Packaging of Pathological Specimens for Transport by Road to, or between, hospital sites.

HSPOL 007

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<td>AUTHOR</td>
<td>Jenny Webster  Assistant General Manager, Pathology Services</td>
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LOCATION OF COPIES
1. Electronically copy on QWB
2. H&S Manual, Pathology General Office GRH
3. H&S Manual, Pathology General Office CGH
5. H&S Manual, Phlebotomy CGH

REVIEW HISTORY

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<td>August 2009</td>
<td>Jenny Webster</td>
<td>Updated to include specific reference to Histology samples and to take account of Pathology Reconfiguration</td>
<td>JM Webster</td>
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<td>May 2010</td>
<td>Jenny Webster</td>
<td>Update to include comments from Trust consultant Alex Lynch</td>
<td>J M Webster</td>
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<td>February 2012</td>
<td>Jenny Webster</td>
<td>See amendment history.</td>
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For Review History after February 2012, see QWB.
# AMENDMENT HISTORY

Please insert or discard pages as directed.

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**Principle**

The packaging of pathological specimens for diagnostic or investigational purposes are subject to regulation primarily through The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Dangerous Goods Regulations (DGR), the Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment Regulations 2009 and the European Directive ADR (road) 2011.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the correct packaging and transportation of diagnostic and investigational specimens to and between the Pathology Departments at Cheltenham General and Gloucestershire Royal Hospitals.

**Principal Stakeholders**

All Healthcare employees involved in the handling, despatch and transportation of diagnostic specimens must ensure that they are packaged according to the guidance provided, and that they are aware of the correct procedures in event of leakage/breakage of the samples in transit.

1. A memo relating to sample packaging, for circulation to GP Surgeries and Community Hospitals using the Pathology and/or Hospital Transport has been prepared. Appendix 1 shows the wording of this Memo.

2. The memo relating to leaking/broken samples, for circulation to Hospital Drivers and Courier/Taxi firms has also been prepared, and the wording is shown as Appendix 2.

3. Pathology Drivers have written instructions relating to leaking/broken samples in their Standard Operating Procedure Manual.

**Classification of specimens**

For the purposes of this procedure, it must be assumed that diagnostic specimens may potentially contain pathogens associated with risk groups 1, 2 and 3, and must therefore be packaged according to the general standard. ADR 2011 uses a new shipping name for diagnostic specimens, which it is reasonable to infer do not contain Risk Group 4 or UN2814 consigned pathogens.
UN3373 BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE, CATEGORY B
Packaging standard – applies to all samples

Potentially infectious substances should be packed according to Packaging Instruction 650 ADR.

1. Every pathological specimen must be enclosed in a primary leak-proof container
   (E.g. screw-cap universal container, Greiner blood bottle etc) and hermetically sealed or securely closed.

2. Ensure that all sample vials/bottles are labelled in accordance with the laboratory labelling policy with patient’s name, DOB or hospital number and laboratory number.

3. The primary container must be sealed in a leak-proof plastic bag (Minigrip, polythene or specimen bag with the request card attached to the outside).

4. Single or Multiple samples must then be sealed in a heavy-duty plastic bag containing absorbent material.

5. The entire package will be placed inside a secure, padded carrier for transportation on the Hospital or Pathology vans or the Shuttlebus.

6. Larger samples (24 hour urines, Histology buckets etc.) should be sealed inside a leak-proof plastic bag, with the request card attached to the outside, and then further sealed individually, inside a heavy-duty plastic bag containing an absorbent pad or other absorbent material.

Labelling

1. The heavy-duty plastic Transport bags will be marked 'Gloucestershire Hospitals NHSF Trust, with contact details for the relevant department, the 'Biohazard' logo and any relevant Chemical Hazard warning signs. The lettering or bag will be colour coded to identify the samples they contain:

   Red- Transfusion and Ante Natal samples.
   Green- Haematology/Chemical Pathology combined samples
   Blue- Microbiology
   Black- Histology
   Yellow- Cytology

   Where the samples are too large to go into the pre-printed bags (e.g. Large Histology buckets), clear bags may be used and their destination marked in indelible marker on the outside.
2. The Carriers will be clearly marked with the Trust’s name, the UN3373 mark and the words:

“BIOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE, CATEGORY B”

3. No other labelling is required.

**Sending method**

1. Samples packed in accordance with the above procedure may be sent by the Hospital or Pathology Van Service, or the Shuttlebus. Where multiple samples are transported in racks, these should be pre-sorted by speciality before racking. The rack and samples should be securely wrapped using ‘cling film’, and the forms (where applicable) sealed separately in a minigrip bag. The rack and forms should then be placed into the relevant heavy duty plastic bag containing the absorbent material, ready for transport using the padded carriers.

