

# Variable impact of an antimicrobial stewardship programme in three intensive care units: time-series analysis of 2012–2017 surveillance data

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# 1 Variable impact of an antimicrobial stewardship programme in three intensive care

# 2 units: time-series analysis of 2012-2017 surveillance data

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- 24 Running title
- 25 Stewardship in intensive care units
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28 Synopsis

Background: Preprescription authorization (PPA) and postprescription review with feedback
(PPRF) were successively implemented in 2012 and 2016 in our 1500-bed hospital.

Aim : We assessed their impact on carbapenems use and resistance levels of *P. aeruginosa* in
three intensive care units (ICU).

33 **Methods:** Carbapenems use (in DDD/1000 occupied bed-days) and resistance of *P*. 34 *aeruginosa* (percentage of non-susceptible (I+R) isolates to imipenem and/or meropenem) 35 were analyzed using a controlled interrupted time-series method. Two periods were 36 compared: 2012-2015 (PPA) and 2016-2017 (PPA+PPRF). Models were adjusted on the 37 annual incidence of extended-spectrum  $\beta$ -lactamase-producing *Enterobacteriacae*.

**Findings:** Carbapenem use was stable over PPA period in all ICUs, with a significant change of slope over PPA+PPRF period only in ICU1 ( $\beta$ 2= -12.8, CI=-19.5;-6.1). There was a switch from imipenem to meropenem during PPA period in all three units. Resistances of *P*. *aeruginosa* were stable over the study period in ICU1 and 2, and significantly decreased over PPA+PPRF period in ICU3 ( $\beta$ 2=-0.18, CI=-0.3;-0.03).

43 Conclusion: In real life conditions and with the same antimicrobial stewardship programme
44 (AMSP) led by a single team, impact of PPRF was heterogeneous between ICUs. Factors
45 driving impact of AMSP should be further assessed in comparable settings through real life
46 data, to target where they could prove cost-effective.

Keywords : antimicrobial stewardship, carbapenems, Pseudomonas aeruginosa, timeseries modeling, intensive care unit

# 50 Introduction

Multidisciplinary antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) programmes have proven effective to 51 decrease mortality, to improve quality of antibiotic prescriptions and to reduce unnecessary 52 antibiotic use [1,2]. Implementation of such programmes is therefore strongly encouraged in 53 all healthcare settings [3,4]. However, when planning implementation of an AMS programme 54 at a hospital scale, prioritizing strategies may be challenging, especially in resource-limited 55 settings. Both restrictive and enabling approaches have been used, and their impact is variable 56 [1,5-7]. In a recent prospective crossover trial [5], a restrictive approach consisting in 57 requirement of pre-prescription approval (PPA), was compared to a post-prescription review 58 59 with feedback (PPRF) approach. PPRF was more efficient to reduce antibiotic use, suggesting that prioritizing such intervention would have the most significant impact [5]. Conversely, 60 other authors reported an increase of cefepime, piperacillin/tazobactam and vancomycin use 61 62 when PPA was replaced to PPRF in a prospective non comparative study [6].

PPRF requires important human resources that hamper simultaneous implementation in all 63 64 medical wards of a health-care setting. In most published studies, programmes were either implemented at a hospital scale with substantial dedicated human and financial resources, or 65 restricted to specific departments [8]. There is currently limited evidence on the impact of 66 PPRF at a hospital scale in real-life conditions. In the French context, AMS programmes are 67 primarily supervised by infectious diseases clinicians in addition to their routine clinical tasks, 68 with limited dedicated time to AMS activities [9]. Following national and international 69 recommendations, we implemented in our 1500-bed university hospital a stewardship 70 71 programme based on PPA and PPRF targeting carbapenem prescriptions. The goal of this study was to assess and compare, in real-life conditions, the impact of PPA and PPRF on 72 antibiotic use and resistance of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in three intensive care units (ICU) 73 within a same healthcare setting. 74

#### 76 Methods

#### 77 Setting, participants and intervention

This retrospective observational study was conducted between 2012 and 2017 in the Hôpitaux 78 Universitaires Paris Centre (HUPC), a 1500-bed university hospital, Paris, France. Patients 79 from three distinct intensive care units were included: ICU1 (24 beds) including patients with 80 severe medical conditions (e.g. severe community-acquired sepsis, out-of-hospital cardiac 81 82 arrest, etc.), ICU2 (10 beds) post-operative patients after gastrointestinal surgery and ICU3 (16 beds) post-operative patients following thoracic surgery. All ICU patients who had 83 received at least one dose of carbapenem (meropenem or imipenem) over the study period 84 85 were included. The study was conducted in accordance with STROBE-AMS guidelines [10].

PPA alone, then PPA + PPRF were successively implemented in 2012 and 2016 in all 86 medical, surgical and intensive care units of the hospital for carbapenem prescriptions. The 87 programme was supervised as part of routine work by the multidisciplinary team available on 88 89 site, composed of one pharmacist in charge of antibiotics deliveries and of three Infectious Diseases (ID) physicians dedicated to giving daily individual bedside advice for patients with 90 infectious diseases. No additional resources were allocated to implement the AMS 91 programme. Procedures for PPA and PPRF were as reported elsewhere [5,11]. With PPA the 92 prescriber had to seek input from the pharmacists prior to administration of carbapenems. For 93 each carbapenem prescription, the role of the pharmacist was to check whether the indication 94 was concordant with the local guideline, and if not, to discuss alternatives with the clinician in 95 charge. In the second period (PPA+PPRF), in addition to PPA, pharmacists identified new 96 97 carbapenem prescriptions on a daily basis and sent the list of patients to the ID physicians of the AMS team. In the ensuing 48-72 hours, ID physicians visited the patients, reviewed the 98 clinical charts and interviewed the prescribing physicians during a bedside visit. Based on 99 100 available diagnostic tests and clinical course, the AMS team advised the clinician with recommendations for stopping, discontinuing, or adjusting therapy. Both ID physicians and 101

pharmacists followed a local guideline derived from national recommendations on treatment
durations and promotion of non-carbapenems alternatives [11–13]. The guideline also
recommended preferential use of meropenem rather than imipenem based on literature data
suggesting better tolerance and greater in vitro activity against Gram-negative pathogens [14].

#### 107 <u>Antibiotic use</u>

Carbapenem use was estimated from aggregate data of imipenem and meropenem pharmacy 108 109 deliveries, and expressed as Defined Daily Doses (DDD) per 1000 occupied bed-days (BD). DDD were defined according to ATC/DDD index 2014 [15]. Imipenem and meropenem have 110 the same DDD of 2 grams per 24 hours. However, individual dosing may vary widely 111 between patients, mainly depending on the severity of clinical presentation (typically 1.5g to 112 3g/24 hours for imipenem and 3 to 6 g/24h for meropenem, the highest doses being used in 113 114 the most critical patients [16]). As previously described, using non-standard doses of antibiotics can affect calculation of DDD [3]. For instance, the highest recommended dose 115 116 would account for 1.5 DDD for imipenem (3g/24 hours) and 2 DDD for meropenem (6g/24 117 hours), therefore biasing comparisons between molecules. To account for these discrepancies, we randomly selected ten prescriptions of imipenem and meropenem per year and per 118 intensive care unit (n=360 prescriptions) and collected data on individual doses actually 119 prescribed. For each unit, we then calculated a correction coefficient, defined as the mean 120 daily dose of meropenem divided by the mean daily dose of imipenem. Corrected meropenem 121 consumptions were calculated by dividing raw consumptions by the correction coefficient in 122 each unit. 123

124

#### 125 <u>Antimicrobial resistance</u>

126 Identification of microorganisms used MALDI-TOF and susceptibility testing was performed127 by disc diffusion methods according to EUCAST guidelines. An isolate was considered non

susceptible when tested and interpreted as resistant (R) or with intermediate susceptibility (I) 128 129 in accordance with the French and European clinical breakpoint criteria (EUCAST) [17]. Data were expressed as percentage of resistance (PR), defined as the percentage of non-susceptible 130 (I+R) isolates, out of all isolates with antimicrobial susceptibility testing. Duplicates from the 131 same patient were eliminated taking only the first by date of sample collection and isolate 132 source, and defined as the presence of similar susceptibility patterns for all antibiotics from 133 the standard list defined by the EUCAST for the species. We first studied the global resistance 134 to carbapenems, defined as resistance to either imipenem, meropenem, or both. Trends of 135 individual resistance to one of the two molecules (imipenem or meropenem) were secondly 136 assessed and are presented in the supplementary material. The incidence of extended-137 spectrum β-lactamase-producing *Enterobacteriacae* (ESBL-E) from all isolates was assessed 138 per year and per 1000 BD. 139

140

# 141 Data analysis

142 Two periods were analyzed: 2012–2015 (PPA alone) and 2016–2017 (both PPA and PPRF).

Analysis of aggregated data was performed through a controlled interrupted time-series
method. The time-series was divided into a pre and post intervention segment. We estimated
the three-monthly consumption of carbapenems with a multiple linear regression model

146 
$$consumption_{t} = \begin{cases} \beta_{0} + \beta_{1} \times t + \gamma \times Incidence_{t}^{(ESBL)} , pre-intervention \\ \beta_{0} + (\beta_{1} + \beta_{2}) \times t + \gamma \times Incidence_{t}^{(ESBL)}, post-intervention \end{cases}$$

In this model, *t* is a continuous variable indicating the time in trimester since 2012.  $\beta_0$  is the intercept which estimates the baseline consumption of carbapenems,  $\beta_1$  is the change in consumption during the pre-intervention period,  $\beta_2$  is the change of slope between the postintervention and the pre-intervention period, and  $\gamma$  the parameter associated to the incidence of ESBL. Since local epidemiology may affect the use of carbapenems, all models were adjusted on the annual incidence of ESBL-E. 153 We estimated the three-monthly percentage of resistance (PR) of *P. aeruginosa* to 154 carbapenems with a Poisson loglinear regression model:

155  $\log(number \ of \ resistant \ isolates_t)$ 

156 
$$=\begin{cases} \beta_0 + \beta_1 \times t + \log(number \ of \ isolates) &, pre-intervention \\ \beta_0 + (\beta_1 + \beta_2) \times t + \log(number \ of \ isolates) , post-intervention \end{cases}$$

157 Statistical analysis and modeling were performed using the R software (3.3.2) [18]. 158 Anonymized routine surveillance data were stored on a secured database regularly declared to 159 the national competent authorities (Commission Nationale Informatique et Libertés). For this 160 type of observational retrospective study, formal consent and permission of an institutional 161 review board are not required.

162

### 163 **Results**

#### 164 <u>Antibiotic use</u>

165 Over the 3 ICUs, raw consumption of carbapenems was 131 DDD/1000 BD in 2012 and 162 DDD/1000 BD in 2017. In the sample of 360 prescriptions, the mean individual dosage was 166 2.5g /24 hours (standard error (SE)=1.0) for imipenem and 5.2g /24 hours (SE=1.5) for 167 meropenem, leading to a correction coefficient of 2. The interrupted time-series showed no 168 change in overall corrected carbapenem use during the PPA period ( $\beta$ 1=+0.1, 95% confidence 169 interval (CI)= -13.1;+13.3), and no change of slope over the PPA+PPRF period ( $\beta$ 2=-3.3, CI= 170 -9.4;+2.8). There was however a switch between imipenem and meropenem: while overall 171 172 consumption of imipenem steadily decreased, meropenem increased over the PPA period in 173 all three units (tables S1 and S3, supplementary material).

Within each ICU, carbapenem use showed different patterns. In ICU 1, carbapenem use was stable over the PPA period, along with a progressive replacement of imipenem by meropenem (Figure 1). After implementation of PPRF, overall carbapenem consumption significantly dropped, related to a change of slope for both imipenem ( $\beta$ 2=-7.57, CI = -12.69; -2.45, table 1) and, to a lesser extent, meropenem use ( $\beta$ 2=-11.39 CI = -25.23; +2.46, table 1). In ICU 2 and ICU 3, a switch from imipenem to meropenem also occurred during the PPA period, but
we observed no impact of PPRF neither on overall consumption, nor imipenem and
meropenem use.

As shown in table 1, in all units, the annual incidence of ESBL-E was not statisticallyassociated with carbapenem use.

184

# 185 <u>Antimicrobial resistance</u>

The overall PR of *P. aeruginosa* to carbapenems in the three ICUs was of 40% in 2012 and
35% in 2017 (imipenem : 33% in 2012, 27% in 2017; meropenem : 23% in 2012, 24% in
2017).

Global resistance of *P. aeruginosa* to carbapenems (imipenem and/or meropenem) was stable during the PPA period, with no significant change after implementation of PPRF over the three units (figure 2, table 2). Similar patterns were observed in ICU 1 and ICU 2. In ICU 3, a significant decrease in global resistance was observed in the PPA+PPRF period, related to a decrease of imipenem resistance ( $\beta$ 2=-0.19, CI=-0.4;-0.01, table S2), whereas meropenem resistance remained stable ( $\beta$ 2=-0.06, CI=-0.26;+0.15, table S4).

195

# 196 Discussion

In this retrospective study based on surveillance data, we report heterogeneous impact of an AMS programme within three ICUs of the same hospital. Carbapenem use did not change over the PPA period in all three ICUs, and significantly decreased in only one ICU after implementation of PPRF. A switch from imipenem to meropenem was observed in the three ICUs during the PPA period. Resistance rates showed similar patterns and were stable over the study period within the three units.

As previously reported, PPA alone had a limited impact on the overall carbapenem use in our 204 205 setting, apart from a switch from imipenem to meropenem use. This switch during the study period was probably related to adherence to local guidelines, actively promoted by the 206 207 pharmacists and ID physicians of the AMS team [14]. In the trial by Tamma et al., antibiotic consumptions remained steady during PPA periods in both arms [5]. A Cochrane review and 208 meta-analysis confirmed that restrictive strategies were less effective than enabling 209 interventions with feedback to enhance compliance to antibiotic strategies [1]. Moreover, 210 several studies revealed unintended consequences of PPA: negative professional culture 211 through breakdown in trust and communication [19,20] and delay in time to first antibiotic 212 213 dose [21]. In practice, there are many barriers for implementation of PPA in a healthcare setting. PPA requires someone to be available to answer requests in real time, 24/7. Antibiotic 214 approval practices may also differ between stewardship practitioners depending on their 215 background, level of experience [11]. In many health-care settings, pharmacists are dedicated 216 to this task. However, even if extensively trained on antibiotic stewardship, most pharmacists 217 218 feel to have limited capacity to influence antibiotic decision-making, mainly due to the 219 perception of antibiotic use as a medical responsibility [22]. This is particularly true in ICUs where patients are critically unwell, at high risk for carriage of multidrug-resistant bacteria, 220 and where physicians are highly experienced in prescribing antibiotics. All these limitations 221 raise concerns on effectiveness of PPA in practice and even more of its medico-economic 222 223 impact.

224

PPRF showed encouraging positive effects [5,7,23], leading to its positioning as a cornerstone of AMS programmes [24]. In our study, PPRF showed a significant impact on carbapenem consumption in one out of three ICU units. In comparison, Abbara et al. reported in a single ICU a decrease in broad spectrum antibiotics use – among which carbapenems – and resistance of *P. aeruginosa* after a strategy combining: i) systematic PPRF of all

antibiotics, ii) restriction of broad spectrum antibiotics through local guidelines. While our 230 231 AMS programme targeted only carbapenems in the whole hospital, their AMS programme targeted all broad-spectrum antibiotics in a single ICU. Like PPA, PPRF is a resource-232 233 consuming strategy since members of the AMS team must be available on site to review prescriptions within 24-48 hours. Thus, focusing the AMS programme on a single ICU could 234 partly explain their different results. Second, effectiveness of the strategy highly depends on 235 adherence of the caring physicians to recommendations of the AMS team [24,25]. Factors that 236 237 drive adherence to ID advices are not fully understood. Several reports underlined that the strongest drivers were stewards and prescribers' behavior and beliefs, rather than patients' 238 239 characteristics [24-26]. Recent qualitative work investigated that issue, putting forward factors such as local culture and practices, physicians' personal experiences, involvement of 240 supra-level bodies like hospital authorities, physician's interest and willingness to conform to 241 242 guidelines, competition between physicians and AMS team's qualifications and tasks, lack of interaction between the AMS team and senior doctors while care delivery is very 243 244 hierarchically structured [26-28]. Because these factors are very heterogeneous, it is difficult to anticipate in which setting PPRF is likely to have the highest impact. 245

246

Our results on antibiotic resistance were deceiving, despite a marginal decrease of imipenem resistance during the PPA+PPRF period in a single ICU. The number of *P.aeruginosa* isolates in this ICU was low which could account for a high variability of results. Moreover, this was observed in only one ICU, while imipenem consumption had been previously decreasing for several years in all three ICUs. If the switch from imipenem to meropenem had an impact on *P.aeruginosa* resistance to imipenem, we would have assumed to see a sustainable and similar effect in the three ICUs, which we did not observe.

254 Several studies suggest a strong correlation between carbapenem use and the proportion of

255 carbapenem-resistant *P. aeruginosa* isolates, particularly in settings where chromosomally

encoded resistance mechanisms (loss of OprD porin, overproduction of the MexAB efflux 256 257 system) are predominant, like in France. For instance, in a retrospective study in a French ICU [29], imipenem resistance of *P. aeruginosa* strains was mainly due to chromosomally 258 259 encoded resistance mechanisms, and the main risk factor for resistance was prior exposure to imipenem (Odds ratio = 6.8 [95% CI, 1.2 to 50.2] when patients received > 3 days of 260 261 imipenem). The correlation between antibiotic use and emergence of resistance is not 262 straightforward for other Gram-negative bacteria (i.e. resistance to 3GC and ESBL-Enterobacteriacae), explaining why we specifically chose to focus on the pairing of "P. 263 aeruginosa / carbapenems" to evaluate the impact of the programme. 264 265 Failure to show any impact of our strategies on carbapenems resistance could be due to a real lack of effect, to confounding factors, or a too short period of observation after 266 implementation of PPRF (2 years). The effect of AMS programmes on antibiotic resistance, in 267 particular of P. aeruginosa, remains unclear and inconsistent between studies [1, 30, 31]. 268 Actual evidence shows too much variance in microbial outcomes to reliably assess the effect 269 270 of change in antibiotic use on gram-negative bacteria and to discriminate the impact of each 271 strategy [31].

272

This study has several limitations. As it is an uncontrolled study, PPA and PPRF occurred in 273 two different periods, during which other changes could have impacted antibiotic prescribing 274 practices. Because carbapenems are mainly used in the treatment of ESBL-E infections, we 275 adjusted our models on the incidence of ESBL-E isolates from each unit. However, in all 276 models, the parameter was not statistically significant, meaning that the ESBL-E incidence 277 had no significant impact on carbapenem consumption over the study period. Still, other 278 factors impacting bacterial resistance were not assessed, as fluoroquinolones' cross-over 279 impact on carbapenem resistance, clinical characteristics of the patients, iatrogenic factors 280 (use of invasive devices, mechanical ventilation, etc.) [32-34]. Another limitation is that we 281

did not assess adherence to PPRF, while it is a major success factor in non-coercive strategies
[22,24]. Finally, there was a high variability over time in carbapenem consumption on a
microscale level in each ICU. Because we reported antibiotic deliveries and not antibiotic use,
this may be explained by stockpiling in the three units.

286

Until now, most published studies analyzed the effect of AMS strategies in a single setting, 287 while we compared the effect of one strategy led by the same AMS team in three different 288 settings from the same hospital [30]. Analyzing impact at hospital level increases statistical 289 290 power, but can also hide differential impacts within different medical units. Our study reports 291 observational surveillance data, offering the opportunity to observe real-life effects of PPA and PPA+PPRF. In this pragmatic approach, our goal was to observe whether any trend 292 293 would be observed after implementation of the programme, and to compare different settings. This approach does not allow to formally relate a change in resistance to a change in 294 antibiotic use. However, our data show that in real-life conditions, when implementing an 295 AMS program, variable impact may be observed depending on the setting, within the same 296 hospital. Taking that variability into account is important for deciding how to effectively split 297 298 resources allocated to AMS programmes.

