IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

Guidance for Long-term Care Facilities on Serology Testing for SARS-CoV-2
April 21, 2020

Serology tests look for the presence of antibodies in the blood that are made in response to a specific infection, such as COVID-19, or vaccination. These are different from tests such as PCR that detect the virus that causes COVID-19. The FDA has recently announced Emergency Use Authorization for several tests[1] that detect the antibodies to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Other, non-FDA-approved tests are also being marketed.

A positive antibody test for SARS-CoV-2 may indicate that an individual had COVID-19. However, it does not indicate whether someone is currently infected and can spread virus to others or if they have recovered and are no longer infectious. Furthermore, there can be both false positive test results (the person tests positive but never had the infection) and false negative test results (the person tests negative but in fact had the infection). The chance for false positive test results increases when few people in the population have had the infection, which is believed to be the case currently in Idaho.

Furthermore, it is unclear at this time whether a person who has had COVID-19 and recovered from the infection has any greater protection against contracting the virus again than an individual who has never been infected with the virus.

For this reason, the Idaho Division of Public Health does not currently recommend antibody testing for clinical decision-making or occupational-health considerations in long-term care facilities.

For additional information, please see the Idaho Division of Public Health document, Serological (Antibody) Testing for COVID-19, on the official Idaho coronavirus website.

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[1] As of April 21, 2020, the FDA has issued Emergency Use Authorizations (EUA) for four serological tests for COVID-19. All four of these are authorized for use in certified diagnostic laboratories.

- qSARS-CoV-2 IgG/IgM Rapid Test by Cellex, Inc.
- VITROS Immunodiagnostics Anti-SARS-CoV-2 Total Reagent Pack by Ortho Clinical Diagnostics
- DPP COVID-19 IgM/IgG System by Chembio Diagnostic
- COVID-19 ELISA IgG Antibody Test by Mount Sinai Laboratory

The full list of diagnostic tests that have received an EUA is posted at https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/emergency-situations-medical-devices/emergency-use-authorizations#covid19ivd