



MLS: Laboratory Update

MDH Requests Assistance with Ongoing Anthrax Investigation

August 30, 2011

Purpose of this Message:

To ask for your assistance in the ongoing investigation of a natural case of inhalation anthrax identified in Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is asking for assurance that all suspect *Bacillus* sp. isolated in your laboratory from June 1, 2011 through the present time, was ruled-out or referred for *Bacillus anthracis* using the LRN Sentinel Laboratory Guidelines, as per standard practice.

Background Information

MDH has been working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the State Public Health Agencies in North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana and Florida to investigate a case of inhalation anthrax. The individual, who resides in Florida, was hospitalized in Minnesota in early August with pneumonia, was determined to have inhalation anthrax and is now recovering. He had traveled through western states, including North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota and had exposure to soil and animal products; all evidence indicates that this case was the result of natural exposure and not a criminal or terrorist act.

The isolate was first recognized by an LRN Sentinel Laboratory in Minnesota which used the testing algorithm in the ASM Guidelines for LRN Advanced Sentinel Laboratories to quickly refer the isolate to the MDH Public Health Laboratory (MDH-PHL). Subsequent analysis at MDH-PHL confirmed the identification of *Bacillus anthracis*. Because this is an isolated case and an unusual occurrence, we are reaching out to all LRN Sentinel laboratories to ensure that all possible *Bacillus* sp., both human and animal sources, have been vetted through the LRN algorithm for *B. anthracis*.

Sentinel Protocols for Ruling-Out Potential *B. anthracis* Isolates

To be sure that there have been no other human or animal cases of anthrax that could have been missed in the states where the case has travelled, we are asking that all laboratories assure that any *Bacillus* sp. isolated in your laboratories from June 1, 2011 through the present time, was ruled-out for *Bacillus anthracis* using the ASM LRN Sentinel Laboratory Guidelines.

As LRN Sentinel Level laboratories, you are aware that the algorithm for *Bacillus anthracis* includes: a large Gram-positive rod that is non-hemolytic, non-motile and catalase positive. Please call MDH-PHL at 651-201-5073 (week day) or 651-201-5414 (after hours/weekends), if you have had any suspect isolate that has not yet been referred from June 1, 2011 to present, even if the isolate is no longer available.

The ASM Guidelines for LRN Advanced Sentinel Laboratories can be accessed through the MLS website at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/phl/labep/binder3.html>.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Maureen Sullivan
Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit Supervisor
Minnesota Department of Health
Public Health Laboratory – EPR Unit
(651)201-5582

Maureen.sullivan@state.mn.us

Paula M. (Snippes) Vagnone, MT (ASCP)
Microbiology Supervisor
Program Advisor, Minnesota Laboratory System
Public Health Laboratory, Minnesota Department of Health
Phone: 651-201-5581
paula.snippes@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us/mls

This is an update from the Minnesota Department of Health – Public Health Laboratory (MDH-PHL) and the Minnesota Laboratory System (MLS). This message is being sent to MLS laboratory contacts serving Minnesota residents. You are not required to reply to this message.

****Please forward this to all appropriate personnel within your institution and Health System****

The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties. It is for official use only. Do not distribute beyond the intended recipient groups as described in this message.