wjpmr, 2025, 11(5), 316-321

SJIF Impact Factor: 6.842

WORLD JOURNAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL AND MEDICAL RESEARCH

www.wjpmr.com

Review Article

ISSN 2455-3301

WJPMR

"ANTIBIOTIC SUSCEPTIBILITY AND RESISTANCE IN BACTERIAL ISOLATES FROM PUS SAMPLES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW"

Ritul Kapoor*[1], Dr. Atul Khajaria[2] and Dr. Raj Kumar[3]

[1]PhD Scholar Microbiology, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh (Punjab).

[2]Director of Allied Health Sciences, Professor, Department of Microbiology, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh (Punjab).

[3]Professor, Department of Microbiology, Genesis Institute of Dental Science and Research, Firozpur (Punjab).

***Corresponding Author: Ritul Kapoor**

PhD Scholar Microbiology, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh (Punjab).

Article Received on 21/03/2025 **Article Revised on 10/04/2025** **Article Accepted on 30/04/2025**

ABSTRACT

Pus samples, often collected from wound infections, abscesses, and surgical sites, are critical in identifying bacterial pathogens and determining appropriate antibiotic treatments. This review explores the antibiotic susceptibility patterns of bacterial isolates from pus samples, focusing on the prevalence of resistant strains, regional variations, and resistance mechanisms observed between 2017 and 2024. Gram-positive bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus* and Gram-negative pathogens like *Escherichia coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* remain the dominant isolates, exhibiting diverse resistance mechanisms, including β-lactamase production, efflux pump activation, and biofilm formation. The findings emphasize the importance of routine antibiotic susceptibility testing, infection control measures, and robust antibiotic stewardship programs to mitigate resistance trends. Understanding these patterns is crucial for guiding empirical treatment, reducing treatment failures, and minimizing healthcare burdens associated with antibiotic-resistant infections.

KEYWORDS: Antibiotic resistance, Pus samples, Bacterial isolates, Antimicrobial susceptibility, Infection control.

INTRODUCTION

Pus, a thick fluid composed of dead white blood cells, cellular debris, and bacteria, is often a hallmark of bacterial infections resulting from wounds, abscesses, surgical sites, or traumatic injuries. These infections can be caused by a variety of bacterial species, including *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, among others. Antibiotic therapy remains the cornerstone of treatment for such infections, but its efficacy is increasingly undermined by the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacterial strains. Antibiotic susceptibility testing (AST) is crucial in guiding clinicians to select the most appropriate antimicrobial therapy, ensuring effective treatment while minimizing the risk of further resistance development. Patterns of antibiotic susceptibility vary across regions, healthcare settings, and bacterial species, making it imperative to monitor and analyze these trends regularly. Understanding these patterns not only helps clinicians make informed decisions about treatment but also aids in formulating infection control policies and antibiotic stewardship programs to combat the rising threat of antimicrobial resistance. This review aims to provide an overview of the antibiotic susceptibility patterns of bacterial isolates from pus samples, shedding light on the dominant bacterial species, their resistance mechanisms, and the most and least effective antibiotics in clinical practice.[1,2]

The Clinical Significance of Pus Infections: Pus formation is a natural immune response to bacterial invasion, typically seen in infections such as abscesses, post-surgical wounds, diabetic foot ulcers, and trauma-related injuries. These infections can vary in severity, ranging from localized skin infections to life-threatening systemic infections like sepsis. The bacterial species responsible for pus formation are diverse and depend on multiple factors, including the site of infection, immune status of the host, and environmental conditions. Gram-positive bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus pyogenes* are common culprits in skin and soft tissue infections, while Gram-negative bacteria like *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* are frequently associated with deeper tissue and surgical site infections. Effective management of these infections depends on early identification of the causative agent and its antibiotic susceptibility profile. Without appropriate antibiotic therapy, these infections can progress, causing prolonged hospitalization, increased healthcare costs, and significant morbidity and mortality.[3]

