

# ELABORATIONS

News and Issues for Washington's Clinical Laboratories

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## Proficiency Testing - Time to Enroll for 2008

by Leonard Kargacin, DOH/LQA

Proficiency testing (PT), required under Medical Test Site rules 246-338-050, is a source of external quality control. Although labs perform daily internal quality control with their test systems, external quality control provides important interlaboratory comparisons to determine the accuracy and reliability of your testing procedures.

It is time to enroll in PT for 2008. Page 4 contains a list of the currently approved PT agencies. Call the programs for a free copy of their 2008 PT brochure or visit their websites. Your current PT provider will automatically send you a PT order form and catalog for 2008. Early enrollment guarantees that you will receive samples for the first testing event that occurs between January-March 2008.

- Shop around for prices and test groups.
- In order to cover all tests performed in your laboratory, it may be necessary to enroll in PT with more than one company.

**Failure to participate in PT** results in a score of 0% for each analyte. This is a failure, and may jeopardize your ability to continue testing patient specimens.

**Information needed to enroll:** Complete the 2008 Order Form in the PT brochure with the following information:

- Name (use the name **exactly** as it appears on your MTS license)
- Address
- CLIA ID # (primary means of identifying your lab)
- MTS license number (see your MTS license)
- Select the appropriate program for your lab (you may have to enroll in several modules and/or companies to cover all analytes)

**NOTE:** Authorize the PT agency to send copies of your results to the Washington State Department of Health Office of Laboratory Quality Assurance. **Do this for each analyte!**

### Regulated analytes:

- Five sample modules shipped three times per year are required for all regulated analytes.
- Visit the LQA website ([www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm)) for a listing of the regulated analytes.
- PT participation is required for all **non-waived** tests for Influenza A and B, and Direct Strep Antigen.
- Some manufacturers of waived test kits include instructions for moderate complexity testing in the same package insert. This allows the laboratory to choose whether they want to perform the test as a waived test following the waived test requirements or as a moderate complexity test following these requirements. If the laboratory chooses to perform the test as a moderate complexity test, it **must** participate in a **5-sample PT program three times per year.**

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### Practice Guidelines

The following practice guidelines have been developed by the Clinical Laboratory Advisory Council. They can be accessed at the following website:  
[www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm)

Anemia	Lipid Screening
ANA	PAP Smear
Bioterrorism Event Mgmt	Point-of-Care Testing
Bleeding Disorders	PSA
Chlamydia	Rash Illness
Diabetes	Red Cell Transfusion
Group A Strep Pharyngitis	Renal Disease
Group B Streptococcus	STD
Hepatitis	Thyroid
HIV	Tuberculosis
Infectious Diarrhea	Urinalysis
Intestinal Parasites	Wellness

# Proficiency Testing, continued from page 1

**Non-regulated analytes:** All non-waived tests (other than the regulated analytes) must be tested using one or a combination of the following:

- A two-sample PT program from one of the proficiency testing providers, or
- Blind samples with known values, or
- Split samples with another lab, or
- Split samples with another instrument or method, or
- Two analysts perform microscopic tests and compare results, or
- Kodachromes of microscopic tests, or
- Correlate patient results with clinical history.

**Adding tests during the year:**

- Notify our office within 30 days.
- Enroll in PT for regulated analytes before you start testing patient samples.

**Deleting tests during the year:**

- Notify our office within 30 days.

**Temporarily discontinuing tests during the year:**

- Notify our office if you temporarily discontinue a test.
- Use the appropriate action code from your PT provider if you temporarily discontinue a test at the time of a PT challenge.
- When you reinstate the test, notify our office.

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**Website addresses:**

**DOH home page:** <http://www.doh.wa.gov>  
**LQA home page:** <http://www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm>  
**PHL home page:**  
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/PHL/default.htm>

**LQA website:** The LQA website contains additional information regarding proficiency testing, applications, licensing, practice guidelines, surveys and checklists, medical test site rules and much more. The website address is <http://www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm>.

If you have other questions regarding proficiency testing, contact Leonard Kargacin at (206) 418-5416.

## TIPS for Proficiency Testing Success

Improve your chances for successful participation in PT by considering the following suggestions:

- ✓ **Release Results:** Notify PT provider that copies of PT results for **each** analyte are to be sent to the Office of Laboratory Quality Assurance.
- ✓ **Handle PT samples like patient samples:** Don't run them multiple times.
- ✓ **Retain all raw data:** Save data showing the workup of PT samples, instrument printouts, worksheets, and log sheets.
- ✓ **Make sure all testing personnel perform PT during the year:** Share or rotate the samples among all staff who perform the test.
- ✓ **Fill in the Method Code:** Do not leave blank.
- ✓ **Correctly report the reason PT was not done:** If you are unable to test for some reason, indicate this on the answer sheet. If you discontinued testing for an analyte, indicate this on the sheet. Immediately notify LQA of any change.
- ✓ **Be timely:** Always be sure to meet the deadline for returning your results.
- ✓ **Review your graded results:** Review your graded PT results with your lab director. Document corrective action for scores below 80%. Evaluate ungraded results.

