

WV Office of Laboratory Services
Mycobacteriology Unit

Non-tuberculosis Mycobacterium (NTM) Information for Healthcare Providers

Potential Clinical Significance

1. present only as pathogens
2. present usually as pathogens
3. present commonly as nonpathogens
4. present usually as nonpathogens¹

Mycobacterium species	Potential Clinical Significance
Non-photochromogens/non-pigmented	
<i>M. avium</i> complex	2
<i>M. gastri</i>	4
<i>M. malmoense</i>	1
<i>M. haemophilium</i>	1
<i>M. nonchromogenicum</i>	4
<i>M. terrae</i> complex	4
<i>M. triviale</i>	4
Photochromogens (produce pigment in light only)	
<i>M. marium</i>	2
<i>M. kansasii</i>	2
<i>M. simiae</i>	3-2
Scotochromogens (produce pigment in light and dark)	
<i>M. scrofulaceum</i>	3-2
<i>M. szulgai</i>	1
<i>M. gordonae</i>	4
<i>M. flavescens</i>	4
<i>M. xenopi</i>	3
Rapid growers (grow in 7 days or less)	
<i>M. fortuitum</i> complex	4-3
<i>M. fortuitum</i> group	4-3
<i>M. chelonae</i>	4-3
other rapid grower	4

The significance of the isolation of Mycobacterium Other Than Tuberculosis (MOTT) may be difficult to assess since many species are opportunistic pathogens. The following criteria are useful in establishing a role for NTM in the disease process:

1. repeated isolation of a large number of colonies of the same species from the same anatomical site over an extended period;
2. clinical or radiographic evidence of disease;
3. histopathologic evidence of the presence of mycobacteria in tissue;
4. increasing numbers of mycobacteria in sequential specimens;
5. isolation from a normally sterile site;
6. predilection of the species to cause disease at that site;
7. presence of predisposing conditions in the patient;
8. absence of other identifiable causes of disease.²

CONTACT

304-558-3530 extension 2621

¹ Lennette, Balows, et al. 1985. Manual of Clinical Microbiology 4th edition, p. 218.

² Murray, Baron, et al. 1995. Manual of Clinical Microbiology 6th edition, p. 429.