



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## American Journal of Infection Control

journal homepage: [www.ajicjournal.org](http://www.ajicjournal.org)

## Major Article

## Factors associated with multidrug-resistant bacteria in a cohort of patients with asymptomatic bacteriuria who underwent urological surgery



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## Key Words:

Bacterial resistance  
Urinary tract infection  
Urological surgical procedures

**Background:** Although the factors associated to bacterial resistance in patients with asymptomatic bacteriuria (ASB) have been studied in pregnant, fertile age women, patients with spinal cord injury, and those with urogynecological disorders, nothing is known about the factors associated with multidrug-resistant (MDR) bacteria in patients with ASB and planned urological procedures. This study therefore sought to identify the sociodemographic and clinical factors associated with MDR bacteria in a cohort of patients with ASB scheduled for urological procedures.

**Methods:** We conducted a nested case–control study on a cohort of patients with ASB and planned urological procedures at 3 Colombian medical centers. Cases were patients with MDR bacteria and controls were patients without MDR bacteria.

**Results:** A total of 184 patients were included, 41.8% (n = 77) of whom presented ASB with MDR bacteria. The factors linking ASB with MDR bacteria were: advanced age (odds ratio, 1.03; 95% confidence interval, 1.01–1.06) and hospitalization within the 3-month period before surgery (odds ratio, 2.35; 95% confidence interval, 1.08–5.21).

**Conclusions:** Bacterial resistance is frequent among patients with ASB and planned urological procedures. Advanced age and prior hospitalization should be borne in mind for patients with planned urological procedures because they are factors associated with the presence of MDR bacteria.

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Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is considered a public health problem and a threat to humanity.<sup>1</sup> In developed countries, incidence of infection due to multidrug-resistant (MDR) bacteria is 131 per 100,000

population,<sup>2</sup> with a mortality rate of 7 patients per 100,000 every year.<sup>2</sup> As compared with patients infected with nonresistant bacteria, those attended for MDR bacterial infections increase health care costs by >36%.<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that by 2050, over 10 million persons may die as a consequence of AMR, a figure that is even higher than deaths expected from cancer and diabetes.<sup>4</sup>

AMR is frequent in patients with health care–associated infections,<sup>5</sup> pulmonary tuberculosis,<sup>6</sup> in community-acquired infections<sup>7</sup> such as pneumonia, urinary tract infections,<sup>8</sup> skin and soft tissue infections, as well as in patients colonized as in the case of asymptomatic bacteriuria (ASB).<sup>9</sup>

Although it is known that urine is not sterile and that urinary microbiota is useful for bodily functions,<sup>10</sup> patients with ASB are not expected to be colonized by MDR bacteria. Previous studies have indicated that

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Funding/support: The principal author (Jorge A Ramos-Castaneda) is the beneficiary of grant 677-2014 COLCIENCIAS and Departamento del Huila.

Conflicts of interest: None to report.

Author contributions: J.A.R. conceived and designed the study, acquired and analyzed the data, interpreted the findings, and wrote the manuscript. A.R.R. and E.V.L. designed the study, interpreted the findings, and wrote the manuscript. A.M.S. designed the study, D.F.S. and J.O.M. interpreted the findings and wrote the manuscript. All authors critically reviewed this report and approved the final version.

This research is part of the work conducted toward the PhD title of Jorge A. Ramos-Castaneda.

the prevalence of MDR bacteria in patients with ASB is 16%,<sup>9</sup> and it should be screened in pregnant women and prior to endourological procedures to determine perioperative prophylactic antibiotics.<sup>11–13</sup> ASB does not represent a risk or danger to patients, except in the earlier described 2 situations,<sup>14–16</sup> but the appearance of MDR bacteria generates concern because of the risk of such bacteria invading other tissues, generating localized and systemic infections,<sup>17</sup> and possibly disseminating MDR bacteria to other persons.

Bacterial resistance in patients with ASB has been studied in certain groups, including pregnant,<sup>18</sup> women of fertile age,<sup>19</sup> hospitalized patients,<sup>20</sup> patients with spinal cord injury,<sup>21</sup> and women with urogynecological disorders,<sup>22</sup> but not in patients with planned urological procedures. Bearing in mind that over 30% of patients scheduled for urological procedures present with ASB,<sup>23</sup> and that this poses a risk factor for postsurgical infectious complications, it is important to ascertain precisely which factors are associated with the MDR bacteria in patients with ASB.

