

# OPERATIONAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COLLECTION, HANDLING AND SHIPMENT OF METAL FRAGMENTS REMOVED FROM DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PERSONNEL

## The Joint Pathology Center (JPC), Environmental Laboratory Services

**BACKGROUND:** Embedded metal fragments removed from surviving Department of Defense (DoD) personnel in DoD medical treatment facilities (MTFs) will be analyzed for their chemical composition to identify a number of different metals and alloys—including lead, depleted uranium (DU), and tungsten—which could pose a long-term health hazard.

The JPC analyzes metallic, combat-related fragments from Navy, Marine Corps, and Veterans Administration patients. Fragments from Army and Air Force patients should be submitted to the respective Public Health Laboratories. Non-combat and non-metallic fragments may be submitted to the JPC through the Anatomic Pathology Department of MTFs or VAMCs. Analysis of specimens submitted from VAMCs will incur a charge.

The removed fragment(s) should be collected and sent to the JPC using the following instructions:

### I. Collection and Handling of Fragment(s) with or without Attached Tissue:

- Suspected metal fragment(s) without attached tissue should be placed in a plastic specimen cup containing at least 70% ethanol or isopropanol, and tightly sealed with a screw tight plastic lid.
- Tissue specimens (i.e., capsular or connective tissues) associated with the metal fragment(s) may be submitted separately or attached to the fragment(s), for histological evaluation and chemical analysis. The specimen should be placed in a plastic specimen cup (as above), fixed in 10% neutral buffered formalin, and sealed. Fragment(s) will be separated from attached tissue at the JPC.
- The volume of the fixative should be at least three times the volume of the specimen(s)/fragment(s).

### II. Labeling and Packaging:

- The outside of the specimen cup should be labeled with the patient's name, date of birth, EDIPI or SSN (if EDIPI is not available), date sample collected, site of collection, surgical pathology number, and MTF/VAMC name.
- The specimen cup should be placed in a "biohazard" bag and sealed. The bag should be placed into a rigid container for shipment to the JPC.
- The specimen(s)/fragment(s) should be shipped at ambient temperature.

### III. Documentation:

- Specimens should be submitted to the JPC from the contributing MTF's or VAMC's Pathology Department, with a copy of the surgical pathology report, (even if a gross only report).
- Please ensure that the JPC Consultation Request Form is filled-out in its entirety and submitted with the shipment for fragments and for tissue specimens. This form may be downloaded from the JPC website at <https://jpc.capmed.mil/>

### IV. Mailing Address:

- The package should be addressed as follows:  
The Joint Pathology Center  
ATTN: Environmental Laboratory Services  
606 Stephen Sitter Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-1290

### V. Contact Information for The Joint Pathology Center:

- Phone: (855)-393-3904
- Email: [dha.ncr.ncr-medical-dir-jpc.mbx.help@health.mil](mailto:dha.ncr.ncr-medical-dir-jpc.mbx.help@health.mil)

### VI. References:

- DODI 6490.03 Deployment Health, 19 June 2019
- VHA Directive 1303.01