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(54) Title: DETECTION OF METHICILLIN-RESISTANT *STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS*

(57) Abstract: This invention relates to the use of genetic probes for detection of the presence of the *SCCmec* cassette in *Staphylococcus aureus*. In one aspect, the invention allows specific detection and identification of methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* (MRSA) in a clinical sample without interference from the presence of other non-*S. aureus* methicillin-resistant staphylococci. In another aspect, the invention allows specific detection and identification of methicillin-resistant coagulase negative staphylococci (MRCNS) originating from a clinical sample without interference from the presence of methicillin-resistant *S. aureus*.



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DETECTION OF METHICILLIN-RESISTANT *STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS*

RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/930,840 filed on May 18, 2007. The entire teachings of the above application are incorporated herein
5 by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) strains contain a *SCCmec* cassette, which may contain the *mecA* gene whose gene product confers methicillin resistance. Specific detection of MRSA by the presence of the *SCCmec* cassette has been
10 used in a number of publications and patents (US 6156507, US 2005019893). These various methods all rely on the use of primer set(s) where one (or more) primers target the *S. aureus* chromosomal DNA (external to *SCCmec*) and the other one (or more) primers target the *SCCmec* cassettes near the chromosomal integration site. Due to the presence of multiple *SCCmec* (sub) types, more than one primer set is needed to detect all MRSAs. *SCCmec*
15 cassettes are also found in other *Staphylococcus* species, commonly known as coagulase-negative staphylococci, including *S. epidermidis*, *S. hominis*, *S. haemolyticus* and others. Current methods therefore use primers directed specifically to *S. aureus* chromosomal DNA (non-cassette regions) to assess the species identification and to avoid confusion between *SCCmec* cassettes detected in *S. aureus* and those in other staphylococci.

20 In theory, this is a clear strategy for MRSA detection, however, in practice this concept produces both false positive and false negative results as has been reported (Drews, et. al., J. Clin. Microbiol. 44:3794, 2006; Desjardins, et. al., J. Clin. Microbiol. 44:1219, 2006, Bishop, et. al. J. Clin. Microbiol. 44:2904, 2006) and there is therefore a need for improved methods with higher sensitivity and specificity.

25 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Oligonucleotides or oligonucleotide mimics as defined herein can be used in methods to detect MRSA and MRCNS and to distinguish MRSA from MRCNS. The oligonucleotides and oligonucleotide mimics are, in some embodiments, set forth in the

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tables herein, and comprise sequences SEQ ID NOs 1-36. The oligonucleotides and oligonucleotide mimics are generally referred to as probes, especially as used in hybridization methods, or as primers, especially as used in DNA amplification methods.

In one embodiment the invention is a method of testing a sample for the presence or absence of SCC*mec* cassette DNA present as an insertion in chromosomal DNA of *Staphylococcus aureus*. The method includes (a) hybridizing the sample, under appropriate conditions, to one or more capture probe(s) that hybridize to chromosomal DNA of *Staphylococcus aureus* external to SCC*mec* by at least partially complementary sequences, the capture probe(s) being optionally attached to a support, (b) hybridizing the sample to one or more detector probe(s) that hybridize to SCC*mec* cassette DNA by at least partially complementary sequences, and (c) detecting each of the detector probe(s), which may include application of means of detection appropriate to the probe (and not all probes may be detected) thereby determining that the SCC*mec* cassette DNA is present and that it is integrated into the chromosomal DNA of *Staphylococcus aureus*. The hybridizations (a) and (b) can be carried out at the same time or can be carried out in either order. Optionally, the sample to be tested can be hybridized to one or more blocker probe(s) that hybridize to DNA of one or more other species of staphylococci as part of step (a).

Another method tests a sample for the presence of DNA of *S. aureus* comprising SCC*mec*. The method includes performing an amplification reaction using the sample as a source of template DNA. A first primer comprises a nucleobase sequence complementary to a nucleobase sequence within SCC*mec* of at least one SCC*mec* type of *Staphylococcus species*. A second primer hybridizes to chromosomal DNA of *S. aureus* external to SCC*mec*. The results of the amplification reaction are analyzed for the presence of amplification product. If the amplification product is present, DNA of *S. aureus* comprising SCC*mec* is present in the sample.

Further aspects of the invention are kits with components to carry out the assay methods. The kits include oligonucleotide or oligonucleotide mimics to be used as probes or primers, as appropriate to the method, and can include other reagents and solutions. A solid support may be supplied with capture probe attached, or for attachment of capture probes, for example.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The design of *S. aureus*-specific probes near the integration site for the SCCmec cassette is complicated by the high degree of sequence similarity between the chromosomal DNA of *Staphylococcus species*, (herein, the term “chromosomal DNA” is limited to regions external to any SCCmec, if present) which may explain false-positive results by current methods (Francois, et al., J Clin Microbiol. 45(6):2011-2013, 2007). With this invention, improved specificity is possible using blocker probes that prevent hybridization of *S. aureus*-specific probes to other *Staphylococcus species*.

Another parameter complicating probe design is sequence heterogeneity of chromosomal DNA between *S. aureus* strains within the *S. aureus*-specific target regions, such that a single probe does not hybridize to all *S. aureus* strains as shown in Example 3. This may be overcome by simply designing multiple probes as also shown in Example 3, but this invention offers the advantage of designing fewer probes, or even a single probe directed towards a non-*S. aureus*-specific region which, when used in conjunction with blocker probes as shown in Example 6, eliminates hybridization to other *Staphylococcus species*.

The invention includes oligonucleotides and oligonucleotide mimics, including those comprising the nucleobase sequences described herein, and including those consisting of the nucleobase sequences described herein. Probes and primers comprising oligonucleotides or oligonucleotide mimics are part of the invention and are suitable for the assays described herein. Oligonucleotide mimics include, for example, phosphorothioate oligonucleotides, peptide nucleic acids (PNAs), and locked nucleic acids (LNAs). Oligonucleotide mimic portions and oligonucleotide portions (comprising at least one monomer unit, for example) can be combined in one chimeric oligonucleotide (e.g., a PNA/DNA chimera or a LNA/DNA chimera). Such chimeric oligonucleotides are also included within “oligonucleotide mimics.” Like oligonucleotides that may be found naturally occurring in cells, oligonucleotide mimics are spoken of as having a nucleobase sequence according to the A, C, G, T and U base portion of each of their respective monomer units. Also like oligonucleotides that may be found naturally occurring in cells, oligonucleotide mimics can form hybrids through Watson-Crick basepairing with DNA and/or RNA comprising a nucleobase sequence that is at least partially complementary. The oligonucleotides may be isolated. An oligonucleotide or oligonucleotide mimic can be provided as (in solution for example) the only probe, or it can be provided as a combination of one or more probes.

Generic probes are presented which bind to conserved regions of nucleic acid targets, though with some mismatched bases. As described herein, probes were designed that can form hybrids with these regions even though many of the bases in the probe are mismatched. The probe design is based on an "average" sequence from the alignment of several
5 sequences derived from nature. The probe incorporates bases at each position which are complimentary to at least one of the natural sequences. The resulting probe is partially complimentary to all of the sequences it was designed against. The design method is similar to the well known concept of degenerate probes (primers), where a given probe sequence is designed with "wobble" bases incorporated, such that the final probe produced is actually
10 composed of a population of two or more distinct sequences based on a general core sequence. This design method is different from degenerate probes in that there is only one probe sequence based on consensus complementarities. This type of generic mismatching probe is referred to as a "consensus" probe herein.

Consensus probes can be used in combination with blocker probes. Blocker probes
15 are well defined in the art and at their simplest can be defined as probes which bind specifically to nucleic acid targets which are not targets of interest. Very often blocker probes are designed such that they can not be detected. Blocker probes are used as part of a probe cocktail to prevent evolution of detectable signal from targets which are not of interest. Blocker probes and consensus probes together, as described herein, can be used to
20 prevent signal evolution from specific nucleic acid targets.

The combination of blocker probes and consensus probes (with either partially or complete complementarity to the target and/or non target sequence) offers the advantage of utilizing sequence differences outside the target/non-target region, such that only a part of the blocker probe(s) is used to reduce binding of the consensus probe to the non-target
25 sequence. The use of one and two blocker probes utilizing sequence differences is exemplified in Example 5 and 6. This aspect of the invention is not limited to the sample or assay type but is a general concept providing improved specificity for nucleic acid analysis, and can be viewed as a means of using a longer target sequence.

Another aspect of this invention is the use of very short probes which facilitates
30 design of probes outside target regions with sequence heterogeneity. Use of very short probes, i.e. less than 10 bases, is common in the art for applications where specificity is not desired, i.e., random priming of PCR reactions with hexamers, as any given 9-mer is

statistically predicted to occur every 4 to the 9th ($4^9 = 262144$) bases. Very short probes are therefore not perceived by prior art in nucleic acid detection methods where high specificity is required, and in fact were specifically ruled out by earlier practitioners as being untenable for detection of SCC*mec* cassettes in *S. aureus* (US 2005019893). This exclusion may have
5 been due to the reliance on PCR as a dominant method of nucleic acid analysis. As shown herein, very short probes containing LNA and/or PNA allow for nucleic acid detection methods, which can not be performed using conventional DNA probes of equivalent length (see Examples 4 and 5). The advantages of using short probes are not limited to the sample or assay type.

