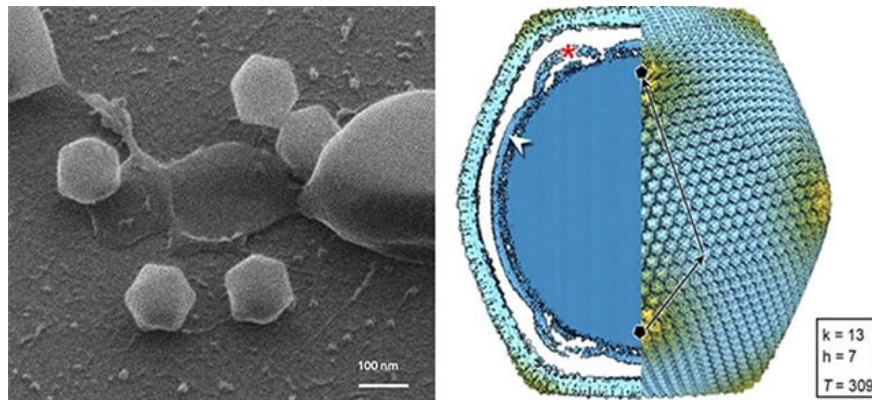


Scientists find first giant virus strain near the Arctic

Jyvaskylavirus – the first giant virus found in Finland – shows that this group of viruses is more common than expected and plays an important role in ecosystems.

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For the first time in Finland, researchers from the Nanoscience Centre at the University of Jyväskylä have successfully isolated a giant virus, dubbed Jyvaskylavirus. The discovery suggests that giant viruses may be more widely distributed in the Northern Hemisphere than previously thought, and sheds light on their structure, origin and function.



Giant viruses are ubiquitous in nature.

Viruses are everywhere. While most viruses are harmless to humans, they play an essential role in ecosystems. In recent years, scientists have discovered a series of giant viruses (about the size of bacteria) that infect amoebas and other microorganisms. Most known giant viruses have been found in Europe and South America, but their life cycles and distribution remain unknown.

Research at the University of Jyväskylä is the first to isolate a giant virus from Finland. Jyvaskylavirus is 200 nanometers in diameter – twice as large as influenza or SARS-CoV-2.

' Thanks to international cooperation, we have decoded the genome and structure of the Jyvaskylavirus. It is related to the Marseillevirus that was isolated in France. Several new giant viruses were also discovered in environmental samples, ' says Professor Lotta-Riina Sundberg from the University of Jyväskylä.

The discovery suggests that giant viruses are more common in soil and water than previously thought, even in the frigid north.

This new discovery helps to better understand the interactions between microorganisms, the role of viruses in regulating biological populations, and provides new insights into the structure of giant viruses. The research paves the way for further work to decipher the mysteries of the "giants" in the microscopic world.

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