The aim of this study was to identify the sociodemographic and clinical factors associated with the presence of MDR bacteria in a cohort of patients with ASB who were scheduled for urological procedures.

## METHODS

### Study type and study population

We conducted a nested case–control study on a cohort of patients with ASB and planned urological procedures at 3 Colombian medical centers.

Patients with planned urological procedures were consecutively recruited during April 2018 through January 2019. All patients were screened to detect ASB prior to surgery. ASB was defined as a bacterial isolate in a voided urine sample having a count of  $>10^5$  (colony-forming unit/mL), assessed as being from a person who does not exhibit signs or symptoms of urinary tract infection.<sup>24</sup> The urological procedures included were transurethral resection of prostate (partial or radical), tumors of bladder or urethra, open prostatectomy (partial or radical), ureterolithotomy, nephrolithotomy, nephrectomy, and flexible ureterorenoscopy. We excluded all patients with urinary tract infection, immunosuppression secondary to glucocorticoid use, and hematological or solid-organ malignancies undergoing chemotherapy or radiation treatment, as well as patients aged  $<18$  years.

A case was defined as any patient with ASB who had MDR bacteria. Multidrug-resistance was defined as nonsusceptibility to at least 1 agent in 3 or more categories of antibiotics, taking into account the intrinsic resistance of microorganisms to certain antimicrobial agents.<sup>25</sup> Antimicrobial categories were aminoglycoside, antipseudomonal penicillin +  $\beta$ -lactamase inhibitors, carbapenems, nonextended spectrum cephalosporins, extended spectrum cephalosporins, fluoroquinolones, folate pathway inhibitors, monobactams, penicillin, penicillin +  $\beta$ -lactamase inhibitors, phosphonic acids, and polymyxins.<sup>25</sup> Controls were patients with ASB due to nonresistant bacteria.

All isolates were identified by means of the microbiology laboratory's standard method. Susceptibility criteria were defined by reference to the Clinical & Laboratory Standards Institute cut-off values.<sup>26</sup>

### Independent variables

The independent variables were sex, age, personal history of conditions such as arterial hypertension, diabetes mellitus, urological cancer, renal lithiasis, or benign prostatic hyperplasia. Data were also collected on prior manipulation of the urinary tract (surgery or endoscopic procedure) in the preceding 3 months,<sup>13,23</sup> antibiotic use in the preceding 3 months, type of urological intervention, microorganism isolated, and hospitalization in the preceding 3 months.

### Statistical analysis

The independent variables were compared in groups with and without MDR bacteria. The  $\chi^2$  test was used to establish significant differences with the categorical variables. Age was compared using the Student t test. The odds ratios (OR) with their 95% confidence intervals (CI) were calculated for the independent variables. We fitted a logistic regression model for explanatory purposes, in which we included variables with statistical significance in the bivariate analysis, the interactions, and the confounding variables. All data analyses were performed using the R Studio 1.1.4 software package (R Core Team; R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria).

### Ethical considerations

The study was submitted to and approved by the Universidad CES research ethics committee (record no. 123, study 631) and by the ethics committees of the respective participating institutions. Patients' informed verbal consent was obtained for the review of clinical histories. The principal investigator entered into a confidentiality agreement with the institutions. In all cases, consent was obtained in accordance with the provisions of the latest version of the Declaration of Helsinki.

## RESULTS

During the study period, 184 patients with ASB were scheduled for urological surgery; they had a mean age of 61.4 (SD 13.9) years and were mostly men (62.0%). The most frequent nonurological condition was arterial hypertension (30.98%). Benign prostatic hyperplasia (41.30%) and renal lithiasis (32.06%) were the 2 most frequent urological disorders (Table 1).

Over 40% of patients in this cohort reported some prior manipulation of the urinary tract in the last 3 months (mainly endoscopic procedures), as well as hospitalization (40.8%) or antibiotic use in the

**Table 1**

Demographic and clinical characteristics of the patients with asymptomatic bacteriuria (N = 184)

Characteristics	N (%)
<b>City</b>	
Neiva	162 (88.0)
Medellín	22 (11.9)
<b>Institution</b>	
1	22 (11.9)
2	146 (79.3)
3	16 (8.7)
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	114 (61.9)
Female	70 (38.0)
<b>Age (years)</b>	
Mean (SD)	61.43 (13.9)
Median (range interquartile)	63 (17)
<b>Comorbidities</b>	
Arterial hypertension	57 (30.9)
Diabetes mellitus	24 (13.0)
Urological cancer	13 (7.0)
Urolithiasis	59 (32.0)
Benign prostatic hyperplasia	76 (41.3)
<b>History of a urological intervention</b>	
Previous urological intervention*	84 (45.6)
Previous endoscopic intervention*	50 (27.1)
Previous surgery*	34 (18.4)
Permanent bladder catheter	49 (26.6)
Intermittent bladder catheter	2 (1.0)
Ureteral stent	21 (11.4)
Hospitalization in the last 3 months	75 (40.7)
Antibiotics in the last 3 months	102 (55.4)

\*In the last 3 months.

**Table 2**  
Microbiological characteristics of the patients with asymptomatic bacteriuria (N = 184)

Microbiological characteristic	MDR bacteria N (%)	Non-MDR bacteria N (%)	N (%)
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	30 (42.9)	40 (57.1)	70 (38.0)
<i>Klebsiella pneumoniae</i>	25 (69.4)	11 (30.6)	36 (19.5)
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	4 (23.5)	13 (76.5)	17 (9.2)
<i>Enterococcus faecalis</i>	1 (7.1)	13 (92.9)	14 (7.6)
<i>Proteus mirabilis</i>	3 (25.0)	9 (75.0)	12 (6.5)
<i>Serratia marcescens</i>	4 (44.4)	5 (55.6)	9 (4.8)
<i>Morganella morganii</i>	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	5 (2.7)
<i>Enterobacter cloacae</i>	1 (25.0)	3 (75.0)	4 (2.1)
<i>Klebsiella oxytoca</i>	1 (25.0)	3 (75.0)	4 (2.1)
<i>Acinetobacter baumannii</i>	2 (66.7)	1 (33.3)	3 (1.6)
<i>Citrobacter freundii</i>	0	3 (100.0)	3 (1.6)
<i>Streptococcus agalactiae</i>	0	2 (100.0)	2 (1.0)
Others*	4 (100.0)	0	4 (2.1)

MDR, multidrug-resistant.

\**Hafnia alvei*, *Providencia rettgeri*, *Pseudomonas luteola*, or *Pseudomonas putida*.

preceding 3 months (55.4%) (Table 1). In terms of use of urological devices, indwelling urinary catheter and ureteral stents were the devices most used by patients prior to urological surgery (26.6% and 11.4%, respectively) (Table 1).

A total of 41.8% (n = 77) of patients presented with MDR bacteria in this cohort, and *Escherichia coli* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* were the microorganisms more frequently seen (57.6%) (Table 2).

The crude analysis showed that, compared with controls, cases had a higher age (OR, 1.03; 95% CI, 1.00–1.05) and registered a higher frequency of previous urological interventions (OR, 1.86; 95% CI, 1.03–3.36), particularly surgery (OR, 3.15; 95% CI, 1.45–7.05), and of hospitalization in the preceding 3 months (OR, 2.96; 95% CI, 1.61–5.46) (Table 3). In addition, there were other variables that displayed an association, although without reaching statistical significance, such as antibiotic use in the 3 months immediately preceding urological surgery (OR, 1.78; 95% CI, 0.98–3.25) (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
Demographic and clinical characteristics associated with the presence of an MDR microorganism in patients with asymptomatic bacteriuria (N = 184)

