Predicting the re-distribution of antibiotic molecules caused by inter-species interactions in microbial communities

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Microbes associate in nature forming complex communities, but they are often studied in purified form. Here I show that differences in antibiotic sensitivity between co-existing bacterial species can modify the diffusion of antibiotic molecules, and alter the drug efficacy measured in conventional *in vitro* assays. I developed a model, validated experimentally using an artificial two-species community, showing antibiotic molecules re-distribute evenly across all species if they have similar drug sensitivity. The result is lower drug efficacy with respect to conventional *in vitro* assays. However, when species have different sensitivities, the re-distribution of antibiotic is uneven and most sensitive species accumulate more drug. The result is increased drug efficacy against these species. Despite this discrepancy with conventional laboratory assays, my data suggests the changes in drug efficacy are predictable and provides insight into how communities can affect the diffusion of other molecules in the environment.

I. Introduction

The notion of isolating and growning a microbe in purified form is fundamental in microbiology. These 'pure cultures' are justified by the seemingly unpredictability of *in vitro* assays when microbiological cultures contain multiple species. For example, the same bacteria can show different sensitivities to the same antibiotic depending on whether it is tested in purified form (*1*, *2*). While the isolation of microorganisms is indeed helpful to understand their biology, they also live in nature as part of wider communities (*3*). How many of the traits measured *in vitro* using pure cultures are maintained within communities? Communities are studied almost exclusively by analysing the underlying biological interactions between the member species (*4*), while the corresponding physical changes in their environment are overlooked. Antimicrobials, and their efficacy, are particularly sensitive to this oversight. Drug efficacy is tested exclusively using pure cultures (*5*) but recent evidence suggests (*6–8*) that antimicrobial efficacy may depend on surrounding species even without direct interaction between them.

Here I explore some of the physical changes that microorganisms can impose on their environment, and present a model that provides a mechanism thatexplains the variation of drug efficacy mediated by microbial communities. Reliance on common resources can suppress the growth of competing species, whence the concept of *competitive suppression* (*9*). The model suggests that carbon and antimicrobial molecules spread across all species within a community. Competitive suppression limits the growth of all species within the community, but if

the drug sensitivity of the member species is comparable, the antimicrobial diffuses into all species—not just the target—resulting in fewer antimicrobial molecules per species. That is, loss of drug efficacy. Phenotypically, this can be interpreted as drug tolerance of the individual species, but it is not: It is under-exposure, driven by the withdrawal of antimicrobial molecules by neighbouring species. However, if some species are *not* as sensitive to the drug, competitive suppression enforces the uneven distribution of antimicrobial 'concentrating' the antibiotic within the most sensitive species. Thus, with the increment in drug molecules per cell, the same inhibition observed in pure culture conditions can be achieved with a fraction of the antibiotic used. To validate these predictions I used two sets of pairwise competition assays between two constructs of *Escherichia coli*, sensitive and resistant to the antibiotic tetracycline, and *Salmonella typhimurium*, also sensitive to the drug.

II. Results

Consider j phenotypically distinct species competing for a limited resource, C, and exposed to a drug, A, supplied at concentration $A_e(0) = A_0$, cast as the following model:

$$\dot{S}_j = \overbrace{G_j(C)S_j}^{\text{Growth}} \cdot \overbrace{I_j(A)}^{\text{Inhibition}}, \tag{1a}$$

$$\dot{A}_j = \overbrace{-dA_j}^{\text{Decay}} + \overbrace{\varphi_j(A_e - A_j)S_j}^{\text{Fick's Diffusion}}, \tag{1b}$$

$$\dot{A}_e = -dA_e - \sum_{j=1}^{i} \varphi_j(A_e - A_j)S_j, \tag{1c}$$

$$\dot{C} = -\sum_{j=1}^{i} \overbrace{U_j(C)S_j}^{\text{C-Uptake}}, \tag{1d}$$

Here, $\dot{S}_j$ and $\dot{A}_j$ represent the density of individuals per unit volume from species j and their content of drug A over time, respectively, with initial conditions $S_j(0) = S_{j0}$, $A_j(0) = 0$, and $C(0) = C_0 > 0$. The uptake of resource C by individuals of species j is a saturating Monod function, proportional to the maximal uptake rate $\bar{\mu}_j$,

$$U_j(C) := \bar{\mu}_j \frac{C}{K_j + C}, \tag{2}$$

where K_j is the half-saturation parameter and the affinity of individuals from species j for the limited resource C is given by $1/K_j$. Their growth rate at a given resource concentration is denoted by $G_j(C) := U_j(C) \cdot y_j$, where y_j is the biomass yield per unit of resource in individuals from species j. Their growth inhibition by drug A is described qualitatively by the inhibition function (*10*)

$$I_j(A) := \frac{1}{1 + (A_j/\kappa_j)^\alpha}, \text{ where } 0 \leq I_j(A) \leq 1. \tag{3}$$

This function is dimensionless and has two parameters. First, the Hill coefficient α which characterises the co-operativity of the inhibition. And second, κ_j is the affinity of drug A for its

