

New genetic biomarkers to differentiate pathogenic and clinically relevant *Bacillus cereus* strains

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Key Words:	<i>Bacillus cereus</i> , pathogenicity, genetic biomarkers, diagnostic tool, AUC
Abstract:	<p>Objectives. <i>Bacillus cereus</i> is responsible for food poisoning in France and rare but severe clinical infections. The pathogenicity of strains varies from harmless to lethal strains. However, there are currently no markers, either alone or in combination, to differentiate pathogenic from non-pathogenic strains. The objective of the study was to identify new genetic biomarkers to differentiate pathogenic from clinically relevant <i>Bacillus cereus</i> strains.</p> <p>Methods. A first set of 15 <i>B. cereus</i> strains were compared by RNAseq. A logistic regression model with lasso penalty was applied to define combination of genes whose expression was associated with strain pathogenicity. The identified markers were checked for their presence/absence in a collection of 95 <i>B. cereus</i> strains with varying pathogenic potential (FBO, clinical and non-pathogenic). ROC-AUC analysis determines the combination of biomarkers, which best differentiate between the "disease" versus 'non-disease' groups.</p> <p>Results. 7 genes were identified during the RNAseq analysis with a prediction to differentiate between pathogenic and non pathogenic strains. The validation of the presence/absence of these genes in a larger collection of strains coupled with AUC prediction showed that a combination of 4 biomarkers was sufficient to accurately discern clinical strains from harmless strains, with an AUC of 0.955, sensitivity of 0.9 and specificity of 0.86.</p> <p>Conclusions. These new findings help in the understanding of <i>B. cereus</i> pathogenic potential and complexity and may provide tools for a better assessment of the risks associated with <i>B. cereus</i> contamination to improve patient health and food safety.</p>

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4 **New genetic biomarkers to differentiate pathogenic and clinically relevant *Bacillus cereus***
5 **strains**
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31 **Keywords**

32 *Bacillus cereus*, pathogenicity, genetic biomarkers
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Abstract

Objectives. *Bacillus cereus* is responsible for food poisoning in France and rare but severe clinical infections. The pathogenicity of strains varies from harmless to lethal strains. However, there are currently no markers, either alone or in combination, to differentiate pathogenic from non-pathogenic strains. The objective of the study was to identify new genetic biomarkers to differentiate pathogenic from clinically relevant *Bacillus cereus* strains.

Methods. A first set of 15 *B. cereus* strains were compared by RNAseq. A logistic regression model with lasso penalty was applied to define combination of genes whose expression was associated with strain pathogenicity. The identified markers were checked for their presence/absence in a collection of 95 *B. cereus* strains with varying pathogenic potential (FBO, clinical and non-pathogenic). ROC-AUC analysis determines the combination of biomarkers, which best differentiate between the “disease” versus ‘non-disease’ groups.

Results. 7 genes were identified during the RNAseq analysis with a prediction to differentiate between pathogenic and non pathogenic strains. The validation of the presence/absence of these genes in a larger collection of strains coupled with AUC prediction showed that a combination of 4 biomarkers was sufficient to accurately discern clinical strains from harmless strains, with an AUC of 0.955, sensitivity of 0.9 and specificity of 0.86.

Conclusions. These new findings help in the understanding of *B. cereus* pathogenic potential and complexity and may provide tools for a better assessment of the risks associated with *B. cereus* contamination to improve patient health and food safety.

Introduction

Bacillus cereus is the third causative agent of food-borne-outbreaks (FBO) in Europe [1]. *B. cereus* can induce two types of gastrointestinal diseases, leading to generally mild and self-limiting emetic or diarrhoeal syndromes, although several cases of severe infections have been reported [2]. *B. cereus* also induces systemic infections leading to patient death in approximately 10% of cases [3-7]. *B. cereus* is also a source of central nervous system infections and other systemic infections especially in newborns [3, 8]. Recent epidemiological studies show that the number of cases of serious *B. cereus* infections is largely underestimated [9]. The pathogenic potential of *B. cereus* is extremely variable, with some strains being harmless and others lethal.

B. cereus possesses several toxin genes, such as *nhe*, *hbl* and *cytK* [2, 10]. These toxins provide an indication of the strain toxicity potential but are not sufficient, alone, to discriminate hazardous from harmless strains [9, 11-13]. Indeed, several studies have shown that *Nhe* production by hazardous strains is variable and that non-pathogenic strains can also produce it in large quantities [1, 12]. Moreover, these toxins do not appear to be suitable markers for strains causing non-gastrointestinal infections [9]. *B. cereus* produces other toxins such as haemolysin II (HlyII), the metalloproteases *InhA1*, *InhA2* and the cell wall peptidase FM (CwpFM), which may also be involved in pathogenicity [14-18]. The emetic form of *B. cereus* food poisoning is caused by the peptide cereulide [19], which represent less than 1% of the FBO strains of *B. cereus* [1, 19, 20].

To date, the above described determinants were not sufficient to completely explain the virulence of *B. cereus* [21] and there are currently no markers, either alone or in combination, to differentiate pathogenic from non-pathogenic strains. In this work, we took advantage of a well characterized collection of 95 *B. cereus* strains and compared pathogenic (FBO and clinical) with non-pathogenic strains. We identified a combination of four as yet undescribed biomarkers, wherein their presence/absence allows an accurate identification of clinical *B. cereus* strains. These findings constitute a huge step in the understanding of the *B. cereus* pathogenic potential and complexity and may provide tools to better assess the risks associated with *B. cereus* contamination.

Methods

Isolate information

This study includes 39 *B. cereus* strains associated with foodborne illness [1], 35 strains isolated from human patients following systemic or local infections [9] and 21 non-pathogenic strains [11, 22] (Sup Table 1). We have previously shown a correlation between cytotoxicity and virulence [21]. Nevertheless, although these strains had previously been shown to be weakly cytotoxic to human cells and to have reduced virulence in an insect infection model, this does not rule out their potential ability to produce symptoms in specific vulnerable populations.

RNA extraction

The transcriptome study by RNAseq was carried out on 15 strains representative of the three collections (Sup Table 2) in triplicates. Bacterial cultures were incubated in BHI medium at 30°C in microaerophilic condition (5% O₂–15% CO₂–80% N₂) at pH 7 until entry into stationary growth phase. Samples were centrifuged at 12,000 g for 3 min at 4°C and placed immediately at -80°C until processing. The bacterial pellets were re-suspended with 200 µl of 10 mM Tris-HCl at pH 8 + 4 µl of lysozyme at 50 mg/ml and incubated at 37°C. Total RNA was extracted with the HPRNA kit (High Pure RNA Isolation Kit; Roche) as previously described [23]. The RNA integrity was measured by the RIN (RNA Integrity Number) and were between 7 and 10. The mRNA were enriched with the RiboZero Kit (Illumina). The sequencing of the mRNA was carried out by the I2BC platform (CNRS, Gif-sur-Yvette). Directional and paired libraries were prepared with the Illumina scriptseq kit and the sequencing was performed on an Illumina Nextseq machine.

