

Guideline

Subject: Transfer of specimens between different pathology providers
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Clinicians may at times, in a single request form, require pathology testing to be done at different service providers. Laboratories may also request aliquots or blocks from a variety of source laboratories for ancillary testing, including molecular testing. Ideally, all tests should be done together and interpreted together provided the laboratory is accredited to provide all the tests.

However, if testing has to be done in different laboratories, the College provides the following guidance, based on different scenarios;

1. Clinician has sent a referral to Laboratory A but has requested a particular test to be done at laboratory B. If Laboratory A does provide that service, they may perform that test provided the requesting clinician has been advised prior to doing the test. However, if the requesting clinician does not consent to Laboratory A providing the service, Laboratory A should refer the request to Laboratory B. The parties should consider the relevant costs (including retrieval and transportation) as well as the implications for informed financial consent.
2. Tissues are held at one site (Laboratory A) but the requesting clinician has sent a request directly to the reference Laboratory B. Laboratory B requests for the release of tissues from Laboratory A so that it can test the sample. Should Laboratory A decide to provide that service themselves, it should get prior approval from the requesting clinician and also advise Laboratory B of this decision, as per (1) above.
3. It is unreasonable for clinicians to simply request Laboratory A (on Laboratory A's request form) to collect specimens and ask them to forward the specimens to Laboratory B for testing without prior agreement.

Methods used in certain laboratories may not be comparable. All laboratories are required to have done the necessary compliance activities that would be required to achieve NATA/RCPA accreditation for the test. Despite this, different methods for performing the same test used in certain laboratories may not be equivalent. In these situations, laboratories need to disclose to requesting clinicians which method has been used and what (if any) limitations may apply. However, if one provider believes that the methods they utilise or the services they provide offer advantages over those of another provider, they may wish to educate the referrer as to the merits of their service.