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***Mission: To promote and protect the health and well-being of our community.***

***Vision: Optimal health for all***

June 13, 2016

RE: The Role of Low Cost IGRA Availability in Tuberculosis Elimination

Dear Colleagues,

I want to inform you about the availability of very low cost QuantiFERON through the Kings County Department of Public Health. You may have patients who would benefit from this service. I write you in the hope that you'll keep this service in mind when ordering IGRA on certain of your patients.

The observed decline in the incidence of tuberculosis in California has leveled off for the last five years. In 2015, 80% of the California cases were due to reactivation of latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI). As a part of a national effort to eliminate tuberculosis transmission in the United States, there is now more emphasis on identifying and treating individuals with LTBI.

In 2015, in California, only 19% of the cases were US born. Immigrants from Mexico and the Philippines account for about 50% of the foreign born cases in California. The proportion would be higher in Kings County. With the exception of immigrants from affluent, industrialized countries, any foreign born patient in your practice should be assessed for LTBI and offered treatment as indicated.

Almost all of these patients are at risk for having a false positive skin test for tuberculosis. BCG is widely used in countries where tuberculosis is common. BCG is typically given at birth. Its use in Mexico and the Philippines is close to universal. BCG does not prevent tuberculosis infection. BCG can cause a falsely positive skin test. Most of your immigrant patients will require IGRA testing to rule out a false positive. The cost of this testing for your patients without third party coverage can be prohibitive.

With the help of grant funding my department now has the ability to provide this testing at a much reduced cost to your patients. We estimate that the cost is 10-20% of the cost through commercial testing. I hope you will join with the effort to identify and treat people in our community with latent tuberculosis. I believe that this low cost service will go a long ways toward relieving a financial burden for your patients. I hope you'll make your staff aware of this service. Your staff can get more information on how to access this service by calling Marlene 852-2741 or Dulce 852-4837.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about this letter. My email is [michael.maclea@co.kings.ca.us](mailto:michael.maclea@co.kings.ca.us). My direct line is: 559-852-2876.

Sincerely,

Michael Mac Lean, M.D., M.S.