

# GUIDELINES FOR PHARMACY PRACTICE

Guidance for Point of Care Testing in  
Community Pharmacies

March 2022

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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Point-of-care testing (POCT) is a form of patient-centric health care and refers to diagnostic, monitoring, screening, or prognostic tests performed at, or near, the site of a patient, with the result leading to a possible change in care for the patient. POCT can guide treatment decisions and support care and is often provided by health care professionals or, in some cases, by individuals themselves.

When using POCT, it is important for pharmacy professionals to understand its limitations and risks and ensure that it is performed within the scope of the manufacturer's intended use. If POCT is performed outside of established policies, processes, and procedures, it could lead to inconsistent and unreliable results which can result in risk to the patient being tested. This includes the possibility of reporting erroneous results, which could lead to incorrect or inappropriate decisions being made in relation to the health, management, or care needs of the patient.

Guidelines are intended to guide pharmacy practice in the absence of defined legislation or standards of practice. Registrants should only depart from a guideline if they can demonstrate that, by doing so, they did not detract from the safety, effectiveness, or appropriateness of patient care.

# 2. OPERATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

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When planning for and overseeing Point of Care Testing (POCT) services, pharmacists-in-charge should ensure that:

- a) they are knowledgeable of the types of POCT to be offered, their purpose, and conditions for appropriate use, including verifying that planned tests are approved by Health Canada;
- b) they are sufficiently knowledgeable on POCT in general as well as the particulars of each individual test offered to be able to make decisions, problem-solve, and support staff performing POCT;
- c) staff performing POCT have appropriate initial and ongoing orientation and training, as well as ongoing competency/performance assessment;
- d) suitable and sufficient staffing is in place to ensure that offering the service does not compromise patient care;

- e) the physical space is appropriate to performing POCT safely for both staff and the patient, and will result in reliable testing, including being clean, hygienic, able to maintain necessary temperature and humidity levels, and offering privacy;
- f) the service complies with all relevant provincial legislation and requirements, including
  - occupational health and safety legislation and best practices, including those pertaining to the handling of biological products, sharps, and hazardous waste; and
  - privacy legislation and best practices, including those pertaining to the collection, documentation, retention, and disclosure of patient-specific information.
- g) the service complies with pharmacy legislation, the NLPB Code of Ethics, Standards of Pharmacy Operation, and all relevant standards of practice, guidelines, and policies;
- h) policies and procedures are established, including those that support follow-up care as well as necessary communication with patients and relevant members of the circle of care; and
- i) there is a quality assurance program in place that includes regular testing of equipment and consumables, systematic monitoring, and evaluation of POCT processes, and documentation, review, and follow-up of identified problems.

### 3. PHARMACIST EXPECTATIONS

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When performing POCT, pharmacists should ensure that:

- a) they have the requisite knowledge and skills to do so, including being knowledgeable on best practices for POCT, the overall POCT offerings of the pharmacy, as well as the particulars of each individual test;
- b) they are performing POCT in a physical space that is appropriate to performing POCT safely for both themselves and the patient, and will result in reliable testing, including being clean, hygienic, able to maintain necessary temperature and humidity levels, and offering privacy;
- c) they are practicing in compliance with relevant provincial legislation and requirements, pharmacy legislation, the NLPB Code of Ethics, Standards of Pharmacy Operation, and all relevant standards of practice;
- d) each POCT performed is done so in compliance with the POCT manufacturer's instructions and procedures;
- e) they consider the appropriateness of the particular POCT for the specific patient being tested, taking into consideration patient-specific factors such as signs of present illness,

current drug therapy, need for the test, clinical and testing guidelines for condition being tested;

- f) the result of each POCT performed is appropriately documented, interpreted, communicated, and acted up as necessary, including engaging the patient, adapting prescriptions, referring for follow-up testing, communicating with other healthcare providers, and reporting to public health agencies; and
- g) they are active participants in the pharmacy's POCT quality assurance program.