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DE DOCTEUR EN MÉDECINE

**Intérêt du dosage de biomarqueur(s) dans les exacerbations de BPCO
en soins premiers pour limiter la prescription d'antibiotiques :
revue systématique de la littérature et méta-analyse**

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AVERTISSEMENT

La Faculté n'entend donner aucune approbation aux opinions émises dans les thèses :
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LISTE DES ABREVIATIONS

ABREVIATIONS FRANCAISES

BDCA/BDLA	Bronchodilatateur de Courte Durée D'action/Longue Durée d'Action
BPCO	Bronchopneumopathie Obstructive Chronique
CRP	Protéine C-réactive
CSI	Corticostéroïdes inhalés
CVF	Capacité Vitale Forcée
DDJ	Dose Définies Journalières
EFR	Epreuves Fonctionnelles Respiratoires
EVA	Echelle Visuelle Analogique
IC	Intervalle de Confiance
OMS	Organisation Mondiale de la Santé
PCT	Procalcitonine
SPLF	Société de Pneumologie de Langue Française
VAI/VAS	Voies Aeriennes Inférieures/Supérieures
VEMS	Volume Expiratoire Maximal par Seconde

ABREVIATIONS ANGLAISES

AECOPD	Acute Exacerbation of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
AUC	Area Under the Curve
CAT	COPD Assessment Test
CI	Confidence Intervall
COPD	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
CRP	C-reactive protein
ECDC	European Center for Disease Prevention and Control
GOLD	Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease
GP	General Practitioner
LRTI	Low Respiratory Tract Infection
mMRC	Medical Research Council
NEJM	The New England Journal of Medicine
OR	Odds Ratio
POCT	Point Of Care Testing
PCT	Procalcitonin
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
RTI	Respiratory Tract Infection
WBC	White Blood Count

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PREAMBULE

Cette thèse de médecine est présentée sous la forme suivante :

- Une introduction longue en français avec deux objectifs : présenter le contexte médical avec une orientation principalement pédagogique, et présenter le contexte scientifique et l'objectif comme le fait également l'introduction courte en anglais
- Un résumé en anglais
- Un article original en anglais en vue d'une soumission à une revue scientifique internationale
- Une discussion générale et conclusion en français qui reprennent essentiellement la discussion et conclusion de l'article en anglais

Le document est structuré ainsi en application de la circulaire Toubon.¹

¹ Circulaire du 19 mars 1996 concernant l'application de la loi no 94-665 du 4 août 1994 relative à l'emploi de la langue française. JORF n°68 du 20 mars 1996 page 4258. NOR: PRMX9601403C

INTRODUCTION GENERALE

Antibiorésistance et dispositif « *point-of-care* »

Le 3 septembre 1928, le futur Prix Nobel Alexander Fleming découvrait la pénicilline. La même année, il envisageait le risque de résistance et écrivait: « *la personne irréfléchie qui joue avec un traitement à base de pénicilline est moralement responsable de la mort de l'homme qui succombe à une infection par l'organisme résistant à la pénicilline* ». En 1940 la fabrication de la pénicilline est devenue industrielle, permettant son utilisation large, mais dès 1944 les premiers cas de résistance à la pénicilline étaient décrits. Plus de 90 ans après cette découverte, la résistance aux antibiotiques est devenue un phénomène global et une préoccupation majeure pour les autorités de santé du monde entier. L'antibiorésistance entraîne une augmentation des dépenses médicales, une prolongation des hospitalisations et une hausse de la mortalité. Si des mesures radicales ne sont pas prises, l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS) prévoit que d'ici 2050, la résistance bactérienne sera la première cause de mortalité au monde (10 millions de décès annuels) (1). En 2019, le nombre de décès annuels liés à cette résistance est estimé à près de 700 000 à l'échelle mondiale. En Europe, selon le centre européen de prévention et contrôle des maladies (ECDC), il est estimé à 33 000, ce qui est comparable aux décès cumulés liés à la grippe, à la tuberculose et à l'infection par le virus de l'immunodéficience humaine (VIH) (2). En France, bien que source de débats, on estime que 120 000 personnes par an sont infectées par une bactérie résistante conduisant à un décès dans 5 000 à 15 000 cas.

Le surcoût financier imputable à la résistance bactérienne s'élèverait à plus de 1,5 milliard d'euros en Europe. Dans le monde entier, l'antibiorésistance pourrait coûter plus de 100 000 milliards de dollars (3). Pour la Banque mondiale, ce coût pourrait avoir un impact économique similaire à celui de la crise financière de 2008 (4). Au même titre que les pesticides, les antibiotiques ont également un impact écologique avec une présence retrouvée dans des sédiments fluviaux (5).

En France, l'exposition communautaire aux antibiotiques a diminué depuis la mise en place au début des années 2000 du premier « Plan national pour préserver l'efficacité des antibiotiques » (5). La consommation des antibiotiques calculée à partir des données de ventes entre 2010 et 2020 est passée de 25,0 à 18,7 doses définies journalières (DDJ) pour 1 000 habitants et par jour, confirmant la baisse observée depuis 2016. En 2020, les pénicillines représentaient 54,0 % de la consommation totale d'antibiotiques, avec 32,1 % pour l'amoxicilline seule et 19,5 % pour l'amoxicilline-acide clavulanique. Toutefois, la France reste en 2020 l'un des pays européens les moins bien classés pour la consommation d'antibiotiques. La figure 1 ci-dessous montre qu'en 2018, la France faisait partie des 5 pays européens consommant le plus d'antibiotiques (6).

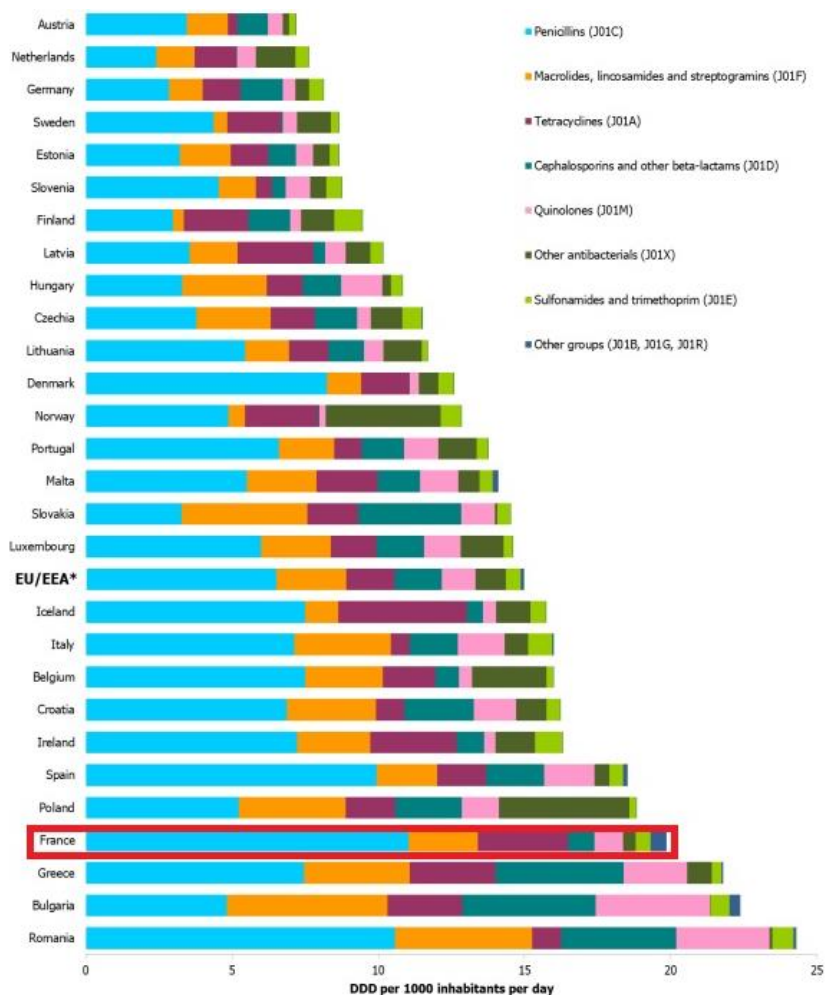


Figure 1: consommation d'antibiotiques à usage systémique par pays dans l'Union Européenne en 2018 (exprimé en DDJ pour 1000 habitants par jour) - Annual Epidemiological Report for 2021 European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

Cette consommation importante d'antibiotiques en France, la forte augmentation de la résistance bactérienne et le surcoût pour l'Assurance maladie doit amener les praticiens à limiter leurs prescriptions d'antibiotiques aux seules situations où cela est justifié. Les conséquences d'une telle rationalisation sont particulièrement importantes en médecine générale puisque 90 % des antibiotiques consommés en France sont prescrits par des médecins généralistes. Ces prescriptions concernent les infections des voies aériennes supérieures (VAS) et inférieures (VAI) cumulant les deux tiers de l'ensemble des antibiothérapies pour des pathologies le plus souvent virales (7). L'exercice n'est cependant pas simple au quotidien du fait des difficultés d'orientation diagnostique entre

infections virales et bactériennes et parfois de la pression des patients pour une antibiothérapie. La décision finale relève souvent de la clinique et parfois de l'insistance des patients face à un épisode infectieux perdurant conformément aux principes de la médecine factuelle.

Pourtant de plus en plus d'études internationales montrent que la biologie délocalisée « *point-of-care* » pourrait aider à affiner le diagnostic et à limiter la surprescription d'antibiotiques en soins premiers (7–10). Ces appareils sont fréquemment utilisés dans d'autres pays européens, aux Pays-Bas, au Danemark, en Norvège, en Suisse mais aussi en Russie et en Asie (Thaïlande et Birmanie) (11,12). En effet, dans ces pays, il existe des appareils de biologie délocalisée « *point-of-care testing (POCT)* » qui permettent d'avoir à l'aide d'une goutte de sang le résultat semi-quantitatif ou quantitatif d'un dosage de la protéine C-réactive (CRP) rapide en quelques minutes (8) et parfois de la procalcitonine (PCT) (13,14). En effet, ces deux marqueurs CRP et PCT augmentent en cas d'inflammation et/ou d'infection, la PCT étant plus spécifique d'une infection bactérienne mais aussi beaucoup plus coûteuse (15).

Aux Pays-Bas, le deuxième pays européen le moins prescripteur d'antibiotiques (6), le CRP « *POCT* » est notamment utilisé par 48 % des médecins généralistes en ambulatoire (16). En Suisse, la quasi-totalité des médecins généralistes ont et utilisent un CRP « *POCT* » (17). En France, ce dispositif est rarement utilisé car peu répandu en raison de l'absence de recommandation officielle et du non-remboursement par l'Assurance maladie (12,18).

Les types d'infections respiratoires communautaires pour lesquelles les antibiotiques sont les plus souvent prescrits en soins premiers sont les exacerbations de bronchopneumopathie chronique obstructive (EBPCO) et les bronchites aiguës (pourtant très majoritairement virales) dans les VAI (19–21) et les infections des VAS chez l'enfant (22,23). Cette revue systématique de la littérature se limitera aux EBPCO.

Définition de la BPCO et épidémiologie

La BPCO est une affection fréquente, sous-diagnostiquée, responsable d'une importante morbi-mortalité. A l'échelle mondiale, elle était la 6^{ème} cause de décès et les projections prévoient qu'elle devienne la 3^{ème} ou 4^{ème} cause d'ici 2030 en raison de la persistance de l'exposition aux facteurs de risque de BPCO et du vieillissement de la population (24).

Le tabagisme actif reste le principal facteur de risque de BPCO et serait responsable à lui seul de 40 % à 80 % des BPCO en fonction des pays. Même si la prévalence de la BPCO est multipliée par cinq avec le statut tabagique, 4 % à 30 % des BPCO selon les cohortes concernent des sujets *a priori* non-fumeurs, suggérant l'existence d'une prédisposition génétique et les conséquences d'autres facteurs de risque tels que le tabagisme passif et les facteurs d'exposition professionnelle, voire environnementale, atmosphérique ou domestique (24). Initialement en 2010, le seul facteur étiologique génétique prouvé était le déficit sévère en α 1-antitrypsine (25). Il concernerait 1 à 3 % des patients atteints de BPCO (26). En 2015, puis récemment en 2023, d'autres gènes ont été identifiés. Un rôle de l'épigénétique ne peut être exclu et les périodes pré et périnatale pourraient jouer un rôle dans la genèse de la maladie (26,27). L'effet aggravant de la pollution atmosphérique a été mis en évidence chez les patients les plus sévères lors des pics de pollution.

Son rôle dans la genèse de la BPCO reste discuté mais paraît probable dans les zones à pollution élevée (24).

Selon l'OMS, la BPCO concerne 210 millions de personnes atteintes dans le monde, soit une prévalence qui varie dans la plupart des pays entre 4 et 10 % avec une moyenne estimée à 7,5 % (26). Dans certains pays, comme les États-Unis ou la Norvège, la prévalence de la BPCO est déjà plus grande chez les femmes. Elle augmente significativement avec l'âge, avec une prévalence moyenne après 60 ans qui peut varier de 18 % à 30 %. En France, elle a été estimée à 4 % dans un échantillon représentatif de la population chez des sujets âgés de plus de 25 ans et 7,5 % dans une autre étude chez les plus de 45 ans (24). Pourtant, elle reste encore sous-diagnostiquée avec entre deux tiers à 90 % des personnes concernées en France sans diagnostic et environ 70 % dans le monde (28,29).

La BPCO est aussi la 2^{ème} cause mondiale d'invalidité. Elle s'accompagne souvent d'une altération marquée de la qualité de vie, y compris chez les patients âgés de plus de 40 ans ayant une obstruction légère. En 2001, selon le livre blanc de l'European Respiratory Society, le coût annuel global direct et indirect de la BPCO a été estimé à 38,7 milliards d'euros, avec 73 % des coûts en rapport avec une incapacité au travail, 12 % pour les soins ambulatoires, 7,5 % pour les hospitalisations et 7,5 % pour les médicaments (30). Les signes cliniques les plus fréquemment observés chez un patient ayant une BPCO sont une dyspnée, une toux chronique et des expectorations mais le diagnostic de BPCO nécessite une spirométrie afin d'objectiver un trouble ventilatoire obstructif incomplètement réversible ($VE_{max}/CVF < 0.70$) après l'administration d'un bronchodilatateur. Cet examen indispensable pour le diagnostic n'est malheureusement réalisé que chez un quart à un

tiers des patients souffrant de BPCO et suivis par leur médecin généraliste (31). Les stades GOLD (Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease) servent de base pour définir les stades spirométriques de la BPCO (tableau 1).

Stade spirométrique	VEMS
<i>GOLD I : léger</i>	≥ 80% valeur théorique
<i>GOLD II : modéré</i>	50% à 79% valeur théorique
<i>GOLD III : sévère</i>	30% à 49% valeur théorique
<i>GOLD IV : très sévère</i>	< 30% valeur théorique

Tableau 1 : stades spirométriques GOLD d'un patient BPCO

Conscient du caractère insuffisant de la classification fondée sur la sévérité de l'obstruction bronchique, un panel d'experts réunis dans la GOLD a proposé en 2011 et modifié par la suite une nouvelle classification de la sévérité de la BPCO, prenant en compte le retentissement symptomatique (évalué sur l'intensité de la dyspnée sur l'échelle modifiée du Medical Research Council (mMRC) (tableau 2)), ou sur la qualité de vie avec des échelles courtes telles que le COPD Assessment Test (CAT) (32) et le risque d'exacerbations (évalué sur le nombre d'épisodes l'année précédente), en plus de la sévérité de l'obstruction bronchique.