Transcriptome sequencing analysis

Sequencing quality was assessed using FastQC, and adapter sequences and low-quality base pairs were removed using cutadapt (version 1.9) [24]. Reads were further trimmed in 3' using sickle (version 1.33, option "-x" and default values for all other parameters, implying a Phred quality cutoff of 20). In absence of whole genome sequences for the 15 strains, the cleaned reads were mapped against a repertoire of allelic variants for 23,815 genes aiming at accounting for the pangenome of *B. cereus* group. This repertoire was obtained by single-linkage clustering based on the results of an all-against-all blastn comparison (version 2.2.26, e-value cut-off 1e-5) [25] of 519,931 CDSs extracted from the 91 annotated complete genomes available at the time of

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4 analysis for *B. cereus* group in Genbank. Pairs of CDSs that aligned over at least 70% of the length
5 of the shortest sequence and with at least 75% nucleotide sequence identity were grouped in the
6 same cluster, which resulted in 23,815 clusters representing distinct genes. Reads were mapped
7 using bowtie2 (version 2.2.6, options “-N 1 -L 16 -R 4”) [26] whose results were converted to bam
8 format using SAMtools version 1.9 [27]. Read counts on each allelic variant were obtained using
9 HTSeq-count (version 0.6.1) [28] and summed over allelic variants to obtain a single read count
10 per gene per sample. To cope with sequence similarity between allelic variants of a same gene
11 and fragmentation of the reference according to gene boundaries, R1 and R2 reads were aligned
12 independently and use of HTSeq-count option “-a 0” allowed to count reads that aligned equally
13 well on several allelic variants of a same gene. Of note, since bowtie2 mapped each read on a
14 single allelic variant, reads could not be counted more than once in the sum. Expression levels
15 expressed as \log_2 scaled rpkms (reads per kilobase per million mapped reads) were produced by
16 the R package “edgeR” (version 3.11) using the mean length of the genes in the cluster and a prior
17 count of 1.

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19 Raw transcriptomic data and differential expression analysis are accessible through GEO Series
20 accession number GSE168681

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22 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/query/acc.cgi?acc=GSE171128>).

23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 *Statistical model*

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36 The strategy for statistical analysis of RNAseq data was to select genes to predict whether a strain
37 is pathogenic $y=1$ or not $y=0$ and evaluate the prediction accuracy. We considered the logistic
38 regression model with lasso penalty implemented in the R-package “glmnet”, which allows the
39 selection of a limited subset of genes whose expression is associated with strain pathogenicity
40 [29]. The package glmnet provides an interval cross validation procedure to select the penalty
41 constant, which determines the number of selected genes.

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43 The prediction accuracy of the procedure was evaluated in a cross-validation framework where
44 splitting in training and validation sets preserves the matching of the three replicates of each
45 strain. For each replicate, the model provides a probability \hat{z}_i to be pathogenic, and we considered
46 the average value over the three replicates as the prediction probability of the strain. The
47 predicted pathogenicity status is set to zero if the prediction probability is smaller than 0.5 and 1
48 otherwise.

Biomarker screen by PCR

The 7 marker genes were retrieved from at least 20 sequenced *B. cereus* strains from NCBI databases and aligned by CLC Main workbench7 software to identify two regions conserved across the strains. Within these regions, 20 bp primers were designed using the Beacon Designer software. For the majority of the selected genes there were no perfectly conserved sequence and some bases had to be replaced with R (A/T), Y (C/T) or W (A/T) for primer design (Sup Table 3).

For all the strains of the collection, a single colony was picked, resuspended in 100 μ L Tris-EDTA NaCl buffer (TEN) and incubated at 98°C for 10 min. After centrifugation, 1 μ L of supernatant was used as DNA matrix. The PCR mixture contained 1 μ L DNA matrix, 0.5 μ M primer (forward and reverse), 10 μ L DreamTaq Green PCR Master Mix (2X) (Thermo Scientific) in a final volume of 20 μ L. PCR fragment sizes were revealed on 1.5% agarose gels containing Midori Green, and visualised by a UV imaging device.

AUC analysis to select combinations of biomarkers

The PCR data were pooled into a presence (1) /absence (0) table, which was then used as input for ROC-AUC analysis facilitated by the web-based suite of tools hosted at www.combiroc.eu. The ROC-AUC analysis determines the combination of biomarkers, which will best differentiate the classes of samples input ('disease' versus 'non-disease' groups). Sets of biomarkers were selected based on their performance in sensitivity or specificity alone, or in combination as the AUC metric. Potential hits were filtered at 85% specificity and 85% sensitivity.

Results

RNAseq analysis

We obtained between 9-15 million reads per samples with 90% correctly paired. The overall alignment rate was over 85%. The analysis enabled the creation of a read counts table based on gene expression levels for each sample (Figure 1). The dispersion of the sample count values was homogeneous and the biological triplicates clustered well together. We identified 3276 genes in the core transcriptome, which represents approximately 65% of the genes in each strain.

Identification of 7 biomarkers by logistic regression analysis

A Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon nonparametric rank test with a classical 5% of q value did not allow the prediction of significant differences in gene expression among the strain collections (not shown). Thus, to identify markers that could potentially differentiate pathogenic from non-pathogenic strains, we performed a penalized conditional logistic regression with the lasso method on the entire counting table to select relevant genes for the prediction of pathogenic potential. By applying the prediction model to the 11,179 genes with the selected penalty constant of 0.01, only 7 genes were selected (Table 1).

With the RPKM values of these 7 genes (Sup Table 4), a prediction in a cross-validation framework among the 15 strains, leads to 13 well classified strains (estimated probability \hat{z}_i value below 0.5 for non-pathogenic and above 0.5 for pathogenic strains) and two misclassified strains, one false positive (NP strain PF predicted as pathogenic) and one false negative (pathogenic FBO strain 12CEB01BAC predicted as NP) (Table 2).

Validation of the biomarkers on a large strain collection

Initially, for the first 15 strains, the presence of the 7 selected genes was further assed by PCR (Table 3). These data revealed that when a gene showed no expression by transcriptomic analysis, the gene was actually absent from the strain. Thus, the identification of these 7 biomarkers was based on gene presence/absence, rather than mRNA expression. As such, an approach centred on gene detection was chosen for the screening of the large bacterial collection with the 7 genes selected (Table 3) and to determine the area under the curve (AUC), specificity, and sensitivity of possible combinations of the selected biomarkers.

