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To: Infection Control Professionals
Local Public Health
Wisconsin Hospital Association

From: Thomas Haupt
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RE: Use of influenza IgM antibody tests

Recently, the Division of Public Health (DPH) has received numerous laboratory reports reporting the results of influenza IgM tests, primarily among older individuals (>65 years old). This recent trend has raised several questions regarding the proper use of these tests and the interpretation of results.

The Division of Public Health consulted with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and agreed on the following guidance regarding the use of the IgM test:

1. Influenza vaccination may induce IgM and/or IgG depending on the prior history of influenza infection/vaccination of the individual. Therefore it is difficult to interpret the results of a single serum IgM titer as a diagnosis of recent infection.
2. Although rarely used, paired sera are the "gold standard" for influenza sero-diagnosis.
3. The Division of Public Health discourages the use of the IgM test as a diagnostic test for influenza.

Diagnostic tests that can be used include:

1. Virus culture of nasal or throat secretions
2. Rapid influenza tests, although the interpretation of these results is dependent on the level of influenza activity (ie. positive predictive values increase with increased influenza activity)
3. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR)

Please share this guidance with facilities and clinicians in your jurisdiction that may benefit from this information. Any questions or comments should be addressed to Thomas Haupt. He can be reached by telephone at 608-266-5326 or by e-mail at hauptte@dhfs.state.wi.us