Improving Clinical and Quality Outcomes for Prenatal Care with Lab 2.0 at TriCore Reference Laboratories

2019 UNIVANTS Recognition of Distinction

While laboratories play a critical role in processing test orders and providing diagnostic information to clinicians, the lab of the future will advance beyond this function to provide actionable insights. "Lab 2.0" will use historical and longitudinal data that drive care transformation and support payer and provider organizations in their efforts to improve outcomes, reduce costs and increase patient satisfaction.

At TriCore Reference Laboratories in Albuquerque, N.M., leaders were aware that pregnant women in the state's Medicaid population were not receiving adequate care; across the state, 22.9% of women receive inadequate prenatal care, according to the March of Dimes foundation. New Mexico's Human Services Department challenged managed care organizations to find a solution to this, and TriCore recognized that it could support this effort, by identifying women who are at risk or may have gaps in their prenatal and postpartum care.

"Healthcare is shifting from a volume-based environment to a value-based environment," said Kathleen Swanson, RPh, MS, senior clinical solutions specialist at TriCore. "Lab 2.0 allows laboratories to raise their hand and say we can play a key role in a value-based environment."

TriCore teamed up with a large MCO to develop and implement a statewide prospective program. During an 11-month pilot, the lab was able to deliver a wealth of actionable analytics to the MCO's care coordinators that improved the timeliness of prenatal care, identified births in real-time, closed prenatal and postpartum gaps in care, and improved birth outcomes. TriCore was awarded recognition of distinction as a part of the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence program for its efforts in this groundbreaking project.

Data was captured for over 1,300 pregnancies and measured key performance indicators such as pregnancies identified in the first trimester, risk factors, gaps in care, preterm birth, and neonatal intensive care admissions and lengths of stay. Access to real-time

From left to right: Kathleen Swanson, RPh, MS, senior clinical solutions specialist at TriCore, and David Grenache, PhD, chief scientific officer at TriCore.

insights from TriCore was invaluable for the MCO, which otherwise may not have learned of pregnancy tests or births until months later, once the payer claim was processed. The program identified 76.8% of pregnancies in the first trimester, exceeding the state's 2016 reported baseline of 63.4%. Equipped with real-time analytics based on pregnancy test data, care coordinators were able to engage expectant mothers in the first trimester.

"We were able to identify tests that should have been performed at key points in the pregnancy but weren't," said David Grenache, PhD, TriCore's chief scientific officer. "For example, women in their second trimester should be screened for gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM)—because we screen for pregnancy and conditions like this, we know who's pregnant, who's due for a GDM test and who hasn't had it done."

Results from patients in the program showed reduced admissions to the NICU, a significant KPI for hospital administrators. There was a 10.7% NICU admission rate among the 199 births that were supported by data-equipped care coordinators, compared to 18.2% of cases that were managed without TriCore's analytics.

As TriCore worked to develop its relationship with the MCO and engage clinicians and administrators, Swanson notes that it was challenging to convince stakeholders that the company is more than "just a lab."

"Proving that labs can provide meaningful clinical insight is valuable, important and very difficult," Swanson said. "This will be a journey."

While this pilot program is unique among U.S. laboratories, it's not the only area in which TriCore is looking to develop value-based programs.

"For us here at TriCore and for many other labs, this is not a one and done," Grenache said. "We want to do more of this, not only for prenatal patients, but also for others with chronic disease conditions."

If you and your teams are leading with Lab 2.0 projects, visit UnivantsHCE.com for more details on the 2020 award program. Submissions are open through February 28, 2020.

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