

Introducing our theme: Community and point-of-care testing

Bulletin Editor, Professor Angharad Davies, introduces this issue's theme.

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Since the COVID-19 pandemic – when PCR testing centres appeared all over the country, universities ran rapid antigen testing facilities on campus, and later we were all exhorted to self-test at home – the use of near-patient testing has expanded rapidly. This has many potential benefits, when properly implemented, and has political impetus, with one of the NHS 10-Year Plan's 'shifts' being the shift of healthcare services into the community. However, it also brings challenges and the need for new ways of working and oversight for those of us in laboratory medicine. These are the themes of this issue of the Bulletin.

How do we keep sight of all the varied testing that may be going on outside laboratories, across our patch? NHS England's Southeast point-of-care testing (POCT) Group Chair [Katy Heaney](#) explains how in her region, structures and processes have been established to oversee the expanding range and location of POCT testing being carried out, and highlights useful key pointers. [College TAC representative, Wiaam Al-Hasani](#), shares a great example of a trial of POCT to monitor treatment at the Maudsley Hospital, with significant benefits for mental health patients.

Pathologists and patients need to be confident that POCT meets the quality standards we all expect. [Annette Thomas, Wales National Clinical Lead for POCT](#), explores how guidance and accreditation can provide quality assurance and safeguard patient safety.

Self-sampling has the potential to offer choice and convenience for patients (and sometimes their carers) who might otherwise not easily be able to access clinical services. [Gilbert Wieringa and colleagues](#) provide an overview of a February 2025 Association for Laboratory Medicine-organised conference on the benefits, latest developments and available guidance on introducing self-sampling devices.

While the introduction of Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) does not necessarily entail POCT (though this may also be carried out in CDCs), it aims to bring more convenient, accessible diagnostic services to patients in community-based settings. [The CDC and Pathology Pillar Teams at NHS England report on the progress](#) of this programme and how it can improve health outcomes, efficiency and unequal access.

Finally, commercial POCT devices have increasing application in veterinary medicine, with benefits including expedited treatment, improved animal welfare and greater zoonotic disease surveillance. In this article, [Dr Pamela Kelly and Professor Roberto La Ragione explore some examples of point-of-care tests](#) currently in use in veterinary pathology.

All in all, we are seeing a sea-change in expectations of, and attitudes to, testing. I hope this collection of articles will be helpful to all our members who are rising to this challenge.

Meet the author



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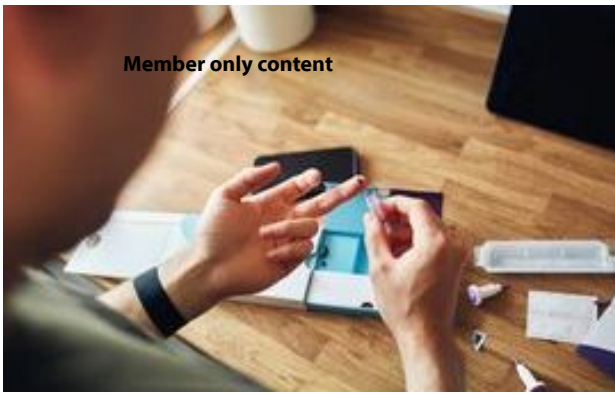
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