

# ELABORATIONS

News and Issues for Washington's Clinical Laboratories

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## Phlebotomy and the Elderly

by Linda Parisi, DOH/LQA

**T**he number of elderly patients needing to have their blood drawn for laboratory tests will increase as the baby boomer population ages. Elderly patients are unique individuals with special needs. The phlebotomist must be familiar with the aging process and the diseases and illnesses associated with it so the patient is treated with the compassion, kindness, patience, and respect they deserve.

The physical affects of aging can result in challenges not normally faced by the phlebotomist.

**Skin changes** include loss of collagen and subcutaneous fat, resulting in wrinkled, sagging, thin skin with decreased elasticity. Lack of hydration with impaired peripheral circulation makes it harder to get adequate blood sample flow during venipuncture. The possibility of vein collapse and increased bruising can result.

**Hearing impaired** patients may have difficulty answering questions and understanding instructions. Speak clearly and distinctly. Use your normal voice; never shout. Use written instructions, if necessary. Take care to identify the patient as they may not be able to confirm or deny their name.

**Visual problems** such as farsightedness, clouding of the eyes, or light intolerance result in the need for a well-lighted phlebotomy area. Be aware that it may be necessary for you to help a patient to the phlebotomy chair or restroom.

**Reduced cerebral circulation** may lead to a loss of balance and frequent falls.

**Conditions such as Alzheimer's or dementia** may decrease the ability of meaningful communication. Approach the patient in a calm and professional manner. Speak clearly and slowly.

**Arthritis** may make it difficult for a patient to straighten an arm or open the hand. Use the opposite arm if possible. If that is not an option, let the patient decide on a comfortable position for the venipuncture.

**Patients with heart or bleeding disorders** are at risk for hematoma formation or uncontrolled bleeding at the site of blood collection. Hold adequate pressure over the collection site until the bleeding stops.

**Diabetes** effects the circulation and healing process especially in the lower extremities, generally making venipuncture of the leg, ankle, and foot veins off limits.

**Parkinson's Disease and stroke** may affect speech. Allow adequate time for the patient to speak. Tremors or movements may make it impossible to collect blood

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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

# LQA Changes

Laboratory Quality Assurance (LQA) is part of the Health Systems Quality Assurance (HSQA) Division of the Washington State Department of Health. The Division is undergoing changes that will affect the way we do business.

**Division Reorganization:** HSQA will undergo a reorganization of the Division into functional units early in 2008. We will notify the Medical Test Site (MTS) license holders of changes that may affect them through future articles in Elaborations.

**Division Computer System:** HSQA is implementing a new computer system that will integrate professional and facility licensing. This integration will change the way we do business in LQA. Full implementation of the new computer is scheduled for February 2008; however, parallel testing of the new application process will begin in October 2007.

**MTS Initial Application Changes:**

- Effective October 17, 2007, mail all applications for new MTS licenses to Tumwater for initial processing.
- The biennial license fee for Certificate of Waiver and Provider Performed Microscopic Procedure (PPMP) licenses must accompany new applications. Fees for Accredited and Categorized MTS licenses will continue to be billed after the application is reviewed and processed by LQA staff.
- The updated application forms for new MTS licenses will be placed on the LQA website prior to October 17. Please use the new application forms when submitting MTS license applications after October 17.

Look in future issues of Elaborations for more information about changes that may affect you.

## Phlebotomy and the Elderly, continued from page 1

without injury to the patient. Call for assistance to help with the blood collection process, if needed.

**Pulmonary conditions** result in reduced elasticity of the airway tissues and make elderly patients more susceptible to colds and pneumonia. If the phlebotomist has a cold, try to avoid drawing blood from elderly patients. If that is not an option, wear a mask for the patient's protection.

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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>

**Other considerations:**

- Make sure that there is a clear pathway for the patient with a wheelchair or a walker.
- Use butterfly needles or pediatric short-draw tubes for difficult blood collection.
- Apply the tourniquet snugly but loosely enough to avoid damage to the patient's skin.
- Avoid drawing blood from bruised areas.
- Massage the arm from the wrist to the elbow to force blood into the area or warm the collection site.
- Don't rub too hard when cleaning the site. Clean a second time, if necessary, instead.
- Anchor the vein firmly.
- Hold pressure until the bleeding has stopped.

Treat the patient with respect and dignity so that the phlebotomy experience is positive.

