

Modelling The Effect of MUC1 on Influenza Virus Infection Kinetics and Macrophage Dynamics

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Abstract

MUC1 belongs to the family of cell surface (cs-) mucins. Experimental evidence indicates that its presence reduces *in vivo* influenza viral infection severity. However, the mechanisms by which MUC1 influences viral dynamics and the host immune response are not yet well understood, limiting our ability to predict the efficacy of potential treatments that target MUC1. To address this limitation, we utilize available *in vivo* kinetic data for both virus and macrophage populations in wildtype and MUC1 knockout mice. We apply two mathematical models of within-host influenza dynamics to this data. The models differ in how they categorise the mechanisms of viral control. Both models provide evidence that MUC1 reduces the susceptibility of epithelial cells to influenza virus and regulates macrophage recruitment. Furthermore, we predict and compare some key infection-related quantities between the two mice groups. We find that MUC1 significantly reduces the basic reproduction number of viral replication as well as the number of cumulative macrophages but has little impact on the cumulative viral load. Our analyses suggest that the viral replication rate in the early stages of infection influences the kinetics of the host immune response, with consequences for infection outcomes, such as severity. We also show that MUC1 plays a strong anti-inflammatory role in the regulation of the host immune response. This study improves our understanding of the dynamic role of MUC1 against influenza infection and may support the development of novel antiviral treatments and immunomodulators that target MUC1.

11 *Keywords:* influenza viral dynamics, cell-surface mucin MUC1, immune
12 response, mathematical models

13 1. Introduction

14 Influenza is a contagious respiratory disease. It remains as a major pub-
15 lic health burden that affects and threatens millions of people each year [1].
16 Influenza virus (IV) primarily attacks the epithelial cells that line the up-
17 per respiratory tract (URT) of the host, causing an acute infection [2]. The
18 host immune response has been shown to play an important role against in-
19 fluenza infection [3, 4]. As part of the innate immune response, macrophages
20 that reside in airways limit viral dissemination through phagocytosis of viral
21 particles and prevent the virus from spreading to the lungs [5, 6]. Acti-
22 vated macrophages produce inflammatory molecules, such as TNF- α , which
23 stimulates recruitment of additional immune cells, such as monocyte-derived
24 macrophages (MDMs) to the site of infection. These molecules also facilitate
25 the activation of adaptive immune responses, such as maturation of B cells
26 and effector CD8⁺ T cells [7]. Thus, macrophages play a critical role against
27 influenza viral infection [8, 9, 10].

28 However, recruited macrophages also amplify inflammation. Overstimu-
29 lation of the host immune response can lead to pathology, indicating that
30 there is a subtle balance between a protective and a destructive response
31 [1, 11]. A dysregulated immune response, often marked by an excessive re-
32 cruitment of macrophages to the site of infection and a high level of cytokine
33 production, can lead to lung pathology, causing serious and sometimes fatal
34 infection outcomes [12, 13, 14, 15].

35 MUC1 belongs to the family of cell surface (cs-) mucin and is constitu-
36 tively expressed at the surface of respiratory epithelial cells and macrophages,
37 as reviewed in [16, 17, 18]. It has been shown to be capable of modulating
38 cytokine production *in vitro* viral infection [19, 20, 21] and *in vivo* bacterial
39 infection [22, 23]. More recently, McAuley and colleagues investigated the *in*
40 *vivo* effects of MUC1 on influenza viral infection [24]. They first intranasally
41 infected wildtype (WT) and MUC1-knockout (KO) mice with influenza A
42 virus, then measured and compared the kinetic time-series data of viral load
43 as well as different immune cells between the two groups. They found that the
44 virus grows more quickly and reaches a peak earlier in MUC1-KO mice. Mice
45 displayed a more enhanced inflammatory response, dominated by a higher

number of macrophages and a high level of cytokine production. Based on these observations, they hypothesised that MUC1 acts as physical barrier to prevent virus from infecting epithelial cells and contribute to regulation of the host immune response. However, the potential effects of MUC1 *in vivo* are poorly quantified, limiting our ability to predict the efficacy of potential treatments that target MUC1. To address this limitation, we incorporated the hypothesised effects of MUC1 into mathematical models of influenza viral dynamics and applied Bayesian inference to estimate key parameter values and provided new quantitative insight into the role of MUC1 in shaping influenza virus infection and the host immune response.

Influenza viral dynamics models have been used to study many aspects of influenza infection and the host immune response, as reviewed in [25]. Studies focusing on the immune system have used viral dynamics models to study various types of immunological data, sharpening to our understanding of the contribution of different immunological components to influenza viral infection [26, 27, 28].

In this work, we utilize available *in vivo* kinetic data for both virus and macrophage populations in wildtype and MUC1 knockout mice. We analyse the data with two mathematical models of influenza viral dynamics under a Bayesian framework, quantifying the potential effects of cs-mucin MUC1 in influenza infection. The two models differ in how they categorise mechanisms of viral control. We also use the data-calibrated models to evaluate and analyse the dependence of various infection-related quantities on MUC1 expression. Finally, we discuss the biological implications of our results.

2. Results

2.1. Model fitting

In vivo viral load and macrophage data in WT and MUC1-KO mice were used in model fitting. We fitted a Target cell-Infected-cell-Virus (TIV) model (Eqs. 1–4 in Materials and Methods) and an Immune Response (IR) model (Eqs. 5–18) to the data, respectively. MUC1 has been suggested to prevent virus from infecting epithelial cells. It also has been implicated in the regulation of the host innate immune response, associated with macrophage recruitment [24]. As detailed in Materials and Methods, both models capture these effects. The reduction in susceptibility of target cells is captured by a parameter ε_1 , modulating viral infectivity to the target cells in $dT/dt = (1 - \varepsilon_1)\beta TV$ (Eq. 1). The effect of the limitation of macrophage recruitment is

82 captured by a parameter ε_2 and is modelled in $dM/dt = s + (1 - \varepsilon_2)\phi I - \delta_M M$
 83 (Eq. 4). In the absence of MUC1 expression, e.g., in MUC1-KO mice, we set
 84 $\varepsilon_1 = \varepsilon_2 = 0$ to represent a complete knockout effect.

85 The fitting results are shown in Fig. 1. The median of the posterior predic-
 86 tion (solid line) and a 95% predict interval (PI, shaded area) were computed
 87 from 4000 model simulation based upon 4000 samples from the posterior
 88 distribution of model parameters (provided in Supplementary Figures). The
 89 trend for both the viral kinetics (Figs. 1A and 1B) and macrophages dy-
 90 namics (Figs. 1C and 1D) is well captured by the median prediction in both
 91 models, suggesting that both models are able to explain the data. More-
 92 over, the narrow 95% PI indicates a relatively high certainty level for model
 93 predictions.

94 2.2. Estimates of MUC1 parameters

95 The marginal posterior densities for ε_1 and ε_2 provide insight into the
 96 role of MUC1. The median parameter estimates and their associated 95%
 97 credible intervals (CIs) are given in Table 1. The median estimate of the
 98 effect of MUC1 on reduction of viral infectivity (ε_1) is 0.44 (95% CI: 0.23
 99 – 0.71) in the TIV model and 0.42 (95% CI: 0.22 – 0.58) in the IR model.
 100 Further, the estimated median values of MUC1 on regulation of macrophage
 101 recruitment (ε_2) are 0.45 (95% CI: 0.18 – 0.64) and 0.38 (95% CI: 0.06 –
 102 0.63) in the TIV and IR models, respectively.

103 The posterior-median estimates are qualitatively consistent between the
 104 two models. The results support the experimental hypothesis [24] and pro-
 105 vide quantitative evidence that the presence of MUC1 reduces viral infec-
 106 tivity to epithelial cells. They also provide evidence that MUC1 reduces
 107 macrophage recruitment and thus regulates the host innate immune response.

108 Detailed posteriors of model parameters are provided in Supplementary
 109 Figures (SFigs. 1–10), and correlation maps of the estimated parameters for
 110 the TIV and IR models are given in SFigs. 11–12. There is a low correlation
 111 coefficient between ε_1 and ε_2 for the TIV ($R = 0.08$) and IR ($R = -0.22$)
 112 models, suggesting the two parameters have a weak relationship. In partic-
 113 ular, we found that the posterior-median estimate of the phagocytosis rate
 114 of virus by macrophages (κ_M) is approximately 10^{-8} for the TIV model, and
 115 the estimate is in agreement with the estimate for the IR model (SFig. 9).
 116 We used the median estimates of model parameters to compute the ratio of
 117 macrophage-mediated viral decay ($\kappa_M M(t)$) to overall viral decay rate in the
 118 TIV ($\kappa_M M(t) + \delta_V$) and IR ($\kappa_M M(t) + \delta_V + \kappa_{AS} A_S(t) + \kappa_{AL} A_L(t)$) models as

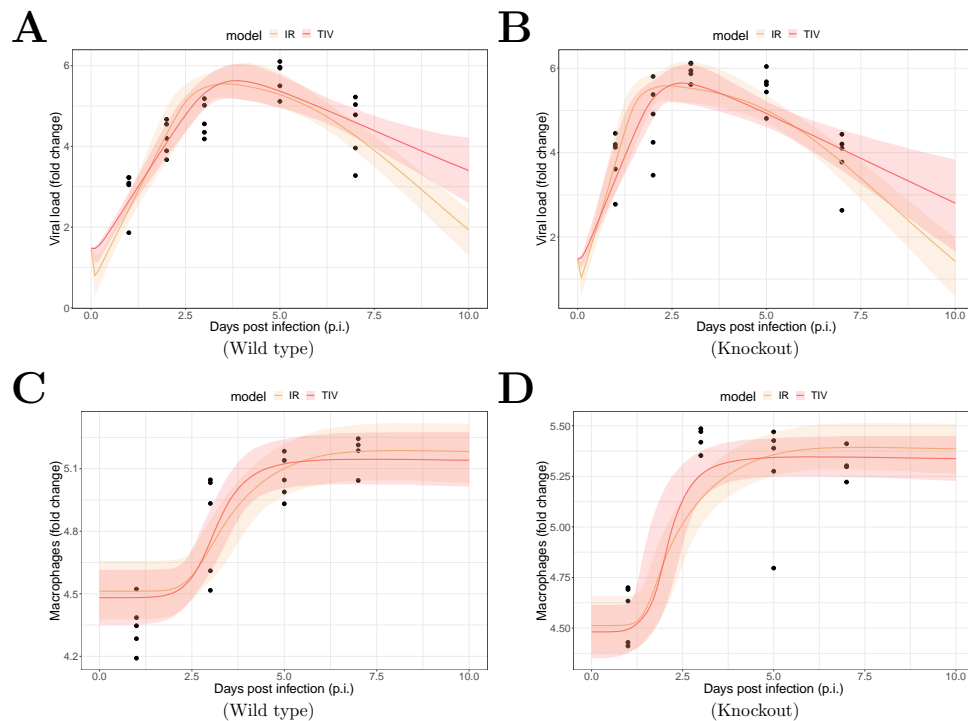


Figure 1: Results of model fitting for WT and MUC1-KO mice. Data are presented by solid circles. Panels A and B show the median of posterior predictions (solid line) and a 95% prediction interval (shaded area) of viral load data for both TIV (red) and IR (yellow) models for WT and MUC1-KO mice, respectively. Panels C and D show the model predictions of macrophage data in the two models for WT and MUC1-KO mice, respectively. The priors of model parameters are given in Supplementary Materials. The posteriors of estimated model parameters are given in Supplementary Figures.

