

# BUGS AT THE DINNER TABLE: Role of the Gut Microbiome in Obesity & Metabolic Syndrome

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# Disclosures

- Advisory Board: Janssen, Ferring, Abbvie
- Research Materials: Rebiotix

INTRODUCTION: Understanding the literature

1

Review the relationship between the intestinal microbiome and obesity

2

Discuss evidence supporting the role of the microbiome in T2DM

3

Describe interactions between the intestinal microbiome in NAFLD

CONCLUSION: Microbial therapeutics and the future

## Objectives for Today's Talk

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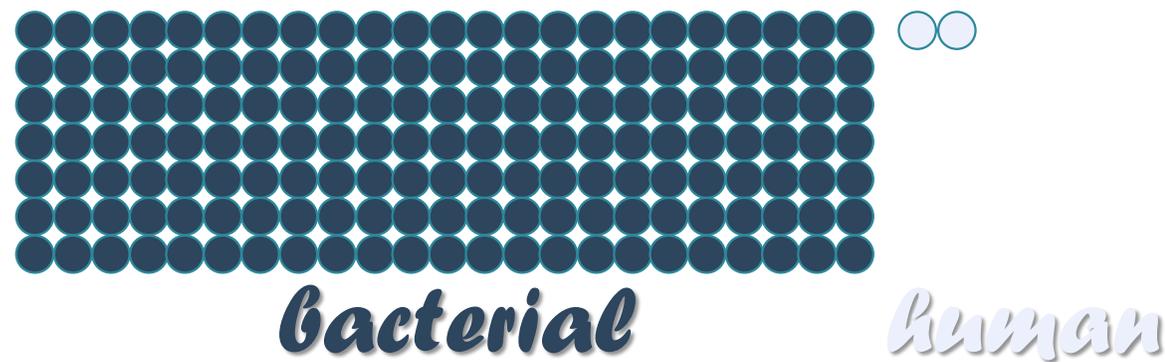
Describe interactions between the intestinal microbiome in NAFLD

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# Objectives for Today's Talk

Microbiome  
refers to the  
collective  
genetic  
material of all  
nonhuman  
cells in the  
body

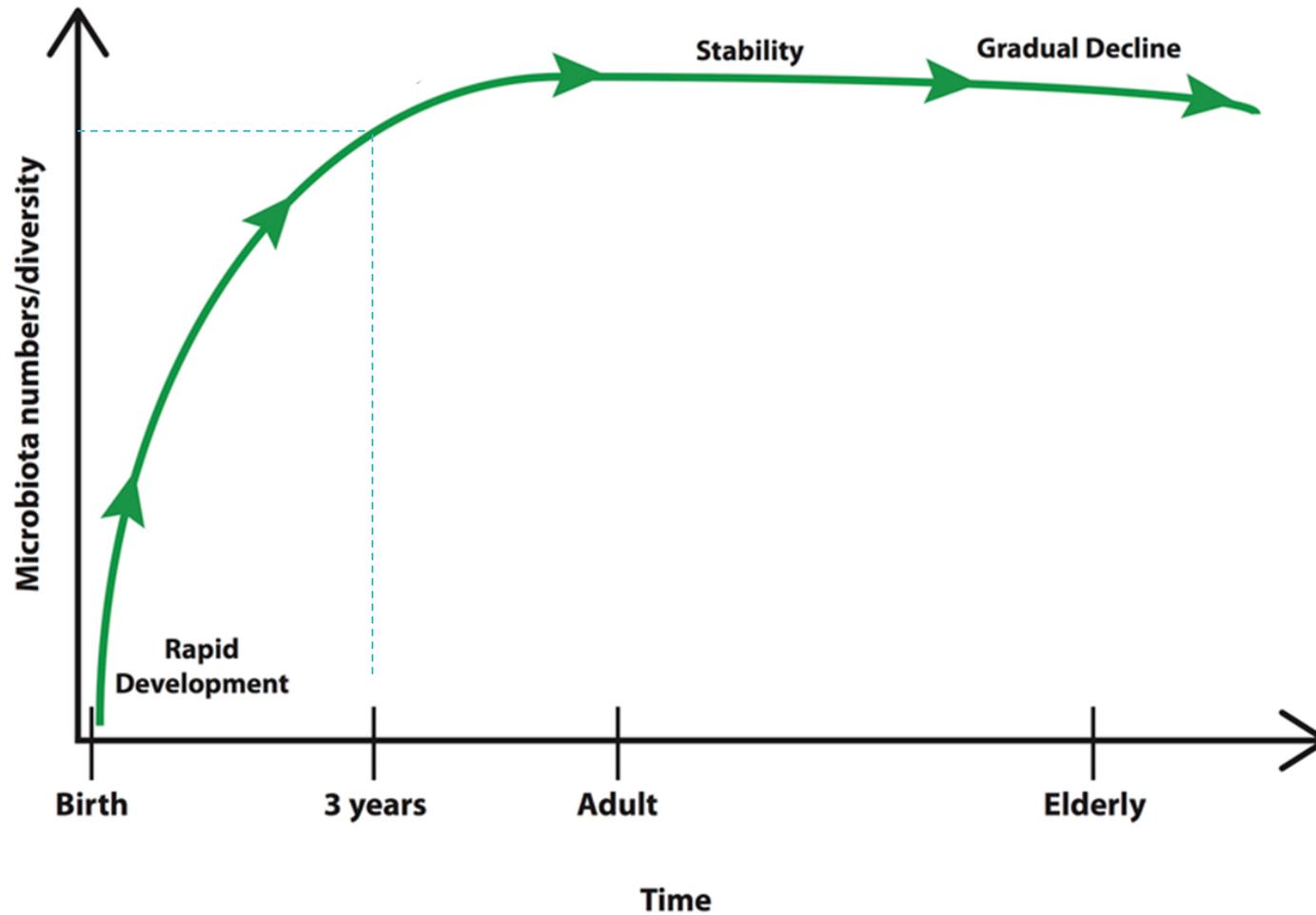
- Microbiota = bacterial, viral, fungal cells in the body
- Microbiome = genes within these cells
- 150x more microbial genes than human genome
- Relevance across disease states





- protection against pathogenic bacterial blooms
- maintenance of gut barrier

Intestinal microbiota has multiple intestinal, and endocrine functions



Early life influences  
greatest impact on long-  
term microbial structure  
and function

Colonization with maternal  
microbes during delivery

Breastfeeding

Breastmilk

Limited heritability  
(monozygotic / dizygotic twin studies)



Literature is  
plagued by  
misattribution  
of *association*  
with *causation*

- Many confounders
- Dietary influences most significant: obesity, T2DM literature
- Germ-free animal models provide best evidence for causal roles
- Similar experimental designs lacking in humans

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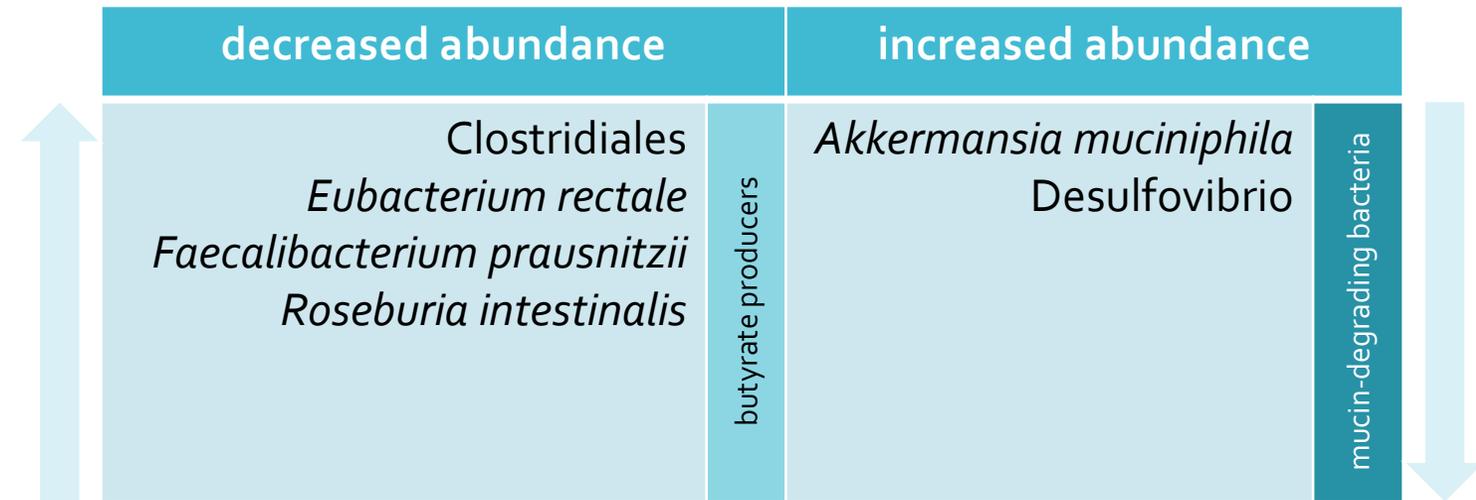
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Describe interactions between the intestinal microbiome in NAFLD

