

*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**

### **Discrepancy in Diagnosis Based on Biopsy Results**

**Summary:**

In 2010, a pathology report was issued stating that the patient had a certain type of cancer (Diagnosis A). The patient received treatment, including chemotherapy, based on this diagnosis.

In 2012, the same patient had another biopsy. The pathology report on this sample indicated a different type of cancer (Diagnosis B).

As part of routine quality assurance procedure, the 2010 case was reviewed. It was determined that the 2010 biopsy should have been given Diagnosis B.

**Keywords:**

Discrepancies, pathology reports

**Device Name (if applicable):**

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

**Type of Analysis:** single event

**Topic:** Specimen/Laboratory

### **Findings of the Review:**

Pathology is based on subjective interpretation of cells in various stages of progression, which can result in a range of findings. In this case, the 2010 diagnosis was due to a specific test result, making Diagnosis A the most likely. The repeat testing in 2012 showed variable results across several samples.

In 2010, the case had been reviewed in depth by various clinicians including pathology, oncology and radiology. No 'red flags' were identified that could have alerted the physicians that an incorrect diagnosis had been made.

### **System Learning:**

For difficult cases such as this one, it is recommended that:

- Confirm that the case rounds used to discuss difficult cases are well documented for all disease types
- Prepare an educational program using this case and other difficult/unusual cases as a reminder of human factors and confirmation bias.

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