

NEWSLETTER ISSUE – 10th November 2020



COVID IgG SEROLOGY

Taranaki Pathology Services has introduced IgG serological testing for COVID-19. Private requests will incur a fee of \$100.25 inc GST.

Antibody testing is most useful to see whether someone has been infected with COVID-19 two weeks to several months previously. It would be most useful for those who think they may have developed COVID-19, but could not get tested at the time.

Serology does not have a useful role for diagnosing acute infection, because it takes up to 14 days to develop antibodies, and IgM antibodies do not appear much sooner than IgG. PCR remains the mainstay of acute diagnosis and contact tracing. It appears that some people, particularly those with mild disease, do not develop antibodies or lose them after several weeks.

We have several methods available which detect antibodies to nucleocapsid (N) protein or spike (S) protein. Because of a small risk of false positive results, any positive result will be confirmed with a second test before issuing positive results. Positive results should be discussed with the medical officer of health.

We do not have enough experience with COVID-19 serology to understand how long antibodies persist and how well they correlate with immunity from reinfection. This is because they are not a direct measure of neutralising antibodies, which means they are not recognised for generating an “immune passport”. On the basis of small studies conducted overseas, it does seem likely that those

with detectable antibodies will be immune, at least for the duration of detectable antibodies, but this is not guaranteed.

COVID IgM SEROLOGY

COVID-19 IgM serology has very recently become an entry requirement into China. Unfortunately there was no notice given to laboratories of this change. We intend to make this test available as soon as we are able.

For patient enquiries regarding entry into China please contact the laboratory manager, Sally Scouller as requirements for pre-departure testing for China are still being discussed by officials of the Chinese and New Zealand governments and are subject to change at the moment.