10 This invention is exemplified for the detection of MRSA but is equally suitable for detection of MRCNS and in fact offers the potential for using the same probe set(s) comprising consensus probe(s) and probe(s) for SCC*mec* for detection of the SCC*mec* cassette in staphylococci (with differentiation between MRSA and MRCNS (methicillin-resistant coagulase negative)) and supplemented with either blocking probes preventing
15 hybridization of the consensus probe to non-*S. aureus* staphylococci for detection of MRSA, or blocking probes preventing hybridization of the consensus probe to *S. aureus* for detection of MRCNS.

In one embodiment, the invention comprises probes for the detection of SCC*mec* in *S. aureus*; see Examples 1, 2 and 3. Preferably, the probes comprise less than 15
20 nucleobases and are oligonucleotide mimics comprising LNA or PNA, detecting one or more SCC*mec* types (see Examples 4 and 5) and may be used in combination to detect multiple SCC*mec* types (see Example 4 and Example 5).

In another embodiment, the invention comprises a method for detecting SCC*mec* in *S. aureus* using the probes in combination with one or more probes hybridizing to
25 chromosomal DNA of *S. aureus*. These may be either hybridizing specifically to *S. aureus* only (Example 6) or to other species of Staphylococci (Example 7). To eliminate hybridization to other *Staphylococcus species*, blocker probes may be included to prevent hybridization of the probe(s) to other *Staphylococcus species* (Examples 7 and 8). Steps of methods for specific purposes are described herein, wherein step a) (hybridizing the sample
30 to one or more capture probes and step b) (hybridizing the sample to one or more detector probes) can occur by combining the appropriate reagents in sequence, or can occur by

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combining the appropriate reagents in one hybridization mixture so that hybridizing steps a) and b) occur at the same time.

The method to detect SCCmec in *S. aureus* in a sample may include lysing the cells in the sample, denaturing the DNA in the sample, incubating the DNA with one or more capture probes hybridizing to SCCmec types and one or more probes hybridizing to *S. aureus* chromosomal DNA. Protocols to carry out sandwich-type DNA hybridization assays or target amplification assays are known in the art.

Kits comprising probe set(s) and optionally also comprising reagents are also a part of the invention. Instructions to use the kit can also be a component of the kit. DNA control standards can also be included. Capture probes can be supplied attached to a support, such as in the wells of a microtiter plate. One capture probe can be supplied in a set of wells, or more than one capture probe can be supplied together in the same wells. Detector probes can be provided individually packaged, or more than one detector probe can be packaged together. Blocker probes, if included in the kit, can be provided individually packaged, or more than one blocker probe can be packaged together. Blocker probes can be included with detector probes. It will be understood that while certain probes that hybridize to a first region of DNA are designated herein as "capture" probes and certain probes that hybridize to a second region of DNA are designated herein as "detector" probes, probes of the sequences of capture probes can be used in assays as detector probes and vice versa, so long as the appropriate probes are used together in the assay.

This invention is exemplified using sandwich hybridization but is also applicable to other hybridization methods and to nucleic acid amplification techniques.

DNA amplification methods (e.g., polymerase chain reaction) can be used to detect MRSA in a sample, as these methods, in effect, detect a nucleobase sequence internal to SCCmec, and a nucleobase sequence on the *S. aureus* chromosome external to SCCmec on a template DNA of *S. aureus* present in the sample. The amplification methods can use as primers any of the oligonucleotides or oligonucleotide mimics described as probes herein, or can use shorter portions of those molecules. Primers of a variety of lengths, comprising PNA or LNA, can be used, e.g., primers of 14, 13, 12, 11, 10 or fewer monomers. The primers can comprise the nucleobase sequences described for any of the oligonucleotides or oligonucleotide mimics described herein as capture probes or detector probes, so that a primer pair for amplification consists of one oligonucleotide or oligonucleotide mimic with

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the nucleobase sequence of a capture probe and one oligonucleotide or oligonucleotide mimic with the nucleobase sequence of a detector probe.

It should be noted from the results in Example 12 that LNA/DNA primers (comprising both LNA and DNA monomers) shorter than DNA primers of the same sequence can be used successfully to amplify DNA by the polymerase chain reaction. LNA/DNA primers as short as 10 monomer units resulted in amplified product.

The detection of MRSA by sandwich hybridization methods and by amplification methods such as the methods shown herein exemplifies a more general method that can be applied to the detection of other DNA or RNA targets (e.g., a gene for virulence in pathogenic bacteria, an allele associated with a genetic disease in humans, or a sequence indicating a mutation, a chromosomal rearrangement, deletion or insertion). The use of short LNA or LNA/DNA oligonucleotide mimics as probes or primers as demonstrated herein (see, for example, Examples 11 and 12) can be generally applied to the detection of other target DNAs in other assays. Oligonucleotide mimics comprising LNA can be substituted for oligonucleotides of the same nucleobase sequence for use as primers or probes, with greater sensitivity in assays. The length of an effective probe or primer can be shorter in an oligonucleotide mimic comprising LNA, compared to an oligonucleotide.

As used herein, the word "hybridize" or "hybridizing" means the sequence specific binding of any of two single stranded nucleic acids or oligonucleotides or oligonucleotide mimics to form duplexes according to Watson-Crick base-pairing rules. Hybrids may form between two nucleobase sequences which are not perfectly complementary as defined by the W-C base pairing rules, but are substantially complimentary such that they form stable double stranded complexes under assay conditions, also referred to as partially complementary consensus probes.

A sample to be used in the assays described herein can be, for example, bacteria from one or more isolated colonies, or bacteria grown in a liquid or other culture, either isolated or mixed. Additionally, a sample can be bodily fluid or washings as might be obtained for analysis in a clinical laboratory, or an aliquot of such fluid or washings.

Staphylococcus species is used to indicate any of the species of staphylococci.

EXAMPLES

Materials and Methods

The examples below use EVIGENE, a sandwich-type DNA hybridization assay (Skov et al., Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy 43: 467-475, 1999; Levi and Towner, J. Clin. Microbiol. 38: 830-838, 2003) to specifically detect genetic markers in staphylococci. EVIGENE kit components (AdvanDx, Woburn, MA) and generic assay products were used for all experiments differing only by the individual probes as listed in the Examples below. For each sample, 2 drops of Lysis I solution were added to 2 mL microcentrifuge tubes with lockable lids. Using a 1 μ L plastic inoculating loop, 2 loops of colonies were collected and transferred to the tube and vortexed until the bacteria were completely suspended. The tube was incubated in a heating block or water bath at 35-37°C for 20 min. Two drops of Lysis II solution were added to the tube and vortexed thoroughly. The tube was incubated in a heating block at 95-100°C for 15 min, vortexed and incubated at 95-100°C for another 15 min. The tubes were allowed to cool at room temperature for 5 min. One drop of Detector Probes was added into a well in a microtiter well with immobilized Capture Probes followed by 100 μ L of the sample (lysed bacteria) from the tube. The resulting mixture comprised NaCl, Tris and detergent as known to facilitate hybridization of the probes to the bacterial nucleic acid. The well was covered with plate sealing tape and placed in a microtiter plate shaker/incubator set at 55°C and 400 rpm and incubated for 60 min. After incubation, the well was emptied and 2 drops of Conjugate Buffer were added, followed by 1 drop of Conjugate. The well was covered with plate sealing tape and incubated at 35-37°C for 30 min. After the end of incubation, the well was then emptied, washed 4 times with 7 drops (or 4 x 200 μ l) of Wash Solution. One drop of Substrate A was added followed by 2 drops of Substrate B and the solution was incubated at room temperature for 30 min. Two drops of Stop Solution were added and absorbance was measured at 492 nm using an ELISA plate reader. Other assay formats, including PCR or other target amplification techniques, may also be used with the probe sets.

A variety of bacteria strains from AdvanDx A/S, Denmark were used. The identity (species and type, if available) of each isolate was based on information available from the supplier of the strains and/or other tests, such as EVIGENE tests for detection of *mecA* (gene for methicillin resistance) and *nuc* (*S. aureus*-specific gene).

DNA probes and probes comprising LNA nucleobases were obtained from TAG Copenhagen A/S (Copenhagen, Denmark). Capture probes were labeled for immobilization onto microtiter wells and Detector probes were labeled for detection via colorimetric signal amplification using components from commercial EVIGENE kits (AdvanDx). Blocker probes were unlabeled.

EXAMPLE 1: Detection of SCC_{mec} type I, II, and IV in *S. aureus*, only

Table 1.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture and Detector probes used in the experiment. The Capture probe targets the *S. aureus* DNA and has 10 mismatches to *Staphylococcus epidermidis* DNA. The Detector probe targets SCC_{mec} types I, II, and IV (not III and V).

