SARS-CoV-2 testing on Genexpert analyser at Cooma

19 June 2020

NSW Health Pathology has set up rapid COVID-19 testing in Cooma to help protect snow-goers and local communities against potential virus outbreaks.

Rapid PCR testing for COVID-19 is now available in our Cooma Lab and will be conducted using a GeneXpert Analyser for urgent cases to help prevent potential outbreaks during the ski season.

The analyser will be in place for approximately three months and urgent patient testing must be authorised by NSW Health Pathology’s Cooma Laboratory Manager.

This rapid testing technology can detect a COVID-19 infection and deliver a result within 60 minutes of the specimen arriving in the laboratory. Providing a diagnosis within an hour means faster care and early isolation can be provided, which is vital to the health response, protection of the community and to prevent potential local outbreaks.

The majority of tests – non-urgent / high risk – for the local region will be performed on a high throughput molecular PCR BD Max diagnostic platform recently set-up and validated at NSW Health Pathology’s Bega laboratory.

NSWHP recently rolled out rapid COVID-19 test kits using GeneXpert in 35 of our laboratories across the state for high risk patients to overcome logistical challenges and improved turnaround times for urgent cases.

As these new rapid PCR COVID-19 test kits are in high global demand, it is essential we continue to prioritise distribution to areas of urgent demand for priority patients.

Rapid testing should be considered for patients meeting the following criteria:

- In an acutely unwell inpatient with new onset respiratory symptoms/pneumonia or
  OR
- Unexplained sepsis developed in hospital, particularly if pregnant
  AND
- Requirement for a rapid result to inform clinical management (i.e. treatment or transfer)
  OR
- Urgent public health intervention.

These details are also available on our website at www.pathology.health.nsw.gov.au/covid-19-info/covid-19-testing-information.

NSW Health Pathology reviews its testing strategies and capabilities daily to continue to meet evolving statewide needs and to make most efficient use of specialist diagnostic test kits and consumables. These all remain in high global demand, which is why we continue our regular liaison with vendors and to also evaluate newly emerging COVID-19 diagnostic test kits including rapid Point of Care.