



12/2/2021

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 2, 2021(update from April 7, 2021 sequencing memo)

TO: Illinois Hospitals, Laboratories, and Providers

FROM: Leslie Chapman
Acting Division Chief, Division of Laboratories

Sarah Patrick, MPH, PhD
Acting State Epidemiologist

SUBJECT: Update: Variant Testing and Genomic Sequencing to Identify Omicron

On November 26, the World Health Organization classified a new variant, B.1.1.529, as a Variant of Concern and has named it Omicron. One case has been identified in California on December 1, 2021. The variant has numerous mutations that can lead to S gene target failure in some PCR assays. (<https://covariants.org/variants/21K.Omicron>)

To enhance current surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 variants in Illinois, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is asking Illinois hospitals and commercial laboratories to send 15 randomly selected SARS-CoV-2 positive samples weekly to the IDPH laboratory for genomic sequencing. Both the Chicago and Springfield IDPH laboratories perform COVID-19 sequencing. Please contact IDPH laboratories at dph.lab.shipping@illinois.gov to enroll in IDPH's surveillance program if your facility has not already. The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) is eliciting specimens from Chicago hospitals for sequencing that is aligned but separate from this process (see the CDPH HAN Page for additional information). Hospitals labs doing PCR testing are also encouraged to run the SGTF if they have the appropriate sequencing platform to do so.

Data evaluation for samples submitted during the Delta wave in Illinois (mid-June to present) indicates that more sequencing for COVID-19 surveillance is needed from COVID regions 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9 ([map](#)).

Submission Guidelines:

- 1.) Select 15 random positive PCR samples to submit to IDPH Springfield or Chicago laboratories for sequencing once per week. If possible, select samples that have a CT value ≤ 28 . To meet the 15 sample per week goal, IDPH Lab will accept samples with higher CT values or none if the testing platform does not allow access to the CT values.
- 2.) Submit clinical remnant samples that contain a minimum of 1 ml of the original Viral Transport Media (VTM). Be sure to ship the sample in a tightly sealed tube, preferably with an O-ring cap to prevent leakage.
- 3.) Complete the [COVID-19/Influenza Test Requisition Form](#). Select COVID-19 sequencing. Write “COVID-19 sequencing—For Omicron Surveillance” on the top of the form.
- 4.) Specimen that can reach the IDPH laboratory within 72 hours of collection should be shipped with frozen cold packs to maintain 2-8 degrees Celsius temperature.
- 5.) Specimens that will be greater than 72 hours from collection when received at the IDPH lab, should be frozen and shipped on dry ice.
- 6.) Shipping coolers and return service labels can be ordered from [IDPH’s online COVID-19 supply request form](#). Please refer to the instructions below.

All sequences will be uploaded into GISAID to contribute to pandemic response and international variant tracking, <https://www.gisaid.org/hcov19-variants/>. Please note sequencing is for epidemiological purposes only and will be reported to local health departments for further follow-up. A report of sequencing results will not be issued to the patient or the provider.

Ship to: (choose a lab location closest to the healthcare facility)

Illinois Department of Public Health Lab
825 N. Rutledge St.
Springfield, IL 62702
Attention: COVID Sequencing

Illinois Department of Public Health Lab
2121 W. Taylor St.
Chicago, IL 60612
Attention: COVID Sequencing

Illinois Department of Public Health Lab
1155 South Oakland Avenue
Carbondale, IL 62901
Attention: COVID Sequencing