



COLA[®]

**What It's Worth
The Value of Near Patient Testing**

As we develop into a learning healthcare system, may we think and act with wisdom to ensure quality, access, and value for all.



ABOUT COLA

COLA accredits nearly 8,000 medical laboratories through a program of education, consultation, and accreditation. The organization is an independent, non-profit accreditor whose education program and standards enable clinical laboratories and staff to meet U.S. CLIA and other regulatory requirements.

COLA is recognized by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) as a deemed accrediting organization. COLA's program is endorsed by the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), the American College of Physicians (ACP), and is also recognized by The Joint Commission.

For more information about COLA, please visit www.cola.org.

COLA[®] Accreditation.
Education.
Innovation.

Near Patient Testing Plays a Part in Today's Advancements in Clinical Laboratory Science.

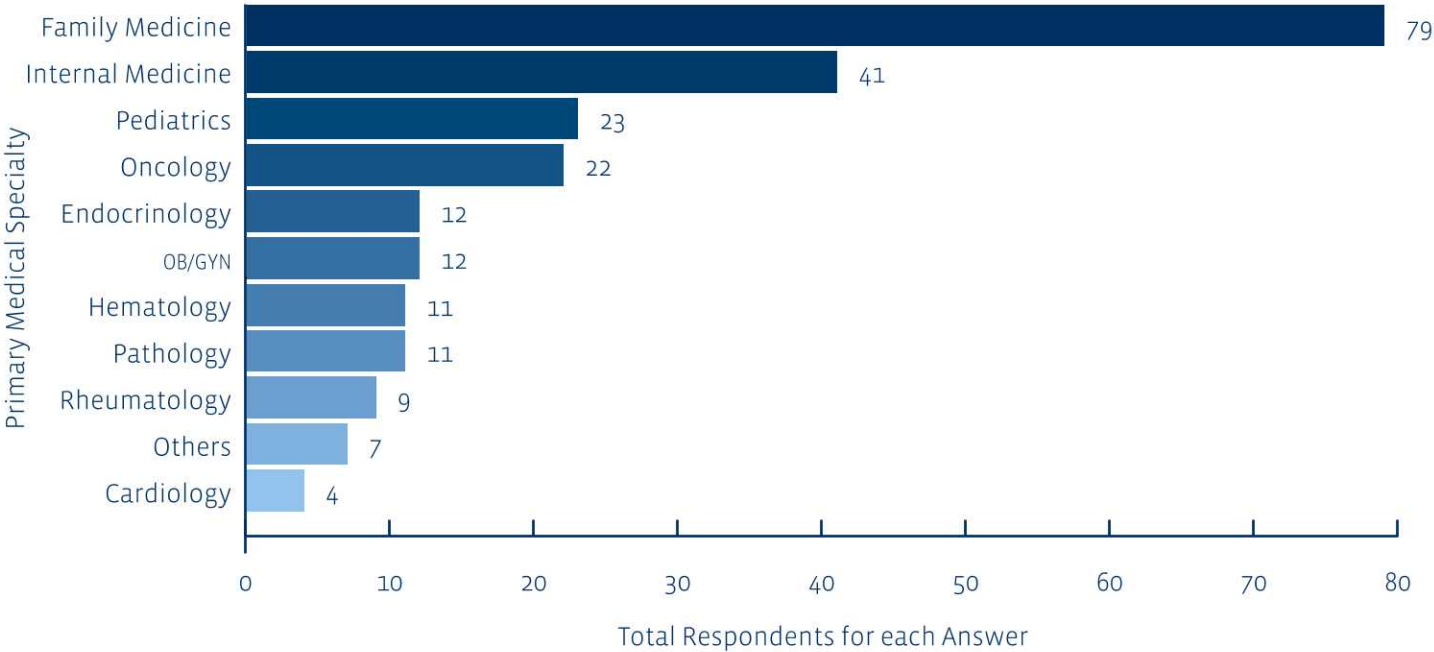
Breakthroughs in science and technological progress are tremendously beneficial, especially when focused on improving the quality of our lives. In the case of laboratory testing, human ingenuity has resulted in technology, which enables clinicians to perform real-time testing in a diversity of care settings, including clinics, nursing homes, patient-centered medical homes, and accountable care organizations.

