, Germany*

The twin-arginine translocation (Tat) system of prokaryotes and plant plastids serves to transport folded proteins across energized biological membranes. In *Escherichia coli*, the most intensively studied model organism for Tat transport, three components, namely TatA, TatB, and TatC, assemble to functional Tat translocons. It is well known that TatB stably interacts with TatC, thereby forming the core of the Tat translocon that also interacts with TatA. Early studies suggested a 1:1 interaction for TatB with TatC in purified Tat translocons [1]. The interaction site for the TatB membrane anchor with TatC has been identified at the fifth transmembrane helix of TatC. However, additional TatB interaction sites are likely, and transcriptional analyses supported an excess of TatB over TatC, implying additional interactions of TatB that may even not be interactions with TatC. We therefore placed the artificial UV-inducible cross-linker amino acid p-benzoyl phenylalanine (Bpa) at several positions of the TatB membrane anchor and analyzed its interactions in *vivo*. Notably, the results indicated that TatB almost exclusively cross-linked with itself. This was confirmed by non-specific cross-linking with formaldehyde and glutaraldehyde. In any case, the cross-links indicated homo-oligomers and therefore self-associations *in vivo*. The data therefore strongly question the belief that TatB exclusively interacts with TatC *in vivo*. The ability of TatB to homo-oligomerize has been demonstrated [2], and it now rather appears that TatB primarily exists in such homo-oligomeric associations that may well be associated with TatC at specific TatB-TatC interaction sites.

1 Bolhuis et al. (2001) TatB and TatC Form a Functional and Structural Unit of the Twin-arginine Translocon from *Escherichia coli*. J. Biol. Chem. 276, 20213–20219

553-MTP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

554-MTP
The Mechanism behind Bacterial Lipoprotein Release: Phenol-Soluble Modulins Mediate Toll-Like Receptor 2 Activation via Extracellular Vesicle Release from *Staphylococcus aureus*

*K. Schatterer*, C. *Beck*, D. Kretschmer
1Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Infektionsbiologie, Tübingen, Germany

The innate immune system uses Toll-like receptor (TLR) 2 to detect conserved bacterial lipoproteins of invading pathogens. The lipid anchor attaches lipoproteins to the cytoplasmic membrane and prevents their release from the bacterial cell envelope. How bacteria release lipoproteins and how these molecules reach TLR2 remain unknown. *Staphylococcus aureus* has been described to liberate membrane vesicles. The composition, mode of release, and relevance for interaction of such membrane vesicles has remained ambiguous. We recently reported that *S. aureus* can release lipoproteins only when surfactant-
like small peptides, the phenol-soluble modulins (PSMs), are expressed. Here we demonstrate that PSM peptides promote the release of membrane vesicles from the cytoplasmic membrane of *S. aureus* via an increase in membrane fluidity, and we provide evidence that the bacterial turgor is the driving force for vesicle budding under hypotonic osmotic conditions. Intriguingly, the majority of lipoproteins are released by *S. aureus* as components of membrane vesicles, and this process depends on surfactant-like molecules such as PSMs. Vesicle disruption at high detergent concentrations promotes the capacity of lipoproteins to activate TLR2. These results reveal that vesicle release by bacterium-derived surfactants is required for TLR2-mediated inflammation.

555-SeSIP
A role for metabolic flux sensing in second messenger control
M. van Berkum1, A. Reinders1, S. Ozaki1, M. Sangermani1, B. Sellner1, U. Jenal1
1University of Basel, Biozentrum, Basel, Switzerland

The second messenger cyclic-di-GMP (c-di-GMP) is a ubiquitous regulator of bacterial growth and behavior. A total of 25 enzymes synthesizing or degrading c-di-GMP are encoded in the *E. coli* K-12 genome. These enzymes are thought to have different input signals for their expression or activity, resulting in spatiotemporal c-di-GMP control. Yet little is known about potential heterogeneity of this second messenger within populations. Recently we found evidence that *E. coli* populations can display bimodal expression of the c-di-GMP phosphodiesterase *pdeL*. *PdeL* expression is negatively regulated by c-di-GMP levels and critically depends on the global transcriptional regulator Cra. Because Cra activity correlates with glycolytic flux, the regulator was proposed to act as metabolic flux sensor (Kochanowski et al. 2013).

To investigate the role of Cra and of metabolic flux distributions in bimodal *pdeL* expression, we generated a ligand-binding-deficient Cra mutant, Cra*:* Loss of ligand binding was demonstrated by electrophoretic mobility shift (EMSA) and thermal shift assays (TSA). Strains harboring the cra* allele showed reduced expression of *pykF*, a gene that is negatively controlled by Cra, as compared to wild type. Interestingly, this difference was abolished at low glycolytic flux conditions. The mutated regulator significantly altered protein levels of multiple Cra targets. We also show that *pdeL* expression can be elevated under glycolytic conditions in a cra* background.

The Cra-dependent expression of *pdeL* shows a direct link between central carbon metabolism and second messenger control. Because bimodal *pdeL* expression could drive bimodal c-di-GMP concentration distributions within *E. coli* populations, we hypothesize that this could be part of a bet-hedging strategy to direct differential behavior in constantly changing environments. We are currently investigating what the role of metabolic flux is, via Cra and PdeL, in c-di-GMP heterogeneity within bacterial populations.

557-SeSIP
Control of cyanobacterial day-night metabolism by the output regulator of a biological clock in *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803
*F. Braun*, L. Thomalla1, C. van der Does1, T. E. F. Quax1, T. Allers2, V. Kaeven3, S. V. Albers1
1Universität Freiburg, Biologie II, Freiburg i. Br., Germany
2University of Nottingham, School of Life Sciences, Nottingham, United Kingdom
3Hannover Medical School, Research Core Unit Metabolomics, Hannover, Germany

Second messengers are crucial components for the perception of environmental stimuli for all living organisms. One major class of these second messengers are cyclic nucleotides. The role of these molecules within intracellular signal transduction has been well studied in bacteria. One quite recently discovered bacterial second messenger is c-di-AMP. It has been demonstrated to be essential in bacteria, pointing towards its vital function for the cell. Compared to bacteria, significantly less is known about cyclic nucleotide second messengers in archaea. This study represents the first direct evidence of the in vivo presence of c-di-AMP in an archaeon.

The euryarchaeal model organism *Halofexrx volcanii* was demonstrated to produce c-di-AMP under various growth conditions by performing LC-MS/MS on cell pellet extracts. The only diadenylate cyclase encoded in the genome of *H. volcanii* belongs to the DacZ class. Using thin-layer chromatography and [γ-32P]-labeled ATP as substrate it could be shown that the *H. volcanii* DacZ enzyme produces c-di-AMP in vitro. Similar to bacteria, the dacZ gene is essential and homologous overexpression of DacZ leads to cell death, suggesting the need for tight regulation of c-di-AMP levels, which indicates that it is involved in the control of important regulatory processes. A major target of c-di-AMP signaling in bacteria is the maintenance of the cellular osmotic homeostasis. The results presented here suggest a comparable function in *H. volcanii*. An exchange of the dacZ gene's promoter resulted in a mutant strain with significantly decreased c-di-AMP levels compared to the wild type. This strain exhibited a characteristic growth phenotype of increased OD-values, especially in media with low salt concentration. Light-microscopical analysis unveiled that the increased OD-values were not caused by elevated growth but rather by a considerably increased cell volume. This implies an impaired osmoregulation in this strain.

In summary, this study expands the field of c-di-AMP research to archaea. Additionally, it indicates that the regulation of osmohomeostasis is likely to be a common function of c-di-AMP signaling in bacteria and archaea.

556-SeSIP
Cyclic nucleotides in Archaea: Cyclic-di-AMP in the archaean *Halofexrx volcanii* and its putative role
*F. Braun*, L. Thomalla1, C. van der Does1, T. E. F. Quax1, T. Allers2, V. Kaeven3, S. V. Albers1
1Universität Freiburg, Biologie II, Freiburg i. Br., Germany
2University of Nottingham, School of Life Sciences, Nottingham, United Kingdom
3Hannover Medical School, Research Core Unit Metabolomics, Hannover, Germany

Cyanobacteria exhibit rhythmic gene expression with a period length of about 24 hours to adapt to daily environmental changes. In the model organism *Synechococcus elongatus* PCC 7942 (hereafter *Synechococcus 7942*), the central oscillator consists of the three proteins KaiA, KaiB and KaiC and utilizes the histidine kinase SasA and its response regulator RpaA for output-signaling. In *Synechococcus 7942* the circadian clock system is rather well understood, whereas circadian networks of other cyanobacteria can be very diverse and are less exhaustively investigated. It is still controversial, whether the model strain *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803 (hereafter *Synechocystis 6803*) exhibits a true circadian clock. While *Synechococcus 7942* is obligate photoautotrophic,
Synechocystis 6803 can also grow chemoheterotrophically in the dark. However, Synechocystis 6803 harbors homologs of the Kai proteins and the output pathway. The rpaA deletion mutant showed reduced viability in light-dark rhythms and chemoheterotrophic growth in the dark was abolished completely. Transcriptomic data revealed that RpaA is mainly involved in the regulation of genes related to C-acclimation in the light and to carbon metabolism in the dark. Specifically, genes involved in the metabolism of the storage compound polyhydroxybutyrate (PHB) are upregulated in the dark in the wild type but not in the ΔrpaA strain. Furthermore, we performed preliminary measurements of the carbon storage compounds PHB and glycogen. In ΔrpaA cells that were grown under high carbon conditions, the glycogen metabolism and synthesis of PHB seemed to be affected compared to the wild type. Thus, we suggest a connection of RpaA to the carbon metabolism of Synechocystis 6803. In summary, we show a wide-ranging involvement of RpaA in the regulation of the metabolism of Synechocystis 6803 in a diurnal light-dark rhythm.

558-SeSiP
Mechanism and function of the non-standard circadian clock system KaiB3C3 in Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803

C. Köbler1, A. Wiegard2, I. Axmann2, A. Wilde1
1University of Freiburg, Institute of Biology III, Freiburg, Germany
2Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Institute for Synthetic Microbiology, Düsseldorf, Germany

Through the rotation of Earth, all organisms are subjected to daily environmental changes. To facilitate their adaptation, many organisms generate an internal rhythm with a period length of around 24 hours, referred to as circadian rhythm. Within cyanobacteria Synechococcus elongatus sp. PCC 7942 functions as a model organism for the circadian clock. Its clock consists of three core proteins: KaiA, KaiB and KaiC. Phosphorylation and dephosphorylation of KaiC maintains the timing mechanism. Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 contains two additional homologs of the kaiB and kaiC genes. To our knowledge, no function for the non-standard clock KaiB2C2 has been described so far; however, Aoki and Onai [1] suggested that KaiC3 and KaiB3 modulate the amplitude and period of the main oscillator KaiAB1C1. In line with this, our in vitro and yeast two-hybrid data strongly imply cross talk between the non-standard clock KaiB3C3 and the main oscillator KaiAB1C1. Subsequent analysis of KaiC3 showed a reduced ATPase activity of the clock protein not only in the presence of KaiB3, but also in the presence of KaiB1. In contrast to the inactivation of the main oscillator (ΔkaiAB1C1), deletion of kaiC3 had no effect in light-dark cycles, yet showed growth impairment during chemoheterotrophic growth in complete darkness [2]. Thus, emphasizing the function of KaiC3 and KaiB3 in acclimation to darkness. While the main oscillator KaiAB1C1 occupies the histidine kinase Sasa and its response regulator RpaA for signal transduction, KaiB3C3 utilizes an RpaA-independent output pathway. A putative candidate for the KaiB3C3 output-signaling pathway is the NarL-type response regulator Sil0485. However, direction of signaling and additional players will be investigated in future experiments.


559-SeSiP
From insects to plants: about the fact of insect pathogenic Photorhabdus luminescens in the rhizosphere.

A. Regaio1, N. Dominelli1, S. Eckstein1,2, R. Heermann2
1IGU Mainz, Microbiology, Mainz, Germany
2Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Biozentrum, Microbiology, München, Germany

Photorhabdus luminescens are Gram-negative enteric bacteria that live in close symbiosis with soil nematodes, are in turn highly pathogenic against insects and exist in two phenotypic cell forms. Phenotypic heterogeneity in bacterial cell populations allows genetically identical organisms to different behavior under similar environmental conditions. The two phenotypic different cell variants of P. luminescens are referred to as symbiosis phenotypic variant (primary or 1° cells) and symbiosis “deficient” phenotypic variant (secondary or 2° cells). 1° and 2° cells are genetically identical and equally pathogenic towards insect larvae. However, they differ in diverse phenotypic traits, 1° cells display: i) toxins, extracellular enzymes and pigments production; ii) secondary metabolites like antibiotics and bioluminescence; iii) clumping factor iv) occurrence in crystalline inclusion proteins; the majority of which are missing or have a reduced level in 2° cells. Moreover, the big divergence is represented by the success of the P. luminescens relationship with entomopathogenic nematodes (ENPs): 2° cells can neither grow in ENPs nor support their development. It is assumed that 2° cells could adapt to a free lifestyle in soil, hence better respond to different stress environmental conditions, nutrient poverty and plant derived molecules like those in the rhizosphere. Therefore, phenotypic switching in P. luminescens has to be tightly regulated since it could lead the bacterium to live in different environments: alone in the rhizosphere or in association with ENPs. Here, we present the main regulatory mechanisms important for phenotypic switching in P. luminescens cell populations and discuss the biological reason as well as the fate of the 2° cells in the rhizosphere, especially their effect towards plant roots. Understanding the role and the function of the bacteria in the rhizosphere accelerates the progress in biocontrol manipulation and agricultural management strategies.

560-SeSiP
Reporter gene systems for the investigation of the TPP riboswitch as a novel target for antibiotic substances

A. Hübenthal1, M. Mack1, M. Mayer2
1Hochschule Mannheim, Institute for Technical Microbiology, Mannheim, Germany
2Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, ZMBH, Heidelberg, Germany

Riboswitches are noncoding RNA elements located in the 5'-untranslated region of mRNAs. They function as genetic switches and modulate downstream gene expression upon binding of a specific ligand. The most widespread bacterial riboswitch appears to be the one responding to thiamine pyrophosphate (TPP), which is an essential cofactor for carbohydrate metabolism. Upon binding of TPP, the riboswitch affects the expression of thiamine synthesis and transport genes in a negative feedback loop. Nucleotide sequences and functions of TPP riboswitches are conserved amongst bacteria, including key ESKAPE pathogens. The common occurrence of riboswitches in bacteria and the fact that they are not found in humans qualifies them as a potential drug target in a range of bacterial pathogens.

The goal of the project is to set up an in vivo testing system for the TPP riboswitch to identify new potential antibiotic
substances. To reach this goal, translational and transcriptional reporter gene fusions of TPP riboswitches from various bacteria shall be created. Expression of these reporter gene fusions in Escherichia coli will validate that binding of potential riboswitch ligands indeed interferes with gene expression. The corresponding ligands will be identified in a high-throughput-screening. As a reporter gene, the E. coli β-galactosidase gene lacZ will be used, which allows detection as well as quantification of gene expression. By using translational and transcriptional fusions, the operating principle of the respective riboswitch can be characterised as well. Subsequently, the affinities of the identified ligands to TPP riboswitches of different bacteria will be analysed. It will be investigated, whether the novel potent compounds have comparable effects on riboswitches of various bacteria, especially strains known to cause nosocomial infections. Furthermore, the mode of action of the new ligands, as well as possible enzymatic modifications, shall be analysed.

With these approaches, the antibiotic potential of newly identified thiamine analogs can be examined. This will provide an important basis for the development of urgently needed new antibiotics with novel targets.

561-SeSiP
The role of stable and dynamic piston regions for transmembrane signaling by sensor kinase DcuS of E. coli
*M. Stopp1, P. A. Steinmetz2, G. Unden1
1Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Institute of Molecular Physiology, Mainz, Germany

The C-di-carcboxylate (C-Dc) metabolism in E. coli is regulated by the DcuS/DcuR two component system [1]. The membrane-integral sensor histidine kinase DcuS is activated by periplasmic C-Dc (such as fumarate) resulting in cytoplasmic autophosphorylation [2]. Due to physical separation of signal input and output (phosphorylation) by the membrane a signal transfer mechanism is required. Signal transduction across the membrane includes a piston type shift of transmembrane helix 2 (TM2) [3], but the complete mechanism for transmembrane and cytoplasmic signal transmission is unknown.

Homodimerization of TM2 and of adjacent regions in the inactive and the fumarate activated state was investigated by scanning the reactivity of DcuS single cysteine variants, revealing the dimerization interface. The kinetics of cysteine reactivity of selected interface residues were performed in presence and absence of the effector fumarate. The data disclose static and dynamic parts of the DcuS dimer during signal transduction. Conspicuous regions were tested for significance for DcuS function by alanine/cysteine substitutions in a dcuB-lacZ reporter gene assay which revealed a SxxxGxxxxG interaction motif in TM2 and its significance for signal transduction in DcuS.

References:

562-SeSiP

The phosphoglucomutase GlimM moonlights in modulating the activity of the diadenylate cyclase CdaA in Listeria monocytogenes
*R. Bremerkamp1, J. Heidemann2, J. Gibbard3, R. Seifert*, V. Kaeuer1, R. Ficner1, F. M. Commmichau2
1Institut für Mikrobiologie und Genetik, Allgemeine Mikrobiologie, Göttingen, Germany
2Institut für Mikrobiologie und Genetik, Molekulare Strukturbiologie, Göttingen, Germany
3Institut für Biotechnologie, Synthetische Mikrobiologie, Sentenberg, Germany

The second messenger cyclic diadenosine monophosphate (c-di-AMP) is essential for Firmicutes under most growth conditions. It is produced by diadenylate cyclases (DACs) and degraded by phosphodiesterases. The opportunistic human pathogen Listeria monocytogenes possesses only the DAC CdaA. The understanding of the regulation of the activity of CdaA could be a stepping point for the development of novel antibiotics. The gene encoding CdaA is localized in a highly conserved cdaA-cdaR-glimM operon. The cdaR gene encoding the membrane-bound CdaR protein is known to regulate CdaA. The glimM gene encodes the phosphoglucomutase GlimM, which is essential for cell growth because it produces cell wall precursors. The genetic conservation of the glimM gene suggests that GlimM might also be involved in the regulation of the DAC activity of

Ne-Fructosyllsine (FrK) is a Maillard sugar produced by the non-enzymatic reaction of glucose and lysine. As a postranslational protein modification it plays a role in diabetes mellitus as well as aging processes in the human body. Escherichia coli can grow on FrK as a sole carbon source. The corresponding metabolic proteins are encoded in an operon frlABCD. Upon uptake of FrK by the permease FrlA, the amino sugar is decomposed into lysine and glucose-6-phosphate by the concerted enzyme activities of the kinase FrlD and the deglycase FrlB. In contrast to the decomposition, the genetic regulation is not yet understood. Bioinformatic analyses and studies on the Bacillus subtilis FrlK degradation pathway suggest that the putative transcription factor FrlR plays a pivotal role here. Employing PfrlABCD-Lux reporter fusions of varying length we succeeded in unmasking FrlR as a road block repressor and identifying the corresponding operator sequence. Using microscale thermophoresis and surface plasmon resonance spectroscopy, we confirmed our finding in vitro and also determined DNA binding affinity. A structural model identifies FrlR as a GntR-like repressor consisting of an UTRA substrate binding domain and a Helix-Turn-Helix-DNA binding domain. In summary, our data lead to a regulatory model in which dimeric FrlR blocks the transcription of the frlABCD operon. Interestingly, FrlR is not recognized directly but only after phosphorylation by FrlD. Binding of FrlR leads to structural rearrangements in the FrlR transcriptionally active dimer and liberates the operator. As additional levels of regulation we found catabolite repression by the cAMP responsive transcription activator CRP and heat stress induced expression by the alternative sigma factor σ32. This complexity enables optimal adaptation to intestinal growth where FrK is present as a component of human food.

Regulation of the fructose lysine metabolism in Escherichia coli
*F. Koller1, D. Gast2, A. Hoffmann-Röder2, J. Lassak1
1Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Department of Biology, Martinsried, Germany
2Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität, Department of Chemistry, München, Germany
CdaA. The aim of this study was to elucidate the effects of GlmM on the regulation of L. monocytogenes. For this purpose, mass spectrometry analysis to determine the intracellular c-di-AMP concentration as well as growth tests under varying osmotic stress conditions were performed. The localization of the proteins was analyzed by employing Western blot analysis. It could be shown that GlmM has an inhibitory effect on CdaA upon hyperosmotic shock, which leads to a strong decrease of intracellular c-di-AMP levels. Furthermore, it could be demonstrated that GlmM plays a role in the adaption to hypoosmotic shock and that the enzyme is mainly localized in the cytoplasm. A GlmM variant that contained the F154I mutation, which lies in a highly conserved region of the protein, exhibited reduced effects on CdaA compared to the wild type GlmM. This gives a first hint that this site is involved in the interaction of the two proteins. The GlmM protein from Escherichia coli did not affect the activity of CdaA from L. monocytogenes, hinting at a divergent evolution of this essential enzyme in bacteria that possess a CdaA protein and those who do not. In summary, this work was able to expand the understanding of the in vivo regulation of the DAC CdaA and the phosphoglucomutase GlmM.

**564-SeSiP**

PROMIS4Cyanos, a new method to predict and identify new protein-metabolite interactions in Cyanobacteria

*A. Kraus1, E. Sokolowska2, D. Schlossarek2, A. Skirycz2, W. R. Hess1*

1Albert-Ludwigs-University, Institute for Biologie III, Freiburg, Germany

2Max Planck Institute of Molecular Plant Physiology, Potsdam-Golm, Germany

Protein-small molecule interactions can play important roles in the regulation of metabolism and development. In cyanobacteria, some transcription factors bind small metabolites as co-repressors or inducers. The promoter binding of the activator CmpR is stimulated through 2-phosphoglycolate and ribulose 1,5-bisphosphate (Nishimura et al., 2008). For the repressor NdhR(CcmR), the metabolites 2-oxoglutartarate and NADP+ have been confirmed as corepressor molecules (Daley et al., 2012), thereby increasing the binding of this repressor to two regions upstream of ndhR and ndhf3 (Figge et al., 2001). 2-oxoglutarate is also the signaling molecule for NtcA, a regulator of nitrogen homeostasis in cyanobacteria, that regulates the transcription of genes related to nitrogen assimilation. NtcA with its promotor element is not sufficient for the activation of transcription and 2-oxoglutarate is required for transcriptional initiation (Tanigawa et al., 2002). However, due to the lack of system-wide approaches, only a minority of these regulatory molecules are known. In the center of PROMIS (PROtein Metabolite Interactions using Size separation) is a simple biochemical method utilizing the big size difference between proteins and small molecules. The hypothesis is that small molecules/metabolites interact with proteins and form stable complexes which will fractionate together, appearing in the high molecular weight fractions. Our metabolomics based analysis of small molecules co-fractionating with proteins identified a multitude of different metabolites in Synechocystis PCC 6803-M, suggesting the existence of small molecules bound to proteins that represent new potential regulatory molecules. The following proteomics based analyses across protein-containing fractions that show similar elution behavior like the analyzed metabolites result in the prediction of new regulatory interaction partners. The method shown here was established for Arabidopsis thaliana and was adapted to Synechocystis PCC 6803-M cell cultures, but is also applicable to other biological systems (Veyel et al., 2017 and 2018).

**565-SeSiP**

Going green - Influence of plant root exudates on phenotypic traits of insect pathogenic *Photobahdus luminescens*

*N. Domineili1*, A. Regaiolo2, K. Andresen1, R. Heermann1

1Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Institut für Molekulare Physiologie, Mikrobiologie, Mainz, Germany

*Photobahdus luminescens* is a bioluminescent, Gram-negative entomopathogenic bacterium of the family of Enterobacteriaceae. Its dualistic life cycle involves a mutualistic symbiosis with *Heterorhabditis bacteriophora* nematodes and a pathogenic part towards a wide range of insect hosts. *P. luminescens* exists in two phenotypically different cell variants: primary (1°) and secondary (2°) cells. 2° cells lack several 1° specific features like bioluminescence, pigmentation and antibiotic production. Furthermore, in contrast to 1° cells, they are not able to live in symbiosis with the nematodes anymore and are therefore left in soil when all nutrients of the insect cadaver are depleted. This leads to the assumption that 2° cells are better adapted to a free life in soil, which suggests a direct interaction with or attraction towards plants in the rhizosphere. Here we show the influence of plant deriving signals on *P. luminescens* 2° cells.

RNA-Seq data of 2° cells cultivated with root exudate gave first insights in the effects of plant root deriving substances on the expression of genes related to metabolism, transport, flagellar machinery etc. Since genes related to chitinase activity are upregulated in 2° cells due to plant root exudates, the influence of the bacteria on plant pathogenic fungi growth was analysed and characterized. Our data clearly show that 2° cells have an alternative lifestyle than 1° cells, and utilize alternative nutrients, which are supposed to be plant derived. Moreover, our data show that 2° cells can colonize plant roots and can further act as plant protecting microorganism against plant pathogenic fungi. Since *P. luminescens* is used as bioinsecticide the understanding of how 2° cells can protect plants not only against insects but also against plant pathogenic fungi will improve sustainable pest management in agriculture.

**566-SeSiP**

Temperature-dependent modulation of the sRNA CyaR in *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis*

*S. Pienko1*, K. Urban1, M. Klöhn1, M. Holler1, F. Narberhaus1

1Ruhr-University Bochum, Microbial Biology, Bochum, Germany

The bacterial regulation of gene expression consists of a diverse and complex regulatory network. In addition to the regulation at DNA level, RNA-mediated regulation represents a mechanism that ensures the rapid adaptation of bacteria upon changing environmental conditions e.g. temperature, osmotic stress and nutrient uptake. Regulatory small non-coding RNAs (sRNAs) are versatile RNA elements that mostly regulate target mRNAs posttranscriptionally by base-pairing in a positive or negative manner. On the one hand, mRNAs are stabilized or the binding of the ribosomal subunit is facilitated, on the other hand the sRNA-mRNA complex leads to the degradation of the mRNA or prevents the binding of the ribosomal subunit (1,2). We focused on the Gram-negative foodborne pathogen *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis* and its temperature-dependent RNA-mediated gene expression under environmental (25 °C) and infection-relevant conditions (37 °C). Based on PARS profiling (1), the sRNA CyaR was identified as an sRNA that undergoes a structural change of the RNA secondary structure in response to an increasing temperature. This led
us to the hypothesis of a temperature-dependent regulation of CyaR target genes. Due to the high homology of CyaR in Y. pseudotuberculosis and E. coli we also investigated the temperature-dependent regulation of CyaR in E. coli. For Y. pseudotuberculosis, a CyaR deletion mutant was constructed and ompX was identified as the first known mRNA target.

References:


567-SeSiP

Biochemical characterization and crystallization of the iron response regulator IscR of Dinoroseobacter shibae

L. Plötzy1, H. Maab1, P. Lukat1, D. Jahn1, E. Härting1

1TU Braunschweig, Institut für Mikrobiologie, Braunschweig, Germany
2Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Structure and Function of proteins, Braunschweig, Germany

Introduction: Dinoroseobacter shibae is a member of the Roseobacter group of marine bacteria. In its natural habitat, the highly oxygenated sea water, only a minor amount of soluble ferrous iron is available. D. shibae possesses a member of the Rnf2-family of transcription factors that shares 42 % identity to E. coli IscR. Different to E. coli IscR, IscR of D. shibae is supposed to coordinate a heme cofactor. Three histidine residues were identified, which might be involved in heme coordination.

Objectives: Biochemical characterization, crystallization and functional analysis of IscR.

Material & Methods: To identify the role of the histidine residues for the coordination of heme, each of the three residues was changed to an alanine residue via site directed mutagenesis of the corresponding gene. IscR of D. shibae and mutant variants were recombinantly produced and purified aerobically. Coordination of heme as a cofactor was monitored by UV/Vis spectroscopy. DNA binding of aerobic purified IscR wildtype and mutant proteins was analyzed using electro mobility shift assays (EMSA). Purified Streptagged IscR with a concentration of 15 mg/mL was used for the crystallization attempts. Gene regulatory effects of IscR regarding to iron availability were analyzed via a hemB2-lacZ reporter gene fusion.

Results: Purified IscR showed a characteristic absorption maximum of heme at 425 nm. EMSA analyses revealed binding of the IscR protein to the hemB2 promoter DNA sequence. Measured β-galactosidase activities indicated a repressor function of IscR. First crystallization attempts resulted in IscR crystals and X-ray data extending to a resolution of 1.9 Å were collected and revealed a dimeric structure of IscR. In addition, it was possible to co-crystallize IscR together with the heme cofactor.

Conclusion: The IscR homolog of D. shibae is able to measure iron availability by binding of a heme cofactor via histidine residues and regulates target genes in response to iron limitation.

568-SeSiP

PAS4-LuxR solos in Photorhabdus luminescens as interkingdom-signaling receptors

J. Brehm1, L. Antelo1, E. Thines1,2, R. Heermann1

1Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Mikrobiologie und Weinforschung, Mainz, Germany
2Institut für Biotechnologie und Wirkstoff-Forschung, Kaiserslautern, Germany

The well-known cell-cell-communication systems in Gram-negative bacteria are based on LuxR-type receptors detecting specific signaling molecules to regulate gene expression. These receptors contain a C-terminal DNA binding domain (DBD) and an N-terminal signal binding domain (SBD). The Gram-negative entomopathogen Photorhabdus luminescens harbors the remarkably high number of 40 LuxR-type receptors, most of them harbor a “PAS4”-SBD1. Knockouts of PAS4-luxR gene clusters showed a specific decrease in pathogenicity against larvae from different insect species. Therefore, the PAS4-LuxR receptors are supposed to play a central role in interkingdom-signaling between the bacteria and their eukaryotic hosts. The “PAS3”-SBD of the insect juvenile hormone binding regulator Met of Drosophilia melanogaster is structurally very homologous to the “PAS4” domains of the LuxR solos Plu2019 and Plu2018. This fact suggested that the Plu2018/Plu2019 “PAS4” domains might also sense insect hormone-like molecules. Among others, plu0258 was identified as a target gene of Plu2018 and/or Plu2019. Pplu0258 activity could be specifically induced by Galleria mellonella insect homogenerate signaling receptors. We then isolated the Plu2018/Plu2019 signaling molecule from G. mellonella insect homogenerate and curtailed the number of possible ligands to a few comparatively hydrophobic small molecules. In a HPLC fraction we identified a molecule, which shows a sterol-like UV spectrum and is putatively sensed by the interkingdom-signaling PAS4-LuxR solos. Since PAS4-LuxR solos are also present in human pathogens, they might represent promising targets for novel antimicrobial drugs.


569-SeSiP

Establishing and reversing cell polarity during phototactic movement of cyanobacteria

Y. Han1, A. Jakob1, N. Schuergers1, A. Wilde1

1Institute of biology III, University of Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany

The unicellular cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 can move towards or away from a unidirectional light source using type IV pili, a process called phototaxis. Different photoreceptors involved in phototaxis have been identified and it was observed that the pilus motor ATPase PilB1 dynamically localizes to the leading edge of the motile cell [1, 2]. However, the molecular mechanisms by which the perceived light signals lead to the polar activity of the motility apparatus are still not well understood. Previous studies suggest that specific CheY-like response regulators (RR) play key roles in establishing light-induced motility and cell polarity in Synechocystis[1]. While some contain only a CheY-type receiver domain (REC) others belong to the PatA-type regulators where the REC domain is fused to a – so-far uncharacterized - PATAN domain [1,3].
Using Yeast two-hybrid screens and fluorescence tagging, we aim to uncover the function of these RRs in phototactic orientation.

Our results show that some RRs localize to the cytoplasmic membrane and we confirmed direct protein-protein interactions between the response regulators (PixG and PixE) and the pilus motor protein PilB1 as well as the pilus platform protein PilC in case of the latter. Assays with truncated proteins show that the PATAN domain constitutes the interaction surface.

To better understand the role of this domain, we investigate the interplay of PATAN- and CheY-like domains in PatA-type response regulators by in vivo mutant studies and in vitro pull-down and co-immunoprecipitation experiments. Moreover, we plan to decipher the structure-function relationship through crystallography.


570-SeSiP
Killing me slowly
Regulation of biofilm formation in P. aeruginosa

Bacterial communities called biofilms safeguard bacteria against antibiotics but also effectively protect pathogens from the immune system. Pseudomonas aeruginosa biofilms play a major role in chronic lung infections and were linked to poor clinical outcomes. Understanding the exact mechanisms of biofilm formation, maintenance and their role in the human patient is thus of key importance for future treatment options.

Here, we show that a toxin/antitoxin-like module strongly promotes biofilm formation and maintenance in P. aeruginosa PAO1.

We found that the proteins interfere with the global second messenger c-di-GMP. Expression of the module is under control of a major signaling pathway regulating virulence and persistence. Importantly, the module is expressed stochastically in the bacterial population, arguing that P. aeruginosa has chosen a “bet-hedging” strategy for biofilm formation during infections.

571-SeSiP
The PAS4-LuxR solo Plu0919 of the insect pathogen Photorhabdus luminescens senses a nematode-derived signal

It is well known that bacteria communicate via small diffusible molecules, a process termed quorum sensing. The basic quorum sensing system of Gram-negative bacteria consists of a LuxI-type signal synthase and a cognate LuxR-type receptor that detects the respective signal. However, many bacteria harbor so called LuxR solos, which lack a cognate LuxI synthase, so that the signals they sense are mostly unknown. LuxR solos are assumed to play an important role in inter-kingdom-signaling, the communication between bacteria and their eukaryotic hosts. With an amount of 40, the entomopathogenic bacterium Photorhabdus luminescens harbors the largest number of LuxR solos ever found in bacteria. Most of the P. luminescens LuxR solos contain a PAS4 signal binding domain, which are assumed to detect eukaryotic hormone-like signaling molecules. In order to identify the signal for Plu0919, we analysed putative signal cocktails on binding to the purified protein via Nano Differential Scanning Fluorimetry. Hence, we found that Heterorhabditis bacteriophora nematode homogenate contained the signaling molecule for this LuxR solo. Microscale Thermophoresis as well as Surface Plasmon Resonance spectroscopy confirmed the signal-dependent binding of Plu0919 to the promoter regions of different Plu0919 target genes. We then analyzed the influence of Plu0919 on the activity of PantA, one of the target promoters. PantA activity was repressed in the presence of H. bacteriophora homogenate. These results indicate that Plu0919 is involved in inter-kingdom signaling of P. luminescens to recognize the host and consequently adapting gene expression. Since PAS4-LuxR solos are often involved in regulation of pathogenicity, these class of regulators are promising targets for novel antimicrobials in the future.

produced in M. oryzae to facilitate a higher variability in signal transduction.

This hypothesis will be comprehensively investigated at the genetic, transcriptional and biochemical level. In addition to complement the "loss of function" mutant ΔMoypd1 with different MoYpd1p isoforms, we intend to use proteome and phosphoproteome analyses to characterize the signaling processes and aim to generate "multi-fluorescence-mutants" of the different isoforms.

573-SeSiP
Cascade regulation of a sulfide oxidation pathway in Bacillus licheniformis
J. Li1, L. Xun1, Y. Xia2
1Shandong University, State Key Laboratory of Microbial Technology, Jinan, China
2University of Münster, Institute of Infectiology, Center for Molecular Biology, Bochum, Germany

Hydrogen sulfide at high levels is toxic, inhibiting aerobic respiration, and it can be benefitting at low levels, functioning as a reducing agent and signaling molecule. The dual effects warrant a homeostasis of endogenous sulfide. Sulfide:quinone oxidoreductases (SQO) and persulfide dioxygenases (PDO) are two key enzymes involved in removing excess sulfide. In Bacillus licheniformis, a sqr-pdo gene arrangement is preceded nreBC, encoding a putative two component regulator. Immediately upstream, several genes for (multidomain) sulfurtransferases, TaeU and a thioredoxin (yrkEFHJ-ydIQ) are located and preceded by yrkD, encoding a CsrR-like transcriptional repressor. 5'-RACE analysis identified transcription initiation sites in front of yrkD and sqr. Furthermore, we found that YrkD and NreBC form a regulatory cascade. B. licheniformis mutants lacking nreC and nreC lost the ability to oxidize H2S while a ΔyrkD strain transcribed sqr without sulfide induction. A gene encoding green fluorescent protein (GFP) was placed behind pdo and used as a reporter system. The reporter induction by sulfide was dose dependent. In summary, YrkD functions as a repressor regulating yrkDFHJ-ydIQ-nreBC, and NreBC acts as an activating system for the expression of sqr-pdo. The cascade regulation fine-tunes the expression of the sulfur oxidizing genes in Bacillus licheniformis.

574-SeSiP
Lead-seq: in vivo RNA structure probing on a transcriptome-wide scale
V. B. Brandenburg1, C. Twittenhoff1, F. Righet1, A. M. Nuss3, A. Mosig1, P. Dersch1,4, F. Narberhaus1
1Ruhr-University Bochum, Biology and Biotechnology, Microbial Biology, Bochum, Germany
2Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Department of Molecular Infection Biology, Braunschweig, Germany
3Ruhr-University Bochum, Department of Biophysics, Bochum, Germany
4University of Münster, Institute of Infectiology, Center for Molecular Biology of Inflammation, Münster, Germany

The dynamic conformation of RNA molecules is known to have a profound impact on regulatory processes in living cells. This challenges biological research to aim for a pervasive understanding of RNA secondary structures and their implications.

