



Date: July 5, 2018

BCD-2018-08
Replaces BCD 2017-01

To: Wisconsin Clinicians, Infection Preventionists, Tribal Health Centers, and Local Health Departments

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Influenza Testing and Variant Influenza A Virus Detection

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The 2018 city and county fair season in the Midwest is now underway. During recent summers, swine exhibitions at agricultural fairs and other direct or indirect exposure to swine have been associated with human infections caused by variant influenza A viruses that include A/H3N2v, A/H1N2v and A/H1N1v. So far this year, one human case of variant influenza A (A/H3N2v) has been detected in humans in the United States (Indiana) and influenza has been detected in swine in one Midwest state (Wisconsin).

Therefore, it is important to consider influenza among patients with acute respiratory illnesses (ARI) who report direct exposure to swine (showing swine, raising swine, feeding swine, cleaning swine waste or physically touching swine), indirect exposure to swine (in a building that houses swine or attendance at an event where swine are present), or close contact with an ill person who had recent swine exposure or is known to be infected with a variant virus (within 2 meters or approximately 6 feet).

ARI is defined as any two of the following: fever, cough, sore throat, rhinorrhea or nasal congestion. Patients who present with ARI and have known or suspected exposure to swine within one week prior to illness onset can be tested at no charge by the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) with the prior approval (see below) of the Wisconsin Division of Public Health (DPH).

Rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs) may not reliably detect variant influenza. Consequently, the use of RIDTs to identify variant influenza A is discouraged. Nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal specimens should be collected from patients who meet testing criteria, placed into one tube of viral transport media and sent to the WSLH for influenza PCR testing. Specimens submitted for testing must include a completed WSLH lab requisition form. The form can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.slh.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/ReqForm-EnhancedSurv-0514.doc>

To obtain approval for testing or if you have questions regarding this memo, please contact Thomas Haupt, Wisconsin Influenza Surveillance Coordinator, at 608-266-5326, Anna Kocharian, Epidemiologist, at 608-267-9004, or call the Bureau of Communicable Diseases at 608-267-9003. For after-hours approval, call the 24/7 emergency number at 608-258-0099 and ask for the communicable disease epidemiologist on call.