Procedure for Approval for Referred Out-of-Province Clinical Laboratory Tests

Issued by

Provincial Laboratory Formulary Advisory Council

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1.0 Overview and Purpose

1.1 Ordering privileges for clinical laboratory tests in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) is based on the Provincial Laboratory Formulary (PLF).

1.2 Some tests are not available in province and must be referred out-of-province for analysis. A list of frequently ordered referred out-of-province tests is maintained as part of the PLF and is available to physicians and other ordering professionals on the Department of Health and Community Services (HCS) website.

1.2.1 Requests for referred out-of-province tests require approval as outlined in this document.

1.3 Infrequently ordered tests that are not specifically identified in the PLF but are required under exceptional circumstances will undergo a rapid review and approval process.

1.4 The purpose of this policy is to ensure rational test utilization, correct ordering, sample collection, and processing of referred-out test requests; and to assure that unusual test requests are clinically justified.

2.0 Policy Statements

2.1 When there is need for a test that requires out-of-province testing, a *Laboratory Test Special Authorization (LTSA)* form must be prepared by the ordering professional. Approval of this form confirms that appropriate consultation with a laboratory medicine specialist has occurred prior to sample collection, or that necessary information is available to permit timely decisions on sample send-out.

2.2 Criteria for approval of an out-of-province laboratory test request will include but may not be limited to:

2.2.1 How the test will influence clinical management, treatment plan, and patient care.

2.2.2 Whether it is the most appropriate test for accurate diagnosis/management or if any other tests are available and more appropriate.

2.2.3 If equally useful tests are readily available at lower cost.

2.2.4 Whether a repeat request meets the minimal retest interval.

2.2.5 Whether the testing lab is on the current list of acceptable referral labs (i.e. meets the Regional Health Authorities (RHA) quality requirements).

2.2.6 Consultation with other laboratory medicine specialists within or outside the organization as necessary to determine test utility.

2.3 If a sample is received by a laboratory for out-of-province testing without a fully completed LTSA form, it will not be approved for referral. In such cases, the ordering professional will be requested to complete the LTSA form prior to the sample being sent out-of-province for testing. Where sample stability allows, non-approved samples will be held for a maximum of two months, or storage stability limit, whichever is lower, pending submission of further information then discarded

3.0 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all health care professionals with test ordering privileges in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and affects all requests involving tests sent out-of-province by Laboratory Medicine Programs in all RHAs.

4.0 Responsibility

4.1 Health Care Providers:

4.1.1 Follow the procedures described in this document to access laboratory tests performed out-of-province

4.2 Medical Director or Designate Laboratory Medicine Specialist:

4.2.1 Accepts requests for out-of-province tests.

4.2.2 Decides on whether to accept or reject the request and/or samples to be referred out-of-province.

4.2.3 Follows up with Health Care Providers in a timely manner when further information is required for a specimen to be tested out-of-province or if test request is rejected.

5.0 Procedure

Follow the activities below to ensure expedient processing of laboratory test requests for out-of-province services.

5.1 Requesting out-of-province tests listed on the PLF (Tier 3)

5.1.1 The ordering professional must complete a LTSA Form and submit, for review by a laboratory medicine specialist within the laboratory site/division responsible for the specific service. A copy of the LTSA must be attached to the requisition when the patient presents at laboratory for blood collection and/or specimen delivered to the lab and accompany the specimen to the referral dispatch area

5.1.2 The form must be submitted prior to specimen collection in order to ensure timely approval and dispatch of appropriately processed samples.

5.2 Review process for out-of-province tests

5.2.1 A laboratory medicine specialist will review the LTSA form and approve the request; or will initiate telephone and/or other contact (faxed request for information, email) with the ordering professional to resolve any outstanding issues related to the test request prior to determining acceptance or final disposition of the specimen.

5.2.2 Approved test requests are processed for send-out to a referral lab and dispatched at the next scheduled time or for urgent cases as soon as can be arranged. Non-approved tests are held for the sample stability period or 2 months, whichever is less, and discarded if no further instructions on disposition are provided.

5.2.3 The final decision will be documented by the laboratory medicine specialist on the LTSA form

5.3 Urgent send-out test approval

5.3.1 In some cases, the sensitive nature of certain measured analytes makes urgent or special processing of out-of-province tests requests necessary. Such priority tests include those:

5.3.1.1 where the sample is unstable at routine storage conditions and timely transport and analysis must be arranged;

5.3.1.2 where special sample processing is required (see PLF for special collection/transport/processing requirements or special patient preparation required); or

5.3.1.3 where urgent test results are required for a patient management decision.

5.3.2 In these cases, contact **must** be made with the laboratory medicine specialist prior to sample collection in order to confirm sample specifications.

5.3.3 Approval of tests without a completed LTSA form will be considered only in urgent circumstances and at the discretion of the laboratory medicine specialist and based on other information available while the request is being reviewed. The ordering professional will be instructed to complete and submit the LSTA form.

5.3.4 Sample collection should only occur once the laboratory medicine specialist has communicated with the ordering professional indicating if and when the sample can be sent and any potential

sample stability concerns that may compromise getting the sample tested out of province.

5.4 Urgent requests for previously unfunded/unapproved PLF tests (Tier 4)

5.4.1 Requests for infrequent tests that are not approved for funding for the PLF but are required under exceptional circumstances will undergo a rapid review and approval process as described in Appendix A.

