

Title: Overview of technical and clinical aspects of point-of-care testing

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Abstract:

The benefits of using Point-of-care testing (POCT) instruments include not only the immediate feedback to the individual, but also the simplicity, ease and speed of testing results. It is a compact, easy to carry and highly accurate instrument, bringing the testing procedure closer to the patient, particularly in primary and intensive care settings. The reports of the POCT tests may be issued automatically by the software that interfaces with the laboratory information system or manually reported by qualified professionals. Several scientific studies analyzed samples of patients in the conventional laboratory and POCT system simultaneously and observed no difference in the clinical values. In some countries where POCT devices are being used there are specific laws regarding the training and competence of the operators and their continuing education program. International regulations have defined the conditions required and quality specifications for the devices. The pre-analytic phase is an important step to guarantee the quality of results. Effective operator training is encouraged and compliance with all manufacturer's technical guidelines is necessary to ensure accurate results. The use of POCT has the potential to reduce the incidence of undiagnosed and undertreated chronic diseases. The clinical application of POCT has proved to be efficient in raising awareness on the importance of monitoring lipid levels, and early initiation of pharmacological treatment, particularly in dyslipidaemias, prevents the consequences of developing cardiovascular diseases. The main advantage is to achieve a wider population screening, obtaining early diagnostic of inherited diseases such as familial hypercholesterolemia. Therefore, POCT tests can be a key factor in the change of service provision in pharmacies, radically improving the way as pharmacists will provide basic health care services.