

Pathology Policy on Self-requesting and result delivery directly to patients

Self Requesting

In line with guidance from British Medical Association¹ and The General Medical Council Ethical Guidance² pathology will not process samples where the patient and the requestor are the same individual or are suspected of being in a close personal relationship (family/friends). All NHS staff should be registered with a general practitioner outside their own family.

In the event that the requestor is suspected of being the patient or closely related to the patient, refer the request to a senior member of staff who should take the following action:

- Contact the requestor (or department/location) to ascertain any suspected relationship
- If a close relationship is confirmed – explain that the sample will not be processed and that they should refer themselves to an unrelated medical professional (GP/A&E). Book the specimen in as not tested and explain why.
- If a close relationship is denied, process the sample and record that confirmation of no relationship was obtained.

Communicating results to patients

The Pathology department does not issue reports to patients directly. However, the Trust is working towards allowing patients to access their own patient records as part of the IT strategy.

Results are communicated to the requesting clinician for interpretation and change in patient management as applicable.

The rationale for not offering results directly to patients is

- Many test results represent professional interpretation rather than measurement, and the laboratory interpretation may need to be modified by the clinician who knows the patient's specific situation, or even at a multidisciplinary team meeting.
- Results can sometimes deliver bad news, such as the diagnosis of an unexpected life-threatening condition, in an uncompromising manner and in the absence of appropriate support.
- Genetic results may have implications for other family members
- Some microbiology results have profound public health implications.
- Data protection - No robust mechanism for ensuring telephone enquirer is a bona fide patient

In exceptional cases, and with the agreement of the patient's clinician, copies of printed results may be sent directly to the patient's home address in addition to the requesting clinician. This is on a case-by case basis and with the agreement of the pathology clinical director

¹ Ethical Responsibilities in treating doctors who are patients Jan 2010 BMS Ethics http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctorswhoarepatientsjanuary2010.pdf_62126868.pdf

² General Medical Council Good Medical Practice 2013 Domain 2 Safety and Quality http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/good_medical_practice/safety_quality.asp