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Intracellular parasitism, the driving force of evolution of *Legionella pneumophila* and the genus *Legionella*

Laure Gomez-Valero, Carmen Buchrieser

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38 **Abstract**

39 *Legionella pneumophila* is an intracellular pathogen that causes a severe pneumonia called
40 Legionnaires' disease that is often fatal when not promptly diagnosed and treated. However,
41 *L. pneumophila* is mainly an environmental pathogen of protozoa. This bacterium parasitizes
42 free-living amoeba and other aquatic protozoa with which it co-evolved over an evolutionary
43 long time. Due to the close relationship between hosts and pathogens, their co-evolution
44 leads to molecular interactions such as the exchange of genetic material through horizontal
45 gene transfer (HGT). Those genes that confer an advantage to the bacteria were fixed in
46 their genomes and help these pathogens to subvert host functions to their advantage.
47 Genome sequencing of *L. pneumophila* and recently of the entire genus *Legionella* that
48 comprises over 60 species revealed that Legionellae have co-opted genes and thus cellular
49 functions from their eukaryotic hosts to a surprisingly high extent never observed before for
50 an prokaryotic organism. Acquisition and loss of these eukaryotic-like genes and eukaryotic
51 domains is an on-going process underlining the highly dynamic nature of the *Legionella*
52 genomes. Although the large amount and diversity of HGT that occurred between *Legionella*
53 and their protozoan hosts seems to be unique in the prokaryotic world the analyses of more
54 and more genomes from environmental organisms and symbionts of amoeba revealed that
55 such genetic exchanges occur among all amoeba associated bacteria and also among the
56 different microorganisms that infect amoeba such as viruses. This dynamic reshuffling and
57 gene-acquisition has led to the emergence of major human pathogens such as *Legionella*
58 and may lead to the emergence of new human pathogens from the environment.

59

60 **Introduction**

61

62 Pathogenicity refers to the ability of an organism to cause disease and to harm the host. The
63 more virulent a pathogen the higher the degree of host damage it can induce, but virulence
64 evolves to the level that optimizes the pathogens reproduction and transmission rate.
65 Pathogenicity and virulence developed through co-evolution of pathogens with its hosts, a
66 major driver of evolution and biological innovation over millions of years. Host-pathogen co-
67 evolution is very widespread across ecosystems, but perhaps the best studied is that
68 occurring between plants, animals or humans and pathogenic parasites, fungi, viruses or
69 bacteria. The result of this reciprocal selection lead to the evolution of sophisticated
70 mechanisms to subvert host functions and shaped the immune defences in eukaryotic cells
71 that should eliminate invading microorganisms.

72 Due to the close relationship between hosts and pathogens, their co-evolution leads
73 to molecular interactions such as the exchange of genetic material through horizontal gene
74 transfer (HGT). During evolution the sequences acquired can be adapted to the recipients
75 species and thereby improve its fitness and affect the interaction between the pathogen and
76 its host. Inter-bacterial HGT was first described in 1959 when the ability of *Shigella* to
77 incorporate drug resistance genes from other *Shigella* strains and from *Escherichia coli* was
78 discovered (1). Since then, it became clear that HGT is an important force driving the
79 evolution of bacteria and archaea, as well as that of unicellular eukaryotes (2). It has now
80 also been shown that prokaryotes cannot only exchange genetic material with other
81 prokaryotes and viruses with viruses, but also between them and with eukaryotes. However,
82 there are only few reports of eukaryote-to-prokaryote HGT.

83 One intriguing case where eukaryote-to-prokaryote HGT has been described is the
84 co-evolution of *Legionella* with protozoa. *Legionella* are environmental bacteria belonging to
85 the class of γ -proteobacteria. The genus contains over 60 species, among which *Legionella*
86 *pneumophila* and *Legionella longbeachae* are major human pathogens that are known as the
87 etiological agent of Legionnaires' disease, a severe pneumonia that is often fatal when not
88 treated promptly (3, 4). *Legionella* are ubiquitous in fresh water reservoirs worldwide but
89 certain species are also found in moist soil, where they parasitize within free-living protozoa
90 (5). The finding that these bacteria replicate intracellularly in environmental protozoa such as
91 *Acanthamoeba castellanii*, *Verbamoeba veriformis* or *Hartmanella veriformis* led to a new
92 perception in microbiology: the ability of a bacterium to replicate within human monocytes
93 and alveolar macrophages, may be derived from the conserved cell biology between
94 amoeba, its natural host in aquatic environments, and human phagocytic cells (5-7).

