Coronavirus updates

Questionnaire identifies COVID-19 impact, challenges, needs of organizations

The Joint Commission enterprise conducted an online questionnaire in September 2020 among health care organizations that work with The Joint Commission, Joint Commission Resources and the Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare to learn about the needs of health care organizations in the current and evolving pandemic environment.

The questionnaire — administered by C+R Research — had a total of 735 respondents, representing a variety of health care settings. It assessed needs for enhancements, changes and improvements to patient safety and quality of care amid COVID-19 by focusing on these key areas:

- **Self-reported impact of COVID-19 on organizations:** Most survey participants reported a medium to high impact on their organizations from COVID-19 and often perceived a higher impact than the number of COVID-19 cases in their area may have indicated.

- **Greatest COVID-19 challenges faced:** Health care organizations across all settings reported facing common challenges during COVID-19, including staffing issues, obtaining supplies/supply shortages, and implementing safety protocols and guidelines.

- **Staffing changes resulting from COVID-19:** Survey participants reported the most common changes resulting from COVID-19 include increased communication to keep staff updated on changes and to support their well-being, increased working-from-home participation and changed plans to accommodate staffing shortages.

- **Protocol/organizational changes resulting from COVID-19:** Establishing and updating protocols such as infection prevention and emergency management plans and procuring additional PPE and supplies for immediate use were the most common COVID-19 organizational changes reported by survey participants.

- **COVID-19 resource importance:** Survey participants identified resources that helped them monitor changes and adapt plans accordingly — specifically, communications on regulatory/guideline changes resulting from COVID-19, information on modifications to infection prevention plans and additional training as being the most helpful as federal/state/local recommendations evolve.

Visit The Joint Commission’s COVID-19 resource page.

*Sentinel Event Alert shares concerns from health care workers during COVID-19*

The latest issue of *Sentinel Event Alert* — the first in a new special-edition series — addresses concerns received from health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In “Voices from the pandemic: Health care workers in the midst of crisis,” *Sentinel Event Alert* examines how the continuing onslaught of COVID-19 is pushing health care organizations to their limits and workers beyond physical exhaustion. These kinds of traumatic experiences underscore the critical importance of supporting health care workers who bear the burden of crisis situations along with patients and families.

As a sounding board and source of information to America’s health care organizations, The Joint Commission is in a unique position to understand and shed light on their collective experience during the pandemic.

Read *Sentinel Event Alert.*

*Joint Commission Resources, Deloitte release white paper on COVID-19 lessons learned*

A free white paper is available from Joint Commission Resources and Deloitte focusing on lessons learned from the coronavirus pandemic.
“COVID-19 Lessons Learned: A Resource for Recovery” touches on best practices identified through discussions with a diverse group of health care leaders. The white paper includes assessments of readiness/preparedness efforts across national, regional and local stakeholders, as well as a review of public documents.

The white paper examines specific actions that organizations have taken to address issues and provides access to guidance and tools for health care leaders. Some of the wide array of health care domains covered in this in-depth resource include:

- Leadership
- Emergency readiness and crisis response
- Infection control
- Patient safety and high reliability
- Communications and change management

Download the white paper.

Marwa Zohdy, PhD, CJCP, Vice President, Global Consulting Services, Joint Commission Resources and Joint Commission International, also expanded on some of the topics discussed in the white paper during a Take 5 podcast. Listen to the conversation. [9:49]

**Accreditation**

**SAFER® Dashboard launches for Laboratory Accreditation Program**

On April 6, The Joint Commission launched the SAFER® Dashboard for all its accredited health care organizations, including the Laboratory Accreditation Program. The dashboard is a self-serve data analytic tool that allows organizations to view all their survey data and Joint Commission national comparison data in one place.

The dashboard is accessible on an organization’s Joint Commission Connect® extranet site. Initial access will be given to the chief executive officer, primary accreditation contact, and primary laboratory contact (if applicable). Security administrators in the organization may grant access to additional users as needed.

All information contained in the Final Accreditation Report is available on the SAFER Dashboard. The dashboard will include all survey data (such as triennial surveys or for-cause surveys) for all accreditation programs (excluding certification program data). Users can view aggregate historical accreditation data, new survey finding data, and comparison data to help identify patterns and trends to prioritize improvement initiatives.

The development of the SAFER Dashboard has been an incremental process rooted in extensive customer feedback and collaboration. Phase 1 implementation provided the dashboard to a subset of health care organizations, which allowed The Joint Commission to gain valuable insights for further expansion. This collaboration has facilitated enhancements to deliver meaningful and useful data in a user-friendly format that is now available out to all Joint Commission-accredited organizations.

The April 6 launch included an enhancement made from the Phase 1 feedback, as the dashboard now will include Joint Commission national comparison data. This includes all surveys conducted by The Joint Commission in a designated time frame, based on organizations’ accredited programs. Organizations will have the ability to access national aggregate SAFER Matrix comparison data, as well as view and compare the national Top 10 most frequently scored standards and elements of performance.

For Joint committed accredited organizations, questions about the SAFER Dashboard may be directed to the organization’s designated account executive. Not Joint commission accredited yet? Reach out to request a demo and learn more about how this can be a powerful tool to help your organization make efficient data-driven decisions every day.

Learn more about the capabilities of the SAFER Dashboard.
New machine learning technology for survey consistency launches
Earlier this year, The Joint Commission launched its Machine Learning for Survey Consistency technology across all its accreditation and certification programs, including the Laboratory Accreditation Program. This new technology continuously analyzes data using artificial intelligence (AI) to identify data relationships and essentially learn from data gathered from years of validated survey and review reports.

