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12 **Structural characterisation of the HT3 motif of the polyhistidine**
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28 **ABSTRACT**29 The bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (the pneumococcus) is a major human
30 pathogen that requires Zn²⁺ for its survival and virulence in the host environment.31 Polyhistidine triad protein D (PhtD) has a known role in pneumococcal Zn²⁺

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32 homeostasis. However, the mechanistic basis of PhtD function remains unclear, partly
33 due to a lack of structural information. Here, we determined the crystal structure of
34 the fragment PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹, containing the third Zn²⁺-binding histidine triad (HT) motif
35 of the protein. Analysis of the structure suggests that Zn²⁺-binding occurs at the
36 surface of the protein and that all five HT motifs in the protein bind Zn²⁺ and share
37 similar structures. These new structural insights aid in our understanding of how the
38 Pht proteins facilitate pneumococcal Zn²⁺ acquisition.

45 **ABBREVIATIONS**

46 HT, histidine triad

47 Pht, polyhistidine triad

48 SBP, solute-binding protein

51 **KEYWORDS (up to six)**

52 *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, zinc acquisition, polyhistidine triad, PhtD, *in situ*
53 proteolysis, x-ray crystallography

55 **INTRODUCTION**

56 The bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (the pneumococcus) is a major human
57 pathogen associated with significant global morbidity and mortality [1]. Although the
58 pneumococcus is a common commensal of the human nasopharynx [2], it can invade
59 other tissues including the lungs, brain, and ears, where it is associated with a broad
60 spectrum of diseases, ranging from local infections, such as otitis media, to invasive
61 diseases including pneumonia and meningitis [3,4]. Zinc (Zn²⁺) is an essential nutrient
62 for *S. pneumoniae* and the ability to acquire this trace metal at the host-pathogen
63 interface is critical for survival of the bacterium. Acquisition of Zn²⁺ by *S.*
64 *pneumoniae* is primarily facilitated by the ATP-binding cassette transporter, AdcCB,

65 and two Zn²⁺-specific solute-binding proteins (SBPs), AdcA and AdcAII [5,6].
66 Abrogation of Adc permease function severely impacts Zn²⁺ uptake and attenuates
67 pneumococcal virulence in murine models of infection [5,6].

68 During Zn²⁺-starvation, the pneumococcus up-regulates a large number of
69 genes, including those encoding surface proteins of the histidine triad (HT) family [7].
70 This family of proteins is found throughout the *Streptococcus* genus, although there
71 are exceptions, with the defining feature of repeated HT (HxxHxH) motifs [8]. *S.*
72 *pneumoniae* encodes four Pht proteins, PhtA, PhtB, PhtD, and PhtE [9], which range
73 from 90 to 116 kDa in size. Transcription of the Pht genes is tightly regulated by the
74 Zn²⁺-responsive metalloregulator AdcR and they are co-expressed with the Zn²⁺-
75 specific SBP *adcAII* [10-12]. The co-regulation of *adcAII* with *phtD* led to the *pht*
76 genes being implicated in divalent cation scavenging by *S. pneumoniae* [13].

77 Subsequent studies revealed that the Pht proteins primarily localise to the
78 pneumococcal cell wall, but could also be observed secreted in the extracellular
79 medium [9,14], and contributed specifically to Zn²⁺ homeostasis and pneumococcus
80 virulence [11,15]. Intriguingly, the role of the Pht proteins in Zn²⁺ homeostasis was
81 shown to be facilitated by AdcAII, with negligible dependence upon the other SBP,
82 AdcA.

83 Interaction between AdcAII and PhtD has been probed and although
84 interaction has been shown *in vitro* [16], direct evidence of *in vivo* Zn²⁺ transfer from
85 the Pht proteins to AdcAII remains elusive. Further challenging elucidation of the
86 molecular basis of Pht protein function is the overlapping functionality of the
87 proteins, with only a single Pht isoform necessary for pneumococcal growth [11].
88 Another major issue that has precluded detailed insights into the Pht proteins has been
89 the paucity of structural data. This has largely been attributed to the intrinsic
90 flexibility of these protein molecules, as suggested by secondary and tertiary structure
91 predictions. Moreover, full-length PhtD is prone to degradation and techniques such
92 as small angle X-ray scattering have not been successful in providing structural
93 insights about the protein in solution. However, significant advances have been
94 achieved, notably by Riboldi-Tunnicliffe *et al.* [17], who reported the crystal structure
95 at 1.2 Å resolution of a 55-residue fragment from pneumococcal PhtA, which
96 contained the HT2 motif. In this structure, Zn²⁺ is bound by three histidine residues
97 from the HT motif and one glutamate residue from a nearby loop, giving a tetrahedral
98 Zn²⁺ coordination geometry. More recently, Bersch *et al.* [12] determined the solution

99 structure, by nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy, of a 137-residue-long
100 N-terminal region of pneumococcal PhtD that contained the HT1 motif. This revealed
101 a Zn²⁺ ion bound to the HT motif, using the same Zn²⁺-binding mode as seen in the
102 PhtA crystal structure.

103 The highly exposed cellular location of the Pht proteins has also attracted
104 significant interest in this family as potential vaccine targets [18,19]. Many of the Pht
105 protein studies have focused on examining their potential to serve as vaccine antigens
106 for protection against pneumococcal infections [20], with some reported cases of
107 clinical benefit [21,22]. However, the mechanistic basis of Pht protein function has
108 remained unanswered.