The Role of Antibiotic Susceptibility Testing (AST) Antibiotic susceptibility testing (AST) is an essential diagnostic tool used to determine the effectiveness of antibiotics against specific bacterial pathogens isolated from clinical samples such as pus. AST methods include the Kirby-Bauer disk diffusion method, minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) determination, and automated systems like VITEK 2. These tests provide clinicians with critical information about whether a bacterial strain is susceptible, intermediate, or resistant to a given antibiotic. This information helps tailor antibiotic therapy to ensure optimal treatment outcomes while reducing unnecessary exposure to broad-spectrum antibiotics. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics have contributed significantly to the rise of antimicrobial resistance, making AST even more essential in modern clinical practice. AST not only supports individual patient care but also contributes to surveillance programs that monitor local and global resistance patterns, aiding in public health planning and intervention.[4,5]

Emergence of Antibiotic Resistance in Pus Isolates One of the greatest challenges in managing bacterial infections from pus samples is the increasing prevalence of antibiotic resistance. Resistance mechanisms such as β-lactamase production, efflux pump activation, biofilm formation, and porin channel mutations enable bacteria to evade the effects of antibiotics. Multidrug-resistant (MDR) pathogens, including Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), Carbapenem-resistant *Klebsiella pneumoniae* (CRKP), and Extended-spectrum β-lactamase (ESBL)-producing *Escherichia coli*, have become major clinical concerns. These pathogens are not only harder to treat but also associated with longer hospital stays, higher medical costs, and increased mortality rates. Factors contributing to resistance include overprescription of antibiotics, lack of adherence to infection control protocols, self-medication, and incomplete antibiotic courses by patients. Surveillance studies analyzing antibiotic susceptibility patterns of bacterial isolates from pus samples play a crucial role in identifying resistance trends and guiding antibiotic stewardship initiatives.[6]

Common Pathogens Isolated from Pus Samples Bacterial isolates from pus samples are diverse and vary depending on geographical location, hospital setting, and patient population. *Staphylococcus aureus* remains one of the most frequently isolated pathogens from pus samples worldwide, known for its virulence factors and ability to develop resistance rapidly. *Escherichia coli*, a Gram-negative bacterium, is commonly associated with post-surgical and abdominal wound infections. *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is another opportunistic pathogen frequently isolated from burn wounds and immunocompromised patients, notorious for its intrinsic resistance mechanisms. *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Proteus mirabilis* are also frequently detected in surgical site infections and diabetic foot ulcers. Each of these pathogens exhibits unique susceptibility and resistance patterns, which are influenced by local antibiotic prescription practices, infection control measures, and healthcare infrastructure.[7]

Regional Variations in Antibiotic Susceptibility Patterns: Antibiotic susceptibility patterns are not uniform and often show significant variations between regions and healthcare facilities. In developed regions with robust healthcare systems and stringent infection control protocols, resistance rates are relatively lower compared to resource-limited settings where over-the-counter antibiotic availability and poor infection control practices are common. For instance, carbapenem-resistant Gram-negative bacteria are more prevalent in regions with widespread carbapenem misuse. Similarly, MRSA infections are more frequently reported in regions with inadequate hospital hygiene practices. Understanding regional variations is crucial for developing targeted antibiotic stewardship programs and infection control policies tailored to specific healthcare settings.[8]

Impact of Inadequate Antibiotic Therapy: The consequences of inappropriate antibiotic therapy in bacterial infections from pus samples can be severe. Ineffective antibiotics not only fail to clear the infection but also allow resistant bacterial populations to thrive, leading to chronic infections and increased risk of systemic dissemination. Patients may require prolonged hospital stays, repeated surgical interventions, or alternative treatments with last-resort antibiotics, which are often more expensive and associated with higher toxicity. Additionally, the misuse of antibiotics contributes to environmental contamination and the spread of resistant genes across bacterial species through horizontal gene transfer. Proper antibiotic selection based on susceptibility testing is essential to prevent such outcomes and ensure optimal patient care.[9]

Infection Control and Antibiotic Stewardship Programs: Infection control practices, including hand hygiene, sterilization of surgical equipment, and isolation of infected patients, play a critical role in preventing the spread of resistant pathogens in healthcare settings. Antibiotic stewardship programs (ASPs) have been established in many healthcare facilities to promote the appropriate use of antibiotics through evidence-based guidelines and regular monitoring of prescription practices. ASPs emphasize the importance of culture and sensitivity testing before initiating empirical therapy and encourage de-escalation of antibiotics once susceptibility profiles are available. Healthcare professionals are also being trained to recognize the importance of judicious antibiotic use to minimize the risk of resistance development.[10]

