



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY *Messenger* Public Health Laboratory

April 2016

Advanced Respiratory PCR Panel Introduced

The San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory (SLO PHL) has adopted a new PCR panel for the detection of respiratory pathogens. This new test can be performed in as little as an hour, and detects influenza virus, adenovirus, human metapneumovirus, enterovirus and rhinoviruses, as well as parainfluenza viruses 1-4, and RSV. The additional agents detected with this panel include multiple types of coronavirus, *Bordetella pertussis*, *Chlamydia pneumoniae* and *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*. The latter two agents are common causes of primary atypical pneumonia, and were not available for detection by any method at the SLO PHL prior to this new test adoption. Previously referred to as the “RVP” or Respiratory Virus PCR Panel, the new panel is simply “RP”. (Test # 6310)

The use of PCR panels continues to be a topic of lively discussion in medical laboratory and clinician circles, with strong opinions being rendered that detection of the agent even if no specific antimicrobial therapy is available is important for patient satisfaction. It is also important to recognize that *Bordetella pertussis*, *Chlamydia pneumoniae* and *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* are respiratory pathogens, but are bacteria and are treatable with antibiotics. To be inclusive, some viruses such as Influenza A viruses can be treated—if detected early in illness onset with drugs like oseltamivir and zanamivir. Antiviral research promises to add additional options to treatment in the foreseeable future, thus specific viral pathogen identification is important for baseline surveillance, despite limited treatment options at present.

The SLO PHL is working on an advanced gastrointestinal pathogen panel that will allow detection of the current array of agents, plus enteropathogenic and enteroinvasive *E. coli*, *Cyclospora cayentanensis*, *Aeromonas*, *Plesiomonas*, astrovirus, rotavirus and sapovirus. The number of agents in the new PCR panel far outstrips any conceivable culture approach in regard to sensitivity, speed of detection or cost.

Packaging and Shipping Training—April 28 Vets Hall

A workshop presented by nationally-recognized CDC expert Pat Payne, has been scheduled for April 28 in San Luis Obispo. This one-day program provides a comprehensive overview of regulations applicable to Packaging and Shipping human and animal specimens for lab testing.

FAA regulations require that individuals who perform packaging and shipping receive training **every three years**. The FAA is known for performing unannounced site inspections of laboratories and requesting shipping and training records for all staff assigned these duties.

Registration information is available on the SLO PHL website www.sloPublicHealth.org/Lab, or you can register using registrar@aphl.org, or call or email Dr. Jim Beebe at 805-781-5507 or jbeebe@co.slo.ca.us and indicate the desired location for your attendance.

There is no fee and lunch is provided.