95

96 Indeed, *L. pneumophila* encodes a type IV secretion system named Dot/Icm (8, 9)
97 that is secreting proteins, which allow this bacterium to manipulate host functions in
98 protozoan and in human cells. Furthermore, several of the traits that contribute to the fitness
99 of *L. pneumophila* in the environment (protozoa) also facilitate its growth in alveolar
100 macrophages (reviewed in (4, 10-12)). However, how the adaptation of *Legionella* to
101 eukaryotic cells and the ability to replicate intracellularly may have evolved on the molecular
102 level was not known.

103

104 **The *L. pneumophila* genome sequence, a breakthrough in the understanding of** 105 ***Legionella*-protozoa co-evolution**

106 *Legionella pneumophila* was one of the human pathogens whose genome was
107 completely sequenced only in 2004. The analysis of its genome sequence was key for a new
108 understanding of the strategies employed by *Legionella* to subvert host functions as the
109 genome sequence uncovered an intriguing feature of the *L. pneumophila* genome. It
110 encodes an unmatched large number and diversity of bacterial proteins with eukaryotic-like
111 properties (13). Among the about 3000 protein coding genes predicted in the genome, more
112 than 150 proteins with high similarity to eukaryotic proteins or carrying eukaryotic motifs were
113 predicted, representing about 5 % of its protein-coding capacity, a number that increased
114 later when systematic searches were employed. Examples of protein domains that had been
115 identified in the *L. pneumophila* genome are F-box and U-box domain proteins, SET-
116 domains, Sel1-domains, STPK domains and Ankyrin domains (13). Examples for proteins
117 homologue to eukaryotic proteins, which are proteins with $\geq 30\%$ amino acid similarity over at
118 least two thirds of the eukaryotic protein length are a eukaryotic glycoamylase, apyrases, or
119 a sphingosine-1 phosphate lyase. This finding led to the suggestion that *L. pneumophila*
120 secretes these proteins in the host cell to subvert eukaryotic signalling pathways by
121 mimicking host cell functions (13). Indeed, also the first described Dot/Icm effector RalF that
122 was identified before the genome was sequenced, encodes a eukaryotic Sec7 domain. Sec7
123 domains are components of Arf-specific guanine nucleotide exchange factors (GEFs). GEFs
124 catalyse the nucleotide exchange of Arfs thereby converting them from an inactive state
125 (GDP-bound) to the active one (GTP-bound). Like in a eukaryotic cell, following secretion
126 into the host cell, RalF recruits Arf-1 and then functions like an Arf-1 specific GEF (14).

127 Based on the information gleaned from the genome sequence analyses many of the
128 eukaryotic-like effectors were functionally analysed to learn whether they are bacterial
129 weapons employed to subvert host functions as predicted. Indeed, each of the effectors
130 analysed to date, encoded the predicted eukaryotic function and was shown to be part of a
131 sophisticated effector network that evolved to manipulate the host cell. These effectors
132 modulate a plethora of host cell processes including vesicular trafficking, apoptosis,

133 autophagy, protein synthesis, ubiquitination, epigenetic modifications, and induce many
134 different post translational modifications (PTM) (15). They may induce the PTMs directly as
135 do AnkB or LubX that contain an F-box or U-box motif, respectively and function as E-3
136 ligases that transfer ubiquitin moieties to host proteins (15-17) or they may recruit host
137 enzymes such as the eukaryotic protein prenyl transferases to achieve membrane
138 localization of the respective effector (18, 19).

139 More than 330 effectors secreted by the Dot/Icm type IV secretion system (T4SS) and
140 over 25 proteins secreted by the type II secretion system (T2SS) have been described for
141 *L. pneumophila* (20-22). With a genome size of in average 3.2 Mb and 3100 protein coding
142 genes this astonishing number of over 350 secreted proteins which represent over 10% of
143 the *L. pneumophila* proteome is not matched by any other known bacterial pathogen. The
144 closest comes *Coxiella burnetti*, which has a genome size of about 2Mb and about 2100
145 predicted protein coding genes (21, 22) and over 100 secreted effector proteins (23). Thus
146 the question arises why does *Legionella* need that many effector proteins? This question
147 becomes even more puzzling as many of the effectors studied to date do not show any or at
148 least no strong intracellular growth defect when deleted nor does even the simultaneous
149 deletion of over 60 effectors obtained through large chromosomal deletions that carry these
150 genes (24). Based on the different data, it is thought that *L. pneumophila* encodes such a
151 high number of secreted proteins, to fine-tune the host pathogen interactions to allow the
152 replication in many different protozoan hosts. Thus the redundancy of effector functions
153 observed in intracellular growth in human or mouse macrophages might be beneficial for
154 *Legionella* when parasitizing protozoa in the environment as *L. pneumophila* may use
155 different effector sets adapted to different protozoan species.

156

157 **The genus *Legionella* co-opts eukaryotic functions to an unprecedented high number** 158 **and diversity**

159 *Legionella pneumophila* is part of a large genus of over 65 species of which most are
160 harmless, environmental bacteria found in aquatic environments associated with amoeba.
161 *Legionella longbeachae*, is the second species often found in human disease as it is a
162 frequent cause of Legionnaires' disease in Australia, New Zealand and Southeast Asia but it
163 emerges lately also in Europe and the United States (25). However most of the other
164 *Legionella* species have been only rarely or never found in human disease and only little is
165 known about them. Thus an exciting question to answer was, whether the presence of
166 eukaryotic genes and eukaryotic domains is a general feature of the *Legionella* genomes. A
167 first answer came from the analyses of the *L. longbeachae* genome, as indeed the effector
168 repertoire seemed of similar size and a high number of eukaryotic domains and proteins had
169 been identified (26). However the surprising finding was, that only about 34% of the

170 *L. pneumophila* effectors were conserved in the *L. longbeachae* genome, but 51 new,
171 putative Dot/Icm substrates specific for *L. longbeachae* that encode eukaryotic-like domains
172 were identified (26). Related to a different life style, *L. longbeachae* is found in moist soil and
173 potting soil, genes that might have been acquired from plants have been identified, such as
174 proteins with pentatricopeptide repeat (PPR) domains, a family of proteins that is greatly
175 expanded in plants.

176 Recently the nearly entire genus *Legionella* has been sequenced and analysed (27,
177 28). This disclosed a fascinating and unique feature of these bacteria. A highly dynamic and
178 diverse effector repertoire of over 18 000 proteins that contain at least 137 different
179 eukaryotic domains and over 200 different eukaryotic proteins was discovered (28).
180 Comparative genome and evolutionary analyses brought evidence that *Legionella* species
181 have acquired these eukaryotic-like proteins from all domains of life, plant, animal, fungal,
182 and archaea (28). A particular exciting finding was the identification of 184 genes that are
183 predicted to encode small GTPases, 71 of which are Rab GTPases. All have the best Blast
184 hit with proteins from protozoan organisms such as *Entamoeba* or *Tetrahymena*.
185 Furthermore phylogenetic analyses indicate that these proteins are indeed acquired from
186 protozoan hosts (28). Thus RabGTPases are a unique feature of the genus *Legionella*.

187 Most interestingly, despite the enormous diversity of eukaryotic domains present in
188 the *Legionella* effectors, it seems that certain signalling pathways are exploited by all
189 species. Indeed, quasi all genomes contain U- and/or F-box proteins suggesting that the
190 exploitation of ubiquitin signaling is of utmost importance to succeed replication inside
191 eukaryotic host cells (28). Another example is the eukaryotic-type ecto-NTPDases
192 (apyrases), which are conserved in all species analysed. It has been shown that this protein
193 confers to *L. pneumophila* the ability to hydrolyse ATP, a function that seems necessary for
194 optimal intracellular replication (29). Recently the structure of NTPDases from a legume plant
195 revealed that these NTPDases could adopt two conformations depending on the molecule
196 and co-factor bound in the active site (30). Interestingly this phenomenon had been
197 previously described in *Rattus norvegicus*, *Toxoplasma gondii* NTPDaseIII and the
198 *L. pneumophila* NTPDaseI suggesting a common catalytic mechanism across the domains of
199 life. This structural similarity again supports the idea that *Legionella* have acquired these
200 functions from eukaryotic organisms. Thaumatin domains that are considered a prototype for
201 a pathogen-response protein domain in fungi, plants, and animals are also present in all
202 *Legionella* genomes (28). Another interesting domain is the SET domain encoded by RomA
203 of *L. pneumophila* where it has been shown to induce a unique host chromatin modification
204 (31). This domain is present in nearly all *Legionella* species but *L. longbeachae* (28)
205 suggesting that modification of histones is an important mechanism by which *Legionella*
206 facilitate their intracellular survival. Thus although most surprisingly only a set of 8 conserved

207 core effectors was identified in the genus *Legionella* (27, 28) the identification of the
208 presence of conserved domains suggests that one could perhaps define a core set of
209 eukaryotic signalling pathways that intracellular bacteria need to modulate to replicate
210 intracellularly.