Near Patient testing is invaluable to early diagnosis and chronic disease management and it can prevent patients from accessing more expensive care settings. In cases where technology reduces healthcare costs downstream, we have the chance to improve the quality of our lives while being smart about how we spend our healthcare dollars.



Near Patient Testing Is Valued Across Multiple Medical Practices

Figure 1: What is your primary medical specialty?







We reached out to clinicians across the country to gather their expertise on the significance of near patient testing in their medical practice and the implications to patient care if near patient testing were no longer available.

Clinicians from both general medical practices and multiple medical specialties responded with interest to provide their perspective on the topic. More than half of physicians that decided to participate defined their practice in the areas of family medicine and internal medicine (Figure 1). The range of general and specialty medical providers participating in

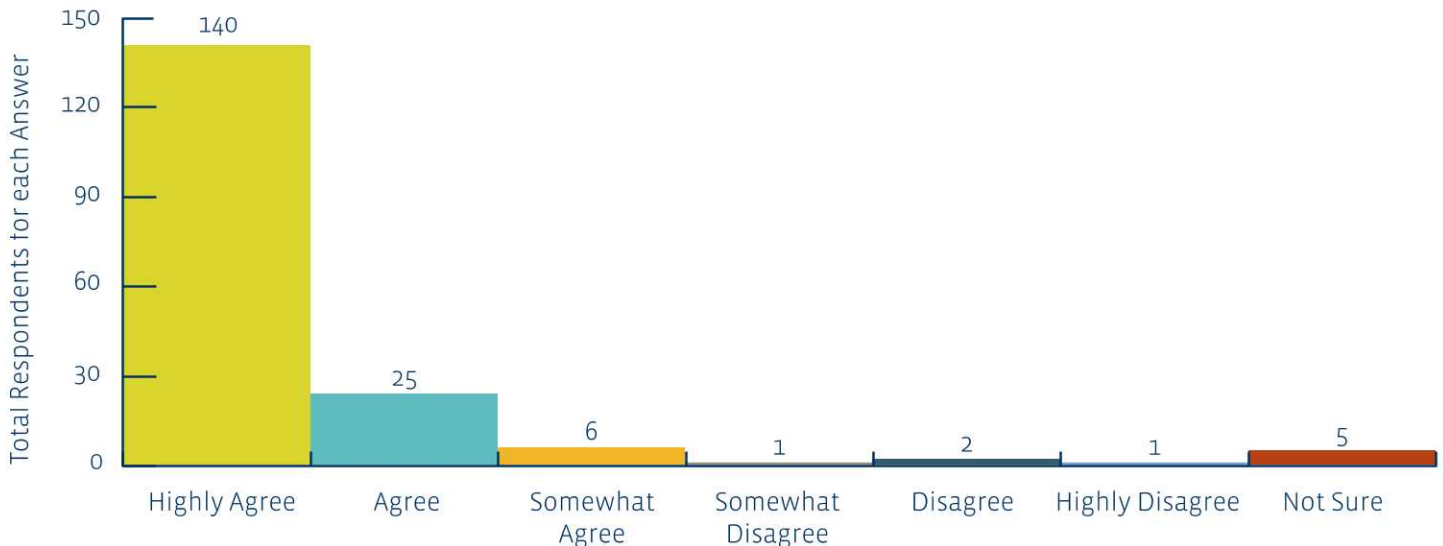
the survey demonstrates that providers across all medical practices place a high value on the importance of near patient testing.

Participating physicians agreed that the overall well-being of patients is partially reliant on the clinical evidence given by progressive patient-centered clinical laboratory testing. Many of these clinical experts reported that access to real-time laboratory information at the time of the patient’s visit influences patient health outcomes. Remarkably, nearly ninety percent of clinicians highly agreed or agreed with the statement that laboratory testing at the time of the patient’s visit improves elderly patient outcomes (Figure 2).



