ALBERTA PRECISION LABORATORIES
Leaders in Laboratory Medicine

Laboratory Bulletin

DATE:	23 September 2024
TO:	All Healthcare Providers
FROM:	Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) – Provincial Public Health Laboratory (ProvLab)
RE:	**Change in Respiratory Pathogen Panel Testing**

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message

- Effective Monday, September 23, 2024. ProvLab North and South sites are implementing a new version of the existing respiratory pathogens panel (RPP) for respiratory viral and bacterial targets.
- This new version will have all the same viral targets with the addition of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19).
- Rapid COVID-19 PCR and influenza/RSV PCR will still be available for patients who meet eligibility criteria (typically hospitalized or emergency department patients). This may result in two SARS-CoV-2 or influenza/RSV results. Discordant results may be observed with low concentration positive specimens.
- The assay has similar sensitivity for SARS-CoV-2, influenza, and RSV as the rapid PCR tests
- Most community patients (including congregate care patients) for whom RPP is indicated and COVID-19 testing is ordered will be tested using the new RPP test only. SARS-CoV-2 will therefore be included in the RPP report and not reported separately.
- There will be **no change** to the following:
    - Testing criteria/patient eligibility for either RPP, SARS-CoV-2 or influenza/RSV
    - Mechanisms to order respiratory virus testing in Connect Care or using a requisition.
    - Time to results
    - Testing locations
    - Format of results reported except for the addition of SARS-CoV-2

Background

- Since 2017 ProvLab has used the NxTAG® Respiratory Pathogen Panel (RPP) for the detection of a range of viral and bacterial targets.
- Recently the manufacturer (Diasorin) transitioned from its existing panel to a new respiratory panel (NxTAG® Respiratory Pathogen Panel v2).
- This new testing panel is Health Canada approved and has been validated by ProvLab with an equivalent performance to the previous kit.
- It tests for SARS-CoV-2, influenza A/B, RSV, other human coronaviruses, parainfluenza viruses 1-4, enterovirus/rhinovirus, human metapneumovirus, adenovirus, and Mycoplasma pneumoniae.

Action Required

- Continue to use the RPP and other respiratory virus tests only when it will impact clinical management.

- Continue to order respiratory virus testing using current practices through the Respiratory Infection (inc. COVID-19 NAT) Connect Care order or by using the COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Requisition (www.albertahealthservices.ca/frm-21701.pdf).
- If this turnaround time is sufficient for your patient's COVID-19 and//or Flu/RSV result, please order RPP only and do not select COVID-19 and/or Flu/RSV tests in Connect Care
- Do not use an RPP result to decide if a patient should be taken off isolation for respiratory viral illness (aka influenza-like symptoms), this should be based on symptoms. Consult your local infection, prevention and control if you have questions.
- Contact the Public Health Laboratory microbiologist on-call for questions about RPP results.

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to

- Dr Mathew Diggle, Clinical Microbiologist, Provincial Laboratory for Public Health, APL (mathew.diggle@aplabs.ca)
- Dr Nathan Zelyas, medical Microbiologist, Provincial Laboratory for Public Health, APL (nathan.zelyas@aplabs.ca)

Approved by

- Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical/Scientific Director, Public Health Laboratory, APL