**Influenza specimen referral to WHO CC 2015**

The WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Influenza in Melbourne is interested in receiving influenza virus samples and isolates for further strain characterisation and molecular sequencing. As your laboratory has sent us samples in the past, we have prepared this document to guide your decision about which samples to send. These recommendations are based on our experience with successful isolation of viruses and likelihood of obtaining a vaccine candidate.

**Suggested guidelines for clinical specimen selection for referral to WHOCC for isolation:**

* ‘Fresh’ specimens: specimens processed for storage soon after collection and then forwarded to WHOCC within 48h
* High viral load: low cross-over threshold (CT) in NAT, strong DFA
* Clinically significant (as described under scenario 3)
* Swabs in media (not dry swabs)
* Consider proportion per geographic area, range of ages if possible
* Please pack samples in order of the paperwork. E.g. place samples in boxes (or equivalent) in the same order as in the paper work. If using bags, please pack no more than 10 samples per bag.
* Please ship on dry ice. If you cannot send on dry ice, please only send samples that are <48h old and have been stored at 2-8°C, shipped with cold packs.

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| **Laboratory** | **Scenario 1: Out of season** **(roughly Dec-Mar)\*** | **Scenario 2: Early in season** **(roughly Apr-Jun)\*** | **Scenario 3: Mid season** **(roughly Jul-Sep)\*** | **Scenario 4: Late in season** **(roughly Oct-Dec)\*** |
| **Specimens to refer** | All influenza positive specimens | All influenza positive specimens | **Specimens referred by exception** **only** from significant patients e.g. samples unable to be subtyped with current primers, returned travellers with onset overseas, vaccinated, ICU, pregnancy, other immunocompromised, community or institution outbreaks, unusual community cluster, clinically suspected antiviral resistance, indigenous patients, post-mortem samples, children <5y  | All influenza positive specimens |
| **Dispatch frequency** | Every 2-3 months (i.e. in March) (unless unsubtypable, outbreak, suspected H5/H7 or otherwise of particular interest) | Fortnightly  | Fortnightly. Send all by mid-August.  | Monthly. Send all by early January  |

\*These dates may vary depending on the season. Your state health department can provide guidance

If you have any questions about suitable samples to send, please contact Rob Shaw, at: robert.shaw@influenzacentre.org