

Febrile Agglutinins

The Febrile Agglutinin Panel, long a standard for the diagnosis of typhoid fever, rickettsial disease, brucellosis and tularemia has been replaced by more specific and sensitive methods. Cross reacting antibodies compromised the specificity of the febrile agglutinin tests (i.e. Widal and Weil-Felix). Delayed production of agglutinating antibodies resulted in decreased sensitivity. As a result, the serology laboratory will no longer be performing Febrile Agglutinins.

ORDERING HINTS:

When submitting specimens or ordering tests, please indicate suspected organism.

- For typhoid fever, order blood cultures during the acute phase of the disease (first week). For other Salmonella infections, including typhoid fever (later in the disease process), submit stool specimens (in fecal culture transport medium if more than 1 hour delay in delivery to the laboratory).
- For diagnosis of rickettsial disease (Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Typhus Fever or Q Fever) order the specific serological test. The serum specimen must be maintained as a sterile specimen. A convalescent specimen is required if a negative result is obtained on the acute specimen.
- For suspected brucellosis, order blood cultures, indicating that brucellosis is suspected. Alternatively, order acute and convalescent Brucella serology. If brucellosis is strongly suspected, serial convalescent specimens over a several month period may be required.
- For tularemia, order tularemia serology. A convalescent specimen is required 10 - 21 days after the acute specimen. If possible, submit tissue for culture from typically involved areas (lymph nodes, skin ulcer, sputum, etc.) and indicate tularemia is suspected.

REFERENCES:

Burke DS, Brown SL, Lack of diagnostic utility of febrile agglutinin screens, *Military Medicine*, 624-626, Sept 1980.

Young, EJ, Serologic diagnosis of human brucellosis: Analysis of 214 cases by agglutination tests and review of the literature, *RID*, 13:359-372, 1991.

Zuerlein, TJ, Smith PW, The diagnostic utility of the febrile agglutinin tests, *JAMA*, 254:1211-1214. 1985.

SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION CONTACT: Nancy Cornish, M.D., Pathologist, Director of Microbiology, (402) 354-4540
Gerald Berthold MT(ASCP)SM, Supervisor of Microbiology, (402) 354-3147