# **Environmental Stressors Triggering Antibiotic Resistance in** Bacteria



# Methodology

## **Aerosolization:**

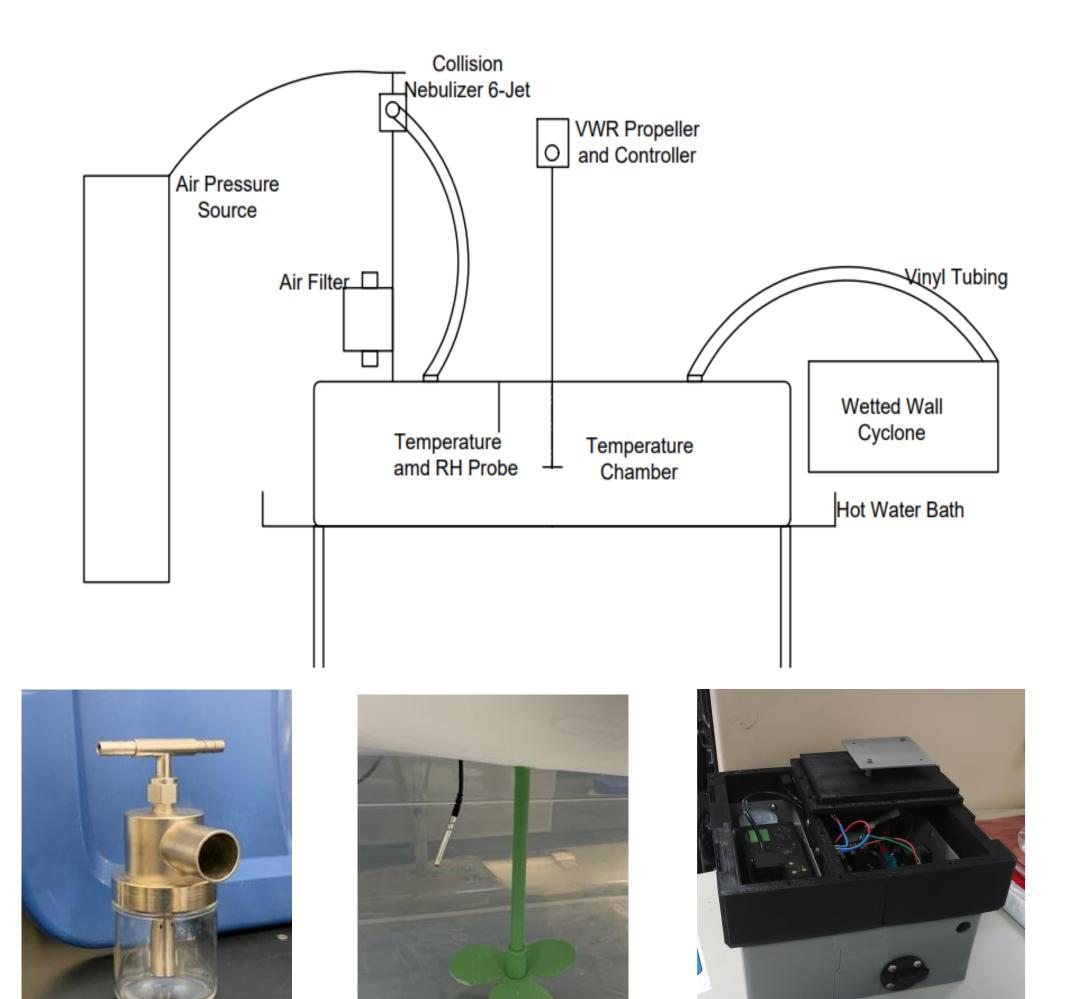
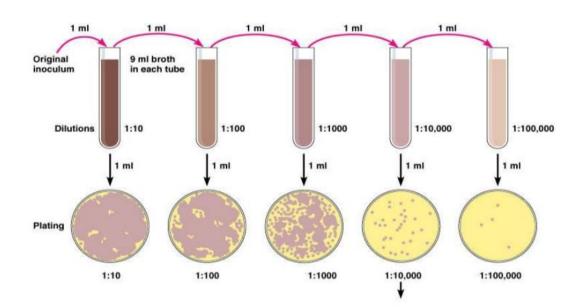


Figure 2. Parts of the setup. (A) Collison Nebulizer 6-Jet atomizes liquid cultures (B) VWR Propeller with a constant rotation of 80 rpm (C) Wetted Wall Cyclone (WWC) collects aerosols at 100 L/min

### **Culturable Counts:**



**Figure 3. Serial Dilution Plating.** Samples were diluted 10,000x for nebulized and stock E. coli MG 1655 fresh mid-log samples. Aerosol samples were diluted 10x. The dilutions were plated on Tryptic Soy Agar plates and incubated overnight at 37°C for culturable counts.

