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Co-occurrence of Photochemical and Microbiological Transformation Processes in Open-Water Unit Process Wetlands

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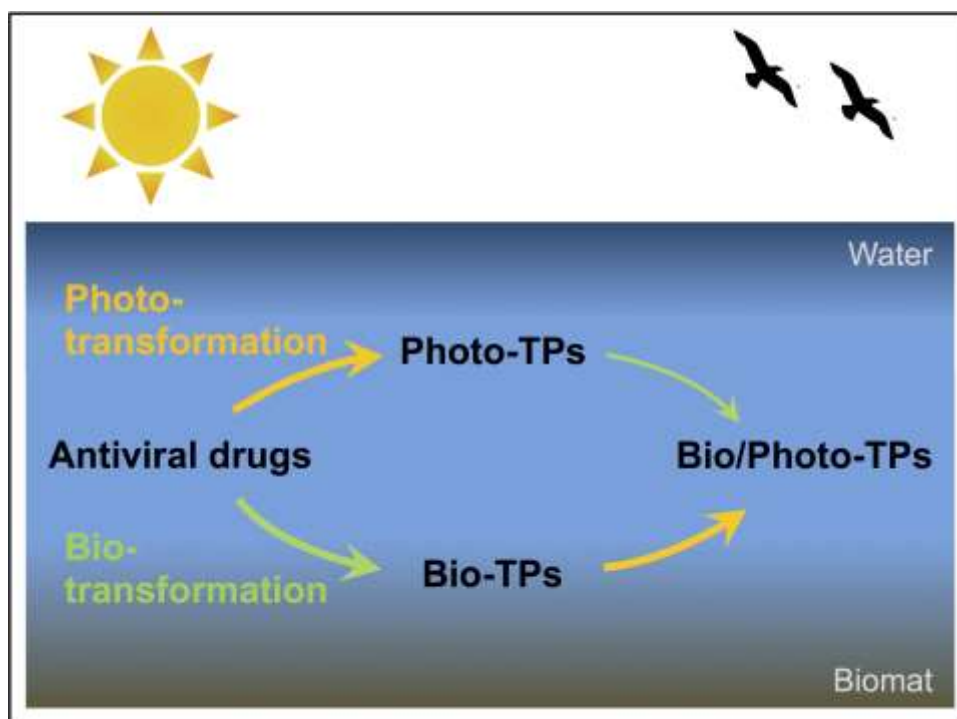
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21 **Abstract**

22 The fate of anthropogenic trace organic contaminants in surface waters can be complex due
23 to the presence of multiple parallel and consecutive transformation processes. In this
24 study, the removal of five antiviral drugs (i.e., abacavir, acyclovir, emtricitabine, lamivudine
25 and zidovudine) via both bio- and photo-transformation processes was investigated in
26 laboratory microcosm experiments simulating an open-water unit process wetland
27 receiving municipal wastewater effluent. The relative importance of the two
28 transformation processes was strongly compound dependent. Phototransformation was
29 the main removal mechanism for abacavir, zidovudine and emtricitabine with half-lives
30 ($t_{1/2,photo}$) in wetland water of 1.6 h, 7.6 h and 25 h, respectively. In contrast, removal of
31 acyclovir and lamivudine was mainly attributable to slower microbial processes ($t_{1/2,bio} =$
32 74 h and 120 h, respectively). Identification of transformation products via high-resolution
33 mass-spectrometry revealed that bio- and photo-transformation reactions took place at
34 different moieties of the molecules. For abacavir and zidovudine, rapid transformation was
35 attributable to the high reactivity of the cyclopropylamine and azido moiety, respectively.
36 Despite substantial differences in kinetics of different antiviral drugs, biotransformation
37 reactions mainly involved oxidation of hydroxyl groups to the corresponding carboxylic
38 acids. Phototransformation rates of parent antiviral drugs and their biotransformation
39 products were similar, indicating that prior exposure to microorganisms (e.g., in a
40 wastewater treatment plant or a vegetated wetland) would not affect the rate of
41 transformation of the part of the molecule that was susceptible to phototransformation.
42 However, phototransformation strongly affected the rates of biotransformation of the
43 hydroxyl groups, which in some cases resulted in greater persistence of abacavir and
44 acyclovir phototransformation products.

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52 **Introduction**

53 The discharge of municipal wastewater effluents into surface waters can result in the
54 presence of trace organic contaminants at concentrations that pose potential risks to
55 aquatic ecosystems and drinking water resources. After their release, many trace organic
56 contaminants are attenuated by biological and photochemical processes. Although these
57 processes often occur simultaneously or sequentially in the environment, most studies
58 have considered the occurrence of only one transformation process at a time.¹⁻⁴ Thus, it is
59 difficult to predict which transformation products are formed and whether or not
60 transformation reactions occurring at one moiety alter the kinetics of subsequent
61 transformation reactions. Furthermore, if partial transformation of a compound enhances
62 the reactivity of other moieties, interaction of transformation processes could result in
63 changes in the distribution of transformation products as well as their rates of removal. For
64 example, carbamazepine, a compound that is particularly resistant to biotransformation is
65 slowly transformed upon exposure to sunlight via direct photolysis and reaction with
66 $\cdot\text{OH}$.^{5,6} This leads to the formation hydroxylated derivatives⁷ which are more easily
67 biodegraded than the parent compound.⁸

68 Open water unit process wetlands have been developed as a polishing treatment step for
69 municipal wastewater effluents.⁹ These managed natural systems utilize sunlight to
70 remove trace organic compounds and deactivate pathogens.¹⁰⁻¹² In addition,
71 microorganisms in the biomat formed at the bottom of these treatment basins reduce
72 nitrate and contribute to aerobic biodegradation of trace organic contaminants.^{13,14} To
73 assess the importance of the co-occurrence of biological and photochemical transformation
74 reactions to reaction kinetics and product distribution, the fate of five antiviral drugs (i.e.,
75 abacavir, emtricitabine, lamivudine, zidovudine and acyclovir, see Figure 1) was studied
76 under conditions comparable to those encountered in open-water unit process wetlands.

77 Antiviral drugs were chosen because they are widely used for the treatment of diseases
78 such as herpes, hepatitis and HIV, and have been detected at concentrations above $1 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$
79 in municipal wastewater effluents.¹⁵⁻¹⁸ No information about potential environmental
80 effects resulting from the release of these compound into the aquatic environment is
81 available so far. Furthermore, little is known about the effects of these compounds on

82 environmental viruses, a group of microorganisms that play a very important role in
83 aquatic ecosystems.¹⁹

84 By investigating transformation kinetics and transformation mechanisms under conditions
85 comparable to those encountered in open-water unit process wetlands it is possible to gain
86 insight into how simultaneously occurring bio- and photo-transformation reactions affect
87 the overall fate of antiviral drugs in sunlit surface waters. These compounds also serve as
88 models for other families of compounds that contain moieties that are susceptible to bio-
89 and phototransformation.

