

<b>DATE:</b>	2021 April 19
<b>TO:</b>	Lethbridge and Area Physicians, Nursing Staff and Laboratory Staff
<b>FROM:</b>	Clinical Biochemistry, South Sector, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL)
<b>RE:</b>	Discontinuation of Serum Folate Testing

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### Key Message

- Effective **May 3, 2021**, 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 have samples collected and transported to the Chinook Regional Hospital Chemistry laboratory. However, all requests will be cancelled and resulted with a comment in the laboratory information system.
  - Samples will be stored for two weeks, during which time, the physician is asked to contact the Clinical Biochemist for approval.

### Why this is Important

- 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 the Chinook Regional Hospital Chemistry Laboratory (403-388- 6094) or Dr. Dennis Orton (403-770-3219) if testing is required within 2 weeks of sample receipt.

### Inquiries and feedback may be directed to

- Dr. Dennis Orton, Clinical Biochemist, South Sector - Chinook Regional Hospital, (403) 770-3219, [Dennis.Orton@aplabs.ca](mailto:Dennis.Orton@aplabs.ca)

### This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by

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