

Rapid Screening Fits Patients For New HIV-Fighting Drugs

New York State Department of Health



A new diagnostic assay developed by the New York State Department of Health and Health Research allows physicians to quickly screen potential candidates for a new class of HIV drugs.

The technology was developed at the Wadsworth Center of the New York State Department of Health in Albany from the late 1990s to the present by Sean Philpott, Ph.D., Barbara Weiser, M.D., Harold Burger, M.D., and Christina M. Kitchen, Ph.D., who is based in Los Angeles. Initial funding was provided by the New York State Department of Health, the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and a National Research Service Award from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Licensed and commercialized by Pathway Diagnostics as SensiTrop™, the lab test measures a patient's HIV-1 co-receptor usage, to determine if the patient is an appropriate candidate for a new type of HIV drug called CCR5-blocking or CXCR4-blocking entry inhibitors. A co-receptor is a specific part of the cellular structure that HIV needs in order to attack the cell.

“ *These drugs are part of the first new class of drugs for HIV treatment in 10 years and offer hope to patients whose treatment with other HIV drugs has failed. They may also be effective in treating newly infected patients, while causing fewer side effects.*

However, only patients with a specific co-receptor type of HIV will benefit. A test for co-receptor usage, also known as “tropism,” ensures that patients are matched with the right drug. Studies also indicate that tracking tropism may be an important new tool for clinicians monitoring HIV progression and making treatment decisions. SensiTrop provides a significantly faster solution for screening HIV patients for compatibility with these new drugs.

Mayo Laboratories has become the first major lab to offer the test. Because of the need to repeatedly perform tests to monitor patients, cost and turnaround time are important factors. SensiTrop is extremely sensitive, very rapid, and about half the cost as compared to the biological HIV tropism assay that’s currently available.

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