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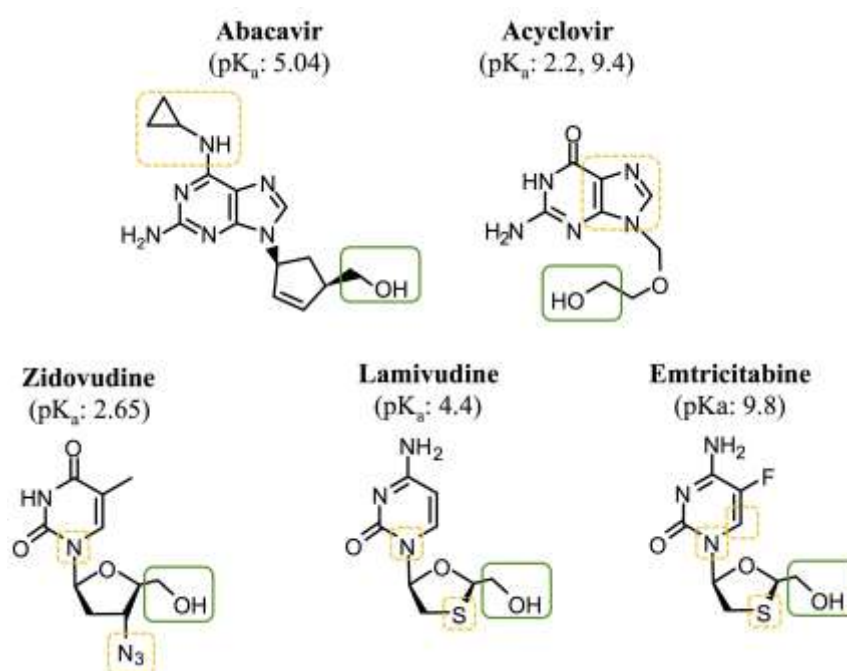


Figure 1. Antiviral drugs and their most likely sites of proposed photo- (□) and biotransformation (□) reactions.

91

92 **Materials and Methods**

93 *Chemicals*

94 Analytical reference standards of antiviral drugs and stable isotope-labeled analogues used
95 as internal standards (purity > 99%) were purchased from Toronto Research Chemicals
96 (Ontario, Canada). All other chemicals and solvents were obtained from Fisher Scientific
97 (Fairlawn, NJ).

98

99 *Wetland water sampling conditions*

100 Phototransformation experiments were conducted in water collected from a pilot-scale
101 open-water unit process wetland located in Discovery Bay, CA. The facility treats about
102 10,000 gallons per day ($4.4 \times 10^{-4} \text{ m}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$) of nitrified wastewater effluent from an adjacent
103 municipal wastewater treatment plant. Details about the open-water unit process wetland
104 were described previously.^{10,13} Water collected from the open-water wetland typically
105 contained 10 - 20 mg L⁻¹ -N NO₃⁻, 5 - 10 mg L⁻¹-C DOC, and 60 - 80 mg L⁻¹-C dissolved
106 inorganic carbon (HCO₃⁻ and CO₃²⁻). Samples for laboratory irradiation experiments were
107 collected from the mid-point of the wetland. All samples were filtered through pre-rinsed
108 1µm (nominal pore size) glass fiber filters (Whatman) and were stored in the dark at 4°C
109 until analysis, which occurred within 5 days.

110

111 *Laboratory photo- and biotransformation experiments (or: Determination of photo- and*
112 *biotransformation kinetics)*

113 Irradiation experiments were performed using a collimated beam Oriel Solar Simulator
114 (Spectra Physics, serial no. 91194) equipped with a 1000 W Xe lamp and either two
115 successive atmospheric attenuation filters (Spectra Physics, serial no. 81088 & 81017) or
116 one atmospheric and one UVB-filter (Spectra Physics, serial no. 81088 & 81050). Spectral
117 irradiance was routinely measured with a spectroradiometer (RPS 380, International light)
118 at different locations of the irradiated area to assess variability, which was always < 5%.
119 Details on lamp irradiance energies and the spectra of different configurations are given in
120 section 1.1 of the Supporting Information (SI). Irradiation experiments were carried out in
121 100mL black-painted glass beakers that were placed in a water bath at constant
122 temperature ($18 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$). Initial concentrations of antivirals of approximately 0.5 µM were
123 used for all kinetics experiments. Pseudo-first order phototransformation rate constants of
124 antivirals and photochemical probe compounds used for the quantification of reactive
125 intermediates were calculated from the slopes of linear regression of the natural log of
126 concentration versus time. Control experiments in the dark revealed no degradation of
127 antiviral drugs indicating that their transformation in wetland water can solely be
128 attributed to photochemical processes.

129 For the elucidation of biotransformation kinetics experiments beakers were additionally
130 supplemented with 10 mL of the biomat taken from the bottom of the pilot-scale wetland
131 and kept in the dark (see Jasper et al, for further details).

132
133 *Direct and indirect phototransformation.* Experiments to assess direct phototransformation
134 of antiviral drugs were conducted in buffered ultrapure water at pH-values ranging from 6
135 to 10 (pH 6 - 8: 5 mM phosphate buffer; pH 9 - 10: 5 mM borate buffer). Samples (1 mL)
136 were collected at regular time intervals and stored at 4°C in the dark until analysis.
137 Electronic absorption spectra of antiviral drugs at different pH values (see Fig. S2) were
138 recorded with a UV-2600 UV-Vis Spectrophotometer (Shimadzu) using quartz-glass
139 cuvettes (Hellma, Germany). Further details on determination of quantum yields using the
140 *p*-nitroanisole (PNA)/pyridine(PYR) method²⁰ and related calculations are provided in
141 section 1.6 of the SI.

142 Indirect phototransformation of antiviral drugs was investigated by the addition of specific
143 quenchers to wetland water: *N,N*-dimethylaniline (DMA; 10 µM) was used to scavenge CO₃-
144 radicals¹⁰, sorbic acid (2.5 mM) to scavenge excited triplet states of the dissolved organic
145 matter (³DOM*)²¹, histidine (20 mM) to scavenge singlet oxygen (¹O₂)²² and isopropyl
146 alcohol (IPA; 26 mM) to scavenge [•]OH-radicals.²³ In addition, experiments with specific
147 photosensitizers and were conducted in ultrapure buffered water to determine reaction
148 rate constants of antiviral drugs with individual reactive intermediates: For CO₃^{•-} either
149 NaNO₃/NaHCO₃ or NaNO₃/duroquinone photosensitizer methods were used.^{24,25} The
150 excited triplet state photosensitizers 3-methoxyacetophenone (3MAP) and anthraquinone-
151 2-sulfonate (AQ2S) served as a proxy for ³DOM*.²⁶ Hydroxyl-radicals were generated by
152 the irradiation of NaNO₃ solutions.²⁷ For ¹O₂ production Rose Bengal was used as a
153 photosensitizer.²⁸ To further verify the role of ¹O₂, some experiments were performed in
154 D₂O. Reaction rate constants were either determined by competition kinetics or by
155 comparing reaction rates of antiviral drugs with those of established photochemical probe
156 compounds (experimental details and calculations are provided in section 1.5 and 1.7). For
157 all indirect phototransformation experiments, the concentration changes of photochemical
158 probe compounds and antiviral drugs during irradiations were followed by HPLC-UV.
159 Experimental and analytical details, including comprehensive results are provided in SI.

160 Given the structural similarities of antivirals with DNA bases, additional irradiation
161 experiments were performed with adenine, 2-amino adenosine, cytosine, cytidine, guanine,
162 thymidine and thymine (SI section 2.1.1) to obtain further information about the
163 photoreactive moieties in the molecules and thus aid the identification of transformation
164 products.

