Malassezia and the Skin
It has been known for many years that the *Malassezia* yeasts are associated with a number of different human diseases ranging from pityriasis versicolor to seborrhoeic dermatitis. However the evolving history of their taxonomy and pathogenicity, and the management of the diseases that they cause has been a long, and often difficult, journey. Their fastidious growth requirements defied the initial attempts to culture these organisms on laboratory media and their true identification and the relationship between different species only became apparent with the application of modern molecular techniques. Likewise although recognised in the 19th century as potential causes of human infection, piecing together the complex and, in certain cases, still uncertain relationships to different human diseases has taken many years. Recognised initially as causes of infection of the skin, they are now known to be superficial commensals as well as potential causes of infections in domestic animals and more serious human conditions such as fungemia. They have also been implicated in the pathogenesis of allergic and other inflammatory diseases.

Given this complex, yet fascinating, history it seems appropriate to bring together current thought on these yeasts, their structure and function and their association with both human and animal disease states. This book provides such a view of the genus *Malassezia* and the diseases caused by its members. In accomplishing this task the book takes the reader through the history of the genus *Malassezia* and critically reviews its taxonomy, physiology and the diseases caused, both directly or indirectly. It is intended to provide an up-to-date account of these organisms that will appeal to the specialist scientist and student as well as the practising microbiologist or physician.

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Roderick J. Hay
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Contributors

H. Ruth Ashbee, PhD
Mycology Reference Center,
Department of Microbiology,
Leeds General Infirmary,
Leeds, LS1 3EX, UK
h.r.ashbee@leeds.ac.uk

Dominik Begerow, PhD
Ruhr-Universität Bochum,
Geobottanik, ND 03/174,
Universitätsstr. 150,
44801 Bochum, Germany
dominik.begerow@rub.de

Teun Boekhout, PhD
Centraalbureau voor Schimmelcultures,
Uppsalalaan 8, 3584 CT Utrecht,
The Netherlands
t.boekhout@cbs.knaw.nl

Ross Bond, DVM, PhD
Senior Lecturer in Veterinary Dermatology,
Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences,
Royal Veterinary College, Hawkshead Lane,
North Mymms, Hatfield,
Herts AL9 7TA, UK
rbond@rvc.ac.uk

F. Javier Cabañes, DVM
Veterinary Mycology Group,
Department of Animal Health and Anatomy,
Faculty of Veterinary,
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona,
08193 Bellaterra, Barcelona, Spain
javier.cabanes@uab.es

Reto Crameri, PhD
Swiss Institute of Allergy and Asthma
Research (SIAF),
Obere Strasse 22, 7270 Davos,
Switzerland
crameri@siaf.uzh.ch

Vicente Crespo Erchiga, MD
Department of Dermatology,
Regional University Hospital Carlos Haya,
Plaza del Hospital Civil s/n,
29009 Málaga, Spain
vicente.crespo.sspa@juntadeandalucia.es

Tom Dawson, PhD
The Procter & Gamble Co,
Miami Valley Innovation Center,
Cincinnati, OH 45253-8707, USA
saunders.cw@pg.com
Yvonne DeAngelis, BSc
The Procter & Gamble Co
Miami Valley Innovation Center
Cincinnati, OH 45253-8707, USA
saunders.cw@pg.com

George Gaitanis, DM, PhD
Department of Skin and Venereal Diseases,
University Hospital of Ioannina,
University of Ioannina Medical School,
S. Niarhos Avenue,
45500 Ioannina, Greece
ggaitanis@med.uoa.gr

Andreas Groll, DM, PhD
Infectious Disease Research Program,
Center for Bone Marrow Transplantation
and Department of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology
Children’s University Hospital Muenster,
Albert-Schweitzer-Strasse 33,
48149 Muenster, Germany
grollan@ukmuenster.de

Eveline Guého-Kellermann, PhD
INSERM
5 rue de la Huchette
61400 Mauves sur Huisne, France
e.gueho@orange.fr

Jacques Guillot, DVM, PhD
Department of Parasitology-Mycology,
Joint Research Unit BIPAR (Biologie Moléculaire et Immunologie Parasitaires et Fongiques) AFSSA, ENVA, UPVM,
Ecole Nationale Vétérinaire d’Alfort,
94704 Maisons-Alfort, France
jguillot@vet-alfort.fr

Suzana Hadina, DVM, PhD
Department of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases with Clinic,
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,
Heinzelova 55, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia
suzana.hadina@vef.hr

Roderick J. Hay, MD
Professor of cutaneous infection,
Skin Infection Clinic,
Dermatology Department,
Kings College Hospital,
London SE5 9RS, UK
roderick.hay@ifd.org

Peter Mayser, MD
Department of Dermatology and Andrology,
Justus Liebig University Giessen,
Gaffkystrasse 14, 35385 Giessen,
Germany
peter.mayser@derma.med.uni-giessen.de

Gillian Midgley, PhD
35 Lebanon Park,
Twickenham TW1 3DH, UK
mail@bryn-jones.net

Vincent A. Robert, PhD
Bioinformatics group leader,
Centraalbureau voor Schimmelcultures,
Uppsalalaan 8, 3584 CT Utrecht,
The Netherlands
v.robert@cbs.knaw.nl
www.cbs.knaw.nl

Charles D. Saunders, PhD
The Procter & Gamble Co,
Miami Valley Innovation Center,
Cincinnati, OH 45253-8707, USA
saunders.cw@pg.com

Annika Scheynius, MD, PhD
Department of Medicine Solna,
Clinical Allergy Research Unit,
L2:04, Karolinska Institutet and University Hospital,
171 76, Stockholm, Sweden
annika.scheynius@ki.se
Takashi Sugita, PhD  
Department of Microbiology,  
Meiji Pharmaceutical University,  
2-522-1 Noshio, Kiyose,  
Tokyo 204-8588, Japan  
sugita@my-pharm.ac.jp

Athanasios Tragiannidis, MD, PhD  
Second Department of Pediatrics,  
Hematology and Oncology Unit,  
Aristotle University Thessaloniki,  
AHEPA Hospital, S. Kiriakidi 1 str,  
54636 Thessaloniki, Greece  
atriagia@auth.gr

Aristea Velegraki, PhD  
Mycology Laboratory, Medical School,  
National and Kapodistrian  
University of Athens,  
Athens 11527, Greece  
aveleg@med.uoa.gr

Jun Xu, PhD  
The Procter & Gamble Co,  
Miami Valley Innovation Center,  
Cincinnati, OH 45253-8707, USA  
saunders.cw@pg.com