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CHL Testing Capabilities H7N9 and Coronavirus

Sender: CHL Virology
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The below is a memo from Lance Jennings regarding the testing capabilities of the Canterbury Health Laboratories Virology Laboratory.

If you have any queries regarding this memo please direct them to Lance Jennings, his contact information is outlined below.

Dear All,

There is current media attention on a novel avian virus, the H7N9 virus which has infected 14 humans and caused 5 deaths in Eastern China. A novel coronavirus is also causing concern in the Mediterranean and Europe. Limited human to human transmission has been demonstrated with the coronavirus but not (so far) with the H7N9 virus. There is global concern at present, which could increase should H7 human to human transmission be demonstrated.

Regardless, there will be travellers returning to New Zealand and Christchurch whom will most likely be seen in the community or ED in the first instance and require diagnostic testing.

CHL Virology current capability & planning:

1. **Influenza A virus detection (Matrix gene):** CHL have several sets of PCR primers and probes, including routine FastTrack respiratory virus assay which should detect all influenza A viruses (including any novel virus). CHL are currently verifying the match of these sequences.
2. **H7N9 confirmation:** CHL are currently able to confirm a novel virus by exclusion of influenza A H1N1pdm and H3N2 subtypes by PCR and are verifying the match of our H7 subtyping primers.
3. **Novel coronavirus:** primers are available.
4. **QAP:** CHL have asked to join the Australian QAP for coronaviruses and influenza H7N9 and receive control nucleic acid materials.
5. **PC3 facilities:** CHL are planning to train staff to carry out respiratory sample preparation, cell culture and nucleic acid extraction in the PC3 lab. To ensure ongoing PC3 capability, it is planned to move the WHO/NML measles/rubella culture work to be routinely carried out in the PC3 lab.
6. **Linkages:** CHL are involved in the Australian PHLN email discussions, and have communicated with the Ministry of Health (Mark Jacobs) and ESR (Sue Huang)

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