Comparison of HSV-1 strains circulating in Finland demonstrates the uncoupling of

whole-genome relatedness and phenotypic outcomes of viral infection

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Abstract

A majority of adults in Finland are seropositive carriers of herpes simplex viruses (HSV).

Infection occurs at epithelial or mucosal surfaces, after which virions enter innervating nerve

endings, eventually establishing lifelong infection in neurons of the sensory or autonomic

nervous system. Recent data have highlighted the genetic diversity of HSV-1 strains, and

demonstrated apparent geographic patterns in strain similarity. Though multiple HSV-1 genomes

have been sequenced from Europe to date, there is a lack of sequenced genomes from Nordic

countries. Finland's history includes at least two major waves of human migration, suggesting

the potential for diverse viruses to persist in the population. Here we used HSV-1 clinical isolates

from Finland to test the relationship between viral phylogeny, genetic variation, and phenotypic

characteristics. We found that Finnish HSV-1 isolates separated into two distinct phylogenetic

groups, potentially reflecting historical waves of human (and viral) migration into Finland. Each

HSV-1 isolate harbored a distinct set of phenotypes in cell culture, including differences in virus

production, extracellular virus release, and cell-type-specific fitness. Importantly, the

phylogenetic clusters were not predictive of any detectable pattern in phenotypic differences,

demonstrating that whole-genome relatedness is not a proxy for overall viral phenotype. Instead,

we highlight specific gene-level differences that may contribute to observed phenotypic

differences, and we note that strains from different phylogenetic groups contain the same genetic

variations.

Importance

Herpes simplex viruses (HSV) infect a majority of adults. Recent data have highlighted the genetic diversity of HSV-1 strains, and demonstrated apparent genomic relatedness between strains from the same geographic region. We use HSV-1 clinical isolates from Finland to test the relationship between viral genomic and geographic relationships, differences in specific genes, and characteristics of viral infection. We found that viral isolates from Finland separated into two distinct groups of genomic and geographic relatedness, potentially reflecting historical patterns of human and viral migration into Finland. These Finland HSV-1 isolates had distinct infection characteristics in multiple cell types tested, which were specific to each isolate and did not group according to genomic and geographic relatedness. This demonstrates that HSV-1 strain differences in specific characteristics of infection are set by a combination of host cell type and specific viral gene-level differences.

Keywords: Herpes simplex virus (HSV), comparative genomics, phylogeny, genotype, phenotype, genetic variation

Introduction

Human herpes simplex virus 1 (HSV-1; Family: *Herpesviridae,* Genus: *Simplexvirus,* species: *Human herpesvirus 1*) has been recognized as a cause of major human disease since the era of

Hippocrates (1), and to this day there is no effective vaccine (2). Approximately 50% of adults in

Finland are seropositive for HSV-1 (3–5), and 13% are seropositive for HSV-2 (3, 6). HSV

infects via epithelial or mucosal surfaces, after which it is taken up by nerve endings and

establishes a lifelong infection in neurons of the sensory or sympathetic nervous system. From

these neuronal sites the virus can reactivate, transit via nerve endings back to the skin surface,

and re-initiate skin or mucosal shedding at the same site as the original infection. In addition to

recurrent epithelial lesions, HSV also causes infectious keratitis, worsens acquisition and

shedding rates for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and can progress to cause rare but life-

threatening encephalitis (1).

Recent comparative genomics studies of HSV-1, from our lab and others, have demonstrated that

HSV-1 strains from unrelated individuals can differ in 2-4% of the viral genome (7–13). HSV-1

has a large DNA genome of ~152 kilobases, encoding >75 proteins (14, 15). Prior comparisons

of HSV-1 strains based on single-gene or whole-genome sequencing have found at least three

major clades that cluster geographically, with evidence of recombination between these groups

(16–18, 9). However these studies have focused almost exclusively on the quantification of

sequence diversity, without connecting these observations to experimental measures of viral

fitness and/or virulence. Several recent examples have demonstrated the usefulness of comparing

closely related virus strains to explore the effects of minor sequence differences on phenotypic

outcomes (19–22, 10). To date, publications examining the genome-wide diversity of HSV-1 in

diverse clinical isolates have not connected these observations to any classic measures of viral

fitness, such as viral replication in cells, or antiviral drug resistance (23–25). Based on the

decades of prior research leading to all current antiviral approaches for HSV-1, we anticipate that

a connection between viral genetic data, cell-based measures of viral fitness, and in vivo

measures of viral pathogenesis will be crucial to drive the next generation of viral therapeutics.

Examining the phenotypic differences displayed by HSV-1 strains in culture provides an

opportunity to explore the scope of these differences and test whether or not they are linked to

previously observed patterns of geographic diversity.

Finland has a unique history that has led to a relatively homogeneous and stable population (26–

28), providing a unique view on the evolution of viruses that are persistent in the population.

There has been gene flow contributing to human population of Finland: both from the east, and

from the south (southwest) (26–28). The Eastern migrations from Siberia began over 3500 years

ago, and allele sharing with modern East Asian populations can be observed even in present day

Finns (27, 28). Finland also has one of the best genealogical databases in the world, which in

combination with computerized medical records and a high rate of patient participation, has led

to many recent advances in human medical genetics (29, 30). This may enable future studies to

explore the co-evolution of human and viral genetic variation in this population.

We have characterized ten HSV-1 strains isolated from a random subset of Finland clinic visits,

and compared their growth properties, drug resistance, and other phenotypic features. Full

genome sequences of these viruses were compared to each other and to other previously

described strains of HSV-1, to reveal patterns of inter-host and intra-host variability. While two

phylogenetic sub-groups were detected at a genomic level, these sub-groups were not predictive

of any detectable pattern in the observed phenotypic differences, demonstrating that whole-

genome relatedness is not a proxy for viral phenotype. We anticipate that these data will aid in

efforts to develop improved sequence-based antiviral therapies, by providing additional data on

conserved vs. divergent areas of the HSV-1 genome, and contribute to development of a vaccine

against HSV infections based on attenuation of these or related clinical isolates (31). These data

present an opportunity to explore the diversity of chronic herpesviruses in the Finland

population, and to lay the foundation for future studies that explore the connections between

viral genetic differences, host genetic predispositions, and their potential relationship(s) to

clinical outcomes of HSV-1 infection.

