

Comparative Evaluation of the Seegene Seeplex RV15 and Real-Time PCR for Respiratory Virus Detection

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Comparative Evaluation of the Seegene Seeplex RV15 and Real-Time PCR for Respiratory Virus Detection

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Reaction #	FAM channel	JOE channel	Cy5 channel
1	FLA	FLB	_
2	RSV		
3	PF2	PF1	PF3
4	ADV	Enterovirus	
5			HRV
6	MPNV		
7	PDV	K-Ras	

Table I

Distribution of primer and probe combinations and probe dye-labels within each of the seven real-time RT-PCR reactions, i.e. reaction 4 had adenovirus and enterovirus primers and probes.

Virus		Sequence	Final Conc. (nM)
Influenza A	Forward	CAAGACCAATCCTGTCACCTCTG	900
(FLA)	Reverse	TGCATTTTGGACAAAGCGTCTAC	900
(I E/I)	Probe	FAM-AGTCCTCGCTCACTGGGCACGGT-BHQ1	200
Influenza B	Forward	GGCAACACCTGTTTCCATATTAAG	900
(FLB)	Reverse	GCCTGTTAATGCAGACAAAACTC	900
(I LD)	Probe	JOE-TCATAGGCAGCTCCGAAGCAAGACATGA-BHQ1	200
Dagminatony	Forward	GAAGGGTCAAACATCTGTTTAACAAG	900
Respiratory Syncytial Virus	Reverse 1	GTTTCAGCTWGTGGGAAGAAGATA	900
(RSV)	Reverse 2	GTGTCAGCCTGTGGAAAGAAGGATA	900
(K5 V)	Probe	FAM-TGATCCTGCATTRTCACARTACCATCCTCT-BHQ1	200
Dogginflyongo 1	Forward	ATTCAGACAGGATGGAACCGTTAA	900
Parainfluenza 1 (PF1)	Reverse	GATACTAAGCTTTGTTGTGACCTCAT	900
(ГГТ)	Probe	JOE-ACCAATGCCTTCAACTGTGTCTCCCGTG-BHQ1	200
Danain florance 2	Forward	AGAGATAACAGGGTTTGAGAATAATTCAT	900
Parainfluenza 2 (PF2)	Reverse	CAAATGGAGTTTGGTGATTAAGGGTA	900
(PF2)	Probe	FAM-TCCAGATGCTCGATCAACTATGTCCAGAGG-BHQ1	200
D : Cl 2	Forward	CGATTAGAGGCTTTCAGACAAGATG	900
Parainfluenza 3	Reverse	CTGTTGAGACCGCATGATTGAC	900
(PF3)	Probe	Cy5-CCACTGTGTCACCGCTCAATACCAGCC-BHQ3	200
	Forward	CCCCTGAATGCGGCTAATCC	900
Enterovirus	Reverse	GTCACCATAAGCAGCCAATATAAGAA	900
•	Probe	AACACGGACACCCAAAGTAGTCGGTTCC	200
	Forward	GCCCCAGTGGTCTTACATGCACATC	900
Adenovirus	Reverse	GCCACGGTGGGGTTTCTAAACTT	900
(ADV)	Probe	FAM-TGCACCAGACCCGGGCTCAGGTACTCCGA-BHQ1	200
	Forward 1	TGTGCTCRCTTTGAGTCCTC	900
Rhinovirus	Forward 2	TGTGCTCAGTGTGCTTCCTC	900
(HRV)	Reverse	TGAAACACGGACACCCAAAGTA	900
•	Probe	Cy5-CCCTGAATGYGGCTAACCTTAAMCCTGC-BHQ3	200
	Forward	CATATAAGCATGCTATATTAAAAGAGTCTC	500
Metapneumovirus	Reverse	CCTATTTCTGCAGCATATTTGTAATCAG	250
(MPNV)	Probe	FAM-TGYAATGATGAGGGTGTCACTGCGGTTG-BHQ1	500
	Forward	GCCTGCTGAAAATGACTGAATATAAAC	600
K-Ras	Reverse	TGATTCTGAATTAGCTGTATCGTCAAG	600
•	Probe	JOE-TGCCTACGCCACAAGCTCCAACTACCA-BHQ1	100
	Forward	GCGGGTGCCTTTTACAAGAAC	600
PDV	Reverse	CAGAATAAGCAAAATTGATAGGAACCAT	600

Table II

Primer and probe sequences for each of the ten targets detected by the real-time respiratory RT-PCR system. The ADV primer-probe set is derived from those described in [Heim et al., 2003], and the MPNV set from [Maertzdorf et al., 2004]. The remaining primers and probes were developed in-house.

Single virus samples	n	C _t range [†]
FLA	9	18.5 - 31.4
FLB	9	22.7 - 37.6
HRV	9	21.2 - 38.3
ADV	9	23.4 - 38.1
MPNV	8	22.4 - 35.0
RSV	8	25.3 - 38.2
PF1	13	23.8 - 37.9
PF2	6	25.3 - 35.3
PF3	11	25.3 - 37.5

Dual virus samples	n
ADV & HRV	2
PF1 & ADV	1
RSV & ADV	2
RSV & HRV	1
HRV & MPNV	4
FLA & MPNV	2
FLA & RSV	4
PF3 & MPNV	1
PF2 & ADV	1

Table III

Characteristics of the 100 respiratory extracts tested by Seeplex RV12. Either single targets (left-hand two columns) or two targets (right-hand columns) were detected in each sample by in-house multiplex RT-PCR. The target range of RV12 comprises these 9 viruses, together with two human coronavirus groups (229E/NL63 and OC43/HKU1). Also, RSV-A and RSV-B are detected separately.

† Ct ranges are derived from both single and dual virus samples.

Single virus samples	n	C_t range †
FLA	10	23.6 - 34.6
FLB	17*	18.8 - 32.5
HRV	4	23.5 - 36.0
ADV	10	20.4 - 32.4
MPNV	7	20.6 - 31.5
RSV	9	23.4 - 36.4
PF1	9	22.7 - 30.6
PF2	5*	20.7 - 32.7
PF3	7	23.3 - 32.6

Dual virus samples	n
ADV & PF3	1
FLB & HRV	1
FLB & PF3	1
FLA & PF2	1
RSV & ADV	2^*

Table IV

Characteristics of the 84 respiratory extracts tested by Seeplex RV15. Either single targets (left-hand two columns) or two targets (right-hand columns) were detected in each sample by in-house multiplex RT-PCR. Four FLB, two PF2, and both RSV-ADV dually-infected samples had been tested previously in the RV12 evaluation. All viruses in these repeated samples had been previously detected by the RV12 system. In addition to the 12 targets detected by RV12, RV15 also detects human bocavirus, human parainfluenza 4, and enterovirus.

† Ct ranges are derived from both single and dual virus samples.

(a)

Sample #	PCR result (C _t)	RV12
7	FLB (35.77)	None
29	FLB (35.70)	None
83	FLB (32.01)	None
94	FLB (37.56)	None
60	HRV (33.54)	None
43	MPNV (35.32)	None
32	PF1 (35.21)	RSVb
27	HRV (29.34), MPNV (35.62)	HRV, ADV
82	FLA (30.81), MPNV (35.94)	FLA
87	MPNV (26.57), PF3 (33.92)	MPNV
100	PF2 (28.5), ADV (38.11)	PF2
17	ADV (31.65)	ADV, 229E
18	ADV (26.85), RSV (32.64)	ADV, RSVa, HRV
39	RSV (30.24)	RSVa, OC43, ADV
47	ADV (33.44)	ADV, OC43
50	FLA (28.95)	FLA, HRV
55	HRV (32.69)	HRV, OC43
66	HRV (21.16)	HRV, RSVa
70	FLA (27.98)	FLA, RSVa
71	HRV (31.81)	HRV, RSVa
90	PF3 (31.81)	PF3, RSVb
102	PF2 (29.14)	PF2, HRV
(b)		

0 1 11	DCD 4 (C)	DV4
Sample #	PCR result (C _t)	RV15
156	FLB (26.50)	None
158	FLB (30.30)	None
159	FLB (30.41)	None
160	FLB (29.46)	None
170	FLB (31.64)	None
142	ADV (30.02)	None
143	ADV (29.76)	None
150	ADV (23.38)	None
108	PIV-2 (26.98), FLA (28.70)	None
182	ADV (27.20)	HRV, RSV
107	MPNV (26.92)	MPNV, HRV
134	RSV (29.86)	RSVb, HEV
165	FLA (27.03)	FLA, OC43
176	FLB (25.13)	FLB, OC43
183	RSV (31.96)	RSVb, BocV

Table V

Summary of the discrepant results (highlighted in bold type) between the in-house real-time PCR and Seeplex® RV12 (a) and RV15 (b). Samples where Seeplex® missed targets detected by PCR are given first.



