

# **Microbiota in Transplantation**

---

**Ajay Israni, MD, MS**

**Professor of Medicine**

**Hennepin Healthcare and University of MN School of  
Medicine and School of Public Health**

**Guillaume Onyeaghala, PhD, MPH**

**Post-doctoral Research Fellow**

**Hennepin Healthcare Research Institute, and University  
of Minnesota School of Medicine**

**Renal Conference**

**October 8, 2021**

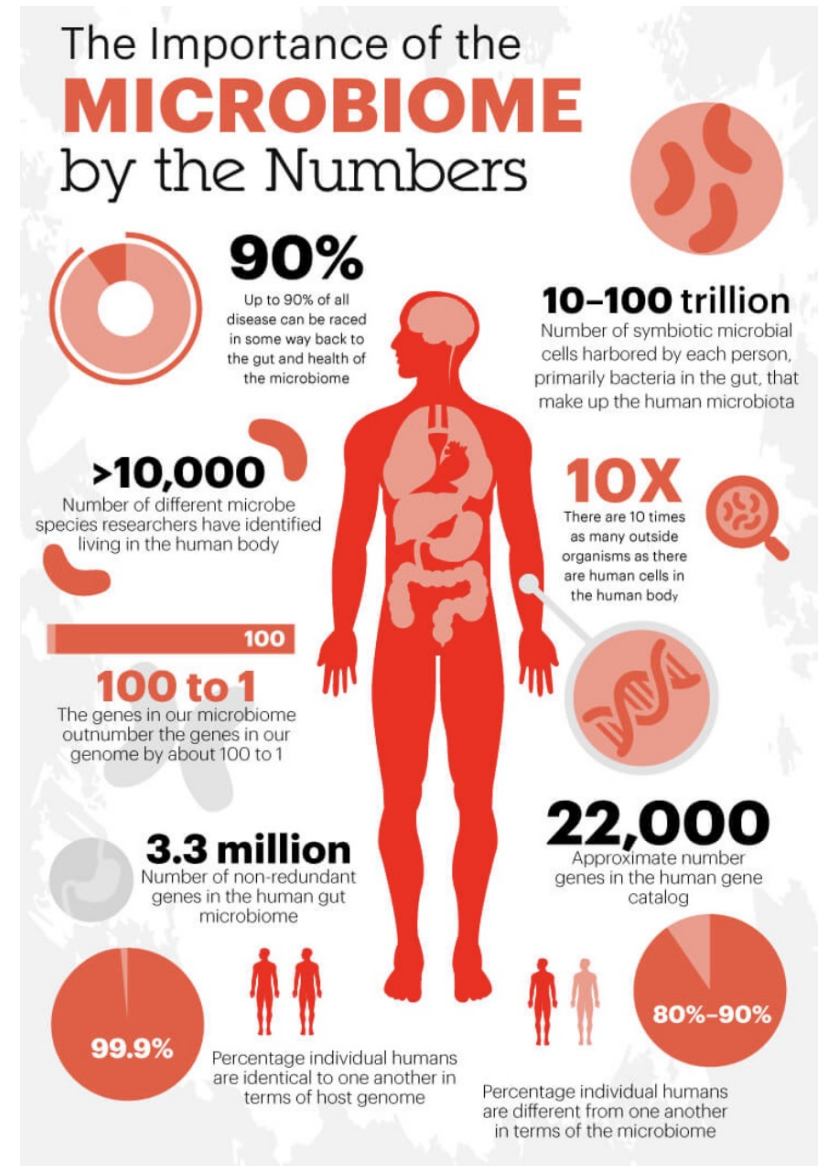
# Outline

---

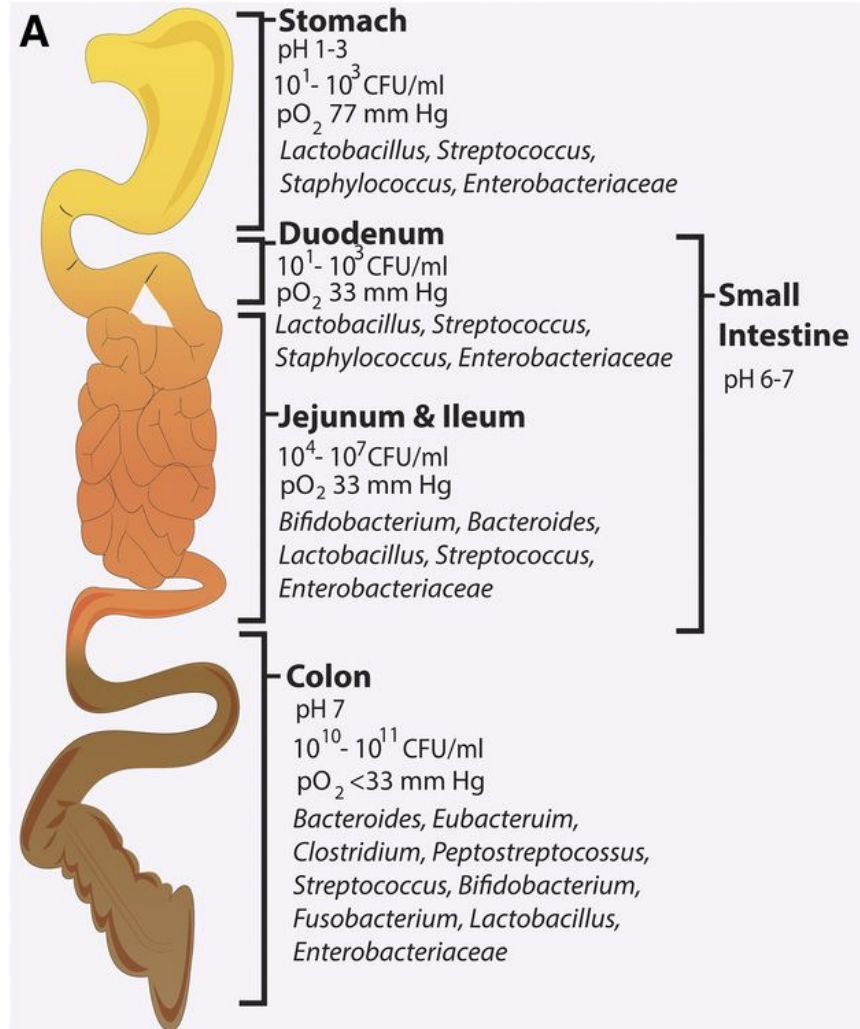
1. Short overview of the influence of the microbiome on drug disposition -- “pharmacomicrobiomics”
2. Discuss the ongoing microbiome study in kidney transplant -- The MISSION Study
3. Quantifying Mycophenolate mofetil metabolism using an in-vitro assay

# The Human Microbiome

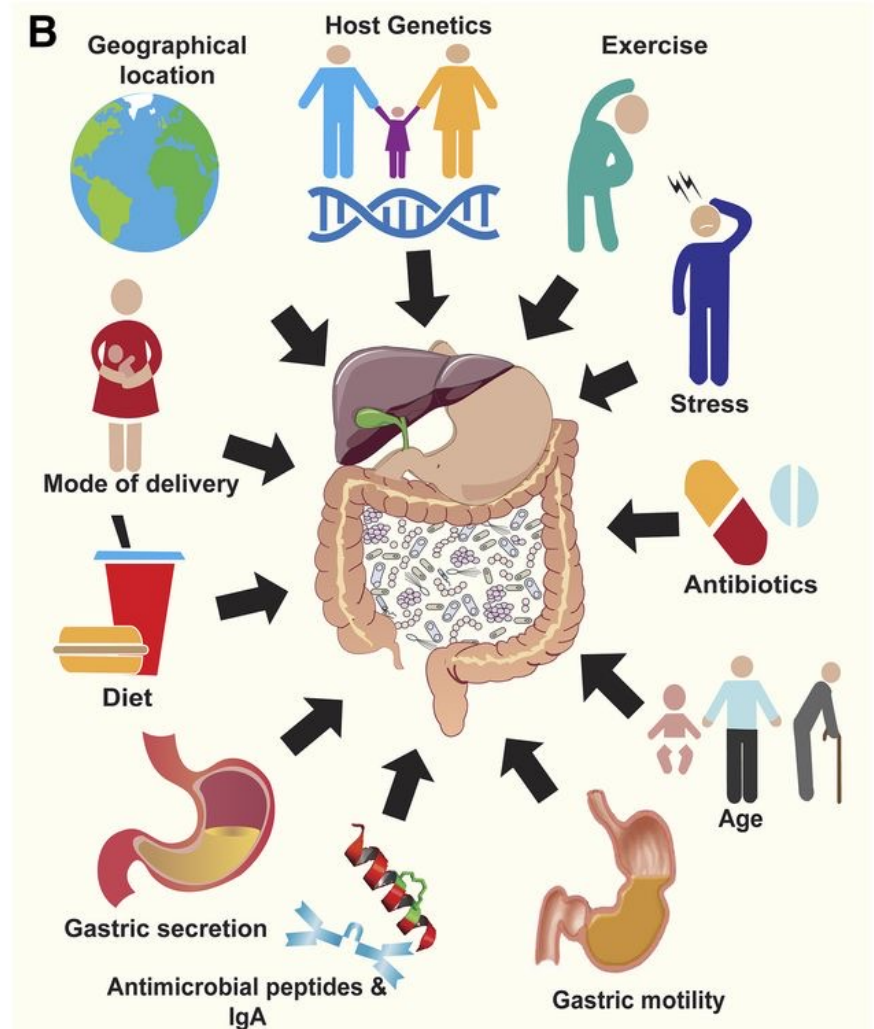
- The microbiome (>10,000 species in humans) is associated with health and disease.
- Diversity of the microbiome among individuals is high (80-90% different).
- Many factors affect the microbiome including diet and xenobiotics.
- Most of human microbiome resides in the GI tract but varies extensively between individuals.



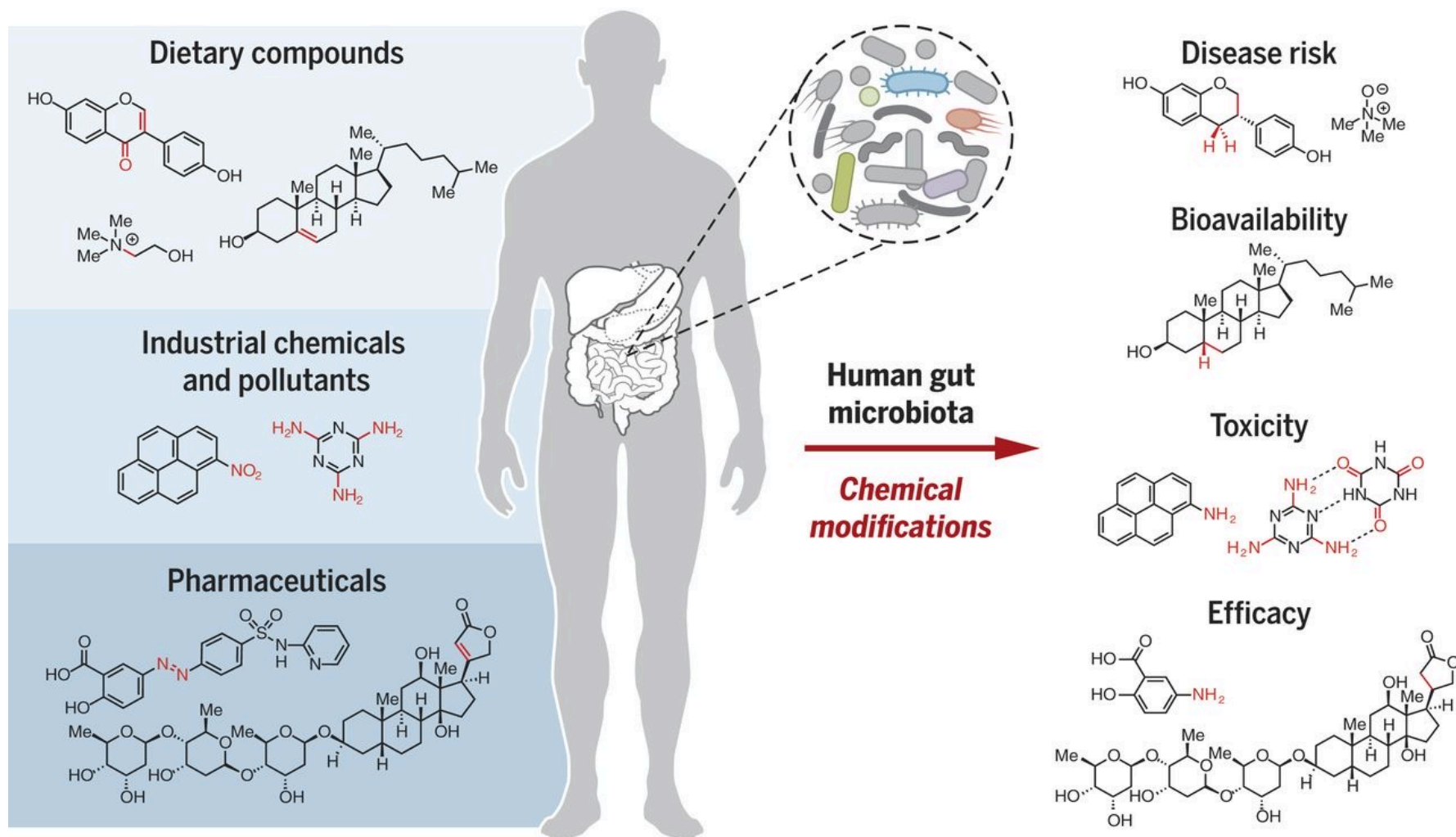
# Metabolic niches in the gut microbiome



