

Association of with canine periodontitis

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Marcel Nordhoff, Bärbel Rühe, Claudia Kellermeier, Annette Moter, Rose Schmitz, et al.. Association of with canine periodontitis. Veterinary Microbiology, 2008, 127 (3-4), pp.334. 10.1016/j.vetmic.2007.09.011 . hal-00532324

HAL Id: hal-00532324 https://hal.science/hal-00532324

Submitted on 4 Nov 2010

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Accepted Manuscript

Title: Association of Treponema spp. with canine periodontitis

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Please cite this article as: Nordhoff, M., Rühe, B., Kellermeier, C., Moter, A., Schmitz, R., Brunnberg, L., Wieler, L.H., Association of *Treponema spp.* with canine periodontitis, *Veterinary Microbiology* (2007), doi:10.1016/j.vetmic.2007.09.011

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

1	Association of Treponema spp. with canine periodontitis
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30 Abstract

To evaluate the association of oral *Treponema* (*T*.) spp. with severity of canine periodontitis, subgingival plaque samples of dogs of various breeds undergoing surgery were investigated. A wide range of oral *Treponema* spp. was analysed by a molecular and culture independent approach applying DNA-DNA dot blot hybridization analysis and fluorescence in situ hybridization using *Treponema* specific oligonucleotide probes specific for phylogenetic groups I to VII of oral treponemes as well as probes specific for *T. socranskii* and *T. denticola*.

To assess the periodontal status of affected dogs clinical parameters were measured and the periodontal status was classified from grade 0 (physiological periodont) to 3 (severe periodontitis). The periodontal status correlated significantly with an increasing concentration of volatile sulphur compounds (VSC, r = 0.854) determined with a Halimeter, indicating a positive correlation between the presence of VSC-producing bacteria and periodontitis.

43 In this study *Treponema* spp. of phylogenetic groups III, V, VI, and VII were not detected in 44 any sample, whereas T. denticola-like treponemes were found only in 2 of 51 animals. 45 However, treponemes belonging to phylogenetic groups I, II and IV of oral treponemes or 46 T. socranskii were found in up to 64.84% of the dogs. The detection rate of Treponema spp. 47 was significantly associated with an increased periodontal status. Treponemes present in 48 periodontal lesions were also visualized by fluorescence in situ hybridization of gingival biopsies showing Treponema spp. not only in the microbial biofilm but also within the 49 50 gingival tissue.

51 The data presented here indicate that oral *Treponema* spp. are associated with canine 52 periodontitis. Similar to human periodontitis, treponemes of groups I, II, IV and *T. socranskii* 53 were found more frequently the higher the degree of periodontitis was.

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56 Introduction

57 Periodontal disease is a common problem in pets, especially in dogs, and in the past, various 58 medically important bacterial pathogens have been described in these animals. Most of these 59 studies have been performed in dogs utilizing culture-based methodology (Allaker et al., 60 1997; Elliott et al., 2005; Hardham et al., 2005; Hennet and Harvey, 1991). In general, these 61 studies assumed that bacterial pathogens in dogs are identical or very similar to those found in 62 human patients (Riviere et al., 1996; Valdez et al., 2000). Besides several well-known gram-63 negative anaerobic genera like Prevotella, Tannerella, and Porphyromonas, the genus 64 Treponema gained much interest, as it is of particular importance in humans (Chan and 65 McLaughlin, 2000; Moter et al., 2006; Rocas et al., 2001; Sela, 2001). In recent studies, 66 treponemes similar to T. denticola, T. socranskii, T. vincentii, T. maltophilum, T. medium and 67 T. pectinovorum have been reported in dogs and cats (Riviere et al., 1996; Valdez et al., 68 2000). Treponemes are particularly difficult to cultivate or even as yet-uncultured, therefore 69 cultivation results only partly reflect the occurrence and diversity of treponemes in particular 70 settings (Choi et al., 1994). Therefore during the last decade, non culture-based methods have 71 been developed to get a deeper understanding of ecological niches like the oral cavity 72 (Sakamoto et al., 2005). In pets, so far no attempts were made to systematically investigate 73 the occurrence of *Treponema* spp. in periodontal disease, utilizing non culture-based 74 methodology to detect single phylogenetic groups of these pathogens.

