Factors Impacting the Yield of Image-Guided Biopsy in Native Vertebral Osteomyelitis: A 10-Year Retrospective Study

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Background. Image-guided biopsies in patients with suspected native vertebral osteomyelitis (NVO) are recommended to establish the microbiological diagnosis and guide antibiotic therapy. Despite recent advances, the microbiological yield of this procedure remains between 48% and 52%. A better understanding of factors associated with this low yield may lead to improved microbiological diagnosis.

Methods. We retrospectively identified patients with suspected NVO undergoing image-guided biopsies from January 2011 to June 2021 at our institution. Two hundred nine patients undergoing 248 percutaneous biopsies were included. Demographic data, biopsy and microbiologic techniques, clinical characteristics, and antibiotic use were collected. Multivariable logistic regression analysis was conducted to determine factors associated with microbiological yield.

Results. A total of 110 of 209 (52.6%) initial image-guided biopsies revealed positive microbiological results. This number increased to 121 of 209 (57.9%) when repeat image-guided biopsies were included. In multivariable analysis, aspiration of fluid was associated with a 3-fold increased odds of yielding a positive result (odds ratio [OR], 3.13; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.39–7.04; P = .002). A univariate subgroup analysis revealed a significant association between the length of the antibiotic-free period and microbiological yield, with the lowest rates of pathogen detection at 0–3 days and higher rates as duration increased (P = .017).

Conclusions. Prior antibiotic use in patients with suspected NVO was associated with a decrease in the microbiological yield of image-guided biopsies. An antibiotic-free period of at least 4 days is suggested to maximize yield. Successful fluid aspiration during the procedure also increases microbiological yield.

Keywords. antibiotics; image-guided biopsy; microbiological yield; spondylodiscitis; vertebral osteomyelitis.

The incidence of native vertebral osteomyelitis (NVO) has been increasing in recent years due to a rapidly aging population, as well as other demographic and iatrogenic factors [1, 2]. Most cases of NVO result from hematogenous seeding of the endplate adjacent to the disc space from a distant infectious focus. Native vertebral osteomyelitis is associated with a mortality rate of up to 11% in contemporary cohorts. It also carries a significant risk of complications and sequelae if treatment is delayed [3]. Optimal treatment requires the microbiologic identification of the offending microorganism. Blood cultures may isolate the organism in up to half of cases, which could preclude the need for a biopsy [4]. However, many patients will require an image-guided or an open spinal biopsy to identify the pathogen [4].

Image guidance typically involves either computed tomography (CT) or fluoroscopic guidance and is less invasive than an open surgical approach. Unfortunately, the yield of image-guided biopsy is lower than an open biopsy (48% vs 76%) [5]. There is also a significant variability in the accuracy of image-guided biopsy [6, 7]. Factors that may influence the yield include prior antimicrobial therapy, needle size, presence of fluid collections, and performing a repeat percutaneous biopsy [8–10]. Most cohorts that have attempted to study those variables have been relatively small and yielded conflicting results regarding the effect of certain factors such as antibiotic exposure [9, 11, 12]. We herein conducted a large cohort study to evaluate the impact of various factors that affect the microbiological yield of image-guided biopsies among patients with suspected...
NVO. We aimed to determine the optimal duration of withholding antibiotics before biopsy.

METHODS

We performed a retrospective review of patients who underwent CT or fluoroscopically guided biopsies between January 1, 2011 and June 30, 2021 at our institution. An initial list of patients was curated from the Department of Radiology database (n = 1555) and all cases were reviewed using the electronic medical record. We included patients age 18 years or older with suspected NVO. We excluded patients younger than 18 years old (n = 20), patients who declined research authorization (n = 23), and patients with spinal hardware (n = 39). We also excluded cases in which biopsy revealed an alternative diagnosis or was performed for another indication such as malignancy (n = 1098). Study data were collected and managed using REDCap electronic data capture tools [13]. Patients with positive blood cultures were not excluded if they underwent biopsy. Only patients who underwent the image-guided biopsy at our center were included. We focused on data collected at the first biopsy per patient in our primary analysis, although data from repeat biopsies were also collected and included in secondary analyses. Our Institutional Review Board (IRB) classified the study as exempt research (IRB 21-005624).

Definitions

Native vertebral osteomyelitis was diagnosed through clinical judgment by providers with histological, microbiological, or imaging confirmation. Antibiotic exposure was defined as any receipt of antibiotics in the preceding 28 days before biopsy. A positive yield was defined as an organism clinically determined to be the cause of the underlying NVO. Organisms determined by treating providers as clinically insignificant and were not treated with antibiotics were considered negative yield.