129   Methods

Virus isolates and virus stock propagation

Clinical isolates were obtained from anonymous coded diagnostic samples from herpes lesions

representing currently circulating viral strains in Finland (**Table 1**). The virus diagnostic unit of

the Turku University Hospital receives viral culture samples from the whole country except for

the Helsinki-Uusimaa region (capital Helsinki area and the South-Eastern Finland). Recent

immigrations to Finland were not represented in the sample material. Approval for the study of

anonymous HSV isolates was provided by the Turku University Central Hospital (permit #

J10/17).

An immunoperoxidase-rapid culture assay (32) was used to type the viruses as HSV-1, which

was confirmed by a HSV type-specific gD (US6) gene-based PCR test (33). Viruses were

initially propagated on Vero cells (African green monkey kidney cells; ATCC), maintained in

Dulbecco's MEM with 2% fetal calf serum and gentamycin. A stock was made by addition of 3

ml of 9% autoclaved skimmed milk (Valio, Finland) on to 5 ml of the culture medium and

subsequent freezing. The cells and the medium were collected and combined upon thawing, and

were frozen and thawed for two further rounds before aliquoting. The viral titer was determined

by plaque titration on Vero cells as described before (34). Parallel aliquots were used for further

viral culture studies and for preparation of viral nucleocapsid DNA.

Statistical methods

For viral production data, SPSS Statistics 20 (IBM, Armonk NY, USA) software was use to

perform statistical analyses. Non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test was used to calculate

statistical significances. The threshold for significance was set to $p<0.05$.

Viral genomic DNA isolation

The viral genomic DNA was prepared from isolated viral nucleocapsids as described previously

(7, 35). In brief, viral stock collected from the first or second passage in Vero cells was used to

infect $\sim 1\times10^8$ HaCaT cells (Department of Dentistry, University of Turku (36)) at a multiplicity

of infection (m.o.i.) of 0.1-1 plaque-forming units (PFU)/cell, and the infection was allowed to

proceed to completion at +35 °C (1-3 days). The cells were collected, washed with PBS and

suspended to LCM buffer (0.125 M KCl, 30 mM Tris pH 7.4, 5 mM $MgCl_2$, 0.5 mM EDTA,

0.5% Nonidet P-40; with 0.6 mM beta-mercaptoethanol). After two successive extractions with

Freon (1,1,2-trichloro-1,2,2-trifluoroethane, Sigma-Aldrich), the extracts were added on top of

layers in LCM buffer with 45% and 5% glycerol and ultracentrifuged at 77 000 x g for 1 h at

+4°C (Beckman Coulter SW41Ti rotor). Viral nucleocapsids were recovered from the bottom of

the ultracentrifuge tube, and the DNA was prepared by treatment with Proteinase K and SDS,

followed by repeated extractions with phenol-chloroform and ethanol precipitation. The DNA

content and purity were observed by spectrophotometry and by agarose gel electrophoresis after

restriction enzyme digestions.

Cell culture

Vero cells (ATCC; Manassas, VA) were propagated in M199 medium supplemented with 5%

fetal bovine serum and gentamycin. HaCaT cells (Department of Dentistry, University of Turku;

(36)) were propagated in DMEM medium with HEPES buffer, supplemented with 7% fetal

bovine serum and gentamycin. SH-SY5Y neuroblastoma cells (K. Åkerman, Åbo Akademi

University, Turku, Finland) were propagated in DMEM (high glucose) medium supplemented

with 10% fetal bovine serum, 2 mM L-glutamine and gentamycin. Initial differentiation of SH-

SY5Y cells involved culture for 10 days in DMEM/F-12 medium containing 5% fetal bovine

serum, 10 µM All-trans retinoic acid (Sigma), 2 mM L-glutamine and gentamycin. Thereafter

SH-SY5Y cells were transferred on Matrigel-coated (B-D) 96-well plates and the medium was

changed to serum-free DMEM/F-12 medium containing 10 µM all-trans retinoic acid (Sigma),

0.5 µg/ml of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (Millipore), 2 mM L-glutamine and gentamycin.

Acyclovir resistance testing

The sensitivity of each HSV strain to acyclovir was tested in a microplate format. Vero cells

grown on 96-well cell culture plates were treated with cell culture medium (DMEM with 5%

fetal bovine serum) supplemented with acyclovir (ACV; Sigma), in concentrations of 128 µg/ml

to 0.03125 µg/ml (1:4 serial dilutions). Duplicate wells containing each ACV dilution, and wells

without ACV, were infected with 100 PFU of each virus. As a control, the HSV-1 delta305 virus

was included; it is resistant to ACV due to deletion of its thymidine kinase gene (37). Infected

cells were incubated at +37°C, at 5% CO_2, for 72 hours before fixation with methanol and

staining with crystal violet. The reduction of plaque numbers at each ACV dilution was observed

in comparison with wells infected without ACV. A logistic fit curve was used for determination

of IC_{50} values. A virus with an IC_{50} value of over 2 µg/ml (of ACV) was considered resistant

(38).

Image acquisition

Photomicrographic images of viral plaques were obtained using a Zeiss Primovert inverted

microscope with Plan-Achromat 4x and 10x objectives, recorded using an AxioCam ERc 5s

camera, and analyzed using Zeiss ZEN 2012 software.