109 Here, we structurally examined PhtD, the most highly conserved Pht protein
110 across pneumococcal serotypes [15], using an *in situ* proteolysis approach and Zn²⁺-
111 SAD phasing. We report the crystal structure of a 71-residue PhtD fragment
112 encompassing the HT3 motif (comprising residues 269-339, PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹). Based on
113 this structure, we then performed homology modelling of the regions containing the
114 HT2, HT4, and HT5 motifs of PhtD. Our results suggest that all 5 HT motifs in PhtD
115 possess similar core structural elements and have the capacity to bind Zn²⁺, which has
116 implications for the function of the full-length protein.

117

118

119 **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

120 **Expression and purification**

121 Recombinant PhtD was generated by PCR amplification of the SPD_0889 gene from
122 Serotype 2 *S. pneumoniae* D39, using ligation-independent cloning and PhtD_LIC1F
123 (5' TGGGTGGTGGATTTCCCTGTCAGTAAGAGAGAGGGGAT) and PhtD_LIC1R
124 (5' TTGGAAGTATAAATTTCCCTGTATAGGAGTCGGTTGACT)
125 oligonucleotides, to insert the gene into an N-terminal dodecahistidine tag-containing
126 vector, pCAMnLIC01, to generate pCAMnLIC01-PhtD. Recombinant expression of
127 PhtD was performed in 2 x terrific broth + 1% glucose, at 37 °C in High-Yield Flasks
128 (Thomson Scientific). Expression was induced at an OD₆₀₀ of 3.0 using isopropyl β-
129 D-1-thiogalactopyranoside, and cells harvested after 4 h. Recombinant PhtD was
130 initially isolated by virtue of its dodecahistidine tag using immobilised metal ion
131 affinity chromatography on a HisTrapHP Column using an AKTA Fast Protein Liquid
132 Chromatography (FPLC) System (GE Healthcare). The tag was then removed by

133 incubation with a human rhinovirus C3 protease at a ratio of 10:1 (protein:protease)
134 and purification of the cleaved protein on a HisTrapHP column. To further purify the
135 protein, PhtD was subjected to anion-exchange chromatography using a HiTrapQ HP
136 column (GE Healthcare), followed by gel-permeation chromatography on a HiLoad
137 16/60 Superdex 200 PG column (GE Healthcare) in 20 mM Tris (pH 7.6) and 200
138 mM NaCl on an AKTA FPLC.

139

140 **Crystallisation**

141 Purified recombinant PhtD protein was concentrated to 20 mg/ml using a centrifugal
142 filter unit (Amicon MWCO 10 kDa, Millipore). Crystals were obtained using the
143 hanging drop vapour diffusion method at 20 °C in 1.1 M sodium malonate, 0.5 %
144 (v/v) JED-2003, and 0.1 M HEPES-NaOH pH 7.0, in the presence of α -chymotrypsin
145 (1 μ g protease per 100 μ g PhtD) (Sigma C3142) in the crystallisation drops, taking
146 advantage of *in situ* proteolysis of PhtD. α -Chymotrypsin solution was prepared as
147 described in Dong *et al.* [23].

148

149 **Data collection, processing and structure determination**

150 Crystals were mounted onto CryoLoops (Hampton Research) and were briefly soaked
151 in Paratone-N (Hampton Research) before being flash-cooled in liquid nitrogen. Prior
152 to data collection, a fluorescence excitation scan was performed to confirm the
153 presence of Zn^{2+} in the crystals. The X-ray diffraction data was collected from a
154 single crystal using X-ray radiation energy at 9858 eV at the Australian Synchrotron
155 MX1 beamline [24], with a rotation range of 360°, using 0.5° oscillations and 1
156 second X-ray exposures per diffraction image. The collected data was indexed and
157 integrated using *XDS* [25] and scaled and merged using *Aimless* [26]. The Friedel
158 pairs were kept separated during data processing. Initial experimental phases were
159 calculated using *AutoSol* [27] and the initial model was constructed using
160 *Phenix.AutoBuild* [28]. The structure was refined iteratively using *Phenix.Refine* [29]
161 and manually corrected in *COOT* [30].

162

163 **Homology modelling**

164 Homology models of the PhtD fragments containing the HT2, HT4, and HT5 motifs
165 were constructed using the crystal structure obtained in this study as the template
166 using *Modeller 9.19* [31]. The secondary structure of PhtD was predicted using

167 *PHYRE2* [32] and JPred4 [33]. Sequence alignment was performed using EMBOSS
168 Needle [34], with manual adjustments based on the secondary structure prediction.
169 The region of PhtD for each modelled HT-containing fragment was as follows: HT2
170 fragment, residues 159-231; HT4 fragment, residues 515-586; HT5 fragment, residues
171 598-670.

172

173

174 RESULTS

175 Determination of the crystal structure of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹

176 We initially sought to crystallise full-length pneumococcal PhtD; however, the protein
177 was refractory to crystallisation. We therefore used *in situ* proteolysis, which has
178 previously been shown as a rescue technique to crystallise proteins [23,35,36]. The
179 approach takes advantage of the proteolytic products of larger proteins with higher
180 crystallization propensities that are generated. Here, we employed the protease α -
181 chymotrypsin, which was supplemented in the crystallisation drops containing full-
182 length PhtD. Three weeks after setup, single crystals started to appear in the
183 crystallisation drops.

