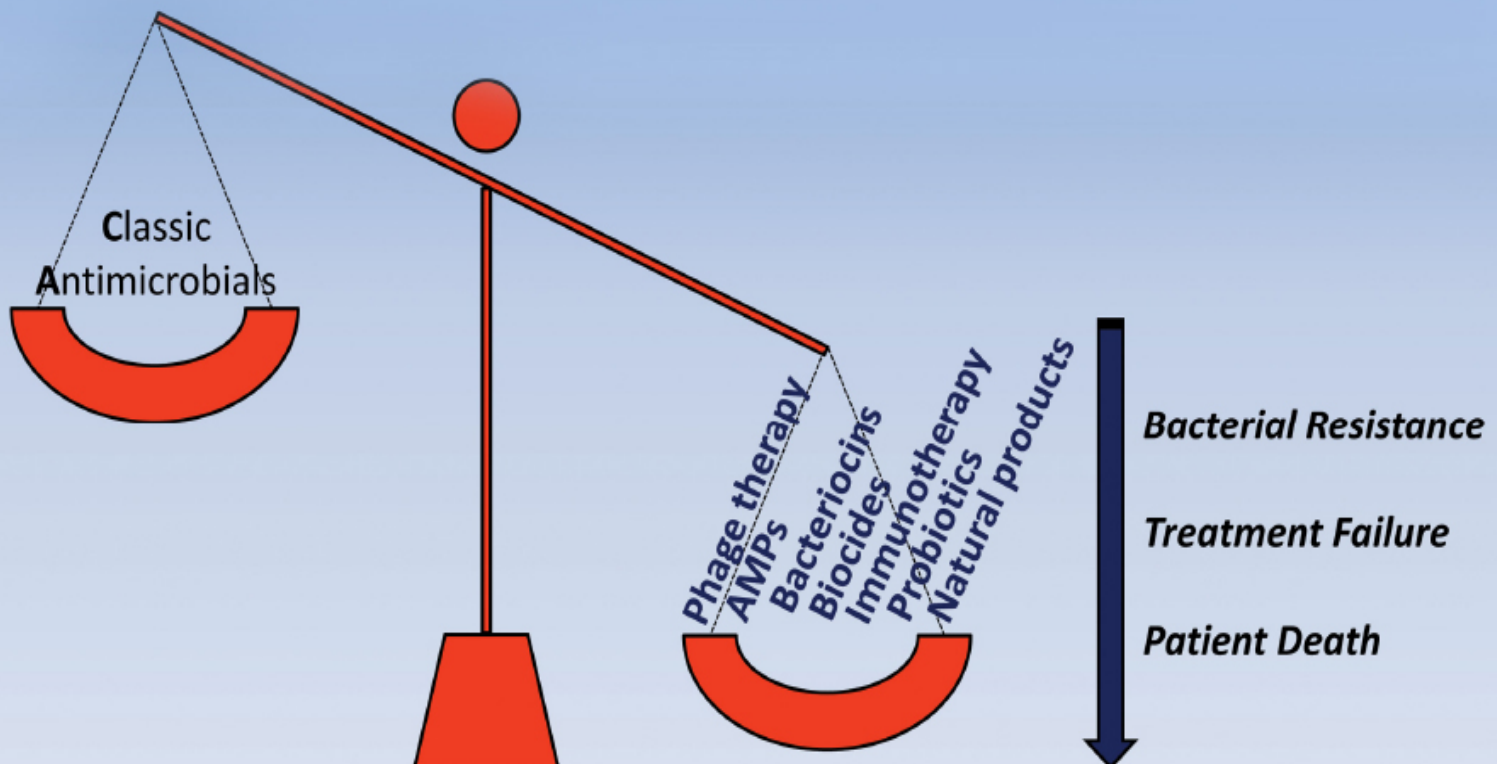


FRONTIERS IN ANTIMICROBIAL AGENTS

THE CHALLENGES OF ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW THERAPEUTICS

