User Guide for the IBGRL Red Cell Reference Laboratory

Referral of Blood Samples to the Red Cell Reference Laboratory

1. Antibody investigations

- The main function of the Red Cell Reference Department of the IBGRL is to undertake alloantibody investigations of a **'NON-ROUTINE' and COMPLEX NATURE WHERE COMPATIBLE BLOOD IS DIFFICULT TO FIND**
- This category includes confirmation of a rarity identified by the referrer and determination of possible underlying specificities.

Samples preferred: Minimum of 10ml clotted blood PLUS 10ml anticoagulated blood. Larger samples are preferable and sometimes may be essential. Anticoagulated samples should not be separated. Separation of clotted samples is optional.

PLEASE DO NOT SEND:

- Weak gel-only antibodies
- Antibodies that are not reacting with **ALL** or the **VAST MAJORITY** of red cells
- Autoantibodies

2. Antibodies to low incidence antigens

- Patient whose serum/plasma contains antibody to a **SINGLE EXAMPLE** of donor cells or **baby's/father's** cells in case of maternal antibody
- The incompatibility should have a **minimum 3+** reaction (on a scale of 1+ to 5+)

Samples preferred: Minimum of 10ml clotted blood from the patient PLUS 10ml EDTA sample from the incompatible donor or father (less is acceptable from a baby).

PLEASE DO NOT SEND:

- Antibody without incompatible red cells
- Incompatible red cells without antibody

3. Red cell antigen investigations

- Carried out on any blood group system where determination of phenotype is difficult or an uncommon polymorphism is suspected.

Samples preferred: Minimum of 10ml EDTA sample.

PLEASE DO NOT SEND:

- ABO problems without both red cells and plasma
- Rh problems with an Rh-related antibody without both red cells and plasma

4. Other investigations

- Other types of referrals will be considered but it is essential to telephone to discuss the case or make an e-mail request before dispatch of the samples.

We accept samples from the following laboratories:

- UK blood service reference laboratories.
- Overseas reference laboratories.

***Please note:* samples from UK hospitals will only be investigated with the knowledge of their local blood centre.**

Reporting of Results

Results will only be reported to the referring laboratory. UK hospitals must contact their local RCI laboratory for results of investigations referred to the IBGRL Red Cell Reference Department. Reports will normally be sent by first class mail. In urgent cases, or when requested, preliminary results may be given by telephone, email or fax prior to mailing a full report.

Turnaround time: The time between receipt of sample and reporting will depend on the urgency of the case and the number of samples in the laboratory at any given time (which is out of our control). Priority is always given to urgent cases and therefore non-urgent investigations may be necessarily delayed. The referrer will be informed if there is to be undue delay in starting an investigation for this reason.

User assessment. It is a requirement for our laboratory to assess user satisfaction and complaints. We would be grateful if referrers would participate in our regular customer satisfaction surveys.

Accessing results on Sp-ICE

Reports from the IBGRL Red Cell Reference Laboratory are available to view on the Sp-ICE web browser. The Sp-ICE web browser is currently available to all hospitals based in England.

If you do not currently have access to the Sp-ICE browser and wish to view these reports, please contact your local Transfusion Laboratory Manager (Sp-ICE primary contact) or e-mail ICE@nhsbt.nhs.uk for training and access.

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Sending Samples to IBGRL

Within the UK: Non urgent samples should be sent by first class mail. Urgent samples should be sent by courier ensuring door-to-door delivery.

Outside the UK: Samples should be sent by 'express' mail, courier or by air freight ensuring door-to-door delivery.

Urgent referrals are defined as those where blood for transfusion is needed as quickly as possible. It is essential that the red cell reference laboratory is contacted by telephone prior to sending samples of this nature.

Please note: All packages should be clearly labelled with storage conditions.

Address for packages:

Nicole Thornton
Head of Red Cell Reference
International Blood Group Reference Laboratory
NHSBT Filton Blood Centre
North Bristol Park
Filton
Bristol BS34 7QH
UK

Paperwork accompanying samples:

Please include the following details on a sample referral form or headed paper ensuring that the full address for correspondence is clear:

- Full name and identification number(s) of all samples enclosed.
- Outline of investigation required.
- Brief description of work carried out in referring laboratory.
- ABO group and any other phenotypes known.
- Printed name and title of referrer.
- Indication of urgency of investigation.
- Declaration of infection risk status if known.

Working Hours:

Our normal working hours are:

Monday - Thursday	9.00am - 5.30pm
Friday	9.00am - 5.00pm

Urgent cases can be investigated outside of these hours but it is essential to liaise with the Department prior to sending the samples.

Enquiries to:

Nicole Thornton Tel: +44 (0)117 921 7586 or
Laboratory Tel: +44 (0)117 921 7587
Email: nicole.thornton@nhsbt.nhs.uk
http://ibgrl.blood.co.uk