Paucity of adaptive selection in PmrAB two-component system may resist emergence of colistin resistance in *Acinetobacter baumannii*

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Abstract

Investigations on the selection pressure acting on point mutations in PmrAB two-component

system may provide insights into the future of colistin therapy in *Acinetobacter baumannii*,

since mutations in *pmrAB* are implicated in colistin resistance. We performed adaptive

selection analysis of *pmrAB* and compared with the available data on colistin resistant strains.

We analysed PmrAB sequences in 3113 draft genomes of *A. baumannii* obtained from

RefSeq database. Adaptive selection analysis was performed by two widely used programs

namely, HyPhy and PAML. In addition, to examine the reliability of the approach, the same

analysis was performed on *gyrA* of *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella enterica*, since adaptive

mutations on *gyrA* confer quinolone resistance. Mutations that had caused colistin resistance

were found to be neither adaptive nor polymorphic, rather they occur at sites that are either

under neutral or purifying selection. Strong negative evolutionary selection pressure is also

observed at sites throughout both PmrA and PmrB. Sites with high levels of polymorphisms

in PmrAB were found to be under neutral selection. Notably, there was no sign of positive

selection. Some of them are rather deleterious. These conditions might be maintaining the

incidence of colistin resistance in *A. baumannii* under check. Therefore, in the context of

colistin resistance, natural selection plays only a minor role and we assert that in future, *A.*

baumannii may not be able to sustain and successfully disseminate colistin resistance.

Therefore, at present the concerns raised about continuing the usage of colistin for the

treatment against *A. baumannii* infections appears to be unnecessary.

Introduction

Single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) contribute greatly towards the microevolution of a

bacterium (Chouard, 2010; Reznick & Ricklefs, 2009). Consequently, these bacteria are able

to adapt to their environment comparatively faster without any significant associated costs.

These mutations also have a profound effect on drug resistance and pathogenesis. In recent

years, colistin resistance has been found to be due to SNPs in the genes encoding the two-

component system (TCS) PmrAB, as well as in the *lpx* operon, that are responsible for the

production and regulation of lipopolysaccharide (LPS) in bacterial cell walls (Moffatt et al.,

2010; Snitkin et al., 2013; Thi Khanh Nhu et al., 2016).

PmrAB is thought to regulate lipid-A biosynthesis of gram negative outer membranes (Boll et

al., 2016). Lipid-A is a constituent of the outer membrane LPS, which is the target of colistin.

Colistin resistant strains of *A. baumannii* have modifications and/or loss of LPS from their

outer membrane, with concomitant mutations in the *pmrCAB* and/or *lpx* operon (Boll et al.,

2016; Carretero-Ledesma et al., 2018). Emergence of such resistance is worrisome, since

colistin is the last-choice drug against multidrug resistant *A. baumannii*. The objective of this

study was therefore to identify the hyper-variable regions of the TCS PmrAB in *A. baumannii*

to gain insights into their contribution towards the structure and function of this TCS. Since

point mutations in PmrAB have been implicated in resistance to colistin, sequence analysis of

PmrAB in the context of the evolutionary selection pressure acting on these mutations may

provide insights into the fate of colistin resistance in *A. baumannii*. We report that, both

PmrA and PmrB are under strong purifying evolutionary selection pressure. In addition, there

was no sign of adaptive evolution. Mutations that cause colistin resistance are neither

adaptive nor polymorphic. Some of them are rather deleterious. Therefore, it is highly

unlikely that these mutations will sustain in the long term and hence, *A. baumannii* may not

be able to emerge as a colistin-resistant organism.

Methods

Minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) for colistin were performed according to European

Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing guidelines (EUCAST, 2017). *pmrA*

coding sequences were amplified by *in house* designed primers and custom sequenced

(**Supplementary methods**). For selection analysis, 3113 genomes were retrieved from

RefSeq from which, *pmrA* and *pmrB* sequences were extracted. *pmrAB* sequences originated

from colistin resistant strains that appeared in the literature were also included. Selection

analysis was performed with Single Likelihood Ancestor Counting method of the HyPhy

package, and CodeML of the PAML package. All methods in detail have been provided in

Supplementary methods.

Results

Mutation hotspots in PmrAB are not responsible for colistin resistance

In our observations, two of our clinical isolates, PKAB15 and PKAB19 were identified to be

colistin resistant (**Table 1**). We amplified and performed sequencing of the *pmrA* genes from

these two isolates. One non-synonymous mutation in each of these isolates was identified in

pmrA, when compared to the reference strain *A. baumannii* ATCC17978, both of which

(D10N in PKAB15, and R212L in PKAB19) have never been reported hitherto. Both these

mutations change charged amino acids with uncharged ones which, we believe might have

significant alterations on the structure of the protein to bring about colistin resistance.

Across all the 3113 genomes investigated in the study, 43 sites with non-synonymous

mutations were identified in *pmrA* (**Table 2**). Of these, five were highly polymorphic sites.

Most of the mutations occur in the signal receiver domain and the region connecting the

receiver domain to the DNA-binding domain (**Figure 1**). The DNA binding domain recorded

as few as seven sites with non-synonymous mutations, four of which had rare mutations

while one was among the five most polymorphic sites. A well-conserved DNA binding

domain emphasizes the importance of genes that are regulated by PmrAB, and therefore, it

cannot afford many mutations in this region.

One hundred fifty sites with amino acid substitutions in the PmrB protein sequence were

found in our study, of which, 64 sites had rare mutations, each occurring in ≤0.1% of the

genomes analysed (**Table 3**). Eighteen of the sites were highly polymorphic (**Table 3 &**

Figure 2, middle panel). Most of these belong to the two trans-membrane regions and the

intracellular domain connecting them. The HATPase_c domain, which binds the ATP moiety

required for auto-phosphorylation of the sensor kinase, is the most conserved domain. In

particular, with the exception of a few rare mutations, the ATP binding domain, Mg^{2+} binding

domain and the G-X-G motif were well conserved (**Figure 2, upper & middle panel**). The

Mg^{2+} metal cofactor and the G-X-G motif line the ATP binding pocket and are therefore

crucial for the function of PmrB. Clearly, mutations in these sites can severely compromise

its function.