# Factors affecting the composition and function of the intestine metabolic niche



# Human gut microbes metabolize xenobiotics



# Microbiome Effects Drug Metabolism, PK and Drug Outcomes – Possible Mechanisms

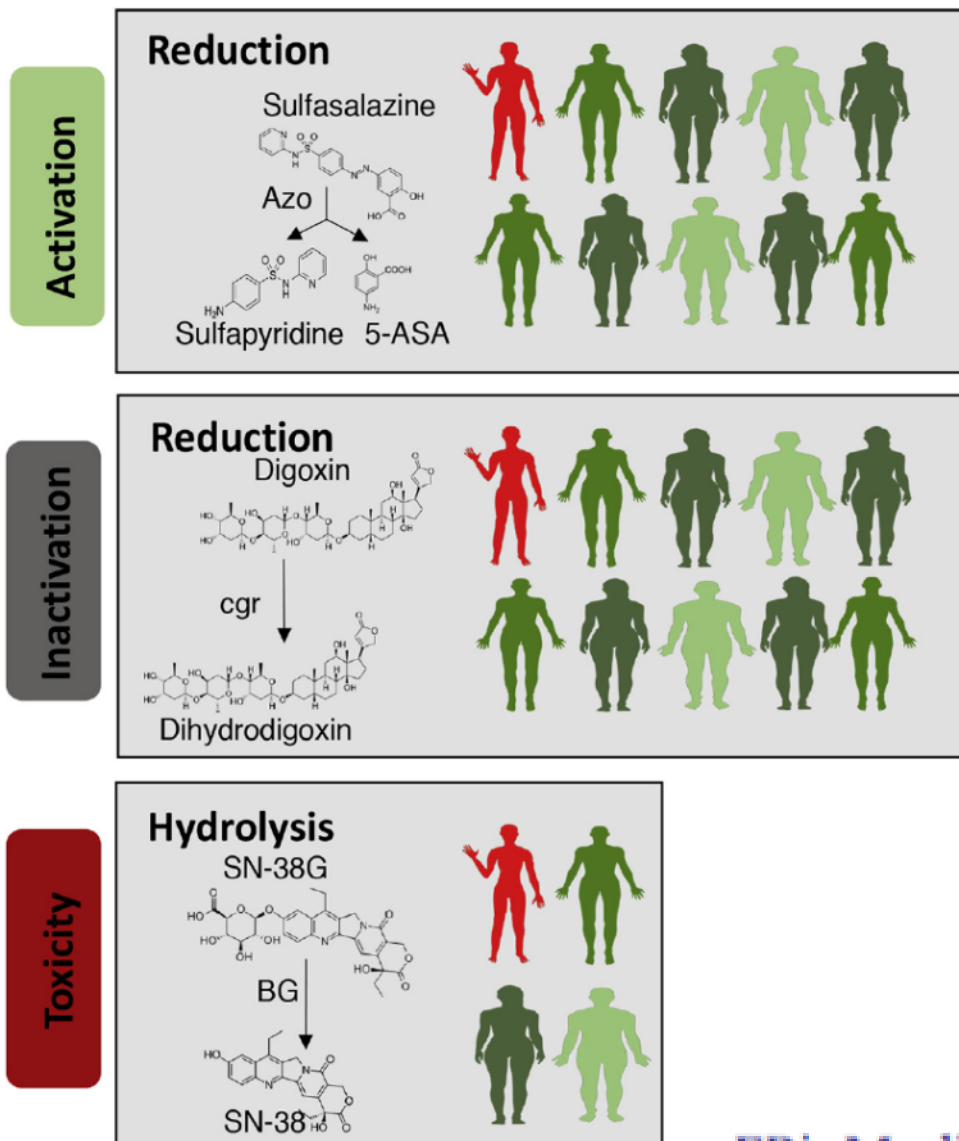
---

- Gut microbiome may express enzymes that activate or inactivate drugs (↑or↓drug clearance).
- A drug may be sequestered by direct binding to the bacterial organism (inactivate).
- A drug may be metabolically reactivated by enzymes made by the bacteria.
- An altered microbiota may generate alternative drug metabolites (active or inactive).
- Gut microbiome may alter drug transport (↑or↓drug movement across membranes and absorption).



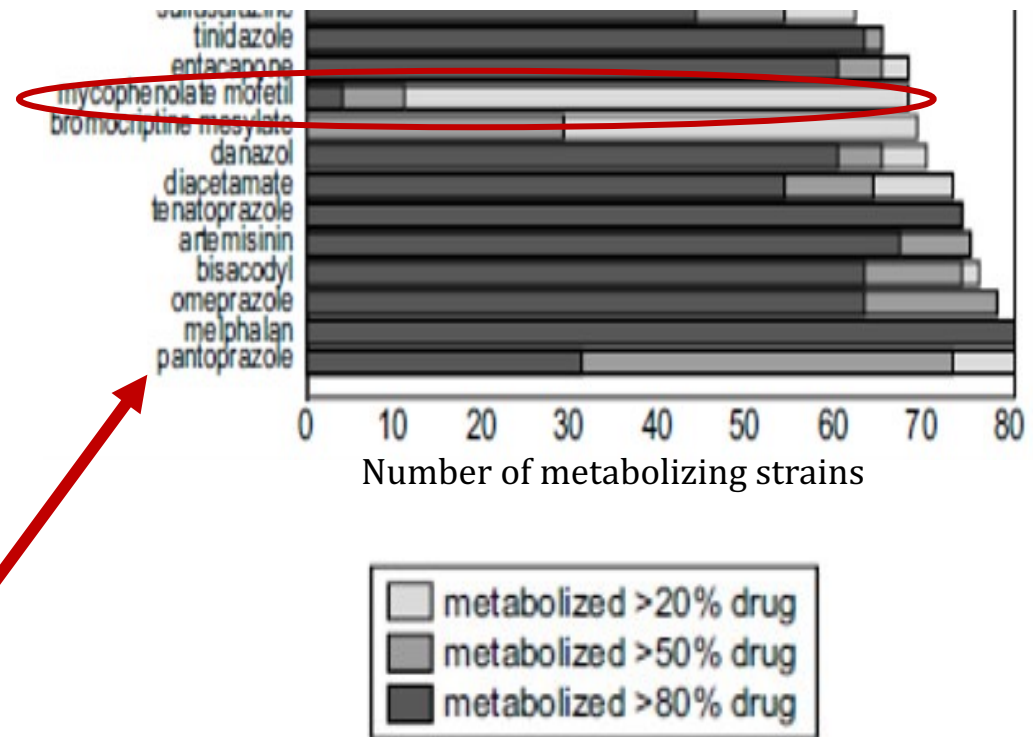
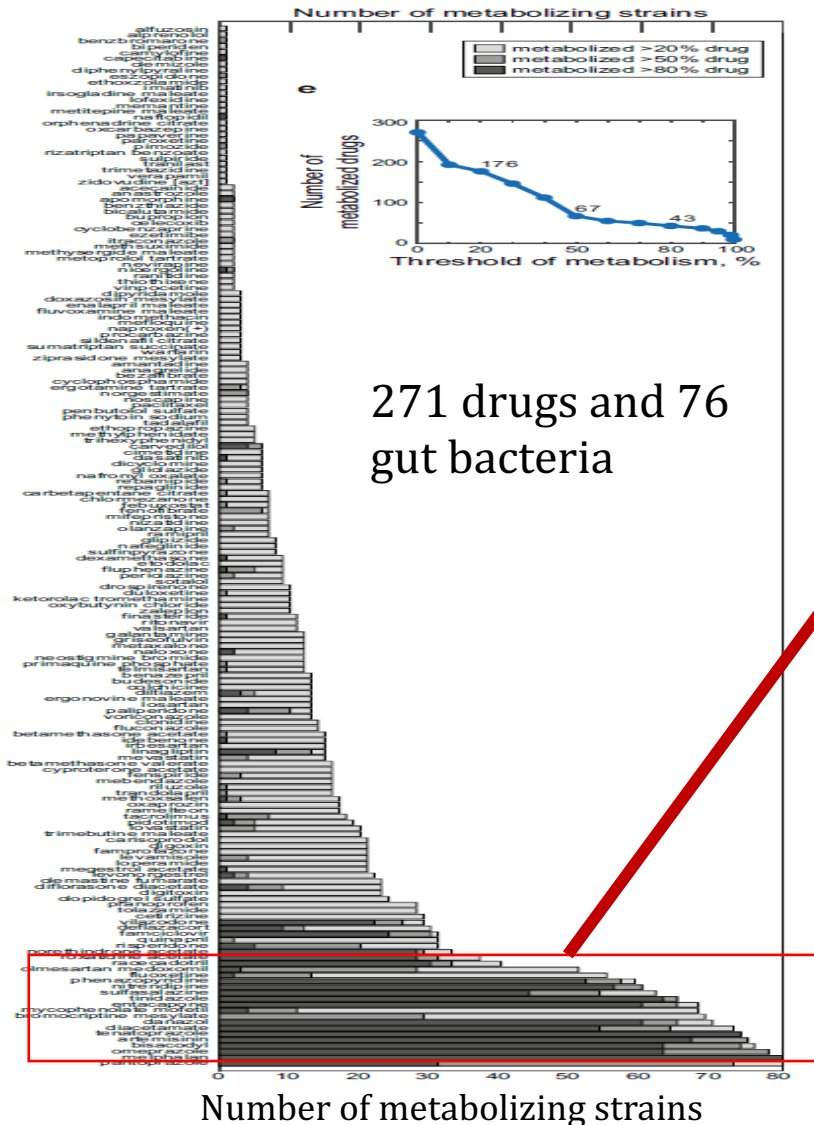
# Gut microbiota-host liver metabolic interactions drive variability in drug response

b



# Mapping human microbiome drug metabolism by gut bacteria and their genes

Michael Zimmermann<sup>1,3</sup>, Maria Zimmermann-Kogadeeva<sup>1,3</sup>, Rebekka Wegmann<sup>1,2</sup> & Andrew L. Goodman<sup>1\*</sup>

