Ecological opportunity as a driving force for radiation events and time-dependent evolutionary rates in papillomaviruses

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Abstract

Papillomaviruses (PVs) have a wide host range, infecting mammals, birds, turtles, and snakes. The recent discovery of PVs in different fish species allows for a more complete reconstruction of the evolutionary history of the viral family. In this study we perform phylogenetic dating to analyse evolutionary events that occurred during PV evolution, as well as to estimate speciation and evolutionary rates.

We have used four different data sets to explore and correct for potential biases that particular taxa combinations may introduce during molecular time inference. When considering the evolution of substitution rates we observed that short-term rate estimates are much higher than long-term rate estimates, also known as the time-dependent rate phenomenon. We discuss that for PVs the time-dependent evolutionary rates may reflect changes in the available host niches. When considering the evolution of viral branching events (as a proxy for speciation rates), we show that these are not constant through time, suggesting the occurrence of distinct evolutionary events such as adaptive radiations. In a joint analysis with host speciation rates, we identify at least four different evolutionary periods, demonstrating that the evolution of PVs is multiphasic, and refining the previously suggested biphasic evolutionary scenario.

Thanks to the discovery of novel PVs in basal hosts and to the implementation of a time-dependent rate model for molecular dating, our results provide new insights into the evolutionary history of PVs. In this updated evolutionary scenario, ecological opportunity appears as one main driving force for the different radiation and key-innovation events we observe.

Keywords: virus evolution, molecular dating, time-dependent rate phenomenon, host-virus co-evolution and co-phylogeny

Introduction

Papillomaviruses (PVs) are small non-enveloped circular dsDNA viruses with genome size between 6 and 8 kbp. The minimal PV genome consists of an upstream regulatory region (URR), an early gene region encoding for the E1 and E2 proteins, with in most cases the *E4* gene nested within *E2*, and a late gene region encoding for the L2 and L1 capsid proteins (García-Vallvé et al., 2005). Proteins in the early region are involved in viral replication and cell transformation, while the capsid proteins self assemble to yield virions and encapsidate the genome. During PV evolution, at different time points and in different linages, the viral genomes have acquired, and in cases subsequently lost, the *E5*, *E6* and *E7* oncogenes (Van Doorslaer & McBride, 2016; Willemsen et al., 2019; Willemsen & Bravo, 2019). In chronic infections by certain viruses and in certain hosts, these genes are directly involved in the onset of cancer and behave thus as oncogenes.

PVs have been mainly described to infect mammals, but have also been found in reptiles and birds. More recently, PVs have also been discovered in fish, firstly isolated from a gilt-head sea bream (López-Bueno et al., 2016). Other PV genomes were later isolated from a rainbow trout, two haddocks, and a red snapper (Tisza et al., 2020). This discovery challenged our perspective on the origin of this viral family. Phylogenetic dating studies including this single fish PV genome date back the time to the most recent common ancestor (tmrca) of PVs to 481 (95% HPD: 326−656; Van Doorslaer, Ruoppolo, et al., 2017) and 424 million years ago (95% HPD: 402−446; Willemsen & Bravo, 2019), and thus more ancient than previously thought.

The continuous discovery of novel PVs allows to add pieces to the puzzle of their evolutionary history. Notwithstanding, an enormous bias towards human taxon sampling remains, because certain human PVs (HPVs) are a major public health concern. Indeed, while the majority of PVs cause asymptomatic infections in skin and mucosa, a relatively

small number of oncogenic HPVs are associated to malignant lesions that can develop

into cancer (Monographs, 2012). For other animals, PVs associated to malignant lesions

have been found in a few polyphyletic lineages that mainly infect horses (Scase et al.,

2010), cows (Campo, 1997), rabbits (Kreider & Bartlett, 1981) and chamois (Mengual-

Chuliá et al., 2014).

Phylogenetic studies have revealed that virus-host codivergence is one of the main driving

forces of PV evolution: one third of the viruses' divergence patterns can be explained by

the hosts' divergence patterns (M. Gottschling et al., 2011). This match allows to identify

host divergence times that can be used to date the PV tree (Pimenoff et al., 2017; Rector

et al., 2007; Shah et al., 2010). Although virus-host codivergence plays an important

evolutionary role in PVs, it is not the only mechanism that has shaped PV diversification.

Other evolutionary processes such as recombination (Rector et al., 2008), lineage sorting

and host switches have also played a fundamental role in PV evolution, even in recent

times (Pimenoff et al., 2017). The best supported scenario proposes a biphasic evolution

(Félez-Sánchez et al., 2015; M. Gottschling et al., 2007, 2011), where an early PV

radiation would have generated the main extant viral crown groups, followed by

independent co-divergence between PVs and their hosts. Consequently, inconsistencies

between the virus and host trees are often detected, challenging the inference of ancestral

node ages of the PV tree.

Besides node ages, evolutionary rate is one of the key parameters used to characterise

the evolutionary history of viruses. Being dsDNA viruses, PVs belong within the group of

slow evolving viruses, with rates in the order of 10^{-7} to 10^{-9} nucleotide substitutions per site

per year (Pimenoff et al., 2017; Rector et al., 2007; Shah et al., 2010). These values are

several orders of magnitudes lower than the rates of their fast evolving counterparts, the

RNA viruses (Duffy et al., 2008). However, it is becoming widely accepted that the division

between viral types in terms of evolutionary rate is not as strict as historically assumed.

Over the last fifteen years it has become more evident that when performing molecular

dating, rate estimates may vary depending on the time frame of measurement, so that rate

estimates based on recent calibration nodes are much higher than those based on older

calibration nodes (Aiewsakun & Katzourakis, 2015, 2017; Duchene et al., 2014; Ho et al.,

2005, 2011). As a consequence, biased divergence times may be inferred, where long-

term rates tend to underestimate the divergence time, while short-term rates are prone to

overestimation. This time-dependent rate phenomenon has been detected in mitochondria

of different organisms (*e.g.* birds, fish, insects, penguins and primates Burridge et al.,

2008; García-Moreno, 2004; Ho et al., 2005; Papadopoulou et al., 2010; Subramanian et

al., 2009), but has also been communicated for bacteria (Biek et al., 2015; Comas et al.,

2013; Feng et al., 2008; Rocha et al., 2006) as well as for multiple levels of viral taxonomy

(Aiewsakun & Katzourakis, 2015, 2016; Duchene et al., 2014; Gibbs et al., 2010). Despite

the differences in mean substitution rates between large viral groups (*e.g.* between DNA

and RNA viruses), the rate decay speed of time-dependent rates is reported to be

independent of viral taxonomy (Aiewsakun & Katzourakis, 2016; Duchene et al., 2014;

Gibbs et al., 2010). Therefore, corrections proposed to compensate for time-dependent

rates have proven to be useful in providing better estimation of the evolutionary time scale

of any virus (Aiewsakun & Katzourakis, 2015, 2017; Membrebe et al., 2019).