119 a time-series, respectively. We found that $\kappa_M M(t)$ only has a minor contri-
 120 bution to viral clearance (SFig. 14). The result suggests that macrophages,
 121 although is important to maintain gas exchange in lungs and reduce infection
 122 severity, is not directly involved in limiting viral replication, as evidenced in
 123 [29, 30].

124 2.3. Prediction of infection-related quantities

125 Influenza pathogenesis is often associated with a high viral load and an
 126 overstimulated immune response [15]. In the absence of MUC1, mice showed
 127 a significantly high mortality rate [24]. Here, we use the 4000 joint posterior

Parameter	Description	Median (95% CI)	
		TIV	IR
ε_1	The effect of MUC1 on reduction of target cell susceptibility to infection	0.44 (0.23,0.71)	0.42 (0.22, 0.58)
ε_2	The effect of MUC1 on regulation of macrophage recruitment	0.45 (0.18,0.64)	0.38 (0.06, 0.63)

Table 1: **Estimates of MUC1 parameters and comparison between models.** The estimates of the effects of MUC1 on reduction of target cell susceptibility to influenza virus (ε_1) and the effects of MUC1 on regulation of macrophage recruitment (ε_2). The lower and upper boundary of the 95% credible interval (CI) of the parameter is given by calculating the 2.5% and 97.5% quantile of the marginal posterior parameter distribution.

distributions to predict the impact of MUC1 on some key infection-related quantities that likely influence infection severity. We then compare these quantities between the two models.

The basic reproduction number of viral replication (R_0) is defined as the average number of secondary infected cells that are produced by an initially infected cell when the target cell population is not depleted and is fully susceptible [31]. An infection may be established only if $R_0 > 1$. It is a critical indicator that quantifies how fast an infection is established and evolved.

Fig. 2A and 2B show the R_0 between WT and MUC1-KO groups in the TIV and IR models, respectively. Both models predict a significantly higher median value of R_0 (dashed line) in the MUC1-KO group (20 in MUC1-KO group versus 11.1 in WT group for the TIV model, and 45.6 versus 26.4 for the IR model). The estimates of R_0 are comparable to previous estimates from fitting viral dynamics models to viral kinetic data in humans [32] and mice [33].

To assess the impact of MUC1 on viral dynamics, we compute the area under the viral load (without log-transformation) curve, which is often used as a marker for infectiousness (shown in Eq. 20 in Materials and Methods). Both the TIV (Fig. 2C) and IR (Fig. 2D) models predict very similar $\log_{10}(\text{AUC}_V)$ in WT and MUC1-KO mice. This implies that a paucity of MUC1 expression has little, if any, effect on the cumulative viral load. This observation

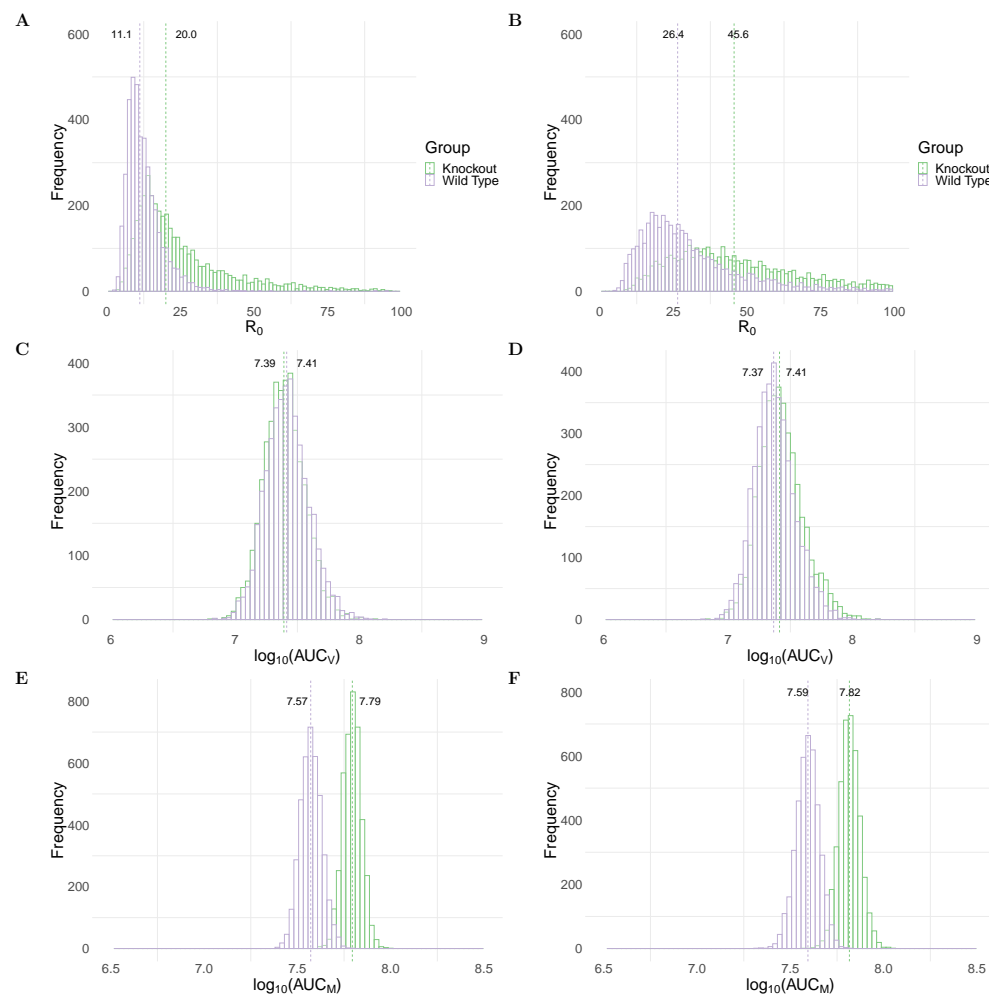


Figure 2: Comparison of model predictions for selected key biological quantities. Distributions are calculated using the 4000 joint posterior distributions. Panels A and B show the distribution of the basic reproduction number of viral replication in wildtype (purple) and MUC1-knockout (green) group in TIV (left panel) and IR models (right panel), respectively. Panels C and D show the distribution of the cumulative viral load in different mice groups in the two models. Panels E and F show the accumulative macrophages in WT and MUC1-KO mice group in the two models.

150 is supported by data in [24] in which they found that MUC1-KO mice were
 151 still capable of clearing virus after day 7 post infection.

152 An excessive accumulation of macrophages is considered as a hallmark for

severe infection, often observed in highly pathogenic influenza viral infection [14]. We use the area under the macrophage time-series curve (without log-transformation; Eq. 21 in Materials and Methods) as a surrogate for the strength of immune response stimulation and explore the dependence of the AUC_M upon MUC1. As shown in Figs. 2E and 2F, both models predict a higher median value of $\log_{10}(AUC_M)$ in MUC1-KO mice compared to WT mice. This suggests that MUC1 reduces the accumulation of macrophages and thus contributes to the regulation of the host immune response.

We also assessed the influence of MUC1 on peak viral load (SFigs. 13A and 13B in Supplementary Figures) and peak viral load time (SFigs. 13C and 13D) for the two models. Both models predict that the presence of MUC1 delays the time at which viral load peaks but only has a subtle influence on the magnitude of peak viral load, as evidenced in [24].

In summary, both models predict a higher value of R_0 (Figs. 2A and 2B) and increased macrophage accumulation (Figs. 2E and 2F) in the absence of MUC1 expression. The results emphasise the dual roles for MUC1 in reducing viral infectivity and limiting macrophage recruitment. Furthermore, they suggest that the absence of MUC1, while not driving a significant increase in cumulative viral load, facilitates viral replication and dissemination within the host in the early stages of infection. More epithelial cells are infected in a short time interval, heightening macrophage recruitment, likely contributing to lung pathology and providing an explanation for the heightened mortality rate in MUC1 KO mice.

2.4. Delineation the effects of MUC1 on macrophage recruitment

We have shown that the presence of MUC1 reduces AUC_M (Fig. 2E and 2F), which may alleviate infection severity. The accumulation of macrophages is not only directly impacted by the regulatory effect of MUC1, (i.e., ε_2), but is also indirectly affected by antigen levels, which are influenced by ε_1 through modulating dynamics for infected cells (I). Here, we analyse the relative contribution of the two effects of MUC1 on the AUC_M . We use the macrophage reduction efficiency, defined as the decrease in the area under the macrophage curve in wild type mice ($AUC_{M,WT}$) relative to the AUC of the macrophage curve in MUC1 knockout mice ($AUC_{M,KO}$):