Stade dyspnée	Description
<i>Stade 0</i>	dyspnée pour les efforts soutenus
<i>Stade 1</i>	dyspnée si marche rapide à plat ou en pente modérée
<i>Stade 2</i>	dyspnée si marche sur terrain plat avec quelqu'un de son âge
<i>Stade 3</i>	dyspnée et arrêt lors de marche sur terrain plat après quelques minutes ou une centaine de mètres pour reprendre son souffle
<i>Stade 4</i>	dyspnée au moindre effort

Tableau 2 : échelle de la dyspnée modifiée du Medical Research Council (mMRC)

Ces experts de la GOLD ont mis à jour en 2023 les recommandations pour reconnaître l'importance clinique des exacerbations et ainsi classer les patients BPCO en stade A, B ou E (anciennement A, B, C et D) une fois le diagnostic établi par spirométrie selon les symptômes du patient et/ou l'historique d'exacerbation (figure 2). Ceci permet alors de proposer un traitement de fond adapté selon le stade du patient (BDLA ou BDCA pour stade A, BDLA + BDCA pour stade B et, BDCA + BDLA ± CSI pour stade E).

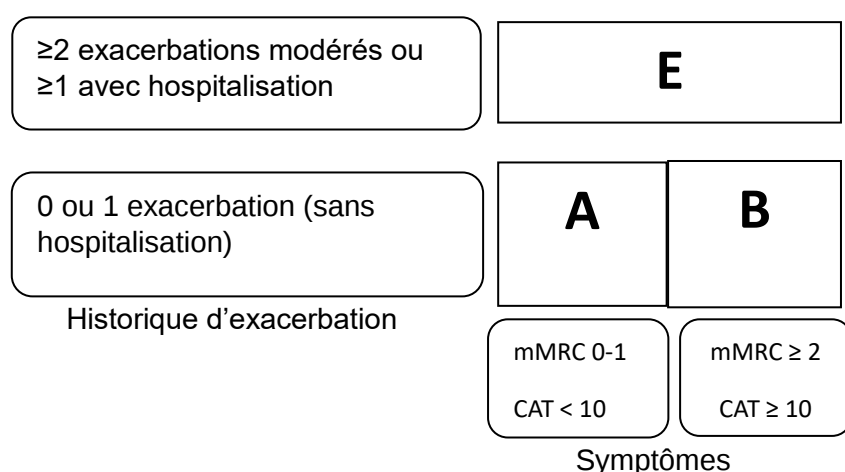


Figure 2 : outil d'évaluation GOLD ABE

Définition de l'exacerbation de BPCO

La BPCO est caractérisée par des périodes d'exacerbation dont la gravité est variable d'un patient à l'autre et d'un épisode à l'autre. Jusqu'en 2022, la définition de l'exacerbation de BPCO était essentiellement basée sur le rapport GOLD comme un événement aigu caractérisé par :

- une aggravation des symptômes respiratoires
- au-delà des variations quotidiennes
- et conduisant à une modification thérapeutique.
- et après avoir éliminé un diagnostic différentiel (insuffisance cardiaque, pneumonie et embolie pulmonaire)

La principale limite de cette définition étant qu'elle comprend une évaluation *a posteriori* de la prise en charge du patient. Un groupe d'experts s'est réuni en 2021 pour établir une nouvelle définition de l'exacerbation de BPCO et de sa sévérité dans la proposition de Rome (33), qui depuis a été reprise dans le rapport GOLD 2023 (34) et 2024 (35) :

- événement caractérisé par de la dyspnée et/ou de la toux et expectorations qui s'aggravent sur une durée de 14 jours, qui peuvent s'accompagner d'une tachypnée et/ou d'une tachycardie
- qui s'associe souvent à la l'inflammation locale ou systémique
- causée par une infection des voies aériennes, de la pollution ou une autre agression des voies aériennes
- et après avoir éliminé un diagnostic différentiel (insuffisance cardiaque, pneumonie et embolie pulmonaire)

Définition de la gravité de l'exacerbation de BPCO

La gravité de l'exacerbation de BPCO dans le rapport GOLD 2022 était également définie *a posteriori* de la prise en charge du patient :

- exacerbation légère : augmentation des symptômes contrôlés par BDCA uniquement
- exacerbation modérée : requérant des BDCA plus une antibiothérapie et/ou une corticothérapie
- exacerbation sévère : hospitalisation ou passage aux urgences

La nouvelle définition de la gravité de l'exacerbation depuis 2023 est plus objective et prend notamment en compte la quantification de la dyspnée, la fréquence cardiaque et respiratoire et, quand cela est possible, un dosage de CRP et un gaz du sang artériel (tableau 3).

	Critère	Seuil
LEGERE • < 3 critères non respectés parmi 5 • pH > 7.35	Dyspnée	EVA < 5
	Fréquence respiratoire	< 24 cycles/min
MODEREE • ≥ 3 critères non respectés parmi 5 • pH > 7.35	Fréquence cardiaque	< 95bpm
	Saturation en oxygène	≥ 92%(ET delta ≤ 3%si état basal connu)
SEVERE • pH < 7.35 ET • PaCO₂ > 45 mmHg	CRP	< 10 mg/L
	GDS artériel	pH > 7.35

Tableau 3 : nouvelle définition des exacerbations de BPCO selon GOLD 2023

Exacerbation de BPCO, antibiothérapie et biomarqueurs

Plus de 80 % des EBPCO sont prises en charge en ambulatoire avec bronchodilatateurs, corticothérapie et/ou antibiothérapie (35). On estime que 70 % des EBPCO sont causées par une infection et 30 % par des facteurs environnementaux (pollution, météo...). Sur les 70 % déclenchées par une infection, les bactéries potentiellement pathogènes sont identifiées dans environ 20 à 58 % des échantillons cliniques alors que les virus respiratoires le sont dans environ 50 % des exacerbations (36–38). Seulement le tiers à la moitié des EBPCO seraient donc d'origine bactérienne.

Les signes cliniques d'infection bactérienne dans une EBPCO sont difficilement identifiables et controversés. Les critères couramment utilisés sont ceux d'Anthonisen depuis 1987 (39) avec l'augmentation de la dyspnée, de la toux, du volume de l'expectoration ou la modification de l'aspect de l'expectoration (aspect purulent). Cependant, ces signes ne sont pas spécifiques d'une infection bactérienne, l'augmentation des crachats et leur aspect purulent pouvant être causés uniquement par l'inflammation (24,40). Ces éléments sont subjectifs et restent imprécis pour déterminer si un patient peut être traité sans antibiotiques.

En 2018, la Cochrane a publié une revue systématique totalisant 19 essais randomisés (n= 2 663 participants) dont 11 en soins premiers sur l'utilisation des antibiotiques dans le contrôle des EBPCO (41). Elle démontrait un niveau de preuve insuffisant de la clinique seule pour orienter la décision de prescription quelle que soit la sévérité de l'exacerbation et que l'utilisation de biomarqueurs pour orienter la prescription d'antibiotiques devait être mieux documentée.

Concernant ces éventuels biomarqueurs, une revue systématique de littérature et une étude effectuées en soins secondaires retrouvaient des biomarqueurs soit très spécialisés et donc peu adaptés aux soins premiers soit avec un recrutement de patients hospitalisés ou indifférencié entre ambulatoire et hospitalier (42,43). Une autre revue systématique de la Cochrane en 2022 réalisée sur des biomarqueurs délocalisés « *POCT* » en soins premiers sur une large population avec infection des VAI et VAS en adjonction de l'anamnèse et de l'examen clinique concluait à une probable réduction de prescription d'antibiotiques grâce à la CRP « *POCT* » (11). Cette étude soulignait la nécessité d'études supplémentaires notamment sur les populations immunodéprimées, avec comorbidités, les plus de 80 ans et les enfants.

A ce jour, il n'existe donc pas de revue systématique de littérature sur des biomarqueurs guidant la prescription d'antibiotiques spécifiquement dans les EBPCO en soins premiers, c'est-à-dire consultant un médecin généraliste en dehors de l'hôpital alors que la majorité des EBPCO sont prises en charge en ambulatoire. Un biomarqueur peut être réalisé en biologie délocalisé « *POCT* » avec un résultat rapide en quelques minutes (44) ou en laboratoire mais avec un résultat en quelques heures. Cependant, en soins premiers, il n'existe que peu d'études dans la littérature avec des biomarqueurs réalisés en laboratoire.

L'objectif de cette recherche était donc d'effectuer une revue systématique de la littérature pour évaluer l'intérêt du dosage délocalisé « *POCT* » ou en laboratoire de biomarqueurs pertinents en soins premiers comme outil décisionnel conjoint à l'examen clinique pour orienter la prescription d'antibiotiques dans les EBPCO en soins premiers.

ABSTRACT

Background: Acute Exacerbations of COPD (AECOPD) are frequently treated with antibiotics in primary care, leading to antibiotic resistance and adverse effects. Biomarkers might assist in reducing unnecessary antibiotic prescription when used alongside clinical assessment. This review aimed to evaluate the benefit of point-of-care testing (POCT) biomarkers and lab blood tests in primary care in decreasing antibiotic prescriptions.

Methods: This systematic review applied the PRISMA 2020 statement and the Cochrane Handbook to identify randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and observational studies conducted in primary care. The primary outcome was the rate of antibiotic prescribing or use, while secondary outcomes included biomarker threshold for prescription and patient harm. Searches were conducted in PubMed, CENTRAL, Embase, and Web of Science up to August 31, 2023. Data were extracted and assessed for quality and bias and meta-analysis performed using Cochrane RevMan® tool.

Results: Eight studies were included: six focused on CRP POCT and two on procalcitonin (PCT) lab testing. For CRP POCT, there was one RCT with 653 patients, four observational studies with 1854 patients, and one qualitative study. For PCT, two RCTs were included. The meta-analysis of CRP POCT indicated a significant reduction in antibiotic prescribing (OR=0.41; 95% CI: [0.32-0.53]; I²=36%) and low certainty of evidence. No meta-analysis for PCT was feasible.

Conclusion: CRP POCT likely reduces antibiotic prescriptions for AECOPD in primary care settings when used with clinical assessment. However, more RCTs are needed for confirmation. There is insufficient data to draw conclusions about PCT biomarker.

PROSPERO registration number: CRD42024575414

Keywords: COPD, exacerbation, biomarker, point-of-care testing, C-reactive protein, procalcitonin, antibiotic

INTRODUCTION

About 80% of acute exacerbations of COPD (AECOPD) are diagnosed by general practitioners (GPs) in primary care settings. GPs usually manage them with bronchodilators, corticosteroids and/or antibiotics (35). Limiting unnecessary antibiotic prescription in primary care is vital to reducing bacterial resistance to antibiotics at both societal (2,45) and individual level (46). Antibiotic resistance leads to ineffective treatments, increased risks of serious complications such as bacterial infections and death, and increased healthcare costs (47,48). Antibiotics have side effects and drug interactions that may harm patients particularly when not needed. However, patient safety must also be carefully considered to reduce the risk of undertreatment of serious bacterial infections.

The decision whether to prescribe antibiotics for an AECOPD is challenging. On one hand, it reassures both GPs and patients but on the other hand, only bacterial AECOPD may benefit from antibiotics and the majority of AECOPD are not caused by bacteria (bacterial AECOPD account for 20 to 58% in clinical samples) (36–38) but rather by virus or environmental factors (such as pollution and weather). Clinical signs of bacterial AECOPD may not be easily identified and are controversial. Anthonisen criteria are often used since 1987 (39) with increased dyspnea, increased sputum volume and increased sputum purulence even though they are not specific to bacterial infection as they may be caused by local inflammation (24,40). These signs are subjective and remain vague to identify whether a patient may be treated without antibiotics.

In 2018, Cochrane published a systematic review with 19 randomised trials (2663 participants) about the value of antibiotics for inpatients and outpatients with AECOPD (41). It reported inconsistent effects of antibiotics and called for biomarkers through blood tests to identify who would benefit from antibiotics while sparing antibiotics for patients who are unlikely to experience benefits and for whom drawbacks of antibiotics should be avoided. Another systematic literature review and a trial already explored many biomarkers but mainly in secondary care settings. Such biomarkers were either very specialised and not relevant to primary care or patients recruitment spanned undifferentially primary and secondary care, making it unusable for primary care patients (49). In 2022, another Cochrane systematic review of literature explored the use of point-of-care tests in primary care for upper and lower respiratory tract infections along clinical examination and concluded a likely reduction of antibiotic prescription due to C-reactive protein (CRP) point-of-care testing (POCT) with moderate to high certainty of evidence (11). It emphasised the need for further analysis on specific subgroups such as immunocompromised patients, children and elderly people.

To date, no systematic review of literature tackles biomarkers specifically for AECOPD population in primary care settings to help reducing antibiotic prescription.

The aim of this systematic review and meta-analysis was to assess the benefit of POCT in GPs practices or blood test in labs to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescription for AECOPD in primary care settings.

METHODS

This systematic review of literature applied the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* (PRISMA) 2020 statement (50) and the Cochrane Handbook for systematic reviews and interventions (51).

A Cornwall University diagram (see appendix 1) was used to ensure this work meets systematic literature review criteria (52).

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible, studies had to have a primary outcome related to a POCT or a blood test in a lab to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescription or use for AECOPD in primary care settings. Included studies had to report the following criteria:

- Proven diagnosis of COPD with spirometry (any GOLD stage) and/or diagnosis of COPD in primary care clinical records (53);
- Outpatients i.e. only primary care patients;
- Patients presenting with an AECOPD with at least one of the Anthonisen criteria: increased dyspnea, increased sputum volume and increased sputum purulence and lasting a minimum of 24 hours and a maximum of 21 days (53);
- Blood test as POCT or in a lab to help decision about antibiotic prescribing or use.

Studies with the following criteria were excluded:

- Inpatients i.e. hospital patients (emergency or medical wards or intensive care unit);
- Patients requiring urgent hospital admission.

Included studies were:

- Randomised controlled trials (RCTs);
- Cohort studies;
- Retrospective, cross-sectional and case-control observational studies;
- Qualitatives studies.

Excluded studies were:

- Systematic reviews of literatureand meta-analysis;
- Editorial letters;
- Comments.

Information sources

The review of literature was conducted from January 2022 until August 2023 in four medical databases: MEDLINE through PUBMED interface (1977-2023/08/31), the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) (1948-2023/08/31), EMBASE (1975-2023/08/31) and the Web of Science (1900-2023/08/31).

The following registers were explored: Clinical trials, ANZTR, EU Clinical Trials Register, the Netherlands Trial Register, UK – IRRCTN registry and US Clinical Trial.

COPD academic societies websites were also explored.

Search strategy

A research equation by database was built in several steps:

- 1) Breaking down the research question (*assessment of the benefit of POCT in GPs practice or blood test in labs to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescription for AECOPD in primary care settings*) into three units (or blocks). Each block

resulted in one research equation with semantic specificities related to each database. Guidance from the “documentary team for systematic literature review” at the University of Lille was precious at this stage to apply systematic review recommendations (54).

2) Breakdown was as follows :

- a. Block 1 : « COPD »
- b. Block 2 : « Antibiotics »
- c. Block 3 : « Biomarkers »

3) One final research equation per database merged the three blocks (block 1 AND block 2 AND block 3)

The export feature in the four databases was used by generating a .ris or .nbib file enabling an import in the ZOTERO® tool. A ZOTERO® group library was then created to remove duplicates.

Selection and data collection process

Resulting records on ZOTERO® after removing duplicates were then imported into the Rayyan® platform, a collaborative tool to filter out reports according to title and abstract (55). Two independent reviewers blind to their allocations (MF and RF) proceeded with reports selection. Three possible allocations: “yes” report included, “no” report excluded and “maybe” if researchers were unsure. The “maybe” reports were then allocated either to “yes” or “no” after consensus between reviewers or discussion with a third reviewer (CB). Included reports remained blinded during this process. Included reports were then imported back into ZOTERO®.

Citations and bibliographical references at the end of included reports and excluded systematic reviews of literature and meta-analysis were also investigated with a tool “citation chaser” offering two features “forward citation chaser” and “backward citation chaser” to ensure no relevant reports were missed (56).

Data items

All reports referring to inpatients were excluded. Reports referring to patients with low respiratory tract infection (LRTI) were only included if a relevant AECOPD outpatient subgroup was created. A single researcher (MF) extracted the relevant data for analysis purposes. Any primary or secondary outcome was considered and any limitation or missing information was considered as a bias.

Study risk of bias assessment

The risk of bias of the included reports was assessed by two independent investigators by using the Cochrane tool as explained in *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions* (51). A tool named *Robvis*® was used to generate risk-of-bias assessment figures (57). Bias included for non-randomised studies and randomised studies (adapted from ROBINS-1 and RoB 2) (58) are as follows (tables 4 and 5) :

N°	Bias name
D1	<i>Bias due to confounding</i>
D2	<i>Biases of selection of participants into the study</i>
D3	<i>Bias in classifications of interventions</i>
D4	<i>Bias due to deviations from intended interventions</i>
D5	<i>Bias due to missing outcome data</i>
D6	<i>Bias in measurement of the outcome</i>
D7	<i>Bias in selection of the reported result</i>

Table 4: types of bias for non-randomised studies

N°	Bias name
D1	<i>Random sequence generation (selection bias)</i>
D2	<i>Allocation concealment (selection bias)</i>
D3	<i>Blinding of participants and personnel (performance bias)</i>
D4	<i>Blinding of outcome assessment (detection bias)</i>
D5	<i>Incomplete outcome data (attrition bias)</i>
D6	<i>Selective reporting (reporting bias)</i>
D7	<i>Other bias</i>

Table 5: types of bias for randomised studies

The quality of reports was assessed using a standard tool to assess risk of bias according to the GRADE framework (*Grading of Recommendations Assessment Development and Evaluation*) (59). First, it randomised trials as high quality and observational studies as low quality (grades ranging from high, moderate, low and very low). Quality can be downgraded due to risk of bias, inconsistencies, indirectness, imprecision or publication

bias. Quality can less frequently be upgraded mainly due to a large magnitude of effect (60).

Effect measures and synthesis method (meta-analysis)

The effect of biomarkers was reported as an odds ratio (OR) with a 95% confidence interval (95% CI). The adjusted OR within reports, when available, was an input in Cochrane Review Manager 5.3[®] (RevMan[®]), a free tool developed by Cochrane collaboration (61).

When the OR was not available in reports, computation through RevMan[®] with four values from reports was performed: N1-N2-N3-N4 resulting from the intervention (e.g. CRP biomarker) or not, and from the primary outcome: antibiotics prescription or not (table 6). These four values are necessary to compute an OR including a 95% CI with RevMan[®].

	<i>CRP test applied</i>	<i>CRP test not applied</i>
<i>Antibiotic prescription</i>	N1	N2
<i>No antibiotic prescribed</i>	N3	N4

Table 6: input data in RevMan[®] tool for OR calculation

Unpublished measures were not sought. When the adjusted OR was not available in a report, the four values were imported into RevMan[®] to compute effect size and standard error. Generic inverse variance was used, adjusting for the direction of the effect (i.e. increase or decrease). OR and 95% CI were computed using random effects in the context

of an important difference in weight of the studies. Heterogeneity was computed using the I^2 statistic. The result was presented as a forest plot.

Reporting bias assessment

We carried out a funnel plot to assess potential missing results for our primary outcome by using RevMan®.

Certainty of evidence

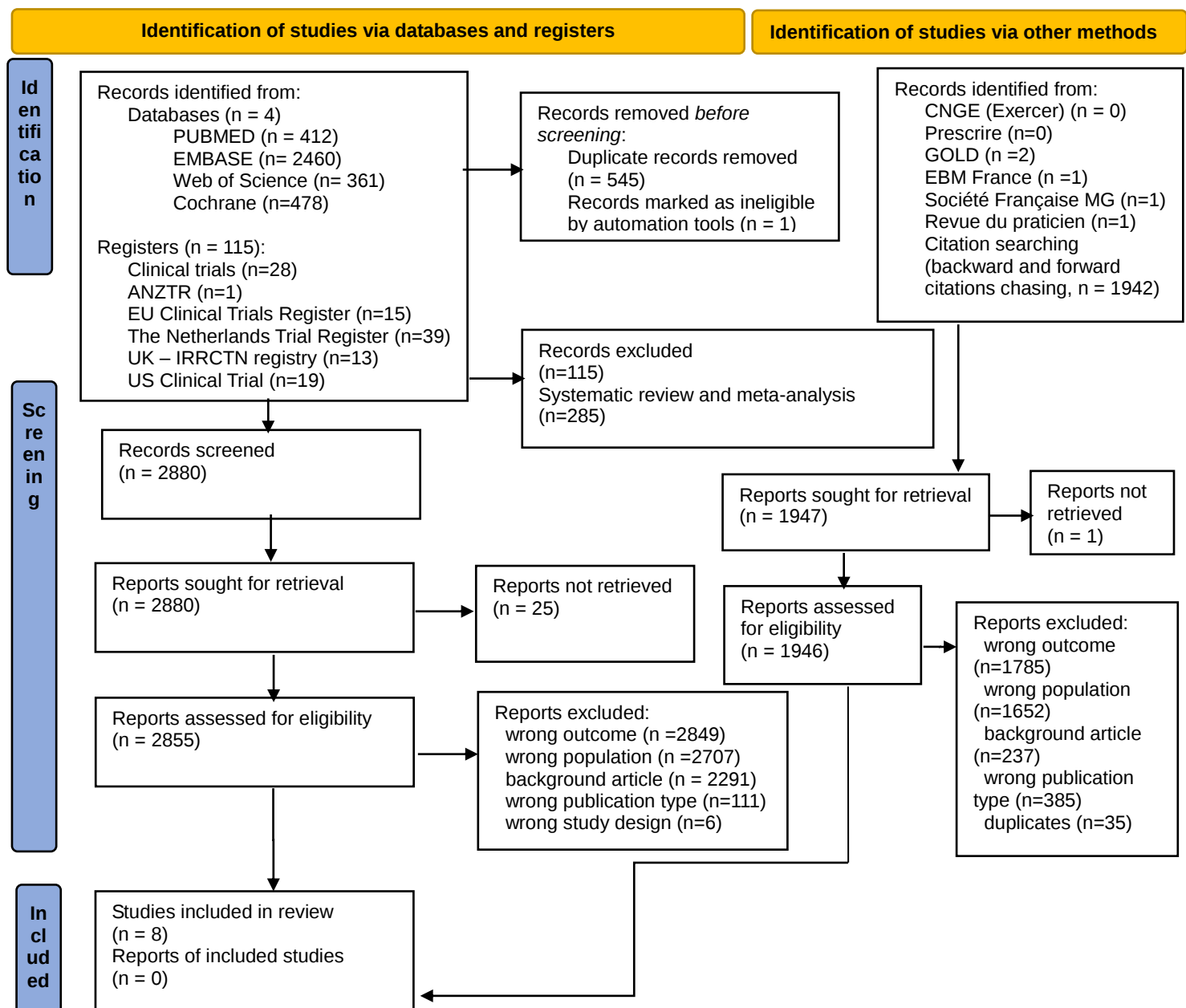
Certainty of evidence for the meta-analysis was aggregated from the individual level of evidence GRADE for each report included in the meta-analysis.

Three sensitivity analyses were conducted to assess the robustness of the synthesised results: one with observational studies only, one with the best quality reports and another with reports providing a clear biomarker threshold for antibiotic prescription.

RESULTS

Study selection

Records selection is presented in the following flow chart (figure 3). The total number of records without duplicates was 5227. Search by key words in databases and registers returned respectively 3165 and 115 records without duplicates. Records identified from other sources including citation searching returned 1947 records.



From: Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71.

Figure 3: PRISMA 2020 flow chart diagram

The four final search equations returned (see appendix 2 for detailed equations):

- 412 records in PUBMED
- 2460 records in EMBASE
- 361 records in Web of Science
- 478 records in Cochrane

Higher number of records in EMBASE may be explained by the absence of MeSH within EMBASE, thus search-tree algorithm returned many more records.

Eight studies were included in the review:

- Five quantitative studies related to CRP biomarker as point-of-care testing (POCT): one RCT with 653 patients and four observational studies for a total of 1854 patients
- Two quantitative studies related to PCT biomarker as blood test in lab: two RCTs with AECOPD sub-groups including respectively 21 and 6 patients
- One qualitative study related to CRP biomarker with 20 patients and 20 doctors/nurses

Three litigious records required a discussion between reviewers and an exclusion was decided for all of them mainly because of a wrong publication type and/or a wrong population (62–64).

The two PCT studies were included because abstracts strongly suggested the primary outcome was the antibiotic prescribing rate with a PCT-guided approach. However, it turned out to be a secondary outcome. After discussion between reviewers, we decided to include them in the review for information purpose since no PCT study was used in the meta-analysis. Similarly, the qualitative study was included for information purpose.

CRP and PCT were the main biomarkers retrieved in the review. Although leucocyte count appears in some records as a white blood count (WBC) POCT device (65), no study assessed it as a biomarker to reduce antibiotic prescribing in AECOPD in primary care. Likewise, neutrophils count exist as a POCT device (66) and is mainly used for patients following chemotherapy at risk of neutropenia (67) but no report assessed it for AECOPD.

Not peer-reviewed literature

Grey literature so not peer-reviewed was also explored but no records were included since by definition they were not approved through the official peer-review process. Five relevant thesis were noticed but with a different population or with a different outcome or were old research works (2010) and without analysis of the POCT (see appendix 3 for more information).

Quantitative study characteristics

Table 7 below reports the characteristics of the seven included quantitative studies.

Study (References)	Study design	Number of patients	Location	Biomarker	Population	Primary outcome
<i>Barber, et al. 2022. British Journal of Community nursing</i> <i>Does availability of point of care C-reactive protein measurement affect provision of antibiotics in a community respiratory service?</i> (68)	Quantitative retrospective	282	England	CRP POCT	Patients with a COPD diagnosis recorded in EMIS database used by 50% of GP in England (69) and ≥ 1 Anthonisen criterion	Antibiotic use with CRP POCT versus standard care
<i>Butler CC, et al. 2019. NEJM.</i> C-Reactive Protein Testing to Guide Antibiotic Prescribing for COPD Exacerbations (70)	Open label randomised multicentric and non-inferiority	653	England and Wales	CRP POCT	Patients ≥ 40 years old with a COPD diagnosis registered in medical records and ≥ 1 Anthonisen criterion between 24h et 21 days	Antibiotic use guided by CRP POCT versus standard care

<i>Llor C, et al. 2013. Therapeutic Advances in Respiratory Disease</i> <i>Predictors for antibiotic prescribing in patients with exacerbations of COPD in general practice (71)</i>	Cross-sectional observational	123	Denmark and Sweden	CRP POCT	Patient with a spirometric diagnosis of COPD and ≥ 1 Anthonisen criterion	Antibiotic prescription rate guided by CRP POCT versus standard care and analysis of predictors for antibiotic prescribing
<i>Llor C, et al. 2012. Eur Respi Journal</i> <i>Interventions to reduce antibiotic prescription for lower respiratory tract infections: Happy Audit study (72)</i>	Interventional prospective non randomised before-after	783 (Full-intervention group FIG)	Spain	CRP POCT	Patients with a suspected LRTI (bronchitis, AECOPD, pneumonia) by the doctor and based on symptoms and clinical signs (fever, coughing, dyspnoea, increase in sputum volume, purulence of sputum)	Assess the effect of two interventions to reduce antibiotic prescribing in inferior RTI (training only versus training and CRP POCT)
<i>Strykowski DF, et al. 2015. Family Practice.</i> <i>An intervention with access to C-reactive protein rapid test reduces antibiotic overprescribing in acute exacerbations of chronic bronchitis and COPD (73)</i>	Interventional prospective	666 (Full-intervention group FIG)	Spain	CRP POCT	Patients with a COPD diagnosis registered by a doctor and ≥ 1 Anthonisen criterion	Assess the effect of two interventions to reduce antibiotic prescribing in AECOPD (training only versus training and CRP POCT)
<i>Briel M. 2008. Arch.Intern Med.</i> <i>Procalcitonin-Guided Antibiotic Use vs a Standard Approach for Acute Respiratory Tract Infections in Primary Care (74)</i>	Open label randomised multicentric and non inferiority	458 (21 AECOPD)	Switzerland	PCT in laboratory	Patients with LRTI including a sub-group AECOPD	Number of days, within the first 14 days after baseline, during which a patient's daily activities were restricted by a RTI <i>Secondary outcome : Antibiotic prescribing rate with a PCT-guided approach for LRTI</i>
<i>O. Burkhardt 2010. Eu. Respi J</i> <i>Procalcitonin guidance and reduction of antibiotic use in acute respiratory tract infection (75)</i>	Randomised and non inferiority	550 (6 AECOPD)	Germany	PCT in laboratory	Patients with LRTI including a sub-group AECOPD	Number of days with significant health impairment due to acute respiratory tract infection at 14 days <i>Secondary outcome : antibiotic prescribing rate with a PCT-guided approach for LRTI</i>

Table 7: characteristics of the seven included quantitative studies

Qualitative study characteristics

Table 8 below reports the characteristics of the included qualitative study.

Etudes (Références)	Study design	Number of patients	Location	Population	Primary outcome
<i>R.Philipps 2020. British Journal of General Practice</i> <i>C-reactive protein-guided antibiotic prescribing for COPD exacerbations: a qualitative evaluation (76)</i>	Qualitative with semi-structured telephone interviews	20 patients and 20 doctors/nurses	England	Patients from Butler CC randomised trial (70)	To understand perceptions of the value of CRP POCT for guiding antibiotic prescribing for AECOPD; explore possible mechanisms, mediators, and pathways to effects; and identify potential barriers and facilitators to implementation from the perspectives of patients and clinicians

Table 8: characteristics of the included qualitative study

Risk of bias within non-randomised studies for CRP biomarker

Figure 4 below reports the biases within studies for non-randomised studies for CRP biomarker. Two studies have serious biases due to confounding, selection of participants or measurement of outcome (68,72). More detailed information about bias analysis is available in appendix 4.

		Risk of bias domains							
		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	Overall
Study	Barber et al. British journal of community nursing. 2022								
	Llor C, et al. 2013. Therapeutic Advances in Respiratory Disease								
	Llor C, et al. 2012. Eur Respi Journal								
	Strikowski DF, et al. 2015. Family Practice								
		Domains: D1: Bias due to confounding. D2: Bias due to selection of participants. D3: Bias in classification of interventions. D4: Bias due to deviations from intended interventions. D5: Bias due to missing data. D6: Bias in measurement of outcomes. D7: Bias in selection of the reported result.							Judgement Serious Moderate Low No information

Figure 4: biases within non-randomised studies for CRP biomarker

Risk of bias within randomised study for CRP biomarker

Figure 5 below reports the biases for the randomised study for CRP biomarker. This study is well-designed but has two noticeable bias: it is not blinded and the main author Butler CC has a conflict of interest with *Roche Molecular Systems* (advisory board fees) and *Roche Molecular Diagnostics* (grant support) provider of POCT devices. However, another company *Abbott* loaned POCT devices for the study and had no role in the design, accrual, analysis, data interpretation and manuscript preparation (70). This study had a good methodological quality and double-blind design may have proved difficult to implement in primary care with a POCT hence a moderate overall bias decided by both reviewers. More detailed information about bias analysis is available in appendix 4.

