



MEMORANDUM # 127

TO: UNC Hospitals Attending Physicians, Housestaff, Nursing Coordinators,
Department Heads and Supervisors

FROM: *ms* Peter H. Gilligan, PhD, Director, Clinical Microbiology/Immunology Laboratory
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DATE: April 29, 2008

SUBJECT: **Seasonal Suspension of Influenza Antigen Testing (Rapid Influenza Test)**

The Clinical Microbiology Laboratory annually suspends Influenza antigen testing (Influenza A/B Rapid Ag) during the warmer months when the incidence of influenza in the population is low. **The Laboratory has ceased offering this test**, and will recommence testing in the fall (usually around October).

Based on reports from the North Carolina Division of Public Health, State Epidemiologist Section, the incidence of influenza-like illness in the population is approaching zero percent (as of April, 2008). Due to this low incidence and the specificity of the test, the Positive Predictive Value of the test (PPV – the likelihood that a positive result represents a true positive) is extremely low; under current conditions, any positive result is considerably more likely to be false than true. Given the relatively low sensitivity of the test under any conditions (~70% in adults), any result, positive or negative, is of minimal clinical value at this time.

If you are concerned that your patient may have influenza, we recommend Influenza Virus PCR, which has a significantly higher sensitivity and specificity.

If you have any questions, please contact the Clinical Microbiology Laboratory at 966-4053.