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# Objectives

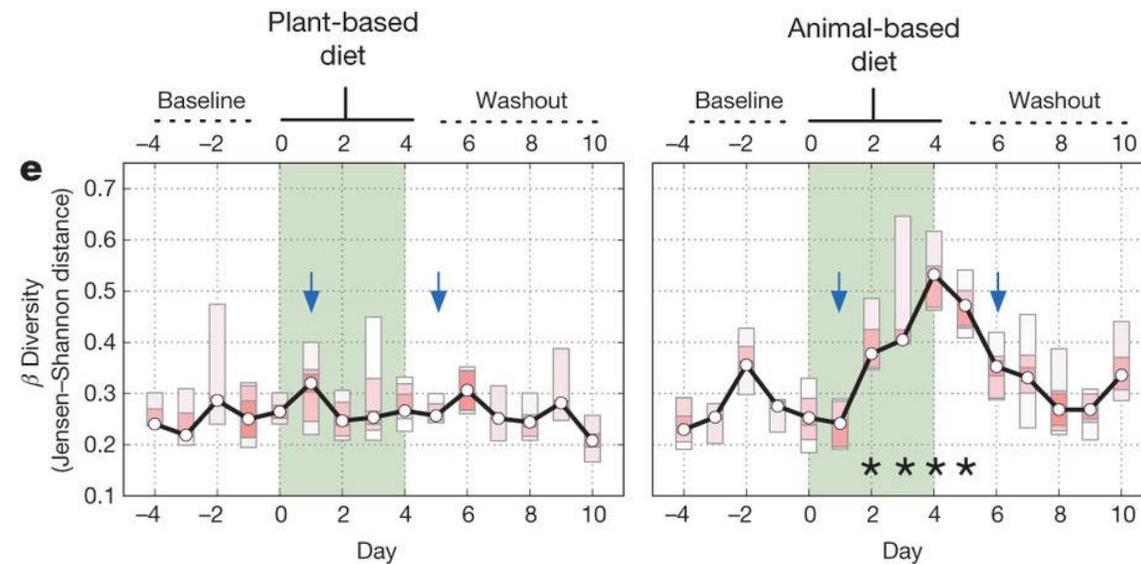
# Differences in microbial communities between lean and obese individuals



- Broadly: reduced bacterial diversity in obesity
- Animal studies: reduced diversity correlates with ↑BMI, adiposity, dyslipidemia, inflammation

# Microbiota strongly influenced by diet

- High fat, animal-based diets significantly diminish overall microbial diversity



- Diet can shift bacterial communities within 3 days, long before clinical phenotype emerges



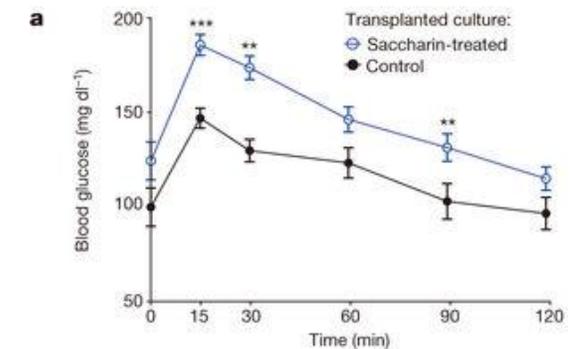
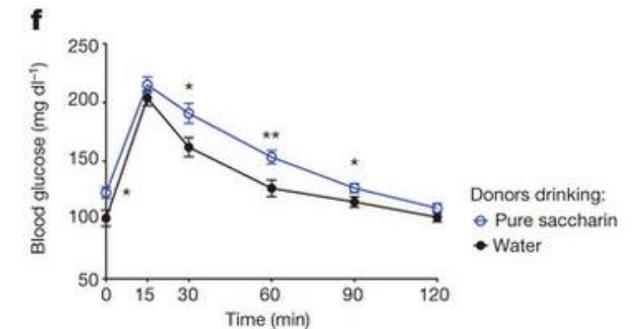
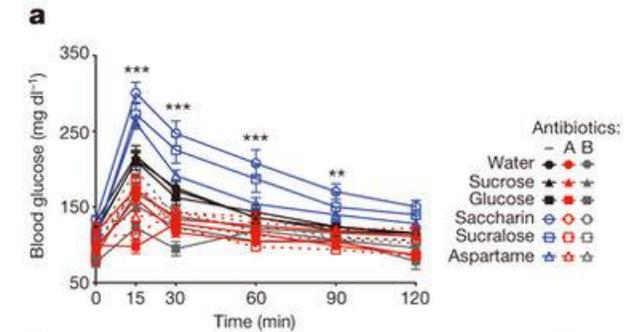
# “Association of artificial sweeteners and T<sub>2</sub>DM risk”

Schulze MB, Manson JE, Ludwig DS, et al. (2004)  
Sweetened beverages, weight gain, and incidence of  
type 2 diabetes in young and middle-aged women.

JAMA 292, 927–934.

# Artificial sweeteners associated with altered microbial composition

1. n=20 mice, non-artificial sweetener (NAS) added to normal chow diet → glucose intolerance
2. n=15 mice, receiving NAS diet given **oral antibiotics** → **no glucose intolerance**
3. n=12 germ-free mice received **fecal transplant** from NAS-fed animals → **glucose intolerance** in recipients
4. n=12 germ-free mice received **fecal transplant** from **healthy donor stool** incubated in **NAS cell culture** → **glucose intolerance** in recipients



# Cardiovascular risks associated with red meat intake linked to microbiota metabolism

- Red meat (+carnitine, +choline) metabolized by gut microbiota to trimethylamine (TMA)
- TMA synthesized by hepatic FMO<sub>3</sub> to TMAO
- Strong correlation between [TMAO] with CAD incidence
- 2016 Cell: TMAO enhances platelet aggregation, thrombosis

Koeth RA, Wang Z, Levison BS, et al. Intestinal microbiota metabolism of L-carnitine, a nutrient in red meat, promotes atherosclerosis. *Nat Med* 2013; 19:576–585.

Tang WH, Hazen SL. Microbiome, trimethylamine N-oxide, and cardiometabolic disease. *Transl Res* 2017; 179:108–115.

Zhu W, Gregory Jill C, Org E, et al. Gut microbial metabolite TMAO enhances platelet hyperreactivity and thrombosis risk. *Cell* 2016;165:111–124.

## Short-chain fatty acids important link between microbiota and metabolism

- >10% of host energy provided by bacterial fermentation of indigestible substrates
- Dietary fibers metabolized into short-chain fatty acids

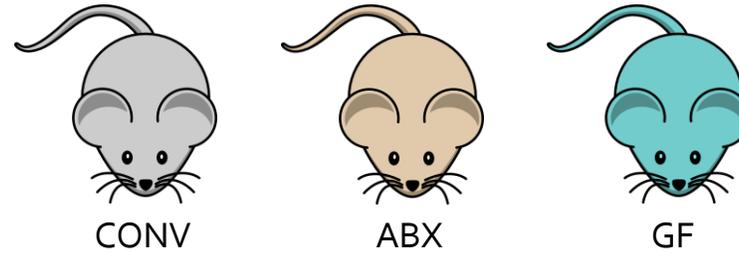
SCFA	metabolic function
butyrate	colonocyte energy source
propionate, acetate	energy substrate for liver
butyrate, propionate acetate	circulatory extra-intestinal metabolic + neural signaling

# Microbially derived SCFA affects central sympathetic pathways

- Acetate affects CNS via vagal nerve afferents
- Animal studies have demonstrated possible weight-reduction effects in animals receiving supplementation
- Mixed results in recent literature

