



Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

July 28, 2022

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Subject: New *C. difficile* ordering requirement

Many of our patients with a positive stool *Clostridioides difficile* (“C. diff”) PCR diagnostic test are only colonized with this organism – and do not have actual disease.

IPC has recently clinically audited our C. diff testing. The large majority were sent on patients who received laxatives (which causes diarrhea) and may not have had fever, a high white blood cell count, abdominal symptoms or signs, or even diarrhea, often. Others were tested for “transfer to another facility”. These tests falsely elevate our C. diff rate which has implications for the patient and for HUMC/DHS. The former because some patients receive unnecessary therapy such as vancomycin, metronidazole, or even monoclonal antibody. The latter present an incorrect incidence rate to Leapfrog, TJC, and other oversight bodies.

**The PCR test should only be considered for patients with diarrhea (more than normal stool frequency or watery/very loose) and who have not received a laxative, enema, or PO contrast in the preceding 48 hours**, all of which may cause diarrhea.

**Beginning on Monday August 8**, a signed copy of a paper form (see below) **must be signed by the primary team resident physician** and accompany the specimen to the lab. Specimens submitted without the signature will be rejected by the laboratory. Selected cases will be audited by Infection Prevention and Control staff. Unit clerks will be in charge of keeping a stock of forms readily available. The lab currently rejects non-formed stools and those that come in >24 after the order.

We appreciate everyone’s attention to this matter.

To provide equitable and exceptional care with the respect and compassion we would want for our loved ones.



Health Services  
[www.dhs.lacounty.gov](http://www.dhs.lacounty.gov)



# Stool *C. difficile* PCR Diagnostic Test

## CLINICAL JUSTIFICATION FORM

Many of our patients with a positive *C. difficile* PCR diagnostic test are only colonized with this organism – and do not have actual disease. Harbor-UCLA uses a *C. difficile* PCR test that detects bacterial DNA, but cannot distinguish colonization from infection. **The PCR test should only be considered for patients with diarrhea (more than normal stool frequency or watery/very loose) and who have not received a laxative, enema, or PO contrast in the preceding 48 hours.**

If testing is still desired, a signed copy of this form must be signed by the primary team resident physician and accompany the specimen to the lab. **Specimens submitted without the signature will be rejected by the laboratory.** Selected cases will be audited by Infection Prevention and Control staff.

### Clinician Attestation:

I attest that the patient for whom I am requesting a *C. difficile* test has (check both):

\_\_\_ Diarrhea (watery/very loose stools or greater frequency than normal)

**AND**

\_\_\_ Not received laxatives/enema/PO contrast in the 48 hours prior to collection

### Patient Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

MRN: \_\_\_\_\_ Clinical Service: \_\_\_\_\_

### Ordering Clinician:

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Text or pager: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Attending Name (Print):

\_\_\_\_\_