## The Transportation of Clinical Samples to the Pathology Laboratory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version:</th>
<th>V1.2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ratified by:</td>
<td>Pathology Management Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date ratified:</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of author and title:</td>
<td>Ian Diton, Quality Coordinator- Pathology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Written:</td>
<td>12th October 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of responsible committee/individual:</td>
<td>Ian Diton, Quality Coordinator- Pathology</td>
</tr>
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<td>Target audience:</td>
<td>Transport Couriers, Ports, Healthcare workers</td>
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<td>Compliance with any other external requirements (e.g. Information Governance):</td>
<td>UKAS accreditation to BS EN ISO 15189:2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Documents:</td>
<td>GP-6 Use and Management of the Pneumatic Sample Delivery System. QC-063 &amp; QC-049 Pathology Services handbooks.</td>
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</table>
The Transportation of Clinical Samples to the Pathology Laboratory

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Please be advised the Trust discourages retention of hard copies of procedural documents and can only guarantee that the procedural document on the Trust website is the most up to date version.

Version Control Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version number and issue number</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Reason for Change</th>
<th>Description of Changes Made</th>
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<tr>
<td>V1.0</td>
<td>October 2012</td>
<td>Ian Diton</td>
<td>New Document</td>
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<td>V1.1</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
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<td>June 2017</td>
<td>Ian Diton</td>
<td>Accreditation body changed</td>
<td>External requirements body changed. CPA now UKAS.</td>
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Consultation Table

This document has been developed in consultation with the groups and/or individuals in this table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Individual or group</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill O’Neill</td>
<td>Pathology Microbiology Lead BMS</td>
<td>12/10/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinal Amin</td>
<td>Pathology Principal Biomedical Scientist</td>
<td>12/10/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina Lloyd</td>
<td>Deputy Director Infection and Prevention Control</td>
<td>12/10/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Care Division Team</td>
<td>Integrated Care Division Management Team</td>
<td>11/10/12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrated Care Division Team</td>
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<td>12/11/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathology Management Team</td>
<td>Pathology Management Team</td>
<td>09/06/17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This information may be made available in alternative languages and formats, such as large print, upon request. Please contact the document author to discuss.
Table of Contents

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................ 4
2. Purpose .................................................................................................................... 4
   2.1. Rationale ......................................................................................................... 4
   2.2. Principles ........................................................................................................ 4
   2.3. Scope ............................................................................................................... 4
3. Definitions ............................................................................................................... 4
4. Accountabilities and Responsibilities ................................................................. 4
5. Procedures and Actions to Follow .................................................................... 4
6. Equality and Human Rights Statement .......................................................... 9
7. Training ................................................................................................................ 10
8. Monitoring Compliance with the Document .................................................. 11
9. References ......................................................................................................... 12
Appendix A – EHRA Form .................................................................................. 13
1. Introduction

This document identifies the various transportation methods for the supply of samples and request forms to the Pathology Laboratories at the East Sussex Healthcare Trust. All Pathology samples are potentially hazardous and this procedure has been written to assist staff members with the delivery, handling, spillage/leakage and general precautions associated with these samples.

2. Purpose
   2.1. Rationale
   Not applicable.
   
   2.2. Principles
   To ensure that clinical samples are transported safely and correctly to Pathology.
   
   2.3. Scope
   This procedure sets out the safe working practices for all staff engaged in the transportation of clinical samples to the Pathology Laboratory.

3. Definitions

   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 specific handling conditions or prompt delivery to the laboratory.

   The laboratory sample delivery service is provided by the Trust's Courier Transport Services, to ensure the safe and timely delivery of samples from GP surgeries and other external sources that may include private hospitals.

4. Accountabilities and Responsibilities

   Not applicable.

5. Procedures and Actions to Follow

   Transport of Samples 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 and that sample integrity is maintained. These rules must be observed at all times and never allowed to lapse for whatever reason such as high levels of activity or failure to maintain adequate supplies of bags or containers. The following requirements must be met to ensure staff members are not put at risk.
The Transportation of Clinical Samples to the Pathology Laboratory

- All clinical samples –
  - Each individual patient specimen container must be sealed tightly and placed inside an individual sealed plastic bag (The request form is not to be placed next to the sample).
  - Where appropriate, must 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 glass 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

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

- Safe working practices (as described in Model Rules for Porters section of this procedure) should be observed at all times.

