**A membrane-depolarising toxin substrate of the *Staphylococcus aureus* Type VII**

**protein secretion system targets eukaryotes and bacteria**

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**Summary**

The type VII protein secretion system (T7SS) is conserved across *Staphylococcus aureus*

strains and plays important roles in virulence and interbacterial competition. To date only one

T7SS substrate protein, encoded in a subset of strains, has been functionally characterized.

Here, using an unbiased proteomic approach, we identify TspA as a further T7SS substrate.

TspA, encoded distantly from the T7SS gene cluster, is found across all *S. aureus* strains.

Heterologous expression of TspA indicates that it has a toxic C-terminal domain that

depolarizes membranes. The membrane depolarizing activity is alleviated by co-production of

the TsaI immunity protein. Using a zebrafish hindbrain ventricle infection model, we

demonstrate that the T7SS of strain RN6390 contributes to zebrafish mortality, and deletion

of *tspA* leads to increased bacterial clearance *in vivo*. The toxin domain of TspA is highly

polymorphic and *S. aureus* strains encode multiple *tsaI* homologues at the *tspA* locus,

suggestive of additional roles in intra-species competition. In agreement, we demonstrate

TspA-dependent growth inhibition of RN6390 by strain COL in the zebrafish infection model,

that is alleviated by the presence of TsaI homologues. This is the first T7SS substrate protein

shown to have activity against both eukaryotes and prokaryotes.

## Introduction

The Type VII secretion system (T7SS) has been characterised in bacteria of the actinobacteria and firmicutes phyla. In pathogenic mycobacteria the ESX-1 T7SS secretes numerous proteins that are essential for virulence and immune evasion[1]. The Ess T7SS of *Staphylococcus aureus* is also required for pathogenesis in murine models of infection[2, 3, 4], and a longitudinal study of persistent *S. aureus* infection in the airways of a cystic fibrosis patient showed that the *ess* T7SS genes were highly upregulated during a 13 year timespan[5]. It is becoming increasingly apparent, however, that in addition to having anti-eukaryotic activity, the T7SS of firmicutes mediates interbacterial competition[6, 7, 8]. Some strains of *S. aureus* secrete a DNA endonuclease toxin, EsaD[6, 9], that when overproduced leads to growth inhibition of a sensitive *S. aureus* strain[6]. Moreover, *Streptococcus intermedius* exports at least three LXG domain-containing toxins, TelA, TelB and TelC that mediate contact-dependent growth inhibition against a range of Gram positive species[7].

A large integral membrane ATPase of the FtsK/SpoIIIE family, termed EssC in firmicutes, is a conserved component of all T7SSs and probably energizes protein secretion as well as forming part of the translocation channel[10, 11, 12, 13]. Three further membrane proteins function alongside the ATPase to mediate T7 protein secretion[2, 3, 13, 14, 15]. EsxA, a small secreted protein of the WXG100 family, is a further conserved T7 component that is dependent on the T7SS for its translocation across the membrane[2, 16]. In *S. aureus* the T7 structural components are encoded at the *ess* locus. In commonly-studied *S. aureus* strains including Newman, RN6390 and USA300, the T7 substrates EsxB, EsxC, EsxD and EsaD are encoded immediately downstream of *essC* (Fig 1A) and are co-regulated with the genes coding for machinery components[2, 3, 6, 9, 17, 18]. With the exception of EsaD the biological activities of these substrates are unknown, although mutational studies have suggested that EsxB and EsxC contribute to persistent infection in a murine abscess model[2, 17].

Despite the *ess* locus forming part of the core *S. aureus* genome, these four substrate proteins are not conserved across *S. aureus* isolates, being found in only approximately 50% of sequenced strains[19]. Furthermore, inactivation of the T7SS in *S. aureus* strain ST398 shows

a similar decrease in kidney abscess formation as that seen for T7 mutants in Newman and

USA300[2, 4, 20], despite the fact that recognizable homologues of EsxB/EsxC/EsxD/EsaD are

not encoded by this strain[19]. This strongly suggests that there are further *S. aureus* T7

substrates that are yet to be identified. Here we have taken an unbiased approach to identify

T7 substrates using quantitative proteomic analysis of culture supernatants from *S. aureus*

RN6390 wild type and *essC* strains. We identify a new substrate, TspA that is encoded

distantly from the *ess* gene cluster and is found in all sequenced *S. aureus* strains. Further

analysis indicates that TspA has a toxic C-terminal domain that depolarizes membranes.

Using a zebrafish hindbrain ventricle infection model, we reveal that TspA is important for

zebrafish killing and interbacterial competition *in vivo*.

## Results

## The *S. aureus* RN6390 T7SS secreted proteome

To identify candidate T7 substrates, RN6390 and an isogenic *essC* deletion strain[3] were cultured in the minimal medium RPMI. Both strains grew identically (Fig 1B) and expressed components of the T7SS, and as expected secretion of EsxA was abolished in the *essC* strain (Fig 1C). Culture supernatants were isolated when cells reached $OD_{600nm}$ of 1, and label-free quantitative proteomics used to assess changes in protein abundance of four biological replicates of each secretome. Following identification of 1170 proteins, 17 proteins showed, with high confidence ($p < 0.05$, 2-fold change), a decrease in abundance in the secretome of the *essC* strain relative to the RN6390 parent strain (Fig 1D, Fig 1E; Table S1).

Proteomic analysis indicated that the secreted core component, EsxA, was significantly reduced in abundance in the *essC* secretome, as expected from the western blot analysis (Fig 1C). Peptides from the membrane-bound T7 component EsaA, which has a large surface-exposed loop[21], were also less abundant in the supernatant of the *essC* strain, as were EsxD and EsaD, known substrates of the T7SS[6, 9, 18] (Table 1, Table S1). The EsxC substrate[17] was also exclusively detected in the supernatant of the wild type strain, but only two EsxC peptides were detected and it did not meet the $p < 0.01$ cut-off (Table S1). EsxB, another previously identified substrate[2, 22], and EsaE, which is co-secreted with EsaD[6] were not detected in any of our analysis.

After EsxD, the protein with the highest relative abundance in the secretome of the wild type strain was the uncharacterized protein SAOUHSC_00584. This protein harbours a predicted LXG domain which is common to some T7SS substrates[7]. Other proteins enriched in the secretome of the wild type strain include a predicted superantigen (SAOUHSC_00389), the secretory antigen SsaA, two predicted membrane-bound lipoproteins (SAOUHSC_01180 and SAOUHSC_02695), two uncharacterized proteins (SAOUHSC_00406 and SAOUHSC_02448) and several predicted cytoplasmic proteins (Table 1). A small number of

proteins were found to be enriched in abundance in the *essC* secretome (Table S1), including

the heme oxygenase IsdI, which is known to be upregulated when the T7SS is inactivated[23].

**SAOUHSC_00584/TspA localizes to the membrane dependent on EssC**

We next constructed tagged variants of each of SAOUHSC_00389, SAOUHSC_00406,

SAOUHSC_00584, SAOUHSC_02448 and SsaA to probe their subcellular locations in the

wild type and Δ*essC* strains. C-terminally HA-tagged SAOUHSC_00389, SAOUHSC_02448

and SsaA were secreted into the culture supernatant in an *essC*-independent manner (Fig

S1), indicating that these proteins are not substrates of the T7SS and their reduced abundance

in the *essC* secretome may arise for pleiotropic reasons. Overproduction of C-terminally Myc-

tagged SAOUHSC_00406 caused cell lysis, seen by the presence of TrxA in the supernatant

samples (Fig S1B). By contrast, a C-terminally Myc-tagged variant of SAOUHSC_00584 was

detected only in the cellular fraction (Fig S1C). To probe the subcellular location of

SAOUHSC_00584-Myc, we generated cell wall, membrane and cytoplasmic fractions. Fig 2A

shows that the tagged protein localizes to the membrane and that it appears to be destabilized

by the loss of EssC. SAOUHSC_00584 was subsequently renamed TspA (Type Seven

dependent Protein A).

