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## Using Data, Innovation and Collaboration to Support Better Patient Outcomes During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to turn life as we once knew it upside down, it is important to look back at some of the successes that have allowed us all to take measurable steps towards “getting back to normal”. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to clinical teams and laboratories alike, across health systems.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Public Health England (PHE) was primarily responsible for COVID-19 testing. Due to the hazardous nature of the virus and the vast number of individuals requiring testing, a substantial backlog in test processing was soon realized. To address this unprecedented challenge, an integrated care team that included laboratory medicine, information technology (IT), and North West London Pathology’s [a National Health Service (NHS) pathology partnership serving 3 major London hospital trusts] Infection and Immunity team, collaborated to implement new solutions in the face of this pandemic.

Their approach was multi-faceted and included increasing the variability of testing, improving access to rapid tests, providing continuity and resilience in local testing. A key to successfully implementing this strategy required validation of testing across multiple different assays to ensure expected and reliable results. This particular challenge was uniquely addressed

in collaboration with Imperial College (Dementia Research Institute).

A new workflow was implemented to test COVID-19 samples, which could validate test sample kits from multiple suppliers. Further, in-house testing for COVID-19 was launched within parts of Northwest London Pathology in order to reduce the number of samples send outs to PHE.

The diverse number of COVID-19 tests and multiple validated methodologies substantially improved testing capacity to 2,400 tests every 24 hours. This in turn enabled clinical teams within the hospitals to rapidly confirm which patients had the virus, thereby improving treatment, reducing transmission, and improving safety for staff and the community. The programs’ success received national recognition and was featured on BBC News for their work and innovative testing in March 2020 and August 2020.

The collaborative nature and success in implementing timely COVID-19 testing strategies also gained global exposure through the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence award program, with recognition of Achievement for the 2020 awards. Congratulations to Paul Nacmanson, *Data/IT Analyst*, Saghar Missaghian-Cully, *Managing Director, North West London Pathology*, Panos Pantelidis, *Divisional Manager, Infection and Immunity*, Paul Randell, *Consultant Virologist*, and Gabriel Roberts, *Data Analyst*.

**“Innovative work in the face  
of a global pandemic”**

– Judge Commentary

**LABORATORY  
PROCESSING**

**>2,400**

tests within 24 hours

**NATIONAL  
RECOGNITION**

for COVID-19 testing  
methodologies

#### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated novel and quick thinking across clinical care teams to enable provision care.
2. Collaboration within systems and across systems is a key to tackling the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Clinical laboratories are key strategic leaders and collaborators for improving outcomes and care during pandemic and beyond.