

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Center for Cancer Prevention and Control
Maryland Cancer Registry

Frequently Asked Questions – “Lab Only” Follow Back

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Below is a list of frequently asked questions regarding “lab only” follow back reporting of cancer cases to the Maryland Cancer Registry (MCR). “Lab only” tumors are those reported to the MCR **only** by a laboratory and not by any other hospital, radiation facility, or physician.



1. Question: If a pathology laboratory reports a newly diagnosed reportable tumor to the MCR, is it necessary for the physician to report the same case to the MCR?

Answer: Maryland law states that “...each physician who has care of or has diagnosed cancer or a central nervous system tumor for a non-hospitalized patient not otherwise reported shall...submit a cancer report to the Secretary” http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/cancer/Documents/1-Health_General_18-203-18-204.pdf

Furthermore, Maryland law states that a cancer report consists of demographic information, initial histology, initial treatment, and the extent of disease (by the end of the first hospitalization). Because a laboratory report only provides the Maryland Cancer Registry (MCR) with a histology, primary site, and very limited demographics, the MCR still needs race, county of residence, disease stage, and treatment information on the cases. To obtain this additional information, the MCR sends letters to physicians who ordered the lab test on non-hospitalized patients with cancer reported by a lab. The physician receiving the letters may either 1) reply to the MCR’s request for information on cases where the MCR only has information from a lab, or 2) choose to become a reporter to the MCR and report these cases directly.



2. Question: Do physician offices get reimbursed for the time it takes to report these cases.

Answer: No. The MCR does not pay any reporting facility to submit cases.



3. Question: What are the HIPAA guidelines that cover reporting patient information to the MCR and where can this information be located?

The Maryland Cancer Registry is a “public health authority”, as defined by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). Federal regulations [see 45 C.F.R. §164.512(a), (b), and (d) and §160.203(c)] authorize disclosure without patient consent in a number of circumstances, including the following:

Disclosure is permitted to a public health authority authorized by law to access information to prevent/control disease, injury, disability, e.g., disease reporting, vital statistics reporting, public health surveillance, public health investigations, public health interventions and partner notification.

The Maryland Cancer Registry is a public health authority, cancer reporting and surveillance is required by state law, and the MCR is not performing such function on behalf of the covered entity, it is not necessary to complete a business associate's agreement before providing the MCR, or entities officially acting on the MCR's behalf, with the requested personally identifiable information. The requested information is needed to conduct public health surveillance and will be re-disclosed only upon approval by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Institutional Review Board.

For a copy of the HIPAA guidelines go to:

http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/cancer/Documents/HIPAA_Information.pdf



4. Question: Where is the law stating that physicians have to report?

For a copy of the law and regulations go to:

http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/cancer/pages/mcr_regs.aspx



5. Question: I have never received these forms before. Why am I receiving them now?

The MCR began conducting follow back on "laboratory only" cases (that is, tumors only reported by laboratories) in 2009. If you have not received follow back request forms recently, all of your patients must have been reported to the MCR by a facility other than the laboratory.



6. Question: I did not treat this patient and/or I have no information, what do I do?

Fill out any information you do have. If you know who treated the patient for cancer, please write that information on the form and return it via fax to the MCR at **240-314-2377**. If you have no information at all, please also note that on the form and fax it back to the MCR.



7. Question: How can I make sure I do not receive these forms?

To make sure you do not receive these forms, you can take an active part in the reporting of cancer by becoming a reporter. By becoming an active reporter, you will let us know when you have diagnosed or treated a cancer patient. Contact the MCR technical help line Westat: **1-888-662-0016** or **301-315-5990** to become a reporter or for more information.