MATERIALS STRUCTURE

in Chemistry, Biology, Physics and Technology

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MATERIALS STRUCTURE
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Special issue of Materials Structure in 2025 contains abstracts from the conference New Trends in BioScience 3

History, Traditions and Innovative Approaches

Dear colleagues, friends, and participants,

it is my pleasure to extend to you an invitation to the international conference "New Trends in bioScience 3 – History, Traditions, and Innovative Approaches," organized by the Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, to be held from October 6–8, 2025. This conference reflects the University's active involvement in the KreativEU consortium, an initiative dedicated to advancing scientific innovation while preserving academic traditions and cultural heritage.

The scientific program will primarily address structural biology, biochemistry, and biophysics, while remaining open to a wider scientific audience, including Master's and doctoral students. Through invited lectures delivered by well-known national and international experts, interactive poster sessions, and opportunities for scholarly exchange, the conference aims to foster the dissemination of knowledge, promote student mobility, and strengthen international collaboration.

By linking the most recent advances in research with a responsiveness of historical and cultural legacies, the conference emphasizes the long-term responsibility of science to contribute to the societal development. In recalling the exemplary act of Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, who, 130 years ago, declined to patent his discovery of X-rays in order to make its benefits universally accessible,e are reminded of the values of openness, generosity, and responsibility that continue to guide scientific inquiry. In this spirit, the conference aspires to provide a platform for open academic dialogue, uniting tradition with innovation.

I am delighted to welcome you to České Budějovice and look forwa wrd to what promises to be an intellectually enriching and inspiring academic gathering.

České Budějovice, September 2025 *Ivana Kutá Smatanová*

Electronic version of the journal can be found at http://www.xray.cz/ms together with the instructions for the authors.

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New Trends in Bioscience 3

History, Traditions and Innovative Approaches

České Budějovice, 6.10.-8.10. 2025

Speakers and affiliations:

Dr. Cyril Bařinka, *Inst of Biotechnology AS CR, Praha, CR*
Dr. Petr Bezdicka, *Inst of Inorganic Chemistry, AS CR, Praha, CR*
Dr. Milan Dopita, *Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University, Praha, CR*
Dr. Jose A. Gavira, *Laboratorio de Estudios Cristalográficos, CSIC – UGR, Granada, Spain*
Dr. Anna Imbert Stulc, *Inst of Inorganic Chemistry, AS CR, Praha, CR*
Dr. Barbora Kaščáková, *Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, CR*
plk. RNDr. Marek Kotrlý, *Police of the Czech Republic, Praha, CR*
Mgr. Anna Koutská, *Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, CR*
Prof. Sergio Martínez-Rodríguez, *Faculty of Medicine, University of Granada, Spain*
Dr. Jeroen R. Mesters, *University of Luebeck, Germany*
Prof. Silviu Miloiu, *Valahia University of Targoviste & KreativEU - Knowledge & Creativity European University, Dambovita, Romania*
Assoc. Prof. Lucia Nováková, *Trnavská univerzita v Trnave, Slovakia*
Dr. Petr Pachl, *Inst of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry, AS CR, Praha, CR*
Prof. Lars Redecke, *University of Luebeck, Germany*
Assoc. Prof. Pavlína Řezáčová, *Inst of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry, AS CR, Praha, CR*
Prof. Dina Maria Ribeiro Mateus, *Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Portugal*
Dr. Jana Škerlová, *Inst of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry, AS CR, Praha, CR*
Dr. Daniel Sojka, *Biological Center, AS CR, České Budějovice, CR*
Prof. Vítězslav Straňák, *Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice, CR*
Dr. Silvie Švarcová, *Inst of Inorganic Chemistry, AS CR, Praha, CR*
Prof. Roman Tůma, *Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, CR*
pplk. Mgr. Ivana Turková, *Police of the Czech Republic, Praha, CR*

Opening ceremony:

Assoc. Prof. Luděk Berec, *Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, CR*
Prof. Pavel Kozák, *Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, CR*
Prof. Ivana Kutá Smatanová, *Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, CR*
Prof. Dr. Hab. Silviu Miloiu, *Valahia University of Targoviste & KreativEU - Knowledge & Creativity European University, Dambovita, Romania*
Assoc. Prof. Dagmar Škodová Parmová, *the Mayor of the city Ceske Budejovice*
Prof. František Vácha, *Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, CR*
Assoc. Prof. Radka Závodská, *Faculty of Education, University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, CR*
Prof. Vladimír Žlábek, *Faculty of Fisheries and Protection of Waters, University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, CR*

Monday, October 6

13:00-14:00 Registration & welcome coffee

14:00-15:00 Opening
Opening Remarks by Conference Chair [*Ivana Kutá Smatanová*]
Prologue by the USB representative – Rector [*Pavel Kozák*]
Prologue by the Mayor of the city České Budějovice [*Dagmar Škodová Parmová*]
Prologue by the FSc USB representative – Dean [*František Vácha*]
Prologue by the USB representative – Vice-rector for International Relations [*Vladimír Žlábek*]
Prologue by the USB representative – Vice-Rector for Research [*Luděk Berec*]
Prologue by the KreativEU representative - Vice-Rector for Institutional Development and International Relations, Valahia University of Targoviste [*Silviu Miloiu*]
Prologue by the USB and KreativEU representative – Member of Steering Committee [*Radka Závodská*]

15:00
Pavlína Řezáčová **L1 – page s5**
130 years of seeing the invisible: The story of X-Ray Discovery
15:35
Jana Škerlová **L2 – s5**
X-ray in structural biology

16:10 *Break, refreshment*

16:30
Anna Imbert Stulc **L3 – s6**
Tracing the origin of Notre Dame timberwood: Elemental and isotopic(strontium and neodymium) markers
17:05 **L4 – s7**
Silvie Švarcová, Petr Bezdička
Revealing of lead and mercury soaps in miniature portraits
17:40
Marek Kotrlý, Ivana Turková **L5 – s8**
Counterfeit Analysis in Real Forensic Practice
18:15
Ivana Turková, Marek Kotrlý **L6 – s9**
Analysis of Fine Art Forgeries in Forensic Practice

19:00-22:00 Poster Session & Networking Reception

Tuesday, October 7

09:30
Cyril Bařinka **L7**
Development of targeted approaches for combating prostate cancer

10:00 Lab walking tour

11:00 *Break, refreshment*

11:20-12:30 Poster Presentations & Informal Networking

13:00-14:30 Lunch

14:30
Sergio Martínez-Rodríguez **L8 – s10**
Protein purification in and beyond the crystallography world
15:05
José A. Gavira-Gallardo **L9 – s10**
Pharma & Biotechnological Use of Protein Crystals
15:40
Lars Redecke **L10 – s11**
Protein crystallization in living cells - Pushing the limits

16:15 *Break, refreshment*

16:35
Jeroen Mesters **L11 – s12**
Anaemia, cultural/religious heritage and dietary preferences
17:10
Silviu Miloiu, Lucia Nováková **L12 – s12**
Eco-Cultural Heritage: Conceptual Innovations and Applied Methodologies for the 21st Century
17:45
Dina Mateus **L13 – s13**
Plant-Based Biocides for the Sustainable Preservation of Built Cultural Heritage
18:20
Kateřina Lonová **L14 – s14**
No labels needed – analyze your organelles using holography

20:00-22:00 **Social Networking & Informal Discussion**

Wednesday, October 8

09:30
Barbora Kaščáková **L15 – s14**
Targeted Protein Degradation as a Novel Antiviral Strategy
10:00
Daniel Sojka **L16 – s15**
Heritage to Innovation: How classical Czech parasitology can fuel protease-based drug Discovery
10:30
Anna Koutská **L17 – s15**
Small fly, big impact: Drosophila to unravel the pathology of neurodevelopmental disorders.

