

Strategies for Laboratory Professionals to Drive Laboratory Stewardship

Background

- Laboratory testing is critical for screening, diagnosing, treating, and managing diseases.
- Because it is a high-volume and evolving aspect of medicine, laboratory ordering, practice, and costs can vary widely and lead to opportunities for improvement.
- Laboratory stewardship is a strategy to assure high-quality laboratory medicine by providing the right test for the right patient at the right time.
- Implementing a laboratory stewardship program is an opportunity for laboratory professionals to drive change toward realizing aims in healthcare.
- **Objective:** In a review article, authors discuss the emergence of laboratory stewardship in the pursuit of high-quality patient care and a framework for implementation of laboratory stewardship programs in healthcare systems.

Aims of laboratory stewardship programs

- The aims for laboratory stewardship align with the “quadruple aim” developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement in the United States to achieve high-quality healthcare.^{1,2,3} Laboratory stewardship programs support these aims:
 - Better patient experience: optimize laboratory testing to prevent over- or undertesting
 - Better population health: reduce variation in care
 - Lower cost: prevent unnecessary test orders
 - Well-being of the care team: streamline clinical decision making

Key elements of laboratory stewardship programs

- A clear vision and organizational alignment to drive change
- Skills for program implementation and leadership
- Supportive resources, including dedicated personnel and also equipment and supplies
- Incentives to initiate and maintain participation of healthcare systems and individual team members
- An actionable plan with defined objectives, performance metrics, and a process improvement discipline

Conclusions

- Laboratory processes and the professionals engaged in them have the opportunity to promote change in healthcare systems to achieve the “quadruple aim.”
- The keys to achieving successful laboratory stewardship programs are using clinical data to drive change and partnering with appropriate clinical and administrative stakeholders.

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