



COVID-19 Diagnostic Updates

AccessDX Laboratory executive shares perspectives
on the testing ecosystem **BY JOE SPINELLI**

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING is a critical component to the COVID-19 response, and increasing availability remains a key driver for a safe return to our communities. As the testing landscape evolves, employers and municipalities are evaluating a portfolio-based approach to their testing strategies. Advanced diagnostic options that balance speed, accuracy, and cost-effectiveness are now available to fit unique situational needs.

PCR Testing

COVID-19 PCR testing, collected by clinical professionals and processed by high-quality molecular diagnostic laboratories, remain the “gold standard” for the accurate detection of symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals. Labs are increasingly beating 24–48-hour turnaround times for PCR results while

ensuring the highest possible accuracy rate for consistent and early detection. General availability has improved, and research studies demonstrate that the latest generation of less-invasive saliva testing kits are approaching similar accuracy levels to the oral and nasal swabs. This is welcome news for everyone!

Now more than ever, workplace testing programs using PCR testing are conducted on a regular (often weekly) basis, and increasingly via telemedicine. These programs help isolate and identify asymptomatic individuals with the highest degree of accuracy, and may incorporate software solutions such as MedTek21 to facilitate streamlined ordering and results delivery. Employers protecting high-risk staff or serving high-risk communities have instituted testing regimens that closely mirror those conducted in long term care facilities, which have been highly effective at mitigating outbreaks since their implementation.

Rapid Antigen Testing

Rapid antigen tests provide results in minutes by detecting specific proteins on the surface of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and can be more cost-effective than alternative tests. The downside to antigen testing is their lower diagnostic accuracy, though this has greatly improved with the latest slate of FDA-authorized tests. We have seen groups utilize next-generation rapid antigen tests to test asymptomatic facility visitors, customers, as well as employees with limited cross-contact to help supplement other safety protocols and PCR-based testing programs.

Antibody Testing

Antibody testing detects the presence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies in an infected, recovered, or vaccinated individual. While antibody testing is typically less accurate at detecting the early stages of an infection, they possess higher levels of accuracy in recovered individuals. Municipalities are starting to revisit antibody testing for its potential to identify those who have recovered and/or have been successfully vaccinated. While the EEOC and CDC have yet to revise earlier rulings that prohibit the use of antibody testing in employer programs, this space may evolve further as vaccinations become more ubiquitous.

Delaware's Continued Leadership in Precision Medicine

Delaware's health care community has worked tirelessly to meet the demands of the pandemic, and there remains exciting momentum with advanced research

initiatives in the state. One such investigational biomarker program from Delaware-based Trinitas aims to identify individuals who are most at risk of an adverse event from COVID-19, using a combination of data science and a simple diagnostic test. New innovations such as the Trinitas program will continue to improve the speed of our recovery, helping us prepare and respond to new pandemic threats for generations to come. ■



Joe Spinelli is senior vice president of product and strategy for AccessDX Laboratory, an advanced clinical diagnostics provider servicing thousands of municipalities, employer groups, and care organizations across the United States. In addition to providing COVID-19 testing solutions, personalized medication management programs, and other advanced molecular diagnostics services, AccessDX Laboratory has partnered with Delaware-based Trinitas on its investigational biomarker program. Mr. Spinelli is also a founding team member of the MedTek21 clinical decision support platform, and serves as an advisor to multiple high-growth startups in the Mid-Atlantic region.

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