COVID-19

TESTING SURVEY

For more information, visit cmadocs.org/covid-19
COVID-19 TESTING is critical not only for the diagnosis of COVID-19, but for the understanding, management and treatment of the disease. Adequate testing is also a key component to getting the pandemic under control and reopening our state. COVID-19 testing is the responsibility of our entire health care system, and physicians are a critical component of ensuring the right individuals are tested, at the right place and at the right time.

To better understand the physician experience with COVID-19 testing, the California Medical Association and California COVID-19 Testing Taskforce partnered to conduct a survey of California physicians. The survey asked physicians about their experience accessing testing supplies, collecting and/or processing test samples (both molecular diagnostic and alternative test types), receiving data and reporting results, communicating with patients, and reimbursement.

In a period of eight days, almost 800 physician practices responded to the survey, representing all modes of practice in a broad range of specialties across 45 counties.

The survey results indicate widespread physician challenges in obtaining one or more necessary supplies to collect COVID-19 specimens, like test collection kits or personal protective equipment. Additionally, many physicians report they do not consistently receive their patient’s COVID-19 molecular test results, indicating a breakdown in the feedback loop to physicians, which can result in delays in patient care and negatively impact disease surveillance efforts, quality of care and data analytics.

The results on the following pages highlight the immediate need for improvements in the testing supply chain, timelier test processing, and better data and reporting of COVID-19 test results.
Physician practices surveyed, representing all modes of practice in a broad range of specialties across 45 counties.

50% of practices are collecting specimens for COVID-19 molecular testing.

84% send COVID-19 test specimens to a 3rd party for processing.

800 test collection kits per month used on average by pediatric and primary care practices

593 test collection kits per month used on average by specialists

I work at a county hospital. We have had to place our testing on hold, as we do not have a steady or stable supply of testing materials. This puts our patients of low socioeconomic status at a disadvantage and increases the degree of health disparities in our community.

73% practices report difficulty obtaining the supplies needed for COVID-19 testing.

57% have had trouble obtaining test collection kits

40% have had trouble obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE)

Most important to physicians when choosing where to send COVID-19 tests for processing:

+ Turnaround times (41%)
+ Quality and accuracy of the lab (23%)

Turnaround times are quicker when tests are processed on-site.

+ 91% of tests processed on-site are ready within 48 hours
+ 24% of tests processed by a 3rd party are ready within 48 hours

Turnaround time is too long to be meaningful.

4 out of 10 physicians do not consistently receive their patients’ test results.
Survey Summary

+ In eight days, almost 800 physician practices responded, representing all modes of practice in a broad range of specialties across 45 counties.

+ 50% of practices indicated they are collecting specimens for COVID-19 molecular testing.
  - While all specialties report they collect specimens for testing, specimen collection is primarily performed by primary care and pediatric practices (39%).
  - Practices that do not collect COVID-19 test specimens typically send patients to community testing sites (63%) and large hospitals/health systems (58%).

+ Primary care and pediatric practices report they utilize an average of 412 test collection kits per month. Specialists average 593 kits per month.

+ Approximately three out of four (73%) practices report difficulty obtaining one or more of the supplies needed to collect specimens for COVID-19 testing.
  - 57% have had trouble obtaining test collection kits (i.e. swabs and transport media [VTM, saline, etc.])
  - 40% have had trouble obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE)
  - Physician practices in the Inland Empire and the Bay Area are disproportionately impacted by testing supply challenges.
    - Inland Empire – 71% of practices report difficulty obtaining test kits, 50% report PPE difficulties
    - Bay Area – 71% of practices report difficulty obtaining test kits

+ Most practices (84%) do not process COVID-19 test specimens on-site and, instead, send specimens out for processing.

+ When choosing where to send a COVID-19 test for processing, the most important consideration for physicians is quicker turnaround times (41%), followed by quality and accuracy of the lab (23%).

+ Turnaround times to receive COVID-19 test results are quicker when processed on-site vs. by a third party.
  - 91% of tests processed on-site are ready within 48 hours compared with only 24% when processed by a third party.
  - Academic medical centers, local public health labs and hospital/health systems process a higher percentage of tests within 48 hours than commercial labs (i.e., Quest, LabCorp).

+ Twenty percent (20%) of practices provide alternative COVID-19 testing to their patients.
+ Data on practice reimbursement for PCR specimen collection, processing and alternative testing was not meaningful due to small sample size and high volume of “don’t know” responses.

