



Capital Health

MEMORANDUM

To: Capital Health Inpatient, Emergency and Outpatient clinics, Physicians, Health Service Managers, Nurse Practitioners

From: Dr. Manal Elnenaei, Dr. Bassam Nassar, Dr. Amy Lou, Ms Cindy Andrews
Division of Clinical Chemistry

Date: September 3, 2014

Subject: **Change in ordering of Electrolyte Panels to promote appropriate utilization**

As part of the move towards promoting appropriate utilization of laboratory tests, effective September 15, 2014, the standard Electrolyte panel will include Sodium and Potassium only. Total CO₂ and Chloride testing will no longer be routinely performed.

If either or both of these analytes are clinically required, it must be via the following:

- A. For Primary Care: On the primary care requisition, request Total CO₂ and Chloride testing separately under 'other tests'. Abbreviations e.g. Cl or CO₂ will be accepted.**
- B. For Capital Health Inpatient, Emergency and Outpatient clinics: The Inpatient and Clinic requisition will be modified to show 3 separate options for electrolytes:**
- Electrolytes (Na & K)
 - Chloride
 - Total CO₂

Only select those electrolytes required. If a requisition does not provide these options, please select Electrolytes and Na and K will be analysed. Total CO₂ and Chloride must be requested separately under 'other tests'.

This decision is based on the following:

- Bicarbonate and chloride are useful to assess patients in whom an acid-base imbalance is suspected.
- There are over 570,000 bicarbonates and chlorides run annually from the QEII Health Sciences site alone, at least 90% of which are not clinically warranted. This is wasteful for laboratory resources and is a source of unnecessary anxiety in some cases where there is a marginal shift from the reference range that may reflect biological or analytical variation, but is not clinically relevant.

Please note:

Add-ons for total CO₂ will no longer be accepted following initial processing of the sample due to quality issues around sample integrity for total CO₂

If you have further questions about this issue, please contact Dr. Elnenaei at 902-473-5194, Dr Lou at 902-473-1528 or Dr. Nassar at 902-473-2225

CC. Ms.Shauna Thompson, Dr. Godfrey Heathcote, Ms Sandy Schlay, Ms Faye Lively