

LGH Histology

General Information

The Histology Department is situated within the Pathology Laboratory at Letterkenny General Hospital. It is concerned with the diagnosis of cellular abnormalities within tissues and cells by microscopic examination and the undertaking of Post Mortem examinations.

Departmental Contacts

Dr. D.P. Barry	Consultant Pathologist	Ext 3546
Dr. G.M. O'Dowd	Consultant Pathologist	Ext 3545
Dr. K.M. Dillon	Consultant Pathologist	Ext 4469
Mr. I.N. Bowcott	Chief Medical Scientist	Ext 3561
Ms Kerry Borland	Senior Medical Scientist	Ext 3561
Mr. E. McNulty	Senior Mortuary Technician	Ext 3572

Departmental Phone Numbers

	Internal Extension	External Direct Dial
Secretaries (For Results)	3579 Dr Barry	074 9123579
	3619 Dr O'Dowd	074 9123619
	4468 Dr Dillon	074 9124468
Histology Laboratory	3561	074 9123561
Mortuary	3572	074 9123572

Routine Opening Hours

Histology	Monday - Friday	0900 - 1700
Mortuary	Monday - Friday	0800 - 1630

Outside these hours the Consultant "on-call" can be contacted for advice via the main switchboard at Letterkenny General Hospital (Tel: 074 9125888).

The Histology Department is closed at weekends and on Public Holidays.

A Post Mortem Service is available on Saturday mornings and Public Holidays after prior arrangement with the Consultant Pathologist "on-call" and Senior Mortuary Technician.

Turnaround Times

Small biopsy specimens - the majority will be reported within 2 days of receipt. Large and unfixed specimens - will require additional fixation and the report will be delayed by at least a further day over smaller specimens. The majority will be reported within 3 working days of receipt. Non-Gynae Cytology specimens - normally reported within 3 working days from receipt.

Exceptions

In the following situations the report will usually be delayed further. In such cases, an interim report may be issued, or the Consultant Pathologist may discuss the case with the referring doctor.

Specimens where the tissue requires decalcification e.g. bone. Specimens requiring lengthy and involved procedures, particularly those requiring immunocytochemistry or special stains. Specimens where the pathologist feels a second opinion may be of benefit to the patient, and high risk specimens (Category 3).

Urgent Reports

If an urgent diagnosis is required, please telephone and discuss the case with the Consultant Pathologist covering "cut-up".

For enquiries regarding Histology reports, please ring the Pathology Secretaries.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations

Dilute formalin (formaldehyde) solutions are hazardous and governed by COSHH regulations. All areas where this substance is used should have a hazard data sheet detailing First Aid procedures and actions in the event of accident or spillage.

Quality Assurance

The department employs rigorous internal quality control procedures to ensure a high level of quality is maintained. We also partake in the National External Quality Assessment Schemes (NEQAS) for both Immunocytochemistry and Cellular Pathology Technique.

Histopathology & Non-Gynaecological Cytology

Request Form

All requests for histopathology, including frozen sections and non-Gynae cytology MUST be made on the blue card used solely for histology/cytology specimens. Supplies of these forms are available from Pathology Reception.

Labelling Form and Specimen

The specimen request form must be labelled with the following information:

Patient's FULL NAME (Surname and Forename)

Patient's date of birth

Patient's chart number (PCN) (patient's full address where PCN not available)

The specimen container must be labelled with the following information:

Patient's FULL NAME (Surname and Forename)

Patient's chart number (PCN) (patient's date of birth where PCN not available)

Failure to provide any of the above information will result in the specimen and request form being returned to source. The responsibility for specimen labelling/form completion lies with the requesting Clinician. Unlabeled specimens or requests will not be accepted under any circumstances and will be returned to the requestor for appropriate action.

Both the specimen container and request form must be completed legibly and as fully as possible, e.g. Patient's address, details of previous histology, clinical details etc.

Histology Specimen Collection

Routine Specimens

With the exception of specimens for frozen section or those requiring specialist referral (e.g. renal and muscle biopsies) all specimens MUST be collected into containers of 10% neutral buffered formalin solution.

