

newsworthy trends

Get a Test, Stop a Killer?

(NAPSA)—Can routine, low-cost lab tests—like the kind that doctors use to check your blood sugar or your cholesterol level—stop a killer?

The answer is yes. In fact, they can stop many killers.

Although most of us think of lab tests as just, well, tests, laboratory medicine has become a key part of bringing some of the most dangerous diseases under control, including cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, and cardiovascular diseases. It hasn't cured them, of course. But it has given physicians new power to prevent them and control their effects. For example:

- Diabetes can cause blindness, kidney failure, stroke, and death. But a \$13 lab test can tell if a patient has high blood sugar levels that signal diabetes. With this information, doctors can prescribe dietary changes, exercise, medications, or insulin to keep blood sugar within the normal range. When it stays in that range, patients can gain, on average, five more years of life, eight more years of eyesight, and six more years of freedom from kidney disease.

- When patients discover chronic kidney disease, it is often too late—they already face kidney failure or death. But two inexpensive lab tests that evaluate kidney functioning can alert physicians to the problem, allowing them to select treatments than can halt the disease for



Lab tests provide physicians with information that helps them diagnose a medical condition and decide how best to treat it.

many patients, and prevent it altogether in others. Early diagnosis, in fact, can delay kidney failure for two years or more even if the patient's kidneys have already declined by 25 percent.

- The death rate from cervical cancer over the past 50 years has dropped by about 75 percent—in large part because of the Pap test. These tests play such a powerful role because they provide a kind of early-warning system for cervical cancer. They detect pre-cancerous cells, thereby allowing physicians to stop cancer even before it starts. If cancer is already present, the tests are able to detect it in its early stages, when treatment is most successful.

For more information about how laboratory medicine is helping control serious diseases, go to www.labresultsforlife.org.