## **Antimicrobial Testing:**

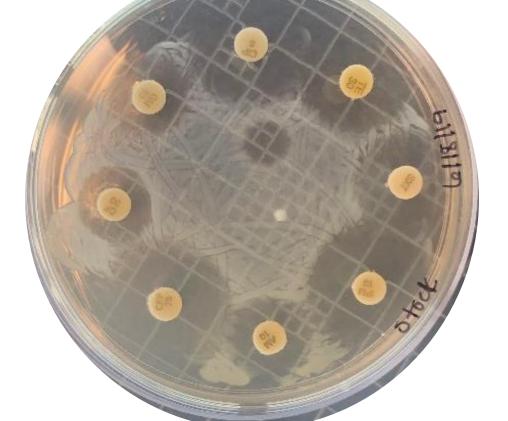
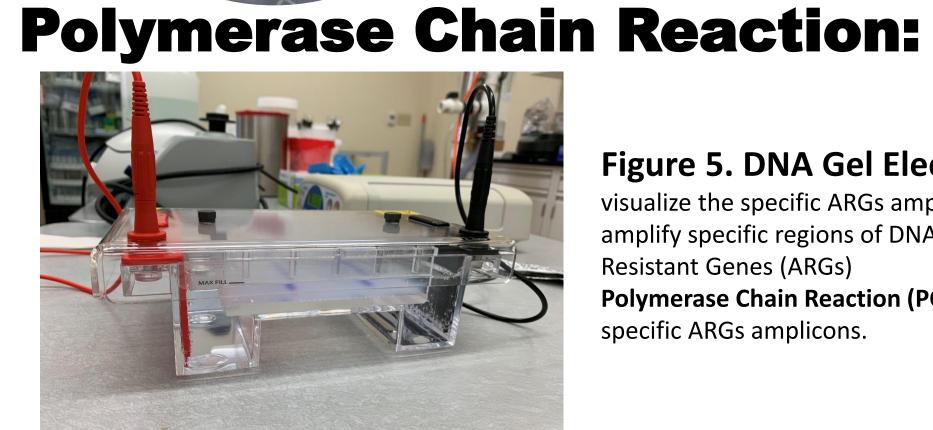


Figure 4. Kirby Bauer Susceptibility test. Discs with antibiotics were placed on plates of E.coli from stock, nebulized liquid and collected aerosol samples. Antibiotics consisted of Ampicillin (AM), Cefoperazone (CFP), Cephalothin (CF), Gentamycin (GM), Ciprofloxacin (CIP), Tetracycline (TE), Sulfamethoxazole trimethoprim(SXT), and Imipenem(IPM)

Larger zone of inhibition indicates that the bacteria is susceptible, smaller zone shows resistance.



### Figure 5. DNA Gel Electrophoresis was used to visualize the specific ARGs amplicons. PCR was used to amplify specific regions of DNA that coded for Antibiotic Resistant Genes (ARGs) Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) was used to visualize the

specific ARGs amplicons.

Brooke Smith\*, Maria King Aerosol Technology Laboratory, Biological and Agricultural Engineering, Texas A&M University Email address: <a href="mailto:blsmith5@tamu.edu">blsmith5@tamu.edu</a>, <a href="mailto:mdking@tamu.edu">mdking@tamu.edu</a>

