



# In Vitro Activity of Tebipenem against Various Resistant Subsets of *Escherichia coli* Causing Urinary Tract Infections in the United States (2018 to 2020)

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**ABSTRACT** This study investigated the activity of an oral carbapenem, tebipenem, against various molecularly characterized subsets of *Escherichia coli*. A total of 15.0% of *E. coli* isolates (360/2,035 isolates) met the MIC criteria for screening for  $\beta$ -lactamases. Most of those isolates (74.7% [269/360 isolates]) carried *bla*<sub>CTX-M</sub>. The CTX-M distribution varied (50% to 86%) among Census Regions, as did that of plasmid AmpC genes (up to 41% among *E. coli* isolates from the New England Region). Tebipenem and intravenous carbapenems showed uniform activity against various *E. coli* subsets.

**KEYWORDS** carbapenems, oral, ESBL, CTX-M, ST131, resistance, surveillance

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) remain the most common bacterial infections encountered in ambulatory care settings in the United States (1). Some cases may present with life-threatening symptoms, requiring hospitalization and the use of broad-spectrum antimicrobial agents (2). There were >600,000 hospital admissions due to complicated UTI (cUTI) in 2018, which represented approximately 2% of all annual admissions in the United States that year (3). Also, UTIs acquired in the hospital are among the most common health care-associated infections (HAIs), and approximately 75% are associated with a urinary catheter (i.e., catheter-associated UTIs [CAUTIs]) (4, 5). *Escherichia coli* is the most common pathogen implicated in community- and hospital-acquired UTIs in the United States and is the predominant pathogen recovered from all hospital-acquired infections (1, 4). In most recent years, between 13% and 25% of *E. coli* strains responsible for CAUTIs were not susceptible to extended-spectrum cephalosporins (4).

The epidemiology of *E. coli* causing community-acquired infections and HAIs is constantly evolving, affecting antimicrobial resistance patterns (4). In the past 2 decades, a shift in the epidemiology of *E. coli* occurred due to the emergence and expansion of isolates belonging to sequence type 131 (ST131) (6–8). These changes may require additional antibiotics and alternative strategies for optimizing treatment and minimizing poor outcomes. Tebipenem is an oral carbapenem in clinical development for treatment of cUTIs and pyelonephritis that has demonstrated noninferiority to intravenous ertapenem in a phase 3 clinical trial (ADAPT-PO Trial [ClinicalTrials.gov registration number NCT03788967]) (9). The present study investigated the activity of tebipenem against various genetic subsets of *E. coli* causing UTIs in patients hospitalized in the United States in 2018 to 2020.

A total of 2,395 *E. coli* isolates recovered from patients with UTIs in 58 centers in nine U.S. Census Regions in 2018 to 2020 were included in the STEWARD Surveillance Program. Participating sites followed specific instructions for selecting consecutive and unique isolates (1 per patient infection episode) deemed clinically relevant based on local criteria. Bacterial identifications were confirmed by the monitoring laboratory (JMI Laboratories, North Liberty, IA, USA), and susceptibility testing was performed by using broth microdilution

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(10). Frozen-form panels were quality checked before and during use, according to CLSI guidelines (10, 11). MIC interpretations for comparator agents followed CLSI breakpoint criteria (11). Isolates with ceftazidime, ceftriaxone, and/or aztreonam MICs of  $\geq 2$   $\mu\text{g/mL}$  were presumptively defined here as extended-spectrum  $\beta$ -lactamase (ESBL) producers and were sequenced for *in silico* screening of genes encoding known ESBLs, plasmid AmpC, oxacillinases, and carbapenemases (12).

A total of 15.0% of the *E. coli* isolates (360/2,035 isolates) were presumptively defined here as ESBL producers. In general, these isolates accounted for 10% to 20% of isolates from each U.S. Census Region, with fewer in the West North Central Region (7.1%) and the New England Region (8.8%) and more in the Middle Atlantic Region (47.5%) (see Table S1 in the supplemental material). Overall, most ESBL producers (74.7% [269/360 isolates]) carried  $bla_{\text{CTX-M}}$  but the proportions of such isolates varied from 50% to 85.8% among regions (Table 1). The  $bla_{\text{CTX-M}}$  alleles from group 1 represented the majority of  $\beta$ -lactamase genes with an extended-spectrum profile (59.5% [160/269 isolates]), whereas the remaining  $bla_{\text{CTX-M}}$  alleles belonged to group 9 (40.9% [110/269 isolates]). One isolate (ST1722) from the South Atlantic Region carried genes associated with both group 1 and group 9 ( $bla_{\text{CTX-M-15}}$  and  $bla_{\text{CTX-M-27}}$ ) (data not shown). In addition, 6 U.S. Census Regions showed a greater prevalence of CTX-M alleles belonging to group 1, but the New England Region, East North Central Region, and South Atlantic Region had equal or greater proportions of group 9 genes compared to group 1 genes.

