Date July 11, 2018

C. difficile PCR Testing

Mercy Clinical Laboratory offers a highly sensitive PCR test for *C. difficile*. Patients that are colonized and not infected with this organism may produce a positive result. In order to be good stewards of this test, please note the following when ordering testing.

Order *C. difficile* PCR testing if:
- Patient has clinically significant diarrhea (3 or more loose stools per day for the last 24 hours)
- Patient has not been taking laxatives, stool softeners, or Lactulose over the last 24-48 hours
- Order a single stool specimen to be tested for *C. difficile*. Place patient on empiric Contact Precautions while awaiting results.

Do NOT order *C. difficile* testing if:
- Patient does not have clinically significant diarrhea (3 or more loose stools per day for the last 24 hours); rather, observe the patient for 24 hours to assess for persistence of symptoms.
- If patient has been taking laxatives and/or stool softeners, STOP and clarify the need for Lactulose. Gauge clinical response before prior to ordering *C. difficile* testing. The ordering provider should make a clinical judgment on whether *C. difficile* testing should occur.

Please note, orders for *C. difficile* will require answers to questions around diarrhea and laxative status.

Please contact Jill Noble, Specialty Services Manager at 515-247-4038 with any questions.

Thank you for choosing Mercy Clinical Laboratory.