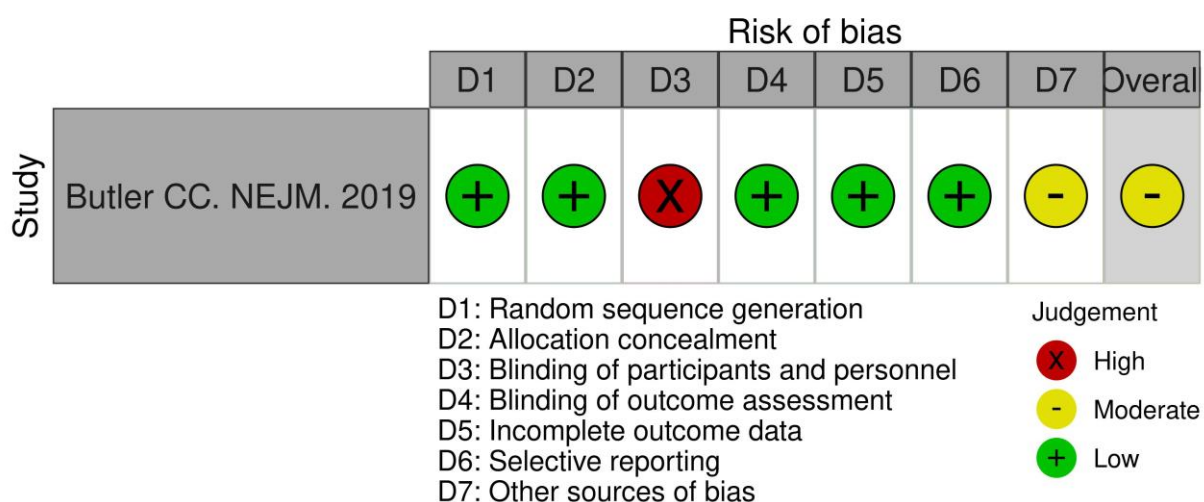


Figure 5: biases within randomised studies for CRP biomarker

Risk of bias within randomised studies for PCT biomarker

Figure 6 below reports the biases for the two randomised studies for PCT biomarker. More detailed information about bias analysis is available in appendix 4.

		Risk of bias							
		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	Overall
Study	Briel M. 2008. Arch.Intern Med								
	Burkhardt 2010								
		D1: Random sequence generation D2: Allocation concealment D3: Blinding of participants and personnel D4: Blinding of outcome assessment D5: Incomplete outcome data D6: Selective reporting D7: Other sources of bias							Judgement High Moderate Low

Figure 6: biases within randomised studies for PCT biomarker

Results of individual studies

Results of studies and level of evidence

Table 9 below shows the main results. All studies related to CRP biomarker refer to POCT and found a significant reduction in antibiotic prescription rate for AECOPD. The CRP cut-off for antibiotic prescribing from the best quality study is 40mg/L with no evidence of harm for patients (70) and with an AUC of 0.732 (0.614-0.851, 95% CI) (70,77). If increased sputum purulence was also observed, AUC improved at 0.842 (0.760-0.924, 95% CI) (78). Other studies suggest either 50mg/L (68) or a grey area between 20mg/L and 100mg/L where antibiotic prescribing should be discussed on a case-by-case basis (sputum purulence providing more weight to antibiotic prescribing) (71-73). When CRP is above 100 mg/L, antibiotics must be prescribed (71-73).

The two studies related to PCT biomarker (blood test in lab and not POCT) did not allow to conclude on the sub-group AECOPD because of an antibiotic prescribing rate evaluated as a secondary outcome and the absence of statistical analysis (74,75).

The only qualitative study about CRP showed that POCT guided antibiotic prescribing for AECOPD had high acceptability among primary care staff and patients, but commissioning arrangements and further simplification of the POCT need attention to facilitate implementation in routine practice (76).

Study	Main outcome : antibiotic prescription or use	Secondary outcomes : biomarker cut-off value (1) and patients harm (2)	Related instructions to biomarker cut-off value	Sensitivity Specificity Area under the curve (AUC)	Level of evidence (GRADE)
Barber, et al. 2022. <i>British Journal of Community nursing</i> Does availability of point of care C-reactive protein measurement affect provision of antibiotics in a community respiratory service?	CRP-guided group : 45.7% antibiotic use Usual-care group : 70.1% antibiotic use 24.4% antibiotic reduction $p < 0.001$ OR* : 0.36 (0.21-0.61; 95% CI)	1) CRP ≥ 50 mg/L when ≥ 2 AC (36.2%) and when < 2 AC (8.8%) $p = 0.008$	CRP ≥ 50mg/L : consider antibiotic prescribing	CRP ≥ 50mg/L Sensitivity: 0.94 Specificity: 0.72 (68,79,80)	VERY LOW
Butler CC, et al. 2019. <i>NEJM</i>. C-Reactive Protein Testing to Guide Antibiotic Prescribing for COPD Exacerbations	CRP-guided group : 57% antibiotic use Usual-care group : 77.4% antibiotic use 20.4% antibiotic reduction Adjusted OR: 0.31 (0.20-0.47; 95% CI)	1) CRP < 20mg/L: antibiotics issued (32.8%) 20 mg/L $< \text{CRP} \leq 40$mg/L: antibiotics issued (84.2%) CRP > 40mg/L: antibiotics issued (94.7%) 2) No evidence of patients harm by reducing antibiotic prescription. COPD-related health status, as measured by the Clinical COPD Questionnaire at 2 weeks after randomisation was in favor of the COPD guided-group : adjusted mean difference in total score : -0.19 points (two-sided 90% CI, -0.33 to -0.05)	CRP ≥ 40mg/L : antibiotic prescribing likely beneficial and should be prescribed 20mg/L $\leq \text{CRP} < 40$mg/L : antibiotic prescribing beneficial if sputum purulence CRP < 20mg/L : antibiotic prescribing unlikely beneficial and should not be prescribed	CRP ≥ 40mg/L: Sensitivity : 0.655 Specificity : 0.732 AUC : 0.732 (0.614-0.851 95% CI) (77) CRP ≥ 40mg/L + ≥ 1 AC (increased sputum pulence) : AUC : 0.842 (0.760-0.924 95% CI) (78)	MODERATE

Llor C, et al. 2013. Therapeutic Advances in Respiratory Disease Predictors for antibiotic prescribing in patients with exacerbations of COPD in general practice.	CRP-guided group : 54.3% antibiotic prescription Usual-care group : 80.6% antibiotic prescription 26.3% antibiotic reduction $p < 0.001$ Adjusted OR : 0.34 (0.19-0.61; 95% CI)	Not available (NA)	CRP $\leq 20\text{mg/L}$: do not prescribe antibiotics $20\text{mg/L} \leq \text{CRP} < 100\text{mg/L}$: discuss antibiotic prescribing CRP $\geq 100\text{mg/L}$: antibiotics should be prescribed	NA	LOW
Llor C, et al. 2012. Eur Respi Journal Interventions to reduce antibiotic prescription for lower respiratory tract infections: Happy Audit study	CRP-guided post-intervention group : 72.6% antibiotic prescription Pre-intervention group : 82.3% antibiotic prescription 9.7% antibiotic reduction OR* : 0.57 (0.41-0.80; 95% CI)	NA	CRP $\leq 20\text{mg/L}$: do not prescribe antibiotics $20\text{mg/L} \leq \text{CRP} < 100\text{mg/L}$: discuss antibiotic prescribing CRP $\geq 100\text{mg/L}$: antibiotics should be prescribed	NA	VERY LOW
Strikowski DF, et al. 2015. Family Practice. An intervention with access to C-reactive protein rapid test reduces antibiotic overprescribing in acute exacerbations of chronic bronchitis and COPD.	CRP-guided post-intervention group: 74.5% antibiotic prescription Pre-intervention group : 86.5% antibiotic prescription 12% antibiotic reduction $p < 0.001$ Adjusted OR : 0.46 (0.31-0.68; 95% CI)	2) Underprescribing was not significant but this may due to small sample size limitations $p = 0.075$ OR : 0.25 (0.06–1.0; 95% CI)	CRP $\leq 20\text{mg/L}$: do not prescribe antibiotics $20\text{mg/L} \leq \text{CRP} < 100\text{mg/L}$: discuss antibiotic prescribing CRP $\geq 100\text{mg/L}$: antibiotics should be prescribed	NA	LOW
Briel M. 2008. Arch.Intern Med. Procalcitonin-Guided Antibiotic Use vs a Standard Approach for Acute Respiratory Tract Infections in Primary Care	Considered as a secondary outcome : PCT-guided group for AECOPD or asthma : 56% antibiotic use Usual-care group for AECOPD or asthma : 92% antibiotic use No OR available for AECOPD subgroup	NA	NA	NA	LOW
O. Burkhardt 2010. Eu. Respi J Procalcitonin guidance and reduction of antibiotic use in acute respiratory tract infection	Considered as a secondary outcome No OR available for AECOPD subgroup	NA	NA	NA	LOW

*unadjusted OR computed through RevMan tool

*AC : Anthonisen criteria

Table 9: main results of included studies

Quantitative study meta-analysis

Figure 7 below shows the meta-analysis of the five quantitative studies for the CRP POCT computed through RevMan® tool and totalling 2507 patients. It was in favour of an antibiotic prescribing reduction for AECOPD patients in primary care with moderate homogeneity among studies: OR= 0.41; 95% IC: [0.32-0.53]; I²= 36%.

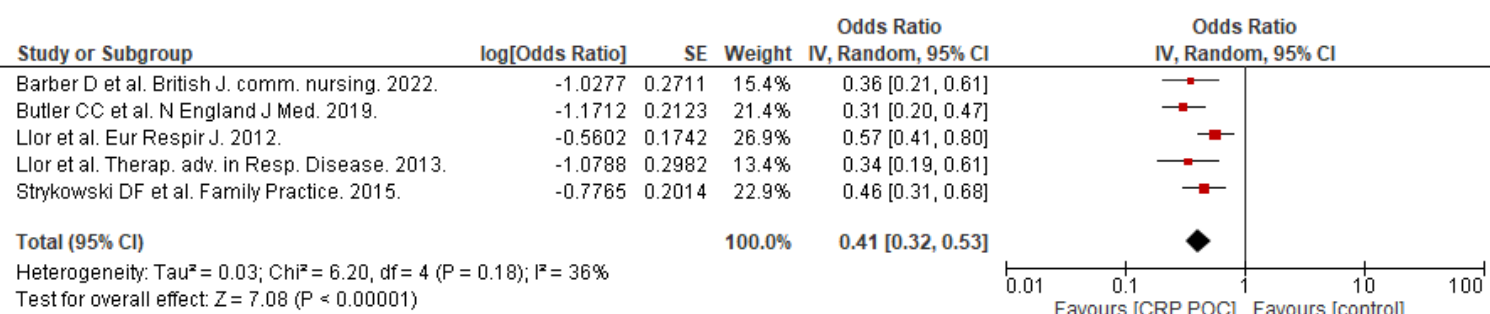


Figure 7: meta-analysis of the five quantitative studies (CRP POCT)

Sensitivity analysis

In sensitivity analysis, we analysed separately: observational studies only, best quality studies (very low quality excluded) and studies with clear CRP cut-off values (CRP at 40mg/L or CRP at 50mg/L) for antibiotic prescription.

Observational studies

The four observational studies totalling 1854 patients were also in favor of the CRP POCT to reduce antibiotic prescribing with low heterogeneity: OR= 0.46; 95% CI: [0.36-0.58]; I²= 12% (figure 8).

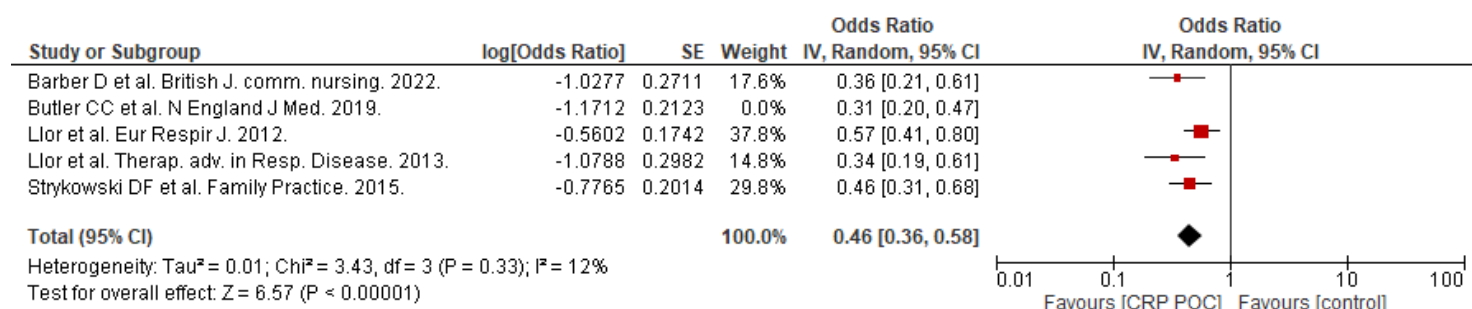


Figure 8: meta-analysis of the four observational studies (CRP POCT)

Best quality studies

The best quality studies (very low level of evidence excluded) were also in favor of the CRP POCT to reduce antibiotic prescribing, without heterogeneity: OR= 0.37; 95% CI: [0.29-0.48]; $I^2 = 0\%$ (figure 9).

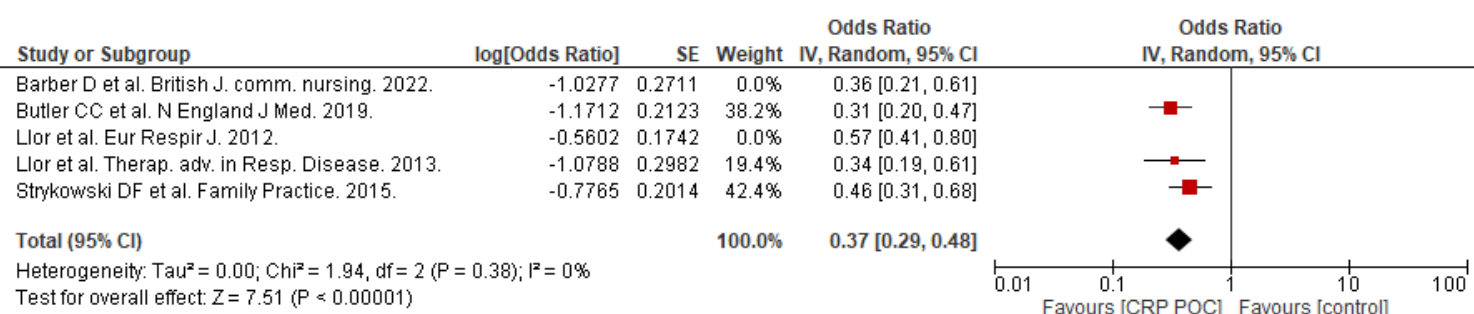


Figure 9: meta-analysis of the three best quality studies (CRP POCT)

CRP cut-off value studies

The two studies with a clear CRP cut-off value at 40mg/L and 50mg/L were also in favor of the CRP POCT to reduce antibiotic prescribing without heterogeneity: OR= 0.33; 95% CI: [0.24-0.45]; $I^2 = 0\%$ (figure 10).

