

1        **Clonal transmission and new mechanism of resistance to trimethoprim-**  
2        **sulfamethoxazole in *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* strains isolated in a**  
3        **neonatology unit at Antananarivo, Madagascar, deciphered by whole**  
4        **genome sequence analysis**

5        Mamitina Alain Noah Rabenandrasana<sup>1</sup>, Volasoa Andrianoelina<sup>1</sup>, Melanie Bonneault<sup>2</sup>,  
6        Perlinot Herindrainy<sup>3</sup>, Benoit Garin<sup>4</sup>, Sebastien Breurec<sup>5</sup>, Elisabeth Delarocque-Astagneau<sup>2</sup>,  
7        Zafitsara Zo Andrianirina<sup>6</sup>, Vincent Enouf<sup>7</sup>, Bich-Tram Huynh<sup>2</sup>, Lulla Opatowski<sup>2</sup>, Jean-Marc  
8        Collard<sup>1</sup>

9  
10        <sup>1</sup>*Experimental Bacteriology Unit, Institut Pasteur, Antananarivo, Madagascar.*

11        <sup>2</sup>*Biostatistique, Biomathématique, Pharmaco-épidémiologie et Maladies Infectieuses (B2PHI), Institut*  
12        *Pasteur, Inserm, Université de Versailles–Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (UVSQ), Paris, France.*

13        <sup>3</sup>*Epidemiology and Clinical Research Unit, Institut Pasteur, Antananarivo, Madagascar.*

14        <sup>4</sup>*Laboratoire Immuno-Hématologie CHU, CHU Pointe-à-Pitre, Abymes, Guadeloupe, France.*

15        <sup>5</sup>*Faculté de médecine, Institut Pasteur de la Guadeloupe, Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe*

16        <sup>6</sup>*Pediatric Ward, Centre Hospitalier de Soavinandriana, Antananarivo, 97159, Madagascar.*

17        <sup>7</sup>*Pasteur International Bioresources network (PIBnet), Plateforme de Microbiologie Mutualisée (P2M),*  
18        *Institut Pasteur, Paris, France.*

19

20        Corresponding author:

21        Mamitina Alain Noah Rabenandrasana, [rabalainnoah@gmail.com](mailto:rabalainnoah@gmail.com)

22

23        **ABSTRACT**

24        *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* has been recognized as an emerging multidrug resistant  
25        organism in hospital settings due to its resistance to a broad range of antimicrobial agents.

26        These include  $\beta$ -lactams and aminoglycosides, afforded by the existence of intrinsic and

27 acquired resistance mechanisms. Trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole (SXT) is recommended as  
28 one of the best treatment choices against *S. maltophilia* infections; however increasing  
29 resistance to SXT has complicated the treatment. From July 2014 to March 2015, individuals  
30 and surfaces from a neonatology ward in Antananarivo, Madagascar, were longitudinally  
31 followed to assess the transmission of bacteria resistant to antibiotics between neonates,  
32 individuals (parents and nurses) and ward environments. Four *S. maltophilia* strains were  
33 successively isolated from a water-tap (N=1), from feces obtained from a newborn (N=1), and  
34 nursing staff (N=2). Antimicrobial susceptibility testing and whole genome sequencing were  
35 performed on each isolate. Based on coregenome alignment, all strains were identical and  
36 belonged to the new sequence type ST-288. They were resistant to trimethoprim-  
37 sulfamethoxazole, carbapenems and intermediate to levofloxacin. Each isolate carried the  
38 *aadB*, *strA*, *strB* and *sulI* genes located in a class I integron but variants of the *dfrA* gene were  
39 absent. We assessed by PROVEAN analysis the single nucleotide mutations found in *folA*, *folC*  
40 and *folM* genes and only the mutation in *folA* (A114T:GCC→ACC) has an effect on the activity  
41 of trimethoprim. Our findings demonstrated the prolonged presence of SXT-resistant *S.*  
42 *maltophilia* in a clinical setting with consecutive transfers from the environment to a newborn  
43 and staff based on the isolation dates. We also hypothesized that single nucleotide mutations  
44 in *folA* could be responsible for trimethoprim resistance.

45

## 46 INTRODUCTION

47 *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* is a non-fermentative Gram-negative bacterium generally  
48 found throughout the environment (soil, sewage, plants). It is also occasionally isolated in  
49 hospitals where this bacterium is currently regarded as an important opportunistic pathogen. It  
50 causes a large range of clinical syndromes such as bacteraemia, sepsis, pneumonia,  
51 meningitis, endocarditis, septic arthritis, urinary infections, and endophthalmitis (1, 2),  
52 especially in hospitalized immunocompromized patients or patients with underlying disease.  
53 *S. maltophilia* has been recognized as one of the leading nosocomial multidrug resistant

54 organisms due to its resistance to a broad range of antimicrobial agents, including  $\beta$ -lactams  
55 and aminoglycosides, afforded by the existence of intrinsic and acquired resistance  
56 mechanisms (3). However it remained susceptible to fluoroquinolones, polymyxins and  
57 trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole (SXT) (4).

58 SXT in association with ticarcillin and clavulanic acid is traditionally recommended as one of  
59 the first choices against *S. maltophilia* infections but fluoroquinolones (also in association  
60 with other antibiotics) are an attractive option due to their *in vitro* activity (5). However,  
61 increasing resistance to SXT has complicated the treatment and resistance determinants such  
62 as *sul* and *dfrA* genes, class 1 integrons and mobile genetic elements have been reported to  
63 contribute to SXT resistance (6–8). The aim of this study was to establish the link between 4  
64 SXT resistant *S. maltophilia* isolates collected in a neonatology unit and to decipher the  
65 genetic basis of resistance to SXT.

66

## 67 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### 68 **Study design**

69 The longitudinal study was conducted in the neonatal intensive care unit in CENHOSOA  
70 hospital in Antananarivo, Madagascar (08/27/2014–03/06/2015) and was already described in  
71 Bonneault *et al.* 2019 (9). Briefly, 22 newborns (NBs) were included in the cohort and were  
72 followed until discharge or death. Average unit stays lasted 18 days. All health-care workers  
73 (HCWs) and NBs' accompanying family members (FMs; usually the mother, involved in the  
74 basic infant care, except for one child who had four distinct accompanying FMs) were also  
75 followed. In total 22 NBs, 21 HCWs and 24 FMs were included in the study. At enrollment, a  
76 rectal swab was obtained from the NB and a stool sample from the FM to detect E-ESBL  
77 colonization. Rectal swabs were systematically obtained from the NB on a weekly basis. For  
78 stays <7 days in the unit, a stool sample was obtained the day of discharge. Stools were also  
79 collected from the FMs and from the HCWs every week. Environmental swabbing was  
80 performed at the beginning, middle and the end of the investigation. The study was approved

81 by the Madagascar Public Health Ministry Ethics Committee (Reference number: 040–  
82 MSANP/CE).

83

84

### 85 **Bacteriological analyses**

86 All samples were cultivated on CHROMagar™ ESBL (CHROMagar, Paris, France) and each  
87 colony morphotype was identified by mass spectrometry (MS) MALDI-TOF (Bruker  
88 Daltonics, Bremen, Germany). Antimicrobial susceptibility testing was performed on each  
89 isolate according to the standard disc methods described in the 2018 CASFM guidelines. In  
90 this study, we only focused on *S. maltophilia* positive samples.

91

### 92 **Whole genome sequencing (WGS) & Bioinformatic analysis**

93 DNA extraction was performed on 5 mL of liquid cultures grown overnight at 37°C in a Luria  
94 Bertani infusion medium by using the Cador Pathogen Extraction Kit (Indical Bioscience) on  
95 the Qiacube HT (QIAGEN, France) device according to the manufacturer's protocol for  
96 Gram-negative bacteria. DNA quantity and purity was assessed by using Nanodrop  
97 2000/200C (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA). Library preparation was  
98 conducted by using the Nextera XT DNA Sample Kit (Illumina, San Diego, CA, USA). WGS  
99 was performed on a NextSeq 500 platform (Illumina) by using 2 × 150-bp runs. FqCleaner  
100 version 3.0 was used to eliminate adaptor sequences (10, 11), reduce redundant or  
101 overrepresented reads (12), correct sequencing errors (13), merge overlapping paired reads,  
102 and discard reads with Phred scores (measure of the quality of identification of nucleobases  
103 generated by automated DNA sequencing) <20. Illumina reads *de novo* assembly was  
104 performed using Spades (14). Acquired resistance genes were detected by the resfinder  
105 software (15). The genomes were annotated by using prokka and PATRIC web server (16,  
106 17). The sequence types (ST) were determined *in silico* with the public database for *S.*  
107 *maltophilia* (<https://pubmlst.org/smaltophilia/>). Phylogenetic analysis based on whole genome

108 sequences was done using the Parsnp program from the harvest suite, gubbins and RaxML  
109 (18–20). Mutation detection in SXT resistant *S. maltophilia* strains was performed with the  
110 Breseq 0.31.1 software (*S. maltophilia* D457 was used as reference genome) (21). All non-  
111 synonymous mutations were analyzed with PROVEAN (Protein Variation Effect Analyzer)  
112 (13) to predict the functional deleteriousness caused by the missense mutation. Plasmid  
113 detection, typing and reconstruction were performed with the MOB-suite software (22).

114

### 115 **Predicted structure and molecular docking**

116 The secondary and tertiary structures of proteins were predicted by using the Raptor X server  
117 (23–26). The wild-type amino acid sequence from the D457 strain was chosen as template for  
118 homology modeling. We used autodock vina to calculate Gibbs free energy of binding ( $\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$ )  
119 of ligands (trimethoprim) with targets. They were further converted to the predicted inhibition  
120 constants ( $K_{i_{\text{pred}}}$ ) with this formula (27):

$$121 \quad K_{i_{\text{pred}}} = \exp([\Delta G_{\text{bind}} * 1,000] / [R * T])$$

122 where R (gas constant) is 1.98 cal(mol\*K)<sup>-1</sup>, and T (room temperature) is 298.15 Kelvin.

