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RESEARCH ARTICLE

COMPARISON OF BIOFILM PRODUCTION AMONG CARBAPENEM RESISTANCE CLINICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISOLATES OF *PSEUDOMONAS AERUGINOSA* IN SOME TERTIARY HOSPITALS OF SOUTH WEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Pseudomonas aeruginosa (P.A) is one of the major opportunistic pathogens of human often associated with morbidity and mortality. This study is to determine antibiotic susceptibility pattern and biofilm production among the P.A isolates and also compare biofilm production among carbapenem resistant clinical and environmental isolates from the selected Hospitals. Strains were recovered from different clinical and environmental samples from the hospitals using standard microbiological techniques. Kirby-Bauer disc diffusion method was used for susceptibility testing and biofilm production was determined using quantitative method. A total of 132 stains (120 clinical and 12 environmental isolates) of non duplicate P.A were recovered from 1,214 clinical and 1,000 environmental samples of the selected hospitals. Imipenem was the most effective antibiotics against the isolates as 84.2% (101) and 100% (12) were recorded from clinical and environmental isolates respectively. Biofilm production was 41.7% and 16.7% among clinical and environmental P.A and carbapenem resistant clinical P.A produces more biofilm than carbapenem resistant environmental P.A with 63.9% and 40% respectively. In conclusion policy maker and health practitioners should address this problem and implement a more rational and appropriate use of antibiotics. This may involve restricting and monitoring the sales of antibiotics in the country.

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INTRODUCTION

Pseudomonas aeruginosa is an opportunistic pathogen from human that is frequently associated with an increased in morbidity and mortality among immunocompromised patients. (Kerr et al 2009, Armour et al 2007) Increasing resistance of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* to different class of antibiotics especially carbapenem has become a major concern worldwide. Treatment of infection associated with *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is usually complicated because the organism is intrinsically resistant to many classes of antibiotics and most times acquire resistant to most effective antibiotics (J.P. Pirnay et al, 2003). Abuse and continuous misuse of broad spectrum antibiotics has created selective pressure on the bacteria which has likely led to emergence of multi resistant strains. Research shows that multidrug resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is responsible for 4-60% nosocomial infections around the globe (H.G Safaei et al, 2017).

Pseudomonas aeruginosa is also known to produce wide arrays of virulence factors such as biofilm. The gravity of infection caused by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is dependent on the production of several virulence factors which affect different aspects of its pathogenesis (M.Y Alikhani et al, 2014, M. Safari et al 2014 and J.A. Schaber et al, 2007,). Study also shows that the ability of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* to form biofilm under different conditions reduces the efficacy of the antibiotics treatment and also induces chronic infectious diseases (T. Rasamiravaka et al, 2015).

Biofilms are sessile communities of microorganisms which are characterized by the cells being irreversibly attached to a substratum or to each other. They are enclosed in a matrix of extracellular polymeric substances (EPS) that they have produced and exhibit an altered phenotype with respect to growth rate and gene transcription (G.D Christensen et al, 1985). Biofilms act as efficient barriers against antimicrobial

agents and also help microorganism to attach to surfaces, protect them against drying and cause a lot of problems in the medical and industrial settings because of its ability to provoke greater resistance to antibiotics and also reduces the host immune response action (H.Grabski et al, 2017, T. Rasamiravaka et al, 2015 and M.E Davey et al, 2000). *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is a worrisome organism that has the ability to grow under various conditions. The organism is found frequently in various areas of the hospitals such as physicians and nurses clothings, sinks, equipment, tap and contaminated medical equipment due to its high resistance to disinfectants (M. Davane et al, 2014 and De Abreu et al, 2014). The hospital environment may be contaminated through the hospital staff, patients and even visitors. It is very possible also for hospital area to harbour carbapenem resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and consequently circulates it within the hospital. In view of these, the objectives of this study is to isolate and identify *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* from clinical and environmental samples in the selected tertiary Hospitals, determine their antibiotic susceptibility pattern, determine production of biofilm among clinical and environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* isolates and also compare biofilm production among carbapenem resistant clinical and environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* from the selected Hospitals. Community acquired infections in this content are infections from the communities or infections acquired within 24hrs of admission in the hospital while nosocomial infection are refers to infections acquired after 24hours of admission into the hospital. Isolate found to be resistant to one out of the three carbapenem antibiotics applied was referred to as carbapenem resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in the Department of Medical Microbiology and Parasitology Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) Teaching Hospital, Osogbo from January 2017 to December 2017. A total of 1,214 clinical samples from wound swab, urine, stools, blood, sputum, ear swab and throat swab submitted to Microbiology Departments of two tertiary hospitals in South West Nigeria namely: LAUTECH Teaching Hospital-Osogbo and LAUTECH Teaching Hospital-Ogbomoso were examined. Also, 1,000 environmental samples recovered from beddings, sinks, furniture, equipment, and walls of the two tertiary hospitals were processed following standard microbiology procedures.

Identification of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*: Preliminary isolation and identification of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was done by standard microbiology methods. Clinical Samples from wound swab, blood, urine, sputum, ear swab, throat swab and stool were cultured by streaking on MacConkey and chocolate agar plates with a sterile wire loop using standard procedures. The plates were incubated aerobically overnight at 37°C. Environmental samples from the hospitals were also processed following standard microbiological procedures. Samples from sinks, equipment, beddings were collected using a sterile swab stick soaked with peptone water and were cultured immediately using a streak method with a sterile wire loop on chocolate and MacConkey agar. This was then incubated overnight at 37°C. Isolates presumed to be *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* were identified by using colonial morphology, Gram reactions, motility test, biochemical tests, production of blue green pigment pyocyanin and also its ability to grow at 42°C.

Antibiotics Susceptibility Testing: Antibiotic susceptibility test was determined for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* isolates using Kirby-Bauer techniques on Mueller Hilton (MH) agar plates (Oxoid products). A sterile wire loop was used to pick test organism into a Mueller Hilton broth and was incubated at 37 °C for 2 hours. Turbidity of the suspension was adjusted to 0.5 Macfarland's standard (1.5×10^8 CFU/ml) and a sterile swab was then dipped into the inoculum tube which was used to streaked the entire surface of the MH agar to ensure even distribution. Antimicrobial disc was then picked using a sterile forceps and was pressed lightly to ensure contact with the agar which was then incubated at 37°C for 18 hours. Antibiotic discs used include : ceftriaxone (CRO-10µg), ciprofloxacin (CIP-10µg), gentamycin (CN-10µg), tobramycin (TOB-10µg), levofloxacin (LEV- 5µg), tetracycline (TE-30µg), imipenem (IPM-10µg), meropenem (MEM-10µg) and ertapenem (ETP-10µg) *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* strain ATCC 27853 was used to control the experiment. Zone diameter of inhibition (in mm) of the organism to each antibiotic were measured using a calibrated ruler put on the underside of the plate and was interpreted according to CLSI (2015).

Quantitative Determination of biofilm Production assay: Quantitative determination of biofilm assay was carried out using a sterile 96 well microtitre plate. *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was first incubated overnight inside a Muller Hilton broth at 37°C. A volume of 100µl of the overnight cultures of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* isolates were then inoculated into another 100 µl of Muller Hinton Broth (MHB) supplemented with 0.5% glucose for 2 days at 37°C. After incubation, the planktonic bacteria were removed by shaking the plate rapidly in a tray with tap water. 125 µl of 0.2% crystal violet was then used to stain the preparation for 10 minutes at room temperature before rinsing with distilled water. It was then air dried and 200 µl of 95% ethanol each was added to each well. Incubation was done at room temperature for 15 minutes and 150 µl from each well was transferred into a new microtitre plate. The absorbance was measured spectrophotometrically at 570 nm. The experiment was carried out in triplicates and the mean value of optical densities (OD) was calculated. The isolates with higher OD greater or equal to 0.2 were considered as biofilm forming isolates (A. Ghadaksaz et al, 2015 and J.H Merritt et al, 2005).

Patients information: Information about the age, sex, clinical details, sample type and date of collection of samples from the patients were collected from the laboratory forms filled for each patient by their physicians.

Inclusion criteria: All clinical and environmental samples cultured that yielded growth of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* from the two hospitals were included.

Exclusion criteria: Any sample that does not grow *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was excluded.

Preservation of isolate: Isolates were preserved in two slants in Mueller Hilton broth. One was preserved using 20% glycerol while the other was without glycerol in the refrigeration at -20C in LAUTECH (Mercy Land) Osogbo before further investigation.

Data analysis: Data were generated from the results and SPSS 24 was used to analyze it. Results were generated through frequency and percentage.

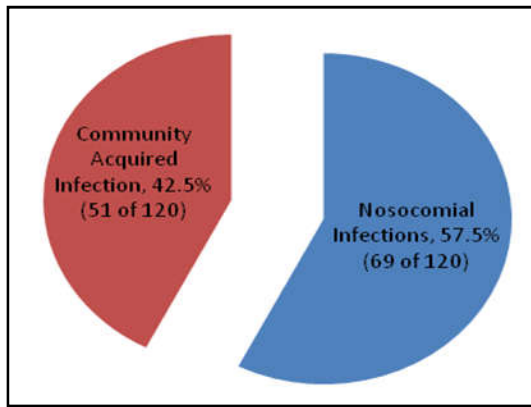


Figure 1. Distribution of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* among Nosocomial and Community Acquired Infected Patients in the two Tertiary Hospitals of Southwest Nigeria (n=120)

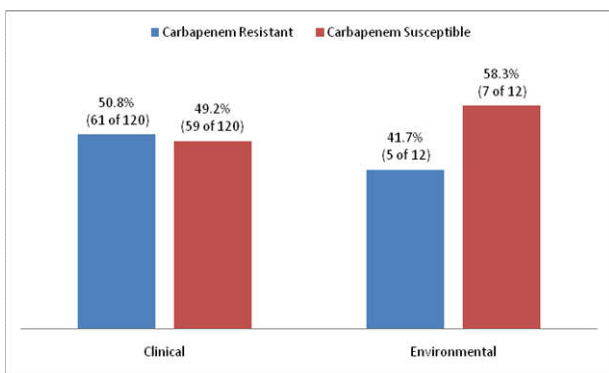


Figure 2. Carbapenem Resistant among Clinical and Environmental Isolates of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in the Selected Tertiary Hospitals

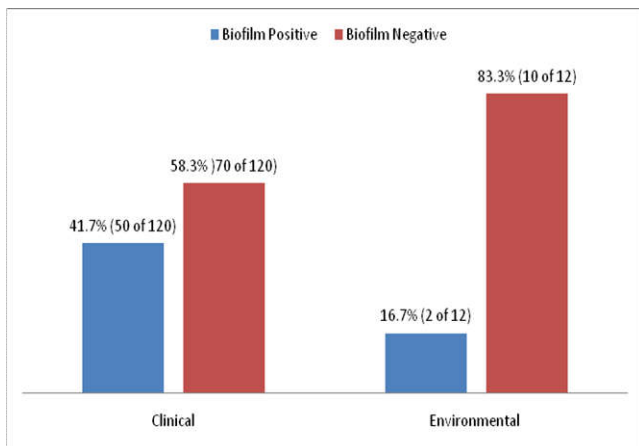


Figure 3. Distribution of Biofilm Production among Environmental and Clinical Isolates of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in Two Tertiary Hospitals of Southwest Nigeria. (Clinical *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* n=120, Environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* n= 12)

Ethical Approval: Ethical Approval was gotten from the selected hospitals.

