AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR CLINICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE

Statement of the

American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS)

for

CLIAC, March 2003

Background

In the absence of comprehensive national health care reform, Congress and state legislative bodies will take incremental actions to deal with inequitable access to health care and to reduce health care costs. The American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS) espouses "excellent, accessible, cost-effective laboratory services for consumers of health care" in its vision statement and supports the tenets of health care reform delineated in this document.

Surveys have indicated that consumerism will effect health care decisions in the United States. Consumers, when asked who should be in charge of their health care, responded "me" followed by the physician.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) in its study entitled "Crossing the Quality Chasm A New Health System for the 21st Century" recommended ten rules of redesign for health care that includes the patient as the source of control, the need for transparency, shared knowledge and free flow of information and evidence-based decision making.

Position

As the health care focus continues to shift toward wellness, ASCLS supports preventive care such as early intervention, immunization and screening programs. ASCLS supports direct access to clinical laboratory services for screening tests, tests used for monitoring purposes, and tests that do not require consultation. Direct access can greatly increase the availability and usage of preventive services. Direct access can level some of the inequities of access to health care in the United States. Furthermore, substantial cost savings can be achieved by eliminating office visits and prior approval of appropriate, preventive laboratory services.

There are many models of delivery of direct access to laboratory services. It is incumbent on any model that the patient's safety and interests be protected and that the rules outlined by the IOM study are incorporated into the business model. ASCLS believes that consumer-driven laboratory services are best provided by clinical laboratories, in which reside the expertise to ensure the appropriate menu of tests and quality performance standards as well as interpret and explain test results when needed.

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