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Section:	#15 Operative Services

Surgical Specimens and Frozen Sections for Pathology

Purpose:

To provide guidelines for perioperative personnel for the care and handling of surgical specimens and non-biological objects submitted to pathology.

Policy Statement:

It is the policy of Boston Medical Center to provide a safe environment to patients undergoing surgical procedures through the implementation of standard procedures for the care and handling of surgical specimens.

All biospecimens and non-biological objects removed during the surgical procedure should be sent to the Pathology Department.

Exceptions are noted below and in BMC policy 3_46_000. Hardware and prostheses are exempt unless being removed for reason of malfunction, defect or recall, and will be retained by the Pathology department after consultation with the Risk Management Office.

Application:

This policy applies to all perioperative personnel and Attending Surgeons participating in surgical procedures.

Exceptions:

Patient request for tissue

Patient requests to take hardware, teeth and stones etc are granted, provided the specimen is cleaned and sterilized. Exempted tissue must not be released in formalin or Bouin's solution. The circulating nurse documents all specimens given to the patient in the patient's chart. All other patient requests for removed body parts are to be referred to the Department of Anatomic Pathology (4-7039 or 4-5310) or Manager (pager # 3550).

Exempted procedures that generate tissues (responsibility: attending surgeon)

The following procedures generate tissues that may be discarded into the medical waste stream and do not need to be forwarded to the department of Anatomic Pathology. All tissues that are discarded should be described and documented in the patient's chart. Discarding of tissues generated during these procedures is at the discretion of the attending surgeon.

**Abdominoplasty
Blepharoplasty
Circumcision
Dermabrasion
Forehead Lift
Liposuction
Mastopexy
Otoplasty
Rhinoplasty
Rhytidectomy (Face lift)
Any and all procedures labeled cosmetic**

The circulating nurse documents in the pathology section of OR Manager all specimens either given to the patient or discarded. All other patient requests for removed body parts are to be referred to the Department of Anatomic Pathology (4-7039 or 4-5310). During off hours, page Pathologist on call for guidance.

For forensic specimens, the nurse should follow the guidelines in policy 15_03_070 Evidence Preservation.

Procedure:

1. Surgical specimens are handed off the field to the circulating nurse.
2. All specimens for permanent sections are placed in an appropriate container, labeled with two unique patient identifiers and bagged for delivery to the pathology department. ***It is not appropriate to send any specimens on towels or in open containers, with the exception of amputated limbs.*** Routine specimens are generally put in formalin, but if there is a need for transport media this should be confirmed with the surgeon.
3. Multiple specimens are numbered sequentially. Each specimen label is numbered to match the corresponding number on the pathology requisition.
4. Markers placed on a specimen are indicated on the pathology requisition.
5. The pathology requisition is completed. Collection Date/Time and Patient Location, indicating OR room number and extension must be completed on all pathology requisitions. The surgeon verbally designates how the specimen is to be labeled and visually confirms the label on the specimen container and the pathology requisition with the circulating nurse during the pathology time out at the end of the surgical procedure.
6. **Pathology Time Out Verification** (yellow box on pathology requisition). A pathology time-out **MUST** be performed at the end of the surgical procedure by the Attending surgeon and circulating nurse. All information in the yellow time-out section must be completed before the circulating nurse and surgeon leave the room. Additionally, the RN and MD will document reconciliation of the specimens at the end of the case on the Universal Protocol checklist.
The Pathology Time Out Verification section will be completed for frozen section specimens using the “write down, read back” method of communication with the surgeon prior to the specimen leaving the OR to be delivered to pathology.

7. The circulating nurse is responsible for delivering specimens and the completed pathology requisition to the Department of Pathology refrigerator. When specimens are delivered to the pathology department refrigerator/drop off area the log book must be completed in its entirety. The specimen is entered into the specimen log with date, patient label, types and number of specimens. The nurse initials the entry. Documentation of total number of containers submitted is essential.
 - For the Menino Pavilion: The pathology refrigerator is located in the Pathology Department, room number 2098.
 - For the Newton Pavilion: The pathology refrigerator is located on H3 room number 3800A.
 - For the Moakley OR: The pathology refrigerator is located in the dirty utility room in the PACU (room number 2217). After 4pm, all specimens are delivered to the Pathology refrigerator outside the Menino PACU. Rush specimens must be paged to a Pathology Department administrator (#3550 or 3437). No specimen should ever be left fresh in the refrigerator over the weekend.

If a pathology specimen arrives at the Pathology Dept without a label, the Pathology Dept. staff will call and notify the OR charge nurse of this occurrence and document in the STARS system. The unlabeled specimen will be delivered back to the OR front desk staff, and the circulator will be asked to identify and re-label the specimen. The specimen can either be delivered back to the Pathology Dept. by courier, or can be delivered to the Pathology refrigerator with the corresponding Pathology requisition.

8. **For frozen sections:**

When the specimen is ready to be examined, the circulating nurse will call the Pathology Department staff (4-7039 or 4-5310). If the pathologist on-call needs to be paged, dial 31-0784. When the pathologist has arrived at the frozen section room, they will call into the respective Operating Room, and the circulator will send the perioperative assistant to deliver the pathology specimen to the frozen section room for intraoperative examination. The perioperative assistant will hand the specimen to the pathologist and will await confirmation that the specimen is labeled properly before leaving. If there are any discrepancies or questions about the specimen, the pathologist will call directly into the OR and speak to the surgeon.

Frozen sections are **NOT** placed in formalin, but rather in a labeled specimen cup that is either empty or contains saline solution and must be accompanied by a pathology requisition. The pathologist calls the operating room and directly conveys the results to the surgeon. If the surgeon is not available, the pathologist will directly page the surgeon.

9. Breast biopsy with needle localization specimens are placed “fresh” in a transpec container and are delivered with the localization films and the pathology requisition to the Breast Imaging Department. The transporter is instructed to wait for the specimen in the Breast Imaging Department and to then deliver the specimen, films and pathology requisition directly back to the OR circulating nurse.

Responsibility:

Boston Medical Center Policy and Procedure Manual

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The Department of Perioperative Services, the Division of Surgery and the Department of Pathology are responsible for monitoring policy compliance on an ongoing basis.

Forms:

Pathology slip #30171

Other Related Policies:

03_46_000 Tissue Submission to Anatomic Pathology

15_03_070 Evidence Preservation

03_60_000 Time Out Policy

References:

Recommended Practices for the Care and Handling of Specimens in the Perioperative Environment, 2012 Perioperative Standards and Recommended Practices for Inpatient and Ambulatory Settings, 2012 Edition, AORN, pp 333-340.

Contributing Departments:

Anatomic Pathology Dept.

Perioperative Services