RESULTS

A total number of 120 (9.9%) clinical and 12(1.2%) environmental isolates of non duplicate *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* were recovered from 1,214 clinical and 1,000 environmental samples respectively.

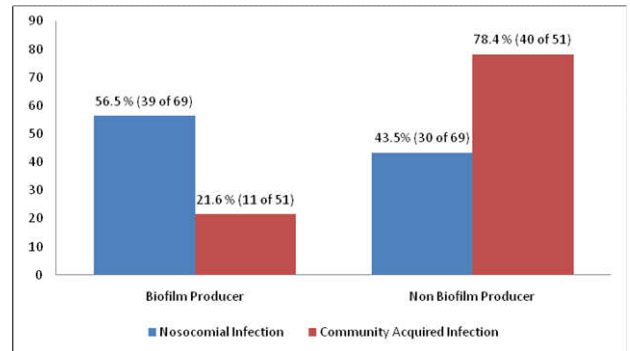


Figure 4. Biofilm Formation among Nosocomial and Community Acquired infected Patients of the Two Tertiary Hospitals in South West Nigeria

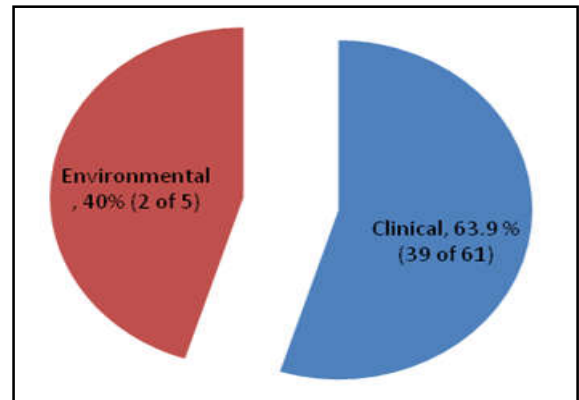


Figure 5. Evaluation of Biofilm Production among Carbapenem Resistant Clinical and Environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

Table 1: Gender Distribution of patients whose samples yielded growth of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* among the two Tertiary Hospitals in Southwest Nigeria (n=120).

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	73	60.8
Female	47	39.2
Total	120	100

The patients from whom clinical *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* were isolated includes 73 male (60.8%) and 47 (39.2%) female (Table 1). Nosocomial infection was 69 (57.5%) while community acquired infection was 51(42.5%) (Figure 1) Age range of 31-40 have the highest frequency of 48(40%) while 51 and above was 3(2.5%), being the lowest (Table 2). Results of clinical and environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* antimicrobial susceptibility testing by the disk diffusion method shows that Imipenem was the most effective antibiotics against the isolates as 84.2%(101 of 120) and 100% (12 of 12) were recorded for clinical and environmental isolates respectively. Highest resistance was seen among the clinical and environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* against ceftriazone as 79.2% (95 of 120) and 75% (9 of 12) were resistant respectively. Other antibiotics exhibited various susceptibility rates as shown in Table 3. A proportion of 50.8% (61 out of 120) of clinical *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* were carbapenem resistant while 41.7% (5 out of 12) of Environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* were carbapenem resistant (Figure 2). Biofilm formation among the clinical *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was found to be 41.7% (50 out of 120) and 16.7% (2 out of 12) among environmental isolates (Figure 3).

Table 2. Age Distribution of Patients whose samples yielded growth of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in the Two Tertiary Hospitals of Southwest Nigeria (n=120).

