

# **Infection dynamics and virus-induced apoptosis in influenza virus A infected adherent and suspension MDCK cells**

## **Dissertation**

**zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades**

**doctor rerum naturalium**

**(Dr. rer. nat.)**

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geb. am 06.07.1984 in Göttingen

genehmigt durch die Fakultät für Verfahrens- und Systemtechnik  
der Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg

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eingereicht am: 27.11.2014

Promotionskolloquium am: 17.04.2015



Forschungsberichte aus dem Max-Planck-Institut  
für Dynamik komplexer technischer Systeme

Band 44

**Britta Peschel**

**Infection dynamics and virus-induced apoptosis in  
influenza virus A infected adherent and suspension  
MDCK cells**

Shaker Verlag  
Aachen 2015

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Zugl.: Magdeburg, Univ., Diss., 2015

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Printed in Germany.

ISBN 978-3-8440-3738-8

ISSN 1439-4804

Shaker Verlag GmbH • P.O. BOX 101818 • D-52018 Aachen

Phone: 0049/2407/9596-0 • Telefax: 0049/2407/9596-9

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## Abstract

Besides the classical production in embryonated chicken eggs, influenza vaccines can also be produced in cell culture-based processes. These cell culture processes have many advantages over egg-based processes such as a higher flexibility regarding lead times of production campaigns and as an alternative for vaccine manufacturing in case of avian influenza epidemics. To optimise productivity of cell culture processes not only improved cell growth but also the understanding of virus host cell interaction is of crucial importance. Thereby, limiting steps and starting points for optimisation of upstream processing can be identified. In order to contribute to this understanding, aim of this thesis was to characterise influenza virus infection dynamics and virus-induced apoptosis of host cells. Flow cytometric staining of the influenza virus NP protein was used to monitor the time course of infection and a TUNEL assay to characterise progress of apoptosis.

Firstly, studies on statistical analysis of flow cytometric data including the choice of cytometric control samples were carried out. Secondly, infections of adherent Madin-Darby canine kidney (MDCK) cells with different influenza virus strains at several multiplicity of infection (MOI) were performed, followed by studies on defective interfering particles (DIPs). Thirdly, infections of adherent MDCK cells were additionally performed in stirred tank bioreactors (STR). Finally, the MDCK.SUS2 suspension cell line was characterised for influenza virus propagation. Analysis of virus-induced apoptosis and infection dynamics both in dependence of virus strain and MOI as well as for an adherent and a suspension cell line are unique features of this thesis. In addition, data obtained in this work were used in research collaborations for stochastic as well as deterministic mathematical models of influenza virus propagation in cell culture.

At MOI  $10^{-4}$  all influenza virus strains tested in adherent MDCK cells in T25-flasks (A/PR/8 from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) and from the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC), A/Uruguay/716/2007-like high growth reassortant (HGR) and A/Wisconsin/67/2005-like HGR) showed few strain-specific differences in haemagglutination (HA) titre and Tissue Culture Infective Dose 50 (TCID<sub>50</sub>) and a late apoptosis induction. In MOI 3 infections with influenza A/PR/8 NIBSC an early and strong apoptosis induction and no increase in TCID<sub>50</sub> was observed. For all strains, except for the Wisconsin-like HGR, maximum HA titre was not affected by the MOI, with  $3.0 \log_{10} \text{HAU}/100 \mu\text{L}$  as highest HA titre obtained in infections with the Uruguay-like HGR. In contrast, maximum TCID<sub>50</sub> decreased with increasing MOI, probably caused by DIPs. Overall, these data demonstrate the importance of low MOI infection conditions in virus production to obtain high infectious virus titres.

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The influence of DIPs on infection dynamics, HA titre, and TCID<sub>50</sub> was demonstrated in infections of adherent MDCK cells with influenza A/PR/8 NIBSC seed virus containing 5.4 x 10<sup>6</sup> to 1.0 x 10<sup>9</sup> infectious virus particles (IVP)/mL (0.2% to 21.3% IVP of total virus particles). A high percentage (21.3%) in the seed virus resulted in maximum TCID<sub>50</sub> of 3.2 x 10<sup>9</sup> IVP/mL, while in infections with virus seeds containing low amounts of IVP (0.2%) no increase in TCID<sub>50</sub> was observed. This demonstrates that virus seeds have to be carefully controlled to guarantee high yield virus production.

