



Customer Survey Yields Positive Results

By Anne Marie Mullin, Senior Vice President

In the summer of 2009 we reported the results from a customer survey that took place at the start of that year.

Laboratory Alliance had, for the first time, engaged the services of a research and marketing company to perform a Voice of the Customer survey. We were very pleased with the results, and received valuable feedback about our company.

At that time, we used the feedback to make Laboratory Alliance even better in the eyes of our customers, and we incorporated suggestions from the survey respondents.

Last June, three and a half years after the first survey, Dr. O'Leary and I again worked with the same firm, Vincent McCabe, to complete our 2012 Voice of the Customer – Customer Satisfaction research study. Because we are studying change of opinion over time, the 2012 survey instruments were similar to the first study in 2009. We are glad to share details of the process and results.

Overview

During June 2012, prospective participants from a list of Laboratory Alliance's customers were contacted by phone and were invited to complete an online study. The respondents, 57 individuals from 49 different practices or organizations, represented a broad cross-section of job titles and practice and organization types.

The 2012 results were very positive – they actually exceeded the positive results of the 2009 study. Laboratory Alliance received an exceptional number of complimentary comments. Most importantly, we virtually eliminated any pockets of minor dissatisfaction noted in the 2009 survey.

The researchers noted that scores and comments such as those provided by our users are extraordinary and indicate a strong affinity for Laboratory Alliance services and its employees.

Of the respondents:

- 91 percent gave a score of 8, 9 or 10 that they would recommend Laboratory Alliance.
- There were no scores lower than 5.
- 96 percent of respondents scored Laboratory Alliance highly overall, with good and excellent scores.

Compared to benchmarks of other organizations, these are very strong scores. The increase of 2 percent over 2009 was most rewarding in that more people scored us a "9" or "10" in 2012 than in 2009. At these high levels of performance, maintaining such scores over time is a significantly positive signal, according to Jean Vincent of Vincent McCabe. Physicians' scores were slightly higher than the average score.

What did we learn?

Overall, scores were very high, with the vast majority scoring Laboratory Alliance "excellent" or "good" on each of the service factors. According to Vincent McCabe, when considering average scores seen in surveys of this type, Laboratory Alliance scores are very high and notably strong.

To conclude

While everyone at Laboratory Alliance is thrilled with these results, we never stop striving for excellence in our areas of expertise. We practice teamwork at Laboratory Alliance, and our customers are part of our team.

The survey feedback is good, but as I wrote in 2009, we prefer that our customers tell us throughout the year how we are doing and what we could do better, rather than waiting for the next customer survey.

It is as easy as sending an email, picking up the phone or speaking with an account representative at his or her next visit. Communication is critical because we know that if we don't take care of our customers, someone else will.

FACTORS OF IMPORTANCE

The top ten service factors that respondents consider most important include the following:

1. Accuracy of results
2. STAT testing turnaround time
3. Prompt response to inquiries
4. Overall customer service responsiveness
5. Ease of getting results
6. Courtesy of staff
7. Customer service offered by telephone staff
8. Critical value notification
9. Courier and transport services
10. Good connectivity to your EMR

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Creating a Leaner Rapid Response Lab at Crouse

By Lonnie Stallcup, Manager of Process Improvement

The Lean Project at our Rapid Response Lab within Crouse Hospital began in March 2012. Sally Riggall, clinical lab technologist at our Crouse site, assisted me in planning the new design for the lab.

Phase one of implementation involved removing permanent casework between the Blood Bank and the General Lab. Removing the casework helped to improve laboratory communication and also created more work space for technical staff.

Phase two of the Lean implementation involved moving the automated instruments closer to the center of the laboratory in a "circular" configuration. This allowed us to reduce the amount of walking staff would have to do to complete their processes. To further streamline, manual test processes were placed outside of the central, automated work cell.

Prior to the implementation of Lean, Central Receiving staff had limited work space. Through Lean principles we created additional space for the staff to complete their processes more fluidly.

