

# COVID-19 UPDATE

## Keeping You Safe



Thunder Bay Regional  
Health Sciences  
Centre

To: All Staff, Professional Staff, Learners and Volunteers

From: Jennifer Wintermans, EVP, Communications & Corporate Relations, COVID-19 Lead

Date: January 7, 2022

RE: **Clarification of Rapid Testing VS In-House Priority Testing**

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Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our Hospital has coordinated priority testing for all staff after COVID-19 exposure, and or symptoms in order to receive timely results. Currently the COVID-19 Assessment Centre has been a site for both staff and public to book appointments and receive COVID-19 testing.

When staff members attend appointments through this centre, they are booked as priority in-house testing, in order to receive results in efficient turnaround time, as this could impact our Hospital operations. The term "rapid testing" has been often misused when addressing priority testing. To ensure clear communication and understanding, below are clear definitions of the tests.

Each method detects a different part of the virus, and how it works influences the test's speed and relative accuracy. There are two major types of tests used to diagnose infection with SARS-CoV-2:

- 1. Molecular testing, better known as PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) "In-House Priority Testing"** – *TBRHSC Laboratory Services department has adopted and is licensed to perform:* involves the amplification of a virus's genetic material (RNA/DNA) so that even a small amount of the coronavirus genes in a patient's sample can be detected. Testing and handling by Medical Laboratory Professionals is extremely complex as is the instrumentation required for analysis. PCR testing is very accurate and considered the gold standard. TAT is not Rapid or Quick; rather performing PCR testing 'in-house' in our Microbiology Lab means that results are reported quicker than if we had to dispatch the specimen the Public Health Lab as this dispatch and transportation takes time and also means that specimens go into queue with all other regional specimens being sent to the PHL.
- 2. RAT = Rapid Antigen Testing** – *TBRHSC Laboratory Services department has not adopted and is not licensed to perform:* is much quicker but less accurate than PCR. Positive results can be believed and not confirmed by PCR, but a negative test is not as reliable; therefore, repeat RAT testing is recommended. This test utilizes a lateral flow kit that has antibodies specific to SARS-CoV-2 built into it (applied to a test line) which bind coronavirus antigen, if present (causing a line to become visible indicating a positive result). These tests can be self-administered and do not require an analyzer/equipment platform nor a licensed Medical Laboratory Professional to interpret and report results.

If any additional information is needed, please contact Georgia Carr, Manager, Laboratory Services at [carrg@tbh.net](mailto:carrg@tbh.net).