

S382

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**How to choose the optimal automation for your lab**

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Inoculation of samples on agar media and broth is a repetitive and fastidious work that is amenable to automation. Several automated inoculation systems are now available with different procedures and characteristics. Some such as the Wasp (COPAN) and Innova (Becton-Dickinson) mainly represent a mechanization of human tasks, using sterile calibrated loops whereas others such as Previ-Isola (BioMerieux) and Inoqula (KIESTRA) represent true innovative automation, that use a sterile comb or sterile bead, respectively. Each system has some advantages and disadvantages. Some clues (summarized in a recent review article: Greub & Prod'hom Clin Microbiol Infect 2011) will be provided to temptatively help clinical microbiologists in making their decision. Indeed, the choice of one of these systems should take into account the characteristics of the instrument as well as the characteristics of the laboratory and the type of samples that will be processed. Other important aspects that are important to guide the choice include (i) the compatibility of the LIS system and (ii) the compatibility with downstream automated procedures such as automated colony picking systems and/or automated agar plates reading.