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# Prevalence of multiple beta lactamases producing gram negative bacilli from various clinical samples in a tertiary care center at Kancheepuram.

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# ABSTRACT

## Introduction

The increasing numbers of multiple beta lactamases produced organisms leave very limited treatment options for clinicians. Single organism expressing multiple beta lactamase enzymes further complicated the treatment option. Hence this study investigated the co-existence of multiple beta lactamase enzymes in clinical isolates of gram negative bacteria.

#### Materials and methods

A total of 435 consecutive, non-repetitive, gram negative isolates were collected from various clinical samples included in this study. Antimicrobial susceptibility testing was performed as per CLSI. All the bacterial strains were subjected for detection of ESBL, AmpC, and MBL enzymes as recommended by CLSI.

#### **Results**

Out of 435 gram negative bacilli, 105 (24%) were ESBL producers, 40 (9%) were AmpC enzyme producer and 5 (1%) were MBL producers. *E.coli* was the predominant isolate accounting for (34.3%) of ESBL production, followed by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (31.5%), *Klebsiella sps* (19%) and *Acinetobacter baumannii* (31%). The highest incidence of AmpC was seen in *E.coli* 15.9%, followed by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* 10.8%, *Klebsiella sps* 6.6% and *Acinetobacter baumannii* 6.8% respectively. While MBL production was only seen in 5 (1%) isolates. Co-existence of ESBL and AmpC was observed in 11 (2.5%), ESBL and MBL coproduction was detected in 4 (1%) and the coproduction of AmpC and MBL was observed in one isolate (0.2%).

### Conclusion

Rapid identification of these enzymes along with routine sensitivity reports will help the clinicians in prescribing proper antibiotics and implementing infection control measures to prevent the dissemination of such resistance strains.

**Keywords:** Drug resistance, Extended spectrum beta lactamase (ESBL), AmpC beta lactamase (AmpC), Metallo beta lactamase (MBL).

# **INTRODUCTION**

Emergence of antimicrobial resistant bacteria is the growing threat worldwide and a major reason for the

increase in infections among community and health care settings. Resistance is mainly due to antibiotic abuse and over the counter drug delivery. Resistance mechanisms have been found for almost every class of antibiotics. Persistent exposure of bacterial strains to antibiotics causes mutation which leads to the emergence of newer resistance mechanism and rapid clonal spread. One of such mechanism is production of beta lactamase [1].

β- Lactam antibiotics represent the most common treatment for a broad spectrum of gram positive and gram negative bacteria. One of the most important resistance mechanisms in gram negative bacteria against β-lactam antibiotics is induced by the production of β – lactamase enzymes. β – Lactamase enzymes are classified into four main group's viz., A, B, C and D. This is mainly due to the occurrence of point mutation in the sequence of the primary β – lactamase enzyme genes [2].

Commonly reported beta lactamases among gram negative organisms are extended spectrum beta lactamase (ESBL), AmpC and Metallo beta lactamase (MBL).

In the last decade the prevalence of ESBLs, MBLs and AmpC  $\beta$ -lactamases are gradually increasing in various parts of India and throughout the world; pose a challenge to the clinician in treating infections caused by such virulent strains. At the same time, these organisms became common nosocomial agents along with MRSA, VRE and Pseudomonas. The routine susceptibility tests fail to detect these strains, which may result in unsuccessful treatment. Consequently, it is necessary to report these ESBLs, MBLs and AmpC  $\beta$ -lactamases along with the routine sensitivity report so that the clinician can choose proper antibiotic for therapeutic purpose in right time.

Hence the present study is carried out to engender data on the prevalence of  $\beta$ -lactamase producing gram negative bacilli among hospitalized patients.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Bacterial isolates**

The study was conducted at Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Chennai, over a period of January 2014- March 2015. A total of 435 consecutive, non-repetitive, gram negative isolates from various clinical samples such as urine, pus, ear swab, draining tube tip (DTT), sputum, bronchial wash, endotracheal tube, throat swab and conjunctival swab which were received in the clinical bacteriology laboratory, were included in the study. All the isolates were processed and identified as per standard protocol [3]. The reference strains, ESBL positive *Klebsiella pneumonia* ATCC 700603 and ESBL negative *Escherichia coli* ATCC 25922 were included in the study.

#### Antimicrobial susceptibility testing

The isolates were subjected to antibiotic susceptibility testing by Kirby-Bauer disc diffusion method as per CLSI guidelines [4], using commercially available antibiotic discs procured from (HIMEDIA, Mumbai, India) Cefazoline ( $30\mu g$ ), Cefoxitin ( $30\mu g$ ), Cefotaxime ( $30\mu g$ ), Ceftazidime ( $30\mu g$ ), Cefipime ( $30\mu g$ ), Imipenem ( $10\mu g$ ), Amoxycillin/clavulinate ( $20/10\mu g$ ), Amikacin ( $30\mu g$ ), Gentamicin ( $10\mu g$ ), Ampicillin ( $10\mu g$ ) and Ciproploxacin ( $5\mu g$ ) on Mueller Hinton agar plate.

# Criteria for the selection of the esbl, ampc and metallo beta lactamase producing strains

- The isolates were tested for their susceptibility to third generation cephalosporins (3GCs) e.g. ceftazidime (30 µg), cefotaxime (30 µg) and ceftriaxone (30 µg) by using the standard disc diffusion method as recommended by the CLSI [4]. If a zone diameter of < 22 mm for ceftazidime, < 27 mm for cefotaxime and < 25 mm for ceftriaxone were recorded, then the strain was considered to be "suspicious for ESBL production" [10]. Only those isolates which were resistant to one of the 3 GCs were selected for the study and were processed for ESBL production.</li>
- Isolates showing resistance or reduced sensitivity to cefoxitin, cefotaxime, ceftriaxone, ceftazidime, cefpodoxime or aztreonam and sensitive to cefepime. No increase in zone size with addition of an inhibitor by 5 mm. Isolates showing blunting of zone of inhibition (ceftazidime or cefotaxime) adjacent to inducer (imipenem or cefoxitin) were considered as a screen positive AmpC producer and subjected to AmpC disk test [4].
- Gram negative organisms that showed reduced susceptibility to Imipenem (10µg) were selected for MBL production [4].

#### **Tests for esbl production**

# **Double disk approximation test for screening** (DDAT)

The test organisms adjusted to 0.5 McFarland standards were lawn cultured on to a Mueller Hinton agar plate. Antibiotic discs of Amoxicillin/Clavulanic acid  $(20/10\mu g)$  and cefotaxime  $(30 \ \mu g)$  were placed at

a distance of 15 mm from centre to centre of the disc apart and incubated at  $37^{0}$ C for 18-24hrs. Organisms that showed a clear extension of the cefotaxime inhibition zone towards the disc containing Clavulanate were considered as ESBL producer. The organisms which were screened and found positive for ESBL production were subjected to confirmatory test [5].

# CLSI phenotypic confirmatory disc diffusion test (PCDDT)

Ceftazidime (30 µg) and ceftazidime plus Clavulanic acid (30/10 µg) were placed 20 mm apart on lawn culture of the test isolate on Mueller Hinton agar and incubated overnight at 37<sup>o</sup>C. The organism was considered as ESBL producer if there was a  $\geq$ 5mm increase in diameter of Ceftazidime plus Clavulanic disc and that of ceftazidime disc alone [4&6].

#### Amp c disk antagonism test

A lawn culture of *E. coli* ATCC 25922 was prepared on MHA plate. Sterile disks (6mm) was moistened with sterile saline  $(20\mu)$  and inoculated with several colonies of test organisms. The inoculated disk was then placed 5mm beside a cefoxitin disc. Plates were incubated overnight at 35°C. A positive test was appeared as a flattening or indentation of the cefoxitin inhibition zone in the vicinity of the test disc [7]. A negative test had an undistorted zone.