Table 1.1: Nucleobase Sequences

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP2	AATCCTTCGGAAGATAGCATCTTTCCTTGTATTTCTAATG (SEQ ID NO:1)
Detector	Dt1	GCTATTATTTACTTGAAATGAAAGACTGCGGAGGCTAACT (SEQ ID NO:2)

Method

Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using Capture probe GenCP2 (60 nM) and Detector Probe Dt1 (5 nM).

Results

The *mecA* result of each isolate (using the MRSA EVIGENE™ kits) as well as the MRSA results according to the invention, i.e. specific detection of *mecA* in *S. aureus* by detection of the SCC_{mec} cassette in *S. aureus* only, are shown in Table 1.2. The final column displays the absorbance readings at 492 nm. Absorbance readings above background levels indicate the presence of the nucleic acid target in the sample.

Table 1.2: Results of Example 1

Species	ATCC#	Type	MecA	MRSA	OD 492
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	6538	MecA neg.	Negative	Negative	0.287
<i>Staphylococcus epidermis</i>	51625	CNS	Positive	Negative	0.153
<i>Enterococcus faecalis</i>	51299		Negative	Negative	0.122
<i>Enterococcus faecium</i>	700221		Negative	Negative	0.116
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>		SCCmec type I	Positive	Positive	1.231
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>		SCCmec type Ia	Positive	Positive	1.049
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>		SCCmec type II	Positive	Positive	1.121
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>		SCCmec type III	Positive	Negative	0.185
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>		SCCmec type IIIa	Positive	Negative	0.215
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>		SCCmec type IV	Positive	Positive	1.033
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>		SCCmec type IV - PVL pos. ST80	Positive	Positive	1.261
<i>Staphylococcus epidermis</i>		CNS	Positive	Negative	0.171
Unknown		CNS	Positive	Negative	0.165
<i>Staphylococcus haemolyticus</i>		CNS	Positive	Negative	0.244
<i>Staphylococcus simulans</i>	27851	CNS	Negative	Negative	0.167
<i>Staphylococcus warneri</i>	49454	CNS	Negative	Negative	0.178
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>			Negative	Negative	0.135
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>			Negative	Negative	0.139
<i>Staphylococcus fleurettii</i>	BAA-274	CNS	Positive	Negative	0.436
<i>Staphylococcus</i>			Positive	Negative	0.205
<i>Staphylococcus saccharolyticus</i>	14953	CNS	Positive	Negative	0.192
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	700699	MecA pos.	Positive	Positive	0.673

Staphylococcus aureus		MecA pos.	Positive	Positive	0.974
Staphylococcus aureus		MecA pos.	Negative	Negative	0.140
Escherichia coli	35218		Negative	Negative	0.184
Candida krusei	Y-7550		Negative	Negative	0.120
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type I	Positive	Positive	1.628
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type Ia	Positive	Positive	1.328
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type I	Positive	Positive	1.297
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec IA - MecA pos.	Positive	Positive	0.614
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type II	Positive	Positive	1.316
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type II	Positive	Positive	1.204
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type II	Positive	Positive	1.402
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type IIIa	Positive	Negative	0.211
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type IIIa	Positive	Negative	0.142
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type III	Positive	Negative	0.133
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type IV	Positive	Positive	1.324
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type III	Positive	Negative	0.172
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type V	Positive	Negative	0.141
Staphylococcus aureus		SCCmec type IV	Positive	Positive	1.306
Staphylococcus aureus		Spa type t005	Positive	Positive	1.300
Staphylococcus aureus		Spa type t044	Positive	Positive	1.345
Staphylococcus aureus		Spa type t175	Positive	Positive	1.021
Staphylococcus aureus		Spa type t019	Positive	Positive	1.420
Unknown	SSI B	CNS - MecA/nuc pos.	Positive	Negative	0.230

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The results clearly show that only *mecA*-positive *S. aureus* strains of SCC*mec* type I, II or IV tested positive ($OD_{492} > 0.5$); whereas, *mecA*-positive staphylococci other than *S. aureus*, *mecA*-negative *S. aureus* and other bacterial and yeast strains all tested negative ($OD_{492} < 0.5$). The results also showed that *mecA*-positive *S. aureus* strains of SCC*mec* type III and V tested negative, as the Detector probe was not designed for these SCC*mec* types.

The data also show that sandwich hybridization, such as EVIGENE, is a suitable assay format and is thus an alternative to PCR for specific detection of SCC*mec* in *S. aureus*.

EXAMPLE 2: Detection of SCC*mec* type I, II, III, IV and V in only *S. aureus*

Table 2.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture and Detector probes used in the experiment. Capture probe GenCP2 (the same as in Example 1). Detector probe Dt1 (designed to be specific for SCC*mec* type I, II & IV), Detector probe Type III (designed to be specific for SCC*mec* type III) and Detector probe Type V (designed to be specific for SCC*mec* type V, Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Nucleobase Sequences

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP2	AATCCTTCGGAAGATAGCATCTTTCCTTGTATTCTAATG (SEQ ID NO:1)
Detector	Dt1	GCTATTATTTACTTGAAATGAAAGACTGCGGAGGCTAACT (SEQ ID NO:2)
Detector	Type III	TAATCCAATATTTTCATATATGTAATTCCTCCACATCTCAT (SEQ ID NO:3)
Detector	Type V	ACTTTAGTCAAATCATCTTCACTAGTGTAATTATCGAATG (SEQ ID NO:4)

Method

Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using Capture probe GenCP2 (60 nM) and Detector Probe Dt1 (5 nM), Detector Probe Type III (5 nM), or Detector Probe Type V (5 nM).

Results

Table 2.2: Results of Example 2

Capture probe GenCp2								
Species	AdvanDx ID	Type	Dt1 (Type I, II, IV)	OD 492	Type III	OD 492	Type V	OD 492
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#294	SCCmec type I	Positive	1.628	Negative	0.179	Negative	0.194
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#296	SCCmec type I	Positive	1.297	Negative	0.166	Negative	0.174
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#295	SCCmec type Ia	Positive	1.328	Negative	0.192	Negative	0.185
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#298	SCCmec type II	Positive	1.316	Negative	0.186	Negative	0.204
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#299	SCCmec type II	Positive	1.204	Negative	0.203	Negative	0.178
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#300	SCCmec type II	Positive	1.402	Negative	0.172	Negative	0.157
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#301	SCCmec type IIIa	Negative	0.211	Positive	1.255	Negative	0.178
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#303	SCCmec type III	Negative	0.133	Positive	1.297	Negative	0.198
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#305	SCCmec type III	Negative	0.172	Positive	1.280	Negative	0.202
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#304	SCCmec type IV	Positive	1.324	Negative	0.158	Negative	0.171
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#307	SCCmec type IV - PVL pos.	Positive	1.306	Negative	0.216	Negative	0.351
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#460	Type V	Negative	0.250	Negative	0.232	Positive	1.091
<i>Staphylococcus warneri</i>	#351	MR-CNS	Negative	0.160	Negative	0.139	Negative	0.224
<i>Staphylococcus epidermis</i>	#352	MR-CNS	Negative	0.166	Negative	0.164	Negative	0.330
<i>Staphylococcus hominis</i>	#353	MR-CNS	Negative	0.185	Negative	0.142	Positive	0.578

The results show that only MRSA strains typed as SCC*mec* type I, II & IV tested positive ($OD_{492} > 0.5$) with Detector Dt1 and strains typed as SCC*mec* type III tested positive ($OD_{492} > 0.5$) with Detector Type III and strains typed as SCC*mec* type V tested positive ($OD_{492} > 0.5$) with Detector Type V; whereas, *mecA*-positive staphylococci other than *S. aureus*, all tested negative ($OD_{492} < 0.5$).

EXAMPLE 3

Table 3.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture and Detector probes used in the experiment. Additional detector probes were tested based on sequences in WO02099034. Two Capture probes GenCP2 (used in previous Examples) and GenCP3 were tested with Detector probes Dt1, Type III, Type V, Type5 (specific for SCC*mec* type V, WO02099034), Type4 (specific for SCC*mec* type IV, WO02099034), Type7 (specific for SCC*mec* type VII, WO02099034), type 6 (specific for SCC*mec* type VI, WO02099034), or type 8,9 (designed to be specific for SCC*mec* types VIII and IX, WO02099034).

