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**TO: DDG: CHIEF OF OPERATIONS  
CHIEF DIRECTORS  
DIRECTORS  
HEADS OF INSTITUTIONS  
HEAD OF HEALTH: CITY OF CAPE TOWN**

**CIRCULAR H<sup>111</sup> /2022**

**NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF TUBERCULOSIS (TB) RESULT SMS NOTIFICATION FOR THE  
GENEXPERT MTB/RIF ULTRA ASSAY RESULTS**

Your attention is drawn to the attached circular from National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) dated 5 August 2022 regarding the introduction of the short message service (SMS) reporting of GeneXpert MTB/RIF ULTRA assay results.

**Implementation Date**

The TB SMS notification service to clients will be implemented nationally as of the **7th August 2022**.

**Important considerations**

In order for the notification process to be successful, please ensure the following;

1. Health Care Workers completing the Lab request forms are to confirm and capture the clients' current cell phone contact details for all Xpert MTB/RIF Ultra investigations.
2. Health care workers should inform all clients that they will receive an SMS and that they may also be contacted by the Department of Health or NHLS.

Yours sincerely,

*AD Goeman*  
pp

**JO ARENDSE**

**CHIEF DIRECTOR: ECSS**

**DATE:** 05/08/2022

**To:** Provincial and District HAST Managers, Clinicians, Health Care workers and NHLS Laboratory personnel

**From:** National Health Laboratory Services and NDoH National TB Control Programme

**Date:** 05 August 2022

**RE:** **National implementation of Tuberculosis (TB) Result SMS notification for the GeneXpert MTB/RIF ULTRA assay results**

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#### **BACKGROUND:**

There has been a significant decline in Tuberculosis (TB) testing and notifications from April 2020 through October 2020. This was largely attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns which affected both the supply and demand of TB diagnostic and treatment services. In response to this, a TB Recovery plan committee was established. The main aim of this committee was to develop a plan to mitigate the losses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and scale up new innovative approaches to attain the National Strategic Plan (NSP), End TB Strategy, UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Ending TB and Sustainable Development Goals.

One of the key interventions we can easily adopt from the COVID-19 response, is the introduction of the short message service (SMS) reporting test results. The TB SMS notification is intended to provide clients who have had an Xpert MTB/RIF Ultra test with a notification from the laboratory. A pilot was performed by the Centre for Tuberculosis in selected districts in South Africa in collaboration with the National TB Think Tank and findings from the pilot have indicated no harm observed since implementation. Consultation between the NHLS CEO and National TB directorate have approved the introduction of this service.

The purpose of introducing the TB SMS notification is to **STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS FOR LINKAGE OF PEOPLE DIAGNOSED WITH TB TO APPROPRIATE TREATMENT**, thereby, reducing the initial loss to follow by prompting patients to return to the Health care facility when their results are available. This is part of our TB recovery plan. A circular was recently sent by the Director General requesting provinces to implement the TB Recovery Plan.

#### **TB SMS TEXT:**

The SMS will read as follows based on a consensus view from the National TB Think Tank;

#### **Result Group 1**

- MTB Detected
- MTB Detected; Trace results
- MTB detected, RIF unsuccessful
- Test unsuccessful

SMS to Client: ***“Please return to the clinic or hospital urgently for your test result.”***

**Result Group 2**

- MTB not detected

SMS to Client: ***“Your TB test result is negative. Please return to clinic if you are still unwell or if HIV positive.”***

**IMPLEMENTATION**

The TB SMS notification service to clients will be implemented nationally as of the **7<sup>th</sup> August 2022**.

In order for the notification process to be successful, we need to ensure the following;

1. Health Care Workers completing the Lab request forms are to capture the clients’ cell phone contact details for all Xpert MTB/RIF Ultra investigations (fig. 1 red box)
2. NHLS receiving office staff are to ensure that this information is accurately captured on TrakCare
3. The SMS service is automated and no further action would be required from the laboratories

The form is titled 'PHC REQUEST FORM N1' and includes the following sections:

- Header:** NATIONAL HEALTH LABORATORY SERVICE logo, CCMT (YES/NO) box, NHLS LAB NUMBER BARCODE (AKEU2851P), and 'MARK IF URGENT' checkbox.
- Patient Information:** CLINIC FOLDER NUMBER, PATIENT ID / PASSPORT, SURNAME, FIRST NAMES, TITLE, GENDER, RACE, DATE OF BIRTH, AGE.
- Facility Information:** FACILITY NAME, SERVICE POINT, EDK CODE, NHLS FACILITY CODE.
- Specimen Collection:** COLLECTION DATE, TIME, SPECIMEN TYPE.
- Requester Information:** REQUESTED BY (HEALTH CARE WORKER (HCW)), HEALTH CARE WORKER (HCW) SIGNATURE, MPCSAs / SANC NO, CONTACT NO.
- Other:** IF SPECIMEN COLLECTED BY OTHER (NAME), MPCSAs / SANC NO.
- Telephone:** A red box highlights the 'CELL' field.

**Figure 1:** Example of one of the NHLS Laboratory Requisition Forms

The NHLS in partnership with the National TB Control and Management cluster will continue to engage and work with all stakeholders to end TB.

*K. Chetty*  
 Dr. Kamy Chetty  
 NHLS Chief Executive Officer

National Health Laboratory Service  
 National Priority Programme



Centre for Tuberculosis  
 & National TB Reference Laboratory



National TB Control & Management Cluster Office

