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Marine viruses and their biogeochemical and ecological effects

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Abstract

Viruses are the most common biological agents in the sea, typically numbering ten billion per litre. They probably infect all organisms, can undergo rapid decay and replenishment, and influence many biogeochemical and ecological processes, including nutrient cycling, system respiration, particle size-distributions and sinking rates, bacterial and algal biodiversity and species distributions, algal bloom control, dimethyl sulphide formation and genetic transfer. Newly developed fluorescence and molecular techniques leave the field poised to make significant advances towards evaluating and quantifying such effects.

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