

The Wisconsin Clinical Laboratory Network (WCLN)

The Wisconsin Clinical Laboratory Network (WCLN) is a network of nearly 170 clinical laboratories throughout Wisconsin. The Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) coordinates and supports the WCLN, which is a subset of the National Laboratory Response Network (LRN) focused on emergency preparedness and response to public health threats. Nick Zumwalde is the Outreach Coordinator for the WCLN within the Communicable Disease Division at WSLH. He can be reached at nicholas.zumwalde@slh.wisc.edu or (608) 224-4251.

The National LRN is a collaborative, voluntary network of laboratories for response to terrorism threats, emerging infectious diseases, and other public health threats or emergencies. Additional information about the LRN and laboratory roles is available at http://emergency.cdc.gov/lrn/. The National LRN defines 3 levels of laboratories, based on laboratory capabilities and responsibilities:

- **National Laboratories**, like the CDC, have extensive capabilities to characterize isolates and provide protocols and reagents.
- **LRN Reference Laboratories**, like the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH), are responsible for providing reference level testing and coordinating the statewide networks.
- **Sentinel Laboratories** are comprised of hospital-based and large clinical laboratories that perform some level of microbiology. Sentinel Laboratories are likely among the first that will recognize unusual occurrences and alert the rest of us.

The WCLN is strengthened by the participation of clinical laboratory representatives who serve on the WCLN Laboratory Technical Advisory Group (LabTAG). LabTAG is comprised of regional representatives from each of the seven Wisconsin Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition regions in the state, as well as, at least four at-large members. WSLH helps support and engage the WCLN through educational activities, workshops, training, reference materials, and regular, active communications.

Both clinical laboratories and the public health community have benefited from the active participation of clinical laboratories in the WCLN. These benefits affect not only emergency response, but also disease surveillance and outbreak response.

If you want to know more about the WCLN or the information presented here, contact wcln@mail.slh.wisc.edu.

WCLN Activities

Resource Materials Provided to Laboratories Available on WSLH Webpage:

- **Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing (AST) Resources**
- **Biosafety**
- **Continuing Education**
- **Emergency Response**
- **Lab Network Development**
- **National Training Providers and Associations**
- **Packaging & Shipping Hazard Materials/Infectious Substances**
- **Select Agent Resources**
- **Student Education**
- **Tick Identification Resources**

Regional Meetings: WSLH hosts three PACE credit eligible regional meetings around the state annually in the Fall at no cost to attendees. Target audience includes laboratorians and individuals in public health.

On-Site Laboratory Visits: WSLH staff conduct at least ten laboratory visits each year to enhance relationships and identify and discuss topics of concern.

Exercises - Testing: Educational Bioterrorism Preparedness Exercises are offered at no cost to all laboratories twice per year. Additionally, an annual InformaCast Communication Exercise is conducted annually with all laboratories.

Workshops: A PACE credit eligible technical conference (held in the Spring) and additional workshops (held throughout the state as funding allows), with recent topics ranging from antimicrobial susceptibility testing to sepsis to Category A and B packaging and shipping are available for Wisconsin laboratorians at no cost to attend.

Communications: Each WCLN laboratory receives a monthly “Laboratory Message” via a Google Groups listserv, which contains information updates, training announcements, and emergency notifications. In addition, a smaller WCLN Google Groups listserv has been developed to enhance communication and information-sharing among Wisconsin laboratorians. Please email Nick Zumwalde if you want to be included on these communications. A Padlet WCLN Bulletin Board is also planning to go live soon, giving WCLN laboratorians the ability to post and comment to an online Discussion Board.

Webinars: At least eight educational PACE credit eligible webinars are provided annually at no cost to attendees. Webinars are hosted by subject matter experts and focus on training topics identified by statewide laboratorians.

Peter A. Shult Award: This award recognizes a WCLN laboratorian who actively participates in the WCLN, has made (or is making) outstanding contributions to promoting the profession and field of clinical lab science, and has demonstrated (or is demonstrating) exceptional clinical lab service at their facilities or within the WCLN.