



Protecting, Maintaining and Improving the Health of All Minnesotans

Notification Letter to Minnesota Hospital and Reference Laboratories Regarding Reporting of Pulmonary Nontuberculous Mycobacteria (NTM)

Dear Reference or Hospital Microbiology Laboratorian:

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will be expanding surveillance to include reporting of pulmonary nontuberculous mycobacteria (NTM) on October 1, 2019, in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. MDH is conducting this surveillance pursuant to Minnesota Rules 4605.7000 to 4605.7900. Specifically, Minnesota Rules, 4605.7046 (sentinel surveillance), permits the Commissioner of Health to require sentinel surveillance of infectious diseases and syndromes if certain criteria are met. Documentation on the approved proposal for this change as well as details on NTM reporting are available at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/ntm>.

Nontuberculous mycobacteria (NTM) are opportunistic acid-fast bacteria that are widespread and naturally occurring in the environment, especially in soil and water. The prevalence of human disease caused by pulmonary NTM and deaths associated with NTM have increased over the last two decades. The reason for this is unknown. NTM are opportunistic pathogens that have a strong affinity for infecting patients in health care settings. The potable water systems that supply many US health care facilities are excellent reservoirs for NTM. In both hospitals and clinics, NTM can find opportunities to infect patients due to breaches in patient's natural defenses or the presence of medical devices. In addition to individual infections caused by NTM, there have been outbreaks involving a variety of water exposures and medical devices. There has also been transmission of NTM among patients with cystic fibrosis. Sentinel surveillance of pulmonary NTM is critical to understanding the epidemiology of pulmonary NTM in Minnesota so that appropriate prevention and control measures can be designed and implemented.

Reporting Requirements:

- **What:** MDH is requiring laboratories to report cases of pulmonary nontuberculous mycobacteria (NTM) in Hennepin and Ramsey county residents. Pulmonary NTM infections occur in the lungs. Pulmonary specimens include sputum samples, tracheal secretions, lung biopsies, and bronchoalveolar lavage.
- **When:** Similar to other reportable communicable diseases, you must report to MDH within one working day after the test result is finalized.
- **How:** Clinical and reference laboratories that have the capability to identify pulmonary NTM will need to report all cases of pulmonary NTM among Hennepin and Ramsey county residents using a designated case report form. Clinical and reference laboratories that have the capability to identify pulmonary NTM will also need to send weekly line lists of identified patients who are residents of Hennepin and Ramsey counties to MDH.

Your participation in this surveillance program is greatly appreciated. Thank you for all you do to protect the health and safety of Minnesotans.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Laura Tourdot (laura.tourdot@state.mn.us) at 651-201-4881 or Paula Snippes Vagnone (paula.snippes@state.mn.us) at 651-201-5581.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jan K. Malcolm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jan K. Malcolm
Commissioner
P.O. Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975