$$\text{Macrophage Reduction Efficiency} = 1 - \frac{AUC_{M,WT}}{AUC_{M,KO}},$$

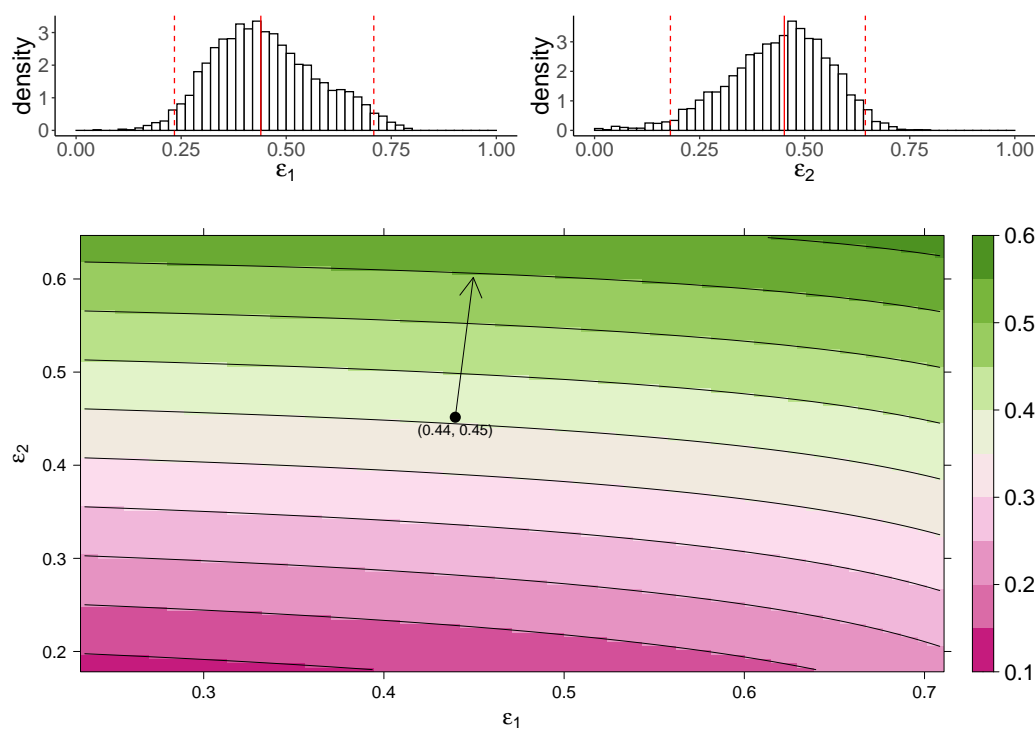


Figure 3: **Predicting the AUC_M on the effects of MUC1 for the TIV model.** The upper panel shows the marginal posterior distribution of ε_1 (left) and ε_2 (right). Between the two red-dashed lines indicates a 95% credible interval (CI) of the parameters, and the red-solid line indicates parameters' median value. The heatmap shows dependence of macrophage reduction efficiency upon ε_1 and ε_2 . The black circle indicates the pair of median values of ε_1 and ε_2 , and the arrow indicates the direction of the rate of change in macrophage reduction efficiency at that point.

Fig. 3 shows the estimated marginal posterior density of ε_1 and ε_2 for the TIV model (top panel) and a heatmap of the dependence of macrophage reduction efficiency on ε_1 and ε_2 (bottom panel). The heatmap predicts the dependence of the macrophage reduction efficiency for various values of ε_1 and ε_2 within the 95% CI. We observe that a higher ε_1 or ε_2 leads to a higher macrophage reduction level, suggesting that both effects contribute to reduce the accumulation of macrophages. However, the macrophage reduction efficiency is notably more sensitive to changes in ε_2 . In particular, taking the median parameter values as a reasonable prediction point (black circle), the rate of change in the macrophage reduction efficiency is strongly

187 dependent on ε_2 and only weakly dependent on ε_1 . (indicated by the ar-
 188 row line). This result suggests that the direct regulatory effect of MUC1 on
 189 macrophage recruitment has a dominant influence on the AUC_M . We also
 190 assess the macrophage reduction efficiency as a function of ε_1 and ε_2 for the
 191 IR model. As shown in Fig. 4, the results are qualitatively consistent—the
 192 macrophage reduction efficiency is strongly influenced by ε_2 .

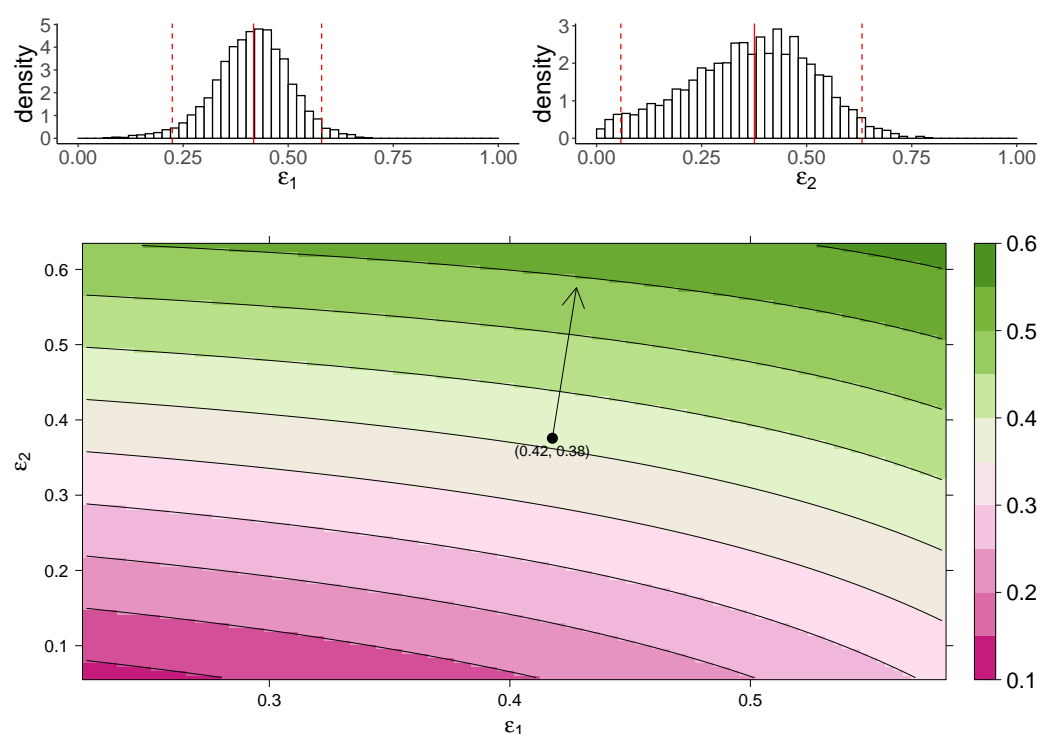


Figure 4: **Predicting the AUC_M on the effects of MUC1 for the IR model.** The upper panel shows the marginal posterior distribution of ε_1 (left) and ε_2 (right). Between the two red-dashed lines indicates a 95% credible interval (CI) of the parameters, and the red-solid line indicates parameters' median value. The heatmap shows dependence of macrophage reduction efficiency upon ε_1 and ε_2 . The black circle indicates the pair of median values of ε_1 and ε_2 , and the arrow indicates the direction of the rate of change in macrophage reduction efficiency at that point.

193 Both models predict a strong effect for ε_2 and relatively small effect for
 194 ε_1 on the AUC_M . This is understood by recalling that the presence of MUC1
 195 does not significantly influence the cumulative viral load, as shown in Fig.
 196 2C and 2D. Thus, a change in the reduction of viral infectivity to target cells

(ε_1) has only a minor effect on the AUC_M . The results emphasise a strong regulatory effect of MUC1 on macrophage accumulation.

3. Discussion

In this work, we have studied the *in vivo* immunological effects of cs-mucin MUC1 in influenza viral infection. We incorporated the experimentally hypothesised roles of MUC1 into two mathematical models and fitted kinetic data of both virus and macrophage populations to the models in a Bayesian framework. Our estimation results (Table 1) provide evidence that MUC1 reduces the susceptibility of epithelial cells to viral infection. They also provided evidence that MUC1 limits the recruitment of macrophages and thus regulates the host immune response. Both models predict the influence of MUC1 on various infection-related quantities (Fig. 2). While the expression of MUC1 has little impact on the cumulative viral load (AUC_V), it delays viral infection by reducing the basic reproduction number of viral replication (Figs. 2A and 2B) and delaying viral load peak time (SFigs. 11C and 11D). More importantly, we found that the presence of MUC1 significantly reduces the accumulation of macrophages (Figs. 2E and 2F). The decreased level of macrophages is primarily driven by the direct regulatory effect (ε_2) of MUC1 on macrophage recruitment (Figs. 3 and 4).

Our model-based analyses provide new insight into the mechanisms by which MUC1 influences viral dynamics and the host immune response. This is also the first study that we are aware of that provides quantitative estimates of the *in vivo* effects of cs-mucin MUC1 on influenza infection. Our analyses enhance our ability to predict the efficacy of potential treatments that target MUC1. Influenza pathogenesis is often marked by a high viral load, and infection of epithelial cells is a key determinant of the level of viral load [34, 15, 11]. MUC1 is rapidly stimulated at the surface of epithelial cells and macrophages upon infection, and is thought to act as a “releasable decoy”, preventing virus from attaching and infecting the cells, thereby reducing viral infectivity [17]. Regardless of the specific mechanism, our model predictions suggest that MUC1 only effectively reduce R_0 (Fig. 2 and 2B) but not the AUC_V (Fig. 2C and 2D). The biological implications of this are two-fold. Firstly, MUC1, as part of the innate immune response, has been shown to be rapidly upregulated within a few hours post *in vitro* infection [21]. The decreased R_0 suggests that MUC1 expression contributes to limit and delay viral infection, and more importantly, to prevent viral dissemination within

the host. This provides strong protection to the host and reduce infection severity. Viral spread to the lower respiratory tract (LRT) is known to cause complications, leading to more severe infection outcomes [34]. Secondly, the comparable AUC_V between WT and MUC1-KO group implies that a lack of cs-mucin MUC1 protection have a subtle influence on other immunological components that are responsible for viral clearance, such as the host adaptive immune response. This may be partially supported in [24], where MUC1-KO mice were shown to clear virus from the lungs at day 7 post infection. A more comprehensive dataset that captures the dynamics of antibodies or effector $CD8^+$ T cells would greatly improve our understanding of the impact on MUC1 to the adaptive immune response.

Beyond these virological indicator, viral pathogenesis is also associated with the strength of the host immune response induced by influenza infection. An excessive recruitment of macrophages to the site of infection is a hallmark of overstimulated immune responses [34, 14]. The anti-inflammatory role of MUC1 has been shown to inhibit activation of Toll-like receptors (TLRs) in macrophages and infected cells [24]. In MUC1-KO mice, our models predicted a significantly enhanced level of AUC_M (Fig. 2E and 2F), which may reflect the high mortality rate in the group. This finding emphasises the importance of quantities related to the immune response, which can be critical indicators for predicting the severity of infection and facilitating the assessment of antiviral therapies, as suggested in [34, 35]. Further, we have shown that the decreased AUC_M is primarily due to the direct regulatory effect of MUC1 on macrophages (i.e., ε_2), which highlights a strong anti-inflammatory effect for MUC1. This may support the development of novel immunomodulators that target cs-mucin MUC1.