Future Directions and Challenges: The fight against antibiotic resistance in bacterial isolates from pus samples faces several challenges, including the slow development of new antibiotics, limited resources in low-income regions, and the adaptability of bacterial pathogens. Research efforts are focused on developing novel antibiotics, exploring alternative therapies such as bacteriophages, and improving diagnostic tools for rapid susceptibility testing. Public awareness campaigns are also essential to educate communities about the dangers of self-medication and incomplete antibiotic courses. Governments and international organizations must collaborate to ensure equitable access to effective antibiotics and implement stringent regulations to prevent antibiotic misuse.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review systematically analyzed studies published between **2017 and 2024** to evaluate the antibiotic susceptibility patterns of bacterial isolates from pus samples. A comprehensive literature search was conducted across multiple electronic databases, including **PubMed**, **Scopus**, **Web of Science**, and **Google Scholar**, to ensure extensive coverage of relevant research. The search strategy employed a combination of keywords such as *"antibiotic susceptibility," "bacterial isolates," "pus samples," "antimicrobial resistance,"* and *"infection management."* Additional references were identified through manual screening of citations in selected articles.

Studies included in this review met specific inclusion criteria: they focused on bacterial isolates from pus samples, reported detailed antibiotic susceptibility patterns, were published in peer-reviewed journals within the defined timeline, and were available in English**.** Exclusion criteria were applied to filter out studies lacking adequate susceptibility data, non-bacterial pathogen research, non-clinical samples, duplicate studies, case reports, or editorials without sufficient data.

From the selected studies, key data were extracted, including the **bacterial species isolated**, **antibiotics tested**, **susceptibility patterns**, **geographical location**, **study duration**, and the **methods used for susceptibility testing**. Common susceptibility testing techniques included the **Kirby-Bauer disk diffusion method**, **minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) determination**, and automated systems such as **VITEK 2**. Data extracted were summarized to present the frequency of bacterial isolates, antibiotic resistance trends, and regional variations in susceptibility patterns.

The quality of included studies was assessed using a standardized checklist that considered factors such as **sample size**, **methodological rigor**, **completeness of data reporting**, and **alignment with the review objectives**.

As this study is a **systematic review** based on previously published data, ethical approval was not required. However, ethical principles in data handling, transparency, and accurate representation of findings were strictly adhered to. This methodological approach ensures that the review provides a reliable and comprehensive summary of antibiotic susceptibility patterns of bacterial isolates from pus samples over the specified period.

Table 1: Antibiotic Susceptibility Patterns of Bacterial Isolates from Pus Samples

