Evaluation of Cobas Amplicor MTB Test to detect *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* in pulmonary and extrapulmonary specimens

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**INTRODUCTION**

In recent years tuberculosis has regained importance in many countries as a result of the AIDS epidemic, increased rates of immunocompromised patients and the cases of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (TB). The WHO estimates that, if control of the disease is not further strengthened between the years 2000 and 2020, nearly 1 billion people will be infected, 200 million people will develop overt disease, and 35 million will die (Levidiotou *et al.*, 2003). The detection of mycobacteria by conventional methods is based on microscopic examination of the specimens stained with acid-fast technique combined with culture methods. Staining is the most widely used rapid method for detection of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, although both the sensitivity and specificity of this method are low. This technique requires about $5 \times 10^3$-$5 \times 10^4$ bacil-