

**TO:** Clients of URMCLabs

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**RE:** Qualitative PCR for Varicella-Zoster Virus In-House

**DATE:** 7/2/2012

On July 9, 2012, the URMCL Clinical Virology Lab will begin in-house polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing of skin site specimens collected in viral transport medium for Varicella-Zoster Virus (VZV). The real-time PCR assay is in-house developed and NYS Dept. of Health approved. It uses the Focus Diagnostics PCR reagents and the 3M Integrated Cyclor for amplification.

The PCR will replace virus culture that requires fourteen days of incubation and has significant sensitivity limitations. PCR is at least twice as sensitive as culture with a limit of detection of 300 DNA copies/ ml. Culture for HSV will be performed on the same samples with a four-day incubation time. Most positive HSV cultures are reported within the first 48 hrs of incubation. Culture and PCR results will be reported independently. VZV PCR testing will be routinely performed on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; by special request, results can be made available within one day. Specimens other than skin sites (i.e. CSF, eye) will continue to be sent to our reference lab with a one-day turn-around time. Assistance with collection of specimens at bedside and same-day fluorescent staining will be discontinued after July 27, 2012.

For questions or additional information, please contact the Virology Lab supervisor, Cindy Mellen.  
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