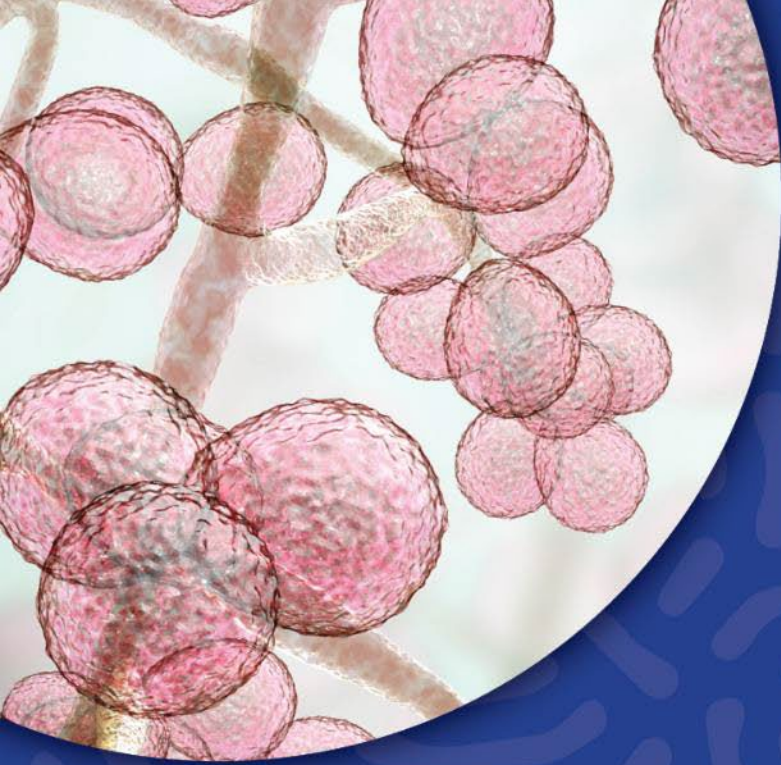


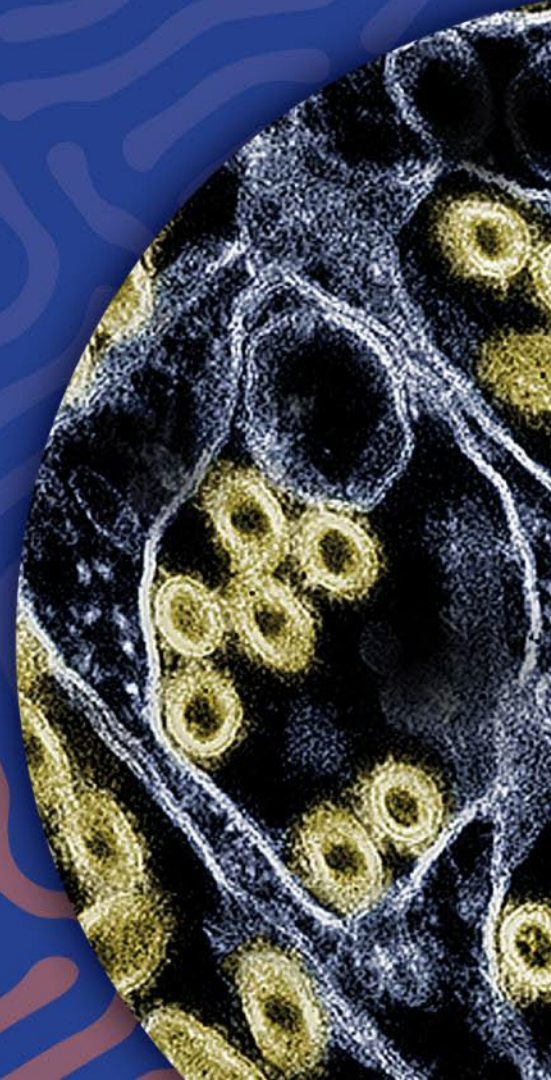


2025



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Phenotypic vs. Genotypic

Recommendations for AMR Testing

Jean B. Patel, PhD, D(ABMM)



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Disclosures

Nothing to disclose

Poll Everywhere



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Phenotypic Antimicrobial Susceptibility Tests (AST) vs Resistance Mechanisms (RMs)



Q: Do we need both types of data?

A: With increasing frequency, the answer is yes!

Q: Do I need both results all of the time?

A: No, just some of the time.

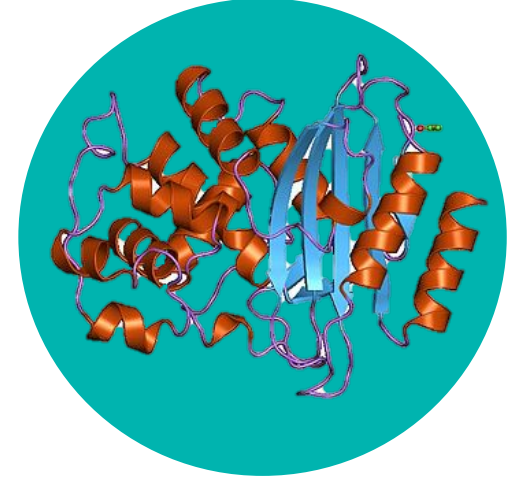
Q: Should I report both result when I have the data?

A: Not necessarily. Reporting needs to be done in a way to drive clinical decision making with minimal confusion.

Q: Is it possible to only perform resistance mechanism testing?

A: Rarely. This could change in the future.

Most Common Methods to Detect RMs



Molecular Assays	Immunoassays	Phenotypic
<i>mec</i> genes	(PBP2a) <i>mecA</i>	Penicillinases
<i>van</i> genes	Carbapenemases	ESBLs, Carbapenemases
ESBLs, Carbapenemases		Inducible clindamycin resistance

Useful Applications of RM Testing



1. Early treatment decisions

- ✓ A RM test result correlates well with phenotypic resistance
- ✓ The presence of a RM indicates alternative therapy needed

2. More accurate therapy decisions when phenotypic resistance fails to detect antimicrobial resistance of clinical or epidemiological relevance.

3. Improved empiric therapy decisions

Good Correlation of RM and Phenotypic Results



Staphylococcus aureus

- Mec genes account for nearly 100% of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*
- Alternative therapy for serious infections: Vancomycin



Enterococcus spp.