The time-dependency of molecular rate estimates can be an artefact of our reconstruction

approaches, but it may alternatively reflect different biological processes. Thus, short-term

rate measurements are thought to approximate the spontaneous mutation rate (*e.g.*

transient deleterious mutations and transient short-sighted adaptations for the current

host), while long-term rates represent the substitution rate (*i.e.* mutations that become

fixed) over macroevolutionary timescales (Ho et al., 2011; Simmonds et al., 2019).

However, this model does not explain the paradox of why viral genomes are conserved

over the long-term while having an apparent unlimited evolutionary potential in terms of

population size and mutation rate to evolve and adapt rapidly. Simmonds et al., 2019

proposed an alternative explanatory model where viral genome conservation is best

explained by a niche-filling model in which fitness optimization is rapidly achieved in the

viral hosts, and therefore viral long-term rates increasingly resemble those of their hosts.

In this study we revisit the evolutionary history of PVs with newly available ancestral fish

PV genomes. We selected our calibration points and dated the PV tree using four different

data sets based on the consistencies in virus-host codivergence. Two of these data sets

contain the virtually complete PV collection hitherto described, while the other two are

different versions of reduced data sets to correct for the over-representation of humans

and of other economically important hosts. First, we investigate whether a time-dependent

rate model better fits PV evolution data than previously used models. Second, we compare

evolutionary rates, diversification rates, and node age estimates among the different PV

data sets. In addition, we compare the PV evolutionary- and diversification rate estimates

with those of the corresponding hosts. Based on our observations we propose an updated

evolutionary scenario and point out important events that occurred during the evolution of

PVs.

Materials and Methods

Data collection and alignments

For this study, 359 full length PV genomes were downloaded from the PaVE

(https://pave.niaid.nih.gov/, Van Doorslaer, Li, et al., 2017) and GenBank

(https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/) databases (Table S1). The *E1*, *E2*, *L2* and *L1*

genes were extracted and aligned individually at the amino acid level using MAFFT v.7.271

(Katoh & Standley, 2013), corrected manually, and backtranslated to nucleotides using

PAL2NAL v.14 (Suyama et al., 2006). The alignment was filtered using Gblocks v.0.91b

(Castresana, 2000). For tree construction, *E1*, *E2*, *L2* and *L1* were concatenated using a

custom perl script.

Prior phylogenetic analyses

To detect recombinant taxa as well as incongruent taxa between the early gene tree and

the late gene tree, we used the filtered concatenated early genes (*E1-E2*) and late genes

(*L2-L1*). For these two alignments, the LG+I+Γ protein substitution model was identified as

the best suited model using ProtTest v.3.4.2 (Darriba et al., 2011). ML-based phylogenetic

analyses were conducted using RAxML v.8.2.9 (Stamatakis, 2014) under the GTR+Γ4

model for the nucleotide alignment using six partitions (three for each gene corresponding

to each codon position), under the LG+I+Γ model for the amino acid alignment using two

partitions (one for each gene), and using 1000 bootstrap replicates. The trees were rooted

using the SaPV1 (*Sparus aurata papillomavirus 1)* sequence (López-Bueno et al., 2016;

Fig. S1-S2). Rogue taxa were identified using the algorithm implemented in RAxML

(Pattengale et al., 2011). The topologies of the *E1-E2* and *L2-L1* trees were compared

using the disagree method in TOPD-fMtS v.3.3 (Puigbo et al., 2007), which allowed us to

identify the disagreeing taxa between the two tree topologies.

The previously identified recombinant PVs isolated from Cetaceans (PphPV1-2, TtPV1-7,

DdPV1, PsPV1) (Marc Gottschling et al., 2011; Rector et al., 2008; Robles-Sikisaka et al.,

2012) also showed to confidently disagree in position between the early and late gene

trees in our analyses. Therefore, these recombinant PVs were removed for generating the

Full Data set (FD), leaving us with a data set of 343 PV genomes (of which 200 infect

humans). Based on the taxa that agree between the *E1-E2* and *L2-L1* trees, we generated

two different versions of reduced data sets containing representatives for each PV species

and PV type: Representative Data set 1 (RD1) and Representative Data set 2 (RD2). RD1

and RD2 both contain 130 PVs (of which 48 infect humans), and share 85 terminal taxa.

RD1 and RD2 were constructed to compensate for certain over-represented host taxa in

the FD. For example, the 200 human PVs and the 21 bovine PVs present in the FD were

respectively represented by 48 and 6 terminal taxa in the reduced data sets (see Table

S1). For the sake of clarity we would like to stress that classification within

Papillomaviridae is explicitly based on genetic distance, where each PV type is a unique

genomic entity. During the establishment of the boundaries for defining the different

taxonomic categories within the *Papillomaviridae* (genera – species – type – variant) it was

recognized that distribution of pairwise genetic distances is multimodal (De Villiers et al.,

2004). The PV working group within the International Committee on the Taxonomy of

Viruses decided then to follow these "natural categories" to delineate the boundaries of the

taxonomic levels, leading to an official definition of phylogenetic taxa at higher taxonomic

levels, as an ensemble of PV types grouped into genera, species and subfamilies (Bernard

et al., 2010; Burk et al., 2013; Bzhalava et al., 2015; De Villiers et al., 2004; Van Doorslaer

et al., 2018; see also https://talk.ictvonline.org/taxonomy/).

Our FD, RD1 and RD2 contained one single fish PV genome (SaPV1), but during the

study four other fish PV genomes were made available at GenBank (accessions:

MH510267, MH616908, MH617143, MH617579; Tisza et al., 2020). As the sequences of

these new PVs add relevant information to the basal clade of the tree, these genomes

were added to the FD, and this new data set containing 347 PV genomes was named FDF

(FD + additional fish PVs).

For all four data sets (FDF, FD, RD1, and RD2), the concatenated *E1-E2-L2-L1* alignments were used to construct ML trees with RAxML v.8.2.9 under the GTR+Γ4 model for the nucleotide alignments, using twelve partitions (three for each gene corresponding to each codon position), under the LG+I+Γ model for the amino acid alignments using four partitions (one for each gene), and in both cases using 1000 bootstrap replicates (Fig. S3-S6).

Phylogenetic time inference

Based on the ML constructed trees, 18 calibration nodes were selected on subtrees where the *E1-E2* and *L2-L1* trees did not show discrepancies (Fig. S1-S2) and where the host tree matched the PV tree. Calibration times were based on host divergence molecular clock estimates collected from TimeTree (http://www.timetree.org/), integrating the corresponding confidence intervals in the prior (Table 1). The effect of the calibration nodes, and therewith forced clades, on the topology of the tree was validated by constructing ML trees constrained to the calibrations used and subsequent comparison to the corresponding unconstrained tree using a Shimodaira-Hasegawa test (Shimodaira & Hasegawa, 1999) as implemented in RAxML (Stamatakis, 2014). At the nucleotide level, the constrained trees did not test significantly worse than the unconstrained trees (Table S2). At the amino acid level, the constrained FDF and RD2 trees tested significantly worse. The nucleotide-based constrained ML trees were used as a starting trees for time inference at the nucleotide level.

Number	Calibration node	Divergence estimate (million years ago)	CI (million years)
1	Root	435	425 - 446
2	Aves/Testudines	254	240 - 268
3	Perissodactyla/Cetartiodactyla	78	74 - 81
4	Bovidae1/Cervidae1	27.31	23.13 - 31.49

5	Bovidae2/Cervidae2	27.31	23.13 - 31.49
6	Laurasiatheria/Primates	96	91 - 102
7	Platyrrhini/Catarrhini	43.20	40.60 - 45.70
8	Homo/Colobus	29.44	27.61 - 31.28
9	Homo/Pan	6.65	6.23 - 7.07
10	Pan troglodytes/Pan paniscus	2.82	2.40 - 3.24
11	Rodentia/Primates	90	85 - 94
12	Laurasiatheria/Euarchontoglires	96	91 - 102
13	Insectivora/Carnivora	89	83 - 96
14	Hyaenidae/Felidae	40	33 - 46
15	Primates/Glires	90	85 - 94
16	Bovidae3/Cervidae3	27.31	23.13 - 31.49
17	Feliformia/Caniformia	54	52 - 57
18	Cricetidae/Muridae	32.70	27.90 - 37.40

Table 1. Calibration points used for molecular dating of the PV tree. The estimates and the corresponding confidence intervals (CIs) are based on host divergence estimates (TimeTree: http://www.timetree.org/). Numbers in the first column correspond to those used in subsequent graphs and tables in this article to refer to the calibration nodes.

Before a time-dependent rate model was implemented in BEAST (Membrebe et al., 2019;

Suchard et al., 2018), we manually verified whether a time-dependency of molecular rate

estimates exists for PVs. Bayesian time inference was performed at the nucleotide level

using BEAST v.1.8.3 (Alexei J Drummond et al., 2012), under the GTR+Γ4 model, using

twelve partitions, the uncorrelated relaxed clock model (Alexei J Drummond et al.,

2006) with a lognormal distribution and a continuous quantile parametrisation (Li &

Drummond, 2012), and the Yule speciation process tree prior (Gernhard, 2008; Yule,

1925). For each calibration node, a prior was defined with a normal distribution around the

host divergence estimate and with a standard deviation based on the confidence intervals

indicated in Table 1. Time inference was performed separately for each calibration node,

on both RD1 and RD2. Thus, per data set, 18 independent time inferences using single

calibration nodes were performed. A further description of the manual verification and

following correction of time-dependency of molecular rate estimates can be found in

Supplementary File 1.

Subsequently, Bayesian time inference was performed at the nucleotide level using

BEAST v.1.10.4 (Suchard et al., 2018), under the GTR+Γ4 model, using four partitions

(one for each gene). Using data sets RD1 and RD2, four different clock models were

tested under the Yule speciation process tree prior (Gernhard, 2008; Yule, 1925): (i) the

strict clock model, (ii) the uncorrelated relaxed clock model (Alexei J Drummond et al.,

2006) with a lognormal distribution and a continuous quantile parametrisation (UCLD; Li &

Drummond, 2012), (iii) a uniform time-dependent rate (TDRuni) clock model, and (iv) an

exponential time-dependent rate (TDRexp) clock model (Membrebe et al., 2019). The strict

clock model assumes a single substitution rate for the whole tree. The UCLD assumes that

that substitution rate along each branch is drawn independently from a lognormal

distribution, nonetheless one single mean substitution rate is calculated over the tree. The

TDR clock model allows for substitution rate variation over time. The TDRuni and TDRexp

epoch models are set up as described in Membrebe et al., 2019, with custom uniform time

intervals (with boundaries $0 < 10 < 20 < ... < 400 < \infty$) and custom exponentially distributed

time intervals (with boundaries $0 < 10^{-5} < 10^{-4} < ... < 10^2 < \infty$), that are expected to cover

the depth of the PV phylogeny. The Yule speciation process branching model assumes a

constant speciation rate with no extinction. The clock model with the best model fit was

also tested with a coalescent Bayesian Skyline tree prior (A. J. Drummond et al., 2005),

that allows the population size to vary stochastically over time.

For each calibration node, a normal distribution was assumed with the host divergence

estimate and standard deviation based on the confidence intervals indicated in (Table 1).

The standard deviation of the root was relaxed to 50 million years. For each reduced data

set, and each model, four independent MCMC chains were run for a maximum of 10^7

generations, sampling every 10^4. We compared the model fits of the different clock models

with the (log) marginal likelihood estimates obtained using stepping-stone sampling (Baele

et al., 2012, 2013), with 100 paths steps, and a chain length of 10^6. From all models

tested, the best model was also used for time inference with the FD and FDF data sets.

For each of these, seven independent MCMC chains were run for a maximum of $3x10^7$

generations, sampling every $3x10^4$.

