



## Primary Care Laboratory Interface Group (PLIG)

May 2018

Dear Colleague

### **Changes to immunology & allergy testing in NHS Lothian**

We are writing to make you aware of some recent changes that have been made to try and ensure appropriate Immunology laboratory testing within NHS Lothian. These changes have been discussed and agreed at the Primary Care Laboratory Interface Group (PLIG). The aim of these changes is to assist GPs with ordering of tests that are often complex and may require specialist interpretation.

#### 1) Antinuclear Antibody Testing / Connective Tissue Disease Screen:

The ANA test is frequently requested, and often unexpected low/ borderline positive results are seen, which can be challenging to interpret, especially when the clinical scenario is unclear.

Please ensure that any requests for ANA have relevant clinical details provided. Any requests where this is not the case will not be tested. These samples will routinely be stored in the lab, and requesting doctors are able to phone the laboratory to discuss testing wherever needed. Please see attached a new guide regarding Connective Tissue Diseases and a 'clinical screen' for these groups of disorders has been detailed in the guideline, as well as indications for ANA testing. This document will shortly be available on RefHelp.

#### 2) Allergy testing (Specific IgE tests – formerly RAST)

There are currently no clear 'diagnostic' blood tests available for Allergy. These tests can provide useful information in some clinical scenarios, but in others, they may provide clinically conflicting information that can in some patients cause harm, and sometimes unnecessary dietary restriction. Specific IgE tests are not indicated in non-type 1 hypersensitivity clinical syndromes (e.g food intolerances, eczema, migraines).

Specific IgE test requests that do not provide appropriate clinical details will not be tested. For further information please see attached a new guide on allergy test requesting. This document will shortly be available on RefHelp.

In terms of laboratory testing, we will not process any send-away allergen specific IgE tests from Primary Care (i.e those more rare food specific IgE tests that we do

not do process locally). We will also not process any drug specific IgEs from Primary Care. The reason for this is that a negative food or drug specific IgE test **does not** exclude allergy and many Allergy specialists use these blood tests to guide further intradermal skin testing / challenge testing for further evaluating patients with these suspected allergies.

3) Anti-neuronal antibody testing / Type 1 Diabetes Antibodies testing

Anti-neuronal antibody tests are useful in certain rare clinical situations where particular neurological symptoms are seen often in conjunction with psychological disturbances. If an autoimmune basis for this is diagnosed (e.g autoimmune limbic encephalitis), then these patients may benefit from potent immune suppression therapies. Requests for all these tests need to be made along with a clear clinical narrative from the appropriate specialists, and we, in the laboratory, are more than happy to be contacted to discuss individual cases further where needed.

In line with this, we will not be accepting requests for testing neuronal antibodies (such as Yo/ Hu/ Ri/ NMDA R / VGKC antibodies/ ACH R/ Ganglioside antibodies) from Primary Care. These are specialist service associated tests and, with agreement from the PLIG GP subcommittee representatives, we feel that these requests should only come from secondary care (likely to mainly be Neurology).

Similarly, the Diabetes Type 1 associated antibodies, GAD/ IA2 antibodies, will not be processed from Primary Care requests – again, this test should only really come from secondary care (mainly Endocrinologists).

As always – for exceptional cases / circumstances – we (Senior BMS staff in Immunology and I) are more than happy to discuss individual cases and organise testing for patients wherever needed.

Please contact [chaurchopra@nhs.net](mailto:chaurchopra@nhs.net) if you have any queries concerning the contents of this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Charu Chopra  
Consultant Immunologist