Next generation sequencing

Viral nucleocapsid DNA was sheared on a Covaris M220 (parameters: 60 seconds duration, peak

power 50, 10% duty cycle, 4C). We used the Illumina TruSeq DNA Sample Prep kit to prepare

barcoded sequencing libraries, according to the manufacturer's protocol for low-throughput

sample handling. Libraries were quantified and assessed by Qubit (Invitrogen, CA), Bioanalyzer

(Agilent), and library adapter qPCR (KAPA Biosystems). Illumina MiSeq paired-end sequencing

(2 x 300 bp) was completed according to manufacturer's recommendations, using 17 pM library

concentration.

A consensus viral genome for each strain was assembled using a *de novo* viral genome assembly

(VirGA) workflow (10). This approach begins with quality control, including removal of

contaminating host sequences, adapters from library preparation, and imaging artifacts. Next

VirGA iterates through multiple *de novo* assemblies using SSAKE, which we then combine into

longer blocks of sequence (contigs) using Celera and GapFiller. VirGA uses Mugsy alignment to

match these contigs to the HSV-1 reference genome (strain 17, GenBank accession JN555585).

The best-matched contigs are stitched into a single consensus genome, which is then annotated

and subjected to additional quality control measures. These include an examination of coverage

(sequence read) depth, detection of minority variants within each consensus genome, and manual

inspection of gaps and low coverage areas. See **Table 2** for GenBank accessions.

Intra-strain minority-variant detection

Minority-variant (MV) positions within each *de novo* assembled genome were determined using

VarScan v2.2.11 as previously described (19, 39). Conservative variant calling parameters to

eliminate sequencing-induced errors were set at: minimum allele frequency ≥ 0.02; base call

quality ≥ 20; read depth at the position ≥ 100; independent reads supporting minor allele ≥ 5. MVs

containing $\geq 90\%$ unidirectional strand support were excluded from further analyses (40, 41), as

were those occurring within 10 base pairs of one another. MVs passing quality control were

mapped to respective genomes and assessed for mutational effect using SnpEff and SnpSift (42,

43).

Phylogenetic and recombination analyses

DNA sequences were aligned using the Kalign algorithm included in eBioTools. To avoid

inferences caused by false phylogenetic signals, all gap and repeat regions were excluded prior to

this analysis. Repeat regions not leading to gaps were also excluded since these may contain

single nucleotide differences that have been shuffled into new positions by random aspects of

tandem-repeat alignment. Furthermore, nucleotides that were marked as "N" in GenBank-

derived strains were excluded, along with the corresponding aligned nucleotides in remaining

sequences. Complete genomes in GenBank harbouring long stretches of "N" were not included

in the analysis (e.g. strain B3x_1_5). The network is based on an alignment of 116,610

nucleotides, which is more than 75% of the entire HSV-1 genome.

The phylogenetic network was constructed by using SplitsTree4. It is a NeighborNet with

OrdinaryLeastSquares Variance depicted as a RootedEqualAngle splitstree. A recombination test

on the complete dataset was performed by using the Phi test for recombination implemented in

SplitsTree4. Bootstrapping values greater than 80 are shown for clades with three or more

strains.

Restriction fragment length polymorphism (RFLP) analysis

A cytoplasmic viral DNA preparation was modified from the protocol described by Igarashi et al

(44). Subconfluent Vero cell cultures were infected at an m.o.i. of 0.1, and incubated at +34℃

for 2 days until the cytopathic effect was complete. The cells were collected in 150 mM NaCl, 10

mM Tris pH 7.6, 1.5 mM MgCl buffer, with 0.1% Nonidet P-40. The nuclei were pelleted, and

DNA was extracted from the supernatant by two successive extractions with phenol-chloroform.

DNA was recovered by ethanol precipitation. 12.5 µg of each viral DNA was diluted in 15 µl

solution containing sterile H_2O, FastDigest 10X green buffer and FastDigest BamHI or SalI

restriction enzyme (Thermo Scientific). Electrophoresis was run in 0.8 % TBE-agarose gels, with

GeneRuler mix DNA ladder, for 24 h at 45 V before imaging. In order to separate large DNA

fragments after SalI digestion, electrophoresis was continued for additional 36 h at 30 V.

Results

Comparison of growth properties of Finnish HSV-1 strains in vitro

A random set of ten circulating Finnish HSV-1 isolates were selected from residual laboratory

diagnostic specimens (**Table 1)**. We first examined *in vitro* phenotypic characteristics of these

HSV-1 isolates, by comparing their overall titer and rate of intracellular virus vs. extracellular

(released) virus production at 24 hours post infection (hpi) of a range of cell types (**Figure 1**).

These included non-human primate kidney-derived epithelial (Vero) cells (**Figure 1A**), human

keratinocyte (HaCaT) cells (**Figure 1B**), and human neuroblastoma (SH-SY5Y) cells in a mixed,

undifferentiated state (**Figure 1C**), as well as a differentiated, neuronal state (**Figure 1D**).

Compared to epithelial and keratinocyte cells, overall viral production was markedly reduced in

neuronal precursor cells and differentiated neuronal cells (compare **Figure 1AB** vs. **CD**). The

wild-type HSV-1 reference strain 17+ replicated to significantly higher titers than any of the

circulating clinical isolates in Vero cells, which are standardly used for HSV propagation, and to

a lesser extent strain 17+ replicated at higher titer in keratinocytes as well (**Figure 1**; $p<0.05$, 10-

100 fold higher viral amounts). Different clinical isolates excelled at producing virions in each

cell type, with no clear patterns of most- or least-efficient viral production or release across all

cell types. The amount of extracellular released virus was less than 10% of the total virion

production, in all cell types except the undifferentiated neuronal precursor cells (**Figure 1,**

insets). Each virus strain was also tested for acyclovir (ACV) resistance. Despite some variation

in ACV susceptibility (IC50 values), none of the circulating Finnish viruses was considered

resistant to ACV (**Table 1**). There were also no significant differences among the 10 clinical

isolates in the plaque morphology or the type of cytopathic effect induced in Vero cell cultures

(data not shown).

Genetic and genomic analysis of Finnish HSV-1 strains

Based on prior data suggesting the effects of successive waves of migration on the human

population in Finland (45, 46), we next assessed the overall genetic diversity of these ten HSV-1

isolates. We first performed a restriction fragment length polymorphism (RFLP) analysis on viral

genomic DNA, which revealed at least two broad patterns of variation (**Figure 2**). The diversity

of bands led us to examine these genetic differences with greater precision using high-

throughput, deep genome sequencing (HTS) and comparative genomics analysis (see **Methods**

for details). A previously described bioinformatics pipeline was used to *de novo* assemble a full-

length consensus genome for each strain **(Table 2)**. A viral consensus genome represents the

most common nucleotide detected at each nucleotide position in that viral population. All viral

genomes had an average coverage depth between 1,000-2,800-fold, with >96% of the genome

covered at a depth exceeding 100-fold **(Table 2)**. As observed in prior publications, the few

areas with <100X coverage correlated with regions of high G+C-content, and/or highly repetitive

sequences (47, 9, 10). The >1,000X average coverage depth enabled us to compare the full

genetic complement of the viral genome for each strain, to analyze differences both between and

within each viral strain population, and to compare them to previously described viral genomes.

Genetic relatedness of Finland HSV-1 samples

First, we used the viral consensus genomes to compare how overall variation in these ten Finnish

HSV-1 genomes related to the patterns observed by RFLP analysis (**Figure 2**). Whole genome

alignments were created using the ten Finnish HSV-1 genomes, as well as these ten in

conjunction with a diverse set of previously published HSV-1 genomes (see Methods and

Supplemental Table S1 for a full list). We then used SplitsTree to create a phylogenetic

network that revealed the relatedness of the ten Finnish viral genomes to each other (**Figure 3A**)

and to previously described HSV-1 genomes (**Figure 3B**). This approach revealed that the

Finland HSV-1 genomes separated into two sub-groups, which appear to relate to previously

recognized Asian and European / North American clades. These data echo those of the initial

RFLP analysis.

Protein-coding variation in Finland HSV-1 samples

Next, we examined more fine-scale genetic differences in these HSV-1 isolates, which are

invisible at the level of RFLP analysis. Here we examined DNA- and amino acid (AA)-

alignments for each protein-coding region of the HSV-1 genome (**Supplemental Table S2-S3**).

We found that from zero to 8% of each coding region differed at the AA level between the ten

Finnish viral genomes (**Figure 4**). Only a handful of small coding regions (UL20, VP26 (UL35),

UL49A, UL55) showed no AA variation at all between viral isolates. Consistent with previous

findings (9), gL (UL1), UL11, UL43, gG (US4), and gJ (US5) were among the most divergent

proteins. Together these inter-strain genetic differences in 70 HSV-1 proteins in **Figure 4**

provide ample opportunities to generate the phenotypic diversity observed in **Figure 1**. Overall,

these levels of AA coding diversity reflect those seen in previous analyses (9), and between other

known HSV-1 genomes.

Minority allelic variants in Finland HSV-1 viral populations

Each viral consensus genome represents the most common nucleotide detected at each position

in the viral genome. In contrast, minority variants (MV) within each viral population are rare

alleles, presented in <50% of the sequenced reads. These MV may rise to greater prevalence

during viral spread to new niches or hosts, or under selective evolutionary pressure. For each

viral genome, we examined the number of MVs detected in each genome. Stringent quality-

control criteria were used to reduce the number of false-positive MVs (see **Methods**), and only

those MV detected at ≥2% prevalence were used in this analysis. MVs were found dispersed

across each genome (**Figure 5A**), mostly in intergenic regions, and were mostly of low

frequency (**Figure 5B**). A concentration of MVs was found in the internal-repeat region, which

may result from stochasticity in tandem repeat alignment in this area, and/or from the reduced

selective pressures on intergenic sequences found in this region. The MVs detected in US7 (gI)

occur at the same tandem-repeat site as the consensus-level AA variations in this gene (**Figure**

6). Taken together, these results define the level of inter-host (**Figure 4**) and intra-host (**Figure**

5) variation seen in the Finnish HSV-1 strains described herein.

Patterns of variation in Finnish HSV-1 strains

Finally, we considered whether any of the observed patterns of genomic or phenotypic variation

could be linked to fine-scale coding variations in these ten Finnish HSV-1 isolates. The genomic

sub-groups detected by RFLP (**Figure 2**) and phylogenetic network analysis (**Figure 3**) were

reflected in several coding variations that correlated with phylogenetic group. For example,

coding differences in the secreted and virion surface glycoprotein G (gG; US4) correlated with

the two Finnish phylogenetic sub-groups (**Figure 6A**; see **Figure 3** for phylogenetic sub-groups).

Other impacts on coding variation may result from changes in copy number at tandem repeats.

Variation in tandem repeat length in glycoprotein I (gI; US7) leads to changes in the length of a

repeating tract of mucin-type O-linked glycosylation sites (**Figure 6B)**, akin to that previously

described in clinical isolates of HSV-1 (16, 48). Finally, there are detectable patterns of AA

variation that correlate with phenotypic differences in viral fitness in specific cell types. Coding

differences in the nuclear egress complex protein NEC2 (UL34) (**Figure 6C**) were observed in

the two strains (F-12g, M-15) which showed no detectable extracellular virion release in

differentiated neuronal cells (**Figure 1D**). The terminally differentiated and non-dividing state of

these neuronal cells may constitute a sensitized background to detect impacts on virion egress.

Taken together, these examples illustrate the type and degree of variation present in these strains,

and highlight potential genetic insights into viral phenotype.