1-FBO vs NP

For the FBO strains, the best combination of biomarkers able to differentiate NP from FBO strains was obtained with 4 biomarkers (Figure 2A). With this combination, the best AUC was 0.768, the sensitivity 0.69 and the specificity 0.773. Therefore, we obtained some false positive (NP strains that appear pathogenic), and some false negative (FBO strains that appear NP). Taken together, the general trend for the FBO identification was an overall low AUC among the tested combinations, thus preventing their accurate differentiation.

Nevertheless, we identified that several FBO strains were lacking almost all biomarkers. These FBO strains primarily belong to the phylogeny group IV (table 3). We thus performed an additional

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4 AUC analysis after the removal of all strains of the phylogeny group IV of the collection (FBO and
5 NP). The results were significantly improved and the best combination resulted in an AUC above
6 0.9 and with significantly improved sensitivity or improved specificity. But a combination resulting
7 in sensitivity and specificity above 0.9 was not determined (Figure 2B).
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10 11 12 2-NP vs clinical strains 13

14 Regarding the clinical strains, the best results were achieved with a combination of 4 biomarkers
15 with an AUC of 0.955, sensitivity of 0.9 and specificity of 0.86. Therefore, the analysis concludes
16 that an accurate differentiation between clinical and non-pathogenic strains can be obtained by
17 using these biomarkers (Figure 2C). These two combinations allowed the accurate discrimination
18 between the two strain populations. Some markers have the same occurrence within the strain
19 collection (5, 6, 7) and were therefore interchangeable during the AUC analysis. Thus, the best
20 combinations of biomarkers are: 1, 2, 3, 5 (or 6 or 7). The genes are named, *adhB*, *agrC*, *thiJ*,
21 *BCQ_PI180* (or *gshAB* or *BCQ_PI181*).
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24 As a conclusion, a suitable combination of 4 biomarkers has been found to create a robust and
25 accurate test to differentiate clinical from non-pathogenic strains, with an AUC of 0.955, given
26 that test results above 0.9 are considered excellent.
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35 **Discussion**

36 The emergence of *B. cereus* as a foodborne pathogen and as an opportunistic pathogen has
37 intensified the need to distinguish strains of public health concern. The pathogenic potential of *B.*
38 *cereus* is extremely variable, with some strains being harmless and others lethal. Currently, due
39 to the lack of validated and standardized analytical methods, only the presence of *B. cereus* is
40 usually investigated in foods or clinical samples at a species-level. Over the years, new methods
41 have been developed with the leading principle to detect and distinguish *B. cereus* from others
42 *Bacillus* group members by a time-saving and *in-situ* analysis [30], genotyping using high-
43 resolution melting analysis [31], the use of multi-locus sequence (MLST) [32] or the classification
44 of the strains according to their affiliation to a phylogenetic group that offers a first useful
45 indicator of risk [11]. Nevertheless, MLST analysis of the 53 strain sequences included in this study
46 revealed that 21% belonged to the sequence type ST26, and approximately 11% to an
47 undetermined ST (not shown), while >40% of the strains were identified as belonging to PanC
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4 clade III (Table 3). As such, the ST types and PanC classifications were unable to completely explain
5 the grouping of the strains.
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7 Here, we report new markers characteristic of pathogenic *B. cereus* strains, which detection
8 requires only PCR, and is thus independently of growth conditions. We could indeed show that
9 the simple presence/absence of the gene was as discriminant as its expression value by
10 transcriptomic analysis. We further calculated the AUC, specificity and sensitivity obtained using
11 the combination of these 4 biomarkers to discriminate between our large *B. cereus* collection
12 inducing various pathologies. CombiROC results demonstrate that clinical strains were more
13 efficiently separated from the non-pathogenic strains than the FBO strains.
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15 Regarding the FBO strains, to improve the analysis, strains belonging to the phylogenetic group IV
16 were removed, thus allowing a significant improvement in strain differentiation. This might prove
17 very useful for food industries to better communicate the risks of *B. cereus* food contamination
18 and to take the appropriate measures for decontamination while preventing or minimizing
19 economic loss. Nevertheless, this implies a two step-test with a first *panC* phylogenetic attribution
20 followed by a biomarker test.
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22 By contrast, regarding the clinical strains, the combination of 4 biomarkers allowed the
23 identification of a strong differentiation test with an AUC of 0.955, sensitivity of 0.9, and specificity
24 of 0.86. Thus, a global test with a strong AUC (above 0.9) and increased sensitivity (rare false
25 negative) could be proposed to accurately discriminate between clinical and harmless strains. As
26 such, our new findings may be relevant to gain additional knowledge on the strains found in
27 hospitals and healthcare settings.
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COI statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Author Contributions

DK, BG, RD: performed experiments, analyzed data, manuscript writing; CG, SP, PN: analyzed data; SH, AB: supervision; NR: initial concept, supervision, analyzed data, writing of manuscript, funding sources.

Legends of figures and tables

Figure 1. RNAseq heatmap. Heatmap representation of expression levels (\log_2 rpk) across the pangenomic repertoire of 23,815 genes (rows) and the 45 samples (columns). Dendrograms are built by hierarchical clustering with average-link. The 3,272 genes with signal in all strains are indicated by grey bars. Non-pathogenic strains are indicated in black and pathogenic strains in red.

Figure 2. CombiROC analysis results. The presence/absence matrix resulting from PCR detection of biomarker sequences was analyzed by CombiROC. (A) Foodborne outbreak strains (FBO) versus non-pathogenic; (B) FBO versus non-pathogenic strains, excluding phylogenetic group IV. Links best sensitivity performance, right highest specificity; (C) clinical versus non-pathogenic strains.

Table 1. List of 7 selected biomarkers with gene position (on the reference genome pAH187_270 - NC_011655.1) and putative function.

Table 2. Estimated probability \hat{z}_i for the 15 strains. A logistic regression model with lasso penalty was applied to select the penalty constant, which determines the number of selected genes. Then prediction accuracy of the procedure was evaluated in a cross-validation framework. For each replicate, the model provides a probability \hat{z}_i to be pathogenic, and we considered the average value over the three replicates as the prediction probability of the strain. The predicted non-pathogenicity corresponds to a \hat{z}_i smaller than 0.5 and the predicted pathogenicity corresponds to \hat{z}_i above 0.5.

Table 3. Presence/absence of biomarkers among non-pathogenic (green), FBO (blue) and clinical (beige) strains. The presence of each biomarker gene was assessed by PCR in all strain of the collection. If the gene was present, a score of 1 was attributed (green boxes), if the gene is absent, a score of 0 is attributed (red boxes).

