



**HAL**  
open science

## Acquisition of Beta-Lactamase by *Neisseria meningitidis* through Possible Horizontal Gene Transfer

Eva Hong, Ala-Eddine Deghmane, Muhamed-Kheir Taha

### ► To cite this version:

Eva Hong, Ala-Eddine Deghmane, Muhamed-Kheir Taha. Acquisition of Beta-Lactamase by *Neisseria meningitidis* through Possible Horizontal Gene Transfer. *Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy*, 2018, 62 (9), pp.e00831-18. 10.1128/AAC.00831-18 . pasteur-01950880

**HAL Id: pasteur-01950880**

**<https://pasteur.hal.science/pasteur-01950880>**

Submitted on 11 Dec 2018

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



# Acquisition of Beta-Lactamase by *Neisseria meningitidis* through Possible Horizontal Gene Transfer

Eva Hong,<sup>a</sup> Ala-Eddine Deghmane,<sup>a</sup>  Muhamed-Kheir Taha<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Invasive Bacterial Infection and National Reference Centre for Meningococci, Institut Pasteur, Paris, France

**ABSTRACT** We report the detection in France of a beta-lactamase-producing invasive meningococcal isolate. Whole-genome sequencing of the isolate revealed a ROB-1-type beta-lactamase gene that is frequently encountered in *Haemophilus influenzae*, suggesting horizontal transfer between isolates of these bacterial species. Beta-lactamases are exceptional in meningococci, with no reports for more than 2 decades. This report is worrying, as the expansion of such isolates may jeopardize the effective treatment against invasive meningococcal disease.

**KEYWORDS** *Neisseria meningitidis*, beta-lactamases

**B**eta-lactam agents are often used for the treatment of invasive meningococcal disease (IMD). Reduced susceptibilities to penicillin G, ampicillin, and amoxicillin have been increasingly reported worldwide. Isolates with reduced susceptibility to third-generation cephalosporins have been also described through *penA* gene transfer from gonococci to meningococci (1). However, beta-lactamase-producing meningococci remained exceptional, with no reported cases for more than 2 decades (2).

We identified in 2017 at the National Reference Center for Meningococci in Paris, France, an invasive isolate of *Neisseria meningitidis* that produced a beta-lactamase. The isolate was from a 23-year-old woman who was admitted to the hospital with fever and abdominal pain. *N. meningitidis* was isolated from blood culture. No respiratory samples were available to study any possible respiratory coinfection. Antibiotic susceptibility testing revealed resistances to penicillin G and amoxicillin, with MICs of 3 and 12  $\mu\text{g/ml}$ , respectively. Clavulanic acid (an inhibitor of beta-lactamase) decreased the amoxicillin MIC to 0.5  $\mu\text{g/ml}$ . The isolate was susceptible to third-generation cephalosporins (ceftriaxone and cefotaxime: MIC, 0.008  $\mu\text{g/ml}$ ), and the patient was successfully treated with ceftriaxone.

The isolate was of serogroup Y. Whole-genome sequencing (WGS) enabled genotyping of the isolate: group, Y; PorA variable region VR1, 5-2; PorA variable region VR2, 10-2; FetA variable region, F4-1; clonal complex (cc), 23; sequence type (ST), 3587. The data (FASTA format) are accessible on the PubMLST website (accession number [53820](https://pubmlst.org/53820), isolate LNP29202) and at NCBI GenBank accession no. [PRJNA454456](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PRJNA454456). WGS also enabled the detection of a ROB-1-type beta-lactamase gene (*bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub>) on the chromosome of the isolate that was 100% identical at both DNA and amino-acid levels to *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> harbored by the pB1000 in *Haemophilus influenzae* but also found in other bacterial species, such as *Pasteurella* and *Moraxella* species (3).

