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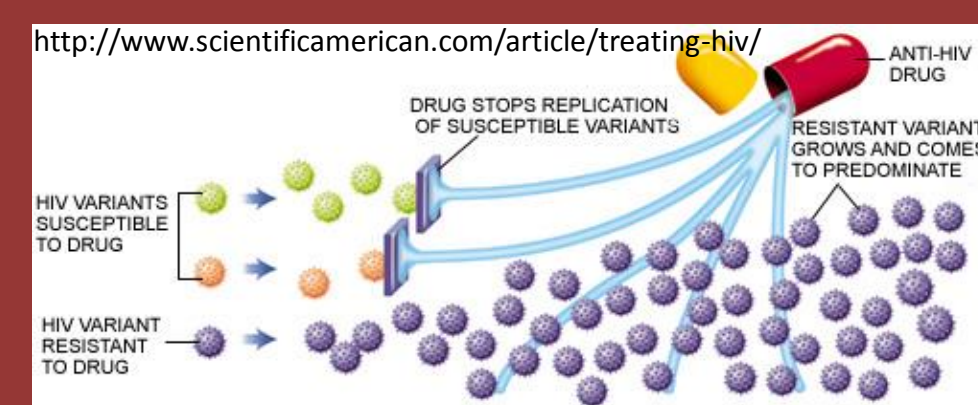
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Analysis of Current Clinical Antiviral Treatment Approaches and Medications and Related Suggestions for Future Research

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Introduction

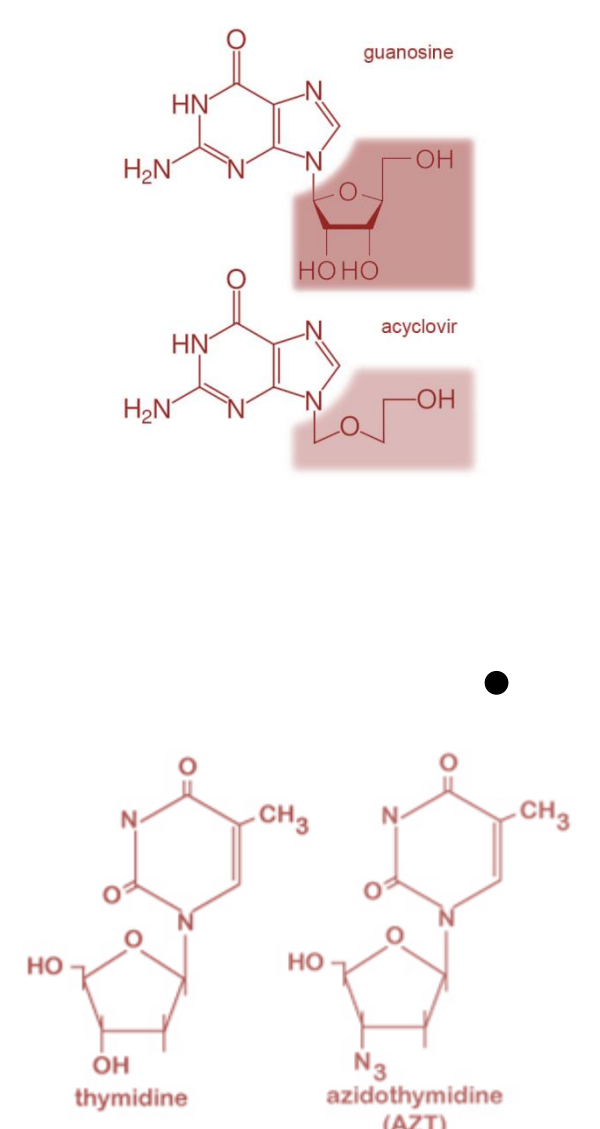
- The term “virus” describes a group of nonliving obligatorily-pathogenic particles that are capable of infecting host cells, taking over their metabolic machinery, and reproducing at the cost of the host’s own energetic and molecular resources.
- The viral replication cycle has six basic steps:
 - adsorption,
 - penetration/uncoating,
 - viral component replication
 - assembly, and
 - release
- Treatment methods fall into discrete categories, all based on known viral infection and replication methods, to slow the replication and spread of the virus.



The rapid and incredibly prolific nature of viral replication allows for greater variation, and thus greater rates of resistance development. HAART and other “cocktail” treatments aim to stall viral replication at different levels, decreasing the chance that resistant strains will persist. A virus would have to have three separate resistance mechanisms simultaneously to continue unhindered in these cases.

