

Pathology News



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



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One of the key reasons for consolidating pathology services across our three trusts was to provide greater opportunities for sustained investment, innovation and improvement in the way pathology is delivered than would be possible through separate, stand-alone services.

As a result, our microbiology laboratory is now one of the most advanced in UK. We are also one of the first hospital laboratories in the UK to have acquired a fully automated molecular laboratory. This means we can now expand our repertoire of molecular tests. Our repertoire will include infectious diseases such as HIV, HCV and cancer markers. Molecular diagnostics will have a dramatic impact on the speed, efficiency and accuracy of diagnostic medicine.

Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea and Herpes are the first tests that will be run on our new fully automated analysers and we have recently sent information to GPs in Wandsworth, Kingston, Surrey Downs and Merton to inform you of these changes. If you are a GP in Croydon you will soon be notified of these changes. We've included a reminder about this in the newsletter.

In this edition we also have a survey of turnaround times for Chemistry and Haematology tests – please ensure you complete the survey (closes on Friday 29 July) as it will give us important feedback which will help us to improve the service we provide to you. Any changes that are made to the service will be feedback to you via this newsletter.

We hope you're finding our new, regular newsletter informative and useful. If there is anything you would like included or if you have any further questions please contact us at stgh-tr.SWLPComms@nhs.net



Saghar Missaghian-Cully
Managing Director



Dr Aodhan Breathnach
Clinical Director

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN SWLP

Sample labelling instructions

You will recall that we recently sent to you sample labelling instructions for all our services to ensure that all those using our pathology services are aware of acceptance criteria for samples. The policy is available below and is also available on the South West London Pathology website www.swlpath.nhs.uk under 'TEST INFORMATION' heading.

Please also note the following: A positive Haemaglobinopathy report can have important clinical consequences. Acceptable labelling criteria has been established by NHS England in line with other genetic testing. There is clear guidance that laboratories should only accept and process samples which can be linked to a patient request with three unique identifiers. This will normally be Name, D.O.B. and NHS number / hospital number MRN. In exceptional circumstances an address may be used instead of the NHS number/hospital number MRN.

Please can this information be cascaded to all surgery staff collecting blood samples for haemaglobinopathy testing. Samples which do not meet the required labelling standard will be rejected and a report issued stating the request cannot be processed because the minimum labelling information required for genetic testing has not been met.

[Click here for the Sample Labelling Policy](#)

GP Liaison - Next Steps

We are in the process of arranging the next meeting of the SWLP GP Liaison Group. The meeting will focus on current service delivery and future changes including:

- New supplies ordering systems for GP & Community sites
- Introduction of greater sample tracking and post from surgeries during transit
- Distribution of a 'Service user pack' and reference information for each site, summarising the services offered by SWLP and how to access them effectively.
- Swap out of new specimen tubes to complete the standardisation process across the 3 localities
- Introduction of single telephone number for results and clinical advice

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 work to 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

SWLP IT Contact Details

If you have an IT related Pathology query please choose one of the following options:

1. Log the call with the hospital IT helpdesk where you are based.
2. Email SWLP-IT@stgeorges.nhs.uk
3. Phone 0208 725 1096 or 4450

Please do not email individual members of the team - they may be on annual leave or out of the office so may not be able to respond to your email.

Consumables Form

GPs in Kingston, Richmond, Surrey Downs and Wandsworth:

MICROBIOLOGY AND BLOOD SCIENCES

There is a new consumables form which has these items listed. Once filled, the form should be sent back to Pathology.Consumables@stgeorges.nhs.uk.

New Pathology Consumables Form

GPs in Croydon

There are no changes to your consumables. Please continue to use your current forms.

All GPs

CYTOLOGY

There are no changes to ordering Cytology supplies - send the completed form to the following email address: stqh-tr.SWLPsupplies@nhs.net

Cytology Consumables Form

BLOOD SCIENCES

Faecal Occult Blood in Investigating GI Symptoms

The new NICE guidelines on the investigation of lower gastrointestinal symptoms (NG12) have reintroduced occult blood testing in certain patient groups. These guidelines have not been endorsed by the British Society of Gastroenterology or many guideline groups including the London Cancer Alliance. Occult blood testing is not presently part of our referral guideline pathway.

