Human Papilloma Virus DNA Testing

- Human Papilloma Virus DNA testing (by the Cepheid Xpert HPV System) uses real time PCR to detect High Risk HPV subtypes known to be associated with a higher risk of developing cervical cancer.

Laboratory testing

- The Xpert HPV assay performed at ACT Pathology requires cervical specimens to be collected into ThinPrep specimen containers (not collected on Digene swabs).
- It is important that smear takers visualise the cervix and obtain a sample from the full circumference of the cervix using an Ayers’ spatula with or without a cervex brush or cytobroom. (As required for a Pap smear collection). The sample is agitated into a ThinPrep vial without delay. (Figure 1).
- Collection devices and ThinPrep Vials can be obtained by contacting ACT Pathology Reception on 6244 2816. (Figure 2).

- Testing is performed daily at ACT Pathology from Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) ensuring quick turnaround times.
• The Xpert HPV assay is designed to detect the presence of HPV types 16, 18, 31, 33, 35, 45, 51, 52, 56, 58, 59, 66 and 68. These subtypes are recognised as high to intermediate risk factors for the development of cervical cancer.

• A negative result does not exclude exposure to HPV and may occur due to:
  - Insufficient material collected.
  - HPV present but not of the serotypes stated above.
  - Very low levels of the above serotypes, (below the detectable level).

• The assay can be inhibited by the presence of anti-fungal creams and/or acetic acid. Cervical specimens should be collected prior to the application of any of these agents during examination.

• Very rarely, the assay result is indeterminate. This means that the result is not a clear positive or a clear negative result. A recollection is required when this occurs.

• ACT Pathology offers HPV testing for patients as a “Test of Cure” and there is a Medicare item number for this test. However, it is subject to the following specific criteria and requires the practitioner to supply clinical information on the request form.

**Item no: 69418 of the Medicare Benefits Schedule:**

A test for high risk Human papilloma viruses (HPV) in a patient who:

- has received excisional or ablative treatment for high grade squamous intraepithelial lesions (HSIL) of the cervix within the last two years or:
- within the last two years has had a positive HPV test after excisional or ablative treatment for high-grade squamous intraepithelial lesions (HSIL) of the cervix; or
- is already undergoing annual cytological review for the follow-up of a previously treated HSIL.
- to a maximum of 2 of this item in a 24 month period.

• If testing is requested outside of the criteria listed above (item 69418) the patient may incur an out-of-pocket expense. The amount is determined by the testing laboratory.

• For further information please contact: Dr. Huw Llewellyn, Director of Cytology (02 6244 2882) or Ms Linda Beckett, Senior Scientist (02 6244 2876).