



Pertussis PCR

Please post, or distribute widely, as appropriate

On **June 21st, 2004**, the Provincial Lab will be changing its diagnostic assay for *Bordetella pertussis*. We will be implementing a new polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay which detects the DNA from this organism. This method will be used for all specimens submitted to the Provincial Lab for pertussis detection.

The specimen of choice remains the nasopharyngeal swab. Nasopharyngeal aspirates are also good specimens, but are appropriate only when the sample can be immediately carried to the lab. Bronchoscopy specimens are acceptable, while throat swabs are not. New pertussis specimen collection kits containing swab, transport medium, requisition and instructions, are being distributed. In the interim, the old kits are also acceptable for PCR testing.

The PCR assay results will be available 24- 48 hours after receipt at the Provincial Lab. PCR offers improved sensitivity over culture, and will likely detect more cases. The organism does not need to be viable for detection by PCR. The PCR assay is not a test of cure and should not be used as such. PCR-positive cases are reportable to your Medical Officer of Health.

The DFA test will be discontinued, as the PCR assay offers a rapid turn around time and is more accurate.

Routine cultures will also be discontinued unless specifically requested by consultation with the microbiologist-on-call. *B. parapertussis* is not be detected by the PCR assay. If there is a case where *B. parapertussis* is an important consideration, please page the microbiologist-on-call.

We anticipate that this new assay will provide more accurate and timely *B. pertussis* lab results for clinical and public health professionals. If you have any questions on the Pertussis PCR, please feel free to contact us at the numbers below

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