Diagnosing Specimen Collection Issues

Identifying specimen collection issues and learning how to prevent them

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Specimen Collection: Facts

• Phlebotomy is the most commonly performed invasive medical procedure.
• Over one billion venipunctures are performed in the U.S. annually.
• Accurate venipuncture is the first step in accurate laboratory testing
Specimen Collection: Is it Easy?

Not all venipunctures go as planned!

Blood Draw Fail
Common Specimen Collection Issues

Mechanical Errors

• Leaving tourniquet on too long
• Using inappropriate needle gauge
• Incorrect order of draw
• Non sterile techniques
• Inappropriate transfer from syringe
Common Specimen Collection Issues

• Procedural Errors
  • Early or late collection of a timed draw
  • Failure to protect from light or place on ice
  • Inappropriate specimen type collected
• Short Draws
  • Inappropriate fill ratio
  • Insufficient volume for testing
Common Specimen Collection Issues

• Labeling Errors
  • Missing Date and Time
  • Missing phlebotomist initials
  • Incomplete Label
    • Missing part of name, DOB, MRN
    • Illegible
The Cardinal Sin

Drawing the wrong patient!
Quality: Why is it important?

• For the patient!
• Specimen Collection leads to accurate results
  • Garbage In = Garbage Out
• Lab credibility
  • Six Sigma = Less than 3.4 defects per million produced or 99.9997%
    • So if you have 10000 venipunctures a month
      • One mistake every 16 months!
The Three T’s of Improving Collections

- Track Them
- Tell Them
- Train Them
Track Issues by Type

- Categorize issues
- Document when they occur
- Document who caused the issue

Sample Exception Report
Tell them about it

- Tell the people who made the mistakes
- Report All Errors (Even when the outcome isn’t affected)
  - To phlebotomists
  - To Nursing Staff
  - To Clients
Train them to be accurate

• Give your new employees time to train
• Do continuing education and training based on issues you identify
• Provide training to nursing staff
• Present case studies of collection issues
• Give them observation with a trainer/mentor
• Use annual competency to be effective
Other Solutions That Work

• Use lean processes with phlebotomy
  • Tray, Collection, Labeling, Transport
• Order of Draw card with inverting instructions
• Fill line card for nursing units
• Training Resource Webpage for hospital staff or clients
• Syringe transfer device (safety and hemolysis prevention)
References