In response to this problem NICE is currently undertaking guidance development for Faecal Immunochemical Testing with the publication being due in April 2017.
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/indevelopment/gid-dg10005>

SWLP is awaiting these updated guidelines before introducing faecal immunological occult blood testing locally.

We want your feedback on turnaround times for Haematology and Chemistry tests

SWLP is very keen to ensure that the service we provide meet your needs. We are keen to explore this further by using surveys to gather your comments and feedback. On a regular basis we will be sending you electronic surveys, which will focus on specific aspects of our pathology service and may be directed to only a targeted group of users.

In this next survey we are focusing on turn around times for Haematology and Chemistry tests. There are 4 questions we would like you to answer (the first 3 questions are your details). Please take a few minutes to complete the survey – we value your feedback and wish to continue to improve our services.

The survey will run for two weeks from **Monday 18 July until Friday 29 July (6pm)**.

Making use of feedback

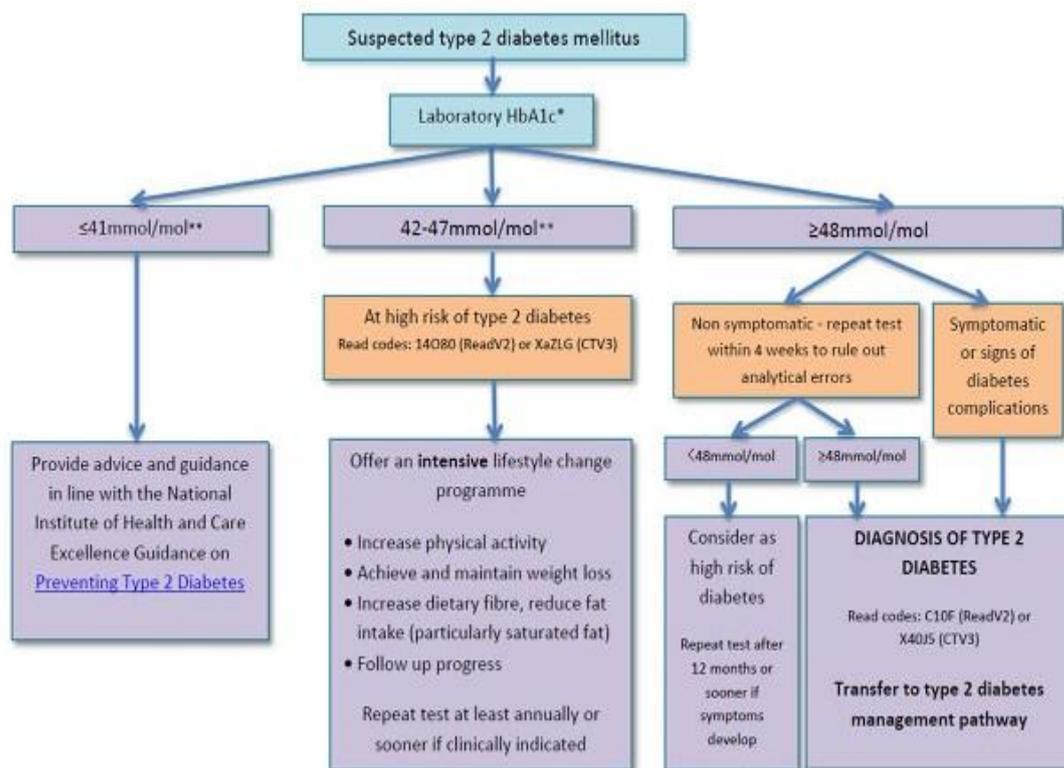
We will feedback any changes that are made to the service via the South West London Pathology GP newsletter.

[Click here to go to complete the survey](#)

HbA1c for the Diagnosis of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus

In line with the WHO and the London Diabetes Strategic Clinical Network, SWLP recommends the adoption of HbA1c for the diagnosis of type 2 diabetes mellitus.