There MUST be sufficient formalin in the container to completely cover the specimen. Ideally there should be at least 3 times the volume of fixative in ratio to the size of the specimen to ensure adequate fixation.

Specimens MUST NOT be placed into any other solution or into a dry container, as irreversible deterioration of the specimen will take place, making microscopic interpretation impossible.

Large specimens should not be sliced or opened by the surgeon, but sent directly to the laboratory without delay.

Specimens should be sent directly to the Histology Department, either by hand or via the vacuum tube system and not to Pathology Central Reception.

If there is any doubt about the handling or otherwise of any histological specimen please contact a Consultant Pathologist in advance.

Frozen Sections

Frozen sections should only be requested if the immediate management of the patient is likely to be altered as a result. Always discuss frozen section requests with the Consultant Pathologist.

Planned frozen sections should be pre-booked with the Consultant Pathologist to ensure the availability of medical and technical staff.

In cases of unplanned frozen sections, as much warning as possible should be given as the equipment used requires appropriate preparation.

Specimens for frozen section MUST be placed in a suitably sized DRY specimen container and transferred immediately to the Histology Department, either by hand or via the vacuum tube system.

Renal Biopsies

Renal biopsies are examined at the Beaumont Hospital, Dublin and should be received in the Histology Department at Letterkenny General Hospital by 11.00am for dispatch by courier.

Two specimens should be taken, one into 10% buffered formalin and the other into Zeus medium. Both fixatives are available for collection from the Histology Department at Letterkenny General Hospital.

Muscle Biopsies

Muscle biopsies for Neurodegenerative and metabolic studies are examined by the Neuropathology Department at the Beaumont Hospital, Dublin. These are transported to Dublin by taxi to ensure they reach the Beaumont Hospital by 4.00pm. They must be received in the Histology Department at Letterkenny General Hospital as early as possible in the morning and by 11.00am at the very latest.

Non-Gynae Cytology Specimen Collection

The main specimen types are detailed below, for advice on those and other specimens please contact a Consultant Pathologist or the Histology Department. All specimens must be sent to the laboratory without delay.

If Microbiological and/or Biochemical analysis is also required, separate samples and request forms MUST be submitted to the appropriate laboratory.

Urine: 20ml of urine in a sterile universal container (white top) will be sufficient. For best cell yields the sample should be collected at the beginning or end of voiding urine. The first morning sample is less suitable than other times as cells will have been exposed to urine for some hours overnight and may have autolysed.

Sputum: Sputum examination is most useful in detecting carcinoma. For other suspected pathology discuss with a Consultant Pathologist in advance. Use a white top sterile universal container to collect the first deep cough specimen produced in the morning, or a sample taken after physiotherapy. The sample should be collected before breakfast or teeth cleaning. Samples comprising predominantly saliva are inadequate for cytological investigation of the lower respiratory tract.

Pleural, Peritoneal and Cyst Fluids: Up to 20ml of fresh fluid should be sent to the laboratory in a white top sterile universal container. Drainage bags of fluid must not be sent to the laboratory. Transport of such bags poses a serious infection risk to staff and public within the hospital.

Fine Needle Aspiration Specimens (FNA): FNA specimens are available only by prior arrangement with the Consultant Pathologist.

Cervical Cytology: All gynaecological cytology is now handled through the National Cervical Screening Program.

Post Mortems

Post mortems may be arranged by contacting either the Mortuary (extension 3572) or the Consultant Pathologist covering Post Mortems.

In appropriate cases the Pathologists may discuss individual Post Mortem details before and following the examination.

Post Mortems are of two kinds: Hospital Post Mortems and Coroner's Post Mortems.

In the case of Hospital Post Mortems it is essential that informed written consent for the post mortem be obtained from the next of kin. The responsibility for completion of the Death Certificate in this case lies with the Clinical team.

Consent is not required – and should not be sought – in the case of Coroner's Post Mortems. The Coroner completes the Death Certificate, in these cases.