165
166 *Identification of photo- and biotransformation products.* High resolution mass spectrometry
167 (HR-MS; LTQ Orbitrap Velos, Thermo Scientific, Bremen, Germany) was used to conduct
168 accurate MS and MS/MS analysis of transformation products of antiviral drugs. To this end,
169 experiments at elevated concentrations (40 μM) were used. The LTQ Orbitrap Velos was
170 coupled to a Thermo Scientific Accela liquid chromatography system (Accela pump and
171 autosampler). HR-MS was conducted in the positive electrospray ionization (ESI) mode. To
172 obtain structural information on the chemical structure of formed TPs, MSⁿ fragmentation
173 experiments were conducted using data dependent acquisition. Further information on the
174 applied setup and data dependent acquisition parameters can be found in the SI (section
175 1.2). Product formation of antiviral drugs in laboratory experiments was determined liquid
176 chromatography tandem mass spectrometry (LC/MS/MS). Details on the analytical
177 methods are provided in the SI (section 1.3).

178
179 *Combined bio- and photodegradation experiments.* The fate of antiviral drugs in the
180 presence of sunlight and microorganisms was investigated over a 72 h period in the
181 laboratory. Amber glass beakers (250mL) were filled with 180 mL of wetland water and 20
182 mL of freshly collected biomat material from the bottom of the Discovery Bay open-water
183 unit process wetland. The experimental setup was the same as described above for
184 photochemical experiments, but with three day/night cycles to simulate field conditions (8
185 h of daily irradiation followed by 16 h in the darkness; 72 h total). Antiviral drugs were
186 added individually at concentrations of 0.5 μM to ensure detection of both parent antiviral
187 compounds and their transformation products. Samples were collected at regular time
188 intervals and stored at 4°C in the dark prior to LC/MS/MS analysis, which occurred within
189 24 h. Further details about the analytical method can be found in the SI.

190

191 **Results and Discussion**

192 *Phototransformation in wetland water*

193 Phototransformation of the five investigated antiviral drugs in wetland water followed
194 first-order kinetics ($r^2 \geq 0.98$; Figure S4-S8). In native wetland water (pH 8.9), the fastest
195 phototransformation was observed for abacavir ($k_{\text{obs}} = 0.52 \pm 0.06 \text{ h}^{-1}$), zidovudine ($k_{\text{obs}} =$
196 $0.09 \pm 0.002 \text{ h}^{-1}$) and emtricitabine ($k_{\text{obs}} = 0.03 \pm 0.002 \text{ h}^{-1}$) whereas the transformation of
197 acyclovir and lamivudine were significantly slower ($k_{\text{obs}} = 0.012 \pm 0.001 \text{ h}^{-1}$ and $0.011 \pm$
198 0.001 h^{-1} , respectively) (Figure 2). No degradation of antiviral drugs in wetland water in
199 the dark was observed indicating that their removal was solely attributable to
200 photochemical processes. Photosynthetic activity leads to significant diurnal fluctuations of
201 pH in open-surface wetlands.¹⁰ Therefore, phototransformation kinetics of antiviral drugs
202 in wetland water were also determined at pH 6.5 and pH 10 (Figure 2).

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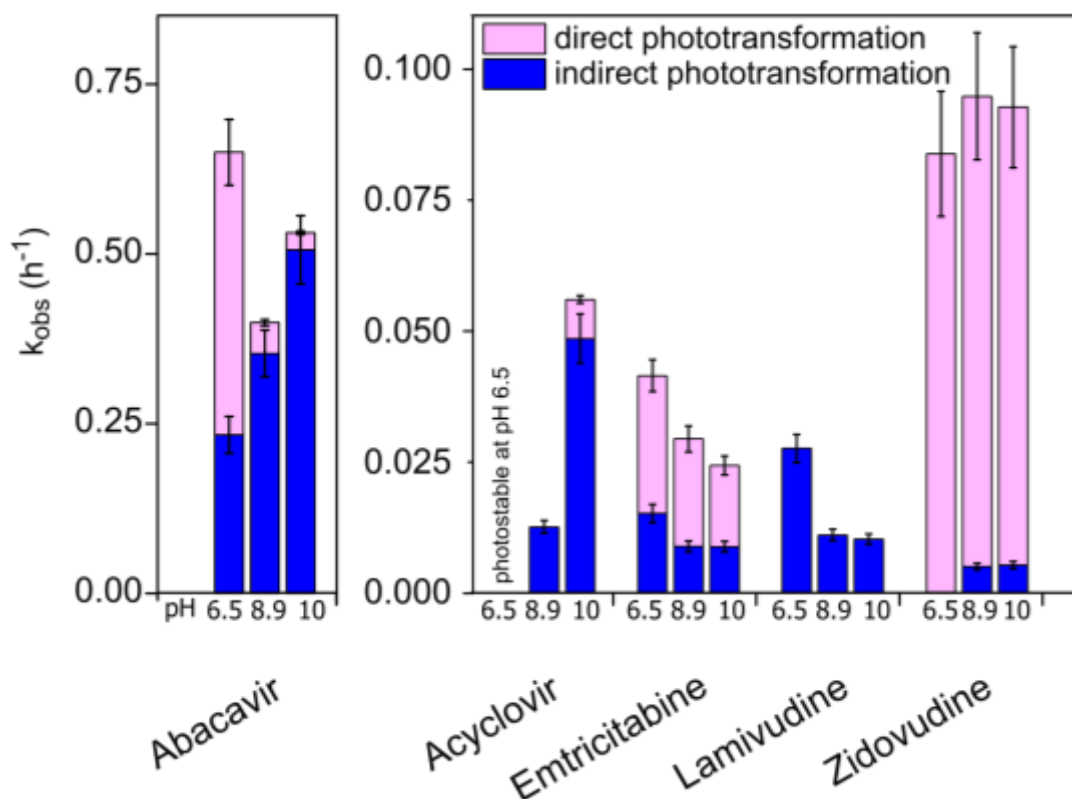


Figure 2. Phototransformation kinetics of antiviral drugs in experiments with wetland water at different pH values and contribution of direct and indirect photolysis processes by comparison with results obtained in ultrapure water. Data for wetland water are corrected for light-absorption. Error bars show 95% confidence intervals.

204

205 Phototransformation of abacavir in wetland water increased when the pH value was
206 adjusted to 6.5 or 10. This can be attributed to higher contribution of direct photolysis due
207 to higher quantum yields at lower pH values (i.e. Φ_{app} is 4.2 – 11.4 times higher between pH
208 6 – 8, compared to pH 9 and 10, SI Table S5) and faster indirect photolysis at higher pH
209 values. Comparison of transformation kinetics with results obtained in ultrapure water
210 revealed the dominance of indirect photodegradation processes at pH 8.9 and 10, whereas
211 direct photolysis was more important at pH 6.5. The addition of sorbic acid and histidine
212 significantly reduced phototransformation rates of abacavir in wetland water (Fig. S4),
213 suggesting the involvement of $^3\text{DOM}^*$ and $^1\text{O}_2$ in the photochemical fate of this compound.
214 This was also supported by experiments with specific singlet oxygen and excited triplet
215 state sensitizers (see below). Negligible removal of the structural analogues adenine and 2-
216 amino-adenosine further revealed that the photolability of abacavir can be attributed to the
217 cyclopropyl-moiety (see SI section 2.1.1).

218 Rates of phototransformation of zidovudine were not affected by changes in pH.
219 Comparison with reaction rates in both ultrapure water and wetland water in the presence
220 of scavengers revealed the dominance of direct photolysis (Fig. S5). Similar to abacavir,
221 comparison with the depletion of structural analogues thymine and thymidine indicated
222 that the azide moiety was responsible for the observed photoreactivity of zidovudine as
223 both analogues showed no removal when exposed to light (see SI section 2.1.1).

224 Phototransformation of acyclovir in wetland water increased with increasing pH.
225 Comparison with results from ultrapure water revealed that removal at pH 8.9 was solely
226 due to indirect photolysis, whereas at pH 10 direct photolysis was also relevant.
227 Significantly reduced rates of acyclovir phototransformation in the presence of sorbic acid
228 and histidine indicated the importance of $^1\text{O}_2$ and $^3\text{DOM}^*$ to indirect photolysis (Fig. S6). In
229 contrast to abacavir and zidovudine, phototransformation kinetics were similar to those
230 observed for the structural analogue guanine (SI Fig. S15). Thus, phototransformation of
231 acyclovir can be attributed primarily to the guanine moiety.

232 For lamivudine and emtricitabine, phototransformation kinetics in wetland water
233 decreased with increasing pH. No removal of lamivudine was observed in ultrapure water
234 indicating that its removal was entirely attributable to indirect photolysis. Higher

235 phototransformation rates of emtricitabine relative to lamivudine further indicated the
236 strong influence of the fluorine atom for emtricitabine's photolability. The presence of the
237 fluorine substituent leads to a higher absorption at 300-320 nm and thus alters the
238 compound's UV absorbance at wavelengths between 300-320 nm (SI Fig. S2). Even though
239 the absorption spectrum of emtricitabine did not change with pH, the quantum yield
240 steadily decreases with increasing pH (Table S5). Phototransformation of lamivudine in
241 wetland water was fully inhibited by sorbic acid, histidine and IPA but was unaltered in the
242 presence of DMA (Fig. S7). This indicates the importance of $^3\text{DOM}^*$, $^1\text{O}_2$ and OH-radicals for
243 its indirect phototransformation. For emtricitabine, phototransformation rates in wetland
244 were only affected by IPA and sorbic acid (Fig. S8), indicating that reactions with $^1\text{O}_2$ are
245 less important for this compound. The high photostability of its associated DNA base
246 cytosine and nucleotide cytidine revealed the importance of structural modifications (thiol
247 group (both compounds) and fluorine (emtricitabine)) to the observed photodegradability.

248
249 Additional experiments with individual reactive species revealed second order reaction
250 rates with $\cdot\text{OH}$ at or above (abacavir, zidovudine) diffusion controlled levels ranging from
251 $5 \cdot 10^9 - 1.1 \cdot 10^{11} \text{ M}^{-1}\text{s}^{-1}$ (Table 1). Antiviral compounds were reactive with $\text{CO}_3^{\cdot-}$, at rates
252 between $1.2 \cdot 10^6 - 1.2 \cdot 10^9 \text{ M}^{-1}\text{s}^{-1}$, while only abacavir ($1.2 \cdot 10^9 \text{ M}^{-1}\text{s}^{-1}$) and acyclovir ($1.2 \cdot 10^7$
253 $\text{M}^{-1}\text{s}^{-1}$) were obviously reactive with $^1\text{O}_2$. With the exception of abacavir, no depletion of
254 antiviral compounds was observe in the presence of the model triplet photosensitizer
255 3MAP but in presence of AQ2S at rates similar or higher than the reference probe
256 compound TMP, indicating a selective reactivity with excited triplet states. In order to
257 check the plausibility of results for indirect phototransformation and obtain further
258 indications for the role of different reactive species, steady-state concentrations of reactive
259 species measured in wetland water (Table S4) were multiplied with measured second-
260 order reaction rate constants of antivirals with $^1\text{O}_2$, $\cdot\text{OH}$ and $\cdot\text{CO}_3^-$, respectively (Table 1).
261 Based on this estimation revealed for abacavir that at pH 8.9 approximately 60% of its
262 indirect photodegradation in wetland water can be attributed to $^1\text{O}_2$. For acyclovir the
263 important role of $^1\text{O}_2$ for photodegradation was also strengthened, although the prediction
264 overestimates depletion rates by a factor two. For emtricitabine and lamivudine the

265 contribution of $^1\text{O}_2$, $\cdot\text{OH}$ and $\cdot\text{CO}_3^-$ can be assumed negligible, emphasizing the role of $^3\text{DOM}^*$
 266 and corroborating results of quenching experiments.
 267

Table 1. Quantum yields (pH 9) and apparent second-order reaction rate constants of indirect phototransformation of antiviral drugs via reaction with $^1\text{O}_2$, $\cdot\text{OH}$, $\cdot\text{CO}_3^-$ and excited triplet states (given relative to the degradation of the $^3\text{Sens}^*$ probe compound TMP). Quantum yields of antiviral drugs at pH 6-8 and pH 10 can be found in SI Table S5.

	[M Es ⁻¹]	[M ⁻¹ s ⁻¹]				[-]	
	Φ_{app} (pH 9)	$^1\text{O}_2$	$\cdot\text{OH}$	$\cdot\text{CO}_3^-$ ($\text{NO}_3^- + \text{HCO}_3^-/\text{CO}_3^{2-}$)	$\cdot\text{CO}_3^-$ (DQ)	$^3\text{SENS}^*$ (AQ2S)	$^3\text{SENS}^*$ (MAP)
Abacavir	0.014 (±0.003)	1.2×10^9 (± 18%)	1.1×10^{11} (± 3%)	1.2×10^9 (± 4%)	- ^a	4.88	13.5
Zidovudine	0.45 (±0.15)	n.d.	1.3×10^{10} (± 2%)	2.4×10^6 (± 5%)	1.3×10^6 (± 4%)	0.62	n.d.
Acyclovir	0.01 (±0.005)	1.2×10^7 (± 25%)	5.0×10^9 (± 2%)	1.2×10^8 (± 2%)	6.3×10^7 (± 4%)	0.08	n.d.
Emtricitabine	0.016 (±0.005)	n.d.	9.3×10^9 (± 2%)	3.0×10^6 (± 4%)	4.3×10^6 (± 12%)	2.03	n.d.
Lamivudine	n.d.	n.d.	9.2×10^9 (± 1%)	1.2×10^6 (± 3%)	1.7×10^6 (± 3%)	1.86	n.d.

268 n.d.: not detected above level of uncertainty; ^a not applicable due to reaction of abacavir with DQ also in the dark

269
 270 *Comparison of photo- vs biotransformation rates*
 271 Dark experiments conducted with wetland water in the presence of biomat material
 272 indicated that biotransformation rates varied considerably among antiviral drugs.
 273 Biotransformation half-life times ($t_{1/2,\text{bio}}$) ranged from 74 h for acyclovir to 500 h (21 d) for
 274 emtricitabine (Fig. 3; Fig. S13). Under typical wetland treatment conditions (i.e., hydraulic
 275 retention times of 2-3 days), significant biological attenuation of acyclovir and abacavir is
 276 expected whereas for the other antiviral drugs removal via microbial processes is unlikely
 277 to be an important removal pathway. Comparison of transformation rates of antiviral drugs
 278 in the dark to those observed in irradiated wetland water indicated that
 279 phototransformation processes were dominant for abacavir, zidovudine and emtricitabine,
 280 while for acyclovir and lamivudine biotransformation was similar or more important than
 281 photolysis during typical summertime conditions (Fig. 3).
 282