In conducting this study, we applied two mathematical models to the kinetic data. The models differ in how they model adaptive immunity. We compared the key estimation results of MUC1's effects and model predictions of infection-related quantities between the two models. We found that both models fit the *in vivo* viral load and macrophage data well (Fig. 1), giving comparable parameter estimates and consistent biological insights.

One of the most important applications of viral dynamic models is to estimate key kinetic parameters, as reviewed in [25]. Model selection for data fitting is an important but unresolved challenge in influenza dynamics modelling due to limited time-series data on numerous quantities of interested. Parameter estimates vary substantially between different studies, and the predictive power of any given model is influenced by the selection of model

271 components, as showed in previous work by our group [27, 35] and others
272 [36]. In our study, there are advantages and disadvantages in applying the
273 TIV and IR models. Due to its simple model structure, the TIV model is
274 more computationally efficient. But its lack of a detailed characterisation
275 of adaptive immunity makes the model difficult to use to explore potential
276 interactions between different immunological components, e.g., interactions
277 between macrophages and CD8⁺ T cells. The IR model, on the other hand,
278 is more computationally intensive and has far more parameters to either es-
279 timate or determine from the literature. However, it is more suitable for
280 explaining *in vivo* kinetic viral load data to which adaptive immunity has
281 been shown to have an influence. It also provides a platform to study more
282 complicated virus-immunity dynamics and interaction between different com-
283 ponents of immune responses.

284 Neither the TIV nor IR models consider the full spectrum of host im-
285 mune response which are known to contribute to viral control and that have
286 been included in other modelling works, e.g., interferon dynamics [27, 28].
287 Regardless, we argue our two models are sufficient for this study in which we
288 focus on the influence of MUC1 on viral dynamics and macrophage kinet-
289 ics, which are both explicitly considered in the models. Furthermore, there
290 is no evidence to suggest that MUC1 has an impact on the adaptive im-
291 mune response. Combined with the observation that MUC1-KO mice clear
292 virus after day 7 post infection [24], the effects of MUC1 may be minimally
293 influenced by the detailed dynamics of adaptive immunity.

294 Our study has some limitations. We only incorporated the two hypothe-
295 sised effects of cs-mucin MUC1 on influenza viral infection into our mathe-
296 matical models, but did not consider the detailed dynamics of MUC1 itself
297 due to a lack of MUC1 kinetic data. As a result, the critical timing at which
298 MUC1 starts to take effect has not been estimated. This could be an im-
299 portant factor that influences disease severity [17]. In future work, explicitly
300 modelling the time dependent MUC1 effects would be of interest given avail-
301 ability of time-series data of MUC1 expression. Another limitation is that
302 we assumed a fixed adaptive immune response, such that the adaptive im-
303 mune responses dominate viral clearance at day 5 post infection regardless
304 of MUC1 expression [27, 37]. Though there is no evidence so far that MUC1
305 would affect the magnitude and/or timing of the adaptive immune response,
306 extension of the IR model to allow for such an effect may be of interest.

307 4. Materials and Methods

308 4.1. Mathematical Models

309 In this study, we considered two mathematical models that are often
310 used to study within-host influenza dynamics, but which differ in how they
311 categorise the mechanisms of viral control.

312 4.1.1. The TIV model

The Target cell-Infected cell-Virus (TIV) model depicts a simple but fundamental interaction between target cells and influenza virus, as originally presented in [32]. To estimate the *in vivo* impacts of MUC1, we incorporate the two hypothesised effects of MUC1 on viral infectivity and innate immune responses into the TIV model. We also consider a component of macrophage dynamics and critical interactions between macrophages and virus. The model is described by a set of ordinary differential equations (ODEs):

$$\frac{dT}{dt} = gT \left(1 - \frac{T + I}{T_{max}} \right) - (1 - \varepsilon_1)\beta TV, \quad (1)$$

$$\frac{dI}{dt} = (1 - \varepsilon_1)\beta TV - \delta_I I, \quad (2)$$

$$\frac{dV}{dt} = pI - \delta_V V - \kappa_M MV, \quad (3)$$

$$\frac{dM}{dt} = s + (1 - \varepsilon_2)\phi I - \delta_M M. \quad (4)$$

313 Eqs. 1–3 describe the interaction between virus and epithelial cells. In
314 detail, epithelial cells (T), the target cells for influenza virus, are infected
315 with virus (V) and become infected cells (I) at an infectivity rate βV per
316 day. Target cells are replenished at a rate $gT(1 - (T + I)/T_{max})$, where T_{max}
317 is the maximal number of epithelial cells that line the upper respiratory
318 tract (URT). The infectivity rate is modified by MUC1, parameterised by ε_1 .
319 Infected cells produce free virus at a rate p per day. Apoptosis occurs at a
320 rate δ_I per day. The decrease of free virus is either due to natural decay at
321 a constant rate δ_V per day, or internalisation by macrophages (M) at a rate
322 $\kappa_M M$.

323 Eq. 4 models the dynamics of macrophages. We assume a constant sup-
324plementary rate and a decay rate of macrophages at s and δ_M per day,
325 respectively. Upon infection, monocytes are recruited from peripheral blood

326 to the site of infection and become monocyte-derived macrophages (MDMs)
 327 in the presence of cytokines. We assume the recruitment rate is proportional
 328 to the level of infected cells, ϕI , as infected cells contribute to cytokines pro-
 329 duction. The cs-mucin MUC1 regulates the recruitment rate of macrophages,
 330 parameterised by ε_2 .

331 4.1.2. *The IR model*

The immune response (IR) model is based on the TIV model and includes a detailed adaptive immune response, which contributes to viral clearance

over a distinct timescale [28]. The model is formulated by a system of ODEs:

$$\frac{dT}{dt} = gT \left(1 - \frac{T+I}{T_{max}} \right) - (1 - \varepsilon_1)\beta TV, \quad (5)$$

$$\frac{dI}{dt} = (1 - \varepsilon_1)\beta TV - \delta_I I - \kappa_E EI, \quad (6)$$

$$\frac{dV}{dt} = pI - \delta_V V - \kappa_M MV - \kappa_{AS} A_S V - \kappa_{AL} A_L V, \quad (7)$$

$$\frac{dM}{dt} = s + (1 - \varepsilon_2)\phi I - \delta_M M, \quad (8)$$

$$\frac{dE_0}{dt} = -\gamma_E \frac{V}{V + E_{50}} E_0, \quad (9)$$

$$\frac{dE_1}{dt} = \gamma_E \frac{V}{V + E_{50}} E_0 - \frac{n_E}{\tau_E} E_1, \quad (10)$$

$$\frac{dE_i}{dt} = \frac{n_E}{\tau_E} (E_{i-1} - E_i), \quad i = 2, \dots, n_E \quad (11)$$

$$\frac{dE}{dt} = \phi_E \frac{n_E}{\tau_E} E_{n_E} - \delta_E E, \quad (12)$$

$$\frac{dB_0}{dt} = -\gamma_B \frac{V}{V + B_{50}} B_0, \quad (13)$$

$$\frac{dB_1}{dt} = \gamma_B \frac{V}{V + B_{50}} B_0 - \frac{n_B}{\tau_B} B_1, \quad (14)$$

$$\frac{dB_i}{dt} = \frac{n_B}{\tau_B} (B_{i-1} - B_i), \quad i = 2, \dots, n_B \quad (15)$$

$$\frac{dP}{dt} = \phi_p \frac{n_B}{\tau_B} B_{n_B} - \delta_p P, \quad (16)$$

$$\frac{dA_S}{dt} = \mu_S P - \delta_{AS} A_S, \quad (17)$$

$$\frac{dA_L}{dt} = \mu_L P - \delta_{AL} A_L. \quad (18)$$

332 Eqs. 5–8 retain the skeleton of the TIV model, describing the essential
 333 target cell-virus dynamics, except for additional components in dI/dt and
 334 dV/dt related to adaptive immune responses. $\kappa_E E$ in Eq. 6 represents the
 335 rate of infected cells lysis by effector CD8⁺ T cells. The extra terms $\kappa_{AS} A_S$
 336 and $\kappa_{LS} A_L$ in Eq. 7 represent virus clearance mediated by a short-lived (A_S ,
 337 e.g., IgM) and a long-lasting antibody (A_L , e.g., IgG), respectively.

338 Eqs. 9–12 describe a major component of the cellular adaptive immune

response mediated by CD8⁺ T cells. Naïve CD8⁺ T cells (E_0) initiate proliferation and differentiate into effector cells E_1 upon stimulation via antigen-presentation at a rate $\gamma_E V / (V + E_{50})$, where γ_E is the maximal stimulation rate, and E_{50} is a half saturation level at which half of the stimulation rate is obtained (as shown in Eq. 9). Effector cells E_1 perform programmed proliferation to E_i where i denotes proliferation stages (Eqs. 10 – 11) for τ_E days, experience through n_E stages [38], finally becoming mature effector cytotoxic T lymphocytes (E) at a rate ϕ_E at the final stage. The decay rate of E is δ_E , as shown in Eq. 12.

Similarly, the dynamics of the humoral adaptive immune response are described by Eqs. 13–16. Naïve B cells (B_0) start to proliferate and differentiate into plasma cells (B_1) once stimulated by virus at a rate $\gamma_B V / (V + B_{50})$, where γ_B is the maximal stimulation rate and B_{50} is a half-saturation level, as shown in Eq. 13. Eqs. 14–15 capture how plasma cells (B_1) undergo programmed proliferation through n_B stages into B_i , where i denotes proliferation stages, for τ_B days [38]. Finally, mature plasma cells P (Eq. 16) are produced at a rate ϕ_B and decay at a rate δ_p .

Eqs. 17–18 describe the dynamics of a short-lived antibody (A_S) and a long-lived antibody (A_L). A_S and A_L are produced by plasma cells (P) at rates μ_S and μ_L and decay at rates δ_{AS} and δ_{AL} , respectively.

4.2. Statistical Inference

We extracted the kinetic data of both virus and macrophage population in wild type (WT) and MUC1 knockout mice using WebPlotDigitizer (version 4.4) from [24]. In the study, groups of wild type and MUC1-KO mice were intranasally infected with influenza A virus (PR8). There were 5 mice in each group. We assumed the variability of virus and macrophage data between different mice within the same group was due to measurement error, so that the data from different mice were pooled together for analysis.

