NorthShore University HealthSystem
Delivering Same-Day Results with In-house Testing

By mid-March, when COVID-19 cases climbed over 100 in Illinois, NorthShore University HealthSystem in Evanston began testing symptomatic patients with its own in-house test.

Work on the test began in January and, once developed, NorthShore became the first health system in the state performing its own testing, as noted by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH).

NorthShore’s five hospitals can test over 1,000 people a day and deliver same-day results to doctors, which is significant. Illinois residents tested at IDPH and commercial labs have waited several days for their results.

Karen Kaul, MD, chair of NorthShore’s department of pathology and laboratory medicine, said same-day results allow doctors to decide if patients should be isolated at the hospital or sent home.

“For us it seems like 2009 all over again,” Dr. Kaul said, referring to NorthShore’s in-house DNA-based test for Swine flu. “We were running hundreds of tests back then.”

As a community-based academic medical center, NorthShore is well-equipped for in-house testing. The system’s molecular diagnostic laboratory dates to 1992. With its COVID-19 testing, NorthShore is sharing “positive material” with labs across the U.S. to help them validate their own testing.

“There’s a whole unseen network of labs across the country working together on this,” Dr. Kaul said.

Illinois hospitals plan ahead. Find out how OSF Healthcare’s existing protocols helped them take precautions to prepare for COVID-19.