



Pathology Users Survey—Results

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How to Access

Pathology on Tarkanet

Most NDHT PCs have a link to Tarkanet on the desktop. Also, clicking on the internet explorer icon should open Tarkanet. NDHT I.T. Services Dept (01271 322697) tell us that all GP Practices should also have a link to Tarkanet—please contact them if this is not the case.

From the Tarkanet home page:

Click the blue 'Documentation' Tab.

Click on the word 'Manuals' in the list shown.

Click on the word 'Pathology Handbook' from the list of manuals.

In October 2007 the Pathology Department issued a survey to all users of the North Devon Pathology Service.

From over 700 questionnaires sent out, 230 were returned giving a response rate of about 33%. We would like to thank all those who took part.

The results of the survey have now been published along with a detailed response from the Laboratory Management Team. Issues raised from the survey have been discussed at the Laboratory's Annual Management Review meeting and as a result we have drawn up actions to be taken, and implemented some improvements already. We have also offered explanations to some of the comments you have made. The survey results are

available to view in a number of ways. It is accessible on Tarkanet, in the Pathology Handbook (see below on how to access Tarkanet), it will be emailed to each GP Practice Manager for distribution to PCT staff (one hard copy will also be sent to each GP practice) and a hardcopy will be sent to those users who are not part of the three local NHS Trusts.

We feel it is important to know what you think of the service we offer, and surveys are one method of finding out this information. We will be conducting further surveys in the future as part of our commitment to improve the service.

Apart from the many compliments received, the main sub-

Survey Results

What Happens Next?

We have looked at your comments and drawn up plans to address some of the issues. In the document, these are shown in blue. Some improvements have already been implemented—these are shown in green. Other improvements will take longer and involve extra finance.

jects which provided most comments were around specimen transport issues, computer problems and accessing Pathology information.

If you wish to discuss with us the survey results please use the contact details on the last page of this newsletter.

Pathology—Workload *Some facts & Figures*

We thought it would be useful to let you know what we do.

Staff: - approximately 70 staff are employed in Pathology. These are distributed across the four specialties of Biochemistry, Haematology, Microbiology and Cellular Pathology.

Request Forms: We receive between 1700 and 2000 pathology request forms (and associated specimens) each weekday. The details on each one has to be manually entered into the pathology computer by 9 data entry staff.

Rejected Specimens: latest figures show that 0.4% of

pathology requests are being rejected due to incomplete, inadequate or incorrect labeling—a vast improvement over the last 4 months.

Results: Approximately 4 million results are reported each year. Many have interpretive clinical comments included.

How to Book onto a Pathology Course

NDDH Scheduled course bookings are managed by the NDHT Learning & Development Dept. Please contact them on ext. 2396 (01271 322396) to book onto one of the courses.

NDDH Unscheduled courses are bespoke—please contact Andrew Lansdell, Senior Biomedical scientist on ext. 2419 (01271 322419) in the first instance to discuss your requirements.

GP/PCT Teaching: please contact Andrew Lansdell, as above.

“Only 0.4% of pathology requests are being rejected”

Specimen Acceptance Policy

Specimens must be labelled with 2 key patient identifiers (transfusion specimens need 3)

Request Forms must be labelled with 3 key identifiers

Key patient identifiers are:

Full name (not initials or preferred names), DOB, and unique number (hospital, NHS, A/E or GUM)

Specimen and request form information must match and be correct. Transfusion forms must be signed.

For more details or a copy of the full policy, contact the Pathology Quality Manager—see back cover for contact number.

Pathology Teaching Sessions

N.D.D.H. Scheduled Courses

The Pathology Department arranges teaching sessions in several subject areas: Understanding Haematology Results, Understanding Biochemistry Results, Accessing Pathology Results, Last Offices, Blood Transfusion Study days, BARS training, Blood Glucose Monitoring and Phlebotomy technique. For information on how to book onto a course, see box on left.

ND.D.H. Unscheduled Courses

Teaching sessions can be arranged for junior medical staff, college students and other interested groups of staff. For contact details to arrange a teaching session, see box on left.

GP/PCT Staff Teaching Sessions

We have received expressions of interest relating to Pathology Teaching sessions, on-site at GP practices. We agree that this is a worthwhile cause and we have highly experienced members of scientific staff with teaching qualifications

and consultants who are willing to consider any requests for teaching sessions or even a question and answer session at a practice meeting.

Clinical and general advice can always be obtained over the telephone by contacting the relevant department or person, contact numbers are available on Pathology request forms, or via NDDH switchboard or on the back page of this newsletter. There is also an e-form to complete on the ‘Contact Us’ page of the Pathology Handbook.

Avoiding Rejected Specimens

Our latest figures show that only 0.4% of all pathology requests are currently being rejected due to incorrect, inadequate or missing data either on the request form or specimens. Some of the main reasons for rejecting these specimens are: **Temporary residents/Newly registered patients attending a local GP**, please indicate on the request form T/R or N/R so we know that you do not have an NHS number yet. **Patients completing their own specimen labels**, e.g. on urine containers & Faecal Occult Blood cards. Please tell the patient to label with their own FULL name and DOB. If you could supply the patient with label trace labels, this may help. **Request forms received from other Hospitals**. These often do not contain a NHS number, only an unusable hospital number belonging to the other hospital. Please enter the patients

NHS number on such forms if possible. **New born babies being labelled with mothers name and hospital number**. The baby’s name DOB and unique number must be used, not Mum’s.

