



HEALTH ALERT

May 19, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

As you may be aware, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has recently reported a 57% increase in the number of chickenpox (varicella) cases in the State of Michigan. To better evaluate this increase, MDHHS is requesting that, whenever possible, clinicians confirm suspected cases by laboratory means. Laboratory confirmation can be accomplished by any of the following:

- (1) Isolation of varicella from a clinical specimen, OR
- (2) Varicella antigen detected by direct fluorescent antibody (DFA), OR
- (3) Varicella-specific nucleic acid detected by polymerase chain reaction (PCR), OR
- (4) Significant rise in serum anti-varicella immunoglobulin G (IgG) antibody level by any standard serologic assay

Although all of the above options are acceptable, PCR testing is the method of choice for confirming varicella according to the CDC.

Due to the potential impact that a varicella outbreak can have on school children who have vaccine waivers, it is important that confirmation be obtained whenever possible to aid in better evaluating these outbreaks.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 616-494-5548.

Sincerely,

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Medical Director, Ottawa County Department of Public Health

Total Fax: 1 Page

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