

January 7, 2009

DCL Reminds Clients about Specimen Labeling Policies

As the new year begins, DCL Medical Laboratories would like to remind clients about our specimen labeling policies. Over the past few weeks we have noticed an increase in labeling errors, especially in the labeling of specimens being submitted for ABO/Rh typing, antibody screening and histology. It is DCL policy and Federal regulation to safeguard patient care by properly handling and monitoring specimens for adequacy in identification, test requisition and collection method. Therefore, DCL requires complete and consistent labeling of specimens and requisitions in accordance with FDA regulations, JCAHO and CAP.

Please take a moment to refresh your memory regarding the policies that follow in this laboratory bulletin, especially the special requirements for blood bank and surgical specimens. If you have any questions, contact DCL Client Services by calling (317) 874-1334 or toll free at (866) 874-1334.

Labeling Requirements for ALL Specimens

- Patient's LEGAL first and last names (NO nicknames or initials) MUST be handwritten on the container
- DCL highly recommends the use of a second identifier such as a date of birth or physician's name to further ensure correct specimen identification.

Special Labeling Requirements for Surgical Specimens

- As with all specimens, the patient's LEGAL first and last names (NO nicknames or initials) MUST be handwritten on the container
- The specimen site MUST be handwritten on the container.
- Computer generated labels MUST NOT cover any handwritten information.

Special Labeling Requirements for ABO/Rh Typing and Antibody Screen

Because of the critical nature of correctly identifying specimens for blood bank testing (ABO/Rh Typing and Antibody Screen), DCL requires additional labeling to ensure proper identification.

- As with all specimens, the patient's LEGAL first and last name (NO nicknames or initials) must be handwritten on the tube.
- The tube must also be:
 - labeled with a unique identifier such as a social security number or patient chart number.
 - labeled with the the time and date of collection.
 - initialed by the phlebotomist.
 - initialed or signed by the patient.

IMPORTANT:

- The patient's signature must be requested after all other identification information is placed on the tube as it indicates that the patient confirms the accuracy of the identification information
- Computer generated labels MUST NOT cover the patient's signature or phlebotomist's initials.

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Additional Labeling Requirements

- Label specimen containers using a blue or black ink pen unless otherwise specified in the collection instructions for that specimen.
- Label all slides using pencil unless otherwise specified in the collection instructions for that specimen.
- It is good laboratory practice to label each sample immediately after collection. Under no circumstances should specimen containers be labeled prior to collection.
- Do not place computer-generated labels over handwritten labels unless there is absolutely no other option.
- The most serious situation encountered is when the specimen is received with no labeling at all! In this situation, no testing will be performed and the client will be notified.

Requisition Requirements

Requisitions MUST contain the following clearly readable information:

- Patient's LEGAL first and last name (NO nicknames or initials)
- Patient's gender
- Patient's date of birth
- Unique patient identification number such as a Social Security number, patient ID number or chart number (when applicable or used as an identifier on a container)
- Date and time of collection
- Phlebotomist's initials or physician's signature
- Ordering provider (name, address and telephone number)
- Payment type
- Tests requested
- An ICD-9 code for each test requested

Additional information specific to the requested testing or payment type may be required. So that the lab may process your request in a timely fashion, please complete as much of the requisition as possible before submitting the form to the laboratory.

Questions? Contact Client Services

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