



February 25, 2005

To: All Medical and Provincial Officers of Health, Gastroenterologists, Infectious Diseases physicians, Family Medicine physicians, Microbiologists, Pathologists, and Laboratory Directors

Re: *Helicobacter pylori* serology

Dear Doctor,

Regional Health Authorities throughout Alberta are working to implement the Urea Breath Test (UBT) for the diagnosis and management of *Helicobacter pylori* infection. This test accurately detects the presence of the organism in the gastrointestinal tract, and is the test of choice recommended in the CMA and AMA clinical practice guidelines for dyspepsia [1, 2].

On an interim basis, under the direction of Alberta Health and Wellness, the Provincial Laboratory for Public Health has been providing *H. pylori* serologic testing on request. Serology is inaccurate for diagnosis of this infection, however, with a sensitivity and specificity of approximately 80% [3, 4]. Results of this test should be interpreted cautiously, in clinical context. A negative test does not rule out *H. pylori* infection. In addition, as the antibody response is long-lived, a positive serologic test cannot differentiate current from past, resolved infection, leading to inappropriate antibiotic use. These concerns are not a problem with the UBT, which detects the presence of the organism itself.

As the UBT will become available in your region by April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005, ***H. pylori* serology will be discontinued effective April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005**

Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Tilley".

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References:

1. Veldhuyzen van Zanten SJ, Flook N, Chiba N, et al. An evidence-based approach to the management of uninvestigated dyspepsia in the era of *Helicobacter pylori*. Canadian Dyspepsia Working Group. CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association Journal 2000;162:S3-23
2. Association AM. Guideline for diagnosis and treatment of chronic undiagnosed dyspepsia in adults: Alberta Clinical Practice Guidelines Working Group for Dyspepsia. [www.amda.ab.ca/cpg/index.html](http://www.amda.ab.ca/cpg/index.html) 2000
3. Vaira D, Vakil N. Blood, urine, stool, breath, money, and *Helicobacter pylori*. Gut 2001;48:287-9
4. Loy CT, Irwig LM, Katelaris PH and Talley NJ. Do commercial serological kits for *Helicobacter pylori* infection differ in accuracy? A meta-analysis. American Journal of Gastroenterology 1996;91:1138-44