SPECIMEN IDENTIFICATION, COLLECTION AND HANDLING

1. PURPOSE
To provide direction with regards to specimen identification, collection, preservation, safe handling and transportation to pathology.

KEY POINTS
• All procedures involving the collection and handling of specimens require adherence to standard precautions and the use of appropriate PPE.

• The circulating nurse is responsible for ensuring that an appropriate sized container with a secure lid is available in theatre.

• Specimens that routinely go to histopathology are to be placed into a pathology biohazard bag, and then placed in a specimen bucket.

• Larger specimens are to be placed in a clean, clear plastic bag and then placed in a specimen bucket for transportation.

• The specimen shall be labelled with a pathology specimen addressograph label. In addition to the printed details in the addressograph the following should be added:
  o Post operative ward
  o Team
  o Name of specimen
  o Date

  NB: No abbreviations are to be used when labelling a specimen.

• The label is placed on the side of the specimen container immediately prior to the specimen being placed inside. Prior to labelling the specimen container the circulating nurse is responsible for a verification check of the patient’s identity.

• The instrument nurse will confirm with the surgeon, the name of the specimen and whether the specimen is to be placed into formalin, or is a fresh or frozen section.

• Double verification between the instrument and circulating nurse of the labelled specimen must occur before the specimen is placed into the container. The instrument nurse will verbally confirm with the circulating nurse the name of the specimen and any identifying markers or any fixative solution required before placing the specimen into the container.

• The specimen should be handed off as soon as possible from the time of removal from the cavity to prevent mishandling, incorrect labelling or loss.

• Small specimens shall be placed in the container using suitable forceps.

• Medium / large specimens shall be handed over by the instrument nurse in a kidney dish or placed directly into the container once the labelling has been checked.

• If formalin is required, a ratio of 10:1 is used (10 parts formalin to the weight of the tissue).
• Specimens will usually be transported to pathology by an orderly at designated times during the day.

• Specimens shall be transported discreetly to ensure patient confidentiality.

• Specimens are to be placed in a secure container to prevent leakage and contamination during transportation.

• Specimens waiting for transportation shall be stored in an area which maintains patient confidentiality.

• Oversize specimens and containers weighing more than 5kg must be placed on a small trolley for transportation to pathology.

• All specimens must have a pathology request form with the following
  - Correct patient label
  - Date
  - Medical officer signature
  - The tests required

The pathology request form must be placed in the pathology bag with the specimen.

• All specimens shall be recorded in the following
  - Theatre Management System (TMS) specimen section.
  - Frozen sections entered into TMS must also have the time the specimen left the theatre documented.
  - The individual registry book in each theatre
  - The pathology register (fresh and frozen specimens only).

• The pathology register must be completed in full and include the following
  - Correct patient addressograph label
  - Date
  - Post op ward
  - Team
  - Type of specimen
  - State fresh or frozen
  - The initials of the nurse sending the specimen
  - The initials of the person receiving the specimen in pathology.

HISTOPATHOLOGY SPECIMENS
• These are placed in prepared formalin containers.

• Small specimens e.g. curettings, cervical biopsies, products of conception, cone biopsies, LLETZ biopsies) are placed in approximately 20 times their own volume of 10% buffered formalin.

• The specimen is labelled as described above.

• The container shall be placed in a pathology bag with the request form.

• The medical officer’s signature must be on the request form before it is taken to pathology.

CYTOGENETIC SPECIMENS
• The expiry date of the cytogenetic container must be checked before use.

• Only fresh tissue shall be placed in a cytogenetic specific container.

• The specimen shall be labelled as described above.
• Additional cytogenetic container may be obtained by contacting the theatre area manager or Cytogenetic at SCGH 6383 4221.

• As alternative the tissue may be placed into a sterile yellow top container and 20mL of sterile 0.9% sodium chloride added. The specimen is then placed into a pathology bag with the request form. The specimen must be taken to pathology immediately and pathology informed that no cytogenetic containers were available.

MICROBIOLOGY SWABS
• Each swab must be labelled as described above.

• Microbiology specimens shall be placed in a micro mark pathology bag with the request form.

• The swabs must be sent to pathology as soon as possible after the completion of the case.

URINE SPECIMENS
• Urine specimens are placed in a sterile yellow top container.

• The specimen should be a mid stream, clean catch specimen of at least 10mL (adult).

• The container is labelled as described above and placed into a pathology bag with the request form.

• In hours, all urine specimens should be sent to the laboratory within 15 minutes of collection.

• Out of hours, the specimen should be placed in the specimen fridge for collection the next day.

PAP SMEARS
• Only frosted end slides shall be used for pap smear collection.

• The slide shall have the following information written on it in pencil:
  ➢ Patient URMN
  ➢ Patient surname and given name

• Once the specimen is collected the slide must be immediately submerged into the cytofixitive with the frosted end upper most.

• Label the container as described above.

• Place the container in a pathology bag with the request form.

THIN PREP SMEARS
• The blue brush is used to collect the specimen.

• Collect the specimen in the container marked ‘Thin Prep’.

• Swish or disconnect the brush head into the ‘thin prep’ solution.

• Label the container as described above on the side of the container.

• Place the specimen in a pathology bag with the request form.
FRESH SPECIMENS

- The specimen is labelled as described above.
- The orderly collects the specimen from the scrub area room.
- Fresh specimens are sent to pathology as soon as possible with a completed request form.
- The ‘dry / fresh pathology register’ must accompany the specimen to pathology. Pathology staff must sign the register when receiving the specimen. The register is returned to the theatre from which it came.

FLUID SPECIMENS FOR CYTOLOGY

- Use a specimen trap for collection in laparoscopic cases and change the top to the provided screw top for transport to pathology.
- Collection of abdominal fluid
  - Use a 50mL syringe to collect the fluid
  - Once collected, the syringe is handed to the circulating nurse and decanted into a sterile yellow top container.
  - The container is labelled as described above
  - Place the specimen in a pathology bag with the request form.

PINNING OUT A SPECIMEN

- Select an appropriately sized piece of blue foam for the specimen.
- Use 4 x short 19G needles to pin out the specimen.
- The specimen is sent to pathology dry pinned on the blue foam with marking sutures.
- Place the blue foam and specimen in a square (placenta) container. Mark the container with the word “SHARPS” written in Red ink.
- Label the container as described above and send as soon as possible to pathology in a clear plastic bag with the request form.

FROZEN SECTIONS

(In hours 0700-1700)

- Contact pathology via the intercom, 126.
- Wait for a response from pathology.
- State your name, what theatre you are in, the patient’s URMN and name, what specimen is being sent and the consultant’s name.
- All frozen sections must be sent immediately to histopathology.
- Label the container as described above including the time the specimen leaves theatre. No abbreviations are to be used when labelling the specimen. Ensure a completed request form accompanies the specimen.
- The orderly collects the specimen from the scrub bay.
- Inform the orderly whether it is a fresh or a frozen section.
The pathology specimen register accompanies the specimen to pathology, where the pathology staff member signs it. The register is returned to the theatre it came from.

**After Hours**

- Pathology will call to confirm whether further frozen sections are required.
- Once all planned specimens are received, the pathologist will phone theatre prior to 1700 hours to check no other unexpected specimens are coming.
- If the theatre session is extended, theatre must liaise with pathology for specimen requirements.
- The theatre co-ordinator shall discuss the case requirements with the pathologist.
- If there is no pathologist in the department, contact the on call pathologist on 0424134149.
- The on call pathologist must be contacted for all specimens going to the pathology department after 1700.

### REFERENCES (STANDARDS)


| National Standards – 1.7.2 Clinical Care |
| Legislation - Nil |

Related Policies – KEMH Infection Control Manual
Other related documents – Nil

### RESPONSIBILITY

| Policy Sponsor | Nursing & Midwifery Director OGCCU |
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