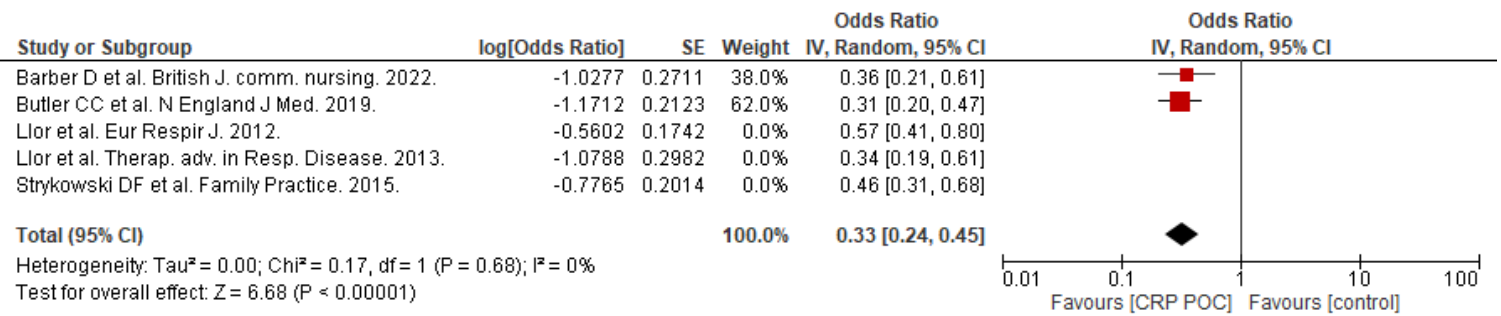


Figure 10: meta-analysis of the two studies with clear CRP cut-off value (CRP POCT)

Reporting biases

Regarding the overall publication bias, the funnel plot below (figure 11) illustrated an acceptable risk with a well-balanced distribution of the results around the total OR.

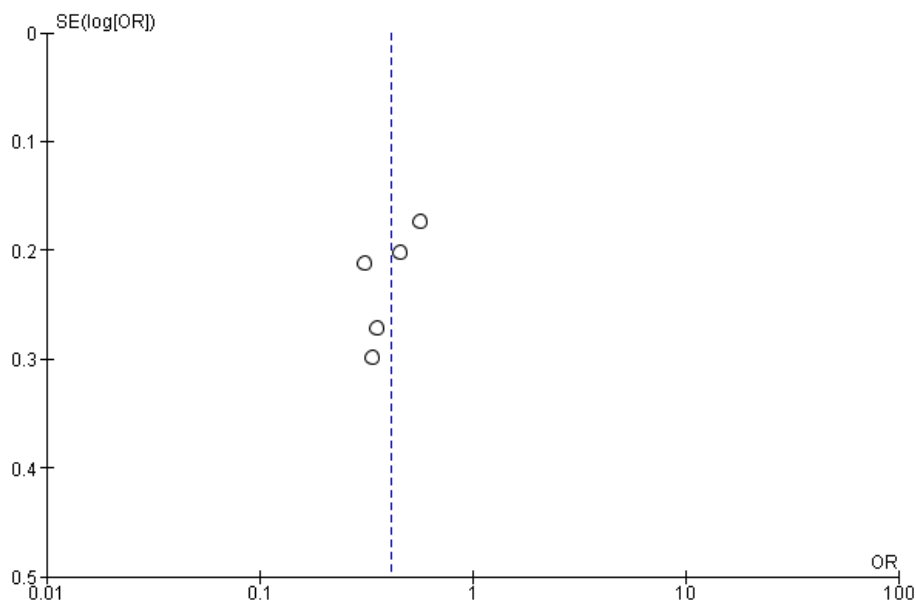


Figure 11: funnel plot of the five quantitative studies (CRP POCT)

Certainty of evidence (GRADE)

For CRP POCT, two observational studies had a very low level of evidence due to significant biases (68,72), two had a low level of evidence (71,73) and the RCT had a moderate level of evidence (70). In the meta-analysis for CRP biomarker, the aggregated certainty of evidence was evaluated by both reviewers as low (low to moderate if the sensitivity analysis with the three best quality studies is considered).

For PCT biomarker, the two randomised studies had each a low level of evidence (74,75).

DISCUSSION

Summary of main results

Eight studies were identified: seven quantitative studies with five related to CRP POCT, two related to PCT as blood test in lab and one qualitative study related to CRP POCT. In total, for CRP POCT: one RCT with 653 patients, four observational studies for a total of 1854 patients and one qualitative study with 20 patients and 20 doctors/nurses.

The meta-analysis performed with one RCT and four observational studies for CRP POCT was in favour of an antibiotic prescribing reduction for AECOPD patients in primary care.

Regarding secondary outcomes, it is difficult to aggregate different recommendations from the studies about CRP thresholds but in the single RCT the cut-off value was set at 40mg/L for antibiotic prescribing with an AUC of 0.732 (70,77). If increased sputum purulence is observed, AUC for CRP POCT improved at 0.842 (78) making it a quite efficient diagnosis tool without compromising patient safety (70). It is important to note that CRP POCT complements clinical assessment and do not replace it.

However, the certainty of evidence for the meta-analysis for CRP POCT is low (low to moderate if the sensitivity analysis with the three best quality studies is considered) mainly due to the lack of RCTs. The single RCT included is of good quality, yet open-labelled. The four remaining studies being observational are at higher risk of bias.

As the two studies investigating the effect of PCT did not provide exploitable results for the AECOPD subgroup and because the antibiotic prescribing rate was a secondary outcome,

the evidence is very uncertain about the effect of PCT for antibiotic prescribing reduction in primary care AECOPD patients.

Strengths and limitations

Our review has strengths. To our knowledge, it is the first systematic review and meta-analysis addressing specifically an AECOPD population in primary care and assessing the effect of biomarkers to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescription. It was achieved by two independent reviewers and occasionally three reviewers on specific points. We gathered data from broad sources: four databases, 115 registers, about 2,000 citation searching and several academic societies. The number of initial records in the flow chart is significant: over 5,000. Records searched were mainly in English and rarely in French, German or Spanish. We did not restrict any language to our search. Although systematic reviews and meta-analysis were excluded from our search, citations and bibliographical references from these reviews were retrieved with the tool “citation chaser” and ensuring no relevant reports were missed.

Our review has limitations too. Our meta-analysis included one single RCT and five observational studies. The lack of RCTs in the body of evidence limited the level of certainty. Combining RCTs and observational studies with different designs and methodologies in a meta-analysis is not ideal as mentioned in the Cochrane Handbook (81) although the results of the sensitivity analysis with observational studies only remained close to the results of the five quantitative studies.

When the OR was not available within two observational studies (68,72), it was computed through the RevMan® tool but confounding factors might not have been taken into account

leading to an unadjusted OR and a higher risk of bias (although these two studies were already considered the most biased in this review with a very low level of evidence).

Regarding limitations related to included studies, the single RCT is open-labelled thus at risk of bias due to the lack of blinding. The main author Butler CC has a conflict of interest with *Roche Molecular Systems* (advisory board fees) and *Roche Molecular Diagnostics* (grant support) a provider of POCT (70). For both reasons, we downgraded this RCT from high to moderate level of evidence despite the reputation of the publication (the NEJM). Observational studies included are of variable quality and do not always address patients harm as a secondary outcome (68,71,72), although antibiotic underprescribing might be an issue for patients safety in case of serious bacterial infection. The level of evidence was assessed as low or very low for these observational studies. Most included studies enrolled AECOPD population based on physician-diagnosed COPD even though the official COPD definition is spirometry confirmed, albeit time-consuming and not readily available in primary care settings (31). Even if the possibility of an alternate diagnosis such as asthma created a selection bias, this situation somehow represents the real-world population being treated as COPD patients in primary care.

Outlook

A cost-analysis and practical feasibility study based on the single included RCT with an English and Welsh population evaluated that CRP POCT diagnostic strategy did not increase healthcare costs and that both patients and clinicians value the diagnostic strategy (82). The qualitative study included in this systematic review on the same English and Welsh population also concluded CRP POCT had high acceptability among primary

care staff and patients, although commissioning arrangements and further simplification of the CRP POCT need attention to facilitate implementation in routine practice (76).

We suggest that more RCTs should be designed in a double-blind setting and without conflict of interest regarding POCT providers to confirm on a bigger scale that CRP POCT significantly reduce antibiotic prescription for AECOPD. The academic society GOLD also suggested in its latest 2024 report additional studies in other settings before a recommendation to generalise this approach (35). A CRP cut-off value for antibiotic prescription should also be evaluated as a primary outcome to confirm a CRP cut-off value around 40mg/L.

Evidence is very scarce about PCT effect on antibiotic prescribing for AECOPD in primary care as no studies specifically focused on this population and particularly for PCT POCT. The cost of PCT (about ten times more expensive than CRP) (15) also raises questions about its future viability in primary care at a time when healthcare spendings are being carefully watched (83,84).

Other POCT biomarkers exist (mainly leucocytes and neutrophils) (65,66) but as of today, no study assessed it for reducing antibiotic prescription for AECOPD in primary care. Some studies in secondary care suggested combining CRP with other biomarkers might enhance performance diagnosis in case of a bacterial AECOPD (85–87). A dual or triple biomarker (CRP/neutrophils or CRP/leucocytes/neutrophils) might then identify more accurately AECOPD requiring antibiotic prescription.

Besides antibiotics, oral glucocorticoids are often prescribed to treat AECOPD in primary care and this treatment may be guided by an eosinophil POCT. Indeed, in a 2024 multicentre, double-blind, and randomised controlled trial in 14 primary care settings in the United Kingdom with 308 patients, treating eosinophilic AECOPD only with corticosteroids did not have a significative difference on re-treatment, hospitalisations or deaths than treating all AECOPD with corticosteroids (88).

Thus, COPD exacerbation phenotype could be identified by such biomarkers to guide not only antibiotherapy but also oral glucocorticoid therapy in primary care. This could be a promising path to a more personalised treatment plan, respectful to the ecosystem and alleviating unnecessary costs to the primary healthcare systems.

Regarding the practical feasibility, POCT devices in primary care are well-implemented and regularly used in other European countries (Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Switzerland) (12,89). However, France medical biology outsourcing in GPs practices is poorly developed and has no legal basis since today blood tests must be carried out and validated in labs only. There is also some reluctance to change in some healthcare professional to outsource biology (90).

CONCLUSION

This systematic review and meta-analysis shows evidence to support CRP POCT in significantly reducing antibiotic prescription for AECOPD in primary care in complement to clinical assessment. However, the level of evidence for this meta-analysis for CRP POCT is low mainly due to the lack of RCTs in the body of evidence and inherent bias to observational studies. The evidence is very uncertain about the effect of PCT for antibiotic prescribing reduction for AECOPD patients in primary care. We suggest French health authorities start considering CRP POCT in primary care for AECOPD to combat the antibiotic resistance plague causing increased healthcare costs and serious complications for patients. Meanwhile, it remains possible at the end of a consultation to prescribe CRP as a blood test in lab and get the result in several hours and call back the patient to guide antibiotherapy in AECOPD in primary care. However, this approach is surely less convenient and efficient than a POCT result within a few minutes.

OTHER INFORMATION

Registration and protocol

The protocol of this review was registered on PROSPERO, an international prospective register of systemic reviews available at <https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero/> under the number CRD42024575414.

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The authors did not have any financial or non financial support from sponsor or funders.

Competing interests

The authors did not have any competing interests.

Availability of data, code and other materials

All search equations are available in the appendix 2.

DISCUSSION GENERALE

Résumé des résultats principaux

Huit études ont été identifiées dans cette revue systématique de littérature : sept études quantitatives dont cinq en lien avec la CRP « *POCT* », deux en lien avec la PCT dosée en laboratoire et une étude qualitative en lien avec la CRP « *POCT* ». Au total, pour la CRP « *POCT* » : une étude randomisée avec 653 patients, quatre études observationnelles pour un total de 1854 patients et une étude qualitative avec 20 patients et 20 infirmières/médecins.

La méta-analyse réalisée avec un essai randomisé et quatre études observationnelles pour la CRP « *POCT* » était en faveur d'une réduction de la prescription d'antibiotiques dans les EBPCO en soins premiers avec une hétérogénéité acceptable mais un niveau de preuve bas.

Pour le critère de jugement secondaire, il n'a pas été possible d'aggréger les différents résultats des études sur le seuil de CRP mais l'unique essai randomisé dans cette revue proposait un seuil à 40 mg/L pour la prescription d'antibiotiques (70,77). Si la purulence des expectorations était également observée, l'AUC augmentait de 0,732 à 0,842 (78) faisant de la CRP « *POCT* » un outil diagnostique relativement performant mais toujours en complément de l'examen clinique et sans risque supplémentaire pour les patients (70). Les études observationnelles proposaient soit un seuil de CRP plus élevé à 50 mg/L (68) que l'essai randomisé à 40 mg/L (70) pour la prescription d'antibiothérapie soit une zone grise entre 20 mg/L et 100 mg/L en fonction du contexte clinique et une forte

recommandation de prescription d'antibiothérapie si la CRP était supérieure à 100 mg/L (71-73).

Au total, le niveau de preuve de cette revue systématique et méta-analyse pour la CRP « *POCT* » était bas (bas à modéré avec l'analyse de sensibilité sur les trois meilleures études) essentiellement par manque d'essais randomisés dans le corps de preuves. L'unique essai randomisé inclus était de bonne qualité mais réalisé sans insu. Les quatre études observationnelles avaient par définition un risque de biais plus élevé.

Comme les deux études évaluant l'effet de la PCT n'ont pas fourni de résultats exploitables en sous-groupes EBPCO et que le taux de prescription d'antibiotiques était un critère de jugement secondaire, le niveau de preuve était très incertain pour l'efficacité de la PCT dans la réduction de la prescription d'antibiotiques en soins premiers. Il n'a donc pas été possible de conclure pour la PCT.

Forces et limites

Notre revue présente des forces. A notre connaissance, il s'agit de la première revue systématique de la littérature et méta-analyse concernant spécifiquement une population d'EBPCO en soins premiers (représentant 80 % des exacerbations) et évaluant l'effet de biomarqueurs pertinents en soins premiers pour réduire la prescription d'antibiotiques. Elle a été réalisée indépendamment par deux évaluateurs et même occasionnellement par trois sur des points spécifiques. Nous avons rassemblé des informations provenant de sources variées : quatre bases de données internationales, 115 registres, environ 2000 « *citation searching* » et plusieurs sociétés savantes. Le nombre total d'enregistrements extraits dépassait 5000 (figure 3 - flow chart) permettant de réaliser une revue exhaustive.

Les enregistrements extraits étaient essentiellement en anglais et rarement en français, allemand ou espagnol. Nous n'avons exclu aucun enregistrement lié à une langue étrangère. Bien que les revues systématiques et méta-analyses aient été exclues de notre recherche, l'outil « *citation chaser* » a permis de chercher les citations et les références bibliographiques de ces revues, garantissant ainsi de ne pas méconnaître une étude importante.

Notre revue présentait également des limites. Notre méta-analyse a inclus un seul essai randomisé et quatre études observationnelles, il manquait donc d'autres essais randomisés pour prétendre à un niveau de preuve modéré ou élevé. Quand l'OR n'était pas directement disponible au sein de deux études observationnelles (68,72), celui-ci a été calculé avec l'outil RevMan® de manière non ajustée donc sans prendre en compte de potentiels facteurs de confusion (bien que ces deux études aient déjà évaluées comme de moindre qualité avec un niveau de preuve très bas).

Au sein des études incluses, l'unique essai randomisé était sans insu et donc exposé à un risque de biais non négligeable. L'auteur principal Butler CC avait un conflit d'intérêt déclaré avec *Roche Molecular Systems* (honoraires de conseil consultatif) et *Roche Molecular Diagnostics* (subvention de soutien), un fournisseur de dispositif « *POCT* » (70) bien qu'une autre entreprise *Abbott* ait fourni les dispositifs « *POCT* » pour cette étude sans interférer avec le design, l'analyse, l'interprétation des données, l'écriture du manuscrit ou encore l'aspect financier. Pour ces deux raisons, nous avons déclassé la qualité (niveau de preuve GRADE) de cet essai randomisé d'élevée à modérée malgré le prestige de la revue dans lequel il était publié (le NEJM).

Les études observationnelles incluses étaient de qualité variable et n'avaient pas comme objectif secondaire les risques supplémentaires induits par la réduction de prescription d'antibiothérapie (notamment l'évolution vers une exacerbation bactérienne sévère). La seule autre étude que l'essai randomisé de Butler CC (70) ayant un seuil défini de la CRP pour la prescription d'antibiothérapie était l'étude observationnelle de Barber D (68) avec un seuil à 50 mg/L (versus 40 mg/L chez Butler) mais la qualité de celle-ci a été évaluée très basse. La qualité des 4 études observationnelles pour la CRP « *POCT* » a été évaluée soit basse soit très basse.

La plupart des études incluses avec une population de patients BPCO ont un diagnostic basé sur des critères déclaratifs d'après le médecin généraliste alors que la définition officielle de la BPCO est basée sur la spirométrie bien que peu répandue chez les médecins généralistes par manque de temps, d'équipement et de formation (31). Cependant, même si le risque d'un diagnostic alternatif comme l'asthme est possible, cela est représentatif des patients ayant probablement une BPCO mais sans confirmation spirométrique et étant malgré tout pris en charge par les médecins généralistes.

Perspectives

Une vaste étude d'analyse de coût et de faisabilité pratique menée sur l'unique essai randomisé de cette revue (sur une population anglaise et galloise) a évalué que la stratégie diagnostique de la CRP « *POCT* » n'augmentait pas les dépenses de santé et que les patients et médecins étaient favorables à cette stratégie diagnostique (82). L'étude qualitative de cette revue systématique toujours sur une population anglaise et galloise a également conclu que l'adhérence au CRP « *POCT* » parmi les patients et soignants était

élevée mais que les procédures d'installation et de mise en service devaient être soigneusement prises en compte pour envisager une utilisation courante (76).

Le développement d'études randomisées supplémentaires, en double-aveugle et sans conflit d'intérêt avec les fournisseurs de « *POCT* » sont nécessaires pour pouvoir généraliser ces résultats à l'échelle internationale. Ces études supplémentaires dans d'autres pays et contextes sont d'ailleurs suggérées par la société savante GOLD dans leur dernier rapport de 2024 (35). Si confirmés, ces résultats donneraient sans doute davantage de crédit auprès des instances de santé à une stratégie diagnostique basée sur l'examen clinique et sur l'utilisation de la CRP « *POCT* » en complément pour réduire la prescription d'antibiothérapie dans les EBPCO en soins premiers. Des études évaluant comme critère de jugement principal la valeur seuil de la CRP sont également nécessaires afin de confirmer ce seuil évalué à 40 mg/L dans notre revue systématique.

Pour la PCT, il n'y a pas suffisamment d'éléments pour conclure car aucune étude à ce jour n'a évalué spécifiquement la population EBPCO en soins premiers et encore moins avec une PCT « *POCT* ». Néanmoins, le coût de la PCT environ dix fois plus élevé que celui de la CRP (15) pose des questions sur la pertinence d'un tel biomarqueur en soins premiers où les dépenses de santé sont actuellement étroitement surveillées (83,84).

Des « *POCT* » pour les leucocytes et neutrophiles existent (65,66) notamment pour les patients à risque de neutropénie à domicile dans les suites d'une chimiothérapie (67). Cependant, aucune étude ne les a évalués à ce jour dans l'optique de diminuer les prescriptions d'antibiothérapie dans les EBPCO en soins premiers. Des études en soins secondaires laissent penser que combiner des biomarqueurs avec la CRP pourrait

améliorer les performances diagnostiques notamment les neutrophiles qui semblent augmenter sensiblement en cas d'EBPCO bactérienne (85–87) Un double ou triple biomarqueur (CRP/neutrophiles ou CRP/leucocytes/neutrophiles) pourrait alors potentiellement identifier plus précisément les EBPCO nécessitant une antibiothérapie.

Hormis l'antibiothérapie, une corticothérapie orale est souvent prescrite pour traiter les EBPCO en soins premiers et cette thérapeutique pourrait également être orientée par un « *POCT* » pour les éosinophiles. En effet, en 2024, un essai clinique randomisé, multicentrique et en double-aveugle réalisé dans 14 centres ambulatoires avec 308 patients au Royaume-Uni, montrait que traiter uniquement les EBPCO avec éosinophilie par corticothérapie orale ne présentaient pas de différence significative en terme de re-traitement, d'hospitalisation ou de décès que de traiter toutes les EBPCO par corticothérapie (88).

Par conséquent, le phénotype d'exacerbation des BPCO pourrait être identifié avec de tels biomarqueurs (CRP, leucocytes, neutrophiles et éosinophiles) pour orienter non seulement la prescription d'antibiothérapie mais également la corticothérapie orale. Cela offrirait une piste prometteuse vers un plan de soins davantage personnalisé, plus respectueux de l'écosystème et limitant les dépenses inutiles liées à l'antibiorésistance.

Concernant la faisabilité pratique, les dispositifs « *POCT* » en soins premiers sont bien implantés et régulièrement utilisés dans des pays voisins de la France (Pays-Bas, Danemark, Suède, Suisse) (12,89). Cependant, la biologie délocalisée « *POCT* » chez les médecins généralistes est très peu développée en France pour plusieurs raisons : en ambulatoire et en dehors d'un contexte thérapeutique urgent, seuls les laboratoires sont actuellement accrédités médico-légalement pour valider des résultats de prise de sang

même capillaire et il existe également une réticence de certains professionnels du secteur à l'extension de la biologie délocalisée (90).

Par ailleurs, réaliser un examen biologique chez le médecin généraliste n'est pas une pratique inscrite dans les mœurs en France. En effet, d'une part, cela demanderait de réaliser un prélèvement capillaire avec un résultat en trois à quatre minutes sur une consultation de quinze minutes, ce qui n'est toutefois pas plus long que les tests rapides d'orientation diagnostique réalisés pour les angines ou les infections covid (91). D'autre part, un investissement financier initial de l'ordre de 1800€ (92,93) est nécessaire mais pourrait cependant être partagé parmi plusieurs praticiens dans une même structure de soins premiers. Une cotation dédiée à cet acte de biologie délocalisé inciterait probablement les médecins à utiliser davantage la CRP « *POCT* » en complément de l'examen clinique leur permettant ainsi d'amortir les frais d'investissement et de maintenance de ce dispositif.

Enfin, une étude qualitative nationale auprès de médecins généralistes français serait utile pour évaluer l'intérêt porté et l'acceptabilité de la CRP « *POCT* » pour limiter les prescriptions d'antibiothérapie inappropriées dans les EBPCO en soins premiers.

CONCLUSION GENERALE

Cette revue systématique et méta-analyse apporte des éléments en faveur de la CRP « *POCT* » en complément de l'examen clinique pour diminuer significativement les prescriptions d'antibiothérapie inappropriées dans les EBPCO en soins premiers.

Cependant, le niveau de preuve de cette méta-analyse pour la CRP « *POCT* » était bas (bas à modéré avec l'analyse de sensibilité sur les trois meilleures études) en raison d'un seul essai randomisé identifié et de biais inhérents aux études observationnelles.

Le niveau de preuve de la PCT sur la diminution des prescriptions d'antibiothérapie dans les EBPCO en soins premiers est difficilement évaluable, il n'est donc pas possible de conclure.

Nous suggérons aux autorités de santé de considérer l'approche CRP « *POCT* » pour les EBPCO en soins premiers pour combattre le fléau de l'antibiorésistance augmentant les dépenses de santé et source de complications graves pour les patients. En attendant, il est toujours possible de prescrire une CRP sur un bilan sanguin à la fin d'une consultation, d'obtenir le résultat du laboratoire en quelques heures et de rappeler le patient pour décider d'une antibiothérapie ou non en cas d'EPBCO en soins premiers. Cependant, cette démarche reste moins pratique et beaucoup plus longue qu'un résultat de « *POCT* » obtenu en quelques minutes auprès du patient.

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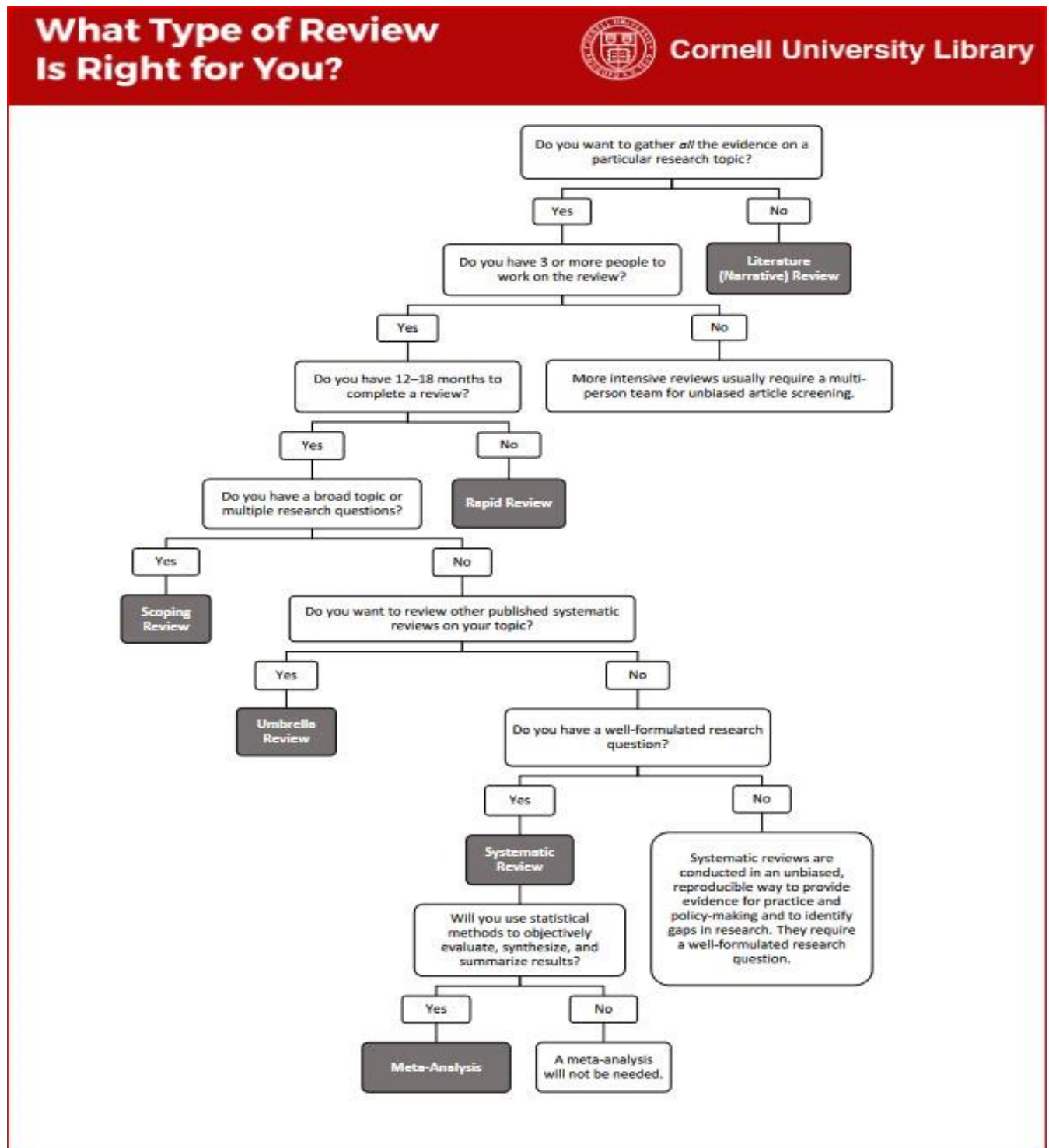
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: types of literature review chart



APPENDIX 2: aggregated and detailed block of search equations for the four databases

Aggregated block of search equations

PUBMED	
BLOC 1 AND BLOC 2 AND BLOC 3	("Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive"[Mesh] OR "Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive"[Title/Abstract] OR "COPD"[Title/Abstract] OR "chronic obstructive pulmonary disease"[Title/Abstract]) AND ("Anti-Infective Agents"[Mesh] OR antibiotic*[Title/Abstract] OR antibacterial agent*[Title/Abstract] OR anti-bacterial agent*[Title/Abstract]) AND (biomarker[MeSH Terms] OR biomarker*[Title/Abstract] OR biomarker*[Title/Abstract] OR biological markers OR biological marker* OR point-of-care systems[MeSH Terms] OR point of care[Title/Abstract] OR POCT[Title/Abstract] OR C-reactive protein[MeSH Terms] OR C-reactive protein[Title/Abstract] OR C reactive protein* OR Procalcitonin[MeSH Terms] OR Procalcitonin[Title/Abstract] OR Leukocytes[MeSH Terms] OR Leukocytes[Title/Abstract] OR blood neutrophil/lymphocyte ratio [Title/Abstract])
EMBASE	
BLOC 1 AND BLOC 2 AND BLOC 3	('chronic obstructive lung disease'/exp OR 'exacerbations of chronic pulmonary disease tool'/exp) AND ('antibiotic agent'/exp) AND('biological marker'/exp OR 'c reactive protein'/exp OR 'point of care testing'/exp OR 'point of care system'/exp OR 'leukocyte'/exp OR 'procalcitonin'/exp OR 'procalcitonin blood level'/exp OR 'neutrophil'/exp)
WEB OF SCIENCE	
BLOC 1 AND BLOC 2 AND BLOC 3	(TI=(COPD) OR AB =(COPD) OR AK=(COPD) OR TI=(Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease) OR AB=(Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease) OR AK=(Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease)) AND (TI=(Antibiotic) OR AB=(Antibiotic) OR AK=(Antibiotic) OR TI=(Anti-Bacterial Agents) OR AB=(Anti-Bacterial Agents) OR AK= (Anti-Bacterial Agents) OR TI=(Amoxicillin) OR AB=(Amoxicillin) OR AK=(Amoxicillin) OR TI=(antiinfective therapy) OR AB=(antiinfective therapy) OR AK=(antiinfective therapy) OR TI=(augmentin) OR AB=(augmentin) OR AK=(augmentin)) AND (TI=(biomarker*) OR TI=(bio-marker*) OR AB=(biomarker*) OR AB=(bio-marker*) OR AK=(biomarker*) OR AK=(bio-marker*) OR TI=(point of care) OR TI=(POCT) OR AB=(point of care) OR AB=(POCT) OR AK=(point of care) OR AK=(POCT) OR TI=(C-reactive protein) OR TI=(C reactive protein) OR TI=(CRP) OR AB=(C-reactive protein) OR AB=(C reactive protein) OR AB=(CRP) OR AK=(C-reactive protein) OR AB=(C reactive protein) OR AK=(CRP) OR TI=(procalcitonin) OR TI=(PCT) OR AB=(procalcitonin) OR TI=(PCT) OR AB=(procalcitonin) OR AB=(PCT) OR TI=(leukocyte*) OR TI=(blood white count) OR TI=(neutrophil*) OR AB=(leukocyte*) OR AB=(blood white count) OR AB=(neutrophil*) OR AK=(leukocyte*) OR AK=(blood white count) OR AK=(neutrophil*))

