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# Finding the Right Referral Laboratory

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*Opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the speaker and do not express the views or opinions of Cardinal Health*

# Learning Objectives

- Describe the process to select a referral laboratory or consultative service
- Describe processes needed to utilize referral laboratory or consultative services
- Develop metrics to evaluate a referral laboratory's or consultant's performance

# Partnership

- Physician's office
- Rural hospital
- Academic medical center
- Independent clinical and/or anatomic pathology laboratory



Referral Laboratory

# Definitions

- Referral laboratory – external laboratory to which a specimen is submitted for an examination procedure. May also be called a reference laboratory. In this presentation, consultative services is included with this definition.
- Referring laboratory – laboratory that submits specimens for a supplementary or confirmation examination procedure and receives the report from the referral laboratory.

Referring laboratory:  
sends specimens



Referral laboratory:  
receives specimens



# Identify Needs

- Broad test menu
- Expertise in a particular discipline such as oncology or pediatrics
- Specialized testing such as genetic tests for congenital defects
- Consultative services for anatomic pathology
- Quick turnaround time

# Stakeholders

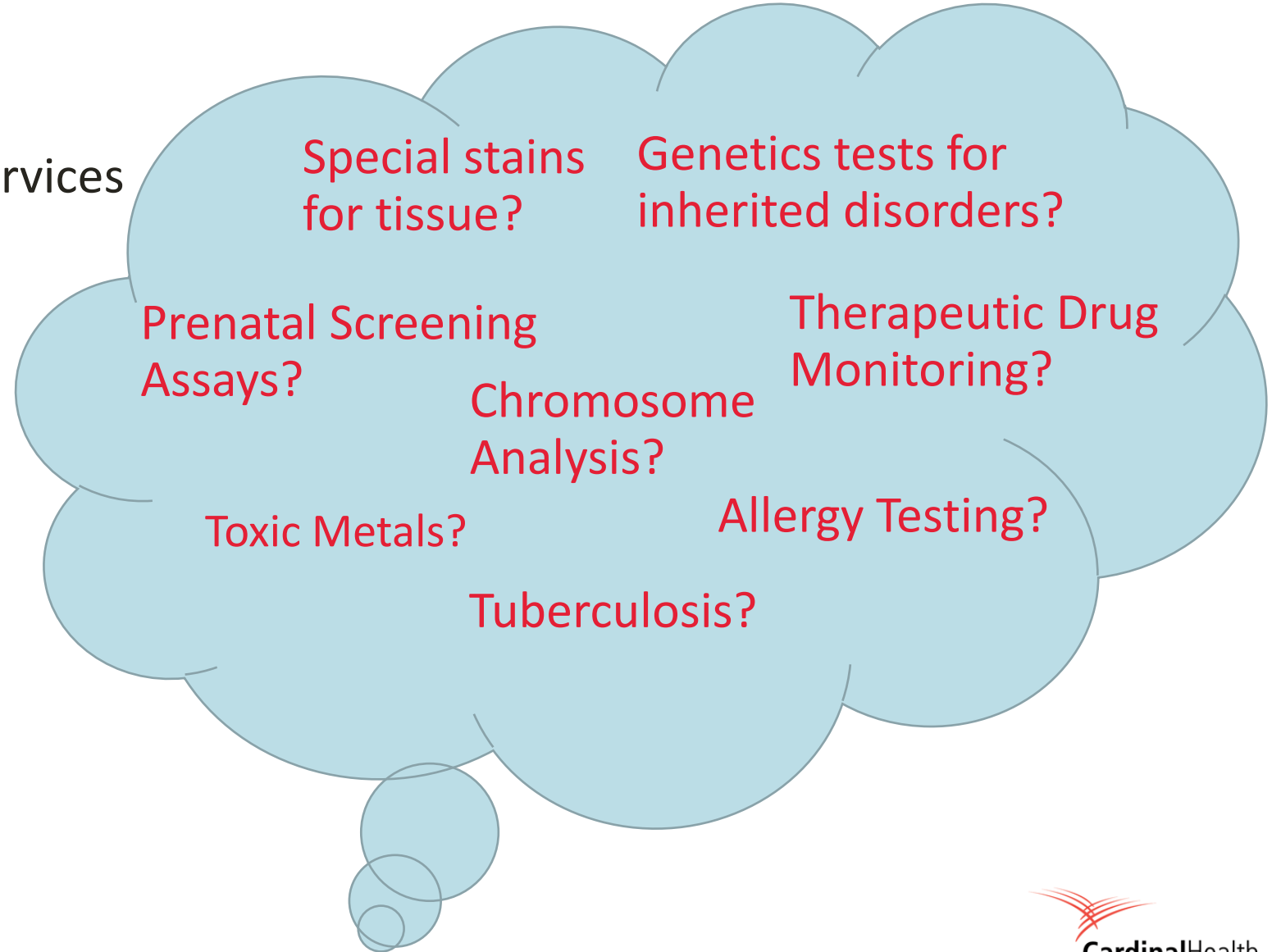
- Ordering healthcare providers
- Pathologists
- Medical directors



