

NHS Vaccine Shortage Ends While a New Test May Help Treat the Flu

Jose Calvo December 04, 2018



After millions of people were urged to get flu shot by England's NHS after the end of a shortage, it was announced that a new test called the cobas Liat may help during winter.

(Newswire.net -- December 4, 2018) -- The new 20-minute test called the cobas Liat may help determine who has the flu, treat them more quickly, and give the hospitals the ability to discharge patients and free up much-needed beds. The shortage had many worried, but the NHS ordered 8.5 million more vaccines, the test provides a way to treat influenza patients more effectively.

The winter is always a tough period for NHS, a [medical negligence law firm](#) explains, because they are pressured to treat many patients during flu season due to the cold weather. This season in particular is expected to be more severe than the last. Furthermore, nearly [one out of five](#) NHS hospital trusts have failed to meet their target wait-lists.

29 out of 157 NHS hospitals in the United Kingdom did not meet a single target in the last year, according to an investigation done by the BBC. Performing the worst were Wales and Northern Ireland. Wales has not met any of its key three targets in the last five years and Northern Ireland has failed to meet targets at all five of their facilities.

The last time any target was met in the United Kingdom was in Scotland in August 2017. England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland all failed to achieve targets for the first time since they were introduced more than ten years ago.

The new flu test may help hospitals meet their targets. Normally, the hospitals have to send flu tests to a separate laboratory location, where the patient has to wait for several days at the hospital. Now, with the new test, a single throat swab can be analyzed by an on-site machine in 20 minutes.

While Roche Diagnostics, the manufacturer of the cobas Liat test, says that it can detect over 40 different strains of influenza and can save NHS up to £24 million, Public Health England warns that there is not enough data to determine how successful and cost effective the test is. Many tests are coming onto the market, they've said, and there hasn't been a national assessment on it, though the early adopters have seen benefits.

Norfolk and Norwich Hospitals NHS Foundation Trusts began using the test in January, and found that out of 277 tests conducted over the first four months, 128, or 46 percent, were positive, leading to quicker diagnoses and more efficient use of beds and rooms.

The number of blocked beds dropped from 11 to two and the number of day beds went from 12.3 to 2.7. Estimating that the money they could save from the test may be around £142,555, this number does not account for the cost of the test kits. £104,125 of the saved money comes from day beds, £7,560 in blocked beds, and £30,870 in admissions that are omitted.

The flu vaccine will also help in this regard. Many vaccines are available, and there is concern about people who resist them. Some mistakenly believe that getting the flu shot will give them influenza. Out of 1,027,075 healthcare professionals offered the vaccination in 2017, only 706,075 received it. If someone does get influenza after receiving the vaccine, it will be milder. And for professionals, there is concern that they may carry the virus without symptoms, possibly giving it to their patients.

In addition, the new flu test has been implemented in the emergency unit at London's Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust with very different results. An area with a high elderly population, the impact of flu season is more severe and acute. The hospital began using the test after a large number of patients were unnecessarily isolated during the flu seasons of 2017 and 2018.

The NHS trust in London carried out 1,526 tests over a period of 19 weeks, 479 came out positive. Less than a third, which conflicts with the more positive NHS tests. 65 percent of discharges didn't require isolation when other risks

were ruled out.

Though NHS vaccines will prevent flus and the test may save money, the approaching winter will be severe and the effectiveness of the test is to be determined.

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