

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE BUSY COORDINATOR

JUN 2023

Precautions for Handling and Collecting Biological Specimens during a Pandemic

Scenario

Paul is a new clinical research coordinator, tasked to collect *biological specimens for a research study whilst in a pandemic. How should Paul ensure proper handling of the specimens?

**Biological specimens include blood, urine, tissue, cells, saliva, etc. These samples in research can contribute to a better understanding of human health and disease.*

What are some precautionary steps Paul should follow before handling the specimens in a pandemic?

1. Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE minimizes the chances of mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, mouth and skin exposure to these biological specimens. At minimum, Paul should wear:

- Laboratory coat
- Safety goggles
- Gloves
- Long pants
- Fully enclosed footwear
- Surgical mask (in view of pandemic)

2. Hand Hygiene

The “5 moments” approach recommends health-care workers to perform Hand Hygiene:

- i. a. Before touching a patient
- ii. b. Before a clean/aseptic task or procedure
- iii. c. After touching a patient’s body fluid
- iv. d. After touching a patient
- v. e. After touching patient surroundings

3. Biological Waste

Biohazard wastes are to be put into yellow biohazard bags for disposal by Biohazard Waste Disposal Contractors. Be mindful not to discard biohazard wastes into regular bins for household waste.

References:

1. NSC-JCI-PCI-OPG-017 Hand Hygiene (accessible via NSC intranet only)
2. Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings, CDC, 2007

For full SOP on handling and collecting biological specimens, NHG and Partner Institutions may refer to the

Additional references:

1. NHG PCR SOP 501- C04 Biological Specimen Collection and Handling
2. NHG Biological Specimen Log 509-009

REMINDER: Readers are advised to comply with their institutional policies and/or guidelines on how to handle and collect Biological Specimens during a Pandemic.

Article Contributed By: Emily Tay, Research Assistant, National Skin Centre
Edited By: NHG Group Research, OHRPP

**Disclaimer: All characters appearing in this article are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons is purely coincidental. Best practices may differ between institutions. Readers are encouraged to follow their institution’s policies/guidelines relating to the above scenarios/case study.*

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