How Do Point of Care Testing Programs Handle Requests for New Services?

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Objectives: Point of care testing programs (POCTPs) support the provision of testing in several locations and groups within healthcare facilities, and cater to diverse user groups. Traditionally, a streamlined, scientific, and standardized workflow to evaluate new test requests is lacking in POCTPs. Our aim was to survey POCTPs and look for opportunities for standardization.

Methods: A nationwide survey was created on www.surveymonkey.com and distributed to the subscribers of the point of care listserv of American Association of Clinical Chemistry. The survey asked 10 questions regarding design, oversight, workflow, and structure of POCTPs and the processes utilized to evaluate new test requests.

Results: All participants have a formal POCTP. When a request is submitted, a majority of the requests are received by the institution’s point of care committee (POCC), or a combination of POCC and laboratory management. Most requests are received in paper form, followed by electronic submission. The initial evaluation tends to be completed by the POCC with laboratory management involvement at some point in the process. Over half of the respondents did not have a formal management process to handle new requests. While most did not form a formal process, a majority of the sites did have specific and defined criteria for approval. Slightly more than half of the respondents evaluated the new service request for their impact on value based quality metrics. The majority of the evaluation was based on cost, turnaround time, and lastly the main lab’s ability to perform the request.

Conclusions: A thorough evaluation of a new test request is necessary due to complexity of data management and oversight, training, and competency assessment for potentially thousands of individuals, quality control documentation, quality performance, reporting, billing, process control, and improvement on pay per performance metrics. By streamlining, standardizing, and centralizing the request process POCC can better evaluate and implement new testing.