Statistics and graphics

Statistical analyses and graphics were done using R (R Core Team, 2014), with the aid of

the packages "ape", "car", "dplyr", "ggfortify", "ggplot2", "ggtree", "lawstat", "overlapping",

"pgirmess", "reshape", "stats", and "strap". Computation of optimal breakpoints in the LTT

plots was performed using the R package "strucchange". The final display of the graphics

was designed using Inkscape v.0.92 (https://inkscape.org/en/). The silhouettes in Fig. 1

were obtained from Freepik (https://www.freepik.com/).

Results

PV crown-groups form well-supported clades, albeit with unclear relative positions among

them

In this study we use four different data sets, with a less exhaustive (RD1 and RD2) and a

more exhaustive (FD and FDF) representation of all PV genomes in the databases (see

Materials and Methods). As some PV lineages —mainly PVs infecting humans and some

economically important species such as cattle, dogs and horses— are over-represented in

the full data sets (FD and FDF), we chose to also work with two different reduced

representative data sets (RD1 and RD2). For the construction of RD1 and RD2, the full

data sets were used to select one representative for each PV species and type. We would

like to stress that for PVs, a type describes a unique genomic entity, genetically different

from and within defined boundaries of nucleotide identity to other sister taxa (see also

Materials and Methods). RD1 contains representative species with initial shorter branches

as compared to those chosen for RD2. Thus for RD2, more diverse PV genomes are being

compared.

For all data sets, the early and the late genes were concatenated (*E1-E2-L2-L1*) and trees

were constructed at the nucleotide and amino acid level under a maximum likelihood

framework. Overall, we observed well-supported clades for the different PV crown groups

(Fig. 1 and Fig. S3-S6): Alpha-OmikronPVs, Beta-XiPVs, Lambda-MuPVs, and Delta-

ZetaPVs. Despite the conserved support of these large clades, their relative positions,

however, vary for the different trees constructed at the nucleotide and amino acid levels,

as well as between the different data sets.

A time-dependent rate model describes best the evolutionary history of PVs

When performing time inference using one single calibration at a time (Table 1), we

observed that a time-dependency of molecular rate estimates exists for PVs, with younger

calibrations rendering higher inferred values of the molecular evolutionary rate. As shown

in Fig. 2, there is a strong correlation between the substitution rate and the inferred time

(Fig. 2a: RD1, *Spearman's rho* = 0.8225, *S* = 1766, *p* = 2.419e-05; Fig. 2b: RD2,

Spearman's rho = 0.5170, *S* = 1470, *p* = 0.0299). The substitution rate inferred for the

youngest node (~3 Ma: ~1.17×10^{-8} s/s/y) is ~2.3 times higher than the substitution rate

inferred for the root of the tree (~434 Ma: 5.13×10^{-9} s/s/y, see Table S3). When performing

time inference using all 18 calibrations nodes together, the variation of evolutionary rates

over time is not captured under the uncorrelated relaxed clock model (UCLD). Therefore,

we have estimated our node ages by correcting for the time-dependent rate phenomenon

by fitting a power-law rate decay model to the single calibration data (as described in

Supplementary File 1). Recently, a time-dependent rate (TDR) clock model was

implemented in BEAST, that accommodates rate variation through time (Membrebe et al.,

2019). When performing time inference using all 18 calibration nodes (Table 1) and the

TDR clock model, we observe a strong TDR effect under an epoch structure with both

uniformly and exponentially distributed time intervals (Fig. S7). To investigate whether the

TDR model indeed better describes the evolutionary history of PVs, we tested the TDR

clock model against the UCLD and strict clock model. Both the exponential and uniform

TDR clock models yield considerably higher log marginal likelihood estimates compared to

the UCLD and strict clock models (Table 2). The exponential TDR model shows the best fit

to the data among the clock models being compared. Fig. 3a depicts the molecular rate

estimates under the exponential TDR model with a pronounced rate increase towards the

present for all four data sets. Comparing all four data sets under the exponential TDR

model, we estimate the short-term PV rate to be between 1.29×10^{-8} and 1.42×10^{-8}

substitutions/site/year (s/s/y), while the long-term PV rate is estimated to be between

2.42×10^{-9} and 4.58×10^{-9} s/s/y (Table 3). The evolutionary rate estimates for all epochs can

be found in Table S4. Under the uniform TDR model and using the reduced data sets, the

estimated short-term PV rate (Table S5, between 0-10 Ma: ~1.39×10^{-8} s/s/y) falls within the

range of the rate obtained under the exponential TDR model. The long-term PV rate is

estimated to be lower under the uniform TDR model (Table S5, above 400 Ma: ~1.81×10^{-9}

s/s/y), most probably related to the last epoch starting 300 Ma later compared to the last

epoch under the exponential TDR model (above 100 Ma). Not unexpected, the estimated

short-term PV rates are remarkably higher while the estimated long-term PV rates are

lower, than the overall evolutionary rate estimate of ~8×10^{-9} s/s/y inferred under the UCLD

model (Table 3). With the reduced data sets we infer higher short-term and lower long-term

rate as compared to the full data sets (Fig. 3a), *i.e.* a stronger time-dependent rate effect,

as is evident in the regression coefficients for RD1 and RD2 and the regression

coefficients for FD and FDF (Table 2).

Data set	Clock model	Tree prior	Log P(data|M)	Parameters	Mean	95% HPD	
RD1	TDRexp	Yule Process	-420158.160	Intercept β_0	-3.600	(-3.692;	-3.500)
				Slope β_1	-0.384	(-0.418;	-0.355)
	TDRexp	Bayesian Skyline	-438793.035	Intercept β_0	-3.657	(-3.761;	-3.556)
				Slope β_1	-0.365	(-0.396;	-0.333)
	TDRuni	Yule Process	-452190.114	Intercept β_0	-3.554	(-3.670;	-3.439)
				Slope β_1	-0.423	(-0.463;	-0.385)
	UCLD	Yule Process	-5.842e+300	Mean μ	0.949	(0.918;	0.980)
				Dispersion σ	0.235	(0.207;	0.264)
	Strict	Yule Process	-5.774e+300	Clock rate r	1	NA	
RD2	TDRexp	Yule Process	-428278.860	Intercept β_0	-3.778	(-3.877;	-3.669)
				Slope β_1	-0.326	(-0.359;	-0.294)
	TDRexp	Bayesian Skyline	-449076.075	Intercept β_0	-3.837	(-3.952;	-3.731)
				Slope β_1	-3.087	(-0.338;	-0.271)
	TDRuni	Yule Process	-445062.696	Intercept β_0	-3.737	(-3.868;	-3.607)
				Slope β_1	-0.364	(-0.406;	-0.321)
	UCLD	Yule Process	-6.339e+300	Mean μ	0.951	(0.920;	0.984)
				Dispersion σ	0.238	(0.209;	0.269)
	Strict	Yule Process	-4.931e+300	Clock rate r	1	NA	
FD	TDRexp	Yule Process	NA	Intercept β_0	-3.970	(-4.063;	-3.887)
				Slope β_1	-0.224	(0.250;	-0.194)
FDF	TDRexp	Yule Process	NA	Intercept β_0	-3.928	(-4.019;	-3.840)
				Slope β_1	-0.238	(-0.265;	-0.208)