5.4.2 Ordering professionals and laboratory medicine specialists may be unaware of the specific sample requirements or the specific usefulness and/or limitations of rarely ordered tests. In these instances, it is important that the ordering professional initiate contact with the laboratory medicine specialist at an early stage prior to sample collection to discuss the testing requirements and appropriateness of the test, and such that appropriate arrangements can be made.

5.5 Urgent one-time only requests for tests not listed in the PLF.

5.5.1 Where urgent test results are required for non-formulary tests for patient management and to expedite the process, the decision to approve the test will be made directly by the laboratory medicine specialist.

5.5.2 The ordering professional should make contact with the designated on-call laboratory medicine specialist in the appropriate laboratory division.

5.5.3 Upon taking the initial request information, the laboratory medicine specialist will expediently begin the process for approval and instruct the ordering professional to complete the LTSA form if it has not already been submitted.

5.5.4 The laboratory medicine specialist will exercise due diligence in making the necessary contacts to determine test appropriateness, collection instructions, cost, selection of an accredited reference laboratory prepared to perform the testing, and other information required to decide whether the request will be approved.

5.5.5 If the request is declined, the laboratory medicine specialist will make other test recommendations as appropriate and will communicate with the ordering professional.

5.5.6 If the request is approved, arrangements will be made for the specimen to be properly collected (by the health professional or laboratory as appropriate) and transported to the testing lab. The collection and transport instructions will be documented on the

LTSA form. A copy of the LTSA must be attached to the requisition when the patient presents at laboratory for blood collection and/or specimen delivered to the lab and accompany the specimen to the referral dispatch area.

5.6 Urgent requests to add test to the PLF

5.6.1 In cases where there is urgent request for a test with high likelihood for reordering by the same ordering professional or others the laboratory medicine specialist will expediently begin the process for approval and instruct the ordering professional to complete the LTSA form if it has not already been submitted and the *Application Form for Additions and Modifications of the Provincial Laboratory Formulary*.

5.6.2 The laboratory medicine specialist will initiate the rapid review process by submitting a request to the Provincial Laboratory Formulary Advisory Council (PLFAC) Chair immediately upon obtaining the request.

5.6.3 The PLFAC co-chair will form an ad hoc committee, within 5 working days, to review the request and determine timelines for final decision.

5.6.4 The committee will deliver the decision and make any further recommendations to the ordering professional and laboratory medicine specialist.

5.7 Discard of non-approved samples.

5.7.1 When test stability permits, samples from non-approved test requests will be held for two months, or until the ordering professional makes contact with the laboratory to discuss the sample disposition.

5.7.2 A notice (LTSA, cancellation report, or lab report result comment as applicable) will be issued to the ordering professional indicating that the sample is being held and that clinical justification for the request is required prior to further processing. Samples with unresolved disposition and without justification for the test will be discarded after two months from the initial request.

5.7.3 A list of non-approved samples will be created and reviewed on a weekly basis. The laboratory medicine specialist or designate will confirm individual samples for discard.

6.0 Procedural Notes

6.1 Specific questions surrounding the collection and processing of referred-out test samples should be directed to a designated laboratory medicine specialist within the appropriate laboratory discipline.

7.0 Supporting Documents

7.1 Fryer AA, & Smellie WSA. Managing demand for laboratory tests: a laboratory toolkit. *J Clin Pathol* 2013;66:62–72.

7.2 Janssens PMW. Managing the demand for laboratory testing: Options and opportunities. *Clin Chim Acta* 2010;411:1596–1602

8.0 Related Documents

8.1 *Laboratory test special authorization form (LTSA)*

8.2 *Procedure for adding New Laboratory Tests to the Provincial Laboratory Formulary*

8.3 *Application Form for Additions and Modifications of the Provincial Laboratory Fromulary*

9.0 Definitions and Acronyms:

- **PLFAC – Provincial Laboratory Formulary Advisory Council:** A provincial sub-committee of the Newfoundland and Labrador HCS Laboratory Reform Initiative. The PLFAC assists and advises on laboratory test utilization and development of a PLF.
- **HCS - Department of Health And Community Services**
- **PLF – Provincial Laboratory Formulary:** Continuously updated list of laboratory tests that can be ordered by physicians.
- **Referred out-of-province test:** Referred out-of- province test refers to any laboratory investigation that is not available at a provincial laboratory and out of province laboratory services are required for analysis.
- **LTSA - Laboratory test special authorization form:** Information form for out-of-province test referrals and other tests requiring special authorization. This form must be completed as part of the test request approval process to insure timely analysis.
- **Laboratory Medicine Specialist:** Laboratory Medical Director (or Clinical Chief), Division Chief, Laboratory Scientist, Pathologist, or Laboratory Physician in the specific laboratory discipline that the test is a recognized responsibility.

- **Ordering Professional:** Health Care professional, physician, nurse practitioners, or others with privilege to initiate a new order for a laboratory test, and is identified to receive and to act on the report.
- **Stakeholders:** Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and other with test ordering privileges or others representing groups directly impacted.
- **Tier 3:** Tier 3 tests are tests requiring special authorization and are referred out-of- province for testing and listed on the provincial lab formulary.
- **Tier 4:** Tier 4 tests are tests that are generally not available except under requiring special authorization but rarely ordered tests and designated in the provincial lab formulary as unfunded/unapproved. Special permission may be granted to refer the test out of province in extenuating circumstances.
- **RHA - Regional Health Authority:** There are four RHAs in Newfoundland and Labrador: Eastern Health, Central Health, Western Health, and Labrador Grenfell Health

10.0 Appendices

Appendix 1-Flow Chart for handling non-PLF test orders.

Appendix A. Flow Chart for handling non-PLF test orders.