A novel genomic island harbouring *Isa*(E), *Inu*(B) genes and a defective prophage in a *Streptococcus pyogenes* isolate resistant to lincosamide, streptogramin A and pleuromutilin antibiotics

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30 Abstract

The lincosamide-resistant and macrolide-susceptible phenotype has not been 31 described to date in Streptococcus pyogenes (group A Streptococcus; GAS). The 32 aim of this study was to characterize a GAS isolate susceptible to macrolides but 33 resistant to lincosamide, streptogramin A and pleuromutilin antibiotics (LS<sub>A</sub>P 34 phenotype). The antimicrobial susceptibility was tested by the microdilution broth 35 36 method and the resistance phenotype by D-test. The GAS2887HUB isolate was 37 subjected to whole-genome sequencing. The isolate showed a positive Gots' test (clindamycin inactivation). WGS revealed the strain was ST10 and emm93 and had 38 39 five resistance genes (Inu(B), ant(6)-Ia, aph(3')-III, tet(M), and dfrG). The tet(M) gene was located into a Tn916-like transposon. The Isa(E)-Inu(B)-containing 40 sequence (inserted downstream of the rumA gene) was formed by a 39.6-kb 41 prophage, followed by a gene cluster encoding aminoglycoside-streptothricin 42 resistance [ant(6)la-sat4-aph(3')III] and Isa(E)-Inu(B) genes. This structure was 43 not transferred by conjugation. In conclusion, we have described a new genetic 44 element carrying a determinant of lincosamide resistance in a GAS. Further 45 molecular epidemiological surveys are needed to determine the prevalence of this 46 47 mechanism of resistance in GAS.

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Key words: L phenotype, LS<sub>A</sub>P phenotype, *Streptococcus pyogenes*, GAS, *Inu*(B), *Isa*(E).

#### 52 **1. Introduction**

Streptococcus pyogenes (group A Streptococcus; GAS) is a major human pathogen that causes infections such as tonsillitis and skin and soft tissue infection [1]. Penicillins and cephalosporins are widely used to treat GAS infections due to the universal susceptibility of this bacterium to  $\beta$ -lactams. In cases of  $\beta$ -lactam allergy, macrolides or lincosamides are the recommended alternatives. Moreover, the addition of protein synthesis inhibitors, such as clindamycin, may effectively reduce the synthesis of virulence factors and improve patient outcomes [2].

To date, two transferable mechanisms of macrolide and lincosamide 60 resistance have been described in GAS (the ML phenotype). One involves 23S 61 62 rRNA methylation (erm genes), responsible for resistance to macrolides, lincosamides and streptogramins B (the MLS<sub>B</sub> phenotype). The other involves 63 active efflux (mef genes), conferring resistance to 14- and 15-membered 64 macrolides (the so-called M phenotype) [3,4]. These genes are widespread in 65 streptococci, mostly through the transfer of mobile genetic elements (MGEs) of the 66 Tn916 family. Two additional phenotypes have been reported sporadically in other 67 streptococci: lincosamide inactivation by a nucleotidyltransferase (L phenotype, Inu 68 genes); and resistance to lincosamide, streptogramin A and pleuromutilin 69 70 antibiotics due to ribosomal protection (LS<sub>A</sub>P phenotype; *Isa* genes) [5,6]. The latter mechanism, also carried by MGEs, has been described in several human and 71 animal streptococcal species [7–12], including one S. pyogenes isolate (erm(B) 72 together with Isa(C); MLS<sub>B</sub> phenotype) [13]. 73

In this study we describe, to the best of our knowledge, the first *S. pyogenes* isolate with an LS<sub>A</sub>P phenotype due to the presence of *Isa*(E) and *Inu*(B) genes. Moreover, we show that the genetic element carrying these genes was inserted into the *S. pyogenes* chromosome with a defective prophage similar to those recovered from swine pathogens.

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# 80 2. Materials and methods

## 81 **2.1** Bacterial strain and antibiotic susceptibility testing

A S. pyogenes exhibiting a LS<sub>A</sub>P phenotype (GAS2887HUB) was obtained from a 82 83 wound sample of a 77-year-old woman with cellulitis who was attended in the emergency department in September 2009. She consulted for a fever (39°C), 84 85 headache, vomits and a confusional state. The physical examination revealed a pretibial leg ulcer was observed with signs of infection and cellulitis. Antipyretic and 86 amoxicillin-clavulanic acid therapy was started after collecting blood cultures and 87 wound samples. The patient presented good evolution after a 15-hour observation 88 period and was discharged. After two weeks of amoxicillin-clavulanic treatment and 89 one month of reepithelialisation therapy the wound resolved. 90

