



March 31, 2023

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear CDC:

I am writing in regard to an ongoing multistate outbreak of verona integron metallo- β -lactamase (VIM)-producing carbapenem-resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (VIM-CRPA). From May 1, 2022 to March 14, 2023, 68 patients from 16 states with VIM-CRPA have been identified as part of this outbreak. All isolates were ST1203 with VIM-80 and GES-9 carbapenemase genes (a combination not previously seen in the U.S.), and closely related based on whole genome sequencing analysis. Case-patients have been identified in a variety of healthcare settings including acute care hospitals, outpatient clinics, and long-term care facilities. The outbreak is associated with multiple types of infections, including eye infections; three patients have died and there have been eight reports of vision loss and four reports of enucleation. The initial investigation identified a nationally distributed artificial tear product associated with this outbreak. This product was voluntarily recalled by the manufacturer in February 2023, however new cases continue to be reported at a slower pace. Given the widespread use of this product across the nation and the risk of secondary transmission in U.S. healthcare facilities, this outbreak continues to represent an urgent threat to public health. Thus, a multi-state and jurisdictional post-product recall monitoring investigation for this outbreak is necessary to identify new cases, assess for changes in epidemiologic risk factors for acquisition, prevent secondary transmission in healthcare facilities, describe outcomes for VIM-CRPA infections linked to this outbreak to inform future public health actions, and to implement additional prevention and control measures.

The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) strongly supports a centrally coordinated multistate and jurisdictional post-product recall monitoring investigation of VIM-CRPA and recommends multistate technical assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A multistate coordinated investigation of VIM-CRPA will continue to assist each public health jurisdiction in making rapid, practical decisions for actions to prevent and control the public health problem. This approach will streamline and strengthen the response, as opposed to multiple jurisdictional investigations independently addressing VIM-CRPA monitoring and risk assessment.

Each jurisdiction participating in the multi-jurisdictional response would retain ownership of and is responsible for all data collected within their respective jurisdiction.

Sincerely,

Janet Hamilton, MPH
Executive Director
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists