Red cell folate assay utilization:

Utilization of RBC folate assay was reviewed for the months of March through May 2014. There were 173 instances of the Red cell folate test being ordered and the samples were sent to a reference Laboratory.

During the same period GRU Clinical Pathology performed 715 serum folate assays.

In 18 instances both tests were done with the following findings:
- 2 patients had low serum folate and normal RBC folate
- 1 patient had both values below normal
- No patient had low RBC folate and normal Serum folate.
- The values were within the normal range in all of the remaining instances.

Of the 173 instances of RBC folate assays, 11 tests showed low RBC folate (involving 10 patients)
- In only one patient was concurrent Serum folate done and that was also below normal.

Literature does not support use of red cell folate assay. (1)

Conclusion: It does not appear that RBC folate test is adding any value.

Proposed Action: RBC folate test will be taken off the lab menu. It will still be available as a miscellaneous test. Clinical Pathology plans to make this change effective on July 1, 2014.

Please feel free to contact the undersigned for any issues related to this change or Clinical Pathology in general.

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June 20, 2014

Reference:
Red cell or serum folate? Results from the National Pathology Alliance benchmarking rewiew.