123

### 124 **Quantification of biofilm formation**

125 The biofilm assay was performed as previously described (28) but with slight modifications.  
126 Overnight cultures of *S. maltophilia* in 5 mL Luria Bertani infusion medium reaching an  
127 optical density at 620 nm equivalent to 1 (OD<sub>620</sub>) (approximately 1\*10<sup>9</sup> CFU/mL) were  
128 transferred to the wells of a sterile flat-bottomed 96-well polystyrene microtitre plate and  
129 incubated for 24h at 35°C +/- 2°C. Non adherent cells were subsequently removed by  
130 washing twice with 200 µl of sterile distilled water. The amount of biofilm biomass was  
131 assessed by crystal violet staining. Biofilms were stained with 125 µl of 1.0 % (w/v) crystal  
132 violet for 15 min. The dye solution was discarded, and the plate was washed three times with  
133 sterile distilled water and allowed to air-dry for 24 h at room temperature. Stained biofilms  
134 were exposed to 30.0 % (v/v) acetic acid for 15 min, and the OD 620 of the extracted dye was

135 subsequently measured. The average OD values was calculated for all tested strains and  
136 negative controls, since all tests are performed in triplicate and repeated three times. Second,  
137 the cut-off value (OD<sub>c</sub>) was established. It is defined as three standard deviations (SD) above  
138 the mean OD of the negative control: OD<sub>c</sub>=average OD of negative control + (3×SD of  
139 negative control). OD values of a tested strain are expressed as average OD value of the strain  
140 reduced by OD<sub>c</sub> value (OD=average OD of a strain -OD<sub>c</sub>). OD<sub>c</sub> value is calculated for each  
141 microtiter plate separately. Based upon the previously calculated OD values: OD ≤OD<sub>c</sub> = no  
142 biofilm producer; OD<sub>c</sub> ≤OD ≤2 × OD<sub>c</sub> = weak biofilm producer; 2 × OD<sub>c</sub>≤OD≤4×OD<sub>c</sub> =  
143 moderate biofilm producer; 4OD<sub>c</sub><OD = strong biofilm producer. All tests were performed in  
144 triplicate and repeated three times.

145

## 146 **RESULTS**

### 147 **Epidemiological data**

148 During the cohort conducted in the neonatal unit - (see Materials and Methods), 4 *S.*  
149 *maltophilia* were isolated. A first *S. maltophilia* strain (MS MALDI-TOF score of 2.736) was  
150 isolated in January, 07th 2015 from an environmental swab (476SM) realized on a water tap  
151 out of the three sinks present in the neonatology unit. Fourteen days later a second *S.*  
152 *maltophilia* strain (MS MALDI-TOF score of 2.120) was isolated from a rectal swab of a  
153 premature newborn (517SM) admitted to the neonatal ICU. Subsequently, two strains of *S.*  
154 *maltophilia* were isolated from the fingerprints of 2 nurses at day 47 (629SM) and 56  
155 (646SM) after the first isolation from the water tap (MS MALDI-TOF scores of respectively  
156 2.102 and 2.052) (Table 1).

157

### 158 **Antimicrobial susceptibility testing**

159 All 4 isolates were resistant to cotrimoxazole (SXT), ertapenem (ETP), meropenem (MEM)  
160 and imipenem (IPM), intermediate to levofloxacin (LVX) and sensitive to minocycline

161 (MNO), ceftazidime (CAZ) and ticarcillin-clavulanate (TCC). The antimicrobial  
162 susceptibility testing results of the 4 strains are showed in table1.

163

164 Table1: Antimicrobial susceptibility testing of the four *S. maltophilia* strains. Abbreviations:

165 SXT: trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, TCC: Ticarcillin-clavulanate, CAZ: ceftazidim, LVX:

166 levofloxacin, MNO: minocycline, MEM: meropenem, ETP: ertapenem and IPM: imipenem.

167

Strains	Origin	Isolation date	Sample	inhibition zone diameters (mm)							
				SXT	TCC	CAZ	LVX	MNO	MEM	ETP	IPM
476SM	Watertap	January 07, 2015	Environmental swab	6 (R)	35 (S)	22 (S)	21 (I)	25 (S)	6 (R)	6 (R)	6 (R)
517SM	Baby	January 21, 2015	Rectal swab	6 (R)	37 (S)	23 (S)	21 (I)	27 (S)	6 (R)	6 (R)	6 (R)
646SM	Nursing staff1	February 23, 2015	Fingerprint	6 (R)	36 (S)	23 (S)	21 (I)	24 (S)	6 (R)	6 (R)	6 (R)
629SM	Nursing staff2	March 04, 2015	Fingerprint	6 (R)	34 (S)	21 (S)	21 (I)	26 (S)	6 (R)	6 (R)	6 (R)