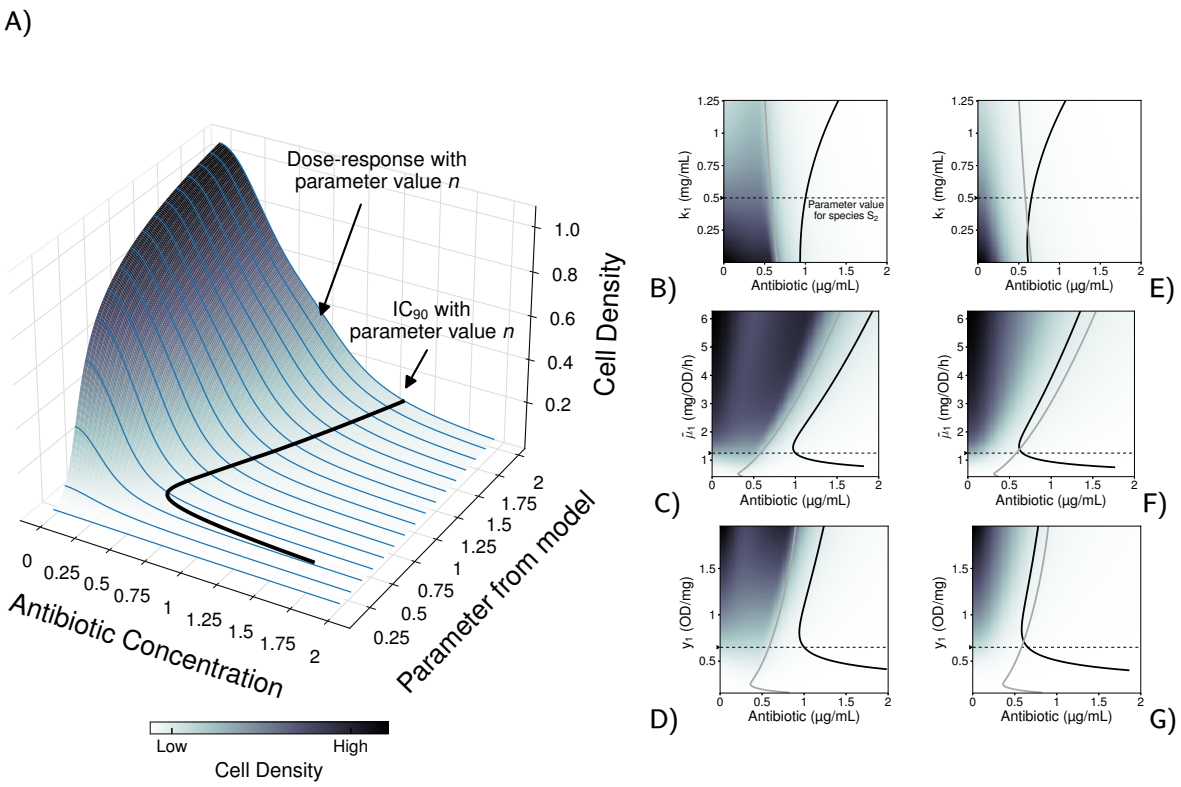

Figure 1. S_1 drug sensitivity profiles in pure and mixed culture growth conditions alongside species S_2. A) Growth of species S_1, with different parameter values ($k_1, \bar{\mu}_1$, and y_1), after 24h of growth in the presence of different antibiotic concentrations. I aggregated the resulting dose-response profiles (blue) to create a density map from low predicted cell density (white) to high predicted cell density (black). B–D) IC_{90}, antibiotic concentration inhibiting 90% (IC_{90}) the growth predicted without drug, resulting with different parameters values for the half-saturation parameter k_1 (B), maximal carbon up-take $\bar{\mu}_1$ (C), or biomass yield y_s (D) in equation 1 when species S_2 is drug-sensitive. The IC_{90} for species S_1 growing as pure cultures is shown in grey, and growing in mixed culture with S_2 are shown in black. The parameter values for species S_2 were fixed at a value noted by a black arrow on the y-axis, followed by a dotted black line. E–G) Change in IC_{90}, as in Figures B–C), when the competing species S_2 is *not* drug-sensitive (resistant or tolerant).

target and it can be derived from the drug concentration required to halve the maximal growth rate, so that $A_{50} = 1/\kappa_j$ (*10*). For the sake of simplicity, I assumed that drug A diffuses from the environment into cells of species j, and *vice versa*, with a diffusion coefficient φ_j; and part of A being lost to chemical stability (*11*) at a rate d. This is not an unreasonable assumption given that antimicrobials molecules can indeed diffuse through cell membranes facilitated by membrane proteins (*12*).

For my first computation I set the number of species $j = 2$, to facilitate later experimental validation, where $I_1(A) = I_2(A)$ and $G_1(C) = G_2(C)$. Thus, individuals from both species are sensitive to A and phenotypically identical. Given Equation 3, the density of individuals from either species as pure cultures, after 24h of incubation, declines with higher drug concentrations consistently with standard clinical protocols (*13*) (Figure 1A). To allow experimental validation, I calculated the concentration of A inhibiting the growth of the pure cultures by 90% (IC_{90}) as commonly used in clinic laboratories (*14–16*). The drug sensitivity of each species depends on the values for the parameters $K, \bar{\mu}$, and y of Equation 2 (Figure 1B–D, grey), with values

that increase the density of individuals resulting in higher IC_{90}. This is consistent with the *inoculum effect* (*17*), whereby sensitivity tests that use larger inocula also report higher minimum inhibitory concentrations, hence the standardisation of these clinical assays. However, the relationship between these parameters and the IC_{90} is not necessarily proportional. For parameters $\bar{\mu}$ and y, for example, the resulting change in IC_{90} with respect to the parameter values is non-monotone, which means certain values for these parameters can maximise susceptibility for drug A. The neighbouring species shows similar, albeit not identical, changes in sensitivity (Figure S2).