VOLUME 1



Editors:
Manuela Oliveira
Isa D. Serrano

**Frontiers in Antimicrobial
Agents
(Volume 1)**

**The Challenging of Antibiotic
Resistance in the Development of
New Therapeutics**

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	i
PREFACE	ii
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS	iv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	3
INTRODUCTION	4
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
REFERENCES	7
CHAPTER 2 BACTERIOPHAGES AS ANTIBACTERIAL AGENTS: WHY ARE WE FACING AN ANTIBIOTIC CRISIS AND HOW COULD BACTERIOPHAGES BE OF HELP?	10
1. INTRODUCTION	11
2. WHY ARE WE FACING AN ANTIBIOTIC (AB) CRISIS?	12
3. HOW TO RESOLVE THIS ANTIBIOTIC CRISIS?	14
4. BACTERIOPHAGES OR IN SHORT ‘PHAGES’	14
5. BACTERIOPHAGE THERAPY OR PHAGE THERAPY	16
6. EXPERIMENTAL PHAGE THERAPY	17
7. SAFETY ISSUES	18
8. IN FACT WE LIVE IN AN “OCEAN” OF BACTERIOPHAGES	19
9. SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR PHAGE THERAPY	20
10. THE POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES OF PHAGE THERAPY VERSUS ANTIBIOTICS	24
11. PHAGE THERAPY IN PUBLIC HEALTH	25
12. WHY PHAGE THERAPY IS NOT YET IMPLEMENTED?	26
CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES	27
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	27
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	27
REFERENCES	28
CHAPTER 3 ANTIMICROBIAL PEPTIDES	33
INTRODUCTION	33
1. WHAT ARE ANTIMICROBIAL PEPTIDES (AMPS)	34
1.1. Mode of Action	34
1.2. Immune System	36
1.3. Resistance	37
2. CHRONOLOGY OF AMPS DISCOVERY – A BRIEF HISTORY	40
2.1. Classification of AMPs	41
2.1.1. <i>Biological Source</i>	42
2.1.2. <i>Biological Functions</i>	42
2.1.3. <i>Biosynthesis</i>	42
2.1.4. <i>Molecular Properties</i>	42
2.1.5. <i>Molecular Targets</i>	43
2.1.6. <i>Three-Dimensional (3D) Structure</i>	43
2.2. Currently Active AMPs Databases	44
3. THERAPEUTIC APPLICATIONS OF AMPS	49
3.1. Anticancer AMPs	50

3.2. Antiviral AMPs	53
3.3. Anti-parasitic AMPs	54
3.4. New Generation of AMPs	55
CONCLUDING REMARKS	57
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	58
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	58
REFERENCES	58

CHAPTER 4 PROBIOTICS: WAYS OF ACTION AND BENEFICIAL EFFECTS	69
1. INTRODUCTION	69
2. SELECTION OF PROBIOTICS	72
3. COMMERCIALY IMPORTANT PROBIOTICS	74
4. MECHANISMS OF ACTION OF PROBIOTICS	77
4.1. Immunomodulation	77
4.2. Direct Effects on Other Microorganisms	79
5. BENEFICIAL HEALTH EFFECTS OF PROBIOTICS	80
5.1. Alleviation of Lactose Intolerance	81
5.2. Effect on Helicobacter Pylori Eradication	82
5.3. Anti-carcinogenic Effect	83
5.4. Cholesterol-lowering Effects	84
5.5. Allergy and Atopic Dermatitis	85
5.6. Inflammatory Diseases and Bowel Syndromes	86
CONCLUSION	87
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	87
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	87
REFERENCES	87