- Laboratory administrators
- Laboratory managers
- Financial representatives
- Procurement representatives

# Proposed Send Out Test Menu

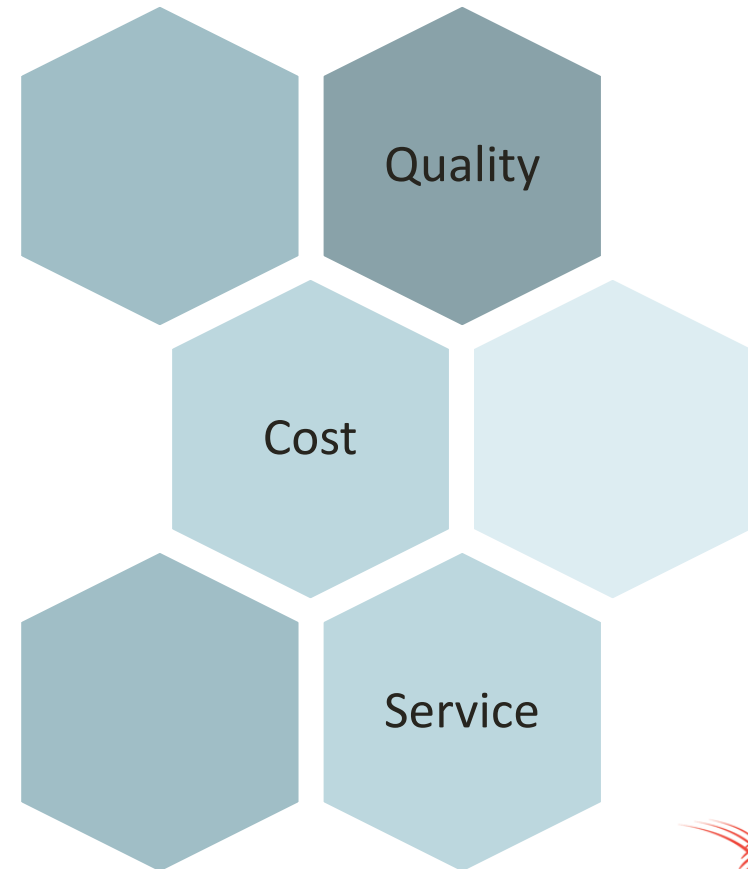
- List of desired tests and/or services
- Preferred test method
- Approximate volumes





