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Diagnostic Cytology Specimen Acceptance Policy

Policy

Diagnostic Cytology department at BC Cancer has quality standards for accepting specimens for processing. All specimens must be received with the corresponding test requisition, and all patient demographics must be correct. When a specimen arrives without a requisition and/or incorrect patient demographics, this constitutes a major deficiency, and the specimen does not meet the criteria for routine processing.

Diagnostic Cytology categorizes specimens into replaceable and irreplaceable. When an irreplaceable specimen is received with a major deficiency, the laboratory will promptly notify the submitting clinician or authorized designate. This communication enables timely resolution of the deficiency, supports patient safety and specimen traceability, and minimizes delays in testing and reporting. Once the deficiency has been satisfactorily resolved and documented, the specimen may proceed for processing in accordance with departmental procedures.

The following specimen deficiencies **DO NOT** meet the criteria for processing:

- Illegible Container label
- Specimens lacking two unique identifiers
- Unlabelled Slides/Specimen container
- Broken slides
- Incomplete/Incorrect Requisitions
- Mismatched information between specimen container and requisition
- Specimens consisting of or containing materials not accepted for cytologic examination, including: vomitus, fecal matter, insects, ticks, toenails/fingernails, tampons, foreign objects, bile, semen, or breast milk.
- Vitreous Fluid
- Specimens from patients with known or suspected **Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) or other prion diseases**. Due to biosafety and laboratory processing limitations, these specimens cannot be accepted for cytologic examination and will be rejected.

For rejected specimens, a **specimen rejection report** will be issued to the submitting clinician, outlining the reason for rejection and, where appropriate, recommendations for specimen recollection and resubmission.

Clinicians are encouraged to consult the **BC Cancer Diagnostic Cytology website** for current specimen collection requirements, submission instructions, acceptable specimen types, and specimen acceptance criteria to minimize delays in testing and reporting.

www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/laboratory-services/diagnostic-cytology

Purpose

Diagnostic Cytology complies with established policies, procedures, and accreditation standards to ensure patient safety, regulatory compliance, and the integrity of laboratory testing. The quality, accuracy, and reliability of laboratory results can only be assured when specimens and accompanying test requests meet defined acceptance criteria.

Scope

This Policy applies to BC Cancer, Diagnostic Cytology Laboratory.

References:

Provincial Health Services Authority Laboratories Policies

Diagnostic Accreditation Program Standards www.cpsbc.ca/programs/dap

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