Infections of adherent MDCK cells with influenza virus A/PR/8 NIBSC in STR showed a 4 h earlier onset of infection with a 0.6 log<sub>10</sub> HAU/100 µL lower final HA titre, compared to infections with influenza A/PR/8 RKI. Influenza Uruguay-like and Wisconsin-like HGRs did not reach final HA titres and maximum TCID<sub>50</sub> of infections with A/PR/8 RKI (3.3 log<sub>10</sub> HAU/100 µL, 1.3 x 10<sup>9</sup> IVP/mL). A low MOI infection (10<sup>-5</sup>) of MDCK cells with influenza A/PR/8 RKI resulted in an increased maximum TCID<sub>50</sub> of 2.4 x 10<sup>9</sup> IVP/mL compared to MOI 0.025 infections. In addition, infection of adherent MDCK cells with influenza A/PR/8 RKI in serum-free medium without washing steps was performed that showed final HA titre, maximum TCID<sub>50</sub>, and infection dynamics comparable to infections with washing steps. Thus, direct infection was successfully demonstrated to be a possible alternative for influenza virus propagation.

As an alternative to the use of adherent MDCK cells, the suspension cell line MDCK.SUS2 was characterised for influenza virus A propagation in serum-free medium. Testing different medium exchange strategies revealed a 1:2 dilution of the culture broth at time of infection as optimal to achieve fast onset of infection and to obtain high HA titres. MOI 10<sup>-5</sup> infections of MDCK.SUS2 cells with influenza A/PR/8 RKI showed lower HA titres and TCID<sub>50</sub> and more pronounced virus-induced apoptosis levels compared to adherent MDCK cells. Future studies will have to clarify whether the increased apoptosis of MDCK.SUS2 cells is related to changes in cellular factors during the cell line adaptation process.

In summary, this work demonstrated low MOI infection conditions to be beneficial for optimisation of TCID<sub>50</sub> yields in influenza A virus production. Infection dynamics depended, however, on virus strain, especially in terms of virus-induced apoptosis. In addition, presence of DIPs in seed virus strongly influenced infectious virus yields. Finally, a MDCK suspension cell line was demonstrated to be an alternative to adherent MDCK cells, offering a production process that is easier to scale-up. Still, in infections with adherent MDCK cells higher HA titre and TCID<sub>50</sub> were obtained. Concluding, this work contributed to the understanding of influenza virus propagation in cell culture, and provided valuable insights for optimisation of upstream processing in influenza vaccine production.

## Kurzfassung

Als Alternative zur Produktion in bebrüteten Hühnereiern werden Influenza Vakzine heute teilweise bereits in zellkulturbasierten Prozessen hergestellt. Diese Prozesse bieten einige Vorteile wie eine hohe Flexibilität der Produktionsvorlaufzeiten und sind eine Alternative zur Vakzinproduktion im Falle von Vogelgrippeausbrüchen. Zahlreiche Zelllinien werden in der Literatur als zur Influenzavirusvermehrung geeignet beschrieben. Zur Erhöhung der Produktivität dieser zellkulturbasierten Prozesse ist nicht nur die Verbesserung des Zellwachstums von Bedeutung, sondern auch das Verständnis der Virus-Wirtszell-Interaktion. Dies ermöglicht das Auffinden limitierender Schritte und Ansatzpunkte zur Optimierung des *Upstream Processing*. Ziel dieser Arbeit war durch die Charakterisierung von Influenza Virus Infektionsdynamiken und virusinduzierter Apoptose einen Beitrag hierzu zu leisten. Dazu wurden eine durchfluszytometrische Färbung eines Virusproteins sowie ein TUNEL Assay zur Apoptosemessung durchgeführt.

Zunächst wurde die statistische Auswertung durchfluszytometrischer- und Virustiter-Daten sowie die Wahl der Kontrollproben für die Zytometrie untersucht. Dann wurde in statischen Kulturgefäßen der Einfluss der *multiplicity of infection* (MOI) sowie die Rolle von *defective interfering particles* (DIPs) analysiert. Im Anschluss wurden Rührkesselversuche mit adhärenten Zellen durchgeführt. Schließlich wurde eine Suspensionszelllinie zur Influenzavirusvermehrung charakterisiert. Die Analyse von Infektionsdynamik und virus-induzierter Apoptose in Abhängigkeit der MOI und des Virusstamms sowie im Vergleich einer adhärenten mit einer Suspensionszelllinie sind Alleinstellungsmerkmale dieser Arbeit. Darüber hinaus wurden Daten dieser Arbeit zur mathematischen Modellierung der Influenzavirusvermehrung in Zellkultur im Rahmen von Forschungskooperationen genutzt.

