

T-SPOT®.TB Assay Using Extended Storage Time and Alternative Anticoagulant: A Validation Study

Background

- The T-SPOT®.TB assay (Oxford Immunotec) is an in vitro diagnostic test, performed with whole blood, that can detect latent *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* infection.
- After collection, specimens can be stored for a maximum of 32 hours at room temperature before processing. Storage time of whole-blood specimens plays an important role for applications of the assay, but longer storage times would be beneficial for many reasons.
- In addition, use of sodium heparin sulfate as an alternative coagulant to lithium heparin for blood collection would make the assay more accessible to patients and clinicians.
- **Objective:** The investigators assessed the effects of extended blood storage time (39 h vs 32 h) and an alternative anticoagulant for blood collection on T-SPOT®.TB assay performance.

Methods

- To assess the performance of the T-SPOT®.TB assay with an alternative anticoagulant, whole-blood specimens were collected in paired tubes containing either the previously validated (lithium heparin) or alternative (sodium heparin) anticoagulant.
 - After collection, specimens were stored for 39 hours at room temperature (18 °C - 25 °C). Pooled samples from the remnant blood were used for precision studies.
 - T-Cell *Xtend* reagent (Oxford), which is normally added within 32 hours of specimen collection, was then added to each specimen.
 - Specimens were processed using a modified Leucosep™ Tube method (Greiner Bio-One, Austria). Aside from storage time, other modifications to the previously validated T-SPOT®.TB method included duration of the initial centrifugation, the centrifugation brake setting, and cell resuspension procedures.
 - T-SPOT®.TB spots were developed and counted according to manufacturer instructions.
- As a reference for comparison of test results, a second set of specimens was collected in lithium heparin tubes from the same donors and processed using the previously validated T-SPOT®.TB method.

Results

- All precision studies (n=36) from pooled blood and comparison studies (below) had acceptable spot counts for the positive (≥20 spots) and negative (≤10 spots) controls; no invalid results were observed.
- Results for the modified and reference methods agreed for all specimens: 50 positive, 70 negative, and the 36 precision study specimens. No indeterminate results were observed.
- Results for sodium heparin and lithium heparin tubes agreed for all specimens: 25 positive and 35 negative.

Conclusions

- The longer (39 hours) storage time and use of sodium heparin anticoagulant, as well as the other modifications made to the T-SPOT®.TB assay in this study, did not alter the assay performance.

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Authors

Jian R Bao,¹ Finny P Mathew,¹ Robert S Jones,¹ Patrick W Mason,¹ Jessie M Hutchens Maxwell,² Ron N Master,¹ Richard B Clark,¹ Kileen L Shier¹

Affiliations

¹ Quest Diagnostics Nichols Institute, Chantilly, VA, USA

² Quest Diagnostics TB, LLC, Memphis, TN, USA

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