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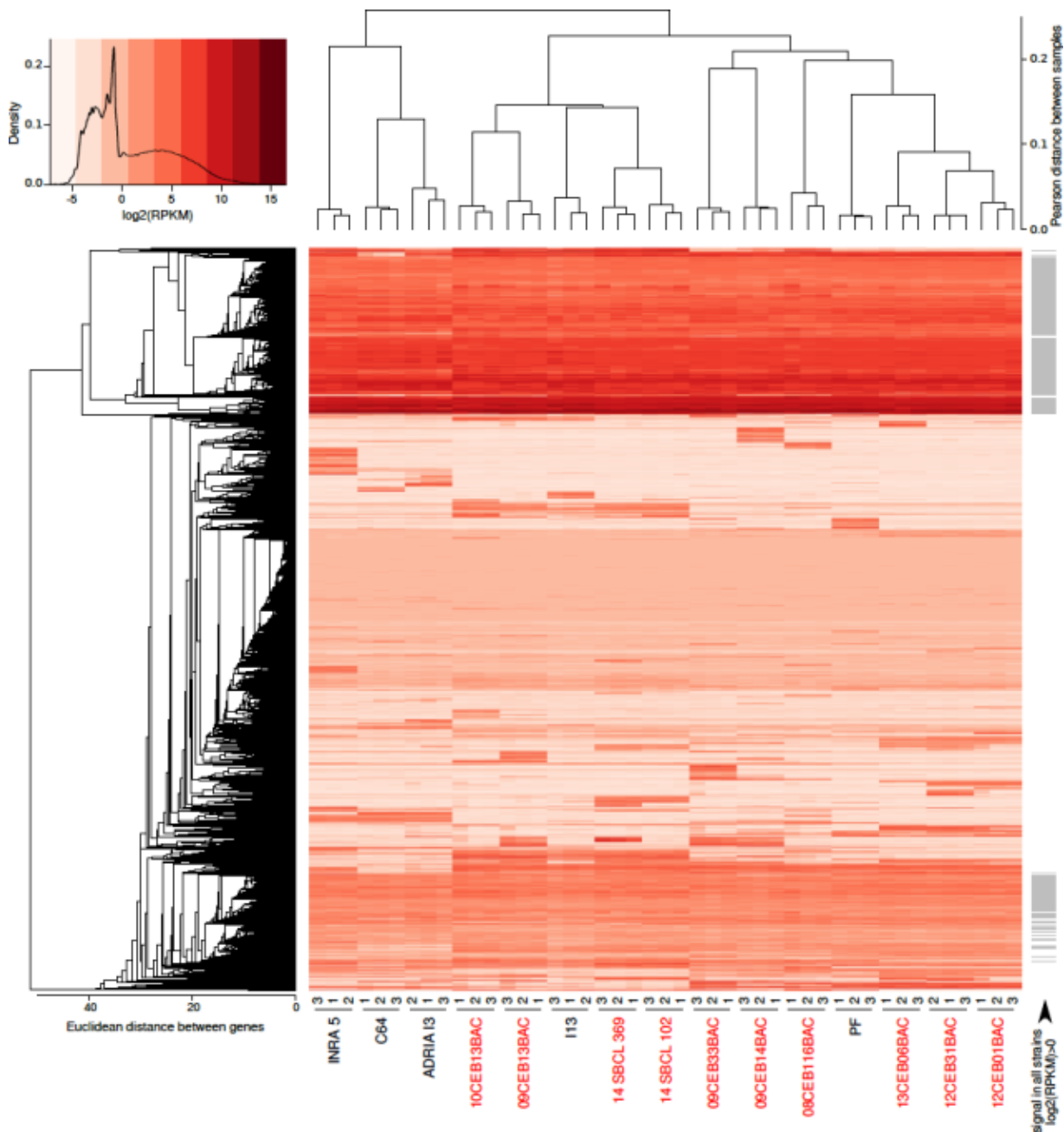
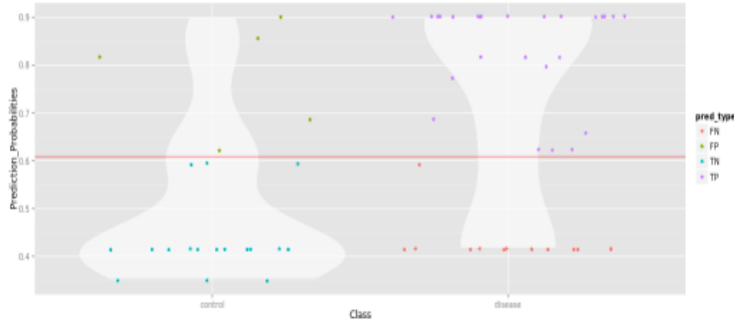


Figure 1

A

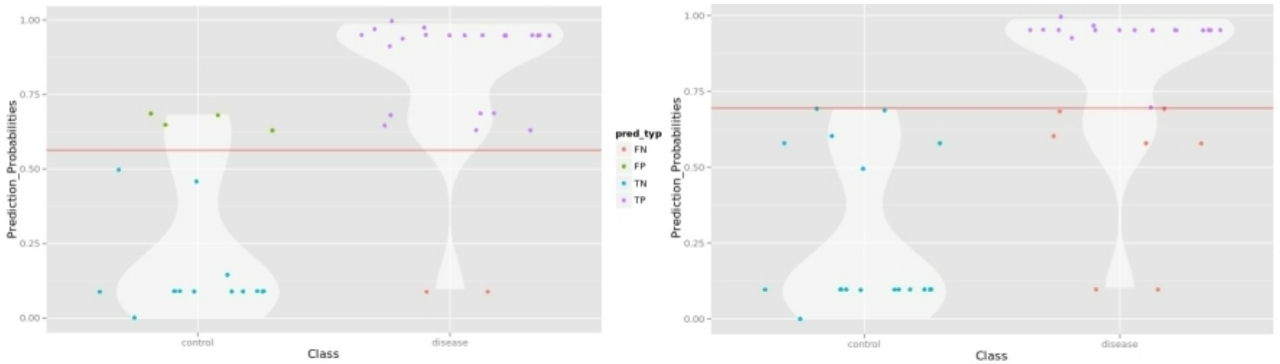
Clinical Microbiology and Infection

Biomarkers	Genes	AUC	SE	SP
Marker2-Marker3-Marker4-Marker6	agrC, thiJ, araC, gshAB	0.768	0.692	0.773



B

Biomarkers	Genes	AUC	SE	SP
Marker1-Marker2-Marker4-Marker5-Marker6	adhB, agrC, araC, BCQ_PI180, gshAB	0.917	0.917	0.778
Marker1-Marker3-Marker4-Marker5-Marker6	adhB, thiJ, araC, BCQ_PI180, gshAB	0.919	0.708	1.000



