



NATURAL AND SYNTHETIC ANTIBIOFILM COMPOUNDS: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Biofilm is a community of microorganisms adhering to biotic or abiotic surfaces embedded by a self-produced extra-polymeric matrix facilitating the survival in an adverse environment. Quorum sensing systems provide for the bacteria an access to nutrients and favourable environmental niches as well as enhanced action against competing bacteria and environmental stresses. Quorum sensing has also been identified as a mode of resistance to antibacterial treatment. The aim of this review is to give a synopsis which will serve as a knowledge base for researchers on antibiofilms. Provided in this work are naturally occurring and synthetic antibiofilms which are at various stages of development. The mechanisms of action of these compounds are yet to be fully understood. While some antibiofilm compounds prevent the formation of biofilms, others disrupt already formed biofilms. Notable among compounds which prevent the formation of biofilms are quorum sensing inhibitor, ajoene obtained from garlic, proanthocyanidins from cranberry and others. The chemical structures of some of these compounds were highlighted with a view to identifying the moieties responsible for their antibiofilm activities. Among the synthetic antibiofilm compounds, marine products, like dihydrooroidin (DHO) have been identified to have both antibiofilm and antifouling activities. It is pleasing that, not only do we have in the pipeline many biological compounds to be used for prevention and disruption of already-formed biofilms, we also have synthetic antibiofilms largely from aquatic sources

Keywords : Biofilm, quorum sensing, natural antibiofilm compounds, synthetic antibiofilm compounds, resistance.

INTRODUCTION

Biofilms are a biologically active matrix of cells and extra-cellular substances in association with a solid surface, frequently embedded in a matrix of extracellular polymeric substances (Heydorn *et al.*, 2000). Over the past few decades, biofilm growth has been observed in many industrial and domestic domains. Unfortunately, in most cases the growth of biofilms has been detrimental. Examples of industries that suffer the ill-effects of biofilm include the maritime, dairy, food, water systems, oil, paper, opticians, dentistry and hospitals (Dunne, 2002). Perhaps the environment where people are exposed to biofilms most frequently is the domestic environment (Klahre *et al.*, 2000). Product spoilage, reduced production efficiency, corrosion, unpleasant odours (malodours), unsightliness, infection, pipe blockages and equipment failure are examples of the detrimental effects of biofilms (Espeland *et al.*, 2001).

Quorum sensing is a cell-to-cell communication mechanism, which plays an important role in

biofilm development and balances the environment when the bacteria density becomes high (Lan lu *et al.*, 2019). It is a signaling system through which sessile cells in a biofilm "talk" to each other in order to build microcolonies and to keep water channels open. A variety of different molecules can be used as signals. Karbasizade *et al.* (2017) reported that extracts from plants have been shown to regulate biofilm formation and inhibit quorum sensing. Authors of this review therefore, found it rational to give a collection of plants and marine products with antibiofilm activities currently undergoing clinical trials. This review will offer biofilm researchers opportunity to further investigate the activities of these antibiofilm agents or validate the claims on them.

Here, the naturally-occurring antibiofilm compounds are highlighted, stating their mechanisms of action as well as their molecular structures stating the moieties involved in their chemical interaction with the biofilm matrices. Next, we discussed the synthetically-derived

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antibiofilm compounds, their sources and their potential of seeing the light of the day in terms of industrial production.

Mechanism of biofilm infections

The pathogenesis of biofilm-related infections involve a) detachment of cells or biofilm aggregates may result in bloodstream or urinary tract infections or in the production of emboli, b) cells may exchange resistance plasmids within biofilms, c) cells in biofilms have dramatically reduced susceptibility to antimicrobial agents, d) biofilm-associated gram-negative bacteria may produce endotoxins, and e) biofilms are resistant to host immune system clearance (Characklis, 1973).

