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# Enhanced detection of Carbapenemase-Producing *Enterobacteriaceae* by an optimized phenol red assay

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#### Abstract

Screening for the detection of carbapenemase-producing bacteria still encounters issues related to workflow, limit of detection or qualitative interpretation. We developed a spectrophotometry-based version of the Carba NP phenol red assay (Nordmann *et al.*, 2012) in a microtiter plate format, compatible with low bacterial cell counts. We were able to detect highly active carbapenemases such as KPC and IMP in 30 min. A wider range of carbapenemases including OXA-48 were detected using higher inocula, still being competitive compared with currently available phenol red assays. Validation experiments of our test with a panel of 81 *Enterobacteriaceae* showed good performance with 93% of sensitivity and 92% of specificity. The compatibility of our routine-friendly protocol with automation offers great perspectives for high throughput screening in outbreak situations and/or in big laboratories.

Keywords: Carbapenemase, detection, assay, bacteria, phenol-red, spectrophotometry.

#### Abbreviations:

CLSI: Clinical & Laboratory Standards Institute guidelines. CPE: carbapenemase-producing *Enterobacteriaceae*. ESBL: Extended spectrum β-lactamases. IMP: Imipenemase. KPC: *Klebsiella pneumoniae* Carbapenemase. NDM: New Delhi metallo-β-lactamase. OD<sub>558nm</sub>: Optical density at 558 nm. OM: Outer Membrane. OXA: Oxacillinase. VIM: Verona Integron encoded Metallo-β-lactamase. WT: Wild Type.

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