

# Specimen Receiving, Processing and Accessioning

## CLINICAL PATHOLOGY:

### SPECIMEN RECEIVING AREAS

The Specimen Receiving Area is located at the VCUHS in the Clinical Support Center on the 6th floor for the purposes of receiving and accessioning specimens for processing by the laboratories. Specimens are received from inpatient hospital units, outpatient clinics, research grant programs, and outreach services.

Transfusion Medicine specimens should be delivered directly to the Gateway Building, 6th floor, for all VCUHS inpatient hospital units and outpatient clinics.

### SPECIMEN RECEIVING PROCEDURES

Orders on inpatients and outpatients are placed in the Clinical Information System (CIS). Specimen barcode labels are printed at the patient location. Upon arrival in the Specimen Receiving Area, specimens are logged into the information system with the specimen collection time and the arrival time. Specimens are then sorted according to laboratory and/or priority sections.

If necessary, specimens are spun and then aliquotted. Depending upon the tests requested, all specimens are either stored in the Specimen Receiving Area for later pickup by a specific laboratory or transferred immediately to an appropriate laboratory for analysis.

### GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTABLE / UNACCEPTABLE SPECIMENS AND REJECTION CRITERIA

The proper collection and transportation of specimens to the laboratory for analyses is required by the laboratory to provide valid analytical results for patient care. Specimens which are improperly collected or transported may result in invalid analytical results, and thus adversely affect patient care. Therefore, specimens which do not meet acceptable criteria may be rejected by the laboratory and a recollection requested. The following are criteria used for the possible rejection of specimens:

- specimen improperly labeled as to the patient identity (unlabeled or mislabeled)
- improper collection container, improper preservative, or improper anticoagulant

## Specimen Receiving, Processing and Accessioning

- incomplete test requisition (ie, required information not present)
- specimen volume inadequate (QNS) for analysis
- excessive delay in specimen transport or improperly transported (ie, not on ice when required)
- specimen contaminated with biological hazardous material

If a specimen is determined to be unacceptable, the clinical unit or physician will be contacted and informed that a new specimen is required, and this fact will also be noted in the CIS system. If an unacceptable specimen cannot be recollected (irreplaceable specimen), the requested analyses may be performed with written approval of the ordering physician and a staff pathologist or resident in pathology. The specimen problem will be noted on the result report.

## Transfusion Medicine

Specimens for Transfusion Medicine must be labeled with the patient's full name and hospital number (if hospital number is not available, then social security number must be used), date and time of collection, phlebotomist's signature on the tube. Specimens lacking proper identification may not be accepted by the laboratory.

# ANATOMIC PATHOLOGY:

## SPECIMEN RECEIVING AREAS

The Anatomic Pathology Receiving Area is located at the VCUHS in the Gateway Building on the 6th floor, for the purposes of receiving and accessioning specimens for processing by the laboratories. Specimens are received from inpatient hospital units, outpatient clinics, research grant programs, and outreach services. Clinical history is required for all patient samples. For neuropathology specimens, bone tumors, or consults, the radiology report and films are also requested. Consult material should be accompanied by any associated pathology report(s), including any preliminary report(s), H&E slides, and paraffin blocks where possible.

## SPECIMEN RECEIVING PROCEDURES

**Histopathology specimens** are received in the Receiving Area, fresh (unfixed), and properly labeled and packaged during working hours from 8 AM - 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday. Specimens are otherwise refrigerated (not frozen) and retained in the Operating Rooms or sent to the Specimen Receiving Area located in the Clinical Support Center on the 6th floor until the laboratory is open for delivery. On Saturday or Sunday, a pathology resident will collect specimens

from the Operating Room. All tissue specimens of the same patient received on the same day are given the same accession number. All tissue specimens received will be checked for prior accession number on that same day. Consult cases are delivered to the Anatomic Pathology Receiving Area. These cases are registered and given an accession number within 2 hours of receipt and delivered to the appropriate faculty member and/or laboratory.

**Cytopathology specimens** are received 24 hours/day in Central Receiving and Processing, Clinical Support Center, 6th floor. Each cytology sample must be accompanied by either an electronically generated sheet or manual requisition which will be accessioned in CIS.

**Hematopathology specimens** are received in Central Receiving and Processing, Clinical Support Center, 6th floor. Each Hematopathology specimen must be accompanied by an manual requisition. Specimens are accessioned in CIS.

**Ancillary testing specimens** for immunohistochemistry, hormone receptors, *in situ* hybridization, immunofluorescence and electron microscopy are received in the Anatomic Pathology Receiving Area 8 AM - 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday. After hours, specimens may be received in the Clinical Support Center Receiving Area. All specimens received are given an accession number upon receipt. Consult cases are delivered to the Anatomic Pathology Receiving Area. These cases are registered and given an accession number and delivered to the appropriate faculty member and/or laboratory within 2 hours of receipt.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTABLE / UNACCEPTABLE SPECIMENS AND REJECTION CRITERIA**

The proper collection and transportation of specimens to the laboratory for analyses is required by the laboratory to provide valid results for patient care. Specimens which are improperly collected or transported may result in invalid results and thus adversely affect patient care. Therefore, specimens which do not meet acceptable criteria may be rejected by the laboratory and a recollection where appropriate requested. The following are criteria used for the possible rejection of specimens:

- specimen improperly labeled (unlabeled or mislabeled) as to the patient identity
- improper collection/fixation
- incomplete test requisition (ie, required information not present)
- excessive delay in specimen transport or improperly transported (ie, not on ice when required)
- specimen contaminated with biological hazardous material

## Specimen Receiving, Processing and Accessioning

If a specimen is determined to be unacceptable, the physician or laboratory will be contacted and informed that a new specimen is required, and notification will be documented. If an unacceptable specimen cannot be recollected (irreplaceable specimen), the requested analyses may be performed with written approval by the ordering physician and a staff pathologist or resident in pathology. The specimen problem will be noted on the result report.

**Cytopathology:** All specimens submitted for cytologic studies must be properly labeled with patient name and medical record number. Gynecologic smears may be spray-fixed or placed in Pap bottles with fixative. Surepath™ is utilized for the collection of liquid based gynecologic samples. Sputum for malignant cells is collected in a sputum bottle for Papanicolaou studies and will not be processed unless it is collected in this container. Sputum for *Pneumocystis carinii* must be collected as a fresh, unfixed specimen. Body cavity fluids are collected fresh, unfixed in a sterile container. The Cytology Laboratory will not accept volumes of fluid in excess of 100 mL. If, at any time, a specimen is received in a condition which the medical director deems unsuitable, the specimen will be discarded.