168

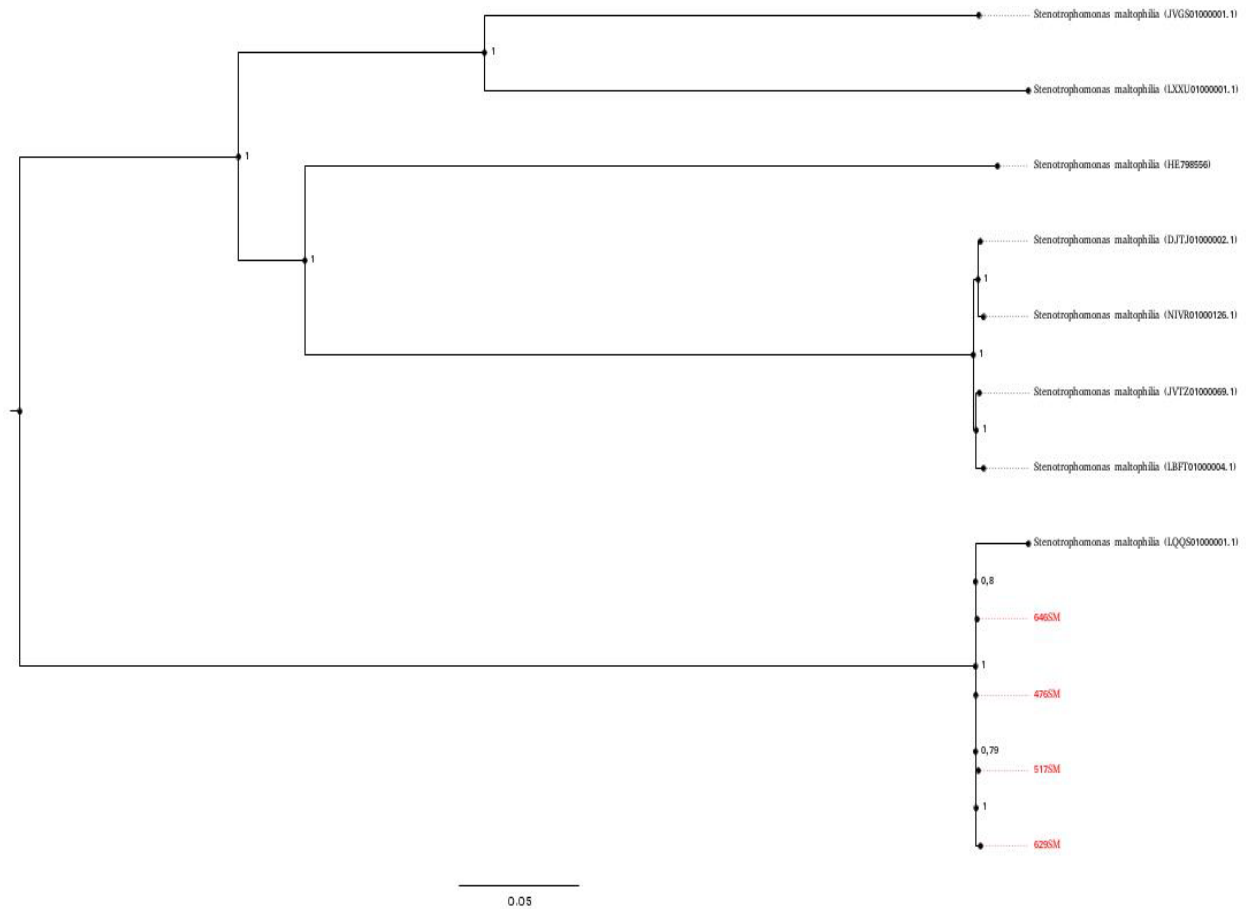
### 169 **Phylogenetic analysis and multilocus sequence-types**

170 A phylogenetic analysis based on whole genome sequences was performed using the Parsnp  
171 program. The 4 isolates are identical and clustered with a *S. maltophilia* (LQQS01000001)  
172 originating from Malaysia (figure 1). The sequence types (ST) of our four isolates were  
173 determined with MLST *in silico* with the public database (<https://pubmlst.org/smaltophilia/>).

174 They all belonged to a new ST: ST-288.

175

176



178

179 Figure 1: Phylogenetic tree based on coregenome alignment of four *S. maltophilia* including  
180 representative genomes from NCBI genbank. Sequences were aligned using ParSNP, genetic  
181 recombination were removed using Gubbins and phylogenetic inferences were obtained using  
182 the maximum likelihood method within raxML software. Bootstrap values are expressed by  
183 decimal of 1 000 replicates with a parameter test and shown at the branching points. The  
184 branches of the tree are indicated by the genus and species name of the type strains followed  
185 by the NCBI gene accession numbers. The four *S. maltophilia* isolates from this study are  
186 represented in red color.

187

### 188 **Resistome analysis**

189 Multiple antimicrobial, heavy-metal and arsenic resistance markers were identified in the  
190 chromosome of each isolate (Table 2). The resistome of these 4 strains revealed the presence  
191 of 27 antibacterial-resistant genes using the resfinder software and PATRIC webserver. The



192 isolates possess two different types of  $\beta$ -lactamases, i.e., Amber class A genes (L2 family),  
193 Amber class B metallo- $\beta$ -lactamase (MBL) genes (L1 family), and five aminoglycoside  
194 inactivation enzymes: *aph(2'')-ia*, *aph(3'')-i*, *aph(3')-ii/aph(3')-xv*, *aph(6)-ic/aph(6)-id*. We  
195 also identified 9 efflux pumps conferring antibiotic resistance and two regulators modulating  
196 expression of antibiotic resistance genes

197

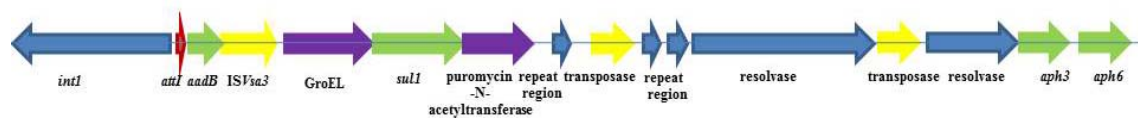
## 198 **Plasmid analysis**

199 Mobsuite software enabled us to identify and reconstruct two plasmids: an IncP conjugative  
200 plasmid harboring the aminoglycoside 6-phosphotransferase gene (*sph* gene) and which  
201 presented 86% nucleotidic identities with the plasmid p35734 found in *E. cloacae*. Moreover  
202 we found a non-transferable plasmid with a RND efflux transporter conferring resistances to  
203 cobalt, zinc, cadmium and which presented 99% nucleotidic identities with the plasmid  
204 pLMG930 found in *Xanthomonas euvesicatoria*. As we used the short-reads sequencing  
205 technique, we were unable to circularize the plasmids.

