EUCAST in 2012 – 2013

www.eucast.org

EUCAST is the European Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing. It provides common European breakpoints and antimicrobial susceptibility testing methodology. Over the years ESCMID has provided the administrative, financial and scientific framework for EUCAST. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is currently supporting EUCAST with another three year contract (2011 – 14), while ESCMID is supporting the development of the EUCAST disk diffusion method.

Version 3.0 of the EUCAST breakpoint tables was published on the EUCAST website (www.eucast.org) in January 2013. Changes or new breakpoints in breakpoint tables are highlighted in such a way that the user is immediately alerted to the change. Breakpoints for new agents are set by EUCAST as part of a licensing process of the European Medicines Agency (EMA). In the past year, breakpoints have been set for ceftaroline and several other new agents, including antimycobacterial and antifungal agents, are currently being processed. Particularly for disk diffusion, several breakpoints, including piperacillin, cefalexin and aztreonam for Enterobacteriaceae and aminoglycosides for enterococci, have been revised in the light of new information. Moreover, several technical notes have been reworded and supplementary tables for the interpretation of susceptibility testing results have been added (i.e. oxacillin disk screen for Strep-
toccus pneumoniae and benzylpenicillin disk screen for Hae-
mophilus influenzae). Breakpoints for various less common organisms, including Pasteurella multocida, Campylobacter jejuni and Campylobacter coli, were established and, in collaboration with ESCMID Study Groups or National Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing Committees, new breakpoints are being developed for organisms including Corynebacterium spp. and Pseu-
domonas spp. other than P. aeruginosa. Breakpoints for topical agents are also under discussion.

In the process of setting breakpoints and in compliance with the TATFAR (Transatlantic Taskforce on Antimicrobial Resistance) initiative, a memorandum of understanding was signed with CLSI (Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute) to develop colistin/polymyxin breakpoints. A six-member subcommittee, with three representatives each from EUCAST and CLSI, has been established.

The EUCAST website continues to be developed and updated, and all EUCAST breakpoints and documents are freely available on the website. Additional documents have been published on the EUCAST website, including the annual update of QC tables, an antimicrobial susceptibility testing reading guide for disk diffusion, guidance documents and Standard Operation Procedure documents (SOPs). New translations into French, German and Spanish of the main EUCAST documents have been incorporated. Translations into other languages are on-going under the umbrella of National Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing Com-

EUCAST Steering Committee autumn 2012
Alasdair MacGowan and Derek Brown in front of
{l. to r.} Gunnar Kahlmeter, Christian Giske, Robert Skov, Rafael Canton [chairman], Johan Mouton, Claude-James Soussy.
Not in picture: Petra Apfalter and Luis Martinez-Martinez.
Steering Committee of the EUCAST Antifungal Susceptibility Testing Subcommittee at the ECCMID 2012 (l. to r.) William Hope, Maiken Cavling Arendrup (Chair), Cornelia Lass-Floerl and Manuel Cuenca-Estrella

Preparing for susceptibility testing

Participants of the EUCAST General Committee Meeting at ECCMID
mittees (NACs) in different countries. In addition, details of the current compliance of manufacturers with EUCAST breakpoints and methods are periodically updated on the website. The ‘frequently asked questions’ section about EUCAST breakpoints and methods continues to be expanded as questions are received.

The EUCAST MIC and zone diameter website presents MIC and zone diameter distributions of bacteria and fungi based on a continually increasing number of distributions. Graphs showing MIC-zone diameter correlations also continue to be expanded. The distributions highlight wild type populations and give epidemiological cut-off values (ECOFFs). Within these sections, data on variation in testing of QC strains can be obtained.

During 2012 and early 2013, nearly all countries in Europe completed the process of forming a National Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing Committee (NAC). These committees provide a national strategy for antimicrobial susceptibility testing and help to implement EUCAST breakpoints and methods where appropriate. Data from UK NEQAS (UK National External Quality Assessment System) show an increase in the use of EUCAST breakpoints from 36% in 2009 to 68.5% in 2012. Closely similar figures were observed in the EARS-Net (European Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance Network, ECDC) external quality assessment exercises. The interest in EUCAST breakpoints from outside Europe is increasing and EUCAST Steering Committee members are frequently asked to participate in national meetings. During 2012, EUCAST guidelines were adopted in Australia.

The second edition of the Postgraduate Education Course entitled ‘Antimicrobial susceptibility testing and surveillance: from laboratory to clinic – a EUCAST, ESGARS and EPASG perspective’ was organised in Madrid, Spain with attendees from 27 European countries and 7 countries outside Europe (Cuba, India, Kuwait, New Zealand, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Syria).

The Antifungal Susceptibility Testing (AFST) Subcommittee is a standing EUCAST subcommittee, dealing with all issues related to breakpoints and susceptibility testing for fungi. The AFST has continued to work on the establishment of clinical breakpoints for antifungal agents. Several new breakpoints were established, notably for Aspergillus species and several breakpoints for Candida species were updated. Rationale documents were sent for consultation and responses are available together with the rationale documents on the EUCAST website. The following technical note has been accepted for publication in the journal, Clinical Microbiology and Infection: EUCAST Technical Note on Aspergillus and voriconazole. A new version of the EUCAST breakpoint table for antifungals was published in February 2013 (version 6.0).

The Expert Rules Subcommittee and the EUCAST Steering Committee have updated the EUCAST expert rules and the new version was published in Clinical Microbiology and Infection (2013; 19: 141–60). This Subcommittee achieved its objectives and has now been disbanded. The EUCAST Steering Committee is collecting new data for future updates of the expert rules.

The Anaerobe Subcommittee advised the Steering Committee on breakpoints for anaerobes. The Subcommittee achieved its major objectives and was also disbanded. A project to establish disk diffusion methods and interpretive criteria for rapidly growing anaerobes is being developed together with the ESCMID Study Group for Anaerobic Infections (ESGAI).

The new Subcommittee on antimicrobial resistance mechanisms of clinical and/or epidemiological importance (Christian Giske, Chairman) has nearly finished developing the first version of practical guidelines for the detection of resistance mechanisms.