+ Four out of 10 physicians do not consistently receive their patients’ COVID-19 test results. This was consistent across all labs. This communication gap can result in delays in patient care and negatively impact disease surveillance efforts, quality of care and data analytics.
Complete Survey Results

1. Does your practice collect specimens for COVID-19 molecular testing (i.e. PCR)?
   - Yes .................................................................50%
   - No .................................................................50%

2. Where do you send patients for COVID-19 molecular testing? (check all that apply)
   - Community testing site........................................63%
   - State-funded sites (e.g. OptumServe/Verily) .............17%
   - Other practice in your community..........................21%
   - Hospital or large health system in your community.....58%
   - Other (please specify) ........................................10%

3. On average how many test collection kits does your practice go through in a month?
   - Average .........................................................626 kits per month

4. Is your practice having difficulty obtaining any of the following supplies to collect specimens for COVID-19 molecular testing? (check all that apply)
   - Test collection kits (i.e. swabs and transport media [VTM, saline, etc.]) ............57%
   - Personal Protective Equipment ................................40%
   - No, my practice is not having difficulty obtaining molecular testing supplies ..........35%

5. Are you being reimbursed by payors for collecting COVID-19 molecular test specimens?
   - Yes ........................................................................17%
   - No ..........................................................................21%
   - Don’t know ..........................................................62%

6. What percentage of COVID-19 molecular test specimen collections are you reimbursed for?
   - More than 75% ....................................................58%
   - 51-75% ...............................................................27%
   - 25-50% ...............................................................10%
   - Less than 25% .....................................................5%

7. Does the payor’s reimbursement cover your costs for COVID-19 molecular test specimen collection?
   - Always ....................................................................44%
   - Sometimes ..........................................................49%
   - Never ......................................................................7%
8. Why are you not being reimbursed by payors for collecting COVID-19 molecular test specimens? (check all that apply)

Unclear how to bill appropriately ........................................... 38%
Payor denies as bundled .................................................. 29%
Payor denies as non-covered ........................................... 38%
Other (please specify) .................................................... 29%

9. Does your practice process COVID-19 molecular test specimens on-site?

Yes .................................................................................. 16%
No .................................................................................... 84%

10. Do you process all of your patients’ COVID-19 molecular test samples or do you send some samples out to third parties to process?

Process all specimens ..................................................... 24%
Process some specimens ................................................. 76%

11. Where do you send your COVID-19 molecular test specimens for processing? (check all that apply)

LabCorp ................................................................. 20%
Quest ................................................................. 35%
Academic medical center ......................................... 6%
Hospital/Health system .......................................... 23%
Local public health lab ........................................... 12%
N/A - I don't process COVID-19 molecular test specimens ...... 37%
Other (please specify) ...................................................... 11%

12. What is your primary consideration when choosing where to send a COVID-19 molecular test specimen for processing? (select one)

The lab is in the patient’s payor network ......................... 20%
Quicker turnaround times ........................................... 41%
Quality and accuracy of the lab .................................. 23%
Other (please specify) ...................................................... 16%

13. If you send COVID-19 molecular test samples to a third party for processing, what is the turnaround time to receive results?

Less than 24 hours ......................................................... 2%
24-48 hours ............................................................. 22%
3-7 days ........................................................................ 39%
7-14 days ................................................................. 20%
More than 14 days ......................................................... 4%
No consistent timeline .................................................. 13%
14. If you process COVID-19 molecular test specimens on site, what is the turnaround time to receive results?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnaround Time</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 24 hours</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-48 hours</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7 days</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-14 days</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 14 days</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No consistent timeline</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. If you process COVID-19 tests on site, have you had any challenges reporting data to CalREDIE?

Yes: 12%
No: 88%

16. If you process COVID-19 tests on site, do you utilize pooled testing?

Yes: 41%
No: 59%

17. Is your practice having difficulty obtaining any of the following supplies to process specimens for COVID-19 molecular testing? (check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supply</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reagents</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab instruments</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Protective Equipment</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, my practice is not having difficulty obtaining supplies</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Are you being reimbursed by payors for processing COVID-19 molecular test specimens? (check all that apply)

Yes: 13%
No: 6%
Don't know: 81%

19. What percentage of the COVID-19 molecular test specimens you process are you reimbursed for?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Reimbursement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 75%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Does the payor's reimbursement cover your costs for COVID-19 molecular test specimen processing?

Always: 0%
Sometimes: 100%
Never: 0%
21. Why are you not being reimbursed by payors for processing COVID-19 molecular test specimens? (check all that apply)
   Unclear how to bill appropriately .......................................................... 0%
   Payor denies as bundled ...................................................................... 0%
   Payor denies as non-covered ................................................................. 100%
   Other (please specify) ........................................................................... 0%

22. How often do you receive your patient’s COVID-19 molecular test results?
   All of the time........................................................................................ 59%
   More than half of the time .................................................................. 18%
   Half of the time .................................................................................... 7%
   Less than half of the time ..................................................................... 4%
   Only if patient tells me or never ......................................................... 6%
   Not applicable ...................................................................................... 6%

23. Does your practice do antigen, serology or other COVID-19 testing?
   Yes.......................................................................................................... 20%
   No......................................................................................................... 80%

24. What types of alternative COVID-19 testing do you perform? (check all that apply)
   Rapid antigen test .............................................................................. 39%
   Serology ............................................................................................... 84%
   Other (please specify) ......................................................................... 2%

25. Are you reimbursed by payors for collecting or processing alternative COVID-19 test specimens? (check all that apply)
   Yes.......................................................................................................... 7%
   No......................................................................................................... 22%
   Sometimes ............................................................................................ 14%
   Don’t know .......................................................................................... 49%
   Not applicable ...................................................................................... 8%

26. How often do you receive your patient’s alternative COVID-19 test results?
   All of the time........................................................................................ 67%
   More than half of the time .................................................................. 12%
   Half of the time .................................................................................... 3%
   Less than half of the time ..................................................................... 5%
   Only if patient tells me or never ......................................................... 8%
   Not applicable ...................................................................................... 5%

27. For primary care practices, do you send broad communications to patients about when they should be tested?
   Yes.......................................................................................................... 18%
   No......................................................................................................... 31%
   Not applicable ...................................................................................... 51%
28. Where do you get your information on testing? (check all that apply)

- California Department of Public Health ........................................... 64%
- Local Public Health Departments .................................................. 61%
- Independent research ...................................................................... 28%
- Medical Group, IPA, Health System ................................................. 35%
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ..................................... 63%
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration ................................................ 10%
- California Medical Association ...................................................... 33%
- Other medical or specialty societies ................................................. 23%
- Other (please specify) ...................................................................... 5%

29. Please share other challenges your practice has experienced related to COVID-19 testing:

+ Turnaround time is too long to be meaningful. Also have not been able to get swabs from LabCorp and local hospitals short on reagent supplies.

+ Public health only does priority testing. Patients have to wait a long time to go to local test site if asymptomatic. By the time they get their results, they might have infected a lot of people. Patients are frustrated with not knowing if they are carrier.

+ Provider testing availability. If I test myself weekly, I have to pay $100/week, so I have been trying to find free locations to do it.

+ It's still almost impossible to order a test in this area unless a patient is going to have a procedure or goes to a local ER.

+ My practice volume is down 90%. I used to have a 4 to 6 week waiting time to see me. Now I only see 1 or 2 patients per day. I would operate 5 to 10 cases per week. NOW MAYBE ONE PER WEEK. I cannot sustain such a loss of income. I can’t pay my staff or the rent. I may have to close my office completely.

+ For preoperative testing we are having trouble getting results back in timely manner and have had to cancel surgery due to this.

+ We have limited testing. We are a cancer center and cannot support routine testing before chemo so we only refer symptomatic patients for testing at local sites. We are limited on rapid testing, so we have to plan 5 days in advance if we feel a test is necessary prior to a procedure, like chemotherapy, and even then our testing capacity is limited.

+ Ensuring the safety of my patients and those I supervise.

+ Length of time it takes to receive results! Really difficult if waiting for a staff member to get results before they can return to work.

+ Delays in getting appointments for testing, delays in test results, insufficient contact tracing teams.

+ We have had to place our testing on hold, as we do not have a steady or stable supply of testing materials. I work at a county hospital. The surrounding private or community hospitals have better supply access. This puts our patients of low socioeconomic status at a disadvantage and increases the degree of health disparities in our community.
We can only order a few tests due to limited availability of kits from LabCorp. So, we are only testing high risk cases. We need more availability to test children and kits to test all who need them. Plus, faster turnaround times.

Finding a testing site with availability is sometimes hard for patients with limited technology access.

Not having adequate PPE, office space not safe.

Difficult to figure out which antibody tests are reliable. Difficulty to acquire testing platforms.

Pre-op or pre-procedure testing is so delayed it is not clinically useful.

