



# SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY *Messenger* Public Health Laboratory

## December 2015

It is that time, at year end, when it is common to take a retrospective look at what the past year's accomplishments. We too, the staff at the County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory (SLO PHL), are also taking stock. Here are some of our new and ongoing achievements for 2015:

- Tuberculosis testing – SLO PHL recently detected the first case of Multi-Drug resistant (MDR) TB in the county in two hours' time using the GeneXpert instrument, an addition this year.
- Pertussis (whooping cough) and other vaccine preventable diseases – SLO PHL staff performed more than 200 PCR tests, detecting the pertussis agent in 8%.
- Influenza – use of CDC-developed reverse-transcription PCR method to determine conclusively the status of infected individuals, and enable detection of H5N1 and H7N9 strains potentially from Asia or Africa, should they suddenly arrive here.
- Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) testing – continued large volume testing for Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, and Trichomonas by the most sensitive and specific molecular amplification method available; as well as HIV, Syphilis and Herpes virus infection.
- Enterovirus – performance of enterovirus PCR, capable of detecting strain D68, the cause of paralytic cases in multiple states in 2014; and a cluster of viral meningitis cases at Cal Poly in 2015.
- Foodborne illness – testing of both ill persons (e.g., Norovirus outbreak associated with the 2015 SLO Straight Down Golf Tournament) and food samples.
- Water testing—SLO PHL routinely tests the waters of the ocean, City of Morro Bay, drinking water, well water, and waste water.
- Food Safety – testing of shellfish-growing waters and shellfish meat to guarantee the quality of food products eaten at local restaurants and other locations.
- Blood Lead testing – since 2012, the lab has been testing children in partnership with CHCCC, WIC and other partners to detect early stage of childhood lead poisoning.
- Rabies testing - performed routinely on wild and domestic animals. Yes, rabies continues to circulate in our county – in bats, skunks and even coyotes.
- Bioterrorism testing – for the agents of anthrax and plague, among others.

The list is not exhaustive and could include: training hospital and reference laboratory staff, diagnosing parasitic, fungal, viral and other bacterial infections, and readiness to establish testing for Ebola virus or the next emerging infectious disease threat as necessary.

*The SLO Public Health Laboratory is a community asset, proudly serving the people of San Luis Obispo County since 1928.*