Antimicrobial drug discovery: SAR optimization and QSAR

Guest speakers:Alastair Parkes & James DuffyModerator:Charles MowbrayHost:Astrid Pentz-Murr (GARDP)

24 August 2023







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The presentation will be followed by an interactive Q&A session.

Please submit your questions via the 'questions' window. We will review all questions and respond to as many as possible after the presentation.

Today's speakers

Antimicrobial drug discovery: SAR optimization and QSAR



Alastair Parkes Vice-President, Medicinal Chemistry *Evotec (United Kingdom)*



James Duffy Senior Director, Drug Discovery Medicines for Malaria Venture – MMV (Switzerland)



<u>Moderator:</u> Charles Mowbray Discovery Director Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative – DNDi (Switzerland)

Alastair Parkes



Alastair Parkes currently leads a medicinal chemistry department at Evotec, a global drug discovery and development company. Evotec's mission is to discover and develop highly effective therapeutics and make them globally available to the patients who need them.

He joined the company in 2006, working first on central nervous system drug discovery programmes and oncology projects, before focusing on antibacterial research since January 2014.

Alastair is a regular presenter at medicinal chemistry and antibacterial drug discovery conferences, sharing results from Evotec's antibacterial research programmes focused both on specific targets and also the development of new tools. He has been a regular speaker on antibacterial drug discovery at Oxford University's Centre for Doctoral Training in the UK, and has also published a number of papers in the field.

Before joining Evotec, Alastair was employed at the University of Manchester during his post-doctoral studies. He holds MChem and DPhil degrees in organic chemistry from the University of Oxford.



#RESEARCHNEVERSTOPS

SAR Optimisation in Antibacterial Drug Discovery

Alastair Parkes



- The multiple challenges of antibacterial drug design
- 2. Addressing access to drug targets in bacteria
- 3. Designing for site of infection?
- 4. Case study
- 5. Conclusions





The multiparameter problem for antibiotics

Reaching the point where several property spaces overlap





Can we take a general approach to antibacterial design?

Analysis based on approved drugs suggests specific property space

Antibacterial drugs often occupy different physicochemical space from drugs targeting receptors in mammalian cells



The physicochemical space can vary significantly depending on the species of bacteria

AZ analysed 3,200 project compounds with whole cell activity ($\leq 8\mu g/mL$) and found that the average clogD varied between species¹





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The multiparameter problem for antibiotics

Reaching the point where several property spaces overlap





Why worry about bacterial penetration?

Targets of commonly used antibiotics





Focus on Gram-negative bacteria

Targets of commonly used antibiotics





Focus on Gram-negative bacteria

The barrier(s) to entry





Why are Gram-negative bacteria so tough?

The Gram-negative cell envelope in more detail







Efflux Pump Inhibitors

Blocking efflux pumps could potentiate known drugs in MDR strains

- Many compounds have been shown to inhibit efflux pumps and restore activity against resistant bacteria
- EPIs tend to have poor PK and toxicity to mammalian cells
- Demonstrated utility in determining efflux prevalence in clinical isolates







Siderophores – the Trojan Horse strategy

Utilise iron transport mechanisms to facilitate entry

- Bacteria require iron for many cellular processes and have mechanisms for its acquisition
- Siderophores are molecules able to coordinate iron, these are secreted and reabsorbed by bacteria using active transport
- The antibiotic-siderophore conjugate Cefiderocol was approved by the FDA in 2019 for treatment of multi-drugresistant Gram-negative bacteria





Hijacking other preferred entry routes for Gram-negatives?

Non-siderophore conjugates may enable penetration

- As part of a collaboration between Evotec and Harvard we were trying to broaden spectrum of a Gram-positive only series of molecules
- We developed a novel approach to enable compounds to access the cytoplasm of Gram-negative bacteria through conjugation with ciprofloxacin¹⁾







Permeabilisers

Compounds that disrupt bacterial membranes

• Polymixins, such as Colistin (sometimes known as the antibiotic of last resort) penetrate bacteria by interacting with both outer and inner membranes







Permeabilisers

Compounds that disrupt bacterial membranes

• Polycationic nature enables disruption of the outer membrane through displacement of stabilizing metal ions in the lipopolysaccharide







Permeabilisers

Compounds that disrupt bacterial membranes

- Lipophilic features enable polymixins to act as detergents to disrupt cytoplasmic membranes and other phospholipid bilayers
- Newer polymixins, with reduced toxicity but limited antibacterial activity, are being developed for codosing with known antibiotics as they retain the ability to permeabilise bacteria





Compound quantification in bacteria

Tools to understand accumulation in cells and intracellular compartments

Whole-Cell Assay

- Determine the compound concentration in the whole cell
- Medium throughput (96-well plate assay)
- Applicable to different pathogens (Ec, Kp, BCG, Mtb, ...)
- Applicable to different growth media
- Label-free mass spectrometry based drug quantification



- \rightarrow Correlate SAR and bacterial accumulation within a chemical series
- \rightarrow Compare different chemical series, hits ranking

Subcellular Fractionation Assay

- Determine the compound concentration in the different cell compartments
- Low throughput
- Proof of concept done on E. coli
- Assay development started on A. baumannii
- Label-free mass spectrometry based drug quantification



→ Variable level of activity between different strains/mutants of the same species (MoA and MoR)

Understand drug permeability into bacteria to support rational design of novel drug candidates



Utilising accumulation data to derive predictive rules for *E. coli*

A seminal paper in 2017 provided some guidelines

- Measured accumulation in *E. coli* using MS analysis of cell material & supernatant for 180 diverse compounds
- Findings from this set of compounds
 - Positively charged compounds are more likely to accumulate than either neutral or negative compounds irrespective of clogD
 - Of the positively charged compounds that accumulate primary amines represent the majority
 - Of the compounds containing primary amines rigid amphiphilic compounds and those with low globularity are most likely to accumulate in *E. coli*





Applying eNTRyway rules

Broadening spectrum by applying guidelines derived from accumulation data

- The Hergenrother group went on to share a web-based application eNTRyway¹) designed to be a simple tool to help predict accumulation in Gram-negative bacteria
- Addition of primary amines to two Gram-positive only antibacterial compounds meeting the rigidity and low globularity criteria resulted in broad spectrum agents²⁾





How about accumulation in other Gram-negatives

How do different classes of antibiotics penetrate cell envelopes

- Using wild type, hyperporinated (reducing the outer-membrane barrier), efflux-knockout, and combined hyperporinated and efflux knockout strains of *E. coli*, *P. aeruginosa* and *A. baumanii* Zgurskaya and co-workers examined the diversity of Gram-negative permeability barriers
 - Both MIC values and accumulation assays were utilised to assess permeation & efflux of a diverse panel of 47 antibiotics



- The rates of accumulation of various antibiotics vary significantly between Gram-negative species:
 - different LPS, different porins, different efflux pumps



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The multiparameter problem for antibiotics

Designing for site of infection





Designing for site of infection

Focus on urinary tract infections

- Measuring tissue concentrations can be important, but designing for accumulation in specific tissues is difficult
- For UTI focusing on renal clearance can deliver drugs to the site of infection
 - aim for small hydrophilic molecules with minimal plasma protein binding e.g. Fosfomycin (a key drug for UTI, inc. bladder infections)
- How can we apply this in a drug discovery project?





Selecting compounds to test in a UTI model

- A series of compounds were optimised addressing a cytoplasmic target
- Designing for renal clearance resulted in weaker activity:

Compound	Target IC ₅₀ (nM)	MIC ¹⁾ (E. coli)	Measured LogD (7.4)	Molecular Weight	
А	5	0.5	2.9	500	
В	108	8	-0.6 1	450 1	
		Compound B is:	more hydrophilic	smaller	
But does more of the compound reach the urine?					



Selecting compounds to test in a UTI model

- A series of compounds were optimised addressing a cytoplasmic target
- Designing for renal clearance resulted in weaker activity
- How does this affect PK?