Age Group (years)	Frequency	Percentage
1 - 10	11	9.2
11 - 20	14	11.7
21 - 30	35	29.1
31 - 40	48	40
41 - 50	9	7.5
51 and Above	3	2.5
Total	120	100

Table 3. Antibiogram of Clinical and Environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Isolates among the Two Tertiary Hospitals (Clinical isolate: n=120 , Environmental Isolates n=12)

Antibiotics	Clinical Isolates (n=120)				Environmental Isolate n=(12)			
	Sensitive		Resistant		Sensitive		Resistant	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Ciprofloxacin	69	57.5	51	42.5	7	58.3	5	41.7
Gentimicin	44	36.7	76	63.3	5	41.7	7	58.3
Tobramycin	82	68.3	38	31.7	8	66.7	4	33.3
Levofloxacin	69	55.8	53	44.2	9	75	3	25
Ceftriazone	25	20.8	95	79.2	3	25	9	75
Imipenem	101	84.2	19	15.8	12	100	0	0
Meropenem	97	80.8	23	19.2	11	91.7	1	8.3
Etrapanem	59	49.2	61	50.8	7	58.3	5	41.7
Tetracycline	0	0	120	100	0	0	12	100

Table 4. Distribution of Biofilm Production among *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* from Different Clinical Samples in Some Tertiary Hospitals in South West Nigeria (n=120)

Clinical <i>P.aeruginosa</i>	Biofilm Producers	Non-Biofilm Producers
Sputum (N=16)	6 (37.5%)	10(62.5%)
Blood (N=15)	8 (53.3%)	7(46.7%)
Wound (N=43)	19 (44.2%)	24(55.8%)
Urine (N=36)	13 (36.1%)	23(63.9%)
Ear (N=10)	4 (40%)	6 (60%)

Table 5. Biofilm production among Clinical and Environmental Antibiotic Resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

Resistant Antibiotics	Clinical <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>		Environmental <i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>		
	Number of Resistant Organism (n)	Biofilm Producers Frequency %	Number of Resistant Organism	Biofilm Producers. Frequency	%
Ciprofloxacin	51	28 54.9	5	2	40
Gentimicin	76	42 55.3	7	1	14.3
Tobramycin	38	18 47.4	4	1	25
Levofloxacin	53	24 45.2	3	1	33.3
Ceftriazone	95	37 38.9	9	2	11.1
Imipenem	19	10 52.6	0	0	0
Meropenem	23	13 56.5	1	1	100
Etrapanem	61	39 63.9	5	2	40
Tetracycline	120	50 41.7	12	2	16.7

Maximum biofilm production was found among *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* isolates with 56.5% (39 out of 69) and 21.6% (11 out of 51) from nosocomial infection and community acquired infected patients respectively (Figure 4). This study shows that among the clinical samples cultured, blood has the maximum biofilm production with 53.3% (8 out of 15), followed by wound 44.2% (19 out of 43), ear 40% (4 out of 10), sputum 37.5% (6 out of 16) and urine 36.1%(13 of 36) (Table 4). Biofilm production among the resistant clinical and environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* to different antibiotics shows maximum production among Etrapanem and meropenem with 63.9% (39 of 61) and 100% (1 of 1) respectively while other results are shown in Table 5. Biofilm production among carbapenem resistant clinical *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was 63.9% (39 of 61) while among environmental it was 40% (2 of 5) Figure 5.

DISCUSSION

Infections caused by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* are commonly implicated as a cause of health care acquired infections with high mortality and morbidity (N.A. Hassuna et al 2015). Research shows that the ability of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* to produce biofilms and to be resistant to multiple antibiotics allows the organism to survive any type of harsh conditions (De Almeida et al., 2017, P.K.Taylor et al., 2014). Major cause of the spread of this pathogen has been linked to cross transmission of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* from health workers or inanimate objects in our health care institutions. Another major concern is the insufficient and inappropriate control of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* infections which has led to spread of antibiotics resistant in our communities. (M.R. Arabestani et al, 2014, J.Rossello et al, 1992).