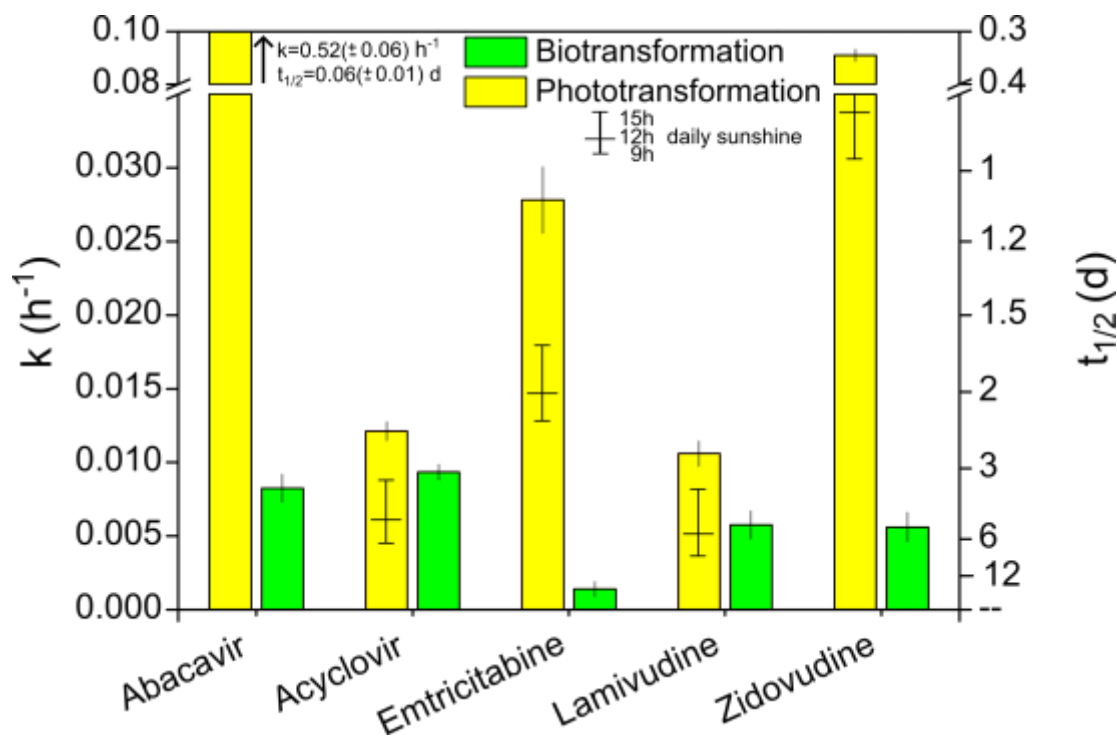


Figure 3. Photo- and biotransformation rate constants k (h^{-1}) and associated half-life time $t_{1/2}$ (d) of antiviral drugs in laboratory experiments. Small bars within phototransformation columns indicate half-life times based on daily sunshine hours (9-15 hours). For the determination of biodegradation half-life times experiments were conducted in the presence of biomat in the dark. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals obtained from linear regressions.

283

284 Transformation of abacavir

285 HRMS analysis indicated that four primary transformation products (TP318, TP288, TP284
 286 and TP246) were formed during photolysis of abacavir in wetland water (SI section 2.2;
 287 Table S7). In agreement with results obtained for the structural analogues 2-amino-
 288 adenosine and adenine, fragmentation patterns of TP318, TP288 and TP246 revealed that
 289 the cyclopropylamine moiety was the main site of reaction, leaving the 2-amino-adenine
 290 (fragments: m/z 151.073, 134.046 and 109.051) and the 2-cyclopenten-1-methanyl
 291 moieties (fragments: m/z 95.353 and 79.054) unaltered.

292 Exact mass calculations of TP318 showed addition of two oxygen atoms to the cyclopropyl
 293 moiety (Δm +31.9898 Da). Results from MS² experiments were consistent with the scission
 294 of the cyclopropyl ring and the presence of a terminal hydroxyl group, as indicated by the
 295 cleavage of H₂O and CH₂O.

296 For TP288, MS data suggested modification of the cyclopropyl moiety via loss of one carbon
 297 atom and the addition of one oxygen atom, leading to the formation of an acetamide,

298 whereas TP246 was formed via cleavage of the cyclopropyl ring. The chemical structure of
299 TP246 was confirmed by comparison with a commercially available reference standard.
300 The exact mass and fragmentation pattern of TP284 was consistent with loss of two
301 protons from either the cyclopropylamine or the 2-amino-adenosine moiety (fragments
302 m/z 149.069 and 189.088 instead of m/z 151.073 and 191.104 compared to abacavir and
303 the other TPs). Considering the high photolability of the cyclopropyl moiety, these
304 structural changes were most likely due to the formation of a cyclopropylimine.

305 To assess the relative importance of direct and different indirect photolysis processes for
306 formation of the observed abacavir transformation products, their formation was
307 investigated in buffered water (direct photolysis only), wetland water (direct and indirect
308 photolysis), and wetland water in the presence of different reactive intermediate
309 scavengers. The results revealed that both direct and indirect photolysis of abacavir
310 produced the same suite of TPs at similar relative concentrations, despite the fact that the
311 disappearance of the parent compound was significantly accelerated in the presence of
312 DOM and individual reactive intermediates (Fig. S17 & S18). Similar results were observed
313 for irgarol, an algaecide that is structurally similar to abacavir, suggesting that the
314 cyclopropylamine moiety is the main site of reaction under all conditions.²⁹
315 Photodegradation experiments in buffered ultrapure water with different optical filters
316 indicated that wavelengths below 320 nm preferentially led to cleavage of the cyclopropyl
317 moiety (TP246), whereas wavelengths above 320 nm (UV-A & visible light) led to scission
318 of the cyclopropyl ring followed by partial oxidation (TP318) (Fig. S19).

319 These findings suggest that phototransformation of abacavir is initiated by a one electron
320 oxidation of the cyclopropylamine moiety, leading to the formation of a
321 cyclopropylaminium radical cation,^{30,31} followed by subsequent reactions resulting in the
322 formation of various products. Interestingly, this phenomenon has also been utilized for
323 the investigation of electron-hopping in DNA by modifying guanine and adenine with
324 cyclopropyl moieties.^{32,33} Due to the instability of the initially formed closed ring radical
325 cation, the modification results in rapid cyclopropyl ring-opening as well as 1,2-hydrogen
326 migration, leading to the formation of an ionized allylamine.^{30,34} Scission of the ring is
327 followed either by a complete cleavage of the cyclopropyl moiety (TP246) or reaction of the
328 ring opened radical cation with H_2O/O_2 .^{32,34} In the latter case, electron release from the

329 carbon centered radical followed by hydrolysis leads to the formation of a 3-
330 hydroxypropanaminium cation³⁵ and subsequent addition of water results in the formation
331 of the 3-hydroxypropanamide (TP318). In our system, TP288 is formed by photolytic
332 cleavage of the hydroxymethyl group which leads to the formation of the acetamide
333 product.^{35,36} TP284 was most likely formed via H-atom abstraction, resulting in the
334 formation of a neutral cyclopropyl radical followed by an electron transfer reaction and/or
335 hydrolysis and elimination of water even though this reaction has only been shown to be
336 catalyzed by enzymes so far.^{37,38}

337
338 Experiments with biomat material in the dark to determine the relative importance of
339 biotransformation reactions indicated that microbial transformation of abacavir mainly
340 occurred via oxidation of the primary alcohol group of the 2-cyclopenten-1-
341 hydroxymethyl side chain to produce the corresponding carboxylic acid (abacavir
342 carboxylate, Fig. S13). This was consistent with previous experiments conducted with
343 mixed liquor suspended solids from an activated sludge treatment plant.³⁹

344
345 When abacavir was exposed simultaneously to light and microorganisms (Fig. 4), a rapid
346 loss of abacavir was observed during the first 8-hour light period (i.e., the initial
347 concentration decreased by approximately 90 %). For the next 16 hours (i.e., the dark
348 period) abacavir removal was significantly slower. When the light was turned back on,
349 nearly all remaining abacavir disappeared. As expected, the light-induced transformation of
350 abacavir gave rise to the four photo-TPs described above (middle panel of Fig. 4). The
351 concentrations of these photo-TPs decreased by approximately 25% over the next 2.5 days,
352 indicating that further transformation took place, either via photolytic or microbial
353 processes.

354 Additional biodegradation experiments with the four photo-TPs of abacavir revealed that
355 biotransformation occurs at the same moiety as observed for the parent compound, leading
356 to the corresponding carboxylates (TP246 carboxylate, TP284 carboxylate, TP288
357 carboxylate and TP318 carboxylate; Fig. S20). Exact mass data and fragmentation patterns
358 of bio-photo TPs determined by HRMS analysis are included in section 2.2 of the SI.
359 Consequently, the observed decrease in concentration of photo-TPs shown in the middle

360 panel of Fig. 4 was mainly attributable to biotransformation, leading to a steady formation
361 of carboxylate photo-TPs (bottom panel of Fig. 4). Faster transformation rates of abacavir
362 photo-TPs observed during irradiation periods may have been attributable to enhanced
363 biotransformation due to elevated oxygen concentrations or elevated pH values that
364 occurred when the photosynthetic microorganisms in the biomat were active. Differences
365 in biotransformation rates of TP246, TP284, TP288 and TP318, compared to abacavir (Fig.
366 S14), indicate that alteration of chemical structure influences biotransformation kinetics,
367 e.g. by affecting enzyme binding affinities or steric properties. Light-exposure of abacavir
368 carboxylate formed in the dark led to its phototransformation, ultimately yielding the same
369 photo-TPs as abacavir (bottom panel of Fig. 4). Considering that abacavir is already
370 transformed extensively to abacavir carboxylate in activated sludge treatment,³⁹ a rapid
371 elimination of both compounds can be expected in open-water unit process wetlands. In
372 contrast to biotransformation reactions, similar phototransformation kinetics were
373 observed for abacavir and abacavir carboxylate (Fig. S12). TP246 carboxylate was
374 identified as the main product that accumulates over time because it is not susceptible to
375 further reactions.

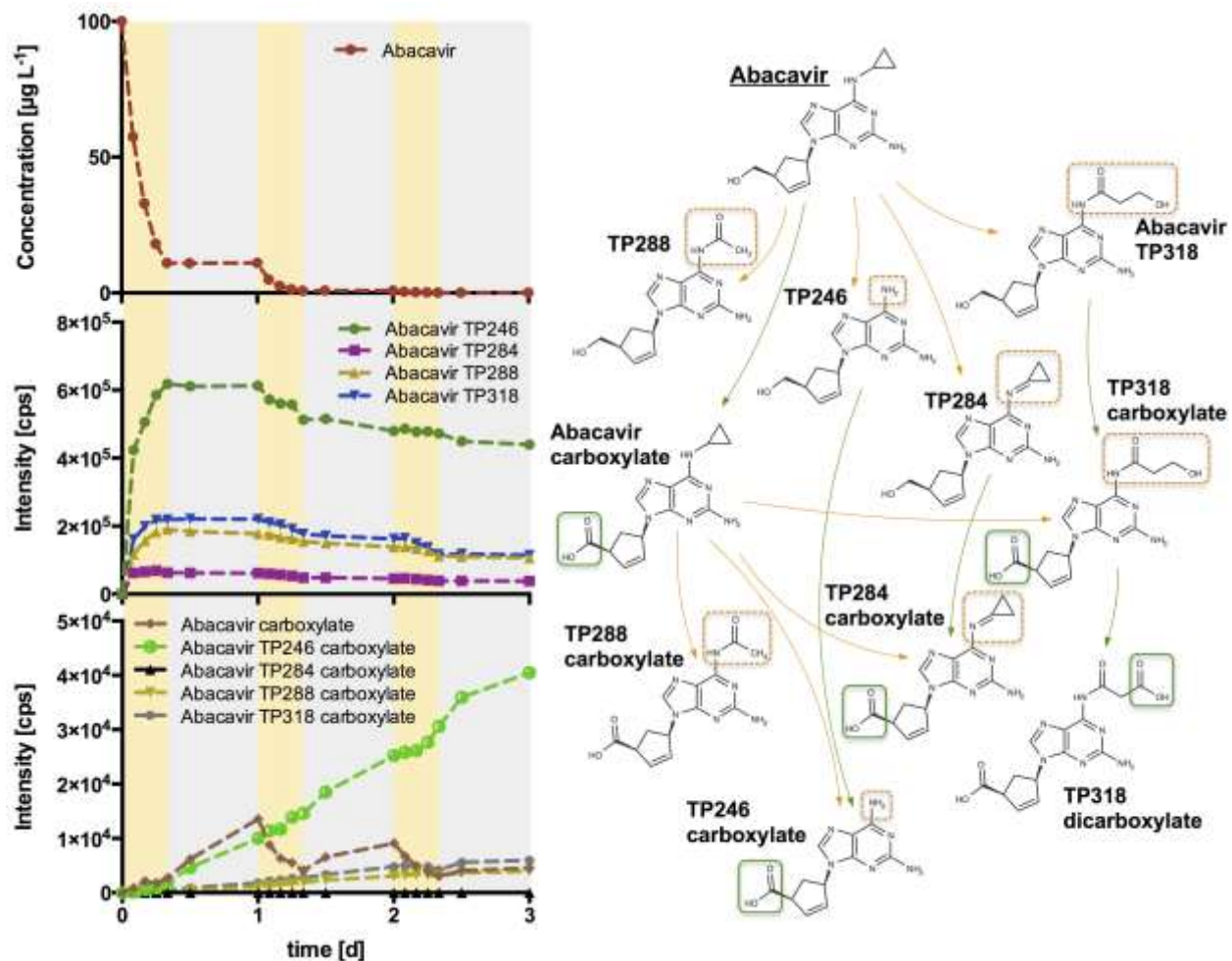


Figure 4. Transformation of abacavir (left, top) and resulting formation of photo-TPs (left, middle) and bio- / bio-photo-TPs (left, bottom) as well as proposed transformation pathway (right) in combined in 3 day experiments in the presence of biomat with 8 hours of daily irradiation. In the transformation pathway, photo- and biotransformation reactions and structural changes in the molecules are indicated in orange and green, respectively.

376

377 Transformation of acyclovir

378 In contrast to abacavir, the transformation of acyclovir was dominated by microbial
 379 processes (Fig. 5), with biotransformation resulting in the formation of acyclovir
 380 carboxylate, which was not susceptible to further microbial transformation. These results
 381 are consistent with previous biotransformation experiments conducted with acyclovir in
 382 sewage sludge.⁴⁰

383 In the absence of biomat material, exposure of wetland water to simulated sunlight
 384 resulted in formation of two main photo-TPs (TP257 and TP223). HRMS analysis indicated
 385 that TP257 contains two additional oxygen atoms on the guanine moiety, as evidenced by