# Tips for Shipping Infectious Substances: What is a Primary Container?

by Laura Kentala & Shelley Lankford, DOH/PHL

What is a primary container? The US DOT and IATA definition states that the primary receptacle(s) must be leak-proof for liquids and sift-proof for solids. If it contains liquids, it must not contain more than 1 liter. The primary container or secondary container must be able to withstand an internal pressure of 95kPa and temperatures of -40°C to +55°C for either Category A or Category B specimens without leakage.

A primary container is the object containing the actual specimen. It can be a blue-capped centrifuge tube, a swab in a Cariblaire transport media, an agar slant with bacterial culture, or a locking plastic bag with an animal head. What is NEVER a primary container? A Petri dish! Petri dishes cannot be used because they do not have a closure with a seal and cannot be adequately sealed with tape or parafilm.

The primary container may be composed of many types of material. It can be plastic, glass, or metal. The important point to remember is that the lid of the primary container must be a screw cap or other closure device that has a seal to prevent any of the specimen and media from escaping. In addition, the cap must be taped to prevent it from opening during transit. Currently there are no requirements regarding the kind of tape that can be used. Any adhesive tape will do as long as it secures the cap.

Proper labeling of the primary container is also important. The label on the primary container must be legible and cannot be handwritten. The label must also have adequate patient identification. The identifier can be a name, number or bar coding, and it must match the patient information on the form you have included.

What does this mean for your lab? Follow these few rules regarding primary containers and you will be compliant with the latest shipping regulations. Look for an article on secondary containers in the next edition of Elaborations.

## Venipuncture Techniques Training Course

*Monday, January 21, 2008*

This course is designed for the health care worker who is new to blood drawing, or for anyone who wants a “refresher” to learn the very latest in venipuncture procedures and techniques. The course is taught by Sylvia Crawford, Registered Phlebotomist (ASCP).

Course objectives are to understand techniques for best vein selection; to perform a successful venipuncture; to exercise appropriate use of equipment; proper handling of blood specimens, and to understand biohazard safety techniques and OSHA regulations. The course is six hours in length and will be held at the Washington State Public Health Laboratories in Shoreline, WA. There will be 0.6 CEU credits awarded at the completion of this course.

Please register online at <http://www.seattlesthdhivptc.org>. The registration fee is \$150. If paying by check, please make it payable to **University of Washington** and send it to the Seattle STD/HIV Prevention Training Center at 901 Boren Ave., Suite 1100, Seattle, WA 98104. To pay by credit card, go to: <http://www.seattlesthdhivptc.org> and download the Payment by Credit Card form, complete and fax it to (206) 221-4945, Attn: Ronnie Staats, before the January 14, 2008 registration deadline. **For more information or an application, please contact** Ronnie Staats at [rstaats@u.washington.edu](mailto:rstaats@u.washington.edu) or (206) 685-9848.

## Approved PT Providers

**Accutest** (800) 356-6788

<http://www.digitalpt.com>

**Amer. Acad. of Family Physicians** (800) 274-7911

<http://www.aafp.org/pt.xml>

**Amer. Assoc. of Bioanalysts** (800) 234-5315

<http://www.aab.org/>

**American Proficiency Institute** (800) 333-0958

<http://www.api-pt.com/>

**ASIM Medical Lab Evaluation** (800) 338-2746

<http://www.acponline.org/mle/>

**California Thoracic Society** (714) 730-1944

<http://www.thoracic.org/sections/chapters/ca/pt-program.html>

**College of American Pathologists/EXCEL**

(800) 323-4040

<http://www.cap.org/apps/cap.portal>

**WSLH** (800) 462-5261

<http://www.slh.wisc.edu/pt/>

For answers to your PT questions, go to the LQA website at [www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/lqa.htm) or call Leonard Kargacin at (206) 418-5416.

## Calendar of Events

### PHL Training Classes:

(<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehspl/phl/training/train.htm>)

#### Gram Stains: A Practical Approach

December 12 Shoreline

#### Basic Blood Cell Morphology

January 10 Shoreline

#### Venipuncture (register through UW - See page 3)

January 21

#### 2008 WSSCLS/NWSSAMT Spring Meeting

April 24-26, 2008 Lynnwood

#### Northwest Medical Laboratory Symposium

October 2008 Portland, OR

#### 15th Annual Clinical Laboratory Conference

November 2008 Seattle

Contact information for the events listed above can be found on page 2. The Calendar of Events is a list of upcoming conferences, deadlines, and other dates of interest to the clinical laboratory community. If you have events that you would like to have included, please mail them to ELABORATIONS at the address on page 2. Information must be received at least one month before the scheduled event. The editor reserves the right to make final decisions on inclusion.