

Point of Care Testing

Point of Care Testing (POCT) is laboratory testing conducted close to the site of patient/resident care. POCT is also known as bedside testing, near-patient testing, remote testing, mobile testing and rapid diagnostics. POCT provides rapid test results that can expedite decisions to improve patient/resident care. Most POCT devices are handheld electronics or molecular collection tools. Common examples of POC tests include:

- Glucometers for measuring blood sugar
- Handheld chemistry analyzers to perform tests such as creatinine, electrolytes, hemoglobin, troponin, cardiac enzymes, PT/INR, and blood gases
- Dipsticks for urine chemistry testing
- Refractometers for measuring specific gravity
- SARS-CoV-2 Rapid testing
- Rapid Strep testing

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) regulates all laboratory testing (except research) performed on humans in the U.S. through the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act (CLIA). CMS requires education and training of all personnel who will perform POCT as well as quality control measures. Some common deficiencies identified during inspections include:

- Missing policy procedures
- Lack of competency assessments on staff
- Failure to follow manufacturer's instruction for disinfection (i.e., type of disinfectant, drying/wet time, etc.)
- Incomplete validations of instrumentation and demonstration of quality control checks
- Incomplete quality assurance plan and quality monitoring

Measures to Ensure Reliable, High Quality Test Results

- Positively identify the patient/resident before collecting a sample
- Clean POC device before and after use
- Clean work surfaces before and after testing
- Store all reagents and media as recommended by the manufacturer
- Document expiration dates of reagents/kits, and discard any reagents or tests that have expired
- Allow time for refrigerated reagents/samples to come to room temperature prior to testing if required by the manufacturer's instructions
- Perform equipment calibration checks, as needed, following the manufacturer's instructions
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use of the appropriate collection device and sample volume needed for testing
- Use timers and follow the required timing intervals before reading test results
- Have a regular schedule for maintaining testing equipment

Remember:

- ✓ Proper hand hygiene, using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water, is to be performed before collecting specimens.
- ✓ Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves when collecting the sample and performing testing.