Laboratory Bulletin

Date: **March 23, 2011**

To: **Emergency physicians, Gastroenterologists, Infectious Disease physicians, Medical Officers of Health and Laboratory Directors and Managers**

From: **ProvLab**

Re: **Changes in serological testing for Hepatitis A virus (HAV) at ProvLab**

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Messages:

Effective April 5, 2011, Hepatitis A virus (HAV) testing offered by ProvLab will change. ProvLab will now provide these two assays, on the Architect platform:

- an IgG specific anti-HAV test and
- an IgM specific anti-HAV test

These will replace the previous assays which consisted of a test for Total (IgM +IgG), anti HAV antibodies, and an assay specific for IgM (both on the Axsym platform).

Background:

Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is usually transmitted by the fecal-oral route; acute infection can result in an acute hepatitis, which is however associated with a low mortality (< 1%). Complete recovery is the usual outcome. HAV does not cause chronic infection. Acute infection is accompanied by the apparition of anti-HAV IgM antibodies, typically at the onset of symptoms and almost certainly within 2 weeks of symptom onset. Anti-HAV IgM antibodies persist for 3 to 6 months afterward. Apparition of anti-HAV IgG antibodies occurs a little later (typically 1 to 4 weeks afterward), but they persist for life and indicate immunity to re-infection. Vaccination for HAV also triggers long lasting IgG antibodies and may trigger transient IgM antibodies.

Guidelines for test ordering:

- For the diagnosis of acute infection with HAV, order the anti-HAV IgM test.
- To document immunity or prior infection, order the anti-HAV IgG test.

Questions & Comments:

If you have any questions or comments regarding this bulletin, please contact:
Dr. Raymond Tellier, MD MSc FRCPC CSPQ FCCM D (ABMM)
Program Leader, Enteric Viruses and HAV infections, ProvLab
Raymond.Tellier@albertahealthservices.ca
(403) 944-2724

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by Dr. Greg Tyrrell, Acting Associate Medical Director of ProvLab