

DECEMBER 2, 2019



## Montana Laboratory Sentinel

Updates from the MT Laboratory Services Bureau, 800-821-7284, [www.lab.hhs.mt.gov](http://www.lab.hhs.mt.gov)

If you have questions regarding any of these updates, please call us (800) 821-7284

### Norovirus Season

Norovirus season is upon us and the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) needs your help!!! To improve our outbreak surveillance of norovirus in Montana, we are asking partners to send positive norovirus specimens to the Montana Public Health Laboratory (MTPHL) for further surveillance testing. Please [click here](#) for more information

### Updated Zika Virus Testing Recommendations

Based on CDC's understanding of current Zika epidemiology and associated testing patterns, recommendations have been updated regarding routine serological testing for Zika virus. During periods of low Zika virus transmission, the risk of false positive lab results increases, which has direct implications for pregnant women. Therefore, a letter was drafted *asking state, territorial, and local health departments and laboratories to review and update their Zika virus testing practices*. Importantly, *routine serological testing for Zika virus is no longer recommended*. You can find more details in the link below, which highlights key points in existing diagnostic testing guidelines that support this guidance (see paragraph 3). [Click here for more information](#)

### Hantavirus Testing

Due to difficulties in obtaining the necessary reagents and controls for performing CDC's Hantavirus IgG and IgM EIA assay, the Montana Public Health Laboratory is no longer performing this method for confirmation of Sin Nombre Virus. The MTPHL is now performing a Hantavirus IgM screening assay, so you will no longer see IgG results on your patient reports. Positive Hantavirus IgM specimens identified by this assay will be forwarded to CDC for confirmatory testing.

## **NEW! Hepatitis C RNA testing**

The Montana Public Health Laboratory recently implemented Hepatitis C RNA testing for confirmation of current Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) infection, as well as for monitoring treatment status. Following CDC's recommended algorithm, all positive HCV antibody screens will now be reflexed to the HCV RNA assay. This assay distinguishes those people who have been infected in the past and subsequently resolved, from those who are currently infectious. Having these results helps clinicians and other providers correctly identify persons infected with HCV, so that preventative services, care and treatment can be offered. In addition, being able to notify persons of their infection status enables them to make informed decisions about medical care and options for HCV treatment, or lets them know that they are not infectious. For more information click: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6218a5.htm>.

## **Updates to Carbapenem-Resistance Surveillance Testing at MTPHL**

Following CDC recommendations, the MTPHL is no longer performing CARBA-R real-time PCR on every isolate submitted for carbapenem-resistance surveillance. The MTPHL will continue to perform the modified Carbapenem Inactivation Method (mCIM) and those isolates testing positive by mCIM will be reflexed to the CARBA-R test. No further testing will be performed on negative mCIM isolates.

The CARBA-R assay can still be ordered if a provider wants testing done regardless of the mCIM result, but there will be a fee associated. We are no longer able to support this testing for all isolates on a fee-waived basis. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the MTPHL Microbiology Department at 406-444-5251.