We took a Bayesian inference approach to fit the TIV and IR model (detailed in Model) to the log-transformed kinetic data. In detail, our model has 10 parameters to estimate, and the parameter space is denoted as $\Phi = (\varepsilon_1, \beta, \delta_I, p, \delta_V, s, \delta_M, \varepsilon_2, \kappa_M, \phi)$. Upon calibrating the IR model, we fixed all parameters of the adaptive immune responses (e.g., all parameters in Eqs. 9–18) to previous estimated values in literature [27, 38]. We fixed the parameters because estimating the immunological effects of adaptive immunity is not a focus of this study, [24] does not provide sufficient data for estimation

of these parameters. We chose parameter values such that the adaptive immune response became active five days post-infection. The fixed parameter values are given in Table 2 in Supplementary Materials.

Further, we assumed WT and MUC1-KO mice only differ in ε_1 and ε_2 , a reasonable assumption given inbred mice and use of the same virus for all experiment. We fitted log-transformed WT and MUC1-KO data simultaneously to the models with the same parameter vector set, only differing except for ε_1 and ε_2 , which were set to $\varepsilon_1 = \varepsilon_2 = 0$ for MUC1-KO mice. The prior distribution for model parameters (Φ) is given in Table 1 in Supplementary Materials. The distribution of the observed log-transformed viral load and macrophage measurement is assumed to be a normal distribution with a mean value given by the model simulation results and standard deviation (SD) parameter with prior distribution of a normal distribution with a mean of 0 and a SD of 1.

Model fitting was performed in R (version 4.0.2) and Stan (Rstan 2.21.0). Hamiltonian Monte Carlo (HMC) optimized by the No-U-Turn Sampler (NUTS) [39] was implemented to draw samples from the joint posterior distribution of the model parameters. A detailed theoretical foundation of HMC can be found in [40]. In particular, we used four chains with different starting points and ran 2000 iterations for each chain, discarding the first 1000 iterations as burn-in. We retained 4000 samples in total from 4 chains (1000 for each) after the burn-in iterations. The marginal posterior and prior density for all parameters are shown in Supplementary Materials. We calculated the median and quantiles of 2.5% and 97.5% of the 4000 model outputs at each time for posterior prediction and a 95% prediction interval (PI), respectively (e.g., Fig. 2).

4.3. Infection-related quantities

The basic reproduction number of viral replication (R_0) is given by

$$R_0 = \frac{(1 - \varepsilon_1)\beta T_0 V}{\delta_I(\delta_V + \kappa_M M_0)}, \quad (19)$$

where T_0 is the initial number of epithelial cells, and M_0 is the number of macrophages in a disease-free equilibrium, given by s/δ_M . Note that $\varepsilon_1 = 0$ in MUC1-KO group. The area under the viral load time-series curve (AUC_V)

and under the macrophage time-series curve (AUC_M) are given by

$$AUC_V = \int_0^{\tau} V(t)dt, \quad (20)$$

$$AUC_M = \int_0^{\tau} M(t)dt, \quad (21)$$

where τ is a cut-off day for calculation. We set $\tau = 14$, which covers the duration of viral infection, macrophage dynamics and clinical dynamics in [24]. $V(t)$ and $M(t)$ are simulated time series of viral load and macrophages, respectively.

The estimates of the infection-related quantities were computed using the 4000 posterior samples by solving the ode solver ode15s in MATLAB R2019b with a relative tolerance of 1×10^{-5} and an absolute tolerance of 1×10^{-10} . The initial values for different model components in the TIV model is $(T, I, V, M) = (1 \times 10^7, 0, 30, s/\delta_M)$, where s and δ_M are estimated from fitting the macrophage data to the model. For the IR model, the initial values were $(T, I, V, M, E_0, E_1 \dots E, B_0, B_1 \dots P, A_S, A_L) = (1 \times 10^7, 0, 30, s/\delta_M, 100, 0, \dots 0, 100, 0, \dots 0, 0, 0)$. The values of fixed parameters are given in Supplementary Materials (Table 2). All visualization was performed in R (version 4.0.2). Computer codes to produce all the figures in this study can be found at <https://github.com/keli5734/MUC1>.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, Ke Li, Pengxing Cao and James McCaw; Formal analysis, Ke Li, Pengxing Cao and James McCaw; Methodology, Ke Li, Pengxing Cao and James McCaw; Supervision, Pengxing Cao and James McCaw; Validation, Ke Li, Pengxing Cao and James McCaw; Visualization, Ke Li, Pengxing Cao and James McCaw; Writing—original draft, Ke Li; Writing—review & editing, Ke Li, Pengxing Cao and James McCaw.

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435 **Declarations of interest**

436 None.

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Supplementary Figures

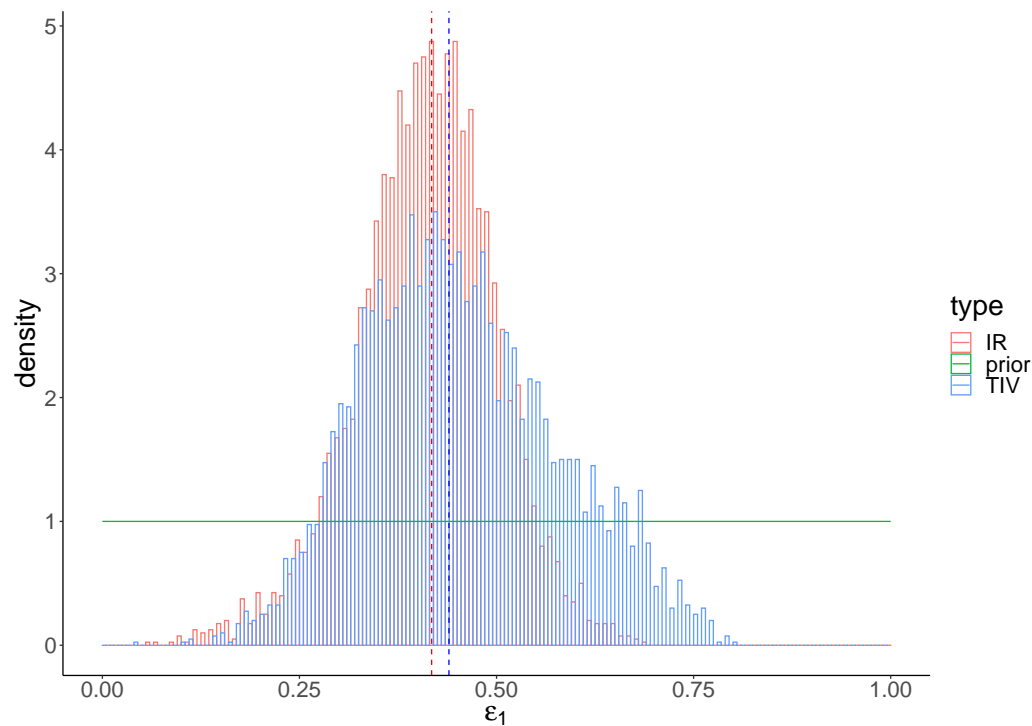


Figure 1: The prior (green) and posterior distributions of ε_1 in TIV (blue) and IR (red) models. Dashed lines indicate the posterior-median estimates. A detailed prior distribution see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials.

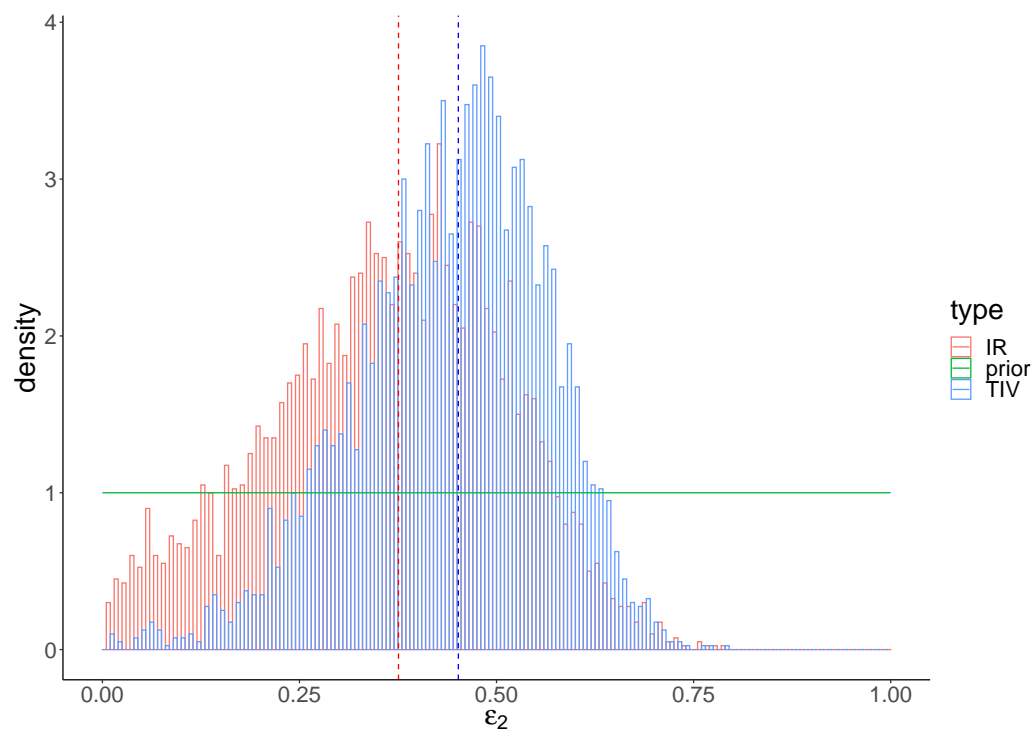


Figure 2: The prior (green) and posterior distributions of ε_2 in TIV (blue) and IR (red) models. Dashed lines indicate the posterior-median estimates. A detailed prior distribution see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials.