Here, we introduce Lead-seq, a global in vivo structure-probing method. This novel method utilizes the ability of lead(II) acetate to induce strand breaks on single stranded RNA sites [1], and combines it with high-throughput sequencing. We applied Lead-seq to elucidate the transcriptome-wide RNA landscape in the enteric pathogen Yersinia pseudotuberculosis. The method provided structural information equally for all four nucleotides. It correctly displayed secondary structures of different types of non-coding RNAs, and revealed global structural features of mRNAs.

The application of Lead-seq to Y. pseudotuberculosis cells grown at two different temperatures unveiled the first temperature-responsive in vivo RNA structurome of a bacterial pathogen. The identification of temperature-induced local structural rearrangements allowed for detection of thermo-sensing structural features. The translation of candidate genes derived from this approach was confirmed to be temperature regulated. Overall, we established Lead-seq as approach for comparative studies of RNA structures on a global scale.

1. Lindell M et al., RNA. 2002

575-SeSiP
Polar localizing phosphodiesterase PdeB regulates the motile-to-sessile transition in Shewanella putrefaciens
V. Kreiling1, T. Rick1, S. Mielke1, F. Rossmann1, K. Thormann1
1JLU Giessen, Giessen, Germany

Bacterial cells maintain a high degree of intracellular organization, which requires the spatial and temporal organization of cellular components. One of the most important ways to obtain this strictly regulated organization is the recruitment of proteins by so-called landmark proteins, such as HubP, which localizes a number of different protein complexes, such as the chemotaxis system, the origin of the chromosome, or components of type IV pili, to the designated cell pole. We recently showed that in Shewanella putrefaciens also the phosphodiesterase PdeB localizes in a HubP-dependent manner to the flagellated cell pole by direct interaction of both proteins.

PdeB affects the global level of c-di-GMP within the bacterial cell in dependence of the environmental conditions. However, we show that detaching of PdeB from the cell pole by single residue substitutions results in a drastic phenotype, strongly suggesting that polar recruitment by and/or interaction with HubP is critical for the normal function of PdeB. We also demonstrate that by regulating the level of c-di-GMP, PdeB controls the motile to sessile transition and thereby decreases flagella-mediated spreading in soft agar. By using transcriptional reporter fusions and fluorescence microscopy, we show that PdeB regulates the expression of the secondary lateral but not the main the polar flagellar system. In addition, PdeB controls the reversible and irreversible attachment to surfaces by regulating the assembly of MSHA pili at the functional level and the expression of bpf operon, encoding a surface adhesin, which limits motility of the cells in structured environments. Thus, PdeB is a major mediator of the motile-to-sessile transition in S. putrefaciens.

576-SeSiP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

577-SeSiP
POIS cleaving dioxygenases from Nocardia farcinica and Streptomyces bingchengensis interfere with Pseudomonas aeruginosa quorum sensing
S. Fetzner1, A. Arranz San Martín1
1IMMB, WWU Münster, Münster, Germany
Introduction

Pseudomonas aeruginosa is a nosocomial pathogen that regulates its virulence via a complex quorum sensing network, in which the alkylquinolone signal molecule 2-heptyl-3-hydroxy-4-(1H)-quinone (Pseudomonas quinolone signal, PQS) plays a crucial role together with 2-heptyl-4(1H)-quinone and N-acylhomoserine lactones. PQS can be inactivated by ring cleaving dioxygenases such as Hod from Arthrobacter sp. Rue61 and AqdC from Mycobacteroides abscessus. Nonetheless, susceptibility to denaturation under adverse physicochemical conditions and proteolytic degradation are major drawbacks of enzymatic inactivation.

Materials and methods

In this study, a diverse group of PQS cleaving dioxygenases was characterized regarding PQS cleaving ability, stability, and susceptibility to P. aeruginosa extracellular proteases. Furthermore, assays on virulence factor production and biofilm formation by P. aeruginosa were performed with the most promising candidates, and their effect on P. aeruginosa virulence was assessed in a Galleria mellonella infection model.

Results

Under the conditions tested, the dioxygenase from N. farcinica showed the highest thermostability and catalytic efficiency towards PQS, whereas the one from S. bingchenganensis showed the highest affinity towards this substrate. Extracellular addition of these PQS-dioxygenases to P. aeruginosa cultures led to a reduction in alkylquinolone production. Pyocyanin and pyoverdine levels were also substantially reduced upon enzyme addition. Furthermore, treatment with the most promising PQS cleaving dioxygenases showed a slight protective effect when Galleria mellonella larvae were infected with P. aeruginosa PAO1. Further investigations to analyze the effects of quenching a compound that is both a signal molecule and an iron chelator not only on P. aeruginosa, but within the context of polymicrobial infections, would be highly interesting.

578-SeSiP
Membrane Stress induces T6SS activity in Pseudomonas aeruginosa

A. S. Stolle1, B. Meader1, J. J. Mekalanos2
1Westfälische Wilhelms University, Center for Molecular Biology of Inflammation, Münster, Germany
2Harvard Medical School, Microbiology and Immunobiology, Boston, United States

The type 6 secretion system (T6SS) is a nanomachine encoded by many gram-negative bacteria used for warfare among different species to create a growth advantage in densely occupied niches. Some species, like Vibrio cholerae, use their T6SS in an untargeted fashion and seemingly fire randomly at other bacteria. In contrast, Pseudomonas aeruginosa uses its T6SS more defensively, meaning that it only fires its T6SS when it has been challenged before. Interestingly, P. aeruginosa seems to sense the exact position of an incoming attack, because it is able to retaliate at the same position of the incoming attack. However, the signal that is sensed by P. aeruginosa has not been identified to date. Here, we use a CRISPR interference approach to knock down essential genes in the inner membrane, periplasm or outer membrane to interrogate whether membrane disruption is the signal that is sensed by P. aeruginosa. Indeed, knockdown of bamA, tolB and iptD led to increased functional T6SS activity and results in untargeted killing of T6-negative V. cholerae. Assembly and firing of the T6SS apparatus is signaled via the threonine phosphorylation pathway. Here, we show that outer membrane perturbation is sensed by P. aeruginosa and results in building of a functional T6SS apparatus.

579-SeSiP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

580-SeSiP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

581-SeSiP
The phosphotransferase protein EliaNc regulates AcnB aconitase activity in a phosphorylation-independent manner in Escherichia coli

F. Sikora1, M. Mörk-Mörkenstein1, B. Görke1
1Max Perutz Labs, University Vienna, Vienna, Austria

Bacteria constantly adapt their metabolism to the availability of carbon and nitrogen sources. An important system for carbohydrate utilization is the canonical PEP-dependent phosphotransferase system (PTS). In parallel, many Proteobacteria possess a nitrogen-related PTS, which exclusively exerts regulatory functions and consists of the three proteins ElaN, NPr and EliaNc (encoded by ptsN). EliaNc regulates various cellular processes, such as phosphate and potassium uptake, depending on its phosphorylation state. However, not all phenotypes of E. coli lacking ptsN can be explained by the known targets of EliaNc. For instance, EliaNc was observed to stimulate flux through the TCA cycle in a phosphorylation-independent manner, suggesting that the TCA cycle flux is regulated by EliaNc levels.

In this study, the aconitase AcnB is identified as a novel interaction partner of EliaNc. Interestingly, this interaction is independent of the EliaNc phosphorylation state. Furthermore, absence of EliaNc, but not modulation of its phosphorylation, results in higher aconitase activity. This is in contrast to other regulatory targets of EliaNc, which interact either with the phosphorylated or the non-phosphorylated form of the protein. These findings suggest that levels of EliaNc, whose synthesis is believed to be constitutive, might be modulated by the cell. To identify factors involved in the regulation of ptsN expression, we carry out a transposon mutagenesis screen and find that Hfq, a key player in post-transcriptional regulation, negatively impacts EliaNc synthesis. In addition, we observe that ptsN transcription increases under cell envelope stress conditions. Taken together, we find that E. coli can adjust EliaNc levels on the transcriptional as well as the post-transcriptional level, allowing to modulate AcnB activity in a phosphorylation-independent manner.


582-SeSiP
GMCSF synergizes with LPS for IL-1β secretion through an alternative NLRP3 inflammasome pathway

Inflammasomes are multiprotein complexes that act as scaffolds for caspase-1 activation, which in turn promotes the activation of the proinflammatory cytokines IL-1β and IL-18 as well as pyroptosis, a form of regulated cell death. There are multiple inflammasomes and among them the NLRP3 inflammasome responds to a wide array of stimuli such as ATP and nigericin, but the actual activation mechanism is still unknown. NLRP3 activation is a two-step mechanism: a first signal called “priming” is required for expression of pro-IL-1β and NLRP3-activation. Then a second “activation signal”, triggers the inflammasome complex formation and rapid cytokines secretion through pyropotosis pores. There are however a number of reports showing that NLRP3 can be activated without a second classical stimulus, as ATP and nigericin, where a priming signal such as LPS treatment is enough to trigger a slower and prolonged IL-1β secretion. GM-CSF treatment is one such scenario, whereby GM-CSF synergizes with LPS to promote NLRP3 activation and IL-1β secretion. Moreover, GM-CSF is expressed at high levels at sites of inflammation, as in synovial fluid from patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and anti-GMCSF treatment is in clinical trial for RA and multiple sclerosis.

We investigated the mechanism of GM-CSF-regulated inflammasome activation and IL-1β secretion. We show that GM-CSF synergizes with LPS for IL-1β-secretion in a NLRP3-ASC-caspase 1 dependent manner. GM-CSF/LPS-induced IL-1β-secretion required the necrosis signaling components RIPK3 as well as RIPK1 kinase activity and MLKL, suggesting a requirement for cell death signaling. However, neither necrosis nor pyroptosis could be observed during GM-CSF/LPS-induced IL-1β-secretion. We further observed a requirement for mitochondrial reactive oxygen species (ROS), indicating that ROS may be driving NLRP3 activation in response to LPS/GM-CSF. We propose that this pathway represents a natural trigger for NLRP3 activation that is cell death independent and may be relevant for inflammation and inflammatory disease.

583-ARP
Characterizing the role of minD2 and minD4 in Halofax volcanii
*M. Pairo*, P. Nussbaum!, S. V. Albers!
!University Of Freiburg, Molecular Biology of Archaea, Freiburg imbreisgau, Germany

The process of archaeal cell division has not been studied in detail. However, the extreme halophilic euryarchaeon Halofax volcanii, utilizes the FtsZ-based bacterial-type system (Markarova and Koonin, 2010). It encodes for eight homologs of FtsZ, at least two of which – FtsZ1 and FtsZ2 - are involved in cell division. However, two homologs – CetZ1 and CetZ2 - were shown to play a role in cell morphology (Duggin et al., 2015). In many bacteria, the correct placement of the Z-ring at the center of the cell is ensured by the Min protein system. In H. volcanii, four homologs of minD* were found, but no minC or minE (unlike E. coli). Deletion of any of the four MinD homologs and all their possible combinations in H. volcanii had no effect on FtsZ1 localization or cell division. However, the minD2 and minD4 mutants showed a clear motility phenotype.

Although the MinD4 deletion mutant was able to assemble archaellum, swimming motility was inhibited which was similar to known chemotaxis protein deletion mutants. Indeed, the localization of the CheW clusters was altered in this mutant. At closer look, the MinD2 deletion mutant did not only have a motility phenotype, but also showed a much earlier “round” phenotype than the wildtype cells which usually round up only towards the stationary growth phase. As “rounded up” H. volcanii cells do not assemble an archaellum, the motility defect is probably a secondary effect of the minD2 deletion. Currently, we are establishing fluorescent fusion proteins to visualize minD2 and are performing pulldown assays to identify interacting protein partners to understand MinD2’s role in cell shape determination in H. volcanii.

584-ARP
Translational coupling via termination-reinitiation in archaea and bacteria
*M. Huber!, G. Faure!, S. Laass!, G. Rizzo!, E. Kolbe!, C. Wehrheim!, K. Seitz!, Y. Wolf!, E. Koonin!, J. Soppa!
!Goethe University, Institute of Molecular Biosciences, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Many genes in archaea and bacteria are organized in operons and are transcribed into polycistronic mRNAs. This enables translational coupling, i.e. translation of a downstream gene depends on translation of an upstream gene. One mechanism of translational coupling is named “Termination-Reinitiation” (TeRe). In this case, ribosomes that terminate translation of an upstream gene remain on the transcript (at least the small subunit), and reinitiate translation at a nearby or overlapping downstream gene.

From 720 genomes of archaea and bacteria, we identified substantial, albeit highly variable, fractions of co-directed overlapping gene pairs in all major prokaryotic phyla. We experimentally tested the predicted coupling in the model archaeon Haloferax volcanii and bacterium Escherichia coli. To this end, gene overlaps where fused to reporter genes, and variants were compared that did or did not, respectively, allow the ribosome to reach the overlap. Quantification of translational efficiencies revealed that strict translational coupling via TeRe operates at both tested model organisms. All gene pairs contained SD motifs near the 3*-end of the upstream gene. To analyze the role these in translational coupling, the motifs were mutated. The results indicated that the contribution of the SD motif to translational coupling is highly variable, with the SD-less mutants showing 0% to 100% translational efficiency compared to the wild-type genes. Next, the distance between stop codon and start codon was varied, to elucidate the maximal distance a ribosome can scan along the RNA.

Taken together, translational coupling at overlapping gene pairs was experimentally proven for one archaeal and one bacterial species, and the bioinformatics analysis indicates that it might be very widespread in many groups of prokaryotes.

585-ARP
Single-domain zinc finger μ-proteins in Haloferax volcanii
*S. Zahn!, C. Nagel!, A. Machulla!, J. Soppa!
!Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main, Institut für Molekulare Biowissenschaften, Frankfurt a. M., Germany

Characterization of the "low molecular weight proteome" of Halobacterium salinarum led to the identification of 380
proteins of less than 20 kDa. Most of them had no assigned function, and 20 contained two CPXCG motifs that were postulated to form a zinc finger. These experimental results also guided the annotation of the *Haloferax volcanii* genome. Currently, *Haloferax volcanii* is annotated to encode 282 μ-proteins with a length of less than 70 amino acids, only 24 of which have an assigned function. 43 of these μ-proteins contain at least two CPXCG motifs and are, therefore, most probably single-domain zinc finger μ-proteins.

Until now 18 of the respective genes have been deleted, and 11 deletion mutants differed from the wildtype under at least one condition, e.g. growth capabilities with different carbon/phosphate/nitrogen sources, resistance against UV-/phosphate/oxidative or osmotic stress, biofilm formation, or motility/chemotaxis. Four deletion mutants showed the same pleiotrophic phenotype, i.e. swarming motility was considerably decreased, while biofilm formation, resistance to UV irradiation as well as resistance to osmotic stress were increased.

HVO_2753 encodes the only μ-protein containing four CPXCG motifs and thus two zinc fingers. Its deletion led to a loss of swarming and decrease in biofilm formation. Swarming could be restored by the expression of the native HVO_2753 gene. In contrast, single amino acid mutants in each CPXCG motif did not enhance swarming, proving that all four motifs are essential. A fluorescent assay experimentally confirmed that HVO_2753 binds zinc. In vivo cross-linking revealed that HVO_2753 forms a complex with other proteins, and the identification of binding partners is currently under way. Taken together, one domain zinc finger μ-proteins fulfill important biological functions in *H. volcanii*.


586-ARP

**Uptake and degradation of disaccharides in *Haloferax volcanii* and *Haloarcula hispanica***

*M. Ortjohann*, U. Johnsen*, P. Schönheit*

*Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, Institut für Allgemeine Mikrobiologie, Kiel, Germany*

The degradation pathways of hexoses in halophilic archaea have been studied in detail. E.g. Hfx. volcanii degrades glucose via a semi phosphorylated Entner-Doudoroff (spED)-pathway (1) and fructose by a modified Embden-Meyerhof (EM)-pathway. Fructose uptake involves a phosphoenolpyruvate dependent phosphotransferase system (PEP-PTS) that forms fructose-1-phosphate (2). However, the catabolism of disaccharides in haloarchaea has not been analyzed in detail so far.

Here we report analyses of transport, cleavage and degradation of disaccharides in Hfx. volcanii and Har. hispanica. (I) An ABC transporter composed of a substrate binding protein (SBP), two transmembrane domains and a nucleotide binding domain was identified in Hfx. volcanii that is promiscuous for the disaccharides maltose, trehalose, cellobiose, sucrose and isomaltulose. (II) A hydrolase from Har. hispanica that belongs to the GH68 family and catalyzes the cleavage of sucrose was characterized. (III) Using deletion mutants of genes encoding the key enzymes glucose dehydrogenase and fructose-1-phosphate kinase we could show that in Hfx. volcanii disaccharide-derived glucose and fructose moieties are degraded via the spED- and the modified EM-pathway respectively. (IV) Further we present evidence that in Hfx. volcanii the PEP-PTS is involved in phosphorylation of sucrose-derived fructose excluding a role of ketohexokinase that has previously been proposed to phosphorlylate fructose to fructose-1-phosphate in Haloarcula species (3).


**587-ARP**

Metagenomic prediction of altiarchaeotal virus-host dynamics in a high-C O2 subsurface environment

*S. Eßer*, T. L. V. Bornemann*, J. Rahlff*, A. J. Probst*

*University of Duisburg Essen, Group for Aquatic Microbial Ecology, Institute for Environmental Microbiology and Biotechnology, Essen, Germany*

**Introduction**

_Candidatus_ Altiaurechaeum hamiconexum are well known for playing a key role in the carbon cycle in cold, subsurface ecosystems, yet viral interactions with _Ca_. _A. hamiconexum_ and respective virus-host dynamics remain an open question.

**Objectives**

To answer this question, we used public datasets encompassing more than 1 Tb of sequence information for identifying putatively viral genomes, whose viruses infect Altiaurechaeota and analyzed the abovementioned virus-host dynamics.

**Methods**

The metagenomic datasets (study site: CO2-driven, cold-water Crystal Geyser, Utah, USA) spanning a sampling period of 6 years, were used to link predicted viruses to Altiaurechaeota via CRISPR-spacer to protospacer matches. In detail, CRISPR systems of Altiaurechaeota were identified with CRISPRCasFinder(1) and spacer were extracted via MetaCRAST(2) (clustered at 97% nucleotide identity). Viral genomes were predicted in a polyphasic approach encompassing VirSorter(3), VirFinder(4), VogDB(5), FindCircular(6) and inhouse scripts.

**Results**

Two CRISPR systems with different repeat sequences were identified within the Altiaurechaeota genomes with a total of 491 and 405,685 spacer clusters, respectively. We were able to assign 64 viral genomes to show infection histories with Altiaurechaeota and another 37, which were likely viruses. The 491 and 405,685spacer clusters, respectively. We were able to assign 64 viral genomes to show infection histories with Altiaurechaeota and another 37, which were likely viruses. The virus-host dynamics of two selected viruses were resolved showing a co-correlation with the host and a fully independent pattern, respectively.

**Conclusion**

Altiaurechaeota carry highly heterogeneous CRISPR systems showing a great micro-diversity of strains and complex infection histories and dynamics with viruses. The infection followed by cell lysis of Altiaurechaeota likely jump-starts heterotrophic carbon cycling in these subsurface ecosystems.

**References**
588-ARP
Viability of Methanoseta and attached bacteria
*A. Lonsing*, G. Martens1, J. Kuina, J. Harder1
1Max-Planck-Institut für marine Mikrobiologie, Dept. of Molecular Ecology, Bremen, Germany

Introduction:

Methanoseta spp., a genus of Archaea, is one of the predominant methane producers detected in anoxic habitats all over the world. It dominates the methanogenesis from acetate in slowly growing enrichment cultures and wastewater treatment plants. In limonene-degrading methanogenic communities (1) small cocoid bacteria assigned as strain OP3 LiM were found attached to the Methanoseta filaments. The mode of interaction between the cells is undisclosed.

Objectives:

Live/Dead stains were used to characterize the viability of the microbial community.

Results:

Here we report the staining of Methanoseta filaments using stains for DNA (DAPI), ribosomal RNA (FISH probe) and lipids (Nile Red). Within the Methanoseta filaments which were observed in phase contrast microscopy, cells without staining by the FISH probe and DAPI were observed. In these cases, Nile Red revealed the presence of the membrane. Viability stainings are currently pursued and will be reported in this contribution.

Conclusion:

The lack of staining suggested that within the filaments of Methanoseta, cells are present that lack their cytosolic content. Possible biological reasons include viral infections and predatory bacteria.


589-ARP
Interaction of Haloarchaeal Gas Vesicle Proteins Determined by Split-GFP
*A. Jost1, K. Völken1, J. Born1, F. Pfeifer1
1Technische Universität Darmstadt, Microbiology & Archaea, Darmstadt, Germany

Introduction

Split-GFP is an established method to verify protein-protein-interactions (PPI) in bacteria and yeasts in vivo and was recently adapted to Haloarchaeae [1]. The green fluorescent protein (GFP) is splitted into 2 fragments, NGFP and CGFP that are fused to two proteins of interest. In the case of an interaction, the GFP portions are able to assemble a fluorescent GFP. We used this method to investigate PPI of gas vesicle proteins in Haloferax volcanii to unravel gas vesicle formation.

Objectives

PPI was used to study the interaction of gas vesicle (GV) accessory proteins to gain insights into early stages of gas vesicle formation.

Methods

The salt-adapted mGFP2 was splitted between the residues 157 and 158 in two fragments, NGFP and CGFP. Each fragment was fused N- or C-terminally to the two GV proteins of interest and the fluorescence of the resulting Hfx. volcanii transformants was analyzed.

Results

The eight accessory proteins GvpF through GvpM were tested and their interactions were determined. Each protein had a major interaction partner except for GvpL, that interacted with five of these proteins, and GvpF contacted GvpL and GvpA. Vice versa, GvpA bound GvpF only. Further analysis with fragments of GvpA determined the N-terminal portion of GvpA, and especially the α-helix 1, as the interaction site for GvpF.

Conclusion

Split-GFP is a valuable method to detect PPI under high salt conditions in vivo. We uncovered interactions between all accessory gas vesicle proteins and determined GvpF as the only interaction partner for the major gas vesicle protein GvpA. Our results imply the existence of a nucleation complex, but further research is required. Interactions will be specified by further fragmentation and point mutations in these proteins.


590-ARP
Establishment of a novel haloarchaeal virus-host system
*S. Schwarzer*, H. M. Oksanen*, T. E. F. Quax1
1University of Freiburg, Archaear virus-host interactions, Faculty of Biology, Freiburg, Germany
2University of Helsinki, Molecular and Integrative Biosciences Research Programme, Faculty of Biological and Environmental Sciences, Helsinki, Finland

Archaeal viruses are known for their high diversity and complex morphologies. However, relatively little is known about their infection strategies. Archaeal viruses face different challenges during viral entry and egress, compared to their bacterial counterparts, as the archaeal cell envelope and its appendages fundamentally differ from those of bacteria. For only a few archaeal viruses, the entry and egress mechanisms have been studied, so far. To investigate the main principles underlying infection strategies of archaeal viruses, we aimed to establish a genetically accessible haloarchaeal virus-host system.
A culture collection screen uncovered several haloarchaeal strains that appeared to be auspicious host organisms to perform virus-host interaction studies. For these strains, optimal conditions for growth and motility were determined. The characterization of these strains revealed that a recently isolated Haloferax sp. is a promising organism to study the entry mechanisms of haloarchaeal viruses. This strain is infected by an icosahedral tailed dsDNA virus with a long non-contractile tail (siphovirus morphotype). Haloferax tailed virus 1 (HFTV1) is the first known virus infecting a Haloferax strain and was isolated together with its host from saline Lake Retba (Senegal) in 2011 (Mizuno et al., 2019).

Currently, we are developing a system to create gene knockouts for Haloferax sp. that hosts HFTV1. Furthermore, sequencing and genome annotation of this strain unraveled a close relationship to other members of the genus Haloferax, especially to Hfx. volcanii. We therefore aim to test if the extensive genetic toolbox developed for Hfx. volcanii facilitates experimental analysis of this virus-host system and will help to identify the infection strategies of haloarchaeal viruses.

591-ARP
Investigation of the catalytic mechanism of the Heme-Synthase AhbD
*t, Fix* G. Layer
1University of Freiburg, Pharmaceutical Biology and Biotecnology, Freiburg, Germany

Tetrapyroles, which are also called the “colors of life”, play an important role in all three kingdoms of life. The cyclic tetrapyrole heme is an essential prosthetic group for almost all organisms on earth. The biosynthesis of heme starts with 5-aminolevulinic acid, which is stepwise converted into uroporphyrinogen III. In Archaea, the so-called siroheme-dependent pathway is used to transform uroporphyrinogen III into heme.[1]

The last step of the siroheme-dependent route is the conversion of iron-coproporphyrin III to heme, which is catalyzed by the heme synthase AhbD. This enzyme belongs to the Radical SAM superfamily and contains at least two [4Fe-4S] clusters.[2] AhbD catalyzes the oxidative decarboxylation of two propionate side chains of iron-coproporphyrin III to the corresponding vinyl groups of heme by a radical mechanism. For this, the N-terminal [4Fe-4S] cluster is required for the binding of S-adenosyl-methionine and radical formation. The function of the C-terminal cluster is not known. Determination of the iron and sulfide content of the recombinant AhbD from Methanosarcina barkeri indicates the presence of a third [4Fe-4S] cluster. To investigate this hypothesis and the function of the additional clusters, different single cluster variants of AhbD from M. barkeri were created. Using an in vitro enzyme activity assay it was demonstrated, that the C-terminal cluster might be not required for the conversion of iron-coproporphyrin III into heme. In contrast the putative third [4Fe-4S] cluster might be required for heme formation.

References:

592-ARP
Functional characterization of a cobalamin-dependent Radical SAM methyltransferase
*J. Gagsteiger*, G. Layer
1University of Freiburg, Institute of Pharmaceutical Science, Freiburg i. Br., Germany

Radical S-adenosyl-L-methionine (SAM) methyltransferases (MT) are known to methylate a broad range of substrates. They belong to the Radical SAM superfamily using a [4Fe-4S] cluster and SAM in order to initiate radical catalysis.[1] A predicted Radical SAM methyltransferase may also be responsible for the methylation of the unreactive sp³-hybridized C2 atom of a glutamine residue in methyl-coenzyme M reductase (MCR) of methanogenic archaea. The gene encoding the suspected MT is often located in close vicinity to the mcr genes and next to the gene encoding a Radical SAM enzyme responsible for the C5-methylation of an arginine residue, another modification of MCR.[2,3] Besides the Radical SAM domain, amino acid analysis revealed an N-terminal cobalamin-binding domain. Therefore, the enzyme most likely uses methyl-cobalamin as an additional cofactor.

The aim of the project is the in vitro characterization of the predicted cobalamin-dependent MT (B12-MT). However, the production and purification of the B12-MT proved to be difficult largely due to solubility issues during heterologous protein production. Therefore, we constructed expression vectors for B12-MT genes from different organisms using vectors encoding different purification and solubility tags. Different production strains and culture conditions were also tested. Recently, we were able to produce the predicted B12-MT from Methanocalculus thermoophilus in soluble form in Escherichia coli. Next, we will establish an enzyme activity assay using different peptides as substrates and, further, we will investigate the role of the cofactors during catalysis.


593-ARP
Characterization of a Radical SAM methyltransferase involved in the posttranslational modification of methylcoenzyme M reductase
*R. Hanna*, G. Layer
1Universität Freiburg, Institut für Pharmazeutische Wissenschaften, Freiburg, Germany

Methyl-coenzyme M reductase (MCR) is an enzyme involved in the last, methane releasing step of methanogenesis in methanogenic archaea. Near the active site, MCR carries several unusual posttranslational modifications of amino acids, one of which is a 5-methylarginine. It is proposed that this modification increases the stability of MCR, but is not crucial overall for enzyme function.[1] The gene ma4551 from Methanosarcina acetivorans C2A is located near the mcr gene cluster and codes for a Radical S-adenosyl-L-methionine (SAM) methyltransferase, which is responsible for the methylation of arginine.[1] Although Ma4551 does not show the typical characteristics of cobalamin-dependent Radical SAM methyltransferases, it requires cobalamin as a cofactor/cosubstrate.[2] Ma4551 most likely contains two [4Fe-4S]-clusters, coordinated by conserved three- or four-cysteine motifs. While one cluster is responsible for the
homolytic cleavage of SAM, the function of the second cluster yet remains unknown.

This work aims to establish an in vitro enzyme activity assay for Ma4551, using synthetic peptides as substrate. We then aim to determine the minimal peptide length required for substrate binding and want to identify the amino acid residues needed for substrate recognition. Also the function of the second [4Fe-4S]-cluster and the mechanism of cobalamin regeneration need to be investigated.

So far, we were able to produce and purify wild type Ma4551, as well as two cluster depleted variants, each missing one of the Fe-S-cluster. For the wild type enzyme complete enzyme activity was observed when cobalamin was added. Using HPLC analysis, increasing amounts of 5'-deoxyadenosine as product of the radical cleavage of SAM and an increase in S-adenosyl-L-homocysteine concentration as product of the methyl group transfer were measured over time. Simultaneously, the amount of SAM decreased. The two enzyme variants missing either one of the iron-sulfur clusters showed either no activity or only partial activity.

References


594-ARP
Raising a hidden treasure

For more than three decades, the Archaea Centre Regensburg represents one of the scientific hearts for the study of extremophilic microorganisms and more specifically for organisms from the third domain of life, the Archaea. During this period, original samples were collected from various extreme habitats from all over the world and subsequently used to enrich, isolate and cultivate new microbial species. Currently, the culture collection at the Archaea Centre comprises more than 1500 strains and enrichment cultures. In addition, we can rely on decades of experience and specialized equipment to cultivate extremophiles at the Archaea Centre Regensburg. While some of the archaeal organisms (e.g. Pyrococcus furiosus and the fascinating co-culture of Ignicoccus hospitalis and Nanoarchaeum equitans) became research objects for many laboratories, the majority of the isolated strains is still not well characterized and awaiting their awakening.

To raise this hidden treasure, we plan to combine state-of-the-art technologies for assaying microbial communities with classical and innovative microbial profiling strategies. This includes e.g. reliable and reproducible protocols for nucleic acid purification and 16S rRNA gene profiling by qPCR and amplicon sequencing. Especially, we are focusing on the implementation of third-generation sequencing platforms as the Nanopore MiniON platform in our pipelines.

Here, I will present a case study focusing on four original samples collected at deep-sea hydrothermal sediments and vents in the 80’s, 90’s, 00’s and 10’s. So far, we determined microbial community compositions by Nanopore-based sequencing and advantages and disadvantages of this technique compared to other sequencing platforms will be discussed. Moreover, cultivation attempts showed that even original samples stored at 4°C for more than 30 years can serve as inoculum to successfully isolate microorganisms.

Raising the hidden treasure of the Archaea Centre Regensburg, our ultimate goal is to contribute new experimental strategies to cultivate the unculturable.

595-ARP
Polyploidy in prokaryotes: Intermolecular gene conversion as a mechanism to equalize genome copies

It has been assumed for many years that monoploidy is a typical feature of prokaryotes. However, in contrast, the majority of prokaryotic species is in fact oligoploid or polyploid. Polyploidy has most likely evolved independently in various phylogenetic lineages and is related to many evolutionary advantages. These include resistance to double strand breaks and the usage of genomic DNA as a phosphate storage polymer. Furthermore, intermolecular gene conversion can lead to the equalization of chromosomes and is defined as a non-reciprocal transfer of information between two homologous DNA sequences.

Halofex volcanii is a polyplloid halophilic archaeon and contains about 20-30 copies of its main chromosome when cultivated under optimal growth conditions. We established an approach to study intermolecular gene conversion by fusion of a tryptophan-auxotrophic and a thymine-auxotrophic strain of Halofex volcanii and subsequent selection in the absence of both substrates. Additionally, the strains carry different versions of other genes, which ideally do not underlie any selective pressure and have an easy to identify phenotype. We made use of the genes crtB (HVO_2524) and crtD (HVO_2528), both of which encode an enzyme essential for carotenoid biosynthesis. Strains with different mutations in one or both genes were generated and fused. The efficiency of unselected intermolecular gene conversion was addressed phenotypically and by analytical PCR. This approach will be used to shed light on the importance of different parameters that might influence gene conversion efficiency e.g. 1) the size of insertions/deletions; 2) the size of mismatches; 3) the lengths of DNA-tracts that are converted and 4) the direction of the conversion.

596-ARP
Shape and structure of archaeanal cells, as seen by electron tomography

Various archaeanal cells serve as model system for studies of archaeanal molecular cell biology. One example is the euryarchaeon Pyrococcus furiosus, a motile cell expressing numerous archaella. Another archaean studied in our lab is Methanocaldococcus villosus, a hyperthermophilic methanogen with exceptional motility. These cells are described as ‘slightly irregular’ cocci, up to 1500 nm in diameter. They are regarded as round but a detailed analysis is lacking.
Methods: Cells are analysed by electron tomographic methods (Rachel et al, 2010). Using electron cryo-tomography and sub-tomogram averaging, we presented a model of the Pyrococcus furiosus archaeallar motor in 3D (Daum et al, 2017). In current studies, cells are not concentrated by centrifugation, but by gentle filtration, then cryo-immobilized by high-pressure freezing, followed by freeze-substitution and resin embedding. Parallel beam STEM tomography with dual-axis tilting of 600 nm sections enables us to eliminate the focus gradient at high tilt, by increasing the depth of focus. We extend our studies towards naturally occurring lab mutants.

Results: The tomography datasets help us to visualize the cells with minimal distortion, using the improved sample preparation protocol. The natural shape of the cells is trapped in an undisturbed way, before their structure is analysed at a resolution of about 5 nm. We unravelled yet undescribed features, like kinks and sharp bends in the archaeal cell wall, features pointing to unique mechanisms of cell shape determination.

Conclusion: Combined ultrastructural and biochemical analyses are necessary in order to fully understand the complexity of coccoid archaeal cells. We plan to complement our studies using electron cryo-tomography, in the near future.

References:
Daum et al, 2017: eLife 6: 27470

597-PMP
Establishing a hydrogen-sensing platform organism for the directed evolution of continuous, photosynthesis-driven hydrogen production
*F. Opel* 1, A. Schmid 1, S. Klahn 1

Introduction: Molecular hydrogen (H₂) is believed to be an ideal candidate for future energy supply because it is a clean, CO₂-neutral energy carrier. Hence, a biotechnological production of H₂, i.e. driven by photosynthesis appears promising. Nevertheless, a plethora of hurdles have to be overcome to establish, e.g. a cyanobacterium as whole-cell biocatalyst for a photosynthetic H₂ production.

Objectives: We aim to implement the natural H₂-responsive regulatory cascade of Ralstonia eutropha; comprising an O₂-insensitive H₂-sensing Hydrogenase, a histidine kinase and a response regulator; in the cyanobacterial model strain Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 (Synechocystis). The regulatory components will be coupled with the expression of a reporter gene, namely for the superfolder green fluorescent protein (sfGFP), to achieve a H₂-dependent sfGFP fluorescence.

Material & Methods: The structural and accessory genes encoding the proteins of the regulatory cascade will be combined as artificial operons via PCR-based and gene synthesis approaches for the generation of a series of replicative, broad-host range plasmids for the introduction into Synechocystis. In addition, different promoters and ribosome binding sites shall be tested to verify expression as well as function of the respective proteins. The regulatory cascade will be stepwise established into both E. coli and Synechocystis.

Results: So far, we were able to accomplish a weak transcription regulation mediated by the heterologous response regulator HoxA, visualized by sfGFP in E. coli.

Conclusion: The completed system would present a synthetic biosensor, which could ultimately be used for in vivo monitoring of H₂ and subsequently as tool for the systematic improvement of cyanobacterial H₂ evolution.

598-PMP
Elucidating the significance of Sodium for Metabolism in the Cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803
*M. Burkhardt*, K. Forchhammer

1Universitä Tübingen, Organismic Interactions, Tübingen, Germany

Salt plays an important role in life. They serve as buffer substances, cofactors, enhancers and inhibitors and much more. Sodium is the most abundant cation in the environment and is thus expected to influence all living cells. In cyanobacteria, sodium is reported to be required for the regulation of osmotic pressure, pH, bicarbonate uptake and photosynthesis. Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803, hereafter Synechocystis, is a non-diazotroph unicellular cyanobacterium. If faced with nitrogen starvation, it can enter a state of dormancy termed chlorosis and recover from that in presence of nitrogen again. The goal was to find the primary requirement for sodium in Synechocystis and characterise the necessity throughout regular growth and nitrogen starvation-induced chlorosis. Viability and growth were tested with growth curves and measurement of the photosystem 2 activity via PAM fluorometry. Levels of glycogen throughout chlorosis and resuscitation were analysed by enzymatic assay. Nitrite levels during resuscitation were determined by a chemical assay (Griess reaction). Cells in nitrate-supplemented medium died without sodium. The requirement for sodium could be bypassed by addition of 10 mM glucose and gassing with 2% CO₂ but not by addition of 100 mM KHCO₃. Sodium starvation during early chlorosis led to death of cells, but starvation after glycogen levels were established yielded no difference to regular conditions. Without sodium, cells started to resuscitate but stopped when carbon uptake became relevant. Thus, it was concluded that the activity of the sodium-dependent bicarbonate uptake systems BicA and SbtA are the primary requirement for sodium. This requirement appears omnipresent throughout the life of Synechocystis.