Most of the amino acid substitutions previously reported in PmrAB in isolates of *A.*

baumannii that are resistant to colistin were found to be at non-polymorphic sites in our

analysis. To date, four sites in *pmrA* and 26 sites in *pmrB* have been described as having non-

synonymous mutations in the isolates resistant to colistin (**Supplementary Table S1**). Only

one of the four resulting amino acid substitutions in PmrA and only three of the 26 in PmrB

belong to polymorphic sites. In PmrA, the only substitution (S119T) at a polymorphic site,

which has been shown to correlate with colistin resistance, occurs in the region that connects

the domain of the signal receptor to the DNA binding domain (**Figure 1, top & middle**

panel). In the case of PmrB, two of the three polymorphic sites in PmrB of colistin-resistant

isolates have frequent substitutions A142V and P170Q; both sites fall into the intracellular

domain of the protein. P360Q mutation occurs in the third polymorphic site, which lies in the

ATPase domain of PmrB (**Figure 2, top & middle panel, Supplementary table S1**). Since

the amino acid substitutions previously described in colistin resistant isolates of *A. baumannii*

are sporadic observations, we understand that both PmrA and PmrB are constrained when

accommodating non-synonymous SNPs. Therefore colistin resistance has not been an

emerging phenomenon in the case of *A. baumannii*, unlike resistance to other antibiotics. We

therefore examined the selection pressure at each amino acid site of the TCS, to see if there is

negative selection acting on them, which could be the cause of the underlying mutation

constraints.

Both PmrA and PmrB are subject to negative selection pressure

To estimate the strength of natural selection pressure acting on each amino acid site in PmrA

and PmrB, we performed codon based selection analysis. We observed significant negative

selection (also known as 'purifying selection') all through both the protein sequences. In

PmrA, 43 sites out of 224 are subjected to a strong negative selection pressure. As a result,

these sites and the regions around them remain conserved (Figure 1, bottom panel).

Functionally important sites, both in the signal receiver domain and in the DNA binding

domain, exhibit a much more negative selection pressure than the rest of the sequence. While

no signs of positive selection were found in PmrA, sites with high levels of polymorphism

were found to be under neutral selection instead. Three of the four mutated sites of PmrA

(M12K/M12I, P102H, S119T and L206P) that are reported in colistin-resistant isolates of *A.*

baumannii belong to these highly polymorphic regions, which are under neutral selection

(**Supplementary Table S1 & Figure 1, middle panel**).

Similarly, 52 out of 444 sites are under significant negative selection in PmrB (Table 3 &

Figure 2, bottom panel). Sites under negative selection were well distributed throughout the

protein sequence. As in the case of PmrA, these sites and regions around them are fairly

conserved in PmrB. In particular, the extracellular region, which spans the functional sites of

the HATPase_c, HisKA and HAMP domains, has far fewer mutations than the rest of the

molecule, due to the presence of the majority of the sites under negative selection therein

(Figure 2, top & middle panel). Notably, though most of these sites are under purifying

selection, the functional domains managed to acquire amino acid substitutions (Figure 2,

middle & bottom panel). This can explain the loss of fitness associated with colistin

resistance in previous reports. As many as 23 out of the 26 amino acid substitutions in PmrB

that occur in colistin-resistant isolates fall in functional domains (**Supplementary Table S1**

& Figure 2, top panel). However, these mutations occur mainly on sites that are under

neutral selection (**Figure 3A**), each of them being delimited by the sites under negative

selection in the functional domains (**Figure 2, top & bottom panels**). However, there exists

a site at 153 of PmrB that is under significant positive selection (**Table 3 & Figure 3B**).

The SLAC method is equivalent to the site model of the equally well accepted program

CodeML of the PAML package, but both employ different sets of procedures and algorithms

(Yang, 2007). To examine the consistency of the obtained results, we performed the same

selection analysis for PmrA and PmrB with CodeML. CodeML produced similar results to

that we obtained with SLAC of HyPhy; it did not find any sign of significant positive

selection in any of the sites of PmrA and PmrB (**Supplementary file S2**). This increases the

reliability of the study and reinforces our results on the lack of adaptive selection on PmrAB.

Taken together, mutations in PmrAB TCS that are held responsible for colistin resistance in

A. baumannii are neither adaptive nor polymorphic (Figure 3A). Rarher, the PmrAB TCS is

under strong purifying selection to sustain colistin resistance in the long term. Therefore, it is

plausible to believe that resistance to colistin, when occurred due to mutations in PmrAB, is

not disseminated owing to the underlying purifying selection that causes the loss of fitness.

Selection analysis of gyrA of E. coli and S. enterica was able to detect signatures of

adaptive evolution that validates our approach

To validate this approach of selection analysis and increase reliability of the results, we

employed the same methodology to detect positively selected sites in well-known antibiotic

targets that cause antibiotic resistance. We considered DNA gyrase A (*gyrA*) to be the most

appropriate for this purpose, as there is abundant of literature that share common findings

about mutations in this gene in multiple organisms that lead to quinolone resistance.

Mutations at Ser-83 and Asp-87 in GyrA are the most frequently reported sites to be

responsible for quinolone resistance in Enteric bacteria (Domínguez et al., 2002; Everett et

al., 1996; Lindgren et al., 2003; Vila et al., 2001, 1994). Therefore, our results of selection

analysis can be qualified as valid if these two sites are detected under the same selection

analysis framework applied to *pmrAB*. Interestingly, selection analysis of *gyrA* successfully

detected these two sites (Ser-83 and Asp-87) to be under adaptive evolution in both *E. coli* as

well as *S. enterica* (**Figure 3B & Supplementary file S2**). This not only substantiated the

reliability of the methodology, but also validated our results obtained for *pmrAB*. In addition,

this also provided evidences that adaptive evolution had an important role to play behind the

emergence of quinolone resistance in *E. coli* and *S. enterica*, while it has little role to play in

colistin resistance in *A. baumannii*.

