

OVERVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE MOST PROBABLE NUMBER (MPN) METHOD TO QUANTIFY ORGANISMS ≥ 10 Mm AND < 50 Mm

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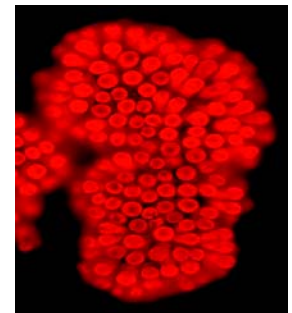


Outline

- Determination of ballast water management system (BWMS) treatment effects on organisms $\geq 10 \mu\text{m}$ and $< 50 \mu\text{m}$ in the context of the current USCG regulation
- Review of effects following treatment by BWMS (e.g., viability)
- Viability (MPN) task group: History and next steps

Quantifying *Any* BWMS's Effects on $\geq 10 \mu\text{m}$ $< 50 \mu\text{m}$ Organisms

- The ideal method to determine the number of living organisms would:
 - Allow a relatively large volume of water to be sampled
 - Be relatively quick and straightforward to perform
 - Unambiguously identify all living cells and organisms
- Most traditional metrics are insufficient to *quantify* organisms in a mixed assemblage with confidence: molecular methods, chlorophyll α , uptake of radiolabeled substrates (e.g., H^{14}CO_3)
- The problem (living vs. dead single-celled organisms) is decades old



Quantifying *Any* BWMS's Effects on $\geq 10 \mu\text{m}$ $< 50 \mu\text{m}$ Organisms

- NRL conducted >100 trials using vital and mortal stains (which indicate if organisms are living or dead, respectively)
- Another option: fluorescent markers that reveal
 - Information about the integrity of enzyme systems
 - Ability of cells to control internal composition

FDA + CMFDA

Fluorescein Diacetate (FDA)

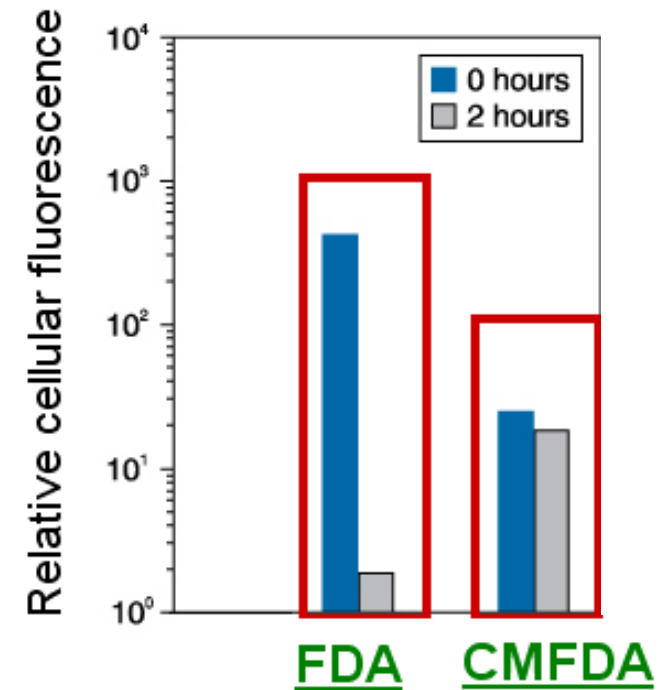
viability probe

Fluorescence decreases over time due to leakage of fluorescein from cells

5-Chloromethylfluorescein Diacetate (CMFDA)

viability probe

Retained inside cells, but the chloromethyl group appears to reduce maximum signal intensity



Why not use both?