**Qualification** criteria – minimum requirements that a referral laboratory must meet

**Selection** criteria – information solicited to assist the laboratory in selecting a referral laboratory

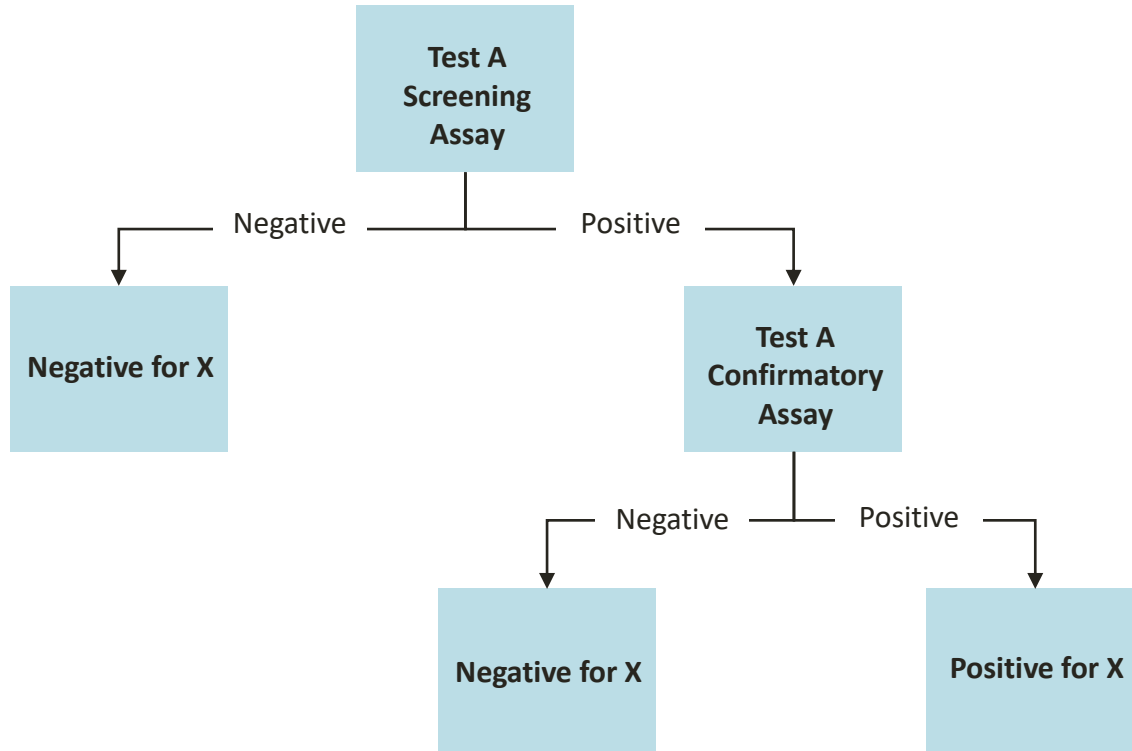




# Selection Criteria

- Company Information
- Quality Management System
- Customer Service
- Connectivity
- Logistics
- Utilization Management
- Outreach and Business Development
- Additional Services

# Test Offerings



- Test menu
- Reflex testing
- Add-on testing
- Send out to another referral laboratory

# Company Overview

- Years in business
- Applicable licensure and accreditation
- Name and credentials of the laboratory and/or medical director
- Expertise for esoteric tests and consultations
- Laboratory Information System in use

# Quality

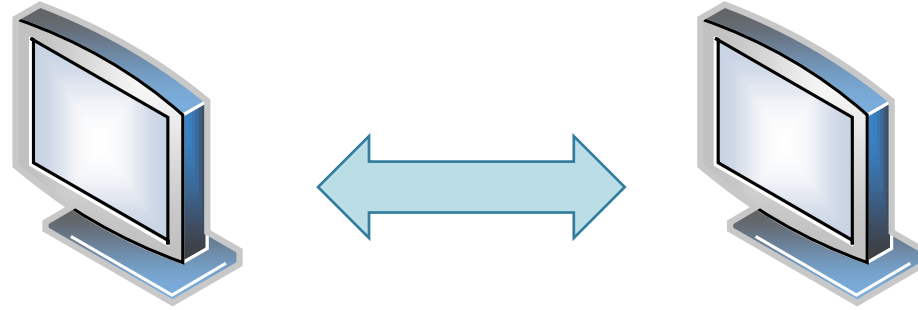
- Quality management system overview
- Quality and performance metrics
- Proficiency testing provider
- Process to resolve problems



# Customer Service

- Directory of tests and services
- Customer service contact center and hours of operation
- Availability of pathologists and/or technical experts after hours, weekends or holidays for consultation
- Customer complaint resolution
- Communication of changes related to test offerings

# Connectivity



- Interface with LIS or portal for ordering tests and reporting results
- Support of LIS interface
- Communication of changes to the interface
- Add-on test process
- Security of transmitted information
- Downtime processes

# Testing Logistics and Utilization

## Shipping

- Provision of specimen collection and/or shipping supplies
- Courier service for specimen pickup
- Stat or expedited courier service

