Review of winter testing requirements

Welcome back to the latest blog!

As we edge closer to the winter season. This year will be a pivotal time for testing compared to previous years. Each year during the winter seasons hospitals are presented with an increase in hospital admissions and busier intensive care units as the risk of developing a virus becomes greater. During the winter seasons, various viruses peak such as influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and other forms of cold and flu viruses. Those that become most ill from seasonal illnesses are often young children, elderly and those suffering from health issues, in particular those with respiratory conditions. Unfortunately due to the severity of these viruses they result in large numbers of deaths during the winter months. Seasonal viruses resemble symptoms of those similar to COVID-19 which will make diagnosing patients quickly more challenging. There is a driving requirement for the winter seasons to see the development of respiratory testing panels that can diagnose and distinguish the difference between types of flu and COVID-19. Identifying patients that have influenza and COVID-19 quicker allows the prognosis to be better with the ability to provide the correct treatment plans. During the 2019/2020 winter season, the UK saw a **decrease** in hospitalisation and intensive care admissions with influenza. Although heavily reliant on the flu vaccine programme to protect those most vulnerable, influenza has the capability to mutate and adapt its course for target. During the 2018/2019 winter season, the UK offered **25 million** patients a flu vaccination and in particular a new type of cell-based vaccine that was offered to the over 65's and adults with underlying conditions. Although the flu vaccination programme is something that effectively works each year this is not an opportunity that presents itself for COVID-19 currently. Due to COVID-19 in April, there was a fall in appointments at hospitals and doctors' surgeries. NHS Digital data for Shropshire reported in April patient bookings were down by 35% upon the previous year due to COVID-19. With the flu vaccination programme soon to start this may present a new issue in lower demand for patient bookings for flu vaccinations from the following year. Identifying whether a patient has a specific type of winter respiratory virus has never been more important because of the threat of COVID-19. Testing for COVID-19 is a continuous programme that will be at the forefront for many months to come but we also may take into consideration the effects that seasonal influenza and other respiratory viruses can cause during these winter months. We are looking forward to the release of our new advanced winter testing solution products to support multiple industries in enhancing their testing capabilities than previously before. We are excited to bring to the table a variety of products from our respiratory testing panel to our qPCR multiplex assay that can diagnose patients from one test with Influenza, RSV or COVID-19 in one test. A strategy which many will use to obtain results far quicker whilst maintaining greater accuracy in comparison to other diagnostic methods. We are proud to be supporting our partners during these winter months to come in providing the best possible winter diagnostic solutions so you can test, treat and trace. If you would like to hear more about our winter testing solution products please contact us at **enquiries@primerdesign.co.uk**.