Quorum Sensing

Cell-to-cell signaling, known as quorum sensing, has been shown to play a role in biofilm formation in foodborne pathogens. Bacterial gene expression in some bacterial species may be regulated by quorum sensing, a cell density-dependent signaling system mediated by chemical autoinducer molecules produced by bacteria (Miller *et al.*, 2001). The autoinducer molecules bind to the appropriate transcription regulator(s) when the bacterial population reaches the quorum level (that is, the signal concentration reaches a threshold concentration sufficient to facilitate binding to the receptor) (Bassler 2001). Binding of the autoinducers is followed by activation or repression of target genes. Thus, quorum sensing allows bacteria to display a unified response that benefits the population (Smith *et al.*, 2004). Bacterial quorum sensing systems enhance access to nutrients and more favorable environmental niches, and they enhance action against competing bacteria and environmental stresses. Examples of cellular processes modulated by quorum sensing are symbiosis, transfer of conjugative plasmids, sporulation, antimicrobial peptide synthesis, regulation of virulence, and biofilm formation (Bassler 2001).

There are according to Bassler. (2001), several different quorum sensing autoinducer systems in

bacteria. Three main QS systems can be distinguished: the acylhomoserine lactone (AHL) QS system in Gram-negative bacteria, the autoinducing peptide (AIP) QS system in Gram-positive bacteria and the autoinducer-2 (AI-2) QS system in both Gram-negative and -positive bacteria. For example, in Gram-negative bacteria, the quorum sensing system is dependent on homologues of the *Vibrio fischeri* LuxI-LuxR regulatory proteins (Miller *et al.*, 2001). Synthesized by the LuxI-like proteins, the autoinducer compounds are acylated homoserine lactones (AHLs), which are also known as autoinducer 1 (AI-1). The AHLs consist of a homoserine lactone ring with a variable length acyl side chain. The AHL is synthesized inside the cell and is either diffused or secreted outside to the external environment. The concentration of AHLs increases as the bacterial population increases. When the AHLs reach a critical threshold level, they re-enter the bacterial cell to bind to the LuxR-like protein receptors. The LuxR-AHL complexes activate or repress target gene transcription (Miller *et al.*, 2001).

Organizational Structure of Biofilms

Understanding the structure of medically significant biofilms, and how to prevent them, are important sectors of current research in the microbiological field.

In an aqueous environment, bacteria may form an organized community that is attached to a solid surface at the liquid interface; this is known as a biofilm (Zheng *et al.*, 1994). Bacteria that form biofilms must be able to adhere to a surface, as well as accumulate to form multilayered cell clusters through intracellular adhesion (Rijnaarts *et al.*, 1993 ; Zheng *et al.*, 1994)

In this diagram below, reversible attachment and irreversible attachment are two different steps.

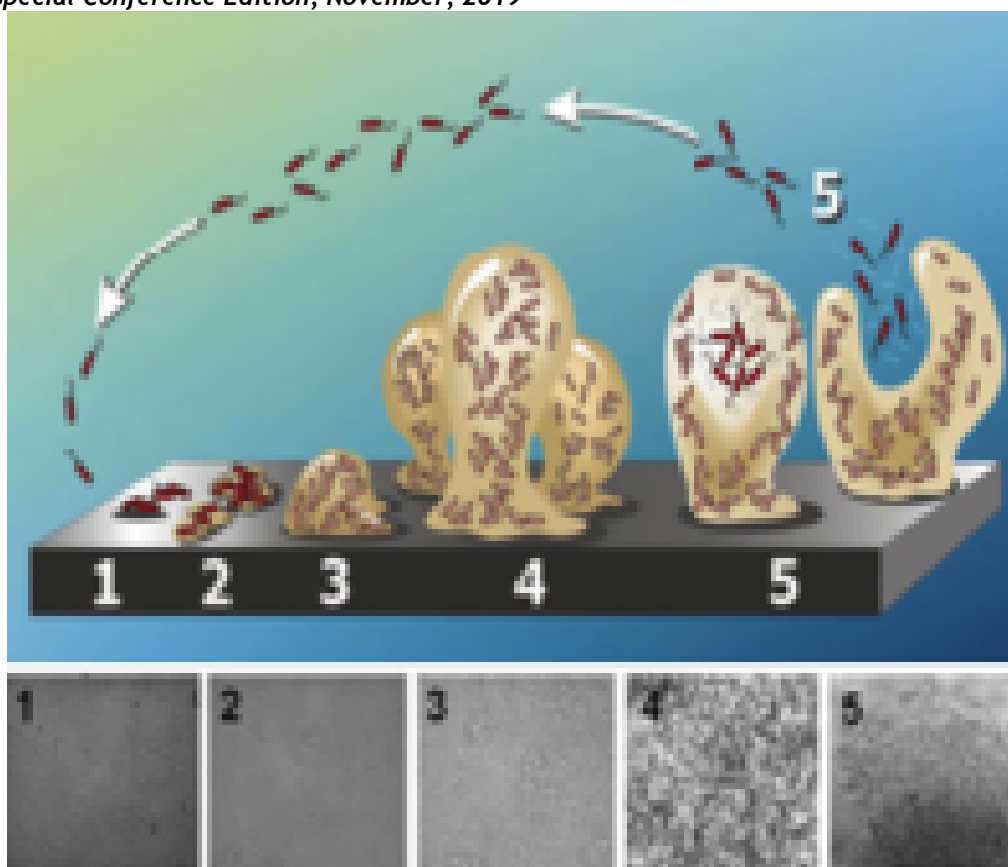


Figure 1: Stages of Development of Biofilm
Lab Medicine, 2015

The formation of a biofilm involves a four step process: attachment of bacterial cells to a surface, accumulation of bacterial cells forming multiple layers, maturation of the biofilm, and release of some bacteria in the planktonic state, which can attach to a new surface and form another biofilm (Zheng *et al.*, 1994). These sessile communities offer protected growth from the environment (Costerton *et al.*, 1999), and have a heightened resistance to antimicrobials as well as to the host immune responses (Stewart *et al.*, 2001).

Mode of action of antibiofilm agents

About 60 synthesized compounds were screened for antimicrobial and anti-biofilm activity, ¼ of which were interesting for further investigation and recommended for follow-up studies (Mitchenko *et al.*, 2015).

Membranolytic mode of action in Gram-positive bacteria was revealed for several compounds. Antibiofilm substances can inhibit biofilm formation (preventive effect) or alternatively act on biofilms already formed (therapeutic effect). The mechanism of action against established biofilms may be through disruption of biofilm biomass and/or direct killing of the biofilm bacteria. (Brazil oral research., 2013).

Naturally-occurring antibiofilm compounds

The following is a concise review of some of the natural anti-biofilm agents currently under study.

Biofilm-Disrupting Enzymes

Enzymes, like DNase I, α -amylase and DspB are biofilm-dispersing agents that degrade the biofilm matrix, permitting increased penetration of antibiotics. DNase I cleavage of extracellular DNA leads to alterations in biofilm architecture, which permits increased antibiotic penetration (Tetz *et al.*, 2009). A DNA-dissolving drug (Pulmozyme) has been used in cystic fibrosis patients to help disrupt the biofilm. α -amylase is a proven anti-biofilm agent against *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Vibrio cholerae* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, not only inhibiting biofilm formation, but also degrading preformed mature biofilms (Kalpana *et al.*, 2012). DspB is a soluble β -*N*-acetylglucosaminidase with broad-spectrum activity to dissolve the biofilm matrix, and shows synergy with other antimicrobials (Darouiche *et al.*, 2009).

Proteolytic enzymes like serrapeptase help the body break down protein involved in inflammation and mucous. It may also help

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disrupt the outer layers of biofilms and uncover hidden microbes.

Unfortunately, the high cost of industrial enzyme production makes their large-scale application as anti-biofilm agents unfeasible (Sun *et al.*, 2013). Bacteriophages are viruses that produce a number of enzymes that negate the protection afforded by biofilms. Phages degrade the biofilm matrix and lyse bacteria, while leaving friendly bacteria unharmed. Phage modification of biofilm architecture also increases susceptibility to antibiotics. However, phage-resistant bacteria can evolve rapidly. (Sun *et al.*, 2013)

Quorum-Sensing Inhibitors

Quorum-Sensing (QS) is a form of communication bacteria use to cooperatively build biofilm communities. Most bacteria produce QS signals, as well as QS inhibitors. Usnic acid, a lichen metabolite, possesses inhibitory activity against bacterial and fungal biofilms via QS interference. QS inhibitors can increase the

susceptibility of biofilms to antibiotics. QS Inhibitors are generally regarded as safe in humans. (Sun *et al.*, 2013)

Garlic inhibits the expression of several genes that control bacterial QS. The star in garlic's arsenal is ajoene, the sulfur-containing compound produced when garlic is crushed. Ajoene inhibits production of rhamnolipid, which shields biofilms from white blood cells. Over 90% of biofilm bacteria were killed with a combination of ajoene and the antibiotic tobramycin. Garlic also has anti-viral, anti-fungal, and anti-protozoal properties, and benefits the cardiovascular and immune systems. (Jakobsen *et al.*, 2012) These sulfur compounds from garlic quickly lose their activity upon exposure to oxygen. A willow bark extract, hamamelitannin, also inhibits QS. (Morgan., 2015).

