
Date: October 21, 2019
To: South and Central Zone Physicians
From: APL Microbiology
Re: Blood Cultures - Increase in Number of Bottles

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Key Message:

- Effective **October 30, 2019**, the number of bottles required for routine adult blood cultures is increasing to **4 bottles**.
- Two sets, each consisting of 1 aerobic and 1 anaerobic bottle, should be collected from 2 separate venipuncture sites.
- If endocarditis is suspected, collect 3 sets (6 bottles total).

Why this is Important:

- Bacteremia (and candidemia) is a life-threatening, time-sensitive infection.
- The sensitivity of blood cultures is directly linked to the volume of blood being cultured, increasing by 6-15% when adding a fourth bottle (40 mL total).
- This change does not affect recommendations for pediatric blood cultures.

Action Required:

- Blood cultures should continue to be ordered as before.
- Laboratory-collected blood cultures will adhere to and reflect the above guidelines.
- Locations collecting their own blood cultures should adjust their protocols to reflect the above guidelines in order to maximize sensitivity of testing.

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References:

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