206

## 207 **Genetic environment of resistance genes**

208 All isolates carried class I integrons that contains *sul1*, *aadB*, *aph3*, *aph6* genes and the entire  
209 heat shock protein gene *groEL* upstream the *sul1* gene (Figure 2).



210

211 Figure2: Structure of class I integrons in the *S. maltophilia* isolated in the neonatology unit.

212 Table 2: Resistome of *S. maltophilia* isolated in the neonatology unit

Function	Enzymes commission numbers	Classification
Subclass B3 beta-lactamase (L1 family)	EC 3.5.2.6	antibiotic inactivation enzyme
Putative aminoglycoside 6-phosphotransferase		
Aminoglycoside 3'-phosphotransferase ( <i>aph(3')-ii/aph(3')-xv</i> )	EC 2.7.1.95	
Aminoglycoside 2"-nucleotidyltransferase ( <i>aph(2")-ia (aadb family)</i> )	EC 2.7.7.46	
Aminoglycoside 6-phosphotransferase ( <i>aph(6)-ic/aph(6)-id</i> )	EC 2.7.1.72	
Class A beta-lactamase	EC 3.5.2.6	
Aminoglycoside 3"-phosphotransferase ( <i>aph(3")-i</i> )	EC 2.7.1.87	
Outer membrane channel TolC ( <i>OpmH</i> )		efflux pump conferring antibiotic resistance
Multidrug efflux system EmrAB-OMF, membrane fusion component EmrA		
Macrolide-specific efflux protein MacA		
Multidrug efflux system MdtABC-TolC, inner-membrane proton/drug antiporter MdtB (RND type)		
Macrolide export ATP-binding/permease protein MacB		

213 Table 2: Continued

Function	Enzymes commission numbers	Classification
Multidrug efflux system EmrAB-OMF, inner-membrane proton/drug antiporter EmrB (MFS type)		efflux pump conferring antibiotic resistance
Multidrug efflux system MdtABC-TolC, inner-membrane proton/drug antiporter MdtC (RND type)		
Multidrug efflux system MdtABC-TolC, membrane fusion component MdtA		
Outer membrane factor (OMF) lipoprotein associated with EmrAB-OMF efflux system		
Outer membrane low permeability porin, OprB family		gene modulating permeability to antibiotic
Hydrogen peroxide-inducible genes activator ( <i>OxyR</i> )		regulator modulating expression of antibiotic resistance genes

214

## 215 **Mutations and resistance to SXT**

216 When using *S. maltophilia* D457 as reference genome a total of 327 deletions, 286 insertions  
217 and 2133 substitutions were detected with the Breseq 0.31.1 software. In all isolates, single  
218 nucleotide mutations in genes encoding enzymes involved in folic acid metabolism which can  
219 be inactivated by trimethoprim were detected in *folA* (A114T:GCC→ACC), *folC*  
220 (L339V:TTG→GTG) and *folM* (A72P:GCC→CCC) which encode respectively the  
221 dihydrofolate reductase, dihydrofolate synthase and FolM alternative dihydrofolate reductase  
222 1. Only the mutation in *folA* has an effect on the activity of the protein as assessed by  
223 PROVEAN analysis

224

## 225 **Predicted structure and molecular docking**

226 The Gibbs free energy of binding ( $\Delta G_{\text{bind}}$ ) between the Fola protein (mutated and wild-type)  
227 and trimethoprim was calculated and values of - 6.9 kcal/mol and -7.1 kcal/mol were found  
228 for the mutated and the wild-type proteins, respectively. The predicted inhibition constants  
229 ( $K_{i_{\text{pred}}}$ ) between trimethoprim and the Fola wild-type protein was  $3.59 \times 10^{-6}$  and  $8.39 \times 10^{-6}$   
230 between trimethoprim and the mutated Fola indicating a reduced susceptibility to  
231 trimethoprim.

232

## 233 **Quantification of biofilm formation**

234 The amount of biofilm biomass was assessed by crystal violet staining as explained in table 4.  
235 All 4 isolates had an average  $OD_{650\text{nm}}$  value of 0.145 ( $OD_c = 0.086$ ), meaning they are weak  
236 biofilm producers. Additionally, we detected in the four isolates modifications in genes  
237 involved in biofilm production: 43 substitutions in the *rmlA* gene, 32 substitutions in the  
238 *spgM* gene, two insertions and three substitutions in the intergenic region between the *manA*  
239 and *spgM* genes, two substitutions in the intergenic region between the *rfbB* and *rmlA* genes  
240 and one substitutions in the intergenic region between the *rpfC* and *rpfF* genes. These genetic

241 modifications are probably the cause of weak biofilm production. The list of all mutations  
242 detected is showed in supplementary material S1.

