

**Date:** March 13, 2014

**To:** North Zone, Edmonton Zone and Central Zone  
Alberta Health, Alberta MicroNet, Physicians, Infection Prevention and Control,  
Infectious Diseases Physicians, Medical Officers of Health, Laboratory Directors and  
Managers

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

**Re:** Discontinuation of DFA for Influenza and Respiratory Virus Detection at ProvLab - Edmonton Site

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**Key Messages:**

- ProvLab Alberta (Edmonton site) has historically undertaken Direct Fluorescent Antibody Testing (DFA) for influenza A, influenza B, respiratory syncytial viruses A/B, and parainfluenza viruses - 1/2/3.
- On January 8, 2014, a laboratory bulletin was released documenting the **temporary discontinuation** of respiratory DFA testing through March 31, 2014. In consultation with stakeholders, we have re-evaluated the decision, and will **permanently discontinue** the respiratory DFA testing **effective March 17, 2014**.
- The discontinuation is due to issues related to:
  - 1) **Decreased sensitivity of DFA testing when compared to molecular approaches.**
  - 2) **Concern regarding inappropriate removal of contact precautions based on negative DFA results.**
  - 3) **Issues related to workflow at ProvLab.**
- Testing for influenza and other respiratory viruses will still be undertaken by molecular testing platforms.

**Why this is important:**

- Some physicians have ordered DFA testing in order to achieve a perceived quicker turn-around-time (TAT) for respiratory virus test results.
- However, ProvLab would like to focus on maintaining a 24-hour TAT (following specimen receipt in the laboratory) for influenza testing by molecular means.
- Molecular tests are more sensitive and specific than DFA for the detection of respiratory viruses.

**Action Required:**

- Please be aware that DFA tests will not be performed as of **March 17, 2014**.
- When looking at results in Alberta Netcare or on ProvLab reports, please look for molecular test results for influenza A and other respiratory virus tests.

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

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

Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical / Scientific Director, ProvLab