386 the detection of fragment m/z 184 instead of m/z 152 (Table S8; Fig. S16). Photosensitized
387 degradation of guanine and guanosine occurs by reaction with excited triplet states, $^1\text{O}_2$,
388 $\cdot\text{OH}$ or $\cdot\text{CO}_3^-$.^{41,42} The main product of the reaction of guanine with $^1\text{O}_2$ has been identified
389 as spiroiminodihydroantoin.⁴³⁻⁴⁵ To assess the role of $^1\text{O}_2$ in the phototransformation of
390 acyclovir in wetland water, experiments were conducted in both H_2O and D_2O in the
391 presence of the $^1\text{O}_2$ sensitizer Rose Bengal (Fig. 5). Lifetimes of $^1\text{O}_2$ in D_2O are more than an
392 order of magnitude higher than in H_2O ³⁸ and faster transformation of acyclovir in D_2O
393 confirmed the role of $^1\text{O}_2$ for the indirect photolysis of acyclovir. In addition, the yield of
394 TP257 increased in D_2O . Due to its photochemical properties acyclovir is likely to undergo
395 self-sensitization via photoexcitation and subsequent formation of $^1\text{O}_2$ as shown for guanine
396 and guanosine.⁴⁷⁻⁴⁹ For the second acyclovir photo-TP (TP223), HRMS analysis indicated
397 the loss of two protons, most likely from the side chain, as evidenced by the detection of
398 fragments m/z 152, 135 and 110, suggesting that the guanine moiety remained unchanged
399 (Table S8). Additional information obtained from the fragmentation of the side chain was
400 inconclusive but indicates oxidation of the terminal alcohol to the corresponding aldehyde
401 via reaction with $\cdot\text{OH}$.⁵⁰

402 Results from 72h simulated sunlight experiments conducted in the presence of the biomat
403 revealed a steady decrease of acyclovir during light and dark periods, indicating the
404 dominance of biotransformation processes (Fig. 5b). However, biotransformation of
405 acyclovir was significantly faster in the sunlight experiments compared to dark controls
406 (Fig. 5a&b) suggesting that the higher oxygen concentrations and the elevated pH values
407 that occurred when microorganisms in the biomat were undergoing photosynthesis played
408 a role in the biotransformation processes.¹⁰ In the presence of simulated sunlight,
409 production of the two phototransformation products (i.e., TP257 and TP224) was
410 observed. No significant removal of TP257 was detected during dark periods, suggesting
411 limited biotransformation via oxidation of the terminal hydroxyl-group of the side chain.
412 Although the exact reason for this is unknown, a plausible explanation is that the structural
413 modifications of the guanine core moiety prevented enzymatic oxidation of TP257. In
414 contrast, concentrations of TP223 decreased in the dark. For the biotransformation
415 product (i.e., acyclovir carboxylate), increasing concentrations were only observed during
416 dark periods whereas its concentration decreased when exposed to sunlight. This indicates

417 that the compound was transformed further by photolytic processes, most likely via the
 418 same mechanisms as acyclovir. This was confirmed by additional irradiation experiments
 419 with acyclovir carboxylate in wetland water (results not shown).
 420

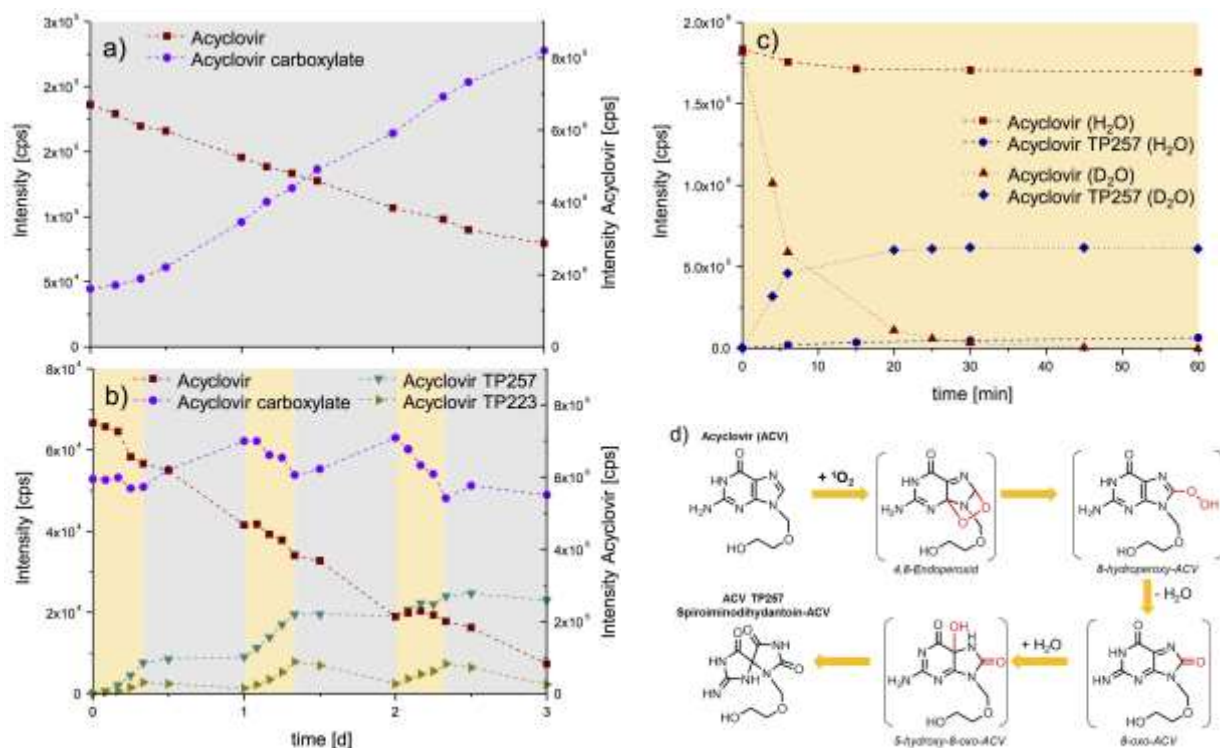


Figure 5. Transformation of acyclovir in the presence of biomat in the dark (a) in combined photo- and biotransformation experiments (b), as well as formation of TP257 via reaction of acyclovir with $^1\text{O}_2$ in D_2O and H_2O using Rose Bengal as photosensitizer (c) and its proposed phototransformation pathway (d). The occurrence of acyclovir carboxylate at t_0 in (a) and (b) is due to its emission by the WWTP that feeds the wetland.

421
 422 Transformation of zidovudine, lamivudine and emtricitabine
 423 MS spectra of the phototransformation products of emtricitabine, lamivudine and
 424 zidovudine indicated structural changes at different positions on the molecules (Table S9-
 425 S11). For lamivudine and emtricitabine, HRMS analysis revealed oxidation of the riboside
 426 moiety (lamivudine TP245 and emtricitabine TP263), most likely via S-oxidation. This was
 427 confirmed by comparison with commercially available reference standards. Addition of
 428 H_2O to the 5-fluoro-cytosine moiety was observed for emtricitabine (emtricitabine TP265).
 429 Experiments conducted with the fluorine-free analogue lamivudine illustrates the
 430 importance of fluorine substitution: the F-moiety increases the light absorbance at

431 wavelengths > 300 nm (Fig. S2) for emtricitabine and leads to faster photodegradation
432 (Figure 1, Table S5). Emtricitabine TP265 was formed via hydration of the double bond of
433 the 5-fluorocytosine moiety, yielding a hydroxyl-group at position C6. For zidovudine,
434 observed phototransformations were mainly attributable to the photolability of the azido
435 moiety. Formation of zidovudine TP239 can be explained by cleavage of N₂, yielding a
436 nitrene intermediate, which reacts further via intramolecular C-H insertion to an
437 aziridine.^{51,52} Subsequent nucleophilic attack of the aziridine by water leads to the
438 hydroxylation of the C atom in β-position or the formation of a hydroxylamine (zidovudine
439 TP257).^{51,53} Results from HRMS analysis of zidovudine TP221 were inconclusive but
440 indicated cleavage of N₂ and H₂O from the furanosyl moiety.

