

# Handling of Empty Specimen Containers

(13.2 Empty\_Specimen\_Containers); Created November 25th, 2019 by Jeremy Deisch, MD

On rare occasion, specimen containers are received that are either appropriately labeled yet appear empty. When this occurs, follow the steps below:

- Inspect the container very closely. Occasionally, small specimen fragments can be found stuck to the **bottom of the lid** or **between the threads** between the lid and container. Also, with the lid on and tight, hold the specimen up to the light and swirl the formalin; this can help to identify very small tissue fragments.
- If *any* tiny tissue fragments are seen (i.e. small enough that they will likely be lost during processing, significantly less than 1 mm in maximal dimension), take the specimen container to accessioning and ask them spin down the specimen for cell block preparation.
- If no tissue is identified in the steps above...
  - **Confirm with supervising PA or pathologist that no tissue is seen**; document in a case Comment which specimen container is empty and the name, date, and time of the confirmation with staff.
  - **Contact the submitting clinician** (as indicated on requisition) and notify that specimen container is empty
  - **Save specimen container in gross room** for future review; specimen container can be discarded after the CAP specimen retention requirement of two weeks after report completion. This gives ample time for clinicians and office staff to attempt to locate any missing specimens or reconcile procedure records.