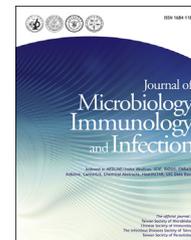




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## Correspondence

# Early prosthetic joint infection due to *Ureaplasma urealyticum*: Benefit of 16S rRNA gene sequence analysis for diagnosis



### KEYWORDS

Prosthetic joint infection;  
*Ureaplasma urealyticum*;  
16S rRNA gene;  
Molecular diagnosis

**Abstract** Detection of the most frequently bacteria involved in prosthetic joint infection (PJI) is usually performed by conventional cultures. We report a case of early PJI due to *Ureaplasma urealyticum*, diagnosed by 16S rRNA gene sequence analysis, which highlights the interest of molecular methods if fastidious bacteria are involved in PJI.

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Dear Editor,

Prosthesis joint infection (PJI) is one of the most serious complication of prosthesis implantation and its bacterial documentation is critical for appropriate antibiotherapy. *Ureaplasma urealyticum* is a human urogenital pathogen rarely involved in PJI, which can not be detected by conventional culture methods due to its specific culture conditions requirement.<sup>1</sup> Here we report a case of an early PJI due to *U. urealyticum*, which was identified by molecular biology, secondarily to negative conventional cultures.

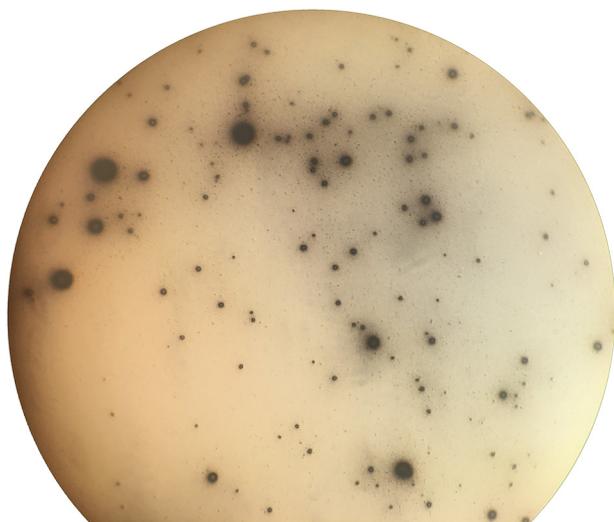
A 88-year-old man underwent left hemiarthroplasty for a femoral neck fracture. On the 6th postoperative day, he was diagnosed with acute urinary retention. Urinary drainage was performed and ceftriaxone treatment was initiated. On postoperative day 40, the patient experienced a painful hip preventing him from walking. Examination of the hip showed a purulent swelling and an inflammatory scar but no fever. Multiple irrigations with pulsatile lavage of the implanted hip and retention of the arthroplasty were performed. Specimens were collected intraoperatively and submitted for aerobic, anaerobic and broth cultures. An empirical antimicrobial treatment with meropenem and daptomycin was initiated. Following negative conventional

cultures, direct 16S rRNA gene amplification and sequence analysis were performed on frozen specimens. A portion of the 16S rRNA gene was amplified, using universal primers which correspond to positions 8–27 and 1384–1400 using *Escherichia coli* numbering, respectively.<sup>2</sup> The sequence was analyzed with the Bio Informatics Bacterial Identification (BIBI) database. All the 5 per-operative samples were positive for *U. urealyticum* (Genbank accession no MF372933). Secondary cultures were performed using A7 agar (bioMerieux) and broth media adapted to ureaplasma (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Two specimens were positive by specific cultures and the species identification of *U. urealyticum* was confirmed using a specific real-time PCR.<sup>3</sup> Minimum inhibitory concentrations (MICs) of levofloxacin, moxifloxacin, tetracycline, and doxycycline were then determined using a broth dilution method and showed susceptibility of the isolate with MICs of 1 µg/ml, 0.25 µg/ml, 0.5 µg/ml and 0.12 µg/ml, respectively.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the patient died of multiple comorbidities before the antimicrobial treatment could have been adapted.

