



Photo from the NW: Nella Sterling



Photo from the NE: Jackie Winkler



Photo from the NW: Daniel Egli

Lab Outpatient Improvement Project



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Regional Director Diagnostic Service

Background

The Lab Outpatient Improvement Project (LOIP) was initiated to address the long wait times to access outpatient lab services in Northern BC. The pandemic exacerbated an already fragile and frustrating service that people in the North had long voiced concerns over. Over a 2-year timespan, lab services were completely transformed and modernized across 26 sites.

Variable Processes Paper
Staffing Shortages
COVID-19
Manual Processes



“I tried to get in for an appointment at the lab before I see my doctor in August, but I can’t get into lab until September”

Unsolicited feedback at a hair salon in PG, July 29, 2021

Objective

The goal was to improve patient access and reduce wait times

LAB FUNCTIONS	REQUISITION	SCHEDULING	REGISTRATION
BENEFITS	STREAMLINING THE REQUISITION PROCESS	IMPROVE SERVICE	OPTIMIZE EXPERIENCE
PATIENTS	 Paper or faxed requisition	 2 REGIONAL CALL CENTRE (pending approval)  3 SELF-SCHEDULING	
LABS	 1 SCANLAB	 4 LAB-SCHEDULING	 5 MANAGING LINE-UPS

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT



WHY

The purpose of the project is to improve lab outpatient services by taking a person and family-centered approach to access and service delivery. The goal is to improve patient access and to reduce wait times.

WHAT







Northern Health will meet this goal by offering a blended service model of scheduled and unscheduled lab appointments, whereby

Patients will have access to new and modern tools that offer

- the ability to self-schedule either online using the HealthELife portal or by phone
- the ability to drop-in while avoiding long line-ups using NH Check In for queuing
- the flexibility to bring in a requisition or have it sent straight to NH

Labs will be able to focus on appropriate clinical and clerical tasks, thanks to the

- digitization of requisitions
- development of necessary policies and processes
- expansion of clerical functions to ensure clinical staff are free to see patients
- standardization of the lab schedule (Cerner Scheduling)
- improved patient flow management for drop-ins

LAB FUNCTIONS	REQUISITION	SCHEDULING	REGISTRATION	ACCESS POINTS	LABORATORY AND DELIVERY	TESTING	REPORTING
BENEFITS	STREAMLINING THE REQUISITION PROCESS	IMPROVE SERVICE	OPTIMIZE EXPERIENCE				
PATIENTS	 Paper or faxed requisition	2 REGIONAL CALL CENTRE (pending approval)  3 SELF-SCHEDULING					
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HOW

Through these five initiatives:

- 1 Requisition Digitization (ScanLab)
- 2 Self-Scheduling Phone (Regional Call Centre)
- 3 Self-Scheduling Online (HealthELife)
- 4 Lab Scheduling (Cerner Scheduling)
- 5 Queue Management (NH Check In)

WHERE

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PG – Phoenix • Quesnel • Prince Rupert • Terrace • Vanderhoof • Chetwynd • Kitimat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PG – UHNBC • Fort St. John • Dawson Creek • Smithers • Fort St. James • Tumbler Ridge • Fraser Lake • Houston • Burns Lake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazelton • Mackenzie • McBride • Queen Charlotte • Masset • Hudson Hope • Valemount • Stewart • Dease Lake • Fort Nelson

WHEN

March 2021 to March 2023

Developed September 2021
Updated February 2022

Patient/Customer Voice



Phones to be Answered



Get confirmation requisition was received



Have confidence all orders completed in 1 visit



Patient partners represented all HSDA's, demographics, socioeconomic status, including indigenous representation.

