

Pathology News



An NHS partnership providing a highly dependable, clinically assured and cost effective diagnostic pathology service



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Over the next few weeks SWLP will begin a programme of intense GP engagement. Every GP surgery and community clinic will be visited. The last time we did this we were gathering your feedback on the proposals for the new transport routes. This has now been successfully implemented and speaking directly to you about your requirements - to ensure we got it right - was invaluable.

SWLP are introducing some key developments which aim to improve the service SWLP Users receive. These include:

1. The launch of online pathology store and creation of user ID and account details
2. The launch of a dedicated results telephone number
3. Changing the pathology specimen collection bags to allow greater tracking
4. Introducing sealed wallets for incoming and outgoing internal mail

During the upcoming visit to your surgery we will outline the imminent and recent changes to our service. During the visit you will also be given a welcome pack containing information about our service.

The pack will also contain a survey - which has been included in this newsletter. We want to make sure you have the opportunity to give us feedback, good and bad, about our service. It's important to us to continuously seek to improve our service.

Finally, we recently won an EHI award for best use of IT to support healthcare business efficiency. We are delighted to have received this award - it's not only an acknowledgement of the hard work and dedication of our staff, it also highlights our drive to be innovative and to use technology as effectively as we can.

We hope you find this newsletter informative. As always if you do wish to get in contact with us please email us at stgh-tr.SWLPcomms@nhs.net



Saghar Missaghian-Cully
Managing Director



Dr Aodhan Breathnach
Clinical Director

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN SWLP

Visiting your GP surgery

To help facilitate the implementation of changes including ordering pathology consumables, post and sample collection bags, SWLP are writing to every practice manager and plan to deliver information to every reception desk as well as visit every collection site.

SWLP are forming a working group of frontline staff who will visit over 220 sites to deliver a 'welcome pack' during the weeks commencing 7 and 14 November. We are planning to notify the practices of the planned date of the visit and will visit on this date during open hours and speak to the receptionist or practice manager if available.

The team member will briefly talk through the changes. The 'welcome pack' will contain information on how to contact us; a summary of all transport routes including weekend and evening deliveries; instructions on how to use 'The Pathology Store' our new GP online ordering system for consumables; new updated blood container information; details on a user survey to get your feedback; our sample labelling policy with examples showing how samples should be labelled; changes to sample collection bags; and the new postal system.

Providing a nominated contact for each GP surgery:

The welcome pack will have details of the assigned practice username and temporary password which will give you access to The Pathology Store – the new online ordering system for pathology consumables. During the visit each surgery will need to provide details of a named contact for the surgery and provide a live email and current contact number which SWLP can use as a point of reference in the future. The assigned user can edit their information on the 'My Account' section of the site.

The Pathology Store

The new online ordering system for pathology consumables



From November 2016 there will be a new way to order the consumables you need for pathology. The Pathology Store is a new online ordering system - a one stop shop for all pathology consumables.

We will provide full instructions on how to access the system and how to use it during the visit to your surgery/clinic. There will also be an instruction sheet giving details on what you need to do and how the system works.

The system is easy to use and will allow you to track your order; place repeat orders; and keep a log of all your previous orders.

New Results Line



There is now a new telephone number for results. At present the line is available for GPs in Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth to obtain results for Clinical Blood Sciences (Chemistry, Haematology and Immunology):

0208 725 5468

In due course the number will be available for GPs in Croydon.

Update on Transport

SWLP has now completed the optimisation of the 18 dedicated pathology courier runs.

Courier collection details

We plan to publish collection details on the SWLP website - every surgery will be able to check their assigned collection times, which route it is assigned to and the time the samples get to the hub.

Call and collect service

There is only a limited time that the driver can be at any location and therefore the service is designed as 'call and collect' or 'call and drop' only. We ask that sites have their samples and post ready for collection at the scheduled time and that drivers are not asked to retrieve samples from fridges, clinic rooms etc. or wait whilst checks are made to ensure all samples are ready. The courier runs only allow for 'call and collect' or 'call and drop'.

New sample collection bags and new postal system

There will be changes to the blue sample collection bags and a new postal system will be introduced. Please click on the link for full details of the changes - the instructions will be in the GP 'welcome pack' and a starter stock of plastic bags will be provided during the visit.

[New sample collection bags and postal system](#)

What do you think of our service?

Let us know!

An important way to improve our service is to make sure we are aware of what you want and need from our services.

In view of this we would like to get feedback from you - good and bad. You can do this by clicking on the link below. The survey will take less than five minutes to complete.

[Click here to complete the survey](#)

Paper Request Forms

Most GP practices and clinics now use some form of electronic ordering to request tests. We would like to ensure that those GPs still using paper request forms use standardised forms.

We will use the Microbiology and Clinical Blood Sciences (Haematology and Chemistry)/Immunology forms (see below) as our primary manual request forms and as our downtime forms. For the time being we will still accept other paper request forms until your stores run out.

The paper request forms will be available to download from 'The Pathology Store' our new online ordering system for pathology consumables. We will also be developing online forms that can be filled in electronically.

[Microbiology - Paper Request Form](#)

[Clinical Blood Sciences/Immunology - Paper Request Form](#)

Blood Collection Tubes - Updated



The image shows a BD Vacutainer Tube Guide & Recommended Order of Draw. It is a table with columns for Color Code, Cat. No., Tube Type, and Test. The table lists various tube types and their corresponding tests, along with special instructions. The table is organized into sections for different types of tests, such as Chemistry, Hematology, and Microbiology. The table is titled 'Tube Guide & Recommended Order of Draw' and includes the BD Vacutainer logo and the text '© Life Sciences - Analytical Systems'.

The information on correct blood collection tubes for tests has been updated. Please note that it does not contain paediatric tube information - we are currently working on this information. Click on the button below to view the PDF version.

If you are GP in Croydon: Changes are being made to the Cerner IT system order menu and once this has been completed we will advise you on the names of test orders that you may wish to add to your GP Order Comms system. In the interim, for tests not available on your on line order menu, please advise the phlebotomist to handwrite on the request form the sample and test required.

[Blood Collection Tubes - updated](#)

GP surgeries in Croydon

New Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea collection devices

If your GP surgery or clinic is located in Croydon, during the next few weeks there will be changes to collection devices for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea tests.

Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea and Herpes tests are now being processed in our new, state-of-the-art fully automated molecular laboratory using new analysers so the collection devices need to be changed.

Once the 'swap out' date is confirmed we will email your GP practice to inform you of the date. Courier drivers from ERS Medical will also give you information on the date of the 'swap out' - this will give you advance notice of the date they will collect the old devices and deliver new devices to you.

After the 'swap out' date Microbiology will no longer process the old collection devices for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea.

Contact Us

If you wish to contact us with regards to any aspect of our service, you can contact us using the email address below. We will ensure it is logged, investigated and resolved.

We are keen to work with all those using our services to ensure our service meets your requirements and expectations.

Please use our secure NHS.net email address to raise any specific points as this will help us address the details at individual patient level.

Please provide the following information:

- Patient's NHS number
- Date of test
- Name of test
- The name of your GP surgery

Email address: stgh-tr.SWLPcomms@nhs.net

CLINICAL UPDATES

Faecal Calprotectin

Faecal calprotectin testing is recommended as an option to support clinicians with the differential diagnosis of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) or irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) in adults under the age of 40 with lower gastrointestinal symptoms particularly chronic diarrhoea for whom specialist assessment is being considered.

Your local CCG will have guidelines on when it is appropriate to request a faecal calprotectin test and the preliminary investigations which should be completed before considering ordering this test.

Due to the high numbers of samples being received for faecal calprotectin testing, a vetting process has been implemented to ensure the appropriateness of the request based on recommendations in the NICE guidelines for inflammatory bowel disease (QS81) and suspected cancer (NG12).

When requesting a faecal calprotectin test:

- Do not use faecal calprotectin testing in patients you suspect of bowel cancer, these patients should be referred
- Do not use faecal calprotectin testing for patients in whom you suspect to have an infection
- Give your patient a stool pot, ensuring the pot is labelled with the patient name, DOB and NHS number and the sample date
- Advise your patients to provide at least 2 g of stool, informing them that formed solid stool is preferable (samples which are either too watery or too solid are unsuitable for analysis)
- Tell your patient where to take their sample – inform your patient the sample is stable at room temperature so there is no need for them to refrigerate it
- Give as much clinical information as you can, including symptoms and their duration, Rome II and clinical scores on the request
- Send a separate sample to microbiology; for microscopy, culture, and sensitivity; unless infection has already been excluded

For further information:

Inflammatory Bowel Disease. Guidelines in Practice (September 2016 vol 19 Issue 9). Nice guidelines for inflammatory bowel disease (QS81) and suspected cancer (NG12).

