

21 December 2009

Dear Practitioner

Last week our pathologists published the first issue of The Scope, a bi-monthly newsletter put together by the Labtests pathology team for Auckland practitioners. Contents of this issue include:

- Update from Medical Director Richard Lloyd
- Answers to FAQs on faecal parasite testing
- Clinical application of sensitive troponin assays
- Common misdiagnoses of sarcoma
- Guidelines for chlamydia testing
- AIDS-related Kaposi sarcoma case study
- Full pathology team contact details

A copy of the newsletter is available on our website at: [http://www.labtests.co.nz/Images-\(1\)/The-Scope-Issue-1-151209.aspx](http://www.labtests.co.nz/Images-(1)/The-Scope-Issue-1-151209.aspx) or please contact your MLO to receive a hard copy.

NEW REFERENCE INTERVALS AVAILABLE ON LABTESTS WEBSITE

Our reference intervals are now charted and available on our website at: <http://www.labtests.co.nz/Information-for-Clinicians/Reference-Intervals.aspx>

Practitioners should note changes to D-dimer units, which are now reported the same as other laboratories in the Auckland region. We have put together the below list of Frequently Asked Questions relating to reference ranges for further information.

Why is the Troponin reference range different? Why does it result in more positives?

Labtests measures cardiac Troponin levels using the Siemens Centaur Troponin I (cTnl) assay. In our experience, the Siemens Troponin method is more sensitive than some others on the market. This gives an earlier indication of myocardial injury, ensuring a responsive outcome for the patient.

Can I compare Labtests PSA results with those of other labs?

It is not advisable to compare tumour markers from different laboratories. Labtests measures PSA using the Siemens Centaur PSA assay and reports the same reference ranges appropriate to the patients' age as used by the other Auckland diagnostic pathology laboratories. As a rule of thumb, our reported PSA values will be similar, but not identical to those reported by other Auckland Laboratories. A recent ARQAG survey reveals that results from Labtests are aligned with those from LabPlus and North Shore Hospital. Middlemore Hospital and Diagnostic Medlab results are generally higher.

Am I able to compare Labtests INR results with those of other Laboratories in Auckland?

The INR (International Normalised Ratio) is effectively a means of standardising a patient's prothrombin ratio. The purpose of this standardisation is to allow direct comparison of a patient's results between laboratories using different testing methods. Labtests utilises a different testing platform than is used by DML. There may be small differences in INR results between the labs but these are unlikely to lead to a change in warfarin dosage.

How do Labtests Glucose Results compare with other laboratories in Auckland?

The upper limit of Labtests' Reference Range for fasting serum or plasma glucose is 5.4 mmol/L. Labtests uses the same reference range used by LabPLUS, which is published by the New Zealand Guideline Group (NZGG) and the Ministry of Health (MOH). Labtests appends an interpretive comment to all clinically significant abnormal results.

Following feedback from clinicians our Chemical Pathologists have amended Labtests' interpretive comments to ensure clarity and alignment with the advice of the NZGG. Examples of these comments are:

1. Fasting glucose 5.5-6.0 mmol/L: The result is probably normal. If patient was not truly fasting suggest repeat. Some patients with these levels will show diabetes or impaired glucose tolerance in an oral glucose tolerance test. An oral GTT is suggested if risk factors for diabetes are present (e.g. age more than 45y, obesity, hypertension, non-European ethnicity, family history, past history of gestational diabetes).

2. Fasting glucose 6.1-6.9 mmol/L: This result indicates impaired fasting glycaemia if diabetes mellitus is not known to be present. If the patient was not truly fasting suggest repeat. Otherwise an oral glucose tolerance test should be performed.

Our external Quality Assurance Program performance data for glucose shows that Labtests' blood glucose measurements are both accurate and precise, and in accordance with the majority of other labs in Australasia.

What standard does Labtests use for reporting eGFR?

Labtests uses a standard international formula to report eGFR's of <90 as required by the Regional Renal service. Previously only eGFR's of <60 were reported. Labtests is working with the Regional Renal service to standardize reporting across all laboratories.

Why am I seeing more red cells in my urine culture reports?

At the present time Labtests is performing microscopy on all urines (approximately 30% more than the previous provider). This is done using automated flow cytometry (cell counting) technology which has less intra-test and inter-test variability than manual microscopy.

MICROBIOLOGY UPDATE

Change to urine reporting

In response to feedback from GPs regarding how we report urinalysis results, we have made a change to the way the WBC and RBC are reported. As up to $10 \times 10^6/L$ WBC and $15 \times 10^6/L$ RBC are a normal finding in urine, where there is $< 10 \times 10^6/L$ WBC or $< 15 \times 10^6/L$ RBC, it is reported as $< 10 \times 10^6/L / < 15 \times 10^6/L$ rather than the whole number (i.e. WBC = $6 \times 10^6/L$ is now reported as $< 10 \times 10^6/L$ – this is a normal finding). Where there are $\geq 10 \times 10^6/L$ WBC or $\geq 15 \times 10^6/L$ RBC the actual number seen will be reported.

