February 18, 2016

All Physicians and Nurse Practitioners

Dear Doctor or Healthcare Provider:

**RE: Vitamin D Testing In Saskatchewan**

Currently in Saskatchewan, only the Saskatoon Health Region (SHR) and the Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory (SDCL) maintain the infrastructure to deliver vitamin D testing. Both SDCL and SHR are committed to supporting good patient care through high quality vitamin D testing in those cases where it is required.

In reviewing the data from our information systems, we have identified an opportunity to better manage vitamin D testing in the province. In this regard, Drs. A. Lyon (SHR), B. Mali (RQHR) and J. Eichhorst (SDCL) have reviewed the data from our laboratories and the clinical best practice guidelines for this laboratory testing.

This analysis suggests that most physicians and nurse practitioners are good stewards of resources in the care of their patients. We recognize and appreciate that the majority of providers order vitamin D tests on selected patients where it is clinically indicated (typically far fewer than 50 vitamin D tests per year per provider). However, we have noted that a small number of providers order the majority of testing.

As a result, we are providing information to practitioners regarding the issue. We ask all practitioners to limit orders for vitamin D tests to patients where the test is clinically indicated and to avoid routine screening. We are also distributing a patient information package on vitamin D testing so that physicians and nurse practitioners have a document to provide to patients who have questions about vitamin D testing. The literature supports the concept that, in most cases, it is wise to “treat – not test” and suggest patients supplement their diet with vitamin D (testing not generally required prior to or following supplementation).

We are confident that with the support of health care providers, we will be able to manage the delivery of this test in a manner that provides the maximum clinical benefit to our patients.
The Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) Board and Representative Assembly have endorsed the recommendations of Choosing Wisely Canada. This work is part of our first efforts to improve the appropriate use of all laboratory resources. This work is consistent with both the Choosing Wisely Canada campaign and the Appropriateness of Care Framework that was developed in Saskatchewan.

If you have questions regarding this testing, please feel free to call either Dr. Jeff Eichhorst (SDCL) or Dr. Andrew Lyon (Saskatoon Health Region). Dr. Eichhorst can be reached at (306) 787 3284 or by email at Jeff.Eichhorst@health.gov.sk.ca Dr. Lyon can be reached at (306) 655 5164 or by email at andrew.lyon@saskatoonhealthregion.ca.

Copies of both the clinical recommendation and the Patient Information Package are available online in the SDCL compendium at http://sdcl-testviewer.ehealthsask.ca/ in the What Is New at SDCL section. This document will also be posted on the public website Saskatchewan.ca.

We thank you for your consideration of this information and your support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian Laursen
Chair, Senior Medical Officers Committee