Model Rules for Portering Staff Handling Specimens for Laboratory Medicine

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**Changes from last version of this document**

* Document updated to include current care group terminology
* Page 6 adds a section for the transportation of samples for COVID-19 testing, and Caring for COVID-19 Patients at Death

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# Purpose and Scope

The policy documents the range of services the portering staff provide on both the hospital sites for the Laboratory Medicine to ensure both patient safety by preserving the integrity of samples and the occupational Health and Safety of the personnel involved in transportation and reception of specimens and members of the general public.

These model rules aim to draw attention to specific safety guidelines for this specific staff group and forms the basis for training given to staff.

# References

Laboratory Medicine Procedure: Transportation & Posting of Specimens: LM-SOP-TRANSPORT

**Medical Laboratories - Requirements for Quality and Competence (ISO 15189:2012)**

BS EN ISO 15189:2012 has been purchased under a restricted licence and must not be printed out, the Quality Manager and Head Biomedical Scientists each have a licensed copy.

Applicable clauses and sub-clauses within the standard:

ISO 15189: 2012; 5.4.5 Sample Transportation

Instructions for Packaging and transporting the samples to the laboratory for COVID-19 Test: MB-INF-COVID SAMPLES

Instruction for Caring for COVID-19 Patients at Death, Handling and Transporting to the Mortuary: MO-SOP-COVID

# Responsibilities

Facilities are directly responsible for Transport within the Trust and training their staff in line with this policy.

The Laboratory Medicine Quality Manager will ensure the policy is current.

* 1. All trust staff must comply with the Trust Information Governance Staff Guide: Confidentiality: Code of conduct. Diagnostic samples must betransported in such a manner that all patient details are confidential.

# Training

The Laboratory Medicine Quality Manager, Mortuary Manager and Blood Transfusion Practitioner are available for training and advice as specified and when requested.

# Publication and Distribution

The policy is available to all Trust staff on Staff Room (Trust Intranet site). This Policy is to be published and distributed to all staff within the Directorate of Laboratory Medicine through the Q-Pulse document module.

# Policy

## Portering services to Laboratory Medicine - York

**Portering staff provide a range of services to Laboratory Medicine at York – these include:**

* Collection and transport of all diagnostic specimens from wards, clinics and theatres as required.
* The transportation of bodies to the mortuary.
* The collection and transport of blood and products both from the Blood Transfusion laboratory on the second floor laboratory medicine and to the Issue Blood Bank fridge located in theatres.
* The delivery of printed reports to wards, clinics and theatres

## Portering services to Laboratory Medicine - Scarborough

**Portering staff at Scarborough are not expected to carry out the same services as at York, services include:**

* The transportation of bodies to the mortuary.

Portering staff will attend induction training given by the Mortuary Manager as the site requires (LM-INF-PRTRS IND). This will be recorded using the template LM-TEM-PRTRS IND by Laboratory Medicine as LM-REC-PRTRS INDXXYY, where YY is the year and MM is the month that the training occurred.

The Blood Transfusion Practitioner will also provide training which is recorded on the Learning Hub.

## Model Rules

**Portering staff are expected to comply with the following model rules at all times when they are on duty on both York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust sites:**

1. Portering staff will act at all times in a courteous and sensitive manner with all staff, patients and visitors.
2. Portering staff will ensure they wear the correct uniform provided, and comply with the current Trust dress code.
3. All portering staff will follow all Trust guidelines and policies relating to Health and Safety at Work as required for their portering post.
4. When transporting bodies to the mortuary these will be treated with dignity and respect at all times. Please refer to MO-SOP-PORTERS (York) and SMO-SOP-PORTERS (Scarborough) available on Staff Room - [Home](http://staffroom.ydh.yha.com) › [Policies and Procedures](http://staffroom.ydh.yha.com/policies-and-procedures) › [Clinical Documents](http://staffroom.ydh.yha.com/policies-and-procedures/clinical) › [Laboratory Medicine](http://staffroom.ydh.yha.com/policies-and-procedures/clinical/laboratory-medicine)
5. Portering staff will maintain patient confidentiality at all times in line with Trust policy. Failure to do so will be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter.
6. Portering staff required to transport blood and products for transfusion must undertake training and competency assessment in these procedures prior to undertaking these tasks.
7. No member of the portering staff should use the Blood Bank fridge without undergoing appropriate training in its use.

