

Provincial Laboratory for Public Health (Microbiology)

February 27, 2004

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To all TB Control, Infectious Diseases, Respiratory Medicine, Medical Microbiology and Pathology physicians and Lab Managers

Re: TB PCR

Dear Colleague,

We would like to alert you to an enhancement in our Mycobacteriology service which will be implemented on March 1st, 2004.

Previously, TB PCR testing on acid-fast bacteria smear-positive respiratory specimens has been provided on request only. In order to streamline the process, this test will now be performed routinely on all smear-positive respiratory specimens from NEW cases. The results will be phoned to the ordering physician and TB Control. This result will be available within 36 hours of the smear result for most cases, and can be expedited for urgent cases on weekends by paging the Microbiologist on call (Edmonton 780-407-8822, or University of Alberta Hospital Locating 6191 or Calgary 403-268-7210). After an initial implementation phase of 3-4 months, we anticipate that further improvements to this new service will reduce the turnaround time to 24 hours for all cases.

The literature suggests that this licensed test is accurate with a sensitivity and specificity of 95 and >99%, respectively, for smear positive respiratory specimens, and in our experience has demonstrated 100% correlation with culture (n=73). The assay detects all species in the *M. tuberculosis* complex, including *M. tuberculosis*, *M. bovis*, BCG, *M. africanum*, and *M. microti*. While this performance is good, errors may occur rarely, as with any test, and we anticipate that you will continue to use sound clinical judgement in the interpretation of the test.

If you have any concerns regarding the implementation and performance of this test, please do not hesitate to page us.

Regards,

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