

ADMINISTRATIVE CLOSURE

MCI # 2009-02826-HI-0750

Legionnaire's Disease-Related Testing at the Pittsburgh (PA) VAMC

On June 21, 2009, a complainant sent an e-mail to the Jerome Herbers alleging that the Pittsburgh VAMC hospital laboratory was performing tests for the bacterium *Legionella* in environmental specimens without sufficient expertise. The complainant, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (b)(3):5 U.S.C. App 3 (IG Act); (b)(6)

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[REDACTED] (b)(3):5 U.S.C. App 3 (IG Act); (b)(6)

[REDACTED] alleged that the individual assigned this responsibility after her departure lacked expertise. It should be noted that *Legionella* thrives in many aqueous environments, but can be difficult to isolate in culture because of the many competing organisms found in environmental specimens. False-positive results are not considered to be a problem, but false-negative results are a very real possibility. A telephone interview with the complainant was recorded July 10.

On July 24 a telephone interview with the Associate Director and Dr. Rajiv Jain, Chief of Staff, was recorded. The issues were also discussed subsequently by phone with [REDACTED] VHA Infectious Diseases Program Director. Dr. Jain asserted that the hospital laboratory was fully accredited to perform a full range of laboratory tests, including cultures of environmental specimens for *Legionella*. He acknowledged, however, that for the VAMC to serve as a reference facility for other hospitals it would be prudent to validate that VAMC staff is proficient. He stated that the hospital had already begun efforts to obtain recognition of proficiency from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). The CDC's ELITE (Environmental Legionella Isolation Techniques Evaluation) Program requires facilities to process two panels of unlabeled specimens, some of which contain *Legionella* (<http://www.cdc.gov/legionella/elite-intro.htm>). On August 31, the VAMC received notification from the CDC that the VAMC laboratory had correctly identified pathogen-containing specimens. The VAMC is now listed as an ELITE member (<https://wwwn.cdc.gov/elite/Public/MemberList.aspx>).

J. E. Herbers, MD

October 6, 2009

Please have
admin's testing
7/21/09
11/2/09

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