



DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY
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DHA-Policy Memorandum 24-009
January 3, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION LIST

SUBJECT: Pathology Subspecialty Consultation via the Joint Pathology Center

References: (a) Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5136.01, "Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD(HA))," September 30, 2013, as amended
(b) DoD Directive 5136.13, "Defense Health Agency," September 30, 2013, as amended
(c) Public Law 110-181, National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2008, Section 722, "Establishment of Joint Pathology Center"
(d) The Joint Pathology Center (JPC) Submission Manual, July 2021

This Defense Health Agency (DHA) Policy Memorandum, based on the authorities of References (a) and (b), and in accordance with the guidance of References (c) and (d), establishes the Joint Pathology Center (JPC) as a function to provide secondary pathology consultation for military Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs) that provide anatomic pathology services. It is understood that there are 36 MTFs with anatomic pathologists; they review dental specimens needing pathology diagnoses and will send dental specimens to the JPC if they need secondary evaluation.

This DHA Policy Memorandum directs MTF pathology departments to utilize the JPC, a DHA-funded resource, for secondary pathology consultation to the maximum extent practicable and clinically appropriate. The JPC provides cost-effective, centralized, pathology subspecialty consultation for the Department of Defense and provides hospital-based pathologists with access to pathology subspecialty expertise for the most difficult and challenging cases.

There are valid reasons for MTFs to utilize private sector facilities rather than the JPC for secondary consultation. These reasons include:

- To facilitate continuity of care when a patient is receiving definitive care in the private sector network
- Transit time for the case to be sent to the JPC may delay appropriate care
- Urgent or high acuity inpatient care in which referring a case to the JPC may delay appropriate care

- The JPC may not have the appropriate testing necessary for treatment (e.g., next-generation sequencing (NGS) molecular testing. While the JPC panel for NGS testing may be appropriate for treatment in many cases, it may not include the correct testing for certain types of targeted therapy).

Depending on the type of case submitted and the type of assistance requested, there are certain submission requirements that must be met before a case can be accepted at the JPC. The JPC will usually issue a final report within 5 working days of receipt of a consultation; however, complex cases and those requiring additional testing may require additional time. Refer to the JPC website and the Submission Manual for detailed instructions, exceptions, and forms to initiate the referral process.^{1, 2}

This DHA Policy Memorandum is cleared for public release and available on the Internet from the Health.mil site at <https://health.mil/Reference-Center/Policies> and is also available to authorized users from the DHA SharePoint site at <https://info.health.mil/cos/admin/pubs/DHA%20Publications%20Signed/Forms/AllItems.aspx>.

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¹ Joint Pathology Center Website can be found here: <https://jpc.capmed.mil/index.asp>

² Joint Pathology Center Submission Manual can be found here:
https://jpc.capmed.mil/docs/jpc_submission_manual_final_v24.pdf

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