

Online-Only Abstract

Rectal swab for detection of norovirus by real-time PCR: similar sensitivity compared to faecal specimens

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Abstract

Rapid diagnosis and immediate infection control precautions are cornerstones in the prevention of norovirus outbreaks. However, faecal sampling for norovirus PCR—the standard of care—is time consuming. From 2009 to 2011, parallel faecal and rectal swab samples were consecutively obtained from patients with acute gastroenteritis presenting at our emergency department. In total, 109 complete sample pairs of 108 patients were analysed by specific norovirus real-time PCR. The sensitivity of real-time PCR was 97.3% (36/37) for both sampling methods. A rectal swab is a reasonable option for detection of norovirus by real-time PCR, if a stool specimen is not readily available.