



Genesee County Health Department

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September 14, 2009

<http://www.gchd.us>

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Dear Colleague,

In preparation for the upcoming influenza season, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) has issued guidance for laboratory testing for the pandemic H1N1 virus at their Bureau of Laboratories (BOL). The full guidance can be found at www.gchd.us.

Please refer to the attached Influenza Testing Algorithm. Testing will be limited to the following groups identified for public health investigations:

- Hospitalized patients with severe influenza-like illness (i.e., ICU patients)
- Patients with an influenza-like illness of an unusual presentation (e.g., encephalopathy, cardiac complications)
- Pregnant women with severe influenza-like illness
- Outbreaks or clusters of influenza-like illness in congregate settings (e.g., schools, camps, long-term care facilities, daycares, etc), as requested by local or state public health
- Influenza-related deaths of individuals of any age

Currently, no pre-approval through the local health department is necessary to submit a specimen of patients who fall into those groups. This may change depending on the volume of specimens received by the BOL. I encourage clinicians to contact the Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) for assistance in submitting specimens and determining if a patient meets the criteria for a public health investigation of H1N1 infection. Clinicians can reach the Communicable Disease Program at (810) 257-1017.

Clinicians needing diagnostic testing in patients that do not meet MDCH BOL testing criteria are encouraged to use private laboratories offering H1N1 influenza testing.

Lastly, clinicians are reminded that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have determined that Rapid Influenza Detection Tests (RIDT) are not a good tool for screening for H1N1 influenza virus infection and a negative RIDT does not rule out infection. Please see the attachment for more details.

For further information, please contact me at (810) 257-3155 or gjohnson@gchd.us. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Gary K. Johnson, MD, MPH
Medical Director

Attachments

Better Life Through Better Health

**H1N1 Rapid Influenza Testing
Information for Healthcare Providers
Michigan Department of Community Health
August 14, 2009**

Rapid Influenza Detection Tests (RIDT) are often used in the clinical setting to screen for Season flu and guide the use of antiviral therapy. During the spring outbreak of novel H1N1 (sometimes referred to as “swine flu” in the media) the RIDT was also used without good data on the usefulness of this screening test.

We now have good information that the RIDT test is not a good screening test for novel H1N1. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released a report in the August 7 Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR. 58(30);826-9) highlighting this point. The report indicated that the RIDT only detected novel H1N1 at high viral titers with the overall sensitivity being 40%-69%. Even for Seasonal influenza the sensitivity of the RIDT is modest. Sensitivity testing results are in the 60 – 80% range for seasonal influenza A (H1N1) and 80 – 83% range for seasonal influenza A(H3N2).

Health care providers who diagnose and treat influenza patients must be cognizant of the fact that a negative RIDT result does NOT rule out influenza infection with the novel H1N1 virus and is not a good screening test for this virus.