243 Table 4: Optical density (650nm) of biofilm formation of four strains

244

ID strain	517SM	476SM	629SM	646SM	Standard deviation	OD <sub>negative</sub>
test 1	0,212125	0,11725	0,174125	0,1245	0,00698851	0,08659053
test2	0,174125	0,19625	0,125375	0,100625	0,01431034	0,08368101
test3	0,13575	0,135625	0,124	0,12375	0,00484031	0,08952092
Average	0,174	0,14970833	0,14116667	0,11629167	0,00871305	0,08659749

245

## 246 Discussion

247 The prevalence of *S. maltophilia* has increased in hospitals worldwide simultaneously  
248 with the emergence of a myriad of other antibiotic resistant bacteria (29). Here, we  
249 demonstrated, based on WGS phylogeny, the clonal transmission of *S. maltophilia* resistant to  
250 SXT in a neonatology unit, which might be explained by its ecology and fitness in hospitals  
251 wards and/or by poor hygiene management. The determination of a new ST is in accordance  
252 with the high plasticity and capacity of this bacterium to adapt to specific niches and develop  
253 new characteristics. We showed in our study that the same strain of *S. maltophilia* was  
254 isolated four times on a period of two months in a neonatal ward of a hospital in  
255 Antananarivo, confirming its ability to persist and spread in the medical environment.  
256 Selective pressure imposed by specific conditions in a hospital environment could promote  
257 the survival of certain STs with an adaptive advantage for this specific setting and lead  
258 afterwards to their clonal spread.

259 The reduced susceptibility of *S. maltophilia* to most antibiotics can be attributed to  
260 both intrinsic and acquired resistances. The proteins mediating intrinsic resistance in *S.*  
261 *maltophilia* include chromosomally encoded multidrug efflux pumps such as SmeABC,  
262 SmeDEF, SmeYZ, SmeOP-TolCSm, antibiotic-inactivating enzymes (L1/L2  $\beta$ -lactamases

263 and aminoglycoside inactivating enzymes), and the chromosomally encoded Qnr pentapeptide  
264 repeat proteins (30) which are present in most if not all strains of *S. maltophilia*, as in our  
265 Madagascan strains, suggesting that they did not arise during the recent evolution of  
266 resistance caused by antibiotic therapy. In addition, *S. maltophilia* can acquire mechanisms to  
267 increase its resistance pattern through horizontal gene transfer via plasmids, and subsequently  
268 by recombination processes with integrons, transposons and genomic islands (GIs).

269 The four isolates, which are genotypically identical, were resistant to SXT, one of the  
270 therapeutic choices. The resistance of Gram-negative bacteria to sulfonamides is mainly  
271 conferred by the acquisition of either *sul1* or *sul2*, encoding dihydropteroate synthases (31).  
272 The *sul1* gene carried by class 1 integrons and *sul2*, which is linked to insertion sequence  
273 common region (ISCR) elements, was identified in SXT-resistant *S. maltophilia* isolates (5,  
274 32, 33). The resistance to trimethoprim in *S. maltophilia* is mainly conferred by the  
275 dihydrofolate reductase *dfr* genes such as *dfrA1*, *dfrA5*, *dfrA12*, *dfrA17*, and *dfrA27* which are  
276 usually located within class 1 integrons as part of various resistance gene cassettes. Both  
277 types of *sul* and *dfr* genes can occur together in high-level SXT-resistant isolates (6, 34).  
278 Moreover, the efflux pumps SmeDEF, TolCsm, and SmeYZ are associated with SXT  
279 resistance (35–37). We found that the *sul1* gene was present but no *dfr* genes were detected,  
280 pointing out the presence of another mechanism of resistance to trimethoprim. We were able  
281 to show that a point mutation (A114T:GCC→ACC) in the dihydrofolate reductase gene (*folA*)  
282 decreased the affinity of trimethoprim to the F<sub>olA</sub> protein ensuring therefore resistance to this  
283 antibiotic.

284 We have also shown the presence of two plasmids, one of which harbored heavy metal  
285 resistance genes and which was almost identical to the pLMG930 plasmid found in  
286 *Xanthomonas euvesicatoria*, a bacterial spot-causing xanthomonads. This indicates a high  
287 probability of dissemination of the strain in different ecological niches, notably those  
288 contaminated with heavy metals. It is well known that the presence of both metals and  
289 antibiotic resistance genes play a major role in the persistence, selection and spread of

290 antibiotic- and metal-resistant bacteria in anthropogenic environments heavily contaminated  
291 with detergents, heavy metals and other antimicrobials [29, 30]. In developing countries,  
292 rivers, lakes and lagoons are often contaminated with untreated hospital and industrial  
293 effluents and also by urban storm-water containing anthropogenic pollutants due to intensive  
294 uncontrolled urbanization. These are optimal conditions for bacterial development and the  
295 spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

296 Biofilm formation in bacteria is a multifactorial event that depends on surface  
297 characteristics, motility of strains, genes involved in biofilm formation, and other factors, and  
298 is usually correlated with a higher level of resistance to antibiotics and disinfectants (38).  
299 Different factors influence the physiology of biofilm formation in *S. maltophilia*, namely the  
300 SmeYZ efflux pump that confers resistance to antimicrobials (37), the iron level in the media  
301 (39), and histidine kinase and BfmAK system (40). Interestingly, our study revealed a  
302 negative correlation between the simultaneous presence of genes involved in biofilm  
303 formation such as *spgM*, *rmlA* and *rpfF* genes and the biofilm production. This correlation  
304 could be due to the mutations identified in the three previous genes. However, a clone was  
305 detected along a period of two months in the neonatology ward pointing out a persistence of  
306 the strain in this environment.

307 In conclusion, this work represents the first characterization at the genomic level of  
308 SXT resistant *S. maltophilia* strains circulating in a neonatology ward of a hospital in  
309 Antananarivo, Madagascar. We also pointed out the possible role of a point mutation in the  
310 *folA* gene conferring resistance to trimethoprim. Clonal relatedness between strains indicated  
311 the transmission and the persistence of *S. maltophilia* in the hospital setting and the threat it  
312 could represent for newborns, especially for preterms.