In spite of the obstacles that it faced prior to this project, the Crouse RRL now operates efficiently and effectively. We are currently working to transition non-technical activities performed by technical staff to Central Receiving, and will continue to work as a team to incorporate Lean principles in the RRL workplace.



CORRECT CODES ARE CRITICAL!

DID YOU KNOW?

Medicare **may deny payment** for a test even though the physician believed it was appropriate if the test did not meet Medicare's definition of medical necessity.

NCDs and LCDs

National Coverage Determinations (NCDs) and **Local Coverage Determinations (LCDs)** tests and information concerning appropriate diagnosis codes can be found on Laboratory Alliance's website at laboratoryalliance.com under **Healthcare Providers**.

There, you will find:

- **Specific test CPT codes** for which medical necessity rules have been defined.
- **The ICD-9 or diagnosis codes** that Medicare will accept as documentation that the listed test is reasonable and necessary for diagnosis or treatment. ICD-9 codes supporting medical necessity **must be included on the requisition form**. The diagnosis must be present for the procedure to be paid and there must be documentation within the patient's medical record.

Note: When ordering a test that does not meet NCD or LCD guidelines, an Advanced Beneficiary Notice (ABN) should be signed by the patient. The purpose of the ABN is to give the patient advance notice that Medicare may not pay for the test ordered. When payment is denied as not medically necessary, Laboratory Alliance can only bill the patient if we have received a valid (i.e., signed) ABN.

Reflex Testing

Reflex testing is testing that is performed as a result of initial test results which are used to further identify significant diagnostic information required for appropriate patient care. A list of the reflex tests that are performed when appropriate is in our **Directory of Services**, on our website and on the back of our requisitions.

Panels

Organ or disease panels will only be billed and reimbursed when all test components are medically necessary. If only some components are medically necessary, or if the physician wishes to order other tests not included in the panel, those tests should be ordered individually. A list of tests included in the American Medical Association acceptable panels is included on our requisition and in our **Directory of Services**. Medicare reimbursement amounts for these tests can be found at: www.cms.hhs.gov/ClinicalLabFeeSched/. Medicaid reimbursement will usually be equal to or less than the Medicare reimbursement.

Clinical Consultation Services

Appropriate test use and ordering may be discussed with Laboratory Alliance's Medical Director and CEO Michael O'Leary, M.D., available by contacting our Customer Service Department at (315) 461-3008.

- **National Coverage Determinations (NCD)** is a national policy statement that indicates which diagnoses, signs, or symptoms are payable for specific tests.

- **Local Coverage Determinations (LCD)** is a local policy statement by the local Medicare carrier or fiscal intermediary that indicates which diagnoses, signs, or symptoms are payable for specific tests. Our Medicare carrier is National Government Services.

- ICD stands for **International Statistical Classifications of Diseases**. ICD codes are alphanumeric designations given to every diagnosis, description of symptoms and cause of death attributed to human beings.

Compliance Information was submitted by Nancy Sniffen, Director of Billing and Compliance, and Belinda Reed, Compliance Manager

Your cooperation in providing diagnostic information is essential to the efficient operation of our lab. Without appropriate diagnostic documentation, we cannot get paid for our services.

Additionally, diagnostic information can determine whether or not an ABN should be signed. You can either provide an ICD-9 code or a written diagnosis in the space provided on the requisition.

Providing diagnostic information when ordering a test not only helps us operate efficiently and get paid for our services, it can also eliminate the time and expense the physician office may incur when reviewing files and responding to our requests.



Flu Facts — A State of Emergency

By Paul A. Granato, Ph.D., Director of Microbiology

As the news media reported, the months of October through December 2012 were historic for an unprecedented incidence of influenza occurring in the Central New York area and throughout New York state.

During that three-month period, more than 15,000 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza were documented in New York state compared to only 4,000 cases the entire previous respiratory season. As of mid-January, the total number of influenza cases reported in New York state exceeded 20,000 laboratory-confirmed infections.

