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Manual Clinical Data Tracking Systems Can Be as Effective as Computerized Systems

An effective Clinical Data Tracking method, whether computerized or manual, should assure that the results of all tests ordered are returned to the practice. Such a system requires that all physicians in the practice agree on a standardized procedure for ordering tests and for how the returning results are handled.



A manual tracking system may be as simple as storing patient records with pending test results in a separate location and reviewing these charts weekly for expected reports. Another system may be to record, in a book, the patients that have tests ordered - by date and procedure - and review this book weekly.

Whether you have a computerized system or a manual tracking system, Risk Management & Patient Safety suggests the following:

- Devise a system which notifies every patient of every result. The policy of "no news is good news" should not be used.
- Establish a simple, standardized system for notifying patients of both normal and abnormal test results.
- For normal or non-urgent abnormal results, your physician should initial, date, and provide instruction for the patient follow-up on the actual laboratory result sheet.
- All urgent abnormal results should be immediately directed to and followed-up by the physician. These reports should also be dated and initialed by the physician or an advanced-practice professional.
- Empower patients to serve as a double check system. Patients should be educated about what tests are being ordered, the purpose of the test, and when and how the results will be relayed. Give them a specific time frame to expect the results and, direct them to call the office if they have not received their results.
- Only file the reports after they are reviewed, dated, and initialed by the physician.