

# **Guideline for specimen processing in Microbiology Laboratory during COVID19 pandemic**

## **Specimen Reception**

- Specimens and request forms to be kept at a designated place at the reception desk and should be handled by an authorized lab worker wearing a surgical mask and disposable gloves. Respiratory samples should be kept in a separate tray.
- Discard the gloves immediately after handling all the specimens and wash hands.
- Leak proof containers should be used for specimens
- Leaking containers should be kept inside a leak proof bag to prevent contamination. Leaking samples should be informed to Consultant Microbiologist/SR/Reg/MO.

## **Specimen Processing**

| <b>Specimen</b>   | <b>Precautions</b>   |
|---|--|
| Respiratory specimens including sputum for TB Genexpert | Handle in safety cabinet wearing a surgical mask, face shield, gown and gloves |
| All other specimens                                     | Wear surgical mask, laboratory coat and gloves                                 |

- Immediately discard gloves after handling specimens and wash hands to prevent contaminating other surfaces and record books/request forms.
- Keep centrifugation machine lid closed for 10 minutes after centrifugation.

## **Decontamination**

- After specimens are processed, decontaminate all work surfaces with 0.1% hypochlorite (contact time 10 minutes). For metal surfaces 70% alcohol can be used.

## **Disposal of specimens**

- All specimen containers should be decontaminated with 1% hypochlorite in to a leak proof container and kept for 30 minutes. Then placed in leak proof yellow bags and sent for incineration or available institutional disposal method.
- All culture plates and blood culture bottles should be autoclaved before disposal and routine disposal measures should be followed afterwards.



## **Personal Protection**

- Use designated sink for hand washing.
- Wash hands with soap and water for minimum 20 seconds if hands are visibly soiled.
- Wash hands frequently and immediately after handling high risk specimens.
- Maintain social distancing and wear surgical masks at work.
- Reduce staff number in places where aerosol generating laboratory procedures take place. (e.g. centrifugation)
- Wear laboratory coats when processing samples and do not take the laboratory coat outside the laboratory unnecessarily. Preferably wash daily.
- Covered laboratory shoes should be worn.
- Do not keep personal items such as mobile phones on laboratory work benches.
- All work surfaces to be cleaned with 0.1% hypochlorite at least two times/per day.
- Clean high contact surfaces like door handles, telephones with 70% alcohol at least twice a day.

## **Patient contact**

- Samples should be delivered to the laboratory by hospital staff members.
- Prevent patient crowding at the laboratory entrance by taking suitable measures such as increasing staff at the reception to attend to patient needs quickly and advising on social distancing.
- Restrict patients entering the working area of the laboratory.
- Issue reports to the respective wards or clinics to prevent patient crowding near the lab to collect reports.