211

212 **Inter-domain horizontal gene transfer and the emergence of a human pathogen**

213 The high number and wide variety of eukaryotic functions discovered in the *Legionella*
214 genomes suggested that inter domain horizontal gene transfer may be the mechanism of
215 acquisition and that these proteins and domains of eukaryotic origin witness the tight co-
216 evolution between *Legionella* and its protozoan hosts (13, 26, 32-34). Many reviews on the
217 functions of these different effectors of *L. pneumophila* and how they subvert host signalling
218 pathways have been published in the last years (e.g. (15, 35-40)) thus we will here further
219 detail only one “eukaryotic-like” effector protein, the *L. pneumophila* sphingosine-1
220 phosphate lyase named *LpSpl*, as this protein is an excellent example of how these
221 eukaryotic like proteins might have been acquired and evolved.

222 Sphingolipids are major components of all eukaryotic cellular membranes. They have
223 important functions as signalling molecules in the eukaryotic cell by regulating processes
224 such as the stress response, cell proliferation, apoptosis, angiogenesis, genetic diseases,
225 and resistance to chemotherapy (41). Simplified, sphingomyelin, present in plasma
226 membranes is hydrolysed by sphingomyelinase to ceramide that can also be *de novo*
227 synthesized, which then is converted by ceramidase to sphingosine, which is phosphorylated
228 by a sphingosine kinase to sphingosine-1 phosphate that can be converted by sphingosine-1
229 phosphate lyase (Spl) to hexadecanal + Ethanolamine-P (42). Interestingly, sphingolipid
230 biosynthesis was shown to be conserved in *Acanthamoeba castellanii* and appears to be
231 generally conserved among protozoa (43). Only very few bacteria such as
232 *Sphingobacterium*, *Sphingomonas* and *Bacteroides* and *Bdellovibrio stolpii* are able to
233 synthesize sphingolipids (42). Thus it was an intriguing finding that the *L. pneumophila*
234 genome encodes several eukaryotic enzymes participating in the sphingolipid pathway, such
235 as sphingosine kinase, sphingomyelinase and sphingosine-1 phosphate lyase (44).

236 The *L. pneumophila* sphingosine-1 phosphate lyase named *LpSpl*, was further
237 characterized. Its structural analyses showed that *LpSpl* has a dimeric multidomain
238 architecture that is very similar to the previously characterized SPL structures of the human
239 (hSPL) and the yeast (Dpl1p) enzyme. Their comparison revealed that the active site of the
240 enzyme was conserved among the *LpSpl* and hSpl and activity analyses confirmed that the
241 *L. pneumophila* Spl shows indeed sphingosine-1 phosphate lyase activity like its human
242 counterpart (45). Furthermore metabolomics analyses of *L. pneumophila* infected human
243 macrophages revealed that *L. pneumophila* *LpSpl* targets the sphingolipid metabolism of the

244 host cell directly to modulate the levels of sphingosine and restrains autophagy (45). Thus,
245 *LpSpl* is an enzyme that modulates the host cell sphingolipid metabolism to the pathogens
246 advantage.

247 The question arises “what is the origin of such an eukaryotic enzyme in an prokaryotic
248 genome?”. To answer this question we have undertaken phylogenetic analyses of this gene
249 by recruiting homologous sequences from a database containing only completed genome
250 sequences. Selected representatives of all eukaryotic groups and one representative of each
251 bacterial species were included in the analyses. After Blastp only significant hits (e-value <10
252 $\times 10^{-4}$) were retained, and only one hit for each species was included in the analysis. The
253 resulting phylogenetic tree is shown in **Figure 1A**. Indeed, the *L. pneumophila LpSpl* gene is
254 embedded in the same clade as the eukaryotic sequences from *Entamoeba spp.*,
255 *Tetrahymena thermophila* and *Paramecium tetraurelia Spl*, which is suggesting that *LpSpl*
256 was acquired by horizontal gene transfer from a protist host as also suggested earlier (46,
257 47). The analyses of the distribution of the sphingosine-1 phosphate lyase in the genus
258 *Legionella* reveals that this enzyme is present in 16 of the 58 *Legionella* species/subspecies
259 analyzed (**Figure 1B**) suggesting that the remaining 42 species have evolved other ways to
260 manipulate the host sphingolipid metabolism or employ different strategies to restrain
261 autophagy. Indeed, even among different *L. pneumophila* species are differences in how
262 they subvert the autophagy pathway. An example is RavZ, an effector of *L. pneumophila*
263 strain Philadelphia that inhibits autophagosome maturation through irreversible ATG8
264 deconjugation that is absent from strain Paris (48).

265 To better understand the evolutionary history of the sphingosine-1 phosphate lyase
266 (*spl*) gene in the genus *Legionella*, we have analysed the phylogenetic relationship of the 16
267 *Legionella spl* genes. As shown in **Figure 2A**, the protein similarity ranges from 63-100%
268 and five highly related groups can be distinguished. *L. pneumophila* subsp *pneumophila*,
269 *L. pneumophila* subsp *pascuelleii*, *L. pneumophila* subsp *fraserii* and *L. waltersii* form one
270 group where the Spl sequence shows 95-100% similarity to the *L. pneumophila LpSpl*
271 sequence. A second group with 70% sequence similarity is formed by *L. gresiliensis* and
272 *L. busanensis*, a third group that shows 67-69% similarity to *LpSpl* contains the species
273 *L. hackeliae*, *L. jamestowniensis* and *L. brunensis* and finally the least conserved group
274 contains five species that show 63-68% sequence similarity to *LpSpl* (**Figure 2A**). Thus the
275 phylogeny of the different Spl proteins in the genus *Legionella*, suggests either acquisition of
276 an *spl* gene in a common ancestor and subsequent diversifying evolution and losses in many
277 species or multiple acquisitions. To answer this question, we overlapped the distribution of
278 the *spl* sequences on the phylogeny of the genus (**Figure 2B**) and carried out evolutionary
279 analysis of presence/absence using GLOOME and stochastic mapping. These analyses
280 showed that the *spl* gene has been acquired at least four times during the evolution of the

281 genus (green arrows) and has also been lost several times (red dots). Thus gene gain and
282 loss seems to be an on-going process that shapes the *Legionella* genomes.

283 *L. pneumophila* was one of the first examples for evidence of eukaryote to prokaryote
284 gene transfer. However, genome analyses from environmental bacteria including symbionts
285 of amoeba showed that eukaryotic domains were also present in the amoeba symbiont
286 *Amoebophilus asiaticus* (49). An analyses of 480 genomes of different prokaryotes revealed
287 that eukaryotic domains are significantly enriched in the genomes of many amoeba-
288 associated bacteria such as *Chlamydiae*, *Rickettsia bellii*, *Francisella tularensis*, or
289 *Mycobacterium avium* (49). This indicates that phylogenetically and ecologically diverse
290 bacteria, which thrive inside amoebae, exploit common mechanisms for interaction with their
291 hosts and are all exchanges genetic material (49). Recently it was also proposed that
292 amoeba-fungal interaction might select for traits that promote survival during animal infection
293 and thereby contribute to virulence (50). Thus similar processes may contribute to the
294 evolution of other amoeba-associated bacteria and fungi and may lead to the emergence of
295 new human pathogens.

296

297 **Horizontal gene transfer among amoeba associated bacteria or viruses within amoeba**

298 The availability and comparison of genome sequences from organisms belonging to all
299 domains of life and residing in different environmental niches brought evidence that HGT
300 may occur between many organisms and not only between closely related species but even
301 between different domains of life. In this context amoeba seem to be a privileged
302 environment for DNA exchange. Indeed, *Legionella* seems to have exchanged genetic
303 material also with viruses that infect amoeba, as it was reported that *L. pneumophila*
304 encodes proteins homologous to proteins found in the mimivirus genome (51), a virus that
305 infects *Acanthamoeba* (34, 52). Most interestingly, this situation seem to be reciprocal as
306 intracellular bacteria appear to have transferred genes also to the mimiviral genome, some of
307 which are involved in the parasitic adaptations of the mimivirus (52).