299

300

301 **Conclusion:** In real life conditions, after implementation of an AMS programme based on 302 systematic post-prescription review of all carbapenem prescriptions, we report a decrease of 303 antibiotic use in only one out of three ICUs, with no clear impact on carbapenem resistance of 304 *P. aeruginosa*. This suggests that within the same hospital, systematic post-prescription 305 review by an antibiotic expert may have a heterogeneous impact from a unit to another. Due

- to financial and organizational constraints, such an approach should be prioritized in specific
- 307 wards and predictors of successful implementation still need to be assessed.
- 308

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- 314

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# 476 Tables



|      | Intercept<br>β₀[CI]      | PPA<br>period              |             | PPA+PPRF<br>period         |             | Incidence <sup>(ESBL)</sup> |             |
|------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
|      |                          | <b>β</b> <sub>1</sub> [CI] | p-<br>value | <b>β</b> <sub>2</sub> [CI] | p-<br>value | γ [CI]                      | p-<br>value |
| All  | 76.6<br>[-88.6;+241.8]   | 0.1<br>[-13.1;+13.3]       | 0.99        | -3.3<br>[-9.4;+2.8]        | 0.27        | 8.4<br>[-39.4;+56.2]        | 0.72        |
| ICU1 | 147.3<br>[-34.4;+328.9]  | 8.8<br>[-5.8;+23.3]        | 0.22        | -12.8<br>[-19.5;-6.1]      | <10-3       | -22.0<br>[-74.5;+30.6]      | 0.39        |
| ICU2 | 3.9<br>[-572.1;+579.9]   | 6.1<br>[-40.1;+52.3]       | 0.79        | 4.7<br>[-16.6;+25.9]       | 0.65        | 41.0<br>[-125.7;+207.6]     | 0.61        |
| ICU3 | -46.2<br>[-417.3;+324.9] | -6.7<br>[-36.5;+23.0]      | 0.64        | 4.7<br>[-9.0;+18.4]        | 0.48        | 50.4<br>[-56.9;+157.7]      | 0.34        |

**Table 1.** Parameters of the multiple linear regression models for corrected carbapenem use

*Abbreviations:* CI : 95% confidence interval; ESBL : extended-spectrum  $\beta$ -lactamase-481 producing *Enterobacteriacae*.

Table 2. Parameters of the multiple linear regression models for the proportion of resistance
to carbapenems of *P. aeruginosa*

|          | Intercept           | PPA perio           | d       | PPA+PPRF period     |         |
|----------|---------------------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|          | β <sub>0</sub> [CI] | β <sub>1</sub> [CI] | p-value | β <sub>2</sub> [CI] | p-value |
| All ICUs | -1.0 [-1.2;-0.8]    | +0.03 [-0.06;+0.1]  | 0.45    | -0.07 [-0.2;+0.01]  | 0.08    |
| ICU1     | -0.8 [-1.1;-0.5]    | -0.05 [-0.2;+0.1]   | 0.47    | -0.02 [-0.1;+0.1]   | 0.71    |
| ICU2     | -0.8 [-1.3;-0.3]    | -0.02 [-0.3;+0.2]   | 0.85    | -0.01 [-0.2;+0.2]   | 0.96    |
| ICU3     | -1.35 [-1.8;-0.9]   | +0.23 [+0.04;+0.4]  | 0.02    | -0.18 [-0.3;-0.03]  | 0.01    |

*Abbreviations:* CI : 95% confidence interval; ESBL : extended-spectrum  $\beta$ -lactamase-488 producing *Enterobacteriacae*.

- 501 Figure captions
- 502
- 503 Figure 1: Carbapenem use in DDD/1000 BD over time
- 504 This figure is online-only color
- a) in all ICUs, b) in ICU 1, c) in ICU 2, d) in ICU 3
- 506 Black dotted line: raw carbapenem consumption (imipenem+meropenem).
- 507 Black line: corrected carbapenem consumption (imipenem+meropenem).
- 508 Blue line: imipenem consumption.
- 509 Red line: corrected meropenem consumption.
- 510 Overall incidence of ESBL in all ICUs, from 2012 to 2017, per 1000 occupied bed-days :
- 511 3.34, 3.34, 2.71, 2.71, 2.13, 2.11
- 512
- 513 Figure 2: Proportion of resistance to imipenem and/or meropenem in *Pseudomonas*
- 514 *aeruginosa* isolates over time
- 515 This figure is online-only color
- 516 a) in all ICUs, b) in ICU 1, c) in ICU 2, d) in ICU 3
- 517 Total number of isolates per year, from 2012 to 2017 : ICU 1 [34/27/23/30/20/19], ICU 2
- 518 [12/12/14/5/8/7], ICU 3 [15/11/24/21/8/7]
- 519