

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910133540303321
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Titolo	Of microbes and men : war and peace on the mucosal surfaces // Phillippe Sansonetti
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Collège de France, 2013 Paris, France : , : Collège de France, , 2013 ©2013
ISBN	2722602725
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (50 pages)
Collana	Lecons inaugurales du College de France
Soggetti	Biology Bacteria
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Sommario/riassunto	Our bodies contain ten times more bacteria than cells and their activity is essential for our organisms. A true symbiosis exists between humans and microbes, the complex mechanisms of which can only be decoded using molecular genetics. However these bacteria can also cause infectious and parasitic diseases which kill over 15 million people a year throughout the world. To develop effective treatments and vaccines for such diseases, scientists need to know how bacteria outmanoeuvre the body's defence mechanisms and how to decipher the rules of war and peace between microbes and humans.