This phenomenon is exacerbated if both species grow in mixed culture conditions, where both become phenotypically more tolerant to drug A (Figure 1B–D, black). If I were to target, say, individuals from species S_1, doing so when the species is surrounded by S_2 would require more drug. This is the case, for example, of pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma treated with gemcitabine when bacteria grow within the tumour's microenvironment (*18*). More generally, genotypes analog to S_1 should increase their drug tolerance when they are surrounded by similarly sensitive species.

To test this hypothesis, I mixed equal proportions (cell/cell) of *Escherichia coli* Wyl and *Salmonella typhimurium* SL1344 in minimal media supplemented with different concentrations of tetracycline (see Methods). This antibiotic can diffuse passively into cells of both gram-negative species (*19*), who also have similar sensitivity to this antibiotic: 0.232 ± 0.003 and 0.276 ± 0.016 µg/mL of tetracycline (mean $IC_{90} \pm 95\%$ confidence, with $n = 8$ replicates, see Methods). This approximates to $I_1(A) \approx I_2(A)$, as laid out by the theory above. The chromosome of *E. coli* Wyl carries *yfp*, gene encoding a yellow fluorescence protein (YFP), so I tracked its density in mixed culture conditions. Consistently with Equations 1a–d, the bacterium was around 23% more tolerant to tetracycline when it grew in mixed culture with *S. typhimurium* (Mann-Whitney U-test $p = 1.554 \times 10^{-4}, ranksum = 36$ with $n = 8$ replicates, Figure 2A).

Next, I explored in the model the case where individuals from both species have different sensitivities to drug A ($I_1(A) \neq I_2(A)$). This scenario is akin to pathogens such as *C. difficile* growing alongside human cells (*20*) where the latter are unaffected by the drug ($I_2(A) \approx 1$). The model now predicts a subset of values for K, y, and $\bar{\mu}$ that make S_1 *more* sensitive to the drug in the presence of individuals from species S_2 (Figure 1E–G), whether S_2 is not affected by drug A or is resistant to it for example through efflux pumps (*21*) (see Supplementary Text). To test this prediction, I mixed equal proportions (cell/cell) of two constructs of *Escherichia coli* with different sensitivities to tetracycline. One construct is Wyl, used above, who is sensitive to the antibiotic. The other construct is GB(c), harbouring a non-transmissible plasmid carrying the gene *tet(36)* (*22*) and, therefore, resistant to the drug. Tetracycline binds to the bacterial ribosome, inhibiting protein synthesis (*23*), and *tet(36)* provides ribosomal protection against tetracycline (*22*) without degrading the antibiotic. The IC_{90} for this construct was 6.106 ± 0.272 µg/mL of tetracycline (mean $IC_{90} \pm 95\%$ confidence with $n = 8$ replicates). Now, $I_1(A) \ll I_2(A)$ satisfies the assumption above. The IC_{90} for *E. coli* Wyl was 0.232 ± 0.003 µg/mL of tetracycline as pure culture. Growing alongside drug-resistant GB(c), however, it was 0.112 ± 0.003 µg/mL (Figure 2B).

Above I noted that parameter values leading to higher density of individuals in pure culture,