11:00 *Break, refreshment*

11:20
Roma Tůma **L18 – s16**
From the Braggs to Bill Astbury and the advent of modern structural molecular biology
11:50
Petr Pachl **L19 – s16**
Extremely brilliant X-ray sources and new opportunities in macromolecular crystallography

13:00-14:30 Lunch

14:30
Vítězslav Straňák **L20 – s17**
Functional nanostructured surfaces: from design to sensing applications
15:00
Milan Dopita **L21 – s17**
Exploring the Morphology and Structure of Fe-Based Nanomaterials for Pharmaceutical Applications Using X-ray Scattering Methods

15:30 Student Flash Talks

16:00 Closing Remarks & Awards for Best Poster / Flash Talk

16:20 *Break, refreshment*

NEW TRENDS IN BIOSCIENCE 3

Cultural Heritage in Science

České Budějovice, 6.10.-8.10. 2025

October 6, Monday

L1

130 YEARS OF SEEING THE INVISIBLE: THE STORY OF X-RAY DISCOVERY

Pavlína Řezáčová

Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry, Czech Academy of Sciences, Flemingovo nam. 2, 16610 Prague, Czech Republic
rezacova@uochb.cas.cz

In November 1895, Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen discovered X-rays, a new type of invisible radiation that can pass through the body and create images of bones and organs. His meticulous experiments not only revealed a new branch of physics but also transformed medicine by introducing diagnostic imaging. Röntgen's wife, Anna Bertha, was part of this story—her hand was the subject of the very first X-ray picture, which showed her wedding ring and became a powerful symbol of the new invention.

News about X-rays spread very fast. Within weeks, newspapers in Europe and the United States were reporting the discovery. This quick publicity helped bring X-rays from the laboratory into medical practice almost immediately.

Today, X-rays are used every day in hospitals and clinics to diagnose broken bones, lung diseases, and many other conditions. They are also important in cancer treatment, dentistry, airport security, and scientific research. From Röntgen's first experiment to modern technology, X-rays have become one of the most valuable tools in both medicine and science.

L2

X-RAY IN STRUCTURAL BIOLOGY

Jana Škerlová

Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry, Czech Academy of Sciences, Flemingovo nam. 2, 16610 Prague, Czech Republic

How do we know what proteins look like? How can we study the invisible machinery of life at the atomic level? The answer lies in the powerful use of X-rays in structural biology. By analyzing how X-rays diffract on crystals of biomolecules, we can reconstruct detailed 3D structures that reveal how these molecules work – and how we can target them in medicine, biotechnology, and research. This talk explores how X-ray crystallography has become one of the most essential tools in structural biology, changing our understanding of life, health, and disease, and how it is still driving major discoveries today. We will walk through the principles behind the technique, its historical milestones, and explain why seeing is believing when it comes to biology.

L3

TRACING THE ORIGIN OF THE TIMBERS OF NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS: SR–ND ISOTOPIC AND MULTI-ELEMENTAL FINGERPRINTS

A. Imbert Štulc

Institute of Inorganic Chemistry of the Czech Academy of Sciences, v.v.i., ALMA Laboratory, Řež, Czech Republic

stulc@iic.cas.cz

The wooden framework of Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral was almost entirely destroyed by fire on 15 April 2019. Although the charred timbers could not be reused for the reconstruction, they were of great interest to historians and archaeologists. Their study provided an unique opportunity to explore over 800 years of the monument's history and to gain new insight into cathedral construction in the Central Middle Ages (11^{th}–13^{th} centuries). A key question for understanding medieval forestry management and the timber trade was the provenance of the beams.

Provenance determination was based on a multidisciplinary approach combining the study of historical archives, the observation of archaeological features, and the analysis of the geochemical (multi-elemental and Sr–Nd isotopic) composition of the wood. Tracing with geochemical signatures consists of discriminating sites based on their geological and pedological contexts. Trees take up nutrients from the bioavailable soil pool during their growth. Concentrations of mineral nutrients and isotopic ratios in wood are therefore linked to the geochemical composition of soils and underlying rocks. Absorption of certain elements (e.g., Mn, Ca) is controlled by soil pH, while isotope ratios reflect the type and age of the bedrock. These tracers provide complementary information on the environment where trees grow. In the case of archaeological wood, geochemical signatures may be further modified by post-depositional conditions [1].

The case study of the Notre-Dame timbers required (1) verification of the stability of geochemical tracers in carbonized wood, and (2) the establishment of a reference database of multi-elemental and isotopic signatures in present-day woods around Paris.

High-temperature exposure did not alter the Sr and Nd isotopic composition, but caused volatilization and the loss of some elements. Elemental tracers were therefore selected based on their thermostability (i.e., elements showing < 20% decrease at 800 °C) [2]. The reference database comprised 12 forest sites, each representing a distinct type of substrate, covering the geological and soil diversity of the Seine River catchment area. Provenance of present-day wood could be resolved with 93% accuracy, with site discrimination primarily controlled by the $^{87}Sr/^{86}Sr$ isotopic ratio and the Mn/Ca and Sr/Ca ratios [3]. The carbonized Notre-Dame timbers were analysed for felling dates and geochemical signatures, which were compared both internally and with source forests from reference database. The signatures of most medieval beams were characteristic of stands growing on deep silty soils, consistent with archival evidence placing their origin southeast of Paris.

1. F. Hajj, A. Poszwa, J. Bouchez, and F. Guérold, 'Radiogenic and "stable" strontium isotopes in provenance studies: A review and first results on archaeological wood from shipwrecks', *J. Archaeol. Sci*., vol. **86**, pp. 24-49, Oct. 2017, doi: 10.1016/j.jas.2017.09.005.
2. A. I. Štulc et al., 'Multi-elemental and Strontium-Neodymium Isotopic Signatures in Charred Wood: Potential for Wood Provenance Studies', *Int. J. Wood Cult.*, vol. **1**, no. aop, pp. 1-48, 2023.
3. A. I. Štulc et al., 'Tracing the origin of wood at the regional scale with dendrochemical markers: elemental and strontium and neodymium isotopic composition', *Sci. Total Environ.*, vol. **957**, p. 177640, Dec. 2024, doi: 10.1016/j.scitotenv.2024.177640.

L4

REVEALING OF LEAD AND MERCURY SOAPS IN MINIATURE PORTRAITS

P. Bezdička, S. Švarcová

ALMA Laboratory, Institute of Inorganic Chemistry of the Czech Academy of Sciences, č.p. 1001, Husinec-Řež, Czech Republic

petrb@iic.cas.cz

Saponification of paint layers often induces unwanted changes of the original appearance of paintings caused by the increased transparency and/or opacity of the affected paint layers. The as formed soap aggregates have a strong tendency to growing in time. They could, therefore, threaten the stability of works of art when the protruding and efflorescing soaps result in the loose of paint layers' adhesion. [1] In the studies of saponification processes, the attention is paid in the first place to zinc and lead-based pigments which are apparently the most sensitive ones to interact with fatty binding media under formation of metal soaps. Nevertheless, our research of portrait miniatures has revealed presence of different types of crystalline metal carboxylates frequently in a conjoined occurrence of lead white ($2PbCO_3 \cdot Pb(OH)_2$) and cinnabar (HgS) in paint layers, exceptionally even without presence of any lead-based pigment, indicating that HgS assisted to the formation of Pb and/or Hg carboxylates. [2] However, the lack of reliable reference structural data for mercury carboxylates limited both their proper identification in artworks and the experimental research of HgS interactions with binders on molecular level.

Therefore, we synthesized long chain simple and mixed mercury (II) carboxylates of the general formula $Hg(C16)_x(C18)_{2-x}$ (where C16 and C18 stand for palmitate and stearate, resp., and $(0 \leq x \leq 2)$ in the form of pure polycrystalline powders and characterized them primarily by XRPD and ssNMR. The crystal structure description of the synthesized mercury carboxylates [3] enabled us the successful identification of mercury and lead carboxylates in miniature portraits [4]. Moreover, application of the Rietveld refinement on the collected XRPD patterns provided a detailed insight into the chemical composition of detected crystalline mercury and lead carboxylates, showing their mixed character (i.e., both palmitate and stearate anions are incorporated in one compound). In addition, specification of chemical composition of detected mercury and lead soaps allowed us to estimate consumption of cinnabar and lead white by saponification reaction based on mass balance relations, indicating the original composition of degraded paint layers.

This contribution demonstrates results of the first ever analyses of portrait miniatures by various non-invasive methods with the special focus to XRPD. It also summarizes the fundamental structural characteristics of synthesized reference mercury carboxylates and their invaluable role in the identification of mercury soaps found in painted artworks.

1. P. Noble, in *Metal Soaps in Art. Conservation and Research*, edited by F. Casadio, K. Keune & P. Noble. (Springer), 2019, pp. 1-22.
2. S. Garrappa, D. Hradil, J. Hradilová, E. Kočí, M. Pech, P. Bezdička, S. Švarcová, *Anal Bioanal Chem*, **413**, (2021), 263 - 278.
3. R. Barannikov, E. Kočí, P. Bezdička, L. Kobera, A. Mahun, J. Rohlíček, J. Plocek, S. Švarcová, *Dalton Trans*, **51**, (2022), 4019 – 4032.
4. S. Garrappa, P. Bezdička, S. Švarcová, J. Hradilová, M. Pech, D. Hradil, *Eur Phys J Plus*, **138**, (2023), 219.

The authors thank to all colleagues who participated in the research and analyses, namely E. Kočí, S. Garrappa, M. Pech, D. Hradil, J. Hradilová, J. Plocek, L. Kobera, J. Rohlíček, and J. Hermans, as well as to restorers, curators and artworks' owners collaborating in the investigation of paintings.

L5

COUNTERFEIT ANALYSIS IN REAL FORENSIC PRACTICE

Marek Kotrlý, Ivana Turková

Institute of Criminalistics, Bartolomějská 12, 110 00 Praha 1, Czech Republic

The current world market is flooded with counterfeits in every sector, and the art market and market for art objects are no exception. Most estimates agree that approximately 30% of items in the art market are counterfeit. Very often, it is modern or contemporary art where it is easier to introduce counterfeit pieces. Unfortunately, identifying these counterfeits is also more difficult when they are of high quality.

In the forensic field, the tendency is to apply a complex analytical approach that enables the analysis of all components of a piece of art. The area of painting analysis is probably the most extensive. Complex analyses of the paint layers and other materials can generally be divided into completely non-destructive methods and those requiring the collection of microsamples.

Methods classified as non-destructive analyses include initial imaging in the visible spectrum, infrared and UV spectrum, multispectral photography, and X-ray imaging. X-ray imaging is used for non-destructive detection of the composition, structure, and condition of artworks, for identifying pre-paintings and underpaintings, and for mapping stylistic differences between originals and counterfeits. Other non-destructive methods include X-ray fluorescence (XRF) and Raman spectroscopy. These methods are typically used as screening tools to obtain initial information about the examined item and to specify locations from which microsamples should be collected for further analysis.

A wide range of devices and techniques are used for further instrumental analysis. The most important are:

a) Optical and electron microscopy and microanalysis (SEM/FIB and EDS/WDS, mXRF) – these are basic methods applied to most inorganic samples. Their advantage is non-destructiveness, allowing the sample to be reused. If cross-section examination of paint layers is not necessary, the item can be placed directly into the microscope chamber without adjustment (for sizes up to 20 by 20 cm). For many items, such as gemstones and jewelry, this is the only option. To determine quantitative characteristics (for example, morphological parameters of mineral grains), imaging analysis methods are used. The data from individual samples are compared using multivariate statistical analyses. To compare textile fibers and their fragments, methods of quantitative color measurement at the microscale are used. For studying microelements and admixtures, an XRF device built directly into the SEM chamber (mXRF) with an analyzed surface size of about 30 μm is beneficial. This device also enables simultaneous EDS/XRF analysis and is successfully used to analyze microelement admixtures, for example, in synthetic gem materials that imitate natural gemstones. Based on microelement content, it is possible, for instance, to determine the origin of cubic zirconia (ZrO2), etc. FIB methods are applied to study thin layers and metal material structures (e.g., imitations of gold items coated with titanium nitride). Items are evaluated comprehensively, and canvases are examined—the type of weave is identified, fibers are analyzed, and fiber pigments and dyes are studied. The materials used for frames are also examined, etc.

b) X-ray powder diffraction and microdiffraction (XRD, mXRD) – these methods enable direct phase analysis of substances even within mixtures. The mXRD allows obtaining complete structural information from an area of approximately 100 μm, making it possible to analyze individual pigment grains, thin layers, etc., directly.

c) Infrared spectroscopy (IR, FTIR) and Raman spectroscopy – these are important complementary methods. Problems can arise when analyzing mixtures due to significant overlapping of absorption bands. In IR spectroscopy, so-called mirror reflections often appear in spectra from polished sections. In Raman spectroscopy, fluorescence can completely prevent measurement at the laser wavelength used.

d) Gas chromatography coupled with mass spectrometry (GC-MS, MS/MS) – these methods are especially useful for identifying organic substances in mixtures. In the case of counterfeit paintings, they are used to detect impregnants that create the appearance of "aged" canvases.

Other methods include botanical techniques (identification of wood species), biological methods, and genetic analysis (for example, analysis of binders of biological origin). Signature analysis is also performed, though it is very challenging since signatures usually do not represent continuous script and the texts are very short.

The multidisciplinary approach has enabled the collection of a large dataset for both the art materials database and the database of painting techniques of important Czech painters. Research using mobile spectroscopic methods has yielded very satisfactory results. Thanks to these methods, detailed characterizations of individual artists' palettes have been possible. The data obtained are fundamental for assessing the authenticity of artworks. All data, including primary documentation, are stored in specially programmed databases, which will later be used for authenticity assessment of paintings. Although these databases are still in their initial stages, they already contain more than eleven thousand data entries.

In practice, a few thousand cases are processed annually. Large cases may contain several hundred items. Besides pigment and color analysis and comparison in the broader sense, a significantly wider spectrum of materials is examined. These include complex analyses of samples with petrological and mineralogical character (e.g., remnants of statues, sculptures, gemological items, etc.), analyses of metal materials in a broader sense, fiber identification and textile material analysis, analysis of tool marks (e.g., on painting frames, comparison with paintings, detection of tool marks), and more.

L6

ANALYSIS OF FINE ART FORGERIES IN FORENSIC PRACTICE

Ivana Turková, Marek Kotrlý

Institute of Criminalistics of the Police of the Czech Republic

Investing in fine art is widely perceived as a safe and prestigious form of long-term capital appreciation. However, when the authenticity of an artwork is questioned, such an investment may become a significant financial risk. The exponential rise in auction prices over the past decades has made the production and sale of art forgeries an increasingly lucrative and thus dangerous field of criminal activity. In many cases, counterfeits are so sophisticated that they cannot be distinguished from originals by visual inspection alone, which makes the application of advanced forensic and analytical methods indispensable.

The Institute of Criminalistics of the Police of the Czech Republic, in close cooperation with the National Gallery in Prague and, more recently, with the University of Pardubice, has been developing robust and court-defensible procedures for the authentication of fine art. These procedures are based on systematic research of original works by significant Czech and European painters, especially from the late 19th and 20th centuries, and on building comprehensive databases of pigments and other artistic materials. The goal is to provide forensic experts and law enforcement authorities with reliable, reproducible, and scientifically verifiable tools for distinguishing genuine works from forgeries.