Discussion

In this study, we described the first-ever HSV-1 genomes from Finland. Two distinct sub-groups

or clades were observed in the ten Finnish clinical isolates, with four strains clustering in one

clade and six in another. These groups were detectable using both classical RFLP approaches

(**Figure 2**) and deep-sequencing methods for whole-genome analyses (**Figure 3**). These data

appear to corroborate with previous findings on colonization of Finland, with migration from

Europe in the south/southwest and from Asia in the northeast (26–28). However, we found that

phenotypic differences between these isolates were uncoupled from the overall genomic patterns

that grouped them into two geographic clades. While plaque morphology was consistent across

isolates (data not shown), the amount of virus production, extracellular virion release, and

acyclovir sensitivity differed between isolates and across cell types (**Figure 1** and **Table 1**). We

detected gene-specific patterns of genetic variation that may impact protein function. Future

studies will need to dissect individual genetic variations in each viral isolate in order to test their

precise impact(s) on viral fitness.

When analyzing the replication capabilities of these recently isolated clinical samples in multiple

cell types, we found that they replicated to lower overall titers and produced fewer extracellular

virions than the lab-adapted HSV-1 strain 17+, regardless of cell type (**Figure 1**). This difference

was more pronounced in non-human primate epithelial and human keratinocyte cells, and was

more subtle in neuronal precursors and differentiated neuronal cells. There did not appear to be

any clear differences in titer or extracellular virus production between geographic clades. There

also seemed to be no noticeable differences in plaque morphology among these samples, with

plaque size and cellular cytopathic effect being similar across all samples (data not shown).

Although we report findings in a number of cell lines in this study, it will be important for future

studies to examine each virus and cell-type pairing separately, since these data demonstrate that

maximal viral fitness in one cell type is not generally predictive of fitness in another.

We observed several potential connections between genetic differences and phenotypic

differences. For instance, we detected an AA difference in the UL34 (NEC2) binding domain in

F-12g and M-15 **(Figure 6C).** Previous work has shown that the viral proteins UL31 (NEC1) and

UL34 (NEC2) form a nuclear egress complex that localizes to the perinuclear space and plays a

critical role in egress of viral capsids from the nucleus (49, 50). In these two clinical isolates (F-

12g and M-15), there was no measurable amount of extracellular virus produced in differentiated

neuronal cells (**Figure 1D**). Further studies will be needed to examine if this phenotype is linked

to a disruption of NEC1 and NEC2 binding and impaired nuclear egress for isolates F-12g and

M-15. Variation in the copy-number of tandem repeats is yet another way that HSV-1 isolates

can generate genetic and potential phenotypic variation (9, 16, 51–53). Glycoprotein I (gI; US7)

contains a mucin-like domain with repeating units of serine, threonine, and proline (**Figure 6B**).

This domain varies in length across these isolates. This domain has been previously shown to

serve as a site of O-linked glycosylation, with longer tracts (e.g. 8 repeating blocks of 7 AA

each) being more heavily glycosylated than short tracts (e.g. 2 repeating blocks) (16, 48). A prior

study of over 80 Swedish HSV-1 isolates found roughly equal distributions of isolates with two,

three, or four repeating blocks in this mucin-like gI domain (16, 48). Half of the Finland HSV-1

isolates analyzed here have at least four repeating units, suggesting the potential for gI to be

more heavily glycosylated in these isolates. These data generate hypotheses for future

investigations of genotype-phenotype links in these and other new clinical isolates.

This study provides one of the first combinations of phenotypic analyses that span multiple cell

types, alongside full comparative genomic analyses that span both phylogenetic and gene-

specific analyses. One comparison not yet explored in this or prior studies is the specific pairing

of each virus with cells derived from the human source of each isolate. This approach is now

technically feasible, using induced pluripotent stem cell technology to generate specific cell

types from a single source such as a buccal swab. The rich genealogical databases in Finland

suggest an opportunity to not only pair these analyses at the human-cell and virus level, but also

to link observed phenotypes of cellular infection to each patient's clinical, genetic, and/or

familial history of herpesvirus disease. Future studies may also seek to link human interaction

data, for instance contact networks and/or travel history, to infer how human movement and

interactions patterns influence pathogen spread and population dynamics. We anticipate that in

the future, this approach would yield fruitful insights not only into direct clinical outcomes of

herpesvirus disease, but also generate hypotheses about herpesvirus co-morbidities.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank professor Päivi Onkamo, and the members of the Hukkanen and Szpara labs

for helpful feedback and discussion. We acknowledge Ritva Kajander for preparation of the viral

stocks and the viral nucleocapsid DNA, and BSc Kiira Kalke and BSc Mira Hörkkö for help in

imaging the viral plaques. This work was supported by research startup funds (MLS) from the

Pennsylvania State University, and by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Health using

CURE funds (MLS). The Department specifically disclaims responsibility for any analyses,

interpretations, or conclusions. The funding from the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation grant

#170046 is acknowledged. We thank Prof. Bernard Roizman, University of Chicago, for the

HSV-1 delta305 virus.

Figure Legends

Figure 1: Comparison of growth properties of Finnish HSV-1 strains reveals the

uncoupling of phenotypic and geographic variation.

Histograms comparing virus production for ten Finnish strains of HSV-1, as compared to the

HSV-1 reference strain 17+, in different cell types. Panel **(A,** non-human primate**)** shows Vero

monkey kidney cells, which are defective in interferon signaling; **(B)** shows HaCaT human

keratinocytes; **(C)** shows undifferentiated human SH-SY5Y neuroblastoma cells (neuronal

precursor cells); **(D)** shows differentiated human SH-SY5Y neuronal-like cells. Viruses are

plotted in descending order based on their viral production. For ease of comparison, the strains

are color-coded and divided into the genomic sub-groups used in later figures (see **Figure 3** for

illustration). Each histogram bar plots infectious virions in the cell-associated fraction (gray) vs.

those released from cells (black). A horizontal line shows the median (solid green) and the

average (dashed green) amount of virus production for the ten Finnish HSV-1 strains in each cell

type, with a highlighted box (green) on this y-axis added to highlight the multi-log decrease in

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Tables

Table 1: The Finnish HSV-1 strains used for genome sequence comparisons.