599-PMP
Investigation of phasins for an increased PHB yield in Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803

*J. Alford*, M. Koch, K. Forchhammer

1University of Tuebingen, Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine Tuebingen, Tuebingen, Germany
Due to its material properties and biodegradability the polyester Polyhydroxybutyrate (PHB) represents a promising alternative to conventional petroleum-based plastic. PHB is naturally produced by many organisms, often under conditions of nutrient limitation. One example is the cyanobacterium *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803 (*Synechocystis*), which is a natural PHB producer (Klotz et al., 2016). Since this organism can grow phototrophically, it produces bioplastic from CO2 as the sole carbon source. To increase the PHB production by *Synechocystis*, it is necessary to better understand its PHB metabolism. So far it is known, that PHB accumulates in granules, which are coated with a layer of structural and functional proteins termed phasins (Bresan et al., 2016). In heterotrophic bacteria, various phasins with different roles in PHB metabolism have been identified (Sznajer et al., 2015). In cyanobacteria only one phasin, PhaP, which regulates the surface-to-volume ratio of PHB granules, has been identified so far (Hauf et al., 2015). Here, we aim to identify and characterize further phasins in *Synechocystis*. For this purpose, we are performing proteome analysis of purified PHB granules. Subsequent molecular analysis of putative phasins could provide deeper insights into their physiological function. Currently, we are investigating the function of the putative phasins Strl0058 and Strl0060. Strl0058 shows sequence similarities to PhaF, a phasin that ensures equal distribution of PHB to the daughter cells during cell division (Maestro and Sanz, 2017). We observed, that a deletion of *strl0058* leads to a reduction in PHB production and to a higher number of PHB granules. We plan to further investigate its function by analyzing its structure and by performing pulldown experiments to reveal interacting proteins. Strl0060 is a potential candidate for an intracellular PHB depolymerase in *Synechocystis*, as its sequence predicts similarities to a family of phospholipases/acylesterase.

**600-PMP**

A new mode of B12-remodeling in microalgae?

*C. Baum*1, R. C. Menezes*2*, A. Svatos*3*, T. Schubert*1,2*

1Institute of Microbiology, Department of Applied and Ecological Microbiology, Jena, Germany
2Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology, Research Group Mass Spectrometry, Jena, Germany

B12-vitamers are essential cofactors of enzymes involved in central metabolic pathways of bacteria, archaea, humans, animals, and microalgae, but are only produced by selected prokaryotes. The availability of exogenous B12 directly influences the chance of survival for many B12-auxotrophic organisms. In addition, the structural variability among natural B12-compounds can limit the fitness of a given B12-dependent organism that is specialized on the utilization of a distinct B12-vitamer. To circumvent such incompatibilities, selected bacteria (*Dehalococcoides mccartyi, Rhodobacter sphaeroides*) and archaea (*Methanosarcina mazei*) possess an enzymatic machinery that allows for structural remodeling of B12-vitamers taken up from the environment. In this study, the freshwater model microalga *Chlamydomonas reinhardii* was investigated for its ability to remodel B12-compounds. The organism was fed with structurally different B12-vitamers and building blocks of the B12-nucleotide loop substructure. The growth of *C. reinhardii* B12-dependent mutant strain was determined via a photometer at a wavelength of 730nm and the remodeling of the nucleotide loop of *C. reinhardii* was analyzed by B12-extraction, purification, and product identification via mass spectrometry. As a result of this study it could be shown that *C. reinhardii* utilize almost all B12-vitamers which were tested but it prefers certain B12-vitamers more than others. HPLC and mass spectrometry analyses of B12-vitamers extracted from *C. reinhardii* fed with a not preferred B12-vitamer and the building blocks of a preferred one have shown a shift from the not preferred to the preferred B12-vitamer. Based on the collected data a novel model of biological B12-deconstruction in *C. reinhardii* has to be assumed, the mechanistic basis of which is currently under investigation.

**601-PMP**

Cyanobacteria as a new host for plant terpene biosynthesis

*M. Dietch*, I. M. Axmann

1Heinrich-Heine Universitat, Synthetische Mikrobiologie, Düsseldorf, Germany
2Heinrich-Heine-University Duesseldorf, Synthetic Microbiology, Duesseldorf, Germany

The topology of the cyanobacterial nucleoid is highly regulated by various levels of negative supercoiling. Depending on external stimuli such as variations in temperature, osmolarity, pH or carbon source, but also the intracellular energy level, cells can quickly adapt and globally modify gene regulation by changing the levels of DNA superhelicity. In turn, supercoiling-sensitive promoters can dynamically be activated or repressed depending on the current energy state of the cell. Our overall aim is to reprogram *Synechocystis* in order to precisely fine-tune its growth rate up to a total growth stop and use Cyanobacteria as promising alternative candidates for the production of a broad class of terpenes. Plant triterpenes form one of the most diverse groups of natural products which include versatile bioactive metabolites. In this work, we link the intrinsic isoprene metabolism of *Synechocystis* to heterologous pathway modules, such as codon-optimized genes for Nootkatone production.

**602-PMP**

Metabolic regulation of isoenzymes in the triosephosphate hub of *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803

S. Lucius1, M. Hagemann2

1Rostock University, Plant Physiology, Rostock, Germany
2Heinrich-Heine-University Duesseldorf, Synthetic Microbiology, Duesseldorf, Germany

The research consortium SCyCode (Switch in Cyanobacteria: Coherent decision-making) is a newly established interdisciplinary research network comprising several working groups focusing on cyanobacterial research. The consortium aims to better understand how cyanobacteria can switch between photoautotrophic and heterotrophic modes of metabolism, in adaptation to internal and external signals. This process demands multi-layered regulations of central metabolic routes in a unicellular system and despite the knowledge of the main pathways, the fine-tune regulation is still largely unknown.

As part of this joint project, our group at the University of Rostock focuses on the regulation of carbon metabolism in *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803 under different CO2 availability. Here we are working on mutants deficient in the isoenzymes GAPDH1/2 (Glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase) and PGAM1/2 (Phosphoglycerate mutase) from the triosephosphate hub. Metabolic changes after shifts from high CO2 to ambient air in the light resemble the switch from autotrophic to heterotrophic modes after light and dark changes. Growth experiments of the mentioned mutants in shifting CO2 conditions combined with metabolomic analysis by LC-MS and of glycogen contents will possibly further elucidate the role of these enzymes in the export of carbon during CO2 acclimatization.

Furthermore, we are aiming to identify carbon metabolism related metabolites and candidate peptides that might have
an influence on the activity of our isoenzymes by overexpressing them heterologously in *E. coli* and performing enzymatic assays *in vitro*.

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**603-PMP**

The role of serine/threonine-kinases in the metabolic regulation of carbon metabolism in *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803

*1 T. Barske*, M. Hagemann

As part of the newly established interdisciplinary research consortium SCyCode (Switch in Cyanobacteria: Coherent decision-making) this project is aimed to elucidate a better understanding of regulatory switches between photoautotrophic and heterotrophic modes of metabolism in acclimation to internal and external signals in the model organism *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803. We hypothesized that different isoenzymes and protein phosphorylation of key enzymes might play a central role for the allocation of organic carbon into different pathways in the unicellular cyanobacterium *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803.

In recent phosphoproteome studies it has been shown that many enzymes of the primary carbon metabolism (e.g. Gap2, Eda, Gnd, Tkt and Eno) were phosphorylated (Mikkat et al. 2014, Spät et al. 2015). However, it is still largely unknown if protein phosphorylation has an impact on protein activities and which protein kinases are responsible for protein modifications. To identify serine/threonine kinases involved in the phosphorylation of enzymes of primary carbon metabolism, a knock-out mutant library of all (putative) 12 annotated serine/threonine kinases (*spk*-L) was established. The acclimation of the different kinase mutants to fluctuating inorganic carbon conditions and the impact on the phosphoproteome will be analyzed in a comparative study of the 12 annotated serine/threonine kinase mutants. Subsequently, the regulation of certain kinases will be analyzed to elucidate the complex carbon regulatory network in *Synechocystis*.

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**605-PMP**

Regulation of glycogen metabolism in *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803

*1 N. Neumann*, K. Forchhammer

The availability of iron, particularly in modern oceans, affects the growth of living organisms. Cyanobacteria, essential primary producers in both terrestrial and marine environments, require iron to build and maintain their photosynthetic machinery. Prior to the Great Oxygenation Event (GOE), iron was abundantly available as soluble Fe2+ in the Archean ocean, with concentrations ranging from 40 to 120 μM. The oxygenc activity of cyanobacteria may have led to the precipitation of Fe3+ due to oxidation of Fe2+, thereby removing iron from the system. As Fe2+ became scarce, marine cyanobacteria would have needed to adapt to lower iron availability.

Our goal is to investigate the regulation of Fe2+/Fe3+ uptake mechanisms in the marine oxygenic phototrophs *Pseudanabaena* PCC7367 and *Synechococcus* PCC7336.

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**604-PMP**

Investigation into Cyanobacterial Iron Uptake in a Simulated Archean Ocean

*T. C. Enzinger-Bleyl*, A. J. Herrmann, M. M. Gehringer

The availability of iron, particularly in modern oceans, affects the growth of living organisms. Cyanobacteria, essential primary producers in both terrestrial and marine environments, require iron to build and maintain their photosynthetic machinery. Prior to the Great Oxygenation Event (GOE), iron was abundantly available as soluble Fe2+ in the Archean ocean, with concentrations ranging from 40 to 120 μM. The oxygenc activity of cyanobacteria may have led to the precipitation of Fe3+ due to oxidation of Fe2+, thereby removing iron from the system. As Fe2+ became scarce, marine cyanobacteria would have needed to adapt to lower iron availability.

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**606-PMP**

Regulation of glycogen metabolism in *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803

*1 T. Barske*, M. Hagemann

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In recent phosphoproteome studies it has been shown that many enzymes of the primary carbon metabolism (e.g. Gap2, Eda, Gnd, Tkt and Eno) were phosphorylated (Mikkat et al. 2014, Spät et al. 2015). However, it is still largely unknown if protein phosphorylation has an impact on protein activities and which protein kinases are responsible for protein modifications. To identify serine/threonine kinases involved in the phosphorylation of enzymes of primary carbon metabolism, a knock-out mutant library of all (putative) 12 annotated serine/threonine kinases (*spk*-L) was established. The acclimation of the different kinase mutants to fluctuating inorganic carbon conditions and the impact on the phosphoproteome will be analyzed in a comparative study of the 12 annotated serine/threonine kinase mutants. Subsequently, the regulation of certain kinases will be analyzed to elucidate the complex carbon regulatory network in *Synechocystis*.


Cyanobacteria are potential candidates to couple oxygenic photosynthesis to the production of molecular hydrogen (H₂) using a bidirectional hydrogenase. They are regarded as promising “low-cost” microbial cell factories for a sustainable H₂ production. H₂ constitutes a high-energy fuel that burns cleanly in producing only water as its by-product. One of the major challenges in using native cyanobacterial hydrogenases is their high oxygen sensitivity. For this reason, our aim is to express the soluble oxygen tolerant NiFe-hydrogenase of *Ralsstonia eutropha* in *Synechocystis sp.* PCC 6803. The active protein will be evaluated regarding H₂ production and consumption. Recently, the functional expression of the oxygen-tolerant hydrogenase from *R. eutropha* in *Synechocystis* has been achieved. Its characterization and optimization constitute the main focus of the project. We will present data regarding strain design, the evaluation of protein expression, and setups for activity tests.

Finally, we will show analytic tools for the quantification of H₂ production and consumption under different growth conditions. Future research objectives include protein engineering, in order to improve the H₂ production capacity of the oxygen tolerant hydrogenase.

### 607-PMP

**Antisense RNA asPcrL regulates expression of photosynthesis genes in *Rhodobacter sphaeroides***

Promoting RNase III-dependent turn-over of puf-mRNA

*C. M. Reuscher*, G. Klug

Institut für Mikro- und Molekularbiologie, Gießen, Germany

The facultative phototrophic model bacterium *Rhodobacter sphaeroides* is known for its metabolic versatility. Under microaerobic conditions it synthesizes intracytoplasmic membranes harbouring the pigment protein complexes needed for anoxygenic photosynthesis. For fast adaption to varying environmental conditions the transcription of genes in the photosynthetic gene clusters is tightly regulated. The *puf* operon comprises genes which encode proteins of the light harvesting complex I (LHI) and the reaction centre (RC). RNA-Seq and Northern blot analysis of transcripts derived from the *puf* operon unveiled that also certain small RNAs are transcribed. Up to date two different *puf* operon associated sRNAs were characterized. The *Hfq*-dependent sRNA asPcrL was detected antisense to the 5′ region of the *pufL* gene extending into the *pufA-pufL* intercistronic region. Northern blot results confirmed the presence of asPcrL (~180 nt) under microaerobic and phototrophic conditions. An artificial increase in the amount of the asPcrL by plasmid driven over-expression led to a reduction in the amount of LHI/RC-complexes and in *in vivo* reporter assays showed that asPcrL influences *pufL*, an Hfq-dependent manner. Additionally, we could show that the over-expression also influences the half-live of the polycistronic *puf* mRNA. *In vitro* degradation assays show that *pufL* is degraded via RNase III in an asPcrL-dependent manner. Taken together asPcrL is the second non-coding RNA which is associated with the *puf*-operon and plays an important role in processing and degradation of its target mRNA.

### 608-PMP

**Manipulation of *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803 on a whole-genome scale**

*A. Behle*, W. Murugathas*, M. Dietsch*, R. Machne*, I. M. Axmann

1 Institute for Synthetic Microbiology, Duesseldorf, Germany

Regulation of the topological state of the cyanobacterial chromosome is dependent on different external and internal conditions, including, but not limited to nutrient availability, temperature, pH, or the intracellular energy level. The main enzyme class involved in the mediation of DNA topology is the topoisomerases, which comprise a variety of similar enzymes with distinct functions. Mainly, we are interested in the two opposing players – the gyrase, which is able to actively introduce negative supercoils, and the topoisomerase I, which can remove supercoils, thereby relaxing the DNA.

Using a variety of newly developed genetic tools, we aim to precisely target this global regulatory network by manipulating these enzymes on a transcriptional and translational level. We aim to measure these changes in real time, using modern techniques such as transcriptomics and live-cell imaging.

### 609-PMP

**Regulators of cyanobacterial gene expression**

*L. Berwanger*, A. Klop

1 Heinrich Heine University, synthetic microbiology, Düsseldorf, Germany

The cyanobacterial gene regulation is orchestrated by a circadian rhythm in which the times of light-induced gene expression are synchronized by circadian KaiABC clock proteins. In contrast to other bacteria, gene expression in cyanobacteria is governed by an additional regulatory element since they are the only group of Gram-negative prokaryotes that are capable of oxidative photosynthesis. One of the central mechanisms of gene expression is transcription. The cyanobacterial transcription machine (TM) differs from the TM of other bacteria, e.g. the central protein of the TM - the DNA-dependent RNA polymerase (RNAP) - has several specific properties in contrast to the typical bacterial RNAP. The binding of RNAP to the promoter regions of the gene to be transcribed requires the reversible association of a sigma factor (σ factor). Recognition and binding of DNA promoter elements are initiated by specific σ factors. Cyanobacteria have a broad pool of different σ factors that regulate gene expression depending on specific metabolic states or stresses. In this work, we provide approaches to characterize components that are involved in cyanobacterial gene regulation and expression.

### 610-PMP

**Vitality determination of terrestrial cyanobacteria by means of their oxygen production**

*M. Witthohn, R. Ubert, K. Muller*

1 University of Applied Sciences, Life Sciences and Bioengineering, Bingen am Rhein, Germany

Recent studies indicate terrestrial cyanobacteria as a great reservoir of secondary metabolites with antifungal, antiviral or antibacterial effects. However, standard microbiologic methods are commonly not applicable, or not easily
adaptable to these bacteria. As an example, cyanobacteria are usually sustained over years by serial transfer on solid agar plates or liquid cultures (Day, 2017), because cryopreservation methods are not sufficiently established. This kind of strain collection causes a high workload and favours contaminations as well as genetic alterations (Rhodes et al., 2006). For the evaluation of new conservation techniques, the determination of cell vitalities is crucial. However, commonly used methods like the counting of cell-forming-units, or the analysis of growth rates are not feasible for many cyanobacteria, due to the formation of cell aggregates, the production of viscous exopolysaccharides, or slow growth rates. To overcome these problems, a new method for the vitality determination of cyanobacteria was developed in this work. An illuminated and tempered setup with an integrated pO2 electrode was inoculated with formerly cryopreserved and defrosted samples of the terrestrial cyanobacterium Trichocoleus sociatus. As cryoprotectants, either DMSO (5% v/v), methanol (5% v/v) or glycerin (15% v/v) was applied. An increase of pO2 could already be detected after 10-20 min. Cell vitalities were gained by calculation of the highest gradient of the pO2 curve. Values obtained from fresh cell material served as reference. The obtained results were validated by growth experiments. The methanol samples showed a diminished vitality of 0-18 %, the ones cryopreserved with either DMSO or glycerin reached decent activity values of 80-96% and 60-70%. The presented approach constitutes a simple and quick method for the vitality determination of cyanobacteria and can be adapted for many different scientific issues, as the testing for antibiotic susceptibilities/resistances, or the response to altered cultivation conditions.

611-PMP
RNase E Substrate Affinity in the Cyanobacterium Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803
U. Hoffmann1, S. Rohg1, F. Hey1, C. Steglich1, A. Wilde1
1Institute for Biology III, Molecular Genetics, Freiburg i. Br., Germany
2Institute of Computer Science, Bioinformatics, Freiburg i. Br., Germany
3Institute for Biology III, Genetics and Experimental Bioinformatics, Freiburg i. Br., Germany

RNase E is an essential endoribonuclease in E. coli. The enzyme is involved in RNA maturation and degradation. Its C-terminal half acts as the scaffold of the degradosome. Furthermore, it plays an important role in the action of several sRNAs.

Target recognition by RNase E is based on several factors. Mainly, two pathways were characterized. Firstly, RNase E shows a high affinity to 5'-mono-phosphorylated RNAs. Secondly, there is a pathway termed 5’-bypass with which RNAs’ secondary structures are recognized independent of their 5’-phosphorylation status.

RNase E homologues with different structural properties were found in many bacteria. However, its target affinity was mainly investigated in the enterobacteria Salmonella and E. coli. RNase E of our model organism Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 is homologous to the N-terminal half of E. coli RNase E.

Our work aims for understanding the role of RNase E and the roles of its different target recognition mechanisms in Synechocystis.

To identify RNase E dependent RNA processing sites on a genome-wide level, we performed tagRNA-Seq of strains with either wild type RNase E or RNase E deficient in 5’-mono-phosphate sensing. tagRNA-Seq is an RNA-Seq protocol to identify processing and transcriptional start sites on a genome-wide level.

Our results show that 5'-mono-phosphate sensing is, as already known from E. coli, also important for tRNA and tRNA maturation in cyanobacteria. Moreover, the processing sites of many other transcripts differ between the two strains. This is also reflected in several phenotypic effects observable between the two different strains.

Further experiments will be conducted to clarify the exact mechanisms underlying our observations.

612-PMP
Mixed-trophies biofilms for high-cell-density cultivation of Synechocystis sp. PCC 6803 in capillary reactors
1I. Heuschkel1, A. Hoschek1, A. Schmid1, B. Bühler1, R. Karande1, K. Bühler1
2UFZ Leipzig, Solar Materials, Leipzig, Germany

In Nature, almost 385 billion tons of CO2 is fixed annually to reduced organic materials by photosynthesis. This power of photosynthesis will be crucial for the production of value-added chemicals and fuels and reduce future dependency on fossil resources. However, the lack of scalable photobioreactors that provide efficient light transmission, CO2 supply, and O2 degassing and thus enable high cell densities (HCD), constitutes a key bottleneck.

Commercialized tubular photobioreactors offer a surface area to volume ratio (SA/V) of over 100 m² m⁻² enabling the efficient capturing of incident solar radiation.1 However, the high energy demand above 2000 W m⁻² necessary for O2 degassing and CO2 supply constitutes a major disadvantage of such tubular reactors. It was estimated to excel the (chemical) energy harvested from the sunlight (150 W m⁻²) by a factor of 13-14, prohibiting an economically feasible photo-biocatalytic production of lower-priced compounds.1

We introduce capillary biofilm reactors with a high surface to volume ratio (1333 m² m⁻³), and thus enhanced light availability, enabling HCDs of photo-autotrophic microorganisms. However, oxygenic photosynthesis leads to O2 accumulation in such systems, impairing biofilm growth. We combined O2 respiring Pseudomonas sp. using proto-cooperation to achieve HCDs of up to 51.8 g m⁻² day⁻¹ for at least one month.3 For benchmarking, the presented phototrophic process will be compared with the conventional chemical and heterotrophic process.2,3

References:
1 Posten, C. Eng. life science. 2009
3 Hoschek et al., Biores. tech. 2019

613-PMP
Improving H2 production in the cyanobacterium 

*Synechocystis* sp PCC 6803

*S. Grimm*1

1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, UFZ, Molecular Biology of Cyanobacteria, Leipzig, Germany

Phototrophic microorganisms have the potential to function as biocatalyst for the CO2-based synthesis of high energy compounds by mainly using water and CO2 for photosynthesis. By genetic engineering and optimization of growth condition, the cyanobacterium *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803 was shown to be capable of producing a variety of valuable and energy-rich carbon compounds as well as H2 as an energy carrier of the future. H2 is produced by transferring electrons via metabolites or directly from the photosynthetic electron transport chain to hydrogenases. Most hydrogenases are inactivated by O2, limiting H2 production by oxygenic phototrophic microorganisms. Also the native hydrogenase of *Synechocystis* is highly O2-sensitive. To obtain anaerobic conditions, expensive metal- or enzyme-based O2 scavengers have been used, but their use on large scale is limited. New reactor designs are necessary to efficiently remove excess O2 and products, control growth, and efficiently supply microbes with substrates (light and CO2). Growth of microbes in biofilm reactors led to enormous advantages including self-immobilization, self-repair, high cell density, and, in case of phototrophs, high light availability (Halan et al., 2012; Posten, 2009). Recently, a mixed-species capillary reactor design containing *Synechocystis* and *Pseudomonas* strains was shown not only to reduce O2-levels, but also to induce micro- and anaerobic conditions (Hoschek et al., 2019). Starting from this knowledge, mixed trophy biofilms were studied as a tool to improve H2 production by *Synechocystis*.

- (2) Posten C., Engineering in Life Sciences, 2009, 9(3), 165-177

614-PMP

A synthetic consortium containing *Tolypothrix* sp. and *Pseudomonas* sp. in a capillary biofilm reactor

*M. Bozan*1, A. Schmid1, N. Musati2, M. Schmidt2, K. Bühler1

1Helmholtz - Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ), Solar Materials, Leipzig, Germany
2Isotope Biogeochemistry, Leipzig, Germany

Biofilms of phototrophic organisms hold a huge potential as an alternative reaction format in biotechnology due to the extraordinary cell densities and the remarkable stabilities possible in such systems. In this context capillary reactors are excellent cultivation systems due to their optimal surface area to volume ratio. [1] Here, we set out to establish a novel strain for biofilm based photo biotechnology, the filamentous and nitrogen-fixing cyanobacterium *Tolypothrix* PCC7712. It was co-cultivated with the aerobic heterotrophic *Pseudomonas taiwanensis* VLB120, following the approach of dual-trophies biofilm cultivation as previously reported for *Synechocystis* sp. PCC6803. [1] *Tolypothrix/Pseudomonas* mixed cultures were cultivated either with nitrate, or without to promote nitrogen fixation. As control, single species *Tolypothrix* PCC7712 biofilms were also investigated. Chlorophyll a content was measured as a ready out for *Tolypothrix* PCC7712 growth. Dual trophies cultivation was beneficial for *Tolypothrix* PCC7712 biofilm formation. In mixed cultures cultivated with nitrate a chlorophyll a content of 32.36 ± 5.83 μg/ml was determined, which is about 4 fold higher that for single species *Tolypothrix* sp. biofilms. Strikingly, nitrogen fixation seemed to strongly promote biofilm formation of both, single as well as dual trophies biofilms, as nitrogen-fixing *Tolypothrix* sp. produced about 4 fold more biomass in the capillaries based on chlorophyll a measurements. Furthermore, confocal laser microscopy and scanning electron microscopy were applied to analyze the localization and morphology of the different species cells in the biofilm. Preliminary results showed that *P.taiwanensis* VLB120 creates a conditioning environment for *Tolypothrix* PCC7712 biofilm by boosting initial attachment of the photoautotrophic organism, and causing higher EPS production. Overall, *Tolypothrix* PCC 7712 appears to be a novel candidate for biofilm based biotechnological applications, due to fast and stable biofilm formation and its ability to fix atmospheric carbon and nitrogen.


615-PMP

Carbohydrate analysis of the cyanobacterium *Synechococcus elongatus*

*N. Thumm*1, *G. Fuentes*, L. M. Nentwig1, I. M. Axmann1

1Heinrich Heine Universität Düsseldorf, Synthetic Microbiology, Düsseldorf, Germany

Due to their capability to perform oxygenic photosynthesis cyanobacteria positively influence the world's climate. With the increase of the world population the need for renewable energy sources as well as chemicals and therapeutics is increasing whereas a sustainable production of these compounds seems to be desirable. The microorganisms currently used for the biotechnological production of these products have a heterotrophic lifestyle, which means that they themselves need a carbon source. Cyanobacteria are an attractive alternative to traditionally used heterotrophic organisms, as they are using the energy of the sun, carbon dioxide and water from their environment to build carbohydrates while releasing elemental oxygen. A key carbohydrate is cellulose, an unbranched homopolysaccharide consisting of β-1,4-linked glucose molecules. Cellulose is the most abundant biopolymer on earth primarily produced by plants. Interestingly, cellulose is also a component of the cell wall of certain cyanobacteria. Plant chloroplasts arose through endosymbiosis from cyanobacteria. Thus, a cyanobacterial origin of plant cellulose synthase has been suggested (Nobles et al., 2001). We are aiming to identify the role and importance of cellulose in cyanobacteria. We performed a knock-out of the three genes encoding the bacterial cellulose synthase complex in *S. elongatus*, namely *bcsA*, *bcsB* and *bcsC*. The composition of cell walls of wildtype and mutants is analyzed by linkage analysis via gas chromatography and detected by mass spectrometry.

616-SMP

Electronic analogous synthetic genetic circuits in bacteria for coding, decoding and integrating chemical and microgravity signals in a human designed way

*S. Bagh*1, K. Sarkar1, D. Bonnerjee1, S. Mukhopadhyay1

1Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Biophysics and Structural Genomics, Kolkata, India

Introduction: Processing complex chemical signals by engineered cells in human designed way is a key importance in cellular robotics. Here we demonstrate our recent effort in
creating complex environmental signal processing circuits in living *E. coli*.

Objective: We have created electronic analogous a 2-to-4 biochemical digital decoder, a 4-to-2-priority encoder, 2-to-1 de-multiplexer, and a multiplexer in a bacterial population connected by chemical wires. Those engineered bacteria sense, process, decode, and encode four small molecules environmental chemical signals and response by producing four different fluorescent proteins according to the truth table behavior of the electronic analogous devices.

Methods: We have designed, fabricated and assembled synthetic genetic circuits according to electronic circuit principles of the decoder and encoder circuits.

Results: All the component genetic logic gates are created using a library of hybrid promoters and experimentally characterized extensively for digitality, dynamic range and mathematically predictive behavior.

Microgravity Biosensor: On the other hand, synthetically engineered microbes have numerous projected applications in space bioengineering. Microgravity is a unique property of space. Biological solutions to space travel must consider microgravity as an important component, which is unknown in the biological worlds on the Earth. Therefore, creating a biochemical way to integrate microgravity as a signal within cellular processes is an important step towards developing a technology platform for space bioengineering. Here we have created the first biological or biochemical or molecular microgravity sensor in *Escherichia coli* applying synthetic gene circuits. The engineered bacteria sense and respond to microgravity by altering the expression of fluorescent reporter proteins. We further demonstrate any gene and promoter can be used. Thus, our design in universal.

Conclusion: Our work has significance in microbial robotics, synthetic biology and space bioengineering.

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**617-SMP**

Light-mediated control of complex biosynthetic pathways in *Pseudomonas putida*

* N. L. Bitzenhofer1, F. Hilgers1, A. Loeschke1, J. Ehlers1, J. Gebauer2, J. Pietruszka3-2, K. E. Jaeger1, 3, T. Drepper1

1 Institute of Molecular Enzyme Technology, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Jülich, Germany  
2 Institute for Bioorganic Chemistry, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Jülich, Germany  
3 Institute of Bio- and Geosciences IBG-1, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Jülich, Germany

Optimization of bacterial production processes often requires precise control over targeted metabolic pathways. In the last decades, different approaches have been described to develop such processes in bacteria with the implementation of optogenetic tools as a rapidly emerging approach. To control complex biosynthetic pathways with light, we used genetically encoded photosensitizers (PS). These proteins produce reactive oxygen species (ROS) upon illumination and can thus damage cellular components. Here, we report on the development and evaluation of these proteins for chromophore-assisted light inactivation (CALI) of target enzymes in living cells. The feasibility of a light-mediated control over such complex production processes was analyzed by using the bifurcated pathway of the antibiotic tripyrrole prodigiosin as a proof of concept. In initial experiments, we were able to demonstrate a gradual PS-mediated inhibition of the enzyme PigC which catalyzes the final product-forming condensation reaction of the monopyrrol MAP and the bipyrrole MBC. The light-triggered PigC inhibition was analyzed by photometric quantification of prodigiosin revealing a significantly reduced enzyme activity upon illumination. Furthermore, a PS-based strategy was developed to enable targeted control over the prodigiosin precursor supply. As observed for PigC, the production level of the precursor MAP and the subsequent formation of prodigiosin could be controlled via light-mediated reduction of the respective enzyme activity. In summary, our results indicate that complex metabolic pathways can principally be light-regulated by using genetically encoded PSs as tags for CALI of defined enzymes. The degree of inactivation, however, depends on the illumination conditions and the applied photosensitizer as well as the targeted enzyme.

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**618-SMP**

Design and construction of a new yeast endosymbiont

* N. T. Odermatt1, P. D. Gerlinger1, T. J. Erb1

1 MPI for Terrestrial Microbiology, Biochemistry and Synthetic Metabolism, Marburg, Germany

Endosymbiosis represents the key step in early evolution, where a metabolically limited eukaryote took up bacteria and transformed them into organelles. This allowed the host to increase their metabolic diversity and occupy new niches. Still, stably inheritable internal bacteria in nature are rare, their understanding limited and manipulation difficult. Artificial endosymbionts can be used as a modular tool to improve bioproduction and exploit the advantages of two fundamentally different organisms.

The generation of a synthetic intracellular symbiont aims at replaying nature by implanting a bacterium into a yeast cell. We tested different mutual dependencies based the exchange of essential vitamins, amino acids or antibiotic protection. This kept *S. cerevisiae* and *E. coli* in close physical association in co-culture experiments, but did not yet lead to an internal propagation of the bacterium.

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**619-SMP**

Development of new genetic engineering tools for *Methylobacterium extorquens*

* L. Pöschel1, E. Gehr1, P. Jordan1, M. Buchhaupt1

1 Dechema Forschungsinstitut, Industrielle Biotechnologie, Frankfurt a. M., Germany

The α-proteobacterium *Methylobacterium extorquens* is an extensively studied model organism for methylotrophy. It also serves as promising host for the biotechnological production of valuable compounds from C1 carbon sources. The development of efficient production strains usually requires several genetic modifications. The toolbox for genetic engineering of *M. extorquens* is limited. There are only a few promoters established and all plasmids used are based on the same vector system (pCM).

A compatible, stably maintained second plasmid system would allow to test combinations of multiple enzyme activities within a single strain rapidly. In order to find a plasmid that is compatible to the IncP-vector pCM, potential candidates were tested in *M. extorquens* for their functionality. Eventually, we could isolate a mutated version of the pBBR1-based broad host range vector pMIs. The respective plasmid pMIs1_1B contains a mutation within the promoter region of the rep gene. Although the transformation efficiency and growth rate of pMIs1_1B-transformants is decreased compared to pCM-transformants, it can be used for the
expression of heterologous genes. In subsequent experiments, pMis1_1B and pCM were successfully tested for compatibility. Surprisingly, reporter gene experiments indicate that expression levels of genes encoded on pMis1_1B are increased when pCM is present in the same strain.

Furthermore, we optimized the cumate inducible promoter system PQ2148, which showed a leaky repression in our experiments. After expressing a toxic operon under the control of the leaky promoter, we could isolate different suppressor mutants. We found a mutated promoter (PQ2148-s6), which showed a much tighter repression in reporter gene experiments. While the tunability is preserved, the maximum gene expression strength is decreased compared to the original promoter. Therefore, the system is suitable for the expression of cytotoxic genes.

In summary, we could expand the genetic toolbox for M. extorquens, namely by a tightly regulatable promoter and a secondary plasmid system. This gives new possibilities for designing efficient production strains for methylotrophic biotechnology.

621-SMP
Dissemination of iron-scavenging pyoverdine as a model for public good-based interspecies communication within microbial communities

*L. Kruse*, F. Hilgers1, O. Klaus1, V. Svensson1, K. E. Jaeger1,2, T. Drepper1
1Institute of Molecular Enzyme Technology, Heine-Heine-University Düsseldorf, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Jülich, Germany
2Institute of Bio- and Geosciences IBG-1, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Jülich, Germany

Microbial communities are complex life forms that can be found in almost any habitat. Based on their metabolic versatility, these consortia play a superior role in essential biological processes like detoxification, food production or pathogenesis. In microbial communities, interspecies communication can be conveyed by the exchange of so-called public goods - beneficial compounds synthesized by an individual species that can subsequently be shared among the entire microbial consortium. Based on the properties of public goods, such social interactions can strongly impact dynamics and behaviour of the entire microbial community. In order to gain deeper insights into public good-based communication processes, the exchange of iron-scavenging compounds was initially analysed as a model system in a synthetic consortium of *Pseudomonas putida* and *Rhodobacter capsulatus*. Previous investigations have shown that *P. putida* represents an ideal model organism as public good producer, because it secretes the fluorescent siderophore pyoverdine under iron depletion. Released pyoverdine can efficiently bind Fe3+ and subsequently be reimported. In contrast, bioinformatic analysis of the *R. capsulatus* genome sequence revealed the presence of three putative pyoverdine receptors genes, which might be involved in iron homeostasis1. Remarkably, no corresponding pyoverdine synthesis genes could be identified in the *R. capsulatus* genome making it an ideal public good receiver candidate. To initially analyse the potential role of pyoverdine for iron homeostasis of *R. capsulatus*, cell growth of the wild-type strain SB1003 was analysed under increasing iron limitation in comparison to the *P. putida* wild-type KT2440 and the pyoverdine mutant (Δpvd). As expected, iron deficiency resulted in a strong growth impairment of *R. capsulatus* and *P. putida* Δpvd. Remarkably, growth of *R. capsulatus* could be restored under these conditions by either adding cell-free pyoverdine-containing supernatant of *P. putida* wild-type cultures or in respective co-cultivation experiments. These findings indicate that pyoverdine can act as a public good in this synthetic microbial consortium.

1Zappa et al. 2013

622-SMP
Towards the Reconstitution of Cryptophycin Biosynthesis

*A. Tippelt1*, M. Nett1
1TU Dortmund, Department of Biochemical and Chemical Engineering - Technical Biology, Dortmund, Germany

Cyanobacteria are versatile producers of structurally diverse secondary metabolites with clinical potential as antitumor agents (1). However, the genetic manipulation of these microorganisms is challenging. Likewise, cultivation on an industrially relevant scale is rarely feasible. The reconstitution of biosynthetic pathways to cyanobacterial natural products in more amenable hosts, such as *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, is thus highly desirable.

In this project, we aim to generate a yeast strain for the production of cryptophycins, which are highly active, multidendrug-resistant antitumor agents from the cyanobacterium *Nostoc* sp. ATCC 53789 (2). For this, we refactored the cryptophycin pathway. The four core biosynthetic genes *crpa-D* were equipped with artificial expression control elements (3,4) and, subsequently, inserted into the genome of a yeast strain expressing a broad spectrum 4'-phosphopantetheinyl transferase. The chromosomal integration was achieved by CRISPR-Cas9 and by homologous recombination into LTR sites (5,6). Subsequent genetic analyses confirmed the successful reconstitution and transcription of the cryptophycin genes in the recombinant yeast.

Currently, procedural improvements are carried out to increase the cryptophycin production titer. Furthermore, a directed precursor feed is implemented, exploiting the substrate tolerance of the biosynthetic enzymes. The objective is to generate non-natural cryptophycins with improved pharmaceutical properties.


623-SMP
Redesigning hydrogenase: a semisynthetic [Mn]-hydrogenase

*G. Huang*, H. Pan1, M. D. Wodrich2, F. F. Tirani2, K. Ataka3, X. Hu3, S. Shima1

*G. Huang*, H. Pan1, M. D. Wodrich2, F. F. Tirani2, K. Ataka3, X. Hu3, S. Shima1

1TU Dortmund, Department of Biochemical and Chemical Engineering - Technical Biology, Dortmund, Germany

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Currently, procedural improvements are carried out to increase the cryptophycin production titer. Furthermore, a directed precursor feed is implemented, exploiting the substrate tolerance of the biosynthetic enzymes. The objective is to generate non-natural cryptophycins with improved pharmaceutical properties.

