

# Medical Update



*An industry news update from your laboratory partner*

## **DCL provides laboratory testing options for Influenza A (H1N1)**

*Laboratory also takes precautions to maintain a healthy staff during the flu season*

As fall approaches, both seasonal and novel type A (H1N1) influenza are a public concern. At DCL Medical Laboratories we are preparing for the flu season by offering our clients testing options for their patients, as well as taking precautions to maintain a healthy laboratory staff.

### **H1N1 is different than seasonal influenza**

The 2009 outbreak of influenza type A is caused by a new strain of H1N1; very few individuals will have developed immunity. While seasonal flu is most likely to cause complications in people over age 65, H1N1 appears to be affecting younger individuals, especially those under the age of 25. H1N1 is expected to spread globally, be unaffected by seasonal changes and reach pandemic levels.

### **Children, pregnant patients and others at risk for complications**

Those most at risk for complications due to seasonal flu, including pregnant women, children under the age of five and those with certain medical conditions, are also at risk for complications from H1N1. From April 15 to July 24, 2009, a total of 43,771 confirmed and probable cases of novel influenza A (H1N1) infection were reported to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Of the cases reported, 5,011 were hospitalized and 302 died. The largest number of deaths occurred among 25- to 49-year-olds. The estimated rate of hospital admission is four times greater for pregnant women.

### **Flu testing available from DCL Medical Laboratories**

The CDC recommends that clinicians test patients for the novel influenza (H1N1) virus if they have an acute febrile respiratory illness or sepsis-like syndrome. Priority for testing includes patients who 1) require hospitalization or 2) are at high-risk for severe disease such as children and pregnant women.

At the time of this publication (September 2009), any case of positive influenza A is assumed to be novel influenza A (H1N1) as seasonal influenza is not yet prevalent. As fall progresses, it will become more important to separate novel type A (H1N1) from seasonal type A influenza, because treatment should be determined based on the strain of A type flu.

DCL currently offers a rapid Influenza A+B test (Influenza A & B Ag Quick Vue, DCL test number ECS3015). Specimens for this test should be collected using a nasal swab (green-top) or a nasal wash and submitted in M4 media. They should be clearly labeled with the patient's first and last names and a secondary identifier such as a date of birth. Refrigerate the specimen immediately. This test has been found to have 70% to 85% sensitivity for type A and 80% sensitivity for type B. This rapid test can be reported within 24 hours. A negative result may occur if the amount of antigen in the specimen is below the detection level. A negative result also does not rule out the presence of other flu type infections.

This test will differentiate between type A and type B flu, however will not differentiate between H1N1 and seasonal type A influenza. DCL is currently in the process of obtaining and validating a new PCR assay for H1N1 influenza and will notify clients as soon as the test is available for order.

---

*Continued on the next page*

**Preventative measures taken in the laboratory and patient service centers**

DCL is taking precautions to prevent the flu in our workplace and among our phlebotomists to maintain a healthy laboratory staff. DCL is making good hand washing technique a priority and encouraging employees to stay at home if they experience flu-like symptoms or care for children experiencing flu symptoms. We are providing both seasonal and H1N1 vaccines to our employees. Our phlebotomists have also been provided masks to use when appropriate.

**For more information about influenza and testing**

As the flu season progresses, guidelines and recommendations will continue to change. We recommend consulting the CDC, as well as your local health department, for more information. You may also contact DCL Client Services at (317) 874-1334 or toll free at (866) 874-1334.

- The Centers for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- Indiana State Department of Health: <http://www.in.gov/isdh/>
- State of Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services: [www.dhss.mo.gov/index.html](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/index.html)
- Illinois Department of Public Health: [www.idph.state.il.us/](http://www.idph.state.il.us/)
- Kentucky Cabinet of Health and Family Services: <http://chfs.ky.gov/>
- Ohio Department of Health: [www.odh.ohio.gov/](http://www.odh.ohio.gov/)