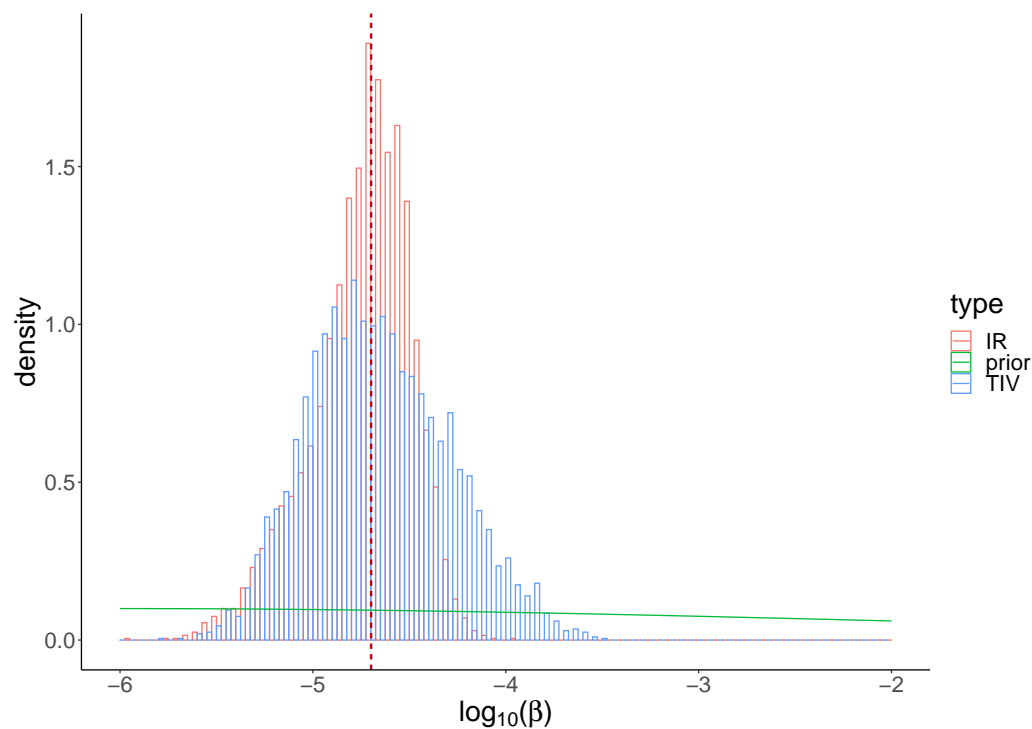


Figure 3: The prior (green) and posterior distributions of $\log_{10}(\beta)$ in TIV (blue) and IR (red) models. Dashed lines indicate the posterior-median estimates. A detailed prior distribution see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials.

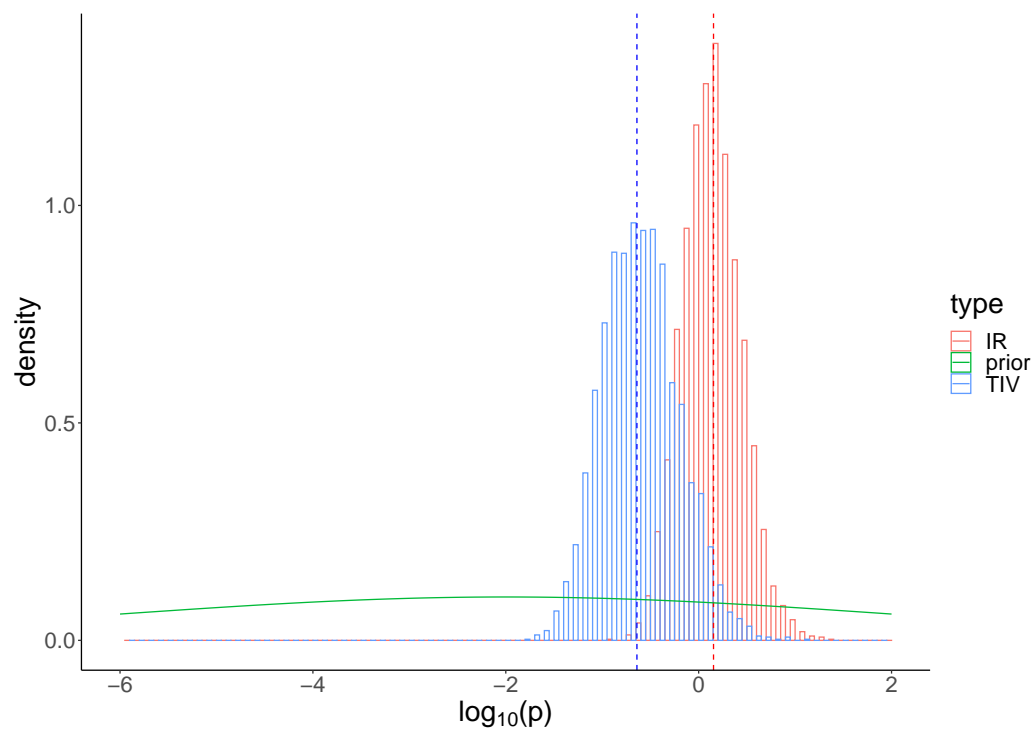


Figure 4: The prior (green) and posterior distributions of $\log_{10}(p)$ in TIV (blue) and IR (red) models. Dashed lines indicate the posterior-median estimates. A detailed prior distribution see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials.

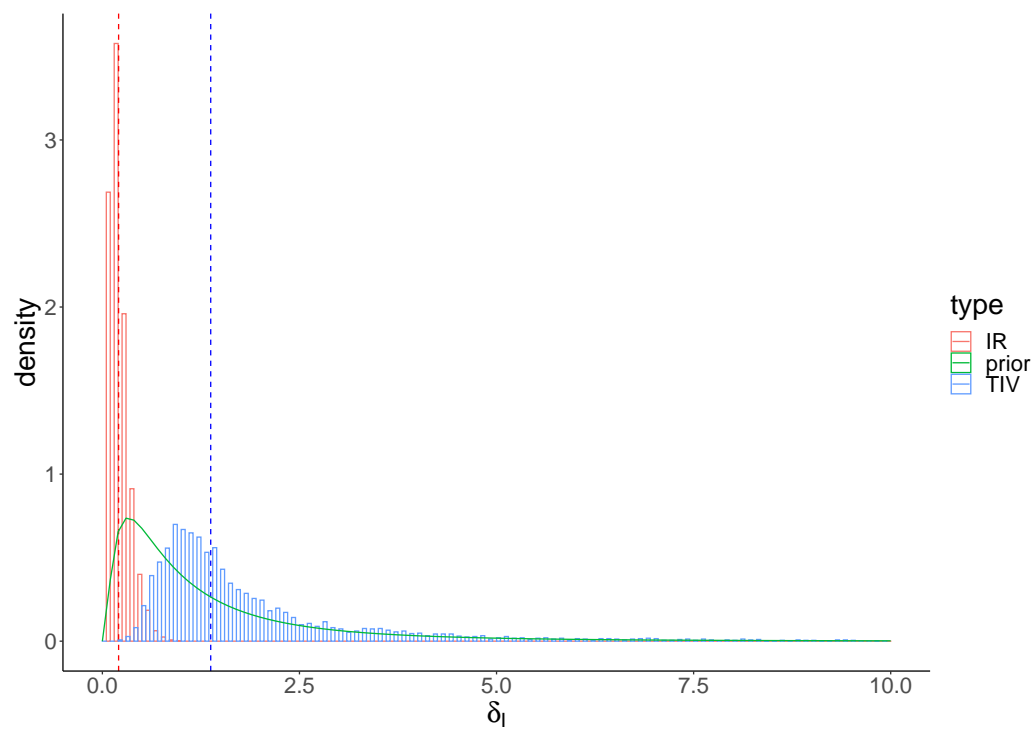


Figure 5: The prior (green) and posterior distributions of δ_I in TIV (blue) and IR (red) models. Dashed lines indicate the posterior-median estimates. A detailed prior distribution see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials.

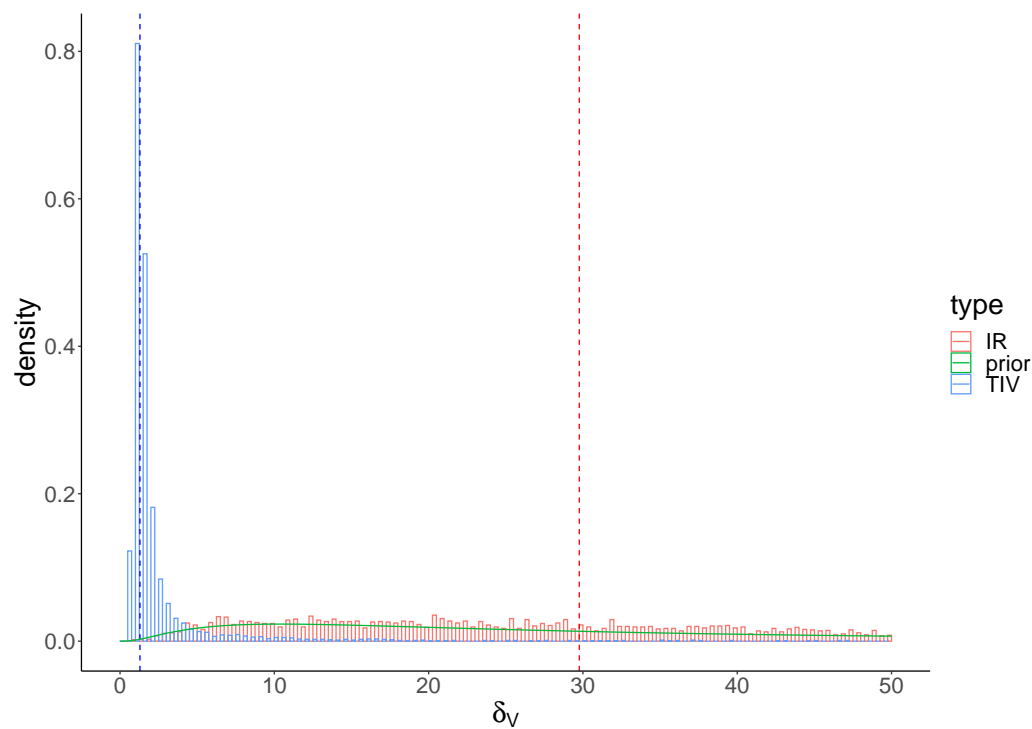


Figure 6: The prior (green) and posterior distributions of δ_V in TIV (blue) and IR (red) models. Dashed lines indicate the posterior-median estimates. A detailed prior distribution see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials.