TspA is predicted to be 469 amino acids long and to have either one (TMHMM) or two

(Predictprotein.org) transmembrane domains towards its C-terminal end. To determine

whether it is an integral membrane protein we washed isolated membranes with urea which

removes peripherally bound proteins by denaturation. Fig 2B indicates that a large fraction of

TspA-Myc is displaced from the membrane to the cytoplasmic fraction by urea whereas a *bona*

*fide* integral membrane protein, EssB, is not displaced by this treatment[24, 25, 26]. We conclude

that TspA-Myc peripherally interacts with the membrane. This is consistent with findings from

the proteomic experiment as peptides along the entire length of TspA were detected in the

secretome (Fig S2).

To determine whether TspA-Myc is exposed at the extracellular side we prepared

spheroplasts and treated them with proteinase K. Fig 2C shows that at low concentrations of

proteinase K, TspA-Myc was proteolytically cleaved to release a smaller fragment that also

cross-reacted with the anti-Myc antibody. At least part of this smaller fragment must be

extracellular as it was also degraded as the protease concentration was increased. An

approximately 37 kDa C-terminal fragment of TspA-Myc detected natively in the absence of

added protease was also extracellular as it was sensitive to digestion by proteinase K. The

likely topology of TspA is shown in Fig 2E.

All *S. aureus* T7SS substrate proteins identified to date are found only in a subset of strains,

and are linked with specific *essC* subtypes. However, TspA is encoded by all *S. aureus*

genomes examined in[19], and is distant from the *ess* locus. This raised the possibility that TspA

may be a further secreted core component of the T7 machinery. To examine this, we

constructed an in-frame *tspA* deletion in RN6390 and investigated the subcellular location of

the T7 secreted component EsxA and the substrate protein EsxC. Fig 2D shows that both

EsxA and EsxC are secreted in the absence of TspA. We conclude that TspA is a peripheral

membrane protein substrate of the T7SS whose localization and/or stability at the extracellular

side of the membrane is dependent on EssC, and that it is not a core component of the T7SS.

**TspA has a toxic C-terminal domain with membrane depolarizing activity that is**

**neutralized by TsaI**

Sequence analysis of TspA indicates that homologues are found across the *Staphylococci*

(including *S. argenteus*, *S. epidermidis* and *S. lugdunensis*), in *Listeria* species and

Enterococci, but does not provide clues about potential function. However, analysis of TspA

using modelling programs predicts strong structural similarity to colicin Ia (Fig 3A), a

bactericidal protein produced by some strains of *Escherichia coli*. Colicin Ia has an

amphipathic domain at its C-terminus that inserts into the cytoplasmic membrane from the

extracellular side to form a voltage-gated channel[27, 28, 29]. To investigate the function of TspA,

DNA encoding full length TspA or the C-terminal domain alone (TspA$_{CT}$) was cloned into a

tightly-regulatable vector for expression in *E. coli*. Fig 3C shows that production of TspA or

TspA$_{CT}$ did not affect *E. coli* survival. However, colicin Ia shows a siddness for channel

formation because it requires a transmembrane voltage for full insertion[30]. We therefore

targeted TspA$_{CT}$ to the periplasm of *E. coli* by fusing to a Tat signal peptide[31, 32]. Fig 3C shows

that this construct was toxic, and that toxicity was relieved when the Tat pathway was

inactivated (Fig 3C), consistent with the C-terminal domain of TspA exerting toxic activity from

the periplasmic side of the membrane.

To assess TspA$_{CT}$ activity we first used the BacLight assay to test for membrane

depolarization. This uses 3,3′-diethyloxacarbocyanine iodide DiOC$_2$(3), a dye that exhibits

green florescence in dilute solution but a red shift following membrane potential-driven

accumulation in the bacterial cytosol. After sorting of *E. coli* cells by flow cytometry it was seen

that the majority of *E. coli* cells harbouring the empty vector exhibited red fluorescence, which

shifted to green following treatment with the uncoupler carbonyl cyanide 3-

chlorophenylhydrazone (CCCP). A similar shift in fluorescence was also observed when *E.*

*coli* produced the AmiAss-TspA$_{CT}$ fusion (Fig 3D), indicative of loss of membrane potential.

We conclude that the C-terminal domain of TspA has membrane depolarising activity.

Pore-forming proteins are widely used as toxins to target either prokaryotic or eukaryotic

cells[33, 34]. To determine whether TspA forms pores we used single-cell microscopy that

combines the voltage-sensitive dye DiSC$_3$(5) with the membrane-impermeable nucleic acid

stain Sytox Green[35]. *E. coli* cells incubated with Polymyxin B, which produces large ion-

permeable pores in the *E. coli* cell envelope[36], showed strong labelling with Sytox Green,

indicative of permeabilisation, coupled with very low DiSC$_3$ fluorescence (Fig 3E-G). By

contrast, cells harbouring the empty vector had high DiSC$_3$ fluorescence that was unaffected

by supplementation with the inducer L-arabinose, and did not stain with Sytox Green. Cells

expressing the AmiAss-TspA$_{CT}$ fusion following incubation with arabinose rapidly depolarised,

as evidenced by the marked reduction in $DiSC_3$ fluorescence, but did not detectably stain with

Sytox Green, even after prolonged periods of incubation (Fig 3E-G, Fig S3). Therefore, it

appears that TspA acts by triggering membrane depolarisation but does so by forming ion

channels rather than larger, nonselective pores in the *E. coli* inner membrane.

Bacterially-produced channel-forming toxins are often co-expressed with immunity proteins

that protect the producing cell from self-intoxication; for example, protection from colicin Ia

toxicity is mediated by the membrane-bound Iia immunity protein[37]. TspA is genetically linked

to a repeat region of ten genes encoding predicted polytopic membrane proteins with DUF443

domains (Fig 3B). To assess whether the DUF443-domain protein encoded adjacent to TspA

offers protection against the toxicity of the TspA C-terminal domain, we co-produced the

AmiAss-TspA$_{CT}$ fusion alongside SAOUHSC_00585 in *E. coli*. Fig 3C shows that co-

production of SAOUHSC_00585 offered protection of *E. coli* (Fig 3C). It also protected cells

from AmiAss-TspA$_{CT}$-induced depolarisation (Fig 3D-G). SAOUHSC_00585 was

subsequently renamed TsaI (<u>Tsp</u>A <u>I</u>mmunity protein).

**A zebrafish model for *S. aureus* infection and T7SS activity.**

To probe whether TspA is important for *S. aureus* virulence, we initially developed an

immunocompetent murine model of *S. aureus* pneumonia. Previous reports have indicated

that $2-4 \times 10^8$ colony forming units (cfu) of strain Newman was a suitable infectious dose, and

that bacterial proliferation in lung tissue could be observed after 24 hours[38]. We found that at

a dose of $8 \times 10^7 - 2 \times 10^8$ of strain RN6390, the mice were asymptomatic and had almost

completely cleared the bacteria from lung tissue after 48 hours, whereas a dose of $8 \times 10^8 -$

$2 \times 10^9$ was lethal to all mice within 12 hours. At a dose of $3 \times 10^8$, the mice developed

symptoms which resolved within 12 hours, and therefore using this dosage we sought to test

whether there was a difference in bacterial proliferation and dissemination dependent on the

T7SS. However, after 24 hours of infection with $3 \times 10^8$ cfu of RN6390 or a cognate $\Delta essC$

strain, counts recovered from the lungs and livers of mice infected with the ΔessC strain were

not significantly different than those from mice infected with the wild type (Fig S4).

