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Between steps of the process, the device 150 may be stood on its base, which can be formed with a foot as would be useful for stability.

A kit for this process may contain, in a tray, the device 150, a swab 20, and a closure, along with any instructions and labeling.

It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations, combinations of elements, and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

EXAMPLES

Example 1

A swab is provided in a sterile packet, the shaft of the swab being formed with a notch separating the handle from the sampling tip. The swab is rubbed in the gingiva separating the teeth from the gums of a child and inserted into a collection device of the invention. The swab handle is bent vigorously so that it breaks at the notch, releasing the swab tip with specimen into the device. The swab insertion channel is then covered with a sliding closure that rides in tracks in the housing, and sealed irreversibly, the sliding closure having a ratcheted underside which mates and locks over a locking tooth or spur on the body of the device. The professional then removes a protective external skin from the device, taking care not to contaminate the freshly exposed surfaces, and hands the device to an aide for processing.

Example 2

A swab is provided in a sterile envelope, the shaft of the swab being formed of a material suitable for cutting with a blade. The patient is asked to provide a self-collected specimen of the vaginal mucosa and is given instructions. The patient collects the sample and inserts the soft tip of the swab into the sample collection device that was provided. The patient hands the device to a health professional, who takes it with gloved hands. The health professional closes the cover of the device, cutting free the swab handle and discarding it, and then removes the disposable external skins on the device, taking care not to contaminate the freshly exposed surfaces. After removing the skins, the health professional inserts the device into a semi-automated analytical apparatus and completes the assay. The result is read and the device with sample is then discarded. The analytical apparatus is equipped with

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networking capability so as to transmit identifying and "smart" electronic data as an electronic medical record to a database on a server.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for collecting a test sample, the method comprising:

a) providing a sample collection device comprising:  
 i) a body having an external surface, the external surface defining at least one swab receiving orifice with internal hollow volume for receiving a swab, the swab receiving orifice compatible with a sealable closure that may be sealably closed over the swab receiving orifice; and

ii) a removable disposable external skin layer or shell covering at least a portion of the external surface of the body; and

b) providing instructions comprising

i) inserting the swab into the swab receiving orifice and sealably closing the sealable closure over the swab receiving orifice;

ii) handling the sample collection device by contacting the external disposable skin layer or shell prior to or during insertion of the swab into the swab receiving orifice and closure of the sealable closure over the swab receiving orifice;

iii) removing the removable disposable external skin layer or shell from the body with a clean hand after insertion of the swab into the swab receiving orifice and closure of the sealable closure over the swab receiving orifice, thereby exposing the at least a portion of the external surface of the body; and

iv) handling the exposed external surface with clean hands, wherein the method reduces or eliminates contamination with a biohazard during sample collection or analysis.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the sample collection device further comprises a second removable external skin layer or shell covering a second portion of the external surface, and the method further comprises removing the second removable external skin layer or shell with a clean hand.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the swab comprises a handle with frangible neck and an absorbent tip for collecting the test sample.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the method further comprises inserting the absorbent tip into the swab receiving orifice and breaking off the handle at the frangible neck.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the swab is a tampon.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the test sample is a biosample.

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