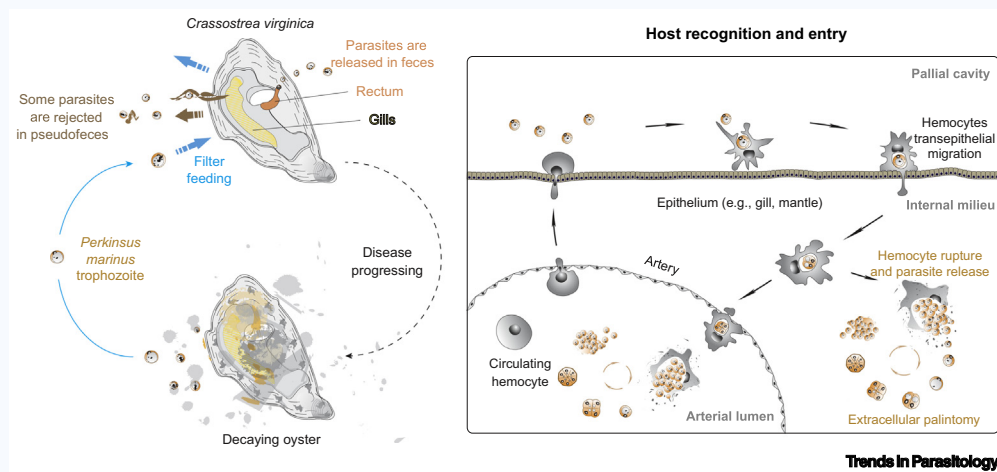


Perkinsus marinus

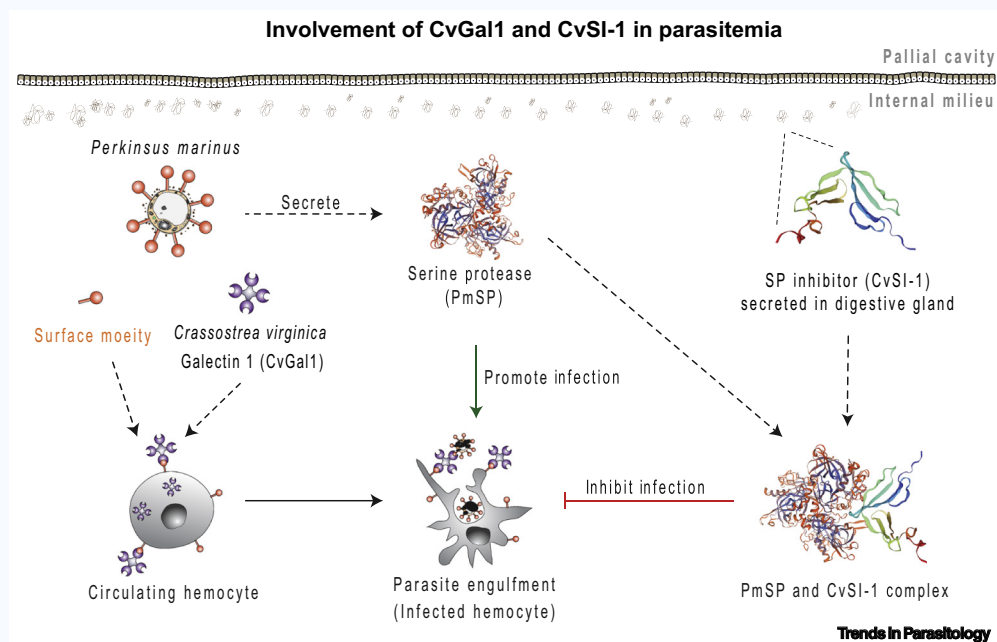
Raghavendra Yadavalli,¹ Kousuke Umeda,^{1,2} and José A. Fernández Robledo^{1,*}

¹Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences, Boothbay, ME, USA

²National Research Center for Protozoan Diseases, Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Hokkaido, Japan



Perkinsus marinus is a facultative intracellular marine protozoan parasite responsible for the Dermo disease in *Crassostrea virginica* oysters. Associated with mass mortalities in the Gulf Coast and Chesapeake Bay (USA), it remains one of the main hurdles for oyster reef restoration and aquaculture. Oysters take up the parasite by filter-feeding; in the pallial cavity it can be phagocytosed by the hemocytes via CvGal1, gaining access to the internal milieu. Inside the parasitophorous vacuole, the parasite resists oxidative stress and acquires nutrients. Propagation strategies include binary fission, budding, palintomy, and schizogony. Although the effect on humans upon consumption of raw infected oysters has not been studied, humanized HLA-DR4 mice fed with *P. marinus* do not develop noticeable pathology but elicit systemic immunity. Parasite culture in host-free media, and the use of genetic tools, make it a tractable genetic model and a heterologous expression and vaccine-delivery system.



KEY FACTS:

P. marinus is phylogenetically close to dinoflagellates and apicomplexans.

Two genomes in the nucleus (86 Mb encoding >23 600 proteins) and mitochondrion, using mRNA *trans*-splicing with a conserved 21–22 nt spliced leader.

With a direct life cycle, trophozoites are released into the water with pseudofeces and feces, or from decaying oysters.

It remains controversial whether *P. marinus* produces zoospores as do other *Perkinsus* spp.

Continuous culture in the absence of host cells and transfection methodology enable the study of physiology, cell biology, and host–parasite interactions.

It offers a heterologous expression system for human pathogen genes (e.g., *Plasmodium falciparum*, *Toxoplasma gondii*, *Cryptosporidium parvum*, and Ebola virus).

DISEASE FACTS:

P. marinus infection is one of the World Organization of Animal Health (OIE)-listed diseases.

Once described in the Gulf of México, it is now found in both North and South America.

High water temperature is the main environmental clue associated with oyster mass mortalities.

A protease inhibitor (CvSI-1) isolated from the plasma of eastern oysters inhibits the parasite's proliferation *in vitro* and appears to be involved in the resistance to Dermo disease.

With numerous chemical inhibitors of *in vitro* propagation, treatment of diseased oysters in the natural environment remains unrealistic.

TAXONOMY AND CLASSIFICATION:

PHYLUM: Perkinsozoa
CLASS: Perkinsea
ORDER: Perkinsida
FAMILY: Perkinsidae
GENUS: *Perkinsus*
SPECIES: *P. marinus*

*Correspondence:
jfernandez-robledo@bigelow.org
 (J.A. Fernández Robledo).

Acknowledgments

National Science Foundation (NSF) 1701480 (J.A.F.R.), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) NA15NMF4270303 (J.A.F.R.), and JSPS KAKENHI – Grant-in-Aid for JSPS Fellows 19J00148 (K.U.).

Resources

www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/aah-saa/diseases-maladies/pmdoy-eng.html

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genome/280

www.atcc.org

www.protocols.io

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