pathlab



December 2015

Changes to Mantoux and Quantiferon Gold Testing

Mantoux Testing

From 4th January 2016, Mantoux testing ordered through Pathlab Waikato will only be performed at the Anglesea Clinic Building in Hamilton.

The increasing usage of Interferon Gamma Release Assays (IGRAs) such as Quantiferon Gold has resulted in a consequent decline in the number of Mantoux tests being performed. The administration and reading of Mantoux tests requires a considerable amount of training and experience. Due to the decrease in test numbers, a lot of staff members now perform less than the recommended numbers of Mantoux tests that are required to retain optimal competency.

This issue was raised by our laboratory accreditation body, IANZ. In response to this, and after extensive discussions with the DHB, we have decided to restrict Mantoux testing to one collection centre only.

In the vast majority of clinical scenarios, IGRAs such as Quantiferon Gold are now preferred to Mantoux testing. The (blood) test is easier to perform and interpret, has better negative predictive value, and is not affected by BCG vaccination.

In exceptional circumstances, Mantoux testing may still be preferred to IGRAs. Such cases include the diagnosis of latent TB infection in under 5 yr olds for whom the data on IGRAs is still sub-optimal. Mantoux testing may also be used on occasion to clarify an equivocal Quantiferon Gold assay, usually after discussion with a specialist.

CLINICAL UPDATE

Quantiferon Gold Testing

From 4th January 2016, pre-approval will be required for Quantiferon Gold testing when performed for diagnostic reasons in the community setting. This pre-approval should be sought by telephoning the Pathlab clinical microbiologist on-call.

The Quantiferon Gold (QFG) blood test is an Interferon Gamma Release Assay (IGRA) and it measures the amount of interferon released by T cells sensitised by specific TB antigens.

Here are the main indications for QFG testing in the community setting. The testing protocols have been agreed after discussions between Pathlab and the Waikato DHB:

- **Pre-employment screening for latent TB infection**. This is the most widely used and well established indication for the Quantiferon Gold test. (patient paid, not DHB funded, pre-approval not required)
- **When travelling to a country where endemic rates of TB are high**. Particularly if working in a healthcare setting. Consultation with a travel doctor is recommended. (patient paid, not DHB funded, pre-approval not required)
- **When there is a clinical suspicion of extra-respiratory TB**. Should usually only be ordered for this indication after discussion with an appropriate specialist. This indication is DHB funded on the condition that pre-approval has been sought from the clinical microbiologist.
- **When there is a strong clinical suspicion of respiratory TB but sputum culture is negative.** Consultation with a specialist is recommended. This indication is DHB funded on the condition that pre-approval has been sought from the clinical microbiologist.
- **Contact tracing:** performed by population health (pre-approval not required).

Where pre-approval is required, please document evidence of this having been done on the request form. Otherwise the request is likely to be rejected.

Note that respiratory, rheumatology, and infectious diseases specialists are able to request Quantiferon Gold testing in the Waikato outpatient clinic setting without prior approval.

Quantiferon Gold testing is **not indicated** as a first line screen for the exclusion of respiratory TB, nor is the test indicated in the initial investigation of PUOs or night sweats.
Please do not hesitate to contact one of us if there are any questions pertaining to these changes.

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CLINICAL UPDATE