Pathology Department


Approved by: B. Seymour

GP User’s Survey Report 2009
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Acknowledgements

The Pathology Management Team is grateful for the help and support of Kate McDonnell, NDHT Clinical Audit Department and clerical support from the Pathology Office in the production of this document.
0 INTRODUCTION

The Pathology Department complies with the ‘Standards for the Medical Laboratory’ issued by Clinical Pathology Accreditation Ltd.

The standards A2 and H2 set requirements that the laboratory management shall determine the needs and requirements of its users and assess their level of user satisfaction on a regular basis. This survey has been performed to comply with these standards, and in doing so, will bring to the attention of laboratory management areas where we could improve the specimen transport arrangements.

1.0 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the survey was to assess the level of satisfaction of General Practitioners (GP) with the specimen transport arrangements by responding to specific questions relating to this area of the service.

The information gained through this exercise will enable the laboratory management team to look at what services we provide and how to improve them to meet the needs and requirements of our users, as part of our commitment to continually improve the quality of the whole pathology service.

2.0 STANDARDS

Clinical pathology Accreditation ‘Standards for the Medical Laboratory’ v2.01, A2, E4 and H2.

3.0 METHOD

A one page questionnaire was designed to elicit General Practitioners views about the specimen collection service from their practice premises for delivery to the Pathology Department at North Devon District Hospital. The questionnaire is attached at Appendix 2. Twenty-three practices using the service were sent a survey form and nineteen replies were received (83%). Those excluded are:

- East Street, South Molton
- Fremington
- Litchdon
- Waterside
4.0 FINDINGS

GP practice opening hours vary across the patch and from day to day, however all the 19 respondents practices open between 07.30 and 09.00. Closing times vary considerably more with some practices staying open until 20.00 on one or two nights a week.

 Practices have been ordered in the charts and tables as follows:
- Barnstaple
- Bideford area
- North of NDDH
- Torrington, South Molton, Chulmleigh
- Westernmost area

4.1 What are the opening times of your Practice? When are your phlebotomy sessions held?

The following charts show the number of hours the practice is open, how long their phlebotomy session is and the remainder of the practice opening hours by day of the week. Please note the “Hours” scale is not times of day but number of opening hours.

Chart 1 - Monday

Chart 2 – Tuesday
Chart 3 – Wednesday

Chart 4 – Thursday

Chart 5 – Friday

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GP User’s Survey Report 2009
4.2 How many specimen collections per day do you have at present? At approximately what time do the specimens usually get collected now?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Number of collections</th>
<th>Times of collections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boutport Street</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>08:45 11:00 14:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brannam</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>08:30 11:30 14:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>09:00 11:00 14:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bideford</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11:30 14:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11:30 16:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwick</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10:30 16:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woolacombe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11:00 16:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle Gardens</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12:15 13:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Molton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallingbrook</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Torrington</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradworthy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holsworthy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shebbear</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 What concerns if any, do you have about specimens not being taken to the laboratory on the day they were collected from your patients?

Five practices said “None”. Three pointed out that they make appointments before the time of specimen collection and “try not to” do them later.

- **Boutport Street**
  - Only samples safe for overnight storage are taken after last collection otherwise patient has to return next day.

- **Brannam**
  - Potassiums not being done & samples being stored incorrectly
Queens

- Inaccurate results, due to lack of later afternoon pickup most blood tests have to be taken in the morning. Samples taken and pickup missed.

Northam and Wooda

- Concerns relate to having to restrict taking samples to first half of the day when we are open much later. We have no facilities to store late samples appropriately so don't take them.

Lynton

- None except Friday PM. Also bloods don't get processed same day from morning specimens as they don't get to lab until late in afternoon.

Castle Gardens

- Not being "fresh" and adversely affecting test results.

South Molton

- Unable to do U+E’s in afternoon which is occasionally inconvenient but not a major issue.

Wallingbrook

- Tend to organise U+E blood for morning session to avoid problems re Potassium.

Holsworthy

- A later single collection would be useful.

Shebbear

- Loss of potassium result and other unknown deteriorations?

4.4 Would advice on storing specimens overnight be useful to you?

14/19 respondents said “Yes”.

