



Winter 2007

**Pennsylvania Department of Health
Bureau of Laboratories Updates**

VOLUME II

100 Years of Public Health- 1906 -2006**Influenza Virus Culture Submission Procedures for
Physicians and Laboratories Not Enrolled in the
Influenza Sentinel Program**

We are well into the flu season for Pennsylvania and it's important to know how to correctly submit specimens for testing. The Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) will provide collections kits and prepaid shipping containers upon request from a physician or laboratory. Physicians and laboratories may use their own collection kits and mailers if they do not have BOL supplies on hand. Collect a nasal, nasopharyngeal, or throat specimen using a standard viral culturette or a sterile swab placed in viral transport medium. Fill out a [Specimen Submission Form](#) completely. Age, county of residence, sex and date of collection are required. Put the patient name/ID on the specimen. Please be sure that the identification information of the specimen and the Form are identical. Wrap the specimen with absorbent material, e.g., paper towels, and place it into the main compartment of the biohazard bag (one per bag) then seal the zip-lock. Place the Specimen Submission Form into the outer slot of the bag. **Do not place the Specimen Submission Form in the compartment with the specimen!** Refrigerate the specimen at 2-8° C until transport to the Bureau of Laboratories.

Ship specimens as soon as possible after collection (within 48 hr). Specimens must be kept cold until they reach the laboratory. Refrigerate specimens if they will not be shipped immediately. Ship specimens in an insulated (Styrofoam) container with cold packs (frozen before shipment). Do not use wet ice (ice cubes or crushed ice).

Ship the specimen to: **Pennsylvania Department of Health
Bureau of Laboratories
110 Pickering Way, Lionville, PA 19353**

(Please print your return address on the label.)

If you have any questions, please contact:

Dr. James Lute at 610-280-3464, or e-mail to
jlute@state.pa.us.

Norovirus Testing By the Bureau of Laboratories

There has been some confusion regarding the Norovirus testing by the Bureau of Laboratories (BOL), in Lionville PA. The Bureau does not provide Norovirus testing as a primary diagnostic tool. Rather, the primary purpose of our testing is to provide support to our Bureau of Epidemiology in outbreak investigation. As such Norovirus testing is not performed on a "stat" basis. Instead, it is

performed in batches, with results generated at least weekly, depending on volume.

The goal of Norovirus testing at the BOL is to have results for the Bureau of Epidemiology within a week of the receipt of specimens at the Bureau of Laboratories. We will provide the results of this testing to hospitals, physicians and other health care providers who have an interest. However, such providers should not expect to be able to use this testing as the sole diagnostic tool for patient management.

The BOL will try to accommodate requests to expedite testing when it is possible and/or necessary. Please contact **George Fraser** at 610-280-3464 or email gfraser@state.pa.us if you have questions regarding this matter.

Rabies Specimen Submitters

The Bureau of Laboratories (BOL), after consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has developed new submission guidelines for rabies specimens. In order for a specimen to be considered adequate, we must receive a full transverse cross-section of the medulla and cerebellum. If possible, we would also like a cross-section of the hippocampus, as this can sometimes be helpful in unusual cases. DFA negative results for inadequate specimens will be reported as "Indeterminate".

If you have questions, please contact **Dr. James Lute** at 610-280-3464 or by email, jlute@state.pa.us.

Information on rabies submission is also available at our website: <http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?a=167&q=202464>.

**Chemical Terrorism Clinical Specimen Shipping
Instructions**

The CDC has updated shipping instructions for specimens collected from people who may have been exposed to chemical terrorism agents. In 2006, the Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) sent 240 hospital and private clinical laboratory directors in the state a CD entitled "Responding to a Chemical Emergency, Collection and Handling of Clinical Specimens". Because of the feedback from laboratories throughout the commonwealth and other states, the CDC has simplified some of the procedures for shipping specimens. We will soon be sending these updates to designated laboratories throughout the state. If a chemical terrorism event does occur, arrangement will be made for a rapid-toxin screen which will test for over 150 toxins such as nerve agents, cyanide, etc.

Drills and exercises are being planned for emergency rooms and laboratories who wish to participate in 2007. If you have any questions, please call **Larry Iampietro**, the Chemical Terrorism Response Laboratory Coordinator, at 610-280-3464 ext. 3244 or email liampietro@state.pa.us.



Amendment to the Pennsylvania Clinical Laboratory Act.

House Bill 2639 has amended the Clinical Laboratory Act, to add a requirement for calculation of the glomerular filtration rate, when laboratories are testing for creatinine levels.

H B 2639 reads as follows:

Section 13.2. Glomerular Filtration Rate Testing.--The director of a clinical laboratory licensed in this Commonwealth shall provide that when the laboratory tests a specimen to determine the serum creatinine level for a patient age 18 or older, the laboratory shall also calculate the patient's estimated glomerular filtration rate AT NO ADDITIONAL CHARGE.

Section 1. The laboratory shall include the patient's estimated glomerular filtration rate with its report to the health care professional.

Clinical laboratories in health care facilities shall report the estimated glomerular filtration rate based on a protocol developed by the laboratory in consultation with either or both its medical staff or clinical departments. A laboratory shall only be required to calculate and report a patient's estimated glomerular filtration rate if information necessary for the calculation to be considered medically appropriate and valid for the patient has been made available to the laboratory by the health care professional. This section shall not apply to clinical trials and research. Clinical laboratories that do not have information systems capable of providing estimated glomerular filtration rates on an automated basis shall have two years to comply with this section.

Section 2. In recognition of the constantly evolving nature of medicine and technology, this section shall expire on July 1, 2010.

Section 3. This act shall take effect in 120 days. [from November 9, 2006]

Personnel Changes in Laboratory Improvement

During the last several months, a number of Division staff has left the organization. Surveyors **Carl Swithers** and **James Mathis** have left state service for other work. **Janice Merchant** has retired from the Administrative Support Section and **Debra Tyler**, Supervisor of the Laboratory Survey Section, has transferred to the Division of Maternal and Child Health in Harrisburg. **Peggy Zaleski** has left Proficiency Testing and Training, and returned to the laboratory bench.

We wish them all well in their new endeavors, and we will miss them all. While we search for their replacements, please remember that questions can still be addressed to the rest of the Division staff, especially the supervisors: **Marianne Porter**, Division Director (maporter@state.pa.us), **Mary McCormick**, Supervisor of Proficiency Testing and Training (mamccormic@state.pa.us) and **Shirlean Johnson**, Supervisor of Administrative Support (shijohnson@state.pa.us).

TRAINING SCHEDULE

Agents of Bioterrorism: Training for the Sentinel Labs

Location: Bureau of Labs, Exton, PA

Time: March 21, 2007

If you have questions, please contact **Vincent Lan** at: jlan@state.pa.us

CONTACT INFORMATION

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: www.health.state.pa.us/labs

This and all future updates will be available on-line at the above website. If you wish to have future updates e-mailed to your facility, please respond to the following e-mail address with your request: jlan@state.pa.us. The most recent copy of future updates will accompany all mailings that the Bureau distributes.

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH

