
Date: January 8, 2014

To: Edmonton Zone, Central Zone and North 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: Temporary Discontinuation of Direct Fluorescent Antibody (DFA) Testing for Influenza and Respiratory Virus Detection at ProvLab – Edmonton

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Key Messages:

- ProvLab - Edmonton has historically undertaken Direct Fluorescent Antibody Testing (DFA) for influenza A, influenza B, respiratory syncytial viruses A/B, and parainfluenza viruses-1/2/3.
- Effective immediately, DFA testing will be discontinued until March 31, 2014 due to the following:
 - increased number of specimens being collected for viral testing
 - decreased sensitivity of DFA testing when compared to molecular approaches
 - predominance of influenza A pdm09 as a circulating virus and
 - issues related to workflow at ProvLab
- Testing for influenza and other respiratory viruses will still be undertaken by molecular testing platforms.
- Samples submitted for respiratory virus DFA testing will automatically be tested through the molecular testing algorithm.
- The decision regarding the status of DFA testing will be reassessed April 1, 2014.

Why this is important:

- Some physicians have ordered DFA testing for influenza A, influenza B, respiratory syncytial viruses A/B, and parainfluenza viruses-1/2/3 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 receipt of the specimen 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:

- Refer to the ProvLab Guide to Services at: <http://www.provlab.ab.ca/guide-to-services.pdf> when collecting and submitting respiratory specimens for molecular testing.
- When looking up results on Alberta Netcare or ProvLab reports, please look for molecular test results for influenza A/B and other respiratory viruses.

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

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- Dr. Julian Tang at: 780-407-3068 or Email: Julian.tang@albertahealthservices.ca

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical / Scientific Director, ProvLab