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1 Dermatopathology Laboratory (Operation Procedure)

The Dermatopathology Laboratory hours are:

Monday thru Friday – 8:00 am to 5:00 pm CST and selected holidays. Closed weekends.

Specimens via Federal Express:

Formalin filled (or Michele’s medium for Direct Immunofluorescence testing) specimen bottles are labeled with the referring doctor’s name, patient name, and site of specimen. The dermatopathology requisitions contain the patient’s demographic information including billing information, the type of test requested (routine hematoxylin and eosin (H&E) or Direct Immunofluorescence (DIF)), a description of the specimen type and clinical history. The specimen bottle and requisition form are packed by the referring physician’s office in a watertight plastic bag with a biohazard label and proper absorbent material. They are then sealed in the cardboard Federal Express boxes and labeled with a pre-addressed air bill provided by our office.

The boxes are either dropped off at a Federal Express box or arrangements are made by the doctor’s office staff to have them picked up onsite.

A Federal Express courier delivers the boxes and envelopes containing specimen bottles, dermatopathology requisitions, and insurance information daily to the Dermatopathology Laboratory. The normal delivery time is approximately 9:00 am.

Specimens via Courier:

Formalin filled (or Michele’s medium for Direct Immunofluorescence testing) specimen bottles are labeled with the referring doctor’s name, patient name, and site of specimen. The dermatopathology requisitions contain the patient’s demographic information including billing information, the type of test requested (routine hematoxylin and eosin (H&E) or Direct Immunofluorescence (DIF)), a description of the specimen type and clinical history. The specimen bottle and requisition form are packed by the referring physician’s office in a watertight plastic bag with a biohazard label provided by our laboratory. The physician’s office is to call our office to request a pick up. The person taking the call in our office is to call Arch Express at 989-0100 to request a pick up at the physician’s office, to be delivered to us no later than 5:00 pm. Otherwise they are advised to pick up the next morning and the physician’s office is informed. The personnel from Arch Express place the bags with the specimens in a zippered St. Louis University Dermatology courier pouch. The number of specimens is counted with a
designated person at the physician’s office at the time of pick-up and with a designated person in the Dermatopathology Laboratory at St. Louis University at delivery.

All specimens, regardless of delivery method, are delivered to the Dermatopathology Laboratory where they are unpacked and labeled. The Laboratory Technicians enter each patient name, referring physician name, and number of biopsies into the computer to generate an accession number. Each number is generated in the computer in sequential order, the specimen labels are printed for the requisition form and for each specimen bottle. A corresponding cassette is also printed for each specimen. A gross description and measurements are taken on each specimen and the data is written on the biopsy requisition form. The specimen is then placed into the corresponding cassette. Specimens that require complex grossing are inked, appropriately sectioned, and placed into cassettes labeled with the accession number. The specimens are then placed in a rack in a formalin filled container until all the grossing is completed. Once grossing is done, the specimens are put into the tissue processors and the processors are turned on so the tissue is processed over night or over the weekend depending on the run chosen. All specimens are then processed into H+E or Direct Immunofluorescence slides as requested by the ordering physician.

The remainder of the patient/specimen data is entered into the computer from the specimen requisition form under the accession number that was assigned to that case.

Once the processed slides are finished in the histology laboratory, they are then given with the requisition forms to the designated dermatopathologist for microscopic examination. Direct Immunofluorescence slides are placed in the appropriately designated refrigerator and only the requisition form is given to the dermatopathologist. The designated attending dermatopathologist examines the slides and the diagnosis codes are written on each requisition, entered into the database, and decoded. The requisition forms are once again returned to the dermatopathologist to review the diagnosis and reported text as well as add any other pertinent findings and/or histochemical stains / immunohistochemical stains. Each case is revised, as needed, by the dermatopathologist and electronically signed out. Once signed the reports are either printed and/or sent to the computer fax queue where they are faxed to the referring physician’s office during the night. The printed reports are sorted and mailed to the referring physician’s office the same day or the morning of the following business day. We also have internet resulting where the referring physician can log into a secure web site to obtain the biopsy results on their patients.

