



Capital Letter

June 2020

Mid-year update

The challenges of 2020 – Care in a COVID crisis

Who could believe we would arrive at June 2020, after emerging through a blurring of the previous months and having lived through extraordinary times which we have all experienced in our own different personal ways. What a time. The global world has changed. Australia is altered. Here in Canberra regional life is tentatively reaching a new balance, as businesses re-open, gatherings are allowed, institutions return to welcoming visitors and the kids are back at school.

At Capital Pathology our staff gathered back in December 2019 to celebrate the year, and we were all puzzled by the smoke on that summer night, that encroached across Canberra from country bushfires. This was the sign of terrible months ahead, with uncontrollable bushfires across several states, lives lost, property destroyed and livelihoods altered to the core. The smoke blanketed the Capital, the smell permeated buildings including the lab and the heat and the drought drained any remaining life.

Relief came with the rain, the hills greened up and places like the Arboretum breathed afresh.

Nature was not finished with us yet however. A novel coronavirus was circulating, and before long 2020 became the year the globe experienced a pandemic catastrophe which to date has resulted in over 7.8 million cases, almost half a million deaths, and untold suffering. The anguish for our patients and their families was yet another emotional blow on top of those struggling for support after the fires.

The adversity has brought out our best values too, as communities have had to adhere to new social restrictions, physical distancing, and hygiene measures and have pulled together under medical public leadership. We have emerged in Australia not untouched, but relatively speaking we are well off as a national community and we avoided the worst case scenarios. In pathology we have played an essential, vital role in

helping during this time. The quality of the medical system in Australia has proven our saviour, and pathology has been central in the COVID-19 response.

For Capital Pathology, our role in COVID-19 began when we received our first referral in late January. For many weeks after this, we were the only pathology provider in the region offering collection services for suspected COVID-19 cases – long before the public facilities in ACT and NSW were up and running. This was all done in the face of desperate shortages of PPE and testing reagent where obtaining these proved a significant issue for both us and other medical practices.

What has been achieved in the months since that first request has been a combined effort between our referring doctors, and our amazing staff who took all these changes in their stride during very uncertain times.

CAPITAL PATHOLOGY AND COVID-19

- Over 5000 requests for COVID testing
- 38 positives reported
- SMS negative results to patients (optional)
- Deployment of a self-collect option for COVID swabs, after successful validation, greatly reducing PPE use.
- Development of multiple telehealth request forms, and a new entry system for managing these.
- Provision of inpatient services to highly complex public patient cases in the private hospitals.
- Continually worked with ACT Health and NSW Health, as well the Primary Health Networks.



We offer our warmest thanks to all our medical colleagues and their staff who have been on the front line, and of course our own staff. At times faced with anxious patients, at times faced with changing procedure and protocols, at times fearful, at times short on PPE but now hopefully full of confidence that we have done well and that we have cared for those that we have been the given responsibility of being their care provider / their doctor.

We appreciate that the entire medical community has played a critical role in the pandemic response, and in pathology we are one of the links that bring so many together. There have been so many medical practice challenges, including the business uncertainty for many, the advent of telehealth, the infection control and physical changes in each premises. We have had to be leaders ourselves, leaders following the correct scientific and medical advice that has guided our state and territory health officials in such a way that Australia's handling of COVID-19 crisis has been one of the global success stories in the battle against the virus SARS-CoV-2.

As for the remainder of 2020? Only time will tell. But we hope and trust that with continuing good policy, with excellent leadership and with a great community spirit that we will be able to confront any challenges that may come our way.

Warmest wishes,

Dr Paul Whiting
Medical Director

Telehealth pathology referrals

For doctors providing telehealth consultations for their patients, Capital Pathology has developed a couple of ways to make it easier to request pathology.

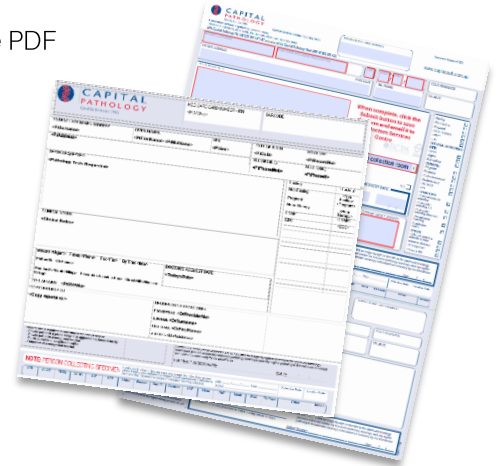
These forms can be emailed to your patient, or directly to us at dsc@capitalpath.com.au. For forms sent to us, we will input the information into the system and send an SMS notification to the patient that they have been referred to us and to show the SMS to their collector to retrieve their details.

Simply visit our new-look website and follow the links to the telehealth page.

www.capitalpath.com.au/telehealth

On the website you can find the following forms for telehealth referrals:

- RTF Letter Template to import into Best Practice or Medical Director
- Fillable PDF



We are also working on a simple internet form that can be used as a request form. We will have more information on this shortly.

We're going paperless!

In an effort to reduce our paper usage, we are moving towards an electronic newsletter. Capital Pathology usually issues 2-3 newsletters per year, and we occasionally may have other important updates to communicate to your practice.

If you would like to assist us in this endeavour, please provide your clinic's email address below and return it to us and we will update our records.

Clinic Name: _____

Email: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Please email to client_services@capitalpath.com.au or fax to 02 6285 9941

Note: Email addresses provided to Capital Pathology will be used solely for the purposes of communicating important information, and will not be shared with any other party under any circumstance.