December 17, 2018

To: All Chiefs of Service, Attending Physicians, Housestaff, Nurses and Other Concerned Personnel

From: Barbara Haller, MD, PhD
Division Chief, Microbiology and Director, Clinical Laboratory

Re: Recommended Testing Guidelines for Respiratory Illnesses at ZSFG, 2018-19

For the 2018-2019 influenza (flu) season, the ZSFG Clinical Laboratory is providing this memo to educate and guide physicians on available testing methods and recommended ordering strategies for patients with respiratory illness.

The following table summarizes available test for respiratory viruses at ZSFG.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assay</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Turn-around Time</th>
<th>Ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influenza A/B &amp; RSV</td>
<td>Real-Time PCR</td>
<td>Inpatient, Outpatient</td>
<td>Approximately 2 hours. Available 24/7.</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza A/B</td>
<td>Real-Time PCR</td>
<td>Inpatient, Outpatient</td>
<td>Approximately 2 hours. Available 24/7.</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory Pathogen Panel</td>
<td>Multiplex PCR</td>
<td>Inpatient and LHH Patients only</td>
<td>Approximately 3 hours. (Evening, nights &amp; weekends workload permitting.)</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV Antigen</td>
<td>Lateral flow Immunoassay</td>
<td>Inpatient, Outpatient</td>
<td>Approximately 1 hour. Available 24/7.</td>
<td>Pediatrics &lt; 5 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: The appropriate specimen is a nasopharyngeal swab submersed in Universal Viral Transport medium (collection kit available). All other specimen types (BAL, tracheal aspirates, etc.) will need a viral culture sent to a reference lab.

Please follow the recommended guidelines below for your location to test for respiratory pathogens:

**ZSFG Inpatient Locations:**
- During influenza season, order the Influenza A/B & RSV PCR first.
- If the above test is negative and a viral illness is still suspected, order (or add-on to previously received specimen) the Respiratory Pathogen Panel if the result will affect clinical management. Outside of influenza season, order the Respiratory Pathogen Panel.

**Pediatrics (outpatients):**
- Order the Influenza A/B & RSV PCR.

**Outpatient Locations (including ED and Urgent Care):**
- Order the Influenza A/B PCR or the Influenza A/B with RSV PCR.

NOTE: The Respiratory Pathogen Panel is not offered for outpatient locations.

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- Order the Respiratory Pathogen Panel. However, if a strong suspicion exists for influenza or an influenza outbreak is occurring, then order the Influenza A/B & RSV PCR first.

NOTE: In most cases, a Viral Culture is not useful because a Respiratory Pathogen Panel is more sensitive, has a much faster turn-around time, and will cover a broader range of agents.

For any questions or concerns, please contact Phong Pham, Sr Supervisor, Microbiology at (415) 206-3597 or Barbara Haller, MD, PhD, at (415) 206-8588.