

Surveillance System for the Introduction of Antimicrobial Resistant (AMR)
Organisms into the U.S. Following International Travel

Why am I being asked to participate in this research study?

A member of your household recently enrolled in a research study at the Massachusetts General Hospital Travelers' Advice and Immunization Center. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the risk of acquiring drug resistant organisms in the gut and/or on the skin during international travel.

With the permission of your household contact, we are writing to you to invite you to participate in this research. We have determined that your household contact is colonized with a drug resistant organism, and we are interested to learn whether these organisms spread within a household.

What is antimicrobial resistance?

Drug resistance, or antimicrobial resistance, is the ability of organisms to resist the effects of drugs – that is, organisms may still grow even in the presence of a medication that is intended to kill them. Recent studies suggest that many international travelers become colonized in their intestine or on their skin with highly resistant organisms.

Being colonized with a drug resistant organism means that you have the organism somewhere in or on your body, but it is not making you sick. The risk of infection for colonized people that are otherwise healthy is low. Most people who get infections from these drug resistant organisms are already sick from other medical conditions.

What is the purpose of the research study?

Through research studies like this one, we can gain a better understanding of how common drug resistant organisms are in the U.S. and internationally, the associated risks of becoming colonized with these organisms, and whether healthy, colonized individuals spread them within a household.

What does the study involve?

If you are willing to participate, we will ask you to collect and mail three stool samples and/or skin swabs over the course of the next year. You would submit samples 90 days, 180 days and 360 days after your household contact returned from their international trip. We will also ask that you submit a survey with each sample. The survey will ask questions about your health and behaviors that may affect your risk of acquiring a drug resistant organism. None of your identifying information will be collected.

How do I agree to participate in the study?

If you are interested in participating in this research, please contact the study nurse, Elizabeth Oliver, at eholiver@mgh.harvard.edu or call her at 617-643-3677.

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