# Objective

# Is our HVAC system triggering antimicrobial resistance in airborne bacteria?

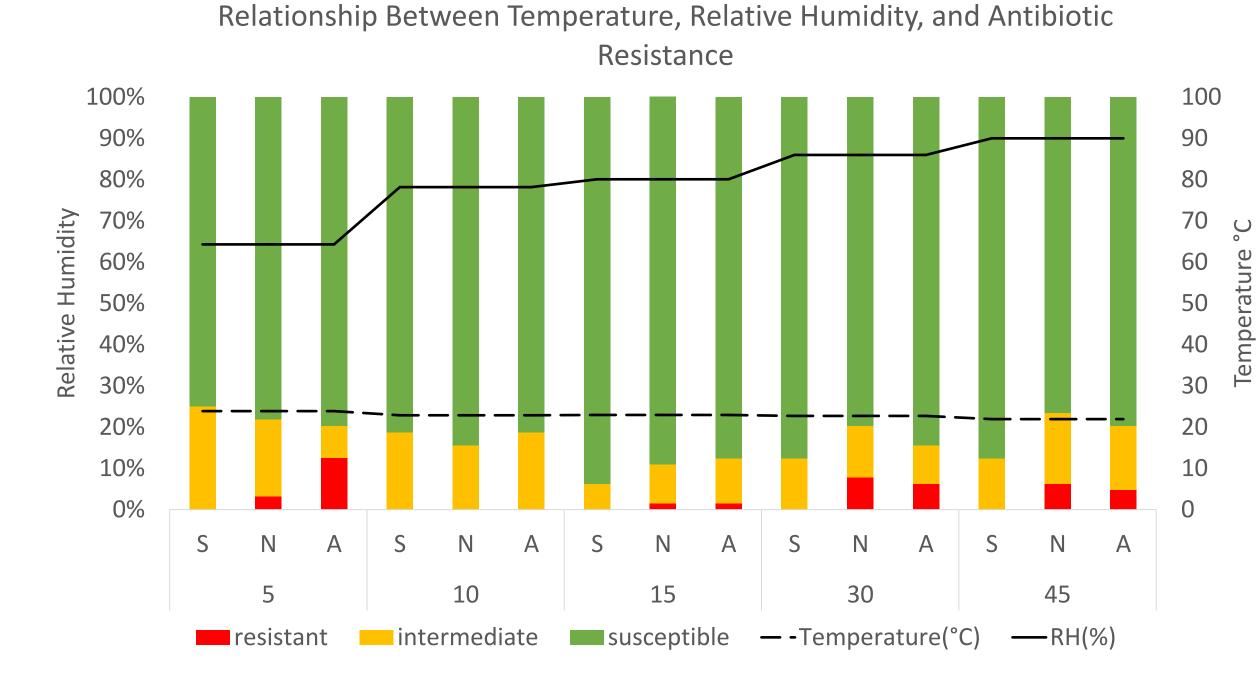
After months of use an air filter can only filter 70% of particles approximately 3 µm or more. Which means bacteria can still escape into indoor air.

Humans can inhale particles  $\leq 10 \mu$ m in size making it easy for toxic aerosols to enter the human body. What is in the air and how can air effect our health globally? Antibiotic resistance is the cause of 2 million infections and 23000 deaths annually in the US alone (CDC). Multidrug resistant bacteria are the leading cause of lower respiratory infection, morbidity and mortality globally. This study focuses on how air movement, aerosolization time, temperature, and relative humidity can effect the antibiotic resistance of E. coli, a close relative to multidrug resistant pathogens.

					R	8	51			
	nebulizer	aerosols Stock R	ef.	5 S	S	1	1	1	S	
			Stock	5 S	s		S	S	S	
568 bp			N1	5 S	S		5	S	S	
			N1	5 S	S	R	S	S		
marR			N2	5 S	s	S	S	S	S	
			N2	5 S	S	R	S	S	- I	
	nebulizer	aerosols	N3	5 S	S	I	I	I	S	
			N3	5 S	S	I	S	I	S	
			N4	5 S	S	I	S	S	S	
980 bp			N4	5 S	S			S		
rfaC			1A	5 S	S	R	S	S	S	
			1A	5 S	S	R	S	S	S	
	nebulizer	aerosols	2A	5 S	S	R	S	S	S	
			2A 3A	5 S	S S		R	S S	R S	
2200 bp			3A 3A	5 S	s	К	S	S		
			4A	5 S	s	K	S	S	S	
katE			4A	5 S	s	I	1	S	I	
		L Choole	Ref. Stock	10 S	S		S	S		_
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			N1	10 S	S		S	S	S	_
			N1	10 S	S	I	S	S	S	
568 bp			N2	10 S	S	I	S	S	- I	
marR			N2	10 S	S	I	S	S	S	
			N3	10 S	S	I	S	S	S	
			N3	10 S	S	I	S	S	S	
			N4	10 S	S	I	S	S	S	
			N4	10 S	S	I	S	S		
	nebulizer		1A	10 S	S			S	S	
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		and and and less loss to	N1	45 S	S	-	S	S	S	_
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			N2	45 S	S	S	1	S	S	
			N2	45 S	S	R	R	1	S	
568 hn			NZ NZ		S	I	I	S	S	
568 bp			N2 N3	45 S			S	S	l I	
<b>568 bp</b> marR			N3 N3	45 S	S	I			S	
			N3 N3 N4	45 S 45 S	S	R	S	S		
	nebulizer	aerosols	N3 N3 N4 N4	45 S 45 S 45 S	S S	R	S	I	S	
	nebulizer	aerosols	N3 N3 N4 N4 1A	45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S	S S S	R R I	S S	l S	S I	
marR	nebulizer	aerosols	N3 N3 N4 N4 1A 1A	45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S	S S S S	I R R I I	S S S	l S S	S I S	
marR	nebulizer	aerosols	N3 N3 N4 N4 1A 1A 2A	45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S	S S S S S	I R I I I	S S S S	I S S S	S I S S	
marR	nebulizer	aerosols	N3 N3 N4 N4 1A 1A 2A 2A 2A	45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S	S S S S S S	I R I I I I	S S S S S	I S S S S	S I S S S	
	nebulizer	aerosols	N3 N3 N4 N4 1A 1A 2A	45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S	S S S S S	I R I I I I R	S S S S	I S S S	S I S S	
marR	nebulizer	aerosols	N3 N3 N4 N4 1A 1A 1A 2A 2A 2A 3A	45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S 45 S	S S S S S S R	I R I I I I R I I I I I	S S S S S R	I S S S S S	S I S S S S	