- Van genes account for 100% of vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus*
- Alternative therapy: Daptomycin or linezolid

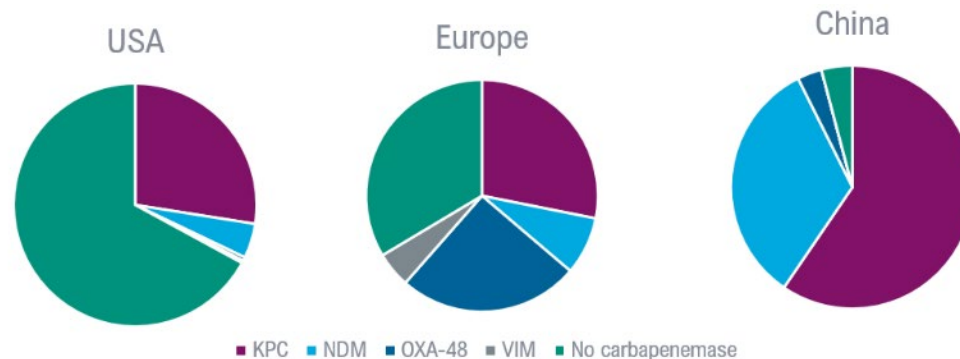
Rapid RM tests for these pathogens usually enables effective patient management

Poor Correlation of RM and Phenotypic Results



Enterobacteriales

- The presence of a carbapenemase is a subset of carbapenem-resistant isolates.
- The % attributable resistance varies by population



- Identifying resistance and alternative therapies requires phenotypic testing

References:

Zhang, Y; et al. 2018. Antimicrobial Agents & Chemotherapy 62 (2)
Nordmann, P; et al. 2019. Clin Infect Dis 69 (Suppl 7)
CDC ([Carbapenem-Resistant Enterobacteriales | A.R. & Patient Safety Portal \(cdc.gov\)](#))

Rapid RM tests are most informative if positive. Additional rapid phenotypic testing is needed to drive effective therapy

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RM Tests Indicates Therapy Escalation

Extended-spectrum β -lactamase (ESBL)-producing *Escherichia coli* in a urine specimen

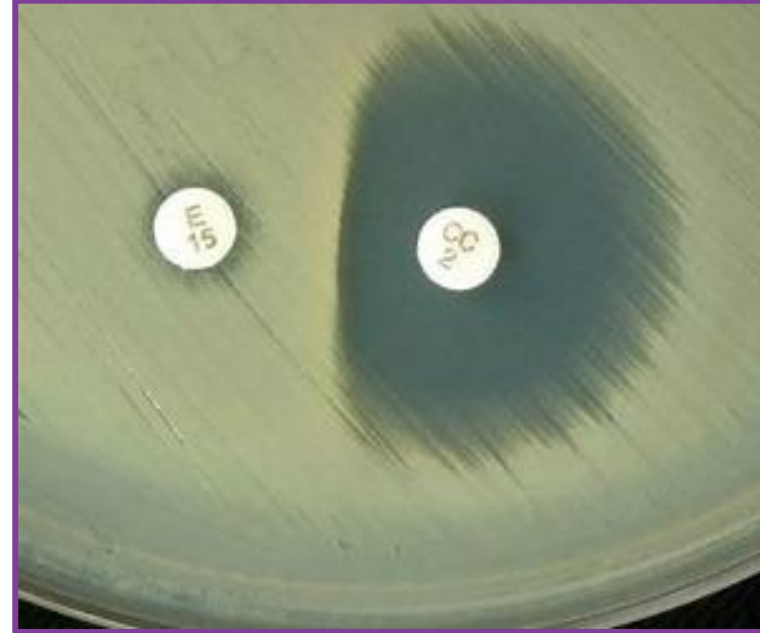
- *E. coli* is the #1 cause of outpatient urinary tract infection (~80%)
- With increasing frequency, these are ESBL-producing isolates (~24% in U.S.)
- IDSA MDRO treatment guideline recommends the following for treatment of uncomplicated UTI cause by ESBL-producing *E. coli*
 - A. Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, nitrofurantoin, ciprofloxacin or levofloxacin (Note: These drugs are effective for multiple pathogens, but resistance rates can be high.)
 - B. Aminoglycosides or Fosfomycin (Note: Aminoglycosides are IV antibiotics and fosfomycin is effective for *E. coli* UTI only.)

These recommendations introduce a new dependence upon diagnostic testing for outpatient UTIs because ID, AST, and ESBL testing is needed for treatment of a very common infection.

Phenotypic Testing Fails to Detect Resistance



- Inducible clindamycin resistance in *Staphylococcus* and *Streptococcus*.
- This occurs when bacteria acquire *erm* genes, which confers resistance to clindamycin and macrolides (e.g., erythromycin) when fully expressed.
- Isolates test resistant to erythromycin but susceptible to clindamycin during low expression but can convert to high level expression when clindamycin is used clinically.
- Erythromycin can induce gene expression



Solution:

Test susceptibility to clindamycin alone, erythromycin alone and a combination of both drugs.

Clindamycin: susceptible

Erythromycin: resistant

Both drugs: positive growth

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Improved Empiric Treatment Decisions

Adding RM data to an antibiogram provides better information for empirical treatment regimens.

XYZ Institution Microbiology Laboratory 1 January - 31 December 2021 Cumulative Antimicrobial Susceptibility Test Data - Antibiogram																
	PERCENTAGE (%) SUSCEPTIBLE*															
		Aminoglycosides			β-Lactams						Quinolones		Others			
	# Isolates Tested	Amikacin	Gentamicin	Tobramycin	Oxacillin	Ampicillin	Piperacillin/ Tazobactam	Ceftazidime	Ceftriaxone	Meropenem	Ciprofloxacin	Levofloxacin	Clindamycin	Nitrofurantoin [§]	Chloramphenicol	Trimethoprim sulfamethoxazole
GRAM NEGATIVE																
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	670	99	53	92	-	50	97	92	93	99	28	-	-	90	-	72
<i>Klebsiella</i> sp.	300	99	72	94	-	R	52	60	61	68	50	-	-	50	-	54
<i>Proteus mirabilis</i>	75	100	70	93	-	53	58	61	63	95	55	-	-	R	-	79
<i>Salmonella enterica</i> ser. Typhi (blood isolates only)	50	-	-	-	-	50	-	-	69	-	90	-	-	-	22	86
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	187	97	70	83	-	R	45	53	R	76	60	-	-	-	-	R
GRAM POSITIVE																
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> ALL	850	-	-	-	66	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	81	-	-	97
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> MRSA	289	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	100 [#]	-	96
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> MSSA	561	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	82	100	-	97
* %S for each organism/antimicrobial combination generated by including first isolate of organism encountered in a given patient § Nitrofurantoin data for urine isolates only R = intrinsic resistance (-) drug not routinely tested or indicated for this organism																

This can improve antibiotic use when:

1. A rapid RM test is used
2. The patient is likely to be infected with a resistant pathogen

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What if Phenotypic and RM Results Disagree?



