

## **Advice to Anatomical Pathology (AP) and Forensic Pathology (FP) Fellows and Trainees**

This following guidelines serve to assist Anatomical and Forensic Pathology Fellows and Trainees on how to manage their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidelines are current as at 2 April 2020 and are subject to change.

### **1. Guidance on Handling Fresh or Poorly Fixed Tissue (FNA and Frozen Sections)**

The highest risk of the spread COVID19 is via any procedure that produces aerosol. For AP AND FP Fellows and Trainees aerosol production may occur if high speed tools are used. Any procedure likely to do this warrants full use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Such procedures are very rare in AP.

For other procedures the risk of spread is through droplet production. In general, the risks for these cases are similar to those for frozen section and fine needle aspirate (FNA) for any suspected infectious case.

FNA or frozen section on a confirmed or suspected case should be avoided where possible. Discussion with the relevant clinical teams regarding the need for frozen section or FNA and consideration of alternatives should occur in a confirmed or suspected case. At present if a discussion has not occurred with the clinician prior to receiving frozen section material, call theatre (prior to opening specimen bag) to specifically ask if there is any suspicion of COVID19.

If a frozen section or FNA is unavoidable the following is recommended:

- Reduce the number of operators to a minimum
- The dissector/aspirator should wear appropriate PPE which should include;
  - Fluid resistant disposable gloves
  - Fluid resistant disposable apron
  - Eye protection
  - P2/N95 mask
- Any dissection should be handled in a ventilation/fume cabinet
- Standard decontamination procedures of all equipment and surfaces involved should occur following the procedure.(See attached)

- Disposal of PPE should be done correctly (see procedure for your practice/institute or check with infection control practitioner) (our example attached at end).

For other patients normal infection control precautions should occur.

## **2. Biopsy Specimens**

There must but adequate fixation for biopsy specimens:

- For those less than <4mm four hours is recommended
- For larger specimens overnight fixation is recommend

## **3. Double Heading**

Normal double heading is not recommended unless you can comply with the governments social isolating policies. That is keep 1.5 metres away from others and observe the 4 square metre rule.

Many departments have large multi-header microscopes which should allow at least a few people to sit at the appropriate distance at the same time.

Alternatively, many departments now have the ability to send microscopy by video to a TV/computer screen. Fellows and Trainees could then sit in the room spaced apart 1.5m (or in their own office) and still see the images albeit on a screen instead of directly down the microscope.

## **4. Handling Slides and Slide Trays**

Normal infection control precautions should be followed such as washing hands or using hand sanitizer after touching slides or trays. If you are aware the patient is COVID19 positive or is suspected of being COVID 19 positive disposable gloves may be worn.

## **5. Multidisciplinary Team Meetings**

Consider holding meetings via video conferencing. Alternatively, if face-to-face the government's social isolating policies that is keep 1.5 metres away from others and observe the 4 square metre rule should be observed.

## **6. Autopsy**

Most organisations already have their own excellent guidelines on how to perform autopsies on infectious patients. Many of these are dictated by local government health department requirements. Some other useful guidelines are provided for you information below. Please check the [COVID-19 updates](#) page on our website for other resources.

[St Vincent's Hospital Sydney Guide to PPE](#)

[United States Department of Labor](#)

[Royal College of Pathologists \(UK\)](#)

*The above guidelines and resources are current at the time of posting and subject to change. For enquiries to external sources, please contact each organisation directly.*