**The following sections apply to York only:**

1. When transporting specimens to or from the laboratory portering staff will follow transportation guidance as outlined in the Laboratory Medicine “Transportation and posting of specimens” procedure, available on Staff Room - [Home](http://staffroom.ydh.yha.com) › [Policies and Procedures](http://staffroom.ydh.yha.com/policies-and-procedures) › [Clinical Documents](http://staffroom.ydh.yha.com/policies-and-procedures/clinical) › [Laboratory Medicine](http://staffroom.ydh.yha.com/policies-and-procedures/clinical/laboratory-medicine)
2. At no time must portering staff carry specimens without a secondary container (be it a metal box or zip lock sealed polythene bag). White Diagnostic Specimen bags with absorbent pads are provided for this purpose and are available from Pathology Specimen Reception (tel: 726542) at any time. This is to ensure the integrity of any spillage and protect the member of staff from possible contamination.
3. After transporting specimens to the laboratory, portering staff should wash their hands thoroughly. Under exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, alcohol gel may used.
4. In routine hours (9.00 - 5.00 pm), portering staff should transport specimens directly to York specimen reception on the Ground Floor opposite Pharmacy; all specimens should be contained in a box or secondary impervious and leak-proof container.
5. Outside normal hours, samples left at the Main Reception should be transported to Laboratory Medicine without delay and delivered directly to the relevant laboratory on the first or second floor.
6. Theatre tins containing Microbiology samples and fresh Histology samples taken at theatre should be delivered directly to the Microbiology department on the first floor of the pathology block. During Microbiology normal working hours (Monday to Friday 08:30-20:00, Saturday 08:30-17:00, and Sunday 08:30-16:00) the theatre tin should be handed directly to a member of Microbiology staff. Out of normal working hours if there is no one to hand the theatre tin to it should be placed in the Microbiology cold store which is located on the right hand side of the Microbiology corridor if heading from out of the main stairwell, about half way down and is labelled 'Cold Room'. The theatre tin is placed on the floor just inside the door on the right hand side. **Under no circumstances should the theatre tin be delivered to the second floor.**
7. There may be occasion under direction of the theatre staff that sentinel lymph node breast specimens are delivered in a theatre tin directly to Histology on the third floor during normal working hours (Monday to Friday 08:30-17:00). The theatre tin should be handed directly to a member of staff. Out of hours the theatre tin should be placed in the fridge facing you as you come out of the lift with a sign on it saying ‘Theatre Tin’. **For all other theatre tin deliveries please follow the instructions above**
8. **In the event of a specimen spillage:**

* **Samples should always be transported within the hospital site in a secondary container, either the diagnostic specimen sample transport bag or lockable metal tin**. If the secondary container is dropped in transit and a breakage is suspected, the secondary container should not be opened. The suspected container should be returned to Laboratory Medicine, where staff should be made aware that a breakage is suspected. The container should then be taken to the Microbiology Department for appropriate action to be taken.
* **Transport staff must not touch or try to clear up the spill**. Stay with the specimen to prevent other people touching it and send somebody to the Microbiology Dept for assistance or, get a member of staff to phone Microbiology on extension York 5856 Scarborough 2288 for assistance.
* **In the event of a spillage of formalin from a Histology sample** (this could be from sample containers varying from 60ml through to 500ml) portering staff should be aware this is a hazardous fluid that should not be touched without gloves. Care should be taken not to splash in the eye, should this occur promptly wash eyes with lots of water while lifting the eyelids, for 15 minutes. For small spillages try to ventilate the area; the spill may be mopped up (whilst wearing gloves) with a paper towel and the contaminated material placed in a sealed bag and brought to the histology department for disposal in clinical waste. For larger spillages try to ventilate the area or if this is not possible try to restrict access to the area of the spill. Please contact Laboratory Medicine specimen reception to obtain spillage absorption granules specific for formalin. These should be scattered around the spillage to contain it then poured over the centre to absorb and neutralise any remainder. The granules and any other contaminated material should then be placed in a sealed bag and disposed of in the nearest clinical waste. If the spillage happens in normal working hours please contact the histology laboratory on ext. York 5728 for advice or assistance, and for disposal of contaminated material. Should the spillage happen out of normal working hours (8.30 to 5pm Monday-Friday) then the spillage granules are located in laboratory medicine reception just inside the double doors on the shelves to the left hand side.
  + Wash hands and complete a DATIX Adverse Incident form

