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LCMChealth.org

Kimberly Hood  
Louisiana Department of Health

Dear Ms. Hood,

This week, LCMC Health was notified by Roche Diagnostics Corporation that the allocation of Roche Cobas reagent supplies, required for the performance of SARS-CoV-2 PCR testing, would be limited. LCMC Health has relied heavily on the Roche Cobas 6800 for testing across our health system and in our community. That modality was a key component in our partnership with the City of New Orleans and LSUHSC to operate walk in community testing sites in underserved, undertested areas of metro New Orleans. That testing concept has been praised as a best practice by HHS for its execution, quick turnaround, and comprehensive follow up.

Because of our confidence in the Roche Cobas analyzer and our interest in contributing to the State of Louisiana's testing initiative, LCMC submitted a proposal to conduct community and congregate testing in Regions 1 and 9. Prior to submission, our team discussed continued reagent supply and availability with the Roche Central Zone Senior VP, Rajen Bhimaraj, as well as our local representative. At that time we were assured that Roche would be able to meet the predicted increase in demand for reagent. We were subsequently selected to participate in the LDH program and have recently seen significant growth in hospital based, community, and congregated facility COVID-19 testing. LCMC's testing teams are scheduled to operate at multiple congregate sites every day, with more requests from congregate and community sites daily. We continue our high volume (250-300 tests per day) community testing sites, and have seen an increased rate of positivity over the last week. We are reluctant to scale back testing in the face of these numbers, particularly with the recent memory of the disparate outcomes from Covid 19 infection in many of the same neighborhoods that have been the focus of our efforts.

To reiterate: through our partnership with the Louisiana Department of Health, we have been able to improve access to community testing and have significantly increased congregate facility testing in the greater New Orleans area. The Roche Cobas has been the engine that enabled this work. Without a continued supply of Roche reagent, we may be short upward of 2500 tests per week in southeast Louisiana. While Roche has promised an allocation of approximately 1300 tests per week, this amount will serve only our present rate of in house use and perhaps one or two day per week of community testing- as opposed to the 5 days per week we have tested since April 21, 2020. Without access to adequate amounts of reagent, we will likely have to scale back community testing and eliminate congregate testing by July 6. Any help with this matter would be appreciated and I would be happy to discuss more if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

John F. Heaton, MD  
President, Clinical and System Operations  
LCMC Health