

FIRST DO NO HARM – CHALLENGES TO BE OVERCOME IN THE MODERN PRACTICE OF PATHOLOGY

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The modern practice of pathology faces two immediate and major challenges – the need to satisfy a high level of clinical demand for reliable testing to make treatment as well as diagnostic decisions and the requirement that this to be done in an environment where healthcare spending is increasingly constrained. These international trends have driven widespread and often rapid changes in the way in which pathology services are delivered. New models of operation have utilized amalgamation, centralization, automation and digitization to deliver services with varying success. As safe and reliable pathology testing underpins modern healthcare, any failures impact directly on the care of

individuals or a very large numbers of patients and disrupt the delivery of acute as well as community-based care. There is an urgent need to reassess these models to ensure that any risks to patient safety which have arisen during this period of change are identified and managed. Data from a review of errors known to be associated patient harm, including a review of claims from a large medical indemnity insurer, will be presented and a path forward for the effective management of risks to patients as a consequence of pathology testing is proposed.

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