Compound	Target IC ₅₀ (nM)	MIC (E. coli)	Measured LogD (7.4)	Molecular Weight
А	5	0.5	2.9	500
В	108	8	-0.6	450

PK Dose	1 mg/kg IV				10 mg/kg IV
Compound	AUC o-∞ (μg.hr/mL)	C _{max} (µg/mL)	Blood CL (ml/min/kg)	V _D (L/kg)	% of dose in urine
А	0.3	0.3	94	4.5	0.8
В	3.5	8	5	0.8	26

Selecting compounds to test in a UTI model



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It's the balance of properties that matters



CFU – colony forming units mpk – milligrams per kilogram



Conclusions for targeting the right extracellular compartment

- Designing for accumulation in most tissues is difficult, and so optimising for unbound plasma exposure is often the most sensible strategy
- Designing for renal clearance is possible and for UTIs achieving high levels of renal clearance can result in enhanced efficacy in *in vivo* models of infection



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Case study – LpxA inhibitors for P. aeruginosa

Data guided optimisation of biochemical potency, antibacterial activity and exposure



¹Half life in mouse microsomes Journal of Medicinal Chemistry 2021, 64, 19, 14377-14425

Strategies and predictive models to aid antibacterial drug design



- Some guidelines and strategies exist for design of compounds to penetrate *E. coli*
 - Permeabilisers or efflux pump inhibitors
 - Conjugate molecules
 - eNTRYway rules
- Data gathering and proper curation can enable construction of predictive models
 - But due to the diversity of bacteria we have no general solutions
- Once we have multiple models for bacteria the challenge is to combine with multi-parameter optimisation required for all drug discovery



Acknowledgements







Powered by **CARB-X**

- Evotec: David Corbett, Peter Warn, Michelle Southey, Adele Faulkner, Shelley Parrott, Emily Trimby, Stephanie Sandiford, Alain Dorali, Martin Arthuis, Beth Williamson, Swapna Vaddi, Ian Yule, Sebastien Coyne, Anthony Dickie, Ole Andersen, Daniel Stein, Olivier Barbeau, Angelo Sanzone, Pia Thommes, John Barker, Ricky Cain, Christel Compper, Magali Dejob, Alain Dorali, Donnya Etheridge, Sian Evans, Elise Gadouleau, Tim Gorman, Denes Haase, Maisie Holbrow-Wilshaw, Thomas Krulle, Xianfu Li, Chris Lumley, Barbara Mertins, Spencer Napier, Rajesh Odedra, Kostas Papadopoulos, Vas Roumpelakis, Kate Spear, Jennifer Williams, Michael Zahn
- Harvard: Prof. Dan Kahne, Veerasak Srisuknimit
- Forge: David Puerta, Min Teng, Kostantin Taganov, Baskar Nammalwar
- X-Biotix: Dominic Ryan, Boudewijn DeJonge



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James Duffy



James Duffy is a Senior Director of Drug Discovery at Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) with 25 years' experience working in drug discovery.

He has a special interest in malaria and other infectious diseases that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations in the global south. Working at MMV, he is part of the efforts to reduce the burden of malaria in disease-endemic countries by discovering, developing and delivering new, effective and affordable antimalarial drugs. His current role is to provide scientific input and strategic leadership to multidisciplinary collaborations with academic, biotechnology and pharmaceutical partners engaged in malaria drug discovery projects.

James obtained his PhD from the University of Sussex (Brighton, UK) and prior to MMV he worked at BioFocus (Cambridge, UK) where he was a co-inventor of the FDA approved HDAC inhibitor Belinostat.



Experimental validation of the MAlaria Inhibitor Prediction (MAIP) platform

James Duffy, Senior Director Drug Discovery

GARDP, Geneva, 24 August 2023 Defeating Malaria Together



Asexual blood stage phenotypic HTS | 15 Years of Hit Gen.