The continual increase in influenza infections prompted Gov. Andrew Cuomo to declare a public health emergency on January 13. In doing so, Gov. Cuomo directed his administration, the NYS Department of Health and other agencies to use all resources necessary to deal with the influenza problem and to “remove all barriers to ensure that all New Yorkers – children and adults alike – have access to critically needed flu vaccine.”

Laboratory Alliance’s Microbiology Department also was impacted by the high incidence of influenza in the community by testing unusually large numbers of patient specimens.

For example, during last December alone, our virology staff performed more influenza tests than some entire previous years. Fortunately, Laboratory Alliance recently

implemented a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) influenza assay at each of its three Rapid Response Laboratories (RRLs) located at St. Joseph’s Hospital, Crouse Hospital, and Upstate University Hospital - Community Campus, that is identical to the method used at our Operations Center.

This rapid and reliable PCR assay allows for the confirmatory laboratory detection of influenza in a patient specimen within 90 minutes of specimen receipt. The availability of reliable results in such a short period of time has had great impact on the care and therapeutic management of hospitalized and emergency room patients.

Given the considerable amount of recent national and local news media attention that influenza has attracted, I share with you the following facts about influenza for your general information:

- According to a recent study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the current trivalent influenza vaccine is only 62% effective in preventing influenza. Despite this, individuals are encouraged to receive the vaccine to prevent the dissemination of disease. The very young and the elderly are especially encouraged to receive the vaccine as influenza may cause the most serious disease in these age groups with the highest mortality rates.
- It is estimated that about 37% of the American population has received the flu vaccine. 135 million vaccine doses

were manufactured for this flu season. It is expected that at least 50% of the U.S. population will be vaccinated.

- In the United States, 7.3% of all deaths that occurred during the first week of 2013 were due to influenza or pneumonia.
- The most prevalent flu strain this year is influenza A H3N2, which was last seen nine years ago and was known as the “Fujian” flu. However, the 2009 influenza A H1N1 virus, also known as the swine flu, and the influenza B viruses have been detected occasionally in our community and throughout the U.S. All three of these influenza viruses are covered by the current influenza vaccine and all three viruses and many more are detected by the PCR assay used by Laboratory Alliance.
- The CDC has claimed that this flu season will be the worst in ten years and is already five weeks ahead of the usual flu season cycle.
- So far, only three states, California, Mississippi and Hawaii, have escaped the “widespread” classification issued by the CDC.

In short, the best ways to prevent the acquisition of influenza are by receiving the vaccine (immune protection is usually acquired within 14 days following vaccination), frequently washing your hands, and avoiding close contact with individuals who appear ill with a respiratory infection.

A Local Perspective on the Flu’s Impact

By Anne Marie Mullin, Senior Vice President

For several weeks this winter, the national flu epidemic was the leading news story in Syracuse and across the country. And for good reason.

In December, Laboratory Alliance processed its highest volume of flu tests for one month and exceeded its previous record from October 2009 by almost twice as much. October 2009 is when the area experienced the novel flu strain H1N1.

December 2012 tests exceeded the number of all flu testing the company performed in 2010. During the first week of January, the company’s multiple laboratories ran 680 tests and 40 antigen detection for flu. There were 173 positive results. The positivity rate was about 25 percent.

In response to our news release announcing these statistics, Laboratory Alliance was contacted by WSYR TV News Channel 9’s news reporter Leigh Isaacson. Leigh and her cameraman visited

our Operations Center on Wednesday, Jan. 16, and Leigh interviewed Director of Microbiology Dr. Paul Granato, who discussed this year’s record number of flu cases from a laboratory’s perspective.

Below are some clips of the story that ran on that evening’s news segment following an introduction by Carrie Lazarus. The story is titled “Local lab sees spike in testing for flu, other illnesses,” and is posted on WSYR’s website: log on to www.9wsyr.com and search “local lab sees spike” to read the story and view the video.

We appreciate everyone’s help at the Operation’s Center who assisted with this effort. The reporter and cameraman were very impressed with the scope and size of our company and the important testing that we perform behind the scenes. They asked that we keep them informed of other lab-related news stories that would be of interest to the general public.



