



The LAB is Essential to our Practice.



In this rural community the closest laboratories are 80 and 100 miles from the clinic. For Dr. WY, this means if the clinic “no longer provided lab work, elderly patients would have to travel a long distance.”

Elderly patients who are reluctant to give up their car keys put their safety at risk. “One of my elderly patients fell asleep while driving her car and drove off the road,” shared Dr. WY. Dr. WY made it clear that if the practice was not able to provide lab testing at their clinic, patients would need to travel to another lab and this would increase the risk of car accidents.

Dr. WY explained further that difficulties in traveling are compounded in this rural community during the winter months. “Our weather here has been unreal. We have had record snowfall.” Dr. WY shared that the record snowfall this winter season caused 10 to 15 different local road closures due to avalanches.

This creates highly unfavorable situations for any traveling patients, including elderly patients. During the winter months, travel for patients is “like taking a chance on life” added Dr. WY.

Adjacent to the clinic is an emergency room treating acute care patients. Dr. WY explained that patients come to the practice with chest pain symptoms daily.



“I want to protect our patients by ensuring access to my clinical lab.”

And by performing a variety of tests in the office laboratory, including a cardiac troponin test, it can be determined whether the patient is having a heart attack. Dr. WY added that, **“Troponins, CBCs, and comprehensive metabolic panels are the most commonly ordered tests. I don’t know how I would practice ER medicine without those.”**

Dr. WY shared that their ER patients can be transported by helicopter or ambulance to a neighboring community hospital, but at what cost? Dr. WY added if we can do the screening testing here it’s not necessary for elderly patients “to take ambulance and helicopter rides.”

Dr. WY explained that the clinic collects specimens for transport to reference laboratories; however, the interstate used for transport closes frequently and has caused significant delays. When specimens do get through to the reference laboratory, Dr. WY shared that the clinic “will get the results back the following morning or the day after.”

Dr. WY shared that the clinic’s experience with reference labs has “been pretty good” but Dr. WY mentioned that weather should not be underestimated. It is a barrier when referring tests out and that barrier is removed when the testing can be done in the clinic.