Introduction to Point-of-Care Testing

Most individuals, at some point, visit a doctor’s office to determine if they have an infection. One way to test to see if patients have an infection is to perform point-of-care testing through the use of rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs). These allow health care professionals to quickly and efficiently decide whether patients are suffering from an infection like strep throat, influenza, hepatitis or human immunodeficiency virus. RDTs require a small amount of bodily fluid, most commonly obtained from the mouth, nasal cavity or blood. The information derived from RDTs allows providers to decide whether starting treatment is appropriate or if further testing is needed. These tests can be extremely useful in ensuring patients receive appropriate medical care in a reasonable amount of time.

What a Pharmacist Provides

Patients suffering from various infections often visit a retail pharmacy in search of over-the-counter remedies for their symptoms. Due to this fact, pharmacists are commonly the first health care provider that patients will come in contact with. Together with a physician, pharmacists can use RDTs, along with physical evaluation, in determining the appropriate course of treatment, such as medication or being referred to a physician.

The implementation of RDTs in the pharmacy is helping to decrease the overuse of antibiotics and the presence of disease within communities. Training for RDT use by pharmacists is increasing and allowing more and more of them to be available to the public, in turn creating healthier neighborhoods.

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