Primary Care Cervical Screening: Best Practice and Failsafe Checks

It is important that failsafe's and safety checks are done when a patient comes for their cervical screening test. This will ensure that the sample is accepted at the laboratory and will reduce the chance of any errors, resulting in screening safety incidents, or harm.

Pre-Appointment Checks

Before the patient's appointment:
- Check the prior notification list (PNL) to see which patients are due for cervical screening
- Check the PNL against the practice list for up-to-date patient contact details and identify any patients who match the exclusion criteria (absence of cervix, age, etc).

Patient and vial checks before patient entry into the room:
- Check on Open Exeter and patient records to ensure patient has not been ceased or deferred from cervical screening (due to absence of cervix, age, etc)
- Check that the vial has not passed expiry date and has at least 14 days remaining
- One HMR101 should be printed for the patient, forms should not be printed in advance.

Appointment Checks

Patient and practice checks on entry to room:
Vials are labelled in front of patient and patient checks the HMR101 form and vial to agree all information is correct:
- Patient to check the accuracy of details on screen prior to printing the e-request form
- Patient to check their personal details are correct (full name, DOB, NHS number, address)
- Check GP practice, name of sample taker and NMC/GMC code is correctly documented
- Label for vial should not cover the expiry date.

After the test:
Place the vial in an individual cervical screening sample bag with the corresponding request form in the separate pocket, ensure the bag is sealed properly:
- Cross check that the information on the vial and form is identical before sealing the bag
- Sample bags should be placed into a safe and secure cervical screening samples transport bag ready for collection.

Post Appointment Checks

Post clinic:
Visual check of all bags with samples and forms at end of clinic to ensure no error has occurred.

Sample collection:
Check to ensure that all samples taken are picked up by the laboratory courier and have been signed for.
- Ensure the courier scans the barcode at the surgery to acknowledge arrival
- Ensure all samples are handed over and there is an accurate list of all samples taken for that day – the list should be cross checked and signed by the practice and the courier
- Ensure the courier scans cervical screening samples transport bag.

Patient should be added to a failsafe list:
- It should be clear which patients are waiting for results and who within the practice will check that a result has been received for each sample taken
- Outstanding results should be followed up in a timely manner.

Useful Guides:
Sample Taker Guide: Cervical screening: cervical sample taker training - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Sample Acceptance Policy: Guidance for acceptance of cervical screening samples in laboratories and pathways, roles and responsibilities - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)