

# Foreword: Introducing the eJIFCC special issue on “POCT – making the point”

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## ARTICLE INFO

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## FOREWORD

Point of care testing (POCT) represents an important step forward in the clinical management of patients. POC assays are easy to use and do not require skilled personnel, thus they are particularly useful in low resource settings (where diagnostics laboratories equipped with complex instruments and well trained technicians are not available), as well as in the Proximity Medicine networks working in synergy with central laboratories. Furthermore, results are delivered in real-time, accelerating the decisional process behind the clinical decision as in the Emergency setting (air and ground ambulances, intensive care units, acute settings), remote rural settings, disasters, military conflicts, camps supporting vulnerable population (migrants and refugees camps), and sanitary residencies for the Elderly. A prompt diagnosis is also crucial in the case of contagious diseases allowing a rapid isolation of the infected patient and treatment; thus, reducing the risk of transmission of the pathogen. In this context, the role of POCT has been highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic in screening and tracing programs.

This special issue includes a series of papers reflecting the topics planned for the “POCT: making the point” conference to be held between September 6 and 7, 2021 in Rome, Italy.

The aim of this Conference is to bring together IFCC and EFLM experts and representatives from the IVD Companies, in order to discuss various POCT dimensions: Quality Assurance, Training, Technological Innovations, Applications, Market and Sustainability.

Although POCT devices offer many advantages, their application goes hand in hand with numerous challenges, namely, clinical governance, connectivity, role of the laboratory director and staff, quality control, education and risk management. Furthermore, responsibility also extends to the manufacturer in the design and validation of POCT devices. Simultaneously, National and even supranational regulations and accreditations would be desired, but such procedures, at a global level, are still patchy.

Direct to Consumer Tests (DTCT) can be considered an extreme version of POC where patients perform the test themselves. Even if DTCT driven by the application of disruptive technologies has the potential for self-empowerment of patients, it raised many concerns and no regulatory safeguards for consumers exist as yet.

Finally, articles included in this issue by some of the authors are focused on the application of POCT devices in pediatrics, low-income countries and in the context of refugee and migrant care.

Organizing this conference started in the middle of the pandemic, when all my colleagues were under tremendous pressure fighting with Covid-19! The conference has been postponed to a new date with the faith that it shall be held eventually later in September, 2021 in Rome, Italy.

The present special issue is, in some way, evidence of our resilience in this very engaging time where Laboratory Medicine has demonstrated again its great value in patient care.