C

Biomarkers	Genes	AUC	SE	SP
Marker1-Marker2-Marker3-Marker6	adhB, agrC, thiJ, gshAB	0.955	0.909	0.864
Marker1-Marker2-Marker3-Marker5	adhB, agrC, thiJ, BCQ_PI180	0.955	0.909	0.864

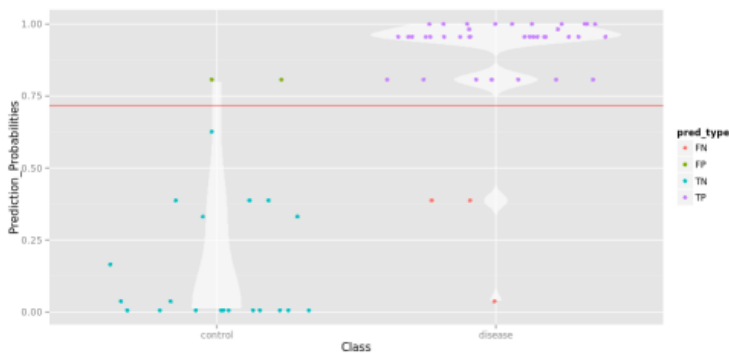


Figure 2

Table 2: Estimated probability \hat{z}_i for the 15 strains. A logistic regression model with lasso penalty was applied to select the penalty constant, which determines the number of selected genes. Then prediction accuracy of the procedure was evaluated in a cross-validation framework. For each replicate, the model provides a probability \hat{z}_i to be pathogenic, and we considered the average value over the three replicates as the prediction probability of the strain. The predicted non-pathogenicity corresponds to a \hat{z}_i smaller than 0.5 and the predicted pathogenicity corresponds to \hat{z}_i above 0.5.

NP	Prob mean
INRA 5	0.153328340753618
C64	0.0752423643321016
ADRIA13	0.0437357685829226
I13	0.5
PF	0.599889993544854
FBO	
10CEB13BAC	0.993824252074421
08CEB116BAC	0.675323289631434
14SBCL102	0.953746924319411
14SBCL369	0.950799749333682
12CEB01BAC	0.382731024964747
Clinical	
09CEB13BAC	0.975134675591066
09CEB14BAC	0.890033149139494
09CEB33BAC	0.788491148616572
12CEB31BAC	0.977652814613013
13CEB06BAC	0.986545096552651

1	08CEB049BAC_S71	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
2	08CEB075BAC_S72	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
3	09CEB03BAC_S73	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	III
4	09CEB05BAC_S74	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
5	09CEB38BAC_S75	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
6	10CEB06BAC_S76	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
7	10CEB33BAC_S77	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
8	10CEB68BAC_S78	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	III
9	14 SBCL 008_S79	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	IV
10	14 SBCL 016_S80	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	IV
11	14 SBCL 020_S81	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	IV
12	14 SBCL 022_S82	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	IV
13	14 SBCL 049_S83	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	IV
14	14 SBCL 175_S84	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	VII
15	14 SBCL 180_S85	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	IV
16	14 SBCL 266_S86	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	IV
17	14 SBCL 374_S87	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	IV
18	14 SBCL 566_S88	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	III
19	09CEB13BAC_S6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	IV
20	09CEB14BAC_S7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	II
21	09CEB33BAC_S8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
22	12CEB31BAC_S14	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
23	13CEB06BAC_S15	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
24	09CEB11BAC_S16	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
25	09CEB16BAC_S17	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
26	12CEB30BAC_S18	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	II
27	12CEB40BAC_S20	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
28	12CEB46BAC_S21	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	IV
29	12CEB47BAC_S22	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	IV
30	12CEB51BAC_S23	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	II
31	13CEB01BAC_S24	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	III
32	09CEB12BAC_S53	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
33	09CEB34BAC_S59	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
34	09CEB36BAC_S61	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	III
35	12CEB34BAC_S64	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	IV
36	12CEB37BAC_S90	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	IV
37	12CEB38BAC_S91	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
38	12CEB39BAC_S92	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
39	12CEB42BAC_S94	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
40	12CEB43BAC_S95	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	III
41	12CEB44BAC_S96	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	IV
42	12CEB45BAC_S97	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	II
43	12CEB48BAC_S98	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	II
44	12CEB49BAC_S99	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	IV
45	12CEB50BAC_S100	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	IV
46	12CEB52BAC_S101	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	III
47	13CEB03BAC_S102	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	II
48	13CEB07BAC_S105	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
49	13CEB09BAC_S106	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
50	13CEB30BAC_S107	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	II
51	14CEB16BAC_S114	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	IV
52	14CEB17BAC_S115	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	III
53	14SBCL987_S116	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	IV

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For Peer Review

Supplementary Table 1: Strain table

A- Origin of the 21 non-pathogenic strains and their genetic signature

Strain	Source	Genetic Signature (GS)	panC group
INRA-PF_S09	Milk protein	10	III
I13_S10	Cooked rice	2	IV
INRA-5_S11	Pasteurized zucchini puree	8	VI
INRA-C64_S12	Pasteurized vegetables	8	VI
ADRIA-I3_S13	Cooked foods	8	VI
INRA-BN_S36	Vegetable	12	II
INRA-PA_S37	Milk protein	4	III
INRA-A3_S38	Starch	2	IV
I23_S39	Cooked apple	10	IV
SB_S40	Soil from a vegetable field	10	V
I11_S41	Cooked food	5	V
INRA-C1_S42	Pasteurized vegetables	8	VI
INRA-C46_S43	Pasteurized vegetables	8	VI
INRA-SL_S44	Soil	8	VI
INRA-SO_S45	Soil	8	VI
INRA-BC_S47	Vegetable	2	II
I2_S48	Dried fruit	2	IV
INRA-BL_S49	Vegetable	8	VI
ADRIA I21_S50	Cooked foods	8	VI
INRA-SV_S51	Soil	8	VI
WSBC 10204_S52	Pasteurized milk	8	VI

B- Epidemiological data and symptoms of the 39 selected food-borne outbreaks (FBO) strictly associated to *B. cereus* and GS of the associated strains