Discussion

The emergence and spread of multidrug-resistant ESKAPE group of pathogens including *A.*

baumannii have prompted many health professionals to assume that we are on the verge of a

post-antibiotic era. Colistin and to some extent, tigecycline appear to be the only treatment

options for treating infections caused by multidrug-resistant *A. baumannii*. In addition, the

notable efficacy of colistin against tigecycline-resistant *A. baumannii* advocates colistin as

the last option against the organism. However, reports of colistin resistance in *A. baumannii*

have raised unprecedented concerns, as it is thought that resistance to colistin may become

widespread in the future if not used judiciously. Contrary to this belief, we have shown in this

work that resistance to colistin may not become a general phenomenon and these concerns

are therefore unwarranted. Similar opinions were also put forwarded by Lo´pez-Rojas *et al.*

based on the observed reduced fitness and reduced virulence of experimentally induced

colistin-resistant *A. baumannii* isolates (Lo´pez-Rojas et al., 2011). However, they also

cautioned that, though the synonymous mutations are initially not adaptive, compensatory

mutations may attenuate the reduced fitness. In contrast, using selection analysis, our

investigation provided more direct evidence that mutations that cause colistin resistance are

neither adaptive nor polymorphic and therefore, may not take over the global population.

In *A. baumannii*, resistance to colistin occurs in two mechanisms: enzymatic modification of

lipid A moieties of the bacterial cell wall, either by the addition of phosphoethanolamine or

galactosamine, or hyperacylation, and complete loss of cell wall lipo-polysaccharide (LPS)

due to inactivation of lipid A biosynthesis (Beceiro et al., 2011; Boll et al., 2015; Henry et al.,

2011; Moffatt et al., 2011, 2010; Pelletier et al., 2013). Colistin resistance by both

mechanisms is the result of deletions and/or substitutions in the PmrAB two-component

system (Adams et al., 2009; Arroyo et al., 2011; Beceiro et al., 2011). Resistance to colistin

due to mutations in PmrAB is the most common mode of colistin resistance.

PmrAB mutation analysis, in conjunction with domain analysis suggests that the signal

receptor domain and the DNA binding domain, as well as the functional sites therein are

ideally conserved in PmrA. This indicates that PmrA transduces a very specific signal, input

from PmrB and in turn, regulates a limited and non-degenerate set of genes. On the other

hand, the transmembrane domains as well as the intracellular domain of PmrB are highly

variable. Other domains such as the kinase and ATP-binding domain are comparatively

conserved and contain more sites with purifying selection. Since there is only one

intracellular domain delimited by transmembrane α-helices, this domain must be recruiting

the response regulator(s). Since this domain is variable, we can state that it recruits more than

one response regulators and/or transcription factors, resulting in cross-talks between parallel

signal transduction pathways, one of which is the cognate PmrA-mediated signalling. More

detailed investigations at the molecular level are needed to corroborate this hypothesis.

In this study, we collected 3113 draft genomes from the RefSeq database to evaluate the

degree of natural selection acting on each site of PmrAB two-component system. Initially, the

study considered *pmrAB* sequences only related to colistin resistant strains. This comprise of

44 *pmrA* and 39 *pmrB* sequences that were collected from the whole genomes of colistin

resistant strains as well as from the full length coding sequences associated with colistin

resistance that appear in the literature. Selection analysis with this dataset showed just one

site with purifying selection and no adaptive selection in PmrA. Similarly, it showed neither

positive nor negative selection in PmrB (**Supplementary file S2**). However, when all the

pmrAB sequences from the 3113 genomes were considered, it was found that the PmrAB

TCS is under strong purifying selection. This dramatic change in the results can be attributed

to the homogeneity of the initial sequence data that contains sequences associated with only

colistin resistant strains. In cases where the sequences belong to a homogenous population

exposed to similar environmental conditions, most of the mutations are transient mutations,

which underestimates any real purifying as well as adaptive selection (Kryazhimskiy &

Plotkin, 2008). A similar scenario exists when the strains undergo convergent and parallel

evolution resulting from colistin exposure (Crandall et al., 1999). The larger dataset allowed

the inclusion of genomes reported worldwide over a wide range of time scale that ensures a

heterogeneous set of samples/populations for analysis.

To evaluate long term emergence of colistin resistance, we need to examine the scenario

post-exposure to colistin. In addition, if any site is under adaptive selection, selection analysis

should identify signatures of adaptive selection from a sufficiently large dataset, even in the

absence of colistin exposure. We could then qualify these mutations are stable enough to

sustain long term resistance to colistin. Most of the amino acid substitutions in PmrAB

reported to date are either from longitudinal isolates of patients or induced in laboratory

conditions. Reports of clinical isolates bearing colistin resistance are scant. In addition, the

colistin exposure to *A. baumannii* lasts as long as the treatment of the patient, and the

resistance (if arises) reverts back to susceptible phenotype on withdrawal of colistin. (Adams

et al., 2009; Cheah et al., 2016; Snitkin et al., 2013). Therefore, it is plausible to believe that

mutations that cause colistin resistance are transient mutations owing to the short exposure to

the antibiotic as clinicians prefer to give short term colistin therapy due to its association with

nephrotoxicity. Further, with no evidence of compensatory mutations linked to colistin

resistance identified till date, which strengthens our supposition that colistin resistant

mutations may never get fixed in the global population of *A. baumannii* (Lesho et al., 2013;

Lo´pez-Rojas et al., 2011; Rolain et al., 2011). This observation may not apply to the

populations in micro-environments, such as a laboratory cultures.

Apparently, resistance to colistin is achieved by a cost of fitness. Studies in the past have

shown reduced fitness in colistin resistant isolates, both in terms of growth rate under

laboratory conditions and reduced virulence (Beceiro et al., 2014; Lo´pez-Rojas et al., 2011;

López-Rojas et al., 2013). In addition, to compensate for the loss/modification of the LPS, the

transcriptome and the corresponding proteome are largely shifted towards expression of

genes responsible for membrane integrity and biogenesis (Boll et al., 2016; Cheah et al.,

2016; Henry et al., 2011). A recent work confirms that surface lipoproteins are overexpressed

and localized profusely on the cell surface, which could compensate for the loss of membrane

integrity. These studies highlight the excessive cost of colistin resistance, and therefore,

mutations in PmrAB may be deleterious and subject to strong purifying selection.