Usually a finalized report takes 24 hours from the time the specimen reaches our laboratory. Some specimens require special procedures (histochemical stains, immunohistochemical stains, deeper sections), which will delay the final report. A verbal preliminary report can usually be obtained when examination of all slides has been made by the attending dermatopathologist.
2 Specimen Collection

Several different methods may be used to obtain a skin specimen sample, depending on the size and location of the skin lesion. The skin specimen sample is placed in a solution, either formalin or Michele’s solution.

- **Shave biopsy.** After a local anesthetic is injected, a surgical knife (scalpel) or blade is used to shave off the growth. Stitches are not needed. Any bleeding can usually be controlled with a chemical that stops bleeding and by applying pressure. The biopsy site is then covered with a bandage or sterile dressing.

- **Punch biopsy.** After a local anesthetic is injected, a small, sharp tool that looks like a cookie cutter (punch biopsy tool) is placed over the lesion, pushed down, and slowly rotated to remove a circular piece of skin. The skin sample is lifted up with a tool called a forceps or a needle and is cut from the tissue below. Stitches may not be needed for a small skin sample. If a large skin sample is taken, one or two stitches may be needed. Pressure is applied to the site until the bleeding stops. The wound is then covered with a bandage or sterile dressing.

- **Incision.** After a local anesthetic is injected, a piece of the lesion is removed with a scalpel. Stitches are used to close the wound. Pressure is applied to the site until the bleeding stops. The wound is then covered with a bandage or sterile dressing.

- **Excision.** After a local anesthetic is injected, the entire lesion is removed with a scalpel. Stitches are used to close the wound. Pressure is applied to the site until the bleeding stops. The wound is then covered with a bandage or sterile dressing. If the excision is large, a skin graft may be needed.

- **Slow Mohs (staged) excision.** A local anesthetic is used to numb the surgical area. The surgical procedure begins by excising around the skin cancer with a scalpel. Only the area that appears to be abnormal is first excised. After the excision is completed, the area is bandaged.
3 The Sending Provider’s Responsibilities

1. Formalin-filled (or Michele’s medium for Direct Immunofluorescence testing) specimen bottles are labeled with the doctor’s name, patient’s name and site of biopsy.

2. A requisition form, which details the patient’s demographic information including billing information, as well as describes the specimen (i.e., type, site, approximate size, description of lesion and a clinical diagnosis) and test requested is completed and accompanies the specimen.

3. The specimen bottles and requisition forms are placed together in the biohazard plastic specimen bag provided by our office and sealed.

   a. They are then placed in the Federal Express cardboard brown boxes and the diagnostic pack is sealed. The preprinted air bill is placed on the inside of the air bill pouch and attached to the diagnostic pack. The doctor’s office can set up a daily Federal Express pickup, call for a pickup, or take the package to the nearest Federal Express drop box or office.

   b. For doctors who use our courier, the office personnel call us to advise that they have a pickup ready. We will call Arch Express Courier and advise them to pickup up the specimens. If the call is late in the day, we are to advise the doctor’s office to appropriately store the specimens. Arch Express will then pick up the morning of the following business day. The personnel from Arch Express place the bags with the specimens in a zippered St. Louis University Dermatology courier pouch. The number of specimens is counted with a designated person at the physician’s office at the time of pick-up and with a designated person in the Dermatopathology Laboratory at St. Louis University at delivery.

4. All supplies including formalin filled specimen vials, Michele’s medium vials, biohazard plastic bags, Federal Express boxes, preprinted air bills, and requisition forms are ordered through our laboratory by calling 314 256 3413.
4 Policy for Rejecting Specimens

All specimens submitted to the Dermatopathology Laboratory must be properly labeled. This includes the completed requisition form, which should correlate with the properly labeled specimen, complete patient identification and current billing information including copies of insurance cards where appropriate.

Please be advised that no laboratory tests will be performed on unlabeled specimens. These specimens will be held and the laboratory personnel will notify the responsible provider in order to obtain appropriate clarification.