

# Tip of the Month

## Mind the Gap

“Mind the gap.” It’s an automated message you’ll hear repeated in the London Underground subway system each time a train arrives at the station to warn passengers of the gap between the train door and the station platform. There are gaps in phlebotomy we must be mindful of, too, so that patient care, worker safety, professionalism and sample quality don’t go falling through the cracks. The next time you draw blood from a patient, mind these gaps:

- Training gap — the difference between what blood sample-collection personnel are originally taught about the procedure and what they remember and practice today.
- Standards gap — the deviation in one’s actual technique from current CLSI blood collection standards.
- Patient identification gap — any protocol that doesn’t prevent the misidentification of patients.
- Labeling gap — occurs when the collector fails to properly label samples at the patient’s side and failure to label samples drawn from an arm receiving IV fluids as such.
- Transportation gap — any delay or improper transport method that compromises sample quality.
- Processing gap — a departure from sample processing procedures that negatively impacts specimen integrity, such as disregard for centrifugation requirements and specimen stability limits.
- Add-on gap — the inappropriate addition of tests to previously collected blood samples.
- Colleague gap — the loss of cooperation that can develop between those who draw patient samples and the individuals who test them.
- Department gap — the lack of understanding and respect that can exist between lab and nursing, or other departments.
- PPE gap — the variation between what a facility deems appropriate personal protective equipment for a task, and what the employee actually wears.
- Activation gap — the time between removing the needle from the patient and activating the device’s safety feature.
- Productivity gap — the difference between one’s work schedule and the actual time worked.
- Compensation gap — the salary one is paid versus the true value of an excellent phlebotomist.

Minding these blood-collection gaps keeps phlebotomists and other healthcare professionals who draw samples safe, and on solid footing. Ignore them and you probably shouldn’t ride the London subway either.