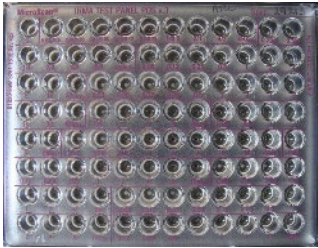
CLSI M100 Appendix G. Using Molecular Assays for Resistance Detection

- Table G1: Methicillin (Oxacillin) vs *Staphylococcus aureus*
- Table G2: Vancomycin vs *Enterococcus* spp.
- Table G3: Detection of ESBLs or carbapenemases in *Enterobacterales*

Table G1. Strategies for Reporting Methicillin (Oxacillin) Results When Using Molecular and Phenotypic AST Methods for *S. aureus*

Indication	Resistance Mechanism(s)	Methods	Specimen Types	Results		Suggestions for Resolution	Consider Reporting as ^a :	Comments ^b
				Resistance Mechanism(s) Detected	Phenotypic AST (if tested)			
Detecting methicillin (oxacillin) resistance in <i>S. aureus</i>	PBP2a	Latex agglutination, immuno-chromatography	Colony	PBP2a positive	Cefoxitin R	N/A	Methicillin (oxacillin) R	1
				PBP2a negative	Cefoxitin S	N/A	Methicillin (oxacillin) S	1
				PBP2a positive	Cefoxitin S	Confirm isolate identification, repeat latex agglutination and AST, and consider <i>mecA</i> colony NAAT, if available.	If discrepancy is not resolved by suggested testing, report as methicillin (oxacillin) R.	1–2

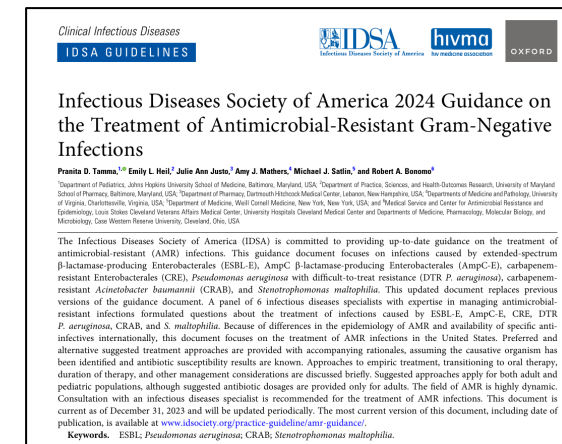
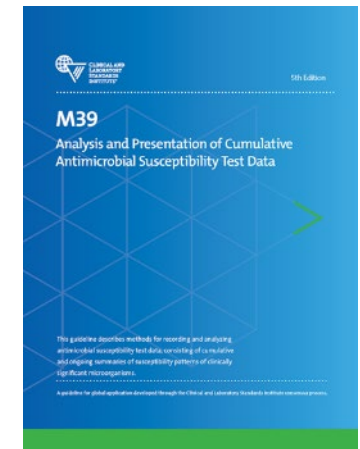
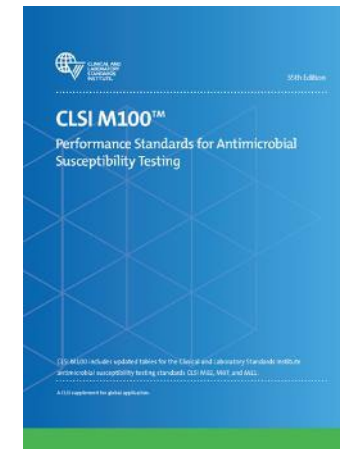
When to Detect RMs & Commonly Used Tests

					
	Direct from specimen	Direct from Positive Blood Culture (PBC)	Initial subculture	Built into AST	Post AST
	Early treatment decisions	Early treatment decisions	Early treatment decisions	Detect Rms not reliably detection using phenotypic methods	Confirm or characterize phenotypic resistance for treatment or epidemiological purposes.
Blood	T2 Diagnostics	BioFire Film Array System	Molecular Assay Systems:	Vitek 2	Same as initial subculture
LRTI	BioFire FilmArray System	cobas eplex system	Roche cobas system	Vitek Reveal	
	cobas eplex system	Verigene System	Cepheid Xpert	BD Phoenix	
	Verigene System	Xpert MRSA/SA	BD Max	MicroScan	
Rectal Swab	BD Max CPO		ClearView PBP2a	SeLux	
	Xpert Carba-R		NG-Test CARBA 5		
Nasal Swab	Cobas MRSA/SA				
	Xpert MRSA/SA				
	BD Max MRSA/SA				

Resources

- CDC – The epidemiology of AMR threats
- CLSI – Testing and reporting recommendations
- IDSA – Treatment Recommendations

www.cdc.gov, www.clsi.org, www.idsociety.org



Evolving Thoughts on RM Testing Over Time

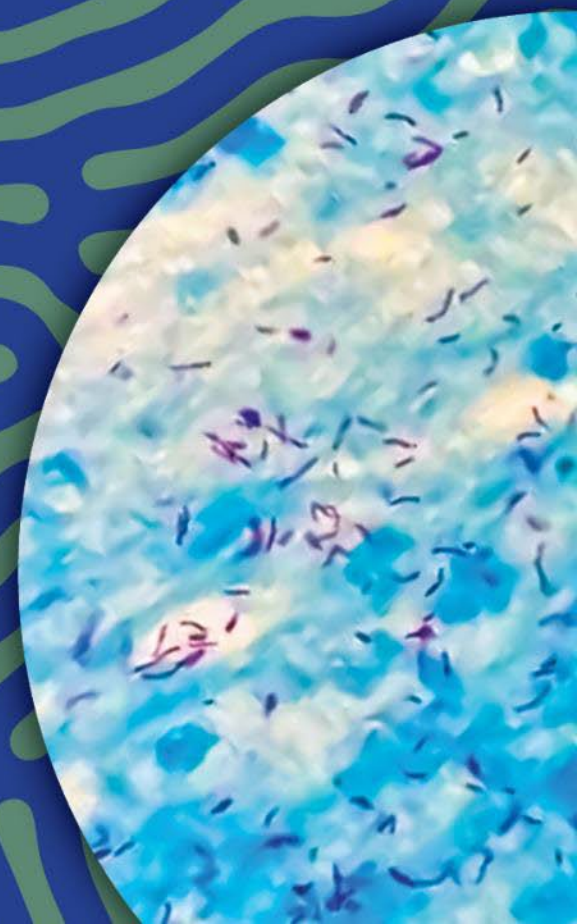


The mechanism doesn't matter. We just need to know the MIC.

