

AMAZING PEOPLE DOING AMAZING THINGS

Exeter Hospital Lab Services – Adapting to Change With Excellence

One of Exeter Hospital's departments that has had to do some fast work behind the scenes to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic is our lab. From the very beginning the pressure was on to figure out how to make COVID-19 tests available to our inpatients, outpatients, Emergency Department patients as well as people in the community. Once testing was established, specimen collection had to be addressed. For general community members, drive up testing, run by staff from other areas of the the organization, was established outside the Perry Building.

Tests for COVID-19 were not widely available at the beginning of the pandemic. There is still a shortage of test kits and supplies, which limits how many tests our lab can do in-house. The Hospital's lab has developed relationships with several outside laboratories as it quickly became apparent one reference lab would become overwhelmed meeting turn-around-time expectations with the volume of tests we were doing.

In-house tests require validation, staff need to become competent in the performance of the test and the laboratory information system needs to be set to for resulting before the first patient result is generated. Throughout the implementation of the COVID-19 testing process, the team has had to adapt quickly to changes from varied specimen requirements, a variety of test requisitions and new test codes for ordering and resulting. Testing protocols change often as different COVID tests become available.

The blood bank and transfusion service are a part of the hospital lab. COVID-19 social distancing and stay-at-home orders have decreased blood drives so there is a shortage of blood product available for transfusion. One big accomplishment in the face of these challenges is that the blood bank recently worked with the American Red Cross and the Senior Director of Rehabilitation Services to set up a blood drive at the Center for Orthopedics & Movement.

All of this work for COVID-19 is above and beyond providing the usual lab testing for Exeter Hospital's patients, including those who do not have the virus. Everyone in the laboratory works to prioritize tests based on patient needs. The lab will continue to ensure we are using the most appropriate tests and have a solid network of labs and couriers to keep our now expanded team working smoothly in this constantly changing environment.



Thank you to Exeter Hospital's Lab Services team members (from left): **LuAnn Stevens, Janet Rogers (kneeling), Dawn Walker, Susan Donovan, Janet Ste. Marie, Susan Hartman, and Denise Harrington.**