## Testing

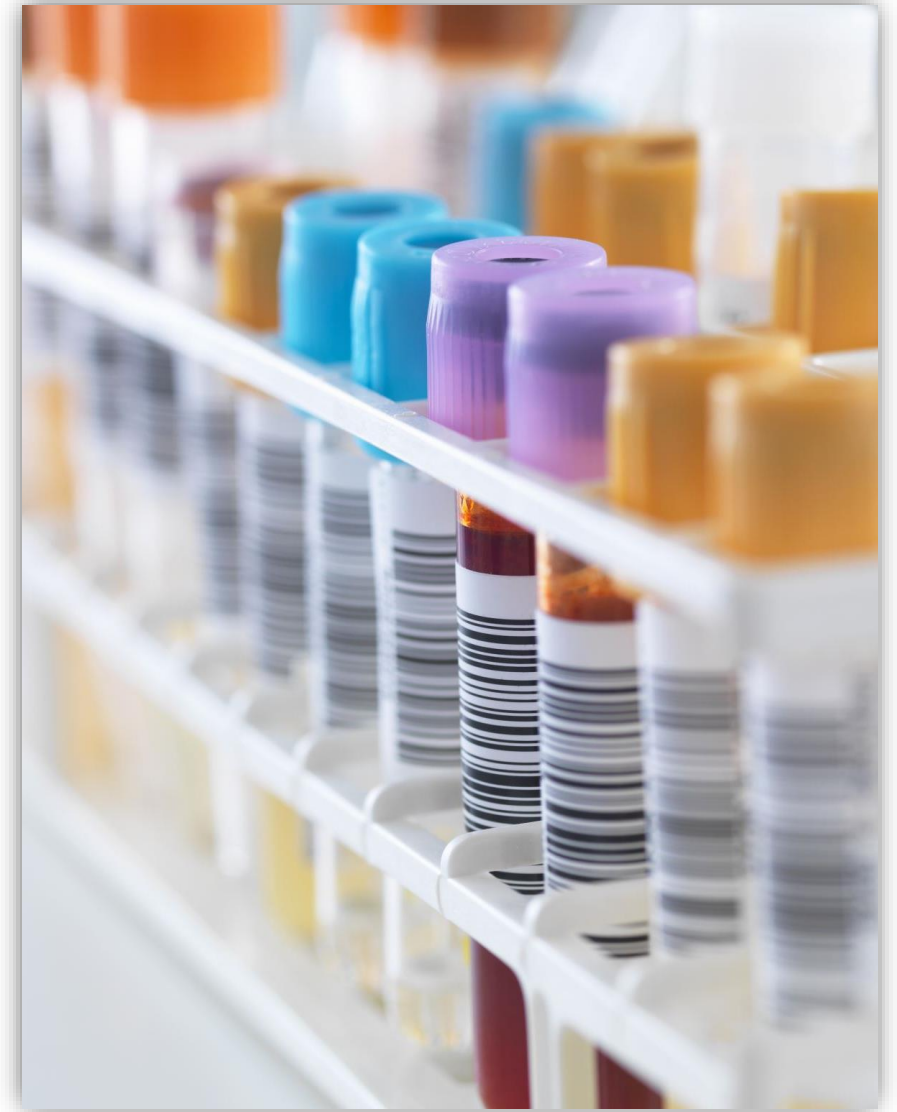
- Turnaround time for each test
- Consolidated report, if tests are performed at multiple sites
- Notification of critical values

## Utilization

- TAT calculations
- Provision of metrics by test, ordering provider or location

# Additional Services

- Provision of continuing education to clients or laboratory staff
- Technical assistance for instrument validation
- Access to known specimens for test validation or to resolve technical problems





# Cost



- Tests and consultations
- Stat or handling fees
- Interface
- Provided supplies
- Specialized reports
- Assistance for client or third-party billing

# Anatomic Pathology

- Cytopathology services
- Fine needle aspirates
- Gross examinations
- Frozen sections
- Quality metrics
- Laboratory Medical Directorship services



# Specialty Tests

- Laboratory developed tests (LDT)
- Next generation sequencing
- Guidance for selecting the appropriate test method when more than one is available
- Technical component only services offered for flow cytometry, immunohistochemistry, histochemistry, etc.