*Ureaplasma* spp. belongs to the class *Mollicutes* and are one of the smallest free-living organisms. Recently, they have been classified into two species, *U. urealyticum* and *Ureaplasma parvum*. A recent meta-analysis in men supports that only *U. urealyticum* is an etiological agent of

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**Figure 1.** *Ureaplasma urealyticum* colonies on A7 agar (bioMérieux) visualized with binocular microscope (magnification  $\times 125$ ).

nongonococcal urethritis.<sup>4</sup> *U. urealyticum* has been described in septic arthritis or polyarthritis in immunocompromised patients, but PJI are uncommon and to our knowledge, only two cases have been reported.<sup>5,6</sup> Both were late PJIs, and one occurred in an immunocompromised patient.<sup>6</sup> Thus this is the first description of an early PJI as defined by the IDSA, because occurring within 1–3 months after surgery.<sup>7</sup>

*U. urealyticum* has limited biosynthesis abilities and *in vitro* culture requires a specific complex growth media.<sup>1</sup> However, such media are not routinely performed on perioperative samples for PJI due to the rare occurrence of this bacteria. Molecular methods can also be used for identification of ureaplasmas such as 16S rRNA gene sequence analysis. Guidelines about management of PJI recommend starting empirical broad spectrum antibiotic therapy quickly before pathogen identification. Used regimens often contain  $\beta$ -lactams, vancomycin or daptomycin, which are not active antibiotics against *U. urealyticum* due to the lack of a cell wall. On the opposite, this species is susceptible to tetracyclines and fluoroquinolones (MIC of moxifloxacin being lower than that of levofloxacin), doxycycline being the most potent molecule. However, resistance has recently been reported for both antibiotics. Thus, performing specific cultures after molecular biology results is of importance for susceptibility testing.

Although uncommon, PJI due to *U. urealyticum* should be considered and molecular methods with large screening such as 16S rDNA sequence analysis should be performed for PJI diagnosis when traditional culture remains negative despite a clinical suspicion of infection. This is of great importance especially to adapt empirical treatment.

### Conflict of interest statement

All authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Caroline Rouard

APHP, H  pital Antoine B  cl  re, Service de Bact  riologie-Hygi  ne, Clamart, France

Universit   Paris Sud, Facult   de Pharmacie, UBAPS, Chatenay-Malabry, France

Sabine Pereyre

Univ. Bordeaux, CHU de Bordeaux USC-EA 3671 Infections humaines    mycoplasmes et chlamydiae, Centre National de R  f  rence des Infections Sexuellement Transmissibles, INRA, Bordeaux, France

Sophie Abgrall

APHP, H  pital Antoine B  cl  re, Service de M  decine Interne, Clamart, France

Christelle Guillet-Caruba

APHP, H  pital Antoine B  cl  re, Service de Bact  riologie-Hygi  ne, Clamart, France

Pierre Divin  

APHP, H  pital Antoine B  cl  re, Service de Chirurgie Orthop  dique, Clamart, France

Nad  ge Bourgeois-Nicolaos

APHP, H  pital Antoine B  cl  re, Service de Bact  riologie-Hygi  ne, Clamart, France

Universit   Paris Sud, Facult   de Pharmacie, UBAPS, Chatenay-Malabry, France

Sandrine Roy

APHP, H  pital Antoine B  cl  re, Service de Pharmacie    Usage Int  rieur, Clamart, France

Véronique Mangin d'Ouince  
*APHP, Hôpital Corentin Celton, Service de Gériatrie, Issy-les-moulineaux, France*

Cécile Bébéar  
*Univ. Bordeaux, CHU de Bordeaux USC-EA 3671 Infections humaines à mycoplasmes et chlamydiae, Centre National de Référence des Infections Sexuellement Transmissibles, INRA, Bordeaux, France*

Thierry Bégué  
*APHP, Hôpital Antoine Béclère, Service de Chirurgie Orthopédique, Clamart, France*

Florence Doucet-Populaire\*  
*APHP, Hôpital Antoine Béclère, Service de Bactériologie-Hygiène, Clamart, France*

*Université Paris Sud, Faculté de Pharmacie, UBAPS, Chatenay-Malabry, France*

\*Corresponding author. 157 rue de la Porte de Trivaux, 92141 Clamart, France. Fax: +33 146326796.  
*E-mail address: [florence.doucet-populaire@aphp.fr](mailto:florence.doucet-populaire@aphp.fr)*

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