Given that there are likely to be roles for the T7SS in bacterial competition as well as direct

interaction with the host, we next developed a model where these two potentially confounding

factors could be investigated. The zebrafish (*Danio rerio*), a widely used vertebrate model for

development, has recently been adapted to study bacterial infection by human pathogens[39].

The hindbrain ventricle offers a sterile compartment that can be used to follow bacterial

interactions *in vivo*[40]. We first assessed the utility of this infection model by testing the effect

of dose and temperature on survival for *S. aureus* inoculated into the hindbrain ventricle (Fig

S5A) of zebrafish larvae 3 days post fertilisation (dpf). Clear dose-dependent zebrafish

mortality was observed, with ~90% of zebrafish surviving a low dose of *S. aureus* infection (7

x $10^3$ cfu) whereas only ~55% survived a higher dose (2 x $10^4$ cfu; Fig S5B). Although 28.5°C

is the optimum temperature for zebrafish larvae development, *S. aureus* has a temperature

optimum of 30 - 37°C for growth. In agreement with this, we observed significantly increased

zebrafish mortality at 33°C relative to 28.5°C, at high dose infection (Fig S5B).

We next assessed whether there was a role for the T7SS in zebrafish mortality. For these

experiments, larvae at 3 dpf were inoculated in the hindbrain ventricle with 2 x $10^4$ cfu of

RN6390 or an isogenic strain, RN6390 Δ*ess*, lacking all 12 genes (*esxA* through *esaG*) at the

*ess* locus[3], and incubated at 33°C. We routinely observed that zebrafish mortality was

significantly reduced, at both 24 and 48 hr post inoculation (hpi), for fish infected with the

RN6390 Δ*ess* strain compared to the wild type (Fig S5C; Fig 4A,C). In agreement with this,

total bacterial counts of infected fish revealed that following an initial period of six hours where

both strains replicated in a similar manner, there was a significant decrease in recovery of the

Δ*ess* strain compared to the wild type after 9 hours (Fig S5D), suggesting that bacteria lacking

the T7SS are more rapidly cleared *in vivo*. We also tested a second *S. aureus* strain, COL, in

this assay. Fig S6A shows that COL was only weakly virulent at 24 hpi, but at high dose

substantial mortality was seen after 48 hr (Fig S6A). As before, fish mortality was at least in

part dependent on a functional T7SS (Fig S6B), although we observed no difference in

bacterial burden between the wild type and $\Delta essC$ strain at the timepoints sampled (FigS6C).

We conclude that the T7SS plays a role in virulence of *S. aureus* in this zebrafish infection

model.

In addition to TspA, a second T7SS secreted toxin, EsaD (also called EssD[9, 41]), has been

identified in some *S. aureus* nuclease strains. EsaD was shown to inhibit growth of a

competitor *S. aureus* strain *in vitro*[6], but has also been directly implicated in virulence through

modulation of cytokine responses and abscess formation[9, 41]. We therefore determined

whether TspA or EsaD was required for virulence in the zebrafish infection model. Infection of

larvae with strain RN6390 lacking TspA resulted in levels of mortality intermediate between

the wild type and $\Delta ess$ strain (Fig 4A), and a significantly reduced bacterial burden relative to

the wild type strain at 9 hpi (Fig 4B). By contrast, no difference was observed in either zebrafish

mortality (Fig 4C) or bacterial burden (Fig 4D) between infection with RN6390 and an isogenic

*esaD* mutant, indicating no detectable role of EsaD in virulence (Fig 4C, 4D). Taken together,

we conclude that zebrafish infection can be used to investigate the role of T7SS effectors *in*

*vivo*, and that TspA (but not EsaD) contributes to T7SS-mediated virulence.

**T7SS dependent bacterial competition *in vivo*.**

Although TspA is clearly required for full *S. aureus* virulence in the zebrafish model, the

observed toxicity when heterologously produced in *E. coli* coupled with the presence of

immunity genes encoded downstream of *tspA* strongly suggests that secreted TspA may also

have antibacterial activity. Previously, the antibacterial activity of EsaD was demonstrated

using the *S. aureus* COL strain, and required *esaD* to be overproduced from a multi-copy

plasmid in order to observe growth inhibition of sensitive *S. aureus* strains[6]. We therefore first

tested whether overproduction of TspA in COL could inhibit the growth of strain RN6390 that

was deleted for *tspA* along with the 10 genes encoding TsaI homologues. However co-culture

experiments in solid or liquid growth conditions failed to demonstrate any TspA-dependent

growth inhibition (data not shown).

Zebrafish larvae have recently been adapted to study predator-prey interactions[40], and we

reasoned that since the T7SS was active in our zebrafish infection model it may also provide

a suitable experimental system to investigate the impact of T7-mediated bacterial competition

*in vivo*. COL as the attacker strain was co-inoculated into the hindbrain ventricle, at a 1:1 ratio,

with either RN6390 or an isogenic strain lacking immunity proteins for EsaD and TspA (FRU1;

RN6390 Δ*saouhsc00268-00278*, Δ*saouhsc00585-00602*). A significant reduction in recovery

of the target strain lacking immunity genes was observed compared to the isogenic parental

strain at 15 hr post infection (Fig 5A). Conversely, there was significantly greater fish mortality

at 24 hr after co-inoculation of COL with the wild type RN6390 than the immunity mutant strain

(Fig 5B). Since COL is almost completely avirulent at this time-point (Fig S5) we infer that the

mortality arises from RN6390, and as the wild type strain survives better when co-inoculated

with COL than the immunity deletion strain co-inoculated with COL, this accounts for the

greater fish mortality.

To confirm that the reduced growth of the RN6390 immunity mutant strain was dependent

upon a functional T7SS in the attacking strain, we repeated the co-inoculation experiments

using a T7 mutant strain of COL (COLΔ*essC*). The RN6390 immunity mutant strain showed

significantly higher recovery after 15 hours in the presence of the COL T7 mutant strain than

wild type COL (Fig 5C) and accordingly this was linked with poorer survival of zebrafish (Fig

5D). Collectively these data highlight the utility of zebrafish for investigating *S. aureus*

competition *in vivo*, and demonstrate that bacterial competition and zebrafish mortality is

dependent on a functional T7SS in the attacking strain and the absence of immunity proteins

against EsaD and TspA in the prey strain, highlighted in the schematic (Fig 5E).

Finally, we investigated which of the EsaD and TspA toxins was responsible for inter-strain

competition by using variants of COL deleted for either *tspA* or *esaD* as the attacking strain. It

was seen that in the absence of either TspA (Fig 5F) or EsaD (Fig 5H) there was a significant

increase in recovery of the RN6390 Δ*saouhsc00268-00278*, Δ*saouhsc00585-00602* prey

strain, indicating that each of these toxins has activity against the target strain. However, there

was a more pronounced increase in zebrafish mortality when the attacker strain lacked *esaD*

than *tspA* (compare Figs 6G and I), suggesting that EsaD has the more potent antibacterial

activity in these conditions.

