

## **Majors, Michael L**

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**From:** Majors, Michael L  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 22, 2015 7:45 PM  
**To:** SHMC Microbiology  
**Subject:** Fingers Contaminate Slides!

**Importance:** High

We recently had numerous Gram stains that were grossly contaminated by fingers. The glass slides were touched and handled in the same area where the specimens were applied. A variety of microorganisms (mostly Gram-negative rods) appeared in the smears that represented contamination rather than pathogens. These contaminating organisms were reported on several patient smears. Many of these smears had to be pulled for review because Gram-negative rods did not grow in the culture. Several specimens had to be retrieved and the smears remade. The contaminating organisms were not present on the remade smears.

- Glass slides should never be touched in the area where specimens are applied! This is true whether you are wearing gloves or not.
- Only handle the frosted end and the edges of slides.
- Check for smudges or finger prints on slides BEFORE using them. Do not use dirty slides.
- Do not apply specimen near the edges where the glass slide would be handled.

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