

# Overcoming challenges of tuberculosis drug discovery and development

Guest speakers: Jeremy Rock, Dirk Schnappinger & Laura Cleghorn

Moderator: Valerie Mizrahi

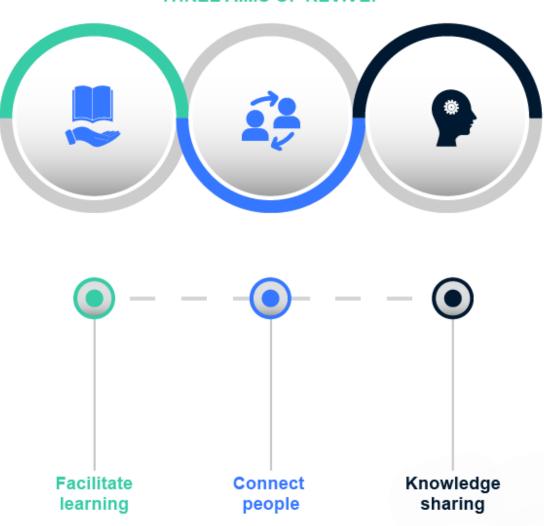
Host: Shirine Derakhshani

9 September 2025



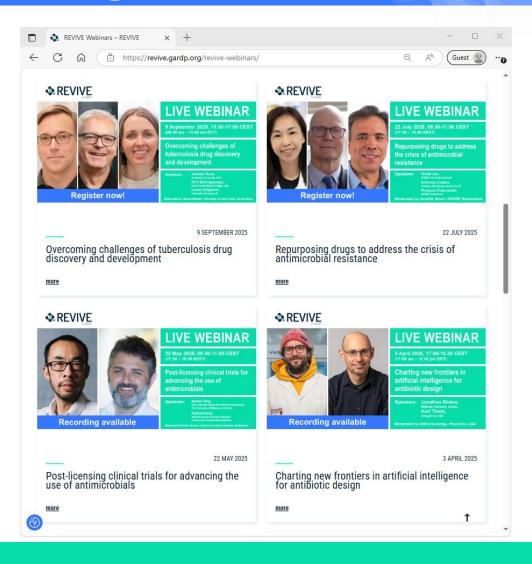
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# Webinar recordings

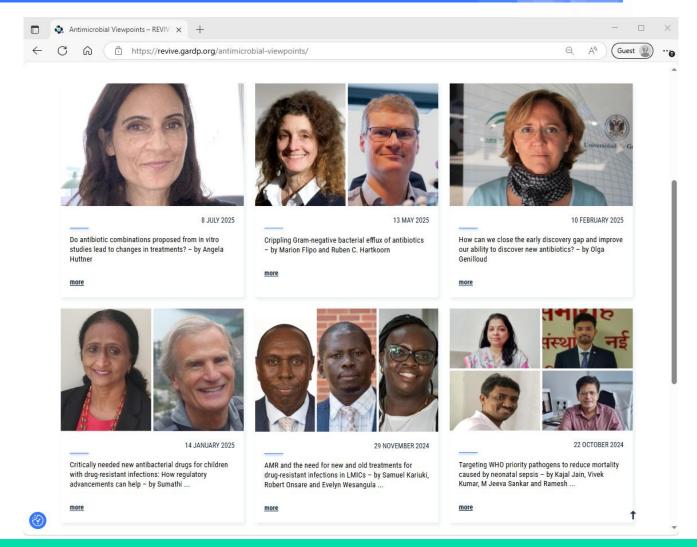




# **Antimicrobial Viewpoints**

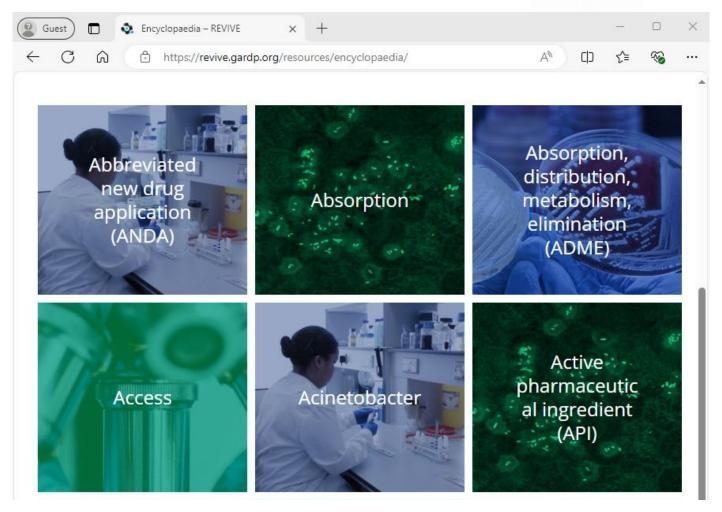






# Antimicrobial Encyclopaedia

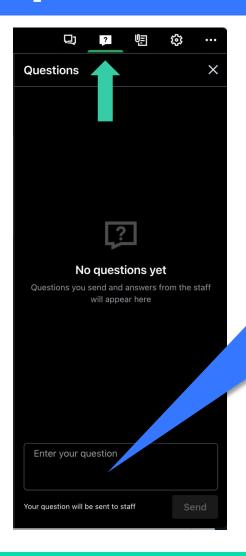




# How to submit your questions



If your question is addressed to a specific speaker, please include their name when submitting the question.



Please submit your questions through the box provided after clicking the 'questions' button. We will review all questions and respond to as many as possible after the presentation.

# Today's speakers





# Overcoming challenges of tuberculosis drug discovery and development



Moderator:
Valerie Mizrahi
Former director, Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine, University of Cape Town (South Africa)



Jeremy Rock
Associate Professor,
Rockefeller University
(USA)



Dirk Schnappinger
Professor, Department of
Microbiology &
Immunology, Weill Cornell
Medical College (USA)



Laura Cleghorn
Reader, Drug Discovery
Unit, School of Life
Sciences, University of
Dundee (UK)



# Jeremy Rock



Jeremy Rock is an Associate Professor at the Rockefeller University and head of the Laboratory of Host-Pathogen Biology. His lab studies the human pathogen Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the leading cause of death due to infectious disease. The Rock lab uses functional and chemical genomics approaches to investigate the mechanisms by which these bacteria colonize their hosts and how they evade killing by antibiotics.

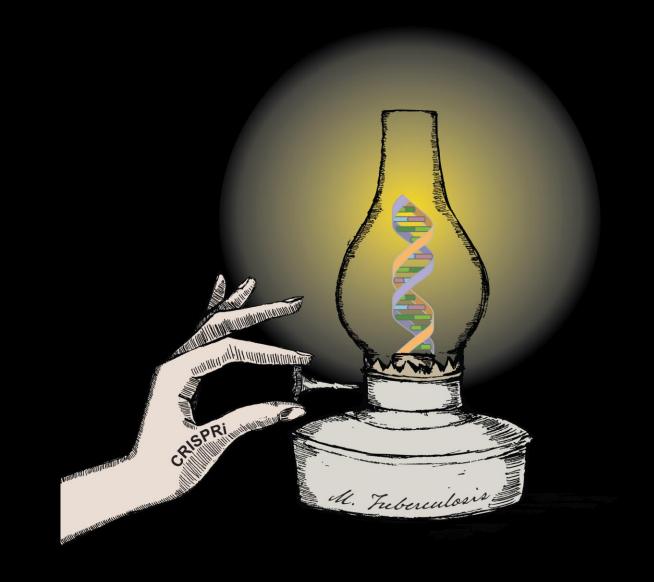
Jeremy received his undergraduate degrees in biochemistry and economics from the University of California, Berkeley. He then spent two years in the biotech industry at Sangamo Biosciences to develop new tools for genome editing. Following this, he earned his PhD from MIT where he studied cell cycle regulation with Angelika Amon. Jeremy found his calling in mycobacterial pathogenesis while performing postdoctoral studies at the Harvard School of Public Health with Sarah Fortune and Eric Rubin.

# Identifying vulnerable targets & pathways in *M. tuberculosis*

Jeremy Rock

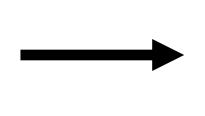
Associate Professor Head of the Laboratory of Host-Pathogen Biology





# Understand Mtb biology to build better therapies

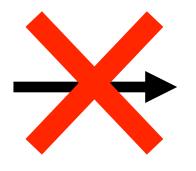
Discover new biology that facilitates Mtb pathogenesis



Discover new drugs that perturb that biology and thereby inhibit Mtb pathogenesis

# Understand Mtb biology to build better therapies

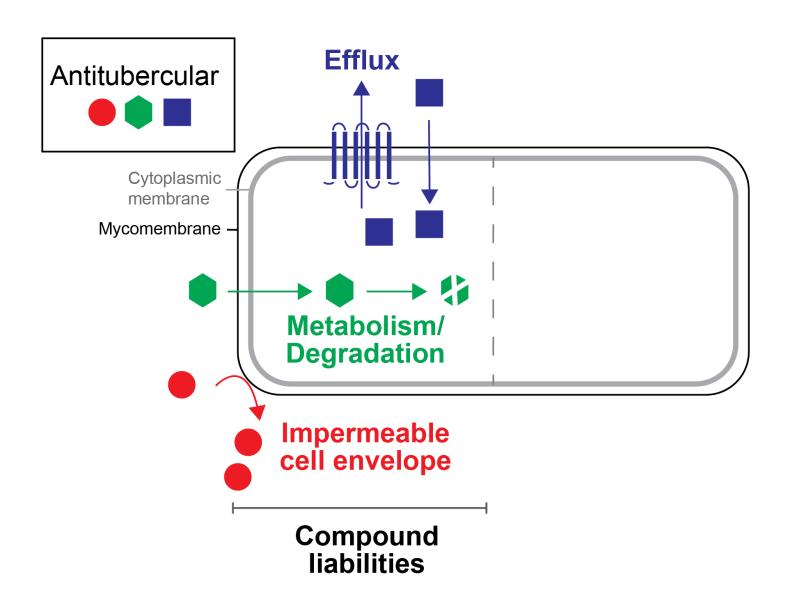
Discover new biology that facilitates Mtb pathogenesis



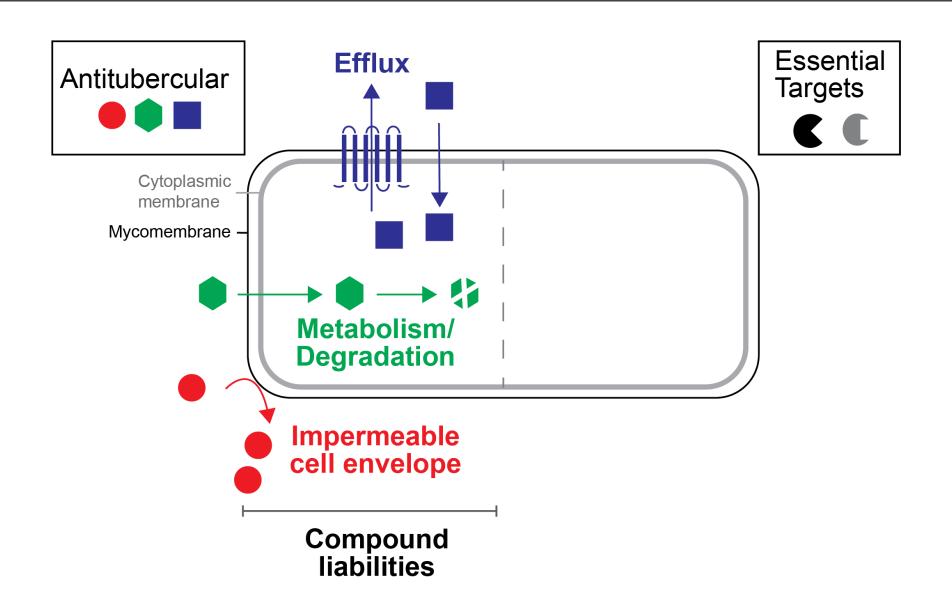
Really hard!

Discover new drugs that perturb that biology and thereby inhibit Mtb pathogenesis

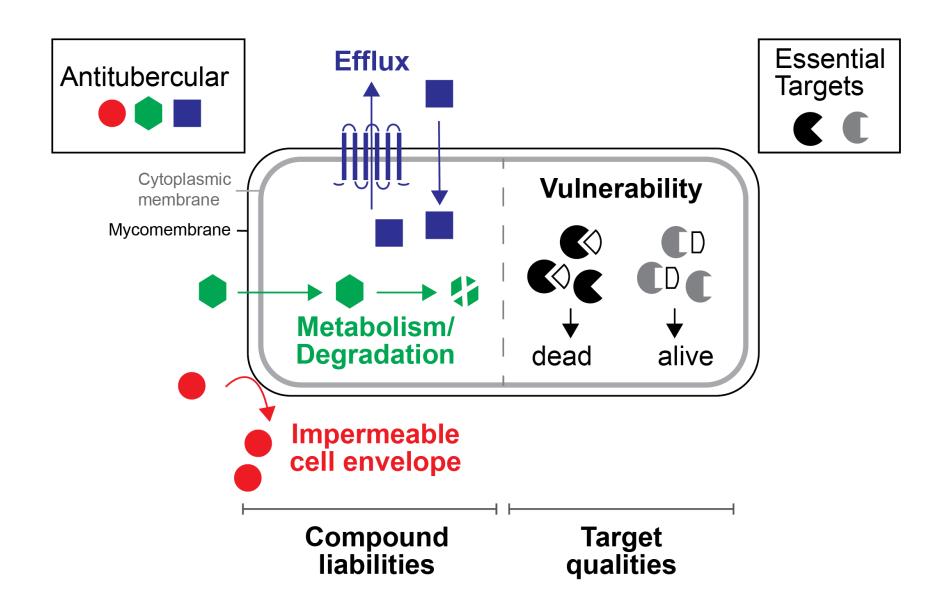
# Common failure modes for target-based drug discovery



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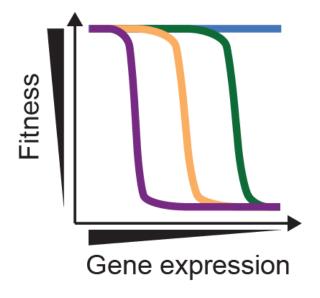


# Common failure modes for target-based drug discovery



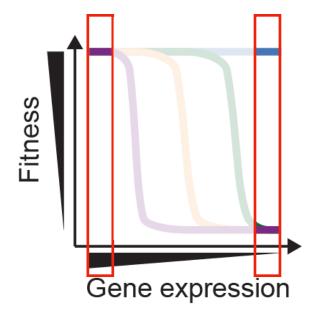
#### **VULNERABILITY**: CONTINUOUS VARIABLE

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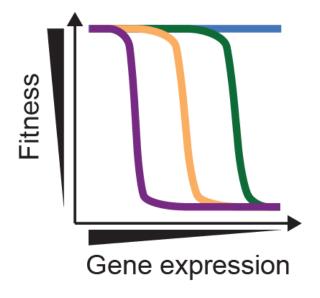
- Gene 1 Essential
- Gene 2 Essential
- Gene 3 Essential
- Gene 4 Non-Essential

#### **VULNERABILITY**: CONTINUOUS VARIABLE



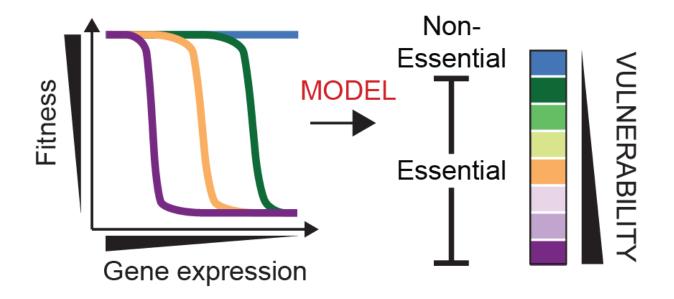
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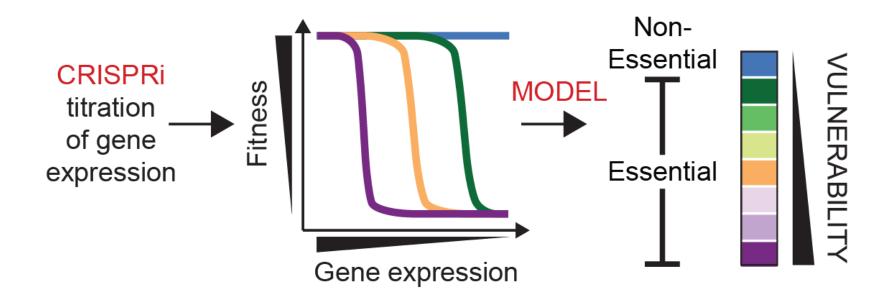


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Barbara Bosch (Former PhD student)

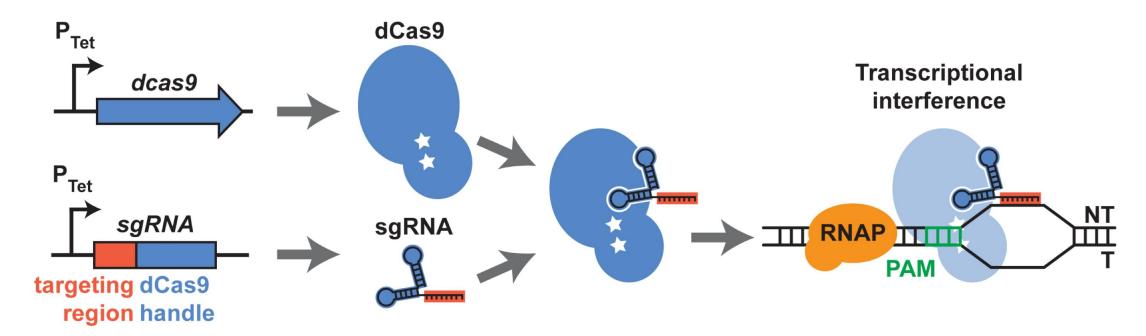


Michael DeJesus (Senior Computational Scientist)



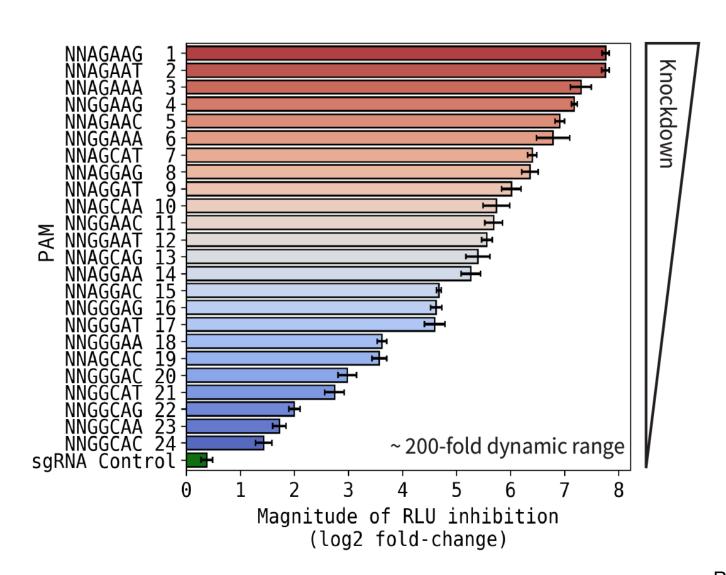
Dirk Schnappinger (PI @ WCM)

# CRISPR interference for programmable target knockdown



Sth1 Cas9 consensus PAM: 5'-NNAGAAW-3'

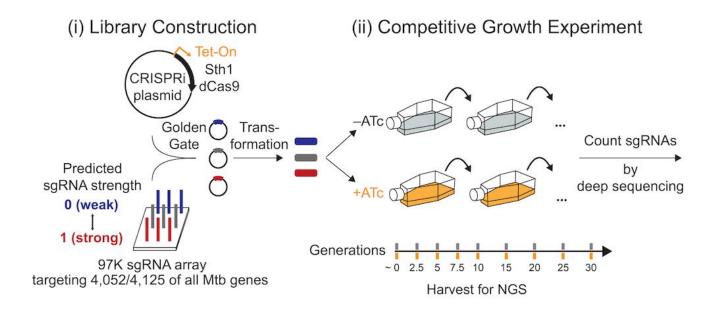
### Tunable CRISPRi with Sth1 dCas9



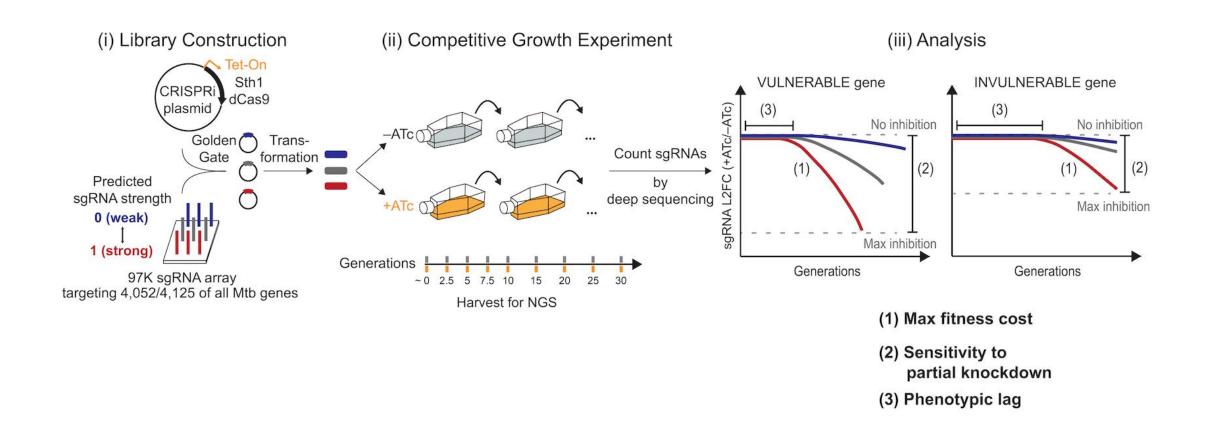
# Defining target vulnerability in Mtb

# (i) Library Construction Tet-On Sth1 dCas9 Golden Gate Predicted sgRNA strength 0 (weak) 1 (strong) 97K sgRNA array targeting 4,052/4,125 of all Mtb genes

