

Tip of the Month



Winning One for the Home Team

Whether it's baseball or drawing blood, we all want to win one for the home team. In healthcare, the home team is the patient. You have the opportunity to score big when you draw blood properly.

From the uniform you wear, to the manner in which you speak, to the equipment you use, when you cover all the bases of customer service you keep out of foul territory with your patients.

Following the technical rules of the game is important, too. Like avoiding “squeeze plays”—where patients are allowed to pump their fists prior to the draw or excessive tourniquet time—as these practices may alter analyte concentration and forfeit accurate results.

Great baseball players and great phlebotomists understand the importance of following an established line-up. Bat out of order and the team is subject to penalty. Draw tubes out of order, and the patient could be penalized with inappropriate medical decisions based on lab results altered by additive carryover.

Experienced pitchers and collectors also know their strike zones. For the pitcher, the strike zone falls roughly between the batter's elbow and kneecap. For the collector, the median and cephalic veins of the antecubital area comprise the desired zone for site selection. If inaccessible, this “zone” is expanded to include the basilic vein, along with the veins located on the back of the hand. But just like pitches to the inside, a puncture to the inside aspect of the arm increases the potential for injury.

A winning baseball team has several things in common with a winning phlebotomy team: dependability, accountability, integrity, and a love for what they do. Team members also assist one another and pinch hit when colleagues are in a slump.

It takes time, training and practice to skillfully pitch a ball, swing a bat, or insert a needle. Some will try to convince you otherwise. But there are no short-cuts to success. Whether your goal is the World Series or world-class phlebotomy, achieving excellence in your field is hard work.

When you're consistently coached according to the standards, and facility policy umpires your performance, you can achieve a perfect collection without error. There's no better feeling than leading the home team to victory. Perform like an All Star, and you might not only be every patient's MVP, but you will likely be inducted into their personal Hall of Fame.