Author's response to reviews

Title: Testing for hereditary thrombophilia: a retrospective analysis of testing referred to a national laboratory

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editors,

My coauthors and I respectfully submit our manuscript entitled "Testing for hereditary thrombophilia: a retrospective analysis of testing referred to a national laboratory" for your consideration as an article in BMC Clinical Pathology.

The paper describes our observational study of thrombophilia testing across a large number of U.S. medical facilities. These laboratory tests (V Leiden mutation, Protein S, etc.) are commonly ordered by internists, surgeons, obstetricians, neurologists and others in the workup of patients with thrombotic disorders, such as deep venous thrombosis and thrombotic stroke. Although there are published recommendations on the use of these tests, particularly from a consensus conference sponsored by the College of American Pathologists, they have not been widely disseminated. Our study compared thrombophilia test ordering patterns as received by a national esoteric reference laboratory with the patterns that would be expected if physicians were following these recommended best practices. The patterns we found suggest widespread suboptimal use of these tests.

As noted in the Discussion section of our manuscript, other researchers have used local chart reviews and physician surveys to study utilization of thrombophilia tests, with conclusions similar to ours. Our study is the first we are aware of to use a very large multi-hospital data set.

Our findings have implications for dissemination of clinical practice guidelines as well as the study of utilization of diagnostic tests.

Thank you for your consideration of this paper.

Brian Jackson