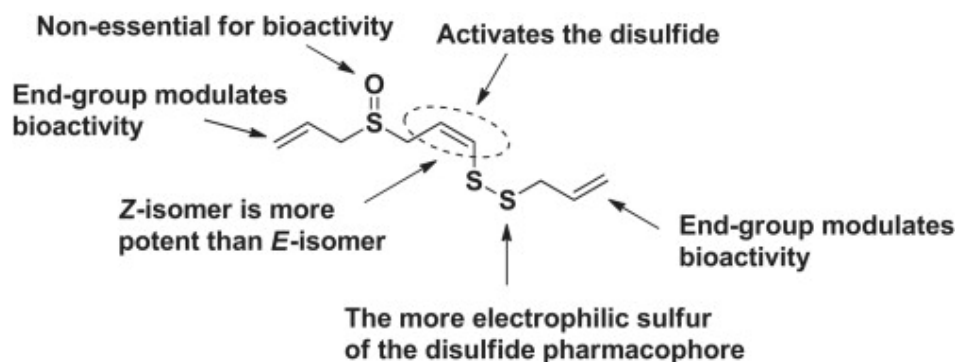


Figure. 2: Chemical structure of ajoene functional group

Antioxidants

According to Lee *et al* (2011), the anticancer, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory effects of flavonoids are well established. Yet, their biofilm disrupting function is practically unknown. Flavonoids appear to suppress the formation of biofilms via a non-specific QS inhibition (Vikram *et al.*, 2010). The flavonoid phloretin inhibited

biofilm formation in *E. coli* O157:H7, and ameliorated colon inflammation in rats without harming beneficial biofilms (Lee *et.al.*, 2011). Naturally occurring flavanols in cocoa may reverse memory decline significantly. (Brickman, *et al.*, 2014) Their ability to inhibit QS might provide a clue for their action.

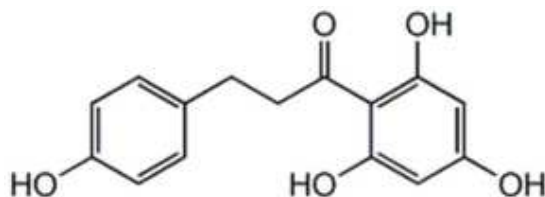


Figure 3 : Flavanol moiety

Cranberry has a reputation for keeping bacteria from sticking to surfaces. The red pigments in cranberries have been shown to inhibit biofilm formation. These proanthocyanidins (PACs) have

been reported to possess antimicrobial, anti-adhesion, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory properties (Bodet *et al.*, 2006).

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They prevent the attachment of pathogens to host tissues, and can inhibit the formation of biofilms in the mouth and urinary tract. (Labrecque *et al.*, 2006) Cranberry PACs stopped the gum disease pathogen, *Porphyromonas gingivitis*, from adhering and forming biofilm, which markedly reduced its invasiveness. [La *et al.*, 2010] These unique PACs also prevented adherence and biofilm formation by *Candida albicans*, the causative agent of thrush and yeast infections. (Feldman *et al.*, 2012). Cranberry juice extract, at low micromolar levels, inhibited tissue-destroying

enzymes made by bacteria (La *et al.*, 2010) and humans. (Bodet *et al.*, 2007) Cranberry PACs also prevented dental plaque, by inhibiting biofilm-forming enzymes, (Steinberg *et al.*, 2004) and keeping bacteria from aggregating. (Weiss *et al.*, 1998; Yamanaka *et al.*, 2004) Daily use of a cranberry-containing mouthwash for 6 weeks significantly reduced levels of mutants *streptococci* in human saliva. (Weiss *et al.*, 2004) The anti-adhesive benefits of cranberry for urinary tract infections may be substantially increased by increasing the alkalinity of urine.