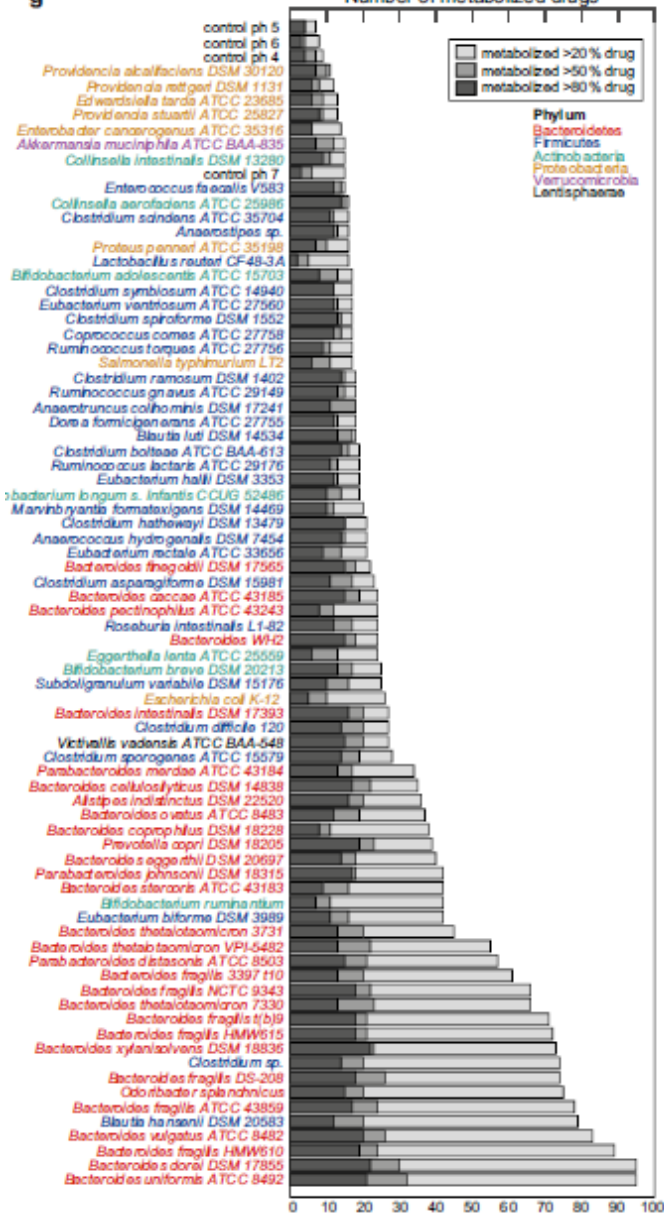


**2/3 of drugs were reduced by 20% or more by one or more bacteria strains**

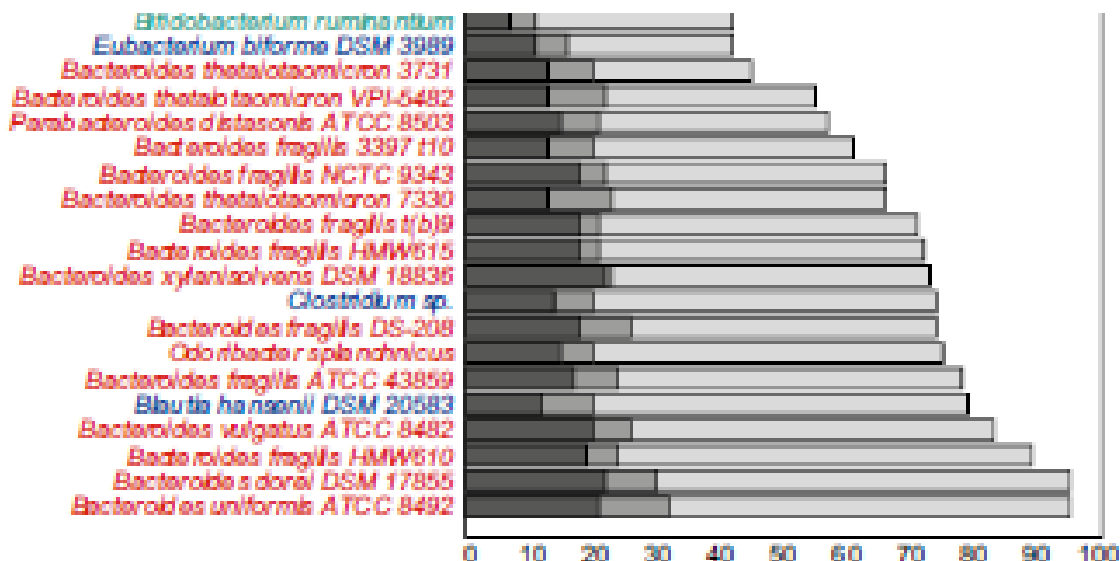


9

Number of metabolized drugs



metabolized >20% drug  
metabolized >50% drug  
metabolized >80% drug



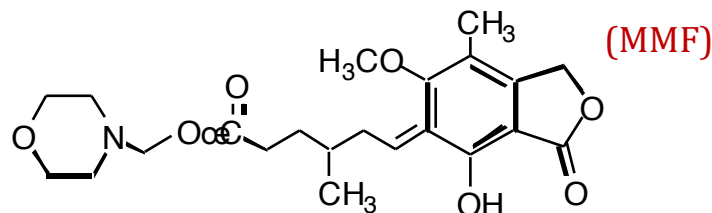
Phylum  
Bacteroidetes  
Firmicutes  
Actinobacteria  
Proteobacteria  
Verrucomicrobia  
Lentisphaerae

# What is the effect of the Microbiome on Immunosuppressant Drugs?

---

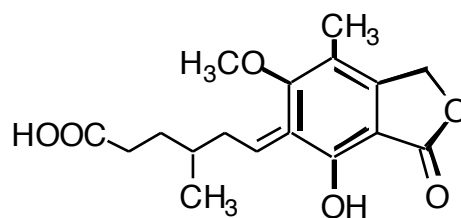
- Mycophenolate Mofetil

# Major Metabolic Pathway of Mycophenolate



Mycophenolate mofetil

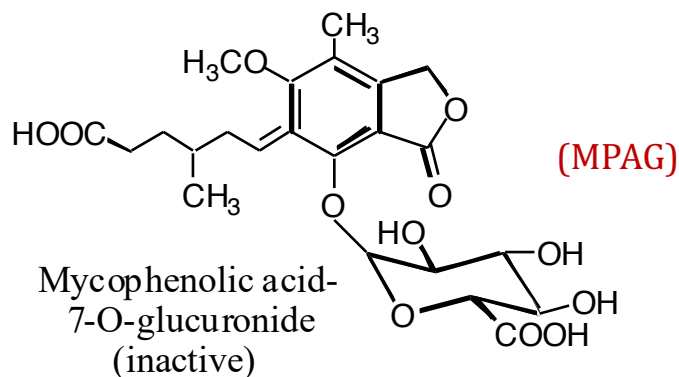
Carboxylesterase



Mycophenolic Acid (active)

UDP-glucuronosyl-transferase

Liver and kidney



Enterohepatic recycling (EHR) (10-40%)

Beta-glucuronidase (from bacteria expressing beta-glucuronidase [GUS])

GUS is expressed by Bacteroides, Firmicutes, Proteobacteria, Acinobacteria phyla

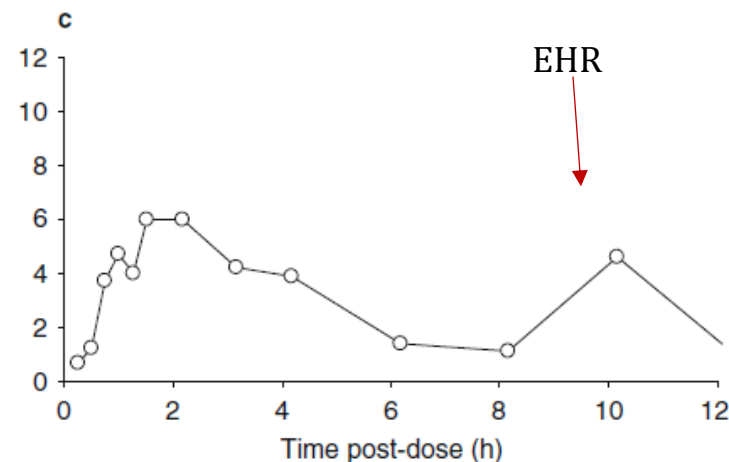


Figure 1. MPA Plasma concentration time profile showing enterohepatic recirculation

# GI Adverse Events of Immunosuppressive Agents

	Oral ulcers, stomatitis	Gingival hyperplasia	Nausea, vomiting, dyspepsia	Gastro- paresis	Pan- creatitis	Diarrhea	Constipation
Tacrolimus	+	0	++	0/+	0/+	++	+
Cyclosporine	0	+	+	+	0/+	+	0
mTOR inhibitors	++	0	++	0	0/+	++	++
Steroids	0	0	+	0	+	0	0
Azathioprine	0	0	+	0	+	0	0
Mycophenolate	+	0/+	++	0	0/+	++	+

Undesirable effects are listed using the following categories: ++ very common ( $\geq 1/10$ ); + common ( $\geq 1/100$  to  $< 1/10$ ); 0/+ uncommon ( $\geq 1/1000$  to  $< 1/100$ ); 0 rare ( $< 1/1000$ ).

GI complications frequently necessitate dose reduction, interruption, or even discontinuation, conversion to a less potent agent, increasing the risk of acute rejection or graft loss and add healthcare costs

# Mycophenolate Hematological Toxicity

---

- Incidence of MPA related anemia high occurring in 10-13% of kidney transplant recipients.
- Incidence of MPA related leukopenia is high occurring in 22-30% of kidney transplant recipients.
- These toxicities result in dose reduction, conversion to less potent agents such as azathioprine and use of expensive growth factors (G-CSF and erythropoietin), increased risk of rejection.



Supporting Evidence that Mycophenolate  
Metabolism and PK may be Altered by the  
Gut Microbiome and may Drive Side Effects

# Many Antibiotic Related DDI Interactions

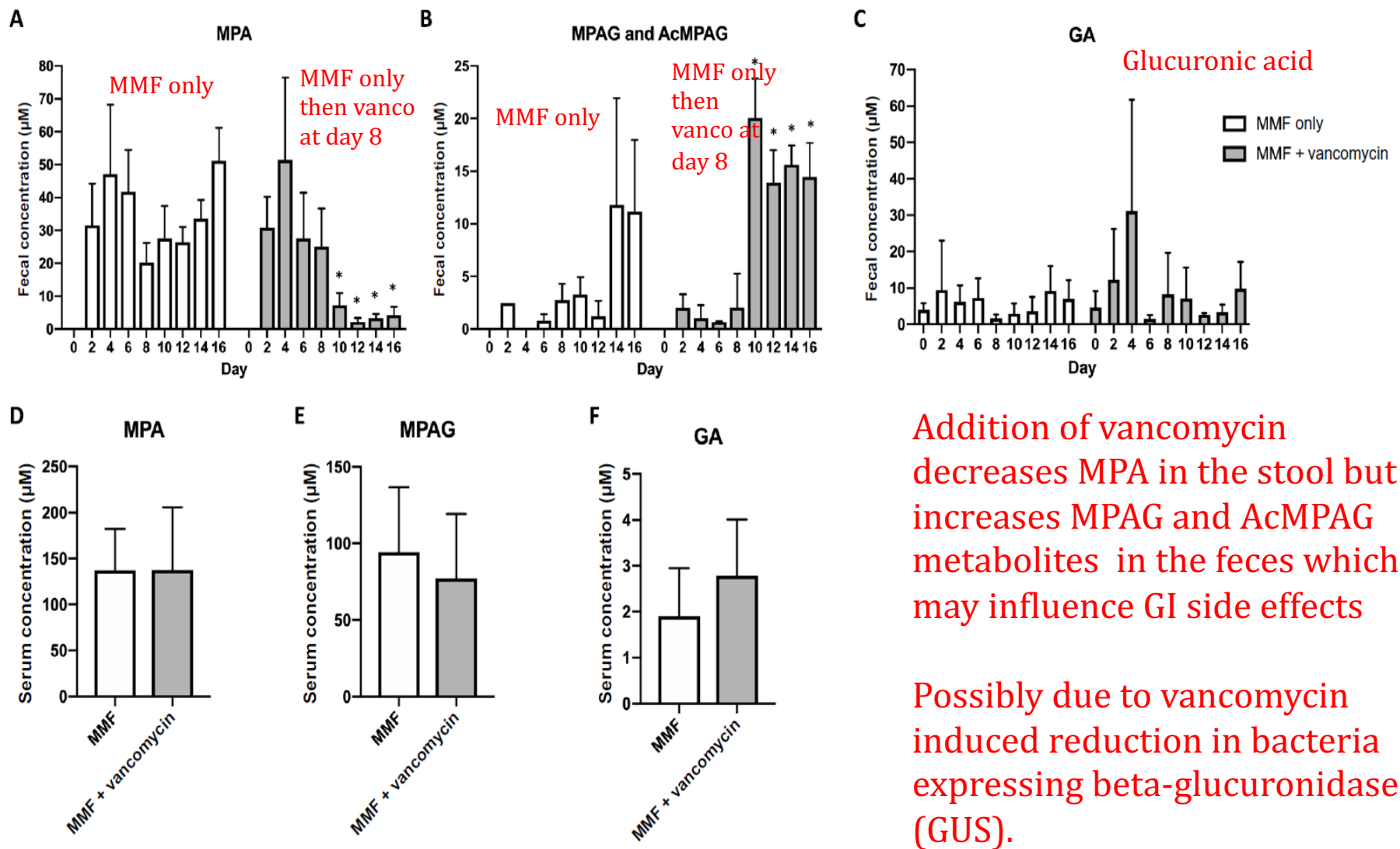
**Table 2** Pharmacokinetic alterations of some drugs by gut microbiota in vivo: recent progress