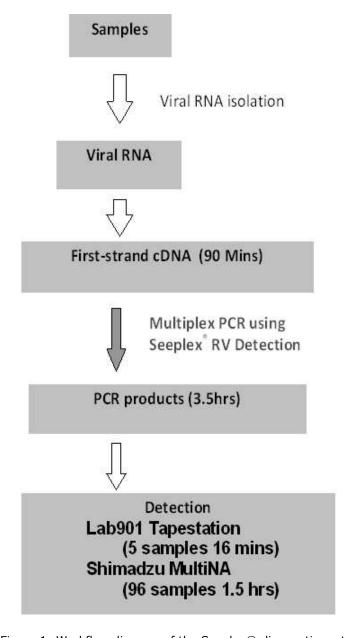


Figure 1: Workflow diagram of the Seeplex® diagnostic system. 30x56mm (300 x 300 DPI)

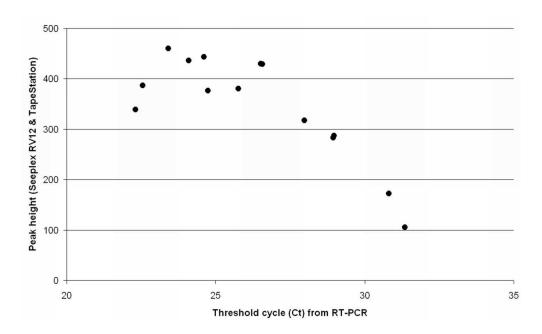


Figure 2: Plot showing how peak heights obtained using Seeplex® RV12 and the TapeStation microelectrophoresis platform display negative correlation with the threshold cycles obtained from the RT-PCR method. Data shown is from Influenza A-positive samples. $105 \times 64 \text{mm} \ (300 \times 300 \ \text{DPI})$

Title Page

Title: Comparative Evaluation of the Seegene Seeplex RV15 and Real-Time PCR for Respiratory Virus Detection

Running Title: Real-Time PCR and Seeplex Systems for Respiratory Virus Detection

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Abstract

2	Respiratory virus infections contribute substantially both to hospitalisations of young
3	children, and to morbidity in immunocompromised patients such as those with
4	haemotological malignancies. Their rapid and accurate diagnosis is essential to patient
5	management.
6	To evaluate the prospective utility of Seeplex® DPO technology in respiratory virus
7	diagnosis, a panel of 99 respiratory samples positive by real-time RT-PCR for one or
8	more viruses was assayed by the Seegene Seeplex® RV12 system. As well as being
9	able to detect all ten viruses in the real-time RT-PCR system with the exception of
10	enteroviruses, RV12 can also distinguish between the two subgroups of RSV and
11	detect two subgroups of coronaviruses.
12	Seven of the 9 viruses in common with the RT-PCR were detected reliably by RV12.
13	Eleven samples RT-PCR-positive for Metapneumovirus and 5 samples positive for
14	Influenza B were not detected by RV12. Seegene developed a second-generation
15	system, RV15, which not only allowed detection of 3 additional viruses, but also
16	addressed the potential problems with RV12 specificity. To address these concerns,
17	84 respiratory samples positive for a range of viruses by real-time PCR were assayed
18	with RV15. The results of this evaluation improved significantly upon those seen with
19	RV12.
20	The high throughput capabilities and potential lower technical requirements afforded

by the Seeplex® system may offer an alternative to real-time RT-PCR systems.

