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## AHA TRANSFORMATION TALKS

STRATEGIES FOR REIMAGINING HEALTH CARE

### Closing Gaps in Care Through Laboratory Stewardship

**Laboratory testing is the single highest-volume medical activity performed in the U.S., with about 14 billion tests conducted each year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports.**

Many hospitals and health systems have implemented test utilization or laboratory stewardship programs to track patterns in test ordering compared to accepted guidelines and can help identify gaps in care.

Lab test data can be used to guide clinical decision-making at the individual patient and population health level.

Effective stewardship programs go beyond data analysis and extend into continual improvement and cultural adaptation. These programs help hospitals and health systems optimize testing, reduce costs, and improve patient care.

In recent years, laboratory stewardship has emerged as a strategy to assure quality in laboratory medicine with the goal of providing the right test for the right patient at the right time.



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## Optimizing testing

Lab stewardship is designed to optimize testing by gaining deeper insights from data in the laboratory information system and EMR to help deliver the highest quality care. By connecting physicians, lab administrators, and medical leaders with actionable, real-time lab data, health care organizations can create a team approach to overall test utilization.

### An effective lab stewardship program can help:



**Improve test selection:** Leaders can identify testing variations in care and design interventions that can help guide test selection to ensure compliance with evidence-based guidelines.



**Enhance the patient experience:** The right test selection can help clinicians make the right diagnosis faster and test data trends can identify where clinicians can start treatment sooner to improve patient outcomes in areas such as critical care testing and chronic disease management.



**Reduce the cost of care:** Data can be mined to identify high-volume, high-cost test utilization and trends before the cost of care escalates and the patient is at risk.

With many health care organizations continuing to face financial challenges due to the ongoing pandemic and staffing shortages, hospital operations leaders continue to focus on ways to improve care quality, laboratory stewardship programs can be an essential component in these efforts.

To help your organization transform, visit the AHA Transformation Talks [resources page](#).

## Discussion Questions:

1. **How can lab stewardship close gaps in patient care and improve clinical quality?**
2. **What are the essential elements of an effective laboratory stewardship program?**
3. **What impact can laboratory stewardship have on hospitals and health systems?**