The antimicrobial susceptibility was tested by the broth microdilution reference method following the EUCAST recommendations. For antibiotics lacking recommendations, the Antibiogram Commitee of the French Society for Microbiology breakpoints were used (CA-SFM: <u>www.sfm-microbiologie.org/</u>). The ML phenotype was assessed by the D-test disk-diffusion method [3]. The following antimicrobials were tested: ampicillin, penicillin, cefotaxime, erythromycin,

azithromycin, spiramycin, clindamycin, lincomycin, pristinamycin, quinupristin,
dalfopristin, quinupristin-dalfopristin, tiamulin, tetracycline, chloramphenicol,
ciprofloxacin, trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole, amikacin, gentamicin, kanamycin,
streptomycin and tobramycin. Lincosamide inactivation was screened using Gots'
test, as previously described [14].

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## 103 **2.2 WGS analysis**

Genomic DNA was extracted using a QIAamp DNA Mini Kit (Qiagen), guantified 104 105 with a QuantiFluor dsDNA System (Promega Corporation, US) and was then adjusted to 0.2 ng/µL. Genome was sequenced using a 150 bp paired-end read 106 protocol (NexteraXT kit and MiSeq, Illumina, US) at Macrogen, Inc. (Seoul, Rep. of 107 .The quality of the sequencing was assessed with FastQC 108 Korea) (http://www.bioinformatics.babraham.ac.uk/projects/fastqc/). 109 Afterwards. reads were trimmed, duplicated reads removed and errors corrected. Finally, they were 110 assembled with Geneious 9.1.7 (Biomatters, New Zealand). 111

The *emm*-type and MLST were deduced using the *emm* CDC databases for WGS (<u>https://www2a.cdc.gov/ncidod/biotech/strepblast.asp;</u> <u>https://pubmlst.org/spyogenes/</u>). Additional sequence analysis was performed using different available online tools (ResFinder 3.0, ICEberg and Phaster) to explore the presence of acquired resistance mechanisms and different MGEs, such as integrative conjugative elements and prophages. The genetic environment of *Isa*(E)–*Inu*(B) was studied through comparison with previously described

sequences present in public databases. For the putative prophage sequences
predicted by Phaster, further characterisation was achieved using BlastX.
Comparisons between GAS2887HUB, sequences found to be similar based on
nucleotide sequence alignments, and *Isa*(E)–*Inu*(B) structures previously described
in streptococci were displayed using Easyfig program.

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## 125 2.3 Mating experiments

S. pyogenes GAS3493HUB and S. agalactiae GBS4777HUB (rifampin-resistant MIC: 32 mg/L and clindamycin susceptible) were used as recipient strains for conjugation experiments performed on membrane filter, as described [15]. Transconjugants were selected using blood agar plates containing 20mg/L of rifampicin and 4mg/L of clindamycin. Mating experiments were repeated three times.

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#### 133 **3. Results and Discussion**

#### 134 **3.1** Antibiotic resistance genes, susceptibility testing and molecular typing.

The GAS2887HUB isolate was resistant to clindamycin, lincomycin, dalfopristin, 135 streptomvcin tiamulin, tetracycline, amikacin, kanamycin, 136 and 137 trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole, but it was susceptible to the remaining antibiotics 138 tested (Supplementary material Table S1). Gots' test was positive, proving 139 lincosamide inactivation, whereas the D-test failed to reveal either synergy or induction events. Consistent with this, the analysis of acquired genes for antibiotic 140 resistance (ResFinder 3.0) demonstrated the presence of Inu(B), ant(6)-la, aph(3')-141

III, *tet*(M) and *dfrG*. The *lsa*(E) was not detected because it is not included in the ResFinder database. Besides this, the GAS2887HUB strain harboured a Tn*916* element [*tet*(M) gene], two prophage-like sequences (P1 and P2) and a partly deleted prophage (P3) (Supplementary material Fig. S1).

The GAS2887HUB strain was emm93 and the sequence type was ST10, a 146 rare association. In fact, this was the unique isolate with emm93 among nearly 500 147 GAS collected over a twenty-year period. Furthermore, the GAS MLST database 148 contains only 14 ST10 isolates, of which only 3 contain emm93 (2 isolates from 149 150 India and 1 from Egypt). However, clindamycin susceptibility was not reported for 151 any of these isolates, which meant that we could not clarify the putative clonal association of these resistance mechanisms, as with other resistance mechanisms 152 153 in GAS [3].

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## 155 **3.2 WGS analysis: Genetic context of Isa(E)-Inu(B) genes**

156 To the best of our knowledge, the genetic environment of *Isa*(E)-*Inu*(B) genes in 157 our strain was different to that previously reported [7,8,13,16,17]. The *lsa*(E)-*lnu*(B) genes resided together with the 39.6 kb P2 that was inserted downstream of the 158 159 rumA gene (Fig. 1A). This sequence was formed by a 39.6 kb prophage, followed by an aminoglycoside-streptothricin-resistance cluster [ant(6)la-sat4-aph(3')III] 160 and the *lsa*(E)-*lnu*(B) genes. The extremes of this composite structure were highly 161 similar to the Streptococcus porci DSM 23759 prophage (67%-100% identity, 162 average 85.8%, Acc. No. AUIP01000001, positions 1-57586) and to the 163 164 Isa(E)-Inu(B) genes (99.7% identity, Acc. No AUIP01000004, positions 165 2690-7146). Moreover, the GAS2887HUB sequence containing from ant(6) la -sat4-aph(3) III to Isa(E)-Inu(B) was found in a different arrangement in 166 Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae Ery-11 [16] (Acc. No. KP339868, 99.1% identity, 167 positions 11622-17508; 99.9% identity. positions 4868-9307). The 168 169 ant(6)la-sat4-aph(3')III cluster shared 98.1% identity with the S. suis TZ080501 170 genome (Acc. No. KX077897, positions 51296-56201) (Fig. 1B).

Among streptococci (Fig 1C), the MGE harbouring *Isa*(E)-*Inu*(B) genes was 171 172 first reported in a S. agalactiae structure (SGB76) also containing a multidrug resistance cluster (aadE-apt-spw) [8]. This combination was also described with 173 different arrangement in S.suis [17,18]. A second Isa(E)-Inu(B)-containing element 174 was described in a human S. agalactiae isolate (Fig 1C; 20162235) [7]. Beside 175 176 this, the *lnu*(B) gene have been also found in streptococci and staphylococci with L 177 and LS<sub>A</sub>P phenotypes isolated from animals and some food products [18], indicating that some streptococci serve as a reservoir for antimicrobial resistance 178 179 genes [17]. When comparing the characterized structures harbouring Isa(E)-Inu(B) genes with GAS2887HUB (Fig. 1C), three findings were notable [8,16,18,19]. First, 180 the orf4-orf5-lsa(E)-lnu(B) structure was highly conserved (95% identity) among 181 them. Second, in the previously described streptococcal structures, the 182 *Isa*(E)-*Inu*(B) genes went together with a multidrug 183 resistance cluster (aadE-apt-spw). Third, the aminoglycoside-streptothricin resistance cluster 184 185 [ant(6)la-sat4-aph(3')III] detected in our strain (GAS2887HUB) was found in a different arrangement in E. rhusiopathiae. 186

187 The presence of a prophage highly similar to the one previously found in animal isolates of S. porci DSM 23759 [19], and E. rhusiopathiae [16,20], could 188 suggest a putative animal source for this element. It is likely that the widespread 189 use of lincosamides to treat (or prevent) infections in animals could have favoured 190 the selection and spread of such mechanisms of resistance. In our strain, the 191 genomic island located downstream of the defective prophage, which contains the 192 ant(6)Ia-sat4-aph(3')III-cluster and Isa(E)-Inu(B) resistance genes, could be a 193 disrupted integrative mobilizable element. Nonetheless, it contains integration- and 194 195 excision-like genes and one putative insertion sequence, but no genes required for MGE conjugation. However, no transconjugants were obtained after mating 196 197 experiments.

Clindamycin is frequently used, combined with a  $\beta$ -lactam, for the treatment of 198 severe skin and soft tissue infections as prevents the ribosomal synthesis of 199 200 virulence factors. Furthermore, the WHO has included lincosamides and 201 streptogramins in the list of critically important antimicrobials for the human medicine. To date clindamycin-resistance in GAS has been associated to erm 202 genes responsible of the  $MLS_B$  phenotype. The description of this new genomic 203 island encoding lincosamide-resistance in macrolide-susceptible GAS is a cause of 204 concern and deserves surveillance of this rare resistance mechanism that could be 205 underestimated if clindamycin is not routinely tested. Moreover, Inu(B)-Isa(E) 206 confers resistance to pleuromutilinas. Among them, lefamulin is one of the eleven 207 phase III antimicrobials included in the WHO 2017 priority list for antibacterial 208 agents. 209

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#### 211 4. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, we have described a genomic island conferring LS<sub>A</sub>P phenotype in a GAS similar to those found in *S. porci* and *E. rhusiopahiae*. *In vitro* mobilization of this element by conjugation was not achieved. The presence of a lincosamide inactivation gene precludes the use of lincosamides in the treatment of severe GAS infections from this pathogen. Further studies are needed to understand if this mechanism of resistance is spread among GAS.