Current State Analysis



Reduction of 40% of throughput from pre-covid levels



Clinical staff spending a minimum of 2 hours per day performing clerical functions



Long wait times



Difficulty filling appointments



2 biggest lab challenges; staffing & managing paper requisitions



Access is limited and minimal drop-in options



Not patient-centric

What we did:

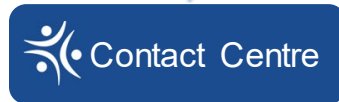
Pre-COVID-19
100% Drop In

During COVID-19
100% Scheduled

TODAY Blended Model

CENTRAL BOOKING

by



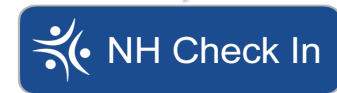
ONLINE BOOKING

by



DROP IN

by



Including:

EXPANDED CLERICAL
FUNCTIONS & SUPPORT



STANDARD
PROCESSES

by



REQUISITION
DIGITIZATION



Results... of the 26 Outpatient Lab Sites in NH

UNDERSTANDING PATIENT BEHAVIOUR

How patients access lab services

34%



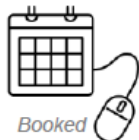
Booked through Contact Centre

31%



Booked through Lab

4%



Booked Online

32%



Dropped In

Current Service Model

68%



Booked

32%



Drop In

HealthElife Portal

102%↑



increase in enrollment to HealthElife Portal when Online Lab Scheduling introduced (from 7% to 14%)

Patient Satisfaction



of patients feel there has been an improvement to lab access – but agree there needs to be more education & support around new ways to access

UNDERSTANDING BACKLOG & WAIT

Elimination of Backlog

100%



of labs have shared that the backlog has been eliminated

Elimination of Paper Filing

100%



of labs have moved to a paper-free filing system; improving one of the largest challenges lab had

Improved Wait Times



1 day

labs currently have an average of 1 day wait time – this is an improvement from the 2 week, up to 6 weeks, wait time at start of LOIP

Labs with Live Standard Systems

81%



Contact Centre

73%



NH Check In

88%



Online HealthElife

96%



Center Scheduling

100% of labs have access to standard scheduling and queuing tools for their patients; if <20 patients NH Check In and Contact Centre are not required

Northern Health Contact Center



UNDERSTANDING CONTACT CENTRE

250



of phone calls received by the regional contact centre every day

197



Appointments are booked in Northern Health (for the 18 labs that are currently being supported by the Regional Contact Centre)

4min 45sec



Average handling time of phone calls

10 seconds



Average wait time for the phone to be answered

2 minutes



Longest wait time for the phone to be answered

Digitized Repository “ScanLab”

UNDERSTANDING
REQUISITIONS

26,741



Total labs ordered per month

34%



of requisitions are missing key health information requirements

+

79



different versions of the standard lab requisition used in Northern Health

+

40%



of all lab requisitions are the current version

=

48
hours



Is the time to process requisitions at Northern Health and LifeLabs

Incomplete Fields - NHA

BC Health Services Agency | Ministry of Health

STANDARD OUT-PATIENT LABORATORY REQUISITION

ORDERING PRACTITIONER: ADDRESS, PHONE, MSP PRACTITIONER NUMBER

Yellow fields must be completed. For tests indicated with a blue tick box, consult provincial guidelines and protocols (www.BCGuidelines.ca) <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/practitioner-professional-resources/bc-guidelines>

Bill to → MSP ICBC PATIENT OTHER: _____

PERSONAL HEALTH NUMBER _____ BC/WorkSafeBC NUMBER _____

LOCUM FOR PRACTITIONER AND MSP PRACTITIONER NUMBER _____

LAST NAME OF PATIENT _____ FIRST NAME OF PATIENT _____

If this is a STAT order please provide contact information: _____

Copy to PRACTITIONER/MSP Practitioner Number: _____

Copy to PRACTITIONER/MSP Practitioner Number: _____

SEX M F Pregnant? YES NO Fasting? _____ h pc

CONTACT NUMBER OF PATIENT _____ SECONDARY CONTACT NUMBER OF PATIENT _____ OTHER CONTACT NUMBER OF PATIENT _____

CITY/TOWN _____ PROVINCE _____ POSTAL CODE _____

DIAGNOSIS _____ CURRENT MEDICATIONS/DATE AND TIME OF LAST DOSE _____

HEMATOLOGY **URINE TESTS** **CHEMISTRY**

Hematology profile On Anticoagulant? Yes No Macroscopic → microscopic if dipstick positive Glucose – fasting (see reverse for details)