Direct Treatment Methods

- Spike protein antagonists
 - Creating antibodies that will bind to the spike proteins or cellular receptors – expensive and incredibly time-consuming
- Disruption of Replication
 - Toxic nucleosides such as acyclovir (guanosine analogue) is used to treat the herpes simplex virus, varicella zoster, herpes zoster, and sometimes HIV¹⁹. Acyclovir halts DNA production because it lacks a 3’ end¹². Azidothymidine (AZT) is a thymine analog recognized by reverse-transcriptase and used in HIV treatment²².
 - Integrase inhibitors, including raltegravir, dolutegravir, and elvitegravir, prevent viral genes from being spliced into the host genome by selectively inhibiting the strand transfer ability of integrase¹⁷, but side effects and/or liver dysfunction and failure have been reported³.
 - Protease inhibitors prevent the post-translational conversion of viral gene products to their mature form⁴.
- Highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), used to treat HIV, is comprised of two different NRTIs and one protease or integrase³⁴.
 - The combination decreases viral load, decreasing the likelihood of resistance and allowing the patient’s immune system to rebuild.
- Neuraminidase inhibitors such as oseltamivir target the detachment mechanism of influenza viruses. Neuraminidase must cleave the hemagglutinin-sialic acid bond to release new virions²⁷.

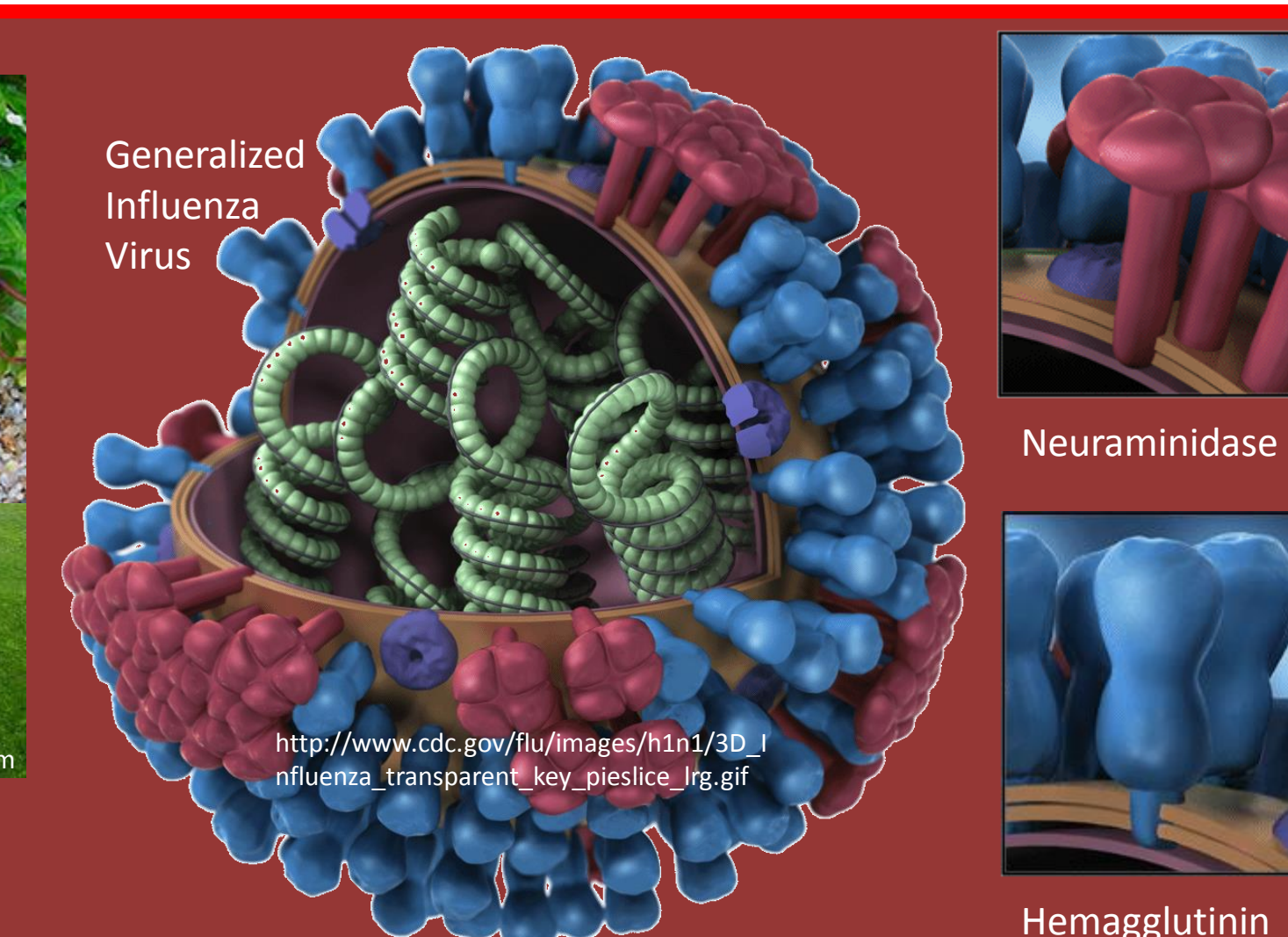


Immunomodulation

- Immunomodulatory treatments are promising because they may enhance innate immunity.
- Only interferon is prescribed for viral infection
 - Natural interferons are released by a cell infected by a viral pathogen to warn nearby cells, triggering a series of non-specific antiviral genes⁸.
- G-CSF is generally used to help cancer patients recover from chemotherapy²³, though it could also be used to increase immunological response, especially in advanced AIDS patients.
 - G-CSF has been shown to cause Sweet’s Syndrome, an autoimmune condition²⁵. Further study would be needed to confirm efficacy in a virology setting.
- Imiquimod is prescribed as a topical cream to treat warts and other skin irritations⁷.
 - It activates (TLR7), acting upstream of interferon in the immune signaling pathway and triggering the release of several cytokines⁶. Its efficacy against viral infections is largely unknown.
- Sulfated polysaccharides as immunomodulatory elements
