

A Supplement To

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LAB STORIES

Clinical labs share their challenges and successes at improving everyday performance and outcomes





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Teamwork

In its recent report on diagnostic errors, *Improving Diagnosis in Healthcare*, the Institute of Medicine emphasized the importance of teamwork among healthcare professionals involved in the diagnostic process.¹ Among the recommendations of its report, in fact, IOM gave teamwork top billing:

Goal 1: Facilitate more-effective teamwork in the diagnostic process among healthcare professionals, patients, and their families.

In the fine print of its recommendations, IOM defines a number of ways that labs should seek to improve teamwork among its collaborating healthcare professionals.

In recognition that the diagnostic process is a dynamic team-based activity, healthcare organizations should ensure that healthcare professionals have the appropriate knowledge, skills, resources, and support to engage in teamwork in the diagnostic process.

There should be no doubt about the importance of suppliers for the proper functioning of such diagnostic teams. By providing resources suitable for use in diagnostic applications—from reagents and controls to advanced instrumentation and finished assays—suppliers help labs to keep pace with increasing demands for higher throughput, faster turnaround times, and greater diagnostic precision.



This supplement is devoted to telling the stories of labs that have worked with their suppliers to ensure they can provide high-quality testing services for physicians and their patients. If your lab also has a great story to tell, we'd like to hear about it.

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REFERENCE

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *Improving diagnosis in healthcare*. Balogh EP, Miller BT, Ball JR, eds. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015.



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*i*SED: Most reliable way to secure accurate patient results



As any lab manager knows, there is inherent variation in many hematology tests, making it challenging for physicians to adjust or refine treatment.

Zulma Irizarry, Lab Manager at Rheumatology Associates of South Texas in San Antonio, was faced with this situation recently. Over the course of a six-month period, one of the practice's physicians, treating a patient with joint pain and arterial stenosis, ordered three ESRs from the practice's internal laboratory, and three additional tests from an external laboratory.

Upon receiving the reports from both labs, the physician noted markedly different results. The internal lab, which used the *i*SED from ALCOR Scientific, obtained ESRs of less than 12 mm/hr. The external lab, which used another automated ESR analyzer, reported ESRs greater than 50 mm/hr in all three tests.

Zulma contacted ALCOR Scientific for help ensuring that the physicians would remain confident in the *i*SED results generated by her lab.

ALCOR promptly sent a specialist to Texas to investigate. Together, Zulma and her ALCOR specialist repeated the patient's tests in both labs with fresh blood samples. Internally, they used three methods to compare results: the *i*SED (SN 00059), *i*SED (SN 00319), and the manual ESR SEDI-RATE Westergren ESR System.

Consistent with ALCOR's satisfaction guarantee, the *i*SED results matched the Westergren ESR.

	<i>i</i> SED 00059	<i>i</i> SED 00319	Westergren ESR
Specimen ID	ESR result (mm/hr)	ESR result (mm/hr)	ESR result (mm/hr)
72985	25/25	31/31	27/31

To reinforce their conclusion that *i*SED provided reliable ESR results, Zulma and her ALCOR specialist worked together to test an additional 61 samples from random patients, with a range of ESR values from 2 to 104 mm/hr. They conducted a side-by-side comparison using both the *i*SED (SN 00059) and the SEDI-RATE Westergren methods.

The *i*SED and Westergren approaches resulted in an overall 98.5% correlation. The study proved the ALCOR claim of consistency with the CLSI Approved Standard Method.

*"This analysis convinced us that *i*SED is the most reliable way to secure accurate patient results. With *i*SED, our physicians know they are getting a precise measurement, allowing them to provide superior care of our patients with inflammatory disorders."*—Zulma Irizarry, Rheumatology Associates of South Texas

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- No Disposables
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- 100uL sample size
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Sound too good to be true? See what *iSED* users are saying...

"My night shift supervisor put her arms around the *iSED* this morning and she told me, 'Please don't ever take the *iSED* away. I wish all of our instruments were this fast and easy to use!"

- Pat Rawluk
Doctor's Hospital of Dallas, TX

"I just wanted to let you know what a successful and easy transition it was to change to the *iSED*. The staff **LOVES** the analyzer... ER physicians are happy the results are quick!"

- Lois Conover
Mary Greeley Medical Center, IA

"After running the manual Westergren method, we found that the *iSED* **significantly improved our laboratory's workflow** by reducing the hands-on time for ESR testing."

- Maureen Caraker
Baystate Medical Center, MA

...and hundreds more similar stories!

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Lab Stories: Case Study in Medical-Grade Refrigeration

Critical Access Hospital benefits from standardizing cold storage

Margaret Mary Health (MMH) is a critical access hospital located in southeastern Indiana, with a core clinical laboratory as well as a satellite lab located in the oncology and outpatient clinic. Several years ago, Annette Gillman, MT(ASCP), Laboratory Manager at MMH, realized the value of implementing medical-grade refrigeration that is designed to maintain the specific temperature ranges required for their reagents and other temperature-sensitive products. Over time, refrigerators and freezers from Helmer Scientific have been acquired for storage of reagents, medications, vaccines, and patient

nourishment. By standardizing on a single vendor, MMH has been able to achieve consistent storage protocols, effective monitoring, and efficient inventory control.

Not only is maintaining strict temperature ranges vital to the quality of the stored products, it is required by accrediting agencies, such as CAP, TJC, and state Boards of Health. Assessors look at whether the refrigerator or freezer can maintain the temperature range listed on the product's package insert. In addition, the units must be monitored, and there must be a plan to address any excursions outside of the acceptable range.

Configurable storage supports better inventory control

Inventory control is important to operational efficiency. Utilizing refrigerators with glass doors provides better product visibility, which in turn supports effective inventory management. MMH has also found value in the configurable storage options offered by Helmer Scientific. All refrigerators and freezers are now ordered with roll-out baskets (rather than stationary shelves). Because the baskets can be pulled out, they offer better ergonomics for laboratory staff, better visibility to the stored products, and improved organization. This enables efficient stock rotation and better inventory management.

In addition to the use of refrigerators with glass doors and implementation of roll-out baskets, for each unit MMH labels the baskets and creates inventory diagrams that are placed on the door. This helps quickly direct users to the products they need and minimizes door-open time.

Because of the strict temperature ranges required for their stored products, accreditation requirements, and the benefits of effective inventory control, MMH has realized value from implementing medical-grade cold storage. It has far exceeded any savings that would have been realized from purchasing lower cost household or commercial grade units.



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