

Straight to the point: iPOCT first to gain UK accreditation for point-of-care testing

Unilabs iPOCT has become the first laboratory to be granted UK accreditation for point-of-care testing. This accreditation gives confidence in the competence of iPOCT's innovative, customer-focused testing service, and may ultimately lead to improved clinical care for patients.

iPOCT, a leader in the European diagnostic service industry, worked closely with UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service) and CPA (Clinical Pathology Accreditation) to undergo assessment for the accreditation, which is a key element of building and maintaining confidence in providers of point-of-care testing.

Point-of-care testing – also known as near-patient testing – enables patient samples to be analysed at the time of their clinic visit thus offering better access and providing faster results for immediate clinical decision making. Accreditation signifies that the user of the service can be confident they are receiving a service of the requisite quality

Increased community-based testing could limit the number of visits a patient has to make to hospitals and clinics, and may even reduce the number of people admitted to hospital.

During the process to gain accreditation, a number of iPOCT's processes have been improved, which means that healthcare organisations now have access to a higher quality and more efficient point-of-care testing service. This, in turn, should lead to faster diagnosis and more-rapid treatment of patients.

Dr Lars Lundgren, Chief Medical Officer at Unilabs, says: "We are delighted to be the first UK organisation to have a fully evaluated and accredited point-of-care testing service. This will give our present and future customers confidence in the safety of our service."

Professor Chris Price, Visiting Professor in Clinical Biochemistry at the University of Oxford and an acknowledged leader in the field of point-of-care testing, says: "It is widely acknowledged that some of the major challenges facing health care are around structural and organisational changes, improving access for patients and bringing more care closer to home, at the same time enhancing the quality of outcomes. Point-of-care testing is seen as one of the key enablers in this transformational change and it is therefore exciting to see that Unilabs iPOCT are meeting this challenge by offering a service fully accredited, as a point-of-care testing provider, by UKAS".

The accreditation of all pathology providers, including point-of-care testing providers, was a recommendation made in the *Report of the Review of NHS Pathology Services in England*, which was chaired by Lord Carter of Coles and published in 2006.

iPOCT is the first UK organisation to gain accreditation for point-of-care testing, specifically to international standards ISO 15189:2007 and ISO 22870:2006, which are concerned with the quality and competence of medical laboratories and point-of-care testing, respectively. One feature of ISO 22870 is that providers of point-of-care testing should be involved in clinical governance, something that is addressed during assessments.

Point-of-care testing in a hospital is often controlled by its own pathology laboratory. The accreditation of iPOCT has shown that accreditation for point-of-care testing can be attained in less conventional models of delivery

iPOCT manages individually tailored point-of-care testing services at 14 geographically remote UK sites in both the public and private sectors, and at one site in Denmark. One of the most innovative aspects of iPOCT's approach is the way it interacts with its customers. iPOCT provides 'end-to-end' connectivity with an electronic diagnostics record. The company also provides network and data security, with 24-hour monitoring of all connections, capture of all test data, equipment and operator information, and connection to its customers' electronic patient records if required.

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-- Notes to Editors are attached as a separate document --

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