

# connections update

## Quality and Safety at St. Joseph's Health Centre

Providing the safest care possible to our patients is very important to us. We have a saying at St. Joseph's Health Centre that "patient safety is everybody's responsibility." So why is this important to us? As a community teaching hospital serving the diverse communities of south west Toronto, our patients and their families rely on us each and every day to provide safe, quality care. There are many initiatives and strategies in place that go into helping us achieve our strategic commitment of Putting Patients First by providing the safest care.

Over the next year, our newsletter, *Connections*, will provide our patients and their families as well as our staff, physicians and volunteers, with information on these initiatives to report on how we're doing on delivering on our commitment to provide safe, quality care.

Read on to learn more about what Laboratory Services is doing to support quality care and patient safety at St. Joseph's Health Centre. Registration Services and Clinical Engineering are also doing their part to ensure patient safety and quality at the Health Centre - read all about that in the *Connections*, August 3rd issue.

### Quality and Safety in Laboratory Services

When a patient gives a blood sample, a urine sample or undergoes a tissue biopsy for testing and analysis, it's one of the very few stages in their journey through the health care system where they are separated from their care.

Most of the lab work performed in a hospital setting is sent away from where the patient is directly receiving care, like in the Emergency Department, at their bedside in their hospital room, or in the Operating Room, to be analyzed in the Laboratory.

"As a patient, you need to be able to assume that the results that come back to you through your clinician are your lab results – that what the lab technologists thought they were analyzing in the lab is really the correct sample collected from you. It requires a lot of attention to detail and it is easy to take that entire process and all of the quality controls that are in place for granted," said

Michael Hierlihy, Administrative Director of Clinical Support Services.

Every day approximately 800 to 1,000 tubes of blood pass through the Core Laboratory for analysis and up to approximately 60 tissue specimens are sent to our Pathology Laboratory for diagnosis. Once all of the testing is complete, every lab result is delivered electronically so there are no delays for the patient.

"The lab is extremely regulated by external accrediting organizations (Ontario Laboratory Accreditation, CAP) – and it has to be because of workflow every specimen follows," said Michael. When a lab test is ordered for a patient, the specimen that is collected follows three processes or stages of workflow through the laboratory:

- The Pre-analytic stage: where the specimen is collected from the patient and labeled with their personal information.
- Analytic stage: where the specimen is analyzed through a series of different processes and analyzers and the results are reviewed before being released to physicians.

- Post-analytic stage: where the final report is generated that shows the results from all of the lab testing that the clinician uses to determine the patients continued care path.

In a diagnostic laboratory that processes thousands of specimens collected from patients every day, it is important that everything is labeled properly during the Pre-Analytic Stage.

“Specimen labeling and proper identification is critical for obvious reasons,” said Bill Chapman, Chief of Laboratory Medicine. “The wrong results can be reported on the wrong person if it is not done properly.” Another important part of this stage in workflow is making sure that the lab specimen is acquired properly from the patient so they don’t have to ‘re-poke’ the patient for additional re-testing.

Over the last year, the Lab has been conducting several in-service teaching and education sessions in partnership with the Emergency Department, Cardiac Care Unit, Intensive Care Unit, Paediatrics and the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit to ensure that nursing staff are performing their part of the this Pre-Analytic Stage of the process correctly.

In April 2009, the Ontario Lab Accreditation performed their onsite assessment and St. Joseph’s Department of Laboratory Medicine received the maximum accreditation of 4 years.

“This is a well developed program of assessment that is in place in Ontario that ensures quality during all stages of a specimen’s workflow,” said Wayne Ozanne, Laboratory Manager. This means that on an ongoing basis the laboratories are constantly having our analytic processes and interpretation of lab results assessed in all areas of the lab.

The Laboratory’s four-year accreditation status is based on achieving program requirements in all of the following International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards:

- ISO 15189:2007 Medical laboratories — Particular requirements for quality and competence
- ISO 15190:2003 Medical laboratories – Requirements for safety
- ISO 22870:2006 Point-of-care testing (POCT) – Requirements for quality and competence

The Lab’s team is a dedicated group of medical

physicians, medical technologists, technicians, clerical and support staff. The Medical Laboratory Technologists are cross trained within several laboratories that make up the department, which includes: Chemistry, Hematology, the Blood Bank, Microbiology, Pathology, Specimen Collection and oversight of the Point of Care Testing. Wayne Ozanne said they are all required through their College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario to maintain and show evidence of their expertise and skills by participating in a continued learning and educational portfolio audits that is reviewed by their College.

One of the larger initiatives that Laboratory Services Department is involved in that directly relates to the Health Centre’s Corporate Quality strategy and Big Aim is the Lab Utilization program.

“It’s about Using Our Resources Wisely, but there is a significant quality aspect to this program,” said Bill. The quality and safety aspect to the program is if there is over utilization of lab services (more lab tests ordered than what was really needed to help diagnose the patient) there is a concern that there will be results that come back that dictate a therapeutic plan for a patient that may actually be wrong.

“Too much lab work can actually harm the patient. The more tests you do is not better. The more tests you do, the more likely you are to come up with false positives,” said Bill. A working group has been created to develop medical directives for the Emergency Department (an area of the hospital that uses a lot of the Health Centre’s Laboratory Services) that will consist of test menus that can be ordered by nurses under circumstances that are in accordance with the Ontario Hospital Association protocols.



30 The Queensway, Toronto, Ontario M6R 1B5  
T: 416-530-6000 W: [www.stjoe.on.ca](http://www.stjoe.on.ca)