

EFFICIENCY & QUALITY IN A REMOTE, DIFFICULT TO STAFF LAB

Case Study | Fairbanks Memorial Hospital

KEY FIGURES

Date Established

→ 1972

Number of Beds

→ 152

Number of Specialties

→ 27+

Inpatient Visits

→ 4,384

Outpatient Visits

→ 150,165

Employees

→ 1,399

Part of Foundation Health Partners, a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Greater Fairbanks Community Hospital Foundation

Community owned & operated

Serves patients from throughout the interior of Alaska

Accredited by: AABB, CLIA, and the College of American Pathologists

OVERVIEW

Fairbanks Memorial Hospital (FMH) serves patients throughout the interior of Alaska, providing care in more than 27 specialties. The laboratory team at FMH is committed to helping clinicians deliver quality patient care through routine same-day testing and urgent specimens.

Due to FMH's location, the laboratory faces challenges with long-term staffing. While many laboratories struggle to fill open positions, the challenge is especially acute in the heart of Alaska. Staffing shortages and frequent transitions mean that efficient workflow and simplified processes are even more important to the goal of delivering quality patient care.

FMH decided to engage with the bioMérieux Lab Consultancy team to help improve capacity, efficiency, and time to results—all in context of a small staff with high turnover.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS & CHALLENGES

- Staffing & utilization
- Workflow changes
- Time to results

IMPLEMENTATION

Prior to working with bioMérieux, the lab's microbiology processes and quality control were duplicative and time consuming, which was difficult for the small staff to keep up with. FMH also wanted to learn how they could involve staff with less microbiology experience in PCR testing to relieve microbiology staff workload and bring on a new instrument—the VITEK® MS Prime—which they knew would lead to important microbiology process changes. FMH viewed the situation as a perfect opportunity to evaluate and improve laboratory workflow as a whole.

Even though FMH knew they needed help, staff in the laboratory were apprehensive at first, as is often the case when a third party is brought in to review processes and consult. However, the bioMérieux team was able to build trust and make everyone comfortable with a non-judgmental approach. These positive relationships meant that staff were more open to making changes and implementing the roadmap provided by the bioMérieux team.

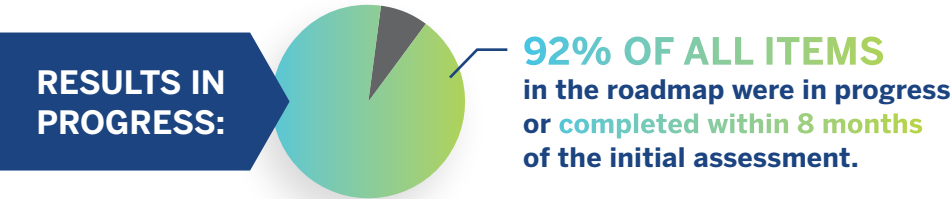


RESULTS





These process improvements helped the lab achieve high quality results and faster turnaround times, including finalized results in 18-24 hours on uncomplicated UTIs.

In addition to the improvements in turnaround time, the plan and guidelines that the bioMérieux team provided are clear and easy to follow.

Working with the team, a roadmap for change was developed to help guide the lab to make improvements and implement recommendations. Even with staffing or leadership changes, this is an easy-to-follow roadmap to keep the lab moving forward.







KEY RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDED:

-  Outsource testing that requires highly specialized knowledge and significant hands-on time
-  Utilize moderate complexity molecular testing to reduce turnaround time and decrease hands on time
-  Clarify procedures to reduce ramp up time for new employees
-  Invest in newer ID/AST equipment to reduce time to actionable results

The team at FMH now has a plan for the future that they can continue to implement over time, even in the context of high staff turnover, which means continued improvements in the support that the lab can provide to clinicians. The project is more than an investment in the laboratory—it is an investment in the future of patient care.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

-  Openness to change
-  Knowledge sharing and communication
-  PCR technology
-  Networking laboratory instruments and systems



“Trust the team coming in to guide you, stay open minded about the process and the suggestions and work with your staff as a team too, before you move forward.”

Medical Laboratory Scientist at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital



“The team has seen a lot of different labs and a lot of different processes. They can take all of those experiences and suggestions and bring them to us, and make them applicable to our lab, with our staffing, in our region.”

Laboratory Director at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital



“Long term, we were thinking about how we can push out the best results possible, with faster turnaround time, without the need to have 3 to 5+ years microbiology training and experience.”

Medical Laboratory Scientist at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital

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