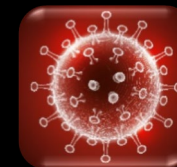


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# Lab Delays

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October 19, 2020

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Mental health &  
**COVID-19**  
**WEBINAR**

# LAB DELAYS

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JULIE HENDRY



Mental health &  
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## Disclosures

- None



## Current State

- 17 of 18 Patient Service Centres are open
- Appointments are booking 4-7 weeks out
- Walk in service available at 10 locations, some locations have limited walk in service to specific hours
- Appointment capacity is at 72% of Pre-COVID-19 levels
- Adding pop up clinics on Sundays whenever staffing allows
- Short notice appointments are available for urgent needs (next 3 days)
- Biggest challenge is mid-range urgency – lab work needed within a 1-3 week range

# LAB DELAYS

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## Root Causes

### Staffing Shortage

- Patient Service Centre staff recruited into COVID-19 testing lab positions
- MLA training programs paused from March to August
- Regularly losing staff for up to 14 days due to COVID-19 symptoms, self-isolation, and exposures to COVID-19

### COVID-19 Precautions

- Screening of patients and provision of medical grade masks
- Reduced capacity of waiting rooms to comply with social distancing
- Line management at sites serving walk-in patients

### Facility Challenges

- Non-storefront locations have no ability to queue patients outside lab space
- Closure of acute care facilities to community patients



## Mitigation

### Staffing

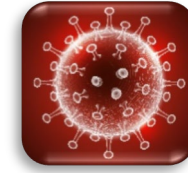
- Ongoing hiring of MLA staff at the end of each student practicum session
- Hiring admin support staff to perform screening, data entry, and line management tasks
- Change to full PPE required for patient-facing tasks to prevent staff exposure resulting in the need for quarantine

### Facilities

- Sites unable to queue patients have converted to appointment-only service, ongoing work to maximize the number of appointments available at these sites
- Open remaining location – target date is December

### Winterization

- Space has been identified at some locations to provide secondary indoor waiting rooms for walk in patients, hoping to have this functional in November
- Walk-in patients able to wait in their vehicles and be called back when it is their turn
- Trialing providing a scheduled return time for walk-in patients at two sites



## Collaboration – How can you help?

### Requisitions:

- Provide paper or email copy whenever possible, when emailing encourage patients to print if they can. Alternatively, the patient can email from their mobile device when they arrive at the lab
- Avoid faxing when feasible – faxing limits your patients to a single site, sites have 3,000 – 5,000 faxed requisitions on hand at any given time, it is easy to misfile or lose them with this volume, faxed requisitions are only kept for 3 months

### Expectations:

- Provide your patient with a clear timeline of when they need their bloodwork
- Write this information on the requisition for the patient
- Working on large release of additional appointments. To be successful this requires physician collaboration in improving time sensitive access



## Collaboration – How can you help?

### Access for Patients with Immediate needs

- Short Notice appointments are available for patients who require bloodwork same day or within 3 days. Consider this option for patients with immediate need and unable to attend as a walk-in patient e.g. frail, immune compromised
- To secure short notice appointment, patient must phone the booking line and clearly state they require a short notice appointment for bloodwork. The agent will ask the patients questions to ensure they qualify
- Short notice appointments are available at all sites. However, depending on current availability when patient calls, they may need to attend a site that is not their preference

### Access for mid-range needs

- Provide your patient with a clear timeline of when they need their bloodwork, encourage them to check the appointment booking site frequently as they may be able to secure a cancellation

### Walk-in Access

- If unable to secure an appointment they may attend as a walk in at locations accepting walk in patients. Wait times tend to be lowest Tuesday to Thursday and midday – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.



## Appropriate Ordering – Choosing Wisely Canada

Urinalysis - 40% of patients coming to Patient Service Centres have urinalysis ordered

- Extends the time the patient is present in the lab, reducing capacity
- If patient unable to void at the time of visit they must return to drop off their specimen later
- If patient needs to urinate before their testing has been entered a staff member must pause what they are doing to provide a labelled container
- All urine specimens must be poured off from the collection container into a testing tube before transport for testing. At larger sites this work occupies one staff member for the entire day reducing the staff available to perform collections and ECGs