Infektionen adhärenter *Madin-Darby canine kidney* (MDCK) Zellen in T-Flaschen bei MOI  $10^4$  zeigten geringe Unterschiede in Hämagglutinations (HA) Titer und *Tissue Culture Infective Dose 50* ( $\text{TCID}_{50}$ ) und eine späte virusinduzierte Apoptose aller getesteten Virusstämme (A/PR/8 vom Robert-Koch-Institut (RKI) und vom *National Institute for Biological Standards and Control* (NIBSC), A/Uruguay/716/2007-like *high growth reassortant* (HGR) und A/Wisconsin/67/2005-like HGR). Infektionen mit Influenza A/PR/8 NIBSC zeigten bei MOI 3 eine frühe und starke Apoptoseinduktion sowie keinen Anstieg im  $\text{TCID}_{50}$ . Außer für Wisconsin-like zeigten die finalen HA Titer keine Abhängigkeit von der MOI; der höchste Titer  $3.0 \log_{10} \text{HAU}/100 \mu\text{L}$  wurde in Infektionen mit Uruguay-like HGR erzielt. Im Gegensatz zum HA Titer nahm der maximale  $\text{TCID}_{50}$  mit zunehmender MOI ab, vermutlich durch die Anreicherung von DIPs bei hohen MOI. Die Daten zeigen damit, dass niedrige MOI eine besondere Rolle für hohe  $\text{TCID}_{50}$  spielen.

---

Der Einfluss von DIPs auf Infektionsdynamik und Virustiter wurde weiter in einer Studie mit verschiedenen Chargen A/PR/8 NIBSC Saatvirus untersucht, die TCID<sub>50</sub> zwischen  $5.4 \times 10^6$  und  $1.0 \times 10^9$  infektiöse Viruspartikel (IVP)/mL (0.2 bis 21.3% IVP) besitzen. Saatvirus mit hohem Anteil an IVP (21.3%) erzielte einen maximalen TCID<sub>50</sub> von  $3.2 \times 10^9$  IVP/mL, wohingegen Saatvirus mit geringem Anteil an IVP (0.2%) keinen Anstieg im TCID<sub>50</sub> bewirkte. Dies zeigt, dass die Saatviruszusammensetzung kontrolliert werden muss, um hohe Virustiter in der Influenzavakzinproduktion zu erhalten.

Rührkesselinfektionen adhärenter MDCK Zellen mit A/PR/8 NIBSC zeigten einen um 4 Stunden früheren Anstieg und einen um  $0.6 \log_{10}$  HAU/100 µL niedrigeren HA Titer im Vergleich zu A/PR/8 RKI Infektionen. Auch mit Influenza Uruguay-like und Wisconsin-like HGRs wurden nicht so hohe Titer wie mit A/PR/8 RKI ( $3.3 \log_{10}$  HAU/100 µL,  $1.3 \times 10^9$  IVP/mL) erreicht. Infektionen mit A/PR/8 RKI bei niedriger MOI ( $10^{-5}$ ) zeigten im Vergleich zu MOI 0.025 einen erhöhten maximalen TCID<sub>50</sub> von  $2.4 \times 10^9$  IVP/mL. Außerdem zeigte eine direkte Infektion in serumfreiem Medium ohne Waschschrifte kaum Veränderungen in HA Titer, TCID<sub>50</sub> und Infektionsdynamik verglichen mit Infektionen mit Waschschriften. Damit wurde eine komplett serumfreie Virusvermehrung als gute Alternative zu Prozessen mit Zellwachstum in serumhaltigem Medium aufgezeigt.

