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

- Special stains for tissue?
- Genetics tests for inherited disorders?
- Prenatal Screening Assays?
- Chromosome Analysis?
- Toxic Metals?
- Therapeutic Drug Monitoring?
- Allergy Testing?
- Tuberculosis?
**Selection** criteria – information solicited to assist the laboratory in selecting a referral laboratory

**Qualification** criteria – minimum requirements that a referral laboratory must meet
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
- Add-on test process
- Support of LIS interface
- Security of transmitted information
- Communication of changes to the interface
- 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
### Scoring Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Poor (0) | Fails to meet requirements  
Response has little merit  
Fails to demonstrate that the work will be performed in an acceptable manner |
| Inadequate (1–3) | Barely meets the requirements  
Response has some merit  
Significant weaknesses that could result in unacceptable shortcomings in performance |
| Acceptable (4–6) | Partially meets the requirements  
Response has substance  
Weaknesses that could result in tolerable or reasonably correctable shortcomings in performance |
| Good (7–8) | Reasonably meets the requirements  
Response is comprehensive  
Minor weaknesses that should not significantly affect performance |
| Excellent (9–10) | Fully meets the requirements  
No apparent weaknesses that will affect performance |
Selection Scoring Worksheet - Weights

Each criterion is assigned a relative weight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
<th>or</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination Logistics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Utilization Management</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach and Business Development</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Services</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Fit</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
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<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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</table>
Selection Scoring Worksheet - Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Customer Service</th>
<th>Assessed Score (0–10):</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Customer service is available at all times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Customer inquiries and complaints are investigated and resolved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The referral laboratory has subject matter experts to help select examinations or to explain results.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pathologists and/or technical experts are available after hours or on weekends and holidays.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dedicated support will be assigned to the referring laboratory.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Service levels are monitored.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reports will be provided to monitor service levels at ____________ frequency.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Summary Score

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referral Laboratory</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact Number</th>
<th>Approved Tests</th>
<th>Date Approved</th>
<th>Date Discontinued</th>
<th>CLIA Number and Expiration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
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

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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