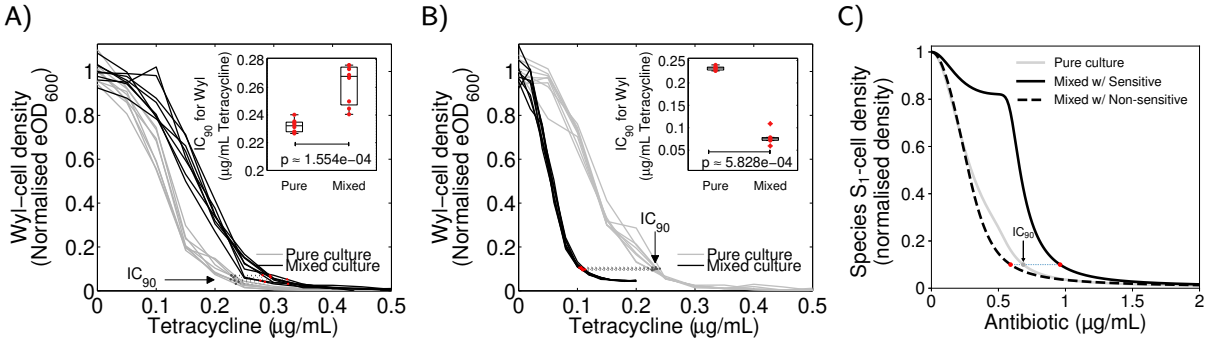

Figure 2. Change in drug efficacy against sensitive *Escherichia coli* Wyl are consistent with theoretical predictions. A–B) Change in normalised density of *Escherichia coli* Wyl as a function of tetracycline concentration, when Wyl grows in mixed culture with tetracycline-sensitive *Salmonella typhimurium* (A) and tetracycline-resistant *Escherichia coli* GB(c) (B). The change in density of Wyl growing in mixed culture is shown in black, with grey showing the change in density in pure culture. The IC_{90} in each condition is shown as dots, red for mixed culture conditions and dark grey for pure culture, connected by a dotted line. Non-parametric, Mann-Whitney U-test between IC_{90}s is shown in the inset. Raw data is shown as dots, whereas the boxes represent median (centre of the box), 25th, and 75th percentile of the dataset. The whiskers show the most extreme data points that are not outliers. C) Theoretical change in S_1-cell density with increasing antibiotic concentration in pure (grey) and mixed (black) culture conditions with neighbours that have different drug sensitivity. The plot represents the case where both species have different carbon uptake (μ_i), and differences in IC_{90} are represented as shown in A–B for consistency.

also led to higher IC_{90}. When $I_1(A) \approx I_2(A)$, Equations 1a–d suggest that individuals from one species change the drug availability, measured as relative drug molecules per individual, for the other. Thus, when species S_2 captures through diffusion its share of drug in mixed culture conditions, there is less of it available for species S_1 resulting in less drug per individual (Figure S1A–C)—and *vice versa*. However, when $I_1(A) \neq I_2(A)$, by virtue of different affinities of drug A for each species ($\kappa_1 \neq \kappa_2$), the drug diffuses more rapidly from the least sensitive species back into the environment—re-exposing its sensitive counterpart. Thus, the change in drug content in the most sensitive species occurs through a different mechanism. The least sensitive species, given its higher tolerance to antimicrobial A, can maintain its growth and therefore it can remove a higher share of the limited resource, C. Consequently, the growth of the most sensitive species is limited (*9*), leaving more drug per individual of this species (Figure S1D–F). This competition for a shared resource is akin to that found, for example, between *Salmonella typhimurium* biofilms and cancer cells, where they compete for access to nutrients in the bloodstream—resulting in the bacteria inhibiting cancer growth (*24*).

To verify this hypothesis, I estimated the content of tetracycline in *E. coli* Wyl by dividing the bacterium's culture density, measured in relative fluorescence units to allow tracking in mixed culture conditions, by the concentration of tetracycline defining its IC_{90}. The estimates resemble closely the theoretical predictions in Figure 2C: *E. coli* Wyl contains approximately 20% less tetracycline growing next to *Salmonella typhimurium* and 65% more tetracycline growing alongside drug-resistant GB(c) (Figure 3).

III. Discussion

It should be stressed that my theory is not specific to *Escherichia coli* and antibiotics, and I anticipate that other species and molecules to obey the same relations. There are, however, limitations in the model some of which imposed by experimental conditions. For example, for simplicity the Fick's term has no spacial derivative as it would be expected, as I shaked the culture to maintain the growth conditions homogeneous (see Methods). Instead, the derivative is approximated as the difference in antimicrobial inside and outside the cells. Another assumption from the model is that all j species rely upon a single source of carbon. In reality, however, I used two: Glucose, the main carbon source, and casamino acids. The latter is added to provide the microbes with amino acids they cannot synthetise, and that they need to grow. But, true to the underlying microbial complexity, casamino acids can also be used as carbon source if glucose is scarce (*25*). Is this difference relevant? In this case I argue it is not. The goal of the study is to explore whether the number of cells from a competing species can change antibiotic efficacy against a focal species, and if they do, to understand why. Indeed, the use of two carbon sources may lead to, for example, speciation: Each species would evolve to use different carbon sources to avoid competition (*26*). This can also occur through byproducts of a single carbon source (*27*). But mine is not an evolutionary study.

The model that I present here is, like all models, wrong in some ways. But it is also useful in others. It demonstrates that microbial communities influence physical properties of the environment they thrive, one of them being the diffusion of free-moving molecules. Here, the difference in drug sensitivity between the member species determines how antibiotic molecules diffuse and, ultimately, the biological response *in situ* within the community. Importantly, this feedback between diffusion and drug inhibition is not captured by standard microbiological assays. Indeed, the use of polymicrobial cultures can help measure the feedback but there are technical limitations—like the number of fluorescent proteins that can be used to track different species without spectral overlap (*28*). This means that drug efficacies reported by laboratory assays may not be the same as those shown in nature, being likely that other traits show similar variations.

IV. Methods

Media and Strains. The strains of *Escherichia coli* GB(c) and Wyl were a gift from Remy Chait and Roy Kishony, and non-labelled *Salmonella typhimurium* SL1344 a gift from Markus Arnoldini and Martin Ackermann. Experiments were conducted in M9 minimal media supplemented with 0.4% glucose (Fisher Scientific #G/0500/53) and 0.1% casamino acids (Duchefa #C1301.0250), supplemented with tetracycline. M9 minimum media (50X) was made by mixing equal proportions (vol/vol) of two parts, part A and part B, and diluted accordingly to 1X. Part A (50X) contains 350 g/L of K_2HPO_4 (Sigma #P3786) and 100g/L of KH_2HPO_4 (Sigma #P9791); whereas part B (50X) contains 29.4g/L of trisodium citrate (Sigma #S1804), 50g/L of $(NH_4)_2SO_4$ (Sigma #A4418), and 10.45g/L of $MgSO_4$ (Fisher Scientific #M/1050/53). I made tetracycline stock solutions from powder stock (Duchefa #0150.0025) at 5mg/mL in deionised water. Subsequent dilutions were made from this stock and kept at 4^oC.

