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**Date:** August 13, 2015  
**To:** Emergency Physicians, Infectious Diseases Physicians, Intensive Care Physicians, Medical Officers of Health, Pediatricians, Laboratory Directors and Managers  
**From:** Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab)  
**Re:** Changes to Testing of Gastroenteritis Viruses

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**Key Message:**

- Commencing September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, electron microscopy (EM) for the detection of viruses (GEV) associated with gastroenteritis will be replaced by PCR testing.
- The GEV PCR panel comprises of norovirus genogroups 1 and 2, rotavirus group A, sapovirus, astrovirus and adenovirus.
- Community patients older than 5 years of age will not be tested by the GEV PCR panel. For special cases, please call the ProvLab virologist-on-call (VOC) for pre-approval BEFORE submitting samples.
- Samples from the same individual will be REJECTED if resubmitted within a three day interval.

**Background:**

The sensitivity and specificity of the GEV PCR panel is significantly better than EM, and is a more cost-effective assay operationally. Using this panel, our studies have shown that these viruses were identified to be the cause of 80% of gastroenteritis outbreaks and greater than 35% of sporadic gastroenteritis.

**How will this change in testing benefit patients?**

- Enhanced GEV detection of gastroenteritis can improve patient management, especially for immunocompromised patients.
- Infection prevention and control measures can be better optimized using these results.
- Surveillance of viral gastroenteritis burden and emerging trends will provide data for evaluation of the rotavirus vaccine program that started June 1, 2015 in Alberta.

**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