
Date: March 1, 2012

To: HIV and STD clinics, Infectious Disease physicians, Alberta Health and Wellness, Medical Officers of Health, Alberta MicroNet, Laboratory Directors and Managers

From: Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab)

Re: Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) RNA Testing Change

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message:

- Effective the week of March 12, 2012, ProvLab will change the reporting range for HIV RNA test results following a transition to a second generation of the Roche® HIV RNA assay kit. The lower limit of detection on the linear range will change to 20 copies/mL from the previous 40 copies/mL. The upper limit remains the same at 1.0×10^7 copies/mL.

Why this is Important:

- Roche is replacing their current HIV viral load assay done on the Cobas Taqman with an updated version. ProvLab has compared the two and found excellent correlation.
- The newly implemented COBAS® Roche Taqman HIV RNA version assay detection range will have a lower limit of detection on the linear range. The detectable range given on laboratory reports will therefore be different from previous reports generated with the first generation assay.
- Please note this may have an impact on clinical interpretation if the patient has an HIV RNA between 20-40 copies/mL. Such a result would have previously been interpreted as 'undetectable'.

Collection and Transport of Specimens:

- No change.

Inquires and feedback may be directed to:

- Dr. G. Zahariadis at 780-407-8975 or George.Zahariadis@albertahealthservices.ca or
- Edmonton Site Virologist on-call at 780-407-7121 or
- Calgary Site Virologist on-call at 403-944-1200

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by Dr. Marie Louie, Acting Medical Director of ProvLab