A significant number of sites in both PmrA and PmrB are under purifying selection. In

addition, we also identified mutation hotspots, sites that are exceptionally polymorphic.

Interestingly, sites with mutations that cause colistin resistance are not polymorphic sites.

Rather, colistin resistance mutations are largely under neutral selection. In addition, a few of

colistin resistance mutations are also under purifying selection (**Figure 3A & B**). We suggest

that these conditions maintain the incidence of colistin resistance under check. Further, loss

of fitness due to colistin resistance resulting from the combined effects of neutral colistin

resistance mutations and the purifying selection acting on the overall protein sequences

ensure that the colistin resistance remains uncommon. The reasons for this loss of fitness

include physiological costs in terms of slow growth rate, loss of membrane integrity and its

compensation, and reduced virulence. In addition to this, because of the high selection

pressure exerted by the host's immune system and the presence of drugs, the short exposure

of the bacterium to colistin in the host, it is highly unlikely that random genetic drift can fix

these mutations. These observations explain us why reports of colistin-resistant isolates of *A.*

baumannii have been sporadic and they might remain so. In the near future, *A. baumannii*

may not be able to emerge as a colistin-resistant organism, unless other mechanisms such as

plasmid-mediated (*e. g.*, *mcr*-1) resistance emerge.

The other mechanism of development of Colistin resistance is due to mutations in *lpxACD* of

A. baumannii. However, unlike mutations in *pmrAB*, where virtually all mutations that cause

Colistin resistance are due to substitutions, mutations reported in *lpxACD* are due to large

indels, non-sense mutations and insertion sequence-mediated gene disruptions that cause

complete loss of cell wall lipopolysaccharide (Carretero-Ledesma et al., 2018; Girardello et

al., 2017; Moffatt et al., 2010). There is no direct method to analyse signatures of selection

pressure from such mutations. However, it has already been reported through growth curve

and virulence assays that fitness costs associated with *lpx* mutations are even higher than

those associated with *pmr* mutations (Beceiro et al., 2014) and therefore, *lpxACD* mutants are

unsustainable in the long run.

One site at 153 of PmrB appears to be under adaptive selection. This site has $dN - dS$ value of

9.48851 ($p = 0.013$). Surprisingly, this site has never been reported to be mutated in colistin

resistant strains of *A. baumannii*. This site belongs to one of the transmembrane domains of

PmrB. The fact that it has so far never caused colistin resistance indicates that the positive

selection gain may not overcome the cost of colistin resistance. Since the site belongs to a

transmembrane domain, it is also possible that the mutations that occur at this site might

serve an advantage in terms of structural stability, rather than having a functional advantage.

Further, studies employing site directed mutagenesis experiments could throw additional

information about this site.

The study attempted to assert the reliability of the methodology by applying it to *gyrA* on the

basis of whether it can identify sites that are expected to be under adaptive selection in

multiple organisms. The computational method of selection analysis has precisely detected

the sites under adaptive evolution in GyrA, an observation which is supported by a wealth of

previous literature about quinolone resistance in bacteria. In case of *E. coli*, resistance to

quinolones requires multiple mutations in different genes including *gyrA* to achieve a

clinically relevant level. The requirement for multiple mutations suggests that there is strong

selection for resistance mutations invariably associated with unusually high mutation rates

occurring due to antibiotic exposure. Quinolones are known to interact with the DNA-GyrA

complex, rather than with the enzyme alone. One study correlated that *gyrA* mutations lead to

reduction of drug binding to the protein-DNA complex to 60-fold less than that of wild-type

GyrA (Willmott & Maxwell, 1993). In this respect, identification of the sites that are most

pronounced to be associated with quinolone resistance by adaptive selection analysis

provides sufficient grounds to emphasize the power of the methodology to detect adaptive

evolution in protein coding sequences.

Conclusion

The anticipation and management of natural selection is an important aspect of the fight

against multidrug resistance (Lesho et al., 2013). This was the central theme of this work in

the context of the degree of natural selection acting on PmrAB TCS, which has been

implicated in resistance to colistin. We showed that in case of resistance to colistin, natural

selection plays only a minor role, if at all, and therefore, continuing use of colistin could still

be a safe option. Therefore, the concerns raised by healthcare professionals regarding rapid

emergence of colistin resistance and about continuing the usage of colistin for the treatment

against *A. baumannii* infections are unwarranted.

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None to declare.

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Figure Legends

Figure 1. Mutation analysis of PmrA of *A. baumannii*.

Top panel – The domain analysis (predicted by HMMER)(Finn et al., 2011). The secondary structure
was predicted by Phyre2 web server (Kelly et al., 2015). The black triangles show functional sites of
the protein (predicted by the Conserved Domain Database) (Marchler-Bauer et al., 2011). A-Active
site, P-Phosphorylation site, D-Dimerization interface, R-Intermolecular recognition site. Barrels and
arrows represent α-helices and β-sheets, respectively. Numbers in brackets denote the start-end
positions of the corresponding domains.

Middle panel – Positions and numbers of non-synonymous mutations across all the genomes under
the analysis.

Bottom panel – Selection along the protein sequence expressed in terms of normalized $dN - dS$
(calculated by Datamonkey web server) (Kosakovsky Pond & Frost, 2005). Asterisks indicate sites
under negative selection with $p \leq 0.05$. Triangles show the sites identified in colistin resistant isolates
in previous literatures.

This figure appears in colour in the online version of *JAC* and in black and white in the print version
of *JAC*.

Figure 2. Mutation analysis of PmrB of *A. baumannii*.

Top panel – The domain analysis (predicted by HMMER)(Finn et al., 2011). The secondary structure
was predicted by Phyre2 server and trans-membrane (yellow barrels) by TMHMM (Kelly et al., 2015;
Sonnhammer et al., 1998). The black triangles show functional sites of the protein (predicted by the
Conserved Domain Database) (Marchler-Bauer et al., 2011). AB-ATP binding site, M-Mg^{2+} binding
site, G-GXG motif. Barrels and arrows represent α-helices and β-sheets, respectively. Yellow
coloured regions of the α-helices denote transmembrane domains. Numbers in brackets denote the
start-end positions of the corresponding domains.