184 Data collection at the Australian Synchrotron confirmed the presence of Zn^{2+} ,
185 based on a fluorescence excitation scan; a fluorescence peak corresponding to the
186 emission energy of Zn^{2+} ion at approximately 8638 eV was observed. We
187 subsequently used the Zn^{2+} present in the crystal as an anomalous scatterer and
188 collected diffraction data at the Zn^{2+} $K\alpha$ edge around 9858 eV, to optimise the
189 anomalous signal from Zn^{2+} . The merged data had a mid-slope of anomalous normal
190 probability of 1.7, indicating a strong anomalous signal present in the diffraction data.
191 The PhtD fragment crystals had the symmetry of space group C2 with a monoclinic
192 unit cell ($a = 59.03 \text{ \AA}$, $b = 47.98 \text{ \AA}$, $c = 23.59 \text{ \AA}$, $\alpha = 90.00^\circ$, $\beta = 107.13^\circ$, $\gamma = 90.00^\circ$).
193 A single copy of the PhtD fragment was present in each asymmetric unit. The
194 electron density map was calculated using phases derived from the Zn^{2+} anomalous
195 signal and the structure was determined to a resolution of 1.92 \AA . Details of
196 diffraction and structure statistics are summarised in Table 1.

197 We attempted to determine the precise region of the crystallised PhtD
198 fragment using mass spectroscopy. However, the results were inconclusive due to
199 contamination of the crystals with other PhtD peptides. SDS-PAGE using dissolved
200 crystals (data not shown) revealed a protein band below 10 kDa. Using PeptideCutter

201 [37], a cleavage prediction tool, the region most likely cleaved by α -chymotrypsin
202 corresponds to residues 266-341, with a calculated molecular weight of 8636 Da,
203 which is consistent with the estimated fragment size by SDS-PAGE. However, based
204 on the electron density map, only residues 269-339 can be modelled unambiguously,
205 and therefore the fragment is denoted as PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹.

206

207 **Overall structure of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹**

208 The crystal structure of the 71-residue PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ consists of a globular bundle of two
209 short α -helices and three anti-parallel β -strands (**Figure 1A, B**). Helix α 1 (residues
210 270-282) and β -strand β 1 (residues 303-305) are connected by a long loop α 1 β 1
211 (residues 283-302), with the rest of the secondary structure elements connected by
212 short loops. Analysis of the surface electrostatic potential shows an uneven charge
213 distribution on the PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ surface (**Figure 1C**). The fragment contains the HT3
214 region of pneumococcal PhtD, comprising His314 residing on β -strand β 2 (residues
215 309-314), and His317 and His319 on β -strand β 3 (residues 317-322). β 2 and β 3 form
216 a β -hairpin motif, which brings His314, His317, and His319 to close proximity. A
217 Zn²⁺-binding site is formed by these three histidine residues and an aspartic acid
218 residue, Asp293, from loop α 1 β 1. Notably, the Zn²⁺-binding site resides on the
219 surface of the protein fragment, with immediate access for Zn²⁺ from the surrounding
220 solvent to the binding site. In the binding site, a Zn²⁺ ion is bound by the atoms N δ 1
221 from His314, N ϵ 2 from His317, N ϵ 2 from His319, and O δ 2 from Asp293 in a
222 tetrahedral coordination geometry (**Figure 2**), with coordination bond angles of
223 105.5 °, 107.4 °, 108.4 °, and 110.0 °, respectively. The observed bond lengths are
224 1.98 Å, 2.09 Å, 2.02 Å, and 1.97 Å, respectively, and are typical for protein
225 coordination of a Zn²⁺ ion [38]. The Zn²⁺-binding region, along with the rest of the
226 exposed loop α 1 β 1, exhibits a negatively-charged surface, while the helical region
227 presents a positively-charged surface. Although loop α 1 β 1 appears to be ordered in
228 the structure, the mobility of this region may increase in the absence of the ion and the
229 stabilising interaction conferred by Asp293.

230

231 **Structural comparisons of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ with PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸ and PhtA¹⁶⁶⁻²²⁰**

232 We compared the PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ structure determined in this work with the structures of
233 the *S. pneumoniae* Pht protein fragments PhtA¹⁶⁶⁻²²⁰, obtained by crystallography [17]
234 that encompasses the HT2 motif of PhtA, and PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸, an NMR solution structure

235 of the N-terminal region [12] that contains the HT1 motif of PhtD. Sequence
236 comparisons show that PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ and PhtA¹⁶⁶⁻²²⁰ share approximately 30% sequence
237 identity, with the HT motifs completely conserved. Superposition of the two
238 structures generates a root-mean-square deviation of 0.69 Å over 55 atoms.
239 Overall, despite the low sequence identity, the two structures show a conserved
240 structural fold, including all the three β-strands, α2, and the Zn²⁺-binding site defined
241 by the HT motif and an aspartic acid residue from loop α1β1 (**Figure 3A**). The Zn²⁺
242 coordination in the binding site in both structures is also highly similar, with
243 comparable coordination bond lengths. By contrast, PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸ and PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ share
244 only 17% sequence identity, with the two structures showing a number of distinct
245 features. In PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸, an α-helix is present in the loop that corresponds to the α1β1
246 region in PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹; the first β-strand in PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸ is twice the length of the
247 equivalent region in PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹; and the α1 and α2 helices found in PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ are
248 absent in PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸. Notably, the Zn²⁺-coordinating carboxylate residue in PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸,
249 Glu63, is situated on the α-helix present in the loop, which corresponds to α1β1
250 region in PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹. However, despite these differences, the structures of the Zn²⁺-
251 binding sites are highly conserved, featuring the histidine triad residing on a β-hairpin
252 and a negatively charged residue that defines a tetrahedral Zn²⁺-coordination
253 environment (**Figure 3B**).