313

314

315

316

317 **Data availability:**

318 These whole genome shotgun projects have been deposited at DDBJ/ENA/GenBank. under  
319 the accession [VFJF00000000](#), [VFJG00000000](#), [VFJH00000000](#) and [VFEX00000000](#)  
320 corresponding respectively for the strains.517SM, 629SM, 646SM and 476SM.

321

322 **Acknowledgments:** We would like to thank Tatianah Sehen Rivomanantsoa, the field  
323 investigator, and the staff of pediatric and neonatology units' at the CENHOSOA Hospital,  
324 Antananarivo, Madagascar. We would also like to thank the program “Actions concertées  
325 inter-pasteuriennes” (ACIP: grant no. A-22-2013) which supported this work and staff of the  
326 “Plateforme de Microbiologie Mutualisée (P2M)” at Institut Pasteur Paris where the whole  
327 genome sequencing was performed.

328

329 **References**

- 330 1. Denton M KK. 1998. Microbiological and clinical aspects of infection associated with  
331 *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*. Clin Microbiol Rev 11:57–80.
- 332 2. Looney WJ, Narita M, Mühlemann K. 2009. *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* : an  
333 emerging opportunist human pathogen. Lancet Infect Dis 9:312–323.
- 334 3. JS B. New strategies against *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*: a serious worldwide  
335 intrinsically drug-resistant opportunistic pathogen. Expert Rev Anti Infect Ther 12:1–4.
- 336 4. Yu Lin, Wang Marco R, Scipione, Yanina Dubrovskaya JP. Monotherapy with  
337 Fluoroquinolone or Trimethoprim-Sulfamethoxazole for Treatment of  
338 *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*. Infect Antimicrob Agents Chemother 58:176–182.
- 339 5. Barbolla R, Catalano M, Orman BE, Famiglietti A, Vay C, Smayevsky J, Centrón D  
340 PSA. 2004. Class 1 integrons increase trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole MICs against  
341 epidemiologically unrelated *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* isolates. Antimicrob  
342 Agents Chemother 48:666–669.
- 343 6. Hu LF, Chen GS, Kong QX, Gao LP, Chen X, Ye Y LJB. 2016. Increase in the



- 344 prevalence of resistance determinants to trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole in clinical  
345 *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* isolates in China. PLoS One 11.
- 346 7. Chatelut M, Dournes JL, Chabanon G MN. 1995. Epidemiological typing of  
347 *Stenotrophomonas* (*Xanthomonas*) *maltophilia* by PCR. J Clin Microbiol 33:912–914.
- 348 8. Chang YT, Lin CY, Chen YH HPR. 2015. Update on infections caused by  
349 *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* with particular attention to resistance mechanisms and  
350 therapeutic options. Front Microbiol 6:893.
- 351 9. Bonneault; M, Andrianoelina; VH, Herindrainy; P, Rabenandrasana; MAN, Garin; B,  
352 Breurec; S, Delarocque-Astagneau; E, Guillemot; D, Andrianirina; ZZ, Collard; J-M,  
353 Huynh; BT, Opatowski; L. 2019. Transmission Routes of Extended-Spectrum Beta-  
354 Lactamase – Producing Enterobacteriaceae in a Neonatology Ward in Madagascar  
355 00:1–8.
- 356 10. Criscuolo A BS. 2013. AlienTrimmer: a tool to quickly and accurately trim off  
357 multiple short contaminant sequences from high-throughput sequencing reads.  
358 Genomics 102:500–506.
- 359 11. Crusoe MR, Alameldin HF, Awad S, Boucher E, Caldwell A CR. 2015. The khmer  
360 software package: enabling efficient nucleotide sequence analysis. F1000Res 4:900.
- 361 12. Liu Y, Schröder J SB. 2018. Musket: a multistage k-mer spectrum-based error  
362 corrector for Illumina sequence data. Bioinformatics 29:308–315.
- 363 13. Choi Y, Sims GE, Murphy S, Miller JR CAP. 2012. Predicting the Functional Effect of  
364 Amino Acid Substitutions and Indels. PLoS One 7.
- 365 14. Bankevich A, Nurk S, Antipov D, Gurevich AA, Dvorkin M, Kulikov AS, Lesin VM,  
366 Nikolenko SI, Pham SON, Prjibelski AD, Pyshkin A V, Sirotkin A V, Vyahhi N,  
367 Tesler G, Alekseyev MAXA, Pevzner PA. 2012. and Its Applications to Single-Cell  
368 Sequencing 19:455–477.
- 369 15. Zankari E, Hasman H, Cosentino S, Vestergaard M, Rasmussen S, Lund O, Aarestrup  
370 FM, Larsen MV. 2012. Identification of acquired antimicrobial resistance genes 2640–