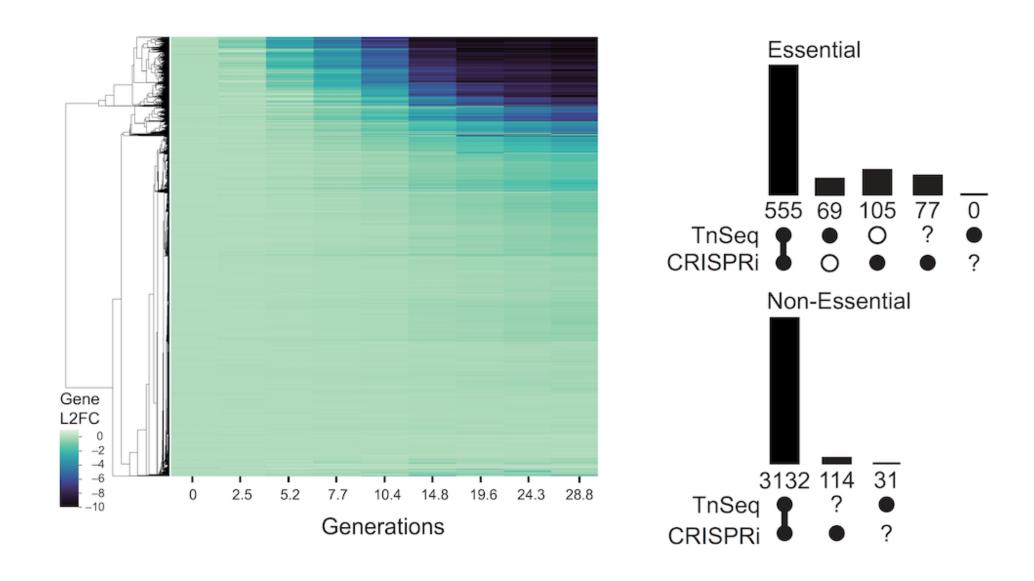
# Defining target vulnerability in Mtb



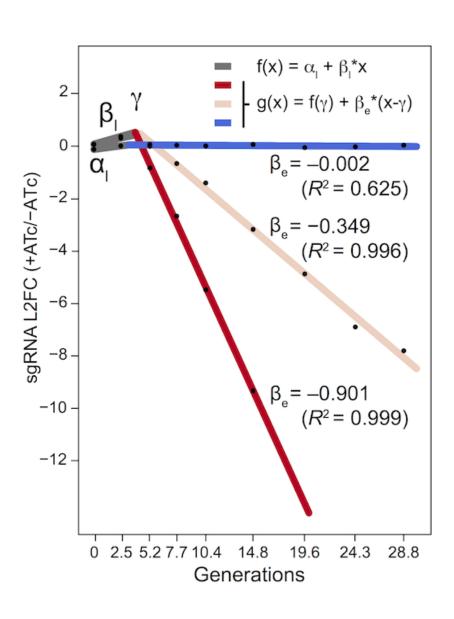
# Defining target vulnerability in Mtb



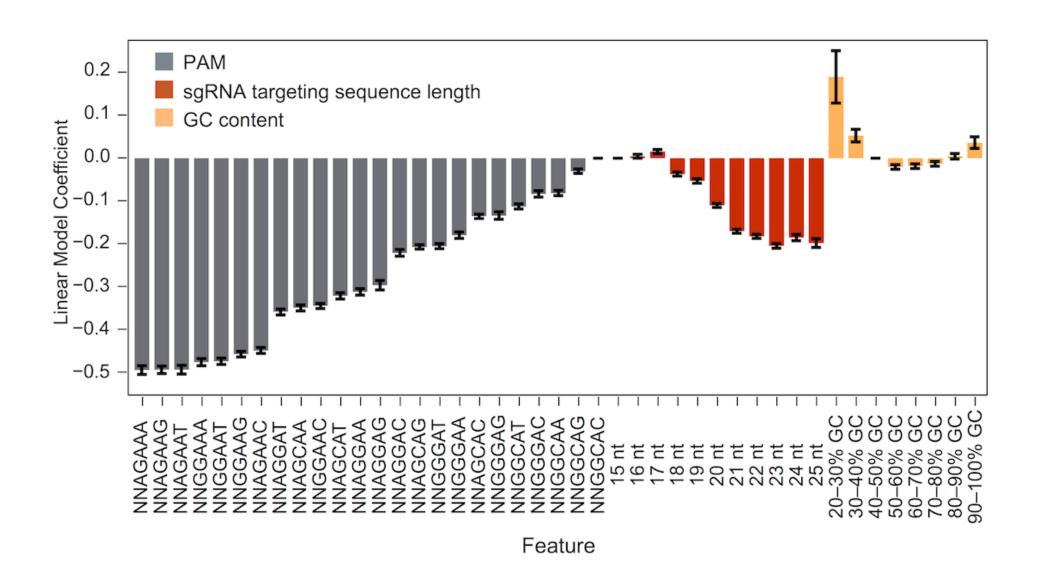
# Benchmarking genome-scale CRISPRi to TnSeq



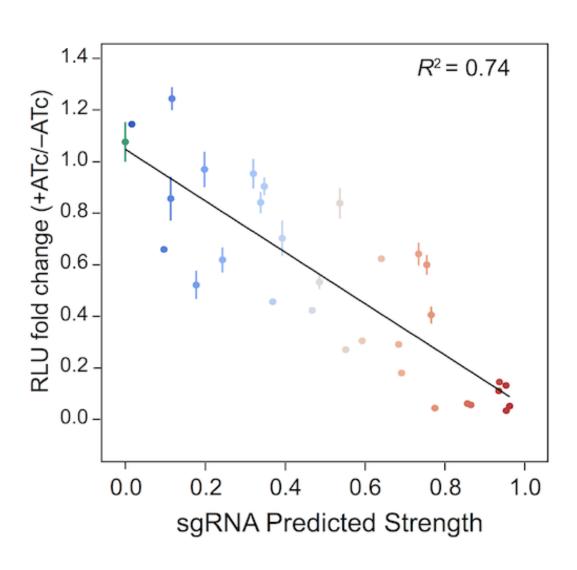
# Quantifying sgRNA "strength"



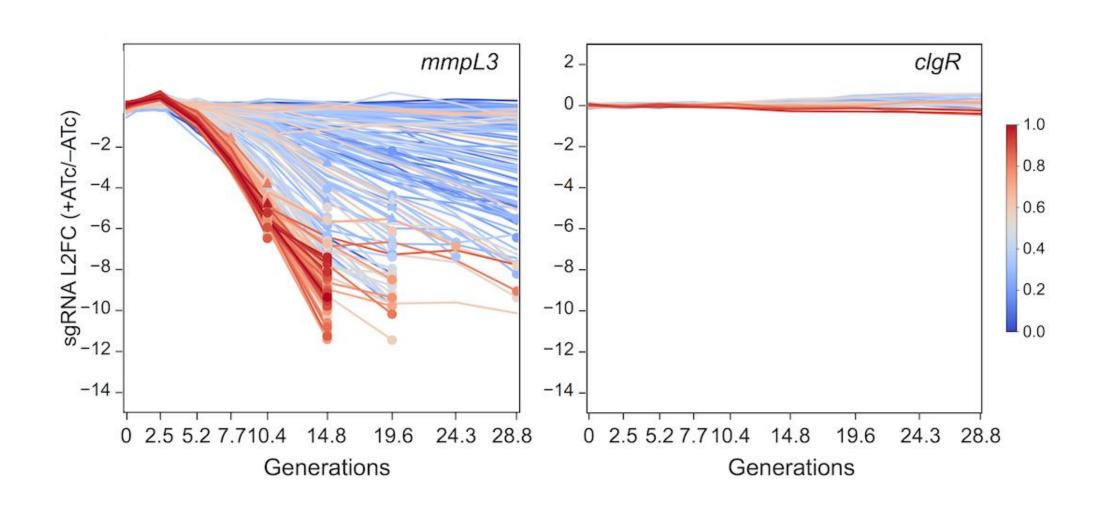
# Identification of features that dictate sgRNA strength



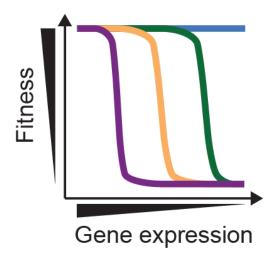
# sgRNA strength predictions are reasonable



