

Point-of-Care Testing

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Point-of-care testing is the analysis of clinical specimens outside the traditional laboratory, near to or at the site of patient care. It is performed in a variety of locations such as, but not limited to, hospital wards, operating theatres, emergency departments, General Practice surgeries, health clinics, pharmacies, ambulance services and patients' homes.

This position statement is not intended to apply to patient self-testing. The NZMA has a separate position statement that addresses [direct-to-consumer laboratory testing](#).

Point-of-care testing may offer a number of advantages over laboratory testing, including:¹

- Reduced turnaround time
- Ability to provide tests in remote locations and outside of laboratory hours
- Improved monitoring of certain conditions where frequent testing is desirable
- Improved convenience and access to service for patients
- Facilitates opportunistic screening for early identification of certain conditions.

Despite these potential advantages, point-of-care testing presents significant challenges. In part, this is because point-of-care testing devices are not subject to effective regulation in New Zealand. The potential advantages of point-of-care testing only hold true if test results provided are accurate, reliable and can contribute to improving patient outcomes.

The NZMA believes that point-of-care testing needs to be regulated at a national level, but also needs to be supported by adequate clinical governance and quality management systems at provider level. This ensures such testing is safe, effective, clinically appropriate and consistent with best practice guidelines.

We also believe that all Point-of-care testing should meet the following principles:

- Careful consideration of clinical need should be given before introducing point-of-care testing.
- Point-of-care testing should be seen as complementary to, and not as a replacement, for conventional laboratory testing.
- An accredited laboratory should play a key role in the development and management of a point-of-care testing service.
- As far as possible, results obtained from point-of-care testing should be incorporated into the patient's health record.
- Funding and regulatory arrangements should ensure a level playing field for providers of point-of-care testing and should not exacerbate health inequities.
- Cost-effectiveness considerations should be taken into account when developing and deploying point-of-care testing.

¹ New Zealand Best Practice Guidelines for Point-of-Care Testing. November 2018. Available from <https://www.nzimls.org.nz/point-of-care-testing.html>