

DATE:	2022 February 7
TO:	Medicine Hat and Area Physicians, Nursing Staff and Laboratory Staff
FROM:	Clinical Biochemistry, South Sector, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL)
RE:	Discontinuation of Serum Folate Testing

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Key Message

- Effective **Feb 15, 2022**, APL will initiate a trial in Southern Alberta to determine the frequency of potentially useful serum folate orders and to assess & improve test utilization.
 - Patients with serum folate requests will be cancelled and resulted with a comment in the laboratory information system.
 - Physicians may contact the Laboratory for Clinical Biochemist approval to proceed with collection of this test.

Background

- Serum folate levels primarily indicate recent ingestion and not biochemical folate reserves.
- Folate deficiency may manifest as macrocytic anemia, and laboratory data acquired within Alberta show folate sufficiency rates ranging from 99.6% to 99.8% of patients tested (sufficiency defined as normal serum folate or low serum folate in the absence of macrocytosis).
- Choosing Wisely Canada does not recommend serum folate testing in asymptomatic patients and states:
 - For most patients at risk of folate deficiency (e.g. malabsorption conditions, alcoholism), it is more practical and economical to treat with multivitamin supplements including folic acid than to test for deficiency.
 - The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada recommends universal supplementation for women of reproductive age. Investigations are not required prior to initiating folic acid in women considering pregnancy.

Action Required

- Ordering Physician to contact Medicine Hat Regional Hospital Chemistry Laboratory (403-502-8648 ext. 1536) if testing is required.

Questions/Concerns

- Dr. Heather Paul, Clinical Biochemist, South Sector – Medicine Hat Regional Hospital, (403) 770-3634, Heather.Paul@aplabs.ca

Approved by

- Dr. Spencer Paulson, Regional Laboratory Medicine Site Chief, Medicine Hat Regional Hospital
- Dr. Hossein Sadrzadeh, Section Chief, Clinical Biochemistry, South Sector
- Dr. Paul Klonowski, Associate Medical Director, South Sector