

Manitoba Health, Healthy Living & Seniors (MHLS) supports reporting and learning from patient safety events. The focus of a patient safety review is to closely look at the health care system that surrounds and interacts with those giving and receiving care. The goal is to identify risks to patient safety and recommend the most effective ways to minimize risk and improve the delivery of healthcare.

Patient Safety Learning Advisory

Transporting Specimen for External Consultation

Summary:

Consultation with an expert from outside the province was sought on a patient's biopsy sample.

This necessitated shipping the sample but the shipping was delayed by several weeks.

Keywords:

Transporting specimens, external consultation for specimens

Device Name (if applicable):

Drug/Name/Fluid Name: (if applicable):

Type of Analysis: single event

Topic: Specimen/Laboratory

Findings of the Review:

The sample was not shipped in a timely manner due to both human error and procedural shortfalls regarding the shipment and tracking of specimens to an external laboratory.

Physicians who followed up regarding the specimen were mistakenly informed that the specimen had shipped. This occurred because staff consulted the pathology report rather than a shipping log.

The pathology report indicated that the sample was sent for external consultation prior the sample shipping. To be more accurate, the report should have stated that the specimen was being referred for external consultation.

The patient's family had difficulty navigating the system to get accurate information on the status of the specimen. It was identified that staff should have been more professional and courteous.

System Learning:

Implement a formal process for referral of samples in place of e-mail/verbal instructions that cannot be tracked or flagged for follow-up. This process will include a step to confirm receipt of the sample at the referral laboratory.

Develop further procedures for precious samples being sent to external labs that include communication with the receiving site to provide them with shipping details. Train staff in shipping procedures for precious samples.

Client Services will communicate with the applicable department at each facility to ensure they know how to direct concerns related to laboratory. Conduct training sessions with appropriate staff to improve the quality of communication with patients and their families.