Text

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24	Timely and accurate diagnosis of respiratory virus infection is essential to patient care
25	in settings as diverse as haematopoietic stem cell transplant recipients [Jalal et al.,
26	2007; Piralla et al., 2009], childhood bronchitis and pneumonia [Shay et al., 2001;
27	Michelow et al., 2004] and the seasonal influenza epidemics implicated in substantial
28	annual mortality [Mook et al., 2008]. As such infections often present with similar
29	symptoms, laboratory analysis is essential.
30	Many laboratories rely still on non-molecular approaches such as direct
31	immunofluorescence and viral culture. However, in the UK, various real-time PCR-
32	based systems have been employed for a number of years, their utility having been
33	demonstrated largely by comparison with these more traditional methods [Templeton
34	et al., 2004; Bustin and Mueller, 2005; Freymuth et al., 2006; van de Pol et al., 2007;
35	Mahony et al., 2007; Kuypers et al., 2009] (reviewed in Mahony, 2008). Emerging
36	technologies thus have to demonstrate significant benefit against these existing tools
37	to achieve widespread adoption [Pabbaraju et al., 2008; Arens et al., 2010].
38	The novel Seeplex® system exploits Dual Priming Oligonucleotides (DPOs) as PCR
39	primers, each comprising a standard primer-length 5' portion which initiates priming,
40	separated by multiple inosine residues from a shorter, 6-12 nucleotide 3' component
41	which determines duplex extension. As well as facilitating melting temperature
42	regulation during primer design, mispriming and PCR artefacts such as primer
43	dimerisation are almost eliminated, allowing simultaneous and efficient amplification
44	of multiple complex targets in single reactions [Chun et al., 2007].
45	The system summary in Figure 1 shows a standard nucleic acid extraction, a cDNA
46	step, and then a DPO PCR, in which the products of each target virus have different

47	nucleotide lengths. Post-PCR product analysis employs an automated bench-top
48	system with which target detection interpretations are inferred from PCR product
49	sizes.
50	The RV12 system enables simultaneous detection of 12 respiratory viruses in 2
51	reactions per sample. Its performance when compared to traditional diagnostic
52	methods has been demonstrated frequently [Yoo et al., 2007; Drews et al., 2008; Roh
53	et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2009], with potential time and resource savings when
54	compared to more modern methods, particularly in high throughput settings where
55	prompt diagnosis is important. More recently, the RV15 kit has been developed that
56	targets 15 viruses in 3 reactions.
57	No studies evaluating either system against real-time PCR-based respiratory virus
58	detection methods have yet been published. The results of a comparative evaluation of
59	serial iterations of the Seeplex® system with the multiplex PCR-based method that
60	has been used for 5 years as the primary diagnostic assay for respiratory virus
61	detection in a major London hospital are described.

Materials and Methods

Samples were nasopharyngeal aspirates, bronchio-alveolar lavages, or respiratory swabs (nose and/or throat) submitted to the laboratory for routine testing. Aspirates and lavages were diluted in saline and centrifuged to separate cellular material from mucoid and liquid components. Swabs were transported in viral transport medium and extracted directly. Two automated nucleic acid extractors were employed at different times during the course of this evaluation – the NucliSENS easyMAG platform (Biomérieux, Marcy l'Etoile, France) and the QIAamp One-For-All Nucleic Acid Kits on the Qiagen BioRobot MDx DSP (Qiagen, Crawley, UK). Immediately prior to extraction, samples were supplemented with a fixed quantity of phocine distemper virus (PDV), obtained from cell culture supernatant and stored in lots at -80°C. Additionally, all samples that underwent easyMAG extraction were pre-incubated at 56°C for 10 minutes with Buffer AL and 30mAU/ml proteinase K (both Qiagen). Nucleic acid extracts were stored at -80°C between extraction and analysis. Real-Time RT-PCR. Each sample extract was subjected to seven simultaneous real-time RT-PCRs, with each reaction detecting between one and three targets (Table I). The seventh reaction constituted a duplex control reaction, with primers and probes targeting both a human gene from the *ras* family (K-Ras) [Hilbe et al., 2003] and Protein H (haemagglutinin) of the PDV internal control RNA. Mastermixes and samples were dispensed robotically into the Rotorgene Gene-Disc reaction vessels by a CAS1200 liquid handler (both Qiagen). Quantitect Multiplex RT-PCR Mix NoRox (Qiagen), specific primers and probe combinations (Table II, all obtained from Sigma-Genosys, Gillingham, UK), and 10µl of nucleic acid extract were mixed in 25µl reactions. Real time cycling, detection and