Drugs	Treatments	PK alteration of parent drugs	PK alteration of metabolite(s)
Acetaminophen	Pretreatment with antibiotic mixture of bacitracin, streptomycin and neomycin for 5 days (b.i.d.) in rats	↑ AUC <sub>0-24 h</sub> (82%), ↑ AUC <sub>∞</sub> (81%)	↑ AUC <sub>0-24 h</sub> (83%) <sup>a</sup> , ↑ AUC <sub>∞</sub> (81%) <sup>a</sup>
Amiodarone	Pretreatment with a probiotic, <i>E. coli</i> strain Nissle 1917, for 7 days in rats	↓ AUC <sub>0-30 h</sub> (43%)	↑ C <sub>max</sub> (150%)
Amlodipine	Pretreatment with ampicillin for 2 days in rats	↑ C <sub>max</sub> , ↑ AUC	NA
Aspirin	Pretreatment with ampicillin for 3 days in rats	↑ AUC (251%)	↑ AUC (361%), ↑ C <sub>max</sub> (345%)
Deleobuvir	Pretreatment with streptomycin and neomycin for 6 days (b.i.d) in rats	No change	↓ C <sub>max</sub> (86%) , ↓ AUC (89%)
Mycophenolic acid	Pretreatment with amoxicillin and clavulanate 5 times (every 12 h) in rats	↓ AUC <sub>0-12 h</sub> (18 ~ 25%), ↑ CL (38 ~ 80%)	NA
Lovastatin	Pretreatment with either ampicillin or antibiotic mixture of cefadroxil, oxytetracycline and erythromycin in rats	NA	↓ C <sub>max</sub> (39 ~ 50%), ↓ AUC (35 ~ 51%)

# Vancomycin relieves mycophenolate mofetil–induced gastrointestinal toxicity by eliminating gut bacterial $\beta$ -glucuronidase activity

Michael R. Taylor<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Kyle L. Flannigan<sup>4,5</sup>, Hannah Rahim<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Amina Mohamud<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Ian A. Lewis<sup>6</sup>, Simon A. Hirota<sup>4,5,7</sup>, Steven C. Greenway<sup>1,2,3,8\*</sup>

Mycophenolate mofetil (MMF) is commonly prescribed and has proven advantages over other immunosuppressive drugs. However, frequent gastrointestinal side effects through an unknown mechanism limit its use. We have found that consumption of MMF alters the composition of the gut microbiota, selecting for bacteria expressing the enzyme  $\beta$ -glucuronidase (GUS) and leading to an up-regulation of GUS activity in the gut of mice and symptomatic humans. In the mouse, vancomycin eliminated GUS-expressing bacteria and prevented MMF-induced weight loss and colonic inflammation. Our work provides a mechanism for the toxicity associated with MMF and a future direction for the development of therapeutics.

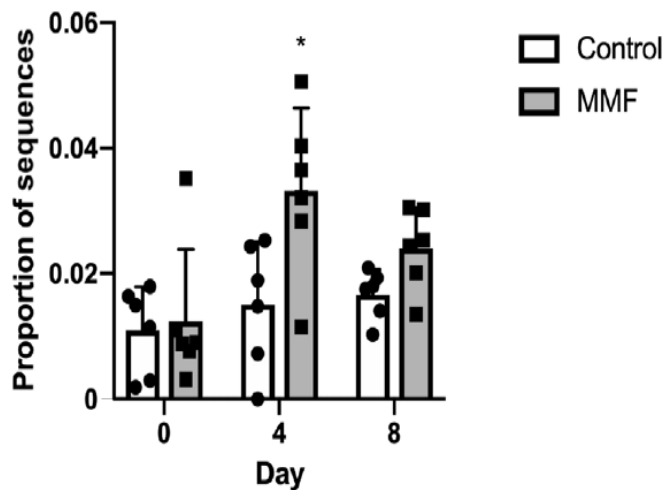


Addition of vancomycin decreases MPA in the stool but increases MPAG and AcMPAG metabolites in the feces which may influence GI side effects

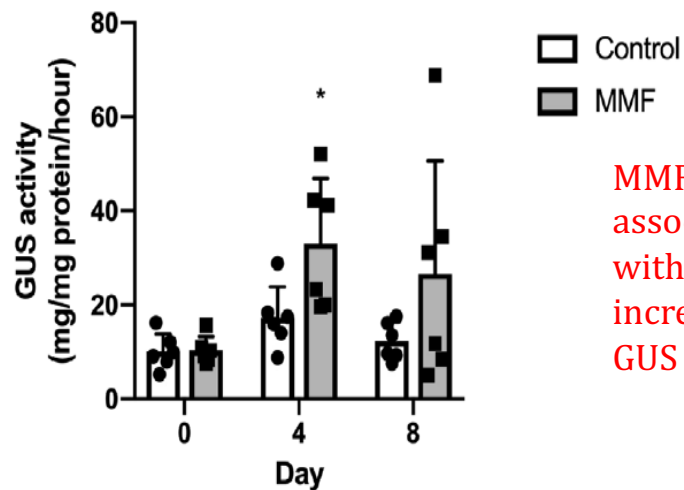
Possibly due to vancomycin induced reduction in bacteria expressing beta-glucuronidase (GUS).

**Fig. 5. Changes in MMF metabolites.** The concentrations of MMF metabolites were measured in mouse fecal pellets and serum. (A to C) Comparison of MPA, MPAG, and GA levels in mice exposed to MMF only for up to 16 days and mice initially exposed to MMF only for 8 days and then with the addition of vancomycin for 8 days. Vancomycin treatment resulted in significant increases in MPAG and significant decreases in MPA levels ( $P < 0.05$ ). (D to F) In serum from mice consuming MMF, levels of MPA, MPAG, and GA were not affected after 8 days of treatment with vancomycin. AcMPAG was not detected in the serum. Data are means  $\pm$  SEM. The mean concentration of each metabolite before (days 0 to 8) and after (days 10 to 16) the introduction of vancomycin was compared independently in each treatment group using a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), with  $*P < 0.0005$ .

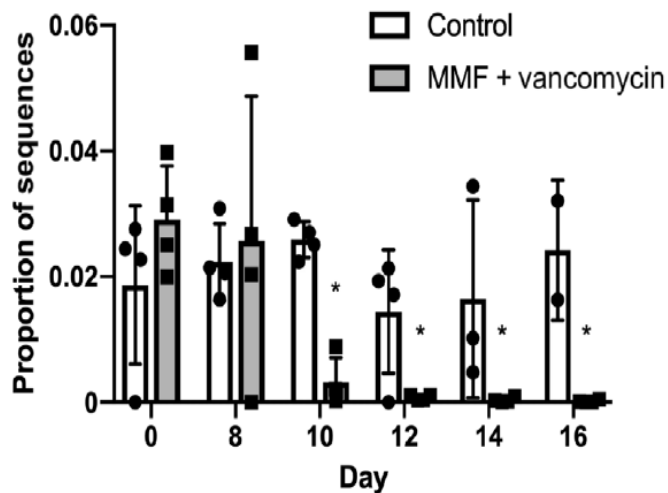
A



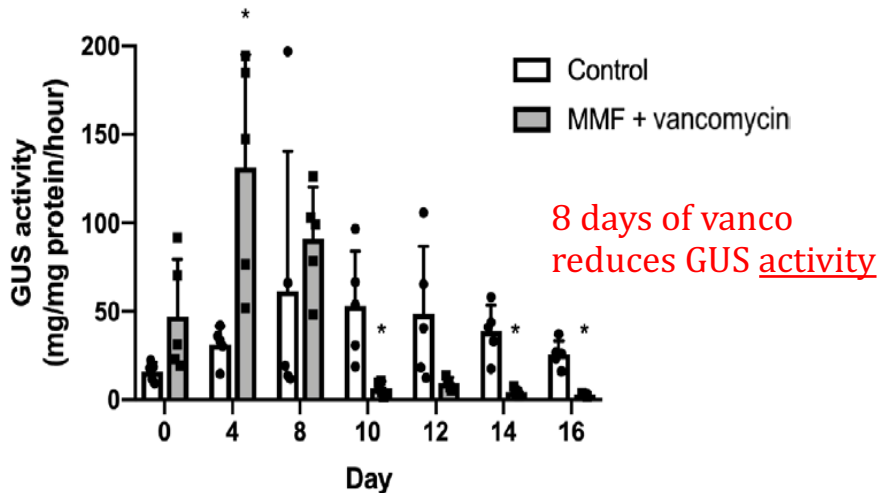
B



C

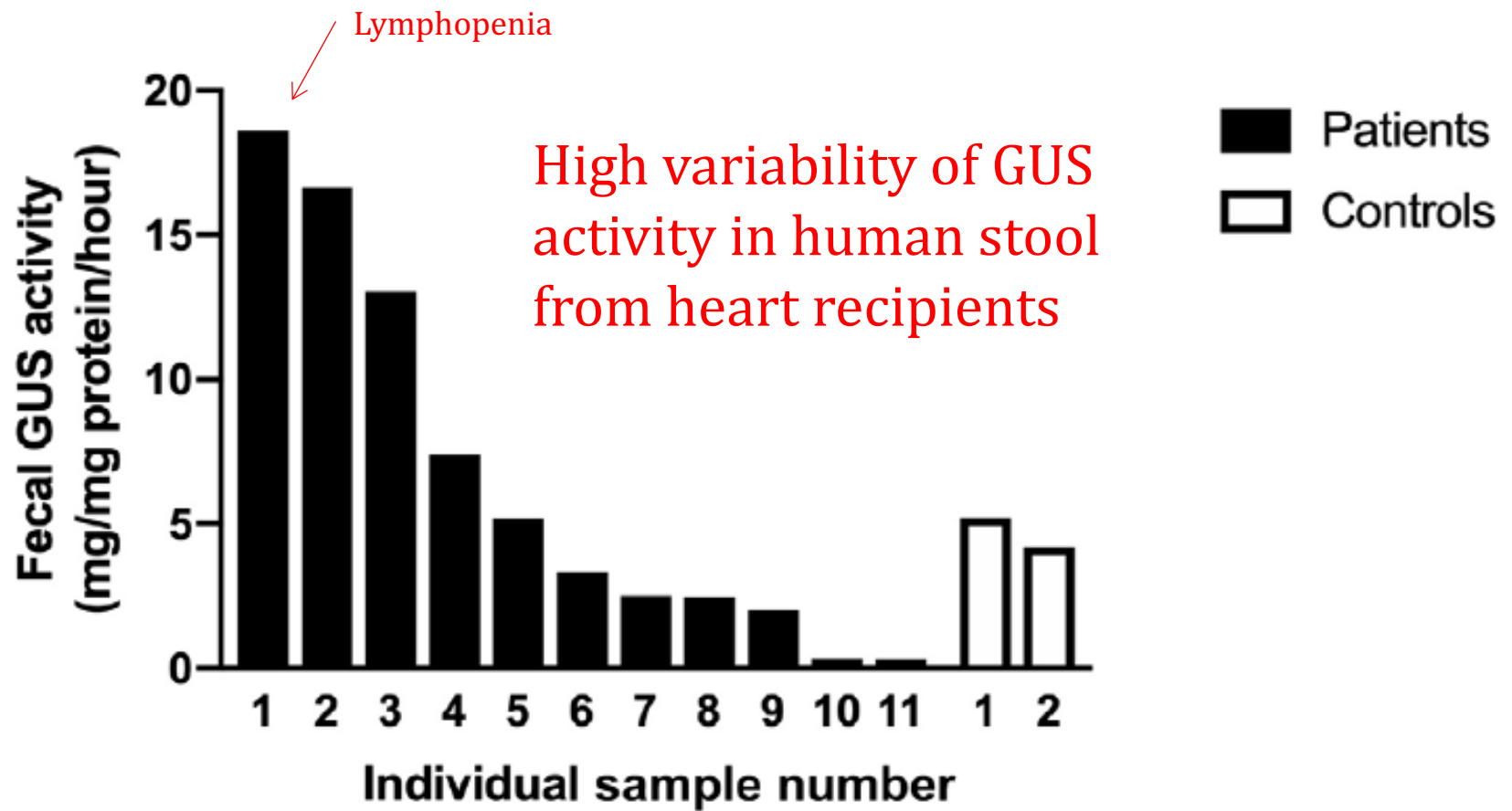


D



**Fig. 3. MMF-up-regulated GUS expression and activity are prevented by vancomycin.** PICRUSt and an enzyme activity assay were used to assess gene expression and GUS activity in mouse fecal pellets. (A) The proportional abundance of KEGG ortholog K01195 increased significantly ( $*P=0.006$ ) in the presence of MMF after 4 days. (B) GUS activity in fecal pellets collected from mice consuming MMF also increased significantly ( $P=0.03$ ) after 4 days. (C) The introduction of vancomycin on day 8 rapidly eliminated the expression of K01195. (D) Vancomycin, introduced after day 8, abolished GUS activity in fecal pellets ( $*P<0.01$ ). All data are plotted as means and SDs with data points for individual samples represented.





