



Messenger

New Laboratory Director at SLO County Public Health Laboratory

We are pleased to introduce Dr. Glen M Miller as the new laboratory director for the County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory. He is taking over the position from Dr. Jim Beebe who is retiring after nearly fourteen years of stellar laboratory leadership for our County. Glen comes to us from his position as Assistant Laboratory Director at the Napa-Solano-Yolo-Marin-Mendocino County Public Health Laboratory.

Influenza and Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) Seasonal Surveillance

Influenza surveillance coupled with surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 for the 2021-2022 season begins Sunday, October 3, 2021.

The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory is soliciting specimens (nasopharyngeal swab in viral transport medium) for seasonal influenza virus surveillance without charge. Mark requisitions with "Influenza/COVID-19 surveillance".

Test # 51000 SARS Cov2 /Influenza PCR will be assigned.

Hospitals: Submit specimens from patients who are hospitalized with influenza-like illness (ILI) and/or placed in an ICU regardless of rapid or PCR test result. TO AVOID A FEE, NOTE DATES ON REQUISITION (e.g., "admitted 12/15/21, moved to ICU 12/17/21").

Outpatient Healthcare Providers: Submit specimens from patients with ILI and a positive rapid or PCR influenza test. TO AVOID A FEE, NOTE RAPID or PCR TEST RESULTS ON THE LAB TEST REQUISITION (e.g., "Rapid A+" or "PCR B+" 12/15/21).

The submission of specimens allows public health officials to determine the seasonal onset and the relative frequency of influenza transmission and to provide guidance to the medical community regarding the efficacy of antiviral therapy.

Influenza virus activity is currently at very low levels in Australia which, while still in its winter months, heralds a possible light season again this year. It is possible that the ongoing interventions of masking and social distancing to prevent SARS-CoV-2 infections may again reduce transmission of influenza virus. There was zero detections of influenza virus last year! Additionally, influenza vaccine remains a significant factor in reducing transmission.

The SLO Public Health Laboratory participates as a member of the California Respiratory Laboratory Network and able to detect new influenza virus strains or variants as well as the H5N1 strain and the H7N9 strains. The Lab has been sequencing positive COVID-19 specimens since May of 2021, determining the lineage of circulating strains for epidemiologic surveillance.

Change to STI & COVID-19 Testing Coming Soon

In the coming weeks, the County of SLO Public Health Laboratory will be switching to a new testing platform—the Roche Diagnostics Cobas 6800 to detect SARS-CoV-2 and sexually transmitted infections (STIs [*Chlamydia*, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, *Trichomonas vaginalis*, and *Mycoplasma genitalium*]). This new platform is a PCR-based amplification technology that will require a different specimen collection tube for STIs. Herpes virus-1 and -2 amplification testing will also change to PCR. Stay tuned for more information.

Holiday Schedule

The laboratory will be closed on the following days:

Monday October 11—Columbus Day

Thursday November 11—Veterans Day

Thursday-Friday November 25, 26—Thanksgiving

Friday December 24—Christmas

Friday December 31—New Year's

Questions?

Please contact the Laboratory Director by phone at 805-781-5512 or email at gmmiller@co.slo.ca.us

