



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY *Messenger* Public Health Laboratory

January 2016

It's a new year and persons interested in communicable diseases and their diagnostic testing wonder what this year will bring and will we be ready (think MERS, Ebola, Enterovirus D68). Unpredictable as events are, it is still possible to discern probable occurrences that will be a concern for public health and community partners:

Influenza— Seasonal influenza infections are still at a low or sporadic level, but modestly increasing. Influenza type B viruses have been prominent in early detections, Stay tuned. New strains such influenza type A H7N9 and H5N6 are causing human infections in China. It's not a stretch to their arrival here. The SLO Public Health Laboratory (SLO PHL) can test for these strains.

Tuberculosis— Cases of active disease, of which there are very few in SLO County, are discovered quickly because of the everyday communication between the medical and hospital community and public health. Noteworthy in 2015 was the first detection of a case of multi-drug resistant (MDR) tuberculosis by the SLO PHL using a state-of-the-art molecular amplification method. We hope not to detect another MDR case in the new year.

Emerging Infections— While travelers had to be aware of Dengue and Chikungunya virus risks in 2015, it is the Zika virus that promises to make new headlines this year. Human cases for this exotic virus have appeared in various Caribbean countries after appearing in French Polynesia last year. (ProMED digest Jan 11, 2016).

Enterovirus infections— The public health laboratory network must be ready to test for any number of enterovirus infections, even as Poliovirus, a prominent member of the group, is at a stage in Asia and Africa where elimination is possible. However, the recent nation-wide epidemic of Enterovirus D68, and the outbreak of Echovirus 18 among Cal Poly students are incentives to remain vigilant. New outbreaks are likely.

Other respiratory viruses— When individuals, young or old, are hospitalized with Influenza-like illness (ILI) but are tested and found to be influenza-negative, the SLO laboratory has found other lesser known, but potent viruses, to be the culprit: Parainfluenza viruses 1, 2 or 3; Human Metapneumovirus; and for children, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

New Look - The San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory *Messenger* is being sent to you this month using Constant Contact. We hope that this method of communication will be more efficient, allowing easy viewing of the *Messenger* on desktops and smart phones.

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