Table 3.1: Nucleobase Sequences

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP2	AATCCTTCGGAAGATAGCATCTTTCCTTGTATTTCTAATG (SEQ ID NO:1)
Capture	GenCP3	TGTTCAATTAACACAACCCGCATCATTTGATGTGGGAATG (SEQ ID NO:5)
Detector	Dt1	GCTATTATTTACTTGAAATGAAAGACTGCGGAGGCTAACT (SEQ ID NO:2)
Detector	Type III	TAATCCAATATTTTCATATATGTAATTCCTCCACATCTCAT (SEQ ID NO:3)
Detector	Type V	ACTTTAGTCAAATCATCTTCACTAGTGTAATTATCGAATG (SEQ ID NO:4)
Detector	Type5	TAATAAACTCTGCTTTATATTATAAAATTACGGCTGAAATAACC (SEQ ID NO:6)
Detector	Type4	TGTTTTCTTCAAATATTATCTCGTAATTTACCTTGTTTCATTAAAC (SEQ ID NO:7)
Detector	Type7	TTTATTCTTCAAAGATTTGAGCTAATTTAATAATTTTCTCATTA (SEQ ID NO:8)
Detector	type 6	AATTAATCTGATTTTCACTCTTCATCTACTTACTCATATT (SEQ ID NO:9)
Detector	type 8,9	AACATAACAGCAATTCACATAAACCTCATATGTTCTGATA (SEQ ID NO:10)

Method

Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using Capture probe GenCP2 (60 nM) and Detector probe Dt1 (5 nM) and

5 Detector probe Type III (5 nM), or Detector probe Type V (5 nM), Detector probe Type5 (5 nM), Detector probe Type4 (5 nM), Detector probe Type7 (5 nM), Detector probe type 6 (5 nM), or Detector probe type 8,9 (5 nM). The Capture probe GenCP3 was tested together with Detector probe Dt1, Type III, and Type V (5 nM each) or with Detector probe Type5 (5 nM), Detector probe Type4 (5 nM), Detector probe Type7 (5 nM), Detector probe type 6 (5

10 nM), or Detector probe type 8,9 (5 nM).

Results

Table 3.2: Results of Example 3

Capture probe GenCp2														
Sample ID	Dt1 & Type III	OD 492	Type V	OD 492	Type5	OD 492	Type4	OD 492	Type7	OD 492	Type 6	OD 492	Type 8,9	OD 492
Clinical isolate #360	Negative	0.155	Negative	0.115	Negative	0.264	Negative	0.216	Negative	0.185	Negative	0.214	Positive	1.672
Clinical isolate #361	Negative	0.159	Negative	0.124	Negative	0.290	Negative	0.226	Negative	0.267	Negative	0.201	Positive	1.769
Clinical isolate #389	Negative	0.121	Negative	0.111	Negative	0.226	Positive	1.578	Negative	0.205	Negative	0.153	Negative	0.172
Clinical isolate #391	Negative	0.135	Negative	0.124	Positive	1.947	Negative	0.236	Negative	0.251	Negative	0.204	Negative	0.179
Clinical isolate #395	Negative	0.141	Negative		Negative	0.212	Negative	0.183	Positive	1.711	Negative	0.146	Negative	0.243
Clinical isolate #396	Negative	0.129	Negative	0.116	Positive	1.703	Negative	0.218	Negative	0.223	Negative	0.195	Negative	0.226
Clinical isolate #397	Negative	0.136	Negative	0.109	Negative	0.229	Negative	0.230	Negative	0.273	Negative	0.185	Negative	0.239

Capture probe GenCp3												
Sample ID	Dt1 & Type III & Type V	OD 492	Type5	OD 492	Type4	OD 492	Type7	OD 492	Type 6	OD 492	Type 8,9	OD 492
Clinical isolate #397	Negative	0.130	Negative	0.124	Negative	0.105	Negative	0.119	Positive	1.840	Negative	0.105

The results in Example 3 show that the strains which did not test positive with GenCp2 and the detector probes described in Example 2 (Dt1, Type III & Type V) tested positive when alternate detector probes or another capture probe (GenCp3) was included in the test. The data show that multiple Capture and Detector probes may improve sensitivity and that additional probes may be added as additional “false-negative” strains (new SCC*mec* types) occur.

EXAMPLE 4: Detection of *mecA* in only *S. aureus* by detection of the SCC*mec* cassette in *S. aureus* with 9-mer LNA probe

Table 4.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture and Detector probes used in the experiment.

Table 4.1: Nucleobase Sequences

LNA monomers are lowercase a,g,c,t, and DNA monomers are uppercase A,G,C,T

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP3	TGTTCAATTAACACAACCCGCATCATTTGATGTGGGAATG (SEQ ID NO:5)
Detector	Dt1	GCTATTATTTACTTGAAATGAAAGACTGCGGAGGCTAACT (SEQ ID NO:2)
Detector	T1,2,4-Dt5	GaggctaaC (SEQ ID NO:11)
Detector	T1,2,4-Dt8	GAGGCTAAC (SEQ ID NO :12)

Method

Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using the Detector probe Dt1 (5 nM), 9-mer Dt5 LNA/DNA (50 nM) or 9-mer DNA (50 nM) and Capture probe GenCp3 (60 nM) above (Table 4.1).

Results

Table 4.2: Results of Example 4

Species	ADx ID	Type	Dt1 (Type I, II, IV) OD 492	Dt5 (Type I, II, IV) 9-mer LNA/DNA OD 492	Dt8 (Type I, II, IV) 9-mer DNA OD 492
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#294	SCCmec type I	Positive 2.475	Positive 1.713	Negative 0.123
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#295	SCCmec type Ia	Positive 2.398	Negative 0.469	Negative 0.112
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#298	SCCmec type II	Positive 2.766	Positive 1.992	Negative 0.164
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#303	SCCmec type III	Negative 0.112	Negative 0.111	Negative 0.118
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#301	SCCmec type IIIa	Negative 0.118	Negative 0.095	Negative 0.138
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#304	SCCmec type IV	Positive 2.981	Positive 1.584	Negative 0.125
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#307	SCCmec type IV+PVL	Positive 2.783	Positive 1.694	Negative 0.121
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#460	Type V	Negative 0.116	Negative 0.098	Negative 0.127
<i>Staphylococcus warneri</i>	#351	MR-CNS	Negative 0.389	Negative 0.169	Negative 0.131
<i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	#352	MR-CNS	Negative 0.129	Negative 0.101	Negative 0.124
<i>Staphylococcus hominis</i>	#353	MR-CNS	Negative 0.116	Negative 0.097	Negative 0.175
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#156	MSSA	Negative 0.112	Negative 0.101	Negative 0.114

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Results of Example 4 are summarized in Table 4.2, which displays the absorbance values obtained at 492 nm and the positive/negative results for the samples. The experiment showed that only the methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* strains of SCCmec type I, II or IV were positive ($OD_{492} > 0.5$) using the Capture GenCp3 and a 40-mer DNA or a LNA/DNA 9-mer
 5 Detector Probe, whereas a 9-mer DNA Detector Probe with the same sequence as the LNA/DNA gave a negative result when testing the same samples.

The data also show that replacing some of the naturally occurring nucleotides with non-naturally-occurring LNA monomers allows for use of short probes.

EXAMPLE 5: Detection of *mecA* in only *S. aureus* by detection of the SCCmec cassette in
 10 *S. aureus* with 9-mer PNA probe

Table 5.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture and Detector probes used in the experiment. The 9-mer PNA Detector Probe Dt10 was designed to detect SCCmec type I, II and IV.

Table 5.1: Nucleobase Sequences

15 PNA monomers are lowercase a,g,c,t, and DNA monomers are uppercase A,G,C,T

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP2	AATCCTTCGGAAGATAGCATCTTTCCTTGTATTTCTAATG (SEQ ID NO:1)
Detector	T1,2,4-Dt10	ctgcggagg (SEQ ID NO :13)

Method

Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using the Detector probe 9-mer Dt10 PNA (50 nM) and Capture probe GenCp2 (60 nM) above (Table 5.1).

Results

Table 5.2: Results of Example 5

Species	ADx ID	Type	Dt10 (Type I, II, IV) 9-mer PNA	
				OD 492
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#294	SCCmec type I	Positive	0.659
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#295	SCCmec type Ia	Positive	0.674
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#297	SCCmec type Ia	Positive	0.535
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#298	SCCmec type II	Positive	0.797
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#303	SCCmec type III	Negative	0.230
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#301	SCCmec type IIIa	Negative	0.290
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#304	SCCmec type IV	Positive	0.651
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#460	Type V	Negative	0.200
<i>Staphylococcus warneri</i>	#351	MR-CNS	Negative	0.198
<i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	#352	MR-CNS	Negative	0.194
<i>Staphylococcus hominis</i>	#353	MR-CNS	Negative	0.177
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#156	MSSA	Negative	0.191

Results of Example 5 are summarized in Table 5.2, which displays the absorbance values obtained at 492 nm and the positive/negative results for the samples. The experiment showed that only the methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* strains of SCCmec type I, II or IV were positive ($OD_{492} > 0.5$) using the Capture GenCp2 and PNA 9-mer Detector Probe (Dt10). The data also show that replacing some of the naturally occurring nucleotides with non-naturally-occurring PNA monomers allows for the use of short probes.

EXAMPLE 6: Specific detection of MRSA with *S. warneri* blocker probes

Table 6.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture and Detector probes used in the experiment.

In the experiment below, Capture probe (GenCp3, Table 4.1), all the SCCmec Detector probes (Dt1, type III, type V, Type5, Type4, Type7, type 6 and type 8,9, Table 3.1) and Blocker probes (B4A and B4B or the B5, Table 6.1) were used.

Table 6.1: Nucleobase Sequences

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP3	TGTTCAATTAACACAACCCGCATCATTTGATGTGGGAATG (SEQ ID NO:5)
Detector	All	See note*
Blocker	B4A	ATTTGGTGTGGGAAGGTCATCTTGCTGAA (SEQ ID NO:14)
Blocker	B4B	TCGATATACTTGTTCTATCAACACGACGCG (SEQ ID NO:15)
Blocker	B5	TGTTCTATCAACACGACGCGCATCATTTGGTGTGGGAAGG (SEQ ID NO:16)

* All Dt *SCC_{mec}*: Dt1, type III, type V, Type5, Type4, Type7, type 6 and type 8,9 (see Example 3 for the sequences)

Method

- 5 Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using the Detector probes (5 nM each) and Capture probe GenCp3 (60 nM) above with and without the Blocker probes (50 nM each).

Results

Table 6.2: Results of Example 6

Species	ADx ID	Type	All Dt SCCmec - Blocker OD 492	All Dt SCCmec + Blocker B4A/B4B OD 492	All Dt SCCmec + Blocker B5 OD 492
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#294	SCCmec type I	Positive 2.307	Positive 2.346	Positive 2.026
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#295	SCCmec type Ia	Positive 2.431	Positive 2.399	Positive 2.366
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#298	SCCmec type II	Positive 2.602	Positive 2.638	Positive 2.499
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#303	SCCmec type III	Positive 1.154	Positive 0.928	Positive 0.844
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#301	SCCmec type IIIa	Positive 1.417	Positive 1.255	Positive 1.060
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#304	SCCmec type IV	Positive 2.607	Positive 2.459	Positive 2.537
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#307	SCCmec type IV+PVL	Positive 2.167	Positive 2.523	Positive 2.503
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#460	Type V	Positive 1.161	Positive 0.998	Positive 0.755
<i>Staphylococcus warneri</i>	#351	MR-CNS	Positive 1.377	Negative 0.165	Negative 0.161
<i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	#352	MR-CNS	Negative 0.129	Negative 0.101	Negative 0.124
<i>Staphylococcus hominis</i>	#353	MR-CNS	Negative 0.113	Negative 0.112	Negative 0.146
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#156	MSSA	Negative 0.313	Negative 0.263	Negative 0.207

Results of Example 6 are summarized in Table 6.2, which displays the absorbance values obtained at 492 nm and the positive/negative results for the samples. The cut off value is set at $OD_{492 \text{ or } 490} = 0.500$. Signals greater than or equal to the cut-off value are considered positive. Signals less than cut-off value are considered negative. Using the Capture (GenCp3) and all the SCCmec Detector Probes, all methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* strains (all SCCmec types) were positive as well as methicillin-resistant *S. warneri*.

By using Blocker probes designed to hybridize to chromosomal DNA of *S. warneri* (not *S. aureus*), specific detection of methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* was obtained.

The Blocker probes thus effectively prevent the Capture probe from hybridizing to chromosomal DNA of *S. warneri*, thereby allowing for specific detection of methicillin-resistant *S. aureus*.

EXAMPLE 7: Use of blocker probes for specific detection of MRSA using a consensus capture probe

Table 7.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture (GenCp4) and Detector probe (Dt) and Blocker probes (B1A and B1B) used in the experiment below. The Capture probe is designed to hybridize to chromosomal DNA of *S. aureus* and *S. epidermidis*. The Detector probe is designed to hybridize to SCCmec type I, II & IV (not III and V) and the Blocker probes are designed to hybridize to chromosomal DNA of *S. epidermidis* (not *S. aureus*).

Table 7.1: Nucleobase Sequences

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP4	CAAATACAAAGTCGCTTTGCCCTTGTGTCA (SEQ ID NO:17)
Detector	Dt1	GCTATTATTTACTTGAAATGAAAGACTGCGGAGGCTAACT (SEQ ID NO:2)
Blocker	B1A	TTTGACCTTGTGTCATGCGTGTTTGTAGTTCTTTAGCGAG (SEQ ID NO:18)
Blocker	B1B	TGTAAACCATTGGAGCCACCTATGACAAATGTAAAGTCGC (SEQ ID NO:19)

Method

Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using the Detector (5 nM) and Capture probes (60 nM) above with and without the Blocker probes (50 nM each).

5 Results

Results of Example 7 are summarized in Table 7.2, which displays the absorbance values obtained at 492 nm and the positive/negative results for the samples. Absorbance readings ($OD_{492} > 0.5$) above background levels indicate the presence of the nucleic acid target in the sample.

10

Table 7.2: Results of Example 7

Species	AdvanDx ID	Type	Dt1 (Type I, II, IV) - Blocker		Dt1 (Type I, II, IV) + Blocker B1A/B1B	
				OD 492		OD 492
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#9	SCCmec type I	Positive	1.965	Positive	1.796
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#10	SCCmec type Ia	Positive	1.884	Positive	2.201
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#11	SCCmec type II	Positive	1.854	Positive	1.800
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#12	SCCmec type III	Negative	0.114	Negative	0.123
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#13	SCCmec type IIIa	Negative	0.098	Negative	0.107
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#14	SCCmec type IV	Positive	2.371	Positive	1.839
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#460	Type V	Negative	0.114	Negative	0.100
<i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	#355	MR-CNS	Positive	1.310	Negative	0.114
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#156	MSSA	Negative	0.143	Negative	0.124

The methicillin-resistant *S. epidermidis* and methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* strains of SCCmec type I, II or IV were all positive ($OD_{492} > 0.5$) using the Capture and Detector Probe, whereas only the methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* strains were positive when using

Blocker probes. The Blocker probes thus effectively prevent the Capture probe from hybridizing to chromosomal DNA of *S. epidermidis*, thereby allowing for specific detection of methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* without using a *S. aureus*-specific capture probe. This aspect of the invention provides an advantage over previous design schemes as the location of the probe is less limited.

EXAMPLE 8: MRSA detection with a consensus capture probe, blocker probes and 9-mer LNA Detector probe

Table 8.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture (GenCp4) and the Blocker probes (B1A and BIB) from Example 7, combined with the Detector probe (Dt5) from Example 4.

Table 8.1: Nucleobase Sequences

LNA monomers are lowercase a,g,c,t, and DNA monomers are uppercase A,G,C,T

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP4	CAAATACAAAGTCGCTTTGCCCTTGTGTCA (SEQ ID NO:17)
Detector	T1,2,4-Dt5	GaggctaaC (SEQ ID NO:11)
Blocker	B1A	TTTGACCTTGTGTCATGCGTGTTTGTAGTTCTTTAGCGAG (SEQ ID NO:18)
Blocker	B1B	TGTAAACCATTGGAGCCACCTATGACAAATGTAAAGTCGC (SEQ ID NO:19)

Method

Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using the Detector (Dt5, 50 nM) and Capture probe (GenCp4, 60 nM) above with and without the Blocker probes (B1A and BIB, 500 nM each).

Results

Table 8.2: Results of Example 8

Species	AdvanDx ID	Type	Dt5 (Type I, II, IV) - Blocker		Dt5 (Type I, II, IV) + Blocker B1A/B1B	
				OD 492		OD 492
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#9	SCCmec type I	Positive	1.030	Positive	0.771
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#10	SCCmec type Ia	Positive	1.168	Positive	0.967
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#11	SCCmec type II	Positive	1.206	Positive	0.955
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#12	SCCmec type III	Negative	0.130	Negative	0.157
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#13	SCCmec type IIIa	Negative	0.112	Negative	0.124
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#14	SCCmec type IV	Positive	1.106	Positive	1.130
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#460	Type V	Negative	0.122	Negative	0.129
<i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	#355	MR-CNS	Positive	0.561	Negative	0.155
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#156	MSSA	Negative	0.124	Negative	0.223

Results of Example 8 are summarized in Table 8.2, which displays the absorbance values obtained at 492 nm and the positive/negative results for the samples. Absorbance readings ($OD_{492} > 0.5$) above background levels indicate the presence of the nucleic acid target in the sample. This example shows that the Blocker probes prevent the Capture probe from hybridizing to chromosomal DNA of *S. epidermidis*, thereby allowing for specific detection of methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* without using a *S. aureus*-specific capture probe. The results also showed that *mecA*-positive *S. aureus* strains of SCCmec type I, II or IV tested positive with a 9-mer Detector probe hybridized together with the *S. epidermidis* Blocker probes.

EXAMPLE 9: Detection of SCC*mec* types I, II & IV using 9-mer LNA/DNA or 9-mer LNA probe

Table 9.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture probe GenCp3 with the Detector probe Dt5 (from Examples 4 and 8), Dt12 and Dt1.

5

Table 9.1: Nucleobase Sequences

LNA monomers are lowercase a,g,c,t, and DNA monomers are uppercase A,G,C,T

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP3	TGTTCAATTAACACAACCCGCATCATTTGATGTGGGA ATG (SEQ ID NO:5)
Detector	Dt1	GCTATTATTTACTTGAAATGAAAGACTGCGGAGGCTA ACT (SEQ ID NO:2)
Detector	T1,2,4-Dt5	GaggctaaC (SEQ ID NO:11)
Detector	T1,2,4-Dt12	gaggctaac (SEQ ID NO:20)

Method

Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using the Detector probe Dt1 (5 nM), 9-mer Dt5 LNA (50 nM) or 9-mer LNA (50
10 nM) with Capture probe GenCp3 (60 nM) above (Table 9.1).