308 In addition to gene exchange between amoeba-associated bacteria such as
309 *Legionella* with viruses, there is also evidence of gene exchange between different bacteria
310 infecting amoeba. *Rickettsia* which also replicate in amoeba, contain genes encoding a
311 putative conjugal DNA transfer system highly similar to that of *Protochlamydia amoebophila*
312 UWE25, an obligate symbiont of amoebae and other genes highly similar to homologues in
313 intracellular bacteria of amoebae (53). Indeed, one of the secreted effectors of
314 *L. pneumophila*, RalF contains a eukaryotic Sec-7 domain (14). The analyses of the
315 evolutionary history of this domain reveals that a similar domain is present in the *Rickettsia*
316 genomes, and that both, *Rickettsia* and *Legionella* Sec-7 sequences are embedded within
317 eukaryotic sequences suggesting that one of the bacteria acquired this domain from an

318 amoeba host and then the bacteria exchanged this domain among them (54). Another
319 interesting report reveals that amoeba may also acquire genes from their bacterial parasites
320 or symbionts. The anaerobic protist *Mastigamoeba balamuthi* encodes p-cresol- and indole-
321 producing enzymes that most likely originated from phagocytized bacteria in the protist's
322 anoxic habitat and allowed the eukaryotic recipient to produce the bacterial weapon p-cresol
323 at bacteriostatic concentrations (55).

324 Thus gene exchange between many different organisms may take place and if the
325 acquired DNA confers an advantage to the recipient, it will be fixed and will evolve further
326 with the new genome. Thus evolutionary analyses might miss the real extent of these gene
327 exchanges as there are likely genes e.g. in prokaryotes that originated from eukaryotic
328 species but there are no identifiable eukaryotic homologs presumably due to substantial
329 evolution of these proteins after their acquisition by the bacteria as suggested for the
330 *Legionella* SH2 domain proteins (56). Another reason that makes it difficult to trace the
331 evolutionary history of certain genes is due to the fact that we do not have enough
332 sequencing data for environmental protozoa, fungi and bacteria. Once databases are
333 enriched with such sequences we might see even more genetic exchange than thought.

334

335 **Conclusion**

336 Amoeba associated bacteria seem to thrive in an environment that is prone to HGT. Gene
337 exchange among amoeba associated bacteria such as *Legionella*, *Chlamydia* or *Rickettsia*
338 as well as between the amoebal host and the parasitizing bacteria or the viruses present in
339 amoeba takes place (13, 26, 34, 47, 57-61). The investigation of the function of these
340 horizontally acquired genes, suggests that they confer a selective advantage to the bacteria.
341 Indeed, *Legionella* have transformed these proteins, using them as “tools of oppression” to
342 hijack host cellular functions, in particular targeting signal transduction, protein turnover and
343 chromatin modifying pathways. However, the finding that *Legionella* species have acquired
344 eukaryotic-like proteins from all domains of life, plants, animals, fungi, and archaea, in an
345 unprecedented high number and large diversity opens many new questions. One intriguing
346 question is “what is the mechanism by which these transfers occur?” and “how is the foreign
347 DNA integrated in the prokaryotic genomes?”. An interesting finding that may be related to
348 the inter domain gene transfer is the identification of a gene predicted to encode a group II
349 intron reverse transcriptase in the *L. pneumophila* genome. Thus a possibility is that
350 *L. pneumophila* incorporates also RNA from its host, a fact that would explain why the
351 eukaryotic genes in *Legionella* do not carry introns. The proof that RNA may be transferred
352 horizontally would be the discovery of a new key mechanism for evolution and adaption of
353 bacteria. Furthermore *Legionella* are able to develop competence for natural transformation
354 (62), a major mechanism of HGT which may act in the intracellular environment of amoeba.

355 However, experimental proof is missing yet. Thus many exciting questions on the evolution
356 of *Legionella* that may teach us also how new human pathogens may evolve from the
357 environment remain to be answered. The knowledge on these evolutionary processes will be
358 a precious help to avoid the emergence of new pathogens and gives an exciting outlook on
359 future research.