The  $bla_{\text{CMY}}$  gene (33/360 isolates [9.2%]) was the most common cephalosporinase gene, followed by  $bla_{\text{DHA}}$  (7/360 isolates [1.9%]). These cephalosporinases represented approximately 11% of the genes detected (Table 1). The proportion of plasmid AmpC genes was  $<10\%$  in most regions, but prevalence rates of 11% to 16% were noted in the South Atlantic Region, East North Central Region, and Pacific Region, with an even higher prevalence rate (41%) in the New England Region (see Table S1). Many isolates carried multiple ESBL genes, including  $bla_{\text{CTX-M}}$  and  $bla_{\text{CMY}}$  (5 isolates),  $bla_{\text{CTX-M-15}}$  and  $bla_{\text{SHV-12}}$  (1 isolate),  $bla_{\text{CTX-M-27}}$  and  $bla_{\text{DHA-1}}$  (1 isolate), and  $bla_{\text{CMY-2}}$  and  $bla_{\text{DHA-1}}$  (1 isolate) (data not shown). One isolate each from the Middle Atlantic (New York) Region and the East South Central (Kentucky) Region carried only  $bla_{\text{KPC-2}}$  or  $bla_{\text{SHV-12}}$ . In addition, 56 (15.6%) of the presumptive ESBL producers did not have ESBL, plasmid AmpC, or carbapenemase genes.

Tebipenem had MIC<sub>50</sub> and MIC<sub>90</sub> values of 0.015  $\mu\text{g/mL}$  and 0.015  $\mu\text{g/mL}$ , respectively, against isolates that did not meet the MIC criteria for screening of  $\beta$ -lactamase genes (i.e., presumptive non-ESBL-producing isolates). Other carbapenem,  $\beta$ -lactam, and non- $\beta$ -lactam agents were active against this subset, except for amoxicillin-clavulanate (86.6% susceptible), oral cefuroxime (74.2% susceptible), levofloxacin (84.2% susceptible), and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (75.1% susceptible) (Table 2). Consistent modal MIC and MIC<sub>50</sub> values of 0.015  $\mu\text{g/mL}$  were obtained for tebipenem against all resistant subsets described in Table 1 with  $>10$  isolates, whereas ertapenem showed MIC<sub>50</sub> values of  $\leq 0.008$  to 0.06  $\mu\text{g/mL}$  (Table 1). Susceptibility results ( $\leq 50.5\%$  susceptible) for oral agents were limited against the presumptive ESBL producers, whereas carbapenem agents (93.8 to 100% susceptible) and piperacillin-tazobactam (93.8 to 93.9% susceptible) were active against these subsets (Table 2).

Tebipenem, ertapenem, meropenem, and imipenem were very potent against the *E. coli* surveillance isolates included here and their respective resistant subsets. Piperacillin-tazobactam also demonstrated *in vitro* coverage (94% susceptible) against ESBL-producing *E. coli* strains; however, a previous open-label, randomized, controlled clinical study provided evidence that this combination should be avoided for targeted therapy of concomitant bacteremia due to ESBL-producing *E. coli* (13), whereas recent studies showed that this combination was effective for UTIs (14–16). The dissemination of ESBL-producing *E. coli* strains may pose additional challenges when treating UTIs. As shown here, these isolates are resistant to fluoroquinolone (6, 17) and often coresistant to trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, which are among the recommended therapeutic agents (17). In summary, this study shows the increased prevalence of ESBL-producing *E. coli* strains causing UTIs in U.S. hospitals and also a possible switch to  $bla_{\text{CTX-M-14}}$  from  $bla_{\text{CTX-M-15}}$ , the clinical significance of which remains to be elucidated. The variability of genes encoding CTX-M-15, CTX-M-14/27, and plasmid AmpC among U.S. Census Regions offers the possibility of a less predictable susceptibility

**TABLE 1** *In vitro* activity of tebipenem and ertapenem against *E. coli* clinical isolates causing UTIs in U.S. hospitals