Key of strains	Year	Incriminated food	Number of human cases	Incubation period (h)	Symptoms	Place of outbreaks	CFU/g	Genetic Signature (GS)	panC group
08CEB116BAC_S1	2009	Semolina	40	12	Diarrhea	Staff canteen	1,20E+03	1	II
10CEB13BAC_S2	2006	Paella	27	7	Diarrhea	Medico-social institute	2,80E+04	2	IV
12CEB01BAC_S3	2006	Apricot compote	8	5-16	Vomiting	School canteen	7,00E+02	1	III
14 SBCL 102_S4	2007	Lamb meat	5	8	Vomiting-diarrhea	Canteen of company	2,30E+03	2	IV
14 SBCL 369_S5	2005	Vetebales soup	10	12-24	Vomiting-diarrhea	School canteen	9,10E+02	2	IV
09CEB01BAC_S26	2008	Tiramisu	15	1	Vomiting-diarrhea	Canteen of company	8,00E+02	9	III
09CEB04BAC_S27	2004	Mashed potatoes	24	not known	Vomiting-diarrhea	School or equivalent	4,00E+02	7	VII
09CEB26BAC_S28	2008	Quenelle of pike	15	2	Vomiting-diarrhea-other	Canteen of company	1,20E+03	6	II
09CEB40BAC_S29	2009	Squid-sauce	3	12	Diarrhea	Canteen of company	2,10E+05	12	II
10CEB46BAC_S30	2008	Taboulesh	11	not known	Abdominal pain-other	Canteen of hospital	not known	2	IV
10CEB88BAC_S31	2011	Rice salad	8	1-1,5	Vomiting-diarrhea	Family	1,70E+07	3	III
14 SBCL 013_S32	2002	Mashed potatoes	10	not known	Vomiting-diarrhea	School or equivalent	7,80E+04	4	III
14 SBCL 038_S33	2011	Samoussa	9	1	Nausea-other	Restaurant or equivalent	not known	6	IV
14 SBCL 281_S34	2012	Onion soup	5	8-12	Vomiting	School canteen	4,00E+02	2	IV
14 SBCL 714_S35	2004	Polenta	25	18-24	Abdominal pains-diarrhea	Medico-social institute	9,00E+03	5	II
07CEB21BAC_S65	2007	Semolina	5	2	Vomiting	Commercial catering	1,20E+07	3	III
07CEB48BAC_S66	2011	Shrimp	12	24	Vomiting-diarrhea	Commercial catering	6,80E+04	3	III
07CEB53BAC_S67	2012	Tomatoes	4	2-3	Vomiting-diarrhea	Commercial catering	7,00E+02	3	III
08CEB121BAC_S68	2010	Taboulesh	not known	not known	not known	Restaurant or equivalent	5,00E+03	4	II

08CEB145BAC_ S69	2012	Comosed salad (rice or corn)	2	not known	Abdominal pain-vomiting	Canteen of company	1,90E+03	4	II
08CEB037BAC_ S70	2001	Rice salad	13	4-24	Vomiting-other	The elderly	2,00E+03	4	IV
08CEB049BAC_ S71	2003	Semolina	4	0,5-3	Vomiting	Restaurant or equivalent	5,50E+04	3	III
08CEB075BAC_ S72	2006	Fruit salad	70	not known	not known	Canteen of company	6,30E+03	3	III
09CEB03BAC_ S73	2002	Fish in coconut milk	2	2 to 3	Nausea-other	Restaurant or equivalent	1,10E+04	3	III
09CEB05BAC_ S74	2007	Cantonese rice	2	0,5	Vomiting-other	Family	1,60E+05	3	III
09CEB38BAC_ S75	2009	Chicken sauce	15	not known	Vomiting-diarrhea	Restaurant or equivalent	5,00E+02	3	III
10CEB06BAC_ S76	2003	Pasta gratin	2	2	Vomiting-diarrhea	Family	1,50E+07	3	III
10CEB33BAC_ S77	2007	Chicken	8	5	Vomiting-diarrhea	Family	6,50E+04	3	III
10CEB68BAC_ S78	2010	Mashed vegetables	19	not known	Vomiting-diarrhea-other	Canteen of social activities	1,20E+04	1	III
14 SBCL 008_ S79	2001	Carrot	3	5	Vomiting-diarrhea-other	Restaurant or equivalent	5,80E+03	2	IV
14 SBCL 016_ S80	2003	Tomatoes	3	15	Diarrhea	Hospital	5,50E+03	2	IV
14 SBCL 020_ S81	2005	Composed salad	3	2	Vomiting-diarrhea	Canteen of hospital	2,00E+03	2	IV
14 SBCL 022_ S82	2005	Tomatoe-corn-courgette	9	8-10	Abdominal pain-vomiting	School canteen	4,00E+03	2	IV
14 SBCL 049_ S83	2006	Composed salad	8	6-34	Abdominal pain-vomiting-other	Family	4,00E+02	2	IV
14 SBCL 175_ S84	2011	Mashed fish	18	12	Vomiting-diarrhea	Residence for the elderly	4,00E+02	7	VII
14 SBCL 180_ S85	2011	Diced mixed vegetables	14	1-21	Vomiting-diarrhea	Residence for the elderly	4,00E+02	2	IV
14 SBCL 266_ S86	2012	Millefeuille	2	4	Nausea	Restaurant or equivalent	2,00E+03	2	IV
14 SBCL 374_ S87	2006	Composed salad	not known	7	Abdominal pain	School canteen	5,50E+02	2	IV
14 SBCL 566_ S88	2008	Mix of pie	19	5-24	Vomiting-diarrhea	Canteen for social activities	4,00E+02	1	III

C- Epidemiological data and symptoms of the 35 selected *B. cereus* positive clinical samples and GS of the associated strains.

Key of strains	date of sampling	Hospital ward	Age of patients	Type of sampling	Symptoms	Outcomes	Genetic Signature (GS)	panC group
09CEB13BAC_S6	16/06/2009	Neonatology	Premature newborn	Blood culture	Brain abscess	Recovery	2	IV
09CEB14BAC_S7	05/07/2009	Neonatology	Premature newborn	Blood culture	Bacteremia	Recovery	1	II
09CEB33BAC_S8	03/09/2009	Neonatology	Newborn	Axilla-later feces	Skin infection	Recovery	1	III
12CEB31BAC_S14	08/2011	Neonatology	Premature newborn	Blood culture	Organ failure and pulmonary and cerebral abscesses	Death	4	III
13CEB06BAC_S15	juin-11	Intensive care unit	86	Blood culture from catheter	Heart failure, ventilator-associated pneumonia, ischemic stroke	Recovery	1	III
09CEB11BAC_S16	28/07/2009	Neonatology	Premature newborn	Blood culture	Meningitis, infection in the liver, both lungs	Death	1	III
09CEB16BAC_S17	21/07/2009	Neonatology	Newborn	Umbilical	Local colonization	Recovery	1	III
12CEB30BAC_S18	02/08/2011	Neonatology	Premature newborn	Blood culture	Sepsis	Recovery	4	II
12CEB40BAC_S20	03/03/2010	Gastroenterology	63	Blood culture	Bacteremia and central venous catheter-linked infection	Recovery	3	III
12CEB46BAC_S21	07/12/2010	Hematology	61	Blood culture	Sepsis (patient with an acute myeloid leukemia)	Recovery	2	IV
12CEB47BAC_S22	15/06/2008	Neurology	43	Blood culture	Bacteremia	Recovery	6	IV
12CEB51BAC_S23	16/07/2010	Cardiac surgery	60	blood culture	Sternum abscess, absent fever	Sequela of osteitis	1	II
13CEB01BAC_S24	07/2011	Orthopedic surgery	31	Prosthesis from tibia	No clinical sign of infection	Recovery	9	III
09CEB12BAC_S53	28/07/2009	Neonatology	Premature newborn	Cerebrospinal fluid	Meningitis, infection in the liver, both lungs	Death	1	III

