

These frequently asked questions are intended to be a guide and do not replace provincial BNP/NT-proBNP policies, procedures or other related documents.

1. Is there a definitive “Go-Live” date for implementing BNP/NT-proBNP?

The go-live date has been confirmed for **March 6, 2012** for most sites in North, South and Central Zones. We anticipate that sites managed by Calgary Laboratory Services and DynaLife_{DX} will be operational by the end of March.

2. Outpatient Clinics are able to order Troponin. Will they be able to order BNP as well?

The Chemistry Network has established the following guidelines for ordering BNP / NT-proBNP tests. Any requests that fall outside of the Chemistry Network guidelines require approval by a Pathologist or Biochemist.

Ordering Location	Physician Type	Reason
Community (Heart Function Clinic)	Cardiologist or Internist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Known Heart Failure (HF) patient assessment and management – following/assessing efficacy of therapy. b. Otherwise not available since BNP/NT-proBNP are not effective screening tests in non-acute settings.
Emergency Department	ED physician - includes specialists and family physicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Differential diagnosis of HF from other causes of dyspnea only when the diagnosis is uncertain, i.e., an intermediate pre-test probability.
Inpatients	Attending physician, consulting Cardiologist or Internist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Differential diagnosis of HF from other causes of dyspnea only when the diagnosis is uncertain in patients previously admitted for some other reason. b. Differentiate worsening HF from other causes of shortness of breath (SOB) in a patient with known cardiac dysfunction and other co-morbidities. c. Pre-discharge testing for risk stratification to determine adequacy of therapy prior to discharge and to determine a management plan post-discharge.

A patient should not normally have more than 2 tests ordered in any 21 day period. Rare exceptions to these test utilization criteria will require approval of the Pathologist or Biochemist on-call.

3. If Troponin and BNP/NT-proBNP are ordered together, does the lab process both orders?

Yes. The purpose of ordering these two tests together is usually to assist with triaging and diagnosing the patient in an emergency situation. If a patient has chest pain, both tests might be ordered simultaneously to differentiate the cause of the patient’s distress. It is up to the Emergency physician to determine the appropriateness of the orders.

4. If a physician wants to monitor BNP levels on a patient diagnosed with heart failure, will they be allowed to?

If the patient is from an Outpatient Heart Function Clinic, the Cardiologist or Internist meets the eligibility criteria to order BNP/NT-proBNP. No other physicians are eligible to order the tests on community patients without consent from the Pathologist or Biochemist.

The current ordering guidelines in Alberta limits BNP/NT-proBNP test orders to no more than two orders within a 21 day period. Rare exceptions to this rule may be made upon approval by the Pathologist or Biochemist.

5. What if a patient has no symptoms? Will the physician be allowed to order BNP?

Physician education is being conducted around the province to ensure physicians are familiar with the most effective use of BNP / NT-proBNP testing. Laboratory staff are only required to verify that the order falls within the guidelines outlined by the Chemistry Network (provided on page 1) or have been approved by the Pathologist or Biochemist. Laboratory staff are not involved in assessing patient symptoms.

6. Will laboratories be responsible for monitoring BNP / NT-proBNP test orders?

Statistics will be collected by the Laboratory Services Data Team through the Laboratory Information System to monitor BNP/NT-proBNP test utilization. This information will be disseminated to the Directors and Medical Directors in each zone to monitor compliance with the Chemistry Network guidelines.

7. Will BNP / NT-proBNP be added to existing Laboratory STAT test lists in the province?

Yes, BNP / NT-proBNP tests will be included on the provincial STAT test list when it is developed. According to our Lab Information System colleagues, the tests have been set up to allow for STAT orders at Meditech sites.

8. If a physician insists that a BNP/NT-BNP test order be processed, how should lab staff handle this?

A policy is being prepared to address this scenario and should be available to staff prior to the implementation. In the absence of a formal policy, staff are advised to collect the patient sample and consult with their Pathologist or Biochemist to determine next steps.

9. Is there a specific age where BNP will not be effective?

There are no age restrictions for ordering BNP or NT-proBNP. When used according to the Chemistry Network guidelines, the test results are effective for diagnosing heart failure in all age groups.

10. If BNP is increased as the disease progresses, why would we repeat the BNP after we already know the patient is in Heart Failure?

BNP and NT-proBNP levels fluctuate, depending on the heart's level of distress. When a patient is in acute decompensated heart failure, the levels of BNP and NT-proBNP increase; when a patient's condition is well managed, the levels of BNP and NT-proBNP decrease accordingly.

The Chemistry Network guidelines allow physicians to use the tests to stratify patient risk prior to discharge from the hospital. This is helpful in determining whether the patient's medications are at sufficient levels.

11. There is a 21 day limit message that displays in the Laboratory Information System if the test is re-ordered, but if you ignore the message it will let the test be re-ordered, will this be fixed?

This function is intentional and allows Laboratory staff to override the 21 day rule if it is approved by the Pathologist/Biochemist. Nurses, physicians and others who place orders through the order entry system in hospitals are not able to override the 21 day rule.

12. Where can the approved BNP / NT-proBNP ordering guidelines be found?

Resource and educational information may be accessed on the AHS Laboratory Services website at: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/6388.asp>

Comprehensive information regarding the BNP / NT-proBNP implementation, including the approved guidelines has been provided to physicians and nurses via the Laboratory Report newsletter (February 2012) and Laboratory Bulletin (February 29, 2012). Both are posted on the Laboratory Services website.