National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week is an annual celebration of the medical laboratory professionals and pathologists who play a vital role in every aspect of health care. This year it is Monday, April 22, through Sunday, April 28.

It offers an opportunity to let our clients and associates know about our dedication and commitment to our profession and to quality patient care.

Since laboratory professionals often work behind the scenes, few people know that the critical testing they perform every day saves lives, reduces morbidity, and helps control the cost of care.

Join us as we honor the more than 300,000 medical laboratory professionals throughout the country who perform and interpret more than 10 billion laboratory tests in the United States every year.

With a critical nationwide shortage of medical laboratory professionals, a degree in Clinical Laboratory Science is a smart career move.

In response to the shortage of skilled phlebotomists, Laboratory Alliance recently announced a new training program to become a skilled phlebotomist, designed to recruit friendly, confident professionals to the company.

Qualified recruits receive training, a competitive compensation and a comprehensive benefits package. Friendly people are required for this patient-focused profession. In addition to a cheerful attitude, a high school diploma and valid driver’s license are required to participate in the program.

“As we expand in Central New York, we have openings for phlebotomists at each of these new centers,” said Barb Guiffrida, vice president of human resources. “A few years ago we addressed the shortage of medical technologists by starting an education program that trains skilled workers over a two-year period. The phlebotomy program compensates the trainees while offering a rewarding career in the healthcare industry.”

Welcome to our New Clients

Breast Care Center
Syracuse, N.Y.

Cazenovia College Health Services
Cazenovia, N.Y.

CNY Family Care
East Syracuse, N.Y.
Anatomic Pathology work only



IN THE NEWS



George Popp Joins Board of United Way of Greater Oswego County

George Popp, vice president of Information Systems and chief information officer at Laboratory Alliance, was recently appointed to the board of directors of United Way of Greater Oswego County.

United Way works with 20 local partner agencies and supports 34 human service programs in five areas: emergency services, children and family services, health and special needs, senior services, and youth development. The Oswego County United Way traces its history back to at least 1935, when the Oswego Community Chest was formed to coordinate fund-raising activities among several health and service organizations.

George has been with Laboratory Alliance since its inception in 1998. He is a member of several professional organizations, including the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, the Health Information and Management Systems Society, and the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives.

Anne Marie Mullin Appointed to the Board of Hospice of CNY

Anne Marie Mullin, senior vice president at Laboratory Alliance, was recently appointed to the operating board of Hospice of Central New York.

Hospice of Central New York is an independent, community-based, not-for-profit agency committed to providing a compassionate, dignified alternative for people with an incurable illness and limited life expectancy. HCNY operates Hospice of Central New York (HCNY), the Hospice Grief Center, The Hospice Foundation of CNY, and The Auxiliary to Hospice Foundation.

Anne Marie is a long-time volunteer at HCNY and previously served as secretary and president of the foundation board of Hospice.



IN REMEMBRANCE OF BARB



All of us at Laboratory Alliance and our affiliate hospitals were saddened to learn of the sudden and unexpected death of our friend and co-worker Barbara (Boland) Gonnella, who died on February 14 of a ruptured brain aneurysm.

Barb was the transfusion services manager of Laboratory Alliance since the company was formed in January 1998. Prior to her

15 years with our company, Barb was the Blood Bank supervisor at St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center from June 1993 through December 1997. Barb was a graduate of the College of Health Related Professions at Upstate Medical University with a Bachelor of Science in medical technology.

Following is her obituary, which best speaks to the wonderful person that she was:

She is survived by her husband of 33 years, Severin Gonnella, and her children, Carrie Gonnella and husband, Brendan Daley, David Gonnella and partner, Gwen Lennox, and Andrew Gonnella. She is also survived by a sister, Mary (Pat) O'Connor; sister, Anna (Frank) Baldiga; brother, John (Bev) Boland; brother, Robert (Sue) Boland, and many nieces and nephews.