- 371 2644.
- 372 16. Wattam AR, Davis JJ, Assaf R, Brettin T, Bun C, Conrad N, Dietrich EM, Disz T,  
373 Gabbard JL, Gerdes S, Henry CS, Kenyon RW, Machi D, Mao C, Nordberg EK, Olsen  
374 GJ, Olson R, Overbeek R, Parrello B, Pusch GD, Shukla M, Vonstein V, Warren A,  
375 Xia F, Yoo H, Stevens RL. 2017. Improvements to PATRIC , the all-bacterial  
376 Bioinformatics Database and Analysis Resource 45:535–542.
- 377 17. Seemann T. 2014. Prokka : rapid prokaryotic genome annotation 30:2068–2069.
- 378 18. Stamatakis A. 2014. RAxML version 8 : a tool for phylogenetic analysis and post-  
379 analysis of large phylogenies 30:1312–1313.
- 380 19. Croucher NJ, Page AJ, Connor TR, Delaney AJ, Keane JA, Bentley SD, Parkhill J,  
381 Harris SR. 2015. Rapid phylogenetic analysis of large samples of recombinant bacterial  
382 whole genome sequences using Gubbins 43.
- 383 20. Treangen TJ, Ondov BD, Koren S, Phillippy AM. 2014. The Harvest suite for rapid  
384 core-genome alignment and visualization of thousands of intraspecific microbial  
385 genomes 1–15.
- 386 21. DE D, JE. B. 2014. Identification of mutations in laboratory-evolved microbes from  
387 next-generation sequencing data using breseq. *Methods Mol Biol* 1151:165–188.
- 388 22. Nash JR, E. JH. 2018. MOB-suite: software tools for clustering, reconstruction and  
389 typing of plasmids from draft assemblies. *Microb Genomics* 4.
- 390 23. Jian Peng JX. Raptorx: Exploiting structure information for protein alignment by  
391 statistical inference. *Predict Methods Reports, PROTEINS* 79.
- 392 24. Peng JI XJ. 2011. A multiple-template approach to protein threading. *Proteins*  
393 79:1930.
- 394 25. Xu J, ; MS, Feng; W, Jinbo; Z. 2013. Protein threading using context-specific  
395 alignment potential. *Bioinformatics* 29:257–265.
- 396 26. O. Trott AJO. 2010. AutoDock Vina: improving the speed and accuracy of docking  
397 with a new scoring function, efficient optimization and multithreading. *J Comput*

- 398 Chem 31:455–461.
- 399 27. Sergey Shityakov CF. 2014. In silico predictive model to determine vector-mediated  
400 transport properties for the blood–brain barrier choline transporter. *Adv Appl*  
401 *Bioinforma Chem* 7:1–14.
- 402 28. Srdjan Stepanovic ´, Dragana Vukovic ´, Veronika Hola, Giovanni Di Bonaventura,  
403 Slobodanka Djukic ´ IC ´Irkovic ´, Ruzicka. F. 2007. Quantification of biofilm in  
404 microtiter plates: overview of testing conditions and practical recommendations for  
405 assessment of biofilm production by staphylococci. *APMIS* 115:891–899.
- 406 29. Haowa Madi, Jovanka Lukić, Zorica Vasiljević, Marjan Biočanin MK, Branko Jovčić  
407 JL. 2016. Genotypic and Phenotypic Characterization of *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*  
408 Strains from a Pediatric Tertiary Care Hospital in Serbia. *PLoS One* 11:10.
- 409 30. Sanchez MB, Hernandez A MJL. 2009. *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* drug resistance.  
410 *Futur Microbiol* 4:655–660.
- 411 31. Rådström P SG. 1988. RSF1010 and a conjugative plasmid contain sulII, one of two  
412 known genes for plasmid-borne sulfonamide resistance dihydropteroate synthase.  
413 *Antimicrob Agents Chemother* 32:1684–1692.
- 414 32. Toleman MA, Bennett PM, Bennett DM, Jones RN WTR. 2007. Global emergence of  
415 trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole resistance in *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* mediated  
416 by acquisition of sul genes. *Emerg Infect Dis* 13:559–565.
- 417 33. Chung HS, Kim K, Hong SS, Hong SG, Lee K CY. 2015. The sulI gene in  
418 *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* with high-level resistance to  
419 trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole. *Ann Lab Med* 35:246–249.
- 420 34. Hu LF, Chang X, Ye Y, Wang ZX, Shao YB, Shi W, Li X LJB. 2011.  
421 *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* resistance to trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole mediated  
422 by acquisition of sul and dfrA genes in a plasmid-mediated class 1 integron. *Int J*  
423 *Antimicrob Agents* 37:230–234.
- 424 35. Huang YW, Hu RM YTC. 2013. Role of the pcm-tolCsm operon in the multidrug

- 425 resistance of *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*. *J Antimicrob Chemother* 68:1987–1993.
- 426 36. Sánchez MB MJ. 2015. The efflux pump SmeDEF contributes to trimethoprim-  
427 sulfamethoxazole resistance in *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*. *Antimicrob Agents*  
428 *Chemother* 59:4347–4348.
- 429 37. Lin YT, Huang YW, Chen SJ, Chang CW YTC. 2015. The SmeYZ efflux pump of  
430 *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* contributes to drug resistance, virulence-related  
431 characteristics, and virulence in mice. *Antimicrob Agents Chemother* 59:4067±4073.
- 432 38. BalcaÂzar JL, Subirats J BCM. The role of biofilms as environmental reservoirs of  
433 antibiotic resistance. *Front Microbiol* 6:1216.
- 434 39. GarcõÂa CA, Alcaraz ES, Franco MA P de RBN. 2015. Iron is a signal for  
435 *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia* biofilm formation, oxidative stress response, OMPs  
436 expression, and virulence. *Front Microbiol* 6:926.
- 437 40. Zheng L, Wang FF, Ren BZ, Liu W, Liu Z QW. 2016. Systematic Mutational Analysis  
438 of Histidine Kinase Genes in the Nosocomial Pathogen *Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*  
439 Identifies BfmAK System Control of Biofilm Development. *Appl Env Microbiol*  
440 82:2444±2456.
- 441