RM testing is useful for infection control and epidemiological purposes only.

RM testing is important for early treatment decisions and better empiric therapy.

Recommendations will continue to evolve as resistance increases and new diagnostics come to market.





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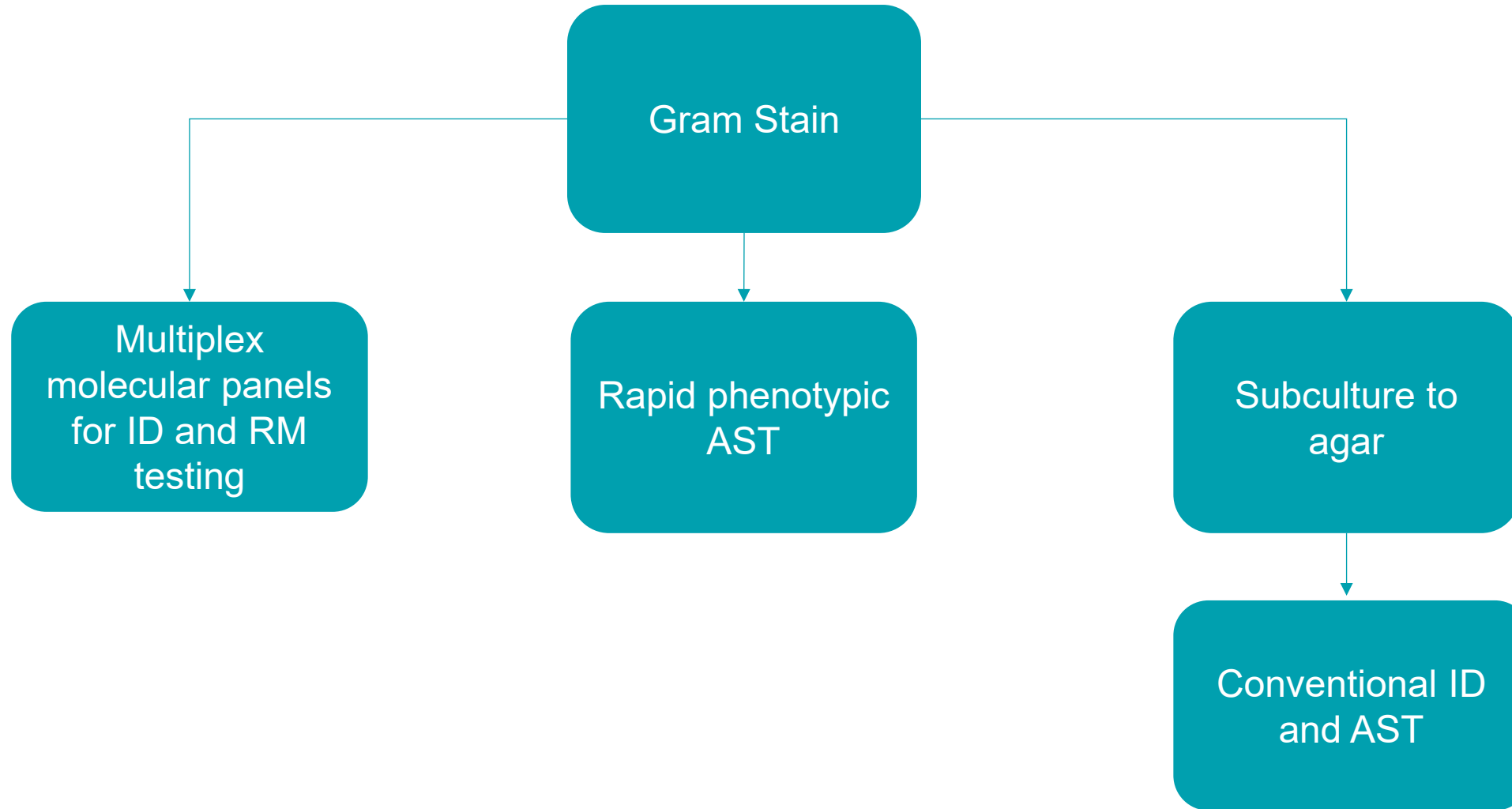
Case Study #1

Case 1: Native Valve Endocarditis



- A 77-year-old woman was hospitalized with a 1-week history of progressive shortness of breath, cough and lower limb edema. She had a prior history of arterial hypertension.
- The patient was febrile, tachycardic, and had a low oxygen saturation on air. White blood cells were elevated. Chest Xray and transthoracic echocardiogram suggested endocarditis.
- Blood cultures were collected, and the patient was started on vancomycin and gentamicin.
- The blood culture bottles were positive and tested using the lab's standard protocol.

Positive Blood Culture Testing Protocol



Diagnostic Results – Rapid Molecular Panel

Target	Result
<i>Staphylococcus lugdunensis</i>	Not Detected
<i>Streptococcus</i>	Not Detected
<i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i>	Not Detected
<i>Streptococcus agalactiae</i>	Not Detected
<i>Streptococcus anginosus</i> group	Not Detected
<i>Streptococcus pyogenes</i>	Not Detected
<i>Bacillus cereus</i> group	Not Detected
<i>Bacillus subtilis</i> group	Not Detected
<i>Bacillus cereus</i> group	Not Detected
<i>Cutibacterium acnes</i>	Not Detected
<i>Enterococcus</i>	DETECTED
<i>Enterococcus faecalis</i>	Not Detected
<i>Enterococcus faecium</i>	Not Detected

Target	Result
<i>Lactobacillus</i>	Not Detected
<i>Listeria</i>	Not Detected
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	Not Detected
<i>Micrococcus</i>	Not Detected
<i>Staphylococcus</i>	Not Detected
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	Not Detected
<i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	Not Detected
<i>mecA</i>	Not Detected
<i>mecC</i>	Not Detected
<i>vanA</i>	Not Detected
<i>vanB</i>	Not Detected

Rapid Phenotypic AST Results for *Enterococcus* spp.

