

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Recognizing the lab professionals

April 19-25 is Medical Laboratory Professionals Week and what better time to recognize the people who perform laboratory tests which provide the information our clinical colleagues use to diagnose, monitor and treat patients.

The importance of widespread testing has become apparent to all who are managing the COVID-19 pandemic. The drive-through test sites are actually specimen collection sites where nasal swabs are collected. Current testing for the

coronavirus occurs in hospital, reference and public health laboratories which have the expertise and equipment to perform the very complex molecular biology techniques.

The people performing these tests are medical laboratory scientists and technicians who have college degrees and professional certification (and in some states, licensure). Laboratory leadership is provided by MD pathologists, doctoral scientists and laboratory professionals with advanced degrees.

The shortages

experienced by front-line healthcare workers are also felt by laboratory personnel. This includes not only the PPE but also reagents, supplies and equipment used for specimen collection and transport, and the coronavirus test itself.

Tests are being developed for coronavirus antibodies which are typically an indication the person has recovered from the virus. The antibody test is more straight-forward and will likely be performed in more laboratories using equipment they already have.

Early detection of

infection in the population, tracing contacts and an indication of recovery from the virus are keys to lifting the current restrictions on businesses and individuals.

Healthcare professionals are receiving recognition and praise for their dedication in the extremely stressful conditions of the pandemic. Medical laboratory professionals are an essential part of the healthcare team. They deserve your thanks as well.

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