Life Support Systems
Microbial Challenges

August 24, 2009
Agenda

- Environmental Control and Life Support Systems (ECLSS) What is it?
- A Look Inside the International Space Station (ISS)
- The Complexity of a Water Recycling System
- ISS Microbiology Acceptability Limits
- Overview of Current Microbial Challenges
- In a Perfect World What we Would Like to Have
- The Future
Environmental Control and Life Support Systems (ECLSS)

- Control Atmosphere Pressure
- Condition Atmosphere
- Respond to Emergency Conditions
- Control Internal CO2 & Contaminants
- Provide Water
Note: These values are based on an average metabolic rate of 136.7 W/person (11,200 BTU/person/day) and a respiration quotient of 0.87. The values will be higher when activity levels are greater and for larger than average people. The respiration quotient is the molar ratio of CO$_2$ generated to O$_2$ consumed.

Human Needs and Effluents Mass Balance (per person per day)

- Oxygen: 0.84 kg (1.84 lb)
- Food Solids: 0.62 kg (1.36 lb)
- Water in Food: 1.15 kg (2.54 lb)
- Food Prep Water: 0.76 kg (1.67 lb)
- Drink: 1.62 kg (3.56 lb)
- Metabolized Water: 0.35 kg (0.76 lb)
- Hand/Face Wash Water: 4.09 kg (9.00 lb)
- Shower Water: 2.73 kg (6.00 lb)
- Urinal Flush: 0.49 kg (1.09 lb)
- Clothes Wash Water: 12.50 kg (27.50 lb)
- Dish Wash Water: 5.45 kg (12.00 lb)
- Total: 30.60 kg (67.32 lb)

Carbon Dioxide: 1.00 kg (2.20 lb)

- Respiration & Perspiration Water: 2.28 kg (5.02 lb)
- Food Preparation, Latent Water: 0.036 kg (0.08 lb)
- Urine: 1.50 kg (3.31 lb)
- Urine Flush Water: 0.50 kg (1.09 lb)
- Feces Water: 0.091 kg (0.20 lb)
- Sweat Solids: 0.018 kg (0.04 lb)
- Urine Solids: 0.059 kg (0.13 lb)
- Feces Solids: 0.032 kg (0.07 lb)
- Hygiene Water: 12.58 kg (27.68 lb)

- Clothes Wash Water Liquid: 11.90 kg (26.17 lb)
- Latent: 0.60 kg (1.33 lb)

Total: 30.60 kg (67.32 lb)
A Look Inside ISS

Node 1

Lab

FGB

SM
Living in Space
Filling up a bag of water in the Zvezda, SM
ECLSS Microbial Challenges

- Wetted Materials in space life support systems include:
  - Titanium
  - 316L Stainless Steel
  - Teflon
  - Viton O-rings
  - Nickel-Brazed Stainless Steel
## ECLSS Microbial Challenges

### ISS Microbial Acceptability Limits (U.S.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bacteria</th>
<th>Fungi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surfaces</strong></td>
<td>10,000 CFU/100 cm²</td>
<td>100 CFU/100 cm²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water</strong></td>
<td>100 CFU/100 ml (no detectable coliforms)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Air</strong></td>
<td>≤ 1,000 CFU/m³</td>
<td>100 CFU/m³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CFU/cm² = colony forming units per square centimeter; CFU/m³ = colony forming units per cubic meter; CFU/ml = colony forming units per milliliter.
ADVERSE EFFECTS OF MICROBIAL CONTAMINATION

Short-term Effects (days to weeks)

- Air/Surfaces:
  - Release of volatiles (e.g., odors)
  - Allergies (e.g., skin, respiratory)
  - Infectious diseases (e.g., Legionnaire’s)

- Water:
  - Objectionable taste/odor
  - Gastrointestinal distress

From Victoria Castro, ICES 2006, JSC

Long-term Effects (weeks to years)

- Air/Surfaces (same as short-term plus):
  - Release of toxins (e.g., mycotoxins)
  - Sick building syndrome
  - Environmental contamination
  - Biodegradation of materials
  - Systems performance