09CEB34BAC_S59	17/09/2009	Neonatology	Premature-newborn	Stomach-tube feeding	Premature birth	Recovery	3	III
09CEB36BAC_S61	21/09/2009	Neonatology	Premature-newborn	Central venous catheter	Bacteremia	Recovery	1	III
12CEB34BAC_S64	06/2009	Emergency	80	Thoracentesis	Pulmonary infection	not known	2	IV
12CEB37BAC_S90	18/09/2011	Intensive care unit	30	Blood culture	Endocarditis	Death	2	IV
12CEB38BAC_S91	02/11/2009	Hematology	65	Blood culture	Sepsis	Death	1	III
12CEB39BAC_S92	12/09/2011	Nephrology	54	Blood culture	Sepsis	Recovery	1	III
12CEB42BAC_S94	26/03/2010	Gastroenterology	63	Blood culture	Bacteremia and central venous catheter-linked infection	Recovery	3	III
12CEB43BAC_S95	27/05/2010	Gastroenterology	63	Blood culture	Bacteremia and central venous catheter-linked infection	Recovery	1	III
12CEB44BAC_S96	03/06/2008	Surgery	34	Blood culture	Bacteremia	Recovery	4	IV
12CEB45BAC_S97	27/11/2010	Neurology	newborn	Blood culture	Kidneys and urinary infections	Recovery	1	II
12CEB48BAC_S98	06/10/2009	Oncology	66	Blood culture	Bacteremia (patient with a colorectal cancer)	Recovery	1	II
12CEB49BAC_S99	24/09/2010	Hematology	24	Blood culture+ skin infection	Sepsis and aplastic anemia caused by drugs	Recovery	2	IV
12CEB50BAC_S100	12/08/2009	Gynecological surgery	77	Blood culture	Bacteremia (patient with breast cancer)	Recovery	2	IV
12CEB52BAC_S101	20/06/2008	Hematology	40	Blood culture	Bacteremia (immunocompromised patient)	Recovery	4	III
13CEB03BAC_S102	oct-11	Intensive care unit	76	Blood culture	Community acquired pneumonia	Recovery	1	II
13CEB07BAC_S105	oct-11	Emergency	24	Blood culture	Abdominal pain, shivering, vomiting, fever, diarrhea	Recovery	3	III
13CEB09BAC_S106	sept-12	Gastroenterology	85	Liver abscess	Sepsis, hepatitis c and liver abscess,	Recovery	3	III

					abdominal pain, diarrhea			
13CEB30BAC_S107	sept-13	not known	not known	Blood culture	Nausea, abdominal pain and vomiting	not known	5	II
14CEB16BAC_S114	déc-13	Clinical laboratory	Premature newborn	Blood culture from peripheral veins	Septic shock, multiple organ failure, pulmonary and cerebral abscesses	Death	2	IV
14CEB17BAC_S115	déc-13	Clinical laboratory	Premature newborn	Bronchial aspiration (lung)	Septic shock and pneumonia pulmonary necrotic abscesses, recurrent pneumothorax	Death	4	III
14SBCL987_S116	2014	not known	not known	Biopsy (kidney)	Vomiting and diarrhea	Death	5	IV

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Supplementary Table 2: Strains selected for the RNAseq study and representative of the three collections FBO (F), Clinical (C) and non pathogenic (NP). For each strain, the name, origin, Nhe and Hbl production as well as cytotoxicity to HeLa and Raw cells is indicated.

Strains	Samples	Symptoms (n)	Nhe indice	Hbl indice	cytotoxic activity on HeLa cells	cytotoxic activity on Raw cells	
NP	INRA-PF_S09	Milk protein	-	3-4	1/64	57%	16%
	I13_S10	Cooked rice	-	3	1/64	6%	0%
	INRA 5_S11	Pasteurized zucchini puree	-	2	1/4	11%	5%
	INRAC64_S12	Pasteurized vegetables	-	2-3	1/16	20%	2%
	ADRIA I3_S13	Cooked foods	-	2	1	7%	2%
F	08CEB116BAC_S1	Semolina	Diarrhea (40)	1	nd	7%	8%
	10CEB13BAC_S2	Paella	Diarrhea (27)	3	1/16	77%	44%
	12CEB01BAC_S3	Apricot compote	Vomit (8)	5	nd	77%	21%
	14SBCL102_S4	Ham	Diarrhea and vomit (5)	4	1/64	89%	86%
	14SBCL369_S5	Vegetables soup	Diarrhea and vomit (10)	3	1/64	76%	84%
C	09CEB13BAC_S6	blood culture	brain abscess (1)	3	1/16	77%	47%
	09CEB14BAC_S7	blood culture	bacteremia (1)	2	nd	88%	40%
	09CEB33BAC_S8	axilla	skin infection (1)	4	nd	25%	12%
		later feces					
	12CEB31BAC_S14	blood culture	Apnea, bradycardia, and gray complexion. after that, sepsis, organ failure and pulmonary and cerebral abscesses (1)	5	nd	100%	48%
13CEB06BAC_S15	blood culture from catheter	heart failure, ventilator-associated pneumonia, ischemic stroke (1)	5	nd	11%	7%	

nd : not detected

Supplementary Table 3: Primers used in this study

Primer purpose and target gene	Primer (a)	Primer sequence (5'-3') (b)	Annealing temp (°C)	Product size (bp)	reference or source
<i>agrC</i>	BBC-01-F	TATCCTRGTTATAGCATTTTAGC	55	131	this study
	BBC-02-R	GTTAGTATGTATCCRAAGAYGCAGTAGA	55		this study
<i>adhB</i>	BBC-03-F	TTATTATCTATTCTTTTCGTGTGATGC	55	275	this study
	BBC-04-R	CTATTTGTAGCAGAACATTCRAAACC	55		this study
<i>BCQ_PI181</i>	BBC-05-F	TCGATGTAGAAGAGCCAAAAGC	55	289	this study
	BBC-06-R	CCTTTACCTTGTGTTTCTCG	55		this study
<i>BCQ_PI180</i>	BBC-07-F	ATGCAACAGCAGCTYACTTTTCAA	55	251	this study
	BBC-08-R	TGTAACAAACACCATATWATTGCTATT	55		this study
<i>araC</i>	BBC-09-F	GTACAGTTAAAAGCYTTTCC	55	221	this study
	BBC-10-R	GGRTYTTCCCATGACATATCTA	55		this study
<i>gshAB</i>	BBC-11-F	ACGAAATGCTTTGGCCATTAAG	55	284	this study
	BBC-12-R	CCATCGATAGTGTAATAATT	55		this study
<i>thiJ</i>	BBC-13-F	GCTGTTATTTATTACGCAGG	55	251	this study
	BBC-14-R	ATCTTCTGTAAAAATGGAAC	55		this study