Als Alternative zu adhärenten Zellen wurde die Suspensionszelllinie MDCK.SUS2 zur Virusvermehrung in serumfreiem Medium charakterisiert. Der Vergleich verschiedener Mediumswechselstrategien zeigte, dass eine direkte Infektion ohne Waschschrifte zwar möglich, eine 1:2-Verdünnung zum Zeitpunkt der Infektion aber optimal ist, um eine schnelle Infektionsdynamik und hohe Virustiter zu erzielen. MOI  $10^{-5}$  Infektionen zeigten allerdings niedrigere HA Titer und TCID<sub>50</sub> sowie eine deutlich verstärkte virusinduzierte Apoptose als bei adhärenten MDCK Zellen beobachtet. Weitere Studien werden klären müssen inwieweit die verstärkte Apoptose mit zellulären Veränderungen durch den Adaptationsprozess zusammenhängt.

Zusammenfassend hat diese Arbeit den positiven Einfluss niedriger MOI auf infektiöse Virustiter in der zellkulturbasierten Influenzavermehrung dargelegt. Der Einfluss der MOI hing dabei stark vom Virusstamm ab, besonders in Hinblick auf virusinduzierte Apoptose. Des Weiteren wurde gezeigt, dass DIPs die infektiöse Virusausbeute beeinflussen. Schließlich wurde die MDCK.SUS2 Zelle als leicht hochzuskalierende Alternative zur adhärenten MDCK Zelle getestet. Allerdings blieben HA Titer und TCID<sub>50</sub> unter denen adhärenter MDCK Zellen. Damit trägt diese Arbeit zum Verständnis der Virusvermehrung in Zellkultur bei und zeigt wertvolle Möglichkeiten zur Optimierung des *Upstream Processing* der Influenzavakzinproduktion auf.

## Preface

The work presented in this thesis was conducted during my time as scientific employee at the Max Planck Institute for Dynamics of Complex Technical Systems in Magdeburg from October 2008 until September 2013.

My special thanks are directed to Prof. Dr.-Ing. Udo Reichl (Max Planck Institute for Dynamics of Complex Technical Systems and Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg) for the supervision, the interesting topic, and the possibility to participate at numerous national and international conferences. In addition, special thanks go to PD Dr. rer. nat. habil. Yvonne Genzel (Max Planck Institute for Dynamics of Complex Technical Systems Magdeburg) for the supervision, fruitful discussion, and advice. Additional thanks I owe to Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Bettina Weiß (University of Applied Sciences Esslingen), Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Wolfgang Marwan, and Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Dieter Schinzer (both Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg) for evaluating my thesis as referees and for taking the chair of the commission, respectively.

In completing this work I benefited from the help of M.Sc. Tanja Laske and M.Sc. Sarah Frentzel who conducted their bachelor thesis within my supervision. I like to thank you for your contribution to our good work.

I greatly value the time I could spend with my colleagues at the MPI, especially of the Bioprocess Engineering Group. Here, I want to specially thank the whole Upstream Team and the Molecular Biology Team for the great collaboration inside and outside the lab.

I also gratefully acknowledge the collaborations with Dr.-Ing. Thomas Müller, Dipl.-Ing. Robert Dürr, and Dr.-Ing. Stefan Heldt, the fruitful discussions and successful publications. Furthermore, I want to thank Dr.-Ing. Robert Flassig for support with the statistical analysis of my data.

Furthermore, I am truly grateful for the support and encouragement of my family and my dear friends throughout the course of the thesis. Finally, there are no words to express my thanks to my husband Andreas who always encouraged me, who never stopped believing in me and without whose help, love, and support I would not have completed this thesis.



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## List of abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Meaning                                             |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1:2dil       | Infection with 1:2 dilution at toi                  |
| ATF          | Alternating tangential flow                         |
| ATP          | Adenosine triphosphate                              |
| BAD          | B cell lymphoma 2-associated death promoter         |
| BAEE         | N- $\alpha$ -benzoyl-L-arginine ethyl ester         |
| BAK          | Homologous antagonist killer                        |
| BAP          | Biological active particle                          |
| BAPNA        | N- $\alpha$ -benzoyl-DL-arginine-4-nitroanilide     |
| BAX          | B cell lymphoma 2-associated X protein              |
| Bcl-2        | B cell lymphoma 2                                   |
| BHK          | Baby hamster kidney                                 |
| BP           | Band-pass filter                                    |
| BSA          | Bovine serum albumin                                |
| ca           | Cold-adapted                                        |
| CAD          | Caspase-activated DNase                             |
| CAP          | CEVEC's amniocyte production                        |
| CHO          | Chinese hamster ovary                               |
| CHOP         | Deoxyribonucleic acid damage-inducible transcript 3 |
| cRNA         | Complementary ribonucleic acid                      |
| CTL          | Cytotoxic T lymphocytes                             |
| DI           | Defective interfering                               |
| DIP          | Defective interfering particle                      |
| DISC         | Death-inducing signalling complex                   |
| DNA          | Deoxyribonucleic acid                               |
| ECACC        | European Collection of Cell Cultures                |
| EDTA         | Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid                     |
| ER           | Endoplasmic reticulum                               |
| FADD         | Fas-associated protein with death domain            |
| FasL         | Fas ligand                                          |
| Fc           | Fragment crystallisable                             |
| FCS          | Foetal calf serum                                   |
| FDA          | US Food and Drug Administration                     |
| FI           | Fluorescence intensity                              |
| FITC         | Fluorescein isothiocyanate                          |
| FL           | Fluorescence light                                  |
| fMLP         | Formyl-methionine-leucine-phenylalanine             |
| FSC          | Forward scatter channel                             |
| GMEM         | Glasgow's Minimum Essential Medium                  |

