Welcome to the American Society of Cytopathology Podcast CytoPathPod! The American Society of Cytopathology (ASC) is fully committed to Saving Lives One Cell at a Time. The ASC plays a leading role in education, advocacy and research in cytopathology to increase early detection of cancer and its precursors. Join special guests to highlight ASC activities in cytopathology education, advocacy and research. Each episode contains information to help you grow in your cytopathology profession.


The GAEPC is pleased to introduce a recurring column in the ASC bulletin dealing with issues related to coding, compliance and regulatory questions posed by our readers. The readership is encouraged to send in questions to the GAEPC (asc@cytopathology.org). GAEPC will research the topic and provide answers in subsequent bulletins.

Swati Mehrotra, M.D. Chair, GAEPC

A frequently asked question refers to “competency assessment” and its site-specific documentation. This question was encountered as “competency” question while preparing for laboratory inspection by one of our members. Here we provide a brief overview for our readers related to this complex topic:

COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT ACROSS MULTIPLE SITES
Ranjana Nawgiri, M.D. and Pamela Gibson, M.D.

1. Does competency assessment need to be done at each site if a health system/hospital has same cytology personnel working at multiple sites?

Yes, it needs to be performed at each site that carries its own CLIA#. As detailed in Subpart C, §493.43 of the Electronic Code of Federal Regulation (source: 57 FR 7143, Feb. 28, 1992) all laboratories (with some exceptions) performing nonwaived testing must file a separate application for each laboratory location. Laboratories within a hospital that are located at contiguous buildings on the same campus and under common direction may file a single application or multiple applications for the laboratory sites within the same physical location or street address. For College of American Pathologists (CAP) accredited laboratories, the CAP document on Competency assessment states: “A laboratory may not share competency assessment records and performance across a system (at multiple sites) for non-waived testing. Competency is required to be performed at each site where the testing is performed. The laboratory director may determine how competency assessment is performed at multiple sites for waived testing.”

2. What are the competencies that need be assessed?

CLIA defines six elements of competency assessment. These are to be documented for each person every year. The six elements of competency are:

1.) Direct observation of routine test performance
2.) Monitoring, recording and reporting test results
3.) Review of intermediate test results or worksheets, quality control records, proficiency testing results, and preventive maintenance records.
4.) Direct observation of performance of instrument maintenance and function checks
5.) Test performance as defined by laboratory policy (e.g., testing previously analyzed specimens, internal blind testing samples, external proficiency or testing samples)
6.) Evaluation of problem-solving skills as appropriate to the job.
3. Is competency assessment the same as a proficiency test?

No, the purpose of competency assessment is broader and more detailed than proficiency testing as it involves observing and documenting that each individual knows how to properly perform all the elements of their job and that they are following the procedures and safety measures that are in place for that institution. Proficiency testing however is used as one of the elements of competency (#5 see above).

4. Is training and personnel evaluation the same as competency testing? Can training and personnel evaluation be used to assess competency?

No, the difference between training and competency is that training happens before someone begins testing and competency assessment confirms that they are doing the testing correctly. Personnel evaluations evaluate other behaviors and attributes as they relate to the position or job.

5. How often does competency needs to be assessed?

Initially 6-monthly, then annually. According to the CAP checklist support document “During the first year of an individual’s duties, competency must be assessed at least semi-annually and then annually. There are two assessments in the first year of patient testing. The timing starts once the person is reporting patient test results independently.”

These guidelines established by CMS under the auspices of CLIA-88 ruling serve as a basis of the required framework established by different accreditation agencies like College of American Pathologists (CAP), The Joint Commission (TJC), Commission on Office Laboratory Accreditation (COLA) and other local state and federal oversight agencies.

