

## **Inpatient Lab Work**

*by Michele Fruits, MT (ASCP)  
Director of Laboratory Services*

The McBride Orthopedic Hospital laboratory is a CLIA certified laboratory with experienced personnel. The Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) regulate laboratory testing and require clinical laboratories to be certificated by their state as well as the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) before they can accept human samples for diagnostic testing. The objective of the CLIA program is to ensure quality laboratory testing.

Why is CLIA certification important to McBride patients? It is important because it means the McBride laboratory has undergone a rigorous inspection process that assures patients accurate results and equally important, competent employees. McBride laboratory phlebotomists represent more than 100 years of experience collectively while the laboratory technologists have well over 200 years of experience. This combined experience creates a positive experience for McBride patients.

Of course, most people have a love-hate relationship with laboratories. Patients know it is important to undergo certain tests and (typically) are pleased with test results that help diagnose conditions, but the majority hate the fact a 'blood draw' is involved to help them feel better. Unfortunately, it is a means to the end for wellness.

Many patients are already aware there is a small inconvenience associated with blood work post-surgery at McBride. If you are an inpatient, phlebotomists visit rooms and draw blood as early as 4:00 a.m. Of course, this is not an enjoyable segment of the hospital experience, but it does serve an important purpose.

Many physicians order hematology and chemistry tests post-surgery to see if adjustments need to be made for their patient. A hematology test shows if a patient is anemic from loss of blood, or if white blood cell count and platelet count levels are as expected. A simple chemistry test allows the physician to know the patient's electrolytes are balanced, their blood sugar is controlled and their kidney and liver are working as expected.

All of these tests require a blood draw and take a couple of hours to process and complete. By having these tests performed early in the morning, physicians have results for morning rounds/review. Hence, patients benefit from prompt action if needed and recover quicker, allowing them to manage pain/issues and participate in physical therapy and other activities which expedite the healing process.

We are not encouraging everyone to 'hug' their phlebotomist at 4:00 a.m. when barely awake, but hopefully after reading this article, those who spend time as a McBride inpatient will have a better understanding of the process as well as great confidence in the wonderful Laboratory staff involved in their care. ■