Barb was the manager of Transfusion Services at Laboratory Alliance of Central New York. She was also a board member of the Blood Bank Society of New York State, a volunteer hospital assessor for AABB for 10 years, and submissions coordinator for the BBANYS newsletter. Barb graduated from SUNY Upstate Medical University and Bishop Grimes High School. Barb lived her life to

the absolute fullest. She enjoyed traveling with her family, cooking, biking, hiking and playing golf. One of her passions was exercising at Trillium Fitness, and she loved the community there. Barb was always looking for new challenges; last year she completed her first Iron Girl Triathlon. Barb served as "Commissioner" of the Wednesday night Pitch league, where she ruled with an iron fist. She and Sev were perennial contenders; in fact, she left us while in first place for this season. Barb was a multi-tasker who gave 110% in her work life, home life, and to her family. She was unfailingly thoughtful, and lived her life with unparalleled integrity. She was the rock of her extended family and was quick to grace everyone with her smile. Barb was a wonderful human being, greatly loved by her colleagues, friends, and family. We are very proud that she was able to help many people through the gifts of her organs.

A scholarship was created in Barb's name, and contributions can be mailed to Upstate Medical University Foundation, 750 E. Adams Street CAB 326, Syracuse, NY 13210 or submitted online at www.foundationforupstate.org.



LA NEWSMAKERS

New Employees

Please welcome our new employees

At our Corporate Offices

Kavita Patel – Information Systems Analyst
Jaclyn Hughes – Customer Service Representative

At our Operations Center

Ronilo Aquino – Medical Technologist
Mary Cosco – Laboratory Office Assistant
Nora Daye – Phlebotomist
Jacob Dillon – Technical Processing Assistant
Lawrence Gessini – Courier
Kathleen Horsington – Phlebotomist
Kevin Morton – Courier

At our Rapid Response Laboratory at Upstate University Hospital at Community General

Sean Dwyer – Medical Technologist

At our Rapid Response Laboratory at Crouse Hospital

Jasmine Bergen – Laboratory Office Assistant
Katie Bocketti – Laboratory Office Assistant

At our Rapid Response Laboratory at St. Joseph's Hospital

Michelle Dautrich – Medical Technologist
Susan Gallager – Pathology Administrative Receptionist
Shelley O'Neil – Laboratory Office Assistant
Martha Starmer – Laboratory Office Assistant
Deanna Woods – Medical Laboratory Technician

Employees Give Generously to Toys for Tots

By **Dru Ellen Neis, MS, MT(ASCP) SH**
Materials Manager, Operations Center

Laboratory Alliance employees contributed four large collection boxes full of new toys for the US Marines Corp Toys for Tots campaign this year.

A special thank you to Transportation Supervisor Bill Miller for his assistance picking up and dropping off all of the toys collected for this charitable event.

On behalf of the Activities Committee, I want to thank Laboratory Alliance employees for their generosity by helping others in need during the 2012-13 holiday season.

Laboratory Alliance Goes Red

Our employees again generously donated to the Go Red for Women campaign which was held on Feb. 4. We raised \$470 for the American Heart Association. Many employees showed their support by wearing red that day.



Employee Anniversaries

January, 5 years:

Donald Stone
Wayne Nowakowski

January, 10 years:

Deborah Durante

February, 5 years:

Jeffrey Baker

March, 5 years:

Kathleen Hass
Robert Smith

March, 15 years:

Eric Henry
Kathleen Laubenstein
Mary Meaker
Michele Scott
Karen Strouse
Lawrence Vanderhoff

January, 15 years:

Maureen Conklin
Diane King
Mary Ellen Milczarski
Russell Rawling
Rebecca Reynolds
Debra Shannon
Virginia Stannard
Margaret Thompson

February, 15 years:

Mary K. Clancy
Nancy Crossett
Cheryl Haskins
Janet Miller
Rita Sabino
Daniel Sheehan

Join Our Team as We Remember a Friend

Laboratory Alliance will be participating as a team in the 2013 American Heart Association Heart Walk. Our team will walk or run in memory of Barb Gonnella. Barb was an advocate for a healthy lifestyle and encouraged physical fitness. The event will be held on Saturday, April 6, at 10 a.m., rain or shine, at Onondaga Community College, SRC Event Center. There is no entry fee. Registration begins at 8 a.m.