We appreciate your feedback and will continue to evaluate our methods to ensure quality reporting.

Semen Analysis

Semen analysis is performed to assess fertility and as part of the post-vasectomy work up.

Fertility specimens must be received by the laboratory fresh, i.e. within 1-2 hours of collection. Patients should deliver the specimens to the central laboratory at Carbine Road, Mt Wellington, between 0700h and 1700h Monday – Friday and 0800h – 1200h (noon) on Saturday. We cannot accept samples on Sunday. Please ensure your patients are aware of the correct times and days for specimen drop-off.

Post-vasectomy specimens may be delivered to a collection centre on the day of collection for transport to our Mt Wellington laboratory.

Please contact one of our microbiologists (Dr Drinkovic or Dr Upton) with any feedback, concerns or for further information.

OUR TEAM

Last week, Labtests welcomed Immunologist, Professor Ban-Hok Toh, who is consulting to Labtests from Gribbles Pathology in Melbourne to provide additional interpretation and specialist advice on immunology. Professor Toh is internationally recognised for his work on autoimmune gastritis and pernicious anaemia.

In addition to his position at Gribbles Pathology, Professor Toh is Head of the Autoimmunity Laboratory at Monash University's Centre for Inflammatory Diseases and a Professional Fellow of the Baker Heart Research Institute. He was previously Head of the Department of Immunology at Monash University (1995 - 2005) and Chief Examiner in Immunology for the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (1995 - 2000).

Practitioners can contact Professor Toh for advice on (09) 574 7375, which will automatically transfer to his Australian mobile or email him at: ban-hok.toh@med.monash.edu.au

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY COLLECTIONS SERVICES REMINDER

To enable our staff to enjoy family holiday time over Christmas and New Year, we will be operating reduced hours and locations on the public holiday days.

For those patients that require regular tests, our home visits team will work in with them to ensure they receive the care they require over this period. Home visit bookings will be available by phoning 0508 LABTESTS (0508 522 837).

Our collection centres are displaying the below list of holiday opening locations and hours over the next few weeks and our MLOs will notify your practice if your local collection centre is affected over this period.

If you have any questions about our service during this time, please contact your MLO.

Christmas Day			
Friday 25th December 2009	On-call collection services	Phone 0508 LABTESTS 0508 522 837	
Boxing Day			
Saturday 26th December 2009	Mt Wellington	37-41 Carbine Road	8am – 12 noon
	Papakura	132A Great South Road	8am – 12 noon
	Grey Lynn	58 Brown Street	8am – 12 noon
	Mairangi Bay	119 Apollo Drive	8am – 12 noon
	Henderson	51 Lincoln Road	8am – 12 noon
Sunday 27th December 2009	Mt Wellington	37-41 Carbine Road	8am – 12 noon
Monday 28th December 2009	Mt Wellington	37-41 Carbine Road	8am – 12 noon
	Papakura	132A Great South Road	8am – 12 noon
	Botany Road	301 Botany Road	8am – 12 noon
	Grey Lynn	58 Brown Street	8am – 12 noon
	Mt Roskill	223 Stoddard Road	8am – 12 noon
	Mairangi Bay	119 Apollo Drive	8am – 12 noon
	Glenfield	Westfield Shopping Centre Level 2	8am – 12 noon
	Henderson	51 Lincoln Road	8am – 12 noon
	Massey	Westgate Shopping Centre 2-20 Fernhill Dr	8am – 12 noon

New Years Day			
Friday 1st January 2010	Mt Wellington	37-41 Carbine Road	8am – 12 noon
Saturday 2nd January 2010	Mt Wellington	37-41 Carbine Road	8am – 12 noon

	Papakura	132A Great South Road	8am – 12 noon
	Grey Lynn	58 Brown Street	8am – 12 noon
	Mairangi Bay	119 Apollo Drive	8am – 12 noon
	Henderson	51 Lincoln Road	8am – 12 noon
Sunday 3rd January 2010	Mt Wellington	37-41 Carbine Road	8am – 12 noon
Monday 4th January 2010	Mt Wellington	37-41 Carbine Road	8am – 12 noon
	Papakura	132A Great South Road	8am – 12 noon
	Botany Road	301 Botany Road	8am – 12 noon
	Grey Lynn	58 Brown Street	8am – 12 noon
	Mt Roskill	223 Stoddard Road	8am – 12 noon
	Mairangi Bay	119 Apollo Drive	8am – 12 noon
	Glenfield	Westfield Shopping Centre Level 2	8am – 12 noon
	Henderson	51 Lincoln Road	8am – 12 noon
	Massey	Westgate Shopping Centre 2-20 Fernhill Dr	8am – 12 noon

Yours sincerely



Dr Craig Marshall
Chief Executive Officer



Dr Richard Lloyd
Medical Director