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**Date:** August 2, 2012

**To:** Alberta Health, Gastroenterologists, Infectious Diseases Physicians, Intensive Care and Neonatal Intensive Care Physicians, Respiratory Medicine Physicians, Transplant Physicians, and Laboratory Directors and Managers

**From:** Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab)

**Re:** Change in viral testing for HSV and VZV for broncho-alveolar lavages and tissue biopsies

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**Key Message:**

Effective August 16, 2012, laboratory testing for herpes simplex virus (HSV) 1 and 2 and varicella zoster virus (VZV) on broncho-alveolar lavages (BALs) and tissue biopsies will be performed by a molecular assay – polymerase chain reaction (PCR). There are no changes required for the collection and transport of the sample.

**Background:**

Currently, testing at ProvLab for HSV and VZV on BALs and tissue biopsies is done by virus isolation in cell culture. Effective August 16, 2012, we will discontinue the routine use of isolation in cell culture; instead, we will perform a multiplex PCR on the sample. The multiplex assay tests simultaneously for the presence of HSV-1, HSV-2 and VZV, and provides the identification of the virus present. The turn-around time of the PCR will be shorter than viral isolation, and the sensitivity greater.

ProvLab will retain a limited capacity to isolate viruses in cell culture, for cases where further characterization (such as antiviral susceptibility testing) is warranted; such cases must be discussed with the Virologist-on-Call (VOC).

**The Virologist-on-Call can be contacted as follows:**

- Edmonton Site – Phone: 780-407-7121 (ask for Virologist-on-Call)
- Calgary Site – Phone: 403-944-1200 (ask for Virologist-on-Call)

**Inquiries and feedback regarding this bulletin may be directed to:**

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**This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical Director, ProvLab**