



21st October 2004

To: All Laboratory Directors.

Re: Increased Hepatitis A in Alberta: Investigation by Alberta Health and Wellness and Health Canada

As part of the on-going investigation of hepatitis A cases in Alberta we have been asked to help by facilitating molecular testing of specimens taken during the acute phase of illness. Thus we request that you send any hepatitis A IgM positive specimens (and other blood or stool specimens from identified acute cases as available) on to Prov. Lab. (either Calgary or Edmonton) for possible molecular epidemiological study at the National Microbiology Laboratory. It would facilitate retrieval and safe storage of key specimens if you could let Prov. Lab. know by phoning the virologist-on-call when a case is identified since sometimes we have a duplicate specimen (e.g. when hepatitis C testing is requested at the same time). In some circumstances we may also contact you to obtain specimens identified in the past few months as they may be from linked cases. Your normal testing and reporting procedures should not be altered.

The yield from molecular testing will be enhanced if the specimen (whether serum or stool specimen) is transported as soon as possible on cool packs to Prov. Lab. If the sample has been frozen it should be transported on dry ice to avoid freeze-thawing. In order to facilitate easy tracking of specimens sent on to us for molecular testing and epidemiological follow-up we have prepared a simple requisition for inclusion with any specimens.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this.

If you have any queries or comments please do not hesitate to contact one of us.

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