



To: CAHAN San Diego Participants
Date: March 18, 2019
From: Epidemiology Program, Public Health Services

Update: Carbapenem-resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Infections after Hospitalization in Tijuana

This health alert updates providers that four local cases have been reported of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* infections with carbapenem resistance due to Verona integron-encoded metallo- β -lactamase (VIM-CRPA) linked to previous hospitalizations in Tijuana, Mexico. The [level 2 travel alert](#) issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding surgeries in Tijuana facilities has been updated. Recommendations and resource links are provided.

Key Messages

- Four cases of VIM-CRPA have been reported in San Diego County in individuals with previous hospitalizations in Tijuana, Mexico.
- The local cases are linked to an ongoing multistate cluster of VIM-CRPA in persons returning from Tijuana after having invasive medical procedures. About half of those infected had their surgery performed at Grand View Hospital in Tijuana.
- Travelers to Tijuana should not have surgery at Grand View Hospital until further notice.
- CDC recommends that any patient with surgery at Grand View Hospital after August 1, 2018 discuss screening for blood borne pathogens with their provider.
- Providers admitting patients with infections after invasive medical procedures in Tijuana should test for carbapenemase-producing organisms and strongly consider implementing pre-emptive contact precautions while awaiting lab results.
- Providers should report carbapenem-resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* to the County Epidemiology Program and arrange to test these specimens for resistance mechanism via the San Diego County Public Health Laboratory (SDCPHL).
- Individuals planning to go abroad for medical procedures should consult with their local providers prior to departure and follow CDC medical tourism [travel advice](#).

Situation

A San Diego CAHAN [alert](#) was issued on January 16, 2019, regarding reports from CDC of VIM-CRPA infections in U.S. residents who had invasive medical procedures in Tijuana. About half of those infected with these bacteria had surgery at Grand View Hospital in Tijuana. The others became infected after surgery at other hospitals and clinics in Tijuana.

Since the alert was issued, the County Epidemiology Program has received four reports of individuals with VIM-CRPA in San Diego County after prior hospitalization in Tijuana. Two patients had surgery at Grand View Hospital, one in October 2018 and the other in January 2019. The other two patients were hospitalized at other facilities in Tijuana in January and February 2019 and were subsequently discovered to have CRPA upon admission or transfer to hospitals in San Diego County. All four of these patients were cared for in San Diego healthcare facilities using contact precautions. No secondary cases of VIM-CRPA have been identified.

To date, CDC has received 25 reports (20 confirmed and 5 suspected) of VIM-CRPA in the multistate cluster related to medical facilities in Tijuana. CDC continues to [recommend](#) that travelers to Mexico not have any surgery at Grand View Hospital in Tijuana, until further notice. In addition, Mexican health officials identified concerns about medical device and instrument reprocessing at Grand View Hospital. The facility did not follow recommended procedures for assuring the quality of sterilization processes. CDC [recommends](#) that patients who have had surgery at Grand View Hospital, on or after August 1, 2018, should discuss with their healthcare provider possible screening for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV.

Background

Traveling abroad for medical care is increasingly common. Medical and surgical procedures done anywhere (including the United States) carry some risk and can result in complications, including infection. Prior to travel, CDC recommends that individuals consult a local travel medicine specialist at least a month before departure. Travelers should consult their own physician and [research](#) the foreign provider who will perform any planned procedure, as well as the clinic or hospital where the care will be provided.

Recommendations for Providers

- **Advise** patients who are seeking medical care outside the United States to research the foreign provider. They should not have any procedures at Grand View Hospital until further notice.
- **Consider screening** for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV in any patient who had a surgical procedure at Grand View Hospital after August 1, 2018.
- **Be vigilant** for the possibility of resistant infections occurring in patients who have traveled abroad for medical procedures, especially those with a history of invasive procedures in Tijuana.
- **Perform rectal screening** for carbapenemase-producing organisms when admitting patients who have a history of overnight stays in foreign healthcare facilities.
 - This recommendation applies to patients hospitalized outside the U.S. at any time during the six months before their local hospital admission.
 - Consider placing such patients in isolation and contact precautions while awaiting screening results, especially those with infections after invasive procedures in Tijuana.
 - Rectal screening is available through the [County Public Health Laboratory](#). Call (619) 692-8500, option 1 or [email](#) for information on proper specimen collection, storage and transport.
- **Obtain cultures** and perform antimicrobial susceptibility testing to guide treatment of infections in patients who have a history of having undergone invasive procedures.

- **Isolate patients**, from whom carbapenemase-producing organisms are obtained (regardless of specimen source), on contact precautions; ask them about receipt of healthcare outside the U.S., including medical tourism, in the six months prior to positive culture.
- **Consult** with an infectious disease specialist when caring for patients with carbapenemase-producing organisms. These infections may be difficult to treat, and may require protracted and complex antibacterial drug combinations and courses.
- **Report all cases** of carbapenemase-producing organisms and any case of a surgical site infection in patients who have recently undergone surgery in foreign medical facilities. Call the [County Epidemiology Program](#) during normal business hours at 619-692-8499 (Mon-Fri 8 AM to 5 PM) or fax a [Confidential Morbidity Report](#) to 858-715-6458.
- **Test** any carbapenem-resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* or Enterobacteriaceae for Verona integron-encoded metallo- β -lactamase (VIM) and other plasmid-mediated carbapenemases.
 - Mechanism testing for VIM and other plasmid-mediated carbapenemases may be arranged via the County Public Health Laboratory after approval by the County Epidemiology Program.
 - Call (619) 692-8500, option 1 or [email](#) for information on proper specimen collection, storage and transport.
- **Refer** to additional response measures in the recently updated [CDC Interim Guidance](#) on containing novel or targeted multidrug-resistant organisms.

Resources

- [CDC Travel Alert on Drug-resistant Infections in Mexico](#)
- [CDC Clinician Information on Medical Tourism](#)
- [CDC Traveler Information on Medical Tourism](#)
- [CDC Interim Guidance for a Public Health Response to Contain Novel or Targeted Multidrug-resistant Organisms \(MDROs\) – January 2019 Update](#)
- CDC website: [Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae in Healthcare Settings](#)
- CDC toolkit: [Facility Guidance for Control of Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae \(CRE\) – November 2015 Update](#)
- California Department of Public Health website: [Hospital Acquired Infection Program](#)

Thank you for your participation.

CAHAN San Diego

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