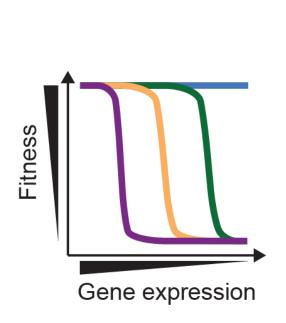
# Predictably tunable gene knockdown

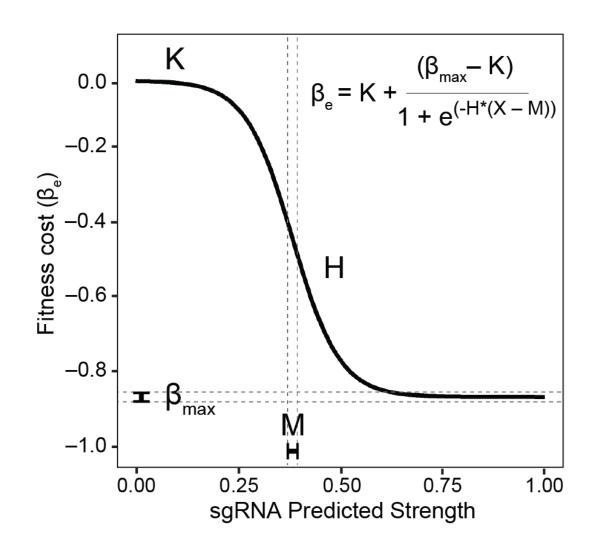


# Quantifying gene vulnerability

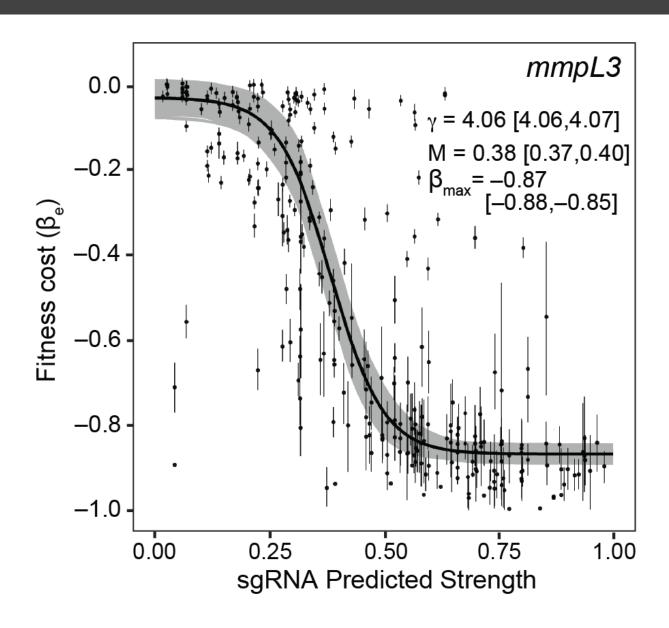


# Quantifying gene vulnerability

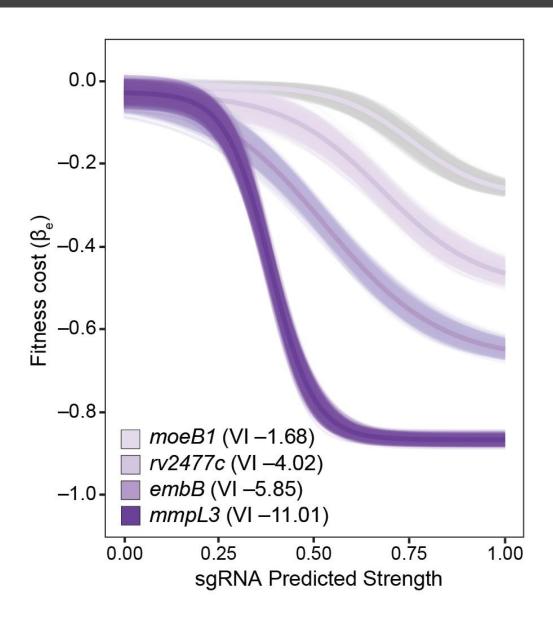




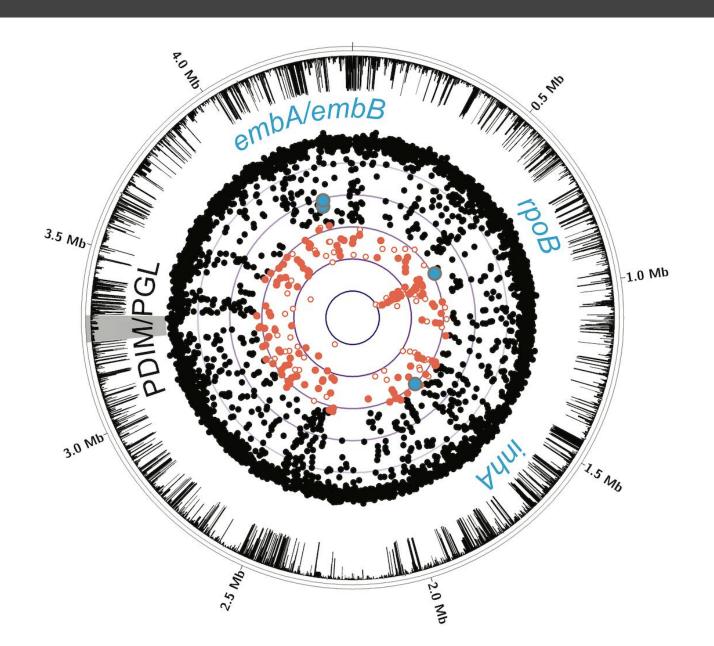
# Quantifying gene vulnerability



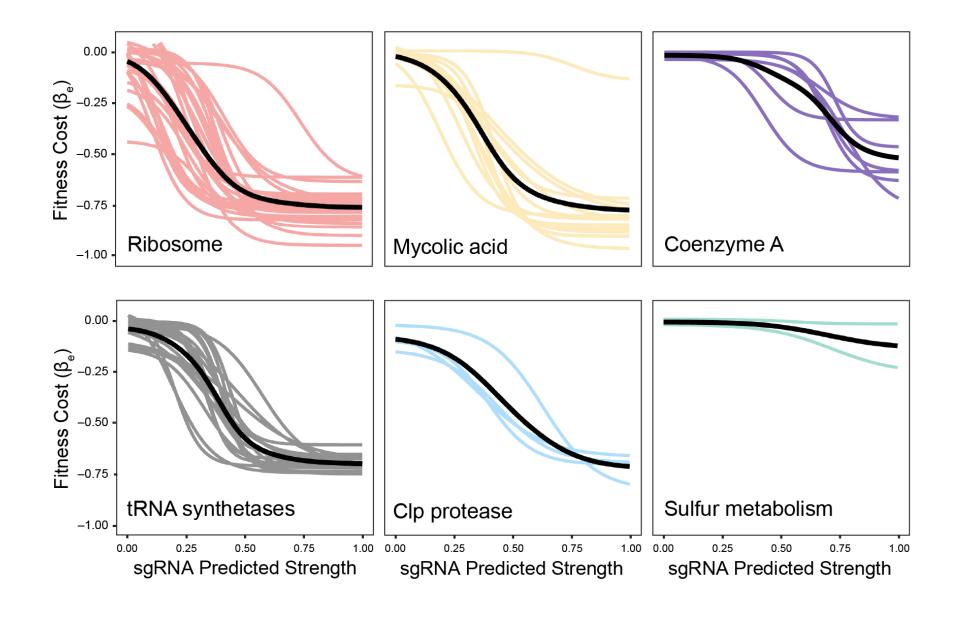
## Essential genes have different vulnerabilities



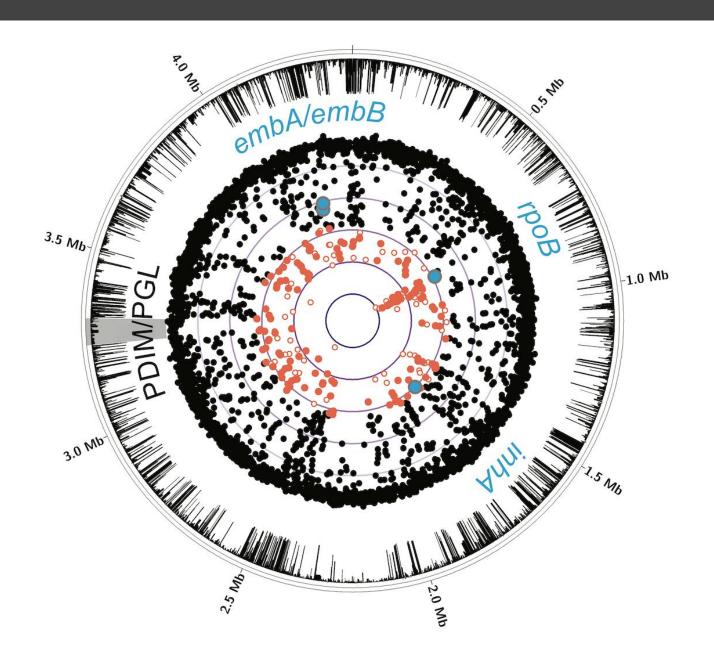
# Gene vulnerability varies widely across the Mtb genome



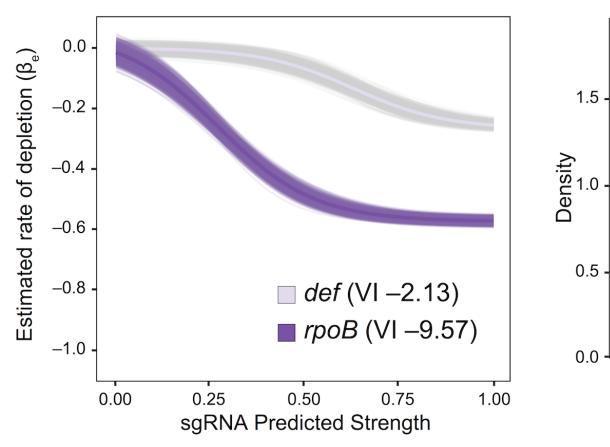
#### Pathway analysis of vulnerability

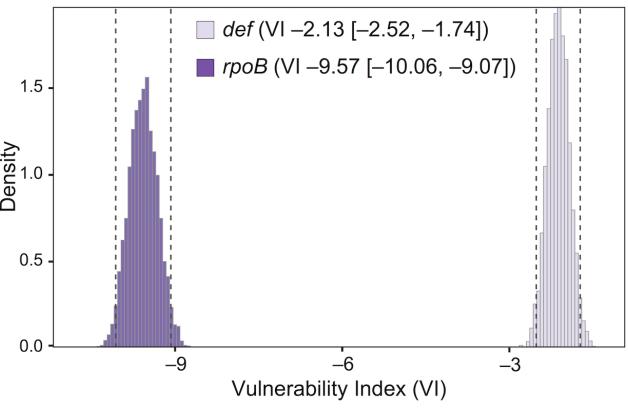


#### Gene vulnerability varies widely across the Mtb genome



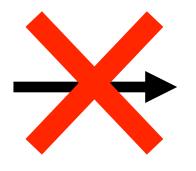
#### Not all drug targets are made equal





#### Understand Mtb biology to build better therapies

Discover new biology that facilitates Mtb pathogenesis

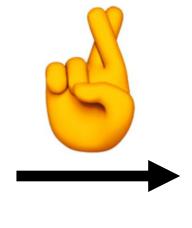


Really hard!

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#### The TB Drug Accelerator









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## Acknowledgements – Rock Lab





## Dirk Schnappinger



Dirk Schnappinger joined Weill Cornell Medical College in 2001, where he currently holds the position of Professor in the Department of Microbiology & Immunology. He received his Ph.D. from the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany, in 1998 for work on the repressor controlling tetracycline resistance in Gram negative bacteria. After his graduate work Dr. Schnappinger began to study the human pathogen Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb), first at UC Berkeley, in the lab of Dr. Lee Riley, and then at Stanford under the guidance of Dr. Gary Schoolnik, where he helped to adapt microarray-based RNA profiling to the analysis of bacterial pathogens.

His current research aims to help develop new medicines for the treatment and prevention of Tuberculosis (TB), an infectious disease that still claims over a million lives each year. This work began with developing a regulatory system that allows to turn Mtb genes on and off, both in vitro and during infections. His lab now applies this and other genetic approaches to evaluate Mtb gene products as new targets for TB drug development by documenting the impact of their genetic inactivation on growth and persistence of Mtb in vitro and in mice, help elucidate the mechanisms by which small molecules inhibit the growth of Mtb, improve safety of the M. bovis BCG vaccine and develop a human challenge model for TB.

# The application of chemical-genetic tools in TB drug discovery

Dirk Schnappinger, PhD

Department of Microbiology and Immunology

Weill Cornell Medicine

New York, USA

## **Applications**

- 1. Validation of Mtb targets in mice
- 2. Mechanistic analysis of hit and lead compounds
- 3. Discovery of new chemical matter: target-directed whole cells screens

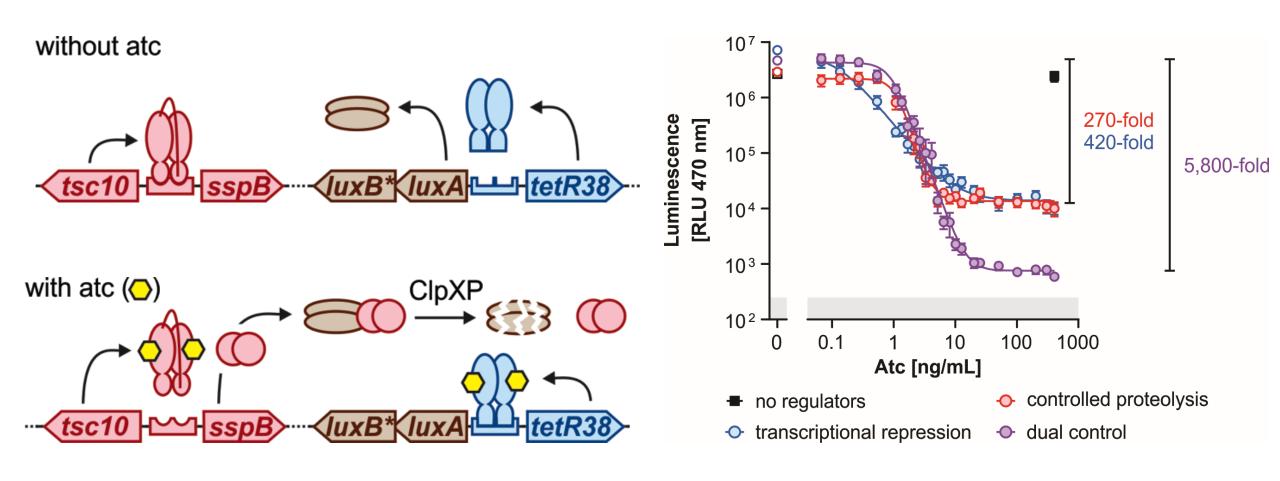
2025.09.09

## Why conditional gene silencing?

- Most antibiotics target in vitro essential gene products/processes, which are difficult to study using traditional genetic approaches and screens (such as transposon-based methods).
- Successful treatment of an infection requires targeting gene products/processes required by a pathogen to maintain an infection.
- Conventional mutants (transposon mutants, deletion mutants) often only allow to assess the importance of a gene product for establishing an infection.

Goal: Develop a conditional gene silencing system that allows to efficiently suppress gene activity in vitro and during infection.

## Dual-control (DUC) system



Jee-Hyun Kim, Kathryn O'Brien et al. PMID: 24191058

## Impact of interfering with NAD synthesis

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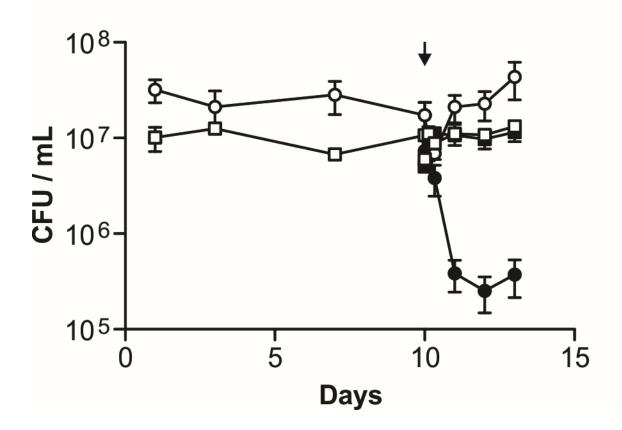
#### **PBS**

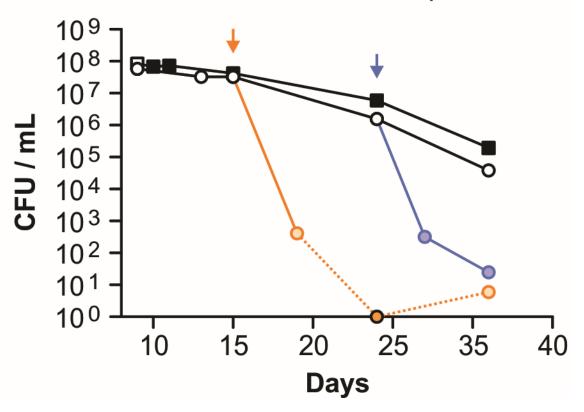
- □ wt no atc
- NadE-DUC no atc
- wt plus atc

   NadE-DUC plus atc d10

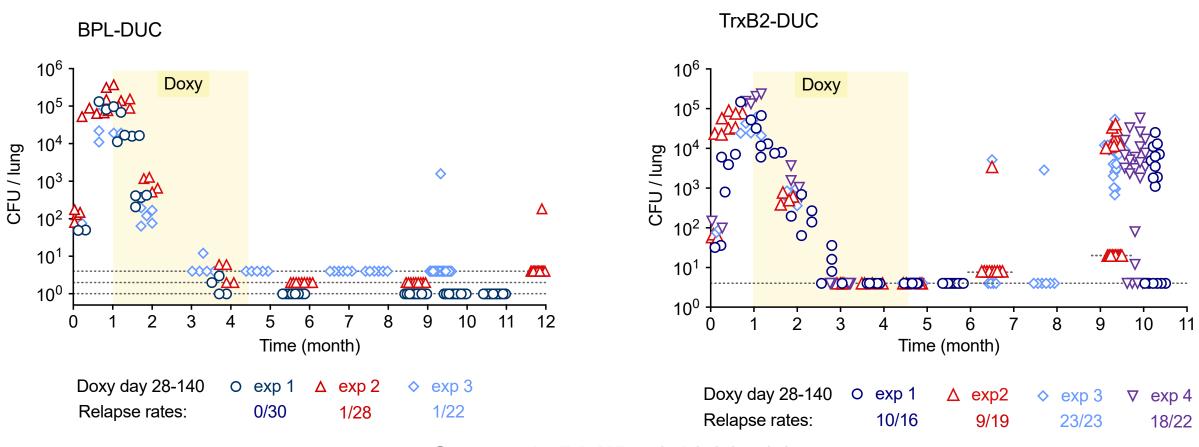
#### Hypoxia

- □ wt no atc
- wt plus atc
- NadE-DUC no atc
- NadE-DUC plus atc d15
- NadE-DUC plus atc d24



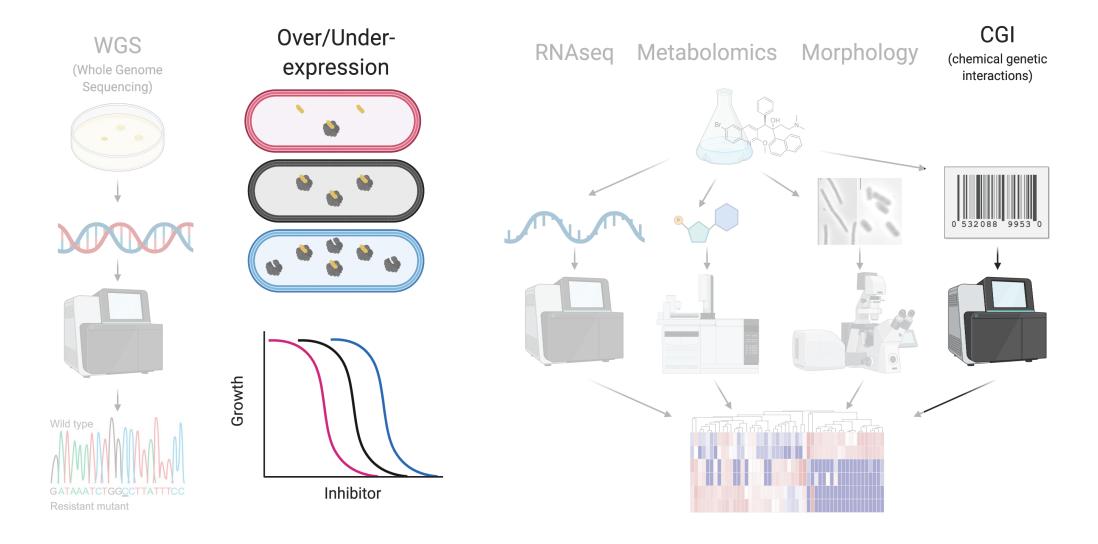


## Identification of sterilizing targets



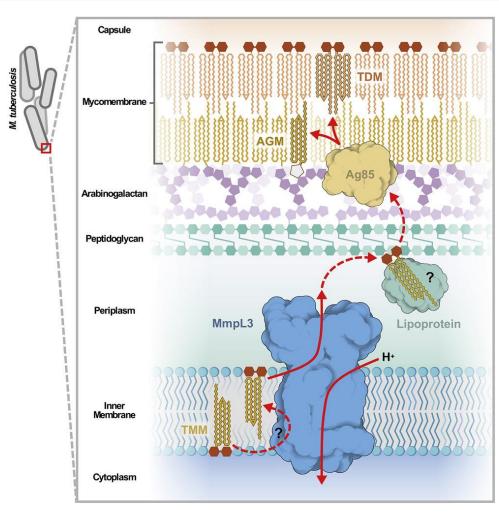
Su et al. PMID: 34269789

## Mechanistic analyses of hits and leads



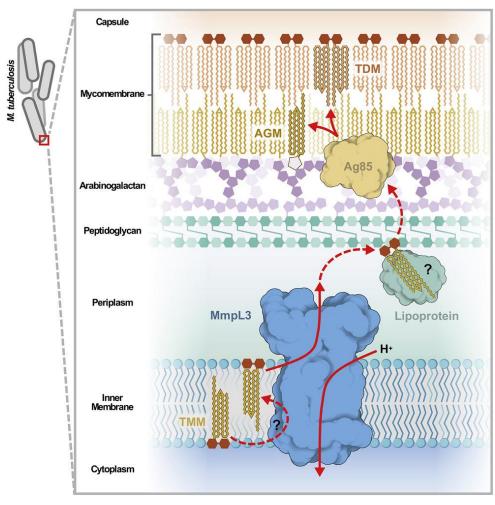
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## **MmpL3: TMM transporter**

