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9(2)(a)

RE Official Information Act request CDHB 10814 & WCDHB 9666

I refer to your email dated 14 January 2022, subsequently clarified on 17 January 2022, to the Ministry of Health which they transferred to us on 11 February 2022 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act from Canterbury DHB and West Coast DHB. Specifically:

I require whatever official guidance documents we use in New Zealand to cover the handling and transportation of microbiology samples from provincial hospitals to centralized testing laboratories. I expect that official guidance would cover aspects such as reported by Miller et al. [1] including transport media, temperature and time from specimen extraction from patient until the analysis is completed at the centralized laboratory.

[1] Miller et al., A guide to utilization of the microbiology laboratory for diagnosis of infectious diseases 2018: Updated by the Infectious Diseases Society of America and the American Society of Microbiology. *Current Infectious Diseases* 2018, 67(6), e1-e94. doi: 10.1093/cid/ciy381;

IANZ-accredited pathology laboratories in New Zealand, which includes the Canterbury DHB and West Coast DHB laboratories, comply with ISO 15189:2012.

This standard has a section (5.4.4) about primary sample collection and handling. In brief, it includes requirements for the provision of documented procedures for the collection, handling

and transportation of samples to ensure the integrity of the specimen and the safety of the carrier.

This standard is fulfilled at Canterbury DHB and West Coast DHB through the provision of

- a. the CHL Test Manager, <http://www.labnet.health.nz/testmanager/>, a publicly available website which provides sample collection, storage, and transport requirements, and
- b. the Specimen Transport Manual which is used internally and describes our courier collection arrangements for referral laboratories (relevant extract attached as **Appendix 1**).

I trust that this satisfies your interest in this matter.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Canterbury DHB website and West Coast DHB website after your receipt of this response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Rls', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ralph La Salle
Senior Manager, OIAs
Canterbury DHB & West Coast DHB

3. Receipt of External Referred Work - IN

Purpose

To provide instructions for receiving specimens from external referrers.

Associated Documents

Reception Manual Section 9.0. This section covers the receipt of samples from patients, over the counter via taxis and couriers (RTS), Lamson tube and Blood Test Centre.

[Reception Protocol Manual.](#)

3.1 Specimens from CSCL

These are delivered to specimen reception by CSCL couriers.

Specimens are sorted, time clocked and processed.

Request information is contained on the sendaway sticker on the request form.

Empty boxes are put on the appropriate shelves for recollection.

3.2 Courier Bins from Burwood and TPMH

These are delivered to specimen registration and the card attached to the top of the courier bin is time stamped and signed.

The bins are opened and the contents sorted and time stamped. Any urgent samples are dealt with as a priority.

Specimens are handled in accordance with reception protocol.

Bin cards are placed in the card file, which is in the bookshelf in registration.

Empty chilly bins go on the appropriate labelled shelves in the courier room for collection.

3.3 Out of Town Chilly Bins

This service is provided by CHL using Courier Post.

The bins are put out on the loading bay for collection before midday, Monday to Friday.

Verify all bins present and correct, and check off against the check sheet.

All bins require a Courier Post 'Connect-It' label. Pre-printed labels are in the file kept in the Section Head's office.

Courier Post scan the ticket upon collection and they will know how many bins have been collected at each location. These are checked off against the delivery and Courier Post provides a check sheet on delivery. Missing bins are tracked by Courier Post.

Courier Post can be contacted on 0800 268 7437 or the fleet manager on 027 2326181.

3.4 Processing the Bins

Empty all chilly bins as they are checked against the contents on card and mark on the check sheet. Any chilly bins that do not arrive, telephone 0800 268 7437.

All multilabs samples, frozen, ambient, PCR and Chlamydia from Wairau, Nelson, Taranaki and Hastings Hospital are put on individual trays with their packing slips to be marked off once all chilly bins are emptied.

All other packing slips apart from the multilabs are placed on a separate tray. All frozen specimens are taken out and put in a separate bin (make sure they are not thawed). Thawed specimens will be stamped 'Received thawed'. Photocopy the card to be given to the supervisor and notify the laboratory concerned regarding thawed specimens.

When complete, chilly bins are checked to see that they are empty of all specimens. Plain and frozen bottles are returned to the correct bins. This information is obtained from the clipboard check sheet. Initial the check sheet when completed.

Check condition of chilly bin, including the address card on the lid. Replace card if required. Bins that require cleaning or maintenance forward to the Site Co-ordinator, label and use one of the spare bins in its place.