# Influence on central appetite regulation

- Microbiota can influence hypothalamic signaling

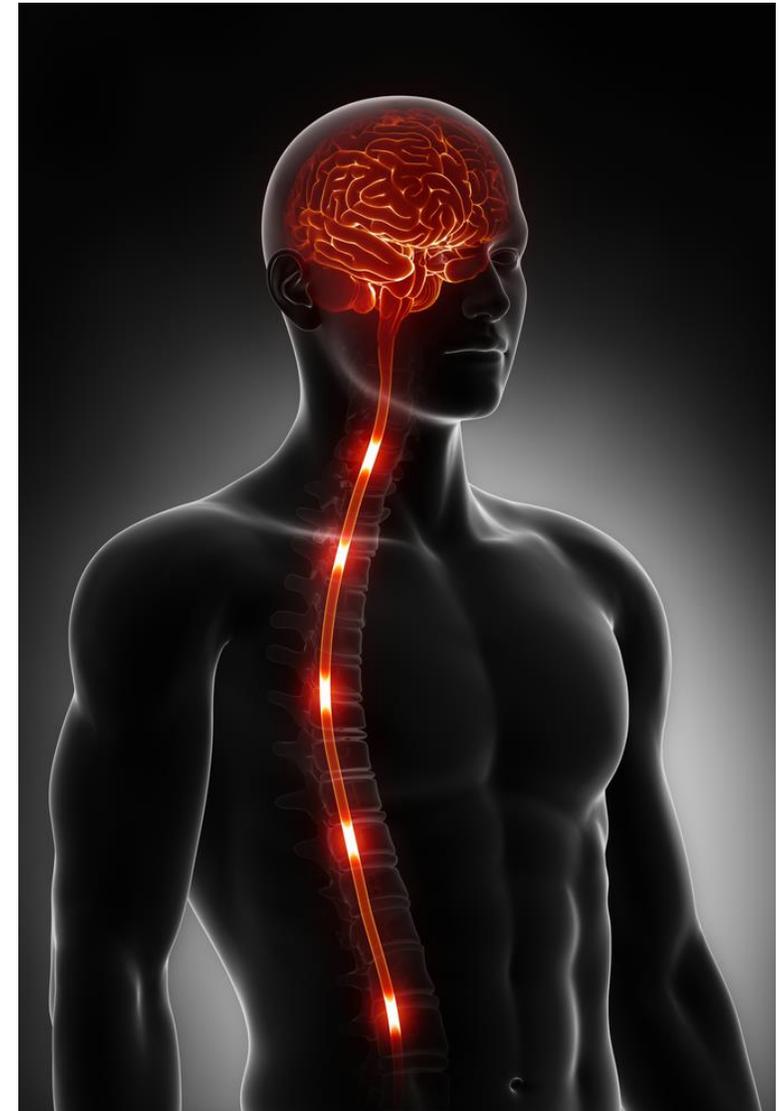


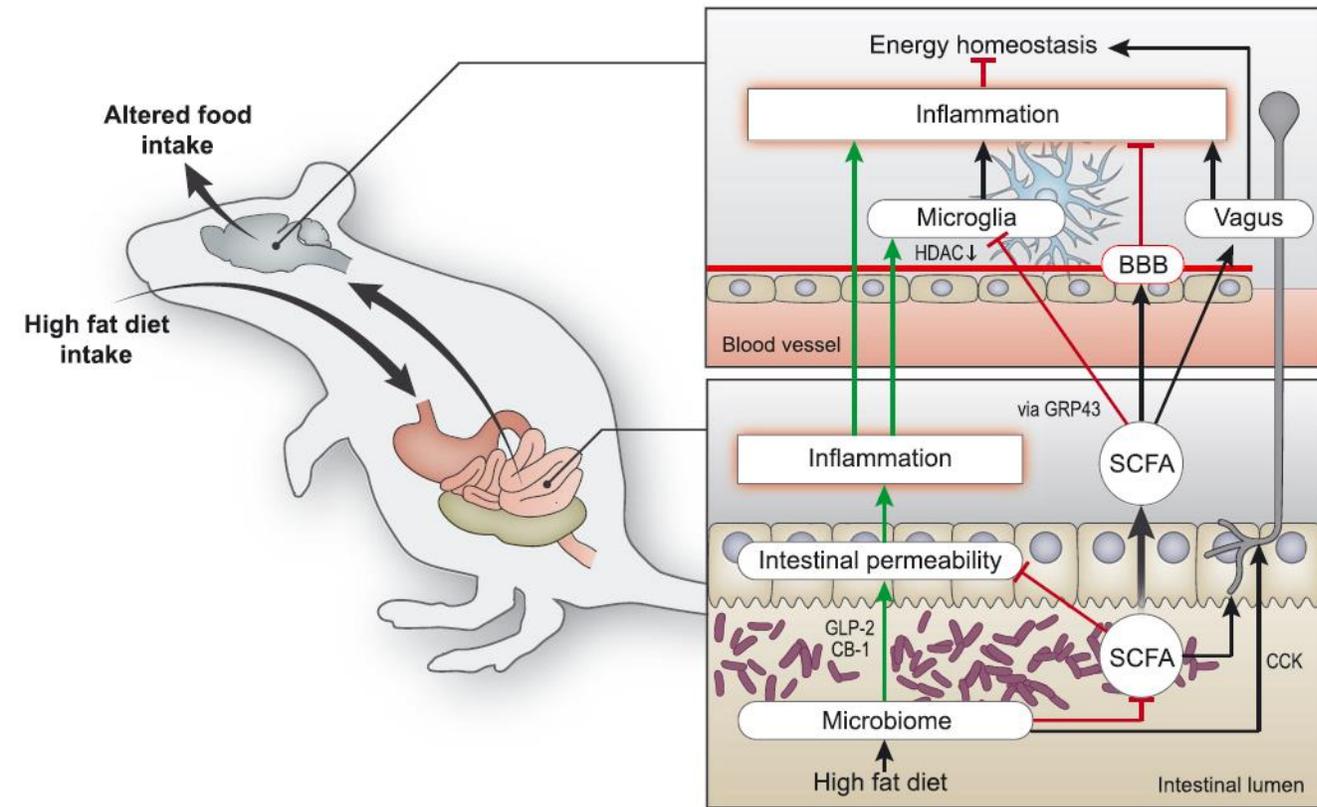
- Hypothalamic gene expression varies with microbial composition
- *Roseburia*, *Lactobacillus spp.*



Anorectic: POMC, DNF, and CRF

Orexigenic: AgRP, PYY



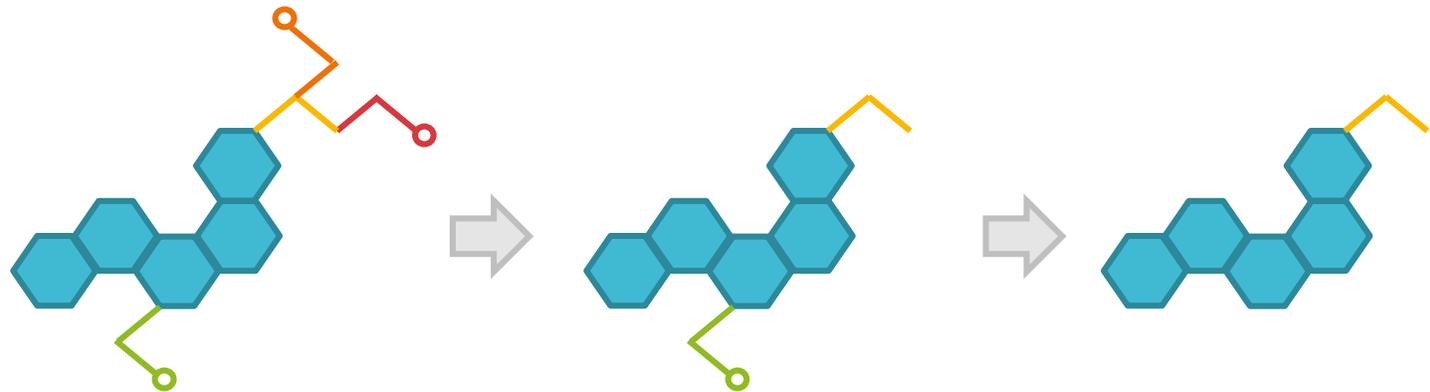


- Microglia influenced by intestinal bacteria
- GF mice have poorly developed microglia
- Antibiotics given to non-GF mice rapidly affects microglial permeability
- Recolonization with fecal transplant corrects this within six weeks
- **Dynamic, rapid process of microbiota influencing blood brain barrier and CNS**

Microbiota affects CNS pathways by altering blood brain barrier permeability

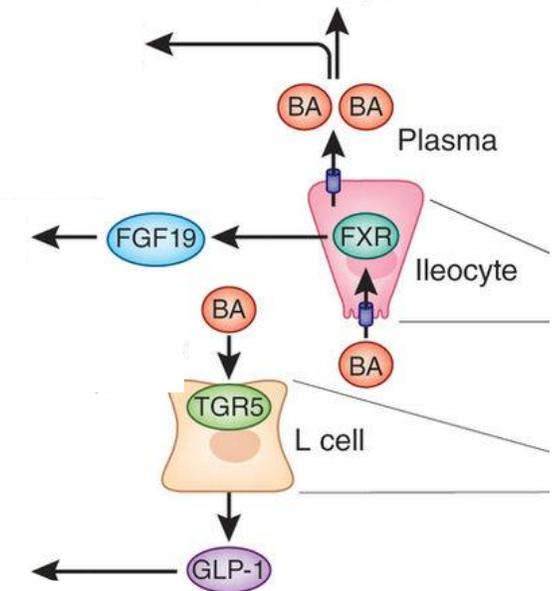
Physiologic functions of endogenous, host-produced metabolites also affected

- Example: intestinal bile acids
- Produced by body and metabolized by bacteria to 2° bile acids
- Further dehydroxylated by non-pathogenic *Clostridia spp.* in colon



# Microbially metabolized bile acids have major effects on host metabolism

- Bile acids activate FXR receptor in ileum and liver
- TGR<sub>5</sub> in intestinal L-cells
- Significantly higher ligand potential of dehydroxylated bile acids (microbiota) for FXR/TGR<sub>5</sub>



# Bariatric surgery further suggests role for microbiota in obesity

- Roux-en-Y gastric bypass: most effective longterm interventions to induce weight loss
- Decreased caloric intake unlikely to explain rapid metabolic and appetite suppression effects alone
- Series of experiments in surgical mouse models:
  - a) Vertical sleeve gastrectomy performed in FXR knock-out mice: no weight loss
  - b) Surgical diversion of biliary flow from duodenum to ileum: weight loss + metabolic improvements
  - c) Fecal transfers from RYGB mice to non-operative obese mice: weight loss + metabolic improvements

**BARIATRICS → GUT MICROBIOTA → ↓OBESITY / METABOLIC SYNDROME**

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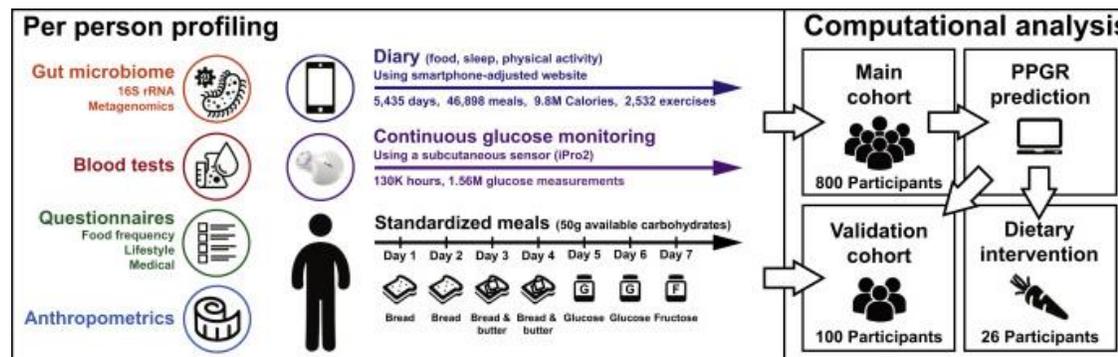
Describe interactions between the intestinal microbiome in NAFLD

