

Safety in Practice

RESULTS HANDLING SYSTEMS

PRACTICE SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

These questions might usefully guide a practice meeting about how to make your results handling systems safer

SYSTEMS ISSUES

Does our practice have a results handling systems outlined in a protocol?

How does our practice ensure the results are reviewed and acted on in a timely manner?

How does our practice handle results when a clinician is absent from the practice (e.g. on leave or due to illness) and/or when a locum orders a test?

How does our practice action emergency test results communicated by the laboratory?

How does our practice track tests ordered and results received so that missing results are identified and chased up?

How does our practice monitor the reliability of its result handling system?

How does our practice ensure laboratory results are reviewed and commented on by the appropriate clinician?

What is the system in our practice to ensure laboratory results are seen by the clinician who ordered them?

Do we have standards for reviewing abnormal and/or normal results within clinically appropriate timescales agreed within the practice?

What is our practice system for dealing with multiple test results not yet returned to the practice (i.e. this is to avoid a situation where a number of tests have been carried out and the patient is told that the result is normal, when other test results are still to be returned)

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TRAINING ISSUES

How are our staff, including locums, trained in the results handling system?

COMMUNICATION ISSUES

Has our practice agreed on the nature of wording used to communicate test results? (e.g. 'no action' or 'normal' comments are often not of assistance to administrative staff in communicating effectively and safely with the patient)

How do we review these phrases to ensure they are appropriate?

PATIENT'S HEALTH LITERACY ISSUES

How does our practice inform our patients about the different steps involved in how, when and how to access their test results?

How well informed do we feel our patients are about the process?

How does our practice record that it has notified patients of their results and actions required?

How does our practice identify patients who do not make appointments for tests or who do not attend for a related appointment?