

## Policy

**Subject:** Clinical Handover and after-hours pathology results  
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### Clinical Handover

Clinical Handover refers to the transfer of professional responsibility and accountability for some or all aspects of care for a patient, or group of patients, to another person or professional group on a temporary or permanent basis.

Effective clinical handover is vital in maintaining patient safety. Evidence for this can be found in outcomes of international service inquiries, Coroner's recommendations and international literature.

Clinical handover in pathology practice needs to be supported by appropriate policies, procedures and resources. Pathologists should have clear protocols outlining the minimum information requirements for the handover of pathology specimens/results for the following circumstances:

- Shift to shift handover
- After hours and weekend handover
- Transfer of care from one team/pathologist to another
- Transfer of care from one facility to another

The structured and documented processes should include:

- Preparing for handover, including setting the location and time while maintaining continuity of patient care.
- Organising relevant workforce members to participate.
- Being aware of the clinical context and patient needs.
- Participating in effective handover resulting in transfer of responsibility and accountability for care.

Clinical handover tools and guides need to be periodically reviewed.

The clinical handover processes should be structured and led/facilitated by the most senior member of the pathology practice team.

### After hours pathology results

Good medical practice is patient-centred and medical professionals have a responsibility to protect and promote the health of individuals and the community. A pathologist with the appropriate scope of practice should be available to discuss high-risk (critical) results after

hours with a clinician, if required. If the requesting practitioner cannot be contacted about a high-risk result out of hours a pathologist with the appropriate scope of practice should be contactable by the laboratory to determine whether the patient requires urgent medical attention and, if so, has an obligation to advise the patient of the results and the need to seek urgent medical treatment.

Pathologists need to have documented clear policies, procedures and/or protocols relating to handling of urgent after-hours pathology results. These should outline the minimum requirements of pathologists in the management of urgent after-hours pathology results.