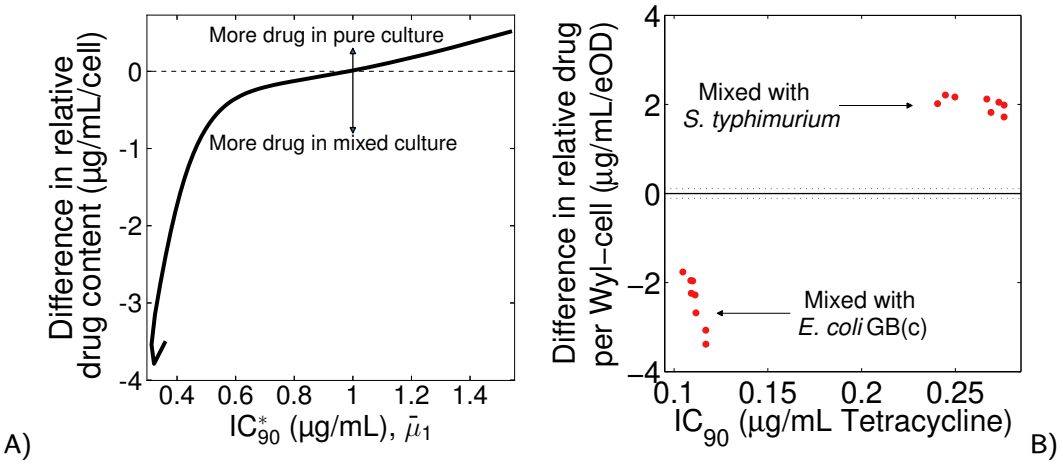

Figure 3. Relative content in drug molecules changes as predicted by model. A) Difference in drug content per S_1-cell at the IC_{90} between pure culture and mixed culture conditions. Positive and negative values denote more drug in S_1-cells in pure and mixed culture conditions, respectively. Lack of difference is shown as a horizontal, dotted line. B) Experimental estimation of the difference in relative cell content in the bacterium *Escherichia coli* Wyl. Raw data for Wyl is shown as red dots. Lack of difference is shown as a horizontal, black line and the 95% confidence of the lack of difference as a horizontal, dotted line. Insets in A and B, and raw data for relative drug content can be found in Figure S3.

Sensitivity assay. I inoculated a 96-well microtitre plate, containing 150µL of media supplemented with 0–0.5 µg/mL of tetracycline (for *E. coli* Wyl and *S. typhimurium*) or 0–15µg/mL (for *E. coli* GB(c)), with an overnight of each strain to measure drug sensitivity in pure cultures. For sensitivity assays of Wyl in mixed culture conditions I inoculated the microtitre plate, containing 150µg/mL of media supplemented with 0–0.5 µg/mL of tetracycline, with equal number of cells from two overnight cultures from Wyl and *S. typhimurium* using 8 technical replicates for each drug concentration. For the competition between Wyl and GB(c), however, I used 0–0.2 g/mL to measure drug efficacy more reliably given the increased drug efficacy observed against Wyl.

I incubated the microtitre plate at 30°C in a commercial spectrophotometer, shaking at 750rpm to ensure uniform mixing, and measured the optical density of each well at 600nm (OD_{600}), yellow florescence for Wyl (YFP excitation at 505nm, emission at 540nm), and cyan fluorescence for GB(c) (CFP at 430nm/480nm) every 20min for 24h. I defined the minimum inhibitory concentration as the tetracycline concentration able to inhibit 90% of the growth observed in the absence of antibiotic after the 24h incubation period.

Culture readings. Fluorescence protein genes were constitutively expressed with an approximately constant fluorescence to optical density ratio (Figure S4). The number of colony forming units (CFU) is positively correlated with optical density measured at 600nm (OD_{600}) (Figure S5). Thus, I normalised fluorescence readings with respect to optical density readings, using the ratio optical density to fluorescence that I in pure culture conditions, to track the relative abundance of Wyl in mixed culture conditions. This metric is referred to as 'Estimated optical density' in the main text. Time series data set were blank corrected prior to calculating the minimum inhibitory concentration.

Code availability: A non-parameterized, python3 implementation of equations 1a–d can be found at https://github.com/rc-reding/papers/tree/master/EvolProof_2020. Table 1 contains a list of parameter values used.

Table 1. Model parameters for Equations 1a–d, 2 and 3.

Parameter	Description	Value
$\bar{\mu}_j$	Maximal carbon uptake rate	1.25 mg / OD / h
K_j	Half-saturation constant	0.5 mg / mL
y_j	Biomass yield	0.65 OD / mg
d	Drug degradation rate	10^{-4} / h
κ_j	Affinity of drug A for species type j	0.1 mL / µg
φ_j	Diffusion coefficient	0.1 mL / OD / h
A_0	Initial drug concentration	2 µg / mL
C_0	Initial carbon concentration	2 mg / mL

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Competing interests: The author declares no competing interests.