Fructosamine Assay

Fructosamine Assay - an alternative to HbA1c for monitoring Diabetes Mellitus (DM) in situations where HbA1c is unsuitable

Fructosamine is a measure of serum glycated proteins (mainly albumin) and correlates well with HbA1c. It provides a measure of the average glycaemia over the previous 2-3 weeks (reflecting the half-life of albumin in the blood).

HbA1c is the recommended assay for monitoring diabetes. However, when there is a haemoglobinopathy present that either interferes with the analysis or may affect red cell turnover (and therefore give a falsely low or high HbA1c), glycaemic control may be assessed by measuring fructosamine.

Conditions that affect serum albumin production (eg increased or decreased turnover) may affect the reliability of fructosamine assay (eg. nephrotic syndrome, liver disease, paraproteinaemias).

The targets for DM are as follows:

- Diabetic (well controlled) 264-320 umol/L
- Diabetic (poorly controlled) >320 umol/L

The fructosamine assay must not be used for the diagnosis of DM.

Immunology

Top ten tips when making requests

Now that South West London Pathology is well established we want to make sure you get the best from the huge range of tests that are available.

Part of this is ensuring that you have enough information to request the right tests in the appropriate clinical setting and to interpret the results properly.

The measurement of the immunoglobulins IgG, IgA and IgM is central to the diagnosis of B cell malignancy e.g. myeloma, and of immune deficiency but every day only about 40% of our requests show any clinical details suggestive of these conditions. We are also receiving multiple requests for immunoglobulins within a few days or weeks.

Our top ten tips when making immunoglobulin requests:

1. Immunoglobulin (IgG, IgA and IgM) measurements are indicated if you are considering B cell malignancy or immune deficiency.

Symptoms (unexplained) that can be associated with B cell malignancy:

- anaemia
- renal impairment
- back and/or bone pain
- raised calcium
- raised ESR or plasma viscosity
- lethargy
- night sweats

Symptoms (unexplained) that can be associated with immune deficiency

- severe infection
- atypical infection
- prolonged infection
- frequent infections

2. Immunoglobulin measurement should be accompanied by serum protein electrophoresis. Sensible reasons to measure immunoglobulins are for consideration of B cell malignancy and immune deficiency. In adults secondary immune deficiency is one of the red flags for B cell malignancy.

3. If you are considering B cell malignancy, don't forget to check an urine for Bence Jones protein.

4. The SWLP Immunology lab will add interpretative comments. Any samples where we find a significant abnormality we will try to contact the requestors, particularly if we think a two week referral is indicated.

5. Immunoglobulins are non-specific markers and can be raised in many infectious or inflammatory conditions, particularly if they are persistent or severe. If there is no

monoclonal protein (paraprotein) and no immune deficiency, there is rarely any indication for repeating abnormal immunoglobulin results.

6. Immunoglobulin concentrations are not useful for monitoring disease progression or response to treatment EXCEPT in B cell malignancy and immune deficiency where they can be used to monitor treatment and disease progression. In other conditions, Immunoglobulin concentrations may change but not with enough consistency to use them to monitor disease.

7. The half-life of the immunoglobulins varies with IgG having a half-life of approx. 23 days and IgA and IgM having a half life of 3-5 days. This means that if you do want to recheck the immunoglobulin concentrations, it is best to wait at least 3 months.

8. We quote a standard UK reference range for immunoglobulins but there are some ethnic and environmental differences. The ranges seen for IgG and IgM decrease with latitude so subjects whose ethnicity and environment is closer to the equator have higher IgG and IgM concentrations than those who are Caucasian and have spent their lives in the UK.

9. IgA deficiency is the most common primary immune deficiency and it is seen in approx. 1/700 of the population and often without clinical consequence.

10. Polyclonally raised IgA is the most common immunoglobulin abnormality that we see. IgA is the immunoglobulin that defends mucosal surfaces so can be increased in mucosal infection or inflammation. Raised IgA concentrations are also seen in autoimmune rheumatic disease and liver disease. Enthusiastic or excessive alcohol can result in raised IgA concentrations although it is NOT a specific marker for alcohol use.



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Our mailing address is:

stgh-tr.SWLPcomms@nhs.net