254

255 **Homology models of the PhtD HT motifs suggest similar Zn²⁺-binding** 256 **mechanisms**

257 Secondary-structure prediction of PhtD shows that regions encompassing HT2, HT3,
258 HT4, and HT5 motifs (when including 40 residues before and 20 residues after the
259 HT motif in the analysis) all contain similar secondary-structure features, including
260 the two β-strands harbouring the HT motif, and at least one of the two helices, despite
261 low sequence identities (34.2%, 28.8%, and 21% of the HT2, HT4, and HT5
262 containing fragments, compared with PhtD²⁴⁷⁻³¹⁷, respectively). Homology modelling
263 of HT2, HT4, and HT5 using PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ as the template revealed that all HT models
264 adopt a similar structural fold, with the capacity of binding Zn²⁺ in the solvent-
265 accessible Zn²⁺-binding site defined by the HT motifs (**Figure 4**). Examination of the
266 surface electrostatic potentials of all the 5 HT motif-containing regions of PhtD
267 suggests that all motifs include charged surfaces (**Figure 5**), which are likely to be
268 exposed on the surface of PhtD protein.

269

270

271 **DISCUSSION**

272 Acquisition of Zn^{2+} from the host environment is essential for the ability of *S.*
273 *pneumoniae* to colonize and mediate disease. PhtD has been shown to aid in
274 pneumococcal pathogenesis via the acquisition of Zn^{2+} during growth in Zn^{2+} -
275 limiting conditions, while also aiding in resisting host clearance via binding Factor H
276 [10,15,39]. Although the *in vivo* significance of the Pht proteins in resisting
277 complement-mediated clearance remains unclear, their contribution to Zn^{2+}
278 acquisition, facilitated primarily in association with AdcAII, is well established
279 [5,16]. Despite this, the molecular basis for how PhtD contributes to Zn^{2+} acquisition
280 remains unclear, due to a lack of structural information on the histidine-triad family
281 proteins. Prior to this work, the N-terminal region of PhtD, which contains the HT1
282 motif, was the only portion of this protein with structural information. Here, we
283 determined the high-resolution structure of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹, containing the HT3 motif of
284 pneumococcal PhtD, providing new insights into Zn^{2+} recruitment by the histidine
285 triad motifs.

286 Although full-length PhtD remains refractory to crystallisation, by combining
287 our high-resolution structural analysis of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ with homology modelling of the
288 other three HT-containing regions, we can speculate reasonably on potential
289 mechanistic aspects of PhtD function. Here, our comparison of the HT motifs
290 suggests that they likely share a conserved tertiary structure similar to HT3, most
291 notably in their respective Zn^{2+} -binding sites. Loisel *et al.* [16] reported the affinity of
292 the PhtD HT1 for Zn^{2+} as 131 ± 10 nM. Given the structural similarities of all HT
293 motifs in PhtD, we speculate that binding affinities of other HT motifs would be
294 comparable to that of HT1. However, in a complex protein, such as PhtD, it is not
295 unreasonable to expect cooperativity between the HT motifs and allosteric
296 interactions between sites that may influence Zn^{2+} binding. Recent work by
297 Eijkelkamp *et al.* [15] revealed a hierarchy for the five HT motifs of PhtD with
298 respect to their importance for *in vitro* Zn^{2+} acquisition. That work showed that HT1
299 of PhtD, which is closest to the pneumococcal cell membrane, was the most
300 important, whereas HT5 had the smallest contribution. Analysis of pneumococcal
301 mutants lacking the HT2, HT3 or HT4 motifs of PhtD revealed an impact on Zn^{2+}

302 import, albeit to a lesser extent than a mutant lacking HT1. Whether these findings
303 indicate cooperativity of binding or allosteric changes within PhtD remains to be
304 confirmed.

305 The isolation of the HT3 fragment crystals by *in situ* proteolysis indicates that
306 the HT3 fragment is exposed on the surface of PhtD, rendering it accessible to α -
307 chymotrypsin. Furthermore, the uneven distribution of surface electrostatic potential
308 on the HT3 fragment surface is also consistent with a solvent-exposed location.
309 Examination of the PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸ solution structure and the homology models of HT2,
310 HT4, and HT5 regions reveals that, similar to PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹, all these fragments possess
311 charged surfaces and would suggest protein surface localisation. This structural
312 composition would be consistent with the contribution of these motifs to Zn²⁺
313 acquisition at the pathogen-host interface [11,15]. Notably, the histidine triad residues
314 in HT3 are on a β -hairpin, and as such it would be expected that the conformation of
315 this region would be largely stable in the absence of Zn²⁺. This arrangement suggests
316 that the Zn²⁺-binding site in the HT motif is essentially pre-formed. As a consequence,
317 Zn²⁺ binding is likely to be controlled by coordination of Asp293 from the α 1 β 1 loop,
318 with the resultant movement of the α 1 β 1 loop towards the β -hairpin, thereby
319 excluding the Zn²⁺ ion from the solvent. PhtD binding to Zn²⁺ has been shown by
320 fluorescence quenching experiments to decrease the exposure of tryptophan residues
321 to the solvent [40]. Taken together, these observations suggest that the conformational
322 changes induced by Zn²⁺ binding at the HT sites also affect the overall structure of
323 PhtD. One possible functional implication of this process would be to enable the
324 formation of a cascade of HT sites across the cell wall and thereby provide a pathway
325 for Zn²⁺ translocation to the pneumococcal cell membrane. Analysis of the C-terminal
326 region of PhtD, distal to the pneumococcal cell wall and closer to the host cells,
327 reveals that this region comprises multiple histidine residues and is highly packed
328 with negatively charged residues. In essence, this region resembles the highly flexible
329 histidine-rich loop in the Adc permease associated Zn²⁺-binding protein AdcA [5]. In
330 AdcA, this region is proposed to act as a mobile Zn²⁺ scavenger that aids in the
331 delivery of the captured metal ion to the binding site of AdcA [5]. The C-terminal
332 domain of PhtD may hold a similar function and transfer the captured Zn²⁺ to the HT
333 motifs, enabling the transfer from the host environment to AdcAII at the
334 pneumococcal cell surface.