Sample	Gender	Code	Age	Lesion or diagnosis	Acyclovir sensitivity, IC50 value (µg/ml)
H1211	female	F-11	21	blister	0.25
H1215	male	M-15	5	blister	0.03
H12113	female	F-13	29	blister	0.11
H12114	female	F-14g	23	genital blister	0.50
H12117	female	F-17	57	blister	0.15
H12118	female	F-18g	19	genital blister	0.13
H1311	female	F-11*l*	59	blister (lip)	0.31
H1312	male	M-12	39	blister	0.13
H1412	female	F-12g	28	genital lesion	0.09
H15119	male	M-19	36	blister	0.15

666   *The IC50 value for HSV-1 delta305 (a TK-negative, ACV-resistant control) was 8.08 and for
667   the reference strain HSV-1(17+) it was 0.13. The limit of resistance was ≥ 2.0 µg/ml.

669   **Table 2. Sequencing statistics for Finnish HSV-1 strains.**

Sample	Code	% Depth ≥100	Average coverage	Raw Sequence Reads	Used for Assembly	% Viral	GenBank Accession^
H1211	F-11	96%	1,027x	4.2 million	2.8 million	66%	MH999843
H1215	M-15	99%	2,808x	5.5 million	3.8 million	70%	MH999846
H12113	F-13	98%	2,354x	3.8 million	2.4 million	64%	MH999842
H12114	F-14g	98%	2,078x	5.9 million	3.8 million	66%	MH999844
H12117	F-17	98%	1,976x	4.1 million	2.7 million	66%	MH999845
H12118	F-18g	98%	1,678x	4.2 million	2.9 million	69%	MH999847
H1311	F-11*l*	99%	2,541x	4.6 million	3.0 million	65%	MH999848
H1312	M-12	98%	2,415x	6.0 million	3.7 million	61%	MH999849
H1412	F-12g	98%	1,524x	4.5 million	3.1 million	69%	MH999851
H15119	M-19	99%	1,536x	4.8 million	3.0 million	64%	MH999850

^See GenBank flatfile attached for review purposes.

Figures & Figure Legends

Figure 1: Comparison of growth properties of Finnish HSV-1 strains reveals the

uncoupling of phenotypic and geographic variation.

Histograms comparing virus production for ten Finnish strains of HSV-1, as compared to the

HSV-1 reference strain 17+, in different cell types. Panel **(A,** non-human primate**)** shows Vero

monkey kidney cells, which are defective in interferon signaling; **(B)** shows HaCaT human

keratinocytes; **(C)** shows undifferentiated human SH-SY5Y neuroblastoma cells (neuronal

precursor cells); **(D)** shows differentiated human SH-SY5Y neuronal-like cells. Viruses are

plotted in descending order based on their viral production. For ease of comparison, the strains

are color-coded and divided into the genomic sub-groups used in later figures (see **Figure 3** for

illustration). Each histogram bar plots infectious virions in the cell-associated fraction (gray) vs.

those released from cells (black). A horizontal line shows the median (solid green) and the

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Viral genomic DNA was digested with SalI and separated via electrophoresis to distinguish

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isolates.

Histogram depicts the percent of synonymous nucleotide differences per gene (**A**) and the

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(**C**) AA differences in the nuclear egress protein NEC2 (UL34) were observed in the two strains

752   (M-15, F-12g) which showed no detectable extracellular virion release in differentiated neuronal

753   cells (**Figure 1D**). See Discussion for additional insights on the potential phenotypic impacts of

754   the variations shown in B-C.

Supplemental Tables

Supplemental Table S1: List of previously published HSV-1 genomes used for

phylogenetic analyses

Virus Isolate	Country (with location detail, if available)	GenBank Accession #	References
H1211 / F-11*	Finland	MH999843	(31), present
H1215 / M-15*	Finland	MH999846	(31), present
H12113 / F-13*	Finland	MH999842	present
H12114 / F-14g*	Finland	MH999844	(31), present
H12117 / F-17*	Finland	MH999845	(31), present
H12118 / F-18g*	Finland	MH999847	(31), present
H1311 / F11l*	Finland	MH999848	present
H1312 / M-12*	Finland	MH999849	present
H1412 / F-12g*	Finland	MH999851	present
H15119 / M-19*	Finland	MH999850	present
SC16	Spain (Madrid)	KX946970	(55)
172/2010	Germany	LT594105	(12)
2158/2007	Germany	LT594106	(12)
3083/2008	Germany	LT594107	(12)
1319/2005	Germany	LT594108	(12)
270/2007	Germany	LT594109	(12)
66/2007	Germany	LT594110	(12)
1394/2005	Germany	LT594111	(12)
369/2007	Germany	LT594112	(12)
160/1982	Germany	LT594192	(12)
132/1998	Germany	LT594457	(12)
L2	Russia (Moscow)	KT780616	(56)
B^3x1.1	U.S.A. (Bronx, NY)	KU310657	(57)
B^3x1.2	U.S.A. (Bronx, NY)	KU310658	(57)
B^3x1.3	U.S.A. (Bronx, NY)	KU310659	(57)
B^3x1.4	U.S.A. (Bronx, NY)	KU310660	(57)
B^3x1.5	U.S.A. (Bronx, NY)	KU310661	(57)
H193	U.S.A.	KT425108	n/a
KOS79	U.S.A. (Madison, WI)	KT425109	(11)
CJ994	U.S.A. (Madison, WI)	KR011283	(20)
HSV-1/0116209/India/2011	India	KJ847330	(58)
H166	U.S.A.	KM222726	(59)
H166syn	U.S.A.	KM222727	(59)
RE	U.S.A.	KF498959	n/a
OD4	U.S.A. (Madison, WI)	JN420342	(8)
17	U.K. (Glasgow)	JN555585	(9)
CR38	China (Shenyang)	HM585508	(9)