When we sent reports back informing you of a rejection, we make an informed guess of the identity of the patient. This is why these ‘rejected’ reports have the full patient ID included. However, there are no actual results on these

reports so there is not a risk of mis-treating the wrong patient. We do it this way to avoid creating another instance of the patient on the computer system—a double registration, leading to difficulty when trying to find results. If you are aware of any double (or even triple/quadruple) patient records on the pathology computer, contact the Pathology Computer Manager, Mr. Julian Bishop on ext. 2324 (01271 322324).

Electronic Reporting of Pathology Results & Comments to GPs

We frequently receive calls from GP practices where users cannot see the Laboratory Comments associated with a particular report. These comments can be extremely important and may include results, reference ranges, interpretive comments, which should be read in conjunction with the main results. Where

present, we always send these comments electronically, but there may be an issue with the practice clinical systems not displaying them with the main results, especially when they have been ‘filed’ in the patient record. Please contact your Practice I.T. rep to ensure you are able to view these comments.

Warning over blood-taking method

(Taken from an article from the BBC News Website. Full article can be found at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7525932.stm>

People who take blood have been warned not to get the patient to tightly clench their fist during the procedure.

UK researchers who examined 200,000 blood test results found clenching then relaxing the fist could raise potassium levels, potentially confusing results.

A UK expert said clenching was an outdated practice and staff taking blood should not ask patients to do so.

When she retested them, their potassium levels were normal - but they had all started to clench their fists before the test.

It led to the author of the report to speak to managers of the phlebotomy services in her trust, which then instructed staff not to use the clenching method.

The study looks at 200,000 results from blood tests requested by GPs between 2002 and 2005. The updated training was offered in September 2003.

The percentage of tests showing worryingly high potassium levels fell significantly after the change.

The impact of fist-clenching while giving blood has been known since the 1960s, but

the procedure was being passed on from generation to generation of phlebotomists.

"It seems to be hit or miss whether they get trained to avoid using this procedure," she said.

"But best practice advocates that patients don't tightly clench but gently close their hand during needle insertion and that the hand is loosened prior to the collection of blood. "Also the tourniquet should not be tightened on the arm for longer than 60 seconds or during the collection of the sample."

National Reporting of MRSA Screens

The Government requires all NHS Trusts to report the number patients who have been screened for MRSA prior to elective admission. The Pathology Department has been asked to extract this data from the pathology computer. We can extract the total number of MRSA requests received, but currently are not able to identify which have been requested prior to elective admission.

We are now asking ALL pathology requesters to write the word 'elective' on Microbiology request forms for MRSA screening requests prior to elective admission.

This will enable us to extract the required data. Please contact Mr. Julian Bishop, Pathology Computer Manager on ext. 2324 or (01271 322324) or Dr David Richards ext. 2320 or (01271 322320) if you require more information.

Pathology Requests from Devon Doctors

A small number of pathology requests are received from the out-of-hours GP service, Devon Doctors. We often find it difficult to know where to send the results for a large proportion of these requests as the requesting doctor is almost always not the patient's registered doctor. This often means that the results are sent to the original re-

questing Devon Doctor instead of the patient's GP practice—which introduces a delay in getting results to the correct location.

We understand that requests from Devon Doctors will not include a NHS number and have an exception to the Specimen Acceptance Policy in place to manage this, but the request forms do need to

be marked with 'Devon Docs' so that the requests are not rejected.

To summarise, request forms should include the name of the requesting Devon Doctor and the location to send the results to the patient's GP practice. Finally, the form should indicate that the request is a Devon Doctors request.

"We often find it difficult to know where to send the results for a large proportion of these [Devon Doctors] requests"

Point of Care Testing

Due to a combination of the expansion of Point of Care Testing (PoCT) and the requirement to meet accreditation standards the Trust has established a PoCT team. The team consist of three, Alan Bowden, Hannah Savage and PoCT Manager David O'Neill. They will work to bring all PoCT systems within the Trust into line with the

accreditation standards. They have started with blood glucose monitors and blood gas and will be tackling urine "dip-stick" testing next. If you have any issues with current PoCT devices or wish to discuss new applications of PoCT then please contact the team via email or NDDH ext 3114 (01271 349114 from outside the hospital).



Point of Care Testing Equipment

Laboratory Accreditation

After the external assessments by CPA of the NDHT Pathology Department this year, we have been granted 'Conditional Approval.' We have a small number of improvements to make, mainly to internal documentation before gaining full accreditation status.

In practice this means that the quality of the service provided to you is up to the required, national standard and you can be assured that the procedures we have in place ensure that the results we produce are accurate, precise and on time.

