

PATHOLOGICAL LABORATORY SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE UNION HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The following rules have been published in Government Notice No. 1073 of 22 June 1956:

PATHOLOGICAL LABORATORY SERVICES. RULES FOR THE CARRYING OUT OF LABORATORY TESTS.

1. CANCELLATION OF PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT NOTICES.

With effect as from the 1st July, 1956, Government Notices No. 2397, dated the 14th November, 1947, and No. 1888, dated the 17th September, 1954, are hereby cancelled and the following new rules shall be applicable to pathological laboratory services as provided by the Union Health Department.

2. LABORATORIES WHERE PATHOLOGICAL LABORATORY SERVICES WILL BE PROVIDED.

Pathological (microbiological, biochemical and cytological) laboratory services will be provided by the Union Health Department at the following laboratories:

- (a) The Government Pathological Laboratory, Cape Town.
 - (b) The Government Pathological Laboratory, Durban.
 - (c) The East London and Border Pathological Laboratory, East London.
 - (d) The South African Institute for Medical Research, Johannesburg.
 - (e) The South African Institute for Medical Research, Bloemfontein.
 - (f) The South African Institute for Medical Research, Port Elizabeth.
 - (g) The South African Institute for Medical Research, Kroonstad.
 - (h) The South African Blood Transfusion Service, Johannesburg [in respect only to services provided under section 3 (ii) of this notice].
- (i) Such other pathological laboratories with which the Union Health Department has entered into contracts, approved by Treasury, for the provision of such services.

3. LABORATORY SERVICES WHICH ARE PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE.

The following services will be provided free of charge:

- (i) *Services in respect of the Diagnosis and Control of Infectious and Communicable Diseases*
 - (a) These free services will be restricted to laboratory tests

for the diagnosis and public health control of the following diseases:

- Anthrax,
- bacillary dysentery,
- bacterial food poisoning,
- bilharziasis,
- brucellosis,
- meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia.

4. LABORATORY SERVICES FOR WHICH CHARGES WILL BE MADE

(i) *Services to Local Authorities in respect of the Bacteriological Examination of Samples of Waters which are Intended for Domestic Use.*

The charge to a local authority for the bacteriological testing of a sample of water shall be £1. 10s. per sample, but if a prior special arrangement has been authorised by the Chief Regional Health Officer of the region for a local authority to submit (over a period of one year) samples for the regular testing of a particular domestic water supply, this charge will be reduced to 5s. per sample. Before such a special arrangement may be authorised, the local authority shall furnish the Chief Regional Health Officer with an adequate description of the water supply in question and the latter shall stipulate the conditions under which the samples may be submitted with special reference to the number of samples and times of delivery at the laboratory. These special arrangements may be renewed annually.

It is essential for valid tests that the samples of water should be kept continuously at a low temperature from the time of collection until the time of delivery to the laboratory. For this reason the bottles containing the water samples should, during this period, be packed surrounded by ice in a special insulated box which should reach the laboratory before all the ice has melted.

The sterile bottles required for collecting the water samples may be furnished on request by the nearest laboratory but the ice and insulated boxes must be provided by the local authority at its cost. The boxes will be promptly returned to the local authorities after receipt at the laboratory.

(ii) *Other Laboratory Services which may be Rendered to Local Authorities and which are not Covered Elsewhere in this Notice.*

Other bacteriological tests which are of direct public health interest and which are not covered elsewhere in this notice, e.g. the routine bacteriological testing of dairy products and sewage effluents, may be carried out at a charge of £2 per specimen but

if a prior special arrangement has been authorised by the Chief Regional Health Officer of the region for a local authority to submit samples for regular testing the charge will be reduced to 10s. per sample.

(iii) *Services which may be Rendered to Other Administrations.*

Pathological laboratory services may be provided at the Government Pathological Laboratories at Cape Town and Durban to the following administrations:

- (a) The several Provincial Administrations;
- (b) the South West African Administration; and
- (c) the South African Railways and Harbours Administration. (But not the South African Railways Sick Fund.)

The charges for tests will be such as have been approved by Treasury.

5. GENERAL RULES APPLICABLE TO THE CARRYING OUT OF LABORATORY TESTS

All tests which are carried out at the laboratories will be subject to the following conditions:

(a) All specimens forwarded to the laboratories for testing shall be delivered in suitable containers which do not leak, which are properly labelled with identification marks and which are accompanied by adequately completed request forms giving all necessary particulars, viz., the name and address of the sender, the identification mark and the nature of the specimen, the type of test desired and a brief account of the circumstances which necessitate the examination. These request forms should be signed by a responsible person, e.g. the medical officer in charge of the patient.

Suitable containers with labels and printed request forms may be obtained, in reasonable quantities, on application to the pathologist in charge of the nearest laboratory.

Containers supplied by a laboratory remain at all times the property of the laboratory and must be used for no purpose other than that of transmitting specimens to the laboratory whence they were obtained.

(b) All specimens must be delivered to the laboratory free of charge for carriage or postage.

(c) All specimens forwarded by post, rail or air must be so packed as to comply strictly with relevant regulations.

(d) Subject to such general instructions as may from time to time be issued by the Minister, the examination of specimens received shall be at the discretion of the pathologist in charge of the laboratory who may arrange to carry out particular tests only on certain days of the week or who may decline to undertake any tests which he considers to be necessary. The methods employed for testing shall also be at the pathologists' discretion.

(e) When the sender wishes the same test to be repeated on similar specimens from the same patient, he must clearly state on the request form that the specimen is a repeated one and he must also indicate thereon the reasons for repeating the specimen and whether it is being repeated for a first or subsequent time. The result of previous examination(s) must be indicated. The pathologist in charge of the laboratory may lay down rules as to when and how often specimens may be repeated and he may decline to examine specimens which he considers to have been unnecessarily repeated.

(f) Reports on specimens from patients must be regarded as confidential and not be shown to persons who are not entitled to see them.

(g) Under no circumstances may reports or results of tests be used for trade or advertising purposes.

(h) Specimens will not be returned to the sender unless he has requested this at the time of sending and has prepaid the cost of returning the specimens.

(i) For information as to what specimens to take for testing in respect of various diseases, how and when to send such specimens to the laboratory, when to request repetition of tests and what test are routinely employed at the laboratory, medical practitioners should apply to the pathologist in charge of the laboratory for a copy of the relevant pamphlet.