

Raising the Bar for Diagnostic Capabilities

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In this issue, readers will again find strong arguments for the need to continually improve the diagnostic capability of laboratories throughout the state as well as improve the communication between the public and the private sector. At the same time that public health and the private sector are facing yet another challenging infectious disease (see the article regarding *Bordetella pertussis* by Catherine Gebhart, Ph.D., the state has also encountered its first case of Vancomycin-Intermediate *Staphylococcus epidermidis* (VISE). Both of these examples illustrate the significant challenges facing front-line diagnostic laboratories. In the case of *B. pertussis*, although new technologies have increased the capability for accurate diagnosis, the technology has not been streamlined for application to most laboratories. In the case of VISE, laboratorians must be constantly on the lookout for new patterns of antibiotic resistance.

We have received an analysis of laboratory preparedness for emerging infectious diseases that was conducted for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by the Battelle Corporation. In a written survey with follow up by phone call, the investigators from Battelle asked laboratory managers and technologists around the state to several questions regarding their level of training and interactions with the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory (NPHL). The report indicated that not only do a majority of private labs know about NPHL, but they have received training or educational materials within the past year that improved the knowledge base and ability to meet the challenges of their daily work.