

This edition of the NPHL newsletter highlights the breadth of activities undertaken the past six months. The accompanying articles describe the implementation of a new amplified assay for detection of gonorrhea and Chlamydia. An analysis by Peter Iwen and Phil Medina showed that use of the new assay significantly increased the detection of cases infected with Chlamydia. Although new technology provides significant advantages such as the ability to test urine from males and females, these new technologies also bring along new challenges. One example is illustrated by the article by Nate Birch and his finding of a significant number of falsified urine specimens submitted for testing for sexually transmitted diseases. Although this problem is well known in the drug testing arena it had not been previously described in the microbiology field. Another important technology development is the recent completion of a new version of the NPHL internet based ordering and reporting system. This program has shown remarkable progress under the leadership of our state epidemiologist, Tom Safranek and in many ways this program leads the nation in the field of electronic laboratory reporting. The new version of the PHLIP software is a big step forward as it now includes an epidemiology module which vastly extends the capability of the system to include all important public health test types. The new module was made active after an extensive three year evaluation of the security capabilities of the system and a demonstrated ability to keep information confidential while at the same time taking advantage of the numerous efficiencies existing in a web based paperless system. Other new developments are underway and we look forward to sharing these with our public health partners throughout the state.