Results

Table 9.2: Results of Example 9

Species	OD 492	Dt5 (Type I, II, IV) OD 492	Dt12 (Type I, II, IV) OD 492	Dt1 (Type I, II, IV) OD 492
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> #295 SCCmec type Ia	Positive	1.547	Positive 1.832	Positive 2.218
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> #298 SCCmec type II	Positive	1.616	Positive 1.944	Positive 2.075
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> #16 SCCmec type IV	Positive	1.644	Positive 1.906	Positive 1.783
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> #156 MSSA	Negative	0.144	Negative 0.168	Negative 0.200

Results of Example 9 are summarized in Table 9.2, which displays the absorbance values obtained at 492 nm and the positive/negative results for the samples. The experiment showed that the methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* strains of SCCmec type I, II or IV were positive ($OD_{492} > 0.5$) using the Capture GenCp3 with a 40-mer DNA or 9-mer mixed LNA/DNA Dt5 or a 9-mer only LNA (Dt12) Detector Probe.

The data also show that replacing some or all of the naturally occurring DNA nucleotides with non-naturally-occurring LNA monomers allows for use of short probes.

EXAMPLE 10: Detection of SCCmec type III detection with 9-mer LNA/DNA probe

Table 10.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture probe (GenCp3) and the Detector probes Type III and Type III-Dt2.

Table 10.1: Nucleobase Sequences

LNA monomers are lowercase a,g,c,t, and DNA monomers are uppercase A,G,C,T

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP3	TGTTCAATTAACACAACCCGCATCATTTGATGTGGGAATG (SEQ ID NO:5)
Detector	Type III	TAATCCAATATTTTCATATATGTAATTCCTCCACATCTCAT (SEQ ID NO:3)
Detector	Type III-Dt2	TtcctccaC (SEQ ID NO:21)

Method

Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using the Detector probe Type III (5 nM) and 9-mer Type III-Dt2 LNA/DNA probe (50 nM) and Capture probe GenCp3 (60 nM) above (Table 10.1).

Table 10.2: Results of Example 10

Species	ADx ID	Type	Type III-Dt2		Type III	
				OD 492		OD 492
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#303	SCCmec type III	Positive	1.732	Positive	1.693
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#301	SCCmec type IIIa	Positive	1.676	Positive	1.704
<i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	#352	MR-CNS	Negative	0.214	Negative	0.117
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	#156	MSSA	Negative	0.273	Negative	0.158

Results of Example 10 are summarized in Table 10.2, which displays the absorbance values obtained at 492 nm and the positive/negative results for the samples. The experiment showed that the methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* strains of SCCmec type III were positive (OD₄₉₂ > 0.5) using Capture probe GenCp3 and a 40-mer DNA or 9-mer mixed LNA/DNA Detector Probe.

EXAMPLE 11: Detection of SCCmec type V using 9-mer LNA probe

Table 11.1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the Capture (GenCp3) with the Detector probes Type V and Type V-Dt4.

Table 11.1: Nucleobase Sequences

LNA monomers are lowercase a,g,c,t, and DNA monomers are uppercase A,G,C,T

Probe Type	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
Capture	GenCP3	TGTTCAATTAACACAACCCGCATCATTTGATGTGGGAATG (SEQ ID NO:5)
Detector	Type V	ACTTTAGTCAAATCATCTTCACTAGTGTAATTATCGAATG (SEQ ID NO:4)
Detector	Type V-Dt4	accattcac (SEQ ID NO:22)

Method

Samples were prepared and assayed essentially according to the EVIGENE™ procedure using the Detector probe Type V (5 nM) and 9-mer Type V-Dt4 LNA probe (50 nM) and Capture probe GenCp3 (60 nM) above (Table 10.1).

Table 11.2: Results of Example 11

Species	Type	Type V-Dt4		Type V	
		OD 492		OD 492	
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	SCCmec type V	Positive	0.647	Positive	0.588
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	MSSA	Negative	0.155	Negative	0.113

Results of Example 11 are summarized in Table 11.2, which displays the absorbance values obtained at 492 nm and the positive/negative results for the samples. The experiment showed that the methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* strain of SCCmec type V was positive (OD₄₉₂ > 0.5) using the Capture GenCp3 and a 40-mer DNA or 9-mer LNA only Detector Probe. MSSA is methicillin sensitive *Staphylococcus aureus*.

EXAMPLE 12: Use of short LNA PCR primers for specific detection of MRSA

Table 12 .1 displays the nucleobase sequences of the PCR primers with specific LNA substitutions used in the PCR experiment below. The primers are designed to hybridize to genomic DNA of *S. aureus* or to a SCCmec type II as found in *S. aureus* strain Mu50.

Table 12.1: Nucleobase Sequences

LNA monomers are lowercase a,g,c,t, and DNA monomers are uppercase A,G,C,T

Primer	Name	Sequence (5' to 3')
FORWARD		
Dt1	F1	GCTATTATTTACTTGAAATGAAAGACTGCGGAGGCTAACT (SEQ ID NO:2)
Dt1	F5	GcGgAgGCTAACT (SEQ ID NO:23)
Dt1	F5-DNA	GCGGAGGCTAACT (SEQ ID NO:24)
Dt1	F7	AcTGcGGaGGCTAACT (SEQ ID NO:25)
Dt1	F8	cTGcGGaGGCTAAC (SEQ ID NO:26)
Dt1	F15	cgGaGGCTAAC (SEQ ID NO:27)
Dt1	F15-DNA	CGGAGGCTAAC (SEQ ID NO:28)
Dt1	F16	cgGaGGCTAA (SEQ ID NO:29)
Dt1	F16-DNA	CGGAGGCTAA (SEQ ID NO:30)
REVERSE		
GenCP2	R1	CATTAGAAATACAAGGAAAGATGCTATCTTCCGAAGGATT (SEQ ID NO:31)
GenCP3	R1	CATTCCCACATCAAATGATGCGGGTTG (SEQ ID NO:32)
GenCP3	R3	ggGtTgTGTTAATT (SEQ ID NO:33)
GenCP3	R3-DNA	GGGTTGTGTTAATT (SEQ ID NO:34)
GenCP3	R7	ggGtTgTGTTAA (SEQ ID NO:35)
GenCP3	R7-DNA	GGGTTGTGTTAA (SEQ ID NO:36)

Method

- 5 The DNA template was genomic bacterial DNA (Mu50, ATCC 700699), isolated with DNeasy Blood & Tissue kit (Qiagen). All DNA and LNA primers were suspended in 10 mM Tris. PCR amplification was performed in 50 μ L reactions using 1 μ M of each PCR primer, 800 ng or 8 ng genomic DNA and AccuPrime Taq DNA polymerase with AccuPrime buffer II, and 10 mM dNTPs (Invitrogen). Thermal cycling began with
- 10 denaturation at 94.0°C for 3 min followed by 30 cycles of 94.0°C for 30 s, 55.0°C for 30 s and 68.0°C for 30 s. PCR product was visualized on 2% agarose gels with ethidium bromide and a 100 bp DNA ladder (Invitrogen). Images of the gels were taken with a digital camera.

Table 12.2

Gel A			Gel B		
Lane	Sample	Conc.	Lane	Sample	Conc.
2	100 bp DNA ladder	0.5µg	2	100 bp DNA ladder	0.5µg
3	Cp2-R1+ Dt1-F5	Undil.	3	Cp3-R1+ Dt1-F5	Undil.
4	Cp2-R1+ Dt1-F5	1:100	4	Cp3-R1+ Dt1-F5	1:100
5	Cp2-R1+ Dt1-F7	Undil.	5	Cp3-R1+ Dt1-F7	Undil.
6	Cp2-R1+ Dt1-F7	1:100	6	Cp3-R1+ Dt1-F7	1:100
7	Cp2-R1+ Dt1-F8	Undil.	7	Cp3-R1+ Dt1-F8	Undil.
8	Cp2-R1+ Dt1-F8	1:100	8	Cp3-R1+ Dt1-F8	1:100
9	Cp2-R1+ Dt1-F1	Undil.	9	Cp3-R1+ Dt1-F1	Undil.
10	Cp2-R1+ Dt1-F1	1:100	10	Cp3-R1+ Dt1-F1	1:100
11	100 bp DNA ladder	0.5µg	11	100 bp DNA ladder	0.5µg

Forward and reverse primer sequences are listed in Table 12.1. The forward Dt-F1 (SEQ ID NO:2) primer has the same sequence as Detector probe Dt1 used in the previous experiments. The primer pairs are listed in Table 12.2. Eight different primer pairs were tested for amplification of 800 ng (undiluted) or 8 ng (1:100) genomic DNA. All lanes of the agarose gels that were loaded with an aliquot of the completed amplification reaction showed a strong band of DNA of the expected length on 400 bp (Gel A: forward primer: Dt-F1, -F5, -F7 or F8 paired with GenCp2-R1 reverse primer) and 200 bp (Gel B: forward primer: Dt-F1, -F5, -F7 or F8 paired with GenCp3-R1 reverse primer).