CONCLUSION: Microbial therapeutics and the future

# Objectives

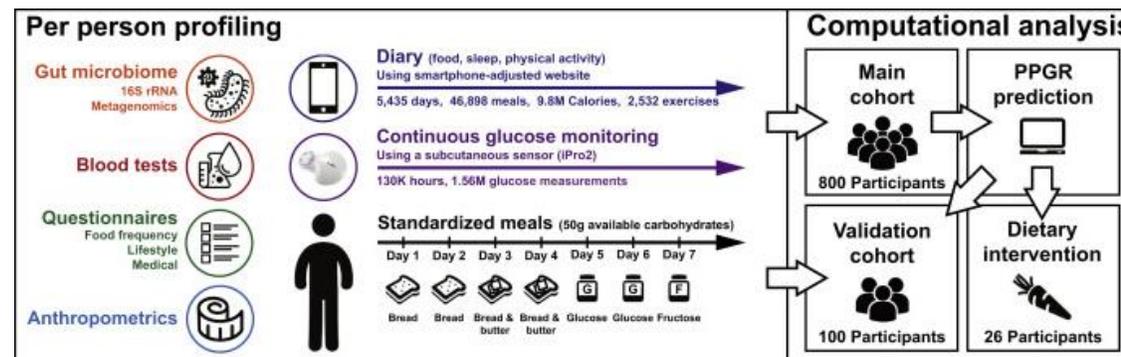
# Landmark 2015 Cell paper: diabetes management through personalized microbiota manipulation

- Israeli team led by Eran Elinav and Eran Segal
- Stool samples, post-prandial glucose response of **800** T2DM patients fed **46,000** meals over **5,400** days



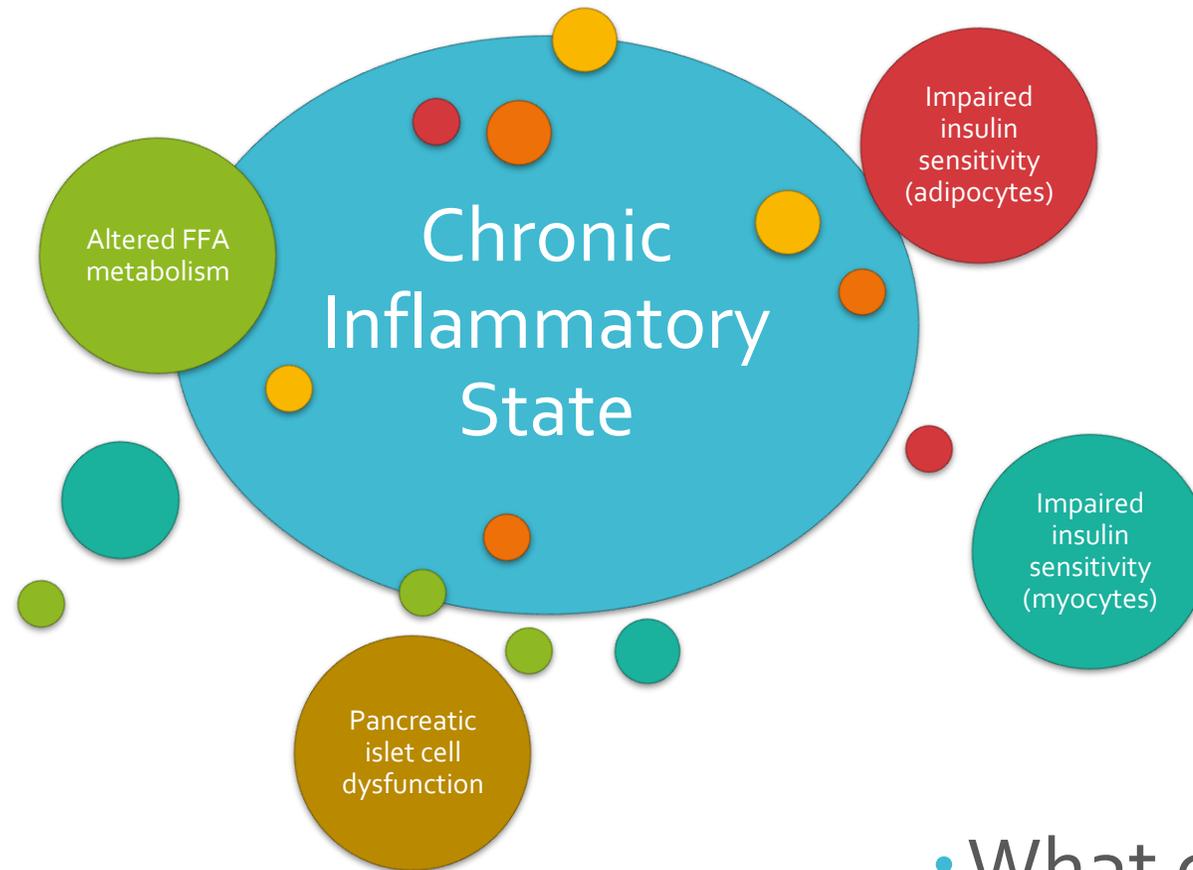
# Landmark 2015 Cell paper: diabetes management through personalized microbiota manipulation

- Computational prediction rule developed: foods + microbiome + blood glucose + interindividual variability
- Validated against 100 T2DM participants
- Microbiome-guided nutritional counselling performed better than dietitian-guided counselling for predicting blood glucose response



- Heterogeneous patient responses to routine nutritional counselling
- Differences in microbial composition may underlie post-prandial glucose response

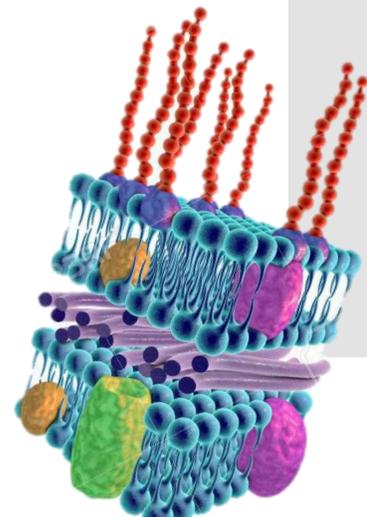
Insulin resistant in Type 2 Diabetes characterized by low-grade systemic inflammation



- What causes the inflammation?

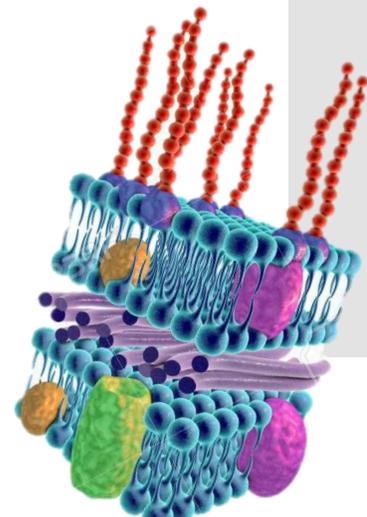
Microbial  
dysbiosis may  
be the inciting  
factor for low-  
grade chronic  
inflammation

- 2007, Diabetes: Patrice Cani described *metabolic endotoxemia*
- Mice fed high-fat diets found to develop obesity, insulin resistance, diabetes + systemic inflammation



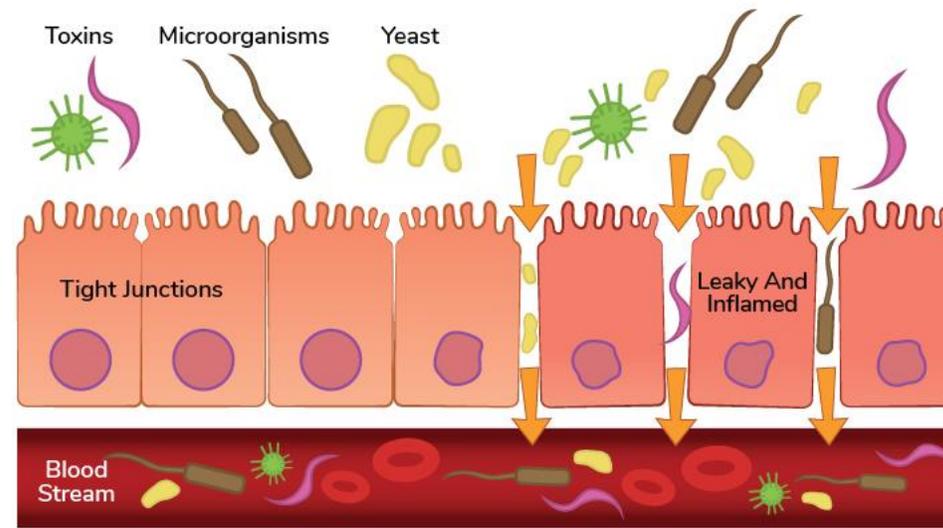
# Microbial dysbiosis may be the inciting factor for low-grade chronic inflammation

- Gram-negative bacterial lipopolysaccharide (LPL)
- Transmembrane TLR receptors sense intestinal bacterial LPL
- Triggers inflammatory cytokine pathway



# Bacterial LPL also may directly enter circulation through leaky gut membranes

- High [LPL] in in portal vein, plasma of T<sub>2</sub>DM patients
- Intestinal permeability increased between epithelial cells
- 2015 JD Schertzer (McMaster University): certain bacterial strains disrupt localization of tight-junction proteins



Immune Response • Reaction • B and T Cells Release

# Microbially derived short-chain fatty acids may have a protective effect against T<sub>2</sub>DM

- High fiber diets beneficial in T<sub>2</sub>DM management
- Possible microbial basis
- Bacterially produced SCFA stimulate liver/muscle protein kinases (AMPK)
- AMPK activates PPAR receptors →
  - improved glucose uptake
  - oxidation of free-fatty acids
  - increased energy expenditure

