Overview

Useful For
Aids in the diagnosis of Whipple disease, especially for identifying inconclusive or suspicious cases

Testing Algorithm

Special Instructions
- Infective Endocarditis: Diagnostic Testing for Identification of Microbiological Etiology

Method Name
Rapid Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)

NY State Available
Yes

Specimen

Specimen Type
Whole Blood EDTA

Specimen Required
The high sensitivity of amplification by PCR requires the specimen to be processed in an environment in which contamination of the specimen by Tropheryma whipplei DNA is unlikely.

Container/Tube:

Preferred: Lavender top (EDTA)

Acceptable: Royal blue top (EDTA), pink top (EDTA), or sterile vial containing EDTA-derived aliquot

Specimen Volume: 1 mL

Collection Instructions: Send specimen in original tube (preferred).

Forms
If not ordering electronically, complete, print, and send 1 of the following forms with the specimen:
- Microbiology Test Request (T244)
- Gastroenterology and Hepatology Client Test Request (T728)

Specimen Minimum Volume
0.5 mL

Reject Due To
All specimens will be evaluated at Mayo Clinic Laboratories for test suitability.
Specimen Stability Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specimen Type</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Special Container</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Blood EDTA</td>
<td>Refrigerated (preferred)</td>
<td>7 days</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ambient</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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Clinical and Interpretive

Clinical Information

Whipple disease is a chronic, systemic illness that in the majority of cases involves the small intestine and its lymphatic drainage. The disease primarily affects middle-aged individuals, with a peak incidence in the third and fourth decades. Clinical findings may include malabsorption, chronic diarrhea, abdominal pain, arthralgia, fever, and central nervous system symptoms.

Pathologic changes associated with Whipple disease are distinctive, with diagnosis dependent on histologic examination of biopsy specimens from involved tissues. Electron microscopic or special high-resolution light microscopic examination of the lamina propria of the small intestine of patients with untreated Whipple disease reveals many rod-shaped bacillary organisms. These tiny bacilli, referred to as Whipple bacilli, measure about 0.25 micrometer long and are seen as periodic acid-Schiff-positive granules within macrophages. These inclusions represent fragments of the cell walls from degenerating bacilli.

Culture of Whipple bacilli from biopsy material is laborious and the organism is very slow growing. Definitive identification of the Whipple-associated bacillus has been difficult because of these limitations. Recently, molecular techniques using PCR and nucleotide sequencing allowed classification of this bacillus as an actinomycete not closely related to any other known species, which has been named *Tropheryma whipplei*.

Reference Values

Not applicable

Interpretation

A positive result is considered diagnostic of Whipple disease.

A negative result does not negate the presence of the organism or active disease, as false-negative results may occur due to inhibition of PCR, sequence variability underlying the primers and probes or the presence of *Tropheryma whipplei* in quantities less than the limit of detection of the assay.

Cautions

Test results should be used as an aid in diagnosis and not be considered diagnostic in themselves. The single assay should not be used as the only criteria to form a clinical conclusion, but results should be correlated with patient symptoms and clinical presentation. A negative result does not negate the presence of the organism or active disease.

Supportive Data

A total of 321 clinical specimens (including blood, tissue, cerebrospinal fluid, and synovial fluid) were evaluated for the presence of *Tropheryma whipplei* DNA by targeting the heat shock protein 65 gene using the LightCycler Whip
Test Definition: WHIPB
Tropheryma whipplei PCR, B

The LightCycler Whip assay compared to conventional PCR assay. The sensitivity and specificity of the LightCycler Whip assay compared to conventional PCR were 98% and 99%, respectively. The analytical sensitivity was less than 50 targets per reaction. The LightCycler Whip showed no cross reaction when tested on a panel of 28 organism genotypically closely related to *T whipplei* by BLAST analysis.

**Clinical Reference**


**Performance**

**Method Description**

Nucleic acid is extracted from all specimens using the MagNA Pure extraction system. The resulting nucleic acid is tested for the presence of the target DNA of *Tropheryma whipplei* using the LightCycler real-time PCR. The instrument amplifies and continuously monitors the development of target nucleic acid using fluorescent resonance emission technology (FRET) after each cycle. Analysis of the PCR amplification and probe melting curves is accomplished through the use of the LightCycler software. (Sloan LM, Rosenblatt JE, Cockerill FR III: Detection of *Tropheryma whipplei* DNA in clinical specimens by LightCycler real-time PCR. J Clin Microbiol 2005;43:3516-3518)

**PDF Report**

No

**Day(s) and Time(s) Test Performed**

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

**Analytic Time**

2 days

**Maximum Laboratory Time**

7 days

**Specimen Retention Time**

1 week

**Performing Laboratory Location**

Rochester

**Fees and Codes**

**Fees**

- Authorized users can sign in to Test Prices for detailed fee information.
- Clients without access to Test Prices can contact Customer Service 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Prospective clients should contact their Regional Manager. For assistance, contact Customer Service.
Test Classification

This test was developed and its performance characteristics determined by Mayo Clinic in a manner consistent with CLIA requirements. This test has not been cleared or approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

CPT Code Information

87798

LOINC® Information

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