The sequence analysis showed that the *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> gene was inserted on the chromosome of the LNP29202 isolate upstream of the gene Neis0803 and downstream of the gene Neis0807. These two genes encode hypothetical proteins. The *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> gene was present on the meningococcal chromosome with its promoter as well as the ribosome binding site, enabling the transcription and translation of the beta lactamase. The *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> gene of the plasmid pB1000 was previously shown to be functional and responsible for the resistance to beta-lactam antibiotics (4). However, no additional

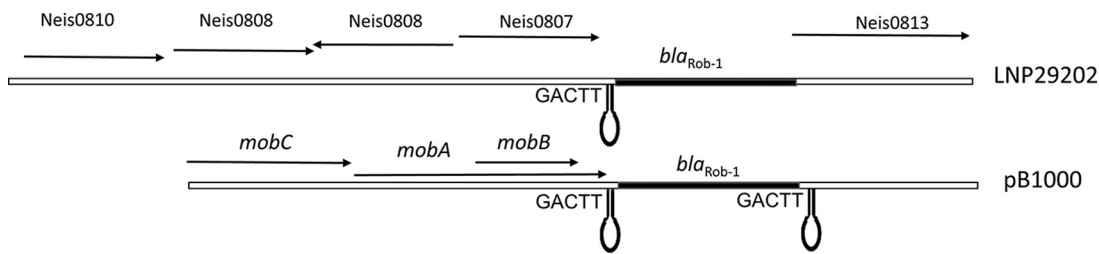
Received 24 April 2018 Returned for modification 26 April 2018 Accepted 21 June 2018

Accepted manuscript posted online 25 June 2018

**Citation** Hong E, Deghmane A-E, Taha M-K. 2018. Acquisition of beta-lactamase by *Neisseria meningitidis* through possible horizontal gene transfer. Antimicrob Agents Chemother 62:e00831-18. <https://doi.org/10.1128/AAC.00831-18>.

**Copyright** © 2018 American Society for Microbiology. All Rights Reserved.

Address correspondence to Muhamed-Kheir Taha, [mktaha@pasteur.fr](mailto:mktaha@pasteur.fr).

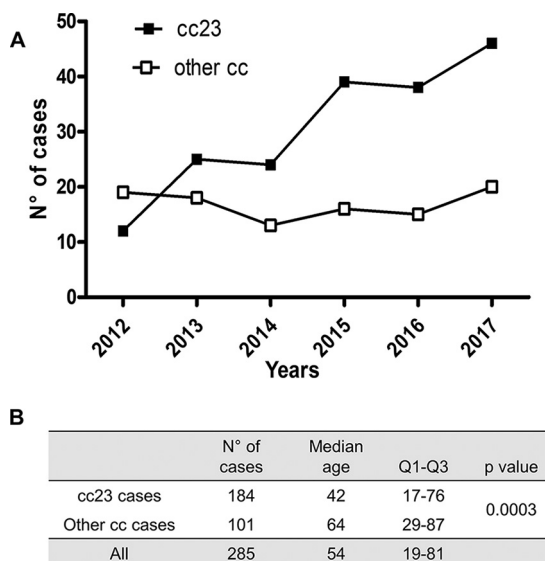


**FIG 1** Schematic representation of the genetic organization of the chromosomal region of the isolate LNP29202 that received the insertion of the *bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>* gene. The organization of the pB1000 plasmid harboring the *bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>* gene is also shown. The arrows indicate the genes (names are above the arrows). The GACTT sequences and the transcription terminator (the hairpin structure) are also indicated.

genes from pB1000 (such as the *mobABC* genes) were transferred with the *bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>* gene on the chromosome of the LNP29202 isolate (Fig. 1).

It was previously suggested that the flanking sequences of the *bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>* gene on the pB1000 plasmid mediate the insertion of this gene. Indeed, a perfect two repeats of the sequence GACTT that are linked to a transcriptional terminator are located upstream and downstream of *bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>* on the pB1000 plasmid (4). The *bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>* in the LNP29202 isolate is preceded by only one copy of the GACTT that was linked to a transcriptional terminator, as in the plasmid pB1000 (Fig. 1). A similar organization was also reported in the plasmid pHS-Tet encoding tetracycline resistance in *Haemophilus parasuis* strain HS1543 (5). The acquisition of the *bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>* gene may have occurred through a respiratory coinfection of *N. meningitidis* and isolates of these bacterial species.

The isolate reported here belonged to *N. meningitidis* serogroup Y (NmY) of the cc23. IMD cases due to NmY cc23 have been increasing in France and in other European countries since 2010 (6). NmY (of cc23 and other cc) are frequently observed in the elderly and are involved in pneumonia (7). However, many NmY/cc23 cases are now occurring in adolescents and young adults who have a higher prevalence of meningococcal carriage (8), thereby perhaps providing an opportunity for concurrently carried bacterial species to exchange genetic material (Fig. 2). The acquisition of



**FIG 2** (A) Evolution of cases (numbers) of group Y invasive meningococcal disease in France per year during the period 2012 to 2017 according to clonal complexes (cc23 versus other cc). (B) Evolution of cases (numbers) of IMD for the whole period according to median age and to the clonal complexes (cc23 versus other cc). A chi-square test was performed to calculate the *P* value (cc23 versus other cc). The cases represent all the cases that were received at the National Reference Center for Meningococci, which types all the isolates as part of its mission of surveillance of IMD in France.

*bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> among meningococcal isolates is worrying, as it may jeopardize the use of beta-lactams that are first-line antibiotics for the empirical treatment of IMD. Preventive strategies (vaccination) should be enhanced to reduce the incidence of the disease and the circulation of the isolates. These measures should reduce the use of antibiotics and the selection of resistance.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work made use of the Neisseria Sequence Typing website (<https://pubmlst.org/neisseria/>) developed by Keith Jolley and sited at the University of Oxford (9). The development of this site has been funded by the Wellcome Trust and European Union. We also acknowledge the PIBNET-P2M platform at the Institut Pasteur.

### REFERENCES

- Deghmane AE, Hong E, Taha MK. 2017. Emergence of meningococci with reduced susceptibility to third-generation cephalosporins. *J Antimicrob Chemother* 72:95–98. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jac/dkw400>.
- Vázquez JA, Enriquez AM, De la Fuente L, Berron S, Baquero M. 1996. Isolation of a strain of beta-lactamase-producing *Neisseria meningitidis* in Spain. *Eur J Clin Microbiol Infect Dis* 15:181–182. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01591498>.
- Tristram SG, Littlejohn R, Bradbury RS. 2010. *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> presence on pB1000 in *Haemophilus influenzae* is widespread, and variable cefaclor resistance is associated with altered penicillin-binding proteins. *Antimicrob Agents Chemother* 54:4945–4947. <https://doi.org/10.1128/AAC.00263-10>.
- San Millan A, Escudero JA, Catalan A, Nieto S, Farello F, Gibert M, Moreno MA, Dominguez L, Gonzalez-Zorn B. 2007. Beta-lactam resistance in *Haemophilus parasuis* is mediated by plasmid pB1000 bearing *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub>. *Antimicrob Agents Chemother* 51:2260–2264. <https://doi.org/10.1128/AAC.00242-07>.
- Lancashire JF, Terry TD, Blackall PJ, Jennings MP. 2005. Plasmid-encoded Tet B tetracycline resistance in *Haemophilus parasuis*. *Antimicrob Agents Chemother* 49:1927–1931. <https://doi.org/10.1128/AAC.49.5.1927-1931.2005>.
- Broker M, Emonet S, Fazio C, Jacobsson S, Koliou M, Kuusi M, Pace D, Paragi M, Pysik A, Simoes MJ, Skoczynska A, Stefanelli P, Toropainen M, Taha MK, Tzanakaki G. 2015. Meningococcal serogroup Y disease in Europe continuation of high importance in some European regions in 2013. *Hum Vaccin Immunother* 11:2281–2286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21645515.2015.1051276>.
- Säll O, Stenmark B, Glimaker M, Jacobsson S, Molling P, Olcen P, Fredlund H. 2017. Clinical presentation of invasive disease caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup Y in Sweden, 1995 to 2012. *Epidemiol Infect* 145:2137–2143. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0950268817000929>.
- Christensen H, May M, Bowen L, Hickman M, Trotter CL. 2010. Meningococcal carriage by age: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet Infect Dis* 10:853–861. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099\(10\)70251-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(10)70251-6).
- Jolley KA, Maiden MC. 2010. BIGSdb: scalable analysis of bacterial genome variation at the population level. *BMC Bioinformatics* 11:595–605. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2105-11-595>.