CLAIMS

1. A swab assembly for collecting a specimen from a human urethra, comprising:

an elongated shaft having a proximal end and a distal end, the elongated shaft having a notch therein between its proximal and distal ends;

a sheath having a proximal end and a distal end, the sheath defining a lumen extending between its proximal and distal ends, wherein at least a portion of the elongated shaft is disposed within the sheath lumen, and the sheath is slidable relative to the elongated shaft, the sheath being sized and shaped for insertion into a human urethra; and

a compressible collection tip coupled to the distal end of the elongated shaft and configured for obtaining the specimen,

wherein the sheath is slidable between a first position in which the shaft notch is disposed within the sheath lumen and wherein the sheath protects the elongated shaft from breaking at the notch, and a second position in which the shaft notch is exposed out of the sheath lumen, and wherein the sheath does not protect the elongated shaft from breaking at the notch,

wherein the collection tip is configured to be compressed and positioned entirely within the sheath lumen during insertion of the sheath into the urethra, and

wherein the collection tip expands when the collection tip is exposed out of the sheath lumen when the sheath is positioned at or near a specimen collection site within the urethra.

2. The swab assembly of claim 1, wherein the elongated shaft is configured to preferentially break at the notch when a force is applied to the elongated shaft.

3. A method for collecting a specimen from a human urethra using a swab assembly comprising a sheath having a lumen, an elongated shaft disposed within the sheath lumen, and a compressible collection tip coupled to a distal end of the elongated shaft, the collection tip having a length, wherein the elongated shaft comprises a notch configured to cause the elongated shaft to preferentially break at the notch when a force is applied to the elongated shaft, the method comprising the steps of:

inserting the swab assembly into a human urethra until the collection tip is adjacent to a target collection site, wherein the collection tip is compressed and positioned within the sheath lumen during the inserting step;

exposing the collection tip by sliding the sheath relative to the elongated shaft, or sliding the elongated shaft relative to the sheath, such that the notch remains positioned in the sheath lumen, and wherein the collection tip expands to a non-compressed state when exposed out of the sheath lumen;

obtaining the specimen by contacting the target collection site with the collection tip;

removing the swab assembly from the urethra, wherein the elongated shaft is disposed within the sheath lumen such that the notch is positioned in the sheath lumen during the inserting, obtaining, and removing steps;

sliding the sheath relative to the elongated shaft, or sliding the elongated shaft relative to the sheath, such that the shaft notch is disposed outside of the sheath lumen; and

breaking the elongated shaft at or proximate the notch.