Biopsy Techniques

The biopsies were performed by neuroradiologists subspecializing in procedural neuroradiology. Either fluoroscopy or CT was used as the guidance modality in each case. The regions most compatible with active infection on imaging were sampled. Although each individual patient scenario is unique, common approaches included the following: (1) when preprocedure imaging (typically magnetic resonance imaging) suggested infection of adjacent subendplate regions and/or the intervening disc space, a caudal to cranial transpedicular approach was typically used under fluoroscopy; (2) when preprocedure imaging suggested that the disc space was extensively involved including with probable purulent fluid, a disc space approach was typically used under either fluoroscopy or CT; (3) when preprocedure imaging demonstrated paraspinal fluid collections, these were typically sampled under CT-guidance [14]. The types and gauges of needles used varied by route of sampling and by practitioner preference. However, when an osseous biopsy is performed, commonly relatively large caliber (13- or 14-gauge) sampling needles were used. If imaging suggested purulent fluid was present, such as in a disc space, the paraspinal region, or a facet joint, attempts were made to aspirate these regions. Note that epidural abscesses are typically not accessible to percutaneous sampling.

Culture Techniques

Tissue specimens were homogenized using a stomacher (Seward Inc., Port St. Lucie, FL). Before March 2016, the homogenates were inoculated onto sheep-blood and chocolate agar, incubated aerobically at 35°C in 5% CO₂ for 5 days, and onto CDC anaerobic blood agar and into a prereduced thioglycollate broth, incubated anaerobically for 14 days. From April 2016 onwards, homogenates were inoculated into blood culture bottles (BD BACTEC Plus Aerobic/F medium and BD BACTEC Lytic/10 Anaerobic/F medium) and incubated on the BACTEC 9240/FX instruments (BD Diagnostic Systems) for 14 days. Bone specimens were processed through a grinder with brain-heart infusion broth. Grounded bone specimens were inoculated into agar plates.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were presented as count and percentage for categorical variables and as median and interquartile range (IQR) for continuous variables. To test unadjusted associations between potential risk factors and pathogen detection, Pearson χ² or Wilcoxon rank-sum tests were used, as appropriate. A multivariable logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine independent associations of prespecified risk factors with pathogen detection. Continuous variables were modeled with 3-knot restricted cubic splines to allow for nonlinear associations. Odds ratios (ORs) were used to quantify the relative increase in odds of pathogen detection for an IQR increase in the input variable or for each level of the variable compared with a reference level. Missing data on covariates were handled with multiple imputation such that the missing values were predicted using all observed information on the outcome and the other covariates in the model and averaged over 20 separate draws. Statistical analysis was conducted using R programming language, version 4.0.3 (R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria).

RESULTS

A total of 209 patients were diagnosed with NVO and underwent 248 image-guided biopsies. The median age at the time of biopsy was 66 years old (IQR, 55.5–74.6) and 60.8% were male. Demographics and clinical presentation are outlined in Table 1. Data on imaging, procedural details, and specifics of
... recent antibiotic exposure are reported in Table 2. One hundred thirty patients (62.2%) had antibiotic exposure with antibiotic-free period ranging from 0 to 27 days. Eighty-seven of these patients (66.9%) received antibiotics up to the same day of biopsy and 43 (33.1%) had their antibiotics stopped earlier. The remaining 79 patients (37.8%) did not have antibiotic exposure. Initial biopsies were positive in 110 patients (52.6%). Repeat biopsies were performed in 39 patients and were positive in 14 (35.9%), including 11 who were initially negative and 3 whose initial biopsies became positive after the repeat biopsy was completed. Therefore, the cumulative positive yield among all patients in the study was 57.9% (121 of 209). A third biopsy was performed in one patient and did not reveal any organism. The results of the various culture and molecular techniques used are detailed in Table 2. Gram-positive organisms represented 87.1% of detected cases as is shown in Table 3.

Unadjusted analysis conducted on the results of the first biopsy revealed a significant association between positive yield and antibiotic exposure, successful fluid aspiration, and elevated levels of C-reactive protein (CRP)/erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR). Although using blood culture bottles (BCBs) for specimen incubation had a positivity rate of 48.8%, the yield was not significantly higher than with agar/broth techniques ($P = .052$) in the unadjusted analysis as shown in Table 4.

Among patients with antibiotic exposure ($n = 130$), positive yield was significantly higher with a longer duration of antibiotic-free period before the biopsy. To further depict the association between the length of the antibiotic-free period and the yield, a prediction curve for duration was plotted after fitting a univariate logistic regression model with a spline function (Figure 1). The curve suggests that withholding antibiotics for 0–3 days corresponded to rates of pathogen detection <50%, and that withholding antibiotics for additional days...

### Table 1. Patient Characteristics

| Characteristic                  | N   | Overall (N = 209) |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------------------|
| Age, years                     | 209 | 66.1 (55.5–74.6)  |
| Sex, male                      | 209 | 127 (60.8%)       |
| Race, White persons            | 206 | 194 (94.2%)       |
| Comorbidities                  | 209 |                   |
| Diabetes mellitus              | 65  | (31.1%)           |
| Malignancy                     | 37  | (17.7%)           |
| Prior spinal radiation         | 7   | (3.3%)            |
| Prior spinal surgery           | 53  | (25.4%)           |
| Immunosuppression              | 51  | (24.4%)           |
| Spinal injections within 6 months | 209 | 21 (10.0%)       |
| Presence of back pain          | 209 | 201 (96.2%)       |
| Duration of back pain (days)   | 200 | 44.5 (22.0–88.2)  |
| Presence of fever at any point before the biopsy | 209 | 42 (20.1%) |
| Presence of chills at any point before biopsy | 209 | 23 (11.0%) |
| Any neurologic sequelae        | 209 | 37 (17.7%)        |
| Maximum CRP (mg/L)             | 194 | 46.8 (17.4–103.7) |
| Maximum ESR (mm/h)             | 183 | 56.0 (30.0–87.0)  |
| Maximum total serum WBC        | 208 | 8.9 (7.0–11.1)    |

**Abbreviations:** CRP, C-reactive protein; ESR, erythrocyte sedimentation rate; WBC, white blood cells.

**NOTES:** N is the number of patients with available information for each variable. Categorical variables are presented as number (percentage) and continuous variables are reported as median (quartile 1 to quartile 3).

### Table 2. Imaging, Biopsy, and Culture Techniques

| Characteristic                  | N   | Overall (N = 209) |
|--------------------------------|-----|-------------------|
| Degree of NVO suspicion on imaging | 209 |                   |
| Low                            |     | 17 (8.1%)         |
| Moderate                       |     | 38 (18.2%)        |
| High                           |     | 154 (73.7%)       |
| Site/level of NVO              | 209 |                   |
| Cervical                       | 5   | (2.4%)            |
| Thoracic                       | 46  | (22.0%)           |
| Lumbosacral                    | 108 | (51.7%)           |
| Multifocal                     | 50  | (23.9%)           |
| Epidural abscess or collection | 39  | (18.7%)           |
| Paraspinal abscess or collection | 40 | (19.1%)         |
| CT versus fluoroscopy guidance: CT | 58 | (27.8%)         |
| Use of antibiotics in the 28 days before procedure | 209 | 130 (62.2%)       |
| Duration of antibiotics (days) before procedure | 130 | 10.0 (3.0–35.8) |
| Number of antibiotics used     | 209 | 1.0 (0–2.0)       |
| Number of specimens taken      | 178 | 4.0 (3.0–5.0)     |
| Needle gauge used              | 209 | 14 (13.0–14.0)    |
| Successful fluid aspiration    | 209 | 63 (30.1%)        |
| Volume of aspirate taken (mL)  | 49  | 3.0 (1.0–5.0)     |
| Pathogen detection (1st biopsy) | 209 | 110 (52.6%)       |
| Result of PCR: Positive        | 36  | 10 (27.8%)        |
| Pathogen detected by blood culture bottles | 82 | 40 (48.8%) |
| Pathogen detected by regular cultures | 171 | 67 (39.2%) |
| Pathogen detected by fungal cultures | 197 | 6 (3.0%) |
| Pathogen detected by mycobacterial cultures | 173 | 2 (1.2%) |
| Pathogen detected by anaerobic cultures | 171 | 14 (8.2%) |
| Pathology report: NVO          | 209 | 31 (14.8%)        |

**Abbreviations:** CT, computed tomography; NVO, native vertebral osteomyelitis; PCR, polymerase chain reaction.

**NOTES:** N is the number of patients with available information for each variable. Categorical variables are presented as number (percentage) and continuous variables are reported as median (quartile 1 to quartile 3).