Table 2. Model fit and regression coefficients for the time-dependent rate clock models. For RD1 and RD2 the model fit of different clock and tree models using (log) marginal likelihood estimates obtained using stepping-stone sampling is given. The exponential time-dependent clock model (TDRexp), the uniform time-dependent clock model (TDRuni), the uncorrelated relaxed clock model (UCLD) and the strict clock mode were compared. The TDRexp model with a Yule tree prior yields the highest log marginal

likelihood estimate for both data sets. For RD1, RD2, FD and FDF, the regression coefficients of the TDRexp model were compared. The steeper slopes for RD1 and RD2 indicate a stronger time-dependent rate effect compared to FD and FDF (see also Fig. 3a).

Data set	Nr. of taxa	Mean rate	95% HPD	Short-term rate (1 - 10 Ma)	95% HPD	Long-term rate (above 100 Ma)	95% HPD
RD1	130	7.90×10^{-9}	$(7.45 \times 10^{-9};\ 8.35 \times 10^{-9})$	1.42×10^{-8}	$(1.27 \times 10^{-8};\ 1.56 \times 10^{-8})$	2.42×10^{-9}	$(2.16 \times 10^{-9};\ 2.68 \times 10^{-9})$
RD2	130	8.01×10^{-9}	$(7.55 \times 10^{-9};\ 8.47 \times 10^{-9})$	1.31×10^{-8}	$(1.18 \times 10^{-8};\ 1.45 \times 10^{-8})$	2.92×10^{-9}	$(2.60 \times 10^{-9};\ 3.24 \times 10^{-9})$
FD	343	7.99×10^{-9}	$(7.62 \times 10^{-9};\ 8.36 \times 10^{-9})$	1.29×10^{-8}	$(1.16 \times 10^{-8};\ 1.41 \times 10^{-8})$	4.58×10^{-9}	$(4.18 \times 10^{-9};\ 5.06 \times 10^{-9})$
FDF	347	7.68×10^{-9}	$(7.31 \times 10^{-9};\ 8.02 \times 10^{-9})$	1.31×10^{-8}	$(1.19 \times 10^{-8};\ 1.47 \times 10^{-8})$	4.39×10^{-9}	$(4.00 \times 10^{-9};\ 4.86 \times 10^{-9})$

Table 3. The mean, short- and long-term evolutionary rate estimates for PVs. The mean evolutionary rates were inferred by using the uncorrelated relaxed clock model (UCLD) with a Yule tree prior and using all 18 calibration nodes together. The short- and long-term evolutionary rates were inferred by time inference using the exponential TDR model with a Yule tree prior and using all 18 calibration nodes together. Values are in substitutions per site per year.

PVs have not diversified at a constant rate

The dated phylogenetic trees using RD1, RD2, FD, and FDF, with an exponential TDR

model and a Yule tree prior are shown in Fig. 3b and Fig. S8-11. A detailed annotated

version of the tree obtained using RD2 is depicted in Fig. 1. The main differences between

the reduced and full data sets are observed in the ancestral nodes, where those of RD1

and RD2 are inferred to be much older than those of FD and FDF (Fig. 3b). To visualize

the timing of PV diversification, we constructed lineages-through-time (LTT) plots based on

the dated trees and compared these to the host tree (Fig. 3c). For both viral and host LTT

plots we observe different evolutionary periods, where the branching events are not

constant through time, suggesting the occurrence of distinct evolutionary events such as

adaptive radiations. For viral data we can distinguish four evolutionary periods (divided by

grey vertical bars in Fig. 3c), that are based on the observation of breakpoints in the four viral LTT plots (RD1, RD2, FD and FDF). Using the host LTT plot, we computed the optimal breakpoints, allowing us to establish general borders (at 148, 64 and 10 Ma) for four evolutionary periods (divided by black dashed vertical lines in Fig. 3c). These borders based on the host tree roughly match the borders for the observed viral evolutionary periods, and were used to compare the slopes of the viral and host LTT plots (Fig. 3d and Table 4). Our analysis of the LTT slopes indicates that the rate of emergence of novel viral lineages was higher than the rate of novel host lineages in periods II and III (*i.e.* steeper slopes for the emergence of PV lineages). It is important to note that our estimates lose in precision as we approach the root of our tree (period I), essentially due to the limited number of viral taxa retrieved from non-mammalian hosts.

In period I (between ~600 and ~148 Ma) we first observe a slow increase of PV lineages that correspond to the basal PV clades: PVs infecting fish, birds, turtles and ancestral mammals. In period II (between ~148 and ~64 Ma), the number of PV lineages surpasses the number of host lineages, growing at a ~1.5 times faster rate. We interpret that evolutionary period II corresponds to a viral radiation, that goes in parallel with the crown radiation of placental mammals ~100 Ma, that generated a large number of viral lineages. In period III (between ~64 and ~10 Ma) both the PV and host slopes decrease, notwithstanding that the number of PV lineages continues to increase at a rate that is ~1.8 times faster as compared to the hosts. We interpret that period III corresponds to the diversification of placental mammals within the host crown-groups and the parallel diversification of PVs with their hosts. Lastly, in period IV (between ~10 Ma and the present) we observe a further decrease in both PV and host slopes. We interpret that in addition to virus host co-evolution, the flattening slopes in periods III and especially IV, indicate a much slower diversification of PVs within their hosts (Fig. 3d and Table 4).

