



**KATHY HOCHUL**  
Governor

## Department of Health

**JAMES V. McDONALD, M.D., M.P.H.**  
Acting Commissioner

**MEGAN E. BALDWIN**  
Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner

**Date:** January 30, 2023

**To:** Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Health Care Providers, Clinical Laboratories, Commercial Laboratories, and Local Health Departments

**From:** New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Bureau of Healthcare Associated Infections and Wadsworth Center

### HEALTH ADVISORY: MULTISTATE CLUSTER OF CARBAPENEM-RESISTANT PSEUDOMONAS INFECTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH ARTIFICIAL TEARS

Verona Integron-mediated Metallo- $\beta$ -lactamase (VIM)-producing Carbapenem-resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (CRPA)

Please distribute immediately to:  
Laboratory Directors, Hospital Epidemiologists, Infection Preventionists, Infectious Disease Physicians, Medical Directors, and Nursing Directors

### BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

NYSDOH, in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is investigating cases of VIM-producing CRPA that belong to a multistate cluster. In addition to demonstrating carbapenem resistance, isolates in this cluster are not susceptible to ceftazidime or cefepime. Nationally, isolates have been identified from clinical cultures of corneas, sputum, urine, wounds, blood, and from rectal swabs collected to detect colonization. These specimens were collected in both outpatient and inpatient healthcare settings. Isolates in this cluster are sequence type 1203, harbor *bla*<sub>VIM-80</sub> and *bla*<sub>GES-9</sub> (a combination not previously observed in the United States) and are closely related by whole genome sequencing analysis.

### UPDATE

CDC has reported that national case surveillance from May 2022 through January 19, 2023, has identified 50 patients from 11 states with infections or colonized with this organism. Seven case patients are NYS residents. Review of common exposures among all patients identified that the majority of patients used artificial tears prior to identification of VIM-GES-CRPA infection or colonization. The most common brand reported was EzriCare Artificial Tears, a preservative-free product dispensed in multidose bottles. Laboratory testing of EzriCare Artificial Tears by CDC identified the presence of VIM-CRPA in opened EzriCare bottles; these VIM-CRPA are undergoing further characterization, including testing for GES and to determine sequence type, to assess if they match the outbreak strain. Testing of unopened bottles of EzriCare Artificial Tears is ongoing.

## ACTIONS

Review artificial tear products on hand and if EzriCare Artificial Tears are identified, **discontinue use**. Clinical laboratories should submit any patient isolates meeting the defined laboratory criteria to Wadsworth Center. Notify your regional epidemiologist or local health department of any suspected infections with this organism.

## ISOLATES REQUESTED BY THE WADSWORTH CENTER – ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE LABORATORY NETWORK

Please submit all *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* that are resistant to carbapenems (imipenem, meropenem, or doripenem) and not susceptible to cefepime or ceftazidime to Wadsworth Center for carbapenem resistance gene testing: <https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/ar-lab-networks/domestic.html>.

We understand that this is an additional effort for your laboratory. Wadsworth Center provides a FedEx account to ship isolates free of charge. Instructions for using the FedEx account can be founded in the “Guidance for Antimicrobial Resistance Laboratory Network CRPA Isolate Submission to Wadsworth Center” document included.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Laboratory Contact

For questions or further information on isolate submission, please contact [ARLNCORENY@health.ny.gov](mailto:ARLNCORENY@health.ny.gov); 518-474-4177

### HAI Contact

For questions or further guidance on infection prevention and control or to report suspected cases, please contact [icp@health.ny.gov](mailto:icp@health.ny.gov) or your Regional Epidemiologist.

### NYSDOH Regional and Central Office Contact Information:

- Western Regional Office (585) 423-8097
- Central New York Regional Office (315) 477-8165
- Metropolitan Area Regional Office (914) 654-7149
- Capital District Regional Office (518) 474-1142
- Central Office (518) 474-1142



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## Guidance for Antimicrobial Resistance Laboratory Network (AR Lab Network) CRPA Isolate Submission to the Wadsworth Center

(Northeast Regional Antimicrobial Resistance Laboratory Network)

### ISOLATE SUBMISSION - Carbapenem-resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (CRPA)

#### A. LABELING REQUIREMENTS

Specimens must be clearly labeled (electronically generated labels) with:

1. **A minimum of two unique patient identifiers.** Acceptable identifiers include:
  - Patient's full name
  - Date of birth
  - Medical record number
  - Sample ID number
2. **Date of specimen collection**

#### B. SHIPPING REQUIREMENTS – **Isolates**

- Ship isolates on agar slants that support the growth of the organism (agar plates are not acceptable)
- Store isolates at 4°C prior to shipping (if shipping not available same day)
- Isolates should be shipped as soon as possible
- Ship isolates at ambient temperature