The methodological framework combines a wide range of complementary analytical techniques. Optical microscopy provides initial information on the stratigraphy of paint layers, the morphology of pigment particles, and evidence of retouching or later interventions. Scanning electron microscopy with energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (SEM/EDS) enables high-resolution imaging and elemental analysis of pigments, fillers, and fibers. Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) is applied to identify binding media and organic components within paint layers, while Raman spectroscopy supplies highly specific molecular information, particularly valuable for identifying pigments and dyes in microsamples. These techniques are complemented by X-ray diffraction (XRD), which is crucial not only for the precise identification of crystalline phases but also for detecting historical changes in pigment production, such as those associated with titanium white or Naples yellow.

The applicability of these procedures has been confirmed in a number of forensic cases involving disputed artworks. Frequently investigated materials include not only pigments and binders but also textile fibers and other components of cultural heritage objects, which are often essential for dating or verifying both artworks and historical artifacts. For example, the Institute has collaborated with restorers during the examination of the historic theatre curtain of the Jewish Museum in Prague, as well as with the Náprstek Museum in Prague, where indigenous South American ritual artifacts, including shrunken heads (tsantsas), were subjected to detailed material analysis. These case studies highlight not only the analytical challenges but also the necessity of interdisciplinary collaboration between forensic scientists, conservation specialists, and art historians.

The development of standardized methodologies, supported by this interdisciplinary approach, ensures that the results are both scientifically valid and legally defensible in court. This research has been financially supported by the project of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic: The Development of a Strategic Cluster for Effective Instrumental Technological Methods of Forensic Authentication of Modern Artworks (VJ01010004).

October 7, Tuesday

L8

PROTEIN PURIFICATION IN AND BEYOND THE CRYSTALLOGRAPHY WORLD

Sergio Martínez-Rodríguez

Dpto. de Bioquímica y Biología Molecular III e Inmunología, Universidad de Granada
sergio@ugr.es

The X-Ray Structural Biology field relies on the production of abundant, pure and homogeneous protein samples for protein crystallization [1]. Besides its importance in Structural Studies, proteins are used at different purity levels in economic sectors such as feed industry, pharmaceuticals or human health. Purification methodologies have improved dramatically in the past decades, but they represent multifactorial-processes highly dependent (but not limited to) protein production hosts, recombinant construction design, lysis methods, protein stability (degradation, aggregation propensity, thermostability,…) and/or sample composition (pH, ionic strength, temperature, additives,…) [2,3].

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L9

THE ROLE OF PROTEIN CRYSTALS IN BIOTECHNOLOGY AND PHARMA

José A. Gavira

Laboratorio de Estudios Cristalográficos, IACT-CSIC, Avd. las Palmeras, 4, 18100 Armilla, Spain
j.gavira@csic.es

The crystallization of biomolecules has played a pivotal role in pharmaceutical innovation, with insulin being the first hormone successfully crystallized to obtain a pure and stable form that transformed diabetes treatment and improved the lives of millions of patients, its crystallization not only enabled large-scale purification and stabilization, but also established the foundation for modern protein-based therapeutics (Figure 1). Building on this legacy, protein crystals have become essential tools for diverse applications ranging from structural biology to advanced drug delivery. In the field of biocatalysis, enzymes exploit their versatility, selectivity, and specificity to catalyze industrially relevant reactions under mild conditions. To extend their lifetime under extreme conditions and enhance efficiency, enzymes can be immobilized in different supports, with Cross-Linked Enzyme Crystals (CLECs) offering one of the most robust and recyclable solutions [1]. CLECs are currently experiencing a renaissance, boosted by advances in protein crystallization over the last two decades and by the development of novel scaffold materials. In this lecture, I will present how knowledge gained from crystallization in convection-free environments has been applied in our lab to produce protein crystals for biotechnological applications, including: i) CLECs for the development of enhanced, robust biosensors [2], ii) reinforced cross-linked enzyme crystals (rCLECs) for large-scale enzymatic reactions with durable auto-supported catalysts [3], and iii) reinforced protein crystals for controlled drug delivery systems [4].

Figure 1. In May 1921, Fredrick Banting met in John Macleod's lab to begin their experiments with insulin. In January 1922, the first person received an insulin injection. By 1923, insulin was commercially available. Banting and Macleod received the 1923 Nobel Prize in medicine.

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3. Fernández-Penas, R., et al., *Cryst Growth Des* **21**, 1698–1707 (2021).

4. Contreras-Montoya, R. *et al. ACS Appl Mater Interfaces* **13**, 11672–11682 (2021).

L10

PROTEIN CRYSTALLIZATION IN LIVING CELLS - PUSHING THE LIMITS

Lars Redecke

Institute of Biochemistry, University of Lübeck, Ratzeburger Allee 160, 23538 Lübeck, Germany, and Deutsches Elektronen Synchrotron (DESY), Notkestraße 85, 22607 Hamburg, Germany
lars.redecke@uni-luebeck.de

Although it has been known for more than a century, protein crystallization in living cells was considered an artificial, pathogenic phenomenon for a long time. However, during the past decades, it has been observed surprisingly often in all domains of life and is now recognized as a physiological assembly process that is also accessible for recombinant proteins in host cells [1]. The advent of high-brilliance synchrotron sources, X-ray free-electron lasers, and improved serial data collection strategies has allowed the use of these micrometer-sized crystals for structural biology [2-7]. Thus, *in cellulo* crystallization offers exciting new possibilities for the structural investigation of proteins in a quasi-native environment, complementing conventional X-ray crystallography approaches.

This lecture will present an overview of the current knowledge about *in cellulo* crystallization of native and recombinant proteins, complemented with a discussion of the current method developments to successfully collect X-ray diffraction data from intracellular crystals. Efforts to systematically exploit living insect cells as protein crystallization chambers and to streamline this process for structural biology resulted in the establishment of a pipeline to elucidate the structural information of *in cellulo* crystallized target proteins in short time, denoted as '*InCellCryst*' [8]. After cloning of the target gene into baculovirus transfer vectors, the associated recombinant baculoviruses are generated to infect insect cells, and crystal formation is detected at day 4 to 6 after infection. If intracellular crystal -lization is successful, X-ray diffraction data of tens of thousands of crystals are collected directly within the living cells using recently developed serial crystallography approaches at XFELs [2,3,6,7] or synchrotron sources [4,8]. However, a recent proof-of-principle experiment demonstrated that a full electron diffraction (mED) dataset can be collected only using a single intracellular crystal in the low µm size-range [10]. Since low numbers of crystal containing cells are frequently obtained within a cell culture, *in cellulo* mED holds the promise to overcome this major bottleneck of *in cellulo* protein crystallization, which currently restricts a wider application in structural biology.

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L11

ANAEMIA, CULTURAL/RELIGIOUS HERITAGE AND DIETARY PREFERENCES

Jeroen R. Mesters

Institute of Biochemistry, Center for Structural and Cell Biology in Medicine, University of Lübeck, Ratzeburger Allee 160, 23538 Lübeck, Germany
jeroen.mesters@uni-luebeck.de

Anaemia globally affects roughly one-quarter of the world population. It affects vulnerable populations, particularly children, pregnant women, and women of reproductive age, leading to severe health consequences like increased maternal and child mortality, impaired cognitive and physical development, and reduced productivity.

Religious heritage, cultural and dietary preferences significantly influence anaemia prevalence by restricting access to essential nutrients like iron, vitamin B12 and folate as seen in persons with food taboos, gender-based food restrictions, or cultural/religious dietary rules, with the hazard of an increasing anaemia risk.