 - These compounds have been shown to increase the immune response. Sulfated polysaccharides from *Enteromorpha prolifera* and the red seaweed *Nemalion helminthoides* were shown to increase the proliferation of macrophages and stimulated nitric oxide and cytokine production^{14,24}.



Enteromorpha prolifera and *Nemalion helminthoides* contain sulfated polysaccharides that may increase the immune response to viruses and other pathogens.

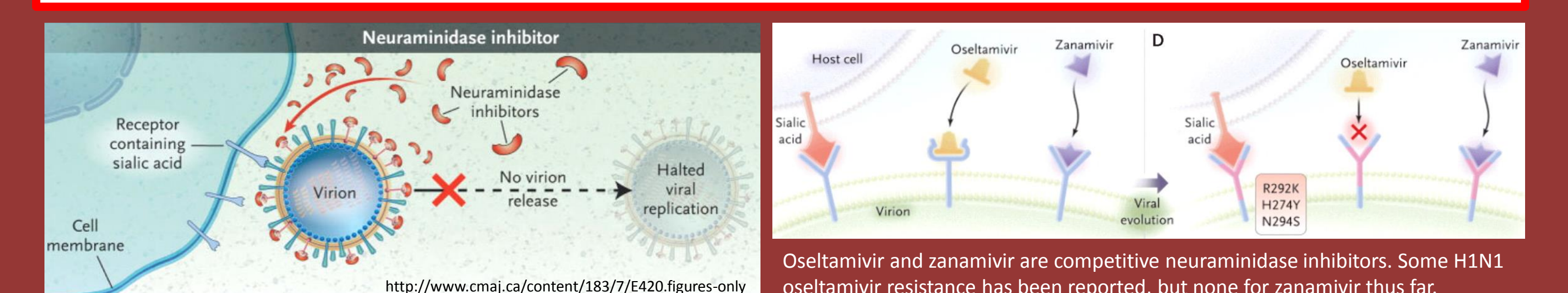


Viral Vectors

- The persistence of viral infections, such as dengue fever in the more arid parts of the world, can be directly attributed to non-human vectors in those areas.
- A recent study explored the immune response of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito when it has been infected by dengue virus¹³.
 - Two genes silenced in *A. aegypti* elevated resistance to the virus in the mosquito’s midgut, suggesting that the virus affected the immune response of the host by somehow modulating the expression of those genes.

Resistance

- Interferon modulation
 - Example: A Borna virus nucleoprotein inhibits interferon production by counteracting the TBK1–IRF3 pathway³¹.
- Amantadine and rimantadine
 - Inhibits the viral M2 ion channel needed to uncoat influenza A viruses after host cell penetration³²
 - Amantadine is no longer recommended because due to widespread resistance, particularly in all relevant strains of H1N1⁹. Amantadine was highly encouraged as both a prophylactic and a treatment as early as the 1970s²⁰.
- Raltegravir was hailed as major progress in the search for new integrase inhibitors¹⁶ in 2005 and has now been approved for use in very young children³.
 - Merck & Co. are currently researching MK-2048, a compound they refer to as a “second generation integrase inhibitor,” capable of lasting up to four hours longer than raltegravir¹⁸.
- Oseltamivir can be seen in the very early stages of this resistance process.
 - A factsheet produced by Roche in 2006 claimed that resistance was infrequent at that time²⁸. As of 2009, the WHO believes that “there is no evidence to indicate the development of widespread antiviral resistance among pandemic H1N1 viruses”³³.
- Some viruses have also developed resistance to acyclovir and penciclovir⁵, which act at a very direct level on viral replication mechanisms, after decades of treatment.



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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor of Biology Frank Fekete for sponsoring this independent study and the librarians who helped me acquire journal articles outside the normal scope of what is available at Colby College.