

Date:	October 19, 2020
To:	Northern Health Clinicians and Patient Care Areas
From:	Dr. Randall Dumont, Microbiology Director, UHNBC Dr. Kamran Azar, Laboratory Director NE & NW Lisette Vienneau, Regional Director Diagnostic Services
Re:	Respiratory Testing Addition: BioFire® Array

Northern Health (NH) Laboratory Services has validated an additional PCR platform to augment in-house respiratory testing. BioFire® technology has been implemented at Fort St. John Hospital (FSJH), Mills Memorial Hospital (MMH), and UHNBC and will increase NH testing capacity by approximately 48%. These three sites have a combined ability to perform approximately 140 tests daily.

BioFire® performs multiplex PCR assays which detects 21 viral and bacterial pathogens and results in lower turn-around-times than the traditional GeneXpert® platform.

Nasopharyngeal swabs are the sample type for this assay; hence, **YOCON** and **Copan** viral swabs and **Starplex** multirans swabs are the only acceptable specimen. Please remove current stocks of APTIMA swabs as soon as possible. Incorrect swab types will delay test results as recollection or redirected testing will be required.

Pediatric Outpatients and COVID patients categorized as **HOSP** or **LTC** will be tested by BioFire® assay at the three Northern Health hub sites. Initially, results will be reported only for COVID-19, influenza A, influenza B, and RSV. When the platform is fully implemented, the entire panel of respiratory pathogens will be reported, which will provide a more comprehensive assessment and may help to clarify the etiology for the patient's clinical presentation. It is not possible to result only single pathogens, so more respiratory pathogens will be reported than originally requested. Additional respiratory organisms and viruses will be added when testing is available.

Testing is performed by laboratory microbiology departments during **routine** operational hours; refer to your local testing site for details. Current provincial recommendations state that requests for STAT COVID-19 testing are not indicated as patient management is not dependent on a positive or negative result. If there are exceptional circumstances, requests for a STAT COVID-19 test can be considered in consultation with a Pathologist.

For further information or questions, please contact Lisette Vienneau, Regional Director of Diagnostic Services at Lisette.vienneau@northernhealth.ca