



Legionella Antigen Testing

Pathlab is proposing to drop urinary antigen testing for *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 from the **4th January 2016**.

The reasons for this are as follows:

- Legionella PCR is nowadays much more readily available with a relatively fast turnaround time. The preferred specimen is a lower respiratory tract sample. PCR should be the test of choice in a hospitalised patient with Community Acquired Pneumonia, where Legionella infection is suspected. Treatment should be empirical at least until this result is obtained.
- *Legionella longbeachae* is the predominant Legionella strain seen both locally and in NZ. This strain is not detected by the urinary antigen test.
- There is the potential for a negative urinary antigen result for *L. pneumophila* to be misinterpreted. There have unfortunately been occasions over the past few years where acutely unwell patients have had empirical Legionella cover stopped on the basis of a negative urinary antigen result. This presents a potential clinical risk.
- The sensitivity of the urinary antigen test, even for *L. pneumophila* serogroup 1 is only in the order of 75%.

This change has already been discussed with local Infectious Diseases and Respiratory physicians.

If you have any questions pertaining to this proposed change please do not hesitate to contact us.

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