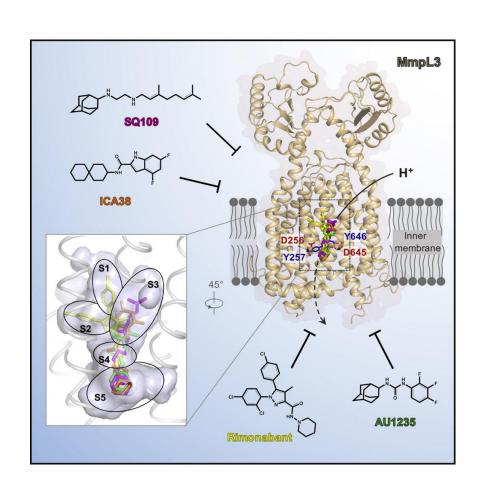


Adams et al, PMID 34242558

## MmpL3: frequent target in phenotypic screens

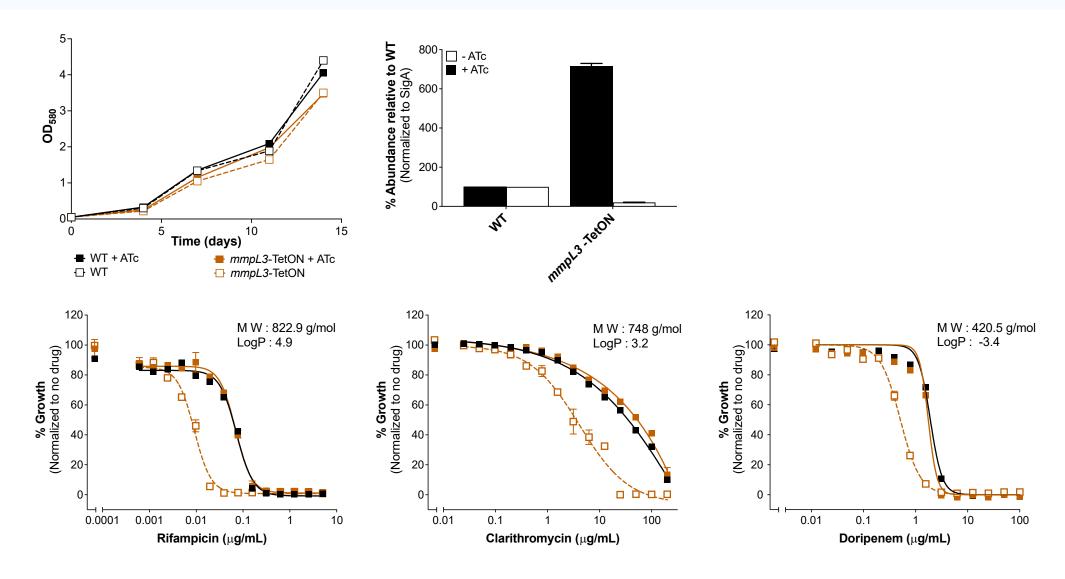


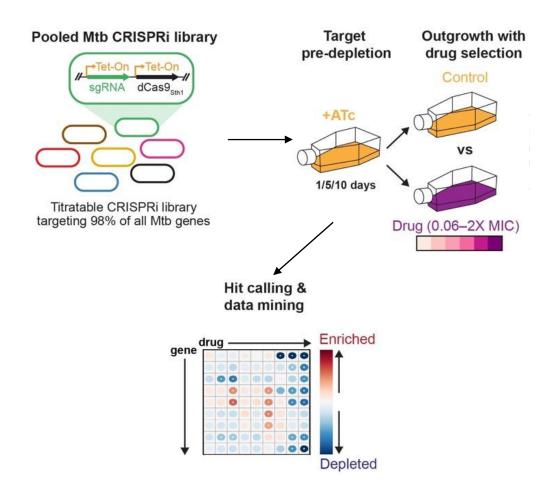
Adams et al, PMID 34242558

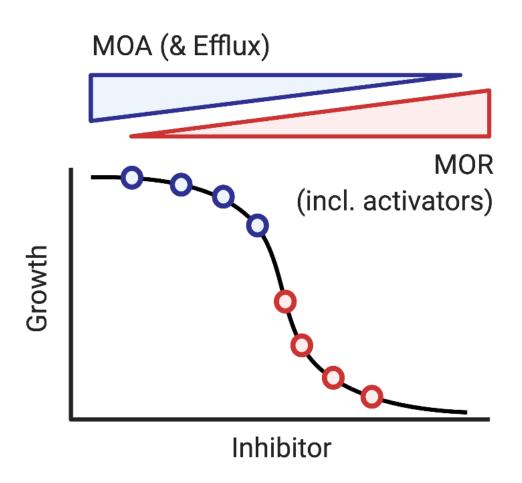


Zhang et al, PMID 30682372

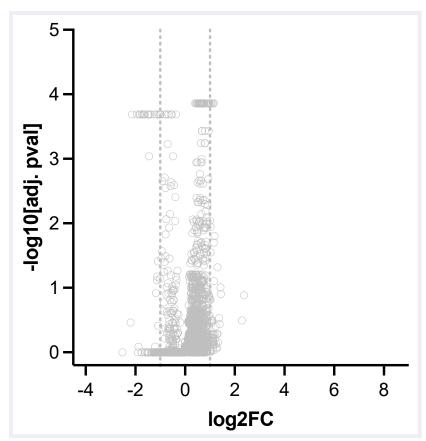
## Two-way regulation of mmpL3

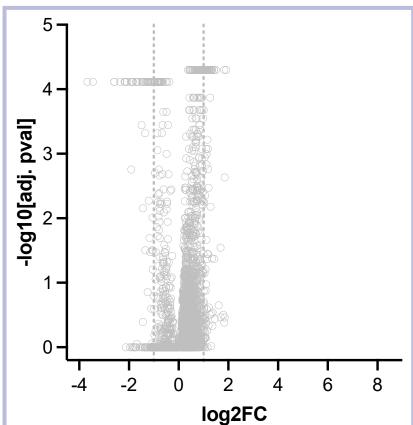


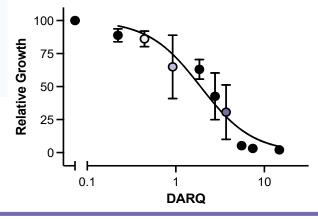


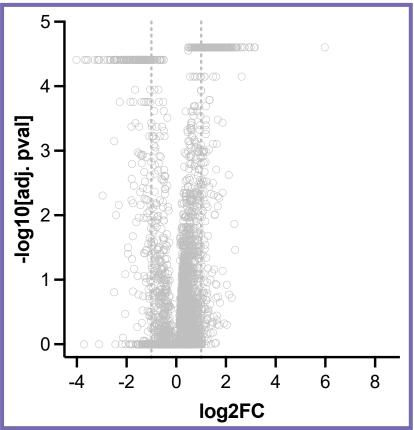


Li, Poulton et al. PMID 35637331

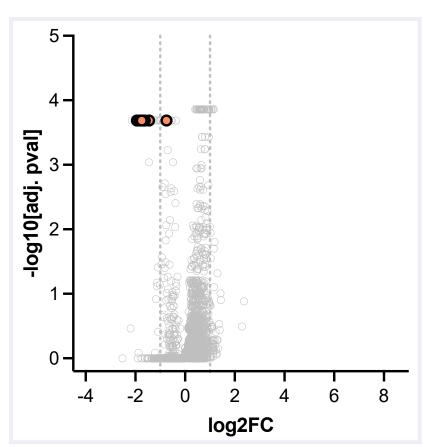


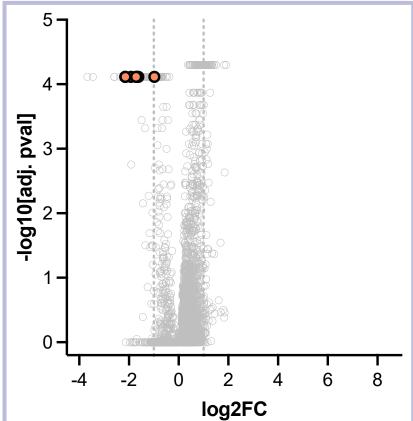


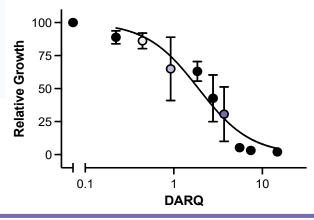


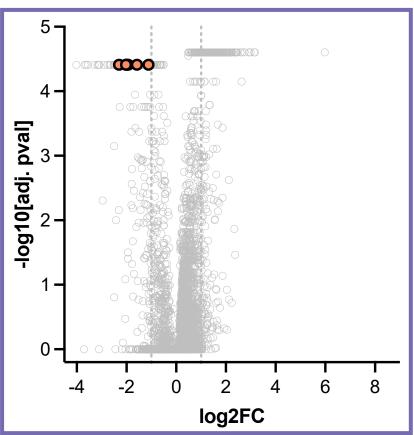


ATP synthase



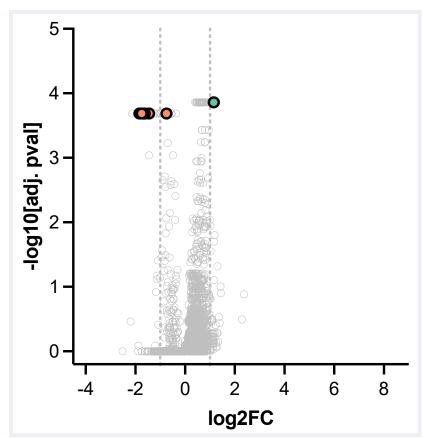


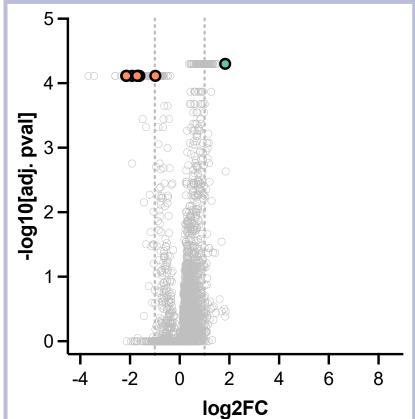


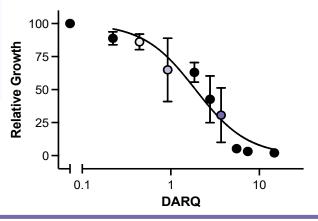


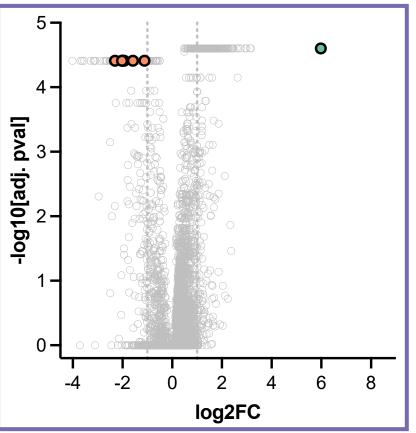
ATP synthase

mmpR5 (rv0678)

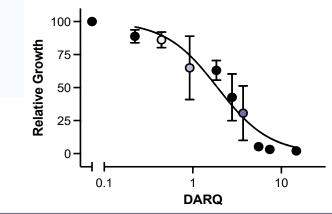


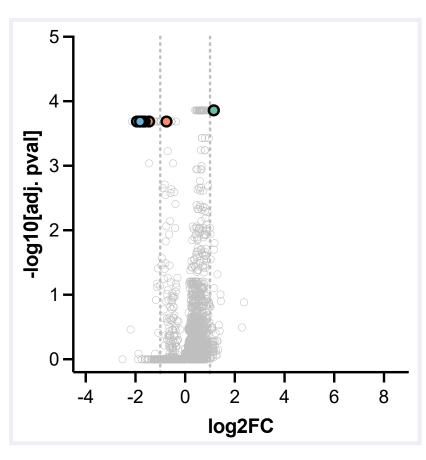


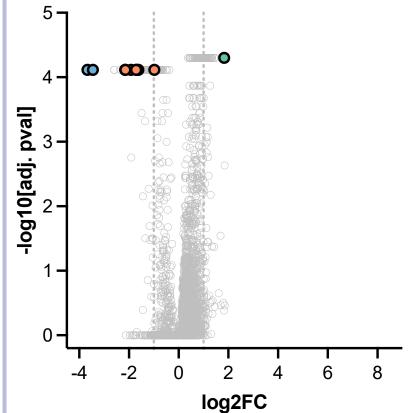


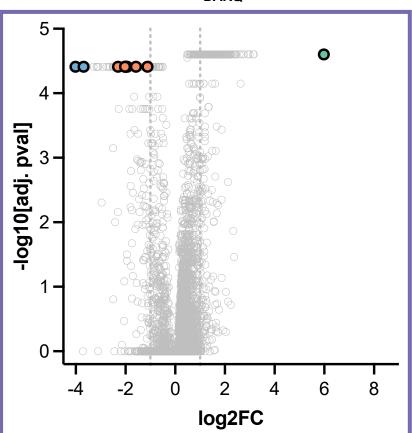


- ATP synthase
- mmpR5 (rv0678)
- mmpL5S5









## Target-directed whole cells screens

nature

Vol 441|18 May 2006|doi:10.1038/nature04784

Chemistry & Biology

Article

#### LETTERS

## Platensimycin is a selective FabF inhibitor with potent antibiotic properties

Jun Wang<sup>1</sup>\*, Stephen M. Soisson<sup>1</sup>\*, Katherine Young<sup>1</sup>, Wesley Shoop<sup>1</sup>†, Srinivas Kodali<sup>1</sup>, Andrew Galgoci<sup>1</sup>, Ronald Painter<sup>1</sup>, Gopalakrishnan Parthasarathy<sup>1</sup>, Yui S. Tang<sup>1</sup>, Richard Cummings<sup>1</sup>, Sookhee Ha<sup>1</sup>, Karen Dorso<sup>1</sup>, Mary Motyl<sup>1</sup>, Hiranthi Jayasuriya<sup>1</sup>, John Ondeyka<sup>1</sup>, Kithsiri Herath<sup>1</sup>, Chaowei Zhang<sup>1</sup>, Lorraine Hernandez<sup>1</sup>, John Allocco<sup>1</sup>, Ángela Basilio<sup>1</sup>, José R. Tormo<sup>1</sup>, Olga Genilloud<sup>1</sup>, Francisca Vicente<sup>1</sup>, Fernando Pelaez<sup>1</sup>, Lawrence Colwell<sup>1</sup>, Sang Ho Lee<sup>1</sup>, Bruce Michael<sup>1</sup>, Thomas Felcetto<sup>1</sup>, Charles Gill<sup>1</sup>, Lynn L. Silver<sup>1</sup>†, Jeffery D. Hermes<sup>1</sup>, Ken Bartizal<sup>1</sup>, John Barrett<sup>1</sup>‡, Dennis Schmatz<sup>1</sup>, Joseph W. Becker<sup>1</sup>, Doris Cully<sup>1</sup> & Sheo B. Singh<sup>1</sup>

