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This is the **published version** of the bachelor thesis:

Martín Vivas, Anna. Antimicrobial peptides : an alternative to antibiotics?.  
2021. (815 Grau en Biotecnologia)

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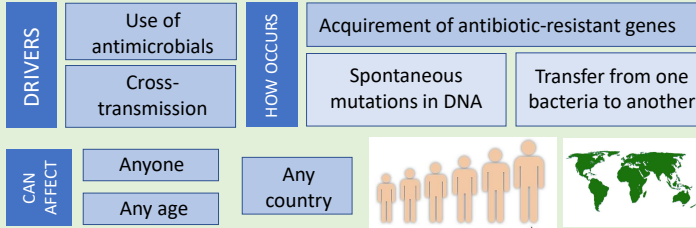
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## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

- WHO has declared that AMR (Antimicrobial Resistance) is one of the top ten biggest threats to global health, food security and development today.



**700.000** people die each year worldwide

- The aim of this review is to expose an insight into the suitability of the use of antimicrobial peptides as an alternative to antibiotics in the treatment of *S. aureus* infections, one of the most commonly bacteria developing AMR.

## FEATURES AND PROPERTIES OF AMPs

### Broad Description

- Cationic and amphipathic.
- Encoded in genes and synthesized by ribosomes.
- The most common structures are helical and  $\beta$ -sheet rich AMPs.

### Mechanism of action

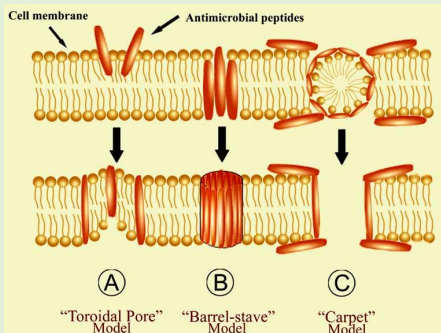


Figure 1. Models explaining the different membrane permeabilization mechanisms of AMPs. Retrieved from [4].

### Less proneness to resistance development

- Membrane disintegration is energetically unfavourable.
- Distinct lipid composition and neutral charge of eukaryotic membranes compared with bacterial ones, leads to a different kinetics of AMP interaction.

### Outstanding properties and objections

	Broad-spectrum activity and fast rate of killing	Extensive and costly large-scale production	
	Additional anti-inflammatory properties	Susceptible to proteolytic degradation	
	Less prone to develop resistance	Can be toxic at high concentrations	
	Therapeutic and antimicrobial activity at low concentrations	Unknown pharmacokinetics	

## APPLICATION AND THERAPEUTIC USES

### Cit 1.1

- AMP from the skin glands of *Litoria citropa*.
- Antimicrobial activity against MRSA through carpet model mechanism.

### Temporins

- AMPs from amphibian skin glands.
- Membranolytic action against some *staphylococci* strains. Also towards dormant cells.

### Serine-protease Esp

- The presence of *S. epidermidis* in the nasal cavity correlated with the absence of *S. aureus* colonization.

### Staphylococci

- Action against strains closely phylogenetically related or within the same niche as the producer.
- The majority of them belong to **lantibiotics** class.
- Nisins
- Epidermin
- Microbisporin (NAI-107)
- Lactacin Q
- Nukacin ISK-1
- Pep5

### AMPs with anti-biofilm capacity

They interfere in various stages of biofilm-formation:

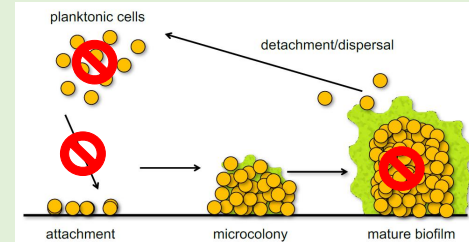


Figure 2. The biofilm life cycle and action of anti-biofilm AMPs. Adapted from [5].

- Nisin A
- Temporin G
- Epidermin
- Esp
- Lysostaphin
- DJK-5 → it does not target metabolically-active bacteria, but promotes degradation of (p)ppGpp

### AMPs with wound-healing promoting activity

Involved in tissue regeneration

Examples: AG30/5C, WRL3 and Epinecidin-1

## OPTIMIZATION STRATEGIES

### 1. INCREASE STABILITY

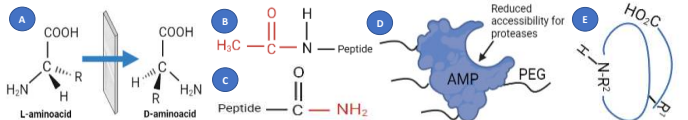


Figure 3. Strategies for increasing AMPs stability. (A) D-enantiomerization; (B) N-ter acetylation; (C) C-ter amidation; (D) Pegylation; (E) Peptide Cyclisation

### 2. DELIVERY STRATEGIES → Topical therapy is preferred

Nanotechnological platforms and scaffolds	Increased aqueous solubility and moderate lipophilicity	Peptide cyclisation	Penetration enhancers	<500 Da
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### 3. IMPROVE ACTIVITY AND POTENCY

- Amphipaticity
- Hydrophobicity
- Net charge
- AMPs + Antibiotics
- Other combinations:
  - AMP + antibiotic-resistant breakers
  - AMP+EPS-inhibiting agents
  - AMP+chelating agents
  - AMP+matrix disaggregating agents

### 4. REDUCE TOXICITY

- Short AMPs → poor immunogenicity but reduced antimicrobial activity
- Possible options:
  - D-enantiomerization
  - Switching polar to non polar residues

## CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER DIRECTIONS

- The most important factors that make AMPs promising candidates as antibiotic alternative are the **broad-spectrum** of activity, the **low proneness to resistance development** and their **anti-biofilm activity**.
- Although propitious candidates are emerging with synthetic methods, **toxicity and high-production cost are still hurdles to deal with**.
- AMPs in combination with antibiotics** seems to be a viable and transient solution until more sophisticated achievements are reached.



- Structure-function studies may provide relevant information to overcome host toxicity of AMPs.
- Novel approaches for **peptide synthesis based on innovations in synthetic biology** may open the door for easier and cost-effective production.

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