

Guidelines for LRN Sentinel Laboratories

INTRODUCTION

Clinic- and hospital-based laboratories are on the front line of response in an unannounced bioterrorism event. These sentinel laboratories, will be the first to receive specimens or isolate organisms from such an event and must have the capability to either rule out suspect isolates or refer the isolate for confirmation to an appropriate Laboratory Response Network (LRN) Reference laboratory. The Minnesota Department of Health Public Health Laboratory (MN-PHL) has prepared this manual as a guide to the responsibilities and practices appropriate for LRN Sentinel laboratories. A majority of this guide directly references laboratory guidelines established through the collaboration of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Association for Public Health Laboratories (APHL). It contains a summary of specimen requirements, rule-out criteria, flowcharts, technical references and notification steps. In addition, MN-PHL has included a safety guideline specific for bioterrorism agents and a guideline for packaging and shipping biomedical materials.

USING THIS GUIDE

This manual is an update to the LRN Level A Bioterrorism Laboratory Protocol 3-ring binder that your laboratory received as a part of the Level A wet workshop held at MN-PHL in 2003-2004. The old protocol binder contains obsolete phone numbers for MN-PHL, but should be kept in your laboratory because it contains useful information and excellent pictures. LRN has stipulated that the ASM guidelines are the approved protocols for what are now called LRN Advanced Clinical Sentinel laboratories (see definitions in this section). The last tab of this manual provides you with a template for a “Clinical Laboratory Bioterrorism Readiness Plan” that can be personalized for your laboratory setting. A link to the ASM electronic version of the document can be found on the Minnesota Laboratory System (MLS) website: www.health.state.mn.us/mls under ‘Laboratory Emergency Preparedness’.

FLOWCHARTS

A MN-PHL-specific organism flowchart has been added to the beginning of most of the protocols as a quick reference on how each organism rule-out should be approached in your laboratory. The MN-PHL contact information is included in each flowchart for those situations where a potential bioterrorism agent cannot be ruled out and must be referred.

FUTURE UPDATES

The protocols in this manual as well as future updates and additions will be available on the Minnesota Laboratory System (MLS) website: www.health.state.mn.us/mls.