Drug	Interpretation
Ampicillin	S
Ceftaroline	S
Daptomycin	S
Linezolid	S
Vancomycin	I

The molecular test results are negative for *vanA* and *vanB*, but the phenotypic test indicates vancomycin non-susceptibility. This is a discrepancy that should be addressed because the patient may be on the wrong therapy.



How do you reconcile the vancomycin results?

✓ 1

Report results without reconciliation

0%

Repeat molecular tests

0%

Repeat phenotypic tests

100%

Look for guidance in CLSI M100, Appendix G

0%

Consult M100, Appendix G

Indication	Resistance Mechanism(s)	Methods	Specimen Types	Results		Suggestions for Resolution	Report as:	Comments ^a
				Resistance Mechanism(s) Detected	Phenotypic AST (If tested)			
Detection of VRE	vanA vanB	NAAT or array hybridization technology	Blood culture broth or surveillance cultures	vanA and/or vanB detected	Vancomycin R	N/A	Report phenotypic result as found (if available); consider reporting presence of molecular target per institutional protocol.	1-3
				vanA and/or vanB not detected	Vancomycin S	N/A	Report phenotypic result as found (if available); consider reporting presence of molecular target per institutional protocol.	
				vanA and/or vanB detected	Vancomycin S	Confirm isolate identification to species level (eg, <i>E. faecalis</i>) and repeat AST. If mixed culture, test isolates individually.	If discrepancy is not resolved by suggested testing, report as vancomycin R.	1-3
				vanA and/or vanB not detected	Vancomycin R	Confirm isolate identification to species level (eg, <i>E. faecalis</i>) and repeat AST. If mixed culture, test isolates individually.	If discrepancy is not resolved by suggested testing, report as vancomycin R.	4

Comments

(1) *vanA* may be present in nonenterococcal species.¹³

(2) Vancomycin-variable *E. faecium* isolates have been isolated in Canada. They carry wild-type *vanA* but initially test as vancomycin susceptible with a culture-based method. They can convert to a resistant phenotype during vancomycin treatment.^{14 15}

(3) The *vanB* gene has been found in several commensal nonenterococcal bacteria, which may lead to misclassification of vancomycin-susceptible enterococci as resistant in surveillance cultures containing mixed bacterial species.¹⁶

(4) Constitutive low-level vancomycin resistance can be detected phenotypically (2-32 µg/mL) from the presence of *vanC*, an intrinsic resistance characteristic of *E. gallinarum* (*vanC1*) and *E. casseliflavus* (*vanC2-C4*).¹⁷

(5) Targeting *vanA* only may miss regional *vanB*-carrying VRE.¹⁸

Enterococcus gallinarum

Epidemiology of Vancomycin-Resistant *Enterococcus*

Table 1 Characteristics of glycopeptide resistance phenotypes in *Enterococcus*

Resistance	Acquired								Intrinsic
	High		Variable	Moderate	Low				Low
Phenotype	VanA	VanM	VanB	VanD	VanE	VanG	VanL	VanN	VanC
Vancomycin MIC (mg/L)	64–1,000	>256	4–1,000	64–128	8–32	≤16	8	16	2–32
Teicoplanin MIC (mg/L)	16–512	96	0.5–1	4–64	0.5	Sensitive	≤0.5	≤0.5	0.5–1
Modification	D-Ala-D-Lac	D-Ala-D-Lac	D-Ala-D-Lac	D-Ala-D-Lac	D-Ala-D-Ser	D-Ala-D-Ser	D-Ala-D-Ser	D-Ala-D-Ser	D-Ala-D-Ser
Location	Plasmid or chromosome	Plasmid or chromosome	Plasmid or chromosome	Plasmid or chromosome	Chromosome	Chromosome	Chromosome	Plasmid	Chromosome
Transferrable	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Expression	Inducible	Inducible	Inducible	Constitutive or inducible	Inducible	Inducible	Inducible	Constitutive	Constitutive or inducible
Main Species	<i>E. faecalis</i> , <i>E. faecium</i>	<i>E. faecium</i>	<i>E. faecalis</i> , <i>E. faecium</i>	<i>E. faecalis</i> , <i>E. faecium</i>	<i>E. faecalis</i>	<i>E. faecalis</i>	<i>E. faecalis</i>	<i>E. faecium</i>	<i>E. gallinarum</i> , <i>E. casseliflavus</i>

Notes: Data from Boyd et al,²⁸ Lebreton et al,²⁹ McKessar et al,³⁰ and Xu et al.³¹ Adapted from Courvalin P. Vancomycin resistance in Gram-positive cocci. *Clin Infect Dis.* 2006;42(Suppl 1):S25–S34, by permission of Oxford University Press.²⁷

Abbreviations: MIC, minimum inhibitory concentration; D-Ala-D-Lac, D-alanine-D-lactate; D-Ala-D-Ser, D-alanine-D-serine.

Reasons why RM testing may miss vancomycin resistance:

- Isolates of *E. faecalis* and *E. faecium* may contain van genes other than *vanA* and *vanB*.
- The isolate may be a species with intrinsic vancomycin resistance, *vanC*.