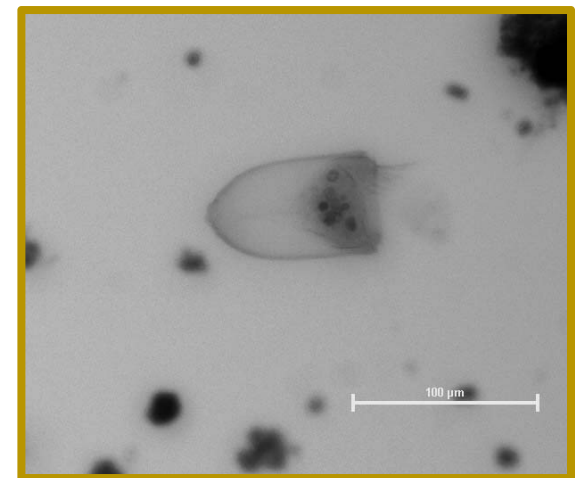
FDA + CMFDA + Movement

FDA/CMFDA + Direct Counting = # Living Organisms

(FDA + CMFDA)



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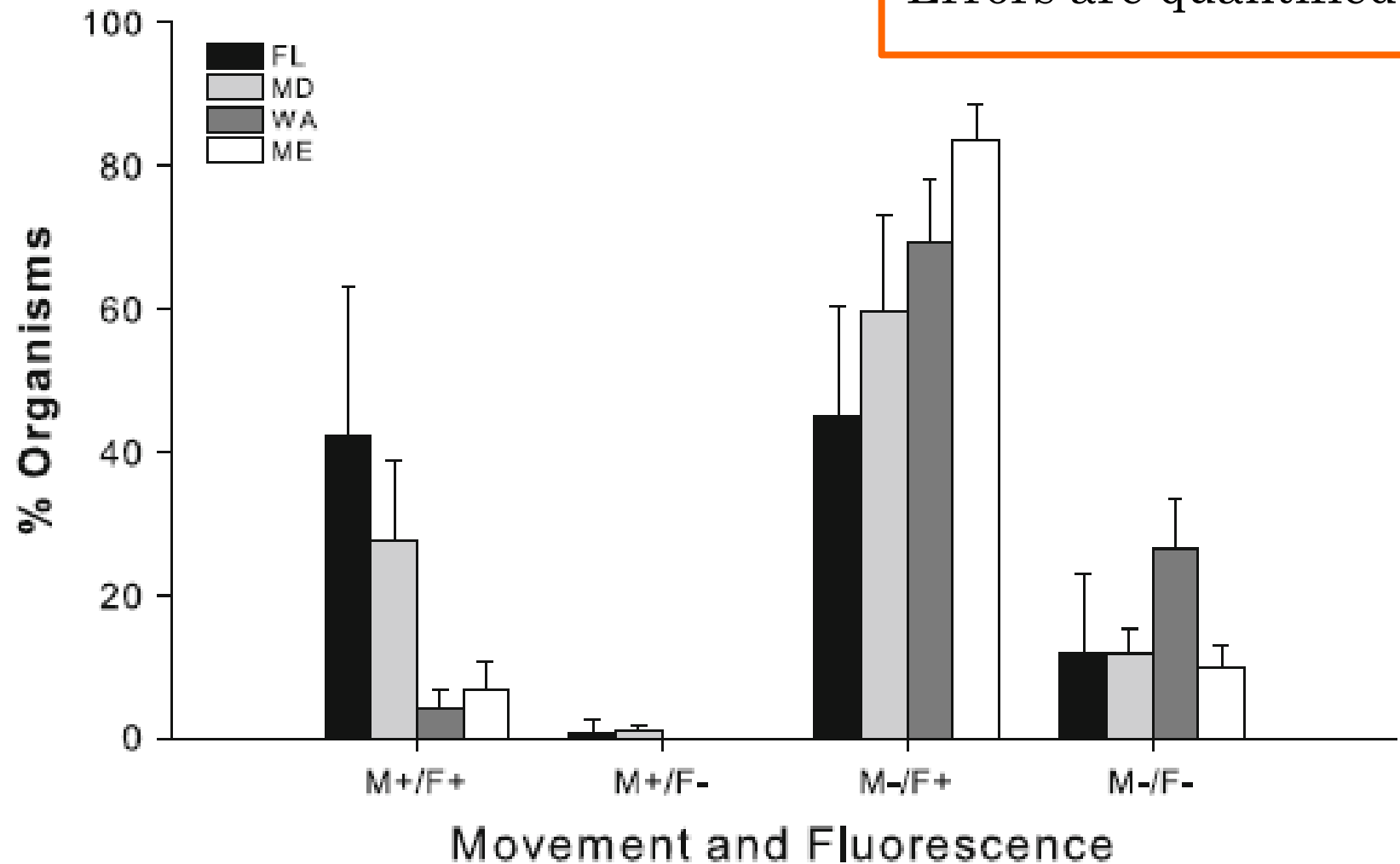
FDA + CMFDA + Movement

