To: Medical Staff, Nursing Staff & Administrative Staff, St. Luke’s Health Network  
From: Dr. David Anderson, Chief of Pathology  
Date: 9 June, 2005  
Re: System-wide change to 10% neutral-buffered formalin fixative for all surgical pathology specimens.

1. Effective July 18, 2005, all St. Luke’s Health Network laboratories, operating rooms and endoscopy centers will switch tissue fixatives for surgical pathology specimens from Fix-All, an alcohol-based formaldehyde solution, to 10% neutral-buffered formalin (formalin).

2. Formalin will be available to all physician’s offices currently receiving supplies from us by 1 July, 2005. We request that those offices place your orders for formalin as soon as possible. Please inventory your supply of Fixall carefully so that you are not ordering more than you need before 15 July, 2005.

3. Cytology specimens (fine needle aspirates, body fluids) will continue to be processed using the Cytolyte fixative and will not be affected by this change.

4. Rationale: for the past several years, our laboratories have used Fixall with the intent that it was a better fixative for fatty tissues, requiring shortened fixation times and thus shortened reporting times for certain biopsies. However, most every other pathology laboratory in the United States employs 10% neutral buffered formalin as the standard fixative – an important matter when comparing tumor cell morphologies and immunoreactivities of tumor markers between laboratories. Our own in-house research comparing the fixatives suggests that breast tissue can be fixed and processed as quickly with better histology using formalin. In addition, formalin is cheaper and can be supplied in a much greater variety of containers than Fixall.

5. The Material Safety Data Sheet for formalin is attached to this Memo. Please note that formalin is a carcinogen with OSHA-established exposure limits. However, formalin has the same OSHA-established exposure limits for its formaldehyde & methyl alcohol constituents as does Fixall. Unlike Fixall, formalin contains no isopropyl alcohol and is therefore less flammable.

6. Please refer questions to Ms. Kim Artim (x 4832), Ms. Ruth Cochrane (x 4598) or Dr. D. Anderson (x 4899).