Table 12.3

Gel C			
Lane	Sample		
1	100bp DNA ladder		
		14-mer + 13-mer	Band
2	Cp3-R3 + Dt1-F5	LNA-LNA	200 bp
3	Cp3-R3 + Dt1-F5-DNA	LNA-DNA	200 bp
4	Cp3-R3-DNA + Dt1-F5	DNA-LNA	None
5	Cp3-R3-DNA + Dt1-F5-DNA	DNA-DNA	None
		12-mer + 13-mer	
6	Cp3-R7 + Dt1-F5-DNA		200 bp
7	Cp3-R7-DNA + Dt1-F5	LNA-DNA	200 bp
8	Cp3-R7-DNA + Dt1-F5-DNA	DNA-LNA	None
9	Cp3-R7-DNA + Dt1-F5-DNA	DNA-DNA	None
10	100 bp DNA ladder		
Gel D			
Lane	Sample	14-mer + 11-mer	
4	100bp DNA ladder		
5	Cp3-R3 + Dt1-F15	LNA-LNA	200 bp
6	Cp3-R3 + Dt1-F15-DNA	LNA-DNA	Faint 200 bp
7	Cp3-R3-DNA + Dt1-F15	DNA-LNA	None
8	Cp3-R3-DNA + Dt1-F15-DNA	DNA-DNA	None
9	100 bp DNA ladder		
Gel E			
Lane	Sample	14-mer + 10-mer	
1	100bp DNA ladder		
2	Cp3-R3 + Dt1-F16	LNA-LNA	Faint 200 bp
3	Cp3-R3 + Dt1-F16-DNA	LNA-DNA	None
4	Cp3-R3-DNA + Dt1-F16	DNA-LNA	None
5	Cp3-R3-DNA + Dt1-F16-DNA	DNA-DNA	None
6	100 bp DNA ladder		

Forward and reverse primer sequences are listed in Table 12.1. The primer pairs are listed in Table 12.3. In Gel C, eight different primer pairs were tested for amplification of 800 ng (undiluted) DNA. All amplicons (200 bp) were made with a forward Dt1-F5 (13-mer LNA/DNA primer) or Dt-F5-DNA (13-mer DNA primer), paired with GenCP3-R3 (14-mer LNA/DNA primer) or GenCP3-R7 (12-mer LNA/DNA) as reverse primers. In Gel D, four different primer pairs were tested for amplification of 800 ng (undiluted) DNA (Gel D, Table

12.3). All amplicons (200 bp) were made with a forward Dt1-F15 (11-mer LNA/DNA) primer or Dt-F11-DNA (11-mer DNA) primer, and GenCP3-R3 (14-mer LNA/DNA), reverse primer. In Gel E, four different primer pairs were tested for amplification of 800 ng (undiluted) DNA (Gel D, Table 12.3). All amplicons (200 bp) were made with a forward
5 Dt1-F16 (10-mer LNA/DNA) primer or Dt-F16-DNA (10-mer DNA) primer, and GenCP3-R3 (14-mer LNA/DNA) reverse primer.

In Gel C, lanes 2 and 3 had strong bands of DNA of the expected length as a product of the amplification reaction. Lanes 6 and 7 had fainter bands. Other primer combinations did not result in detectable product.

10 In Gel D, lane 2 had strong band and lane 3 had faint band of DNA of the expected length of amplification product. See Table 12.3 for the primer combinations. Other primer combinations did not result in detectable product.

In Gel E, lanes 2 had faint band of DNA of the expected length of amplification product. See Table 12.3 for the primer combinations. Other primer combinations did not
15 result in detectable product.

The PCR experiments showed that LNA incorporation improves the efficiency of short, low- T_m , (AT-rich) primers. Three or four LNA subunits were incorporated into each primer, because this was sufficient to elevate the predicted melting temperatures into the range that resulted in products visible on stained agarose gels as good bands. Previous work
20 showed that PCR failed when primers had more than three LNAs (Ugozzoli, L.A. *et al.*, Anal. Biochem 324:143-152, 2004) but the results on Gels B, C, D and E demonstrated that a 14-mer, or 12-mer primer containing 4 LNA monomers successfully primed amplification.

The experiment showed that the methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* strain Mu50 of SCC mec type II was detected by PCR by using a 13-, 11- or a 10-mer forward LNA/DNA
25 and a 14- or a 12-mer reverse LNA/DNA primer, but not detected by PCR when using DNA-only primers with the same sequence and length.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A kit for detection of SCCmec in *Staphylococcus aureus*, the kit comprising:
 - a) one or more detector probes, wherein the detector probes are selected from the group consisting of: Dt1, Type III, Type V, Type 5, Type 4, Type 7, type 6, type 8,9, T1,2,4-Dt5, T1,2,4-Dt12, TypeIII-Dt2 and Type V-Dt4;
 - b) one or more capture probes optionally attached to a support, wherein one capture probe is GenCP3.
2. A kit for detection of SCCmec in *Staphylococcus aureus*, the kit comprising:
 - a) one or more detector probes, wherein the detector probes are selected from the group consisting of Dt1 and T1,2,4-Dt5; and
 - b) one or more capture probes optionally attached to a support, wherein one capture probe is GenCP4.
3. A kit for detection of SCCmec in *Staphylococcus aureus*, the kit comprising:
 - a) one or more detector probes, wherein the detector probes are selected from the group consisting of Dt1 and T1,2,4-Dt5;
 - b) one or more capture probes optionally attached to a support; wherein one capture probe is GenCP4; and
 - c) one or more blocker probes, wherein the blocker probes are selected from the group consisting of B1A and B1B.
4. A kit for detection of SCCmec in *Staphylococcus aureus*, the kit comprising:
 - a) one or more detector probes, wherein the detector probes are selected from the group consisting of Dt1, Type III, Type V, T1,2,4-Dt10, Type 5, Type 4, Type 7, type 6, type 8,9; and
 - b) one or more capture probes optionally attached to a support, wherein one capture probe is GenCP2.
5. A kit for detection of SCCmec in *Staphylococcus aureus*, the kit comprising:

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- 5
- a) one or more detector probes, wherein the detector probes are selected from the group consisting of Dt1, Type III, Type V, Type 5, Type 4, Type 7, type 6, type 8,9, T1,2,4-Dt5, T1,2,4-Dt12, TypeIII-Dt2 and Type V-Dt4;
 - b) one or more capture probes optionally attached to a support, wherein one capture probe is GenCP3; and
 - c) one or more blocker probes, wherein the blocker probes are selected from the group consisting of B4A, B4B and B5.
- 10
6. A kit for detection of the SCCmec cassette in *Staphylococcus aureus*, the kit comprising:
- a) one or more detector probe(s); and
 - b) one or more capture probe(s) optionally attached to a support;
- wherein the detector probe(s) and the capture probe(s) each comprise at least one monomer of an oligonucleotide mimic.
- 15
7. A kit for detection of methicillin-resistant coagulase negative staphylococci in a sample, the kit comprising:
- a) one or more detector probe(s); and
 - b) one or more capture probe(s) optionally attached to a support;
- wherein the detector probe(s) and the capture probe(s) each comprise at least one monomer of an oligonucleotide mimic.
- 20
8. A kit for detection of the SCCmec cassette in *Staphylococcus aureus*, the kit comprising:
- a) one or more detector probe(s);
 - b) one or more capture probe(s) optionally attached to a support; and
 - c) one or more blocker probe(s);
- 25
- wherein the detector probe(s) and the capture probe(s) and the blocker probe(s) each comprise at least one monomer of an oligonucleotide mimic.
9. A kit for detection of methicillin-resistant coagulase negative staphylococci in a sample, the kit comprising:

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- a) one or more detector probe(s);
- b) one or more capture probe(s) optionally attached to a support; and
- c) one or more blocker probe(s);

wherein the detector probe(s) and the capture probe(s) and the blocker probe(s) each
comprise at least one monomer of an oligonucleotide mimic.

10. A method of testing a sample for the presence or absence of SCC*mec* cassette DNA in DNA of *Staphylococcus aureus*, the method comprising:
 - a) hybridizing the sample to one or more capture probe(s) that hybridize to DNA of *Staphylococcus aureus*, the capture probe(s) optionally attached to a support;
 - b) hybridizing the sample to one or more detector probe(s) that hybridize to SCC*mec* cassette DNA; and
 - c) detecting or not detecting each of the detector probe(s), thereby determining the presence or absence, respectively, of the SCC*mec* cassette DNA in the DNA of the *Staphylococcus aureus*.
11. The method of claim 10 wherein the detector probe(s), the capture probe(s) and the blocker probe(s) each comprise at least one LNA monomer and are 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 or 14 monomer units long.
12. The method of claim 10 wherein one capture probe is GenCP2 and wherein the one or more detector probes are selected from the group consisting of: Dt1, Type III, Type V, T1,2,4-Dt10, Type 5, Type 4, Type 7, type 6, type 8,9.
13. The method of claim 10 wherein one capture probe is GenCP3 and wherein the one or more detector probes are selected from the group consisting of: Dt1, Type III, Type V, Type 5, Type 4, Type 7, type 6, type 8,9, T1,2,4-Dt5, T1,2,4-Dt12, TypeIII-Dt2 and Type V-Dt4.
14. The method of claim 10 wherein one capture probe is GenCP4 and wherein the one or more detector probes are selected from the group consisting of: Dt1 and T1,2,4-Dt5.

