October 2, 2017

TO: Acute Care Hospitals

SUBJECT: Testing and treatment for patients hospitalized with suspected influenza

As influenza season approaches, please be aware that rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs) can be falsely negative when influenza is widespread and falsely positive when influenza is less common.\(^1\)\(^2\) Falsely negative RIDT results can result in patients with severe influenza not receiving appropriate treatment.

Therefore, regardless of the results of prior RIDTs, CDPH recommends for hospitalized patients with suspected influenza:

- rRT-PCR diagnostic testing
- Prompt empiric therapy with a neuraminidase inhibitor while awaiting results of rRT-PCR testing.\(^3\)
  
  Antiviral treatment should continue if interim RIDT testing is negative because of the possibility of falsely negative RIDT results.\(^2\) Although antiviral treatment is of the most benefit when started within 48 hours of symptom onset, patients admitted later in illness may still benefit.\(^4\)

Additional testing for severe cases: Specimens from fatal cases or those requiring intensive care should be sent to your local public health laboratory for additional characterization (influenza A sub-typing or influenza B lineage genotyping) if your laboratory does not have this capability.

Reporting: As a reminder, please report all deaths associated with Influenza in persons younger than 65 years of age to your local health departments. ICU admissions associated with influenza are also reportable in certain jurisdictions.

References:
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  