

2001 National Survey of Hospital Coagulation Laboratory Practices: Personnel Qualifications and Clinical Service/Laboratory Capacities

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Introduction: Coagulopathy and bleeding are major public health concerns, and coagulation laboratory tests are principal components of clinical management. To characterize, among other issues, coagulation personnel and clinical service/laboratory characteristics, we conducted a survey of laboratories in 2001.

Methods: From a sampling frame of institutions listed in the 1999 directory of the American Hospital Association, we randomly selected 800 hospital coagulation laboratories (sampling rate, 14%; response rate, 79%). A group of coagulation experts and survey methodologists assisted in survey design and further evaluated content and format of the survey before pilot testing.

Results: Ninety-seven percent of sampled hospitals performed coagulation testing.

Testing location. Respondents reported performing coagulation tests in core laboratory (55%), hematology laboratory (38%), coagulation laboratory (16%), stat laboratory (5%), and at point of care (11%).

Components of competency assessment program. Respondents reported using the following competency measures: successful performance of QC with documentation of remedial actions (92%), review of procedure manuals (86%), analysis of unknown samples (80%), direct observation of a task (74%), participation in continuing education (61%), and periodic written examination (30%).

Educational degree of laboratory director. Ninety-one percent noted an M.D. and 7% noted a Ph.D. for the laboratory director.

Certification of laboratory director. Laboratory director was reported to be board-certified in clinical pathology (76%), anatomical pathology (63%), medicine (18%); hematopathology (8%), hematology (5%), and certified by the American Society for Clinical Pathology (25%).

Clinical service capacities. Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported that a clinician was available for consultation with expertise in coagulation disorders. An anticoagulation outpatient clinic specializing in adjustment of oral anticoagulants existed at 20% of the institutions while 9% of the institutions had an outpatient clinic specializing in diagnosis and treatment of coagulation disorders.

Conclusion: Reported personnel and other resources appeared to support coagulation testing; most reported not having outpatient clinical services.