## Packaging & Shipping of Infectious Substances Class

**DATE, TIME & LOCATIONS:** October 25: Clarkston, WA OR November 29: Shoreline, WA

**Course Content:** Employers must certify the training of their employees who ship infectious substances according to the Department of Transportation regulations every two - three years. This course will cover the regulations governing the transportation of all infectious substances including DOT, IATA, and US Postal Service Regulations; overview of Category A & B; proper packaging of all infectious substances; proper marking and labeling for shipping; workshop exercises in what you have learned for each mode of transportation; review of commercially available certified shipping systems; and review of PHL shipping guidelines and the use of the PHL shipping systems.

**Who Should Attend:** This course is designed for laboratory testing personnel, supervisors, directors, and consultants in all laboratories who are responsible for shipping cultures and patient specimens.

**Continuing Education Units:** Students will receive 0.4 CEUs for completion of this course. Applicants must attend the entire workshop to receive CEUs. Accreditation is provided through the State of California Department of Health Services, Office of Laboratory Field Services, 2151 Berkeley Way- Annex 12, Berkeley, CA 94704-1011.

**Tuition:** \$95.00 if registered on or before deadline (1 week prior to course date), or \$105.00 thereafter.

## Gram Stain Training Class: A Practical Approach

**Course Date:** December 13, 2007. Registration will begin at 8:00 a.m. Class will start promptly at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m.

**Who Should Attend:** Individuals who are currently performing the Gram stain procedure on clinical specimens and would like a review/update, and individuals interested in learning to perform Gram stains on clinical specimens.

**Continuing Education Units:** Students will receive 0.6 CEUs for completion of this course. Applicants must attend the entire workshop to receive CEUs. Accreditation is provided through the State of California Department of Health Services, Office of Laboratory Field Services, 2151 Berkeley Way- Annex 12, Berkeley, CA 94704-1011.

**Tuition:** \$115 (by December 06, 2007); \$125 (after December 06, 2007)

**Location:** The course is held at the DOH Public Health Laboratories in Shoreline. A map and driving directions will be sent to each registered student. All laboratory materials, manuals, and use of equipment are included. Students are responsible for their own transportation, meals, and lodging.

**Course Content:** The course will cover the performance, reading, and interpretation of the Gram stain when used on clinical specimens. The lecture portion of the course will cover clinical uses, significance of the Gram stain, quality control, quality assurance, and bacterial and host cell morphology. In the laboratory section of this course, participants will have hands-on experience performing the Gram stain procedure, examining and reporting Gram stains of unknown organisms, and observing common bacterial and host cell types in a variety of clinical specimens.

## Training Class Registration

- Download the registration form from <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphl/phl/training/train.htm>.
- DO NOT SEND MONEY WITH YOUR REGISTRATION FORM.
- Complete the registration form and fax to (206) 418-5445, e-mail to [phl.training@doh.wa.gov](mailto:phl.training@doh.wa.gov), or mail to:  
**Department of Health, Training Program**  
**1610 NE 150th Street**  
**PO Box 550501**  
**Shoreline, WA 98155-9701**
- You will be notified by mail of your acceptance into the class. Payment information and a map to the training location will be enclosed. All students must have confirmation letters to attend class. Please call the training program if you have not received your packet one week prior to the class.

For more information contact Margaret Hoff at (206) 418-5402 or email at [phl.training@doh.wa.gov](mailto:phl.training@doh.wa.gov).

# 14th Annual Clinical Laboratory Conference

**November 12, 2007**

**Doubletree Hotel at Sea-Tac International Airport**

If you have not received a copy of the program, contact Leonard Kargacin:  
phone: (206) 418-5416,  
e-mail: [leonard.kargacin@doh.wa.gov](mailto:leonard.kargacin@doh.wa.gov)

The program is also available from the LQA website:  
[http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/fsl/lqa\\_updates.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/fsl/lqa_updates.htm).

## Calendar of Events

### PHL Training Classes:

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

### Shipping & Handling of Infectious Substances

October 25                      Clarkston **OR**  
November 29                    Shoreline

### Gram Stains: A Practical Approach

December 13                    Shoreline

### Northwest Medical Laboratory Symposium

October 24-27                   Seattle

### 14th Annual Clinical Laboratory Conference

November 12                    Seattle

### 2008 WSSCLS/NWSSAMT Spring Meeting

April 24-26, 2008              Lynnwood

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.