POLICY FOR THE TRANSPORT OF PATHOLOGY SAMPLES

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<th>Reviewed by</th>
<th>Approved by</th>
<th>Summary of Changes</th>
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<td>&lt;Signature&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;Signature&gt;</td>
<td>Added ISO15189 requirements for temperature and time frame of delivery to maintain sample integrity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Brookes</td>
<td>Paul Mackenzie</td>
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<td>Pathology Quality Oper Manager</td>
<td>Clinical Chemistry Manager</td>
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<td>22/08/2014</td>
<td>&lt;Date&gt;</td>
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ASSOCIATED PROCEDURES & FORMS

CPA (UK) Ltd E4 Specimen Transportation

EC4 Essential criteria

7.7 Sample transport and handling
7.9 Confidentiality and Safety

IC 018 Policy for Management of Spillage of Blood and Body Fluids
IC 016 Infection Control Policy (Southend University Hospital NHSFT)
IC 02 Infection Control Standard Precautions
LP CP 0030 Cellular Pathology – Model Rules for Specimen Transport
HS 012 Pneumatic Tube Policy (Southend University Hospital NHSFT)
SS MP 01 Operation and Basic Maintenance of Office Machinery

RA 688 Tube Transfer System
RA 762 Transportation of blood samples
RA 487 Transport of specimen from Blood/clinic/Wards to reception area

COPY NUMBER

LOCATION OF HARD COPIES

1. General Policies Master Folder
2. Courier managers office
3-14 Model rules- transport drivers (Page 9) displayed in all 12 vehicles.
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1. Purpose and Scope

This procedure sets out the safe working practices for all staff engaged in the transport of clinical samples to the Pathology Laboratory.

2. Responsibility

Each employee is required to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and all other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.

Responsibility for the safe collection and packaging of clinical samples shall rest entirely upon the sender, it is therefore imperative that all areas where clinical materials are generated remain conversant with current rules, regulations and up to date safety codes of practice. Instructions are available for users of the service with advice for samples that require need specific handling conditions or prompt delivery to the laboratory.

The laboratory has a Service level agreement with the Trust’s Courier Transport Services, to ensure the safe and timely delivery of samples from GP surgeries and outreach clinics.

3. Definitions

DGSA- Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor

4. Records

All records / documentation generated as a result of a process shall be entered onto the departments Storage of Clinical Material, Records and External Documents Matrixes / Policies.

5. Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Race, Ethnic origins, Nationality, Gender, Culture, Religion or belief, Sexual orientation, Age or Disability?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

6. Health & Safety/COSHH (including Environmental) /Precautions

Have the following documents/procedures been checked against:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document/Procedure</th>
<th>Yes/NA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COSHH</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Assessment (if applicable)</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturers Method Sheet</td>
<td>NA</td>
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</table>
7. Process

7.1 Transportation within the hospital

General information

The Pathology Department Management team is committed to ensure that the health, safety and welfare of staff, patients and visitors to the department are maintained to the highest possible standard. All laboratory specimens are potentially hazardous;

It is important that care is taken when collecting and handling clinical samples to ensure that the risk of infection to staff is kept to an absolute minimum. These rules must be observed at all times and never allowed to lapse at busy periods or because of a failure to maintain adequate supplies of bags or containers. Members of staff employed within the Trust must not be put at risk because of ignorance, negligence or bad technique.

- All clinical samples must either –
  - Be placed inside a sealed plastic bag. (The request form is not to be placed next to the sample).
  - Or be supported upright in a purpose made rack or tray so as to prevent accidental contamination of staff, request forms and / or other samples.
  - Blood and tissue slides should be regarded as ‘sharps’ and placed in an appropriate slide transport box before packaging.

- Racks and trays will be designed to allow for decontamination and sterilisation at specified intervals.

- Samples must never be carried unprotected in the open hand or given to other members of staff in this way.

- Samples should be maintained within the temperature range specified for sample collection and handling (room temperature unless otherwise stated), and should be transported within an agreed time frame to preserve the integrity of the samples. Markedly delayed delivery or exposure of samples to extremes of temperature should be reported to Pathology.

- Safe working practices (as described in Model Rules for Porters) shall be observed at all times.

- Patient confidentiality must be observed at all times.

- The use of the pneumatic transport system poses additional risks, see separate section for details of how to use the system.

- Never leave samples unattended in a public area.
7.2 Transport of samples using Courier Services

All laboratory specimens are potentially hazardous. It is important that care is taken when collecting and handling clinical samples to ensure that the risk of infection to staff is kept to an absolute minimum. These rules must be observed at all times and never allowed to lapse at busy periods or because of a failure to maintain adequate supplies of bags or containers. Members of staff employed within the Trust must not be put at risk because of ignorance, negligence or bad technique.

