January 30, 2013

To: Chiefs of Service, Attending Physicians, Housestaff, Nurses and Other Concerned Personnel

From: Barbara Haller, MD, PhD  
Division Chief, Microbiology

Lisa Winston, MD  
Hospital Epidemiologist, SFGH  
Co-Chair, Infection Control Committee

Eberhard Fiebig, MD  
Director, Clinical Laboratory

Henry (Chip) Chambers, MD  
Chief, Infectious Diseases, SFGH  
Co-Chair, Infection Control Committee

Re: Recommendations for Respiratory Virus Testing

Currently, the SFGH Clinical Laboratory is unable to perform rapid PCR testing for influenza viruses because test kits are not available from the manufacturer. Due to the tremendous demand nationwide for PCR test kits, it is unclear when in-house rapid PCR testing for influenza will resume. In response to the test kit shortage, please note the following:

1. **Beginning January 30, 2013**, when viral culture is ordered on nasopharyngeal swabs, nasopharyngeal aspirate/wash, or tracheal aspirate, specimens will be sent out for a **Rapid Respiratory Viral Culture**, which will detect influenza A, influenza B, RSV, parainfluenza viruses, and adenovirus.

2. **For Inpatients**: The recommended test is the **Rapid Respiratory Viral Culture** (check a routine viral culture box on the Microbiology requisition). Results should be available from our reference laboratory 2-5 days after specimen collection.

3. **For Outpatients**: Influenza testing is not routinely recommended, since rapid testing at SFGH is currently not available at SFGH Clinical Laboratory. Empirical antiviral therapy should be considered for patients with influenza-like illness who are at high risk for complications.

4. For bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL) specimens, routine respiratory viral culture will be sent. This viral culture will also detect CMV, enterovirus, herpes simplex virus, and varicella-zoster virus. Results should be available from the reference laboratory in 2-14 days.

For questions or concerns, contact Barbara Haller, MD, PhD (415-807-6388), Marguerite Roemer (206-3597), Chip Chambers, MD (443-8978), or Lisa Winston, MD (443-0719).