

Risk Matters: Unsolicited Test Reports



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When an unsolicited test result is received regarding an established patient of the practice, it should be handled the same way as one that was personally ordered. Contact the patient, notify the ordering physician, and, if appropriate, arrange for needed follow-up care. Do not automatically assume normal results do not require action, as occasionally results within normal range of the laboratory may not be the expected result for the patient. Additionally, notify the testing facility that the provider is not the ordering physician, and that the result should be delivered to the physician who ordered the test.

If the patient is *not known* to the provider, there is still a limited duty of care owed to the patient. Much of this obligation would be minimized by confirming with the ordering physician (if possible) that he or she received and addressed the test result. In any event, notify the testing facility that the provider is in receipt of the report in error, and that it should be delivered to the ordering physician. If the report indicates a panic value or grave condition and the provider is not able to confirm the ordering physician is in receipt of the

report, an attempt to contact the patient would be appropriate for patient safety considerations. In both cases, it is important to document all steps taken to correct the error.

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