Rottman, M. *et al. Science*, **325**, 1175-80 (2010) Gamo, F. J. *et al. Nature*, 2010, **465**, 305-10 (2010) Guiguemde, W. A. *et al. Nature*, **465**, 311-15 (2010)



MAIP | Motivation and potential uses



- Clear need for accessible, affordable and user-friendly computational tools to support infectious and neglected tropical disease drug discovery (https://www.mmv.org/our-work/research-and-development)
- Maximize the **impact** of compound testing through **enrichment** (using the model) towards a greater proportion of potential actives
 - Organizations/institutions with large screening collections who are willing to test (blinded) subsets in the whole cell asexual blood stage HT assays
 - Organizations who are designing and acquiring new (antimalarial) libraries (especially those with limited compound acquisition budget)
 - Groups with access to novel compounds
- Potential application of the approach (open access consensus model) for use in other NTD drug discovery projects



MAIP | Construction of model



= dependent variable (active/inactive)



Regression, Neural Networks, Random Forests etc.



Medicines for Malaria Ventur

Bosc, N., et al., J. Cheminform., 13, 13 (2021)

MAIP | Use of tool (example)



- Distribution of model scores for the active (orange) and inactive (blue) compounds
- Grey lines illustrate the fractions of compounds used to calculate the enrichment factor (EF)
- EF = hit rate (the proportion of active compounds) within a defined sorted fraction divided by the total hit rate

- MAIP (https://www.ebi.ac.uk/chembl/maip/) generates a score for each compound in uploaded file
- Based on test sets, prioritize scores above 40-50 for good enrichment



MMV Hit Generation | Library design

MMV libraries are designed as a sets of **diverse**, **novel**, and **high-quality** compounds



Feature	Ideal Criteria
Diversity	EMBL-EBI 'reduced graphs' & frameworks protocol to identify unique scaffolds Only centroids or singletons (Stardrop clustering sim. > 0.7)
Novelty	No compounds in MMV in-house database, malaria subsets of ChEMBL ¹ and SureChEMBL No 'malaria drug fragments' (MMV in-house list)
Quality	Balanced calculated physicochemical property profile with potential for further development No compounds with a structure alert ² Predicted malaria active (MAIP)
Balanced profile	MMV Library Design MPO score > 0.8

1. <u>https://chembl.gitbook.io/chembl-ntd/</u>

2. Brenk, R., et al. ChemMedChem, 3, 435–444 (2008).



MMV Hit Generation | Library design MPO profile



Use of weighted MPO scoring profile in library design:

- Design focus is to achieve a **balanced profile** (*vs.* imposing strict cut-offs)
- Max. MPO score for a compound with 'ideal' properties = 1
- **Properties** selected to be **complementary** (avoid placing too much importance on one property)
- MMV MPO scoring profiles available on Optibrium website (https://optibrium.com/downloads/mmvantimalarial-scoring-profile/)



Yusof, I. et al. Drug Discovery Today, 18, 659–666 (2013)

MMV Hit Generation | ChEMBL QSAR Library (CQL)



Compounds in CQL have calc. physicochemical properties associated with high quality chemical hits

 MPO criteria not met for all compounds and some high scoring (MAIP) compounds selected with MPO < 0.8 (generally containing ≥ 1 structural alerts)



MMV Hit Generation | Screening cascade (CQL vs. random)



Bosc. N., et al., (2023), Manuscript submitted for publication

**According to stocks availabilities

- MMV have developed a comprehensive primary screening and hit triage cascade
 - Strict selection criteria are depicted in green, and ideal ones in blue
 - Predicted actives (CQL) = red
 - Randomly selected (control) = black
 - Key activity data generated at 2 test centers
- CQL has significantly higher hit rates than libraries designed without MAIP (e.g. HGL1)
 - **CQL** = **3%** screening actives
 - **HGL1 = 0.1%** screening actives
- 8 Confirmed Actives
 - MAIP score = 51-62
 - MPO score > 0.8 (7 of 8 compounds)
 - Novel antimalarial hits (ChEMBL)