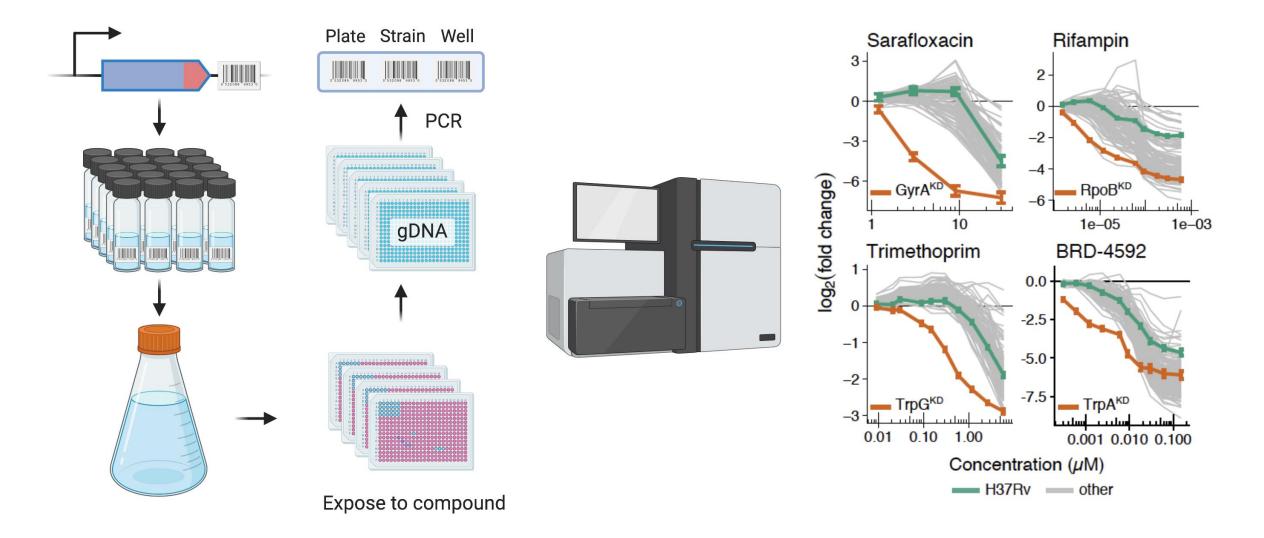
## Pathway-Selective Sensitization of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* for Target-Based Whole-Cell Screening

Garth L. Abrahams, 1,2,\* Anuradha Kumar, 3 Suzana Savvi, 1 Alvin W. Hung, 4 Shijun Wen, 4 Chris Abell, 4 Clifton E. Barry III, 5 David R. Sherman, 3 Helena I.M. Boshoff, 5 and Valerie Mizrahi<sup>1,2,\*</sup>

Johnson et al. PMID: 31217586

2025.09.09

## Multiplexed target-directed whole cells screens



2025.09.09

## Acknowledgements

#### **Weill Cornell Medicine**

**Dirk Schnappinger** 

Sabine Ehrt Anisha Zaveri Carolina Trujillo **Curtis Engelhart** Jee Kim Joshua Wallach Kathryn O'Brien Nadine Ruecker Shipra Grover Sophie Lavalette



#### **Rockefeller University**

Jeremy Rock
Barbara Bosch
Michael DeJesus
Nicholas Poulton
Shuqi Li

# Broad Institute Deborah Hung Eachan Johnson James Gomez

NIAID, BMGF, DOD, Potts Memorial Foundation, Boehringer Ingelheim Fonds, Wellcome Trust

2025,09,09



## Laura Cleghorn



Laura Cleghorn is the Tuberculosis Portfolio Leader in the Dundee Drug Discovery Unit (DDU) where she leads a team of multi-disciplinary researchers focused on identifying novel inhibitors with the potential to be progressed toward pre-clinical candidate selection and evaluated as a new therapy for TB.

Laura obtained a BSc(Hons) in Chemistry from the University of Edinburgh then worked at Organon Laboratories as a graduate medicinal chemist before moving to the University of Leeds where she obtained a PhD in Organic Chemistry in the lab of Prof. Ron Grigg. In 2006, Laura joined the newly formed Drug Discovery Unit as a medicinal chemist, initially working on Human African Trypanosomiasis, before moving to the Tuberculosis group in 2013, where she became the Portfolio Leader in 2020, and was afterwords promoted to the position of Reader in 2022.





## Opportunities and challenges in TB drug discovery:

Targeting Pks13 as a case study

Laura Cleghorn

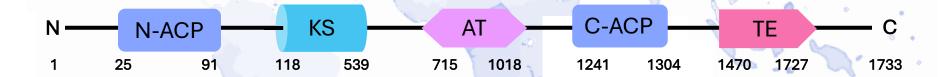
**REVIVE** webinar

9<sup>th</sup> September 2025

## Polyketide Synthase (Pks13)



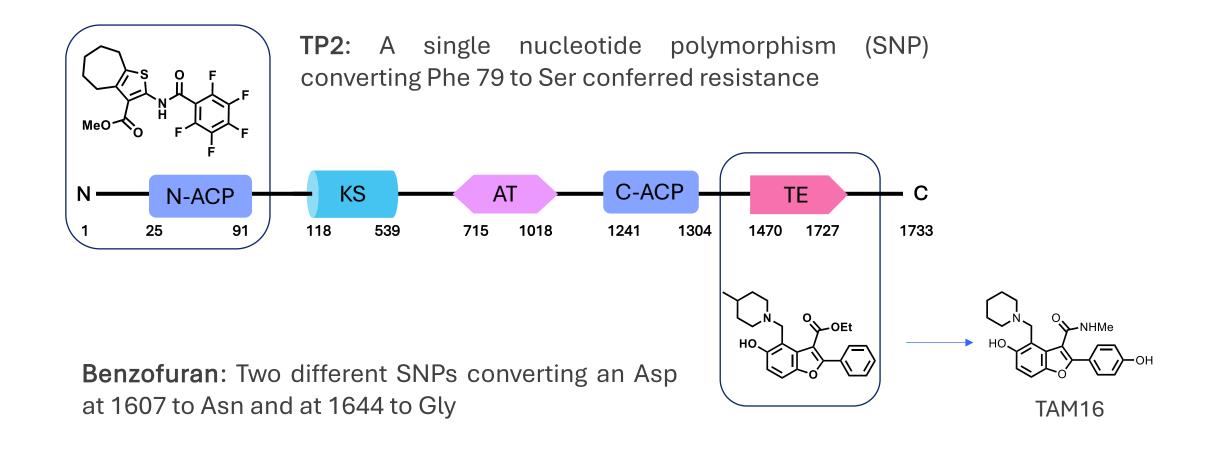
- Pks13 is an essential gene
  - Role: Condense 2 different fatty acid chains to produce cell wall mycolic acids
    - Only found in mycobacteria and is essential for its survival
- Pks13 protein contains1733 amino acids
  - 5 domains are known to have function



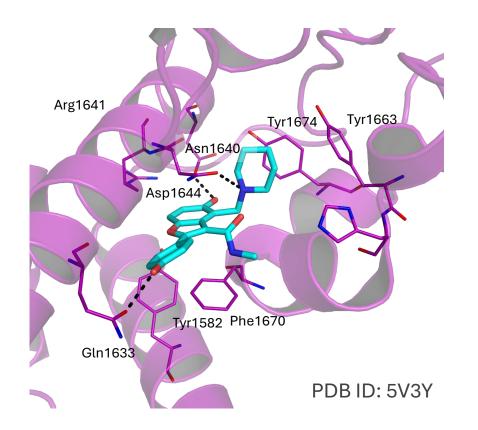
Today's webinar will summarise drug discovery efforts to target Pks13

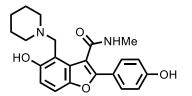
## 1<sup>st</sup> Discovery of Pks13 inhibitors





## Benzofuran 'TE' series

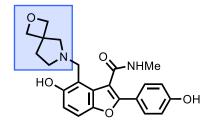




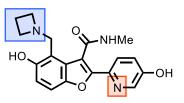
	TAM16	
Pks13 IC <sub>50</sub>	0.3 μΜ	
H37Rv MIC	0.08 μΜ	
hERG IC50	7 μM	
Microsomal	3 mL/min/g	
clearance	3 mL/min/g	







	6
Pks13 IC <sub>50</sub>	0.3 μΜ
H37Rv MIC	0.6 μΜ
hERG IC50	> 30 µM
Microsomal	2 ml /min/g
clearance	3 mL/min/g

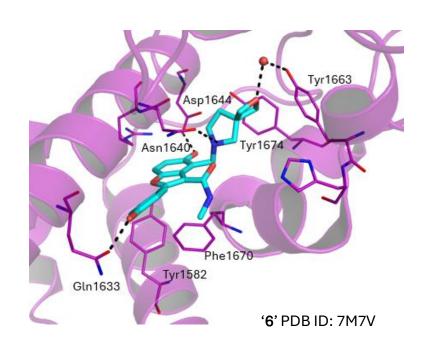


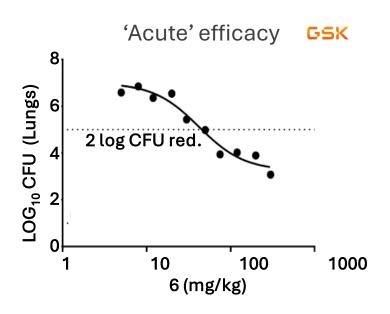
	12
Pks13 IC <sub>50</sub>	0.2 μΜ
H37Rv MIC	0.3 μΜ
hERG IC50	> 30 µM
Microsomal clearance	0.9 mL/min/g

## Benzofuran 'TE' series efficacy









Follow up cardiotoxicity study on 6 highlighted the hERG liability remained

Series halted

#### Major Challenge:

• Lipophilic amine essential & responsible for off-target cardiovascular toxicity

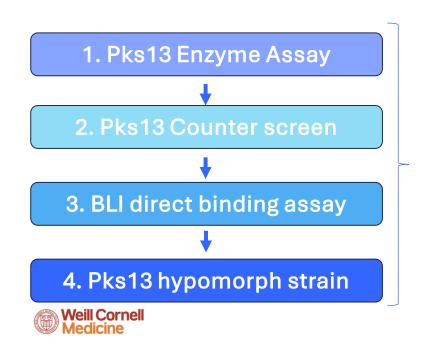
## Target based screening strategy

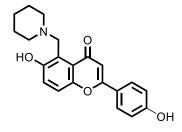




Next a screening campaign to identify alternative chemical start points was initiated

- ~183K compounds screened from a variety of libraries
- ~ 1,500 progressed to hit confirmation



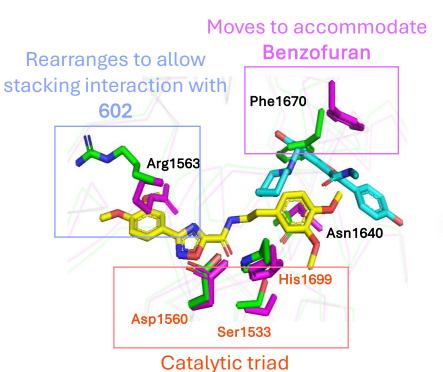


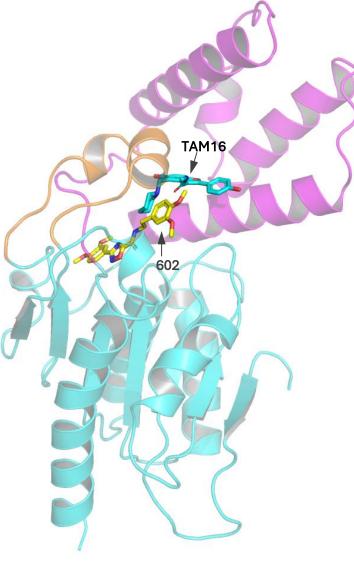
	105*
Pks13 IC <sub>50</sub>	0.5 μΜ
H37Rv MIC	0.08 μΜ
hERG IC50	0.8 μΜ
Microsomal clearance	3 mL/min/g

