



Management Bulletin

North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health | Laboratory Improvement Unit

Pitt County: Mission-Driven for Quality Patient Care

“To Protect, Promote, and Assure the health of all people in Pitt County” is the mission statement of the Pitt County Health Department (PCHD). As a team oriented facility, they have well established the meaning behind this statement. PCHD has many clinic areas serving over 14,000 patients per year in the areas of sexually transmitted disease (STD), family planning, prenatal care, child health, adult health, WIC, immunization and communicable disease. Each division in the health department has a common purpose and goals that all team members are committed to.

That commitment begins with customer service training being an integral part of working at PCHD. The training is offered through the county training center, and all staff, regardless of division, are required to attend. Customer service is also discussed regularly in supervisory, quality improvement and practice management meetings. The focus is on continuous improvement in customer service for both internal and external clients.

The Laboratory Team

One of those committed divisions is the laboratory, led by Lab Manager Tammy Rees, Medical Laboratory Technologist (MLT), who has served in this role since 2012. In Tammy’s words, “I am so proud of our lab. We are blessed to have such a good team. We work closely together, and each staff member has different and unique qualities that unite us.”

In addition to Tammy, lab team members include Rachel Brinn, MLT, Denise Price, MLT (ASCP), Candice Conner, CPT(ASPT), and back-up tech, Toria Wilson, BSPH. The staff is a diverse group with each team member having hospital lab experience, each in a different specialty area of the lab. They have learned the value of depending on each other and holding each other accountable for quality lab work every day, and they effectively boost each other up when needed or chip in and help each other to serve their patients in a timely manner.

Collaboration

In addition to laboratory duties, lab team members also participate in other committees within the health department. Tammy and Denise are members of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Team, where Tammy is currently serving as chairperson. Tammy also serves on the Practice Management, Quality Improvement (QI), Epidemiology and North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NC EDSS) teams. Candice, who serves as the Phlebotomy Coordinator, is responsible for the clinical training of new employees as well as students from surrounding phlebotomy programs. Rachel and Candice are both members of the Safety and Sunshine committees. Denise Price currently serves as chairperson of the Sunshine Committee, which was developed to boost staff morale and improve teamwork between the lab

and the various clinic areas. The Sunshine Committee recognizes special events (weddings, births, promotions, etc.), and brings the entire health department together as one for celebrations and recognitions.

Quality Improvement

The PCHD lab has made successful strides towards improving the quality of care that their patients receive in many ways. One example of this is a quality improvement study related to testing and fiscal responsibility. Test kits and quality control materials for Rapid Plasma Reagin (RPR) testing were being kept on hand only for testing stat specimens, although the majority of RPR specimens were being sent to the North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health (NCSLPH) for testing. Kits were being discarded regularly without being used, causing a huge amount of wasted funds. After performing a financial analysis, it was decided that instead of only performing RPR on stat specimens, the lab would begin performing batch RPR testing in-house on prenatal patients. This change utilized kits and eliminated waste. In addition, the health department also receives some revenue for the testing through insurance reimbursements, which in turn helps with the cost of the kit.

Change

As with most health care providers, the PCHD team is headed towards change in health information sharing. In April 2018, PCHD will be implementing a new electronic health records system. All divisions within the health department are collaborating on the project to improve health outcomes for the clients they serve. This system will not only interconnect clinics within the health department itself, but it will also connect with Vidant Medical Center in Greenville. This will

enable the sharing of information between agencies on mutual clients, and will also improve communications regarding infectious and communicable diseases and other disease information.

Community

Not only does PCHD focus on their own clients, their commitment to improving the quality of life for all Pitt county residents extends to the community. One example of this is participation in the “Shorter Steps to Shots” quality improvement project. Consisting of staff members from many of the health department divisions, and in conjunction with the Center for Public Health Quality and Population Health Improvement Partners, the aim of the project was to decrease the staff time necessary to give the immunization, and provide “steps” for those coming in from the community for an immunization. The project was such a tremendous success that PCHD was asked to present their project at the 2017 North Carolina Immunization Conference.

Another example of involvement and commitment to the community is a recent tuberculosis (TB) exposure incident. A student at a nearby school had tested positive for TB. The health department was instrumental in working with the school systems involved by going to the schools affected and performing PPD skin testing and collecting blood samples for serum TB testing on all potentially exposed students and staff. On another occasion, lab and other health department staff volunteered their time over the Thanksgiving holiday to collect and transport stool samples after a local food outbreak was declared. Although this occurred over a major holiday, almost every area in the health department had a role in the investigation and the workup of the food outbreak.

Summary

As you can see, the quality of care and commitment to excellence is easy to identify, not only in the lab, but within PCHD, as a whole. This commitment to excellence can best be seen in the results of their last Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA) inspection. In April 2017, Pitt County Health Department lab earned a 100 percent score with no deficiencies or citations on their inspection. This is especially noteworthy when you realize that this CLIA inspection represents the entire Area D region for the NCSLPH CLIA Contract Program. Such an outstanding achievement could not have been accomplished without the support and teamwork of not only the lab team, but from the health department overall. At Pitt County Health Department, the mission to provide quality patient care is the top priority!



Pitt County Lab Staff

L-R: Candice Connor, CPT (ASCP), Rachel Brinn, MLT, Tammy Rees, MLT (ASCP), Denise Price, MLT (ASCP)

Submitted by: Linda Cleve, BSMT (ASCP)



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