

What is the importance of ordering an appropriate test?

The clinical laboratory plays a crucial role in health care, with patients and behind the scenes.

- We deliver excellent care to patients through tests and procedures for diagnosis, prevention and monitoring purposes.
- We improve patient outcome through the promotion of proper laboratory test and result utilization.

What is appropriate laboratory test utilization?

Appropriate testing means using the right test, the right method, the right guideline, at the right time, to the right patient, with the right cost and for the right outcome.

Research has show there is a great variability in laboratory test utilization, even when clinical scenarios and patient characteristics are similar.



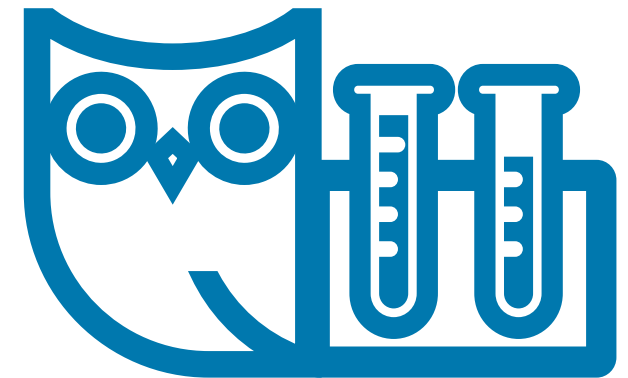
Testing appropriateness is established through consensus with experts, should be evidence based, and have a clear understanding of the sensitivity and specificity of the test in question, amongst other factors.

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Laboratory Test Utilization in Canada

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What are the causes of inappropriate laboratory test utilization?

The reasons are numerous and can't be pinned on a single concept. Research



has shown that the following factors can cause inappropriate tests: the laboratory; the requestor; the patient and the system.

- Practice habits are traditionally difficult to change, even in the face of new evidence
- Patients might request tests and treatments without having all the information about risks and benefits
- Lack of time for shared decision-making between clinicians and patients
- Outdated decision-support systems encourage over-ordering
- Defensive medicine and fear of malpractice lawsuits drive over-investigations
- Payment systems that reward doing more



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Information adapted from: Salinas M., Flores E., López-Garrigós M., Leiva-Salinas C. (2018). *Laboratory test inappropriateness: Lessons revisited and clarified in seven questions. Journal of Laboratory and Precision Medicine*, 3(4), 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21037/jlpm.2018.03.10>

Why should we reduce inappropriate laboratory test utilization?

Inappropriate testing introduces greater potential risk for the patient (physically and mentally), increases wasteful resources, and utilizes the lab and health professionals time needlessly.



- An estimated 20–50% of all testing is inappropriately ordered (incorrect, redundant or ordered at wrong time).
- Almost \$6 billion is spent annually on lab testing in Canada, and about 10% of that is unnecessary.



Need strategies to increase appropriate laboratory test ordering?

- Review your test catalogue
- Update your ordering forms
- Educate yourself and coworkers on the latest testing information
- Review clinical guidelines and protocols, reviewing who needs updated training

How do you design, establish and monitor improving appropriateness strategies?

A project doesn't have to be complicated. There are articles on Lab Wisely and Choosing Wisely Canada websites that can get you started. Your first steps into this process should be simple:

1. Identify the test you are concerned about.
2. Brainstorm reasons for why this issue exists.
3. Seek information to validate and disprove your concerns.
4. Seek solutions with your coworkers, management and other health professional.

What are the appropriateness indicators to detect inappropriateness and to monitor after interventions?

The answer to this question will need to be locally determined and based on the information and tracking mechanisms available. Nonetheless, your organization likely has individuals who specialize in project management, research, quality, and/or decision support services. Reach out and ask your question to see how you can monitor testing change.



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