

WHO Western Pacific Region

Laboratory testing for swine influenza A H1N1

Draft guidelines

Sample collection

- The normal influenza testing protocol should be followed
- Nasal and/or throat swabs and/or depending on normal practice should be collected. Appropriate person protection should be used by those collecting the specimens.
- Handling, storage and transport of samples should follow guidelines developed for influenza A H5N1

Detection and confirmation

- Given that this is a novel strain of influenza virus, it would be prudent that virus isolation was only attempted in facilities that met BSL-3 or higher levels of containment.
- Clinical samples should be processed in a properly functioning biosafety cabinet by staff wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Current information suggests that rapid tests designed to detect influenza A virus should detect this strain.
- While primers used in PCR assays to detect highly conserved parts of the influenza genome and confirm the presence of influenza A will probably work, primers currently used in PCR diagnostics for subtyping influenza A virus may not detect non-human strains. Information on the sensitivity of current assays should be available in the near future
- It is possible that routine testing of samples containing this virus will return results that are positive for influenza A virus but subtyping will not identify it as H1N1. Until the situation becomes clearer it is strongly recommended that for all samples containing influenza A non-typable virus, the nucleic acid be sequenced to confirm the presence of this virus. WHO is currently in discussion with the WHO Influenza Collaborating Centres and National Influenza Centres to develop a strategy to support those countries currently not able to perform sequencing. It is highly desirable that this sequencing be performed in as timely a manner as possible.

Laboratories in WPR able to confirm swine influenza A H1N1 at this stage

WHO is aware that the following laboratories in WPR are capable of performing nucleic acid sequencing to confirm the presence of swine influenza A H1N1 in clinical samples. Further follow-up may identify additional laboratories with this capacity

- WHO Collaborating Centre on influenza (WHO CC) in Melbourne
- WHO Collaborating Centre on influenza (WHO CC) in Tokyo
- National Influenza Centres in Hong Kong, Singapore and Sydney .

Figure 1 Location of laboratories in WPR with known capacity to sequence influenza A virus nucleic acid

