

July 2010

Public Health Laboratories Implement A New Screening Test for HIV -1/2

To health care providers:

Effective June 1, 2010, the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP) public health laboratories (PHL) began to phase in a new human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) screening test known as the “HIV Ag/Ab Combo Screen.” This screening test simultaneously detects both HIV p24 antigen (Ag) and antibodies (Ab) to HIV type 1 and type 2 (HIV-1/ HIV-2) in human serum or plasma.

The HIV Ag/Ab combo assay demonstrates 100 per cent sensitivity and a specificity of more than 99.5 per cent. The HIV Ag/Ab combo screen will eventually replace the HIV1/HIV2 screen that detects only Ab to HIV-1 and HIV-2 in human serum or plasma.

In the meantime, HIV samples may be tested by either one of these two assays.

How to interpret what assay was used?

- If the HIV screen test indicates “HIV Ag/Ab combo screen” then the specimen has been tested using the new test.
- If the HIV screen test indicates “HIV1/HIV2 screen” then it was tested using the previous test which only detects the presence of HIV antibodies.

Please note that the HIV Ag/Ab Combo result does not distinguish between the detection of HIV p24 antigen, HIV-1 antibodies, or HIV-2 antibodies.

A specimen with a borderline or reactive result on an HIV screen test will proceed to confirmatory testing according to the HIV testing algorithm.

External laboratories requesting confirmation of HIV reactive results must include the following information on the HIV serology test requisition:

- the HIV screening test method
- the HIV screen test result

For further information:

- HIV Laboratory at **416-235-5727**, or contact your local OAHPP laboratory.
- For the OAHPP Specimen Collection Guide and previous Labstracts refer to <http://www.oahpp.ca/publichealthlaboratories.php>
- Public Health Agency of Canada website: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca