
Date: April 13, 2012

To: Transplant Programs, Infectious Diseases Physicians, Critical Care Physicians,
Laboratory Directors and Managers

From: Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (ProvLab)

Re: Update for CMV Viral Load: Implementation of a New Assay and Reporting in
International Units

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Key Messages:

Starting March 12, 2012, ProvLab implemented a new assay for Cytomegalovirus (CMV) viral load in International Units (IU), the Real Star CMV PCR (Altona Diagnostics).

The conversion factor between the previous in-house assay (in copies/mL) and the new assay (in IU/mL) has been re-evaluated, using the data accumulated so far, additional experiments, and a more direct calculation method. On average, the conversion factor is approximately 2-fold. i.e. 2 copies/mL by the in-house assay are about 1.0 IU/mL by the Real Star assay.

It should be remembered that in some samples the observed ratios may be different because of the inherent properties of quantitative PCR, and especially when dealing with low viral loads (< 5,000 to 10,000 copies/mL).

The transition period where we perform and report both assays has now been extended by one month, i.e. until June 4, 2012. (*Subject to review of ongoing data analysis during this transition period.*) Thereafter, the CMV viral load will be reported only in IU/mL using the Real Star (Altona) assay.

This Laboratory Bulletin supersedes the previous Laboratory Bulletin of March 2, 2012.

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

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- Edmonton Site – Ph: 780-407-7121 (ask for Virologist-on-Call)
- Calgary Site – Ph: 403-944-1200 (ask for Virologist-on-Call)

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