



## Influenza Testing & Treatment – Important Updates for the 2018/2019 Season

By Lisa Veach, MD Infection Prevention and Kim Von Ahsen, Laboratory

Welcome to **In the Loop**, the newsletter from UnityPoint Health – Des Moines Laboratories.

The purpose of this newsletter is to distribute valuable information to our service area, including new test availability, test updates regarding methodology, specimen collection, and normal values.

We may also include feature topics related to laboratory diagnostics and test utilization.

If you have suggestions for topics you would like to read about in the newsletter, please email [Kimberly.VonAhsen@unitypoint.org](mailto:Kimberly.VonAhsen@unitypoint.org)

**Influenza activity in the United States is increasing. Per the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Flu Surveillance as of the week ending December 22, 2018; Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, influenza A(H3N2), and influenza B viruses continue to co-circulate.**

A number of flu tests are available to detect influenza viruses in respiratory specimens. The most common are called “rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs).” RIDTs work by detecting the parts of the virus (antigens) that stimulate an immune response. These tests can provide results within approximately 10-15 minutes, but are not as accurate as other flu tests. Therefore, a patient could still have the flu, even though the rapid test result is negative. Other flu tests are called “rapid molecular assays” that detect genetic material of the virus. Rapid molecular assays produce results in 15-20 minutes and are more accurate than RIDTs. Molecular assay (PCR) for influenza is **PREFERRED** over rapid antigen test (RIDT).

### Testing Available

#### Molecular Assays (PCR)

- UnityPoint Health – Des Moines Laboratories now offers a standalone PCR test for Influenza A/B in addition to the Respiratory Filmarray by PCR which includes influenza A/B plus 20 other respiratory pathogens.
- PCR testing performed at Methodist Lab only; specimens from Lutheran and Methodist West will be transported to IMMC for testing

Test Name	Epic Order
Influenza A/B by PCR	LAB3147
Respiratory Filmarray	LAB3222

#### Rapid Influenza (RIDT) testing

- RIDT remains available and is performed at all 3 sites.

When would RIDT be used? RIDT is available on site at Lutheran and Methodist West to provide a more rapid turnaround than PCR

- if RIDT is positive, influenza diagnosis confirmed
- if RIDT results are **NEGATIVE**, the lab will auto-reflex to influenza A/B by PCR (due to false negative rate up to 30% for RIDT testing). RIDT testing ordered at Lutheran, Methodist, and West on all patient classes (i.e Emergency, Outpatient, Inpatient, etc) and testing referred by clients to Pathology Laboratory for RIDT testing will auto-reflex to the molecular assay.

## Treatment Updates

- Morbidly obese (BMI >40) and pregnant or postpartum (within 2 weeks) women are now identified as persons at high risk of complications and in need of antiviral therapy
- Antiviral treatment **SHOULD** be started ASAP for adults and children with documented OR suspected influenza (regardless of vaccination history) in these settings:
  - Persons of any age requiring hospitalization; **treat regardless of duration of symptoms**
  - Outpatients of any age with severe or progressive symptoms; **treat regardless of duration of symptoms**
  - Outpatients at high risk of complications:
    - Chronic medical conditions
    - Immunocompromised
    - Younger than 2 years or older than 65
    - Pregnant or within 2 weeks postpartum
- Antiviral treatment **CAN** be **CONSIDERED** in all other settings for other adults and children with suspected or documented influenza, especially if
  - Symptom onset  $\leq$  2 days
  - Symptomatic outpatients who are household contacts of persons at high risk (especially severely immunocompromised)
  - Symptomatic healthcare providers who care for immunocompromised patients

### IMPORTANT TAKE AWAYS

Single platform influenza A/B PCR test is available. Preferred over RIDT

If RIDT is performed & negative, laboratory will reflex PCR test

Remember to treat patients with antivirals **REGARDLESS** of symptom duration if they are high risk category.

## Laboratory Leadership Announcement



Client Services Department of the Clinical Laboratory is pleased to announce Darin Wicker, MLT, HLT has been selected as Phlebotomy Supervisor for Iowa Methodist Laboratory and will begin in his new role effective January 7, 2019.

Darin has been employed with UnityPoint Health – Des Moines since June 2011 and started his career with us as a Laboratory Support Technician at Methodist West Hospital. While working as a LST, he attended the DMACC Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) program graduating with his degree in 2015. After graduation, Darin took the opportunity to use his MLT degree and take on a new challenge with accepting a position with the Histology Department at Iowa Methodist eventually becoming a certified Histology Technologist (HT). Prior to his employment with UnityPoint Health – Des Moines, Darin work at Mercy Medical Center in Des Moines from October 1997 to April 2011 as a both an inpatient and outreach Phlebotomist including 3.5 years as a Team Lead.

Darin brings to the Client Services Department both phlebotomy and leadership experience along with a new knowledge and perspective of Anatomic Pathology experience. His unique background and global knowledge base/perspective of the Laboratory will enhance our department's ability to understand, advise, and respond to the complex needs of our patients in all aspects of their laboratory testing; therefore, ensuring a comprehensive customer service and patient experience. Please join me in congratulating Darin on this promotion into his new role with UnityPoint Health – Des Moines.

Darin's contact information starting January 7<sup>th</sup> will be: Office Phone: (515) 241 – 6800 Email: [darin.wicker@unitypoint.org](mailto:darin.wicker@unitypoint.org)

Also please take a moment to thank Kayla Allison, MLS for the tremendous job she has done in this role and wish her well as she explores a new opportunity with our Laboratory!