



April 21, 2010

To: All Ordering Providers & Entities

From: John G. Newby, M.D.  
Laboratory Medical Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John G. Newby".

Subject: **Change in Definition of "CBC" / Must Specify if Differential Required**

Traditionally, an order for "CBC" (Complete Blood Count) has been considered to include a white cell differential count, automated or manual. However, several years ago the American Medical Association, publisher of the CPT Codes, changed the description of code 85027 from "Hemogram with platelet count" to "Blood Count; Complete (CBC), Automated (HGB, HCT, RBC, WBC and Platelet Count)".

More recently, certain payers, particularly Medicare, have taken the stance that when an order for CBC does not explicitly specify that a WBC Differential is requested, that no differential should be performed and the procedure should be billed as code 85027. In order to be in compliance with this ruling, HML will have to make a change in how orders for CBC will be filled.

**Beginning May 15, 2010, in order to receive a WBC differential count, your order must specify that the differential is required, e.g. "CBC with diff". Otherwise you will get the Hematology Panel including hemoglobin, hematocrit, RBC, WBC and platelet counts, but no differential count.**

If you use HML's preprinted requisition forms, this specification is already present, and no further action is necessary. The primary issue will come with orders that are hand-written or on forms not designed by HML. An audit shows that approximately 20% of CBC orders received would be affected by this change. Please note that inpatient orders written onto the patient chart will also be subject to this requirement.

We hope that this advance notice will provide sufficient time to change your ordering pattern and/or modify any forms you may use to include the specification of the differential count, if so desired. *Unfortunately, in most cases we will not be able to add a differential count to a specimen for which the WBC differential was desired but not explicitly requested, due to specimen deterioration issues.*