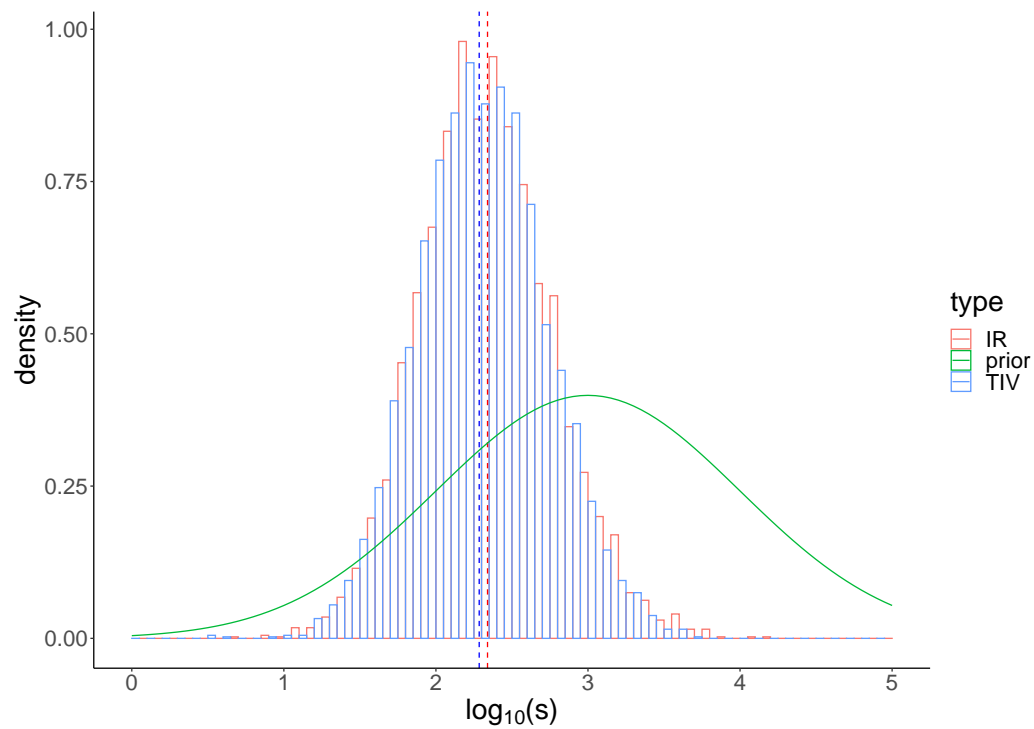


Figure 7: The prior (green) and posterior distributions of $\log(s)$ in TIV (blue) and IR (red) models. Dashed lines indicate the posterior-median estimates. A detailed prior distribution see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials.

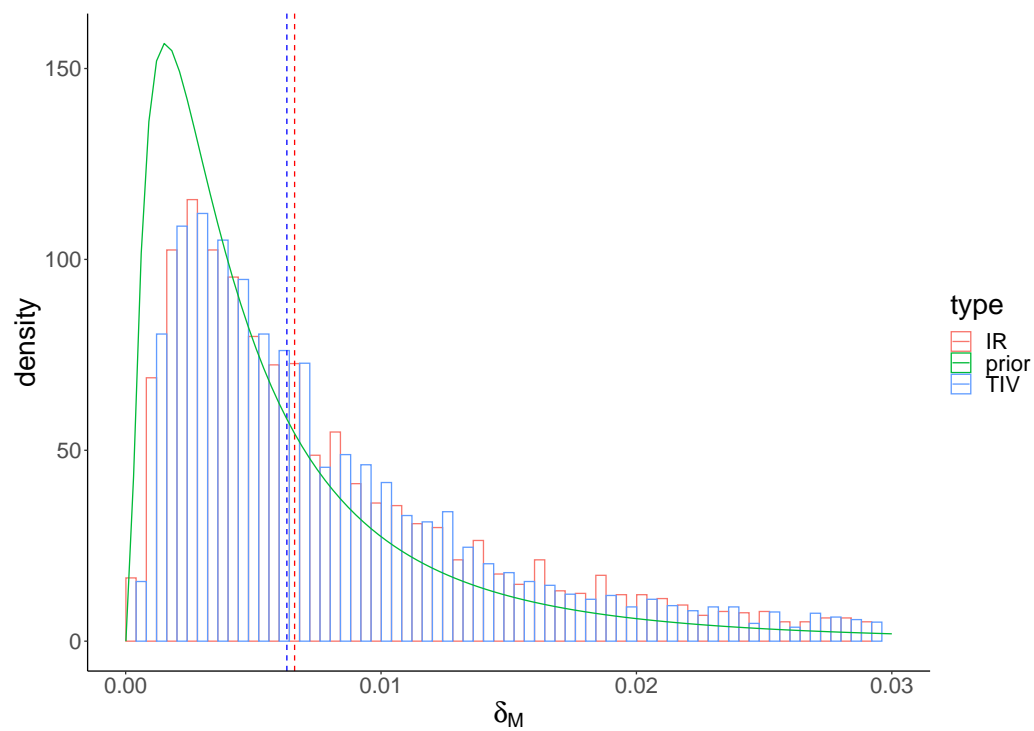


Figure 8: The prior (green) and posterior distributions of δ_M in TIV (blue) and IR (red) models. Dashed lines indicate the posterior-median estimates. A detailed prior distribution see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials.

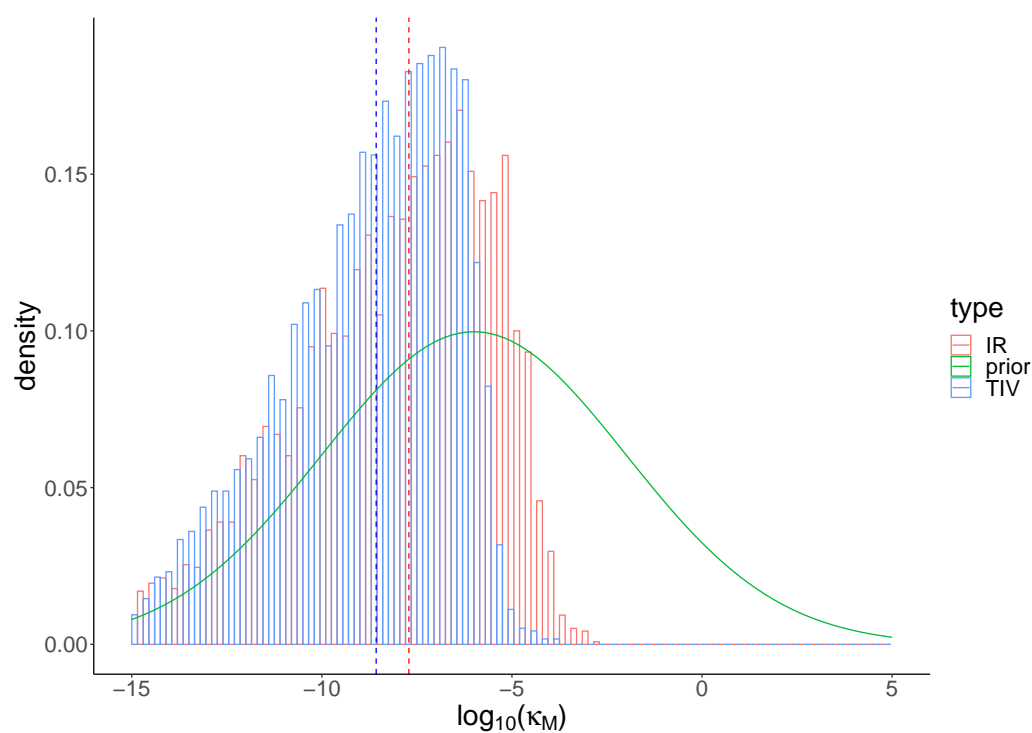


Figure 9: The prior (green) and posterior distributions of $\log_{10}(\kappa_M)$ in TIV (blue) and IR (red) models. Dashed lines indicate the posterior-median estimates. A detailed prior distribution see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials.

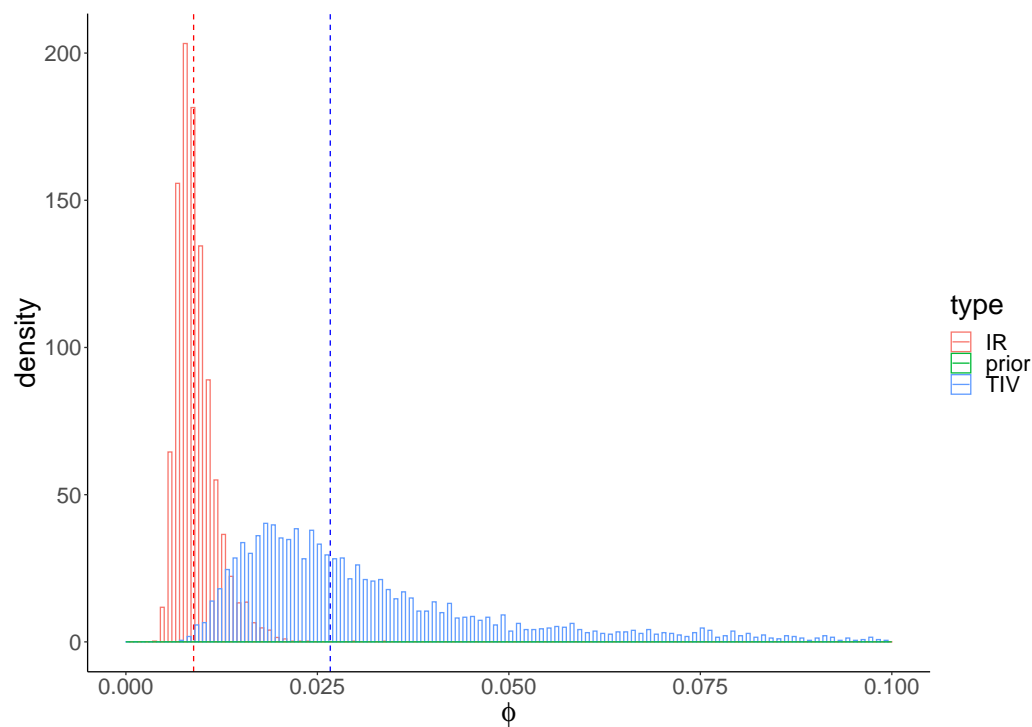


Figure 10: The prior (green) and posterior distributions of ϕ in TIV (blue) and IR (red) models. Dashed lines indicate the posterior-median estimates. A detailed prior distribution see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials.