Hydrogenases, a group of metalloenzymes, catalyze H₂ production and utilization. In nature, only Ni and/or Fe are employed as the active-site metals for [NiFe]-, [FeFe]- and [Fe]-hydrogenase. However, many synthetic transition-metal mimics are able to catalyze H₂-activation. [Fe]-hydrogenase, mainly found in methanogenic archaea, reversibly catalyzes the hydride transfer from H₂ to an organic hydride acceptor, methenyl-tetrahydromethanopterin. The prosthetic group of [Fe]-hydrogenase is the iron-guanilylpyridinol (FeGP) cofactor, which contains mono-iron center playing a key role in H₂-activation [1,2]. Here, we report a semisynthetic [Mn]-hydrogenase, which is made of a redesigned model compound of the FeGP cofactor, in which Fe(II) was replaced by Mn(II) [3]. This semisynthetic [Mn]-hydrogenase performed heterolytic cleavage of H₂ and hydrogenation as native [Fe]-hydrogenase. Notably, this non-native [Mn]-hydrogenase showed higher catalytic activity than the semi-synthetic [Fe]-hydrogenase in the occupancy-normalized case [3,4]. This finding provides information that synthesis of a non-native metal hydrogenase with H₂-activation/generation functions is possible. Additionally, it opens a general question: why nature does not consider Mn as hydrogenase metal site?


624-SMP
Rhodobacter capsulatus as a phototrophic platform organism for the synthesis of plant terpenes


1 Institute of Molecular Enzyme Technology, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Jülich, Germany
2 Institute of Molecular Enzyme Technology, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf, Forschungszentrum Juelich, Juelich, Germany
3 Institute of Bio- and Geosciences IBG-1, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Jülich, Germany

Terpenes are a large class of natural compounds that can be used, for example, as fragrances, cosmetics or pharmaceuticals in different industrial and biomedical applications. Due to its phototrophic lifestyle, Rhodobacter capsulatus is a versatile host that can be used for the production of plant-derived terpenes. The formation of an intracytoplasmic membrane system as well as an efficient intrinsic tetraterpenic pathway are unique properties of this strain that are favorable for the synthesis and storage of these hydrophobic natural products. In addition, R. capsulatus can form polyhydroxybutyrate (PHB) granules under phototrophic conditions. These microbial intracellular inclusions gained biotechnological interest because they can be used as a matrix for in vivo immobilization of heterologous proteins.

Here, we present different strategies to engineer R. capsulatus as a phototrophic platform organism for the synthesis of sesquii-, di-, tri- and tetraterpenes. To analyze if gradually adjustable formation of the key precursor farnesylpyrophosphate (FPP) is beneficial for terpene synthesis under phototrophic conditions, the genes of the intrinsic 1-deoxy-d-xylulose 5-phosphate (DXP) pathway as well as the heterologous mevalonate (MVA) pathway were modularly co-expressed with the respective terpene synthase gene in various combinations. Notably, these comparative studies identified a distinct combination of precursor biosynthetic genes as best-performing setup for most of the tested terpene synthases. To analyze the effect of enzyme co-localization on terpenoid production we finally generated expression plasmids allowing the in vivo immobilization of proteins on the PHB surface in R. capsulatus. As proof of concept, we used the PHB synthase PhaC as an appropriated PHB anchor protein and the yellow fluorescent protein EYFP as target protein. The modular engineering approaches together with the PHB-mediated control of spatial arrangement developed in this study can further help to establish R. capsulatus as a phototrophic platform organism for the production and characterization of new plant-derived terpenes.

625-SMP
Whole-cell biosensors as effective, fast and low-cost tool in antibiotic research

D. Wolf", L. Friebel", D. Iliaieov", A. Walder"

1 Technische Universität Dresden, Chair of General Microbiology, Dresden, Germany

Considering the increase of multi-resistant bacterial pathogens to available antimicrobials, the necessity for novel antibiotic substances is becoming urgent. Genome mining, synthetic chemistry and re-focusing efforts to new groups of producing organisms has provided many new sources for antibiotics that need to be efficiently characterized for their mode of action. Whole-cell biosensors can be used as an effective tool to screen novel antimicrobial substances for their cellular target. Biosensors are microbial reporter strains that combine an antibiotic-responsive input module (the sensor) with an automatically quantifiable output module (the reporter) [1]. In our lab, we have developed a range of Escherichia coli and Bacillus subtilis biosensors that cover all major classes of antimicrobial targets in bacteria. Here, we present a selection of newly developed biosensors, which responds to antibiotics in a high and specific manner. The biosensor constructs generated each consists of the promoter of a gene that, based on gene expression analysis and transcriptome studies, showed an increased expression under antibiotic stress. The strength of the biosensors’ promoter was tested through induction by adding appropriate antibiotics, followed by measurement of luminescence using plate reader assays. We found that the promoter Phvr, Phvd, Pcsr and Pyufk from B. subtilis specifically respond to norfloxacin, rifampicin, erythromycin and penicillin, respectively. Furthermore, we successfully established E. coli biosensors containing Ppyr, or Prif as sensory unit for fluoroquinolones and tetracycline, respectively. Additionally, we also characterized these biosensors in more detail regarding their dynamics, specificity and strength. In summary, the presented biosensors enlarge our already existing panel of diverse biosensors to narrow down the cellular target of novel antibiotics in a fast and efficient way.

626-SMP
Converting a non-magnetotactic species of Magnetospirillum into a magnetosome-producer through a single-step transfer of biosynthetic magnetosome operons
*M. Dziuba*1,2, D. Schüller1
1University of Bayreuth, Microbiology, Bayreuth, Germany
2Research Center of Biotechnology RAS, Institute of Bioengineering, Moscow, Russian Federation

Magnetotactic bacteria (MTB) are known for their unique ability to synthesize complex membrane-enveloped magnetic organelles, magnetosomes, which they use for magnetic navigation. The best studied MTB belong to genus Magnetospirillum, which besides numerous magnetotactic strains also contains an increasing number of non-magnetotactic species lacking genes for magnetosome formation. Both types are abundant in aquatic sediments. Their close phylogenetic relationship raised the questions: (i) did the non-magnetotactic magnetospirilla lose magnetosome genes during evolution? (ii) Can they be (re)magnetized by transfer of magnetosome genes? Previously, this could be demonstrated only for a single species (Rhodospirillum rubrum), while failed in other tested Alphaproteobacteria. In this study we assessed the potential of non-magnetotactic Magnetospirillum spp. to synthesize magnetosomes upon acquisition of the corresponding genes from a related species. A compact vector harbouring the set of magnetosome operons (>30 genes) from Magnetospirillum gryphiswaldense MSR-1 was transferred in a single-step into three non-magnetotactic strains Magnetospirillum sp. 15-1, M. aberrantis SpK and M. bellicus VDY. While SpK and VDY could not be transformed due to the presence of a putative restriction-modification system(s), conjugative transfer of the vector induced magnetosome biosynthesis in the hitherto non-magnetotactic strain Magnetospirillum sp. 15-1. However, the magnetosomes produced by the obtained mutants were smaller and poorly organized within the cells that resulted in the lack of efficient magnetotaxis in weak magnetic fields (of µT range). This might be attributed to the lower expression levels of several magnetosome proteins in strain 15-1. In summary, our findings showed that at least one of the non-magnetotactic species of Magnetospirillum can be "magnetized" by the transfer of magnetosome genes from a magnetotactic strain MSR-1. We also demonstrate potential limitations in the natural ability of horizontally transferred magnetosome genes to execute their function in a new host, even if it is closely related.

628-SMP
Targeted metabolite recovery from synthetic microbial communities resembling anaerobic digesters
*C. Möslinger1, J. Dolinsek1
1Kompetenzzentrum Holz, Holzchemie und Biotechnologie, Linz, Austria

Introduction

Biorefineries aim to convert lignocellulosic biomass, the world's most abundant renewable resource, into valuable bulk chemicals. Microbes grow at mild conditions, thus biotechnology holds a promise to make biorefinery processes cheaper and more environmentally friendly. Anaerobic digesters are mature technology where diverse microbes convert lignocellulosic biomass into methane gas. Besides methane, a number of valuable compounds such as lactic acid are continuously produced in anaerobic digesters, but are also rapidly metabolized by microbes such as acetogens. While such rapid turnover prevents toxic metabolites to build up, it also prevents recovery of valuable chemicals.

Objectives

The aim of this work is to rationally create a synthetic microbial community that resembles communities in anaerobic digesters but is capable to efficiently convert lignocellulosic biomass into valuable compounds other than methane gas.

Materials & Methods

Spirochaeta thermophila can convert lignocellulose into D-lactate, H2, and acetate. D-lactate and acetate inhibit growth - their removal should improve further substrate turnover. Methanothermobacter thermaustreptophilum is an acetoclastic methanogen that converts acetate into CH4. M. thermaustreptophilum neither metabolizes S. thermophila's substrates, nor does it metabolize the desired products H2 and D-lactate. We expect that when combined, both microbes will convert lignocellulose into products D-lactate, H2, and CH4.

Results

S. thermophila rapidly acidifies its environment, and product inhibition prevents further glucose turnover. Models suggest that the interaction between both microbes becomes increasingly mutualistic as pH decreases and metabolites have begun to investigate the sphingofungins produced by Aspergillus fumigatus, which are SIs structurally related to fumonisins. Certain similarities of gene sequences and gene cluster composition to the fumonisin biosynthetic genes have led us to identify the biosynthetic gene cluster of sphingofungins, as well as to establish an overexpression mutant of the cluster for higher sphingofungin production. In combination with deletion mutants of all genes assigned to the biosynthetic cluster we are well on our way to characterize the biosynthesis of sphingofungins and its intermediates in A. fumigatus.

The analysis of genome databases has suggested that there are more than three hundred putative SI producing gene clusters in fungi. So we want to use our knowledge gained on the general aspects of SI biosynthesis to produce novel compounds by combining biosynthetic SI producing genes of different fungal organisms.

627-SMP
Biosynthesis of sphingofungins in human pathogenic fungus Aspergillus fumigatus
*A. U. Bisseg1, J. Rautschek1, J. E. Kuts1, D. J. Mattern1, S. Hoefgen1, Y. Huang1, A. A. Brakhage1, V. Valiante1
1Leibniz-Institut für Naturstoff-Forschung und Infektionsbiologie, Hans-Knöll-Institut, Biobricks mikrobieller Naturstoffsynthesen, Jena, Germany

Secondary metabolites produced by filamentous fungi are a vast and still not fully explored reservoir of biologically active molecules. While many obvious candidates have been extensively studied there are still many compounds left of which there is little known. Among these compounds is a class of molecules categorized as sphingolipid inhibitors (SIs). These inhibitors are considered promising candidates for new therapeutic approaches to intervene in the sphingolipid homeostasis, which is imbalanced in numerous human diseases such as diabetes and Alzheimer's disease.

While the biosynthesis of the SI fumonisins has been thoroughly studied in Fusarium, the overall knowledge on other SIs is still limited. To rectify this gap of knowledge we
lactate and acetate become increasingly toxic. M. thermoacetophilica removes acetate and thus allows S. thermophilia to grow at low pH where S. thermophilia cannot grow on its own.

Conclusion

We hope to build a community that converts lignocellulose into valuable products D-lactate, CH4 and H2. Such process could replace oil-based processes and contribute to CO2 reduction.

629-SMP

Small noncoding RNAs as a tool to modulate gene expression

Bacteria have been used to produce all kinds of compounds with industrial interest. However, their efficiency is compromised by their complex metabolism and low survival in the demanding industrial conditions.

Small noncoding RNAs (sRNAs) constitute functional RNA molecules, that are involved in cellular functions that go from ribosomal modification, participation in catalytic biochemical reactions to regulation at the transcriptional, post-transcriptional, translational and post-translational levels. These molecules appear to be promising regulatory agents which can be transferred between different bacterial species and designed to target expression of specific genes. Modulation of gene expression is an urgent need to redesign metabolism of industrial microorganisms.

Here we report the construction of a small RNA-based regulon system with potential to be used for different purposes in synthetic biology. Our model microorganism is Pseudomonas putida, a very stress-resistant bacterium and a good candidate to be exploited in the harsh conditions of industrial bioreactors. The customized sRNAs here developed were implemented as a tool to modulate the expression of endogenous (acrB and sdhB) and reporter genes (gfp and yfp). These customized sRNAs are composed by two parts: i) constant part composed by a scaffold structure that is responsible for the recruitment of the Hfq, facilitating the binding of the sRNA to the target; ii) flexible part composed by a sequence that is complementary to the chosen target mRNA. The novelty of our work resides in the duality of this plasmid expression system that not only can downregulate a chosen gene but also overexpress it. This can be accomplished by simply changing the region of the antisense interaction of the sRNA with the target mRNA transcript.

By plugging-in and -out genetic circuits, this tailor-made regulatory system can be used to redesign P. putida metabolism, fulfilling an important industrial gap.

630-SMP

The author has not agreed to a publication.

631-SMP

Tailored engineering of fungal nonribosomal peptide synthetases to obtain artificial cyclodepsipeptides

Nonribosomal peptide synthetases (NRPSs) represent promising engineering platforms for the design of structurally complex peptides of pharmacological importance. While previous studies focused on bacterial synthetases, fungal systems assembling drugs like the antibacterial cephalosporins, antifungal echinocandins or immunosuppressive cyclosporine still await in-depth exploitation. In the forefront of our studies, an effective engineering of fungal iterative cyclodepsipeptide (CDP) synthetases in particular has been severely hampered, as various mechanistic features of CDP biosynthesis were only poorly understood.

By combining protein truncation, in trans expression and combinatorial biosynthesis, we assigned important functional segments of fungal CDP synthetases. The gained mechanistic knowledge allowed for the design of a variety of in vivo functional artificial assembly lines comprising parts from up to three different NRPSs. By active CDP ring size control and the application of the Tet-on expression system in Aspergillus niger as a heterologous host, we obtained the new-to-nature CDPs octa-enniatin and octa-beauvericin, as well as high titers of hexa-bassianolide (g/L scale), which showed superior antiparasitic activity accompanied by cytotoxicity.

As an alternative NRPS engineering approach, we fused up to three CDP synthetases by harnessing their unique terminal C domain as canonical C domain. This induced a switch from an exclusively iterative to a mixed iterative/linear assembly mode, leading to various hybrid CDPs with altered symmetry. Based on a systematic comparison of three fungal NRPS exchange units (C-A-M-T, CCTD-A-Mt-T, A-Mt-T), we also demonstrate that fungal NRPSs of different assembly types can be combined using different swapping sites, while respecting the C domain integrity and specificity. Overall, our findings give distinct clues for efficient reprogramming of iterative and linear fungal NRPSs in future protein engineering approaches.

632-SMP

Rapid purification and characterization of recombinant proteins and antibodies: Capture high-capacity membranes

Recombinant protein production is immensely important in many research settings, including academic research institutions, biopharmaceutical organizations, and enzyme and agricultural industries. Fusion tags are widely used to improve yields and enable purification and characterization of protein structure and function. Polyhistidine tags, which incorporate 6–10 histidines at either terminus of the target proteins, are the most popular tag used for purification. The affinity of the histidines to immobilized metal ions such as Co2+ and Ni2+ is utilized to selectively bind the tagged construct to the matrix, while washing away unwanted materials, before eluting the target with low-pH or imidazole-
containing buffers. Typical purification methods using immobilized metal affinity chromatography (IMAC) columns take several hours to complete due to long column equilibration/binding times and slow diffusion of large macromolecules through the resin bed. The long times increase the risk of proteolytic degradation and activity loss due to unfolding or denaturation. Membrane-based affinity systems have rapid flow-induced mass transport and short residence times; however, they have been plagued with low capacity due to small internal surface areas. Here, we describe a novel, nylon-membrane-based IMAC system with chemically enhanced surface areas of the pores that allow protein binding capacities comparable to, or better than, resins at 75 mg or more per cm³ of membrane. Unlike traditional resin-based systems, the entire purification process—from loading the lysate to eluting pure protein—can be completed at room temperature in less than five minutes. We have assembled these membranes into spin columns and filtration devices and demonstrated their ability to purify histagged proteins produced in bacterial and mammalian cells. The millisecond residence time of the proteins on the membrane during binding minimizes the possibility of degradation. These membranes function perfectly in the presence of additives such as ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA), reducing agents such as dithiothreitol (DTT), and under denaturing conditions (in the presence of urea and guanidium hydrochloride). We have extended the high-capacity membrane technology to immobilize Protein A and G, enabling extremely fast purification of antibodies from various matrices based on the affinity of these proteins for the fragment crystallizable region (Fc) region of antibodies. Antibody purification can be accomplished in less than 15 minutes, with capacities of up to 40 mg/ml or more, far exceeding the capacity of resin-based columns. More recently, we have immobilized trypsin and pepsin enzymes on these membranes to carry out proteolysis of proteins for their characterization, identification, and quantitation through mass spectrometry analysis. In contrast to the long incubation periods (6–24 hours) of conventional in-solution digestions, the proteolytic membranes generate peptides suitable for downstream analysis, with equivalent or improved sequence coverage, in less than a minute. Additionally, we expanded the membrane technology with immobilized streptavidin suitable for enrichment of target proteins, antibodies, and oligos. These novel membrane-based spinnable affinity columns and filtration devices will be useful for purifying a variety of recombinant proteins and antibodies and their proteomics characterization in academic and industrial settings.

634-MEEP
Fast and universal metaproteome workflow for analysis of microbial communities
R. Heyer¹, K. Schallert¹, A. Büdel¹, R. Zoun⁶, A. Behn⁴, F. Kohrs¹, S. Pütker¹, C. Siewert¹, T. Muth⁶, G. Saake⁶, U. Reichl¹,5, *D. Benndorf¹,5
¹Otto von Guericke University, Bioprocess Engineering, Magdeburg, Germany
²Otto von Guericke University, Institute for Technical and Business Information Systems, Magdeburg, Germany
³University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, Bioinformatics Research Group, Hagenberg, Austria
⁴glyXera GmbH, Magdeburg, Germany
⁵Max Planck Institute for Dynamics of Complex Technical Systems, Bioprocess Engineering, Magdeburg, Germany
⁶Robert Koch Institute, Department for Methods Development and Research Infrastructure, Bioinformatics Unit, Berlin, Germany

Question
Metaproteomics provides valuable insight into structure and function of microbial communities in the human body, in natural habitats, and in technical systems. Its application as a diagnostic tool in medicine and biotechnology, however, is still hampered by labor and time-consuming experimental workflows and by extremely high computational efforts for bioinformatic data analysis. To tackle these issues, a metaproteomics workflow was established that includes a high-throughput and standardized sample preparation, up-to-date mass spectrometry and fast bioinformatic algorithms, and overcomes limitations of previous solutions.

Methods
A combination of phenol extraction and FASP digestion of extracted proteins allowed the preparation of samples from human faeces, soils, wastewater treatment plants and biogas plants in less than 13 h for a single sample, limited only by the LC-MS/MS run time. We developed a new version of the MetaProteomeAnalyzer for qualitative and quantitative analysis of taxonomic and functional data. The software is provided to the scientific community as a central remote server solution (www.mpa.ovgu.de).

Results
The improved workflow generated at least two times as many protein identifications than the previous workflow, and a drastic increase of taxonomic and functional annotations. Technical replicates of samples showed high reproducibility (more than 90% identical metaproteins, Pearson coefficients higher than 0.9), whereas different types of samples were clearly separated (less than 70% identical metaproteins, Pearson coefficients lower than 0.7).

Conclusion
Improved sample preparation and bioinformatic analysis provided taxonomic and functional data of microbial communities in less than 24 hours demonstrating the potential to compete with metagenomic or

633-MEEP
Unicellular Labyrinthulomycetes Protists are a key Component of Heterotrophic Microbes in the Coastal Oceans
N. Xie¹, M. Bai¹, L. Liu¹, *. G. Wang¹
¹Tianjin University, Environmental Science & Ecology, Tianjin, China

Heterotrophic microbes play a key role in remineralizing organic matters and secondary production in the coastal oceans. While there is a significant body of literature examining of bacterial and phytoplankton communities, much less is known about the diversity, dynamics and ecology of eukaryotic heterotrophs. Labyrinthulomycetes are unicellular fungus-like protists with the ubiquitous presence in the oceans, but whose ecology is poorly understood. Our recent studies indicate that the biomass of this group of protistan microbes can exceed that of the bacterioplankton in coastal waters. Like bacterioplankton, their community is dominated by a few prevalent taxa with summer or winter preferences. However, the majority of phyotypes occurs mostly as reoccurring, season-specific blooms as previously described for planktonic fungi. Clearly, niche partitioning in responding to environmental variables commonly occurs among closely-related Labyrinthulomycetes protists. Their distinct temporal and spatial distributions in the coastal waters compared to bacterioplankton and planktonic fungi suggest the dynamic relationship among these heterotrophic microbial groups and their significant contributions to the total rates of carbon and nutrient cycling in the coastal oceans.
Changes in nutrient levels and ratios are recognized as one of the major components of global change in freshwater ecosystems. Revealing the impact of nutrient load and altered elemental ratios in the nutrient supply on freshwater bacterial communities is of paramount importance to further our understanding of contemporary and future freshwater ecosystems. Using microcosm experiments established with freshwater microbial communities we investigated the impacts of elevated nitrogen concentration on microbial diversity and community composition on the DNA (i.e. total community) and the RNA level (i.e. potentially active community) by sequencing and T-RFLP fingerprinting. In addition, we assessed bacterial community function with community level physiological profiling. In order to infer the impact of nutrient ratio, we applied nitrogen elevation with or without a phosphorus supply. We found that different community measures showed distinct responses. While bacterial diversity was only affected by nutrient ratio, community composition and function were both sensitive to nutrient ratio and levels of nutrient elevation, as well as their interactive effects. Correlation between function and community composition were dependent on the nutrient ratios and the community of interest (i.e. potentially active or total community). Overall, our study stresses the importance of further considering the impact of nutrient imbalances on microbial communities, since they might cause serious alterations of freshwater ecosystem functioning under global change.

Driven by advances in technology and need (e.g. identifying toxigenic and non-toxigenic genotypes) microbial observations are evolving to become increasingly resolved (micro-diversity). These high-resolution observations (e.g. genotypes) are challenging the traditional model of phytoplankton species succession because they frequently show great sequence diversity indicating potential co-blooming.

We hypothesize that co-blooming types (species, strains, genotypes, etc.), occupying similar ecological niches, are evolutionarily more related, and thus genetically closer than those showing succession. We test this hypothesis using a meta-analysis of plankton datasets. Specifically, we analyze marine and freshwater datasets and correlate fitness difference to genetic distance.

To quantify fitness differences, a selection coefficient (average population growth rate similarity) is calculated for all pairs of types within each dataset. Our measure can be applied to absolute and relative data and relative abundance.

Genetic distance is quantified using 16S rRNA average nucleotide distances (16S ANDs). For closely related types we base the distance on the 16S rRNA internally transcribed spacer (ITS) region and convert it to 16S AND. Conversion factors were obtained by creating libraries of species that allowed for calculation of 16S AND as well as 16S ITS AND. To allow for comparison of eukaryotes and prokaryotes, rubisco subunit RbcL protein sequences or plastid 16S rRNA gene sequences were used and similarly converted.

Application of the method to several marine and freshwater datasets revealed a weak but consistently positive correlation between genetic distance and fitness differences. On a larger scale, these results could contribute to improved models that may address basic principles of diversity, ecology and evolution.
Limnic cyanobacterial populations can be signatures of past and recent environmental change and have been reconstructed from lake sediments since the begin of industrialization. What remains unknown is in how far sedimentary cyanobacterial DNA of centennial abundance. This cyanobacterial ps in Lake Tiefer See and - mong the core genomes of - p llow strains of oral origin to adapt to the gut p r an accessory secretion system e.g., multiple and linear icoplankton community of the water column were generally community observation in the water column were generally similar to those reconstructed from a sediment core spanning the last 350 years from Lake Tiefer See, where ampiclon single variants (ASVs) assigned to Anabaena and Dolichospermum. Other filamentous cyanobacteria like Phormidium and picoplankton cyanobacteria were also observed, however, in low abundance. This cyanobacterial community observation in the water column were generally similar to those reconstructed from a sediment core spanning the last 350 years from Lake Tiefer See, where ampiclon single variants (ASVs) assigned to unicellular picoplankton Cyanobium and Aphanizomenon belonging to the ADA clade (Anabaena, Dolichospermum, and Aphanizomenon) were equally the most dominant picoplankton and filamentous cyanobacteria, respectively. Further analyses of the 16S rRNA gene cyanobacterial community of the water column are still in progress.

Our study is the first to quantify seasonal and spatial changes of cyanobacteria in Lake Tiefer See and contributes to a better understanding of current and past environmental changes of this lake.

639-MEEP
Comparative genomics reveal insights into genomic plasticity and habitat adaptation of Streptococcus parasanguinis

Introduction: Streptococcus parasanguinis is a commensal that colonizes the oral cavity, but also commonly found in the gastrointestinal tract (stomach and small intestine) of healthy adults. However, the mechanisms underlying within-host adaptation of S. parasanguinis to different habitats remain unstudied.

Objectives: We aimed to elucidate the population structure of S. parasanguinis and to determine the evolutionary pathways that allow strains of oral origin to adapt to the gut environment.

Materials & methods: We performed a comparative genomic analysis on 44 S. parasanguinis genomes that were collected from various body sites and 8 different countries. Most of the genomes (n = 42) were retrieved from public database, while the remaining two genomes were in-house collected from two habitats of the same patient and sequenced.

Results: We detected 14,446 single-nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) and a high level of recombination events among the core genomes of S. parasanguinis. Intestinal S. parasanguinis genomes harboured intact prophages that were phylogenetically distinct from their oral counterparts. Furthermore, a large genomic element (63 genes) that encodes for the anaerobic cobalamin/vitamin B12 synthase was detected mainly in S. parasanguinis genomes of intestinal and clinical origin suggesting adaptation to the anaerobic condition including the gastrointestinal tract. Another genomic fragment composes of 16 genes that encode for an accessory secretion system (aSEC) found in nine S. parasanguinis genomes forming a distinct phylogenetic clade.

Conclusion: Our results revealed a high level of recombination among S. parasanguinis genomes suggesting frequent horizontal gene transfer. Mobile genetic elements have played an important role in the adaptation of S. parasanguinis to the intestinal habitat. Taken together, our findings emphasize the high degree of genomic plasticity of S. parasanguinis that might reflect special evolutionary processes enabling for adaptation to different ecosystems.

640-MEEP
The recovery of metagenome-assembled genomes is influenced by sample evenness.

How do community diversity (e.g., species abundance, taxonomic relatedness) and sequencing depth impact the recovery of metagenome assembled genomes (MAGs) from complex microbial communities?

To answer this question we selected 12 phyla (9 Bacterial, 2 Archaeal and 1 Fungal) three times (three sets of richness). For each phylum, we selected 2 organisms of the same genus and one from a different family. Also, we introduced special genomic configuration (e.g., multiple and linear chromosomes). Forty two species were selected for each richness (126 in total), from which all genomes have been sequenced. Next, we simulated 23 metagenomes in silico varying evenness profiles and number of HiSeq Illumina reads for each richness set (69 in total) using MetaSim. We selected three supervised pipelines (two automated and one semi-automated) to recover MAGs from all simulated metagenomes (completeness and contamination were evaluated by CheckM).

We recovered over 5500 MAGs from the 69 in silico communities using the three recovery pipelines per in silico metagenome. Communities composed of taxonomically distinct species showed a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) increase in the number of recovered bins when compared to communities composed of taxonomically related species. A statistically significant increase ($p < 0.05$) in the number of MAGs was only obtained when comparing sequencing depths of 10 versus 120 and 10 versus 180 million reads. Communities composed of taxonomically distinct species also showed a statistically significant increase ($p < 0.05$) in genome completeness when compared to communities composed of taxonomically related microbes.
This study shows that the highest number of recovered genomes occurs when species present different relative abundances and they are not taxonomically related. This is because current tools are unable to distinguish between species with similar taxonomies (genus level) at comparable abundance levels. Further, increasing the sequencing depth over 60 million reads does not significantly improve genome recovery for the tested evenness distributions.

**641-MEEP**

Coupling cell sorting and metagenomics allows the recovery of genomes from low abundance species. N. Abdulkadir, J. Pedro Saraiva, F. Schattenberg, S. Müller, U. Nunes da Rocha

Flow cytometry has advantages over sequencing techniques by providing quantitative information about cell numbers which can further be used to define sub-communities. However, this technique does not provide information on function and phylogeny is usually assessed by 16S rRNA sequencing. Metagenomics is a standard technique used to study microbial community’s composition and functional potential. The complexity and high diversity found in most ecosystems allow only the study of the dominant species through metagenomics. For example, in highly diverse environments only a few dozen species can be recovered as metagenome assembled genomes (MAGs) per sample.

We hypothesize it is possible to recover genomes from less abundant microbial species by recovering MAGs from different sub-community separated via flow cytometry. To test this hypothesis, we sorted a wastewater microbial community in dominant (DP), rare (PR) and outer gates (O) while the unsorted (U) community was used as a control. Next, DNA extraction and sequencing was performed on cells from the different sub-communities and the control. Metagenomes were sequenced (150 bp paired-end Illumina reads, minimum 20 million reads per library) and MAGs were recovered using the MetaWRAP workflow.

A total of 13 taxonomic classifications were obtained from all sub-communities (11 up to species level 1 to family level and 1 to genus level) from 26 recovered MAGs. Escherichia coli and Sphingobacterium sp. were present in all groups. Acinetobacter gerneri was only present in the outer gates and Elizabethkingia miricola was only found in rare gates. Comamonas terrigena and Empedobacter brevis was found in both the outer and rare gates. The remaining taxa were only found in the unsorted sub-communities. Our results support the hypothesis that separating sub-communities using cell sorting can improve the recovery of MAGs from low abundant microbial species.

**642-MEEP**

Link between metabolically active soil microbiome and soil functions and their response to climate change in a grassland ecosystem

S. Wahdan, W. Purahong, F. Buscot

Microbial communities in soil play a key role in maintaining ecosystem functions by catalyzing many processes such as organic matter breakdown and mineralization and climate regulation. Linking diversity of microbes to their contribution to soil functions has been boosted by bar code studies using next-generation sequencing but remains challenging as it requires distinguishing metabolically active microbes within the ecosystems. In the present study, we used pair-end Illumina sequencing combined with bromodeoxyuridine (BrdU) immunocapture technique to characterize total and metabolically active bacteria and fungi in the rhizosphere soil of Trifolium pratense (red clover). To assess the functional capacity of the rhizosphere microbial community, we measured the activity of three microbial extracellular enzymes (β-glucopyranosidase, N-acetyl-β-glucosaminidase and phosphatase), which play a central role in the C, N and P acquisitions in soil ecosystem. The study was conducted on the Global Change Experimental Facility (GCEF) that simulates a scenario of future climate change based on several models of climate change in Central Germany for the years between 2070 and 2100. We estimated that 42.8% of bacteria and 32.1% of fungi in soil are metabolically active. We also found that active bacterial richness significantly positively correlates with β-glucosidase activity and with N-acetyl-glucosaminidase activity (P < 0.05) while active fungal richness significantly positively correlates with phosphatase activity (P < 0.05). On the other hand, total microbial richness had no significant correlation (P > 0.05) with any enzyme activities. We emphasis on considering the active microbiome to study the relationship between biodiversity-ecosystem functioning.

**643-MEEP**

Characterization of 2-phenanthroate-CoA ligase

I. Kapleva-Dudek, R. U. Meckenstock

Introduction: In anaerobic degradation of aromatic hydrocarbons, the formation of the corresponding CoA thioester at the carboxyl group is crucial for the further degradation pathway. It is known that CoA ligases are oxygen insensitive and require ATP to bind CoA to the carboxylic group. However, little is known about the CoA ligases involved in the thioesterification of PAHs, especially the one present in the novel sulfate-reducing enrichment culture TRIP, which can convert 2-phenanthrene carboxylic acid to 2-phenanthroyl-CoA.

Objectives: In this work, an attempt is made to investigate the 2-phenanthroate-CoA ligase from TRIP culture. The aim is to characterize substrate specificity, the effect of other nucleotides and cations on the activity. Moreover, three genes encoding putative phenanthroate-CoA ligase from TRIP1 are planned to be heterologously expressed in E.coli and proofed in their activity. Materials & Methods: For enzymatic assays, crude cell extract of TRIP culture is used with 2-phenanthrene carboxylic acid as control substrate and MOPS/KOH (100 mM, pH 7.3) with 15 mM MgCl2 as standard buffer. To characterize substrate specificity several other aromatic hydrocarbon acid are tested. Furthermore, various cations instead of Mg2+ as well as other nucleotides instead of ATP are added into the standard enzyme assay.

Results: 2-phenanthroate-CoA ligase is able to convert not only 2-phenanthroic acid to its corresponding CoA thioester, but also some other aromatic hydrocarbon acid. However, the enzyme activity was lower compared to the control substrate. The use of nucleotides other than ATP as well as cations other than Mg2+ affects the ligase activity.

Conclusion: 2-phenanthroate-CoA ligase is not substrate specific and shows similarities in their activity to already known CoA ligases.
Methanotrophs rarely live in seclusion, and may select for specific interacting partners, forming a methanotroph interactome. The methanotroph interactome that comprises of methanotrophs and non-methanotrophs, is thought to modulate methane oxidation and give rise to emergent properties beneficial for the methanotrophs. Therefore, the interactome may become relevant for community functioning under stress. Here, we determined the response of a methane-driven (incubation under ~2%v/v methane) interactome to a step-wise increase in NH4Cl-induced stress (0.5 to 4.75 g N L-1, in 0.25 – 0.5 g N L-1 increments) using soil microcosm incubations. Incubations, without supplemental ammonium served as reference. Although ammonium and intermediates of ammonium oxidation are known to inhibit methane oxidation, methanotrophic activity was unexpectedly detected even in incubations supplemented with high ammonium levels, albeit rates were significantly reduced. Both the 16S rRNA and pmoA (structural gene encoding for the methane monoxygenase) gene sequence analyses revealed divergent communities in the reference and stressed incubations. The 16S rRNA-based co-occurrence network analysis performed to explore potential interactions within the methanotroph interactome, revealed a more complex and modular community structure in the reference incubation, likely driven by more stable and predictable interactions when compared to the stressed community. Interestingly, the non-methanotrophs formed the key nodes, and appear to become more important with intensified stress. Extrapolating to a wider context, stress intensification unravels the interaction network, with adverse consequences for community functioning.

Desiccation - re-wetting is a recurring phenomenon in rice paddies exerting an impact on the soil microbial community. Rice paddy soils are drained bi-annually during rice harvest and re-flooded with the start of the new planting season. Since rice paddy soils contribute substantially to global methane emission, it is relevant to determine the methane-oxidizing microbial community (i.e., both the methane-oxidizing bacteria, MOB, as well as other microorganisms associated to the MOB) and their resilience/resistance to desiccation - re-wetting. It is known that MOB form a close network with their interacting partners but it is barely understood how these react in response to desiccation. To relate key microorganisms to community functioning, a stable-isotope probing (SIP) experiment was performed using a rice paddy soil to determine the impact of desiccation - re-wetting on the active methane-oxidizing community. Methane oxidation was monitored, using gas chromatography (GC), while the methanotrophic community abundance was followed via group specific qPCR assays targeting the MOB subgroups type Ia, Ib and II. DNA-based SIP was coupled to MiSeq sequence analysis to determine the change in the active methane-oxidizing community after desiccation - re-wetting. The disturbance adversely affected methane uptake rates only in the short term. Thereafter the trend in methane uptake was generally comparable in the un-disturbed and disturbed incubations. A dominance of type I over type II MOB was observed during the incubation, showing community resilience to the disturbance. The abundance of the more oligotrophic type II MOB increased after desiccation in the later stages of incubation, when nutrients became limiting. A shift in the active microbial community composition was detected after desiccation indicated by a change in the abundance of the community members, and resulting in a less diverse but more connected network. Altogether, our results showed that MOB are resilient to single desiccation events given sufficient recovery periods, even though their associated microbial community may change.

Transcription factors (TF) are proteins controlling the rate of transcription of genetic information, regulating cellular gene expression. A better understanding of TF in a microbial community context will open revenues for exploring gene regulation in ecosystems where microbes are key players. To the best of our knowledge, no platform supports prediction and classification of putative bacterial TF from ”omics data recovered from microbial communities. This study describes the development of PredicTF, a tool to predict TF and their families from ”omics data.

First, we collected publicly available data on TF. Initially, we chose to collect data from CollecTF; a bacterial TF database containing 390 experimentally validated TF distributed over 44 TF families. Later, we retrieved TF sequences directly from Uniprot for bacterial TF Reviewed (Swiss-Prot) and manually annotated. The TF sequences were merged generating a robust TF database with 11,961 TF sequences. This database was used to train a deep learning model to predict new TF and their families from ”omics data. Based on our TF database, PredicTF was able to identify 35.40%, 27.23%, 51.19% 60.53% and 38.04% of the known accuracy of PredicTF.

We will further evaluate PredicTF using a two steps approach. First, we will test PredicTF with 8 bacterial species isolated from environmental samples from which
genomes and transcriptomes are available. After, we will determine the efficiency of PredictTF in complex microbial communities from forest soils from which metagenomes and metatranscriptomes have been sequenced.

This approach will provide the first look at TF distribution and it opens the potential to evaluate regulatory networks in complex microbial communities.

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648-MEEP
Phytoplankton traits shift along gradients in species-specific ways

*P. Hofmann, A. Chatzinotas, S. W. Harpole, S. Dunker
1Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Environmental Microbiology - UMB, Leipzig, Germany
2Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ, Department of Physiological Diversity - PhyDiv, Leipzig, Germany
3Deutsches Zentrum für integrative Biodiversitätsforschung – iDiv, Leipzig, Germany
4Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Halle, Germany

Question

How do traits of phytoplankton strains differ along gradients of temperature and resource supply ratio?

Methods

Short-term experiments inoculated with six phytoplankton strains, including three green algae and three cyanobacteria in a climate cabinet. The microcosms were exposed to constant light conditions at different temperature levels (15 - 30°C) and nitrogen : phosphorus ratios (5:1, 20:1, 35:1, 80:1) for two weeks. Growth was measured daily with a plate reader, while single-cell traits (cell volume and chlorophyll a fluorescence) were monitored an image-based flow cytometer.

Results

Overall, Temperature was affecting trait shifts more strongly than resource supply ratio, although these shifts in cell volume and chlorophyll a fluorescence were not unidirectional for all strains and traits did not respond uniformly to the environmental gradients.

For the selected strains, shifts in traits along these gradients were not shared according to the phylogenetic relationships, but rather specific to each species. Furthermore the shifts in single cell volume distributions depending on the environmental conditions carry implications for associated functions, such as sinking rate, surface area to volume ratio and likelihood of predation and by extension survival of individuals.

Conclusions

Cellular volume and chlorophyll a fluorescence both shifted according to temperature and resource supply ratio. Species responded differently to these gradients and their responses was not mirrored by their phylogenetic relationships. Insight into trait shifts related to the environment could potentially improve understanding of patterns within phytoplankton communities within and across years as well as in response to future conditions.

649-MEEP
Diversity of anaerobic methanotrophic communities in deep sediments of Lake Baikal

*A. Lomakina, T. Pogodaeva, O. Shubenkova, V. Ivanov, I. Khažlov, T. Zemskaya
1Limnological Institute, Irkutsk, Russian Federation

Lake Baikal is the world's only freshwater reservoir where gas hydrates (GH) are found, and it describes more than 50 geological structures that differ in the composition of the discharged fluids (Khlystov et al., 2018, 2019). Process of AOM in deep sediments of Lake Baikal was revealed by radioisotope techniques, with the maximum that was usually close to the GH layers, as well as by the methane profile (Zemskaya et al., 2008, 2010). Methane concentrations in the sediments at the investigated sites increase with depth, reaching the maximum values, and the obtained profiles of methane distribution curves are similar to those in the AOM zones of other freshwater ecosystems (Schubert et al., 2011; Weber et al., 2017). It is known that electron acceptors at AOM can be not only sulfate ions (concentrations which in deep sediments of Lake Baikal ranged from 5.2 μM to 15000 μM), but also oxidized forms of Fe and Mn, as well as nitrate and nitrite ions. In deep sediments of Lake Baikal dominated reduced forms of Fe (up to 100 μM), and nitrate and nitrite ion concentrations did not exceed 9.6 μM. We have shown that in sediments of the discharge areas, located in the South and Central of Lake Baikal, members of nitrate and nitrite-dependent AOM (archaea ANME-2d and bacteria NC10) (Lomakina et al., 2018a) have been detected by molecular biology methods. Using methods of fluorescent in situ hybridization of anaerobic methanotrophic microorganisms were detected in the enrichment cultures from bottom sediments of a mud volcano Peschanka and the Krasnyi Yar seepage area. In the enrichment cultures under anaerobic cultivation, methane content in the gas phase decreased, and microbial consortia were established (Lomakina et al., 2018b). The presence of genes of AOM (mcrA of ANME-2d subcluster и pmoA of phylum NC10) was established in the enrichment cultures from bottom sediments of the Krasnyi Yar seepage area.

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652-MEEP
Linking the leaf microbiome to leaf metabolite landscape

*M. Murillo-Roas, H. S. M. Abdullah, N. Ueberschaar, M. Agler
1Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Plant Microbiome Lab - Department of Microbiology, Jena, Germany
2Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Mass Spectrometry Platform, Jena, Germany

Introduction:

In recent years there has been an increasing interest to study how the phyllosphere microbiome assembles. Understanding how this occurs in the inter-cellular space of the leaf (e.g. the apoplast), would provide major insights on plant-microbe interactions. This environment is truly dynamic; the fluctuation of nutrients and a large array of defense molecules, suggests it is a challenging niche for microbial colonization, where microbe-microbe interactions may play an important role. Currently, characterizing...
microbial activity in the plant requires huge technical replication to overcome host signals, making it practically impossible in realistic scenarios.

**Objective:**

We aim to develop a method to simultaneously obtain a snapshot of host physiology and microbial diversity in the apoplast, allowing researchers to better understand the dynamics of plant-microbe interactions under natural conditions.

**Materials and methods:**

We tested an infiltration-centrifugation technique to recover apoplastic fluid (AFW) from leaves of five diverse plant species. AFW from single leaves were then split, with one fraction utilized for untargeted metabolomics and the other for studying diversity or functions of associated microbiota. We optimized buffers and conditions to eliminate cytoplasm leakage in problematic leaves of Flaveria. The efficiency of recovery of microbial diversity in the AFW fractions vs. in whole leaves is being tested using amplicon sequencing.

**Results and outlook:**

Infiltration using sodium phosphate buffer (100 mM, pH 6.5), followed by centrifugation at 2500 x g for three minutes allowed the recovery of approximately 0.14 g AFW/ g fresh leaf for Flaveria robusta. This approach appears to be applicable to most plant species we tested since cytoplasm-specific metabolites were not detected. We observed species-specific amino acid profiles in the different plants, which we hypothesize are relevant for microbial nutrition. Additionally, PCR of 16S rRNA genes in AFW show clear bacterial signals with low host DNA contamination. Thus, we are now able to assess microbial diversity and activity simultaneously with host physiology.

**653-MEEP**

Red Queens in and below the Goldilocks zone

R. Jerdan1, A. Spiers2

1Abertay University, School of Applied Sciences, Dundee, United Kingdom

Many Pseudomonas spp. are able to form air-liquid (A-L) interface biofilms in static liquid microcosms, and the eco-evolutionary dynamics of the model P. fluorescens SBW25 system are well-understood. In particular, adaptive lineages such as the Wrinkly Spreader gain a fitness advantage through accessing the high-O2 region of the microcosm, known as the Goldilocks zone, by biofilm-formation. Just like the Red Queen, Wrinkly Spreaders are constantly competing for O2 and further adaptation can occur within the biofilm itself. We have begun to extend our understanding of biofilm-formation to community-based biofilms using soil-wash inocula dominated by biofilm-competent pseudomonads. Communities were subject to serial transfers with different selection regimes including incubation conditions, sample type and transfer times, and community growth, biofilm strength and attachment levels were assessed for each transfer and for randomly-chosen isolates recovered from the initial and final-transfer communities. Although the communities under selection did not produce increasingly-strong biofilms dominated by a few “super-biofilm” strains as expected, a significant loss of diversity was observed, and a phenotypic shift occurred between the initial and final selected communities, demonstrating that these communities were in fact subject to selection. Substantial growth was also observed under the biofilms, and tests of communities and isolates suggests that substantial productivity could occur in the low-O2 region of these microcosms as well as in the Goldilocks zone. It is possible that biofilm-competent strains might avoid competition at the A-L interface by choosing a less competitive niche lower down the liquid column in a biochemical trade-off in which lower growth rates resulting from O2-limitation are balanced by the cost of biofilm-formation which would have been required at the A-L interface.

**654-MEEP**

Microbial colonization of plants at different developmental stages leads to diverse plant phenotypes and survival rates.

T. Mayer1, P. Baumann1, M. Reichelt2, J. Gershenzon2, M. Agler1

1Friedrich-Schiller Universität Jena, Microbiology, Jena, Germany
2Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology, Biochemistry, Jena, Germany

**Introduction**

Variation is omnipresent in nature and plays an important role in evolution. Plants of the same genotype usually show various phenotypes, including different susceptibility to microbial pathogens, but the role plant-associated microorganisms play in generating variation is still unclear. These microbes interact with each other and the plant in complex networks which underlying mechanisms as well as their impact on other species we poorly understand.

**Objective**

We aim to find out how plant-associated microbial community assembly affects variation by interrupting the natural colonization process in different plant populations from a small geographical scale to reveal population-specific differences and local adaptations of the plants microbiota.

**Material & Methods**

We collected wild Arabidopsis thaliana populations in Jena, Germany and characterized their diversity using length polymorphisms of three microsatellite loci, a flowering time assay and analysis of leaf aliphatic glucosinolate profiles. We isolated bacteria from two of these populations using traditional culture techniques and a new in-planta isolation approach. In addition, we performed time-series experiments disturbing the natural colonization.

**Results**

We identified four wild A.thaliana populations with very low intra- and high inter-population plant heterogeneity and differential culturable microbial diversity. In-planta enrichment of microbes suggests that a minority of leaf-associated bacterial taxa can colonize these plants. Wild plants treated with a common inoculum at different developmental stages had lower survival rates and supposedly higher size variation by similar average size then uninoculated plants. In addition, survivors were more resistant to biotic stress. This effect was not found in the A.thaliana ecotype Col-0.

**Conclusions**

We hypothesize that amongst other things variation is caused by stochastic early colonization depending on the genotype and the environment. Hereby, the first colonizers
influence survival and phenotypic variation of their host as well as the establishment of the microbial community by microbe-plant and microbe-microbe interactions.

655-MEEP
Cross feeding among plant endophytic bacteria and its role in plant resilience to pathogens
1A. T. Odejide1, H. S. M. Abdullah1, M. Murillo-Roo1, N. Uhberschaar2, M. Agler1
1Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Plant Microbiology Lab - Department of Microbiology, Jena, Germany
2Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Mass Spectrometry Platform, Jena, Germany

Introduction:

Microbial communities play important roles in the health of plants. However, recent evidence has shown leaf-endophytic bacteria reprogram their metabolism upon entering the leaf and alter the chemical landscape to thrive, suggesting it is a difficult niche to colonize. Metabolic cross-feeding may enable auxotrophic microbes to survive in such an environment. Upon a pathogen infection, new niches are created, possibly altering the abundance of these microbes. We are interested in understanding whether this is relevant for the fitness of the plant.

Objective:

We aim to understand whether the survival of endophytic auxotrophs, through cross-feeding, plays a role in resilience of plants to pathogens.

Materials and methods:

We enriched and isolated phyllosphere bacteria from Flaveria trinerva and F. robusta and tested their carbon consuming strategies. We then checked if their growth was enhanced by cross-feeding with other microbes. By untargeted metabolomics, we characterized the amino acid profile in the apoplast of healthy plants. To test the relevance of these interactions on the fitness of the plant, synthetic communities of endophyte microbes, isolated from healthy and diseased leaves, will be confronted to a fungal pathogen in planta.

Results and outlook:

We found that the isolated bacteria have different carbon-metabolizing strategies and that cross-feeding favours their survival in minimal media. We also discovered higher microbial load in diseased leaves, than in healthy samples. Differences in the amino acid profile of the apoplast from these two species suggest microbe-microbe interactions and their relevance in plant may be influenced by the availability of nutrients in the environment.

656-MEEP
The author has not agreed to a publication.

657-MEEP
Evolution and transmission analysis of a MDR M. tuberculosis endemic genotype in Bulgaria by whole genome sequencing
1S. Panaiotov4, V. Tolchkov1, Y. Atanasova1, A. Baykova1, S. Yordanova1, E. Bachlyiska
1National Center of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, Department of Microbiology, Sofia, Bulgaria

Introduction

An outbreak of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis was detected in Bulgaria in 2008 when spoligotyping and MIRU-VNTR genotyping was introduced. Molecular typing confirmed strong association between MDR and SIT41 (TUR) MTB sublineage. The MDR TB cases of SIT41 genotype in Bulgaria are >40%. The drug sensitive MTB strains of SIT41 genotype represented only 2%. SIT41 genotype is considered as a marker for MDR tuberculosis in Bulgaria. SIT41 (TUR) is endemic M. tuberculosis genotype for Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania and Turkey. The Bulgarian MIRU-VNTR profile of SIT41 (TUR) MDR M. tuberculosis strains is specific.

Objectives

Our study intended to apply whole genome sequencing typing analysis to reconstruct the transmission dynamics of a MDR endemic in Bulgaria at higher resolution than 24 MIRU-VNTR analysis and to identify mutations associated with phenotypic drug resistance.

Materials and Methods

In total, 150 MDR/XDR TB strains of SIT41 (TUR) have been characterized by spoligotyping and 24 loci MIRU-VNTR analysis. These represent about 75% coverage of the MDR/XDR TB cases of SIT41 (TUR) in the country for the period 2007-2018. Whole genome sequencing was applied for sequencing analysis of 48 SIT41 strains.

Results

MIRU-VNTR analysis identified three clusters including 17, 26 and 67 strains. Five other clusters include between 3 and 9 strains. The largest cluster’s MIRU-VNTR profile 244124132134425113333b32 was identified all over the country, suggesting a common ancestor. This genotype was not found in other countries. MIRU-VNTR analysis showed that SIT41 strains from Bulgaria differ from those from Albania, Greece, Serbia and Turkey. Epidemiological links were difficult to establish based on patients interview. Whole genome sequencing typing of 48 SIT41 strains demonstrated allelic differences between 1 and 54 alleles. Several clustered strains with identical WGS profile were identified. Identified SNP mutations with Xpert MTB/RIF assay responsible for MDR were confirmed by WGS analysis.

Conclusions

The endemic SIT41 MIRU-VNTR MDR genotype, spreading in Bulgaria, was not found in other countries, suggesting local evolution. Contact tracing analysis could not explain how patients living at a distance of >350 km have identical MIRU-VNTR and WGS profiles.

Applying WGS we hope to date the start of this ongoing MDR endemy, to identify true transmissions across the country. The clonal expansion of SIT41 among the MDR-TB patients in Bulgaria remains to be further analyzed.

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Trypanosoma brucei is a eukaryotic, protist, pathogen with a parasitic lifestyle. It causes sleeping sickness in humans and nagana in cattle in Sub-Saharan Africa. The parasite proliferates into two main forms, the procyclic form, when in the vector (tsetse fly) and the bloodstream form, when in the host. To avoid detection by the host's immune system, the parasite undergoes antigenic variation by switching its variant surface glycoprotein (VSG), which forms a coat on the cell surface. Only one VSG gene of a repertoire of thousands of different genes is expressed at the time. VSGs are expressed in one of about 20 sub-telomeric expression sites and flanked by conserved VSG specific sequences. Recent in vivo data showed that trypanosomes expressing short VSG genes mainly appear in an early infectious stage, whereas trypanosomes expressing long VSG genes appear in late infection. This suggests that cells expressing short VSGs might grow faster than cells expressing long VSGs. To test this hypothesis the growth rate of cells expressing different VSGs is assessed in vitro. For that, trypanosomes, where the Streptococcus pyogenes CRISPR/Cas9 nuclelease was integrated, were used to transfect a guide RNA upstream of the active VSG. By adding tetracycline the inducible Cas9 nuclease was expressed and a double strand break was created which led to switching to other VSGs due to the DNA repair mechanism. Cells expressing different VSGs were isolated by sub-cloning a mixed culture and used to analyse their growth by establishing growth curves and in mixing experiments. Furthermore, the VSG proteins of cells expressing three different VSGs (VSG-2, VSG-3 and VSG-6) were extracted and their oligosaccharides removed to analyse the glycosylation state. Cells expressing the short VSG-2 (1431 bp) outgrow other VSGs in a mixed culture. However, cells expressing the long VSG-6 (1590 bp) outgrow the shorter VSG-3 (1530 bp) in a mixing experiment. The glycosylation state of these three VSGs shows little difference. To analyse the growth of a high range of switched cells a mixed culture will be used to extract and sequence VSG RNA over time.

658-EPP
VSG length dependent growth rate in Trypanosoma brucei
*V. Scheidt, D. Horn
1University of Dundee, Department of Biological Chemistry an Drug Discovery, Dundee, United Kingdom

Results: In total, 2875 soil samples were analyzed between 2016 and 2018. We observed a high degree of variation in the abundance of A. fumigatus across sites, however, fields with high A. fumigatus density tended to be consistently so from year to year. Strikingly, we observed a significant reduction in the abundance of A. fumigatus on conventional fields followingazole treatment – a finding that was not repeated on an organic agriculture control field – indicating that the application of azoles is imposing a bottleneck on A. fumigatus. The overall resistance frequency among agricultural isolates was low, with only 1-3% of isolates from 2016-2018 showing resistance. Importantly, isolates from after the growing season and azole exposure showed a subtle, but consistent reduction in susceptibility to medical and agricultural azoles.

At the genome level, isolates from different regions and time periods did not cluster separately, indicating a lack of population structure. Comparison of environmental isolates with clinical isolates revealed several subgroups present in the environment that were not represented among clinical samples. Resistant environmental isolates were exclusively either wild type at the cyp51a1 loci or carried the TR4/S4B6 allele, while clinical isolates showed a much wider range of cyp51a1 mutations. Ongoing work is focused on defining fungal determinants enriched in human infection, as well as genetic changes associated with azole resistance.

660-EPP
Is Miconazole and Ciclopixol olamine an alternative treatment for Terbinafine-resistant Trichophyton mentagrophytes ITS genotype VIII?
1Laboratory for Medical Microbiology, Partnership Prof. P. Nenoff & Dr. C. Krüger, Rötha OT Mölibis, Germany
2Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois, Dermatology Service, Lausanne, Switzerland
3SYNLAB Eesti OÜ, Tallinn, Estonia
4Nirvan and “In Skin” Clinics, Vadodara, India
5Preah Kossamak Hospital, Dermatology Clinic Mey Sithach, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
6University Medical Centre, Department of Dermatology, Freiburg, Germany
7Charité University Medical Centre, Department of Dermatology, Berlin, Germany
8Dermatology practice Schongau, Schongau, Germany
9Dermatology FMH, Medical practice Reinalcherhof, Reineich, Switzerland
10Dermatology practice Gebhardt, Zwickau, Germany
11Dermatology practice Hradetzky/Krusche, Leipzig, Germany
12Dermatology practice Hofmann, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Although resistance of dermatophytes against antifungals has been of minor importance for many years, the situation changed completely: primarily Trichophyton (T.) mentagrophytes ITS genotype VIII (Indian variant) was shown to cause chronic recalcitrant dermatophytosis associated with failing topical and oral terbinafine (TRB) treatment and in-vitro TRB resistance. The aim of this study was to analyze the susceptibility of TRB-resistant and -sensitive T. mentagrophytes VIII to miconazole (MI) and ciclopixol olamine (CIC). Results were compared to antifungal susceptibilities of T. mentagrophytes VII (Thai variant) and T. rubrum.

In total, 12 T. mentagrophytes VII strains from Iraq, Finland, Cambodia and Germany, 21 T. mentagrophytes VII from Germany and two T. rubrum from Pakistan and Switzerland were included in this study. These clinically isolated strains were identified by culture, PCR-ELISA and ITS sequencing. TRB resistance was defined by growth on TRB-containing
agaro and squalene epoxidase gene mutation. MIC values of MI and CIC were determined on agar.

Out of all tested T. mentagrophytes VIII strains 83.3%(10) were TRB-resistant, but only 16.7%(2) were TRB-sensitive. In contrast, no TRB resistance was detected in T. mentagrophytes VII and T. rubrum. While MICs of CIC were unexceptionally 8 µg/ml, MICs of MI differed between the tested Trichophyton genotypes and species: T. mentagrophytes VIII showed the lowest (<0.05-0.1 µg/ml) and T. mentagrophytes VII the highest (0.4 µg/ml) MIC value. In between, there was the MIC value (0.2 µg/ml) of T. rubrum.

As recently described by Nenoff et al.,(2019), a six-month-old female patient from Bahrain suffering from an extensive dermatophytosis caused by a TRB-resistant T. mentagrophytes VIII strain was successfully treated with topical MI and CIC. In this study, we show for the first time that T. mentagrophytes VIII strains are highly susceptible to MI in vitro, even higher than T. mentagrophytes VII and T. rubrum. As TRB resistance and the geographical origin of the patient did most likely not influence the susceptibility to MI and CIC, we suggest both antifungals as an efficient topical alternative treatment.

661-EPP

Using in vitro and ex vivo models to unravel Candida auris infection strategies

S. Allert1, D. Schulz1, P. Kämmer1, P. Großmann2, T. Wolf2, S. Brunke1, B. Hube1

1Hans-Knoell-Institute, Microbial Pathogenicity Mechanisms, Jena, Germany
2Hans-Knoell-Institute, Systems Biology and Bioinformatics, Jena, Germany

Candida species are a major cause of invasive fungal infections, with Candida albicans, C. glabrata, C. parapsilosis, and C. tropicalis being the clinically most relevant ones. Recently, C. auris emerged as a new species affecting humans in various regions of the world, causing invasive infections with high rates of clinical treatment failures and problems with nosocomial transmission.

As the pathogenicity mechanisms of C. auris are largely unknown, we analyzed a set of C. auris strains from different clades during interaction with host cells and in vitro under conditions mimicking the host or environmental situation. Although the different strains were variable in drug resistance, aggregation and other in vitro growth phenotypes, the overall behavior in our infection models was similar. C. auris strains did not cause severe damage of epithelial cells, in contrast to C. albicans. Human macrophages rapidly phagocytose C. auris cells and respond by distinct cytokine secretion. However, C. auris can survive inside of macrophages and shows intracellular replication comparable to C. glabrata. To mimic the initial phase of systemic Candida infections with dissemination via the bloodstream, we used an ex vivo whole blood infection model. Similar to C. albicans and C. glabrata, C. auris is efficiently killed in human blood and shows a species-specific pattern in immune cell association, survival rate and induction of cytokines. Dual transcriptional profiling of C. albicans, C. parapsilosis, C. tropicalis or C. glabrata and blood cells during infection indicates discrete survival strategies of all four fungal species, while the transcriptional host response is rather uniform. Follow-up RNA-sequencing analysis of C. auris-infected blood has given first insights. For instance, in line with the observations for the other four Candida species, the human response to C. auris in blood is governed by an upregulation of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines. Further analysis of the transcriptional profiling data will help us to place C. auris within the pathogenic landscape of Candida species.

662-EPP

Gut microbiota-mediated colonization resistance against Candida albicans

*W. Krüger1, S. Vieleicher2, R. Santhanam2, M. Stock2, M. J. Niemiec1, I. D. Jacobsen1

1Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology, Microbial Immunology, Jena, Germany
2Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology, Systems Biology and Bioinformatics, Jena, Germany

The human gut provides a niche for various microbes, including fungi. The fungus Candida albicans is commonly found on mucosal surfaces of healthy individuals, but can also cause superficial to disseminated infections. Microbial dysbiosis can increase fungal proliferation and lead to mucosal and systemic candidiasis. Over the past decades, incidence with C. albicans has increased in intensive care units. Understanding which intestinal microbes control this commensal might contribute to prevention of the disease.

The aim of this project is to examine the influence of the intestinal microbiota composition on C. albicans colonization and to study the impact on the host immune response.

Genetically identical mice were analyzed for differences in their fecal microbes by microbiome analysis and colonized with C. albicans. To investigate the effect of several bacterial groups, different antibiotic treatments were implemented prior to C. albicans inoculation. Changes in bacterial burden were measured by CFUs at several time points during the experiment. Flow cytometry was used to investigate effects on immune cells in the spleen and Peyer’s patches.

Analysis revealed variations in fungal and bacterial composition in genetically identical mice from different breeders, while they showed similar C. albicans colonization rates 14 days after inoculation. In contradiction to the general assumption that adult laboratory mice are naturally resistant to C. albicans colonization (Koh, 2013; Prieto et al., 2014), we detected up to 1 × 106 CFUs/g in fecal samples and intestinal organs in the absence of antibiotic treatment. However, depletion of intestinal bacteria by antibiotics enhanced colonization in all mice. Additionally, organs of untreated mice of different colonies varied in their immune composition and showed differential immune reactions to C. albicans colonization and bacterial depletion.

Thus, despite variation in the microbial composition, and in contrast to previous reports by others, genetically identical mice could be colonized with C. albicans at comparable rates, with antibiotic-induced dysbiosis increasing colonization levels.

663-EPP

The peroxiredoxin Asp f3 is crucial for redox balance, sensing of reactive oxygen species and virulence in Aspergillus fumigatus

J. M. Boysen1,2, N. Saeed1,2, E. Shekhova1,2, T. Wolf1, G. Panagiotou1, O. Kniemeyer1, F. Hillmann1

1Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology - Hans Knöll Institute, Evolution of Microbial Interactions, Jena, Germany
2Friedrich-Schiller-University, Jena, Germany

*J. M. Boysen1,2, N. Saeed1,2, E. Shekhova1,2, T. Wolf1, G. Panagiotou1, O. Kniemeyer1, F. Hillmann1

1Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology - Hans Knöll Institute, Evolution of Microbial Interactions, Jena, Germany
2Friedrich-Schiller-University, Jena, Germany
Aspergillus fumigatus is a filamentous ascomycete of saprophytic lifestyle which is also known as an opportunistic pathogen. The highest risk to develop A. fumigatus derived infections, ranging from allergic reactions to often fatal invasive aspergillosis, lies with immunocompromised patients suffering from conditions such as leukemia, organ or stem cell transplantation, HIV or chronic granulomatous disease. How A. fumigatus adapts its metabolic needs to the host environment of the lungs is a central question in its infection biology. We have previously identified the major allergen Asp f3 to act as a functional 2-Cystein-peroxiredoxin that plays an essential role for invasive growth in a mouse model for aspergillosis, demonstrating that the fungus depends on a functional redox homeostasis during growth in the host. The deletion mutant of asp f3 grows wildtype-like unless challenged with ROS. The hypersensitivity to ROS was found to be strictly dependent on both conserved cysteine residues of the protein. To elucidate the role of Asp f3 in the redox homeostasis of the fungus during ROS exposure, we took a redox proteomics approach to compare the global proteins oxidation state in the wild type and the Δasp f3 strain following hydrogen peroxide treatment. Thus we gained insight into the targets of ROS associated damage and could identify proteins with proposed extracellular functions in protein folding as well as central metabolic enzymes to be stronger oxidized in Δasp f3. We also established an in vivo assay, which allows specific exposure to external pulses of superoxide (O2•−); the primary product of the NADPH oxidase in cells of the innate immunity, to monitor the transcriptional changes in A. fumigatus confronted with ROS. RNASeq analysis revealed identical transcription for unchallenged wildtype and Δasp f3. However, in the presence of external ROS the mutant displayed a deregulation of the fungal oxidative stress response, leading to a number of differentially expressed genes which are for example part of oxidation-reduction processes, transmembrane transport or gliotoxin biosynthesis.

Currently, we are following up on local plant responses to infection using plant and fungal reporter lines. 2. Establishing the fungus as a model organism comparable to U. maydis. This included cultivation, genetic manipulation, and sequencing the genome. Notably, in contrast to the dimorphic smut fungi, T. thlaspeos growth exclusively in a filamentous form, but still has a typical smut genome with the conserved a and b mating locus (2). 3. Characterization of protein and RNA virulence factors to identify conserved and specific virulence factors. Interestingly, the effector repertoire differs from grass smut fungi, and our Thecaphora-specific top candidate effector links infection to plant cold acclimation. Here, I will report on our latest findings on the interaction between T. thlaspeos with its host plants in this novel model pathosystem.


665-EPP
Functional Analysis of the Candida albicans ECE1 promoter
1R. Martin1, 2, O. Kurzai1, 3, 2
1University of Würzburg, Institute for Hygiene and Microbiology, Würzburg, Germany
2Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology-Hans Knoell Institute- National Reference Center for Invasive Fungal Infections, Jena, Germany
3Leibniz Institute for Natural Product Research and Infection Biology-Hans Knoell Institute-, Research Group Fungal Septomics, Jena, Germany

Introduction
ECE1 is normally the most abundant transcript in C. albicans hyphae, but barely detectable in yeast cells. It was recently shown that the eEc1 protein is processed into different peptides which are secreted from the hyphae into the environment. One of these peptides, Candidalysin, is cytolytic and contributes to damage of host cell membranes. Therefore, a better understanding of the regulation of this gene will help to better understand fungal virulence.

Objectives
The aims of this study were to identify the TATA box required for the transcription of the gene, to determine the length of the actual ECE1 promoter and to examine if different hyphal growth stimulators can induce alternative routes of transcription.

Material and Methods
To address the objectives of the study, we used RNAseq data and RACE PCR to identify the 5’ untranslated region (UTR) of ECE1. In a next step, we performed site-directed mutagenesis in a construct where GFP is under control of the ECE1 promoter to perform a functional analysis of putative TATA boxes. To determine the length of the promoter, truncated versions of it were fused to GFP and ectopically integrated into the C. albicans NEUT5L locus.
Consequently, the resulting mutants were screened for GFP signal intensities after the induction of hyphal growth.

Results

The size of the 5'UTR was always 50bp, independent from the stimulus used to trigger hyphal growth. In accordance, a TATA box which is 109bp upstream of the start codon was identified as the one required for the start of transcription. The GFP screening with truncated versions of the 5' intergenic region showed that the minimum size of the promoter was between 1000 and 1500bp.

Conclusions

Within this study we identified the TATA box required for the transcription of ECE1 and determined the length of the promoter. Our results show that a region 1000-1500bp upstream of the ECE1 start codon is required for the expression of the gene. This active region contains putative binding sites for several transcription factors, indicating that an intense regulation controls the transcription of ECE1 in the different morphologies of C. albicans.

666-EPP
Analysis of the intestinal mycobiome composition in a non-alcoholic fatty liver disease patient cohort

Introduction

The prevalence of the emerging non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is estimated to be around 25-35% in Europe. NAFLD pathogenesis is characterized by excessive accumulation of fat in hepatocytes, constituting a non-alcoholic fatty liver (NAFL) in early disease stages, which could develop to non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) in advanced disease stages. As the liver is closely connected to the gut via portal vein blood supply, it is exposed to high fat diet-related implications like intestinal microbiome composition shifts. It has been shown before that, in advanced NAFLD stages the bacterial composition of the intestinal microbiome significantly changes in comparison to early disease stages and controls. However, less is known about the intestinal mycobiome in NAFLD pathogenesis.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to elucidate the role that intestinal fungi have in the pathogenesis of NAFLD by characterizing the gut mycobiota in NAFLD patients, using microbial DNA initially isolated and utilized for intestinal bacteriome composition analysis.

Materials and Methods

For analysis of the intestinal mycobiome diversity in NAFLD pathogenesis, stool samples from 23 NAFLD, 14 NAL and 18 NASH patients as well as 27 healthy controls were collected. Microbial genomic DNA was extracted from the stool samples and used for ITS1 sequencing.

Results

ITS1 sequencing of microbial DNA samples, which were initially isolated and used for intestinal bacteriome analysis, proved successful as a wide variety of about 160 fungal species, including various Candida and Aspergillus species and Malassezia, were identified. We are currently analyzing the intestinal mycobiome diversity in the NAFLD disease stages in comparison to the controls.

Conclusion

Due to the observed variety of intestinal fungi and their influence on host organism physiology, changes in the intestinal mycobiome composition of NAFLD patients compared to the controls might be detectable. As also bacteriome data are available for the NAFLD patient cohort, future work will include the correlation between mycobiome and bacteriome data and investigation of possible interaction mechanisms.

667-EPP
Cross-resistance between fluconazole and macrophages mediated by mitochondria function in C. glabrata

Candida glabrata has become the second most common cause of candidemia, largely due to its ability to rapidly acquire antifungal resistances. It is more closely related to the baker’s yeastSaccharomyces cerevisiae than to other pathogenic Candida species, and seems to have evolved different infection strategies. While comparing its genome to closely related, nonpathogenic yeasts, we found markers of positive selection in the sequence of the gene CgMIP1, whose ortholog in S. cerevisiae codes for a mitochondrial polymerase. We investigated whether these markers are traces of C. glabrata’s selection in the host toward pathogenicity.

A deletion mutant of CgMIP1 is petite, lacking mitochondrial function like its S. cerevisiae counterpart. Like the baker’s yeast mutant, it also is highly fluconazole resistant, in agreement with a concomitant upregulation of efflux pumps. However, unlike the S. cerevisiae mutant, C. glabrata mip1Δ is resistant to many endoplasmic reticulum stressors, and, importantly, survives uptake by human macrophages significantly better than the wild type.

The petite phenotype can be triggered by passage through macrophages, as well as by continuous exposure to fluconazole. This indicates that macrophage exposure can trigger antifungal resistance — and vice versa, with important implications for treatment of C. glabrata infections. Importantly, we found petite phenotypes in clinical isolates which likewise better resisted both macrophages and azoles. We are currently investigating the contribution of CgMIP1 in these resistances, but are confident that mitochondrial function connects these two clinically relevant phenotypes.
**668-EPP**

The castrating fungus *Microbotryum*: A parasitic genus to understand the evolution of host-specific parasitism

1 S. Klenner, L. Engelhardt, N. Hassel, I. Teichert, D. Begerow
2 Ruhr-University Bochum, Department of Geobotany, Bochum, Germany
3 Ruhr-University Bochum, Allgemeine und Molekulare Botanik, Bochum, Germany

**Question:** Biotrophic fungi are characterized by intimate interactions with highly specific hosts and often cause devastating plant diseases. Biotrophic interaction necessitates an adapted set of genes to manipulate the host plant and complete the fungal life cycle. The genus *Microbotryum* comprises species of closely related fungal parasites infecting specific host plants. *Microbotryum* has a diphasic life cycle consisting of a haploid, saprotrophic sporidial stage and a dikaryotic biotrophic hyphal stage in planta, which interferes with flower formation of the host.

**Methods:** Bioinformatical analyses of putative host-manipulating effectors were performed to assess subcellular localization in planta and provide candidate genes for host-specific interaction. Therefore, we established an efficient transformation protocol to electrotransfer linear and circular DNA resulting in stable *Microbotryum* transformants to assess gene function.

**Results:** Transformation experiments show initial incubation at low temperatures is crucial for cell regeneration and formation of resistant colonies. Our results indicate that false positive rate of transformants is minimized by electroporation at 0.5 kV yielding up to 2.5 x 10³ transformants. Putative effectors were detected *in silico* and predicted to be localized in the chloroplast, plant nucleus as well as the apoplast.

**Conclusions:** Lacking efficient genetic tools to assess the role of these putative effectors, we further aim to establish a modular molecular toolbox utilizing the Golden Gate cloning strategy and our established transformation protocol. Using *BsaI* we designed specific restriction and re-ligation sites for each module and each library in our toolbox. This library includes different classes of donor plasmids, which corresponds to multiple research issues like heterologous gene expression and fluorophore tagging. In addition, it enables us to express RNAi and CRISPR/Cas9 constructs in *Microbotryum* to assess gene function.

In summary, we present two versatile and time-saving tools, which allow access not only to a single parasitic fungus, but to an entire parasitic genus to understand the evolution of host specificity.

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**670-FMP**

Effect of pulsed light treatment on *Salmonella* Typhimurium and *Yersinia enterocolitica* reduction on pork skin and loin and influence on sensory properties

1 C. Wiacek, F. Koch, P. G. Braun
2 Leipzig University, Institute of Food Hygiene, Leipzig, Germany

Salmonellosis and Yersiniosis are well-known human foodborne illnesses. Both are closely associated to the consumption of raw pork meat and products thereof. Despite high hygiene standards in slaughterhouses the safety of such products cannot be ensured, which is the reason that additional decontamination measures should be taken into account. Non-thermal decontamination technologies, e.g. pulsed light (PL), are increasingly gaining interest. Particularly in the area of minimally processed foods they can improve microbial safety. The aim of the investigations presented was to examine the bactericidal effect of PL on both bacteria on food matrices, the role of light spectra and the influence on product quality.

Typhimurium (S.T.) or Y. enterocolitica (Y.e.) inoculated pork loin and skin were PL-treated with a variety of different fluences and wavelength spectra by using treatment distance/time variations and bandpass and long pass filters to eliminate individual wavelength ranges.

PL treatments with the full light spectrum (200-1200 nm) resulted in significant reductions of S.T. (3.0 log) and Y.e. (3.2 log) within a few seconds. However, the sensory properties of the pork loin and skin were altered. Experiments with pork skin and various filters indicate none respectively slight reductions (0.3 log) with PL in the VIS and IR spectrum as well as in the UV-A fraction. With the addition of UV-B, reductions of 2.2 log (S.T.) and 3.0 log (Y.e.) were measurable. This means that even without UV-C, held responsible for the germicidal effect but also odor deviation, significant reductions can be achieved on pork skin. The sensory evaluation verified that previously frequently mentioned attributes “chemical” and “pungent” were used less frequently and in a more moderate manner in samples without UV-C. The perceived deviations were described as less unpleasant.

As a contact and residue free, fast and water-saving technology PL might be an interesting alternative technology for meat industry. Nonetheless, beside bactericidal effect also resulting product quality has to be taken into account because changes in odor could be an exclusion criterion for the application.

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**671-FMP**

Plasma treated water generated by microwave-induced plasma (MidiPLexc) leads to antimicrobial effects on *Listeria monocytogenes* biofilms

1 O. Handorf, U. Schnabel, V. P. Bauer, T. Weihe, C. Weit, K. Riedel, J. Ehlebeck
2 Leibniz Institute for Plasmascience and Technology, Plasmabioengineering, Greifswald, Germany
3 Environmental Sustainability and Health Institute, Food Safety and Microbiology, Dublin, Ireland
4 Institute of Microbiology, Microbial Physiology and Molecular Biology, Greifswald, Germany

Plasma generated compounds (PGC’s) such as plasma processed air (PPA) or plasma treated water (PTW) offer an increasingly important alternative for the treatment of microorganisms in hard-to-reach industrial applications such as those found in the food industry. Therefore, the antimicrobial effect of water treated with microwave induced plasma (MidiPLexc) on *Listeria monocytogenes* (ATCC 1513) biofilms was investigated. 10 ml deionized water was treated with the MidiPLexc plasma source (Fig. 1) for 100 s, 300 s and 900 s (pre-treatment time) and the bacterial biofilm was subsequently exposed to the PTW for 1 min, 3 min and 5 min (post-treatment time) for each treatment time. The effects of these treatments were analysed using microbial methods (CFU, fluorescence and XTT assay) and imaging techniques (fluorescence microscopy, confocal laser scanning microscopy (CLSM), atomic force microscopy (AFM)). The CFU showed a maximum reduction factor (RF) of 4.7 (300 s; 5 min), a maximum reduction in vitality of 69.5% (900 s; 5 min) (fluorescence assay) and a maximum reduction in cell metabolism of 47.9% (900 s; 5 min) (XTT assay). Fluorescence microscopy shows an increasing antimicrobial effect on biofilms with increasing pre- and post-
This study shows that the commercial medium is only partially suitable for the detection of CPE with low resistances. Usage of the medium beyond the expiry date or of a homemade may increase the sensitivity of the method.