- Patient confidentiality must be observed at all times.

- The use of the pneumatic transport system poses additional risks; see the use of the Pneumatic Tube System for details of how to use the system.

- Never leave samples unattended in a public area.

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. The following requirements must be met to ensure staff members are not put at risk.

- 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, by patient, placed in a secondary bag containing absorbent material, sealed and carefully placed in the transport container.

- Transport boxes will be provided for each surgery or clinic to transport specimens. On collection by the couriers, the samples will have already been placed in the liner bag containing absorbent material and sealed with a clip fastener. The transport box zip must be closed before the courier arrives for collection.

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

- Handle specimen containers gently at all times.

- Safe working practices (as described in Model Rules for Transport Drivers section) shall be observed at all times.
The Transportation of Clinical Samples to the Pathology Laboratory

- 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.

- Decontamination materials shall be carried in each vehicle to enable small spillages to be contained. In the event of major contamination the Pathology Support Services on Ext: 5776 (Eastbourne), 8404 (Conquest) or, in the event of Formalin spillage the Cellular Pathology Laboratory (Ext: 8023), 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.

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

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. The following requirements must be met to ensure staff members and private contractors are not put at risk.

- 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, by patient, 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 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.

- In the event of a spill, decontamination materials are available from Pathology by contacting Pathology Support Services on Ext: 5776 (Eastbourne), 8404 (Conquest) or, in the event of Formalin spillage the Cellular Pathology Laboratory (Ext: 8023).

- 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 Trust Incident report must be written for any loss or breakage of sample 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.

**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 2007) 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 slide transport box before packaging.

Samples known to contain or suspected of containing Category Group 4 pathogens **MUST NOT** be sent by post. Refer to the Consultant Microbiologist for advice.

**Use of the Pneumatic Transport System.**

The pneumatic transport system is used to send samples to the Pathology laboratory. 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 policy for the Use and Management of the Pneumatic sample delivery system (ESHT)

**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 bodies 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 TREM card (QC 060) is available to the emergency services.

### Specific Requirements

**Each van must have the following:**
- gloves and spillage kit
- sharps box
- TREM card is available for the emergency services in the event of a road traffic accident.

### Spillage

**Biohazard Spill**
- If a specimen leaks and runs out of the box, put on gloves, and cover the spillage with the appropriate material from the spillage kit.
- Do not mop it up. Drive to the laboratory for help.

**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 (Conquest Hospital (01424 755255 Ext: 8023))
  - This spill can only be dealt with by the laboratory.

### Model Rules – Porters

**Introduction**

Some of the work carried out by laboratory porters and messengers is 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 (The request form is not to be placed next to the sample).
- Multiple specimens must be carried in the appropriate containers, e.g. larger polythene bags or boxes, never in hand or pockets.
The Transportation of Clinical Samples to the Pathology Laboratory

- 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 transport 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 transport box, please refer to the Trust Policy for ‘The Spillage of Blood and Body Fluids’ (ESHT).

- Report the accident to a senior member of ward staff and your supervisor as soon as possible.

**A Trust Incident report must be completed**

The incident report can be found on the Hospital website under ‘fast find navigation/incident report for and guidance’.

6. **Equality and Human Rights Statement**

All of the Trust’s functions (including those delivered in partnership arrangements) should be analysed. This includes all Trust services and also all of the documents covered by the ‘Policy for the Development and Management of Procedural Documents’.

The Trust remains accountable for outsourced work, which should include a requirement for external providers to analyse and report the impact upon the equality duty and the arrangements for the Trust to monitor this.

**Evidence**

The greater the work’s relevance to advancing equality (e.g. patient care), the more evidence of inequalities (i.e. disadvantage, unmet needs or low participation) should be considered. Evidence is available from Oasis PAS, Datix, or ESR data reports, published by NICE or contained in the NHS Evidence Library.

**Age**

Age can refer to either a particular age or an age group. An age group includes people of the same age or includes people of a particular range of ages (e.g. the over 65’s).

**Disability**

A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Effects might include (but are not limited to):

- Behavioural and Emotional
- Hearing
- Manual Dexterity
- Memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand (Learning Disability)
- Mobility
- Perceptions of Physical Danger
- Personal, Self-Care and Continence
Progressive Conditions and Physical Health (such as HIV, Cancer, MS, Fits etc.)