## 218 Nucleotide sequence accession number

219 Sequence data were deposited in the European nucleotide archive under the 220 accession number ERS2881644.

#### 221 Acknowledgements

We thank the staff at the Microbiology Department of Hospital Universitari de Bellvitge, for daily contributions to this Project. We are also grateful with Dr. Thierry Naas for initial WGS support. This study was partially presented at the 55<sup>th</sup> Interscience Conference of Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy, San Diego, CA, US 2015 (poster number C-657).

#### 227 Funding

This study was supported by grants from Fondo de Investigaciones Sanitarias de la Seguridad Social (INT 15/0186; INT16/0117 and PI18/00339) and from Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red (CIBER) de Enfermedades Respiratorias (CIBERES CB06/06/0037), an initiative of the Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Madrid, Spain. Financial support was also provided by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). D.B. received a travel grant from Sociedad Española de Enfermedades Infecciosas y Microbiología Clínica (SEIMC). D.B. was supported by "Formació Post-Residència en Recerca" predoctoral contract from
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
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317	Figure legends:				
318	Fig.	1. Schematic and comparative of the sequence containing <i>Isa</i> (E)– <i>Inu</i> (B).			
318 319	•	<b>1. Schematic and comparative of the sequence containing</b> <i>Isa</i> (E)- <i>Inu</i> (B). omparison of GAS2887HUB to the M1 GAS strain (reference GAS genome:			
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319	<b>A)</b> C Acc.	omparison of GAS2887HUB to the M1 GAS strain (reference GAS genome:			
319 320	A) C Acc. sequ	omparison of GAS2887HUB to the M1 GAS strain (reference GAS genome: No. NC_002737 positions 1080518–1152718) showing the insertion of the			
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<ul><li>319</li><li>320</li><li>321</li><li>322</li></ul>	A) C Acc. sequ dowr regio	omparison of GAS2887HUB to the M1 GAS strain (reference GAS genome: No. NC_002737 positions 1080518–1152718) showing the insertion of the ence containing $Isa(E)-Inu(B)$ genes together with the prophage 39.6 kb P2 instream of <i>rumA</i> (23S rRNA (uracil-5)-methyltransferase). The purple-gradated			
<ul> <li>319</li> <li>320</li> <li>321</li> <li>322</li> <li>323</li> </ul>	A) C Acc. sequ dowr regio the C	omparison of GAS2887HUB to the M1 GAS strain (reference GAS genome: No. NC_002737 positions 1080518–1152718) showing the insertion of the ence containing $Isa(E)-Inu(B)$ genes together with the prophage 39.6 kb P2 instream of <i>rumA</i> (23S rRNA (uracil-5)-methyltransferase). The purple-gradated ns show 64%–100% sequence identity, and the red line highlights the part of			
<ul> <li>319</li> <li>320</li> <li>321</li> <li>322</li> <li>323</li> <li>324</li> </ul>	A) C Acc. sequ dowr regio the G the s	omparison of GAS2887HUB to the M1 GAS strain (reference GAS genome: No. NC_002737 positions 1080518–1152718) showing the insertion of the ence containing $lsa(E)-lnu(B)$ genes together with the prophage 39.6 kb P2 instream of <i>rumA</i> (23S rRNA (uracil-5)-methyltransferase). The purple-gradated ins show 64%–100% sequence identity, and the red line highlights the part of GAS2887HUB sequence shown in more detail in Fig. 1B. <b>B)</b> Representation of			
<ul> <li>319</li> <li>320</li> <li>321</li> <li>322</li> <li>323</li> <li>324</li> <li>325</li> </ul>	A) C Acc. sequ down regio the C the s P2, s	omparison of GAS2887HUB to the M1 GAS strain (reference GAS genome: No. NC_002737 positions 1080518–1152718) showing the insertion of the ence containing $Isa(E)-Inu(B)$ genes together with the prophage 39.6 kb P2 astream of <i>rumA</i> (23S rRNA (uracil-5)-methyltransferase). The purple-gradated ins show 64%–100% sequence identity, and the red line highlights the part of GAS2887HUB sequence shown in more detail in Fig. 1B. <b>B</b> ) Representation of equence containing $Isa(E)-Inu(B)$ genes together with the prophage 39.6 kb			
<ul> <li>319</li> <li>320</li> <li>321</li> <li>322</li> <li>323</li> <li>324</li> <li>325</li> <li>326</li> </ul>	A) C Acc. sequ down regio the C the s P2, s with	omparison of GAS2887HUB to the M1 GAS strain (reference GAS genome: No. NC_002737 positions 1080518–1152718) showing the insertion of the ence containing <i>Isa</i> (E)– <i>Inu</i> (B) genes together with the prophage 39.6 kb P2 instream of <i>rumA</i> (23S rRNA (uracil-5)-methyltransferase). The purple-gradated ins show 64%–100% sequence identity, and the red line highlights the part of GAS2887HUB sequence shown in more detail in Fig. 1B. <b>B</b> ) Representation of equence containing <i>Isa</i> (E)– <i>Inu</i> (B) genes together with the prophage 39.6 kb showing the relatedness of the prophage sequence and <i>Isa</i> (E)– <i>Inu</i> (B) genes			

