



Understanding Pathology

Among the many resources your doctor may use in the evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of his patients is the assistance of a pathologist. Pathologists are physicians who have completed at least four years of additional training in laboratory medicine after completing medical school and specialize in the diagnosis and study of disease. Pathologists are able to assist other physicians in the diagnosis, treatment, and care of their patients. Your pathologists are members of the Martha Jefferson Hospital Medical Staff with offices located in the hospital laboratory. All have completed subspecialty training, hold faculty appointments at the University of Virginia, and are certified by the American Board of Pathology.

Occasionally, patients express questions regarding what a pathologist does and what services are covered by his fees. During an office visit, your doctor may obtain blood, fluid, and tissue samples and request pathology studies as part of your care. This request constitutes your personal physician's endorsement that services be provided to you by another physician, in this case a pathologist. This same holds true if you are hospitalized and have surgery and/or diagnostic tests. Your surgical specimen and some laboratory tests will require examination by a pathologist who will render a diagnostic interpretation to be used by your doctor for which a fee is charged. As examples, pathologists frequently review blood, bone marrow, breast tissue, lung tissue, prostate tissue, colon tissue, and gynecological specimens (including pap smears) to diagnose and/or stage diseases or abnormal conditions.

For procedures performed at MJH, you will receive two bills. One bill is from Charlottesville Pathology Associates which represents the pathologist's fee for professional services. The other bill is from MJH and covers the technical component of handling and processing the specimen.

We realize that since we rarely meet the patient face to face, our services are often misunderstood. However, we hope this notice has provided you with some insight into our profession and the value of the medical services which we provide.