**Transportation of samples for COVID-19 testing**

1. A complete list of instructions for how to package and transport samples for COVID-19 testing can be found on the hospital intranet, please read and follow these instructions carefully. [Home](file:///C:\Users\rlovie\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\WGEEPD4M\Transportation%20of%20samples%20for%20COVID-19%20testing) > [Covid-19: all the latest information](https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/covid-19/) > [Labs and sample handling](https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/covid-19/labs-and-sample-handling/) > [Instructions for packaging and transporting the samples to the laboratory for Covid-19 test](https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/seecmsfile/?id=4456)
2. Swabs are supplied by Microbiology department. Usually, swabs are replenished when samples are delivered to the lab. However, small supplies of swab kits for out of hour use should be collected from the microbiology before the end of the day (closing time 5:15pm).

**Caring for COVID-19 Patients at Death, Handling and Transporting to the Mortuary**

1. To ensure dignity is maintained for the patient, please read and follow the instructions that can be found on the Trust Staff Room site [Home](http://staffroom.ydh.yha.com) > [Covid-19: all the latest information](https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/covid-19/) > [Standard operating procedures and clinical guidelines](https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/covid-19/standard-operating-procedures-and-clinical-guidelines/https:/www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/covid-19/standard-operating-procedures-and-clinical-guidelines/) > [Caring for COVID-19 patients at death, handling and transporting to the mortuary](https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/seecmsfile/?id=4464). This is an integrated document for York and Scarborough.

**Appendix 1**

**Transport of Specimens by Hospital Staff**

It is the responsibility of the sender taking the specimen to ensure that the request form and patient’s specimen are correctly and adequately labelled.

Specimens must be submitted in a suitable specimen container, provided by the laboratory. Specimen containers should be plastic, wherever possible, and leak-proof. Containers must comply with British Standards BS ISO 6710:1995, BS 5213:1975.

The sender must ensure that the specimen container is properly closed and is not contaminated on the outside. The specimen container must be labelled with:

* Patient's surname, forename, D.O.B and/or unique identifier (normally the NHS Number)
* Nature of the specimen
* Time and date of collection
* Specimen source e.g. ward or clinic

The specimen must be accompanied by a suitably completed request form. This must include:

* Patient's surname, forename and/or unique identifier (normally the NHS Number)
* Patient date of birth
* Nature and/or site of the specimen
* Time and date of collection
* Specimen source e.g. ward or clinic
* Requesting consultant or approved authority and their location
* Test request
* And, where information is available, the following information must also be included on the request form
* Relevant clinical information
* Location for results to be sent if different from requester’s location
* Priority status

The primary specimen container must be placed in a transparent plastic transport bag and sealed, either by an integral sealing strip, or by other suitable means to enable opening without using sharp-pointed instruments. Bags MUST NOT be sealed with pins, staples or metal clips as they may cause injury and may affect the integrity of the bag.

Either the specimen bag and/or the request form should display the “Biohazard” symbol.

The request form must NOT be put in the bag with the specimen. York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust laboratory medicine request forms (including those used for Order Comms requests) have an integrated sealable plastic bag for the specimen. However, in the absence of these request forms a plastic bag with a side pocket can accommodate the completed request form.

In the case of large specimens, such as certain histopathology specimens or 24-hour urine containers, the primary receptacle may be placed in clear plastic sacks and sealed at the neck to prevent leakage. The request form must be securely taped to the neck of the sack in such a way that it can be processed within the laboratory without damaging or defacing the request form. Staples, pins and metal clips must NOT be used.

**Under no circumstances should anyone transport specimen containers in their hands or pockets.**

Specimens must be transported to the laboratory in the supplied diagnostic specimen sample transport carrier bags except for those samples from Theatres which are transported in a lockable metal tin.

Diagnostic specimen transport carrier bags are sealable, opaque plastic bags to be used for the transport of all samples from within the hospital. They are reusable provided no contamination has occurred.

* Metal specimen carriers must be disinfected weekly with 1% hypochlorite solution and whenever contaminated.
* Specimen carriers must NOT be used for any other purpose.

This route can be used to safely transport high-risk specimens.