

PATHOLOGY SERVICES

CHAPTER 51

The South Western Area Pathology Service (SWAPS) provides comprehensive Area pathology services 24 hours a day, 7 days per week to all hospitals in SWSAHS. In addition, SWAPS provides pathology services to private hospitals and the Orana Pathology Service (Macquarie Health Service).

SWAPS is one of the largest public sector pathology providers in NSW, attending to over 960,000 requests in 2002, and more than 1 million requests in 2003. Growth in the number of pathology requests to the Service currently exceeds 6% per annum.

The demand for pathology services is expected to continue to rise to 2011 in line with the projected growth in hospital activity.

Current Services

All acute hospital facilities in SWSAHS have a SWAPS laboratory on site, which provide collection, blood transfusion and basic analytical testing services. Test results are accessible on line throughout the Area via a password.

The main determinant is patient care but the service has been designed to provide a cost-effective outcome for both patients and the Area.

A comprehensive pathology service is provided 24 hours per day 7 days per week to all hospitals of SWSAHS, private hospitals and our hub partner Orana pathology service.

All services are delivered by a network of vertically-integrated Area and Sector laboratories with Area laboratories operating continuously and others working extended hours complemented by a comprehensive call back system and dedicated SWAPS courier service running 24 hours daily.

The service processes both the routine work and a large number of high complexity analytes but refers a small number of highly specialised tests such as Cytogenetics to other tertiary laboratories.

The services provided by SWAPS fall into two broad categories – medical (pathology) testing and clinical services. The pathology services cover:

- Anatomical pathology including cytopathology;
- Chemical pathology including endocrinology and toxicology;
- Haematology including blood bank and bone marrow transplant;
- Microbiology, molecular diagnosis and serology; and
- Immunology.

Anatomical Pathology services include:

- a fine needle aspiration biopsy service both at Liverpool and other Sector Hospitals;
- intra-operative frozen section diagnosis by Staff Specialists at Sector facilities; and
- a non-Coronial autopsy service which includes examination of still-births and pre-viable fetuses.

The Department of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases is accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities to provide microbiological testing of air, water, and endoscopes (post high-level disinfection). (It is the first Area Pathology Service laboratory in Australia to have achieved this.)

Clinical Services include Haematology Consulting and Microbiology/ Infectious Diseases services which are provided at the Liverpool, Bankstown, Bowral and Campbelltown Hospitals.

Haematology and Microbiology/Infectious Diseases comprise:

- Tertiary inpatient services Liverpool;
- Area – wide consultative services; and
- Private non-inpatient clinics at Liverpool and other sectors.

Also Microbiology provides:

- Membership of individual hospital and Area infection control committees;
- Membership of individual hospital Drug Advisory Committees; and
- Liaison with the Area Public Health Unit.

Research and Teaching

SWAPS provides undergraduate and postgraduate training in pathology and in house training for registrars and technical officers/hospital scientists. SWAPS also participates in the education programs of the Divisions of General Practice, provides continuing nursing and medical education and contributes to specialist education for physicians, surgeons, and other specialists:

- Undergraduate teaching of Pathology UNSW years 3, 4 and 5.
- Undergraduate teaching Internal Medicine SW Sydney Clinical School.
- Postgraduate training in Pathology – examination success achieved for FRCPA in Anatomical Pathology, Haematology and Microbiology.
- Contribution to specialist education e.g. for physicians, surgeons, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, dermatology etc.
- Involvement in education programs of the Divisions of General Practice e.g. Quality Use of Medicines programs of the National Prescribing Service.
- Area – wide involvement in continuing medical & nursing education for main clinical discipline.
- In house training for professional qualifications for eight registrars and a similar number of trainee Technical Officers/Hospital Scientists.

In addition, research is a key component of the service provided by SWAPS. SWAPS is currently involved in the State reference laboratory functions for the typing of meningococci and the State Staphylococcal Reference Facility and in collaborative research with clinical groups including clinical trials. SWAPS also provides infrastructure support by testing specimen collection and dispatch for clinical trials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pathology services continue to run as an Area-wide service with primary medical laboratory services based at Liverpool and onsite laboratories and outreach clinics provided to Bankstown, Campbelltown, Bowral and Fairfield.
- Outreach clinics at Bankstown and Campbelltown be expanded in line with their developing tertiary roles.
- Anatomical pathology services be expanded to enable timely provision of testing and reports of increasing complexity and volume.
- Cytology services at Bankstown be developed through recruitment of a cyto-technologist and pathologist.
- Pathology involvement in clinical pathology meetings at Campbelltown and Bankstown be expanded.
- Teaching and research capacity within Pathology be expanded.
- Immunopathology to be expanded.
- Pathology courier service to be expanded to enable timely collection and delivery of specimens.
- Department of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases be expanded with additional registrar support.
- Capital requirements for Area SWAPS at Liverpool be informed by the completion of a master development control plan. Physical resources and equipment be enhanced to enable effective storage of blocks, tissues and slides.