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Date: November 3, 2011  
To: Clients of Hagerstown Medical Laboratory (HML)  
From: John G. Newby, MD   
Director of Laboratories  
Subject: Ammonia specimen Transport Time and Temperature

Recently we were made aware of some confusion over the acceptable limits on transport time and temperature for Ammonia specimens analyzed by HML. Ammonia specimens must be put on ice immediately and transported so that they are received within 30 minutes of collection at HML's main laboratory in Suite 230 in Robinwood Professional Center. The ammonia content of whole blood increases rapidly at room temperature and keeping it on ice will slow down the increase. Our assay is valid only if we receive the specimen on ice and within 30 minutes of collection. Specimens which are not properly transported or having exceeded the time limit, will show an increase over the patient's actual ammonia value, potentially leading to unnecessary clinical intervention with unnecessary costs and stress for the patient.

For all these reasons, HML is requiring the following:

1. All outpatients, including ambulatory Nursing Home patients, must come to HML's Robinwood Patient Service Center in Suite 145 for collection.
2. Physician practices and healthcare facilities, other than Meritus Medical Center, who collect ammonia specimens themselves must arrange for transportation of these specimens **ensuring that they arrive on ice and within 30 minutes of collection at HML's main laboratory in Suite 230 in Robinwood Professional Center.**

**HML cannot offer courier specimen pickup for this test due to its time constraints.**

If you have questions or concerns, please contact HML Client Services at 301-665-4900 or 1-800-428-2105.