Improving genetics quality, affordability, and impact for health system executives

Quest Advanced®

New opportunities to advance patient and hospital health

As a senior health system or hospital administrator, you know all too well how difficult it is to balance hospital performance with optimal clinical quality and patient outcomes. You've no doubt examined a wide variety of strategic approaches that can help move to better, more affordable outcomes. But have you taken a close look at the role and impact that genetic testing play?

With the high cost of genetic tests, payer coverage and reimbursement as it relates to clinical utility, and a growing yet fragmented genetic testing industry, it is easy to imagine a situation where hospitals and health systems struggle to contain costs—especially considering the demand from providers and patients for more genetic testing.

Simplifying and standardizing criteria for who gets genetic testing, how to determine the appropriate tests, and what help is available for interpreting results can make it easier to deliver high-quality care. In fact, the move to value-based care demands it. The right reference lab partner can help you overcome barriers to the strategic use of genetic testing and help you achieve your goals.

Genomics may increase equity issues

Genomic information has a growing role in clinical care, but more collaboration between clinicians and medical scientists is needed to optimize its value. And there's another challenge for hospitals seeking to create greater equity in care: a lack of diversity in genetic data. Current genomic knowledge comes primarily from populations of European descent. To meet their stated goals of high-quality care for all, hospital systems need to ensure access to diverse genetic data to support medical decision-making. Who you partner with for testing may play a role.

It's not how much you test. It's how wisely.

It used to be that adding tests added income. But with the move to value-based care, ordering more tests is likely to reduce revenue due to payer coverage and reimbursement complexity. Not only will being smarter about genetic testing reduce income risk, but it can also help lead to better care and an improved patient experience. After all, hospitals currently lose about $1.7 million per year to unnecessary testing.[2]

Some barriers are logistical—like a practitioner not knowing how to order a test. Some are a matter of education—teaching physicians and specialists to recognize situations and scenarios where genetic testing is or isn't appropriate. And some barriers are related to technology and infrastructure—like how to store and interpret such an incredible amount of data.[1]

– Heidi Rehm, PhD, Chief Genomics Officer at Massachusetts General Hospital at University of Washington

Persistent inequities in healthcare delivery are an important barrier to improving care. But concerns about equity lead to a more fundamental problem for genomics: the lack of diversity.[3]

– Wylie Burke, MD, PhD, Professor Emerita at University of Washington

Simplification may be part of your solution

The complexity of genetic testing offers an opening to consolidate diagnostics with larger reference labs, rather than a series of smaller specialists, that can offer the required stability and scale your health system may need. After all, it's easy to see value in reducing operational complexity through consolidation—especially when coupled with the likelihood of reducing costs due to economies of scale and reduced oversight from hospital personnel. Potential gains include

- A high-quality, comprehensive genetic test menu
- Help identifying appropriate tests
- Assistance interpreting results
- Access to genetic counselors
- Streamlined ordering mechanisms
- Simplification of revenue cycle management

The potential to drive cost efficiencies and build long-term, stable relationships holds value because it can help you reach your goal of controlling growth-related expenditures. If you can get the same quality results with easier management—and potentially at a lower cost—why wouldn't you? It's one way to help ensure genetic testing becomes more available to all.

Finally, academic collaborations may exist that can help advance the clinical utility and equity of diagnostics. In effect, working with them can also help move your system toward its overall goals.

A roadmap for building an affordable, scalable approach

1. 1 complete solution | 2. New forms of care | 3. Better affordability

With the cost and effort to deliver the full breadth of specialized genetics testing outstripping most health systems' lab budgets and capabilities, it's understandable that specialty providers have sprung up to provide a growing set of testing options. Yet niche players lead to variable quality, confusion around who to contact for which tests, and increased oversight from health system managers. None of which support your goals of increased quality and reduced costs. So how should you go about finding the right genetic testing partners? Use these thoughts as a guide.

> There has been rapid growth in the number of new genetic tests entering the market, with about 10 new tests appearing daily.[4]

1 Insist on 1 complete genetics solution to deliver high-quality care

While you could assemble a series of specialist testing labs to flesh out a complete genetic testing menu, a better approach would be to partner with 1 lab capable of handling most—or all—of your needs now and in the future. Working with a single, top-tier lab will standardize quality and simplify ordering, reviewing, and paying for diagnostics with 1 optimized process. The best labs will offer:

Broad and deep reach:

- Routine and advanced genetic tests
- Regional genomic centers of excellence
- Scale, quality, and access of large national reference laboratory partners
- Specialization and customization of best-in-class specialty genetic labs

Comprehensive testing across methodologies, technologies, and clinical applications including:

- Cytogenetics
- Molecular genetics
- Biochemical genetics
- Infectious agents

Support for your clinicians with offerings like:

- Screening, diagnostics, and therapeutics
- Continuity of follow-up testing with a same-director review
- IT solutions for true clinical data integration

2 Look for genetic expertise to help advise your caregivers and innovate new forms of care

When genetics are part of trying to deliver quality care, it's not enough to send samples to a lab and get results back. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), there are over 7,000 rare diseases, many of which are genetic in origin,[5] so sometimes there may not be an answer in the results. That's when you need a lab with broad and deep genetic expertise to work with your healthcare professionals to determine what they're dealing with. Look for a lab with

- An extensive history of advancing genetic testing through ongoing innovation, and quickly makes breakthroughs available for diagnosis and treatment of genetic and rare diseases
- A large team of industry-leading experts including MDs and PhDs, genetic counselors, and biostatisticians to support clinicians with test selection and interpretation, consult on clinical policy and clinical claims reviews, and review your approach to genetic testing
- Genetics experts who conduct ongoing collaboration with the nation's most advanced academic research institutions, publish extensively, and participate and provide leadership in professional medical societies such as the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) and the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG)
- Experts who can consult with physicians to ensure care decisions are based on detailed information and how gene variants revealed by testing might impact their patients
- Dedicated and accessible support options, including a dedicated phone line, to provide genetic testing support for your clinicians on their schedule

3 Insist on affordability to increase the impact of genetics across your entire patient population

High-quality healthcare should not depend on the patient's zip code or income. So, it's important to work with a lab making demonstrable efforts to increase accessibility for testing and broaden payer access, including

- Recognizing the importance of making genetic testing affordable for patients and manageable for your health system
- In-network with all leading healthcare payers, to help patients get the access they expect
- Robust patient assistance program to make clinical laboratory services available to patients who are underinsured, uninsured or who cannot afford to pay for testing

Genetic diagnostics should be more readily available

While many agree on the power of genetic testing, there is no shared framework yet for how those tests should be administered or paid for. That's why it's best to start with a sensible, streamlined approach that maximizes efficiencies and outcomes while minimizing confusion and cost.

Large reference labs make sense because they offer unique benefits, such as the staff and expertise to innovate new tests and methodologies. They also feature the ability to simplify ordering and interpretation of tests and control costs through deep ties to the healthcare industry. And finally, they offer programs that can reduce payment concerns for underserved patient populations.

Quest Diagnostics® offers 700+ genetic tests across the entire continuum, 40+ years of advanced genetic testing experience, expert clinical support with 650+ MDs and PhDs, and 50 genetic counselors and biostatisticians. We also have near-universal in-network patient access with 90%+ US health plans and payers, making us uniquely qualified to be your genetics testing partner.

To find additional resources or learn about how Quest Diagnostics can help you build a state-of-the-art genetics testing program, please visit QuestDiagnostics.com/genetic-tests.

To test or not to test: look to electronic health records (EHR)?

Criteria for who should be tested can be applied inconsistently, leading to treatment delays and inequity in healthcare outcomes. To explore a possible solution, a recent study developed a model using diagnostic billing information from EHR data to determine its predictive abilities. For 2,000+ patients who received chromosomal microarray (CMA) testing and a control population of 9,000, the model achieved greater than 90% accuracy versus actual testing in identifying those with potentially pathogenic copy number variants based on their CMA results.[6]

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