



**MEMORANDUM #187**

**TO:** UNCHCS Attending Physicians and Faculty Practice Physicians, Housestaff, Clinical Nurse Coordinators, Department Heads and Supervisors

**FROM:** *MBM* Melissa B. Miller, PhD, Director, Clinical Microbiology Laboratory  
*HWC* Herbert C. Whinna, MD, PhD, Director, McLendon Clinical Laboratories

**SUBJECT:** **Specimen Rejection Policy Update for Respiratory Mycobacterial Cultures**

**DATE:** January 14, 2020

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Effective February 1, 2020, the Clinical Microbiology Laboratory will begin **rejecting respiratory specimens submitted for mycobacterial culture (culture, AFB; LAB877) if they are < 3 mL**. The ideal collection volume is 5 -10 mL. This change is supported by numerous guidelines and publications indicating that culture yield for mycobacteria from respiratory specimens is best when 5 - 10 mL are collected, but declines precipitously when < 3 mL are collected. Previously, respiratory specimens < 1 mL were rejected.

This policy change does not affect deep pharyngeal swabs submitted from patients with cystic fibrosis or bronchoscopy specimens.

Questions can be directed to the Microbiology Lab 984-974-1805 or Dr. Melissa Miller at [Melissa.Miller@unchealth.unc.edu](mailto:Melissa.Miller@unchealth.unc.edu)

**Resources:**

- Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute. 2018. Laboratory Detection and Identification of Mycobacteria. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. CLSI guideline M48. Wayne, PA.
- Forbes et al. 2018. Practice guidelines for clinical microbiology laboratories: mycobacteria. Clin Microbiol Rev. 31:e00038-17; 30
- Association for Public Health Laboratories (APHL). 2019. [https://www.aphl.org/lab\\_assessment\\_2019](https://www.aphl.org/lab_assessment_2019)
- APHL. 2018. [https://www.aphl.org/submission\\_guidelines\\_2018](https://www.aphl.org/submission_guidelines_2018)
- Warren et al. 2000. Am J Respir Crit Care Med. 161: 1559-62.