



Better health through
laboratory medicine.

April 16, 2020

Ambassador Deborah Birx, MD
White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator
Office of the Vice President
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Ambassador Birx:

The American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACCC) urges you to address the critical needs of America's clinical laboratories for sample collection and analytical test components and personal protective equipment (PPE) to meet our nation's COVID-19 testing demands. We also encourage the Coronavirus Task Force to communicate directly and regularly with the clinical laboratory community to address barriers to testing. Such consultations may eliminate confusion over the current testing capacity for the virus.

AACCC's members, as laboratory professionals, are on the front lines combating this disease—developing laboratory developed tests (LDTs) to detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus or implementing commercial test kits, overseeing and conducting these tests from specimen collection to results reporting, and developing and/or implementing new testing mechanisms to detect antibodies post-infection. Even though significant progress has been made in these areas in recent weeks, there are still significant barriers to laboratories expanding testing and appropriately protecting laboratory healthcare personnel.

While the capacity for performing COVID-19 testing has increased significantly in recent weeks, our ability to perform tests is still limited. There is a shortage of necessary supplies, including sample collection and test components. We also need appropriate nasal swabs to collect the specimens intended for the molecular tests. Unless and until these supply chain issues are resolved, the nation's laboratories will remain stymied in their attempts to maximize their testing capacity. At this point, the biggest barrier to testing is not capacity, but access to vital supplies.

Another critical issue facing the laboratory community, as well as other healthcare professionals, is the shortage of PPE. Laboratory professionals are collecting and processing the specimens needed to determine whether a person is infected by the virus. As frontline workers, they continue to need PPE, including gowns, masks, gloves, and face shields so that they can safely

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do their jobs. Increased production and disbursement of these items to the entire healthcare enterprise is vital to ensuring the safety of those individuals charged with clinical testing.

Finally, AACC strongly urges the Task Force to consult with laboratory professionals to learn of the problems the testing community is encountering and obtain feedback on possible solutions for addressing these problems. You recently asked why labs were not using their Abbott instruments to full capacity. Direct interaction with the lab medicine community would facilitate speedy answers to your questions, which would in turn make it easier for you to put into place effective solutions. One option for facilitating this interaction would be for the Task Force to participate in AACC's online [forum](#) that allows laboratory professionals to share problems in real-time and discuss immediate options for addressing them.

AACC is a global scientific and medical professional organization dedicated to clinical laboratory science and its application to healthcare. AACC brings together more than 50,000 clinical laboratory professionals, physicians, research scientists, and business leaders from around the world focused on clinical chemistry, molecular diagnostics, mass spectrometry, translational medicine, lab management, and other areas of laboratory science to advance healthcare collaboration, knowledge, expertise, and innovation.

We look forward to working with you on these most important issues. To facilitate these interactions, or if you have any questions, please email Vince Stine, PhD, AACC's Senior Director of Government and Global Affairs, at vsstine@aacc.org.

Sincerely,



Carmen L. Wiley, PhD, DABCC, FAACC
President, AACC