# Information is Requested



Questionnaire



Request for Information



Request for Proposal



To Whom

# Selection Process

## Selection Committee

- Laboratory/medical director
- Laboratory administrator
- Hospital administrator
- Quality manager
- Procurement personnel

## Selection Method

- Consensus
- Rank
- Vote
- Score

# Selection Worksheet

- Name of the referral laboratory
- Name of the individual scoring and date
- List of selection criteria and key elements
- Rating scale
- Assigned weights to each criterion

# Selection Scoring Worksheet – Rating Scale

Scoring Guide	
<b>Poor (0)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fails to meet requirements</li> <li>• Response has little merit</li> <li>• Fails to demonstrate that the work will be performed in an acceptable manner</li> </ul>
<b>Inadequate (1–3)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barely meets the requirements</li> <li>• Response has some merit</li> <li>• Significant weaknesses that could result in unacceptable shortcomings in performance</li> </ul>
<b>Acceptable (4–6)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partially meets the requirements</li> <li>• Response has substance</li> <li>• Weaknesses that could result in tolerable or reasonably correctable shortcomings in performance</li> </ul>
<b>Good (7–8)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasonably meets the requirements</li> <li>• Response is comprehensive</li> <li>• Minor weaknesses that should not significantly affect performance</li> </ul>
<b>Excellent (9–10)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully meets the requirements</li> <li>• No apparent weaknesses that will affect performance</li> </ul>

# Selection Scoring Worksheet - Weights

Each criterion is assigned a relative weight

Criteria	Weighted Score	or	Weighted Score
Company	0.5		5
Quality	1		10
Customer Service	1		10
Connectivity	1		10
Examination Logistics	2		20
Test Utilization Management	0.5		5
Outreach and Business Development	0.5		5
Additional Services	0.5		5
Cost	2.5		25
Organizational Fit	0.5		5
Total	10		100





# Selection Scoring Worksheet - Example

3. Customer Service	Assessed Score (0–10):		
	Yes	No	N/A
• Customer service is available at all times.			
• Customer inquiries and complaints are investigated and resolved.			
• The referral laboratory has subject matter experts to help select examinations or to explain results.			
• Pathologists and/or technical experts are available after hours or on weekends and holidays.			
• Dedicated support will be assigned to the referring laboratory.			
• Service levels are monitored.			
• Reports will be provided to monitor service levels at _____ frequency.			

# Summary Score

Summary Score Sheet	Assigned Score (A)	Weighted Score (B)	Total Score (A • B)
1. Company		0.5	
2. Quality		1	
3. Customer Service		1	
4. Connectivity		1	
5. Examination Logistics		2	
6. Test Utilization Management		0.5	
7. Outreach and Business Development		0.5	
8. Additional Services		0.5	
9. Cost		2.5	
10. Organizational Fit		0.5	
<b>Grand Total</b>			



# Referral Laboratory A

<b>Summary Score Sheet</b>	<b>Assigned Score (A)</b>	<b>Weighted Score (B)</b>	<b>Total Score (A • B)</b>
1. Company	10	0.5	5
2. Quality	10	1	10
3. Customer Service	8	1	8
4. Connectivity	8	1	8
5. Examination Logistics	8	2	16
6. Test Utilization Management	6	0.5	3
7. Outreach and Business Development	1	0.5	.5
8. Additional Services	3	0.5	1.5
9. Cost	8	2.5	20
10. Organizational Fit	7	0.5	3.5
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>75.5</b>

# Selection Scoring Worksheet Summary

- ✓ List selection criteria and key elements
- ✓ Assign weight to each criterion before scoring
- ✓ Assess each criterion and assign a score
- ✓ Multiply score times weight
- ✓ Total the scores

# CONGRATULATIONS!



# Agreement for Services

- List of tests and cost
- Consultative Service expectations including costs
- Other services such as a specimen collection, courier service or stat service
- Provision of collection or shipping supplies
- Availability of technical resources to answer questions
- Requirement to maintain licensure and/or accreditation
- Quality requirements – personnel qualifications, evidence of method validation, QC plans, PT expectations
- TAT expectations
- Specimen acceptance criteria
- Specimen storage requirements

# Agreement for Services

- Initial interface build and support
- Communication of changes to a test method or reference interval
- Notification of referral to a third laboratory
- Report format
- Reporting logistics
- Confidentiality
- Communication of a supplier recall
- Complaint process
- Feedback on performance
- Service metrics
- Billing logistics

# Approved Referral Laboratory List

Referral Laboratory	Address	Contact Number	Approved Tests	Date Approved	Date Discontinued	CLIA Number and Expiration





# Specimen Processes

## Specimen Handling

Centrifugation  
Separation  
Storage Temperature



## Test Ordering

Entry of orders in the LIS or completion of the referral laboratory test requisition



