

# UW Health: Lab performs nearly 200,000 COVID-19 tests

Posted on Friday, Feb 26, 2021

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MADISON, Wis. – UW Health’s lab performed its first COVID-19 test at University Hospital on March 19, 2020. Almost a year later, they have run nearly 200,000 COVID-19 tests.

Today, UW Health is recognizing the efforts of the medical technologists, specimen receiving technicians, pathology faculty, development specialists, lab quality and many lab leaders who have often worked 80-100 hours per week to achieve this remarkable feat. Some weeks they ran as many as 1,100 COVID-19 test per day.

In early March 2020, the state lab was the only one that could test for COVID-19 and supplies were limited. Patient placement and decision making for a care team was difficult without a COVID-19 test results, and UW Health needed more tests and faster results so frontline workers could provide accurate, safe, and quality patient care.

The Molecular Diagnostic Lab at University Hospital, part of the UW Health Laboratory Services, began running COVID-19 tests in March and soon started to operate 24/7.

“To run this testing 24/7, it was all hands-on deck. We added extra shifts, learned new duties, moved staff around and moved some of our testing to other labs,” said Michele Marggi, laboratory director for UW Health Clinical Laboratory. “So much went into this response -gathering supplies, working through the regulatory aspects, adjusting schedules, rewriting policies, training new staff, and much more.”

In addition to operating 24/7, the lab had to constantly evolve as the landscape of testing changed to incorporate new options like the addition of saliva tests and

demand rose for faster results. The staff at UW Health's lab rose to the challenge.

"It was exhausting, yet truly remarkable. I am so proud of the effort that our laboratory provided. It has been essential to UW Health's pandemic response," said Marggi.

Video of the lab, testing and interviews with two medical technologists are available.