Physicians Agree Near Patient Testing Has A Positive Impact On The Health of Elderly Patients

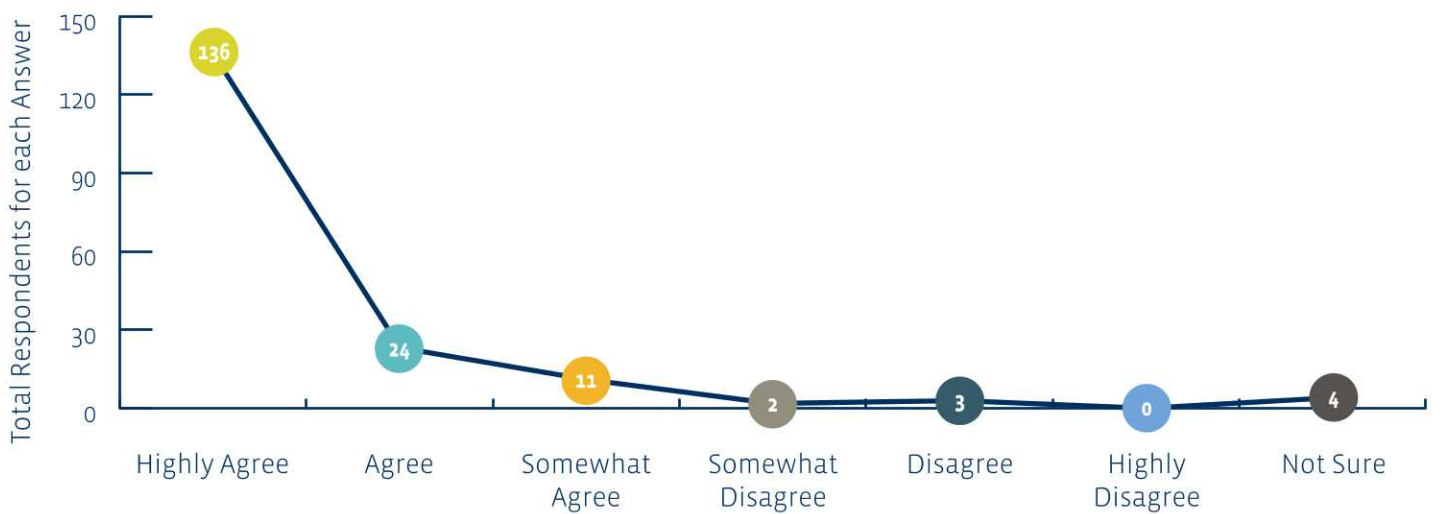
Figure 2: How much do you agree with this statement? Many of our elderly patients experience better outcomes because we provide clinical laboratory testing within our practice.



Similarly, approximately 90 percent of responding physicians claimed they highly agree or agree that elderly patients of their practice would be exposed to greater health risks without near patient testing (Figure 3).

Physicians Also Agree Without Near Patient Testing Elderly Patients May Be Harmed

Figure 3: How much do you agree with this statement? I believe our elderly patients would be at risk of more serious health issues if we were no longer able to provide clinical laboratory services within our practice.





