

2019 CSCC Award for Innovation in Laboratory Medicine

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Toxicology Network of the Alberta Public Laboratories, Alberta Health Services



The 2019 CSCC Award for Innovation in Laboratory Medicine is awarded to the Toxicology Network of the Alberta Public Laboratories (APL). The Toxicology Network, a committee of Clinical Toxicologists, Clinical Chemists, Pathologists, Laboratory Technologists and Administrators, was established to recommend best practices, standardization and new testing for all laboratories in Alberta. The Toxicology Network examined toxicology and therapeutic drug monitoring testing conducted throughout the province, working with all laboratory providers and with the clinical users of testing, to understand testing needs and reinforce standardized best practices and recommended changes. The Network was originally chaired by Dr. Penny Colbourne and is currently chaired by Dr. Jessica Boyd, both CSCC members.

The Toxicology Network included laboratory representatives from across the province in terms of both a geographical and population basis. The Toxicology Network also included laboratorians with a range of skill sets including medical laboratory technologists, pathologists, clinical chemists and toxicologists. This diverse group of individuals ensured there was a truly provincial voice.

The initiatives lead by the Toxicology Network were not done in isolation and included laboratory outreach with other medical professional groups. Examples of several initiatives are as follows:

- The provincial standardization of target ranges and alert values for therapeutic drug monitoring was evidence based but also included discussions with physician colleagues and the AHS Poison and Drug Information Service (PADIS) (i.e., Alberta's Poison Control).
- The initiative to eliminate qualitative toxicology testing in emergent situations (i.e., STAT drug testing) necessitated engagement with the Addiction and Mental Health Strategic Clinical Network, the Emergency Strategic Clinical Network, physician colleagues at various institutions across the province and PADIS. This engagement took the form of the development and distribution of a position statement and an appropriateness of care document, in person presentations, Telehealth presentations, along with numerous e-mails and phone calls.
- The initiative to standardize Toxicology testing for Opioid Dependency Programs is on-going but to date has involved outreach to physician groups managing that patient population. In addition, a survey was developed and distributed to those physicians who prescribed methadone and/or buprenorphine. Focusing the survey on those particular physicians was possible through a collaboration with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta. These efforts by the Toxicology Network have served patient care and health services through coordinated efforts and leadership