### Table 3. Pathogens Detected

| Pathogen                                | First Biopsy (N = 110) | Total Biopsies (N = 124) |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Staphylococcus aureus                   | 22 (20.0%)             | 24 (19.4%)              |
| Coagulase-negative Staphylococci        | 29 (26.4%)             | 33 (26.6%)              |
| Streptococci                            | 11 (10.0%)             | 11 (8.9%)               |
| Gram-negative rods                      | 8 (7.3%)               | 9 (7.3%)                |
| Mycobacteria                            | 2 (1.8%)               | 2 (1.6%)                |
| Anaerobes                               | 3 (2.7%)               | 3 (2.4%)                |
| Fungi*                                  | 7 (6.4%)               | 8 (6.5%)                |
| Other Gram-positive*                    | 28 (25.5%)             | 32 (25.8%)              |
| Hyphomicrobiium                         | 0 (0%)                 | 1 (0.8%)                |
| Ureaplasma urealyticific                 | 0 (0%)                 | 1 (0.8%)                |

*Ureaplasma urealyticific, Nakaissamiymon glabrata, Blastomyces, Coccidioides.

*Cutibacterium acnes, Trueperella pyogenes, Parvimonas micra, Corynebacterium striatum.
Additional tissue biopsies had a 3-fold increased odds of positive yield (OR, 3.13; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.39–7.04) compared to dry aspirations. Antibiotic exposure was independently associated with 3-fold lower odds of a positive yield (OR, 0.32; 95% CI, 0.16–0.65). After adjusting for other variables in the multivariable logistic regression analysis, patients who had successful fluid aspiration intraoperatively with or without pathogen recovery before the biopsy demonstrated progressively higher rates of pathogen recovery.

In the multivariable logistic regression analysis, patients who had successful fluid aspiration intraoperatively with or without additional tissue biopsies had a 3-fold increased odds of positive yield (OR, 3.13; 95% confidence interval [CI], 1.39–7.04) compared to dry aspirations. Antibiotic exposure was independently associated with 3-fold lower odds of a positive yield (OR, 0.32; 95% CI, 0.16–0.65). After adjusting for other variables in the multivariable logistic regression model, CRP and ESR were no longer significantly associated with positive yield as is represented in Table 5.

**DISCUSSION**

The use of image-guided biopsies has long been an intuitive choice in the diagnosis of patients with NVO. Although less

![Figure 1](image-url)

**Figure 1.** The curve represents the estimated relationship between the antibiotic-free period and the predicted probability of pathogen detection, as estimated by a univariate logistic regression model with time fitted flexibly with a 5-knot restricted cubic spline function. Vertical lines at the top and bottom of the plot show the distribution of interval times for patients with and without pathogen detection, respectively, with the height of these lines proportional to the frequencies of those values. abx, antibiotics.

### Table 4. Unadjusted Outcome Analysis for Pathogen Detection

| Characteristic                          | No Pathogen Detected (N = 99) | Pathogen Detected (N = 110) | P Value |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Degree of suspicion of NVO on imaging |                               |                             | 0.342a  |
| Low                                    | ...                           | ...                         |         |
| Mild-moderate                          | 9 (9.1%)                      | 8 (7.3%)                    |         |
| High                                   | 14 (14.1%)                    | 24 (21.8%)                  |         |
| Prior use of antibiotics               | 209                           | 70 (70.7%)                  | 0.016a  |
| Time from stopping abx to biopsy, days |                               |                             | 0.017a  |
| > 0 days                               | 19/70 (27.1%)                 | 24/60 (40.0%)               |         |
| ≥ 3 days                               | 9/70 (12.9%)                  | 22/60 (33.9%)               |         |
| ≥ 7 days                               | 3/70 (4.3%)                   | 16/60 (26.7%)               |         |
| Number of specimens taken              | 178                           | 4.5 (3.0–5.8)               | 0.249a  |
| Successful fluid aspiration            | 209                           | 19 (19.2%)                  | 0.01a   |
| Inoculation into blood culture bottles | 209                           | 32 (32.3%)                  | 0.052a  |
| Maximum C-reactive protein             | 194                           | 31.8 (12.3–67.8)            | <.001a  |
| Maximum ESR preprocedure               | 183                           | 45.0 (23.0–76.5)            | 0.011a  |
| Multilevel NVO                         | 209                           | 27 (27.3%)                  | 0.282a  |
| Presence of epidural or paraspinal collection | 209 | 30 (30.3%)                  | 0.606a  |
| Presence of fever                      | 209                           | 18 (18.2%)                  | 0.512a  |
| Needle gauge used                      | 209                           | 14.0 (13.0–14.0)            | 0.908a  |
| CT or fluoroscopy guidance, CT         | 209                           | 28 (28.3%)                  | 0.871a  |

**Abbreviations:** abx, antibiotics; CT, computed tomography; ESR, erythrocyte sedimentation rate; NVO, native vertebral osteomyelitis.

