Genetics Laboratories,
5th Floor Tower Wing
Guy's Hospital
Great Maze Pond
London
SE1 9RT

24th March 2020

Re: Viapath Genomics Laboratory Services at Guy's Hospital in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Dear Service User,

I am writing to inform you of our current situation regarding the provision of Genetic testing from our laboratory.

As you are aware the NHS is dealing with unprecedented pressures as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and have issued national guidance about prioritisation of genomics services. Our ability to provide genetic testing is being severely affected by staff absences and because we are redeploying resources to support testing for critical services.

As a result, we need your support in implementing measures to safeguard the most critical genomics tests i.e. prenatal and neonatal rare disease tests (constitutional genetics), and cancer tests that inform patient treatment.

Until further notice, please do not refer any non-urgent genomic tests to this laboratory.

We will attempt to store any non-urgent samples that are referred to us; however, there is a risk that sample viability could be compromised due to limited specimen reception and technical processing services available. Any non-urgent tests already received by the laboratory will be processed but results will be delayed. Please see appendix for examples of urgent and non-urgent tests.

We are aware that some clinics have implemented remote consultations by teleconferencing and are considering issuing DIY sample collection kits to patients. **Please be aware we are unable to accept saliva/buccal samples as an alternative to blood for DNA extraction at this time.**

This is a rapidly evolving situation and we will provide updates as circumstances change; any communication about specific tests will be from our laboratory teams.

We appreciate your understanding and patience during this challenging time. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact us at:

  Email: gst-tr.viapathgeneticsadmin@nhs.net.
  Tel: 0207 188 1696/1709
  Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm

Kind regards,

Debasmita Sarkar
Service Delivery Manager

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Appendix 1 – Examples of Tests and Action to be taken.

Referral Category	Examples of tests	Action taken
Urgent tests which should be referred as usual	- Cancer - all cancer tests that inform treatment and are critical for optimal patient management. - All tests on prenatal samples (amnio, CVS, fetal blood). - Neonatal samples for trisomy testing and arrayCGH, cystic fibrosis, spinal muscular atrophy, Prader-willi syndrome and myotonic dystrophy. - Carrier testing in ongoing pregnancies - Urgent germline testing for BRCA mutations - Other referrals that are considered urgent can be arranged following discussion with the laboratory (e.g. older children where the result directly affects their treatment).	**Continue to refer as normal.** Reports may be slightly delayed.
Non-urgent tests which may still be referred but may be subject to delay	Fetal or placental material for cytogenomic investigations of pregnancy loss	**Continue to refer if necessary.** Samples may be stored and not tested until normal service resumes.
Non-urgent tests that may not be processed	- Cancer - cases referred for MGUS, amyloid, lymphoma samples which are not critical to patient management or samples without a confirmed diagnosis of malignant disease. - Non-urgent referrals for suspected chromosome imbalance by arrayCGH. - Karyotype referrals and Y-microdeletions for fertility investigations. - All rare disease molecular genetics tests for single gene disorders that do not fit into the urgent category.	**Please do not send samples until further notice.**