- Validation study conducted at four locations with different water types:
 - **Key West, FL**
 - **Baltimore, MD**
 - **Boothbay Harbor, ME**
 - **Sequim, WA**
- Environmental Technology Verification (ETV) Program Technical Panel concurrence
- Peer-reviewed publication (Steinberg et al. 2011)



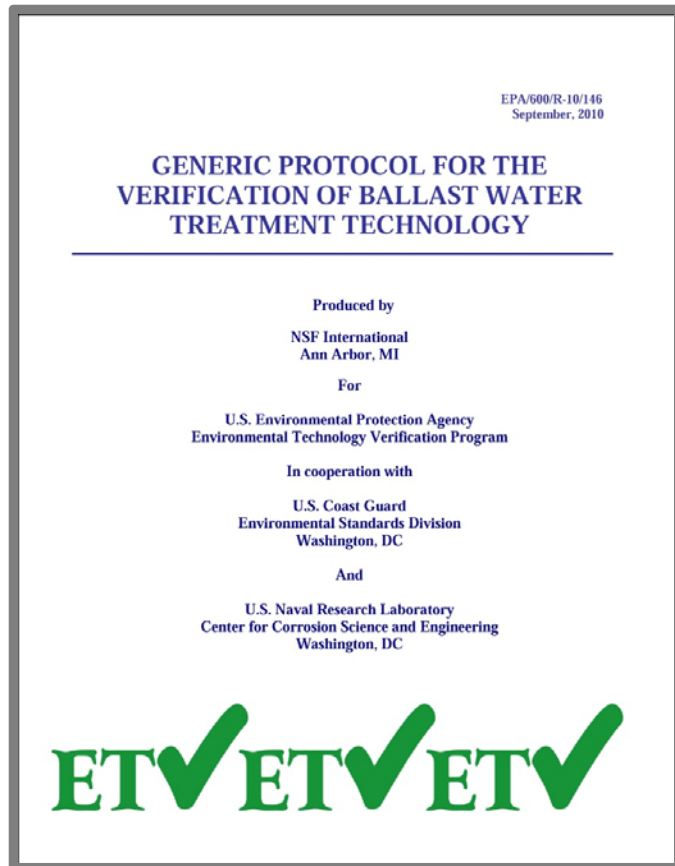
FDA + CMFDA + Movement

Errors are quantified



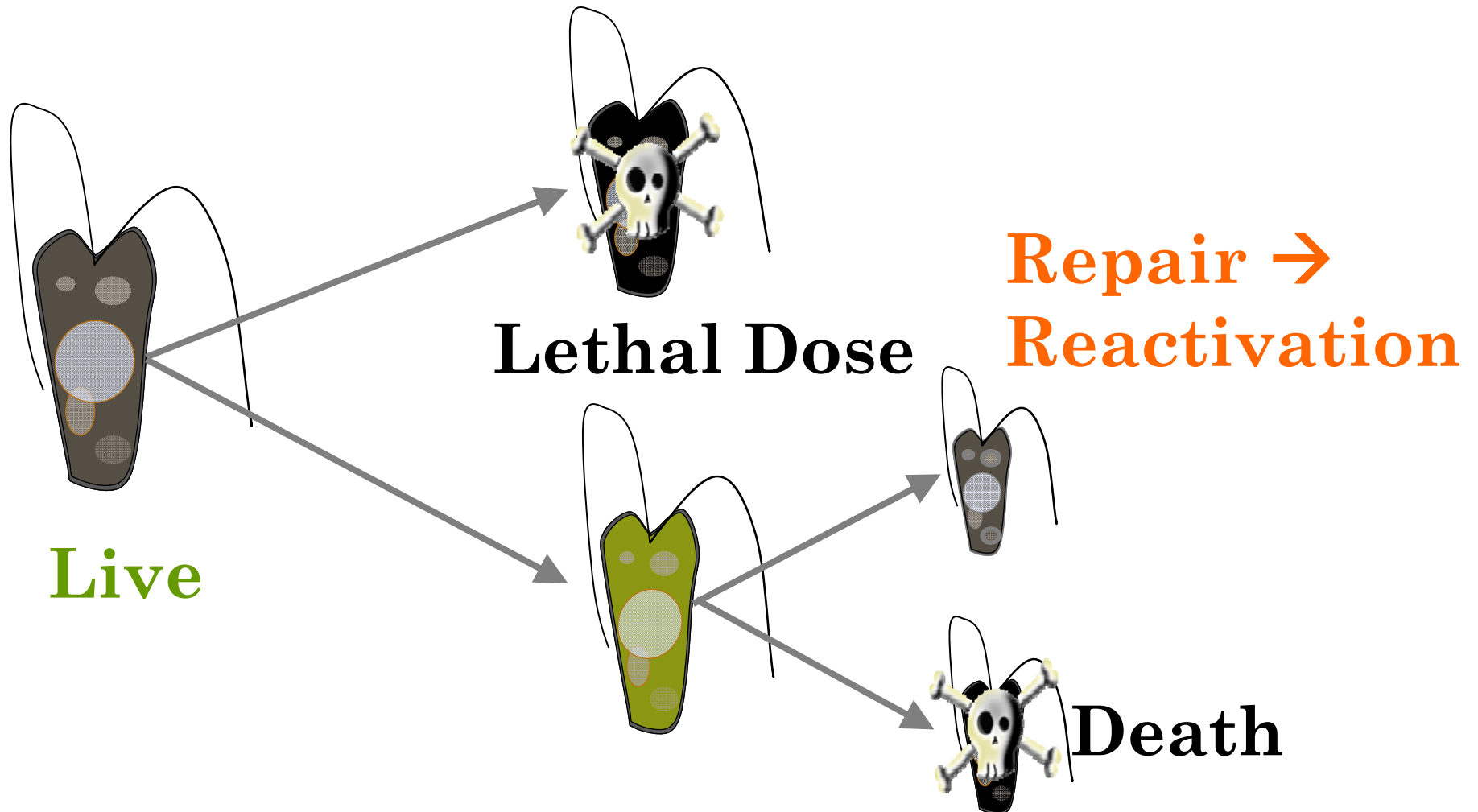
(Steinberg et al. 2011)

FDA + CMFDA + Movement



- The FDA/CMFDA + movement method is specified in the ETV Protocol
 - USCG Final Rule incorporates ETV Protocol by reference
 - EPA Vessel General Permit currently requires self-monitoring of organisms $<10\ \mu\text{m}$ (bacteria and indicator organisms) following sampling consistent with the ETV Protocol
- Alternate approaches may be used
 - Validation would be required