15. A method of testing a sample for the presence or absence of SCC*mec* cassette DNA in DNA of *Staphylococcus aureus*, the method comprising:
- 5 a) hybridizing the sample to one or more capture probe(s) that hybridize to DNA of *Staphylococcus aureus*, the capture probe(s) optionally attached to a support, and optionally hybridizing the sample to one or more blocker probe(s) hybridizing to DNA of one or more other species of staphylococci;
- b) hybridizing the sample to one or more detector probe(s) that hybridize to SCC*mec* cassette DNA; and
- 10 c) detecting or not detecting each of the detector probe(s), thereby determining the presence or absence, respectively, of the SCC*mec* cassette DNA in the DNA of the *Staphylococcus aureus*.
16. The method of claim 15 wherein the detector probe(s), the capture probe(s) and the blocker probe(s) each comprise at least one LNA monomer and are 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 or 14 monomer units long.
- 15 17. The method of claim 15 wherein one capture probe is GenCP4; wherein the one or more detector probes are Dt1 or T1,2,4-Dt5; and wherein the one or more blocker probes are B1A or B1B.
18. The method of claim 15 wherein one capture probe is GenCP3; wherein the one or more detector probes are Dt1, Type III, Type V, Type 5, Type 4, Type 7, type 6, type 8,9, T1,2,4-Dt5, T1,2,4-Dt12, TypeIII-Dt2 or Type V-Dt4; and wherein the one or more blocker probes are B4A or B4B or B5.
- 20 19. A method of testing a sample for the presence or absence of SCC*mec* cassette DNA in DNA of a plurality of *Staphylococcus species*, the method comprising:
- 25 a) hybridizing the sample to one or more capture probe(s) that hybridize to DNA of a plurality of *Staphylococcus species*, the capture probe(s) optionally attached to a support, and optionally hybridizing the sample to one or more blocker probe(s) hybridizing to the DNA of one or more of the plurality of *Staphylococcus species*;
- b) hybridizing the sample to one or more detector probe(s) that hybridize to SCC*mec* cassette DNA; and
- 30

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- c) detecting or not detecting each of the detector probe(s), thereby determining the presence or absence, respectively, of the SCC*mec* cassette DNA in the DNA of the plurality of *Staphylococcus species*;

wherein the detector probe(s) and the capture probe(s) and the blocker probe(s) each
5 comprise at least one monomer of an oligonucleotide mimic.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the detector probe(s), the capture probe(s) and the blocker probe(s) each comprise at least one LNA monomer and are 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 or 14 monomer units long.

21. A method of testing a sample for the presence or absence of DNA of *S. aureus*
10 comprising SCC*mec*, the method comprising:

a) performing an amplification reaction using the sample as a source of template DNA, using a first primer comprising a nucleobase sequence complementary to a nucleobase sequence within SCC*mec* of at least one SCC*mec* type of *Staphylococcus species*, and a second primer that hybridizes to chromosomal DNA of *S. aureus*
15 external to SCC*mec*; and

b) analyzing results of the amplification reaction for the presence of amplification product;

wherein, if the amplification product is present, DNA of *S. aureus* comprising SCC*mec* is present in the sample, and if the amplification product is absent, DNA of
20 *S. aureus* comprising SCC*mec* is absent from the sample.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein the first primer and the second primer each comprise one or more LNA monomers and are 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 or 14 monomer units long.

23. The method of claim 21 wherein the first primer is selected from the group consisting
25 of: SEQ ID NO:2, SEQ ID NO:23, SEQ ID NO:24, SEQ ID NO:25, SEQ ID NO:26, SEQ ID NO:27, SEQ ID NO:28, SEQ ID NO:29 and SEQ ID NO:30; and wherein the second primer is selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:29, SEQ ID

NO:30, SEQ ID NO:31, SEQ ID NO:32, SEQ ID NO:33, SEQ ID NO:34, SEQ ID NO:35 and SEQ ID NO:36.

24. A probe comprising at least one monomer of an oligonucleotide mimic, said probe for detecting, identifying or quantitating methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) or methicillin resistant coagulase negative staphylococci (MRCNS) in a sample, wherein said probe has a nucleobase sequence that is sufficiently complementary to hybridize to a nucleobase sequence within the SCCmec cassette region of at least one SCCmec cassette type of *Staphylococcus species*.
25. The probe of claim 24, wherein said probe has a nucleobase sequence completely complementary to a nucleobase sequence within the SCCmec cassette region of at least one SCCmec cassette type of *Staphylococcus species*.
26. The probe of claim 24 wherein the probe is 5-20, 8-15, 9-12, 9, 10, 11 or 12 monomer units long.
27. The probe of claim 24 which comprises at least one LNA monomer.
28. The probe of claim 26 wherein the probe comprises 4 or more LNA monomers.
29. The probe of claim 26 wherein the probe consists of LNA.
30. The probe of claim 24, which comprises at least one PNA monomer.
31. A probe set for detecting, identifying or quantitating methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) or methicillin resistant coagulase negative staphylococci (MRCNS) in a sample, comprising:
- a) one or more probes of claim 24; and
 - b) one or more probe(s) that hybridize to chromosomal DNA external to the SCCmec cassette region of *Staphylococcus species*.
32. A probe set for detecting, identifying or quantitating methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in a sample, comprising:
- a) one or more probes of claim 24; and

- b) one or more probe(s) that hybridize to chromosomal DNA external to the SCC*mec* cassette region of *Staphylococcus aureus*.

33. A probe set for detecting, identifying or quantitating methicillin resistant coagulase negative staphylococci (MRCNS) in a sample, comprising:

- a) one or more probes of claim 24; and
- b) one or more probe(s) that hybridize to chromosomal DNA external to the SCC*mec* cassette region of a species of staphylococcus other than *Staphylococcus aureus*.

34. A probe set for detecting, identifying or quantitating methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in a sample, comprising:

- a) one or more probe(s) of claim 24;
- b) one or more probe(s) that hybridize to a region of chromosomal DNA external to the SCC*mec* cassette region, said region of chromosomal DNA comprising related sequences in *Staphylococcus aureus* and one or more other species of staphylococci; and
- c) one or more probe(s) that hybridize to the region of chromosomal DNA of b) in one or more species of staphylococci other than *Staphylococcus aureus*.

35. A probe set for detecting, identifying or quantitating methicillin resistant coagulase negative staphylococci (MRCNS) in a sample, comprising:

- a) one or more probe(s) of claim 24; and
- b) one or more probe(s) that hybridize to a region of chromosomal DNA external to the SCC*mec* cassette region, said region of chromosomal DNA comprising related sequences in *Staphylococcus aureus* and other species of staphylococci; and
- c) one or more probe(s) that hybridize to the region of chromosomal DNA of b) in *Staphylococcus aureus*.

36. The probe set of claim 34 wherein the probe(s) of c) inhibit binding of the probe(s) of b) to chromosomal DNA of a species of staphylococcus other than *Staphylococcus aureus*.

37. An oligonucleotide or oligonucleotide mimic comprising a nucleobase sequence selected from the group consisting of: SEQ ID NO:2, SEQ ID NO:3 and SEQ ID NO:4, SEQ ID NO:6, SEQ ID NO:7, SEQ ID NO:8, SEQ ID NO:9, SEQ ID NO:10, SEQ ID NO:11, SEQ ID NO:12, SEQ ID NO:13, SEQ ID NO:20, SEQ ID NO:21, and SEQ ID NO:22.
38. An oligonucleotide or oligonucleotide mimic comprising a nucleobase sequence selected from the group consisting of: SEQ ID NO:14, SEQ ID NO:15, SEQ ID NO:16, SEQ ID NO:18 and SEQ ID NO:19.
39. An oligonucleotide or oligonucleotide mimic comprising a nucleobase sequence selected from the group consisting of: SEQ ID NO:2, SEQ ID NO:23, SEQ ID NO:24, SEQ ID NO:25, SEQ ID NO:26, SEQ ID NO:27, SEQ ID NO:28, SEQ ID NO:29 and SEQ ID NO:30.
40. An oligonucleotide or oligonucleotide mimic comprising a nucleobase sequence selected from the group consisting of: SEQ ID NO:31, SEQ ID NO:32, SEQ ID NO:33, SEQ ID NO:34, SEQ ID NO:35 and SEQ ID NO:36.