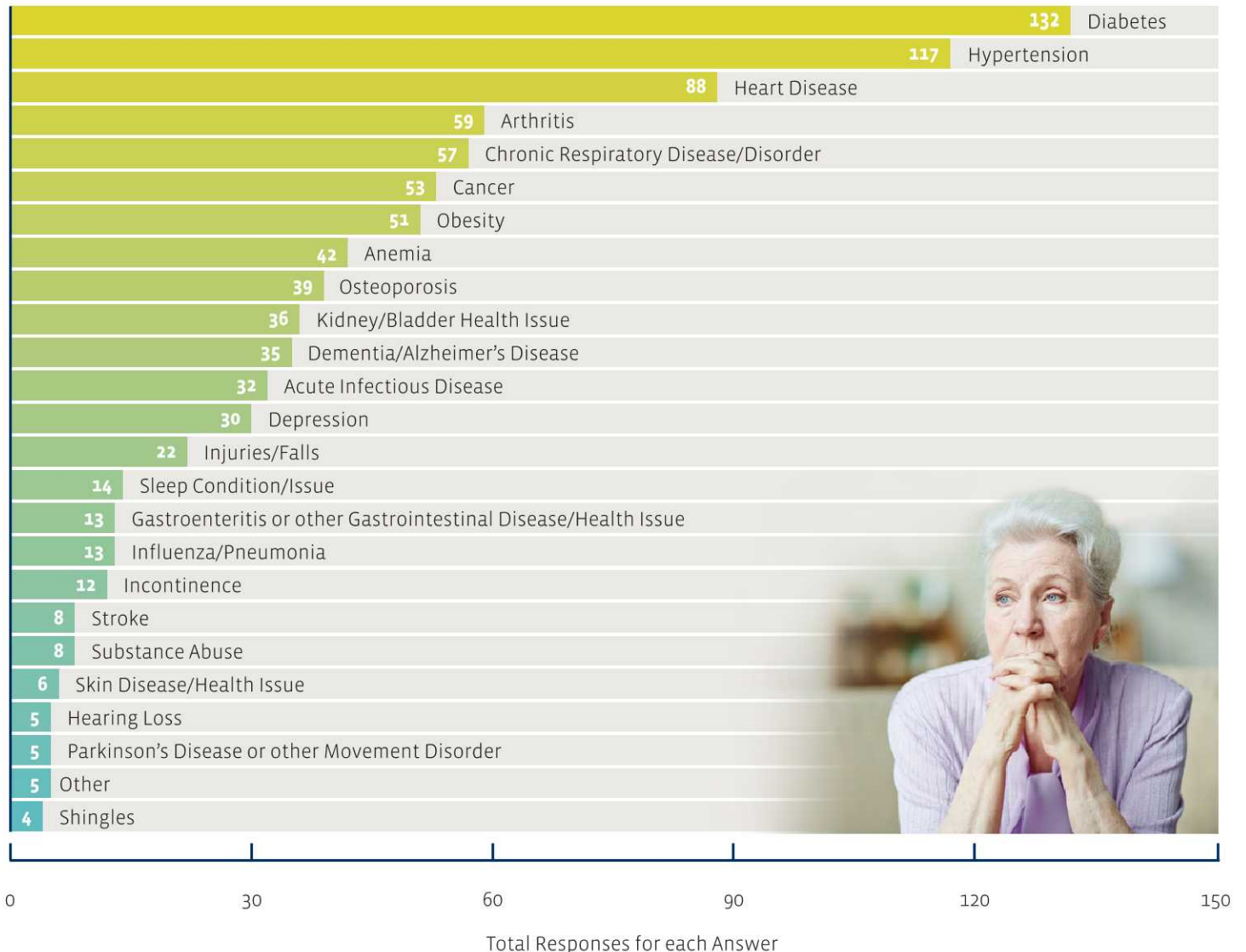


In a very timely and convenient manner, near patient testing can identify unseen diseases and conditions and can prevent more serious health outcomes for patients, unnecessary treatments prescribed by doctors, and therefore, lower healthcare costs. In fact, clinicians of elderly patients on Medicare use clinical laboratory data to

diagnose and/or treat some of the most common conditions facing both the country’s general population and elderly patient population at large. According to physicians, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease are the leading health concerns for elderly patients (Figure 4).

A Glimpse of Leading Health Concerns Facing The Elderly Today

Figure 4: What are the most common health concerns of your elderly patient population?