**Fig. 6. GUS activity in human stool.** Samples were collected from 11 adult and pediatric heart transplant recipients and 2 healthy, nontransplant controls. The highest level of GUS activity seen in patient 1 correlated with lymphopenia requiring a dose reduction in her MMF. Patient 3 had developed hematochezia and colonic lymphonodular hyperplasia while taking MMF. Patients 10 and 11 had been taken off MMF before sample collection.

# Microbiome and ImmunosuppreSSION in Kidney Transplantation (**MISSION**) Study

---

## Study Aims

Aim 1: To determine the association of microbiome diversity with plasma MPA and metabolite concentrations posttx.

Aim 2: To determine the association of microbiome diversity in tx recipients with MPA-associated toxicities such as anemia and leukopenia posttx.

Aim 3: To determine the association of microbiome diversity with diarrhea in tx recipients on MMF posttx.

# Study Design

---

**Aim 1 & 2:** Mycophenolate PK between days 30-90 posttx in research unit

- Collect two stool microbiome samples beginning at 1 week post-tx and another at PK visit and month 4 and 6.
- Follow subjects for mycophenolate related anemia, and leukopenia, for 12 months.
- Assess stool for ***beta-glucuronidase*** transcripts.
- New cross-sectional cohort also planned\*

**Aim 3:** Assess subjects for diarrhea from time of tx until 6 months post-tx.

- Collect two microbiome samples beginning at beginning at 1 week post-tx and another at PK visit and month 4 and 6.
- Record acute rejection and eGFR posttransplant

# Study Endpoints

---

- Pharmacokinetics – AUCs of MPA, MPAG, acyl MPAG and enterohepatic recirculation
- Tacrolimus troughs, measured clinically
- MPA related anemia
- MPA related leukopenia
- Diarrhea as a patient reported outcome

# Criteria to Determine Study Eligibility

---

## INCLUSION CRITERIA

1. Undergoing kidney transplantation
2. Male or female at least 18 years of age at time of enrollment
3. Receiving oral tacrolimus and MMF (Cellcept or generic) for maintenance immunosuppression. **MMF** must be given orally in equal doses on a every 12hr schedule, at least 48 hr before PK visit to assure steady state
4. Gives written informed consent
5. Able and willing to complete all study-related procedures and visits
6. Living or Deceased Donor Kidney tx recipient
7. Able and willing to complete all study-related visits

## EXCLUSION CRITERIA

1. Recipient of a previous non-kidney transplant
2. Patient is a multi-organ transplant recipient
3. Patients that take medications that significantly impact (inhibit or induce) UGT enzymes
4. Presence of active gastroparesis
5. Liver dysfunction (total bilirubin >2x Upper limit of normal) within 2 weeks of PK visit.
6. Patients that take medications that significantly impact (inhibit or induce) the UGT enzymes
7. Patient is HIV positive
8. Pregnant or nursing (lactating) women



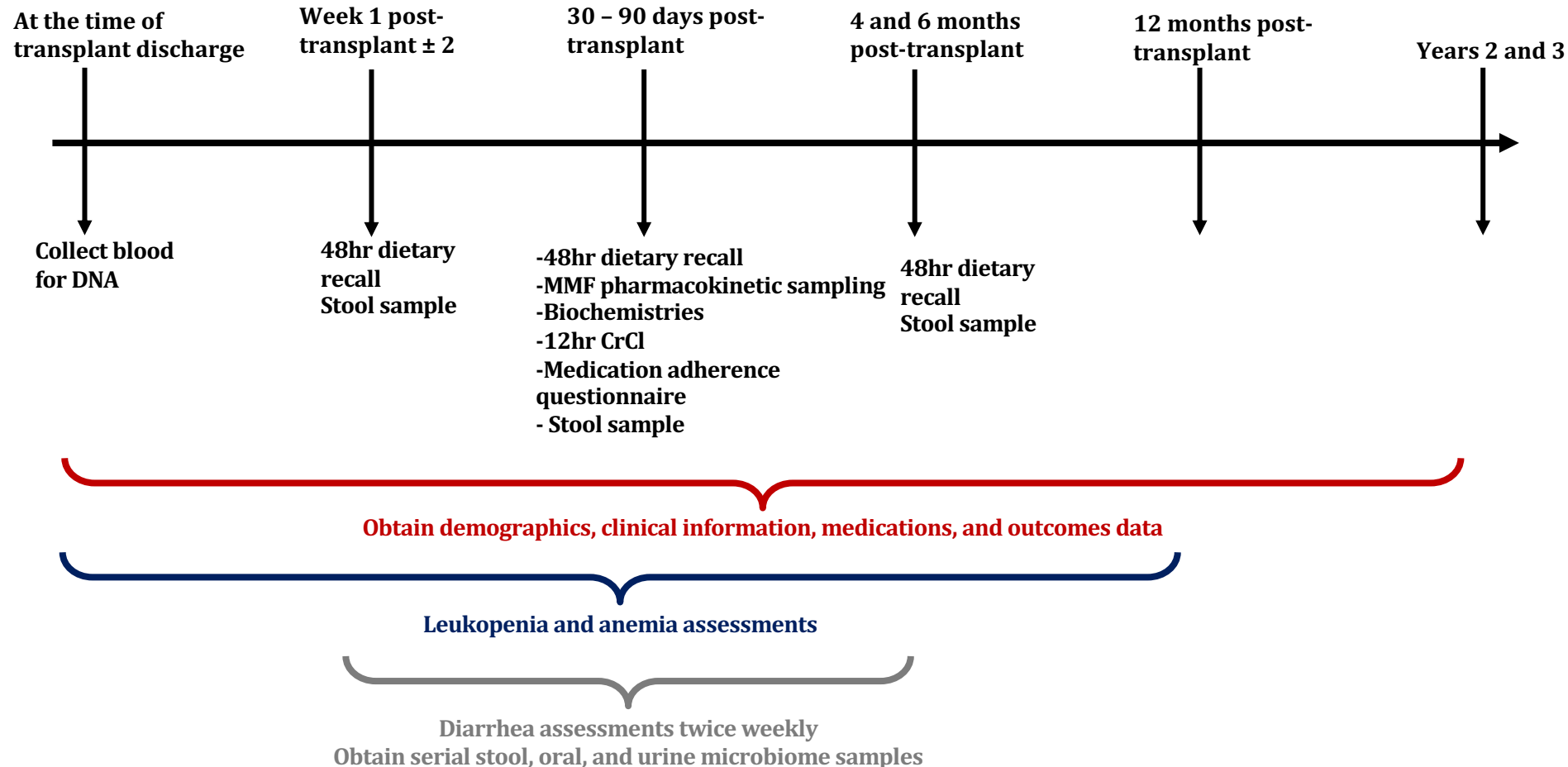
# Important Study Details

---

- Participants enrolled from UMN and Hennepin kidney transplant programs
- Microbiome samples will be collected 4 times in first 6 months. The participant may bring the stool samples into the clinic.
- Participants will be admitted to CRU for ~13 hours for a one time MMF pharmacokinetic study between days 30-60.\* Must be on **mycophenolate mofetil (not Myfortic)** and tacrolimus.
- Participant must be on BID dosing of MMF (to capture EHR peak) at time of pharmacokinetics.
- Stay on MMF if possible until end of study at 12 months and dosing not changed to non BID intervals
- Text messages will be sent twice weekly with questions about diarrhea occurrence and severity for 6 months posttx
- Follow participant for 12 months for leukopenia and anemia occurrence
- Paid for participation (\$200 for PK visit and additionally for text messages and more stool samples)

# Schedule of Events for Prospective Cohort

---



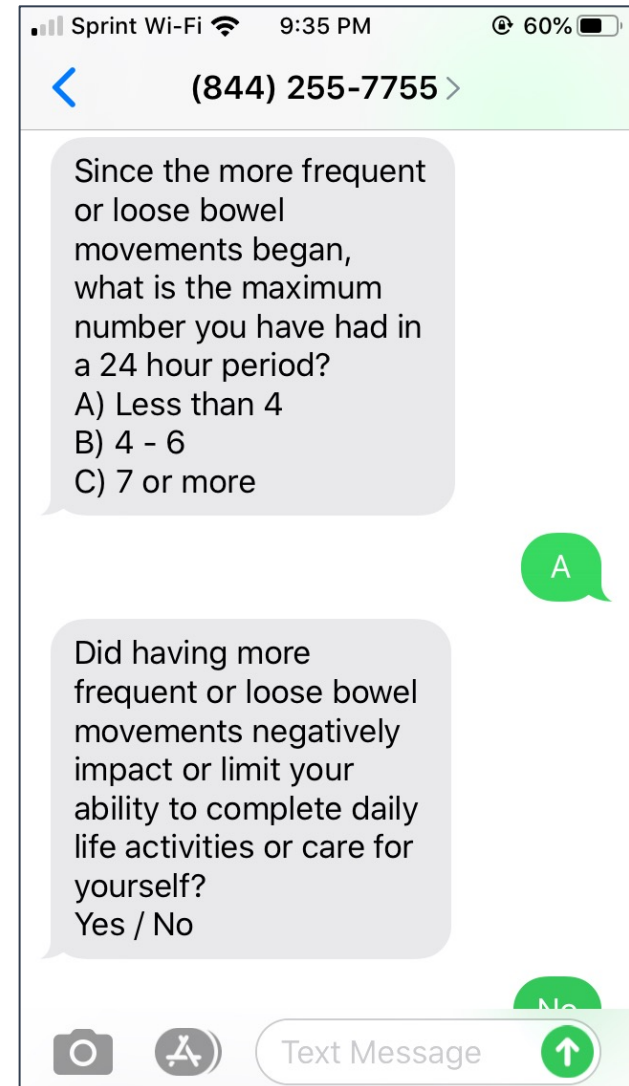
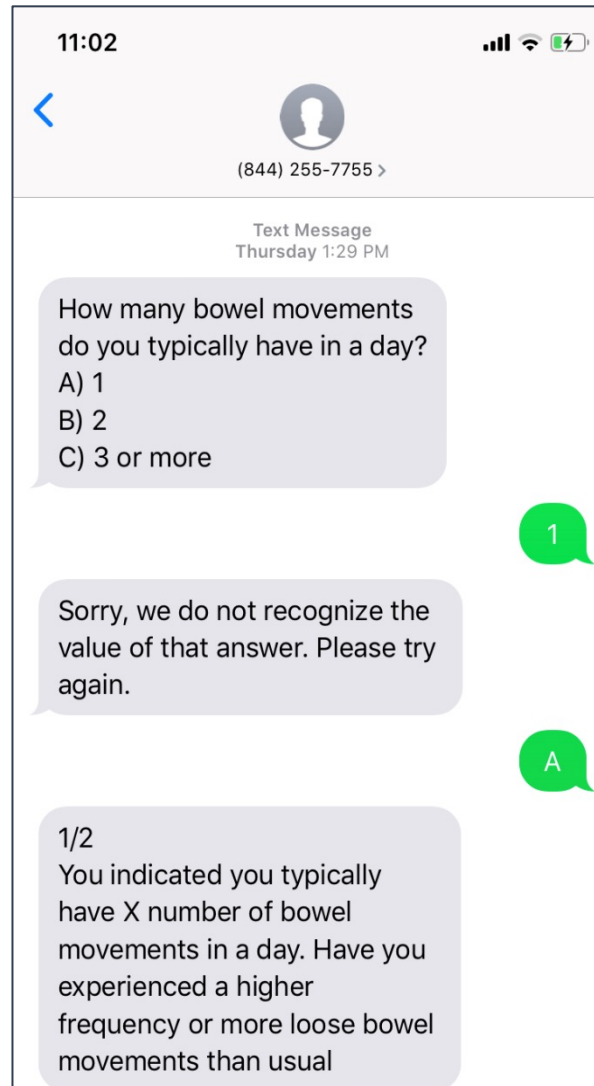
# Diarrhea Assessments

Participants will be texted twice weekly to assess frequent of loose bowel movements x 6 months



Mobile questions. answers. people.