4.5 Would advice on purchasing and using a centrifuge be useful to you?

These practices said “Yes”
- Queens
- Northam
- Wooda
- Wallingbrook
- Shebbear

4.6 Would you consider paying for an additional later specimen pick-up?

Northam and Wooda practices were the only ones to say “Yes” and they would require this Monday to Friday.
4.7 For routine specimens what is your required ‘blood collection to results received’ turnaround time?

- 42% Next working day
- 5% 3 days or less
- 5% 3 days ideal, week ok
- 48% Current turnaround times

5.0 Conclusions

- There is insufficient demand for any additional van service to be feasible.

- Most practices confine taking specimens to the early part of each day where possible, although there are three practices who take specimens at almost any time. The number of collections appears to have little effect on the timing of phlebotomy sessions.

- The majority of practices would benefit from information about storage of specimens and some about the purchase and use of a centrifuge.
### 6.0 Action Plan: Title: GP Specimen Transport Improvements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Actions to Achieve</th>
<th>Person(s) responsible</th>
<th>Date completed by</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Evidence/Success Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide all non-N.D.D.H. locations with advice on specimen storage</td>
<td>Publish advice in hardcopy format by e-mail and on Tarkanet</td>
<td>Quality Manager</td>
<td>17/12/2009</td>
<td>Advice produced, and sent out.</td>
<td>See attached Specimen Storage guidance notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To investigate use of centrifuges in GP practices in other Trust areas and provide GPs with our recommendations</td>
<td>Contact Taunton and Exeter contact to gather information regarding where responsibilities lie for GP centrifuges and how successful it is</td>
<td>Quality Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attempted to contact Biochemistry manager in Taunton approx 15 times – no response. Also tried Deputy biochemistry manager in Exeter – awaiting a response.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at ways of increasing the collection service for Northam and Wood practices at no extra cost to the lab</td>
<td>Liaise with Sodexo and Bideford Hospital regarding a Friday evening collection</td>
<td>Quality Manager</td>
<td>17/12/2009</td>
<td>Friday evening collection agreed with Sodexo and Bideford Portering Manager 2 Month trial beginning 08/01/10 for urgent specimens or one-offs,</td>
<td>See attached e-mail from the Quality Manager to Northam/Wooda practice Manager informing them of the trial arrangements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.0 APPENDIX 1: COMPLETED ACTIONS

RE: Friday Afternoon Extra Pathology Specimen Collection - TRIAL

Clark Jane Frances (NORTHAM SURGERY)

Sent: 16 December 2009 15:20
To: Seymour Bruce (Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust)

Dear Bruce

Many thanks - will pass this on and start from 8th January 2010

Happy Christmas

Jane

From: Seymour Bruce (Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust)
Sent: 16 December 2009 10:43
To: Clark Jane Frances (NORTHAM SURGERY)
Subject: RE: Friday Afternoon Extra Pathology Specimen Collection - TRIAL

Hello Jane,

Any urgent or one off specimens would need to be taken to the Minor Injuries Unit at Bideford Hospital by 6pm each Friday. I suggested a trial period of 2 months, starting from Friday 8th January 2010, after which we can both review how it has been.

Talking yesterday to the portering manager for Bideford Hospital, it seems that there may be a possibility of improving this late Friday collection later next year, as the porters duties may be changed, allowing them to transport the specimens to us in time for us to process them during the working day. This could mean a drop off time at the hospital of say 4pm for example, but you, In theory, could then send more routine specimens. But I will keep you informed of any such developments.

Kind regards and compliments of the season,

Bruce

Bruce Seymour
Pathology Quality Manager
North Devon District Hospital
Raleigh Park
Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB

01271 322324 (or Internal ext. 2324)
bruce.seymour@nhs.net
Pathology Specimen Storage Guidance

If a delay in transporting pathology specimens to the laboratory is unavoidable the following general guidance on storage is offered to help prevent deterioration.