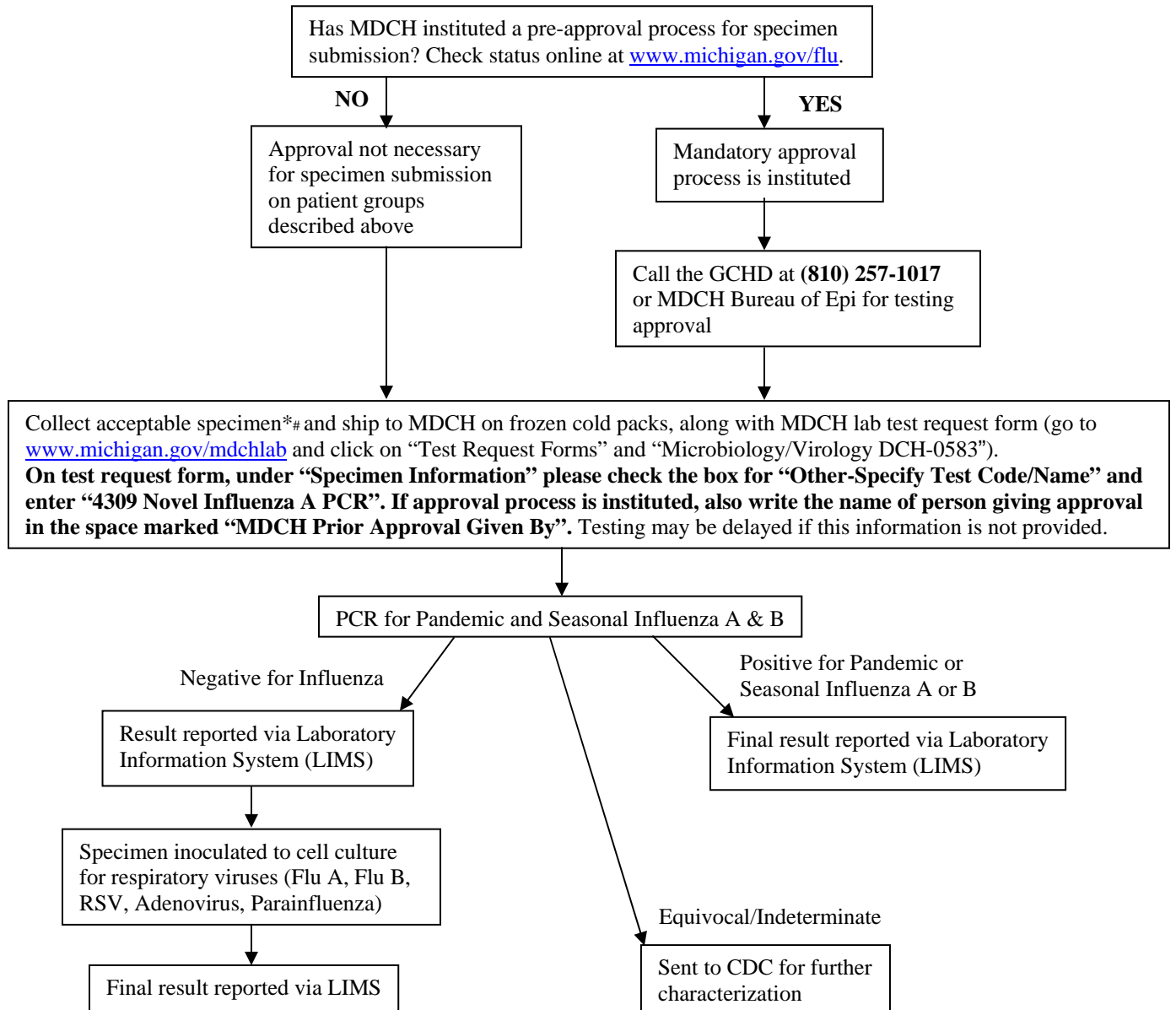
Remember the RIDT does not differentiate between subtypes of influenza A and some types of RIDT in use do not detect influenza B virus.

Further guidance and information regarding seasonal and novel H1N1 influenza can be found at the following web sites www.flu.gov , www.cdc.gov/flu, and www.michigan.gov/flu.

Influenza Testing Algorithm for Cases and Outbreaks – Fall 2009 Michigan Department of Community Health

Questions regarding case and outbreak influenza testing should be directed to the Genesee County Health Department at (810) 257-1017 or MDCH Bureau of Epidemiology at 517-335-8165 during normal business hours or 517-335-9030 after hours.

MDCH influenza testing will only be conducted for public health case investigations (**ICU hospitalizations, severely ill pregnant women, patients with unusual and severe presentations, and deaths**) and for **congregate setting outbreak/cluster investigations**. See “MDCH 2009-2010 Guidelines for Clinicians on Influenza Testing,” available on the MIHAN and at www.michigan.gov/flu, for more information and for reporting requirements.



* Acceptable specimens: NP swab in viral transport medium (VTM) or saline (PBS); Nasal swab in VTM or PBS; Dual NP/OP swabs in VTM or PBS; Nasal aspirates; Viral isolates. **DO NOT SUBMIT MULTIPLE SAMPLES ON THE SAME PATIENT.**
 # Swabs used in influenza rapid diagnostic tests **cannot** be reused for MDCH testing. Consider collecting two swabs so that one may be reserved for MDCH confirmatory testing if needed. Alternatively, an aliquot of the original specimen may be submitted.