N is the number of patients with available information for each variable. Categorical variables are presented as number (percentage), and continuous variables are reported as median (quartile 1 to quartile 3) or exceedance probabilities.

aPearson χ² test.

bWilcoxon rank-sum test.

### Table 5. Multivariable Outcome Analysis for Pathogen Identification

| Predictor                        | Levels* | Odds Ratio (95% Confidence Interval) | P Value |
|----------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Degree of suspicion of NVO       | ...     | Low/high                            | 0.126   |
|                                  | ...     | Moderate/high                       | 0.232   |
| Prior use of antibiotics         | Yes/No  | 0.32 (0.16–0.65)                    | 0.002   |
| Number of biopsies taken         | 5:3     | 1.11 (0.72–1.71)                    | 0.376   |
| Successful fluid aspiration      | Yes/No  | 3.13 (1.39–7.04)                    | 0.006   |
| Blood culture bottles taken      | Yes/No  | 1.72 (0.85–3.47)                    | 0.132   |
| Maximum C-reactive protein       | Yes/No  | 303.7:17.4                          | 0.142   |
| Maximum ESR preprocedure         | 87:30   | 2.14 (0.93–4.92)                    | 0.200   |
| Multilevel NVO                   | Yes/No  | 0.55 (0.25–1.17)                    | 0.120   |
| Presence of epidural or paraspinal collection | Yes/No | 0.97 (0.47–2.02)                    | 0.938   |
| Presence of fever                | Yes/No  | 1.18 (0.50–2.77)                    | 0.705   |

**Abbreviations:** ESR, erythrocyte sedimentation rate; NVO, native vertebral osteomyelitis.

NOTES: Results are from a multivariable examination of candidate risk factors using a binary logistic regression model for pathogen detection. Missing data were imputed and continuous variables were modeled flexibly using splines.

*Levels shown for each predictor are the 2 selected points at which the odds ratio is computed. These are the 75th percentile: 25th percentile for continuous predictors or current group: reference group for categorical predictors.
invasive and costly, this procedure is less likely to identify a pathogen than open surgery [5]. The yield microbiological yield of these biopsies has been widely variable with positive yields reported between 19% and 92% of cases [5, 15]. Our study resulted in a yield of 52.6% from the first biopsy alone, similar to the yield reported by recent meta-analyses [15]. Numerous studies have attempted to identify patient and management-related factors that affect the microbiological yield of the image-guided biopsy. Elevated inflammatory markers, such as CRP and ESR, and the aspiration of fluid, with or without tissue, during the procedure have been the factors most consistently correlated with a positive yield [16]. Other factors, such as antibiotic exposure before the biopsy, have been more controversial.

Most recent studies, including a 2017 meta-analysis, have suggested that antibiotic exposure before the procedure has a limited effect on the yield [5, 17]. Of note, many studies included a large proportion of patients with mycobacterial NVO, which may not be as susceptible to typical antibiotics used in pyogenic NVO [17]. When considering antibiotic use, numerous factors come into play, including duration and type of antibiotics used. However, the optimal antibiotic-free period before the procedure also remains a point of contention due to the scarcity of evidence. As a result, the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) supports the prevailing dogma of withholding antibiotics for 1–2 weeks when an image-guided procedure is planned [3]. In our study, 130 patients were exposed to antibiotics in the 28 days before the procedure, which was associated with a reduced microbiological yield. After these patients were evaluated according to the time between withholding antibiotics and performing a biopsy, results showed a chronologic relation between this antibiotic-free period and the positive microbiological yield of the image-guided biopsy (P = .017). Based on a graphical assessment, an antibiotic-free period of 0–3 days showed rates of pathogen detection lower than 50%, whereas rates increased progressively starting at approximately 4 days or longer. Therefore, we suggest an antibiotic-free period of at least 4 days if feasible to maximize the yield of image-guided biopsies. This timeframe is further justified by the need to address a patient’s ongoing symptoms and the potential to develop sequelae.

