

## UAMS Microbiology Laboratory

### I. GENERAL LABORATORY GUIDELINES

- A. The quality of the laboratory result is dependent upon the quality of the specimen and the information given to the laboratory.
- B. Examination of microbiology cultures is not completed until noon. Significant positive results, e.g. first time positive cultures on blood, body fluid, etc., are called to physicians as soon as the results become available. Please first check the computer for results. If results are not yet available in the computer, please wait until after **12-NOON** to call the laboratory.
- C. **Information Required on Requisitions and Specimen Containers:**
  - 1. Patient last name, first name.
  - 2. Date of Birth (D.O.B.)
  - 3. Patient medical record # and account
  - 4. Patient's Diagnosis or Chief Complaint (i.e. FUO OR SBE)
  - 5. Patient location
  - 6. The ordering physician and code (Please provide full name of physician.)
  - 7. The ordering physicians phone # and pager #
  - 8. Specimen type (culture site and collection time)
  - 9. The tests required - Tests ordered must be individually marked (a line drawn through multiple tests is not acceptable).
  - 10. Indicate any special handling required
  - 11. The date and time of specimen collection

Refer to "*Laboratory Specimen Identification Policy*" and "*Laboratory Test Requisition*" under General Information on the

Clinical Laboratory website for more information.

- 12. Call the Microbiology Lab (501-686-6880) for special requests (i.e. cultures for **Actinomyces, Nocardia, or Aeromonas in stool**, etc.), which must be noted on the special instruction area of the requisition.
- 13. If a specimen is directly plated on culture media, the culture plates **must be labeled** with the patient's name, account number, unit number, culture site, date and time of collection, along with a transmittal or Microbiology Request Form.
- D. **Collection and Delivery of Specimens (see "Specimen Collection Guidelines"):**
  - 1. Collect enough material for the desired studies. If a two (2) swab culturette will be used for the desired studies, collect specimen on both swabs. Collect a (2) swab culturette for each type of culture desired. (**Note: Swabs are generally considered suboptimal specimens due to small amount of material available.**)
  - 2. Place swabs in appropriate transport media (e.g. Anaerobic, etc.); place biopsies, aspirates, or fluids in a sterile container that **does not include additives or chemicals** and bring to the Clinical Laboratory - **ASAP**
  - 3. Collect aspirates or wound discharges with a needle and syringe. Transfer to a sterile container.
    - a. **Do not use a container that includes additives or chemicals (ex. Clot Activator).**
    - b. **Sterile body fluids can be collected in the blood culture vials. Ensure there is an appropriate volume of specimen.**
    - c. **Syringes with capped needles will not be processed by laboratory personnel. (NOTE: OSHA publications 29 CFR Part 1910.1030 (e)(2)(ii)(J) PROHIBITS RECAPPING NEEDLES or REMOVING NEEDLE FROM SYRINGE).**
  - 4. Avoid contamination from indigenous flora, whenever possible, to ensure a sample representative of the infectious process. There are many sites of infection where the specimen may contain an etiologic agent whose presence in a healthy host would otherwise be considered normal flora. This normal flora from skin, membranes, and the respiratory tract could interfere with the interpretation of culture results as well as overgrow and obscure the true agent of disease. Specimens to be discouraged due to questionable microbial information include:

Colostomy discharge  
Foley catheter tip  
Gastric aspirates of newborns  
Lochia  
Vomitus

Instead of swabs, tissue or an aspirate is preferred on the following specimen types:

Burns, Wounds  
Decubitus  
Gangrenous lesions  
Periodontal lesions  
Perirectal lesions  
Surgical specimens

5. Duplicate specimens from the same site on the same patient for the same procedure on the same day will not be routinely processed. (An exception: Blood Cultures). Requests for other exceptions should be directed to Microbiology Director or CP Resident On-Call (501-688-2820).
6. The laboratory will only accept routine stool cultures and ova/parasite examinations on outpatients or on inpatients hospitalized three (3) days or less. The laboratory will accept routine stool cultures and ova/parasite examinations on patients hospitalized for more than three (3) days if the patient is immunocompromised or if there was a failure to order appropriate stool testing during the initial period of hospitalization. If there is an unusual situation, and the test needs to be performed, contact the Microbiology Director and/or the CP Resident On-Call (501-688-2820). Routine stool cultures should be sent to the Microbiology Department in Cary-Blair vials.
7. All specimens must be delivered to the Clinical Laboratory within one (1) hour of collection for optimal isolation of organisms.

## **II. BACTERIA CULTURE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES:**

### **A. Gram Stain (GS)**

A Gram stain smear is included routinely with most specimens processed. Exceptions include, urine, stool, bone, blood, catheter, surface, gastric aspirate, stem cell harvest, burn/graft quantitative culture and bone marrow harvest. If a Gram stained smear is requested from a specimen not routinely Gram stained or in the event a smear only is desired without culturing the specimen, order appropriately in e-chart or state this in the "Special Instructions" box on the requisition.