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0521834651 - The Influence of Cooperative Bacteria on Animal Host Biology

Edited by Margaret J. McFall-Ngai, Brian Henderson and Edward G. Ruby

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The Influence of Cooperative Bacteria on Animal Host Biology

Ninety percent of the cells in the human body are bacteria, and humans may be host to many thousands of different species of bacteria. These striking statistics are part of a new paradigm in microbiology in which bacteria are no longer viewed as disease-causing killers but more as lifelong partners that are often essential for the survival of their host. This book brings together a group of diverse scientists – evolutionary biologists, immunologists, molecular biologists, microbiologists, pathologists, and mathematicians – to discuss the evolution and mechanisms of bacteria–host interactions at all levels of complexity, ranging from associations of one bacterium with its host to the many hundreds of bacteria normally associated with mammals. Chapters deal with the evolution of bacteria–host interactions over the last 60 years (since the introduction of antibiotics) to a period of 3.8 billion years (since the evolution of single-celled life) and discuss bacterial interactions with multicellular life forms such as coral reefs, insects, mice, and men. This book should be of interest to the widest range of biological scientists.

Margaret J. McFall-Ngai is Professor of Medical Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine.

Brian Henderson is Professor of Cell Biology and head of the Cellular Microbiology Research Group in the Division of Microbial Diseases, Eastman Dental Institute, University College London. He is the co-editor of *Molecular Chaperones and Cell Signalling* (2005), *Bacterial Evasion of Host Immune Responses* (2003), and co-author of *Bacterial Disease Mechanisms* (2002).

Edward G. Ruby is Professor of Medical Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine.

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Over the past decade, the rapid development of an array of techniques in the fields of cellular and molecular biology have transformed whole areas of research across the biological sciences. Microbiology has perhaps been influenced most of all. Our understanding of microbial diversity and evolutionary biology, and of how pathogenic bacteria and viruses interact with their animal and plant hosts at the molecular level, for example, has been revolutionized. Perhaps the most exciting recent advance in microbiology has been the development of the interface discipline of Cellular Microbiology, a fusion of classic microbiology, microbial molecular biology, and eukaryotic cellular and molecular biology. Cellular Microbiology is revealing how pathogenic bacteria interact with host cells in what is turning out to be a complex evolutionary battle of competing gene products. Molecular and cellular biology are no longer discrete subject areas but vital tools and an integrated part of current microbiological research. As part of this revolution in molecular biology, the genomes of a growing number of pathogenic and model bacteria have been fully sequenced, with immense implications for our future understanding of microorganisms at the molecular level.

Advances in Molecular and Cellular Microbiology is a series edited by researchers active in these exciting and rapidly expanding fields. Each volume focuses on a particular aspect of cellular or molecular microbiology and provides an overview of the area, as well as examines current research. This series will enable graduate students and researchers to keep up with the rapidly diversifying literature in current microbiological research.

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Professor Brian Henderson

University College London

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Professor Sir Anthony Coates

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EDITED BY

MARGARET J. McFALL-NGAI

University of Wisconsin, Madison

BRIAN HENDERSON

University College London

EDWARD G. RUBY

University of Wisconsin, Madison



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Preface

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Bacteriology can be traced back to Anton van Leeuwenhoek in the late seventeenth century, who first saw the magnitude of the bacterial colonisation of the planet Earth. However, it was in the nineteenth century that bacteriology, as we know it, was created by the towering figures of scientists such as Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch of bacterial disease fame and Serge Winogradsky, who pioneered the characterisation of the activity of bacteria in natural habitats. Bacteriology begat immunology, and the twentieth century saw the development of antibacterial vaccines and then the discovery of antibiotics. These naturally occurring drugs created the false illusion that we had “beaten the bugs,” and bacteriology as a scientific discipline went into decline. Nevertheless, the study of bacteria, such as *Escherichia coli*, and of bacteriophage was at the foundation of modern molecular biology. The emergence of widespread antibiotic resistance in the late twentieth century was the spur to reactivate bacteriology, which is now a flourishing discipline in its many guises, such as molecular microbiology, cellular microbiology, and environmental microbiology.

Throughout the twentieth century, there was a growing realisation that bacteria did more than simply cause disease, and evidence began to mount that most animals contained their own populations of bacteria that were variously termed: commensal bacteria, indigenous microbiota, microflora, and so on. It was not until the advent of techniques allowing molecular phylogenetic analysis of the life forms in environmental samples (including those from animals) that the magnitude of the diversity of the prokaryotic world became realised. We now understand that microbial life forms, particularly bacteria, are the predominant organisms on our planet, with a staggering diversity. What has been even more astonishing is the discovery that the

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majority of multicellular creatures on our planet live with many specific bacterial partners. In this volume, we describe these organisms as cooperative bacteria. Humans, most of whom fear bacterial infection, may be the acme of bacterial cooperation as ninety percent of the cells in the average human are bacteria, and the number of bacterial species living happily with us is estimated to be between 1,000 and 3,000. Compare this with the 50 or so bacteria (many of which form part of the cooperative assembly) that have the potential to cause human disease. This suggests that for the last century or more, we have been looking at bacteria through the wrong end of the telescope.

This volume arose from a meeting held in the beautiful lake resort of Bellagio, Italy, and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. Scientists from diverse disciplines but with a common interest in bacteria–host interactions came together to discuss the biology of animal–bacterial cooperation and what it means for both partners.

This volume is divided into four sections. Part I discusses the evolution of cooperation and addresses key questions about the role of cooperation as an evolutionary pressure on both prokaryotes and eukaryotes, as well as the influence of bacterial cooperation in the evolution of the complex vertebrate acquired immune response. Biological evolution is generally viewed on the scale of millions of years. However, as the last two chapters in this section describe, rapid changes in phenotype can arise in bacterial populations in response to selection factors in their environment, such as antibiotics. In Part II attention focuses on the ecological interactions between bacteria and their multicellular hosts, and the reader is introduced to the roles of bacteria in such diverse activities as coral bleaching and the control of insect reproduction. A major problem in the study of cooperative bacteria is the complexity of the “system” that is created between bacteria and their hosts. The final chapters in this section deal with methods of analysis of cooperative systems using metagenomics and mathematical modelling. Part III discusses our emerging knowledge of how cooperative bacteria interact with their hosts at the molecular level in a variety of systems ranging from intracellular bacteria in insects to the complex systems found in mammalian tissues such as the gut, genitourinary system, and respiratory tract. The final section, Part IV, considers how cooperative bacteria interact with innate and acquired immunity, and discusses our rapidly advancing knowledge of the innate immune responses of invertebrates and the mechanisms by which vertebrates immunologically recognise and cope with bacteria, including their cooperative partners. The final chapter reviews how much we have gained control over our cooperative bacteria in the last 50 years.

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This volume will be of interest to a wide range of biological scientists, including basic microbiologists, medical microbiologists, epidemiologists, cell biologists, virologists, parasitologists, ecologists, and zoologists, and should be useful to undergraduate, postgraduate, and postdoctoral scientists working at the frontier of a new understanding of the role of cooperative bacteria in animal host biology.

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Contributors

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Caroline Anselme

Laboratoire de Biologie
Fonctionnelle Insectes et
Interactions
URM INRA/INSA de Lyon
Bât. Louis Pasteur
20 Avenue Albert Einstein
69621 Villeurbanne Cedex
France
anselme@insa-lyon.fr

Göran Bergsten

Department of Microbiology,
Immunology and Glycobiology
Institute of Laboratory Medicine
Lund University
S-223 62 Lund
Sweden
Goran.Bergsten@mig.lu.se

Clare E. Bryant

Department of Clinical Veterinary
Medicine
University of Cambridge
Madingley Road
Cambridge CB3 0ES
United Kingdom
Ceb27@cus.cam.ac.uk

Sylvain Charlat

Department of Biology
University College London
4 Stephenson Way
London NW1 2HE
United Kingdom
s.charlat@ucl.ac.uk

Julian Davies

Department of Microbiology and
Immunology
University of British Columbia
Vancouver
British Columbia
Canada V6T 1Z3
JED@UNIXG.UBC.CA

Fernando de la Cruz

Departamento de Biología Molecular
(Unidad Asociada al CIB)
Universidad de Cantabria
Spain
delacruz@medi.unican.es

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[More information](#)**Ulrich Dobrindt**

Institut für Molekulare

Infektionsbiologie

Röntgenring 11

Würzburg D-97070

Germany

u.dobrindt@mail.uni-wuerzburg.de**Brian Henderson**

Division of Microbial Diseases

Eastman Dental Institute

University College London

256 Gray's Inn Road

London WC1X 8LD

United Kingdom

b.henderson@eastman.ucl.ac.uk**Jörg Hacker**

Institut für Molekulare

Infektionsbiologie

Röntgenring 11

Würzburg D-97070

Germany

j.hacker@mail.uni-wuerzburg.de**Ute Hentschel**

Institut für Molekulare

Infektionsbiologie

Röntgenring 11

Würzburg D-97070

Germany

u.hentschel@mail.uni-wuerzburg.de**Jo Handelsman**

Department of Plant Pathology

University of Wisconsin

1630 Linden Dr.

Madison

Wisconsin 53706-1598

USA

JOH@PLANTPATH.WISC.EDU**Carole S. Hickman**

Department of Integrative Biology

University of California Berkeley

Berkeley

California 94720-3140

USA

caroleh@socrates.berkeley.edu**Abdelaziz Heddi**

Laboratoire de Biologie

Fonctionnelle Insectes et

Interactions

URM INRA/INSA de Lyon

Bât. Louis Pasteur

20 Avenue Albert Einstein

69621 Villeurbanne Cedex.

France

Abdelaziz.heddi@insa-lyon.fr**Lora V. Hooper**

Center for Immunology

The University of Texas

Southwestern Medical Center

at Dallas

5323 Harry Hines Blvd.

Dallas

Texas 75390

USA

Lora.hooper@utsouthwestern.edu

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CONTRIBUTORS

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[More information](#)**Emily A. Hornett**

Department of Biology
University College London
4 Stephenson Way
London NW1 2HE
United Kingdom
e.hornett@ucl.ac.uk

Gregory D. Hurst

Department of Biology
University College London
4 Stephenson Way
London NW1 2HE
United Kingdom
g.hurst@ucl.ac.uk

Seema Mattoo

Department of Pharmacology
University of California, San Diego
School of Medicine
Leich tag Biomedical Research
Building
Rm 249, Bay M
9500 Gilman Drive
Dept 0721
La Jolla
California 92093-0721
smattoo@ucas.edu

Margaret McFall-Ngai

Department of Medical
Microbiology and Immunology
University of Wisconsin
1300 University Avenue
Madison
Wisconsin 53706
USA
mjmcfallngai@wisc.edu

Hilde Merkert

Institut für Molekulare
Infektionsbiologie
Röntgenring 11
Würzburg D-97070
Germany
h.merkert@mail.uni-wuerzburg.de

Jeffrey F. Miller

UCLA School of Medicine
10833 LeConte Avenue
43-46CHS
Los Angeles
California 90095
USA
jfmiller@ucla.edu

Horacio Montenegro

Department of Biology
University College London
4 Stephenson Way
London NW1 2HE
United Kingdom
h.montenegro@ucl.ac.uk

Andrew S. Neish

Department of Pathology
Emory University School of
Medicine
105-F Whitehead
615 Michaels St.
Atlanta
Georgia 30322
USA
aneish@emory.edu

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CONTRIBUTORS

Kenneth F. Raffa

Department of Entomology

University of Wisconsin

1630 Linden Dr.

Madison

Wisconsin 53706-1598

USA

raffa@entomology.wisc.edu**Paul B. Rainey**

School of Biological Sciences

University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019

Auckland

New Zealand

p.rainey@auckland.ac.nz**Rino Rappuoli**

Chiron Vaccines

Via Fiorentina 1

53100 Siena

Italy

RINO.RAPPUOLI@CHIRON.COM**Max Reuter**

Department of Biology

University College London

4 Stephenson Way

London NW1 2HE

United Kingdom

m.reuter@ucl.ac.uk**Courtney J. Robinson**

Department of Plant Pathology

University of Wisconsin

1630 Linden Dr.

Madison

Wisconsin 53706-1598

USA

cjr@plantpath.wisc.edu**Eugene Rosenberg**

Department of Molecular

Microbiology and Biotechnology

Tel Aviv University

Ramat Aviv 69978

Israel

eros@post.tau.ac.il**Edward N. Ruby**

Department of Medical

Microbiology and Immunology

University of Wisconsin

1300 University Avenue

Madison

Wisconsin 53706

USA

egruby@wisc.edu**Robert M. Seymour**

Department of Mathematics

University College London

Gower Street

London WC1E 6BT

United Kingdom

r.seymour@math.ucl.ac.uk**L. Courtney Smith**

Department of Biological Sciences

George Washington University

Lisner Hall 334

2023 G St. NW

Washington, DC 20052

USA

csmith@gwu.edu**Michael Steinert**

Institut für Molekulare

Infektionsbiologie

Röntgenring 11

Würzburg D-97070

Germany

m.steinert@mail.uni-wuerzburg.de

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Catharina Svanborg

Department of Microbiology,
Immunology and Glycobiology
Institute of Laboratory Medicine
Lund University
S-223 62 Lund
Sweden
Catharina.svanborg@mig.lu.se

Sabine Töttemeyer

Department of Clinical Veterinary
Medicine
University of Cambridge
Madingley Road
Cambridge CB3 0ES
United Kingdom
st2b2@cam.ac.uk

Zoe Veneti

Department of Biology
University College London
4 Stephenson Way
London NW1 2HE
United Kingdom
z.veneti@ucl.ac.uk

Björn Wullt

Department of Urology
Lund University
22185 Lund
Sweden
bjorn.wullt@urokir.lu.se

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CONTRIBUTORS