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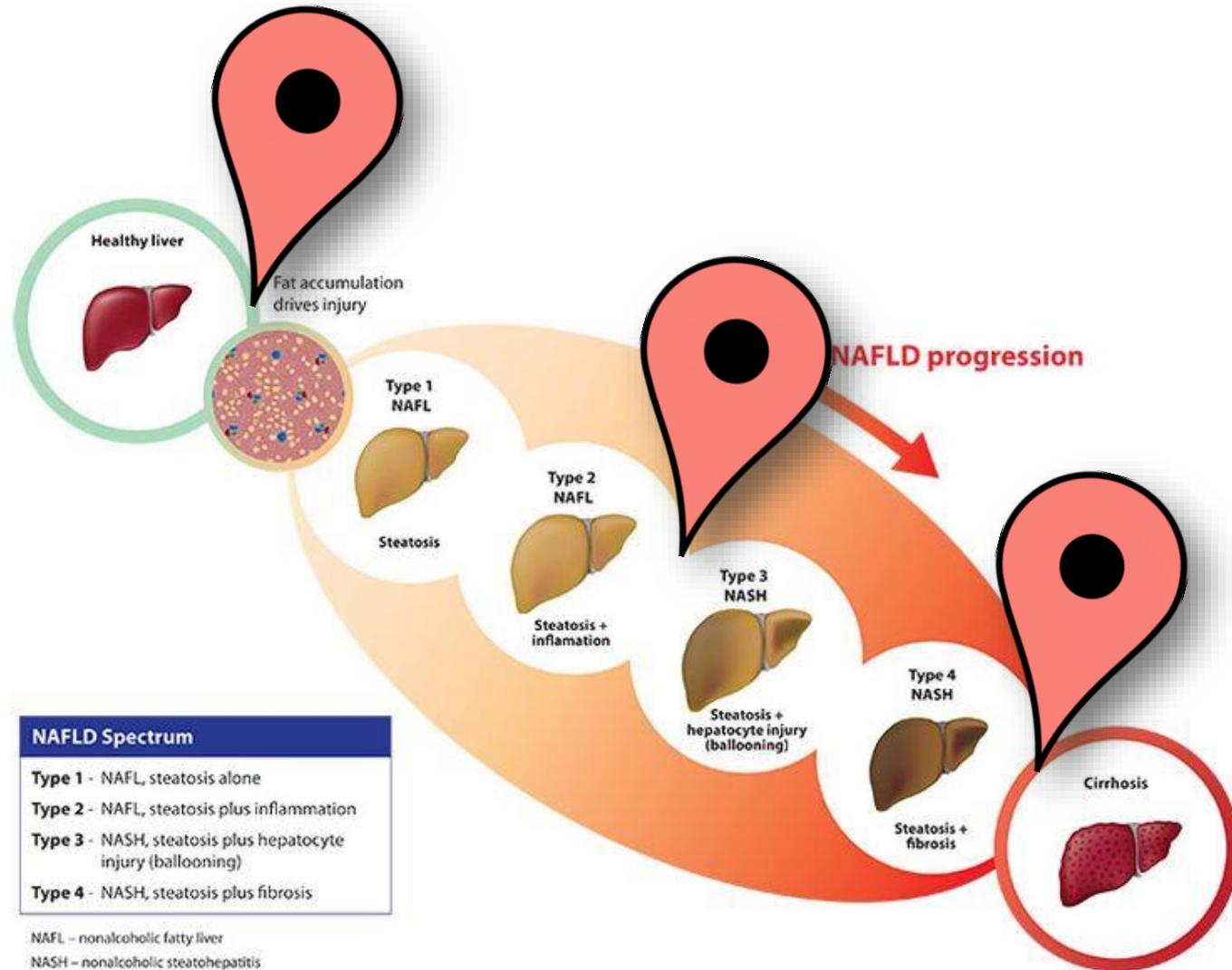
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# Objectives

Progression of NAFLD to cirrhosis is much less linear than the picture suggests

30% NAFL develop NASH  
30% NASH develop cirrhosis

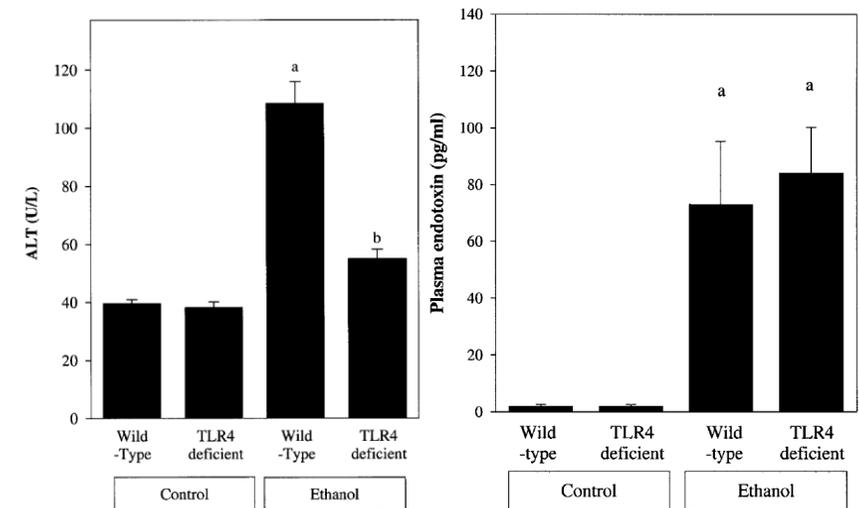
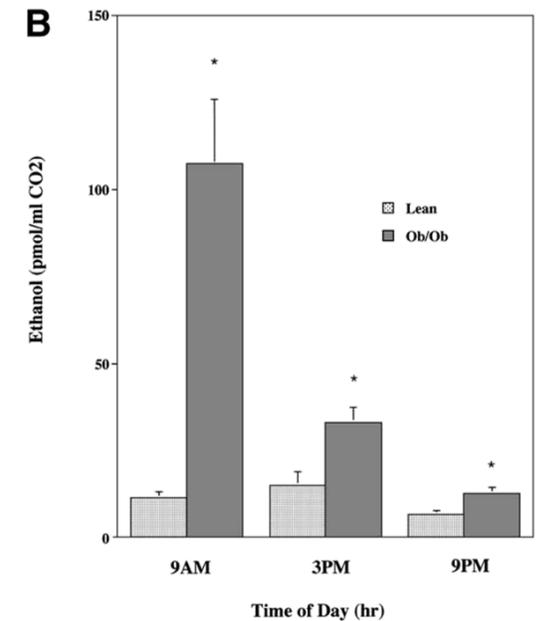


# Microbially derived ethanol may have direct hepatotoxic effects

- Microbiome composition of NAFLD and non-NAFLD obese patients differ in abundance of multiple species
- *Enterobacteriaceae* higher compared to healthy controls
- Major metabolite of *Enterobacteriaceae* is ethanol

# Microbially derived ethanol may have direct hepatotoxic effects

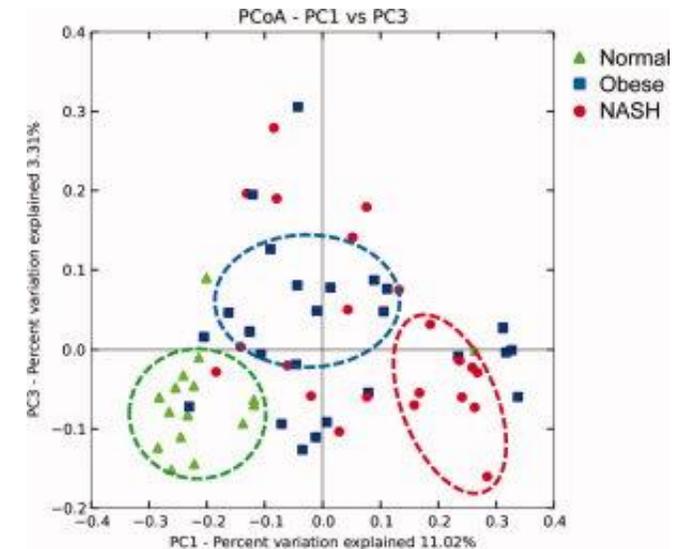
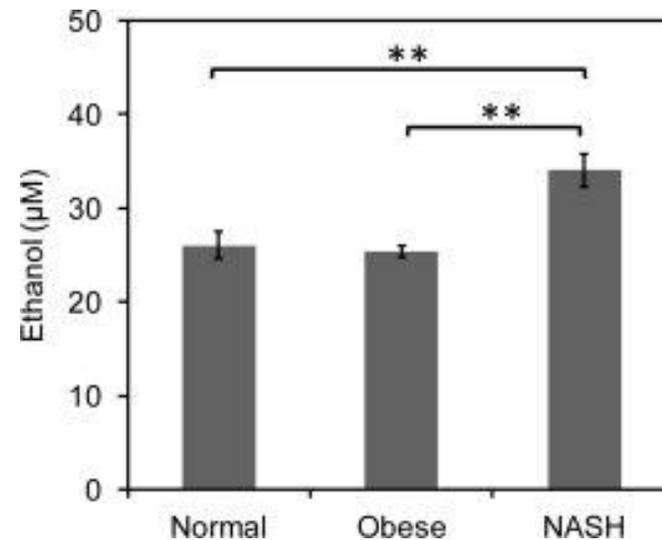
- Obese animals higher blood concentrations of ethanol vs lean animals
- Ethanol produced *de novo* produces ROS → liver inflammation
- Rats fed nonabsorbable antibiotics less-severe liver inflammation after ethanol administration
- TLR<sub>4</sub><sup>-/-</sup> mice no liver inflammation after ethanol administration





## Pediatric data also suggests microbial ethanol hepatotoxicity in NAFLD/NASH

- n=75, mean age 14.4
- 3 groups: healthy controls + obesity + NASH



Small bowel  
bacterial  
overgrowth  
more common  
in NAFLD

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SIBO: disorder of abnormally high bacterial abundance in small intestine

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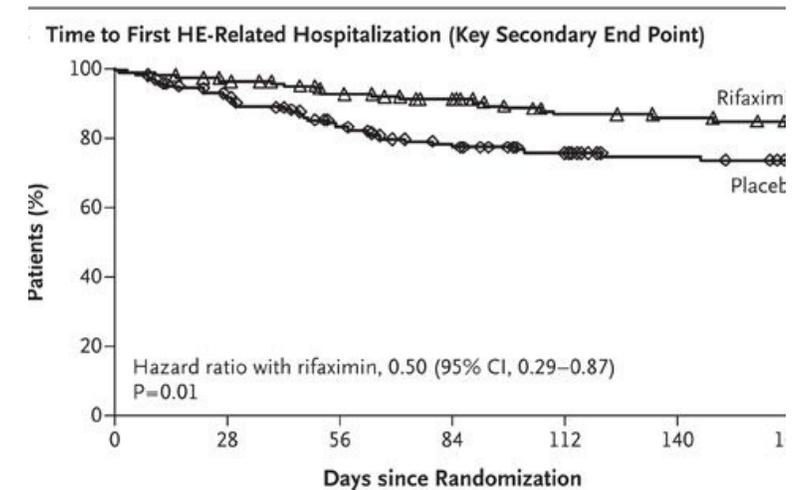
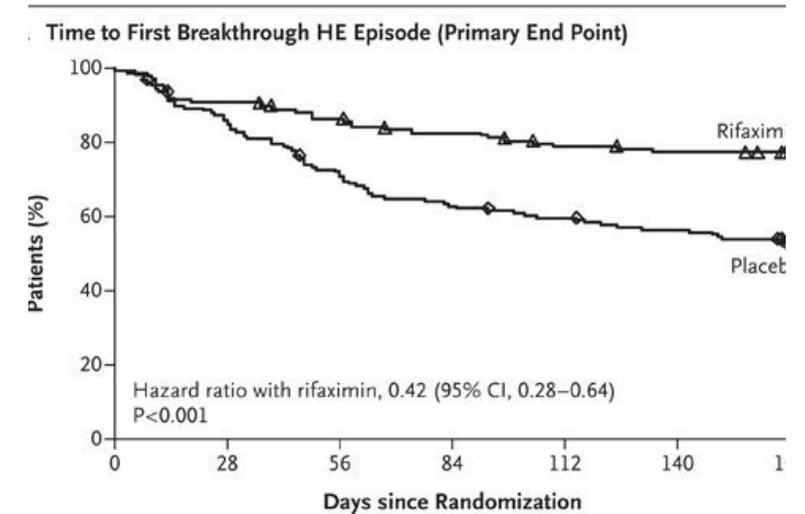
Patients with obesity, NAFLD have higher bacterial load versus healthy controls

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SIBO correlates with degree of steatosis, inflammation and fibrosis

# Treatment of small bowel bacterial overgrowth results in significant improvement in patients with cirrhosis

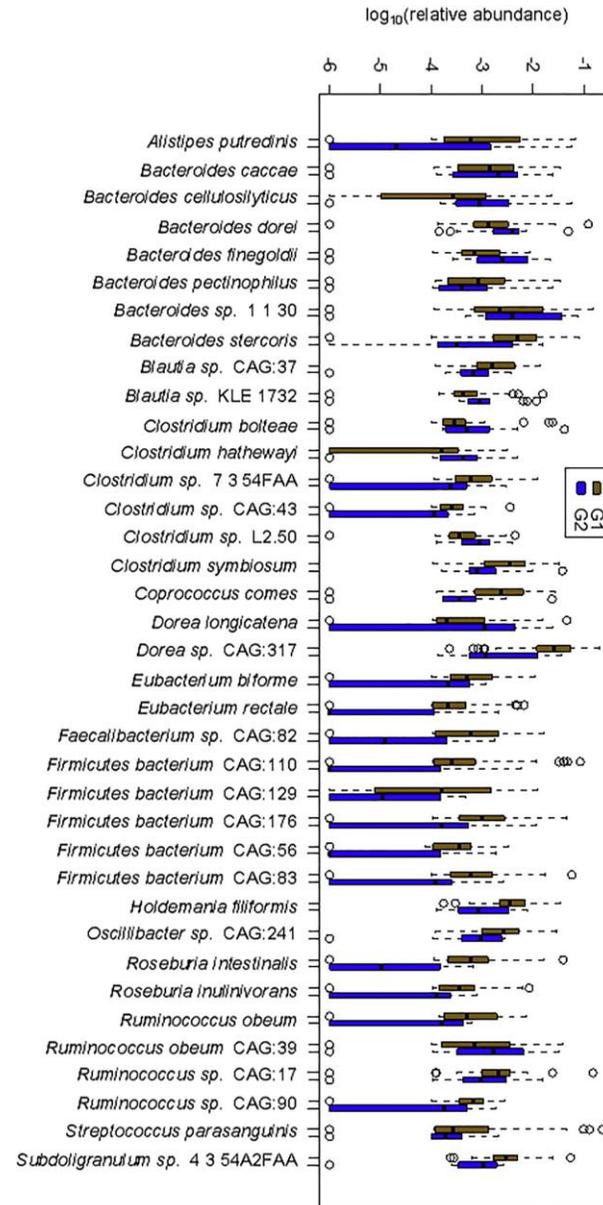
- Rifaximin: nonabsorbable antibiotic for hepatic encephalopathy
- Reduction of luminal bacteria, reduction of  $\text{NH}_3$  production
- Clinical trials ongoing to determine if Rifaximin may affect natural history of liver disease pre-cirrhosis



# Therapeutic bile-acid therapy effective at reducing bacterial overgrowth, inflammation

- Supplemental bile acids may reverse cirrhosis in rats
- Obeticholic acid, FXR agonist
- Multicenter RCT of obeticholic acid in NASH (n=283)
  - Reduced inflammatory activity
  - Reduced fibrosis
  - Improved NAFLD Activity Scores
- Phase 2 clinical trials

# Microbial signatures may offer noninvasive biomarkers for NAFLD staging



- Liver biopsy high-risk in cirrhosis
- 37 gut microbial species predicted Stage 0-2 fibrosis vs. Stage 3-4 fibrosis
- AUROC 0.936
- Stool samples alternative to liver biopsy for detection of advanced fibrosis

4.5"

4.0"

3.5"

3.0"

2.5"

2.0"

1.5"

1.0"

*Obesity*

*Diabetes*

*NAFLD*



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# Objectives

As clinicians...  
how can we  
apply this to  
our patients?



A word cloud featuring the following terms: fiber, yogurt, fecal, antibiotics, organic, probiotics, prebiotics, FMT, and kefir. The words are arranged in a roughly triangular shape, with 'fiber' at the top left, 'antibiotics' in the center, and 'FMT' at the bottom.

fiber  
yogurt  
fecal  
antibiotics  
organic  
probiotics  
prebiotics  
FMT  
kefir

Microbiota  
based therapies  
are a hot area  
of research

# Microbiota based therapies are a hot area of research: TMAO & atherosclerosis

- Targeted inhibition of gut microbial trimethylamine production for atherosclerosis prevention
- Structural analogue of precursor choline (DMB)
- *In vitro* testing on human stool significantly reduces TMA production
- Human trials lacking

## Fecal transplant for T<sub>2</sub>DM

- Fecal microbiota transplant assessed in 1 RCT for T<sub>2</sub>DM
- N=38, autologous vs. healthy donor FMT
- Improvement in insulin sensitivity after 6 weeks
  - No sustained effect at 12 weeks

# Fecal transplant for obesity

- No human studies yet
- 6 clinical trials registered: Boston, Helsinki, Tel Aviv, Hong Kong +
- Dr. Michael Silverman (ID): London, Ontario 🍁
- Dr. Johane Allard (GI): Toronto, Ontario 🍁

## Probiotics have little defined role

- A topic unto itself...
- Have not shown any (generalizable) benefit
- Significant placebo effect
- Low risk

The last 5 years  
have shown an  
exponential  
increase in  
microbiome  
literature. Next  
5 years?

- Estimate: ~1700 patients per cohort study to assess obesity/microbiome relationship where one variable is controlled
- NIH Funded: Human Microbiome Project
- Future studies may establish sub-classifications of metabolic syndrome
  - ie. T2DM driven by bacterial composition vs. T2DM where microbiota does not have role in pathophysiology*

# Conclusions

Microbiota influences obesity:

- dietary influences on microbiome
  - influence on central hypothalamic function

Microbiota influences T<sub>2</sub>DM through:

- SCFA regulate glycemic control
- LPS

Microbiota influences NAFLD through:

- microbial ethanol production
  - SIBO

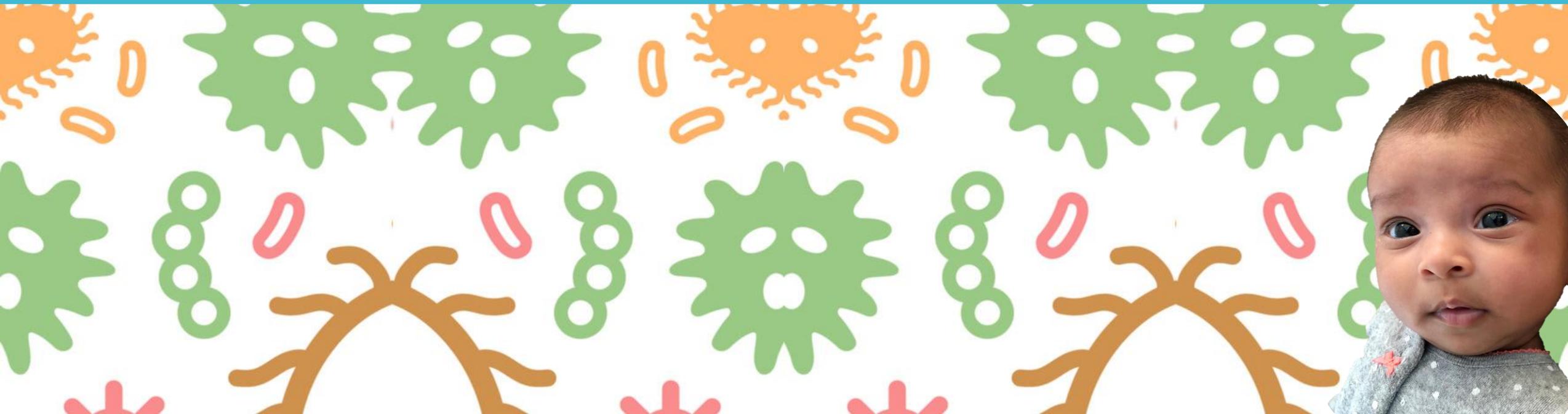


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DIVISION OF PEDIATRIC GASTROENTEROLOGY & NUTRITION

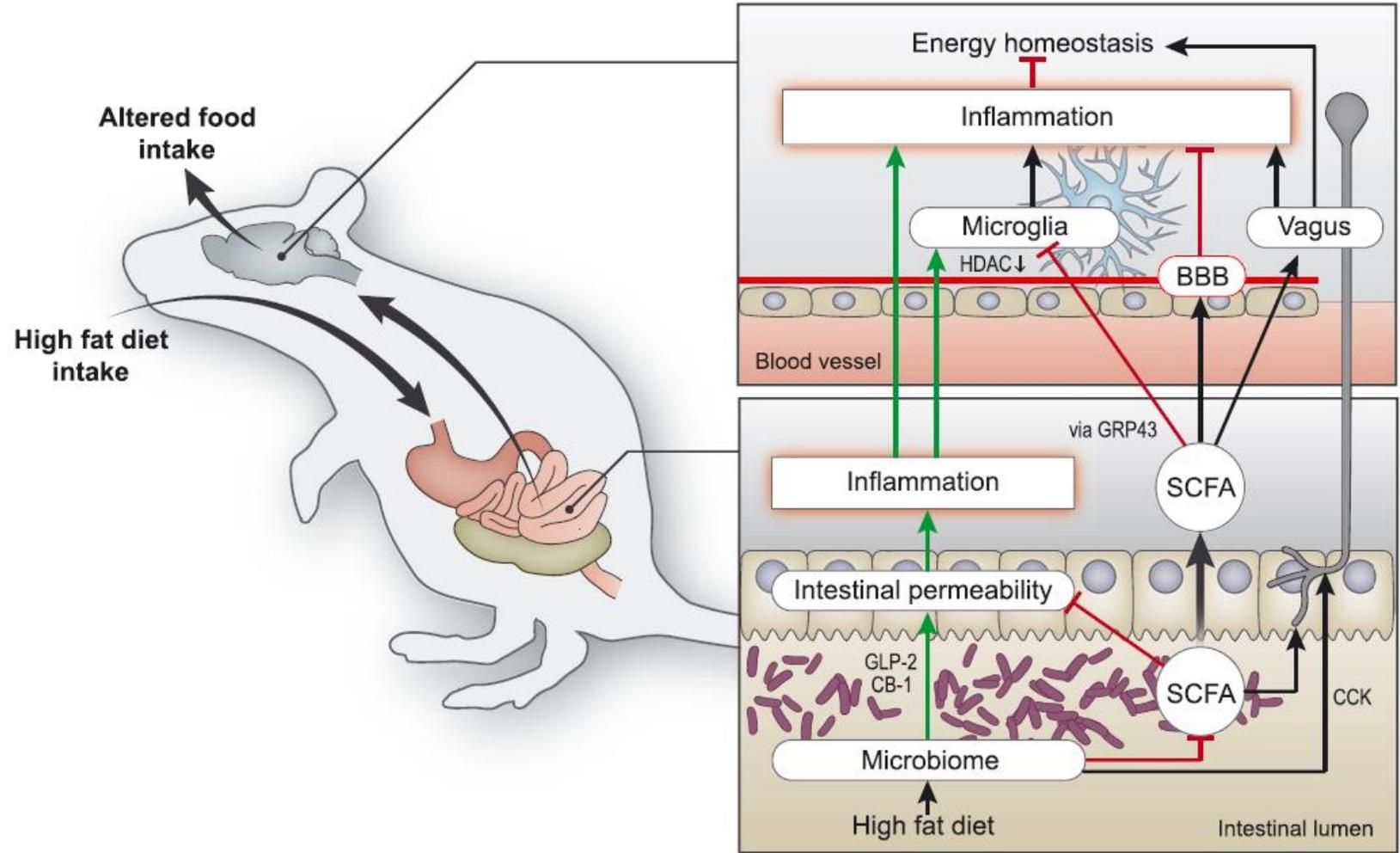
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PEDIATRICS, MCMASTER CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



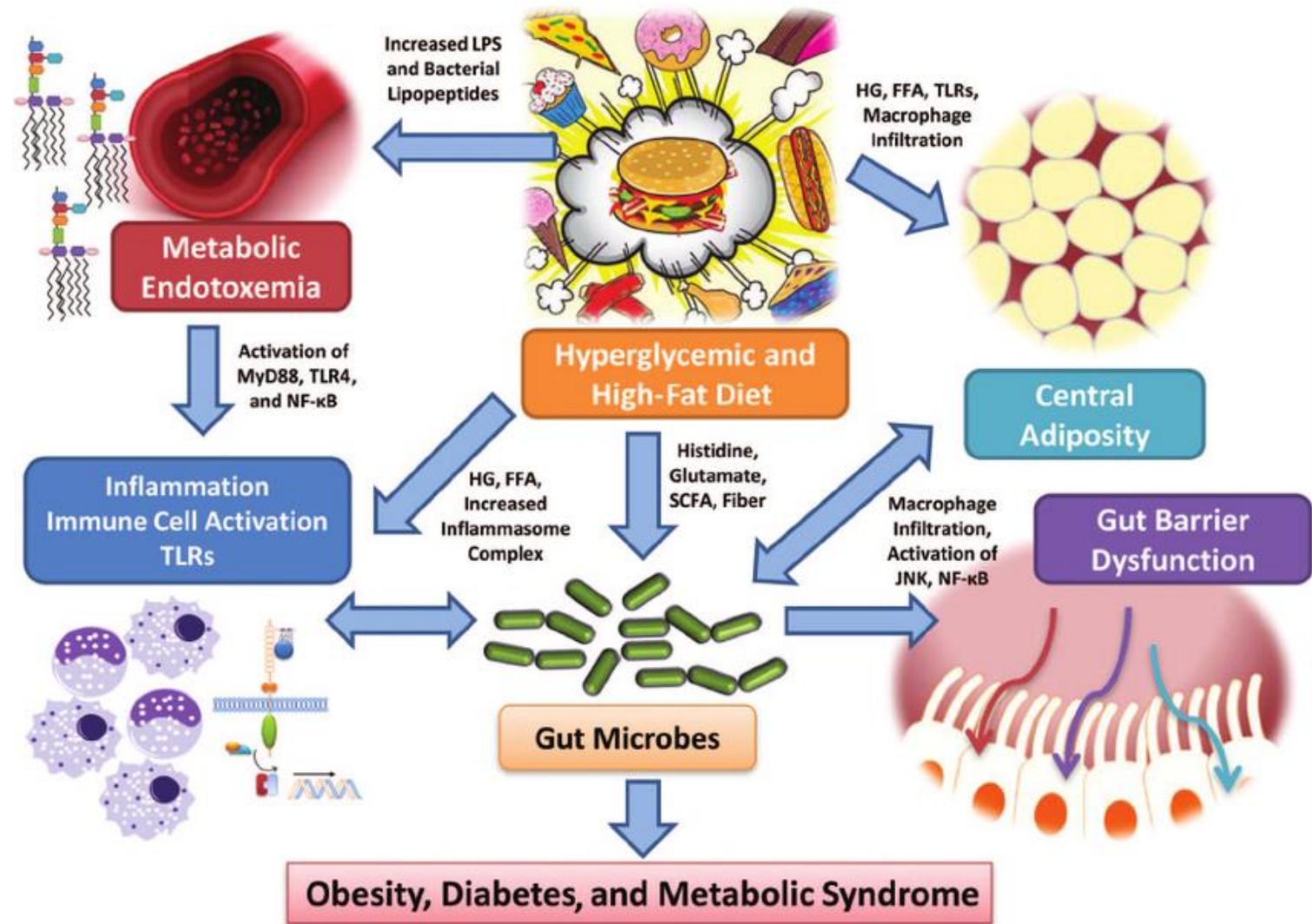
- APPENDIX

The proposed mechanisms of how microbiota influences energy homeostasis during high-fat diet feeding. During high-fat diet feeding, microbiota increases intestinal permeability via mechanisms involving GLP-1 and CB<sub>1</sub>, leading to systemic inflammation. Systemic inflammation induces central inflammation via humoral, cellular (microglia) or neural (not shown) pathways, impairing energy homeostasis and increasing food intake. Short-chain fatty acid, of which the production is decreased during diet-induced obesity, promotes colonic integrity, blood–brain barrier integrity and induces a neuroprotective and anti-inflammatory state in microglia by inhibiting (HDAC, histone deacetylase) via the G-protein coupled receptor 43. Moreover, both microbiota and short-chain fatty acid interact with vagal afferent nerves, communicating with the hypothalamus about inflammation and energy homeostasis, although its influence is unclear. Red lines depict negative connections; green lines depict positive connections, and black lines depict unknown connections (CB<sub>1</sub>, cannabinoid receptor 1; CCK, cholecystikinin; GPR43, G protein-coupled receptor 43).