post-run analysis were performed on the 72-well Rotorgene platform (Qiagen) with fixed fluorescence thresholds, allowing direct comparison both between samples and between runs. Positive controls (a panel of plasmids containing the specific PCR target as inserts) for each respiratory virus target were included in each run, and compared to expected threshold cycle (C_t) values. For each sample, C_t values for the PDV and K-Ras control reactions were compared to expected values before parallel PCR results were considered valid. Seeplex® RV12. Ninety-nine respiratory extracts stored at -80°C were selected that previously had tested positive by RT-PCR for one or more respiratory virus targets. With the exception of enterovirus and the internal control virus (PDV), which were not detected by RV12, all viral targets in the RT-PCR were represented (Table III). Random hexamer-primed cDNA synthesis products were generated using the Revertaid system (Fermentas, York, UK), according to the manufacturer's instructions, and stored at -20°C until use. Each cDNA preparation was subjected to the RV12 PCR procedure according to the manufacturer's instructions (Seegene, Seoul, South Korea). Briefly, parallel 20µl reactions were set up, each containing RV12 mastermix, 8-MOPS contamination control reagent, and 3µl of cDNA. One of each pair was supplemented with 4µl primer mix A, the other with 4ul primer mix B. Thermal cycling conditions were as follows: 15 minutes at 94°C, followed by 40 cycles of 94°C for 30s, 60°C for 90s, and 72°C for 90s, followed by a single incubation of 10 minutes at 72°C. Completed reactions were analysed using the MultiNA platform (Shimadzu Corporation, Kyoto, Japan), coupled to a dedicated Seegene software template. Analysis output comprised

111	both a qualitative interpretation of presence or absence of each virus target, and a
112	determination of peak intensity.
113	Seeplex® RV15.
114	Eighty-four respiratory extracts stored at -80°C testing positive for one or more
115	RT-PCR virus targets (Table IV) were subjected to cDNA synthesis using the Mu-LV
116	system (Invitrogen, Paisley, UK), according to the manufacturer's instructions.
117	Reaction products were stored at -20°C until use. Eight samples of the 84 had been
118	part of the previous RV12 analysis.
119	Each cDNA preparation was subjected to the RV15 PCR procedure according to
120	Seegene's instructions. Briefly, parallel 20µl reactions were set up for each sample, as
121	per the RV12 kit, but with three reactions per sample (primer mixes A, B & C) rather
122	than the two in the earlier kit. Thermal cycling conditions were as per the RV12 kit.
123	Completed reactions were analysed using the Tape Station platform (Lab901,
124	Edinburgh, UK) linked to a specific Seeplex® RV15 interpretation software module.
125	Again, results were presented both qualitatively and semi-quantitatively, according to
126	the migration rate and band intensity of each species present within completed
127	reactions.
128	Redesigned Influenza B Primers.
129	During the evaluation, a new panel of influenza B primers was developed by Seegene
130	to replace those in the RV15 kit. The cDNA preparations of the 19 FLB-positive (by
131	RT-PCR) samples analysed by RV15 were subjected to amplification using these
132	primers under the same conditions as for the primer mixes of the RV12 and RV15

kits, but in monoplex reactions. Analysis was performed as per RV15, above.

Results

135	Seeplex® RV12.
136	All targets detected by the RT-PCR were also detected by Seeplex® RV12 in 88 of
137	the 99 nucleic acid extracts tested with the Seeplex® RV12 system. In 7 of the
138	remaining 11 samples, single infections were missed (4xFLB, one each of HRV, PF1,
139	and MPNV), and in four samples where two viruses had been detected by RT-PCR,
140	the virus target with the higher C _t was missed by RV12 (2xMPNV, 1xPF3 and
141	1xADV). Comparison of MultiNA peak heights and RT-PCR C _t values for each virus
142	target revealed a broad negative correlation between the two parameters, with the
143	exception of HRV, where no correlation was observed (Figure 2).
144	In all instances where PF2 (7 samples), FLA (15), and/or RSV (15) were detected by
145	RT-PCR, these virus targets were detected with RV12 also. For each instance where
146	PF1, PF3, HRV, and/or ADV were detected by RT-PCR, all except one of each virus
147	target were detected by Seeplex® RV12. Each instance of undetected virus
148	represented a sample whose C_t was found in the higher part of the range for that virus.
149	FLB and MPNV targets were detected less frequently. Four of the 5 FLB-positive
150	samples with the highest C _t values, and the 3 MPNV-positive samples with the
151	highest C _t values were not detected by RV12.
152	Conversely, ADV, RSV, HRV and MPNV were detected by RV12 in extracts where
153	the RT-PCR system had failed to do so (in 3, 4, 4, and 1 sample respectively), and
154	with the exception of the RSV detections, had high peak heights, consistent with high
155	target concentrations in the initial samples.
156	Seeplex® RV15.
157	Eighty four extracts from respiratory samples RT-PCR-positive for at least one
158	respiratory virus were tested by RV15. With the exception of ADV and FLB, all