360

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366 **Figure legends**

367

368 **Figure 1: The sphingosine -1 phosphate lyase gene was acquired by horizontal gene**

369 **transfer from protozoa but is not conserved throughout the genus.** A) Phylogeny of the

370 sphingosine-1 phosphate lyse (Lpp2128) of *L. pneumophila* strain Paris and homologous

371 sequences from eukaryotic and prokaryotic organisms. Homologous sequences were

372 recruited from a database containing only completed genome sequences. Selected

373 representatives of all eukaryotic groups and one representative of each bacterial species are

374 included in the analyses. According to Blastp comparisons only significant hits were recruited

375 (e-value $<10 \times 10^{-4}$), and only one hit for each species was retained. The alignment was

376 performed with Muscle for Lpp2128, and followed by manual curation. The phylogeny was

377 reconstructed using a distance method (NJ) with 1000 bootstrap replicates. The

378 corresponding support values are shown in each node (values lower than 50 are not

379 represented). Bars represent 20% and 10% of estimated phylogenetic divergence,

380 respectively. B) Distribution of the orthologous genes of the sphingosine-1 phosphate lyse

381 Lpp2128 in the genus *Legionella*. Orthology prediction has been done using the Pan

382 Genome Ortholog Clustering Tool (PanOCT) with the following parameters: amino acid

383 percentage identity cut-off 30%, BLAST e-value cutoff 10^{-5} , and minimum percentage match

384 length of subject and query 65%

385

386 **Figure 2: The sphingosine-1 phosphate lyase genes have been acquired and lost**

387 **multiple times during the evolution of the genus *Legionella*.** A) Phylogeny of the

388 sphingosine-1 phosphate lyse (Lpp2128) of *L. pneumophila* strain Paris and the

389 corresponding orthologous proteins in other *Legionella* species. The tree was constructed by

390 likelihood using the software RAxML with 100 bootstrap replicates. The corresponding

391 support values are shown in each node. B) Gain/loss prediction for the sphingosine-1

392 phosphate lyase in the different *Legionella* species. The prediction was done based on

393 parsimony using the program GLOOME with double cost of gain versus loss. Green arrows

394 represent acquisition events and red dots on the branches represent gain events

