

## **Introduction to this Edition**

*By Steven Hinrichs, M.D., Director, NPHL*

Everyone who works in a laboratory will relate to the comments of Eddie Teague, the Laboratory Manager at Gordon Memorial Hospital. As he notes, the laboratory provides many unique experiences and opportunities for growth, yet many of the rewards are personal. Some of those opportunities are addressed in this issue of the NPHL newsletter including a description of remarkable technology capable of identifying unknown powders and materials. But it's not just a black box, as with many technologies, the laboratorian must select the most representative material for study and know the limitations of the instrument. A separate article describes a growing concept in public health preparedness, the creation of interstate partnerships to provide mutual assistance in time of need. It has become apparent in the wake of the Katrina disaster that the federal government cannot provide all the assistance that a community might require. Since the public health laboratory is located in Omaha, we are well aware that the laboratories in western Nebraska may have to rely on the State Public Health Laboratory in Wyoming or Colorado. For that reason we are also working on making sure we can transmit and obtain laboratory test orders and results using the internet. We believe that within the next two years that every laboratory in the state will be connected electronically; therefore it is important that everyone has some familiarity with the terminology related to electronic data exchange. There will be more articles on this topic in the future.