Middle panel – Positions and numbers of non-synonymous mutations across all the genomes under
the analysis.

Bottom panel – Selection along the protein sequence in terms of normalized $dN - dS$ (calculated by
Datamonkey web server) (Kosakovsky Pond & Frost, 2005). Asterisks indicate sites under negative
selection with $p \leq 0.05$, green asterisk representing a site with positive selection. Triangles show the
sites identified in colistin resistant isolates in previous literatures.

This figure appears in colour in the online version of *JAC* and in black and white in the print version
of *JAC*.

Figure 3. A) Venn diagram depicting the amino acid substitutions resulting from non-
synonymous mutations in *pmrA* and *pmrB*, which are responsible for resistance to colistin in *A.*
baumannii are under neutral selection, most of which are non-polymorphic sites. Numbers in each set
indicate the number of sites falling under the corresponding category. **B)** Volcano plot of the $dN - dS$
data for *pmrAB* and *gyrA* plotted against $-Log_{10}$ of the *p*-value. The sites under adaptive selection in
PmrB and GyrA have been indicated.

This figure appears in colour in the online version of *JAC* and in black and white in the print version
of *JAC*.

Table 1. Molecular characters and other clinical details of isolates PKAB15 and PKAB19

Resistant Determinants

	bla_{IMP-1}	bla_{OXA-23}	bla_{OXA-51}	bla_{OXA-58}	bla_{NDM-1}	bla_{PER-1}	bla_{ADC}	adeB	aac(3)-I	aac(6)-Ib	aph(3)-I	ant(3)-I	rmtC	armA
PKAB15	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
PKAB19	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-

Biofilm production and Antimicrobial susceptibility [a]

	MEM (mg/L)	CAZ (mg/L)	CRO (mg/L)	AMK (mg/L)	GEN (mg/L)	TOB (mg/L)	TGC (mg/L)	CST (mg/L)	Biofilm[b]
PKAB15	>256(R)	>256(R)	>256(R)	>256(R)	>256(R)	>256(R)	0.75(S)	3(R)	+
PKAB19	32(R)	32(R)	>256(R)	8(S)	256(R)	<2(S)	0.38(S)	3(R)	++

[a]R – Resistant, I – Intermediate, S – Sensitive, according to EUCAST Guidelines(EUCAST, 2017)
[b]+ – Weakly positive ($OD_{Control} < OD < 2xOD_{Control}$), ++ – Strongly positive ($OD > 3xOD_{Control}$)
MEM – Meropenem, CAZ – Ceftazidime, CRO – Ceftriaxone, AMK – Amikacin, GEN – Gentamicin, TOB – Tobramycin, TGC – Tigecyclin, CST – Colistin

Nucleotide sequence accession numbers

Nucleotide sequences of *pmrAB* from *Acinetobacter baumannii* strains PKAB19 and PKAB15 have been deposited in GenBank under accession numbers MH925082 and MH925083, respectively.

 Table 2. Codon-wise mutation and selection analysis and the corresponding *p*-values for

527   *pmrA*. Only values for codons with non-zero normalized $dN - dS$ values are shown. Sites

528   reported to be associated with colistin resistant strains are shown in bold. *p*-values >0.05 are

529   shaded red, <0.05 shaded green, intermediate color is yellow. Normalized $dN - dS$ values >0

530   are shaded red, <0 shaded green, intermediate color is yellow.

Codon	*p*-value	Normalized *dN-dS*	#Non-synonymous mutations
3	0.264358	1.58451	2
4	0.296151	-3.71198	0
5	0.539133	-2.125	0
6	0.00820638	2.208	4
8	**0.450377**	**3.08981**	**2**
9	0.264775	-4.15186	0
10	0.459423	2.99064	6
12	**0.00515319**	**3.30361**	**7**
14	0.259259	-4.94689	1
15	0.453651	-2.84841	3
16	0.588192	3.67763	18
17	0.037037	-9.89377	0
18	0.0366219	-20.2495	88
19	0.037037	-9.89377	0
20	0.538401	2.4815	3
21	0.126661	-7.37897	0
25	0.337556	-4.42948	0
27	0.261537	-4.38016	0
29	0.0676334	-8.80995	0
31	0.555372	-1.65067	1
33	0.264775	-4.15186	0
34	0.333333	-3.29792	0
35	0.55381	-2.12147	0
36	0.459444	-2.65666	2
37	0.333333	-3.29792	0
38	0.174609	-6.07459	0
39	0.0123457	-13.1917	0
40	0.0394633	-13.1752	0
41	0.291797	-4.25337	0
42	0.111111	-8.24481	1
43	0.266116	-4.38016	0
44	0.51388	3.15339	101
45	0.0694484	-8.84626	0
46	0.264775	-4.15186	0
48	0.188558	-6.38329	0
51	0.0342525	-14.541	2
52	0.0185623	-12.4556	0
53	0.168915	-6.35978	0
54	**0.00115942**	**-24.6886**	**1**
55	0.314606	-4.02386	0
56	0.0123457	-13.1917	0
59	0.264775	-4.15186	0
60	0.0123457	-13.1917	0