335 In summary, we present the crystal structure of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹, harbouring the
336 HT3 motif of pneumococcal PhtD, providing new structural insights into this
337 challenging family of proteins. Structural examination of HT3 indicates that binding
338 of Zn²⁺ most likely occurs at the surface of the protein and that this process is likely
339 coupled to broader structural changes. Together, the combination of Zn²⁺-binding
340 strategies enhances the acquisition of this essential ion by *S. pneumoniae*.

341

342

343 DATA DEPOSITION

344 Coordinates of the PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ fragment crystal structure have been deposited in the
345 Protein Data Bank with accession code 6CSL.

346

347

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356

357 **Figure 1. Crystal structure of pneumococcal PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹.** (A) Sequence and crystal
358 structure-based secondary structure of pneumococcal PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹. The α -helices are
359 shown as red cylinders and β -strands are shown as yellow arrows. The Zn²⁺-
360 coordinating residues are coloured in blue. Numbers of the starting and ending
361 residues are indicated in the sequence using superscript. (B) Cartoon representation of
362 PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ crystal structure. The α -helices are coloured in red, β -strands in yellow,
363 and loops in green. The bound Zn²⁺ ion is shown as a white sphere and its
364 coordinating residues as cyan sticks. (C) Surface electrostatic potential of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹
365 crystal structure shown in the same orientation as in (B). Positive and negative
366 potentials are shown in blue and red, respectively, coloured continuously between -5
367 and 5 kT/e. Surface electrostatic potential was calculated using APBS [41]; the

368 calculation included the Zn^{2+} ions. The N- and C- termini of the structure are
369 indicated by 'N' and 'C', respectively.

370

371 **Figure 2. The Zn^{2+} -binding site of pneumococcal PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹.** The Zn^{2+} ion is
372 shown as a white sphere. The Zn^{2+} -coordinating residues are shown as cyan sticks,
373 with the atoms contributing to the interactions as spheres. The coordinating bonds are
374 illustrated with black dashed lines. The electron density shown is the $2F_o-F_c$ map
375 contoured at 1.5σ .

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381

382 **Figure 3. Structural comparison of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ with PhtA¹⁶⁶⁻²²⁰ and PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸.** (A)
383 Superposition of the crystal structure of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ (green) and PhtA¹⁶⁶⁻²²⁰ (cyan,
384 PDB ID: 2CS7) [17] in cartoon representation. The bound Zn^{2+} ions are shown as
385 spheres and the Zn^{2+} -coordinating residues are shown as sticks. (B) Superposition of
386 the crystal structure of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹ (green) and the solution structure of PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸
387 (magenta, PDB ID: 3ZFJ) [12] in cartoon representation. The bound Zn^{2+} ions are
388 shown as spheres and the Zn^{2+} -coordinating residues are shown as sticks.

389

390

391 **Figure 4. Homology models of pneumococcal HT fragments.** (A) Sequence
392 alignments of the HT2, HT3, HT4, HT5 fragments of PhtD, and the HT2 fragment of
393 PhtA. The Zn^{2+} ion-coordinating residues are highlighted in blue and the numbers of
394 the starting and ending residues of the respective fragment are noted using
395 superscript. The alignment was prepared using Clustal Omega [42]. (B) HT2-
396 containing fragment model shown in green cartoon representation. (C) HT4-
397 containing fragment model shown in cyan cartoon representation. (D) HT5-containing
398 fragment model shown in magenta cartoon representation. The bound Zn^{2+} ions are
399 shown as white spheres and their coordinating-residues are shown in stick
400 representation. Secondary structure prediction for each HT fragment is shown below

401 each model. α -Helices are indicated by red cylinders, β -strands are represented by
402 yellow arrows, and the Zn^{2+} -coordinating residues are coloured in cyan.

403

404

405 **Figure 5. Surface electrostatic potential of pneumococcal HT-containing**
406 **fragments.** Molecules are shown in surface representation, coloured according to
407 electrostatic potential. Positive and negative potentials are shown in blue and red,
408 respectively, coloured continuously between -5 and 5 kT/e. Surface electrostatic
409 potential was calculated using APBS [41] ; the calculation included the Zn^{2+} ions. The
410 positions of the Zn^{2+} -binding sites are indicated. For HT1, the solution structure of
411 PhtD⁴⁰⁻¹⁵⁸ was used (PDB ID: 3ZFJ) [12]. For HT3, the crystal structure of PhtD²⁶⁹⁻³³⁹
412 was used. For HT2, HT4, and HT5, the homology models generated in this study
413 were used.

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Table 1. Data collection, processing, and refinement statistics.

Data collection	
Diffraction source	Australian Synchrotron MX1 Beamline
Wavelength (Å)	1.25
Resolution range (Å)	18.27-1.92 (1.92-1.97)
Space group	C 1 2 1
Temperature (K)	100
Rotation range per image (°)	0.5
Total rotation range (°)	360
<i>a, b, c</i> (Å)	59.03, 47.98, 23.59
<i>α, β, γ</i> (°)	90.00, 107.13, 90.00

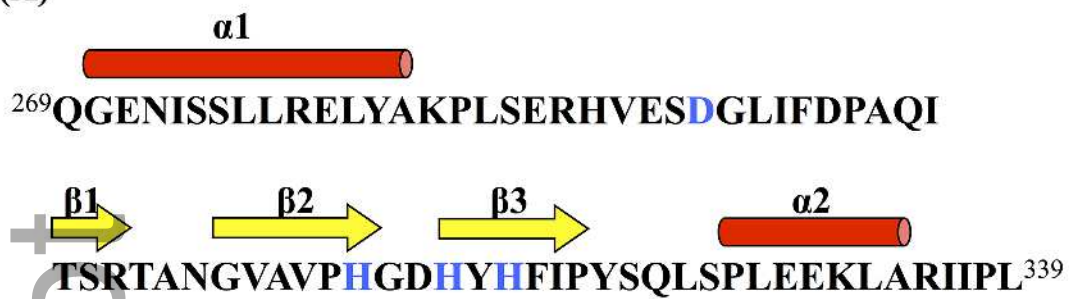
Mosaicity (°)	0.19
Completeness (%)	97.8 (84.5)
CC (1/2)	0.99 (0.97)
R _{merge}	0.029 (0.118)
<I/σ(I)>	25.9 (8.2)
Multiplicity	3.6
No. unique reflections	4744 (275)
R _{work} /R _{free} (%)	14.6/19.3
No. of non-hydrogen atoms	
Protein	558
Ion	1
Water	71
Average B-factors (Å²)	
Protein	17.5
Ion	10.1
Waters	28.1
R.m.s. deviations	
Bond lengths (Å)	0.004
Bond angles (°)	0.79

Statistics for the highest-resolution shell are shown in parentheses.

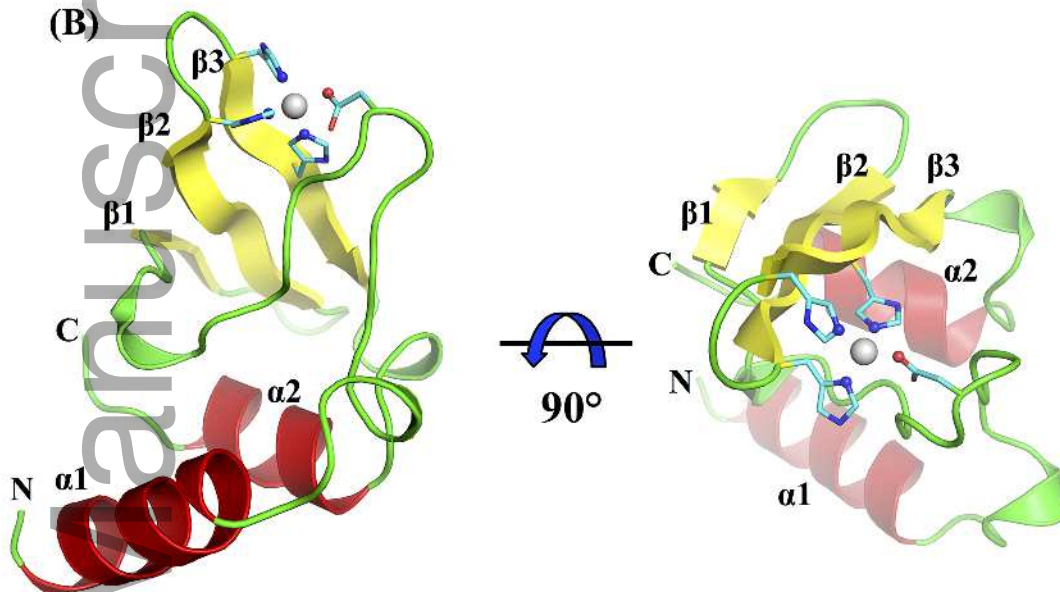
$$R_{\text{merge}} = \frac{\sum_{hkl} \sum_j |I_{hkl,j} - \langle I_{hkl} \rangle|}{\sum_{hkl} \sum_j I_{hkl,j}}$$

$R_{\text{work}}/R_{\text{free}} = \frac{\sum_{hkl} |F_{hkl}^{\text{obs}} - F_{hkl}^{\text{calc}}|}{\sum_{hkl} F_{hkl}^{\text{obs}}}$; R_{free} was calculated using randomly chosen 10 % fraction of data that was excluded from refinement.

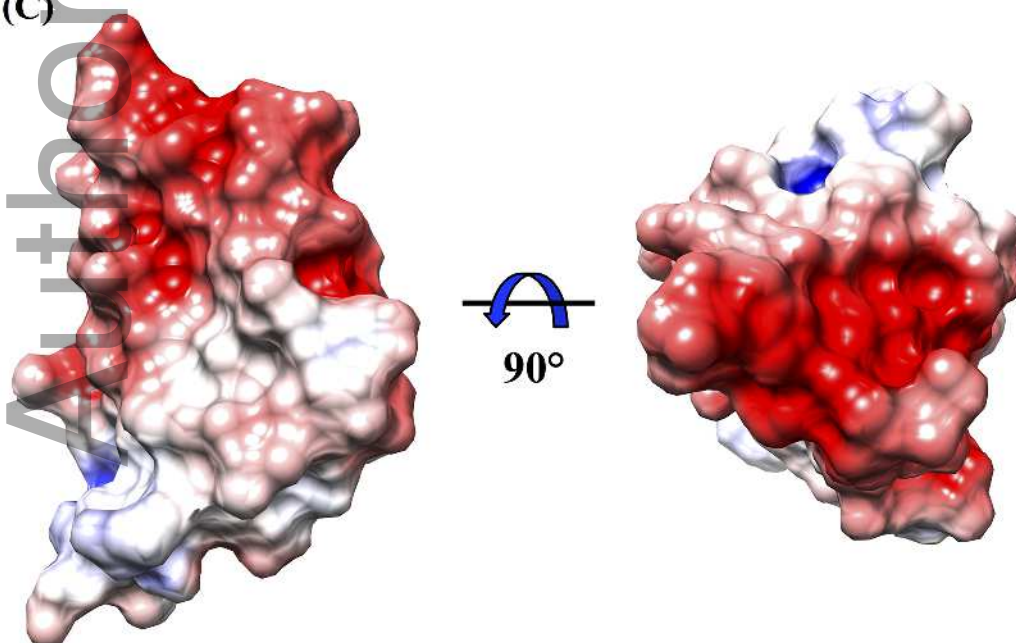
(A)