CHAPTER 5 IMMUNOTHERAPY	97
1. BACTERIAL INFECTIVITY, IMMUNE RESPONSE AND MULTIRESTANT INFECTIONS : NEW PERSPECTIVES	98
1.1. Introduction	98
1.2. Host Resistance	99
1.3. Bacterial Strategies for Evading, Surviving Host Defense Systems and Create Infection	103
2. IMMUNOTHERAPY	109
2.1. Introduction	109
2.2. Applications of Immunotherapy	111
2.3. Passive Immunotherapy	112
2.4. Passive Immunotherapy: Antibodies	113
2.5. Passive Immunotherapy: Adoptive T-cell Transfer	116
2.6. Passive Immunotherapy: Immunomodulators	117
2.7. Growth Factors	117
2.7.1. <i>Filgastrim</i>	117
2.7.2. <i>Sargramostim</i>	118
2.7.3. <i>Erythropoietin (EPO)</i>	118
2.7.4. <i>Insulin-like Growth Factor-1 (IGF-1)</i>	118
2.8. Interleukins	119
2.8.1. <i>Interleukin 2</i>	119
2.8.2. <i>Interleukin-8</i>	119
2.9. Interferons	119
2.9.1. <i>Human Interferon Alpha (HuIFN- α)</i>	120
2.9.2. <i>Recombinant-Feline Interferon Omega (rFeIFN- ω)</i>	122

2.10. Nonspecific Immunostimulants	123
2.10.1. <i>Staphylococcal Protein A (SPA)</i>	124
2.10.2. <i>Propionibacterium Acnes</i>	125
2.10.3. <i>Acemannan</i>	125
2.10.4. <i>Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG)</i>	125
2.10.5. <i>Serratia Marcescens Extracts</i>	126
2.10.6. <i>Parapoxvirus</i>	126
2.11. Drugs From Other Classes That Can Have Immunomodulation Properties	127
2.11.1. <i>Liposomes</i>	127
2.11.2. <i>Levamisole</i>	127
2.11.3. <i>Lactoferrin</i>	128
2.11.4. <i>Nosodes</i>	128
2.11.5. <i>Cimetidine</i>	128
2.11.6. <i>Active Immunotherapy</i>	129
2.12. Active Immunotherapy: Vaccines	129
2.13. Peptide Plus Adjuvant	131
2.14. Plasmid DNA	132
2.15. Recombinant Virus	132
2.16. Recombinant Bacteria	133
2.17. Dendritic Cell Vaccines	133
2.18. Tumor Cell Vaccines	134
2.19. Heat-shock Protein and Exosome-based Vaccines	135
2.20. Active Immunotherapy: Checkpoint Blockade	135
CONCLUDING REMARKS	136
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	136
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	137
REFERENCES	137
CHAPTER 6 PERSPECTIVES ON NATURAL PRODUCTS	149
1. NATURAL PRODUCTS AS ANTIBIOTIC ALTERNATIVES FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM	150
2. SEARCHING FOR NATURAL PRODUCTS: THE IMPORTANCE AND EVOLVING ROLE OF NATURAL PRODUCTS IN DRUG DISCOVERY	151
3. CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE IDENTIFICATION, ISOLATION AND TESTING OF NATURAL PRODUCTS AND THEIR ACTIVE COMPOUNDS	153
4. PROMISING RESULTS ON THE USAGE OF NATURAL COMPOUNDS AGAINST PATHOGENIC MICROORGANISMS	158
CONCLUDING REMARKS	168
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	169
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	169
REFERENCES	169
CHAPTER 7 BACTERIOCINS	178
1. INTRODUCTION	179
2. BACTERIOCINS IN GRAM-NEGATIVE BACTERIA	180
2.1. Colicins	181
2.2. Microcins	181
2.3. Genetic regulation of Colicins and Colicin-like bacteriocins	181
2.4. Mode of Action	183
3. BACTERIOCINS OF GRAM-POSITIVE BACTERIA	183
3.1. Classification	184

3.1.1. Class I: The Lanthionine-Containing (Lantibiotics) Bacteriocins	186
3.1.2. Class II: The Unmodified Peptide Bacteriocins	187
3.1.3. Class III: The Large (>10 kDa) Bacteriocins	188
3.2. Nisin: The Classic Case-Study	189
3.3. Genetic Regulation	190
3.3.1. Genetic regulation in Lantibiotics – Nisin	192
3.4. Mode of Action	194
4. Bacteriocins of Archaea	195
5. Detecting Bacteriocin Production	195
6. Promising Results on the Usage of Bacteriocins	197
6.1. In the Food Industry	197
6.2. In Human Health	199
6.3. In Livestock Health	202
7. “Raison d’etre” - Ecological Role and Evolution of Bacteriocin Diversity	202
CONCLUDING REMARKS	203
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	204
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	204
REFERENCES	204