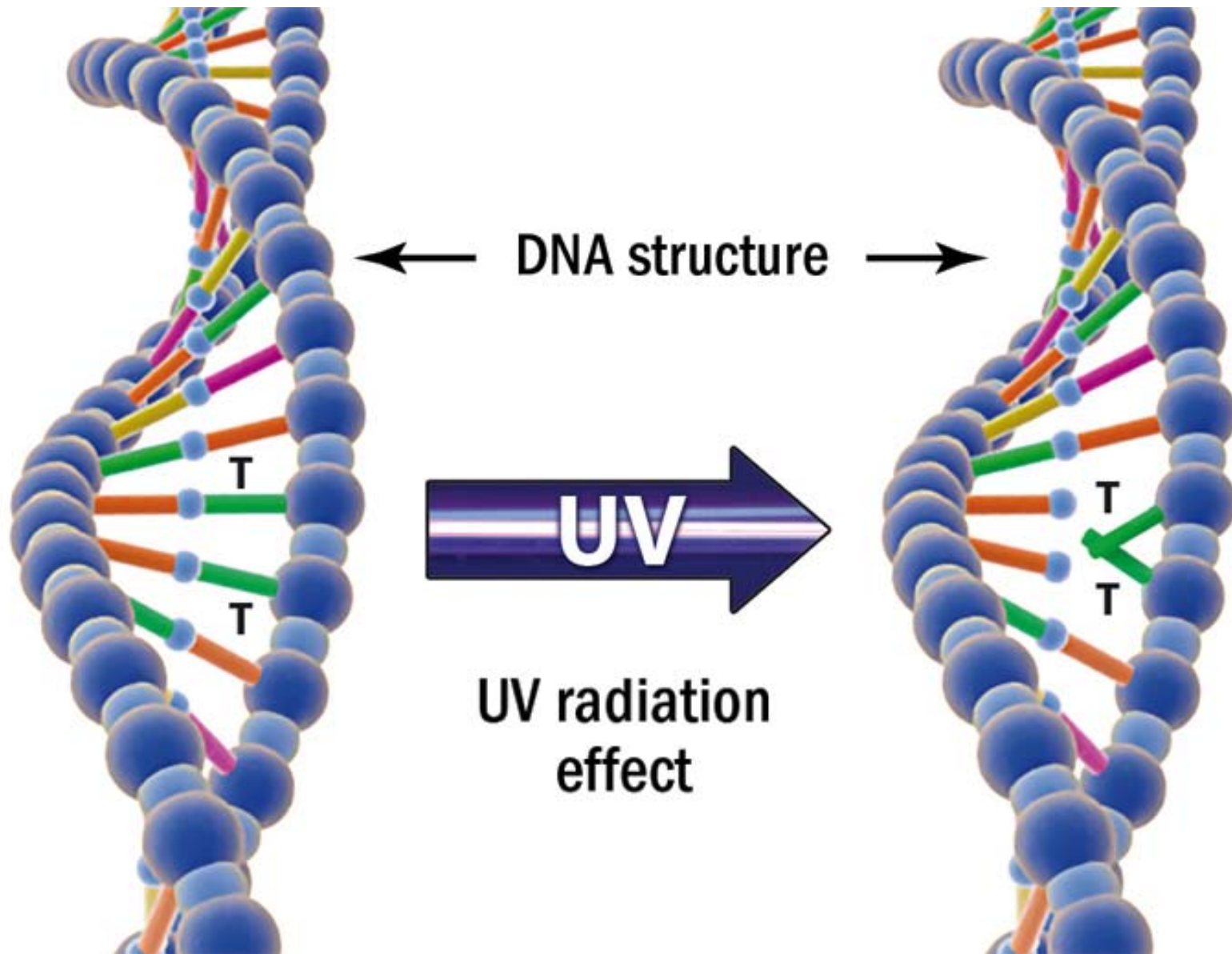
UV-Treated Organisms



Sublethal Disinfecting Dose

Damage: DNA, cell membrane, enzymes

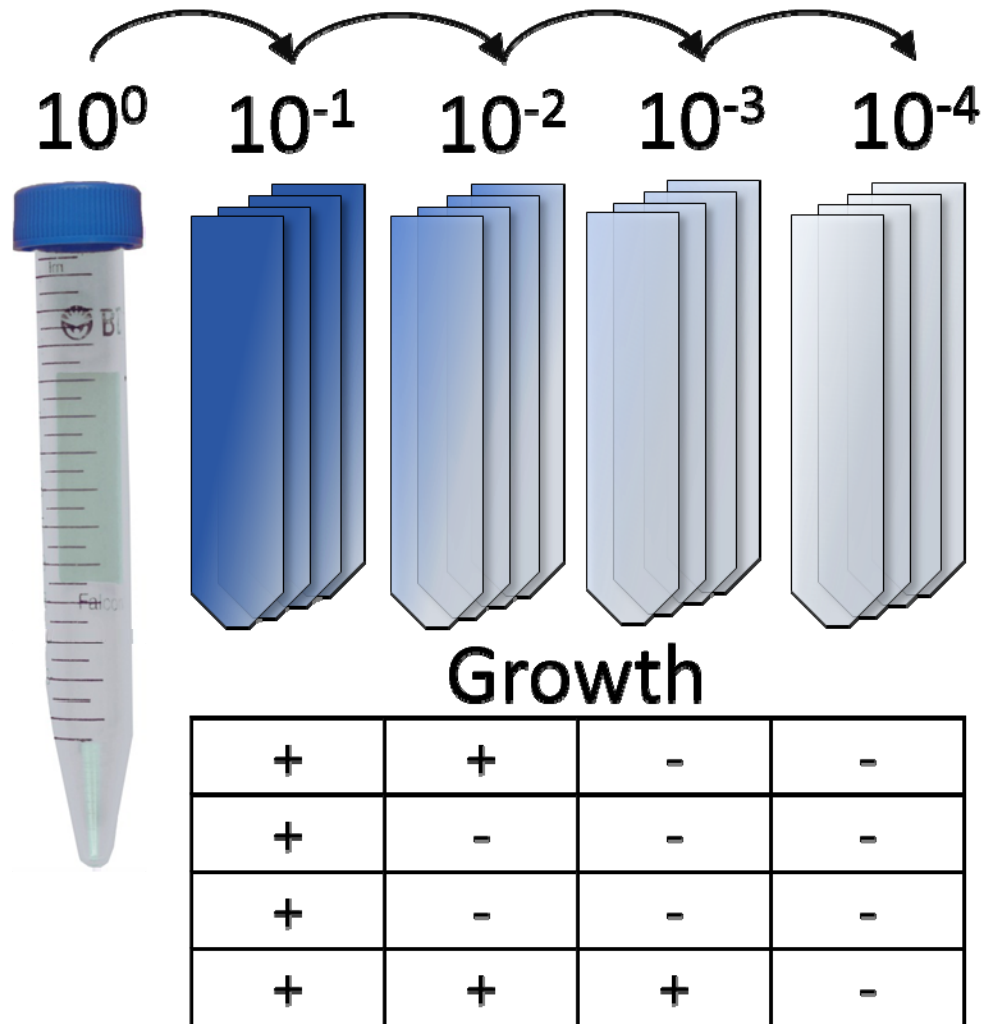
Germicidal Effects



Germicidal Effects

- At doses typically used in disinfection—
- UV covalently links adjacent bases (“rungs” in DNA ladder), causing **“thymine dimers”**
- When the cell divides, DNA replication and transcription is inhibited
- Thus, microorganisms are rendered **unable to divide** and reproduce; death is not immediate

MPN Method



- Incubation conditions are specified, e.g.,:
 - Temperature
 - Media
 - Illumination
 - Time

MPN Method

- Developed for single-species bacteria cultures
