

TRANSITION OF SERVICES - TOM BAKER CANCER CENTRE (TBCC)

As leaders involved in the transition of clinical testing from Tom Baker Cancer Center (TBCC) Pathology Laboratory to Calgary Laboratory Services (CLS) – and on behalf of the hundreds of staff and physicians who provide this service to patients – we'd like to offer the following clarification to the reports which suggested that CLS is not prepared and lacks the expertise to manage the additional workload. In fact:

- Essentially all cancer diagnoses in the Calgary Zone have always been made by pathologists at CLS.
- Almost all laboratory tests for cancer patients in the Calgary Zone have always been performed by CLS.
- CLS has more than 80 physicians and specialized laboratory scientists and 1,950 technical and clerical staff providing patient care.
- CLS' Lead Cancer Pathologist Calgary Zone has almost 20 years experience in cancer pathology with specific expertise in gynecologic and pulmonary pathology and is a member of the National Lung Cancer Pathology and Staging Multidisciplinary Expert Panel.
- In the specific areas of Immunohistochemistry and Molecular Pathology, CLS currently performs over 90,000 tests annually and employs ten Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technology licensed medical laboratory technologists, with a combined experience of greater than 90 years.
- Prognostic tests (which suggest how a patient's cancer might behave) and predictive tests (which suggest how a patient will respond to a specific treatment) are all interpreted by a group of specialist pathologists with expertise in this testing. This allows second opinion and consensus diagnosis, essential components that ensure an accurate test result.

In simple terms, this means cancer patients will continue to get the same high quality of testing they have always received. Services will not be disrupted by this transition, nor will they be reduced. On the contrary, this move will reduce duplication between the two laboratories, improve communication and create efficiencies that will allow CLS to expand the menu of testing and introduce emerging cancer tests. That means better options for physicians and their patients. In the short term we expect quality will remain as high as it has always been, and the expectation is that in the long-term, quality overall will be improved.

How do we know the quality of our testing is good? A comprehensive validation plan, over and above general laboratory practice and Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI) requirements, was designed to ensure the transfer of tests from TBCC would be seamless and introduce no risk to patient care. For the past six weeks CLS has been comparing test results to those generated at TBCC, with additional samples sent to Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto to be checked. The quality of testing has so far proven to be as high as what is currently offered. As validation progresses, any disagreement in results will lead to samples being sent to the Mayo Clinic to resolve.

This transition will also provide clinicians with access to consolidated results via the various Electronic Medical Record Systems available. It will enable the TBCC Translational Research Laboratory to continue its focus on cancer care research and development of emerging molecular techniques under the direction of AHS Research.

We are proud of the work we do and the people who do it. CLS has been recognized as one of Alberta's Top Employers for the past three consecutive years and is one of the largest multi-site integrated acute care and community laboratory practices in North America. We provide multi-disciplinary diagnostic laboratory and pathology services to more than 1.3 million people in Calgary and surrounding areas. Last year, CLS performed over 21 million tests.

Our staff and physicians are highly dedicated and committed in the work they do on a daily basis. Patient care is always our number one concern, and we have set the bar high to ensure our expectations for quality are met. We are confident we are meeting this, and will continue to meet this, as we transition to this next phase of cancer pathology in Calgary.



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