2. Samples for carriage by Taxi should be packaged according to the standard, up to and including point 3, and then the package should be placed into the normal ‘sandwich box’ container. The ‘sandwich box’ should then be sealed inside the relevant heavy duty plastic bag containing the absorbent material. This will not only provide compliance with the transportation regulations, but offer a greater degree of confidentiality where samples are transported by people other than NHS staff.

3. Urgent samples for Microbiology or Cytology can be packaged up to and including point 4, and then placed in a transport ‘pod’ with the green (Cytology) or yellow (Microbiology) screw cap which should be made tamper evident with the use of a cable tie through the handle.

4. Packaging of samples for transport by Royal Mail or other Courier are dealt with in a separate policy- ‘Packaging of Pathological Specimens for Transport by Mail’.

**References**

Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens  
*Categorisation of pathogens according to hazard and categories of containment*  
Second edition 1990

Health and Safety Executive  
*Biological Agents: Managing the risks in laboratories and healthcare premises*  
(2005)

Health Services Advisory Committee
Safe working and the prevention of infection in clinical laboratories and similar facilities
Second edition 2003
HSE Books

International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)

Pathology Department GHNHSFT
Specimen Labelling Policy – QMS POL 012
Appendix 1:

MEMO

To:    All GP Surgeries and Hospitals
CC:    Hospital Transport Manager, GHNHSFT
From:  Jenny Webster, Pathology Services Administrator
Date:
Subject:  Transport (by Road) of Pathological Specimens

In order to comply with the new transport regulations, we require all specimens to be packaged as follows:

1. Each sample should be enclosed in a primary leak-proof container, and securely closed. The sample must be labelled in accordance with the laboratory labelling policy, and placed inside a sealed leak-proof plastic bag with the request card attached.

   This part of the policy is consistent with current procedures.

2. Samples should then be 'sorted' by specialty i.e. by the form-
   Haematology/Chemistry, Microbiology, Histology etc.

   Large sealable plastic bags will be provided, which will contain absorbent pads. The sorted specimens should be placed (as a batch) into the relevant 'colour-coded' bag and sealed awaiting collection, i.e. one bag for each specialty.

   Red- Transfusion and Ante Natal samples.
   Green- Haematology/Chemical Pathology combined samples
   Blue- Microbiology
   Black- Histology
   Yellow- Cytology

   24 hour Urine collection bottles should be packaged separately to other samples, they should be sealed in a clear plastic bag, with the form attached to the outside. This should then be placed in a Haematology/Chemical Pathology bag containing the absorbent material.
3. Histology buckets should be sealed in a clear plastic bag with the form attached to the outside. This should then be placed in a second plastic bag which also contains some absorbent material. Label with the destination using indelible marker.

4. The Hospital/Pathology drivers will collect the samples in their bags and transport them to the Pathology Department using the padded carriers.

5. Where samples are sent by Taxi/Courier firms 'out of hours', the samples should be packaged as normal, and placed into the usual 'sandwich box'. The box should then be sealed inside the relevant bag containing the absorbent material.

Please Note:

1. If specimens are placed in the wrong coloured bag, they may be taken to the wrong laboratory, causing delay in analysis.
2. If the samples are not correctly packaged, the Driver will not be able to accept them. It is not the responsibility of the Driver to sort or package samples.
Appendix 2:

MEMO

To: All Hospital Drivers, Couriers, Taxi Drivers
CC: Hospital Transport Manager, GHNHSFT
From: Jenny Webster, Pathology Services Administrator
Date:
Subject: Transport (by Road) of Pathological Specimens

In order to comply with the regulations, all specimens collected from GP Surgeries, Community Hospitals etc. should already be packaged as follows:

1. Each sample should be enclosed in a primary leak-proof container, and securely closed. The sample must be labelled in accordance with the laboratory labelling policy, and placed inside a sealed leak-proof plastic bag with the request card attached.
2. Samples should then be ‘sorted’ by specialty, and further sealed in large plastic bags which contain absorbent pads.
3. 24 hour Urine collection bottles should be packaged separately to other samples.
4. Histology buckets should be sealed inside a clear plastic bag with the form attached to the outside. This should then be placed in a second plastic bag which also contains some absorbent material. It should be labelled with the destination using indelible marker.

On collection, the driver should seal these bags in either the new padded carriers provided, or where small numbers are transported, they may be placed inside the plastic ‘sandwich box’ and then sealed inside the large plastic bag containing the absorbent material.

The bags should NOT under any circumstances be opened, or otherwise tampered with once sealed.

Any leakage or breakage should be reported immediately by contacting the number on the outside of the transport box or plastic bag- DO NOT touch the specimens, seek advice before continuing your journey.

Samples which have not been packaged in accordance to the regulations should NOT be accepted.