Codon	*p*-value	Normalized *dN-dS*	#Non-synonymous mutations
62	0.119672	-10.7783	1
63	0.333333	-3.29792	0
64	0.0150859	-14.9871	0
66	0.0397356	-13.145	0
67	0.00264645	-18.0118	0
68	0.111111	-6.59585	0
70	0.498667	3.29154	8
71	0.333333	-3.29792	0
72	0.333333	-3.29792	0
73	0.037037	-9.89377	0
74	0.00411523	-16.4896	0
75	0.0123457	-13.1917	0
76	0.303064	-4.28582	0
77	0.305164	-3.60236	0
78	0.305164	-3.60236	0
79	0.338828	-3.29792	0
80	0.0009653	-24.7344	5
81	0.481296	-2.97962	0
82	0.708465	0.342856	10
83	0.33968	-4.4018	0
84	0.172438	-6.30536	0
85	0.337556	-4.42948	0
86	0.173193	-6.80852	3
88	0.037037	-9.89377	0
90	0.0123457	-13.1917	0
91	0.166357	-6.41356	0
92	0.0701058	-8.30372	0
93	0.796512	3.35393	26
94	0.112114	-6.59585	0
97	0.264775	-4.15186	0
98	0.284264	-4.15186	0
99	0.546441	-2.13659	0
100	0.305164	-3.60236	0
101	0.263682	-4.42059	0
102	**0.0123457**	**-13.1917**	**0**
103	0.284264	-4.15186	0
104	0.00478642	-17.4213	0
105	0.265431	1.49679	1
107	0.00474956	-17.455	0
108	0.161317	-6.4	0
109	0.037037	-9.89377	0
110	0.0178326	-14.8407	1
111	0.406641	-3.30926	3
112	0.291608	-3.76981	0
113	0.0701058	-8.30372	0
114	5.65E-06	-36.2772	0
115	0.568532	-2.02235	0
116	0.109719	-7.8853	0
117	0.333333	-3.29792	0
118	0.333198	1.64879	1
119	**0.609372**	**4.51149**	**199**
120	0.00463535	-16.4896	0
122	0.260794	-4.39264	0
123	0.333333	-3.29792	0
124	0.33968	-4.4018	0

Codon	p-value	Normalized dN-dS	#Non-synonymous mutations
125	0.552136	3.28531	3
126	0.0123457	-13.1917	0
127	0.119708	-9.46518	27
128	0.306009	1.90736	25
129	0.458626	3.0322	26
130	0.114213	-8.84854	0
131	0.352489	-3.71363	0
132	0.17445	-6.26275	0
133	0.811993	2.6014	63
134	0.173347	-6.80603	1
135	0.00411523	-16.4896	0
136	0.265113	1.49589	1
137	0.597828	-1.8392	0
139	0.550199	-2.14243	0
141	0.333195	1.64862	1
142	0.258655	-4.42898	0
143	0.116565	-8.75883	0
144	0.00130132	-20.7593	0
146	0.00411523	-16.4896	0
147	0.000152416	-26.3834	0
148	0.0701058	-8.30372	0
149	0.263321	-4.42665	0
150	0.00147606	-19.7875	0
151	0.33968	-4.4018	0
152	0.333333	-3.29792	0
155	0.0296732	-12.4095	0
156	0.120704	-6.59585	0
158	0.333198	1.64879	1
159	0.00448563	-17.7063	0
161	0.111111	-6.59585	0
162	0.305164	-3.60236	0
163	0.159045	-6.34428	0
165	0.260128	-4.93241	1
166	0.649555	-0.85846	0
168	0.0841187	-9.40117	103
169	0.0185623	-12.4556	0
173	0.517064	-2.02165	5
174	0.264775	-4.15186	0
175	0.33606	-3.29792	0
177	0.037037	-9.89377	0
178	0.0701058	-8.30372	0
179	0.45178	-2.74555	0
180	0.258614	1.54525	3
185	0.264775	-4.15186	0
186	0.0701058	-8.30372	0
190	0.111111	-6.59585	0
191	0.037037	-9.89377	0
192	0.264775	-4.15186	0
193	0.0701058	-8.30372	0
194	0.00137174	-19.7875	0
196	0.259123	-4.42098	0
199	0.000152416	-26.3834	0
200	0.0701058	-8.30372	0
201	0.264775	-4.15186	0
202	0.0984731	-8.25712	0

Codon	p-value	Normalized dN-dS	#Non-synonymous mutations
203	0.091224	-7.77091	0
204	0.037037	-9.89377	0
205	0.266116	-4.38016	0
206	**0.0330216**	**-13.4333**	**1**
207	0.333333	-3.29792	0
209	0.0701058	-8.30372	0
211	1.39E-11	-75.919	0
212	0.505965	-2.94466	0
213	0.00411523	-16.4896	0
214	0.305164	-3.60236	0
215	0.505964	-2.94466	0
217	0.333102	-3.86639	0
218	0.111111	-6.59585	0
219	0.0808058	-8.30372	0
220	0.333165	1.64855	1
221	0.295666	-4.26472	0
222	0.555472	-1.65007	2
223	0.337557	-4.42948	0
224	0.354016	-3.29792	0

533 **Table 3**. Codon-wise mutation and selection analysis and the corresponding *p*-values for

534 *pmrB*. Only values for codons with non-zero normalized $dN - dS$ values are shown. Sites

535 reported to be associated with colistin resistant strains are shown in bold. *p*-values >0.05 are

536 shaded red, <0.05 shaded green, intermediate color is yellow. Normalized $dN - dS$ values >0

537 are shaded red, <0 shaded green, intermediate color is yellow.

Codon	*p*-value	Normalized dN-dS	#Non-synonymous mutations
5	0.75505	0.02736	5
6	0.23262	0.86962	1
8	0.00182	-14.404	0
9	0.58075	-1.0608	0
13	**0.55552**	**1.84816**	**4**
14	**0.74388**	**3.18365**	**6**
16	0.24758	0.81882	2
17	**0.67942**	**-0.0326**	**5**
19	0.08941	-4.1207	0
21	0.33333	0.92411	8
23	0.27049	-2.2776	0
25	0.75816	3.51406	57
27	0.25223	0.82388	3
29	0.07326	-4.9802	0
30	0.05913	-5.4891	0
31	0.80176	3.69314	8
33	0.58791	-0.7609	2
34	0.28581	-2.8642	0
36	0.33333	-1.8482	0
37	0.24741	-2.4901	0
40	0.3244	-2.1937	0
42	0.33333	-1.8482	0
43	0.28627	1.14615	4
45	0.59629	0.97052	15
46	0.27067	-2.4901	0
47	0.5053	-1.331	0
48	0.33333	-1.8482	0
49	0.22739	-2.8632	0
50	0.02931	-6.6678	0
51	0.33333	-1.8482	0
53	0.23685	-2.7488	0
54	0.15783	-4.1439	35
55	0.25926	-2.7723	2
56	0.5046	-1.3278	0
58	0.03704	-5.5447	0
60	0.236	-4.0995	2
61	0.57394	2.45633	4
62	0.56844	2.64003	7
63	7.39E-13	-49.802	0
64	**0.67964**	**3.27573**	**20**
65	0.44231	-1.6114	28
67	0.41978	-0.0866	28
69	0.27067	-2.4901	0

