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DATE: June 30, 2016
TO: UCH Medical Staff, Housestaff, Patient Care Centers, and Outpatient Clinics
FROM: Kathleen G. Beavis, MD, Interim Director of Laboratories and
Director, Clinical Microbiology and Immunology Laboratories
KT Jerry Yeo, Ph.D., DABCC, FACB, Director, Clinical Chemistry Laboratories
RE: Hepatitis C virus (HCVAB) reactive antibody test reflex to HCV quantitative viral load testing

Effective July 7th, 2016, the Clinical Microbiology/Immunology Laboratory will perform quantitative HCV viral load by PCR on all specimens reactive for Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) by antibody testing. This will eliminate the current need for an add-on order and additional specimen, and bring our testing into alignment with CDC recommendations for confirmatory testing for diagnosis of HCV infection.

Ordering information:

The order code for HCV antibody in Epic, HCVAB, is unchanged, but the test name has been updated to "HCV AB reflex to viral load". For samples reactive by antibody testing, a reflex order for HCVL "Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Viral Load will be added automatically.

Specimen and transport requirements:

Testing is performed on plasma only. Collect 5 – 10 mL of whole blood in a 10 ml lavender-top Vacutainer (EDTA) tube to ensure there is sufficient residual sample for HCV viral load testing without a subsequent venipuncture.

Methodology, Testing Schedule, and Reporting

The methodologies for both the HCV antibody testing and the HCV Viral Load will be unchanged (Roche).

HCV antibody testing is performed daily, with turnaround time of 24 hours. Results are reported in Epic under Infectious Diseases/Hepatitis. Reporting of results remains unchanged, except that HCV antibody reactive results will now include the following additional comment:

"Reactive Hepatitis C antibody result. Specimen is being confirmed for Hepatitis C virus by quantitative PCR. Please refer to Infectious Diseases/Hepatitis in Epic for HCV PCR results."

HCV viral load testing is performed 3 times a week, and reported in Epic under Infectious Diseases/Hepatitis.

HCV viral load test can still be ordered separately in Epic for those patients already known to be positive for the HCV virus. For further information see HCVAB and HCVL in the Laboratory Handbook.

Note: Orders for The Acute Hepatitis Panel (AHPNL) will not reflex to HCV Viral Load.

If you have any questions, please contact Scott Matushek, Chief Technologist, Clinical Microbiology/Immunology Laboratory at 773-795-0055, or Angella Charnot-Katsikas, MD, Assistant Director, Clinical Microbiology/Immunology Laboratory at 773-834-2473.