

June 20, 2017

To the editors of the Proceedings of the National Academy of the Sciences of the USA:

We submit for your review: “Viral and Bacterial Communities of Colorectal Cancer” by Geoffrey Hannigan and colleagues. We believe this work to be especially well suited for publication in PNAS and highly relevant to a broader scientific readership as well as the general public.

Both bacteria and viruses are capable of promoting cancer in humans, but cancer-associated microbiome studies to date have focused almost exclusively on bacteria. We understand very little about the cancer-associated virus communities, also termed the “cancer virome”. To address this knowledge gap, we applied 16S rRNA gene sequencing, whole shotgun metagenomic, and purified virus metagenomic techniques to evaluate the cancer-associated changes in the virus and bacterial gut communities from our cohort of 90 human subjects. We found that the gut virome is significantly altered in colorectal cancer, can be used with machine learning algorithms to predict cancer with the same efficiency as bacterial community signatures, and is not a simple reflection of the bacterial community. Our findings inform our biological understanding of the disease by supporting a model in which the influential phages did not exclusively infect influential bacteria, but rather act through the community as a whole. Together, our findings provide a deeper understanding of colorectal cancer biology that will inform future studies and therapeutic endeavors.

Our lab strives to set high standards of reproducibility and transparency, while generating and publishing high quality data. As such, all analysis work-flows, scripts, and datasets have been made publicly available for other researchers to utilize.

The data presented in this manuscript are original and the manuscript is not under consideration elsewhere. A preprint version of this manuscript has been made available through BioRxiv (doi: PENDING). All authors have read and approve the manuscript for publication.

As editors, we suggest the following three editorial board members: **Jeffrey Miller**, **Dianne Griffin**, and **Todd Klaenhammer**. **Jeffrey Miller** is qualified to handle this paper because of his expertise in bacteriophage biology and phage interactions with their bacterial hosts. **Dianne Griffin** is qualified to handle this paper because of her expertise in virus pathogenesis. **Todd Klaenhammer** is qualified to handle this paper because of his expertise in the mechanisms involved in bacteriophage-bacteria interactions.

We suggest the following reviewers for this publication:

Alejandro Reyes Muñoz, PhD
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Biological Sciences
Universidad de los Andes
Email: a.reyes@uniandes.edu.co

Katrine Whiteson, PhD

Assistant Professor
School of Biological Sciences
School of Medicine
University of California, Irvine
Email: katrine@uci.edu

John Kirby, PhD

Professor
Department of Microbiology and Immunology
Medical College of Wisconsin
Email: jkirby@mcw.edu

Mya Breitbart, PhD

Associate Professor
Dept. of Biological Oceanography
University of South Florida
Email: mya@usf.edu

Bonnie Hurwitz, PhD

Assistant Professor
Dept. of Agricultural and BioSystems Engineering
University of Arizona
Email: bhurwitz@email.arizona.edu

Unfortunately, we must ask that Rob Knight and Matthew Sullivan not be used as an editor or reviewers since previous interactions with these individuals indicate that they are unable to provide an unbiased assessment of our work.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Schloss'.

Patrick D. Schloss
Associate Professor
Frederick G. Novy Collegiat Professor of Microbiome Research