- Samples must always be carried in closed boxes, which are clearly marked with a Biological Substance Category B label. This outer package must display a diamond warning symbol (size 50 mm) containing the text “UN3373” in letters 6mm high.

- Samples must be individually bagged, placed in a secondary bag containing absorbent material, sealed and carefully placed in the transport container.

- Two storage boxes will be provided for each surgery or clinic – one for holding blood specimens and one for non-blood specimens. On collection by the couriers, the samples will be transferred by the couriers into two separate transport boxes, one for blood, one for non-blooms) lined with a clear plastic bag containing absorbent material and which can be secured with a cable tie when full.

- Where a patient’s pathology request requires both blood and non-blood samples, these should be placed in the non-blood containers.

- Blood and tissue slides should be regarded as ‘sharps’ and placed in an appropriate plastic slide transport box before packaging.

- Handle specimen containers gently at all times.

- Safe working practices (as described in Model Rules for Transport Drivers) shall be observed at all times.

- Samples must never be carried unprotected in the open hand or given to other members of staff in this way.

- Samples must not be left unattended when not secured in the van. Patient confidentiality must be preserved at all times.

- The transport vehicle should be maintained at room temperature and samples should be transported within an agreed time frame to preserve the integrity of the samples. Markedly delayed delivery or exposure of samples to extremes of temperature should be reported to Pathology.

- The containment of samples within motor vehicles, used to transport samples, must be such as to restrain, retain and protect the contents in the event of an accident.
• In the event of a major/uncontained biological spillage contact Pathology Support Services immediately (Ext: 5411), if minor/leak is contained then inform Pathology on arrival. In the event of Formalin spillage the Cellular Pathology Laboratory (Ext: 6630), must be contacted before any material is touched.

• In the event of a vehicle breakdown or a road traffic accident, do not allow persons other than courier staff or Trust staff to handle specimens.

• Any spillage must be reported immediately to a designated senior member of the department concerned. The response by the Pathology laboratory staff will depend upon the size and extent of the spillage and upon the level of contamination. All decontamination shall be in accordance with the current Pathology Safety Policy.

• Always wash hands thoroughly before rest breaks and at the end of a work period.

7.3 Transport of Samples by Private Taxi firms

All laboratory specimens are potentially hazardous. It is important that care is taken when collecting and handling clinical samples to ensure that the risk of infection to staff is kept to an absolute minimum. These rules must be observed at all times and never allowed to lapse at busy periods or because of a failure to maintain adequate supplies of bags or containers. Members of staff employed within the Trust and private contractors must not be put at risk because of ignorance, negligence or bad technique. Only laboratory/trust approved private contractors should be used.

• Samples must always be carried in closed boxes, which are clearly marked with a Biological Substance Category B label. This outer package must display a diamond warning symbol containing the text “UN3373” in letters 6mm high.

• Samples must be individually bagged, placed in a secondary bag containing absorbent material, sealed and carefully placed in the transport container.

• Blood and tissue slides should be regarded as ‘sharps’ and placed in an appropriate plastic slide transport box before packaging.

• Handle specimen containers gently at all times

• Safe working practices (as described in Model Rules for Transport Drivers) shall be observed at all times.

• Samples must never be carried unprotected in the open hand or given to other members of staff in this way, nor carried in your pocket, handbag or other personal item.

• The transport vehicle should be kept at room temperature and samples should be transported within an agreed time frame to preserve the integrity of the samples. Markedly delayed delivery or exposure of samples to extremes of temperature should be reported to Pathology.
• To comply with the DSGH guidelines
  ▪ The package must be secured in the locked boot of the vehicle and must NOT be carried in the passenger cabin. NO PASSENGERS are permitted whilst the specimens are being transported.
  ▪ The package must be delivered directly, with no unauthorised detours or stops, to the specified location.
  ▪ The package must be handed to the named person or department by the driver. DO NOT leave at any other location UNLESS that is your instruction.

• In the event of a spill, decontamination materials are available from Pathology by contacting Pathology Support Services (Ext: 5411) or in the event of a Formalin spillage, the Cellular Pathology laboratory (Ext: 6630).

• In the event of a vehicle breakdown or a road traffic accident, do not allow persons other than taxi staff or Trust staff to handle specimens.

  *Non – NHS staff must not attempt to remove or clear up damaged samples arising from any such accident until the pathology laboratory has been contacted. A senior member of the laboratory team will initially assess the problem and then instruct those on site how to proceed.*

• A written report of any loss or breakage of sample must be made to the Pathology Department without delay and should be preceded by a verbal communication.

• Always wash hands thoroughly before rest breaks and at the end of a work period.

