

# LABORATORY ECONOMICS

*Competitive Market Analysis For Laboratory Management Decision Makers*

## SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS DOCTORS' CHALLENGES IN ORDERING AND INTERPRETING LAB TESTS

Primary care physicians have uncertainty for 14.7% of the clinical lab tests they order, and they experience uncertainty in interpreting the results 8.3% of the time, according to survey results published in *The Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine* (March-April 2014, Vol. 27, No. 2).

The survey of 1,768 doctors found the most problematic issues when ordering tests were: 1) uncertainty over patient cost (55%); 2) insurance policies that limit testing (48%); and 3) insurance policies mandating use of a specific lab (40%).

The most common tactic that surveyed physicians use to overcome uncertainty in ordering lab tests was "reviewing e-references," cited by 57%, while the least common tactic was "asking a lab professional," cited by only 6%.

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### Primary Care Physician Challenges When Ordering Lab Tests

Patient costs.....	55%
Insurance policies limit testing .....	48%
Insurance policies mandate use of a specific lab .....	40%
Lack of comparative cost information.....	39%
Different test names.....	20%
Test not available except in a panel .....	20%
Different tests in test panels.....	18%

Source: *Primary Care Physicians' Challenges In Ordering Clinical Laboratory Tests and Interpreting Results*, JABFM, March-April 2014, pp. 268-274

## NEW NCCI POLICY CUTS FISH TEST RATES BY 50%

Without warning or comment from the lab industry, CMS has issued guidance through its National Correct Coding Initiative (NCCI) Policy Manual, which effectively cuts Medicare reimbursement for FISH testing by 50%. The new NCCI policy states that if two or more probes are applied to a sample for CPT codes 88365, 88367 or 88368, only one unit of service can be billed because the two probes are part of the same "probe staining procedure." Thus CMS will reimburse \$0 for the second, third or fourth FISH probe performed on a patient specimen. Previously, labs had billed one unit of service for each reportable FISH probe.

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