Chemical structure of proanthocyanidins

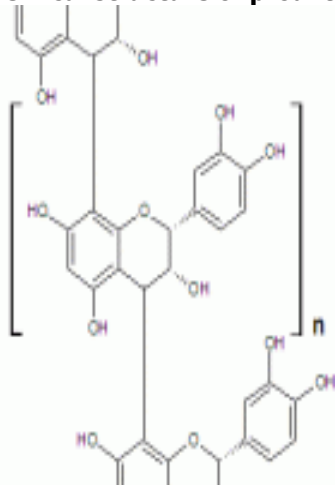


Figure 4: Procyanidin Skeleton

Chlorogenic acids (CGA), largely from coffee, are cinnamic acid derivatives with important antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities. (Farah *et al.*, 2008) In vitro antibacterial and anti-biofilm activities of chlorogenic acid against clinical isolates of *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*

resistant to trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole (TMP/SMX) was investigated. The MIC and MBC values ranged from 8 to 32 µg/mL. In vitro antibiofilm testing showed a 4-fold reduction in biofilm viability at 4x MIC. (Karunanidhi *et al.*, 2012)

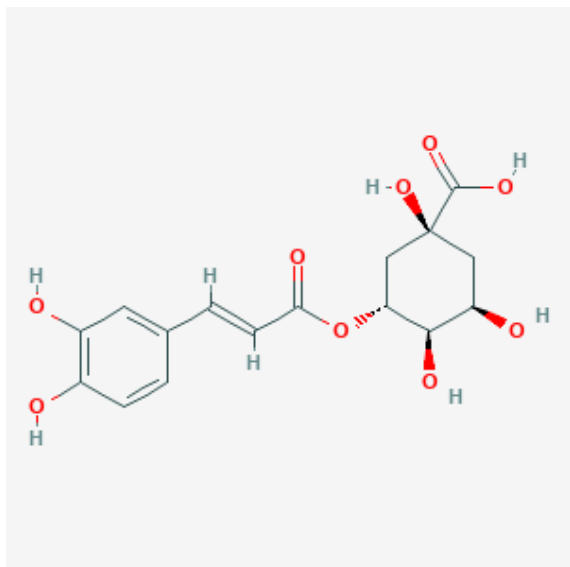
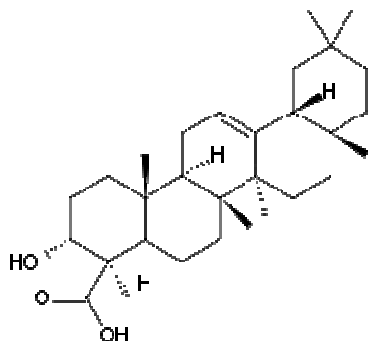


Figure 5 : Chlorogenic acid skeleton

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Boswellic acids are pentacyclic triterpenes, produced in plants belonging to the genus *Boswellia*, with potent anti-biofilm properties. Acetyl-11-keto- β -boswellic acid, which exhibited the most potent antibacterial activity, was effective against all 112 pathogenic gram



Structure of α -boswellic acid

Boswellic acids are a series of pentacyclic triterpene molecules that are produced by plants in the genus *Boswellia* like *Boswellia odorata*. The leaf extract of *Pongamia pinnata* showed significant antibiofilm activity (Karlupudi *et al.*, 2012). The antimicrobial activity of the plant extract is attributed to the presence of phenolic compounds, such as alkaloids, flavonoids, terpenoids and polyacetylenes. (Shan *et al.*, 2007)

Five Indonesian medical plant extracts were shown to inhibit *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Staphylococcus aureus* biofilm formation at concentrations as low as 0.12 mg/mL. (Pratiwi *et al.*, 2015)

Wheat bran extract exhibits anti-biofilm activity, inhibiting biofilm formation and destroying pre-formed *S. aureus* biofilm in dairy cows with mastitis (González-Ortiz *et al.*, 2014).