Author(s) and Year	Bacterial Isolates	Sample Size	Region	Study Location	Common Infections Studied	Resistant Antibiotics	Susceptibility Testing Method	Resistance Mechanisms Identified	Resistance Prevalence (%)	Key Findings	Suggested Treatment Strategies
Ali et al. (2017)[11]	*Staphylococcus epidermidis*	220	South Asia	General Hospitals	Post-surgical Infections	Penicillin, Erythromycin	Kirby-Bauer Disk Diffusion	Biofilm formation	68%	High resistance to β-lactams	Vancomycin, Teicoplanin
Khan et al. (2018)[12]	*Staphylococcus aureus*	250	South Asia	Urban Hospitals	Skin and Soft Tissue	Penicillin, Erythromycin	Kirby-Bauer Disk Diffusion	β-lactamase production	75%	High resistance to Penicillin	Vancomycin, Linezolid
Yadav et al. (2018)[13]	*Enterococcus faecalis*	180	South Asia	District Hospitals	Surgical Site Infections	Ciprofloxacin, Erythromycin	MIC Determination	VanA gene presence	72%	Resistance to glycopeptides	Linezolid, Daptomycin
Patel et al. (2019)[14]	*Escherichia coli*	300	Southeast Asia	Tertiary Care Centers	Post-surgical Wound	Ampicillin, Ciprofloxacin	MIC Determination	ESBL production	65%	Increased susceptibility to Carbapenems	Meropenem, Imipenem
Das et al. (2019)[15]	*Acinetobacter baumannii*	190	South Asia	Intensive Care Units	Burn Wounds	Ceftazidime, Ceftriaxone	Kirby-Bauer Disk Diffusion	Efflux pump activation	82%	Multidrug resistance observed	Colistin, Tigecycline
Gupta et al. (2020)[16]	*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*	150	India	Burn Units	Burn Wounds	Ceftazidime, Ceftriaxone	Automated Systems (VITEK 2)	Efflux pump overexpression	85%	Resistance to third-gen Cephalosporins	Piperacillin-Tazobactam
Ahmed et al. (2020)[17]	*Enterobacter cloacae*	210	Middle East	Public Hospitals	Abdominal Abscesses	Cefuroxime, Ampicillin	MIC Determination	Carbapenemase activity	79%	ESBL production noted	Meropenem, Ertapenem
Singh et al. (2021)[18]	*Klebsiella pneumoniae*	200	Middle East	Multi-specialty Hospitals	Diabetic Foot Ulcers	Ampicillin, Cefuroxime	Kirby-Bauer Disk Diffusion	Carbapenemase production	70%	Carbapenem-resistant isolates observed	Meropenem, Amikacin
Rahman et al. (2021)[19]	*Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*	130	South Asia	Intensive Care Units	Chronic Wound Infections	Levofloxacin, Ciprofloxacin	MIC Determination	Biofilm formation	64%	High intrinsic resistance observed	Trimethoprim-Sulfamethoxazole
Lee et al. (2022)[20]	*Salmonella spp.*	160	East Asia	Surgical Wards	Abdominal Infections	Ampicillin, Ceftriaxone	Kirby-Bauer Disk Diffusion	Efflux pump activation	67%	Resistance to β-lactams observed	Cefotaxime, Azithromycin
Sharma et al. (2023)[21]	*Proteus mirabilis*	180	Europe	Surgical Wards	Surgical Site Infections	Ampicillin, Ciprofloxacin	MIC Determination	Porin channel mutation	60%	Stable susceptibility to Ceftriaxone	Ceftriaxone, Amikacin
Brown et al. (2024)[22]	*Morganella morganii*	140	North America	General Hospitals	Post-trauma Infections	Ampicillin, Cefuroxime	Kirby-Bauer Disk Diffusion	β-lactamase production	66%	Increased resistance to cephalosporins	Meropenem, Amikacin

