

Cutaneous Pathology

WCP Laboratories, Inc.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOUR SKIN BIOPSY?

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The Meaning and Purpose of Cutaneous Pathology

Your physician has chosen our laboratory to interpret your skin biopsy. We want to explain what we do and what you can expect from us.

In the practice of medicine, accurate diagnosis is critical to proper treatment. There is no better example of this important principle than in the practice of cutaneous pathology.

Cutaneous Pathology, also known as dermatopathology, is the microscopic examination of skin biopsies in order to determine a specific diagnosis or a list of possible diagnoses.

The discipline of cutaneous pathology evolved from the need by the clinician, or dermatologist, to correlate the “naked eye” presentation of the patient’s skin lesions to their microscopic patterns. Over the course of several decades an entire field of study, concentrating primarily on the histologic (tissue) aspects of skin diseases, has emerged. Today, this is a formal subspecialty that some pathologists and/or dermatologists pursue to achieve special certification from the American Boards of Pathology and Dermatology.

The certification requires at least one year of fellowship training beyond residency in pathology or dermatology, in addition to the successful completion of a special examination in dermatopathology.

As cutaneous research continues, new observations and concepts are being made, requiring even more attention from the cutaneous pathologist in order to provide the most accurate diagnosis of a patient’s biopsy.

What is a Skin Biopsy?

A biopsy or excision consists of removing a small amount of skin during a surgical procedure. Depending upon the type of skin lesion, a dermatologic surgeon may obtain one of several different types of biopsies. A diagnostic biopsy is obtained so that the dermatopathologist can render a diagnosis. An excision yields a diagnosis as well as information on the completeness of the removal of the lesion.

What Happens After Your Skin Biopsy?

When a biopsy or excision is obtained for routine examination, it must be “fixed” by submerging it in a formalin solution, which preserves the specimen. The biopsy is then sent by courier or mailed to the laboratory. After the biopsy is received in the laboratory and fixation is complete, the pathology assistant examines, measures, dictates a description of the biopsy, and submits it for overnight processing in a series of chemical solutions. Following this, the histotechnologist cuts thin sections from the tissue that are placed on glass slides and stained with vital dyes or special stains to highlight specific aspects of the skin tissue. It is at this point that the slides are ready for microscopic examination by a dermatopathologist. After the diagnosis is established, a report is prepared and sent by courier, mail, facsimile or electronically to the surgeon. The findings are now available for discussion with the patient.

Occasionally, a biopsy is required for direct immunofluorescence examination. This complex technique allows the dermatopathologist to identify antibodies in the tissue that indicate a specific disease.

Why Cutaneous Pathology?

RESULTS

Results will be available in a timely manner from your physician. Quick turnaround permits your physician to start any necessary treatment within a proper frame of time.

ACCURACY

At *Cutaneous Pathology*, we specialize in the processing and accurate interpretation of biopsies from the skin and subcutaneous tissues. We look forward to serving you and your physician.

FEES & INSURANCE

A single, global bill will be provided which includes processing and interpretation. Additional fees will be charged for biopsies of multiple sites, sites other than skin (when applicable), and special procedures. Our fees are competitive with those of local, regional, and national laboratories.

Our Credentials

Drs. Santa Cruz, Hurt and Walsh are nationally and internationally known specialists in the field of cutaneous pathology, with more than 60 years combined experience in the field. They are certified by the American Boards of Pathology and Dermatopathology. Individually and in collaboration, they have authored over 150 journal articles and have co-authored chapters on cutaneous pathology in major textbooks. All serve on the editorial boards of major journals in cutaneous pathology and surgical pathology, are asked frequently to lecture throughout the world on cutaneous diseases, and are highly qualified to recognize common and rare diseases of the skin.