- **Biochemistry** (☏ 01271 322345)
  - Red and yellow top tubes – Should be centrifuged ASAP but if delayed store at ROOM TEMPERATURE*#
  - Mauve top tubes (K$_3$ EDTA for HbA1c) – Store in refrigerator (2-8°C)
  - Grey top tubes (Sodium Fluoride/ K$_3$ EDTA) - Store in refrigerator (2-8°C)
  - Urine specimens – Store in refrigerator (2-8°C)
  - Other fluids (pleural, ascitic) – Store in refrigerator (2-8°C)

- **Haematology** (☏ 01271 322329)
  - Mauve top tubes (K$_3$ EDTA for FBC & Viscosity) – store in refrigerator (2-8°C)
  - Pale blue top tubes (Citrate for INR/coagulation)- store in refrigerator (2-8°C)
  - Yellow top tubes (for Rheumatoid factor/Glandular fever etc)-store in refrigerator (2-8°C)

- **Microbiology** (☏ 01271 322347)
  - All specimens to be stored in the refrigerator (2-8°C) EXCEPT:–
  - Blood culture specimens – store at room temperature#
  - Skin scrapings (for mycology studies) - store at room temperature#

- **Transfusion** (☏ 01271 322327)
  - Store all specimens in the refrigerator (2-8°C) EXCEPT:–
  - Specimens for Cold Agglutinins – Cannot be stored, contact laboratory for advice.

- **Histology** (☏ 01271 322340)
  - All specimens to be placed in and covered by 10% neutral buffered formalin and stored at room temperature#

- **Cytology** (non-gynae, cyst fluids, urines etc) (☏ 01271 322340)
  - All specimens – store in refrigerator (2-8°C)

Notes:-
* Refrigeration of specimens and delayed transport will affect some tests, e.g. potassium and phosphate, such that analysis may not occur.

# Specimens for room temperature storage should not be exposed to extremes of temperature e.g. placed in direct sunlight, near a heat source (e.g. radiator) or allowed to chill or freeze. Ideally, they should be kept in an insulated container between 20°C – 25°C.

These guidelines apply to the common laboratory test repertoire – please contact the appropriate laboratory (numbers given above) for information relating to specific tests.

Pathology specimens should be transported to the laboratory as soon as possible after collection. Delay could result in deterioration in the specimen and invalidate the results of any investigations carried out.
8.0 Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
Pathology Department
Q-Pulse Doc. No.: Q-SURVEY-2

Survey 2009

Pathology Department

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Date of Report: October 2009

Dear Doctor or Practice Manager,

As you will be aware, we carried out a survey of our service users at the end of 2007 asking for comments about and suggestions for improvements to the Pathology Department services. Frequency and timing of specimen collection was raised as being of concern by some General Practice staff. However, the previous survey respondents’ anonymity was preserved to enable them to give their honest opinions and, as such, we have no geographical information about them.

I would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to answer the questions below on behalf of your practice as a whole. At this stage the Pathology Department is not offering any additional collection services, this is merely an attempt to gather further information and look at all feasible options for improving the current service.

An addressed return envelope is included for your convenience. Many thanks.

Bruce Seymour
Pathology Quality Manager

GP Practice Survey Re: Specimen Transportation (Pathology Department)

Woolacombe Medical Centre

1. What are the opening times of your Practice?

Mon  
Tues  
Wed  
Thurs  
Fri  
Sat  

2. When are your phlebotomy sessions held?

Mon  
Tues  
Wed  
Thurs  
Fri  
Sat  

It is not possible for all GP practices to have just one collection at the end of each day due to logistics of getting the drivers to 24 practices and the current opening times of the laboratory.

3. How many specimen collections per day do you have at present?

4. At approximately what time do the specimens usually get collected now?

5. What concerns, if any, do you have about specimens not being taken to the laboratory on the day they were collected from your patients. (collected from patients after your last specimen pick-up.)

We can offer advice on how to store specimens to avoid deterioration until the next van collection, e.g. overnight.

6. Would advice on storing specimens overnight be useful to you?  

Yes  No  

In remote geographical areas, some GP practices have bought a centrifuge to spin certain blood specimens, preserving them and avoiding the need for re-bleeding the patient for tests such as potassium.

7. Would advice on purchasing and using a centrifuge be useful to you?  

Introducing a later specimen collection would cost approximately £80-£80 per day. This cost could be shared by practices, so if there are more practices involved in a particular area the cost would be less.

8. Would you consider paying for an additional, later specimen pick-up?  

Yes  No  

9. If you would consider paying for an additional, later specimen collection on which days of the week would you require it?

Monday  
Tuesday  
Wednesday  
Thursday  
Friday  
Saturday  

10. For routine specimens, what is your required ‘blood collection to results received’ turnaround time? e.g. next working day, 3 days, 1 week etc.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please use the enclosed envelope to return it to Pathology

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