COCHRANE	
BLOC 1 AND BLOC 2 AND BLOC 3	(MeSH descriptor: [Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive] OR (Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive):ti,ab,kw OR (COPD):ti,ab,kw OR COPD exacerbation* OR Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*) AND ('MeSH descriptor[Anti-Infective Agents] OR anti bacterial agent* OR antibiotic* OR amoxicillin OR antiinfective agent* OR anti infective agent* OR anti infective therapy OR antiinfective therapy OR anti-infective therapy) AND (MeSH descriptor: [Biomarkers] OR biomarker* OR biological marker* OR MeSH descriptor: point-of-care systems OR point of care OR POC OR C reactive protein* OR CRP OR leukocytes OR leucocytes OR procalcitonin OR PCT OR MeSH descriptor: [leukocytes] OR leukocyte* OR leucocyte* OR MeSH descriptor: [Neutrophils] OR neutrophil*) r: point-of-care systems OR point of care OR POC OR C reactive protein* OR CRP OR leukocytes OR leucocytes OR procalcitonin OR PCT OR MeSH descriptor: [leukocytes] OR leukocyte* OR leucocyte* OR MeSH descriptor: [Neutrophils] OR neutrophil*)

Block 1: COPD

PUBMED	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
"Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive"[Mesh] OR "Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive"[Title/Abstract]	24/07/2023	67,053
"COPD"[Title/Abstract]	24/07/2023	58,672
"chronic obstructive pulmonary disease"[Title/Abstract]	24/07/2023	61,309
"Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive"[Mesh] OR "Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive"[Title/Abstract] OR "COPD"[Title/Abstract] OR "chronic obstructive pulmonary disease"[Title/Abstract]	24/07/2023	101,972
EMBASE	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
chronic obstructive lung disease'/exp	16/08/2023	176,452
exacerbations of chronic pulmonary disease tool'/exp	16/08/2023	12
chronic obstructive lung disease'/exp OR 'exacerbations of chronic pulmonary disease tool'/exp	16/08/2023	176,547
WEB OF SCIENCE	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
TI=(COPD) OR AB =(COPD) OR AK=(COPD)	24/07/2023	72,242
TI=(Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease) OR AB=(Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease) OR AK=(Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease)	24/07/2023	62,554
TI=(COPD) OR AB =(COPD) OR AK=(COPD) OR 'TI=(Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease) OR AB=(Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease) OR AK=(Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease)	24/07/2023	95,763

COCHRANE	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
MeSH descriptor: [Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive]	15/08/2023	7267
COPD	15/08/2023	19,264
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*	15/08/2023	17,106
MeSH descriptor: [Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive] OR (Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Obstructive):ti,ab,kw OR (COPD):ti,ab,kw OR COPD exacerbation* OR Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease*	15/08/2023	23,917

Block 2: antibiotics

PUBMED	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
"Anti-Infective Agents"[Mesh]	15/08/2023	443,234
antibiotic*[Title/Abstract]	15/08/2023	427,877
antibacterial agent*[Title/Abstract]	15/08/2023	12,540
antibiotic agent*[Title/Abstract]	15/08/2023	1,988
"Anti-Infective Agents"[Mesh] OR antibiotic*[Title/Abstract] OR antibacterial agent*[Title/Abstract] OR anti-bacterial agent*[Title/Abstract]	15/08/2023	1,052,047
EMBASE	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
'antibiotic agent'/exp	15/08/2023	1,924,583
'antibiotic agent'/exp	15/08/2023	1,924,583
WEB OF SCIENCE	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
TI=(Antibiotic) OR AB=(Antibiotic) OR AK=(Antibiotic)	24/07/2023	97,711
TI=(Anti-Bacterial Agents) OR AB=(Anti-Bacterial Agents) OR AK=(Anti-Bacterial Agents)	24/07/2023	2587
TI=(antiinfective therapy) OR AB=(antiinfective therapy) OR AK=(antiinfective therapy)	24/07/2023	157
TI=(Amoxicillin) OR AB=(Amoxicillin) OR AK=(Amoxicillin)	24/07/2023	19098
TI=(augmentin) OR AB=(augmentin) OR AK=(augmentin)	24/07/2023	504
TI=(Antibiotic) OR AB=(Antibiotic) OR AK=(Antibiotic) OR TI=(Anti-Bacterial Agents) OR AB=(Anti-Bacterial Agents) OR AK=(Anti-Bacterial Agents) OR TI=(Amoxicillin) OR AB=(Amoxicillin) OR AK=(Amoxicillin) OR TI=(antiinfective therapy) OR AB=(antiinfective therapy) OR AK=(antiinfective therapy) OR TI=(augmentin) OR AB=(augmentin) OR AK=(augmentin)	24/07/2023	374,365

COCHRANE	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
MeSH descriptor: [Anti-Infective Agents]	15/08/2023	36,360
anti bacterial agent*	15/08/2023	16,044
antibiotic*	15/08/2023	38,774
amoxicillin	15/08/2023	6,797
antiinfective agent* OR anti infective agent*	15/08/2023	7,000
anti infective therapy OR antiinfective therapy OR anti-infective therapy	15/08/2023	7,067
'MeSH descriptor[Anti-Infective Agents] OR anti bacterial agent* OR antibiotic* OR amoxicillin OR antiinfective agent* OR anti infective agent* OR anti infective therapy OR antiinfective therapy OR anti-infective therapy	15/08/2023	69,166

Block 3: biomarkers

PUBMED	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
biomarkers [MeSH Terms]	15/08/2023	883,351
biomarker*[Title/Abstract]	15/08/2023	418,622
biological markers	15/08/2023	1,093,027
biological marker*	15/08/2023	532,210
point-of-care systems[MeSH Terms]	07/06/2023	19,835
point of care[Title/Abstract]	07/06/2023	32,948
POCT[Title/Abstract]	07/06/2023	2,542
C-reactive protein[MeSH Terms]	07/06/2023	53,956
C-reactive protein[Title/Abstract]	07/06/2023	89,285
C reactive protein*	15/08/2023	153,547
Procalcitonin[MeSH Terms]	07/06/2023	1,785
Procalcitonin[Title/Abstract]	07/06/2023	8,973
Leukocytes[MeSH Terms]	07/06/2023	819,554
Leukocytes[Title/Abstract]	07/06/2023	84,036
blood neutrophil/lymphocyte ratio [Title/Abstract]	07/06/2023	63
biomarker[MeSH Terms] OR biomarker*[Title/Abstract] OR biological markers OR biological marker* OR point-of-care systems[MeSH Terms] OR point of care[Title/Abstract] OR POCT[Title/Abstract] OR C-reactive protein[MeSH Terms] OR C-reactive protein[Title/Abstract] OR C reactive protein* OR Procalcitonin[MeSH Terms] OR Procalcitonin[Title/Abstract] OR Leukocytes[MeSH Terms] OR Leukocytes[Title/Abstract] OR blood neutrophil/lymphocyte ratio [Title/Abstract]	15/08/2023	2,221,948

EMBASE	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
'biological marker'/exp	20/07/2023	428,784
'c reactive protein'/exp	20/07/2023	253,880
'point of care testing'/exp	20/07/2023	21,469
'leukocyte'/exp	20/07/2023	1,483,700
'procalcitonin'/exp	20/07/2023	23,749
procalcitonin blood level'/exp	20/07/2023	88
point of care system'/exp	20/07/2023	3,923
neutrophil'/exp	20/07/2023	173,522
biological marker'/exp OR 'c reactive protein'/exp OR 'point of care testing'/exp OR 'point of care system'/exp OR 'leukocyte'/exp OR 'procalcitonin'/exp OR 'procalcitonin blood level'/exp OR 'neutrophil'/exp	16/08/2023	2,112,159
WEB OF SCIENCE	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
TI=(biomarker*) OR TI=(bio-marker*) OR AB=(biomarker*) OR AB=(bio-marker*) OR AK=(biomarker*) OR AK=(bio-marker*)	26/07/2023	480,426
TI=(point of care) OR TI=(POCT) OR AB=(point of care) OR AB=(POCT) OR AK=(point of care) OR AK=(POCT)	31/07/2023	14,595
TI=(C-reactive protein) OR TI=(C reactive protein) OR TI=(CRP) OR AB=(C-reactive protein) OR AB=(C reactive protein) OR AB=(CRP) OR AK=(C-reactive protein) OR AB=(C reactive protein) OR AK=(CRP)	31/07/2023	141,761
TI=(procalcitonin) OR TI=(PCT) OR AB=(procalcitonin) OR TI=(PCT) OR AB=(procalcitonin) OR AB=(PCT)	31/07/2023	23,275
TI=(leukocyte*) OR TI=(blood white count) OR TI=(neutrophil*) OR AB=(leukocyte*) OR AB=(blood white count) OR AB=(neutrophil*) OR AK=(leukocyte*) OR AK=(blood white count) OR AK=(neutrophil*)	31/07/2023	302,422
TI=(biomarker*) OR TI=(bio-marker*) OR AB=(biomarker*) OR AB=(bio-marker*) OR AK=(biomarker*) OR AK=(bio-marker*) OR TI=(point of care) OR TI=(POCT) OR AB=(point of care) OR AB=(POCT) OR AK=(point of care) OR AK=(POCT) OR TI=(C-reactive protein) OR TI=(C reactive protein) OR TI=(CRP) OR AB=(C-reactive protein) OR AB=(C reactive protein) OR AB=(CRP) OR AK=(C-reactive protein) OR AB=(C reactive protein) OR AK=(CRP) OR TI=(procalcitonin) OR TI=(PCT) OR AB=(procalcitonin) OR TI=(PCT) OR AB=(procalcitonin) OR AB=(PCT) OR TI=(leukocyte*) OR TI=(blood white count) OR TI=(neutrophil*) OR AB=(leukocyte*) OR AB=(blood white count) OR AB=(neutrophil*) OR AK=(leukocyte*) OR AK=(blood white count) OR AK=(neutrophil*)	31/07/2023	993,695

COCHRANE	Date de lancement de la requête	Nombre de résultats
MeSH descriptor: [Biomarkers]	15/08/2023	26,881
biomarker*	15/08/2023	54,135
biological marker*	15/08/2023	8,217
MeSH descriptor: point-of-care systems	15/08/2023	707
point of care	15/08/2023	31,141
POC	15/08/2023	3,146
C reactive protein*	15/08/2023	22,892
CRP	15/08/2023	22,241
procalcitonin	15/08/2023	1,398
PCT	15/08/2023	1,567
MeSH descriptor: [leukocytes]	15/08/2023	11,191
Leukocytes OR leucocytes	15/08/2023	16,952
MeSH descriptor: [Neutrophils]	15/08/2023	1,584
neutrophil*	15/08/2023	14,572
MeSH descriptor: [Biomarkers] OR biomarker* OR biological marker* OR MeSH descriptor: point-of-care systems OR point of care OR POC OR C reactive protein* OR CRP OR leukocytes OR leucocytes OR procalcitonin OR PCT OR MeSH descriptor: [leukocytes] OR leukocyte* OR leucocyte* OR MeSH descriptor: [Neutrophils] OR neutrophil*	15/08/2023	146,193

APPENDIX 3: grey literature search

- these.fr: no relevant reports found
- bioRxiv: no relevant reports found
- COPD GOLD academic society: two relevant reports found :
 - o « GOLD 2023: Highlights for primary care ».
 - o « GOLD 2024 report » : p118/218
- Pepite (<https://pepite.univ-lille.fr/ori-oai-search/>): no relevant reports found
- google scholar: no new relevant report found with the search equation : *COPD and biomarkers and antibiotics*
- Sudoc: 5 relevant thesis in French but with a different population or a different primary outcome :
 - o *Analyse critique de la prescription d'antibiotiques dans les exacerbations de la broncho-pneumopathie chronique obstructive , thèse 2008, Saint Etienne*
 - o *Les médecins sont-ils prêts à faire confiance à la procalcitonine pour guider la mise sous antibiotiques dans l'exacerbation de BPCO ? Bordeaux, 2014*
 - o *Exacerbations aiguës de bronchites chroniques : quelle place pour le dosage de la procalcitonine ? : étude rétrospective bicentrique sur 152 patients, 2010, Clermond-Ferrand*
 - o *Biological Markers For Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease And Asthma, 2016*
 - o *Intérêt du dosage de la protéine C réactive par des méthodes de biologie délocalisée en soins primaires, Lille, 2018*

APPENDIX 4: analysis of biases

Analysis of bias within non-randomised studies for CRP biomarker

Bias name	Risk	<i>Barber et al. 2022. British journal of community nursing.</i>
Bias due to confounding	Serious	1) By definition, as this is an observational study and no mention of variables adjustment. 2) Quote: "a relatively large number patients with COPD may also have an underlying diagnosis of bronchiectasis, however within this study, each cohort was categorised as a distinct diagnosis"
Biais of selection of participants into the study	Serious	Quote: "Telephone contacts were excluded from this review as during a telephone-only consultation, measurement of CRP was not an option. However, after other exclusions were applied, telephone contacts accounted for 41.3% of clinical contacts (n= 258) and included advice on starting antibiotics. Thus, a large number of contacts and assessment were not studied"
Bias in classifications of interventions	No information	Not applicable (no intervention as retrospective quantitative service review)
Bias due to deviations from intended interventions	No information	Not applicable (no intervention as retrospective quantitative service review)
Bias due to missing outcome data	Moderate	Quote: "Documentation of the AC symptoms was found within the comment section of electronic notes and required manual tabulation, and depended on accurate clinical history-taking and then documentation, which is assumed for the purposes of this review. However, this may be be an area of weakness to be addressed in any future study"
Bias in measurement of the outcome	Serious	Quote: "CRP measurement was not integrated into the complete assessment as a required component. Instead it was and is for the clinician to decide to utilise it based on an individual assessment and no protocol was in place to determine this"
Bias in selection of the reported result	Moderate	No available protocol to compare intended outcomes with analysed outcomes

Bias analysis for study *Barber et al. 2022. British journal of community nursing.*

