



Wyoming's Lab Loop

A Publication of the Wyoming Public Health Laboratory Volume 2 Issue 1 Winter, 2005

Message from WPHL

As the year ends we look at the progress we have made, success we have had and what changes we need to make for the future. The Bioterrorism Laboratory Program has successfully implemented projects that have provided community laboratories with unique training opportunities and grant funding to increase laboratory capacity through out the state. These programs will continue through the new year, others, such as the Antimicrobial Resistance Testing activities at WPHL will change in the coming months as discussed below.

Rich Harris, Ph.D.

Antimicrobial Resistance: WPHL Program

Recently WPHL with Infectious Disease Epidemiology evaluated current bacteriology testing activities associated with Antimicrobial Resistance.

In the past clinical laboratories have been required under the Reportable Disease Requirements to forward isolates of resistant organisms of public health interest for collection of state-wide antimicrobial susceptibility data. These organisms have included Methicillin-resistant and Vancomycin-intermediate or resistant

Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA, VRSA, VISA), Drug-Resistant *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (DRSP), and Vancomycin-resistant Enterococci (VRE).

After evaluating the past



John working with AMR isolates in the safety cabinet

two years of testing data on these isolates the following changes in the

submission policy for these isolates is in effect as of January 1, 2005.

MRSA, VISA, VRSA

- 1) Isolates associated with the evaluation of suspect clusters/outbreaks following consultation with the state epidemiologist or state health officer.
- 2) All suspected VISA or VRSA isolates and confirmation testing on isolates with MICs indicating **decreased** Vancomycin susceptibility or in the event of treatment failure with Vancomycin.

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- 3) MRSA confirmation testing on selected isolates with questionable MICs.

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BT Update: Year 2 Community Lab Grant Project

We are pleased to report the Year Two Bioterrorism Community Laboratory Capacity Building Grant Project, made possible by funding from the 2004-2005 CDC Bioterrorism Preparedness Grant and the 2004-2005 Health Resources and Services Administration Grant (HRSA). The Year Two Grant Project will

provide \$430,000 in grants to community laboratories throughout Wyoming and is designed to help labs build capacity and capability to safely recognize, identify and respond to a natural disease outbreak or an unexpected BT event.

A primary goal of this grant year is to encour-

age creative use of funds to either recruit or retain highly skilled microbiologists in community laboratory facilities. An additional primary goal of this grant year is to encourage use of funding for development of involvement of skilled microbiologist in community

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Group shot of the Demystifying the Agents of Bioterrorism Wet Lab Workshop participants. For details & more great pictures see page 3.

Year Two BT Community Lab Grant Project (cont'd)

preparedness activities. These new goals are in addition to the original focus areas of safety, training & education, and laboratory equipment enhancement.

Due to federal requirements on this year's funding from CDC that all contracts end by Aug. 30, 2005, stricter deadlines for submission of applications and contract finalization are required. **Applications received late may not be funded and Contracts not returned on time will be considered void.** (See *the list of Deadlines at the end of the article for more informa-*

tion)

Remember, all clinical laboratories in the state that perform the basic microbiological testing services associated with sentinel laboratory activities within the Laboratory Response Network (LRN) are eligible for a grant through this project. This is a wonderful opportunity to fund capacity building activities at a facility!

Need more information? Contact Angie at 307-777-7431.

DEADLINES

Application

Postmark by Dec 20, 2004

Applications Scored

Jan 14, 2005

Contract Amendments mailed

Feb. 10, 2005

Contract Signed & Returned

2 weeks after received

Funds Received by Facilities

April 15, 2005

Progress Reports Due

May 31 & August 30, 2005

Chemical Terrorism: What's New? *The Impact for Wyoming Clinical Labs*

The Bioterrorism Laboratory Program is excited to welcome Kathleen McKinna who recently joined the team as the Chemical Terrorism Laboratory Coordinator. Kathleen previously worked in WPHL's Chemical Testing Laboratory and brings to the program expertise and knowledge about the specialized chemical testing instrumentation used for detection of metabolites in human specimens.

Initially, Kathleen will focus on the development & implementation of a state-wide Chemical Terrorism (CT) Level 1 Laboratory program. Central to that goal will be the coordination of a rapid and effective laboratory response to both chemical hazards and chemical terrorism. This will be accomplished through establishment of cooperative networks plus training and education designed to ensure statewide competency in the collection, packaging and shipment of clinical specimens for transport to laboratories capable of testing and measuring metabolites of chemical threat agents. As a Level 1 CT laboratory WPHL will

not perform testing but instead will refer clinical specimens associated with CT events to Level 2/3 CT lab equipped to perform testing on human specimens.