**Discussion**

Here we have taken an unbiased approach to discover substrates of the T7SS in *S. aureus*

RN6390, identifying the LXG-domain protein, TspA. TspA localizes to the cell envelope and

has a toxic C-terminal domain that has membrane-depolarizing activity. While all other

previously-identified T7 substrates are encoded at the *ess* locus and are associated with

specific *essC* subtypes[19, 42], TspA is encoded elsewhere on the genome, and is conserved

across all *S. aureus* strains. This suggests TspA plays a key role in *S. aureus*, and indeed we

show that it contributes to T7SS-mediated virulence in a zebrafish infection model. Pore- and

channel-forming toxins are key virulence factors produced by many pathogenic bacteria[43], that

can act both extracellularly to form pores in eukaryotic cells, like some bacterial hemolysins[44],

or intracellularly for example by altering permeability of the phagosome, like the pore-forming

toxin Listeriolysin-O, or the Type III secretion system effector VopQ[45, 46]. It should be noted

that the T7SS of strain USA300 has been shown to play a role in release of *S. aureus* during

intracellular infection[47], however RN6390 is only poorly invasive in bronchial epithelial cell

lines, and intracellular survival and bacterial release is independent of the T7SS (data not

shown). The precise mechanism by which TspA interacts with host cells remains to be

determined.

TspA is a highly unusual toxin because it also has antibacterial activity, leading to growth

inhibition of a target *S. aureus* strain *in vivo*. Protection from TspA intoxication is mediated by

a genetically-linked immunity protein, TsaI. It is interesting to note that the C-terminal domain

of TspA is polymorphic (Fig S7) and that clusters of *tsaI* homologues are encoded at the *tspA*

locus, indicative of intraspecies competition with strains accumulating multiple *tsaI*-encoding

genes as a likely protective mechanism from TspA sequence variants.

In conclusion we have identified an extracellular toxin that can target across the domains of

life under the same *in vivo* conditions. To our knowledge it is only the second bacterial exotoxin

identified to have such dual-targeting activity, after VasX from *Vibrio cholerae*[48, 49], and the first

from Gram positive bacteria.

**Materials and Methods**

**Bacterial strains, plasmids and growth conditions.** All strains and plasmids used in this study are given in Tables S2 and S3. *S. aureus* strain RN6390[50] and its Δ*essC*[3], Δ*esaD*[6], Δ*SAOUHSC_00268-00278*[6] and Δ*ess* (Δ*esxA-esaG*)[3] derivatives along with strain COL[51] have been described previously. An in-frame deletion of *tspA* (*SAOUHSC_00584*) in RN6390 was constructed by allelic exchange using plasmid pIMAY (Table S3)[52]. The upstream and downstream regions including the start codon and last six codons were amplified from RN6390 genomic DNA using primers listed in Table S4 and were cloned into pIMAY and introduced onto the chromosome by recombination as described previously[52]. For deletion of *tsaI* and its homologues, the upstream regions of *SAOUHSC_00585* including its first four codons and the downstream *SAOUHSC_00602* including its last four codons were amplified from RN6390 genomic DNA, cloned into pIMAY and was introduced into strain RN6390Δ*SAOUHSC_00268-00278* to generate strain FRU1 (as RN6390 Δ*SAOUHSC_00268-00278*, Δ*SAOUHSC_00585-00602*). For in frame deletion of *esaD* (SACOL0281) and *tspA* (SACOL0643) in strain COL, constructs pIMAY-esaD[6] and pIMAY-tspA were used, following the protocol of[52]. Derivatives of strains harbouring markerless *gfp* or *mCherry* chromosomal insertions were constructed according to[53] using plasmids pTH100 and pRN111, respectively. *E. coli* strain JM110 was used for cloning purposes and MG1655[54] and its isogenic Δ*tatABCD* derivative SG3000[55] was used for toxicity assays.

All oligonucleotides used in this study are listed in Table S4, and RN6390 chromosomal DNA was used as template unless otherwise stated. Plasmid pRAB11-tspA-myc encodes TspA with a C-terminal Myc tag in pRAB11[56] and was constructed following amplification with primers tspA cmyc fw and tspA cmyc rv. Plasmid pRAB11-02448-ha produces SAOUHSC_02448 with a C-terminal HA tag from vector pRAB11 and the encoding gene was amplified using primers 02448 cha fw and 02448 cha rv. Plasmid pRAB11-0389-ha codes for SAOUHSC_0389 with a C-terminal HA tag in pRAB11 and was constructed following amplification with primers 00389 cha fw and 00389 cha rv. Plasmid pRAB11-0406-myc encodes SAOUHSC_0406 with

a C-terminal Myc tag in pRAB11 and was constructed following amplification with primers

00406 cmyc fw and 00406 cmyc rv. In each case the amplified gene is preceded by the *esxA*

RBS (AGGAGGTTTCTAGTT), and were cloned as *Kpn*I - *Sac*I fragments. Plasmid pRMC2-

ssaA-ha codes for SsaA with a C-terminal HA tag. It was constructed following amplification

of SsaA using primers pRMC2-ssaA-bglII-for and pRMC2- SSaA-HA-rev-EcoRI, digestion with

*Bgl*II and *Eco*RI and cloning into similarly cut pRMC2[57].

Plasmid pBAD18-tspA codes for the full length TspA. The encoding gene was amplified using

primers tspA fl fw and tspA fl rv, digested with *Xba*I and *Sal*I and subsequently cloned into

similarly cut pBAD18-Cm[58]. Plasmid pBAD18-tspA$_{CT en}$codes for the last 251aa of TspA; the

encoding DNA was amplified using primers tspA cp fw and tspA fl rv, digested with *Xba*I and

*Sal*I and cloned into similarly cut pBAD18-Cm. Plasmid pBAD18-AmiAss-tspA$_{CT}$ codes for the

*E. coli* AmiA signal sequence fused in-frame to the N-terminus of TspA$_{CT}$. This was

constructed following separate amplification of the DNA encoding the first 36 amino acids of

AmiA using primers AmiAss fw and AmiAss rv with *E. coli* MG1655 chromosomal DNA as

template digestion with *Nhe*I and *Kpn*I and cloning into similarly cut pBAD18-Cm. The TspA$_{CT}$

coding sequence was then amplified using tspA cp fw (which lacks a start codon) and tspA fl

rv, digested with *Xba*I and *Sal*I and cloned into similarly cut pBAD18-AmiAss. Plasmid

pBAD18-AmiAss-tspA$_{CT}$ + tsaI codes for the AmiAss-TspA$_{CT}$ fusion along with TsaI. The *tsaI*

(*saouhsc_00585*) gene was amplified using primers tsaI fw and tsaI rv, digested with *Sal*I and

*Sph*I and cloned into similarly cut pBAD18-AmiAss-tspA$_{CT}$.

Plasmid pSUPROM-TsaI produces TsaI constitutively from the *E. coli tat* promoter. The

encoding gene was amplified using primers pSU-TsaI fw and pSU-TsaI rv, digested with

*Bam*HI and *Xho*I and cloned into similarly-digested pSUPROM[59].

*S. aureus* strains were cultured in RPMI medium for proteomic analysis, as detailed below.

For all other experiments *S. aureus* strains were grown in TSB medium at 37°C with vigorous

agitation. Chloramphenicol was used 10 μg/ml final concentration for plasmid selection.

Anhydrotetracycline (ATC) was added to *S. aureus* cultures at 1 μg/ml during allelic gene

replacement. For induction of plasmid-encoded proteins, 500 ng/ml ATC was added to

cultures at $OD_{600}$ of 0.4, and cells were harvested at $OD_{600}$ of 2.0. *E. coli* was grown aerobically

in LB at 37°C, supplemented with ampicillin (100 μg/ml), kanamycin (50 μg/ml) or

chloramphenicol (25 μg/ml) where appropriate. D-glucose and L-arabinose were used to

control expression of cloned genes from the pBAD18-Cm vector[58]. For toxicity assays single

colonies of MG1655 freshly transformed with the appropriate pBAD18-Cm construct growing

on LB agar containing 0.2% D-glucose were picked and re-suspended in LB to an $OD_{600}$ of

1.0. Serial dilutions to $10^{-5}$ were prepared and 5 μL of each spotted onto LB agar supplemented

with 0.2% D-glucose, 0.02% L-arabinose or 0.2% L-arabinose and incubated overnight at

37°C.