# Detection of the metallo- $\beta$ - lactamases (MBLs)

#### **Imipenem-EDTA Combined Disc Test (CDT)**

The metallo-  $\beta$ - lactamase production was detected by the imipenem – EDTA double disc synergy test. Two 10µg imipenem disks were placed on the MHA plate inoculated with culture adjusted to 0.5 McFarland standards and 10 µl of sterile 0.5 M EDTA solution was added to one of the imipenem disk. The inhibition zones of the imipenem and imipenem plus EDTA disks were compared after inoculation. The organisms were considered to be MBL producers if the increase in the inhibition zone of the beta lactam+EDTA disk was  $\geq 5$  mm when compared to imipenem disk alone [8].

#### **RESULTS**

Out of 435 Gram negative organisms included in this study, the predominant isolates was *E. coli* 119 (27.3%), followed by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* 111 (25.5%), *Klebsiella pneumonia* 80 (18.9%), *Proteus mirabilis* 43 (9.8%), *Acinetobacter baumannii* 29 (6.6%), *Klebsiella oxytoca* 25 (5.7%), *Citrobacter Spp* 15 (3.4%), *Proteus vulgaris* 10 (2.2%) and *Enterobacter aerogenes* 3 (0.68%). Among the 435 gram negative isolates, a Multi drug resistant pattern was detected in 260/435 (59.7%) (**TABLE: 1**).

#### **DETECTION OF ESBL, AmpC AND MBL**

Out of 435 gram negative bacilli, 105 (24%) isolates were confirmed as ESBL producers. AmpC disk test detected 40 (9%) isolates as AmpC enzyme producer and 5 (1%) isolates were found to be MBL producers.

DDAT detected only 100 (22.9%) ESBL producers and whereas PCDDT detected 105 (24%) isolates as ESBL producers. Two strains of *E.coli* and three strains of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* that were not detected as ESBL producers by DDAT, were detected as ESBL producers by PCDDT (**Fig. 1,2**). The remaining 100 isolates were found to produce ESBL by both the methods.

Among 105 (24%) ESBL producers, *E.coli* was the predominant isolate accounting for about 41 (34.3%) of ESBL production, the second predominant isolate was *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* 35 (31.5%) followed by *Klebsiella sps* 20(19%) and *Acinetobacter baumannii* 9 (31%).

The highest incidence of AmpC was seen in *E.coli* (19) 15.9%, followed by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (12)10.8%, *Klebsiella sps* (7)6.6% and *Acinetobacter baumannii* (2)6.8% respectively (**Fig, 3,4**). While MBL production was only seen in 5 (1%) isolates. 4 *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and 1 *Enterobacter aerogenes.* (**Fig. 5,6**).

Co-existence of ESBL and AmpC was observed in 11 (2.5%), it was found to be higher in *E.coli* (5%), *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (1.6%), *Klebsiella sps* (2.8%), whereas ESBL and MBL coproduction was detected in only 4 isolates which is of 1%. All the four isolates were *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (3.6%). The coproduction of AmpC and MBL was observed in one isolate (0.2%) of *Enterobacter aerogenes* (CHART: 1)

Except 5 isolates which showed reduced susceptibility to Imipenem, the remaining 98.8% of the isolates were sensitive to Imipenem.

Organisms	No of Gram negative	No. of Multi drug	Percentage of Multi drug	
	Isolates (%) N=435	resistant isolates in=200	resistant isolates (%)	
E.coli	119(27.3%)	98	82.3	
Klebsiella	80(18.9%)	40	50	
pneumonia				
Klebsiella oxytoca	25(5.7%)	15	60	
Pseudomonas	111(25.5%)	75	67.5	
aeruginosa				
Acinetobacter	29(6.6%)	10	34.4	
baumannii				
Proteus mirabilus	43(9.8%)	10	23.25	
Proteus vulgaris	10(2.2%)	5	50	
Citrobacter sps	15(3.4%)	7	46.6	
Enterobacter	3(0.68%)	-	-	
aerogenes				
Total	435	260	59.7	

TABL	E: 1	Multi	drug	resistant	gram	negative	isolates
					0		



**CHART:1** Distribution of  $\beta$ -lactamases and its co-production.



Fig: 1 A >5mm increase in zone of inhibition for ceftazidime/ clavulanic acid CAC versus ceftazidime alone confirmed ESBL production.