Addressing anaemia requires – besides culturally sensitive interventions and community involvement – tailored nutrition education and precision medicine to ensure effective anaemia prevention and management.

Nutrition education – respecting religious heritage, cultural and dietary preferences – starts with a deeper understanding of the physiological and biochemical background of iron uptake.

Selected readings

https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/anaemia

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Iron insight: exploring dietary patterns and iron deficiency among teenage girls in Sweden. Stubbendorff et al., 2025, Eur. J. Nutr. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00394-025-03630-z

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Associations of unprocessed and processed meat intake with mortality and cardiovas-cular disease in 21 countries [Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology (PURE) Study]: a prospective cohort study. Iqbal et al., 2021, Am. J. Clin. Nutr. https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/nqaa448

L12

ECO-CULTURAL HERITAGE: CONCEPTUAL INNOVATIONS AND APPLIED METHODOLOGIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Silviu Miloiu[1], Lucia Nováková[2]

[1]Valahia University of Targoviste & KreativEU - Knowledge & Creativity European University, Aleea Sinaia, no. 13, 130004 Targoviste, Dambovita
[2]Trnavská univerzita v Trnave, Filozofická fakulta, Katedra klasickej archeológie

This paper proposes a reconceptualization of heritage epistemology through the integration of eco-cultural perspectives with contemporary theoretical frameworks in heritage studies. In response to the increasing urgency of environmental degradation, climate change, and cultural fragmentation, heritage scholarship must move beyond traditional dichotomies of natural versus cultural heritage. Eco-cultural heritage, understood as the entanglement of ecological systems and cultural practices, offers a dynamic lens for interpreting, preserving, and managing heritage in the Anthropocene. Drawing on interdisciplinary theories from environmental humanities, critical heritage studies, and Indigenous epistemologies, this paper develops a conceptual model that bridges ecological interdependence with cultural continuity. The model is then tested through selected case studies in East-Central Europe, demonstrating how this integrated approach reorients heritage practice toward sustainability, community engagement, and resilience. The paper argues that embracing eco-cultural heritage as a core analytical category not only enriches our understanding of place and identities, but also fosters innovative strategies for heritage governance and policy. Ultimately, this study contributes to the formulation of a new heritage epistemology, one that is reflexive, holistic, and attuned to the complexities of contemporary socio-environmental realities. The proposed approach - central to KreativEU Alliance as well - is intended to serve as both a conceptual advancement and a practical tool for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers alike.

L13

PLANT-BASED BIOCIDES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE PRESERVATION OF BUILT CULTURAL HERITAGE

Dina Mateus

Techn&Art - Centre for Technology, Restoration and Art Enhancement, Instituto Politecnico de Tomar

Biological colonization is among the most pressing threats to the integrity of built cultural heritage, accelerating material deterioration and compromising long-term preservation. Microorganisms—including fungi and bacteria—produce acids, pigments, and enzymes that deteriorate both organic and inorganic substrates, resulting in discoloration, cracking, surface detachment, and structural weakening. Traditional mitigation strategies rely heavily on synthetic biocides such as quaternary ammonium compounds, phenols, or commercial formulations, which, although effective, present significant drawbacks: their toxicity to humans, persistence in the environment, and potential to cause irreversible alterations to heritage materials. In line with global sustainability goals and ecological engineering principles, there is increasing interest in developing bio-based, less harmful alternatives for preventive and curative conservation practices.

This research explores the use of plant-derived essential oils (EOs) as natural biocides for the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage materials, with a focus on mural paintings, stone, and ceramics materials. EOs obtained from fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare* Mill.), pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium* L.), lavender (*Lavandula viridis* L'Hér.), and thyme (*Thymus mastichina* L.) were tested against microorganisms isolated from emblematic Portuguese heritage sites, including the Convent of Christ in Tomar [1], the Roman city of Conímbriga [2], and the 18th-century murals of the House of Moscadim [3]. The tested strains comprised both bacteria and fungi, representative of biodeteriorative communities affecting built heritage.

Biocidal efficacy was assessed through direct-contact (disk diffusion) and micro-atmosphere methods. The latter proved particularly promising for fragile surfaces, as it capitalizes on the volatility of EOs, enabling antimicrobial activity without physical contact or risk of chemical interaction with original substrates. Field trials were performed to validate laboratory results under real environmental conditions.

EOs from fennel, pennyroyal, lavender, and thyme showed significant antimicrobial activity against the microorganisms isolated from stone and mural paintings, although generally less effective than the commercial biocide Biotin T®. Pennyroyal and fennel EOs proved the most potent antifungal overall, even surpassing Biotin T® against fungi. Mixtures of EOs revealed synergistic effects, enhancing biocidal efficacy. The results confirm that the effectiveness of plant-based biocides depends on both the microorganism species and the chemical composition of the EOs, highlighting the need for context-specific evaluation in cultural heritage preservation. Field trials confirmed the practical potential of EO-based treatments for cultural heritage preservation.

Overall, this research provides compelling evidence that plant-derived essential oils represent a viable and eco-friendly strategy for the sustainable preservation of built cultural heritage. Their demonstrated antimicrobial efficacy, renewable origin, reduced environmental impact, and potential for non-invasive application support their integration into conservation practice. Further optimization of EO-based formulations and application methods can strengthen their role as effective and sustainable substitutes for synthetic biocides, aligning heritage conservation with environmental responsibility.

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L14

NO LABELS NEEDED – ANALYZE YOUR ORGANELLES USING HOLOGRAPHY

Kateřina Lónová

Altium International s.r.o., Na Jetelce 69/2, 190 00 Praha 9

Cell metabolism plays a pivotal role in both health and disease, yet conventional fluorescence-based techniques are often constrained by phototoxicity, photobleaching, and demanding sample preparation. Nanolive's holotomographic technology enables label-free, high-resolution, and continuous monitoring of metabolic activity without compromising cell viability.

The **Smart Lipid Droplet Assay** and **Smart Mitochondrial Assay** provide quantitative analysis of lipid droplet morphology and distribution, as well as detailed assessment of mitochondrial dynamics. By eliminating the need for dyes and enabling long-term real-time observation, Nanolive's technology represents a major innovation for biomedical research, accelerating the discovery of disease mechanisms and drug responses.

October 8, Wednesday

L15

TARGETED PROTEIN DEGRADATION AS A NOVEL ANTIVIRAL STRATEGY

B. Kaščáková[1], H. El Kilani[2], H. Durmaz[3], R. Kumar Akula[3], K. Rox[3], R. Hilgenfeld[2], I. Kutá Smatanová[1]

[1]Department of Chemistry, University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic
[2]Institute for Molecular Medicine, University of Lübeck, Germany
[3]Department of Chemical Biology, Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Germany
karafb00@jcu.cz

Enteroviruses (EV), including EV-A71 and EV-D68, represent an increasing public health concern, especially among children [1,2]. These viruses are associated with serious neurological and respiratory illnesses such as hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) [3,4] and acute flaccid myelitis (AFM) [5,6]. Currently, there are no specific antiviral therapies available for these infections.

This project explores a novel approach: **targeted protein degradation**. Instead of inhibiting viral enzymes, we aim to eliminate them by exploiting the ubiquitin-proteasome system. Our target is the **2A protease (2Apro)**, a viral enzyme essential for replication and immune evasion. 2Apro processes the viral polyprotein and interferes with host defense mechanisms by cleaving eIF4G and disrupting interferon signaling through IFNAR1 degradation and cleavage of MAVS and MDA5 [7,8].

To achieve targeted degradation, we propose the development of **proteolysis-targeting chimeras (PROTACs)** that link 2Apro to cereblon (CRBN)-mediated ubiquitination and proteasomal degradation [9,10]. PROTACs provide advantages over conventional inhibitors, including catalytic activity, complete removal of the target protein, and reduced susceptibility to resistance [9,11].