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Case Study #2

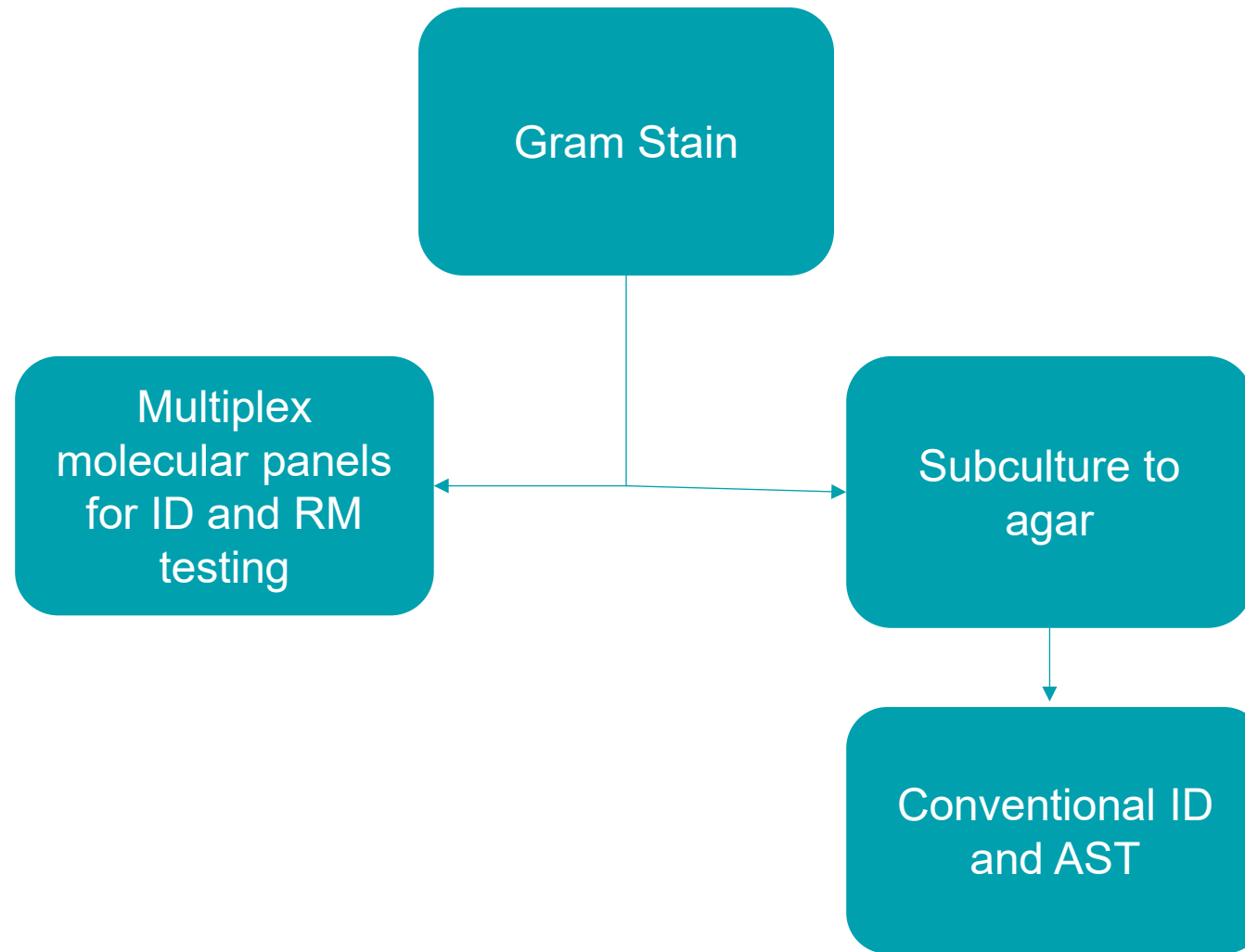
Case 2: Ventilator-Associated Pneumonia (VAP)

- A 62 yo male diagnosed with ischemic stroke was admitted to the intensive care unit of the hospital.
- The patient was unresponsive and demonstrated low oxygen saturation on room air. He was immediately intubated and placed on mechanical ventilation to maintain adequate oxygenation.
- On day 5 of ICU admission, the patient developed fever, purulent sputum production and increased respiratory secretions with worsening oxygenation indicating VAP.
- The patient was already receiving empiric therapy with piperacillin-tazobactam, which was escalated to a combination of meropenem and vancomycin.



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Sputum Testing Protocol



Rapid Molecular Panel Results

Target	Result
<i>Acinetobacter calcoaceticus-baumannii</i> complex	DETECTED
<i>Bacteroides fragilis</i>	Not Detected
<i>Enterobacter cloacae</i> complex	Not Detected
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Not Detected
<i>Klebsiella aerogenes</i>	Not Detected
<i>Klebsiella oxytoca</i>	Not Detected
<i>Klebsiella pneumoniae</i> group	Not Detected
<i>Proteus</i> spp.	Not Detected
<i>Serratia marcescens</i>	Not Detected
<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i>	Not Detected
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	Not Detected
<i>Serratia marcescens</i>	Not Detected

Target	Result
CTX-M	Not Detected
IMP	Not Detected
KPC	Not Detected
<i>mcr-1</i>	Not Detected
NDM	Not Detected
OXA-48-like	Not Detected
VIM	Not Detected

Question 2: Is this isolate carbapenem resistant?

A doctor calls the laboratory and wants to know if the *Acinetobacter* isolate is carbapenem resistant based upon molecular testing. She says this is very important to know because she wants to treat the patient with sulbactam-durlobactam, a new drug for treating VAP caused by *Acinetobacter* spp., but the pharmacy only allows for the drug to be used when carbapenem-resistance is known.

Based upon the molecular results, you can say....



Based upon the molecular results, you can say:

We need to wait for the phenotypic AST results to know if the isolate is carbapenem resistant

0%

The isolate is likely to be carbapenem susceptible.

0%

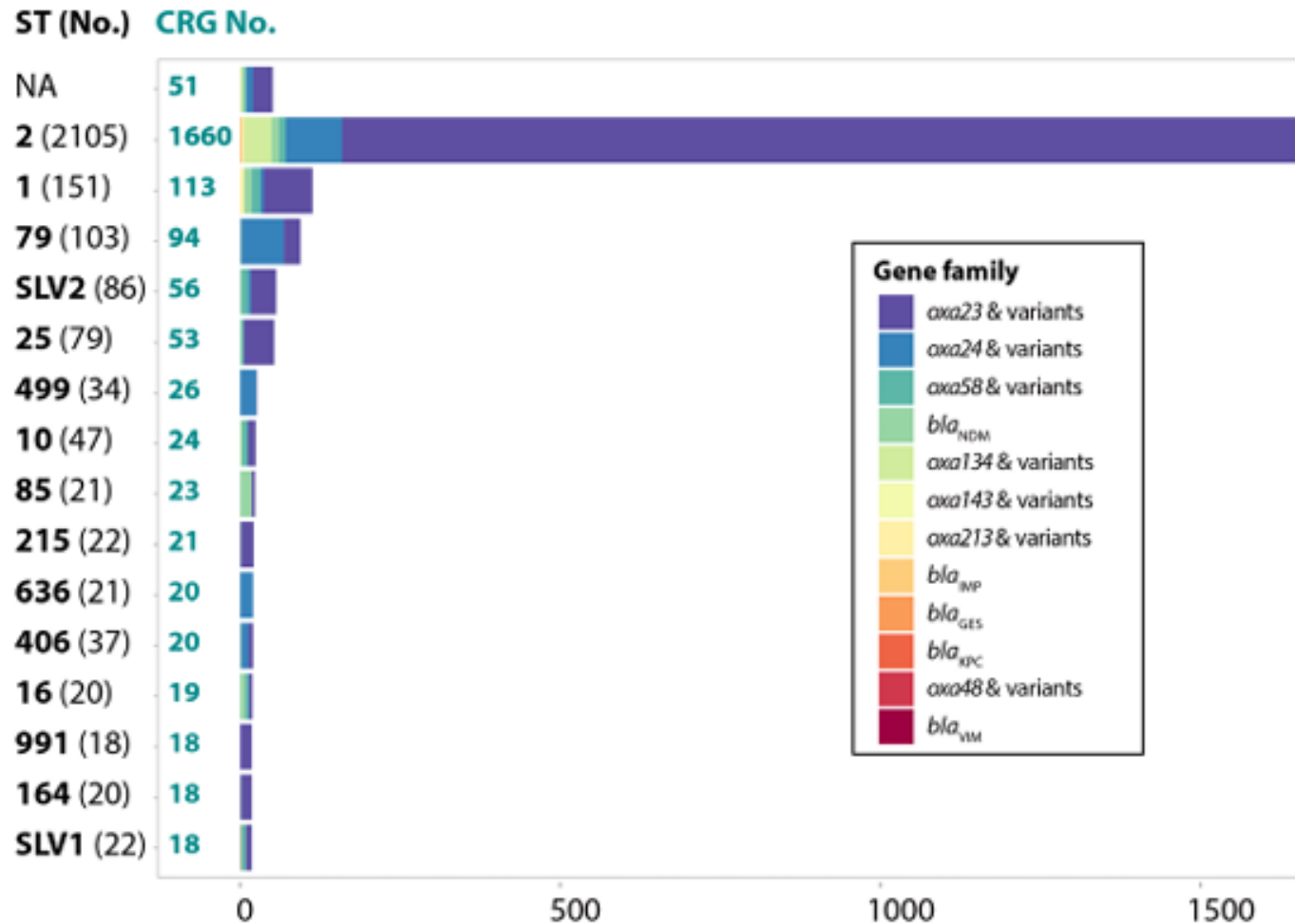
The isolate is likely to be carbapenem resistant

