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GENETIC DNA PROBES FOR *MYCOBACTERIUM AVIUM* COMPLEX IDENTIFICATION

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SUMMARY

The acridinium ester labelled DNA probe specific for *M. avium* complex (MAC) was used for testing 30 strains of MAC previously identified by conventional procedures. The hybridization was positive in 26 strains, negative in 3 strains and one strain seemed to be contamined when subcultured. The specific DNA probes allow to identify even the slow growing mycobacterial strains, in positive samples, within two hours while conventional methods usually take several weeks to show the result. A rapid confirmation of a mycobacterial species is invaluable for selecting an effective treatment as early as possible, which is extremely important e.g. in immunosuppressed patients, children with lymphadenitis, etc. Nevertheless, this method has the disadvantage of being too expensive for some laboratories, though questionable if repeated subcultures, technicians's time and the delay in obtaining results are taken into account, and enabling to identify only a limited number of clinically significant mycobacterial species using commercially available probes.

Key words: M. avium complex, DNA probes

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