Fig: 2 No increase in zone of inhibition negative for ESBL production



**Fig: 3** Disk antagonism test showing  $AmpC\beta$  lactamase production showing blunting of the cefotaxime disc adjacent to the Imipenem disk.



**Fig: 5** EDTA/ imipenem combined disk test showing increase in the zone of inhibition with EDTA/Imipenem disk compared with Imipenem disk alone- MBL positive



Fig: 4 No blunting of zone AmpC negative



Fig: 6 no increase in zone for imipenem/ EDTA disknegative for MBL

## DISCUSSION

 $\beta$ -lactams are the drug of choice for the various infections caused by Gram positive and negative organisms. Among which cephalosporins are currently used to treat enterobacterial infections. The selective pressure of misuse and overuse of third generation cephalosporins in the hospitals has resulted in increased emergence of ESBL, plasmid mediated AmpC and MBL producing bacteria in many areas of hospitals.

Undiscerning administration of  $\beta$ -lactam antibiotics to the hospitalized patients increases the chance of colonization of beta-lactamase producing organisms that results in cross contamination of resistant strains between patients as well as health care workers.

The infections which are caused by multidrugresistant beta lactamase enzymes producing gram negative bacilli have been reported with an increasing frequency, from various tertiary care centers and they are associated with a significant morbidity and mortality [9]. The numerous beta lactamases are encoded either by the chromosomal genes or by the transferable genes, which are located on the plasmids or the transposons [10].

Initially, these enzymes are commonly found in the *Klebsiella* species and in *E.coli*, [11] but now these enzymes are produced by all members of enterobacteriaceae and other gram negative bacilli [12]. Infections caused by such resistant strains can limit the therapeutic option and also pose challenge for the microbiologist and clinicians in identifying and treating them. Hence it has become necessary to detect such resistant pattern along with routine sensitivity testing.

In our study, the prevalence of multidrug pattern among gram negative bacteria, including the enterobacteriaceae and the non-fermenters was 59.7%, which is quiet high in a rural setting. The ESBL production in our analysis was found to be maximum (24%) as compared to the other betalactamase tested. Among which *E.coli* was the predominant isolate accounting for 41(34.3%) of ESBL production, the second predominant isolate was *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* 35(31.5%) followed by *Klebsiella sps* 20(19%) and *Acinetobacter baumannii* 9(31%).

Similarly a report from Punjab by Loveena oberoi *et al.*, [13] showed high prevalence of ESBL (35.16%) producer among all beta-lactamases tested in ICU patients which is comparable to our study. A

study which was done by Nachimuthu Ramesh *et al.* (2008) [14] and Kumar *et al.* (2006) [12] also reported high prevalence of ESBLs among *E.coli*.

The incidence of ESBL in major hospitals of India has been reported as high as 60-80% [11,15]. US hospitals have reported 40% [16] of ESBL producers among GNB tested whereas report from Taiwan [17] showed 94% of ESBL production. A study done by Harakuni *et al* [18] reported a high prevalence of ESBLs (74%) in ICU patients. Whereas, Laghawe *et al* [19] and Menon *et al* [20] have reported lower percentage of ESBL producers (19.67%) and (20%) respectively when compared to our study. Hence it has been proved that the prevalence of the ESBLs among clinical isolates is not uniform and varies from country to country and institution to institution within the same country.

