



Issue: Blood Alcohol Collection Kits

Raised by: Jenny Pethick (Project Officer)

Background: Amendments to the Northern Territory Traffic Act this year, have created potential for Remote Area Nurses to be involved in the collection of blood alcohol samples to be used for forensic purposes. Jenny Pethick, on behalf of Remote Health Branch, has been involved in investigating the implications that implementation of this legislation in Remote Health Centres.

Best Practice Group have been asked to review the Blood Alcohol Collection Kits and related processes.

Discussion: A standard, individually sealed kit is available from Hospital Stores (Code # BLOOD014) for use in the collection of blood alcohol samples related to forensic purposes. While the contents are simple consumables otherwise readily available in all health centres, the enclosed blood sample tube is marked with a unique number which corresponds to a similar number on both an NT specific certification form and sticky label. Together, these pre-numbered items contribute to prevent tampering of evidence.

Unfortunately, the consumables in the currently supplied kits do not allow a needle free decanting of the sample.

The supplier of the kits has been requested to change to a needle free system. There are apparently some limitations to which systems could be used due to the requirement of printing unique numbers on the applicable components. Best Practice Group have been shown a Monovette system which is currently used in the NSW equivalent kit. The sample appears satisfactory and is essentially similar to the familiar Vacutainer system, except that the vacuum is created by the withdrawal of a plunger rather than inherent in the sample tube. Enquiries with clinicians in NSW who have used the system indicated no dissatisfaction with the product. Rather than trial the product and cause delay in establishing the production of new kits for the NT, the request has been made for new kits to be produced, however this will take some time before they are available to remote health centres.

In the intervening period staff are not obliged to use the standard needle/syringe combination in existing kits if they do not wish to. The legislation does not force a practitioner that they must take a sample for forensic purposes.

Information should be available to Health Centre staff regarding the taking of blood samples for forensic purposes and consequently an Atlas item has been prepared and is available for further information.

Consultation: CNM, Emergency Dept, RPA Hospital; Allan Phillips, Sarstedt Australia

References: [Northern Territory Traffic Act \(2007\)](#)

Outcome: **Inclusion of a needle free collection container in the NT Blood Alcohol Collection Kit has been requested from the supplier.**

An Atlas item on *Collection of Blood Alcohol Sample for Forensic Purposes* has been produced.