The aim of the present study was therefore to investigate the occurrence of *Treponema* spp. via 16S rRNA targeting a dog cohort undergoing surgery. Based on methodology from human dentistry we defined the periodontal status of four teeth and sampled DNA from two well defined sites of two teeth each. Furthermore we determined volatile sulphur compounds (VSC) in an attempt to monitor other bacterial pathogens, as VSC concentrations are known to be correlated with the appearance of periodontal pathogens, being able to reduce sulphate

The data presented here show that like in human medical patients the occurrence of treponemes is associated with the degree of periodontitis. In addition, the spectrum of *Treponema* spp. detected in this study seems to be basically the same as in human periodontitis.

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87 Materials and methods

88 Study population

The study population consisted of 101 dogs, which underwent surgery for numerous reasons. All animals were withheld feed for 12 hours and received water ad libitum. Animals received no antibiotic treatment for at least 3 months prior to sampling or, where treated, antibiotics were administered no earlier than 12 h before examination and sample collection. The animals were sedated as described previously (Kellermeier et al., 2004). Because PCR amplification and therefore subsequent detection of treponemes failed in samples of 10 dogs these dogs were excluded in following analyses resulting in a total number of 91 dogs.

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97 Clinical measurements

98 Halitosis assessment through VSC determination

99 Volatile sulphur compounds (VSC) concentrations in snout air were determined using a 100 sulfide monitor (Halimeter®, Interscan RH17K, USA). This apparatus, originally constructed 101 for use in human medicine, was slightly modified to be useful for dogs by replacing the straw 102 with the middle part of a 5ml syringe. Concentrations were determined in triplicate and a 103 mean value was calculated. Measurement of VSC's was always performed in the morning. 104 In addition, halitosis was determined organoleptic by one single investigator, by lifting the 105 upper lip and smelling malus odor in a distance of approx. 2 cm. Four grades were defined, no 106 odor (0), odor, but not unpleasant (1), intensive bad odor (2), and intensive odor, even before

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108 Periodontal status

109 To asses periodontal status the gingival index (GI), calculus index (CI), plaque index (PI), 110 pocket depth (PD), mobility index (MI) and furcation index (FI) were evaluated from the 111 canine tooth (tooth 204) and the fourth premolar (tooth 208) of the left maxilla as well as 112 from the first incisivus (tooth 401) and the first molar (tooth 409) of the right mandible as 113 previously described (Rateitschak et al., 2003). GI, CI, PI and PD were measured at the 114 fascial side of the teeth. MI was calculated manually by moving the tooth in orofascial 115 direction. FI was determined by probing the tooth with a furcation probe from the fascial side. 116 The periodontal status was then calculated by the mean value of the sum of the periodontal 117 indices.

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119 **DNA extraction and amplification**

Samples were obtained principally as previously described (Moter et al., 1998). In brief, 120 121 subgingival plaque samples were obtained by probing the fascial sulci of the fourth premolar 122 of the left maxilla (tooth 208) and the first molar of the left mandible (tooth 409) with sterile 123 paper points for 10 seconds. Subsequently paper points were transferred in 450 µl PBS, pH 124 7.4. After vortexing paper points were removed and 50 µl lysis buffer (500 mM Tris-HCl, pH 9.0, 20 mM EDTA, 10 mM NaCl, 1% sodium dodecylsulfate [SDS]) were added and no 125 126 additional DNA purification was done. For PCR one microliter of bulk DNA was added to the 127 PCR reaction mixture. PCR was repeated three times at least to obtain positive amplification 128 products.

For PCR amplification of approximately 550 bp of 16S rRNA gene the universal primers TPU-1 (5'-AGAGTTTGATCMTGGCTCAG -3', position 8-27 in *Escherichia coli* 16S rRNA gene) and the universal reverse primer RTU-3 (5'-GWATTACCGCGGCKGCTG-3', position 518-535 in *Escherichia coli* 16S rRNA gene) were used. Amplification of the partial 16S

dNTPs, 25 pmol of each primer and 2,5 U *Taq* polymerase. Samples were preheated at 94 °C
for 5 min followed by amplification with 94 °C for 30 s, 56 °C for 30 s and 72 °C for 45 s. A

total of 30 cycles was carried out with a final elongation step at 72 °C for 10 min. Successful
amplification was verified by agarose gelelectrophoresis.