References
1) College of American Pathologists Checklist Requirement GEN.55500 - Competency assessment – Nonwaived testing-Phase II
3) CLIA https://www.jointcommission.org/standards/standard-faqs/laboratory/human-resources-hr/000001411/
4) https://www.ecfr.gov/

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Presented by the Cytotechnology Program Review Committee

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Journal of the American Society of Cytopathology
Volume 10, Issue 2, Pages 113-248, March - April 2021
We are minimally invasive diagnosis
Edmund S. Cibas
As the field of cytopathology continues to grow and evolve, Drs. Cibas and Ducatman have published the fifth edition of "Cytology: Diagnostic Principles and Clinical Correlates." Each edition has built on the strength of the previous editions with adding new topics and this textbook exceeds the standards already set. The fourth edition included a dedicated chapter on fine needle aspiration (FNA) technique and specimen handling with a video demonstration attached. A chapter on bone cytology is a welcome addition to this fifth edition textbook.

As the authors note, the chapters are written by many authors and even so, the chapters follow a similar format. The basic format of the chapters is laid out in the preface and is as follows:

- Indications
- Sample collection and preparation methods
- Terminology for reporting results
- Accuracy (including common pitfalls that lead to false-negative and false-positive diagnoses)
- A description of normal elements
- A “how to” guide for diagnosis of benign and malignant lesions with an emphasis on differential diagnoses.

As with most cytopathology textbooks, the authors begin with a chapter on gynecologic cytopathology, which builds the basis of cellular morphology in cytology both benign and malignant. Other areas of exfoliative cytology are discussed in similar structure and design.

As mentioned above, an entire chapter is devoted to FNA techniques discussing the performance of the FNA to include ultrasound-guided FNA as well. Clinical correlation is discussed as applicable demonstrating the usefulness of cytology to the overall care and treatment for the patient.

Cellular criteria for normal elements as well as benign and malignant lesions are provided in the didactic session of each chapter. The authors also utilize bulleted “capsule summaries” for highlighting specific cytomorphologic features of various entities as well as the differential diagnoses. These capsule summaries are also useful in depicting various features unique to the subject matter at hand. For example, in the salivary gland that are capsule summaries depicting the following:

- Tumors that are often cystic
- Lesions that are sometimes bilateral
- Numerous lymphocytes are seen in
These summaries provide an easy and quick reference guide when you may not have the time to search the entire chapter to locate the information you need.

There are numerous images in each chapter depicting the various cytologic criteria, histology, immunohistochemistry (IHC), flow cytometry, and molecular diagnostics for various benign and malignant lesions. Each cellular image is clear and demonstrates the lesion or topic discussed. The captions for each lesion provide additional detail notes for the specific criteria illustrated. Tables are also included in each chapter where appropriate to show IHC results for specific lesions as well as other topics that lend themselves easily to a table format.

The final chapter in this book deals with laboratory management. There are wide ranges of topics discussed from cytopathology organizations to regulatory agencies. The federal regulations revolving around gynecologic cytopathology is discussed at length to include proficiency testing, laboratory personnel standards and screening workloads. Various laboratory accreditation requirements are provided as well as laboratory safety standards.

This fifth edition textbook is well written and organized. It is hard to imagine another edition being better than the one before. This edition does not disappoint as it continues to build and grow as the field of cytology evolves. This book is highly recommended as the go to textbook for all of your cytologic inquiries.

Leigh Ann Cahill BS, CT(ASCP)CMIAC
Editor, The ASC Bulletin
American Society of Cytopathology.

Click here to listen to Leigh Ann interview Dr. Cibas in the first Book Review Podcast.
The ASC Foundation’s Art for Advocacy auction returns to the 69th ASC Annual Scientific Meeting in Las Vegas November 11-14, 2021. We want to showcase our resilient and creative colleagues and their art. We invite you to submit works of art for the virtual Art for Advocacy Auction. All artwork is a donation to the ASC Foundation and is tax deductible. Artworks of any medium are acceptable. Up to three pieces may be considered from each artist, for a nominal submission fee of $25. Images of the art work will be required at the time of application as well as artist information, title and description of your piece, medium, and value. After the July 31, 2021 deadline, all works will be judged by committee and acceptance letters will be sent electronically.

Application and artist information for submission is below.

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