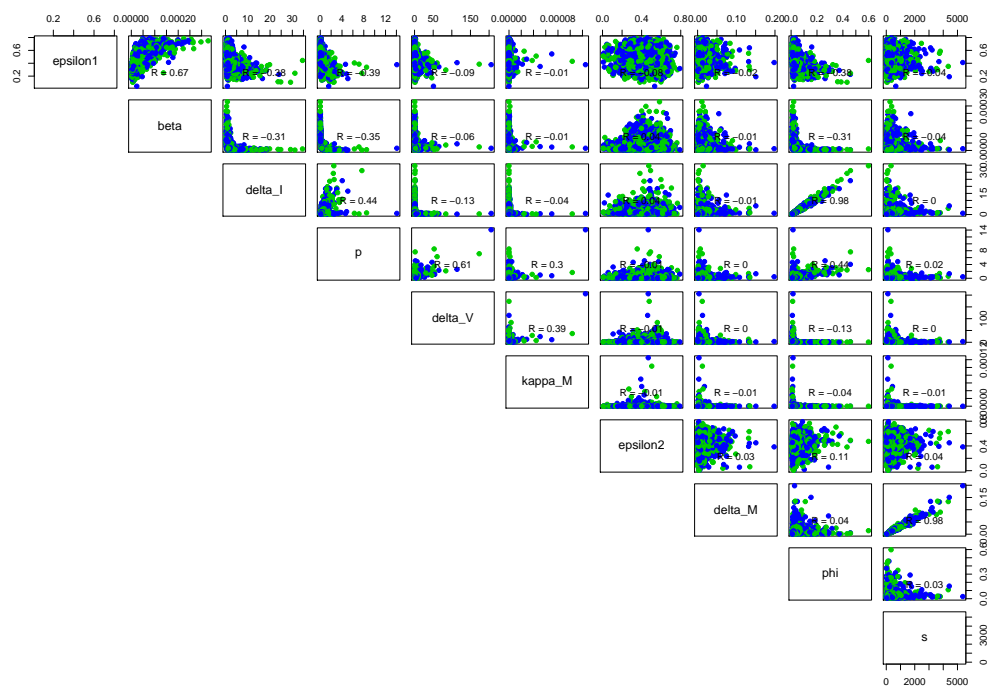


Figure 11: The correlation map of the estimated parameters for the TIV model.

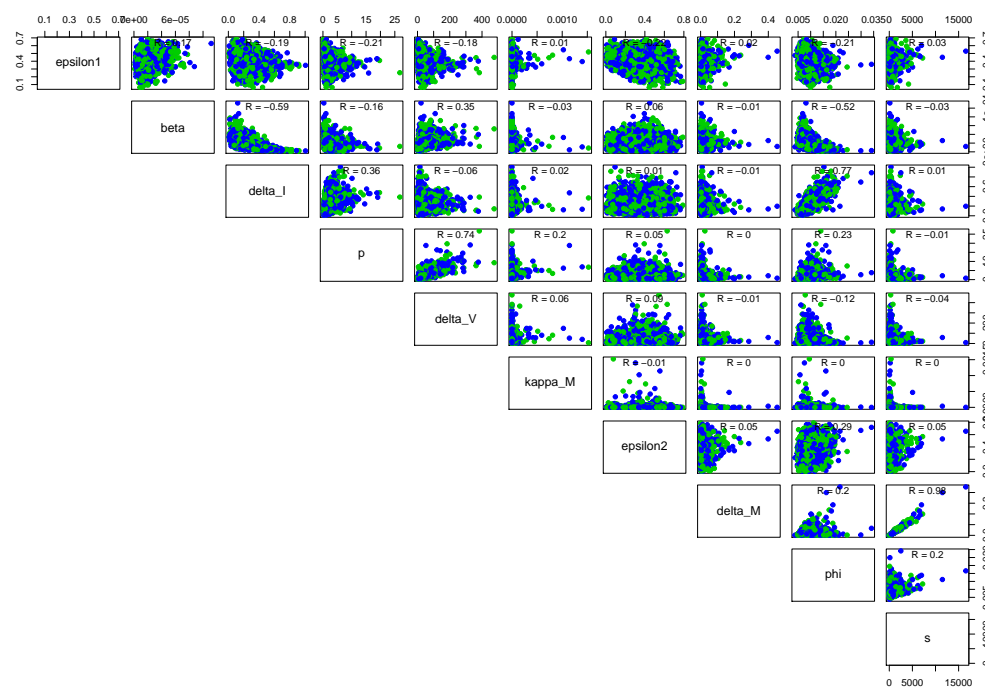


Figure 12: The correlation map of the estimated parameters for the IR model.

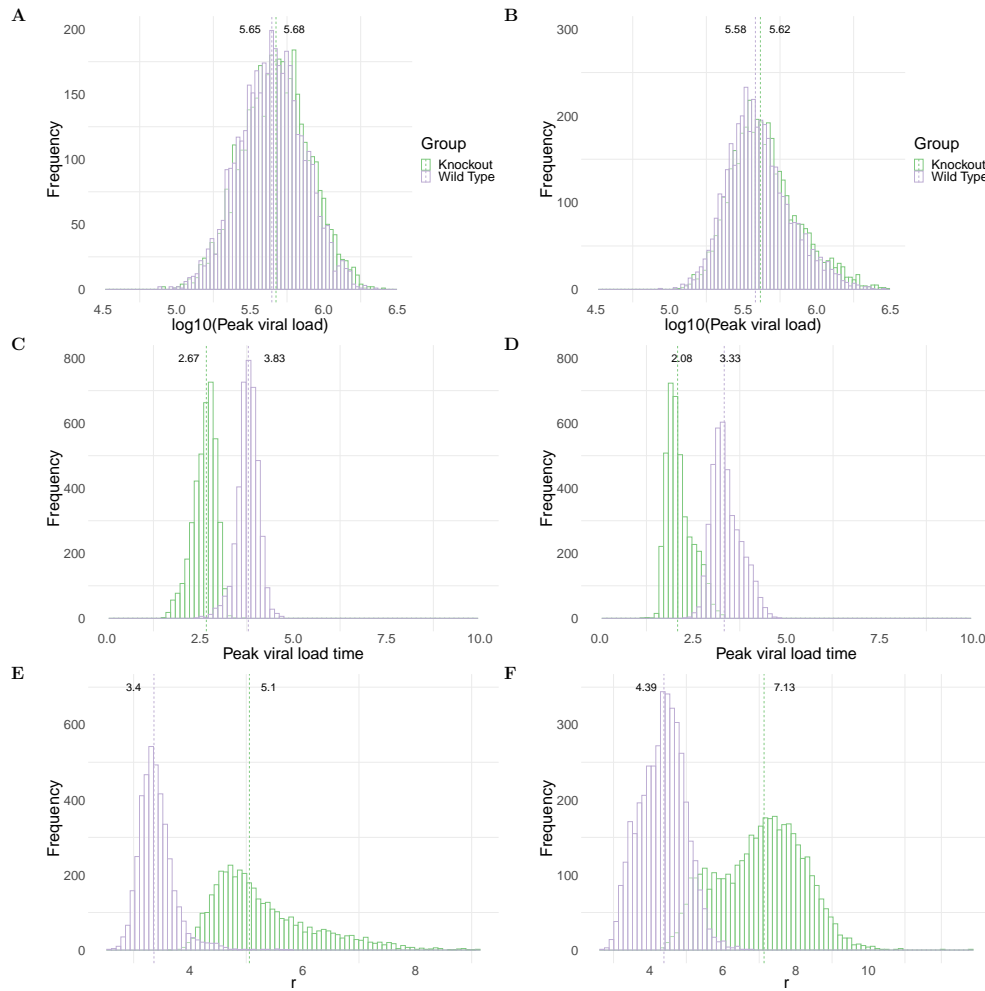


Figure 13: Comparison of model predictions for key biological quantities. The distribution of the quantities is calculated using 4000 joint posterior distributions through model calibration. Panels A and B show the distribution of log₁₀(peak viral load) in wildtype (purple) and MUC1-knockout (green) group in TIV (left panel) and IR models (right panel), respectively. Panels C and D show the distribution of peak viral load time in different mice groups in the two models. Panels E and F show the the initial growth rate of viral replication in the two models. The initial viral regrowth rate is given by $r = (-(\delta_I + \delta_V + \kappa_M M_0) + \sqrt{(\delta_I + \delta_V + \kappa_M M_0)^2 - 4(\delta_I(\delta_V + \kappa_M M_0) - \beta p T_0)})/2$, where M_0 and T_0 are initial number of epithelial cells and macrophages, respectively.

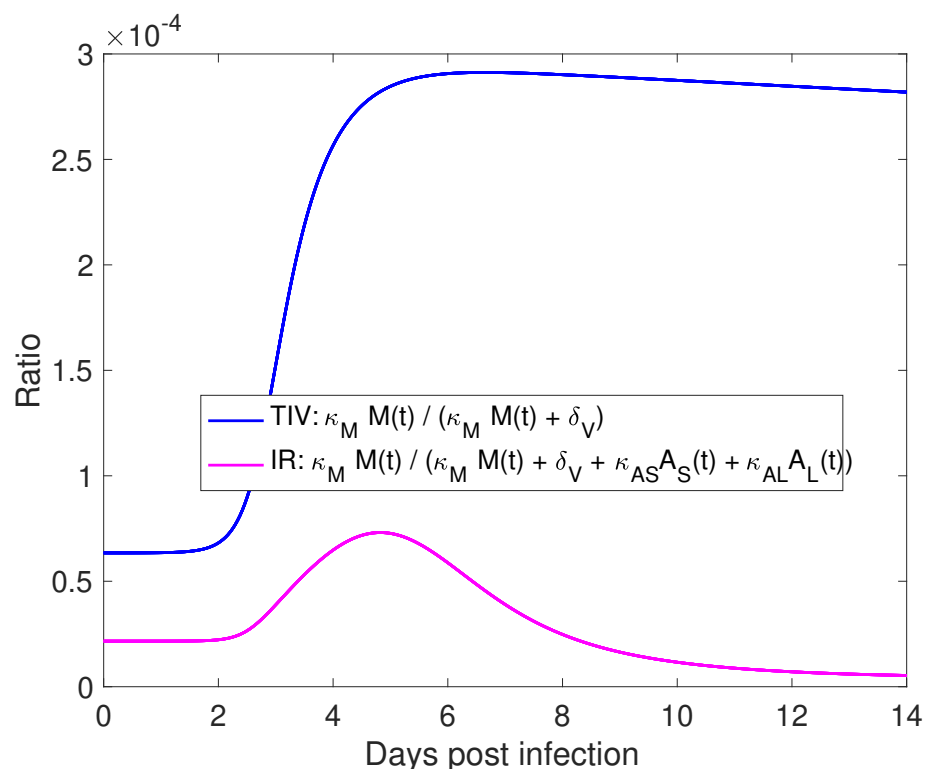


Figure 14: **Relative contribution of macrophage-mediated viral clearance in TIV and IR models.** We used posterior-median estimates of model parameters to compute the ratio shown in the legend in the TIV (blue line) and IR (purple line) models, respectively. The value of fixed model parameters used for simulation is given in Table 2 in Supplementary Materials.