**Preparation of culture supernatants for proteomic analysis.** *S. aureus* strains were grown

overnight in 2 mL TSB after which cells were harvested, washed three times with 10 mL of

RPMI medium, resuspended in 2 mL of RPMI and used to inoculate 200 mL RPMI in 2 L

baffled flasks. Cultures were grown at 37°C with vigorous agitation until an $OD_{600}$ of 1.0 was

reached, after which cultures were cooled to 4°C, cells pelleted and supernatant proteins

precipitated with 6% trichloroacetic acid (TCA) on ice overnight. The precipitated protein

samples were harvested by centrifugation (15 min at 18000 *g*) re-suspended in 80% acetone

(-20°C) and washed twice with 80% acetone. Pellets were air dried at room temperature and

transferred to the mass-spectrometry facility for proteomic analysis.

**Mass spectrometry data analysis and label-free quantitation.** Sample preparation and

mass spectrometry analysis was performed similar to previously described work[60-63].

Precipitated proteins were re-dissolved in 1% sodium 3-[(2-methyl-2-undecyl-1,3-dioxolan-4-

yl)methoxy]-1-propanesulfonate (commercially available as RapiGest, Waters), 50 mM Tris-

HCl pH 8.0, 1 mM TCEP. Cysteines were alkylated by addition of 20 mM Iodoacetamide and

incubation for 20 min at 25°C in the dark and the reaction quenched by addition of 20 mM

DTT. Samples were diluted to 0.1% Rapigest with 50 mM Tris-HCl pH 8.0 and Trypsin

(sequencing grade, Promega) was added at a 1:50 ratio. Proteins were digested overnight at

37°C under constant shaking.

Samples from four biological replicates (0.5 µg of digest for the secretome analyses) were

injected in an interleaved manner onto a 2 cm x 100 µm trap column and separated on a 50

cm x 75 µm EasySpray Pepmap C18 reversed-phase column (Thermo Fisher Scientific) on a

Dionex 3000 Ultimate RSLC. Peptides were eluted by a linear 3-hour gradient of 95% A/5% B

to 35% B (A: $H_2O$, 0.1% Formic acid (FA); B: 80% ACN, 0.08% FA) at 300 nl/min into a LTQ

Orbitrap Velos (Thermo-Fisher Scientific). Data was acquired using a data-dependent "top 20"

method, dynamically choosing the most abundant precursor ions from the survey scan (400-

1600 Th, 60,000 resolution, AGC target value $10^6$). Precursors above the threshold of 2000

counts were isolated within a 2 Th window and fragmented by CID in the LTQ Velos using

normalised collision energy of 35 and an activation time of 10 ms. Dynamic exclusion was

defined by a list size of 500 features and exclusion duration of 60 s. Lock mass was used and

set to 445.120025 for ions of polydimethylcyclosiloxane (PCM).

Label-free quantitation was performed using MaxQuant 1.5.7.4[64]. Data were searched against

the Uniprot database of *S. aureus* NCTC8325 (downloaded on 29.03.17) containing 2,889

sequences and a list of common contaminants in proteomics experiments using the following

settings: enzyme Trypsin/P, allowing for 2 missed cleavage, fixed modifications were

carbamidomethyl (C), variable modifications were set to Acetyl (Protein N-term), Deamidation

(NQ) and Oxidation (M). MS/MS tolerance was set to 0.5 Da, precursor tolerance was set to

6 ppm. Peptide and Protein FDR was set to 0.01, minimal peptide length was 7, and one

unique peptide was required. Re-quantify and retention time alignment (2 min) were enabled.

If no intensities were detected in one condition and the other condition had intensities in at

least in 3 out of 4 replicates, values were imputed in Perseus v1.5.1.1 using default

parameters[65]. A student's t-test (two-tailed, homoscedastic) was performed on the LFQ

intensities and only proteins with $p<0.05$ and a fold-change >2-fold were considered

significant.

**Data availability statement.** Raw mass spectrometry data that support the findings of this study have been deposited to the ProteomeXchange Consortium via the PRIDE[66] partner repository with the dataset identifier PXD00XXXX. All other data supporting the findings of this study are available within the paper and its supplementary information files.

**Cell fractionation and western blotting.** Preparation of *S. aureus* cell and supernatant samples for western blotting, and subcellular fractionation of *S. aureus* into cell wall, membrane and cytoplasmic fractions were as described previously[3]. Preparation of urea-washed membrane fractions was adapted from[67]. Briefly, broken cell suspensions were thoroughly mixed with a final concentration of 4M urea and incubated for 20 minutes at room temperature. Membranes were harvested by ultracentrifugation (227 000 x $g$, 30 min). The supernatant was retained as the urea-treated cytoplasmic fraction and the membrane pellet resuspended in 1 x PBS, 0.5 % Triton X-100. For spheroplast preparation, the method of [68] was adapted. Briefly, strains were cultured as described above, cells were harvested at $OD_{600}$ of 2.0 and resuspended in Buffer A (0.7M sucrose, 20mM maleate, 20mM $MgCl_2$, pH 6.5). Lysostaphin and lysozyme were added at 20 μg/ml and 20 mg/ml final concentration, respectively, and cells incubated at 37°C for 1 hour. Cell debris was pelleted by centrifugation (2,500 x $g$ for 8 min) and the resulting supernatant centrifuged at 16,000 x $g$ for 10 min to pellet the spheroplasts. Sphaeroplasts wer resuspended in 150 μl of Buffer A and were treated with increasing concentrations of Proteinase K on ice for 30 mins. 50 μM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride was added to terminate the reaction and samples mixed with 4x Nu PAGE LDS sample buffer and boiled for 10 min prior to further analysis. Western blotting was performed according to standard protocols using the following antibody dilutions α-EsxA [3] 1:2500; α-EsxC[3] 1:2000, α-EssB[3] 1:10000, α-TrxA[69] 1:25000, α-SrtA (Abcam, catalogue number ab13959) 1:3000, α-HA (HRP-conjugate, Sigma catalogue number H6533) α-Myc (HRP-conjugate, Invitrogen catalogue number R951-25) 1:5000, and goat anti Rabbit IgG HRP conjugate (Bio-Rad, catalogue number 170-6515) 1:10000.

**Bacterial membrane potential detection.** To assess bacterial membrane potential, the method of [70] was adapted, using the BacLight bacterial membrane potential kit (Invitrogen). In brief, overnight cultures of *E. coli* MG1655 harbouring pBAD18-Cm derivatives were sub-cultured into LB medium containing appropriate antibiotics to an $OD_{600}$ of 0.1 and cultured aerobically to $OD_{600}$ of 0.5, before supplementation with 0.2% L-arabinose. Cells were cultured for a further hour then diluted to $1 \times 10^6$ cells per ml in sterile PBS, and a 1ml aliquot of bacterial suspension was added to each flow cytometry tube. For the depolarized control, 25 µL of 500 µM carbonyl cyanide m-chlorophenyl hydrazone (CCCP), provided in the BacLight bacterial membrane potential kit, was added. Next, 3 µL of 3mM $DiOC_2(3)$ was added to each sample, which was mixed and incubated at room temperature for 30 minutes. Cells were subsequently sorted using an LSRFortessa cell analyser (BD Biosciences, San Jose, CA). The $DiOC_2(3)$ dye was excited at 488 nm, with fluorescent emissions detected at 530 and 685 nm. In total, 20000 events were collected for each sample, with forward- and side-scatter parameters used to gate the bacteria. The forward scatter, side scatter, and fluorescence were collected with logarithmic signal amplification. The gated populations were then analysed with FlowJo software by generating a dot plot of red versus green fluorescence.