Our strategy combines **structural biology tools** (X-ray crystallography, crosslinking mass spectrometry) with rational design to develop and optimize PROTAC molecules. We established an expression and purification workflow to obtain milligram quantities of active, monodisperse 2Apro using solubility-enhancing fusion tags and chromatography techniques, ensuring suitability for structural and biochemical studies.

This research builds on the vision of the PANVIPREP consortium for broad-spectrum antiviral development and represents a paradigm shift from inhibition to degradation-based antiviral strategies. Ultimately, this work may provide a foundation for new classes of therapeutics against enteroviruses and other RNA viruses of epidemic and pandemic relevance.

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L16

HERITAGE TO INNOVATION: HOW CLASSICAL CZECH PARASITOLOGY CAN FUEL PROTEASE-BASED DRUG DISCOVERY

Daniel Sojka

Biological Center, AS CR, České Budějovice, Czech Republic

Czech parasitology has a distinguished heritage, originating with the work of Professor Otto Jírovec and other early pioneers who established the field as a cornerstone of biomedical research in Central Europe. Over the decades, this tradition has fostered a strong and collaborative community, notable for embracing diverse and sometimes less traditional parasite models. By studying ticks, coccidia, trypanosomatids, and helminths, Czech researchers uncovered unique molecular adaptations that mediate host–parasite interactions and pathogenesis.

Among these adaptations, proteases and their naturally evolved inhibitors stand out as molecules of exceptional specificity and potency. They regulate processes such as blood feeding, immune evasion, invasion, and transmission, and represent an underexplored resource for translational research. Current Czech projects integrate classical parasitological expertise with modern proteomics, structural biology, and inhibitor screening to functionally dissect parasite protease networks. This work not only illuminates parasite physiology but also identifies novel druggable targets with relevance for both veterinary and human medicine.

By connecting historical strengths with cutting-edge technologies, Czech parasitology demonstrates how heritage can continue to fuel innovation, bridging fundamental discovery and the development of protease-based therapeutic strategies against parasitic diseases.

L17

SMALL FLY, BIG IMPACT: *DROSOPHILA* TO UNRAVEL THE PATHOLOGY OF NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Anna Koutská[1], Tereza Koníková[1], Petra Havlíčková[1], Anna Vápeníková[1], Ivana Kutá-Smatanová[1], Andrew T. Ferenbach[2], Zdeněk Sedláček[3] and Michaela Fencková[1]

[1]Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia, Branišovská 1760, České Budějovice, Czech Republic
[2]Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics, Aarhus University, 8000 Aarhus, Denmark
[3]Second Faculty of Medicine, Charles University, V Úvalu 84, 150 06 Prague 5, Czech Republic
fenckm00@prf.jcu.cz

For over a century, *Drosophila melanogaster* has stood as one of the most powerful and stable model organisms in biology, shaping our understanding of genetics, development, and neuroscience. While far from being a "new trend," the fruit fly continues to adapt to innovative approaches. Today, its genetic tractability and conserved pathways make it invaluable for studying human disease.

Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs), such as Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder, affect millions of people worldwide and are often linked to genetic mutations. In our research, we use *Drosophila* to investigate a conserved, yet poorly characterized gene recently implicated in NDDs through clinical studies. Using modern CRISPR/Cas9 genome editing, we generated knockout and patient-specific alleles to model the consequences of these mutations in the nervous system. Cognitive function is assessed through habituation learning, a fundamental and evolutionarily conserved form of non-associative learning, together with additional developmental and morphological analyses.

By combining the long-standing tradition of *Drosophila* research with cutting-edge genetic tools, we advance the understanding of genes implicated in neurodevelopmental disorders while extending the relevance of this classical model organism to human health. This approach demonstrates how a century-old model, continually refined by modern technologies, remains indispensable for uncovering the molecular basis of human disorders and guiding future biomedical research.

This work is supported by a grant from the Czech Science Foundation (grant no. 23-07810S), an EMBO Installation grant (grant no. IG-5310-2023) to M. Fenckova, and by the GAJU grant from the University of South Bohemia to A. Koutska.

L18

FROM THE BRAGGS TO BILL ASTBURY AND THE ADVENT OF MODERN STRUCTURAL MOLECULAR BIOLOGY

Tomáš Bílý[1,2], David Kaftan[2,3], Jakub Pšenčík[4], Rebecca F. Thompson[5], Roman Tůma[1,5]

[1]Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic
[2]Institute of Parasitology, Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic
[3]Institute of Microbiology, Algatech, Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic
[4]Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University, Czech Republic
[5]Astbury Centre for Structural Molecular Biology, University of Leeds, United Kingdom

The Bragg law underpins interpretation of X-ray diffraction patterns of crystals as well as other partially ordered systems. We will first turn back the clocks to the beginning of the 20th century and look at the early developments of X-ray diffraction and its connection to the University of Leeds where the data underpinning the famous law were collected. Subsequently, Bill Astbury was recruited to the University of Leeds to take over the Bragg legacy and applied X-ray diffraction to textiles. We will discuss how this work fundamentally contributed to the study of biological material and paved way to the discovery of DNA structure. In the end we will return to the present day Astbury Biostructure Laboratory and illustrate the complementarity of X-ray scattering and electron cryo-microscopy in the study of partially ordered biological assemblies.

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L19

EXTREMELY BRILLIANT X-RAY SOURCES AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN MACROMOLECULAR CRYSTALLOGRAPHY

Petr Pachl

ARN - IBMC - CNRS - Unistra - Strasbourg (France)
IOCB AV CR (Czech Republic)

Over the past decade, the advent of X-ray free electron lasers delivering ultra intense X-ray beams has revolutionized biocrystallography. With a brilliance a billion times higher than at synchrotrons, the XFEL beam destroys the sample just after the emission of its diffraction signal in a process called “diffraction before destruction”. While this firepower allows the characterization of smaller crystals than ever (micro or even nanocrystals), the sample needs to be refreshed after each shot and the collection of a full dataset requires series of thousands of crystals. Also, crystal cryocooling is no longer necessary and this type of analysis is mostly performed at room temperature. In these near-to-physiological conditions and thanks to the temporal resolution of XFEL pulses (<100 fs), the dynamics of biological systems (conformational changes, catalytic events) can be probed in crystallo. Similar protocols have been implemented at synchrotron facilities and are widely accessible.

To take advantage of these new approaches, crystal growers need to adapt current protocols mainly devoted to the production of large single crystals, to the preparation of showers of microcrystals with homogeneous size and diffraction quality. Based on crystal growth principles and examples of alternative crystallization approaches including advanced crystallization control or microfluidics technologies [1,2,3].

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L20

PLASMA DEPOSITION OF NANOSTRUCTURED SURFACES: FROM PREPARATION TO (BIO)APPLICATIONS

V. Straňák, P. Čurda, A. Horák, H. Mašková, L. Doudová, J. Štěrba

University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Faculty of Science, Branisovska 1760, 37005 Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic

Nanostructured surfaces prepared by means of low-temperature plasma represent a rapidly developing field at the interface of discharge physics, solid-state physics, nanotechnology, and materials science. The growth of the field is driven by the expansion of nanomaterials, where structural dimensions on the order of 10–100 nm provide materials/surfaces with unique physicochemical properties. Nanostructured surfaces can be fabricated as homogeneous thin films, 2D nanoislands, or nanoparticles deposited directly on the surface or embedded into the bulk of a host material, with subsequent applications in modern semiconductor electronics, sensing, biomedicine, catalytic processes, and beyond.