### 7.4 Transport of Samples using the Postal System

Some samples may need to be posted to this laboratory or to specialist Reference laboratories. It is important to ensure that all samples are posted safely and securely in accordance with the current postal regulations.

The European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR 2011) must be followed at all times. Only approved containers and packing may be used. Blood and tissue slides should be regarded as ‘sharps’ and placed in the appropriate plastic slide transport box before packaging.

Samples known to contain or suspected of containing Category A pathogens **MUST NOT** be sent by post or regular Trust courier. Refer to the Consultant Microbiologist for advice.
7.5 Use of the Pneumatic Transport System

The pneumatic transport system is used to send samples for Pathology. The terminals are at various sites within the hospital. To ensure safe operation please adhere to the following important points.

- Most Pathology samples can be sent using this system. Samples must be placed inside a sealed plastic bag before placing in the transit pods. The request form must be put in the adjacent pocket of the plastic bag and not with the sample.

- Some specimens MUST NOT be sent via the Pneumatic Tube system
  - CSF samples MUST NOT be sent via The Pneumatic Tube Transport System. CSF samples must be sent via portering.
  - Specimens for Histology or Cytology MUST NOT be sent via The Pneumatic Tube Transport System; samples must be sent via portering.
  - The system must not be used for glass. Blood culture bottles MUST NOT be sent via The Pneumatic Tube Transport System.

Refer to the procedures for the Pneumatic Transport system for further details, HS 012 Trust Pneumatic Tube Policy and SS MP 001 Operation and Basic Maintenance of Office Machinery. (Pathology Support Services).
7.6 Model Rules – Transport Drivers

Some of the work carried out by Transport drivers and messengers may involve accidental contact with material that could be infectious. You should always follow the general precautions outlined below and observe the following guidelines:

General Precautions:

- Any cuts, grazes or broken skin **MUST** be covered with a waterproof dressing;
- Hands **must always** be washed before breaks and at the end of a work period;
- All specimens must be carried in the boxes provided, never in hands or pockets;

In the event of the vehicle breaking down or an accident occurring, do not let anyone touch the specimen box, unless they are from the emergency services.

- Make sure the hazards data sheets are made available to them.

Specific Requirements

Each van must have the following:

- Gloves
- Model rules sheet displayed in vehicle.
- Hazard data sheets available for the emergency services in the event of a road traffic accident.
  - This must include the following:
    - Biohazard
    - Formaldehyde

Spillage

**Biohazard Spill**

- If a specimen leaks and runs out of the box, seal vehicle and contact Pathology for advice (Ext: 5411)
- Do not mop it up. If advised to do so drive to the laboratory where staff will deal with the spillage.

**Formaldehyde Spill**

- If a specimen leaks and runs out of the box, **do not try to tackle spillage**.
- Open all windows in vehicle and contact the Cellular Pathology Laboratory (Ext: 6630).
  - **This spill can only be dealt with by the Cellular Pathology laboratory.**
7.7 Model Rules – Porters

Introduction

Some of the work carried out by laboratory porters and messengers in the hospital may involve accidental contact with material that could be infectious. The general precautions and guidelines below MUST be followed:

General Precautions

- Any cuts, grazes or broken skin MUST be covered with a waterproof dressing;
- Hands must always be washed before breaks and at the end of a work period;
- Samples must never be carried unprotected in the open hand or given to other members of staff in this way.
  - Samples must be placed in a sealed plastic bag.
  - Multiple specimens must be carried in the appropriate containers, e.g. larger polythene bags or boxes, never in hands or pockets.
  - Samples should not be transported with / have contact with other items.

Spillage and Leaks

- If a Pathology specimen breaks or leaks into a plastic bag or box, but the spillage is contained, inform one of the Pathology reception staff on arrival. They will ensure it is disposed of safely.
- If out of hours please contact the duty Biomedical Scientist
- If you drop and break a specimen, and the spillage is not contained within the plastic bag or box, please refer to Trust Policy IC018 – Policy for Management of Spillage of Blood and Body Fluids
- Report the accident to a senior member of ward staff and your supervisor as soon as possible.

An Incident report must be completed.

The incident report can be found on StaffNet under Quick links – Incident/Near Miss Reporting Form
8. References

European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) 2011
The Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment Regulations 2009 & 2011
DoH Transport of Infectious Substances Best Practice Guidance for Microbiology Laboratories 2007
Transport of Dangerous Goods for Health Professionals 2001
Safe working and the prevention of infection in clinical laboratories 2003
Safe working and the prevention of infection in the mortuary and post-mortem room 2003
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1994
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (Amendment) Regulations 1996
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992
Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulation 1992
Chemicals (Hazard information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 1994
Advisory Committee on Dangerous pathogens - Categorisation of biological agents according to hazard and categories of containment 1995
The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

ISO 15189 5.4.5 Sample transportation