Recommended cut off points for diagnosis of type 2 diabetes mellitus using HbA1c and interventions



However, it is important to remember there are a number of situations where HbA1c should NOT be used for the diagnosis of type 2 Diabetes. For these situations plasma glucose (fasting/random) or a glucose tolerance test should be used instead:

- Patients at high diabetes risk who are acutely ill (e.g. those requiring hospital admission)
- Acute pancreatic damage or pancreatic surgery
- All children and young people up to the age of 30 years old
- Patients taking medication that may cause rapid glucose rise e.g. corticosteroids, antipsychotic drugs (2 m)
- Pregnancy (current or recent <2months)
- Haematological factors
 - Anaemia – haemolytic and iron deficiency
 - Haemoglobinopathies (may interfere with HbA1c measurement)
- Renal failure (CKD Stage 3b and above)
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection
- Presence of genetic, haematologic and illness-related factors that influence HbA1c and its measurement
- Factors affecting the life span of red cells - recent commencement of erythropoietin therapy will result in a decrease in HbA1c as will occur with some haemoglobinopathies, splenomegaly, rheumatoid arthritis or with drugs such as antiretrovirals, ribavirin and dapsone. Increased erythrocyte lifespan e.g in

splenectomy may increase HbA1c levels.

Other Points to note:

1. HbA1c should not be used to diagnose Type 1 DM (any age)
2. If there is a high suspicion of diabetes (symptoms or multiple risk factors and HbA1c <48mmol/mol), an oral glucose tolerance test may be performed, although this should be considered exceptional.
3. Older people without diabetes appear to have higher HbA1c values than younger individuals, being approximately 4 mmol / mol (0.4%) higher at 70 years than at 40 years.
4. People of African-Caribbean or south Asian descent may have slightly higher HbA1c levels than white European people

If you are unclear or unsure of whether HbA1c should be used for the diagnosis of HbA1c in your patient, please contact the laboratory for clinical advice.

References

1. World Health Organisation (2011). Use of glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) in the Diagnosis of Diabetes Mellitus. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/diabetes/publications/report-hba1c_2011.pdf on 4/11/14
2. World Health Organisation. HbA1c in the diagnosis of type 2 diabetes: a systematic review. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/diabetes/publications/sys_rev_hba1c_web.pdf on 4/11/14
3. W. G. John on behalf of the UK Department of Health Advisory Committee on Diabetes (2012). Expert Position Statement. Use of HbA1c in the diagnosis of diabetes mellitus in the UK. The implementation of World Health Organization guidance 2011. *Diabetic Medicine* 29, 1350–1357
4. Diabetes Modernisation Initiative and NHS South East London (2012). Diagnosis of Diabetes in adults- the use of HbA1c. Retrieved from [http://www.londondiabetes.nhs.uk/resources/guidelines/DiagnosisofDiabetes-theuseofHbA1cv10\[1\].pdf](http://www.londondiabetes.nhs.uk/resources/guidelines/DiagnosisofDiabetes-theuseofHbA1cv10[1].pdf) on 4/11/14
5. Glycated haemoglobin and diagnosis of diabetes mellitus: now well established but beware the pitfalls. *Ann. Clin. Biochem* (2016) 53(3) 309-311

Full article in Word document

MICROBIOLOGY

You will recall that over the last three months there have been a number of container and collection device changes in Microbiology.

To remind you these are as follows:

GPs in Kingston, Richmond, Surrey Downs and Wandsworth:

1. New yellow top devices for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea tests
2. New blue top devices for Herpes
3. New red-top boric acid containers for urine microscopy/culture
4. Rust top devices will now be used instead of gold top devices. Please continue to use the gold top devices until you run out as they will still be processed.

Microbiology will no longer process the old collection devices for Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea or Herpes.

Click on the link below for pictures of the new collection devices.

Please also note that there is a new consumables form which has these items listed. Once you have filled in the form, send it back to pathology.consumables@stgeorges.nhs.uk

[New collection devices](#)

[New Pathology Consumables Form](#)

GPs in Croydon

The above changes have not yet taken place in Croydon. You will be informed when this is due to take place, the current proposed date is in September.

IMMUNOLOGY

Dr Jo Sheldon's award winning low allergy garden



Dr Jo Sheldon and Dr Tim Wreghitt in the low allergy garden with a copy of the front page of their new book.



Jo and Tim with Dame Judy Dench



The Low Allergy Garden

Dr Jo Sheldon, Consultant Immunologist, and Dr Tim Wreghitt, a locum Consultant Virologist at Addenbrooke's developed 'The Low Allergy Garden' for The Royal College of Pathologists which was on display at the Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower show in May.

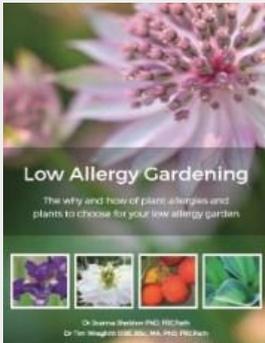
The judges were so impressed with the team's creation they awarded it a silver gilt medal.

Their garden focused on low allergen plants that produce little pollen, making it suitable for people with hay fever and other respiratory allergies such as asthma.

To accompany the exhibit, Jo and Tim have written a book 'Low Allergy Gardening: The why and how of plant allergies and plants to choose for your low allergy garden'.

For more information about the garden and to see more pictures of the plants and garden visit <http://lag-book.co.uk/sample-page/>

Jo also did media interviews - you can listen to her interview on [Radio 4's Today Programme](#)



To get a copy of the book, email info@lag-book.co.uk.

The paperback has over 80 pages, with 47 plant photographs and a list of plants to choose if people want to create a low allergy garden.

It also tells you about other kinds of plant allergies (food allergies and plant contact allergies) – why we get them, what happens in our bodies, how Pathologists diagnose them and what treatments are available.

TRANSPORT

Update on Pathology Transport Arrangements

The revision of the courier runs from GP surgeries direct to the SWLP hub lab at St George's Hospital is now complete. SWLP are now in the process of refining the timings and being flexible to accommodate any changes moving forward.

Basic Pathology Courier numbers as of July 2016 (Mon – Fri)

- 600 individual collections everyday
- 232 locations visited daily
- 18 dedicated vehicles on scheduled runs, a further 2 vehicles for adhoc journeys
- 48 individual runs to the hub lab at St George's
- 2 hours is the average time taken for each individual courier run
- The direct transfer of pathology samples to the hub lab has reduced the transit time by 32%

- Our target transit time for samples from the point of collection to the laboratory is 4 hours 30mins
- For samples for Blood Sciences SWLP, the average overall time from the collection of specimen to being received in the hub lab is 4 hours 23 minutes

The contact number for any courier related issues remains

020 8266 6510 (from 8am – 8pm).

Postal Deliveries

During the transition period there was some disruption in the delivery of internal mail to GP surgeries which resulted in intermittent delivery.

Since the introduction of the new runs SWLP have been working with all parties to ensure that post going to GP surgeries from the hospitals is pre-sorted by the parent Trusts prior to the collection by ERS Medical (ERS).

Additional staff have also been recruited at each hospital site to ensure a smoother collection of post. SWLP are working with ERS to ensure the collection, sorting and distribution of internal mail is managed more effectively.

Monitoring of Sample Quality

SWLP is committed to provide the best quality of service to our users. Due to the changes that have taken place over the last 2 years; measures have been developed to monitor sample quality on a daily basis:

1. **Temperature audits** - SWLP require ERS Medical (ERS) to undertake temperature audits of their vehicles to ensure that samples are transported within optimum temperature levels so sample quality is not adversely affected during transit.
2. **Monitoring of potassium levels** - On daily basis SWLP monitors reported potassium levels and courier times to assess the effectiveness of the measure and improvements taken within the overall operation.
3. Since the beginning of the year the percentage of reported high potassiums, as a consequence of deteriorating sample quality, has been reduced by 42% and is now less than 4%.
4. Our target remains under 3% and work is ongoing in process redesign within the laboratory and reception areas to further shorten the time taken to process samples.
5. **Monitoring of courier runs** - The courier runs are monitored on delivery at the hub and the use of PDA devices allows SWLP to assess whether the journey times remain within required levels.





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Our mailing address is:
stgh-tr.SWLPcomms@nhs.net