673-FMP
Detection and characterization of the mobile colistin resistance gene mcr-4.3 in Acinetobacter baumannii recovered from wastewater treatment plants in Germany
M. Savin1, M. Parcina1, J. Kreyenschmidt1, A. Käsbohrer1,2, J. A. Hammari1
1University of Bonn, Faculty of Agriculture, Institute of Animal Sciences, Bonn, Germany
2German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany

Questions: Antibiotics of the last resort are important for the treatment of multidrug-resistant bacteria in humans. Lately, polymyxins retained further attention as more and more mobile colistin resistance genes were identified conferring resistances against colistin in Gram-negative bacteria. Currently, epidemiological data indicated that mcr-1 is the most prevalent colistin resistance-determinant worldwide. However, reliable data on the impact of the individual mcr-genes are lacking.

Methods: Within the HyReKa-project, ESBL-producing bacteria from process water of different stages within a poultry slaughterhouse in Germany were isolated by selective cultivation. Bacteria of the ESKAPE-group were further subjected to antimicrobial resistance-typing using the microbroth dilution method with Micronaut-S MDR MRGN-screening system.

Results: During this screening, an A. baumannii from process water of poultry eviscerators exhibiting a non-wildtype phenotype against ceftotaxime, chloramphenicol, fosfomycin, colistin and intermediate sensitivity against temocillin was detected. Colistin gene-typing revealed the presence of the mcr-4.3 gene variant. PFGE using bacteria of this A. baumannii isolate indicated that mcr-4.3 is located on a 30 kb plasmid. Whole genome-sequencing indicated that the mcr-4.3 carrying plasmid exhibits significant similarities to the previously reported A. baumannii plasmid. However, both plasmids differ in some regions of their plasmid genomes. In vitro plasmid transmission studies provide no evidence that this plasmid was transmissible to E. coli either by transformation nor conjugation. Furthermore, up to now we are unable to determine an intraspecies transfer of the mcr-4.3 plasmid in A. baumannii.

Conclusions: Our study indicates that A. baumannii might also be a common recipient of mcr-carrying plasmids or involved in its dissemination. As A. baumannii are pathogens of high clinical importance, the acquisition of resistance determinants against last resort antibiotics forces an antimicrobial crisis that was predicted for the future without applying strict global management strategies in antibiotic usage.

674-FMP
Evaluation of the toxicity of pyrithione based Ionic Liquids
*B. Bromberger1, J. Sommer2, C. Robben2, C. Trautner2, R. Kalb3, P. Rossmanith1, P. J. Mester2
1University of Veterinary Medicine, Institute for Veterinary Public Health, Vienna, Austria
2Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung, Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany
3Institute for Veterinary Public Health, University of Veterinary Medicine, Wien, Austria

Figure 1: schematic illustration of the MidiPLexc. schematic illustration of the MidiPLexc with 1 l glass bottle attached to the bottle adapter of the plasma source.
Introduction:

Over the last decades the development of new disinfection strategies gained more importance. One substance, which is already used as a potent antimicrobial is Pyrithione (2-Mercaptopyridine N-oxide) a derivate of the naturally occurring asperglic acid. Pyrithione salts (mostly zinc and sodium) are widely used in shampoos, adhesives or coatings mainly functioning as bacteriostatic, fungistatic or algistatic.

Objectives: Even if Pyrithione is already used as an antimicrobial in different fields of application, the question comes up if its effect can be strengthened or physically modified when incorporated into an ionic liquid to open the application for new areas.

Material & Methods:

In this study, 20 ionic liquids (ILs) with different cationic head groups and Pyrithione as anion were tested on three different biological test systems. Therefore the minimal inhibitory concentrations (MIC) of the Pyrithione-ILs were tested to determine the effects on 17 bacteria and two fungi (yeasts). Additional the virucidal concentrations on four different corresponding virus surrogates as well as the enzyme inhibition potential via qPCR assay was tested. Beside the liquid-based test systems we conducted an agar disk diffusion test.

Results & Discussion:

The MIC test implies that the antimicrobial effect of the pyrithione based ILs on bacteria is similarly to the pure substance. However some ILs, especially those with a long cationic side chain, had increased antimicrobial activity. Concerning the virucidal concentration short cationic side chains have almost no effect, while an increasing sine chain length lead to elevated toxicity until a typical "cut-off" effect was present. On the enzymatic level similar effects could be observed, though MIC values differed based due to the sensitivity of this test method.

Conclusion:

Overall we established ILs with pyrithione anions without losing the antimicrobial property of pyrithione. Additionally these ILs can be modified by changing properties like solubility or physical appearance.

675-FMP
Microbial reduction in domestic dishwashers
1B. Brands1, S. Schulze Struchtrup2, R. Stamminger2, D. Bockmühl2
1Hochschule Rhein-Waal, Faculty of Life Sciences, Kleve, Germany
2Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Institut für Landtechnik, Sektion Haushaltstechnik, Bonn, Germany

Introduction: Dishwashers efficiently remove soil, bacteria and food particles, but microbial communities have been found [1, 2]. No infections via dishwashers have been detected until now. Hygiene measures like high temperature cycles reduce the microbial count in the sump of dishwashers [4]. In Europe, there are no standards to address the hygiene in household dishwashers, whereas in the US, NSF/ANSI 184-2019, states requirements for appliances to be certified as sanitizing.

Objectives: Aim of this study is to develop a method that is able to determine the microbial reduction of different dishwasher cleaning cycles and differentiate between different program parameters.

Methods: Stainless steel biomonitors are contaminated with Micrococcus luteus or Enterococcus faecium embedded in a soil matrix (bovine serum albumin, mucin, corn starch). The logarithmic reduction (LR) on the biomonitors in different dishwashing cycles is determined.

Results: The factors cleaning cycle duration, cleaning temperature and the detergent type used all have influence on the microbial reduction. With higher cleaning temperatures, the LR increases independent of the detergent type. Longer cleaning cycles and use of detergent increase the LR. Higher final rinsing temperatures give higher LRs.

Conclusion: The method is able to determine differences in the tested parameters duration, temperature and use of detergent. Both test strains show similar responses, so M. luteus can be used as test strain in future. The method can help in finding the necessary balance between energy saving and an acceptable level of hygiene so that no dangers arise by ever stricter eco-label regulations.


676-FMP
Antimicrobial effect of cold atmospheric plasma on stainless steel cutting tool surfaces
*T. Albert*, A. J. Dittrich1, A. Lehmann1, T. Arnold1, P. G. Braun1
1University of Leipzig, Institute of Food Hygiene, Leipzig, Germany

Cutting tools can highly contribute to bacterial recontamination of food surfaces during slicing processes. The introduction of spoilage or pathogenic microorganisms can result in significant reduction of product shelf life or in potential health risks for consumer. Therefore, high hygienic standards are required including effective and sustainable decontamination technologies.

In this context the objective of this study was to investigate the suitability of cold atmospheric plasma jet (APJ) treatment for the decontamination of cutting tool surfaces.

For this purpose surfaces of laboratory-scaled stainless steel coupons (Ø 20 mm) were artificially contaminated with stationary phase cultures of Listeria (L) monocytogenes, Serratia (S) liquefaciens and Lactobacillus (L) sakei. By this, three strains of each species were separately exposed to a microwave-excited APJ for up to three minutes. The inactivation rate was estimated depending on different contamination levels (3-4 log; 6-7 log units/surface) as well
as on two different plasma gas mixtures (feeding gas: argon or helium).

In summary, a significant reduction of bacterial counts could be achieved for all tested isolates, but differences in sensitivity were observed between the various bacteria and even between the different strains of each tested species. A more marked reduction was obvious when testing the lower contamination level and using helium in the gas mixture. By this, the mean reduction rates after three minutes of exposure achieved for S. liquefaciens, L. monocytogenes and Lactobacillus sakei were 2.9 log, 3.1 log and 1.7 log, respectively.

The results demonstrate the suitability of APJ treatment to significantly reduce various bacteria on cutting tool surfaces. In order to implement this technology in future food processing more research is needed to improve the inactivation efficiency.

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677-FMP
Addition of essential oil components in food to reduce food spoilage moulds and yeasts

*L. Nißl¹, F. Westhäusser¹, M. Noll¹
¹Coburg University of Applied Sciences, Institute for Bioanalysis, Coburg, Germany

Food safety is important to reduce food spoilage microorganisms and foodborne pathogens. However, food safety is challenging as customers’ demand for natural preservatives is increasing. Essential oils and its components are an alternative as antibacterial and antimycotic food additives. To apply essential oils in food, the minimal inhibitory concentrations (MIC) in vitro and in food matrices have to be analysed.

In this study, the effect of twelve different essential oil components against fourteen food spoilage moulds and yeasts was investigated. MIC of each component and strain was tested via microdilution method. Cinnamaldehyde (CA) had the lowest MIC for all tested strains. However, CA is organoleptic and was therefore combined with other essential oil components via checkerboard method. Overall, 27 out of 91 combinations showed a synergistic effect and both respective component concentrations can be reduced without changing MIC.

Essential oil components in food frequently reduce their antmycotic efficacy and impact the taste, smell and texture of food matrices. To test these effects of CA in ketchup, we tested each ingredient and its combinations on the MIC of Saccharomyces cerevisiae. Only the ingredients salt and vinegar showed a synergistic effect with CA. In addition, we analysed the effect of CA and combinations of ketchup components on S. cerevisiae by live-dead staining in flow cytometry. CA showed not only a fungistatic, but also a fungicide effect. Upcoming studies will investigate the antmycotic effect of CA in the whole ketchup via challenge tests.

Usage of UV-C treatment for bacterial decontamination on eggshells via mercury vapor lamp and LED technology

*S. Fleischmann¹, S. Opherden¹, T. Alter¹, K. Rosen², M. Bielicke², I. Szabo², S. Hadziabdic³, A. Gensch³, P. Rotsch³, G. Wiese³, U. Reesler³
¹Freie Universität Berlin, Institute of Food Safety and Food Hygiene, Berlin, Germany
²Freie Universität Berlin, Institute for Animal Hygiene and Environmental Health, Berlin, Germany
³Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), NRL for the Analysis and Testing of Zoonoses (Salmonella), Berlin, Germany

The bacterial contamination of eggshells with food-borne zoonotic agents in the commercial egg production is an important One Health issue. The traditional Ultraviolet-C (UV-C) mercury vapor lamp technology is already used for bacterial decontamination on eggshells in individual packaging lines in Germany. A novel system of UV-C light-emitting diodes (LEDs) poses an alternative providing many ecological and economic advantages.

The aim of the study was to develop and establish a UV-C LED light method for the commercial application in egg packaging lines. Therefore, the production parameters from an egg packaging line were determined. Thereafter, the bacterial decontamination efficiency of the UV-C LED light on ESBL-producing Escherichia (E.) coli, Enterococcus (E.) faecium, Campylobacter jejuni, Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, and Salmonella on the eggshell surface with and without organic load, was evaluated and compared to the traditional UV-C light method. For this purpose, the surfaces were inoculated with a defined bacterial concentration and the bacterial count was estimated before and after UV-C treatment.

Finally, a reproducible method for detecting the decontamination efficiency via UV-C on eggshells was developed and established. A high organic load of 10g bovine serum albumin (BSA) and 10g yeast extract resulted in a progressive effect of Gram-negative bacteria against UV-C treatment of up to 2log CFU/cm² in contrast to no organic load. Gram-positive bacteria are less vulnerable to UV-C and stable in their detection rate with and without BSA. A high contamination dose of 10⁵ CFU/cm² with E. coli showed only 1log CFU/cm² reduction after UV-C treatment. In contrast, under a contamination dose ≤ 10⁴ CFU/cm² E. coli was no longer detectable. High contamination dose of E. faecium of 10⁷ CFU/cm² showed only 0,5log reduction and 1log reduction using contamination doses ≤ 10⁶ CFU/cm² after UV-C treatment. In general, field isolates from egg-producing poultry farms showed an increased UV-C tolerance. The comparability of the mercury vapor lamps and the LED panels is possible if the wavelength and the radiation intensity [W/m²] are similar.

679-FMP
Impact of cold atmospheric plasma on inactivation of norovirus surrogates on stainless steel

*T. Albert¹, M. Reinhardt¹, U. Truyen¹, P. G. Braun¹
¹University of Leipzig, Institute of Food Hygiene, Leipzig, Germany

Infections with human noroviruses (NoV) are one of the most frequent reasons for gastroenteritis cases worldwide. NoV are highly contagious and spread through multiple routes of transmission including person-to-person and upon exposure to contaminated food, water or aerosolized vomitus particles. The viruses are extremely stable in the environment and resistant to many common disinfections and food processing
techniques. By this NoV can persist in different food as wells as on surfaces, which can be an important source of contamination.

For that reason the aim of the present study was to investigate the antiviral effect of cold atmospheric plasma jet (APJ) treatment on stainless steel surfaces. Until recently, no suitable cell-culture assay is available for the propagation of human norovirus particles and therefore suitable surrogate viruses are an option to be used in inactivation studies.

Laboratory-scaled stainless steel coupons (Ø 20 mm) were artificially contaminated with suspensions of two different norovirus surrogates (murine Norovirus MNV S99, Tulane Virus CCHMC ID: RT 0450). The dried virus suspensions were exposed to a microwave-excited spot-shaped APJ for up to three minutes. The inactivation was estimated depending on treatment time as well as on two different plasma gas mixtures (feeding gas: argon or helium). The detection of infectious particles of murine Norovirus as well as of Tulane virus was done by endpoint titration using two different cell lines (RAW 264.7 and LLC-MKS).

Results will be presented and discussed.

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### 680-FMP

**Comparison of RAPD-PCR and MALDI-TOF MS for typing and identification of coliform bacteria**

*C. Reitter*, F. Schwab, A. Tiehm, J. Gescher, M. Hügler

*1TZW: DVGW-Technologiezentrum Wasser, Microbiology and Molecular Biology, Karlsruhe, Germany
2Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Applied Biology, Karlsruhe, Germany

**Introduction:** Coliform bacteria are indicators for the microbial drinking water quality. Identification of these indicator bacteria represents an important step during the search for a possible contamination source of drinking water. For this reason a fast and accurate method is a precondition for further decisions like e.g. boiling advices or disinfection procedures. However, precise identification of coliform bacteria is often very difficult as they are closely related. Particularly within the genus *Enterobacter* environmental and hygienic-relevant bacteria occur. In this case a combination of identification and strain typing could be used to discriminate closely related clinical from environmental strains.

**Objectives & Methods:** A commonly used typing method is the randomly amplified polymorphic DNA (RAPD), a genetic fingerprinting method. Much faster is the matrix-assisted laser desorption ionization time of flight mass spectrometry (MALDI-TOF MS). It is applied to identify bacteria based on the protein composition within the cell. So far the method is mainly used for clinical bacteria, whereas its application for environmental strains is currently still limited. Therefore the aim of this study was to compare the RAPD with MALDI-TOF for typing and identification of coliform bacteria from (drinking) water samples with a focus on the genera *Enterobacter*, *Lelliottia*, *Serratia*, *Citrobacter* and *Butiauxella*. This should answer the question whether these methods are sensitive and specific enough for strain comparison. The results were checked against identification results using multi locus sequence analysis (MLSA).

**Results & Conclusion:** It could be shown that typing of coliform bacteria is possible with both methods. Typing is also the first step in identifying missing strains in the database of MALDI-TOF MS, as was the case with *Lelliottia* species. Even if the database is not designed for environmental bacteria and is therefore still incomplete, the method has great potential as a routine identification and typing method not only for the clinical but also for the drinking water and environmental sector.

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### 681-FMP

**Inhibition of menaquinone synthesis decreases resistance against freeze-thaw stress and growth rate in refrigerated milk of *Listeria monocytogenes***

*A. Flegler*, V. Kombetz*, A. Lipski

*1University of Bonn, Food Microbiology and Hygiene, Bonn, Germany
2Institute for Poultry Diseases, Veterinary Medicine, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
3Institute for Birds and Reptiles, Veterinary Medicine, University of Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany
4Brüterei Süd, BWE-Breiterei Weser-Ems GmbH & Co. KG, Regenstauf, Germany

**Listeria monocytogenes** is one of the major food-related pathogens and causes listeriosis, a potentially life-threatening illness. One of the most challenging tasks during growth at low temperatures is maintaining cytoplasmic membrane fluidity by modification of lipid membrane composition. For *L. monocytogenes* the dominating adaptation effect is shortening of fatty acid chain length. However, for some strains an additional adaptive response is the increase of menaquinone concentration during growth at low temperatures. The increase of this neutral membrane lipid produced a fluidization of the membrane under low temperature conditions and therefore represents a fatty acid-independent adaptation mechanism. In this study menaquinone content for *L. monocytogenes* strains was reduced by supplementation with aromatic amino acids, which caused a feedback inhibition of the quinone synthesis pathway. Menaquinone-reduced grown *L. monocytogenes* strains and unaffected reference cultures were subjected to freeze-thaw cycles. Cryotolerance clearly decreased for cells with reduced menaquinone content. Growth experiments in milk at low temperature confirmed the growth-inhibiting effect of aromatic amino acids in *L. monocytogenes*. Reduced tolerance against freeze-thaw stress and decreased growth rates at low temperature conditions for menaquinone-depleted *L. monocytogenes* cultures confirmed the adaptive function of these neutral lipids for growth under low temperatures for *L. monocytogenes* and the potential of aromatic amino acids as protectants against this organism in food.

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### 682-FMP

**Disinfection against ESBL producing *E. coli* on hatching broiler eggs – in vitro efficacy test and in vivo trials**

G. Motola*, W. Tébrün*, M. Pees*, J. Bachmeier*, H. M. Hafez1, S. Brüggemann-Schwarze

*1Institute for Poultry Diseases, Veterinary Medicine, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
2Clinic for Birds and Reptiles, Veterinary Medicine, University of Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany
3Brüterei Süd, BWE-Breiterei Weser-Ems GmbH & Co. KG, Regenstauf, Germany

Bacterial contamination of poultry products with ESBL (extended-spectrum beta-lactamase) producing *E. coli* is of major concern for the public health sector, poultry industry and consumers. Hatching eggs can be considered carriers and potential contamination sources for one-day old broiler chicks, resulting in a higher risk of contaminated meat for the consumer. To prevent colonization with ESBL producing bacteria early in the broiler production chain, formaldehyde and hydrogen peroxide are used in commercial hatcheries to disinfect hatching eggs. This study focusses on testing the efficacy of six different disinfection methods against ESBL producing bacteria in broiler hatching eggs.
Using an artificial contamination with a CTX-M-1 producing \textit{E. coli} (phylogroup B1) on eggshell samples, we first evaluated whether conventional and alternative methods can achieve an efficacious disinfection. In the next step, we assessed the effect on hatching rate and chicken development. In a subsequent trial under field conditions, we investigated 1) the disinfection efficacy with a large sample size, 2) the health status of the chicks after hatch and the 3) weight gain of broilers.

The six tested methods, namely formalin gassing, hydrogen peroxide + alcohol, essential oils applied as spray and cold fog, peracetic acid and low energy electron beam reduced the artificial ESBL contamination on the egg shell samples. Five of six methods had no negative effect on hatchability. Essential oils as spray reduced significantly the hatchability and was not included in field trials. In field trials, three out of four tested disinfected methods reduced the natural contamination level on hatching eggs and did not have negative effects on hatching rate nor chicken development.

**683-FMP**

**Developments in the Biopesticide Industry and Implications for Food Safety Testing**

*1.D. Zommick*

*1Valent BioSciences LLC, Biobrational Crop Protection, Libertyville, United States*

1. Introduction

Trends in agriculture and environmental regulation (e.g. the Sustainable Use Directive from the European Commission (Art. 14, 2009/128/EC)) are favoring biopesticide adoption over conventional, synthetic plant protection products for crop protection. This sentiment is also reflected in consumer demand for fewer chemical residues and sustainably sourced food. Microbial biopesticides make up a diverse, growing subset of plant protection products which may impact the food safety industry as has been seen with \textit{Bacillus thuringiensis}-based products.

2. Objective

To highlight the potential for new microbial pesticides to appear in food safety screens current and projected trends in the biological crop protection industry are reviewed. Changes in agricultural practices that promote the use of biopesticides is also addressed.

3. Methods

A review of market research reports, academic and corporate literature, and the European Commission Pesticide Database and pending Active Substance Authorizations was conducted with emphasis on microbial plant protection products which may appear in food safety screens.

4. Results

The European biopesticide market is projected to increase in value at a rate of 15.6% over the next five years to represent 33% of the global biopesticide market. Over 40% of this value is from the sale of microbial products which are commonly applied to foliage. This trend is encouraged by dramatic regulator changes, such as the Ecophyto program in France, that have forced producers to find alternate methods of plant protection. Dozens of fungi, bacteria, yeasts, viruses and biochemicals are currently registered or under review by the EU Commission and EFSA to meet this need.

5. Conclusions

As food producers in Europe identify methods to diminish reliance on synthetic pesticides and enhance Integrated Pest Management strategies, biopesticides will represent a larger share of crop protection tools and become more prevalent in food. There is a need for a concerted effort to understand the implications of biopesticides in food for the food safety industry with clear guidance on how registered microbes can be monitored differently than native strains.

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**684-FMP**

**Quantification of \textit{Pseudomonas} in raw milk and correlation with farm-specific influencing factors**

*1.K. Hofmann*, A. Siebert, M. Wenning, S. Scherer

1 Technische Universität München, Lehrstuhl für Mikrobielle Ökologie, Freising, Germany

2 Bayerisches Landesamt für Gesundheit und Lebensmittelsicherheit, Oberschleißheim, Germany

\textit{Pseudomonas} is a frequent genus of the microbiota of raw milk. Due to its psychrotrophic properties, it is able to grow and produce exoenzymes during cold storage until processing of the milk in the dairies. These proteolytic and lipolytic enzymes are able to cause deterioration of end products, as they withstand ultrahigh temperature treatment. Critical factors for the spoilage potential are besides the duration and temperature of raw milk storage, the initial load with \textit{Pseudomonas} on the farms.

Aim of this study was the determination of \textit{Pseudomonas} counts in raw milk samples from various farms all over Germany in order to correlate high loads with farm specific factors like the type of milking system or animal husbandry. Therefore, the protocol for bacterial DNA extraction out of raw milk samples was optimized by using different EDTA concentrations for a better removal of fat and proteins. Besides this, preservation agents were tested in order to prevent bacterial growth during transportation of the samples. Moreover, \textit{Pseudomonas} counts were determined by a species-specific qPCR assay as well as by high throughput amplicon sequencing.

Quantification of \textit{Pseudomonas} by qPCR showed a good correlation to cell counts determined by either classical cultivation as well as by calculation based on sequencing data. The majority of tested milk samples showed low \textit{Pseudomonas} loads with cell counts < 1.0E+03 cfu/ml. However, 31 out of 317 samples had values between 1.0E+04 cfu/ml and 1.0E+08 cfu/ml. The microbiome data obtained by amplicon sequencing of 184 samples showed an average genus diversity of 220 genera per sample. 36 samples had a relative amount of \textit{Pseudomonas} above 1.5 %, with values up to 95 %.

Further investigations on contamination routes at the farms by site inspections and sampling as well as analyses of the effect of milk storage time are planned. By this, means to lower the \textit{Pseudomonas} counts in raw milk shall be developed, which lead to a reduction of the enzyme load and subsequently to milk products of higher quality.

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**685-FMP**

*Ökologie, Freising, Germany*
Comprehensive analysis of raw milk microbiota from farms throughout Germany

A. Siebert1, K. Hofmann1, M. Wenning2, S. Scherer1
1Technical University of Munich, Chair of Microbial Ecology, ZIEL - Institute for Food and Health, Freising, Germany
2Bavarian Health and Food Safety Authority, Oberschleißheim, Germany

Raw milk microbiota has a strong impact on the hygienic and sensory quality of the resulting end products. Profound knowledge of farm specific factors influencing the bacterial community composition of bulk tank milk is needed to strengthen positive effects and reduce negative consequences. Since Next-Generation sequencing facilitates the detailed investigation of complex microbial communities, the analysis of the raw milk microbiome gained increasing attention. However, due to low cell counts and a highly complex matrix, it is difficult to prepare bacterial DNA from raw milk for sequencing.

Therefore, in this study, an optimized method for sequencing library preparation was established. For this, different cycle numbers were tested to investigate whether and to which extend PCR introduces artifacts into sequencing data. In order to assess influencing factors on the raw milk biodiversity with regard to spoilage associated bacteria and indicators for hygiene, farms were selected from all over Germany. Logistics for raw milk sampling have been set up with a focus on geographical position, type of production, and size of the herd as these parameters may determine the biodiversity of the respective raw milk. Finally, the microbiota of raw milk samples is evaluated by high-throughput amplicon sequencing using an Illumina platform and their diversity is analyzed with IMNGS and Rhea.

For sample preparation, it was shown that PCR cycle number during sequencing library preparation had a significant impact on the determination of the raw milk microbiota. This demonstrates the relevance of PCR conditions during library preparation, as those may influence the estimation of the abundance of particular bacterial groups. First results from milk samples will be presented and analyzed regarding a possible correlation between microbiota and farm specific factors. Eventually, through the evaluation of farm specific influencing factors, an improvement in microbial quality of German raw milk should be achieved.

687-FMP
Antibiotic resistance in Escherichia coli from broilers after amoxicillin treatment

E. Burow1, M. Grobbel1, B. A. Tenhagen1, S. Banneke2, A. Klösboher1,3
1German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Department Biological Safety, Berlin, Germany
2German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Department Experimental Toxicology and ZEBET, Berlin, Germany
3University of Veterinary Medicine, Institute for Veterinary Public Health, Berlin, Germany

Questions: Resistance rates to penicillin are high in commensal Escherichia (E.) coli from German monitored chickens. It was questioned whether administration system impacts occurrence of antibiotic resistance in a group of treated and untreated chickens. Hence, we aimed to investigate resistance to antibiotics in E. coli from chickens' cloak after oral individual (I) or group treatment (G) with amoxicillin, or after contact to I or G (KI or KG) compared to chickens untreated (C) or pre-treatment.

Methods: I/KI, G/KG and C (23 chickens per group) were housed in three separate rooms. The study started when the chickens were two days old. Chickens in I and G were treated with amoxicillin for five days at the beginning of the study period. In a second treatment period, G, KG and C received amoxicillin from day 34 to 38. Cloacal swabs were taken repeatedly (at study days 0, 2 to 7, 14, 21, 28, 34 to 38).

Results: Initial resistance rates were high in the treated and untreated groups. Resistance to ampicillin and further antibiotic agents increased significantly in G and I, and on a significantly lower level in KI, KG and C during the first treatment period. After the treatment, resistance rates declined to initial or lower values in all groups. During a second treatment period, resistance levels were equally high in all treated groups G, KG and C. Cephalosporin resistance was generally low and did not change over the experimental period.

Conclusions: Initial resistance levels were generally high but still, antibiotic treatment increased antibiotic resistance within two days. Co-selection of resistance to several antibiotic classes was indicated. Repeated treatment was
followed by comparable high resistance levels as during the first treatment or once-treated-animals.

688-IP
The Cyclophilin PpiB Connects Cysteine Metabolism with Regulation of Toxin Production in Clostridium difficile
*M. S. Karagöz1, C. M. Ünal1,2, M. Berges1,3, C. Priebe1, J. M. Borro de Acuna1, J. Wissing1,4, L. Jänisch1,4, D. Jahn1,3, M. Steinert1,2,5
1TU Braunschweig, Institut für Mikrobiologie, Braunschweig, Germany
2Turkish German University, Molecular Biotechnology, Istanbul, Turkey
3Braunschweig Integrated Centre of Systems Biology, Braunschweig, Germany
4Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Cellular Proteomics, Braunschweig, Germany
5Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Braunschweig, Germany

Clostridium (Clostridoides) difficile is an anaerobic, toxin producing, enteric pathogen that causes typically antibiotic-associated hospital acquired infections ranging from mild diarrhea to toxic megacolon with high recurrence rates and fatal outcome. Cyclophilins belong to the family of peptidyl-prolyl-cis/trans-isomerases (PPIases), which are ubiquitous proteins with protein folding and chaperoning activities. As such they participate in general protein maturation pathways, as well as, in specific protein-protein interactions supporting unique phenotypes related to important physiological or pathogenic features. While in Gram-positive and Gram-negative pathogens, including Listeria monocytogenes and Legionella pneumophila, contribution of PPIases to various virulence mechanisms have been shown, very little is known about these proteins of C. difficile. Thus, we analysed the only cyclophilin of C. difficile, PpiB, using an interatomic approach. Here, we present a distinct subset of PpiB interaction partners, which majorly belong to the central energy and amino acid metabolism, and stress response. Also, several members of regulation of transcription/translation, protein folding, transport and motility are associated with PpiB. Within the central metabolism CysK, the terminal enzyme in cysteine biosynthesis, stands out, where a functional interaction between PpiB and CysK was shown. This explains the increased cysteine-susceptibility and deregulation of cysteine-dependent toxin production in the ppiB-deletion mutant and highlights the contribution of PpiB to the pathogenicity of C. difficile.

2. Objectives
In this study, a dual RNA-seq approach, which enables the parallel assessment of the transcriptional response of both interaction partners, was used to get further insights into the mechanisms underlying the S. aureus survival strategies and to identify the pathways in mast cells manipulated by S. aureus.

3. Material and Methods

Dual RNA-sequencing and bioinformatical analysis.

4. Results
The analysis yielded a large number of up- or down regulated genes in host and pathogen cells. To discover possible master regulators, gene sets discovered in a gene set enrichment analysis are being compared to gene sets that have a predicted interaction with a (predicted or validated) sRNA. Additionally the RNA-seq data is being analyzed using ANNOgesic to annotate so far unknown sRNAs.

5. Conclusion (preliminary)
Dual-RNA-seq of S. aureus and human mast cells uncovers a large number of up- or down regulated genes during infection.

691-IP
Epigenetic mechanisms regulate host innate immunity against uropathogenic and commensal-like Escherichia coli
*K. Mukherjee1, U. Dobrindt1
1University of Muenster, Institute of Hygiene, Münster, Germany

Introduction

Innate-immunity-related genes in humans are activated during urinary tract infections (UTIs) caused by pathogenic strains of Escherichia coli but are suppressed by commensals. Epigenetic mechanisms play a pivotal role in the regulation of gene expression in response to environmental stimuli.

Objectives

To determine the role of epigenetic mechanisms such as DNA methylation, histone acetylation and miRNAs in regulating the different behaviors of uropathogenic and commensal-like E. coli strains.

Materials & methods

We infected larvae of the greater wax moth, Galleria mellonella, a widely used model insect host, with uropathogenic E. coli (UPEC) strain CFT073 that causes symptomatic UTIs in humans or a commensal-like strain
83972 that causes asymptomatic bacteriuria (ABU). DNA, RNA and histone proteins were isolated from infected larvae for the detection of DNA methylation, histone acetylation, and miRNA expression by next-generation sequencing, RTPCR, and ELISA.

Results

Infection with the UPEC strain was more lethal to larvae than infection with the attenuated ABU strain due to the recognition of each strain by different Toll-like receptors, ultimately leading to differential DNA methylation, histone acetylation and miRNA expression. We correlated epigenetic changes with the induction of innate-immunity-related genes. Transcriptomic analysis of infected G. mellonella larvae infected with E. coli strains CFT073 and 83972 revealed strain-specific variations in the class and expression levels of genes encoding antimicrobial peptides, cytokines, and enzymes controlling major epigenetic mechanisms.

Conclusions

Our results provide evidence for the differential epigenetic regulation of transcriptional reprogramming by UPEC and ABU strains of E. coli in G. mellonella larvae, which may be relevant to understanding the different behaviors of these bacterial strains in the human urinary tract.

692-IIP
Host Innate Immune Reaction to Erythrocytes Lysed by the Malaria Parasite Plasmodium Falciparum

A. González Delgado1, S. Irmscher1, T. Reiß2, G. Pradel3, C. Skerka1
1Leibniz institute for natural product research and infection biology, Jena, Germany
2RWTH Aachen University, Aachen, Germany

Malaria tropica is an infectious disease caused by the unicellular parasite Plasmodium falciparum. This parasite invades and replicates within the red blood cells (RBCs) causing the destruction of these cells. Factor H related protein 1 (FHR1) is a negative regulator of the terminal alternative complement pathway and competes with factor H in binding to C3b. Recently our group identified a new function of FHR1. FHR1 binds to necrotic cell surfaces and mediates inflammation through the activation of the NLRP3 inflammasome in monocytes. FHR1 distinguishes necrotic from apoptotic surfaces and therefore represents an important mediator of inflammation of necrotic surfaces. Thus, we asked whether destruction of RBCs by P. falciparum is recognized by FHR1 thereby triggering strong inflammation and enhancing malaria pathology. In vitro experiments show that heat-induced necrotic RBCs bind FHR1, which in turn triggers the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines. Furthermore, necrotic RBCs bind FHR1 via the N-terminus presenting the C-terminus to immune cells. These binding characteristics are confirmed on necrotic malaria-induced RBCs. We hypothesize that malaria patients expressing FHR1 develop a more severe pathology compare to those that are FHR1 deficient. This could explain why about one third of the Nigerian population presents with a FHR1 deficiency. Whether the FHR1 plasma concentration increases in malaria patients, needs further evaluation.

693-IIP
Domain composition and variations of immune evasion protein C (PspC) among Streptococcus pneumoniae strains.

S. Du1, C. Vilhena1, S. King2, M. Rohde3, C. Skerka1, S. Hammerschmidt1, P. F. Zipfel2
1Leibniz institute for natural product research and infection biology, Jena, Germany
2Nationwide Children's Hospital, Center for Microbial Pathogenesis, Columbus, Ohio, Germany
3Helmholz Center for Infection Research, Central Facility for Microscopy, Braunschweig, Germany

S. pneumoniae is an important human gram positive pathogenic bacterium that can cause infections including otitis media, even acute life-threatening infections like meningitis and sepsis. In order to evade host complement attack, pneumococci have evolved a number of mechanisms. The surface protein PspCs represent important pneumococcal adhesive and immune evasion proteins and promising vaccine candidates. PspC binds several human plasma proteins like factor H, plasminogen, C3, C4BP, secretory IgA, vitronectin and thrombospondin-1. PspC combines antigenic diversity with common binding patterns. At present the NCBI data bank includes 53955 records of PspC variants (Oct. 2019). In order to explain the variability of these many PspC entries, by in silico analysis, sequence comparison and alignment we define a clear domain architecture of the variants. The domains include (0) a signal peptide, (1) hypervariable domain (HVD), (2) repeat domains, (3) random coil domain, (4) a proline rich region (PRD) and (5) a surface anchor, of either a modular choline binding domain (CBD) or an anchor with an LPSTG motif.

This approach identified the five known domains but also seven new domains, and furthermore new domain subtypes, some of which are unique to one variant. According to the homology of full length PspC proteins, they can be grouped into two classes with a CBD or LPSTG motif respectively. The composition, usage, and homology of individual domains differ among the selected variants. Each domain has specific features. And the HVD shows the highest degree of sequence variations. In addition a structural analysis revealed differences in the composition of the outside oriented N-terminal region and of the C-terminal region which includes capsule spanning and membrane anchoring domains. The N-terminal region is rich in charged residues and mainly composed of α-helices. In contrast, C-terminal domains have less charged residues. This sequence-based in silico approach allows a better structure comparison of the variants, is also helpful to vaccine approaches and to define the domain composition of new PspC variants in particular isolated from clinical strains.

694-IIP
Effects of stress on 2-O methylation and immune stimulation of iRNA in E. coli

A. Grober1, I. Freund3, A. Galvanin1, V. Marchand4, Y. Motorin2,4, A. Dalpke1
1TU Dresden, Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hygiene, Dresden, Germany
2Ruprecht-Karls University Heidelberg, Department of Infectious Diseases, Medical Microbiology and Hygiene, Heidelberg, Germany
3BioPole Lorraine University, IMoPA UMR7365 CNRS-UL, Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy, France
4BioPole Lorraine University, Next-Generation Sequencing Core Facility, Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy, France

1. Introduction
Posttranscriptional RNA modifications play a recognized role in self/non-self discrimination of nucleic acids in innate immunity by endosomal Toll-like receptors TLR3, 7 and 8. Previous work has identified a naturally occurring 2'-O-methylation of guanosine at position 18 (Gm18) within tRNAs, which acts as a suppressive ligand for TLR stimulation within a defined sequence: Transfection of PBMCs with modified RNA (Gm18) together with otherwise stimulatory RNA inhibited the immune response.

2. Objectives

We previously observed that the Gm level globally increased in the lab strain E. coli DH5α under stress conditions. As Gm18 methylations led to reduced stimulatory activity in earlier studies, we wanted to investigate whether stress conditions have an impact on the methylation pattern and immune-stimulation of RNA from E. coli isolates.

