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MEDISEC

Steps to Safer Management of Test Results

STEP 1

ORDERING OF LABORATORY TESTS

When ordering laboratory tests, ensure that:

- the tests requested are clearly communicated to the patient and the patient understands why the tests are being ordered, and how results will be communicated. Use the opportunity to check the patient's contact details.
- the specific tests are documented clearly in the patient's file
- have a system in place to follow-up patients who you are particularly concerned about and fail to turn up for scheduled blood tests.

STEP 2

OBTAINING A SAMPLE

Before obtaining a blood test ensure:

- the patient is situated in a suitable location e.g. on an examination couch or sitting in a reclining phlebotomy chair
- hand hygiene is performed in line with best practice
- PPE is in place with proper fit disposable gloves
- the patient is informed of what blood tests are being taken and provides informed consent
- specific counselling is provided, in particular for genetic testing and consequences of a positive result e.g, hereditary haemochromatosis and HIV.

STEP 3

ADMINISTRATION OF SAMPLES

- Always check the patient's identity prior to labelling specimens and pathology forms.
- Ensure the requesting clinician's laboratory code is detailed on the pathology form thus enabling the result to be returned to the requesting clinician.
- Specific care should be taken with any handwritten samples and forms to ensure the handwriting is legible.
- The practice should ensure that they have a robust system in place to track all tests requested to ensure they are returned to the practice as results.

STEP 4

TRANSPORT OF SAMPLES TO THE LABORATORY

- Once the sample has been taken and labelled it should be placed in a sealable leak-proof pathology bag and accompanied with the request form In line with local policy.
- Samples should be transported to the laboratory in a rigid leak-proof container which should be clearly labelled with the UN 3373 diamond-shaped bio-hazard label and must comply with the ADR Dangerous Goods by Road Regulations. If your practice uses an external courier service you need to ensure compliance with regulations and local guidelines.

- Samples that are collected outside routine collection times should be stored in a separate sample refrigerator if required to do so, whilst awaiting collection.

STEP 5

MANAGING RESULTS RETURNED TO THE PRACTICE

The practice should ensure it has a robust system for managing all results returned to the practice both in paper and electronic format. Currently, most laboratories communicate electronic results via Healthlink.

- The practice should agree on the frequency and responsibility of downloading results within the practice.
- Once downloaded they should be work flowed to the requesting clinician on the day of receipt.
- All urgent results phoned to the practice should be put directly through to the requesting GP or their deputy.
- Practices must consider their systems for managing critically abnormal results during out-of-hours and ensure that the laboratories are aware of this system.

STEP 6

CLINICAL REVIEW OF RESULTS

- All patient results should be reviewed in a timely fashion.
- Ideally, results should be reviewed by the requesting clinician. The overall clinical governance of reviewing results always lies with the requesting clinician.
- The practice should consider setting up a "Buddy System" for clinician cover when on leave or absent from the practice.

STEP 7

RESULTS ACTIONED OR FILED

- All results, both normal and abnormal, should be reviewed and actioned in an appropriate timeframe.
- It is important to remember that normal results may require action as well as abnormal.
- All practices should have a pro-active system for contacting patients with results. Patients should be advised not to assume their results are normal if they do not hear anything – *"No news is not necessarily good news".*
- When communicating results to patients always ensure you have the correct patient details. Ask the patient to confirm their name, address, and date of birth.
- Messaging should be clear and unambiguous and non- clinical staff should **never** enter into a clinical discussion about results

STEP 8

PATIENT IS MONITORED THROUGH TO FOLLOW-UP

- It is important to ensure the practice has a robust system in place to follow-up patients in a timely and safe manner Any communication regarding follow-up should be documented clearly in the patient's clinical file.
- All internal communication regarding patient follow-up should be clearly recorded in the patient's file thus providing a clear audit trail.
- A system should be in place to alert clinicians regarding a repeat test at the appropriate time where it is clinically indicated.