ALBERTA PRECISION LABORATORIES
Leaders in Laboratory Medicine

Laboratory Bulletin

DATE:	2022 June 27
TO:	All Central Zone Physicians and Healthcare Providers
FROM:	Clinical Biochemistry, South Sector, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL)
RE:	**Discontinuation of Serum Folate Testing at Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre (RDRHC)**

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message

- Effective **July 5, 2022**, folate testing performed at RDRHC for Central Zone (South Sector) will be discontinued as part of the Using Labs Wisely campaign at RDRHC.
- All requests received by APL **will be cancelled** and resulted with a comment on the report.
- Patient samples for folate testing **will not be collected**.
- In rare cases of suspected folate deficiency, testing can be performed with approval from the Clinical Biochemist or Pathologist on-call.

Background

- In May 2021, APL initiated a trial in South Zone to improve appropriate test utilization of folate. This resulted in a reduction of folate orders by 96.1%. Rare orders have been approved by lab Medical/Scientific staff when clinically appropriate.
- Concurrently, RDRHC is working to attain Choosing Wisely Canada (CWC) status through the Using Labs Wisely campaign. Folate is one of the target analytes in this appropriateness initiative.

Why this is Important

- Since routine fortification of grain-based foods in the late 1990s, folate deficiency has become exceedingly rare in Canada.
- Alberta laboratory data show sufficient folate levels in 99.6%-99.8% of patients tested (sufficiency defined as normal serum folate or low serum folate in the absence of macrocytosis).
- Serum folate levels primarily indicate recent ingestion and not biochemical folate reserves.
- CWC does not recommend serum folate testing in asymptomatic patients and states that 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 the RDRHC Laboratory (403-343-4749) to get approval of Clinical Biochemist or Pathologist on-call if folate testing is required.

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to

- Yury Butorin, PhD, Clinical Biochemist, Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre, 403-406-5633, Yury.Butorin@albertaprecisionlabs.ca

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by

- Heidi Paulin, MD, Regional Laboratory Medicine Site Chief for Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre
- Hossein Sadrzadeh, PhD, Section Chief, Clinical Biochemistry, South Sector
- Paul Klonowski, MD, Associate Medical Director, South Sector