

Sanford Health Policy Laboratory Fargo Region General:	CRITERIA FOR REJECTION OF SUBOPTIMAL SPECIMENS 2.30
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SCOPE: Sanford Fargo Region - All Sites EXCEPT: Fargo Medical Center Broadway, South University Point of Care, Home Health Care, Occupational Health, Orthopedics Surgery Center

PRINCIPLE:

Criteria for rejection of suboptimal specimens is defined to ensure that the quality of testing is not compromised by the collection and transport of specimens.

POLICY:

Specimens that are non-labeled or have illegible labels or do not contain the two patient identifiers cannot be accepted for testing. Specimen recollection will be requested. Specimens that cannot be recollected (irreplaceable specimens) will be tested if determined acceptable by the testing department lead medical technologist and/or on-call manager. The report will be amended with a caveat specifying that the specimen was not able to be properly identified and the results must be interpreted with caution.

PROCEDURE:

1. Evaluate the specimen to make sure it is acceptable (see criteria below).
2. Call the service area whenever a specimen is rejected so a new specimen can be collected. Order a recollect if warranted.
3. Enter rejection information and document phone calls on the [SPECIMEN REJECTION LOG 2.30.L01 \(v.3\)](#).
4. Label the specimen as "rejected" and store in a designated area at a temperature appropriate for that specimen type.
5. Do NOT ACCEPT mislabeled or unlabeled specimens unless the specimen is **irreplaceable** and the individual who collected the specimen can correctly identify the specimen, i.e. the specimen must be unique in some way.
6. Do NOT REJECT the following specimens without consulting a lead, supervisor, or manager:
 - A. Irreplaceable (tissues, CSF, body fluids) specimens.
 - B. Specimens collected by an invasive procedure.
 - C. Unique specimens that cannot be replaced.
 - D. Specimens collected for microbiology culture. When in doubt all specimens collected for culture must be plated and referred to the microbiology supervisor.
7. For specimens that are accepted but the specimen quality is suboptimal:
 - A. An order comment will be added by the specimen processor detailing the circumstances. Examples of comments include (but are not limited to): "mislabeled specimen" or "delay in transport".
 - B. A label (SUBOPTIMAL SPECIMEN - see order comment) will be affixed to the specimen before delivery to the appropriate department.
 - C. The technologist will add the comment to the result stating: "Interpret results with caution. Specimen integrity compromised by (use reason given in order comment)."
8. Quality Assurance
 - A. When a specimen is rejected the person(s) involved in the collection will be informed as soon as

possible and, if appropriate, educated.

- 1) If it is not possible to identify the person involved, or that person is not available, the service area or their supervisor will be notified.
- 2) For laboratory phlebotomy staff the lead or supervisor will be notified by documentation on the [SPECIMEN REJECTION LOG 2.30.L01 \(v.3\)](#). If the issue is critical or impacts patient care, a lead

or

supervisor will be contacted immediately.

- B. Notification and corrective action will be documented using one or more of the following mechanisms:
 - 1) Specimen Rejection Log
 - 2) Patient Safety Report
- C. The Specimen Rejection Log will be reviewed at least monthly by a lead or supervisor to look for patterns or trends.
- D. If patterns or trends are identified additional corrective action will be taken. Corrective action can include:
 - 1) Retraining/remediation
 - 2) Root cause analysis
 - 3) Process Improvements
 - 4) Disciplinary action
- E. Statistics will be compiled by the department supervisor and presented to staff on a routine basis. The Quality Manager will make a formal presentation annually.

CRITERIA FOR REJECTION:

1. General guidelines used laboratory wide:
 - A. Unlabeled or incorrectly labeled specimens. Specimens without at least two unique identifiers (patient name, MRN or date of birth).
 - B. Containers labeled on the lid only will not be accepted.
 - C. Leaking containers and grossly contaminated specimens.
 - D. Specimens from unauthorized sources (specimens without valid orders).
 - E. Specimens without a requisition or computer orders.
 - F. Specimens received in a syringe with the needle still attached.
 - G. Insufficient quantity of specimen.
2. Additional guidelines by specific laboratory area:
 - Blood Bank/Transfusion Services
 - A. All unlabeled or mislabeled specimens must be recollected.
 - B. Grossly hemolyzed specimens require recollection.
 - C. All Blood Bank/Transfusion Service specimens are kept for 14 days.
3. Chemistry
 - A. Grossly hemolyzed specimens require recollection.

Hemolyzed Specimens

Hemolysis can be due to artifact (difficult phlebotomy) or an in-vivo process. Steps are taken to rule out artifact and the provider is notified.

1. First hemolyzed specimen: Order a recollect and have a new specimen collected. When possible, have a phlebotomist collect the second specimen if the original was a unit draw, or a have a different phlebotomist collect it if it was a lab draw.

2. If the provider wants the result reported without a redraw, release the result with the comment "Hemolyzed. Result reported per Dr. _____".

3. Second specimen (recollect) hemolyzed: Call the unit/provider to help determine the course of action. Document all calls in the LIS.

4. Recollect the specimen one more time (for a total of 3 collections, including the original) if the unit/provider requests that it be done. Do NOT collect the specimen more than 3 times.

5. If hemolysis does not resolve report the result with the following comment: "Hemolyzed. Hemolysis not corrected after multiple collections".