441 In addition, photolytic cleavage of the nitrogen-carbon bond between the DNA base
442 moieties and the riboside analogue side chains was observed for all three compounds,
443 resulting in formation 5-fluoro-cytosine (emtricitabine TP129), cytosine (lamivudine
444 TP111) and thymine (zidovudine TP126). None of these TPs were detected in sunlight
445 experiments in the presence of biomat (Fig. S21-22), indicating that they were rapidly
446 transformed, most likely via microbial processes. For zidovudine, this was confirmed by
447 additional biodegradation experiments with the photo-TPs (i.e., thymine, TP239, TP257),
448 showing the rapid elimination of thymine (Fig. S22). Considering the importance of both
449 thymine and cytosine as DNA building blocks, it is likely that they were incorporated into
450 the microbial biomass. The fate of 5-fluorocytosine remains unclear. Similar to abacavir
451 and acyclovir, biotransformation of emtricitabine, lamivudine and zidovudine was shown
452 to result in the formation of carboxylated TPs via oxidation of the terminal alcohol as
453 already observed for abacavir and acyclovir (Fig. S13). As carboxylated TPs are expected to
454 follow the same phototransformation mechanisms as the parent compounds,, the
455 interactions of photo- and biotransformation reactions is likely to result in the complete
456 elimination of via mineralization and/or microbial uptake (Fig. 6).

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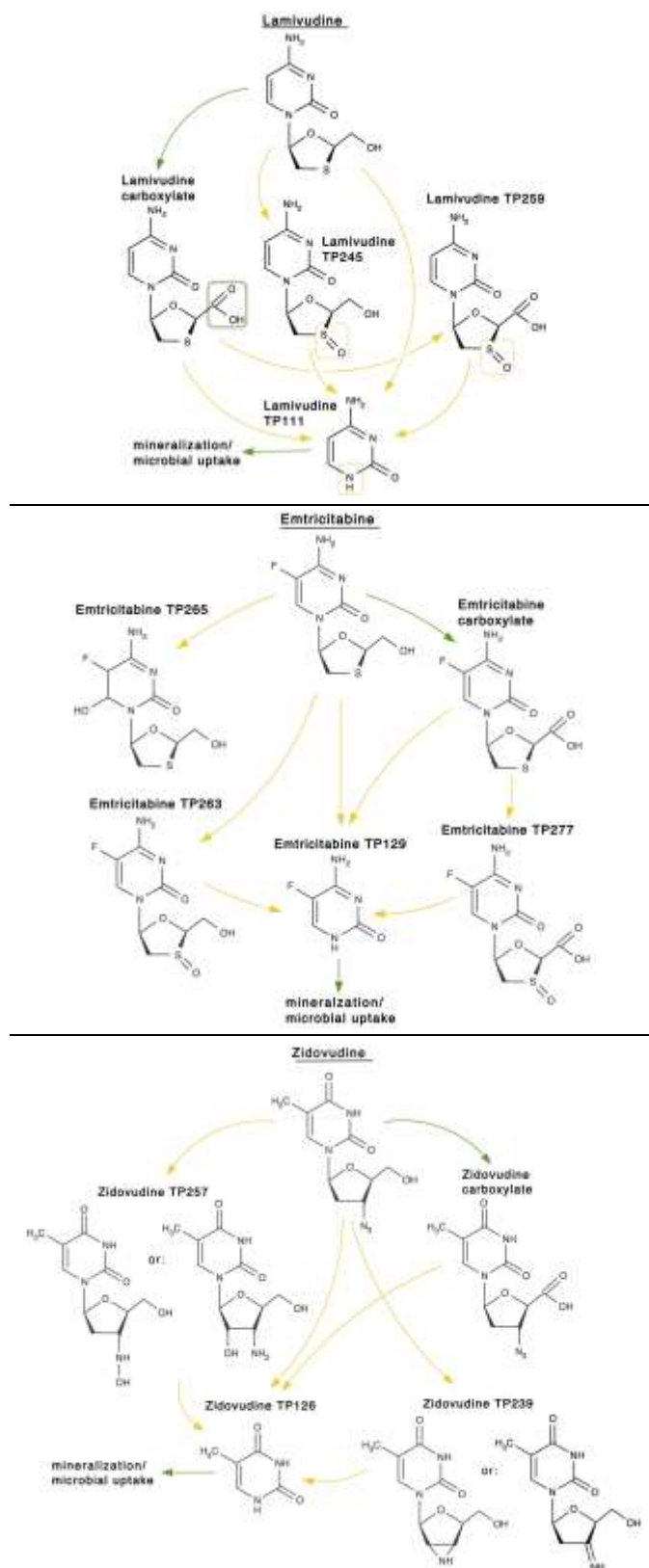


Figure 6. Proposed photo- and biodegradation pathway of lamivudine (top), emtricitabine (middle) and zidovudine (bottom) in open-water wetland cells. Orange and green

arrows indicate photo- and biotransformation reactions,
respectively.

461

462 *Environmental implications*

463 The differences between kinetics and transformation product formation in presence and
464 absence of the biomat highlight the complexity of transformation reactions that lead to the
465 removal of trace organic contaminants in open water unit process wetlands and other
466 sunlit waters. Attempts to predict the environmental fate of organic contaminants in these
467 systems require an understanding of both processes as well as their potential interactions.

468 Identification of TPs showed that bio- and phototransformation reactions take place at
469 different positions of the antiviral molecules. Phototransformation of biodegradation
470 products was found to occur at the same location as in the parent compound. As a result,
471 mechanisms and kinetics were similar to those observed for parent antiviral compounds.

472 This is important because carboxylate biodegradation products are typically present in
473 much higher concentrations in biological treated wastewater compared to parent
474 compounds.³² In contrast, biodegradation kinetics of phototransformation products of
475 antiviral drugs differed substantially from that observed for the parent compound even
476 though the site of enzymatic oxidation did not change. This can be explained by differences
477 in enzyme affinities and steric hindrance. For example, phototransformation of acyclovir
478 created a transformation product (TP257) that was not susceptible to biotransformation
479 by microorganisms that could oxidize the parent compound in the dark.

480 Combining kinetic studies with investigations of transformation product formation
481 provides a better understanding of mechanisms relevant for the removal of trace organic
482 contaminants in sunlit waters. By conducting biotransformation studies in the presence
483 and absence of light it is possible to assess interactions between transformation processes
484 and the likelihood that complete mineralization of trace organic contaminants will occur.
485 These data also suggest that relative ratios of antiviral compounds and their
486 transformation products might be useful as *in situ* probes to assess the relative importance
487 of microbial and photochemical transformation pathways. This study also highlights the
488 need to consider the formation of different transformation products in sunlit and light-
489 shaded systems and the possibility of using knowledge of the reactivity of specific moieties

490 in chemical fate assessment. Considering the variety of formed transformation products,
491 there is a need for appropriate risk assessment tools to assess potential adverse effects of
492 transformation products with unknown toxicities on aquatic ecosystems. Finally, additional
493 field studies are needed to further confirm the obtained laboratory results and to assess
494 the suitability of the approach for the determination of the relative importance of
495 individual transformation processes.

496

497 **Supporting Information**

498 Additional information on sample analysis; UV spectra of antiviral drugs; determination of
499 indirect photolysis reaction rate constants, quantum yields, steady state concentrations of
500 reactive intermediates in wetland water; experiments with DNA model compounds, MSⁿ
501 fragments of transformation products; formation and fate of abacavir photo-TPs by
502 different reactive intermediates; results of combined bio- and phototransformation
503 experiments with emtricitabine, lamivudine and zidovudine.

504

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511

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