




LAB ALERT

 Ryan H. Livengood, M.D., Medical Director
Department of Pathology and Laboratory Services

QUANTITATIVE HCG (FOR PREGNANCY) REPORTING CHANGE

Epic Test Code: LAB142

Effective Date: 10/30/2019

EXPLANATION: For years, a single cutoff has been used for quantitative hCG pregnancy testing. This low cutoff of 5 IU/L has maximal sensitivity for detecting early pregnancy.

However, as patients age, there is a gradual increase in hCG owing to pituitary production in association with perimenopause and menopause, yielding increased frequency of “equivocal” hCG results (>5 but <20 IU/L) among older patients. These findings delay necessary imaging, interventional, and admission-related practices.

In an analysis (in press with *Clinical Biochemistry*) performed locally, using >7500 hCG results from non-pregnant WVUH patients of all ages, the Ruby Laboratory has demonstrated:

- the traditional cutoff of <5 IU/L still applies to patients <40 years of age;
- a test cutoff of <10 IU/L should be used for patients 40-49 years of age; and
- a test cutoff of <15 IU/L should be used for patients ≥50 years of age.

These changes will be made at Ruby, and at the BMC and JMC Laboratory testing locations.

*If you have any questions call BMC at 304-264-1212, option # 7 or JMC at 304-728-1759.