To assess changes in membrane potential and permeabilisation, the same *E. coli* strains were grown as described above. An 'uninduced' sample of *E. coli* harbouring each of pBAD18-Cm (empty), pAmiAss-TspA$_{CT}$ and pAmiAss-TspA$_{CT}$-TsaI was collected and adjusted to $OD_{600}$ of 0.2 before the addition of 2 µM $DiSC_3(5)$ and 200 nM Sytox Green. A permeabilised control sample of cells harbouring empty vector and containing 10 µg/ml Polymyxin B was also prepared and supplemented with both dyes. All samples were then incubated at 37°C for 5 minutes before being analysed by microscopy. To induce protein production from the pBAD18-Cm vector, cell suspensions were adjusted to $OD_{600}$ of 0.2 and supplemented with 0.2% L-arabinose for the indicated period of time (10-60 min) before incubating with $DiSC_3(5)$ and Sytox Green, as above. Imaging of $DiSC_3(5)$ and Sytox Green stained cells was carried out Nikon Eclipse Ti equipped with Sutter Instrument Lambda LS light source, Nikon Plan Apo 100×/1.40 NA Oil Ph3 objective, and Photometrics Prime sCMOS, and Cy5 and GFP filters,

respectively. The images were captured using Metamorph 7.7 (Molecular Devices) and

analysed using ImageJ. For the analysis, the phase contrast images acquired in parallel to the

fluorescence images were used to identify cells as regions of interest, for which average

$DiSC_3(5)$ and Sytox Green fluorescence intensity was measured from the corresponding

background-subtracted fluorescence images. Data was then plotted as a scatter plot for

$DiSC_3(5)$ and Sytox Green fluorescence with each point representing an individual cell.

**Mouse pneumonia model.** *S. aureus* RN6390 (WT) or the isogenic Δ*essC* strain were

subcultured at 1:100 dilution from an overnight culture into fresh TSB medium. Cells were

grown at 37°C with shaking until an $OD_{600}$ of 0.5 was reached, before harvesting and washing

three times in 1x PBS. Cells were finally resuspended in 1 x PBS to $1.2 \times 10^{10}$ cfu/ml. Female

10-12 week old C57/B6 J mice were purchased from Charles River U.K.. Mice were

acclimatised for a 10 day period prior to starting the experiment. Mice were randomised to

cages and treatment groups, and analyses were performed blind. Mice were anaesthetized

(gaseous isofluorane) and infected intranasally with 25 µL of the bacterial suspension to give

a final infected dose of $3 \times 10^8$ cfu per mouse. At 24 hours post infection the lungs and livers

were harvested and the bacterial load determined by plating serial dilutions of tissue

homogenates.

**Zebrafish Infection.** Wild-type (WT, AB strain) or transgenic Tg(*lyz*::dsRed)*nz50* [71] zebrafish

were used for all experiments. Embryos were obtained from naturally spawning zebrafish, and

maintained at 28.5°C until 3 days post fertilisation (dpf) in embryo medium (0.5x E2 medium

supplemented with 0.3 g/ml methylene blue)[72]. For injections, larvae were anesthetized with

200 µg/ml tricaine (Sigma-Aldrich) in embryo medium. Hindbrain ventricle infections were

carried out at 3 dpf and incubated at 33°C unless specified otherwise. Bacteria were

subcultured following overnight growth until they reached $OD_{600}$ of 0.6. For injection of larvae,

bacteria were recovered by centrifugation, washed and resuspended in 1x PBS, 0.1% phenol

red, 1% polyvinylpyrrolidone to the required cfu/ml. Anaesthetized larvae were microinjected

in the hindbrain ventricle (HBV) with 1–2 nL of bacterial suspension. At the indicated times,

larvae were sacrificed in tricaine, lysed with 200 µL of 0.4% Triton X-100 and homogenized

mechanically. Larval homogenates were serially diluted and plated onto TSB agar. Only larvae

having survived the infection were included for enumeration of colony-forming units (cfu). For

zebrafish virulence assays all *S. aureus* strains were chromosomally tagged with GFP which

included RN6390 wild type, and isogenic Δ*ess*, Δ*tspA* and Δ*esaD* strains. For *in vivo*

competition experiments, COL (attacker) strains were chromosomally-tagged with mCherry

and RN6390 (target) strains with GFP. Attacker and target strains were subcultured, harvested

and resuspended in PBS as above. Attacker and target strains were mixed at a 1:1 ratio and

injected in the hindbrain ventricle, with 1-2 nL of bacterial suspension. Larvae were sacrificed

at 15 hpi or 24 hpi, serially diluted and plated on TSB agar, and attacker and target strains

were enumerated by fluorescence (GFP and mCherry).

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 **Figure legends**

 **Figure 1. The *S. aureus* RN6390 T7 secretome.** A. the *ess* locus in strain NCTC8325 (parent

 of RN6390). Genes for core components are shaded green, secreted substrates yellow, EsaE

 (which is co-secreted with EsaD) in hatched shading and the cytoplasmic antitoxin EsaG in

 white. B. Growth of RN6390 (WT) and the isogenic Δ*essC* strain in RPMI medium. C. RN6390

 (WT) and the Δ*essC* strain cultured in RPMI growth medium to $OD_{600}$ = 1. Samples were

 separated into supernatant (sn) and cellular (c) fractions (12% bis-Tris gels) and

 immunoblotted with anti-EsxA, anti-EssB, anti-EssC or anti-TrxA (cytoplasmic protein)

 antisera. D. Volcano plot of the quantitative proteomic secretome analysis. Each spot

 represents an individual protein ranked according to its statistical p-value (y-axis) and relative

 abundance ratio (log2 fold change). The blue dotted lines represent cut-offs for significance

 ($p<0.05$; log2 fold-change>1). E. Proteins present in the secretome of RN6390 at an

 abundance of greater than 2-fold higher than the secretome of the isogenic ΔessC strain. A

 full list of all of the proteins identified in this analysis is given in Table S1. *not detected in the

 Δ*essC* secretome.

 **Figure 2. SAOUHSC_00584/TspA is an extracellular peripheral membrane protein.** A.

 RN6390 (WT) and the Δ*essC* strain harbouring pRAB11 (empty) or pRAB11-TspA-Myc were

 cultured in TSB growth medium. Following induction of plasmid-encoded TspA-Myc

 production, cells were harvested and fractionated into cell wall (cw), membrane (m) and

 cytoplasmic (cyt) fractions. Samples were separated (12% bis-Tris gels) and immunoblotted

 with anti-Myc-HRP anti-TrxA (cytoplasmic protein), anti-Spa (cell wall) or anti-SrtA

 (membrane) antisera. * 'non-specific' cross-reacting band corresponding to Spa. B. Cell

 extracts from the RN6390 samples in (A) were incubated with 4M urea, membranes were

 isolated and the urea-treated cytoplasm (cyt+) and membranes (m+) were separated

 alongside the cell wall and untreated cytoplasm and membrane fractions on a 12% bis-tris gel

 and immunoblotted with anti-Myc and anti-SrtA antisera. C. Spheroplasts from strain RN6390

producing TspA-Myc were incubated with the indicated concentrations of Proteinase K (pk) at

4°C for 30 mins. A sample of spheroplasts from RN6390 containing pRAB11 (empty) is shown

as a negative control. Samples were separated on a 12% bis-tris gel and immunoblotted using

anti-Myc, anti-SrtA, anti-EssB and anti-TrxA antisera. D. *S. aureus* RN6390 or the isogenic

Δ*essC* or Δ*tspA* strains were cultured in TSB medium and harvested at $OD_{600}$ of 2.

