



**TO:** VCU Health Pulmonary Providers

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**DATE:** July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**SUBJECT:** SBAR – Updated Specimen Collection Requirements for Pleural Fluid pH Testing

**Situation:** Specimen collection requirements for pH, Pleural Fluid test specimens received by the VCUH Blood Gas Laboratory have been updated in EPIC.

**Background:** Erroneous pleural fluid pH values may be obtained if pleural fluid specimens are not collected in an airtight syringe, if testing is delayed due to additional test orders or if the test request is submitted as an add-on test request.

**Assessment:** Pleural fluid specimens may contain cellular components that could affect the pH if the specimen is not analyzed within two hours. Ambient air contamination of pleural fluid specimens causes erroneous pH values and air contamination must be minimized. Therefore, pleural fluid specimens for pH testing must be submitted in an airtight syringe and without additional testing ordered on the same specimen. Pleural fluid pH testing is not available as an add-on test.

**Recommendation:** Please collect specimens for pleural fluid pH testing in an airtight syringe. Do not combine pleural fluid pH test orders with additional test orders on the same pleural fluid specimen. Send pleural fluid specimens for pH testing directly to the Blood Gas Laboratory via pneumatic tube (Station 351) or hand deliver specimens to the laboratory. Specimen collection instructions for pH, Pleural Fluid test orders in EPIC have been modified as of July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022 to indicate that specimens will be rejected if not received in a syringe within 2 hours from collection.

Please contact Lorin Bachmann at [lorin.bachmann@vcuhealth.org](mailto:lorin.bachmann@vcuhealth.org) (804-828-6407) with any questions or concerns.

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