

# Making Safety a Standard

Is Testing En Masse the Next Logical Step for Employers?

By Patricia Miller

While many Americans scramble to find at-home COVID-19 tests, some companies are handing them out as a work perk. It's an idea gaining ground across the country, particularly since government-mandated vaccinations are still being challenged by states around the nation. As staff return to the office or continue to work in high-exposure service sectors, employers have to decide how to keep employees safe.

Many businesses have already started offering free at-home tests. Google began offering free tests in 2020 to its 90,000 staff members. The tech giant paid more than \$50 each in December of 2020, reported *Fortune*. While the price of testing is coming down, demand is going up and supply is limited.

Laura Pieslewicz, director of Paradigm Site Services, a Paradigm company that has cornered the market in COVID-19 mitigation, has noticed a change in demand since the Omicron variant ramped up in January.

"We've seen a dramatic increase in testing and requests for home test kits, you can't find them right now," Pieslewicz said.

The federal government has started offering free at-home tests to individuals, but employers are still faced with sourcing mass quantities. Paradigm offers both on-site rapid and PCR testing and specializes in supplying COVID-19 essentials, including bulk orders of rapid test kits for businesses. The laboratory managed to navigate the supply chain problems impacting much of the sector. "Our company purchased in bulk early and diversified with



multiple brands since supply shortages might affect one brand more than another," Pieslewicz said.

Paradigm's high-throughput clinical laboratory can process 5-7,000 PCR tests a day, with results in less than 24 to 48 hours. High-throughput testing

is critical to limiting the spread, especially in business environments where infection rates multiply rapidly. When seeking a laboratory partner, consider the breadth of its services, commitment to the client, and, of course, its tech — which often determines how much volume the lab can handle.

Paradigm set the standard for turnaround times on high-complexity testing using these as their "go-to's" on the bench: The Roche LightCycler 480 is a high-throughput platform offering fully automated, real-time PCR analysis; the KingFisher Flex, is a high-throughput instrument used for consistent

extraction and purification of DNA, RNA, Protein, and Cells; and the Hamilton STAR Liquid Handling System uses air displacement pipetting with patented designs ensuring the highest accuracy in liquid handling steps.

Paradigm credits its driven, innovative staff for the successful re-engineering of the polymerase chain reaction process that led to breakthrough turnaround times. Though pandemic-focused for now, it is shifting to a "full-service" mentality that will continue to offer a variety of clinical testing, including cannabis and mobile testing that brings the lab to the patient.

Employers offering health and wellness perks to their staff should consider incorporating COVID-19 testing en masse, but should keep a few key points in mind. "Do your research. Make sure you're following best practices ... be fluid with [protocols] as things change," Pieslewicz said. "Communication with your employees is probably the biggest thing. Communicate that this is part of an overall umbrella program of health and safety." ■