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<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Clinical Effectiveness Facilitator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approved by</td>
<td>Operational Governance Approval group</td>
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<td>Date Approved</td>
<td>5 June 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Person responsible for review</td>
<td>Clinical Effectiveness Facilitator</td>
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### Policy Amendments

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Collection and Transportation of Specimens

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1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale

The quality of specimens sent for laboratory testing is important as it has implications for microbiological testing and the subsequent prescribing of drugs such as antibiotics (Royal College of Nursing, 2017).

Problems that can result from specimens that have been incorrectly collected, stored or handled include:

- false results from specimens delayed in reaching the laboratory
- the patient being inappropriately or unnecessarily prescribed antibiotics which can:
  - place them at risk of infections such as C.Difficile
  - increase the risk of antimicrobial resistance developing

(Royal College of Nursing, 2017)

Clinical specimens are human materials being transported to the Pathology Laboratory for testing. They may have been obtained to aid diagnosis or for the purpose of investigation (Health and Community Services, 2019a).

As human materials, they should be regarded as potentially infectious and should therefore be handled and transported in such a way that reduces the risk of infection transmission to others.

This policy and its accompanying standard operating procedures have been developed to standardise the way that all specimens are collected, handled and transported so infection prevention and control requirements & Health and Safety regulations are met.

1.2 Scope

Within the scope of this policy and accompanying procedures are the handling of specimens from collection through to their final destination at the Pathology Laboratory. Decision-making about the need to take a specimen is not within the scope of this policy nor is the action to be taken when the results are available.

1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

1.3.1 Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility to ensure that:

- the organisation meets its legal obligations for the health and safety of its employees
- the requirements for using this policy and procedures are met and that adequate resources are made available to meet these requirements

1.3.2 Quality and Governance Lead

The Quality and Governance Lead has a responsibility to:

- ensure that concerns raised about the effectiveness of policies, systems and procedures regarding the collection and transportation of specimens are acted upon
- monitor specimen-related incidents recorded through the incident reporting system (Assure) and report trends and monthly figures at the Operational
Collection and Transportation of Specimens

Governance Meetings
- ensure that training is available and attendance is monitored
- report levels of non-attendance at training to the Operational Governance Group

1.3.3 Clinical Effectiveness Facilitator
The Clinical Effectiveness Facilitator has a responsibility to:
- monitor the systems and processes in place for the safe management of specimens
- act upon concerns raised about the management of specimens
- update this policy and procedures in line with new legislation and current best practice

1.3.4 Operational Leads & Home Care Manager
The Operational Leads and Home Care Manager have a responsibility to:
- monitor the effectiveness of this policy and procedures for the safe collection, handling and transportation of specimens within their service areas
- ensure working practices facilitate safety in line with legal and regulatory requirements
- monitor compliance with the training requirements for this policy

1.3.5 Team Leaders/Line Managers
Team Leaders/Line Managers have a responsibility to:
- ensure all staff are aware of this policy and related procedures
- ensure staff get a specimen transportation box
- monitoring compliance with this policy
- taking appropriate action where standards are not being met
- encourage incident reporting
- manage post incident reviews, debriefs and the implementation of lessons learned
- release staff for training

1.3.6 Staff
Staff involved at any stage of specimen handling from collection to delivery of the specimen to the laboratory have a responsibility to:
- comply with this policy and its related procedural documents
- use risk assessment to minimise risk
- use standard precautions when handling specimens
- report all incidents relating to specimens through the incident reporting system
- work within their sphere of competence
- identify and address any learning needs they may have in relation to collecting, handling and transporting specimens
Collection and Transportation of Specimens

1.4 Principals
Specimens are collected, handled and transported in a manner that ensures the integrity of the sample.
Safe working practices are always used in order to maintain the health and safety of all involved.
Patient confidentiality is maintained when specimens and transported.

2. Policy

2.1 Training
Staff should be trained in the collection, handling and management of specimens (Royal College of Nursing, 2017).
Family Nursing & Home Care staff are required to undertake mandatory Infection Prevention and Control training annually.

2.2 Collecting Specimens
The quality of specimens for laboratory analysis begins when they are obtained. There are several different types of specimen that staff may be required to get and it is therefore important that it is done so in the correct way, using the approved collection container.
Use standard precautions at all times. Wear personal protective equipment in line with local policy. (add link to updated HH & PPE Policy)
Collect specimens in an aseptic manner to avoid them becoming contaminated which could affect the laboratory findings (Royal College of Nursing, 2017).
Give consideration to the time specimens are obtained to ensure that there are laboratory facilities available to test the sample within an appropriate timeframe.
Collect specimens in the appropriate sterile container and securely seal it to avoid leakage and contamination. See the current Health and Community Services Pathology Users Guide available at
https://soj/depts/HSS/HospitalServices/Pages/Pathology.aspx#anchor-0

2.3 Labelling Specimens
To ensure that the correct patient receives the correct treatment, accurately label specimens.
Label specimens with the correct patient information. See Pathology Users Guide above.
Fully complete the sample request form and include information about current or recent antibiotic therapy (Royal College of Nursing, 2017)

2.4 Transporting Specimens
Specimens should arrive at the laboratory in the best possible condition and therefore need to be handled in such a way that achieves this requirement.
Ensure that specimens arrive in the laboratory as soon as possible after they are obtained. Do not leave them sitting at designated collection sites (or elsewhere) overnight.
The handling and transportation of laboratory specimens carries a risk to the handler and to others who may inadvertently come into contact with them if spillage occurs. To reduce the risk of specimens being damaged in transit, carry them in a designated
specimen transportation box (see 2.4.1 for details). Do not transport specimens by hand or in a pocket and do not send them via the internal mail system (Health and Community Services, 2019a).

Use standard precautions at all times.

**2.4.1 Specimen Transport Boxes**

Ensure all staff who may be required to transport specimens have a designated transportation box. Such a box should be of a robust construction, leak-proof, wipeable and designated solely for this purpose (Health and Community Services 2019a). Ensure they are lined with absorbent paper e.g. paper towels or kitchen roll.

All staff involved in the collection and transportation of specimens will have a specimen transportation box as a standard part of their equipment. The box will be labelled with a bio-hazard label and with Family Nursing & Home Care’s contact details, should it be lost.

Seal specimens for transportation within the plastic bag attached to the request form and place in the transportation box.

Multiple samples can be carried in the transportation box. Do not overfill the box.

Keep specimen transportation boxes clean and in good order (see SOP 3). Replace boxes when required.

**2.5 Designated Collection Sites**

Store specimens awaiting transit away from public areas and staff rest rooms (Infection Prevention Society, date unknown)

Family Nursing & Home Care have a designated specimen collection point in the reception at Le Bas. Specimens are collected from this location twice a day (approximately 12.30 and 15.30).

The Pathology Laboratory have arrangements in place for specimens to be collected at set times from GP surgeries. There are agreements in place for Family Nursing & Home Care to leave specimens at the GP surgeries at the New Era and St Peter Clinics. See section 2.7 regarding the maintenance of patient confidentiality.

Staff need to be aware of the scheduled collection times from designated collection sites to ensure that specimens are transported to the laboratory as soon as possible. **Do not leave specimens sitting at designated collection sites (or elsewhere) overnight.**

**2.6 Infection Prevention and Control**

Use standard precautions at all times, including the use of personal protective equipment as per local policy.

Use an aseptic technique when obtaining specimens and collect them in a sterile container (Royal College of Nursing, 2017).

Avoid contaminating the outside of the specimen container and request form.

Seal samples within the plastic bag attached to the request form.

Line specimen transportation boxes with absorbent paper e.g. paper towels or kitchen roll. This provides some cushioning as well as a means to soak up any spillage, should this occur.

 Routinely clean boxes weekly using the currently approved cleaning wipes. See SOP 3 for further details.

Clean any visible contamination immediately.
Collection and Transportation of Specimens

Change the absorbent paper towels weekly when the box is cleaned or before this if there is any visible contamination.

In the event of spillage within the box, deal with this immediately in accordance with local policy - see Waste Management Policy and Procedures for how to deal with spillages [https://www.fnhc.org.je/media/42899/waste-management-policies-procedures-including-procedures-for-accidental-spillages-july-17.pdf](https://www.fnhc.org.je/media/42899/waste-management-policies-procedures-including-procedures-for-accidental-spillages-july-17.pdf).

If reception staff identify a spillage involving the specimen collection box held in Le Bas, notify a member of Nursing Staff immediately who will deal with the problem following local policy.

### 2.7 Patient Confidentiality

Always handle and transport specimens in such a way that maintains patient confidentiality.

Do not hand specimens being left in GP surgeries to surgery staff. Place them directly into the surgery’s collection container.

See SOP 2

### 2.8 Recordkeeping

Record the date and time that the specimen was taken and why it was required. Put a plan in place to ensure that the results are followed up and acted upon in a timely manner. At the time of ratifying this policy, new FNHC guidelines for managing laboratory results are in development.

### 2.9 Incident Reporting

Report any incident regarding specimen handling via ASSURE and as per the Family Nursing & Home Care incident reporting policy. Incidents could include (but are not limited to) spillage of samples; broken samples; mislabelling and lost specimen transportation boxes.

Trends in reported incidents will be identified and raised at the Operational Governance meeting. Take action to address any concern raised.

### 3 Procedures

These standard operating procedures (SOPs) should be followed for:

- SOP 1 Collecting and Labelling Specimens
- SOP 2 Handling and Transporting Specimens
- SOP 3 Care of Specimen Transportation Boxes
SOP 1 Collecting and Labelling Specimens

Purpose

The quality of specimens for laboratory analysis begins when they are obtained. There are several different types of specimen that staff may be required to collect and it is therefore important that it is done in the correct way using the approved collection container. Furthermore, to ensure that the correct patient receives the correct treatment, specimens need to be properly labelled.

Scope

This standard operating procedure (SOP) covers the collection and labelling of specimens for laboratory testing. It does not cover decision-making about the need to take a specimen.

Core Requirements

- Use standard precautions at all times. Wear personal protective equipment in line with local policy.
- Specimens need to be collected in an aseptic manner.
- Consider the time the specimen is taken to ensure that there are laboratory facilities available to test the sample within an appropriate timeframe.
- Collect the specimen in the appropriate sterile container - see the current Health and Community Services Pathology Users Guide available at [https://soj/depts/HSS/HospitalServices/Pages/Pathology.aspx#anchor-0](https://soj/depts/HSS/HospitalServices/Pages/Pathology.aspx#anchor-0).
- Seal specimen container securely to avoid leakage and contamination.
- Label the specimen with the correct patient information. See Pathology Users Guide above.
- Fully complete the specimen request form and include information about current or recent antibiotic therapy.
- Take care to avoid contamination of the outside of the specimen container and request form.
- Seal the specimen within the plastic bag attached to the request form.
- Record in the patient’s care record that the specimen has been taken and the rationale for why it was obtained.
- Send specimen to the laboratory as soon as possible. See SOP 2 for the transportation of specimens.
- **Do not leave specimens sitting at the designated collection site (or elsewhere) overnight.**
SOP 2 Handling and Transporting Specimens

**Purpose**

Specimens should arrive at the laboratory in the best possible condition and therefore need to be handled in such a way that achieves this requirement.

The handling and transportation of laboratory specimens carries a risk to the handler and others who may inadvertently come into contact with them if spillage were to occur. Everyone involved in the handling and transportation of clinical specimens has a responsibility to ensure that Health & Safety regulations are met.

**Scope**

This standard operating procedure (SOP) covers the safe handling/transportation of specimens to ensure best practice in:

- infection prevention and control
- health and safety

**Core Requirements**

- Use standard precautions at all times.
- DO NOT transport specimens by hand or in a pocket
- DO NOT send specimens via the internal mail system.
- Transport all specimens in a designated transportation box.
- Prior to transportation seal the specimen within the plastic bag attached to the request form and place it in the transportation box.
- Multiple specimens can be carried in the transportation box.
- Handle and transport specimens in such a way that maintains patient confidentiality.
- Specimens can either be taken directly to the pathology laboratory reception at Jersey General Hospital or to a designated collection site.
- Be aware of the collection times for specimens and make alternative arrangements to get them to the laboratory should they miss the designated collection time. Do not leave specimens sitting at the designated collection site (or elsewhere) overnight.
- There are two collection times for specimens being left in the designated collection box in the reception at Le Bas (approximately 12.30 and 15.30). Where applicable, check with the reception staff that the final collection has not been missed. Alternative arrangements will need to be made so the specimen is not left sitting overnight.
- Arrangements are in place for staff from the outlying District Nursing bases at New Era and St Peter to leave samples at the designated collection point for the GP surgeries on these sites. The Pathology Laboratory have arrangements in place to collect the specimens at designated times. Staff using these facilities must ensure
that they know the designated collection times. Alternative arrangements will need to be made where the collection deadline is missed.

- To facilitate patient confidentiality, do not hand specimens to the reception staff. Place them directly into the surgery’s designated collection container.

- Where it has been necessary to collect specimens outside of the normal working hours of the Pathology Laboratory, these should be taken to the Switchboard at the Parade entrance of the Hospital. There, they should be stored in accordance with the Laboratory’s sample storage requirements which may include refrigeration (see Pathology Users Guide https://soj/depts/HSS/HospitalServices/Pages/Pathology.aspx#anchor-0). Such samples will not be analysed until the following day.

- Be aware of the working hours of the Pathology Laboratory including reduced operating hours on public holidays. Changes to normal working hours may be found on the My States Health and Community Services intranet site.
**Standard Operating Procedures**

**SOP 3 Care of Specimen Transportation Boxes**

**Purpose**

Any specimen being transported needs to be in a designated specimen transportation box. Such boxes need to facilitate good infection prevention & control and health & safety practice. They should be clean and in good repair.

**Scope**

This standard operating procedure (SOP) covers:

- where to get a specimen transportation box
- routine cleaning
- dealing with spillages

**Core Requirements**

- Order specimen transportation boxes through the Family Nursing & Home Care Stores Department under ‘staff stock’.
- Clean any visible contamination immediately.
- Undertake routine cleaning of the box weekly using the currently approved decontamination wipes and standard precautions
- Change the absorbent paper at the time of cleaning the transportation box.
- Replace any specimen transportation box that is no longer in good repair/fit for purpose.
- Reception staff at Le Bas are responsible for:
  - cleaning the box held in the reception
  - changing the absorbent paper
  - ordering a replacement box from stores when this is required
- In the event of any spillage within a box, deal with this immediately in accordance with local policy - see Waste Management Policy and Procedures for how to deal with spillages [https://www.fnhc.org.je/media/42899/waste-management-policies-procedures-including-procedures-for-accidental-spillages-july-17.pdf](https://www.fnhc.org.je/media/42899/waste-management-policies-procedures-including-procedures-for-accidental-spillages-july-17.pdf).
- If reception staff identify a spillage in or visible contamination to the box held in the Le Bas Reception, notify a member of nursing staff immediately. The member of nursing staff will deal with any spillage/contamination following local policy.
4. Development, Consultation & Ratification

4.1 Consultation Schedule

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<tr>
<td>Clare Stewart</td>
<td>Operational Lead – Rapid Response and Reablement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jay Clarke</td>
<td>Team Leader – DN West</td>
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<td>Linda Huard</td>
<td>Staff Nurse</td>
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<td>Paula Smith</td>
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<td>Julia Foley</td>
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<td>Angela Stewart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gill John</td>
<td>Team Leader – Children's Community Nursing Team</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Team Leader – School Nursing Team</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Eleanor Burrell</td>
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4.2 Ratification Process

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<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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5. References
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Infection Prevention Society (date unknown) Transportation of Specimens https://www.ips.uk.net/files/7713/8044/9272/Transportation_of_specimens_PIT.pdf (last accessed 18/01/19)


6. Bibliography