



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Larry Hogan, Governor - Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor - Van Mitchell, Secretary

Laboratories Administration
Robert A. Myers, Ph.D., Director

MEMORANDUM

To: All State and Local Health Departments
and Health Care Providers

From: Rich Oatis, Supervisor, Mycobacteriology 

Date: June 23, 2016

Subject: Change to Acid Fast Smear Procedure

The Maryland State Tuberculosis Laboratory has had a long-standing practice of confirming all fluorochrome-positive acid fast smears by overstaining the slides with Zhiel-Neelsen stain. During a recent site visit from a CDC TB Laboratory Advisor, it was recommended that this second staining procedure be discontinued. The fluorochrome, due to its high level of sensitivity, is considered the standard for acid fast staining, and thus a secondary staining technique for positive smears has been deemed superfluous.

In order to increase efficiency, reduce unnecessary use of resources, and simplify and clarify our microscopy reports, the Maryland State TB Laboratory will discontinue Zhiel-Neelsen staining as of July 5, 2016. The Laboratory will continue to report a fluorochrome smear result for all clinical specimens submitted. This fluorochrome smear result should be used to guide all appropriate decisions regarding patient management. To assure the quality of these smear results, the TB Laboratory will have a second scientist read any positive fluorochrome smear requiring confirmation.

Any further questions or concerns regarding these changes in policy can be directed to the TB Laboratory at (443) 681-3944.