



Technical Alert

Invalid Rapid Streptococcus Group A Tests Will Reflex to Culture

TO: Medical Staff and Clients

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SUBJECT: **Strep group A (GAS) NAAT (PCR) testing will automatically reflex to Strep Screen Culture when the NAAT is repeatedly invalid or indeterminate**

The Streptococcus group A (GAS) screen using the rapid NAAT (PCR) test using the LIAT instrument has been active at DLS Microbiology since December 12, 2016. Unlike the rapid antigen test, negative results can be reported without a back-up culture. Overall the test has been performing well; however, occasionally the test is reproducibly invalid or indeterminate. This is most likely due to interfering substances in the specimen.

When a result cannot be generated using NAAT due to an invalid or indeterminate test, the specimen should be tested by an alternate method. The preferred method of testing these specimens is culture; a test order for Group A Strep Culture (617) will be placed automatically for the convenience of our providers and clients. Culture for GAS has a turn-around-time of $\geq 18 - 24$ hours, and although culture is considered the “gold standard,” it will also fail to identify all GAS.

Screening patients for GAS is intended to identify and treat infected patients who are at risk for serious sequelae such as rheumatic fever rather than the pharyngitis. A negative test with persisting symptoms may indicate other agents causing pharyngitis are present (e.g. beta Strep group C/G or *Arcanobacterium hemolyticum*). In such cases and if clinically indicated, a more general throat culture may be considered.

Effective July 9, 2018, if Strep Group A NAAT is invalid, a credit will be issued for the Strep Group A NAAT and a Group A Strep Culture will be reflexively ordered.

Testing at the hospital laboratories at QMC Punchbowl, QMC West Oahu, and North Hawaii Community Hospital will transition from Direct Strep A Antigen (with reflex to culture) to the Strep Group A NAAT testing on August 6, 2018.

Order codes: 617 Group A Strep Culture (only available as a reflex test)
 5824 Strep A by Nucleic Acid Test

Please refer any questions to Terrie Koyamatsu, Manager - DLS Microbiology Laboratory at 589-5196, or DLS Client Services at 589-5101.

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