The lecture maps the process of plasma-assisted preparation of nanoparticles and nanocomposite films—from the initial phase of growth initiation, through the formation of layers with defined properties, to the utilization of nanostructures for pathogen detection, demonstrated on two sensor design concepts. In the first case, aspects of optimizing the preparation of a nanocomposite of Ag nanoparticles embedded in a plasma polymer C:H:N:O for LSPR (Localized Surface Plasmon Resonance) detection of Lyme disease pathogens will be discussed.

L21

EXPLORING THE MORPHOLOGY AND STRUCTURE OF FE-BASED NANOMATERIALS FOR PHARMACEUTICAL APPLICATIONS USING X-RAY SCATTERING METHODS

Milan Dopita

Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University, Ke Karlovu 5, 121 16 Praha 2

Iron–carboxymaltose (ICM) is an intravenous iron formulation in which ferric hydroxide nanoparticles are stabilized by a carboxymaltose shell. Understanding its internal architecture is essential for elucidating structure–function relationships that govern stability and bioavailability. In this study, the microstructure of ICM was investigated using Small-Angle X-ray Scattering (SAXS) and X-ray Diffraction (XRD). SAXS analysis revealed a core–shell morphology with nanometer-scale ferric oxyhydroxide cores (~2–5 nm radius) and a disordered carbohydrate coating, consistent with a colloidal complex. XRD patterns exhibited broad reflections characteristic of poorly crystalline ferrihydrite, confirming the amorphous-to-nanocrystalline nature of the iron core. The combination of SAXS and XRD provides complementary insights, demonstrating that ICM is composed of ultrasmall ferrihydrite-like domains embedded within an amorphous polysaccharide matrix. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of ICM's physicochemical stability and its controlled iron release in vivo.

Posters

P1

SELECTIVE INHIBITION OF CARBONIC ANHYDRASE IX FOR CANCER DIAGNOSIS AND THERAPY

Linh Huong Ngô[1,2], Jiří Brynda[1], Klára Pospíšilová[1], Pavlína Řezáčová[1]

[1]Dpt. Structural Biology, IOCB Prague, Structural Biology, Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry of Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, 166 10, Czechia
[2] Dpt. Physical Chemistry, Faculty of Science, Charles University, 128 00, Czechia

Carbonic anhydrase IX (CA IX) belongs to a group of 15 isoforms of the human carbonic anhydrase enzymes. Typically localized on the cell surface, CA IX is primarily found in specific tissues within the gastrointestinal tract. Its expression is induced in response to local hypoxia, aiding in the regulation of pH levels to accommodate the metabolic production of acidic by-products, thereby promoting cancer cell survival and proliferation. The overexpression of CA IX in solid tumors, coupled with its extracellular presence, suggests its potential utility in cancer diagnosis and therapy.

Primarily, most of CA IX inhibitors feature sulphur-based functional group that coordinates the Zn^{2+} ion in the active site. Although overexpression of CA IX is predominantly associated with tumor tissues, other isoforms are present in normal tissues that contributing critical physiological processes. The high sequence similarity and structural homology among CA isoform family causes off-target inhibition leading to unintended side effects. This underscores the need for developing highly selective inhibitors that minimize off-target effects. The project aims to address these challenges by designing novel functional group to enhance both the affinity and selectivity of CA IX inhibitors.

The active site of CA is situated within the central β-sheet, where the zinc-binding core serves as a key junction for the proposes inhibitors, which are designed with a scaffold capable of attaching enzyme moieties. This scaffold comprises a sulfonimine binding group for metal ion interaction, a functional group for interaction with the hydrophobic regions, and additional heteroaromatic moieties to improve affinity. Structural optimisation of these inhibitors has been conducted by understanding how they are fitting within the enzyme's active site, in order enhancing their affinity for tumor-specific CA IX while restricting interactions with other CA isoforms. Additionally, some potent chelators have been selected for theranostics applications, ensuring they do not compromise the binding capacity of inhibitors.

Recombinant CA IX is produced and expressed in *Escherichia coli* BL21, followed by purification via several chromatographic steps to ensure high protein purity. The purified CA and a series of inhibitors are assessed for affinity using the stopped-flow method to screen a library of inhibitors. To better understand the binding modes between selective inhibitors and the enzyme, X-ray crystallography is employed to achieve high-resolution structures of the compounds. The obtained structural information will guide the modification and optimisation the anchored and sticky groups in design the selective inhibitors. This approach aims to maximize affinity for tumor-specific CA IX while minimizing interactions with other carbonic anhydrase isoforms.

P2

SCHOOL GARDENS - AN ENVIRONMENT FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING BIOSCIENCE

Zbyněk Vácha, Štěpánka Chmelová, Renata Ryplová, Tomáš Ditrich & Jan Flašar

Department of Biology, Faculty of Education, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Jeronýmova 10, 371 15 České Budějovice, Czech Republic
zvacha@pf.jcu.cz

School gardens are among the most frequently used spaces for outdoor education, as they provide ample space for experimentation in proximity to educational institutions [1]. By teaching in garden areas, we are continuing the principles of Jan Amos Komenský and the tradition of outdoor teaching from the time of Maria Theresa [2]. When teaching in nature, students' knowledge is linked to practical use, pro-environmental attitudes are formed, creativity is developed, and cooperation, perseverance, and responsibility are trained [3].

School gardens are also an essential place for learning about plant ecosystem services. Biology teachers and students can use modern measuring technology, such as thermal imaging cameras, IR thermometers, CO_2 meters, etc., during garden-based experiments to learn about the physiological processes through which plants influence the hu-

man environment and contribute significantly to mitigating the effects of global climate change. Field teaching activities are part of STEM education. Through their knowledge of plant teachers and their students become aware of the importance of plants. Teaching in school gardens is thus becoming a recognized way of combating the phenomenon of "plant blindness," [4].

In the school's garden, we can also observe non-living nature. An ideal topic for exploring the complex connections between life and earth sciences is the evolution of land use and land cover. Shifts in vegetation, land cover, and land use—driven by variations in climate, bedrock composition, and, above all, human activity—are often clearly visible also in the vicinity of schools. Teaching in garden areas (with using of appropriate methods and tools, e. g. maps or aerial photographs) is a way of incorporating the described topic into regular lessons and to provide the integrated teaching also in the outdoor environment.

Gardens at schools and other academic institutions also play an essential role in education, as they serve as valuable sites for research activities conducted by scientists and students. Such gardens provide a space where research questions can be explored in the context of student projects and diploma thesis and dissertation. Moreover, they often encompass a broad range of biotopes and habitats, thereby offering opportunities to address a wide spectrum of zoological and ecological research topics (*e.g., 1) small water reservoirs embedded in the soil serve as mesocosms for the study of aquatic communities*[5][6]*; 2) a source of organisms for research into insect dispersal abilities*[7][8](*; 3) a research site for studying cold tolerance and microhabitats of overwintering of insects*[9][10].

Other type of research is currently underway focusing on determining bioactive substances in cultivated crops, particularly in various varieties of common vegetables and selected medicinal plants. The bioactive substances being determined mainly include the content of total phenolic compounds, vitamin C, chlorophylls, and carotenoids in plant parts intended for consumption. Edible are grown in the garden, and the dominant flavonoids - quercetin, kaempferol, and myricetin - are also determined [11]. The research also focuses on the cultivation of non-traditional vegetables and their benefits for human health.