Farnesol and xylitol were shown to possess antibiofilm and antibacterial effects when used in root canal irrigants (Alves *et al.*, 2013). Xylitol is a low-carb sweetener found in toothpaste and diet sodas. When bacteria incorporate xylitol into the biofilm, it makes for a flimsy structure (Morgan., 2015).

Aspirin and many other naturally-occurring salicylates have been shown to inhibit the macromolecules that make up the biofilm matrix (Domenico *et al.*, 1990; Muller *et al.*, 1998). Salicylates are produced by many plants in response to infection.

Pro-oxidants can also be effective against biofilms. Oxidative agents are microbicidal, and offer possibilities for reducing the pathogenic activities of biofilms, especially those with an anaerobic component.

positive bacteria tested (MIC range, 2-8 μ g/ml). It inhibited biofilms formed by *S. aureus* and *S. epidermidis*, and could also disrupt preexisting biofilms. Disruption of bacterial membranes is the likely mode of action (Raja *et al.*, 2011).

Fatty Acid Inhibitors

Several *Salvia* (Sage) species widely used as spices were evaluated for their antimicrobial activities, including their anti-adhesive and anti-biofilm effects. *Salvia triloba* extract demonstrated significant bacteriocidal activity against MRSA. Its volatile oil was active against all tested microorganisms except *P. aeruginosa*. *S. triloba* extract and volatile oil were active against biofilms, demonstrating anti-adhesion and anti-biofilm activities, respectively. The antimicrobial activities of other *Salvia* species were negligible (Al-Bakri *et al.*, 2010).

Synthetically-derived antibiofilm compounds

Anti-Biofilm Agents Derived from Marine Sponges

Marine sponges can be likened to little factories for bioactive secondary metabolites. These benthic organisms are some of the simplest multicellular animals with little differentiation and long lives, relying on the water around them to supply all their essential needs. Therefore, the generation of chemical defenses is a key element of their survival, whether they need to ward off predators (Callow *et al.*, 2006), fight off competition for space and resources (Beech *et al.*, 2004) or control surface fouling (Musk *et al.*, 2006). Sponges utilize a plethora of chemical classes to protect themselves and even to communicate with symbiotic organisms that can provide nutrients and additional protection (Callow *et al.*, 2006). Many of these chemicals have been found to have antifouling and anti-biofilm properties, but very few have been shown to modulate biofilm formation without killing the bacteria or disrupting their growth.

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To date, only two classes of marine sponge metabolites house non-bactericidal biofilm modulators, the terpenoids (Musk *et al.*, 2006) and the pyrrole-imidazoles (Beech *et al.*, 2004). Although not unique to sponges, one of the most potent and diverse groups of molecules is the terpenes and their derivatives. Terpenes have a high degree of structural diversity stemming from the modification of isoprene subunits and are valued for their broad range of biological activity, from antifouling agents to antiproliferative cancer therapeutics (Callow *et al.*, 2006 ; Davies *et al.*, 2003). Within the sponge terpenoids, only ageloxime-D, manoalide, and two manoalide congeners have been reported to have the ability to interfere with bacterial biofilm formation without disrupting cellular growth.

In addition, the Melander group has been able to construct from marine sponges, a series of very successful anti-biofilm libraries that utilize the 2-aminoimidazole moiety found within a class of potent molecules, the pyrrole-imidazole alkaloids (PIAs).

CONCLUSION

Many biological compounds of plant or animal origin have emerged some capable of preventing the formation of biofilms, while others are

capable of prevention and disruption of already formed biofilms. More intriguing is the fact that we now have synthetic antibiofilms coming from marine (aquatic) sources widening the array of biofilm-inhibiting substances that can be used synergistically with the conventional antimicrobial agents in use.

RECOMMENDATION

As we advance our knowledge of how to design potent anti-biofilm molecules, a few issues have become clear. First, we need to understand the basic mechanistic aspects of how these molecules exert their activity. These molecules have the ability to provide tools to deconvolute bacterial signaling pathways that are both conserved and unique to Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria. Second, these compounds need to be evaluated in various animal models of infection. As a therapeutic strategy, these compounds will mostly likely serve as adjuvants to conventional antibiotics, and there are dosing and pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamic (PK/PD) issues that must be optimized between the antibiotic and anti-biofilm agent. Third, new molecular classes should be investigated to expand our repertoire of anti-biofilm agents.

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