Virus Isolate	Country (with location detail, if available)	GenBank Accession #	References
E03	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585509	(9)
E06	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585496	(9)
E07	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585497	(9)
E08	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585498	(9)
E10	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585499	(9)
E11	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585500	(9)
E12	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585501	(9)
E13	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585502	(9)
E14	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585510	(9)
E15	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585503	(9)
E19	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585511	(9)
E22	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585504	(9)
E23	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585505	(9)
E25	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585506	(9)
E35	Kenya (Nairobi)	HM585507	(9)
R11	South Korea (Seoul)	HM585514	(9)
R62	South Korea (Seoul)	HM585515	(9)
S23	Japan (Sapporo)	HM585512	(9)
S25	Japan (Sapporo)	HM585513	(9)
F	U.S.A. (Chicago, IL)	GU734771	(9)
H129	U.S.A. (San Francisco, CA)	GU734772	(9)
McKrae	U.S.A. (Gainesville, FL)	JQ730035, JX142173	(9)
KOS	U.S.A. (Houston, TX)	JQ673480, JQ780693	(9)
HF10	U.S.A. (New York, NY)	DQ889502	(9)
Ty_25	Japan	MH999840	n/a
Ty_148	Japan	MH999841	n/a
K_86	Japan	MH999839	n/a
K_47	Japan	MH999838	n/a
7-hse [†]	Sweden or U.S.A.	SRX056767	(60)
7862 [†]	Sweden or U.S.A.	SRX056770	(60)
3355 [†]	Sweden or U.S.A.	SRX056769	(60)
2762 [†]	Sweden or U.S.A.	SRX056768	(60)
90237 [†]	Sweden or U.S.A.	SRX056772	(60)
E4 [†]	Sweden or U.S.A.	SRX056773	(60)
78326 [†]	Sweden or U.S.A.	SRX056771	(60)
4-J1037 [†]	Sweden or U.S.A.	SRX056760	(60)
J1061 [†]	Sweden or U.S.A.	SRX056774	(60)
5-J1061	Sweden or U.S.A.	n/a	(60)

759   [*] newly sequenced strains from Finland in this study.

760   [†] Sequence data deposited in GenBank short read archive

762 **Supplemental Table S2: Number of nucleotide and amino acid (AA) differences observed in each set of Finnish or**

763 **worldwide published HSV1 genomes.**

Gene*	ORF length in NT^	protein length (#AA)	10 Finnish # NT diff.^	10 Finnish # AA changes	10 Finnish %AA diff.	10 Finnish dN/dS	All HSV1 # NT diff.	All HSV1 # AA changes	All HSV1 %AA diff.	All HSV1 dN/dS ratio
UL1	675	224	22	12	5.4	1.20	58	31	13.8	1.15
UL2	1005	334	24	8	2.4	0.50	62	28	8.4	0.82
UL3	675	224	13	5	2.2	0.63	43	19	8.5	0.79
UL4	600	199	11	2	1.0	0.22	43	18	9.0	0.72
UL5	2649	882	35	13	1.5	0.59	106	38	4.3	0.56
UL6	2031	676	43	13	1.9	0.43	107	30	4.4	0.39
UL7	891	296	24	6	2.0	0.33	47	17	5.7	0.57
UL8	2253	750	44	18	2.4	0.69	124	62	8.3	1.00
UL9	2556	851	21	5	0.6	0.31	110	32	3.8	0.41
UL10	1422	473	25	5	1.1	0.25	81	30	6.3	0.59
UL11	291	96	13	5	5.2	0.63	26	17	17.7	1.89
UL12	1881	626	36	12	1.9	0.50	87	30	4.8	0.53
UL13	1557	518	27	10	1.9	0.59	72	33	6.4	0.85
UL14	660	219	10	6	2.7	1.50	27	15	6.8	1.25
UL15	2208	735	22	3	0.4	0.16	80	16	2.2	0.25
UL16	1122	373	13	3	0.8	0.30	55	19	5.1	0.53
UL17	2112	703	30	12	1.7	0.67	108	39	5.5	0.57
UL18	957	318	12	6	1.9	1.00	41	15	4.7	0.58
UL19	4125	1374	39	7	0.5	0.22	139	40	2.9	0.40
UL20	669	222	7	0	0.0	0.00	29	9	4.1	0.45
UL21	1608	535	20	9	1.7	0.82	70	25	4.7	0.56
UL22	2517	838	21	8	1.0	0.62	120	50	6.0	0.71
UL23	1131	376	21	8	2.1	0.62	63	26	6.9	0.70
UL24	810	269	18	7	2.6	0.64	60	28	10.4	0.88