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P3

LYSDERM-T9 AND LYSTAPH-T10: ENZYMATIC MUTANTS WITH INCREASED THERMAL STABILITY FOR THE TREATMENT OF STAPHYLOCOCCAL INFECTIONS

L. Janda[1], P. Straková[1], Š. Kobzová[1], L. Vacek[3], B. Lipový[4], A. Pavelka[1,2], R. Tesařík[1]

[1]Clinical Immunology and Immunology of Infectious Diseases, Veterinary Research Institute, Hudcova 70, Brno 621 00, Czech Republic
[2]National Centre for Biomolecular Research, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kamenice 5, Brno 625 00, Czech Republic
[3]Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine, St. Anne's University Hospital Brno, Masaryk University, Pekařská 53, Brno 656 91, Czech Republic
[4]CEITEC – Central European Institute of Technology, Brno University of Technology, Advanced Biomaterials, Brno
lubomir.janda@vri.cz

Staphylococcal infections, particularly those caused by methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), represent a serious clinical challenge due to the limited efficacy of conventional antibiotics and the alarming rise of resistance [1]. Antimicrobial enzymes such as endolysins and lysostaphins have emerged as promising alternatives, offering targeted disruption of the staphylococcal cell wall. In this study, we evaluated two engineered variants, LYSDERM-T9 and LYSTAPH-T10, which exhibit increased thermal stability leading to prolonged enzymatic activity [2,3]. Both mutants were characterized with respect to catalytic efficiency, stability at elevated temperatures, and bactericidal efficacy against clinical MRSA isolates. Importantly, the catalytic CHAP domains of LYSDERM-T9 and LYSTAPH-T10 are currently under structural investigation, with the aim of further optimizing their stability and function. The ultimate goal is to obtain thermally stabilized enzyme forms that maintain high activity for at least 24 hours.

The application of LYSDERM-T9 and LYSTAPH-T10 demonstrated strong bactericidal activity *in vitro*, including efficacy against staphylococcal biofilms, and their combined use showed a synergistic effect leading to an accelerated reduction of viable bacterial populations. In addition to *in vitro* testing, both enzymes were evaluated in vivo using a porcine model of skin and soft tissue infection [4]. While the *in vivo* results confirmed their antibacterial activity, the differences compared to untreated controls were less pronounced, as the living model itself displays a capacity for spontaneous wound healing. Nevertheless, the positive outcome of the *in vivo* experiments supports the therapeutic potential of LYSDERM-T9 and LYSTAPH-T10 under clinically relevant conditions.

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P4

THE ROLE OF SECONDARY STRUCTURE IN CATHELICIDIN ANTIBACTERIAL ACTIVITY

A. Pavelka[1,2], L. Vacek[3], L. Janda[1]

[1]*Clinical Immunology and Immunology of Infectious Diseases, Veterinary Research Institute, Hudcova 70, Brno 621 00, Czech Republic*

[2]*National Centre for Biomolecular Research, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Kamenice 5, Brno 625 00, Czech Republic*

[3]*Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine, St. Anne's University Hospital Brno, Masaryk University, Pekařská 53, Brno 656 91, Czech Republic*

lubomir.janda@vri.cz

Cathelicidins, a group of antimicrobial peptides, represent a promising alternative to conventional antibiotics, which are increasingly challenged by the rise of bacterial resistance. These peptides exhibit two main modes of action that ultimately lead to infection elimination: antimicrobial and immunomodulatory activity. Their antibacterial activity is exclusively determined by their secondary structure. This structure dictates the mechanism of bacterial elimination, whether through direct interaction with the bacterial membrane or with the bacterium's internal machinery. Recent research also suggests that cathelicidins can form multimeric structures, such as α-fibrils, which have been observed on the surface of bacterial cells. [1,2] Although many models of the antibacterial action of peptides are described in the literature, experimental confirmation of these models is still lacking. [3]

In this study, we categorized cathelicidins into structural groups and compared α-helical cathelicidins across various mammalian species. Furthermore, we investigated the structural differences between synthetically and recombinantly produced LL-37, which had a direct impact on its antibacterial activity. [4] Our current focus is to investigate differences in the quaternary structure among these peptides and to determine whether their antibacterial activity is associated with their secondary or quaternary structure.

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P5

RECYCLING CALCIUM CARBONATE BIOWASTES (SEA AND LAND SHELLS, EGGSHELL AND CUTTLEBONE) TO MANUFACTURE LIME: AN ECO-CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL TO CULTURAL HERITAGE

Eduardo Ferraz [1], José Gamelas [2]

[1]*TECHN&ART, Polythecnic University of Tomar, Quinta do Contador, Estrada da Serra, PT – 2300-313 Tomar, Portugal*

[2]*CERES, University of Coimbra, Department of Chemical Engineering, Rua Sílvio Lima, Pólo II, PT – 3030-790 Coimbra, Portugal*

In this work were used calcium carbonate biowastes (shells) from bivalves (dog cockle, banded wedge, surf clam, Japanese oyster, edible cockle, great scallop, pod razor clam, and edible blue mussel), chicken eggshell, cuttlebone, and from gastropods (land and sea snail).

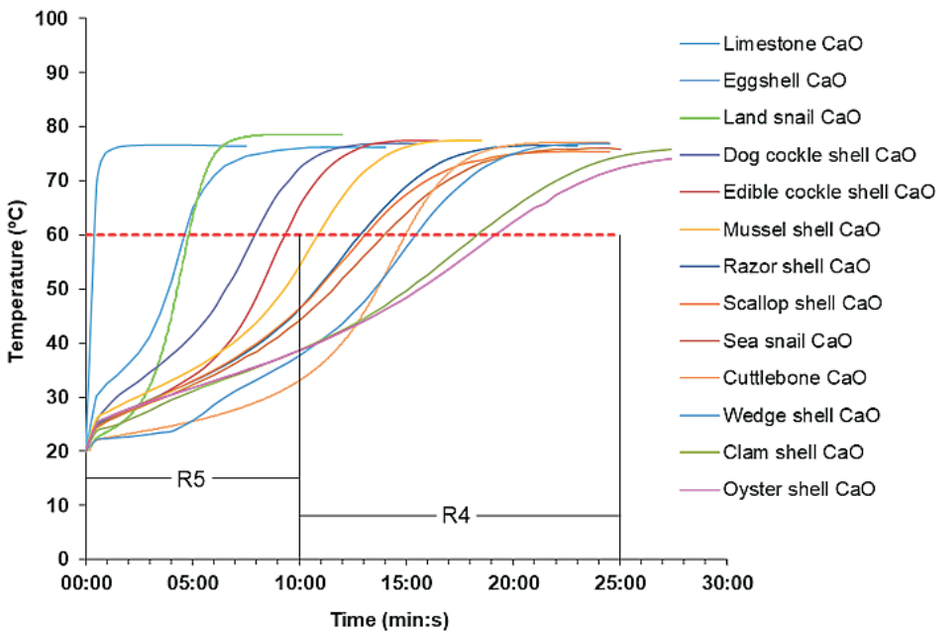
A commercial limestone was used as the reference material.

The biowastes and commercial limestone were calcined at 1000 °C, with a 2 h soaking period in an air atmosphere and a heating rate of 3 °C /min. The resulting quicklime (calcium oxide) was ground, sieved under 0.250 mm, and subsequently hydrated (slaked) by immersion in water.

The wet slaking reactivity test, for the quicklime materials, was accomplished in accordance to NP EN 459-2 standard. The results are presented in the graphics.
The main conclusions:

- The most reactive quicklimes (R5 class – reaching 60 °C in less than 10 min) are: limestone (25 s), eggshell (4:37 min:s), land snail (4:49 min:s), dog cockle (7:54 min:s) and edible cockle (9:20 min:s).
- The remain quicklimes are in a less reactive class (R4 class – reaching 60 °C between 10 e 25 min): edible blue mussel (10:52 min:s) to Japanese oyster (19:09 min:s).

Since till present, it was not achieved a correlation between wet slaking reactivity and the respective physic-mechanical behaviour (hardening) of the quicklime in a lime. mortar, it can be stated that all the studied limes could have potential to be used in the production of lime.



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