- Water (same as short-term plus):
  - System failure
  - Clogging, corrosion, pitting, antimicrobial resistance/regrowth potential (biofilm)
ECLS Microbial Challenges

- **Urine/Pretreated Urine**
  - Hardware Performance Issues
    - Control of biofilm on wetted surfaces
    - Control of fungal growth in pretreated urine

- **Water (potable/wastewater)**
  - Health and Hardware Performance/Life Issues
    - Control of biofilm on wetted surfaces
      - Conditions of flight equipment unknown
    - Control of microorganisms in potable water
      - Re-growth potential/resistance to antimicrobials/MIC
    - Control microorganisms in humidity condensate
ECLS Microbial Challenges

• **Coolant**
  – Health and Hardware Performance/Life Issues
    • Control of microorganisms in the fluid
    • Control of biofilm on wetted surfaces
    • Microbiologically Influenced Corrosion (MIC)

• **Surfaces**
  – Health and Hardware Performance/Life Issues
    • Fungi, bacteria

• **Air**
  – Health and Hardware Performance/Life Issues
    • Fungi, bacteria
ECLSS Microbial Challenges (Design and Test)

- Flow rates: low, intermittent or no flow
- Dead-legs
- Potential long term storage of water in Teflon bags
- Limitations with the use of antimicrobials
- Gravity/microgravity effects
- Wastewater in narrow tubes
ECLSS Microbial Challenges (Design and Test)

- Holding time (between sample and analysis)
- Limited monitoring technology available
- Data interpretation
- Acceptable levels of microorganisms/biofilm
- Need for long term ground testing
- Replicate applicable flight conditions to ground tests
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fleet Leader (Ground Test)</th>
<th>ISS LTL (Flight Sample)</th>
<th>ISS MTL (Flight Sample)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acidovorax avenae</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acidovorax delafieldii</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acidovorax facilis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acidovorax konjaci</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acidovorax temperans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acinetobacter lwofii/genospecies 9</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brevibacterium casei</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brevundimonas vesicularis</td>
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<td>Burkholderia glumae</td>
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<td>Comamonas acidovorans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flavobacterium resinovorum</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janthinobacterium lividum</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oligella species</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralstonia eutropha (very similar genetically to R. paucula)</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralstonia paucula</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ralstonia pickettii</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sphingobacterium spiritovorum</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sphingomonas paucimobilis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stenotrophomonas maltophilia</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unidentified non-fermenting Gram Negative Rod (GNR)</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variovorax paradoxus</td>
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</table>
Challenges with monitoring ECLS systems in-flight include:

- Microbial count (quantification)
  - Viable vs non-viable
  - How will it compare with culture methods?
- Real-time identification
  - Bacteria, Fungi, Viruses
- Flexible
  - Integrated to systems (in-line)
  - Hand-held (for clinical applications)
- Robustness
  - Will the hardware survive qualification/acceptance testing?
ECLSS Microbial Challenges

• If gene-base technology will be used what challenges, like damage to genetic material due to radiation, will need to be addressed?
• Expendables (how much waste will be generated)
• Consumables (reusable is preferred)
• Low power consumption
• Equipment size
• Non-hazardous reagents
• Non-generation of hazardous waste
ECLSS Microbial Challenges

- Calibration (positive/negative controls?)
- Cleaning/disinfection of the sample collection areas
  - How to avoid cross contamination?
- What chemicals/conditions (temp, humidity, etc) could cause a problem (void the reaction)?
- Maintenance/repair (ORU’s?)
- Construction materials
  - Are the materials acceptable in a close environment?
ECLSS Microbial Challenges

- Sample size
- Detection limit (currently <300 CFU/100 mL)
- Microgravity sensitivity
- Sensitivity to particles/precipitates in the fluid
- A system that can be upgraded as needed is preferable (as “target” organisms are identified)
- Will the crew be able to “read” the results on-orbit; can the results be sent to the ground?
- Sample archival for later analyses