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Laboratory turnaround times of surgical biopsies in a university diagnostic histopathology laboratory: an audit

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Introduction and objectives: Turnaround Time (TAT) is the time between specimen receipt by the laboratory and the issuing of the final report. TAT is an important indicator for measuring laboratory performance. Dispatching a report on time assists the clinician to confirm a diagnosis and initiate a timely treatment plan. This audit was carried out to analyse the turnaround time of the specimens handled in our laboratory.

Methodology: This audit reviewed all surgical specimens reported during a period of ten months, from March 2021 to December 2021, at our institute. The total number of calendar days taken by the laboratory to issue the final report was calculated.

Results: A total of 1848 specimens were included. The mean TATs for resection, biopsy and cytology specimens were 10.7 ± 2.0 , 8.0 ± 2.0 and 4.8 ± 2.0 days, respectively, with a range of 1-60 days. 2.7% (n=48) of cases were reported between 30 and 60 days, mainly due to delays in processing or need for the immunohistochemistry/special stains. On exclusion of these cases, mean TATs for resection, biopsy and cytology specimens were 8.14 ± 2.0 , 6.09 ± 2.0 and 4.8 ± 2.0 days, respectively. 9.3% (n=172) of all reports were dispatched by day 3, 48.2% (n=892) by day 7 and 83.2% (n=1538) by day 14.

Conclusion: The TATs for most samples received to our department were satisfactory and reached international standards. However, significant delays occurred due to delays in processing, performing immunohistochemistry and special stains, which need to be addressed.

Keywords: turnaround time (TAT), resection, biopsy, cytology, mastectomy

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