

Date: December 3, 2018
To: All AHS Physicians, Nursing and Laboratory Staff in North, Central, and South Zones
From: AHS Laboratory Services
Re: Standardized reporting of Specific Gravity for Urine hCG (Pregnancy Test) Results

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Key Message:

- Effective December 18, 2018, specific gravity (SG) reporting with qualitative urine hCG testing (pregnancy test) will be standardized across all laboratories in AHS North, Central, and South Zones.

Background:

- AHS is beginning the conversion to a new qualitative urine hCG test, the Innovatek QuickStep® Plus urine pregnancy test.
- Reporting of results and comments will be provincially standardized as part of this hCG product conversion.
- Qualitative urine hCG tests have the potential to produce a false negative result when urine is too dilute. All clinical laboratories in Alberta currently report urine SG with qualitative hCG results, to alert clinicians of dilute urine samples. However, SG cutoff values, comments, and reporting guidelines are variable across the province.
- The Meditech Lab Information System has an upcoming major product installation that will limit any additional changes, i.e. a change freeze. Accordingly, North, Central, and South Zone Laboratories will standardize specific gravity reporting in advance of adopting the new product.
- Laboratories in Edmonton and Calgary, and provincial Point of Care Testing programs will standardize SG reporting when converting to the new urine hCG product (Spring 2019). Zone communication announcing training and product conversion information will follow.

Why this is important:

- False negative urine hCG results can occur in urine samples due to dilute urine, very early pregnancy stage, or very high hCG concentrations. If urine hCG is negative and there is clinical suspicion of pregnancy, the result should be confirmed with a first morning urine sample, or a serum sample.
- A dilute urine specimen may not contain a high enough hCG concentration to produce a positive result.
 - The definition of a dilute urine will be standardized at a cutoff of an SG <1.010
- Negative urine hCG results with a <1.010 will have a comment appended to alert the clinician:
 - "Urine Pregnancy Screen result may be a false negative due to the low Specific Gravity of this urine sample. Suggest repeat with either a serum sample or a first morning urine sample."

Action Required:

- Read carefully any comments appended to urine hCG test (pregnancy test) result for guidance on result interpretation.

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

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This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

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