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139 **Dot blot hybridization**

Dot blot analyses were carried out principally as previously described (Ehmke et al., 2004;
Moter et al., 1998). In brief, PCR products were spotted and cross-linked on a nylon
membrane. Oligonucleotide probes specific for the seven phylogenetic groups of oral
treponemes TRE I-VII as well as probes specific for *T. socranskii* (TSOC) and *T. denticola*(TDEN) were used.

All probes have been deposited in ProbeBase, an online resource for 16S rRNA-targeted
oligonucleotide probes where probe difference alignments are available (Loy et al., 2003).

147 Probes were labelled nonisotopically using the DIG labelling system (Boehringer Mannheim, 148 Germany). All hybridization steps were performed at temperatures between 54 °C and 59 °C 149 depending on the probe used. Stringency washes were optimized for each probe by varying 150 the washing buffer containing 5x SSC and 0,1 % SDS, 2x SSC and 0,1 % SDS or 0,1x SSC 151 and 0,1 % SDS and the temperatures ranging from 56 °C to 62 °C. Chemiluminescence 152 detection was performed with alkaline phosphatase labelled anti-DIG antibody and CSPD 153 according to the manufacture's instructions (Boehringer Mannheim, Germany). After 154 exposure to X-film (X-OMAT AR, Kodak, Germany) from 2 to 12 h the membrane was 155 stripped with buffer containing 0,2 M NaOH and 0,1% SDS.

16S rRNA amplification products of representative *Treponema* strains were used as controlsin dot blot analyses as listed below.

160 Fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH)

161 Biopsies were fixed in PBS, pH 7.4, with 4% formaldehyde (v/v) and embedded in Technovit 162 8100 (Heraeus Kultzer, Germany) according to the manufacture's instructions. Histological 163 sections (4 µm) were mounted on Superfrost® slides (Roth, Germany) and stored at 4°C. 164 For FISH all probes were synthesized and 5'-labelled with Cy3 (indocarbocyanine) for the 165 treponeme specific oligonucleotide probes TRE I, and TRE IV while FITC (fluorescein 166 isothiocyanate) was used for labelling the eubacterial probe EUB 338 (Thermo Hybaid, 167 Interactiva division, Germany). 168 FISH was performed principally as described previously (Moter et al., 1998; Sunde et al., 169 2003). In brief, hybridization was performed at 46 °C in a humid chamber for 4 h using 20 μ l 170 hybridization buffer for each section (20% deionised formamide, 0,45 M NaCl, 20 mM Tris-171 HCl pH 7.4, 0,01% SDS) and 100 ng of the probes. After incubation sections were washed 172 with distilled water, dried and mounted with ProLong® Antifade reagent (Molecular Probes, 173 The Netherlands). For each FISH applications control strain were included as listed below. Strains were fixed in 174 175 3.7% (v/v) formaldehyde/PBS, pH 7.4 and stored at -20 °C. For FISH fixed cells were spotted

onto teflon-marked slides (Paul Marienfeld, Germany), air-dried and dehydrated in 50%, 80%
and 96% (v/v) ethanol.

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179 Fluorescence microscopy

FISH analyses were performed using an epifluorescence microscope (DMBL, Leica) equipped with a 100 W high pressure mercury lamp and a digital camera (DC300F, Leica) for taking photomicrographs. Filters used for detection of FITC and Cy3 signals were L5 resp. Y3 (Leica, Germany).

186 **Control strains**

- 187 To ensure specificity the following strains were included as controls for dot blot hybridization
- and FISH: *T. vincentii* ATCC 35580, *T. denticola* (ATCC 33521^T), *T. maltophilum* (ATCC
- 189 51939^T), *T. lecithinolyticum* (ATCC 700332^T), *T. amylovorum* (ATCC 700288^T),
- 190 T. phagedenis (Biotype Reiter), T. brennaborense (DSM 12168^T), T. socranskii ssp.
- socranskii (ATCC 35536^T), *T. socranskii* ssp. buccale (ATCC 35534^T), *Treponema*socranskii ssp. paredis (ATCC 35535^T), *T. pectinovorum* (ATCC 33768^T).
- Additionally, for dot blot hybridization 16S rRNA controls from yet uncultivated *Treponema*phylotypes were included from clones harbouring partial 16S rRNA gene sequences
 belonging to oral phylotype groups TRE I-TRE VII as described previously (Choi et al., 1994;
 Moter et al., 2006)
- 197