Another factor that had a positive impact on microbiological yield was aspiration of fluid. This has been demonstrated before in numerous studies and is thus an established predictor of yield [16]. However, the mere presence of an epidural or paraspinal collection was not associated with an increase in yield (P = .938). In contrast to the antibiotic-free period, successful fluid aspiration is a factor that can be considered unmodifiable, particularly in cases where the collection is too small for aspiration or is located in an anatomically challenging position. Other potentially modifiable factors include needle choice and number of biopsies. Although studies have been conflicting, it is generally recommended that larger inner bore needles be used when feasible (at least 14-gauge) to maximize yield [18]. Our study did not find any association between gauge and yield (P = .908). However, a large proportion of biopsies performed in our study were done using 13- or 14-gauge needles. Another factor that may play a role but has not been well studied is the number of specimens taken during the procedure [18]. Our study did not find a significant association between the yield and the number of biopsies (P = .249).

Repeat biopsies have been suggested to increase the microbiological yield of the procedure while avoiding an open surgical biopsy. They are generally recommended at least 3 days after culture results from the initial procedure remain negative [3, 10]. Recent studies have suggested a minor but clinically significant increase in the sensitivity of the procedure when repeated [19]. Repeat biopsies successfully identified a pathogen in 14 of 39 cases (35.9%) in our study. This increased the incremental yield from 52.6% to 57.9% (5.3% increase). This supports the use of repeat biopsies when feasible, especially since obtaining a microbiological diagnosis has been associated with more positive outcomes [20]. It is also important to note that some patients had a repeat biopsy but later grew more insidious organisms such as Cutibacterium acnes. Given the increasingly recognized pathogenic role of C. acnes, it may be prudent to consider increasing the time between the 2 biopsies [21]. Further on the technical aspect, the difference in yield between CT or fluoroscopic guidance was not found to be significant in our study (P = .871). Most studies also fail to find a significant difference or suggest a slight preference for fluoroscopy [22, 23]. This is in line with clinical practice patterns in radiology, at our and presumably most other institutions; that is, typically the modality that proceduralists are most comfortable with and which is most likely to provide a diagnosis based on preprocedure imaging is chosen. The slightly greater yield in the literature for fluoroscopy may in part relate to the transpedicular modified vertebroplasty approach, which can be more easily achieved on fluoroscopy than CT, and which at least in some cases allows for sampling of multiple regions (vertebral body below, disc, and vertebral body above).

Data on culture techniques were also collected. In recent years, the use of BCBs to incube biopsy specimen has gained some traction. Small studies have suggested good detection rates with BCBs [24]. To our knowledge, our study is the largest of its kind to examine the clinical use of BCBs for image-guided biopsies (82 patients). We found a marginal yet statistically nonsignificant association between their use and pathogen detection from univariate analysis (P = .052). Therefore, more studies are recommended to accurately assess the impact of BCB use.

Limitations of the study include the heterogeneity of pathogen identification techniques related to the year of diagnosis. Since the study spans 10 years, only more recent samples
were tested with BCBs (39.2%) and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) techniques (17.2%). Furthermore, in the analysis of the antibiotic-free period, the high concentration of patients taking antibiotics on the day of the biopsy resulted in an accurate estimate at that time point but less so at subsequent time points. Susceptibility to previously administered antibiotics was not examined and may have further increased the significance of the findings. When considering successfully identified organisms, it is possible to misidentify a contaminant as a pathogen. To minimize this risk, only organisms explicitly identified as pathogens and targeted with appropriate antimicrobial therapy were recognized as a positive result. Furthermore, we determined preprocedural level of suspicion based on predefined keywords extracted from radiology imaging reports, unlike certain studies that conducted specific analysis of individual images [25].

CONCLUSIONS

In patients undergoing CT or fluoroscopically guided biopsy for native vertebral osteomyelitis, successful fluid aspiration was independently associated with higher odds of pathogen detection, whereas prior use of antibiotics is associated with lower odds of detection. The antibiotic-free period suggested before obtaining the biopsy is at least 4 days. More studies are needed to elucidate the role of blood culture bottles and PCR techniques.

Acknowledgments

Author contributions. J. B. M., E. F. B., A. J. T., and D. B. G. T. had roles in study conceptualization and design. G. A. S., F. E. D., and D. B. G. T. critically reviewed design protocols. J. B. M., A. J. T., and C. R. had roles in data collection. Data entry was conducted by J. B. M. Data analysis and interpretation was done by B. L. The initial draft of the manuscript was prepared by J. B. M. All authors made substantial contributions and edits to the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript. The project was supervised by E. F. B.

Financial support. This work was funded by the Mayo Clinic.

Potential conflicts of interest. All authors: No reported conflicts of interest. All authors have submitted the ICMJE Form for Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest.

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