159	viruses detected by RT-PCR were also detected by RV15, including all instances of
160	MPNV (7/7). Inverse correlations between C_t and RV15 band intensity were less
161	pronounced than that seen with RV12.
162	Three of 9 ADV-positive samples were not detected by RV15. All four FLB-positive
163	samples that had also been tested with RV12 remained FLB-positive by RV15.
164	However, a further 5 previously untested FLB-positive samples failed to signal with
165	RV15. Again, viruses were detected by RV15 that were not detected by the RT-PCR:
166	HRV, enterovirus, coronavirus, and bocavirus (1, 1, 2, and 1 sample respectively).
167	The RT-PCR system did not target either coronavirus or bocavirus. Table V details
168	the discrepant results between the RT-PCR and Seeplex® systems.
169	Redesigned Influenza B Primer Set.
170	Using the new primer set designed to overcome the FLB-detection limitations seen
171	with RV12 and RV15, all FLB-positive samples in which FLB had been detected by
172	RV15 were FLB-positive by the new primer set, as were four of the five samples
173	FLB-negative by RV15. The single sample where FLB was not detected by Seeplex®
174	had given a C _t of 30 by RT-PCR. The lack of amplification controls in this assay
175	series precluded detection of PCR inhibition.

Discussion

An in-house multiplex RT-PCR system and two iterations of a novel PCR-based technology for the detection of respiratory viruses have been compared. In the first instance, 99 samples were evaluated, and in the second, 84. A further panel of 19 FLB-positive samples was tested by a revised primer set within the novel Seeplex® system. Whilst direct comparison of the two systems is limited, due to the sample sets having been pre-determined to be positive for one or more target viruses by one system, it can be stated that the overall performance of the Seeplex® RV12 and RV15 systems was very good, with several instances of viruses being detected where the RT-PCR system had either failed or had been unable to do so. Furthermore, with each virus, some negative correlation was observed between RT-PCR threshold cycle and Seeplex® peak intensity, suggesting the latter could also be employed semi-quantitatively. The frequency of instances where targets detected by RT-PCR were missed by Seeplex® was low, and may have been influenced by repeated freeze-thaw cycles of affected samples, nearly all of which were at the upper end of the relevant C_t range (i.e. with lower target concentrations). However, both MPNV and FLB targets were detected poorly by RV12, with concomitant low band intensities from samples where these targets were detected. Revision of the primer sets was a key component of the development of RV15. RV15 gave a 100% detection rate of all viruses detected by RT-PCR, including seven MPNV-positive samples, but no improvement in FLB detection. The latter primer set was modified further, and retesting the panel of known FLB-positive samples gave substantially greater success. Although these new primers have since been included in the RV15, further evaluation within a standard Seeplex® multiplex PCR format is required.

A limitation to the Seeplex® system is its internal control facility. The artificial targets included in each PCR mastermix allows validation only of the PCR step, whereas the addition of PDV to each extraction allows the RT-PCR system also to control for both the RNA extraction and the reverse transcription step. Inhibition of the RT-PCR system, detected by poorly-amplifying PDV target, occurs with a not insignificant frequency; it is essential to report that a lack of virus detection is not due to any technical deficiency within the system. In the laboratory setting, the Seeplex® system looks to compare favourably with existing technologies where high throughput, ease of use, low technical requirements, and a fully kit-based format are factors. Equally useful is the ability of the RV15 system to detect bocavirus and coronaviruses, whose clinical impact is becoming increasingly clear [Esposito et al., 2008; Brodzinski and Ruddy, 2009; Garcia-Garcia et al., 2010]. Since the completion of this work, the Seeplex® RV15 kit now includes the redesigned influenza B primer set, human RNase P whole process control and now comprises a one-step RT-PCR system rather than the two-step systems employed in these evaluations. In summary, the Seeplex® RV15 produces results comparable to the in house system. The high throughput capabilities and low technical requirements afforded by Seeplex® recommend it as a practical alternative to real-time RT-PCR.

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