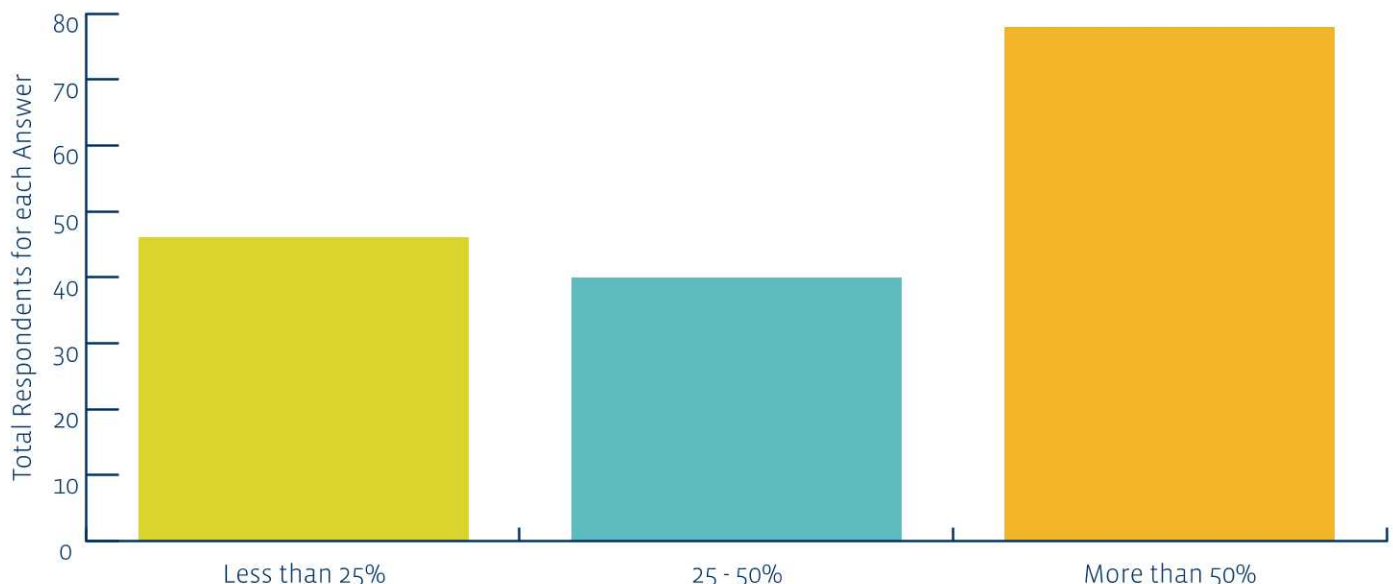


In treating these and other health concerns, reporting physicians also recognize near patient testing as integral to the best patient care practices. However, some experts predict near patient testing is likely to diminish over time as a result of financial trends related to reimbursement rates. *This is significant to patient care costs and delivery as clinicians reported that more than half of the reimbursement contracts held by their own practices are tied to Medicare reimbursement rates (Figure 5).*



Physicians Report A Majority of Their Private Payer Contract Reimbursement Rates Are Tied To A Percentage of Medicare Rates

Figure 5: Regarding your provider contracts with private payers, what percentage of your contracts tie reimbursement rates for laboratory services to a percentage of Medicare rates?



In addition, most physicians completing the survey reported that more than 25% of their patients (anywhere from 26% up to 100% of a practice's patients) are Medicare beneficiaries (Figure 6).

Everyone knows that if the cost to provide the service is greater than the reimbursement for the service, it is simply no longer feasible to provide the service.