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|               |                                                                    |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| HA            | Haemagglutinin                                                     |
| HAU           | Haemagglutination units                                            |
| HEK-293       | Human embryonic kidney                                             |
| HEPES         | 4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperazineethanesulfonic acid                 |
| HGR           | High growth reassortant                                            |
| hpi           | Hours post infection                                               |
| h             | Hour                                                               |
| IgG           | Immunoglobulin G                                                   |
| IRF7          | Interferon regulatory factor 7                                     |
| IVP           | Infectious virus particles                                         |
| LAIV          | Live attenuated influenza vaccines                                 |
| M1            | Matrix protein 1                                                   |
| M2            | Matrix protein 2                                                   |
| MDCK          | Madin-Darby canine kidney                                          |
| MESF          | Molecules of equivalent soluble fluorochrome                       |
| min           | Minute                                                             |
| MOI           | Multiplicity of infection                                          |
| mRNA          | Messenger ribonucleic acid                                         |
| NA            | Neuraminidase                                                      |
| NEP           | Nuclear export protein                                             |
| NF $\kappa$ B | Nuclear factor $\kappa$ -light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells |
| NIBSC         | National Institute for Biological Standards and Control            |
| niCKP         | Non-infectious cell-killing particles                              |
| NP            | Nucleoprotein                                                      |
| NS1           | Non-structural protein 1                                           |
| NS2           | Non-structural protein 2                                           |
| PARP          | Poly adenosine diphosphate ribose polymerase                       |
| PB1           | Polymerase basic 1                                                 |
| PB2           | Polymerase basic 2                                                 |
| PBS           | Phosphate buffered saline                                          |
| PCR           | Polymerase chain reaction                                          |
| PFP           | Plaque-forming particles                                           |
| PI3K          | Phosphatidylinositide 3-kinase                                     |
| PMT           | Photomultiplier tube                                               |
| pNA           | p-nitroaniline                                                     |
| PR            | Puerto Rico                                                        |
| PS            | Phosphatidylserine                                                 |
| RdRp          | ribonucleic acid-dependent ribonucleic acid polymerase             |
| RIG-1         | Retinoic acid-inducible gene 1                                     |
| RKI           | Robert Koch Institute                                              |
| RNA           | Ribonucleic acid                                                   |

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|--------|-----------------------------------------------|
| ROS    | Reactive oxygen species                       |
| SD     | Standard deviation                            |
| SOP    | Standard operation procedure                  |
| SSC    | Side scatter channel                          |
| STR    | Stirred tank bioreactor                       |
| TCID50 | Tissue culture infective dose 50              |
| TdT    | Terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase         |
| TMR    | Tetramethylrhodamine                          |
| TNF    | Tumour necrosis factor                        |
| toi    | Time of infection                             |
| TPCK   | Tosyl phenylalanyl chloromethyl ketone        |
| TRAIL  | TNF-related apoptosis-inducing ligand         |
| TUNEL  | TdT-mediated dUTP nick end labelling reaction |
| WHO    | World Health Organization                     |
| wME    | Infection with medium exchange                |
| w/oME  | Infection without medium exchange             |
| VLP    | Virus-like particle                           |
| vRNA   | Viral ribonucleic acid                        |
| vRNP   | Viral ribonucleoprotein complex               |

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