Patients agreeing to be tested.

Lack of testing. I want to test, but I can’t get the machine or kits.

We are down to our last 5 collection vials. We have been told by Quest we can’t get more at this time.

Reimbursement for collection. Lengthy and changing turnaround times. Public Health departments changing guidelines for who is eligible for testing.

We simply cannot get enough testing kits; I tell at least 10 patients a day they should be tested but we don’t have enough supplies.

Difficulty getting test kids, shortages of materials, slow turnaround time and lost tests.

Fallout from limited testing: no full body coverage offered by health system; ED MDs can wear their own/self-purchased Tyvek suits; not allowed to share/supply to RNs or other staff; no anterooms, cannot increase numbers of AIIRs in ED; arriving EMS personnel clearly not adequately supplied; lingering discord between ED physician group hospital admin who were slow to acknowledge need for masks/took away masks from RNs/tryd to take away masks from EDMDs/would not allow EDMCs to solicit PPE from community - though community willing and asking who to help - never apologized; they now require and supply masks/faceshields only from within their own system; least well supplied healthcare system in the area for rapid tests (we have 4 rapid tests/day only to use in the ED - only for sickest patients); all pts admitted are tested but with PANTHER with off-site 8-12 hours turnaround time; limited RN staffing due to cutbacks/illness/furloughs increases ED boarding of transfer pts and in-queue pts awaiting inhouse bed - lack of onsite rapid testing uses more PPE; overall effect is low morale - many nurses leaving for better pay/conditions.

Even if we have sent the patient to the hospital or community site for testing, we are not provided the test results as soon as possible, posing problems for treatment planning.

Patients unable to schedule an appointment for testing. Delayed test results. False negative test results.

Turnaround time for lab testing as it relates to preoperative testing (we are a surgical practice). Oftentimes patient surgeries will be canceled on the day of the surgery as preoperative COVID test results are not available in time for their scheduled surgery, despite testing up to a week in advance.

Lack of chain of commands. Long testing appointments and lack of clear instructions on where to send patients to for testing.

The biggest frustration is lack of testing supplies. Second frustration is the steps necessary to get the samples to the lab for testing.
+ Due to limited supplies we are not able to test children. I have no idea of the prevalence in my community due to shortage of testing supplies and long turnaround time.

+ Mostly getting PPE. I have been so close to closing my doors because I can’t obtain masks, gloves, cleaning supplies.

30. How many physicians are in your practice?

1-5 ................................................................................................................................. 60%
6-25 ............................................................................................................................... 20%
26-50 ............................................................................................................................. 5%
51-100 .......................................................................................................................... 4%
101-500 ......................................................................................................................... 6%
501-1000 ......................................................................................................................... 2%
More than 1,000 ............................................................................................................ 3%

31. Please indicate your medical specialty (check all that apply):

Allergy .......................................................................................................................... 1%
Anesthesiology .............................................................................................................. 7%
Cardiology ..................................................................................................................... 2%
Dermatology .................................................................................................................. 2%
Emergency medicine/trauma/urgent care ................................................................. 6%
Endocrinology ............................................................................................................... 1%
Gastroenterology ......................................................................................................... 2%
General surgery ......................................................................................................... 2%
Infectious disease ....................................................................................................... 1%
Multi-specialty ............................................................................................................ 4%
Neurology .................................................................................................................... 1%
Nephrology ................................................................................................................ 1%
OB/GYN ......................................................................................................................... 3%
Oncology .................................................................................................................... 2%
Ophthalmology ............................................................................................................ 3%
Orthopedics/orthopedic surgery ................................................................................ 2%
Otolaryngology .......................................................................................................... 2%
Pain medicine ............................................................................................................. 0%
Pathology ................................................................................................................... 0%
Pediatrics ..................................................................................................................... 11%
Plastic & reconstructive surgery ............................................................................... 2%
Primary Care (internal medicine, family practice, general practice) ..................... 28%
Psychiatry ................................................................................................................... 4%
Pulmonology ............................................................................................................... 1%
Radiology ................................................................................................................... 1%
Rheumatology ............................................................................................................ 1%
Surgery ......................................................................................................................... 1%
Urology ....................................................................................................................... 1%
Vascular surgery ......................................................................................................... 1%
Other (please specify) ............................................................................................... 6%

CMA COVID-19 TESTING SURVEY RESULTS
32. **What county do you practice in?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alameda</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<td>Amador</td>
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<td>Butte</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0.2%</td>
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