Figure 6. Resistance results after 5, 15 and 45-minute aerosolization. (a) Amplicons of the marR and rfaC ARGs. (b) Heat map showing bacteria that are Resistant (red), Intermediate (yellow) and Susceptible (green) to the antibiotic (c) Bar charts All the three ARGs are present in the aerosolized bacteria 





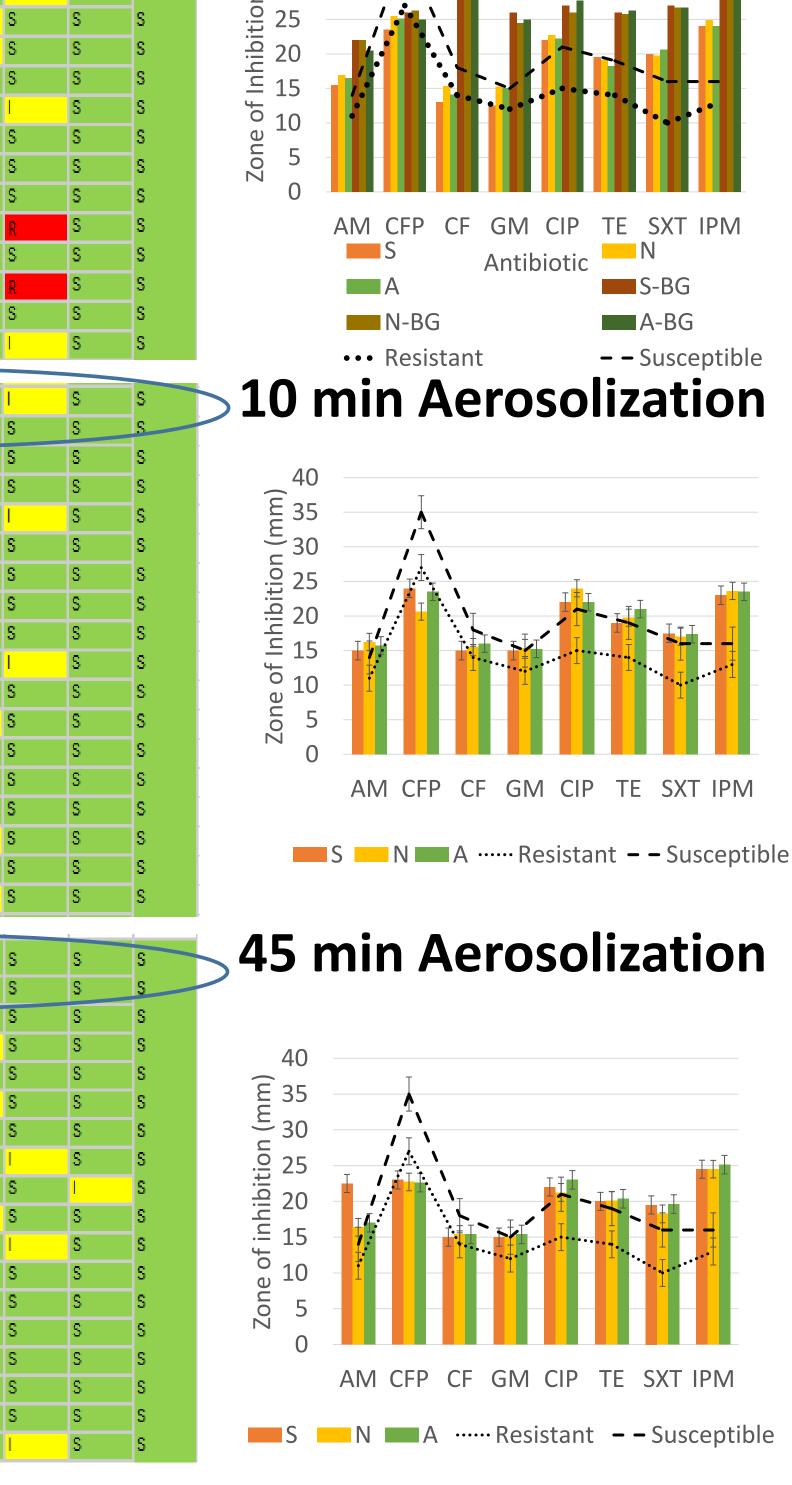
### Figure 7. The Effect Environmental Conditions on the Development of **Resistance.** Stock(S), Nebulized Liquid (N), Collected Aerosol Sample (A).