 - Readily culturable under laboratory conditions
- Not all species present in the diverse community of ambient, photoautotrophic protists can be grown in the laboratory
 - The heterotrophs are excluded

MPN Method

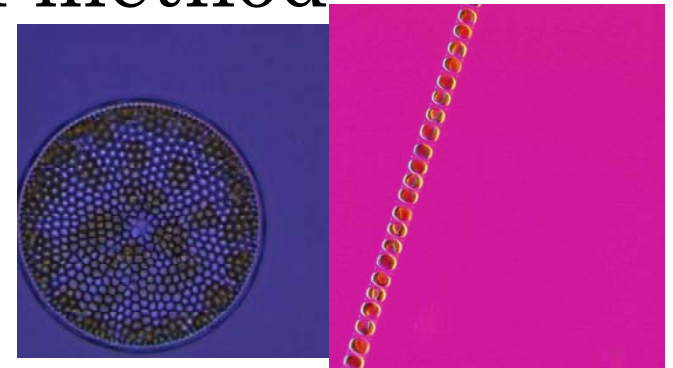
- Theory: Dilute cells to the point of absence → calculate the original [] (with confidence intervals)
- Top-level scientific questions about the method:
 - How to account for non-photosynthetic (heterotrophic) organisms
 - Proposal: Count with movement + add numbers to MPN results
 - How to determine the percentage of species that can reliably grow during the MPN grow-out period
 - How to account for non-growers (correction factor?)
 - Cultivation issue