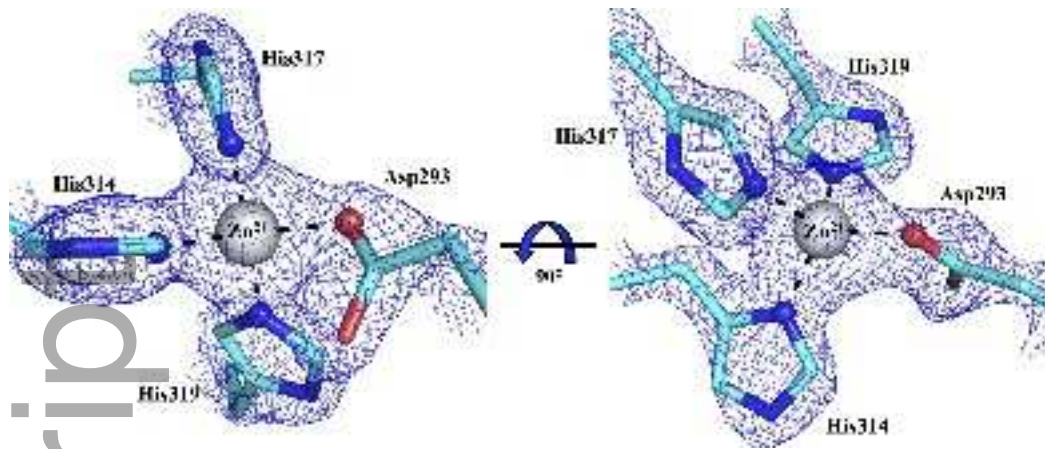
(B)



(C)

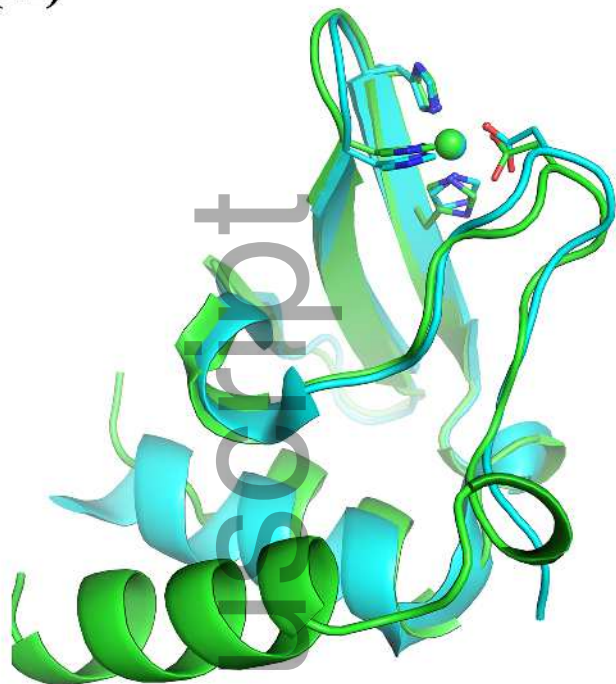


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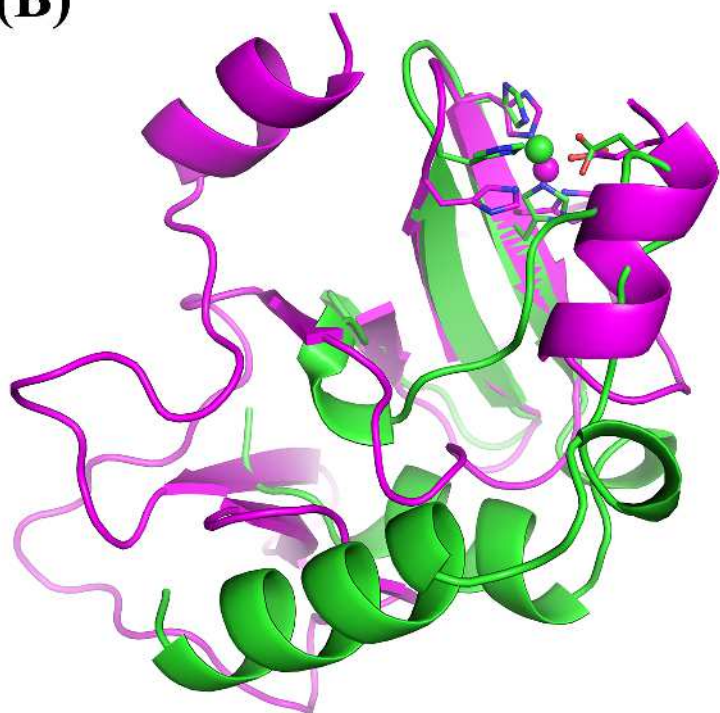


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(A)



(B)