Sampling Time	Avg. I Diame
5	1.0
10	1.0
15	1.0
30	1.0
45	1.0

Figure 8. Correlation between culturability and aerosol droplet size. (a) The average CFU count of *E. coli* stock, nebulized samples, and collected aerosols at room temperature and 37°C. The amount of colony forming units (CFUs) were counted for each sample and the average was taken of each sample type, stock(S), nebulizer(N), and collected aerosol(A) samples. (b) The average droplet size

*E. coli* cells show the ability to express resistant genes and adapt to the environment. During the 5-minute nebulization the *E. coli* became stressed by the change of conditions from 37°C incubation to 20 psi of pressure at room temperature.

- to osmotic stress and desiccation.
- 25°C counts.
- antibiotic resistance.

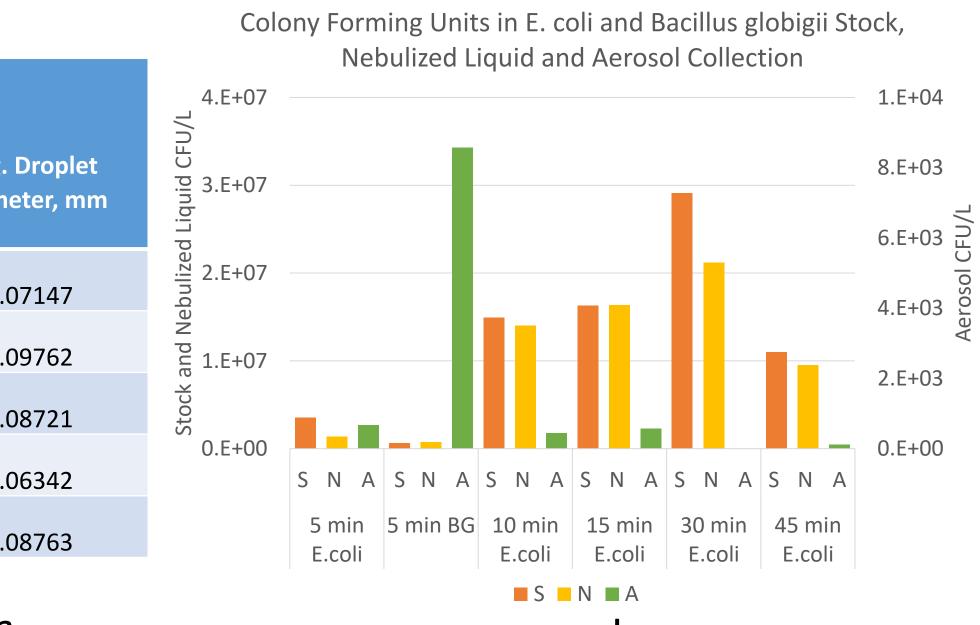


**5 min Aerosolization** 



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## **Environmental Conditions**



Discussion

• The bacteria aerosolized for 5 min expressed the most resistance.

• The expression of resistance decreased during 10, and 15-minutes possibly due to increased droplet size that may have provided a protective environment.

• Nebulization for 30 or 45 minutes led to the development of resistance likely due

• During aerosolization at 37°C, higher CFU values were detected compared to the

• The stock *E. coli* culture never showed resistance until nebulized or aerosolized.

In summary, a correlation was found between extended aerosolization times and