

### Patient Service Centre Conversion

*Mike Kelly, MD, PhD, FRCPC, BC Medical Director*

Following many months of integration activities, we are now in the final phase of converting all BC Biomedical Patient Service Centres (PSCs) to LifeLabs systems and practices. This includes using one Lab Information System (LIS) and one Client Information Centre contact number. We plan to have all BC Biomedical PSCs converted by the fall of 2016.

What this means:

- All external PSC signage has been replaced with LifeLabs signage.
- The employees you have been working with at BC Biomedical remain the same, as do our PSC locations.
- Patients have the ability to book appointments online at all PSCs at [www.LifeLabs.com](http://www.LifeLabs.com).
- We have one LifeLabs lab requisition for all PSC locations in the Lower Mainland.
- If specimens are picked up from your office, this service will continue with LifeLabs couriers.

- Result reporting format will change to the LifeLabs standard. You may see a difference in the display of units, banners and comments. Please note that if you have a problem with your patient reports and how you receive them, contact LifeLabs at 604-431-7206 or toll free at 1-800-431-7206.
- There will be one LifeLabs contact number to add tests or inquire about patient results. Please use the LifeLabs Client Information Centre number 604-431-7206 or toll free at 1-800-431-7206. Please note that if you use the BC Biomedical contact number, you will be automatically rerouted to the new number.
- Your patients' standing orders will continue to be honoured at all PSCs. Please note that LifeLabs provides the standing order expiry date on the patient' report. You will no longer receive the BC Biomedical monthly standing order expiry report.
- Please use the LifeLabs supply order form located at [www.LifeLabs.com](http://www.LifeLabs.com) to order your clinic or office supplies.

Thank you for your support and patience during this transition. We are making changes now that will allow us to provide you with the best possible service in the future. We will continue to keep you informed of any changes that may impact you or your patients.

### Face masks

*Karis Maguire, Environmental Health & Safety*

One crucial way LifeLabs protects the health and well-being of its employees working at Patient Service Centres is to have infectious patients wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when visiting a LifeLabs location. It is expected that symptomatic patients inform the front desk employee of their infectious status immediately upon arrival at which time appropriate PPE will be provided if it is not already being worn.

Recently, several incidents have been reported where an infectious patient did not self-identify at the reception desk, resulting in an exposure risk for both our staff and other patients in the vicinity. When sending an infectious or potentially-infectious patient to our Patient Service Centres, please ensure they are wearing the appropriate PPE (e.g. surgical mask) and remind them to advise the employee at the front desk upon their arrival.



### Allergy Testing

*Kent Dooley, PhD, FCACB, Clinical Biochemist*

Specific Allergen IGE (SAIGE) testing for former BC Bio clients is being consolidated to Lifelabs in Victoria; test method will be unchanged. Please use the LifeLabs requisition to facilitate accurate allergen ordering, available on our website, and remember that MSP rules require that an indication for testing be provided. Note that GP's are limited to 5 allergens per patient per year and Allergy Specialists to 20, though patients may pay for additional allergens. Finally, no testing will be performed if an indication is missing or an excess number of allergens is ordered, in which case a report will be issued indicating that testing was not done. The specimen will be kept for 30 days.

## Pheochromocytoma Screening

Jan Palaty, PhD, FCACB, Clinical Biochemist

In keeping with guidelines from the Endocrine Society and major US laboratories, we remind clinicians that testing for metanephrines is the preferred means of screening for pheochromocytoma. While the plasma (vs 24hr urine) test has been promoted, it is not without serious pitfalls with respect to collection and, more importantly, is not routinely available in British Columbia. Note that vanillylmandelic acid (VMA) is no longer recommended as a screening test for pheochromocytoma and should be used for neuroblastoma evaluation only.

To our knowledge, the urine metanephrines test offered by LifeLabs is unique in that the assay includes all of the principal biogenic amines (plus VMA) related to pheochromocytoma, as well as hydroxyindoleacetic acid (HIAA), the usual screening test for carcinoid syndrome. This approach optimizes both specificity and turnaround time, since all potentially requested tests are performed simultaneously. Moreover, the inclusion of HIAA helps identify the common

problem of urine collections that exceed 24hrs, as this compound is biochemically unrelated to the catecholamines.

We will comment only on a significantly abnormal result for a test that was not ordered, and even then we will not always provide a numerical value. Consequently, clinicians are discouraged from ordering a single test with the assumption that they will be notified if any other results are abnormal.

Pheochromocytoma being rare and catecholamines/metanephrines being potentially affected by a wide variety of medications in unpredictable ways, a drug interaction should be always be considered for any elevated result prior to a pathological cause. Any medications interacting with the catecholamine pathway should be discontinued for at least one week prior to the test.

Note also that our method is based on mass spectrometry and is free of the common interferences which were a problem in older assays using electrochemical detection.

## Joint fluids – Change in Procedure

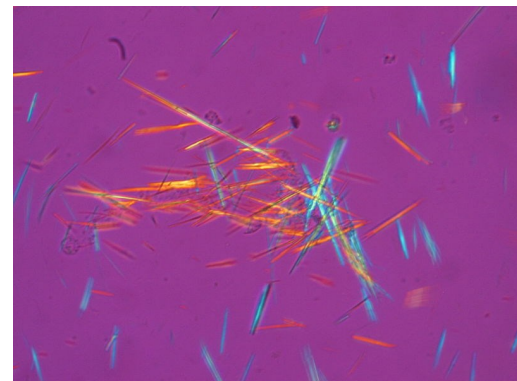
Suseela Reddy, MD, FRCPC, General Pathologist

Joint fluid tests will now be performed only if specifically requested on the requisition (e.g. cell count, differential, crystals and culture). Reflex testing will no longer be performed.

Synovial fluid collection kits may be obtained from LifeLabs by calling (604) 412-4481.

Specimens in syringes with the needle attached pose a safety hazard. If it is necessary to submit the specimen in a syringe, please call our Hematology Department at (604) 412-4474 to arrange for a special container and transport.

Please use the appropriate tubes and fluid volumes as per below.



By Bobgalindo (Own work) [GFDL (http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html)]

Spiked rods of monosodium urate crystals under polarized light in a synovial fluid sample.

Red Top Tube #1 (No additive)	Lavender Top Tube #2 (EDTA)	Green Top Tube #3 (Sodium Heparin)	Red Top Tube #4 (No Additive)	Grey Top Tube #5 (Fluoride)
Minimum 0.5 mL	Minimum 1.0 mL Additional 0.5 mL for cytology	Minimum 0.5 mL	Allow 0.5 mL/test	Allow 0.5 mL/test
Bacterial Culture (includes Gram stain) Other	Cell Count Differential Cytology	Crystals	Protein Other	Glucose