

Policy

Subject: Ethical responsibility of pathologists in relation to test utility
Approval Date: November 2004, Revised March 2009, May 2014, June 2018
Review Date: June 2022
Review By: Board of Professional Practice and Quality
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Purpose

This policy discusses the approach that a pathologist should take if requested to perform a test that they believe to be inappropriate. In all cases the pathologist should communicate their concerns about the test requested to the requestor promptly. This is especially important if the specimen will be suitable for testing for only a short period of time and there would be difficulties with re-collection.

Specific Scenarios

- 1. The test requested is inappropriate, not indicated or unnecessary:**
The pathologist may elect not to proceed with the test, in which case they may choose to contact the referrer personally or to include a qualifying note on the report, or acknowledge receipt of the specimen. The medical practitioner may benefit from education on what would be a more appropriate test considering the clinical context. .
- 2. The test is superseded, non-accredited or considered to be a non-scientifically based test:**
The pathologist should let the referrer know that the test is not suitable and suggest an appropriate alternative. If the referrer still asks for the original test the pathologist could either provide comment noting the test inadequacies or choose to decline to carry out the test.

General Approach

In conclusion, it is recommended that laboratories present, for NATA/RCPA and IANZ or other accredited programs assessment and accreditation, **all** tests they are equipped to perform and currently performing regardless of whether they are funded by Medicare or not. The tests should all be included in the laboratory manual of tests.

As well all in-vitro diagnostic devices must be registered with the Therapeutic Goods Association.

Where tests are done outside of the scope of NATA/RCPA accreditation the report should clearly show that these are not under NATA/RCPA accreditation.

If the pathologist has any reservations about the validity of the test result, then the report should indicate that the pathologist has some reservations about the quality of the results or believes that there are matters that should be drawn to the attention of the referring clinician to assist in interpreting the result.