

**Date:** November 8, 2013

**To:** All Zones  
Physicians, Nurse Managers, Educators, and Practitioners, AHS Corrections,  
Laboratory Directors and Managers

**From:** AHS Laboratory Services, Calgary Laboratory Services and DynaLIFE<sub>DX</sub>

**Re:** Province Wide Testing for Fecal Immunochemical Testing (FIT)

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**Key Messages:**

- On **November 18, 2013**, Fecal Immunochemical Testing (FIT) will be available in the province of Alberta and will replace Fecal Occult Blood (FOBT) testing for **community patients**. FIT testing will be used as a primary screening method for colorectal cancer on asymptomatic patients aged 50 -74 years.
- The new FIT method is a fully automated test and will be performed at two laboratory locations in the province:
  - Calgary Laboratory Services (CLS) will provide testing for the Calgary Zone, South Zone and the three Central Zone laboratory sites that refer testing to Calgary.
  - DynaLIFE<sub>DX</sub> will provide testing for Edmonton Zone, North Zone and Central Zone.
- The FIT test has improved sensitivity and specificity and requires no dietary or medication restrictions.
- As this is a screening test, the expected turnaround time for results will be similar to other send out tests.
- Laboratory results will appear as **either positive or negative** on the printed lab report and in Alberta Netcare.
- All patients will receive a result letter from the Alberta Colorectal Cancer Screening Program (ACRCSP). Patients with an abnormal result will be encouraged to follow up with their family physician and patients with normal results will be encouraged to talk to their physician about annual screening with FIT.

**Why this is important:**

- FIT Testing will **replace** the Fecal Occult Blood (FOBT) test currently ordered on **Community patients**.
- FOBT will remain available in the acute care setting and Emergency Departments for diagnostic purposes. The use of FOBT will be re-evaluated in six months.
- Community laboratory requisitions will be updated and phased in over the next few months to replace the FOBT test with FIT.
- **Community laboratory requisitions received after November 18, 2013 with FOBT requested will automatically have the order changed by the Laboratory to a FIT test.**

**Action Required:**

- Write FIT testing orders on your local laboratory requisition under the “Other Tests Not Listed” box or mark the (Fecal) Occult Blood test box (until revised requisitions are available). Revised community requisitions will have the new FIT code added and Occult Blood test codes removed.
- Refer patients requiring FIT testing to a community patient service center/collection center or local laboratory with the completed requisition requesting FIT testing.

**Additional Information:**

- **Additional information regarding supplying physician offices with FIT kits will be forthcoming in the New Year. In the interim, please continue to send your patients to the laboratory for the FIT kits.**
- All Albertans aged 50-74 years at average risk of developing colorectal cancer should be encouraged to have a FIT test every one to two years according to the revised Toward Optimized Practice (TOP) Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG). Revised CPG will be mailed to all physicians when published.
- Colonoscopy will be recommended as the follow-up test for those with a positive FIT result. Colorectal cancer is among the most commonly diagnosed cancers in Alberta and the second most deadly form of cancer behind lung cancer. Approximately 1 in every 13 men and 1 in every 16 women will develop invasive colorectal cancer.

**Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:**

- Dr. Valerian Dias, Clinical Biochemist PhD FCACB, Calgary Laboratory Services at: 403-770-3549
- Mr. Trefor Higgins, Director of Clinical Biochemistry, Dyna**LIFE**<sub>DX</sub> at: 780-451-3702 Ext. 8134

**This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:**

- Dr. Raymond Lai, Medical Director, Dyna**LIFE**<sub>DX</sub>
- Dr. Leland Baskin, Medical / Scientific Director, Calgary Zone
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