Group (no. of isolates) and agent <sup>a</sup>	No. (cumulative %) of isolates inhibited with MIC ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ) of:											MIC <sub>50</sub>	MIC <sub>90</sub>	
	$\leq 0.004$	0.008	0.015	0.03	0.06	0.12	0.25	0.5	1	2	4			
<b>Non-ESBL-producing (2,035)</b>														
Tebipenem	5 (0.2)	588 (29.1)	1,351 (95.5)	72 (99.1)	14 (99.8)	4 (>99.9)	1 (100.0)						0.015	0.015
Ertapenem		1,654 (86.7)	220 (98.2)	19 (99.2)	12 (99.8)	2 (99.9)	1 (100.0)						$\leq 0.008$	0.015
<b>ESBL-producing (360)</b>														
Tebipenem		24 (6.7)	247 (75.3)	63 (92.8)	15 (96.9)	6 (98.6)	3 (99.4)	1 (99.7)	0 (99.7)	0 (99.7)	1 (100.0) <sup>b</sup>		0.015	0.03
Ertapenem		34 (9.7)	107 (40.2)	101 (68.9)	58 (85.5)	26 (92.9)	10 (95.7)	6 (97.4)	7 (99.4)	2 (100.0)			0.03	0.12
<b><i>bla</i><sub>CTX-M</sub> (269)</b>														
Tebipenem		20 (7.4)	195 (79.9)	40 (94.8)	9 (98.1)	4 (99.6)	1 (100.0)						0.015	0.03
Ertapenem		23 (8.8)	86 (41.6)	75 (70.2)	45 (87.4)	17 (93.9)	8 (96.9)	5 (98.9)	3 (100.0)				0.03	0.12
<b><i>bla</i><sub>CTX-M</sub> group 1<sup>c</sup> (159)</b>														
Tebipenem		6 (3.8)	116 (76.7)	28 (94.3)	5 (97.5)	3 (99.4)	1 (100.0)						0.015	0.03
Ertapenem		6 (4.0)	27 (21.9)	53 (57.0)	38 (82.1)	14 (91.4)	7 (96.0)	4 (98.7)	2 (100.0)				0.03	0.12
<b><i>bla</i><sub>CTX-M</sub> group 9<sup>d</sup> (109)</b>														
Tebipenem		14 (12.8)	78 (84.4)	12 (95.4)	4 (99.1)	1 (100.0)							0.015	0.03
Ertapenem		17 (15.6)	58 (68.8)	21 (88.1)	7 (94.5)	3 (97.2)	1 (98.2)	1 (99.1)	1 (100.0)				0.015	0.06
<b><i>bla</i><sub>CMY</sub><sup>e</sup> (33)</b>														
Tebipenem		1 (3.0)	16 (51.5)	13 (90.9)	1 (93.9)	1 (97.0)	0 (97.0)	1 (100.0)					0.015	0.03
Ertapenem		2 (6.2)	4 (18.8)	8 (43.8)	10 (75.0)	5 (90.6)	0 (90.6)	0 (90.6)	2 (96.9)	1 (100.0)			0.06	0.12
<b><i>bla</i><sub>DHA</sub> (7)</b>														
Tebipenem			2 (28.6)	2 (57.1)	2 (85.7)	1 (100.0)							0.03	
Ertapenem				3 (42.9)	2 (71.4)	1 (85.7)	0 (85.7)	0 (85.7)	1 (100.0)				0.06	
<b>Other<sup>f</sup> (56)</b>														
Tebipenem		3 (5.4)	36 (69.6)	10 (87.5)	4 (94.6)	1 (96.4)	2 (100.0)						0.015	0.06
Ertapenem		8 (14.5)	19 (49.1)	15 (76.4)	2 (80.0)	5 (89.1)	2 (92.7)	1 (94.5)	3 (100.0)				0.03	0.25

<sup>a</sup>Non-ESBL-producing isolates are defined as isolates exhibiting MICs of  $< 2 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$  for ceftazidime, aztreonam, and ceftriaxone; ESBL-producing isolates are defined as isolates that display MICs of  $\geq 2 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$  for ceftazidime, aztreonam, and/or ceftriaxone and presumptively produce ESBL, AmpC, extended-spectrum oxacillinases, and/or carbapenemases. ESBL-producing isolates may contain multiple  $\beta$ -lactamase genes; therefore, isolates may be present in  $> 1$  subset.

<sup>b</sup>A single isolate carried *bla*<sub>KPC-2</sub>; tebipenem and ertapenem MICs of  $4 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$  and  $2 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ , respectively, were obtained for that isolate.

<sup>c</sup>Represented by *bla*<sub>CTX-M-15</sub> except for 9 isolates carrying *bla*<sub>CTX-M-55</sub> and 1 isolate with *bla*<sub>CTX-M-32</sub>.

<sup>d</sup>Represented by *bla*<sub>CTX-M-14</sub> (21 isolates), *bla*<sub>CTX-M-27</sub> (87 isolates), and *bla*<sub>CTX-M-65</sub> (1 isolate).

<sup>e</sup>Includes CMY-2-, CMY-4-, CMY-42-, and CMY-102-encoding genes. Five isolates also carried *bla*<sub>CTX-M</sub> whereas 1 isolate had both *bla*<sub>CMY</sub> and *bla*<sub>DHA</sub>.

<sup>f</sup>Includes isolates that met the MIC criteria for screening for  $\beta$ -lactamases for which ESBL, plasmid AmpC, or carbapenemase genes were not detected.

**TABLE 2** Antimicrobial activity of tebipenem and comparator agents against *E. coli* and resistant subsets

Group (no. of isolates) and agent <sup>a</sup>	MIC ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ )			CLSI susceptibility result (%) <sup>b</sup>		
	MIC <sub>50</sub>	MIC <sub>90</sub>	Range	Susceptible	Intermediate	Resistant
Non-ESBL-producing (2,035)						
Tebipenem	0.015	0.015	$\leq 0.004$ to 0.25	NA	NA	NA
Ertapenem	$\leq 0.008$	0.015	$\leq 0.008$ to 0.25	100.0	0.0	0.0
Meropenem	$\leq 0.015$	0.03	$\leq 0.015$ to 0.12	100.0	0.0	0.0
Imipenem	$\leq 0.12$	$\leq 0.12$	$\leq 0.12$ to 1	100.0	0.0	0.0
Amoxicillin-clavulanic acid	4	16	$\leq 0.25$ to $>32$	86.6	10.9	2.5
Aztreonam	0.12	0.25	$\leq 0.03$ to 1	100.0	0.0	0.0
Cefazolin	2	8	$\leq 0.5$ to $>32$	96.4 <sup>c</sup> /96.4 <sup>d</sup>	—	3.6/3.6
Ceftazidime	0.12	0.25	0.03 to 1	100.0	0.0	0.0
Ceftriaxone	$\leq 0.06$	0.12	$\leq 0.06$ to 1	100.0	0.0	0.0
Cefuroxime	4	8	$\leq 0.5$ to 32	74.2 <sup>c</sup> /95.3 <sup>d</sup>	25.2/4.1	0.5/0.5
Levofloxacin	0.03	8	$\leq 0.015$ to $>32$	84.2	1.2	14.6
Nitrofurantoin	16	32	$\leq 4$ to $>64$	97.9	0.9	1.2
Piperacillin-tazobactam	2	4	$\leq 0.06$ to $>128$	98.9	0.3	0.8
Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole	$\leq 0.12$	$>4$	$\leq 0.12$ to $>4$	75.1	—	24.9
ESBL-producing (360)						
Tebipenem	0.015	0.03	0.008 to 4	NA	NA	NA
Ertapenem	0.03	0.12	$\leq 0.008$ to 2	97.4	2.0	0.6
Meropenem	0.03	0.03	$\leq 0.015$ to 2	99.7	0.3	0.0
Imipenem	$\leq 0.12$	0.25	$\leq 0.12$ to 4	99.4	0.3	0.3
Amoxicillin-clavulanic acid	16	32	2 to $>32$	47.2	30.6	22.2
Aztreonam	16	$>16$	0.12 to $>16$	18.9	17.2	63.9
Cefazolin	$>32$	$>32$	8 to $>32$	0.6 <sup>c</sup> /0.6 <sup>d</sup>	—	99.4/99.4
Ceftazidime	16	$>32$	0.25 to $>32$	28.6	16.9	54.4
Ceftriaxone	$>8$	$>8$	0.12 to $>8$	6.4	1.4	92.2
Cefuroxime	$>64$	$>64$	8 to $>64$	0.0 <sup>c</sup> /1.7 <sup>d</sup>	4.5/2.8	95.5/95.5
Levofloxacin	8	32	$\leq 0.015$ to $>32$	26.1	2.5	71.4
Nitrofurantoin	16	32	$\leq 4$ to $>64$	90.6	3.7	5.7
Piperacillin-tazobactam	4	16	$\leq 0.06$ to $>128$	93.9	4.2	1.9
Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole	$>4$	$>4$	$\leq 0.12$ to $>4$	35.8	—	64.2

<sup>a</sup>Non-ESBL-producing isolates are defined as isolates exhibiting MICs of  $<2 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$  for ceftazidime, aztreonam, and ceftriaxone; ESBL-producing isolates are defined as isolates that display MICs of  $\geq 2 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$  for ceftazidime, aztreonam, and/or ceftriaxone.

<sup>b</sup>Criteria as published by CLSI (11). NA, not applicable; —, not available.

<sup>c</sup>Using oral breakpoints.

<sup>d</sup>Using parenteral breakpoints.

pattern. Upon approval, an oral carbapenem, such as tebipenem, could be a useful addition to the armamentarium for treating cUTI.

## SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Supplemental material is available online only.

**SUPPLEMENTAL FILE 1**, PDF file, 0.1 MB.

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