The LTT plots and the LTT slope analysis suggest that the per-lineage speciation rates have not remained constant through time. Thus we can reject the null hypothesis of constant diversification rates on the FDF, FD, RD1, and RD2 data sets, suggesting that the observed trends in PV number of lineages through time is compatible with evolutionary events such as adaptive radiations and/or key adaptations. The Yule tree prior used for time inference assumes a constant speciation rate with no extinction, indicating that this tree prior is an inadequate model. Therefore, we also performed time inference with a Bayesian Skyline tree prior (BS) and the exponential TDR clock model. When comparing the LTT plots of trees inferred with either a Yule or a BS tree prior, we observed that these render highly similar results (Fig. S12). Nevertheless, time inference with a Yule tree prior yields a higher log marginal likelihood estimate than the inference with the BS tree prior (Table 2). This probably indicates that the concatenated PV gene alignments and the calibration nodes are much more informative than the tree prior, which plays thus a minor role on the results.

Period		Data set	Slope	SE	df	F-stat.	adj. R^2	p-value
I	148-600 Ma	RD1	1.1239	0.1736	2	41.93	0.932	0.0230
		RD2	1.1560	0.1988	2	33.8	0.916	0.0283
		FD	0.9801	0.2562	1	14.64	0.872	0.1627
		FDF	1.3909	0.3527	2	15.56	0.829	0.0587
		hosts	1.7320	0.2027	5	72.98	0.923	0.0004
II	64-148 Ma	RD1	3.0603	0.1057	26	838.5	0.969	< 2.2e-16
		RD2	3.2792	0.0815	29	1618	0.982	< 2.2e-16
		FD	3.8183	0.1025	37	1388	0.973	< 2.2e-16
		FDF	3.6887	0.0937	41	1550	0.974	< 2.2e-16
		hosts	2.2782	0.0855	16	710	0.977	1.104e-14
III	10-64 Ma	RD1	0.8422	0.0286	85	865	0.910	< 2.2e-16
		RD2	0.7392	0.0361	85	419.4	0.830	< 2.2e-16
		FD	0.9082	0.0137	223	4385	0.951	< 2.2e-16
		FDF	0.8594	0.0128	219	4492	0.953	< 2.2e-16

		hosts	0.4562	0.0091	38	2526	0.985	< 2.2e-16
		RD1	0.0315	0.0083	8	14.46	0.599	0.0052
		RD2	0.0298	0.0070	5	18.21	0.742	0.0080
IV	0-10 Ma	FD	0.0759	0.0112	73	45.88	0.378	2.736e-09
		FDF	0.0798	0.0111	76	51.76	0.397	3.769e-10
		hosts	0.1442	0.0097	13	221.4	0.940	1.527e-09

Table 4. The slopes of the LTT lines in Fig. 3c. For each data set (RD1, RD2, FD and FDF) the slope is given for periods I-IV and also shown in Fig. 3d. These periods were defined through the computation of breakpoints in regression relationships using the host LTT plot. The slopes are measured in log10 of the number of new lineages per log10 of million years. The standard error (SE), the degrees of freedom (df = N-2), the F-statistic, adjusted R^2, and the p-value are given to indicate the significance of the calculated slope.

Node age estimates on different data sets

For the dated trees constructed on our full and reduced data sets, we obtained the tmrca

estimates for different clades along the PV tree (Fig. 4 and Table S6). For those nodes for

which the posterior distribution of the age was sampled, we show to what extent the

distributions overlap in Fig. S13. Overall, the tmrca estimates obtained by using different

data sets are similar. Larger differences are found for the more ancient nodes: the root of

the tree, *AvesTestudines/Mammals*, *Aves/Testudines*, *Aves*, and *Mammals* (Fig. 4 and Fig.

S13). For these nodes, we obtained older tmrca estimates when using the reduced data

sets (RD1 and RD2), as compared to the full data sets (FD and FDF). Due to the scarce

number of Pvs described for the hosts corresponding to the underlying PV clades, the

representative extant taxa are the same in these data sets (see Table S1). Therefore, the

ages of these ancient nodes appear to be mostly influenced by the number of mammalian

PVs present in the data sets, where removal of overrepresented PVs leads to older time

estimates. For the youngest nodes, *Homo/Colobus*, *Homo/Pan* and *Pan troglodytes/Pan*

paniscus, inconsistencies in the tmrca estimates were also obtained (Fig. 4 and Fig. S13).

For *Homo/Colobus* and *Pan troglodytes/Pan paniscus*, we obtained younger tmrca

estimates when using RD1 and RD2, as compared to the FD and FDF, while for *Homo/Pan* this is the inverse.

Ultimately, we investigated how the TDRexp clock model performs when compared to corrections for time-dependent rate estimates done by fitting a power-law rate decay model to single calibrations under the UCLD model (Supplementary File 1). The overall comparison for the inferred node ages is shown in Fig. 4. For the *Mammals* node (representing the ancestor of PVs infecting mammals) and for most of the underlying nodes, the corrections estimate the node ages to be older than those inferred by the TDRexp model. This is also the case for the *Homo/Colobus*, *Homo/Pan* and *Pan troglodytes/Pan paniscus* nodes. For the more ancient nodes (*AvesTestudines/Mammals* and *Aves/Testudines*), the corrections estimate the node ages to fall within the range of those inferred by the TDRexp model.

Discussion

With this study we provide an updated overview on the evolutionary history of PVs, with an emphasis in the expansion and radiation events that have punctuated the timeline of this viral family. Our results show that initial PV evolution seems to be marked by virus-host codivergence, where the number of PV lineages slowly increases during the basal diversification of amniotes. The actual increase is probably much faster than the one we communicate here, because a proper sampling of PVs in basal amniotes and in fishes is still wanting. Subsequently, we observe a viral radiation event that appears to be concomitant with the radiation of the placental mammals. The ecological opportunity for PVs to explore new hosts (vacant niches), can be considered a trigger of the adaptive radiation event we observe. Previous studies have already proposed a link between ecological opportunity and adaptive radiation (Glor, 2010; Yoder et al., 2010). In the case

of PVs, adaptive radiation may increase the chances that some of the descendants are

better able to exploit the new hosts, thus resulting in species that possess different types

of adaptations. When all available niche space becomes filled, we expect rates of lineage

accumulation to decrease (Rabosky & Lovette, 2008), and this is exactly what we observe

for PVs. After the radiation event, the slope of the LTT plot decreases, and in parallel to

virus-host codivergence, independent diversification of PVs occurred. Within the major PV

crown groups, the evolution of key innovations allowed PVs to exploit new resources. At

the molecular level, the most compelling example is that of *AlphaPVs* infecting humans,

where the appearance of the *E5* oncogene (Bravo & Alonso, 2004) triggered an adaptive

radiation that generated three viral lineages with different tissue tropisms. Within these

three clades, PVs further diversified some evolved the potential to degrade tumor

suppressor proteins (Fu et al., 2010; Mesplede et al., 2012; Mirabello et al., 2017; Van

Doorslaer et al., 2015; Willemsen et al., 2019).