Gene*	ORF length in NT^	protein length (#AA)	10 Finnish # NT diff.^	10 Finnish # AA changes	10 Finnish %AA diff.	10 Finnish dN/dS	All HSV1 # NT diff.	All HSV1 # AA changes	All HSV1 %AA diff.	All HSV1 dN/dS ratio
UL25	1743	580	19	4	0.7	0.27	74	25	4.3	0.51
UL26	1908	635	40	14	2.2	0.54	92	34	5.4	0.59
UL26.5	990	329	21	8	2.4	0.62	45	17	5.2	0.61
UL27	2715	904	51	14	1.5	0.38	123	40	4.4	0.48
UL28	2358	785	26	6	0.8	0.30	87	23	2.9	0.36
UL29	3591	1196	54	10	0.8	0.23	154	33	2.8	0.27
UL30	3708	1235	32	13	1.1	0.68	154	49	4.0	0.47
UL31	921	306	15	5	1.6	0.50	34	13	4.2	0.62
UL32	1791	596	20	2	0.3	0.11	85	28	4.7	0.49
UL33	393	130	2	1	0.8	1.00	14	4	3.1	0.40
UL34	828	275	15	6	2.2	0.67	37	14	5.1	0.61
UL35	339	112	1	0	0.0	0.00	8	1	0.9	0.14
UL36	9420	3139	166	66	2.1	0.66	1271	440	14.0	0.53
UL37	3372	1123	41	13	1.2	0.46	140	60	5.3	0.75
UL38	1398	465	18	8	1.7	0.80	70	30	6.5	0.75
UL39	3414	1137	42	13	1.1	0.45	157	61	5.4	0.64
UL40	1023	340	10	3	0.9	0.43	38	12	3.5	0.46
UL41	1470	489	16	3	0.6	0.23	52	22	4.5	0.73
UL42	1467	488	19	10	2.0	1.11	76	39	8.0	1.05
UL43	1254	417	35	17	4.1	0.94	90	50	12.0	1.25
UL44	1536	511	26	16	3.1	1.60	97	55	10.8	1.31
UL45	519	172	4	3	1.7	3.00	22	8	4.7	0.57
UL46	2157	718	33	15	2.1	0.83	111	65	9.1	1.41
UL47	2082	693	29	6	0.9	0.26	81	29	4.2	0.56
UL48	1473	490	18	4	0.8	0.29	69	25	5.1	0.57
UL49	276	301	13	5	1.7	0.63	42	18	6.0	0.75
UL49A	906	91	2	0	0.0	0.00	8	3	3.3	0.60
UL50	1116	371	23	9	2.4	0.64	65	26	7.0	0.67

Gene*	ORF length in NT^	protein length (#AA)	10 Finnish # NT diff.^	10 Finnish # AA changes	10 Finnish %AA diff.	10 Finnish dN/dS	All HSV1 # NT diff.	All HSV1 # AA changes	All HSV1 %AA diff.	All HSV1 dN/dS ratio
UL51	735	244	12	3	1.2	0.33	33	13	5.3	0.65
UL52	3177	1058	43	9	0.9	0.26	129	41	3.9	0.47
UL53	1017	338	16	4	1.2	0.33	36	12	3.6	0.50
UL54	1539	512	11	4	0.8	0.57	73	34	6.6	0.87
UL55	561	186	5	0	0.0	0.00	25	9	4.8	0.56
UL56	705	234	8	4	1.7	1.00	34	19	8.1	1.27
US1	1263	420	22	8	1.9	0.57	75	39	9.3	1.08
US2	876	291	24	6	2.1	0.33	44	14	4.8	0.47
US3	1446	481	14	5	1.0	0.56	57	21	4.4	0.58
US4	717	238	26	13	5.5	1.00	68	36	15.1	1.13
US5	279	92	10	7	7.6	2.33	25	17	18.5	2.13
US6	1185	394	18	4	1.0	0.29	67	18	4.6	0.37
US7	1173	390	28	12	3.1	0.75	119	57	14.6	0.92
US8	1653	550	30	13	2.4	0.76	79	38	23.9	0.93
US8A	480	159	3	3	1.9	1.00	49	15	2.7	0.44
US9	273	90	1	1	1.1	1.00	12	4	4.4	0.50
US10	939	312	11	5	1.6	0.83	65	29	9.3	0.81
US11	486	161	1	1	0.6	1.00	42	19	11.8	0.83
US12	267	88	4	2	2.3	1.00	17	10	11.4	1.43
RL1	747	248	25	11	4.4	0.79	422	90	36.3	0.27
RL2	2328	775	44	20	2.6	0.83	180	91	11.7	1.02
RS1	3897	1298	62	30	2.3	0.94	345	207	15.9	1.50

* See **Supplemental Table S1** for list of strain names and genome accessions for comparisons of 10 Finnish and all published HSV1 genomes.
See **Supplemental Table S3** for list of strains excluded from selected gene alignments due to missing data in GenBank.
^ Abbreviations: ORF, open reading frame; NT, nucleotide; AA, amino acid; diff., difference; %, percent; dN/dS, ratio of nonsynonymous to
synonymous nucleotide changes

Supplemental Table S3: HSV-1 strains used to calculate nucleotide and amino acid

(AA) differences in Supplemental Table S2 and Figure 4.

Gene	# of strains in nucleotide alignment	# of strains in AA alignment	Strains not used in nucleotide and AA alignments*
UL7	60	60	B^3x1.1, B^3x1.2, B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5
UL12	61	61	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5, RE
UL13	58	58	E06, E25, E11, OD4, B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5
UL15	60	60	B^3x1.1, B^3x1.2, B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5
UL19	61	61	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5, RE
UL26.5	61	61	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5, HF10
UL41	61	61	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5, OD4
UL43	61	61	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5, HF10
UL48	60	60	B^3x1.1, B^3x1.2, B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5
UL49A	51	51	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5, HF10, 66_2007, 369_2007, 160_1982, 1394_2005, 132_1998, 3083_2008, 2158_2007, 172_2010, 270_2007, 1319_2005
UL55	59	59	E35, E13, KUTy25, B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5
UL56	60	60	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5, E35, HF10
US1	60	60	B^3x1.1, B^3x1.2, B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5
US8A	61	61	HF10, B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5
RL1	58	58	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5, OD4, 1394_2005, CJ994, L2
RL2	61	61	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5, B^3x1.2
RS1	59	59	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5, S23, CJ994, L2
All other genes	62	62	B^3x1.3, B^3x1.4, B^3x1.5

770 * Strains were excluded due to missing data (e.g. due to sequencing gaps) or annotations in
771 GenBank.