Formation of Biofilms by this pathogen does not only contribute to the resistance mechanisms against broad spectrum antibiotics but is also known to fight against host immune systems. Due to the restricted antibiotics penetration, adaptive response and presence of persisting cells, antibiotics susceptibility of biofilm producing bacteria is reduced (E. Drenkard *et al* 2003). Biofilm structure is recognised as a major factor for the persistence of several infections. Chronic infections, especially those associated with indwelling devices have been demonstrated to be involved in biofilm production (J.W. Costerton *et al*, 1999). Several authors have shown that antibiotic resistance of bacteria due to biofilm formation contribute to the persistence of bacterial cells and are also responsible for most problems encountered in the implementation of infection eradication programmes (A. Al-Ahmad *et al*, 2014, S. Gil-Perptin *et al*, 2012). In this study, isolation, identification, antibiotics susceptibility pattern and biofilm production of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* from clinical and environmental samples in the selected tertiary Hospitals was determined. Production of biofilms among carbapenem resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was also determined among the clinical and environmental isolates from the selected Hospitals. The antimicrobial susceptibility profile among the 120 and 12 clinical and environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* identified in this study shows high resistance to tetracycline, ceftriazone and Gentimicin with highest susceptibility to imipenem and meropenem among the clinical and environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Table 3) Studies by some authors also shows high antibiotic resistance to tetracycline and gentimicin in both clinical and environment isolates (Z. Mohammed *et al*, 2008, R.Ndip *et al*, 2005, L. Ruiz *et al* 2004). In Nigeria Zubair *et al.*, 2018 reported 88% susceptibility to imipenem and 71.9% to meropenem among clinical *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. This work corresponds with work done by Zubair *et al*. The high level of resistance experienced by some of the antibiotics applied could be due to the fact that most of the antibiotics are always available at the counters and had been highly misused overtime. (R.N. Akoachere *et al* 2002).

This work shows that clinical *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is more resistant to carbapenem than environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* with 50.8% (61) and 41.7% (5) respectively. A work done in Nigeria by Ayilara *et al.*, 2019 shows that clinical *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* are more resistant to carbapenem than environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* with 28.5% and 10% respectively (A.O Ayilara *et al.*, 2019). Even though this present reports show a high percentage of resistant to carbapenem than the previous work done, this different may be due to the fact that different brand of carbapenem were used in the two research. This shows that resistant of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* to carbapenem antibiotics may likely depend on the brand of carbapenem used. Another report by Ruiz *et al.*, shows that clinical isolates are more resistant to antimicrobial agents than environmental isolates which may be caused by constant submission of clinical strains to the selective action of antibiotics (L. Ruiz *et al* 2004). Biofilm production among the nosocomial infected and community acquired infected patients was 56.5% and 21.6%. This study shows that there was no association between biofilm production and duration of stay of patients in the hospitals. Blood samples was found to have maximum biofilm production among the isolates followed by wound samples this contradicted what was done by Swarnatrisha Saha and his group in Indian in which catheter tip was found to have the

highest level of biofilm production.(Swarnatrisha *et al*, 2018). There was no association between biofilm production and the type of samples collected. This results shows that biofilm production was higher among carbapenem resistant clinical *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* than carbapenem resistant environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Figure 5). Previous work by Ghanbarzdeh *et al.*, and Abidi *et al.*, shows statistically biofilm formation in the MDR *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was higher than the non multi drug resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Z. Ghanbarzadeh *et al.*, 2015 and S.H. Abidi *et al*, 2013). All efforts to lay hands on previous work done on biofilm production among carbapenem resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* clinical and environmental isolates proves abortive. In conclusion a high prevalence of antibiotic resistant and high biofilm production was observed in both the clinical and environmental isolates of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. It was also observed that biofilm production was higher among carbapenem resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* than carbapenem resistant environmental *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. This situation needs urgent attention in our health care setting. It is in our opinion that policy maker and health practitioners should address this problem and implement a more rational and appropriate use of antibiotics. This may involve restricting and monitoring the sales of antibiotics in the country.

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