Sight
Speech

Carers
It is direct discrimination to treat someone less favourable because of their association with someone who has any of the protected characteristics (not just disability) e.g. a parent or partner. The association does not need to be a permanent one (e.g. an occasional respite carer).

Gender Reassignment:
Gender reassignment is the process of transitioning from one gender to another. It does not require someone to undergo medical treatment. A transsexual person is someone who has undergone gender reassignment.

Pregnancy or Maternity:
Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race:
Colour
Nationality, e.g. British or Afghan citizenship
National Origins, i.e. country of origin
Ethnic Origins, e.g. Romani background or Chinese heritage.
A racial group could be “black Britons” including people who are both ethnically black and British citizens.

Religion or Belief (including none):
Religion has the meaning usually given to it and includes: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism etc. The main part of the definition is that the religion must have a clear structure and belief system.

A belief can be either religious or philosophical, including a lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Denominations within a religion can be considered to be a religion or a belief.

Sex:
Man or woman

Sexual Orientation
Bisexual people
Gay men and women / lesbians
Heterosexual people

7. Training

Not applicable
8. Monitoring Compliance with the Document

**Monitoring Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element to be Monitored</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Tool for Monitoring</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Responsible Individual/Group/Committee for review of results/report</th>
<th>Responsible individual/group/committee for acting on recommendations/action plan</th>
<th>Responsible individual/group/committee for ensuring action plan/lessons learnt are implemented</th>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation process</td>
<td>I.Diton</td>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Pathology management team</td>
<td>Pathology Quality Dept / Specimen Reception</td>
<td>I.Diton</td>
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9. References

References
- European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) 2009
- The carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment Regulations 2009
- DoH Transport of Infectious Substances Best Practice Guidance for Microbiology Laboratories 2007
- Approved methods for the Classification and Packaging of Dangerous goods for carriage by road and rail 1994
- 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

Related Documentation
- BS EN ISO 15189: 2012, Section 5.4.5 Sample transportation
- Policy for 'The Spillage of Blood and Body Fluids' (ESHT)
- Policy for 'Managing the Risks Associated with Infection Prevention and Control (ESHT)
- Use and Management of the Pneumatic Sample Delivery System (ESHT)
- QC 060 Pathology Transport Emergency (TREM card
- Transport Services Drivers Handbook
Due Regard, Equality & Human Rights Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of document:</th>
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Who will be affected by this work? E.g. staff, patients, service users, partner organisations etc.

Please include a brief summary of intended outcome:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the work affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of: (Ensure you comment on any affected characteristic and link to main policy with page/paragraph number)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes/No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability (including carers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion &amp; Belief</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Sexual Orientation (LGBT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Reassignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Identified Groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently and what is/are the evidence source(s)? | (Ensure you comment and link to main policy with page/paragraph number) |
|---|

| What are the impacts and alternatives of implementing / not implementing the work / policy? | (Ensure you comment and link to main policy with page/paragraph number) |
|---|

| Please evidence how this work / policy seeks to “eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation” as per the Equality Act 2010? | (Ensure you comment and link to main policy with page/paragraph number) |
|---|

| Please evidence how this work / policy seeks to “advance equality of opportunity between people sharing a protected characteristic and those who do not” as per the Equality Act 2010? | (Ensure you comment and link to main policy with page/paragraph number) |
|---|
6. **Please evidence how this work / policy will “Foster good relations between people sharing a protected characteristic and those who do not” as per the Equality Act 2010?**

(Ensure you comment and link to main policy with page/paragraph number)

7. **Has the policy/guidance been assessed in terms of Human Rights to ensure service users, carers and staff are treated in line with the FREDA principles (fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy)?**

(Ensure you comment and link to main policy with page/paragraph number)

8. **Please evidence how have you engaged stakeholders with an interest in protected characteristics in gathering evidence or testing the evidence available?**

(Ensure you comment and link to main policy with page/paragraph number)

9. **Have you have identified any negative impacts or inequalities on any protected characteristic and others? (Please attach evidence and plan of action ensure this negative impact / inequality is being monitored and addressed).**

(If yes ensure you comment and link to main policy with page/paragraph number)