Innovative Translational Research Shared Resource
Kimberly Dahlman, PhD
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Innovative Translational Research Shared Resource (ITR)
Sample Retention Policy

**Background:** ITR is a Vanderbilt Shared Resource that services a number of investigators to generate and/or modify research samples. Most often, a project Principal Investigator (PI) wants the sample(s) and/or derivative(s) returned immediately after project completion; however some investigators fail to retrieve their samples. Alternatively, PIs may desire short or long-term storage solutions for their samples after projects are complete. In rare cases, investigators vacate their position at their institution without arranging sample retrieval.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the following Sample Retention Policy is to define research samples and their derivatives, minimum sample storage period, and associated storage costs.

**Definition of research sample:** The ITR may be given valuable biological material or derivatives of biological material by the PI, in the course of project initiation and execution. The ITR, other utilized Vanderbilt Shared Resources, or non-Vanderbilt vendors may also generate derivatives from the initial biological materials given. These biological materials include, but are not limited to human, mouse, and rat tissue (e.g. tumor, blood, plasma, serum, cell line). The derivatives of these biological materials include, but are not limited to nucleic acid, protein, and tissue/cell fractions (e.g. isolated peripheral blood mononuclear cells or plasma from whole blood), and stained or unstained formalin-fixed paraffin embedded tissue sections on slides or in tubes. These biological materials and their derivatives are herein considered research samples. Sample intermediates that include, but are not limited to, sample dilutions and samples used for taking measurements (e.g. nucleic acid or protein quantitation assays) are not considered research samples in this policy and will not be given to the PI. In addition, sample derivatives that were not specified by the PI will not be retained by the ITR.

**Minimal operational research sample retention period:** The ITR will transfer all remaining original research samples and those sample derivatives generated in the ITR to the PI when those experiments are complete. The PI will have up to 1 year from project completion to retrieve the samples before the samples are destroyed, unless a written agreement states otherwise. During this one year period, the PI will be notified at least three times that their samples need to be retrieved by the 1-year mark or they will be destroyed. If a written agreement allows for sample storage longer than 1 year, the cost associated with that storage (past 1 year) will be the responsibility of the PI. Return of the samples and their derivatives generated by another Vanderbilt Shared resource or non-Vanderbilt vendor will be subject to that Shared Resource or vendor policy. The ITR is not responsible for research samples or derivatives submitted to these non-ITR resources. Following Vanderbilt University policy, if the PI leaves the institution and fails to retrieve their research sample(s) prior to vacating their position, the PI’s supervisor will be contacted to inform him/her of the project and to pick-up the sample(s). In that case, the PI’s supervisor or designated investigator will have up to 1 year from ITR contact to retrieve the samples before the samples are destroyed, unless a written agreement states otherwise. If a written agreement allows for sample storage longer than 1 year, the cost associated with that storage (past 1 year) will be the responsibility of the PI’s supervisor or designated investigator/department. In the event orphan samples are formalin fixed paraffin embedded blocks (FFPE) and the specimens belong to the Vanderbilt University Pathology Department, those samples will be returned to Pathology. If the FFPE blocks belong to a non-VU pathology department and the ITR has the mailing address, the ITR will mail the blocks back to that department. The ITR reserves the right to utilize samples to be destroyed for internal validation and troubleshooting of new protocols.

**Research sample return:** It is the sole responsibility of the PI or the PI designee to retrieve research samples and their derivatives from the ITR, Shared Resource, or vendor upon project completion. If the samples and/or derivatives were processed by a non-ITR resource, but facilitated by the ITR, the ITR will attempt to retrieve the samples and return them to the PI, where possible. If the PI is a non-Vanderbilt University investigator, the PI will be responsible for the shipping charges and associated materials to return the samples.
If you have any questions please contact Kimberly Dahlman for more information at 936-6589 (office) or Kimberly.b.dahlman@vanderbilt.edu.