MMV Hit Generation | Confirmed Actives



MMV ID	MMV MPO	MW	LogP	3D7 LDH (72h) IC50 (μM)	Dd2 LDH (72h) IC50 (μM)	HepG2 (72h) IC50 (μM)
MMV1797331	0.21	357	2.0	1.9	2.0	21.6
MMV1797658	0.36	335	3.2	0.78	1.5	22.1
MMV1797951	0.14	371	3.1	1.0	0.98	13.8
MMV1798925	0.28	342	3.4	1.1	1.5	19.1
MMV1798946	0.26	427	2.5	0.75	2.0	> 25
MMV1799348	0.35	397	2.8	1.1	2.7	> 25
MMV1801316	0.23	359	3.6	1.5	3.6	> 25
MMV1802771	0.29	424	3.0	0.81	1.1	20.0

MMV ID	LogD pH 7.4	Kin. Sol. (μM)	HLM CLint (μL/min/mg)	Rat Heps CLint (µL/min/10^6 cells)
MMV1797331	1.0	200	3.7	1.9
MMV1797658	0.5	200	3.5	7.2
MMV1797951	-0.2	200	8.3	1.4
MMV1798925	0.3	173	3.5	7.2
MMV1798946	2.9	170	14	2
MMV1799348	1.2	198	3.5	1.2
MMV1801316	2.8	86	24.1	2.7
MMV1802771	1.0	100	11	2.6

MMV MPO = MMV Screening Active MPO score

MMV O O : Medicines for Malaria Venture

MMV Support | Compound testing



Please **contact us (maip@mmv.org)** if you would like to test a sample of any compounds that you identify using **MAIP** in MMV's *Plasmodium falciparum* asexual blood stage assay.

- 'Requestor' must be able to supply sample (e.g. 1 mg)
- Compound must be 'novel' (not in MMV or public database)
- MMV will test the compound at no cost to requestor and share results
- 'Requestor' owns the data



MAIP | Project Team

MAIP model build

Nicolas Bosc (EMBL-EBI) Eloy Félix (EMBL-EBI) Ricardo Arcila (EMBL-EBI) David Mendez (EMBL-EBI) Martin Saunders (GSK) Darren Green (GSK) Jason Ochoada (SJCRH) Anang Shelat (SJCRH) Eric Martin (Novartis) Preeti Iyer (AZ) Ola Engkvist(AZ) Andreas Verras (ex-MSD) James Duffy (MMV) Jeremy Burrows (MMV) Rich Elliot (BMGF) Mark Gardner (AMG) Andrew Leach (EMBL-EBI)

Experimental validation

Nicolas Bosc (EMBL-EBI) Eloy Felix (EMBL-EBI) Mark Gardner (AMG) James Mills (Sandexis) Martijn Timmerman (PPSC) Dennis Asveld (PPSC) Kim Rensen (PPSC) Partha Mukherjee (TCGLS) Rishi Das (TCGLS) Elodie Chenu (MMV) Dominique Besson (MMV) Jeremy Burrows (MMV) James Duffy (MMV) Benoît Laleu (MMV) Eric Guantai (Uni. Narobi) Andrew Leach (EMBL-EBI)



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Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

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Global Health Innovative Technology Fund

National Institutes of Health (NIH/NIAID)











Thank You!







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<u>Moderator:</u> Charles Mowbray Discovery Director Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) (Switzerland)

Upcoming webinars



Register now!

In collaboration with: CARB

Starting an antibacterial drug discovery screening programme With Bruce Blough & Gerry Wright 5 September 2023, 17:00-18:30 CEST



Register now

In collaboration with:

Clinical trials platforms for new and neglected antimicrobials With Jesús Rodríguez-Baño & Julia Bielicki 20 September 2023, 11:00-12:30 CEST

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GARDP and BSAC are delighted to announce that the free virtual Antimicrobial Chemotherapy Conference will take place again next year in collaboration with the European Clinical Research Alliance on Infectious Diseases and the Netherlands Antibiotic Development Platform.

The scientific programme as well as the call for abstracts for posters and short oral presentations will be announced later in the year.







netherlands antibiotic development platform



Thank you for joining us