Mulders RJ, De git KCG, Schéle E, Dickson SL, Sanz Y, Adan RAH. Microbiota in obesity: interactions with enteroendocrine, immune and central nervous systems. *Obes Rev.* 2018

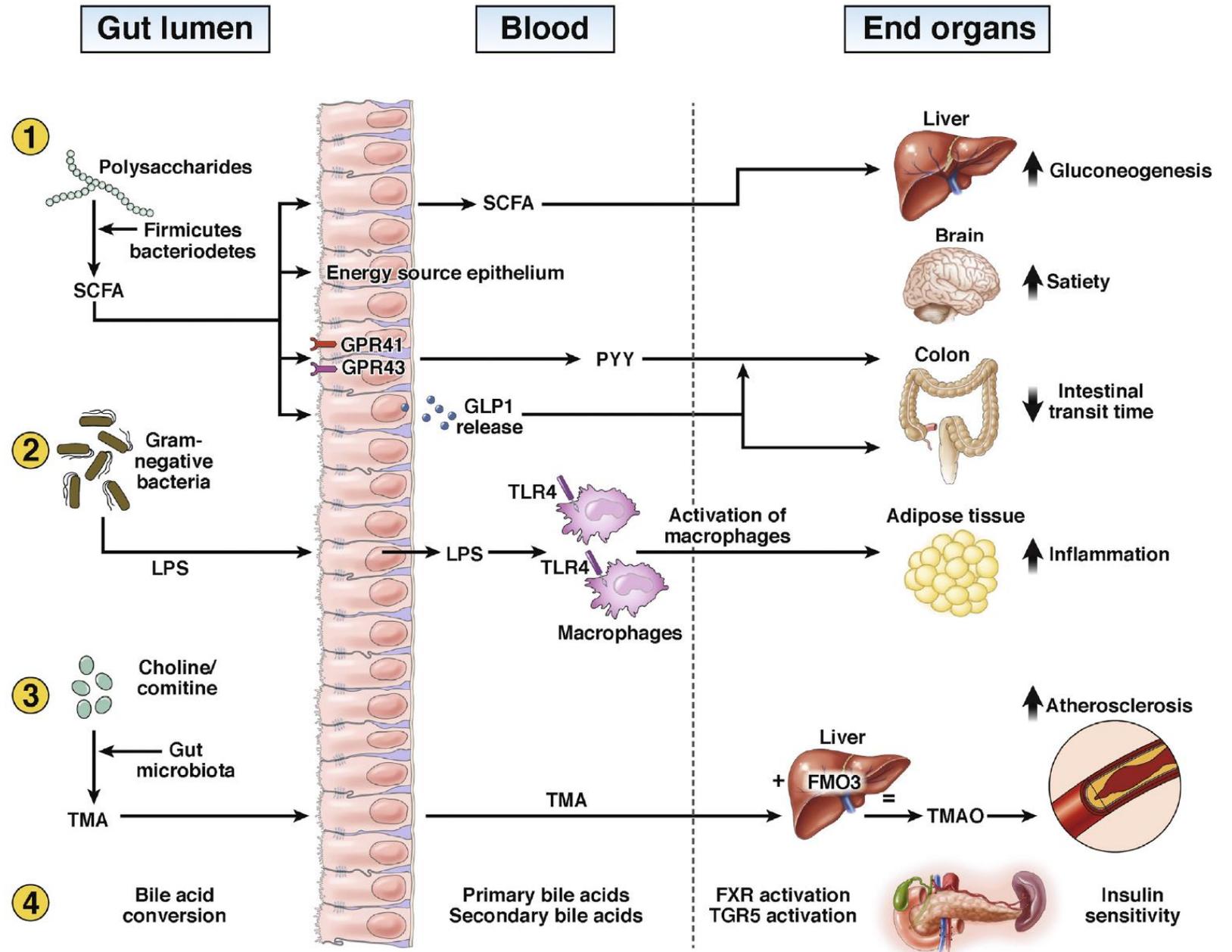


# Interactions between the intestinal microbiota and T<sub>2</sub>DM.

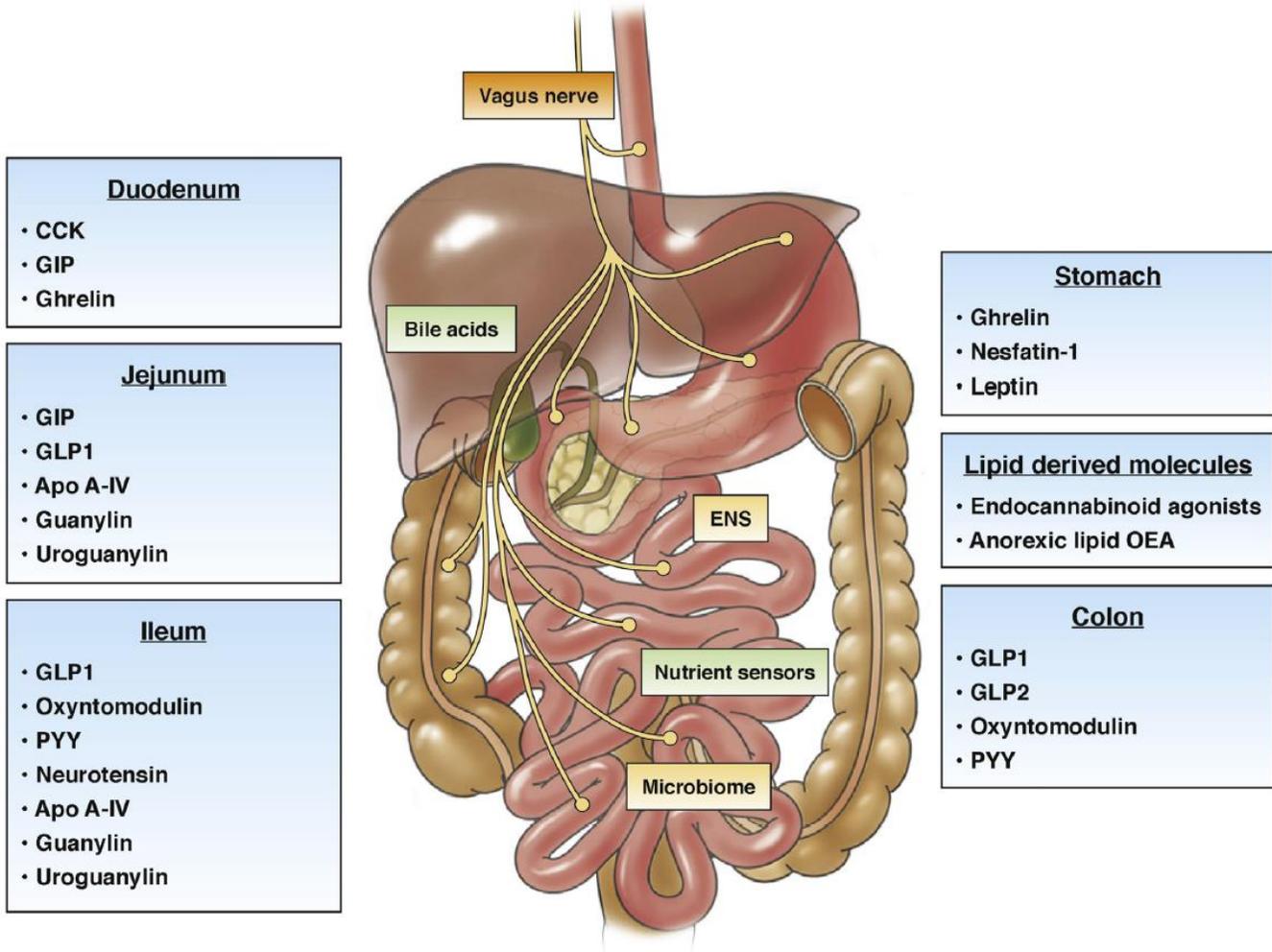


Schematic overview of functions attributed to intestinal bacterial strains. SCFA, short chain fatty acids; GPR41, G-protein coupled receptor 41; GPR43, G-protein coupled receptor 43; GLP1, glucagon like protein 1; PYY, peptide YY; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; TLR4, Toll like receptor 4; TMA, trimethylamine; FMO3, flavin-containing monooxygenase; TMAO, trimethylamine-N-oxide; FXR, farnesoid X receptor TGR5 transmembrane G protein-coupled receptor.

Bouter KE, Van raalte DH, Groen AK, Nieuwdorp M. Role of the Gut Microbiome in the Pathogenesis of Obesity and Obesity-Related Metabolic Dysfunction. *Gastroenterology*. 2017;152(7):1671-1678.



\*Firmicutes and bacteroidetes = gut microbiota



Several signals arising from the GI tract are able to regulate energy homeostasis and body weight. These comprise GI peptides/hormones, which are secreted by different discrete enteroendocrine cell populations distributed along the entire GI tract from the stomach to the distal colonic mucosa and include the orexigenic hormone ghrelin and anorexigenic hormones (CCK, GLP-1, OXM PYY, nesfatin-1, and leptin); intestinal epithelium-derived signals, such as ApoA-IV, guanylin, and uroguanylin; anorexigenic and orexigenic lipid-derived molecules (oleoethanolamide [OEA] and endocannabinoid); and nutrient metabolites produced by gut microbiota (acetate, butyrate, and propionate). The ENS interacts with the autonomic nervous system, EEC products and is able to directly sense absorbed nutrients. In turn, the ENS finetunes the function of EECs. Vagal afferent firing is influenced by a wide-range of gut peptides, gut-derived lipid mediators, shifts in gut microbiota, gut inflammation, and leptin.

Monteiro MP, Batterham RL. The Importance of the Gastrointestinal Tract in Controlling Food Intake and Regulating Energy Balance. *Gastroenterology*. 2017;152(7):1707-1717.e2.