	, I	) I	<sup>)</sup>
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<b>-</b> o'	N-0		

	602	
Pks13 IC <sub>50</sub>	0.3 μΜ	
H37Rv MIC	11 µM	'602' Series
hERG IC50	> 20 µM	002 001100
Microsomal	20 ml /min/a	
clearance	20 mL/min/g	

## 602 'TE' series

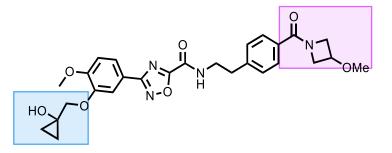




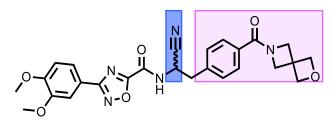
**TAM16** (PDB ID 5V3Y: cyan and purple) **50** (PDB ID 8Q0T: yellow and green)







	80	
Pks13 IC <sub>50</sub>	0.3 μΜ	
H37Rv MIC	1.2 μM	
hERG IC50	ND	
Microsomal	1 001 /00 00 /0	
clearance	1 mL/min/g	

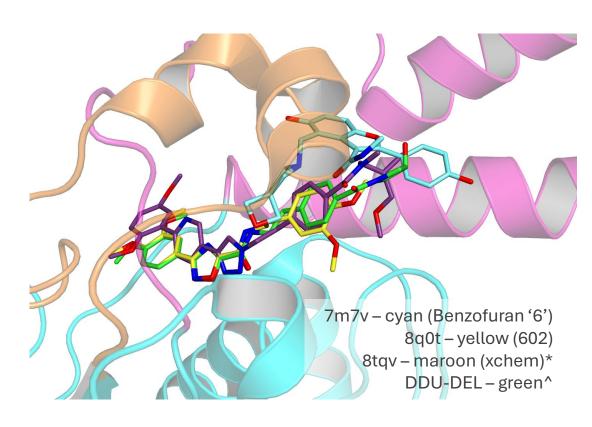


	44	
Pks13 IC <sub>50</sub>	0.4 μΜ	
H37Rv MIC	0.7 μΜ	
hERG IC50	> 70 µM	
Microsomal	1 mL/min/g	
clearance	i iiiL/iiiii/g	

## 'TE' series from DEL screening



An alternative binding mode to inhibit the Pks13 'TE' domain identified



DNA encoded library (DEL) screen

- Xchem/TAMU\*
- DDU

#### **DDU DEL**

- Challenges
  - Balancing optimisation of ADME and retention of potency
  - hERG liability
  - Limited in vivo efficacy

## Phenotypic start point





Phenotypic screening of a large library of ~225K compounds - identified a potent singleton NIH



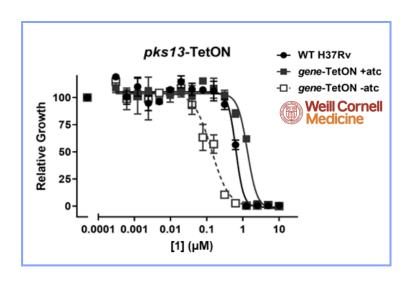
- Screening against a PiniB-LUX strain indicated the compound targeted the cell wall
  - Mmpl3, DprE1, InhA, Fad32, KasA, Pks13

Resistant mutants generated

- FoR 10<sup>-8</sup> (10 x MIC)
- N-ACP and KS domain
  - F79L like F79S mutation reported for TP2

Both '1' and 'TP2' contain a pentafluorophenyl moiety

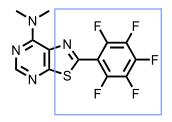
- 'Potential covalent binder'
- Cys287 is the sole cysteine in 1<sup>st</sup> 800 residues of Pks13



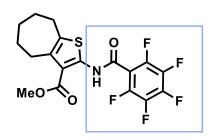
## 'N-ACP/KS' series development



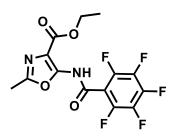




	1	
H37Rv MIC	0.1 μΜ	
hERG IC50	> 30 µM	
Kin. Sol (µM)	2 μΜ	
Microsomal	> 50 mL/min/g	
clearance	> 30 IIIL/IIIII/g	



	TP2	
H37Rv MIC	0.1 μΜ	
hERG IC50	ND	
Kin. Sol (µM)	0.2 μΜ	
Microsomal	15 mL/min/g	
clearance		



	24	
H37Rv MIC	0.3 μΜ	
hERG IC50	ND	
Kin. Sol (μΜ)	204 μΜ	
Microsomal clearance	> 0.5 mL/min/g	
Hepatocyte clearance	12 mL/min/g	

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/ 0	o F	√F F

	43
H37Rv MIC	0.8 μΜ
hERG IC50	ND
Kin. Sol (µM)	196 μΜ
Microsomal clearance	> 0.5 mL/min/g
Hepatocyte clearance	3 mL/min/g

PK study '43' allowed progression to an 'acute' in vivo efficacy

- No reduction in bacteria load (8-day study @ 200 mg/kg) observed
- High conc<sup>n</sup> over 7 days required to see cidal effect in macrophages
  - Not an issue with other series

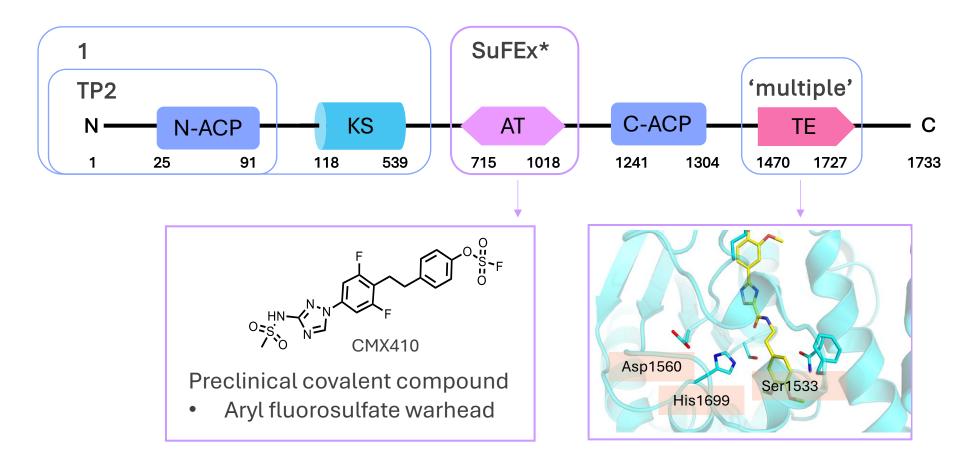
### Domain coverage summary





Inhibitors across the Pks13 domains have been investigated

Data available in public domain



## Lessons learnt and challenges



#### Challenges:

- hERG (3/4 TE series needed to mitigate this risk)
- Limited PK exposure
- Identifying relevant chemical matter

#### Tools:

- Access to hypomorph has been essential to confirm on target
- Structural biology

#### Key question yet to be addressed:

Will Pks13 contribute towards a superior regimen?

## Acknowledgements





Benzofuran: Caroline Wilson, Peter Ray, Fabio Zuccotto, Jorge Hernandez, Anup Aggarwal, Claire Mackenzie, Nicola Caldwell, Malcolm Taylor, Margaret Huggett, Michael Mathieson, Dinakaran Murugesan, Alasdair Smith, Susan Davis, Mattia Cocco, Maloy K. Parai, Arjun Acharya, Fabio Tamaki, Paul Scullion, Ola Epemolu, Jennifer Riley, Laste Stojanovski, Eva Maria Lopez-Román, Pedro Alfonso Torres-Gómez, Ana Maria Toledo, Laura Guijarro-Lopez, Isabel Camino, Curtis A. Engelhart, Dirk Schnappinger, Lisa M. Massoudi, Anne Lenaerts, Gregory T. Robertson, Chris Walpole, David Matthews, David Floyd, James C. Sacchettini, Kevin D. Read, Lourdes Encinas, Robert H Bates, Simon R Green and Paul G Wyatt. J. Med. Chem. 2022, 65, 409–423

602: Simon R. Green, Caroline Wilson, Thomas C. Eadsforth, Avinash S. Punekar, Fabio K. Tamaki, Gavin Wood, Nicola Caldwell, Barbara Forte, Neil R. Norcross, Michael Kiczun, John M. Post, Eva Maria Lopez-Román, Curtis A. Engelhart, Iva Lukac, Fabio Zuccotto, Ola Epemolu, Helena I. M. Boshoff, Dirk Schnappinger, Chris Walpole, Ian H. Gilbert, Kevin D. Read, Paul G. Wyatt and Beatriz Baragaña *J. Med. Chem.* 2023, 66, 15380–15408

N-ACP/KS domain: Simon R Green, Justin R Harrison, Stephen Thompson, Dinakaran Murugesan, M Daben J Libardo, Curtis A Engelhart, Jaclynn Meshanni, Daniel Fletcher, Paul Scullion, Darren Edwards, Ola Epemolu, Nicole Mutter, Yoko Shishikura, Jennifer Riley, Thomas R Ioerger, Jose Juan Roca Guillén, Laura Guijarro López, Kevin D Read, Clifton E Barry 3<sup>rd</sup>, Dirk Schnappinger, Paul G Wyatt, Helena I M Boshoff, and Laura A T Cleghorn. *ACS Infect. Dis.* 2025, 11, 715–726

DEL series: Barbara Forte, Peter Campbell, Gary Knox, Avinash Punekar, Laura Simpson, Ian H. Gilbert, Kevin D. Read, Beatriz Baragaña and collaborators

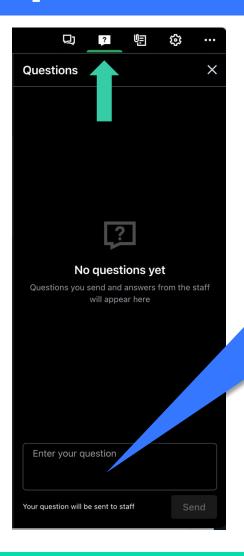
Alice Dawson



## How to submit your questions



If your question is addressed to a specific speaker, please include their name when submitting the question.



Please submit your questions through the box provided after clicking the 'questions' button. We will review all questions and respond to as many as possible after the presentation.

#### Thank you to today's speakers





## Overcoming challenges of tuberculosis drug discovery and development



Moderator:
Valerie Mizrahi
Director, Institute of Infectious
Disease and Molecular
Medicine, University of Cape
Town (South Africa)



Jeremy Rock
Associate Professor,
Rockefeller University
(USA)



Dirk Schnappinger
Professor, Department of
Microbiology &
Immunology, Weill Cornell
Medical College (USA)



Laura Cleghorn
Reader, Drug Discovery
Unit, School of Life
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Using artificial intelligence to analyse and predict susceptibility to antimicrobials

Speakers: Adrian Egli, University of Zürich, Switzerland

> Javier Fernández Domínguez, Pragmatech Al Solutions, Spain

Using artificial intelligence to analyse and predict susceptibility to antimicrobials

With Adrian Egli & Javier Fernández Domínguez 28 October 2025, 17:00-18:30 CEST





## Thank you for joining us