Supernatant (sn) and cellular (c) fractions (equivalent of 100 μL culture supernatant and 10

μL of cells adjusted to $OD_{600}$ of 2.0) were separated on bis-Tris gels (15% acrylamide) and

immunoblotted using anti-EsxA, EsxC or TrxA antisera. E. Model for organization of TspA in

the *S. aureus* envelope. CTD – C-terminal (channel-forming) domain.

**Figure 3. Directed export of TspA C-terminal domain to the periplasm of *E. coli* is toxic**

**and disrupts the membrane potential**. A. Structural model for residues 9-416 of TspA

generated using RaptorX (http://raptorx.uchicago.edu/), modelled on the colicin Ia structure [27].

The predicted channel-forming region is shown in yellow. B. The *tspA* locus. Genes coding for

DUF443 proteins are shown in yellow. C. *E. coli* strain MG1655 harbouring empty pBAD18-

Cm or pBAD18-Cm encoding either full length TspA, the TspA C-terminal domain ($TspA_{CT}$),

$TspA_{CT}$ with the AmiA signal sequence at its N-terminus (AmiAss-$TspA_{CT}$), AmiAss-$TspA_{CT}$

and TsaI (SAOUHSC_00585), AmiAss-$TspA_{CT}$/TsaI alongside an additional plasmid-encoded

copy of TsaI (from Psu-TsaI) or strain SG3000 (as MG1655, Δ*tatABCD*) harbouring pBAD18-

AmiAss-$TspA_{CT}$ was serially diluted and spotted on LB plates containing either D-glucose or

L-arabinose, as indicated. Plates were incubated at 37°C for 16 hours after which they were

photographed. D. *E. coli* MG1655 harbouring pBAD18-Cm (empty), or pBAD18-Cm encoding

AmiAss-$TspA_{CT}$ or AmiAss-$TspA_{CT}$ / TsaI were grown in the presence of 0.2% L-arabinose for

1 hour at which point they diluted to $1 \times 10^6$ cells per ml and supplemented with 30 μM

$DiOC_2(3)$ for 30 mins. One sample of MG1655 harbouring pBAD18 (empty) was also

supplemented with 5 μM CCCP at the same time as $DiOC_2(3)$ addition. Strains were analyzed

by flow cytometry. E-G. The same strain and plasmid combinations as D were grown in the

presence (induced) or absence (uninduced) of 0.2% L-arabinose for 30 minutes after which

they were supplemented with DiSC$_s$(5) and Sytox Green and E. imaged by phase contrast

and fluorescence microscopy. F+G. Fluorescence intensities of F. DiSC$_3$(5) and G. Sytox

Green for each sample was quantified using image J. A control sample where Polymyxin B

was added to the uninduced empty vector control for 5 minutes before supplemented with

DiSC$_s$(5) and Sytox Green was included in each experiment.

**Figure 4. The T7SS contributes to virulence in a zebrafish infection model.** A. Survival

curves of 3 dpf zebrafish lyz:dsRed larvae infected in the hindbrain ventricle with RN6390-gfp

(WT) or otherwise isogenic Δ*ess*-gfp or Δ*tspA*-gfp strains at a dose of ~2 x 10$^4$ cfu and

incubated at 33°C for 48 hpi. Data are pooled from five independent experiments (*n*=17-51

larvae per experiment). The p value between conditions was determined by log-rank Mantel-

Cox test. B. Enumeration of recovered bacteria at 0, 6, 9 or 24 hpi from zebrafish larvae

infected with the same strains as A. Pooled data from 3 independent experiments. Circles

represent individual larva, and only larvae that survived the infection were included. No

significant differences observed between strains at 0, 6 or 24 hpi. Mean ± SEM also shown

(horizontal bars). Significance testing performed by unpaired *t* test. C. Survival curves of 3 dpf

zebrafish lyz:dsRed larvae infected in the hindbrain ventricle with RN6390-gfp (WT) or

otherwise isogenic Δ*ess*-gfp, Δ*esaD*-gfp strains at a dose of ~2 x 10$^4$ cfu and incubated at

33°C for 48 hpi. Data are pooled from three independent experiments (*n*=26-32 larvae per

experiment). Results are plotted as a Kaplan-Meier survival curve and the p value between

conditions was determined by log-rank Mantel-Cox test. D. Enumeration of recovered bacteria

at 0, 6, 9 or 24 hpi from zebrafish embryos infected with the strains as C. Pooled data from 3

independent experiments. Circles represent individual larva, and only larvae having survived

the infection were included. No significant differences observed between strains at 0, 6 or 24

hpi. Mean ± SEM also shown (horizontal bars). Significance testing performed by unpaired *t*

test. **p<0.01, *** p<0.001, **** p<0.0001, ns, not significant.

**Figure 5. Development of an *in vivo* model to study bacterial competition**. Wild type AB

zebrafish larvae at 3 dpf were co-infected with a 1:1 mix of an attacker strain (either COL-

mCherry (WT), COL Δ*essC*-mCherry, COL Δ*tspA*-mCherry or COL Δ*esaD*-mCherry as

indicated) and a target strain (either RN6390-gfp (WT) or RN6390 Δ*00268-278* Δ*00585-*

*00602*-gfp, as indicated). A, C, F, H. Enumeration of recovered attacker and prey bacteria

from zebrafish larvae at 0, 15 or 24 hpi. Pooled data from 3 independent experiments, Mean

± SEM also shown (horizontal bars). Significance testing performed by unpaired *t* test. B, D,

G, I. Survival curves of zebrafish injected with the indicated strain pairs. Data are pooled from

three independent experiments. Results are plotted as a Kaplan-Meier survival curve and the

p value between conditions was determined by log-rank Mantel-Cox test. **p<0.01, ***

p<0.001, **** p<0.0001, ns, not significant. E. Model highlighting the role for the T7SS in

competition *in vivo*.

**Figure S1. HA-tagged variants of SAOUHSC_00389, SAOUHSC_02448 and SsaA are not**

**secreted by the T7SS.** The wild type RN6390 and Δ*essC* mutant carrying A-D pRAB11

(empty) or pRAB11 encoding A. C-terminally HA-tagged SAOUHSC_00389; B. C-terminally

Myc-tagged SAOUHSC_00406; C. C-terminally Myc-tagged tagged SAOUHSC_00584; D. C-

terminally HA-tagged SAOUHSC_02448, or E. pRMC2 (empty) or encoding C-terminally HA-

tagged SsaA were cultured in TSB medium and supplemented with 200 ng/ml ATc at $OD_{600}$ of

0.5. Wen cultures reached $OD_{600}$ of 3.0, samples were withdrawn and separated into culture

supernatant (sn) and cellular (c) fractions. Samples were separated on 12% bis-Tris gels and

immunoblotted with anti-HA, anti-Myc, anti-EsxA or anti-TrxA antibodies, as indicated.

**Figure S2. Peptide coverage of TspA from proteomic analysis.** Regions of TspA coloured

orange were detected by mass spectroscopy analysis.

**Figure S3. Rapid membrane depolarization by the C-terminal domain of TspA.**

Fluorescence intensity changes in $DiSC_3(5)$ (left) and Sytox Green (right) in uninduced cells

harbouring pBAD18-Cm (empty), pBAD18-AmiAss-TspA$_{CT}$ and pBAD18-AmiAss-TspA$_{CT}$ and

upon induction with 0.2% L-arabinose. Cells were then induced for 10, 30 and 60 minutes

before samples removed and cells incubated with $DiSC_3(5)$ and Sytox Green. Fluorescence

intensity of DiSC$_3$(5) and Sytox Green also measured upon addition of Polymixin B to empty

vector as a control for membrane depolarization and permeabilisation.

**Figure S4. No difference in bacterial burden between wild type and *essC* mutant strains**

**in a 24 hour murine pneumonia infection model.** Female 10-12 week old C57/B6 mice

were challenged with 3 x 10$^8$ cfu/ml of RN6390 (WT) or the isogenic ΔessC strain. Bacterial

load was determined in liver and lungs 24 hours after infection. Mean ± SEM (horizontal bars)

is shown. Significance testing performed by unpaired *t* test.

**Figure S5. Developing a zebrafish model to assess T7SS activity *in vivo*.** A. Schematic

of zebrafish larvae showing the site of *S. aureus* injection into the hindbrain ventricle. B.

Survival curves of lyz:dsRed zebrafish larvae injected with wild type RN6390 chromosomally

tagged with GFP. Zebrafish were injected at 3 dpf with a low (~7 x 10$^3$ cfu), medium (~1.4 x

10$^4$ cfu) or high (~2 x 10$^4$ cfu) dose of RN6390-gfp, incubated at 28.5°C or 33°C and monitored

for 48 hpi. Data are pooled from two independent experiments (*n*=22-25 larvae per

experiment). Results are plotted as a Kaplan- Meier survival curve and the *p* value between

conditions was determined by log-rank Mantel-Cox test. C. Survival curves of lyz:dsRed larvae

infected in the hindbrain 3 dpf with RN6390-gfp or RN6390 Δ*ess*-gfp at a dose of ~2 x 10$^4$ cfu

and incubated at 33°C for 48 hpi. Data are pooled from three independent experiments (*n*=28-

50 larvae per experiment. Results are plotted as a Kaplan-Meier survival curve and the p value

between conditions was determined by log-rank Mantel-Cox test. C. Enumeration of recovered

bacteria at 0, 3, 6, 9, 24 or 48 hpi from zebrafish embryos infected with RN6390-gfp or RN6390

Δ*ess*-gfp. Pooled data from 3 independent experiments. Circles represent individual larva, and

only larvae having survived the infection were included. Mean ± SEM also shown (horizontal

bars). Significance testing performed using an unpaired *t* test. *p<0.05 **p<0.01, *** p<0.001,

**** p<0.0001, ns, not significant.

**Figure S6. *S. aureus* COL also exhibits dose and T7SS-dependent zebrafish mortality.**

A. Survival curves of WT zebrafish larvae injected with wild type COL chromosomally tagged

with mCherry.  Zebrafish were injected at 3 dpf with a low (~7 x $10^3$ cfu), medium (~1.5 x $10^4$

cfu) or high dose (~2 x $10^4$ cfu) of COL-mCherry, incubated at 33°C and monitored for 48 hpi.

Data are pooled from three independent experiments. Results are plotted as a Kaplan-Meier

survival curve and the p value between conditions was determined by log-rank Mantel-Cox

test. B. Survival curves of zebrafish larvae injected in the hindbrain 3 dpf with COL-mCherry

(WT) or COL Δ*essC*-mCherry at a dose of ~1.6 x $10^5$ cfu and incubated at 33°C for 48 hpi.

Data are pooled from three independent experiments (*n*=23-30 larvae per experiment).

Results are plotted as Kaplan-Meier survival curves and the p value between conditions was

determined by the log-rank Mantel Cox test. C. Enumeration of recovered bacteria at 0, 6, 24

or 48 hpi from zebrafish embryos infected with COL-mCherry (WT) or COL Δ*essC*-mCherry.

Circles represent individual larvae and data pooled data from 3 independent experiments.

Mean ± SEM also shown (horizontal bars). *p<0.05 **p<0.01, *** p<0.001, **** p<0.0001, ns,

not significant.

**Figure S7. TspA proteins encoded by *S. aureus* strains show variability within the**

**channel-forming domain.** A selection of TspA protein sequences encoded by *S. aureus*

strains were extracted from NCBI (ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/), aligned using ClustalW

(http://www.ch.embnet.org/software/ClustalW.html) and shaded with Boxshade

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A

B

C

D

E

| Identifier | Protein name/description | Relative abundance WT/ΔessC | P-value | Unique peptides | Sequence coverage [%] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SAOUHSC_00267 | EsxD (T7 secreted substrate) | 113.6* | $8.00 \times 10^{-6}$ | 4 | 47.6 |
| SAOUHSC_00584 | (TspA) Uncharacterized LXG domain protein | 15.9 | $2.45 \times 10^{-3}$ | 16 | 44.3 |
| SAOUHSC_00268 | EsaD (T7 secreted nuclease) | 15.8 | $1.64 \times 10^{-3}$ | 24 | 44.5 |
| SAOUHSC_00389 | Uncharacterized. Predicted superantigen-like protein | 6.7* | 0.00109 | 2 | 25.6 |
| SAOUHSC_00257 | EsxA (Secreted T7 core component) | 4.6 | 0.00425 | 6 | 81.4 |
| SAOUHSC_00406 | Uncharacterized protein | 3.0 | 0.00272 | 10 | 31.7 |
| SAOUHSC_01342 | Nuclease SbcCD subunit C | 2.9 | 0.00291 | 7 | 9.7 |
| SAOUHSC_01949 | Intracellular serine protease, putative | 2.6 | 0.00421 | 7 | 20.8 |
| SAOUHSC_02028 | PhiETA ORF57-like protein | 2.4 | $5.21 \times 10^{-3}$ | 13 | 26.4 |
| SAOUHSC_01191 | 50S ribosomal protein L28 | 2.3 | 0.00498 | 3 | 24.2 |
| SAOUHSC_02695 | Uncharacterized protein with DUF4467/cystatin-like domain | 2.3 | 0.00337 | 5 | 31 |
| SAOUHSC_01180 | Uncharacterized protein | 2.3 | 0.00286 | 26 | 73.2 |
| SAOUHSC_00258 | EsaA (membrane-bound T7 core component) | 2.2 | 0.00397 | 71 | 59.4 |
| SAOUHSC_02448 | Uncharacterized protein with alpha/beta hydrolase fold | 2.1 | 0.00353 | 17 | 59.2 |
| SAOUHSC_02042 | Phi Mu50B-like protein | 2.1 | 0.00141 | 2 | 18.9 |
| SAOUHSC_02027 | SLT orf 129-like protein | 2.1 | $1.22 \times 10^{-3}$ | 4 | 56 |
| SAOUHSC_02883 | Staphylococcal secretory antigen SsaA | 2.0 | 0.00431 | 5 | 43.1 |

Fig 1

A

B

C

D

E

Fig 2

Fig 3

Fig 4

Fig 5

Fig S1

MSIDMYLDRSRNQASSVGNLSQTMNSNYDALEKAITQFINDDALKGKAYTSAKQFFSTVLIPLSTSMK
TLSDLTKQACDNFVSRYTSEVDSISLKESELEEDIRSLSQQITRYENLNNNLKKHASDNQQAISSNQQ
IIRTLGQQKHELEEKLRKLREFNQKSPEIFKEVEEFQKIVQQGLTQAQNFWNFSTNQFNIPSGKELDW
AKASHEKYLKVAMGKIEHKAEKETLNKADFAVIKAYAKEHPEDDIPKSILKYINDNKDSIKRDIGLDI
TSTLLEQDGINASKFGVFINTAGGVKGPAGPNSFVEVKRTSGNVFIENGSKFAKGGKYLGKGVAGVGF
GIGMYDDLANDDKTFGEALSHNGMTLAAGSAGTAVGAGLATFVLGSNPVGWVILAGLAMSTVFALGTD
LIYQNNIFGLKDKVDWVGHKIDNSIDVVKKTTEKSMDSVGNAVSEAKNIISNHINPMKWAW

Fig S2

Fig S3

Fig S4

Fig S5

A

B

C

Fig S6

Fig S7