## Specimen Packaging

Packing specimens to maintain appropriate temperature requirements



## Specimen Shipping

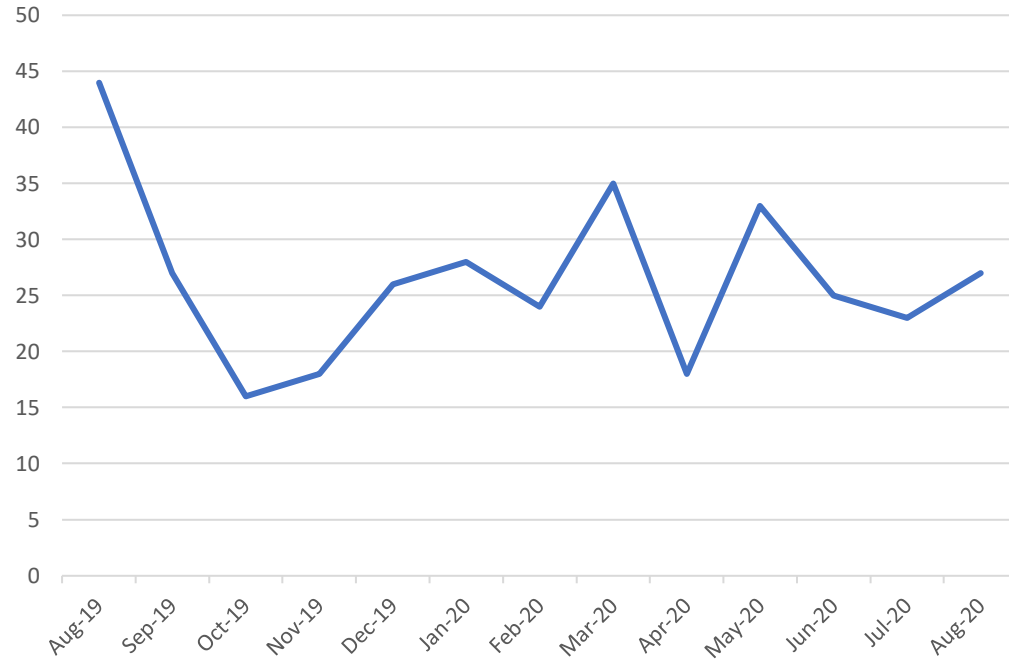
Specimens are picked up for delivery to the referral laboratory



## Results Reports

Results are received and reported to the healthcare provider

# Metrics



- Align with selection criteria
- Monitor new tests or services
- Monitor the effectiveness of corrective actions

# Potential Metrics

## Customer Service

- Customer service center response time
- Client complaints



## Logistics

- Delays in specimen delivery
- Missed pickups



## Pre-examination

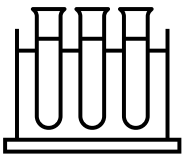
- Specimens lost after release from referring laboratory
- Tests not performed because of the referring laboratory's actions
- Specimen rejections



# Potential Metrics

## Examination

- Number of tests performed
- Percent of tests meeting TAT
- TAT for the most sensitive tests
- TAT for Stat testing
- Number of interface downtimes



## Cytology

- TAT for routine cytology
- Percent of cases reported by diagnosis
- Report of specimen adequacy by ordering provider



## Anatomic Pathology

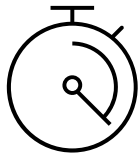
- TAT for routine and complex pathology reports
- Cytology to surgical correlation rate
- TAT for frozen sections
- Frozen section to final diagnosis agreement rate



# Potential Metrics

## Post-examination

- Corrected and revised report rates
- TAT for critical value notification



## Financial Data

- Costs for tests and consultative services
- Costs of shipping, handling or supplies
- Costs for additional fees such as Stats
- Appropriate application of credits



# Additional items

May occur on an annual or semi-annual basis

- Review of current license and accreditation certificates for expiration dates
- Review of sanctions or limitations from a licensing and/or accrediting organization
- Review of PT and alternate assessment data
- Trending of corrective actions for any nonconformances

# Management Review

- Review of metrics compared to defined thresholds
- Review of test offerings
- Satisfaction with problem resolution by the referral laboratory
- Share positive metrics!

# Summary

- Qualifying and selecting a referral laboratory
- Utilizing the referral laboratory's services
- Establishing metrics to monitor the referral laboratory's performance