In this study, we used four different data sets to explore potential biases of the choice of

terminal taxa to infer the evolutionary time scale of PVs. The main differences between the

full and reduced data sets are apparent in (i) the inferred ages of the basal nodes of the

PV tree and (ii) the strength of the time-dependent rate effect. First, the more basal nodes,

between roughly 100 and 550 Ma, are generally inferred to be older when using the

reduced representative sets of taxa compared to using all taxa (Fig. 3b, Fig. 4 and Fig.

S13). Secondly, the time-dependent rate effect is stronger when using the reduced data

sets compared to using the full data sets, as evidenced by a steeper slope in Fig. 3a.

Previous studies have reported that incomplete taxon sampling is independent of

phylogenetic error, and that instead, longer sequences will better improve the accuracy of

phylogenetic inference (Rosenberg & Kumar, 2001, 2003). In contrast, other studies have

reported that fewer taxa can lead to increased variance and uncertainty in the results

(Ackerly, 2000), and thus increased taxon sampling is one of the most practical ways to

improve the accuracy of phylogenetic estimates (Heath et al., 2008; Hillis et al., 2003;

Zwickl & Hillis, 2002). With a simulation study where random and non-random samples of

taxa were drawn, it was shown that random sampling provided for statistically robust trait

correlations, whereas non-random sampling (*e.g.* life-history group or investigator bias) led

to a significant loss of statistical power (Ackerly, 2000). For the construction of the reduced

data sets in this study, it should be noted that taxa pruning was not random, as one

representative was chosen for each PV species and PV type (see Materials and Methods).

Therefore, the same monophyletic lineages of PVs infecting the same hosts were

subsampled for phylogenetic inference with the reduced data sets (RD1 and RD2). RD1

contains representative species with initial shorter branches as compared to those chosen

for RD2. Meaning that for RD2 more diverse PV genomes are being compared, and thus

RD2 represents a more greedy strategy as compared to RD1. Although it has been shown

that greedy algorithms are rarely the best option for statistical power (McAuliffe et al.,

2005), it has also been shown that for genomic comparisons the greedy strategy of

maximizing the evolutionary divergence among species chosen from a known phylogeny

can provide optimal solutions (Pardi & Goldman, 2005). Concordantly, our results indicate

an effect of taxa choice in the reduced data sets, where time inference with more diverse

genomes (RD2) leads to lower evolutionary rate and older node age estimates. Therefore,

RD2 better approaches the estimates inferred with the full data sets, than RD1 does. In the

particular case of this study, increasing the number of taxa appears to reduce phylogenetic

error, leading to more accurate evolutionary rate estimates, and younger basal node age

estimates in the full data sets (FD and FDF). FD and FDF only differ in the additional

presence of four fish PV genomes that were made available during the study. Interestingly,

the increased presence of fish PVs in the FDF, presumably decreases the uncertainty

about the number and nature of substitutions in the outgroup (Heath et al., 2008), leading

to a better estimate of the age of the root.

Previous studies have shown that different substitution rates can be obtained for the same

species depending on whether they are inferred on a long-term or short-term evolutionary

scale. Here we demonstrate that such time-dependency of inferred evolutionary rates is

also present within PVs. The obtained long-term evolutionary rate estimates are in line

with previous overall rates obtained for the *E1* (7.1×10^{-9}) and *L1* (9.6×10^{-9}) genes of PVs

(Shah et al., 2010). Other PV rates estimates, such as 1.84×10^{-8} for recent evolution in the

HPV16 lineage (Pimenoff et al., 2017) and 1.95×10^{-8} for the evolution of a monophyletic

assembly of PVs infecting felids (Rector et al., 2007), fall between the long-term and short-

term rates obtained in this study. This difference can be explained by the inference of

shorter term evolutionary rates in these studies (within the HPV16 clade, based on a

dataset spanning 0.7 Ma, and within the feline PV clade, using a dataset spanning 12 Ma,

respectively), also supporting the hypothesis that a time dependency of the evolutionary

rate is present within PVs.

With our analyses in Supplementary File 1, we show that the time-dependent rate

phenomenon can be well described by fitting a power-law model to the observed data

when applying individual calibration nodes. However, the increase in available statistical

models and inference tools for complex evolutionary processes allowed us to incorporate

the TDR model for time inference of PVs. In our analyses the TDR model performed

considerably better than other models that do note allow for rate variation over time. We

compared a uniformly and exponentially distributed TDR model. Even though the uniformly

distributed model contained more and better dispersed transition times, we find better

model fit for the exponential model. This difference in model fit may therefore imply that the

rate variation through time may not be as regular as expected from a power-law function

(Membrebe et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the increased complexity in the uniform TDR

model (*i.e.* more transition times as compared to the exponential TDR model), can also

lead to a worse fit of this model.

In the case of PVs, the substitution rate appears to be a function of the host niches a virus

can exploit. Ancient ancestral PV genomes appear to have lower substitution rates, and as

the niche availability increased at the time where mammals started to evolve, the

substitution rates increased accordingly. However, it does not seem that PV evolution has

reached an evolutionary stasis, as the PV substitution rates still vary after more than 400

million years of virus-host co-evolution (Supplementary File 1). Episodic and rare events

that result in niche variation, such as host jumps, switch of tissue tropism (Van Doorslaer

et al., 2015; Willemsen & Bravo, 2019) and gene gain/loss events (Van Doorslaer &

McBride, 2016; Willemsen et al., 2019) might prevent PVs from reaching an evolutionary

stasis with their hosts, thus maintaining recent increased substitution rates.