Following are instructions to join the Laboratory Alliance Team:

1. Go to www.heartwalk.kintera.org/syracuse.ny.
2. Click on "Register."
3. Agree to the Waiver/Agreement.
4. Click on "Join a Team."
5. Type in "Laboratory Alliance of Central New York, LLC" and click "Search."
6. Choose "Laboratory Alliance of CNY, LLC (In memory of Barb Gonnella)."
7. Click on "Join Our Team."
8. Agree to the Waiver/Agreement, again.
9. Create username (can be your name) and create password.
10. Follow the prompts to conclusion.

The funds you raise for the Heart Walk will support heart research. Your donations will also help to provide life-saving information to those who need it most.

For more information, contact Marsha Herbst at 461-5903 or by email at marshaherbst@lacny.com or Sunquest mailbox (MYH).



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Saturday, March 23

Ignite 2013 Catholic Men's Conference, SRC Event Center at OCC, *Laboratory Alliance is an exhibitor*



Tuesday, April 3

Upstate New York BioCareer Connection, Ithaca, N.Y. *Laboratory Alliance is a presenter and an exhibitor*



Sunday, April 6

American Heart Association Heart Walk, SRC Event Center at OCC, *Laboratory Alliance will have a team participating in memory of Barb Gonnella. (See page 7 for details).*

**Sunday, April 22-
Saturday, April 28**

National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week
The theme is "Laboratory Professionals Get Results"



Donate a Children's Book by March 8

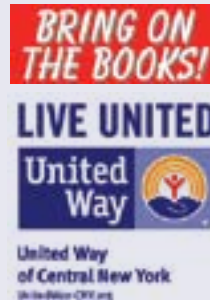
By Brenda Alkins
Device Trial Specialist, Microbiology Department

Laboratory Alliance is participating in the United Way's 15th annual "Bring on the Books" book drive through Friday, March 8. Employees are encouraged to donate new or gently used children's books.

The books will be donated to child care centers and other programs that serve the youth in Onondaga County. Also, we will donate a book for each of our postcards, pictured below, that are brought to our Medical Center West patient service center in response to a recent mailing to the Camillus community.

The campaign, "Success by 6," is a children's initiative of the United Way that promotes literacy and works to ensure that children in Onondaga County are ready for success in both school and life.

Please place the books in the designated boxes located at each of our sites. For more information, contact Brenda Alkins, chairperson, at 410-7067 or Barbara Guiffrida at 461-3028.



When your doctor orders laboratory tests, visit us at Medical Center West

5700 West Genesee Street

Monday through Friday
7:30 am to 5:00 pm

Saturday
8:00 am to noon
315-468-0501

We're located east of the village of Camillus on Route 5 / West Genesee Street, next to St. Joseph's Church and just west of Wal-Mart, Lowe's and Bon-Ton. Free parking, easy access and no appointment necessary.



Always known for prompt, courteous and professional service, Laboratory Alliance is locally owned and employs more than 440 Central New Yorkers.

Show this postcard before June 30, 2013, and we will donate a children's book to United Way's Success By 6 program



If you live in Central New York, it's likely you are vitamin D deficient.

Do you know your vitamin D level?



Why worry?

When we don't replace vitamin D daily, our body will meet its needs by stealing calcium from our bones, weakening them over time — a process that can contribute to the development of osteoporosis and weaken our immunities. Vitamin D deficiency may also increase the risk of heart disease and colon and prostate cancer.

Testing provides important information

A vitamin D deficiency is diagnosed by measuring the concentration of a specific form of vitamin D in blood. Many tests do not measure the supplemental form of vitamin D. **It is imperative to request a total vitamin D test (25-OH vitamin D) in order to assess your true status — a total test that measures vitamin D₂ and D₃ levels in the blood.**

Ask your doctor if you should be tested.

To learn more, visit laboratoryalliance.com or call 315-461-3008.

LABlines

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LABORATORY ALLIANCE of CNY

Comments, suggestions or inquiries should be directed to
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