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V. Supplementary Text

Sensitivity modulation by species S_2 is independent of resistance mechanism. In the main text, I defined whether species S_2 is sensitive to drug A based on the numerical value of κ_j in equation 3—which denotes the affinity of drug A for its target. This is equivalent to mutations, say, in the bacterial ribosome that reduce the affinity of ribosome-binding antibiotics for their target (*1*). But other resistance mechanisms such, as efflux pumps, do not act on the binding affinity of a drug for its target. Efflux pumps can have broad specificity (*2*), thus, able to protect against multiple drugs simultaneously (*3*, *4*).

To explore whether the predictions in the main text are robust to different mutation types, I redefined equations 1b and c to accommodate efflux pumps as resistance mechanism (*5*):

$$\dot{S}_j = \overbrace{G_j(C)S_j}^{\text{Growth}} \cdot \overbrace{I_j(A)}^{\text{Inhibition}}, \tag{4a}$$

$$\dot{A}_j = \overbrace{-dA_j}^{\text{Decay}} + \overbrace{\left(\varphi_j(A_e - A_j) - \frac{v^* p_j}{k_m^* + p_j}\right) S_j}^{\text{Fick's Diffusion with Efflux}}, \tag{4b}$$

$$\dot{A}_e = -dA_e - \sum_{j=1}^{i} \left(\varphi_j(A_e - A_j) - \frac{v^* p_j}{k_m^* + p_j}\right) S_j, \tag{4c}$$

$$\dot{C} = -\sum_{j=1}^{i} \overbrace{U_j(C)S_j}^{\text{C-Uptake}}, \tag{4d}$$

Here v^* represents the maximal efflux rate; k_m^* the half-saturation constant associated where the affinity of the pump for its substrate, A, is given by $1/k_m^*$; and $0 \leq p_j \leq 1$ is the expression level of $j-1$ copies of the efflux pump gene based on the limited abundance of DNA polymerase transcription complex (*6*). The abundance of this pump depends on the number of genes $j-1$ encoding efflux pump. The parameter p_j is monotonically increasing and bounded in j, controlled by a dimensionless constant γ in the Michaelis-Menten function $p_j = (j-1)/(1+\gamma(j-1))$ and $p_j/(k_m^* + p_j)$ the probability that a given drug molecule is bound to the pump. Thus, species S_1 does not express any efflux pump (no copies, as $j-1=0$) whereas species S_2 does indeed express the efflux pump. The remaining parameters are described in the main text with $\kappa_1 = \kappa_2$.

As Figure S6 illustrates, efflux pumps do not change the effect that competing genotypes have on species S_1. However, this resistance mechanism does increase even further the relative abundance of drug A in species S_1. Drug A also diffuses into competing species S_2 until it reaches equilibrium, and will diffuse back into the environment as the abundance of A declines, effectively re-exposing S_1. Active efflux exacerbates this effect by actively moving A molecules from within S_2 back into the environment. The result, shown in Figures S6A–C, is further inhibition of S_1 with respect to the mechanism used in the main text, as noted by its lower IC_{90}.

Supplementary References

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VI. Supplementary Figures

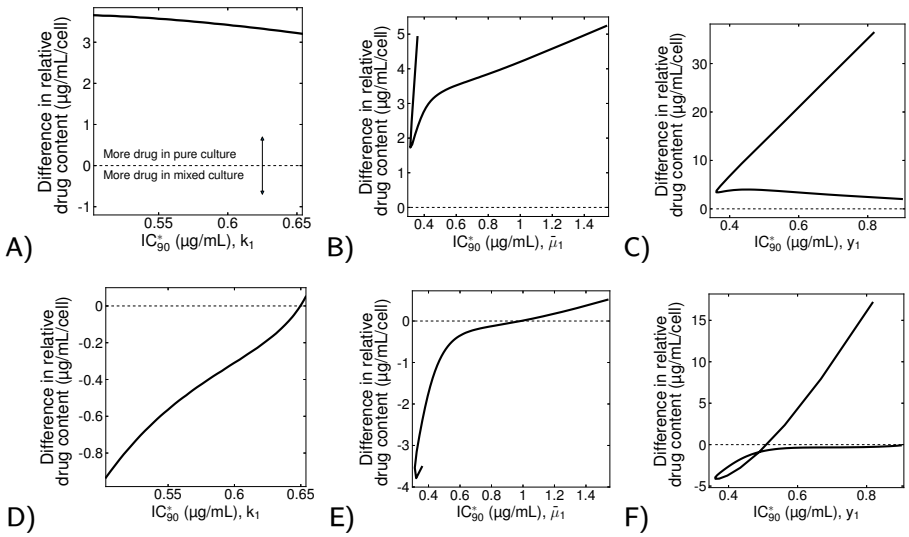

Figure S1. Difference in drug content in cells from species S_1 in pure and mixed growth conditions. A–C) Theoretical difference in relative drug content—antibiotic molecules per cell–of S_1 between pure culture conditions, and mixed culture with *drug-sensitive* S_2. A), B) and C) illustrate the prediction when changing the parameter k, $\bar{\mu}$, and y, respectively. The difference is positive (>0) when the relative content of antibiotic is higher in pure culture conditions, whereas is negative (<0) when the content is higher in mixed culture conditions. Lack of difference is represented by a horizontal, dotted line. **D–F)** Theoretical difference in relative drug content—antibiotic molecules per cell–of S_1 between pure culture conditions, and mixed culture with *drug-insensitive* S_2. A), B) and C) illustrate the prediction when changing the parameter k, $\bar{\mu}$, and y, respectively. The difference is positive (>0) when the relative content of antibiotic is higher in pure culture conditions, whereas is negative (<0) when the content is higher in mixed culture conditions. Lack of difference is represented by a horizontal, dotted line.