#### C. TEST ORDER

##### Electronic Remote Order through Health Commerce System (HCS)

- I. To access the HCS and the Clinical Laboratory Information Management System (CLIMS), follow the steps below for submitting a **SINGLE ORDER**:
  - Login to the Health Commerce System (HCS) at:  
[https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/public/hcs\\_login.html](https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/public/hcs_login.html)
  - Select 'CLIMS'
  - Select 'Remote Order'
  - Select 'Place Single Order (DOH-4463)'
  - Select the specimen/sample type being submitted (Human, Environmental etc.)
  - Fill in the required information on tabbed sections (Submitter, Patient, Tests, Additional Info.)
  - On the 'Test' tab, enter 'Antimicrobial Resistance' in the search field and select 'Search'
  - **For CRPA Isolates (*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*)** – select 'Antimicrobial Resistance CRPA-Isolate'

- Continue to fill in required information on tabbed sections, review, and select ‘**PLACE THIS ORDER**’
- Print the IDR form, and include with isolate shipment

**II.** To access the HCS and the CLIMS, follow the steps below for submitting **MULTIPLE ORDERS in Bulk:**

- Login to the Health Commerce System (HCS) at:  
[https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/public/hcs\\_login.html](https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/public/hcs_login.html)
- Select ‘**CLIMS**’
- Select ‘**Remote Order**’
- Select ‘**Download IDR Spreadsheet Template**’

This spreadsheet is used to capture patient demographic information and test order required for entry into our laboratory information system.

Items to note:

- 1) **Please do NOT modify or change the formatting of the spreadsheet.**
- 2) **Do NOT Encrypt the spreadsheet.**

- Fill in the required information indicated with an asterisk

\*Test Name – **For isolates:**

\***For CRPA Isolates (*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*)** – select  
‘**Antimicrobial Resistance CRPA-Isolate**’

\*Specimen Source Type

\*Suspected Agent – (**Organism being submitted, i.e., *Pseudomonas aeruginosa***)

\*Submitter Specimen ID

\*Submitter Patient ID

\*Collection Date

\*Patient Last Name

\*Patient First Name

\*Patient Birthdate

\*Patient Sex

\*Patient Address1

\*Patient City

\*Patient State

\*Patient Zip

\*NYS County

\*Submitter Point of Contact Name

\*Submitter Point of Contact Phone

- Save the spreadsheet for upload on the HCS

**III. Upload IDR Spreadsheet Template to HCS:**

- Login to the Health Commerce System (HCS) at:  
[https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/public/hcs\\_login.html](https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/public/hcs_login.html)
- Select ‘**CLIMS**’
- Select ‘**Remote Order**’
- Select ‘**Upload IDR or COVID Spreadsheet**’
- Toggle ‘**Select Submitting Facility**’ - Search and select facility

- Select ‘Choose File’ – Browse for saved copy of IDR spreadsheet template
- File will be imported and validate data in the spreadsheet
- Once validation is complete, click ‘Submit’
- A shipping manifest will be created
- Select ‘Print Order’
- Include Shipping manifest with shipment of specimens

#### **IV. Spreadsheets not passing Validation:**

- Errors in the spreadsheet will be highlighted in **RED** for spreadsheets not passing validation
- Resolve errors, then Select ‘Update’
- Select ‘Submit’
- A shipping manifest will be created
- Select ‘Print Order’
- Include shipping manifest with shipment of isolates

#### **NOTE:**

This method provides many advantages over the paper submission IDR form including specimen tracking, email notification when results become available, online access to results, and access to the test catalog. For licensed clinical laboratories with a valid PFI number or county or regional health department, contact your HIN/HCS coordinator to create your HCS account and gain access to CLIMS. For all others, request access by submitting a signed ‘Request for Access to the Wadsworth Center Laboratory Information Management System (CLIMS) form’ and fax to (518) 474-8140 or (518) 473-1326.

#### **D. CONTACT INFORMATION**

[ARLNCORENY@health.ny.gov](mailto:ARLNCORENY@health.ny.gov) Phone: 518-474-4177

#### **E. SHIPPING**

- Isolates should be shipped overnight Monday through Friday to the following address by FedEx, UPS, or Courier:
 

**David Axelrod Institute Bacteriology  
Laboratory  
120 New Scotland Avenue  
Albany, New York 12208  
Attn: ARLN**
- Ship isolate following International Air Transport Association’s (IATA)“Category B” regulation

#### **NOTE:**

Category B is defined as “an infectious substance not in a form generally capable of causing permanent disability or life-threatening or fatal disease in otherwise healthy humans or animals when exposure to it occurs”. A special permit/certification is not required to ship a Category B substance; however, training is necessary to ensure proper packaging of shipments and to reduce risks of exposure during transportation. Training may be informal, consisting of a documented review of Category B shipping practices.

## **FedEx SHIPPING**

Laboratories may ship isolates for ARLN activities free of charge using our Wadsworth Center CDC AR Lab Network account to create a label for shipping by FedEx.

- Log on to [Fedex.com](http://Fedex.com)
- From the toolbar, select Shipping/Create Shipment
- User ID: ARLNWC
- Password: **\$18Media!**
- Create shipment (follow instructions to create shipment)