

Policy

Subject: Pathology test requesting by Nurse Practitioners and Midwives
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Introduction

Pathology testing is performed in an environment described by the Request-test-report cycle (see Guideline: *The Pathology Request-Test-Report Cycle - Guidelines for Requesters and Pathology Providers*).

The usual components of this cycle are a request made by a medical practitioner, a test performed in an accredited laboratory and a report given to the requesting doctor who will then decide on appropriate further action. Tests may be requested by a wide range of people who are not registered medical practitioners. These may include those who are part of current medical services such as nurse practitioners (NP) and midwives.

Responsibility of the Requestor

The requestor will ensure the following:

- Test requested will provide useful clinical information.
- Patient contact details, including phone number are included
- Requestor's after-hours contact number are included for urgent abnormal results.
- Patient is given the option of nominating their regular GP to receive copies of the results and to be contacted with abnormal results
- Patient has given informed consent (including costs, possible follow-up processes)
- Selected laboratory is equipped and qualified to perform the test.
- Procedures are in place to follow-up any unexpected and after hours results.

Responsibility of the Laboratory

The laboratory will ensure the following:

- Provision of information on the clinical use of the test relevant to the requester.
- Technical validity of the result (including QC, QA, interferences etc).
- Integrity of the data flow (result on the right patient).
- Provision of interpretive support relevant to the interpreter.

Responsibility of the Recipient of the Result

The recipient will ensure sufficient knowledge of the:

- Test to allow correct interpretation.
- Patient to allow correct interpretation.

Nurse Practitioners

The term 'nurse practitioner' is now protected in most jurisdictions. As opposed to specialist nurses or nurse specialists, a NP is a registered nurse educated to function autonomously and collaboratively in an advanced and extended clinical role.

The *Health Insurance amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners Act 2010)* enables NP and midwives to request pathology tests within their defined scope of practice and for midwife within a defined range of test items. The regulations supporting the legislation specify that there needs to be a collaborative arrangement between NP/midwives and medical practitioners.

Indemnity

Any pathologist responding to a request from a NP or midwife should have no more medico-legal liability than if a medical practitioner had initiated the request.

Pathologists should check with their insurer to verify their indemnity for claims arising from providing results to NP or midwife.

Reference

RACGP Collaborative Care Agreements – A Guide for Collaborative Care Agreements in General Practice 2011