



To: All Lab Services Staff and Pathologists

From: Marty Woods, Regional Director Lab Services
Dr. Michael Moss, Medical Director Lab Services

Date: July 15, 2015

RE: Lab Services Sustainability Strategy

Today, we're announcing that Lab Services will be embarking on a sustainability strategy for the future. Lab Leadership has developed a vision and objectives for moving forward based on what we've learned from face-to-face meetings, surveys, site visits, and discussions held with lab staff and pathologists over the last year.

As you know, we've experienced steady increases in volumes each year and increased demand for more complex testing within our limited human and financial resources. Lab Services has identified six critical issues that impact sustainability: engagement, growing demand, service equity, staffing retention and recruitment, budget and tools. Of these, staffing retention and recruitment has proven particularly challenging. As an example, the average age of lab technologists and assistants is increasing and it will be difficult for IH to attract and retain qualified staff to meet the anticipated attrition rates. There is also a shortage of pathologists. With 30 pathologists currently on staff, this is about 10 fewer than what is needed to meet present demands. There is also a need for pathologists to meet anticipated annual growth in the service, yet recruitment for this specialty has been challenging. We know lab service is important and supports clinical care in communities across the health authority, but at this point the way we are currently doing business is not sustainable.

We have been looking at ways to improve services and make it more sustainable into the future. Our vision includes consolidating routine core lab testing at one, centralized location at Kelowna General Hospital and expanding point of care (POC) testing at some of our smaller sites. The core lab testing that will be consolidated includes routine testing for: chemistry, hematology, immunoassay, coagulation, urinalysis and a proportion of specialized testing. There are no planned changes for transfusion medicine, microbiology or anatomical pathology.

We anticipate these changes will be implemented over a two-year period, so we have designated resources to manage and implement these changes. Terry Brent, Director Lab Operations, Central will be seconded to a project manager position, leading the operational changes required. Karen Bowen will continue to support cultural transformation and will work

in partnership with Terry Brent, and Maria Klement, Director of Lab Quality, Safety and Innovation, who will be seconded to a transition coordination role for the project. Terry, Karen and Maria, along with the Lab Leadership Team, will be seeking your continued engagement, expertise and support as we transition to a new, sustainable lab future.

We know you'll have specific questions about what the future will look like and sites impacted and it's important to note decisions around which sites will move to expanded point of care testing have not yet been made. The project team will be consulting with lab staff, physicians, nursing and site leads to identify what model(s) make the most sense for each site. In other words, this is not anticipated to be a "cookie-cutter" solution.

Potential sites for expanded point of care testing include:

Ashcroft	Golden	Nakusp
Barriere	Grand Forks	New Denver
Castlegar	Invermere	Oliver
Chase	Keremeos	One Hundred Mile House
Clearwater	Lillooet	Princeton
Creston	Lytton	Revelstoke
Elkford	Logan Lake	Sparwood
Fernie	Merritt	

It's also important to know that nothing is changing today and the merits of expanding or implementing point of care technology will be assessed through a consultative process for each site.

We have advised the provincial offices of the Health Sciences Association and Hospital Employees Union of the Lab Services sustainability strategy and provided assurances that there is no intent of job loss, degradation of current positions, or forced moves resulting from changes made through this process. We recognize that there could be other potential changes and impacts on staff (e.g. scheduling) and to make the transition as smooth as possible, we are committed to working with staff to ensure they're engaged and supported through the changes and we are further committed to continuing dialogue with the unions to ensure an orderly transition. These changes are in no way a reflection of the work done by lab staff and pathologists—it's about ensuring the sustainability of the service in the long term, making it more effective and therefore, improving patient care.

We appreciate you may have further questions about the sustainability strategy, so WebEx meetings have been scheduled for next week, where we will do our best to answer your questions. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to connect with your Director. A team site has been created on SharePoint which will contain important information, updates and documents that you can refer to as we move through this process. The link to the page is: <http://teamsites.interiorhealth.ca/sites/Projects/labsustainability/SitePages/Home.aspx>