A sweet improvement in diabetes testing for South Africa
Lancet Laboratories gets international certification for HbA\textsubscript{1c} testing methods

Johannesburg, Gauteng, 17 November 2010 – To coincide with Diabetes Month, Lancet Laboratories is proud to announce they are the first and only routine pathology laboratory in South Africa to be awarded best-practice certification for their Haemoglobin A\textsubscript{1c} (HbA\textsubscript{1c}) testing method by the US National Glycohemoglobin Standardization Program (NGSP).\textsuperscript{1}

This now means South African healthcare professionals have access to the most accurate HbA\textsubscript{1c} pathology method for monitoring blood glucose control and predicting long-term complications, enabling them to make more targeted treatment-management decisions for their patients with diabetes.\textsuperscript{2}

It is estimated that over 400 000 South Africans with diabetes are being managed in the private sector alone.\textsuperscript{3}

“With radical shifts in lifestyle and culture, South Africans are progressively becoming more affected by diabetes and its debilitating long-term complications including heart disease, blindness, amputation, kidney disease and erectile dysfunction,” said Dr David Rambau, Chemical Pathologist and Head of Lancet Laboratories Quality Assurance Division.

The HbA\textsubscript{1c} provides an average blood-glucose value from the previous six to 12 weeks.\textsuperscript{2} While other routine laboratories throughout South Africa perform the HbA\textsubscript{1c} test, Lancet is the first and only routine pathology laboratory in South Africa to achieve NGSP certification.\textsuperscript{1}

This indicates to healthcare professionals that the HbA\textsubscript{1c} test result produced by Lancet is reliable, accurate and traceable to the gold standard reference method used in the Diabetes Control and Complications Trial (DCCT)\textsuperscript{4} and United Kingdom Prospective Diabetes Study (UKPDS).\textsuperscript{5}

“The findings from the DCCT and the UKPDS have significantly changed the way diabetes is managed today. NGSP certification of Lancet’s HbA\textsubscript{1c} testing method enables healthcare professionals to directly interpret their patient’s results using the findings from these landmark studies, supporting them to better manage their patient’s care,” said Dr David Rambau.

In addition to monitoring and screening blood glucose levels, this year, The American Diabetes Association (ADA) released a position statement endorsing HbA\textsubscript{1c} as a tool for diagnosing diabetes.\textsuperscript{6} Importantly, however, the ADA recommended that the HbA\textsubscript{1c} result used for establishing a diagnosis is performed by a NGSP certified laboratory.\textsuperscript{6}

In South Africa, the Society for Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa (SEMDSA) has called for all major laboratories to submit themselves for NGSP certification as a matter of urgency\textsuperscript{7}, however, due to the limited number of NGSP certified routine pathology laboratories in South Africa, both SEMDSA and the Centre for Diabetes and Endocrinology (CDE) have not yet recommended the HbA\textsubscript{1c} test as a diagnostic tool for diabetes.\textsuperscript{7}

“While diabetes can be successfully controlled, patients who are not accurately monitored and managed are at a higher risk for developing serious long-term health complications. This in turn places additional pressure on an already overburdened healthcare system. Lancet’s NGSP certification provides healthcare professionals with greater peace of mind knowing they have access to the most accurate information available to support their diabetes treatment-management decisions,” concludes Dr David Rambau.

References


7. The Society for Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa (SEMDSA). Position statement on the use of HbA1c assays for the diagnosis of diabetes mellitus. JEMDSA, 2010: Vol, 15 No. 2

**About Lancet Laboratories**

Lancet Laboratories Haemoglobin A1c is measured routinely at the three NGSP certified sites: Lancet Laboratories Johannesburg, Lancet Laboratories Durban and Lancet Laboratories Pencardia. Lancet Laboratories is one of the leading routine pathology laboratories operating throughout Africa - providing vital diagnostic and monitoring pathology services in South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Ghana, Uganda and Kenya.

Committed to providing diagnostic excellence, Lancet Laboratories is SANAS accredited, adhering to international criteria, set out according to ISO Standard 17025. Lancet currently operates in both the public and private healthcare environments and provides specialist pathology services for the corporate, insurance and industrial sectors. We care for more than 18,000 patients a day and offer an extensive range of pathology services, from sophisticated molecular and cytogenetic investigations to advanced chemical analyses.

Lancet is owned as a traditional medical partnership, where pathologists provide a professional diagnostic pathology service and are shareholders in the business. Eighty specialist pathologists, each with their area of expertise, lead the service, not only to ensure the quality and validity of investigations, but also to offer a consultative service to physicians, managed healthcare institutions, the occupational health environment and the insurance and industry sectors.

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