395

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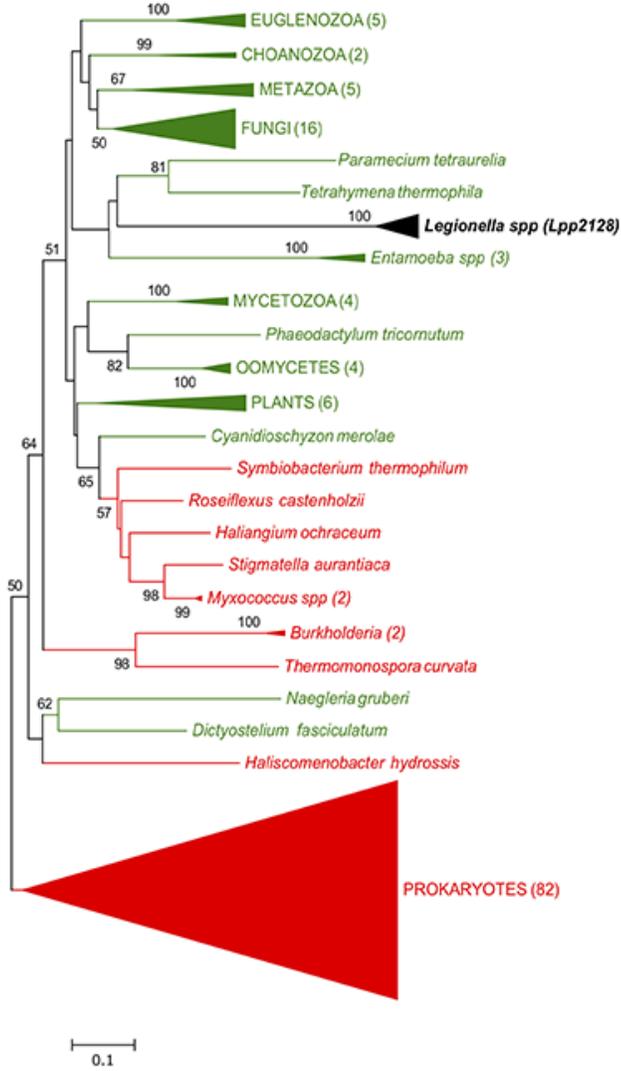
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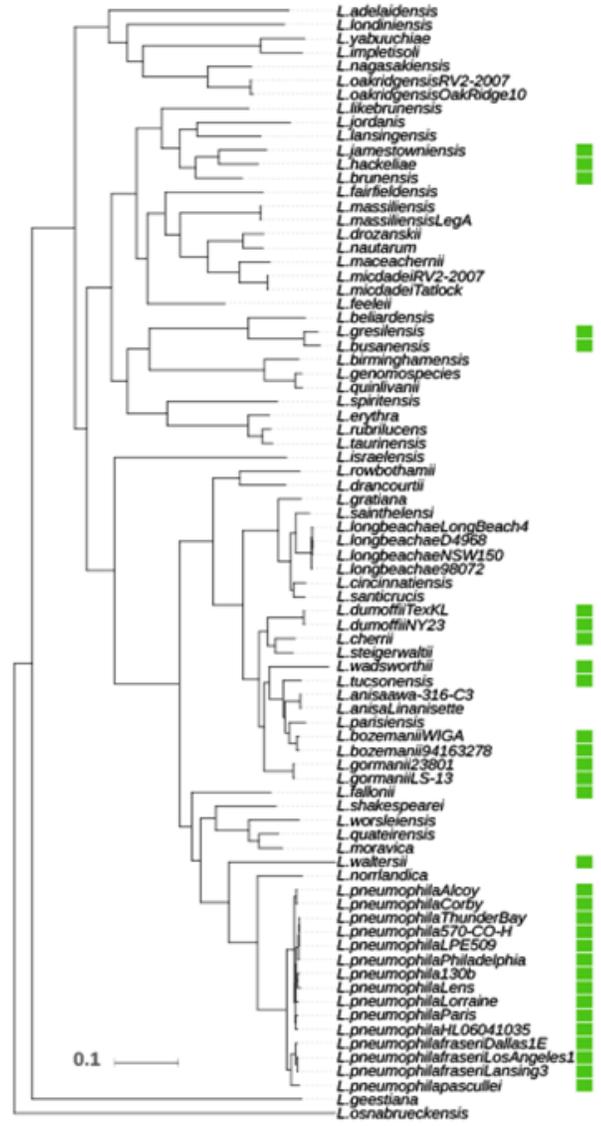
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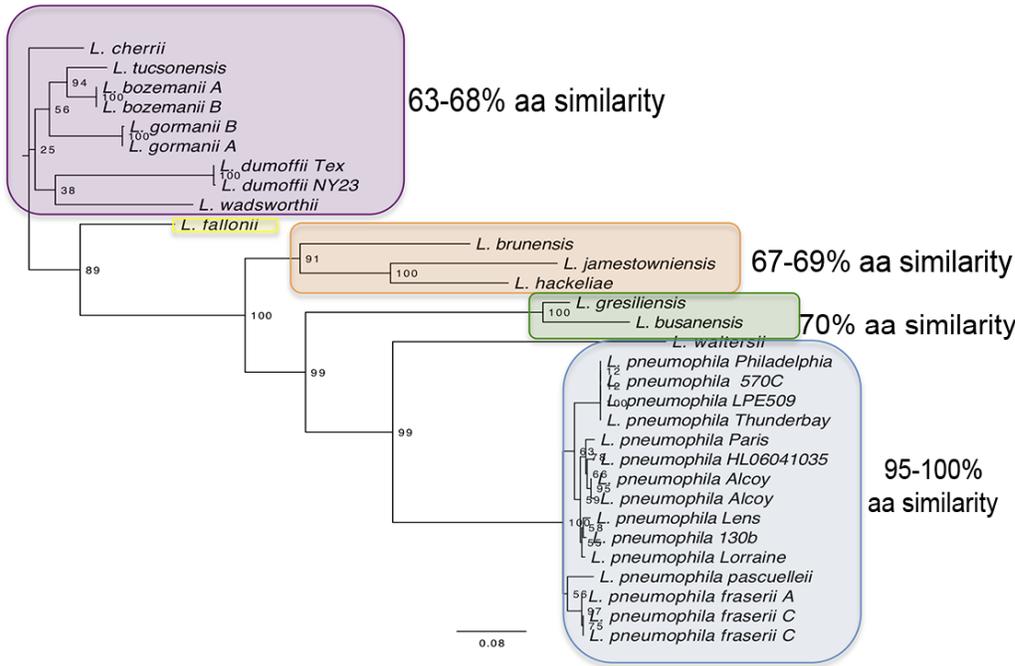
A



B



A



Gene acquisition

Gene loss

Tree scale: 0.1

B

