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September 1, 2006

Dear Colleagues,

I am a professor at the University of South Florida, specializing in using molecular techniques to examine the identity and diversity of marine viruses. Over the past several years, I have developed methods for purifying and sequencing viral communities from the environment, without the requirement of culturing the viruses in the laboratory. These methods have been applied to seawater, sediment, soil, fecal, and blood samples.

I am currently initiating a project to discover novel viruses that cause disease in marine vertebrates. To identify and obtain appropriate samples, I am asking for your help. I am looking for samples from marine organisms that are suspected to be suffering from an unknown viral infection. In the case of skin lesions, a skin/tissue sample from the affected region would be the ideal sample. If a systemic infection is suggested, then a blood sample would be necessary, and in some cases, fecal samples would be appropriate.

The purpose of this study is to identify novel viruses. We are targeting animals that are suspected to have viral infections, but those that test negative for the common, well-characterized viruses. Our methods for viral characterization are fairly time-consuming, so this will not yield immediate results, and may not be useful for treating that individual animal. However, I suspect that each viral infection is seen many times, and once we have completed the procedure to identify the virus, we can design rapid, specific assays which will make the results directly applicable to diagnosing and treating subsequent animals.

If you are treating an animal that might be appropriate for this study, please contact me by e-mail at: [mya@marine.usf.edu](mailto:mya@marine.usf.edu) or by telephone at 727-553-3520. I can then send you more detailed information about sample collection and the procedures that we will follow to purify and sequence the viruses.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mya Breitbart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mya Breitbart