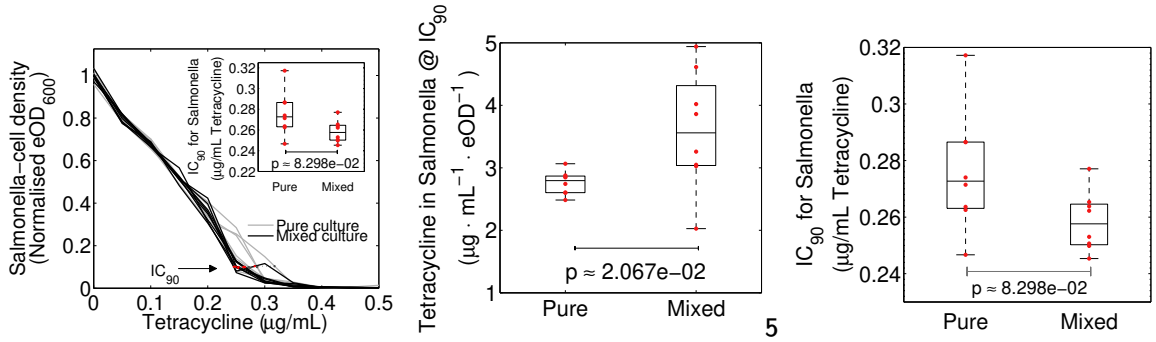

Figure S2. Drug efficacy data for *Salmonella typhimurium*. Left) Change in normalised density of *Salmonella typhimurium* as a function of tetracycline concentration, when Wyl grows in mixed culture with tetracycline-sensitive *Escherichia coli* Wyl. The change in density of *S. typhimurium* growing in mixed culture is shown in black, with grey showing the change in density in pure culture. The IC_{90} in each condition is shown as dots, red for mixed culture conditions and dark grey for pure culture, connected by a dotted line. Non-parametric, Mann-Whitney U-test between IC_{90}s is shown in the inset. Raw data is shown as dots, whereas the boxes represent median (centre of the box), 25th, and 75th percentile of the dataset. The whiskers show the most extreme data points that are not outliers. Similar box plots show the relative content of tetracycline in *S. typhimurium* at its IC_{90} (**centre**), and changes in IC_{90} berween pure and mixed culture conditions (**right**)

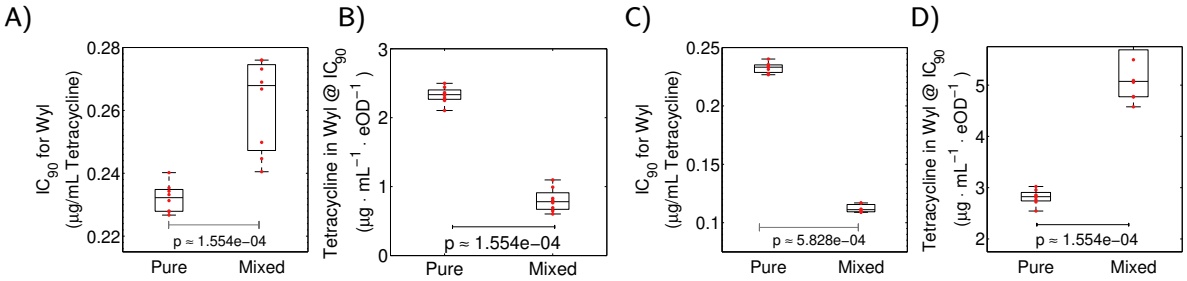

Figure S3. Box plots for tetracycline efficacy against *Escherichia coli*. The boxes represent median (centre of the box), 25th, and 75th percentile of the dataset for IC_{90} and drug content in *Escherichia coli* Wyl growing alongside drug-sensitive *Salmonella typhimurium* (A and B), and drug-resistant *Escherichia coli* GB(c). The whiskers show the most extreme data points that are not outliers. The *p* values shown correspond to non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-tests to determine significance of the difference in datasets between pure and mixed culture conditions.

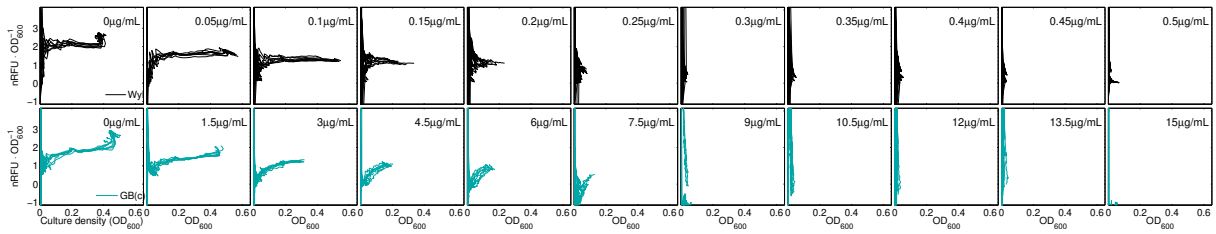

Figure S4. Changes in relative fluorescence over time in both Wyl and GB(c) strains of *Escherichia coli*. Raw change in florescence, per optical density units, measured every 20min for 24h for *E. coli* Wyl (black) and GB(c). Each column represents the data set for each tetracycline concentration used.

