The Right Test, Right Time Case Study:
Health System-Led Biomarker Testing Model

Reflexive Biomarker Testing at Ochsner Health
Ochsner Health, New Orleans, Louisiana

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This case study focuses on ensuring patients receive the right test at the right time for their type of cancer.

Challenge

- Delays and disparities in biomarker testing meant patients were not always matched to the best treatment.
- Testing decisions varied across providers, with gaps driven by insurance coverage, cost, and inconsistent ordering.

Solution

- Implemented testing at diagnosis to ensure results are available for treatment planning.
- Established a joint oncology–pathology task force, supported by molecular navigators and operational leaders.
- Built and maintained a reflexive test selection grid, updated quarterly according to NCCN guidelines, covering guideline-aligned panels across cancers.
- Reflex testing applied automatically across all cancers at pathology diagnosis.
- Molecular navigators integrated workflows in Epic, coordinated with providers, and liaised with labs.
- Engaged in policy advocacy with legislators, insurers, and patient advocacy groups to mandate and reimburse NGS testing.

Outcomes

- Faster, equitable access to targeted therapies supported by policy.
- Reflex testing rates reflect the diverse population being tested (71% White, 29% Black), closely aligning with the overall cancer population (74% White, 26% Black).
- Testing results available by first oncology visit, enabling timely treatment decisions.
- Louisiana laws (2021, 2022) mandate NGS coverage due to advocacy.
- System-wide adoption ensures patients at Ochsner sites benefit from the same equitable testing process.

Key Learnings

- Start with the right team to ensure alignment, credibility, and sustainability.
- Policy work and lab partnerships are essential for financial viability.
- Dedicated molecular navigators reduce provider burden and improve workflow efficiency.
- Ochsner pathology lab's reflexive workflow grids must evolve with scientific evidence and expand to new cancer types as appropriate.

Replication Tip

- Start with a unified oncology–pathology leadership team and integrate navigators to make reflex testing routine and sustainable.

> "By testing at diagnosis, we make sure results are ready for the first oncology visit — patients get matched to the right therapy without delay."

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