Using an expanded data set — including previously vetted and scored findings — Joint Commission field staff now have an advanced capability to conduct keyword or phrase searches for appropriate standards or elements of performance (EPs) to determine how a finding should be scored. As such, machine learning will improve the consistency and accuracy of survey and review findings, while also creating time-saving efficiencies for field staff as they score findings.

Previously, only a small fraction of data was leveraged as “searchable” to associate a finding with a standard or EP. With the new technology, all remaining vetted data is available and searchable — prompting the appropriate standard and EP to appear in the Top 5 of choices more than 80% of the time. The machine learning integration will promote the most consistent and accurate results for laboratories.

In addition, the efficacy level will improve as the machine learning technology matures with continuous learning from additional data available for analyses.

Joint Commission field staff are currently using the technology, integrated as part of a mobile application, for all types of surveys and reviews — including on-site, off-site and hybrid. Organizations do not need to take any action to have the new technology apply to their upcoming Joint Commission survey or review.

Heads-Up Reports now available for first quarter 2021
New Heads-Up Reports for first quarter 2021 are now available for all Joint Commission-accredited programs, including the Laboratory Accreditation Program. The downloadable report is posted in the “Resources and Tools” section of an accredited organization’s secure Joint Commission Connect® extranet site.

Each program-specific report identifies important topics or themes that Joint Commission surveyors are noting and citing during recent surveys. The Heads-Up Report clarifies what standards are being cited and why they are being cited. Primary accreditation contacts are strongly encouraged to distribute each report to the departments and individuals in their organizations who are responsible for the topics identified and are empowered to mitigate any potential risks. By providing these resources, The Joint Commission encourages organizations to resolve similar issues in their own facilities prior to survey.

The first-quarter topic for labs is on inspecting, testing, and maintaining laboratory equipment for Environment of Care (EC) Standard EC.02.04.03, element of performance (EP) 7.

Apply now: Joint Commission hiring pathologist surveyors
The Joint Commission is hiring pathologists to participate in the surveys for its Laboratory Accreditation Program. The pathologists will assist in conducting Laboratory Accreditation evaluations, including:

- Interviewing physicians and staff to determine the organization’s level of compliance with standards.
- Analyzing documents, such as performance data, and use of clinical practice guidelines to assess the level of compliance with Joint Commission standards, evidence of performance improvement, and quality of care.
- Participating in all required conferences and interviews.

Those interested need to be board certified in clinical and anatomic pathology, as well as have five years of recent clinical experience — including at least two years in management, preferably laboratory, and two years demonstrating responsibility for oversight, decision-making, management, and improvement in histopathology and cytology. Applicants also need to have knowledge of compliance requirements related to the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988.

Learn more.
Effective July 1: Accreditation Participation Requirements revisions to laboratory program

The Joint Commission has approved minor revisions to its Accreditation Participation Requirements (APR) chapter for its Laboratory Accreditation program. These revisions — which will go into effect on July 1 — include minor language changes and removal of requirements addressing the Focused Standards Assessment (FSA), as the intracycle monitoring process and FSA are more fully addressed in the Accreditation Process chapter.

View the prepublication standards.

Dark Report article focuses on importance of laboratory accreditation

More than ever before, laboratories need to prove they meet a higher standard of care, and accreditation can provide the robust framework needed to consider all the elements impacting care delivery.

A recent article from the Dark Report highlighted how several large health systems are switching their clinical laboratories' Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments accreditation service, seeking more impact from their accreditation investment.

Joint Commission Laboratory Accreditation, unlike other accreditation programs, focuses on operational systems critical to the safety and quality of patient care, as well as the unique role of laboratories in the overall patient care experience. The Joint Commission’s approach provides not only the foundation for a higher level of standardization but also the ability for greater integration between the hospital and laboratory.

Access the Dark Report article.

Resources

Check out on-demand Laboratory webinar: Interview with an industry expert

An on-demand webinar from April 2021 is now available on The Joint Commission’s website focusing on an interview with a laboratory expert on the lessons learned from the past year dealing with the coronavirus pandemic.

In the webinar, Dr. Rodney Rohde shares his viewpoints and strategies for the future in an interactive discussion with The Joint Commission’s Laboratory Accreditation team.

View the on-demand webinar.

Get 2020 Laboratory Conference materials for free on Joint Commission website

Did something get in the way of you being able to attend the 2020 Laboratory Conference? If so, don’t worry — the materials and resources are now available for free on The Joint Commission’s website.

The materials and replays cover information and education on several topics, such as:

- The keynote address given by E. Blair Holladay, CEO, American Society for Clinical Pathology.
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s laboratory response to COVID-19.
- Lessons learned — not just about COVID-19 — from the customer’s perspective.
- Infection control and prevention, with laboratory best practices during a pandemic.
- Answers to frequently asked questions from laboratories to The Joint Commission.
- How to make the most of the E-dition.
- 2021 Laboratory Accreditation program changes.

Register to receive the free materials. Also, be sure to save the date for the 2021 conference, which is scheduled for Nov. 10-11. More details will be available later this year.
Surveyor spotlight: Learn about Dr. John Russell Forney in Q&A
Joint Commission Laboratory Surveyor Dr. John Russell Forney discovered his love of microbiology at an early age.

While working a summer job in a laboratory at 16, he determined that science would be his life’s work – a decision that has shaped his life.

Learn more about Dr. Forney — including his time with the U.S. Army and how he performs his role at The Joint Commission — in a Q&A on The Joint Commission’s website.

Read the Q&A.