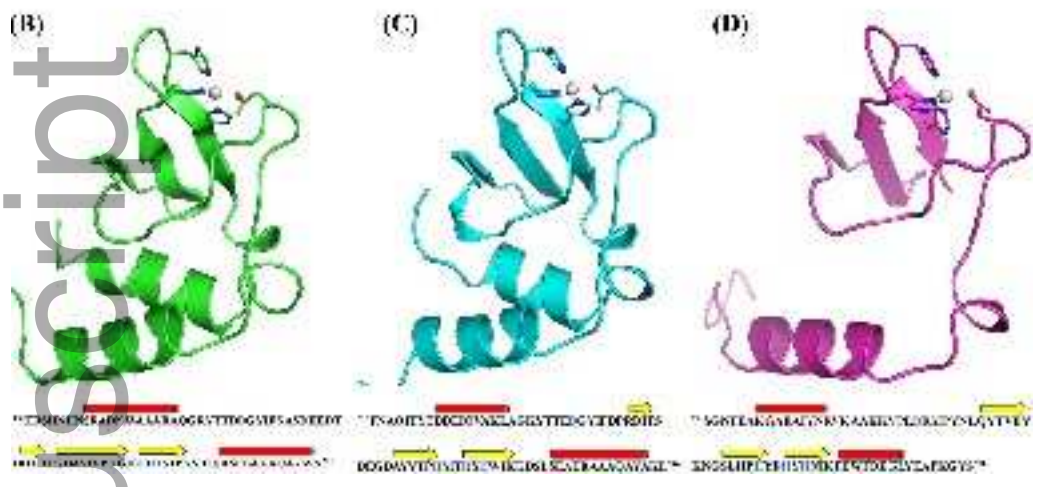
feb2_13122_f3.tif

(A)

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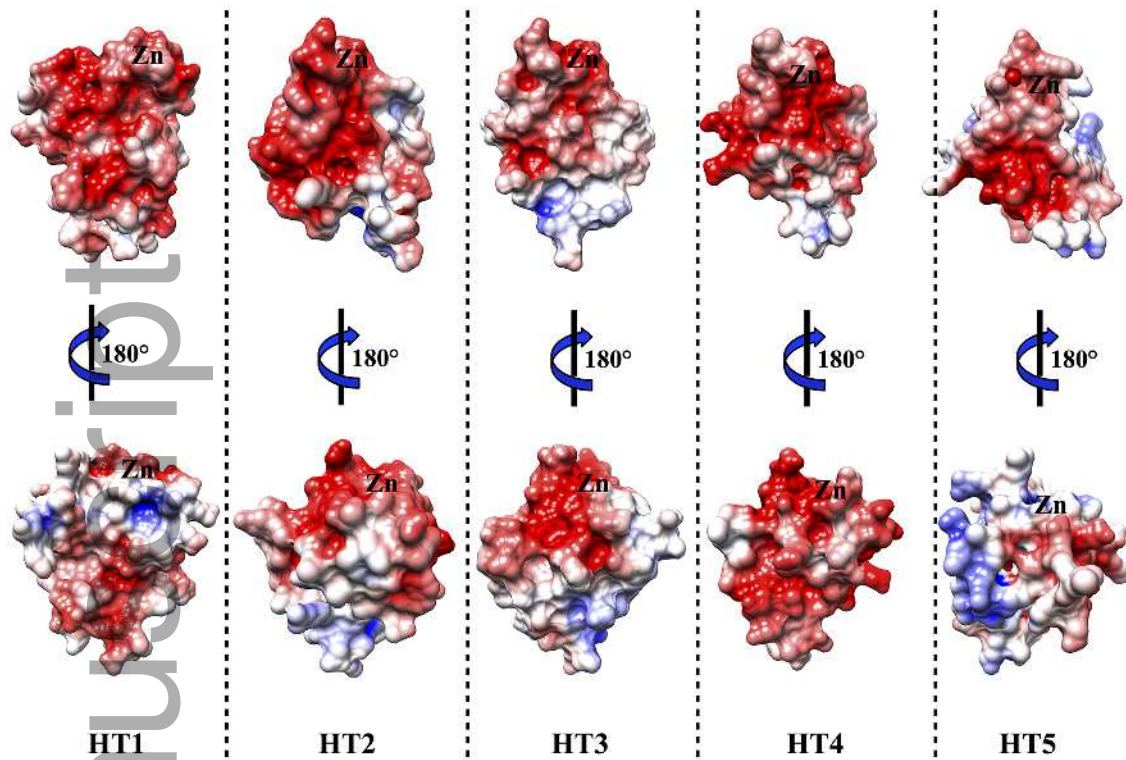
2nd  LQSRBHHMSRADCAVLLARRAQGRYTIIDGGYIFHNSDIIEIDGDAYIVPEGGDYHYIPKSDLRSSELAAGQATW--44
3rd  250--GGEMISSELEKLYAKPLSEKIVEVDGLIFDPAQITSRFANGVAVPEGGDYHCFIPKSQLSPLEKELAEIPL--370
4th  210--FRSQITVYIDDELQVAKLGGKTYIEGGYIFDFKDIISDELDGAYVIFPMIHSNRIANDSLRSEKALAGQAKRSH260
7th  210--SGYTFANGGRATYRURTAARUPIDRPFYHLYVTKURMGREIYPRYDQYRNTKFFNPFQKLYRAPHRTYSI260
PctA_2nd 140--EGGTFVNDGAVALARAGQGRYTIIDGGYIFHNSDIIEIDGDAYIVPEGGDYHYIPKSELRSSELAAGQATW--320

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feb2_13122_f4.tif

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