CHAPTER 8 BIOCIDES – A REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE TO PREVENT AND CONTROL MICROORGANISMS?	208
1. INTRODUCTION	208
2. BIOCIDES CLASSES	210
2.1. Alcohols	212
2.2. Aldehydes	212
2.3. Anilides	212
2.4. Biguanides	213
2.5. Diamidines	213
2.6. Halogen-Releasing Agents	213
2.7. Silver Compounds	214
2.8. Peroxygens	214
2.9. Phenols	215
2.10. Bis-Phenols	215
2.11. Halophenols	215
2.12. Quaternary Ammonium Compounds	216
2.13. Vapor-Phase Sterilants	216
3. FACTORS INFLUENCING EFFECTIVENESS OF BIOCIDES	217
4. MECHANISMS OF BIOCIDES RESISTANCE	218
4.1. Intrinsic Resistance Mechanisms	219
4.2. Biofilm As an Intrinsic Resistance Mechanism	219
4.3. Biofilm Formation in Bacterial Populations	220
4.4. Extrinsic Resistance Mechanisms	222
5. EUROPEAN REGULATION FOR BIOCIDES PRODUCTS	223
CONCLUSION	224
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	225
ABBREVIATIONS	225
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	225
REFERENCES	226

CHAPTER 9 NOVEL THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES IN VETERINARY MEDICINE	234
1. INTRODUCTION	234

1.1. Probiotics	235
1.2. Chicken and Turkeys	236
1.3. Ruminants	238
1.4. Horses	239
1.5. Swine	241
1.6. Aquaculture	242
1.7. Cat and Dog	243
2. BACTERIOPHAGES AND PHAGE THERAPY	245
2.1. Scope of Phage Therapy in Veterinary Sciences	246
CONCLUDING REMARKS	250
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	250
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	251
REFERENCES	251
SUMMARY FRONTIERS IN ANTIMICROBIAL AGENTS –THE CHALLENGING OF ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW THERAPEUTICS	261
SUBJECT INDEX	263

FOREWORD

The rapid development of highly effective antimicrobial agents during the 20th century revolutionized the treatment of diseases caused by bacteria, viruses and fungi; leading to the notion that "it was time to close the book on infectious diseases". However, today we are facing pandrug-resistant microorganisms, and antimicrobial resistance constitutes one of the major public health problems worldwide. Allied to this, the new antimicrobial agent's development pipeline is at its all-time low; because of scientific, economic and regulatory hurdles.

While we must conserve the antimicrobials we have left by using them optimally, the process of developing new agents must also be accelerated. This will hopefully facilitate targeted therapy, improving therapeutic efficacy and decreasing antimicrobial resistance.

This book describes cutting-edge research on innovative alternatives to classical antimicrobial therapy – bacteriophages, antimicrobial peptides, probiotics, immunomodulators, natural compounds, bacteriocins and biocides – and the most appropriate approaches to control the spread of drug-resistant microorganisms.

Interestingly, this book is edited and partly written by scholars dedicated to Microbiology from the area of Veterinary Medicine. This is not surprising, because the amount of antimicrobials marketed for use in animals is approximately four times greater than the quantity used in human medicine. Furthermore, the widespread use of antimicrobial agents in animal production – often administered in lower doses and for longer periods of time – has been linked to the development of antimicrobial resistance.

While the novel therapeutic strategies in Veterinary Medicine have been a major focus in the last chapter, the book has input from a wide range of experts in different disciplines – from basic science to human clinical microbiology – and truly reflects the 'One-Health' approach which spans humans, animals and the wider environment.

