



## **San Antonio Metropolitan Health District**

July 18, 2017

Dear Colleague:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in collaboration with the Texas Department of State Health Services and San Antonio Metropolitan Health District are studying HIV cases in Texas using molecular fingerprints known as genotypes, to identify clusters of genetically similar HIV strains. Although HIV genotype testing is considered standard of care and recommended for all new diagnoses, it is only performed and reported to the health department for approximately 50% of new diagnoses each year. Currently there are 16 HIV clusters identified in the state, 6 in San Antonio; the largest known as "Cluster 51". The Cluster 51 analysis has identified multiple missed opportunities to test symptomatic and/or high-risk individuals for acute HIV infection in San Antonio and Bexar County.

In response to the Cluster 51 analysis, I call upon healthcare providers to:

- Routinely test everyone ages 13-64 years for HIV at least once in lifetime, in all healthcare settings including emergency departments. When a general consent for medical treatment is signed and verbal consent for HIV testing is documented, a separate consent form for HIV testing is not required (Texas Health and Safety Code Sections 81.105 and 81.106).
- Consider acute HIV in the differential diagnosis of fever, lymphadenopathy and pharyngitis.
- Test for HIV when testing for or treating sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Test all pregnant women at first prenatal visit and in the third trimester.
- Test at least annually all men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs and others at high risk for HIV infection.
- Follow the 2014 CDC testing algorithm for HIV (attached), which includes nucleic acid testing (NAT) when an HIV-1/HIV-2 antibody differentiation assay is nonreactive or indeterminate.
- Offer HIV prophylaxis, known as PrEP, to your HIV-negative, high risk patients.

Here are some HIV facts to consider and share with your patients:

- The rate of HIV infections diagnosed in Bexar County rose to 19.1 cases per 100,000 population in 2015, approximately 12% increase from 2014.
- HIV is manageable with medications.
- Get tested for HIV at least once in your lifetime. Nationally, 1 in 7 people with HIV is unaware of their infection. Free testing is available from multiple organizations, including Metro Health.
- In Bexar County, HIV rates are highest among men who have sex with men and in the African-American community. Among women diagnosed with HIV in 2015, 75% acquired the infection through heterosexual intercourse.
- One-third of new HIV diagnoses in Bexar County are among youths ages 15-24 years.
- A person who is diagnosed with HIV and treated promptly can live nearly as long as someone who does not have HIV.
- Many people with HIV are not receiving the treatment they need. Stigma and discrimination against HIV prevent people from accessing testing, care and support.
- People who are HIV-negative can take a daily pill to prevent HIV. Metro Health offers this medication, as well as assistance in obtaining it free or at a low cost.

Sincerely,

Colleen M Bridger, MPH, PhD  
Director

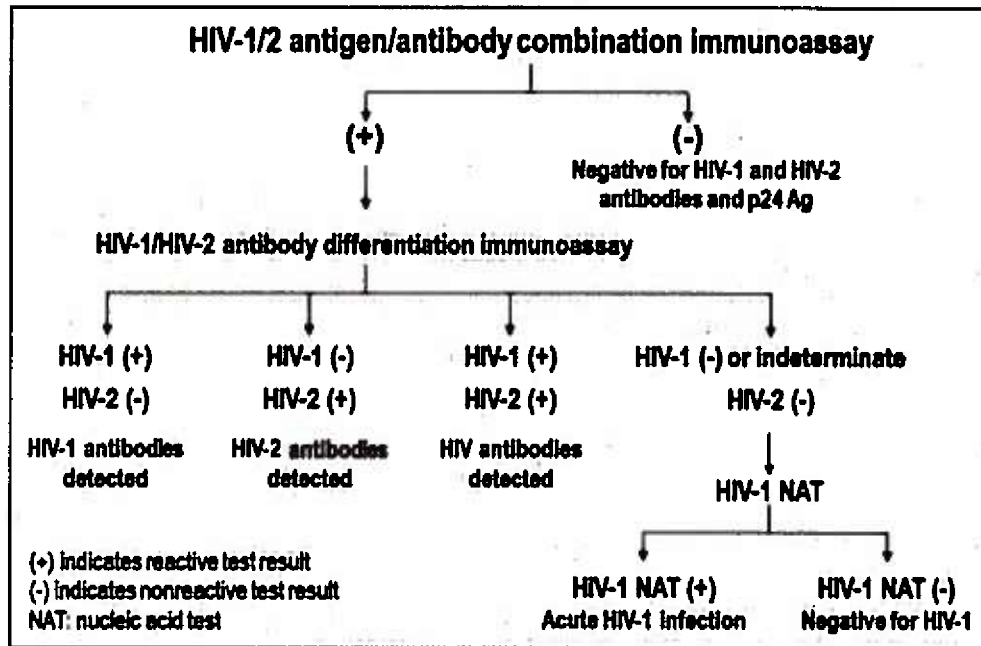
San Antonio Metropolitan Health District

**METROPOLITAN HEALTH DISTRICT**

111 SOLEDAD, STE. 1000 SAN ANTONIO, TX 78205 TEL:210-207-8780

## Attachment

### Recommended Laboratory HIV Testing Algorithm for Serum or Plasma Specimens



Source: [https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/guidelines\\_testing\\_recommendedlabtestingalgorithm.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/guidelines_testing_recommendedlabtestingalgorithm.pdf). Accessed on 7/17/17