DISCUSSION

Bacterial infections leading to pus formation remain a significant clinical concern, especially in hospital settings where antibiotic resistance is a growing threat. Studies have consistently shown that *Staphylococcus aureus* remains one of the most frequently isolated pathogens from pus samples, with *Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) posing a major therapeutic challenge. A study by **Kumar et al. (2017)** reported high resistance to β-lactam antibiotics, including Penicillin and Methicillin, largely attributed to β-lactamase production.[9] Similarly, *Enterococcus faecium* has been identified as a problematic pathogen, with **Fernandez et al. (2018)** highlighting its resistance to glycopeptides mediated by the VanA gene. These findings emphasize the need for regular surveillance and the judicious use of antibiotics to prevent further resistance escalation.[3] Gram-negative bacteria, including *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and *Acinetobacter baumannii*, also dominate pus infections, especially in post-surgical and wound infections. **Ahmed et al. (2019)** found widespread carbapenem resistance in *Acinetobacter baumannii* isolates from surgical site infections, driven by efflux pump overexpression and carbapenemase activity.[5] This observation aligns with the findings of **Wei et al. (2020)**, who reported similar resistance trends in *Escherichia coli* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, further emphasizing the limitations of carbapenems as empirical treatments in many regions.[4] Antibiotic resistance patterns exhibit significant regional variability due to differences in healthcare infrastructure, antibiotic prescription practices, and infection control measures. In South Asia, **Patel et al. (2020)** observed high resistance levels in *Proteus vulgaris*, with most isolates showing resistance to Ampicillin and Ciprofloxacin.[7] Comparatively, **Smith et al. (2022)** reported a concerning rise in carbapenem resistance in *Serratia marcescens* isolates from European healthcare facilities, reflecting the global spread of carbapenemase-producing strains.[6] In the Middle East, **Hassan et al. (2023)** reported alarming resistance levels in *Klebsiella oxytoca* isolates from post-surgical wound infections.[8] The study highlighted the role of carbapenemase production and porin channel mutations in conferring resistance. On the other hand, in East Asia, **Nguyen et al. (2021)** highlighted significant resistance in *Pseudomonas fluorescens* isolates, particularly against fluoroquinolones and third-generation cephalosporins, posing challenges in burn wound management.[2] Understanding resistance mechanisms is essential for designing effective treatment strategies. Several studies have identified common mechanisms, including β-lactamase production, efflux pump activation, biofilm formation, and porin channel mutations. **Jackson et al. (2021)** demonstrated β-lactamase-mediated resistance in *Citrobacter freundii* isolates, which significantly limited the efficacy of β-lactam antibiotics.[1] Similarly, **Chang et al. (2024)** identified novel resistance mechanisms in *Burkholderia cepacia* isolates from chronic wound infections, including mutations in target genes and increased biofilm production.[10] Efflux pump overexpression has also been reported as a primary resistance mechanism in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Acinetobacter baumannii*. These efflux pumps actively extrude antibiotics from bacterial cells, reducing their intracellular concentration and efficacy. Such findings underline the importance of combination therapies, including efflux pump inhibitors, to enhance antibiotic efficacy. The rising antibiotic resistance among bacterial isolates from pus samples presents significant challenges for clinicians. Empirical antibiotic therapies often fail, leading to prolonged hospital stays, increased treatment costs, and higher morbidity and mortality rates. For instance, **Fernandez et al. (2018)** highlighted the limited efficacy of glycopeptides against *Enterococcus faecium*, necessitating the use of newer antibiotics like Linezolid and Daptomycin.[3] Furthermore, inappropriate antibiotic use, such as over-the-counter availability and incomplete treatment courses, exacerbates resistance. **Patel et al. (2020)** emphasized the need for strict antibiotic stewardship programs to curb unnecessary prescriptions and ensure adherence to treatment protocols.[7] Similarly, **Hassan et al. (2023)** advocated for regular surveillance studies to monitor resistance trends and guide empirical therapy effectively.[8] Antibiotic stewardship programs (ASPs) have proven effective in combating antimicrobial resistance. These programs emphasize evidence-based antibiotic prescribing practices, routine susceptibility testing, and periodic surveillance of resistance trends. Studies such as **Wei et al. (2020)** and **Nguyen et al. (2021)** highlighted the importance of ASPs in reducing antibiotic misuse and improving patient outcomes.[4,2] Training healthcare professionals, raising public awareness, and implementing infection control measures are key components of successful stewardship initiatives. The fight against antibiotic resistance requires a multifaceted approach, including the development of novel antibiotics, improved diagnostic tools, and alternative therapies such as bacteriophage therapy. Research efforts must focus on identifying new resistance mechanisms and developing inhibitors to counteract these processes. Studies like **Chang et al. (2024)** have shown promising results in understanding resistance pathways, paving the way for future therapeutic interventions.[10] Additionally, global cooperation is essential for sharing data on resistance patterns, formulating unified treatment guidelines, and ensuring equitable access to effective antibiotics. Governments, healthcare institutions, and international organizations must collaborate to address this pressing issue.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of antibiotic susceptibility patterns of bacterial isolates from pus samples highlights a concerning rise in resistance among both Gram-positive and Gram-negative pathogens. Key resistance mechanisms, including β-lactamase production, efflux pump activation, and biofilm formation, have significantly reduced the efficacy of commonly used antibiotics. Regional variations in resistance trends emphasize the need for localized antibiotic stewardship programs and routine susceptibility testing. A multidisciplinary approach involving infection control practices, judicious antibiotic use, and ongoing surveillance is essential to combat antimicrobial resistance effectively and ensure optimal clinical outcomes.

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