0%

Phenotypic AST is Needed to Define Resistance

- Response A is correct. Most molecular assays do not accurately predict carbapenem-resistance because they lack molecular markers for *Acinetobacter* spp.
- Cobas eplex can detect OXA-23, a common *Acinetobacter* plasmid-mediated resistance mechanism.
- It is not possible to accurately predict carbapenem susceptibility of *Acinetobacter* healthcare-associated infections (44% of *Acinetobacter* healthcare-associated infections are carbapenem resistant per NHSN).

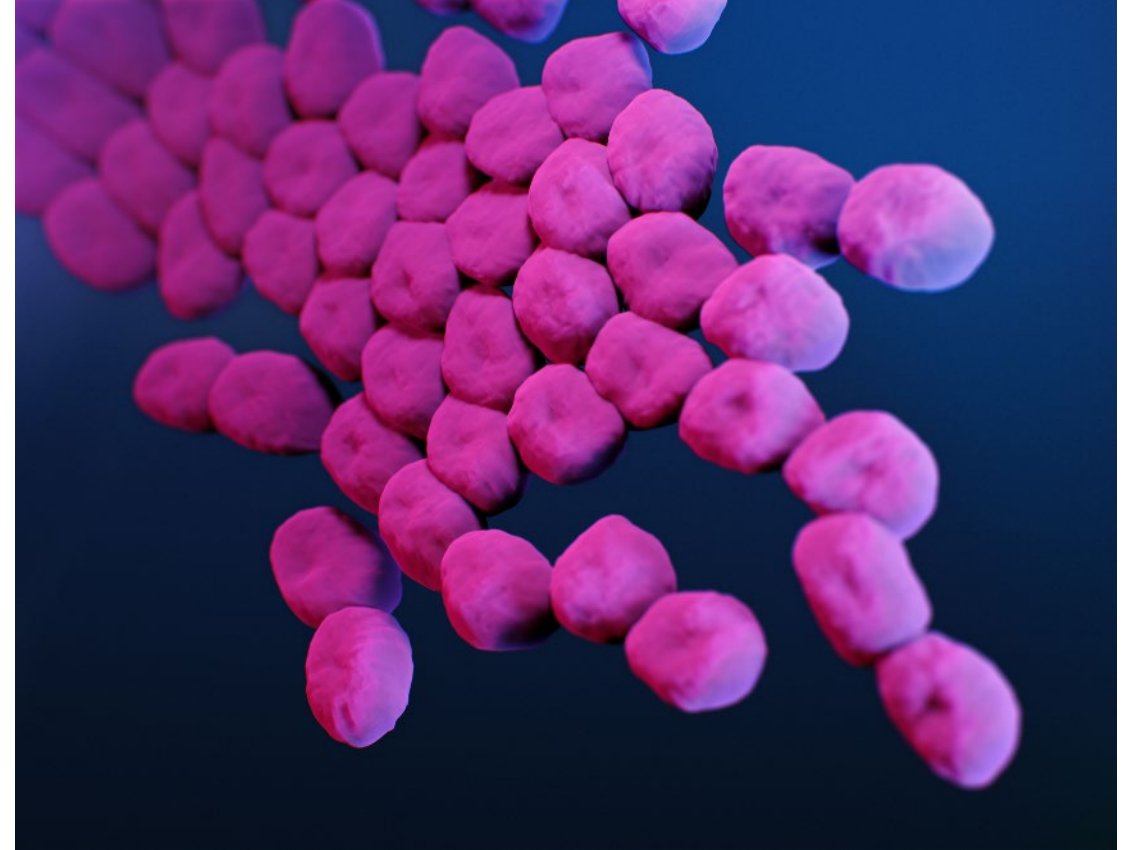
The Epidemiology of Carbapenem-Resistant *Acinetobacter*



- All CARB isolates harbor a carbapenemase. Most are a OXA variant.
- Efflux and permeability mechanisms can contribute to beta-lactamase-mediated resistance.
- KPC, NDM and VIM carbapenemases are rare, but important

Rapid Results for *Acinetobacter* spp.

- Antibiotic stewardship programs may choose to restrict use of new drugs for two reasons:
 1. To preserve the activity of the new drug
 2. To conserve costs; use off-patent drugs rather than new drugs
- Molecular test to predict resistance in *Acinetobacter* demonstrate poor correlation with phenotype.
- When rapid results are needed for *Acinetobacter* susceptibility, then a rapid phenotypic test is best.
- We need rapid phenotypic AST for specimens other than positive blood cultures.





