

Date: September 20, 2016
To: All South Zone East Physicians
From: AHS Laboratory Services & Medicine Hat Diagnostic Lab
Re: Changes to Microbiology Testing of Vaginal Specimens

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TOPIC: Changes to Microbiology Testing of Vaginal Specimens

Key Messages:

Genital Cultures:

- Tests in SZE previously bundled as part of the “genital culture” request must now be explicitly and separately ordered on a requisition or in Meditech OE.
 - These include testing for *Trichomonas*, bacterial vaginosis/yeast, and bacterial culture.
- Collection requirements for the specimens themselves have not changed.
- As before, bacterial culture on vaginal specimens will only be performed when a significant history is indicated. The approved indications for this test have not been changed at this time.
- A new South Zone Microbiology requisition, reflecting these changes, has been distributed to assist with ordering.
- MHDL will maintain their current process for genital culture testing until transition of testing to AHS.

Trichomonas Testing:

- Testing for *Trichomonas vaginalis* testing will now be performed using a rapid antigen test, which has higher sensitivity than the previous microscopic method.
- *Trichomonas* testing will **only** be performed if it is explicitly ordered on the new South Zone Microbiology requisition, the existing MHDL requisition or in Meditech.

Background:

Genital Cultures:

Previously, microbiology testing of vaginal specimens was ordered as “genital culture” on the requisition. This would prompt routine testing for *Trichomonas* and bacterial vaginosis (BV)/yeast on all such specimens, regardless of indication, and bacterial culture was performed only if certain histories were indicated on the requisition for the laboratory.

To support clarity, physician autonomy, and appropriateness of laboratory test ordering, these tests have been unbundled from the previous “genital culture” order, and now can be ordered separately according to clinical indications, by indicating on the South Zone requisition or in Meditech. Testing for *Trichomonas*, BV/yeast, and bacterial culture must now be explicitly and separately ordered.

Note that bacterial culture still requires the appropriate history to be indicated on the requisition in order to be performed. The criteria for vaginal culture has not changed, and currently includes toxic shock syndrome, endometritis, and genitourinary surgery, among others.

Trichomonas Testing:

Trichomonas vaginalis is a sexually transmitted pathogen that is a major cause of vaginitis. Less commonly, it can cause cervicitis in females and urethritis in males.

Testing for *Trichomonas vaginalis* in South Zone East has historically been done using microscopic methods, and was routinely performed on all vaginal specimens. Because the organism is often scant, the sensitivity of microscopy using wet mount and/or other stains is relatively low (50-70%).

Testing will now be performed using a rapid antigen test (OSOM, Sekisui Diagnostics). The sensitivity of this method is 90-95%, and has been validated in symptomatic patients. Specificity of the assay is also high (95%), but as with any molecular assay, false positives are possible.

To minimize the risk of false positives, it is important to test only those patients that are symptomatic or otherwise at high risk (e.g. multiple sexual partners, previous STI's, HIV-positive).

Action Required:

Testing	TRICH	BV/YST	CULTURE	SPECIMEN
SZE/MHDL	Trichomonas	Bacterial vaginosis/yeast	Genital culture (include history)	Vaginal specimen: Amies swab (pink)
MEDITECH/OE	TRICHVAG	VAGS	CUGEN	

Note: Only one swab is required if *Trichomonas* testing, BV/yeast and/or culture are ordered

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

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This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

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Effective Date: October 17, 2016