

November 2008

## Viridans Group Streptococci - Changes to Laboratory Identification Procedures

To Health Care Providers

Effective immediately, the Ontario Public Health Laboratories (OPHL) will no longer routinely identify the viridans group to the species level. Identification to the group level is sufficient, with no significant clinical benefit from classification at the species level. Isolates will be identified as belonging to one of the following groups: *Streptococcus mitis*, *S. anginosus*, *S. mutans*, *S. salivarius*, or *S. bovis* group.

Referral of viridans streptococci for identification to the group level should be reserved for isolates causing serious infections (such as bacteremia, sepsis, endocarditis and other sterile site infections). Isolation of VGS from a single blood culture in otherwise healthy persons usually represents contamination. Further identification at a reference laboratory after isolation in a single blood culture should only be considered in patients where it may be significant, such as in immunocompromised patients, or when endocarditis is suspected.

If identification of VGS from a sterile site to the species level or of a nonsterile site (e.g. wound, soft tissue abscess) to the group level is considered warranted, contact Prasad Rawte or Jonathan Gubbay to discuss this prior to forwarding the isolate for testing.

### For Further Information:

- Mr Prasad Rawte, Head, Reference Identification and Susceptibility at **416-235-5706**
- Dr Jonathan Gubbay, Medical Microbiologist at **416-235-6258**.