ant(6)Ia-sat4-aph(3')III cluster and Isa(E)-Inu(B) genes in E. rhusiopathiae Ery-11 329 [16] (Acc. No. KP339868; positions 11622-17508 and 4868-9307) and the 330 presence of the ant(6)Ia-sat4-aph(3')III cluster in S. suis TZ080501 [17] (Acc. No. 331 KX077897 positions 46803-68299). The yellow-to-blue-shaded regions show 332 333 67%-100% sequence identity. The green line emphasises the GAS2887HUB 334 sequence shown in more detail in Fig. 1C. C) Distribution of the Isa(E)-Inu(B) 335 genes, the ant(6)la-sat4-aph(3')III cluster and the aadE-apt-spw cluster among the previously described structures in streptococci containing Isa(E)-Inu(B) genes 336 [ICESsuNC28 of S. suis A7 [18] (Acc. No. KU2115704); S. porci DSM23759; S. 337 agalactiae SGB76 [8] (Acc. No. KF772204); S. agalactiae 20162235 (SRA number 338 SAMN06032954) [13] and E. rhusiopathiae Ery-11. There is a different 339 arrangement to that found in GAS2887HUB. The grey regions indicate that there is 340 341 up to 95% sequence identity.



# Supplementary material

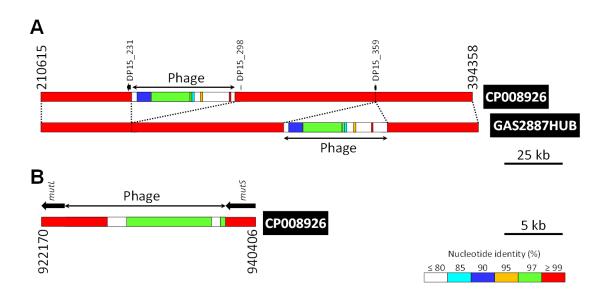
 Table S1. In vitro activity of 16 antimicrobials against GAS2887HUB strain

related with the observed phenotype and the associated resistance genes.

Antibiotic	MIC (mg/L)	Associated resistance genes	Phenotype <sup>a</sup>
Clindamycin	8		
Lincomycin	>256	loo(E) and $lou(P)$	
Dalfopristin	>256	<i>lsa</i> (E) and <i>lnu</i> (B)	R (LS <sub>A</sub> P)
Tiamulin	256		
Tetracycline	>4	tet(M)	R
Trimethoprim- Sulfametoxazole	>2/38	dfrG	R
Penicillin	≤0,03		
Ampicillin	≤0,12	None	S (β-lactams)
Cefotaxime	≤0,06		
Erythromycin	0,125		
Azithromycin	0,03	None	S (Macrolides)
Spiramycin	0,25		
Quinupristin	0,125	None	S (Streptogramin B, S <sub>B</sub> )
Pristinamycin	0,25		
Quinupristin-	0,125	None	$S (S_A + S_B)$
Dalfopristin			
Chloramphenicol	4	None	S

Ciprofloxacin	0,5	None	S (Fluoroquinolones)
Amikacin	64	aph(3')III	
Kanamycin	>256	<i>ap.</i> (0)///	R (Aminoglycosides)
Streptomycin	>256	ant(6)-la	
Gentamicin	4	None	S (Aminoglycosides)
Tobramycin	4	NOTE	S (Animoglycosides)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup>R, resistant; S, susceptible



**Fig. S1.** Comparison of GAS2887HUB phages with those of ATCC19615. A) Synteny between the GAS2887HUB P1 and the GAS ATCC 19615 (Acc. No. CP008926) prophage. B) Collinearity was shared in P3 between with these two strains. The GAS ATCC 19615 nucleotide positions are specified in the figure.