

## Policy

Subject: **Pathology Test Requesting by Practitioners other than Medical or Nurse Practitioners**  
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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 Requestors 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. However, 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 dietitians, physiotherapists, dentists and podiatrists); or alternative health practitioners including acupuncturists, homeopaths and chiropractors. The College has a separate Policy regarding pathology test requesting by nurse-practitioners and midwives under Collaborative Care arrangements.

Within the request-test-report cycle responsibilities are as outlined below:

#### Responsibility of the Requestor

The requestor will ensure the following:

- Test requested will provide useful clinical information.
- 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 results and after-hours results.
- Patient is given the option of nominating their regular medical practitioner to receive copies of the results

#### Responsibility of the Laboratory

The laboratory will ensure the following:

- Provision of information on the clinical use of the test relevant to the requestor.
- 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.

## **Responsibilities of Pathologists**

In considering the issue of non-medical non-nurse practitioner pathology requesting, there may be circumstances where the pathologist may become aware that the requesting practitioner is not able to fulfil their obligations under the request-test-report cycle; eg is unable to understand the clinical implications of the test they are requesting or the subsequent results. Where a pathologist detects foreseeable harm to a patient or patients, such as when interpreting an abnormal result with serious consequences, it would be advisable to apply their usual framework for directly contacting the requesting practitioner, or the patient, to advise seeking urgent medical attention.

The College has developed another guideline: *Testing outside the normal pathology laboratory request-test-report cycle* which discusses pathology testing carried out in environments where the components of request-test-report do not apply thus have implications for the delivery of high-quality laboratory testing.

## **Indemnity**

Pathologists should check with their insurer to verify their indemnity for claims arising from providing results to non-medical non-nurse practitioners. Any pathologist responding to such a request from any other practitioners should have no more medico-legal liability than if a medical practitioner had initiated the request.