198 Statistical analysis

199 SPSS[©] was used for statistical analysis. Box- and scatterplots were used to show differences 200 in the distribution of the dogs involved in this study. Boxplots show quartiles of the 201 distribution indicated as a box with the corresponding median. Samples scored outside of the 202 boxplots were posed solitary by indicating the number of the sample. The periodontal status 203 between groups positive for treponemes was compared by the Mann-Whitney-U-test.

- Because no PCR products were obtained from plaque samples of ten dogs due to technicalproblems these dogs were not included in this study.
- 206

207 Results

208 Clinical measurements

First clinical parameters were assessed to monitor the periodontal status of the dogs involved in this study. As shown in Fig. 1, subjective and halimeter determination of halitosis

clinical periodontal status. In Fig. 2, VCS concentrations, organoleptic grades and the
periodontal status are given, clearly showing that with an increasing periodontal status VSC
concentration as well as organoleptic grading increased.
Because of this association, the study cohort was divided to their periodontal status. 23 of the
animals had a normal periodont (status 0), 53 showed minor (status 1), 23 medium (status 2),
and 2 major (status 3) periodontitis.

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219 Microbiological investigation

After these initial clinical measurements, samples from the facial sulcus of teeth 208 and 409 were taken from 101 dogs for subsequent PCR amplification. Although a total of three repeats of every sample was conducted to obtain PCR products of bacterial 16S rRNA genes for further dot blot hybridization assays, samples from ten dogs remained negative in PCR amplification at all, most probably due to the presence of inhibitory substances rather than due to degradation of the samples (Matto et al., 1998).

From the remaining 91 dogs, DNA was amplified successfully with eubacterial primers TPU1 and RTU3. All amplicons were further processed for DNA-DNA dot blot analysis with 9 different oligonucleotide probes for the specific detection of *Treponema* phylotype groups I-VII, *T. socranskii* or *T. denticola*. As the probe detecting 16S rDNA of *T. denticola* in the initial testing of 51 dogs revealed positive results only in 2 dogs (3.92%), this probe was not used further on.

Probes specific for *Treponema* phylogenetic group I (TRE I) gave positive results in 17 dogs
(18.68 %), TRE II in 40 (43.96 %) and TRE IV in 54 (57.45 %) animals, while *T. socranskii*was detected in 22 (24.18 %) of the dogs. In contrast, TRE III, TRE V, TRE VI and TRE VII
were not detected at all (Tab.1).

236 In total, 59 (64.84%) dogs gave positive results for at least one probe. 43 (47.25%) dogs were

Treponema groups detected by dot blot analysis was TRE II and TRE IV in 17 (18.68%) dogs
followed by the combination of TRE I, TRE II and TRE IV and TRE I, TRE II, TRE IV and *T. socranskii*, each in 8 (8.79%) dogs. The combination of TRE II, TRE IV and *T. socranskii*was detected in 6 (6.59%) dogs while the combination of TRE IV and *T. socranskii* was found
in 3 (3.29%) dogs. The combination of TRE I, TRE II and *T. socranskii* were found only in 1
(1.09%) dog at the same time.

Interestingly, in those animals harbouring treponemes, the periodontal status was in general higher than in those reacting negative as substantiated by further statistical analysis. The statistical analysis revealed a significant association between periodontal status and detection of *Treponema* spp. (TRE I, II, IV and *T. socranskii*: p = 0.001), suggesting a role of treponemes in the aetiology of periodontitis. Fig. 3 summarizes these results by showing the association between periodontal status and the detection rate of *treponemes* of group I, II and IV respectively *T. socranskii*.

To visualize the morphology and localization of treponemes in plaque of the dogs, gingival biopsies taken from two dogs with periodontal status 3 were further investigated by fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH). Hybridization of gingival tissue sections with probes TRE I and TRE IV showed the typical morphology of spirochetes (Fig. 4). FISH using the bacterial probe EUB 338 revealed, that also spirochetes, next to other bacteria, were present in high numbers. FISH results also indicate that treponemes are not only present within the plaque biofilm but also within the gingival tissue.

