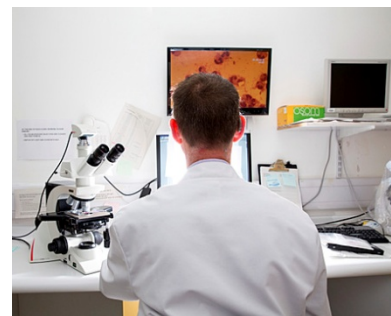


NHS Forth Valley

Collaborative working between laboratory services, Sexual Health and Primary Care to optimise the diagnosis of female genital infection

Collaborative working between the laboratory, Sexual Health services and Primary Care was undertaken in NHS Forth Valley with the aim of optimising the diagnosis of female genital infection. Traditionally clinicians had taken two swabs when undertaking vaginal examinations to look for bacterial infection in the vagina and cervix as well as a third swab of the cervix to screen for infection with Chlamydia. These swabs were then sent for formal processing within the laboratory. By testing the acidity of the vagina within Primary Care it was possible to reduce the requirement for testing by laboratory services for a number of these patients. The basis of such change being guidance provided by Sandyford Sexual Health Services in Glasgow and the local Sexual Health Services within the Board.



The benefit of such a change in diagnostic practice allows more timely prescription of treatment to those whom will benefit while ensuring that where specific diagnostics are required that these targeted to maximise diagnostic yield while minimising waste. In turn this reduces workload at all stages of patient journey and has potential to result in cost savings.

The change was introduced in July 2012 and as illustrated in the chart below there was clear evidence that the number of samples received in the lab before and after the alteration of the diagnostic pathway fell. More recently it has become common place to undertake urinary testing for Chlamydia in those defined at risk and although the numbers of endocervical tests has fallen this has been offset by the less invasive and more patient centred modality of testing.