[www.mosio.com](http://www.mosio.com)



# Conclusion

---

- Microbiome plays a role in drug disposition in transplantation but clinical significance is unknown
- We will determine association of microbiome:
  - MMF pharmacokinetic
  - MMF related anemia
  - MMF related leukopenia
  - MMF related diarrhea
  - Accounting for diet, concomitant meds, & genetics
- Serial microbiome specimens, and clinical information for ancillary studies

Quantifying Mycophenolate mofetil  
metabolism using an in-vitro assay

# Glucuronidation: Sugar-driven symbiosis between microbiota and host

---

- Glucuronidation inactivates and detoxifies molecules by increasing their water solubility, which promotes their removal from the body via the kidneys or GI tract.
- In the GI tract, these glucuronides serve as substrates for bacterial GUS proteins
  - As a by-product of glucuronide hydrolysis, bacteria regenerate the original molecule that was eliminated by the host
- **Glucuronidated endogenous** compounds include bilirubin, hormones, neurotransmitters, bile acids, and fatty acids, all of which influence host homeostasis.

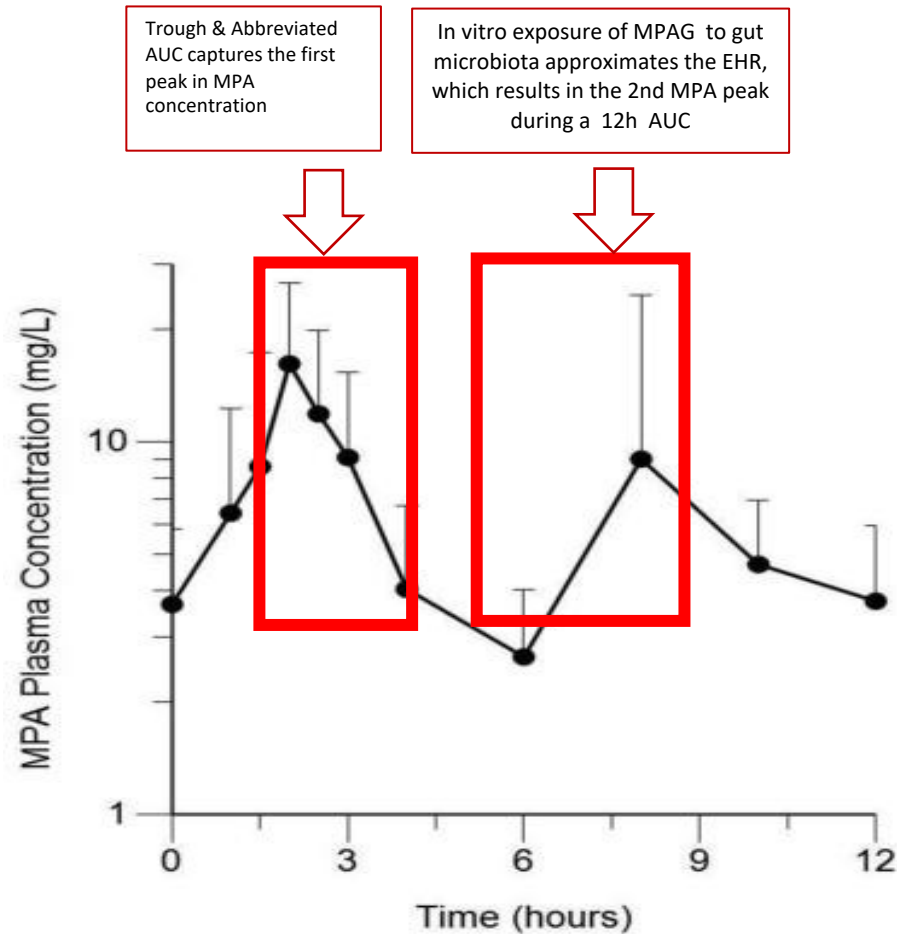
# Exogenous glucuronides in the gut

---

- Glucuronidation is also an important part of drug metabolism to mark compounds for excretion.
- Glucuronides of drugs such as Mycophenolate have been a primary focus of research because of their potential importance to therapeutic efficacy and tolerance.
- Exogenous glucuronides that reach the GI are diverse in chemical structure, suggesting that a proportional breadth of functional diversity may be present in the collection of microbial GUS enzymes in the GI
  - Gut microbiota composition is an important characteristic to EHR for drugs and exogenous glucuronides



# Potential of a new assay to assess in-vitro metabolism



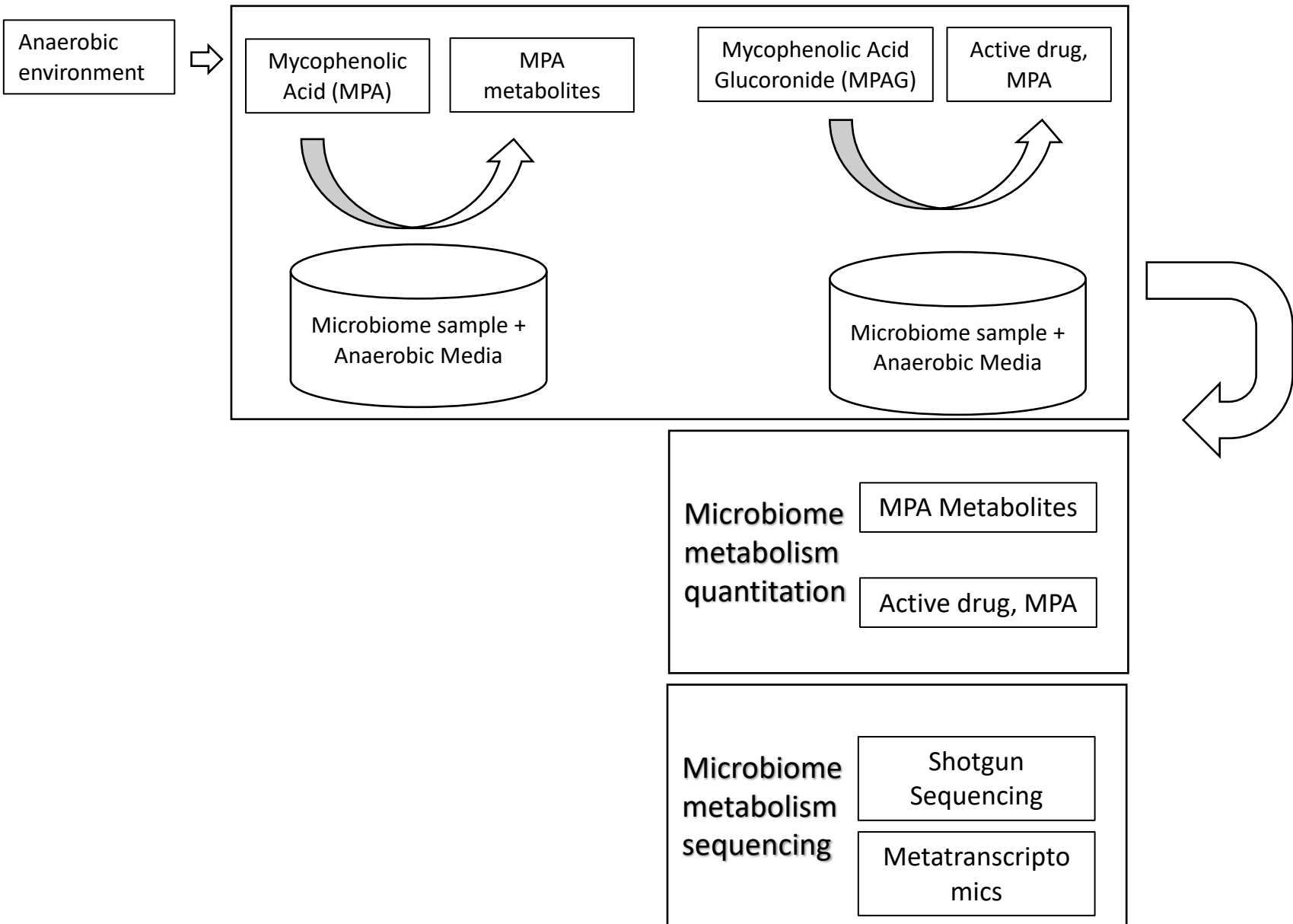
MPA 12 hour AUC curves adapted from Tornatore et. al. <sup>1</sup> and information captured by trough & Abbreviated AUC concentration and our in-vitro assay.

# In-vitro assay Methods

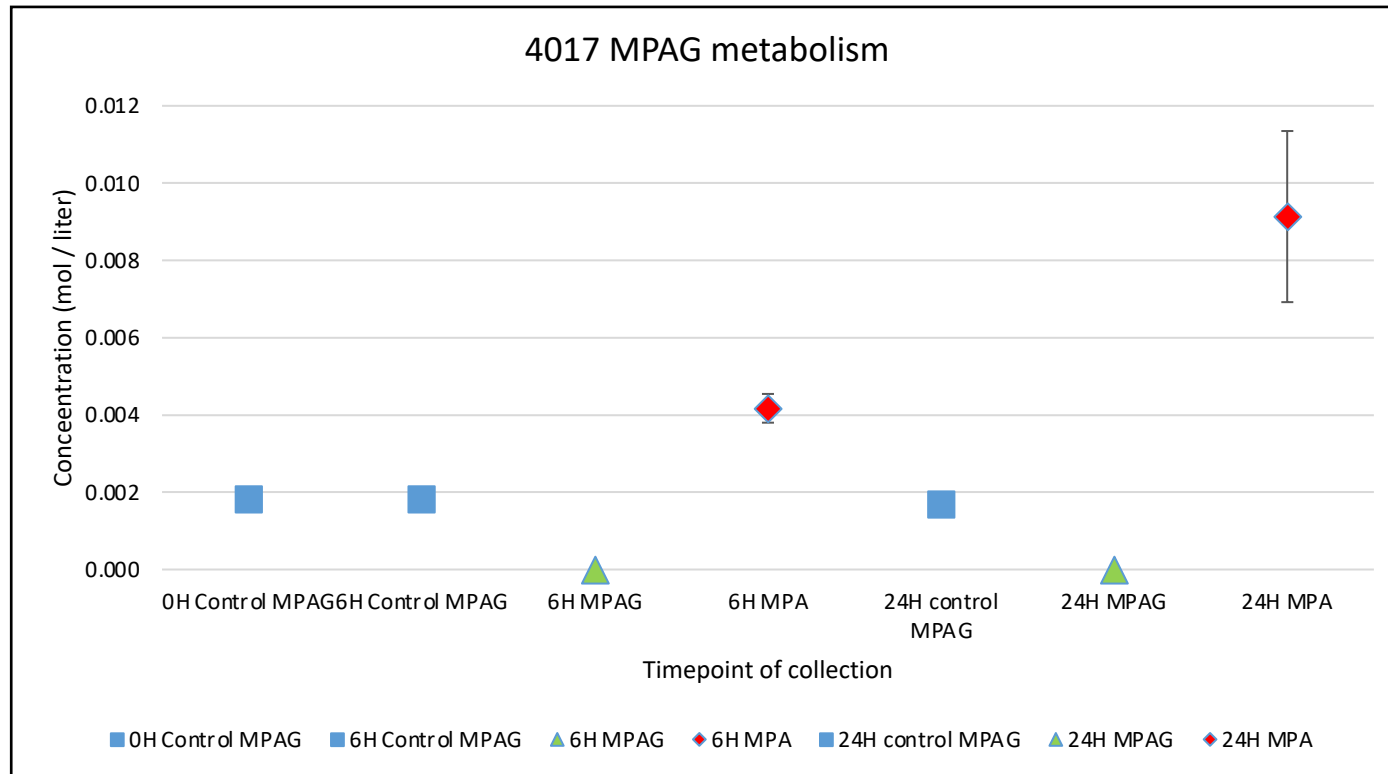
---

- The stool microbiome samples from MISSION study patients undergoing the 12 hour AUC, were used to do pilot testing of our in-vitro assay on 4 Mission study participants.
  - These patients were on a steady state of MMF around 2 months posttx, when they underwent intensive pharmacokinetic sampling over 12 hours to carefully and accurately assess EHR.
  - A stool sample was collected with 48 hours of the pharmacokinetic sampling (most samples were collected during the PK profile)

# In-vitro assay Methods

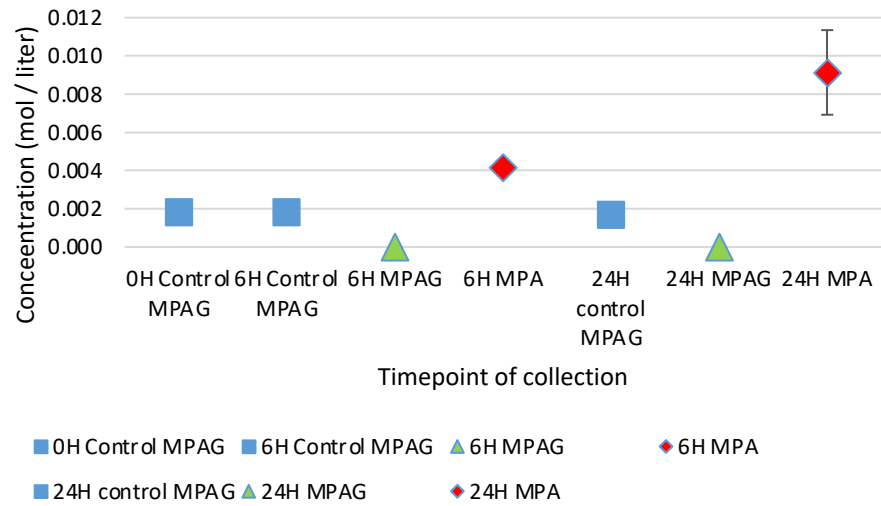


# In-vitro Data

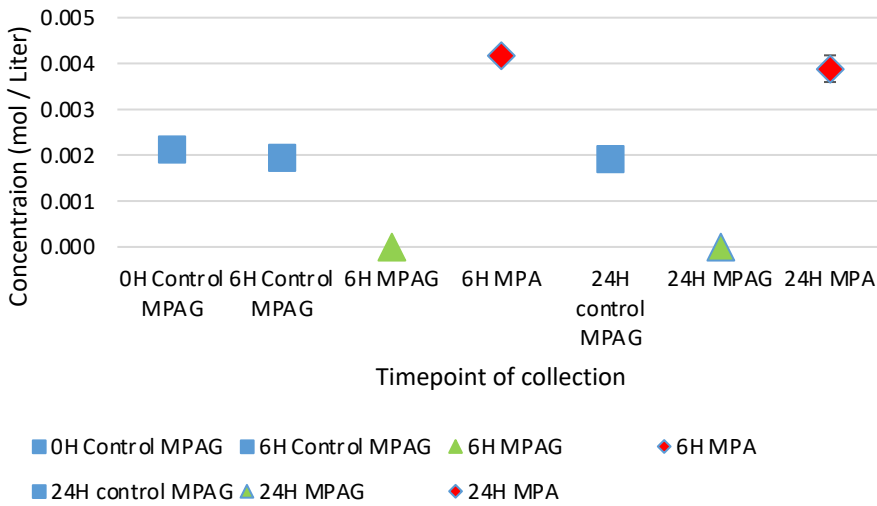


# In-vitro Data

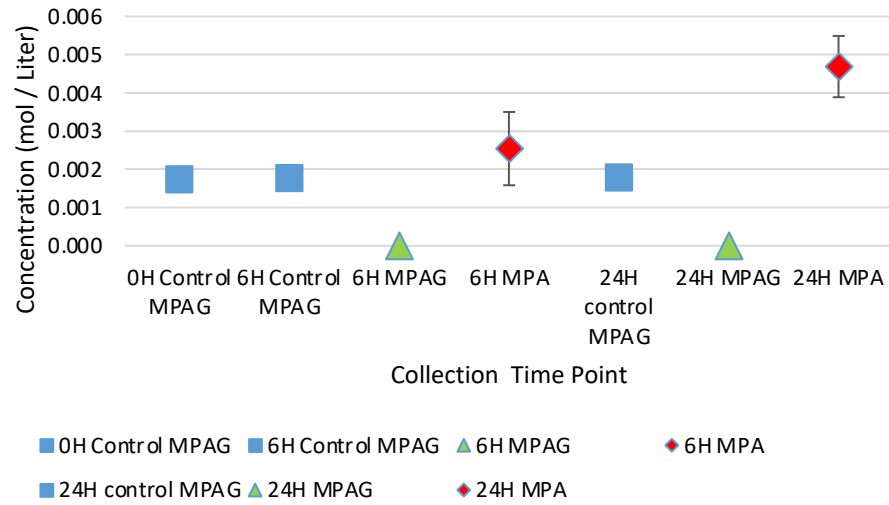
4017 MPAG metabolism



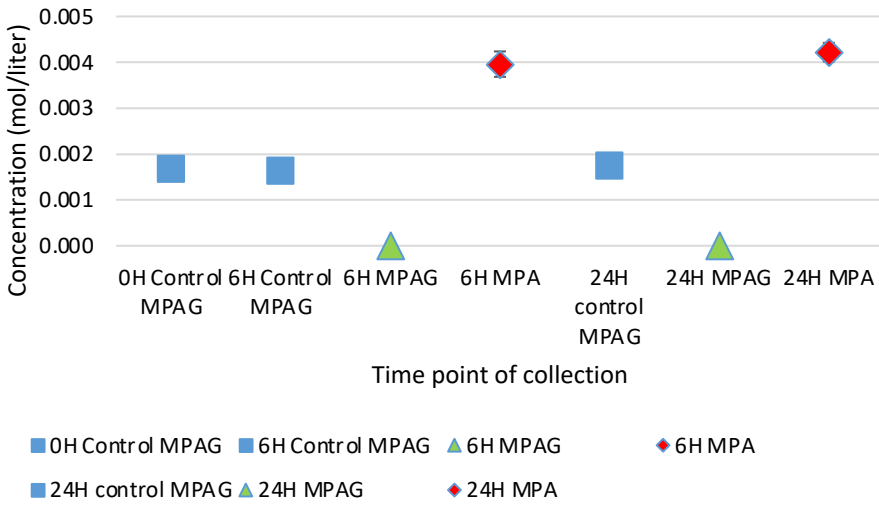
4018 MPAG metabolism



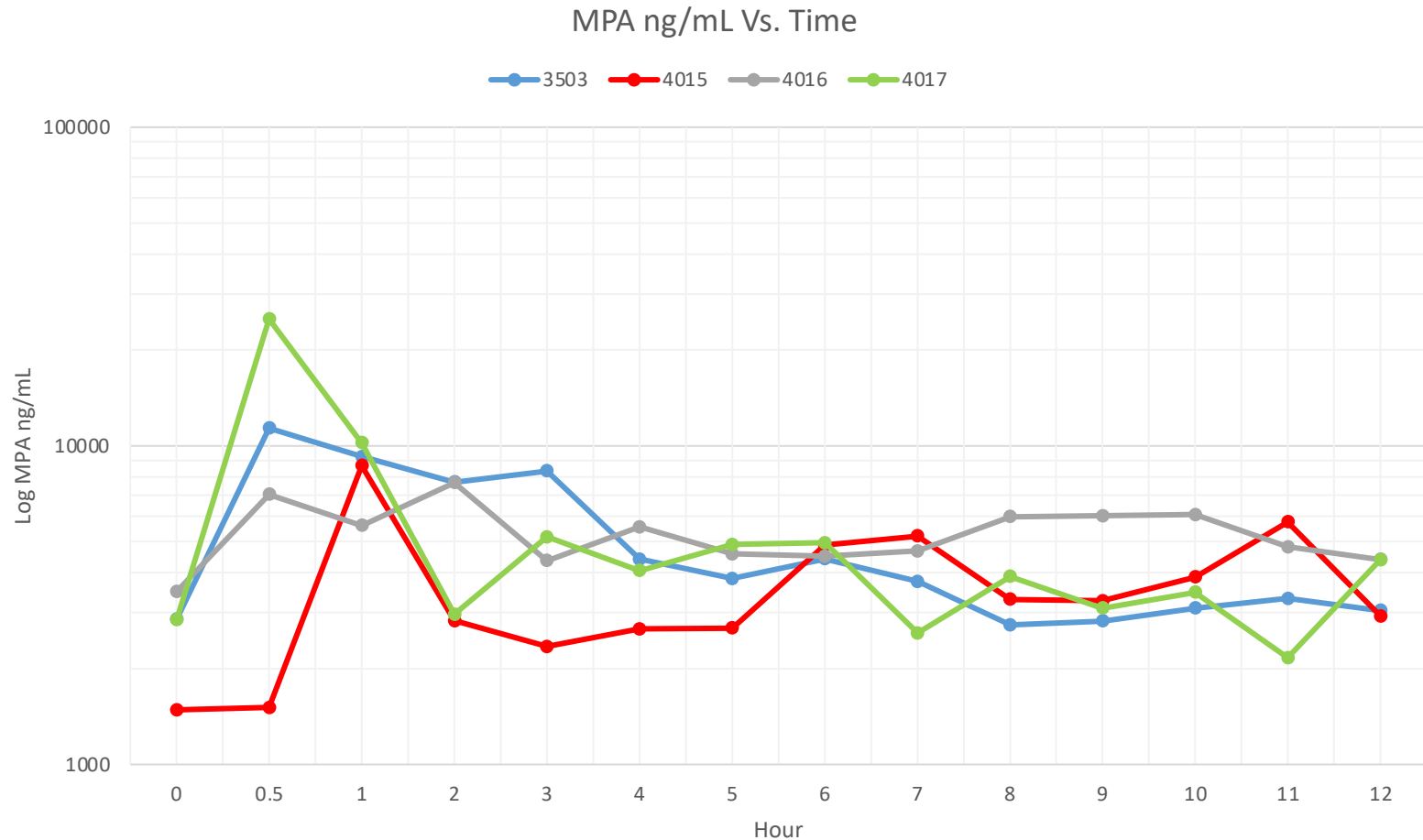
4019 MPAG Metabolism



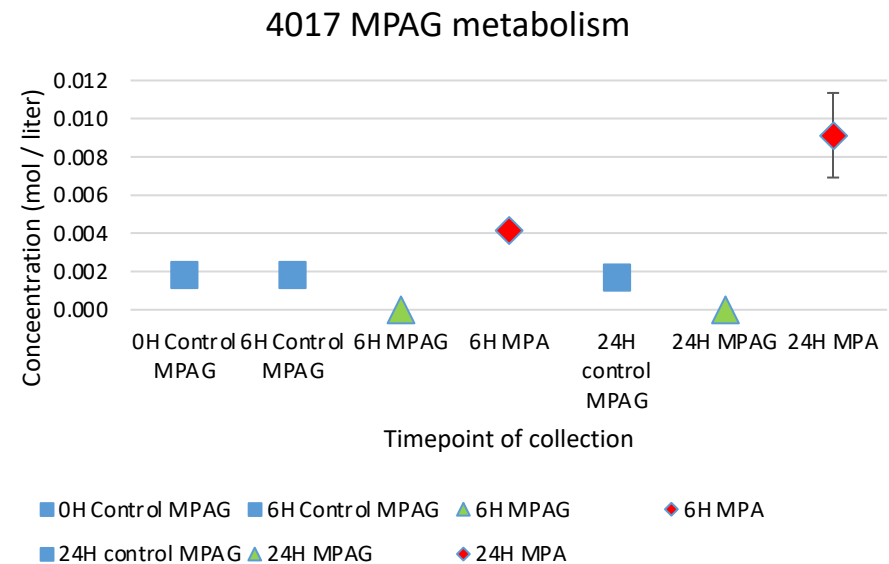
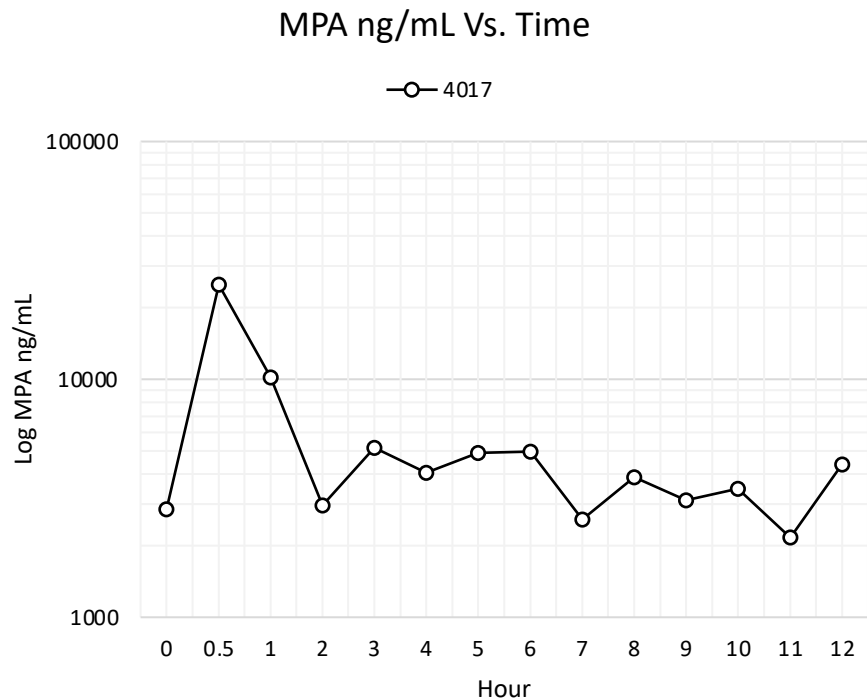
3513 MPAG metabolism



# In-vivo MPA PK data



# In-vivo vs in-vitro MPA PK data





# Preliminary data

---

- MPAG concentrations decreased rapidly at 6 hours post incubation
- We detected an increase in the concentration of MPA starting at the 6 hour after incubation, with a continuing upward trend in the 24 hour aliquots.

