



UNC  
HEALTH CARE

**MEMORANDUM #167**

TO: UNC Hospitals Attending Physicians, Housestaff, Nursing Coordinators,  
Department Heads and Supervisors

FROM: *JS* John Schmitz, Ph.D.  
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DATE: September 1, 2016

**SUBJECT: Ehrlichia IgM testing**

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Effective immediately the Clinical Immunology Laboratory will no longer offer *Ehrlichia chaffeensis* IgM antibody testing. The laboratory will continue to offer the *E. chaffeensis* IgG antibody test. This decision was based upon an analysis of 18 months of testing data that showed that IgM testing did not contribute independent significant information for the laboratory diagnosis of infection. Over this time period only 1 patient demonstrated a positive IgM result in a convalescent sample. The IgG testing of this patient demonstrated seroconversion which is considered the most sensitive approach for the laboratory diagnosis of infection beyond the first week. The laboratory has also encountered difficulty in obtaining IgM positive sera for quality control of reagents.

During the first week of infection, PCR testing of blood is recommended as a diagnostic approach as is the collection of an acute serum sample. This testing can be arranged through the referral testing laboratory (984-974-1414). In addition, a convalescent serum sample should be collected 2 to 3 weeks later to assess seroconversion or a 4-fold increase in antibody titer from the acute sample.

The name of the Ehrlichia test will be changed from Ehrlichia antibody panel to Ehrlichia Antibody, but will still be orderable using LAB794. If *E. chaffeensis* IgM antibody testing is desired, samples can be sent to Mayo Medical Laboratories via the Referral Testing Laboratory by ordering a Referral Lab Test Other, LAB5744.

Please direct questions regarding this change to Dr. Schmitz at 984-974-1452.