

Executive Summary
Delivery of Quality POCT: Bridging the Laboratory Nursing Boundary
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Point-of-care testing (POCT) is diagnostic testing conducted close to the site where clinical care is delivered. POCT is a growing market and can provide faster results with a smaller amount of blood than centralized laboratory testing. There are concerns, however, over the quality of the test result, as the devices look simple, but the result may still be affected by the same preanalytic, analytic and postanalytic issues as laboratory testing. A pilot study by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) found almost 50% of certificate of waiver laboratories out of compliance with CLIA regulations and 15 other states citing concerns about test quality arising from laboratory inspections. A faster result is thus not necessarily a better result if it is incorrect! The goals of managing POCT is to provide quality testing that is safe and reliable, that ensures the appropriate use of technology and that is able to document results to a permanent medical record. A number of strategies to improve POCT quality and effectiveness can be defined:

- Strategy #1 is to set the appropriate attitude for quality. Nursing is subjective and values the convenience of POCT, while the laboratory is objective and values that which is constant and measurable. Collaboration requires mutual respect and acknowledgment of different perspectives. Institutions need to promote unit ownership and self-management, with a shared common goal of quality patient outcomes.
- Strategy #2 acknowledges that we are not alone in POCT or the first to experience a problem. There are a variety of resources to allow communication and networking with our peers and others involved in POCT (AACC POCT listserv at www.aacc.org, practice guidelines being developed by NACB at www.nacb.org, and POCT literature and standards for quality POCT, www.nccls.org).
- Strategy #3 Change takes time. The role of a leader is to enlighten and motivate others to seek the solution rather than providing them with options. Staff are much more successful if they believe they developed the plan rather than following someone else's direction.
- Strategy #4 Utilize POCT connectivity and data management. POCT generates too much data to hand enter results and sort quality control data for trends and problems.
- Strategy #5 Utilize system changes to correct a recurrent problem rather than blaming a person for the problem. Making an individual responsible for a problem may create a fast solution through retraining, but will ultimately not be as successful as approaching a problem by correcting the flaws in the system that led the individual to make the error.
- Strategy #6 Work cooperatively and value each other's expertise. Issues arise when individuals make unilateral decisions that affect other department and their resources, like when the laboratory make changes without consulting nursing or when nursing implements POCT devices without contacting the laboratory.
- Strategy #7 Learn to speak the clinical language. Education materials, procedures, and notices are read and accepted better if they are in a familiar format. Clinicians are very focused on patient care and practice protocols. Try to incorporate laboratory testing and POCT into existing and new practice guidelines to assist clinicians in the appropriate use and interpretation of laboratory testing.