(a) F, forward primer; R, reverse primer

(b) R, A or G; Y, C or T; W, A or T

Supplementary Table 4. RPKM data for the 7 markers. The expression levels expressed as log₂ scaled rpkm (reads per kilobase per million mapped reads) is indicated for each of the 7 marker genes and the 15 samples in biological triplicate (1, 2, 3).

	Marker1	Marker2	Marker3	Marker4	Marker5	Marker6	Marker7
	adhB	agrC	thiJ	araC	BCQ_PI180	gshAB	BCQ_PI181
INRA-PF_S09-1	-2,87	-1,78	0,68	-3,68	-1,49	-1,49	-4,07
INRA-PF_S09-2	-3,81	-1,78	0,60	-3,68	-2,43	-2,43	-3,04
INRA-PF_S09-3	-3,81	-1,78	1,37	-3,68	-1,65	-1,65	-4,07
I13_S10-1	1,66	-1,78	-3,37	-0,58	-1,37	-1,37	-4,07
I13_S10-2	0,47	-1,78	-2,22	-0,09	-1,28	-1,28	-2,92
I13_S10-3	0,83	-1,78	-3,37	-3,68	-2,43	-2,43	-4,07
INRA-5_S11-1	-2,33	-1,78	-3,37	-3,68	-2,43	-2,43	-4,07
INRA-5_S11-2	-3,81	-0,73	-3,37	-3,68	-2,43	-2,43	-4,07
INRA-5_S11-3	-3,81	-1,10	-3,37	-3,68	-1,75	-1,75	-4,07
INRA-C64_S12-1	-3,81	-1,78	-3,37	-1,84	-2,43	-2,43	-2,24
INRA-C64_S12-2	-3,81	-1,78	-2,25	-3,68	-2,43	-2,43	-2,33
INRA-C64_S12-3	-3,81	-1,78	-3,37	-3,68	-2,43	-2,43	-4,07
ADRIA-I3_S13-1	-3,81	-1,78	-3,37	-3,68	-2,43	-2,43	-4,07
ADRIA-I3_S13-2	-1,33	-1,78	-2,43	-3,68	-1,49	-1,49	-4,07
ADRIA-I3_S13-3	-3,81	-0,56	-3,37	-3,68	-2,43	-2,43	-4,07
08CEB116BAC_S1-1	3,46	4,52	0,06	-1,30	5,16	5,16	4,31
08CEB116BAC_S1-2	3,02	4,98	1,23	-3,68	4,83	4,83	5,18
08CEB116BAC_S1-3	1,31	3,65	1,30	-3,68	4,34	4,34	3,72
10CEB13BAC_S2-1	2,34	5,29	3,20	4,45	4,70	4,70	5,42
10CEB13BAC_S2-2	2,45	3,96	3,36	3,98	5,37	5,37	4,79
10CEB13BAC_S2-3	1,65	4,83	1,80	4,12	4,80	4,80	5,19

1								
2	12CEB01BAC_S3-1	1,74	4,73	3,08	5,25	2,92	2,92	2,13
3								
4	12CEB01BAC_S3-2	1,33	4,17	3,08	4,55	-2,43	-2,43	-2,64
5								
6	12CEB01BAC_S3-3	1,15	4,17	1,07	5,13	-2,43	-2,43	-4,07
7								
8	14SBCL102_S4-1	2,41	4,04	1,55	4,96	5,08	5,08	5,08
9								
10	14SBCL102_S4-2	2,66	4,14	1,63	5,20	4,59	4,59	5,22
11								
12	14SBCL102_S4-3	0,29	4,06	1,73	5,04	3,27	3,27	3,65
13								
14	14SBCL369_S5-1	2,50	4,74	2,25	5,27	4,76	4,76	4,72
15								
16	14SBCL369_S5-2	2,80	3,97	2,94	5,43	4,29	4,29	4,69
17								
18	14SBCL369_S5-3	1,21	4,33	2,21	5,46	3,18	3,18	4,05
19								
20								
21	09CEB13BAC_S6-1	1,58	5,81	1,35	7,19	3,68	3,68	6,51
22								
23	09CEB13BAC_S6-2	0,80	5,53	2,92	7,18	3,56	3,56	6,75
24								
25	09CEB13BAC_S6-3	1,86	4,44	2,76	6,68	4,69	4,69	6,64
26								
27	09CEB14BAC_S7-1	3,83	3,54	2,28	6,40	4,16	4,16	5,62
28								
29	09CEB14BAC_S7-2	3,02	4,66	2,84	6,26	3,88	3,88	5,00
30								
31	09CEB14BAC_S7-3	2,79	3,52	2,74	6,85	4,02	4,02	4,71
32								
33	09CEB33BAC_S8-1	2,66	3,51	1,86	6,61	4,23	4,23	6,42
34								
35	09CEB33BAC_S8-2	3,11	2,55	2,22	6,39	4,52	4,52	6,34
36								
37	09CEB33BAC_S8-3	1,93	2,85	2,06	6,68	3,86	3,86	5,68
38								
39	12CEB31BAC_S14-1	2,06	4,96	2,03	5,87	3,44	3,44	4,70
40								
41	12CEB31BAC_S14-2	1,10	3,08	2,21	6,00	4,11	4,11	4,57
42								
43	12CEB31BAC_S14-3	2,26	4,68	1,37	5,76	4,14	4,14	3,97
44								
45	13CEB06BAC_S15-1	2,28	4,58	2,65	3,90	3,44	3,44	3,96
46								
47	13CEB06BAC_S15-2	3,51	5,22	1,80	4,27	3,62	3,62	4,28
48								
49	13CEB06BAC_S15-3	2,73	4,74	2,03	4,06	4,22	4,22	3,69
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For Peer Review