One final note to remember by the enthusiastic reader is that, bacteria have shown, in this continuous "arms race", that they can develop resistance to virtually all therapeutic agents. Therefore, it is very important to continue to use both antibiotics and their alternatives rationally and judiciously.

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PREFACE

This eBook was conceived after an invitation by the Bentham Science Publishers due to the necessity to review the alternative approaches to the classic antibiotic therapies, and to disperse the shadows over the use of these innovative medicines.

The prevalence of drug-resistant microorganisms has increased worldwide. However, in the last years, few novel entities to fight drug resistant microorganisms have entered the clinic. The antibacterial pipeline is scarce because of the costs associated with the clinical trials and licensing of the antibiotics. Therefore, the quest for alternatives to the classic antimicrobial therapeutics that are effective against drug resistant microorganisms is a timely and very important issue in modern medicine.

The development of novel entities to control the dissemination of drug resistant microorganisms would decrease the morbidity and mortality caused by these disease causing agents, and consequently the economic burden associated with health treatments. Some of these drugs are considered extremely valuable in the nearly future due to their low toxicity, capacity for large scale production, and most importantly their low probability to generate resistance. However, the fear associated to the use of innovative medicines such as phage therapy must be overcome. It will take time to bring phage therapy and other approaches to practice with safety, and to change mentalities of clinicians and the general public. The implementation of such innovative medicines will lead to a decrease in the antimicrobial resistance and related failure treatments. This progress will require contribution of different levels of interdisciplinary knowledge: from researchers to public health entities, from producers to consumers, including politicians.

This eBook aims to contribute to an integrated understanding concerning innovative alternatives to the classical antimicrobial therapeutics. It is based on cutting edge research and the outcome will shed light on the most appropriate approach to control the dissemination of drug resistant microorganisms. It gathers a wide range of topics on the subject and includes several chapters with original material. Authors and co-authors represent a multidisciplinary team that includes scientists and professors with a vast experience in the area, from different universities and research institutions. It is an attempt to encourage the implementation of alternative approaches to the classic antimicrobial therapeutics in human and veterinary health programmes.

The eBook is organized in nine chapters: the general introduction is followed by a review devoted to Phage Therapy, Antimicrobial Peptides (AMPs), Probiotics, Immunotherapy, Natural Compounds, Bacteriocins, Biocides, and lastly to the Novel Therapeutic Strategies in

Veterinary Medicine.

Finally, we would like to thank all authors that have enthusiastically contributed to this eBook, and all people that somehow helped us to bring it to daylight, including our family, friends, colleagues and students.

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Introduction

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Abstract: Antibiotherapy protocols for infectious disease control were first applied in 1940s with penicillin. Although they led to a major decrease in morbidity and mortality rates, they were also responsible for the rapid emergence and dissemination of multi-drug-resistant bacteria (MDR). This phenomena led to the prompt development of new antimicrobial compounds, which soon became ineffective due to bacteria ability to develop resistant traits through mutations or resistance genes transfer.

However, the development of new approaches for prevention and control of emerging infections remains one of the major priorities and challenges for Research and Innovation (R&I). The worldwide mortality rate due to infectious diseases keeps exponentially increasing, not only due to MDR bacteria dissemination, but also due to the decline in the development and commercialization of new generations of antibacterial compounds.

Considering the “One Health” concept, new antibacterial strategies are urgent, for human and veterinary medicine. Several R&I approaches are being followed, including phage therapy, antimicrobial peptides and bacteriocins, probiotics, natural compounds, immunomodulation *via* vaccination and biocides.

Keywords: Antimicrobial peptides, Antimicrobial resistance, Bacteriocins, Bacteriophages, Biocides, Biofilm, Generally Recognized as Safe, Host, Immunomodulation, Lytic, Multi-Drug-Resistant, Natural compounds, Nisin, “One Health”, Pathogens, Probiotics, Research and innovation, Therapeutic strategies, Vaccination, Veterinary Medicine.

