Computer Downtime and the Laboratory
Deb Faller, MBA, MT (ASCP) H

The statement “the computer is down” can elicit a collective groan across all of CMH. The loss of computer functions greatly impacts workflow for the Laboratories. Downtimes are especially difficult for the Central Processing Section (CP) because all specimens must go through CP before any testing can be done. CP handles an average of 1300 specimens each day and can be quite busy even without added computer problems. With so many different components to the CMH system including PCI, OE, POM and C/S (Client Server laboratory software), there are multiple downtime processes that must be implemented based on the affected systems.

Have you ever been confused about whether a paper requisition is needed? Why they are talking about downtime when you are still able to enter orders? Will the results be available for viewing in the computer? The following outlines several downtime situations, how the Laboratory handles them and how they impact clinical areas.

1. OE (Order Entry) and or POM (Physician Order Management) is down and C/S is up
   - Orders can not be placed
   - Downtime Requisitions VOS #PS7010-001 should be sent to the lab
   - Red stickers should be placed on STAT specimens before sending to lab
   - Lab will place test orders directly into C/S so that results can be entered
   - Results will be available for viewing in PCI unless otherwise indicated
   - If PCI is also down, Lab will call or fax STAT and critical results, depending on charge nurse preference
   - Other results may be printed, faxed or called, depending on charge nurse preference

2. PCI (Patient Care Inquiry) is down and C/S is up
   - Test results are not available for viewing
   - Lab will call or fax STAT and critical results, depending on charge nurse preference
   - Other results may be printed, faxed or called, depending on charge nurse preference

3. C/S (Lab Client Server) is down but OE/POM/PCI are up
   - Orders are placed in OE or POM although they can not transmit to C/S
   - Orders will print in Central Processing
   - Lab will use pre-printed labels when available
   - If pre-printed labels are not available, lab will use downtime log to record patient information and list of tests ordered
   - Lab will call or fax all results, depending on charge nurse preference
   - When C/S comes back up, lab will enter appropriate collection information and results
   - Once results are entered, they will be viewable in PCI
OE Interface to C/S is down
- Orders entered in OE or POM can not be transmitted to C/S
- Nursing and Physicians continue to place orders normally
- Orders will print in Central Processing
- Lab will place test orders directly in C/S
- Once interface begins working again, orders which had been held in a OE que are transmitted to C/S. Lab will result these as ‘duplicate’

4. Admissions Interface is down
- All patients must have account numbers for tests to be ordered and/ or results entered
- New patients will have downtime account numbers assigned by Admissions

Planned downtimes are by virtue, likely to be handled more smoothly. We are able to make staff scheduling changes if needed, disseminate downtime kits to nursing personnel along with information about needs for paper requisitions, paper result reporting, etc. One of the largest frustrations for laboratory staff is determining if the system has “crashed” or is perhaps running a little slow. It may take us 30-45 minutes to identify the source of a problem. Telephone calls to the laboratory during downtimes are discouraged. Telephone calls decrease the amount of time that can be spent on receiving specimens and performing tests.

The laboratory’s primary goal is to provide timely and efficient processing and reporting of laboratory results. The lab has on-going quality improvement monitoring of our downtime processing. If you have feedback that would be beneficial for our processes or questions about how we handle specimen processing please contact Marinda Cooper, CP Supervisor or Deb Faller, Outreach Manager. Other phone extensions in the CP lab section include:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Extension</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letty Baker, Coordinator</td>
<td>3221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy Vann, Send-Outs</td>
<td>3261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP on 2nd Floor</td>
<td>3230</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out-patient Lab</td>
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<th>Date:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>Noon – 13:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Lab Conference Room 2206.10 WT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker:</td>
<td>Eugenio Taboada, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic:</td>
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