



June 18, 2020

RE: C. difficile

Eliminating hospital acquired C. difficile infections remains a key focus in Catholic Health's drive to provide the highest quality care for our patients. The System has implemented several initiatives related to timely case finding, contact isolation, environmental cleaning and antimicrobial stewardship to help eliminate the spread of this dangerous infection.

In some instances, the standard assay used to diagnose C. difficile infection may yield an equivocal result that is not diagnostic, resulted as "Indeterminate" in the medical record. In these situations, the lab runs an additional test that detects DNA from C. difficile. This test is extremely sensitive, however it also frequently yields false positives results. False positive tests are attributed to the 5-20% of hospitalized individuals that are asymptomatic carriers of the organism. False positive tests lead to inappropriate diagnoses, isolation and treatments.

In response to this issue, Infection Prevention and Control, with the support of Laboratory Services and Senior Leadership has implemented a diagnostic stewardship program to help improve the diagnostic accuracy of C. difficile testing. Key components of the program are outlined below:

- The program only applies to hospitalized patients.
- Providers are prompted to attest that C. difficile orders meet nationally recognized testing criteria at the time of order entry (algorithm link is available in the computer order).
- **Beginning June 29**, "Indeterminate" tests that do not meet diagnostic test criteria on chart review by Infection Prevention and Control will be cancelled. In these instances, the final result will appear with a text comment box alerting the cancellation below the "Indeterminate" value. If the provider wishes to override this cancellation a call to the lab will be required within 24 hours.
- Patients with "Indeterminate" results that are later resulted as "Cancelled" per the diagnostic stewardship policy can be taken off of isolation.
- The entire policy, including the diagnostic stewardship algorithm is available on M-files through the CHS intranet (CHS-IC-125).

Please do not hesitate to contact your site's infection preventionist or me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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