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INTRODUCTION

Antimicrobial resistant bacteria dissemination poses an emergent challenge for the development of new antimicrobial compounds [1], which has significantly diminished in the last decade. Therapeutic options to control the dissemination of resistant bacteria are progressively decreasing. Considering the “One Health” concept, new antibacterial strategies are urgent for human and veterinary medicine. Novel therapeutics strategies aiming at infectious diseases control include phage therapy, probiotics, immunomodulation *via* vaccination, natural compounds and biocides and bacteriocins and antimicrobial peptides.

Antimicrobial peptides (AMP) may constitute new potential antimicrobial compounds: they are able of eliminating a broad spectrum of microorganisms; resistance to AMP was rarely observed; and they have the ability to modulate innate immune response [2]. AMPs are a diverse group of molecules with cationic and amphipathic properties which selectively target membranes rich in negatively charged phospholipids and no cholesterol, such as those of microorganisms [2, 3]. Most have amino acids with two types of side chains: cationic, such as arginine (R), lysine (K), and histidine (H); and bulky nonpolar, *e.g.*, proline (P), phenylalanine (F), and tryptophan (W). The former presumably mediates interactions with bacterial membranes and/or cell walls, including lipopolysaccharide [4], whereas nonpolar chain mediates lipophilic attachment leading to membrane disruption [2, 3].

Recently, it was established that short AMPs having sequence (RW) n -NH₂, ($n= 2$ to 4) are the optimal choice against bacteria. Hexameric and octameric peptides are potent biofilm inhibitors and octameric peptides also disperse existing biofilms and kill detached cells [3, 4]. Other advantage of short AMPs is their minimum damage to host cells, being candidates to large-scale production [3]. In addition, it was shown that some substances that disturb biofilm matrix make them more susceptible to subsequent treatment with antimicrobials or disinfectants, namely furanone [5], nisin [6], and salicylic acid [6]. Cellulase also inhibits biofilm formation by Gram-negative bacteria, probably by degrading the exopolysaccharide [7].

Bacteriocins are a heterogeneous group of ribosomally synthesized AMP produced by bacteria, divided in several classes [8]. Nisin is a class I bacteriocin produced by *Lactococcus lactis* that has antibacterial activity against a wide range of Gram-positive bacteria [9 - 11]. Nisin is already approved as a food preservative in EU (as additive E234) and USA [9].

Some bacteriocins are produced by probiotic strains. Probiotics are defined as “live microorganisms whose when administered in adequate amounts confer a health benefit on the host”. Probiotics are documented to reduce or prevent specific infectious diseases of the gastrointestinal tract. Proposed mechanisms by which probiotics can inhibit pathogens in the gut environment include (i) competitive exclusion by competition for binding sites or stimulation of epithelial barrier function; (ii) stimulation of immune responses *via* increases of sIgA and anti-inflammatory cytokines and regulation of proinflammatory cytokines; (iii) direct antimicrobial activity through production of antimicrobial substances, including bacteriocins and other antimicrobial peptides (AMPs); (iv) production of biosurfactant molecules with antiadhesive and sometimes also antimicrobial activity; (v) inhibition of key cellular processes in gastrointestinal pathogens such as virulence gene or protein expression, quorum sensing or biofilm formation [12, 13].

Bacteriophages are ubiquitous bacterial viruses [14 - 20] that specifically invade several bacterial genera [21, 22]. They are obligate parasites which nucleic acid codes for the proteins necessary for its replication within the host bacterium [14] and can be lytic or temperate [14, 16, 20 - 22]. Bacteriophages used in therapy are usually lytic. Their life cycle includes adsorption to a specific phage receptor on the bacterial cell surface, genomic material injection, exponential phage replication using the host cell machinery, bacteria lysis and release of progeny phages [14, 16, 18, 21, 22]. These phages can present two bacteriolytic mechanisms, promoting cell wall hydrolysis *via* a virolysin-holin system present in most lytic phages, or *via* a single lytic factor [20].

One main advantage of phages is their host specificity [15 - 18, 20, 22], which renders them ideal for eliminating only pathogenic bacteria, belonging to a specific species, serovar or serogroup [14, 16, 20, 22]. Unrelated commensal