



Detectability of SARS-CoV-2 Variants by IU Health SARS-CoV-2 Nucleic Acid Testing Platforms

Effective Date:
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Contact: Molecular & Microbiology

Update Description:

Recently, novel SARS-CoV-2 (the COVID-19 virus) variants demonstrating increased infectivity have emerged in the U.K. and South Africa, raising concerns about the ability of currently used diagnostic tests to detect them. The IU Health Division of Clinical Microbiology leadership has been assured by test manufacturers that the SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid tests (PCR tests; see below) used by the Divisions of Clinical Microbiology and Molecular Pathology **will** detect these viruses.

These tests will not distinguish them from other SARS-CoV-2 variants.

Readers should be cautioned that structural changes to these new variant viruses have as-of-now unknown effects on detectability by antigen-based tests. In addition, it is unknown how both molecular and antigen tests will be affected when future variants arise. Laboratory leadership will remain in close contact with test manufacturers and other clinical and public health laboratories to monitor performance of currently used tests when challenged with emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants.

SARS-COV-2 Molecular Diagnostic Tests Currently in Use

1. Cobas® SARS-CoV-2 qualitative assay for the cobas® 6800/8800 Systems
2. Cobas® SARS-CoV-2 & Influenza A/B qualitative assay for the cobas® Liat® System
3. NxTAG® CoV Extended Panel qualitative assay
4. Xpert® Xpress SARS-CoV-2/Flu/RSV qualitative assay
5. Xpert® Xpress SARS-CoV-2 qualitative assay

Questions:

If there are any questions on test requirements or ordering, please call IU Health Pathology Laboratory Client Services at 317.491.6000 or 800.433.0740. For any additional information regarding the detectability of SARS-CoV-2 variants, please contact Dr. Bryan Schmitt, Medical Director of the IU Health Division of Clinical Microbiology, at bhschmit@iupui.edu