# Ongoing research

---

- Shotgun metatranscriptomics to quantify the amount of beta-glucuronidase enzyme transcripts present in the samples
- MPA pharmacokinetic assays to correlate with in-vitro data

# Future Directions

---

- The methods for the in-vitro assay may determine the dose appropriate for individuals based on their microbiome
- African American patients are often prescribed higher doses of 1.5 grams twice a day.
- Further, this in-vitro approach is not limited to drugs that undergo EHR

# Future Directions

Drug Name	Function	Gut Microbiota Modification	Effect of microbial modification
Irinotecan	Cancer therapy drug	De-glucuronidation of the active metabolite in the gut	<u>Toxicity</u> [1, 2]
Indomethacin	Anti-inflammatory drug	Beta-glucuronidase driven cleavage of NSAID glucuronide	<u>Toxicity</u> [2, 3]
Diclofenac	Anti-inflammatory drug	Beta-glucuronidase driven cleavage of NSAID glucuronide	<u>Toxicity</u> [2, 3]
Ketoprofen	Anti-inflammatory drug	Beta-glucuronidase driven cleavage of NSAID glucuronide	<u>Toxicity</u> [2, 3]
Mycophenolate Mofetil (MMF)	Immunosuppressive drug	Gut microbiota metabolize MPA glucuronide (MPAG) back to mycophenolic acid (MPA)	<u>Toxicity</u> [4-6]
Sulfasalazine	Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) medication	Gut microbiota reduce sulfasalazine into sulfapyridine and the active anti-inflammatory agent 5-ASA	<u>Toxicity</u> [2, 4-6]
Sulindac	Anti-inflammatory drug	De-glucuronidation of the active metabolite in the gut	<u>Toxicity</u> [2, 4-6]
Loperamide	Anti-diarrheal drug	De-glucuronidation of the active metabolite in the gut	<u>Toxicity</u> [2, 4-6]
Levodopa	Parkinson's disease therapeutic drug	Microbial decarboxylation and p-dehydroxylation convert L-dopa to m-tyramine	<u>Inactivation</u> [2]
Cladribine	Cancer therapy drug	Inhibited efficacy	<u>Inactivation</u> [7]
Gemcitabine	Cancer therapy drug	Inhibited efficacy	<u>Inactivation</u> [7]
Digoxin	Congestive heart failure therapy drug	<i>Eggerthella lenta</i> metabolizes digoxin to dihydrodigoxin	<u>Inactivation</u> [2]
Tacrolimus	Immunosuppressive drug	Specific organisms metabolize Tacrolimus to a less effective metabolite	<u>Inactivation</u> [8]
Benzylpenicillin	Cancer therapy drug	Beta-lactamase inhibition	<u>Inactivation</u> [9]
Ipilimumab	Anti CTLA-4 human monoclonal antibody (Ab) therapeutic drug	<i>B. thetaiotaomicron</i> and <i>B. Fragilis</i> enhance T-cell response to antibodies	<u>Activation</u> [2, 10]
Metformin	Type 2 diabetes (T2D) therapy drug	<i>Akkermansia muciniphila</i> abundance is modulated by metformin treatment	<u>Activation</u> [2, 11]
Fludarabine de phosphate	Cancer therapy drug	Improved efficacy	<u>Activation</u> [7]
CB1954	Cancer therapy drug	Improved efficacy	<u>Activation</u> [7]

# Acknowledgements

---

Molecular Epidemiology Lab  
Hennepin Healthcare

- Casey Dorr, PhD
- David Schladt, M.S.
- Sarah Elmer, M.S.
- Pa Chia Yang

University of Minnesota

- Pamela Jacobson, PhD
- Chris Staley, PhD
- Rory Remmel, PhD
- William Oetting, PhD
- Samy Riad, MD
- Arthur Matas, MD
- Stephanie Yuen
- Kristin Mathson
- Mathilda Wagner
- Levi Teigen, PhD

Additional Slides

78 gut bacteria were assessed to metabolize 271 drugs, including MMF, Tac and Prednisone

In vitro quantitative evidence of MMF or TAC metabolism via Liquid chromatography- mass spectrophotometry (LC-MS) after a 12-hour incubation

16 gut bacteria were associated with a decrease in MMF and TAC after a 12 hour incubation

Evidence of beta-glucuronidase activity in the gut microbiome  
Evidence of TAC metabolite production

8 gut bacteria were found to produce GUS enzymes in previous in vitro studies. 1 was found to metabolize TAC but not MMF

Part of a simplified model for human gut microbiome interaction

Culturable strain available for purchase

Guo Y, Crnkovic C, Won KJ, et al. Commensal gut bacteria convert the immunosuppressant tacrolimus to less potent metabolites. *Drug Metab Dispos*. 2019;47(3):194-202. doi:10.1124/dmd.118.084772

Pellock SJ, Redinbo MR. Glucuronides in the gut: Sugar-driven symbioses between microbe and host. *J Biol Chem*. 2017;292(21):8569-8576. doi:10.1074/jbc.R116.767434

Biernat KA, Pellock SJ, Bhatt AP, et al. Structure, function, and inhibition of drug reactivating human gut microbial  $\beta$ -glucuronidases. *Sci Rep*. 2019;9(1). doi:10.1038/s41598-018-36069-w

Ervin SM, Li H, Lim L, et al. Gut microbial  $\beta$ -glucuronidases reactivate estrogens as components of the estrobolome that reactivate estrogens. *J Biol Chem*. 2019;294(49):18586-18599. doi:10.1074/jbc.RA119.010950

Zimmermann M, Zimmermann-Kogadeeva M, Wegmann R, Goodman AL. Mapping human microbiome drug metabolism by gut bacteria and their genes. *Nature*. 2019;570(7762):462-467. doi:10.1038/s41586-019-1291-3

Gut microbes shown  
to metabolize MMF

Gut microbes shown to  
produce GUS enzymes

Ruminococcus gnavus ATCC29149  
Escherichia coli K-12 (BW25113)  
Bacteroides thetaiotaomicron  
3731 (ATCC 29741)

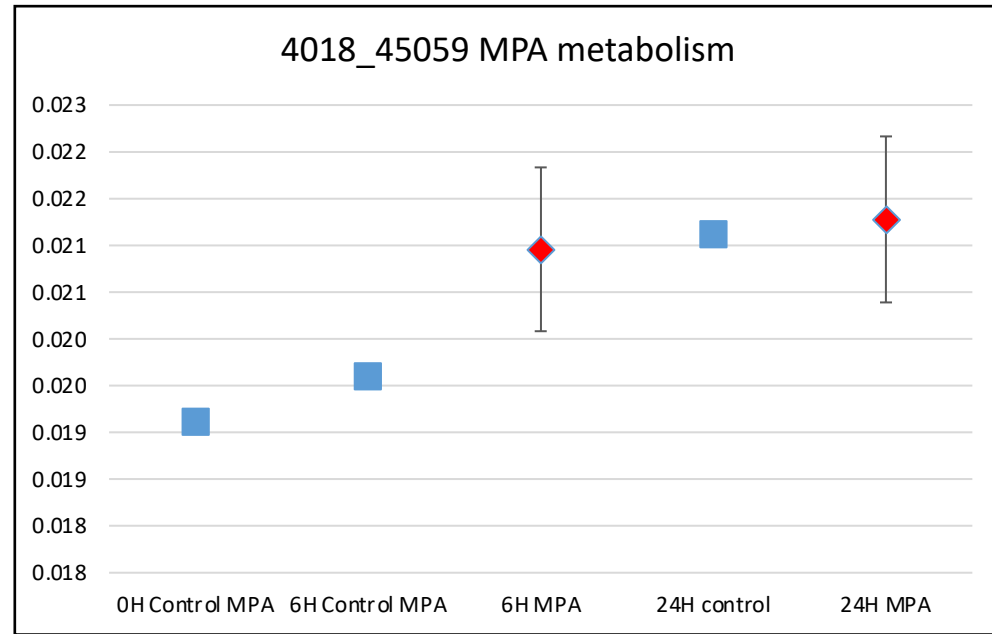
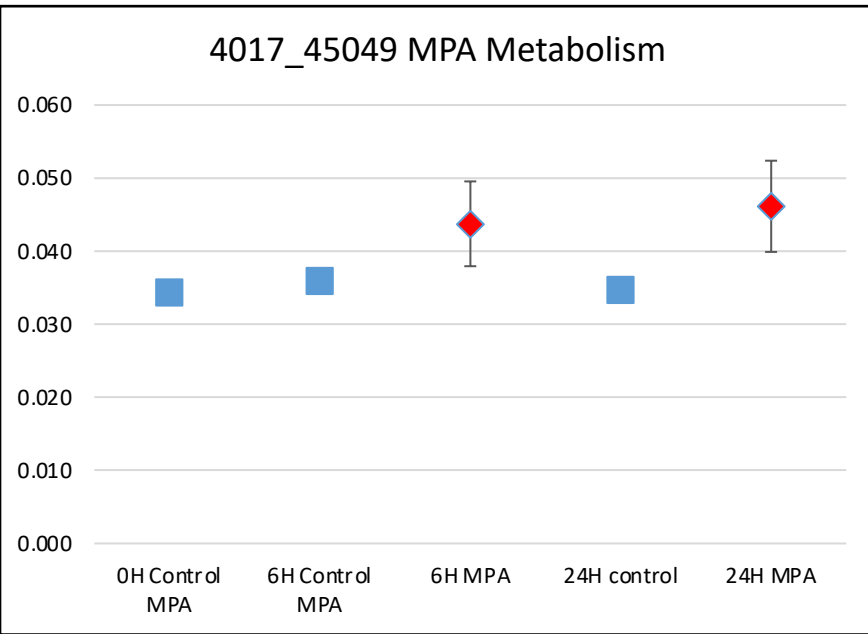
Gut microbes included in  
simplified model for human  
gut microbiome interaction

\*MMF specific target could include  
Bifidobacterium longum subsp. infantis  
CCUG52486  
Bifidobacterium breve DSM20213 (ATCC15700)  
Bacteroides vulgatus ATCC8482  
Bacteroides ovatus ATCC8483  
Clostridium ramosum DSM1402  
\*TAC specific target could include  
Faecalibacterium Prausnitzii ATCC 27766



# MPA metabolism by gut bacteria

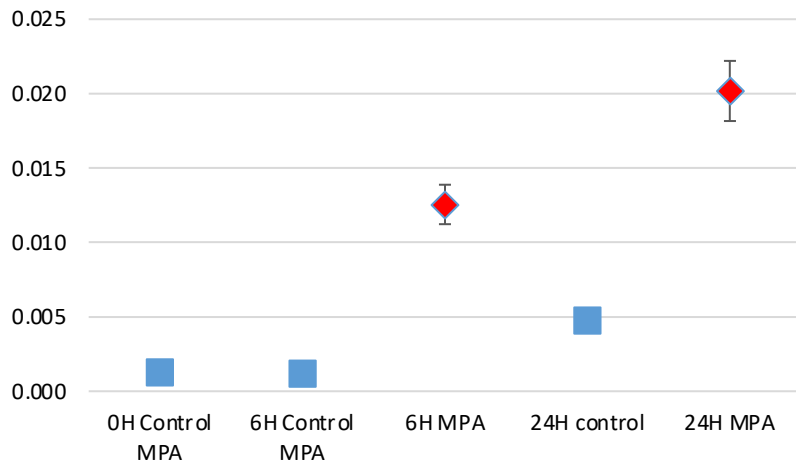
(Concentrations are presented in moles / liter)



# MMF metabolism by gut bacteria

(Concentrations are presented in moles / liter)

4019\_45061 MMF metabolism



3513\_32034 MMF metabolism