Because it is vital that local responders have a good knowledge of issues associated with chemical threats and understand the role and response capability of WPHL, first responders in each county will be surveyed initially to assess local levels of CT preparedness. Survey results will be used to develop a plan to provide targeted training in an effort to ensure that all counties are consistently and comparably trained. Training may include workshops similar to those done previously by the BT Lab Program. As training reinforcement, local responders may also participate in "mock events" conducted either regionally, or in each county. Watch for the schedule of CT Training Workshops in future newsletters.

For more information about the new CT Laboratory efforts call or email Kathleen at 307-532-0144 or kmckin2@state.wy.us.

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**Please direct comments to:
WPHL at 307-777-7431
Lab Loop Editor**

AMR: WPHL's Testing Program (cont'd)

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VRE

- 1) Submit only 1 single isolate from a patient from a site of infection. Do not send multiple isolates from the same patient.
- 2) Only clinically significant isolates of VRE will be accepted, no environmental or screening isolates will be accepted.

- 3) Isolates associated with the evaluation of suspect clusters/outbreaks following consultation with the state epidemiologist or state health officer.

Drug-resistant *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (DRSP)

- 1) DRSP (and all other streptococcus isolates) from sterile sites.

- 2) Submit only one single isolate per patient. Do not send multiple isolates from the same patient.

For more information on confirmation antimicrobial resistance testing contact John Harrison in the WPHL bacteriology lab at 307-777-7431.

Demystifying the Agents of Bioterrorism: Wet Workshop Success

Rule Out? Refer? These questions were asked and answered repeatedly throughout the day for participants of the October 2004 *Demystifying the Agents of Bioterrorism: Wet Workshop for Clinical Laboratorians*

Sponsored by WPHL's Bioterrorism Response Laboratory, (WPHL-BRL), The National Laboratory Training Network, and working with community laboratorians, Marty Hinkel (Worland), Gale Stevens (Torrington) and Deborah Pahl (Cheyenne), WPHL-BRL's staff, Angie Van Houten, Sandy Novick and Jody Fleming, provided training in the identification and testing of agents of bioterrorism to clinical laboratorians across the state.



Megan Carson (Laramie), Dixie Kennedy & Tracy Miller (Wheatland) debate whether to Rule Out or Refer an "unknown" bug while other Workshop participants wait to use the microscope

Unique for this educational experience, the workshop provided valuable hands-on training with 'mimic' organisms that look like those bacterial agents associated with bioterrorism. Participants unanimously agreed that this ex-

posure to actively growing organisms in the wet lab was a superior training experience unmatched by



Instructors, Marty Hinkel, Sandy Novick & Jody Fleming discuss a bad bug during the workshop

any textbook or lecture style training and is a must for bench techs who work in microbiology.

During the 6 hours of training participants learned more about the clinical lab's role in the Laboratory Response Network (LRN), the pitfalls of packaging and shipping suspect BT agents, debated case studies of naturally occurring infections with BT agents, and performed and interpreted both rapid & tubed laboratory tests on "unknown" bugs that have colonial and gram stain morphology similar to BT agents.

Working with partners the laboratory sleuths determined if they had enough evidence to *rule-out* a BT agent or needed confirmation testing available by *referring* the bug to



Penny Haney (Riverton) & Nina Williams (Ft. Waskie) check reactions on a test, as Barb Vermedahl (Cheyenne) & Pamela Gundersen (Green River) ponder to Rule Out or Refer!

the WPHL-BRL.

Depending on funding WPHL-BRL may be able to repeat this training experience during 2005, stay tuned to *Wyoming's Lab Loop* for more information.

Thanks to all those who participated in the workshop and many thanks again to Nebraska's Bioterrorism Laboratory Program for providing the template upon which Wyoming's workshop was designed.

A special thanks to Gale, Marty, and Deb for their valuable input and help making the workshop a success. And a resounding **thanks** to Jody for streaking until she dropped



Joann Brown & Beth Schulte (Newcastle) are hard at work evaluating test reactions on an "unknown" bug

(streaking agar plates that is!)

For more information on the content of the workshop, download presentations, worksheets and Rule Out/Refer Flowcharts on the Bioterrorism Response Lab Resources page which is linked to the main BRL page at: <http://wdh.state.wy.us/lab/BTintro.asp>



Wyoming's Lab Loop

Information Available in this Issue:

-  *AMR testing changes in 2005*
-  *Wet Lab — A good time had by all!*
-  *Chemical Terrorism, Impact on Community Labs*
-  *Year Two BT Community Lab Grants, new goals and deadlines*

What's Coming Up?

Event	Location	Date
ASCLS-CO/WySCLS 2005 Spring Meeting	Northglenn, CO	May 4-6, 2005
American Society for Microbiology General Meeting	Atlanta, GA	June 5-9, 2005
ASCLS 2005 National Meeting	Orlando, FL	July 26-30, 2005

Check out the BT Resources page at:
<http://wdh.state.wy.us/lab/BT%20Resources.asp>



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