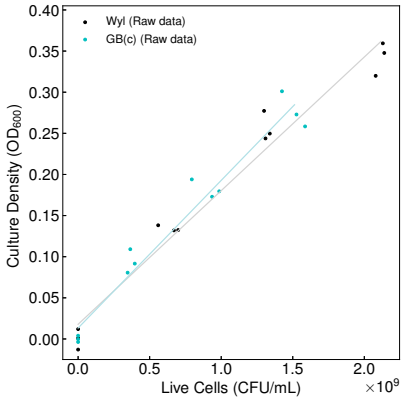

Figure S5. Calibration curve to translate optical density data to number of *Escherichia coli* cells. I fitted the linear model $a = bx + c$ to optical density and colony counting data (dots) to calculate the number of optical density units (OD_{600}) per cell. a denotes the optical density readings measured at 600nm, c the crossing point with the $y-$axis when $x = 0$, and b the conversion factor between optical density and number of cells (x). I interpolating optical density readings to calculate the number of cells within a culture as $x = (a - c)/b$. For the strain S, $b = 1.62 \times 10^{-10}\ OD \cdot mL \cdot CFU^{-1}$ and $c = 1.78 \times 10^{-2}\ OD$, whereas for R $b = 1.79 \times 10^{-10}\ OD \cdot mL \cdot CFU^{-1}$ and $c = 1.33 \times 10^{-2}\ OD$.

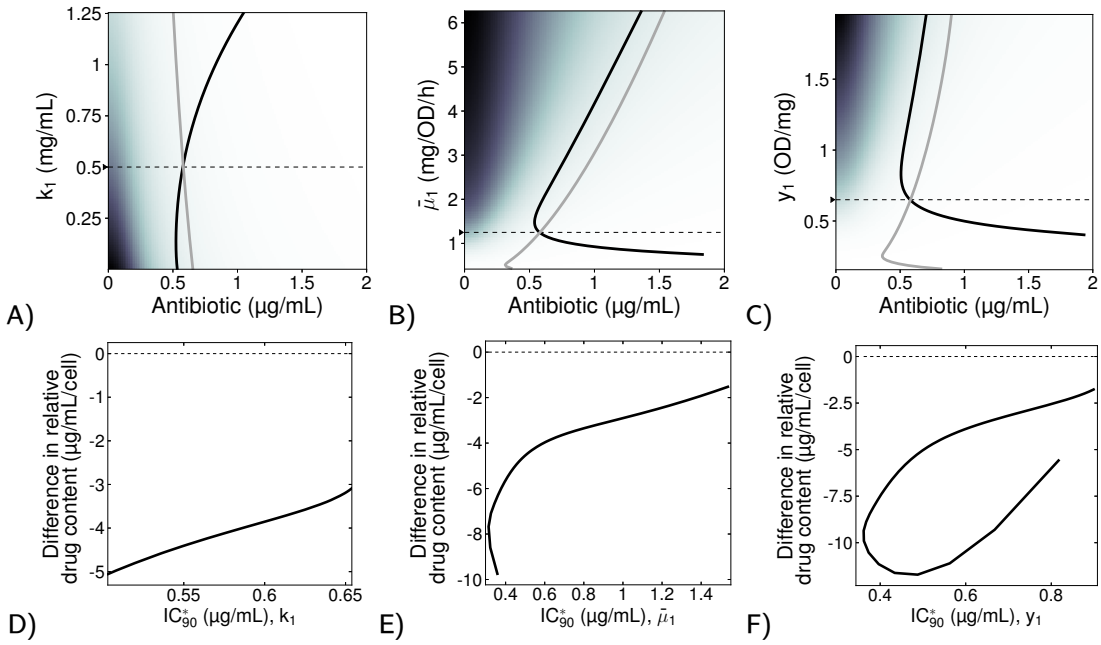

Figure S6. Drug concenttration in individuals from species S_1 in pure and mixed growth conditions when competing genotypes avoid drug-inhibition through efflux pumps. A–C) IC_{90}, antibiotic concentration inhibiting 90% (IC_{90}) the growth predicted without drug, resulting with different parameters values for the half-saturation parameter k_1 (B), maximal carbon up-take $\bar{\mu}_1$ (C), or biomass yield y_s (D) in equation 1 when species S_2 is drug-resistant through efflux pumps. The IC_{90} for species S_1 growing as pure cultures is shown in grey, and growing in mixed culture with S_2 are shown in black. The parameter values for species S_2 were fixed at a value noted by a black arrow on the y-axis, followed by a dotted black line. **D–F)** Theoretical difference in relative drug content—antibiotic molecules per cell–of S_1 between pure culture conditions, and mixed culture with *drug-insensitive* S_2. D), E) and F) illustrate the prediction when changing the parameter k, $\bar{\mu}$, and y, respectively. The difference is positive (>0) when the relative content of antibiotic is higher in pure culture conditions, whereas is negative (<0) when the content is higher in mixed culture conditions. Lack of difference is represented by a horizontal, dotted line.