

Letter to the Editor

Merifluor-*Legionella* Cross-Reactivity

The excellent evaluation of the Merifluor-*Legionella* immunofluorescent reagent for detecting species of *Legionella* (P. H. Edelstein and M. A. C. Edelstein, J. Clin. Microbiol. 27:2455-2458, 1989) indicated possible cross-reactivity with *Bacteroides fragilis* and *Pseudomonas fluorescens*. Our laboratory also uses this polyclonal reagent, and we have been generally pleased with its specificity. However, we recently encountered a bacillus in a sputum sample that appeared larger than a typical *Legionella* sp. yet exhibited the characteristic 4+ fluorescence staining pattern. Upon isolation on buffered charcoal yeast extract (BCYE) agar, this organism was identified as *Corynebacterium striatum*, a member of the indigenous microflora of human anterior nares and skin and recently implicated in a case of native valve endocarditis (S. M. Markowitz and P. E. Coudron, J. Clin. Microbiol. 28:8-10, 1990). Subsequent staining of this organism failed to show any reactivity with polyclonal antisera specific for *Legionella pneumophila* serogroups 1 to 6 or *Legionella micdadei*, suggesting that the cross-reacting antibody in the 33-valent Merifluor-*Legionella* kit is specific for other antigens.

It is clear to us that this organism could cause considerable confusion to the inexperienced user, albeit at a low fre-

quency, in interpretation of clinical specimens stained with this reagent.

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Author's Reply

The finding of Drs. Summersgill and Snyder is interesting and adds to the long list of organisms which occasionally cross-react with polyvalent antibodies to *Legionella* species. Because of these cross-reactions, I prefer not to use such polyvalent reagents for direct specimen examination.

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