

COVID-19 Testing: Community Pharmacy Role in Point-of-Care-Testing

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ABSTRACT

Globally, while COVID-19 new cases are slowing in some countries, a global rise in prevalence has been noted. Measures to combat the pandemic have varied across the developed, developing, and underdeveloped countries with different levels of outcomes. Amidst the global effort to bend the infection arc, one cross-cutting issue is that all these interventions have been almost entirely reactive. As we now look toward the future, countries that have implemented lockdowns and social distancing may consider how to ease rules and “open up” their economies in ways that avoid a second wave of infection. This requires a new mindset, more proactive strategies, targeted and thoughtful execution. Pharmacist role in early detection is central part of the solution.

Keywords: COVID-19; Testing; Pharmacy; Point-of-care-testing; Community; Economies

INTRODUCTION

Globally, while COVID-19 new cases are slowing in some countries, a global rise in prevalence has been noted. Measures to combat the pandemic have varied across the developed, developing, and underdeveloped countries with different levels of outcomes. Amidst the global effort to bend the infection arc, one cross-cutting issue is that all these interventions have been almost entirely reactive. As we now look toward the future, countries that have implemented lockdowns and social distancing may consider how to ease rules and “open up” their economies in ways that avoid a second wave of infection. This requires a new mindset, more proactive strategies, targeted and thoughtful execution. Pharmacist role in early detection is central part of the solution.

The situation

Currently, Point-of-Care Testing (POCT) kits are available in wide variety of settings and in many formats including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's), glucose, urine pregnancy and STI's. Despite the benefits of use of POCT, there are concerns from a quality assurance perspective outside the health care setting.

The challenge

As tests migrate out of clinical laboratory, errors can come from many sources; the reagent, the personnel, the instrument, and the environment. The personnel performing the test must be cognizant of the potential sources of error, risks management, and take actions before they affect results and patient care. POCT navigation in communities can be made possible by a pharmacist through closer ties with public health community.

The solution

Pharmacists are the most accessible health care professionals and have the potential to be at the forefront in COVID-19 community testing, prevention, and management. Additionally, the expanded scope of practice enables pharmacists to play a key role in COVID-19 pandemic.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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