
Date: May 6, 2019
To: Calgary Zone Physicians and Healthcare Providers including Podiatry, Vascular surgery, Plastic surgery and Orthopedic surgery
From: Dr. Kristen Brown, Medical Microbiologist & Infectious Disease Consultant, Alberta Public Laboratories
Re: Change in notification for diabetic foot specimens

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message:

- Effective immediately, samples sent for anaerobic culture (including bone, tissue or swab) labelled as “Diabetic Foot” will be considered non-critical specimens.

Why this is important:

- Physicians will no longer be notified by phone of the results from these specimens, and faxes will not be sent to offices or inpatient units. Results will continue to be available immediately in SCM and Netcare, and will be sent to physician offices by routine mail.
- Samples labelled as “necrotizing fasciitis”, “myonecrosis”, “gas gangrene”, and “crepitant cellulitis” will continue to be treated as critical results.
- Superficial wound cultures have not been considered critical results and there is no change in how these specimens will be handled.

Background:

- Sterile fluids, tissues or swabs sent for anaerobic culture from diabetic feet are specimens which have required immediate physician notification of gram stain and culture results by phone, and fax to the inpatient unit or physician office.
- Many patients with diabetic foot infections are being treated in the outpatient setting and are placed empirically on appropriate antibiotics at the time of specimen collection. Patients unwell enough to be admitted to the hospital are also placed on broad spectrum antibiotics.
- Due to late afternoon OR time availability for podiatrists, who collect a large proportion of these samples, critical result notification for these specimens often occurred in the evening hours and rarely caused change of management at the time of notification.
- Dr. Francois Harton, Section Chief of Podiatric Surgery, and Dr. Gregory Samis, Section Chief of Vascular Surgery, were consulted and are in full agreement that these specimens be considered non-critical.

Action Required:

- Physicians are requested to label specimens as “diabetic foot” when appropriate.

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:

Dr. Kristen Brown, Medical Microbiologist, Kristen.Brown4@ahs.ca, 403-770-3214

Dr. Tom Griener, Medical Microbiologist, Thomas.griener@cls.ab.ca, 403-770-3811

If urgent assistance is required, contact the Microbiologist On Call at cls.moc@cls.ab.ca or 403-770-3757

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:

Dr. Leland Baskin, Associate Medical Director, South Sector, Alberta Public Laboratories