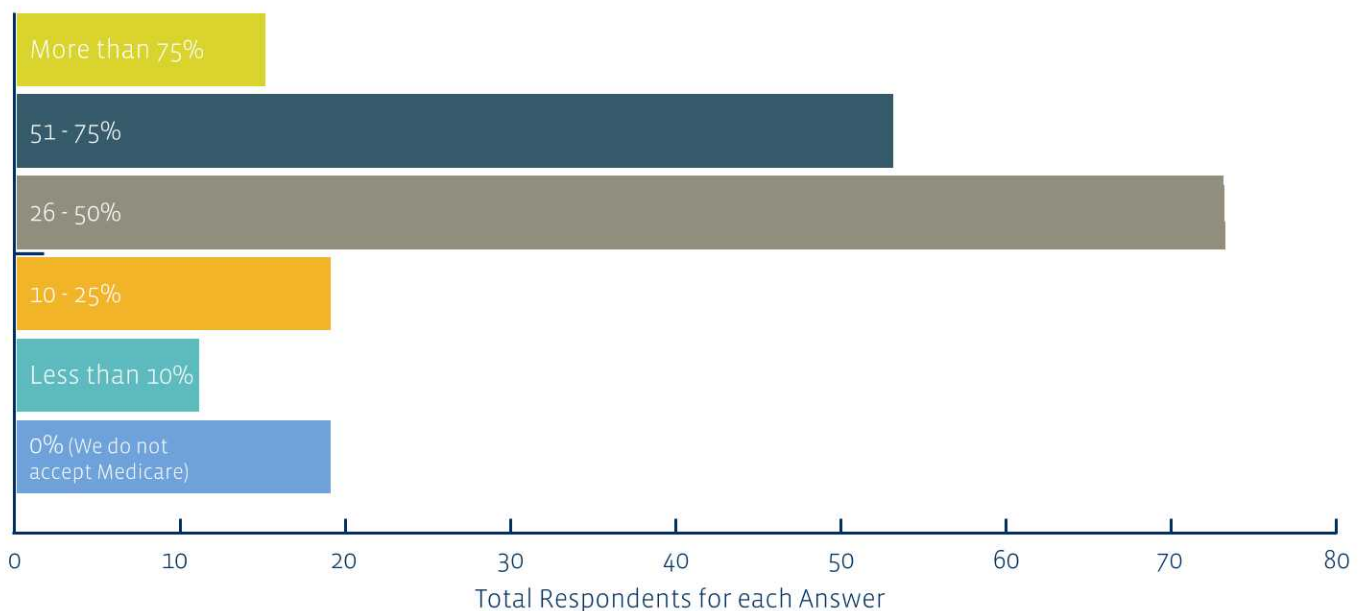
Through near patient testing, elderly patients will avoid emergency care situations requiring hospitalization. Near patient testing prevents costly chronic or severe health conditions through accurate and timely diagnoses. It prevents unnecessary provider services such as additional office visits to simply relay test results to patients.



The value of near patient testing is proven. It reduces costs and improves the care patients receive.

Near Patient Testing Is Valued To A Large Number of Patients on Medicare

Figure 6: Approximately what percentage of your patients are covered by Medicare?



We need to keep the big picture in mind.



The Value of Near Patient Testing

Our Aim

We are currently gathering physician-based knowledge about the impact of clinical laboratory information on diagnosis and treatment and how access to real-time laboratory information improves patient outcomes. Furthermore, we seek to gather and share physician knowledge about the unique needs of the communities they serve.

Our central study question is:

“What is the value of laboratory testing at the time of the patient’s visit and how would patients be impacted if you were no longer able to provide laboratory services in your practice?”

Our Approach

To achieve this research goal, we have designed a national survey to gather knowledge from physicians. The preliminary data of the national survey is reflected in this document.

We are also conducting in-depth interviews using a qualitative, narrative method. The interviews are semi-structured and conducted in a confidential manner. Study participants are encouraged to share specific patient positive or negative experiences of the impact of access to laboratory services on patient care. The results of the interviews will be presented in the final study report.

Looking Towards the Future

We believe further research is needed to support physicians and their patients in the area of access to near patient laboratory services. Additional research can serve to portray a comprehensive representation of common experiences and existing challenges due to the current status of laboratory services and healthcare in general. The findings of our study are meant to contribute to the collected data of laboratory services across the country; however, they are not meant to represent all experiences of patients, elderly patients, or healthcare providers.

Finally, since many readers of this preliminary data may be more familiar with clinical and other positivistic research studies, we wish to explain that this research can be viewed as an interpretative study based in social science.

COLA is currently exploring, through physician-based knowledge, the impact of near patient laboratory testing and how access to real-time laboratory information improves patient outcomes. The findings of our study are meant to contribute to the collected data of laboratory services across the country.

If you would like to learn more about COLA’s study on the value of near patient laboratory testing, please contact the COLA Research Team at research@cola.org.



COLA is a physician-directed organization whose purpose is to promote excellence in laboratory medicine and patient care through a program of voluntary education, consultation, and accreditation.

Comments? Feedback? Questions?

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