Physician Notification of Critical Level Results

**Audience**
All personnel in the Pulmonary Function Clinic.

**Purpose**
The purpose of this policy is to define a written system to notify the requesting physician, the physician on call, or the laboratory Medical Director of blood gas results that exceed critical levels.

**Policy**
Blood gas results that exceed critical levels must be reported immediately (within 15 minutes) to the requesting or ordering physician or the physician responsible for the patient. If unable to locate one of the above-mentioned within 30 minutes, the Pulmonary Fellow assigned to the PFT Lab rotation will be contacted next. If the therapist is unable to locate Fellow the Medical Director of the Pulmonary Laboratories or his designee must be informed. This will be documented in the post test section of the PFT report. In addition, the patient will be asked to remain in the PFT Clinic until the requesting physician or Medical Director is notified of the critical value(s). Physicians will be contacted via in-hour or long-range pager or cell phone.

After notification, the Therapist will make a comment on the post test section of the PFT report as to who was contacted, the time contacted, what variables were communicated to the physician, and the read back values.

**Critical Levels**
The following is a list of parameters and the critical levels for each.
- pH: <7.30 or >7.50
- pCO2: <20 or >55 mmHg
- pO2: <60 mmHg
- HCO3: <15 or >38 mmol/L
- BE: > +5 mmol/L
- Hb: <10 or >17 g%
- HbO2: <90%
- HbCO: >5%
- MetHb: >2%

This form documents the approval and history of the policies and procedures for the Pulmonary Function Laboratory. The Medical Director signs all policies verifying initial approval. Annually thereafter, the Director and/or designee may approve reviews and revisions.

**Date** | **Approved by:** | **Signature**
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11/07 | V. Cardenas, MD
Medical Director Pulmonary Laboratory | 
6/09 | V. Cardenas, MD
| No changes to the policy |
University of Texas Medical Branch
Pulmonary Function Clinic
Policy 04-07  Critical Levels

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Effective Date: Nov 90
Revised Date: May 14
Review Date: May 14