Codon	p-value	Normalized dN-dS	#Non-synonymous mutations
70	0.24741	-2.4901	0
74	0.19416	-3.1985	0
76	0.1748	-4.2132	35
78	1.37E-08	-30.905	0
79	0.0036	2.24631	2
80	**0.33333**	**-1.8482**	**0**
82	0.24247	-2.7524	0
83	0.06121	-4.9802	0
84	0.29742	-2.7524	0
85	0.03704	-5.5447	0
86	0.24741	0.81861	28
87	**0.50023**	**-1.3073**	**0**
88	0.26749	-2.7265	2
89	0.43388	-1.6695	3
91	0.45724	-1.5569	0
92	0.24741	-2.4901	0
93	0.74348	-0.0338	28
94	0.07402	-6.2937	2
96	0.11111	-3.6965	0
99	0.82493	1.76685	35
101	0.33333	-1.8482	0
102	0.12153	-3.6965	0
103	0.06121	-4.9802	0
104	0.27067	-2.4901	0
105	0.00051	-12.938	0
106	0.24743	0.81867	1
109	0.5373	1.81139	7
110	0.72533	0.40327	35
111	0.11122	-3.6965	0
112	0.3285	1.52432	35
113	0.32791	0.91666	7
114	0.08543	-4.5292	0
115	0.11109	-4.621	2
116	**0.27065**	**0.92403**	**1**
118	0.25475	-2.6568	0
119	0.40741	-1.8482	4
120	0.25007	-2.6131	0
121	**0.24438**	**-2.7308**	**0**
122	0.24741	-2.4901	0
123	0.01983	-7.4702	0
124	0.34697	-3.1326	2
126	0.30008	1.16939	1
127	0.5483	-0.9621	7
128	8.59E-07	-24.901	0
129	0.29979	-2.7306	0
131	0.05609	-5.4979	0
132	0.04702	-7.673	8
133	0.55556	-0.9241	4
134	**0.33321**	**0.92395**	**2**
135	0.22887	-2.8447	0
137	0.5741	-0.8505	2
138	0.97399	5.54467	375
140	0.23685	-2.7488	0
141	0.33331	0.92408	2
143	0.03704	-5.5447	0

Codon	*p*-value	Normalized *dN-dS*	#Non-synonymous mutations
144	0.15348	-4.159	1
145	**0.00882**	**2.47068**	**23**
146	0.06121	-4.9802	0
148	0.00015	-14.786	0
150	0.5046	-1.3278	0
152	0.29902	-2.0603	0
153	0.01367	9.48851	11
154	0.25926	-2.7723	3
155	0.24759	0.8188	4
156	0.03704	-5.5447	0
157	0.14703	-4.19	0
159	0.00013	-17.562	1
160	0.50737	-1.3069	14
161	0.25926	-2.7723	1
162	0.55556	-0.9241	5
163	0.75834	3.51471	7
164	0.65538	2.63617	9
165	0.5529	-0.9379	27
166	0.27169	-2.6968	3
167	0.11111	-3.6965	0
168	0.51381	-1.2995	0
169	0.2346	-2.8447	0
170	**0.91393**	**2.80089**	**39**
171	0.01864	-9.0238	0
172	0.24741	-2.4901	0
173	0.57387	-0.852	8
176	0.00375	-9.9603	0
177	0.05605	-5.5	0
178	0.13718	-3.8698	0
179	0.35446	-2.7808	34
180	0.54467	-1.1199	7
181	0.21056	-3.6934	5
182	0.06121	-4.9802	0
183	**0.11419**	**-3.6965**	**0**
184	**0.22729**	**-2.8644**	**0**
185	0.13346	-4.8381	1
186	0.14473	-4.0495	0
187	2.85E-06	-28.648	4
188	0.11111	-3.6965	0
190	**0.22729**	**-2.8644**	**0**
191	0.03704	-5.5447	0
192	**0.78192**	**1.79977**	**7**
194	**0.27072**	**0.92411**	**1**
197	0.23685	-2.7488	0
198	0.13218	-3.4066	0
199	0.2602	-2.6265	0
200	0.33333	-1.8482	0
201	0.11111	-3.6965	0
203	0.06121	-4.9802	0
206	0.00093	-12.45	0
207	0.5736	-0.853	1
208	**0.67468**	**0.21796**	**21**
209	0.24741	-2.4901	0
210	0.23891	0.8543	27
211	1.29E-06	-23.529	0

Codon	*p*-value	Normalized *dN-dS*	#Non-synonymous mutations
212	0.02674	-6.181	0
214	0.23391	-2.8531	0
215	6.27E-07	-24.027	0
217	0.24741	-2.4901	0
218	0.40536	-2.0004	1
220	0.24279	-2.7488	0
221	0.28777	-2.8447	0
222	0.15337	-4.1615	1
223	0.29864	-2.0629	0
224	0.11111	-3.6965	0
226	**0.86831**	**1.84822**	**21**
229	0.53891	-1.1768	2
230	0.00046	-14.352	0
231	0.483	-1.7181	1
232	**0.42867**	**-1.8548**	**19**
233	**0.80247**	**3.69645**	**15**
234	**0.11111**	**-3.6965**	**0**
235	**0.80225**	**0.92229**	**6**
236	0.25926	-2.7723	3
237	0.03526	-6.2927	0
238	0.00023	-14.941	0
239	0.75517	2.72389	4
240	0.2854	1.14537	3
241	0.11111	-3.6965	0
242	0.05965	-5.465	0
243	0.29898	0.87883	2
244	0.25012	-2.6126	0
245	0.55144	-0.985	7
246	0.00023	-14.941	0
247	0.03024	-9.7957	1
248	0.05025	-6.6009	2
249	0.00137	-11.089	0
250	0.05688	-5.4596	0
251	0.44218	1.7085	5
252	0.22712	-2.8665	0
253	0.59374	-0.7965	4
254	0.03541	-6.2853	0
256	**0.24741**	**-2.4901**	**0**
257	0.50503	-1.3142	4
258	0.24741	-2.4901	0
259	0.2374	-2.8111	0
260	0.55929	-0.9126	1
261	0.50023	-1.3073	0
262	**0.04518**	**-6.4739**	**1**
263	**0.86792**	**4.61876**	**7**
265	0.30006	-2.7282	0
266	0.15337	-4.1615	1
267	0.80615	1.23405	102
269	0.03704	-5.5447	0
270	0.51364	2.34224	9
271	0.55531	1.84772	6
272	**0.50568**	**-1.3328**	**0**
273	0.5391	-0.9241	6
274	0.67737	0.17619	7
275	0.00686	-10.165	1