INR Macroscopic _____

MYCOLOGY

Yeast Fungus Site: _____

SIGNATURE OF PRACTITIONER _____

DATE OF COLLECTION _____ TIME OF COLLECTION _____ COLLECTOR _____ TELEPHONE REQUISITION RECEIVED _____

INSTRUCTIONS TO PATIENTS (See reverse)
Other Instructions: _____

Bill To
31%

Gender
14%

Diagnosis
15%

Phone Number
6%

Copy To
10%

Signature
31%

Challenges

- Absence of standardized registration
- Change management
- Contact centre phone number “scam”
- Lack of open communication channels with ordering providers
- Requisition quality




Next steps/Sustaining the Gains

Continue to educate patients and physicians on the new options to access the lab




Northern Health
February 22 · 🌐

We're working to make it easier for you to book a lab appointment in Fort St. John. You can now call a dedicated booking line to book, cancel, or reschedule an appointment.
Call 1-888-223-1530 to book a lab appointment in Fort St. John.



Regional Lab Call Centre
Now open in Fort St. John

Call 1-888-223-1530 to book a lab appointment today!




Let Us Know How We're Doing!

Share your feedback through our **Northern Health Laboratory Services Patient Experience Survey**.

We value your opinion. Please participate in an anonymous survey with our laboratory services. Your feedback will be used to improve our services. This is an opportunity to provide us with detailed feedback. Your feedback will be used to identify opportunities for improvement. To protect the privacy of individuals, please do not include any information that identifies you, staff, patients, or families in your answers.

To complete the survey, click the QR code below link into you.



<https://www.northernhealth.ca/lab-services-patient-experience-survey>

Paper copies of the survey are available upon request. Should you have any questions, please contact LabServicesQuality@northernhealth.ca

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NH Laboratory Services Patient Experience Survey

We value your opinion. Northern Health invites you to participate in an anonymous survey about your experience with our laboratory services. Participation in this survey is voluntary and will take less than 5 minutes to complete.

This is an opportunity to provide us with detailed feedback. Your feedback will be used to identify opportunities for improvement. To protect the privacy of individuals, please do not include any information that identifies you, staff, patients, or families in your answers.

This survey can also be completed online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/NHLAB2023>

- Which laboratory provided the service? _____
- How did you access the service?
 Drop-in Online Scheduling Phone Scheduling
- What is your preferred option to access lab service?
 Drop-in Online Scheduling Phone Scheduling No Preference
- If you used any of the below digital tools offered by Northern Health for this appointment, how would you rate your satisfaction with the tool?

HealthElife	Excellent	Good	Average	Not Satisfactory	I did not use this tool
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please share any comments or feedback on your experience using HealthElife:					

NH Check In	Excellent	Good	Average	Not Satisfactory	I did not use this tool
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please share any comments or feedback on your experience using NH Check In:					
- Did you have to travel outside of your home community for access to lab service?
 Yes No
- Overall, how would you rate the service you received?
 Excellent Good Average Not Satisfactory

Survey continued on back. Please turn over.

Sustain shorter wait times and continue to improve the patient experience

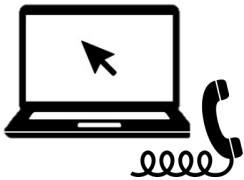


Staffing Opportunities



Lab Staff

- Support staff with training material
- New Clerk Role - define task and training requirement



Lab Clerk



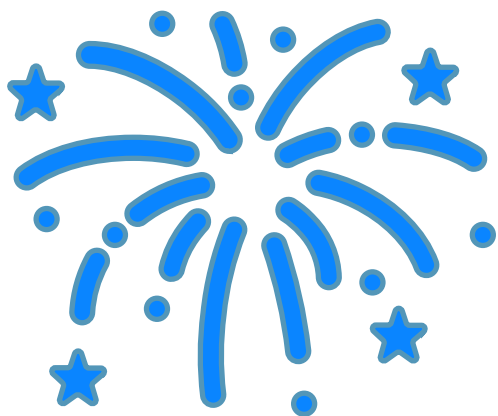
Medical Lab
Assistant
(MLA)



Medical Lab
Technologist
(MLT & CLXT)



Lab Operation
Lead



“Celebrate Any Progress, Don’t Wait to Get Perfect”



Ann McGee Cooper



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