



TO: Medical Staff, House Staff and Patient Care Centers

FROM: Jessica Ridgway, MD
Associate Hospital Epidemiologist

Kathleen G. Beavis, MD
Medical Director, Microbiology Laboratory

DATE: January 8, 2018

RE: Optimization of Laboratory Testing for Diarrhea in Inpatients

As part of continuing efforts to improve our patient care and minimize unnecessary testing, we are implementing changes to inpatient orders for the GI panel PCR and *Clostridium difficile* PCR on January 10, 2018. These changes have been developed in consultation with our colleagues in GI and Infectious Diseases.

GI panel order changes

For inpatients, the GI panel can be ordered in the first 48 hours of a patient's admission. If the GI panel is ordered after the first 48 hours of admission, there will be an EPIC popup screen directing the provider to call the Microbiology Laboratory at 773-702-6133 to request an exception if the provider believes the test is truly needed. This is similar to Microbiology's previous policy of restricting stool culture to the first few days of admission, prior to the introduction of the GI panel. The GI panel will continue to be available in the outpatient setting.

Infection Control and Microbiology decided to make this change due to inappropriate ordering of the test (e.g., ordering the GI Panel instead of the *C. difficile* PCR test) and the lack of clinically relevant results obtained after the first days of hospitalization. A review of all positive GI panels ordered after 48 hours, showed that fewer than 1% had a clinically relevant positive

result.

***C. difficile* PCR order changes**

When an inpatient tests or screens positive for *C. difficile*, providers can no longer order subsequent *C. difficile* testing because inpatients with a positive *C. difficile* result will likely be colonized for the remainder of the admission. Repeat testing will not add more information. Instead, providers will receive an EPIC message encouraging them to decide whether or not to treat for *C. difficile* based on the patient's symptoms and clinical suspicion for *C. difficile* infection..

Please direct any questions to Associate Hospital Epidemiologist, Jessica Ridgway, MD (jessica.ridgway@uchospitals.edu) or the Medical Director of the Microbiology Laboratory, Kathleen G. Beavis, MD (kbeavis@bsd.uchicago.edu). We welcome your suggestions for continued optimization of diagnostic laboratory testing.