Bins are collected from the back landing Monday to Friday by Courier Post.

Laminated re-useable cards are flipped over for return trip.

3.5 Check Sheet for Overnight Couriers

[Refer Section 6, Appendices.](#)

Some locations require faxed confirmation of receipt of samples. These labs are identified on the check sheet.

3.6 Dispatch of Referred Samples to CHL

CHL provide a courier collection service for work referred to CHL. This service is provided by Courier Post. Chilly bins (blue/grey) are supplied by CHL. Each bin has a unique number and may contain a green, pink or blue ice bio bottle for frozen samples (if required).

3.6.1 Courier Arrangements

Courier Post are contracted to collect the bins from each laboratory and deliver overnight to CHL. The bins are usually collected between 4.30 and 5.00pm and delivered to CHL around 6am the following day. Work commences on processing the samples at 6.00am.

If a bin has not been collected it will be delivered the following day to be processed. The service provided meets the requirements for the transport of biological substances, category B in accordance with IATA packing note 650 (appendix 5.3).

3.6.2 Dispatch Cards

Each laboratory has pink cards specially printed with the laboratory address and courier barcode attached. These are able to be used indefinitely by flipping over to display the destination address.

3.6.3 Packing and Packing Slips

Samples need to be packed in leak proof sample tubes or containers. Parafilm can be put around the lids to further lessen the chance of leakage. It is preferable that each sample be placed in a separate specimen bag, however it is often convenient to batch a number of ambient tubes together. Samples are to be wrapped individually in paper towel to act as an absorbent. Do not sellotape to secure the packing around the tube. Once packed all tubes should be placed into bubble wrap then a bio bottle for shipment.

Frozen samples - singles or multiples can be put in one bag (with tubes wrapped individually or collectively in paper towel). Request forms can be kept together in a single bag and do not need to be placed in the green, pink or blue ice with the samples.

All samples and forms should be clearly labelled with the lab number/ref number, surname, initial, and test. NHI number is preferred where possible.

It is preferable that each test has its own aliquot. When small samples do not allow this and the sample has to be shared, please note the order of preference for the tests to be analysed on the request form.

A copy of the request form, with the CHL test referral label attached, completed with test request and charge to details should accompany each sample. A single form can accompany multiple aliquots, as long as all tests requested are listed on the form.

Frozen samples will require a separate form.

A **packing slip** clearly detailing all samples dispatched, the ref/lab number, tests required, and the courier details shall accompany each bin.

3.6.4 Public Holiday Service

Laboratories will be notified of the schedule with regard to public holidays. If in doubt contact CHL on 0800 THE LAB. In the event that urgent samples must be sent contact CHL and special arrangements will be made.

3.6.5 Samples that have Special Requirements

Samples and forms from multilabs are sent straight to the section at CHL that does the testing. For each section a separate aliquot is required and a copy of the request for each aliquot sent.

Generally, multiple samples on the same patient require separate numbers for each sample regardless of the request.

Serial insulins must have separate numbers.
Serial cortisol tests may be on a single number.

Specimen bags containing PCR and Chlamydia samples should be put into the special envelopes provided by CHL. This enables these samples to be easily found and removed from the bins first so that processing can be started and turnaround times maintained.

3.6.6 Green, Pink or Blue Ice for Frozen Samples

Green, pink or blue ice bio bottles are supplied for the transport of frozen samples. If the green, pink or blue ice is frozen as per instructions and put in the polystyrene liner, samples will remain frozen until they are unpacked at CHL. In the event that samples thaw, these will be passed to the analysing laboratory to decide if it is suitable for analysis to proceed, and the requesting lab would be advised if this was not possible.

Green, pink or blue ice containers should be frozen (-20 to -80°C) for 48 hours prior to use. CHL puts absorbent pads into each of the bio bottles to absorb any leaks should samples thaw.

3.6.7 Urgent Requests – Incoming & Outgoing

The laboratory must advise CHL that an urgent sample has been dispatched in the overnight bin, and the tests required. CHL staff will ensure that this sample is located and given priority. When packing the bin, urgent samples and samples for PCR should be placed prominently on top of other samples.

Alternatively after hours, same day national service can be arranged for very urgent samples. The procedure is as follows:

- A call is placed to PACE couriers 0800 501 502
- Account number 91095743
- State the package is for CHL, give a name and pickup location

A PACE Courier contractor will pick up from your address. Details required are as follows:

- Delivery address of item
- Description of item