



March 10, 2020

Dear OSPHL Tuberculosis Testing Clients,

As of January 1, 2020, the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory (OSPHL) discontinued routine GeneXpert testing on smear negative sputum specimens. OSPHL will continue to perform GeneXpert on smear negative sputum upon clinician request\* after approval by The State of Oregon TB Program. The need to obtain approval for this testing applies to all specimens submitted as of today.

The State of Oregon TB Program will determine if GeneXpert should be run on smear negative sputum based upon the following criteria:

- The patient lives in or will return to work in a jail, homeless shelter, nursing home or other congregate setting.
- The patient lives with children < 4 years old or an adult that is significantly immunocompromised.
- The patient is seriously ill (has cavitary chest x-ray or hospitalized)
- The patient has suspected drug resistance (has taken TB drugs in the past)
- The patient is < 10 years old
- The patient is >70 years old

**To request a GeneXpert:**

1. Submit a request to Heidi Behm ([heidi.behm@dhsosha.state.or.us](mailto:heidi.behm@dhsosha.state.or.us)) outlining the justification for testing. Heidi will respond with an approval or disapproval within 24 hours and email the lab, cc'ing you. LPHAs should send sputum to OSPHL upon collection. Do NOT wait for approval to send sputum.
2. Submit a written or electronic order to the laboratory.
  - If you order tests using your electronic health record, the order choice will be made available to order electronically.
  - If you order tests using paper Test Request Forms, please select "GeneXpert on smear-negative sputum. TB program approval required."

Please note: Requests can be made after specimens have been received, but approval must be obtained prior to GeneXpert testing.

## Why this change?

GeneXpert's sensitivity is reduced for AFB smear-negative specimens. The decision to discontinue this test on AFB-negative sputa was made after close consultation with the OHA TB program and CDC and was supported by an analysis of the past five years of Oregon tuberculosis testing data.

At OSPHL, smear-negative specimens are cultured in solid and liquid media. Following culture, isolates are tested by real-time PCR to detect *M. tuberculosis* and *M. avium* DNA. This method for testing of smear-negative sputa provides more sensitive results than GeneXpert and is in line with CDC recommendations and the testing algorithms of other public health laboratories.

**A conference call will be held March 18, 9:30 a.m.- 10:00 a.m.** to answer questions and discuss the change. **Call in number 1-888-278-0296 participant code 136733.**

To view the OSPHL's original notice regarding this change, distributed on December 19, 2019, please visit [www.bitly.com/osppl-news](http://www.bitly.com/osppl-news).

For questions about authorization process contact Heidi Behm at [heidi.behm@dhsosha.state.or.us](mailto:heidi.behm@dhsosha.state.or.us) or 971-673-0169. For questions about lab testing contact Caitlin Miranda at 503-693-4100

Sincerely,

Heidi Behm, RN, MPH  
TB Controller/TB Nurse Consultant  
Oregon Health Authority