Characteristics	MDR bacteria N = 77	Non-MDR bacteria N = 107	P	Crude OR (95% CI)
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	52 (67.5)	62 (57.9)		
Female	25 (32.4)	45 (42.0)	.24	1.51 (0.82–2.78)
<b>Age</b>				
Mean	64.4	59.2	<.01	1.03 (1.00–1.05)
<b>Comorbidities</b>				
Arterial hypertension	29 (37.6)	28 (26.1)	.13	1.71 (0.91–3.20)
Diabetes mellitus	7 (9.0)	17 (15.8)	.26	0.53 (0.21–1.35)
Urological cancer	6 (7.7)	7 (6.5)	.97	1.21 (0.39–3.74)
Urolithiasis	23 (29.8)	36 (33.6)	.70	0.84 (0.45–1.58)
Benign prostatic hyperplasia	37 (48.0)	39 (36.4)	.15	1.61 (0.89–2.93)
<b>History of a urological intervention</b>				
Previous urological intervention*	42 (54.5)	42 (39.2)	.05	1.86 (1.03–3.36)
Previous endoscopic intervention*	20 (25.9)	30 (28.0)	.76	0.90 (0.46–1.75)
Previous surgery*	22 (28.5)	12 (11.2)	.003	3.15 (1.45–7.05)
Permanent bladder catheter	26 (33.7)	23 (21.4)	.09	1.86 (0.96–3.60)
Ureteral stent	9 (11.6)	12 (11.2)	1.0	1.05 (0.42–2.62)
Hospitalization in the last 3 months	43 (55.8)	32 (29.9)	<.01	2.96 (1.61–5.46)
Antibiotics in the last 3 months	49 (63.6)	53 (49.5)	.08	1.78 (0.98–3.25)
<b>Reason for urological intervention</b>				
Lithiasis	22 (28.5)	29 (27.1)	Reference	Reference
Urological cancer	7 (9.0)	10 (9.3)	1.00	1.03 (0.34–3.16)
Hydronephrosis	8 (10.3)	15 (14.0)	.91	1.21 (0.44–3.28)
Benign prostatic hyperplasia	31 (40.2)	39 (36.4)	.95	0.91 (0.44–1.90)
Urinary incontinence	7 (9.0)	9 (8.4)	1.00	0.93 (0.30–2.90)
Tumor	2 (2.6)	5 (4.6)	.79	1.81 (0.32–10.24)

CI, confidence interval; MDR, multidrug-resistant; OR, odds ratio.

\*In the last 3 months.

The multivariate logistic regression analysis showed that having previously undergone hospitalization (OR, 2.35; 95% CI, 1.08–5.21) and the advanced age (OR, 1.03; 95% CI, 1.01–1.06) were factors associated with the acquisition of MDR bacteria organism colonization in patients with ASB. Surgery and antibiotic use in the 3 months immediately preceding urological surgery was not associated with the presence of MDR bacteria (Table 4).

## DISCUSSION

This study has observed that advanced age as well as hospitalization 3 months prior to surgery are factors associated with the presence of MDR bacteria in a cohort of patients with ASB and planned urological procedures. To our knowledge, this is the largest prospective study in terms of sample size conducted on patients with ASB and planned urological procedures in Latin America, and the second largest performed worldwide.

One of the factors associated with the appearance of antibiotic resistance is having recently undergone hospitalization. During hospitalization, patients are exposed to invasive devices, contact with health care MDR bacteria-colonized personnel, and risk of acquiring health care-associated infections,<sup>27,28</sup> factors that may trigger new acquisition of MDR bacteria organism colonization. In our study, evidence of a patient being hospitalized in the preceding 3 months was associated with the appearance of MDR bacteria. This could be because of the direct relationship that exists between hospitalization and antibiotic use, the main factor for generation of MDR bacteria, as well as the use of medications that alter the human microbiota.<sup>29</sup> In this respect, Pobięga et al<sup>9</sup> observed that previous hospitalization was associated with urinary tract infection by extended-spectrum  $\beta$ -lactamase-producing bacteria.

Advanced age was another factor found to be associated with multidrug resistance in patients with ASB. There are studies that have shown a direct relationship between age and antibiotic resistance<sup>30</sup> as result of the physiological changes that occur during adult age and increase both susceptibility to and appearance of MDR bacteria.<sup>31</sup>

**Table 4**

Associated factors with the presence of MDR bacteria in patients with asymptomatic bacteriuria (N = 184)

Associated factors	Crude OR (95% CI)	Adjusted OR (95% CI)*	P
Hospitalization in the last 3 months	2.96 (1.61–5.46)	2.35 (1.08–5.21)	.03
Age (years)	1.03 (1.00–1.05)	1.03 (1.01–1.06)	<.01
Previous surgery in the last 3 months	3.15 (1.45–7.05)	2.38 (0.95–5.96)	.06
Antibiotics in the last 3 months	1.78 (0.98–3.25)	0.85 (0.40–1.79)	.67

CI, confidence interval; MDR, multidrug-resistant; OR, odds ratio.