MPN Task Group: History

- Initially met in June 2013 through the ETV Technical Panel
- Since that time:
 - 7 teleconferences
 - 2 in-person meetings of full task group
 - 3 round-robin experiments among three test facilities, preliminary work at DHI Denmark, NIVA, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories
 - 3 additional experiments largely to determine the percentage of species that can grow/be maintained, accuracy, repeatability, etc.
 - 2 in-person meetings of statistics task group

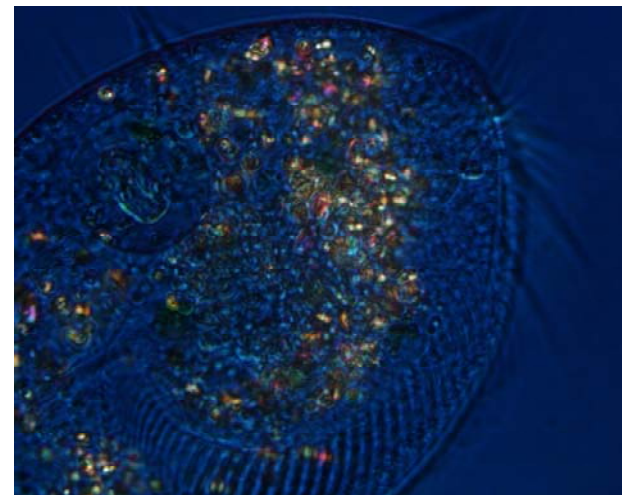
MPN Task Group

- The **MPN method** was drafted, including
 - Summary of data on multiple species analysis from the test facilities
 - Autotroph and Heterotroph method
 - SOP for autotrophs
 - One temperature
 - One media
 - A threshold for determining whether tubes have growth
 - 4x the SD of the fluorescence of a set of blank tubes



MPN Task Group

- Summary of interferences, biases, and limitations
- Heterotroph Method
 - Evaluated by
 - Presence of motility
 - Absence of chlorophyll a autofluorescence



