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IQLM Survey Helps Define Quality

Arlington, Virginia – Laboratory medicine is “important” and “essential” in addressing patient safety and information technology, noted 95% of the respondents to a survey from the Institute for Quality in Laboratory Medicine (IQLM). IQLM issued its six-page questionnaire to 72 diverse associations, corporations, and government agencies to help define quality for laboratory testing and services.

“90 percent of the respondents self-identified themselves as providers of laboratory services, 76 percent as users, and 15 percent as payers,” explained Pamela J. Thompson, MS, MT(ASCP), Health Scientist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and an analyst for the survey. “The opinion of a diversity of stakeholders is vital for assessing the value of laboratory services.”

A summary of the preliminary survey results from the respondents is outlined below:

- 100 percent consider the use of laboratory services “important” or “essential” for cancer
- More than 90 percent consider the use of laboratory services “important” or “essential” in diabetes, pregnancy/childbirth/newborn care, and kidney disease.
- 95 percent stated the appropriateness of test ordering is “important” or “essential” for assessing the quality of laboratory services.
- More than 90 percent considered the following topics important in assessing quality: patient misidentification; missed or misinterpreted test orders; inappropriate laboratory specimen collection and transport; and difficulty in interpreting laboratory results.
- 27 percent considered monitoring billing mistakes “important.”
- Top eight measures rated as “useful” or “essential” for assessing the quality of laboratory services include: specimen labeling error (86%); follow-up of abnormal results (82%); tests ordered with incomplete/inaccurate information (73%); clinician satisfaction (73%); expected laboratory test turnaround time (68%), inappropriate ordering of tests (64%); patient satisfaction (64%), and critical values reporting (59%).
- Less than 25 percent considered diabetes monitoring and hyperlipidemia screening to be of essential value in measuring quality.

Thirty-one percent of those surveyed completed the IQLM questionnaire. “An impressive response rate,” noted Robin Stompler, Chief Executive Officer of the IQLM. “With additional analysis, the Institute can use this survey to learn where additional resources and education are needed to improve quality.”

The Institute for Quality in Laboratory Medicine is a new organization formed to engage the health care community in improving the use of laboratory tests and services. The Institute is the only organization bringing together clinicians, laboratory professionals, patients, manufacturers, government and accrediting bodies to work on advancing substantial improvements in quality, effectiveness, safety and appropriateness for the broad universe of laboratory testing.

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