

Southend University Hospital NHS Trust	GP MP 006 Policy for the Transport of Pathology Samples
Pathology Department	Version 3.0
	Page 1 of 10

POLICY FOR THE TRANSPORT OF PATHOLOGY SAMPLES

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2.0	7 th Apr 10	D Burn	New specimen carriage arrangements for couriers. Contacts in case of spillage updated
3.0	28 th April 11	D Burn	Change to model rules for porters with respect to dealing with spillages

GP MP 006 Transport of Pathology Samples	Date of Review: 28 th April 2011
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Southend University Hospital NHS Trust	GP MP 006 Policy for the Transport of Pathology Samples
Pathology Department	Version 3.0
	Page 2 of 10

CONTENTS

1.	Scope of the Procedure	3
2.	Responsibility	3
3.	References	3
4.	Related Documentation	3
5.	Transport of Samples Within the Hospital	4
6.	Transport of samples using Courier Services	5
7.	Transport of Samples by Private Taxi Firms	7
8.	Transport of Samples using the Postal System	8
9.	Use of the Pneumatic Transport System	8
10.	Model Rules – Transport Drivers	9
11.	Model Rules – Porters	10

GP MP 006 Transport of Pathology Samples	Date of Review: 28 th April 2011
Author: Diane Burn	Next Review Date: 28 th April 2012
This document is controlled and must not be photocopied or reproduced in any way. Any unauthorised printed copy should be regarded as valid only on the date of printing.	

Southend University Hospital NHS Trust	GP MP 006 Policy for the Transport of Pathology Samples
Pathology Department	Version 3.0
	Page 3 of 10

1. Scope of the Procedure

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. 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 <i>Best Practice Guidance for Microbiology Laboratories</i>	2007
Transport of Dangerous Goods for Health Professionals	2001
Approved methods for the Classification and Packaging of Dangerous Goods for Carriage by Road and Rail	1994
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

4. Related Documentation

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

GP MP 006 Transport of Pathology Samples	Date of Review: 28 th April 2011
Author: Diane Burn	Next Review Date: 28 th April 2012
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Southend University Hospital NHS Trust	GP MP 006 Policy for the Transport of Pathology Samples
Pathology Department	Version 3.0
	Page 4 of 10

IC 016	Infection Control Policy (Southend University Hospital NHSFT)
IC 027	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
Risk assessment RA ID 688	Tube Transfer System

5. 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. 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.
- 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.**

GP MP 006 Transport of Pathology Samples	Date of Review: 28 th April 2011
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Southend University Hospital NHS Trust	GP MP 006 Policy for the Transport of Pathology Samples
Pathology Department	Version 3.0
	Page 5 of 10

6. 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 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-bloods) 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 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 (Ext: 5411) or, in the event of Formalin spillage the Cellular Pathology Laboratory (Ext: 6630), must be contacted before any material is touched.

GP MP 006 Transport of Pathology Samples	Date of Review: 28 th April 2011
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Southend University Hospital NHS Trust	GP MP 006 Policy for the Transport of Pathology Samples
Pathology Department	Version 3.0
	Page 6 of 10

- 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.

GP MP 006 Transport of Pathology Samples	Date of Review: 28 th April 2011
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Southend University Hospital NHS Trust	GP MP 006 Policy for the Transport of Pathology Samples
Pathology Department	Version 3.0
	Page 7 of 10

7. 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.

- 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.
- 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.

GP MP 006 Transport of Pathology Samples	Date of Review: 28 th April 2011
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Southend University Hospital NHS Trust	GP MP 006 Policy for the Transport of Pathology Samples
Pathology Department	Version 3.0
	Page 8 of 10

8. 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 plastic 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.

9. 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).

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Southend University Hospital NHS Trust	GP MP 006 Policy for the Transport of Pathology Samples
Pathology Department	Version 3.0
	Page 9 of 10

10. 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 and a spillage kit
- sharps box
- 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, 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 (Ext: 6630).

This spill can only be dealt with by the laboratory.

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Southend University Hospital NHS Trust	GP MP 006 Policy for the Transport of Pathology Samples
Pathology Department	Version 3.0
	Page 10 of 10

11. 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

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