

## LMC Update August 12<sup>th</sup> 2021

### **Blood Tube Supply Disruption**

NHS England and Improvement this week issued patient safety guidance following the news that there is a shortage in the supply of test tubes for blood samples from Becton Dickinson (BD). This is having an impact on supplies to primary and secondary care across the country.

The new [NHS guidance](#), published on 10 August 2021, sets out a number of recommended actions to general practice to protect existing supply levels, including:

#### Minimum retest intervals

- Follow the [guidelines related to RCPATH minimum retest intervals](#) to avoid over-testing for items such as B12 and thyroid disease.

#### Optimising inpatient and assessment unit sampling

- Only test for a clinical indication in patients and increase the testing interval for monitoring where it is clinically safe to do so.
- Keep testing levels under active review.
- Avoid routine group and screen testing unless patient likely to require transfusion, in line with [Choosing Wisely guidance](#).

#### Genomics testing

- Genomics is a high priority in the testing of unwell neonates, prenatal screening and cancer diagnosis. Stock should be used for these tests and should be prioritised accordingly to allow these tests to continue uninterrupted.

#### Reducing non-essential(non-clinically urgent) testing

- Only test for a clinical indication in patients and increase the testing interval for monitoring where it is clinically safe to do so.
- Review testing levels to ensure a reduction in non-clinically urgent testing.
- Ensure clinical staff are aware of which tests may be impacted by the supply disruption. Each organisation should have a pathology handbook which explains which tubes are used for which test.
- Liaise with staff to agree essential testing priorities, examples of such areas are given below:

##### *Vitamin D testing*

- It is recommended that Vitamin D testing (except in very exceptional circumstances set out in [NICE guidance](#)) is stopped.

##### *Routine wellness screening*

- Routine wellness screening is not a priority.
- In the acute setting routine wellness screening is not a priority, for example screening for pre-diabetes, dyslipidaemia, and so forth, especially if patients are in the acute phase of illness. However, certain acute tests should be assessed as appropriate. Patients should be assessed appropriately when recovered.

##### *Allergy testing*

- Allergy testing is not a priority at this time unless there are overriding clinical indications.

##### *Routine infertility testing*

- Routine infertility testing should be deferred until a resolution to the supply disruption is in place, with the exception of patients over 35 years of age in consultation with the individual patient.

The guidance goes on to say that if organisations are likely to run out of products within 48 hours, please notify your pathology incident director and your NHS England and NHS Improvement regional team. It is important to make clear to patients that tests that have been deferred will be carried out in the future where appropriate, and that routine tests will be deferred only where it is clinically safe to do so.

The guidance also warns against stockpiling test tubes and urges GP practices to order supplies from NHS Supply Chain rather than try to buy the equipment directly from the manufacturers.

Read the full guidance [here](#). The NHS supply chain alert detailing the exact products affected can be found [here](#).

We will notify you of any more developments on this when we have anything further from GPC or NHS England.