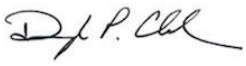
Hello, TriCore Partners:

As we move toward flu season, we'd like to take the time to provide updates on some of the subjects many of you have been asking about, as well as remind you of some on-going items relating to our COVID-19 response.

TriCore has been able to produce over 360,000 tests since the beginning of the pandemic. We maintain twelve different instruments from five different manufacturers at our Core Lab, as well as support strategically placed rapid testing devices in our hospital labs all over the state.

Communication is important. We want to remind you of our COVID-19 page on tricore.org, our COVID-19 data center, as well as notices on TriCore's Provider Portal. Below you will find updated information from TriCore.

As always, let us know how we can help you.



Douglas Clark, MD
Chief Medical Officer

NEW UPDATES

Cycle Threshold (CT) values

We know that a PCR result is a part of the overall diagnostic strategy, along with presence of symptoms, pre-test probability of disease, as well as how the provider intends to use the results (screening or diagnostic). We are currently testing for COVID on 8 different platforms, each with different ways of measuring the amount of virus in specimen. Given the lack of a standardized measurement, we do not believe regularly providing CT values is an appropriate use of the test.

Abbott BinaxNow COVID-19 Sg Card: rapid antigen point of care test

This test did receive FDA EUA, but will have limited commercial availability. TriCore is actively monitoring availability, as well as the status and availability of other rapid antigen tests coming to market. We commit to keeping you updated.

Saliva testing – TriCore update

Tests for use with saliva samples have been validated at TriCore, and we are currently identifying a strategy for deployment. Please note: Testing saliva specimens uses the same technology and resources as testing NP/nasal specimens, thus adopting saliva testing will not address the testing supply chain limitations that are restricting capacity.

Pooling – TriCore update

Pooling methodology has been validated at TriCore, and we are currently identifying a strategy for deployment including logistics and front end automation requirements.

Flu testing – TriCore update

TriCore is actively preparing for the upcoming flu season by validating multiplex panels that include testing for flu, COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses. We are working on tests as they become available from the manufacturers, including platforms to provide hospitals on-site onsite testing capacity.

COVID-19 TESTING ONGOING REMINDERS

TriCore's COVID-19 Testing Stewardship

The national limitation of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID19) testing reagents limits the number of COVID tests TriCore can perform daily. We are doing all we can to help maximize testing so that you will have the information you need when you need it. We maintain twelve different instruments from five different manufacturers at our Core Lab and are actively exploring additional testing platforms and methodologies that would increase capacity.

Stewardship of limited testing resources is critical in order to best serve the health of our community. TriCore is strategically prioritizing testing, *ensuring clinically actionable turnaround times for the highest risk patients.* Based on CDC guidelines for testing, we are prioritizing testing for **symptomatic patients, hospital admissions, persons under investigation [PUI], contact follow up cases,** and **essential pre-operative cases.**

TriCore's COVID-19 Turnaround Times*

Based on supply allocation limits and testing demand, current turnaround time on COVID specimens is as follows:

- TriCore's current inpatient/ED patient turnaround time is within **24 hours** of specimen receipt in the Core Lab.
- TriCore's current outpatient turnaround time is approximately **48 hours** from specimen receipt in the Core Lab. Please indicate this to patients in outpatient clinics and recommend self-quarantine practices during the wait time.
- TriCore highly recommends limiting asymptomatic testing in order to preserve the state's limited testing resources for those who need it most. We anticipate a **minimum of 72-hour** turnaround time for these specimens, subject to change.

**Turnaround time, the time from specimen receipt to results release, is based on the time the specimen arrives in our Core Lab facility in Albuquerque. Transport time can fluctuate with demand and vary by region.*

Pre-surgical Collections

TriCore recommends that pre-surgical samples be collected 72 hours before the procedure in order to ensure results will be back in time to inform next steps.

ALERT! MTM Guanidine media

MTM Guanidine media specimens (please refer to image on right) are producing indeterminate results on TriCore instrumentation which may cause the patient to be recollected. If possible, do not use these collection devices. If it is necessary to use them, please direct any of these specimens to the State Lab for testing.

COVID-19 in TriCore's Directory of Service: click here

TriCore Reference Laboratories offers a molecular diagnostic test of respiratory specimens for COVID-19 infection. Please find the most up-to-date information on this test in our Test Directory, via the link above or accessible on tricore.org in the provider section (enter COVID). Information maintained in the Test Directory includes: list price, CPT code, collection and transport instructions, and turnaround (TAT) time.

TRICORE

TriCore Communications | communications@tricore.org | 505.938.8888 / 800.245.3296

COVID-19 Specimen Collection and Ordering

- Only one (1) specimen, a nasopharyngeal swab or nasal swab, is needed for COVID-19 testing. Specimens should be collected as soon as possible once a Person of Interest (PUI) is identified, regardless of the time of symptom onset.*
- Alternative to viral transport medium (VTM), TriCore accepts swabs in sterile saline or liquid amies for COVID-19 testing.
- Send specimens to TriCore's Core lab via normal courier service.
- Orders:
    - electronic: order COVID | if not an option, order MISREF with COVID as the test name.
    - manual: write COVID as the test name.

Collection Kits & Supplies

Collection kits continue to be in high demand it and are allocated nationally. If you are facing a shortage, the New Mexico Department of Health is your best resource at this time. As an alternative to the VTM, TriCore can accept swabs in sterile saline or liquid amies for COVID-19.

COVID-19 Antibody Test in TriCore's Directory of Service: click here

(SARS-CoV-2 IgG [Coronavirus 2019 antibody IgG])

TriCore began testing for COVID-19 antibodies in May. The test is manufactured by DiaSorin, Inc. and received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the FDA on April 24, 2020. This blood test detects the presence of antibodies produced by the immune system in response to a COVID-19 infection. TriCore offers this test for specific indications with a provider order. For a test overview and indications for testing, please review the technical note: **click here**

TRICORE PATIENT CARE CENTERS

UPDATED HOURS

TriCore continues to accommodate shifting collection demand and to optimize valuable resources (employee expertise & personal protective equipment) at our patient care centers. The most up to date patient care center hours can be found on tricore.org: **click here**

ENCINO DRAW SITE - ALBUQUERQUE

TriCore's Encino location in Albuquerque is again open for routine testing collections.

SAFETY

TriCore regards patient and staff safety as paramount. As our number one priority, we are taking a many-layered approach to reduce exposure to the COVID virus. Our sites are cleaned and sanitized regularly with extra attention to high-use areas. Our staff are fully trained in the modes of transmission and safety procedures in accordance with CDC recommendations. All locations have signage instructing patients to practice social distancing, we limit the number of people accompanying a patient to only those requiring assistance or a guardian, and we ask patients to wait in their cars until it is their turn for collection, where it is logistically possible. Masks are available for patients as appropriate.