

It is widely accepted that there is considerable variation in the use of diagnostic tests across the NHS. While much of this variation can be explained by clinical and demographic differences, some of the variation may be attributed to inappropriate test requesting as a result of over/under-requesting and unnecessary repeat testing.

Aims and Methods

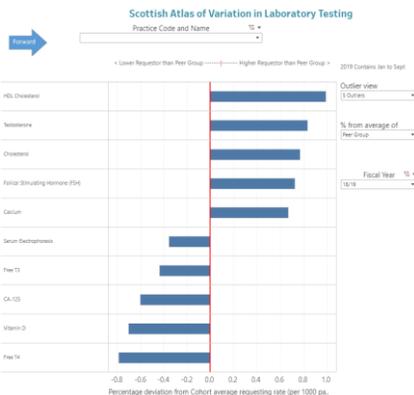
To produce an interactive Atlas that could highlight service areas where unwarranted variation can be identified and allow for development of specific targeted interventions in the form of quality improvement initiatives.

Specialty focused diagnostic networks identified a list of tests most likely to show variation within and across NHS health boards. Data was collected between 2017-2019 on individual GP practice and non-GP requesting rates for laboratory tests from the LIMS of all NHS boards. Additional information including GP practice list size and cluster groups were added. The Atlas was developed using Tableau software.

Results

The Atlas includes four main dashboards:

- National Scotland wide overarching view
- NHS Board primary care view per discipline
- GP and cluster view per NHS Board
- Scotland wide and NHS Board practice requests



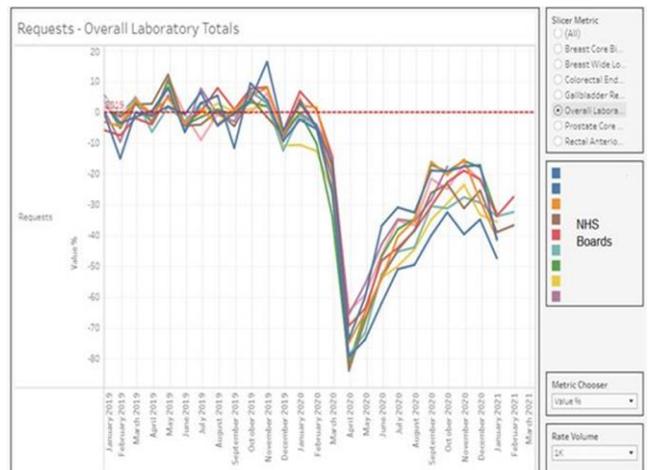
Test request data was received from 95% of practices in Scotland and added to the Atlas. Data was adjusted per 1,000 population and variation in practice requests from the median were displayed. Data is driven by the specific test chosen and filters allow dashboards to be appropriately customised.

Conclusions

The Atlas has been recognised to be a reliable useful tool to easily observe variation in test requesting across cluster, peer group, Health Board and Scotland. This equips stakeholders with the data to tackle variation by implementing their own targeted interventions.

COVID-19

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the objectives of Phase IV of the Demand Optimisation programme were revised, resulting in a re-focused and dynamic programme of work that is relevant and effective in the new pandemic healthcare landscape. Recovery monitoring dashboards have been published that demonstrate substantial reductions in diagnostic testing across NHS Boards throughout the pandemic, allowing Boards to identify, prioritise and address gaps in healthcare provision.



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