



February 14, 2017

CES Physicians:

As you may know, there has been a recent increase in the number of hemolyzed specimens the laboratory has been receiving from the emergency department at UnityPoint Methodist. Since October 2016, the percent of hemolyzed specimens from the ED has dramatically increased from 5% to 15%, severely impacting the turnaround time for patient's results. The Lab and ED administration teams have been working jointly to determine a root cause and resolution of this problem.

Hemolysis affects different test results in different ways. For example, slight hemolysis causes intracellular components, such as potassium, LDH and CKMB to be falsely elevated and severe hemolysis suppresses troponin values. If results are released from hemolyzed specimens, it could mean your patient would be treated for *falsely elevated hyperkalemia*, or possibly worse, patients could be sent home with "normal" (*falsely suppressed*) troponin values when they may in fact have a myocardial infarction. **Our lab techs will not be releasing results of hemolyzed specimens, even at the request of ED physicians.**

We fully appreciate and understand the urgency and critical importance of turning out accurate, timely test results. To resolve the hemolysis issue and in the attempt to minimize risk to patients and patient inconvenience the following will be implemented as soon as possible:

- 1) Current tubing used for IV blood collection will be changed to a new product which we anticipate will help reduce hemolysis.
- 2) Blood collection procedures will be standardized.

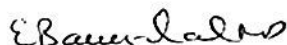
In addition, a stepwise approach will be taken to obtaining optimal blood samples for accurate testing as follows:

- 1) A patient's initial blood sample will continue to be drawn via IV access (this is the current nursing protocol).
- 2) If the initial sample is hemolyzed, the nurse will obtain a second sample by venipuncture ("straight stick") instead of drawing blood from the IV.
- 3) In the event the second blood sample is hemolyzed, a lab phlebotomist will collect a third sample by venipuncture.

We appreciate your patience and support as we move forward with these efforts to ensure the safety of our mutual patients.

Should you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Bauer-Marsh, MD
Medical Director
UnityPoint Health – Methodist Laboratory
(309) 672-4972
Elizabeth.Bauer-Marsh@unitypoint.org



J. Gregory Sowards, MD
ED Medical Director
Comprehensive Emergency Solutions
(309) 672-5500
James.Sowards@unitypoint.org