

**Guidelines to send specimens for histopathology/cytopathology to Department of Pathology during the period of COVID-19 Pandemic (7.4.2020)**

During the duration of Covid-19 pandemic, following guidelines need to be strictly followed for sending all samples for processing to the Department of Pathology in order to prevent any inadvertent exposure to the technical staff, residents and faculty members:

**I. For all histopathology specimens:**

1. Operative specimens as well as biopsies should to be sent in **sealed double leak-proof specimen bags/containers**
2. The specimen should be **completely immersed in 10% buffered** formalin (For small biopsies formalin should be ten times the volume of the tissue & Big specimens should be at least double the volume of the tissue)
3. All specimens as well as histopathology requisition forms should be labelled properly with patient details and **clearly marked in red regarding the status of Covid-19 (negative, suspected, positive or Not Tested)**
4. Please ensure that the **requisition forms** are not handled with contaminated gloves, or contaminated with blood, bodily fluids or any infective material. (Preferably pathology forms should be filled by the person who has not come in contact with the patient)
5. Please ensure that the personnel who transport these specimens should be aware / trained in safe handling practices and should be wearing masks and gloves
6. **No frozen sections will be performed for the duration of ongoing pandemic\***
7. All small specimens/ biopsies will be processed after 24 hours and all large operative specimens after 48-72 hours of formalin fixation according to CDC/WHO guidelines, **hence please bear with us because there might be some delay in reporting of all specimens**
8. Due to requirement of 24-hour formalin fixation **it will not be possible to provide ‘rapid same day reporting’** on samples such as post-transplant kidney biopsies
9. **Fresh tissue for Direct immunofluorescence studies on skin and kidney biopsies will not be accepted for the duration of ongoing pandemic \*** (Extra core/tissue may be sent in formalin)
10. **Ancillary studies such as mutation testing results will be delayed in comparison to usual TAT of 10 days due to logistic issues**
11. Before operating or taking a biopsy of confirmed Covid-19 positive or suspected cases or for any other enquiries, please contact any of the following faculty members/ technical staff, so that the laboratory and the staff are prepared to receive such samples
  - a. Prof Mehar C Sharma : +91-9717739755
  - b. Dr Prasenjit Das : +91-9873898110
  - c. Prof Sandeep Mathur : +91-9868884789
  - d. Mr Arya, Chief Technical Officer: +91- 8178257914
  - e. Prof Chitra Sarkar : +91-9810181945

**Kindly ensure that the above instructions are followed for the duration of Covid-19 pandemic**

**Thank you for your cooperation in these unprecedented times**

## **II. For Cytopathology Specimens:**

### **Cytopathology Specimens**

The Cytopathology Laboratory processes **fresh samples** and uses **aerosol generating procedures** listed below:

1. Centrifugation
2. Cytospin
3. Spraying of FNAC material on slides for smear preparation
4. Cell block preparation

Presently the cytopathology lab mainly performs cancer diagnostics and is not configured for Covid-19 infected samples and aerosol handling. There is limited availability of PPE for staff processing these samples, for residents performing FNAC and rapid on-site evaluation (ROSE) of guided aspirates. Therefore, the cytopathology lab is limiting specimens during Covid-19 epidemic as follows

### **WILL BE RECEIVED AND PROCESSED**

1. Pleural, pericardial and ascitic fluids from suspected cancer patients only
2. BAL and bronchial samples from **non Covid-19** patients only
3. Bladder washings and barbotage samples
4. Smears prepared from ward /clinics (only in alcohol bottles, no fresh unfixed smears)
  - a. Note: if preparing smears yourself, spraying cytology material with needle syringe is aerosol generating procedure and requires PPE
5. CSF for suspected malignancy/leukemia

### **WILL - NOT - BE received/processed/performed**

1. BAL and bronchial samples from Covid-19 patients
2. Cervical smears
3. Urine cytology series from OPD patients
4. Sputum cytology
5. ROSE for EUS, EBUS and USG guided aspirates
6. Pleural, pericardial and ascitic fluid for suspected tuberculosis, cirrhosis or other non-malignant conditions
7. Samples requiring cell block immunohistochemistry

**Will be received/ processed only in urgent diagnostic need after discussion with faculty (Phone Numbers listed below)**

1. Ultrasound guided aspirates for urgent diagnostic needs – ROSE services will be provided only in Covid-19 NEGATIVE patients and if full PPE is available for the resident
2. Any other cytology sample or procedure when needed urgently

## **DIRECTIONS FOR TRANSPORT**

### **For all specimens irrespective of COVID-19 status**

1. All cytology samples to be sent in tightly capped containers with double container to prevent spillage and contamination
2. No fresh unfixed smears will be received
3. Attendants bringing sample have to wear a mask and gloves before entering the department of Pathology
4. Cytopathology lab entry is restricted for all attendants/staff/doctors. Specimens and requisition forms to be handed over through window created for the purpose

### **For any suspected or positive case of COVID 19**

1. As far as possible, cytology samples to be avoided since there are no indications for cytology in Covid
2. BAL fluid, bronchial washing and fresh unfixed smears will not be received.
3. If co-morbidities are being investigated, do a core needle biopsy instead of FNAC
4. If cytology sample is essential
  - a. Send in double container only
  - b. Clearly stamp COVID positive on requisition form and container label in RED
  - c. Mention COVID positive nature of sample while handing through window so that proper precautions can be taken.

Note: If any cytology specimen needs processing for research purposes from COVID-19 patients, they may be sent to separate facility created for the purpose, of the appropriate biosafety level. Cytopathology faculty will provide help and consultation for these.

For any assistance or help, please contact any of the following

1. Dr. VK Iyer 9971426444
2. Dr. Sandeep Mathur 9868884789
3. Dr. Deepali Jain 9868895112

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**Thank you for your cooperation in these unprecedented times**