

3 June 2010

Private Specialists & GPs working in the Capital & Coast and Hutt Valley regions

**Requests by Patients and Private Specialists for GPs to Order Laboratory Tests**

We wrote to GPs and private specialists three years ago about the issue of GPs being asked to order laboratory tests on behalf of another doctor. This arose as a result of Hutt Valley and Capital and Coast DHBs' policy of no longer funding laboratory tests requested by private specialists.

It has come to our attention that there has been an increasing trend for certain private specialists to formally request that GPs order laboratory tests on their behalf including laboratory tests that the public health service would not routinely fund. GPs have raised concerns with the DHBs about receiving these requests

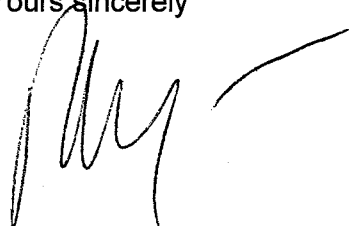
Duty of care carries with it an obligation to ensure that the doctor ordering a test is responsible for both follow-up and, where appropriate, acting upon results of tests. It may, however, be difficult to do so when the test is ordered on behalf of a specialist, particularly if the GP is unfamiliar with the test and the rationale for its request.

Patients with chronic conditions under specialist review, who are undergoing regular testing as part of monitoring their condition or the effects of its treatment, may not be seeing their GP regularly. There could consequently be significant risks for patients if tests were to be ordered by the GP, for care or treatment being provided by a specialist.

General practitioners may wish to provide a copy of this advice to their patients and to private specialists so they can understand why GPs are declining requests to order tests on behalf of a specialist. If GPs receiving such requests are declining to order them because they feel they cannot take responsibility for following up on the results of tests ordered on behalf of private specialists, we support them in that response.

We are happy to discuss the professional implications with any GPs or private specialists who have particular concerns.

Yours sincerely



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