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264 **Discussion**

From a clinical point of view, VSC measurement in humans seems to be a simple and rapid chair-side method to detect shifts in the resident microbiological flora, indicating an increase in possible periodontal pathogens or contributors to disease pathogenesis (Socransky et al., 1998). Measurement of VSC can be performed both, organoleptic or using a halimeter. Although organoleptic measurement is a more subjective technique and a quite simple clinical method for scoring halitosis these data correlate well with those data gained from measurements using a halimeter (Fig. 1).

272 Increase of VSC is due to VSC-producing bacteria and correlates with an increasing number 273 of periodontopathogenic bacteria including black-pigmented bacteria like Porphyromonas 274 spp. or Fusobacterium spp., Prevotella spp. and Treponema denticola which have been shown 275 to be potent producers of VSC and an increasing grade of periodontitis (Awano et al., 2002; 276 Fukamachi et al., 2005; Pavolotskaya et al., 2006; Torresyap et al., 2003). The correlation 277 between VSC and periodontal status is reflected in our data as increasing VSC concentrations 278 are associated with an increasing grade of periodontitis (Fig. 2). Therefore, measurement of 279 VSC concentrations and the coverage of different periodontal indices are reliable markers to 280 record the oral health status in dogs.

After assessing an objective scoring of the oral health status we then examined if the 281 282 prevalence of treponemes is correlated with an increasing degree of periodontitis. To our 283 knowledge, this is the first time the association of treponemes with periodontal status in dogs 284 was investigated systematically. So far, mostly conventional cultivation procedures have been 285 used to screen for putative periodontal pathogens in dogs (Elliott et al., 2005; Hardham et al., 286 2005; Sarkiala et al., 1993; Valdez et al., 2000). However, for human periodontitis it has been 287 shown that the culture dependant approach misses a high proportion of species that are 288 fastidous or yet-to-be cultured (Choi et al., 1994; Kumar et al., 2003; Paster et al., 2001;

have a high prevalence in human periodontitis (Moter et al., 1998; Paster et al., 2001). We
therefore used culture-independent techniques which already have been applied in human
periodontitis to assess the association of treponemal phylotypes with severity of periodontitis
in dogs (Choi et al., 1994; Moter et al., 1998; Moter et al., 2006; Sakamoto et al., 1999; Willis
et al., 1999).

295 By this approach treponemes were detected more frequently in dogs with a higher periodontal 296 status. In 57.45% of the dogs treponemes belonging to group IV were detected, while 297 treponemes of group TRE I, TRE II and T. socranskii were detected in 18.68%, 43.96% and 298 24.18% of the dogs, respectively. As shown by box plots in Fig. 3 the prevalence of these 299 treponemes correlates clearly with the grade of periodontitis. Therefore, our data imply that 300 treponemes are associated with periodontitis in dogs and may play a role in the pathogenesis 301 of canine periodontitis together with other oral pathogens like black-pigmented anaerobe 302 bacteria (BPAB) (Hardham et al., 2005). This assumption was further supported by FISH 303 visualizing spirochetes in periodontal biofilms on sections from gingival biopsies (Fig.4). In 304 these sections treponemes are not only located in the plaque biofilm but also within the tissue 305 implicating their invasive and pathogenic character. These results are also in line with 306 previous immunhistochemical analyses of canine plaque samples detecting oral treponemes 307 more frequently in dogs suffering from periodontitis than in healthy ones (Riviere et al., 308 1996). Similar to our results treponemes related to T. maltophilum, a cultivable representative of oral group IV treponemes, were frequently detected in a cultivation based study (Valdez et 309 310 al., 2000).

Likewise to human periodontitis (Ehmke et al., 2004; Moter et al., 1998; Moter et al., 2006) we found in our study that treponemes associated with canine periodontitis belong to group TRE I, II and IV or to *T. socranskii*. At least these phylotypes are likely to be important diagnostic markers for the diagnosis of canine periodontitis until pathogenicity has not be

VII were detected in these samples. Interestingly only 2 of the 51 dogs harboured *T*. *denticola*-like treponemes belonging to group TRE II although *T. denticola* is considered a major oral pathogen in human periodontitis being present at high frequencies while phylogenetic group TRE II was prevalent in 43.96% of the dogs (Sela, 2001). Our preliminary results therefore imply that treponemes belonging to group TRE III, TRE V, TRE VI and TRE VII as well as *T. denticola*-like treponemes seem to be hardly ever associated with canine periodontitis.

