Point prevalence survey of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) and vancomycin-resistant Enterococci (VRE)
in adult inpatients in a University teaching hospital in the United Kingdom

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Introduction
Antimicrobial resistance is a global public-health emergency, which threatens the advances made by modern medical care over the past century. The World Health Organisation has recently published a global priority list of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, which includes carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) and vancomycin-resistant Enterococci (VRE). Infections with CPE result in increased mortality and there are reports of increasing numbers of CPE isolates. Infections caused by VRE are also associated with increased morbidity, mortality, healthcare costs and durations of hospital stay.

We have previously conducted a six-month prospective surveillance study for Multi-Drug Resistant Organisms (MDRO) in the adult Intensive Care Unit at Addenbrooke’s Hospital. We detected two separate outbreaks of Klebsiella pneumoniae carrying the New-Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase gene, blam. This outbreak spread to several wards before it was controlled, prior to its re-emergence five months later. Asymptomatic VRE carriage was also detected in almost 25% of adults. In order to investigate potential reservoirs of CPE and VRE in our hospital, we conducted a point prevalence survey of all adult inpatients in June 2017.

Methods
We conducted a three-day point prevalence survey in June 2017 to determine CPE and VRE carriage rate among adult inpatients in our hospital. All adult inpatients (aged ≥18 years) were eligible for inclusion in the study. The Infection Control team and ward nurses explained the study, obtained verbal consent from participants and enrolled patients into the study.

A single rectal swab or stool sample was collected for each enrolled patient using Sigma Transwabs (MWE, Wiltshire, England) or standard specimen containers. Samples were delivered to the research laboratory and processed within 24 hours of receipt. Samples were plated onto selective chromogenic media - CHROMID CARBA SMART (bioMerieux, Marcy l’Etoile, France) and Brilliance VRE (Oxoid, Basingstoke, UK) – and incubated at 37 °C for 24-48 hours. Suspect colonies were sub-cultured onto Columbia Blood Agar (Oxoid, Basingstoke, UK) with either a meropenem antibiotic disc for CPE, or vancomycin for VRE isolates. Resistant isolates were identified using matrix-assistant laser desorption/ionisation-time of flight mass spectrometry (MALDI-TOF). Samples that were identified as CPE or VRE underwent antimicrobial susceptibility testing using the Vitek-2 platform – N350 card for Gram-negative isolates and P607 card for VRE (bioMerieux, Marcy l’Etoile, France). Carbapenem-resistant isolates were tested for carbapenemase genes using the Xpert Carba-R assay (Cepheid, California, United States).

Results
954 patients admitted to 42 wards were eligible for inclusion in this study. 818 / 954 (85.7%) patients were approached and 595 / 818 (72.7%) provided verbal consent and samples.

A total of 577 samples were processed and analysed (18 samples unaccounted for). Of the 577 samples processed, none were positive for CPE, and 37 were tested for CPE only.

140 / 540 samples grew colonies suggestive of enterococci on VRE selective media. Eight samples failed to grow on subculture, and two were identified as vancomycin-sensitive Enterococcus fecalis. 130 / 540 (24.1%) samples were positive for vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus faecium. All but five hospital wards (34 / 39, 87.2%) that participated in this study had at least one VRE positive sample identified.

Conclusions
We performed a point-prevalence survey for CPE and VRE carriage in adult inpatients in our hospital in June 2017. Reassuringly, we did not detect CPE carriage. In contrast, we found high rates of VRE carriage, which appeared to have spread throughout the hospital. We are planning WGS analysis of this dataset to provide further insight into the population structure of VRE and potential transmission events within our hospital.

Acknowledgements
We thank the Infection Control Team, the ward staff and the patients for participating in this study. MET is supported by the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Health Foundation, and the NIHR Cambridge Biomedical Research Centre. This study was also supported by Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.