Codon	p-value	Normalized dN-dS	#Non-synonymous mutations
277	0.28777	-2.8447	0
279	0.11111	-3.6965	0
280	0.33333	0.92411	7
282	0.06121	-4.9802	0
283	0.05268	0.65033	7
284	0.69625	-0.0465	8
285	0.01324	-8.2554	0
286	0.03704	-5.5447	0
287	0.11111	-3.6965	0
288	0.0025	-12.454	7
289	0.6288	2.772	7
290	0.24741	-2.4901	0
291	0.28816	-2.8408	0
292	0.11121	-4.6185	1
294	0.25765	-3.3392	3
295	0.33333	-1.8482	0
297	0.25475	-2.6568	0
298	0.24748	0.81869	1
299	0.26088	-2.4901	0
300	0.11111	-3.6965	0
301	0.23981	-3.7899	2
302	0.29971	-2.7314	0
303	0.45781	-1.5103	0
304	0.00015	-14.786	0
305	0.24741	-2.4901	0
306	0.12624	-3.9035	0
307	0.33333	-1.8482	0
308	0.00193	1.2334	2
311	0.22725	-2.865	0
312	0.29902	-2.0603	0
313	0.24741	-2.4901	0
314	0.5046	-1.3278	0
315	**0.21062**	**-3.6929**	**3**
318	0.32788	-2.7169	1
319	0.15334	-4.162	2
320	0.22712	-3.9869	32
321	0.00686	-10.165	1
322	0.03073	-7.3382	28
323	0.22731	-2.8642	0
325	0.24741	-2.4901	0
327	0.00048	-15.303	7
328	0.01195	-8.5438	0
329	0.33333	-1.8482	0
330	0.11111	-3.6965	0
331	0.33333	-1.8482	0
332	0.43366	1.63747	2
333	0.58216	-0.837	3
334	0.29902	-2.0603	0
336	0.24752	0.81872	4
337	0.57377	-0.8527	3
338	0.50539	1.36257	1
341	0.06121	-4.9802	0
342	0.33333	-1.8482	0
343	0.08941	-4.1207	0
344	0.24232	-2.7541	0

Codon	*p*-value	Normalized *dN-dS*	#Non-synonymous mutations
345	0.00537	-9.9603	0
346	0.01783	-8.317	1
347	0.00015	-14.786	0
349	0.19913	-4.3902	7
350	0.33333	-1.8482	0
351	0.0321	-8.5923	7
353	**0.43361**	**-1.6715**	**1**
354	0.29902	-2.0603	0
355	0.36127	-1.8482	0
357	0.46228	-1.5844	7
358	0.01235	-7.3929	0
359	0.45386	-1.5269	7
360	**0.55404**	**1.85946**	**217**
362	0.77995	0.9784	36
363	0.01701	-10.645	35
364	0.03704	-5.5447	0
365	0.26091	0.87901	1
366	0.46786	-1.4329	1
368	0.29902	-2.0603	0
371	0.06121	-4.9802	0
372	0.2592	-2.773	1
373	0.33333	-1.8482	0
374	0.01481	-7.3929	0
375	0.00318	-12.57	0
376	0.00375	-9.9603	0
377	**0.33333**	**-1.8482**	**0**
379	0.24741	0.81861	7
380	0.07326	-4.9802	0
381	0.24741	-2.4901	0
382	0.05423	-5.7317	0
383	0.00137	-11.089	0
384	0.1351	-3.3685	0
385	0.0145	-8.2104	0
386	0.33495	-1.8393	0
387	**0.24743**	**0.81867**	**1**
389	0.01261	-7.3777	0
390	**0.01235**	**-7.3929**	**0**
391	0.00093	-12.45	0
392	0.01514	-7.4702	0
393	0.43363	-1.6714	1
395	0.01325	-8.2534	0
397	0.12189	-3.6965	0
398	0.00023	-14.941	0
399	1.88E-06	-22.179	0
400	0.01645	-7.8731	0
402	0.51847	-1.2809	0
403	**0.04535**	**-7.3997**	**4**
405	0.33333	-1.8482	0
406	0.24741	-2.4901	0
407	0.35538	-1.8041	0
408	0.55546	1.8481	2
411	0.47862	-1.3634	0
412	0.58857	-0.7681	0
414	0.33329	0.92405	1
416	0.25964	-2.6216	0

Codon	p-value	Normalized dN-dS	#Non-synonymous mutations
417	0.33333	-1.8482	0
418	0.60593	-0.6736	1
419	0.24741	-2.4901	0
420	0.16811	-4.2674	7
421	0.24741	-2.4901	0
422	0.50567	-1.3328	0
423	2.45E-06	-24.624	0
424	0.33489	-1.8397	0
425	0.33333	-1.8482	0
426	0.33619	-1.8482	0
428	0.11301	-3.6965	0
429	0.03704	-5.5447	0
430	0.25462	-2.6556	0
431	5.08E-05	-16.634	0
433	0.02621	-8.4657	0
434	0.33333	-1.8482	0
435	0.2346	-2.8447	0
436	0.25206	-2.8409	7
438	0.24743	0.81867	1
439	0.7257	1.20481	7
440	0.57416	-0.8516	63
442	0.11111	-3.6965	0
444	**0.42936**	**-3.1198**	**883**

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Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3