Among two tests done to detect ESBLs production, PCDDT detected more ESBLs than DDAT. Hence identification Correct of ESBL positive enterobacteriaceae in due time is mandatory, not only for optimal patient management but also for immediate institution of appropriate infection control measures, to prevent the spread of these organisms. [21] The double disc approximation test (DDAT) lacks sensitivity because of problem of optimal disc space and the correct storage of the clavulanic acid containing discs. Hence addition of single CAC disk at 20mm distance of CAZ along with routine diagnostic sensitivity testing would screen all gram negative bacteria in the diagnostic laboratory for ESBL production. This method is technically simple and inexpensive [22].

In our study low prevalence (9%) of AmpC production was observed when compared with the other study that had reported high prevalence of the AmpC producers rangings from 10.95% - 50.9% [23,24,25,26] in different parts of India.

In 2003, 20.7% of AmpC producers were reported from Delhi and 37% were from Chennai [27,28]. The number of AmpC producers has been increasing over the past few years. Similar to our finding Loveena oberoi *et al.* [13] reported low prevalence of AmpC (5.4%), this low prevalence could be suggestive of difference in the geographical distribution, which may have given varied resistance patterns [13].

The only  $\beta$ -lactam active against co AmpC and ESBL producers are carbapenems, however, recently resistance to carbapenems has been on the rise, which is mainly due to the production of metallo- $\beta$ -lactamases [29,30]. Production of MBL has

tremendous therapeutic consequences since these organisms also carry multidrug resistance genes and the only viable option left are the potentially toxic polymyxin B and Colistin [31].

Prevalence of MBLs in different regions in India ranges from 2.9% - 19.67% among all gram negative isolates [32,33,34]. In our study, MBL production was observed in 5 (1.1%) isolates, with maximum production in Pseudomonas aeruginosa (4) followed by Enterobacter aerogenes (1). This was lower than that reported by (Shobha et al., 2009 & Varun goel et al., 2013) [35,36] and comparable (3.4%) to that reported by Vidya Pai et al., [37] among gram negative bacteria. The lower resistance to imipenem in our study may probably be due to the reserved use of these anitibiotics. To our interest one isolate of Pseudomonas sps that was sensitive to imipenem by routine disk diffusion technique showed MBL production by CDT. This varying result may be due to the presence of hidden MBL genes, which may spread unnoticed and may lead to untoward infection control problems. Hence it is recommended to follow CDT by CLSI as proved by other studies.

[13] In our study Co-existence of ESBL and AmpC was observed in 2.5% isolates, whereas ESBL and MBL coproduction was detected in 4 (1%) isolates. The coproduction of AmpC and MBL was observed in only 1 (0.2%) isolate. A study conducted by Loveena oberoi et al., [13] reported that 8.79% isolates showed ESBL and MBL coproduction of about, 3.67% of isolates showed AmpC and MBL coproduction and 3.67% of isolates showed AmpC and ESBL coproduction.

Recently, the co-existence of both AmpC  $\beta$ lactamase, ESBL and MBL in some gram negative bacilli has also been reported. This could be because of plasmid mediated AmpC  $\beta$ -lactamase which has been disseminated among the Enterobacteriaceae. These strains in combination with ESBL may give false negative tests in the detection of ESBL as they may mask the recognition of the ESBLs and it may result in a fatal and an inappropriate antimicrobial therapy [13].

## **CONCLUSION**

The present study emphasizes the prevalence of multiple β-lactamase producing gram negative bacilli in a rural setting tertiary hospital. High prevalence of β-lactamase is definitely alarming and there is an urgent need for evidence-based medicine particularly in rural settings, where laboratory facilities are lacking and antibiotics is being rampantly used by the quacks. Hence regular monitoring of the incidence of the  $\beta$ -lactamase production along with routine antibiotic susceptibility testing is necessary. As early detection of beta lactamase producing isolates would be important for the reduction of mortality, morbidity and avoid the intra hospital dissemination of such strains. To prevent the spread of the  $\beta$ -lactamase producing strains, hospitals must have functional hospital infection control committee with an appropriate hospital antibiotic policy, with regular updates.

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