

Dear friends of the microbial viruses,

thank you once more to you all for your active participation at our “Minisymposium” on occasion of the VAAM-Jahrestagung. We were very pleased about your positive feedback. Six speakers presented various perspectives on “Molecular structures made by viruses”. Lucia Malone (U Ontago, New Zealand) in her key note lecture showed how *Serratia jumbo* phages shield their genomes from the host’s CRISPR-CAS defense by building nucleus-like structures (Nat. Microbiol. 2020, 5, 48–55). Thomas Hackl (MPI Heidelberg) discovered a large number of new endogenous virophages in the flagellate *Cafeteria burkhardae* (bioRxiv 2020, doi: 10.1101/2020.11.30.404863). Bacteriophage T5 is a role model for long, non-contractile tailed Siphoviridae. Cécile Breyton (IBS Grenoble, France) presented new high-resolution structures of the receptor binding base plate. Phages with long, contractile tails were the topic in the talk of Nina Bröker (Uni Potsdam); she presented how O-antigen binding TSP mediate phage genome delivery (J. Biol. Chem. 2019, 294, 11751). Daniela Gjorgjevikj (FU Berlin) showed a new cryo-EM structure of the termination factor Rho:Psi of phage P4 with an unexpected inhibition mechanism when in complex with Rho. The genome of a *Haloferax volcanii* virus studied by Tomas Alarcon Schumacher (MPI Bremen) only has about 8 kbp, encoding eleven proteins. It maintains chronic infections in this model Archaea, for example by interfering with glycan metabolism.

Following the symposium, we met for a general assembly of the special interest group on Zoom, main topics discussed were:

- Introduction of Evgeny Idelevich and Christine Wolz as speakers for the special interest group from VAAM side (<https://vaam.de/die-vaam/fachgruppen/mikrobielle-viren-gemeinsame-fg-der-vaam-und-dghm/>)
- Conferences 2021/22 (for a list see below)
- Topics for the next Minisymposium at the VAAM conference 2022 in Düsseldorf, preference was for “Novel microbial viral defense systems beyond CRISPR”. Your ideas for speakers are very welcome!

To summarize, we think that our special interest group has had an excellent start, even though virtual. Again, we ask you to actively recruit new members for the “Fachgruppe” and are looking forward to your ideas and input.

Not all viruses are bad.

With best regards from Berlin and Freiburg,
Stefanie Barbirz and Tessa Quax.

Upcoming conferences:

- July 20-24, 2021: ‘What is new in the world of viruses of microbes?’ session at the World Microbe Forum
- September 13/14, 2021: 2nd German Phage Symposium, Stuttgart-Hohenheim
- July 18-22nd, 2022: Viruses of Microbes Conference VI, Guimarães, Portugal (postponed from 2020)