Bias name	Risk	<i>Llor C, et al. 2013. Therapeutic Advances in Respiratory Disease</i>
Bias due to confounding	Moderate	Quote: "another limitation is that we did not take comorbidities of patients into account" but utilization of C-reactive protein in the office CRP was "adjusted for all other potential predictors in multivariate logistic regression model"
Bias of selection of participants into the study	Moderate	1) Quote: "CRP determination was carried out mainly in Denmark and Sweden" and not in the four other countries (Lithuania, Russia, Spain and Argentina) 2) Quote: "GPs participated on a voluntarily basis and their prescribing habits were probably different from others GPs in the same country"
Bias in classifications of interventions	No information	Not applicable (no intervention as cross-sectional study)
Bias due to deviations from intended interventions	No information	Not applicable (no intervention as cross-sectional study)
Bias due to missing outcome data	Moderate	Not available even in the Happy Audit protocol. However, another study using the Happy Audit cohort revealed missing data (<i>Strikowski DF, et al. 2015. Family Practice</i>). This effect is here difficult to evaluate
Bias in measurement of the outcome	Moderate	Quote in the published protocol: "from a theoretical point of view, the decision to treat should be taken after a diagnosis has been established. In general practice, however, the diagnostic procedures and the decision to treat are intricately linked. The GP may decide whether or not to prescribe an antibiotic at the same time, or even before, he classifies a specific diagnosis to the patient. After making the decision to prescribe the GP may thus adjust the diagnosis to fit the decision about treatment. This may lead to a diagnostic misclassification bias. However, this potential bias will affect the validity of the diagnosis both before and after the intervention and it only has a small likelihood of influencing the effect of the intervention"
Bias in selection of the reported result	Low	Reliability of the Audit Project Odense methodology (used as a reference protocol for this study)

Bias analysis for study *Llor C, et al. 2013. Therapeutic Advances in Respiratory Disease*

Bias name	Risk	<i>Llor C, et al. 2012. Eur Respi Journal</i>
Bias due to confounding	Moderate	Quote: "another limitation is that possible associated comorbidities of the patients registered were not taken into account, and this may influence the percentage and the type of antibiotic used" but quote: "A multilevel logistic regression model was estimated with two levels: the patients with LRTIs and the physicians. Antibiotic prescription was considered as a dependent variable. The variables of interest were the use of CRP and the five clusters of physicians (control group, the FIG before and after the intervention, and the FIG before and after the intervention). The model was also adjusted for covaria-

		bles: age and sex, days with symptoms, signs presented, diagnosis, patient demand for antibiotics, request for radiograph, and radiographic results positive for consolidation"
Biais of selection of participants into the study	Serious	1) This study has a LTRI population that includes a sub-group acute exacerbations of COPD (AECOPD) but it does not address AECOPD population in primary care only. Quote : "the registry sheet included the referral of patients to hospital" 2) Quote: "GPs participated on a voluntarily basis and their prescribing habits were probably different from others GPs in the same country"
Bias in classifications of interventions	Moderate	1) Quote: "physicians were instructed not to use CRP as a stand-alone test but rather to use it as an additional test in case of doubt, withholding antibiotic therapy" 2) Quote: "The CRP test was only used by the physicians in the FIG after the intervention, with 545 determinations of a total of 1,488 (36.6%) contacts"
Bias due to deviations from intended interventions	Moderate	1) Quote: "physicians were instructed not to use CRP as a stand-alone test but rather to use it as an additional test in case of doubt, withholding antibiotic therapy" 2) Quote: "The CRP test was only used by the physicians in the FIG after the intervention, with 545 determinations of a total of 1,488 (36.6%) contacts"
Bias due to missing outcome data	Low	Quote: "< 10% of the professionals who carried out the first registry abandoned the study"
Bias in measurement of the outcome	Moderate	Quote in the published protocol: "from a theoretical point of view, the decision to treat should be taken after a diagnosis has been established. In general practice, however, the diagnostic procedures and the decision to treat are intricately linked. The GP may decide whether or not to prescribe an antibiotic at the same time, or even before, he classifies a specific diagnosis to the patient. After making the decision to prescribe the GP may thus adjust the diagnosis to fit the decision about treatment. This may lead to a diagnostic misclassification bias. However, this potential bias will affect the validity of the diagnosis both before and after the intervention and it only has a small likelihood of influencing the effect of the intervention"
Bias in selection of the reported result	Moderate	Reliability of the Audit Project Odense methodology (used as a reference protocol for this study)

Bias analysis for study *Llor C, et al. 2012. Eur Respi Journal*

Bias name	Risk	<i>Strikowski DF, et al. 2015. Family Practice</i>
Bias due to confounding	Moderate	1) Quote: "Another limitation is that important variables were not taken into account which may have influenced the antibiotic prescribing rate, including forced expiratory volume in 1 s, smoking status, comorbidities, use of oral corticosteroids and history on previous exacerbations 2) Quote: "Although patient demand for antibiotics is a known predictor of antibiotic prescribing (2), the results are unadjusted for this effect, as part of the intervention was to educate consulting patients on the importance of rational use of antibiotics 3) Quote: "The model was multivariably adjusted for patient covariables: age and sex"
Bias of selection of participants into the study	Moderate	1) Quote: "a major limitation of this study is the inclusion of patients without a spirometric diagnosis of COPD. Consequently, patients with exacerbation of chronic bronchitis were also included. This limitation mimics a previously described clinical problem in primary care in Spain, where COPD often is erroneously diagnosed by clinical symptoms without spirometrical confirmation" 2) Quote: "GPs participated on a voluntary basis and their prescribing habits may not reflect the average use of antibiotics in primary care in Spain. GPs participating in audits may be more interested in research and quality development than other GPs"
Bias in classifications of interventions	Moderate	1) Quote: "GPs were advised to use CRP test only in cases of doubt, and not as a stand-alone test, withholding antibiotic therapy for CRP values <20 mg/l and prescribing an antibiotic for values >100 mg/l" 2) Quote: "The CRP rapid test was only used by GPs in the post-intervention FIG and was measured in 29.4% of AECOPD patients in this group"
Bias due to deviations from intended interventions	Moderate	1) Quote: "GPs were advised to use CRP test only in cases of doubt, and not as a stand-alone test, withholding antibiotic therapy for CRP values <20 mg/l and prescribing an antibiotic for values >100 mg/l" 2) Quote: "The CRP rapid test was only used by GPs in the post-intervention FIG and was measured in 29.4% of AECOPD patients in this group."
Bias due to missing outcome data	Low	1) Quote: "A great strength of the study was the large number of GPs included and the fact that only few GPs abandoned the study" 2) Quote: "missing information on antibiotic prescription (n=4)". That is very small proportion of patients with missing outcome data
Bias in measurement of the outcome	Moderate	Quote in the published protocol: "from a theoretical point of view, the decision to treat should be taken after a diagnosis has been established. In general practice, however, the diagnostic procedures and the decision to treat are intricately linked. The GP may decide whether or

		not to prescribe an antibiotic at the same time, or even before, he classifies a specific diagnosis to the patient. After making the decision to prescribe the GP may thus adjust the diagnosis to fit the decision about treatment. This may lead to a diagnostic misclassification bias. However, this potential bias will affect the validity of the diagnosis both before and after the intervention and it only has a small likelihood of influencing the effect of the intervention"
Bias in selection of the reported result	Moderate	Reliability of the Audit Project Odense methodology (used as a reference protocol for this study)

Bias analysis for study *Strikowski DF, et al. 2015. Family Practice*

Analysis of bias within randomised study for CRP biomarker

Bias name	Risk	<i>Butler CC. NEJM. 2019</i>
Random sequence generation	Low	Online computerised randomisation 1:1 ratio performed by the Centre for Trials Research at Cardiff University. Anthonisen criteria (categorised as type 1, 2 or 3) was used as a minimisation variable with a random element set at 80%
Allocation concealment	Low	As stated in the published protocol : "Remote allocation will maintain allocation concealment from both the participant and the recruiting clinician up to the point of intervention, as this is an open study"
Blinding of participants and personnel	High	Interventions are targeted at the level of the GP. Open label trial where participants and staff knew if C-reactive protein levels were used for guidance of antibiotic treatment. Quote: "we were not able to blind physicians or patients in our trial".
Blinding of outcome assessment	Low	Quote: "Clinicians recorded their antibiotic prescribing and other management decisions for all participants after randomization." by the clinicians after randomisation.
Incomplete outcome data	Low	Quote: "the antibiotic prescribing decisions made by clinicians at the initial consultation were ascertained for all but 1 patient, and antibiotic prescriptions issued over the first 4 weeks of follow-up were ascertained for 96.9% of the patients."
Selective reporting	Low	Outcome matches with the study protocol.
Other sources of bias	Moderate	The main author Butler CC has a conflict of interest with Roche Molecular Systems (advisory board fees) and Roche Molecular Diagnostics (grant support), a provider of point-of-care devices. However, the company Abbott which rented CRP point-of-care had : "no role in the design of the trial; in the accrual, analysis, or interpretation of the data; or in the preparation of the manuscript"

Bias analysis for study *Butler CC. NEJM. 2019*

Analysis of bias within randomised studies for PCT biomarker

Bias name	Risk	<i>Briel M. 2008. Arch.Intern Med</i>
Random sequence generation	Low	Quote: "randomization was in fixed blocks of 4, and a separate randomization list was kept for each physician's practice"
Allocation concealment	Low	Quote: "allocation to either intervention was concealed by using a centralized randomization procedure with computer-generated lists produced by an independent statistician"
Blinding of participants and personnel	High	This is an open, multicenter, noninferiority trial where participants and staff knew if PCT was used for guidance of antibiotic treatment.
Blinding of outcome assessment	High	1) Need of antibiotics was assessed before randomisation. Quote : "adult patients with an acute respiratory tract infection and, in their physician's opinion, in need of antibiotics were randomized to either a PCT-guided approach to antibiotic therapy or to a standard approach in which physicians were asked to adhere to current guidelines" 2) This is an open-study without blinding of the primary outcome : "the number of days, within the first 14 days after baseline, during which a patient's daily activities (work or recreation) were restricted by a respiratory tract infection"
Incomplete outcome data	Low	Quote: "for the primary outcome, we report both per-protocol and intention-to-treat analyses with conservative replacement of missing values in the latter"
Selective reporting	Low	Outcome matches with the study protocol.
Other sources of bias	Low	-

Bias analysis for study *Briel M. 2008. Arch.Intern Med*

Bias name	Risk	<i>O. Burkhardt 2010. Eu. Respi J</i>
Random sequence generation	Low	Quote from protocol: "In the interventional part of the study, baseline adaptive randomization was realized through a web-based randomization data bank (IOMTech GmbH, Berlin, Germany), which had been programmed specifically for that purpose"
Allocation concealment	Low	Quote: "Neither the result of the randomisation nor the exact PCT concentration was conveyed to the physician"
Blinding of participants and personnel	Moderate	1) Quote: "A venous EDTA blood specimen was taken from each patient, which was collected, centrifuged and deep-frozen until batch analysis of PCT by employees of the MHH. The results were not reported to the physicians" 2) Quote: "Follow-up clinical investigations were undertaken by employees of the MHH blinded to the study aim and the content"

		of the study protocol on days 14 and 28 after inclusion in the study" 3) Quote: "Neither the result of the randomisation nor the exact PCT concentration was conveyed to the physician." 4) However, the study design made it possible to guess group allocation, quote : "patients who required antimicrobial treatment according to clinical judgment received a prescription with the request to redeem the prescription only after they had been told to do so by telephone"
Blinding of outcome assessment	Moderate	1) Need of antibiotics was assessed before randomisation and may impact patients reported health during follow-up 2) The study design made it possible to guess group allocation (and therefore patients reported health during follow-up), : "patients who required antimicrobial treatment according to clinical judgment received a prescription with the request to redeem the prescription only after they had been told to do so by telephone"
Incomplete outcome data	Low	N=1 missing in the PCT group and n=3 in the control group. Quote: "For the primary outcome, missing values were not replaced. In a sensitivity analysis, missing values for the primary outcome were replaced either as worst case for all (i.e. assuming 14 days with health impairment, scenario 1) or as worst case for PCT guided and best case for standard therapy (i.e. assuming 14 days with health impairment for PCT-guided and 0 days for standard therapy)"
Selective reporting	High	The authors seem to conclude on a secondary outcome at the beginning of the discussion: Quote: "The main results of the present study are as follows: 1) Although the rate of patient treatment with antibiotics was consistently relatively low (30%), there is huge potential for further reduction of antibiotic treatment 2) A simple PCT guided strategy of decisions on antibiotic treatment, including the option of clinical overruling, is non-inferior to standard treatment in terms of safety, and effectively reduced the antibiotic treatment rate by 41.6%"
Other sources of bias	Moderate	Quote: "Thirdly, the previous study included extensive training of the participating physicians in terms of not only briefing but also teaching in evidence-based guidelines. This intervention might open a bias towards antibiotic restriction."

Bias analysis for study *O. Burkhardt 2010. Eu. Respi J*

AUTEUR : Nom : FRENOIS

Prénom : Mathieu

Date de soutenance : 09/10/2024

Titre de la thèse : Intérêt du dosage de biomarqueur(s) dans les exacerbations de BPCO en soins premiers pour limiter la prescription d'antibiotiques : revue systématique de littérature et méta-analyse

Thèse - Médecine - Lille 2024

Cadre de classement : Médecine Générale DES + FST/option : Médecine Générale

Mots-clés : exacerbations, BPCO, biomarqueurs, « point-of-care », antibiothérapie

Contexte : une antibiothérapie est trop souvent prescrite dans les exacerbations de BPCO (EBPCO) en soins premiers. Les signes d'exacerbation bactérienne sont controversés et peu spécifiques. Utiliser des biomarqueurs en complément de l'examen clinique pourrait aider à réduire les prescriptions inappropriées d'antibiothérapie.

Méthode : Revue systématique basée sur PRISMA 2020 et Cochrane Handbook identifiant les essais randomisés et études observationnelles et évaluant l'impact des biomarqueurs sur la prescription d'antibiothérapie dans les EBPCO en soins premiers. La littérature publiée de 1900 au 31 août 2023 sur Pubmed, Cochrane, Web of Science et Embase a été examinée et extraite par deux évaluateurs indépendants. Les risques de biais et la qualité méthodologique ont été évalués avec le Cochrane Risk of Bias tool et avec le cadre de référence GRADE et la méta-analyse avec l'outil Cochrane RevMan®.

Résultats : huit études ont été incluses : six pour la protéine C-réactive (CRP) en « *point-of-care testing (POCT)* » et deux pour la procalcitonine (PCT) en laboratoire. Pour la CRP « *POCT* », un essai randomisé avec 653 patients, quatre études observationnelles pour 1854 patients et une étude qualitative avec 20 patients et 20 médecins/infirmières ont été inclus. Pour la PCT, deux essais randomisés incluant 21 et 6 patients EBPCO ont été inclus. La méta-analyse pour la CRP « *POCT* » était en faveur d'une diminution de prescription d'antibiothérapie en soins premiers avec une hétérogénéité modérée : OR = 0,41 ; IC 95 % : [0,32-0,53] ; I² = 36 %. Cependant, le niveau de preuve était bas (bas à modéré avec l'analyse de sensibilité sur les trois meilleures études) surtout en raison d'un nombre insuffisant d'essais randomisés. Les critères secondaires retrouvaient un seuil probable de CRP à 40 mg/L pour la prescription d'antibiothérapie avec une AUC de 0,732 majorée à 0,842 en présence d'expectorations purulentes et sans risque supplémentaire pour les patients. Il n'a pas été possible de conclure pour la PCT en raison du manque d'analyse en sous-groupes EBPCO pour les deux études et d'un taux de prescription d'antibiothérapie considéré comme critère de jugement secondaire.

Conclusion : L'utilisation de la CRP « *POCT* » en complément de l'examen clinique permet probablement la diminution de prescription d'antibiothérapie dans les EBPCO en soins premiers mais des essais randomisés supplémentaires doivent confirmer ce résultat. Il n'y a pas de données suffisantes pour conclure sur le biomarqueur PCT.

Composition du Jury :

Président : Pr Olivier Le Rouzic

Assesseurs : Dr Isabelle Bodein

Directeur de thèse : Pr Christophe Berkhout