

Date: December 19, 2012

To: All Physicians, Alberta Health, Infectious Diseases Physicians, Medical Officers of Health, TARRANT Sentinel Physicians, Laboratory Directors and Managers

From: Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab)

Re: Cessation in Testing for Respiratory Viruses, other than Influenza Viruses, from Community Patients

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Key Message:

- Effective January 7, 2013, samples submitted to ProvLab for respiratory virus testing from community physicians, including group practices and walk-in clinics will **only** be tested for influenza A and B.

Why this is important:

- ProvLab has been reviewing diagnostic testing and surveillance algorithms for optimal cost-effectiveness.
- Testing for respiratory viruses (i.e. influenza-like illness including Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and parainfluenza viruses, etc.) is performed for both patient diagnosis and public health surveillance purposes.
- Influenza viruses are important for surveillance and management in the community setting, whereas the detection of influenza viruses as well as other respiratory viruses is required for pediatric acute care, in-patients, emergency visits and respiratory outbreaks for patient management and supportive measures.

Note: Testing from community physicians who participate in the TARRANT sentinel physician program and submit their samples on the TARRANT-specific requisition are not affected by this change.

Requirement for other Respiratory Virus testing:

- Specific clinical scenarios where testing for the other respiratory viruses will impact patient management, contact the Virologist-on-Call* for consultation prior to submitting clinical samples. These samples can be tested for the respiratory virus panel should the influenza virus screen be negative.

Note: The Laboratory will not accept faxed requests or phone calls to the testing department to have additional respiratory virus testing performed.

*Contacting the Virologist-on-Call:

Edmonton Site – Ph: 780-407-7121 (ask for Virologist-on-Call)

Calgary Site – Ph: 403-944-1200 (ask for Virologist-on-Call)

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

- Dr. Kevin Fonseca at: 403-944-1263 or E-mail: Kevin.fonseca@albertahealthservices.ca

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical / Scientific Director, Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab)