

Getting to zero harm in controlled substance prescribing: Increasing the accuracy of prescription compliance monitoring through enhanced drug testing support

The opioid epidemic is a serious public health crisis, with a growing need to find new ways to help support both patients and providers to improve overall outcomes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that over 100,000 deaths in 2021 were a result of drug overdoses, a 15% increase from 2020, with opioids accounting for a disproportionate number of those deaths. Thus, while many efforts have been made, opportunities exist in the opioid epidemic to help improve patient outcomes.

A key component to battling the opioid epidemic is utilizing laboratory medicine to inform clinical decision-making, enhance monitoring and reduce overdoses. As part of the University Hospitals (UH) Pain Management Institute and Department of Pathology's response, an integrated clinical care team involving clinical, laboratory, and risk management leaders, sought to effectively use urine drug testing as a key component to their safe controlled substance prescribing. This team aimed to enhance opioid monitoring by improving physician confidence and accuracy of ordering and interpreting lab testing for controlled substance monitoring.

This process was multi-faceted and included newly designed and inclusive drug test panels, accompanied by intuitive naming, built-in reflexes between screening and confirmatory testing, and a comprehensive analytic method to detect commonly prescribed opioids and benzodiazepines. Guidance and educational materials were also strategically rolled-out to provide guidance to clinical stakeholders and users. Lastly, laboratory medicine was integrated into the clinical process through a new laboratory toxicology consultation service. Through this new process, UH has increased compliance to appropriate follow-up of presumptive positive



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drug screens with >98% compliance, while decreasing drug testing costs by 25%. This change corresponds to a 35% increase in clinician compliance with the testing guidelines and has increased clinical confidence related to drug testing. For their efforts and outcomes, this integrated clinical care team was awarded the 2022 UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence award recognition of Distinction. Congratulations to Jaime Noguez, Director, Clinical Chemistry & Toxicology, Christine Schmotzer, Vice Chair, UH System Pathology Operations, Sean Hoynes, Director, Risk Management at UH Primary Care Institute, Heidi DelVecchio, Senior Risk Management Officer, Jeanne Lackamp, Director, UH Pain Management Institute.

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