With the current set of available genomes we can distinguish four periods, along the

evolutionary time scale of PVs. Our results suggest that the evolutionary history of PVs is

multiphasic, where separate radiation events allowed viruses to adapt to new niches, and

a subsequent period where independent diversification between viruses and their hosts

occurred within the major virus-host clades. Our results improve and refine the previous

evolutionary scenario for PVs, that had suggested a biphasic evolution of PVs, where a

primary radiation was directly followed by a secondary diversification event (Ignacio G.

Bravo & Felez-Sanchez, 2015). The discovery of novel PVs infecting ancestral hosts, like

in the present case fish, allowed for the detection of these events. Further increase in

taxon sampling of both mammalian and non-mammalian hosts, together with the

implementation of more flexible evolutionary models allowing for burst and decay of

speciation rates, will lead to a more detailed overview of the evolutionary history of this

successful viral family.

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Supplementary Material

Supplementary Tables S1-S6, Supplementary Figures S1-S13, and Supplementary File 1 are available online. The alignments and xml files are available at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3817552.

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Figure Legends

Figure 1. Dated Bayesian phylogenetic tree for reduced data set 2 (RD2) containing 130 PVs. The tree was constructed at the nucleotide level based on the concatenated *E1-E2-L2-L1* genes, using an exponential TDR model and a Yule tree prior. The scale bar is given in million years ago (Ma). Values at the nodes correspond to posterior probabilities, where asterisks indicate full support. Error bars encompass 95% highest posterior density (HPD) intervals for the age of the nodes. Clock symbols indicate the nodes used for calibration. The clades are coloured according to the PV crown group classification, as indicated in the legend on the left. Next to the tree on the right, the taxonomic host group (superorder, superclass, class, order, parvorder, no rank) corresponds to the one in which the corresponding host clades could best be summarized. The silhouettes cartoon some distinctive members of these clades. The grey shaded areas (delimited with black dashed lines) give an overall overview of four periods that can be distinguished along the evolutionary timeline of PVs, as shown in Fig. 3c.

Figure 2. Time-dependent rate phenomenon for PVs. **a)** Results are given for 18 phylogenetic time inferences on RD1. Each inference was performed with a single calibration node, for which the numbers in the legend correspond to those in Table 1. The x-axis represents time from past to present in million years ago (Ma). The y-axis represents the evolutionary rate in substitutions/site/million years (s/s/my). Error bars correspond to the mean and standard deviation of both the inferred node time and the inferred substitution rate. The black line displays the trend of a linear model fit to the data, with the grey shaded area indicating the 95% confidence interval. **b)** The same analysis as in panel a was performed on RD2. Note that the y-axes in panels a and b are not on the same scale.

Figure 3. Time-dependent rate epoch modelling and diversification on dated phylogenetic PV trees. Bayesian time inference was performed using two representative reduced data sets (RD1 and RD2) and two full data sets (FD and FDF). **a)** Time-dependent rate effect under an epoch structure with exponentially distributed time intervals. The x-axis represents time from past to present in million years ago (Ma). The y-axis represents the evolutionary rate in substitutions/site/million years (s/s/my). The error bars represent the 95% highest posterior density (HPD) intervals of the rate estimates. Both axes are on a log10 scale. **b)** Dated phylogenetic trees for each of the datasets used, inferred with an exponential TDR model and a Yule tree prior. The x-axis represents time from past to present in Ma. The arrows indicate three basal nodes for which the inferred age is given with the 95% HPD between brackets. These basal nodes are inferred to be much older in RD1 and RD2 when compared to FD and FDF. **c)** Lineages through time (LTT) plot for RD1, RD2, FD, FDF and the host tree. The x-axis represents time from past to present in Ma. The y-axis represents the number of lineages. Both axes are on a log10 scale. The grey vertical bars and black dashed vertical lines separate four evolutionary periods (I-IV) that we observe in the viral data and host data, respectively. **d)** The slopes of the LTT lines were calulcated using the four evolutionary periods of the host data. The slopes are also provided in Table 4. This figure highlights the differences in results obtained for the different data sets, but more importantly, shows that a time dependency of evolutionary rates is present within PVs and that PVs have not diversified at a constant rate.

Figure 4. Inferred age for ancestral nodes on dated Bayesian phylogenetic trees. This figure allows to compare the inferred age on the different data sets: RD1, RD2, FD, and FDF. The phylogenetic trees were inferred by time inference using the exponential TDR

model with a Yule tree prior and 18 calibration nodes. RD1_corr and RD2_corr are

corrections for the time-dependent rate phenomenon for trees inferred by time inference

using an UCLD model with a Yule tree prior and 18 single calibration nodes

(Supplementary File 1). The nodes are ancestors of clades within the PV crowngroups and

unclassified clades, matched in colour code with Fig. 1. The nodes used for calibration are

indicated with a clock symbol and the corresponding number (see Table 1). The node age

is in million years ago (Ma) and on a log10 scale. For RD1, RD2, FD and FDF, error bars

encompass 95% highest posterior density (HPD) intervals for the age of the nodes. For

RD1_corr and RD2_corr, error bars encompass the lowest and highest inferred 95%

confidence intervals (CI) for the 18 different nodes used for error correction. The asterisk

indicates that not all the extant PV lineages underlying this node infect mammals as there

is one exception in FD and FDF data sets: a PV isolated from a carpet python (MsPV1).

Crown-group

- ■ (grey) - unclassified
- ■ (blue) Delta-Zeta
- ■ (yellow) Lambda-Mu
- ■ (red) Alpha-Omikron
- ■ (magenta) - unclassified
- ■ (green) Beta-Xi

Actinopterygii
Testudines
Aves
Perissodactyla
Cetartiodactyla
Afrotheria
Laurasiatheria
Platyrrhini
Catarrhini
Laurasiatheria
Euarchontoglires
Laurasiatheria
Metatheria
Euarchontoglires
Laurasiatheria
Euarchontoglires
Laurasiatheria
Euarchontoglires

500   400   300   200   100   0

I
slow increase of PV
lineages corresponding to
the basal PV clades

II
radiation of
PVs
parallel to
radiation of
hosts

III
diversification of
PVs with their hosts

IV
diversification of
PVs within their
hosts

0.92
0.95
0.99
0.92
0.60
0.84
0.94
0.82
0.99