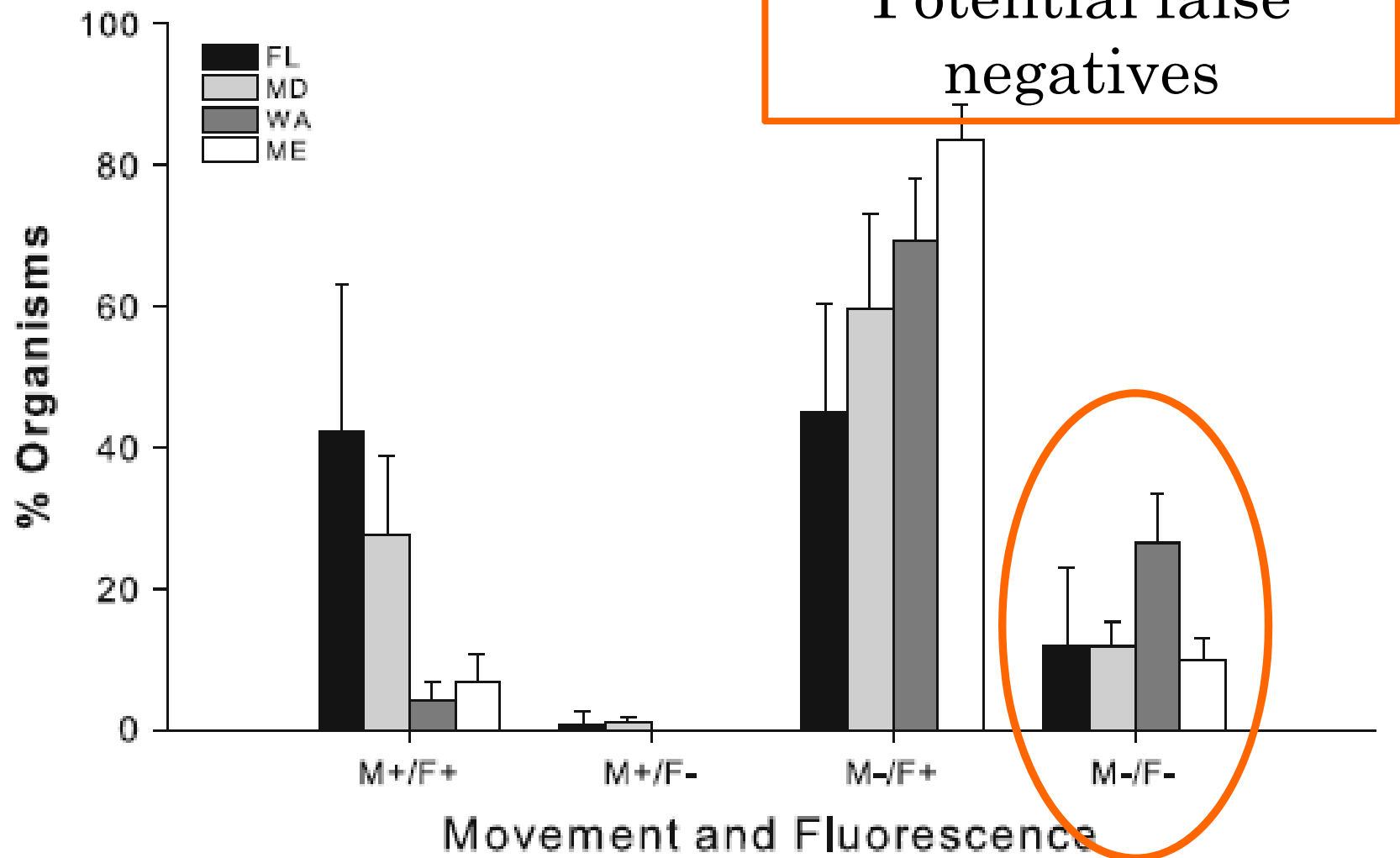
MPN Task Group

- A step-by-step standard operating procedure has been developed
 - At two facilities, the percentage of non-photosynthetic (heterotrophic) organisms was low, $\leq 1\%$
 - The percentage of species that *can grow consistently* ranged from **20-44% or 56-89%**
 - The percentage of species that *grew in at least one test* ranged from **80-89% and 70-94%**
 - That is, the “historical record” was greater than the percentage of species that consistently grow in each test

MPN Task Group—Statistics

- A **modeling study** is being conducted
 - Determining the effect of non-growing species on the final concentration of living organisms
 - Unaccounted for living organisms represent false negatives
 - How can they be incorporated?

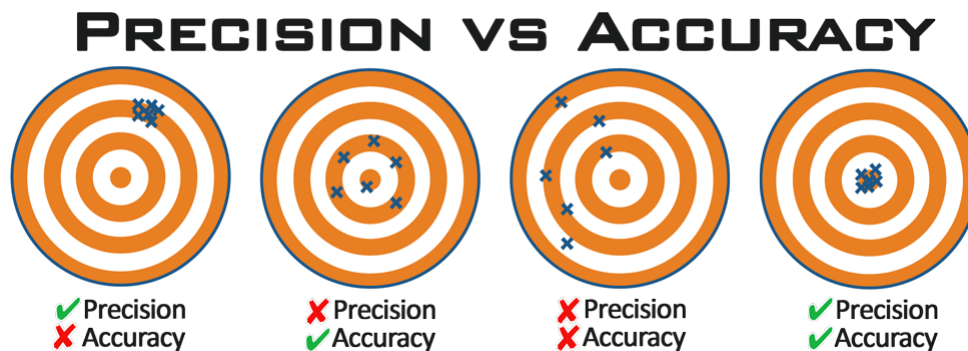
MPN Task Group—Statistics



(Steinberg et al. 2011)

MPN Task Group—Statistics

- An **uncertainty analysis** is being conducted
 - Accounting for the sources of error
 - MPN method
 - FDA/CMFDA + movement approach
 - Any errors common to both approaches (e.g., error in sample collection) will not be considered



MPN Task Group

- A **validation experiment** is being planned now and will be conducted, including
 - Known standards (e.g., living cells, heat-killed cells)
 - Documentation of precision, accuracy, etc., for the method



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