6. Notify the unit/provider that the specimen continues to hemolyze and document the call in the LIS.

7. Once it has been established that recollection will not resolve hemolysis on a certain patient it is no longer necessary to go through the recollect process on subsequent orders during that hospital stay. Add the comment "Hemolyzed. Recollect not done. Hemolysis not corrected by multiple collections on previous specimens".

- B. Specimens collected in a tube with the wrong anticoagulant
- C. Coagulation specimens with clots or an inadequate amount of blood for the tube.
- D. EDTA tubes with clots (A1C, cyclosporine, FK506).

4. Cytology

- A. Evaluate the specimen to make sure it is acceptable.
- B. Criteria for Rejection:
 - 1) Unlabeled or incorrectly labeled specimens. Specimens must have two unique identifiers (patient name, medical record number, date of birth). Do not accept mislabeled or unlabeled specimens unless the specimen is irreplaceable and the individual who collected the specimen can correctly identify the specimen.
 - 2) Specimens from unauthorized sources (without valid orders).
 - 3) Leaking containers with unreadable patient labels.
 - 4) Slides that are broken into small pieces.
 - 5) Specimens without electronic or paper orders.
- C. If the ordering provider is able to be identified, they are notified by phone or note in One Chart.
- D. Document the rejected specimen.
 - 1) Rejected paps are document using the Pap Rejection Log 2.30.L02.
 - 2) All other rejected specimens are documented using the [SPECIMEN REJECTION LOG 2.30.L01](#)

(v.3).

- E. Complete a Patient Safety Report using the MIDAS application for quality risk management.

5. Hematology

- A. Specimens with clots or an inadequate amount of blood for the anticoagulant.
- B. Specimen collected in a tube with the wrong anticoagulant.

6. Histology

- A. Evaluate the specimen to make sure it is acceptable.
- B. Criteria for Rejection:
 - 1) Unlabeled or incorrectly labeled specimens. Specimens must have two unique identifiers (patient name, medical record number, date of birth).

- 2) Container labeled on the lid only will not be accepted.
 - 3) Leaking containers and grossly contaminated specimens.
 - 4) Specimens from unauthorized sources (specimens without valid orders).
 - 5) Specimens without a requisition or computer orders.
 6. If a specimen container appears empty or contains less than the expected amount, the unit collecting the specimen is contacted to resolve the issue.
 - C. Since the specimen is irreplaceable, but meets the above listed criteria for rejection first contact the internal unit collecting the specimen and ask the individual who collected the specimen to come to histology and correct the rejection issue. If the specimen comes from an external site, do not send the specimen back but instead take pictures and send them to the submitting facility to correct the rejection issue.
 - D. Never discard a rejected specimen without consulting the administrative pathologist.
 - E. If specimen meets the criteria for rejection, write in on the [SPECIMEN REJECTION LOG 2.30.L01 \(v.3\)](#) (north campus only) and complete a [SPECIMEN REJECTION FORM PATHOLOGY 2.30.C03 \(v.2\)](#) (SU and North campus) so that the staff and/or lead can enter it into MIDAS for quality control purposes.
7. Microbiology
- A. Culture swabs or material greater than 24 hours old.
 - B. Improper transport or collection container. Examples include:
 - 1) Specimen for anaerobic culture from a routine culturette.
 - 2) Stool for culture in formalin.
 - 3) Synovial fluid for culture in EDTA. Gram stains can be performed.
 - 4) Mucous traps sent through the pneumatic tube system.
 - C. Inappropriate requests. Examples include:
 - 1) Anaerobic cultures on unacceptable sources: sputum, voided/catheterized urine, feces, vaginal sources.
 - 2) Foley catheter tip for culture.
 - 3) 24-hour urine collection for culture.
 - D. More than one specimen submitted on the same day from the same source (except blood).
 - E. Inadequate volume of specimen for multiple requests. Microbiology will ask the physician to prioritize requests.
 - F. Sputum for routine culture contaminated with oropharyngeal microflora.
 - G. Urine for culture held longer than 2 hours at room temperature. Urine in preservative can be held up to 3 days at room temperature.
 - H. Stool for culture or ova and parasite exam on patients hospitalized for more than 3 days.
 - I. Stool for ova and parasite exam with excess barium.
 - J. Specimens for reducing substances more than one hour old unless frozen.
 - K. Para-Pak Enteric Plus System for stool culture if the pH indicator in the medium has turned yellow (must be red).
8. Molecular
- A. Specimens that have been aliquoted, co-mingled, or accessed for other testing prior to molecular testing will be rejected.
 - B. Testing stool specimens for *C. difficile* DNA will be performed no more frequently than one test per 7 days.

REFERENCES:

1. Manual of Clinical Microbiology. 10th ed. 2011. PR Murray. ASM.

2. Clinical Microbiology Procedures Manual. 3rd ed. 2010. Garcia. ASM.
3. Standards for Blood Banks and Transfusion Services, 29th ed., 2014, AABB.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. [SPECIMEN LABELING 4.65](#)
2. [SPECIMEN REJECTION LOG 2.30.L01 \(v.3\)](#)
3. [SPECIMEN REJECTION FORM PATHOLOGY 2.30.C03 \(v.2\)](#)
4. [PAP REJECTION LOG 2.30.L02 \(v.2\)](#)

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