3. Materials & methods

Clinical E. coli strains were cultured under normal growth conditions or stress conditions induced by either nutrient deprivation or antibiotics. Bacterial tRNA and rRNA were purified separately from total RNA, then human peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) were transfected with these RNAs and IFNα and TNFα production were quantified in the supernatants. By using the data from ELISA and flow cytometry, we determined how the modified RNA from E. coli contributes to stimulatory or suppressive immune response. Methylation patterns were determined by RiboMethSeq method.

4. Results

The cultivation of clinical E. coli strains under stress conditions (antibiotics) compared to unstressed conditions led to a significantly lower immune stimulation in tRNA and gRNA.

5. Conclusion

The methylation level of tRNA has been demonstrated as an immunosuppressive regulator compared to total or rRNA from bacteria. Here we show that tRNA isolated from stressed E. coli is more immunosuppressive than RNA isolated from unstressed E. coli. These interesting findings raise the link how stress-induced methylation of RNA supports the immune-escape strategy of E. coli in physiological or pathological conditions.

The upper respiratory tract is a microbial niche of a diverse bacterial community and a portal of entry for many potential pathogens, including Streptococcus pyogenes, a strictly human pathogen. Seasonal influenza infections can lead to an increased risk of dissemination of bacteria to the lower respiratory tract or to secondary bacterial infections, like pneumonia.

Objectives

To gain a better understanding of the co-pathogenesis of influenza viruses with S. pyogenes in the lung.

Material and Methods

We established a sequential intranasal coinfection model in C57BL/6J mice. On day 0 IAV H1N1 were applied intranasally and 2 days after, mice were inoculated intranasally with S. pyogenes. 9 days post infection we analyzed clotting times, survival rates, bacterial and viral dissemination in kidney, blood and lung, as well as tissue pathology. Moreover, the impact of mono- und co-infection on the murine microbiome of the respiratory and intestinal tract was investigated.

Results and Conclusion

Intranasal mono infection with S. pyogenes or Influenza A H1N1 showed no clinical symptoms in mice. After sequential co-infection we detected an increase of neutrophils in the blood. The aPTT clotting time was significantly prolonged and septic mice were positive for the H1N1 virus in the lung. Mortality rate was 45% after coinfection. Analysis of the gut microbiome showed systemic effects on the intestinal microbiota in infected mice, e.g. increased Akkermansiaeace. Additionally, Ruminococcaceae were increased in septic co-infected mice.

696-IIP

withdrawn

697-IIP

Immunization with TLR2-triggering lipidated pneumococcal antigens enhances and skews antibody responses and leads to reduced colonization

1F. Verdoó, L. F. van Beek1,2, D. Schwudke4, T. H. A. Ederveen5, F. J. van Opzeeland2,3, D. Thalheim1, S. Werner1, M. I. de Jonge2,3, S. Hammerschmidt1
1Interfaculty Institute for Genetics and Functional Genomics, Center for Functional Genomics of Microbes, University of Greifswald, Department of Molecular Genetics and Infection Biology, Greifswald, Germany
2Radboud Institute for Molecular Life Sciences, Radboudumc, Section Pediatric Infectious Diseases, Laboratory of Medical Immunology, Nijmegen, Netherlands
3Radboudumc, Radboud Center for Infectious Diseases, Nijmegen, Germany
4Research Center Borstel, Leibniz Center for Medicine and Bioscience, Priority Area Infection, Division of Bioanalytical Chemistry, Borstel, Germany
5Center for Molecular and Biomolecular Informatics, Radboud University Medical Center, Radboud Institute for Molecular Life Sciences, Nijmegen, Netherlands

Introduction

Pneumococcal vaccines have important limitations, including restricted serotype coverage facilitating replacement by non-vaccine serotypes and high manufacturing costs. Therefore, one direction of research is engaging in the development of a serotype-independent and protein-based vaccine.

695-IIP

Impact of H1N1 virus and Streptococcus pyogenes coinfection on coagulation and microbiome in mice

J. Köhler, KolInfekt Study Group, Bernd Kreikemeyer and Sonja Oehmcke-Hecht

Impact of H1N1 virus and Streptococcus pyogenes coinfection on coagulation and microbiome in mice

Juliane Köhler, KolInfekt Study Group, Bernd Kreikemeyer and Sonja Oehmcke-Hecht

Introduction

Pneumococcal vaccines have important limitations, including restricted serotype coverage facilitating replacement by non-vaccine serotypes and high manufacturing costs. Therefore, one direction of research is engaging in the development of a serotype-independent and protein-based vaccine.
Objectives Recently, we have shown that immunization with the non-lipidated pneumococcal lipoproteins DacB and PnrA leads to reduced pneumococcal colonization. In this study, we have investigated the effects of lipidation and vaccination route (intranasal or subcutaneous) on the level of protection and humoral as well as cellular immune responses.

Materials & methods In a mouse model of colonization, we compared the immunogenicity and protectivity of lipidated versus non-lipidated DacB or PnrA with and without additional adjuvant depending on the immunization route. Antigen-specific systemic IgG and IgG subclass levels in antisera were determined by ELISA. Cytokine profiles after intranasal pneumococcal challenge in the NALT (local) and in supernatants after spleen cell stimulation (systemic) were analyzed by flow cytometry. Lipidated proteins triggering the TLR2 were shown by HEK-Blue™ hTLR2 cell reporter assays.

Results Immunization of mice with TLR2-engaging lipidated proteins induced increased IgG levels independent of the application of additional adjuvant. Humoral immune responses were characterized by a Th1-skewed IgG phenotype indicated by elevated levels of IgG2 compared to non-lipidated proteins inducing a IgG1-dominated profile. In addition, mice immunized with the lipidated proteins showed reduced bacterial loads in the nasal tissue compared to the non-lipidated proteins. However, no clear cytokine profile associated with protection of lipidated proteins could be determined.

Conclusion In principle, lipoproteins are interesting candidates for future vaccine strategies as they are conserved, abundant, and immunogenic. We showed the potential of lipidated proteins DacB and PnrA to induce protection against pneumococcal colonization. Therefore, protein lipidation might represent an attractive approach for the development of novel pneumococcal vaccines.

698-IIP Applying bacteria-derived nucleotides as adjuvant in primary human cells

L. S. Chen¹, A. Grober¹, S. Lecesse¹, A. Dalpke¹
¹TU Dresden, Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hygiene, Dresden, Germany

1. Introduction
Sensing bacteria-derived nucleotides, e.g. bacterial RNA (bRNA) or second messenger cyclic dinucleotides (CDNs), by the innate immune system has been investigated intensively in the last two decades. Accumulating data indicate bRNA and CDNs, recognized by endosomal TLRs and stimulator of interferon genes (STING), not only regulate bacteria physiology but affect host innate and adaptive immunity during infection, suggesting the potential application on vaccine development.

2. Objectives
Investigate adjuvant effect and signaling of bacterial nucleotides in host cells.

3. Materials & methods
Primary human peripheral blood mononuclear cells (hPBMC) were isolated fromuffy coats and stimulated with either total bRNA from Pseudomonas aeruginosa, or CDNs bis-(3’-5’) cyclic dimeric guanosine monophosphate (GG) or cyclic [G(3’-5’)]pA(3’-5’)p (cGAMP). Supernatants were subjected to enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) for cytokine detection, and cells were analyzed for surface costimulatory molecules. For antigen (Ag)-specific recall response, CMVpp65 peptide was used as stimulus, treated alone or in
combination with nucleotides. IFNγ-secretion and Ag-specific proliferation of T cells were determined by flow cytometry.

4. Results

bRNA-treated hPBMC secreted potent levels of proinflammatory cytokines, but subtle level of IFNα. In contrast, stimulation by GG selectively produced IFNα but not the others. Interestingly, adding bRNA into CDNs-treated cells increased the secretion of proinflammatory cytokines, but did not affect the level of costimulatory molecules, suggesting that activation of both pathways may provide potential adjuvant effects with less cytotoxic cytokines. To address this hypothesis, CMVpp65-mediated T cell recall responses were tested. hPBMC generated pronounced amounts of IFNγ-producing T cells after 3 hours, comparing with CMVpp65 alone. Furthermore, bRNA plus GG promoted Ag-specific T cell proliferation after 7 days, supporting the adjuvant potential of intracellular nucleotides.

5. Conclusion

Activation of either intracellular TLR or STING pathways could be applied as adjuvant.

700-IP
Shiga Toxin 2a Binds to Complement Components C3 and C5 and Upregulates their Gene Expression in Human Cell Lines
*S. Kellnerová†, S. Chatterjee†, L. Bleul†, A. Weber†, C. Wölz†
†Medical University Innsbruck- Austria, Institute for Hygiene and Medical Microbiology, Innsbruck, Austria

Introduction: Shiga toxin 2a (Stx2a) is one of the main virulence factors involved in the development of Enterohemorrhagic Escherichia coli (EHEC) associated hemolytic uremic syndrome (eHUS). Its ability to activate complement via the alternative pathway and to interact with some of complement proteins is believed to be crucial for the progression of the disease. Although substantial advancements have been achieved in decoding the disease development, the role of complement in both gut and blood has only recently begun to be explored.

Objectives: The aim of this study is to investigate the interaction of Stx2a with the pivotal complement proteins C3 and C5 to check whether Stx2a stimulation influences their transcription and synthesis in various human cell lines.

Methods: Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISA) were performed to evaluate the binding of Stx2a to C3 and C5. In vitro cytotoxicity assays were performed to evaluate at which Stb2a concentrations and time points the HK-2, HCT-8 and GiGeNC cells were still resistant to the cytotoxic effect of Stx2a. Further, cells were stimulated for a suitable time points with varied concentrations of Stx2a, reverse transcription-quantitative PCR (RT-qPCR) was employed to analyse the transcription of these complement components in the cell lines meanwhile ELISAs were performed to analyze their synthesis and release.

Results: Stx2a showed dose dependent binding to C3 and C5 when tested by ELISA. Cytotoxicity assay revealed that HCT-8 cells were significantly more resistant towards Stx2a than GiGeNC and HK-2 cells. Any synthesis or release of C3 and C5 has been proved in HK-2 and HCT-8 cell lines after their stimulation with Stx2a, however RT-qPCR analyses revealed an upregulation of their transcription in all three tested cell lines, being most profound in the GiGeNC cells.

Conclusion: Stx2a interacts with C3 and C5 and upregulates their gene expression in gut and kidney cell lines providing further evidence to the notion that the complement system is involved in the pathophysiology of eHUS. Whether these findings are advantageous or disadvantageous from a host protection perspective remains to be elucidated.

701-IP
Intracellular Staphylococcus aureus induced cell death and cytokine release in human macrophages
*J. Bayer†, L. Bleul†, A. Weber†, C. Wölz†
†University of Tübingen, Interfaculty Institute for Microbiology and Infection Medicine, Tübingen, Germany
‡University of Tübingen, Interfaculty Institute for Cell Biology, Tübingen, Germany

Professional phagocytes play a key role in the host defense against bacterial pathogens by recognizing, engulfing and eradicating invading bacteria. Additionally they are responsible for the initiation of a proinflammatory immune responses. It was shown that different S. aureus factors can lead to apoptosis, pyroptosis and/or necroptosis of macrophages when applied from outside. Little is known about the effects of intracellular S. aureus on cell death and immune responses of human macrophages. We followed USA300 JE2 and isogenic mutants after phagocytosis by human macrophages. The fate of bacteria and cells was monitored regarding bacterial survival, escape, membrane damage and cytokine release. We show that two major regulators of S. aureus namely AgrABCD and SaePQRS act in concert to facilitate escape of the bacteria after initial uptake by human macrophages. Sae-regulated two-component pore-forming toxins Leukocidin A/B (LukAB) and/or Panton-Valentin Leukocidin (PVL) are required for the escape of S. aureus from within human macrophages after phagocytosis. Non-toxic strains were able to persist in macrophage without causing cell-death. The intracellular mechanisms of LukAB and PVL induced cell damage and subsequent bacterial escape was independent of canonical apoptosis, inflammasome or lipoproteins. However, toxin dependent IL1β secretion was inflammasome and lipoprotein dependent. Thus, intracellular toxin dependent cell-death and cytokine release are due to different mechanisms.

702-IP
Identification of specific anti-TPI H8 antibody-epitopes as putative active vaccine against Staphylococcus aureus
*L. Rummel1,2, S. Mertins1,2, M. Krönke1,2, A. Klimka1,2
1University Hospital of Cologne, Institute for Med. Microbiology, Immunology and Hygiene, Cologne, Germany
2German Centre for Infection Research (DZIF), Bonn-Cologne, Germany

Introduction: Staphylococcus aureus (S. aureus) is a major human pathogen causing clinical infections like bacteremia and endocarditis. The morbidity and socioeconomic burden associated with methicillin-resistant S. aureus (MRSA) combined with a lack of new antibiotics defines a clear unmet medical need for novel approaches, including vaccines.

By proteomic approach, we identified vaccine candidates involved in essential metabolic pathways also displayed on the surface of S. aureus. Vaccination with triose-phosphate isomerase (TPI), a highly conserved glycolytic enzyme, showed significant protection in our murine sepsis model. After passive vaccination with anti-TPI monoclonal antibodies (moAbs), moAb H8 provided significant higher survival rates compared to other anti-TPI moAbs. Obviously, protection is epitope specific. Using this reverse immunology
approach we identified the H8-TPI-epitope. However, moAb H8 recognizes a discontinuous epitope containing 100 amino acids.

**Objective:** For cost-effective production of an epitope vaccine, the H8-TPI-epitope sequence needs to be shortened without losing its ability to generate anti-TPI H8-like antibodies.

**Materials and Methods:** Peptide-phage display method was applied to identify a mimotope, structurally mimicking the H8-TPI-epitope. After three rounds of biopanning against immobilized anti-TPI H8 antibody, three mimotopes were enriched and analyzed for specific binding to moAb H8. Additionally, based on prior epitope mapping and binding assay results we generated a peptide assumed to contain the discontinuous H8 epitope, called H8-Disco. After immunization of mice with KLH-conjugated mimotopes and H8-Disco, serum was analyzed for the ability to generate TPI-specific antibodies.

**Results:** Three mimotopes specifically bind to moAb H8 in phage ELISA binding assays, and are able to compete binding of moAb H8 to its ligand TPI. However, the mimotopes did not induce TPI-specific antibodies. In contrast, H8-Disco does induce a humoral TPI-specific immune response.

**Conclusion:** H8-Disco could serve as epitope vaccine against *S. aureus*. The protection potential needs to be evaluated in our *S. aureus* mouse infection model.

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**703-IIP**

**Analysing pathogen-host interaction- Dual RNA sequencing of *Francisella tularensis* infected macrophages**

*M. J. Alber1, M. Antwerpen2, M. C. Walter2, H. von Buttler1*

1Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology, Division for Bacteria and Toxins, Munich, Germany

2Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology, Functional Microbiological Genomics an Bioinformatics, Munich, Germany

*Francisella tularensis* (Ft) is a gram-negative, aerobic, non-motile, non-sporulating small coccobacillus that causes the zoonotic disease tularemia. Infection takes place by bites of non-vertebrate vectors like mosquitoes or ticks, by ingestion or via aerosol. *F.t. subspecies tularensis* (Ft) is highly virulent and highly infective and therefore is in danger to be misused as a bioterroristic or biowarfare agent. In Europe *F.t. subspecies holarctica* (Fh) are mainly less virulent. By classical attenuation live vaccine strains have been generated from Ft.h. During infection, Ft. replicate intracellularly in several cell types i.e. epithelial cells, fibroblasts and hepatocytes but also immune cells like macrophages (MΦs), dendritic cells and neutrophils. Immune mechanisms in infected cells are severely impaired. The interaction of virulence factors from Ft. with cellular components to facilitate this immune evasion is not understood. To investigate this interaction THP-I derived macrophages were infected with Ft.t. and a protocol for subsequent staining and sorting of infected cells followed by RNA preparation was optimized. Using dual RNA sequencing the regulation of pathogen and host factors were analysed in macrophages infected with fully virulent or attenuated Francisella tularensis strains. Besides others, known virulent factors of Ft. were identified to be upregulated in bacteria replicating in macrophages compared to bacteria growing in axenic medium.

Knowing virulent factors that act in the early phase of infection the development of effective vaccines against F.t. might be possible. Especially factors that enable the pathogen to prevent MHC-II presentation are attractive candidates for such vaccines. Moreover, such virulence factors are candidates for specific therapeutics that can impair Francisella growth and help the host immune system to fight the bacterial infection. Enabling MHC-II presentation will lead to IFN-γ production by T-cells to clear Francisella from the host organism.

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**704-IIP**

**Innate Lymphoid Cells in the female genital tract and their role in chlamydial infection**

*S. Barth1, S. Kirschnke1, G. Härcker1*

1University of Freiburg, Institute for Microbiology and Hygiene, Medical Center, Faculty of Medicine, Freiburg i. Br., Germany

*Chlamydia trachomatis* is the most common bacterial agent of sexually transmitted disease. In women, *C. trachomatis*-infection can cause pelvic inflammatory disease leading to infertility. A mouse model of human *C. trachomatis* infection has been established, where infection with *C. muridarum* in female mice causes comparable symptoms and sequelae.

ILCs (innate lymphoid cells: NK cells, ILC1/2/3) play an important role in tissue defense, repair and homeostasis but little is known about their distribution in the female genital tract and their potential role in genital infections. To get a better insight with respect to immune response, bacterial clearance and tissue damage we infected mice with *C. muridarum*. The results show that in naive wt mice, NK cells represent the most prominent cell population within the ILCs in the female genital tract. The total NK cell number increases 5.5-fold by 4 days post-infection (dpi), and the cells produce IFNγ. This indicates that they might play a role at early stages of chlamydial infection. At later stages the number of NK cells decreases and reaches baseline levels at 14 dpi. ILC1 and ILC2 cells are also detectable although their total cell numbers in naive wt mice are much lower than the NK cell number. ILC1 numbers remain stable initially. Intriguingly, until 30 dpi the total cell number of ILC1 cell increases about 10-fold, and there is a correlation of ILC1 number and macroscopically visible tissue damage. This suggests that ILC1s may be involved in tissue damage; whether they play a positive or negative role needs further to be investigated. ILC3s are barely present but appear to convert into ILC1-like cells over the course of infection, as shown for ILC1 and ILC3 cells make up around 17% of total ILC1 numbers 30 dpi. The number of ILC2s does not vary significantly during chlamydial infection at any time. The absolute number of ILCs in neutrophil-deficient-mice is significantly lower 4 dpi. These results suggest that ILCs may partake in anti-bacterial defense and tissue damage, possibly through interaction with myeloid cells.

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**705-IIP**

**Chlamydia trachomatis** reinfection with different serovars provides serovar-independent protection and faster recovery in a mouse lung infection model.

*C. Lanfermann1, M. Kohn1, R. Laudeley1, C. Rheinheimer1, S. Glage2, A. Klos3*

1Hannover Medical School, Institute for Medical Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, Hannover, Germany

2Hannover Medical School, Institute for Laboratory Animal Science, Hannover, Germany

**Introduction:** *Chlamydia trachomatis* (Ct) is an intracellular bacterium. Differences in the major outer membrane proteins
(MOMP) define serovars, which cause diseases ranging from genital infections with infertility or lung infections in newborns to blinding trachoma. Each year there are 130 Million cases of genital Ctr infections worldwide (WHO). Approx. 4% of female teenagers are infected. Thus, a better understanding of immunological mechanisms of Ctr infection is important.

Objectives: There are many reports about serovar-specific protection which might hamper the development of a cross-serovar effective vaccine against Ctr. Thus, we wanted to gain precise information about serovar-specific versus a more general protective immunity using Ctr reinfecion and combinations of the Ctr serovars D, E, and L2.

Methods: In our model, 8 weeks old female C57BL6 mice were infected intranasally with one Ctr serovar. After clinical recovery, 3 and 4 weeks later, potentially remaining chlamydia were eliminated with azithromycin. Reinfection with Ctr was performed 7 weeks after first infection. Body weight and clinical score were determined daily. After 8 days, the anesthetized mice were sacrificed. Subsequently, bacterial load, histology, TNF-α, IFNγ and the granulocyte marker Myeloperoxidase were determined in their lungs.

Results: After 3-4 days of reinfection mice showed an ameliorated course of disease with faster recovery as compared to controls which had only been mock-infected before. Bacterial load as well as cytokine levels were significantly reduced - independently of the Ctr serovar used.

Conclusion: Induced immunity after recovery from Ctr lung infection does not completely prevent reinfection with the identical serovar in mice. Yet, after 3-4 days, the course of infection improves drastically leading to less severe symptoms, a much faster recovery and bacterial clearance. Unexpectedly, a similar degree of cross-protection can be achieved between the three Ctr serovars tested – a promising result in regard of a yet to be developed cross-serovar protecting vaccine.

707-NRZP

Poliovirus containment in Germany: What labs should know

S. Diedrich1, K. Keeren1, U. Vogel1, H. Claus1
1Robert Koch-Institut, FG31, NRZ Poliomyelitis und Enteroviren, Berlin, Germany
2Robert Koch-Institut, FG31, Office NCC, Berlin, Germany
3Ministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit und Gleichstellung, Referat 401, Hannover, Germany
4Niedersächsisches Landesgesundheitsamt, Abteilung 2, Infektionsepidemiologie / Meldewesen, Hannover, Germany
5Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, Referat 322, Berlin, Germany

To maintain the goal of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) by 2023, containment, which includes biosafety and biosecurity requirements for laboratories, vaccine producers, or other facilities that handle or store eradicated polioviruses (PV) is necessary to minimize facility-associated risk of viruses being released into the community.

Wild poliovirus (WPV) type 2 has been declared eradicated worldwide in 2015. Subsequently the oral vaccine switch from trivalent to bivalent OPV (type 1+3) occurred in 2016. In addition, all PV2 containing materials had to be destroyed / inactivated, unless a lab is certified as poliovirus-essential facility (PEF). To date there is no PEF in Germany.

In late 2019, eradication of WPV type 3 has been confirmed and containment efforts for PV type 3 will focus on WPV / vaccine derived PV (VDPV) and PIM. Containment of OPV3 will follow when type 3 containing vaccines are no longer in use.

In contrast to material known to contain PV, potentially infectious material (PIM), i.e. material at risk for containing PV, is a major challenge. PIM includes stool, respiratory or sewage samples as well as isolates derived from these samples, if the material was collected at a time and place where PV (WPV and vaccine) circulated. Thus, all enteric (rotavirus, bacteria, parasites etc.), respiratory (influenza etc.), nutrition and environmental labs may have a PIM-risk, which needs to be assessed. Appropriate risk mitigation and reporting to national authority has to be done.

To meet future challenges and to form the statutory framework for containment a new paragraph was
implemented into the national "Protection against Infection Act" (IfSG) in Germany in 2017. Conformable to law, all laboratories have to destroy any material containing PV2 and to report to the local public health department any kind of PV material or PIM. By regulation of the Federal Ministry of Health, laboratories will be legally obliged to destroy material containing any of the remaining types of PV according to the progress of the GPEI.

708-NRZP
Population Structure of the Genus Brucella as Determined by Core-Genome-Based Multi-Locus-Sequence-Typing (cgMLST)

1H. Scholz
1Institut für Mikrobiologie der Bundeswehr, Bakteriologie und Toxinojologie, München, Germany

Question

The genus Brucella comprises various species of both veterinary and human medical importance. Recently, several new species from new hosts, particularly amphibians, had been added to the genus leading to a significant expansion. Previous studies demonstrated that the new species show a much higher genetic diversity than the classical species causing disease in humans, like e.g. B. melitensis. In order to get a clear picture of the overall population structure of the expanded genus, we developed a core-genome based MLST (cgMLST) assay which allows accurate positioning of any given strain into a global phylogeographical context.

Methods

Creation of a Brucella cgMLST typing scheme with SeqSphere+ (Ridom, Germany). Illumina paired-end sequencing of 100 Brucella isolates of the in-house strain collection comprising all known species and biovars. New Brucella species like B. microti, B. vulpis, B. inopinata, B. papionis, and an exclusive set of recently isolated Brucellae from amphibians were added to the analysis together with 100 genome sequences from the database (Genbank). A minimum spanning tree (MST) with calculated distances and a neighbor-joining tree were created.

Results

The developed assay displayed a robust and accurate population structure of the entire genus based on MLST analysis of 2418 target sequences. Y. pestis strains were well separated according to their assigned biovars and phylogenetic branches. The assay allowed the correct assignment of any given isolate to a phylogenetic branch but also enabled the exact identification at the strain level. Because of the highly clonal population structure of Y. pestis, strains belonging to the same phylogenetic group were separated by only a few SNPs (alleles)

Conclusions

Core-genome-based MLST is a perfect tool to study the overall population structure of Brucella but also allows the identification at the strain level during outbreak investigations and source tracking analysis.

709-NRZP
Development of a Yersinia pestis cgMLST-Assay for Molecular Outbreak and Forensic Trace-Back Analysis

H. Scholz1, M. C. Walter2, M. Antwerpen1
1Institut für Mikrobiologie der Bundeswehr, Bakteriologie und Toxinojologie, München, Germany

Question

Plague, also known as the Black Death, is a life threatening disease caused by the bacterium Yersinia pestis. Despite its globally low prevalence (about 1000-3000 human cases each year) and absence in Europe, plague still remains one of the most feared bacterial diseases. Untreated, it might reach a lethality of up to 100%. In an event of an outbreak or intentional release as a biological weapon, source tracking is of utmost importance. We therefore aimed to develop a robust core-genome-based typing assay for the identification of Y. pestis at the strain level.

Methods

A Y. pestis cgMLST typing scheme with SeqSphere+ (Ridom, Germany) was established. Illumina paired-end sequencing of 70 Y. pestis isolates of the in-house strain collection including rare strains from Mongolia. Additionally 200 genome sequences from the database (Genbank) comprising all phylogenetic branches of all recognized biovars (Orientalis, Antiqua, Medievalis, Intermedia, and Microtus) were added to the analysis. Genomes were assembled and a minimum spanning tree (MST) with calculated distances was created with the tools integrated in SeqSphere.

Results

The developed assay displayed a robust and accurate population structure of the entire genus based on MLST analysis of 2418 target sequences. Y. pestis strains were well separated according to their assigned biovars and phylogenetic branches. The assay allowed the correct assignment of any given isolate to a phylogenetic branch but also enabled the exact identification at the strain level. Because of the highly clonal population structure of Y. pestis, strains belonging to the same phylogenetic group were separated by only a few SNPs (alleles)

Conclusions

The developed cgMLST assay allows accurate typing at the strain level and therefore represents a perfect tool for molecular epidemiological outbreak- and forensic trace-back analyses. It also can be used to study the overall phylogeographic population structure of the Y. pestis including Y. pseudotuberculosis.

710-NRZP
Report of the National Reference Centre for Multidrug-Resistant Gram-negative Bacteria on Carbapenemases in Germany in 2019

N. Pfennigwerth1, J. Schauer2, L. Marlinghaus2, A. Anders2, M. Cremanns2, S. G. Gatermann2
1Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Department of Medical Microbiology, Bochum, Germany
2Ruhr University Bochum, Department of Medical Microbiology, Bochum, Germany

Question: Multidrug-resistance in Enterobacteriales, Pseudomonas aeruginosa and Acinetobacter baumannii is of
Cystic fibrosis (CF) is characterized by chronic infection and inflammation of the airways, infection and inflammation lead to progressive lung damage and respiratory failure. Polymicrobial lung infection in CF is dominated by P. aeruginosa, which is still the major cause of morbidity and mortality among this population. Repeated antimicrobial treatments of infections and exacerbations are a cornerstone of CF patient management. However, over time multi-resistant variants are increasingly selected. Inhaled antibiotics (intermittent or continuous) are part of the standard care for treating chronic pseudomonal respiratory tract infections. In contrast to systemic therapy (oral or intravenous), inhalation of antibiotics offers the advantage of delivering high drug concentrations to the site of infection with minimal systemic side effects Aztreonam, colistin, levofloxacin and tobramycin are available for inhalative antibiotic therapy of chronic P. aeruginosa CF lung infection. To monitor the microbiological efficacy of inhalative therapy, CF sputum sample pairs before and after an inhalative therapy cycle (typically 28 days) were examined by routine culture (CFU/ml) and quantitative real-time PCR of PMA-treated samples (infect living cells; CFU equivalent/ml; targeting 16S rDNA and the P. aeruginosa-specific genes regA and ecfX). So far, no significant change (decrease or increase) in the number of P. aeruginosa could be shown. In parallel, the activity of colistin (CT), aztreonam (ATM), levofloxacin (LEV) and tobramycin (TOB) against recovered clinical P. aeruginosa isolates with variable MIC values (up to ≥ 1024 µg/ml) was compared in artificial sputum medium (ASM) and by using “in-vivo-like” drug concentrations (500 µg/ml, 1000 µg/ml, 2000 µg/ml for ATM, LEV, TOB and 10 µg/ml, 50 µg/ml, 500 µg/ml for CT). In summary, killing activities are variable but clearly increase

**712 NRZP**

Efficacy of inhalative antibiotic therapy against *P. aeruginosa* in patients with Cystic Fibrosis

T. Burbach1, A. Schröder1, C. Smaczny2, O. Eickmeier2, V. Ilievski1, S. Besier1, M. Hogardt1

1University Hospital Frankfurt, Medical Microbiology and Infection Control, Frankfurt Main, Germany
2University Hospital Frankfurt, Medical Microbiology and Infection Control, Frankfurt Main, Germany
3Goethe University Frankfurt, Klinik für Kinder- und Jugendmedizin, Pädiatrische Allergologie, Pneumologie und Mukoviszidose, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is a multiorgan autosomal recessive genetic disease caused by mutations in the cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator (CFTR) gene. A defective CFTR ion channel leads to the formation of viscous secretions and secondary changes in several organs systems. Of note are mainly chronic airway infections with intermittent pulmonary exacerbations and progressive lung function decline. In the nutritive and low-oxygen environments of CF lungs support infections with a polymicrobial spectrum of pathogens. The highest priority in microbiological routine diagnostics remains the cultural detection of CF-typical pathogens (especially *P. aeruginosa, S. aureus*, *B. cepacia*-complex). For a targeted detection of the CF-organisms and adapted pathogen variants, the use of different selective media is required (defined as a basic culture and extended cultural approach). The detection of serum antibodies to *P. aeruginosa* is of diagnostic value for the early detection of *P. aeruginosa* (fist lung infection) and of prognostic value for the success of the *P. aeruginosa* eradication therapy. For species identification in CF microbiology MALDI-TOF MS is the method of choice. *B. cepacia* complex species need to be identified by *recA* gene sequencing in case of first isolates. As for chronic airway infection there is little evidence that AST predicts the clinical outcome of CF antimicrobial therapy, indication for AST testing (regarding *P. aeruginosa*) need to be strict (AST is recommended at least four times a year). With the advent of culture-independent approaches (e.g. microbiom analyses) the pathophysiological understanding of the polymicrobial nature of CF lung infection improved. Today molecular methods can complement the routine microbiology e.g. for detection of primary infection with *P. aeruginosa*, and viruses. The poster presentation will focus on the key recommendations of the MIQ24 CF 2019.

**711 NRZP**

Microbiological Diagnosis of CF lung infection (the new CF MIQ24 2019)

M. Hogardt1, B. C. Kahl1, S. Besier1, J. Steinmann2, M. Aelebe-Horn2, E. Richter3, G. Jäger3, C. Smaczny1, L. Sedlacek4

1University Hospital Frankfurt, Medical Microbiology and Infection Control, Frankfurt Main, Germany
2University Hospital Münster, Institute for Medical Microbiology, Münster, Germany
3Klinikum Nürnberg, Institut für Klinikhygiene, Medizinische Mikrobiologie und klinische Infektiologie, Nürnberg, Germany
4Schädelziraklinik, Munich, Germany
5MVZ Labor Dr. Limbach & Kollegen GbR, Institut für Medizinische Diagnostik GmbH Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany
6Zentrum für Humangenetik und Laboratoriumsdiagnostik, MVZ Martinsried GmbH, Martinsried, Germany
7University Hospital Frankfurt, Medizinische Klinik I, Pneumologie und Allergologie, Frankfurt, Germany
8University Hanover, Institut für Medical Microbiology and Hospital Epidemiology, Hanover, Germany

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is a multiorgan autosomal recessive genetic disease caused by mutations in the cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator (CFTR) gene. A defective CFTR ion channel leads to the formation of viscous secretions and secondary changes in several organs systems. Of note are mainly chronic airway infections with intermittent pulmonary exacerbations and progressive lung function decline. In the nutritive and low-oxygen environments of CF lungs support infections with a polymicrobial spectrum of pathogens. The highest priority in microbiological routine diagnostics remains the cultural detection of CF-typical pathogens (especially *P. aeruginosa, S. aureus*, *B. cepacia*-complex). For a targeted detection of the CF-organisms and adapted pathogen variants, the use of different selective media is required (defined as a basic culture and extended cultural approach). The detection of serum antibodies to *P. aeruginosa* is of diagnostic value for the early detection of *P. aeruginosa* (fist lung infection) and of prognostic value for the success of the *P. aeruginosa* eradication therapy. For species identification in CF microbiology MALDI-TOF MS is the method of choice. *B. cepacia* complex species need to be identified by *recA* gene sequencing in case of first isolates. As for chronic airway infection there is little evidence that AST predicts the clinical outcome of CF antimicrobial therapy, indication for AST testing (regarding *P. aeruginosa*) need to be strict (AST is recommended at least four times a year). With the advent of culture-independent approaches (e.g. microbiom analyses) the pathophysiological understanding of the polymicrobial nature of CF lung infection improved. Today molecular methods can complement the routine microbiology e.g. for detection of primary infection with *P. aeruginosa*, and viruses. The poster presentation will focus on the key recommendations of the MIQ24 CF 2019.

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is characterized by chronic infection and inflammation of the airways, Infection and inflammation lead to progressive lung damage and respiratory failure. Polymicrobial lung infection in CF is dominated by *P. aeruginosa*, which is still the major cause of morbidity and mortality among this population. Repeated antimicrobial treatments of infections and exacerbations are a cornerstone of CF patient management. However, over time multi-resistant variants are increasingly selected. Inhaled antibiotics (intermittent or continuous) are part of the standard care for treating chronic pseudomonal respiratory tract infections. In contrast to systemic therapy (oral or intravenous), inhalation of antibiotics offers the advantage of delivering high drug concentrations to the site of infection with minimal systemic side effects Aztreonam, colistin, levofloxacin and tobramycin are available for inhalative antibiotic therapy of chronic *P. aeruginosa* CF lung infection. To monitor the microbiological efficacy of inhalative therapy, CF sputum sample pairs before and after an inhalative therapy cycle (typically 28 days) were examined by routine culture (CFU/ml) and quantitative real-time PCR of PMA-treated samples (infect living cells; CFU equivalent/ml; targeting 16S rDNA and the *P. aeruginosa*-specific genes *regA* and *ecfX*). So far, no significant change (decrease or increase) in the number of *P. aeruginosa* could be shown. In parallel, the activity of colistin (CT), aztreonam (ATM), levofloxacin (LEV) and tobramycin (TOB) against recovered clinical *P. aeruginosa* isolates with variable MIC values (up to ≥ 1024 µg/ml each) was compared in artificial sputum medium (ASM) and by using “in-vivo-like” drug concentrations (500 µg/ml, 1000 µg/ml, 2000 µg/ml for ATM, LEV, TOB and 10 µg/ml, 50 µg/ml, 500 µg/ml for CT). In summary, killing activities are variable but clearly increase
with drug concentration, and show a trend of sufficient killing activity up to MIC values of 128 μg/ml, that may be an first estimate for an inhalative antibiotic breakpoint.

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713-NRZP

Evaluation of *in silico* tools for sequence-based serovar prediction of *Salmonella spp.* at the German National Reference Center

*S. Banerji*, S. Simon*, A. Tille*, A. Fruth*, A. Flieger*

*Robert Koch-Institute, FG11, Wernigerode, Germany

Introduction: Serotyping is a very important classification method for *Salmonella* species. Several *in silico* serotyping tools for *Salmonella* are available, which are based on whole genome sequence data. The German National Reference Center (NRC) for *Salmonella* and other bacterial enteric pathogens receives around 4,000 *Salmonella* isolates per year.

Aim: We assessed the suitability of two selected *in silico* subtyping methods for routine serotype prediction. SeqSero determines the serotype based on the loci for the relevant O- and H-antigens in the bacterial genome by mapping and blast search (Zhang et al. 2015 & 2019). The second method is based on a 7 locus MLST scheme, which looks for allelic differences in 7 conserved housekeeping genes (Achtman et al. 2012) and reveals distinct sequence types (STs).

Material and methods: Whole genome sequencing was performed on a MiSeq benchtop sequencer using Illumina’s v3 chemistry. Raw reads were submitted to the SeqSero software (www.denglab.info/SeqSero) that was modified for batch analysis. The 7 gene MLST was performed with the Ridom™ SeqSphere+ software where the scheme described above (available from www.enterobase.warwick.ac.uk) was pre-installed.

Results: The analysis of 520 *Salmonella* genomes with the two *in silico* typing tools yielded a high correlation with our laboratory serotyping results, i.e. 98% for SeqSero and 95.2% for MLST. SeqSero failed to predict a complete antigenic formula in 5 cases (1%). An additional five cases (1%) of micorrrelation concerned monophasic strains of *S. Typhimurium* and *S. Choleraesuis*. Serotype prediction based on MLST + Enterobase showed a high error rate for discriminating between monophasic and biphasic variants. The combination of both methods yielded a correlation rate of 99.4% by providing the advantage of both methods.

Conclusions: The evaluation of two different *in silico* methods for *Salmonella* serotype prediction showed that both methods highly correlated with laboratory serotyping results. Since both methods complement each other with respect to the provided information, we conclude that a combination of both tools is best suited for routine *in silico* serotyping at the NRC.

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714-NRZP

NGS-based molecular surveillance of infections with *Shigella sonnei*, cgMLST analysis and identified clusters 2018-2019 in Germany


*Robert Koch Institute, Division Enteropathogenic Bacteria and Legionella, Wernigerode, Germany

**Robert Koch Institute, Infektionskrankheiten, Wernigerode, Germany

Introduction: Among the more than 2,600 *Salmonella* Serovars, *Salmonella* (S.) Enteritidis is the most prevalent in industrialized countries provoking not only 50% of human *Salmonella* infections in Europe but also causing significant, often multi-national food-borne outbreaks (1). Due to the inherent clonality of this serovar unambiguous case identification and source attribution was often hindered since phenotypic and even molecular subtyping methods had been of insufficient discriminatory power. Objectives: *S. Enteritidis* is one of the prioritized organisms for the intensified next generation sequencing (NGS)-based surveillance at the German NRC aiming to enhance the discrimination among certain subtypes defined by conventional subtyping methods. This would result in a more accurate determination of outbreak events and definite identification of the (food) source of infection. Methods: All *S. Enteritidis* isolates sent to the NRC underwent phage typing for pre-selection. From strains of the predominant

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Question: Shigellosis is one of the most important diarrheal infections worldwide with estimated 165 million cases per year and is responsible for approximately 60% of death in children less than 5 years of age. There are four known species of *Shigella*: *S. dysenteriae*, *S. flexneri*, *S. boydii* and *S. sonnei*. All of these have high transmission rates, while *S. sonnei* is the predominant one. Also 75% of reported cases account for this species in Germany, with an increasing number since 2017. In 2018 surveillance and outbreak detection analysis by pulsed-field gel electrophoresis and phage typing was replaced by NGS-based cgMLST at the NRC. Molecular characterization of *S. sonnei* isolates by cgMLST and performance testing for cluster detection and surveillance implementation was carried out.

Methods: In total, 206 isolates of *S. sonnei*, received 2018 and 2019, were characterized at the NRC. Out of these, 120 were under further investigation by Illumina MiSeq whole genome sequencing and Ridom SeqSphere+ v6.0.0 cluster analysis by the utilization of the *Escherichia/Shigella* cgMLST v1 scheme from Enterobase.

Results: By molecular characterization, 28 isolates could be connected to the European-wide outbreak strain reported by Public Health England, UK, associated with transmission amongst MSM (1-10 alleles difference). 14 further isolates, originating from a kindergarten outbreak in Berlin in September 2018, were investigated. A cluster of seven isolates was additionally detected, connected with attendance to a music festival in Poland in August 2018, and three additional clusters closely related in cgMLST were investigated in 2018. 9 Clusters could be identified in 2019, including one with a link to an Irish food isolate, one with travel-association to Jordan and one of 9 closely related cases connected with an attendance to a festival in Saxony-Anhalt.

Conclusion: cgMLST was successful implemented at the NRC for surveillance and outbreak detection. Our work confirms that usage of Enterobase *Escherichia/Shigella* cgMLST v1 scheme is qualified for cluster analysis of Shigella strains.
phage types or from suspected outbreak strains genomic DNA was prepared for Illumina short read sequencing. Raw Reads were analyzed by core genome (cg)MLST (Enterobase scheme in Ridom SeqSphere+ (2.3)) to determine their phylogenetic relationship. Results: Since 2016 more than 1,300 S. Enteritidis genomes have been analyzed at the NRC. Phenotypically, the strains had been attributed to 26 different phage types. cgMLST revealed 73 clusters (41 of them comprising more than three isolates). Although most clusters consist of only one phage type there is no strict correlation between phage type and cgMLST-based relatedness. Often isolates of the same phage type are more distant from one another than isolates of different phage types indicating that, especially for strains belonging to the predominant phage types, no conclusion can be drawn about their cluster affiliation. Conclusion: Applying the high-resolution NGS technique for depicting relationships within the S. Enteritidis population gives a comprehensive overview about the circulating lineages and reliably points out developing clusters allowing more focused outbreak investigations and subsequent control measures.

716-NRZP
Identification of novel pathogenicity factors in Bartonella bacilliformis
*A. Dichter1, S. Garcia Torres1, M. Garcia-Quintanilla1, S. Becker1, J. Berger2, W. Ballhorn1, V. A. J. Kempf1
1Universitätsklinikum Frankfurt, Medizinische Mikrobiologie und Krankenhaushygiene, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
2Max-Planck-Institut für Entwicklungsbiologie, Tübingen, Germany

Introduction:

Bartonella bacilliformis is the causative agent of Carrion’s disease, a vector-borne biphasic illness restricted to the South American Andes. The pathogen infects human erythrocytes causing severe hemolytic anemia (Oroya fever) with high mortality rates in untreated patients. In a second chronic phase, the infection of endothelial cells results in the formation of blood-filled nodular lesions at skin sites (verruga peruana). Underlying molecular mechanisms of host infection are still unclear. Trimeric autotransporter adhesins (TAAs) play an essential role in bacterial pathogenicity and are encoded in various Bartonella spp. We are interested in Bartonella bacilliformis adhesins A (BbadA) that has been identified as a TAA.

Objectives:
The objective of this work is the identification and characterization of immunodominant proteins of B. bacilliformis and the genetic and functional characterization of BbadA and Flagellin. Furthermore, potential target proteins will be analyzed for diagnostic and therapeutic use.

Material & Methods:

Molecular genetic strategies using bacterial mutants (transposon mutagenesis library), recombinant protein expression strategies (heterologous expression library) and a reverse vaccinology approach are used to identify immunodominant proteins and pathogenicity factors of B. bacilliformis. Deletion mutants of bbadA and flagellin were generated using homologous recombination techniques. Furthermore, infection experiments with erythrocytes and endothelial cells will be performed to characterize the role of BbadA in the infection process.

Results & Conclusion:

A genomic B. bacilliformis expression library was established in E. coli and screened by using anti B. bacilliformis sera. Western blot analysis with reactive mutants revealed immunodominance of recombinant BbadA and Flagellin. The genomic deletion of bbadA and flagellin was confirmed by PCR and sequencing. Electron microscopy showed the presence of BbadA on the surface of B. bacilliformis but not in ΔbbadA. Furthermore, the deletion of bbadA leads to a reduction in cell adhesion to endothelial cells.

717-NRZP
Comparative genomics of Borrelia species
*S. Hepner1, J. Hübner2, A. Wieser3, S. K. Sheppard4, E. Mourkas4, S. Bayliss5, J. Calland6, B. Pasoe7, E. Rudolph8, R. E. Rolls8, D. Marosevic9, V. Fingerle9, G. Margos1, A. Sing1
1Bavarian Health and Food Safety Authority, Oberschleißheim, Germany
2Dr. von Hauner Children’s Hospital, Munich, Germany
3Max von Pettenkofer Institute, Munich, Germany
4University of Bath, Bath, United Kingdom
5Ludwig-Maximilians Universiveristy, Munich, Germany

The species Borrelia bavariensis, B. garinii and B. valaisiana belong to the B. burgdorferi sensu lato complex, but differ in vector/host association and/or human pathogenicity. Borrelia bavariensis is adapted to rodents and the species is divided into two populations, one in Eastern Europe and Asia, the other in Western Europe. The population division coincides with the presence of different vectors: Ixodes persulcatus in Eastern Europe and Asia, I. ricinus in Western Europe. In contrast, B. garinii is associated with birds and can use both vectors (I. persulcatus and I. ricinus). Both Borrelia species (B. bavariensis and B. garinii) are human pathogens, but members of the two B. bavariensis populations evoke different manifestations: Patients infected with Asian B. bavariensis display mainly skin lesion, patients infected with European B. bavariensis often show signs of disseminated manifestation, e.g. neuroborreliosis. In contrast, B. valaisiana is not known to be human pathogenic; adapted to birds (like B. garinii) and occurs only in Western Europe as it is associated with I. ricinus. In this project, we want to compare the genomes of this three Borrelia species to identify candidate genes that are involved in adaption and pathogenicity. Cultures of about 30 Borrelia strains were initiated and after DNA extraction whole genome sequencing was performed using Pacific Biosciences and Illumina technology. We will use comparative genomics to identify species-specific core and accessory genome and plasmid families. Furthermore, genes present and absent in species with specific adaption (pathogenicity, host/vector adaption) should be identified using the pangenome tool PIRATE. Special attention will be given to the Asian and European subpopulations of B. bavariensis to understand the population division and differences in virulence levels. To obtain completed consensus genomes (chromosome and plasmids) we used combined Pacific Biosciences and Illumina data. Initial data indicates that the chromosome, cp26 and Ip54 have concordant phylogenies whilst plasmid phylogenies show different clustering of isolates.

718-NRZP
Ten years of laboratory surveillance of the National Reference Laboratory for meningococci an H. influenzae (NRZMIH): invasive H. influenzae disease in Germany 2009–2018
*T. Läm1, H. Claus1, M. Krone1, U. Vogel1
1Ludwig-Maximilians Universiveristy, Munich, Germany
Introduction

NRZMHi has been surveying the serotypes and antibiotic resistance of invasive H. influenzae isolates since 2008. For this purpose, a representative collection of clinical strains is necessary. The NRL therefore closely collaborates with the public health services and the RKI.

Objectives

To report on the NRZMHi laboratory surveillance for invasive Hi infections 2009-2018.

Materials and Methods

Species confirmation and serotyping was done pheno- and genotypically. All isolates were tested by gradient agar diffusion and β-lactamase test. Coverage was assessed by comparing the number of cases processed with the number of notified cases (SurvStat@RKI).

Results

From 2009 to 2018, about 4200 submissions were processed including invasive specimens from 3919 patients. The NRZMHi identified 3865 viable Hi isolates including 3400 invasive strains. An increase in processed cases was seen in the 10 years observation period with 109 cases in 2009 to 649 in 2018. The estimated coverage rose from 59% (2009) to 75% (2018).

Most invasive isolates were NTHi (2817/3400; 82.9 %), followed by Hif (n=390; 11.5%). Hib (n=95; 2.8%) and Hie (n=86; 2.5%) were less common. The age group most affected was > 40 years old (83.0% of all cases) with 64.8% aged 65+. A high proportion of cases (n=290; 8.5%) was in children aged <5 years, with 4.2% aged < 1 year.

622 isolates (18.2 %) were ampicillin resistant: 67.0 % were β-lactamase++; 33.0 % were BLNAR. An increase was observed from 2009 (12%) to 2018 (21%). The cefotaxime resistance was 2% of 1431 tested isolates 2013.

Conclusions

The NRZMHi is now well established in public health microbiology in Germany, partly due to increased submissions. The dominance of NTHi and its rising trend in the elderly consistent with other countries. NTHi in newborns is rare, but possibly underestimated, which warrants consideration in clinical practice. Hia, which is prevalent in some indigenous populations, was uncommon. The success of the German infant vaccination strategy is confirmed by the reduction of Hib disease. Whilst ampicillin resistance rates in invasive isolates are lower than in respiratory isolates, the rise over years is a matter of concern.

719-NRZP

Discriminative potential of VITEK® MS regarding the genus Haemophilus

*S. Nürnberg1, H. Claus1, M. Krone1, U. Vogel1, T. Läm1
1Julius-Maximilians-University of Wuerzburg, Institute for Hygiene and Microbiology, Würzburg, Germany

Introduction

The distinction between non-typeable Haemophilus influenzae (Hi) and H. haemolyticus (Hh) is a diagnostic challenge. At the same time, it is clinically relevant, as only Hi is pathogenic. Species identification based on matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization-time of flight (MALDI-TOF) is a well-established diagnostic method. However, validation data on Haemophilus spp. are scarce, especially for VITEK MS.

Objective

Our aim was to investigate the discriminative potential of VITEK MS in the diagnosis of Haemophilus spp.

Materials and Methods

A total of 308 Haemophilus spp. isolates including 236 Hi and 51 Hh were analyzed by MALDI-TOF using the VITEK MS (bioMérieux). Strains were derived mostly from the collections of the NRZMH and the Institute for Hygiene and Microbiology. Species confirmation was done phenotypically and by specific PCRs. In addition, multilocus sequence typing (MLST) was performed on 108 NTHi and 45 Hh isolates to ensure genetic diversity of the strains.

Results

Phylogenetic analysis based on MLST confirmed the clear separation of Hh and two distinct clusters for Hh and Hi, and represented each species as a clearly separated clade, with profound intraspecies diversity. This finding supported the usefulness of the strain collection and ruled out the possibility that the results might biased by clonality.

On the genus level, VITEK MS correctly identified all tested isolates. For Hh, 22 of 51 strains were correctly identified, 26 were misdiagnosed as Hi, and 3/51 presented uncertain diagnosis. With regards to the identification of Hi, a sensitivity and a specificity of 100% and 56%, respectively, was calculated.

Conclusion

VITEK MS currently shows unsatisfactory specificity with regards to the identification of Hi, as many H.h. isolates are misidentified as Hi. An extension of the VITEK® MS reference database is needed to improve its performance.

720-NRZP

Use of whole genome sequencing to analyse of a cluster of invasive meningococcal disease caused by serogroup C in the counties of Ebersberg and Munich (2019)

H. Claus1, T. Läm1, M. Krone1, *U. Vogel1
1Institute for Hygiene and Microbiology, Würzburg, Germany

Introduction

From March to September 2019 five cases of meningococcal disease occurred in patients aged 13-56 years, which due to the severity of disease and the age group received much media attention and prompted public health officials to initiate a vaccine campaign. We report the genomic characterization of the causative meningococcal isolates.

Objective
Whole genome sequencing (WGS) of meningococcal serogroup C (MenC) isolates of a spatio-temporal cluster in comparison to other MenC isolates from 2019

Material and Methods

WGS was done at the Core Unit Systems Medicine of the University of Würzburg on an Illumina NextSeq 500 sequencer using the Nextera XT library preparation. SeqSphere+ software (Ridom) was used for de novo assembly (Velvet) and allele calling for cgMLST assignment. BIGSdb and SeqSphere+ were used for phylogenetic analyses.

Results

Antigenic finetyping already revealed an identical, but very rare finetype: C: P1.5-1.10-1:F3-6, which otherwise occurred only twice among 6000 isolates collected at the NRZMHi since 2002. The outbreak isolates were assigned to clonal complex (cc) 11. WGS showed that the isolates differed in less than 4 of >1,100 loci from each other. Among all other MenC:cc11 isolates from 2019 (N=4), the next most closely related (N=2) differed in 34 and 163 loci from the Bavarian isolates. They displayed a different antigenic finetyp and were isolated in the counties Hamburg and Rhein-Erft. WGS of 119 strains isolated from January through July 2019 demonstrated that the Ebersberg/Munich MenC group of similar strains was the largest of five groups with ten or less differences in core genome loci. The isolates of the other clusters belonged to serogroups B, W and Y, respectively.

Conclusions

The cluster of IMD in Southern Bavaria was caused by a newly observed clone of cc11, the dominant MenC genotype in Germany. Whilst in this particular case, antigen finetyping already pointed to a unique genotype, cgMLST provided the phylogenetic framework among MenC isolates in Germany.

Methods: Questionnaire; standard household water samples analyzed for Legionella concentration followed by subtyping of Legionella pneumophila serogroup 1 isolates; among cases further water samples to identify the infectious source as appropriate. Appraisal matrix to identify three source types (external source out of residence, residential non-drinking water source, residential drinking water (DW) as source) using three evidence types (microbiological results, cluster evidence, analytical-comparative evidence (using added information from controls)).

Results: Inclusion of 94 study cases and 163 controls. Median age of cases was 68 years (range 25–93 years), 61 were male. We identified an infectious source in 5 cases as confirmed since the same strains (sequence type (ST) 182) were detected in patients and environmental samples. In 12 cases we identified an environmental source as highly probable because strains clinical samples were positive for the same matbtype. In four cases the suspected environmental source was possibly found, based on mab 3/1 positive strains / samples from patients and water. Cases had a higher chance for the presence of a “Knoxville-like” (mab 3/1 positive strain in their residential DW (CR = 6.02, 95% confidence interval (CI) 2.0 to 21). However, being a case was not associated with the degree of Legionella concentration in standard household water samples.

Conclusion: Using the appraisal matrix we attributed a significant proportion of cases of CALD to an infectious source, predominantly residential DW. Risk for LD seems to be conferred primarily by the type of Legionella rather than the amount.

722-NRZP

First case of a non-toxicigenic tox gene-bearing C. ulcerans blood stream infection in an immunocompromised patient. *A. Berger1, J. P. Borde2, A. Dangel3, A. Sing1

1Bavarian Health and Food Safety Authority, National Consilary Laboratory for Diphtheria, Oberschleißheim, Germany
2Gesundheitszentrum Oberkirch, Oberkirch, Germany
3Bavarian Health and Food Safety Authority, Oberschleißheim, Germany

Objectives: The patient’s isolate was toxigenic and was isolated from water samples. The patient had a medical history of a splenic marginal zone lymphoma. On admission, MR imaging of the total spine showed vertebral osteomyelitis as well as infiltration of the paravertebral tissue with an abscess formation but there was no need for surgery. Objectives: The patient’s isolate was toxigenic and was isolated from water samples. The patient had a medical history of a splenic marginal zone lymphoma. On admission, MR imaging of the total spine showed vertebral osteomyelitis as well as infiltration of the paravertebral tissue with an abscess formation but there was no need for surgery. Objectives: The patient’s isolate was toxigenic and was isolated from water samples. The patient had a medical history of a splenic marginal zone lymphoma. On admission, MR imaging of the total spine showed vertebral osteomyelitis as well as infiltration of the paravertebral tissue with an abscess formation but there was no need for surgery. Objectives: The patient’s isolate was toxigenic and was isolated from water samples. The patient had a medical history of a splenic marginal zone lymphoma. On admission, MR imaging of the total spine showed vertebral osteomyelitis as well as infiltration of the paravertebral tissue with an abscess formation but there was no need for surgery.

Methods: Whole genome sequencing (WGS) of meningococcal serogroup C (MenC) isolates of a spatio-temporal cluster in comparison to other MenC isolates from 2019

Material and Methods

WGS was done at the Core Unit Systems Medicine of the University of Würzburg on an Illumina NextSeq 500 sequencer using the Nextera XT library preparation. SeqSphere+ software (Ridom) was used for de novo assembly (Velvet) and allele calling for cgMLST assignment. BIGSdb and SeqSphere+ were used for phylogenetic analyses.

Results

Antigenic finetyping already revealed an identical, but very rare finetype: C: P1.5-1.10-1:F3-6, which otherwise occurred only twice among 6000 isolates collected at the NRZMHi since 2002. The outbreak isolates were assigned to clonal complex (cc) 11. WGS showed that the isolates differed in less than 4 of >1,100 loci from each other. Among all other MenC:cc11 isolates from 2019 (N=4), the next most closely related (N=2) differed in 34 and 163 loci from the Bavarian isolates. They displayed a different antigenic finetyp and were isolated in the counties Hamburg and Rhein-Erft. WGS of 119 strains isolated from January through July 2019 demonstrated that the Ebersberg/Munich MenC group of similar strains was the largest of five groups with ten or less differences in core genome loci. The isolates of the other clusters belonged to serogroups B, W and Y, respectively.

Conclusions

The cluster of IMD in Southern Bavaria was caused by a newly observed clone of cc11, the dominant MenC genotype in Germany. Whilst in this particular case, antigen finetyping already pointed to a unique genotype, cgMLST provided the phylogenetic framework among MenC isolates in Germany.

721-NRZP

Results of intensified source finding efforts among community-acquired cases of Legionnaires’ disease – first results of the German LeTriWa study; Berlin, 2016–2019

C. Lück1, U. Buchholz2, H. J. Jahn3, F. Reber1, A. S. Leifeld4, B. Brodhun5, W. Haas6, C. Förster7, B. Schaefer2, E. Harbich8

1M.Fakultät der TU Dresden, Institut Med. Mikrobiologie, Konsiliarfabor Legionella, Dresden, Germany
2Robert Koch-Institut, Abteilung Infektionsepidemiologie, Respiratorisch übertragbare Erkrankungen, Berlin, Germany
3Umweltbundesamt, Fachgebiet II, 3.5: Mikrobiologie des Trink- und Badewassers, Bad Elster, Germany

Introduction: In Germany Legionnaire's disease (LD) is a notifiable form of pneumonia caused by Legionella bacteria. Typically, the bacterium is found in water systems or biofilm, but it may be aerosolized and inhaled, or aspirated to cause disease. The sources of infection of most cases of community-acquired Legionnaires' disease (CALD) are unknown.

Objective: Identification of sources of infection of CALD.

Adult cases of CALD reported to district health departments and consenting to the study; age and hospital matched controls.
after a total duration of therapy of 6 weeks. Conclusion A microtrauma was discussed as the most probable source of bacterial colonization and infection in this case. NGS data of the strain revealed a previously described PAI and no prophage was detected. MLST data yielded no close relationship to any other isolate in our database, but sequence type ST326 which we have previously isolated from cats and a fox as well as from a human wound after a cat bite in a woman with DLD. Besides the tox gene a variety of virulence genes associated with cell adhesion or iron homeostasis and phospholipase D were detected.

723-MIEP
Detection of CTX-M-15 and AMP-C- beta-lactamases in Escherichia coli and Pseudomonas species isolates from abattoir and poultry anal and cloacal swab samples in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State Nigeria.

1. Iroha 1, O. Nnaji2, B. Oke 1, P. Ikemsi1
2. Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Department of Applied Microbiology, Abakaliki, Nigeria

Background: Extended-spectrum beta-lactamases (ESBL) are enzymes that confer resistance to most beta-lactam antibiotics, including penicillins, cephalosporins, and the monobactam aztreonam. In this study, the presence of ESBL and AMP-C beta lactamase genes were detected in E. coli and Pseudomonas species isolates from abattoir and poultry origin. Method: A total of 300 (poultry n=150 and abattoir n=150) cloacal and anal swabs were collected and analysed using standard microbiology techniques. Isolated bacteria were screened for the presence of ESBL by double disc synergy test while AMP-C detection was by disc diffusion method using cefoxitin and boronic acid. Susceptibility of ESBL producing bacteria to different antibiotics was by disc diffusion method. The presence of antibiotic resistance genes was evaluated using polymerase chain reaction. Clonal relatedness of the isolates was estimated using Random Amplification Polymorphic DNA and further sequenced. Results: The results showed that the samples from poultry harbored 42 (28%) Escherichia coli and 5 (3.3%) Pseudomonas species while samples from abattoir harbored 50 (33.3%) Escherichia coli only. 12 (28.5%) and 5 (33.3%) of E. coli from poultry samples and abattoir, respectively were ESBL producers, while 2 (40%) of Pseudomonas species from abattoir were Amp-C producers. ESBL and AMP-C producing isolates were multi-drug resistant. The isolates analyzed by PCR were found to harbor the following antibiotic resistance genes: blaACC-M, blaMOX-M, blaDHAA-M, mcr 2, mcr 3, blaCTX-M, blaSHV and blaTEM. Out of 17 isolates screened, 9 co-harborred TEM/SHV genes, 2 CTX-M/SHV genes, 6 CTX-M/TEM genes while 1 co-harborred CTX-M/SHV/TEM; 8 also co-harborred mcr2/mcr3. RAPD analysis revealed five clusters based on the band patterns observed. DNA sequencing of blaCTX-M-producing isolates revealed the presence of mcr2/mcr3. CONCLUSION: The presence of these resistance genes in poultry and abattoir is worrisome as it could serve as a potential reservoir and source of spread to humans posing a serious public health threat.

Keywords: beta lactamas, ESBL, AMP-C poultry and abattoir.

724-MIEP
Multi locus genotyping of Giardia duodenalis in Southwestern Iran. A community survey

*M. Beiromvand1, B. Baghlaninezhad1, A. Rafiei1, D. Carmena2, P. C. Köster2, B. Bailo2, M. Hernández de Mingo2
1. Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Parasitology, Andimesht, Iran
2. Parasitology Reference and Research Laboratory, National Centre for Microbiology, Parasitology, Madrid, Spain

Introduction: Giardia duodenalis is one of the main enteric pathogens associated with diarrheal disease. In developing countries, giardiasis is a major public health concern, particularly in children under five years of age.

Methods: Individual faecal specimens were collected from 1,163 individuals (male/female ratio: 0.9; age range 2–75 years) with (n=258) and without (n=905) gastrointestinal symptoms living in rural and urban settings during the period 2017–2018. Conventional methods were used for the initial detection of G. duodenalis cysts in faecal specimens. Microscopy-positive samples were confirmed by PCR amplification and sequencing of the small subunit rRNA gene of the parasite. A multilocus genotyping (MLG) scheme targeting the triose phosphate isomerase, the glutamate dehydrogenase, and the beta-giardin genes was used for genotyping purposes.

Results: Giardia duodenalis cysts were detected in 7.7% (90/1,163) of samples by microscopy, of which 82 were confirmed by ssu-PCR. Successful amplification and sequencing results were obtained for 23.2% (19/82), 9.8% (8/82), and 8.5% (7/82) of the confirmed samples at the tpi, gdh, and bg loci, respectively. MLG data for the three loci were available for two samples only. Out of the 24 samples genotyped at any loci, 50% (12/24) were identified as assemblage A and the remaining half as assemblage B. Overall, AII was the most prevalent sub-assemblage detected (41.7%, 10/24), followed by BIII (25.0%, 6/24), discordant BIII/BIV (5/24) or AI/All (2/24) sequences, and BIV (1/24). No significant correlation was demonstrated between a given assemblage/sub-assemblage and the occurrence of clinical symptoms.

Conclusions: No genotypes adapted to animal hosts other than humans were found circulating in the investigated human population, suggesting that transmission of human giardiasis in this Iranian region is primarily of anthropontic nature. Further molecular-based studies are needed to confirm and expand these results, and to ascertain the presence and public health relevance of the parasite in environmental samples.

725-MIEP
Phylogenetically defined isoforms of Listeria monocytogenes InlB differently bind receptor GC1qR

1. E. Kalinin2, Y. Chalenko2, E. Sysolyatina1, K. Sobyanin2, S. Ermolaeva1
2. Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow, Russian Federation
3. Gamaleya Research Centre of Epidemiology and microbiology, Laboratory of Ecology of Infectious Agents, Moscow, Russian Federation
4. Federal Research Center for Virology and Microbiology, Nizhny Novgorod, Russian Federation

Introduction The human and animal pathogen, Gram-positive bacterium Listeria monocytogenes has been evolving in at least 4 phylogenetic lineages with predominance of Lineage I and Lineage II strains [1]. Lineage I is predominant among listeriosis in humans while Lineage II is overrepresented among animal and food isolates. The invasion factor InlB presents in all L. monocytogenes strains. Phylogenetically defined substitutions in InlB are conservative among strains belonging to a certain phylogenetic lineage. InlB mediates
active invasion into mammalian cells via interactions with tyrosine kinase receptor c-Met, the complement receptor gC1q-R and surface glycosaminoglycans.

**Aim** The aim of study was to establish how different variants of L. monocytogenes InIB internalin domain (idInlB) interact with gC1q-R.

**Materials & methods** Size exclusion chromatography were used to characterize idInlBs. Solid-phase microplate binding was used to quantify interactions with gC1q-R. Isogenic recombinant L. monocytogenes strains were used to elucidate the input of idInlB isoforms in HEp-2 cell invasion.

**Results** 3 variants of the InIB internalin domain were cloned and purified as His-tag-idInlB. IdInlB9 was typical for Lineage I CC1, idInlB14 is widely spread among Lineage II strains of CC7, CC19, CC20, CC101 etc., idInlB13 is typical for EGDe (Lineage II CC9) strain. In ELISA, idInlB9 bound gC1q-R proteins better than both lineage II idInlBs. Invasion in HEp-2 cells of idInlB9 but not idInlB14-carrying L. monocytogenes was gC1q-R dependent.

**Conclusion** Obtained results suggested that interactions of idInlB with gC1q-R are important for virulence Lineage I strains but seem to be of less importance for Lineage II L. monocytogenes strains.

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**726-MIEP**

Analysis of antimicrobial resistance and virulence in *Staphylococcus aureus* isolates from a community sample

*S. aureus* is a common colonizer of the human skin and has become a global threat to healthcare. In the last decades, a rising number of *S. aureus* infection cases was observed and isolates with various resistances and enhanced virulence were increasingly found. *S. aureus* is mainly detected in hospitalized patients. As *S. aureus* is a colonizer of the skin, it is assumable that genetic adaption of *S. aureus* happens on healthy carriers.

Objectives: Multiresistant *S. aureus* isolates, especially MRSA, are well studied in hospitals. Studies among healthy communities are still rare. In context of the “FlüGe” health study, nasal swabs of refugees were collected. Participants lived in communal accommodations in North Rhine Westphalia, Germany. Nasal swabs were analyzed for presence of *S. aureus* and its provision with antimicrobial resistances and other virulence factors.

**Materials & methods:** *S. aureus* isolates are identified by 16S rDNA sequencing and sp-a typing. All isolates are tested for four genes indicating community-acquired (CA) strains. All isolates were tested for antibiotic resistances by microdilution assay. Biofilm formation was investigated by a semi-quantitative biofilm assay.

**Results:** In 161 nasal swabs nine *S. aureus* isolates were identified (5,6%), four were MRSA (2,4%). Isolates belong to common (t084, t304), less common (t021, t991) and rare (t4983) spa-types or have not been described before. In three isolates (33%) arcA or etd genes indicate CA isolates. Resistances to penicillin (100%), oxacillin/cefoxitin (44%) erythromycin, clindamycin and tetracycline were found. No resistances to reserve antibiotics were detected. Most strains are able to weakly form biofilms, of which the majority was resolvable by protein kinase, suggesting a protein-based mechanism of biofilm formation.

**Conclusion:** Among refugees, mostly spa-types were identified that are less common in Central Europe, while typical European strains were rarely detected (except for t084). This indicates a co-travelling of the germs with the refugees. Especially rare or newly described strains seem to be less virulent regarding to antimicrobial resistance and biofilm formation.

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**727-MIEP**

Genomic analysis reveals varying degrees of host restriction in *Escherichia coli*

collections and subjected to whole genome-sequencing (Illumina). A maximum-likelihood phylogeny was constructed based on the core genome sequences. The presence of genes enriched in strains isolated from specific host was determined by a bacterial Genome-Wide Association Study (GWAS).

Results: The core and accessory genes showed a similar clustering pattern at the population level, indicating a partial host association at the level of sub-populations. We identified adaptation of ST131 and ST117 lineages to human and chicken host respectively. Neither the geographical origin of the strains nor AMR gene profiles were associated with either a specific host or phylogenetic lineage. The GWAS results in k-mers associated with chicken, human and cattle hosts, but no k-mers association was found for pigs.

Conclusions: In general, host association was randomly distributed throughout the entire E. coli phylogeny, but various phylogenetic clusters of strains were observed which exhibited a significant enrichment of a specific host. Mapping of k-mers significantly associated with a host to reference genomes showed different gene sets enriched in E. coli isolates from different hosts. In silico analysis of function revealed a potential role in adaptation to or colonization of different hosts, which may determine broad or narrow host range adaptation.

728-MIEP
Molecular and clinical characterization of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) isolates carrying Panton-Valentine leukocidin in Northern Bavaria, Germany, 2009-2016

1T. Szumlianski, A. Simbeck, R. Ziegler1, T. Holzmann2, S. Monecke3, R. Ehricht1, R. Bertram2, W. Schneider-Brachter4, J. Steinmann1

2Klinikum Nürnberg, Institute of Clinical Hygiene, Medical Microbiology and Clinical Infectology, Nürnberg, Germany

3University Hospital Regensburg, Department of Infection Control and Infectious Diseases, Regensburg, Germany

4Leibniz Institute of Photonic Technology e.V., Jena (Leibniz-IPHT), Optisch-Molekulare Diagnostik und Systemtechnologien, Jena, Germany

5Paracelsus Medical University, Research Department, Nürnberg, Germany

6University of Regensburg, Institute of Clinical Microbiology and Hygiene, Regensburg, Germany

Question: The spread of community-acquired MRSA (ca-MRSA) carrying Panton-Valentine-leukocidin (PVL) as a distinctive virulence factor is causing recurring and persistent human infections. This study investigated the epidemiology as well as clinical characteristics of PVL-positive MRSA-strains in Northern Bavaria, Germany, over the course of 8 years.

Methods: In total, 131 PVL-positive MRSA were collected between 2008-2016 from different hospitals in Northern Bavaria, Germany. Identification was performed by MALDI-TOF, susceptibility testing by VITEK II or agar diffusion. The presence of meca and PVL genes was confirmed by PCR, the isolates were then subjected to genotyping by using a DNA microarray (Alere), and assigned to clonal complexes (CC)/sequence types (ST) accordingly. Furthermore, the molecular characteristics of the isolates were correlated to the clinical presentation of the patients.

Results: The predominant strains overall were “ST8-MRSA-[IV-ACME] (PVL+), USA300” (27/131; 20.6%), closely followed by “CC30-MRSA-IV (PVL+), Southwest Pacific Clone” (26/131; 19.8%) and “CC80-MRSA-IV (PVL+)” (25/131; 19.1%). Whereas detection of CC80 showed no clear tendency over the years, the percentage of CC30 per year showed a slight increase. ST8 was declining over the last three years of observation. Other clonal complexes (CC5, CC1, CC772, CC22, CC59, CC88, CC152 and CC93) were detected in smaller numbers. Notably, CC1 (n=7) was not detected before 2015, and clinical data indicate that migration could be a major factor leading to its emergence in this area. The majority (77.9%) of the collected specimens were skin swabs as well as swabs taken from surgical sites. In total, 100 cases (76.3%) were causally linked to an infection (mostly skin and soft tissue) in the respective patients, with the department of dermatology ranking first in terms of samples provided (23/131; 17.6%).

Conclusion: This study demonstrated the molecular epidemiology clones of PVL-positive MRSA in Northern Bavaria, Germany. Migration, international travel and evolutionary factors could possibly lead to further diversification and change in the landscape of PVL-positive MRSA in the region.

729-MIEP
Characterisation of a poorly known S. aureus /MRSA lineage from the Middle East

1E. Mueller1,2, S. Monecke1,2, S. Braun1,2, M. Armengol-Porta3, M. Bes4, S. Boswihi5, M. El-Ashker6, I. Engelmann7, D. Gawlik8, H. Hotzel9, R. Nassar10, A. Reissig11, A. Ruppelt-Lorz11, A. Senok10, A. M. Somily11, E. Udo12, R. Ehricht1,2

1Leibniz Institute of Photonic Technology (IPHT), Optical Molecular Diagnostics and System Technology, Jena, Germany

2InfectoGnostics Research Campus Jena, Jena, Germany

3Institute for Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine, Municipal Hospital Dresden , Dresden, Germany

4National Reference Center for Staphylococci, Hospices Civils de Lyon, Lyon, France

5Kuwait University, Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine, Jabiya, Kuwait

6Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Mansoura University, Department of Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases, Mansoura, Egypt

7BLINK AG, Jena, Germany

8PTC - Phage Technology Center GmbH, Bönen, Germany

9Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut (Federal Research Institute for Animal Health), Institute of Bacterial Infections and Zoonoses., Jena, Germany

10Mohammed Bin Rashid University of Medicine and Health Sciences, College of Medicine, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

11Medical Faculty “Carl Gustav Carus”, Institute for Medical Microbiology and Hygiene, Dresden, Germany

12King Khalid University Hospital and King Saud University, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, College of Medicine, Riyadh, Germany

13Kuwait University, Department of Microbiology, Jabiya, Kuwait

While a lot of data on molecular epidemiology of MRSA is available for North America, Western Europe and Australia, much less is known on the distribution and transmission of MRSA clones in the rest of the world. Here, we describe a poorly known lineage from the Middle East, CC1153, to which several distinct strains from humans and from livestock belong.

Isolates were identified during epidemiological studies, during outbreak investigations or when testing for the presence of toxin genes. They were subjected to microarray hybridization and the genome of one isolate from Dubai was sequenced using Nanopore technology.

CC1153 carries agr II and capsule type 5 genes. It is positive for sasG and most isolates harbor PVL genes. Enterotoxin genes are rarely present (sek, seq). Associated spa types include t903 (26/22-19-17-17-20-17-12) and related variants. PVL-positive CC1153-MSSA were found among Egyptian
cattle suffering from subclinical mastitis. It was also identified among humans with skin and soft tissue infections in Saudi Arabia, France and, in one case, Germany. PVL-positive MRSA from that lineage presented with SCCmec V elements that additionally harboured the fusidic acid resistance gene fusC or with a previously unknown SCCmec I variant that also included this gene. Differences to the SCCmec I-fusC element from the French CC5 Geraldine Clone included an absence of the virulence gene tirS. CC1153 MRSA were observed in Arab Gulf countries (Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia) and once in a child of Egyptian origin in Germany.

The distribution of CC1153 and the emergence of CC1153 MRSA show the necessity of molecular characterization of S. aureus isolates associated with PVL-associated disease or with zoonotic transmission as well as of MRSA that display resistance to fusidic acid. These strains pose a clear and present public health threat as they combine resistance properties to drugs used in hospitals (beta-lactams) as well as to those used topically in the community (fusidic acid). Thus they have selective advantages in either setting and it will be very complicated to contain or to eradicate them once they are established in a population.