\*Adjusted OR by age, previous surgery, and antibiotics in the last 3 months.

In patients with ASB, MDR bacteria are found in: pregnant women (10%–20%),<sup>18</sup> patients with spinal cord injury (50%),<sup>21</sup> hospitalized patients (16%),<sup>9</sup> and patients with planned urological procedures (30%).<sup>23</sup> In our study, over 40% of patients with ASB who were scheduled for urological surgery had MDR bacteria. This difference could be owing to overuse of antibiotics received by these patients prior to urological procedures<sup>32</sup> in line with the recommendations of treating ASB prior to urological surgery.<sup>13</sup> This factor might be increasing resistance rates.<sup>33</sup>

Treatment of ASB is associated with urinary tract infection by MDR bacteria.<sup>34</sup> It is this that has given rise to the debate about evaluating the usefulness and consequences—in terms of antibiotic resistance—of screening for and treating ASB prior to urological surgery,<sup>23,35</sup> particularly when one bears in mind that urine is not sterile and that its microbiota poses protective functions for the body.<sup>22,36</sup> Similarly, the usefulness of identifying and treating ASB has been evaluated in orthopedic surgery,<sup>14</sup> cardiovascular surgery,<sup>15</sup> neurosurgery, spinal cord injury,<sup>37</sup> and transplant patients,<sup>16</sup> with the conclusion that, rather than lowering the risk of infection, treatment of ASB actually poses a risk in terms of antibiotic resistance.

Considering that the cohort of patients with ASB displayed a high rate of bacterial resistance, it is important to assess the risk–benefit relationship of treating bacteriuria prior to urological surgery. Care must be prioritized, and other factors assessed in patients who have undergone recent hospitalization or are of advanced age because they will have a risk of developing MDR bacteria in urine and might experience postsurgical infectious complications.

This study has some limitations. Information was extracted from hospital records and may not have registered all relevant variables, such as antibiotic use, urinary tract manipulation, and hospitalization in the prior 3 months. Isolates were identified using the standard method, albeit of different clinical laboratories, because patient care depends on each individual hospital protocols. Sample size was not large enough to allow for analysis by subgroup, taking into account the type of resistance (MDR, extensively drug-resistant, or pandrug-resistant bacteria).<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the study was based on one of the largest sample sizes used for this specific topic. Data were collected from 3 hospitals in the same country, so that rates of ASB and MDR bacteria may not be generalizable to rates of MDR bacteria in other parts of the world. Finally, the study evaluated the presence of MDR bacteria, but it did not show the rate of resistance by each category of antibiotics.

The study's advantages include consecutive sampling, allowing for the control of selection bias that was conducted in several health centers, which serves to enhance its external validity at least at a national level. Finally, the definition and evaluation of multidrug-resistance was based on findings reported in the literature, according to microorganism's intrinsic resistance.<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusions

Patients with ASB who have undergone urological surgery displayed a high bacterial resistance rate. Both advanced age and hospitalization

within the 3 months immediately preceding the surgical procedure were found to be associated with the presence of MDR bacteria. Given the observed frequency and severity of possible postsurgical infectious complications, it would perhaps be advisable for displaying these characteristics to be screened for the presence of MDR bacteria. Even so, there is a need for more studies to evaluate other factors associated with antibiotic resistance, in which antibiotic use and the mechanism of specific resistance are clearly distinguished. It is imperative to have studies evaluating the usefulness and consequences—in terms of antibiotic resistance—of screening and treating ASB prior to urological surgery.

## Acknowledgments

Jorge A Ramos-Castaneda is grateful to Clínica CES, Centro Especializado de Urología, and Hospital Universitario Hernando Moncalleano Perdomo de Neiva.

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