

5. Importance of AFB smear microscopy and mycobacterial culture

Even if NAATs are performed, AFB smears and cultures must still be ordered on three respiratory specimens. Culture remains the gold standard for diagnosis, and is still necessary for drug susceptibility testing and strain genotyping. Additionally, while AFB smear microscopy has lower sensitivity and specificity when compared to NAATs, concomitant AFB smears are important to interpret NAAT results.