In this study three different *Treponema* phylotype groups as well as *T. socranskii* could be detected by screening 91 dogs. Our data also indicate that dogs suffering from periodontitis also exhibit a high diversity of different *Treponema* spp.. Only 4.39 % of the dogs were positive just for *T. socranskii* resp. 13.18 % for TRE IV while all other *Treponema*-positive dogs exhibited at least two different groups of treponemes as listed in Tab. 1.

To proof similarity of treponemes present in dogs and humans and to extend our knowledge of treponemal diversity in dogs additional and more discriminatory phylogenetical approaches are necessary to assess a more comprehensive and detailed knowledge on this topic as it has been already shown in human periodontitis (Dewhirst et al., 2000).

332 Summarizing, the detection of treponemes by dot blot hybridization in gingival plaque of 333 dogs provides strong evidence for an association of these bacteria in canine periodontal 334 disease, a finding similar to that in human medical area. The same phylotypes that are 335 associated with human periodontitis are also abundant in dogs and might serve as diagnostic 336 markers for canine periodontitis. Fluorescent in situ hybridization demonstrated tissue 337 invasiveness of the treponemes suggesting a pathogenic role in periodontitis. However, not all 338 Treponema spp. involved in human periodontitis were present in dogs. Further studies are 339 necessary to assess deeper insights on the diversity and epidemiology of *Treponema* spp. in 340 dogs to evaluate the exact function of *Treponema* spp. in canine periodontitis.

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442 <u>Legends to Tables and Figures</u>

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444 445 446 447	Table 1:	Distribution of oral treponemes in plaque samples by dot blot hybridization using group- and species-specific oligonucleotide probes. A total of 91 dogs were screened for treponemen. While 32 dogs remained negative at all, treponemes could be detected in 59 dogs in different frequencies and combinations
448 449 450		* only 51 dogs were screened for <i>T. denticola</i> -like treponemes
451 452 453 454	Figure 1:	Concentrations of VSC in ppb measured by a halimeter and organoleptic results scoring from $0 =$ no halitosis, $1 =$ slight halitosis, $2 =$ pronounced halitosis and $3 =$ very strong halitosis.
455 456 457 458	Figure 2:	Association of VSC values, organoleptic results and the periodontal status determined by clinical indices.
459 460 461 462 463 464 465	Figure 3:	Detection of phylogenetic groups TRE I, TRE II and TRE IV resp. <i>T. socranskii</i> detected by dot blot hybridization depending on the periodontal health status. The frequency of detection is significantly ($p = 0,001$) associated with an increasing periodontal health status.
465 466 467 468 469	Figure 4:	FISH analyses of gingival bioptates from sites with periodontitis hybridized with (a) TRE 1-cy3 (yellow) resp. (c) TRE IV-cy3. Same sites, (b) and (d), hybridized with EUB-FITC (green) showing the total bacterial count. Bars 10 μm.

Oligonu cleotide probe	no. of positive dogs (%)	combinations of T <i>reponema</i> spp	n o. of positive d ogs (%)	
Group-specific probes				
TREI	17 (18.68%)	TSOC	4 (4.39 %)	
TRE II	40 (43.96%)	TREIV	12 (13.18 %)	
TRE III	0	TRE IV-TSOC	3 (3.29 %)	
TREIV	54 (57.45%)	TRE II-TRE IV	17 (18.68 %)	
TRE V	0	TRE II-TRE IV-TSOC	6 (6.59 %)	
TRE VI	0	TRE I-TRE II-TSOC	1 (1.09 %)	
TRE VII	0	TRE I-TRE II-TRE IV	8 (8.79 %)	
Species-specific probes		TRE I-TRE II-TRE IV-TSOC	8 (8.79 %)	
TSOC	22 (24.18%)			











detection of T. socranskii





detection of group IV treponemes



