Specimen and Request Form Labelling Policy

Policy

To reject specimens whenever a significant doubt exists over the identity of the specimen i.e. unlabelled and mislabelled specimens.

Specimens that are labelled with some patient details but do not meet minimum labelling requirements are processed with a disclaimer comment added.

It is the policy of CHL not to return specimens for re-labelling or amending (histology and cytology requests and certain sample types are excepted).

Purpose

- To prevent results being reported when there is a significant risk of incorrect patient identification.
- To provide correct and efficient reports in a timely manner for patient care and to ensure patient safety.
- To provide sufficient information to identify the patient, the authorised requestor, and the relevant clinical information.
- To ensure reports are issued to those legally entitled to receive them.
- To comply with regulatory requirements.

Minimum Labelling Requirements

This policy does not apply to specimens processed by New Zealand Blood Service (NZBS). Please refer to the NZBS policy.

At least two unique identifiers must be present on the specimen:

- Surname and given name (mandatory), and one of the following
- Date of Birth
- NHI number
- Referral laboratory number - applies only to aliquots

Approved locations only: Unique patient identifier code and DOB *or* NHI number

The following information must be present on the request form:

- Family name and given name, plus NHI or DOB OR a unique code used by approved locations (e.g. STD clinic samples, donor number, etc.), and DOB;
- name or unique identifier of physician or person legally authorised to request examinations or use medical information;
- location for the report;
- tests required.

Desired

- signature of the approved requestor;
- where relevant - the full address and name of the health care provider to whom a copy of the report is to be sent;

- beep or contact number of requestor.

Labelling errors

Specimens that are **unlabelled** or **mislabelled** will be **rejected** prior to any testing unless those specimens meet the exceptions criteria.

Note: Samples will not be returned to the referrer for relabelling. These requirements apply to all samples, including Emergency/Urgent situations.

Minor mislabelled samples will be processed and reported with a disclaimer.

Labelling error definitions

Unlabelled*:* Specimen received with no identifiers or the minimum requirements have not been met – will not be processed.

Mislabelled*:* Specimen received where identifiers do not match the accompanying request form - will not be processed.

Minor mislabelled: Identifiers do not match the request form, but the error is minor and there is only one minor error – will be processed but the clinical referrer will need to take responsibility for the results.

The only acceptable minor errors are indicated below:

- Short form of given name i.e. Beth/Liz/Elizabeth
- Current year as year of birth
- Transcription error of digit/letter
- Common alias, e.g. Richard/Dick,
- Surname and initial only if DoB and NHI are correct

Exceptions

Specimens that meet the exceptions criteria below will be processed only with completion of a Laboratory Specimen Labelling Error Correction and Patient Discussion Declaration. Samples will not be tested until declaration form is fully complete.

Exceptions List:

Amniotic fluids
Aspirated body fluids
Biopsies
Bone marrow /bone marrow donor specimens
Bronchial wash
Chorionic villi
Corneal scrape
CSF
Foetal bloods/ fibronectin /tissue
Fluids (ascitic, CAPD, cyst, ocular, pleural)
Harvest specimens
Miscarriage products
Stones
Tissues
Vitreous humour

Note: Paediatric samples and clinical trial specimens will be determined on a case by case basis and will need to be signed off by the testing laboratory's Clinical Director or delegate.