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Case Study #3

Case 3: Healthcare-Associated Urinary Tract Infection

- A 76-year-old male with extensive medical history including chronic kidney disease presented to the emergency department with generalized weakness, pain, and confusion. The ED placed a catheter and drained a liter of purulent urine. He was started on empiric ceftriaxone.
- The care team subsequently learned that the patient recently returned from a trip to Israel and Dubai. While in Dubai, the patient fell ill, requiring a 4-week hospitalization during which he was treated for COVID-19 pneumonia.
- During his 4-week hospitalization he received various broad-spectrum antibiotics including piperacillin/tazobactam, linezolid, meropenem, amikacin, and ceftriaxone.

ID and Phenotypic AST Results from Urine Culture

- The patient's urine culture upon admission grew extensively drug-resistant *E. coli*.

Antibiotic	MIC (µg/ml)	MIC interpretation ^a	DD zone (mm)	DD interpretation
Amikacin ^b	4	S		
Ampicillin ^b	≥32	R		
Cefazolin ^b	≥64	R		
Cefiderocol ^c	≥64	R		
Cefepime ^b	≥64	R		
Ceftazidime ^b	≥64	R		
Ceftriaxone ^b	≥64	R		
Ceftazidime/avibactam ^d	≥32	R		
Ceftolozane/tazobactam ^d	≥8	R		
Ciprofloxacin ^b	≥4	R		
Colistin ^d	≤0.25	I		
Ertapenem ^b	≥8	R		
Fosfomycin ^b			26	S
Gentamicin ^b	≤1	S		
Imipenem ^b	8	R	7	R
Imipenem/relebactam ^d	≥32/4	R		
Levofloxacin ^b	≥8	R		
Meropenem ^b			8	R
Meropenem/vaborbactam ^d	≥64/4	R		
Nitrofurantoin ^b	32	S		
Tobramycin ^b	≥16	R		
Trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole ^b	≥320	R		



Should the mechanism of resistance be determined?

Yes, carbapenem RM should be characterized regardless of infection site, but testing can be delayed because it is not important for an immediate therapy decision.

0%

Yes, carbapenem RM should be characterized regardless of infection site and testing should be done in a timely manner because results could be important for patient care and infection prevention.

0%

No, RM testing is not needed because some drugs tested susceptible.

0%

Identify RM for Carbapenem-R *Enterobacterales* (CRE)

- Testing should be performed in a timely manner because carbapenemases can impact therapy decisions and are an infection prevention concern
- Methods for RM testing of isolates from culture include PCR and antigen testing.
- IDSA treatment recommendations for complicated UTI caused by CRE
 - A. Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, ciprofloxacin or levofloxacin
 - B. Ceftazidime-avibactam, meropenem-vaborbactam, imipenem-relebactam, and cefiderocol
 - C. Aminoglycosides are an alternative treatment option

Final Results

TABLE 2. Antibiotic Resistance Genes Carried by the Sequence Type 410 *Escherichia coli* Isolated from the Initial Urinary Culture, Tripler Army Medical Center

Antimicrobial resistance gene ^a	Predicted phenotype ^b
aac(6')-Ib-cr5	Aminoglycosides: amikacin, tobramycin. Quinolones: ciprofloxacin
aadA2	Aminoglycosides: streptomycin
aadA5	Aminoglycosides: streptomycin
blaNDM-5 ^c	β-lactams: carbapenems
blaCMY-2	β-lactams: cephalosporins
blaEC-15	β-lactams: cephalosporins
blaCTX-M-15 ^c	β-lactams: extended-spectrum cephalosporins, monobactams
blaOXA-1	β-lactams: penicillins, early cephalosporins
blaTEM-1	β-lactams: penicillins, early cephalosporins
sul1	Sulfonamides
tet(B)	Tetracyclines
dfrA12	Trimethoprim
dfrA17	Trimethoprim

^aBest hit gene based on sequence identity and coverage.

^bPredicted resistance pattern based on antibiotic resistance gene product.

^cMost important genes driving responsible for extended-spectrum β-lactamases and c... Enterobacterales resistance mechanisms

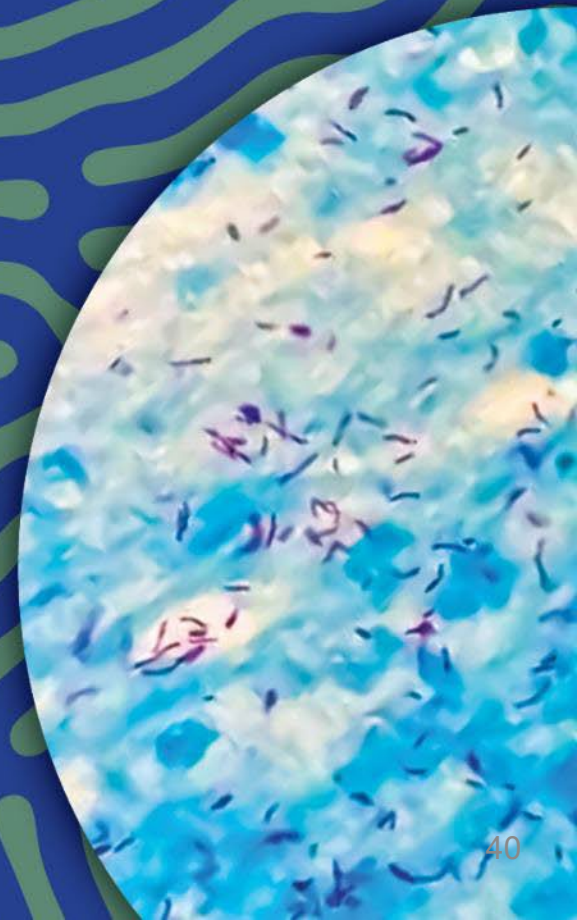
- This isolate harbors a metallo-beta-lactamase encoding gene, *bla*_{NDM}
- Treatment options are:
 - Aztreonam-avibactam (FDA approved)
 - Cefepime-taniborbactam (FDA approval expected in 2026)
- Infection prevention efforts
 - Place patient in contact precautions and in a single patient room if possible.
 - Test for colonization among contacts

Susceptibility can be determined by with a ceftazidime-avibactam, aztreonam broth test. Susceptibility testing of aztreonam-avibactam commercial tests are expected by end of 2025.

RM testing and reporting recommendations will continue to evolve as resistance increases and new diagnostics come to market.

Trends to watch:

- 1. An increasing number of beta-lactam, beta-lactamase drugs on the market. This is likely to drive RM testing.**
- 2. An increasing amount of RM testing in the hospital microbiology laboratory**
- 3. Public health labs will still need to provide high resolution characterization of MDRO to complement to gaps in hospital lab testing.**



Thank You!