North Devon Pathology Department Contact Details

General Manager, Diagnostic Directorate:

Mr. Neil Schofield Tel: 2761 (322761)

Biochemistry Department

Dr John O'Connor, Consultant Clinical Biochemist Tel: 01392 402944
Mr Philip Parker, Head Biomedical Scientist Tel: 2345 (322345)
General Biochemistry Laboratory Enquiries Tel 2345 (322345)

Haematology & Blood Transfusion Department

Duty Consultant Haematologist Tel: 3198 (349198)
Mrs. Sally Williams, Haematology Secretary Tel: 3198 (349198)
Melanie Bonnyer, Haematology CNS Tel: 3198 (349198)
Mr. Tim Watts, Head Biomedical Scientist Tel: 3232 (370232)
Mrs. Maggi Webb, Blood Transfusion Manager Tel: 2327 (322327)
Kathleen Wedgeworth I.V. Fluids/Transfusion CNS Tel: 2440 (322440)
General Haematology Laboratory Enquiries Tel 2329 (322329)
General Transfusion Laboratory Enquiries Tel 2327 (322327)

Microbiology Department

Dr Gail Speirs, Consultant Microbiologist Tel: 2798 (322798)
Dr David Richards Consultant Microbiologist Tel: 2320 (322320)
Angela Mills, Microbiology Secretary Tel: 3199 (349199)
Mr. Colin Parkin, Head Biomedical Scientist Tel: 3278 (370278)
General Microbiology Laboratory Enquiries Tel 2347 (322347)

Cellular Pathology Department

Dr Nicolas Ward, Consultant Histopathologist Tel: 3197 (349197)
Dr Jason Davies, Consultant Histopathologist Tel: 3197 (349197)
Dr Andrew Bull, Consultant Histopathologist Tel: 3197 (349197)
Nicola Martin, Histopathology Secretary Tel: 3197 (349197)
Mr. Lee Lumscombe, Head Biomedical Scientist Tel: 3754 (311754)
General Cell. Path. Laboratory Enquiries Tel 2340 (322340)
Mr. Michael Elton, Mortuary Manager Tel: 2302 (322302)
Bereavement Support Office Tel: 2404 (322404)

Pathology Computer Manager

Mr. Julian Bishop Tel 2324 (322324)

Pathology Quality Manager

Mr. Bruce Seymour Tel 2324 (322324)

Point of Care Manager

Mr. David O'Neill Tel : 3114 (349114)

Pathology Office Manager

Mrs. Ruth Teague Tel: 2796 (322796)

Pathology Supplies/Consumables

Debbie Martinelli & Marcus Milton Tel: 2342 (322342)

N.D.D.H. Switchboard Tel 0 (322577)

Full contact details are available on the 'Contact Us' page of the Pathology Handbook on Tarkanet.

Internal telephone extensions are shown above. Numbers in brackets are the direct dial numbers from outside the hospital. Barnstaple area code is 01271.

Laboratory Opening Times

The laboratory is fully staffed from 09:00 to 17:30 Monday to Friday and on Saturday between 09:00 and 12:30 for all departments except:-

Cellular Pathology—08:30 to 17:00 Mon-Fri only

Mortuary/Bereavement—08:30 to 16:00 Mon-Fri only

Outside of these times there is an on-call service in operation for Biochemistry, Haematology, Microbiology and the Mortuary departments. Contact the on-call staff via the N.D.D.H. Switchboard on ext. 0 (or 01271 322577 externally) - see below for more details on how to contact the on-call biomedical team.

There is also a doorbell outside the main Pathology entrance for use during on-call periods.

How do I get Clinical or General Advice 'Out of Hours?'

CLINICAL ADVICE:-

Biochemistry & Haematology & Microbiology

Clinical Advice from a Pathology Consultant can be obtained outside of normal hours by contacting the N.D.D.H. switchboard—dial 0 from inside the hospital or 01271 322577 and ask for the consultant you require.

GENERAL ADVICE

There are three on-call biomedical scientists (one each for the biochemistry, haematology and microbiology departments) .

The on-call staff request that you do not directly phone the laboratory during on-call periods as they are frequently unable to take calls due to being in other parts of the laboratory, collecting specimens for example.

However, on-call staff can be contacted as follows:

Biochemistry & Haematology: By bleep, either directly (see below), or asking switchboard to bleep the biomedical staff required.

Microbiology:

Through Switchboard only.

How To Contact a Pathology Bleep Holder

Haematology Bleep: 045

Biochemistry Bleep: 031

1. Obtain a dialing tone
2. Dial 74 and the 3 digit bleep number (above)
3. Input the extension number you wish the bleep holder to contact

4. Wait for the confirmation tone (series of long beeps) and replace/switch off the handset/phone

For example, to contact bleep 045 dial 74 045 (your ext. no.) and wait for the confirmatory tone before hanging up.

We hope that you have found this newsletter interesting and helpful. If you would like to see information on a specific topic in the next newsletter, please contact the Pathology Quality Manager, Mr. Bruce Seymour on ext. 2324 (or 01271 322324), email bruce.seymour@ndevon.swest.nhs.uk with any requests.