



Medical Courier and Logistics Best Practices

Thousands of couriers perform medical deliveries across the United States every day, many of them with little or no formal training or education. Whether your couriers are internally staffed or are provided via a third party courier service, especially in the medical industry, it is critical your couriers are trained and knowledgeable in medical courier delivery.

Perish the thought:

- If a specimen bag is dropped between point A and point B. Those plastic baggies are slippery and could fall to the ground breaking the specimen. How is this being handled? Do your couriers carry spill kits? If so, are they trained in what to do next?
- If the patient has to come back to the clinic to have yet another blood re-draw. The average cost of a re-draw is \$300.00. Who is going to pay for that?
- For convenience and saving time, what happens if the courier decides to throw the specimen on their front seat, or in the dashboard of their truck instead of responsibly placing it in the secure position in their vehicle. Don't think this doesn't take place.

Did you know that blood carrying Hepatitis B can survive for up to 7 days on a dry surface? This virus can lead to liver disease and liver cancer. Who is informing and training your drivers of the risks in specimen deliveries?

The following are a few best practices to consider specific to your Couriers and for an overall effective Courier/Logistics Program.

- This is a given: reliable and well serviced vehicle, valid driver's license and excellent driving record.
- Training, training, training. Ensure the courier team delivering your clinical and lab specimens are trained in Blood borne Pathogens and Bio Hazard materials.
- Courier adherence to the uniform/apparel policy. Being professional in appearance is one of the number one requests from clients who contract with third party courier providers.
- Couriers will wear a Photo ID Badge that is visible at all times while on or about the client's facilities.
- Courier adherence to the agreed upon Service Level Agreement, Performance Expectations, Pick-up and Drop-off Procedures.
- Supplies and materials checklist to be inside of vehicle at all times, i.e., OSHA approved Spill Kit, TSA/STA Number, tie downs, specimen containers, packing material, equipment for tracking, etc.
- Couriers must utilize proper temperature controls on the specimens and pharmaceuticals. Many medications and samples are compromised due to improper temperature controls. You should have ambient (controlled at about 75 degrees, refrigerated and frozen transport/storage receptacles).
- Having an efficient tracking system that tracks specimen collections in real-time. Barcode scanning on every package and real-time access to when packages have been picked up and when they will arrive at the laboratory is critical. Knowing how many specimens are inbound to

the lab allows your organization to prepare the nightshift staff accurately, which also contributes to improved labor productivity.

- Ensure you are aware of any certifications required in your state or locality? California requires a 3PL certification of all couriers transporting pharmacy items.
- Couriers should develop and maintain strong relationships with both the clinics and the labs in which they deliver.

Clinical laboratories and pathology groups interested in revisiting their existing courier and logistics arrangements in order to improve service and reduce costs may want to consider the option of outsourcing these functions. Because of advances in technology and new software capabilities, companies that specialize in courier and logistics services can now deliver an improved value proposition to medical laboratories, compared to the state of the industry in years past. In addition, they are also well versed in the Federal, State and local laws and regulations to prevent fines and/or sanctions during authorized audits.

Labs see value in having professional, reliable, and responsive couriers who are trained in how to properly transport medical laboratory specimens. It is supported by the courier company's ability to provide the laboratory customer with latest-generation barcode scanning and GPS tracking technology. In addition, the most experienced medical courier delivery companies are able to analyze the lab's current routes and daily specimen volume to optimize collection times and driver productivity. This also reduces liability on the customer organization through proper contractual language.

Whether your organization decides to maintain an internal courier team or contract with a third party courier service, there are best practices that can be put in to place that will assist in expense reduction, improve quality and strengthen your overall Courier/Logistics Program.

If you would like to know more about this topic or what OMG offers regarding Courier/Logistics Management, please contact us at 513-429-9526 or e-mail us at info@omgservices.com.